



ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL

Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol. 05 No. 01. Jan-March 2026. Page#.1279-1288

Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)

Platform & Workflow by: Open Journal Systems

**Impact of Influencer Marketing on the Buying Behavior of Youth****Ayesha Ishfaq**

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Lahorefahad.anis@ucp.edu.pk**Abstract**

Influencer marketing is when businesses collaborate with internet influencers to sell their goods. Because influencers have sizable internet and social media followings, other influencer marketing partnerships are less tangible. Some individuals have millions or even hundreds of thousands of followers. Many of them will still probably seem like regular individuals. They might only have a thousand followers, or in certain situations, even less. These are the people who create the most engaging social media posts, depending on their area of expertise. They produce the most thrilling films, publish the most exquisite content, and conduct the most engaging and educational online discussions. This thesis aims to investigate the popularity of Instagram influencers, the effectiveness of influencer marketing in promoting a particular product, and the potential of influencer marketing in the marketing industry. The study also looks at the causes behind consumers buying behavior, consumer attraction towards products. To accomplish this study's goals, we used quantitative data using an objective approach. Survey questionnaire was conducted from the students of different universities two private sector universities (University of Management and Technology, University of Central Punjab) and two government universities (The University of Punjab, Government College & University). Sample size for this study was 600 which is divided as on 150 from each university. All our hypothesis were supported. Influencer marketing has a major positive impact on young people's purchasing decisions and greatly increases product promotion. Purchase intent is boosted by the opinions of influencers, strong post interaction, and encouraging audience comments. Youth judgements are also greatly influenced by the kind and quality of information.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Consumer Buying Behavior, Social Media, Youth, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Influencer marketing has become a potent instrument for companies looking to engage with younger consumers. It makes use of social media influencers that have a large following and a high degree of reputation, which helps them sway customers' decisions to buy (Evans et al., 2021). Due to their high level of social media participation and preference for peer recommendations over traditional advertising, young people are especially vulnerable to influencer marketing (Lou & Yuan, 2019). This method is a crucial tactic in contemporary marketing as it influences customer preferences and encourages purchases. These influencers provide content that highlights the brand's goods and services and invites their audience to give them a try. The engagement rate, reach, and revenues that an influencer marketing campaign generates may all be used to gauge its performance. For influencer marketing programs to be

effective, they must be well thought out and carried out in a way that appeals to the audience and reflects the brand's values. (Dey, 2024b).

Influencer marketing's efficacy varies depending on the situation. The outcome is greatly influenced by the kind of influencer used, whether it be a virtual, micro, or famous influencer (Chiu, 2023; Sun, 2021). Similar to this, purchase intentions are significantly impacted by the influencer's perceived credibility, which includes attributes like beauty, knowledge, and dependability (Nugroho, 2022), (Chiu, 2023), and (Ao, 2023). Research continuously shows that more perceived credibility results in more positive views and trust towards the influencer and the brand they advocate (Ao, 2023; Lou, 2019). However, the target audience and product category might affect how important these credibility aspects are in relation to one another (Ahmad, 2019). For instance, competence may be more important for technology-related items (Ao, 2023), whereas attractiveness may be more important for advertising beauty products (Macheka, 2023). Additionally, effective marketing depends heavily on the perceived alignment of the influencer, the product, and the target demographic (Schouten, 2019).

Influencer marketing and young people's purchase patterns show how many different influences interact to impact decisions. Important factors include platform dynamics, audience traits, influencer reputation, and the type of influencer-brand interaction. Influencer marketing offers companies great chances to engage with young customers, but there are hazards and ethical issues that need to be carefully considered. To completely understand the long-term impacts of influencer marketing on young people and to create ethical and successful marketing tactics, more study is necessary (Joshi, 2023), (Han, 2023).

Problem statement:

Influencer marketing is widely adopted by brands, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding how and why young youth are influenced by social media personalities. The key factors (psychological, emotional) that drive purchasing decisions based on influencer recommendation.

Rationale of Study:

Digital marketing and social media's explosive development have changed how companies interact with their target audience, especially young people. Influencers' relatability and trustworthiness with their followers have made influencer marketing a popular tactic. Even yet, more empirical study is still required to fully understand how influencer marketing directly affects the purchasing decisions of young customers.

Objectives:

To examine the importance of influencer marketing in promotion of the products.

To examine how youth perceive social media influencer's opinions and recommendations in buying decision.

To identify the key factors of influencer marketing in influencing the buying behavior of youth.

Hypothesis:

H1: Greater the Influencer marketing greater will be the promotion of a product.

H2: Opinions and recommendations of social media influencers have significant impact on buying behavior of youth.

H3: Greater the engagement on social media posts of influencers the greater will be the impact on buying behavior of youth.

H3(a): Positive audience feedback have positive impact on the buying behavior of youth.

H3(b): Content type and quality have great impact on the buying behavior of youth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature evaluation justifies the necessity of the present study by identifying gaps, contradictions, or unaddressed concerns through a critical analysis of previous research (Hart, 2018). Literature review demonstrates the study's relevance and significance by placing it within the framework of previous research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Influencer marketing affects young people's purchase decisions. Social media's ascent has drastically changed the marketing scene landscape (Joshi, 2023), (Zatwarnicka-Madura, 2022), (Shamim, 2022), with influencer marketing becoming a powerful force influencing customer behavior, especially among young people (Lapierre, 2017). This move is a fundamental shift in the way brands interact with and impact their target consumers, not just a little adjustment. Young people's changing media consumption patterns and the sheer size and reach of social media platforms have produced a special atmosphere where influencer marketing tactics may significantly affect consumer choices (Evans, 2010). Examining the intricate interactions between influencers, companies, and young customers as well as the major themes that affect their purchase decisions is necessary to comprehend this dynamic. This review will examine a number of important topics. In order to understand the multifaceted nature of credibility and how it affects perceptions of authenticity (Shamim, 2022), (Sesar, 2022), we will first look at the idea of influencer credibility and how it affects trust. Second, by examining the psychology of parasocial interactions and the difficulties presented by sponsored material (Joshi, 2023), we will discuss the importance of message authenticity and engagement in creating real relationships. Third, by contrasting and comparing various platforms and their distinctive features, we will look at how social media platforms shape consumption habits (Joshi, 2023). Fourth, we will examine how social norms and peer pressure have a big impact on identity construction and compliance. We will also look at how influencers may affect brand loyalty and how people perceive social norms (Sesar, 2022). The efficacy of influencer marketing is intrinsically tied to the influencer's credibility (Shamim, 2022), (Lapierre, 2017). According to Joshi (2023), credibility is a complex concept that encompasses multiple important aspects, including competence, integrity, and beauty. It is not only a question of popularity or follower count. The perceived genuineness of the influencer's recommendations and, eventually, their persuasiveness are greatly influenced by each of these factors (Gilpin, 1997), (Sesar, 2022). This is especially true for youth, who are frequently less susceptible to being swayed by flimsy arguments and more perceptive of marketing strategies (Lapierre, 2017). Greater credibility is frequently correlated with high levels of experience in a particular product domain (Lapierre, 2017). Customers will assume that the influencer's suggestions are founded on good judgement rather than just self-interest as expertise conveys knowledge and competence. Customers are more inclined to trust an influencer who exhibits a thorough knowledge of the product they are endorsing, offers precise and comprehensive information, and responds to any possible queries or worries (Joshi, 2023). Their capacity to establish trust is also much impacted by the kind of influencer they use, whether they are micro- or macro-influencers (Shamim, 2022; Chiu, 2023). Stronger parasocial ties are often developed between micro-influencers and their audience, who have smaller but very active followings (Shamim, 2022). More relatability and authenticity are fostered by this close relationship, which increases trust and, in turn, persuasive power (Chiu, 2023).

Customers are more open to the influencer's suggestions because of the solid foundation of trust that is created by the connections' perceived intimacy and genuineness (Shamim, 2022). Despite having a wider audience, macro-influencers could find it difficult to build the same closeness and trust because of the perceived gap between them and their sizable following (Shamim, 2022). Maintaining credibility and preventing consumer fraud need transparency with relation to sponsored material (Sesar, 2022; Joshi, 2023). Clear disclosure of advertising agreements

improves trust and lessens the sense of manipulation, according to several studies (Sesar, 2022). Customers are more open to the message when there is transparency since it fosters trust. This thorough analysis of the research has shed light on the complex ways that influencer marketing affects young people's purchasing decisions. Buying decisions are complicatedly shaped by the interaction of influencer credibility, message authenticity, platform features, peer pressure, and cultural factors. This marketing tactic raises significant ethical and regulatory issues, especially when it comes to the promotion of potentially dangerous goods.

The present research still has a number of important shortcomings. To monitor the long-term impacts of influencer marketing on young people's development, longitudinal research is required. How cultural norms and beliefs impact reactions to influencer advertising may be uncovered through cross-cultural research. For a thorough understanding, interdisciplinary approaches that integrate psychology, sociology, marketing, and public health are crucial.

More study must concentrate on constructing media literacy programs to improve young customers' critical thinking abilities and on generating efficient counter-marketing tactics to lessen the detrimental effects of advertising hazardous items. By filling these gaps, a more sophisticated understanding of this dynamic area will be available, guiding the creation of ethical and successful strategies for navigating the changing influencer marketing environment and safeguarding young customers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework offers an organized basis for research, making it crucial for thesis work. It ensures coherence and logical consistency in the development of research questions, hypotheses, and technique (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Specific theory helps the researcher to analyze, investigate, and explore the selected study. The main purpose of using a theoretical framework is to strengthen the concept and main idea of the researcher with previous practicing theories. The researcher used uses and gratification theory in the study.

Uses and Gratification:

A framework known as the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) aims to explain why and how individuals actively look for particular media to meet their needs (Katz et al., 1973). This idea deviates from conventional wisdom that regards the audience as passive media consumers. Rather, it presents people as active agents who choose the media they consume consciously according to their own wants and preferences (Blumler & Katz, 1974; Rubin, 2009).

Cultivation Theory offers a useful framework for understanding the profound influence of media on consumer behavior and marketing strategies (Dato-on, 2000). Individual values can be gradually shaped and consumerism can rise as a result of repeated exposure to marketing messages that emphasize material goods, status symbols, and the pursuit of pleasure via purchasing. Another area where Cultivation Theory provides useful insights is the impact of media on body image and self-esteem, especially among young people (Stein, 2019). Regular exposure to social media and advertising's idealized portrayals of thinness and attractiveness can result in eating disorders, body dissatisfaction, and other detrimental psychological effects. As a result, Cultivation Theory offers a theoretical framework for comprehending the mechanics of media influence in the marketplace and is a potent instrument for examining the subtle yet important effects of media on many facets of consumer behaviors. The quickly developing discipline of influencer marketing uses the reach and credibility of powerful people (influencers) to sell goods and businesses (Li, 2021; Hugh, 2022; Chen, 2023). Their apparent knowledge, genuineness, and relatability provide them the ability to successfully influence the attitudes and actions of their customers. There are many other types of influencer marketing tactics, such as sponsored posts, affiliate marketing, product placement, and live streaming partnerships (Li,

2021; Hugh, 2022; Rohde, 2021). Perceptions of brands and goods are greatly influenced by influencers (Li, 2021; Hugh, 2022; Chen, 2023). Their suggestions and endorsements have a big impact on how customers feel about particular businesses and goods. Youth are especially affected because they frequently lack the critical thinking abilities necessary to distinguish between sponsored material and sincere suggestions. An influencer's reputation and dependability are important determinants of how well their marketing campaigns work (Johansen, NaN), (Li, 2021), and (Hugh, 2022). Positive customer attitudes and buy intents are more likely to be generated by influencers who are seen as genuine, informed, and approachable.

Activity of the Audience: UGT highlights that audiences are active participants in the media consuming process rather than just passive consumers. According to Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974), they choose media according to their requirements, which include knowledge, entertainment, personal identity, integration, and social contact.

Needs and Gratifications: According to the idea, individuals utilize media to satisfy a variety of needs. According to Rubin (2009), they include the following: cognitive needs for learning, affective requirements for experiencing emotions, personal integrative needs for self-worth, social integrative needs for company, and tension release needs for relaxation and escape.

Media Choice: According to UGT, people's preferences for media are impacted by the satisfactions they are looking for. For instance, a person looking for knowledge could favor news channels, but someone looking for leisure might turn to light entertainment shows (Blumler & Katz, 1974).

Effects of Media: According to the hypothesis, people's motivations for consuming media also influence its effects. This indicates that depending on the environment of use and the users' goals, the impact of media information changes greatly (Ruggiero, 2000).

METHODOLOGY

The methodology is considered an essential part of the research. It can be defined as a theoretical and systematic analysis of the method applied to a field of study in methodology, research design, the population and the research tools to be studied. To measure the impact of influencer marketing on the buying behavior of youth, survey method was applied to carry out the desired results of the study and questionnaire was used as method of data collection. Questionnaire was conducted from the students of two private sector universities (University of Management and Technology, University of Central Punjab) and two government universities (The University of Punjab, Government College & University). Sample size for this study was 600 with 150 respondents from each university by using simple random sampling. For data analysis SPSS latest version was used to test relationship and differences between variables.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Gender wise distribution of respondents (N=600)

Valid	Frequency	Valid Percent
MALE	307	51.1%
FEMALE	292	48.6%
TOTAL	600	100%

As shown in table, total respondents were six hundred out of 307 (51.1%) were male and 292 (48.6%) were female.

H1: Greater the Influencer marketing

greater will be the promotion of a product.

		Influencer Marketing	Product Promotion
IM	Pearson Correlation	1	.944**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	600	600
PP	Pearson Correlation	.944**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	600	600

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between influencer marketing and product promotion among youth was investigated using Person product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analysis was performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There is a significant strong positive correlation between variables, $r = .944$, $n = 600$, $p = 0.000$. Thus, the hypothesis supported by data.

H2: Opinions and recommendations of social media influencers have significant impact on buying behavior of youth.

		Influencer Marketing	Opinion and Recommendations
IM	Pearson Correlation	1	.425**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	600	600
ONR	Pearson Correlation	.425**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	600	600

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between influencer marketing and opinion & recommendations on the buying behavior of youth was investigated using Person product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analysis was performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There is a significant medium positive correlation between variables, $r = .425$, $n = 600$, $p = 0.000$. Thus, the hypothesis supported by data.

H3 : Greater the engagement on social media posts of influencers the greater will be the impact on buying behavior of youth.

		Influencer Marketing	Buying Behavior
Influencer Marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	.540**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	600	599
Buying Behavior	Pearson Correlation	.540**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	600	600

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between influencer marketing and buying behavior of youth was investigated using Person product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analysis was performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There is a significant strong positive correlation between variables, $r = .540$, $n = 600$, $p = 0.000$. Thus, the hypothesis supported by data.

H3 (a): Positive audience feedback have positive impact on the buying behavior of youth.

		Influencer marketing	Positive Audience
Influencer Marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	.497**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	600	600
Positive Audience	Pearson Correlation	.497**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	600	600

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between influencer marketing and positive audience feedback impact on the buying behavior of youth was investigated using Person product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analysis was performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There is a significant medium positive correlation between variables, $r = .497$, $n = 600$, $p = 0.000$. Thus, the hypothesis supported by data.

H3 (b): Content type and quality have great impact on the buying behavior of youth.

		Influencer marketing	Content type and quality
Influencer Marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	.486**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	600	599
Content Type Quality	Pearson Correlation	.486**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	600	600

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between influencer marketing and content type and quality impact on the buying behavior of youth was investigated using Person product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analysis was performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There is a significant medium positive correlation between variables, $r = .486$, $n = 600$, $p = 0.000$. Thus, the hypothesis supported by data.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing data of survey questionnaire, it is concluded that influencer marketing have strong positive impact on youth by many factors which includes product promotion, opinion & recommendations, engagement on posts, positive audience feedback, credibility, content type and quality. These factors are making easy for youngsters to decide on what to purchase and which brand's product is more good quality and trendy.

Young people's changing media consumption patterns and the sheer size and reach of social media platforms have produced a special atmosphere where influencer marketing tactics may significantly affect consumer choices. According to literature since digital media platform are formed it booms the internet with its efficient use and creative content. On daily basis everyone consuming content of different kind and influencer putting stories and posts on different products on every other day which makes people attracts towards it. In the current digital world, influencer marketing has become a potent and revolutionary force that has a significant impact on consumer purchasing behavior, especially among young people.

Youth purchasing behavior is greatly influenced by social media influencer marketing; research shows that influencers' authenticity, emotional connection, and reputation greatly affect purchase intentions, with adolescents' propensity to buy being increased by their competence and dependability. Influencers, especially micro-creators, inspire young audiences to actively investigate items, look for more information, and turn curiosity into sales by fusing relevant narrative, parasocial ties, and open endorsements. However, sustaining real connection and ethical disclosure is crucial to preserving trust and efficacy when young people become wary of content that is too repetitious or inauthentic.

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