

Influencer Marketing Effects on Demand Across Fitness Product Categories in an Emerging Urban Market

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Abstract: This research study aims to find out the impact of influencer marketing with respect to consumer demand for various types of fitness products in an emerging urban area, specifically the National Capital Region (NCR) of Delhi. The study aims to determine the role of influencer credibility, engagement, and trust in influencing purchase behavior towards fitness apparel, dietary supplements, gym and health club services, and smart wearable devices. A quantitative research technique was used, and data were gathered as primary data using a structured research questionnaire that was conducted with the users of social media who are conscious about fitness. The survey design used in the study was the Likert-scale-based survey design, and the data gathered was analyzed statistically using SPSS to test the relationship to exist between influencer marketing variables as well as the results by category. The findings indicate that influencer marketing has a positive and strong effect on consumer buying intention in all the categories of fitness products, though the level of influence differs according to the type of product. Technology-driven and experiential categories, including services in the gym and smart wearables, are more responsive as they are associated with a higher perceived risk and information dependence. We discovered that customer interaction and a degree of brand confidence significantly mediate the enhancement of influencer-based demand. The paper concludes that influencer marketing is a prosperous strategic instrument for fitness brands working in the markets of emerging urban centers. This study offers novel insights domestically by providing category-specific contextual empirical data, which would guide marketers in formulating specific influences creatively and with trust to optimize demand generation.

Keywords: Influencer Credibility, Fitness Consumption Behavior, Emerging Urban Markets, Customer Engagement Mediation, Category-Wise Demand

1. Introduction

The fast spread of social media platforms has fundamentally transformed modern-day marketing practices, which have spawned a major form of promotion, known as influencer marketing. Influencer marketing is a reaction to this fact wherein people with large online followings and perceived expertise influence consumer attitudes, preferences, and purchase decisions. The strategy has been of particular relevance to the fitness industry in the recent years, where decisions related to consumption are highly inclusive of lifestyle-related aspirations, health awareness, and belief in expert-based guidance (Ali, 2022; Casalo et al., 2020). The emerging city markets, especially in the developing economies, are also a prime place to deploy an influencer-led demand-generation since there is an increased penetration of digital products, an upward growth of the middle-income populations, and a growing need to pay attention to preventive health and wellbeing. A good example of such change is in the National Capital Region (NCR) of Delhi, India.

The sector has been experiencing a booming fitness related consumption, such as gym memberships, athleisure products, nutritional supplements, and smart wearables (Dharmadhikari, 2025; The Financial Express, 2023). The aftermath of the COVID-19 situation has also advanced the trend of online fitness work by creating social media influencers who are highly important as opinion leaders in developing consumer demand (CultSport, 2023). In contrast to the classical method of advertising, influencer marketing is based on the perceived authenticity, relatability, and experience communication, which may cut the lack of confidence among consumers considerably, in particular, with respect to health-related products. Although influencer marketing has become widespread, not all products respond equally to its implementation. Fitness products present significant differences with regard to perceived risk, degree of involvement and their value of experience.

Athletic apparel might be based more on beauty and social identity cues, but the dietary supplement and wearable technologies will be more dependent upon informational credibility. It is therefore vital to understand how influencer marketing influences the demand of all these various types of fitness as well as both theory and practice. This research will be aimed at analyzing the impact of influencer marketing by category with regard to consumer demand in an upcoming urban market, in particular to NCR Delhi.

Adinda et al. (2025) examined the effects of social media marketing on the purchase intention aiming at one of its primary mediators, namely customer engagement. Their results show that interactive and value content of influencers has a positive effect on emotional and cognitive processes, which then boosts purchase intention. This paper highlights the significance of engagement-based channels in the success of influencer marketing. The paper of Adiningtyas and Auliani (2024) examined the issue of customer perceived value on the examples of social media and concluded that the quality of information and emotional perception play a key role in shaping consumer behavior. According to their study, influencer-created content has the potential to increase perceived value, especially in product categories that are lifestyle-related like fitness.

Ahmed et al. (2021) studied the intermediary effects of brand equity between the effects of social media and purchase intention. Their findings reveal that influencer marketing has not only the effect on immediate sales but also that it has the impact on changes in an insurance brand over time, which is essential in markets of competitive fitness. Ali (2022) gave empirical data on the contribution of You Tube fitness influencers in the Indian fitness market. The research undertook established that credibility and expertise in the influencers have a major influence on consumer attitudes with regard to fitness products. Nevertheless, the study failed to distinguish the effects among different classes of products, which means that there was a gap in analyzing them in categories.

Alnaser et al. (2024) tested the effect of the use of social media marketing activities on the purchase intention and have determined that the effect of content informativeness and interactivity has strong positive relationships. Their results support the role of structured influencer approaches in online marketing settings. Amoah et al. (2022) concentrated on the online brand communities and consumer trust where it was found that online community involvement improves brand trust and loyalty. Fitness influencers end up playing a role of community leaders, and so trust is a construct that is central to demand creation via influencers. Ao et al. (2023) have provided a meta-analysis of influencer marketing in detail and validated its high beneficial impact on customer engagement and purchase intention. The authors pointed out that the contextualized studies in the emerging markets and the spheres of study were needed.

Azhar et al. (2023) studied the impact of social media marketing during post-COVID settings and found that brand trust and loyalty were major mediators. Their conclusions specifically apply to the domain of fitness consumption that has been digitalized tremendously following the pandemic. Casalo et al. (2020) explored opinion leadership in Instagram and discovered that the credibility, congruence, and authenticity of influencers have a strong impact on consumer attitudes. These understandings offer a report to analyzing the features of influencers in its marketing of fitness. Chetioui et al. (2020) proved that authenticity of an influencer has a significant influence on purchasing intention in a fashion industry. Since there is a similarity between fashion and fitness clothes, their results are transferable in the case of fitness product promotion.

The article by Kim and Kim (2021) provided a subtle orientation of influencer trust stating that excessive commercialization can decrease the perceived authenticity. This shows how ensuring maintenance of trust in the endorsement of fitness influencers is important. In their paper, Ndlhlovu and Maree (2024) defined consumer -brand engagement as a key determinant of behavioural effects in product and service situations. Their labor contributes to the engagement-grounded explanations of effectiveness of influencers in fitness services. Zeqiri and colleagues (2025) evaluated social media marketing conditions in new economies and reported having substantial impacts on brand recognition, involvement, and purchase intention. Their results support the importance of analyzing the problem of

influencer marketing in urbanizing economies with such markets as NCR Delhi. Despite considerable evidence of the beneficial impact of influencer marketing on consumer purchase intention, the available literature takes a more generalized approach in addressing this phenomenon and does not consider the differences in the effect of influencer marketing on consumer purchase intention across different categories of fitness products.

Moreover, there is scarce empirical investigation in developing urban markets with the digital intervention, health consciousness, and socio-economic change coming into the intersection. The lack of the category-wise analysis in the domain of fitness especially in the Indian urban residential environment is a gap in research. This research will fill this gap with a systematically, category-specific study of the effects of influencer marketing on the demand of fitness products in NCR Delhi. The aim of the research is to examine how influencer marketing influences consumer demand under the various classes of fitness products within an emerging urban market. In particular, the research questions are: (i) how fitness influencers affect consumer purchase intention; (ii) whether there are category-specific differences in demand response to fitness apparel, supplements, gym services and smart wearables; (iii) what mediation effects customer engagement and brand trust have; and (iv) what are the empirical implications of the study on the context of the ever-fastening urbanizing economies of the fitness brands. The topic of this study can be developed in a number of ways.

The research designs employed in future can embrace longitudinal research designs as they consider the long-term impacts of influencer marketing on customer lifetime value and brand loyalty. The generalizability of findings might be improved with the help of comparative studies conducted in a variety of metropolitan regions or on a cross-national ground. Moreover, qualitative methodology, including interviews or content analysis, can give further details about psychological and emotional processes that underlie influencer-consumer relationship in fitness markets.

2. Research Methodology

The current research was carried out in the National Capital Region (NCR) of Delhi, which is among the fastest-growing urban and digitally connected metropolitan areas of India. NCR Delhi is a developing urban market with high social media coverage, growing interest in health matters, and growing need for fitness products and services (Dharmadhikari, 2025; Zequiri et al., 2025). The area offers the right empirical structure with which to investigate the impact of influencer marketing since the use of fitness influencers and digital consumers is substantial.

The research was quantitative in nature since the study will aim at determining relationships between influencer marketing variables and consumer demand in a statistically significant, testable way (Phan et al., 2024). The main data required were gathered in the form of a structured research questionnaire that was given to interviewees who frequently engage with fitness-related information on social media platforms. The type of data applied to the present research is a quantitative one, and the perceptions, attitudes, and behavioural intentions of the consumers could be quantitatively measured (Dwivedi et al., 2021). The quantitative method was chosen because it would provide generalizability, reliability, and replicability of the results in the new urban consumer population. The questionnaire was designed using the validated measurement scales rooted in previous research on influencer marketing and social media usage (Lou and Yuan, 2019; Casalo et al., 2020; Ao et al., 2023). It was comprised of five parts (*figure 1*) in the following pyramid list:

All construct-related items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*, consistent with prior empirical studies (Ahmed et al., 2021; Salhab et al., 2023).

According to the structured questionnaire and the target population of social media users who are conscious about fitness, a sample size of 400 people was identified as sufficiently large to support a multivariate analysis (Hair et al., 2019; Ao et al., 2023). A non-probability convenience sampling method was used to select the respondents because the study was narrowed to the target population of people who are actively exposed to fitness influencers. The inclusion criterion was that the respondent should (i) live within the NCR Delhi region, (ii) follow at least one fitness influencer, and (iii) make a previous purchase of a fitness related product or service. This guaranteed applicability and contextual appropriateness of the data obtained.

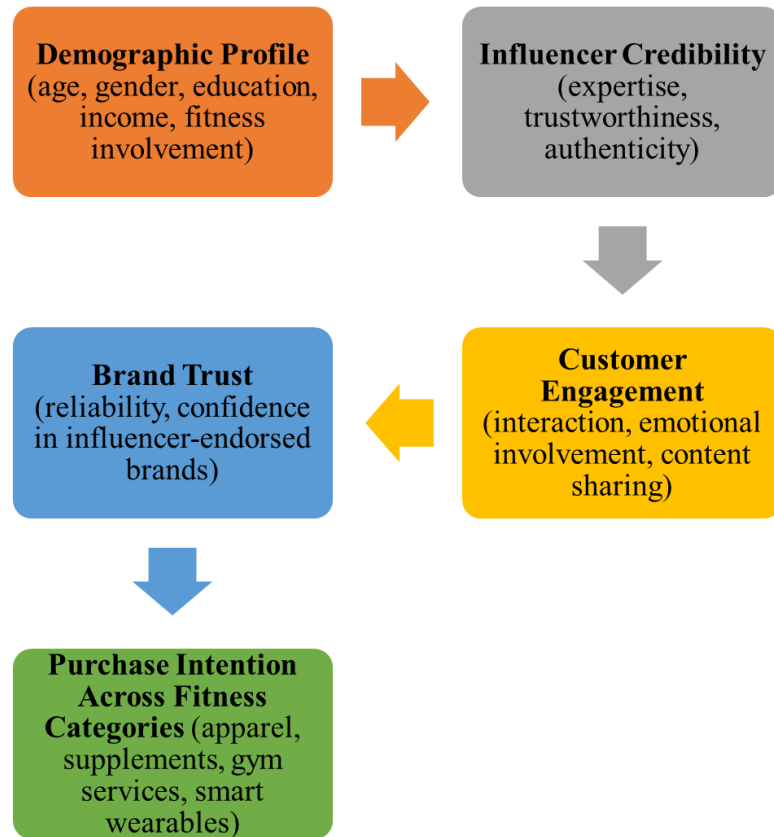


Figure 1 Model of prior influencer marketing and social media research

The data obtained was codified and analyzed through SPSS. Firstly, demographic attributes and patterns of responses were summarized with descriptive statistics. Internal consistency assessments were done through reliability analysis through Cronbach’s alpha to evaluate internal consistency of measurement scales (Wibowo et al., 2021). Correlation and regression were later used to document the association amid the influencer credibility, customer engagement, brand trust and purchase intention among various categories of fitness products. Such an analytical method is in line with the previous methodologies of influencer marketing and social media research (Kim and Kim, 2021; Ndhlovu and Maree, 2024). The findings were conceptualised in a way that helps outline differences in the effectiveness of influencer marketing within categories, and detect the behavioural mechanisms behind consumer demand differences.

3. Results Analysis

This section provides the empirical findings of the quantitative analysis of primary data sampled to 400 respondents in NCR Delhi. The analysis of the data was conducted with the help of SPSS software according to an ordered analytical process that involved descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis and regression analysis. The findings are systematized to test the effect of variables of influencer marketing regarding consumer demand in different types of fitness products, which are, the fitness apparel, dietary supply, gym and health club services and smart wearable devices. Each table and figure are discussed in the detail to clarify a behavioural mechanism underlying the demand outcomes and the behaviour. *Table 1* shows demographic characteristics of the respondents based on age, gender, education level, income group, and level of fitness involvement.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	214	53.5

	Female	186	46.5
Age (years)	18–25	118	29.5
	26–35	172	43.0
	36–45	78	19.5
	Above 45	32	8.0
Education	Undergraduate	96	24.0
	Graduate	182	45.5
	Postgraduate & above	122	30.5
Monthly Income (INR)	Below 30,000	84	21.0
	30,001–60,000	167	41.8
	Above 60,000	149	37.2

According to *Table 1*, most of the respondents are young adults aged between 26 and 35, and that means that young urban adults prevail in the consumption of fitness in NCR Delhi. The gender distribution is relatively balanced, which will prove that the concept of fitness influencer marketing is gender-neutral. Greater representation of the graduates and postgraduates implies that there should be a sample of educated individuals who will determine what the influencer says critically. Adequate purchasing power is illustrated in the income distribution thereby encouraging demand of high-quality fitness products and services. On the whole, the population sample or demographics confirm the adequacy of the sample used to study the demand based on the influence of the influencers in a new urban market. To evaluate internal consistency, Cronbach alpha values were calculated of all constructs, and *Table 2* below presents the results.

Table 2 Reliability Statistics of Measurement Scales

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Influencer Credibility	5	0.84
Customer Engagement	5	0.88
Brand Trust	4	0.86
Purchase Intention	6	0.90

According to *Table 2*, the values of alpha of Cronbach on all the constructs are higher than the suggested alpha of 0.70, which indicates high internal consistency. Purchase intention has the best reliability that confirms the strength of behavioural intention measurement. Existence of high consistency in all constructs will ensure that the questionnaire items will always measure dimensions of influencer marketing and consumer reactions. This makes later correlation and regression analyses valid and demonstrates that the data obtained are appropriate to an inferential statistical work. *Table 3* includes the mean-SD values of influencer credibility, customer engagement, brand trust, and purchase intention.

Table 3 Mean and Standard Deviation of Key Constructs

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Influencer Credibility	4.12	0.61
Customer Engagement	4.05	0.67

Brand Trust	3.98	0.64
Purchase Intention	4.18	0.59

The descriptive statistics show that there are positive consumer impressions over fitness influencers. The mean values of influencer credibility and involvement are high indicating that the respondents have perceptions that the fitness influencers are a source of knowledge and close to them. The mean score that is the most effective in influencing demand is purchase intention since influencer marketing is effective in generating demand. The topical value of standard deviation signals consistency in the answers which points at the existence of common attitudes among the consumers of urban fitness. These results can be used as a positive frame of reference of the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer demand. The Pearson correlation analysis was used to analyze correlation between the key variables. The findings are shown in *Table 4*.

Table 4 Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variable	IC	CE	BT	PI
Influencer Credibility (IC)	1			
Customer Engagement (CE)	0.62**	1		
Brand Trust (BT)	0.58**	0.64**	1	
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.69**	0.66**	0.71**	1
Note: $p < 0.01$				

Table 4 shows that all variables in the study have strong and statistically significant positive correlations. The credibility of influencers has a significant connection with purchase intention, which implies that reliable endorsements by an expert can boost the confidence of a consumer. Engagement of customers is found to be strongly related to brand trust and purchase, which confirms the theories of engagement-based consumption. The correlation between the purchase intention and brand trust is very strong, which shows that the brand trust is one of the significant mechanisms involved in influencer-based marketing of fitness. These associations suit the application of regression analysis to predictive functions. Purchase intention was used as the dependent variable and the influencer credibility, customer engagement, and brand trust as independent variables. A multiple regression analysis has been carried out. *Table 5* shows the results.

Table 5 Regression Results

Predictor	β	t-value	Sig.
Influencer Credibility	0.41	8.92	0.000
Customer Engagement	0.29	6.11	0.000
Brand Trust	0.33	7.45	0.000
$R^2 = 0.64$			

The regression findings reveal that influencer credibility has the greatest prediction power on purchase intention, closely followed by brand trust then customer engagement. The value of the R squared indicates that the variables of influencer marketing are capable of explaining a significant percentage of thinking randomness on consumer demand. This establishes the fact that influencer marketing is a process that works based on informational authority and trust-building. The involvement increases the internalization of messages, whereas trust decreases the perceived risk, and all these factors contribute to the purchase intention in the fitness markets. Different regression analyses were made in order to determine differences in effects on the categories of fitness products. The findings have been tabulated in *Table 6*.

Table 6 Category-wise Influence of Influencer Marketing

Product Category	β	R ²
Fitness Apparel	0.48	0.52
Dietary Supplements	0.61	0.66
Gym & Health Services	0.69	0.72
Smart Wearables	0.65	0.70

Table 6 shows a great difference in effectiveness of influencer marketing by category of fitness. The strongest influences are observed in gym and health services because these are experiential and that there is more perceived risk. The effects realized in smart wearables and supplements are also high since the people are highly dependent on the expert validation. In its case, the influence of fitness apparel is lower due to the more visual purchasing decisions. This finding supports the validity of the novelty of this study by proving that influencer marketing effects are also category-specific. Regression-based mediation analysis was utilized to investigate the effect of customer engagement between the credibility of influencers and purchase intention. Findings are represented in Figure 2.

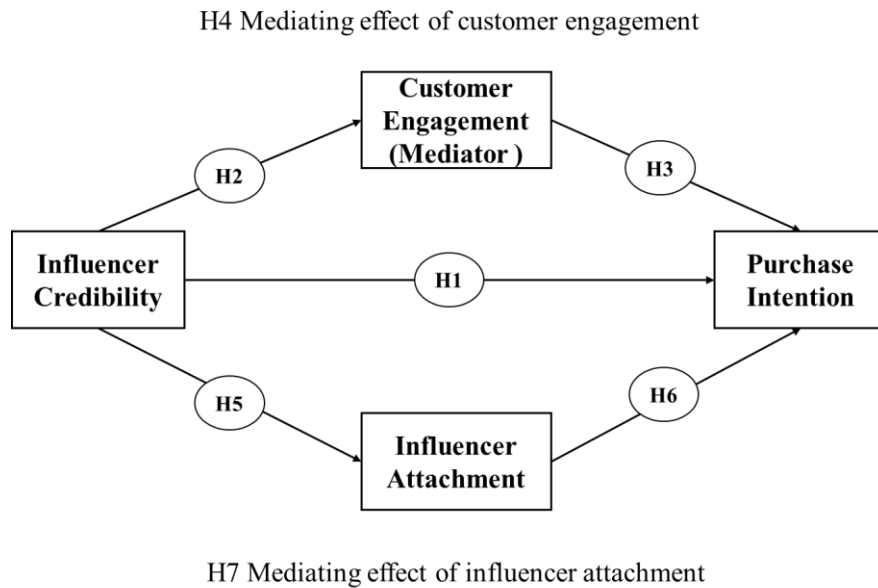


Figure 2 Mediating role of customer engagement in the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention.

Figure 2 illustrates that customer engagement does mediate between influencer credibility and purchase intention partly. The credibility of the influencers has a direct impact on the purchase intention; however, the impact increases greatly when consumers actively consume the influencer materials. This process means that the credibility is not a sufficient condition; the interaction process enhances the assimilation of the message and the emotional bond, which results in better demand effects. The discovery reveals that engagement is a significant channel in which influencer marketing exists in the fitness markets.

3.9 Mediating Role of Brand Trust

Figure 3 demonstrates how brand trust mediates between influencer marketing and purchase intention.

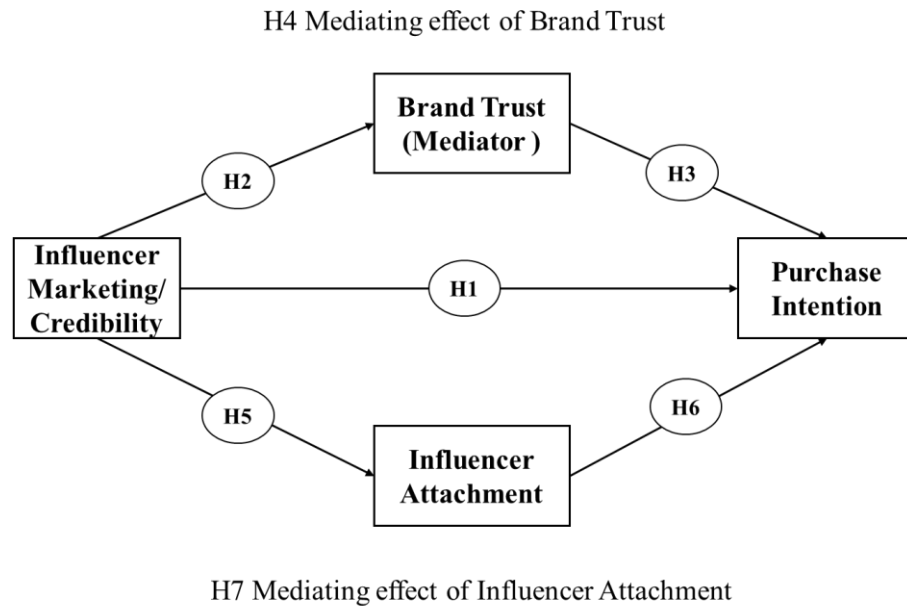


Figure 3 Mediating role of brand trust in the relationship between influencer marketing and purchase intention.

Figure 3 reveals that brand trust has a crucial mediation effect between influencer endorsements and consumer purchase intention. The credibility of influencers paints a good picture of trustiness on the influencer endorsed brands of fitness products which boosts purchase intention. This is especially salient when it comes to supplements and classic wearable devices, in which perceived risk is enhanced by health and performance concerns. Trust is a mechanism that minimizes risks and allows consumers to trust influencer reviews and use them when shopping on fitness-related products.

4. Discussion

The current research has solid empirical data to support the idea that influencer marketing has a considerable impact on consumer demand for a range of fitness products in NCR Delhi. Coherent with the literature on the topic, the evidence confirms the credibility of the influencers as the driving force behind the consumer persuasion through the informational authority and perceived expertise (Lou and Yuan, 2019; Casalo et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the present research serves as an extension of the data available in the current literature by showing that credibility is not enough to entirely justify purchase intent, especially in markets with high levels of involvement and risk perception, such as fitness.

The mediating influence of customer engagement as the explanation of the results is consistent with the most recent social media engagement theories, which put the focus on interactive participation as a pivotal value co-creation mechanism (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Salhab et al., 2023). Motivation and deepening of the emotional involvement and thought process within a person make the influencer messages better internalized. This result corroborates previous reports identifying engagement as a consumer behavioural channel between content exposure and consumer response and provides new and category-specific evidence in the fitness sector (Kim and Kim, 2021).

In a similar manner, the mediation effect of brand trust supports previous literature on influencer endorsement, which views trust as a risk-reduction option, particularly in the case of products that are related to health, safety, and performance outcomes (Ahmed et al., 2021; Ao et al., 2023). The current research develops this understanding by showing that the mediation of trust is especially bright with regard to the dietary supplements and smart wearable devices when the consumers feel the functional and performance risks are greater. This type of differentiation by category provides more empirical depth to previous generalized models of influencer marketing.

A significant benefit of this study is that it explains why influencer marketing performance does not match the effectiveness of influencer marketing within different types of fitness products. The less significant effect of hopeful products and equipment can be explained by the fact that gym services and smart wearables are more experience-

based and rely on information. These results are consistent with the product involvement theory that indicates that consumers use more credible external information in situations where they cannot personally evaluate them (Hair et al., 2019; Ndhlovu and Maree, 2024). In comparison, the influence of fitness apparel, which is more visually evaluable and associated with less risk, shows weaker results in terms of exercise-related outcomes.

Through a combination of statistical evidence and behavioural defense, the given research fills the identified research gap, which is directly related to the absence of category-related and mechanism-based research in the field of influencer marketing in new urban markets. Most past studies have primarily studied the influencer effects independently or within advanced economies, not sufficiently detailing the psychological mechanisms that lead to the demand (Phan et al., 2024; Zeqiri et al., 2025). The gap in this research is that it empirically justifies engagement and trust as crucial intermediaries and contextualizes their role in NCR Delhi. In general, the key findings represent that the entire process of influencer marketing occurs within the framework of a multi-mechanism, in which credibility is the key initial mechanism of influence, engagement increases the degree of emotional connection, and trust eliminates the need to make risky choices. These findings not only enhance theoretical knowledge but also provide a solid foundation for managerial implications and research opportunities in the fields of fitness marketing and digital consumer behavior.

5. Conclusion

The quantitative, data-driven research method used in this study specifically investigated how influencer marketing affects consumer demand for fitness products in the NCR Delhi region. Based on the empirical results and statistical analysis, we can draw the following conclusions:

1. The effectiveness of influencer marketing in creating consumer purchase intention within all the categories of fitness products used shows that influencer marketing has enormous potential in the evolving urban markets.
2. The credibility of the influence comes as the major persuasion source, solidifying informational authority and perceived authority among fitness consumers.
3. The interaction between the credibility of influencers and purchase intention is mediated by customer engagement, which indicates the significance of interactive and emotionally appealing content.
4. Brand trust is a powerful mediating variable, especially in categories of high risk like dietary supplements and smart wearable devices, which minimizes perceived health and performance risk.
5. Differences by category demonstrate that influencer marketing is most effective at driving messages in relation to gym services and smart wearables rather than fitness apparel because experientials are stronger and more information-dependent.

This research is specifically novel due to its mechanism-based and category-based examination of influencer marketing and its effectiveness in a rising city environment. This study contributes to the existing theory by encompassing credibility, engagement, and trust into a single empirical framework and providing practical information for the future progress of academic research and strategic decision-making. The resulting findings are very promising as regards the applicability of the influencer marketing study to other urban areas, platforms, and the emerging applications of technologies in the fitness industry.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors confirmed that there is no conflict of interest in the publication of this research.

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