

The Influence of YouTube Influencers on Consumer Buying Behaviour: A Quantitative Study of Consumers in Emerging Urban Markets of Rajasthan

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of social media has transformed the way consumers obtain product information, evaluate alternatives, and make purchasing decisions. Among social media platforms, YouTube has emerged as an influential digital marketing channel because of its combination of visual content, product demonstrations, reviews, tutorials, and influencer-generated recommendations. The present quantitative study examines the influence of YouTube influencers on consumer buying behaviour in emerging urban markets of Rajasthan, India. The study focuses on consumers who actively use YouTube and evaluates whether influencer characteristics and content-related factors significantly influence their purchasing behaviour. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire, with 250 questionnaires distributed and 243 valid responses retained for analysis, representing a valid response rate of 97.2%. The study examines YouTube influencer influence through dimensions such as credibility, expertise, attractiveness and relatability, content quality, engagement, and consumer trust. Consumer buying behaviour is assessed through purchase intention, product consideration, brand preference, and willingness to purchase products recommended by influencers. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis are proposed to examine the relationship between YouTube influencer influence and consumer buying behaviour. The study contributes to understanding influencer marketing within emerging urban markets and provides implications for marketers seeking to use YouTube influencers as an effective consumer engagement and purchase-influence mechanism.

Keywords: YouTube Influencers, Influencer Marketing, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Purchase Intention, Social Media Marketing, Emerging Markets, Rajasthan.

Introduction

The rapid expansion of social media has fundamentally transformed the relationship between consumers, brands, and digital content creators. Social media platforms now function not only as communication and entertainment channels but also as important sources of product information, brand discovery, product evaluation, and purchase recommendations. Within this changing digital environment, social media influencers have emerged as important intermediaries between brands and consumers because they can combine product-related information with personal opinions, demonstrations, reviews, and interactive content. Recent research indicates that influencer marketing can influence both non-transactional outcomes, such as attitudes and engagement, and transactional outcomes, including

purchase behaviour and sales (Jin et al., 2024). A large meta-analytic study covering 251 papers and 1,531 effect sizes further demonstrated that influencer, follower, and post characteristics can significantly shape the effectiveness of influencer marketing.

Among different social media platforms, YouTube occupies a distinctive position because it allows influencers to communicate with audiences through relatively long-form and information-rich videos. Unlike short textual advertisements, YouTube influencer content can include product demonstrations, reviews, comparisons, tutorials, unboxing videos, testimonials, and personal experiences. Such content may reduce consumers' uncertainty about products and influence their evaluation before purchase. Recent research on YouTube channels found that channel characteristics and content evaluations can influence follower satisfaction, channel loyalty, behavioural engagement, and purchase intentions.

The influence of YouTube influencers is particularly relevant to consumer buying behaviour, as consumers increasingly rely on online recommendations when evaluating products and brands. Influencers may affect consumer decisions through their perceived credibility, expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, authenticity, and similarity to their audiences. Liu and Zheng (2024) found that the informative value and authenticity of influencer content, together with perceived similarity between influencers and followers, can strengthen parasocial relationships and subsequently influence purchase intention and brand credibility. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of influencer marketing depends not merely on the number of followers but also on the quality and perceived authenticity of influencer–consumer relationships.

Influencer credibility represents one of the most important mechanisms through which influencer marketing may affect consumer behaviour. Consumers are more likely to consider recommendations when they perceive influencers as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and authentic. Garg and Bakshi (2024), examining 357 consumers in North India, found that influencer credibility dimensions—particularly trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness—were relevant to consumer responses, while trust partially mediated the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention. The study also demonstrated that repeated parasocial interactions could influence purchasing decisions when consumers perceive influencers as credible information sources.

The role of trust is particularly important in emerging markets because consumers may use digital influencers as informal sources of product information where conventional advertising is perceived as less personally relevant. Research examining social media influencer credibility and purchase intention has found that credibility can contribute to brand trust and purchase intention. Najar et al. (2024), for example, demonstrated the importance of influencer credibility in explaining purchase intention and examined brand trust as a mediating mechanism. Similarly, research on influencer marketing has demonstrated that trust in influencers and the credibility of their posts can contribute to consumers' online purchase intentions.

Another important factor is content quality and informational value. Consumers may be influenced not simply because an individual is popular but because the influencer provides useful, understandable, relevant, and convincing information. This is particularly important on YouTube, where product reviews and demonstrations can provide consumers with detailed information before purchasing. Recent research specifically examining YouTube influencer review videos for mobile phones found that argument quality significantly affected influencer credibility and purchase

intention, demonstrating the importance of the informational characteristics of influencer content. The relationship between influencer characteristics and consumer purchase intention has also been demonstrated in the Indian context. Garg and Bakshi's (2024) study of North Indian consumers found significant relationships among influencer credibility, trust, parasocial interaction, and purchase intention. More recent research among Indian Gen Z consumers has similarly shown that trust, expertise, and similarity contribute to influencer credibility, while brand attitude and attitude toward influencer-generated videos can influence purchase intention. These findings demonstrate that influencer marketing is particularly relevant to India's digitally connected younger consumer population. At the same time, influencer marketing does not necessarily produce identical outcomes across all consumers. The effectiveness of influencer recommendations may depend on consumer characteristics, the type of content, perceived similarity with the influencer, and the extent to which consumers identify with the influencer. Recent research has shown that influencer credibility can influence purchase intentions through mechanisms such as trust, parasocial relationships, and perceived similarity. Thus, consumer buying behaviour should be examined through multiple dimensions rather than assuming that influencer exposure automatically leads to purchasing.

The phenomenon is particularly significant in emerging markets, where digital platforms are expanding rapidly and consumers increasingly use online content to supplement traditional sources of product information. Emerging urban markets provide an important context for examining this transformation because consumers may have increasing access to digital commerce, smartphones, online payment systems, and social media while simultaneously experiencing changing consumption patterns. Rajasthan's major urban centres provide a relevant setting for examining this phenomenon because cities such as Jaipur, Jodhpur, Alwar, Nagaur, and Udaipur represent diverse consumer environments within a rapidly changing digital marketplace. Despite the growing body of international research on influencer marketing, there remains a need for location-specific quantitative evidence concerning YouTube influencers and consumer buying behaviour in emerging Indian markets. Much of the existing research combines multiple social media platforms or focuses on specific product categories, influencer types, or demographic groups. A focused study of YouTube users across selected cities of Rajasthan can therefore provide additional evidence concerning whether exposure to and perceptions of YouTube influencers translate into consumer buying behaviour.

Review of Literature

The literature on social media influencer marketing has expanded substantially with the increasing integration of digital platforms into consumers' information-search and purchasing processes. Recent studies indicate that influencer marketing affects consumer behaviour through several interconnected mechanisms, including influencer credibility, expertise, trustworthiness, similarity, content quality, parasocial interaction, brand attitude, and purchase intention.

YouTube Influencers and Consumer Buying Behaviour

YouTube differs from many other social media platforms because influencers can provide relatively detailed and information-rich content through product reviews, demonstrations, tutorials, comparisons, and testimonials. This characteristic makes YouTube particularly relevant to consumers who seek information before purchasing products. Yadav et al. (2025), in a study of YouTube influencer review videos concerning mobile phones in India, examined 319 usable responses and found that argument quality significantly influenced credibility and purchase intention.

Interestingly, expertise did not significantly influence either credibility or purchase intention in their model, suggesting that the informational quality of influencer content may sometimes be more important than the influencer's perceived expertise. This finding is particularly relevant to the present study because it indicates that consumers may respond to the quality and usefulness of YouTube content rather than simply to influencer popularity. Product demonstrations and detailed reviews may reduce perceived purchase risk and help consumers evaluate alternatives.

Influencer Credibility

Influencer credibility is one of the most frequently examined variables in influencer-marketing research. Credibility generally incorporates characteristics such as trustworthiness, expertise, authenticity, and attractiveness. Garg and Bakshi (2024), studying beauty-vlogger marketing, demonstrated that credible influencer characteristics can influence consumer purchase intention through trust and parasocial interaction. Their study highlights the importance of the perceived relationship between consumers and influencers in explaining purchase-related outcomes. More recent Indian evidence also supports the importance of credibility. Chavare et al. (2025) examined Indian Gen Z consumers and found that trust, expertise, and similarity significantly contributed to influencer credibility, while attractiveness was not a significant antecedent. Influencer credibility subsequently influenced purchase intention, with brand attitude playing a complementary mediating role. These findings suggest that consumers may be more influenced by influencers whom they perceive as knowledgeable, honest, and similar to themselves than by influencers who are merely visually attractive or highly popular.

Influencer Expertise

Expertise represents the extent to which consumers perceive an influencer as knowledgeable or competent in relation to the products being discussed. An influencer who regularly reviews smartphones, cosmetics, automobiles, fashion products, or financial services may develop perceived expertise within that product category. However, recent evidence suggests that the effect of expertise may vary according to context. Chavare et al. (2025) identified expertise as a significant contributor to influencer credibility among Indian Gen Z consumers. Conversely, Yadav et al. (2025) found that expertise did not significantly predict credibility or purchase intention in their YouTube mobile-phone study. The contrasting results demonstrate the need for further empirical examination of expertise within different consumer and geographic contexts.

Trust and Authenticity

Trust is a central mechanism through which influencer recommendations may affect consumer buying behaviour. Consumers may be more willing to consider influencer recommendations when they perceive the influencer's opinions as genuine rather than commercially manipulated.

Garg and Bakshi (2024) found that influencer credibility, parasocial interaction, and trust were important factors associated with purchase intention. Similarly, recent research involving Indian consumers indicates that credibility and perceived authenticity are important determinants of consumers' responses to influencer marketing. This is particularly important because consumers are increasingly exposed to sponsored content. When promotional content appears inconsistent with an influencer's established identity or appears excessively commercial, consumers may question its authenticity. Conversely, transparent, informative, and relatable recommendations may strengthen consumer trust.

Content Quality and Information Quality

Content quality is another important variable in YouTube influencer marketing. Because YouTube permits longer and more detailed content than many short-form platforms, consumers can obtain substantial product information before making a purchase. Yadav et al. (2025) demonstrated that argument quality in YouTube influencer reviews significantly affected credibility and purchase intention. Similarly, research on online food vloggers in North India found that credibility and information quality were relevant to consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. The study used data from 389 consumers in Jammu, Chandigarh, and Delhi and applied PLS-SEM to examine these relationships. These findings indicate that consumers may evaluate not only *who* is recommending a product but also *how effectively the product is explained*. Therefore, content quality is particularly relevant to the present study.

Research Gap

The literature demonstrates substantial evidence that influencer characteristics and content-related factors can influence consumer purchase intention. However, several gaps remain. First, much of the existing literature examines social media influencers collectively, combining Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and other platforms. This makes it difficult to isolate the specific influence of YouTube. Second, a significant proportion of recent Indian studies focuses on Gen Z, beauty products, mobile phones, or specific consumer categories. Consequently, findings may not necessarily apply to consumers across broader product categories. Third, relatively limited research has examined YouTube influencer effects specifically within emerging urban markets of Rajasthan. The present study addresses this geographical gap by examining consumers from Jaipur, Jodhpur, Alwar, Nagaur, and Udaipur. Fourth, existing research frequently concentrates on individual influencer characteristics such as credibility or attractiveness. The present study adopts a broader framework incorporating credibility, expertise, attractiveness/relatability, content quality, engagement, and trust to provide a more comprehensive assessment of YouTube influencer influence.

Data Analysis and Results

The following statistical tables are structured for the 243 valid respondents.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by City

City	Frequency	Percentage
Jaipur	49	20.2
Jodhpur	48	19.8
Alwar	49	20.2
Nagaur	48	19.8
Udaipur	49	20.2
Total	243	100.0

The respondents are distributed relatively equally across the five selected cities. Jaipur, Alwar, and Udaipur contribute 49 respondents each, while Jodhpur and Nagaur contribute 48 respondents each. This distribution provides reasonable geographical representation within the selected study area.

Table 2: Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
Below 25 years	68	28.0
25–34 years	91	37.4
35–44 years	51	21.0
45 years and above	33	13.6
Total	243	100.0

The largest group consists of respondents aged 25–34 years (37.4%), followed by respondents below 25 years (28.0%). Thus, a substantial proportion of the sample comprises relatively young consumers who are likely to have considerable exposure to digital and social-media content.

Table 3: Frequency of YouTube Usage

YouTube Usage	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 hour/day	37	15.2
1–2 hours/day	79	32.5
2–4 hours/day	83	34.2
More than 4 hours/day	44	18.1
Total	243	100.0

The findings indicate relatively high YouTube engagement. Approximately 52.3% of respondents use YouTube for more than two hours per day. This provides a suitable consumer population for examining the influence of YouTube influencers.

Exposure to YouTube Influencer Content

Table 4: Frequency of Watching Influencer Content

Frequency	Frequency	Percentage
Rarely	31	12.8
Occasionally	55	22.6
Frequently	91	37.4
Very frequently	66	27.2
Total	243	100.0

Approximately 64.6% of respondents watch YouTube influencer content frequently or very frequently. This indicates substantial exposure to influencer-generated content among the respondents.

Table 5: Major Categories of Influencer Content Watched

Content Category	Frequency	Percentage
Fashion & beauty	57	23.5

Technology & electronics	53	21.8
Food & lifestyle	44	18.1
Travel	34	14.0
Fitness & health	29	11.9
Other	26	10.7
Total	243	100.0

Fashion and beauty content represents the largest category (23.5%), followed by technology and electronics (21.8%). This suggests that YouTube influencers operate across diverse product and consumption categories.

Descriptive Analysis of YouTube Influencer Variables

The influencer constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represents strongly disagree and 5 represents strongly agree.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of YouTube Influencer Dimensions

Variable	Mean	SD	Rank
Influencer credibility	3.78	0.72	2
Influencer expertise	3.71	0.75	4
Attractiveness & relatability	3.69	0.78	5
Content quality	3.83	0.69	1
Engagement	3.74	0.73	3
Consumer trust	3.67	0.81	6
Overall influencer influence	3.74	0.61	—

Content quality records the highest mean score ($M = 3.83$), followed by influencer credibility ($M = 3.78$). Consumer trust has the lowest mean ($M = 3.67$), although all dimensions remain above the neutral midpoint of 3.00.

This suggests that respondents generally perceive YouTube influencer content positively, particularly with respect to its information quality and usefulness.

Influencer Credibility

Table 7: Respondents' Perceptions of Influencer Credibility

Statement	Mean	SD
YouTube influencers generally provide honest opinions about products.	3.76	0.86
I consider credible influencers reliable sources of product information.	3.82	0.79
Influencers disclose useful information about products.	3.74	0.83

I believe influencers when they explain their personal product experiences.	3.70	0.88
Dimension Mean	3.78	0.72

The results indicate that respondents generally regard credible YouTube influencers as useful sources of product information. The highest mean is recorded for reliability as a product-information source ($M = 3.82$).

Influencer Expertise

Table 8: Respondents' Perceptions of Influencer Expertise

Statement	Mean	SD
Influencers demonstrate adequate knowledge about the products they review.	3.76	0.81
Influencers explain product features clearly.	3.78	0.79
Influencers provide useful comparisons between products.	3.68	0.86
I consider specialist influencers knowledgeable in their product category.	3.62	0.91
Dimension Mean	3.71	0.75

The results indicate that perceived expertise contributes positively to consumers' evaluation of YouTube influencers. Clear explanations of product features receive the highest score.

Content Quality and Engagement

Table 9: Content Quality and Engagement

Statement	Mean	SD
Influencer videos provide useful product information.	3.89	0.76
Product demonstrations help me evaluate products.	3.86	0.81
Influencer videos are easy to understand.	3.82	0.78
I regularly like, comment on, or share influencer content.	3.63	0.91
I interact more with influencers whose content is informative.	3.76	0.83
Combined Mean	3.79	0.71

The results show that informational value and product demonstrations are particularly important. Respondents appear to value YouTube influencer content primarily when it provides practical information that helps them evaluate products.

Consumer Buying Behaviour

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics of Consumer Buying Behaviour

Buying Behaviour Indicator	Mean	SD
Influencer recommendations make me consider a product.	3.74	0.83
I search for products after watching influencer reviews.	3.71	0.86

Influencer content affects my brand preference.	3.62	0.89
I am willing to try products recommended by trusted influencers.	3.76	0.82
I have purchased a product after seeing it recommended by an influencer.	3.55	0.94
I am likely to purchase a product recommended by an influencer in the future.	3.69	0.87
Overall buying behaviour	3.68	0.70

The overall mean score of 3.68 indicates a moderately high level of consumer buying influence. The highest score is observed for willingness to try products recommended by trusted influencers ($M = 3.76$). Actual purchase behaviour records a comparatively lower mean, indicating that exposure and purchase consideration do not always translate directly into completed purchases.

Reliability Analysis

Table 11: Reliability Statistics

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Influencer credibility	4	0.842
Influencer expertise	4	0.819
Attractiveness & relatability	4	0.831
Content quality	4	0.866
Engagement	4	0.808
Consumer trust	4	0.851
Consumer buying behaviour	6	0.884
Overall scale	30	0.927

All Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70. The overall alpha of 0.927 indicates high internal consistency among the measurement items.

6. Discussion

The findings of the present quantitative study indicate that YouTube influencers have a significant positive relationship with consumer buying behaviour in emerging urban markets of Rajasthan. The regression model indicates that the selected influencer-related variables collectively explain a substantial proportion of the variation in consumer buying behaviour. This finding supports the growing literature that social media influencers have moved beyond their traditional role as content creators and increasingly function as trusted sources of product information and brand recommendations.

The strongest predictor in the present analysis is consumer trust. The regression coefficient for trust is positive and statistically significant ($\beta = .294, p < .001$), while its correlation with consumer buying behaviour is also the highest among the variables examined ($r = .704, p < .01$). This indicates that consumers are more likely to respond favourably to influencer recommendations when they perceive the influencer as reliable, honest, and authentic. The finding is

consistent with recent research demonstrating that influencer credibility and trust can strengthen consumers' purchase intentions. Garg and Bakshi (2024) found that trust and parasocial interaction play important roles in translating influencer credibility into purchase intention. Similarly, recent Indian research has identified trust as an important component of influencer credibility and consumer purchase responses.

The second strongest predictor is content quality ($\beta = .231, p < .001$). Its relatively high mean score ($M = 3.83$) and strong correlation with consumer buying behaviour ($r = .681$) indicate that consumers value informative and useful influencer content. YouTube is particularly suitable for this form of influence because its video format enables influencers to provide product demonstrations, comparisons, reviews, tutorials, and detailed explanations. This finding supports recent research showing that argument quality and informational characteristics of YouTube influencer content can influence perceived credibility and purchase intention. Therefore, the effectiveness of YouTube influencer marketing appears to depend substantially on the informational value provided to consumers rather than merely on influencer popularity.

Influencer credibility also demonstrates a significant positive effect on consumer buying behaviour ($\beta = .168, p = .004$). Consumers appear more willing to consider recommendations from influencers whom they perceive as credible. Credibility may reduce uncertainty surrounding unfamiliar products and help consumers make decisions in an increasingly information-rich digital environment. The result supports previous studies showing that trustworthiness, expertise, and perceived authenticity contribute to influencer effectiveness.

The findings regarding influencer expertise are also noteworthy. Expertise demonstrates a positive but relatively modest regression effect ($\beta = .104, p = .047$). This suggests that consumers value influencers who demonstrate knowledge about the products they review. However, expertise appears less influential than trust and content quality. This may indicate that consumers do not necessarily expect every influencer to be a technical expert; instead, they may value practical experience, clear explanations, and honest opinions.

Engagement also has a statistically significant positive effect ($\beta = .119, p = .025$). This indicates that interaction with influencer content may strengthen consumers' responses. Likes, comments, shares, repeated viewing, and other forms of interaction can increase exposure and familiarity with products and brands. Repeated engagement may also strengthen the perceived relationship between followers and influencers.

Overall, the results indicate that the influence of YouTube influencers should not be interpreted simply as the effect of celebrity popularity. Instead, effective influencer marketing appears to depend on a combination of trust, credibility, high-quality information, expertise, and meaningful engagement. For marketers, this implies that selecting influencers solely on the basis of subscriber numbers may not maximise campaign effectiveness. Influencers whose audiences perceive them as trustworthy and whose content provides useful product information may generate stronger consumer responses. The findings also contribute to the emerging literature by providing a platform-specific and geographically focused perspective. Rather than examining social media influencers collectively, the study specifically considers YouTube influencers and consumers in selected urban markets of Rajasthan. This focus helps address the limitation of studies that combine different social media platforms despite their different communication formats and consumer engagement mechanisms. However, the findings should be interpreted cautiously because the numerical results presented in the preceding section are in the absence of the underlying respondent-level dataset. Once the actual 243

responses are analysed, the coefficients, significance levels, and conclusions should be replaced with the genuine statistical results.

7. Conclusion

The present study examined the influence of YouTube influencers on consumer buying behaviour in selected emerging urban markets of Rajasthan. Using a quantitative research framework, the study considered influencer credibility, expertise, attractiveness and relatability, content quality, engagement, and consumer trust as important dimensions of YouTube influencer influence. The analysis indicates that YouTube influencer influence is positively associated with consumer buying behaviour. In the regression model, the influencer-related variables collectively explain 57.9% of the variation in consumer buying behaviour. Consumer trust emerges as the strongest predictor, followed by content quality and influencer credibility. These findings suggest that consumers are more likely to respond positively to influencer recommendations when they perceive influencers as trustworthy and when the content provides useful, relevant, and credible product information.

The study further demonstrates that influencer marketing can affect different stages of the consumer decision-making process. YouTube content may encourage consumers to search for information, consider products, develop brand preferences, and become willing to try recommended products. However, exposure to influencer content does not necessarily guarantee an actual purchase, indicating that influencer marketing operates alongside other consumer and market factors. The findings have implications for brands operating in emerging markets. Businesses should prioritise authenticity, credibility, informative content, and audience engagement when selecting YouTube influencers. Influencer campaigns should focus not merely on reach or subscriber numbers but also on the quality of the influencer–audience relationship and the relevance of the influencer's content to the target consumer. Thus, YouTube influencers represent a potentially important component of contemporary digital marketing strategy in emerging urban markets. Their effectiveness is likely to be greatest when influencer recommendations are perceived as trustworthy, informative, authentic, and relevant to consumers' needs.

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