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Determinants Of Instagram Influencer Marketing Acceptance Among Young Adults

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Abstract:

This study examined the determinants of young adults' acceptance of Instagram influencer marketing. A survey was conducted among young adult Instagram users using a questionnaire as a data collection tool. Adopting the purposive sampling technique, as many as 312 responses were collected. The findings showed that perceptions of informativeness, incentives, and interactivity positively predicted attitude toward Influencer marketing. Attitude, credibility, and incentives were positive predictors of intention toward Influencer Marketing. Lastly, young adults' behavioural intention was a positive predictor of their acceptance behaviour. Among the predictors, informativeness is the strong predictor of attitude followed by interactivity and incentives. Attitude is the strongest factor explaining the variance in intention, followed by credibility and incentives. Further, influencer marketing is found less effective on young adults as they generally exhibit mild rejection behaviour towards it. In conclusion, the study suggests that brands and influencers should tailor endorsements that are informative, interactive, and incentivised in nature to elicit a favourable attitude, which in turn influences intention that finally results in the acceptance behaviour.

Keywords: Credibility, Acceptance/Rejection Behaviour, Instagram, Influencer Marketing

1. Introduction

The total number of mobile users across the globe was 5.86 billion in October 2026, which is 70.4% of the total population (DataReportal, 2026). More than two-thirds of people worldwide own a mobile phone, and over three-quarters of them own a smartphone. The mobile internet user base has also increased as a result (Kemp, 2026).

There are about 1.3 billion people connected to the internet in India as of November 2025, including 500 million who have presence in social media. About 34.1% of the total population of the country is using social media (Kemp, 2025). A report by Forbes Advisor indicates that the total hours of social media use by an average person globally is 159 minutes (Hoory, 2026). In line with the increasing user base, social media applications has also progressed from a platform of direct electronic information exchange to an indispensable marketing tool of the 21st Century, offering numerous tools for marketers to reach their target audience (Maryville University, 2020; Appel et al., 2020).

1.1 Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing involves endorsements and mentions that are made by influencers who are personalities followed on social media and regarded as experts in their fields (Sprout Social, 2023). An influencer can be anyone; for instance, a wedding photographer on Pinterest or a fashion blogger on Instagram (Chopra et al., 2021). Today, influencers work with brands and endorse them on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and so on. Nowadays, buyers are seeking recommendations from influencers and other consumers to make a wise decision. As Chopra et al. (2021) noted, there is a rising significance of influencers in the brand management in the eyes of the consumer. These attributes of reliable news sources include accuracy, reliability, believability, competency, and impartiality, which are correlated with the effects (Pavlova, 2016; Xiao et al., 2018).

Social media celebrities and influencers are often trusted by their followers, and their buying advices provide a brand with a testimonial in the eyes of potential buyers. This makes influencer marketing very effective. The use of influencer marketing by content creators helps them reach their prospective buyers, increase traffic, and build brand awareness. Influencer Marketing Hub's survey (2026) reveals that 87.49% of marketers expect their influencer marketing budgets to increase in 2026, and 72.22% plan an increase of 50% or more. It was also able

to ascertain that 89% of marketers consider the monetary benefits of influencer marketing are equal to or higher than other marketing channels. The market size estimate of influencer promotion expanded from just $1.7 billion to $32.55 billion between the years 2016 and 2025. If the current trends continue, by the end of 2026, the value will have risen to more than $34.1 billion (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2026).

1.2 Instagram

India has the most Instagram users among the countries, with 532 million users as of September 2026 compared to 129 million in 2020 (DataReportal, 2026; NapoleonCat, 2026). In India, the reach of Instagram ads was more than 25% of the country's total population. In India, men account for 69%, while females comprised 31% of Instagram's users (NapoleonCat, 2026). The biggest age category of Instagram users was 25-34 years, followed by 18-24 years (NapoleonCat, 2026). Currently, the largest population of Instagram users comprises millennials and Generation Z (Zote, 2024). According to AppTweak (2026), Instagram was the most downloaded application among all other social media platforms worldwide in 2025 with 721.5 million downloads. The results of a Meta sponsored survey reported by Business Standard (2025) indicated that nearly eight in ten shoppers discover new products through social media, mainly on Facebook and Instagram. The Meta GWI (in Rawat 2023) depicted that the most influential factor was Instagram reels through which 47% of consumers claimed that they acquired knowledge about beauty items. A poll shows that fashion customers discover fashion brands on Instagram reels, and 39% of them make a purchase after identifying the businesses on these reels.

1.3 Statement of the Research Problem

Due to the presence of young audience, Instagram has experienced a sharp increase in India after 2020. Today's marketers have more chances than ever before to communicate with customers by this fabulous increase. Marketers employ influencers, or whoever has a large following on their account whether they are celebrities, bloggers, content creators, etc.

The studies conducted in various countries proved the impact of a marketing strategy using influencers on customers. However, as prior studies focused mostly on the facets of credibility and how it influenced brand attitude and purchase intentions, there is no extensive research done in India to establish the use of influencer marketing. Factors such as entertainment value, incentives, user interaction, and informativeness were often overlooked. Thus, the investigation of the determinants that describe the acceptance of influencer marketing is crucial. Since a majority of the users on Instagram are in the age of 18-34 years in India, the present research focuses on the extent to which young adults in this age group accept Instagram influencer marketing.

Two major research questions are developed from the above discussions.

- What factors determine the acceptance of Instagram influencer marketing?
- How effective is Instagram influencer marketing?

1.4 Objectives

- To analyze the determinants of young adults' acceptance of Instagram influencer marketing.
- To assess the effectiveness of Instagram influencer marketing among young adults.

2. REView Of Literature

The behavioural theories used in the investigations of acceptance and usage behaviours include the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The key constructs used to study user behaviour by these theories include attitude, intention, and actual behaviour. The factors impacting these key constructs were drawn from a review of past studies.

2.1 Major constructs of Influencer Marketing

The topic of attitude has been studied the most in behavioural studies. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) described attitude as the inclination to consistently react in both positive and negative ways towards a certain object. The perception of the Instagram influencer marketing is defined by the likes and dislikes of the users toward Instagram

and their better or worse experience associated with it. Behavioural intention is the extent to which individuals are certain if they will perform a given activity in the future (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). The intention of the users of Instagram can be explained by the likelihood of them watching videos and other content created by the influencers. Lastly, actual behaviour is defined as perceptible actions that are independently studied (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). The way influencer marketing messages used by Instagram users influences their acceptance or rejection of it. According to the literature, both an individual's attitude and intention are causally related as well as the acceptance or rejection behaviour and intention (Chopra et al., 2021; Pradhan et al., 2023; Ilieva et al., 2024; Tiwari et al., 2024; Li et al., 2026; Singh et al., 2026)

2.2 Predictors influencing major constructs of Influencer Marketing

It has been found that several antecedents influence the three major constructs of influencer marketing. The literature identifies the following factors: interactivity, incentives, credibility, entertainment value, and informativeness.

The source of credibility theory propounded that celebrity credibility could be seen from three dimensions: attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness (Hovland & Weiss 1951; Koay et al., 2021). Olasanmi (2023) investigated all three factors of credibility and its role on purchase intention. The findings showed that all three predictors had a significant positive influence on online purchase intentions. Juliadi and Curatman (2026) also demonstrated the strong association between source credibility and purchase intention. Stoddard et al. (2023) investigated source credibility as a second-order construct comprising perceived expertise, goodwill, and trustworthiness. Results indicated that source credibility positively predicted brand attitudes. Kaur's (2025) review of influencer marketing studies highlighted the positive relationship between credibility and brand attitude. Similarly, Anushka et al. (2026) demonstrated that source credibility significantly influenced brand attitude. McQuail (1983) argued that entertainment is all about fulfilling the audience hedonic needs such as aesthetic pleasure, emotional release, escape from the reality, and relief from boredom. Yang (2022) observed that the characteristics of entertaining message can create favourable audience attitudes for the marketers (Yang, 2022). It is because the entertainment value of influencer content can improve user engagement (Lou and Kim, 2019). Perceived entertainment in the influencer content is positively related to consumer attitudes (Carvalho & Gonçalves Rodrigues, 2026). A study by Singh et al. (2026) evidenced that entertainment level of the influencer content had a strong influence on attitude toward Instagram advertisements.

Incentives are specific rewards provided to the prospective buyers in exchange for potential purchases of goods or services (Kumar, 2017). Incentives include free gifts, vouchers, discounts, free trial, etc. (Pietz and Storbacka, 2007 in Keshtgary and Khajehpour, 2011). A study by Bun and Alversia (2020) showed that incentives positively impacted attitude towards a brand. A subsequent study by Cao et al. (2025) demonstrated positive association between incentives and purchase intention.

Informativeness of a marketing communication relates to offering truthful and useful information regularly (Siau and Shen, 2003; Koay et al., 2021). A study by Lou and Yuan (2019) found that informativeness of the influencer posts had a positive influence on follower's trust which in turn influenced the intention. Subsequently, Leung et al. (2022) established that offering more ways of user interaction in a brand communication determined the informativeness of the posts. By doing so, influencers can fulfil the information needs of their followers (Ki et al., 2020). Gross & Von Wangenheim (2022) found that sponsored content with information value created more user engagement in Instagram. Mir & Salo (2025) showed that the informativeness of influencer posts had a direct effect on the followers' brand attitude. Recent studies demonstrated the strong positive effect of informativeness on attitude toward Instagram advertising (Singh et al., 2026; Shailza, & Sarkar, 2026).

Interactivity relates to the degree of reciprocity between influencers and followers in satisfying their communication needs (Ha and James, 1998; Gao et al, 2010; Glucksman, 2017; Koay et al., 2021). Interactive influencer content prompts users on Instagram to engage with the product, and a range of methods by which they can provide feedback - through DMs, comments, website links, etc. Caruelle (2023) identified the triadic relationship among influencers, followers, and brands. The interactive nature of the influencer marketing can facilitate brand discussions and immediate purchases. A study by Yurika et al. (2022) found interactivity as a

positive predictor of brand awareness and purchase intention. Similarly, Kim & Chan-Olmsted (2022) found that perceived interactivity was a strong predictor of intention to use influencer marketing.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual model of the factors influencing the adoption of influencer marketing, derived from the existing theories and literature (Fig 1). The Conceptual framework combines three behavioural theories such as TPB, TAM, and TRA. The proposed model suggests that Instagram users' attitude toward influencer marketing will be significantly predicated by perceived informativeness, entertainment value, credibility, and interaction & incentives. Perceived credibility, interactivity, incentives and attitude of Instagram users will significantly influence their intention to utilize influencer marketing. Lastly, the behaviour of acceptance or rejection will be significantly influenced by the intention. Using this model, the present study looks at Instagram influencer marketing acceptability.

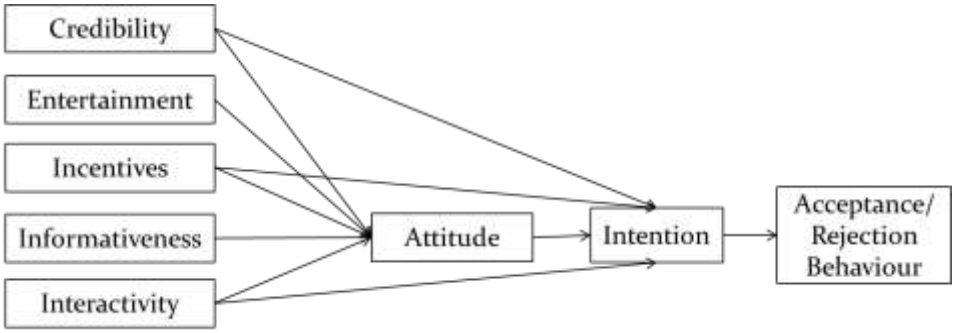


Fig 1. Conceptual Model of Determinants of Instagram Influencer Marketing Acceptance

The hypotheses of the study are presented in the form of null hypotheses as given below:

2.4 Major Hypotheses

H_01 Young adults' perceptions of credibility, entertainment, incentives, informativeness, and interactivity will not significantly predict their attitude toward Instagram Influencer Marketing.

H_02 Young adults' perceptions of credibility, interactivity, incentives and attitude toward influencer marketing will not significantly predict their behavioural intention toward influencer marketing.

H_03 Young adults' behavioural intention toward influencer marketing will not significantly predict their acceptance/rejection behaviour toward influencer marketing.

3. Methodology

This study aimed to assess the determinants of young adults' acceptance of Instagram influencer marketing in Indian setting. To achieve the study objectives, the researchers used a survey design. Thus, non-probability purposive sampling was applied to select the required samples for the study. The sampling frame is the group of Instagram users that fall in the age bracket of 18-34 years. The selected audience of Instagram users aged 18 to 34 answered 312 replies. The type of data collection used was a self-administered online questionnaire.

IMPAIAS stands for Influencer Marketing Perception, Attitude, Intention, and Acceptance Scale, which is a considerable instrument designed for research based on behavioural theories and the prior literature on the subject of influencer marketing. The Likert-type five-point scale has 28 statements with the following levels of agreement: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Each response option was assigned a score of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

4. Data Analysis

The statistical analysis of the survey responses was done using regression analysis. Additionally, descriptive statistics like mean and standard deviation were included.

Table 1: Predictors of attitude toward the Influencer Marketing

Multiple regression								
R	**R^2**	**F**	***Sig.***					
.732	.536	58.211	*0.000***					
Independent Variables		**B**	**Beta**	**SE**	**T**	***Sig.***	**Mean**	**SD**
(Constant)		.162		.294	.550	.583		
Credibility		.041	.036	.109	.376	.708	3.3974	.64382
Entertainment		.140	.109	.109	1.287	.200	3.3237	.80283
Incentives		.161	.152	.080	2.000	**.047***	3.4327	.74938
Informativeness		.290	.281	.085	3.430	**.001****	3.2436	.82813
Interactivity		.289	.262	.095	3.040	**.003***	3.3248	.72036
Dependent Variable: Attitude							3.6182	.58110

Significance level: ** 0.001 level; * 0.05 level

The purpose of developing null hypothesis 1 was to investigate whether the respondents' diverse perceptions, such as credibility, entertainment, incentives, informativeness, and interactivity, influence their attitudes towards influencer marketing. The findings of the multiple regressions are displayed in Table.1. As demonstrated by the findings, the dependent variable "attitude" has a variance that is statistically significant at the 0.001 level (R2=0.536) and can be explained by the entire model (Table 1) (F=58.211, p=0.000< 0.001). Table 1 displays the average of the respondents' diverse perceptions and attitudes on a five-point Likert scale. The attitude's mean value (M=3.6182) is slightly higher than the Likert scale's neutral score of 3. It is evident from this that respondents as a whole have a slightly favourable attitude toward influencer marketing. The observation of the results shows that factors like young Instagram users' perceived incentives, perceived informativeness, and perceived interactivity have a significant impact on how they feel about influencer marketing. Other elements, such as perceived entertainment value and credibility, do not really affect people's attitude about influencer marketing. While considering the Beta values, the most significant factor influencing attitude is informativeness (Beta: 281), followed by interactivity (Beta:.262) and incentives (Beta:.152).

Table 2: Predictors of Intention toward the Influencer Marketing

Multiple regression								
R	**R^2**	**F**	***Sig.***					
.775	.600	56.599	*0.000***					
Independent Variables		**B**	**Beta**	**SE**	**T**	***Sig.***	**Mean**	**SD**
(Constant)		.665		.185	3.601	.000		
Credibility		.296	.320	.067	4.417	**.000****	3.324	.720
Incentives		.167	.197	.056	2.988	**.003***	3.243	.828
Interactivity		.024	.027	.065	.366	.715	3.432	.749
Attitude		.314	.390	.053	5.901	**.000****	3.176	.784
Dependent Variable: Intention							3.280	.666

Significance level: ** 0.001 level; * 0.05 level

The null hypothesis 2 was created to investigate if respondents' intentions about influencer marketing are influenced by variables like credibility, incentives, interactivity, and attitude. Table 2 displays the details of the multiple regression analysis. The variance of the dependent variable 'intention' is statistically significant at the 0.001 level (F=56.599, p= 0.000 < 0.001), and the overall model (Table 2) accounts for this variance (R2 = 0.600). M=3.280, with the intention's mean value slightly above the neutral score 3. It implies that respondents are neutral in their intentions towards Influencer Marketing.

When examining the predictors, it is clear that credibility, incentives and attitude play a major role in determining how they intend to use influencer marketing, while the effect of interactivity is insignificant on Intention (Table 2). The most important predictor of intention, according to the predictors' beta values, is attitude (beta: .390), credibility (beta: .320) followed by incentives (beta: .197).

Table 3: Predictor of Acceptance/Rejection Behaviour toward Influencer Marketing

Linear Regression								
R	**R^2**	**F**	***Sig.***					
.524	.274	58.211	*0.000***					
Independent Variable		**Coefficients**		**SE**	**T**	***Sig.***	**Mean**	**SD**
		B	**Beta**					
(Constant)		.156		.213	.729	.467		
Intention		.486	0.524	.064	7.630	**.000****	3.2804	.66620
Dependent Variable: Acceptance/Rejection Behaviour							1.7500	.61827

Significance level: ** 0.001 level

Null hypothesis 3 was formed to determine whether young Instagram users' behavioural intention significantly predicts their acceptance or rejection of influencer marketing. The linear regression analysis results are presented in table 3.

The results infer that the behavioural intention (table 3) accounts for approximately 27% of the variance (R2= 0.274) of the dependent variable "acceptance/rejection behaviour," which is statistically significant at the 0.001 level (table 2.3b) (F=58.211, p= 0.000 < 0.001). Moreover, there is a significant positive influence of behavioural intention on the acceptance/rejection behaviour towards Influencer Marketing (beta: 0.524). The mean value of acceptance/rejection behaviour (M=1.7500) indicated that Instagram users exhibit a mild degree of rejection towards influencer marketing.

5. Findings & Discussion

This section presents and discusses the implications of the major findings.

5.1 Neutral perceptions

The overall perceptions of young adults towards the Instagram Influencer marketing are generally neutral. It suggests that their perceptions are neither favourable nor unfavourable. The slightly favourable attitude is the outcome of these neutral perceptions.

5.2 Slightly favourable Attitude

Young adults' attitude is slightly favourable towards the Instagram Influencer Marketing. Informativeness is the most significant predictor of attitude, followed by interactivity and incentives. It implies that increasing informativeness, interactivity and incentives will generate a favourable attitude. The perceptions of entertainment and credibility are insignificant predictors of attitude. However, influencer marketing should possess the values

of entertainment and credibility as they are fundamentals of any marketing communication. The role of entertainment and credibility on attitude formation needs further investigation.

5.3 Neutral Behavioural Intention

Young adults are neutral in their intention to use the Instagram influencer marketing. It means that the users are neither favourable nor unfavourable in their intention. The findings show attitude as the most prominent predictor of intention, followed by credibility and incentives. Hence, a more favourable attitude with relevant incentives from a credible source will be ideal for eliciting a more favourable intention.

5.4 Mild Rejection Behaviour

Young adults show mild rejection behaviour towards Instagram Influencer Marketing. It implies that most of the users exhibit a slightly unfavourable behaviour toward it. The findings show that most of the users watch endorsements but they do not take any action on it. Some of them skip or ignore endorsements, and a few of them are watching and using it for consumptions purposes. So, these behavioural traits result in a mild rejection behaviour which is positively predicted by their intention. Instagram influencer marketing is less effective among young adults as they exhibit mild rejection behaviour towards it. Since, behavioural intention is neutral among the users, eliciting a favourable intention is essential for generating the acceptance behaviour.

5.5 Theoretical Implications

This study, by adopting the three behavioural models such as TRA, TPB & TAM, has established direct causal relationships between attitude, intention, and acceptance/rejection behaviour. These three key factors are instrumental in determining the acceptance behaviour of Instagram Influencer Marketing. This study used the three behaviour models TRA, TPB & TAM to establish the direct relationship between attitude, intention and acceptance/rejection behaviour. These three variables are key to Influencer Marketing acceptance among young adults. The study assessed the significance of various perceptions, attitude, intention and acceptance or rejection behaviour towards influencer marketing among young Indian consumers by developing a conceptual model incorporating key aspects of behavioural theories and past literature. These variables can be used in future research to study further about influencer marketing.

5.6 Managerial Implications

As per the findings, informativeness is the strongest indicator of attitude towards influencer marketing. So brands and influencers should focus on giving consumers information about the brand or product; for example, a complete endorsement of the brand or product would be sufficient.

The results showed that entertainment and credibility are not significant predictors of attitude. But credibility is a key factor predicting the intention. Brands and influencers should add more entertainment and credibility aspects in their content because they may be important in grabbing attention and building trust among the consumers. Though credibility is ineffective on attitude formation, its role on intention remains crucial. Brands should also offer incentives that can direct the interest of the customers to the brand and focus on providing multiple options for interactivity in the endorsements. This way, the followers can connect with the brands and their influencers.

Young adults generally have mild rejection towards influencer marketing as they only watch endorsements and do not use them for consumption. So, brands and influencers find ways to influence the users' consumption behaviour. So tailoring endorsements that are informative, interactive and incentivized is ideal to elicit a positive attitude which in turn will influence the intention to use endorsements for consumption and that will result to acceptance behaviour.

6. Conclusion

The present study used two research objectives to approach the research topic in an attempt to determine whether young adults accept Instagram influencer marketing. The study's first objective was to examine what influences young adults' acceptance of influencer marketing. The findings established that the perceptions of informativeness, incentives and interactivity have a significant positive impact on their attitude toward Influencer

Marketing. The perceptions of credibility, incentives and attitude have a significant positive impact on their intention toward Influencer Marketing. Furthermore, the acceptance/rejection behaviour of young people is significantly impacted by their behavioural intention. Informativeness is the most important predictor of attitude among the variables, followed by incentives and interactivity. Attitude is the most significant factor predicting intention, followed by credibility and incentives.

Secondly, effectiveness of influencer marketing among young adults was studied. The findings show that the influencer marketing is less effective on young adults as they generally exhibit mild rejection behaviour towards it. It is evident that most young adults watch endorsements but they do not use it for consumption purposes, while some of them skip or ignore endorsements, only a few of them are watching and using it for consumption purposes. In conclusion, the study suggests the brands and influencers to tailor endorsements that are informative, interactive and incentivised in nature for eliciting a favourable attitude, which in turn influences the intention that finally results in the acceptance behaviour.

7. Limitations

The findings of the study are limited to Instagram users between 18 and 34 years in India. Adopting purposive sampling technique and a smaller sample size are limiting external validity of the findings. Since the findings are specific to Instagram, generalizing the same for the influencer marketing in other social media platforms is a major limitation of the study.

8. Scope For Further Research

Future studies may try to replicate the same in different social media platforms and in different parts of the world with a larger sample size spanning all age groups.

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