
YouTuber icons: an analysis of the impact on buying behaviour of young consumers

Pooja Misra*

Birla Institute of Management Technology,
Plot No. 5, Knowledge Park II, Greater Noida, UP 201306, India
Email: pooja.misra@bimtech.ac.in
*Corresponding author

Ankita Mukherjee

PGDM,
Birla Institute of Management Technology,
Greater Noida, India
Email: ankita.mukherjee18@bimtech.ac.in

Abstract: Huge increase in the reach of internet in India has given rise to the new cult of celebrities known as 'social media influencers'. As people spend more hours on YouTube, their awareness has shifted to internet sponsored means of advertisement. Many brands are diversifying their marketing efforts into sponsoring such YouTubers/influencers. Brands need these influencers because consumers would trust a third person rather than the brand trying to directly advertise itself (Biaudet, 2017). This study aims to quantitatively analyse the influencer's major attributes that impact consumer's buying behaviour for the retail industry in NCR. The research showed that factors such as relatability, trendy, product details and interactivity of YouTube can influence consumer buying behaviour. This study investigates the influence that these factors have on consumer buying behaviour, in the Indian context through analysis which will provide empirical information for industry's reference in order to divide marketing efforts amongst different channels of communication.

Keywords: influencer marketing; YouTube; trendy; relatability; interactivity; consumer buying behaviour.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Misra, P. and Mukherjee, A. (2019) 'YouTuber icons: an analysis of the impact on buying behaviour of young consumers', *Int. J. Business Competition and Growth*, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp.330–345.

Biographical notes: Pooja Misra is an Associate Professor and has a work experience of 24+ years in academics and the corporate industry. She is currently the Chairperson of the Retail Management Program from the Birla Institute of Management Technology, Greater Noida. She shifted to the academic world in 2008 and completed her PhD in Management from the Gautam Buddha University in the area of compensation components and its effect on employee engagement and turnover intent. Her research interests include macroeconomic dimensions of an economy, compensation, employee engagement, retail industry and current trends in business environment.

Ankita Mukherjee has done her postgraduation in PGDM from the Birla Institute of Management Technology, Batch 2016–2018 and is currently working with Newgen Technologies.

This paper is a revised and expanded version of a paper entitled ‘Influence of YouTuber icons: a research agenda’ presented at ICMC 2018, Birla Institute of Management Technology, Greater Noida, 5–6 December 2018.

1 Introduction

On 16th May, 2011, Nisha Madhulika, a then Indian homemaker, uploaded a less than four minutes video on how to prepare a simple recipe. Today, she has more than three million subscribers to her channel and millions of viewers to each of her videos. The video clearly is targeted exclusively to Indian audience including people of Indian origin. It is emphasised to show how a small community on YouTube can impact millions in number especially the younger age group. The same can be related to the increasing popularity of YouTube as videos that cater to one’s ethnicity and are made by complete amateurs.

In today’s date, there is so much content on YouTube that a viewer is spoilt for choices. There are different categories of YouTubers who are differentiated on the basis of their content – moto vloggers (video loggers) who speak of automobiles like cars, bikes, etc. lifestyle vloggers who show clothing hauls to city guides; travel vloggers who travel to various destinations through different means and stay at different places; entertainment vloggers who record comedy sketches, jokes, performances; makeup vloggers talk about cosmetic brands or demo the use of certain products for enhancement of beauty; and some creators who video log social experiments, food reviews, recipes and a lot of other things. Their style of reaching out to people varies. Some vloggers are driven by their acting skills whereas some of the videos do not show the YouTuber at all and are instead, about places or automobiles, cosmetics or whatever they want to showcase.

YouTubers can be further categorised based on their viewership. Some are popular amongst Indians, some are popular globally, some are popular amongst youngsters and some of them have very concentrated local viewership but have a huge impact nonetheless. Lili Singh, who stayed in Canada and has Indian origin, created her videos with the concept of how Canadians of Indian origin behave in Canada. Her famous sketches are of a ‘brown mom’, referring mostly to how her mother would react to a given situation. It became viral much faster than she anticipated and today she has more than 13 million subscribers to her channel named ‘superwoman’.

It is interesting that most big brands see these YouTubers as the ‘new celebrities’, who can make a greater impact for the brand when they endorse it in front of their viewers. The connection between the YouTuber and the viewer already exists and the brands just have to utilise this influence as they place their product for the right target segment through this kind of influencer. ‘YouTube Stars’ is the name given by Andrew (2017) to these influencers.

For this purpose, brands are now sponsoring some of the YouTubers to market their products. Google recognised that around 225 million Indians join YouTube every year, to which, Anurag M., Managing Director, Ford Motors added that in 2016, only 2% of their sales came from digital advertisements whereas in 2017, almost 20% of their sales come from digital. Ford has further reduced costs by seven times and has halved the time to purchase by customers. He further said, "Today, for every rupee we spend on digital we get offline sales equivalent of 30 times and our aim is to push that return even higher." It indicates the exponentially growing potential of YouTube influencers to make a success of a brand's marketing efforts. Moreover, Anuradha Aggarwal, CEO, Marico, said that they spent 80% of their budget on digital advertisement in 2017 (Samosa, 2017)

From an availability perspective of the modes therein, it can be pointed out that people who initially uploaded videos as a hobby or for their passion are now considering video logging on YouTube as a full time job option as they have a chance of earning a livelihood through sponsorships. It will be safe to deduce then, that in the future, companies will have enough options to choose from when they want to create the right impact for the right customer.

Now, even though there are so many influencers who focus mainly on Indian viewership and have great power to influence the viewers, and hence the market, not much research has been done on this topic in the Indian context. Research material that is available outside India is mostly on content analysis and most of them have not applied quantitative methods. Given that brands too have a lot of options to choose from, they need to know what makes an influencer famous, in order to gauge their potential and approach the right ones who will help them make the kind of impact they seek at a cost that is reasonable in terms of the output. A quantitative analysis will help evaluate this form of marketing better for brands to understand how to focus on their target customers especially the younger age group through the right influencers. Hence, this research aims to support the claim with statistical data that factors of influencer marketing impacts consumer buying behaviour especially for consumers in the age group of 20–35 years. Influencer marketing can be defined as "the process of identifying, engaging and supporting individuals who create conversations with a brand's customers, is a growing trend used in public relations initiatives" (Glucksman, 2017). It has been defined as "identifying key communities and opinion leaders who are likely to talk about products and have the ability to influence the opinions of others" by Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012).

2 Objectives of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the impact of factors of influencer marketing. The primary objective of the study is to identify the factors of influencer marketing which have an influence on consumer buying behaviour in terms of their purchase action.

The secondary objective is to explore the strength of the relationship between the factors of influencer marketing and consumer buying behaviour in terms of their purchase action. The research is exploratory (EFA) in nature. Based on review of literature and post exploratory factor analysis, the study determines the constructs or factors of influencer marketing. Thereafter the impact of these identified hedonic shopping factors on customer satisfaction is further investigated through confirmatory factor analysis

(CFA) and structural equation model. This is thereafter followed by discussion and theoretical and managerial implications of the study.

3 Literature review and formulation of hypothesis

Social media is increasingly becoming an integral part of people's lives as more and more youngsters engage with it for hours on a daily basis. Research by Smith (2019) found that the new generation of digital natives is highly susceptible to mobile advertising. Younger generation is known to be spending most of their waking hours with their smartphones. The lingo has changed accordingly. Mainstream Bollywood actors are losing their fan following amongst the youngsters and social media celebrities are becoming more popular. This is a primary cause for big brands to focus on advertising through social media influencers. Marketing budget that used to have a big chunk in slot advertisement is now being diversified and social media is definitely taking a part of it.

Taking examples of various YouTubers such as Mumbiker Nikhil, Nisha Madhulika, Rikshawali and a few other YouTube channels, we aim to understand how videos on YouTube gained popularity and became viral; what attributes/characteristics caught on with viewers.

Since its launch in 2005, YouTube has developed and gained popularity due to its nature of a freeware application. Anyone can shoot any video using the most basic of cameras and editors and easily upload them; and anyone anywhere can access it anytime as long as they have internet connectivity. Now videos can even be downloaded and watched later when the device is not connected to the internet. It can also be viewed in different resolutions depending on the internet speed available. This opened up a host of opportunities for people; for those who wanted to put out content and for those who needed information. Everyone participated in this phenomenon and harnessed the true power of the internet. The dimensions of consumer engagement within the context of online brand communities in terms of engagement with the brand were investigated by Mueller (2013), and Dessart et al. (2015). Tourism industry has seen exceptional results in the past decade due to YouTube popularity and all tourism marketers have learnt that the inclusion of autonomous channels has become a must. Even mainstream entertainment such as big budget feature films is advertising themselves through these influencers. That is the power of the internet.

The impact of social network marketing on consumer purchase intention and the mediating role of customer engagement were studied by Toor et al. (2017). They found that the two were significantly related. Social media has started dominating the minds of consumers of the younger age groups and has over the past few decades, brought in a huge shift in the marketing space from being non-related to buying behaviour to positively influencing it (Natarajan et al., 2014). This attracted amateurs as well as professionals and quickly turned from a pastime to a full time job for some (Snelson, 2011).

YouTube further shares some of its revenue with the content creators under its YouTube Partner Program (YPP) in order to promote outstanding content, this boosted people's passion as they were not always doing it for free (Wattenhofer et al., 2012). This YPP model helped some of the video creators who were contemplating quitting their regular jobs to work on their YouTube channel full time. Most people did their entire

work of coming up with ideas, creating videos, enacting the script, editing to uploading them; all by themselves (Holland, 2016). Many people took it up as a side or a full time profession and fresh content was introduced. This created a sense of relatability for the viewers as the videos were clearly created by amateurs like them, in the early years of YouTube. What impacts more is when YouTubers narrate their life experiences with some documented moments. They gain the trust as the information shared is unaltered and has credibility in the minds of the consumer and thereby has a truly emotional appeal.

Brands need these influencers because consumers would trust a third person (who seemingly, has no direct profit from the sales of the product) rather than the brand trying to directly advertise itself (Biaudet, 2017). The chances of consumers calling out advertisement as frauds are lot lesser when influencers are endorsing it. Initially with the lack of disclaimers about non-sponsored videos, every influencer endorsement seemed like earned media. Even though, now 'sponsored' marked videos do not rank too low in terms of their influence as compared to organic (unpaid) videos (Burke, 2017).

Many people can relate to products or brands spoken about by a YouTuber, mainly because they can relate to the YouTuber. They feel that the mention is genuine and connect more to it (Lepisto and Vahajylkka, 2017). It creates a much needed perception in consumers that the product is capable of fulfilling their own needs. "To a viewer, the lack of professional lighting, scripts and a set made the experience of watching a YouTube video more relatable" (Holland, 2016).

H1 Factors of influencer marketing such as relatability with the influencers and their videos, does not impact consumer buying behaviour in terms of their purchase action.

YouTube has become the latest trend amongst people. The young generation that often found interesting content lacking in television shows have realised the vastness of information available on the internet and are finding it trendy. They are immediately influenced by others who so passionately vouch for the genuineness and vastness of social media. Data published in 2015 in Netherlands claimed that over 95% youth spent more than 11 hours a week on YouTube and the viewership for TV from millennials was ever reducing (Westernberg, 2016). This trend was followed similarly in India as smartphones penetrated both urban and rural markets. It has become a must for people of all strata and for any kind of work it is almost mandatory to have mobile connectivity. And all those exposed to social media are invariably exposed to the new age influencers. This has made the influence of a small number of people disproportionately large (Susarla et al., 2011). Specially, teenagers are easy to advertise to and can sometimes be addicted to watching certain YouTubers as the influence on them is more. Young adults and children can even influence others in the family to buy certain products as they are very persuasive. Maggi, Telegraph and other brands had tested this technique much before social media became a channel for advertisement.

H2 Factors of influencer marketing such as trendy aspect of following social media, does not impact consumer buying behaviour in terms of their purchase action.

Now that internet is with everyone, reaching millions is possible within a fraction of a second and virtually at no cost. Big brands realised that for them, this was a very cost effective and efficient tool for marketing their products. "Influencer marketing presents a glaring opportunity for brands to leverage the power of word-of-mouth at scale through personalities that consumers already follow and admire." With increasing competition

amongst brands, even on social media, these brands have to make sure that they are continuously present in every interaction and networking that happens between every two individuals, who can be a potential customer. To be thus present in every conversation, it is a must to maximise a brand's presence through individuals who will help make the maximum impact while also achieving maximum possible reach. This is where the influencer becomes an important part of the advertisement. What brands have to be careful about is to advertise the right product through an apt influencer. For example, if an influencer creates most videos for beauty products and gets most viewership for those videos, it is ideal to advertise a beauty and wellness product through such a YouTuber. For the appeal that most of these YouTubers have, taking the example of Nikhil Sharma, (YouTube channel named Mumbiker Nikhil) was sponsored for advertising few bikes. This he mentioned in some of his videos. Even though he identifies himself as a lifestyle vlogger, he gets most views on videos that showcase his bike rides. People also comment on his videos asking for suggestions related to bikes, bike parts, riding gears, etc. This was identified properly by brands and they positioned themselves well. To keep his videos interesting, he speaks at a decent pace (a bit on the faster side). People associate so much with him that a few repeat comments about some products make it more compelling for the viewer and creates an impulse to try the product. Even the videos are short, have good background music, youth oriented and have all the elements of surprise, laughter and all the qualities that can make these videos viral (West, 2011). In this context, it should also be mentioned that some studies show that people trust these influencers more than their friends and seek out for any available advice when deciding to purchase a product (Burke, 2017).

The one major factor that added to all the other boons of social media was the fact that these new celebrities were approachable and one could interact with them and there was a possibility of an exchange of feedback. This increased the YouTuber's accountability and credibility in front of the consumer. More a YouTuber engages with his/her viewers, more ardent followers they would get. People felt elated to be able to interact with these vloggers and give a number of feedbacks to somehow get one reply from the YouTuber (Glucksman, 2017). This further increased the popularity of these YouTubers. We may refer to the fact that being able to respond gives people a sense of responsibility and that increases participation (Lange, 2007). People at times feel that the onus is on them to inform others about certain issues or to provide a genuine feedback to a video. It often results in a discussion where viewers reply to each other's comments. Again, more the number of comments, more popular a video becomes. It is a loop that goes on increasing, helping YouTubers achieve the unbelievable popularity that they have gained in such a short span of time.

H3 Factors of influencer marketing such as interactivity of the medium does not impact consumer buying behaviour in terms of their purchase action.

Some YouTubers developed entire business plans around their channels and started earning their living from it. They went to the extent of figuring out the algorithm YouTube uses in order to maximise their viewership (Holmbom, 2015). It was like a well-developed marketing channel waiting to be utilised. Brands saw an opportunity to start a conversation about their products using this medium (Forbes, 2016). Brand managers started believing that the amount of interaction that happens through these networks can successfully alter the perception about a brand (Genzler et al., 2013). This

can also be used as a source of data to judge how a brand is being spoken about and its possible reach (Kousha et al., 2012). Social influence is often measured as multiple nodes in software terms and it forms complex networks, therefore, it is still a work in progress when it comes to measuring the real impact created for a brand through social media (Carter, 2016). The biggest and the most definite benefit that brands get is shown in a recent study; that it is becoming the fastest growing channel for advertisement and the biggest positive impact is on their revenue (Odell, 2018).

But of course, viewers have become smarter and are not always overwhelmed by the celebrity status of the YouTubers or the brand they have created for themselves. While the content, style, interactivity of vloggers matter, consumers also evaluate how much knowledge a YouTuber has about the product he speaks of. Because real power lies with the consumers as they have endless information at their disposal. Comparisons, reviews, ratings, and even trial options are available for almost everything. This truly is the era when the customer is the real king. Nothing can be wrapped in good marketing and sold forever unless it is truly worth. Companies have to be ever more cautious to walk the talk and deliver a real deal so that a good image is maintained. Or else this very social media boon has the power to bring down a brand.

H4 Factors of influencer marketing such as product details displayed does not impact consumer buying behaviour in terms of their purchase action.

Other risks associated with selecting YouTube as a marketing channel is that the target influencer may not like a particular brand, the influencer's popularity may change over time. There are further considerations that marketers must make before going for influencer marketing, such as whether they should approach individual influencers or agencies. Brands also have to strategise carefully as to whether or not free goodies should be given to influencers or there should be giveaways for the viewers who might be the brand's real consumers. All these aspects have to be evaluated as more brands engage in this kind of marketing and as more data is made available.

Though a lot of research documents are available outside India, most of them have done a content analysis. There is lack of quantitative analysis done to study the exact factors while studying the influence on consumer's buying behaviour especially the younger age group, i.e., 20–35 years and the extent of it especially in India. In any case, a shift to this channel of marketing is happening fast as influencer marketing is more cost effective than spot advertisements. For ages, brands have been trying all possible strategies to get some earned media and finally YouTube has made it so easy for them. Yet, the parameters and factors that will help form a clear plan to pursue the right influencers for an optimum impact have not been defined.

Interestingly, research in India has not yet fully investigated the influence of YouTube videos on the consumer's buying behaviour and his decision to purchase. During the course of this research, based on literature review it was seen that factors such as relatability, trendy, interactivity of YouTube and product details can largely influence the purchase decision of the consumers. The aim of this study is to investigate the influence that these four factors, i.e., relatability, trendy, product details and interactivity of YouTube has on the consumer buying behaviour for the age group of 20–35 years, mainly in the Indian context through a quantitative analysis.

3.1 *Relevance*

Increasing number of studies being conducted on the influence of YouTube and how brands are utilising it, reinforces the fact that there is a shift in the way consumers perceive and big brands are making a shift in their communications accordingly. There is enough data to suggest that big brands who feel YouTube advertisement are unnecessary for them, have a good reason to rethink their strategy (Fedorov, 2014). This research aims to study the attributes used by an influencer to motivate a young consumer to purchase a product. The buying behaviour has been studied in terms of social media influence on the consumer, i.e., not just the product details as described but also an influencer's own impact on the consumer. The proposed hypothesis would aid in understanding the impact of factors of influencer marketing such as trendy aspect of following social media, relatability with the influencers and their videos, product details displayed, and interactivity of the medium on consumer buying behaviour in terms of their purchase action. If yes, what is the strength of the relationship between the independent variables (i.e., factors such as trendy aspect of following social media, relatability with the influencers and their videos, product details displayed and interactivity of the medium) of influencer marketing on consumer buying behaviour in terms of their purchase action.

4 **Methodology**

Given the exploratory nature of the research, it was ex-post facto in nature. The design of the approach for investigation included questionnaires filled by prospective young consumers and possible secondary sources (statistical handbooks, books, reports, journals, and internet information).

The questionnaire was designed on a five-point Likert scale. Data was collected from 262 prospective consumers in the age bracket of 20–35 years. The sampling technique used was convenience sampling. That is because YouTube viewers are highly diversified. The respondents were approached personally for their responses and interviews. The questions on buying behaviour items were adapted from the research conducted by Zhang et al. (2013) Based on review of literature it was decided the analytical tools to be used for purpose of analysis of independent and dependent variables currently under study would be exploratory tools such as exploratory factor analysis and explanatory tools such as CFA and structural equation model. Prior to these tools a pilot study was conducted to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire followed by Pearson correlation analysis. Post the successful completion of the pilot study expert opinion was sought on questions designed.

4.1 *Reliability and correlation*

The reliability of Cronbach alpha for questions with reference to relatability, trendy, product details, interactivity and consumer buying behaviour was 0.71, 0.67, 0.59, 0.681 and 0.682 respectively. This shows medium to strong internal consistency amongst the

questions asked. The descriptive statistics for reliability, trendy, product details, interactivity and consumer buying behaviour has been provided in Table 1.

The Pearson correlation showed that the independent parameters of trendy, reliability, product details, interactivity had a moderate to strong relationship with the buying behaviour of consumers (Table 2).

Table 1 Descriptive statistics

	<i>Trendy</i>	<i>Relatability</i>	<i>Product details</i>	<i>Interactivity</i>	<i>Purchase decision</i>
Mean	14.813	25.847	13.481	11.874	15.057
Standard error	0.206	0.254	0.157	0.180	0.196
Median	15.000	26.000	13.500	12.000	15.000
Mode	14.000	24.000	12.000	12.000	14.000
Standard deviation	3.330	4.111	2.534	2.918	3.176

Table 2 Reliability and correlation

	<i>Trend</i>	<i>Relatability</i>	<i>Product details</i>	<i>Interactivity</i>	<i>Buying behaviour</i>
Trend	1				
Relatability	0.558	1			
Product details	0.541	0.613	1		
Interactivity	0.337	0.501	0.335	1	
Buying behaviour	0.613	0.605	0.498	0.453	1

4.2 Factor analysis

Exploratory factor analysis is a statistical method used to identify the underlying relationships and key factors out of a set of measured variables. It helps in identification of the latent constructs and their key factors. CFA is used to test whether the measures of a construct or the independent variables considered in the hypothetical model are similar to the researcher's understanding of the construct.

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted by principal axis factoring which helped to identify the key factors which impact consumer buying behaviour in case of influencer marketing. The value of KMO was 0.882 which indicates that the correlation between the pairs of variables can be explained and factor analysis as a data reduction technique is appropriate. Bartlett's test of sphericity is used to test the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the observed co-relation matrix and identity matrix. The results showed that four factors were able to explain 53.16% of variance. The constructs or factors identified can be labelled as trendy, relatability, product details and interactivity.

The factor analysis thus helped in grouping together of the manifest variables into a couple of factors for each construct, i.e., trendy, relatability, product details and interactivity. This will be of help to the senior management as it would bring about clarity of factors that the senior management needs to focus on while strategising for influencer marketing.

4.3 *Confirmatory factor analysis*

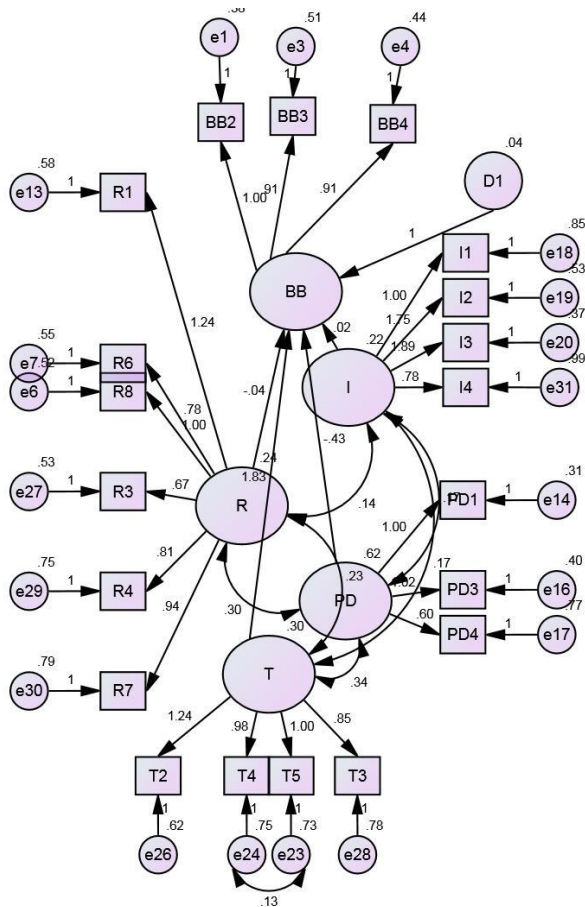
The CFA was done using Amos 18.0. The CFA helped to identify the manifest variable which in the minds of the consumers is of utmost importance. The CFA with all the manifest variables and latent variables taken into consideration produced a goodness of fit index (GFI) of 0.856. The result for the model was chi-square/degrees of freedom (X^2/df), GFI, adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 2.516, 0.856, 0.81 and 0.076, respectively (Figure 1). From the CFA or the measurement model, it was seen that measured variables having a moderate to strong factor loading must be duly considered by the senior management of leading brands for strategising and attempting to positively influence the buying behaviour of consumers. The important manifest variables and their factor loadings are given in Table 3.

Table 3 Standardised regression weights

<i>Manifest variable</i>	<i>Factor loading</i>
BB2 I have made impulsive purchases based on the mention/use of the product by a YouTuber.	.782
BB3 I associate with certain brands because of a favourite YouTuber.	.700
BB4 When I come across a product mentioned in a video, I have the impulse to purchase it.	.724
R8 I trust videos more if they have negative reviews for products.	.564
R6 I trust videos more if they have mixed reviews about a number of products.	.463
R1 I consider reusing a brand due to the upgrades displayed by a YouTuber when I have not had a positive experience before.	.625
PD1 YouTuber’s knowledge about a product convinces me to try the same.	.816
PD3 I prefer products used by YouTubers due to the ease of use displayed by them.	.785
PD4 I cannot spot commercialised videos even if a product is mentioned multiple times.	.470
I1 Influencer’s interactivity (response to comments, etc.) matters to me.	.449
I2 I comment on YouTube videos.	.745
I3 I have posted a review related to a product under a video.	.822
T5 I follow the influencer(s) because of their general popularity.	.538
T4 I follow influencer(s) due to the number of subscribers they have.	.524
T2 I am more likely to be influenced by YouTubers for fashion/cosmetics as compared to health products.	.651
R4 I prefer videos if the content relates to the YouTuber’s own life.	.417
T3 I follow social media influencers because it is more on trend.	.463
I4 I spread negative word about a product if I do not like it.	.340
R3 I find YouTube videos more relatable due to the way they are filmed (lighting, sound, angle).	.410
R7 I never wait for others in my circle to use a product before making the decision to buy it. (Because my favourite vlogger endorsed it).	.463

It was considered that factor loading less than 0.4 but greater than 0.3 should still be considered keeping in mind the study by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) which states that to be considered statistically meaningful the rotated factor loading of 0.32 should have a sample size of 300. For the current study sample size is of 262, thus manifest variable with lower factor loadings such as videos with content related to the YouTuber’s own life are preferable, people follow social media influencers because it is trendy, YouTube videos are more reliable due to the way they are filmed are also relevant and to be considered by senior management whilst devising a business plan with reference to Influencer marketing through YouTube icons.

Figure 1 Structural equation model (see online version for colours)



4.4 Structural equation model

On obtaining the solution through the measurement model, i.e., CFA for the purpose of testing and estimating causal relations and the hypothesis, the structural model was worked upon (Figure 1). The fit indices of the structural model χ^2/df , GFI, AGFI, and RMSEA were 2.516, 0.856, 0.81 and 0.076 respectively.

From the structural model, the probability (p) value and standardised regression weight or beta value connecting the latent variables was arrived at, helping in accepting or rejecting of the developed hypothesis (Table 4). Thus, when the perspective in the minds of the young consumers is to be trendy and follow YouTuber icons and the independent parameter of trendy goes up by 1 standard deviation or 1 unit, it positively influences the buying behaviour of consumers which in turn goes up by 1.295 standard deviations or 1.295 units. This emphasises the statistical relevance of the study that YouTubers influence positively impacts consumer buying behaviour due to the fact following YouTuber is considered as being trendy especially in the age group of 20–35 years. From SEM it was seen that, factors such as relatability, product details and interactivity did not have a direct influence. This could be due to the fact that YouTube is not the only source of influence and consumers are able to receive information about the product and other details through numerous other channels.

Table 4 SEM results – p value, beta coefficient

	<i>P value (0.001 level)</i>	<i>Standardised regression weight (β)</i>
BB <--- R	0.94	-0.028
BB <--- I	0.945	0.011
BB <-- PD	0.099	-0.434
BB <--- T	0.026	1.295

5 Conclusions

The impact of social network marketing on consumer purchase intention and the mediating role of customer engagement was studied by Toor et al. (2017). They found that the two were significantly related which is in line with the current finding of 1.295 standard deviations or 1.295 unit positive impact of influencer factors on consumer buying behaviour. The dimensions of consumer engagement within the context of online brand communities in terms of the engagement with the brand were investigated by Mueller (2013), and Dessart et al. (2015). YouTube thus became the latest trend amongst youngsters and brought about a significant shift in consumer awareness and buying behaviour. Further, to support the case, based on the analysis of the sample of 262 consumers in the age group of 20–35 years in Delhi and NCR in India, it was found that in terms of influence of YouTube icons, factors such as trendy, relatability, product details, interactivity had a moderate to strong relationship with the buying behaviour of consumers.

Factor analysis helped in grouping together of the manifest variables into a couple of factors for each construct, i.e., trendy, relatability, product details and interactivity. CFA helped to identify the manifest variable which in the minds of the young consumers is of

utmost importance with regards to influencing of buying behaviour of consumers by YouTube icons. Factors such as YouTuber's knowledge about a product convinces me to try the same, I prefer products used by YouTubers due to the ease of use displayed by them, I consider reusing a brand due to the upgrades displayed by a YouTuber when I have not had a positive experience before, influencer's interactivity (response to comments, etc.) matters to me, I comment on YouTube videos, I have posted a review related to a product under a video, I follow influencer(s) due to the number of subscribers they have, I prefer videos if the content relates to the YouTuber's own life, I follow social media influencers because it is trendy, I never wait for others in my circle to use a product before making the decision to buy it (because my favourite vlogger endorsed it) are key in positively influencing the buying behaviour of consumers, i.e., when I come across a product mentioned in a video, I have the impulse to purchase it, I associate with certain brands because of a favourite YouTuber, etc. The established structural model shows that based on data collected from young consumers: when the perspective in the minds of the consumers is to be trendy and follow YouTuber icons and the independent parameter of trendy goes up by 1 standard deviation or 1 unit, it positively influences the buying behaviour of consumers which in turn goes up by 1.295 standard deviations or 1.295 units. This corroborates the findings which states that, the young generation that often found interesting content lacking in television shows have realised the vastness of information available on the internet and are finding it trendy. Social media is after all, derived from the age old concept of society where individual interactions form the base for all the values and principles of society (Cretti, 2015). What brands have to be careful about is to advertise the right product through an apt influencer.

6 Managerial implications

The managerial implication of the study is that marketers should be in line with the rising importance of the influence that YouTuber icons have on consumers buying behaviour. The same can be implemented by companies by consistently engaging YouTuber icons for marketing of their brands and products and in this way also sharing details and positives about their products with the consumers at large. The grouping of the manifest variables into a couple of factors for each construct, i.e., trendy, relatability, product details and interactivity will be of help to the senior management as it would bring about clarity of factors that the senior management needs to focus on while strategising for influencer marketing. CFA helped identify manifest variables such as YouTuber's knowledge about a product convinces me to try the same, I prefer products used by YouTubers due to the ease of use displayed by them, I consider reusing a brand due to the upgrades displayed by a YouTuber when I have not had a positive experience before, etc. which can be taken cognisance of by marketers while devising a strategy for positively impacting consumer buying behaviour in term of influencer marketing. SEM showed that based on data collected from young consumers: when the perspective in the minds of the consumers is to be trendy and follow YouTuber icons it has a positive influence on consumer buying behaviour. To be thus present in every conversation, it is a must to maximise a brand's presence through individuals who will help make the maximum impact while also achieving maximum possible reach. This is where the influencer becomes an important part of the advertisement.

The study provides empirical information for industry's reference in order to divide marketing efforts amongst different channels of communication with one channel being YouTuber icons as an influencing medium. The connection between the YouTuber and the viewer's already exists and the brands have to utilise this influence as they place their product for the right target segment through this kind of influencer. This can be an important online marketing strategy adopted by companies. Brand managers have started believing that the amount of interaction that happens through these networks can successfully alter the perception about a brand (Gennzler et al., 2013). Brand managers must bear in mind that studies on the influence of YouTube, reinforces the fact that there is a shift in the way consumers perceive and there is enough data to suggest that big brands who feel YouTube advertisement is unnecessary for them, have a good reason to rethink their strategy (Fedorov, 2014). The research quantifies the role of different factors influencing consumer's behaviour and sketches an outline for the consumer's decision process so that the brands sponsoring YouTubers can select the best influencers for their promotion.

7 Theoretical implications

The study largely contributes to the literature of impact of influencer marketing on consumer buying behaviour in terms of their purchase action. Factor analysis developed a set of four factors, i.e., trendy aspect of following social media, relatibility with the influencers and their videos, product details displayed, and interactivity of the medium of influencer marketing. SEM establishes the fact that for NCR the statistical relevance of the study in terms of Trendy aspect of following social media positively impacts consumer buying behaviour.

8 Limitations of the research

The topic being new, there is hardly any academic literature available in the Indian context. Most of the literature referred to are published in other countries. Thus, real examples of YouTubers had to be used in places where specific academic reference for India was required. Data such as average number of hours people watch YouTube, number of people using internet in various devices, etc. could not be obtained and thus a sample study was done to substitute the lack of this data. This study was mainly done in Delhi and NCR.

9 Scope for future research

As the study was primarily done for Delhi and NCR, the scope could be further expanded to the rest of India to better understand the impact of influencer marketing on consumer buying behaviour. Rural India might have a slightly different picture. Brands aiming to target rural markets may have to further evaluate the consumer perception.

References

- Andrew, A. (2017) [online] <http://www.forbes.com>, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/under30network/2017/06/20/why-youtube-stars-influence-millennials-more-than-traditional-celebrities/#441e2ab548c6> (accessed 5 February 2018).
- Biaudet, S. (2017) *Influencer Marketing as a Marketing Tool: The Process of Creating an Influencer Marketing Campaign on Instagram* [online] https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/134139/Biaudet_Sofie.pdf?sequence=1 (accessed 18 May 2018).
- Burke, K.E. (2017) *Social Butterflies: How Social Media Influencers are the New Celebrity Endorsement*, VirginiaTech Electronic Theses and Dissertations.
- Carter, D. (2016) 'Hustle and brand: the sociotechnical shaping of influence', *SAGE Journal*, Vol. 12, pp.1–12, DOI: 10.1177/2056305116666305.
- Chaffey, D. and Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2012) *Digital Marketing – Strategy, Implementation and Practice*, 5th ed., s. l., Pearson Education Ltd., London
- Cretti, C. (2015) *Consumers' Attitude towards Social Media Advertising* [online] [https://www3.unifr.ch/marketing/fr/assets/public/documents/TravauxBachelor/cretti\(1\)%5B2%5D.pdf](https://www3.unifr.ch/marketing/fr/assets/public/documents/TravauxBachelor/cretti(1)%5B2%5D.pdf) (accessed 11 May 2018).
- Dessart, A., Veloutsou, C. and Morgan-Thomas, A. (2015) 'Consumer engagement in online brand communities: a social media perspective', *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp.28–42.
- Fedorov, P. (2014) *Video Promotion and Advertising: YouTube Channels and Their Role in Promotion of Education* [online] https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/83415/Fedorov_Pavel.pdf?sequence=1 (accessed 12 July 2018).
- Forbes, K. (2016) 'Examining the beauty industry's use of social influencers', *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp.78–87.
- Genzler, S., Volckner, F., Thompkins, Y. and Wiertz, C. (2013) 'Managing brands in the social media environment', *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, Vol. 27, No. 4, pp.242–256, Elsevier.
- Glucksman, M. (2017) 'The rise of social media influencer marketing on lifestyle branding: a case study of Lucie Fink', *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp.77–87 [online] https://www.elon.edu/u/academics/communications/journal/wp-content/uploads/sites/153/2017/12/08_Lifestyle_Brandin (accessed 20 June 2018).
- Holland, M. (2016) 'How YouTube developed into a successful platform for user-generated content', *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp.52–59.
- Holmbom, M. (2015) *The YouTuber: A Qualitative Study of Popular Content Creators* [online] <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A825044&dswid=7132> (accessed 3 October 2018).
- Kousha, K., Thelwall, M. and Abdoli, M. (2012) 'The role of online videos in research communication', *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, Vol. 63, No. 9, pp.1710–1727.
- Lange, P.G. (2007) 'Searching for the 'you' in 'YouTube': an analysis of online response ability', *Ethnographic Praxis in Industry (EPIC) Conference*, Vol. 49, s. l., s.n.
- Lepisto, E. and Vahajylkka, M. (2017) *YouTubers' Impact on Viewers' Buying Behavior* [online] https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/132972/Lepisto_Emmi_Julia_Vahajylkka_Miina.pdf?sequence=1 (accessed 18 June 2018).
- Mueller, B. (2013) *Participatory Culture on YouTube*, Media@LSE, London.
- Natarajan, T., Janarthanan, B., Senthil, A. and Jeevananthan, M. (2014) 'Perception of Indian consumers towards social media advertisements in Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Twitter', *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp.264–284.
- Odell, P. (2018) *The Power of Influencers*, Chief Marketer, s. l., s.n., Worldwide.

- Samosa, S. (2017) [online] <http://www.socialsamosa.com>, <https://www.socialsamosa.com/2017/12/youtube-growing-400-google-for-india/> (accessed 7 December 2017).
- Smith, K.T. (2019) 'Mobile advertising to digital natives: preferences on content, style, personalization, and functionality', *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp.67–80.
- Snelson, C. (2011) 'YouTube across the disciplines: a review of the literature', *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp.159–169.
- Susarla, O., Oh, J. and Tan, Y. (2011) 'Social networks and the diffusion of user-generated content: evidence from YouTube', *Inform. Information Systems Research*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp.11–19.
- Tabachnick, B.G. and Fidell, L.S. (2007) *Using Multivariate Statistics*, 5th ed., Allyn & Bacon, Boston MA.
- Toor, A., Husnain, M. and Hussain, T. (2017) 'Marketing on consumer purchase intention in Pakistan: consumer engagement as a mediator', *Asian Journal of Business and Accounting*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp.167–199.
- West, T. (2011) 'Going viral: factors that lead videos to become internet phenomena', *The Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp.76–84.
- Westernberg, W.M. (2016) *The Influence of YouTubers on Teenagers* [online] https://essay.utwente.nl/71094/1/Westernberg_MA_BMS.pdf (accessed 5 November 2018).
- Zhang, L., Long, L., Xu, Y. and Tan, W. (2013) 'The influences of perceived factors on consumer buying behavior: in the perspective of online shopping capability of consumers', *Journal of Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology*, Vol. 5, No. 24, pp.5632–5638.