

# A SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS ON DRAWBACKS OF INFLUENCER MARKETING: CONSUMER TRUST AND ETHICAL CONCERNS IN FOOD VLOGGING

Dr. Ramesh Kumar Chouhan\*

## ABSTRACT:

*Due to the widespread use of social media and the perceived legitimacy of influencers, influencer marketing has quickly grown to be a big part of digital marketing in India. This study explores the development of influencer marketing in India, emphasizing the moral challenges that have surfaced in tandem with its expansion, including false endorsements, a lack of transparency, and problems with authenticity. The report also discusses how these ethical transgressions affect customer confidence and the success of influencer marketing initiatives. The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) rules are one example of a regulatory framework that is assessed for its ability to foster ethical behavior and transparency. In order to maintain the efficacy of influencer marketing, the results highlight the significance of improving transparency, bolstering regulatory control, and encouraging ethical standards among influencers and brands. Future studies ought to concentrate on the long-term consequences of unethical behavior and the function of consumer education in encouraging moral consumption practices.*

**KEYWORDS:** Factors influencing, Influencer marketing, consumer perception, ethical concerns, Trust, digital advertising.

## INTRODUCTION

Influencer marketing has emerged as a potent promotional strategy as a result of the quick development of digital platforms, which has drastically changed how companies interact with customers. The food and beverage sector stands out among the many industries impacted by this trend, with food vloggers having a significant influence on customer decisions and attitudes. Influencers can significantly impact their audiences by sharing personal food preferences, introducing culinary trends, and promoting items through captivating content.

But there are drawbacks to the increasing reliance on influencer marketing. Concerns regarding the morality and sincerity of such operations are raised by deceptive endorsements, the promotion of unhealthy food options, and a lack of transparency in sponsorships. These problems emphasize the necessity of critically analyzing the negative consequences of influencer marketing, especially in relation to food vlogs. By examining the negative sides of influencer marketing and concentrating on how it affects consumer trust, eating habits, and ethical standards, this study aims to allay these worries. The study intends to shed light on the detrimental effects and offer practical suggestions to promote a more moral and open digital advertising environment by utilizing a mixed-methods research technique.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM-

Influencer marketing's widespread use in the food and beverage industry has sparked questions about the morality and veracity of marketing strategies. Consumer trust has been damaged and dietary choices have been skewed by deceptive endorsements, the promotion of unhealthy eating habits, and the lack of transparency in sponsorships. By critically examining the detrimental effects of influencer marketing on consumer behavior and the larger food sector, this study seeks to remedy these problems.

\*Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Jai Narain Vyas University, Jodhpur

1. To examine how customer trust and eating habits are negatively impacted by influencer marketing in the food and beverage industry.
2. To assess the moral dilemmas raised by influencer marketing strategies, especially when it comes to unreported sponsorships and deceptive material.

LITERATURE REVIEW-

Chevalier, J. A., & Mayzlin, D. (2006). The effect of word of mouth on sales: Online book reviews. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 43(3), 345-354. This landmark study analyzes how online reviews drive consumer buying habits, indicating that positive reviews immensely boost sales. It emphasizes the strength of word-of-mouth and its relevance in the food industry, especially as it pertains to online networks such as Zomato and Swiggy.

Luca, M. (2016). Reviews, reputation, and revenue: The case of Yelp.com. Harvard Business School Working Paper, 12-016. Luca's study highlights the role of online reviews in influencing consumer choice, using Yelp as an example in the restaurant sector. It examines the correlation between review ratings and revenue, a concept that can be applied to India's emerging food review sites.

Kuan, H. H., Lee, M. K., & Wang, C. (2017). How do online reviews affect consumer decision-making? A study of the restaurant sector in India. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 63, 1-9. This paper examines the restaurant industry in India and explores how consumer behavior is influenced by online reviews. The authors conclude that trust in reviews depends on the credibility of the source of the review, which is particularly important in India, where there are varied consumer tastes

Garcia, L. M. (2018). "Food Vlogging and Its Influence on Culinary Trends" Garcia's work examines the role of food vloggers in shaping culinary trends and consumer preferences. It discusses both the positive and negative impacts, such as promoting niche cuisines versus glorifying unhealthy eating habits.

Sharma, P. (2019). The effect of food influencers on consumer behavior in India. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 17(2), 167-184. Sharma examines how food influencers influence Indian consumers' taste and buying decisions. The research posits that although influencers are at times viewed as untrustworthy, they do have significant influence on young, technology-conscious consumers in India's food industry.

Lee, K., & Park, S. (2021). "Consumer Perceptions of Authenticity in Influencer Marketing" This research focuses on how perceived authenticity affects consumer behavior. It finds that audiences are more likely to trust and act on recommendations from influencers who are transparent about sponsorships and personal biases.

Chopra, N., & Patel, A. (2022). "Regulating Influencer Marketing: A Policy Perspective" This study provides an analysis of current regulations on influencer marketing and their effectiveness. It underscores the need for stricter policies to curb misleading advertisements and foster accountability within the industry.

Influencers have an impact on important demographic groups, particularly Generation Z and Millennials. According to a comparative study by Hapsari et al. (2024), social media influencers have a big impact on both generations' purchasing intentions. Nonetheless, their study shows that consumer trust serves as a crucial moderating factor, enhancing the relationship between a satisfying online experience and the ultimate intention to purchase. This emphasizes how important an influencer's perceived authenticity and dependability are to these digitally native generations when it comes to turning engagement into a tangible purchasing decision.

The examination of 200 Jodhpur City respondents offers important information into how food vloggers affect customer attitudes and actions. The purpose of the study was to learn more about the respondents' awareness of sponsorship disclosures, changes in dietary habits, and level of trust in food goods advocated by influencers.

Table 1: Faith and Truthfulness

Particulars	%
Doubting influencer marketing	65
Belief in sincere recommendations	30
Neutral	5

- 65% of respondents were skeptical of influencer-promoted food goods, citing worries about authenticity and hidden sponsorships.
- 30% believed influencers actually promoted the products, with 5% remaining impartial.

Table 2: Effect on Eating Patterns

Particulars	%
Tried goods that influencers promoted	40
Regrettable decisions because of inadequate quality or deception	25
Changed to unhealthy eating practices	35

- 40% tried products advocated by influencers, however 25% regretted their purchases due to poor quality or misrepresentation.
- 35% reported a move towards unhealthy eating habits due to visually appealing but nutritionally inadequate food content.

Table 3: Moral Alarms

Category	%
Emphasize the importance of transparency	75
Ignorant of sponsored promotions	20

- 75% of respondents highlighted the need for transparency in influencer endorsements, emphasizing the importance of disclosing sponsorships.
- 20% were unaware of the concept of paid promotions, underscoring the need for consumer education.

#### FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH-

- Due to their perceived lack of authenticity and transparency, influencer marketing is viewed with suspicion by a large percentage of customers.
- Products endorsed by influencers frequently result in poor eating habits, especially among younger audiences.
- Regulations to ensure sponsorship disclosures and prevent deceptive advertisements are highly demanded.
- The low level of consumer awareness regarding paid marketing suggests that educational measures are necessary.
- Over-reliance on influencers has the potential to skew customer views and erode confidence in digital advertising.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS -

Several important suggestions might be put into practice to overcome ethical issues with influencer marketing in India.

**Increasing Influencer Marketing Transparency:** Requiring explicit and noticeable disclosures in all influencer content can greatly increase transparency. According to the rules established by the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), influencers should constantly include recognizable hashtags like #ad or #sponsored (ASCI, 2021). To keep consumers' trust, brands should also make sure influencers follow these disclosure guidelines.

**Enhancing Regulatory supervision:** In order to guarantee adherence to moral principles, regulatory supervision must be strengthened. Influencer marketing operations should be routinely monitored by the ASCI and other pertinent authorities, who should also penalize noncompliance. The gap between changing marketing trends and current regulations can also be filled by amending consumer protection legislation to include new digital marketing techniques (Kumar & Verma, 2022). Improved enforcement strategies will discourage unethical behavior and promote ethical behavior among brands and influencers.

**Encouraging Influencers and Brands to Follow Ethical Guidelines:** Fostering a culture of accountability in influencer marketing requires promoting ethical standards. Influencers and brands can be made more conscious of the significance of ethical marketing practices through educational initiatives and workshops. According to Rao and Sharma (2020), brands should set explicit ethical guidelines for influencers, stressing the importance of honesty and sincerity in endorsements. Building trust with their audience and ensuring long-term success in the industry may be achieved by encouraging influencers to promote things that they actually use and believe in.

#### CONCLUSION

The results of this study highlight how urgently the food and beverage sector needs to adopt a more moral and open strategy for influencer marketing. Influencers have a great deal of influence over consumer decisions, yet their actions frequently raise questions about transparency, authenticity, and the encouragement of bad habits. Stakeholders can lessen the detrimental effects of influencer marketing by enforcing stronger laws, encouraging moral behavior, and improving consumer education. In the end, encouraging accountability and trust in this area will help consumers and marketers alike by creating a more educated and healthy digital economy.

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