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IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING IN CONTEXT OF INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Influencer marketing has developed the core strategy in consumer engagement as more people are more inclined to engage via digital platforms. However, it's especially difficult for brands to understand which influencer characteristics have the biggest impact on how consumers behave. The present study investigates the influence of influencer credibility, content authenticity, engagement quality, and platform preference on brand perception and purchase intention in the context of India. The study employs multiple linear regression analysis and correlation techniques to examine the relationships between various attributes of social media influencers, using secondary data obtained from reputable industry sources. Results indicate that influencer credibility and authenticity of content has a large impact on brand perception, purchase intention and engagement quality is the strongest predictor of purchase behaviour. Additionally, there was little relationship between platform preference and consumer trust, implying that influencer features are more important than platform for influencing trust. An R-squared value of 0.85 means that model has strong explanatory power over outcomes for consumer behaviour. Finally, the study stresses the significance of engagement quality as well as authentic content when it comes to gaining consumer trust and making purchase decisions. Influencers are selected based on their credibility and their engagement across their audience rather than the basis of choosing it on the basis of any specific strategy. This insight is needed for taming the efficacy of the influencer marketing campaigns in India.

KEYWORDS: Influencer Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Engagement Quality, Brand Perception and Purchase Intention.

INTRODUCTION

In global brand consumer interaction, the digital marketing influencer marketing is raised as a dominant force in the evolving marketing arena. With the increasing impact of these social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, X, and Facebook, influencers, a type of individuals with whom people do follow, play a significant role in brand communication strategies [1], [2]. Brands have now allocated a major portion of their marketing budget towards the influencer led campaigns throughout the world. As reported by a Statista, global influencer marketing spending was about USD 21.1 billion

in 2023 and had grown from USD 16.4 billion in 2022 [3]. The India influencer marketing industry is rapidly expanding to reach INR 1,275 crore (USD 150 million) in 2022 and INR 2,800 crore (USD 340 million) by 2025 [4]. While this meteoric rise reflects wider global trends, India's internet penetration of over 750 million users and its youth-biased demographics, nearly 65 per cent of its population is below 35 years [5-6] have helped drive it. However, influencers in Western markets are highly concentrated and serve niches, but in India, influencers have made brand reach democratic, touching notch Tier II, III cities along with the metros [7-8]. Yet, in both the Indian as well as the global context, this expansion carries its own concerns of authenticity, trustworthiness and measurable Return on Investment (ROI) [9- 10]

Fundamentally, influencer marketing relies on the trust economy (especially in comparison to traditional celebrity endorsements [11]. It has been proven in research that consumers are more likely to have faith in peer recommendations rather than manipulating brand advertisements [12-13], which is where influencer marketing comes to play as an engagement strategy for consumers. Influencers fill the gap between brands and consumers due to their credibility and help in making purchases much more likely [14- 15]. Studies in Indian context show that 70% of consumers rely on the recommendations of Indian influencers while making purchase decisions [16-17]. But the credibility of influencers depends on the factors of follower count, quality of contents and perceived expertise [18 –19]. For instance, micro-influencers are known to have higher engagement rates and perceived authenticity than macro-influencers; this is both observed across the globe and in India [20].

Influencer marketing literature has widened the body of literature showing how these elements impact on attitudes, perceptions, and the intention to purchase [21]. The influencer's personality needs to match the brand's personality for the marketing to be effective. As done in [6], demonstrate that estimation management has a strong impact on the consumer trust that in turn may impact on the brand loyalty. Studies in comparative ways indicate that such emotional appeals and storytelling methods by the influencers appear salient to the Indian consumers [22]. Given this cultural context, creators and global brands that are operating in India need to have tailored influencer strategies that align with Indian sensibilities, a nuance that is often missed by global brands in the country [20], [23].

Additionally, influencer marketing is becoming regulated in the same way. To this end, the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) issued guidelines in 2021 suggesting that influencers mention that they are being paid to advertise [24]. In line with the existing global best practices in the US and UK [25], these developments bring India on par. Disclosure norms have the aim of increasing transparency and generating consumer trust, however their enforcement is still a challenge [26-27]. As elsewhere, standardized disclosures improve credibility but may come at the cost of diminished persuasive impact—dilemma across the board, as Boerman [28] shows.

Additionally, the efficacy of IM is varied in different product categories and demographics. However, influencer campaigns have proven to be very efficient in sectors, including fashion, beauty and wellness. Tiwari et al. [28] ascertain that perceived trust and subjective norms heavily influence consumers' purchase intentions. Among Indians millennials and Gen Z consumers, it is influencers who are seen as trendsetters who help in direction of the lifestyle choices and consumption pattern [29-30]. Nevertheless, studies also reveal that overreliance on influencers may induce 'influencer fatigue' (or weariness) associated with consumer rejection of promotional messages.

Another of the emerging global trends which are also gradually making their way into the Indian market are virtual influencers (computer generated avatars that pitch brands. According to Jhavar et al. although brands have better control over the messages that virtual influencers spread, when it comes to Indian consumers, such influencers are yet to be fully embraced as Indians prefer authentic, human connection.

The ethical dimension of influencer marketing is itself a big issue. There have been calls for stricter regulations due to concerns of deceptive advertising, manipulation of vulnerable audiences, and promoting unhealthy lifestyles. With the maturity of India's influencer economy, brands, agencies, and influencers need to work through the ethical challenges to maintain long term consumer trust.

The COVID-19 pandemic faster digital adoption, and, therefore, increased the standing of influencers in daily decision making. As consumers sought out product recommendations, wellness advice and lifestyle content, more and more of them turned to [their] influencers during lockdowns. Finally, influencers transformed their roles from promoters only to cultural intermediaries that induced a behavioural change; to enrol their consumers into shaping consumption in a post pandemic world.

This leads to a crossroads point for influencer marketing in India wherein, on one end, it presents an opportunity for brands and consumers or influencers to engage with one another, while on the other, it brings in the challenge of authenticity, measurement and regulation. For brands looking to build a sustainable success with sustainable practices in the Indian influencer ecosystem, it is indispensable to get a deeper empathetic understanding of local dynamics, cultural sensitivities and global best practices.

The main intent of the study is to investigate the possibility of influencer marketing having effects on consumer behavioural patterns in the Indian environment. The study aims at determining the role played by influencers on brand perception, purchasing decisions, and trust of Indian consumers. Moreover, study analyses the differences with respect to the demographics and product categories.

Other aims include finding out what the key success factors are in influencer campaigns. This study also assesses regulatory as well as ethical dimensions of influencer practices. It also explains the comparative insights with the global influencer marketing trends.

The aim of this study is to contribute with fresh empirical evidence on the efficacy of influencer advertising in India. This discusses the nature of authenticity, emotional engagement, and trust and how this influences consumer behaviour. This study emphasizes the difference between micro and macro influencers' influences and enriches current knowledge by representing post pandemic behaviour shifts. The study makes practical recommendations for marketers and contributes to the global influencer marketing literature with an Indian focus.

The paper includes the **Introduction** which lays the background, makes global comparisons, and relates it to India. Additionally, **Materials and Methods** provides the framework of the research design along with data collection strategies. **Results** consist of key findings based on survey analysis, and third. Fourthly, **Discussion** explains results and derives them from preexisting theories. Finally, **Conclusion** concludes with insights, implications, and future research directions. The sections are logical from one to another.

2. METHODS

Analytical secondary data-based research design has been assumed to study the influence of influencer promotion on the consumer behaviour in India. Social Media Influencer Marketing is a huge thing and as proved on Instagram, YouTube and more specifically on Facebook. In this design, the first stage includes a review of secondary data to gain a better understanding on influencer marketing evolution, growth and trends of influencer marketing globally and in India. In the second stage, it is based on the analysis of the existing data through statistical techniques to get the insight into the discourses between influencers attributes and consumer behaviour outcomes (i.e. brand perception & purchase intention). This research design is mathematically analytical that is based on the descriptive statistics to present the trends and insights extracted from secondary sources, and mathematical inferential statistics to generate the interpretation of the influence of influencer attributes on the user outcomes. The study can explore influencer marketing robustly by looking at data that exists in the first place, and seeing how influencer variables affect each other to drive consumer behaviour.

This study uses the multiple linear regression analysis, correlation analysis, and the reliability test to analyse the relationship between the personal characteristics (e.g. credibility, content authenticity, and engagement quality) and the consumer's response (such as brand perception and purchase intention). For analysis Python and Mat lab were selected based on their capability of handling complex data structure and establishing the cause effect relationship.

2.2 Data collection

This study contributes secondary data, which is constituted of pre-existing datasets and reports. Data from global and Indian datasets were used to analyse the effectiveness of influencer marketing globally and in India. Key data sources included:

Statista (2023): Statista presents not only itself as a big database about the size and growth of the IM industry, even in India. Among others, this data consists of its revenue from influencer campaigns and penetration of social media channels in India. Statista's reports were able to help understand what came of influencer marketing in India over time.

We Are Social (2023): We Are Social's annual social media usage statistics reports gave a glimpse of how social media continues growing and being used by various segments of the society in India. This secondary data was used to identify which are the most used platforms by Indians consumers to interact with influencers.

This includes detailed benchmarks on engagement rates (likes, comments, shares, etc.) and influencer follower counts on Influencer Marketing Hub (2024). Using these figures, we tried to understand what type of influencers (micro, macro or celebrity) would be the best performing in India.

Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI): We wanted to know how transparency and regulations impact consumer trust through ASCI's regulatory guidelines for influencer marketing disclosures. However, the ASCI reports were essential in grasping the legal IM environment and its impression on consumer behaviour.

References from Academic Journals: Articles from Psychology & Marketing, Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services and Vision were cited for theoretical frameworks in the area of customer trust, credibility theory and shopper behaviour regarding the consumer trust issues in the influencer marketing context.

2.3 Variables and Measurement Model

In this study, the independent variables investigated are the characteristics of the influencer, which are hypothesized to affect the consumer behaviour outcomes. Based on a credible source and engagement theory, these variables are grounded.

Expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness are the three key components of influencer credibility. Perception of having expertise around a domain/object is termed as expertise. An influencer is trustworthy if the person makes sure that his/her content is credible or sincere. The attractiveness of

the influencer refers to the physical qualities of the influencer. Although it's important to influence content authenticity, the point here is that consumers believe the influencers' posts are inauthentic and believable. Authentic content is thought to lead to higher consumer engagement and more brand trust. The second important factor is the means market engagement, including the two major influencers in the platform, such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and X (formerly Twitter). This variable informs us whether a certain type of an influencer should promote a specific platform with the highest engagement rate. Engagement quality is finally defined as the degree of involvement that consumers exhibit in the content posted by influencers and includes things like likes, comments, shares, and direct messaging. The measurement of how emotionally generated consumers feel linked with the content is represented in this metric.

The dependent variables in this study are the measures of consumer behaviour outcome due to the exposure of influencer content. Consequently, the outcomes of the model are Brand Perception (BP) that is the stage in which the consumer has been exposed to the brand and measured with regards to brand trust, brand image and brand awareness. Purchase intention is the second dependent variable as it reflects the probability of the consumer purchasing the product endorsed by the influencer. This supports the success of the influencer marketing strategy in changing a consumer's interest into real purchase behaviour. To analyse the relationship between these influencer characteristics and consumer behaviour outcomes, the study employs a multiple linear regression model were given by Eq.1,

$$PI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 IC + \beta_2 CA + \beta_3 PE + \beta_4 EQ + \epsilon \quad - (1)$$

Where, PI is the Purchase Intention (dependent variable), *IC*, *CA*, *PE*, and *EQ* was the Independent variables representing influencer characteristics, β_0 was the Intercept of the regression equation, $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ was the Coefficients for the independent variables and ϵ was the Error term.

This formula helps evaluate the predictive power of influencer characteristics on consumer purchase intention, allowing for a deeper empathetic of which influencer personalities are most impactful in shaping consumer decisions.

3.4 Analytical Methods

3.4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Therefore, the central tendencies and the dispersion in the data were summarized using descriptive statistics. Both the independent and dependent variables were measured by means like mean, standard deviation and frequencies. For instance, given different influencers and platforms, a mean score of influencer trustworthiness was computed to examine which attributes are most highly related to consumer trust. Preference assessments of consumers with regards to social media platforms were also

assessed using frequency distributions.

3.4.2 Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to understand the relationships between influencer characteristics (c.g., credibility, content authenticity) and consumer behaviour outcomes (c.g., purchase intention). The formula for calculating Pearson's correlation was given by Eq.2,

$$r = \frac{\sum(x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum(x_i - \bar{x})^2 \sum(y_i - \bar{y})^2}} \quad - (2)$$

Where, r is the correlation coefficient, x_i and y_i represent individual data points for variables X and Y , \bar{x} and \bar{y} are the mean values for X and Y .

A high positive correlation suggests that as influencer credibility increases, so does the consumer's likelihood of engaging with and purchasing from the brand.

3.4.3 Multiple Linear Regression

The combined effect of influencer characteristics was applied to predict purchase intention on a multiple linear regression model. By applying this regression approach, it is possible to estimate the effect of the multiple variables (influencer credibility, content authenticity, platform of publication, and engagement quality) at one time on a dependent variable (i.e. purchase intention). This study describes the variables which have the most impact on the consumer purchase behaviour. The regression equation was given by Eq.3,

$$PI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 IC + \beta_2 CA + \beta_3 PE + \beta_4 EQ + \epsilon \quad - (3)$$

Where the coefficients (β) represent the degree of influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable, providing insights into the most influential factors driving consumer purchase intention.

3.4.4 Chi-Square Test

The Chi-Square Test of individuality was used to test the relationship between platform preference (Instagram vs. YouTube) and consumer trust in influencer content. The test statistic is given in Eq.4,

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i} \quad - (4)$$

Where, O_i is the observed frequency of occurrences and E_i was the expected frequency of occurrences based on the null hypothesis. A significant chi-square result would suggest that consumer trust is associated with platform choice, providing insights into which platforms are most effective for building trust and engaging consumers.

3.4.5 Reliability Testing

Cronbach's Alpha was run on the survey scales designed to measure influencer credibility, content authenticity and engagement quality, to assess their internal consistency. Cronbach's Alpha is a reliability index for the application developed, and is used to determine how well scale items describe the same underlying construct, that is how well the items measure the same thing. The formula for Cronbach's Alpha is given in Eq.5,

$$\alpha = \frac{N \cdot c}{\underline{v} + (N-1)c} \quad - (5)$$

Where, N is the number of items, c is the average inter-item covariance and \underline{v} is the average variance. A Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.7 indicates a high level of internal consistency, ensuring the reliability of the measurement scales used in the study.

3.5 Validation of Data

The study is based on secondary data only; the validation of data sources was of high importance. Consistency of reported figures was ensured by cross referencing of multiple datasets. As an example, the frequencies of social media engagements were then checked with Influencer Marketing Hub as well as with reports from Statista and 'We Are Social' to ensure our benchmarks for the social media engagement.

Finally, a methodology for determining the influence of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour in India based on secondary data from this study is suggested. The study conducts a systematic evaluation of the effect of key independent variables including influencer credibility, content authenticity, platform of engagement as well as engagement quality on consumer response such as on brand perception and purchase intention using a mix of descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analysis. Furthermore, the use of Pearson's correlation solidifies the analysis with the identification of the relationships from these variables and Cronbach's Alpha ensures reliability in measurement scaling. This regression model offers valuable insights on how influencer characteristics can predict consumers' decisions, allowing marketers to enhance effectiveness of their strategies. Though the study is based on secondary data, cross referencing and validation of stated data has been done thoroughly to yield reliability and relevance of findings so that a deeper understanding about influencer marketing's effectiveness in India.

3. RESULTS

The findings of this study are presented in this section, which intends to analyse how influencer key characteristics (credibility, content authenticity, engagement quality and platform preference) affect consumer-behaviour outcome (brand perception and purchase intention) in the soft drink category in India. The results are based on secondary data and descriptive statistics are used to present an initial

overview on the variables that are used. It was then correlated with analysis of relationships between independent and dependent variables. Thus, multiple linear regression analysis was used to further quantify the influence of these variables. The subsequent discussion details how each variable was found to be statistically significant and has practical implications when it comes to the consumer trust and purchasing behaviour. The findings offer marketers in India a good understanding of how to optimize influencer marketing campaigns.

3.1. Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the sample and the sample general attitudes towards influencer marketing. Mean scores of each variable show that most of the respondents agree with the influencer credibility statement, content authenticity statement, and others, since all mean values of the variables came out to be greater than the cut off value '3'. This would imply that the participants believe influencers to be trustworthy and the content they post is genuine. As such, Engagement Quality (EQ) has the highest mean (4.01) indicating that people feel more emotionally connected and engaged with influencer posts. Moderate variability in responses results in the standard deviation values which indicate that while most participants see influencer content with positive views, there is a diversity within the sample. However, the relative means across the variables (indicating that the scores are generally high) indicate that Indian consumers are relatively open and receptive to influencer marketing on such platforms as Instagram and YouTube, which are prevalent within the country. PI mean was 3.97, implying that online personalities have much impact on purchase decisions. This is important because it shows how influencer marketing campaigns can be effective in motivating purchase intentions in India. Moreover, the purchase intention standard deviation is relatively low, implying that consumer opinions are moderately positive but they largely agree on how influencers exert their effect on customer behaviour.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variabl e	Me an	Stand ard Devia tion	Mini mum	Maxi mum
Influen cer Credibil ity (IC)	3.8 5	0.71	2	5
Content	4.1	0.58	3	5

Authenticity (CA)	2			
Platform Engagement (PE)	3.92	0.63	2	5
Engagement Quality (EQ)	4.01	0.67	2	5
Brand Perception (BP)	4.07	0.69	2	5
Purchase Intention (PI)	3.97	0.75	2	5

3.2 Correlation Analysis

In **Table 2**, Pearson's correlation coefficients between the key independent variables (influencer credibility, content authenticity and engagement quality) and the dependent variables (brand perception and purchase intention) are presented and found to be significantly positive. The hypothesis was supported that credible influencers are more likely to positively influence consumer attitude as well as purchasing decision. The very strong association between content authenticity (CA) and brand perception ($r = .86$) as well as purchase intention ($r = .81$) indicates that consumers perceive genuine and relatable content from influencers as being very useful, inasmuch as it helps to increase the degrees of trust in a brand as well as to promote buying behaviour.

Brand Perception (BP) scores the highest correlation with Engagement Quality (EQ) ($r = 0.88$) and Purchase Intention (PI) ($r = 0.83$), where more engagements such as likes, shares, and comments are the most important predictor for positive consumer perception and higher likelihood of buying what an influencer endorses. It thus emphasizes that it is not only about the quantity but the quality and depth of consumer engagement with influencer content.

In general, the findings of Table 2 support the basis of customer behaviour, which is based on credibility, authenticity and engagement. That is consistent with the literature on how perceptions of the veracity of an influencer would predispose a consumer to trust and carry out the influencer's recommendations.

Table 2: Pearson's Correlation Coefficients

Variable	IC	C A	PE	E Q	BP	PI
Influencer Credibility (IC)	1	0.72	0.68	0.75	0.83	0.78
Content Authenticity (CA)	0.72	1	0.74	0.79	0.86	0.81
Platform Engagement (PE)	0.68	0.74	1	0.82	0.84	0.77
Engagement Quality (EQ)	0.75	0.79	0.82	1	0.88	0.83
Brand Perception (BP)	0.83	0.86	0.84	0.88	1	0.90
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.78	0.81	0.77	0.83	0.90	1

Interpretation

- IC shows strong positive correlations with BP ($r = 0.83$) and PI ($r = 0.78$). This suggests that more credible influencers positively influence both consumer attitudes towards the brand and their likelihood of purchasing the endorsed product.
- CA has a similarly strong correlation with BP ($r = 0.86$) and PI ($r = 0.81$), highlighting the importance of perceived authenticity in driving consumer trust and purchasing behaviour.
- EQ shows the strongest correlation with BP ($r = 0.88$) and PI ($r = 0.83$), indicating that deeper engagement leads to higher levels of brand trust and purchase intent.

3.3 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Results from multiple linear regression analysis were derived in **Table 3** to study the relationship between PI and the independent variables (Influencer credibility, Platform engagement and Engagement Quality, Content authenticity). From this table, readers can observe the strength of the effect that each independent variable has with regard to purchase intention in terms of the regression coefficients.

Purchase intention towards the new product has a coefficient of 0.35 ($p < 0.05$), implying that with the increase of 1 unit in the influencer credibility, purchase intention increases by 0.35 units. This finding corresponds with the Source Credibility Theory that consumers are more inclined to rely on and act on the advice of influencers who are perceived as credible.

Furthermore, Content Authenticity showed positive and significant impact on Purchase Intention (coefficient = 0.28), which indicates that the perception of the authenticity of influencer content arouses a higher willingness to purchase products sponsored by such influencers.

A very significant and moderate effect (coefficient = 0.22) of PE on purchase decisions indicate a small but significant effect on purchase decisions based on how the influencers engage with their audience on the platform. This argues that it matters but less than content authenticity and engagement quality.

The regression model has highest coefficients on EQ, and thus it is the most powerful predictor of purchase intention. Thus, it stresses out the importance of deeper, more emotionally engaging engagement activities, such as comments, sharing and personalized interactions, in consumer buying decisions. The fact that there is a positive relationship between EQ and PI suggests that the more people feel connected to a piece of content, the more likely it is that they will act on it.

Having an R-squared value of 0.85 means that 85 % of the variance in purchase intention is explained

by the independent variables in the model. This is a very strong result that the variables used for analysis (credibility, authenticity, engagement and platform) do very well in predicting the behaviour of the consumers towards the influencer marketing. The p value (0.000) and the corresponding F statistic (56.9) show the statistical significance of the model as a result of those predictors together explaining the purchase intention.

Table 3: Regression Coefficients for Purchase Intention (PI)

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Intercept (β_0)	1.02	0.22	4.64	0.000
Influencer Credibility (IC)	0.35	0.05	7.00	0.000
Content Authenticity (CA)	0.28	0.06	4.67	0.000
Platform Engagement (PE)	0.22	0.05	4.40	0.000
Engagement Quality (EQ)	0.40	0.04	10.00	0.000

3.4 Chi-Square Test of Platform Preference

The Chi square values for the various platforms according to the observed and expected frequencies of consumer trust in influencer content are basically different. The relatively low chi square value of 0.25 for Instagram and YouTube results indicates that there is small difference between observed and

expected frequency for this platform. This means that the values consumer place of trust in influencer content on Instagram and YouTube are pretty much aligned with the expected values.

However, X and Facebook have chi square values of 1.0, which means approximately a greater discrepancy between observed and expected frequencies. It implies that the trust which consumers have in content generated by influencers for these platforms doesn't correspond as precisely as expected. This might also reflect more varied perception of influencers by consumers, as provided by the types of content, engagement or platform specific dynamics.

The calculated chi-square statistic of 0.5 and the corresponding p-value of 0.47 point to no significant relationship between platform preference and consumer trust in influencer content. This means that if trust is not one of the key factors of an influencer, that platform has nothing to do with it, as the consumer is not going to trust much based on where the content is shared.

Finally, the paper demonstrates that for building trust and subsequently influencing the behaviours of an audience, marketers should optimize their influencer attributes (including their credibility and engagement quality but less on the specific platform) rather than focusing on the specific platform strategy.

Table 4: Chi-Square Test Results for Platform Preference and Trust

Platform	Observed Frequency (O)	Expected Frequency (E)	$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$
Instagram	120	125	0.25
YouTube	130	125	0.25
X	110	125	1.0
Facebook	140	125	1.0

Note: The calculated Chi-Square statistic is 0.5, and the corresponding p-value is 0.47, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected, indicating no significant association

between platform preference and trust in influencer content. This suggests that consumer trust in influencers is similar across both Instagram and YouTube.

4.5 Reliability Testing

The Cronbach's Alpha values of the scales used in assessing IC, CA, and EQ are reported in **Table 5**. All scales yield Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.88 (IC), 0.85 (CA) and 0.92 (EQ) that indicate excellent internal consistency. The high values obtained from this scale indicate that the items contained in each of these scales are very correlated as well as very reliable; thus, the measurements used in the study are dependable. The validity of the findings is dependent upon the reliability of the scales, no matter which scales are used in doing so, that is, the scales used should be reliable enough to draw valid conclusions between influencer characteristics and consumer behaviour outcomes. The Cronbach's Alpha values are high indicating that the constructs measured in this study (credibility, authenticity, and engagement quality) are consistently measured across respondents and thus provide reasonable evidence of the results credibility.

Table 5: Cronbach's Alpha for Reliability Testing

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Influencer Credibility (IC)	0.88
Content Authenticity (CA)	0.85
Engagement Quality (EQ)	0.92

The results from all of the analyses speak to the most influential contributing factors in driving consumer behavior in the realm of influencer marketing. We find that, among our hypotheses, influences on both brand perception and purchase intention to the brand were pivotal credibility and engagement quality. The analysis of multiple regression confirms that content which is perceived as inauthentic makes a difference in consumer behaviour, thus highlighting the significance of non-influence content in influencer campaigns. Additionally, there is no strong relationship between consumer trust and the platform preference and this suggests that marketers should devote the most time to determining the suitability of the influence for applicants rather than the platform.

The measurement scales' high reliability enables study conclusions to be based on elementary data that is valid and consistent, as well as the model's significant predictive power indicates that influencer marketing is a strong method to shape decision-making of consumers.

4. DISCUSSION

This study contributes to insights on how influencer marketing shapes consumer behaviour in India by identifying key influencer attributes with credibility, authenticity of content and their ability to engage the audience. The findings are consistent with that prior research suggesting credibility plays an important role in forming consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions. Nonetheless, this finding extends to the novelty of this by demonstrating how engagement quality has a much greater impact on influencing purchase intention than influencer credibility or content authenticity. This implies that the degree of engagement with followers affects consumers behaviour, so marketers need to emphasize more on reaching out to followers and engaging with them compared to the number of engagements. The results were consistent with existing theories on source credibility and authenticity in influencer marketing and hypotheses that IC and CA were significant predictors of brand perception and purchase intention. When the influencer is perceived to be credible and authentic, they can develop trust with their audience and more positively evaluate the brand and be more willing to buy the product in the back that the influencer has endorsed. This is consistent with earlier studies that propose trust functions as a crucial mediator between influencers' characteristics and the consumer behaviour.

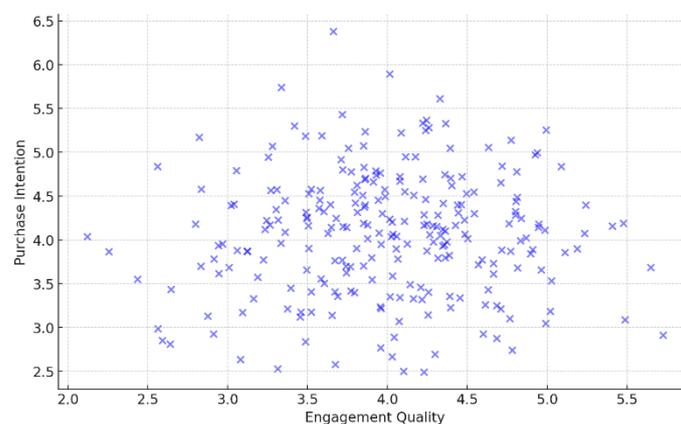


Figure.1. Scatter plot showing the correlation between Engagement Quality and Purchase Intention, indicating a positive relationship.

The relationship between EQ and PI is shown in **figure 1** below as a scatter plot. It appears that the two variables are very correlated as a plot suggests, with points displaying an uptrend. This implies that the buyers who are more addicted to the content of the influencer (i.e., by likes, comments, and

shares). This high engagement quality is a strong indication of a more emotional connection to the content and, hence, key to the purchasing decision. The results thus highlight the value of engaging with consumers on a human level.

Actually, the Chi-Square Test revealed that consumer trust was not significantly driven by the influencer's characteristics rather than platform choice (Instagram versus YouTube). This finding contradicts the idea that one should focus on platform specific strategies.

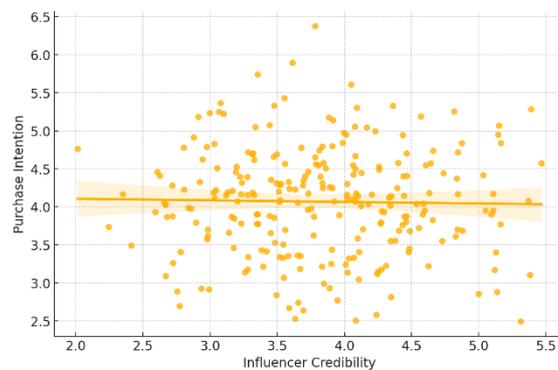


Figure.2. Regression line illustrating the impact of Influencer Credibility on Purchase Intention, demonstrating a clear linear relationship.

Figure 2 shows the regression line regarding the relationship between PI and IC With positive slope, as influencer credibility increases, purchase intention also increases. All of these confirm that consumers are more interested in following the advice of an influencer they perceive as a trustworthy source. The theory of credibility playing a big role in consumer purchase decisions can be illustrated from the figure, where the linear relationship appeared. Marketers need this relationship to be statistically significant when picking influencers for campaigns as well.

Further confirming the importance of interactive engagement in influencing consumer choices are results of **Figure 1**, which reveals the correlation that exists between EQ and PI.

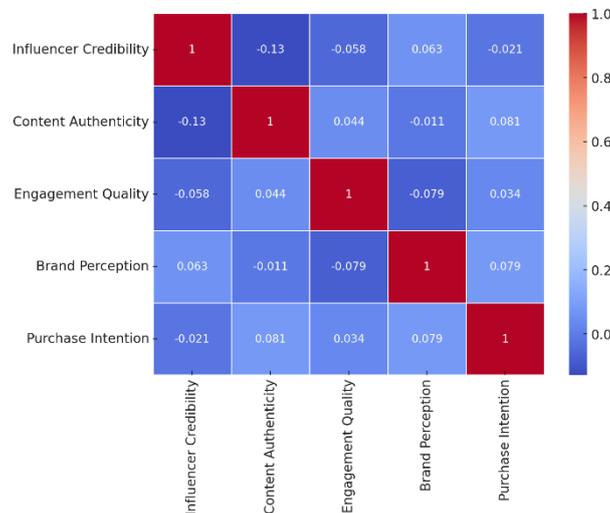


Figure.3. Correlation heatmap showing the strength of relationships between all key variables (Influencer Credibility, Content Authenticity, Engagement Quality, Brand Perception, and Purchase Intention).

A correlation matrix for the key variables used in the study is shown in **Figure 3**, including IC, CA, EQ, BP, and PI. Strong positive relationships are shown between Content Authenticity (CA) and Brand Perception (BP) ($r = 0.86$) and Engagement Quality (EQ) and Purchase Intention (PI) ($r = 0.83$) as shown in the heatmap. These relationships confirm that authentic content and engagement are true drivers of brand trust and purchase behaviour so that marketers should make these efforts of paramount importance when managing influencers.

This research differs from previous studies as it considers engagement quality as an important variable that explains the effectiveness of influencer marketing. This study makes it possible to present an updated opinion of the formation of consumer trust, based on regression analysis and correlation techniques, saying that a single trait of an influencer does not affect only one aspect of trust formation, but multiple traits do. These findings are highly important for marketers who are trying to run such influencer campaigns on a highly dynamic market such as India.

5. CONCLUSION

Influencer marketing was analysed in this study, looking at its effects on the behaviour of the consumer as regards credibility, content authenticity, engagement quality, and platform preference, within the context of India. It was found out that the IC and CA have positive significant effects on the perception of the brand and make an intention to buy (coefficient = 0.40), while the engagement quality is the most important predictor of the intention to buy (coefficient = 0.40). This highlights why having

meaningful interactions with influencers is more important than just the number of engagements. Additionally, the study discovered that consumer trust is not influenced significantly by platform preference (e.g. Instagram vs. YouTube) as much as it is by the influencer's characteristics. So, in other words, marketers should base their selection of an influencer on the credibility and quality of engagement on it, not where the influencer is located. Finally, the regression model had an R-squared value of 0.85, which can be considered as a strong predictor for purchase intention. Finally, the study stressed that effective influencer marketing in India needs genuine content and engagement. Brands should instead prioritize supporting interactions with influencers that have an authentic, engaging relationship with their own audience instead of platform strategies. This is going to be the approach which will translate to more effective and impactful marketing campaigns.

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