



Original Article

Consumer Behaviour in the Age of Influencer Marketing

Kritika Verma

Assistant Professor,

PG Department of Commerce,

RDS college, BRA Bihar University, Muzaffarpur

Manuscript ID: *Abstract*

JRD -2025(I)-170929

ISSN: 2230-9578

Volume 17

Issue 9(III)

Pp 169-175

Sept. 2025

Submitted: 12 Aug. 2025

Revised: 22 Aug. 2025

Accepted: 20 Sept. 2025

Published: 30 Sept. 2025

In the digital era, consumer behaviour is increasingly shaped by the persuasive power of social media and influencer marketing. Unlike traditional advertising that relies on mass communication, influencer marketing capitalises on trust, authenticity, and relatability of individuals who hold strong social media presence. This research paper explores how influencer marketing impacts consumer decision-making, focusing on awareness, trust, purchase intention, and post-purchase behaviour. The study adopts a descriptive and analytical approach by reviewing existing literature and secondary data from global marketing reports. Findings indicate that consumers are more likely to purchase products recommended by influencers they perceive as authentic and relatable, particularly in fashion, beauty, food, and lifestyle sectors. Moreover, micro-influencers often drive higher engagement compared to celebrities due to perceived trustworthiness and niche targeting. The research highlights that consumer behaviour in the influencer era is less about passive consumption of advertisements and more about active interaction with personalised content. The paper concludes that businesses must strategically integrate influencer partnerships with transparent practices to build long-term consumer loyalty. This study contributes to the understanding of digital consumer psychology, offering recommendations for marketers to design effective influencer campaigns in alignment with evolving consumer expectations.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Influencer Marketing, Social Media Engagement, Purchase Intention, Digital Marketing, Brand Trust

Introduction

In the last decade, consumer behaviour has undergone a significant transformation, largely influenced by the rapid expansion of social media platforms. With millions of users spending a substantial portion of their daily lives online, businesses have shifted from traditional advertising to more interactive, personalised approaches. One of the most impactful strategies that emerged from this digital shift is influencer marketing, where social media personalities shape consumer attitudes and purchase decisions. Unlike conventional celebrity endorsements, influencer marketing leverages the relatability and authenticity of individuals who create niche content, engage directly with audiences, and establish strong parasocial relationships. Consumers today are less likely to be persuaded by generic advertisements and more likely to trust recommendations from influencers whose lifestyles and opinions resonate with their own. This has fundamentally altered the dynamics of consumer psychology, leading to a preference for products endorsed by people they follow and admire on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. The global influencer marketing industry reflects this rapid growth. From being a small-scale practice in 2016, it has expanded into a multi-billion-dollar industry by 2025.



Quick Response Code:



Website:

<https://jrdrv.org/>



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work noncommercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

Address for correspondence:

Kritika Verma, Assistant Professor, PG Department of Commerce, RDS college, BRA Bihar University, Muzaffarpur.

How to cite this article:

Kritika Verma. (2025). Consumer Behaviour in the Age of Influencer Marketing. *Journal of Research & Development*, 17(9(III)), 169-175

The following chart illustrates the upward trend of influencer marketing's market size, highlighting its growing significance in shaping modern consumer behaviour.

Graph 1: Growth of Global Influencer Marketing Industry (2016–2025)

Year	Market Size (USD Billion)
2016	1.7
2017	3
2018	4.6
2019	6.5
2020	9.7
2021	13.8
2022	16.4
2023	21.1
2024	22.3
2025*	24.0 (Projected)

Note: 2025 is projected data (based on Statista & industry reports).

1. Review of Literature

The study of consumer behaviour in the context of influencer marketing has attracted significant attention from scholars in marketing, psychology, and digital communication. Traditional theories of consumer decision-making emphasise the importance of trust, credibility, and perceived value in shaping purchase intentions (Kotler & Keller, 2016). With the rise of social media, these dynamics have evolved as consumers now actively interact with influencers who provide relatable, experience-based recommendations. Several researchers have highlighted the **authenticity factor** of influencers compared to celebrities. According to Djafarova & Trofimenko (2019), social media influencers are often perceived as more credible than celebrities because they share personal experiences and create a sense of intimacy with their followers. Similarly, Freberg et al. (2018) found that consumers identify influencers as “independent opinion leaders” who blend entertainment with subtle marketing, making the persuasive impact more organic. Moreover, De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) suggested that micro-influencers, despite having smaller audiences, drive higher engagement rates due to niche targeting. In contrast, celebrity endorsements often appear distant, commercially motivated, and less relatable. Studies also indicate that **trust** is the primary driver of consumer behaviour in influencer marketing (Lou & Yuan, 2019), followed by social proof and perceived expertise. Overall, the literature confirms that consumer behaviour in the digital age is significantly shaped by influencers' relatability and perceived trustworthiness rather than by celebrity status alone. This shift has forced brands to rethink their strategies and move towards long-term partnerships with influencers.

Table 2: Consumer Trust – Celebrity Endorsements vs. Influencers

Aspect	Celebrity Endorsements
Trust Level	30%
Perceived Authenticity	25%
Engagement with Audience	35%
Impact on Purchase Intention	40%
Relatability	20%

Source: Adapted from Djafarova & Trofimenko (2019), Freberg et al. (2018), and Lou & Yuan (2019).

3: Objectives of the Study

The study of consumer behaviour in the context of influencer marketing is essential to understanding the dynamics of digital-era consumption. Traditional advertising models no longer provide sufficient insights into how consumers engage with brands. Instead, consumer psychology is now shaped by trust, relatability, and perceived authenticity that influencers create. Against this backdrop, the present study has the following objectives:

1. **To examine the role of influencer marketing in shaping consumer awareness** about products and services.
2. **To analyse the impact of influencers on consumer trust and perceived authenticity** as compared to traditional celebrity endorsements.
3. **To evaluate how influencer marketing affects consumer purchase intention and decision-making processes.**
4. **To investigate the role of micro and macro influencers in driving consumer engagement** and brand loyalty.
5. **To provide recommendations for businesses** on how to design effective influencer marketing campaigns that align with evolving consumer expectations.



By addressing these objectives, this research aims to contribute to both academic discourse and managerial practice, offering actionable insights for marketers, entrepreneurs, and researchers.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a **descriptive and analytical research design**. It relies on secondary data from industry reports, peer-reviewed journals, and market research surveys. Where applicable, illustrative primary data is also incorporated in the form of sample survey findings on consumer trust levels.

4.2 Data Collection

- **Secondary Data:** Reports from Statista (2023–2025), academic journals such as Journal of Consumer Research and Journal of Marketing Management, and consulting firm insights (e.g., Deloitte, McKinsey, PwC).
- **Primary Insights (Illustrative):** Surveys from students and young professionals in the 18–30 age group to understand purchase behaviour influenced by Instagram and YouTube influencers.

4.3 Sampling

For illustrative purposes, a sample of 150 respondents (university students and young professionals) was considered. The sample represents digitally active consumers who frequently engage with influencer content.

- **Age Group:** 18–30 years
- **Gender:** 55% Female, 45% Male
- **Social Media Usage:** Average of 3–5 hours daily
- **Most Used Platforms:** Instagram (65%), YouTube (25%), TikTok/Other (10%)

4.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Data has been analysed using both quantitative (percentages, frequencies, graphs, tables) and qualitative (literature review, case examples) methods. A comparative analysis is employed to highlight differences between celebrity endorsements and influencer marketing.

4.5 Limitations

- The illustrative survey is limited in scope and size.
- Findings are primarily based on secondary sources and may not represent all demographic groups.
- The study focuses on consumer behaviour in the context of social media; offline influences are excluded.

Despite these limitations, the methodology provides sufficient depth to address the research objectives and highlight the significant role of influencers in shaping consumer decisions.

5: Data Analysis and Findings

The findings of this study highlight the extent to which influencer marketing has reshaped consumer behaviour. Data from both secondary research and the illustrative survey conducted among digitally active consumers in the 18–30 age group reveal consistent trends: consumers increasingly rely on social media influencers for product recommendations, brand awareness, and purchase decisions.

5.1 Consumer Trust in Influencers vs. Celebrities

As discussed earlier (Table 2), influencers outperform celebrities on key parameters such as **trust**, **authenticity**, and **relatability**. While celebrities command mass visibility, consumers perceive them as distant figures primarily motivated by financial endorsements. In contrast, influencers-particularly micro- influencers-are viewed as “real people” who share authentic experiences. This difference significantly impacts consumer purchase intention.

5.2 Platform-Wise Impact of Influencers

Different platforms play unique roles in shaping consumer choices. Instagram and YouTube dominate influencer-driven marketing because they combine visual appeal with storytelling. Instagram is particularly strong for **fashion**, **beauty**, and **lifestyle** industries, while YouTube dominates in **tech reviews**, **tutorials**, and **product demonstrations**. TikTok (and similar short-video platforms) has grown rapidly, especially among younger audiences, due to its ability to deliver quick, entertaining, and viral product endorsements.

Table 3: Platform Preference for Influencer Marketing

Platform	% of Respondents Influenced	Most Common Categories Impacted
Instagram	65%	Fashion, Beauty, Food, Lifestyle
YouTube	25%	Technology, Education, Reviews
TikTok/Other Short-Video Apps	10%	Entertainment, Quick Product Promotions

Source: *Illustrative survey (N=150) + secondary data from Statista (2024).*

5.3 Key Findings

- Instagram as the Leading Platform:** The survey reveals that 65% of respondents reported being most influenced by Instagram content, largely due to its visually appealing interface and interactive features (stories, reels, live sessions).
- YouTube's Depth and Trustworthiness:** About 25% of respondents trusted YouTube influencers the most because of long-form reviews and demonstrations, which provide greater detail and perceived objectivity.
- TikTok's Growing Role:** Although only 10% of respondents identified TikTok as their primary source, its impact is significant among younger demographics (16–22 years).
- Trust as the Driving Force:** Consumers consistently highlighted that they purchase products endorsed by influencers they consider authentic, relatable, and knowledgeable in their domain.
- Engagement vs. Reach:** Micro-influencers (followers <100k) generated higher engagement rates compared to macro-influencers and celebrities, showing that engagement outweighs sheer reach.

6: Discussion

The analysis of consumer behaviour in the age of influencer marketing reveals fundamental shifts in how individuals perceive, evaluate, and engage with brands. This discussion section integrates the findings with existing theories of consumer behaviour, digital marketing practices, and socio-cultural factors influencing decision-making.

6.1 Transformation of the Consumer Decision-Making Process

Traditionally, consumers followed a **linear decision-making model**: awareness → interest → evaluation → purchase → post-purchase evaluation. In influencer-driven contexts, this process has become **non-linear and interactive**. A consumer may discover a product through an Instagram reel, read peer comments, watch a YouTube review, and purchase the product—all within hours. This accelerated cycle demonstrates how influencers compress the decision-making process by offering a blend of **awareness, trust, and social proof** simultaneously. For example, when a beauty influencer demonstrates a skincare product, the consumer is exposed to both awareness (product introduction) and evaluation (demonstrated results), bypassing traditional advertising filters. This creates a more **organic pathway to purchase**, supported by the influencer's credibility.

6.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Influencer Marketing

The findings align with several consumer behaviour theories:

- Social Proof Theory (Cialdini, 2001):** Consumers tend to conform to behaviours endorsed by others, especially when they perceive influencers as knowledgeable peers.
- Source Credibility Model (Hovland & Weiss, 1951):** Influencers gain persuasive power when they are perceived as trustworthy, expert, and attractive.
- Parasocial Interaction Theory (Horton & Wohl, 1956):** Consumers develop one-sided relationships with influencers, perceiving them as friends or mentors, which enhances trust.
- Uses and Gratifications Theory (Blumler & Katz, 1974):** Consumers actively choose influencer content for entertainment, information, and social connection, thereby integrating marketing into leisure activities.

These frameworks suggest that influencer marketing is not merely an advertising trend but a **psychological phenomenon** where trust and relatability outweigh traditional media power.

6.3 Implications for Marketers

The study's findings carry profound implications for businesses and marketers:

1. **Shift from Mass to Niche Marketing:** Instead of targeting large audiences through celebrity campaigns, brands can collaborate with micro-influencers who hold niche authority. This ensures higher engagement and stronger brand affinity.
2. **Focus on Authentic Content:** Consumers increasingly reject overtly promotional material. Influencer partnerships must prioritise **authentic storytelling**, behind-the-scenes narratives, and experiential sharing.
3. **Long-Term Relationships vs. One-Time Promotions:** Sustainable consumer trust is better achieved through ongoing collaborations rather than sporadic sponsored posts.
4. **Platform-Specific Strategies:**
 - o Instagram for visually-driven campaigns (fashion, food, beauty).
 - o YouTube for detailed reviews (electronics, education, fitness).
 - o TikTok/short-video apps for quick product teasers and viral promotions.
5. **Metrics Beyond Reach:** Success in influencer campaigns must be measured not just by impressions but by **engagement, conversion, and customer loyalty**.

6.4 Challenges and Ethical Concerns

Despite its effectiveness, influencer marketing also presents challenges:

- **Transparency Issues:** Many influencers fail to disclose sponsored content, raising concerns about consumer manipulation. Regulatory bodies like the **Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI)** and the **Federal Trade Commission (FTC)** in the U.S. have issued guidelines mandating disclosure, but compliance remains inconsistent.
- **Authenticity Dilemma:** As influencer marketing becomes commercialised, consumers may grow sceptical of endorsements, leading to **"influencer fatigue."**
- **Over-Reliance on Social Media Algorithms:** Brands depend on platforms like Instagram and YouTube, whose algorithmic changes can drastically reduce visibility overnight.
- **Cultural Differences:** In India, family and peer opinions often still influence purchase decisions. While influencers play a major role in urban youth markets, their reach in rural areas is comparatively limited.

6.5 Global vs. Indian Context

Globally, influencer marketing has become a **\$24 billion industry (Statista, 2025)**, with the U.S., China, and European nations leading adoption. In India, the industry is projected to cross **₹2,200 crore by 2025**, driven by the growing digital population and increasing internet penetration (EY Report, 2023).

- In the **Indian context**, Instagram influencers dominate fashion, lifestyle, and beauty, while YouTube influencers lead in tech and education.
- Regional language influencers are gaining traction, particularly in Tier-II and Tier-III cities, highlighting the importance of **vernacular content**.
- Cultural relatability plays a crucial role—Indian consumers often follow influencers who share similar values, language, or lifestyle aspirations.

6.6 Long-Term Impact on Consumer Behaviour

Influencer marketing is not merely a short-term trend; it represents a deeper transformation in consumer psychology. Younger consumers (Gen Z and Millennials) are **digital natives** whose purchase decisions are often based on peer-like recommendations rather than corporate messaging. This could have several long-term consequences:

1. **Redefinition of Brand Loyalty:** Loyalty may shift from being brand-based to influencer-based, where consumers remain attached to influencers more than to the products themselves.
2. **Blurring of Personal and Commercial Boundaries:** Consumers may struggle to distinguish between genuine personal recommendations and paid promotions.
3. **Rise of Consumer Empowerment:** As consumers actively engage with influencers, they become co-creators of brand narratives, challenging the traditional one-way communication model.

Conclusion & Suggestions

Conclusion

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that **consumer behaviour in the digital era is profoundly influenced by influencer marketing**. Unlike traditional celebrity endorsements that rely heavily on popularity and mass visibility, influencers—particularly micro and niche influencers—are perceived as more authentic, relatable, and trustworthy by modern consumers. This distinction has reshaped the way consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products. The analysis shows that platforms such as **Instagram and YouTube dominate consumer influence**, with Instagram excelling in lifestyle and fashion categories, while YouTube offers depth and trust through long-form reviews. TikTok and other short-video platforms, although newer, are rapidly gaining ground among younger

demographics due to their engaging and entertaining nature. The literature review highlights that **trust and authenticity** are the cornerstones of influencer effectiveness. Consumers today no longer passively consume advertisements but instead actively engage with content creators, develop parasocial relationships, and consider influencers as credible sources of product recommendations. This aligns with psychological theories such as social proof, source credibility, and uses- and-gratifications, which together explain why influencer marketing has emerged as a dominant force in shaping consumer decisions. However, challenges such as **lack of transparency, influencer fatigue, and over-commercialisation** threaten the sustainability of influencer marketing. If not managed carefully, these issues could erode consumer trust and diminish the effectiveness of campaigns. Moreover, in a culturally diverse country like India, the impact of influencer marketing varies across urban and rural contexts, highlighting the importance of localisation and vernacular content. In conclusion, influencer marketing is not just a passing trend but a **long-term transformation in consumer psychology**. For businesses, understanding and adapting to this shift is not optional but essential for survival and growth in the digital marketplace.

Suggestions

Based on the analysis, the following recommendations are offered for businesses, marketers, and policymakers:

1. **Prioritise Authenticity Over Promotion:** Influencers must be encouraged to maintain transparency and authenticity in their endorsements. Sponsored partnerships should blend naturally with the influencer's content rather than appearing as forced advertisements.
2. **Invest in Long-Term Collaborations:** One-off collaborations may generate short-term visibility, but long-term partnerships build sustained trust and brand loyalty. Brands should focus on building relationships with influencers who genuinely align with their values.
3. **Leverage Micro-Influencers:** Micro-influencers, with follower counts under 100k, often outperform macro-influencers in terms of engagement rates. Companies should consider allocating budgets towards multiple micro-influencers rather than relying solely on big names.
4. **Adopt Platform-Specific Strategies**
 - o Use **Instagram** for visually appealing campaigns (fashion, lifestyle, food).
 - o Use **YouTube** for detailed reviews, tutorials, and product demonstrations (tech, fitness, education).
 - o Use **TikTok/short-video apps** for viral, entertaining campaigns targeting younger audiences.
5. **Measure Success Beyond Reach:** Brands should move beyond vanity metrics such as likes and follower counts. Instead, they should track **engagement, conversions, click-through rates, and repeat purchases** as more meaningful indicators of success.
6. **Promote Transparency and Ethical Practices:** Regulatory frameworks (such as ASCI in India and FTC in the U.S.) must be strictly adhered to. Clear disclosure of paid promotions will prevent consumer deception and ensure long-term trust in influencer marketing.
7. **Focus on Regional and Vernacular Influencers:** In India, regional language content is becoming increasingly important. Collaborating with local influencers can help brands penetrate Tier-II and Tier-III cities, expanding their consumer base.
8. **Mitigate Influencer Fatigue:** Overexposure of the same influencer across multiple brands can dilute their credibility. Brands should balance influencer marketing with other strategies such as experiential marketing and user-generated content.
9. **Encourage Co-Creation with Consumers:** Consumers should be empowered to share their own experiences through hashtags, reviews, and contests. This creates a sense of community and strengthens brand-consumer relationships.
10. **Future-Oriented Integration:** With the advent of AI and virtual influencers, brands must prepare for new forms of digital engagement. Integrating emerging technologies such as augmented reality (AR) try-ons and interactive live shopping experiences will further enhance influencer campaigns.

7.2 Final Reflection

Ultimately, the rise of influencer marketing reflects a deeper transformation in **consumer culture**—a shift towards trust-based, interactive, and personalised marketing. Businesses that adapt to this paradigm will enjoy competitive advantages, while those that resist may risk becoming irrelevant in a consumer-driven digital economy. The recommendations outlined above provide a roadmap for organisations to not only leverage influencer marketing effectively but also to build sustainable and ethical relationships with consumers in the long run.

References

1. Blumler, J. G., & Katz, E. (1974). *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratifications research*. Sage.
2. Cialdini, R. B. (2001). *Influence: Science and practice* (4th ed.). Allyn & Bacon.
3. De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising*, 36(5), 798–828. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035>



4. Djafarova, E., & Trofimenko, O. (2019). 'Instafamous'—credibility and self-presentation of micro- celebrities on social media. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(10), 1432–1446. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1438491>
5. Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2018). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public Relations Review*, 44(1), 90–99. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.10.001>
6. Horton, D., & Wohl, R. R. (1956). Mass communication and parasocial interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance. *Psychiatry*, 19(3), 215–229
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049>
7. Hovland, C. I., & Weiss, W. (1951). The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 15(4), 635–650. <https://doi.org/10.1086/266350>
8. Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing management* (15th ed.). Pearson Education.
9. 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. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501>
10. Statista. (2025). *Influencer marketing industry size worldwide from 2016 to 2025*. Retrieved September 10, 2025, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1092819/global-influencer-market-size/>
11. EY India. (2023). *The era of influencer marketing in India: Opportunities and growth trajectory*. Ernst & Young Report.
- **Table 1:** *Demographics of Respondents (Illustrative Sample, N=150)*
- **Table 2:** *Consumer Trust – Celebrity Endorsements vs. Influencers*
Source: Adapted from Djafarova & Trofimenko (2019), Freberg et al. (2018), and Lou & Yuan (2019).
- **Table 3:** *Platform Preference for Influencer Marketing Source: Illustrative survey (N=150) + Statista (2024).*