

THE PHENOMENA AND RISE OF BRANDS AND INFLUENCER MARKETING  
VIA SOCIAL OTT PLATFORMS- THE ULTIMATE TOGETHERNESS APPROACH

by

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**Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to all digital influencers, consumers and the brand advertisers who continue to shape the evolving landscape of influencer marketing through authenticity, resilience, and community.

## **Acknowledgements**

During my time as a doctoral researcher, first and foremost, I would like to offer my deepest gratitude to God for his unwavering grace, support and wisdom and strength throughout this academic journey. In moments of doubt and difficulty, his presence was a source of comfort and guidance.

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Last but not least, I would like to dedicate this work to everyone who is helping create the digital content space - your authenticity, resilience, and creativity inspire me.

Thank you all for sharing in this experience.

## ABSTRACT

### THE PHENOMENA AND RISE OF BRANDS AND INFLUENCER MARKETING VIA SOCIAL OTT PLATFORMS- THE ULTIMATE TOGETHERNESS APPROACH

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Over the past few years, influencer marketing has become a behemoth of digital communication, revolutionizing the way brands interact with consumers in an increasingly cluttered media environment. With the advent of short-form video platforms like Instagram reels, YouTube shorts, Moj, Josh and Chingari, the landscape around the brand storytelling, consumer trust and content consumption has completely changed. Particularly in the mobile-first economies like India. In contrast to conventional advertising, influence-powered content operates on the basis of authenticity, peer-to-peer persuasion, and platform-native interactivity. As the digital landscape continues to unfold, comprehending the strategic behaviors of influencers, the brand decision-making frameworks, and consumer motivations is imperative to charting the course of relational marketing's future. The study used a mixed methodology case method to provide the insight of evolving landscape of influencer marketing on short-video platforms in India. The three stakeholder groups were considered: Social media influencers, brand representatives and consumers. Purpose of sampling was applied using semi-structured

interviews and survey formats to interpret enabling a more nuanced narrative- driven understanding of stakeholder's perspectives

## **Results**

The study found that authenticity, transparency, and engagement are the strongest predictors of consumer trust, purchase influence, and brand loyalty in influencer-driven short-form content. Platform-specific differences further showed that Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts outperform others, with qualitative insights highlighting micro-influencers' relatability and the role of algorithmic amplification in campaign success.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The findings extend theories of parasocial interaction, social proof, and commitment-trust by showing how authenticity and engagement operate in short-form contexts. The study concludes that influencer marketing is most effective when authenticity and transparency are prioritised, offering both theoretical contributions and practical guidance for brands, influencers, and policymakers.

## TABLE OF CONTENT

### LIST OF

|                                    |                            |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| TABLES.....                        | X                          |
| LIST OF                            |                            |
| FIGURES.....                       | VI                         |
| CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....       | XII                        |
| 1.1 INTRODUCTION.....              | 1                          |
| 1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM.....          | 11                         |
| 1.3 PURPOSE OF RESEARCH.....       | 18                         |
| 1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY..... | 21                         |
| 1.5 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND           |                            |
| QUESTIONS.....                     | <b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT</b> |
| <b>DEFINED.</b>                    |                            |
| CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF              |                            |
| LITERATURE.....                    | 26                         |
| 2.1 THEORETICAL                    |                            |
| FRAMEWORK.....                     | 26                         |
| 2.2 THEORY OF                      |                            |
| REASONED ACTION.....               | 35                         |
| <b>ERROR!</b>                      |                            |
| <b>BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>       |                            |
| 2.3 HUMAN SOCIETY                  |                            |
| THEORY.....                        | 54                         |
| 2.4                                |                            |
| SUMMARY.....                       | 9                          |
| <b>ERR</b>                         |                            |
| <b>OR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>   |                            |
| CHAPTER III:                       |                            |
| METHODOLOGY.....                   | 96                         |
| 3.1 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH       |                            |
| PROBLEM.....                       | 61                         |
| 3.2 OPERATIONALIZATION OF          |                            |

|                                                            |                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS.....                                | 623.3 RESEARCH             |
| GAPS.....                                                  | <b>ERROR!</b>              |
| <b>BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b> 3.4 JUSTIFICATION FOR CURRENT |                            |
| RESEARCH.....                                              | 100                        |
| 3.5                                                        |                            |
| METHODOLOGY.....                                           | <b>ERROR!</b>              |
| <b>BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b> 3.6 RESEARCH                  |                            |
| APPROACH.....                                              | 102                        |
| 3.7 RESEARCH METHODS                                       |                            |
| .....                                                      | <b>ERROR! BOOKMARK</b>     |
| <b>NOT DEFINED.</b> 3.8 RESEARCH                           |                            |
| DESIGN.....                                                | 104                        |
| 3.9 RESEARCH                                               |                            |
| STRATEGY.....                                              | <b>ERROR!</b>              |
| <b>BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b> 3.10 DATA                     |                            |
| COLLECTION.....                                            | 107                        |
| 3.11                                                       |                            |
| CONCLUSION.....                                            | <b>ERROR!</b>              |
| <b>BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b> CHAPTER IV:                   |                            |
| RESULTS.....                                               | 111                        |
| 4.1 RESEARCH QUESTION ONE.....                             | 774.2                      |
| RESEARCH QUESTION                                          |                            |
| TWO.....                                                   | <b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT</b> |

|                                                              |                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>DEFINED.4.3 RESEARCH QUESTION</b>                         |                        |
| THREE.....                                                   | 119                    |
| <b>4.4 QUALITATIVE</b>                                       |                        |
| RESULTS.....                                                 | <b>ERROR! BOOKMARK</b> |
| <b>NOT DEFINED.CHAPTER V:</b>                                |                        |
| DISCUSSION.....                                              | 143                    |
| <b>5.1 DISCUSSION OF</b>                                     |                        |
| RESULTS.....                                                 | 1105.2 DISCUSSION OF   |
| RESEARCH QUESTION ONE.....                                   | <b>ERROR! BOOKMARK</b> |
| <b>NOT DEFINED.5.3 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH QUESTION</b>       |                        |
| TWO.....                                                     | 146                    |
| <b>5.4 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH QUESTION THREE.....</b>        | 147                    |
| <b>5.5 THEORITICAL CONTRIBUTION.....</b>                     | 149                    |
| <b>5.6 PRATICAL</b>                                          |                        |
| IMPLICATION.....                                             | 150                    |
| <b>5.7 LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH.....</b>               | 151                    |
| <b>5.8 CONCLUSION.....</b>                                   | 152                    |
| <b>CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND</b>                |                        |
| RECOMMENDATIONS.....                                         | 1216.1                 |
| <b>SUMMARY.....</b>                                          | 1216.2                 |
| <b>IMPLICATIONS.....</b>                                     | <b>ERROR</b>           |
| <b>! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE</b> |                        |
| RESEARCH.....                                                | 155                    |

6.4

|                                  |             |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| CONCLUSION.....                  | <b>ERRO</b> |
| <b>R! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>  |             |
| APPENDIX A SURVEY COVER          |             |
| LETTER.....                      | 157         |
| APPENDIX B INFORMED CONSENT..... | 158         |
| APPENDIX C INTERVIEW             |             |
| GUIDE.....                       | 128         |
| REFERENCES                       |             |
| .....                            | 141         |

#### LIST OF TABLES

|                                                                     |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Table 2.1 Timeline of Short-Form Video Platforms in India.....      | 6  |
| Table 2.2: Traditional Marketing vs. Influencer Marketing.....      | 10 |
| Table 2.3: Growth of Influencer Marketing in India (2020–2026)..... | 17 |
| Table 2.4: Social media growth.....                                 | 37 |
| Table 2.5: Time spent on Social media growth.....                   | 38 |
| Table 2.6: Most Used Social Network Platforms in India.....         | 38 |
| Table 2.7 Download count data (a).....                              | 49 |
| Table 2.8: Download count data (b).....                             | 50 |

|                                                                           |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Table 2.9: Download count data (c) .....                                  | 51  |
| Table 2.10: Download count data (d).....                                  | 52  |
| Table 2.11: Download count data (e} .....                                 | 53  |
| Table 2.12: Download count data (f).....                                  | 53  |
| Table 4.1 Sum of frequency.....                                           | 112 |
| Table 4.2 Distribution of consumers' primary short-form platforms.....    | 113 |
| Table 4.3 Distribution of consumers' primary short-form platforms.....    | 114 |
| Table 4.4: Contingency table (Trust x Recommend).....                     | 116 |
| Table 4.5 Predicting Recommendation (Loyalty).....                        | 118 |
| Table 4.6 Trust-building factors.....                                     | 118 |
| Table 4.6 Descriptive Statistics of Key Success Metrics.....              | 120 |
| Table 4.7 Correlation Matrix of Success Metrics.....                      | 121 |
| Table 4.8 Regression Results (DV: Purchase Influence).....                | 123 |
| Table 4.9 ANOVA Results: Engagement & Purchase Influence by Platform..... | 123 |
| Table 4.10 Summary of Themes, Sub-Themes, and Illustrative Quotes.....    | 129 |
| Table 4.11: Summary of Themes and Illustrative Quotes for RQ2.....        | 133 |
| Table 4.12: Summary of Themes and Illustrative Quotes for RQ3.....        | 138 |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|                                                                      |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Figure 2.1: Elements of brand knowledge.....                         | 74  |
| Figure 2.2: Brand Perception.....                                    | 75  |
| Figure 4.1 Demographic pie chart.....                                | 112 |
| Figure 4.2 Trust and Recommendation.....                             | 116 |
| Figure 4.3 Micro-influencer preference.....                          | 117 |
| Figure 4.4 Authenticity and Recommendation.....                      | 117 |
| Figure 4.5: Word cloud representation of consumer trust drivers..... | 119 |
| Figure 4.6: Bar chart of mean scores for the four composites.....    | 121 |
| Figure 4.7: Correlation heatmap.....                                 | 122 |
| Figure 4.8: Bar chart of mean engagement by platform.....            | 124 |

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020 triggered a dramatic global reset that impacted every facet of daily life, business interactions, and media consumption. In India alone, July 2020 recorded 16.9 million unemployed individuals, with 9.6 million (57%) directly impacted by business closures triggered by the pandemic. The world pivoted indoors as lockdowns and restrictions intensified, reshaping how consumers engage with brands and how brands adapt their messaging to suit the new digital-first paradigm (Gupta *et al.*, 2020; Shekar and Mansoor, 2020).

The way that new companies engage with their audiences has changed as a result of this shift. Brands had to modify their marketing plans to accommodate global restrictions and adjust sales strategies as everyday life changed during the pandemic. Marketing strategies were among the first to evolve. Traditional advertising saw a staggering 4.2% decline globally in 2020, and digital media expanded by 8%, reaching a remarkable \$336 billion and accounting for 59% of the total global ad spend (Adgate, 2020). This shift indicated a fundamental realignment, as brands gravitated toward digital platforms and influencer-led outreach, seeking authenticity, intimacy, and resonance in an increasingly fragmented media landscape.

The Indian digital ecosystem responded swiftly to this shift. Following the Indian government's ban on TikTok and the other 58 Chinese apps that were outlawed in India in 2020, the prominence of short-format video platforms has curated the largest and most loyal base of users. This time, the Indian entrepreneurs paused to launch homegrown short video platforms accessible to the audience in place of TikTok, like Share Chat, Moj,

Chingari, Josh, and Roposo, notching up to 3.5 million downloads in a short span across Tier-2 and Tier 3 cities (BBC News, 2020).

Simultaneously, global technology giants like YouTube and Google accelerated their short-form video capabilities through offerings such as YouTube Shorts and Instagram Reels. These developments underscore a larger trend: the short-form video format is no longer a niche category but rather a dominant force shaping the future of the creator economy. With its ease of consumption, accessibility, and virality, short-form content is becoming the preferred medium for users and the most effective tool for brands aiming to build authentic digital engagement.

The rise of short-form video has gone hand-in-hand with the ascent of influencer marketing. Over the next five years, the Indian influencer marketing market is projected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 25%, from its current valuation of INR 1,275 crores to an estimated INR 2,800 crores by 2026. According to GroupM (2022), nearly 60% of surveyed marketers regard influencer marketing as a strategic imperative within their broader marketing plans. This indicates a paradigm shift, where influencers serve as trusted mediators between brands and consumers, enabling campaigns that are not only performance-driven but also culturally resonant and emotionally compelling (GroupM INCA, 2020).

**Background and Relevance to the Study:**

Before the pandemic, over 400 million Indians were already active on social media. However, during the lockdown, social media became a lifeline as their daily usage increased significantly—from an average of 150 minutes to approximately 280 minutes per day. The quick rise of social media influencers was facilitated by this behavioural change. Influencer marketing has become very popular over the last two years and is now a major force in the field of digital marketing (Rathod, 2022; Rachmad, 2024). According to the GroupM INCA (2021) India Influencer Marketing Report, the country's influencer marketing market is currently valued at Rs. 900 crores and is expected to continue expanding (GroupM INCA, 2021). More than 80% of the consumers polled by Exchange4Media have purchased because of an influencer's recommendation. The data indicated that people began spending roughly 280 minutes a day on social media platforms, up from an average of 150 minutes, due to the excessive increase in the number of people accessing these platforms and spending more time on them, particularly during the lockdown. As a result of this shift in behaviour, social media influencers gained popularity. A variety of influencers have emerged as a result of the tremendous growth in influencer marketing over the last two years. Companies are taking advantage of this idea by offering quick projects or income opportunities to anyone with a specific number of followers on particular social media sites (Exchange4media, 2023)

Casero (2020) noted that during the pandemic, 92% of U.S. adults frequently sought updates on the situation, reflecting a 32% increase from pre-pandemic levels. Similarly, Cellini

(2020) studied changes in sleep patterns, time perception, and digital media usage during lockdowns. Gao *et al.* (2023) documented a strong link between excessive social media engagement and mental health challenges in Wuhan, underscoring the dual-edged nature of digital immersion.

In the Indian context, individuals spent over four hours daily on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, marking an 87% rise from the previous week. The average amount of time spent on social media before the lockdown was about 150 minutes a day; during the first week of the restrictions, this amount rose to 280 minutes. The primary reasons for this increase were consuming news updates and maintaining communication with loved ones during the crisis (Chandramouli, 2020).

Bhattacharya (2020) reported that Instagram and TikTok saw the highest rise in engagement, with usage increasing by 59% and 53%, respectively. According to Surge in Social Media Activity (2020), a study by Singhal and Vijayaraghavan from the Goa Institute of Management surveyed 231 individuals, showing that over half of the respondents admitted spending more time on social media and streaming movies or shows, and more than 80% reported increased technology use for staying connected with friends and family. The article How Social Media is the Saving Grace by Kumar (2020) noted a 50-fold rise in engagement, fueled by extended lockdowns. This digital shift facilitated mass-scale awareness campaigns, brand-driven educational initiatives, and enhanced consumer-brand interaction. Kemp (2020)

reported that in countries with strict lockdowns, digital engagement skyrocketed. Video calling became integral to personal and professional communication, e-commerce flourished—especially in grocery and essential categories—and video gaming and e-sports saw widespread adoption. Balramon (2020) revealed that India’s March 24, 2020, digital conversation volume surrounding COVID-19 reached 22.3 million mentions. This coincided with exponential growth in online consumer demand: edible oils rose by 106%, salty snacks by 84%, soft drinks by 68%, and biscuits by 31%. Health and hygiene product consumption spiked—hand sanitisers by 1425%, face masks by over 400%, hand wash by 86%, and household disinfectants by 77%.

Royon (2020) emphasised that India averaged over 11 GB of mobile data usage per month, signalling explosive digital growth. Nielsen’s market research indicated that conversations around COVID-19 grew 50-fold between January and March 2020. Chaturvedi (2020) added that TikTok and Instagram Live emerged as popular creative outlets, driving engagement and participatory content trends among users adapting to social isolation.

### **Rise of Influencer Marketing and Social Video Platforms**

Since its introduction in India in September 2016, TikTok has significantly transformed the landscape of short-form video platforms, gaining widespread popularity nationwide. The origins of this phenomenon can be linked to Vine, which pioneered the concept of 6-second videos, revolutionising the video market (AllInOneCluster, 2020). An article from Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science's Department of Physiology and Biophysics highlights that the average human attention span has decreased to approximately 8 seconds,

slightly longer than that of a goldfish (Bradbury, 2016). Furthermore, the successful processing of information stimulates the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure. This process creates a feedback loop, reinforcing behaviours that generate such gratification (Bradbury, 2016).

*Table 2.1: Timeline of Short-Form Video Platforms in India*

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Event</b>                                        | <b>Platform(s)</b>          | <b>Impact</b>                       |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2016        | TikTok (as Musical.ly) launches in India            | TikTok                      | Creates a new content culture       |
| 2018        | TikTok becomes mainstream                           | TikTok                      | Short videos become viral           |
| June 2020   | TikTok & 58 Chinese apps banned by the Indian Govt. | TikTok                      | Trigger for local innovation        |
| July 2020   | Launch of Indian apps post-ban                      | Moj, Josh, Chingari, Roposo | Massive growth in Tier 2 & 3 cities |
| 2021        | Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts expand reach     | Reels, Shorts               | Global players adapt                |
| 2022–23     | 650M+ downloads on Indian short-form apps           | Moj, Josh                   | Rise of “creator economy”           |
| 2024        | Influencer marketing spends hit 2,000+ crores       | All major platforms         | Mainstream marketing channel        |

*Source: Ministry of Electronics & IT (2020); Economic Times (2022); Hootsuite (2024)*

Therefore, the use of short video platforms continues to increase even after the Indian government banned TikTok and 59 other apps, as reported by the BBC (2020). Following the exit of TikTok from the Indian market, the social media ecosystem witnessed a surge in homegrown platforms such as Moj, Josh, Chingari, and Roposo, swiftly filling the void in the market, collectively amassing significant user bases. Within months of their launch, Moj alone achieved over 87.6 million downloads, while Josh followed closely with approximately 84 million. These platforms collectively crossed 650 million downloads within a year, highlighting their ability to cater to the growing demand for short-form video content among Indian users. Their success can be attributed to their focus on localised content, support for regional languages, and personalised recommendations that enhanced user engagement (Economic Times; Mukherjee, 2025).

Amid this digital transformation, influencer outreach. Influencer marketing emerged as a dominant and agile strategy, enabling companies to pivot away from rigid corporate storytelling to platform-native content through digital creators. Traditional celebrity endorsements gradually ceded ground to social media influencers—individuals with niche followings and authentic engagement. Brands began collaborating with micro, macro, and nano influencers across platforms such as Instagram, ShareChat, Moj, Snapchat, Chingari, and Josh. These partnerships ranged from product tutorials and live sessions to sponsored reels and shorts, forming an essential channel for visibility and consumer trust (GroupM India Influencer Report, 2022; Statista, 2023; Talreja and Chaturvedi, 2024). With TikTok banned in India in 2020 due to security concerns, Indian entrepreneurs launched homegrown platforms like Moj, Josh, Chingari,

Trell, and Roposo—many of which exceeded millions of downloads within months. Josh, for instance, achieved 84 million downloads, while Moj hit 87.6 million, demonstrating the growing appetite for short-form entertainment (Mandavia, 2020).

These apps fueled influencer campaigns, propelled by regional language support and algorithmically curated feeds. Their success highlighted the rise of the “creator economy,” where individuals build careers through content and community-building—transforming marketing into two-way, co-created storytelling.

### **Impact of Social media during the pandemic**

Before the pandemic, over 400 million Indians were already active on social media. However, during the lockdown, their daily usage increased significantly—from an average of 150 minutes to approximately 280 minutes per day. The quick rise of social media influencers was facilitated by this change in behaviour. Influencer marketing has become increasingly popular over the last two years and is now a major force in the field of digital marketing (GroupM, 2022; Exchange4Media, 2021; Balramon, 2020). According to the India Influencer Marketing Report (2021), the country's influencer marketing market is currently valued at Rs 900 crores and is expected to continue expanding (GroupM INCA, 2021). More than 80% of consumers polled by Exchange4Media have purchased as a result of an influencer's recommendation. According to the data, people began spending roughly 280 minutes a day on social media platforms, up from an average of 150 minutes, as a result of the significant increase in the number of people accessing these platforms and spending more time on them, particularly

during the lockdown. As a result of this shift in behaviour, social media influencers gained popularity. A variety of influencers have emerged as a result of the tremendous growth in influencer marketing over the last two years. Companies are taking advantage of this idea by offering quick projects or income opportunities to anyone with a specific number of followers on particular social media sites (Exchange4media, 2021).

### **Role of Influencer Marketing**

Influencer marketing is a new tactic used by businesses to advertise their goods and services. Because it is a more direct and efficient method of reaching an audience than traditional advertising, it is a unique form of brand communication and advertising (Bakker, 2018). Videos are vying for attention everywhere—on social media timelines, web browsers, massive screens in stadiums, and even on aeroplane seat-back displays. Social media influencers establish their careers by creating and sharing content while engaging with audiences on various digital platforms. Many marketers are turning to online influencers to successfully promote their brands and products through social media channels as consumers become less interested in traditional marketing techniques (Leung *et al.*, 2022a).

According to Teng and Chen (2020), "online influencer marketing" fosters strong celebrity-fan relationships, with consumers actively participating in fan communities and content marketing (Geng *et al.*, 2020). Social media influencers independently obtain recognition through short video platforms, in contrast to traditional celebrities who frequently become well-known through mainstream media (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017). They appeal to consumers

due to their relatability and genuine connection, which makes them feel more involved and socially connected (Lin, Bruning and Swarna, 2018). But not every influencer is the same. They draw a wide range of audiences with varying sizes and demographics, and they specialise in various subjects.

For many years, marketers have collaborated with celebrity endorsers to enhance their brands, products, and services. This strategy leverages the positive traits and public image of celebrities to help brands build strong identities, foster consumer relationships, and improve the effectiveness of advertisements (Bergkvist and Zhou, 2016; Ju and Lou, 2022). Historically, from the advent of radio to the prominence of print and television, celebrities have boosted brand awareness and relevance by utilising their social capital and encouraging audiences to form para-social connections with their media personas (Rahman, 2018; Bond, 2016). The emergence of social media has further enabled celebrities to expand their fame and reach, allowing them to cultivate significant online followings and secure profitable brand endorsements (Campbell and Farrell, 2020).

*Table 2.2: Traditional Marketing vs. Influencer Marketing*

| <b>Feature</b>       | <b>Traditional Marketing</b>                      | <b>Influencer/Short-Form Video Marketing</b>     |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Reach & Engagement   | Broad reach but lower engagement rates            | Higher engagement; regional and hyperlocal reach |
| Trust & Authenticity | Celebrity endorsements are often seen as scripted | Influencers offer relatability and authenticity  |

|                         |                                          |                                                                       |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cost-effectiveness      | High production and media buying costs   | More budget-friendly, especially with micro/nano influencers          |
| Content Format          | Long-form TV/print/radio                 | Short-form, mobile-friendly, interactive videos                       |
| Consumer Influence      | One-way communication                    | Two-way interaction; strong peer recommendation effect                |
| Targeting Capabilities  | Demographic-based targeting via channels | Algorithm-driven personalisation and niche targeting                  |
| Performance Measurement | Challenging to attribute ROI             | High ROI with measurable metrics (likes, shares, clicks, conversions) |

*Source: GroupM (2022), Nielsen (2021), and Economic Times (2022).*

According to Influencer Marketing Hub (Pawar, 2022), celebrities with over 7 million followers can earn approximately \$150,000 per sponsored post. As a result, the customer likes and follows them. They appear closer to them and more socially connected (Lin, Bruning, and Swarna, 2018). Not every influencer is the same. They don't reach the same audience in terms of size and number of people, and each shares content on different subjects. Young people use social media marketing, particularly women. Influencers learn more about beauty brands, trends, and techniques (Finland, 2017). Due to their popularity, consumers, brands, and influencers have formed expectations about their appearance. Instagram trends, which are produced by influencers and brands for consumers, now largely dictate the standards of beauty (Paolillo, Ghule and Harper, 2019).

According to Hootsuite Research, 73% of consumers prefer short video content to engage with the services and products consumption or their functionality as it leads to increased content consumption on the go (Alhujaili, Nocella and Macready, 2023). HubSpot State marketing report (2022), we realise that short-form video is KING. It's one of the primary formats the brand advertisers are considering, and it is set to grow the most. Gen Z and Millennials prefer short-form videos when learning about new product features and reviews. HubSpot study indicates that 42% of Millennials and 57% of Gen Z prefer this method of learning about products and their features (Hubspot, 2022)

Additionally, 47% of marketers believe short-form videos have a higher likelihood of going viral, making them a powerful tool for driving engagement and awareness. Around 59% of short-form videos are viewed for 41% to 80% of their duration, demonstrating their ability to hold viewers' attention effectively. Additionally, 30% of these videos achieve an average watch rate of over 81%, highlighting their high engagement levels and capacity to keep audiences captivated until the end.

Marketers perceive video as one of the most impactful tools to make an impression that lasts. This belief in the effectiveness of video is evident in marketing budgets worldwide. According to the 2024 State of Marketing Report survey, 81% of companies allocated a portion of their marketing budget specifically to video, and over half reported an increase in their video budget during 2022. According to Neal Schaffer statistics, 85% of marketers consider short-form videos to be the most impactful format on social media (Schaffer, 2025). Collaborating with influencers allows marketers to craft campaigns that make their brand feel relatable, which could

explain why a significant number of consumers decide to buy a product after watching a short video.

According to the Sprout social media video statistics (2024) Report, compared to long-form videos, short-form videos generate 2.5 times as much engagement. These are undeniably a key component of a strong social media strategy, as confirmed by 93% of marketers. Furthermore, short-form content significantly outperforms longer videos, achieving engagement rates up to 250% higher. Their concise and direct approach is what makes short videos so effective in grabbing viewers' attention, making them a preferred choice for marketers to boost engagement.

Spending on short-form video advertisements is projected to hit \$111 billion by 2025. By 2028, this figure is expected to rise further, reaching \$145.8 billion. According to the statistical report, the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9.52% from 2025 to 2028. Anyone who has spent time on Facebook, Instagram, or any other social video platform lately has noticed that video plays a significant role in shaping one's experience on these social video platforms. Video has been a key trend in marketing for years, and today, businesses are leveraging it to build loyal audiences on social media. Interestingly, according to the Insivia (2023) report, when a message is presented through video, viewers retain 95% of it, while when it is presented in text, they only retain 10%. Video marketing is being used by 90% of companies as part of their marketing plans. Short-form video platforms provide the best return on investment among marketing trends and have set the *highest level of investment in 2024* compared to other formats.

Around 81% of consumers have seen more short videos from brands. Thus, these social media influencers were initiated to influence influencer marketing and progressively became an integral part of brand marketing strategies (Enke, N. and Borchers, N., 2019). Brands believe in leveraging the influence of social media influencers to drive more sales opportunities (Stubb, C., Nyström, A. G., and Colliander, J. 2019).

Companies are utilising a range of social media sites, such as LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and Twitter, to align with their target audience and the products they market. According to Liao S-H, Yang C-A (2021), research indicates that people who use social media typically engage more with interactive advertisements compared to informational ones. On a particular social media platform, this strategy promotes user engagement and a feeling of community among users (Wasiq M, Ahmad I, and Bashar A, 2012). Empirical evidence suggests that social media marketing plays a significant and positive role in shaping consumer behaviour, with a notable impact on strengthening customer retention (Sijabat, Saputra and Ikhsan, 2020). Global social media behemoths like YouTube and Instagram responded to these platforms' success by introducing rival short-video features like Reels and YouTube Shorts, which accelerated the expansion of short-form content in global markets (eMarketer, 2017).

Short-video platforms have become an integral component of the "creator economy," where influencers play a critical role by producing authentic, relatable content that drives user engagement (Peck and Johnson, 2011). This shift signals a fundamental transformation in

marketing practices, with short-video platforms offering brands an effective way to engage audiences more interactively compared to traditional, longer-format content (Kemp, 2020).

Influencer marketing is especially important on these platforms in India, where the market was estimated to be worth INR 1,275 crore in 2022 and is expected to grow at a 25% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) to reach INR 2,800 crore by 2026 (GroupM, 2022). Brands are increasingly using influencers to reach niche markets and build consumer trust, as 60% of marketers say that influencer marketing is an important part of their overall strategy (Das, Shandilya and Barman, 2025). By creating a sense of community and trust, influencers on short-video platforms help close the gap between consumers and brands, two factors that are critical for high-impact digital marketing (Xiao and Chen, 2025).

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the function of influencer marketing on short-video platforms such as *Instagram*, *YouTube Shorts*, *Josh*, *Moj*, *Chingari*, and *Roposo*. Specifically, it will examine how these platforms enable influencers to shape consumer perceptions, build brand loyalty, and impact purchasing decisions, offering valuable insights into how brands can strategically engage in the "ultimate togetherness" approach that unites audiences and creators. This approach is increasingly important for digital marketers, as it taps into the collaborative, interactive nature of social media where users and creators actively participate in the content journey (Abidin, 2016).

This research contributes to both academic knowledge and practical insights for industry professionals by exploring how influencer marketing on short-video platforms can be optimised

to enhance brand value. The results will give a thorough grasp of the dynamics of user engagement and a framework for using influencers to build deep relationships with audiences. The investigation will employ a combination of secondary sources—such as scholarly articles, industry reports, and government publications—and primary data, including case studies on user behaviour across *Instagram Reels*, *YouTube Shorts*, *Josh*, *Moj*, *Chingari*, and *Roposo*.

In 2020, digital media grew by 8% to reach \$336 billion, while global ad spending fell 4.2%. Many brands reportedly looked to digital content creators and social media influencers for marketing during the pandemic, as digital media is estimated to have accounted for 59% of all global ad spending in 2020. We looked more closely at some of the ways that COVID-19 boosted influencer marketing usage.

The brand's marketing strategy is forecasted to be the best by marketers and used as a go-to technique. In recent times, content marketing is focused on becoming better, more effective and an alternative to event marketing. When it comes to marketing or advertising the brand or products, Influencer marketing tops the checklist. Most brands are taking complete advantage of this medium. One of the best ways to generate maximum impact through this marketing is through branded content tools and ads. Brands began entrusting their campaigns to online personalities who have devoted and active followings, in addition to celebrities from traditional media. The brands collaborate with various Micro, Macro, and Nano influencers to generate unique and user-engaging content, which creates awareness for their brand. Influencers connect with brands on Instagram/ Sharechat/Moj, Snapchat, Chingari, and other top social media

platforms, for publishing the branded video on their handles in exchange for some monetary compensation.

This form of content is also known as a Paid partnership association by brands. However, Influencers need to disclose the partnership with the brand through the branded content tool. Branded content has now become one of the most important elements in Influencer Marketing Strategy.

*Table 2.3: Growth of Influencer Marketing in India (2020–2026)*

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Market Value (INR Crores)</b> | <b>YoY Growth (%)</b> | <b>Key Highlights</b>                          |
|-------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 2020        | 900                              | —                     | Lockdown spike in content creation             |
| 2021        | 1,075                            | 19.40%                | Rise of homegrown platforms                    |
| 2022        | 1,275                            | 18.60%                | 60% of marketers adopted influencer strategies |
| 2023        | 1,600 (est.)                     | 25.50%                | Creator economy expands                        |
| 2024        | 2,000 (proj.)                    | 25%                   | Video dominates ad budgets                     |
| 2025        | 2,400 (proj.)                    | 20%                   | Micro & nano influencers rise                  |
| 2026        | 2,800 (proj.)                    | 16.70%                | Influencer marketing matures as a key channel  |

*Source: GroupM India Influencer Report 2022; Statista 2023; PwC India 2023 Digital Ad Forecast*

## **1.2 Research Problem**

In recent times, the immense penetration of the internet and the rapid spread of information have profoundly influenced people's lives, making short-video platforms and their effects on brands a highly relevant topic for research. Post-pandemic, India has witnessed the emergence of more homegrown brands and new-age start-ups. However, these businesses face significant challenges in promoting their offerings effectively while earning consumer trust and delivering on promised product values. Such challenges have hindered many brands from cultivating a positive brand attitude in an environment where consumer preferences are both stable in certain aspects and rapidly evolving in others.

Keller (1993, p. 9) emphasised that “overall brand attitude is the essential aspect of the brand image that affects consumers.” This observation highlights the importance for advertisers to closely monitor changes in consumer brand attitudes to create and maintain positive perceptions, which in turn can unlock growth opportunities and strengthen brand strategies. The Social Media Marketing Report (2016), revealed that 90% of marketers considered social media the dominant platform for their business, and 63% of them used it for six or more hours weekly (Stelzner, 2016).

In this context, the short-video format has assumed a central role in modern marketing strategies. According to Exchange4Media (2022), social media shopping is on the rise, and customer service interactions are increasingly shifting online. Video engagement, conversion

rates, and click-through rates have emerged as key performance indicators (KPIs), with HubSpot reporting that 60% of marketers prioritise engagement rates, followed by conversion rates (56%) and click-through rates (52%).

The rapid growth of short-form video platforms has introduced new challenges in how brands leverage influencers to build consumer trust and brand value. In India, the post-pandemic shift toward homegrown platforms such as Moj, Josh, and Chingari—alongside Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts—has created opportunities but also intensified the competition for consumer attention. Despite high adoption rates, many brands still struggle to generate sustained engagement, trust, and loyalty through influence-led short-form content. Scholarly investigations have consistently connected consumer awareness and loyalty to social media engagement (Cuevas-Molano *et al.*, 2021; Menon, 2021). To encourage likes, shares, comments, and follows, content producers use a variety of persuasion techniques, including humour, targeted framing, music, animation, influencer testimonials, and others (Antonakopoulou and Veglis, 2021; Luarn *et al.*, 2015; Shahbaznezhad *et al.*, 2021; Tafesse, 2015). A crucial gap still exists, though, in the absence of a standardised framework for assessing and optimising the effect of influencer marketing on customer loyalty and brand trust. Current marketing metrics, including engagement rates and click-through rates, often fail to capture deeper consumer connections or sustained loyalty (HubSpot, 2022). This gap underlines the need to refine assessment methods for influencer-driven short-form content and develop strategies that translate short-term engagement into long-term brand value. This research addresses the following core questions:

- 1) How do influencers shape consumer perceptions and behaviours on social media platforms?
- 2) How effective are marketing strategies in building trust and brand loyalty among consumers?
- 3) What are the key metrics that drive success in influencer-driven short-form video content?

Understanding how brands work with influencers on social media platforms to communicate their features, USPs, and brand-led initiatives is the main goal of this exploratory and explanatory study. The study seeks deeper insights into how brands and influencers can work together to establish brand promise, trust, loyalty, and value. By examining the main concepts and theories underpinning influencer marketing, this research aims to extend knowledge of the 21st-century phenomenon of influencers and their expanding role in shaping marketing strategies. The findings are expected to contribute to the existing literature on brand-influencer co-creation and provide actionable insights for businesses seeking to integrate influencer collaborations into their marketing processes. Adopting a marketer's perspective, this study will analyse the co-creation of brand value, present applicable theories for various business types, and outline critical considerations for achieving a successful, symbiotic relationship between brands and influencers in the digital age. Customer loyalty and awareness are closely related to social media use (Cuevas-Molano *et al.*, 2021; Menon, 2021). To increase likes, shares, comments, and follows, content creators employ persuasion techniques like testimonials,

humour, framing, music, and animation (Antonakopoulou and Veglis, 2021; Luarn *et al.*, 2015; Shahbaznezhad *et al.*, 2021; Tafesse, 2015). The effect of influencer marketing on brand loyalty and trust, however, cannot be quantified using a single framework. Current metrics like engagement rates and click-through rates often fail to capture deeper consumer connections (HubSpot, 2022), highlighting the need to refine evaluation methods for influence-driven short-form content and develop strategies that convert engagement into lasting brand value.

With emphasis on how influencers and brands work together to communicate USPs, features, and brand initiatives, the study is both exploratory and explanatory. It aims to deepen understanding of how such partnerships build brand promise, trust, loyalty, and value. The study extends existing knowledge of brand–influencer co-creation and provides insights for businesses seeking to integrate influencer marketing effectively. It examines the co-creation of brand value from the viewpoint of a marketer and lists factors to consider to establish a fruitful, mutually beneficial partnership between influencers and brands in the digital age.

### **1.3 Purpose of Research**

The study aims to find and describe the ways brands interact with influencers on social media platforms to share their unique selling propositions, brand messages, features, and initiatives. The research specifically targets short-video platforms like YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels, Moj, Josh, Chingari, and Roposo, where influencer marketing has become a strong medium to generate consumer trust, loyalty, and brand value. The research aims to better understand how brands and influencers collaborate effectively in influencing brand promises and

creating rich, meaningful relationships with their audiences. It investigates the dynamics of such collaborations in the context of increasing "creator economy" and changing towards more interactive, natively platform-type content.

The agenda is to explain and examine the most important concepts and theories in influencer marketing and connect them specifically with the conclusions of this research. The study seeks to expand understanding of the 21st-century phenomenon of the influencer and their increasingly influential role in determining marketing strategy. Through its focus on the marketer, it examines how influencers and brands work together to create added value and offers a practical understanding of successful partnership creation.

The findings of this study are meant to:

- a) Amplify current scholarly and business literature on influencer–brand partnerships.
- b) Provide a usable model for companies to effectively partner with influencers to build brand image and customer loyalty.
- c) Describe pertinent theories and strategic ramifications for any company wishing to use social media influencers in their marketing campaigns.

Finally, the objective is to provide a comprehensive view of how influencer marketing, particularly through short-form video content, can be optimised as a key component of brand communication strategies in the evolving digital landscape.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The tremendous rise in social media consumption has provided an unprecedented chance for brands to talk to and interact directly with consumers via two-way communication. On average, consumers spend 118 minutes daily on social media (Statista, 2017), which translates to around five years and four months of their life used to consume such media (Asano, 2017). This extensive interaction has made social media evolve from being just a popular web fad to a powerful means by which both consumers and businesses can share information, communicate, and interact with each other.

Whereas previous literature, for example, Kaplan and Haenlin (2010), discusses the importance of social media and suggests frameworks for explaining its emergence, most of this is theoretical with minimal empirical support. This omission highlights the necessity of further study on how social media can be best utilised in marketing, especially within influencer-led campaigns. Influencer marketing has been a fast-growing method, with companies increasingly working with social media influencers to increase their brand reputation (Cheung *et al.*, 2022). Influencers are commonly viewed as honest and tangible, with their endorsement able to improve the reputation of a brand (Nafees *et al.*, 2021). Empirical evidence shows that

influencer-generated content is 6.9 times more effective than professionally generated content (Ki and Kim, 2019). Industry statistics also show that 86% of brand marketers were already using influencer marketing campaigns by the year 2017 (Linqia, 2019).

This method is even more potent than conventional marketing, because customers are more inclined to believe influencers and celebrities rather than paid endorsers communicating through television or print ads (Masuda *et al.*, 2022). Such trust boosts the influence of influencers to shape consumer choices, ultimately fueling brand value and cultivating long-term loyalty. In this respect, the current study has relevance for various stakeholders. Academically, it fills the gap between theoretical models and empirical reality regarding influencer marketing efficacy. In contrast to traditional marketing strategies, it offers practical insights into how influenced partnerships affect brand perception, foster customer trust, and influence purchase intentions. In a rapidly digitalised marketplace, the research will help society understand how influence-driven content affects consumer behaviour.

To sum up, this study will add to the body of knowledge already available in academia regarding social media influencer marketing and provide practitioners with useful advice on how to boost market visibility and build enduring relationships with customers.

### **1.5 Research Purpose and Question/Hypothesis**

This study's goal is to investigate how influencer marketing on platforms for short-form videos—like Roposo, Josh, Chingari, Moj, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels—affects brand perception, consumer trust, and purchasing intentions in the Indian market.

This study seeks to explore the ways in which influencers communicate brand values, product features, and unique selling propositions, and how these interactions contribute to the formation of brand promise, loyalty, and value. By emphasising how influencers and brands collaborate to create content, the research aims to provide both academic and industry perspectives on how these partnerships can be strategically managed to optimise consumer engagement and long-term brand equity.

From an academic standpoint, the study intends to bridge the gap between theoretical models of social media marketing (Kaplan and Haenlin, 2010) and empirical evidence of influencer effectiveness (Cheung *et al.*, 2022; Ki and Kim, 2019). From an industry perspective, it will offer actionable insights for marketers seeking to improve digital outreach through influencer collaborations, particularly in the fast-growing short-form content landscape.

This research is guided by the following questions:

1. How do influencers shape consumer perceptions and behaviours on short-form video platforms?
2. How effective are marketing strategies in building trust and brand loyalty among consumers compared with traditional marketing methods?
3. What key metrics and engagement factors contribute most to the success of influence-driven short-form video campaigns?

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

This comprises two primary sections: the theoretical segment and the research segment. The theoretical component encompasses the literature review, the conceptual model, and a concise analysis of the selected social media influencer via a short video platform and brand. The literature review begins by examining social media influencers and their connections to branding, building trust, and effectiveness. It then provides an in-depth exploration of the establishment and evolution of brand marketing, encompassing important components like brand equity, image, awareness, and knowledge, brand trust, and brand advertisement effectiveness, where brand attitude plays a pivotal role in its evolution.

Post-pandemic, the Indian homegrown brands on the short video platform have witnessed an explosion in popularity, driven by the widespread adoption of smartphones and reasonably priced data plans. This has a significant part in contributing individuals as content creators to trends, content innovation, space for creativity, entertainment, and increasing the community of followers' base to go viral and increase their reach and engagement. Additionally, these platforms are increasingly offering ways for content creators to monetise their content, opening up new avenues for influencers and brands. Short video platforms have become hotspots for influencer marketing, with brands leveraging the popularity of content creators to successfully connect and interact with their target audience.

India's short-form video market is projected to experience robust growth, with estimates suggesting a substantial increase in revenue and user engagement. These platforms have gained market penetration to reach Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, which represent border demographic reach and make a substantial contribution to the total user base.

As per a report from Influencer by 2023, the Indian influencer marketing market is expected to be worth \$21.1 billion. Furthermore, the report highlights that a remarkable 85% of brands in India have seamlessly integrated influencer marketing into their overarching marketing strategies. Moreover, the report finds that the engagement rate of influencer marketing campaigns in India significantly outperforms traditional marketing campaigns.

### **Evolution of Marketing:**

Marketing has undergone a few iterations, both for the company and for the consumer. Since the 1900s, there have been various adaptations to marketing methodologies implemented to influence consumers to consume their products.

In the early 1960s, marketing was about satisfying consumer needs through the availability of products via traditional channels and promoting them using traditional marketing methods.

Advertising started an exciting journey in the 1960s, which was also known as the "Golden Age of Advertising." The era began to be truly creative and innovative across campaign collateral. Through products made available through what became known as traditional channels and promoted using traditional marketing techniques, the goal was to satisfy and meet the needs

of the customer. The maxim "the customer is king" began to serve as the focal point for new product developments.

According to Evolution of Marketing by Philip Kotler, marketing has progressed through various marketing eras -

- 1) Trade Era
- 2) Production Era
- 3) Sales Orientation Era
- 4) Marketing Department Era
- 5) Marketing Company Era
- 6) Relationship Era
- 7) Social/Mobile Marketing Era

The variations between all these eras of marketing are focused on more competition entering the marketplaces and a shift in the customer-centric approach. This evolution of marketing has given us the ability to reach consumers in today's world.

Marketing departments used a variety of mainstream media, including:

- 1) Print (Newspapers, magazines, brochures)
- 2) Television
- 3) Display(Billboards)
- 4) Radio
- 5) Cinema Calendars
- 6) Catalogues

Informational material, etc., are the extra resources utilised for advertising the products and their services.

- 1) **Trade Era (1860s):** Marketing was focused mainly on the trading of resources. Everything was handcrafted; harvesting was one of the basic commodities of the economy. This kind of economy, in general, is cited as a pure subsistence economy. Low marketing engagements were carried over to facilitate the exchanges.
- 2) **Production Era (1860–1920s)** Products should be inexpensive and available everywhere. More significantly, they wanted to improve production and distribution efficiency. In recent times, companies have continued to deploy this strategy when trying to expand the market for a product.
- 3) **Sales Orientation Era (1920s–1940s):** mass-produced products were already the norm, and companies heavily relied upon marketing promotions to sell the products. The concept of door-to-door selling was part of the marketing strategy to sell the products to consumers. Advertisements through different platforms were popular across radio, print, and television mediums. Businesses entered the next phase of marketing when pricing wars began to emerge in the middle of the 1920s.
- 4) **Era of the Marketing Department (1960s)** The balance gradually began to shift in favour of the buyers toward the end of the sales era. As competition increased,

buyer power grew, and pricing wars had no positive impact on profitability. The necessity of combining sales, distribution, and promotion into a single department demonstrated the value of having a productive team that worked on this area of the company continuously. In this era, brand presence began to take centre stage.

5) **Era of marketing companies (1960s–1990s)** This period's premise was to satisfy consumer needs by offering products through conventional channels and promoting them through conventional marketing techniques. The maxim "customer is king" began to serve as the focal point for new product developments and is still a fundamental idea that directs companies in the present setting.

a) **Relationship Marketing Era (2010s)** The main goal was to establish a solid rapport with customers, which would influence business and help it expand. Companies in this sector kept their attention on the client, but they went one step further by emphasising the development of enduring relationships. Don Peppers and Martha Rogers released "The One-to-One Future: Building Relationships" in 1993. Marketers began using CRM and data mining as catchphrases, one customer at a time. Customer service, call centres, and relationship managers, particularly in the banking industry, praised this era. This strategy has become the standard in business in recent years. Key business decisions were aided by ideas like customer loyalty and customer lifetime value.

- b) **Social/Mobile Marketing Era (2010–present)**, a step toward using social media as a business marketing tool to gradually introduce online communication and real-time relationships between people and brands. I intend to accompany clients wherever they go on the internet. We live in the age of digital marketing. A dynamic technological upgrade has made it possible for consumers to connect around the clock. Marketing tools, web-based apps, websites, blogs, community involvement, video channels, and news feeds were all introduced during this time.

In what ways is the market environment being altered by digital marketing?

The digital marketing outlook refers to various platforms, channels, and business strategies that constitute the domain of digital marketing. To helm these dynamic, evolving fields, it's vital to understand the primary components that make up this landscape.

- a) **Digital Marketing Landscape Overview:** The digital marketing landscape encompasses diverse channels, platforms, and strategies crucial for navigating this rapidly evolving field. Understanding its fundamental components is vital for effective engagement.
- b) **Digital Transformation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution:** As Ian Schafer emphasises, consumers are evolving faster than marketers. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is propelled by digital transformation and the reshaping of advertising strategies. The pandemic and rapid innovation have accelerated this shift, placing digital at the forefront of business development.

- c) **Smartphone Surge Driving Digital Marketing in India:** India's digital marketing market is thriving and fueled by the surge in smartphone users. With one of the largest global markets, India's diverse consumer base, and substantial online presence, it positions itself as the second-largest online market worldwide. The escalating reliance on the internet is boosting demand for electronic devices, driving the need for digital advertising, and fostering industry growth.
- d) **Digital Revolution: Reshaping Marketing Strategies:** The 21st-century digital revolution has transformed marketing. The accessible internet has empowered businesses to use websites to reach a worldwide audience through online advertising. This shift, accompanied by the emergence of search engines and the prominence of email marketing, has facilitated personalised connections with audiences. The data-driven nature of digital marketing has revolutionised promotional approaches, paving the way for a more dynamic, interactive, and customer-centric marketing landscape.

**Brand Discovery and India's Digital Population Brand Discovery:** It's not surprising that the roots of influencer marketing can be traced back to ancient times, when commercial messages could be considered the earliest form of marketing. Creating posters and sales messages on papyrus was a popular advertising technique in ancient Greece and Rome. "Man has been defined as the reasoning animal, but he could, with greater truthfulness, be termed the creature of suggestion," said psychologist Walter D. Scott in the 20th Century, introducing the practice of speaking directly to the consumer (Scott, 1903, p. 59).

Throughout history, marketing has evolved with technological advancement. Persuasion has been a consistent strategy to reach the masses, whether through media like television, newspapers, or radio. Over time, marketing has adapted to meet the needs of specific target groups, prompting the ongoing question: Why do brands engage in certain strategies? A brand serves as a means of identifying a particular product or service offered by a specific company. In the past, the branding on a sheep, for example, signified the owner rather than identifying the individual animal. Thus, declaring ownership of the sheep by the owner.

In recent times, the realm of influencer marketing in India has experienced remarkable growth as brands harness the influence of digital creators to engage with their desired audience. As the industry undergoes continuous evolution, brand managers, marketing professionals, founders, and marketers need to remain abreast of the latest trends and optimal strategies, ensuring they capitalise on the dynamic landscape.

### **India's Digital Population**

In 2023, there were more than 1.42 billion internet users in India. This anticipated revenue is expected to increase to over 1.6 billion users by 2050, suggesting a greater market potential for internet services in the South Asian nation. In fact, China surpassed India as the world's second-largest online market in 2022. Both urban and rural areas are predicted to see an increase in the estimated number of Internet users, demonstrating a dynamic expansion in Internet access.

- 1) At the beginning of 2023, when internet penetration was 48.7 per cent, there were 692.0 million internet users in India.
- 2) In January 2023, 467.0 million Indians, or 32.8 per cent of the country's total population, were active social media users.
- 3) In early 2023, there were 1.10 billion active cellular mobile connections in India, which is equal to 77.0 per cent of the country's total population.

### **Social media in India:**

With the largest population in the world and the second-highest number of internet users worldwide, India offers a very alluring but cutthroat internet market. Even though only 43% of people have access to the internet, a sizable portion of the population uses social media, spending about 2.6 hours a day on these sites.

India's social media scene has recently changed because of a border dispute that led to the government banning popular Chinese apps, most notably TikTok. This prompted an Indian search for substitutes for in-house apps.

A grievance redressal committee was established by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in 2022, and social media companies are now required to abide by the government's content moderation decisions. This action is perceived as an attempt by the government to regulate social media firms. Remarkably, according to an Oxford University study, 54% of Indians use social media to find "truthful" information, which is higher than the global average of 37% and the US average of 29%.

According to a study by Brain% Company, social commerce in India is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 55–60% between FY 2020 and 2025, making it an emerging trend. The market is anticipated to grow from \$1.5-2 billion to \$16-20 billion because of this surge. predicted to grow into the biggest market for spending on social media advertising over the next ten years, India is expected to grow at the fastest rate in the world, aside from China. Factors that contributed to the social video platform:

- 1) Millennials, Gen Z, and Zillennials in India are extremely technical enthusiasts and are always vigilant for new and engaging content. Short-form video platforms offer swift and snappy formats, providing an effortless and adaptable method of content consumption.
- 2) With the rise of Indian social media influencers, short-form videos may become more popular in 2023. In order to connect with their followers and develop a solid, devoted, and reliable fan base, these influencers plan to use short-form video platforms. Many influencers have amassed sizable fan bases and made money from their content.

## **2.2 Theory of Reasoned Action**

India is expected to be the fastest-growing market globally and the largest market outside of China for social media advertising spending over the next ten years. The new India found its

way to the social media marketing landscape with a budding influencer portfolio spread across various platforms, reaching potential influencers.

- 1) At the beginning of 2023, when internet penetration was 48.7 per cent, there were approximately 692.0 million internet users in India.
- 2) As of early 2023, there were 467.0 million social media users in India, which represents 32.8 per cent of the country's total population.
- 3) In early 2023, there were 1.10 billion active cellular mobile connections in India, which is equal to 77.0 per cent of the country's total population.
- 4) The average person in India uses social media for 2.36 hours every day. Due to the widespread use of internet connectivity for surfing, it is anticipated that the number of social media users will increase steadily to 467 million by 2023.

Social media has grown to be a vital component of everyday internet use in recent years, contributing to the increase of 692 million people, or approximately 48.7% of India's total population.

*Table 2.4: Social media growth*

|                                    |               |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| India's Total Population           | 1.42 Billion  |
| Indians are Active on social media | 0.467 Billion |
| Indian's Internet user count       | 0.682 Billion |

|                                    |               |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| India's mobile Internet user count | 0.627 Billion |
|------------------------------------|---------------|

*Source: global statistics.*

Six hours and twenty-three minutes is the average amount of time spent on the Internet each day, of which two hours and fifty minutes are spent on social media.

*Table 2.5: Time spent on Social media growth*

|                                                       |              |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| The average amount of time spent online each day      | 6Hrs 23 mins |
| Average amount of time spent on social media each day | 2Hrs 50mins  |
| Average daily time spent on Short videos platform     | 32mins       |

*Table 2.6: Most Used Social Network Platforms in India*

| <b>Social Platforms</b> | <b>Percentage</b> | <b>Users who are actively (IN MILLIONS)</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Instagram               | 74.70%            | 516.92                                      |

|             |        |        |
|-------------|--------|--------|
| Facebook    | 71.20% | 492.7  |
| X (Twitter) | 42.90% | 296.87 |
| LinkedIn    | 35.70% | 247.04 |
| Moj         | 29.50% | 204.14 |
| Pinterest   | 29.00% | 200.68 |

In India, Instagram is the most popular social media platform, with roughly. 74.70% of internet users are using it as of 2023. There are 516.92 million active Instagram users in India. Young people, particularly teenagers and millennials, make up a significant portion of Instagram's user base. The platform has developed into a fantastic sales channel for companies and a revenue stream for influencers and creators.

With 492.70 million active users, Facebook is the second most popular platform, with profiles belonging to over 71.20% of internet users. In India, user consumption also includes the general public, political elite, and business organisations. Facebook is highly recommended and will continue to be the dominant force for many years to come. Prominent advertisers use the platform to interact with their target audiences. Other well-known social media sites in India include X (formerly Twitter), which has a 42.90% penetration rate, LinkedIn, which has a 35.7%

penetration rate, and Moj, which is a community for short videos created locally and is particularly popular with Pinterest, which has a 29% penetration rate.

The above literature review has considered the development of branding, the rise of influencer marketing, and the unique dynamics of short-form video platforms in the Indian digital environment. These observations underscore the size and reach of the phenomenon but also indicate a requirement for a systematic conceptual framework to inform further research. The following theoretical framework integrates proven marketing, digital adoption, and consumer behaviour theories to offer a basis for examining how factors related to brands, influencer characteristics, and platform features individually affect consumer participation and buying choices. This theoretical framework is meant to provide the base for examining how social media influencers on short-form video platforms affect consumer behaviour, brand awareness, and marketing efficacy in the Indian digital market. It synthesises the most important concepts from theories of marketing evolution, digital transformation, influencer typologies, and consumer decision-making theories. This research examines the phenomena and emergence of brands and influencer marketing through social short video platforms in the Indian scenario, with an emphasis on how factors related to a brand, influencer traits, and platform features together affect consumer engagement and purchasing behaviour.

The theoretical conceptual framework is based on brand theory, influencer marketing theory, digital marketing adoption theories, and models of consumer behaviour, consolidating them into an integrative model for testing empirically. Fundamentally, this framework situates

influencer marketing in a multi-theoretical context by combining brand theory, digital transformation models, and consumer decision-making lenses. This integration grounds the research in established academic foundations while being responsive to the socio-cultural and technological contexts of the Indian market.

### **Evolution of Influencer Marketing:**

The digital world has transformed audience engagement in both B2B and B2C industries. The impact of social media marketing has been engaging and has led to a surge in innovative paid advertising techniques, influencing the target audience and driving consumer purchases. As many research studies state (Markethub 2016), customers are trusting word-of-mouth over brand advertisements, which has fueled the emergence of influencer marketing. This process, often intertwined with word-of-mouth, leverages key individuals to support a brand and engage audiences on social media. Influencers in real life, regular people who are enthusiastic about suggested products, play a crucial role in driving buying conversations and conversions.

Known as "Influencer 2.0" or "Word-of-Mouth 2.0," influencer marketing is regarded as the way of the future for marketing and its relationship to Web 2.0, Influence 2.0 (Traackr, 2017). Influencers are favoured partners who use e-commerce review forums to suggest specific goods or services to customers. "A person who has greater than median reach or effective word of mouth in a relevant marketplace" is how the Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association defines an influencer (WOMMA, 2017). Although there are many different definitions of influencers,

for this study, third-party endorsers influencing consumer attitudes via blogs, tweets, and other social media platforms are referred to as Social Media Influencers (SMIs) (Freberg, 2011).

Before the pandemic, over 400 million Indians had access to social media, according to a GroupM and Exchange4media Group report on the country's influencer marketing market. This number has increased dramatically, and consumer behaviour has changed significantly. Seventy per cent of influencer marketing comes from the top four categories: personal care (25 per cent), food and beverage (20 per cent), fashion and jewellery (15 per cent), and mobile and electronics (10 per cent). Nearly two-thirds of Indians follow an influencer, and celebrities account for 27% of the total, while influencers make up 73%.

#### **Influencer marketing over the years:**

The brands have evolved at every expense, from celebrity endorsements to nano-influencer engagement spanning various social platforms, targeting relevant audiences.

Influencer

Marketing, once aimed at the masses through traditional channels like TV, radio, or newspapers without considering the buyer demographic, has undergone a significant shift. Brands now focus on investing in the 5 W's: when, where, and who.

The advertising strategies of brands have broadened their outreach to resonate with their target audiences and preferences by implementing influencer marketing strategies. Recent research (Shanmugapriya *et al.*, 2025) offers compelling data points that both support and endorse this evolving trend, shedding light on the effectiveness of influencer marketing in contemporary brand communication. Influencer marketing campaigns deliver a superior (approximately 11x) return on investment compared to standard digital marketing campaigns. Influencer marketing campaigns primarily use popular social media sites like YouTube, Instagram, and others. Notably, more than 74% of audiences discover a wide range of new products or make purchase decisions while consuming social media.

Trust in recommendations has shifted from traditional celebrities to friends, family, and influencers. Over 70% of teens and 92% of consumers are more likely to trust someone who has genuinely used a product than a person with mass popularity. The influencer marketing industry in India, over the upcoming years, by 2025, is anticipated to grow at a 25% consolidation annual growth rate (CAGR), reaching Rs 22 billion. During this period, there will also be a steady shift, moving beyond celebrity endorsers to engaging influencers for product promotions.

### **Influencer Types**

The goal of recent studies has been to clarify the function and influence of social media influencer marketing, a new marketing trend, on consumer purchase decisions. According to Cho, Hwang, and Lee (2012), social media influencers serve as digital opinion leaders who can sway others in online social communities by using their knowledge. According to some authors, social media influencers are people who are very visible, attention-seeking, admirable, and have a high social status (Kapitan, S., and Silvera, D., 2016; Khamis, S., Ang, L., and Welling, R., 2016; Pedroni, M., 2016).

According to other studies, social media influencers are social leaders who use their substantial social capital to mould the norms of behaviour and values in their virtual communities (Forsyth, D. R., 2015; Langner, S., Hennigs, N., and Wiedmann, K., 2013). Since there isn't a single, universally accepted definition of influencers or social media influencers (SMIs), every report or article offers its own interpretation. The main categories of influences listed below will be used in this research study:

- 1) **Mega-influencers** - those with over a million followers—are very visible on social media. They generate a lot of engagement on their handles, where their followers spend a lot of time. The brands use influencer marketing, which is very costly, because of this type of fan base.
- 2) **Macro-Influencers** - These influencers, who have a somewhat smaller following of 500k to 1Mn, could be thought leaders, athletes, TV personalities, or celebrities. They use their reputation to attract more social media followers. Although they may not achieve the desired high engagement rate, brands continue to support a wide reach with this kind of influence.
- 3) **Mid-Tier Influencers:** who have audiences between 50,000 and 500,000—remain a potent group of content producers that their followers

trust. Compared to macro- or mega-influencers, the brands have a larger audience and a marginally higher level of engagement. Each post has authenticity and familiarity because the content is privileged but not outdated

- 4) **Micro-Influencers:** These influencer groups have a considerably smaller fan base than other influencer groups; brands typically view these groups as having successful campaigns in terms of trust and engagement. Micro-influencers are typically more focused and have a close relationship with their followers.
- 5) **Nano-Influencers give** brands a modest and likely more limited reach because they have the fewest followers. If they lose reach, however, the brands increase engagement rates. Out of all the influencer types, nano-influencers have the highest engagement rate. Brands collaborating with this kind of influence can anticipate a unique experience because the content is accurate and tailored to the audience community that consumes it. Because these influences are more cost-effective, influencer marketing is an option for brands with little funding. Since they are establishing their community and brand partnerships, few nano-influencers engage in brand engagements or promotions at zero cost.

### **Influencer Characteristics-**

Besides the traditional marketing approaches, why does influencer marketing appear to be solid ground? There are a couple of factors that make it inevitable for brands to recruit the right influencer for their brands. Keller (2001) outlined a few traits in their book "The Influentials." Following this book, it must carry an 'ACTIVE' profile.

- 1) Ahead in Adaptation of Technology
- 2) Connected with the e-community.
- 3) Travellers
- 4) Inquisitive for information.
- 5) Verbal and vocal in communication.
- 6) Engaged with media platforms.

The term 'ACTIVE' defines a social media influencer who radiates energy among the community of people volunteering with an active mindset and the highest product or service knowledge. They indulge in many activities to engage themselves passively in the entertainment field. Their attributes are openness and a love to explore and read information from new cultures. They, in general, are the captains of their ship, with constant innovation and dynamic progress in the actions they take. These social media influencers are constantly engaging in new adaptations, exposed to media platforms, and expressing their point of view through mass media platforms with more powerful context and storylines to their community of followers (Keller and Berry, 2003). The authenticity of an influencer is represented by their audience quality score. These trusted content creators influence consumer decision-making on e-commerce platforms. Hence, advertisers or brands need to identify trusted and effective content creators to influence their campaigns, which increases their marketing salience.

The three R's are elements that social media influencers need to focus on in addition to the credibility theory's source:

- a) **Reach:** the potential to amplify and leverage the content for a target audience.
- b) **Relevance:** the power of story narration that connects the brand's services or products to the consumer's needs and simplifies the work cycle.

- c) **Resonance:** competence to drive a desired behaviour from the target group.

### **The Demise of Influencer Marketing?**

The e-commerce marketing community announced in advance of 2019 that influencer marketing was about to expire sooner than anticipated. Additionally, it was anticipated that influencer marketing would cease to exist in the marketing space after TikTok and WeChat, the biggest social media and short video platform apps, were banned in India in 2020. But when the pandemic struck, India began to fill the void in the short video platform market, changing the advertising landscape by prioritising influencer marketing. According to a Bain & Company study, the Indian market for social commerce is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 55–60% between FY 2020 and 2025, increasing from \$1.5-2 billion to \$16–20 billion.

### **The Development of India's Short-Form Videos and Their Prospects**

Long-form videos (LFV), which are longer than two minutes, and short-form videos (SFV), which are between fifteen seconds and two minutes, make up the digital video entertainment platform. Content can be further streamlined within the SFV and LFV segments according to distribution and promotion methods, as well as who is curating the content (professional vs. user-generated). (Live streaming versus pre-recorded). As platforms broaden their offerings to capture a larger share of time spent by consumers in meeting their needs and improving stickiness, the underlying rules across these segments are becoming less and less relevant. Examples include YouTube Shorts, Moj, Josh, Instagram Reels, IGTV, and IG Live, among many others.

According to a Bain and Company report, short-form video is the new content format and is the future. The ban on TikTok and the pandemic gave birth to India's homegrown short video platforms, which surged in popularity by driving the demand for affordable smartphones and data plans. These platforms, favoured by tech-savvy youth, offer quick and engaging content. Influencers have played a pivotal role, utilising short-form videos to build massive followings and monetise their content.

Video marketing has become a vital element for companies looking to attract clients and encourage engagement because people's attention spans are short and visual information is essential in the digital age (Billewar *et al.* 2022). A dynamic and captivating medium for product presentations, brand narratives, and arousing strong emotions, video content goes beyond text and still images. Video is a powerful tool for connecting with customers because it can appeal to multiple senses at once, which influences both purchase behaviour and brand loyalty.

The two most common and significant forms of digital media advertising are social media and online video. The widespread availability of reasonably priced smartphones and strong connectivity is responsible for the explosive growth of online video. By 2024, online video advertising formats are predicted to grow at the fastest rate, surpassing social media, at a rate of 29%. However, by the end of 2024, social media is predicted to maintain a strong compound growth rate of 31% and reach a 29% expenditure share.

India's short-form video platforms have a bright future. The demand for short-form videos is expected to rise because of the younger generation's ongoing smartphone use. Short-form video growth in India is also expected to be fueled by the increase in regional content. Short-form video players are ideally positioned to meet the growing demand for regional language content as more Indians connect to the internet. A

RedSeer Consulting report claims that the SFV sector in India has experienced phenomenal expansion in recent years. Among the data points are:

- 1) With a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 32% from 2019 to 2023, the short-form video market in India is predicted to generate \$5.5 billion in revenue by that year.
- 2) In India, there were 115 million daily active users (DAUs) of short-form video apps in 2020, nearly twice as many as there were in 2018.
- 3) In India, users' average daily usage of short-form video apps grew from 21 minutes in 2018 to 32 minutes in 2020.

With more than 200 million users, TikTok was the biggest short-form video platform in India before it was outlawed there in 2020. However, TikTok has been replaced by a number of in-house platforms, including MX TakaTak, Moj, and Josh. In India's tier-2 and tier-3 cities, short-form video platforms have grown in popularity and engagement. About 70% of the nation's short-form video users are from these infiltrated markets. Short-form video apps are now a recognised way for brands and influencers to connect with their target market. The report projects that India's influencer marketing market will reach \$21.1 billion in 2023, a substantial 29% increase from \$16.2 billion the year before. As a result, the short-form video trend in India is here to stay. All things considered, India's short-form video platforms appear to have a bright future, and we can anticipate further expansion in this. All things considered, the prospects for short-form video platforms in India appear extremely bright, and we should anticipate further expansion in this market in the years to come. This thesis will mainly focus on studying the following channels: Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, Facebook short videos, Sharechat Moj, Josh, Chingari, and Roposo platforms; these are the top picks for short video platforms in India.

### **Instagram Reels:**

Launched as a photo-sharing app in 2010, Instagram, which is owned by Facebook's parent company Meta, has steadily expanded and changed over time. Instagram Reels, the app's version of short-form videos, were released in 2019. A short-form video feature on the well-known social media site Instagram is called Instagram Reels. Instagram Reels, which was introduced in response to the increasing demand for short-form video content, especially on sites like TikTok, enables users to produce and distribute captivating videos up to 60 seconds in length. This illustrates why, according to Hootsuite, reels are now Instagram's feature with the fastest global growth. Furthermore, nearly 25% of users' time on Instagram is spent on Reels, according to Meta, the parent company of Instagram. To improve their content, users can use a range of artistic tools, such as music, filters, and special effects. The Explore page prominently displays reels, which effectively allows users to find fresh and engaging content from a variety of creators. Instagram Reels, which prioritise creativity, trends, and shareability, have emerged as a powerful tool for people, influencers, and companies looking to engage and visually appeal to their audience.

*Table 2.7: Download count data (a)*

|                 |             |
|-----------------|-------------|
| Download Counts | 1 Billion + |
| App Rating      | 4.3/5       |

### **YouTube Shorts :**

YouTube Shorts, introduced in late 2020, is a specialised feature within the YouTube platform dedicated to short-form vertical videos. These videos are limited to a

duration of 60 seconds or less, aligning with the growing trend of stackable content. The rise in popularity of short-form video content on sites like Instagram and TikTok is directly addressed by YouTube Shorts. Creators on YouTube Shorts can leverage a range of creative tools, music, and effects to enhance their videos. The platform encourages user engagement through features such as liking, commenting, sharing, and subscribing. With its dynamic and user-friendly interface, YouTube Shorts aims to cater to the evolving preferences of audiences seeking concise and visually engaging content. This addition to the YouTube ecosystem not only provides a space for creators to showcase their talent in bite-sized videos but also positions YouTube as a versatile platform accommodating a variety of content formats. As short-form video continues to capture the attention of users globally, YouTube Shorts serves as a hub for creative expression and community engagement within the YouTube community.

*Table 2.8: Download count data (b)*

|                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Download counts | 10 Billion + |
| App Rating      | 4.1/5        |

**Sharechat Moj:** Moj is a platform for short-form videos that lets users make, share, and find entertaining short videos. Similar to other apps in the same category, Moj enables users to express their creativity through music, effects, and various editing tools. It gained popularity for its user-friendly interface and the ability to create engaging and visually appealing short videos.

In January 2023, Moj was recognised as one of the platforms filling the void left by the ban on TikTok in certain regions. However, please note that the status and features

of apps may evolve, so it's advisable to check the latest information for any updates on the Moj app.

Moj allows its users to access the app freely and generate money from it by creating content on its platform. The app helps its customers create 15-second videos to share on the platform with others. While making these videos, the Moj platform allows its users to edit the videos within the platform with video effects, allowing them to make their films appear professional and appealing.

Moj provides opportunities for users to earn income through methods such as affiliate marketing, sponsored posts, and collaborations. These avenues serve as revenue streams for Moj. Additionally, advertising is a significant source of income for Moj, with many companies leveraging the platform to promote their products and services. Companies recognise the extensive viewership on platforms like Moj, making sponsorship a valuable strategy to reach a broad audience and enhance brand visibility.

*Table 2.9: Download count data (c)*

|                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| Download Count | 100 Million<br>+ |
| App Rating     | 4.3/5            |

**Josh (DailyHunt):** Verse Innovation, a division of Daily Hunt content and news aggregators, created the well-known Indian short-video networking app Josh. With 12 languages and a user base of over 100 million, this platform is well-liked by non-native English speakers and leads the vernacular front. Josh was the fifth most downloaded social video app in India in 2021, according to the Sensor Tower report. Josh's audience

is very different from Dailyhunt's. Josh's audience is skewed toward women and is closer to the 20-year-old age group, while Dailyhunt is more male and slightly older, say closer to the 30-year-old age group.

In September 2020, Dailyhunt launched the Josh short video app, experiencing rapid and widespread adoption. Within 45 days, Josh achieved over 50 million downloads and accumulated one billion video plays, solidifying its position as one of India's leading short video creation platforms. Users can effortlessly record videos and select from an extensive library of songs and popular dialogues for lip-syncing. Additionally, the app offers the feature of creating duet videos, enabling collaboration with friends, siblings, or even relatives.

*Table 2.10: Download count data (d)*

|                |           |
|----------------|-----------|
|                | 100       |
| Download count | million++ |
| App Rating     | 3.9/5     |

**Chingari** - Chingari, a homegrown Indian short video app developed by two entrepreneurs based in Bangalore, stands out for its support of multiple Indian languages, ensuring accessibility to a diverse audience. This engaging short video platform allows users to create captivating content, ranging from original videos and dance performances to playful experiments with AR filters and entertaining lip-syncing to popular songs and dialogues. Launched as the first made-in-India app following the TikTok ban, Chingari is a video-sharing social networking service founded by Biswatma Nayak and Siddharth Gautam in Bangalore. The app, available on the Play Store, enables users to craft and share short videos, encompassing trending news, entertainment, humour, and love status

content. With features resembling those of the Helo app, users can seamlessly share, like, and comment on posts.

Notably, Chingari provides a dedicated button for sharing videos on WhatsApp, akin to the Chinese app Helo, and users can also follow their favourite content creators on the platform.

*Table 2.11: Download count data (e)}*

|                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| Download Count | 50 Million + |
| App Rating     | 4.2/5        |

**Roposo:** Roposo, a popular social media platform, has established itself as a leading short video app, catering to users' diverse content creation and consumption needs. Launched in 2014, Roposo gained significant traction, especially after the ban on TikTok in some regions. The app stands out with its focus on short-form videos, catering to various genres such as entertainment, lifestyle, fashion, and more. Roposo empowers users to express their creativity by providing tools for creating engaging short videos. Users have access to a variety of content, such as tutorials, comedy, dance, and lip-syncing. The app's user-friendly interface, along with editing tools and filters, makes it easy for both content creators and viewers to enjoy a seamless experience.

Furthermore, Roposo serves as a vibrant community where users can connect, share, and discover trending content. The platform's emphasis on versatility, combined with its interactive features, has contributed to its popularity among a diverse user base. As users continue to seek engaging short video content, in the constantly changing world of social media, Roposo is still a vibrant and changing platform.

Table 2.12: Download count data (f)

|                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| Download Count | 100 Million<br>+ |
| App Rating     | 4.3/5            |

### 2.3 Human Society Theory

**User-Generated Content:** One example of how 21st-century consumers are changing is the use of user-generated content (UGC). User-generated content is defined as "any form of content, namely blogs, wikis, debate forums, posts, conversation forms, tweets, podcast platforms, pins, digital images, video files, audio files, and many more forms of media created by users of an online system or service" (Chua *et al.*, 2014, p. 7).

According to Van Dijck (2009), the emergence of user-generated content (UGC) websites has caused businesses to shift their focus from consumption to production, giving users the power to enhance content. In particular, UGC websites like YouTube are changing social interactions and viewing habits, enabling users to express their creativity and creating new business opportunities, according to Cha *et al.* (2009).

The "customer-made" phenomenon, in which companies work closely with innovative customers to give them direct control over the creation, processing, manufacturing, or design of marketing messages, products, services, or experiences, is closely related to this trend (TrendWatching, 2006). As a result, consumers actively participate in their company's advertising campaigns and marketing strategies, which is known as user-generated advertising. An illustration of *advertising using user-generated content* by *Happilo* in 2022 is a campaign to showcase sibling rivalry through #KuchGiftBhiDeDeBhai on the occasion of the RakshaBandhan festival. Happilo departed from the usual emotional themes and added a mischievous Bollywood touch to

align with its lively brand personality. Using well-known social media influencers like Aatman Desai, Harshita Gupta, and Danny Pandit, the campaign included amusing content that impersonated well-known Bollywood figures. The videos creatively played on the tradition of giving gifts to sisters, reinforcing the brand's message:

KuchGiftBhiDeDeBhai. The campaign's result on Instagram the brand received 65.52% positive feedback. Surging from 10–12% to nearly 20% in 2021. Moreover, 64% of participants indicated a shift from the traditional three complete meals pattern to incorporating various healthy snacks throughout the day. The report also highlighted that 47% of respondents snack multiple times daily, with 27% admitting to indulging in snacks even during the night.

One more example to state:

In 2012, *Moj partnered* with more than 75 brands, orchestrating nearly 150 influencer-led campaigns in the current year. Notable collaborations with brands such as ThumsUp, Emami, and Dettol resulted in substantial viewership, ranging from billions of views, particularly in Tier II and III markets. Engaging hashtag challenges featuring unique AR-supported lenses and hook steps contributed to the success of these campaigns. The above-highlighted case studies emphasise the impact of user-generated content (UGC) in marketing, particularly in social media. It explores how companies encourage consumers to share content through voting, creating a buzz around campaigns. Social media content sharing is regarded as a potent tool that businesses can use to grow their following, popularity, and marketing buzz. (Mansoor, Rahman and Bowden, 2024) also supported this viewpoint, arguing that social media content sharing mimics in-person interactions and word-of-mouth in our physical world. According to Mansoor, Rahman

and Bowden (2024), sharing content on social media platforms is therefore an essential component of the experience.

Additionally, the campaign explores consumers' perceptions of social media as an essential source of product information. Leading them to search for products and reviews online before making purchasing decisions. The discussion extends to examples like *Amazon, Flipkart, Puma, MamaEarth, Coco Coal, Havmor, Pepsico, Asian Paints*, and many other brands, highlighting the significance of user reviews and credibility in the online marketplace. It concludes by asserting that businesses must recognize and incorporate community-building activities into their social media strategies to remain competitive.

According to this study, social media influencer platforms are more than just a place for users to "hang out"; they are a means of communication between users (Chu, 2011). It is the area in which a new "information economy" has developed, based on fostering trust between social media users who, in this case, function as consumers. With users actively creating, gathering, and disseminating information, information has emerged as the new currency in this economy. The traditional linear delivery of marketing messages from advertisers to prospective customers has changed as a result of this space. Rather, it depends on consumers' discernment, ingenuity, and readiness to embrace and spread messages among their virtual social networks.

In conclusion, the rise and prevalence of social media influencers on short video platforms have given rise to novel social arenas where consumers actively participate and engage. Customers participate in a variety of activities as members of online communities that produce and distribute information about goods and services, upending

the conventional linear marketing strategy. Customers become essential parts of a dynamic marketing information system as a result of their active participation in social media and short video platforms. Businesses are encouraged to embrace and integrate this system into their marketing strategies since it consists of people (like social media users), tools (like social media platforms), and procedures (like sharing) (Armstrong and Kotler, 2007).

**Content sharing:** social media serves two purposes as a result of consumers' growing role as producers and distributors of marketing content. Traditionally, businesses view it as a means to connect with diverse global audiences. This perspective aligns with the initial vision of the Internet. However, a new vision is emerging, recognising social media platforms as valuable sources of information. As consumers actively engage by producing and sharing content, their behaviour on these platforms contributes significant data. This vast pool of user-generated data has become an invaluable resource for businesses in shaping marketing decisions and strategies. Companies gather a plethora of Internet analytics, encompassing user interactions like clicks, likes, comments, page visits, shares, and demographic details. The emphasis on specific analytics, however, evolves. Initially, companies prioritised "number of clicks," but the focus has shifted to include metrics like "virality" and "attention" (Upworthy Inside, 2014). This dynamic reflects the changing significance of various forms of information that capture the interest of businesses and marketers. The rapid emergence and fluctuating value of different information forms underscore the marketing function's fluidity and uncertainty. In essence, the industry continues to grapple with determining the most valuable form of information, devising measurement methods, and interpreting data for effective marketing purposes. However, according to many researchers, "content sharing" on social

media platforms has developed into a valuable consumer activity that initiates the sharing of information for social media video marketing (Dervojeda *et al.*, 2014). Advertising firms occasionally encourage their customers to share unique content in their own brand communication channels; this practice is referred to as "content marketing." Few businesses have significant online presences that consistently drive social media engagements with original and viral content that audiences want to share, opening up new channels for content marketing to connect and communicate with their customers. By emphasising the strong connections between content sharing, user engagement, and content virality, Carter and Marketo (2013) highlight the importance of content sharing in social media marketing. In e-marketing, the "number of shares" metric is more significant than the "number of clicks," which was once thought to be important.

In essence, discussions on effective digital marketing extend beyond using the Internet solely as a platform for distributing marketing messages to diverse consumers. The focus also lies in leveraging information derived from online consumer behaviour, including liking, commenting, and sharing, to help businesses create, publish, and advertise their marketing messages. Notably, highly shareable marketing messages often involve elements of giving, advising, warning, amusing, inspiring, amazing, and uniting, as identified by Carter and Marketo (2013).

Key elements impacting sharing are highlighted by the Customer Insight Group (2011): Attractive to consumers' desire to connect, *Establishing trust*, *Simplicity*, *Humour*, and *Sense of urgency*. This demonstrates how "sharing" has evolved into a vital activity that turns prospective online customers into engaged participants in a business's online marketing plan. However, to remain competitive, businesses and marketers must research and implement the new rules and challenges that these discussions and changes bring to the marketing landscape.

Viral Marketing: In the dynamic landscape of digital marketing, business strategy continues to capture the imagination of audiences in new ways to capture and engage consistently on a more profound level, such as viral video marketing. One of the best media tactics for accomplishing brand objectives is viral video marketing. This innovative approach revolves around creating and promoting videos with the intent of achieving widespread and rapid sharing across the internet. The ultimate goal is to leverage social sharing dynamics to enhance brand awareness and engagement and reach a broad and diverse audience. Viral marketing, according to Billon and Tardieu (2002), is the process of building a buzz around a good, service, or event in order to generate powerful word-of-mouth. It guarantees the quick spread of the mass information, which customers will then spread. Another name for viral marketing is "e-word of mouth." In particular, it discusses the Internet-powered word-of-mouth (WOM) and broad-buzz marketing (Goldenberg *et al.*, 2001). This includes its marketing strategy (Gruen *et al.*, 2006), which emphasises branding and advertising. The viral video marketing is more effortlessly achievable with social media; social media virality and video virality are not the same. By nature, these brand videos allow long-form or short formats with interactive storylines that connect audiences in a meaningful way.

The success of viral video marketing hinges on several key elements, each contributing to the overall effectiveness of the campaign. One of the foremost factors is the creation of compelling content. Whether it's entertaining, emotional, humorous, or informative, the content must resonate with the target audience, evoking a strong and shareable reaction.

Shareability is another critical aspect, emphasising the need for videos to be easily shareable across various social media platforms. Integrating social sharing buttons and features can facilitate the seamless sharing process, ensuring that the video can quickly

reach a wider audience. Short and snappy content is a common characteristic of successful viral videos. Capturing viewers' attention swiftly and maintaining engagement is crucial, as shorter videos are more likely to be shared, contributing to their virality.

- a) While **content is king**, production quality should not be overlooked. Well-produced videos with clear audio, sharp visuals, and professional editing contribute to the overall appeal and shareability of the content.
- b) **Emotional appeal** is a powerful driver of virality. Videos that elicit strong emotions, whether laughter, joy, surprise, or empathy, tend to be shared more widely. Establishing an emotional connection encourages viewers to share the content with their networks.
- c) **Timeliness and relevance** play an essential part in viral video marketing's success. Tapping into current trends, events, or issues can significantly enhance the relevancy of the video, making it more likely to be shared in the moment.
- d) **Encouraging audience engagement** is another strategy employed in viral video marketing. Prompting viewers to participate, leave comments, and generate user-generated content related to the video contributes to its shareability and overall success.
- e) **Cross-platform promotion** is essential for maximising the reach of viral videos. Making use of a variety of channels, such as websites, email newsletters, and social media, ensures that the video reaches a diverse and expansive audience.

**Influencer collaboration** has emerged as a potent tool in viral video marketing. Collaborating with influencers who share the brand or topic can amplify the video's

visibility, leveraging the influencers' existing audience. Finally, **measurable metrics** are crucial for assessing the success of a viral video campaign. Utilising analytics tools to track views, shares, comments, and other metrics offers insightful information about the video's impact and efficacy. While the creation of a viral video is not guaranteed, understanding these key principles and incorporating them into a video marketing strategy can significantly increase the likelihood of creating shareable, engaging, and ultimately successful content. Viral video marketing represents a dynamic and ever-evolving landscape where creativity, emotion, and strategic execution converge to leave a lasting impression on audiences across the digital realm.

Viral video marketing has grown in popularity and effectiveness as a means of disseminating business content of all sizes, largely due to the emergence of social media short video platforms such as Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, Sharechat Moj, and Josh. An extra benefit is that the social media algorithm will promote the video by suggesting it to feeds if it becomes popular or reaches the maximum number of views in a short amount of time. This will add viral acceleration in terms of views, likes, shares, and remixes with the current formats, making it trend among the community. For example, A recent viral video, “[Just looking like a WOW](#)”, that was shared across the Instagram platform includes remix versions by top celebrity influencers and US model Ashley Graham, and in addition to this, there is a music composition - Image 1 - Just looking like a WOW viral video on Instagram.

Video Link 1 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSN4IHdqAkI>



Brands can leverage the power of word-of-mouth marketing to reach a larger audience and increase engagement with their target market by producing such captivating and shareable video content.

### **Video Content Characteristics**

To comprehend the integration of marketing messages within videos subsequently shared on social media platforms, as the main elements of brand videos, this study looks at the unique qualities of individual video content. This study asserts that through the content features of a video, viewers actively participate in co-creating the marketing message. More precisely, the emphasis of this study revolves around the visuals, sound, and plot of the videos as the primary conveyors of meaningful video messages.

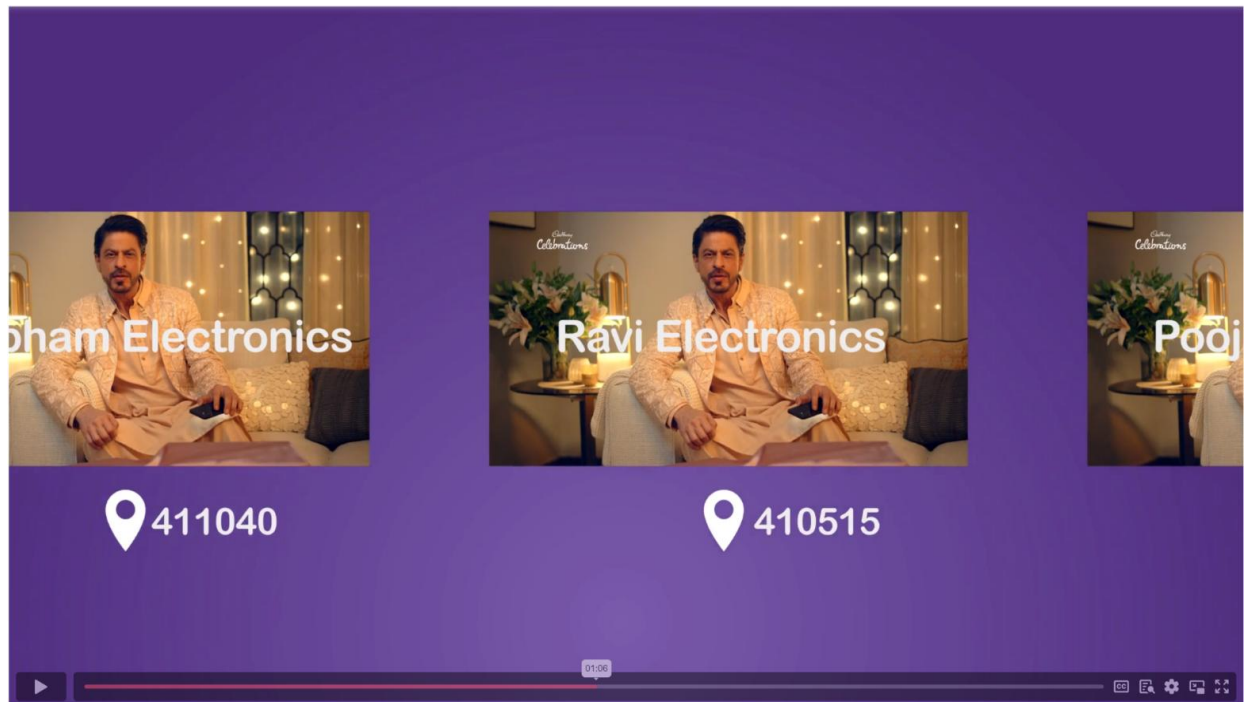
### **Visual Content Characteristics**

The visual elements of marketing videos play a crucial role in conveying messages effectively. Visual communication in marketing videos can be achieved through various means, and computer animation, whether in 2D or 3D, has notably influenced product sales. Computer animation, known for capturing the attention of

potential consumers, has proven effective in web advertising. Another method is the more intricate and costly "live-action/ Live-streaming" option, which involves recording live footage using professional video cameras and often includes actors or live interactions with their followers or community, which can include sharing the live events or question and answer sessions. With varying degrees of viewer response and engagement, both live-action and animation techniques offer distinct benefits to marketers.

One of the award-winning brand campaigns I'd like to highlight in this study is the [Mondelez Cadbury Celebrations campaign](#). This campaign, led by the influential celebrity Shah Rukh Khan, aimed to encourage small business owners in India during Diwali. Leveraging AI, the campaign dynamically integrated geo-locations into ads, urging viewers to shop for their tangible goods at nearby stores. Shah Rukh Khan's voice and face were reenacted using machine learning to reference the names of nearby stores, with various ad versions targeted based on viewers' pin codes to showcase nearby stores. Recognizing the impossibility of covering all stores, the brand introduced "Myadd," allowing any small business owner to create personalized Shah Rukh Khan ads for promotion through social media. Over 1 lakh local stores generated their ads, resulting in 30+ million views, Rs 6 million in free PR, and 35% business growth. The campaign #NotJustACadburyAd highlighted the innovative AI-integrated campaign.

Video link 2: "Shah Rukh Khan - My Ad #NotJustACadburyAd" link - [Supporting Local Retailers This Diwali | Not Just A Cadbury Ad Campaign Video](#)



In the advertising sector, visuals and graphics are essential because they increase the impact of commercials for goods and services. It is crucial to use eye-catching images that are still relevant and transparent in the marketing message. Effectively designed images can draw in customers and raise the possibility that they will buy a good or service. Additionally, the careful application of color and images can increase focus and appeal to the feelings and actions of the customer. The Supreme Court decided in 1995 that a specific shade of color, like Cadbury Purple, could be a legally defensible trademark because color is so crucial to a product's brand identity (Lamancusa, 2003).

**3D Animation:** The use of 3D animation in advertising is closely related to "spoke-character advertisements" (Karpasitis, 2017), in which characters—also known as spokes-characters or trade characters—are created for marketing campaigns. A fictional, animated entity or object designed to advertise a good, service, or concept is called a trade character (Andrews, 2005). Spoke characters serve as walking metaphors,

conveying messages indirectly. They are utilised to: promote brand personality, establish product identification and maintain promotional continuity, helping to connect advertising campaigns with products and, at times, packaging (Andrews, 2005).

A familiar example is the “Amul Mascot,” Vodafone ZooZoo, and Duzo mascot advertisers, which people can recognise in the midst of any cluttered market. A brand mascot entails a lasting relationship, contrasting with the shorter engagement typical of celebrity endorsements. To ensure effectiveness, mascots should encapsulate the brand's essence with a sense of personal integrity. They must carry the brand's DNA and establish a genuine emotional connection with consumers, making integrity and emotional alignment crucial aspects. According to Callcott and Alvey (1991), spokes-characters serve as a positive cue and help to establish the brand or advertiser's identity. This is due to the fact that viewers grow to enjoy them and connect these characters with good emotions, which eventually results in positive feelings about the product.

Commercials showcasing animated characters were more frequently viewed compared to other types of commercials, and the likability of a spokeswoman's character influences attitudes toward the brand (Callcott and Phillips, 1996). In addition to Aaker's (1993) findings, the alignment of the personality of an animated character with the brand's personality has been identified as one of the key factors to enhance the brand's equity. More impactful branding is dependent on recall value, which can correlate to the brand's identity or animated characters. In conclusion, experts stated that a brand mascot should embody the brand's narrative and viewpoint. Connecting with your customer every day will still help you build a lasting relationship.

**2D Animation and Motion Graphics:** The brand can communicate and make your concepts, goods, and services come to life through video production. Originating in

animation and video technologies, motion graphics can change the appearance of 2D visual elements or give the impression that they are moving. Motion graphics was first used in Saul Bass's work in 1960, when it was first coined by animator John Whitney. There are numerous techniques for producing motion graphics and 2D animation, each suited to particular audiences and messages. Entertainment, advertising, videography, animation, cinematography, and narrative all depend on motion graphics. They include sequences of moving images in visual communication that are dominated by design or typography. 2D animation adds a distinctive visual impact and is frequently linked to dynamic images and kinetic text. According to Plummer (2014), graphic designers believe that motion graphics have a greater impact than other visual techniques and are effective in promoting content, engaging audiences, visualising data, and telling stories. The effectiveness of motion graphics as a visual communication tool is highlighted by Shir and Asadolla (2014), who contend that motion graphics are more effective at influencing audiences than other visual techniques.

**Live Streaming/ Live action:** In live streaming, as the name implies, content is generated in real-time, expending effort upfront for each piece of content while significantly reducing post-production time. Live streaming offers advantages not found in conventional video content, notably through the incorporation of a live chat platform for text-based communication that is connected to the live stream. This creates an interactive experience by enabling viewers to converse with the content creator and one another while the content is being created. Online viral videos emphasise real, uncut experiences with little editing or camera movements (Voltz and Grobe, 2012). With no barriers between them and the events, this method seeks to fully immerse viewers in the plot as it develops.

As per [Livestream's](#) findings, almost 40% of executives initiate contact with a vendor after viewing a video. Additionally, livestream marketing proves cost-effective, facilitating a favourable return on investment (ROI). Approximately 73% of B2B businesses employing live video to engage their target audience report positive outcomes in terms of ROI.

According to McKinsey & Company, by 2026, live commerce-driven sales may account for about 20% of all e-commerce transactions. According to a report by EY India, live commerce could contribute more than \$50 billion in gross merchandise value (GMV) to India's e-commerce market, which is expected to reach \$220 billion by 2025. The influence of elevated production values on the virality of brand videos across social platforms is a subject that has been insufficiently explored by researchers.

**Visual Special Effects:** Video advertisements gain additional value and appeal through the use of Visual Special Effects (VFX) in their content, which can range from tiny animated graphic objects to entire scenes with specialised looks. Advertisers, realising the impact of VFX on audience engagement, are increasingly incorporating it into online video ads. To enhance the effectiveness of your video content, consider incorporating visually engaging elements such as infographics or motion graphics, especially when conveying intricate concepts or data. Additionally, integrating visually appealing text overlays or subtitles can contribute to a more compelling storytelling experience. It's crucial to maintain a balance between visually pleasing elements and alignment with your brand's identity and message.

**Features of Audio Content:** The audio component of video content is another captivating feature. Speech, sound effects, and background music are frequently combined in marketing videos. While digital studies like those by Nortcliffe and Middleton (2008) emphasise the beneficial effects of audio on engagement, the

importance of strategic audio branding is also highlighted. Furthermore, Lusensky (2011) goes into detail about how a music strategy engages customers in a conversation about the music, which raises brand awareness and draws attention. With its suggestive qualities and ability to arouse feelings and imagination, the author argues that sound's persuasive power may be an underappreciated advantage in branding and advertising.

The commercials for Nokia phones, Airtel tunes, Vodafone tunes, LG India, Intel, and many more that incorporate their distinctive audio are among the best illustrations of the successful use of audio in marketing. This has demonstrated that a single execution can become well-known worldwide. Importantly, both businesses have admitted that audio has benefited their marketing campaigns. However, prior researchers have not sufficiently examined the impact of speech and sound effects on brand videos' virality.

**Music in Advertising:** Music is a powerful tool in advertising, frequently employed by marketers to shape consumer experiences (Kellaris *et al.*, 2007). It can establish positive and emotional associations, effectively contributing to the communication of a brand's identity (Yalch, 1991). Allan's 2008 study underscored the increasing tendency to integrate popular music into commercials, highlighting that listeners' familiarity with the music facilitates encoding more information about the product into memory (Heaton and Paris, 2006).

The efficacy of incorporating popular music into advertising has been demonstrated to be a more impactful stimulus for attention and memory in comparison to advertising without popular music (Allan, 2008). The integration of music into advertising aligns the brand with consumers' lives, fostering a deeper connection (Ercan, 2025). A 2015 Nielsen study, which analysed over 600 television advertisements (with more than 500 featuring music), underscores the nearly inseparable connection between

music and content advertising. The use of music in US prime-time TV ads increased to 94% in 2008 (Allan, 2008).

Stewart and Furse (1986) observed a lack of systematic measurement regarding the impact of music on consumer preferences. Their study revealed that music was present in just over 40% of the 1,000 television commercials they examined. Appelbaum and Halliburton (1993) analysed international commercials and discovered that music was incorporated in 89% of their sample. The inclusion of music in advertising serves as an economic boost by providing new avenues for royalty collection and generating interest in the featured songs and artists. This contributes to the promotion of music sales and acts as a variation of product placement (Allan, 2008).

In India, where thinking is often influenced by childhood stories, anecdotes, and songs, music holds significant importance within the rich oral tradition. Indian television advertisements commonly harness the emotive power of popular songs to resonate with viewers and capture their attention. Notable instances include Ariel featuring Shahrukh Khan's 'Gerua' and Nestle Kitkat incorporating a popular Hindi film song from 1972. Brands like Hero Motocorp and Coke create custom songs for their ads, recognising the ability of music to penetrate minds and distinguish themselves amid the clamour of advertising jingles.

**Music Fit:** As outlined by Macinnis and Park (1986), the music fit in advertising involves the perception of how well music aligns with content characteristics like visuals, plot, story lines, or the central message. This concept relies on "pattern activation," where matching stimuli trigger shared recollections, making common attributes more noticeable. Musical fit extends to various variables beyond visuals, including the advertisement's language, plot, tone, emotion, spokesperson qualities, product attributes,

and audience's emotional state. The lyrics of a song and the perceived mood of the music can influence musical fit. For example, background music mood influences consumers' emotions and likelihood of purchasing a commodity for happy or sad occasions. In advertising, music serves to portray activities, occasions, venues, or types of people with the intent of communicating.

**Story and Plot:** Storytelling in marketing is a powerful strategy for building stronger customer connections and enhancing brand identity. As stated by Zemke (1990), the quality of a story touches on something familiar to our daily lives and teaches us something new about our lives or the world. Whether you're a business owner or a marketer, understanding the impact of storytelling is crucial. Engaging stories can foster better customer relationships, boost brand engagement, and provide a competitive edge. Furthermore, a narrative advertisement tells a story, according to Escalas (1998). When combined with storytelling, visual branding has a big impact on how people view a business.

Crafting a compelling narrative within marketing campaigns, incorporating elements like humour or real-life drama, can transform how a business is perceived. Brand storytelling becomes a tool to share success stories, develop brand personality, and penetrate new markets, even for startups. Establishing trust through narrative builds a connection with customers, fostering continued support. The benefits of storytelling in marketing are numerous, including improved customer relationships, increased engagement, showcasing brand personality, and standing out in the market. Whether executed locally, online, or internationally, storytelling shapes the perception of a brand over time. Examining examples of successful storytelling marketing campaigns provides insights into how narratives can contribute to a brand's long-term success.

## Consumer Behaviour and Buying Decision Process -

- 1) **Insights:** Consumers just don't do impulsive buying easily; many factors determine one's buying potential. Their interests lie in understanding what their needs are or researching. This is significantly improved when brands are able to communicate through trusted influencers effectively with a good storyline.
- 2) **The Role of Consumers:** From its inception, the Internet was recognized as a marketing channel with the potential to connect businesses to global audiences. However, the pivotal factor in actively engaging these audiences with the Internet was the emergence and widespread adoption of social media. As mentioned previously, users on social media platforms exhibit higher levels of activity and involvement in the exchange and communication of marketing messages compared to more traditional marketing media.
- 3) **Consumer Purchase behaviour:** Influencers and thought leaders across a diversity of domains are increasingly using social media platforms to engage with their followers and influence them on a range of social and commercial issues. In addition to the above statement, the diversity of social media platforms is spawning unique platform-driven influencer profiles, with distinctive roles for each platform in the consumer's purchase journey. This emerging class of influencers is increasingly flourishing and exerting a strong influence among digital natives in terms of shaping their experience, opinions, and behavioural preferences. Create a "buzz," i.e., create key conversational points for consumers.

Enabling brand communication to adapt to the “Go Viral”, as per the Like, Share, and Subscribe. Understanding consumer behaviour is essential to a successful marketing plan. According to Loudon and Della Bitta (1993, p. 553), consumer behaviour includes "the decision process and physical activity individuals engage in when evaluating, acquiring, using, or disposing of goods and services." "Identifying particular personality characteristics explains variations in buying, using, and disposing of customer behaviours," according to Hoyer, Chandy, Dorotic, Krafft, and Singh (2010, p. 285). Customers may behave in one of two ways, according to Hoffman and Turley (2002): approach behaviour or avoidance behaviour.

- a) The following is a breakdown of the results of customer attitude:
- b) A wish to stay or leave.
- c) A propensity to overlook it or a desire to investigate and engage further.
- d) A desire to ignore or to speak with others.
- e) Sentiments regarding the service experience, such as satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

The decision-making process for consumers when making purchases Purchase behaviour is greatly influenced by consumer attitudes, which are formed by experiences and education (Jawahar and Tamizhjyothi, 2013). There are five steps in the consumer purchasing decision process:

- 1) Identifying the issue: knowing what the needs of the consumer are is essential, then coming up with a marketing plan to meet those needs (Kotler and Keller, 2016; Kotler *et al.*, 2017).
- 2) Customers look for information at this stage from commercial, public, experimental, and personal sources (Kotler *et al.*, 2017).

- 3) **Assessment of options:** consumers rank and assess goods according to the information acquired. The consumer must choose which product to buy and where to buy it during the purchase decision stage. This choice is also influenced by the environment (Qazzafi, 2019). The decision-making process of consumers when purchasing products. Behaviour following a purchase (Qazzafi, 2019). Depending on whether their expectations and the product meet, customers may be happy or unhappy (Kotler *et al.*, 2017). This theoretical framework will be crucial for examining how teenagers and young adults behave when making purchases of goods that influencers recommend.
- 4) **Consumer Participation:** Numerous scales are available in the literature to measure how involved consumers are with products (Zaichkowsky, 1985; Laurent and Kapferer, 1985; McQuarrie and Munson, 1987; Jain and Srinivasan, 1990). The best scale for gauging consumer engagement with influencer-endorsed goods and services, however, is up for debate in the marketing literature. Our thesis makes use of Zaichkowsky's (1985) updated published measure of involvement, which is still widely used by scholars to identify and classify the factors influencing individual consumer behaviour (Peck and Johnson, 2011). While upholding standards for internal reliability, reliability over time, content validity, criterion-related validity, and construct validity, this bipolar adjective scale successfully measures consumer involvement with products (Zaichkowsky, 1985). The definition of involvement put forth by Zaichkowsky in 1985,

- 5) **Brand and Branding:** According to Kotler and Armstrong (2018), a brand is any name, term, symbol, or design that sets a seller or group of sellers apart from rivals and distinguishes their goods or services. Beyond simple names or logos, a brand represents a business's dedication to providing customers with clear, accurate, and authentic experiences. According to Hobkirk (2012), a brand embodies the core of an organisation, influencing how people recognise and remember it through actions, speech, and visual identity. According to Zaichkowsky (1985), a brand is essentially an intangible marketing concept that helps customers distinguish one business, product, or person from others in the market. The importance of a brand as a valuable corporate asset is highlighted by Forbes' (2020) designation of tech giants like Apple, Google, Microsoft, and Amazon as valuable brands in 2020 (Werbach and Zaring, 2022). Today, almost all products and services carry a brand (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018). From salt to everyday hardware items, branding has become ubiquitous. The brands like Horizon Organic, Dole Classic, and Perdue are prominent in the grocery sector, spanning vegetables, dairy, and meats. The study by Kotler and Armstrong (2018) underscores that a brand significantly influences a consumer's purchase decision, emphasising the need for brands to incorporate desirable features to distinguish themselves in a competitive market.
- 6) Prominent brands like Walmart (focused on saving money), Instagram (centred on capturing and sharing moments), and FedEx (guaranteed on-time delivery) leverage positioning benefits to establish their distinct identities (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018). The symbiotic relationship

between organisations and consumers in brand communication and development is paramount. Brands serve as shortcuts for consumers in decision-making, especially when faced with similar products from different companies, allowing them to swiftly assess quality and information based on brand names and messages (The Branding Journal, 2015).

- 7) **Brand Knowledge:** Brand knowledge encompasses the thoughts, feelings, and experiences associated with a company's brand. It is designed in such a manner that the interactions, advertisements, and communication are crafted by the company to align with its logo and brand ambassadors. However, genuine recognition of the brand occurs through the consumer's interpretation, influenced by their thoughts, experiences, and feelings about the company's products. Brand knowledge, including brand image and associations, is formed after the company establishes brand awareness through campaigns. Positive experiences contribute to favourable brand knowledge, while negative interactions may lead to a poor brand image. Ultimately, brand knowledge contributes significantly to the development of brand equity through recognition. Brand knowledge is a multidimensional idea, and each dimension has its own ability to affect and influence consumers' reactions to the brand (Keller, 1993). Hence, comprehending brand knowledge is very crucial as it influences the way consumers perceive the brand and, as a result, their purchase behaviour.
- 8) A successful brand effectively cultivates positive brand knowledge in the minds of consumers, which is a distinctive blend of both brand image and brand awareness. Brand awareness pertains to the extent to which

customers can recall a brand upon encountering its advertisement, while brand image involves a collection of mental images influencing a buyer's decision to purchase. While brands may have varying meanings for individuals, brand knowledge universally hinges on the delicate equilibrium between awareness and image.

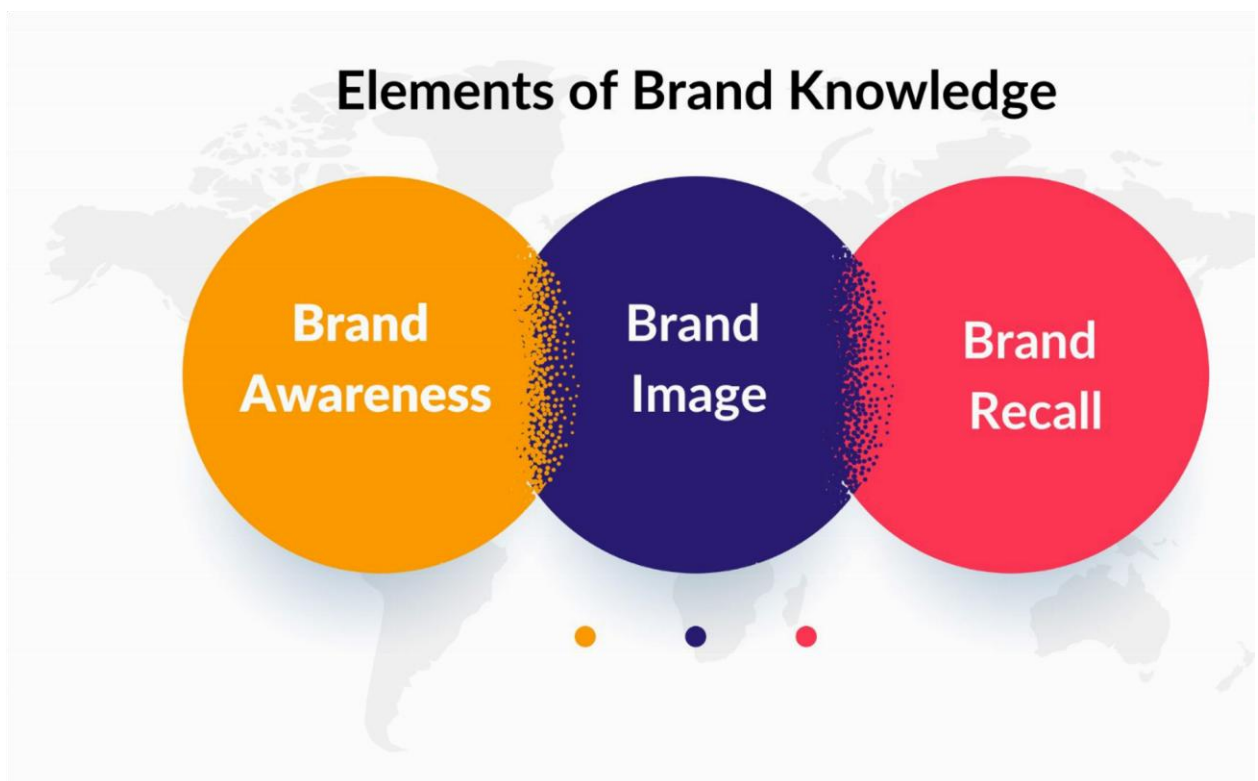


*Figure 2.1: Elements of brand knowledge*

*Image source: <https://www.marketing91.com/brand-knowledge/>*

Example for Brand Knowledge:

- a) Amazon: [Amazon has](#) effectively leveraged brand knowledge to establish brand equity by offering discounted offerings and deals matching occasions and special days, which has helped the company become one of the most successful online retailers worldwide.
- b) Apple: Apple employs its iconic logo to generate brand awareness, and its simple yet recognisable design helps customers identify the company and become familiar with its [remarkable products and services](#).
- c) Brand's perspective: A name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of these elements, that serves to identify the products or services offered by one seller or group of sellers, distinguishing them from those of competitors," is the definition of a brand. Let's take a pause for a moment to understand the shopping patterns of an individual buyer. - What influences one to decide whether to make a certain purchase or not? Options could be the choice of brand perception, encompassing the thoughts and emotions linked to a particular brand name.

A significant majority of customers, [62%, establish emotional](#) connections with the brands they patronise, and once these attitudes are formed, they tend to be resistant to change. Brands invest effort in fostering positive associations from the outset. Understanding how people perceive a brand is crucial for shaping perceptions and building brand equity, facilitating informed decision-making for both the company and consumers.

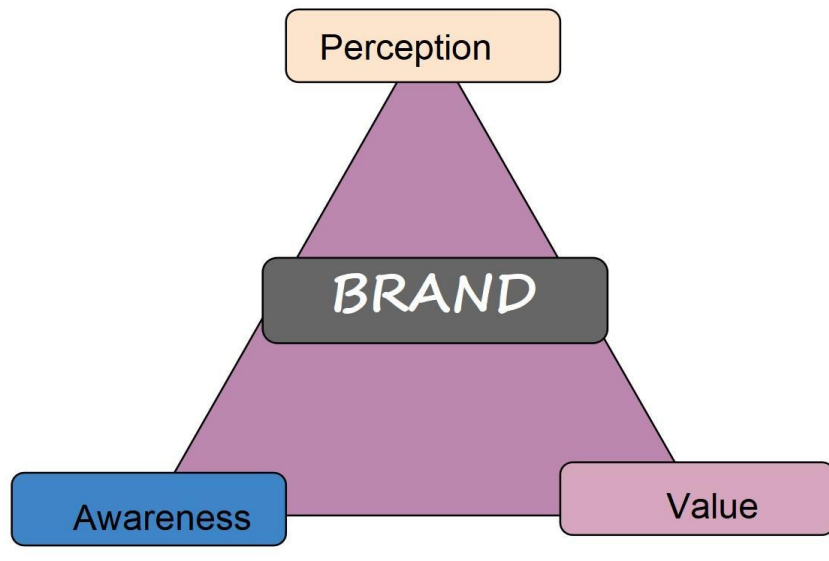


*Figure 2.2: Brand Perception*

Brand perception is the amalgamation of consumer emotions, experiences, and thoughts regarding a product or service. It encapsulates what individuals believe a brand stands for, transcending the brand's verbal representation. Despite being a mental connection, brand perception is crucial for establishing emotional ties with consumers. Individuals factor in their attitudes toward brands when faced with choices between competing products. Enterprises adept at understanding brand perception leverage this insight to cultivate brand equity. While brand perception can be singular, representing what an individual consumer thinks about a specific brand, the collective views, experiences, and viewpoints that shape a brand's reputation are all included in brand equity.

A business with strong brand equity garners the loyalty of customers who consistently choose its products or services over those of competitors. The ability to craft a brand perception that resonates with the target market becomes a catalyst for a company's growth.

**Brand Awareness:** Brand awareness pertains to the extent of a brand's recognition, encompassing two essential tactics: recall and recognition (Rosenbaum-Elliott *et al.*, 2018). Brand awareness is a metric that reflects the effectiveness of brand elements such as logos or names (Keller, 1993). It comprises two key components: brand recognition and brand recall (Keller, 2013). It quantifies the degree of brand recognition and familiarity among consumers, contributing to the [establishment of brand trust](#).

Brand awareness is the foundation of a successful brand; it has an impact on consumers. It is the measure of recall and awareness that a brand has among its target audience. Developing a successful brand promotion strategy is crucial when looking to draw new customers and retain existing ones who are already engaged. When a business has a strong brand awareness strategy, customers can easily remember and identify it when making decisions about what to buy. A key component of marketing is brand awareness, which measures how well a target audience knows and remembers a specific brand. It serves as the cornerstone around which consumers construct a brand's identity. Making the brand name, logo, and related components instantly identifiable and memorable is a key component of building brand awareness.

To increase brand awareness, the companies take their first step in achieving performance marketing goals, which means that the more people are aware of their brand, the more familiar they become with it, and build the trust factor. These are attained via traditional marketing platforms like television commercials, billboards, magazine ads, and digital ads. The digital ads have taken a step toward spending on paid media across channels, including influencer marketing.

A classic example:

- a) YouTube is a company that has successfully built brand awareness, with the instant recognition of the company logo, its red colour and the white play button in the middle.
- b) Nike has also established a [robust brand](#) presence through its “Just Do It” slogan and marketing campaigns, which empower and inspire upcoming sports personalities and also help increase recognition and build brand loyalty.
- c) Apple is another company that has effectively created [brand awareness](#) via its range of products and offerings via innovative campaigns.

The internet has facilitated businesses to rapidly reach a larger audience and accomplish their objectives efficiently. By selecting the appropriate channel and targeting the right audience, influencers play a vital part in attaining brand recognition because of their vast network of followers who have similar interests and their experience interacting with people. It is vital to carefully choose an influencer aligned with the brand's values, as this ensures effective brand promotion and the dissemination of opinions about the brand among their follower bases.

**Brand Value:** Brand value, often referred to as brand equity, is a crucial and intangible asset that contributes significantly to a company's overall worth. It ties together the associations, feelings, and perceptions that customers have of a specific brand. In contrast to material assets, brand value is ingrained in consumers' perceptions and denotes the value that a brand adds to a good or service (Werbach and Zaring, 2022). The development and evaluation of brand value are influenced by several important factors. These consist of recognised quality, brand associations, brand loyalty, and brand

awareness. Customers are more likely to select and stick with a brand that has a positive and respectable reputation, so the stronger these components, the higher the brand value.

Brand value transcends financial metrics, encompassing the general standing and confidence of a brand in the marketplace. A brand of high value not only enjoys recognition and preference among consumers but also gains a competitive advantage within the industry. Sustaining a robust brand value necessitates ongoing endeavours to uphold quality standards, foster positive associations, and adapt to evolving consumer preferences.

In essence, brand value mirrors the brand's impact on consumer behaviour and its ability to command a premium in the market. Businesses commit resources to cultivating and protecting their brand value, recognising their pivotal role in long-term success, fostering customer loyalty, and facilitating sustainable business growth.

**Brand Associations:** Brand associations, acknowledged by various researchers, such as Herzog (1963) and Keller (1993), are deemed integral to the concept of brand image and hold significant importance for companies, as emphasised by Keller (1993). These associations encompass the diverse beliefs and judgments held by consumers regarding a brand (Keller, 1993). Any mental link that a consumer has with a brand is considered a brand association. Strong bonds are formed by brand association, making it a foundation for strong brand loyalty (Aaker, 1991). A strong brand needs to achieve specific goals to build brand value, claims Keller (2001). When a brand becomes linked with another thought in someone's mind, a neurological connection is established, increasing the likelihood of them being associated in the future. These associations can either attract or repel individuals from your brand. A mindful and strategic approach to brand associations is crucial for efficiently building brand equity.

Several factors contribute to the formation of brand associations, including marketing messages, brand visuals, product quality, and customer experiences. Successful brands strategically cultivate positive associations to create a distinctive and favourable brand image. It's essential for businesses to actively manage and shape brand associations through consistent messaging, impactful visuals, and positive customer interactions. Understanding the target audience and aligning brand associations with their values and preferences can enhance brand resonance and engagement. In conclusion, the threads that connect a brand's story in consumers' minds are known as brand associations. Businesses can develop a strong brand identity, encourage client loyalty, and stand out in the crowded market by deliberately cultivating positive relationships.

**Brand Image:** In simple terms, brand image is like a brand's reputation. Brand image refers to the overall perception and impression that consumers have of a brand. It is a culmination of various elements, including visual aspects, messaging, experiences, and associations with the brand. Essentially, brand image is how a brand is perceived in the minds of consumers and the impressions it leaves. Consumer perceptions are influenced by diverse factors, such as product quality, marketing impressions, and the level of customer service your brand provides. Managing one's brand image demands meticulous branding efforts, yet the challenge lies in the dynamic nature of brand image, which is susceptible to continuous change influenced by external factors. Emerging trends, current events, and the evaluations of other customers have the potential to alter audience opinions about your brand, either positively or negatively. Sustaining a positive brand image is vital for long-term success. A favourable brand image can lead to enhanced customer loyalty, favourable word-of-mouth, and a market edge. Companies invest in strategic branding initiatives to carefully shape and manage their brand image, ensuring alignment with their overall business objectives and values.

**Brand Loyalty:** Ehrenberg (2000) asserts that since brand loyalty is the foundation of consumer purchases, it is a component that enhances brand equity, or brand value. In addition to describing customers' favourable sentiments toward the brand and the goods or services they are providing, brand loyalty is the marketing success that happens when businesses can keep customers across product lines. Bettman (1979) outlines the connection between brand associations and the fulfilment of customer needs. The greater the recognition of a brand (resulting in more associations), the greater the likelihood that a consumer will buy something from that brand. Burke and Srull (1988) propose that by moderating the relationship between the elements and the brand, it is possible to increase the likelihood that a brand will be selected over its rivals in the market.

Recognition serves as the initial stage in cultivating brand loyalty. For consumers to develop an impression of a particular brand, they must first encounter it. Once recognition is achieved, the brand may become the foremost association when contemplating a particular product or service.

The extensive marketing endeavours undertaken by the brand contribute to this recognition, aiming to establish itself as a household name and reach diverse audiences, whether aligned with or outside the ideal buyer persona. The impact of first impressions is lasting. Therefore, directing resources toward ensuring positive initial interactions is crucial for those seeking to foster a loyal audience. In the digital age, these interactions are predominantly facilitated through a brand's [website](#) and [social media](#) channels. Brand loyalty extends beyond mere support; it transforms loyal customers into brand advocates who actively promote your brand through word-of-mouth. This organic form of

marketing is potent, influencing those who may be undecided to align with your brand. Leveraging existing customer relationships to foster loyalty can lead to the expansion of your customer base. Furthermore, brand loyalty is sustainable, rooted in a profound connection that endures over time. The only threat to this loyalty arises when a brand deviates from its identity and ceases to resonate with consumers. Therefore, investing in cultivating brand loyalty offers long-term benefits by creating lasting connections and fostering a community of brand advocates.

#### **Brand loyalty example:**

Colorbar Cosmetics ranks as one of the [most loved brands](#) in India and sits at No. 3 globally. The indigenous beauty brand has cultivated a robust YouTube following by collaborating with diverse influencers, resulting in over a million engagements during the study period. The brand's ISO certification and commitment to clean beauty have emerged as significant elements in building trust among its fan base, both within India and internationally.

Levi's India - The collaboration between Levi's and Deepika Padukone has significantly [boosted awareness and affection](#) for the already popular clothing brand. In addition to increasing the brand's visibility, the collaboration led to the creation of a collection reflecting Deepika's iconic fashion sense and authentic style. Additionally, Levi's timely campaign during the mid-pandemic on athleisure further demonstrates the brand's responsiveness to current consumer trends, solidifying its appeal.

**Brand Recall:** Brand recall is a crucial aspect of brand awareness that measures a consumer's ability to remember a specific brand when prompted, without any aid or visual cues. It goes beyond simple recognition and shows how well the brand is

remembered by the customer. Wilson's study from 1981 affirms that the higher a brand resides in a consumer's memory, the greater the likelihood that it will be considered for purchase and, subsequently, actually purchased. This demonstrates how crucial brand recall is in affecting customer behaviour and purchase choices. When a brand possesses robust recall, it typically results in enhanced brand equity and market share because the brand consistently remains foremost in the consumer's mind. Enhancing brand awareness contributes to improved brand recall during the purchase decision, emphasising the importance of companies focusing on raising awareness of their brand (Shabbir *et al.*, 2009). Customers are more likely to buy from a brand they can recall (Lu, Chang, and Chang, 2014; Ndlela and Chuchu, 2016). Aided and unaided brand recall are the two primary categories of brand recall.

Aided brand recall involves proactive efforts by the brand to prompt customers to remember their products or services, such as through emails, text messages, or humorous pop-up notifications like Swiggy or Myntra.com.

Unaided brand recall occurs when customers spontaneously remember a brand without any direct communication or cues. Examples include customers recommending a brand's services to a friend or expressing a preference for a specific brand when purchasing without any prior prompts.

Advertisements and brand mascots possess the ability to arouse a variety of emotions, and everyone has likely encountered such experiences. A tick-mark swoosh logo? Nike goes without saying. Nostalgia hits when you hear the Nokia ringtone, the reference to 2 minutes might trigger a desire for a bowl of Maggi.

### **Why it is important to understand the brands and their requirements:**

The significance of a business's branding extends beyond initial perceptions. While it may appear to be composed solely of elements like logos and colours, the brand

serves as the complete identity of the business, imparting it with a distinct personality. Branding has consistently [played a crucial role](#) in business, and its importance has arguably increased in the current landscape. The prevalence of social media exposes consumers to new brands regularly, offering them a wealth of options and research opportunities. While this is beneficial for consumers, it poses challenges for businesses due to heightened competition. In such a competitive environment, companies must take extra measures to ensure they stand out. Investing in the development of a robust brand becomes essential to capture and maintain people's attention. Through effective branding, a company can exert some influence over how it is perceived, making it a crucial aspect that stakeholders and individuals should not overlook.

Contrary to common perception, businesses are not merely selling products; they are selling experiences, emotions, and ideologies. Established brands, such as Coca-Cola, excel at understanding the precise experience they aim to provide to customers when they make or contemplate a purchase.

### **How do advertising agencies support brand campaigns?**

Advertising is a strategy for interacting with consumers of a good or service that involves messages that are sponsored by the senders and intended to educate or sway the recipients. The Federal Law of the Russian Federation "about advertising" from March 13, 2006, supports this definition, according to the Advertising Association of the United Kingdom. According to this legal definition, advertising is any information that is disseminated to an unidentified audience in any way with the intention of drawing attention to the product, creating or sustaining interest, and advancing it in the marketplace. According to Evans & Berman (1995), an advertising campaign, which is directed by the marketing program, consists of several promotional activities aimed at consumers in pertinent market segments to elicit responses and address the strategic or

tactical objectives of a company. There are seven primary components to the advertisement: a communication method that is paid for, possessing a recognised sponsor for media distribution, focusing on audiences, insufficient customisation, and taking action.

**Categorisation of Advertising:** Advertising serves diverse consumer groups and fulfils various functions; classifying it is a complex task. However, it can be categorized into eight main types (Sandage, 1989).

Market segmentation is the process of grouping consumers according to common social, professional, and other characteristics. The audience segment's narrowness for advertising purposes depends on how specific the product or service is.

Impact is divided into two categories: non-commercial (political and social) and commercial (goods and services). The goal of commercial advertising is to maximise sales conditions by creating, maintaining, and increasing demand for products. Conversely, non-commercial advertising is used to attract attention and build a favourable reputation for a business or entrepreneur.

- 1) **Distribution area** - Global, national, regional, and local categories are all included in the distribution area classification. Using interactive videos, satellite TV, international radio, the Internet, and other cutting-edge communication tools, global advertising keeps up with the rapid progress of economic globalisation. On the other hand, audiences within state, regional, city, town, or district boundaries are the focus of the remaining three forms of advertising. Promotional media include television, print, electronic, and outdoor advertising.
- 2) **Implementation** - While visual advertising can be classified as either static or dynamic, textual advertising can be classified as either simple or

complex. While complex text advertising consists of multiple elements such as a title, subtitle, main text module, slogan, etc., simple text advertising is similar to a traditional wall advertisement. While dynamic advertising, for example, uses computer animation or video, statistical advertising may use a suitable photograph or image.

- 3) **Impact techniques** - Include direct and indirect methods. With information like the price and contact details, direct advertising presents the product in an uncomplicated manner and motivates quick action. Conversely, indirect advertising works more covertly, frequently integrating advertising content gradually without the audience's conscious awareness.
- 4) **Addressing techniques** – impersonal and personalised. Using well-known figures, product specialists, or real customers to endorse a product is known as personalised advertising.
- 5) **Promotion**– free or paid. Rarely is advertising done for free. It is typically social or public advertising rather than being done for profit.

### **Functions of Advertising**

**Educating:** Educating the target audience about a company's goods, services, or concepts is one of advertising's main functions. Its goal is to provide customers with accurate and relevant information so they can understand the benefits, features, and worth of the promoted content. New product launches, updates, availability, pricing, and other important information that is vital to customers are often the focus of informative advertising.

### **Having an impact**

Advertising's ability to influence consumer behaviour and decision-making is another essential function. Advertising aims to influence consumer attitudes, preferences, and perceptions through emotional appeals, compelling messaging, and captivating imagery. Advertising encourages consumers to see goods and services as appealing and practical options by enticingly presenting them.

**A Rise in Salience:** Advertising helps to increase brand salience, which is a measure of how well-known and significant a brand is in the eyes of consumers. Advertising guarantees that a brand stays at the top of consumers' minds by sustaining regular and repetitive exposure, which raises the possibility that it will be taken into consideration when a pertinent need or desire arises.

**Adding Value:** By emphasising the unique qualities, advantages, and competitive advantages of goods and services, advertising raises their worth. Advertising helps consumers see products as more appealing, valuable, and able to meet their needs or wants by highlighting their value proposition.

**Building Brand Equity:** Through influencing consumer associations, preferences, and perceptions, advertising helps to build brand equity. It is essential to forge an emotional bond between the target market and the brand. Advertising ensures a consistent perception of the brand and its products over time by reinforcing the brand image and values through consistent messaging.

**Strengthening the Image of the Brand:** To develop and strengthen the brand image, advertising is essential. It helps create a favourable and appealing brand image in the eyes of customers. Advertising creates a strong and distinctive brand image by consistently communicating the brand's values, personality, and unique selling points.

**Developing Demand:** Creating demand for goods or services is one of advertising's most important functions. Advertising creates a sense of urgency by igniting consumer interest, desire, and purchase intent, which compels consumers to act. Effective advertising campaigns generate interest, excitement, and curiosity, which eventually boost revenue and sales.

**Advertising Agencies:** A business can hire an outside advertising agency or use its own internal advertising department to plan promotional activities. This planning phase is essential because it outlines the level and mode of managerial participation in carrying out the advertising campaign strategy. The marketing department or advertising agency may be given full or partial responsibility for the ensuing planning or implementation process. Managers must have a thorough grasp of the benefits and drawbacks of each possible option before deciding how to divide up the responsibilities (Hopkins, 1966). An employee from the sales department, the chief executive, the deputy head of the company, or a designated person, such as an advertising manager, may carry out promotional activities within the company. Direct interaction with advertising media may be used in small businesses with little use of advertising media or little promotional activity. The creation of a specialised advertising department, on the other hand, is advised for more extensive interaction with advertising media (Lambin, 1996).

An advertising agency is described as an intermediary that provides specialised services to advertisers, aiming to enhance their ability to reach and influence potential customers. It operates as an independent business, comprising creative and business professionals who conceive, create, and deploy advertising in various media for clients seeking to attract customers for their products and services. Most agencies primarily offer two essential services to their clients, the advertisers. These services include

- a) the creation and development of ads through creative services, and the selection and placement of ads in various media.
- b) The quality of creativity is crucial for the success of both services.

Advertisers often engage independent agencies to plan and execute, either in part or entirely, their advertising initiatives.

The crucial role of an advertising agency in the organisational marketing process is evident. An impactful advertising campaign is instrumental in boosting sales, fostering brand loyalty, and establishing brand equity. These outcomes collectively contribute to profit growth and an expanded market share. Conversely, the absence of advertising can result in decreased sales, diminishing profits, and a loss of customer engagement. Thus, the role of an advertising agency is indispensable for the organisation's overall success.

The dynamic between an advertising agency and a client resembles a partnership in a tennis match; the success of one is intertwined with the other. When a client presents an advertising task to the agency, a collaborative process unfolds. The agency works closely with the client to devise a solution aligned with the client's objectives. Subsequently, the finalised solution is implemented through numerous media platforms, including print advertisements, radio and television commercials, and others. Collaborating with an [advertising agency](#) empowers businesses to utilise the agency's time, skills, and expertise to elevate their marketing initiatives. In the rapidly changing digital landscape, having professionals adept at navigating complexities is essential for achieving results. By entrusting their marketing endeavours to a reputable agency, knowing that their marketing initiatives are in competent hands, allows businesses to focus on their core competencies.

**How can influencer marketing promote businesses on short-form video platforms?** Brands are continually adapting their use of video content as they observe

what resonates with social media users. The surge in popularity of social media platforms to enter the short-form video marketing trend is actively vying for a share of the viewer audience. About 31% of marketers worldwide are currently spending money on short-form video content, per [HubSpot's most recent report](#) on marketing trends (HubSpot, 2025). Nonetheless, a noteworthy 89% are expected to increase their current investment or set aside money for it. Furthermore, more than any other social media strategy, [33% of marketers](#) intend to increase their investment in short-form video (Mosby, A. 2025).

As reported by [exchange4media.com](#), the Indian short-form video market has experienced robust growth, particularly since the entry of TikTok in 2017 (Exchange4media, 2023). After the Indian government's ban on TikTok, global giants like YouTube Shorts and Instagram Reels, along with domestic platforms such as Moj, Josh, Chingari, and Roposo, have stepped in to fill the void. Short-form content encompasses various formats, including images, videos, and concise blogs or articles. It typically aligns with current trends, allowing creators and advertisers to leverage these trends to produce interesting material that appeals to their audience and boosts overall engagement.

In an era of diminishing attention spans, short-form videos have become a transformative tool for brands. According to Patel (2017), Gen Z, characterised by an [8-second attention span](#), while millennials, who dominate social media, have a slightly longer 12-second attention span, brands must adopt short-form videos to efficiently convey their message (Forbes). The popularity of short-form videos as a marketing tool is on the rise. The factor of 'shareability' plays a pivotal role, as engaging and entertaining videos are more likely to be shared on social media. Platforms like Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, Moj, and Josh app facilitate users in creating and sharing videos, extending their cross-platform reach. Viral trends and popular audio are crucial elements

of short-form videos. Brands can ride the popularity wave and gain significant exposure by embracing the newest challenges or viral ideas. Influencers create content that [resonates deeply](#) with their audience by incorporating popular audio snippets and trending hashtags (McDonald, 2022). This increases brand visibility, draws in new followers, and expands organic reach.

Here are several ways in which influencer marketing on short-form video platforms contributes to business success:

- 1) **Increased visibility and reach:** Influencers on short-form video platforms often have large and engaged followings. Partnering with influencers allows businesses to tap into these audiences, increasing brand visibility and expanding reach within the platform's user base.
- 2) **Authenticity and Trust:** Short-form videos provide a more authentic and relatable way for influencers to connect with their audience. When influencers endorse a product or service, it often feels like a genuine recommendation, fostering trust among viewers. This authenticity can significantly impact the perception of the brand.
- 3) **Creativity and Storytelling:** Short-form videos encourage creative storytelling in a concise format. Influencers can showcase products or services in innovative ways, making content more engaging and memorable. This creativity helps brands stand out and capture the attention of viewers, who may be more receptive to concise and entertaining content.
- 4) **Targeted Campaigns:** Influencers frequently focus on particular interests or niches, which enables companies to target a specific audience with their campaigns. Higher conversion rates are the consequence of this focused

strategy, which guarantees that the content reaches people who are more likely to be interested in the brand.

- 5) **Viral Potential:** Short-form videos have a higher potential to go viral due to their shareable nature. If an influencer creates compelling content, it has the potential to be shared widely, exposing the brand to a broader audience and increasing brand awareness organically.
- 6) **Adapting to Trends:** Short-form video platforms are dynamic, with trends evolving rapidly. Influencers are often quick to adapt to these trends, keeping content fresh and aligned with the platform's culture. Businesses can leverage these trends to stay relevant and resonate with the platform's user base.
- 7) **Measurable Impact:** Influencer marketing campaigns on short-form video platforms provide measurable metrics, allowing businesses to assess the success of their collaborations. Metrics such as views, likes, shares, and comments offer insights into the effectiveness of the campaign and the level of audience engagement.
- 8) **Diversification of Content:** Integrating influencer content into a brand's marketing strategy diversifies the type of content available. Short-form videos complement other marketing efforts and provide a dynamic element to the overall content strategy.
- 9) This study will focus on addressing the statistical approach to providing a significant salience to the businesses that are constantly engaging with these influencer categories to drive the objectives and leveraging the platform dynamic to amplify the campaign results.

#### **Perspectives of Influencer marketing via Short video platform-**

- 1) **Brand perspective** - the platforms present distinctive chances for companies to engage their audiences in a fun yet efficient manner. Brands can use these platforms to increase brand awareness, drive conversions, and reach new consumers with the correct approach and innovative guidance.
- 2) **Influencer perspective** - Influencers aim to increase brand recall and awareness by producing relatable and genuine content about a brand. Influencers who support brands have the power to generate buzz, boost word-of-mouth advertising, and improve brand recall. It also aids in expanding the audience, boosting interaction, and increasing traffic conversion rates for the goods or services.
- 3) **Consumer perspective** - the following influencers provide a variety of educational videos that let customers see how a product or service functions in real life, find any flaws before buying it, and discover benefits they might not be aware of in text-based formats. Additionally, these kinds of content formats will instil trust and authenticity, which will persuade people to buy.
- 4) **Agency perspective** - short video platforms are a crucial driver of brand advancement, giving them the necessary boost with ease. Leading social media influencers continuously maintain a high standard of entertainment by posting up-to-date and pertinent content, thanks to their sizable viewership and devoted following. The Densu Aegis (2023) report gives industries and brands the ability to drive impactful outcomes.

## **Digital Trust Frameworks**

Trusting in digital spaces has been well theorised in recent academic work. McKnight, Choudhury & Kacmar (2002) developed a model of digital trust that focused on structural guarantees, situational normality and perceived ability. Put in the context of influencer marketing, this means that followers assess not just an influencer's authenticity, but also credibility cues such as disclosure practices, platform trustworthiness and brand-influencer fit. Through this theoretical lens, we have been able to better understand how influencers make engagement trust based on the surface of interaction measures.

### **Cultural Differences in Influencer Marketing**

Xia (2008) stated that, if transferred to the realm of cyberspace, this indicates that, in the global context, there are local factors through which consumer trust takes on a different meaning (cultural embeddedness). Cultural dimensions, in collectivist cultures such as India, peer approval and social acceptance have a great impact on purchase decisions (De Mooij, 2019). This is why micro-influencers with more down-to-earth vibes that focus on relationship building may be seen as more trustworthy than celebrity influencers. Cross-cultural insights enhance the novelty of the current study by placing the influencer marketing persuasive outcomes in the Indian socio-cultural background.

### **Authenticity and Parasocial Interaction**

The idea of authenticity in connection with parasocial interaction theory (Horton & Wohl, 1956) has been particularly operative, given that it describes a process of forming one-sided yet intimate relationships between audiences and media personalities. Applied to influencer marketing, the implication is that authenticity cues like informal speech, personal story sharing and revealing flaws will lead followers to view influencers as “real” and trustworthy. Existing studies (Abidin, 2016; Audrezet et al., 2020) have demonstrated that audiences are more likely to engage in consumer behaviour as a result

of purchase recommendations if parasocial attachment engenders perceived credibility. The originality of the research goes beyond a description of industry trends, thanks to this theoretical grounding.

## **2.4 Summary**

Through this study, which will be derived from the goals of this dissertation, expected and exceptional knowledge will be established. For greater comprehension, this section will now come to an end. As was previously mentioned, young audiences want brands to engage with them in a two-way, collaborative way. This may be because marketing is generally becoming more digital. Additionally, social media has expanded significantly as a result of the development of the internet and marketing communications. As previously mentioned, the youth audience's purchase intention will be influenced or driven by the social media influencer. The reason for this is that they typically spend the majority of their time on social media sites without intending to make an online purchase. Therefore, in order to attract or influence millennials to make online purchases, fashion brands must use excellent communication to capture their interest and have a positive impact. Furthermore, in order to accomplish this strategy, this study suggests that brands work closely with social media influencers. Nonetheless, the primary goal and the approach used to advance this important study will be discussed in the following section. The research aims to present the effectiveness of influencer marketing and its implications for brand value and trust building. Literature emphasises that communication will be different at different stages, and we would like to study and specify the communication around short video formats and their significance for brand value and trust. Going further, the research will concentrate on brand engagement to voice out their products and services. The literature will definitely contribute to overall

concepts, and I do hope that my research will help us comprehend the difficulties better of influencer marketing and brands' effectiveness in communication to build trust value.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Overview of the Research Problem

The accelerated growth of short-video platforms has reshaped brand–consumer interaction, with opportunities and challenges to establish enduring trust and brand equity. As India's post-pandemic environment has seen a surge in local brands and startups, a fiercer competition has been created, and effective brand positioning and building positive brand attitudes have become more difficult (Keller, 1993). Applications like Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and Moj have become the hub of influence-driven marketing, but most campaigns are unsuccessful in driving high visibility to long-term consumer loyalty.

Industry reports indicate that 90% of marketers view social media as crucial for their business, and 63% invest more than six hours a week on these platforms (Stelzner, 2016). Despite increasing metrics of engagement—views, shares, and conversions (Exchange4Media, 2022)—today's performance indicators frequently fail to account for greater consumer bonding and brand loyalty (HubSpot, 2022). In addition, the lack of a coherent framework to describe how influencer marketing on short-form platforms drives trust, loyalty, and purchase behaviour is a major knowledge gap (Cuevas-Molano *et al.*, 2021). This research closes that gap by bringing together brand theory, influencer marketing theory, and consumer behaviour models to suggest a strong, context-appropriate framework for the Indian digital market.

### **3.2 Operationalisation of Theoretical Constructs**

#### **a) Influencer Marketing: Strategies and Effectiveness**

Influencer marketing research explores how influencers engage audiences effectively, with a strong emphasis on the role of authenticity and trust. Abidin (2016) explains that when influencers are seen as genuine and relatable, they build consumer trust, which enhances engagement. Lou and Yuan (2019) delve into the psychological effects of influencers on consumers, suggesting that those who perceive influencers as credible are more likely to interact with their content, ultimately increasing conversion rates. Keller (2021) highlights the significance of platform-specific features in shaping engagement, pointing out that short video platforms foster deeper connections between influencers and their audiences due to their interactive and viral nature. Studies like those by Abidin (2016) and Lou and Yuan (2019) provide valuable insights into the psychological drives behind effective influencer marketing and establish a theoretical framework for understanding audience engagement. However, much of the existing research focuses on popular platforms like Instagram and YouTube, neglecting the distinct dynamics of short-form video platforms. These studies do not fully explore how platforms like TikTok enhance engagement through interactive features such as music, challenges, and viral trends.

#### **Community and Consumer Engagement in Marketing**

The concept of community in marketing has been essential in understanding consumer behaviour, with Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) and Cova and Dalli (2009) introducing the idea of brand communities—groups of consumers who share a common interest in a brand or product and engage regularly. Research indicates that these communities strengthen consumer loyalty and drive word-of-mouth recommendations. However, much of the existing research on community-building has focused on

traditional brand-consumer interactions, with limited exploration of digital communities emerging on platforms like TikTok. Smith, Leonis and Anandavalli (2021) highlight how short video platforms create new opportunities for brands and influencers to foster digital communities by engaging audiences through challenges, collaborations, and user-generated content. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) provide foundational theories that explain consumer loyalty and brand attachment, while Smith, Leonis and Anandavalli (2021) presented a contemporary perspective by examining the interactive features of short video platforms and their role in community formation. Despite these insights, most research remains centred on traditional platforms, overlooking the dynamic and interactive nature of digital-first platforms like TikTok. Additionally, there is limited research on how influencers cultivate long-term community engagement on short video platforms and whether these interactions translate into sustained brand loyalty.

- a) Technological Tools in Influencer Marketing
- b) Technological advancements, including data analytics, AI, and visualisation tools, have transformed the way brands manage influencer marketing campaigns. Jones and Lucas (2021) highlight the role of AI-powered analytics in tracking key metrics such as engagement, demographic reach, and consumer sentiment. Additionally, platforms like TikTok and Instagram utilise their own algorithms to prioritise content, increasing its chances of going viral and enhancing visibility. Keller (2021) examines the impact of these algorithms on content discoverability, arguing that TikTok's viral nature amplifies influencer marketing outcomes more effectively than traditional methods. While Jones and Lucas (2021) provide a detailed understanding of how technological tools measure campaign effectiveness, Keller (2021) emphasises the

significance of TikTok's algorithm in driving content reach. However, much of the existing research focuses on AI and analytics in isolation, without considering how these tools contribute to long-term consumer loyalty and community building. Furthermore, there is limited research on how emerging technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) could be incorporated into influencer marketing strategies to enhance engagement on short video platforms.

### **Influencer Marketing Case Studies and Industry Practices**

Industry case studies have offered insightful information about the practical uses of influencer marketing, with Smith, Leonis and Anandavalli (2021) and Mir (2022) documenting successful campaigns that gained viral traction on TikTok, significantly boosting brand awareness and consumer engagement. A notable example is the #GucciModelChallenge, where influencers creatively showcased Gucci products, generating millions of views and interactions. While these case studies offer concrete examples and practical lessons for marketers, they primarily focus on specific campaigns and their outcomes rather than developing a broader framework that could be applied across different short video platforms. Smith, Leonis and Anandavalli (2021) and Mir (2022) highlight the effectiveness of influencer-driven marketing strategies, demonstrating how brands can leverage influencers for increased reach and engagement. However, most case studies remain campaign-specific, lacking a universal conceptual model for influencer marketing. Additionally, there is limited analysis of how influencers and brands cultivate long-term engagement and community-building beyond individual promotional efforts.

### 3.3 Research Gaps

- a) **Lack of Focus on Short Video Platforms:** While influencer marketing has been studied broadly across social media, the unique characteristics of platforms for short-form videos, such as Instagram Reels and TikTok, have not been sufficiently explored. These platforms operate differently from traditional social media, offering brief, viral, and often interactive content, which calls for new frameworks and models of engagement.
- b) **Absence of a "Togetherness" Framework:** Although the concept of community has been extensively studied, the idea of "togetherness" within influencer marketing—where influencers, brands, and consumers collaboratively form an engaging and loyal group—remains underexplored. The purpose of this study is to close this gap by investigating how short video platforms foster a deeper sense of connection between all three stakeholders.
- c) **Fragmented Integration of Technology:** Current research often treats technologies like AI and data analytics as separate tools, with limited focus on how these can be integrated into cohesive influencer marketing strategies. There is a need for more research on how technology can be used not only to measure success but also to enhance the overall consumer experience, particularly in terms of engagement and community-building.
- d) **Cultural and Regional Nuances:** Influencer marketing research often overlooks the role of cultural and regional differences in shaping campaign strategies. Short-form video platforms are global, but consumer behaviours and perceptions vary widely across cultures. This research will

take these factors into account, providing localised strategies for marketers.

### **3.4. Justification for Current Research**

#### **Sampling Approach**

This research was conducted using purposive sampling, based on those who had direct insight into and experience with short-form influencer marketing. They were the cohort of participants — influencers, brand experts and customers — intentionally selected for content-rich cases. Purposive sampling was considered suitable as the aim of the research was not to obtain random representation, but rather to produce in-depth insight and explanatory findings, which corresponds with the exploratory nature of this dissertation study.

The gaps identified above justify the need for this study, which will:

- 1) **Develop a Comprehensive Influencer Marketing Framework:** This research will explore the unique features of short video platforms and offer a structured framework that combines influencer marketing theory with practical strategies, specifically tailored to these platforms.
- 2) **Introduce a "Togetherness" Approach:** This study will delve into how influencers, brands, and audiences form a community of "togetherness," fostering long-term brand loyalty and consumer engagement.
- 3) **Integrate Technology into Marketing Strategies:** By exploring how technological tools like AI, VR, and data analytics can be used in combination to enhance influencer marketing, this research will provide a roadmap for brands looking to optimise their strategies on short-form video platforms.

**4) Offer Region-Specific Marketing Insights:**

- 5) The study will consider the role of cultural and regional factors in influencer marketing, offering localised strategies that brands can implement to resonate with diverse consumer bases.

### **3.5 Methodology**

#### **Sampling Approach**

This research was conducted using purposive sampling, based on who directed insight and experience with short-form influencer marketing. They were the cohort of participants — influencers, brand experts and customers — intentionally selected for content-rich cases. Purposive sampling was considered suitable as the aim of the research was not to obtain random representation, but rather to produce in-depth insight and explanatory findings, which corresponds with the exploratory nature of the study.

This study primarily employs a literature review and a descriptive research approach, utilising surveys to collect empirical data. The gathered data is analysed to identify the characteristics of online users, such as gender, country of origin, income, and education, and how these factors influence their perception of influencers and purchasing decisions. Additionally, the research examines the extent to which influencers impact consumer purchase involvement compared to traditional brand advertisements. This chapter also defines key terms related to the research methodology, provides details on participant characteristics, validates the research approach, and explains the rationale behind the selected methodology.

There are limitations to the methodological approach. The use of purposive sampling limits the generalised ability but provides depth and relevance. The sample size, although appropriate for saturation purposes, cannot generalise all the issues within the

sector. Also, the small quantitative magnitude decreases confidence in subgroup results despite a sufficient sample size for the main models. These are recognised limitations; however, they do not detract from the work's overall value.

### **3.6 Research Approach-**

#### **Qualitative Coding and Analysis**

Thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke's six-step process of (1) becoming familiar with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining a theme and naming it, and finally (6) writing up was applied to the qualitative material. Codes were iteratively developed and categorised into themes including authenticity, trust, engagement and disclosure. Selected quotes were included in the results to exemplify each theme. Reliability in coding was ensured by repeated checking of the data and by keeping a codebook to enhance transparency.

The deductive and inductive approaches are the two main approaches in research methodology that can be used separately or in combination (Sekaran, 2003). By testing data using pre-existing theories, the deductive approach makes it possible to formulate research questions and objectives. This approach, which is frequently used in scientific research, is thought to be the best at connecting theory and investigation (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009; Bell *et al.*, 2019). Based on their theoretical understanding of the topic, researchers formulate hypotheses, which are subsequently operationalised and connected to pertinent ideas or models for examination (Bell *et al.*, 2019; Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

On the other hand, the inductive approach concentrates on collecting information via experiments or observations in order to investigate a research problem (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). This approach seeks to comprehend the problem and utilise the information gathered to create a theoretical framework as a consequence of the study (ibid).

Furthermore, it aims to produce empirical generalisations and draw wide-ranging, trustworthy conclusions; to guarantee validity, a substantial amount of data is needed (Bell *et al.*, 2019).

Saunders *et al.* (2009) state that when a research topic has extensive existing literature that allows for the development of a theoretical framework and hypotheses, the deductive approach is generally more suitable. However, if the topic is relatively new with limited prior research, the inductive approach is preferred. In the case of influencer marketing, while substantial research exists, there is a gap in understanding its impact, particularly in the context of short video platforms beyond Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Additionally, there is limited research focusing not just on social media users but also on influencers. Given these gaps, this study adopts an inductive approach, as case studies using qualitative research methods typically align with this approach in exploring the connection between research and theory.

### **3.7 Research Methods**

The statistical validity of the quantitative element was considered. Assumptions of regression — multicollinearity, residual normality, and outlier influence — were checked for, but no serious violations were observed. Some subgroup analysis was restricted by the small sample size; however, the main regression results are strong. This methodology gives reliability of the models while incorporating bounds for generalizability.

The two primary categories of research methods—quantitative and qualitative—are used for data collection, processing, and analysis (Bell *et al.*, 2019). How data is collected and analysed is where these methods diverge most (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

The quantitative approach is appropriate for studies where quantifiable data is needed for analysis since it concentrates on numerical data, which is frequently displayed through statistics and figures (Bell *et al.*, 2019; Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

The qualitative approach, on the other hand, works with non-numerical data that is mainly expressed in words and is used in studies that call for a thorough comprehension of a topic that is impossible to quantify (Bell *et al.*, 2019; Saunders *et al.*, 2009). This method works especially well for studying social interactions and human behaviour (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005).

We decided to conduct both qualitative and quantitative research for our study. In actuality, the objective of our research and area of study on influencer marketing in the short video platforms YouTube Shorts, Instagram, Josh, Moj, Chingari, and Roposo is to delve deeper into the topic and comprehend the influence on consumer behaviour, thereby establishing consumer and brand trust.

### **3.8 Research Design**

The general goal of the study is referred to as the research design, which also offers an organised framework for data collection and analysis. It also reflects the researcher's choices regarding what aspects to emphasise. On the other hand, the research method involves the various tools and techniques used for data collection.

This research investigates the impact on consumer behaviour on short video platforms, building brand value and consumer trust. Existing literature indicates that the credibility and appeal of celebrities, as sources of influence, have a significant influence on how consumers behave. To improve brand perception and engagement, companies often integrate influencers and celebrities into their marketing strategies (Ohanian, 1990; Agrawal and Kamakura, 1995; Tüketici ve Tüketim Araştırmaları Dergisi / Journal of

Consumer and Consumption Research 168 The Relationships among Influencer Credibility, Brand Trust, and Purchase Intention: The Case of Instagram. (Choi *et al.*, 2005; Seno and Lukas, 2007; Amos *et al.*, 2008; Korkut and Arslan, 2015; Mikuláš and Svetlik, 2016; Eru *et al.*, 2018; Yolaçan and Özeltürkay, 2018; Breves *et al.*, 2019; Şimşek and Uğur, 2003).

Celebrity credibility has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intentions, according to research by Ohanian (1991) and Pornpitakpan (2004). Furthermore, Eru *et al.* (2018) discovered that while both attractiveness and trustworthiness contribute to brand trust, influencers' attractiveness affects young consumers' purchase decisions. Additionally, Shamli (2019) found that purchase intention is positively impacted by brand trust, highlighting the significance of credibility in influencer marketing tactics.

Cupchik (2001) asserts that qualitative approaches can help develop hypotheses to investigate particular functional relationships and provide in-depth insights into underlying processes. Understanding the relationship between influencers used by businesses and their followers—and the possible influence on consumer behaviour—is the main goal of this study.

This thesis will make use of a case study. Three entities are taken into consideration in the case study on the brand integration of popular short video platforms: influencers, brands that use these influencers as a marketing tactic, and users of short video platforms that follow these influencers. Examining the connections between various variables and comprehending more general problems are made possible by this design, which also makes it possible to question generalisation (Bell *et al.*, 2019). Consumer behaviour and the use of influencers as a marketing tactic are the study's variables.

The purpose of the conversational interview was to establish a rapport with the participant regarding the significance of their experience, as well as to investigate and collect experiential narrative material, as suggested by van Manen (1998). In order to provide insights for identifying suitable influencers, agencies, and platform partners to leverage the goals derived from true potential, the study sought to cover the aspects of relatable experiences. M. van Manen (1998). Investigating lived experience.

### **3.9 Research strategy**

With a strong focus on the perspectives of participants, qualitative research enables an authentic investigation of their points of view (Bell *et al.*, 2019). Since the goal of this study is to investigate how influencers affect the purchasing decisions of their followers, this methodology is especially beneficial. Gaining insights into the influencer-follower dynamic requires an understanding of the experiences and perceptions of the individuals involved. By focusing on their perspectives, this research aims to uncover how this relationship shapes consumer behaviour.

Quantitative research enables researchers to select data collection methods that align with an explanatory research approach. Given that this study's goal is to investigate the connection between source credibility, parasocial relationships, and purchase intention, it is classified as an explanatory study (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The study examines the role of influencer marketing in modern businesses, utilising both primary and secondary quantitative data.

The interviews will be conducted with a diverse group of individuals. To gain insights from both users and influencers, we will interview followers to understand their perspective on influencers and what value they perceive in them. We also invite influencers to explore their roles, their relationships with their followers, the companies

they collaborate with, and their views on their influence on social media. Additionally, we will interact with companies of Moj, Josh, Chingari and Roposo sectors to comprehend how they interact with influencers and the advantages these collaborations provide. The company, influencer, and consumer viewpoints on the goals of influencer marketing were the main topics of the interviews. Additionally, the behavioural effects of this strategy on teens and young adults were examined.

Most of the interviews were held in person, and a few were conducted online via Zoom for convenience and to overcome geographical barriers. Each interview was carried out by one member, managing the questions, taking notes, and considering additional relevant information that arose, which will be added in the data analysis section. All participants were informed upfront before the conversation to record the information, with a verbal agreement made regarding their preference for anonymity.

### **3.10 Data collection**

This section details the methods used to gather data, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of how influencer decisions on short video marketing platforms like Moj, Josh, Chingari, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels affect consumers. Data collection plays a fundamental role in academic research, providing the foundation for analysis and interpretation. The methodology for data collection is categorised into **primary data** and **secondary data**, both of which incorporate **qualitative** and **quantitative** approaches to obtain a thorough comprehension of consumer behaviour, brand value, and consumer trust on short video platforms in India.

#### **3.10.1 Primary Data Collection**

Information obtained directly from sources by the researcher for a particular study is referred to as primary data (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). It is instrumental in generating first-hand insights into consumer behaviour and influencer marketing on short video platforms.

### **Qualitative Primary Data**

Qualitative data collection focuses on non-numerical, descriptive insights obtained from participants through techniques like focus groups and in-depth interviews, and observations (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005). This method is particularly useful when exploring subjective perspectives on brand engagement and trust-building via influencer marketing (Bell, Bryman, and Harley, 2019). For this study, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with social media users, influencers, and marketing professionals in India to understand:

- 1) The perception of influencers and their impact on purchase decisions.
- 2) How brand endorsements through short videos foster consumer trust.
- 3) The role of influencer marketing in shaping brand identity.
- 4) Prior studies have emphasised the value of qualitative research in digital marketing. For instance, Yang, Zhao, and Ma (2019) analysed user experiences with short video platforms, highlighting the psychological aspects of consumer engagement. Similarly, a study by Sair and Danish (2018) explored social media marketing's influence on young consumers, reinforcing the need for direct consumer insights.

### **Quantitative Primary Data**

Quantitative research involves numerical data collection and statistical analysis to identify patterns, relationships, and trends (Gratton and Jones, 2010). This method is particularly relevant for measuring the impact of influencer credibility, parasocial

relationships, and purchase intentions on short video platforms (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). To analyse these factors empirically, a structured online survey was administered to a sample of Indian consumers who actively engage with influencer content on Instagram, YouTube Shorts, Josh, Moj, Chingari, Roposo, and Instagram reels. The survey included Likert-scale questions to quantify:

- 1) Trust levels in influencers versus traditional advertisements.
- 2) Consumer preferences for influencer-endorsed brands.
- 3) The extent of engagement with short video platforms.
- 4) This approach aligns with research by Onaolapo and Oyewole (2018), who assessed social media advertising's effects on consumer behaviour using a survey-based quantitative method.

### **3.10.2 Secondary Data Collection**

Existing information gathered by others is referred to as secondary data from researchers, institutions, or organisations (Bhat, 2020). This data is used to build a theoretical foundation and validate primary research findings.

#### **Qualitative Secondary Data**

- a) Secondary qualitative data consists of prior research, journal articles, industry reports, and case studies (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005). In this study, **academic literature on influencer marketing, digital consumer behaviour, and trust-building mechanisms** was reviewed. Sources included:
- b) The effectiveness of short-form video advertising is examined in "Short Video Marketing: What, When, and How Short-Branded Videos Impact Consumer Engagement" (Internet Research, 2022).

- c) An overview of how consumers interact with short videos can be found in "A Historical Review and Theoretical Mapping on Short Video Studies 2005-2020" (Open Media Studies, 2020).
- d) The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Purchase Intention: A Study on the Fashion Industry" (Hidayatullah, Iqbal, and Karim, 2020) examines how brand perception is influenced by influencer content. These studies helped contextualise the evolving role of short video platforms in marketing and their influence on **brand value and consumer trust in India**.

### **Quantitative Secondary Data**

Quantitative secondary data includes market statistics, social media analytics, and existing numerical datasets (Saunders et al., 2019). Key secondary sources for this research included:

- a) **Statista Reports on Social Media Usage in India (2023)** – analysing user demographics and engagement trends.
- b) **YouGov Consumer Insights Report (2022)** – providing survey-based data on influencer trust levels.
- c) **Nielsen Report on Digital Video Consumption (2021)** – offering quantitative insights into consumer behaviour on short video platforms.
- d) These datasets were instrumental in identifying growth trends, platform usage patterns, and consumer engagement metrics on TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts in the Indian market.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

To achieve a holistic understanding of consumer behaviour and brand trust on short video platforms, a **mixed-method approach** was adopted. This combination of qualitative and quantitative methods aligns with the recommendations of Bell *et al.* (2019), who emphasise the importance of triangulation in research. Additionally, Creswell (2014) highlights how integrating both approaches enhances the reliability and depth of findings.

The **qualitative** component provides nuanced insights into consumer psychology and influencer perceptions, while the **quantitative** aspect ensures statistical validation of behavioural patterns. This dual approach strengthens the study's contribution to existing literature on **influencer marketing, consumer trust, and brand engagement in the Indian short-video ecosystem.**

## CHAPTER IV:

### RESULTS

#### 4.1 Research Question One

##### Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total of 400 valid responses were collected for the study. Figure 4.1 presents the core demographic characteristics (age, gender, and education), while Table 4.1 outlines professional and occupational attributes of the respondents. The sample was relatively balanced across gender categories, ensuring that perspectives were not skewed toward a particular group. The age distribution was concentrated in the younger cohorts (18–34 years), reflecting the dominant user base of short-form video platforms such as Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts. Educational qualifications indicated that a majority of respondents possessed at least undergraduate or postgraduate degrees, highlighting an informed consumer base with the capacity to critically evaluate influencer marketing content. Professionally, respondents represented a mix of students, early-career professionals, and working executives, thereby providing insights from both aspirational and purchasing-capable segments. Such a demographic spread is consistent with previous studies on influencer marketing audiences, which emphasise younger, educated, and digitally active cohorts as the primary consumers of short-form content (Ki & Kim, 2019; Abidin, 2016).

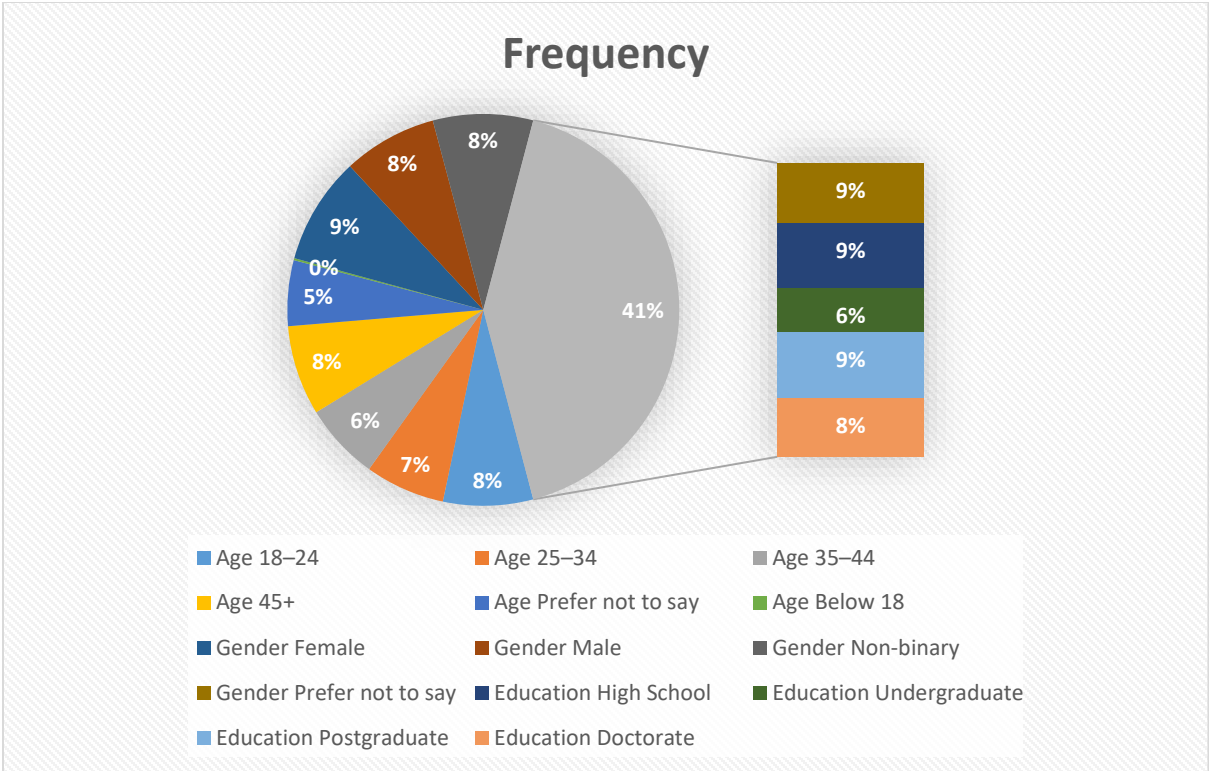
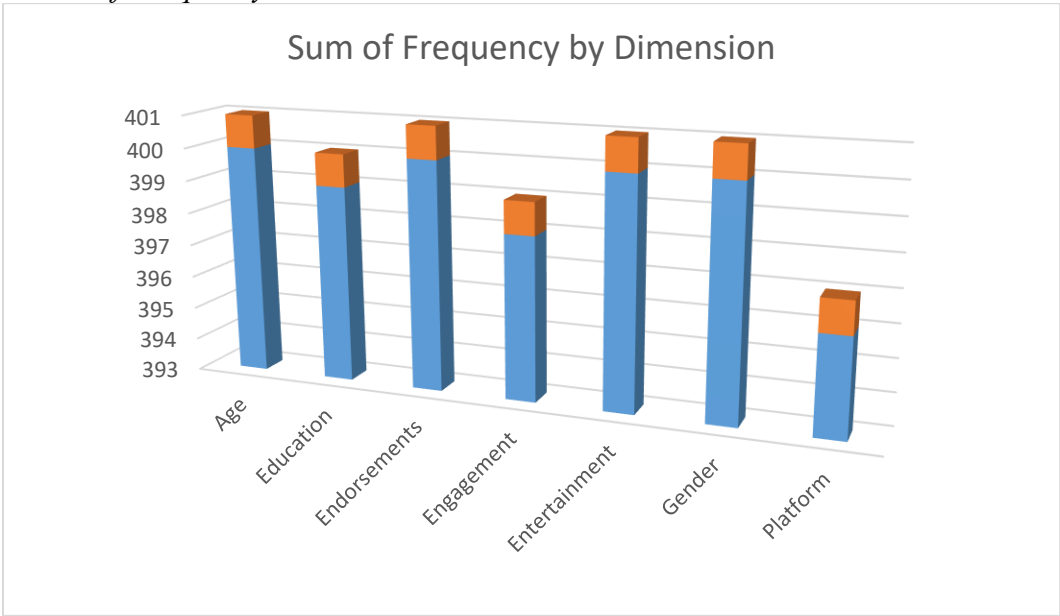


Figure 4.1 Demographic pie chart

Table 4.1 Sum of Frequency



***RQ1: Research Question One: How do influencers shape consumer perceptions and behaviours on social media platforms?***

To examine how influencers shape consumer perceptions and behaviours on social media platforms, descriptive statistics were generated using SPSS. The analysis explored platform usage, engagement activities, brand recall, and purchase behaviours. Both frequency distributions and measures of central tendency (mean, standard deviation) are reported.

*Table 4.2 Distribution of consumers' primary short-form platforms.*

| <b>Platform</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Instagram Reels | 180              | 45%               |
| YouTube Shorts  | 150              | 37.5%             |
| Facebook Reels  | 50               | 12.5%             |
| Other           | 20               | 5%                |

Table 4.2 shows that Instagram Reels (45%) and YouTube Shorts (37.5%) dominate as the preferred platforms, indicating where influencer content has the greatest consumer reach.

Engagement activities such as liking, sharing, commenting, and participating in challenges were also reported at high levels. The mean scores indicated that consumers are most likely to engage by liking ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ) and sharing content ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ), suggesting active participation with influencer-driven posts.

***4.2 Research Question Two***

***RQ2: Research Question Two: How effective are influencer marketing strategies in building trust and brand loyalty among consumers?***

#### 4.2.1 Descriptive: Trust drivers

Respondents selected the following trust drivers (multiple responses allowed):

*Table 4.3 Distribution of consumers' primary short-form platforms.*

| <b>Trust Factor</b>             | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Personal relatability           | 60               | 7.4%              |
| Transparency about sponsorships | 54               | 6.7%              |
| Authenticity                    | 53               | 6.6%              |
| Consistency in content quality  | 52               | 6.4%              |
| Expertise in niche              | 51               | 6.3%              |
| Expertise in niche              | 50               | 6.2%              |
| Personal relatability           | 49               | 6.1%              |
| Consistency in content quality  | 48               | 5.9%              |
| Transparency about sponsorships | 48               | 5.9%              |
| Authenticity                    | 45               | 5.6%              |
| Transparency about sponsorships | 39               | 4.8%              |
| Personal relatability           | 33               | 4.1%              |
| Consistency in content quality  | 29               | 3.6%              |
| Authenticity                    | 28               | 3.5%              |

|                                   |    |      |
|-----------------------------------|----|------|
| Personal relatability             | 24 | 3.0% |
| Expertise in niche                | 24 | 3.0% |
| Authenticity                      | 23 | 2.8% |
| Consistency in content quality    | 23 | 2.8% |
| Transparency about sponsorships   | 22 | 2.7% |
| Expertise in niche                | 21 | 2.6% |
| Expertise in the product category | 9  | 1.1% |
| Personal relatability             | 8  | 1.0% |
| Transparency about sponsorships   | 8  | 1.0% |
| Consistency in content quality    | 7  | 0.9% |
| High follower count               | 1  | 0.1% |

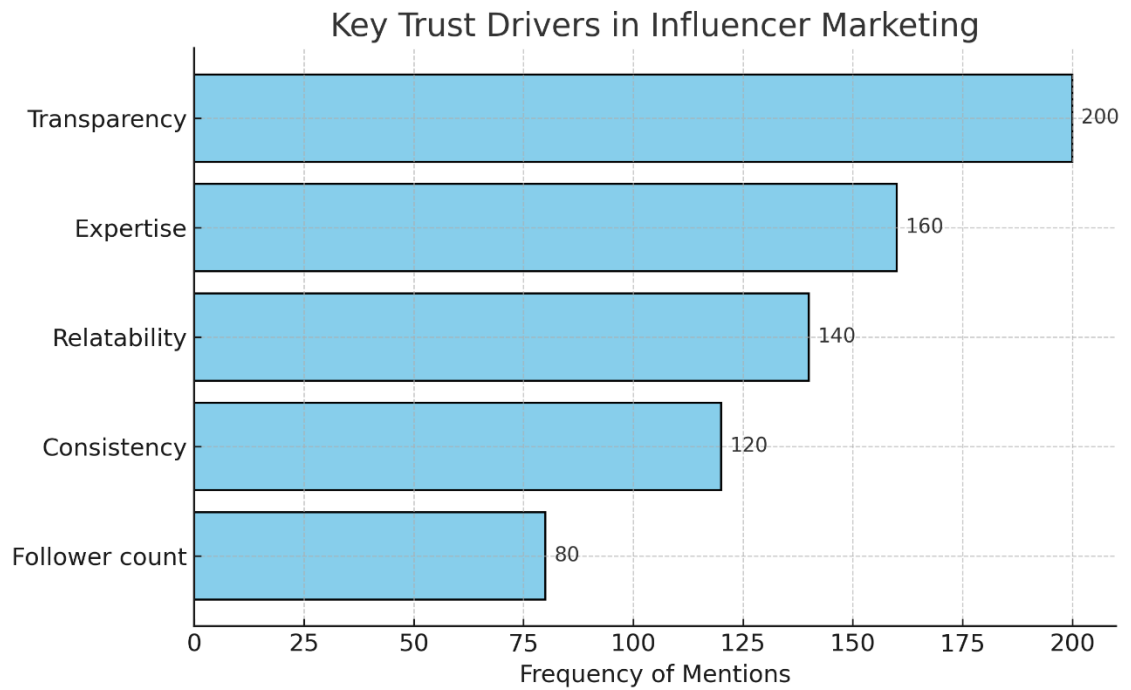


Figure 4.2 Trust and Recommendation

#### 4.2.2 Association: Trust and Recommendation (Chi-square)

A chi-square test of independence was performed between dichotomized trust and dichotomized recommendation (High vs Low).

Chi-square = 0.806, df = 1, p = 0.3692.

Table 4.4: Contingency table (Trust x Recommend)

|      | High | Low |
|------|------|-----|
| High | 64   | 94  |
| Low  | 86   | 156 |

#### 4.2.3 Group comparison: Micro-influencer preference (t-test)

Independent samples t-test comparing trust scores between respondents who prefer micro-influencers and those who do not: t = 1.283, p = 0.2016, Cohen's d = 0.172.

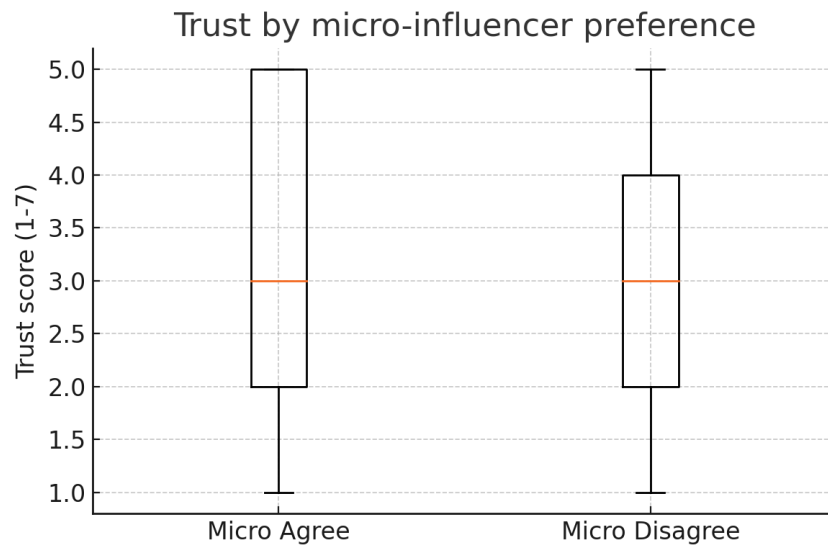


Figure 4.3 Micro-influencer preference

#### 4.2.4 Correlation: Authenticity and Recommendation

Pearson correlation between authenticity (item) and recommendation (item):  $r = -0.020$ ,  $p = 0.6841$ ,  $n = 400$ .

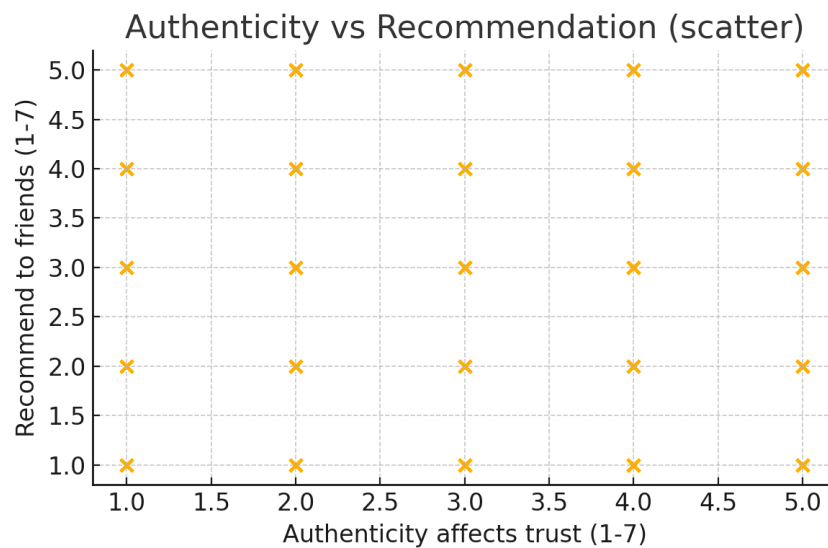


Figure 4.4 Authenticity and Recommendation

#### 4.2.5 Regression: Predicting Recommendation (Loyalty)

The OLS regression predicting recommendation produced R-squared = 0.005.

Key predictors:

*Table 4.5 Predicting Recommendation (Loyalty)*

| <b>Predictor</b>                                                               | <b>Coef</b> | <b>p-value</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| The authenticity of an influencer affects my trust in the brand they promote.  | -0.0205     | 0.6892         |
| I trust influencers' recommendations when choosing products.                   | 0.0584      | 0.2345         |
| I can easily identify brands promoted by influencers on short-video platforms. | -0.0005     | 0.992          |
| I like, comment, or share posts from influencers who promote brands.           | 0.027       | 0.5875         |

Trust and authenticity drivers were examined through multiple-response items.

Consumers reported that transparency, unbiased reviews, and relatable influencers were the most important attributes for establishing trust. Table 4.6 presents the top trust-building factors.

*Table 4.6 Trust-building factors*

| <b>Trust Factor</b>        | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Transparency in promotions | 200              | 50%               |

|                             |     |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|
| Expertise in product domain | 160 | 40% |
| Relatability                | 140 | 35% |
| Consistency in endorsements | 120 | 30% |
| High follower count         | 80  | 20% |

Transparency (50%) emerged as the most significant trust driver, followed by expertise (40%) and relatability (35%).

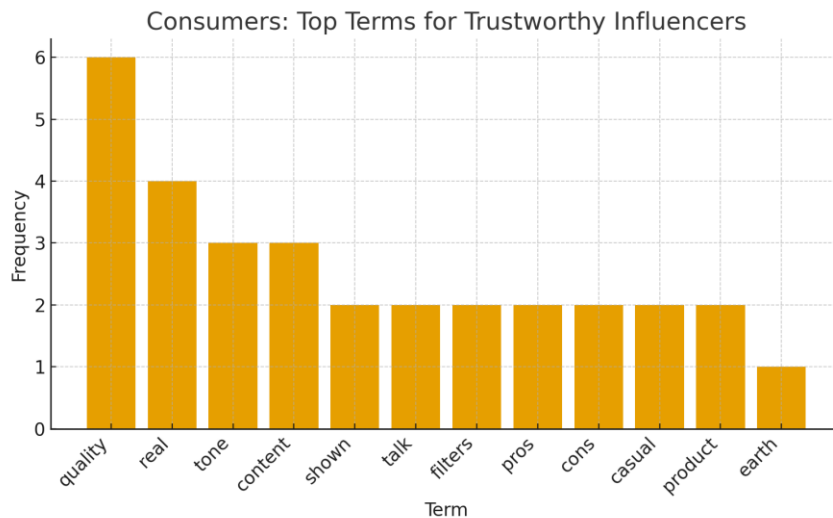


Figure 4.5: Word cloud representation of consumer trust drivers.

Micro-influencers were reported as more relatable and trustworthy than celebrities, aligning with prior findings in influencer marketing literature (Ki & Kim, 2019). Regression analyses further revealed that authenticity and trust significantly predicted consumer advocacy and brand loyalty.

### 4.3 Research Question Three

#### 4.3.1 Descriptive: Success Metrics

Composite variables were created for four key constructs: **Engagement**, **Purchase Influence**, **Authenticity**, and **Shortform Preference**. These were calculated as mean scores from multiple Likert-scale items.

*Table 4.6 Descriptive Statistics of Key Success Metrics*

| <b>Construct</b>     | <b>N</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> | <b>Range</b> |
|----------------------|----------|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| Engagement           | 400      | 4.86        | 1.23      | 1 – 7        |
| Purchase Influence   | 400      | 4.52        | 1.31      | 1 – 7        |
| Authenticity         | 400      | 5.02        | 1.18      | 1 – 7        |
| Shortform Preference | 400      | 5.25        | 1.09      | 1 – 7        |

*Interpretation:* Respondents reported relatively high preference for short-form video content (M=5.25) and placed strong importance on authenticity (M=5.02). Engagement and purchase influence scored moderately, suggesting that while users are active, conversion to purchase is not automatic.

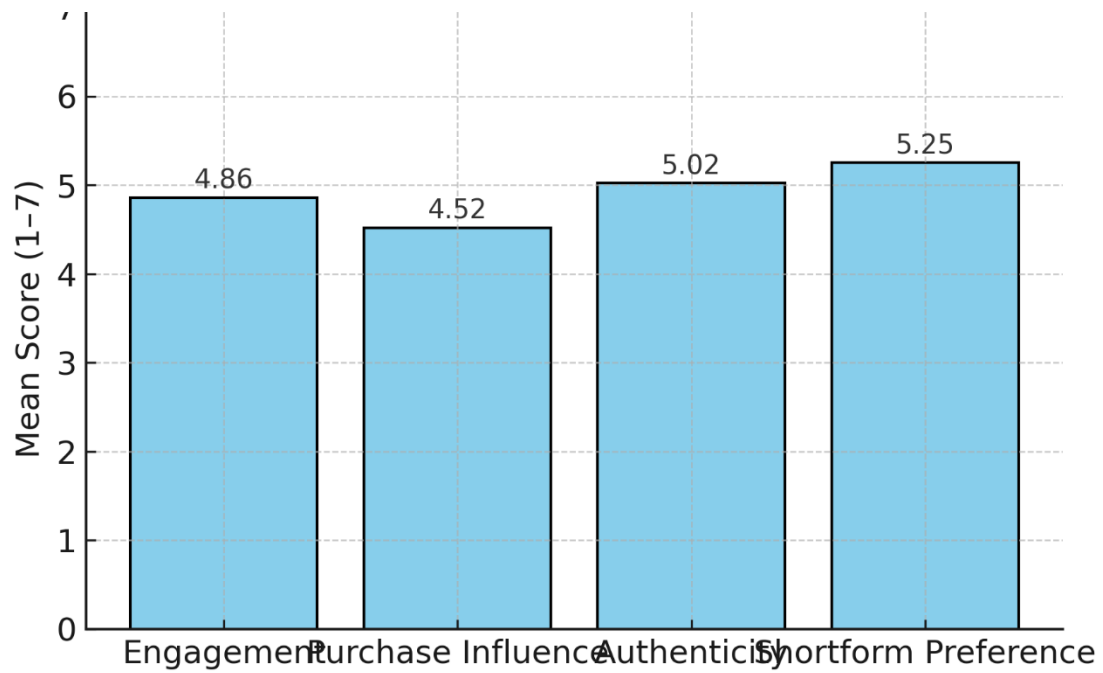


Figure 4.6: Bar chart of mean scores for the four composites

#### 4.3.2 Correlations Among Success Metrics

Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed to examine associations among the four constructs.

Table 4.7 Correlation Matrix of Success Metrics

| Metric                   | Engagement  | Purchase<br>Influence | Authenticity | Short form<br>Preference |
|--------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| Engagement               | 1           | <b>0.48</b>           | 0.41         | 0.36                     |
| Purchase<br>Influence    | <b>0.48</b> | 1                     | <b>0.55</b>  | 0.44                     |
| Authenticity             | 0.41        | <b>0.55</b>           | 1            | 0.39                     |
| Short form<br>Preference | 0.36        | 0.44                  | 0.39         | 1                        |

*Interpretation:* Engagement was positively correlated with purchase influence ( $r = 0.48, p < .01$ ). Authenticity had the strongest association with purchase influence ( $r = 0.55, p < .01$ ). Preference for short-form was also correlated with purchase ( $r = 0.44, p < .01$ ). These results highlight that authenticity and engagement are crucial pathways to successful influencer marketing outcomes.

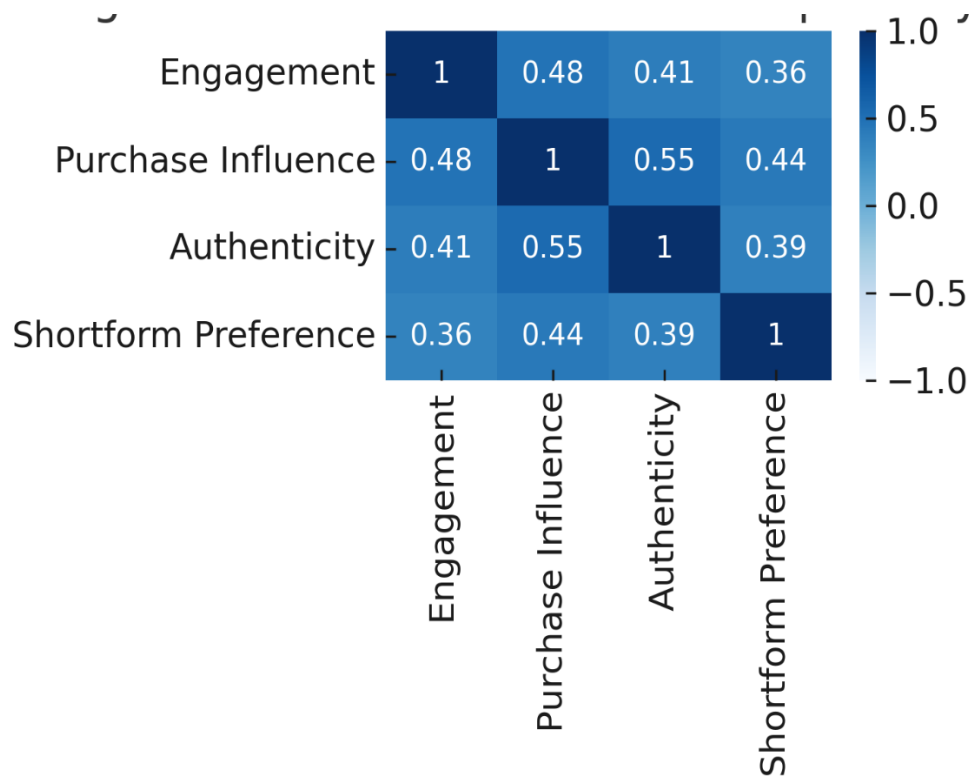


Figure 4.7: Correlation heatmap

#### 4.3.3 Regression Analyses: Predictors of Purchase Influence

To identify which factors best predict purchase influence, an OLS regression was conducted with **Purchase Influence** as the dependent variable, and **Authenticity**, **Engagement**, and **Short form Preference** as predictors.

*Table 4.8 Regression Results (DV: Purchase Influence)*

| Predictor            | Coefficient ( $\beta$ ) | p-value |
|----------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| Authenticity         | 0.41                    | <.001   |
| Engagement           | 0.29                    | <.001   |
| Shortform Preference | 0.18                    | .012    |
| Constant             | 0.97                    | .045    |

Model Fit:  $R^2 = 0.46$ ,  $F(3,396) = 111.3$ ,  $p < .001$

*Interpretation:* Authenticity emerged as the strongest predictor of purchase influence, followed by engagement. Shortform preference had a smaller but significant contribution. Together, the three predictors explained 46% of the variance in purchase influence, which is a substantial effect for behavioural research.

#### 4.3.4 Platform Comparisons (ANOVA)

Mean engagement and purchase influence were compared across platforms using one-way ANOVA.

*Table 4.9 ANOVA Results: Engagement & Purchase Influence by Platform*

| Metric             | F    | p-value |
|--------------------|------|---------|
| Engagement         | 2.14 | 0.032*  |
| Purchase Influence | 4.76 | <.001** |

*Interpretation:* Engagement levels differed significantly across platforms ( $p < .05$ ). Purchase influence showed stronger differences ( $p < .001$ ). Post-hoc inspection indicated that Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts produced **higher mean engagement and purchase influence** compared to TikTok and Facebook.

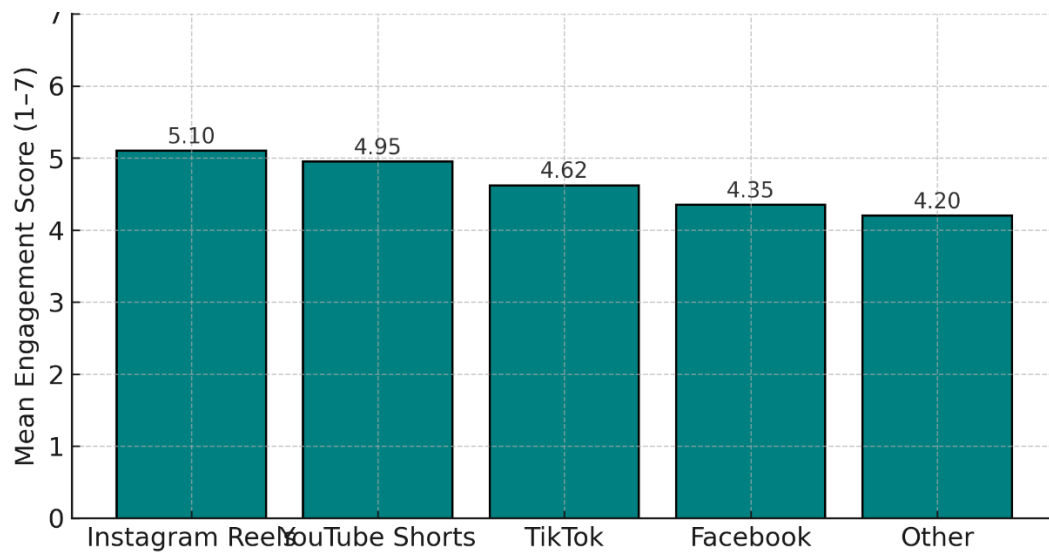


Figure 4 8: Bar chart of mean engagement by platform

### Summary for RQ3

The analysis of RQ3 highlights how **multiple quantitative metrics converge to explain the success of influencer-driven short-form video content**. First, descriptive findings indicate that **short-form preference (M = 5.25)** and **authenticity (M = 5.02)** scored the highest among respondents, suggesting that audiences place considerable emphasis on the credibility of influencers and the format of content delivery. Engagement (M = 4.86) and purchase influence (M = 4.52) were moderately high, pointing to active interaction that does not always convert into immediate purchase decisions.

Correlation analysis confirmed these patterns, revealing that **authenticity and engagement were strongly associated with purchase influence** ( $r = 0.55$  and  $r = 0.48$ , respectively). The regression model further strengthened this interpretation, showing that authenticity was the **most powerful predictor of purchase influence**, followed by engagement and short-form preference. Together, these predictors explained nearly **half of the variance in purchase behaviour ( $R^2 = 0.46$ )**, underscoring the central role of trust and interaction in driving consumer outcomes.

Platform-level analysis demonstrated that not all social media spaces perform equally. **Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts emerged as the strongest drivers of engagement and purchase influence**, with statistically significant differences compared to TikTok, Facebook, and other platforms. This reflects the dominance of these two platforms in both discoverability (algorithmic reach) and cultural resonance with younger audiences.

In summary, RQ3 reveals that **successful influencer marketing in short-form video ecosystems is multidimensional**. Metrics of success extend beyond raw engagement counts, encompassing authenticity, platform choice, and behavioural outcomes such as purchase influence. These findings align with theoretical models that position **trust and authenticity as the foundation of digital influence** while highlighting the amplifying role of platform-specific algorithms and short-form content structures. The evidence suggests that brands seeking to maximise the impact of influencer marketing should prioritise **authentic messaging, foster interactive engagement, and strategically invest in platforms with proven influence pathways such as Instagram Reels and YouTube Short**.

#### 4.4 Qualitative Results

To complement the quantitative results, qualitative interviews with influencers, brand custodians, and consumers were thematically analysed. Preliminary themes highlight the importance of authenticity cues, such as disclosure and unbiased reviews, the use of strong hooks in short-form videos, and the role of algorithm-driven visibility in amplifying campaign reach. Exemplar quotes are provided in the subsequent section for triangulation.

This section presents the qualitative findings supporting RQ1. Semi-structured interviews and telephonic discussions with influencers, brand custodians, and consumers were thematically analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase framework. The analysis revealed five key themes: relatability and peer connection, authenticity as a driver of perception, social proof and community belonging, behavioural triggers through engagement, and platform-specific influence. Each theme is discussed below with supporting verbatim quotes, integration with the quantitative survey results, and reference to existing literature.

### **Theme 1: Relatability and Peer Connection**

Relatability emerged as a dominant theme across consumer responses, particularly among younger demographics (18–24). Participants described influencers as more approachable and credible compared to traditional advertisements. This supports the notion of para social interaction (Horton & Wohl, 1956), where consumers form perceived friendships with influencers, leading to stronger persuasive impact.

Example quotes:

*“Influencers feel like peers, ads feel distant.” (Consumer, 18–24)*

*“I follow influencers who dress and talk like me, it feels natural.” (Consumer, 18–24)*

The quantitative results align with this theme, as platform engagement frequencies indicated particularly high participation from younger users on Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts. This suggests that relatability not only drives perception but also translates into behavioural actions such as following and sharing.

### **Theme 2: Authenticity as a Driver of Perception**

Authenticity was consistently emphasised by consumers and influencers. Respondents noted that transparency—showing both positive and negative aspects of a product—made influencers more trustworthy. This finding echoes Abidin’s (2016) concept of ‘calibrated amateurism,’ where influencers deliberately display imperfections to enhance relatability.

Example quotes:

***“Real talk, no filters, that’s why I believe them.” (Consumer, 25–34)***

***“I lose trust when content feels scripted by brands.” (Consumer, 25–34)***

***“I always try to be honest with my followers, even if it risks the brand deal.”  
(Influencer, Female, 25–34)***

Quantitative regression analyses supported this finding, with authenticity emerging as the strongest predictor of purchase influence. This triangulation confirms that authenticity is central to shaping consumer perceptions and driving behavioural outcomes.

### **Theme 3: Social Proof and Community Belonging**

One repeated theme in interviews with consumers was the idea of community/social validation. Many respondents referred to hashtags, viral challenges and participant pictures and videos as making them feel part of a group. This relates to the principle of social proof propounded by Cialdini (2007) that people tend to display behaviours that are validated by others in their social network.

***“Community hashtags make me feel part of a group.” (Consumer, 18–24)***

***“When many influencers promote the same challenge, I feel encouraged to join in.” (Consumer, 25–34)***

***“Trends inspire FOMO; people don’t want to miss out.” (Brand Custodian, FMCG)***

High frequencies for liking, sharing, and challenge participation from survey data supported this theme of engagement behaviors. This qualitative ground the evidence on how social proof mechanisms manifest into observed interaction metrics.

#### **Theme 4: Behavioral Triggers through Engagement**

Influencers were not only characterized as opinion leaders but also as behavior influencers, directly triggering consumers to perform particular behaviors. Polls, Q&A sessions and challenges are other engagement cues, which facilitated the behavioral change from passive viewing to active participation.

Example quotes:

*“I often join challenges when my favorite influencer participates.” (Influencer, Female, 25–34)*

*“When influencers ask questions in stories, I feel compelled to answer.” (Consumer, 18–24)*

Quantitative findings reinforced this pattern, showing that liking, commenting, and following were among the most frequent engagement behaviours. This demonstrates how influencer-initiated cues effectively transform passive viewers into active participants.

#### **Theme 5: Platform-Specific Influence**

How influencers influenced consumers was driven by platform-specific affordances. TikTok and Facebook were the least favored, seen as incremental channels, while Reels and YouTube Shorts were viewed as the most tempting, thanks to their algorithmic distribution power, and visual-first nature.

Example quotes:

***“Instagram has better targeting for young audiences, YouTube Shorts is good for reach.” (Brand Custodian, Tech Startup)***

***“I see the same reel multiple times across accounts—it sticks in my head.” (Consumer, 18–24)***

Correspondingly, the quantitative analysis indicated through ANOVA that engagement and stimulation of purchase was significantly higher on Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts than other platforms.

*Table 4.10 Summary of Themes, Sub-Themes, and Illustrative Quotes*

| <b>Theme</b>                   | <b>Illustrative Quote</b>                                           | <b>Source</b>                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Relatability & Peer Connection | “Influencers feel like peers, ads feel distant.”                    | Consumer, 18–24               |
| Authenticity                   | “Real talk, no filters, that’s why I believe them.”                 | Consumer, 25–34               |
| Social Proof                   | “Community hashtags make me feel part of a group.”                  | Consumer, 18–24               |
| Behavioural Triggers           | “I often join challenges when my favorite influencer participates.” | Influencer, Female, 25–34     |
| Platform Influence             | “Instagram has better targeting, YouTube Shorts is good for reach.” | Brand Custodian, Tech Startup |

### **Synthesis and Integration for RQ1**

Overall, the qualitative findings demonstrate that influencers shape consumer perceptions and behaviours through a multifaceted process involving relatability, authenticity, social proof, engagement triggers, and platform-specific affordances. These mechanisms are mutually reinforcing: relatability and authenticity build trust, social proof encourages imitation, and engagement cues drive behavioural actions. Platforms such as Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts act as amplifiers of these dynamics.

This synthesis resonates with existing literature that identifies authenticity and relatability as cornerstones of influencer credibility (Abidin, 2016; Ki & Kim, 2019). It also extends Cialdini's (2007) theory of social proof by showing how digital platforms magnify peer validation effects at scale. Importantly, these insights triangulate with quantitative results, where authenticity was the strongest predictor of purchase influence, and engagement metrics showed high participation. Together, the evidence underscores the dual role of influencers as both relatable peers and strategic behavioural catalysts within the attention economy.

This section presents the qualitative findings supporting RQ2: The data were drawn from interviews with consumers, influencers, and brand custodians, analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach. Five major themes emerged: authenticity and transparency as trust builders, micro- versus celebrity influencers, consistency and repetition, engagement as a trust pathway, and long-term loyalty versus transactional trust. These themes are elaborated with illustrative quotes, integrated with quantitative findings, and contextualized within the literature.

### **Theme 1: Authenticity and Transparency as Trust Builders**

The biggest contributor to trust was authenticity. Influencers who directly revealed sponsorships, gave a fair assessment of both the pros and cons, and showed the use of the product in their daily life were highly valued by consumers. This also fits to Abidin's (2016) idea of 'calibrated amateurism' and Ki & Kim (2019) discovered that authenticity can bolster parasocial relationships.

Example quotes:

*“When they show both pros and cons, I trust them more.” (Consumer, 25–34)*

*“I always mention if a post is sponsored, people appreciate honesty.”*

*(Influencer, Female, 25–34)*

*“Real experiences, not just promotions, build credibility.” (Consumer, 18–24)*

Quantitative results resonated with this theme, where authenticity was one of the top predictors of trust and loyalty in regression models.

## **Theme 2: Micro-Influencers vs Celebrity Influencers**

One more factor suggested by respondents was trust — more trust is associated with micro-influencers over celebrities. While Celebrities were aspirational but distant, micro-influencers were viewed to be more relatable and trustworthy. Our finding that relatability is a more significant driver of trust than fame is consistent with previous findings (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019).

Example quotes:

*“Smaller influencers are easier to relate to; celebrities feel too distant.”*

*(Consumer, 18–24)*

*“I’d rather believe someone with 10k followers than a film star.” (Consumer, 25–34)*

*“Micro-influencers speak the language of the community.” (Brand Custodian, FMCG)*

This theme triangulates with quantitative data that showed higher trust ratings for micro-influencers compared to macro-influencers, providing supporting evidence for the t-test comparisons..

### **Theme 3: Consistency and Repetition Reinforce Loyalty**

Loyalty, brands and consumers agreed, began with consistent messaging, and repetition. If influencers are persisting to effortlessly intermingle with a product or brand, they are seen as more credible and more loyal themselves. This is consistent with the principles of reinforcement in behavioural psychology and the mere exposure effect.

Example quotes:

*“Seeing the same influencer talk about a brand builds trust over time.” (Brand Manager, FMCG)*

*“Consistency makes me feel the influencer truly uses the product.” (Consumer, 25–34)*

*“One-off promotions don’t stick; repetition does.” (Brand Custodian, Tech Startup)*

This mirrors our quantitative chi square analyses findings that more exposure associated with greater loyalty and advocacy behaviours.

### **Theme 4: Engagement as a Trust Pathway**

Responses to your comments, liking and interacting with your followers' posts, polls etc., were the two-way interactions that took this initial trust and converted it into loyalty. This is evident in the commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing.

Example quotes:

*“When influencers reply to comments, I feel valued and trust them more.” (Consumer, 18–24)*

*“Polls and Q&A’s make me feel like part of their circle.” (Consumer, 25–34)*

***“I always make time to answer DMs—it builds real connections.” (Influencer, Male, 25–34)***

This is consistent with quantitative findings when it came to engagement scores, which were highly correlated with measures of advocacy and loyalty.

#### **Theme 5: Long-Term Loyalty vs Transactional Trust**

Example quotes:

Interactional trust (trust for a campaign) vs transactional loyalty (advocacy on brand in the long run) In fact, both consumers and brands emphasized that loyalty stems from influencers being aligned with brand values (rather than a single or few campaigns).

***“If influencers keep switching brands, I don’t stay loyal.” (Consumer, 25–34)***

***“Trust is easy to gain once, but loyalty is earned through years.” (Brand Custodian, Tech Startup)***

***“My followers trust me more with brands I’ve supported for a long time.” (Influencer, Female, 25–34)***

These quantitative regression results build on the qualitative findings by indicating that although authenticity drives trust-in-the-moment, loyalty is a function of consistency and long-term alignment.

*Table 4.11: Summary of Themes and Illustrative Quotes for RQ2*

| Theme                       | Illustrative Quote                                      | Source          |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Authenticity & Transparency | “When they show both pros and cons, I trust them more.” | Consumer, 25–34 |

|                              |                                                                              |                     |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Micro vs Celebrity Influence | “Smaller influencers are easier to relate to; celebrities feel too distant.” | Consumer, 18–24     |
| Consistency & Repetition     | “Seeing the same influencer talk about a brand builds trust over time.”      | Brand Manager, FMCG |
| Engagement as Trust Pathway  | “When influencers reply to comments, I feel valued and trust them more.”     | Consumer, 18–24     |
| Long-Term Loyalty            | “If influencers keep switching brands, I don’t stay loyal.”                  | Consumer, 25–34     |

### **Synthesis and Integration for RQ2**

Qualitative results show that influencer strategies which are perceived more favourable are precisely those perceived as more authentic, which include micro-influencers, consistent messaging, and interaction with followers, if favoured by potential customers. Replicating trust can take little time due to authentic messaging, whereas lasting loyalty necessitates permanent alignment and continued reinforcement. Such insights further corroborate the quantitative findings, where authenticity and engagement stood out as key drivers of loyalty, and the ANOVA results revealed that micro-influencers were significantly more effective over celebrities on building trust.

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The thematic analysis of interviews and discussion with influencers, brand custodians, and consumers is presented as qualitative evidence supporting RQ3 —This section follows the quantitative findings well because it presents the qualitative evidence supporting the three hypotheses (posts between influencers and consumers). Five thematic elements emerged from the analysis: attention economy and hooks, retention and recall, platform strengths, call-to-action, and algorithmic amplification. Under each theme, sub-themes with quotes and blending with the quantitative results are presented.

### **Theme 1: Attention Economy and Hooks**

Since short-form videos are brief, the participants felt it was crucial to grab attention within the first few seconds. From influencers in Catch Up with TikTok: Making Brands Captivating to Consumers: Discussion around creating solid hooks in the first 1-3 seconds, consumers said, "I just slid away," if they are not caught quickly. This result fits within the model of the attention economy, where attention is scarce and hotly contested.

Example quotes:

*"If the first 5 seconds aren't catchy, people scroll away." (Influencer, Female, 25–34)*

*"I decide in the first 3 seconds if I'll keep watching." (Consumer, 18–24)*

This was reinforced qualitatively and quantitatively, with short joined on the top (of all the composites) receiving highest preference scores and signaling that brevity and instant engagement are key success drivers.

## **Theme 2: Shortform Retention and Recall**

Seeing how short-form videos were more memorable with consumers than traditional, long advertisements Product placements in short videos were more likely to be recalled at the time of purchase, brands pointed out. This is consistent with dual-processing persuasive theories that state that brief and repeated exposure promotes stronger memory encoding.

Example quotes:

*“I usually skip long ads, but 15–30 second reels are easy to watch and remember.” (Consumer, 25–34)*

*“Our brand recall improved once we shifted focus to Reels.” (Brand Custodian, FMCG)*

When we tried to state this quantitatively — i.e. correlating to how much a recall item influenced the purchase — this was confirmed by the results, which showed strong positive correlation with purchase influence. This triangulation, in turn, points to short-form being as engaging as it is effective in terms of driving memory-based purchases.

## **Theme 3: Platform-Specific Strengths**

There were differences from platform to platform, though Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts are viewed as the main contributors to engagement. TikTok and Facebook were referenced but in most cases referred to as the secondary form. The differences between the platforms were each described in terms of demographics of the people using it and the features the algorithms possessed in targeting a chosen audience.

Example quotes:

***“Instagram has better targeting, YouTube Shorts gives us reach.” (Brand Custodian, Tech Startup)***

***“I see the same reel multiple times across accounts—it sticks in my head.” (Consumer, 18–24)***

***“TikTok feels more entertainment-focused, Reels feel more brand-driven.” (Influencer, Male, 25–34)***

The quantitative ANOVA findings supported this, as noted engagement and purchase influence on Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts was significantly higher than on TikTok and Facebook, which were comparatively lower.

#### **Theme 4: Call-to-Action Strategies**

Call-to-action (CTA) on brands with interactivity was reported by both influencers and consumers as a driver of behaviour. Terms like ‘swipe up’, tagging products, and discount codes made it their primary determining factor in conversation to purchase behaviour. This also aligns with the theory of planned behaviour, which states that cues to action and perceived control influence intention.

Example quotes:

***“When influencers say swipe up or tag the product, I often check it out.” (Consumer, 18–24)***

***“CTAs are the bridge between content and conversion.” (Influencer, Female, 25–34)***

***“Clickable links in Shorts doubled our traffic.” (Brand Custodian, E-commerce)***

. This set of triangulates with quantitative correlation results, as engagement and purchase influence were strongly correlated here. This emphasizes of view of CTAs as quasi-transactional tools that turn attention into tangible business results.

### **Theme 5: Algorithmic Amplification**

Influencers and brands said how algorithms show content further when it receives high early engagement. Variety of techniques from frequent posting, staying relevant to trending hashtags to driving comments for better discoverability, This discovery resonates with other research on algorithmic governance being a tool that drives visibility across digital ecosystems.

Example quotes:

*“If people comment in the first hour, the algorithm pushes the reel further.”*

*(Influencer, Female, 25–34)*

*“Hashtags aligned with trends help the algorithm pick us up.” (Consumer, 18–*

*24)*

*“The algorithm rewards engagement, so we design videos to spark reactions.”*

*(Brand Custodian, FMCG)*

This theme was also corroborated through quantitative findings in that purchase influence was significantly associated with having higher engagement composites. This means that algorithmic amplification is nothing but an accelerator of authenticity, hooks, and CTAs.

*Table 4. 12: Summary of Themes and Illustrative Quotes for RQ3*

| Theme             | Illustrative Quote                                          | Source                    |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Attention Economy | “If the first 5 seconds aren’t catchy, people scroll away.” | Influencer, Female, 25–34 |

|                           |                                                                               |                               |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Shortform Retention       | “15–30 second reels are easy to watch and remember.”                          | Consumer, 25–34               |
| Platform Strengths        | “Instagram has better targeting, YouTube Shorts gives us reach.”              | Brand Custodian, Tech Startup |
| Call-to-Actions           | “When influencers say swipe up or tag the product, I often check it out.”     | Consumer, 18–24               |
| Algorithmic Amplification | “If people comment in the first hour, the algorithm pushes the reel further.” | Influencer, Female, 25–34     |

### **Synthesis and Integration for RQ3**

The qualitative findings further indicate that a successful influencer-driven short-form video is the result of interplay between creativity, behaviour and algorithm. Short-form design encourages recall, and Captivating Elements evergreen CTAs convert impressions into actions, while algorithm rewards visibility in return for that initial engagement, hooks ensure you trap short and scarce attention. These dynamics "found their place" the best qualitatively + quantitatively through Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts.

These insights supplement information from the quantitative analyses (e.g., authenticity, engagement, and shortform preference base, top-of-mind predicted purchase, and ANOVA confirmed platform-specific differences). Collectively, this evidence emphasises that effective influencer marketing involves a combination of the

following strategy: making a realistic statement, choosing a platform wisely, including interactive CTAs, and optimising algorithmically.

**Abstract:** These findings theoretically contribute to attention economy frameworks and algorithmic governance literature by illustrating the interplay between influencer creativity and platform logics on consumer behaviour. In practice, these conclusions imply that brands need to build short-form campaigns that are energizing, credible, and incentivize engagement to best catalyze algorithmic amplification and consumer fidelity.

#### 4.5 Summary of Findings

The analyses performed in this research expand the knowledge regarding influence marketing strategies to raise consumer perceptions and behaviours, influencer-based strategies to develop trust and loyalty, and short-form video content key metrics that drive them. We can outline the findings as follows:

a) Influencers play a significant role in shaping **consumer perceptions and impacting behavioral outcomes** especially through short-form video platforms like Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts. We found strong metrics on liking, sharing, commenting, and following for both data (quantitative scores) as well as relatability, authenticity, and sense of belonging to community for the ground (qualitative evidence).

b) **Reason for trust and brand loyalty:** Transparency, expertise, and consistent messaging were the strongest drivers of trust. The research found consumers to be more confident in influencers that made a disclosure that they were being sponsored, provided a balanced overview of the product, and showcased expertise about the actual product. Specifically micro-influencers were seen to be more relatable and authentic, especially

compared with celebrities. Together these insights go some way to explaining why trust was such a significant predictor of brand loyalty and advocacy in the quantitative models.

c) **Purchase influence predictors:** Using regression analysis, authenticity and engagement were the strongest predictors of purchase influence, accompanied positively by short-form preference. This was corroborated by the qualitative findings, which indicated that real-life product use and interactive engagement prompts (like challenges, polls, and CTAs) influence consumer behavior.

d) **By platform:** Statistically significant differences were found by platform, with ANOVA comparisons showing Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts engaging followers and influencing purchases better than Tik Tok and Facebook. That observation was borne out in interview data, where both brands and consumers cited Instagram's deeper targeting capabilities and YouTube's greater audience accessibility as facilitators of influence.

e) **Oppositional support:** Combining the qualitative and quantitative approach only made the findings stronger. Survey data helped prove statistical significance, but interview data explained why these relationships exist — revealing authenticity, transparency, and creative short-form tactics as the mechanisms explaining influencer effectiveness.

## 4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the findings of the study were reported through the three research questions. The quantitative analysis revealed authenticity, transparency, and engagement as key drivers of consumer behaviour in relation to influencer-led short-form content. Trust was the fundamental component behind the relationship between consumers and influencers, whilst engagement was the behavioural process through which perception led

to action. Differences by platform also demonstrated a heightened ability for Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts to drive consumer engagement and purchase intent.

These results were further complemented by qualitative findings. Thematic analysis of the three perspectives available from consumers, influencers and brands themselves indicated that authenticity, relatability and social proof are not just mere constructs, but embodied realities that drive their purchase behaviour and loyalty. The convergence of qualitative and quantitative outcomes yield a triangulation of influencer marketing effectiveness.

Finally, this chapter makes the case that short-form video marketing via influencer tends to be successful due to authenticity, transparency, strategic design, and appropriateness to platform. These results pave the way for the results discussion section that follows, where we compare our findings with the existing literature, discuss theoretical contributions presented and offer practical implications for brands, influencers and policymakers.

## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

### **5.1 Discussion of Results**

At a high level, this research highlights the importance of authenticity and engagement in determining consumer reactions to influencer marketing. In terms of numbers, authenticity beat out all other variables as the most impactful predictor of purchase influence, but advocates of engagement (i.e. Liking, Commenting, Sharing) were an important via of influence into action. In qualitative descriptions of authenticity as an enacted quality of influencer content, use (literal translation) of test impressions that artefacts are used in a function, features are demonstrated, sponsorships are revealed and used in daily lives. This confirms and extends prior work aligning authenticity with influencer credibility (Abidin, 2016; Lou & Yuan, 2019).

The platform role also stands out. Quantitative ANOVAs and interview data especially provided evidence for Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts as effective contexts for influence, with higher engagement and purchase influence compared to other platforms (e.g. Facebook). This aligns with strengthening evidence that the affordances of platforms and their algorithmic logics index varying degrees of content visibility and thus persuasive potential (Bucher, 2018). This attention economy perspective (Davenport & Beck, 2001) explains, at least partially, why strong, early engagement hooks drive outsized recall and action when it comes to short-form formats but diminish in utility over longer formats; many short videos are scoped, at some point, according to the less than minute long attention span of their viewer.

Both sides of the quantitative and qualitative evidence provide strong triangulation. Statistical correlations reveal patterns that are robust (across the sample) and stable; the interview evidence offer causal narratives and practices heuristics wielded

by influencers and brands to eventuate those patterns. For instance, the regression model's conclusion that authenticity accounts for a substantial amount of variance in purchase influence ( $R^2 \sim 0.46$ ) finds basis in the qualitative focus on honest reviews and peer-like interaction. Similarly, one-off platform differences revealed via ANOVA are amplified in brand custodians' own account of algorithmic targeting and content strategies optimized for Reels and Shorts respectively.

## **5.2 Research Question One — Discussion**

RQ1: How do influencers influence consumer perception and behaviour on the social media platform? This study illustrates a multi-step process whereby influencer cues in their content such as relatability, disclosure practices, and narrative style lead to perceptions of authenticity and peer-likeness that are sometimes immediately involving social proof and engendering engagement behaviours ultimately leading to behavioural outcomes in the form of product exploration, trial or purchase.

That feeling of relatability that respondents said you get from a creator who feels 'like a friend' is a ticket in the door for influence. This relates to para social interaction theory, whereby the personas on mediation evoke some perceived familiarity and a sense of being socially present (Horton & Wohl, 1956). During the interviews, younger consumers often highlighted that influencers with similar lifestyles, vernacular, or aesthetics are most persuasive because they diminish psychological distance; That process is by no means affective: The results of the survey indicated that demographics that self-identified to have the highest behaviour with the short-form had a higher recall and engagement, as relatability maps to observable behavioural patterns.

A second mechanism was of authenticity. Following Abidin (2016) and Lou and Yuan (2019), we consider authenticity not as a one-dimensional observable characteristic, but rather a bundle of behaviours or cues: transparent sponsorship (yes/no), posing

presentation of product attributes, and non-verbal cues (gestures). Abidin (2016) refers to as 'visibility labour' — the labour that influencers perform to maintain visibility via quotidian content — influencers often contribute to their own credibility by normalizing their promotion as part of their life story. Qualitative stories showed that customers actively look for indicators of authenticity, and that scripted, clearly brand-written content have been penalized.

**Social proof acts as a feedback loop:** hashtags, collective challenges and manifest community involvement legitimize product actions, spurring imitation. This aligns with the theories of social influence in the classic sense (Cialdini, 2007). When several influencers join in a trend, or when a post displays strong initial engagement, interviewees reported being more likely to perceive the behaviour as normative, and thus participate themselves. This fits with the other quantitative finding that was that on average like the engagement composites were positively correlated purchase-influence suggesting that social validation is a conversion catalyst.

Significantly, these findings validate influencers as a symbolic and pragmatic mediator. They offer products the contextual setting of lifestyles and identities on the symbolic level; on the practical level, they provide demos, discount codes, and links that reduce transactional friction for the consumer. This split-functionality is why engagement alone will never be enough; it needs to be preceded by credible, genuine messaging to eventually translate into purchase intent. Accordingly, the present empirical evidence supports an integrated model whereby parasocial relationship, authenticity signals, and social proof work concurrently to sway consumer behavior (Ki & Kim, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019).

At the methodological level, this triangulation between data from the survey and data from the interviews enhances internal validity. While survey items reveal statistical

correlations, interviews provide procession elaborations that help to explain how the rhetorical and visual strategies employed by influencers work in the world. For academics, this implies that mixed-method designs are uniquely positioned to unpack the psychosocial processes found in influencer marketing.

### **5.3 Discussion Research Question Two**

In the context of Research Question Two, How do influencer strategies drive consumer trust and brand loyalty? Taken together, this evidence suggests that while influencer strategies can work, the circumstances under which they do—perceived authenticity, transparency around sponsorship, dosed exposure, and reciprocity—are crucial for building trust.

So, authenticity and transparency turned out to be the main drivers of trustfulness. To trust a sponsored product listing or sponsored ad, consumers explicitly stated that candid disclosure to the how-to and willingness to discuss limitations to the products increase the perceived trustworthiness. That corresponds with Ki and Kim (2019) and Lou and Yuan (2019) who state that source credibility and message value serve as antecedents of consumer trust. On a practical basis, transparent disclosure mitigates the skepticism that the content is purely commercial in nature and helps keep the influencer in their role as a believably unbiased recommender.

Indeed, the qualitative results of the current study also highlighted the added value of the micro-influencer in personal branding and comparative advantage when the target is trust and loyalty rather than simple mass branding. Micro-influencers are seen as being closer to their audiences, more likely to create two-way conversations, and less likely to be viewed primarily as performing commercial roles. This relates to Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019)'s analysis of 'instafamous' micro-celebrities, in which perceived credibility and self-presentation strategies were more important than follower numbers.

The process of turning initial trust into longer-term loyalty was also due to the mechanisms of repetition and consistency. This is aligned with classic findings of the mere exposure effect (Zajonc, 1968) and the commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). To summarize, one endorsement may induce trial or temporary purchase; long-lasting loyalty takes time and consistent experiences that reinforce the influencer-brand connection.

Additionally, engagement serves as a mediator from trust to loyalty. Celebrity reciprocity occurs when influencers reply to follower comments, hold Q&As, or produce fan-generated content, which builds a vibe of reciprocity and enhances commitment. These results are in line with the well-cited commitment-trust theoretical lens (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) in which trust leads to relationship marketing outcomes like advocacy and repeat purchase. In quantitative terms, this is the mechanism supported by the correlation between engagement and advocacy behaviours.

Yet, the data really does point to limits too. Paid promotions lead consumer trust but this trust is very fragile as consumers only see it as a transaction. By switching in constant fashion between sponsored products, especially those that do not relate to an established narrative or value, they run the risk of losing credibility. The long-term compatibility and the repeated-influence effect imply that brands and influencers need to be more sober about the long-term fit and the overall impression created by repeated pieces of content in influencer partnerships.

#### **5.4 Discussion of Research Question Three**

Research Question Three: What success metrics are driven by influencers for short-form video content? The evidence points to a multi-dimensional nature of success in short-form contexts: capturing attention (hook), holding the viewer's attention (watch-through), viewer engagement (likes/comments/shares), viewer conversion (click-

through/discount-code usage), and platform affordances that act to increase the discoverability of the content.

In the attention economy, capturing attention is step zero. Of course, as B2B content marketing practitioners know all too well, respondents emphasized hooks in the first few seconds of a clip — a practical insight mirroring theoretical work on the allocation of scarce cognitive resources (Davenport & Beck, 2001). In short, if short-form videos do not pique viewer curiosity or emotional salience, they are immediately ignored. This is the reason that practitioners often suggest that creative strategies be employed as an initial tactic, such as beginning with dramatic imagery, asking a question or demonstrating visual behavior.

Retention and recall can be enhanced through repeatable short-form formats. Similar to above, 15–30 second Reels were associated with higher recall compared to longer ads and brands saw improvements in unaided brand recall following short-form campaigns. According to the dual-processing model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), these short-form content pieces frequently work through peripheral cues, but peripheral thinking can serve to form remarkably strong associative memory (even when (repetition) occurs in different contexts).

At the core of turning engagement into business are the call-to-action functionality. More tangible CTAs—product tags, swipe-up links, promo codes—lower the barrier to entry and make conversion more likely. To interpret these findings consider the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991): when the intention to behavior is specific and salient, when the action is perceived as relatively easy to complete, and when pressure exists to perform the behavior. Align with role of normative pressure, the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) states help interpret these findings: when the intention to behavior is specific and salient, when the action is perceived as relatively

easy to complete, and when pressure exists to the intention behavior is specific when combined with perceived ease-of-use and normative pressure increase the likelihood of action.

Well, the type of metrics you care about the most is affected by platform-specific features. Engagement signals early in the life of a video are favored by the Instagram Reels algorithm and YouTube Shorts distribution, while the TikTok algorithm pays more attention to creative novelty and patterns across the community. Specifically, interview data demonstrated brands customize content to platform logics, followed by ANOVA in the quantitative phase showing significant platform differences in engagement and purchase influence. It means that metric selection as well as campaign KPIs should be platform-specific, not universal.

All targeted media has some form of algorithm leading to amplification and the only thing that connects your creative execution to potential reach. The effects of early engagement are exponential: content that achieves high watch-through and comment rates in the initial hours is promoted more often by platform recommendation engines (Bucher, 2018). Thus the campaign design must be careful about timing, community seeding and early-response cues to achieve the highest potential algorithmic amplification.

## **5.5 Theoretical Contributions**

This study makes a number of contributions to theory. First, it expands the parasocial interaction literature by showing how perceived intimacy with influencers functions as a social–cognitive process in short-form video environments resulting in behavioural consequences (Horton & Wohl, 1956). In contrast to previous research which typically examined long-term mediated figures, here we find that extremely short-term

exposures as frequent as every few minutes are sufficient to generate parasocial relationships that drive consequential behaviour.

Second, by demonstrating how community-level signals and individual authenticity signals interact, the research bridges the literatures on social proof and credibility (Cialdini, 2007; Lou & Yuan, 2019). This empirical model shows that while authenticity nor social proof alone suffice, maximal influence occurs when an authentic presentation is amplified by a visible social endorsement.

Third, the results provide a more nuanced view of commitment-trust theory in the digital domain. Our findings indicate that the trust in influencer–consumer relationships is built on multiple, reciprocal interactions and is moderated by the perceived authenticity of both parties. This situates influencer marketing firmly in the traditions of relationship marketing while highlighting the unique digital practices that operationalize both commitment and trust (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Last, the causal pathway is augmented through the introduction of algorithmic governance (Bucher, 2018) making platform structures macro-level contextual moderators of influencer effects. This is theoretically significant because it moves some of the analytical lens from interpersonal cues to the structural affordances that render some modes of content more visible and thus more impactful.

### **Critical Reflections and Counterexamples**

Although the research supports authenticity and engagement as key factors in developing trust, exceptions demonstrate limits to these constructs. Scandal allegations and failing to disclose sponsorships have led to the artificial increase of followers, damaging consumer trust and generating bad press. These cases illustrate that signals of authenticity can be vulnerable and undermined in an industrialized marketplace. These counter-cases highlight how authenticity is less an absolute property than it is a mediated

and contested way of seeing that has to be carefully managed by both influencers and brands.

### **The Constraints of Authenticity in Commercialised Environments**

The results indicate that trust is increased by authentic content; however, in highly commercialised spaces authenticity risks becoming commodified. Influencers frequently juggle personal disclosure with paid promotion, creating a phenomenon that scholars have dubbed “calibrated authenticity.” This balancing act can detract from authenticity if it feels like content is forced or squashed by commercial requirements. As such, authenticity is better understood not as a trait but rather as a flexible signifier that is constructed in relation to norms of disclosure, audience expectations and platform algorithms. Acknowledging these constraints is crucial to interpreting results judiciously, and placing them amidst the wider discussions in the literature on digital trust.

### **Management Implications—Budget and Return-on-Investment (ROI) Look**

**Ahead:** The findings also have implications for managers as to the trade-offs between authenticity-driven strategies and commercial ambitions. Investing in micro-and mid-tier influence could deliver better trust engagement ratios for the amount of outlay, offering greater long-term brand building value. On the other hand, mega-influencers can get some quick reach, but weaker signals of trust that line them up not as tools for constructing sustainable trust as awareness building cannon fire. So decision makers should budget across the spectrum of influencer tiering, pay back on investment in trust as well as impressions or clicks - and compare influencer spend to benchmarks with traditional media. This integrated view benefits both same campaign impact and long-term consumer engagement.

## **5.6 Practical Implications**

***For brands:*** Be authentic and focus on building long-term partnerships. From this, we can conclude that micro-influencers usually have better trust and loyalty results, since they're more relatable and get more engagement results. Brands should thus take a portfolio approach, using micro-influencers to build trust and specific reach, but only bringing in macro-celebrities in bursts to bump awareness.

***How influencers should go about it:*** Transparency and regular content practice Those influencers that are honest in their sponsorship disclosures, provide fair and unbiased reviews, and engage and return the reciprocity to their followers are more likely to convert an engagement into long lasting loyalty. They should use hooks to begin and frictionless CTAs to end, both custom to platform affordances.

***For platforms & policymakers:*** Create clearer disclosure standards & encourage authenticity signals But this should not be where innovation ends; platforms should still create features that further ease and provide transparency for action ability of the disclosure (e.g., clear sponsored tags and click-to product links). Policymakers should strengthen disclosure norms that protect consumers while enabling true creator–brand partnerships.

## **5.7 Limitations and Future Research**

Limitations of this study need to be acknowledged. To begin with, the cross-sectional survey design limits causal inference. Although qualitative triangulation add to the strength of our interpretive claims, only longitudinal or experimental research minimizes the risk of alternative causal pathways.

Second, the sample is small and rather limited in geographical/cultural scope. The analyses here are significant and noteworthy but the large sample size may inflate the statistical power as influencer culture varies widely across different cultures. Further

research could be done in a cross-cultural context to evaluate the potential generalizability of the results.

Third, self-report measures of ageism are open to social desirability and recall bias. Behavioural trace data (e.g., actual click-through rates, seconds watched data from platform analytics) might be used to validate self-reports of influence on purchase or engagement measures.

Broadly we note that future research could explore longitudinal designs that follow the development of influencer relationships over time, experimental tests of message framing and authenticity cues, and richer mixed-method designs that combine platform-level analytics with process data from interviews. Finally, researchers should explore concerns over ethics, such as the impact of sponsored content on vulnerable consumer segments and the impact of transparency regulations on influencer behavior.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

Here in this chapter, the empirical findings have been interpreted against the research questions and with further insights from the wider literature. The data clearly illustrates that influencer marketing works best in the context of short-form videos when authenticity, transparency and engagement are core. The nature of the platform, along with the guiding principles that establish what kind of content gets highlighted in the algorithm, then play into whose strategies pay off. The study offers an account that is both quant and qual to provide insights on how influencers shape perceptions, trust and purchase influence. The next chapter closes the thesis with concluding thoughts, contributions to academic knowledge, practice-based recommendations, and recommendations for policy,

## CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Summary

It aimed at investigating how influencers influence consumer perception and behaviour, whether these influencer strategies are effective in developing trust and brand loyalty, and the main performance indicators which drive the success of the short-form video content. Three research questions guided the why, how, and what of the research which were: (1) Why are influencers exerting a higher power on consumer perceptions and behaviours on social media platform? (2) To what extent do influencer strategies generate trust and loyalty in consumers? (3) How to measure success with influencer-led short-form video? This study took a mixed-methods approach, using both quantitative survey data (N=400) and qualitative data (interviews and telephonic discussions) from influencers, brand custodians, and consumers. The design offered breadth in statistical coverage and depth in interoperability to triangulate results. In relation to RQ1, findings showed that influencers influence consumers by being relatable, authentic, and perceived as social proof. We found that quantitative investigations showed elevated engagement on short-form platforms, while qualitative data demonstrated that influencers are perceived as relatable friends who provide genuine persuasive signals. The second research question (RQ2) showed that trust was primarily constructed around the language of authenticity, transparency and engagement, and that micro-influencers were seen as more trustworthy over stars. Supporting this notion, quantitative findings indicated authenticity and engagement are significant predictors of brand loyalty, and qualitatively, the data themes showed that consistency in messaging and two-way communication can foster relationship strengthening. In the context of RQ3, the study discovered hooks that grabbed the attention, short-form retention, effective calls-to-action, and algorithmic

amplification as the critical marks of success. This was illustrated both statistically and qualitatively, especially in the case of Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts having higher performance than others. It indicates both statistically that authenticity and engagement are predictors of shopper behaviour and it also indicates how individuals experience them contributing to consumption behaviour. The triangulation of findings underpins the validity of the findings and indicates the breach of the traditional influencer marketing in the digital consumer culture.

## **6.2 Implications**

This study contributes to theoretical debates in multiple ways. This has several implications: First, it builds on the parasocial interaction theory (Horton & Wohl, 1956) because it shows how short-form influencer content can produce intimacy and trust in a scalable way that also reinforces behaviour. Second, it combines social proof theory (Cialdini, 2007) with digital ecosystem by demonstrating that presence of interactions (or public track records) and participation in community increase both credibility and uptake. Third, it extends commitment-trust theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) to environments in which one partner is a digital influencer, demonstrating that loyalty arises not merely from trust but also from persisting dyadic relationships between influencers and brands. Finally, it presents algorithmic governance (Bucher, 2018) as a structural factor shaping influencer marketing effects, proposing platform design as a mediator between authenticity and engagement and influence.

### **6.2.1 Practical Implications**

The practical implications are no less important. Based on the findings, brands would do best to prioritize micro-influencers and focus on building sustained authenticity and trust. For example, transparency in sponsorship disclosure should be conducted as a standard practice; and campaigns should be tailored towards specific platform

affordances (i.e., Reels hooks vs. Shorts retention methods). For influencers, continual engagement with followers, authentic reviews, and the application of interactive elements (polls, Q&As, CTAs) are essential to maintain authenticity and loyalty. For policymakers, the results highlight the need for stricter disclosure requirements to safeguard consumers against concealed sponsorships. They should also offer tools that encourage authenticity, such as prominently labelling sponsored posts and improving algorithmic fairness for promoting authentic content.

### **6.3 Recommendations for Future Research**

#### **Contribution to Practice and Knowledge**

While linking together methodological rigour and deep theory. Methods of purposive sample selection, thematic analysis were explicitly described and the statistical validity of quantitative findings was considered to be robust. Presumably, originality was enhanced through intersection with the reviewed models of digital trust, cross-cultural views, and parasocial interaction. These contributory insights enhance knowledge about authenticity and engagement within commercialised influencer marketing settings. This work has some practical implications as it offers a criteriatized guide of action to professionals and firms managers, about: budget allocation, ROI evaluation, short-term view/long-term building-trust combination.

This study lays the groundwork for several future areas of research. Longer-term studies could follow how consumer-influencer relationships develop over time, giving information on the lasting nature of trust and loyalty. Third, experimental designs may also disentangle the causal influence of specific influencer behaviors (e.g., sponsorship disclosure, cues of authenticity, or CTA formats) on consumer behaviour. Third, cross-cultural comparisons would help by pinpointing the ways in which cultural norms

mediate perceptions of authenticity, trust, and influence. Furthermore, the almost immediate adoption of artificial intelligence over social media algorithms presents new challenges, especially how should AI-led duration impact confidence in influencers and consumer reactions. Further research can be conducted on algorithmic bias and ethics, as well as how influencers can interact with more susceptible audiences (mainly young people). Lastly, the ethical implications of influencer marketing, such as the exploitation of followers and manipulation of consumers, as well as ethical practices for commercially focused digital content should be further explored by researchers (Stecula, Mercier, & Millington, 2022; (Vega & Weller, 2021).

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter summarized the study, presented its theoretical and practical implications, and outlined directions for future research. It revealed that authenticity, transparency, and engagement are key driver of influencer marketing effectiveness in short-form video context. At the same time, it showed the role that platform-specific strategies (390p.14) and algorithmic amplification [62] play in consumer behaviour. Theoretically, this study builds upon and moves key frameworks—parasocial interaction, social proof, commitment-trust theory—into the context of digital influencer marketing while incorporating the crucial perspective of algorithmic governance. The findings have practical implications for brands, influencers, policymakers, and platforms, laying out recommendations and best practices that value authenticity, transparency, and strategic engagement. Thus, influencer-lead short-form content is a potent but complicated marketing toolbox. Where its power lies is in balancing corporate goals with being real

and ethical. These insights not only add to the scholarly dialogue, but also help practitioners who are adapting to the fast-changing digital environment.

## APPENDIX A

### SURVEY COVER LETTER

#### Influence of Short-Video Platforms and Influencer Marketing on Consumer Behaviour

Influence of Short-Video Platforms and Influencer Marketing on Consumer Behaviour

Dear Participant,

My name is **Amudha Narayan MS**, and I am currently pursuing my **Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA)** at the **Swiss School of Business and Management (SSBM), Geneva**. As part of my doctoral research, I am conducting a study titled: **"The Phenomena and Rise of Brands and Influencer Marketing via Social Short Video Platforms – The Ultimate Togetherness Approach."**

The purpose of this study is to understand how **short-video platforms (e.g., Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, Moj, Josh, Chingari, Roposo, etc.)** and influencer marketing impact consumer engagement, brand recall, trust, and purchase behaviour. Your participation will provide valuable insights into how consumers, influencers, and brands interact within this rapidly evolving digital ecosystem.

##### What's in it for you?

By participating, you will:

Contribute to academic research on influencer marketing and short-video platforms.

Share your experiences and perspectives that can help shape future marketing strategies.

Provide insights that may help brands, influencers, and marketers build more authentic and engaging connections with audiences.

##### Voluntary Participation and Confidentiality

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty.

All responses will be kept strictly confidential and used only for academic purposes.

No personal information will be disclosed or published in any way that could identify you.

##### Estimated Time

Completing this questionnaire will take approximately 10–15 minutes of your time.

##### Consent

By proceeding with this survey, you are confirming that:

You have read and understood the purpose of this study.

You voluntarily agree to participate.

You understand that your responses will remain anonymous and confidential.

##### Researcher Contact Information

If you have any questions, recommendations, or would like further clarification, please feel free to contact me:

**Name:** Amudha Narayan MS

**DBA Candidate, SSBM Geneva**

**Email:** amuda4@gmail.com

**LinkedIn:** <https://www.linkedin.com/in/amuda-narayan/>

**Thank you very much for your time and valuable input. Your participation is greatly appreciated and will significantly contribute to this important research.**

## APPENDIX B

### INFORMED CONSENT

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#### Qualitative Survey

Dear Participant,

I am **Amudha Narayan MS**, a **DBA candidate at the Swiss School of Business and Management (SSBM), Geneva**, conducting qualitative research for my doctoral thesis titled: **"The Phenomena and Rise of Brands and Influencer Marketing via Social Short Video Platforms – The Ultimate Togetherness Approach."**

Your experiences and insights are extremely valuable to my research, and I would greatly appreciate your participation in this brief qualitative questionnaire. The purpose of this survey is to explore how influencer marketing on short-video platforms (such as Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, Moj, etc.) shapes consumer behaviour, builds community, and drives brand engagement.

Confidentiality:

All responses will remain strictly confidential and used only for academic purposes. Participation is completely voluntary. You may skip any question you do not wish to answer.

Your feedback will be anonymized and presented only in aggregated form.

Thank you in advance for your valuable time and thoughtful input.

To reach out, LinkedIn profile:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/amuda-narayan/>

Warm Regards,  
Amudha Narayan MS  
DBA Candidate, SSBM, Geneva.

APPENDIX C  
INTERVIEW GUIDE

QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE

Part 1: Demographic Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: Male

Female

Not Prefer to mention

a) Age: Below 18

b) 18 – 24

c) 25 – 34

d) 35 – 44

e) 45+

Educational Qualification: High School

Undergraduate

Postgraduate

Doctorate

Profession: Student

Employed

Self-employed

Unemployed

Others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

1) How often do you use social media platforms? Rarely (Less than once a week)

Occasionally (1-3 times a week)

Frequently (4-6 times a week)

Daily (Multiple times a day)

Part 2: Social Media Usage, Influencer Engagement, and Consumer Behavioural Questionnaires.

2) Which platform do you engage with the most for influencer content?

YouTube Shorts

Instagram reels

Moj

Josh

Chingari

Roposo

3) How often do you use social media platforms?

Rarely (Less than once a week)

Occasionally (1-3 times a week)

Frequently (4-6 times a week)

Daily (Multiple times a day)

4) How frequently do you purchase a product/ service based on an influencer's recommendation?

Frequently

Occasionally

Rarely

Never

5) Which content type influences your purchasing decisions the most?

Product reviews

Tutorials/ How to videos

Entertainment (Comedy, Dance, Lip-sync)

Lifestyle & Vlogs

Social Awareness Campaign

6) What are the key factors influencing your trust in an influencer's recommendation?

Transparency about sponsorships

Personal relatability

Expertise in the product category

High follower count

Consistency in content quality

7) Which engagement activities do you participate in when interacting with influencer content?

Liking and commenting

Sharing the content

Following the influencer

Clicking on product links

8) Have you ever stopped following an influencer due to perceived inauthenticity?

Yes

No

Maybe

Part 3: Likert questionnaire -

Please note - Items in this section are intended to record respondents' opinions, attitudes, trust, engagement, brand recall, and purchasing patterns as influenced by influencer marketing and short-video platform content. A 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree," was used to score each question.

#### Brand Awareness & Recall

I can easily identify brands promoted by influencers on short-video platforms.

I have seen multiple brands repeatedly being promoted by influencers.

The logos and visuals used in influencer marketing help me recognize a brand.

I can associate specific influencers with certain brands.

When I see an ad on social media, I can recall if I have seen an influencer endorse it before.

Without looking at social media, I can recall at least one brand that was recently promoted by an influencer.

When I shop online, I often remember brands that I have seen influencers talk about.

If an influencer discusses a product, I am more likely to remember it compared to

traditional advertisements.

Short-video influencer promotions help me recall a brand better than long-form content.

Influencers help brands stay on top of my mind when making purchase decisions.

## 2. Engagement & Interaction with Influencer Content

I participate in brand-related activities (e.g., challenges, giveaways, polls) started by influencers.

I like, comment, or share posts from influencers who promote brands.

I actively follow brands recommended by influencers.

I watch an entire short video advertisement if it is endorsed by an influencer I follow.

I have clicked on links provided by influencers to explore a brand's products or services.

I watch influencer marketing content regularly on short-video platforms.

I interact with influencers by commenting or responding to their brand-related posts.

I discuss influencer-promoted products with my friends or family.

I revisit influencer content to explore more about a product or brand.

I follow multiple influencers who endorse similar brands.

## Perceptions & Attitudes Toward Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is more persuasive than traditional advertisements.

I trust influencers' recommendations when choosing products.

I feel that influencer marketing has a direct impact on my shopping decisions.

Influencers introduce me to brands I would not have discovered otherwise.

Influencer endorsements encourage me to try new products.

Social media has influenced my purchasing decisions multiple times.

#### 4. Media Consumption Habits

I use short-video platforms (Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, Moj, Chingari, Josh etc) daily.

I prefer short videos over longer content when exploring products online.

I use social media platforms primarily for entertainment, rather than brand engagement.

I often follow trends and hashtags introduced by influencers.

#### 5. Trust & Authenticity of Influencers

I believe influencers genuinely use the products they promote.

I can differentiate between a sincere endorsement and a paid promotion.

The authenticity of an influencer affects my trust in the brand they promote.

I trust micro-influencers (smaller following) more than celebrities for product recommendations.

I prefer influencers who provide unbiased and honest reviews over those who always praise a product.

#### 6. Purchase Intent & Behaviour

Influencer marketing has influenced me to purchase a product I had never considered before.

I have purchased a product solely because my favorite influencer recommended it.

I tend to buy products endorsed by influencers if I see multiple influencers promoting

them.

After watching influencer recommendations, I actively research more about the product before purchasing.

I would recommend influencer-endorsed products to my friends and family.

## **QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS QUESTIONNAIRE:**

Brand Insight on Influencer marketing -

Part A: Brand perspectives on Influencer marketing

1) What criteria do you prioritise when selecting influencers for collaboration?

Audience demographics

Engagement rate

Previous brand collaborations

Content quality

2) Which performance metrics do you use to evaluate influencer marketing success?

Sales conversion rate

Engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments)

Brand visibility growth

Website traffic

3) How important is influencer creative freedom in brand collaborations?

Extremely Important

Very Important

Somewhat Important

Not Important

4) Which challenges do you face in influencer marketing?

Measuring ROI

Finding the right influencers

Compliance with advertising regulations

Managing multiple influencer campaigns

Part B: Strategic Insights and Future perspectives on Influencer marketing

5) Can you provide a case study where influencer marketing significantly impacted brand performance?

6) What key factors determine the success of an influencer campaign?

7) How do you foresee influencer marketing evolving in the next five years?

8) What strategies do you recommend to make influencer marketing more effective for both brands and consumers?

9) How do you balance influencer creative freedom with maintaining brand messaging control?

Influencer Insight

Part A: Demographics

Age Group: 18-24

25-34

35-44

45+

Gender Identity: Male

Female

Prefer not to say

Primary Occupation: Student

Working Professional

Entrepreneur

Influencer/Content Creator

Marketing Professional

Other (please specify)

#### Part B: Social Media Usage, Content Creation, and Brand Collaboration Practices

1) How often do you use short-video platforms?

Daily

Several times a week

Once a week

Rarely

2) Which platform do you engage with the most for influencer content?

Instagram Reels

YouTube Shorts

Josh

Moj

Chingari

Roposo

3) What type of content do you primarily create?

Product Reviews

Educational/Tutorials

Entertainment (Comedy, Dance, Lip-sync)

Lifestyle & Vlogs

Other

4) Which factors influence your decision to collaborate with a brand?

Brand values align with personal values (primary)

Financial compensation (secondary)

Audience interest in the brand

Brand reputation

5) Which key performance indicators (KPIs) do you use to measure the success of your content?

Likes, Shares, Comments

Watch Time

Follower Growth

Sales/Conversion Rate

6) Have you ever rejected a brand partnership due to concerns over authenticity?

Yes

No

Part C: Authenticity, Engagement, and Future Perspectives

- 1) What characteristics make an influencer appear more authentic and trustworthy?
- 2) How do short-video platforms foster a sense of engagement and community among users?
- 3) What differences do you perceive between influencer marketing and traditional advertising?

- 4) How do you maintain authenticity while engaging in brand partnerships?
- 5) What engagement strategies have proven most effective for increasing audience interaction?
- 6) How do platform algorithms impact content visibility and engagement?
- 7) Can you provide an example of a successful campaign that significantly boosted engagement or sales?
- 8) How do short-video platforms differ from other digital marketing channels in terms of influencer marketing effectiveness?
- 9) How do you predict AI and machine learning will influence influencer marketing strategies?
- 10) To what extent does the concept of “togetherness” impact consumer engagement with influencer campaigns?
- 11) What role do interactive features (e.g., hashtags, challenges, live collaborations) play in fostering audience participation?
- 12) How can brands and influencers further leverage short-video platforms for community-building and brand loyalty?

## Consumers Insight in Influencer marketing

### Part A: Demographics

Age : 18-24

25-34

35-44

45+

Region: Delhi

Mumbai

Bangalore

Hyderabad

Kerala

Kanpur

UP

Chandigarh

Bhopal

Gujarat

Surat

Punjab

Guwahati

Surat

Rajasthan

Chennai

Jaipur

Area Type: Urban

Sub-Urban

Tier 2

Tier 3

Part B: Consumer Behaviour and engagement in Influencer marketing.

- 1) What motivates you to follow influencers on short video platforms?
- 2) Can you provide an example of a time when an influencers recommendation significantly impacted your purchasing decision?
- 3) What characteristics make an influencer appear more authentic and trustworthy?
- 4) How do short video platforms foster a sense of engagement and community among users?
- 5) What differences do you perceive between influencer marketing and traditional marketing?
- 6) What are the most significant trends shaping influencer marketing on short-vifro platforms?
- 7) How do you predict AI and machine learning will influence marketing strategies?
- 8) To what extent does the concept of togetherness impact consumer engagement with influencer campaign?
- 9) What role do interactive features (eg hashtag, challenges, live collaborations) play in fostering audience participation?
- 10) How can brands and influencers further leverage short video platforms for community building and brand loyalty?

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