



Impact of Social Media Influencer Marketing on Consumer Purchase Behaviour: An Empirical Study with Reference to Bhopal City

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Abstract

Social media's explosive growth has drastically changed how companies interact with their customers. Because of their capacity to provide engaging, interactive, and customised content, social media influencers have become crucial middlemen between companies and consumers. With a focus on Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, the current research investigates how social media influencer marketing affects consumer purchasing behaviour. Influencer reputation, content authenticity, relatability, and the frequency of exposure to influencer-generated promotional material have all received special attention. A descriptive and empirical research design is used in the study. A systematic questionnaire was used to gather primary data from sixty Bhopal-based social media users. The method used to choose the respondents was convenience sampling. The data was interpreted using regression analysis, Pearson's correlation, mean, standard deviation, and percentage analysis. The results show that customer purchasing behaviour is positively correlated with influencer relatability, authenticity, and credibility. Promotional material focused only on the popularity or beauty of influencers was proven to be less successful than genuine and reliable product recommendations. Additionally, the data shows that customers who are often exposed to material created by influencers have comparatively higher buy inclinations. In general, customer purchasing behaviour is positively impacted by social media influencer marketing. According to the survey, marketers should concentrate on relevant and trustworthy influencers whose audience and content align with the features of the target market and advertised product.

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

1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, the structure of marketing communication has evolved due to the development of digital technology. In addition to social connection and enjoyment, consumers are increasingly utilising social media to research items, compare options, read reviews, and make choices about what to buy. As a result, social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have grown to be crucial marketing platforms that allow companies to interact directly with both current and future clients.

The rise of social media influencers is one of the biggest trends in social media marketing. Social media influencers are people who have built a following via specialised, amusing, educational, or lifestyle-related digital material and have the power to affect their followers' attitudes, beliefs, and purchasing habits. Influencer marketing often fosters a sense of increased accessibility, authenticity, and interpersonal connection between the influencer and followers, in contrast to conventional celebrity endorsement.

Electronic word-of-mouth, product demos, sponsored postings, reviews, suggestions, lessons, unboxing videos, and firsthand accounts are all ways that influencer marketing operates. Influencer recommendations may be seen by consumers as more relevant and realistic than traditional advertising. However, reputation, competence, authenticity, attractiveness, influencer-product fit, and the bond formed between influencers and their audiences all play a significant role in how successful influencer marketing is.

Prior research has shown that customer trust and purchase intention may be strengthened by influencer credibility and the perceived value of influencer-generated content. Lou and Yuan found that consumer confidence in branded social media material is significantly influenced by the informational value, trustworthiness, and attractiveness of influencer content. Consumers may see non-traditional internet superstars and influencers as more relatable and trustworthy than traditional celebrities, according to study on Instagram users.

Influencer-driven digital marketing has grown significantly in India, especially among younger customers. In order to target specific consumer categories, brands from fashion, cosmetics, cuisine, travel, electronics, financial services, and online retail industries are increasingly working with social media producers. However, the efficacy of such communication may vary depending on behavioural, demographic, and regional factors.

Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, offers a suitable environment for analysing consumer reactions to influencer marketing because of its diversified population, which includes students, salaried workers, businesspeople, and other digitally engaged consumers. Thus, the current study aims to examine how various aspects of social media influencer marketing impact Bhopal customers' purchasing decisions.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of the present study are:

1. To examine the influence of social media influencer credibility on consumer purchase behaviour in Bhopal.
2. To analyse the impact of authenticity of influencer-generated content on consumer purchase behaviour.
3. To study the relationship between influencer relatability and consumers' purchase behaviour.
4. To examine whether frequency of exposure to influencer-generated promotional content affects consumer purchase behaviour.

5. To evaluate the overall impact of social media influencer marketing on consumer purchase behaviour in Bhopal.

1.2 Hypotheses of the Study

The following null hypotheses have been formulated:

- H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between influencer credibility and consumer purchase behaviour.
- H₁₁: There is a significant relationship between influencer credibility and consumer purchase behaviour.
- H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between authenticity of influencer content and consumer purchase behaviour.
- H₁₂: There is a significant relationship between authenticity of influencer content and consumer purchase behaviour.
- H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between influencer relatability and consumer purchase behaviour.
- H₁₃: There is a significant relationship between influencer relatability and consumer purchase behaviour.
- H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between exposure to influencer-generated promotional content and consumer purchase behaviour.
- H₁₄: There is a significant relationship between exposure to influencer-generated promotional content and consumer purchase behaviour.
- H₀₅: Social media influencer marketing has no significant impact on consumer purchase behaviour.
- H₁₅: Social media influencer marketing has a significant impact on consumer purchase behaviour.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 International Studies

Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) investigated the legitimacy of Instagram superstars and their impact on young female users' shopping choices. 18 female Instagram users between the ages of 18 and 30 participated in in-depth interviews for the research. Non-traditional celebrities, such as bloggers, YouTubers, and Instagram influencers, were found to be more relatable and believable than conventional celebrities. Purchase behaviour was greatly impacted by this perceived legitimacy. The researchers came to the conclusion that influencers' persuasive power is increased by relatability and personal experience shared via social media material.

De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017) examined Instagram influencer marketing, focusing on product divergence and follower count. Influencers with a lot of followers were often seen as more popular and pleasant, according to their experimental investigation. Nevertheless, having more followers does not always translate into more opinion leadership or better brand perception. The research found that when creating influencer campaigns, marketers should take influencer popularity into account in addition to product-influencer fit.



Lou and Yuan (2019) investigated how customer confidence in sponsored material on social media is impacted by message value and influencer reputation. Their research showed that customer trust was favourably impacted by the informational value of influencer-generated material, influencer legitimacy, attractiveness, and resemblance. Increased brand awareness and purchase intents followed from increased confidence in influencer-generated branded content. The study made clear that the effectiveness of influencer marketing depends on the calibre and legitimacy of communication in addition to audience size.

Sokolova and Kefi (2020) examined beauty and fashion influencers on YouTube and Instagram to learn how parasocial interaction and trustworthiness affect purchase intention. The findings showed that purchase intentions were strongly influenced by customers' perceptions of influencers' legitimacy and the parasocial relationships they formed with them. Additionally, the study demonstrated that followers' and influencers' shared views enhanced parasocial interaction and ultimately enhanced persuasion.

2.2 National Studies

Shetty and Sarkar (2021) investigated how different social media influencers' traits affected Indian customers' inclinations to make purchases. The research examined traits linked to influencer efficacy and evaluated how they affected customer reactions. According to the experts, customers' intentions to buy marketed items might be greatly influenced by the traits of social media influencers. The study demonstrated the growing significance of influencer marketing as a part of digital marketing tactics in India.

Ranganathan et al. (2024) investigated how social media influencers affect Indian consumers' shopping decisions on social media platforms. The increasing integration of influencer-generated content with online shopping environments was the main focus of their investigation. The authors emphasised that via social media interactions and digital recommendations, influencers may shape product awareness, attitudes, and purchase behaviour. The study highlighted how influencer marketing is becoming more and more important in Indian social commerce.

Gaurav (2025) used a sample of 300 social media users to examine the relationship between Indian consumers' purchasing choices and social media influencers. The study looked at purchase intention, content exposure, parasocial interaction, and influencer reputation. The findings suggested that there is a complicated link between influencer marketing and customer behaviour and that positive purchase intention is not always ensured by credibility alone. When assessing influencer efficacy, the study emphasised the need of taking into account customer trust, interaction type, and contextual variables.

Mahajan and Garg (2026) investigated the impact of influencer marketing on Indian consumers' propensity to make purchases. Influencer credibility, attractiveness, reliability, knowledge, and content authenticity were all taken into account in the study. The results showed that although popularity alone was insufficient to guaranty marketing performance, consumers' inclination to buy advertised items was significantly influenced by perceived authenticity and trustworthiness.

Instead, then relying just on follower numbers, the authors recommended that marketers choose influencers based on their reliability, authenticity, and suitability with target customers.

2.3 Research Gap

According to a study of the literature, influencer credibility, attractiveness, genuineness, and buy intention have all been extensively studied both nationally and internationally. However, consumer reactions to influencer marketing might differ based on cultural, socioeconomic, and regional factors. In Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, very little empirical study has particularly looked at how social media influencers affect customers' purchasing decisions.

This research looks at exposure, relatability, authenticity, and believability all at once in the context of Bhopal residents in an effort to close this gap.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research is empirical and descriptive in character. It looks for and examines the connection between various aspects of social media influencer marketing and consumer purchasing patterns.

3.2 Study Area

The geographical area selected for the present research is **Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh**.

3.3 Population of the Study

The demographic is made up of Bhopal residents who utilise social media and have come across goods or services endorsed by social media influencers.

3.4 Sample Size

A total of **60 respondents** were considered for the study.

3.5 Sampling Technique

The respondents were selected using **convenience sampling**, a non-probability sampling technique.

3.6 Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary data were used.

Primary Data: Primary data were obtained through a structured questionnaire administered to social-media users in Bhopal.

Secondary Data: Secondary data on consumer behaviour, digital marketing, and social media influencer marketing was gathered from research papers, journals, books, and other academic publications.

3.7 Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire was used for obtaining consumer responses. The questionnaire consisted of demographic questions and statements relating to:

- Influencer credibility
- Content authenticity
- Influencer relatability
- Exposure to influencer-generated content

- Consumer purchase behaviour

Responses to behavioural statements were measured primarily using a **five-point Likert scale**, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

3.8 Statistical Tools

The following statistical tools were used:

- Frequency
- Percentage
- Mean
- Standard Deviation
- Pearson Correlation
- Simple Regression Analysis

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 4.1: Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Male	32	53.33
Female	28	46.67
Total	60	100.00

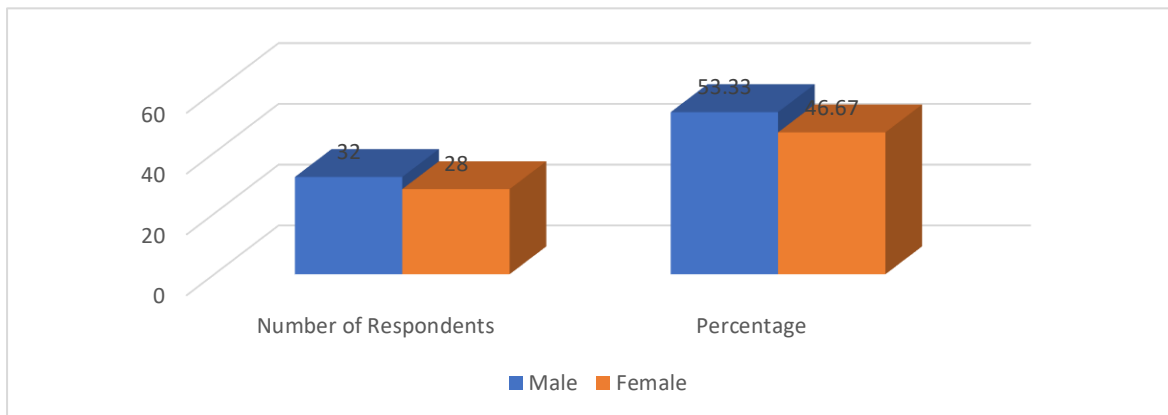


Figure 4.1: Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents

Interpretation

This study shows that 53.33 percent of the respondents were men, while 46.67 percent were women. Therefore, it can be concluded that male respondents had the highest percentage as compared to female respondents in the study.

Table 4.2: Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18–25 Years	25	41.67
26–35 Years	20	33.33
36–45 Years	10	16.67

Above 45 Years	5	8.33
Total	60	100.00

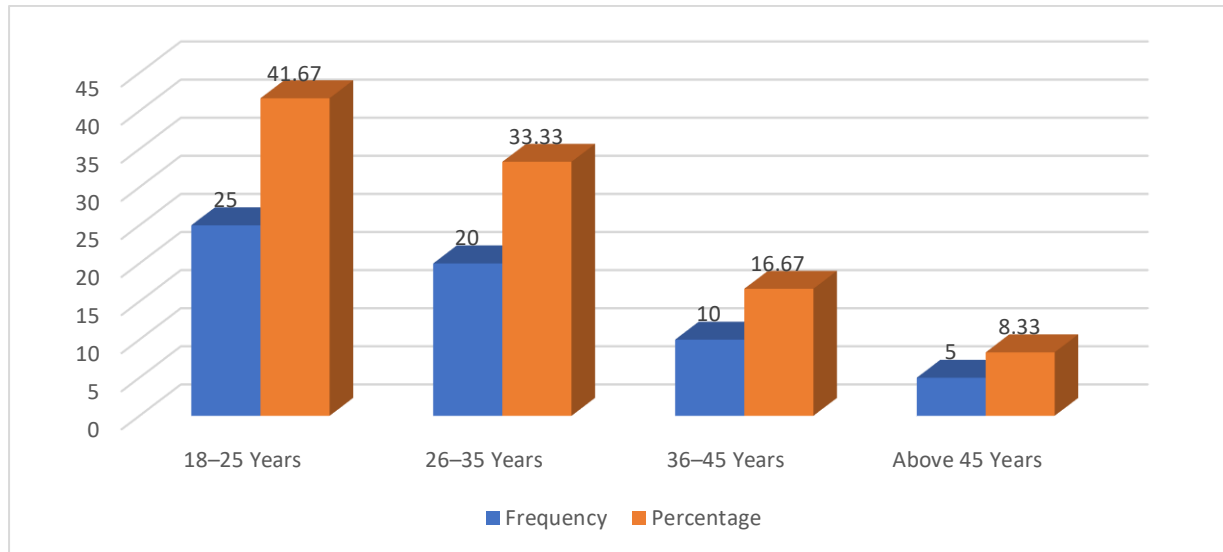


Figure 4.2: Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Interpretation

The age group of 18–25 years old accounted for the biggest percentage of responses (41.67%), followed by the age group of 26–35 years old (33.33%). As a result, around three-fourths of the respondents were under 36, suggesting a comparatively large proportion of younger social media users.

Table 4.3: Most Preferred Social Media Platform for Influencer Content

Platform	Frequency	Percentage
Instagram	25	41.67
YouTube	18	30.00
Facebook	10	16.67
Other Platforms	7	11.66
Total	60	100.00

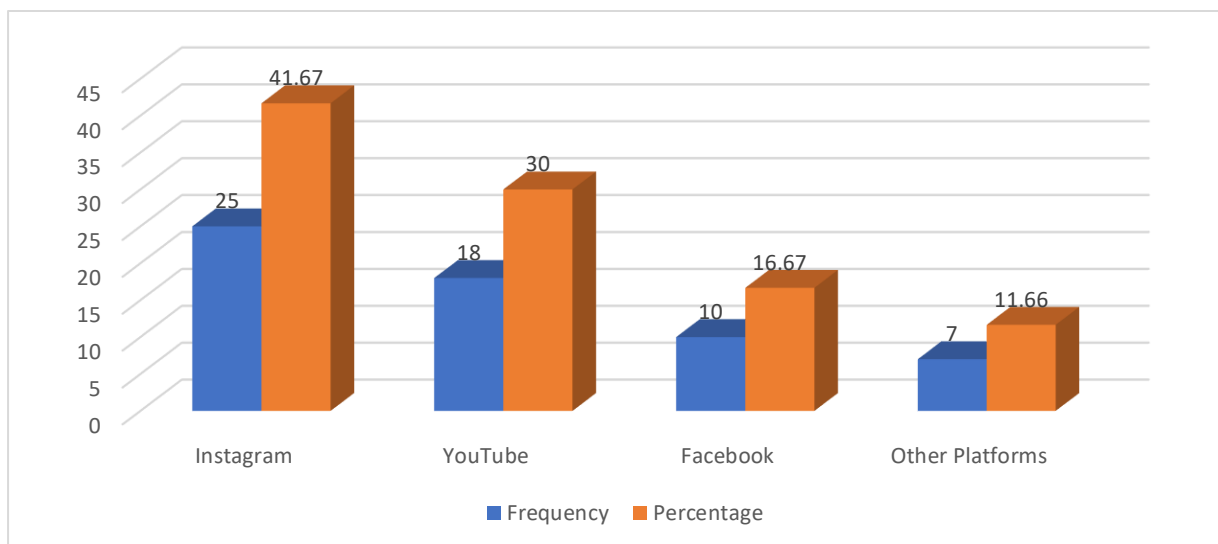


Figure 4.3: Most Preferred Social Media Platform for Influencer Content

Interpretation

With 41.67% of respondents, Instagram was shown to be the most popular medium for watching influencer-generated material. Thirty percent of respondents chose YouTube, with lesser percentages favouring Facebook and other services.

Table 4.4: Purchase of Products Recommended by Social Media Influencers

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Often	14	23.33
Sometimes	28	46.67
Rarely	12	20.00
Never	6	10.00
Total	60	100.00

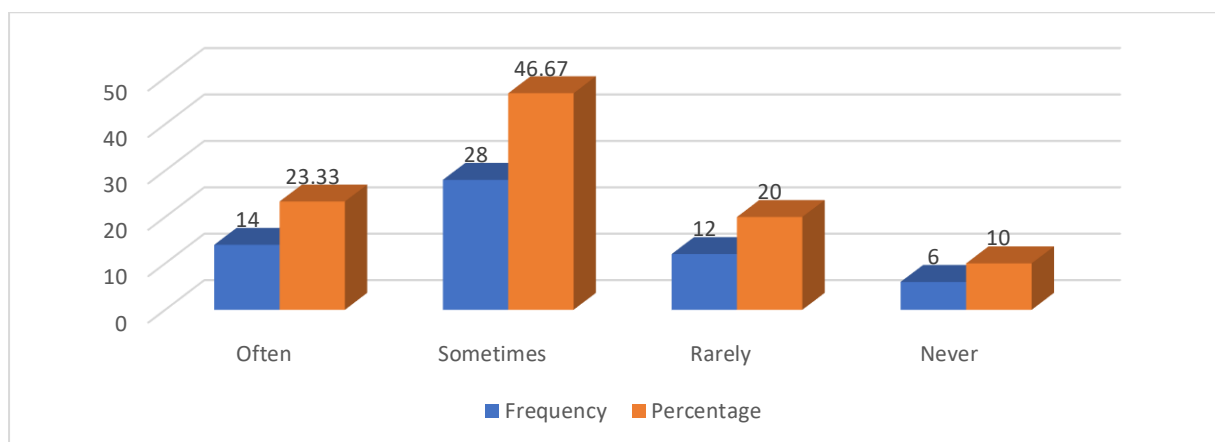


Figure 4.4: Purchase of Products Recommended by Social Media Influencers

Interpretation

According to the table, 23.33% of customers often buy things that influencers promote, while 46.67% do so sometimes. The potential effect of social media influencers on consumer purchasing choices is shown by the fact that 70% of respondents had either often or sometimes bought items suggested by influencers.

Table 4.5: Descriptive Statistics of Major Variables

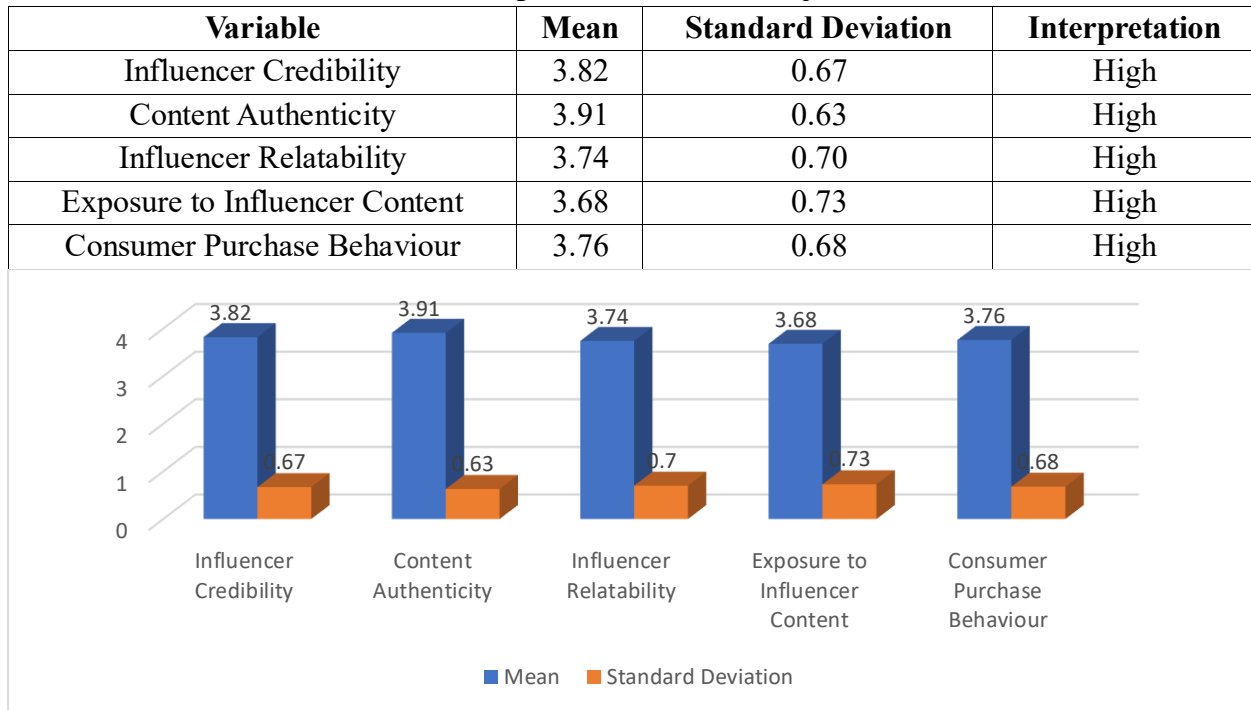


Figure 4.5: Descriptive Statistics of Major Variables

Interpretation

Content authenticity had the highest mean score ($M = 3.91$), followed by influencer credibility ($M = 3.82$). This suggests that genuine material and reliable suggestions are especially valued by customers. The average score for consumer buying behaviour was 3.76, indicating that social media influencer marketing had a significant impact on choices to buy.

Table 4.6: Correlation between Influencer Marketing Variables and Consumer Purchase Behaviour

Independent Variable	Pearson's r	p-value	Result
Influencer Credibility	0.61	<0.001	Significant
Content Authenticity	0.66	<0.001	Significant
Influencer Relatability	0.54	<0.001	Significant
Exposure to Influencer Content	0.47	<0.001	Significant

Significance Level: 0.05

Interpretation

Consumer purchasing behaviour and influencer credibility have a favourable link ($r = 0.61$). As a result, more reliable influencers often have a bigger impact on consumers' choices to buy. The greatest correlation ($r = 0.66$) between content authenticity and purchase behaviour suggests that consumers are most swayed when influencer recommendations are seen as sincere and practical. Additionally, there is a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.54$) between influencer relatability and purchasing behaviour. As a result, consumers are more inclined to react favourably to influencers whose character, way of life, or experiences resonate with them. Consumer purchasing behaviour is somewhat positively correlated with exposure to influencer material ($r = 0.47$). Frequent exposure to influencer recommendations may boost customers' purchase habits by raising product awareness. H01, H02, H03, and H04 are rejected since every association is statistically significant at the 5% level.

Table 4.7: Regression Analysis of Social Media Influencer Marketing and Consumer Purchase Behaviour

Model Statistic	Value
R	0.72
R Square	0.52
Adjusted R Square	0.51
F-value	62.83
p-value	<0.001

Interpretation

There is a significant positive correlation between social media influencer marketing and consumer purchasing behaviour, as indicated by the R value of 0.72. The model's R Square value of 0.52 shows that social media influencer marketing accounts for almost 52% of the variance in consumer buying behaviour. At $p < 0.001$, the F-value of 62.83 is statistically significant. Consequently, the effect of social media influence on consumer purchasing behaviour is statistically significant. Hence, H05 is rejected.

Table 4.8: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Result
H01: Influencer credibility has no significant relationship with purchase behaviour.	Rejected
H02: Content authenticity has no significant relationship with purchase behaviour.	Rejected
H03: Influencer relatability has no significant relationship with purchase behaviour.	Rejected
H04: Exposure to influencer content has no significant relationship with purchase behaviour.	Rejected
H05: Influencer marketing has no significant impact on purchase behaviour.	Rejected

5. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

On the basis of the analysis, the major findings of the study are as follows:



1. Among respondents, Instagram was shown to be the most favoured social media channel for obtaining influencer-generated promotional material.
2. A significant percentage of customers said they bought goods that social media influencers suggested or advertised.
3. Roughly 70% of respondents said they buy things suggested by influencers either often or sometimes.
4. One of the key factors influencing customers' purchasing decisions was found to be content authenticity.
5. Consumer purchasing behaviour showed a substantial positive correlation with influencer credibility.
6. Customers responded more favourably to influencers whose lifestyles, tastes, or experiences they found relevant and comparable to their own.
7. Consumer purchasing behaviour was positively correlated with the frequency of exposure to influencer-generated material.
8. Authenticity and trustworthiness seems to be more important to consumers than influencer popularity alone.
9. All of the chosen aspects of influencer marketing and consumer purchasing behaviour showed statistically significant positive correlations, according to the correlation study.
10. A significant amount of the variance in customer purchasing behaviour was explained by social media influencer marketing, according to regression analysis.
11. Among the Bhopal social media users studied, influencer marketing was shown to significantly improve customer purchasing behaviour.

6. CONCLUSION

The conventional connection between companies, promotional media, and customers has changed as a result of social media. An example of the transition from traditional one-way advertising to interactive and relationship-based marketing communication is the increasing significance of social media influencers. With a focus on Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, the current research investigated the effects of social media influencer marketing on customer purchasing behaviour. According to the survey, customers are greatly impacted by social media celebrities' relatability, authenticity, and believability rather than just their exposure or popularity. The authenticity of influencer-generated content showed a particularly strong correlation with consumer purchasing behaviour among the variables examined. When suggestions are seen as reflecting real ideas or personal experiences rather than just commercial advertising, consumers are more inclined to evaluate or buy things.

Another significant aspect influencing customer reactions was found to be influencer credibility. Influencers who are seen as reliable and informed have a greater ability to influence consumers' assessments of products and choices to buy. In a similar vein, relatability may boost the

persuasiveness of marketing communications and strengthen the bonds between influencers and followers.

The results also imply that consumers get more acquainted with companies and goods when they are exposed to more influencer-generated material, which may have an impact on their purchasing decisions. All things considered, the statistical research shows that social media influencer marketing significantly improves customer purchasing behaviour.

Thus, the research comes to the conclusion that influencer marketing might be a useful marketing strategy for companies aiming to reach Bhopal's tech-savvy customers. However, companies shouldn't choose influencers only based on the number of followers. When creating influencer marketing strategies, influencer reputation, content authenticity, follower engagement, target-audience compatibility, and product-influencer fit should all be taken into account.

Only 60 respondents from Bhopal City are included in the research. As a consequence, it is not possible to immediately extrapolate the findings to the whole population of Madhya Pradesh or India. Future research might look at platform-specific, product-specific, and generational variations in consumer reactions to influencer marketing using bigger samples from other locations and demographic groups.

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