



The rise of influencer marketing: impact on consumer trust and purchase decisions

Dr. Nital Manoj Kothari

Jai Hind College, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

Corresponding Author: Dr. Nital Manoj Kothari

Received 9 March 2026; Accepted 13 Apr 2026; Published 6 May 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64171/JSRD.5.S1.73-75>

Abstract

Influencer marketing has emerged as one of the most powerful digital marketing strategies in the contemporary business environment, fundamentally transforming how brands communicate with consumers. With the rapid growth of social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, individuals with substantial online followings commonly referred to as influencers have gained the ability to shape consumer perceptions and influence purchasing decisions.

This study examines the impact of influencer marketing on consumer trust and purchase behavior, with a specific focus on authenticity, relatability, and credibility. A mixed-method research design has been adopted, incorporating primary data collected from 100 respondents across different demographic segments. Statistical tools such as correlation analysis and chi-square tests have been used to validate the hypotheses.

The findings reveal a strong positive relationship between influencer credibility and consumer trust, which significantly influences purchase decisions. Micro-influencers, in particular, are found to be more effective due to their perceived authenticity and closer connection with audiences. However, concerns related to over-commercialization, misleading promotions, and lack of transparency remain critical challenges.

The study concludes that influencer marketing is a strategic tool for modern branding, provided it is implemented ethically and aligned with consumer expectations. The research contributes to the growing field of digital marketing by offering empirical insights into consumer behavior in the age of social media.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, Consumer behavior, Social media, Brand trust, Digital marketing, Purchase decision, Consumer psychology

1. Introduction

The digital revolution has significantly altered the landscape of marketing, giving rise to innovative strategies that prioritize engagement, personalization, and authenticity. Among these, influencer marketing has emerged as a dominant force, redefining how brands connect with their target audiences.

Influencer marketing involves collaborations between brands and individuals who have established credibility and a substantial following on social media platforms. These influencers create content that promotes products or services in a manner that appears organic and relatable, thereby influencing consumer perceptions and behavior.

Unlike traditional advertising, which often relies on direct persuasion, influencer marketing operates on the principles of trust and social proof. Consumers tend to view influencers as peers rather than advertisers, making their recommendations more credible and impactful. This shift reflects a broader change in consumer behavior, where individuals increasingly rely on digital content and peer reviews for decision-making.

The rise of influencer marketing can be attributed to several factors. The proliferation of smartphones and internet access has increased social media usage, creating a vast audience for digital content. Additionally, consumers have become more skeptical of traditional advertising, seeking authenticity and transparency in brand communication.

However, the rapid growth of influencer marketing has also raised important concerns. Issues such as fake followers, paid promotions without disclosure, and lack of authenticity have the potential to undermine consumer trust. Therefore, understanding the factors that influence the effectiveness of influencer marketing is essential for both researchers and practitioners.

This study aims to examine the impact of influencer marketing on consumer trust and purchase decisions, providing empirical evidence on its effectiveness and identifying key success factors.

2. Literature review

The concept of influencer marketing is rooted in the broader theory of social influence, which suggests that individuals are influenced by the opinions and behaviors of others, particularly those they perceive as credible or similar to themselves. With the advent of social media, this concept has gained new dimensions, as influencers have become key opinion leaders in digital spaces.

Research indicates that influencer marketing is highly effective in building brand awareness and engagement. Influencers create content that resonates with their audience, often incorporating storytelling and personal experiences. This

approach enhances emotional connection and increases the likelihood of consumer engagement.

A significant body of literature emphasizes the role of trust in influencer marketing. Trust is influenced by factors such as authenticity, expertise, and transparency. Influencers who maintain a consistent and genuine online presence are more likely to be trusted by their followers.

Another important aspect is the distinction between different types of influencers. Micro-influencers, who have smaller but highly engaged audiences, are often perceived as more authentic compared to celebrity influencers. Studies suggest that micro-influencers achieve higher engagement rates and are more effective in influencing niche markets.

However, the literature also highlights several challenges. Over-commercialization can lead to reduced credibility, as audiences may perceive content as overly promotional. Additionally, the lack of clear disclosure in sponsored content raises ethical concerns and can negatively impact consumer trust.

This study builds upon existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between influencer marketing, consumer trust, and purchase decisions.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Research design

The study adopts a mixed-method research design, combining quantitative survey analysis with qualitative insights to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

3.2 Data collection

Primary data

Data was collected from 100 respondents, including students, working professionals, and active social media users.

Secondary data

Academic journals, industry reports, and digital marketing studies.

3.3 Hypotheses development

H1: Influencer marketing positively affects consumer trust.

H2: Influencer marketing significantly influences purchase decisions.

H3: Authenticity of influencers enhances marketing effectiveness.

3.4 Analytical tools

- Percentage analysis
- Correlation analysis
- Chi-Square test

4. Data analysis and findings

4.1 Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	SD
Consumer trust	4.2	0.65
Purchase decision	4.1	0.70
Influencer credibility	4.3	0.60

4.2 Correlation analysis

Variables	Trust	Purchase
Trust	1	0.78
Purchase	0.78	1

The correlation value of 0.78 indicates a strong positive relationship between consumer trust and purchase decisions.

4.3 Chi-square test

Hypothesis	Value	p-value	Result
H1	21.2	0.000	Accepted
H2	18.4	0.001	Accepted
H3	16.7	0.002	Accepted

4.4 Analysis and interpretation

The extended findings provide deeper insights into consumer behavior. A significant proportion of respondents indicated that they are more likely to trust influencers who share personal experiences rather than scripted advertisements. This highlights the importance of authenticity in influencer marketing.

Micro-influencers were found to have a stronger impact on consumer trust compared to celebrity influencers. Their smaller audience size allows for more personalized interactions, which enhances credibility and engagement.

Content format also plays a crucial role in influencing consumer behavior. Video-based content, particularly short-form videos such as reels and stories, was found to be more engaging and effective than static posts. This is because videos provide a more immersive experience and allow influencers to demonstrate product usage.

However, the study also identifies several challenges. Approximately 35% of respondents expressed concerns about misleading promotions and lack of transparency. Paid partnerships that are not clearly disclosed can lead to distrust and negatively impact brand image.

Another important finding is the role of consistency in influencer behavior. Influencers who frequently switch between different brands or promote unrelated products tend to lose credibility. Consumers prefer influencers who maintain consistency in their content and align with specific niches.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the growing importance of influencer marketing as a strategic tool in digital marketing. The strong relationship between trust and purchase decisions indicates that influencer marketing is not merely a promotional activity but a relationship-driven approach.

Authenticity emerges as the most critical factor influencing the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Consumers are increasingly aware of marketing tactics and are more likely to engage with content that appears genuine and relatable. This underscores the need for brands to collaborate with influencers who align with their values and target audience.

The study also emphasizes the importance of ethical practices in influencer marketing. Transparency in sponsored content is

essential to maintain consumer trust. Regulatory guidelines and disclosure norms must be strictly followed to ensure accountability.

Furthermore, the rise of micro-influencers represents a significant shift in marketing strategies. Brands are moving away from celebrity endorsements toward more targeted and authentic collaborations. This approach not only enhances engagement but also improves return on investment.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

Influencer marketing has become a powerful tool in the modern marketing landscape, significantly impacting consumer trust and purchase decisions. The study provides empirical evidence that authenticity, credibility, and relatability are key drivers of success in influencer marketing.

6.2 Recommendations

- Focus on authentic and niche influencers
- Ensure transparency in sponsored content
- Build long-term collaborations
- Use data analytics to measure effectiveness
- Align influencer content with brand values.

Conflict of interest statement

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research.

References

1. Freberg K, Graham K, McGaughey K, Freberg L. Who are the social media influencers? *Public Relations Review*, 2011.
2. De Veirman M, Cauberghe V, Hudders L. Marketing through Instagram influencers. *International Journal of Advertising*, 2017.
3. Lou C, Yuan S. Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 2019.
4. Abidin C. Visibility labour: Engaging with influencers. *Media International Australia*, 2016.
5. Djafarova E, Rushworth C. Exploring credibility of influencers. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2017.
6. Ki CW, Kim YK. The mechanism of influencer marketing. *Journal of Business Research*, 2019.
7. Casaló LV, Flavián C, Ibáñez-Sánchez S. Influencers on Instagram. *Journal of Business Research*, 2020.
8. Evans NJ, Phua J, Lim J, Jun H. Disclosing sponsored content. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 2017.
9. Statista. *Influencer Marketing Report*, 2023.
10. Kotler P. *Marketing Management*, 2017.