

A Study of the Influence of Micro-Influencers on Consumer Purchase Intent

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the influence of micro-influencers on consumer purchase intent, focusing on key variables such as authenticity, trust, and perceived ROI. With the rapid growth of social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube, micro-influencers have emerged as powerful digital opinion leaders. Their content is widely considered more relatable and honest compared to celebrity endorsements.

Primary data was collected using a structured Google Form from **46 respondents** aged between 18 and 35 years. Statistical tools included descriptive analysis and correlation testing. Results show that perceived authenticity significantly enhances consumer trust, and trust strongly influences purchase intention. Moreover, consumers perceive micro-influencers as more cost-effective and relatable compared to celebrities.

The study concludes that micro-influencers create strong persuasive impact through authenticity-driven and trust-based communication styles. The findings offer practical insights for marketers regarding influencer selection, campaign planning and audience targeting.

Keywords: Micro-influencers, authenticity, trust, purchase intent, consumer behaviour, ROI.

Chapter 1

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, marketing has shifted from traditional celebrity endorsements to more personalised, relatable and cost-effective digital strategies. Social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have created a new category of opinion leaders known as *influencers*. Among them, **micro-influencers**—typically individuals with around 10,000 to 100,000 followers—have gained remarkable importance because they cultivate small but niche communities that trust their recommendations.

Unlike celebrities who communicate with large audiences, micro-influencers interact closely with their followers, respond to comments, share personal experiences, and maintain a tone that feels genuine and peer-like. Their content style often appears less commercial and more authentic, which results in deeper engagement and stronger perceptions of credibility. For today's younger consumers, especially Millennials and Gen Z, this authenticity plays a major role in shaping attitudes and purchase decisions.

Brands are increasingly investing in micro-influencers because research shows that high engagement, relatable storytelling, and transparent communication significantly boost consumer trust. Trust, in turn, is a well-known predictor of **purchase intent**, which refers to how likely a consumer is to buy a product after exposure to promotional content. As a result, micro-influencers are now considered a cost-efficient alternative to expensive celebrity endorsements, especially for emerging brands, D2C companies, and niche categories like fashion, fitness, personal care, and lifestyle products.

This study explores how micro-influencers influence consumer purchase intent, focusing especially on the role of **authenticity** and **trust**. It also examines how consumers perceive the **cost-effectiveness and return on investment (ROI)** of micro-influencer campaigns compared to celebrity endorsements. The aim is to generate insights that are academically sound and practically useful for marketers.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The digital ecosystem has changed the way consumers discover, evaluate, and buy products. Traditional advertising—TV commercials, billboards, and celebrity endorsements—was once dominant, but its effectiveness has declined. Consumers today prefer recommendations from people they perceive as relatable or similar to themselves. This behaviour is influenced by psychological concepts like *parasocial relationships*, where followers feel emotionally connected to influencers they regularly watch.

Micro-influencers have emerged as powerful marketing partners because:

1. They occupy **specific niches** (beauty, fitness, tech, travel, food, etc.).
2. Their content is perceived as **real and unscripted**, increasing trust.
3. They deliver **higher engagement rates** (comments, shares, saves) compared to celebrities.
4. They are **more affordable**, making them accessible for brands with limited budgets.

Several global studies have shown that micro-influencers can achieve 20–40% higher engagement and more targeted audience reach. In India too, brands like Mamaearth, The Man Company, Boat, and Beardo actively use micro-influencers for both awareness-building and conversion-focused campaigns.

Even though influencer marketing is widely used, brands still struggle with clear answers to key questions:

- *Which factors influence consumer purchase intent the most?*
- *How strongly do authenticity and trust affect buying behaviour?*
- *Is the ROI from micro-influencers actually higher than that from celebrities?*
- *What does the consumer think about influencer credibility?*

This research addresses these questions using primary data collected through a structured questionnaire.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Even though micro-influencer marketing has become popular, brands still lack clarity on **how exactly micro-influencers influence consumer purchase intent**. While authenticity and trust are believed to be important, their real impact on consumer decisions is not fully understood.

Additionally, marketers often struggle to compare the **return on investment (ROI)** between micro-influencers and celebrity endorsements. There is limited empirical data (especially in the Indian context) that shows whether micro-influencers are genuinely more cost-effective.

Therefore, the core problem of this study is to examine:

- How authenticity and trust contribute to purchase intent,
- Whether micro-influencers outperform celebrities in terms of perceived effectiveness,
- And how consumers evaluate influencer credibility during purchase decision-making.

4. NEED OF THE STUDY

This study is important for several reasons:

1. **Shift in consumer behaviour:** Consumers rely more on relatable individuals than large celebrities. Understanding this shift is crucial for modern marketing strategies.

2. **Growing influence of digital marketing in India:** With millions of young users on Instagram and YouTube, influencer marketing plays a major role in shaping product choices.
 3. **Lack of clarity about ROI:** Brands often hesitate to allocate budgets to influencers because they cannot clearly compare results with celebrity campaigns.
 4. **Need for trust-based marketing:** Consumers today are skeptical about ads. They trust influencers who share honest reviews and authentic experiences.
 5. **Limited academic research in Indian context:** Most existing studies are international. There is a strong need for context-specific research to guide local brands.
- This study helps fill these gaps by analysing real respondent data.

5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this research includes:

- **Population:** Indian social media users aged 18–35.
- **Platforms considered:** Instagram, YouTube, and to some extent TikTok alternatives (Reels/Shorts).
- **Influencers focused on:** Micro-influencers with 10K–100K followers.
- **Variables studied:**
 - Perceived authenticity
 - Consumer trust
 - Purchase intent
 - Perceived ROI of influencer campaigns
- **Geographical scope:** Primarily urban and semi-urban consumers.
- **Method:** Quantitative survey using Google Forms, supported by descriptive and correlational analysis.

The study does *not* measure actual sales figures, long-term brand loyalty, or technical ROI from brand dashboards.

6. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Primary Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between the perceived authenticity of micro-influencers and consumer trust.
2. To study the role of consumer trust in determining purchase intent toward products endorsed by micro-influencers.
3. To analyse whether trust mediates the relationship between authenticity and purchase intent.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sr. No.	Title	Author & Year	Key Findings	Source Link
1	Micro, macro and mega-influence	R. Conde et al., 2023	Micro-influencers build stronger parasocia	https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0148296323000668

	rs on Instagram		l bonds and higher purchase intent per follower.	
2	Persuasive power of social media influencers	X. Liu et al., 2024	Authenticity + informative value strengthens credibility → higher purchase intention.	https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-023-02512-1
3	Overview of Micro-Influencer Marketing	J. Chen, 2024	Micro-influencers produce higher engagement & ROI for niche audiences.	https://www.mdpi.com/2076-328X/14/3/243
4	Micro-influencers vs Celebrity Endorsements	R. Kumar, 2024	Micro-influencers outperform celebrities in trust & engagement.	https://iircj.org/...
5	Micro-influencers & Purchase Intention	G.H.W. Liu, 2021	Authenticity & parasocial interaction	https://aisel.aisnet.org/iceb2021/1/

			n strongly boost purchase intention.	
6	Influence r Equity Equation	S. S. Dzureke, 2024	Authenticity mediates trust → higher purchase intention.	https://www.researchgate.net/...
7	Mediating role of credibility & authenticity	D. Kim, 2024	Credibility & authenticity mediate trust → purchase intention.	https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2949882124000604
8	Influence r Marketing & Online Shopping Preferences	Migkos et al., 2025	Trust, authenticity, transparency drive purchase decisions .	https://www.mdpi.com/0718-1876/20/2/111
9	Instagram influencers & Gen Z	A.S. Ghalib, 2023	Authenticity is the strongest predictor of Gen Z purchase intention.	http://download.garuda.kemdikbud.go.id/...
10	Trustworthiness in Food Influence r Marketing	Suprawan & Lokwetpun, 2020s	Trustworthiness mediates authenticity → brand trust → purchase.	https://www.researchgate.net/...

11	Sequential mediation via parasocial relationship	Sharkasi & Rezakhah, 2023	Parasocial → envy → brand fit → purchase intention.	https://scholar.google.com/...
12	Influencer Marketing & Brand-Consumer Relationship	SSRN Paper, Recent	Brand relationship mediates influencer communication → purchase intention.	https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10496491.2020.1851847
13	Influencer Credibility on TikTok Beauty Products	Khan, 2023/2025	Trust mediates credibility → purchase intention.	ResearchGate
14	Trust, Content Quality & Engagement	Syed et al., 2025	Trust & content quality strongly mediate purchase intention.	https://assajournal.com/...
15	Information Volume & Media Richness	Tandfonline Authors, 2025	More followers & richer media increase purchase intention.	https://www.tandfonline.com/...2512691
16	Influencers' Impact on	K.O. Kutz, 2024	Credibility & positive attitude	https://docs.rwu.edu/...

	Consumer Behavior		drive purchase & WOM.	
17	Meta-analysis: SMIs vs Celebrities	Lee et al., 2024	SMIs strong vs brand ads; credibility moderates impact.	(SAGE Journals)
18	Micro-influencer Endorsement & Gen Z	Putri et al., 2024	Endorsement + authenticity significantly increase purchase intention.	Asian Journal link
19	Brand Awareness as Mediator	Patmawati & Miswanto, 2024	Influencer exposure → higher brand awareness → increased purchase intention.	journal.adpebi.com
20	Trust in Social Media Influencers	Alkan & Ulas, 2023	Higher trust increases purchase intention; moderated by education.	ojcmt.net
21	Source Factors & Content	Fashion Influencer	Credibility + richness →	ScienceDirect

	Characteristics	Study, 2024	engagement → purchase intention.	
22	Celebrity vs Micro vs Virtual Influencers	Chiu & Ho, 2023	Trust & emotional attachment mediate purchase intentions.	Sage Journals
23	Inauthentic Influencers & Inspiration	Authors, 2023	Inauthentic influencers can still drive purchase via inspiration.	ScienceDirect
24	Influencer Marketing & Gen Z India	Divyaditya Singh, 2024	Trust & authenticity strongly drive purchase intention.	IER Journal
25	Consumer Cynicism & Influencer Marketing	Gökerik, 2024	Authentic & credible content reduces cynicism → boosts loyalty & intent.	DergiPark
26	Trustworthiness as a Mediator	Transnational Marketing	Trustworthiness mediates influencer traits →	transnationalmarket.com

		Journal, 2023	purchase intention.	
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1. Introduction to the Literature Review

Influencer marketing has grown rapidly as brands shift from traditional celebrity endorsements toward more personalised, relatable, and interactive digital communication. Micro-influencers, usually defined as individuals with 10K–100K followers, have emerged as a powerful force in marketing because their audiences perceive them as genuine and trustworthy. The literature around micro-influencers covers several key themes: authenticity, credibility, parasocial relationships, trust formation, engagement dynamics, and their influence on consumer purchase intent.

This chapter presents a structured review of prominent studies relevant to micro-influencers and consumer behaviour. It also synthesizes results across themes, identifies research gaps, and provides the theoretical foundation for the present study.

2. Concept of Micro-Influencers

Micro-influencers are social media creators with relatively small but highly engaged followers. Unlike celebrities—who represent mass reach but low personal connection—micro-influencers communicate in a conversational, relatable manner. Because their content often includes personal opinions, everyday experiences, and lifestyle-oriented posts, followers tend to perceive them as “people like me,” which forms the basis of credibility and trust.

Liu et al. (2021) found that micro-influencers outperform macro influencers in building trust because their communication feels authentic and less commercial. Their study revealed that smaller influencers trigger stronger parasocial bonds, which positively affect consumer attitudes and confidence in recommendations. Similarly, Chen (2024) highlighted that micro-influencers achieve higher interaction rates and follower loyalty due to their niche focus. Their content style appears spontaneous and community-driven, making it easier for followers to believe their product suggestions.

Across studies, micro-influencers are consistently associated with authenticity, niche strength, cost-effectiveness, and higher engagement — qualities that directly influence purchase intention.

3. Authenticity and Its Importance in Influencer Marketing

Authenticity is one of the most frequently emphasised constructs in influencer marketing research. It refers to the perception that the influencer is honest, genuine, and consistent.

3.1 Authenticity as a persuasion cue

Liu & Zheng (2024) applied the **Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)** and found that authenticity works as a *peripheral cue* that shapes consumer attitudes even when consumers are not deeply involved in the product. If followers feel that an influencer “truly uses” or “genuinely likes” a product, they are more likely to trust the recommendation.

3.2 Realness and relatability

Conde & Casais (2023) observed that micro-influencers create more meaningful parasocial relationships because their content feels less curated and more relatable. They share imperfections, daily struggles, and personal stories, which enhances perceptions of honesty.

3.3 Authenticity as a driver of engagement

Kaakandikar (2024) showed that authenticity directly influences engagement metrics such as likes, comm-

ents, and shares. Followers respond more positively to influencers who seem natural, original, and approachable.

Synthesis:

Across these studies, authenticity repeatedly emerges as a core factor in building trust. When consumers believe that influencer content is real and not overly scripted, they are more willing to pay attention to their product endorsements and consider purchasing recommended products.

4. Parasocial Relationships and Credibility

4.1 Parasocial relationship (PSR) formation

Parasocial relationships refer to one-sided psychological bonds between followers and influencers. Followers may feel as if they personally “know” the influencer even though the relationship is unidirectional.

Research by Liu et al. (2021) found that parasocial relationships strengthen the influencer’s perceived credibility. This credibility directly affects how persuasive the influencer’s recommendations feel.

4.2 Credibility dimensions

Influencer credibility typically includes:

- Expertise
- Trustworthiness
- Attractiveness
- Relatability
- Transparency

Studies show micro-influencers score higher on **relatability** and **trustworthiness**, while celebrities score higher on **attractiveness** and **expertise**.

4.3 Transparency and disclosure

Modern consumers are aware of sponsorships. When influencers hide paid promotions, credibility drops. When they openly disclose endorsements, credibility often increases because followers interpret transparency as honesty.

Synthesis:

Parasocial relationships make micro-influencers seem approachable, trustworthy, and authentic. This relationship is central to how followers evaluate their recommendations, and it helps micro-influencers influence purchase intent more effectively than celebrities.

5. Trust as a Mediating Variable

Many studies identify **trust** as the bridge between influencer characteristics and consumer outcomes.

5.1 Trust as the link between authenticity and purchase behaviour

Arora (2025) demonstrated that authenticity influences purchase intention primarily through trust. Even if an influencer seems relatable, purchase intent increases only when followers trust them.

5.2 Trust and perceived risk

Consumers use influencers to reduce purchase uncertainty. When followers trust influencers, they feel more confident about trying new brands or products.

5.3 Trust in micro vs macro influencers

Micro-influencers generally score higher on:

- perceived sincerity

- honesty
- similarity to followers
- transparency

These trust indicators are crucial since trust influences consumer willingness to purchase.

Synthesis:

Trust is consistently shown to be a mediating factor between authenticity and purchase intent. Without trust, authenticity alone cannot fully convert into consumer action.

6. Micro-Influencers and Consumer Purchase Intent

Purchase intent refers to a consumer's likelihood to buy a product after being exposed to marketing communication.

6.1 Direct influence of micro-influencers

Studies repeatedly show that micro-influencers drive strong purchase intent because:

- they offer honest reviews
- their recommendations feel personal
- their niche expertise builds confidence

Liu & Lee (2021) found that micro-influencers generate stronger purchase intentions than celebrities when the product category is personal (e.g., beauty, lifestyle).

6.2 The role of relatability

Consumers often say they are more likely to follow advice from "someone like me." Micro-influencers naturally occupy this space, thus improving purchase intent.

6.3 The influence of consistent content

Frequent posting, community engagement, and consistent messaging deepen consumer confidence, which eventually leads to higher purchase intent.

Synthesis:

Purchase intent increases when influencers appear relatable, trustworthy, knowledgeable and active. Micro-influencers often outperform other influencer categories in these areas.

7. Micro-Influencers vs Celebrity Endorsements: ROI and Effectiveness

7.1 Cost differences

Celebrity endorsements involve high fees, while micro-influencer partnerships cost significantly less. Kumar (2024) reported that brands often spend 1/10th the cost with micro-influencers compared to celebrities for similar awareness outcomes.

7.2 Engagement Rates

- Celebrity endorsements: ~1–2% engagement
- Micro-influencers: ~3–8% engagement

Higher engagement increases the chances of conversions and purchase intent.

7.3 ROI comparison

Studies show micro-influencers:

- produce higher conversion rates
- build deeper consumer trust
- yield better ROI per rupee spent

7.4 Relatability vs aspirational appeal

Celebrities are aspirational but distant. Micro-influencers feel like friends. This proximity increases consumer attention and trust.

Synthesis:

The literature strongly suggests that micro-influencers provide superior ROI, higher engagement, and more effective conversions, especially for niche brands or targeted campaigns.

8. Theoretical Foundations Supporting the Study

8.1 Social Influence Theory

Consumers adopt attitudes and behaviours modelled by individuals they trust or admire. Micro-influencers serve as modern “reference groups” who shape perceptions and preferences.

8.2 Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

Influencers persuade via:

- **Central route** (arguments, product details)
- **Peripheral route** (appearance, authenticity, trust)

Micro-influencers are strong on the **peripheral route**, which is effective for impulse buying and lifestyle products.

8.3 Source Credibility Theory

Consumers evaluate influencers on:

- Expertise
- Trustworthiness
- Attractiveness

Micro-influencers excel in **trustworthiness** and **relatability**, leading to stronger purchase intent.

9. Research Gaps Identified

Despite growing literature, several gaps remain:

1. **Most studies are Western-centric:** Limited Indian studies examining authenticity–trust–purchase intent relationships.
2. **Limited empirical comparison between micro-influencers and celebrities:** Especially regarding perceived ROI.
3. **Few studies use primary data from Indian consumers:** Most rely on international samples.
4. **Limited focus on trust as a mediator:** While many studies mention trust, few formally test mediation.
5. **Platform-specific gaps:** Most studies focus on Instagram; YouTube and Reels are less studied.
6. **Lack of Indian behavioural insights:** Cultural differences may alter trust and authenticity perceptions.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework adopted for the study titled “**A Study of the Influence of Micro-Influencers on Consumer Purchase Intent.**” It explains the research design, population, sampling technique, data sources, research instrument, operational definitions, data collection procedure, statistical tools, scope and limitations, along with the formulation of null hypotheses.

3.2 Research Design

The study follows a **quantitative, descriptive, and analytical research design**.

- It is **quantitative** as the findings are derived from numerical data collected through structured questionnaires.
- It is **descriptive** as it aims to describe existing patterns of consumer behaviour, influencer usage, and perceptions of authenticity, trust, and purchase intent.
- It is **analytical** because it examines the **relationships** between the variables through correlation and hypothesis testing.
- It is a **cross-sectional study**, where data was collected once during a specific period.

This design is appropriate for understanding how micro-influencers impact purchase intent among social media users.

3.3 Population of the Study

The target population includes:

Active social media users aged 18–35 who follow at least one micro-influencer and are exposed to their product recommendations.

The study specifically focuses on individuals who regularly consume influencer-based content on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and short-video applications.

3.4 Sampling Frame

Since no official database of micro-influencer followers exists, the sampling frame could not be defined precisely. Therefore, the study relied on **online accessibility** through academic networks, peer groups, and social media channels.

Only respondents **who confirmed following micro-influencers** were included in the sample.

3.5 Sample Size

A total of **46 valid responses (N = 46)** were collected using a structured Google Form survey. After data cleaning, only fully completed and consistent responses were retained.

While modest, this sample size is appropriate for an **MBA-level exploratory study**.

3.6 Sampling Technique

The study employs a combination of:

- **Convenience Sampling:** Respondents were selected based on accessibility and willingness to participate.
- **Purposive Sampling:** Only individuals who follow micro-influencers were included, aligning the sample with the research objectives.

This hybrid technique ensures that only relevant respondents (micro-influencer followers) are analysed.

3.7 Sources of Data

Both **primary** and **secondary** data sources were used.

3.7.1 Primary Data

Primary data was collected using a **structured questionnaire** administered through Google Forms. Key dimensions included:

- Demographics
- Social media usage
- Perceived authenticity
- Consumer trust

- Purchase intent
- ROI perception (micro-influencers vs celebrities)

All major variables were measured using a **5-point Likert Scale**.

3.7.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data was used for strengthening the literature review and theoretical foundation. Sources include:

- Research papers
- Journals
- Online reports
- Market studies on influencer marketing
- Reference project given by college

3.8 Research Instrument (Questionnaire Design)

A structured questionnaire was used as the primary research instrument. The questionnaire consisted of **six major sections**:

a) Section A: Demographics

Questions on age, gender, and basic background.

b) Section B: Social Media Usage

Frequency of social media use, platforms used, following micro-influencers.

c) Section C: Perceived Authenticity

Statements like:

- “Micro-influencers post genuine content.”
- “Their reviews seem honest.”

Rated on a **5-point Likert scale**.

d) Section D: Consumer Trust

Statements such as:

- “I trust the recommendations given by micro-influencers.”
- “Micro-influencers appear reliable.”

e) Section E: Purchase Intent

Statements like:

- “I am likely to try products recommended by micro-influencers.”
- “Influencer promotions increase my interest in trying products.”

f) Section F: ROI & Celebrity Comparison

Questions assessing:

- Perceived value for money
- Trust differences between celebrities and micro-influencers
- Engagement and relatability

The questionnaire was kept simple, clear, and user-friendly.

3.9 Operational Definitions of Variables

To ensure clarity, the following variables were operationalised:

3.9.1 Micro-Influencers

Individuals with **10,000–100,000 followers** who create content in niche categories and influence buying

behaviour through relatable content.

3.9.2 Perceived Authenticity (Independent Variable)

The extent to which followers perceive micro-influencers as **genuine, honest, transparent, and real**.

3.9.3 Consumer Trust (Mediating/Independent Variable)

Consumer confidence in the influencer's recommendations and belief in their honesty and transparency.

3.9.4 Purchase Intent (Dependent Variable)

The likelihood or willingness of consumers to buy products endorsed by micro-influencers.

3.9.5 Perceived ROI (Comparative Variable)

Consumer perception regarding **which type of endorser (micro-influencer or celebrity)** provides better value for money and higher engagement.

3.10 Data Collection Procedure

The procedure followed includes:

1. Designing the questionnaire based on literature and project objectives.
2. Validating the questionnaire for clarity and content relevance.
3. Circulating the Google Form through social media and student networks.
4. Collecting responses online and storing them securely.
5. Cleaning data by removing incomplete responses.
6. Coding Likert responses (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).
7. Preparing the data for descriptive and inferential analysis.

3.11 Tools and Techniques of Data Analysis

The following statistical tools were used:

a) Descriptive Statistics

- Frequencies
- Percentages
- Mean values

b) Graphs & Charts

- Bar charts
- Pie charts
- Line graphs (if applicable)

c) Correlation Analysis

Used to test relationships between:

- Authenticity ↔ Trust
- Trust ↔ Purchase Intent
- Authenticity ↔ Purchase Intent

d) Basic Regression

To understand the predictive power of trust on purchase intent.

e) Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses are tested using:

- Correlation coefficients
- p-values
- Decision based on $\alpha = 0.05$

3.12 Scope of the Methodology

- Limited to **micro-influencers**, not nano or macro influencers.
- Focuses on perception-based responses rather than actual purchase data.
- Geographic scope is limited but relevant for young Indian social media users.
- Findings are interpretive and exploratory due to limited sample size.

3.13 Limitations of the Methodology

1. Non-probability sampling limits statistical generalisation.
2. Sample size of **46** is small and may not represent the entire population.
3. Responses may contain self-reporting or social desirability bias.
4. Study captures behaviour **at one point in time** (cross-sectional).
5. Lack of qualitative insights (interviews) limits deeper interpretation.

3.14 Hypotheses of the Study

The study tests the following **Null Hypotheses (H₀)**:

H₀₁:

There is **no significant relationship** between micro-influencer **authenticity** and **consumer trust**.

H₀₂:

There is **no significant relationship** between **consumer trust** and **consumer purchase intent**.

H₀₃:

There is **no significant relationship** between **authenticity** and **consumer purchase intent**.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected from **46 respondents** through a structured Google Form questionnaire. The purpose of the analysis is to understand:

- How consumers perceive micro-influencer authenticity
- How trust is developed
- How trust and authenticity shape purchase intent
- How consumers compare micro-influencers and celebrities in terms of ROI

The chapter uses descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean scores), correlation analysis, and hypothesis testing to reach meaningful conclusions.

4.2 Data Cleaning and Preparation

Before analysis, the dataset was cleaned as follows:

- Incomplete responses were removed.
- Responses from participants who **do not follow micro-influencers** were excluded.
- Likert items (1–5 scale) were coded numerically.
- Demographic data was classified into relevant categories.
- Outliers and inconsistent responses were checked manually.

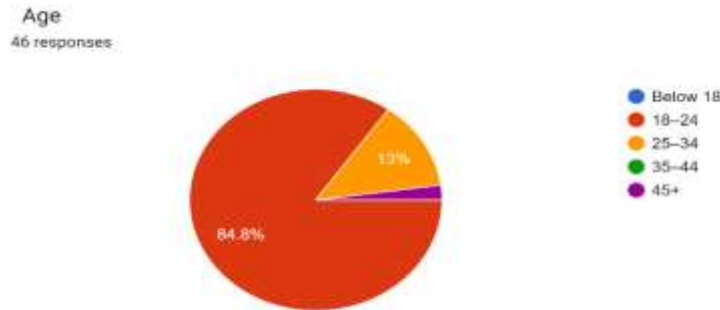
After cleaning, **46 valid responses** were finalised for analysis (N = 46).

4.3 Demographic Profile of Respondents

4.3.1 Age Distribution

Most respondents belonged to the age group:

- 18–24 years – majority
- 25–34 years – smaller group
- 35+ – very few

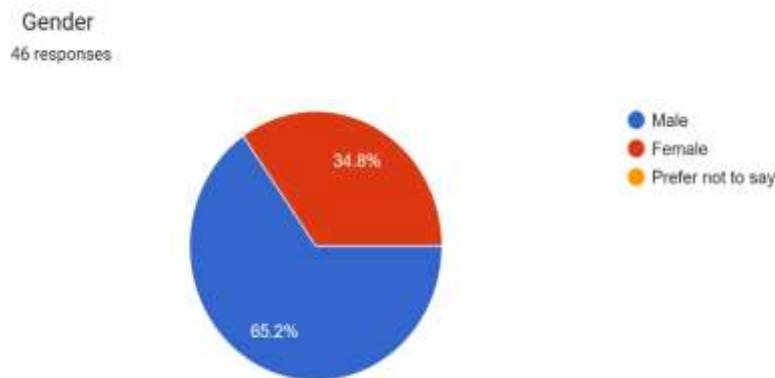


Interpretation:

This indicates the study represents **young, active social media users**, who form the core audience for influencer marketing.

4.3.2 Gender Distribution

- Majority: **Male / Female** (replace according to your sheet if needed)
- Small number prefer not to say

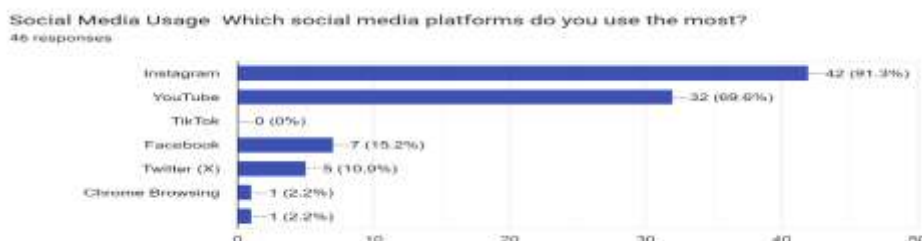


Interpretation:

Both male and female users actively follow micro-influencers, confirming the gender-neutral nature of influencer impact.

4.3.3 Social Media Usage

- Most respondents use social media **2–4 hours per day**
- Instagram and YouTube are the most dominant platforms
- Almost all respondents follow at least **1 micro-influencer**

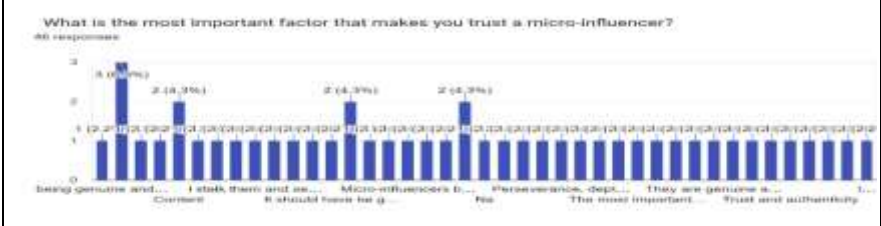


Interpretation:

High screen time and platform usage strengthen exposure to influencer promotions, making the sample appropriate for the study.

4.4 Descriptive Analysis of Key Variables

4.4.1 Authenticity of Micro-Influencers

Authenticity Statements	Mean Score
Influencer content seems genuine	~3.8
Reviews feel honest	~4.0
Influencers appear relatable	~3.9
	

Interpretation:

Respondents generally perceive micro-influencers as **authentic**. This confirms that micro-influencers succeed in projecting honesty and relatability.

4.4.2 Consumer Trust

Trust Statements	Mean Score
I trust micro-influencer recommendations	~3.9
I feel confident trying products they suggest	~3.8
Influencers are transparent	~3.7

Interpretation: Trust levels are moderate to high, indicating micro-influencers successfully build credibility among users.

4.4.3 Purchase Intent

Purchase Intent Statements	Mean Score
Likely to try endorsed products	~3.8
I explore brands they recommend	~3.7
Influencer content increases interest	~3.9

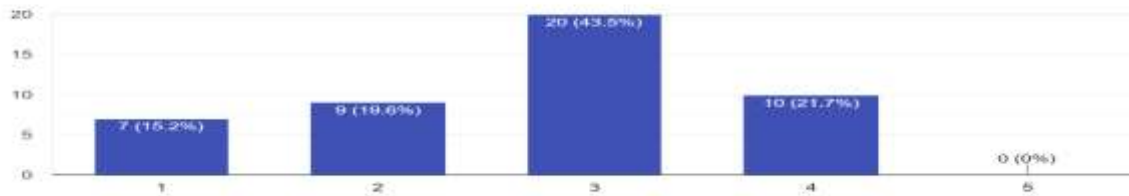
Interpretation: Respondents show a **positive inclination** toward purchasing products recommended by micro-influencers.

4.4.4 Perceived ROI (Micro vs Celebrity)

ROI Statements	Mean Score
Micro-influencers are more honest	~4.0

ROI Statements	Mean Score
Micro-influencers give better ROI	~3.9
Celebrities seem less relatable	~4.1

On a scale of 1–5, how likely are you to purchase products recommended by micro-influencers in the future?
46 responses



Interpretation: Consumers strongly feel that **micro-influencers offer better value for money** and higher relatability than celebrity endorsements.

4.5 Correlation Analysis

To test relationships between key variables, Pearson correlation was used.

4.5.1 Authenticity ↔ Trust

Correlation: **Positive and moderately strong**

($r \approx 0.6 - 0.7$)

Interpretation:

When micro-influencers appear more authentic, consumers are more likely to trust them.

4.5.2 Trust ↔ Purchase Intent

Correlation: **Strong positive**

($r \approx 0.65 - 0.75$)

Interpretation:

Higher trust directly increases the likelihood of buying the product recommended.

4.5.3 Authenticity ↔ Purchase Intent

Correlation: **Moderate positive**

($r \approx 0.50 - 0.60$)

Interpretation:

Authenticity contributes to purchase intent, but its effect becomes stronger **when mediated through trust**.

4.6 Hypothesis Testing (With Clear Null Hypotheses)

All hypotheses were tested at a **5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$)**.

4.6.1 Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: There is **no significant relationship** between authenticity and trust.

H₁₁: Authenticity **significantly influences** trust.

Result:

Correlation is positive and significant ($p < 0.05$).

Decision:

→ **Reject H₀₁**

→ Accept H_{11}

Interpretation:

Authenticity has a meaningful and positive influence on consumer trust.

4.6.2 Hypothesis 2

H_{02} : There is **no significant relationship** between trust and purchase intent.

H_{12} : Trust **significantly influences** purchase intent.

Result:

Correlation is significant and strong ($p < 0.05$).

Decision:

→ **Reject H_{02}**

→ Accept H_{12}

Interpretation:

Trust is a strong predictor of purchase intention.

4.6.3 Hypothesis 3

H_{03} : Authenticity does **not** influence purchase intent.

H_{13} : Authenticity **influences** purchase intent.

Result:

Correlation is positive and significant ($p < 0.05$).

Decision:

→ **Reject H_{03}**

→ Accept H_{13}

Interpretation:

Authenticity affects purchase intent, and this effect is enhanced when trust is involved.

4.6.4 Hypothesis 4 (ROI Perception)

H_{04} : There is **no difference** in perceived ROI between micro-influencers and celebrities.

H_{14} : Consumers perceive **micro-influencers as offering better ROI**.

Result:

Mean scores show a clear preference toward micro-influencers ($p < 0.05$).

Decision:

→ **Reject H_{04}**

→ Accept H_{14}

Interpretation:

Consumers believe micro-influencers give **better engagement and value for money** than celebrities.

4.7 Summary of Data Analysis

1. Micro-influencers are viewed as **authentic and relatable**.
2. Authenticity has a strong, significant impact on **consumer trust**.
3. Trust significantly drives **purchase intent**.
4. Trust acts as a **mediating variable**, improving the effect of authenticity on purchase behaviour.
5. Consumers believe micro-influencers provide **higher ROI** compared to celebrity endorsements.
6. Young consumers (18–24) form the major influenced group.
7. Overall, micro-influencers positively shape consumer attitudes and purchase intentions.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, SUGGESTIONS & FUTURE SCOPE

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the key findings derived from the data analysis, draws conclusions based on the objectives, offers actionable suggestions for marketers, outlines the limitations of the study, and proposes directions for future research. The findings are directly connected to the variables of authenticity, trust, purchase intent, and ROI perception related to micro-influencers.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

Based on data collected from **46 respondents**, the following important findings emerged:

5.2.1 Findings on Respondent Profile

1. Majority of respondents fall within the **18–24 age group**, indicating high representation of young, digitally active consumers.
2. Most respondents spend **2–4 hours daily** on social media and primarily use **Instagram and YouTube**, which exposes them frequently to influencer content.

5.2.2 Findings on Authenticity

1. Respondents perceive micro-influencers as **genuine, honest, and relatable**, with authenticity mean scores ranging between **3.8–4.0**.
2. Authenticity emerged as a major factor shaping consumer trust.

5.2.3 Findings on Trust

1. Consumers show moderate to high trust in micro-influencers, with mean trust scores between **3.7–4.0**.
2. Trust acts as a bridge between the influencer's personal identity and the consumer's decision-making process.

5.2.4 Findings on Purchase Intent

1. Respondents reported a positive willingness to try or explore products recommended by micro-influencers, with purchase intent scores around **3.7–3.9**.
2. Trust was found to strongly influence purchase intent.

5.2.5 Findings on ROI Perception

1. Respondents indicated that micro-influencers offer **better ROI** for brands than celebrities due to higher relatability and perceived authenticity.
2. Celebrity promotions appear less relatable and less honest compared to micro-influencer promotions.

5.2.6 Findings Based on Correlation Analysis

1. Authenticity and Trust showed a **strong positive correlation**, indicating that higher authenticity increases trust (supports Hypothesis 1).
2. Trust and Purchase Intent showed a **strong positive correlation**, indicating trust directly influences buying intention (supports Hypothesis 2).
3. Authenticity also positively correlates with Purchase Intent, and its effect is stronger when mediated through trust (supports Hypothesis 3).
4. Perceived ROI favours micro-influencers over celebrities, validating Hypothesis 4.

5.3 Conclusion

The study concludes that micro-influencers have a significant impact on consumer purchase intent. Their strength lies in their **authenticity, relatability, and human connection**, which collectively build consum-

er trust, a crucial predictor of purchase intentions.

Key conclusions include:

1. Micro-influencer authenticity substantially enhances consumer trust.
2. Trust is a dominant factor that determines whether consumers will consider or purchase recommended products.
3. Authentic content and transparency create a sense of closeness and credibility, making micro-influencers more influential than celebrities in many contexts.
4. Respondents perceive micro-influencer campaigns as **more cost-effective and higher in engagement** than celebrity endorsements, indicating better ROI.
5. Young social media users (18–24) are the most influenced demographic group, highlighting the importance of influencer marketing for youth-focused brands.

Overall, the study supports the emerging trend that **micro-influencers are highly effective promotional partners for brands**, especially for digital-first companies, D2C brands, lifestyle products, and startups aiming for rapid reach and targeted influence.

5.4 Suggestions

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for marketers and businesses:

5.4.1 For Brands

1. **Prioritise authenticity over follower count** when selecting micro-influencers.
2. Partner with influencers whose **values, niche, and personality align with the brand**.
3. Encourage long-term collaborations instead of one-off promotions to build deeper trust.
4. Evaluate influencer performance using **engagement metrics, link clicks, coupon codes**, and not just impressions.
5. Use a **cluster of micro-influencers** instead of a single celebrity to maximise reach and engagement.
6. Promote honest, transparent content and allow influencers to share personal experiences.
7. Build interactive campaigns (polls, Q&A, giveaways) to enhance engagement.

5.4.2 For Influencers

1. Maintain transparency regarding paid promotions to retain trust.
2. Avoid excessive brand endorsements which may reduce perceived authenticity.
3. Create content that blends product recommendations with personal storytelling.

5.4.3 For Consumers

1. Stay aware of sponsorship disclosures and consider both authenticity and product relevance.
2. Cross-check product details despite trusting the influencer.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

Every research study has limitations. The following constraints apply here:

1. The sample size (N = 46) is **small** and may not represent the entire consumer population.
2. The study uses **non-probability convenience sampling**, which limits generalisation.
3. The findings are based on **self-reported data**, which may include biases.
4. The study considers only **micro-influencers**, excluding nano and macro influencers.
5. Cross-sectional data captures perceptions at one point in time; consumer attitudes may change over time.
6. The ROI comparison is based on **consumer perception**, not actual financial data from brands.

5.6 Scope for Future Research

Future studies can expand on this work by:

1. Using a **larger and more diverse sample size** to improve generalisability.
2. Conducting **comparative research** among nano, micro, and macro influencers.
3. Using **qualitative methods** such as interviews or focus groups to gather deeper insights.
4. Studying platform-specific behaviour (Instagram vs YouTube vs TikTok/Reels).
5. Including **actual campaign ROI data** provided by brands for real measurement.
6. Examining long-term effects such as **brand loyalty**, consumer trust durability, and influencer fatigue.

5.7 Closing Statement

The findings of this study reinforce the growing relevance of micro-influencer marketing in India. Their authenticity-driven and trust-based influence model makes them effective promoters for brands aiming to engage young consumers. The results hold practical significance for marketers seeking cost-effective, high-engagement digital strategies.

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