

**IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON DIGITAL CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN CHENNAI CITY**

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**ABSTRACT**

The emergence of social media platforms has significantly transformed marketing strategies, leading to the rise of influencer marketing as a powerful tool to shape consumer behaviour. This study aims to examine the impact of influencer marketing on the buying behaviour of digital consumers in Chennai City. The study focuses on key influencer attributes such as credibility, attractiveness, expertise, content quality, and electronic word-of-mouth. A descriptive and analytical research design was adopted. Primary data were collected from 600 digital consumers through a structured questionnaire using convenience sampling. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation, ANOVA, and multiple regression analysis were employed. The findings reveal that influencer credibility and content quality have a significant positive influence on consumer trust and purchase decisions, while attractiveness plays a moderate role. The study concludes that influencer marketing significantly affects digital consumer buying behaviour and provides practical implications for marketers to design effective influencer strategies.

**Keywords:** *Influencer Marketing, Digital Consumers, Buying Behaviour, Consumer Trust, e-WOM, Chennai City.*

**INTRODUCTION**

The rapid advancement of digital technologies and widespread adoption of social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Twitter have revolutionized marketing practices. Influencer marketing has emerged as a prominent strategy where individuals with a significant online following promote products and services to their audience. Digital consumers increasingly rely on influencers for product recommendations, reviews, and experiences before making purchase decisions. Influencers act as opinion leaders who shape consumer perception, engagement, trust, and ultimately buying behaviour. In urban regions such as Chennai City, where internet penetration and smartphone usage are high, influencer marketing plays a crucial role in influencing consumer decisions. This study attempts to analyze how influencer marketing impacts digital consumer buying behaviour by focusing on key dimensions such as credibility, attractiveness, expertise, content quality, and electronic word-of-mouth.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Kim and Ko (2012) found that social media marketing activities significantly enhance customer engagement and purchase intention through trust-building mechanisms. De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) highlighted that influencer characteristics such as attractiveness and number of followers positively influence brand attitudes and purchase intentions. Lou and Yuan (2019) emphasized that influencer credibility and content value significantly affect consumer trust and buying behaviour. Freberg et al. (2011) identified that perceived influencer expertise and authenticity increase consumer reliance on influencer recommendations. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) reported that Instagram influencers have a strong impact on young consumers' purchasing decisions, especially through relatable content and trust. Sokolova and Kefi (2020) found that parasocial interaction between influencers and followers enhances consumer engagement and purchase intention. Overall, the literature indicates that influencer marketing plays a significant role in shaping consumer perception, trust, and purchase behaviour, but limited studies focus specifically on Chennai City, indicating a research gap.

**RESEARCH GAP**

Although numerous studies have examined the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour, most research has been conducted in Western contexts or at a global level. Limited empirical studies focus on Indian urban markets, particularly Chennai City.

Further, previous studies have mainly emphasized general social media marketing rather than isolating influencer-specific attributes such as credibility, expertise, and content quality. There is also a lack of studies integrating influencer characteristics with multiple dimensions of consumer buying behaviour such as perception, trust, engagement, purchase decision, and satisfaction.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To examine the influence of influencer marketing on digital consumer buying behaviour in Chennai City.
2. To analyze the impact of influencer attributes (credibility, attractiveness, expertise, content quality, e-WOM) on consumer behaviour.
3. To study the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer trust, engagement, and purchase decision.
4. To analyze the influence of demographic variables on responses to influencer marketing.
5. To identify the most influential factor affecting consumer buying behaviour.

**HYPOTHESES**

- H01: Influencer marketing has no significant influence on digital consumer buying behaviour.  
H02: Influencer credibility has no significant influence on consumer trust.  
H03: Influencer attractiveness has no significant influence on consumer engagement.  
H04: Influencer expertise has no significant influence on consumer perception.  
H05: Content quality has no significant influence on purchase decision.  
H06: e-WOM has no significant influence on consumer buying behaviour.  
H07: There is no significant difference in influencer marketing impact across demographic variables.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design:** Descriptive and analytical research design

**Area of Study:** Chennai City

**Data Collection:**

- Primary Data: Structured questionnaire  
Secondary Data: Journals, articles, reports

**Sampling Technique:** Convenience sampling

**Sample Size:** A total of 650 responses were collected, out of which 50 responses were excluded as they were outside Chennai City. The final sample size consists of 600 respondents.

**Measurement Scale:** 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)

**Statistical Tools Used:**

1. Percentage analysis
2. Mean and standard deviation
3. ANOVA
4. Multiple regression analysis

**DATA ANALYSIS**

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	320	53.3
	Female	280	46.7
Age	Below 25	210	35.0
	25-35	230	38.3
	Above 35	160	26.7

Source: Primary data

The data indicates that a majority of respondents belong to the young and middle-aged category, suggesting that influencer marketing predominantly affects digitally active consumers.

**Table 2: Mean Score of Influencer Marketing Factors**

Factor	Mean	Std. Deviation
Credibility	4.21	0.65
Content Quality	4.15	0.70
e-WOM	4.08	0.72
Expertise	3.95	0.75
Attractiveness	3.60	0.80

Source: Computed data

The results highlight that **credibility** has the highest mean value, indicating that consumers prioritize trustworthiness of influencers. Content quality and e-WOM also show strong influence.

**Table 3: ANOVA – Influence of Age on Buying Behaviour**

Variable	F Value	Sig. Value	Result
Age	4.326	0.014	Significant

Source: Computed data

It can be inferred that age significantly influences consumer response to influencer marketing, indicating varying behavioural patterns across age groups. Since the significance value is less than 0.05, H07 is rejected, indicating that demographic variables significantly influence the impact of influencer marketing.

**Table 4: Regression Analysis**

Variable	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Credibility	0.312	6.210	0.000
Content Quality	0.285	5.870	0.000
e-WOM	0.241	4.980	0.000
Expertise	0.198	3.950	0.001
Attractiveness	0.112	2.210	0.027

Source: Computed data

Credibility (Beta = 0.312,  $p < 0.05$ ) demonstrates the strongest positive influence on consumer buying behaviour, indicating that trustworthy influencers significantly affect purchase decisions. Content quality and e-WOM also exhibit strong influence, while attractiveness shows comparatively lower impact. Since all p-values are less than 0.05, all null hypotheses (H02 to H06) are rejected, indicating that influencer marketing variables significantly influence consumer buying behaviour.

**FINDINGS**

The analysis clearly establishes that influencer marketing has a statistically significant impact on the buying behaviour of digital consumers in Chennai City. The regression results indicate that all influencer-related variables credibility, content quality, e-WOM, expertise, and attractiveness have a positive and significant influence on consumer behaviour.

Among these variables, **credibility emerges as the most influential factor**, indicating that consumers strongly rely on trustworthy and authentic influencers when making purchase decisions. This highlights that perceived honesty, reliability, and transparency of influencers are critical determinants of consumer trust and behavioural intention.

**Content quality** is identified as the second most influential factor, suggesting that consumers prefer informative, engaging, and visually appealing content. High-quality content enhances consumer understanding, reduces perceived risk, and increases purchase confidence.

The influence of **electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM)** further emphasizes the importance of peer opinions, reviews, and shared experiences. Consumers tend to rely on feedback and recommendations communicated through influencers, which significantly shapes their buying decisions.

**Expertise** of influencers also plays a meaningful role, indicating that consumers value knowledgeable influencers who provide detailed product insights. This enhances consumer perception and supports informed decision-making.

Although **attractiveness** has a statistically significant impact, its influence is comparatively lower than other variables. This suggests that while visual appeal may attract attention, it is not sufficient to drive purchase decisions without credibility and valuable content.

The ANOVA results reveal that **demographic variables, particularly age**, significantly influence consumer responses to influencer marketing. Younger consumers are more responsive to influencer content, indicating higher engagement levels among digitally active segments.

Overall, the findings confirm that influencer marketing is not merely a promotional tool but a **strategic driver of consumer behaviour**, particularly in urban markets like Chennai City.

**SUGGESTIONS**

**Practical Suggestions for Marketers**

- Focus on Credible Influencers**  
Marketers should collaborate with influencers who demonstrate authenticity, transparency, and trustworthiness rather than selecting influencers based solely on follower count.
- Prioritize High-Quality Content**  
Influencer campaigns should emphasize informative, creative, and engaging content that clearly communicates product benefits and usage.
- Leverage e-WOM Strategies**  
Brands should encourage influencers to generate genuine reviews, testimonials, and interactive discussions to strengthen consumer trust and influence purchase decisions.
- Select Domain-Specific Influencers**  
Collaborating with influencers who possess expertise in specific product categories (e.g., tech, fashion, health) enhances credibility and improves consumer perception.
- Move Beyond Attractiveness-Based Marketing**  
While visual appeal can attract attention, marketers should focus more on content value and authenticity to drive conversions.
- Target Younger Consumer Segments**  
Since younger consumers are more influenced by social media, brands should design platform-specific campaigns targeting this segment.
- Platform-Specific Strategy (Important for Your Study)**

Instagram → Engagement & Reels  
YouTube → Detailed product explanation  
WhatsApp → Personalized marketing  
Telegram → Community-based promotion

#### THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

1. The study contributes to existing literature by integrating **influencer attributes with multiple dimensions of consumer buying behaviour**.
2. It strengthens the understanding of **trust-based consumer decision-making in digital environments**.
3. Provides empirical evidence from **Chennai City**, addressing a geographical research gap.

#### Policy / Strategic Implications

1. Digital marketing strategies should be aligned with **consumer trust-building mechanisms**.
2. Businesses should invest in **long-term influencer relationships** rather than one-time promotions.
3. Ethical influencer marketing practices should be encouraged to maintain consumer confidence.

#### CONCLUSION

The study concludes that influencer marketing plays a crucial role in shaping the buying behaviour of digital consumers in Chennai City. Among the influencing factors, credibility, content quality, and e-WOM are identified as the most significant determinants of consumer decision-making. While attractiveness contributes to consumer engagement, it is not a primary driver of purchase behaviour.

The findings highlight that digital consumers are increasingly rational and information-oriented, relying on authentic and value-driven content rather than superficial promotional appeals. The study emphasizes the need for marketers to adopt a strategic and consumer-centric approach to influencer marketing.

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