

# THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON CONSUMER PURCHASING DECISIONS.

**Author: Madhvendra Singh Gaur**

Affiliation: MBA Scholar

School of Business

Galgotias University, Greater Noida, India

**Abstract:** In the evolving digital era, social media influencers (SMIs) have become influential figures in shaping consumer behavior and purchasing decisions. This study explores how influencers on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat impact the buying behavior of young Indian consumers, particularly Millennials and Gen Z. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire administered both online and offline among 50 respondents from Galgotias University and other Indian social media users.

The research aimed to understand consumer engagement with influencers, the role of trust and credibility, and the extent to which influencer recommendations convert into purchases. Results show that 100% of respondents follow at least one influencer, with Instagram emerging as the most popular platform. About 74% engage with influencer content at least a few times per week, and a striking 96% have purchased a product based on influencer suggestions. The most valued traits in influencers were relatability (34%) and niche expertise (32%). Product categories most influenced include technology, beauty, and fashion.

The findings underscore the growing significance of influencer marketing in brand strategies. The study also discusses sampling limitations and recommends further research with larger and more diverse samples. Overall, this paper contributes valuable insights into the effectiveness of influencer marketing in the Indian digital landscape.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, influencer marketing has become a powerful tool in the digital marketing space. Social media influencers (SMIs), known for their niche expertise and relatable content, now play a key role in shaping consumer choices. India's rising digital population—over 467 million users—has fueled this trend, especially among Millennials and Gen Z. This study investigates how influencers impact purchasing decisions, focusing on trust, credibility, and content type. The research aims to understand consumer engagement, trust factors, and how influencer recommendations lead to purchases. It offers practical insights for marketers and adds to academic literature on digital consumer behavior in the Indian context.

## 2. Literature Review

Research shows that social media influencer (SMI) credibility—based on expertise and authenticity—strongly affects consumer trust and purchase intent (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Studies also highlight the role of relatability, lifestyle appeal (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017), and follower count (De Veirman et al., 2017). Lim et al. (2020) stress attitudes toward influencers as a key factor, while a 2023 meta-analysis confirms expertise-driven trust. However, few studies focus on Indian consumers—this study addresses that critical gap.

## 3. Methodology

This research employed a **descriptive and quantitative design** to analyze how social media influencers affect consumer purchasing decisions among Indian youth. The study is grounded in primary data collection supported by existing literature for contextual alignment. It aims to quantify perceptions, trust factors, and behavioral responses to influencer content.

### 3.1 Data Collection

**Primary:** Structured questionnaire using Google Forms (self-administered online survey).

**Secondary:** Academic journals, published reports, digital marketing articles on influencer behavior.

### 3.2 Sample Size

**Target:** 60 young Indian consumers (students and professionals aged 18–30)

**Responses received:** 50 valid responses

**Method:** Non-probability convenience sampling (via Galgotias University network, WhatsApp, and email)

### 3.3 Tools Used

Google Forms (for survey distribution and collection)

Microsoft Excel and Google Sheets (for tabulation, charts, and basic descriptive statistics)

### 3.4 Focus Areas

Social media usage behavior.

Trust and credibility factors of influencers.

Purchase intent based on influencer content.

Platform-wise consumer engagement (Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat).

## 4. Results and Discussion

The study reveals that young Indian consumers trust influencers primarily for their relatability and niche expertise. Instagram is the most used platform, and influencer recommendations strongly drive purchases in tech, fashion, and beauty. Trust often transfers from influencer to brand, showing influencer marketing's growing impact and acceptance.

### 4.1 Most used platforms to follow influencers.

Which social media platform do you use most frequently to follow influencers?

50 responses

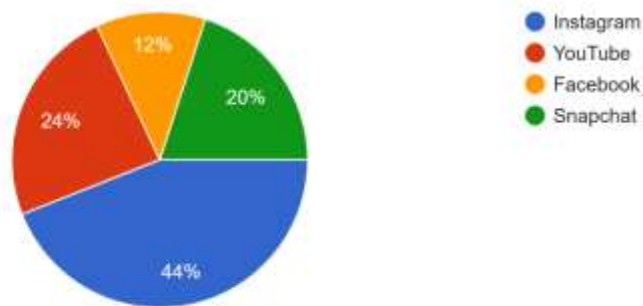


Fig 4.1

Instagram (44%) was the top platform for following influencers, followed by YouTube (24%), Snapchat (20%), and Facebook (12%). This shows a clear preference for visual and short-form content. It aligns with current trends in influencer marketing spend.

### 4.2 Most followed influencers type

What type of influencers do you usually follow?

50 responses

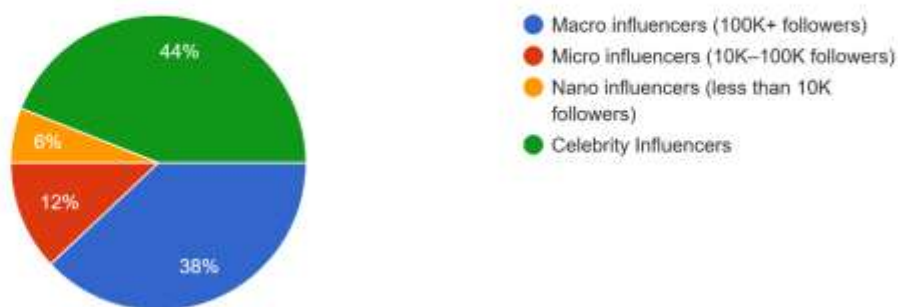


Fig 4.2

Celebrity (44%) and macro influencers (38%) dominate followers, reflecting a preference for mainstream figures. Micro influencers attract 12%, showing some audience value niche appeal and deeper engagement.

### 4.3 Important traits for trust

How important are the following influencer traits in gaining your trust?

50 responses

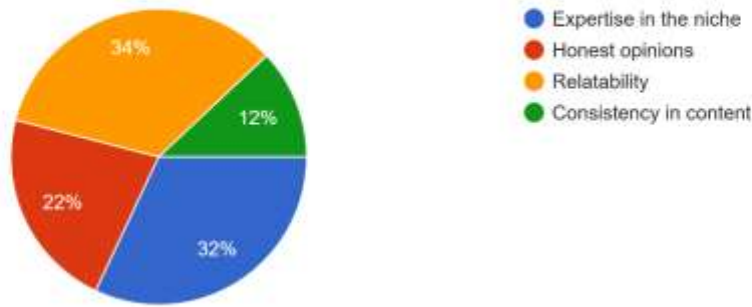


Fig 4.3

Respondents rated relatability (34%), expertise in the niche (32%), and honest opinions (22%) as the most important traits in earning their trust. This demonstrates that while fame attracts attention, trust is built through authenticity and knowledge.

### 4.4 Reason for trusting influencers

What is the biggest reason you trust an influencer's recommendation?

50 responses

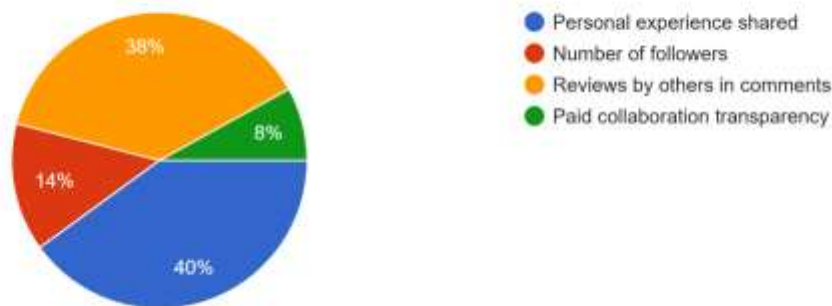


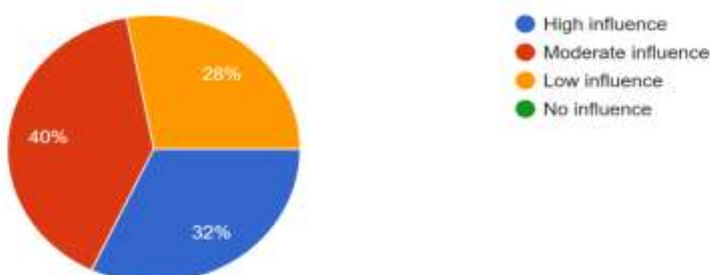
Fig 4.4

Consumers trust influencer recommendations primarily due to personal experience shared (40%) and paid collaboration transparency (38%). In contrast, the number of followers (14%) and reviews by others (8%) are significantly less impactful. This indicates a strong preference for authenticity and honesty in influencer marketing.

### 4.5 Degree of influence

In your opinion, how much influence do social media influencers have on your purchasing decisions?

50 responses



Most respondents (72%) admit to moderate or high influence, reinforcing the persuasive power of influencers. Even the 28% with low influence aren't immune; they may still be subconsciously affected or influenced in specific categories (e.g., fashion but not tech).

This research shows that social media influencers strongly impact buying decisions, especially among 18–30-year-olds. Instagram and YouTube lead in user engagement. Most respondents trust influencers enough to make purchases based on their recommendations.

## 5. Conclusion

This research highlights the powerful role of social media influencers in shaping consumer purchasing behavior, particularly among 18–30-year-olds. Platforms like Instagram and YouTube dominate engagement, with many users trusting influencers enough to make purchases based on their recommendations. Product categories like tech, beauty, and fashion were most influenced, showing a strong preference for visually appealing, trend-driven items.

A key insight is that influence goes beyond follower count. Consumers value relatability, niche expertise, and authenticity more than celebrity status. This shift indicates growing trust in influencers who create honest, connection-based content rather than just promotional posts. As a result, influencer marketing has moved from a supportive tactic to a central strategy in digital marketing.

While influencer content drives both awareness and purchase decisions, consumers still expect brand credibility and transparency. To sustain effectiveness, brands must focus on long-term partnerships with genuine creators and deliver value-driven storytelling in their campaigns.

## 6. Recommendations

### 6.1 For Managers

Daily engagement shows strong influencer content impact.  
Instagram, YouTube preferred for visual campaigns.  
Trust depends on relatability, not popularity.  
Authenticity drives purchases more than followers.

### 6.2 For Future Researchers

Explore evolving trust factors in influencer marketing.  
Study platform-specific engagement and content trends.  
Compare micro vs. macro influencer effectiveness.  
Examine long-term brand-influencer partnerships outcomes.  
Analyze ROI using influencer tracking tools.

## REFERENCES

- [1] 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. [🔗 \(Link\)](#)
- [2] 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. [🔗 \(Link\)](#)
- [3] Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 68, 1–7. [🔗 \(Link\)](#)
- [4] Sudha, M., & Sheena, K. (2017). Impact of influencers in consumer decision process: The fashion industry. *SCMS Journal of Indian Management*, 14(3), 14–30. [🔗 \(Link\)](#)