

Impact of Influencer Marketing in Brand Perception of Consumers: An Analytical Perspective

***Prof. Sagar Bhadange,**

Associate Professor, Institute for Future Education, Entrepreneurship and Leadership iFEEL, Lonavala, sagar.bhadange@ifeel.edu.in

Prof Tharageswari Soundarapandian

Assistant Professor, Institute for Future Education, Entrepreneurship and Leadership iFEEL, Lonavala, tharageswari@ifeel.edu.in

Prof. Vinod Sharma,

Professor of Practice, Institute for Future Education, Entrepreneurship and Leadership iFEEL , Lonavala vinod.sharma@ifeel.edu.in

*Corresponding Author

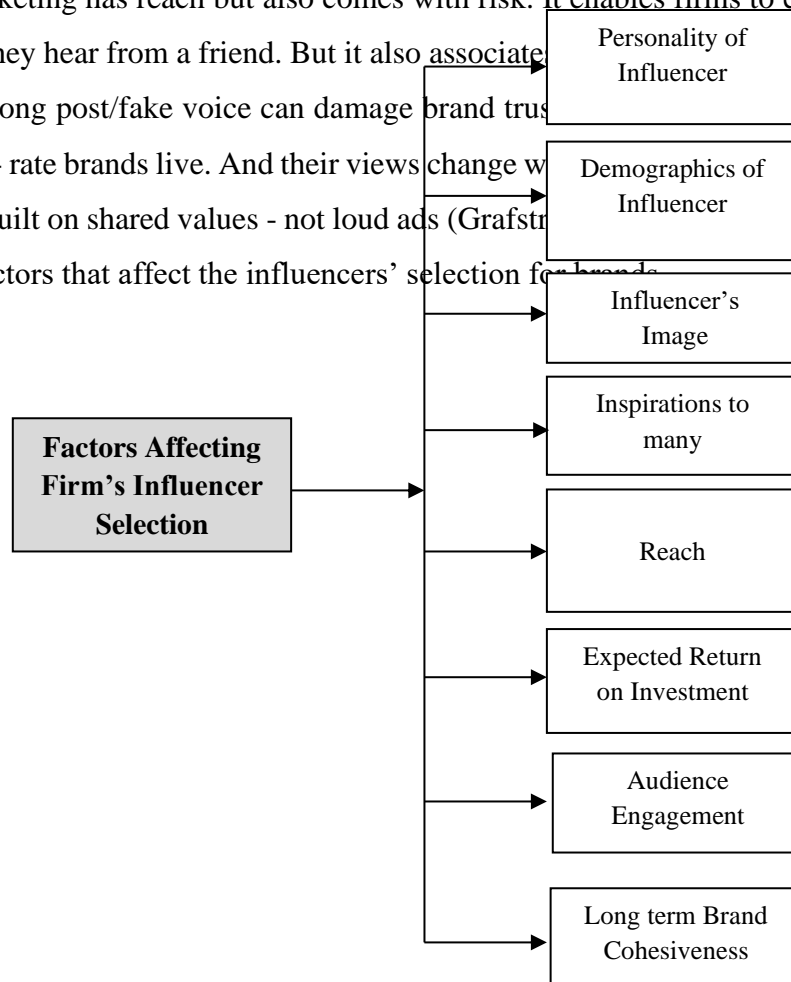
Abstract

Firms employ influencers to modify perceptions of consumers towards the brands. These influencers post views, show products and links on digital platforms. Many buyers believe them more than ads. In India, fashion, food and tech firms use influencers to build fast relationships with young users. Their views, tone and image affect how people perceive brand value and truth. But results are mixed. Some users find paid posts fake or forced. Trust may drop if the influencer changes tone frequently or posts for many firms. Firms choosing the wrong face can lose image. That post may not fit the brand voice. In those instances, users may lose trust or post negative feedback. So, firms must study who speaks, what users post and how users react. Data tools examine this link. Brands monitor likes, clicks and shares to check impact. Tools may indicate whether users trust or doubt the post. Some tools use words and tones to guess mood. These show brands which voice builds trust and which harms image. Firms must match voice, post and goal when using influencer posts. The voice must be real; the post must be clear and the goal simple. Firms must check results, study risk and plan fast changes. Posts from known faces can thus either help or hurt brand value. Right use builds trust, builds image and drives sales. However, weak plans could lose name and user trust.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Brand Perception, Online marketing, Promotion, Customer Perception

Introduction

Indian firms today battle for space in volatile digital markets. They are in a sea of brands trying to speak to the same user. With traditional ads, you get less time, less trust and less response. In this transition, users switch to voices they follow, people they know from quick clips, live chats and stories. These are not brand staff voices. They're not actors from long films. They are influencers. How people perceive products, firms and trends. One good word from them could drive clicks, sales or shares. The wrong type may stall a launch. That clip that builds trust in one group may tear it in another. Firms now have to study what is sold as well as who says it, how and when. Influencer marketing has reach but also comes with risk. It enables firms to enter peer talk. Some users believe they hear from a friend. But it also associate or slip. The wrong post/fake voice can damage brand trust youths - digital and fast switching - rate brands live. And their views change w, or trend. And here, brand trust is built on shared values - not loud ads (Grafstr Viede, 2018). Figure 1 shows the factors that affect the influencers' selection for brands.



Source: Author's Own Work

Figure 1 Factors affecting Brand's Influencer Selection

Firms now test voice and track posts and match before picking a face. They check if the post is in line with brand tone. They rate past post scores, trend on maps and group users by talk type. One post can change a fan group mood. One may pushback. So, tone, tag, and time must be in sync. And even words used in posts can affect how people read the firm. Rise of influencer posts also changes how brands track reach. Clicks, likes & saves are just the beginning. Now brands look at share trails, user comments and post tags. They keep track of who talks back, who repeats and who acts. They map peer chain movement - how a post from one face moves across a group - and shapes view. Where trust grows or drops is shown on this map. Firms also monitor mismatch. Users notice when the influencer's words do not match past posts or brand tone. They ask: is this real? This post seems forced. The link does not add up. Trust falls. So, the post has to sound like the person not the firm. Brands which script too much lose voice. False claims are punished.

From this, Trivedi and Sama (2020). Some firms use tools that check voice fit. They score posts for tone, length and mood. Then they check if users read, act, share or skip. They connect post scores to real sales and user steps. One tool might show that posts with clips perform better than stills. One may find user tags drive more views on posts. These checks help firms select the right face for the job. Influencer posts work best if they're truthful, not pitchy. The users understand the posting is paid, but they want to think it is real. Firms therefore must let the face speak for itself. They must believe the influencer will shape the post - not just send lines. This trust creates more than one-time sales. It creates name value, talk links and long-term reach. Nonetheless, influencer work has gaps too. Many posts look now alike. Some users become tired. They skip the face you liked. Such a shift shows a need for new voice, not reach. This too illustrates the need for checks: not all big follow counts produce real views. Some firms learn this late - after a flat post without sales (Hwang, Oh, and Jang, 2021). Firms in India now move from one-time posts to long links. They establish contacts with insiders. A skin care firm chooses a health - talking face. A car firm selects one who gives trip tips. Such links seem more apt. They let the face grow with the brand

too. Users eventually link the face to the firm. This is a deep link that builds trust more than a loud post. Firms test post types too using short clips and other methods. Each type attracts users. Some love factual stuff, others love jokes. The best posts mix tone and task. They give news, show use and ask for talk. This is a mix that works better than praise. It lets users see the brand at work - not just on show. And brands plan for gaps. If a post fails, they check why. Was the tone off? Did that face look wrong? Was it way too late? They keep logs, test again, and change steps. This cycle creates a post plan which grows over time. Some firms use data to plot post days, select best slots and see which tag gets most clicks.

These steps are helped now by tools. AI tools group users & score tone & Mark weak links. These show post maps, link reach to sales and sort feedback. They can see if that post raised talk or just clicks. They help brands understand what moves trust and not numbers. These tools pick the face no more. People do. But tools make the pick easier. These match tone, field and task. They also avoid harm. If a face has previous slips, the tool might flag. A tool might warn if a tag has past hate. These checks help brands choose safe & smart steps (Chopra, Avhad, and Jaju, 2021). These are jobs that Indian firms now outsource internally. They hire mood trackers and post scorers as well as user map leads. They test posts before launch, tone after launch and log user talk. Others use feedback tools. User ratings, false flagging and more. This loop defines the next post.

Brands also tie influencer work to user goals. Users act if the post saves time. If it just sells, they skip. So, posts must help and not just hope. They cannot just talk about solving a task. A face that shows use rather than tells builds trust. A clip showing steps gets more shares. Firms also tie influencer step count to user views. They check if the user saw the post, clicked, came back or told a friend. These tracks create a full view of the post and path. That gives firms long plans instead of loud weeks. But brands must avoid overuse. Many posts feel fake. Users tune out. Some even block. Thus, brands must limit, plan and space posts. They keep the talk real and real. They must look at the face and not shout. In this new field, brands grow by seeing the user first. This is a post that should fit the user mood and not brand need. It must serve the group and not just the goal - the clip must do that. Good plan looks at what the user wants and picks the post. This order creates gain beyond reach.

Ye, Hudders, De Jans, and De Veirman (2021) found that now some firms launch small groups at test posts. They know how users feel, say and do things. These fix tone, cut length, or change tag. These pre-tests save money, time & harm. They also provide ideas. Firms that do this well link all parts - brand team, influencer, post team & check tool. They meet, plan, test and fix. They keep track of gains, flag gaps and share wins. They build post logs, track mood & grow skill. Soon the post team becomes as important as the brand team. Brands that fail often skip steps. They post too fast, skip checks, or copy trends. They want clicks, not words. This goes beyond trust. That hurts the name. Users never forget forced posts. These are slow to return. So, firms must build post plans carefully. Post voice is brand voice in the long haul. What users hear is what the face says. So, firms must pick carefully, plan skilfully and post truthfully. The clip is short, but the effect is there. A strong post creates link, name and trust. A weak one loses all three. The firms too must stay open. Trends change. Users move. A face that worked last year may seem off now. So, plans must flex, grow and change. The tools help, but people must lead. Then they must feel, see and act. In this way, firms could use influencer work to build as well as sell.

This field is new, fast and deep. It has three underlying elements - truth, trust and tone. Brands that care about their post steps, checks and voice will rise. Those who chase loud clicks/skip plan will fall. The path is open. The moment to act is now.

Literature review

As such, perceived authenticity influences brand perception. Whenever users sense an influencer speaks their own words, shows real use of the product and is honest about their views, they believe that message is true. This sense of truth supports trust transfer. And the influencer is much more than a voice - it's more than a presence. They function like a connection between the user and brand. And users in digital markets are often unsure about claims in ads. They know firms will sell. But if an influencer mentions a product in their daily clip or story, the post is a peer tip. This changes how users hear the message. No longer does it feel like a pitch. It kind of feels like seeing it from someone they know. Once users believe in the influencer, they start trusting what the influencer uses. That is the heart of trust transfer.

According to Vrontis et al. (2021), trust transfer helps new or less-known brands reach markets faster. The product gets trust by link if the influencer is seen as real. A health drink shared by an athlete, for instance, becomes seen as safe and useful. The product has no great brand recall but the face that uses it creates trust. User may eventually develop direct trust with the brand. But from the start, trust comes from the face. This trust transfer must work because brands need influencers with the same tone, field and style as the product. They have to allow room for real use and real talk. If users feel the post is forced or unbranded, trust breaks. But done right, perceived authenticity builds brand trust and market reach beyond mere sale.

Micro and macro-influencers influence how users perceive brands. Micro-influencers typically address smaller, focused groups. They get fewer views, but the talk is real & direct. Many followers consider them peers rather than public figures. This sense of proximity creates bonds with the influencer's audience. When these influencers post about a brand, users consider the post a true tip from someone who understands their needs. As per Xiao, Wang, and Chan-Olmsted (2018), in niche fields like skincare / fitness / craft tools / plant care micro-influencers drive trust more than any other type of influencer. They post real usage, long views, and user notes. That back and forth builds more than reach - it builds shared space. The users feel seen and heard. This kind of post gets more engagement and trust for the face and brand. In many cases, users pick up product tips from micro-influencers more than big names (Kudeshia & Mittal, 2016).

Macro-influencers, in turn, speak to broad, mixed groups. Their posts reach many users but may feel less personal. Such influencers allow for instant reach, strong recall & brand visibility. They are useful for wide launches or for brands looking to build large buzz. But they do talk far apart. Many scrolls past the post without doing anything. Some may even question whether the post is about real use or paid deals. For brand strategy, the influencer type must match the goal. If you want to build trust in a niche, then micro-influencers are better. For a short target, macro-influencers can help. Some firms use both in layers: macro for wide entry; micro for deep follow up. This mix allows the brand to build voice and value across groups.

Similarly, Belanche et al. (2021) found that the number of times users see influencer posts about a brand influence how well they remember it. Repetition builds brand recall. If users see the same product in different ways - daily use, tips or feedback - they associate the brand with use. Every

post reminds the user of the name. The repetition over time builds memory and increases the likelihood of action such as a click or a buy. But this gain is constrained. The same post or message becomes uninteresting if it occurs too frequently. That's called ad fatigue. It can cause users to skim, mute or unfollow an influencer. Users stop reading if it feels like a repeat post. Too many posts/too many faces at once may also make the brand look like it is trying too hard to sell. To avoid this, brands need to plan post gaps, shift tones and change formats. They have to watch user response, look for drop in views, and adjust steps. It's about keeping the brand in mind without making it seem forced. Right balance of post frequency does not harm recall.

From this, Lou and Yuan (2019) found the emotional connection is an important driver of influencer marketing. When users feel connected to an influencer they engage in one-way parasocial interaction. This isn't a real relationship; however, it feels real to the user. They think they know the influencer and understand their life and values. Once this bond has formed, the user begins to trust the influencer's views. If an influencer shares a product or service, they're more likely to listen, remember and act. This effect becomes stronger when the influencer is relatable or aspirational. Featuring a relatable face showing daily use, real thoughts and comments. Users consider this their equivalent of life. An aspirational face, alternatively, might present success, skill, or style that users aspire to. In both cases the post creates a feeling rather than a message. Users hear about a product - they feel a part of the story.

As per Lee and Kim (2020), when the brand is part of this emotional talk, the user associates the brand with the same trust and warmth as the influencer. That might help develop brand loyalty when the user hasn't used the product before. It also shapes how users speak about the brand with others. A strong emotional post may get shares, tags and word of mouth. Firms constructing such relationships need to let influencers speak. Forced posts ruin it. Emotional talk must come from real use and shared views. And brands who respect that place win more than clicks they become part of the user's mind and mood. These emotionally linked relationships build long-term brand value, even in dynamic digital environments.

Influencer marketing is risky but can improve how users perceive a brand. One of the main risks is crisis spillover. It happens when an influencer gets engaged in a public problem - like a social media fight, false claim, or legal problem - and the brand they endorse is seen as part of that

problem. Users associate the brand with the face behind it. If that face loses public trust, so can the brand's image. Such a risk arises from associative perception. Users can not check if the brand agrees with the influencer's actions. The link is all that's needed. Users may stop trusting the influencer if they spread wrong facts, show harmful behaviour or join online hate. That could result in lost sales, online backlash or long-term brand damage.

According to Saima and Khan (2020) In fast digital spaces such crises happen quickly. Posts become viral, users voice opinions and firms are pressed to act fast. A slow or unclear reply from the brand could compound the harm. Alternatively, cutting the ties too fast appears fake or unfair (which causes more talk and split views). To avoid such risks, brands screen influencers well before deals. Then they must check past posts, tone and values. During the link they must monitor public mood and look for early warnings of harm. Also, brands must prepare for problems. An outline of when to say what to say and how to act limits damage. So, in short, influencer ties go beyond reach - they involve shared risk. Brands that act responsibly, check fit, and prepare for crisis are better positioned to protect name and trust.

Brands that work with influencers over a long term gain a solid brand image and user trust. When an influencer works with a brand for some time, customers come to count on the product to be part of the influencer's life too. Every post makes a difference. This repeated link builds brand familiarity. The brand becomes a habit, a belief, or a routine. Such steady links are taken by users as proof of truth. One-time posts may feel like paid work. But after months or seasons of using the same face, users trust the message. They think the influencer uses it for pleasure and not for pay. This belief underlies the notion of authenticity that is key in digital environments in which users tend to distrust ads.

Jin, Muqaddam, and Ryu (2019) found that users who trust the face as well as the product are more likely to try, buy and return. They may also give views, defend the brand in talk, or tell others. The brand becomes part of their peer space instead of their feed. Over time, that trust builds up a base of users who stay instead of scrolling. Brands that want this gain must tie in care. They need influencers with their own values and tone. They must help the influencer with tools, updates & feedback. They also must let the voice be true. Forcing lines destroy trust. It is built in open space.

Short version: long-term ties do more than just extend reach. They affect how users feel, remember & act. A steady voice can change short views into long bonds and help brands gain value in trust and time. Repeat exposure to influencer content cements a brand in consumers' minds. Every post is a cue - reminding users of the brand and embedding its image through repetition. This reinforcement builds brand recall. Users who see a product presented in different formats - videos, reels, stories and testimonials - will remember the name, features and use better. In crowded markets, this just keeps a brand name visible and memorable.

But frequent exposure must be handled. Users may develop ad fatigue when the same influencer shares similar posts too often. When content becomes repetitive, users skip, mull, or unfollow it altogether.

The brand message is old. Martínez-López et al. (2020) discussed that users might also wonder if such a promotion is genuine if it runs in every post, no matter the context. Trust that builds recall may quickly become doubt. Ad fatigue also lowers post effectiveness. Engagement drops. Comments are less meaningful. Shares fall. In certain instances, users might form negative brand evaluations (noise rather than value). The recall goal then becomes lost in overexposure. To avoid this, brands must plan post frequency and timing. Spacing it out, changing up message formats, and having posts coincide with real events/trends keeps it from being irrelevant. Brands can also adjust content plans based on user response - such as drop in likes, clicks or watch time. Influencers should create content that feels natural so repetition does not feel forced.

Thus repeated exposure builds brand recall but overuse damages trust. A clear, spaced and timed strategy keeps brands visible without getting lost in the noise. The key to converting recall to brand value is balance. Influencers influence how users think about a brand. Their style, tone and visual choices impact how users remember and connect with brand content. Consistency in visual identity across colours, fonts, settings and post structure helps to build brand recall. When a brand regularly uses the same logo, brand colour or message style across their posts, users begin to associate these cues with the brand. Over time, this steady link improves recognition and trust.

But consistency must also reflect the brand. A visual style that does not fit the brand tone - for example, bold, playful for a brand known for calm, professional messages - may confuse users.

Post design, background or visual storytelling mismatch can break the connection between the influencer and the product. Some users find the brand unclear or off-track. As gradation continues, Leung, Gu, and Palmatier (2022). A post also loses value if the message structure changes too often. A brand that sounds casual, formal, and vague may not be known by users. This inconsistent perception leads to user confusion over the brand. In worse cases, it can create negative associations if the influencer works with brands that clash in values or image.

This requires firms to teach influencers how to shape content. These include visual rules, tone samples and message flow. They also have to allow room for the influencer's voice, though. A real post that fits the brand but still feels real builds trust and identity. In short, visual and message consistency increases brand recall and trust. Without it, some posts blur or break the brand image. A solid content plan converts influencer posts to brand impressions. According to Karagür, Becker, Klein, and Edeling (2022).

Conclusion

Influencer marketing is increasingly shaping how users see and trust brands. In India's fast-moving digital markets, users respond to peer-like voices more than formal ads. Influencers fill this gap by providing direct, personal content. But such power is also dangerous. Users connect with real posts that are repeated over time with the right tone & format. If posts feel real, they build trust and brand value. If forced or frequent they induce doubt and fatigue. Firms must plan influencer steps carefully - matching brand tone, tracking results and building long ties based on shared values. They must also use data tools to make choices, track responses & fill gaps. Influencer marketing raises sales when managed right. They build memory, trust and long term loyalty. Follow this path and your brands build value.

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