

Impact of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchase Decisions in the FMCG Sector with Special Reference to Bengaluru

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Abstract: In recent years, social media influencers have become a powerful marketing tool for brands in the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector. Their ability to build trust, engage audiences, and drive purchase intent has transformed traditional marketing strategies. This study explores how social media influencers affect consumer purchase decisions in the FMCG sector, with a focus on key factors such as influencer credibility, content authenticity, trust, and engagement. The research also identifies consumer perceptions and attitudes towards influencer marketing and its influence on brand preference and buying behaviour. The findings reveal that influencer credibility, perceived expertise, and relatability play a crucial role in shaping consumer purchasing decisions.

Keywords: Social Media Influencers, FMCG, Consumer Behaviour, Purchase Decisions, Brand Preference, Buying Behaviour

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the FMCG industry has increasingly acknowledged the strategic importance of influencer-led communication, driven by the sector's reliance on rapid consumer decision-making, impulse purchases, and constant brand visibility. As FMCG products are typically low-involvement and frequently bought, consumers often depend on heuristic cues such as trust, familiarity, and social validation rather than detailed product evaluation. Social media influencers significantly shape these cues by offering practical usage demonstrations, unboxing content, comparative reviews, and lifestyle-oriented presentations that closely align with consumers' daily routines and needs. The widespread availability of affordable smartphones and expanded mobile internet access in India has further accelerated the transition from traditional advertising to digital platforms. In metropolitan cities like Bengaluru, where digital adoption is particularly high, consumers rely heavily on social media for product recommendations and brand information. Influencers contribute to this shift by creating content that resembles user-generated material, blending naturally with entertainment and everyday browsing. This reduces viewer resistance and increases receptiveness to brand messages compared with conventional, overt advertising. A key factor driving the success of influencer marketing is the emotional and psychological bond influencers develop with their audiences. Many followers perceive influencers as relatable figures, mentors, or aspirational personalities, resulting in strong para social relationships.

These emotional connections heighten the persuasive power of influencer endorsements, thereby shaping consumer attitudes, motivating product trials, and fostering brand loyalty factors that are especially critical in the competitive FMCG market. Furthermore, influencers enable brands to reach specific demographic groups and niche communities more effectively. Partnerships with nano- and micro-influencers, known for their authenticity, strong engagement, and localized relevance, offer a particular advantage in diverse urban markets such as Bengaluru. These influencers generate credible word-of-mouth and targeted communication that often influences purchase decisions more deeply than broad, generic promotional efforts. Overall, the integration of influencer marketing within the FMCG sector marks a significant shift in how consumers discover, evaluate, and choose everyday products. With evolving digital consumption habits, influencer-driven communication is expected to remain a dominant force in shaping consumer behavior, enhancing brand equity, and strengthening market competitiveness in the years ahead.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nishant Vallabhbhai Vachhani (2018) examined the impact of digital marketing on consumers and firms in urban Gujarat through a descriptive survey-based study. Findings indicated that digital marketing significantly influenced consumer satisfaction and preferences.

Dhiraj Jain (2018) investigated challenges of Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM) in the FMCG sector using survey data from 250 respondents and ANOVA analysis, concluding that consumers generally hold positive attitudes toward EWOM.

St. Petersburg University (2018) the purpose of the research was to studied the relationship between digital marketing strategies and buying behaviour. This study is exploratory research and data was collected through secondary resources. The research methods conducted for this paper are based on qualitative analysis and two methods are secondary data analysis and case studies.

Girshwyn Reddy (2016) assessed the influence of digital marketing on consumer decision-making in Nike's South African retail operations using a mixed-method approach, revealing strong consumer acceptance of digital marketing.

Kyle(2015) in his study found Email marketing is one of the cost-effective ways to reach the mass population. The success of email marketing to the following six attributes: 1) start with value 2) understand the audience 3) move beyond cadence 4) measure early, a measure often 5) think campaigns'not concepts 6) choose the right partner/ platform.

Haq Zia(2015) analysed Indian consumers' perceptions toward online shopping and found that demographic factors influence online buying behaviour, though only a small segment purchased online regularly.

Husain and Adamu (2014) demonstrated through a nationwide quantitative survey that social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter significantly shape consumer buying behaviour.

OBJECTIVES

1. To review secondary literature and industry data on the role of social media influencers in consumer decision-making for FMCG.
2. To synthesize evidence on mechanisms through which influencers drive FMCG purchases (awareness → consideration → purchase).
3. To draw implications specifically relevant to brands and marketers in Bengaluru.

RESEARCH GAP

Although several studies have examined digital marketing, EWOM, and online consumer behaviour, limited research specifically explores how social media influencers shape purchase decisions in the FMCG sector, particularly within Bengaluru's urban and highly digital consumer base. Existing studies focus broadly on digital marketing tools or general online shopping patterns, but do not provide context-specific insights on influencer credibility, authenticity, engagement, and their impact on FMCG buying behaviour. This gap highlights the need for localized and sector-specific analysis.

NEED OF THE STUDY

This study is needed to understand how influencers affect consumer decisions in the rapidly expanding FMCG market, where purchase choices are frequent, low-involvement, and strongly shaped by trust and social proof. As Bengaluru consumers increasingly depend on social media for product recommendations, the study helps brands, marketers, and researchers gain deeper insights into influencer-driven persuasion, brand preference, and buying patterns, enabling more effective digital marketing strategies.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a structured secondary-data synthesis approach, integrating academic literature, industry reports, and market analytics to develop a comprehensive understanding of how social media influencers affect consumer purchase decisions in the FMCG sector, particularly in Bengaluru. The methodology follows a systematic, multi-source data collection and analysis framework as outlined below.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research is designed as a qualitative secondary-data study using a synthesis-based approach. Instead of collecting primary data from consumers, the study consolidates findings from existing, reputable sources to identify recurring patterns, conceptual models, and empirically supported relationships. A structured framework ensures credibility, traceability, and replicability of the findings.

Sources of Secondary Data

A. Academic Literature

Academic literature serves as the theoretical backbone of the study. The review draws primarily from peer-reviewed journals such as the International Journal of Research in Marketing, Journal of Consumer Behaviour, and other reputable IJ publications. Relevant systematic reviews and empirical studies were identified through platforms including Research Gate, Google Scholar, university library repositories, and open-access academic databases. The selected scholarly works offer comprehensive insights into key constructs such as influencer credibility (expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness), consumer psychology and persuasion mechanisms, digital marketing effectiveness, and FMCG purchasing behaviour across various decision-making stages. This literature base strengthens the study through theoretical triangulation and ensures alignment with well-established academic frameworks.

B. Industry Reports

Given the rapidly evolving nature of influencer marketing, industry reports offer current and practice-oriented insights. Key sources consulted include reports from Kantar, which provide influencer effectiveness metrics and media consumption trends; The Goat Agency India's Influencer Report, offering platform-specific performance data and an overview of the Indian influencer ecosystem; and Nielsen/Nielsen IQ (NIQ), which deliver consumer sentiment indicators, influencer measurement frameworks, and FMCG retail analytics. Additionally, reports from INCA (GroupM) and similar digital agencies supply benchmarks on influencer ROI, category-wise trends, and engagement analytics. Business press platforms such as Media Brief, Your Story, and ET Brand Equity are also referenced for contextual summaries and highlights extracted from major industry studies. Collectively, these reports contribute to understanding real-world influencer impact, return on marketing investment (ROMI), emerging trends among Indian consumers, and patterns of digital engagement within the FMCG sector.

C. Market Analytics Sources

To contextualize influencer effects within the broader FMCG landscape, the study draws on multiple market analytics sources, including NielsenIQ (NIQ) FMCG sector snapshots, retail audit summaries, and industry-level analyses covering consumption trends, category performance, and digital adoption. These data sources provide insights into market growth, consumer demand patterns, and variations across FMCG categories such as beauty, personal care, food & beverages, and household care. They also highlight how influencer engagement differs across categories and price segments. By integrating these analytics, the study situates influencer impact within actual market behaviour, offering a data-driven understanding of its effectiveness in diverse FMCG contexts.

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

• Scale and Trajectory of Influencer Marketing in India

Recent industry reports indicate that influencer marketing in India constitutes a rapidly expanding market, with valuations reaching several hundred crore INR and exhibiting double-digit CAGR growth. This expansion reflects increased brand investments and a growing number of content creators across tiers, from macro to micro influencers. The evolving ecosystem enhances both mass reach and niche targeting capabilities, offering significant opportunities for FMCG brands to engage diverse consumer segments.

• Trust and Persuasion Dynamics

Studies by Kantar and similar agencies reveal that a substantial portion of Indian consumers report greater trust in influencer recommendations than in traditional advertisements. Influencer content, particularly when perceived as authentic, drives brand favourability and immediate purchase intentions. This trust differential is a critical mechanism underlying the effectiveness of influencer marketing.

• Attention and Engagement as Mechanisms

Influencer-generated content consistently demonstrates superior attention metrics such as increased view time and reduced skip rates—compared with conventional branded content. Enhanced attention correlates with better message retention and higher likelihood of acting on calls-to-action, including trial or purchase. Nielsen's measurement frameworks indicate that such content can be linked to short-term brand lift and sales, provided appropriate experimental controls are applied.

• Category Differences within FMCG

- **High-visibility/personal categories** (e.g., personal care, cosmetics, premium consumables): Influencers, particularly beauty and lifestyle creators, exert strong effects on product trial and brand switching.
- **Everyday staples** (e.g., basic groceries, household cleaning products): Influencer impact on habitual purchases is comparatively weaker, unless campaigns alter perceptions—highlighting new variants, convenience packs, or ethical claims. NielsenIQ snapshots indicate that FMCG growth patterns and pack-size trends are influenced by digital discovery, affecting premium and variant adoption more than staple consumption.

• Localized Dynamics: Bengaluru Context

Bengaluru's urban, digitally active population and vibrant creator communities (tech, lifestyle, food) create an environment conducive to influencer-driven FMCG campaigns, particularly for products aligned with urban lifestyles, such as on-the-go packs, personal care, or niche organic/premium items. Although city-specific secondary data is limited, Bengaluru's digital adoption trends mirror national urban patterns, supporting the application of broader insights to the local context.

- **Measurement and ROI Challenges**

Industry literature highlights persistent challenges in measuring influencer marketing effectiveness, including attributing offline purchases, distinguishing short-term sales effects from long-term brand equity, and ensuring creative alignment. Reports from Nielsen and INCA recommend integrated measurement approaches combining brand-lift studies, matched-control experiments, and tracking of shoppable links or affiliate codes to more accurately quantify influencer impact.

- **Integrated Insights from Academic and Industry Findings**

Combining academic research and industry evidence provides a nuanced understanding of influencer marketing effectiveness in the FMCG sector:

- **Effectiveness in Upper- and Mid-Funnel Stages:** Influencers are particularly impactful in driving product discovery and consideration. Their ability to capture attention and convey authenticity makes them valuable for launching new FMCG products, promoting premium variants, and enhancing brand recall. Studies on consumer psychology and digital marketing highlight that perceived trustworthiness and relatability of influencers significantly enhance engagement at these stages.
- **Conversion to Habitual Purchasing:** While influencer campaigns can successfully drive initial trials, sustaining repeat purchases requires complementary marketing levers. Availability, in-store visibility, competitive pricing and digital retargeting or reminder mechanisms are critical to converting trials into habitual consumption. NielsenIQ data on pack and value growth indicate that consumers may experiment with premium offerings or alternative pack sizes, but repeat adoption is contingent on accessibility, affordability, and consistent product experience.
- **Leveraging Local Creator Ecosystems:** In urban markets such as Bengaluru, collaborating with local micro-influencers can enhance campaign relevance and cost-efficiency. Micro-influencers often deliver higher engagement rates within niche cohorts, such as tech-savvy, lifestyle-oriented, or food-conscious consumers, which is crucial for urban FMCG marketing. Indian influencer reports demonstrate a growing ROI advantage for micro-influencer campaigns, particularly in digitally active cities where authenticity and relatability drive stronger consumer connections.
- **Strategic Implications:** Integrating these insights suggests that effective influencer marketing in FMCG should adopt a multi-layered approach leveraging macro-influencers for broad awareness, micro-influencers for targeted engagement, and combining digital campaigns with robust distribution, pricing strategies, and retargeting to reinforce habitual consumption.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR FMCG BRANDS IN BENGALURU

Segment Influencer Strategy by Category:

- Deploy macro-influencers to build broad awareness for new product launches or high-visibility campaigns, maximizing reach across urban populations.
- Engage micro-influencers for targeted activation within specific urban cohorts, such as millennials, tech-savvy consumers, or lifestyle-focused segments in Bengaluru.
- Consider category-specific influencer selection: beauty, personal care, and premium FMCG benefit from lifestyle and aspirational influencers, while everyday staples may be better served by relatable local influencers who can demonstrate practical use.

Focus on Creative Authenticity and Storytelling:

- Content that integrates the product into real-life scenarios and provides genuine reviews enhances credibility and consumer trust.
- Encourage influencers to combine storytelling with demonstrable product benefits, such as convenience, quality, or sustainability, aligning with Kantar findings on trust and persuasion.
- Avoid overly scripted or purely promotional content, as Indian consumers increasingly value transparency and relatability.

Measure with Mixed Methods:

- Adopt a multi-pronged measurement framework combining brand-lift studies, affiliate tracking, promo codes, and matched-control panels to accurately assess both short-term sales impact and long-term brand equity.
- Monitor attention, engagement, and conversion metrics to evaluate content effectiveness and ROI across influencer tiers and platforms.
- Leverage data analytics to identify which influencer collaborations drive meaningful engagement within Bengaluru's urban market, adjusting strategies accordingly.

Bridge Online Trials to Offline Repeat Purchase:

- Align influencer campaigns with operational levers such as distribution, in-store visibility, and small-pack pricing to convert initial trials into habitual purchases.
- Introduce reminder or retargeting mechanisms digitally to reinforce trial experiences, particularly for premium variants or niche products.
- Track category-specific adoption patterns to ensure marketing spend translates into sustainable growth rather than one-off trials.

Leverage Local Insights and Urban Trends:

- Bengaluru's digitally active, lifestyle-oriented population is responsive to hyper-local campaigns. Brands should analyze city-level digital adoption trends and urban consumption patterns to refine influencer selection, messaging, and timing.
- Collaborate with local creator communities (tech, food, lifestyle) to tap into authentic networks and enhance campaign relevance.
- Use urban-centric insights to pilot new formats (short-form videos, live commerce, Instagram reels, or regional-language content) to capture attention and engagement effectively.

Integrate Influencer Strategy with Broader Marketing Mix:

- Influencer marketing should complement traditional FMCG marketing levers such as promotions, retail visibility, and experiential campaigns.
- Synchronize online and offline campaigns to maximize the conversion funnel—from awareness to trial to repeat purchase.
- Regularly review cross-channel performance to optimize budget allocation between macro and micro-influencer campaigns based on category and consumer responsiveness.

Limitations of the study

1. Relies solely on secondary sources, with limited city-level Bengaluru data affecting localized insights.
2. Evidence is mostly correlational or from varied industry reports, so causality should be interpreted cautiously.
3. Rapidly evolving platform features may shift trends, requiring ongoing primary research for updated insights.

CONCLUSION

Secondary evidence indicates that social media influencers significantly shape FMCG consumer purchase decisions in India, particularly in urban, digitally active markets like Bengaluru, by driving product discovery, attention, and short-term purchase intent. Effective influencer strategies for FMCG brands are category-specific, emphasize authentic creative storytelling, and employ robust measurement approaches to link campaigns to both sales and long-term brand equity. While influencers excel at generating trial and consideration, converting these into habitual purchases requires alignment with pricing, distribution, and the overall value proposition of the product.

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