AMPLIFYING BRAND REACH THROUGH YOUTUBE INFLUENCERS

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ABSTRACT

Social media platforms in the digital age have revolutionized how brands engage with consumers, with YouTube standing out as a potent tool for influencer marketing. Influencers on YouTube engage audiences through diverse content formats, including vlogs, reviews, tutorials, and sponsored advertisements, making it an ideal platform for promoting products. Influencers play a pivotal role in modern marketing strategies due to their ability to build genuine relationships with their target audiences. The paper investigates the impact of YouTube influencers on consumers' buying intentions. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire to achieve the above goal. The study considered Tamil YouTube Influencers and their impact on Tamil audiences. This study considered the role of Homophily, Sponsored Advertisements, and the Likability of influencers on purchase intentions. The researcher used purposive sampling to collect the data from 201 Tamil audiences who follow Tamil YouTube influencers. The statistical tools used to attain the objectives of this study are frequency analysis, one-way ANOVA, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis. The study results revealed that both Homophily and Sponsored Advertisements significantly impact purchase intentions. Moreover, the likability of an influencer varies across different occupational backgrounds, suggesting that the professions of the influencers influence consumer perceptions. The study also highlights how customer perceptions are shaped by the frequency and types of content influencers share. The researcher suggests to marketers the necessity for personalized marketing strategies that cater to diverse consumer preferences for successful campaigns. Ultimately, the study encourages marketers to effectively utilise YouTube influencers to capture consumer engagement to drive maximum impact on revenue within the Tamil audience segment.

INTRODUCTION

Influencer marketing is being touted as a crucial tactic used by organisations to connect with customers and increase product engagement lately (Ozuem & Willis, 2022). This method utilizes the credibility and popularity of social media personalities to influence purchasing decisions, changing how brands interact with their target markets (Saima & Khan, 2020). As influencers gain trust in the online world (Hossain & Alam, 2022), their endorsements can significantly impact consumer choices (Pop et al., 2022). This change is especially noticeable in markets where traditional advertising is becoming less effective (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Karagür et al., 2022). Additionally, the growth of direct-to-consumer models has made influencer partnerships vital for brands aiming to establish strong brand connections (Andersson et al., 2020). By working with influencers, brands can access specific audiences and encourage community participation (Fan et al., 2023). Therefore, having a deep understanding of influencer marketing dynamics is essential for developing effective strategies that appeal to various consumer groups.

Examining the YouTube Influencer's impact on the purchasing intentions of Tamil customers is the key aim of this study. The growing reliance on digital platforms drives this research to promote products and the unique cultural dynamics that impact consumer behaviour in India. This research is particularly relevant in today's rapidly changing market, where influencer marketing is becoming a key aspect of brand engagement. Even with influencer marketing's rise, a thorough grasp of the particular elements influencing customer behaviour in niche markets still needs to be developed. By looking at the connection between consumer purchase intentions and influencer traits, the study attempts to fill this gap. Through a focus on Tamil customers, this study delivers targeted insights that enhance the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. The study

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utilizes a structured questionnaire to gather primary data from 201 respondents who actively follow Tamil YouTube influencers. Data will be examined using statistical techniques like One-way ANOVA, Pearson Correlation, and Multiple Regression to draw meaningful conclusions.

The subsequent sections will delve into the methodology, results, and conclusion. The study intends to add to the existing literature by evaluating the YouTuber's impact on consumer buying decisions among Tamil customers. To help brands maximise their influencer partnerships in a culturally appropriate way, this paper presents a comprehensive analysis of how influencer marketing might successfully impact consumers' purchase intentions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Influencer marketing has become an essential brand strategy, fundamentally transforming customer involvement and buying behaviour in recent years (Vrontis et al., 2021). This literature review analyzes the evolving dynamics of influencer marketing, focusing on credibility, content types, influencer characteristics, and the impact on consumer purchase intentions.

Influencer marketing significantly impacts consumers' purchase intentions by fostering emotional connections and trust (Masuda et al., 2022). Consumers are more inclined to buy advertised products of Influencers when genuine content is being shared (Delbaere et al., 2021; Kapitan et al., 2022; Ramasamy et al., 2024).). This relationship is solid in markets where traditional advertising has diminished influence (Nadanyiova et al., 2020). Additionally, the alignment of influencer content with brand values enhances consumer commitment and purchase likelihood (Bu et al., 2022). As a result, consumers often rely on influencers for product recommendations, leading to increased sales and brand loyalty (Ramadan & Farah, 2020). The emotional resonance created through influencer interactions is a key driver for purchase intentions (Chen & Yang, 2023).

Since customers like to interact more with influencers that possess comparable qualities, the idea of homophily substantially impacts the efficacy of influencer marketing (Gupta et al., 2023). Influencers who relate to consumers can foster trust and authenticity, making their recommendations more persuasive (Atiq et al., 2022). This shared identity not only strengthens the influencer-follower relationship but also enhances brand perception (Farivar & Wang, 2022). Moreover, increased engagement rates can also result from influencers and their audience having similar demographic and lifestyle characteristics. (Hazari & Sethna, 2023; Hudders & De Jans, 2022). Consequently, brands often prioritize influencers with high homophily to effectively reach their target demographics (Jaiswal et al., 2024). This strategic alignment is essential for optimizing marketing outcomes in influencer campaigns (Huynh et al., 2022).

Expertise is a pivotal factor that enhances the credibility and effectiveness of influencers in marketing (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Chopra et al., 2021). Influencers who demonstrate substantial knowledge in their niche can significantly sway consumer decisions, leading to higher engagement and purchase rates (Prasanthi et al., 2024). Their authority in specific domains reinforces follower trust and loyalty, making recommendations more impactful (Ye et al., 2021). Furthermore, consumers often seek expertise when evaluating product endorsements, as it directly correlates with perceived product value (Tsen & Cheng, 2021). As a result, brands strategically select influencers based on their expertise to optimize campaign effectiveness (Huttula & Karjaluoto., 2023). This focus on specialized knowledge drives purchase intention and solidifies brand authority in competitive markets (Khan, 2023).

The rise of sponsored advertisements in influencer marketing has reshaped consumer perceptions and engagement (Hudders & De Jans, 2022). Despite initial skepticism regarding sponsored content, studies reveal that transparent disclosure enhances the credibility of influencers. When influencers disclose their collaborations, it builds trust and improves consumer perceptions of the promoted goods. Furthermore, effective disclosure practices can mitigate negative perceptions associated with sponsored posts, aligning audience expectations with marketing strategies. This shift toward transparency in influencer partnerships is crucial for maintaining audience loyalty and ensuring long-term brand success. Ultimately, well-managed sponsorships can lead to meaningful consumer engagement and improved purchase intentions (Giuffredi-Kähr et al., 2022).

The consumers' affection towards the influencer is reflected in their likability, significantly influencing consumer engagement (Duh & Thabethe, 2021). Influencers perceived as relatable and likeable foster higher levels of trust and connection with their audience (Lin et al., 2021). This positive rapport not only enhances follower engagement but also leads to increased purchase intentions for endorsed products (Afifah, 2022). The interplay between likability and other attributes, such as expertise and homophily, amplifies the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies (Kim & Kim, 2021). As consumers increasingly prioritize authenticity in their interactions, likeable influencers become essential for brands aiming to cultivate lasting relationships with their audience (Jun & Yi, 2020). Ultimately, the likability of influencers directly correlates with marketing success (Taillon et al., 2020).

Firstly, the study will identify the mean differences in occupational status in the context of likability. Secondly, the study will determine the relationship between the variables affecting influencer marketing. Lastly, the study will analyze the impact of YouTube influencers's Homophily and sponsored Advertisements on Purchase Intention. The following hypotheses have been framed based on the literature review and discussion above. The study's conceptual model is illustrated in Figure 1.

H1: The Mean differences for Likability across various roles are not equal
H2: Variables of Influencer Marketing are significantly correlated
H3: Homophily and Sponsored Advertisements of YouTube Influencers Impact Purchase Intention
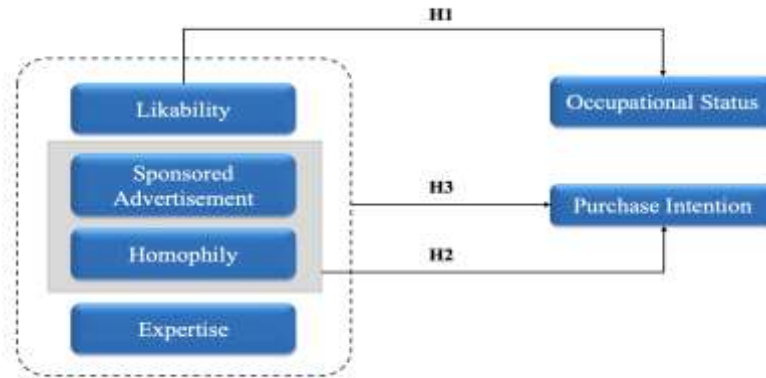
Conceptual Framework

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study explores the role of YouTube influencers on consumers' purchase intentions through a quantitative approach utilising a survey as the main data-gathering tool. The survey, designed to measure variables such as purchase intention, homophily, expertise, sponsored advertisements, and likability, was distributed to respondents who are active YouTube users among diverse age groups. Using purposive sampling, the survey was collected from participants who watched YouTube influencers' videos. Purposive sampling is typically deemed suitable for selecting smaller samples, frequently among confined physical regions or a specific group (Battaglia, 2008). The sample size being studied is usually small, unlike in probability methods, since this is a form of nonprobability sampling where the researcher selects participants based on specific criteria such as expertise in the subject matter or willingness to participate in the study (Oliver, 2015). Therefore, the sample size of 201 respondents was considered adequate to detect significant relationships with precision between the variables, including Frequency analysis, One-way ANOVA, Correlation analysis, and Multiple regression analysis. The demographic details of the individuals have also been noted to provide a thorough profile of the sample. Data collection was facilitated by distributing the survey through Google Forms shared across various social media platforms to reach a broad audience. This method ensured a wide reach and allowed for efficient data collection. Using Google Forms also provided the convenience of automatically organizing responses, which streamlined the data analysis process.

RESULTS

Demographic Data

Gender

Figure 1. The gender of the respondents

Figure 1 illustrates the Gender distribution of the respondents. The data indicate that the majority of the respondents, 67%, were Female, with the remaining 33% being Male. The higher percentage of female survey participants (67%) suggests that women are more likely to follow influencers on social media than Men.
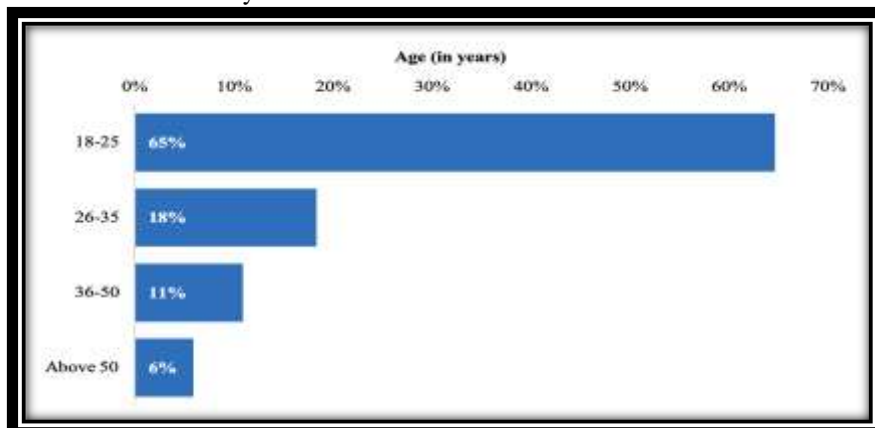

Figure 2. Age of the respondents

Figure 2 presents the age distribution among respondents. It reveals that a substantial proportion, 65%, are between 18 and 25. Following that, a smaller percentage, 18%, falls between the ages of 26 and 35 years. Furthermore, the results show that 11% of respondents are between the ages of 36 and 50, with a minority, 6%, over the age of 50.

Figure 3. Educational Qualification

Figure 3 provides the distribution of educational qualifications among respondents. This indicates that a notable percentage, 48%, hold an undergraduate degree. Following this, 36% of the respondents possess a postgraduate qualification. Furthermore, 16% of the respondents have completed their high school (HSC) education.
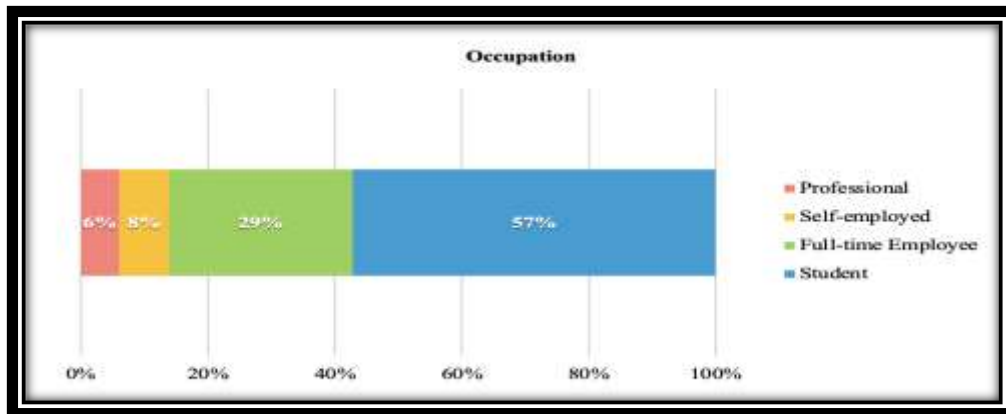

Figure 4. Occupation status

Figure 4 indicates the occupational distribution. It reveals that a predominant proportion, constituting 57%, identifies as students, 29% of the respondents are categorized as full-time employees, 8% identify as self-employed, and lastly, 6% of the respondents are classified as professionals.
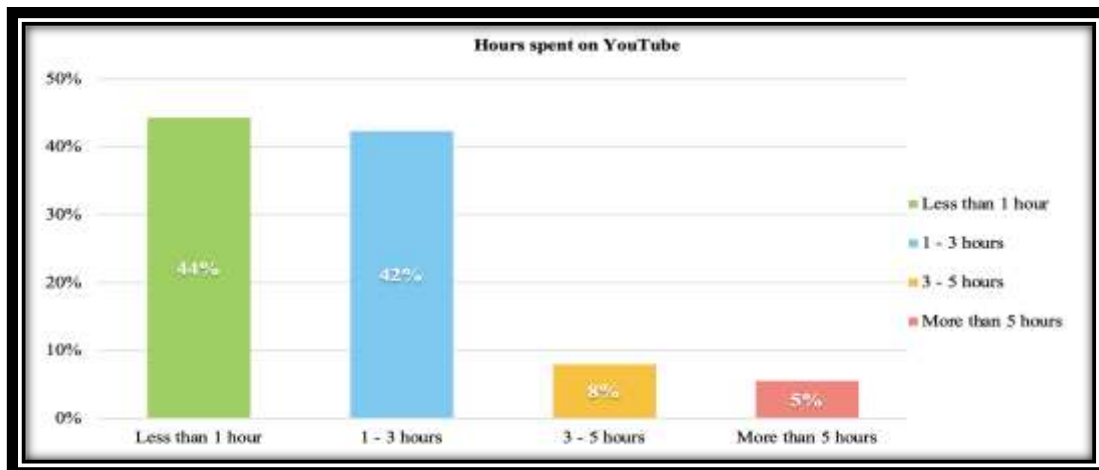

Figure 5. Hours spent on YouTube

Figure 5 presents the distribution of duration allocated in terms of hours spent on YouTube. It reveals that 44% reported spending less than one hour on YouTube, highlighting the daily engagement of users on the YouTube platform (52,53), 42% allocated between one to three hours, 8% reported spending three to five hours, and a minority, comprising 5%, indicated spending more than five hours on YouTube.
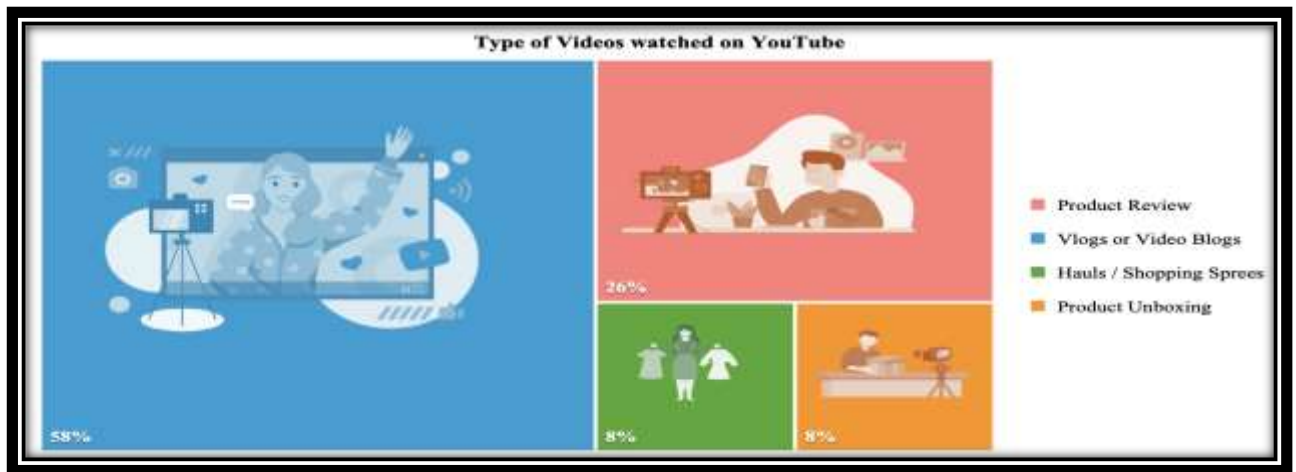
Figure 6. Type of Videos Watched on YouTube

Figure 6 illustrates the preferences regarding the type of videos consumed by individuals on the YouTube platform. It reveals that a significant majority, comprising 58%, indicated a preference for vlogs or video blogs, suggesting a predominant interest in content that offers personal insights, experiences, or narratives.
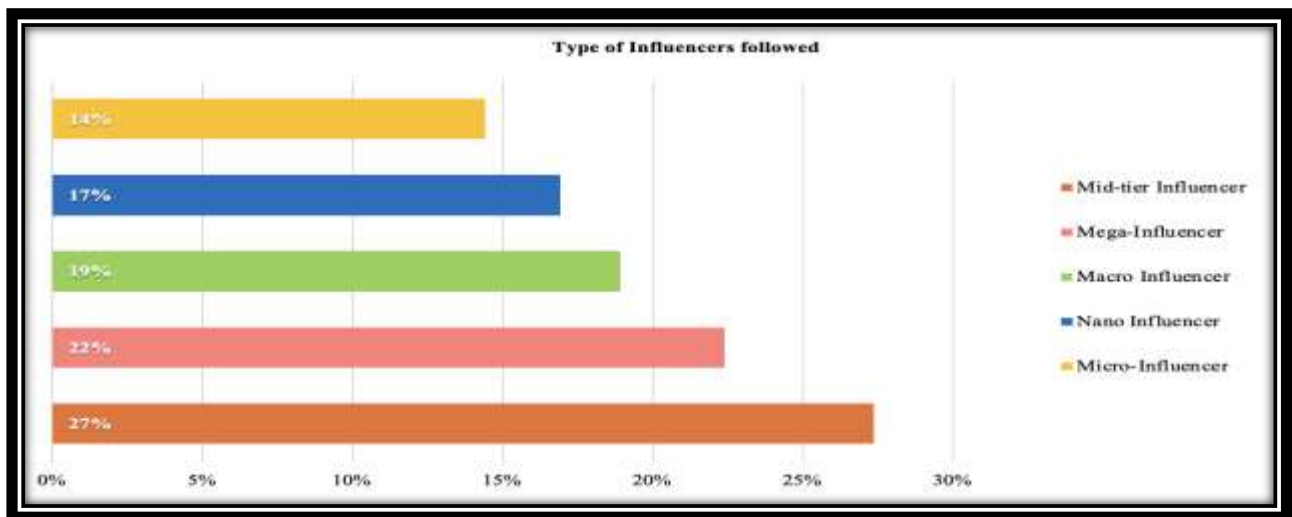

Figure 7. Type of Influencers Followed on YouTube

Figure 7 provides the preferences regarding the type of influencers followed by individuals on YouTube. Respondents (27%) chose to follow mid-tier influencers with follower counts that vary from 100,000 to 500,000, who tend to be chosen for their broader audience reach. Mega-influencers (more than 1 million followers) were followed by 22% of respondents, macro-influencers (500,000 and 1 million followers) by 19%, nano-influencers (1,000 to 10,000 followers) by 17%, and micro-influencers (10,000-100,000 followers) by 14%
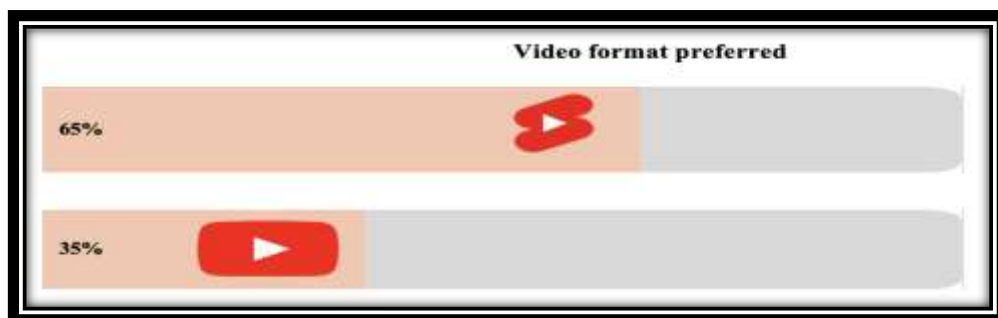

Figure 8. Type of Video format preferred

Figure 8 illustrates the preferences regarding the video format on YouTube. A notable majority, comprising 65% of respondents, disliked YouTube short videos. Conversely, 35% of respondents preferred long videos, indicating interest in content with extended duration and more in-depth coverage.

One-way ANOVA

H1: The Mean differences for Likability across various roles are not equal

Table 1. One-way ANOVA: Likability of Influencer across Occupation Status

Dependent variable: Likability

Variable	Occupation status								F – Value	Sig.
	Student (N = 116)		Professional (N = 12)		Full-time Employee (N = 58)		Self-employed (N = 16)			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	2.904	0.036
Likability	2.955	0.858	2.333	0.771	3.082	0.771	3.094	0.730		

From above Table 1, the results reveal a significant mean difference in Likability across Occupation status (F = 2.904; $p < 0.05$) at a 5% level. Hence, the Hypothesis (H1) is supported.

Pearson Correlation

H2: Variables of Influencer Marketing are significantly correlated

Table 2. Relationship between Variables of Influencer Marketing

	PI	HY	EX	SA	LK
PI	1	.578**	.485**	.437**	.499**
HY	.578**	1	.730**	.479**	.674**
EX	.485**	.730**	1	.551**	.638**
SA	.437**	.479**	.551**	1	.512**
LK	.499**	.674**	.638**	.512**	1

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

PI: Purchase Intention, HY: Homophily, EX: Expertise, SA: Sponsored Advertisement and LK: Likability

The strength of the relationship of Homophily with Expertise (r = 0.730) and Likability (r = 0.674) and Expertise with Likability (r = 0.638) indicated a high positive correlation. The relationship between purchase intention and all variables ranges from 0.40 to 0.59, indicating moderately related. Also, the relationship of Sponsored Advertisement with Likability (r = 0.512) and Expertise (r = 0.551) indicated a moderate relationship (Table 2). Thus, the Hypothesis (H2) is supported, and it is concluded that there is a relationship between Purchase Intention, Homophily, Expertise, Sponsored Advertisement, and Likability through Influencer marketing.

Multiple Regression

H3: Homophily and Sponsored Advertisements of YouTube Influencers Impact Purchase Intention

Table 3. Cause–Effect Relationship of Homophily and Sponsored Advertisements of YouTube Influencers on Purchase Intention

Variables	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	1.199	0.180		6.665	<.001**
Homophily	0.450	0.060	0.479	7.455	<.001**
Sponsored Advertisement	0.183	0.057	0.208	3.239	<.001**
R value			0.606		
R² value			0.368		
F value			57.890		
P value			<0.001		

** Significance level at 5%

Dependent variable: Purchase Intention

X₁ - Homophily

X₂ – Sponsored Advertisement

The Multiple Regression Equation is

Purchase Intention = 1.199 (Constant) + 0.450 X_1 + 0.183X_2

The Multiple R-value of 0.606 indicates the degree of a significant relationship between Purchase Intention and two variables of Influencer Marketing. The R^2 value indicates how much of the Purchase Intention (Dependent variable) can be explained by independent variables such as Homophily and Sponsored Advertisement. The R^2 value is indicated in the above table as 0.368. In this case, only 36.8% of the Purchase Intention can be explained through Homophily and Sponsored Advertisement. The p-value is less than 0.05 for the variables Homophily and Sponsored Advertisement, which positively impact the Purchase Intention (Table 3). Thus, hypothesis (H3) is supported, and therefore, there is a significant impact of Homophily and Sponsored Advertisement on Purchase Intention.

DISCUSSIONS

This study focused on determining the effect or impact of YouTube influencer marketing on purchase intention. The significant difference in Likability across occupation results was consistent with the previous research that revealed Likability may result in different social media outcomes. Likability only sometimes translates into a higher number of followers but does significantly impact engagement. Therefore, the varying levels of engagement across different occupational statuses may be due to the different degrees of interest in the influencers' content, leading to distinct social media outcomes based on occupation (Myers, 2021). Also, the study identified a positive relationship among Purchase intention, Homophily, Expertise, Sponsored advertisement, and Likability in influencer marketing, aligning with previous research findings. These factors collectively influence consumers' decisions, indicating how influencers' perceived similarity, expertise, and the nature of advertisements shape audience engagement and consumer buying decisions. This alignment reinforces the established understanding of influencer marketing dynamics and their effect on consumer behaviour (Bu et al., 2022; Kim & Kim, 2021; Srivastava, 2021). Multiple regression results revealed that homophily considerably impacted purchase intention, which is consistent with earlier studies. The homophily one shares with their chosen influencer is linked to why one follows that influencer, which promotes purchase intention (Shoenberger & Kim, 2023). As Sponsored Content is a kind of advertisement, it was assumed that it would negatively influence the individuals. However, it was found that the Sponsored advertisement positively impacts the purchase intention of followers or subscribers. Through regression analysis, it was found that disclosure of sponsored content has a significant positive impact on purchase intention, which was consistent with previous findings. Disclosing sponsorships transparently by influencers boosts their credibility and genuineness, consequently elevating the likelihood of consumers buying the endorsed products (Kay et al., 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

The study investigated the impact of sponsored advertisements on purchase intention within influencer marketing, particularly among Tamil YouTube influencers. The study revealed that factors such as homophily, likability, and the credibility of sponsored content significantly influence consumer behaviour. Higher levels of perceived homophily between influencers and their audiences result in increased purchase intentions, showing that customers are more willing to engage with influencers they believe to be akin to themselves. Additionally, influencer likability is essential for improving the effectiveness of sponsored commercials, which directly impacts consumer engagement. This study adds to the literature by fulfilling the gap related to Tamil influencers. These findings pose certain inferences for Marketers. Marketers may improve authenticity and relatability by understanding the intricacies of Influencer-audience outcomes. This can be achieved by selecting influencers who resonate with their target audience's values and preferences. Furthermore, the findings highlight the necessity for transparent disclosure of sponsored content, as transparency builds trust and positively influences purchase intentions. Therefore, brands should prioritise collaborations with influencers who demonstrate expertise in their respective niches, as this can effectively drive consumer attention toward the endorsed products. However, the study has certain limitations that must be considered. It examines the role of various types of influencers on purchase intention without focusing on a specific influencer's effect on followers' decisions. Additionally, the research does not address particular product lines or categories, which could be a valuable area for future exploration. Furthermore, the analysis is limited to YouTube as a platform, leaving out other social media channels that could be significant. Lastly, the study is confined to participants in Chennai, suggesting that future research could broaden the scope to include other geographical areas for a more comprehensive understanding. The findings encourage marketers to utilise relatable influencers to create more targeted campaigns, ultimately enhancing brand awareness.

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