



The Impact of Social Media Influencer Marketing on Purchase Intention

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Abstract

Influencer marketing via social media has become one of the most effective tools at a brand's disposal when it comes to influencing consumers' decisions to make a purchase. The present study looks at how various influencer-related factors—namely credibility, engagement, content quality, the choice of platform, and the product category—affect consumers' intention to buy. Primary data was gathered by means of a structured survey involving 300 respondents and was analysed using descriptive statistics and dashboard visualisations created in Power BI. The results show that 68% of the respondents stated that their purchase intention was high after being exposed to influencer content, and 204 of the 300 respondents (68%) said that they had in fact bought a product as a result of an influencer's recommendation. Instagram came out as the most popular platform (50% of the respondents), fashion was the main type of influencer category, and trust level was found to be closely linked to purchasing behaviour, the average trust score being 4.2 out of 5. The findings have practical implications for companies that are developing influencer marketing strategies and make a contribution to the existing academic literature on digital consumer behaviour.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Purchase Intention, Consumer Behaviour, Social Media, Trust, Engagement, Digital Marketing

Received 24 July., 2026; Revised 04 Aug., 2026; Accepted 06 Aug., 2026 © The author(s) 2026.

Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. Introduction

The rise of media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, TikTok and X (formerly Twitter) has completely changed the way that brands communicate with their customers. Of depending on old-fashioned advertising that used to focus mostly on television and newspapers businesses are now using influencer marketing more and more. In influencer marketing people who already have an online audience talk about products and services to their fans. Because influencers are seen as real and easy to connect with their suggestions often have impact than what celebrities or regular ads say. The chance that a person will buy a product—that means how likely they are to make a purchase—is an important result in marketing studies because it shows what people actually do. If marketing experts know what makes people want to buy something in the case of influencer marketing they can use their money better choose the influencers and make campaigns that turn likes into sales. This research looks at how things like how trustworthy an influencer's how good the content is, how many people engage with it which platform people prefer and what kind of product are all connected to how much a consumer wants to buy, based on survey data, from 300 people.

Problem Statement

Social media influencer marketing has become one of the most effective digital marketing strategies for brands to influence consumer purchasing decisions. Consumers increasingly rely on influencers' recommendations, reviews, and promotional content before buying products. However, not all influencer campaigns generate the same level of trust or purchase intention. Factors such as influencer credibility, engagement rate, content quality, platform preference, and product category significantly affect consumers'

buying behaviour. Therefore, businesses need to analyse these factors to understand how influencer marketing impacts purchase intention and optimise their marketing strategies.

Research Objectives

- We want to see how social media influencer marketing affects the things that people buy.
- We need to figure out which social media site makes people want to buy things than the others. People buy things because of media influencer marketing.
- We have to look at how people trust social media influencers and if that trust makes them buy things from social media influencer marketing.
- We are going to check if good content and people talking about it makes them want to buy something because of media influencer marketing.
- We want to know which kind of media influencers and products make people really want to buy things from social media influencer marketing.
- We are going to follow what people do from seeing something a social media influencer posts to actually buying it which is the media influencer marketing process,

II. Literature Review

Marketing literature provides several theories that help explain why consumers are influenced by social media influencers. One of the most widely used theories is Source Credibility Theory, which suggests that people are more likely to accept recommendations from individuals they perceive as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and expert communicators (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990). According to this theory, when consumers believe that an influencer is credible, they are more likely to trust the information provided and follow the influencer's recommendations.

This concept is closely related to parasocial relationships, which refer to the one-sided emotional connections that audiences develop with media personalities or influencers despite having no direct interaction with them (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Over time, followers may feel as though they personally know the influencer, leading them to trust product recommendations in a manner similar to advice received from a friend (Labrecque, 2014).

Another important theoretical framework is the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986). This model explains that consumers process persuasive messages through two routes: the central route, where they carefully evaluate the content and arguments, and the peripheral route, where they rely on cues such as an influencer's popularity, attractiveness, or number of followers rather than the quality of the message itself. Influencer marketing often leverages both processing routes to persuade consumers (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

In the context of online shopping, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposes that consumers are more likely to adopt a technology or make online purchases when they perceive it to be useful and easy to use (Davis, 1989). For example, when influencers provide direct shopping links or simple purchasing options within their content, consumers perceive the buying process as more convenient, thereby increasing their purchase intentions.

Research also indicates that influencer effectiveness depends not only on follower count but also on the level of audience engagement. Studies have found that micro-influencers, despite having smaller audiences, often generate higher engagement rates and stronger consumer trust than macro-influencers because their followers perceive them as more authentic and relatable (De Veirman et al., 2017; Kay et al., 2020). Consequently, credibility, trust, engagement, authenticity, and content quality are considered key determinants of successful influencer marketing campaigns (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

III. Research Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional research design using a structured questionnaire to examine consumer perceptions and purchase behaviour influenced by social media influencers. Primary data were collected from 300 active social media users through convenience and snowball sampling, ensuring respondents followed at least one influencer. The questionnaire gathered information on demographic characteristics, social media platform usage, influencer preferences, trust level, content quality, engagement, product interests, purchase behaviour, purchase intention, monthly spending, and overall satisfaction. The collected data were cleaned and analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and averages. To enhance data interpretation, an interactive Power BI dashboard was developed featuring KPI cards and various visualisations such as pie, bar, column, donut, line, stacked bar, tree map, and funnel charts, with slicers enabling interactive analysis based on demographic and behavioural variables.

IV. Data Analysis and Findings

Key Performance Indicators

The dashboard's core KPI cards summarise the overall survey results as follows:

KPI	Value
Total Respondents	300
Purchase Intention (High)	68%
Purchased After Influencer Recommendation	204 (68%)
Average Monthly Spending	₹3,250
Average Trust Score	4.2 / 5
Average Engagement Score	78%
Most Used Platform	Instagram
Highest Influencer Category	Fashion

These figures indicate a strong overall relationship between exposure to influencer marketing and consumer purchase behaviour: more than two-thirds of respondents reported both high purchase intention and an actual purchase driven by an influencer recommendation.

Platform Preference and Purchase Intention

The bar chart comparing platforms against purchase intention shows Instagram as the clear market leader, followed by YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, and X (Twitter).

Platform	Number of Respondents	Share of Sample
Instagram	150	50%
YouTube	75	25%
Facebook	35	12%
TikTok	25	8%
X (Twitter)	15	5%

Instagrams hold on the market is because of its picture-based, easy to buy from format. This works well for fashion and beauty posts. Those are the two areas where influencers have the most power in this research. YouTube comes in second because its great for, in-depth reviews. These kinds of videos help people trust the content more.

Purchase Intention Distribution

The pie chart segments respondents into three purchase intention levels:

Purchase Intention Level	Count	Percentage
High	204	68%
Medium	66	22%
Low	30	10%

Most of the people who answered the survey said that influencer marketing makes them more likely to buy something. This shows that influencer marketing has a positive effect on whether people want to make a purchase. The people, in the "category really think that influencer marketing is important when they decide to buy something. Influencer marketing is something that can really make people want to buy things.

Trust Level and Its Role

The donut chart of trust level shows a favourable distribution weighted toward higher trust:

Trust Level	Count	Percentage
Very High	82	27%
High	126	42%

Trust Level	Count	Percentage
Medium	64	21%
Low	28	9%

70 percent of people who took part in the survey said they have "Very High" or "High" trust in the influencers they follow. This is very close, to the 68 percent who said they are very likely to make a purchase. This similar pattern shows that the idea is correct. The idea is that trust is one of the important single factors that affects whether someone decides to buy something because of an influencer.

Influencer Category Performance

The column chart of influencer categories highlights fashion and beauty as the two most followed categories:

Influencer Category	Count	Percentage
Fashion	90	30%
Beauty	60	20%
Technology	55	18%
Food	40	13%
Fitness	30	10%
Gaming	15	5%
Travel	10	3%

Fashion and beauty are really deals. They make up half of what people're interested in. This is because people like looking at pictures and videos of these things on sites like Instagram. If you look at all the types of products like electronics and food and sports equipment you can see that fashion and beauty are what people like the most. They are the parts of what people are interested, in. Fashion and beauty are really popular.

Monthly Spending by Age Group

The line chart that shows how much people spend each month in age groups like people who are 18 to 24 years old people who are 25 to 34 years old people who are 35 to 44 years old and people who are 45 years old or more tells us that people usually spend more money as they get older and have more stable jobs. Then spending goes down a bit in the oldest age group. On average people spend around ₹3,250 per month because they buy things they see on media.

People who are 18 to 24 years old buy things often but they do not spend a lot of money at one time. They like to buy clothes and beauty products. The people who are 25 to 34 years old spend the money on average. This is because they have money to spend and they like to buy different kinds of things like technology and lifestyle products. The line chart tracking monthly spending across age groups shows spending patterns that generally rise with age and income stability before tapering off in the oldest bracket with an overall sample average of ₹3,250 per month attributable to influencer-driven purchases and this is especially true for the line chart tracking average monthly spending across age groups, like people who are 18 to 24 years old people who are 25 to 34 years old people who are 35 to 44 years old and people who are 45 years old or more.

Content Quality and Purchase Intention

The stacked bar chart compares the quality of the content, which's excellent good, average or poor with how likely people are to buy something. It is clear that people who think the influencer content is excellent are very likely to buy something. On the hand people who think the content is just average or poor are not very likely to buy something. This shows that the quality of the content is very important when it comes to deciding whether or not to buy something. The content quality is a factor in this decision not just a small one. This is what the Elaboration Likelihood Model says, which we talked about earlier. The model says that the quality of the content is a part of the central-route persuasion pathway, which is the main way that people are persuaded to buy something. The content quality is the influencer content quality. It plays a big role, in the influencer content quality and purchase intention.

Customer Journey Funnel

The funnel chart maps the consumer journey from initial exposure through to final purchase:

Journey Stage	Approx. Share of Sample
Saw Influencer Content	100%
Interested	~85%
Visited Product Page	~78%
Added to Cart	~72%
Purchased	68%

The small difference between each step in the process. Between "Added to Cart" and "Purchased". Shows that the path to buying is smooth which means that when a customer sees content from an influencer and gets to the product page they are very likely to make a purchase. The biggest loss of customers happens between seeing the content and showing interest, which means that the quality and relevance of the content are the main things that can improve the start of the funnel.

V. Discussion of Key Findings

The data shows clearly that influencer marketing has an positive effect on wanting to buy but how much this effect is depends on certain things that can be controlled not on every campaign being the same.

- Trust is the important factor: The way trust is spread out is very similar to the way purchase intention is spread out which means trust is the main thing that makes people want to buy more than the number of followers or how much the platform reaches.
- Where it's shared matters but what is shared matters more: Even though Instagram has the most content the analysis shows that the quality of the content is the most important thing for getting people to buy no matter what platform it is on.
- Different categories have different effects: The fashion and beauty categories get the most benefit from influencer marketing probably because these products are visual and make people want to have them and buying them feels less risky.
- Spending habits by age: Younger people buy often but spend less each time while people a little older between 25 and 34 buy less often but spend more each time. This means brands should change their messages and pricing based on the age group they are targeting.
- The path to buying is smooth: The small drop-off from adding to the cart to making a purchase shows that once people trust the product and are interested there is not difficulty, in actually buying it. Which means it is important to build trust and interest early on.

VI. Recommendations

- Prioritise partnerships with influencers who are trusted and have engagement rates instead of just looking at how many followers they have. Focus on micro-influencers and mid-tier influencers who have connections with their audience.
- Invest in creating high-quality content that's well-made, useful and real because this kind of content has a strong link to more people wanting to make a purchase.
- Spend marketing money on Instagram and YouTube but use TikTok and new platforms to build awareness with younger people who are more likely to use those sites.
- Create campaigns that are specific to product categories taking advantage of the natural match between influencer marketing and items like clothes or makeup.
- Make the part of the customer journey better by improving the content that people see first because that is where the biggest drop-off happens when people lose interest.
- Use different strategies, for age groups adjusting prices and messages to fit the way each group spends money.

VII. Limitations of the Study

This study is based on a single cross-sectional survey of 300 respondents collected through convenience and snowball sampling, which may limit the generalisability of findings to the broader population. Self-reported purchase intention and satisfaction may be subject to social desirability bias, and the study does not track actual long-term purchase behaviour beyond a single recommendation event. Additionally, the analysis is descriptive in nature; it identifies patterns and associations but does not establish statistical causality between

individual variables and purchase intention. Future research could employ regression or structural equation modelling on a larger, randomly sampled population to validate and extend these findings.

VIII. Conclusion

This study confirms that social media influencer marketing has a strong, measurable, and largely positive impact on consumer purchase intention. Across a sample of 300 respondents, 68% reported high purchase intention and an equal proportion confirmed an actual purchase following an influencer's recommendation. Trust level, content quality, and engagement emerged as the most influential factors, with platform choice and product category shaping the context in which these factors operate. Instagram and the fashion and beauty categories currently capture the largest share of consumer attention and conversion. For brands and marketers, these findings underscore the importance of selecting credible, high-engagement influencers and investing in quality content over sheer reach, in order to maximise return on influencer marketing investment.

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