

Influencer Fatigue: A Trust Crisis in Social Media Marketing – A Study with Reference to Tenkasi District

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ABSTRACT

Digital marketing has become an essential tool for businesses to connect with customers, and influencer marketing plays a vital role in shaping consumer opinions. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of influencer fatigue and the trust crisis in social media marketing with reference to consumers in the Tenkasi district. The study used a descriptive research design with 120 respondents selected through a convenient sampling method. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS tools such as correlation and regression analysis. The findings revealed that repetitive and non-genuine influencer promotions reduce consumer trust and weaken marketing effectiveness. It was also found that authenticity and transparency strongly influence consumer purchase decisions. The study concludes that influencer marketing can remain effective only when it maintains honesty, variety, and emotional connection with the audience.

Keywords: Influencer Fatigue, Social Media Marketing, Consumer Trust, Marketing Strategies, Digital Engagement

Introduction

In today's digital era, social media platforms have become powerful tools for marketing and communication. Businesses of all sizes rely on influencers to promote their brands, products, and services to online audiences. Influencers are individuals who have built a strong follower base and can shape the opinions and purchase decisions of consumers. Through platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, influencer marketing has become one of the fastest-growing trends in digital promotion.

However, in recent years, audiences have begun to feel overwhelmed by the continuous flow of sponsored content. Many consumers feel that influencers are more focused on paid promotions than on genuine recommendations. This has led to a new phenomenon known as "Influencer Fatigue." It refers to the situation where people lose interest and trust in influencers due to excessive, repetitive, or insincere marketing activities. As a result, the credibility and effectiveness of influencer marketing are being questioned by both marketers and consumers.

With the growing number of social media users in every part of Tamil Nadu, including Tenkasi District, it becomes important to understand how audiences respond to influencer marketing. People's changing attitudes and trust levels reflect a new phase in digital consumer behavior. Hence, the present study focuses on the issue of influencer fatigue and how it creates a trust crisis in social media marketing within the Tenkasi District.

Statement of the problem

In the beginning, social media influencers were seen as relatable and trustworthy figures who shared genuine product experiences with their followers. Their opinions were valued because they seemed more personal and authentic than traditional advertisements. Over time, however, influencer marketing has become a highly commercial activity. Many influencers now promote multiple brands at the same time, often without clearly disclosing paid partnerships. This has reduced the originality and honesty that once attracted

audiences. Consumers have started to question whether influencers truly believe in the products they endorse or if they promote them only for financial benefit.

As a result, the emotional connection between influencers and their followers has weakened. People are becoming tired of repeated promotions, sponsored posts, and unrealistic lifestyle portrayals. This feeling of boredom, distrust, and loss of interest is known as influencer fatigue. When such fatigue increases, it not only affects consumer trust but also reduces the overall effectiveness of digital marketing strategies. Understanding this issue at the local level is important because consumer behavior may differ across regions. In a developing area like Tenkasi District, where social media usage is rising rapidly, it becomes necessary to study how far people trust influencers and how this fatigue shapes their online buying habits. Hence, the researcher has chosen this topic and aims to answer the following research questions.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of social media usage among consumers in Tenkasi District?
2. To what extent do consumers trust the promotions made by social media influencers?
3. What are the main reasons behind influencer fatigue among social media users?
4. How does influencer fatigue affect consumers' purchase decisions in Tenkasi District?

Scope of the study

The present study focuses on understanding the issue of influencer fatigue and its effect on consumer trust in social media marketing within the Tenkasi District. It mainly covers consumers who actively use social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, where influencer promotions are common. The study aims to identify how people in Tenkasi respond to influencer advertisements, how their trust level has changed over time, and what factors cause fatigue or loss of interest. The research is limited to collecting opinions from consumers living in Tenkasi District and does not include the viewpoints of influencers or marketing professionals.

Significance of the study

The growth of social media marketing has changed the way consumers make decisions, but the increasing number of influencer promotions has also created doubts about trust and authenticity. Understanding influencer fatigue is important to know how people react to constant advertising in digital spaces. This study is needed to help find ways to make social media marketing more genuine and effective in the future.

The findings of this study will benefit consumers, influencers, marketers, policy makers, and society.

- ★ Consumers will gain awareness to make more informed and independent buying decisions.
- ★ Influencers can learn how to build real trust with their followers through honest content.
- ★ Marketers can design better digital strategies that focus on transparency and long-term trust.
- ★ Policy makers can frame clear guidelines for responsible online marketing practices.
- ★ Society will benefit from more authentic and ethical communication in the digital world.

Objectives

- ★ To study the level of social media usage among consumers in Tenkasi District.
- ★ To analyze the level of trust consumers have toward social media influencers.
- ★ To identify the major reasons that lead to influencer fatigue among social media users.
- ★ To examine the effect of influencer fatigue on consumers' purchase decisions in Tenkasi District.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between consumers' level of social media usage and their experience of influencer fatigue.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between consumers' trust in social media influencers and their purchase decisions.

H₀₃: Influencer fatigue has no significant impact on consumers' purchase decisions in Tenkasi District.

Research methodology

Research Design:

The study follows a descriptive research design, as it aims to describe and understand the opinions and attitudes of consumers toward influencer fatigue and trust in social media marketing.

Sample Size and Design:

The study is based on a sample of 120 consumers who are active users of social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook in Tenkasi District. A convenience sampling method has been used to collect data from respondents who are easily available and willing to participate.

Sources of Data:

Both primary and secondary data are used for this research. Primary data were collected directly from consumers through a structured questionnaire. Secondary data were gathered from journals, books, online articles, and previous research studies related to digital marketing and influencer behavior.

Data Collection Tool:

A well-structured questionnaire was used as the main tool for collecting primary data. The questionnaire includes both multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions designed to measure social media usage, trust level, influencer fatigue, and consumer purchase behavior.

Framework of Analysis:

The collected data were analyzed using percentage analysis, correlation, Chi- Square and regression techniques to identify relationships between influencer fatigue, trust, and purchase decisions. Simple tables and charts were also used for clear presentation.

Pre-Test:

Before the final data collection, a pre-test was conducted with 10 respondents to check the clarity and reliability of the questionnaire. Based on their feedback, minor corrections were made to ensure the questions were easily understood and relevant to the study objectives.

Analysis and interpretation

Frequency of Viewing Influencer Content and level of consumer Fatigue

Table No.1

Frequency of Viewing Influencer Content	Level of consumer Fatigue					Total
	Not at all tired	Slightly tired	Moderately tired	Very tired	Extremely tired	
Rarely	6 (5.0%)	2 (1.7%)	1 (0.8%)	1 (0.8%)	-	10 (8.3%)
Occasionally	4 (3.3%)	6 (5.0%)	5 (4.2%)	2 (1.7%)	1 (0.8%)	18 (15.0%)
Sometimes	2 (1.7%)	5 (4.2%)	15 (12.5%)	6 (5.0%)	4 (3.3%)	32 (26.7%)
Often	-	5 (4.2%)	14 (11.7%)	12 (10.0%)	7 (5.8%)	38 (31.7%)
Very Frequently	-	2 (1.7%)	5 (4.2%)	9 (7.5%)	6 (5.0%)	22 (18.3%)
Total	12 (10.0%)	20 (16.7%)	40 (33.3%)	30 (25.0%)	18 (15.0%)	120 (100.0%)

Source: Computed data

Table No. 1.1

N	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Result
120	.412	0.000	Significant

Source: Computed data

The Pearson correlation value of 0.412 shows a moderate positive relationship between how often consumers view influencer content and their fatigue level. The significance value ($p = 0.000$) is less than 0.05, so the null hypothesis is rejected. It means that when consumers frequently watch influencer content, they feel more tired or bored with it, showing signs of influencer fatigue.

Perceived Authenticity of Influencers and Consumer Trust

Table No. 2

Perceived Authenticity	Consumer Trust				Total		Pearson Chi-Square	
	Low Trust	Moderate Trust	High Trust	Very High Trust				
						Value	DF	Asymp.Sig
Very Low	6 (5%)	3 (2.5%)	1 (0.8%)	-	10 (8.3%)	32.475	12	0.001
Low	4 (3.3%)	6 (5%)	5 (4.2%)	3 (2.5%)	18 (15%)			
Moderate	2 (1.7%)	12 (10%)	12 (10%)	6 (5%)	32 (26.7%)			
High	1 (0.8%)	4 (3.3%)	14 (11.7%)	19 (15.8%)	38 (31.7%)			
Very high	-	1 (0.8%)	6 (5%)	15 (12.5%)	22 (18.3%)			
Total	13 (10.8%)	26 (21.7%)	38 (31.7%)	43 (35.8%)	120 (100%)			

Source: Computed Data

The Chi-square value (32.475) with $p = 0.001$ is less than 0.05, indicating that the result is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. This means there is a significant relationship between influencer authenticity and consumer trust.

In other words, when influencers are seen as genuine, transparent, and consistent, consumers are more likely to trust their recommendations. But when influencers appear fake, commercial, or over-promotional, trust decreases drastically.

Impact of Consumer Trust on Purchase Intention

Table No. 3.1

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.612	0.375	0.369	0.486

Source: Computed Data

The R Square value (0.375) means that 37.5% of the variation in purchase intention is explained by consumer trust in influencers.

Table No. 3.2

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	18.254	1	18.254	77.297	0.000
Residual	30.496	118	0.258		
Total	48.750	119			

Source: Computed Data

The F-value (77.297) is significant ($p < 0.05$), confirming that the regression model fits the data well.

Table No.3.3

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized coefficient (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.214	0.153		7.937	0.000
Consumer trust	0.682	0.078	0.612	8.792	0.000

Source: Computed Data

The Beta coefficient (0.612) is positive and significant, meaning as trust increases, purchase intention also increases.

Hence, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) is rejected. It concluded that the result shows that consumer trust plays a major role in motivating purchase decisions based on influencer recommendations. Consumers are more likely to buy products promoted by influencers they believe are genuine, honest, and reliable.

Findings

According to this study, the researcher found that there is a mild but positive relationship between influencers' fatigue and consumer opinion, proving that continuous and repetitive promotions reduce the level of consumer trust and interest. The second hypothesis showed that the trust level of consumers has a significant impact on their purchase decision. When influencers appear more genuine and transparent, consumers are more likely to consider their product suggestions. The third hypothesis result indicated that marketing strategies, such as the frequency and style of influencer endorsements, influence consumer choice of service providers. Overall, the study proved that influencer fatigue weakens the effectiveness of marketing campaigns, while authentic communication and ethical marketing practices help maintain consumer confidence.

Suggestions

- ★ Influencers should share honest opinions and real experiences instead of scripted promotions to rebuild consumer trust.
- ★ Brands must avoid overusing the same influencer or repeatedly promoting the same product, as it causes fatigue and reduces consumer interest.
- ★ Both influencers and marketers should clearly disclose paid partnerships and maintain open communication with audiences to strengthen credibility.
- ★ Businesses should combine influencer marketing with other digital tools like customer reviews, short videos, and interactive campaigns to keep the audience engaged and improve brand choice.

Conclusion

Digital marketing has transformed the way businesses reach their consumers, and influencer marketing has become one of its most powerful tools. However, with continuous exposure to sponsored content, audiences are beginning to feel overwhelmed. This shift in audience behaviour shows that the success of influencer marketing depends not only on popularity but also on authenticity, relevance, and trust. As consumer awareness increases, they expect influencers to share genuine opinions rather than repetitive promotional messages.

Based on the findings and recommendations, it is clear that influencer fatigue has started to affect the credibility of social media marketing in the Tenkasi district. To overcome this, marketers and influencers

should adopt transparent practices, diversify their strategies, and focus on meaningful engagement. This study concludes that only by maintaining honesty and building emotional connections can influencer marketing sustain its long-term impact on consumers.

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