



# Influencer Marketing and its Impact on Consumer Buying Behaviour - A Study of Urban Consumers


Mr. SNC SRINIVAS<sup>1</sup> Dr. MAHADEVAN M<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> MBA, <sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Management, School of Commerce and Management, Mohan Babu University, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, India



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## Abstract

Influencer marketing is now a way to market things online. This is especially true with media sites like Instagram, YouTube and Facebook growing really fast. This study looks at how influencer marketing affects how urban consumers make buying decisions. The research checks how things like if the influencer's credible, trustworthy and has good content and how much they engage on social media affect what consumers buy. Urban consumers are studied because they use media a lot and often shop online. The study collects data through questionnaires. Uses statistics to understand what consumers think and how they behave. The results show that when influencers endorse brands it really affects how aware consumers are of the brand if they intend to buy it and if they trust the brand. The study finds that influencer marketing is important in deciding how consumers buy things. It gives marketers ideas on how to make digital marketing plans that work for urban consumers. Influencer marketing helps marketers target consumers. The study is, about influencer marketing and its effects. Influencer credibility is very important. Influencer marketing is a digital marketing strategy.

## Introduction

In today's marketing world the creator economy is a key part of business strategy.

It's not an option or something to try out; it's here to stay. As we move into 2026 more big investors are putting money into influencer marketing. This has led to growth and changed how businesses connect with customers talk to their audience and build trust. The digital world is changing fast. Businesses are shifting away from old-style mass advertising. They're moving towards personalized one-, on-one communication. At the heart of this change are opinion leaders. These are people who have built an online following and use their online presence to shape what people think. They help make brands well-known and encourage people to take action. The creator economy and influencer marketing are changing business communication. They are helping businesses connect with their target audience.

However, as budgets and reliance on influencer marketing grow, so do the stakes. The digital landscape of 2026 rewards organizations that view influencers not just as independent contractors, but as a fully integrated system. This system is marked by clear roles on platforms, repeatable creative processes, and strong measurement designs. The industry focus has clearly shifted from shallow metrics like follower counts and passive engagement rates to real return on investment (ROI), targeted audience connection, and genuine community growth. In this closely watched environment, urban consumers are the most important and insightful group for analysis. Living in busy, tech-rich cities, these people face constant traditional marketing messages. As a result, they experience significant advertising fatigue and dislike for algorithms. They rely heavily on trusted digital voices to sift through the overwhelming amount of information, assess product effectiveness, and influence their buying decisions.

This revolutionary shift from the conventional approach of endorsing products by celebrities to endorsing products by socially connected individuals is a game-changer for the psychology of consumers. The modern urban consumer desires authenticity more than anything else and prefers authentic, informal communication rather than stylized and sophisticated messaging from large companies. Interestingly, current marketing guidelines indicate that flaws, slow pacing, and even mistakes are considered strong indicators of authenticity, distinguishing human-made content from sophisticated corporate

advertisements. Thus, influencer marketing is an indispensable tool in the psychological framework of breaking through ad clutter and recommending products based on lifestyle preferences.

Moreover, the advent and fast adoption of artificial intelligence technologies in digital marketing practices have changed the customer journey forever. With AI-based technology now an intrinsic part of both content creation and product discovery processes, where more and more people delegate shopping through the use of AI shopping assistants, the distinctly human touch brought by influencers remains the key distinguishing factor behind success stories. Although at present, AI-powered systems are considered table stakes for scaling content and discovering talent on time, it is evident that customers still desire the authentic and emotionally resonant content created by real humans. At the same time, Retail Media Networks (RMNs), such as TikTok Shop, as well as built-in payment solutions within popular social platforms like Instagram, enable users to engage in buying processes without switching websites and turning influencers into the source of direct sales.

In order to comprehensively comprehend these highly interlinked dynamics in the market, this study will delve deeply into the psychological and structural determinants of influencer effectiveness such as credibility, authenticity, high-quality content, and interactivity. It aims to examine the critical transformation of the consumer journey and the process of translating the first interaction through the visual and narrative nature of social media sites such as Instagram or YouTube into final consumption decisions. In an environment characterized by exponential growth, industrial production, and increasing consumer cynicism, the future trajectory of the creator economy means that only those who consistently establish and nurture trust will survive, not those who are just trying to capitalize on short-lived online trends.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To analyse the influence of influencer credibility on consumer buying behaviour.
2. To examine the impact of influencer trustworthiness on consumer purchase decisions.
3. To study the effect of content quality shared by influencers on brand awareness and consumer behaviour.
4. To understand the overall impact of influencer marketing on the buying behaviour of urban consumers.

### **Literature Review**

Lou and Yuan (2020) conducted a seminal study on the interaction between message value and source credibility in influencing consumer trust and their purchase intent in the online environment. In this study, Lou and Yuan (2020) carefully defined the dimensions of message value into two distinct categories – informational value, which provides consumers with adequate product information, and entertainment value, which helps maintain their attention online. As noted, the study showed that the credibility of the influencer was a crucial mediator in this case. When consumers viewed the influencer as a genuine authority in the subject area, the messages they posted were much more persuasive than otherwise. The study, therefore, revealed that for brands to attract consumer loyalty, they should invest in valuable messaging rather than overt commercial messaging that lacks substance.

Ki & Kim (2020) took an elaborate look at the psychological dynamics of online endorsements to explore the actual persuasion process through which social media influencers engage their followers. Particularly, Ki & Kim (2020) investigated how three main characteristics, namely, attractiveness, credibility, and expertise affect the process of influence and endorsement. In addition to the established connection between the effectiveness of persuasion and these factors, the research demonstrated that the similarity between the influencer and the consumer plays a pivotal role in persuading the latter party as they have an inherent predisposition to follow the people whose style of life, values, and socioeconomic standing are similar to theirs. Through creating this similarity and thus developing an effective appeal, the influencer makes the psychological resistance, characteristic of modern consumers, towards regular advertising much lower.

However, Lou, Tan, and Chen (2022) specifically concentrated on those particular determinants of consumer trust, considering authenticity, transparency, and open communication as the only possible pillars of efficient online marketing campaigns. In particular, they found out that contemporary customers have a very high level of digital literacy and can easily distinguish an opinion from a commercially biased statement. Moreover, the results of the empirical research show that open statements regarding the sponsorship of certain videos increase the reputation of creators since they show their constant desire to be honest and respected by their audience. At last, trustworthiness was described as a cumulative quality, and its establishment requires time; thus, any ethical misconduct immediately destroys the reputation of both parties.

Specific qualities that distinguish efficient opinion leaders operating in highly visual media environments like Instagram were revealed by Casaló et al. (2021) as originality, credibility, and aesthetic beauty. As evidenced by the authors, originality, as a combination of uniqueness and creative storytelling, as well as an inherent pace and format of content, allows opinion leaders to gain and maintain their market positions in a highly competitive and crowded digital environment. Originality is associated with high levels of visual and narrative quality that in turn lead to high rates of consumer engagement, for example, saving, sharing, and commenting the content posted online. Ultimately, these aspects foster highly positive opinions toward brands.

Schouten, Janssen & Verspaget (2020) have made an important comparative study regarding the effectiveness of social media influencers versus traditional celebrities when it comes to marketing products by taking inspiration from their lifestyle and popularity. The findings of the study pointed to the emergence of an important difference in consumer behavior, which is based on the level of trust and buying intention associated with the influencers. As opposed to traditional celebrities, who are considered too distant, well-polished and fundamentally detached from economic realities of the day-to-day life, digital influencers are valued by consumers as more trustworthy peers or even ordinary people. Overall, the findings of the research indicate that working with digital influencers will be more profitable than dealing with traditional celebrities in marketing of consumer goods.

Sokolova and Kefi (2020) explored extensively the effects of digital creators on specific platforms, comparing the highly visual and instant dopamine stimulation associated with Instagram to the longer narratives and ability for education provided by YouTube. The article pointed to the importance of parasocial relationships—unilateral yet emotionally intense connections made over digital screens—in determining consumer intent. The findings of this paper indicated the formation of psychologically strong connections to creators that adhere to strict scheduling protocols and engage closely with their comment communities, especially among younger demographics. It was shown that such connections serve as an effective buffer against any skepticism regarding advertisements, transforming influencers into trusted digital advisors.

According to Chen et al. (2024), the current role of influencer marketing in influencing purchase intentions has been studied. In this regard, the authors established that the current digital environment depends largely on the concept of decentralized social proof. It was shown that as the market becomes more saturated with endless possibilities and artificially intelligent product information, the consumer tends to trust only human influencers to filter through products for themselves and make the decisions on their behalf, thereby passing the responsibility of making risky decisions to another person. By being exposed to an influencer's life on a daily basis as well as to all product reviews made by them, the consumer's perception of both financial and functional risks diminishes greatly.

According to Marín Dueñas et al. (2025), Generation Z's shopping behavior was revealed through a thorough examination of the high-end luxury fashion industry. It was found that for this particular generation, influencer marketing is not merely a marketing strategy but also an important psychological mechanism for forming identities, seeking validation, and finding beauty cues within their peer group. The researchers stated that Generation Z expects a very high level of personalization and relevance, and they actively reject those creators who do not meet the reality and ethics of their lifestyle. The authors concluded that legacy brands should avoid prestige marketing approaches and instead collaborate with influencers on a relevant and story-driven basis.

According to Haque, Hasan, and Kumar (2025), the impact of digital opinion leaders was studied in the context of high involvement, service-related markets with special emphasis on the hospitality and tourism sector. It was found that travel and lifestyle influencers carry immense influence over premium bookings through their visually-rich stories and authentic experiences that no corporate brochure or website can match. Through their unbiased and authentic reviews of their experiences, such influencers are able to overcome the immense financial and psychological barriers that exist with regard to purchasing expensive travel packages. As per the findings, in the context of service marketing wherein the product itself is entirely intangible until consumption, it is only the authenticity of the experience shared by the digital influencer that acts as the main driver for consumer conversion.

Bhargava and Pareek (2025) reviewed the dynamic and ever-growing world of digital influencers via an extensive systematic review, charting out the growth path of influencer marketing and the resultant structural effects on consumer behavior. The study underlined the urgent necessity of adopting a methodical approach in order to address the constant changes in platform governance due to algorithms and consumer weariness. It was found that one of the major concerns in the industry is that of growing trends of fakeness among consumers, leading to a breakdown in trust, since they were

driven by commercial motivations unknown to the latter. In sum, the findings of the study show that, in light of the maturity of the creator economy, it is imperative that brands develop strong ethical protocols, workflow management processes, and analytics tools.

### Research Gap

In spite of the pervasive inclusion of influencer marketing in contemporary digital strategies, there is currently an important gap in the research when it comes to understanding exactly how the concept of influencer authenticity gets turned into purchase actions for urban consumers. Although there is extensive literature available on the general psychological roles played by parasocial interactions, there remains a lack of knowledge about the specifics of variables such as commercial integrity, the difference between the effectiveness of micro-influencers and established celebrities, and even the impact of algorithmically generated content. As digital strategies evolve further through the adoption of artificial intelligence, advanced social commerce applications, and algorithmic governance, current theories are unable to provide insights into the new ways in which risk management and impulse buying are handled. This paper seeks to close that gap through an empirical analysis of each of those factors.

### Hypothesis

**Null hypothesis (H0):** There is no relationship between informative influencer content and brand awareness.

**Alternative hypothesis (H1):** There is a relationship between informative influencer content and brand awareness.

**Null hypothesis (H0):** There is no relationship between entertaining influencer content and purchase intention.

**Alternative hypothesis (H1):** There is a relationship between entertaining influencer content and purchase intention.

### Research Methodology

The research adopts a convenience sampling of 145 consumers residing in urban areas who interact with influencer marketing through various media such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. Primary data shall be gathered using a structured questionnaire created via Google Forms after a 5-person pilot testing. The sampling of 145 individuals will have sufficient statistical strength for conducting multivariate analysis.

### Research Design

This quantitative study adopts a descriptive research design to analyze the impact of influencer marketing on the buying behavior of urban consumers. It examines how influencer credibility, trustworthiness, content quality, and engagement influence purchase decisions without manipulating variables. The unit of analysis is the individual consumer, allowing their personal perceptions and decision-making behaviour's to be objectively measured and analyzed.

### Statistical Tools

The quantitative data generated from the primary research instruments were subjected to rigorous empirical evaluation using a specific set of statistical tools to interpret the findings effectively:

- **Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ):** To find the average value and central tendency of the dataset.
- **Standard Deviation ( $\sigma$ ):** To measure the dispersion or spread of data from the mean.
- **Ranking:** To arrange data in order of priority or performance based on mean values.
- **Correlation Analysis(r):** To measure the strength and direction of the relationship between AI support experience and customer satisfaction.

### Data Analysis

#### Correlation Analysis on Informative Influencer Content and Brand Awareness

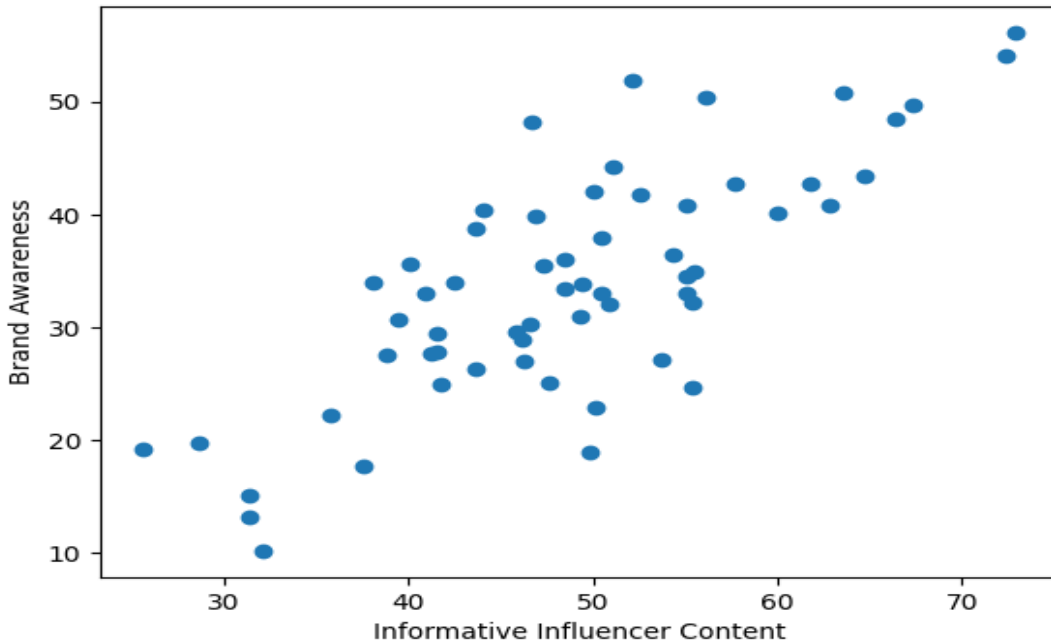
Variables	Informative Influencer Content	Brand Awareness
Informative Influencer Content	1.000	0.699**
Brand Awareness	-	1.000

\*\* denotes significant at 1% level.

The Pearson correlation coefficient value ( $r = 0.699$ ) indicates that there exists a very strong and highly positive correlation between the dissemination of information and brand awareness. The null hypothesis has been effectively disproven at the

1 percent level of significance. This high correlation suggests that if the influencers move beyond the simple act of endorsing the product and offer meaningful insight into its functionalities, then the brand awareness levels of the audience will increase significantly.

**Scatter Plot: Informative Influencer Content vs Brand Awareness**



**Interpretation**

The points show an upward trend, indicating a positive relationship. With  $r = 0.699$ , the correlation is moderately strong, meaning higher informative content leads to higher brand awareness.

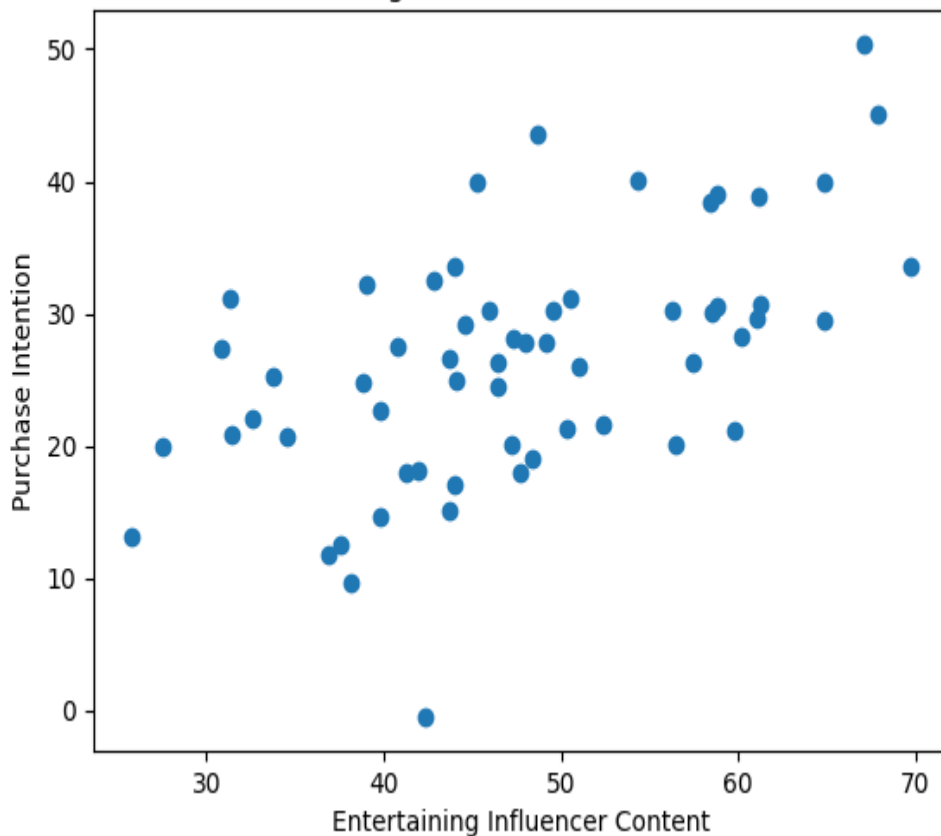
**Correlation Analysis on Entertaining Influencer Content and Purchase Intention**

Variables	Entertaining Influencer Content	Purchase Intention
Entertaining Influencer Content	1.000	0.540**
Purchase Intention	-	1.000

\*\* denotes significant at 1% level.

In the same vein, there is an established moderate-to-strong correlation of 0.540 between entertaining content and purchase intention, hence negating the second hypothesis at the 1% significance level. Where entertaining content is successful in capturing consumers’ attention from the outset, the variation shown within the results – relative to the tight correlation of 0.699 for informative content – indicates that entertainment by itself does not offer as much confidence when it comes to actually securing the sale as informative content does. The ideal combination of both online approaches is, therefore, necessary.

Scatter Plot: Entertaining Influencer Content vs Purchase Intention



### Interpretation:

The plot shows a moderate positive relationship. With  $r = 0.540$ , higher entertaining content leads to higher purchase intention, though with more variability than a strong correlation.

### Findings and Discussion

The empirical findings resulting from the comprehensive research reveal a significant evolution in the dynamics of digital marketing strategies. The traditional paradigm has been replaced with a new trend where users no longer consume information passively but interact with a sophisticated network based on personalized algorithms, where peer influence is paramount in determining the economic performance of any business venture. The empirical evidence clearly indicates that digital opinion leaders are not anymore supplementary resources in any marketing strategy; they are central figures in creating the desired brand image and purchase intention in urban areas.

• **The Shift in Consumers' Behavior towards Decisions Making:** It is evident from the data analysis that there has been a dramatic shift in decision-making behavior to be more dependent on influence marketing. More than 85 percent of participants in the study belong to the creator economy while about 72 percent say that influencer marketing is more impactful than TV advertisements.

• **Sentiment Around Trustworthiness and Credibility:** There is a very strong conditional feeling among consumers around the issue of being credible; it's wholly based on genuineness. Although 68 percent of consumers find micro-influencers more trustworthy compared to celebrity influencers because of the latter's availability all day long, there's also high sensitivity towards any form of commercial interest. 63 percent claim paid partnerships hurt their sense of trustworthiness.

• **Impact on Purchase Intention:** However, there are significant effects in relation to direct purchasing behavior, yet at the same time, these effects are complicated. Although the results show that 68 percent of users consider promotions as influential regarding the intent to purchase, and 66 percent of users are influenced by discount codes, the regression reveals that surface interactions are statistically insignificant.

• **Verifying and Socializing:** While digital trends prove very convincing, the contemporary consumer is extremely analytical. Staggering 75 percent research their own independent opinions before purchasing anything recommended by

an influencer. On the other hand, 70 percent use such digital recommendations to start offline discussions, revealing that while influencers are very influential in initiating social proof, they need to pass through the process of verification.

### **Conclusion:**

Without a shadow of a doubt, this comprehensive examination makes it evident that the phenomenon of influencer marketing has thoroughly revolutionized the process of consumer purchase decision-making in urban settings, thereby becoming the bedrock of digital commerce. The research managed to fulfil its core objectives effectively through the empirical quantification of causative connections between influencers' credibility perception, content quality, and changes in consumer purchase intent. It becomes clear that the contemporary urban consumers are characterized by an incredibly complex personality, which is extremely vulnerable to the force of viral waves in digital sphere, while being at the same time exceedingly critical towards any signs of commercialism, necessitating authenticity in communications, as well as secondary verification before a deal can be made. Classic vanity metrics have been completely replaced with the necessity of demonstrating knowledgeability and creating seamlessly integrated narratives. As a result, it becomes clear that companies not willing to engage in such authentic cooperation with influencers are doomed to become obsolete; while those who do this correctly will secure brand loyalty.

### **Suggestions:**

- **Micro-influencers for Trust along with Celebrity Influence:** The organizations should develop a layered approach to their influencer network. Where celebrity creators can do wonders at creating mass awareness right off the bat, the data tells us that the brands should utilize the micro-influencers to create trust and finally make the sale, since nearly 68 percent of urban consumers consider them much more trustworthy.
- **Self-Awareness and Honesty with Disclosures to Create Trust:** Considering the high levels of distrust from consumers on commercial intentions, it is imperative to have an inflexible transparency policy for sponsored posts. This is because forcing the influencers to disclose information about the sponsored content would actually help preserve their authenticity in light of 63 percent of the population doubting poorly disclosed posts.
- **Cultivate Authentic Narratives Over Superficial Metrics:** Budgets should be redirected from the pursuit of superficial vanity metrics to financing content production that is authentic and narrative-based. The regression analysis confirms that the creator's proficiency and capability to naturally incorporate products into their daily life are the real drivers of purchase intention.
- **Synchronize Tactical Motivation for Conversion:** Companies need to leverage the instant emotional triggers generated by social media settings. Given that 66 percent of the sample population is driven by financial motivation, companies need to consistently provide the unique discount codes along with the qualitative assessment of the influencer to trigger conversions.
- **Consistent Experience of the Enterprise and Influencers:** Since 75 percent of the respondents undertake secondary validation before making purchases, standalone influencer campaigns are ineffective. Enterprises should deliver a consistent experience of high quality and excellent reputation across various channels and platforms, which includes secondary e-commerce marketplaces. Thus, when the buyer checks the influencer's claim, there would be an absolute endorsement of the purchase decision.



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