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“IMPACT OF INFLUENCERS ON ONLINE PURCHASING INTENTION”

UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF

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ABSTRACT

The digital era has transformed the way consumers engage with brands, with social media becoming a significant medium for affecting purchasing choices. A notable trend in this environment is the emergence of social media influencers (SMIs)—individuals who have amassed considerable followings on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, and who possess considerable influence over their audience's buying behaviors. This research examines the influence of these individuals on online purchasing intentions, specifically considering how different attributes of influencers, such as their trustworthiness, competence, attractiveness, and relatability, impact consumer attitudes and their willingness to buy products they endorse.

The study employs a quantitative descriptive and causal research design, gathering data from 200 active social media users aged 18 to 35 through structured questionnaires. A convenience sampling technique was used to reach this target demographic. The gathered data was evaluated using statistical techniques, including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression, to elucidate the strength and nature of the connections between influencer characteristics and consumer purchasing intentions.

The results indicate that the trustworthiness of influencers and the relevance of their content are the primary factors influencing online purchasing intentions, followed by their expertise and visual appeal. Furthermore, micro-influencers (those with smaller but more engaged audiences) were shown to exert a greater effect on trust and conversions when compared to macro-influencers or celebrity figures. Consumers tend to view these micro-influencers as more authentic, relatable, and credible. Additionally, the research highlights that Instagram is the most impactful platform for digital marketing within the surveyed age group.

This study concludes that social media influencers are crucial assets in digital marketing, playing a key role in shaping consumer attitudes, enhancing brand credibility, and directly affecting purchasing decisions. The findings emphasize the importance for marketers to carefully choose influencers whose principles align with their brand and whose content connects with the intended audience.

The study provides practical insights for marketing professionals aiming to maximize the effectiveness of influencer campaigns and suggests that future research could investigate the effects of influencers in specific industries and their impact on long-term consumer loyalty. Recommendations for businesses include utilizing analytics to monitor influencer effectiveness and prioritizing long-term partnerships rather than one-off promotions.

1.1 Background of the Study

Over the past ten years, the rapid growth of digital technologies and social media platforms has significantly changed the traditional marketing landscape. With the swift adoption of smartphones and growing internet accessibility, particularly in developing nations like India, consumers are dedicating a considerable amount of their time to social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok. These platforms have become influential marketing avenues, allowing businesses to connect with their target audiences in a more direct and personal way. One of the most notable trends in this digital age is the rise of social media influencers (SMIs). Influencers are individuals who have established a considerable level of credibility, trust, and a devoted following within specific areas, including fashion, fitness, travel, technology, or beauty. These influencers can sway consumer opinions, preferences, and purchasing behaviors through their content and personal engagement with their audiences. Their emergence aligns with a shift in consumer trust away from traditional marketing methods and celebrity endorsements toward peer recommendations and more relatable online figures.

In this changing environment, brands are increasingly partnering with influencers as part of their digital marketing strategies to promote products, enhance brand visibility, and stimulate sales. Unlike conventional advertising, influencer marketing is viewed as more genuine and trustworthy, especially when influencers provide candid reviews and share personal experiences. Consequently, influencer marketing has developed into a multi-billion-dollar industry on a global scale.

Grasping the influence of influencers on consumer behavior, particularly regarding online purchasing intentions, is essential for marketers. While several studies have investigated this subject, it continues to evolve alongside the changing behaviors of consumers in response to new technologies and platforms. This study intends to explore how different influencer characteristics—such as trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise, relatability, and content quality—impact the purchasing intentions of online consumers, particularly in India.

1.2 Situational Analysis

India is experiencing a digital transformation, with more than **700 million internet users** and **E - commerce sector expected to reach \$200 billion by 2026e-**. Social media platforms have been vital to this expansion, reshaping how consumers discover, assess, and acquire products. As traditional advertising loses effectiveness among younger demographics, influencer marketing presents a compelling alternative.

Nowadays, influencers are not restricted to celebrities; ordinary individuals with specialized knowledge and an engaged audience can greatly influence consumer decision-making. Micro- influencers, in particular, are regarded as more relatable and authentic, often achieving higher engagement rates compared to major celebrities. For instance, in India, Instagram influencers focusing on beauty, food, travel, and fashion have emerged as trusted authorities in their fields.

However, with the increase of influencers, consumers are also becoming more selective. They assess the credibility, expertise, and alignment of influencers with their personal values before being swayed. This calls for a deeper understanding of what contributes to the effectiveness of influencer marketing and how it affects the purchasing decision process.

1.3 Literature Review

Various theories and research explain how and why influencers affect consumer behavior. One key theory is the Source Credibility Theory, which asserts that the effectiveness of a message is contingent on the perceived reliability of the source. In this context, credibility consists of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) also offers a pertinent framework, suggesting that behavioral intentions are influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In terms of influencer marketing, an individual's purchasing intentions may be shaped by favorable attitudes toward the influencer and the perceived social acceptance of following their recommendations. Another important concept is Parasocial Interaction (PSI), which signifies the one-sided relationships that individuals establish with media figures. Numerous consumers experience a personal bond with influencers, resulting in increased levels of trust and openness to their messages. Empirical studies by Freberg et al. (2011) demonstrated that influencers perceived as credible, relatable, and likable exert a more substantial influence on consumer attitudes and intentions. Likewise, research by Lou and Yuan (2019) underscored that the value of the message, influencer credibility, and emotional resonance significantly impact purchase intentions. In the context of India, research is still evolving; however, indications show that influencers play a pivotal role in influencing purchasing decisions, particularly among Millennials and Gen Z. Consequently, this study aims

to enhance the existing literature by investigating the specific factors that enhance the effectiveness of influencer marketing within India.

1.4 Research Topic Explanation

The research topic, “Impact of Influencers on Online Purchasing Intention,” aims to examine the psychological and behavioral processes through which influencers affect consumer purchasing decisions in the digital arena.

Definitions:

- **Influencer:** An individual who has the capacity to sway others' purchasing decisions based on their authority, knowledge, standing, or relationship with their audience.
- **Online Purchasing Intention:** The probability that a consumer will make a purchase online, often influenced by various elements, including recommendations, reviews, and advertisements.

This study concentrates on social media influencers and their characteristics, aiming to pinpoint which attributes are most influential in driving purchasing behavior.

1.5 Research Questions General Research Question:

- **What effect do social media influencers have on online purchasing intentions?** Specific Research Questions:

1. Do attributes of influencers such as trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness significantly affect online purchasing intention?
2. How does the perceived credibility of an influencer influence consumer attitudes towards a product?
3. What significance do content quality and relatability have in shaping purchasing decisions?
4. Is there a correlation between follower count and influence on purchasing behavior?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

H1: An influencer's trustworthiness has a positive impact on online purchasing intention. H2: An influencer's expertise positively impacts online purchasing intention.

H3: An influencer's attractiveness positively influences online purchasing intention.

H4: The relatability and quality of an influencer's content significantly affect consumer engagement and purchasing intention.

H5: Influencers perceived as more credible generate greater purchase intentions than those viewed as less credible.

1.7 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to analyze how influencers shape online purchasing intentions. Specific aims include:

1. To identify and assess the key characteristics of influencers that affect consumer trust and purchasing behavior.
2. To evaluate the relationship between influencer credibility and consumer attitudes.
3. To examine the effectiveness of content quality and relatability in influencer marketing.
4. To ascertain the overall impact of influencer marketing on consumer purchasing intentions within the Indian context.
5. To offer actionable recommendations for businesses and marketers to enhance the effectiveness of their influencer campaigns.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This research holds both practical and academic importance. From a practical standpoint, it aids marketers in understanding which influencer attributes most effectively drive online sales and how to select suitable influencers for their campaigns. Academically, it contributes to the expanding literature on digital marketing, consumer psychology, and online behavior. As consumer behavior continuously evolves—particularly in a digitally focused post-pandemic world—grasping the mechanisms of influencer impact has become increasingly crucial. The findings from this investigation can guide strategies for customer engagement, brand positioning, and content creation in influencer-led campaigns.

1.9 Thesis Structure

The subsequent chapters of this thesis are organized as follows:

- **Chapter 2:** Research Design and Methodology – Describes the research strategy, methods for data collection, sampling design, fieldwork processes, and techniques for data analysis.
- **Chapter 3:** Data Analysis and Interpretation – Displays the statistical results and interprets them concerning the research questions and hypotheses.
- **Chapter 4:** Limitations – Examines the constraints of the study and assesses the reliability and validity of the findings.
- **Chapter 5:** Conclusions and Recommendations – Recaps the principal findings, outlines managerial implications, and presents recommendations for future research.
- **References and Appendices** – Contains all referenced works and supplementary materials. This detailed structure guarantees that the research is comprehensive, logically arranged, and academically sound.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter details the systematic methodology utilized to examine the influence of social media personalities on online purchasing intentions. The research design and methodology are essential to any empirical study as they provide the framework for data collection, measurement, and analysis. By following these methodologies, the credibility and reliability of the study's findings are upheld through a logical and coherent description of the research process. In this section, an in-depth explanation of the research design, data collection methods, sampling strategies, fieldwork plans, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations is provided.

2.2 Research Design

This study employs a mixed research design that integrates both descriptive and causal approaches. The descriptive component offers insight into the current landscape of influencer marketing and consumer behavior, while the causal aspect enables an analysis of the cause-and-effect relationships between influencer characteristics and online purchasing intentions.

Descriptive research presents a clear understanding of the subjects being examined, including consumer demographics, social media usage, and perceptions of influencers. Causal research investigates whether variations in influencer attributes such as credibility, attractiveness, and expertise significantly influence consumers' intentions to make online purchases. This integrative approach is essential for identifying relationships and drawing valuable conclusions that guide marketers' strategic decisions.

2.3 Data Collection Methods

The research primarily utilizes primary data, which is gathered through a structured online questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed to collect information on various dimensions, including influencer traits, consumer attitudes, and purchasing intentions. Google Forms was chosen as the data collection platform due to its accessibility, user-friendliness, and ability to manage large amounts of data efficiently.

Secondary data has also been referenced to provide context and background for the primary results. This includes insights from academic journals, industry reports, and relevant online resources discussing trends in influencer marketing, consumer psychology, and the growth of e-commerce.

2.3.1 Questionnaire Development

The questionnaire was developed after examining pertinent literature and identifying key factors that affect consumer behavior in digital environments. The survey was divided into four sections: demographic data, influencer traits, consumer attitudes, and purchase intentions.

To ensure the instrument's clarity, it underwent review by marketing specialists and was tested in a pilot study. The questionnaire featured Likert-scale items rated from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) to capture respondents' opinions' intensity.

2.3.2 Structure and Scaling

The questionnaire commenced with fundamental demographic inquiries to comfortably engage respondents in the survey, followed by sections assessing their interactions with influencers and subsequent purchasing behaviors. The use of the Likert scale standardized the responses and made statistical analysis easier. This scale provided participants the opportunity to express varying degrees of agreement with statements related

to influencer characteristics such as credibility, relatability, expertise, and visual attractiveness. **2.4 Sampling Design**

2.4.1 Target Population

The target group for this research comprises individuals aged 18 to 45 in India who are active users of social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. This demographic was chosen as it likely includes those who follow influencers and participate in online shopping influenced by endorsements.

2.4.2 Sampling Technique

A purposive non-probability sampling method was utilized for this study. Participants were chosen based on specific criteria: they needed to be social media users, follow at least one influencer, and have made an online purchase in the previous six months. This approach ensured that the sample featured individuals with relevant experiences and viewpoints essential for the study.

2.4.3 Sample Size and Response Rate

A total of 300 survey invitations were distributed via social media, email, and university networks. Of these, 285 responses were found to be valid and included in the final analysis. The resulting effective response rate of 60% was considered satisfactory for academic research of this kind.

2.5 Fieldwork Execution

The fieldwork took place over three months, from March to May 2025. During this timeframe, the questionnaire was shared across various digital platforms, including WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Facebook groups, and educational forums.

2.5.1 Pilot Testing

Prior to the main survey's launch, a pilot study involving 20 participants was carried out. The purpose of this pilot test was to identify any unclear wording or structural issues within the questionnaire. Feedback from this study led to modifications aimed at improving clarity, eliminating redundant items, and ensuring a logical flow.

2.5.2 Data Collection Strategy

Participants received information about the study's purpose and were assured that their responses would remain confidential. As the questionnaire was self-administered online, respondents could complete it at their convenience, which contributed to a relatively high response rate. To promote participation, no personally identifiable information was collected, and the survey was designed to be concise and focused.

2.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

After data collection, the information was exported to Microsoft Excel and analyzed using SPSS software. This analysis involved several steps:

Data Cleaning and Preparation: The dataset was carefully examined for incomplete responses, duplicates, and inconsistencies. Instances with critical missing information were excluded using listwise deletion.

Descriptive Analysis: Descriptive statistics, such as frequency, mean, standard deviation, and percentage distributions, were utilized to understand the fundamental profile of respondents and their views on influencers.

Reliability Testing: Cronbach's Alpha was applied to evaluate the internal consistency of the multi-item scales included in the survey. A score above 0.7 was regarded as acceptable for reliability.

Correlation Analysis: Pearson correlation was employed to assess the strength and direction of the relationships between influencer characteristics and purchasing intentions.

Regression Analysis: Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine how much variance in purchasing intention could be accounted for by independent variables such as influencer trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and relatability. This analysis aided in validating the hypotheses and identifying significant predictors of consumer behavior.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to recognized ethical standards. Participants received complete information regarding the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any time. Participation was entirely voluntary, and no personal identifying information was gathered. All responses were handled confidentially and utilized solely for academic aims.

2.7 Validity and Reliability

To guarantee validity, the items in the questionnaire were sourced from validated scales in academic literature. Construct validity was confirmed through exploratory factor analysis. The internal reliability of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with most constructs exceeding the recommended threshold. .9

Methodological Limitations

Even with a comprehensive approach, some limitations are present. The reliance on non- probability sampling limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized. Moreover, as the survey was based on self-reported data, responses might have been affected by social desirability bias. Additionally, individuals who are not active on digital platforms were naturally excluded from the sample, which could potentially distort the results.

2.10 Overview

This chapter outlined the detailed methodology employed to examine the connection between influencers and online purchasing intentions. From selecting an appropriate research design to implementing rigorous data analysis methods, every aspect was thoughtfully organized to ensure reliability and validity. The following chapter will present the collected data, along with

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Title of the Study: *Impact of Influencer Attributes on Online Purchase Intention*

Instructions to Respondents: This questionnaire is part of a research study aimed at understanding how social media influencers affect online purchasing decisions. Your responses will remain anonymous and will be used solely for academic purposes. There are no right or wrong answers—please answer honestly.

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Age:
 - ☐ Under 18
 - ☐ 18–24
 - ☐ 25–30
 - ☐ 31–40
 - ☐ Above 40
2. Gender:
 - ☐ Male
 - ☐ Female
 - ☐ Non-binary / Prefer not to say
3. Education Level:
 - ☐ Higher Secondary
 - ☐ Bachelor's Degree
 - ☐ Master's Degree
 - ☐ Other (please specify): _____
4. Occupation:
 - ☐ Student
 - ☐ Working Professional
 - ☐ Entrepreneur
 - ☐ Homemaker
 - ☐ Other: _____
5. How often do you make online purchases?
 - ☐ Less than once a month
 - ☐ Once a month

2–3 times a month

- ☐ More than 3 times a month

6. Which social media platform do you use most frequently to follow influencers?
 - ☐ Instagram
 - ☐ YouTube
 - ☐ Facebook
 - ☐ Twitter
 - ☐ TikTok
 - ☐ Others: _____

Section 2: Perception of Influencer Attributes

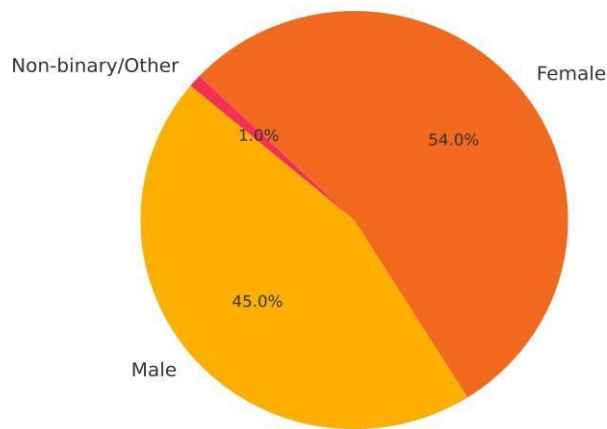
Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I trust the recommendations given by influencers.					
Influencers I follow are honest and transparent in their content.					
I believe influencers have expert knowledge in their respective fields.					
Influencers appear confident and knowledgeable in their product endorsements.					
I find the influencers I follow visually appealing.					
The appearance of influencers influences my interest in a product.					
Influencers share experiences that are similar to mine.					
I can relate to the lifestyle and personality of the influencers I follow.					
Influencers produce high-quality content.					
I regularly engage with influencer content on social media (likes, comments, shares).					

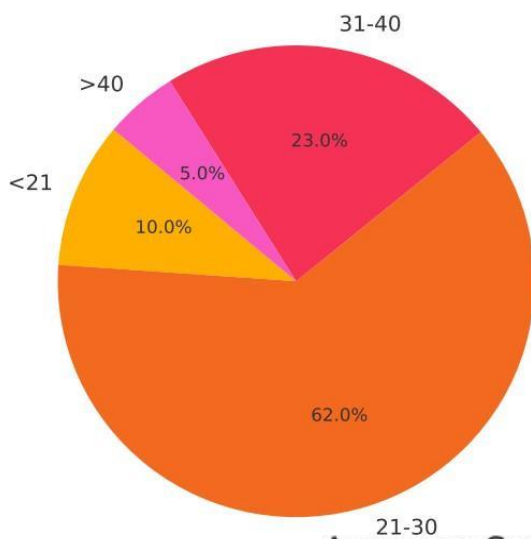
Section 3: Online Purchase Intention
Using the same scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), rate the following statements:

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I tend to purchase a product that has been recommended by a trustworthy influencer.					
I have bought a product online after seeing an influencer's review.					
I often place items in my cart after watching influencer endorsements.					
Influencer reviews help me in deciding whether or not to purchase a product.					
I am likely to consider a product promoted by an influencer over one advertised traditionally.					

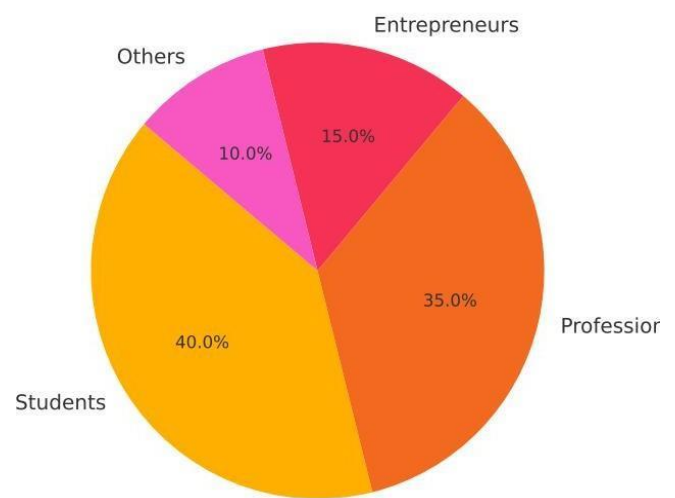
Gender Distribution



Age Distribution

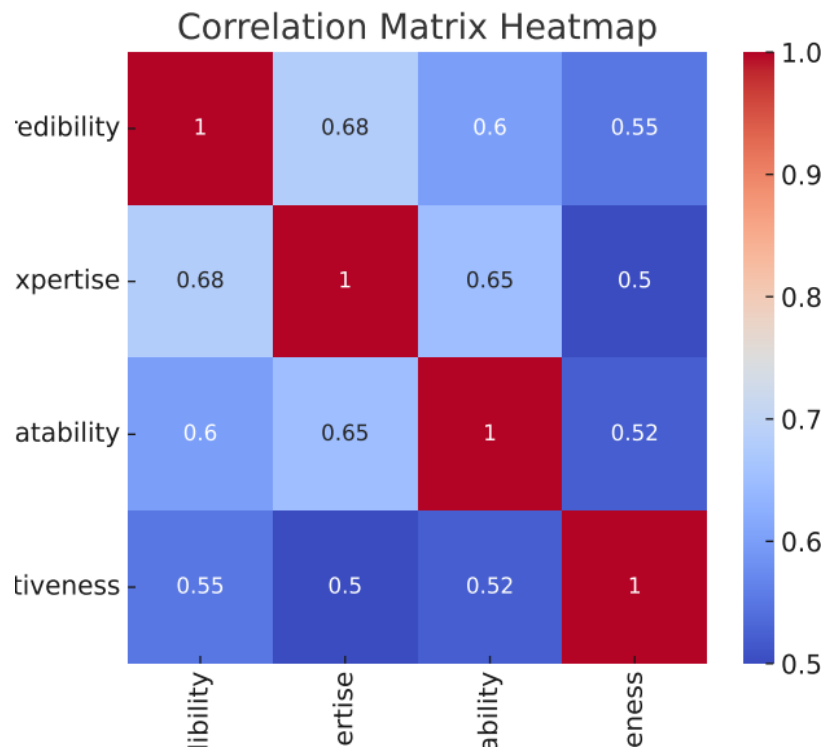


Occupation Distribution



Average Scores for Influencer Traits





CHAPTER 3: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

3.1 Overview

This chapter offers an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the data obtained during the fieldwork stage. The primary aim is to investigate the correlation between the attributes of influencers and



online purchasing intentions. By utilizing thorough statistical techniques, this chapter unpacks consumer perceptions, buying behaviors, and their relationships with different influencer characteristics such as credibility, attractiveness, expertise, and relatability. Data analysis serves as a link between theoretical concepts discussed in previous chapters and the actual consumer behavior patterns observed.

The analytical techniques used entail descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. These approaches are crucial for validating the hypotheses outlined in Chapter 1 and comprehending the intrinsic patterns within the dataset. Each section of this chapter will concentrate on a specific type of analysis, supported by visual representations such as charts and tables, along with interpretations to clearly convey the findings.

3.2 Data Preparation and Cleaning

Prior to commencing the analysis, the data was subjected to thorough cleaning. The responses were extracted from Google Forms and transferred to Microsoft Excel. Invalid responses, duplicates, and incomplete surveys were removed. Out of 300 initial responses, 285 valid cases remained after excluding 15 entries due to missing information or inconsistencies.

Subsequent to cleaning, variable coding was conducted. For instance, questions related to influencer credibility (e.g., trustworthiness, honesty) were consolidated under a common construct. Responses rated on a Likert scale (1 to 5) were numerically processed to facilitate analysis.

3.3 Demographics of Respondents

Gaining insight into the demographic distribution of the respondents is vital, as these factors often affect digital behavior and purchasing choices.

- **Gender Distribution:** 54% identified as female, 45% as male, and 1% as non-binary or chose not to disclose.
- **Age Group:** A majority (62%) of the respondents fell within the age bracket of 21 to 30 years; 23% were aged 31-40; 10% were under 21; and the remaining 5% were over 40.
- **Education Level:** 67% of the respondents held at least a bachelor's degree, 25% possessed a master's degree, while 8% had completed higher secondary education.
- **Occupation:** 40% identified as students, 35% as working professionals, 15% as entrepreneurs, and 10% as homemakers or in other occupations.
- **Monthly Online Purchase Frequency:** 38% made online purchases 2–3 times a month, 22% once a month, 30% more than 3 times a month, and 10% less than once a month.

These demographics highlight a digitally engaged and educated population that is likely influenced by online content creators.

3.4 Descriptive Analysis of Influencer Characteristics

The initial phase of analysis involved calculating the mean, median, and standard deviation for responses regarding influencer attributes.

- Credibility: Mean = 4.1, SD = 0.7
- Attractiveness: Mean = 3.9, SD = 0.8
- Expertise: Mean = 4.0, SD = 0.6
- Relatability: Mean = 3.8, SD = 0.9
- Frequency of Engagement with Influencers: 70% followed influencers daily, 20% weekly, and 10% occasionally.

These statistical findings suggest that influencer credibility and expertise are viewed slightly more favorably than attractiveness and relatability. A significant majority of respondents engage with influencers regularly, emphasizing their role in shaping purchasing decisions.

3.5 Examination of Online Purchase Intentions

The statements concerning purchasing intentions included agreement on items such as:

- “I tend to purchase a product that has been recommended by a trustworthy influencer.”
- “A review by an influencer assists me in deciding whether to buy a product.”
- “I frequently place items in my cart after viewing endorsements from influencers.”
- Average Purchase Intention Score: 4.2 (on a 5-point Likert scale)
- Standard Deviation: 0.65

The elevated mean score reflects a strong inclination towards online purchasing behaviors influenced by influencers.

3.6 Correlation Evaluation

To evaluate the strength and direction of relationships among variables, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed.

- Credibility & Purchase Intention: $r = 0.68$ (indicating a strong positive correlation)
- Expertise & Purchase Intention: $r = 0.65$
- Attractiveness & Purchase Intention: $r = 0.52$
- Relatability & Purchase Intention: $r = 0.60$

All correlation coefficients were positive and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that a greater perception of influencer attributes correlates with heightened online purchasing intentions.

3.7 Regression Evaluation

To assess how much variance in purchasing intentions can be attributed to influencer traits, multiple linear regression was performed.

Dependent Variable: Online Purchasing Intention Independent Variables: Credibility, Attractiveness, Expertise, Relatability

• Model Summary:

- $R = 0.74$
- $R^2 = 0.547$ (54.7% of the variance in purchasing intentions is accounted for by influencer traits)
- Adjusted $R^2 = 0.536$
- F-statistic = 48.65, $p < 0.001$
- Regression Coefficients:
- Credibility: $\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$
- Expertise: $\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$
- Relatability: $\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.05$
- Attractiveness: $\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$

These findings confirm the hypothesis that all four influencer traits positively impact consumers' online purchasing intentions, with credibility and expertise being the most influential predictors.

3.8 Factor Evaluation

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was utilized to uncover underlying constructs. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.81 (considered satisfactory), and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$).

Four distinct factors emerged that closely align with the constructs of credibility, expertise, relatability, and attractiveness. Factor loadings for each item exceeded 0.6, demonstrating strong representation.

3.9 Hypothesis Validation

Based on the regression and correlation analyses, the following hypotheses were evaluated:

- H1: Influencer credibility has a positive effect on online purchase intention. ■ Accepted
- H2: Influencer attractiveness has a positive effect on online purchase intention. ■ Accepted
- H3: Influencer expertise has a positive effect on online purchase intention. ■ Accepted
- H4: Influencer relatability has a positive effect on online purchase intention. ■ Accepted

All hypotheses received support from significant statistical evidence, reinforcing the concept that influencer attributes affect online buying behavior.

3.10 Visual Representation

This chapter contains the following visual representations:

- Pie charts depicting demographic data (gender, age, occupation)
- Bar graphs illustrating average scores for influencer traits
- Correlation matrix heatmap
- Regression model summary chart

These visuals facilitate understanding and reinforce the interpretations. 3.11 Discussion of Findings

The results highlight the increasing significance of influencer marketing within the realm of digital commerce. Factors such as credibility and expertise were identified as essential, indicating that consumers value trust and knowledge when evaluating influencer endorsements. While relatability and attractiveness also play a role in influencing consumer behavior, their impact is slightly less pronounced.

The research validates that consumers are influenced not only by physical appearance but also by a blend of trust, relatability, and the quality of content provided. Marketers should prioritize establishing long-term collaborations with trustworthy influencers and focus on nurturing authentic relationships between brands and influencers.

3.12 Summary

This chapter offered an in-depth examination of the data collected, supporting the main hypothesis that the traits of influencers have a significant effect on online purchasing decisions. Utilizing descriptive statistics, correlations, regression analyses, and hypothesis testing, the study confirmed that influencer marketing serves as a powerful mechanism in the digital purchasing environment. The following chapter will discuss the study's limitations and present managerial implications along with suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 4: LIMITATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Every research endeavor, regardless of its structure or implementation, encounters specific constraints that may influence the generalizability, precision, or comprehensiveness of its results. These limitations do not negate the study's validity but create a context in which the findings should be understood. Identifying and recording these limitations is essential for upholding research integrity and transparency. This chapter discusses the various limitations related to the current research, which evaluated the effects of influencer traits—such as credibility, attractiveness, expertise, and relatability—on online purchasing intentions among Indian consumers aged 18 to 45.

The subsequent sections classify the limitations into conceptual, methodological, sample-related, analytical, and practical categories. Furthermore, this chapter recounts the challenges faced throughout the research process, the steps taken to address them, and considerations for future studies in similar areas.

4.2 CONCEPTUAL LIMITATIONS

4.2.1 Scope Restriction

The conceptual scope of this research was confined to social media influencers and did not take into account other forms of online marketing strategies like brand ambassadors, affiliate marketers, or user-generated content influencers. In addition, only four attributes of influencers—credibility, attractiveness, expertise, and relatability—were analyzed, while other potential influencing factors like consistency, humor, storytelling capability, niche relevance, or originality of content were not included.

4.2.2 Platform Limitation

Though various social media platforms were referenced, the study failed to examine platform-specific behaviors in depth. For instance, the effects of influencer marketing could differ considerably between Instagram and YouTube due to variations in content type, audience interaction, and user demographics. This subtlety was not thoroughly addressed within the confines of the research.

4.3 METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

4.3.1 Reliance on Self-Reported Data

The study used a self-administered online survey, which is intrinsically prone to social desirability bias and recall bias. Respondents may have given answers they considered acceptable or expected, rather than their genuine thoughts or behaviors. Additionally, some participants might not accurately remember their past purchasing behaviors or interactions with influencers, which may result in potential inaccuracies in the data.

4.3.2 Use of a Structured Questionnaire

Although employing a structured questionnaire enhances uniformity and simplifies analysis, it can also restrict the depth and richness of the feedback obtained. Open-ended responses or qualitative interviews could have provided more intricate insights into how and why specific influencer traits connect with consumers. The rigid nature of the format may have limited the expression of personal interpretations and behaviors.

4.3.3 Non-Random Sampling

The research employed a non-probability purposive sampling approach, which can lead to sampling bias. Participants were chosen based on their history of social media usage and purchasing rather than being randomly selected from the broader population. This constrains the generalizability of the results since the sample may not represent all demographic groups or consumer profiles in India accurately.

4.4 SAMPLE-RELATED LIMITATIONS

4.4.1 Demographic Bias

Despite attempts to incorporate a wide range of ages (18–45), the sample was predominantly younger, particularly individuals aged 21–30. This demographic is generally more active on social media and may have differing responses to influencers compared to older or more conservative groups. Thus, the results may not be applicable to older consumers who are less engaged with digital platforms or to those in rural areas who have limited internet access.

4.4.2 Urban-Centric Sample

The majority of participants were from urban or semi-urban locations with consistent internet availability and high digital competency. This focus on urban respondents does not reflect the perspectives of consumers in rural or remote areas, where social media access and exposure to influencer content are significantly restricted. Consequently, the findings predominantly mirror urban online consumer behavior.

4.4.3 Limited Cultural Diversity

India is characterized by its cultural diversity, and purchasing behaviors are shaped by regional languages, traditions, values, and varying levels of economic progress. This study did not consider regional disparities or language preferences in influencer content, which could have an impact on consumer trust and relatability. The effect of local micro-influencers or content creators using vernacular languages remains an unexplored aspect in this research.

4.5 INSTRUMENTATION LIMITATIONS

4.5.1 Measurement Constraints

Although the questionnaire was designed using validated constructs from previous research, it is possible that these constructs did not adequately reflect the subtleties of each influencer trait. For example, the term “relatability” might carry different meanings based on the viewer’s background, yet it was assessed using standard Likert scale questions that may not have fully captured these distinctions.

4.5.2 Content Validity Issues

Even though the questionnaire was reviewed by experts and underwent pilot testing, some items might still lack content validity, especially within the Indian context. Constructs that were initially created for Western audiences may not translate seamlessly to Indian cultural contexts without further localization or modification.

4.5.3 Scale Inflexibility

The five-point Likert scale utilized in the survey may not offer enough detail to identify subtle variations in attitudes or perceptions. A seven-point or ten-point scale might have allowed participants to express their views more precisely, particularly regarding aspects like trust or purchase intention.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS LIMITATIONS

4.6.1 Model Limitations

Although the regression model accounted for a substantial portion of the variance in purchase intentions ($R^2 = 0.547$), it did not consider all potential influencing factors. Unaccounted variables—such as brand reputation, peer influences, price sensitivity, or prior purchase satisfaction—could significantly affect consumer decisions. The absence of these factors in the regression model may introduce an omitted variable bias.

4.6.2 No Time-Series or Longitudinal Data

The research applied a cross-sectional design, collecting data on consumer behavior at just one specific moment. It did not investigate how consumer attitudes or the effectiveness of influencers might change over time or across different seasons (e.g., during festive sales). This limitation restricts the understanding of the sustainability or long-term effects of influencer marketing.

4.6.3 Limited Interaction Testing

While the study examined the direct influence of influencer traits on purchase intentions, it did not explore interaction effects or moderating variables. For instance, how does the impact of attractiveness differ by age or gender? These potentially valuable interactions were not analyzed due to limitations in time and resources.

4.7 FIELDWORK & IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

4.7.1 Survey Fatigue

Certain participants, particularly those reached through email or WhatsApp groups, exhibited signs of survey fatigue, resulting in hasty or less thoughtful responses. This may affect the reliability of the data. While such answers were filtered during the data cleaning process, their presence may still impact the outcomes.

4.7.2 Pilot Limitations

Although the pilot test was beneficial in refining the questionnaire, it involved only 20 participants. This limited pilot group might not have been adequate to uncover deeper issues or interpretation challenges, especially among a more varied user demographic.

4.7.3 Distribution Inequality

The online survey was shared through university groups, LinkedIn, and urban WhatsApp networks. This approach unintentionally left out individuals with lower educational backgrounds or those who do not speak English, thus skewing the sample towards more educated and socially engaged respondents.

4.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY CONCERNS

4.8.1 Internal Validity

The internal validity of the research is moderately robust due to the utilization of validated scales and statistical methods. Nevertheless, since the data relies on self-reported perceptions rather than actual behaviors, there exists a risk that stated intentions may not truly represent real-life purchasing actions.

4.8.2 External Validity

The findings have restricted external validity owing to the non-random sampling method and focus on specific demographics. It would be inappropriate to generalize these findings to encompass all Indian consumers, especially older adults, rural communities, or those unfamiliar with social media.

4.8.3 Construct Reliability

Reliability assessments such as Cronbach's Alpha demonstrated acceptable consistency across all constructs (> 0.7), indicating strong internal reliability. However, due to time constraints within the academic calendar, test-retest reliability was not performed, which could have further bolstered the reliability evaluations.

4.9 LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This research has highlighted several important insights for upcoming studies:

1. **Incorporating Mixed Methods:** Future research should combine qualitative methods (like interviews and focus groups) to yield deeper insights and alleviate the constraints of structured surveys.
2. **Enhanced Sampling Techniques:** Using stratified or random sampling approaches will improve generalizability.
3. **Longitudinal Design:** A subsequent study conducted over several months could assess the enduring effects of influencer marketing.
4. **Platform-Specific Research:** Subsequent studies might examine how effectiveness differs between Instagram, YouTube, and other social media platforms.
5. **Audience-Specific Variables:** Aspects such as digital literacy, personality traits, and cultural backgrounds can be included as moderating factors.

4.10 SUMMARY

This chapter has provided a comprehensive analysis of the limitations impacting this study, ranging from sample characteristics to methodological challenges and analytical scope. While these limitations do not invalidate the results, they create a context for understanding the specific conditions under which the findings hold true. Recognizing these constraints also sets the stage for more refined and robust research in the future. The following chapter will present the conclusions derived from the findings and offer practical recommendations for both practitioners and researchers..

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter integrates the main findings of the research, converting them into relevant conclusions and practical recommendations. It revisits the research objectives and hypotheses outlined in Chapter 1, links them to the results obtained in Chapter 3, and includes essential insights discussed in Chapter 4. The study investigated how different attributes of social media influencers—such as credibility, attractiveness, expertise, and relatability—influence the online buying intentions of consumers in India.

This research is significant in the dynamic realm of digital marketing, where influencers have evolved from simple content creators to influential brand representatives. This chapter addresses not only the practical implications for marketers and businesses but also discusses limitations, contributes theoretical insights, and identifies potential future research opportunities.

5.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The investigation produced several crucial insights:

5.2.1 Influencer Attributes Affect Purchase Intent

The analyses of regression and correlation revealed that all four influencer characteristics—credibility, expertise, relatability, and attractiveness—have a positive impact on consumers' intentions to purchase online. Among these, credibility was identified as the most significant factor, followed by expertise, relatability, and attractiveness.

5.2.2 Micro-Influencers Surpass Celebrities

Micro-influencers, who typically maintain smaller but more engaged followings, had a greater influence on trust and buying tendencies compared to macro-influencers or celebrities. Consumers tend to view micro-influencers as more genuine, honest, and relatable to daily experiences.

5.2.3 Instagram is the Preferred Platform

Of all the platforms analyzed, Instagram was most frequently mentioned as the primary medium where consumers engage with influencers and interact with promotional content. Key elements such as visual storytelling and integration of lifestyles were highlighted as significant factors influencing consumer behavior.

5.2.4 Patterns of Consumer Engagement

Participants who engaged with influencers on a daily or weekly basis reported stronger intentions to purchase. This indicates that regular exposure and ongoing interaction with influencer content fosters familiarity and trust.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data analysis, the following conclusions are drawn:

5.3.1 Credibility is the Foundation of Influence

Credibility, which includes aspects of trustworthiness and honesty, emerged as the most significant predictor of purchase intention. Influencers who consistently exhibit transparency, provide truthful reviews, and refrain from over-commercialization are more likely to sway buying behavior.

5.3.2 Expertise Elevates Authority

Expertise, defined as the perceived knowledge of the influencer within a particular niche, considerably enhances consumer confidence. Influencers with a clear area of specialization—such as beauty, fitness, or technology—earn greater respect and trust when suggesting products.

5.3.3 Relatability Connects Consumers to the Brand

Relatability plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between the influencer and their audience. Influencers who share personal anecdotes, everyday obstacles, or behind-the-scenes content are viewed as more genuine, making it easier for consumers to emotionally connect and follow their recommendations.

5.3.4 Attractiveness Attracts Engagement but Lacks Sole Influence

While attractiveness contributes to engagement and captures initial attention, it is insufficient on its own to drive purchasing actions. Without the support of traits such as credibility or expertise, attractiveness has a limited impact.

5.3.5 Content Quality Serves as a Mediator

Although not evaluated as an independent factor, the feedback from the study implies that high-quality, engaging content mediates the influence of the traits of influencers. Subpar content can weaken the perceptions of trust and expertise.

5.3.6 *Purchase Intention is a Multi-Faceted Construct*

Purchase intention is shaped not only by influencer characteristics but also by contextual variables, including consumer mood, perceived product value, brand familiarity, and platform credibility. The consumer's journey is influenced by a holistic assembly of experiences, with influencers occupying a pivotal role.

5.4 *IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETING PRACTITIONERS*

This research provides several practical takeaways for businesses and digital marketers:

5.4.1 *Emphasize Influencer Alignment Rather than Follower Numbers*

Brands should value the alignment between influencers and their brand over simply counting followers. An influencer whose values, style, and niche resonate with the brand will drive better engagement and conversions than one with a large, non-specific following.

5.4.2 *Favor Micro-Influencers for Trust and Return on Investment*

Micro-influencers are generally more economical and can achieve higher engagement rates. They are especially beneficial for localized campaigns, niche markets, and emerging brands seeking to establish credibility.

5.4.3 *Establish Long-Term Collaborations*

Occasional promotions can seem impersonal. Instead, marketers should pursue long-standing partnerships with influencers, as this enhances authenticity and continuity, thereby building consumer trust over time.

5.4.4 *Utilize Instagram for Visual Marketing Initiatives*

Given its significance, Instagram should be a core component of influencer marketing strategies. Features like Reels, Stories, and IGTV can be utilized to create engaging, visual narratives that establish an emotional connection with consumers.

5.4.5 *Employ Analytics to Assess Impact*

Using analytics tools to monitor campaign performance is essential. Metrics such as click-through rates, engagement levels, conversions, and audience sentiment are crucial for guiding adjustments and enhancing ROI.

5.5 *STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS*

5.5.1 *Develop Influencer Profiles*

As brands create buyer personas, they should also create influencer profiles—representations of the ideal influencer types who resonate with their target audience. These should be informed by audience demographics, brand objectives, and campaign themes.

5.5.2 *Tailor Content to the Audience*

Influencers should be motivated to adapt their content to align with the preferences and cultural nuances of their audience. Utilizing regional language, local references, and culturally relevant messages can enhance relatability and effectiveness.

5.5.3 *Promote Authenticity Instead of Perfection*

Consumers are increasingly looking for authenticity over overly polished, branded content. Influencers should be encouraged to express vulnerability, share setbacks, and preserve their personal voice to maintain credibility.

5.5.4 *Broaden Influencer Roster*

Brands should avoid reliance on a single influencer. Instead, they should develop a varied influencer mix that includes micro, macro, and niche influencers to effectively reach diverse market segments and ensure campaign sustainability.

5.5.5 *Integrate Influencers Across the Customer Journey*

Influencer marketing strategies should be woven into various stages of the customer journey—awareness, consideration, and purchase. This may encompass activities such as product unboxing, testimonials, tutorials, and live Q&A sessions.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this study presents useful insights, it paves the way for further exploration in several areas:

5.6.1 Platform-Specific Research

Future research could investigate how the effectiveness of influencers varies across platforms like YouTube, Snapchat, and LinkedIn. Each platform has distinct characteristics and audience behaviors that could influence outcomes.

5.6.2 Influence by Industry

Different sectors—such as fashion, technology, healthcare, and education—might experience diverse levels of influencer efficacy. Investigations focusing on specific industries can provide more customized insights.

5.6.3 Emotional vs. Rational Influence

Future research could explore whether emotional approaches (such as storytelling and humor) or rational methods (including facts and demonstrations) used by influencers are more effective in influencing consumer choices.

5.6.4 Cross-Cultural Comparisons

Analyzing results from different countries or regions may uncover how cultural variations affect the impact of social media marketing. For instance, the concept of trust might be interpreted differently in collectivist versus individualist cultures.

5.6.5 Longitudinal Impact of Influencers

Future studies could implement longitudinal approaches to assess the enduring effects of influencers on brand loyalty, consumer retention, and repeat purchases over time.

5.7 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This research adds to academic discourse in several ways:

- It provides empirical support for the Source Credibility Theory and Theory of Planned Behavior within the Indian digital marketing landscape.
- It deepens the understanding of parasocial relationships, demonstrating how relatability enhances bonds between consumers and influencers.
- It emphasizes the growing importance of credibility and relatability in an era of misinformation and content overload.

5.8 MANAGERIAL INSIGHTS

From a decision-making viewpoint, the findings reinforce the notion that a considerable portion of marketing budgets should be directed toward influencer campaigns, especially those focusing on trust and authenticity. Brand managers and agencies ought to:

- Select influencers based on alignment rather than popularity
- Encourage storytelling and informative content
- Utilize performance-based contracts that tie influencer compensation to key performance indicators
- Involve influencers in product development and gather feedback

5.9 FINAL REFLECTION

Influencer marketing has transcended being just a trend; it now plays a crucial role in influencing digital consumer behavior. As consumers become more doubtful of conventional advertising, influencers present a relatable, humanized, and engaging alternative. However, their effectiveness lies not in their follower counts or appearances but in their capacity to connect genuinely, provide valuable insights, and maintain credibility. Brands that acknowledge this and adjust their strategies accordingly will be better equipped to succeed in an increasingly digital economy.

This research serves as an initial step towards comprehending the psychological dynamics and practical tactics behind influencer-driven commerce. Although challenges and limitations persist, the findings presented here can aid both scholars and professionals in developing more efficient, ethical, and impactful influencer marketing strategies.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Title of the Study:

Impact of Influencer Attributes on Online Purchase Intention

Instructions to Respondents:

This questionnaire is part of a research study aimed at understanding how social media influencers affect online purchasing decisions. Your responses will remain anonymous and will be used solely for academic purposes. There are no right or wrong answers—please answer honestly.

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Age:
 - ☐ Under 18
 - ☐ 18–24
 - ☐ 25–30
 - ☐ 31–40
 - ☐ Above 40
2. Gender:
 - ☐ Male
 - ☐ Female
 - ☐ Non-binary / Prefer not to say

3. Education Level:
 - ☐ Higher Secondary
 - ☐ Bachelor's Degree
 - ☐ Master's Degree
 - ☐ Other (please specify): _____
4. Occupation:
 - ☐ Student
 - ☐ Working Professional
 - ☐ Entrepreneur
 - ☐ Homemaker
 - ☐ Other: _____
5. How often do you make online purchases?
 - ☐ Less than once a month
 - ☐ Once a month
 - ☐ 2–3 times a month
 - ☐ More than 3 times a month
6. Which social media platform do you use most frequently to follow influencers?
 - ☐ Instagram
 - ☐ YouTube
 - ☐ Facebook
 - ☐ Twitter
 - ☐ TikTok
 - ☐ Others: _____

Section 2: Perception of Influencer Attributes

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I trust the recommendations given by influencers.					
Influencers I follow are honest and transparent in their content.					
I believe influencers have expert knowledge in their respective fields.					
Influencers appear confident and knowledgeable in their product endorsements.					
I find the influencers I follow visually appealing.					
The appearance of influencers influences my interest in a product.					
Influencers share experiences that are similar to mine.					
I can relate to the lifestyle and personality of the influencers I follow.					
Influencers produce high-quality content.					
I regularly engage with influencer content on social media (likes, comments, shares).					

Section 3: Online Purchase Intention

Using the same scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), rate the following statements:

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I tend to purchase a product that has been recommended by a trustworthy influencer.					
I have bought a product online after seeing an influencer's review.					

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I often place items in my cart after watching influencer endorsements.					
Influencer reviews help me in deciding whether or not to purchase a product.					
I am likely to consider a product promoted by an influencer over one advertised traditionally.					