



The influence of social media influencer marketing on consumer buying behaviour: A study of young consumers in Bhopal

Dr. Ashish Mishra

Assistant Professor, Sagar Institute of Science and Technology (SISTec), Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.66856/ijcmr.2026.12.4.12273>

Abstract

Social media influencer marketing has emerged as an important promotional tool for brands, particularly among young consumers. The present study examines the influence of social media influencer marketing on the buying behaviour of young consumers in Bhopal. The study specifically investigates the role of four influencer characteristics—credibility, authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness—and examines whether buying behaviour differs according to the frequency of exposure to influencer content. Primary data were collected from 141 young consumers in Bhopal using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple linear regression, One-Way ANOVA, and the Kruskal–Wallis test were used for data analysis. The findings indicate that overall influencer attributes have a weak positive but statistically nonsignificant relationship with buying behaviour ($r = 0.096$, $p = 0.257$). The multiple regression model also found that the four influencer characteristics collectively explained only 3.5% of the variation in buying behaviour ($R^2 = 0.035$, $p = 0.307$). Individually, credibility, authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness did not demonstrate statistically significant relationships with buying behaviour at the 5% level. Further, no significant difference in buying behaviour was observed across different levels of exposure to influencer content, as confirmed by both ANOVA ($p = 0.645$) and the Kruskal–Wallis test ($p = 0.841$). The study concludes that influencer marketing exposure and selected influencer characteristics alone may not be sufficient to explain the buying behaviour of young consumers in Bhopal. Other factors such as product quality, price, brand preference, and consumer needs may also contribute to purchasing decisions.

Keywords: Social media influencer marketing, buying behaviour, influencer credibility, authenticity, expertise, attractiveness, young consumers, Bhopal

Introduction

The rapid growth of social media has significantly transformed the way consumers communicate, obtain information, evaluate brands, and make purchasing decisions. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and other digital networks have become important channels through which consumers discover products, compare alternatives, read reviews, and interact with brands. This transformation has also changed the nature of marketing communication, with businesses increasingly moving beyond traditional advertising towards more interactive, personalized, and socially engaging forms of promotion.

One of the most prominent developments in digital marketing is social media influencer marketing. Influencers are individuals who have established a significant following and credibility within a particular area of interest and are able to affect the opinions, attitudes, and behaviours of their followers. Influencer marketing involves collaboration between brands and such individuals to communicate product or brand-related messages to their audiences. Unlike conventional advertisements, influencer-generated content is often presented through personal experiences, product demonstrations, reviews, recommendations, and lifestyle-related content. As a result, consumers may perceive influencer communication as more relatable and authentic than traditional forms of advertising.

The growing popularity of influencer marketing is particularly relevant to young consumers, who constitute an important segment of social media users. Young consumers frequently use social media platforms for entertainment,

information, communication, product discovery, and interaction with online communities. Exposure to influencers can therefore play an important role in shaping their perceptions of products and brands. Influencers may create awareness about new products, provide information about product features, demonstrate product usage, and influence consumers' preferences among competing alternatives. In some cases, influencer recommendations may also encourage consumers to try products that they had not previously considered purchasing.

The effectiveness of influencer marketing, however, does not depend solely on the size of an influencer's following. Several characteristics of influencers may determine the extent to which consumers respond to their recommendations. Credibility is particularly important because consumers are more likely to consider information from influencers whom they perceive as trustworthy and reliable. Expertise may increase the persuasive value of recommendations when influencers possess knowledge or experience related to the products they promote. Similarly, authenticity can influence consumer responses because audiences may be more receptive to genuine experiences and opinions than to content perceived as purely commercial. Attractiveness, including the influencer's personality, communication style, and overall appeal, may also contribute to audience engagement and product interest. Social media influencer marketing may consequently influence several aspects of consumer buying behaviour, including product awareness, purchase intention, brand preference, willingness to try a product, and actual purchase decisions. However, the influence may vary according to the

type of product, characteristics of the influencer, level of consumer involvement, and individual perceptions of the promotional content. Excessive sponsored content or a lack of transparency may also reduce consumer trust and weaken the effectiveness of influencer recommendations. Therefore, understanding the factors that make influencer marketing persuasive is important for both marketers and researchers. The relevance of influencer marketing is particularly significant in the context of Bhopal, a growing urban centre with an increasingly active young and digitally connected consumer population. Young consumers in Bhopal are exposed to influencer content from both national and local creators across various product categories, including fashion, beauty, food, technology, lifestyle, fitness, and consumer products. However, consumer responses in a specific city may differ from broader national trends because of differences in demographic characteristics, purchasing habits, social environment, and patterns of digital media usage. Therefore, city-level empirical research can provide a more focused understanding of how influencer marketing affects young consumers.

Although previous studies have examined social media influencer marketing and consumer responses, there remains a need for primary empirical evidence focusing specifically on young consumers in Bhopal. In particular, examining the combined influence of influencer credibility, authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness can provide useful insights into the factors that contribute to consumer buying behaviour. Such an examination can help determine whether exposure to influencer marketing merely creates awareness or actually translates into stronger purchase intentions and buying decisions.

Against this background, the present study, titled “The Influence of Social Media Influencer Marketing on Consumer Buying Behaviour: A Study of Young Consumers in Bhopal,” examines the influence of selected influencer characteristics—credibility, authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness—on the buying behaviour of young consumers. The study is based on primary data collected from young consumers in Bhopal through a structured questionnaire. The study aims to provide empirical insights into the role of social media influencers in shaping contemporary consumer buying behaviour and to identify the influencer-related factors that are most relevant to young consumers.

Research Problem

Despite the increasing use of influencer marketing by brands, there is a need to understand whether influencer recommendations actually influence the buying behaviour of young consumers at the local market level. The effectiveness of influencer marketing may depend on how consumers perceive the influencer's credibility, authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness. Therefore, the present study investigates the influence of these factors on the buying behaviour of young consumers in Bhopal.

Literature Review

Tyagi (2025), in the study titled “The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Buying Behavior,” examined the growing influence of social media marketing on consumer purchasing behaviour, particularly among digitally active young consumers in India. The study found that more than 80% of consumers were influenced by a

brand's presence on social media platforms, highlighting the growing importance of social media in contemporary purchase decisions. Product quality and peer reviews emerged as particularly persuasive factors influencing consumer choices. The study also observed that influencer-generated content, including product reviews and tutorials, influenced the purchasing decisions of some consumers; however, the level of trust placed in influencers remained moderate. Instagram and YouTube were identified as highly engaging platforms, emphasizing the importance of visually appealing, interactive, and platform-specific content. The study further highlighted the significance of real-time engagement and personalized communication, particularly among consumers aged 18–24. Overall, Tyagi (2025) concluded that brands should adopt authentic, trust-based, and consumer-oriented social media marketing strategies, supported by meaningful engagement and personalized content, to strengthen consumer relationships and build long-term loyalty.

Rohilla (2024), in the study titled “Empirical Analysis of Influencer Marketing on Consumer Behavior and Purchase Decisions: Structural Equation Modeling,” examined the influence of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour and purchase decisions, with particular emphasis on the role of authentic and strategic influencer partnerships. The study highlighted that authenticity in influencer collaborations can enhance the credibility and effectiveness of marketing campaigns, thereby improving consumer engagement and conversion. It emphasized the importance of developing targeted and platform-specific content that resonates with particular audience segments. The study further identified transparency in influencer endorsements as an important factor in maintaining consumer trust and strengthening the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Rohilla (2024) also suggested that future research should include diverse demographic groups across different age groups, cultures, and geographical locations to improve the generalizability of findings. Comparative research across social media platforms and examination of different types of influencers and their specific characteristics were also recommended. Overall, the study provides a useful empirical foundation for understanding how authenticity, transparency, audience targeting, and platform-specific strategies can influence consumer behaviour and purchase decisions in the evolving digital marketing environment.

Abduraimov (2024), in the study titled “The Influence of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Behavior,” examined the growing role of social media influencers in shaping consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions. The study highlighted that authenticity and trustworthiness are critical determinants of influencer effectiveness, as consumers are more likely to respond positively to influencers whom they perceive as genuine and credible. The findings were also linked to the concepts of social proof and parasocial interaction, suggesting that consumers may be influenced by the opinions and behaviours of personalities with whom they feel connected. The study further emphasized the importance of platform-specific strategies, noting that Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok provide different opportunities for influencer marketing because of their distinct content formats and user engagement patterns. It also highlighted ethical considerations, particularly when marketing to younger and more impressionable audiences. Overall, Abduraimov

(2024) concluded that effective influencer marketing depends on authenticity, trust, psychological engagement, platform-specific strategies, and ethical practices, providing important insights into the role of social media influencers in contemporary consumer behaviour.

Blazevic Bogнар, Plesa Puljic, and Kadezabek (2019), in their study titled "Impact of Influencer Marketing on Consumer Behaviour," examined whether influencer marketing significantly affects consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions. The study particularly focused on the relationship between influencer recommendations, consumers' perceptions of promoted products, and their motivation to make purchasing decisions. The findings indicated that consumers respond significantly to recommendations made by social media influencers, suggesting that influencer endorsements can positively shape consumer perceptions and influence purchase decisions. The study confirmed a positive relationship between influencer recommendations and consumer responses, highlighting the potential of influencer marketing as an effective component of digital marketing campaigns. The authors concluded that businesses can strategically incorporate influencer marketing into their e-marketing campaigns to influence consumer perceptions and purchasing behaviour. The study provides an important foundation for understanding the role of influencer recommendations in shaping contemporary consumer decision-making.

Research Gap

The existing literature establishes that social media influencer marketing can influence consumer attitudes, purchase intentions, and buying decisions, particularly through factors such as authenticity, credibility, trust, expertise, and platform-specific engagement. However, several gaps remain. First, much of the existing research examines influencer marketing at a broader national or international level, while limited empirical evidence is available specifically on young consumers in Bhopal. Second, previous studies have often focused on purchase intention or general consumer attitudes rather than examining consumer buying behaviour as an integrated outcome of influencer marketing. Third, although authenticity and trust have received considerable attention, fewer studies have simultaneously examined multiple influencer characteristics such as credibility, authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness and their relative influence on buying behaviour. Finally, differences in consumer responses across demographic and social media usage patterns require further investigation among young consumers.

Therefore, the present study attempts to address these gaps by using primary data collected from young consumers in Bhopal and examining the influence of selected influencer characteristics—credibility, authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness—on consumer buying behaviour. The study aims to provide city-specific empirical evidence and identify the influencer-related factors that most strongly affect the purchasing behaviour of young consumers.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the influence of social media influencer marketing on the buying behaviour of young consumers in Bhopal.

2. To analyse the influence of influencer credibility, authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness on consumer buying behaviour.
3. To identify the major influencer marketing factors that significantly influence the buying behaviour of young consumers in Bhopal.

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: Social media influencer marketing has no significant influence on the buying behaviour of young consumers in Bhopal.

H₀₂: Influencer credibility, authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness have no significant relationship with the buying behaviour of young consumers in Bhopal.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the buying behaviour of young consumers based on their level of exposure to social media influencer content.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the influence of social media influencer marketing on the buying behaviour of young consumers in Bhopal. The descriptive component is used to understand the social media usage patterns and perceptions of respondents, while the analytical component focuses on examining the influence of selected influencer marketing factors on consumer buying behaviour.

Study Area

The study is geographically confined to Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, and focuses specifically on young consumers who actively use social media platforms and are exposed to influencer-generated content.

Population and Sample

The target population comprises young consumers in Bhopal, particularly those in the age group of 18–30 years. The study is based on 141 valid respondents whose responses were collected through a structured questionnaire.

Sampling Technique

A convenience sampling technique was adopted for selecting respondents. Respondents who were accessible and willing to participate in the study were included in the sample.

Data Collection

The study is based primarily on primary data. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed among young consumers in Bhopal. The questionnaire consisted of questions related to respondents' demographic characteristics, social media usage, exposure to influencer content, perceptions of influencers, and consumer buying behaviour.

Variables of the Study

The study considers four major influencer marketing factors as independent variables:

- Influencer Credibility
- Influencer Authenticity
- Influencer Expertise

▪ Influencer Attractiveness and Engagement

Consumer Buying Behaviour is considered the dependent variable.

Measurement Scale

The statements measuring influencer marketing factors and consumer buying behaviour were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from:

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected from the respondents were coded, tabulated, and analysed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The analysis was conducted to examine the influence of social media influencer marketing on the buying behaviour of young consumers in Bhopal and to test the formulated hypotheses. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, and mean, were used to summarise the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their responses to the various questionnaire items. The constructs relating to influencer credibility, authenticity, expertise, attractiveness, and consumer buying behaviour were analysed using composite scores based on the respective Likert-scale items. A five-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Strongly Agree* (5) was used for measuring respondents' perceptions.

For hypothesis testing, both correlation and regression techniques were employed. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was used to examine

the direction and strength of the relationship between social media influencer attributes and consumer buying behaviour. It was also used to assess the individual relationships between influencer credibility, authenticity, expertise, attractiveness, and buying behaviour.

To examine the combined influence of influencer characteristics on buying behaviour, Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was employed. In this analysis, consumer buying behaviour was treated as the dependent variable, while influencer credibility, authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness were considered independent variables. The coefficient of determination (R^2), adjusted R^2 , F-statistic, regression coefficients, and corresponding significance values were considered for evaluating the overall explanatory power and individual contribution of the predictors.

To examine whether consumer buying behaviour differed according to respondents' level of exposure to social media influencer content, a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The exposure variable consisted of five categories: *Very Rarely*, *Rarely*, *Sometimes*, *Frequently*, and *Very Frequently*. Since the exposure variable was measured using ordered categories and Likert-scale-based measures were involved, the Kruskal–Wallis test was additionally employed as a non-parametric robustness test. The results of both tests were considered to assess whether statistically significant differences existed among the exposure groups.

A 5% level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$) was adopted for all hypothesis tests. Accordingly, a p-value less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant, while a p-value greater than 0.05 was considered statistically non-significant. The null hypotheses were retained or rejected based on the corresponding statistical test results.

The statistical analysis was therefore based on the following techniques

Research Purpose	Statistical Technique
Summarisation of respondent characteristics and responses	Frequency, Percentage and Mean
Relationship between influencer attributes and buying behaviour	Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation
Combined influence of influencer characteristics on buying behaviour	Multiple Linear Regression
Difference in buying behaviour across exposure groups	One-Way ANOVA
Non-parametric verification of differences across exposure groups	Kruskal–Wallis Test
Level of statistical significance	$\alpha = 0.05$

The use of these techniques enabled the study to assess the strength, direction, significance, and explanatory contribution of social media influencer characteristics in relation to the buying behaviour of young consumers in Bhopal.

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on young consumers in Bhopal and examines how selected characteristics of social media influencers influence their buying behaviour. The study particularly considers influencer credibility, authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness and engagement as important dimensions of influencer marketing.

Ethical Considerations

The respondents were informed that the data collected would be used exclusively for academic purposes. Participation was voluntary, and the responses were treated

confidentially. No personally identifiable information was required for the analysis.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Sample profile and data structure

The analysis is based on 141 young consumers in Bhopal who completed a structured questionnaire on social media influencer marketing and buying behaviour. Responses to Likert-type items were coded as:

- Strongly Disagree = 1
- Disagree = 2
- Neutral = 3
- Agree = 4
- Strongly Agree = 5

Composite scores were created for

- Credibility (Q1–Q4)
- Authenticity (Q5–Q8)

- Expertise (Q9–Q12)
- Attractiveness (Q13–Q16)
- Buying behaviour (Q17–Q24)

Exposure to influencer content was measured using frequency categories (Very rarely, Rarely, Sometimes, Frequently, Very frequently).

Descriptive statistics

Mean levels of key constructs

Construct	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Credibility	3.31	0.62	1.75	4.50
Authenticity	3.50	0.50	2.00	4.50
Expertise	3.79	0.47	2.50	4.75
Attractiveness	3.91	0.42	2.75	4.75
Buying behaviour	3.95	0.32	2.63	4.75

Interpretation

Respondents, on average, tended to agree that influencers are credible, authentic, expert, and attractive, and they also reported relatively high levels of influencer-related buying behaviour. The highest mean was for attractiveness (3.91), followed closely by buying behaviour (3.95). Credibility had the lowest mean (3.31) and the largest variability, indicating more diverse opinions about influencer trustworthiness.

Relationship between influencer characteristics and buying behaviour

Correlation analysis

Variable pair	Pearson rrr	ppp-value
Credibility – Buying behaviour	0.077	0.364
Authenticity – Buying behaviour	–0.015	0.856
Expertise – Buying behaviour	0.159	0.060
Attractiveness – Buying behaviour	–0.050	0.559
Overall influencer attributes – Buying behaviour	0.096	0.257

Interpretation

All correlations between the four influencer characteristics and buying behaviour were positive but very weak, and none reached statistical significance at the 0.05 level. The strongest association was between expertise and buying behaviour ($r=0.159$), which approached but did not meet the conventional significance threshold ($p=0.060$). This suggests that, in this sample, perceptions of influencer expertise may be somewhat related to buying behaviour, but the evidence is not strong enough to conclude a reliable relationship.

Multiple regression: predicting buying behaviour

A multiple linear regression was conducted with buying behaviour as the dependent variable and credibility, authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness as predictors.

- $R^2=0.035$
- Adjusted $R^2=0.006$
- $F(4,136)=1.216$
- $p=0.307$

Predictor	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	t	ppp-value
Constant	3.451	0.425	8.112	<0.001
Credibility	0.047	0.044	1.066	0.288
Authenticity	0.012	0.055	0.219	0.827
Expertise	0.110	0.058	1.902	0.059
Attractiveness	–0.031	0.065	–0.470	0.639

Interpretation

Together, the four influencer characteristics explained only 3.5% of the variance in buying behaviour, and the overall model was not statistically significant ($p=0.307$). Among the predictors, expertise had the largest positive coefficient and came closest to significance ($p=0.059$), but it still did not meet the 0.05 criterion. Credibility, authenticity, and attractiveness did not significantly predict buying behaviour in this sample.

Buying behaviour by exposure to influencer content

Group means

Exposure level	Mean buying behaviour	Std. Dev.	nnn
Very rarely	4.13	—	1
Rarely	3.91	0.41	23
Sometimes	3.98	0.32	5
Frequently	3.98	0.29	80
Very frequently	3.89	0.33	32

Interpretation

Mean buying behaviour scores were fairly similar across exposure groups, ranging from 3.89 to 4.13. The largest group (Frequently, $n=80$) had a mean of 3.98, only slightly higher than the Very frequently group (3.89). The single “Very rarely” respondent reported the highest score (4.13), but this case is too small to generalise.

Statistical tests

- **One-way ANOVA:** $F=0.626$, $p=0.645$
- **Kruskal–Wallis test:** $H=1.418$, $p=0.841$

Interpretation

Both parametric (ANOVA) and non-parametric (Kruskal–Wallis) tests indicate no statistically significant difference in buying behaviour across levels of exposure to influencer content. This suggests that, within this sample, watching influencer content more or less frequently is not associated with systematically higher or lower influencer-related buying behaviour.

Substantive implications

- Although respondents generally reported favourable perceptions of influencers and relatively high buying-behaviour scores, these perceptions and exposure levels did not translate into statistically distinguishable differences in behaviour within this sample.
- The weak and nonsignificant relationships may reflect:
 - Limited variability in responses (many respondents clustering around “Agrees”).
 - Measurement issues (items may not form strong, reliable scales).
 - The possibility that other factors (e.g., price, brand reputation, peer influence) play a larger role than influencer characteristics for this group.

Hypothesis Testing

H₀: Social media influencer marketing has no significant influence on the buying behaviour of young consumers in Bhopal.

I tested the combined influencer-characteristics score against the buying-behaviour score using Pearson correlation.

Variables	Pearson rrr	ppp-value	Decision
Overall influencer attributes and buying behaviour	0.096	0.257	Retain H_{01}

The relationship was positive but very weak and statistically nonsignificant. Therefore, H_{01} is retained.

A multiple regression was also conducted with buying behaviour as the dependent variable and credibility, authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness as predictors:

- $R^2=0.035R^2=0.035R^2=0.035$
- Adjusted $R^2=0.006R^2=0.006R^2=0.006$
- $F(4,136)=1.216F(4,136)=1.216F(4,136)=1.216$
- $p=0.307p=0.307p=0.307$

Together, the four predictors explained approximately 3.5% of the variation in buying behaviour, which was not statistically significant

H_{02} : Influencer credibility, authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness have no significant relationship with the buying behaviour of young consumers in Bhopal.

Predictor	Mean	Pearson rrr	ppp-value	Regression coefficient	Regression ppp-value
Credibility	3.31	0.077	0.364	0.047	0.288
Authenticity	3.50	-0.015	0.856	0.012	0.827
Expertise	3.79	0.159	0.060	0.110	0.059
Attractiveness	3.91	-0.050	0.559	-0.031	0.639

None of the four individual relationships reached $p<0.05p<0.05p<0.05$. Expertise showed the strongest positive

association, but it remained just above the conventional significance threshold in both correlation and regression analysis.

Therefore, H_{02} is retained.

H_{03} : There is no significant difference in the buying behaviour of young consumers based on their level of exposure to social media influencer content.

Exposure was measured using the categories

- Very rarely
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- Very frequently

A one-way ANOVA was conducted

- $F=0.626F=0.626F=0.626$
- $p=0.645p=0.645p=0.645$

Because Likert-scale data may not fully satisfy normality assumptions, a Kruskal–Wallis test was also conducted:

- $H=1.418H=1.418H=1.418$
- $p=0.841p=0.841p=0.841$

Both tests were nonsignificant. Therefore, H_{03} is retained: the data do not show a statistically significant difference in buying behaviour across exposure groups.

Hypothesis decision table

Hypothesis	Test used	Result	Decision
H_{01}	Pearson correlation and multiple regression	$r=0.096, p=0.257r=0.096, p=0.257r=0.096, p=0.257$; regression $p=0.307p=0.307p=0.307$	Retain H_{01}
H_{02}	Pearson correlations and multiple regression	All ppp-values $>0.05>0.05>0.05$	Retain H_{02}
H_{03}	One-way ANOVA and Kruskal–Wallis test	ANOVA $p=0.645p=0.645p=0.645$; Kruskal–Wallis $p=0.841p=0.841p=0.841$	Retain H_{03}

he findings indicate that, within this sample of young consumers in Bhopal, respondents generally reported favourable perceptions of influencer marketing and relatively high buying-behaviour scores. However, the observed variation in buying behaviour was not statistically explained by influencer credibility, authenticity, expertise, attractiveness, or exposure frequency.

This should be reported as “no statistically significant relationship or difference was found”, rather than claiming that influencer marketing has absolutely no effect.

Findings of the Study

Based on the analysis of data collected from young consumers in Bhopal, the following major findings were obtained:

1. Favourable perception towards social media influencer marketing:

The respondents generally demonstrated favourable perceptions towards social media influencer marketing. The mean scores for the influencer characteristics indicate that respondents perceived influencers relatively positively, particularly in terms of attractiveness, expertise, authenticity, and credibility.

2. Overall influencer attributes do not significantly influence buying behaviour:

The analysis found a positive but very weak relationship between the combined influencer-attributes score and consumer buying behaviour ($r=0.096, p=0.257$). Since the significance value was greater than 0.05, the relationship was not statistically significant. The multiple regression analysis also showed that the combined influencer characteristics explained only 3.5% of the variation in buying behaviour ($R^2=0.035$), and the overall regression model was not statistically significant ($F(4,136)=1.216, p=0.307$).

3. Individual influencer characteristics do not show significant relationships with buying behaviour:

The analysis of individual influencer characteristics revealed that credibility ($r=0.077, p=0.364$), authenticity ($r=-0.015, p=0.856$), expertise ($r=0.159, p=0.060$), and attractiveness ($r=-0.050, p=0.559$) did not have statistically significant relationships with consumer buying behaviour at the 5% level of significance. Among the four characteristics, expertise showed the strongest positive association, although the relationship remained statistically nonsignificant.

4. No significant individual predictive effect of influencer characteristics:

The multiple regression analysis further indicated that none of the four influencer characteristics made a statistically significant individual contribution to buying behaviour. The regression significance values were 0.288 for credibility, 0.827 for authenticity, 0.059 for expertise, and 0.639 for attractiveness. Although expertise approached the conventional significance threshold, it did not reach the required level of $p < 0.05$.

5. Exposure frequency does not significantly affect buying behaviour:

The study found no statistically significant difference in consumer buying behaviour across different levels of exposure to social media influencer content. The One-Way ANOVA produced $F = 0.626$, $p = 0.645$, indicating that buying behaviour did not differ significantly among respondents who viewed influencer content very rarely, rarely, sometimes, frequently, or very frequently.

6. Non-parametric analysis confirms the exposure finding:

The Kruskal–Wallis test was additionally conducted as a non-parametric robustness check. The result ($H = 1.418$, $p = 0.841$) was also statistically nonsignificant. Thus, the conclusion obtained from ANOVA was supported by the non-parametric analysis.

7. Influencer marketing should not be interpreted as having no effect whatsoever:

Although the statistical tests did not identify significant relationships or differences, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence that influencer marketing has absolutely no effect on consumer behaviour. Rather, the present sample does not provide sufficient statistical evidence to establish a significant relationship or influence at the 5% level of significance.

8. Expertise emerges as the comparatively stronger influencer characteristic:

Among credibility, authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness, expertise demonstrated the strongest positive association with buying behaviour ($r = 0.159$). Although this association was not statistically significant ($p = 0.060$), the finding suggests that consumers may place relatively greater importance on the knowledge and product-related expertise demonstrated by influencers. This observation may provide a useful direction for further research.

9. Buying behaviour cannot be explained substantially by the measured influencer characteristics:

The relatively low R^2 value (0.035) indicates that the four influencer characteristics included in the study explain only a small proportion of the variation in consumer buying behaviour. This suggests that other factors beyond influencer characteristics may play a more important role in determining the purchasing behaviour of young consumers, such as price, product quality, brand familiarity, personal preferences, peer influence, promotions, perceived value, or previous experience.

10. Overall conclusion of the study:

The findings indicate that young consumers in Bhopal generally hold favourable perceptions towards social media influencers and their marketing activities; however, these favourable perceptions do not translate into a statistically significant relationship with their reported buying behaviour in the present sample. Neither the individual characteristics of influencers nor the frequency of exposure to influencer content demonstrated statistically significant effects or differences in consumer buying behaviour.

Discussion

The findings of the study indicate that although young consumers in Bhopal generally have favourable perceptions of social media influencer marketing, these perceptions do not translate into a statistically significant influence on their buying behaviour. The overall influencer attributes showed only a very weak positive relationship with buying behaviour.

The individual characteristics of influencers—credibility, authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness—also did not show statistically significant relationships with buying behaviour. Among these, expertise demonstrated the strongest positive association, although it remained slightly above the conventional significance level.

The study also found that the frequency of exposure to influencer content does not significantly differentiate consumers' buying behaviour. This suggests that simply viewing influencer content more frequently may not be sufficient to influence purchasing decisions. Other factors such as product quality, price, brand preference, personal needs, and previous experience may also play an important role in consumer decision-making.

Conclusion

The study concludes that social media influencer marketing, in the present sample, does not have a statistically significant influence on the buying behaviour of young consumers in Bhopal. Similarly, influencer credibility, authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness were not found to have significant individual relationships with buying behaviour.

The findings suggest that exposure to influencer content alone may not be sufficient to drive purchasing decisions. Therefore, brands and marketers should consider influencer marketing as one component of a broader marketing strategy rather than relying on influencer exposure alone. Further studies may examine other factors such as product involvement, brand trust, price sensitivity, and peer influence to better understand young consumers' buying behaviour.

Recommendations

1. Focus on relevant influencers: Brands should collaborate with influencers whose content and audience are closely aligned with the target consumer segment.

2. Emphasise expertise: Although expertise was not statistically significant, it showed the strongest positive association with buying behaviour. Brands may therefore consider influencers who demonstrate genuine product knowledge and experience.

3. **Use influencer marketing as part of an integrated strategy:** Since influencer characteristics alone explained only a small proportion of variation in buying behaviour, influencer marketing should be combined with other promotional and marketing activities.
4. **Focus on meaningful content:** Brands and influencers should create informative, relatable, and engaging content rather than relying only on frequent promotional posts.
5. **Consider other purchase factors:** Marketers should also address factors such as product quality, price, brand reputation, offers, and consumer needs when designing campaigns.

Limitations of the Study

1. The study was limited to young consumers in Bhopal, so the findings may not be generalisable to consumers in other cities or age groups.
2. The study used a sample of 141 respondents, which may limit the generalisability of the findings.
3. The study was based primarily on self-reported responses, which may be influenced by respondents' perceptions and recall.
4. The study considered selected influencer characteristics—credibility, authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness—while other factors influencing buying behaviour were not examined.
5. The study focused on the frequency of exposure to influencer content and did not examine the actual duration or quality of consumer engagement with such content.

Scope for Future Research

1. Future studies can include larger samples and respondents from different cities and regions to improve the generalisability of findings.
2. Future research can examine additional factors such as brand trust, product involvement, price sensitivity, peer influence, and perceived value.
3. Comparative studies can be conducted across different social media platforms, such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook.
4. Future studies may examine the influence of different types of influencers, such as nano, micro, macro, and celebrity influencers.
5. Longitudinal studies can be conducted to understand whether the influence of social media influencers on buying behaviour changes over time.

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