

Impact of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchase Decisions-With Special Reference to Nike Air Max

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Abstract—

Keywords

Social Media Influencers, Consumer Purchase Decisions, Influencer Credibility, Nike Air Max, Social Media Influence, Influencer Marketing, Purchase Intention, Urban India

Purpose

The rapid expansion of social media platforms has fundamentally reconfigured consumer decision-making dynamics, elevating digital influencers to the role of powerful opinion leaders within modern marketing ecosystems. Notwithstanding a growing body of influencer marketing literature, empirical studies situating purchase behaviour within a specific premium product category and an Indian urban consumer context remain conspicuously sparse. This study examines the impact of social media influencers on consumer purchase decisions, with particular reference to the Nike Air Max brand among young Indian consumers aged 18–29 years.

Literature Review & Research Gaps

Grounded in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and the Source Credibility Model (Ohanian, 1990), existing research establishes that influencer persuasiveness operates through peripheral credibility cues — trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness — and that platform-specific engagement further amplifies purchase intention (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Tafesse & Wood, 2021). However, most empirical investigations are Western-centric and examine influencer marketing in generalized product domains, leaving the simultaneous modelling of influencer credibility, purchase decision, and platform-specific social media influence as three interrelated constructs largely unexplored. Research addressing premium lifestyle subcategories such as sneaker brands, and the moderating role of prior product ownership, is similarly limited.

Methodology

A quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional research design was employed. Primary data were collected from 271 active social media users in India through a structured 19-item Likert-scale questionnaire measuring three constructs: Influencer Credibility (IC), Purchase Decision (PD), and Social Media Influence (SM). Snowball sampling was used for respondent recruitment.

Analytical procedures comprised Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's α), Pearson Correlation Analysis, Multiple Linear Regression, and cross-tabulation comparison across purchase behavior groups, executed using Python and Microsoft Excel.

Analysis & Findings

Internal consistency was confirmed across all constructs (IC: $\alpha = 0.827$; PD: $\alpha = 0.900$; SM: $\alpha = 0.881$). Pearson correlation analysis revealed strong and statistically significant inter-construct relationships: IC–PD ($r = 0.808$, $p < 0.001$), PD–SM ($r = 0.863$, $p < 0.001$), and IC–SM ($r = 0.704$, $p < 0.001$). Multiple linear regression demonstrated that IC ($\beta = 0.496$) and SM ($\beta = 0.503$) together explain 82.4% of variance in purchase decisions ($R^2 = 0.824$, $F(2,268) = 626.8$, $p < 0.001$), with both predictors contributing in near-equal measure. All four research hypotheses were supported at $p < 0.001$. Group analysis revealed that respondents in the 'Planning to Buy' category recorded the highest construct scores (IC = 4.213, PD = 4.236, SM = 4.159), with younger cohorts (18–23 years) exhibiting significantly greater sensitivity to influencer credibility cues.

Conclusion

The study furnishes robust empirical evidence that influencer credibility and platform-specific social media engagement function as complementary and potent drivers of consumer purchase decisions for premium lifestyle products. The dual-pathway model — wherein credibility establishes the psychological foundation for persuasion while platform mechanics activate behavioral conversion — offers a theoretically coherent and practically actionable framework for brand strategists. The findings carry direct implications for Nike and analogous lifestyle brands in optimizing influencer selection, content format, and platform deployment strategies within the rapidly evolving Indian digital consumer market.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media has emerged as a defining force in the contemporary consumer ecosystem. The mass adoption of platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook have fundamentally altered how consumers discover products, evaluate brands, and ultimately make purchase decisions.

Unlike traditional advertising channels, social media enables bidirectional interaction, fostering parasocial relationships between content creators and their audiences that can exert substantial influence on purchasing behavior.

Within this environment, social media influencers — individuals who have cultivated credible digital identities and engaged follower communities — have emerged as pivotal marketing intermediaries.

Brands, particularly in the lifestyle and fashion sectors, increasingly partner with influencers as an alternative to conventional advertising, leveraging their perceived authenticity and reach. The global influencer marketing industry was valued at over USD 21 billion in 2023 and continues to grow at a double-digit rate, reflecting the strategic importance of this channel to modern brand communication.

Nike Air Max, one of the most iconic and culturally relevant sneaker lines in the world, provides a particularly rich context for examining influencer-driven purchase behavior. The brand occupies an aspirational position in urban youth culture, and its launch campaigns have historically leveraged celebrity endorsements and, more recently, social media influencer collaborations to drive awareness and purchase intent. Understanding how influencer credibility, content authenticity, and platform-specific dynamics interact to shape purchase decisions for premium lifestyle products such as Nike Air Max is therefore of significant academic and managerial relevance.

1.1 Background of the Study

Young Indian consumers — particularly those in the 18–29 age bracket — represent the largest and fastest-growing segment of the country's digital population. With over 750 million internet users and smartphone penetration exceeding 60%, India has become one of the world's most important influencer marketing markets. Urban youth, who simultaneously follow multiple influencers across platforms and form the primary consumer base for premium sneaker brands, are exposed to influencer content at an unprecedented frequency.

Despite the volume of global research on influencer marketing, empirical studies focused on Indian consumers' purchase behavior in the context of specific product categories such as premium sneakers remain limited. Most existing research is either Western-centric or examines influencer marketing in general rather than within a brand-specific framework. This study addresses that gap by investigating the mechanisms through which influencer credibility and social media platform engagement drive purchase decisions for Nike Air Max among young Indian consumers.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing prevalence of influencer-driven marketing campaigns, several critical questions remain inadequately addressed in the existing literature: To what extent does influencer credibility — encompassing trustworthiness, expertise, authenticity, and disclosure transparency — translate into actual purchase behavior? How do different social media platforms (Instagram, YouTube, Facebook) moderate the relationship between influencer content and purchase decisions? And how do these dynamics manifest specifically in the Indian consumer context, where cultural and socioeconomic factors may introduce unique nuances?

The absence of empirically grounded answers to these questions creates a strategic gap for brand managers and marketers seeking to optimize their influencer investment decisions. This study seeks to fill that gap through primary research with a diverse sample of Indian consumers.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- 1.3.1* To analyze the demographic profile of respondents and their social media usage patterns.
- 1.3.2* To examine the role of social media influencers in shaping consumer purchase decisions for Nike Air Max.
- 1.3.3* To assess the impact of influencer credibility on consumer trust and purchase behavior.
- 1.3.4* To evaluate the effect of social media platform-specific engagement on purchase intention.
- 1.3.5* To identify key predictors of purchase decisions through regression modelling.
- 1.3.6* To test the four research hypotheses using appropriate statistical techniques.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study makes several contributions. Academically, it extends the influencer marketing literature by providing empirical evidence within the Indian consumer context and a specific premium product category. Practically, the findings offer actionable insights for Nike and similar brands regarding the optimal selection and deployment of influencers. For social media platforms, the results highlight which content formats and engagement mechanisms are most effective in driving purchase behavior. The study also contributes methodologically by computing and reporting internal consistency statistics that were not available in the original dataset.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

The study is confined to respondents who are active social media users and are aware of, or have considered purchasing, Nike Air Max. The sample of 271 respondents was collected primarily through snowball sampling and may not be fully representative of the broader Indian consumer population. The research is cross-sectional in design, capturing attitudes and behaviors at a single point in time. Longitudinal tracking of actual purchase conversions following influencer exposure was not possible within the scope of this study.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Foundations

The study draws on two complementary theoretical frameworks. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) proposed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) suggests that consumers process persuasive messages through either a central route — engaging in careful analysis of message content — or a peripheral route, relying on heuristic cues such as source attractiveness or popularity. Influencer marketing primarily operates via peripheral cues, where the influencer's credibility, likability, and perceived expertise serve as persuasion shortcuts.

The Source Credibility Model (Ohanian, 1990) identifies three dimensions of source credibility: trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. Applied to influencer marketing, trustworthiness reflects the degree to which followers perceive the influencer as honest and unbiased; expertise refers to the influencer's knowledge of the product domain; and attractiveness encompasses both physical appeal and social desirability. All three dimensions have been consistently linked to positive consumer attitudes and purchase intention in digital marketing contexts.

2.2 Social Media Influencers and Consumer Behaviour

Zak and Hasprova (2020) identified influencers as modern-day opinion leaders whose persuasive impact varies significantly by product category and audience characteristics. In the fashion and lifestyle segment — to which sneaker brands belong — influencer endorsements have been found to elicit the highest consumer responsiveness. Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019) established that micro-influencers, despite having smaller follower counts, often achieve higher engagement and trust levels than celebrity macro-influencers, particularly for niche product categories.

Singh et al. (2023) found that Indian consumers develop favorable brand attitudes when influencers demonstrate genuine product usage and communicate transparently about paid partnerships. This is particularly relevant in the context of the present study, where disclosure of #ad or paid partnership was one of the Likert items measuring influencer credibility. Nguyen et al. (2025) demonstrated that social attractiveness and interpersonal similarity between influencers and followers significantly enhance trust, which in turn strengthens purchase intention — a relationship empirically confirmed in the present study's correlation analysis.

2.3 Platform-Specific Dynamics

Sokolova and Kefi (2020) found that parasocial interaction — the emotional bond that followers form with influencers over time — significantly predicts purchase intention, and that this effect is amplified on visually-oriented platforms such as Instagram. Tafesse and Wood (2021) demonstrated that video-based content on YouTube elicits higher cognitive engagement and recall than static image-based content, making YouTube Reels and Shorts particularly effective for product evaluation in high-involvement categories such as premium sneakers.

Jamil et al. (2024) highlighted TikTok's role in creating urgency for limited-edition product releases, a phenomenon observed in the present study through the SM construct items related to Instagram Stories and limited Nike Air Max release announcements. Xiao, Wang, and Chan-Olmsted (2018) proposed that platform-specific heuristics — such as the number of likes, comments, and shares on a post — serve as credibility signals that amplify the influence of the source.

2.4 Research Gap

While the existing literature extensively documents the general relationship between influencer marketing and consumer purchase intention, several specific gaps informed the design of the present study:

- 2.4.1 Most empirical studies are conducted in Western markets; research on Indian consumers in the context of premium lifestyle brands is limited.
- 2.4.2 Few studies simultaneously model influencer credibility, purchase decision, and platform-specific social media influence as three distinct but interrelated constructs.
- 2.4.3 Research on sneaker brands specifically — as opposed to fashion and beauty in general — remains sparse in the academic literature.

- 2.4.4 The mediating role of platform format (Reels vs. Stories vs. YouTube Shorts) in the influencer-purchase relationship is underexplored.
- 2.4.5 Limited empirical research addresses how actual ownership of the product (i.e., prior Nike Air Max purchase) moderates consumers' sensitivity to influencer content.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative, descriptive, and inferential research design. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire, and the analysis employs both descriptive statistics and inferential techniques including Pearson correlation analysis, multiple linear regression, and reliability analysis. A cross-sectional approach was adopted, with data collected at a single point in time during March 2026.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population consists of social media users in India aged 18 years and above who are aware of Nike Air Max and follow at least one social media influencer. Snowball sampling was employed as the primary recruitment strategy, leveraging personal and professional networks to access diverse respondent profiles across age, gender, education, and social media usage patterns. A total of 271 valid responses were obtained after data cleaning and exclusion of incomplete entries.

3.3 Measurement Instrument

The questionnaire comprised two sections. Section 1 captured demographic information including age, gender, education level, primary social media platform, number of Nike Air Max pairs owned, and prior influencer-driven purchase behavior. Section 2 contained 19 Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) measuring three theoretical constructs:

- 3.3.1 Influencer Credibility (IC): 7 items assessing trust in micro-influencers, athlete influencer expertise, authenticity of unboxing content, styling influence, disclosure transparency, macro vs. micro credibility comparison, and influencer-driven brand loyalty.

- 3.3.2 Purchase Decision (PD): 7 items capturing desire to purchase following influencer exposure, price justification, urgency from limited-edition announcements, store/platform visit intent, resale value consideration, community influence, and color/design preference.

- 3.3.3 Social Media Influence (SM): 5 items measuring the impact of Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts reviews, Instagram Stories urgency, swipe-up purchase links, and trending music in Reels on Nike Air Max purchase behavior.

All scale items were developed specifically for the Nike Air Max context and validated through pilot testing.

3.4 Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework and literature review, the following four hypotheses were formulated:

- 3.4.1 H1: H1: Social media influencers have a significant impact on consumer purchase decisions.
- 3.4.2 H2: H2: Influencer credibility significantly influences consumer trust and purchase intention.
- 3.4.3 H3: H3: Influencer authenticity significantly influences consumer purchase intention.
- 3.4.4 H4: H4: Engagement with influencer content significantly affects consumer buying behavior.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data were entered, cleaned, and analyzed using Python (pandas, scipy, numpy, stats models) and Microsoft Excel. The analytical framework comprised:

- 3.5.1 Descriptive statistics: frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations for all demographic and scale variables.
- 3.5.2 Reliability analysis: Cronbach's alpha computed for each construct to assess internal consistency.
- 3.5.3 Pearson correlation analysis: bivariate correlations among IC, PD, and SM construct scores.
- 3.5.4 Multiple linear regression: OLS regression with IC and SM as independent variables and PD as the dependent variable.

3.5.5 Cross-tabulation analysis: comparison of construct means across purchase behavior groups (Yes / Planning / No).

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the 271 survey respondents. The sample skews young and digitally engaged, which is consistent with the target population of active social media users who follow influencers and are aware of lifestyle sneaker brands.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 271)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Group	18–20 years	31	11.4%
	20–23 years	71	26.2%
	24–26 years	85	31.4%
	27–29 years	74	27.3%
	30 and above	10	3.7%
Gender	Female	152	56.1%
	Male	100	36.9%
	Not Specified	19	7.0%
Education	Undergraduate	72	26.6%
	Postgraduate	66	24.4%
	Working Professional	114	42.1%
	Other	19	7.0%
Primary Social Media Platform	Instagram	135	49.8%
	YouTube	65	24.0%
	Facebook	60	22.1%

	Others (WhatsApp, LinkedIn, X)	11	4.1%
Nike Air Max Pairs Owned	None	117	43.2%
	1 pair	85	31.4%
	2 pairs	63	23.2%
	3 or more pairs	5	1.8%
Purchased Nike Air Max via Influencer Post?	Yes	104	38.4%
	No	103	38.0%
	Planning to Buy	63	23.2%

The largest age cohort is 24–26 years (31.4%), followed by 27–29 years (27.3%) and 20–23 years (26.2%). Together, respondents aged 18–29 years account for 96.3% of the sample, underscoring the study's relevance to young adult consumers. Females constitute the majority of respondents (56.1%), while males account for 36.9%. Working professionals form the largest occupational category (42.1%), followed by undergraduates (26.6%) and postgraduates (24.4%).

Instagram emerges as the dominant social media platform (49.8%), followed by YouTube (24.0%) and Facebook (22.1%). This distribution reflects broader Indian social media usage patterns and highlights Instagram's centrality as an influencer marketing channel.

Notably, 56.8% of respondents own at least one pair of Nike Air Max, indicating a significant existing customer base within the sample. When asked about influencer-driven purchase behavior, 38.4% reported having purchased Nike Air Max following influencer exposure, 38.0% had not, and 23.2% were planning to buy — a remarkably balanced distribution that enables meaningful comparative analysis.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis

Table 2 presents item-level descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for all 19 Likert-scale items across the three constructs. All item means fall above the scale midpoint of 3.0, indicating overall agreement with the influencer-purchase relationship propositions.

Table 2: Item-Level Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach's Alpha (N = 271)

Construct	Item Description	N	Mean	SD	α
IC	Micro-influencers showing personal use increases my trust in Nike Air Max	271	4.07	1.06	0.827
	Athlete influencer expertise affects my Nike purchase decision	271	4.01	0.97	
	Authentic unboxing videos increase confidence in Air Max quality	271	4.10	0.91	
	Influencer outfit styling affects my choice of Nike Air Max size/color	271	3.95	1.00	
	I trust influencers who disclose #ad or paid partnerships	271	3.95	0.90	
	Celebrity influencers are more credible than micro-influencers for sneakers	271	3.94	0.97	
	My connection with influencers affects my loyalty toward sneakers	271	3.92	1.10	
PD	Seeing influencers wear Nike Air Max increases my desire to buy	271	3.80	1.03	0.900
	Limited product announcements by influencers encourage quick purchase	271	3.78	1.15	
	Influencer promotion makes high price of Nike Air Max seem worth paying	271	4.06	1.04	
	Influencer content encourages me to visit Nike stores or online platforms	271	3.84	1.16	

	Resale value of Nike Air Max influenced my purchase decision	271	3.92	0.97	
	Sneaker communities on social media influence my decision to buy Nike Air Max	271	3.59	1.17	
	Influencer affects my choice of Nike Air Max color or design	271	3.83	1.13	
SM	Instagram Reels influence my decision to buy Nike Air Max	271	3.79	1.15	0.881
	YouTube Shorts sneaker reviews encourage me to research Nike Air Max	271	3.68	1.29	
	Instagram Stories create urgency for limited Air Max releases	271	3.62	1.07	
	Swipe-up/product links in Stories encourage me to buy Nike Air Max	271	3.69	1.27	
	Reels with trending music influence my preferred Nike Air Max color/style	270	3.58	1.32	

Reliability analysis confirms excellent internal consistency across all three constructs. The Influencer Credibility (IC) construct achieves $\alpha = 0.827$ (Good), the Purchase Decision (PD) construct achieves $\alpha = 0.900$ (Excellent), and the Social Media Influence (SM) construct achieves α

$= 0.881$ (Good). All alpha values comfortably exceed the conventional threshold of 0.70 recommended for research instruments (Nunnally, 1978), lending strong support to the psychometric quality of the measurement scale.

4.3 Construct Score Summary

Table 3 summaries the mean scores, standard deviations, and reliability coefficients at the construct level. Influencer Credibility records the highest mean (3.991), indicating that respondents strongly perceive influencers as credible sources for Nike Air Max. Purchase Decision (3.831) and Social Media Influence (3.672) also record above-midpoint means, confirming that social media content and influencer endorsements are meaningfully associated with purchase behavior.

Table 3: Construct-Level Summary Statistics (N = 271)

Construct	Items	N	Mean	SD	α	Reliability
Influencer Credibility (IC)	IC1 – IC7	271	3.991	0.692	0.827	Good
Purchase Decision (PD)	PD1 – PD7	271	3.831	0.865	0.900	Excellent
Social Media Influence (SM)	SM1 – SM5	271	3.672	1.003	0.881	Good

4.4 Pearson Correlation Analysis

To examine the bivariate relationships among the three constructs, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed. Table 4 presents the correlation matrix with all coefficients statistically significant at $p < 0.001$.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Matrix (N = 271) ** $p < 0.001$

Variable	IC Score	PD Score	SM Score	Significance
Influencer Credibility (IC)	1.000	0.808**	0.704**	$p < 0.001$
Purchase Decision (PD)	0.808**	1.000	0.863**	$p < 0.001$
Social Media Influence (SM)	0.704**	0.863**	1.000	$p < 0.001$

The correlation between Purchase Decision and Social Media Influence is the strongest ($r = 0.863$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that platform-specific social media engagement is a particularly powerful determinant of purchase behavior. The IC–PD correlation ($r = 0.808$, $p < 0.001$) confirms that influencer credibility is strongly associated with purchase decisions, while the IC–SM correlation ($r = 0.704$, $p < 0.001$) reflects the expected interplay between credibility and platform-level engagement. All three correlations are in the large-to-very-large range, exceeding Cohen's (1988) threshold of 0.50 for a large effect.

These findings directly support H1 (influencers significantly impact purchase decisions), H2 (influencer credibility influences trust and purchase intention), and H4 (engagement with influencer content affects buying behavior).

4.5 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

To determine the relative predictive power of Influencer Credibility (IC) and Social Media Influence (SM) on Purchase Decision (PD), a multiple linear OLS regression model was estimated. Results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Multiple Regression — Predictors of Purchase Decision (N = 271)

Predictor	β Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value	Sig.
(Constant / Intercept)	0.006	0.046	0.121	0.904
Influencer Credibility (IC)	0.496*	0.066	7.53	< 0.001
Social Media Influence (SM)	0.503*	0.054	9.22	< 0.001
R² = 0.824 Adjusted R² = 0.823 F (2, 268) = 626.8 p < 0.001				

The overall model is highly significant ($F(2,268) = 626.8, p < 0.001$), and the R^2 value of 0.824 indicates that IC and SM together explain 82.4% of the variance in purchase decision — an exceptionally strong result for a social science model. Both predictors contribute significantly and in near-equal measure: IC ($\beta = 0.496, p < 0.001$) and SM ($\beta = 0.503, p < 0.001$). The near-zero intercept ($\beta_0 = 0.006$) confirms excellent model calibration.

The result that SM ($\beta = 0.503$) slightly outweighs IC ($\beta = 0.496$) as a predictor of purchase decision suggests that, while influencer credibility is foundational, the specific platform dynamics through which influencer content is delivered — Reels urgency, YouTube reviews, swipe-up links — ultimately drive conversion.

This finding has important implications for marketers: investing in high-credibility influencers is necessary but not sufficient; the platform format and content architecture must also be optimized.

H3 (influencer authenticity influences purchase intention) is supported through the IC regression coefficient, as authenticity items (unboxing videos, disclosure transparency, genuine product usage) are embedded within the IC construct.

4.6 Purchase Behaviour Group Analysis

To further illuminate the relationship between influencer marketing and purchase behavior, construct mean scores were compared across the three purchase behavior groups (Yes, Planning to Buy, No). Table 6 presents this analysis.

Table 6: Construct Means by Purchase Behavior Group

Purchase Behavior	n	IC Mean	PD Mean	SM Mean
Yes – Purchased via influencer	104	4.194	4.011	3.856
Planning to Buy	63	4.213	4.236	4.159
No – Did not purchase	103	3.669	3.420	3.196

Respondents in the 'Planning to Buy' group record the highest scores across all three constructs (IC=4.213, PD = 4.236, SM=4.159), indicating that these consumers are the most actively influenced by influencer content and are in a high-engagement decision stage.

Those who have already purchased via influencer content also score substantially above the overall sample means (IC = 4.194, PD = 4.011, SM = 3.856).

In contrast, non-purchasers score notably lower (IC = 3.669, PD = 3.420, SM = 3.196), confirming a clear dose-response relationship between perceived influencer credibility/social media engagement and actual purchase behavior.

The fact that 'Planning to Buy' respondents score higher than 'Yes' respondents on PD and SM suggests that current influencer campaigns are creating strong purchase aspiration that has not yet converted to action — a commercially valuable insight indicating that retargeting or call-to-action strategies could convert this high-intent segment.

4.8 Hypothesis Testing Summary

Table 7 summaries the results of all four hypothesis tests.

H	Hypothesis Statement	Result	Key Statistics
H1	Social media influencers have a significant impact on consumer purchase decisions.	✓ Supported	$r(\text{IC-PD}) = 0.808, p < 0.001$
H2	Influencer credibility significantly influences consumer trust and purchase intention.	✓ Supported	$\alpha = 0.827$; Mean = 3.99
H3	Influencer authenticity significantly influences consumer purchase intention.	✓ Supported	$\text{IC} \rightarrow \text{PD } \beta = 0.496, p < 0.001$
H4	Engagement with influencer content significantly affects consumer buying behavior.	✓ Supported	$\text{SM} \rightarrow \text{PD } \beta = 0.503, p < 0.001$

All four null hypotheses are rejected in favor of the alternative hypotheses at $p < 0.001$. The empirical evidence thus unequivocally supports the proposition that social media influencers exert a significant and measurable impact on consumer purchase decisions for Nike Air Max.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Key Findings

5.1.1 Instagram is the dominant social media platform among respondents (49.8%), reflecting its primacy as an influencer marketing channel in India. YouTube (24.0%) and Facebook (22.1%) constitute significant secondary channels.

4.7 Age Group Analysis

Analysis of IC construct means across age groups revealed a monotonically declining pattern: 18–23 years (IC Mean = 4.088), 24–29 years (IC Mean = 3.942), and 30+ years (IC Mean = 3.771). Younger respondents are significantly more receptive to influencer credibility cues, consistent with prior literature on the heightened social media sensitivity and digital nativity of Gen-Z consumers (Nguyen et al., 2025). Brands seeking to maximize influencer marketing ROI should therefore prioritize content formats and influencer profiles that resonate with the 18–26 age segment.

5.1.2 All three constructs record above-midpoint mean scores (IC = 3.99, PD = 3.83, SM = 3.67), confirming that respondents meaningfully perceive the role of influencers in their Nike Air Max purchase considerations.

5.1.3 Influencer Credibility and Social Media Influence together explain 82.4% of the variance in Purchase Decision, demonstrating the strong predictive validity of the model.

5.1.4 PD–SM correlation ($r = 0.863$) is the strongest bivariate relationship, underscoring that platform-specific content mechanics (Reels, Stories, YouTube Shorts) are the most proximate driver of purchase behavior.

- 5.1.5 Respondents in the 'Planning to Buy' group are the most influenced segment, representing a high-priority conversion opportunity for Nike's influencer campaigns.
- 5.1.6 Younger respondents (18–23 years) exhibit significantly higher IC scores than older cohorts, confirming generational differences in influencer sensitivity.
- 5.1.7 Reliability analysis confirms excellent psychometric quality across all three constructs, validating the measurement instrument.
- 5.1.8 Approximately 38.4% of respondents have already purchased Nike Air Max following influencer exposure, with an additional 23.2% planning to do so — a combined high-intent rate of 61.6%.

5.2 Discussion

The findings are consistent with and extend prior research in several respects. The strong IC–PD relationship ($r = 0.808$) replicates the credibility–intention linkage documented by Lou and Yuan (2019) and Singh et al. (2023) in the Indian context. The near-equal regression coefficients for IC and SM ($\beta \approx 0.50$) suggest a dual-pathway model of influencer impact: credibility establishes the psychological foundation for persuasion, while platform-specific engagement mechanisms activate the behavioral impulse to purchase.

The exceptionally high R^2 of 0.824 in the regression model is noteworthy and indicates that, for the Nike Air Max consumer segment, influencer marketing variables are among the most powerful determinants of purchase intention. This finding validates Nike's strategic emphasis on influencer-led campaigns for Air Max launches and suggests that competitors seeking to challenge Nike's dominance in the premium sneaker market would need to develop equally compelling influencer strategies.

The dominance of Instagram (49.8% of respondents) and the strength of the SM construct in predicting purchase decisions aligns with Sokolova and Kefi's (2020) finding that parasocial interaction on Instagram significantly predicts purchase intention. The urgency created by Instagram Stories for limited-release Nike Air Max editions appears to be a particularly effective mechanism, consistent with Jamil et al.'s (2024) TikTok-based findings on scarcity cues and purchase acceleration.

The disclosure transparency item in the IC construct — 'I trust influencers who clearly disclose #ad or paid partnerships when promoting Nike Air Max' — achieving a mean of 3.95 suggests that Indian consumers have developed relatively sophisticated media literacy regarding sponsored content.

This has implications for the ethical conduct of influencer campaigns and supports regulatory trends toward mandatory disclosure requirements in India's emerging influencer marketing landscape.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the impact of social media influencers on consumer purchase decisions for Nike Air Max among young Indian consumers. The empirical evidence is unambiguous: influencer credibility and social media platform engagement are strong, statistically significant, and practically meaningful predictors of purchase behavior, together explaining over 82% of variance in purchase decisions.

The findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on influencer marketing in emerging market contexts and offer specific insights into the mechanisms through which Nike's influencer strategy operates. The dual-pathway model — where credibility and platform mechanics operate as complementary but distinct drivers of purchase — provides a theoretically coherent and practically useful framework for brand strategists.

Managerial Implications

1. Nike should continue to prioritize influencer partnerships that emphasize authenticity — genuine unboxing, personal use demonstration, and transparent disclosure — as these are the credibility signals most valued by the target consumer segment.
2. Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts reviews should be the primary content formats for influencer campaigns, given their demonstrated effectiveness in driving both engagement and purchase intent.
3. The 'Planning to Buy' segment (23.2% of respondents) represents a high-value conversion opportunity. Retargeting strategies — such as Instagram Story swipe-up links and time-limited promotional offers — should be deployed to convert this high-intent group.
4. Younger consumers (18–23 years) are the most receptive to influencer credibility cues and should be the primary target demographic for influencer marketing investments.
5. Brands should invest in micro-influencer partnerships in addition to celebrity macro-influencers, given evidence that micro-influencers generate higher trust levels among niche audiences.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Longitudinal studies tracking actual purchase conversion following influencer exposure would provide more robust evidence of causal relationships.
2. Comparative analysis across multiple sneaker brands (Nike vs. Adidas vs. New Balance) would offer insights into brand-specific influencer dynamics.
3. The mediating role of parasocial interaction in the IC–PD relationship merits investigation through structural equation modelling.
4. Platform-level experiments examining the differential impact of Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and emerging formats (such as Instagram Broadcast Channels) on purchase behavior would be commercially valuable.

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