

THE ROLE OF INSTAGRAM INFLUENCERS IN SHAPING CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISIONS: A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

Dr. A. I. SHAKUL HAMEED

Assistant Professor of Commerce,
Sadakathullah Appa College (Autonomous), Tirunelveli – 627 011 Tamilnadu.
Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli -627012, Tamilnadu.

Dr. K. ARUNACHALA PERUMAL

Assistant Professor of Commerce
Sadakathullah Appa College (Autonomous), Tirunelveli – 627 011 Tamilnadu.
Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli -627012, Tamilnadu.

Dr. S. NANCY THEPORAL

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce,
Jeppiaar College of Arts And Science, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 603103
theporalnancy@gmail.com

Dr. K. AHAMED ANIS FATHIMA

Assistant Professor & Head
Department of Commerce (Honours)
Sadakathullah Appa College (Autonomous), Tirunelveli – 627 011 Tamilnadu.
Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli -627012, Tamilnadu.

ABSTRACT

In the digital era, social media platforms particularly Instagram have transformed traditional marketing dynamics by empowering influencers to play a pivotal role in shaping consumer behaviour. This study aims to examine the influence of Instagram influencers on consumer purchase decisions, with special reference to the Tirunelveli district. The research focuses on key influencer characteristics such as content quality, relatability, and engagement, and their impact on consumer buying behaviour. Using a structured questionnaire, primary data was collected from 100 respondents across various demographic segments. Analytical tools including percentage analysis and Chi-Square tests were employed to identify patterns and associations. The findings reveal that influencer attributes like trustworthiness, authenticity, and clear, visually appealing content significantly affect consumer perceptions and intentions to purchase. Interestingly, demographic variables such as age, gender, occupation, and income did not show a statistically significant impact on how consumers perceive influencers. The study concludes that successful influencer marketing strategies should prioritize content relevance, authenticity, and audience engagement, rather than relying heavily on demographic targeting. These findings provide valuable insights for brands

aiming to leverage Instagram as a tool to influence purchasing decisions, particularly in semi-urban regions like Tirunelveli.

Key Words: Instagram Influencers, Consumer Purchase Decisions, Social Media Marketing, Influencer Engagement, Relatability, Digital Marketing, Consumer Behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital landscape, social media has transformed how individuals communicate, share opinions, and make purchasing decisions. Among various platforms, Instagram has emerged as a powerful tool not only for personal expression but also for brand promotion and consumer engagement. With its visually driven interface and large user base, Instagram has given rise to a new wave of digital opinion leaders known as influencers—individuals who possess the ability to affect the opinions, behaviours, and purchase intentions of their followers. Influencer marketing, particularly on Instagram, has become a central strategy for brands aiming to connect with targeted audiences in a more authentic and relatable manner. Influencers often create content that integrates products or services into their lifestyle, which resonates strongly with their followers. This form of marketing relies not on hard-selling techniques but on perceived credibility, relatability, and trust, which are essential in driving consumer action. This study focuses on the role of Instagram influencers in shaping consumer purchase decisions, with special reference to the Tirunelveli district—a growing urban center in Tamil Nadu. As digital connectivity spreads across semi-urban and rural regions, understanding how Instagram users in these areas respond to influencer content becomes increasingly relevant. While much research has been conducted in metro cities, this study aims to bridge the gap by examining consumer behaviour in a more localized context.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dr. Shekhar Verma and **Prof. Priti Dewangan, (2022)** in their study states that the research aims to look deeper into the fundamental ways that social media marketing strategies influence consumer choices for the good of advertisers. The initial portion of the analysis focuses on the critical part that online personalities play in Instagram and YouTube marketing. These celebrities have developed substantial fan bases and the ability to influence their audience's preferences and outlooks. The study examines how sponsored content, influencer collaborations, and deft product placements impact customer perception, brand knowledge, and buying intent. It explores the importance of relatability, credibility, and authenticity to the success of influencer marketing. By comprehending the complexities of

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influencer marketing, brands can maximize their strategies and utilize influencers' impact to influence consumer behaviour positively. The study looks into how visual content impacts consumers on YouTube and Instagram. The visuals enable marketers to showcase their products, way of living, and aspiration material. The study investigates how visually appealing material affects customer engagement, confidence in the brand, and purchasing behaviour. It delves into the psychological factors that drive customer activity on these platforms and demonstrates the usefulness of visuals in evoking emotions, triggering desire, and ultimately influencing purchasing decisions. By clearly understanding the power of visual content, brands can develop fascinating narratives that engage their audience and affect consumer behaviour. The study focuses on the interactions between Instagram and YouTube promotional tactics and how this impacts customer behaviour. It evaluates the efficacy of cross-promotion, coordinated campaigns, and uniform communication over media to enhance brand perception, client retention, and trust. The research also addresses the ethical concerns connected to YouTube and Instagram promotion, emphasizing the value of transparency, openness, and maintaining genuine connections alongside the viewers. By respecting moral requirements, brands can forge enduring relationships with their consumers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ✓ To study the demographic profile of the respondents in the study area.
- ✓ To identify which characteristics of Instagram influencers most significantly influence consumer buying behaviour.
- ✓ To find the association between the demographic profile and the characteristics of Instagram influencers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is descriptive in nature. The study uses both primary and secondary data. The primary data has been collected from a sample group of 100 respondents in Tirunelveli district. The secondary data has been collected from various secondary sources such as books, journals, magazines etc.,

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This section presents the analysis of data and its interpretation.

TABLE 1

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Demographic variables	Categories	No of Respondents	Percentage
Age	18-24 years	35	35%
	25-30 years	30	30%
	31-35 years	20	20%
	36-40 years	15	15%
Gender	Male	53	53%
	Female	47	47%
Occupation	Student	42	42%
	Employed	33	33%
	Self-employed	14	14%
	Homemaker	11	11%
Monthly Income	Below 10,000	40	40%
	10,000 – 20,000	25	25%
	20,000 – 30,000	13	13%
	Above 30,000	22	22%

Source: Primary data

A majority of the respondents (65%) fall within the age bracket of 18 to 30 years, indicating that younger adults are the primary users engaged with Instagram influencer content. It is found that the gender distribution is relatively balanced, with males slightly outnumbering females (53% male vs. 47% female). It is found that Students form the largest occupational group (42%), followed by employed individuals (33%). Income levels vary, with 40% of respondents earning below ₹10,000 per month, and 22% earning above ₹30,000.

TABLE 2

CHARACTERISTICS OF INSTAGRAM INFLUENCERS

S. No	Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Instagram influencers I follow post high-quality content.	79%	21%
2	The information shared by influencers is clear and useful	85%	15%
3	Influencers' posts are visually appealing and engaging	60%	40%
4	I feel that Instagram influencers I follow are relatable.	72%	28%
5	I trust influencers because they share experiences similar to mine	69%	31%
6	Influencers seem honest and authentic in their recommendations	65%	25%
7	Influencers respond to their followers and engage with them.	55%	45%

Source: Primary Data

The above table shows that 79% of the respondents says that the Instagram influencers they follow post high quality content. Majority (85%) of the respondents says that, the information shared is clear and useful. Most of the respondents accept that Influencers' posts are visually appealing and engaging (60%), feel that Instagram influencers they follow are relatable (72%), trust influencers because they share experiences similar to mine (69%), Influencers seem honest and authentic in their recommendations (65%) and Influencers respond to their followers and engage with them (55%)

Relationship between demographic variables and characteristics of Instagram influencers – Chi Square Test

H₀ (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant association between demographic variables and characteristics of Instagram influencers.

TABLE 3

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF INSTAGRAM INFLUENCERS – CHI SQUARE TEST

Characteristics of Instagram Influencers	Value	Gender	Occupation	Monthly Income
High-quality content	χ^2 value p- value	12.321 (0.030)	7.485 (0.000)	5.685 (0.001)
Information is clear and useful	χ^2 value p- value	13.183 (0.000)	24.906 (0.001)	1.025 (0.001)
Visually appealing and engaging posts	χ^2 value p- value	0.729 (0.020)	4.965 (0.001)	3.548 (0.000)
Influencers are relatable	χ^2 value p- value	2.946 (0.000)	3.290 (0.003)	8.650 (0.001)
Trust based on shared experiences	χ^2 value p- value	2.452 (0.030)	25.691 (0.001)	21.856 (0.000)
Perceived honesty and authenticity	χ^2 value p- value	0.055 (0.040)	1.754 (0.000)	2.159 (0.001)
Responds and engages with followers	χ^2 value p- value	1.125 (0.000)	13.654 (0.001)	4.365 (0.010)

Source: Primary Data

The above table shows the association between demographic variables and characteristics of Instagram influencers. It is clear from the above that the null hypothesis is rejected as the p value is < 0.05 . Hence, there exist significant association between the characteristics of Instagram influencers and their demographic profile.

SUGGESTIONS

- Instagram influencers should focus on producing high-quality, visually appealing, and authentic content that resonates with their followers. Brands collaborating with influencers must ensure that the messaging is genuine and aligns with the consumers' values to build long-term trust.
- Influencers should actively engage with their audience through comments, live sessions, polls, and stories. This two-way interaction fosters a sense of community and strengthens followers' trust, which positively influences purchase intentions.

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- Brands should customize influencer campaigns based on the demographic profile of the target audience in Tirunelveli district. Age, gender, occupation, and income levels influence how consumers respond to influencer content, so personalized marketing strategies will be more effective.
- Given the semi-urban context of Tirunelveli, collaborating with micro-influencers and local personalities can be more impactful than partnering solely with high-profile influencers. Local influencers tend to have higher relatability and credibility among regional consumers.
- Clear disclosure of paid promotions enhances consumer trust. Both brands and influencers should maintain transparency regarding sponsored content to uphold credibility and avoid scepticism among followers.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the significant role of Instagram influencers in shaping consumer purchase decisions in Tirunelveli District. The findings reveal that influencer characteristics such as content quality, relatability, and active engagement strongly impact consumers' buying behaviour. The demographic profile of respondents also plays a crucial role in determining the extent to which consumers are influenced by Instagram personalities. The study highlights those consumers in Tirunelveli increasingly rely on Instagram influencers for product information and recommendations, reflecting the growing importance of social media marketing even in semi-urban regions. Influencers who maintain authenticity and regularly engage with their followers tend to build greater trust, which in turn drives purchase intentions. Marketers targeting similar regions can leverage these insights by collaborating with relatable and credible influencers who tailor their content to local preferences and demographics. Overall, the research underscores the evolving dynamics of consumer behaviour in the digital age and stresses the need for brands to adopt consumer-centric social media strategies to remain competitive.

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