

The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchasing Decisions

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Abstract This study investigates how social media influencers (SMIs) shape consumer purchasing decisions, especially among youth aged 18-30. With platforms like Instagram and YouTube dominating, the research highlights influencer traits such as relatability, niche expertise, and honest opinions as crucial for trust-building. Using a structured questionnaire and descriptive research design, the study collected data from 50 respondents. Findings reveal that 96% made purchases based on influencer recommendations, mostly in tech, beauty, and fashion sectors. The research concludes with strategic insights for brands to harness influencer marketing effectively.

Keywords: Social Media Influencers, Consumer Behavior, Digital Marketing, Purchase Decisions, Instagram, YouTube, Trust

1. Introduction With the rise of digital media, traditional advertising has shifted towards influencer marketing. Consumers today turn to relatable personalities on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok for product guidance. Influencers, particularly micro and nano, are seen as more trustworthy than traditional ads. Gen Z and Millennials respond positively to personalized, story-driven content that integrates seamlessly into their daily digital experience.

2. Objectives - To evaluate how influencer traits (trustworthiness, expertise, relatability) influence consumer trust. - To analyze the effectiveness of platforms (Instagram, YouTube, TikTok) in shaping buying behavior. - To examine demographic variation in responses to influencer marketing.

3. Research Methodology A descriptive design supported by an online and offline survey (Google Forms + campus outreach) was used. The sample size was 50, with respondents aged 18-30. A structured questionnaire captured data on influencer interaction, trust metrics, platform usage, and purchasing behavior. Convenience sampling was employed.

4. Data Analysis and Findings - **Influencer Reach:** 100% of respondents follow influencers. - **Platform Preference:** Instagram (44%) and YouTube (24%) lead. - **Engagement Frequency:** 74% engage daily or a few times weekly. - **Purchase Impact:** 96% have purchased based on influencer content. - **Key Influencer Traits:** Relatability (34%), expertise (32%), and honesty (22%) drive trust. - **Categories Influenced:** Tech (30%), Beauty (22%), Fashion (20%). - **Trust Transfer:** Many rely on influencer credibility rather than researching brands independently.

5. Discussion Influencers act as trust agents, transferring their credibility to the products they promote. Authenticity outweighs follower count. Influencer marketing's effectiveness is rooted in storytelling and community validation. While there is some skepticism (16% oppose influencer promotions), the overall sentiment is positive.

6. Managerial Implications - Strategic Partnerships: Focus on micro/nano influencers. - **Platform Focus:** Prioritize Instagram and YouTube. - **Content Strategy:** Emphasize storytelling, transparency, and user-generated content. - **Consumer Education:** Supplement influencer promotions with informative content.

7. Limitations - Sample limited to youth (18–30) and students from one university. - Convenience sampling may limit generalizability. - Self-reported data risks response bias.

8. Conclusion Influencer marketing is no longer optional for brands targeting digitally active consumers. The study confirms influencers' role in shaping perceptions, generating trust, and triggering purchases. Brands must collaborate with authentic, value-aligned influencers and develop long-term engagement strategies to remain competitive.

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Author Declaration I, Aadika Keshari, declare this is my original research and has not been submitted elsewhere.