

Influencer Marketing vs. Celebrity Endorsements: A Comparative Study on Consumer Behavior in the Digital Era

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Peer Review Information	Abstract
<p>Type: Article Received: 28 March 2026 Revised: 26 April 2026 Accepted: 11 May 2026 Published: 02 June 2026</p>	<p>This study explores the impact of influencer marketing and celebrity endorsements in shaping consumer behavior in the advanced digital environment. With the rapid growth of social media platforms, content creators have become an important alternative to traditional celebrity endorsers. The important objective of this research is to compare how both types of endorsements influence consumer trust, brand perception, engagement, and purchase intention.</p> <p>The study follows a detailed research design and is based on first hand data collected through standardized questions from 122 respondents, primarily from younger, digitally active groups. The analysis reveals that celebrity endorsements are effective in creating brand awareness and enhancing brand image due to their popularity and wide reach. However, influencer marketing is found to be more impactful in building trust, relatability, and consumer engagement.</p> <p>The end results further indicate that buyer are more likely to consider suggestions from content creator when making purchase decisions, especially for products promoted on social media platforms. The study concludes that both influencers and celebrities play significant roles in marketing, but their effectiveness depends on the type of the product, target audience, and communication strategy. A balanced use of both methods can help organizations achieve better marketing outcomes in a competitive digital landscape.</p> <p>Keywords: Influencer Marketing; Celebrity Endorsement; Purchase Intention; Consumer Behavior; Brand Credibility; Social Media Marketing; Digital Advertising; Consumer Trust.</p>

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Introduction

In today's digital marketing environment, endorsement strategies play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and purchase decisions. Traditionally, brands have relied on celebrities to promote products on account of their wide reach, popularity, and aspirational appeal. However, with the surge of social media platforms, a new category of endorser's social media influencers has achieved significant importance. Unlike celebrities, influencers build their audience through online content and direct interaction, which makes them more relatable and authentic. This changed how consumers respond to marketing messages, specifically among younger public who value trust and personal connection.

Therefore, marketers face an important question: whether celebrity endorsements or influencer marketing is more effective. This study aims to compare both forms of endorsement by examining their impact on consumer trust, engagement, and purchase intention, and to provide insights for better marketing decision

Literature Review

Prior research shows that both celebrity and influencer endorsements influence consumer behavior, but their impact differs. Influencers are generally seen as more authentic and relatable, which helps build trust and encourages higher engagement among consumers. Their personal content and interaction with followers make their recommendations more persuasive, especially for younger audiences. In contrast, celebrities are effective in creating brand awareness and enhancing brand image due to their popularity and wide reach. However, they may lack the personal connection that influencers offer. Studies also highlight that the effectiveness of endorsements depends on the fit between the product and the endorser.

Overall, influencers are more effective in driving engagement and trust, while celebrities are well-suited for expanding visibility and brand prestige.

Research Objectives

This research targets to understand and compare how influencer marketing and celebrity endorsements affect consumer behavior. The key objectives are:

- To examine how different types of endorsements influence consumer perception of brands and advertisements.
- To compare the effect of influencer and celebrity endorsements on consumers' intention to purchase products.
- To study how factors such as trust, credibility, and relatability impact the effectiveness of endorsers.
- To analyze the level of consumer engagement generated through influencer and celebrity promotions on social media.
- To identify the main component that shape consumer preference between influencers and celebrities.
- To suggest suitable endorsement strategies for marketers based on target audience and product characteristics.

Research Methodology

This study follows a systematic approach to evaluate the effectiveness of influencer and celebrity endorsements on consumer behavior.

A detailed research framework was used to understand consumer perceptions, attitudes, and preferences without manipulating variables. The study primarily follows a quantitative approach, supported by limited qualitative insights for better interpretation.

Data for the study was collected from both first hand data and published data. First hand data was gathered using a systematic questionnaire, which included queries on demographics, social media usage, endorsement perception, and purchase behavior. Published data was obtained from research articles, journals, and online sources to support the findings.

The survey was executed online using a convenience sampling method, and overall 122 respondents engaged in the study. The sample mainly consisted of young, active social media users, making it relevant for analyzing digital marketing trends.

The gathered data was studied using statistical techniques. Descriptive methods such as percentages were used to brief responses, while mean & standard deviation helped understand central tendencies and variation. Correlation analysis was executed to examine the connection between variables such as attention and brand perception. The study highlights, evaluating how factors like credibility, relatability and type of endorser influence consumer trust, engagement and purchase intention across selected product categories.

Research Gaps

1. Scarcity of Comparative Research Related to the Indian Consumers

A lot of previous research was done concerning either influencer marketing or celebrity endorsement; however, comparative research which would be focused on Indian consumers or more precisely younger ones is rather rare. This paper tries to fill that gap by comparing

both approaches.

2. The Lack of Attention to Consumer Engagement Together with Purchase Intention

While most prior studies pay attention on purchase intentions or brand awareness, the combination of engagement, relatability, and trust has not received due attention.

3. Lack of Focused Research Concerning Younger Digital Audience

Previous research mostly concerned the consumer population as a whole, whereas research focusing specifically on younger active in social media consumers, being the main target for influencer marketing nowadays, is much less common.

4. Scarcity of Information About Trust and Relatability Factors

While the factor of credibility is rather well covered in the earlier literature, the impact of the trust ability, relatability, and authenticity comparison of influencer marketing and celebrity endorsement is underexplored.

5. The Lack of Practical Marketing Strategy Recommendations

Academic research provides a good explanation of how different types of endorsements work, but at the same time, it lacks practical advice for marketing strategists.

6. Insufficient Study of Dynamics Surrounding Social Media Endorsements

The past studies done on celebrities as endorser were prior to the explosion in popularity of social media such as Instagram, YouTube, and Tiktok.

Data Analysis

Using the data gathered from 122 participants, descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were used to assess consumers' attitudes about celebrity and influencer endorsements.

Descriptive Analysis

Age Distribution

Table 1. Age Distribution

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
Below 18	9	7%
18–25	61	50%
26–35	35	29%
36–45	17	14%
Total	122	100%

The high number of young adults (18–25) in the sample demonstrates their significant exposure to social media and digital advertising.

Occupational Profile

The table categorizes the respondents based on their professional history.

Table 2. Occupational Profile

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Student	50	41%
Working Professional	38	31%
Homemaker	12	10%
Self Employed	13	11%
Other	9	7%
Total	122	100%

The majority of population are students and professionals, implying a group that is both financially aware and tech competent.

Mean and Standard Deviation

Mean Formula:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum fX}{\sum f}$$

Formula for calculating the standard deviation is as follows:

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{\sum (X - \bar{X})^2}{N}}$$

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
Public pays more attention to celebrity recommendations	3.01	1.19
Celebrities enhance a brand's reputation	3.15	1.27

Major findings include:

Three to four is the average, implying a moderately

Positive to neutral outlook.

The standard deviation, which is around 1. 2, shows that the responses are somewhat consistent.

Respondents generally believed that Celebrities improve a brand's image.

Correlation Matrix

Table 4. Correlation Matrix

Variables	Celebrity Attention	Brand Prestige
Celebrity Attention	1.000	0.319
Brand Prestige	0.319	1.000

Key Lessons Learned:

- The correlation coefficient is only moderately positive (r = 0. 319).
- Increased focus on celebrity endorsements is associated with an improved public image for the company.
- The link is trustworthy because it is statistically significant (p < 0. 05).
- The moderate strength suggests that consumer perception is impacted by other factors as well, such as trustworthiness and relatability.

Key Findings

1. The majority of population are youngsters and often engage with social media, which increases their exposure to online endorsements.
2. Influencers are generally perceived as more authentic, relatable and trustworthy compared to celebrities.
3. Celebrity endorsements help in building brand awareness and prestige, but do not strongly influence engagement.
4. Influencers generate higher consumer engagement and stronger personal connection with audiences.
5. Purchase decisions are influenced by both, but influencers have a slightly greater impact individually.
6. Consumers tend to trust influencer recommendations more, especially when choosing between similar products.
7. The effectiveness of endorsements depends on factors like credibility, relatability, and reach.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study indicates a shift in endorsement strategies within digital marketing. While celebrity endorsements remain effective in enhancing brand visibility and prestige, influencer marketing proves more impactful in building trust, relatability, and consumer engagement.

Younger consumers, in particular, respond more positively to influencers due to their authenticity and closer interaction, making them more influential in purchase decisions. However, celebrities continue to be valuable for achieving wide reach and strengthening brand positioning.

Overall, the effectiveness of endorsements depends on factors such as credibility, product relevance, and target audience. Both influencers and celebrities play distinct roles in marketing, and when used effectively, each can have a strong impact on shaping consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions.

1. Choose endorsers based on product type and target audience.
2. Use influencers for trust and engagement and celebrities for reach and brand image.
3. Focus on authentic and credible collaborations.
4. Adopt a combined approach to balance visibility and engagement.
5. Leverage micro-influencers for better trust and targeted impact.
6. Ensure strong product-endorser alignment and use data to evaluate performance.

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