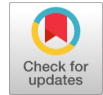




Impact of Social Media Influencer Marketing on Impulse Buying Behaviour of Online Consumers

S. Akhila



Abstract: *The phenomenal growth of social media has given birth to an entirely new form of marketing communication, one where everyday individual with large online followings wields considerable power over the purchase decisions of their audiences. This study examines the impact of social media influencer marketing on the impulse buying behaviour of online consumers in the Indian digital marketplace. Using a structured questionnaire administered to 110 active social media users who engage with influencer content, the research employs percentage analysis, chi-square tests, and Spearman's correlation to analyse the data. The findings indicate that influencer credibility, content relatability, frequency of sponsored posts, and the perceived authenticity of endorsements are the primary drivers of unplanned purchase decisions among digital consumers. The study reveals that a substantial proportion of respondents have made impulsive online purchases within minutes or hours of viewing influencer content, particularly short-form video endorsements on Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts. The chi-square analysis establishes a statistically significant association between the type of influencer followed and the frequency of impulse purchases. In contrast, the correlation analysis confirms a strong positive relationship between influencer trust and unplanned buying behaviour. The research concludes that, when executed with authenticity and strategic intent, influencer marketing is a powerful catalyst for impulse purchases in the digital consumer landscape. Recommendations are offered to brands, content creators, and platform administrators for designing ethical and effective influencer-led campaigns.*

Keywords: *Influencer Marketing, Impulse Buying Behaviour, Social Media Commerce, Consumer Psychology, Digital Marketing, Purchase Intention.*

Nomenclature:

IAMAI: Internet and Mobile Association of India

I. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of social media influencers as a dominant force in digital marketing has dramatically altered the dynamics of consumer decision-making [1]. Unlike traditional advertising formats that follow a top-down, brand-to-consumer communication model, influencer marketing thrives on the perception of authenticity, peer relatability, and personal connection [2]. When a consumer watches a trusted content creator unbox a product,

demonstrate a service, or weave a brand into their daily lifestyle narrative, the psychological distance between discovery and purchase collapses in ways that conventional advertising rarely achieves [3].

Impulse buying, defined as unplanned purchasing triggered by sudden emotional or situational stimuli, has long been a subject of interest in consumer behaviour research [4]. The advent of one-click purchasing, in-app shopping features, and real-time influencer promotions has created an unprecedented environment where impulse buying is not merely possible but actively engineered through platform design and content strategy [5]. In India, where smartphone penetration and mobile internet usage have reached historic highs, the conditions for influencer-driven impulse purchases are particularly fertile [3].

This study seeks to systematically analyse the mechanisms through which influencer marketing content triggers impulsive buying responses among online consumers in India. It investigates how variables such as influencer credibility, content format, follower-influencer relationship quality, and promotional urgency cues interact to produce unplanned purchase behaviour [5]. Understanding these dynamics is essential not only for marketing practitioners but also for consumer advocates and platform regulators who are increasingly concerned about the ethical dimensions of persuasive digital content [1].

A. Objective of the Study

i. Primary Objective

- To examine the impact of social media influencer marketing on the impulse buying behaviour of online consumers.

ii. Secondary Objectives

- To identify the types of influencer content formats that most effectively trigger unplanned purchase decisions among digital consumers.
- To analyse the role of influencer credibility, authenticity, and parasocial relationships in shaping consumer trust and impulsive buying intent.
- To evaluate the association between demographic characteristics of consumers and their susceptibility to influencer-driven impulse purchases.
- To assess the impact of promotional urgency cues such as limited-time offers, exclusive discount codes, and live-stream shopping events on impulsive buying behaviour.

B. Need of the Study

- The exponential rise of influencer marketing as a multi-billion-dollar industry demands rigorous academic scrutiny of its

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behavioural and psychological effects on consumers, particularly in relation to unplanned spending.

- Understanding the triggers of influencer-induced impulse buying equips brands with actionable insights to design campaigns that are both commercially effective and ethically responsible.
- The study helps consumers develop greater awareness of the subtle persuasion mechanisms embedded in influencer content, fostering more mindful and intentional purchasing habits.
- For platform administrators and regulators, insights from this research can inform the development of disclosure standards and consumer protection guidelines for influencer-led advertising.
- Academic literature on the intersection of influencer marketing and impulse buying remains relatively nascent in the Indian context, making this study a valuable contribution to the discipline of consumer behaviour research.

C. Scope of the Study

The scope of this study encompasses a comprehensive examination of how social media influencer marketing, across various platform formats and influencer tiers, shapes the impulse buying behaviour of online consumers. The research covers multiple dimensions of the influencer-consumer relationship, including the psychological mechanisms of parasocial interaction, the role of platform-specific content formats such as short videos, Instagram Stories, live-stream shopping, and review posts, and the contextual factors that amplify susceptibility to unplanned purchases.

The study specifically examines the influence of micro-influencers (10,000 to 100,000 followers), macro-influencers (100,000 to one million followers), and celebrity influencers on distinct consumer segments, recognising that the persuasive power of an influencer is not merely a function of follower count but of audience trust, content niche alignment, and perceived authenticity. The scope further extends to an analysis of the platform ecosystem, encompassing Instagram, YouTube, and emerging short-form video platforms, as the primary environments in which influencer-driven impulse purchases are most frequently reported.

The geographical coverage of this study is limited to urban and semi-urban consumers in Tamil Nadu, with findings offering transferable insights for the broader Indian e-consumer landscape.

D. Hypothesis of the Study

i. Null Hypothesis (H_0)

There is no significant relationship between social media influencer marketing and the impulse buying behaviour of online consumers. Influencer credibility, content format, and promotional cues do not significantly affect the likelihood of unplanned purchases among digital shoppers.

ii. Alternative Hypothesis (H_1)

There is a significant, positive relationship between social media influencer marketing and impulse buying behaviour among online consumers. Influencer credibility, content

authenticity, and urgency-based promotional cues significantly increase the likelihood of unplanned online purchases among digital shoppers.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopts a descriptive cum analytical research design. A descriptive approach is employed to portray current patterns of influencer content consumption and associated buying behaviour. At the same time, the analytical dimension is used to test hypothesised relationships among key variables using statistical tools. This dual-design framework enables the study to both describe and explain the phenomenon of influencer-driven impulse buying with empirical rigour.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- **Primary Data:** A structured questionnaire was developed and administered to 110 respondents who actively follow at least one social media influencer and have made a minimum of one online purchase in the past six months. The questionnaire captured data on influencer-type preferences, content-format engagement, impulse-purchase frequency, trust levels, and demographic characteristics.
- **Secondary Data:** Published academic journals, digital marketing industry reports from FICCI and KPMG, influencer marketing benchmarking studies, and data from the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) were consulted to contextualise the primary findings.

A. Method of Data Collection

- Simple Percentage Analysis
- Chi-Square Analysis
- Spearman's Rank Correlation Analysis

B. Period of Study

- The study was conducted from February 2025 to May 2025 (4 months).

C. Area of Study

- Active social media users and online consumers residing in urban and semi-urban areas of Tamil Nadu, India.

D. Sample Size

- 110 respondents were selected using purposive sampling, targeting individuals who regularly consume influencer content on social media platforms and engage in e-commerce activities.

IV. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The sample size of 110 respondents, while sufficient for the scope of this study, may not fully represent the heterogeneity of India's vast digital consumer population.
- The study is geographically confined to Tamil Nadu, which may limit the generalisability of findings to consumers in other states with



different cultural, linguistic, and economic contexts.

- Self-reported data on impulse buying behaviour may be subject to recall bias, as respondents may not accurately remember or may underreport the extent of their unplanned online purchases.
- The rapidly evolving nature of social media platforms, influencer trends, and algorithmic content delivery means that some findings may require re-examination as the digital marketing ecosystem continues to change.

A. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Type of Influencer Followed by Respondents

Type of Influencer	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Micro-Influencer (10K–100K)	38	34.5
Macro-Influencer (100K–1M)	34	30.9
Celebrity Influencer (1M+)	24	21.8
Nano-Influencer (< 10K)	10	9.1
Brand Official Accounts	4	3.7
Total	110	100

The table above shows that micro-influencers have the largest following among the sampled respondents, at 34.5%, followed by macro-influencers at 30.9%. This finding aligns with broader industry trends, suggesting that consumers increasingly seek authenticity and niche expertise from smaller creators over the polished, commercial aesthetic often associated with celebrity influencers. The relatively modest share of respondents following celebrity influencers at 21.8% underscores the shift in influencer preference towards accessible, relatable content creators whose recommendations feel more organic and less transactional. Nano-influencers, despite their small audiences, hold relevance for hyper-local and community-driven product recommendations.

Table II: Frequency of Impulse Purchases Triggered by Influencer Content

Impulse Purchase Frequency	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Always (Every time I see influencer content)	14	12.7
Often (Several times a month)	32	29.1
Sometimes (Once a month)	40	36.4
Rarely (A few times a year)	18	16.4
Never	6	5.4
Total	110	100

The data present a striking picture of the prevalence of influencer-triggered impulse purchases among the study's respondents. A combined 78.2% of participants reported making unplanned purchases influenced by social media content at least sometimes, with 12.7% admitting to always buying on impulse when exposed to influencer endorsements. Only 5.4% of respondents reported that influencer content has never prompted an unplanned purchase, confirming that the persuasive power of this marketing format is near-universal within the sample. The

modal category of 'sometimes' at 36.4% suggests that while impulse buying is common, it is situationally conditioned by factors such as product relevance, price point, and the nature of the influencer's endorsement.

Table III: Content Formats Most Likely to Trigger Impulse Purchases

Content Format	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Short-Form Video (Reels / Shorts)	44	40
Live-Stream Shopping / Unboxing	26	23.6
Instagram Stories with Swipe-Up Links	18	16.4
Long-Form Review Videos (YouTube)	14	12.7
Static Image Posts with Captions	8	7.3
Total	110	100

Short-form video content is overwhelmingly the most powerful format for triggering impulse purchases, with 40% of respondents identifying Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts as the primary catalysts for their unplanned purchases. The immersive, emotionally engaging, and algorithm-amplified nature of short-form videos creates a consumption environment where viewers are repeatedly and seamlessly exposed to product endorsements, lowering the psychological threshold for spontaneous purchasing. Live-stream shopping, which combines real-time social interaction with direct purchase links, ranks second at 23.6%, reflecting the effectiveness of urgency and community dynamics in driving immediate consumer action. Long-form review videos, despite their informational depth, account for only 12.7% of impulse triggers, suggesting that extended deliberation content is more associated with planned purchasing behaviour.

A. Chi-Square Analysis: Association Between Influencer Type and Impulse Purchase Frequency

A chi-square test was applied to assess whether there is a statistically significant association between the type of influencer respondents follow and the frequency of their impulse purchases. The null hypothesis posits that no such association exists. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table IV: Chi-Square Test Results – Association Between Influencer Type and Impulse Purchase Frequency

Test Parameter	Value
Chi-Square Value (χ^2)	21.384
Degrees of Freedom (df)	16
Asymptotic Significance (p-value)	0.017
Sample Size (N)	110

The chi-square test yields a statistically significant result ($\chi^2 = 21.384, p = 0.017$), indicating that the null hypothesis is rejected at the 5% significance level. A meaningful association exists between the type of influencer a consumer follows and the frequency of impulse purchases. Respondents who follow micro- and nano-influencers reported significantly higher rates of unplanned purchases than those who primarily follow celebrity influencers or brand accounts. This finding reinforces the academic and practitioner consensus that



trust, relatability, and perceived authenticity, qualities more readily associated with smaller creators, are the true engines of influencer-driven consumer action.

B. Spearman's Rank Correlation: Influencer Trust and Impulse Buying Behaviour

Spearman's rank correlation was used to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between influencer trust scores and respondents' impulse-purchase frequency. The correlation matrix is presented in Table 5.

Table V: Spearman's Rank Correlation – Influencer Trust Score and Impulse Purchase Frequency

	Influencer Trust Score	Impulse Purchase Frequency
Influencer Trust Score – Correlation Coefficient	1	0.714
Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0
N	110	110
Impulse Purchase Frequency – Correlation Coefficient	0.714	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0	.
N	110	110

The Spearman's rank correlation analysis reveals a strong positive correlation ($\rho = 0.714$) between consumer trust in influencers and impulse purchase frequency, with the relationship highly statistically significant ($p = 0.000$). This result definitively rejects the null hypothesis and establishes that as consumers' trust in the influencers they follow increases, so too does the frequency and intensity of their unplanned purchasing behaviour [1]. The strength of this correlation underscores the centrality of trust as the psychological mechanism that converts passive viewership into active buying behaviour [4]. Brands that invest in building long-term, authentic relationships between influencers and their audiences, rather than in one-off sponsored posts, are likely to generate substantially greater impulse-purchase outcomes [3].

i. Major Findings

- Micro-influencers are followed by the largest proportion of respondents (34.5%), with their perceived authenticity and niche expertise emerging as key reasons for their outsized influence on consumer trust and purchase decisions.
- A significant majority of 78.2% of respondents reported making impulse purchases triggered by influencer content at least occasionally, with 12.7% reporting that they always make unplanned purchases after viewing influencer endorsements.
- Short-form video content, particularly Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts, is identified as the most powerful content format for triggering impulse purchases, accounting for 40% of such decisions among the respondents sampled.
- Live-stream shopping events, which combine real-time interaction with purchase urgency, rank second in triggering impulse buys at 23.6%, indicating the growing commercial potential of interactive video commerce.
- The chi-square analysis confirms a statistically significant association between the type of

influencer followed and the frequency of impulse purchases, with micro and nano-influencer followers demonstrating significantly higher impulse buying rates than followers of celebrity influencers.

- The Spearman's correlation analysis establishes a strong positive relationship ($\rho = 0.714$) between influencer trust and impulse buying frequency, confirming that trust is the primary psychological mediator between influencer content exposure and unplanned purchase behaviour.
 - Urgency cues such as limited-time discount codes, flash sale announcements, and exclusive influencer-linked offers are identified as significant amplifiers of impulse buying susceptibility, particularly among respondents in the 18–28 age group.
- ### ii. Suggestions
- Brands should strategically invest in long-term partnerships with micro and nano-influencers whose audience demographics and content values align closely with their product identity, rather than defaulting to celebrity endorsements that command higher costs but lower conversion authenticity.
 - The development of high-quality short-form video content featuring genuine product use demonstrations, real-time reviews, and behind-the-scenes narratives should be prioritised in influencer campaign briefs to maximise impulse purchase triggers.
 - E-commerce platforms and social media companies should facilitate seamless in-app purchasing experiences by integrating click-to-buy features directly into influencer content, reducing the steps between product discovery and transaction completion.
 - Influencer marketing campaigns should incorporate transparent disclosure of sponsored content in a manner that is prominent and consumer-friendly, as regulatory requirements from ASCI (Advertising Standards Council of India) mandate clear labelling of paid promotions.
 - Brands must develop ethical guardrails around the use of high-pressure urgency cues to ensure that impulse buying triggers do not exploit financially vulnerable consumer segments, particularly young adults with limited spending capacity.
 - Post-purchase engagement strategies such as influencer-led community groups, loyalty reward sharing, and follow-up content should be designed to convert one-time impulse buyers into repeat and loyal customers.

V. CONCLUSION

This study has systematically demonstrated that social media influencer marketing has a significant and measurable impact on the impulse-buying behaviour of online consumers in India [1]. The strength of this relationship is not incidental





but rooted in the psychological dynamics of trust, parasocial connection, content immersion, and platform-engineered urgency, which collectively lower the consumer's deliberative barriers to purchasing [4].

The finding that micro-influencers and short-form video content are the dominant drivers of impulse purchases challenges the conventional marketing assumption that scale equals influence [2]. In the social media economy, intimacy, authenticity, and contextual relevance are the true currencies of persuasion [1]. Brands that recognise and respond to this reality by cultivating genuine, sustained influencer partnerships rooted in shared values and audience trust will be best positioned to harvest the commercial potential of digital impulse buying [5].

At the same time, the prevalence and magnitude of influencer-driven impulse buying raise important ethical questions about the responsibilities of content creators, platform operators, and brands towards consumers [3]. The development of industry standards for transparent disclosure, responsible urgency marketing, and protections for financially vulnerable audiences must keep pace with the commercial innovation of the influencer economy [1]. This study hopes to contribute not only to the academic understanding of digital consumer behaviour but also to the broader conversation about building a more ethical, transparent, and consumer-empowering social commerce ecosystem in India and beyond [4].

DECLARATION STATEMENT

I must verify the accuracy of the following information as the article's author.

- **Conflicts of Interest/ Competing Interests:** Based on my understanding, this article has no conflicts of interest.
- **Funding Support:** This article has not been funded by any organizations or agencies. This independence ensures that the research is conducted objectively and without external influence.
- **Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate:** The content of this article does not necessitate ethical approval or consent to participate with supporting documentation.
- **Data Access Statement and Material Availability:** The adequate resources of this article are publicly accessible.
- **Author's Contributions:** The authorship of this article is contributed solely by the author.

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