

Attitude - Behaviour Pathways in Influencer Marketing: Evidence from Urban India

A Sabarirajan¹, V Jayalakshmi²

Abstract: *The rapid development of social media platforms has changed how consumers evaluate products, form brand preferences, and making purchase decisions. This study examines the impact of social media influencers (SMIs) on the online apparel purchase behaviour of urban women in Tamil Nadu. Data were collected from 382 respondents using a structured questionnaire through purposive and convenience sampling. The study employed statistical analysis using SPSS. The results reveal that influencer related constructs exhibit strong reliability and unidimensional. Chi-square analysis demonstrated significant associations between demographic variables, influencer following behaviour, and purchase decisions. Binary logistic regression identified influencer credibility and brand influencer alignment as key predictors of online purchase decisions. Ordinal logistic regression further confirmed that trust in influencers is the strongest determinant of brand preference, whereas time spent on social media does not significantly influence brand outcomes. The findings show that content driven attributes of influencers like trust, credibility, and brand relevance are more influential than exposure driven factors such as browsing time. The study delivers actionable insights for apparel brands, marketers, and strategy makers aiming to enhance influencer led campaigns.*

Keywords: Social Media Influencers, Online Purchase Behaviour, Apparel Market, Consumer Trust, Brand preference, South India

1. Introduction

The proliferation of social media platforms has revolutionized digital communication, reshaping how consumers interact with brands and make purchasing decisions. In India, social media penetration has surged, particularly among young urban women who form a dominant segment of online apparel shoppers. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook have become primary channels for fashion discovery, product evaluation, and peer-driven influence. Within this ecosystem, social media influencers (SMIs) have emerged as powerful intermediaries capable of shaping consumer attitudes, enhancing brand visibility, and driving conversions through personalized, relatable, and visually engaging content.

In recent digital marketing, promoting a product or a brand through social media influencers is becoming viral among the companies especially in fashion industry. Their perceived authenticity and trust influence the consumers in their purchase behaviors. Several studies proved that the influencers are influencing the consumers in their purchase behavior. However, the extent to which they influence depends on various factors like demographic profile, psychographic traits and social media usage. Urban women tend to engage more in visually rich platforms and they often exposed to apparel related content and it makes them as a primary source for examining the impact of social media influencers in apparel brands. Even though influencer marketing is growing, the empirical evidence on how influencer characteristics like trust, credibility and content alignment turns into purchase behavior and brand choice remains limited among Indian women. Moreover, the role of social media usage, time spent, platforms accessed, and content exposure continues to be debated, with mixed findings across global studies.

The presents study attempts to fulfil the gaps by analysing the Impact of Social Media Influencers (SMI) in making online apparel purchase decisions among the urban women of Tamil Nadu. Through various statistical tests the study identifies the

significant determinants of influencer induced purchase behavior. The study also differentiates the impact of exposure driven factors from content driven factors. It offers a reference for digital marketers in making strategies for using social media influencers and brand promotions in social media. The study outlines the reviews, methodology and empirical results followed by conclusions and opportunities for future research.

2. Review of Literature

Consumer buying behaviour specifically women consumers in India witnessed a major shift because of digitalization and emergence of e commerce platforms. Several studies highlight that online shopping become an integral part of modern lifestyle, especially among female consumers. They account for a significant proportion of online retail activity. Shrivastava and Wadhwa (2023) highlighted that the rise of digital platforms has shifted traditional marketing to a consumer centric marketing, where consumer behaviours like web rooming and showrooming show a hybrid approach to modern shopping. Their study reveals a rising awareness in social media platforms among Indian women who dynamically compare products across different channels before making a purchase decision. Mason et al. (2025) adapted Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) framework and explored the drivers behind consumer intentions to buy recycled products. Their study focused on green self-identity, social norms, and generational gaps. The results outline that green self-identity and positive consumer attitudes act as primary factor which significantly influence purchase preference for recycled products. Ehsan et al (2025) studied the implications of dynamic bidding on an e-commerce platform and found that dynamic bidding may influence sellers to set higher prices but need not lead to higher conversion rates for sponsored advertisements. It shows that exposure- based strategies alone may not be sufficient to drive purchase behaviour. It demands the need of psychological drivers such as trust and credibility especially in influencer led marketing.

Dolly and Dubey (2023) explored online purchase patterns among young female consumers, particularly students. Their findings show that fashion and apparels are the major part of women's online shopping. The mixed approach of their study reveals that influence of brand trust, peer opinions, and user-friendly interfaces are shaping young women's shopping journeys. Jyotsna Rai's (2024) research on exploring the behaviour of working women drew attention to the emerging impact of social media advertising. In the study she found that personalized advertisements, particularly on platforms like Instagram and Facebook, strongly influence in creating interest in buying products, especially among urban working women in Eastern India. Nisha Singh (2019) in her research identified key dimensions of female consumer behaviour such as service quality, perceived usefulness, and repurchase intention by using factor analysis. She also analysed gender specific preferences and provided a comprehensive examination of women's perceptions in the National capital region. Social media plays a key role in influencing consumer buying behaviour. Sammanasu & Tantuway (2021) in their study identified that social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube not only influence purchasing decisions but also improve interaction between brands and female consumers. A broader analysis by Madhura et al (2024) confirmed that visual experiences on social media platforms combined with attractive design and user reviews significantly increase trust and purchase intentions among women. Geographical location also plays an important role in influencing purchase behaviour. Shyni (2014) in her study in Kannur district, Kerala, highlighted the cultural distinctions that differentiate Indian women consumers from their global consumers. She outlined the need for marketers to develop strategies that align with local values, beliefs, and online behaviours. Barari (2025) examined the direct impact of Virtual Influencer's anthropomorphism on consumer engagement and their well-being. The study revealed that higher anthropomorphism increases consumer engagement but negatively impacts wellbeing.

Several studies examined broader psychological and contextual factors. Sefa Emre Yilmazel (2024) identified gender-based insights of online buying behaviour during online festival seasons. The findings reveal that women are more influenced by factors like category richness and perceived entertainment during online sales events used by social media influencers to promote products. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is playing crucial role in digital marketing. Hari Krishna et al. (2023) studied effective usage of ethically governed AI in marketing research. Their study emphasized on AI driven tools that can be integrating with influencer marketing strategies for improved understanding of consumer sentiments and behaviours. This is more relevant to apparel companies for leveraging social media influencer content to appeal to targeted urban women. Sindura et al. (2022) explored the application of data mining in economic analysis, underlining the value of big data and behavioural pattern analysis. These approaches increasingly used to track social media engagement and its correlation with online purchasing decisions. These techniques provide marketers with insights into how urban women respond to social media influencer content in apparel purchase.

Venkateswarwn et al. (2018) used Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in consumer decision making on automobiles. This model highlights that the factors perceived ease of use, digital trust, online reviews or recommendations from influencers significantly shape consumer decision making. These factors are significant in influencing urban women's buying behaviour in online apparel purchase. The role of consumer involvement and emotional engagement also explored. The findings revealed that both cognitive and affective involvement play key roles in influencing women's online buying behaviour. It is more effective when emotionally connecting content is delivered by the influencers. Several studies identified that there is an interesting trend emerged in nostalgia-driven purchases. This shows how Indian women balance modern online experiences with cultural identity and emotional expressions and values that influencers use when marketing apparel online. Collectively, all these studies show a strong connect of insights into the online buying behaviour of urban women in India. Based on the influence of social media and AI tools, it is identified that female online consumers represent a dynamic, multifaceted segment. Based on the studies it is suggested that the brands should apply a refined, data driven and culturally sensitive approach to influence apparel purchases of urban women in Tamil Nadu through social media influencers.

3. Research Methodology

The study employed a descriptive and analytical research design to examine how social media influencers (SMIs) influence the online apparel purchase decisions of urban women in Tamil Nadu. The study enabled the profiling of respondents, testing of construct validity, and evaluation of association between influencer attributes, social media usage, and consumer behaviour. Data collection carried out with a structured questionnaire with four sections. It consists (1) demographics, (2) social media usage patterns, (3) influencer related constructs such as trust, credibility, brand alignment, and preference over traditional advertising, and (4) online apparel shopping behaviour. Most items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, while demographic variables were categorical.

The target population comprised urban women in major Tamil Nadu cities. The study used purposive sampling to ensure inclusion of social media users and convenience sampling for accessibility. A total of 382 valid responses were collected. Data were analysed using a standard statistical process, including descriptive statistics, reliability test, factor analysis (KMO and Bartlett's test) for construct validation, and inferential tests such as the Chi-square test, Mann-Whitney U test, and correlation analysis. To identify predictors of consumer decisions, both binary logistic regression and ordinal logistic regression were employed. These techniques provided a comprehensive evaluation of the factors that influence brand preference and purchase behaviour in the context of influencer-driven marketing.

4. Findings

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 382)

Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Age (years)	18–24	180	30.0
	25–34	121	37.5
	35–44	75	22.5
	45 and above	6	10.0
Education	Higher Secondary	80	20.9
	Undergraduate	198	51.8
	Postgraduate	97	25.4
	Other	7	1.8
Occupation	Student	214	56.0
	Working Professional	122	31.9
	Homemaker	21	5.5
	Self-employed	16	4.2
	Others	9	2.4
Monthly Income (₹)	Below 20,000	174	45.5
	20,000–40,000	118	30.9
	40,001–60,000	61	16.0
	60,001–80,000	13	3.4
	Above 80,000	16	4.2

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of respondents. Most of the respondents are women aged 18–24 years (47.1%), followed by 25–34 years (31.7%) and 35–44 years (19.6%). Only 1.6% of the respondents are aged 45 years and above. More than half of the respondents were undergraduates (51.8%), while 25.4% were postgraduates. Majority of the respondents were students (56.0%), followed by working professionals (31.9%). In terms of level of income, 45.5% of them are in monthly earnings below ₹20,000, while 30.9% earned between ₹20,000–40,000.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics of Measurement Items

Construct / Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted	Overall Scale (α)
Trust in influencer	0.621	0.869	
Influencers impacting brand preference	0.727	0.774	
Preference for influencer over traditional ads	0.813	0.682	
Overall Scale (3 items)	—	—	0.846

Reliability analysis of the measurement scale is reported in Table 2. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the three-item scale was 0.846, indicating high internal consistency. Corrected item total correlations ranged from 0.621 to 0.813. It shows strong construct reliability.

behaviour, including age and purchase decisions ($\chi^2 = 20.278$, $p < 0.001$) and income and shopping frequency ($\chi^2 = 155.795$, $p < 0.001$). Psychographic factors such as following influencers ($\chi^2 = 94.795$, $p < 0.001$) and trust in influencers ($\chi^2 = 376.534$, $p < 0.001$) were also strongly associated with apparel purchase behaviour. The effect sizes (Cramer’s V) ranged from 0.230 to 0.511, indicating moderate to strong relationships.

Table 3 summarizes the Chi-square test results. It shows significant associations between demographics and purchase

Table 3: Chi-Square Test Results of Demographic and Psychographic Factors on Online Purchase Behaviour

Variables tested	χ^2	df	p-value	Effect Size (Cramer’s V)
Age vs Purchase from Recommendation	20.278	3	0.001***	0.230
Monthly Income vs Online Shopping Frequency	155.795	16	0.001***	0.319
Educational Qualification vs and Trust in Influencers	66.645	12	0.001***	0.241
Following Influencers vs Purchase from Recommendation	94.795	1	0.001***	0.498
Time Spent on Social Media vs Purchase Frequency	135.034	12	0.001***	0.343
Influencer Trustworthiness vs Meeting Expectations	376.534	16	0.001***	0.496
Preference over Traditional Ads vs Purchase from Recommendation	99.910	4	0.001***	0.511

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Exploratory factor analysis was performed to assess construct validity (Table 4). The Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) value of 0.671 and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity ($\chi^2 = 541.461$, $p < 0.001$) confirmed data suitability for factor analysis. In the analysis a single factor emerged, explaining 76.56% of the total variance, with strong loadings from trust in influencers (0.816), preference over advertisements (0.925), and influence on brand preference (0.880).

Table 4: Factor Analysis Results for Influencer-Related Constructs

Test / Item	Value / Loading
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.671
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	$\chi^2 = 541.461$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.001$
Total Variance Explained (1 Factor)	76.56%

Factor Loadings	
– Trust in influencer	0.816
– Preference for influencer over ads	0.925
– Influencers impacting on brand preference	0.880

Table 5 represents the Mann–Whitney U test comparing apparel purchase between respondents who is following influencers and those who is not following. Results showed that non followers reported significantly higher mean ranks (207.74) than followers (169.91). This difference was statistically significant ($U = 14,335.500$, $Z = -3.587$, $p < 0.01$). It shows that followers of influencers are spending less when compared with non-followers.

Table 5: Mann–Whitney U Test: Comparison of Monthly Apparel Spend between Followers and Non-Followers of Influencers

Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Followers (Yes)	164	169.91	27,865.50
Non-Followers (No)	218	207.74	45,287.50
Total	382	–	–

Mann–Whitney U = 14,335.500, Z = -3.587, p < 0.01

The binary logistic regression model (Table 6) used to predict the online apparel purchases influenced by social media influencers. The overall model was significant ($\chi^2 = 66.655$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$). 21.5% of the variance (Nagelkerke R²) with a classification accuracy of 67.3%. Significant predictors include preference for influencers over ads (B = -0.428, p = 0.009, OR = 0.652) and brand influence alignment (B = -0.445, p < 0.001, OR = 0.641). Trust in influencers and time spent on social media were not significant.

Table 6: Binary Logistic Regression Predicting Online Apparel Purchase Based on Influencer Recommendations

Predictor Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig. (p)	Exp(B)
Trust in influencer (INFLUENCE3)	-0.117	0.181	0.421	1	0.516	0.889
Preference for influencer over ads (INFLUENCE4)	-0.428	0.163	6.887	1	0.009	0.652
Average time spent on social media (SMUP2)	0.149	0.113	1.735	1	0.188	1.161
Influence on brand preference (INFLUENCE2)	-0.445	0.099	20.347	1	0.000	0.641
Constant	2.099	0.543	14.964	1	0.000	8.158

Model Fit: -2 Log likelihood = 454.069, Cox & Snell R² = 0.160, Nagelkerke R² = 0.215, Overall classification accuracy = 67.3%

An ordinal logistic regression was employed to test the impact of influencer characteristics and social media usage on brand preference. Table 7 shows that the model was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 180.343$, $df = 8$, $p < 0.001$). It is indicating

that the predictors reliably distinguished levels of brand preference. The pseudo R² values (Cox & Snell = 0.376; Nagelkerke = 0.403; McFadden = 0.175) suggest moderate explanatory power.

Table 7: Ordinal Logistic Regression Predicting Brand Preference Based on Influencer Characteristics and Social Media Usage

Predictor Variable	Estimate (B)	S.E.	Wald χ^2	df	Sig. (p)	95% CI
Location						
INFLUENCE3 (Trust in influencer)	1.558	0.163	91.006	1	0.000	1.238 – 1.878
SMUP2 (Time spent: 1–2 hrs)	-0.139	0.304	0.210	1	0.647	-0.735 – 0.457
SMUP2 (Time spent: 2–3 hrs)	0.052	0.289	0.032	1	0.857	-0.515 – 0.619
SMUP2 (Time spent: >3 hrs)	-0.446	0.290	2.369	1	0.124	-1.013 – 0.122
NFLUENCE2 (Brand preference influence = 1)	-0.873	0.437	3.982	1	0.046	-1.730 – -0.016
NFLUENCE2 (Brand preference influence = 2)	-0.244	0.362	0.453	1	0.501	-0.954 – 0.466
NFLUENCE2 (Brand preference influence = 3)	0.493	0.461	1.145	1	0.285	-0.410 – 1.397
NFLUENCE2 (Brand preference influence = 4)	0.541	0.328	2.721	1	0.099	-0.102 – 1.184

Model Fit: -2 Log Likelihood = 531.330, Model $\chi^2 = 180.343$, $df = 8$, $p < 0.001$, Cox & Snell R² = 0.376, Nagelkerke R² = 0.403, McFadden R² = 0.175

Among the predictors, trust in influencer (INFLUENCE3, B = 1.558, p < 0.001) and influence on brand preference (NFLUENCE2 = 1, B = -0.873, p = 0.046) appeared as significant determinants. Specifically, higher trust in influencers improved the possibility of stronger brand preference. Low level influence (NFLUENCE2 = 1) was negatively associated with brand preference. Other predictors, including social media usage duration (SMUP2) and higher categories of brand preference influence (NFLUENCE2 = 2–4), were not statistically significant. Overall, the findings show that brand trust formed by influencers is a significant driver of consumer brand preference development, whereas general social media exposure plays only a limited role.

5. Discussion

This study shows that social media influencers significantly influence the online apparel purchase behaviour of urban women in Tamil Nadu. Psychological mechanisms play major role rather exposure driven factors. The study consistently shows that trust, credibility, and influencer brand relevance are the most influential determinants of consumer

preference. Factor analysis confirmed a strong and coherent influencer construct, reflecting how consumers perceive influencer attributes holistically. Chi-square results highlighted significant associations between demographic/psychographic factors and purchase behaviour. It emphasizes that younger women and active social media users are more likely to be influenced. The Mann–Whitney U test revealed that non-followers spent more on apparel than followers. This shows that followers may be more selective due to increased awareness and comparisons.

Regression analyses reveals that credibility and brand alignment directly influenced purchase decisions. Trust was the strongest driver of brand preference. Time spent on social media showed no meaningful correlation with purchase expenditure. This reinforce that influence occurs from the quality of content rather than the quantity of exposure. Overall, the findings of the study indicate that influencer influenced apparel purchasing is formed by meaningful engagement and perceived authenticity rather than passive browsing.

6. Conclusion

The study found that social media influencers significantly influence in online apparel purchase behaviour of urban women in Tamil Nadu. The findings of the study clearly indicate that trust in influencers is a key psychological driver of brand preference. Influencer credibility and brand influencer relevance are the strong drivers of purchase behaviour. The study reveals that the exposure-based metrics like time spent on social media and frequency of content viewing, are insufficient to predict consumer purchase behaviour. The influencing mechanism rooted in credibility, authenticity, and brand relevance is highly influencing apparel purchase behaviour and consumer loyalty. Through the empirical evidence the study shows that establishing trust, credibility, and influencer brand relevance form the core psychological drivers that forms brand preference and online apparel purchase decisions among urban women in Tamil Nadu. The results also suggest that apparel brands should prioritise associations with influencers who exhibit high authenticity, expertise, and clear value alignment with the brand rather than focusing merely on follower count. Marketers are encouraged to design campaigns that foster trust based long term consumer relationships. Future research may broaden the demographic and geographic scope to include rural populations and male consumers. Research may be carried out on other product categories, and employ advanced modelling techniques to explore causal mechanisms and mediating effects more comprehensively.

References

- [1] Barari.M, Ross.M, Azad Moghddam.H (2025), "Virtual influencers' anthropomorphism, consumer engagement and/or well-being". *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 42 No. 5 pp. 673–688, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-06-2024-6944>
- [2] Dolly Tripathi, Akshat Dubey, (2023), Online Shopping And Buying Behaviour: A Study On Female Students With Special Reference To Apparels And Fashion Industry, *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 35 S1, 5385-5406.
- [3] Ehsan Saremi, Upender Subramanian (2025) Automated Targeted Bidding for Sponsored Ads on E-Commerce Platforms. *Marketing Science* 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1287/mksc.2024.0813>
- [4] Hari Krishna, S., Madala, R., Ramya, P., SR, A., Dobhal, D., & Sapate, S. (2023). Ethically governed artificial intelligence based innovative business research in finance and marketing system. 2023 Eighth International Conference on Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (ICONSTEM) (pp. 1–7). IEEE. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICONSTEM56934.2023.10142352>.
- [5] Jyotsna Rai, Priyanka Kumari, (2024), Exploring the Factors that influence working women consumer's propensity to make impulsive online apparel buying, *Sustainable business practices in finance and human resource management*, 9, 98-112
- [6] Madhura, K., Panakaje, N., Parvin, S. M. R., Irfana, S., Cutinha, M. H., Yatheen, A., & Soans, R. S. (2024). Online fashion consumerism among women: The interplay of digital experiences and decision making – a mediated moderated analysis. *Innovative Marketing*, 20(4), 245–262.
- [7] Mason MC, Zamparo G, Saleem S, Umar RM (2025), "Generational shifts: understanding the role of green self-identity, social norms and cohort differences in consumer intentions to purchase stigmatised recycled products". *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 42 No. 7 pp. 996–1010, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-12-2023-6441>
- [8] Nisha Singh, Ririka Moolchandani, Archana Bhatia, (2019), Factors Influencing Online Buying Behavior among Women Customers, *International Journal of Research in Engineering, IT and Social Sciences*, 9(3), 50-59
- [9] Sabarirajan, A., Srivenidevi, D., Kuragayala, P. S., Shyam, S. S., Chandratreya, A., & Banu, M. S. (2025). Factors and interpretable models in data-driven management information systems to enhance job satisfaction of road transport employees. In A. Obaid, A. Burlea-Schiopoiu, B. Bhushan, S. Bobur, & S. Rajest (Eds.), *Public sector and workforce management in the digital age* (pp. 177–196). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3373-1137-1.ch009>
- [10] Sammansu, M., & Tantuway, R. (2021). Influence of social media on women buying behavior towards fashion products from online stores. *Sambodhi*, 44(1), 101–107.
- [11] Sefa Emre Yilmazel, (2024), Creating Impulse Buying Behavior in The Online Festival Atmosphere: A Gender-Based Evaluation, *OPUS Journal of Society Research*, 21(6), 435-448.
- [12] Shrivastava, S., & Wadhwa, C. (2023). A study of online buying behaviour of women in India. In *Contemporary business trends: Exploring emerging paradigms* (pp. 37–50).
- [13] Shyni, A. (2014). A study of online shopping behaviour of females-with special reference to Kannur district, Kerala. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 9(4), 528–535.
- [14] Sindhura. K, S.A., U., K. S., Narang, P., Bhanushali, M. M., & Turai, A. K. (2022). Human resource management based economic analysis using data mining. 2022 3rd International Conference on Intelligent Engineering and Management (ICIEM) (pp. 872–876). IEEE. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICIEM54221.2022.9853202>
- [15] Singh, N., Moolchandani, R., & Bhatia, A. (2019). Factors influencing online buying behavior among women customers. *International Journal of Research in Engineering, IT and Social Sciences*, 9(3), 50–59.
- [16] Tripathi, D., & Dubey, A. (2023). Online shopping and buying behaviour: A study on female students with special reference to apparels and fashion industry. *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 5385–5406.
- [17] Venkateswaran, P. S., Sabarirajan, A., Arun, B., Muthupandian, T., & Manimaran, S. (2018). Technology acceptance model for making decision to purchase automobile in Coimbatore district. *International Journal of Mechanical Engineering and Technology (IJMET)*, 9(11), 1608–1613. <http://iaeme.com/Home/issue/IJMET?Volume=9&Issue=11>
- [18] Yilmazel, S. E. (2024). Creating impulse buying behaviour in the online festival atmosphere: A gender-based evaluation. *OPUS Journal of Society Research*, 21(6), 435–448.