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INFLUENCER MARKETING AND ITS IMPACT ON CUSTOMER PURCHASE INTENTION

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Abstract

In the digital age, influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful strategy for brands to interact with and engage their target consumers. Social media influencers profoundly impact consumer behaviour due to their perceived authenticity and strong follower engagement (Freberg et al., 2011; Lou & Yuan, 2019). This article analyses the influence of influencer marketing on customers' purchasing intentions, clarifying the methods through which influencers build trust, enhance engagement, and impact purchasing decisions (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Comprehending this relationship allows organisations to customise their marketing strategies to effectively convert followers into customers (Casaló et al., 2020). This study investigates the influence of influencer marketing on customers' purchase intentions in Chennai. A sample of 157 respondents actively engaged in social media in Chennai was recruited for the study, which is descriptive in nature. The questionnaire functions as the instrument for data collection, and a convenience sampling method was employed to choose respondents (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Multiple regression analysis and one-way ANOVA are the statistical techniques applied, with Cronbach's alpha of 0.834 validating the study's dependability at 83.9% (George & Mallery, 2019). SPSS version 25 is used for data analysis. The findings demonstrate that Reach, Engagement Metrics, and Relevance substantially affect consumers' purchase intentions, with Reach exerting the most significant influence, underscoring the value of an influencer's exposure and audience magnitude (Jin et al., 2019). In contrast, the Credibility of the Influencer and Content Style do not exert a statistically significant influence on purchase intention in this context. Additionally, age and occupation strongly impact influencer marketing, with younger respondents, particularly students, being more susceptible to its effects (De Veirman et al., 2017).

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INTRODUCTION

The emergence of digital platforms has transformed marketing by shifting from traditional methods to more participatory and personalised strategies (Kumar et al., 2020). Influencer marketing has become a strategic approach wherein individuals with significant online followings promote products or services to their audiences (Freberg et al., 2011). Influencers often create a perception of trust and relatability, making their endorsements more persuasive and impactful in shaping consumer preferences (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Marketing success today largely depends on understanding customers' purchase intention, which reflects the likelihood of a consumer buying a product after exposure to promotional content (Ajzen, 1991; Lim et al., 2017). This article examines the impact of marketing strategies adopted by influencers on consumer purchase intentions and identifies the psychological and behavioural factors that drive conversions (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Casaló et al., 2020).

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing refers to the collaboration between brands and individuals, known as influencers, who possess the ability to affect consumer purchasing decisions because of their authority, expertise, status, or strong relationships with their audiences (Freberg et al., 2011). These influencers can include celebrities, content creators, bloggers, or specialised experts who actively engage with their followers through social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Casaló et al., 2020). By leveraging these platforms, influencers build trust and authenticity, making their endorsements more persuasive and effective in shaping consumer attitudes and purchase intentions (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019).

Key features of influencer marketing

Influencers often share personal experiences, which enhances the credibility of their recommendations and fosters consumer trust (Jin et al., 2019).

The bidirectional communication facilitated through social media allows influencers to form deeper and more authentic connections with their audience (Casaló et al., 2020).

Through niche targeting, brands can collaborate with relevant influencers to effectively connect with specific audience segments and maximise engagement (De Veirman et al., 2017).

Influencer initiatives may offer greater cost-effectiveness compared to traditional advertising, yielding a higher return on investment. (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Factors determining Influencer Marketing Effectiveness on Customer Purchase Intention

Influencer marketing effectiveness in shaping customer purchase intentions is influenced by several interrelated factors, including reach, engagement, credibility, content relevance, and authenticity. These dimensions determine the extent to which influencers impact consumer decision-making.

Reach refers to the size and diversity of an influencer's audience. A higher follower base increases content visibility and broadens the brand's exposure to potential customers (De Veirman et al., 2017). Studies indicate that influencers with large audiences generate greater brand awareness and significantly influence purchasing intentions, especially among younger demographics (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019).

Engagement encompasses metrics such as likes, shares, comments, and overall interaction levels between influencers and their audiences. High engagement suggests active audience participation, which enhances trust and strengthens the perceived authenticity of influencer recommendations (Casaló et al., 2020). Engaged audiences are more likely to translate positive attitudes into purchase decisions (Jin et al., 2019).

The credibility of an influencer is a crucial determinant of marketing success. Influencers

perceived as trustworthy and knowledgeable exert stronger persuasive power over consumers (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Consumers are more likely to accept product recommendations when influencers demonstrate expertise and transparency in their endorsements (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

Content relevance refers to the alignment between an influencer's content and the consumer's interests. When influencers promote products that naturally fit within their niche, followers perceive endorsements as authentic rather than forced (Schouten et al., 2020). Relevant content fosters stronger brand associations and positively impacts purchase intentions (Hwang & Zhang, 2018).

Influencers who share personal experiences and authentic narratives enhance emotional connections with audiences, which boosts trust and drives purchase intentions (Marwick, 2015). Personalised storytelling makes consumers feel valued and understood, thereby increasing their likelihood of purchasing recommended products (Ki et al., 2020).

Demographic variables such as age, occupation, and income levels also shape the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Younger consumers, particularly Gen Z and millennials, demonstrate a higher susceptibility to influencer-driven promotions, while income levels influence the ability to act on purchase intentions (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021).

Customer Purchase Intention

Customer purchase intention refers to the likelihood of a consumer buying a product or service based on attitudes, perceptions, and external influences (Ajzen, 1991). It is a key predictor of consumer behaviour and is shaped by several factors:

- Attitude and Perceived Value – Positive brand perception and higher values increase buying intentions (Spears & Singh, 2004; Zeithaml, 1988).
- Trust and Credibility – Trust in the brand and the source of information significantly impacts decisions (Gefen et al., 2003).
- Social Influence – Recommendations from influencers and peers strongly affect purchase decisions (Chetioui et al., 2020).
- External Factors – Price, product quality, brand image, and social media exposure also play crucial roles (Keller, 2003; Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019).
- In influencer marketing, authenticity, expertise, and relatability of influencers enhance consumers' willingness to buy. Measuring purchase intention helps brands assess campaign effectiveness, forecast sales, and design targeted strategies to convert awareness into purchases.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. **Akanksha Sham Jagtap's (2024)** study examined the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour, highlighting that follower engagement and interaction with influencer content significantly influence purchasing decisions. The research highlighted the effectiveness of influencer marketing in improving brand loyalty and increasing sales, indicating its rising strategic significance.
2. **Chu Chu (2024)** emphasised the transition from conventional marketing to influencer-based strategies and identified influencer marketing as an evolution influenced by trends. The essay examined the relationship between the rise in smartphone and internet usage and its impact on social media's influence on consumer purchase intentions, highlighting the increasing prominence of digital influencers.
3. **Masuda et al. (2022**) presented a model based on persuasion theory to assess the parasocial relationship (PSR) between influencers and their followers. Comparative analysis of PSR and traditional relationship marketing constructs reveals that PSR has a significant positive effect on purchase intentions. Furthermore, factors including attitude homophily, physical attractiveness,

and social attractiveness played a role in the formation of parasocial relationships, which subsequently affected customer purchasing decisions.

4. **Lie Ao et al. (2023)** performed a meta-analysis that integrated data from 62 studies involving more than 22,000 participants. The analysis identified eight characteristics of influencers—homophily, expertise, trustworthiness, credibility, product congruence, entertainment value, informative value, and attractiveness—as critical factors influencing customer engagement and purchase intention. The research findings indicate that entertainment value is the primary driver of engagement, while credibility significantly affects purchase intention.
5. **Rakesh Kumar Pandey and Supriya Goutam (2023)** examined the moderating effect of individual materialism traits on the relationship between social media influencer attributes (such as source reliability and product compatibility) and purchase intention.
6. **Sudha, M., and Sheena, K. (2017)** studied the evolving dynamics of clothing retail, highlighting the significant influence of social media on consumer product discovery and decision-making processes. The study emphasised that the fashion industry employs influencer marketing strategies to influence consumers' purchasing decisions, highlighting the importance of a robust online presence for brand competitiveness.
7. **Yuland, Besra, and Syafrizal (2023)** researched the influence of viral marketing by influencers and online consumer reviews on purchase intention, demonstrating their synergistic positive effects.
8. **Xin Zhao et al. (2024**) examined the correlation between influencer characteristics and consumer purchase intentions, specifically within the realm of livestreaming e-commerce in China. The findings indicate that credibility and attractiveness significantly enhance purchase intentions, with brand attitude serving as a mediator for the influence of interactivity by influencers. Professionalism was found to have no significant effect on brand attitude or purchase intention.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To study the impact of influencer marketing on consumer purchase intention

To assess the influence of demographic variables on Influencer marketing

Hypotheses of the study

$H_0$1: There is no significant impact of Influencer marketing on Purchase Intention

$H_0$2: There is no significant influence of demographic variables on Influencer marketing

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study analyses the effect of influencer marketing on customer purchase intentions in Chennai. A sample of 162 respondents active on social media in Chennai was selected for this descriptive study. The questionnaire functions as the instrument for data collection in the study. The study utilises a convenience sampling approach to select respondents. The questionnaire is divided into three sections: the first section focuses on demographic characteristics, while the second and third sections contain scales pertaining to influencer marketing and purchase intention. Multiple regression analysis is utilised to determine the effect of influencer marketing on purchase intention. One-way ANOVA is employed to evaluate the impact of demographic variables on purchase intention. Cronbach's alpha is utilised to evaluate the reliability of the study. Data analysis is conducted using SPSS version 25.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the profile of the respondents, analysis pertaining to the impact of influencer marketing on Purchase intention and influence of demographic variables on Influencer marketing.

Table-I Profile of the Respondents

Source: Primary data

Particulars	Classification	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	233	45.2
	Female	283	54.8
Age (in years)	15 – 25	150	29.1
	26 – 35	183	35.5
	36 – 45	75	14.5
	46 – 55	54	10.5
	Above 55	54	10.5
Occupation	Student	126	24.4
	Employed	223	43.2
	Business	50	9.7
	Professional	69	13.4
	Home Maker	48	9.3
Qualification	High School	47	9.1
	UG	201	39.0
	PG	139	26.9
	Professional	100	19.4
	Diploma	29	5.6
Monthly Income	Less than Rs 30,000	82	15.9
	Rs.30,000 – Rs.50,000	134	26.0
	Rs.50,000 – Rs.80,000	95	18.4
	Rs.80,000 – Rs.1,00,000	86	16.7
	Above Rs.1,00,000	119	23.1

The findings indicate that 54.3% of participants are female, whereas 45.7% are male. The predominant demographic of respondents consists of young adults, who are typically engaged social media users and early adopters of emerging technologies such as electric vehicles and trends influenced by social media personalities. A significant proportion of respondents, 47.6%, have completed post-graduation, while 39.8% hold graduate degrees. A limited percentage has attained education up to the school level, whereas 6.7% falls under the 'Others' category. The distribution of marital status indicates that 66.1% of individuals are unmarried, whereas 33.9% are married. This suggests that the respondent pool predominantly consists of younger, technologically proficient individuals who exhibit higher activity levels on social media platforms. The respondents exhibit a diverse occupational background, with 40.9% employed in salaried positions and 39% identified as students. A smaller proportion consists of self-employed individuals or business owners at 8.3%, while homemakers and others represent 4.7% and 7.1%, respectively. The annual income distribution among respondents is varied, with 35.8% indicating an income of less than ₹5 lakhs and 35% reporting no income. There is a 14.2% decrease in the income bracket of ₹5–10 lakh, while 15% of individuals earn ₹10 lakh or more annually. The data indicate the presence of higher-income individuals, contributing to a varied economic profile for the study.

This section examines the impact of influencer marketing variables on purchase intention. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the influence of the independent variables:

Credibility of Influencer, Engagement Metrics, Relevance, Content Style, and Reach: on the dependent variable, Purchase Intention. Table II summarises the results from the regression analysis.

$H_0$1: There is no significant impact of Influencer marketing on Purchase Intention

Table-II

Impact of Influencer marketing on Purchase Intention

Independent Variables	R^2	Beta	F-statistics	t- value
(Constant)	0.481	1.096	**45.988** (p=.000)**	7.005**
Credibility of Influencer		0.052		1.124
Engagement metrics	**Adjusted R^2**	0.169		3.488**
Relevance		0.124		2.292*
Content style	0.471	0.071		1.518
Reach		0.274		6.076**

** Significant at 1% level

The F-statistic value of 45.988 is significant at the 1% level (p = .000), indicating that the overall regression model is statistically significant. The null hypothesis ($H_0$1) is rejected, indicating that Influencer marketing variables significantly affect Purchase Intention. The R^2 value of 0.481 indicates that 48.1% of the variance in Purchase Intention is accounted for by the independent variables. Of the five independent variables, Reach (β = 0.274, p = .000) exhibits the most substantial positive and statistically significant impact on Purchase Intention. Engagement Metrics (β = 0.169, p = .001) and Relevance (β = 0.124, p = .023) demonstrate a statistically significant impact. Credibility of Influencer (β = 0.052, p = .262) and Content Style (β = 0.071, p = .130) are not statistically significant, indicating a minimal direct effect on consumers' purchase decisions. The findings demonstrate that Reach, Engagement Metrics, and Relevance have a significant impact on consumers' Purchase Intention. Reach exerts the most significant influence, underscoring the critical role of an influencer's visibility and audience size. In contrast, the credibility of the influencer and the style of the content do not exhibit a statistically significant impact on purchase intention within this context.

Influence of demographic variables on Influencer Marketing

This section explores the influence of demographic variables (such as gender, age, education, marital status, occupation, and income) on influencer marketing, specifically how these factors affect the consumer's response to influencer promotions.

$H_0$2: There is no significant influence of demographic variables on Influencer marketing.

Table-III

Influence of demographic variables on Influencer Marketing

	Classification	Mean	S D	F-value
Gender	Male	3.06	.705	**1.149 (p=.285)**
	Female	3.15	.623	
Age Group (in years)	Below 20 years	3.32	.516	**3.312* (p=.028)**
	21-30 years	3.12	.657	
	31-40 years	3.19	.654	
	41-50 years	2.83	.701	

	50 years and above	3.26	.646	
Education	Up to School level	3.23	.569	**0.400 (p=.753)**
	Graduation	3.07	.570	
	Post- Graduation	3.12	.728	
	Others	3.18	.777	
Marital status	Married	3.03	.719	**2.107 (p=.148)**
	Unmarried	3.15	.628	
Occupation	Student	3.24	.683	**3.514* (p=.016)**
	Business/Self-employed	2.80	.771	
	Salaried	3.08	.611	
	Home maker	3.00	.728	
	Others	3.01	.537	
Annual income (in rupees)	Nil	3.20	.675	**1.717 (p=.164)**
	Less than 5 lakhs	3.13	.546	
	5 lakhs to10 lakhs	2.98	.769	
	10 lakhs or above	2.96	.753	

* Significant at 5% level

From Table-III, it is observed that, gender reveals no significant difference in responses to influencer marketing (F = 1.149, p = 0.285), suggesting that male and female respondents exhibit comparable attitudes towards this marketing strategy. The age group under 20 years exhibits a greater response to influencer marketing (Mean = 3.32), with statistical significance (F = 3.312, p = 0.058). This indicates that younger individuals may be more susceptible to the influence of social media influencers, while those aged 41–50 show less influence from the same source. No significant difference in response based on education level (F = 0.400, p = 0.753) suggests that educational background does not influence individual engagement with influencer marketing. Marital status does not significantly influence responses to influencer marketing (F = 2.107, p = 0.148). Students (mean = 3.24) demonstrated a more favourable response to influencer marketing than individuals in other occupations, with the result being significant (F = 3.514, p = 0.058). However, individuals who are self-employed or engaged in business exhibit reduced influence. Income levels do not significantly influence responses to influencer marketing (F = 1.717, p = 0.164), suggesting that income is not a major factor in individuals' reactions to influencer promotions.

CONCLUSION

Influencer marketing has emerged as a crucial component in contemporary marketing, significantly affecting consumers' perceptions and buying behaviours (Jagtap, 2024). This article evaluates and researches the impact of influencer characteristics—such as credibility, attractiveness, engagement, and content relevancy—on customer persuasion and purchasing decisions (Ao et al., 2023). Social media platforms have increased the visibility of influencers and altered brand interactions with their target audiences (Chu, 2024). Despite its recognised potential, challenges, including authenticity, market saturation, and return on investment evaluation, remain critical issues for marketers (Masuda et al., 2022).

The findings demonstrate that reach, engagement metrics, and relevance have a significant impact on consumers' purchase intention (Zhao et al., 2024). Among these factors, reach exerts the most significant influence, demonstrating the importance of an influencer's visibility and audience size (Ao et al., 2023). In contrast, the credibility of the influencer and content style do not exert a statistically significant influence on purchase intention within this context (Zhao et al., 2024). Furthermore, age and occupation significantly impact influencer marketing, with younger respondents, particularly students, showing greater susceptibility to its effects (Sudha & Sheena, 2017).

To improve influencer marketing outcomes, organisations should carefully select influencers whose values align with their brand identities and who can genuinely connect with their audiences (Jagtap, 2024). Future research and practice should focus on improving campaign strategies by considering platform dynamics, product categories, and evolving customer expectations (Chu, 2024). Strategically implemented influencer marketing can serve as a potent tool for improving customer engagement and boosting purchase intention (Ao et al., 2023).

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