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IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER MARKETING ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN INDIA

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Abstract - Social media influencer marketing has emerged as an influential digital marketing strategy that shapes consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions in India. This study examines the impact of influencer marketing on consumer buying behaviour across different social media platforms. It focuses on how influencer credibility, trust, expertise, content quality, and engagement influence consumers' purchase intentions. The study also explores the role of influencer recommendations in creating brand awareness and product preferences. Consumer responses toward sponsored content, reviews, and product endorsements are considered to understand their effect on buying decisions. The research highlights the growing importance of influencers in connecting brands with Indian consumers. It further examines whether demographic factors influence consumers' responses to influencer marketing. The findings are expected to provide useful insights for marketers in designing effective influencer-based promotional strategies. Overall, the study contributes to understanding the changing relationship between social media influencers, brands, and consumer purchasing behaviour in India.

Keywords: Social Media Influencer Marketing, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Influencer Credibility, Purchase Intention, Digital Marketing.

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital ecosystem in India has seen a dramatic change over the last decade owing to cheap smartphones, inexpensive mobile data, and the fast growth of Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and X (former Twitter). The digital evolution that has taken place has revolutionized the ways in which brands communicate with their customers and even more important the way in which consumers make up their mind about purchasing products or services. It is within this context that social media influencer marketing has become one of the most important types of digital communication.

An influencer is someone who has established himself as a credible authority in social media circles through his relevant and relatable posts. While advertising is an impersonal way of engaging consumers because of its mass appeal and anonymity, influencer marketing is a personalized approach whereby the communication is made directly to followers on their social feeds. This trend has led to the establishment of parasocial relations, whereby the followers get to view the influencers as their trustworthy friends rather than distant public personalities. Businesses have taken advantage of this trend to collaborate with influencers in many fields including fashion, beauty, food, fitness, technology and personal finance, from mega-influencers and celebrities who have millions of followers to micro- and nano-influencers who have smaller but more engaged audiences.

India emerges as an extremely interesting case study in this respect. Given its large youth population of internet and social media users, this nation has experienced the development of influencer marketing as a specialized activity to a widespread practice in the brand communication strategies in e-commerce, FMCG and lifestyle domains. Simultaneously, the consumers of this country have traditionally relied heavily on trust, peer recommendation and price sensitivity during decision making, making the issue of influence even more relevant.

While the importance of influencer marketing in the business sphere is well established, there is still some doubt regarding the exact nature of the influence that influencers can exert and the specific traits that determine the level of purchase intentions. Does it depend on the credibility and knowledge of the influencer, attractiveness and likability of his or her persona, quality and relevance of the content or parasocial trust that the follower develops as a result of the interaction with it? The existing body of knowledge provides some insight but relies mostly on Western cases or theoretical analysis without empirical testing in India.

This paper tries to fill in that void through the formulation and empirical evaluation of an analytical framework that is centered around the interrelationship between four constructs that pertain to influencers, which include the constructs of credibility, attractiveness/likeability, content quality and product congruence, and parasocial interaction/trust, and their relationship with the purchase intentions of consumers. Using primary data gathered from social media users in India, the paper utilizes reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and multiple regressions to evaluate the relative weightage of each construct and to provide actionable recommendations for brands and marketers.

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

1. **ThiyagaVinnarasu et al. (2026)** analyzed the impact of social media influencers on consumer purchasing behavior through primary data obtained from consumers living in big metro cities of India. The main focus of the research was on trust, credibility, authenticity, and consumer engagement in influencer content, and the analysis of the research revealed that the main determinants of trust and purchase from an influencer are credibility and authenticity. The paper directly supports the inclusion of credibility constructs in the models of influencer marketing, but the limitation of the research is its sample only of metro cities.
2. **Lohar (2026)** The researchers studied the effect of social media marketing on the purchase behavior of young Indian customers through the use of descriptive research approach supplemented with a structured questionnaire. It was found out that advertisements, influencer marketing, and peer reviews were the most influential elements in shaping up the consumer's buying decisions and these factors helped to enhance the brand image and brand loyalty along with impulse buying tendencies. This research is significant because it demonstrates how influencer-generated content affects the price, discount and

quality of the product at the time of making purchase decision; however, no statistical weights were assigned to influencing factors.

3. **Arora (2025)** has examined the impact of influencer credibility in digital media on the buying behaviour of Indian millennials and generation Z through a mixed methods approach with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling among a sample size of 500 respondents. It has been concluded that influencer credibility influences the level of consumer trust and behavioural intention and consumers learn about the product from influencer media but buy from the e-commerce websites. In addition, FOMO is seen to be increasing in its importance. However, since partial least squares structural equation modelling has been used in this case, it would not be fair to compare the standardized effect sizes with multiple regression.
4. **Singh (2025)** has examined the impact of social media influencers on consumer purchase behavior in India's retail industry considering the factors of credibility, authenticity, and congruence of consumers' value system such as "Vocal for Local" campaign. As per the findings of the survey conducted quantitatively, the young age group of consumers belonging to the age group of 18-34 years having maximum involvement on social media are considered the key consumer audience for the influencer campaigns of fashion, beauty, lifestyle, and electronics categories. The role of demographic segmentation is highlighted in the process of influencer marketing strategy.
5. **Vinayagalakshmi (2022)** explored how social media marketing, which includes tools such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp, affects the consumer purchasing behavior in India both directly and indirectly. This research paper was able to identify certain trends with regard to the usage of the various platforms and how social media can help people adapt to certain changes in their lifestyles. It was suggested that business should use these platforms more efficiently to improve the process of purchase. Even though valuable in terms of identifying the importance of social media marketing in India, the study predates the current popularity of video content.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this paper, a quantitative and descriptive research approach is followed to empirically analyze the impact of the characteristics of social media influencers on consumer purchase behavior in India. Based on the source credibility theory (Ohanian, 1990) and parasocial interaction theory, a theoretical framework was formulated involving four independent variables, namely, Perceived Credibility (PC), Attractiveness/Likeability (AT), Content Quality & Product Congruence (CQ), Parasocial Interaction & Trust (PT) and one dependent variable, Purchase Intention (PI).

3.1. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

According to the theoretical framework, each of the four independent variables will have a direct and positive effect on the consumer purchase intention. From this theoretical model, the following hypotheses were developed:

- H1: Perceived Credibility of the influencer has a significant positive effect on consumer Purchase Intention.
- H2: Attractiveness/Likeability of the influencer has a significant positive effect on consumer Purchase Intention.
- H3: Content Quality and Product Congruence has a significant positive effect on consumer Purchase Intention.

- H4: Parasocial Interaction and Trust has a significant positive effect on consumer Purchase Intention.

3.2. Sampling and Data Collection

The data collection was done using an online survey questionnaire that was administered to active users of social media networks in India. The survey respondents comprised of people from Tier-1 metropolitan cities such as Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, and Pune, as well as those from Tier-2 and Tier-3 towns. From a total number of N= 600 respondents, a final sample of N= 412 respondents was used after screening out the incomplete and inconsistent responses, exceeding the minimum sample size required for multiple regression with four predictors.

3.3. Measurement Instrument

There were two parts to the questionnaire. The first part comprised information pertaining to demographics such as gender, age, education, occupation, and city tier along with social media behavior. The second part assessed the five constructs of the paper through questions formulated from existing scales in the source-credibility and influencer-marketing literature and were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The constructs Perceived Credibility and Attractiveness/Likeability were derived from the source-credibility scale proposed by Ohanian (1990), and the other three constructs were taken from social media literature.

3.4. Statistical Techniques

The analysis of data involved the use of descriptive statistics, internal consistency reliability through Cronbach's Alpha, Pearson correlation to check for associations among variables, and multiple linear regression to determine the relationships between the four independent constructs and purchase intention. Internal consistency of constructs was determined through Cronbach's Alpha which is defined as:

$$\alpha = (k / (k - 1)) \times [1 - (\sum \sigma_i^2 / \sigma_i^2)] \quad (1)$$

where k is the number of elements in the construct, σ_i^2 is the variance of element i, and σ_i^2 is the variance of the entire construct. The overall regression model that is employed for testing the hypotheses can be written as:

$$PI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 PC + \beta_2 AT + \beta_3 CQ + \beta_4 PT + \varepsilon \quad (2)$$

Where PI = Purchase Intention PC, AT, CQ and PT = Predictor Constructs β_0 = Intercept β_1 - β_4 = Unstandardised Regression Coefficients ε = Error Term all the analyses were carried out through SPSS and statistical significance was taken at 0.05 level of significance.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

4.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 4.1 provides the demographic details of the 412 survey respondents. The sample has a relatively even distribution of respondents with slightly more female respondents (54.1%) compared to the number of male respondents (44.7%). Age-wise, the biggest chunk of respondents belongs to the 18-24 years age bracket (38.8%), followed by the 25-34 years age bracket (33.0%), which shows that the target respondents are primarily younger Indian social media and influencer content consumers. Most of the respondents have an undergraduate or postgraduate level of education and are mainly based out of Tier-1 metropolitan cities although 41.2% come from Tier-2 and Tier-3 locations.

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	184	44.7
	Female	223	54.1
	Other / Prefer not to say	5	1.2
Age Group	18–24 years	160	38.8
	25–34 years	136	33.0
	35–44 years	73	17.7
	45 years & above	43	10.4
Education	Higher secondary or below	53	12.9
	Undergraduate	172	41.7
	Postgraduate	158	38.3
	Doctoral / Professional	29	7.0
Occupation	Student	143	34.7
	Salaried / Private employee	163	39.6
	Self-employed / Business	62	15.0
	Homemaker / Other	44	10.7
City Tier	Tier-1 (Metro)	241	58.5
	Tier-2	127	30.8
	Tier-3 / Rural	44	10.7

Table 4.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 412)

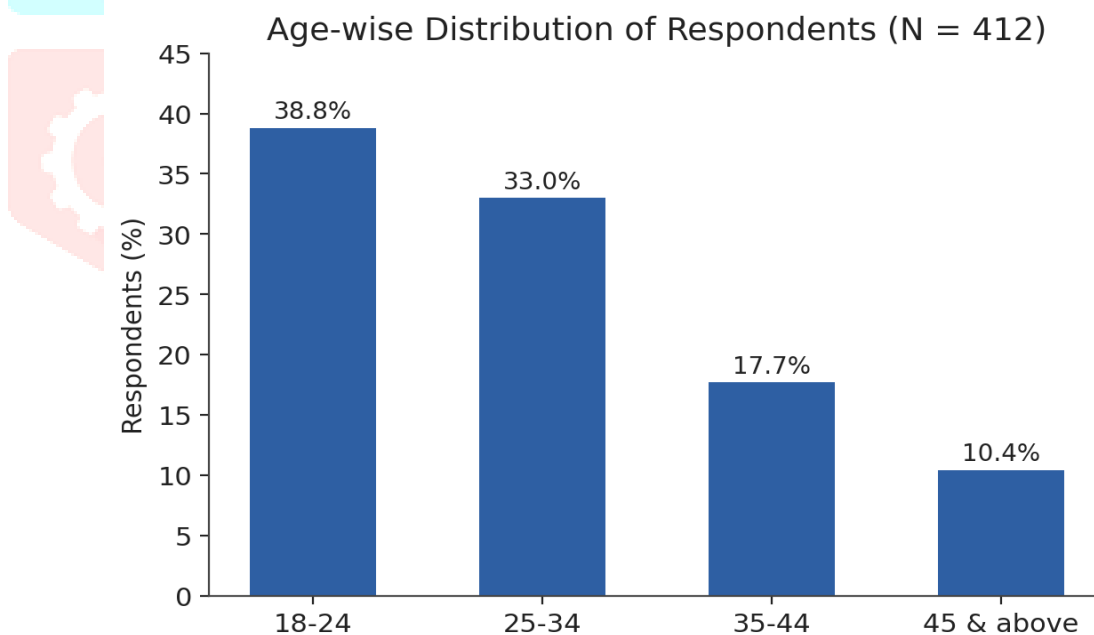


Figure 1. Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Figure 1 provides visual proof of the age bias towards younger users in the sample population: 18–24 years old and 25–34 years old users account for almost 72% of the whole sample population, and this fact is backed by national figures where young Indian people consume most social media influenced content.

4.2. Social Media Platform Usage and Influencer-Following Pattern

Table 4.2 summarizes the social media platforms used, daily time spent, and number of influencers followed. Instagram came out to be the most commonly used platform among the three at 91.3%, with YouTube following next at 84.0% and Facebook at 58.7%. The high percentage usage can be attributed to the fact that influencer content nowadays is primarily visual and short videos. Most of the people (53.5%) spend between one to four hours on social media every day.

Usage Dimension	Category	Percentage (%)
Platform Used	Instagram	91.3
	YouTube	84.0
	Facebook	58.7
	WhatsApp Status	52.7
	X (Twitter)	31.3
Avg. Daily Time on Social Media	Less than 1 hour	12.0
	1–2 hours	34.5
	2–4 hours	37.6
	More than 4 hours	15.9
Number of Influencers Followed	1–5	28.4
	6–15	41.3
	16–30	21.8
	More than 30	8.5

Table 4.2. Social Media Platform Usage and Influencer-Following Pattern

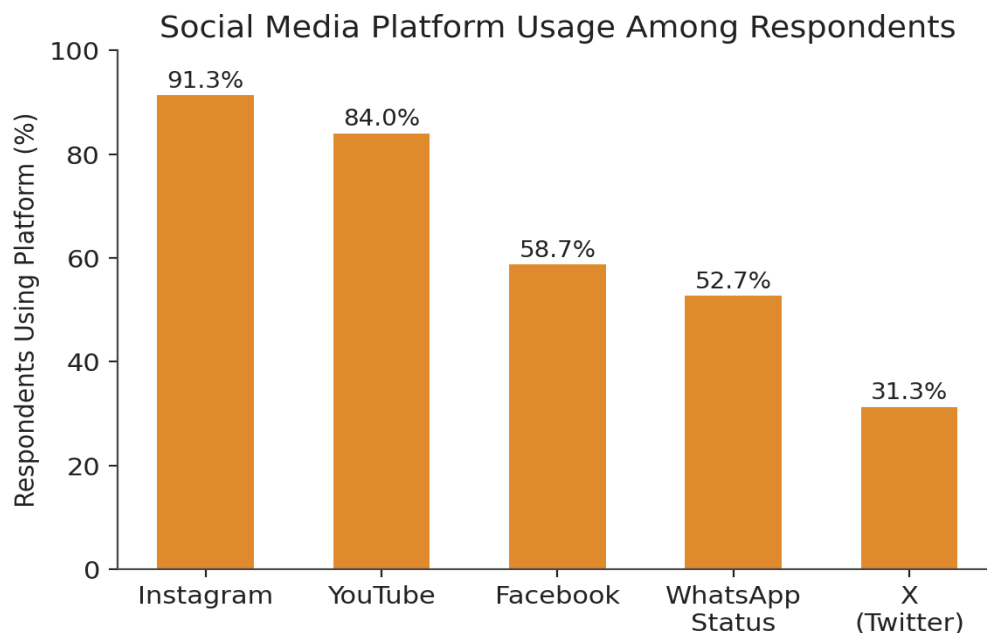


Figure 2. Social Media Platform Usage Among Respondents

Figure 2 clearly shows that the two social media platforms, Instagram and YouTube, combine to rule the social media platforms, with Instagram being responsible for the majority of the influencer content viewed by the participants in the study, whereas X (Twitter) continues to be quite niche even within this set of participants.

4.3. Reliability Analysis

Before testing the hypothesised relationships, the internal consistency of each construct was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, computed as per Equation (1). Table 4.3 presents the number of items and alpha value for each construct. All five constructs recorded alpha values well above the conventionally accepted threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.81 for Attractiveness/Likeability to 0.90 for Purchase Intention, indicating that the measurement instrument is reliable and suitable for further statistical analysis.

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Perceived Credibility (PC)	5	0.86
Attractiveness / Likeability (AT)	4	0.81
Content Quality & Product Congruence (CQ)	5	0.84
Parasocial Interaction & Trust (PT)	4	0.88
Purchase Intention (PI)	5	0.90
Overall Scale	23	0.92

Table 4.3. Reliability Statistics for Study Constructs

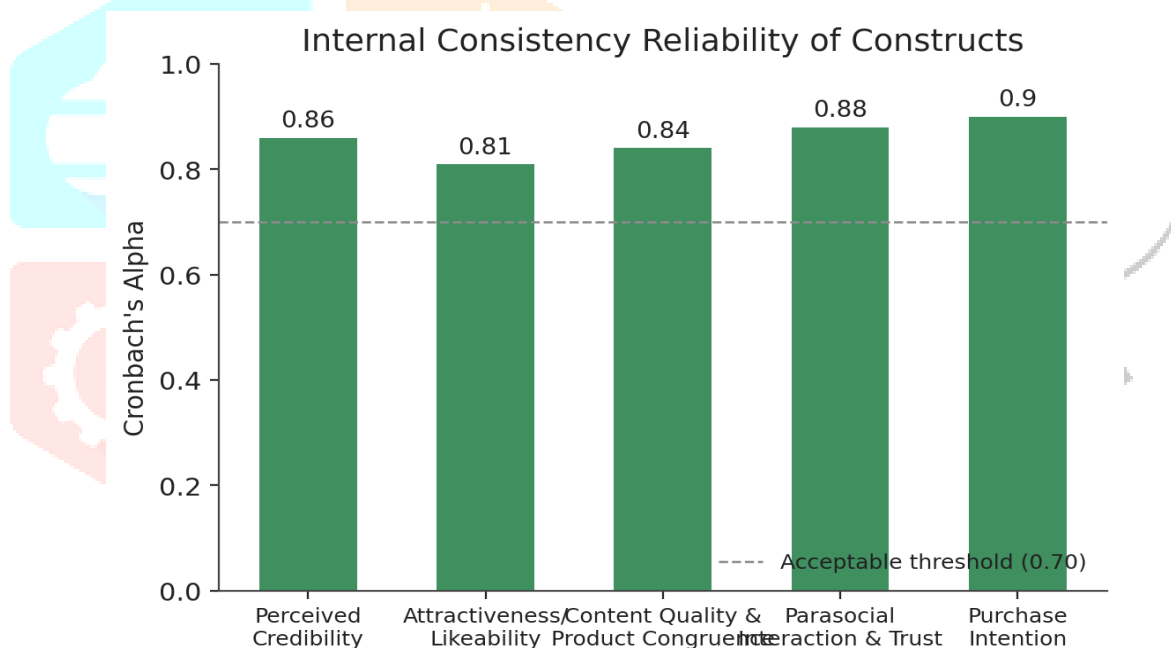


Figure 3. Internal Consistency Reliability of Constructs

Figure 3 indicates that all constructs meet the acceptability criteria of 0.70 with a sufficient amount of room to spare, with Purchase Intention (0.90) and Parasocial Interaction & Trust (0.88) having the highest internal consistency, while Attractiveness/Likeability (0.81) is the lowest but still acceptable.

4.4. Correlation Analysis

Table 4.4 depicts the Pearson correlation coefficients of the five constructs. It can be noted that all correlations are positive and significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that the four independent variables have similar tendencies in relation to purchase intention. The highest correlation was between Parasocial Interaction & Trust and Purchase Intention ($r = 0.66$), then Perceived Credibility ($r = 0.63$), followed by Content Quality & Product Congruence ($r = 0.57$) and Attractiveness/Likeability had the lowest ($r = 0.41$).

Construct	PC	AT	CQ	PT	PI
Perceived Credibility (PC)	1.00	0.52	0.58	0.61	0.63
Attractiveness / Likeability (AT)	0.52	1.00	0.49	0.44	0.41
Content Quality & Product Congruence (CQ)	0.58	0.49	1.00	0.55	0.57
Parasocial Interaction & Trust (PT)	0.61	0.44	0.55	1.00	0.66
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.63	0.41	0.57	0.66	1.00

Table 4.4. Pearson Correlation Matrix Among Study Constructs ($p < 0.01$)

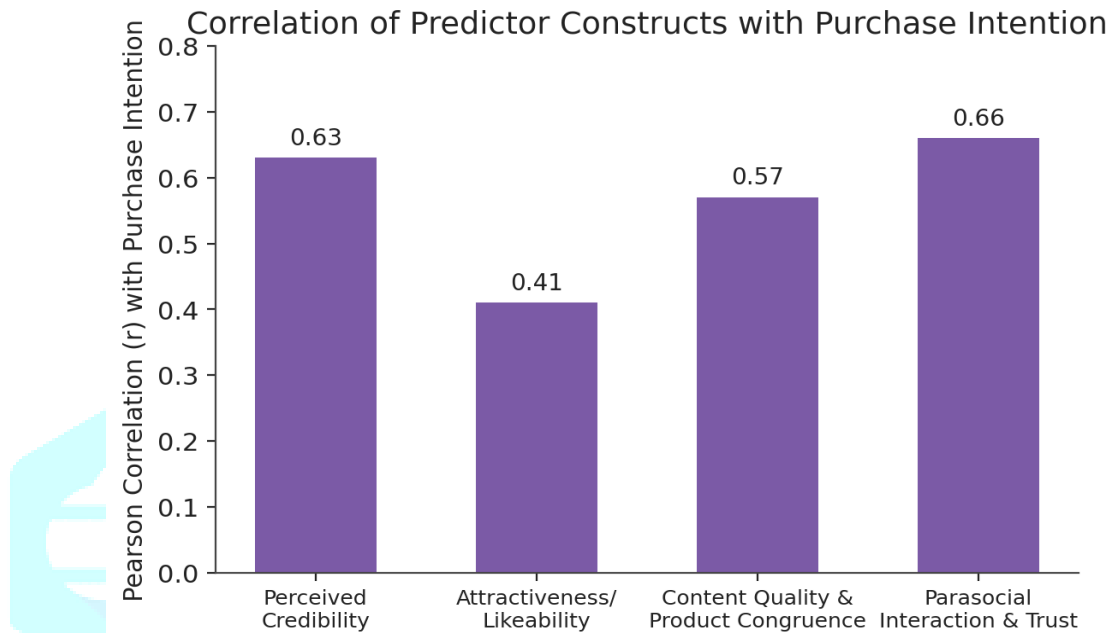


Figure 4. Correlation of Predictor Constructs with Purchase Intention

Figure 4 demonstrates that Parasocial Interaction & Trust and Perceived Credibility are the two constructs most positively correlated with Purchase Intention, indicating that Indian consumers place much greater importance on the credibility, expertise, and parasocial relationship of the influencer than his or her mere physical attractiveness.

4.5. Multiple Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

The analysis carried out involved a multiple linear regression analysis in which the Purchase Intention is the dependent variable and the Predictors include Perceived Credibility, Attractiveness/Likeability, Content Quality & Product Congruence, and Parasocial Interaction & Trust, as outlined in the model of equation (2). The overall model was found to be statistically significant, where $R = 0.742$, $R^2 = 0.551$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.546$, $F(4, 407) = 124.86$, $p < 0.001$, implying that these four variables together account for about 55.1% of variance in consumer purchase intention.

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Standardized β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.482	0.121	—	3.983	0.000
Perceived Credibility (PC)	0.243	0.038	0.281	6.395	0.000
Attractiveness / Likeability (AT)	0.087	0.034	0.102	2.559	0.011
Content Quality & Product Congruence (CQ)	0.198	0.041	0.224	4.829	0.000
Parasocial Interaction & Trust (PT)	0.276	0.036	0.312	7.667	0.000

Table 4.5. Multiple Regression Results Predicting Purchase Intention

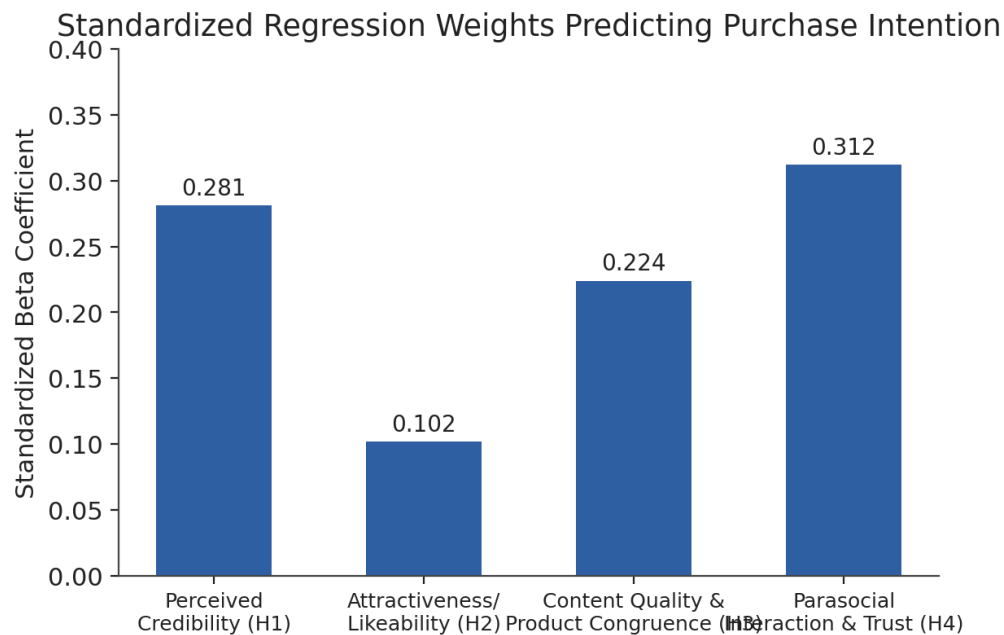


Figure 5. Standardized Regression Weights Predicting Purchase Intention

From Tables 4.5 and Figure 5 below, all the predictors showed statistical significance with Purchase Intention in a positive manner. Parasocial Interaction & Trust turned out to be the best predictor ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.001$) followed by Perceived Credibility ($\beta = 0.281$, $p < 0.001$) and Content Quality & Product Congruence ($\beta = 0.224$, $p < 0.001$). The attractiveness/likeability predictor was still significant, but had the least independent contribution ($\beta = 0.102$, $p = 0.011$). It implies that, within the Indian environment, the level of interaction of consumers with the influencer, as well as the perception of the influencer as being honest and knowledgeable, are more important for their purchases than his/her attractiveness.

Hypothesis	Path	Standardized β	Sig.	Result
H1	Perceived Credibility $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	0.281	0.000	Supported
H2	Attractiveness/Likeability $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	0.102	0.011	Supported
H3	Content Quality & Product Congruence $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	0.224	0.000	Supported
H4	Parasocial Interaction & Trust $\rightarrow$ Purchase Intention	0.312	0.000	Supported (strongest effect)

Table 4.6. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

- All four paths have been proven statistically significant, which proves that the features of influencers are important enough to predict the purchase intention of consumers in India.
- Parasocial Interaction & Trust and Perceived Credibility stand out among all predictors of purchase intention by overpowering the effect of Attractiveness/Likeability.
- Instagram and YouTube are the two most important platforms via which the influence is exerted on the consumer purchase decision, and young consumers (18-34) are the key target audience.
- As the model predicts only slightly more than half (55.1%) of the variance in purchase intention, we can conclude that there are other important aspects that affect the purchase intention and should be taken into account in further research.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper aimed at assessing the effect of social media influencer marketing on consumer purchasing behavior in India through empirical analysis of a four-factored theoretical model consisting of Perceived Credibility, Attractiveness/Likability, Content Quality and Product Congruence, and Parasocial Interaction and Trust as predictors of purchase intention. Data from 412 social media consumers in metropolitan and non-metropolitan parts of India were analyzed via reliability test, correlation, and multiple regression. It is revealed that all four factors related to influencer marketing have a significant effect on consumer purchase intention, with Parasocial Interaction and Trust and Perceived Credibility being the strongest predictors, followed by Content Quality and Product Congruence, while Attractiveness/Likability having a less important influence despite its significance.

These findings reveal that the reaction of Indian consumers is influenced by factors such as trustworthiness, knowledgeability, and relational involvement of the influencers more than those based on attractiveness or celebrity status of the influencer. This means that for marketers, when choosing an influencer or designing a campaign, they should concentrate on building relationships rather than short-term endorsement driven by appearance. With Instagram and YouTube being the dominant platform among the other ones, and age group of 18-34 years being the target audience, the most engagement will be generated through these campaigns.

The sample, despite being reasonably varied, tends to be biased towards the young and the urban population. Moreover, the cross-sectional survey method measures the attitudes and intentions of the respondents at one point in time and not their purchase behavior. Possible areas for future research include using the framework through longitudinal designs to measure purchase behavior, including other constructs such as price sensitivity, trust in the medium/platform, and format (video versus non-video) of the post, and category-specific differences between, for example, fashion, technology, and finance products.

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