

“The Influence of Social Media Content Creators on Consumer Buying Behaviour in India”

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Abstract

India’s rapid shift towards digital ecosystems has fundamentally transformed how consumers evaluate information, interact with brands, and make purchasing decisions. Social media content creators have emerged as influential intermediaries capable of shaping consumer perceptions through authenticity, emotional engagement, and visual storytelling. This study investigates the impact of influencers on consumer buying behaviour across platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and short-video applications. Using a qualitative research design supported by secondary data from academic literature, digital marketing reports, and industry surveys, the study explores psychological triggers, cultural patterns, and platform-specific dynamics that underpin influencer-driven marketing. Findings indicate that trust, niche expertise, and relatable content significantly influence purchase intention, particularly among Indian millennials and Gen Z audiences. The paper also highlights the growing role of women as both creators and informed digital consumers. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of ethical guidelines, transparency in sponsorships, and culturally sensitive communication strategies for sustaining trust in India’s evolving influencer ecosystem.

Keywords: Social media influencers, consumer behaviour, digital marketing, parasocial relationships, India

1. Introduction

Digital transformation in India, driven by affordable smartphones and widespread internet access, has altered how consumers engage with brands and make purchase decisions. Traditional advertising models are increasingly complemented—and often overshadowed—by content created by social media influencers. These creators produce tailored content across genres such as beauty, technology, education, fitness, entertainment, and lifestyle, making them relatable and persuasive voices.

Indian consumers now place substantial value on authentic, experience-based communication instead of polished, one-directional advertisements. Influencers build personal narratives, demonstrate product usage, and create interactive content that resonates with their audiences. This paper examines the mechanisms through which influencers shape buying behaviour and evaluates their growing significance in India’s digital marketplace.

2. Literature Review

Influencer effectiveness can be explained using multiple theoretical perspectives:

2.1 Source Credibility Theory

Consumers judge persuasive messages based on the influencer's trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise. When creators demonstrate domain-specific knowledge, their recommendations become more persuasive.

2.2 Social Influence Theory

Individuals are likely to adopt behaviours promoted by people they admire or relate to. Influencers act as role models, shaping lifestyle aspirations and purchasing preferences.

2.3 Parasocial Interaction Theory

Many followers form one-sided emotional relationships with influencers. These relationships simulate friendship, increasing trust and compliance with recommendations.

2.4 Uses and Gratifications Theory

Audiences seek content that satisfies their needs for entertainment, learning, social identity, and belonging. Influencers meet these needs through personalized storytelling, visual demonstrations, and consistent engagement.

Indian studies emphasize the importance of regional languages, culturally contextual communication, and the rising influence of women as both consumers and content creators.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse how social media content creators influence consumer buying behaviour in India.
2. To identify key determinants such as credibility, emotional engagement, and content quality.
3. To examine platform-specific behavioural trends among Indian consumers.
4. To explore the role and perspective of women in India's influencer ecosystem.
5. To discuss ethical concerns and challenges in influencer-driven marketing.

4. Research Methodology

This study follows a qualitative descriptive approach based on secondary data sources such as:

Peer-reviewed academic journals

Reports by Deloitte, McKinsey, IAMAI, KPMG, and RedSeer

Case studies on Indian influencer marketing

Social media analytics insights

Data was analysed thematically to identify patterns related to consumer psychology, digital interactions, and market trends.

5. Discussion and Analysis

5.1 Rise of Influencer Culture in India

India's growing digital population increasingly values relatable voices who offer real experiences rather than theoretical product descriptions. Influencers provide practical demonstrations, storytelling, and peer-like interactions that traditional advertising often fails to offer.

5.2 Key Determinants of Influencer Impact

a. Credibility and Expertise

Consumers prefer influencers who demonstrate genuine knowledge, consistency, and product awareness. Expertise enhances trust and directly affects purchasing decisions.

b. Parasocial Relationships

Followers often perceive influencers as friends or advisors. This emotional closeness strengthens message acceptance.

c. Content Quality and Storytelling

Narrative-driven videos, honest reviews, humour, tutorials, and aesthetic visuals enhance consumer engagement and product recall.

d. Social Proof

Metrics such as comments, likes, and shares act as cues of popularity and reliability, influencing consumer confidence.

e. Community Influence

Influencers build communities that create trends, encourage interaction, and enhance the credibility of endorsements.

5.3 Platform-Specific Influence

Instagram: Drives impulse buying in fashion, beauty, lifestyle, and wellness categories.

YouTube: Influences high-involvement purchases through detailed reviews and demonstrations.

Facebook: Appeals to regional and older demographics, supporting local businesses.

Short-video platforms: Quick, engaging videos encourage instant purchases.

6. Theoretical Framework

The study adopts an integrated framework combining:

6.1 Social Influence and Credibility Model

Influence occurs through three pathways:

Cognitive (expertise, information quality)

Affective (emotional connection, relatability)

Normative (peer approval, community norms)

6.2 Uses and Gratifications Approach

Consumers rely on influencers to fulfill:

Entertainment needs

Information needs

Identity building

Social belonging

Trend awareness

When these needs are satisfied, purchase intention increases.

7. Women's Perspective in the Influencer Ecosystem

7.1 Women as Digital Consumers

Women increasingly use influencer content for:

Beauty and self-care decisions

Home and family product choices

Parenting and health-related advice

Professional growth and lifestyle improvement

They value practical insights, transparency, and relatable communication.

7.2 Women as Content Creators

Women creators hold a prominent role in India's digital space. Their content often emphasizes:

Work-life balance

Well-being

Family care

Financial independence

Social empowerment

This resonates strongly with female audiences.

7.3 Trust Dynamics

Women respond more favourably to influencers who:

Share authentic experiences

Demonstrate responsibility

Avoid exaggerated promotions

Foster inclusive online communities

8. Emerging Trends and Future Directions

8.1 AI and Virtual Influencers

Artificially generated influencers are gaining popularity for their consistency and novelty, but skepticism about authenticity persists.

8.2 Vernacular and Regional Influencers

Creators using Indian regional languages appeal strongly to Tier-II and Tier-III audiences.

8.3 Live Commerce

Live product demonstrations and Q&A sessions increase engagement and conversions.

8.4 Ethical and Regulatory Needs

Stricter disclosure norms for paid promotions and accountability for misleading endorsements are essential to maintain credibility.

9. Findings

Social media influencers significantly shape consumer purchasing decisions in India. Authenticity and relatability are more persuasive than traditional celebrity advertising. Micro-influencers often outperform larger influencers due to higher trust and closeness. High-quality storytelling enhances product recall and emotional engagement. Women play a major role as both influencers and consumers in shaping digital buying patterns. Transparency and ethical conduct are crucial for long-term influencer reliability.

10. Conclusion

Social media content creators have become central actors in India's digital economy. Their ability to provide honest, engaging, and culturally relevant content has transformed how consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products. The study concludes that trust, authenticity, and strong emotional connections are the foundations of effective influencer marketing. As the landscape continues to evolve, ethical transparency, culturally aligned strategies, and regulatory compliance will shape the future success of influencer-driven commerce in India.

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