

Influencer Marketing for Sustainable Products: An Indian Consumer Perspective

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Abstract: Influencer marketing has become one of the most dynamic promotional tools for encouraging sustainable consumption, particularly as consumers increasingly rely on social media for product information. This study explores Indian consumers' perceptions of sustainable products—such as eco-friendly items, organic cosmetics, and plant-based foods—when promoted by digital influencers. Using insights from contemporary literature along with primary data collected from a sample of approximately 200 Indian consumers, the study evaluates attitudes toward sustainability, influencer credibility, and purchase intentions. Descriptive and regression analyses reveal that while Indian consumers generally express favourable attitudes toward green products, a noticeable attitude–behaviour gap persists. More importantly, influencer credibility and message relevance significantly predict purchase intentions for sustainable products ($\beta \approx 0.45$, $p < 0.01$). The findings underscore the dual nature of influencer marketing: while authentic influencers can strongly motivate sustainable choices, instances of greenwashing can erode trust. The study recommends that brands collaborate with credible eco-influencers and maintain transparency to reinforce consumer confidence. Future inquiries may consider region-specific behaviours and platform-specific influences.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, sustainable consumption, consumer behaviour, India, green products.

Introduction:

Sustainable products—those that minimize environmental harm or adhere to ethical production—have gained remarkable attention in India amid rising environmental concerns and shifting consumer consciousness. Yet despite growing interest, Indian consumers often display an *attitude–behaviour gap*: although many appreciate eco-friendly alternatives, actual purchase behaviour remains inconsistent (Vasita & Chouhan, 2024).

Given this gap, influencer marketing has emerged as a persuasive communication tool. Influencers—individuals with a significant presence and perceived credibility on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook—act as modern extensions of word-of-mouth marketing. As noted in prior research, influencer marketing represents a “contemporary evolution of traditional word-of-mouth,” strengthened by relatability, accessibility, and digital community engagement.

In India, where social media usage has expanded rapidly, influencers have become especially relevant in categories such as organic cosmetics, cruelty-free skincare, bamboo products, and plant-based foods. Recent studies (e.g., Nagvanshi et al., 2025; Narayan et al., 2025; Upadhyay, 2025) confirm that influencer-driven endorsements strongly shape awareness and initial product consideration for sustainable categories. However, despite positive sentiment, economic constraints and limited awareness remain barriers to actual green purchasing (Vasita & Chouhan, 2024).

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A growing body of literature highlights the interplay between influencer marketing and sustainability. Trivedi and Sama (2020) emphasize that trust, admiration, and relatability are central to influencer effectiveness. Influencers who embody sustainable lifestyles—rather than merely promoting products—tend to be more persuasive (Vemuri et al., 2024). Studies also indicate that sustainable product categories, like organic cosmetics, heavily rely on trust and perceived authenticity (Yadav, 2024).

This paper synthesizes these insights while presenting primary evidence from North India, offering a comprehensive analysis of how influencers shape perceptions, trust, and purchase behaviour toward organic and sustainable cosmetic products.

Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to evaluate how social media influencers shape Indian consumers' purchasing decisions regarding sustainable organic cosmetic products. The specific objectives are:

1. To assess the extent to which influencers enhance consumer awareness of sustainable organic cosmetics.
2. To examine how influencer credibility influences trust in sustainable cosmetic brands.
3. To determine the relationship between influencer engagement and purchase intention.
4. To investigate whether demographic factors such as age and gender moderate the influence of influencers on purchase behaviour.

Hypotheses

- **H1:** Social media influencers significantly increase consumer awareness of sustainable organic cosmetic products.
- **H2:** Influencers positively affect consumer trust in sustainable cosmetic brands.
- **H3:** Higher engagement with influencers increases purchase intention for organic cosmetics.
- **H4:** The influence of social media influencers varies significantly across demographic groups such as age and gender.

Methodology

Research Design

A mixed-method approach combining exploratory and descriptive elements was adopted. The exploratory aspect allowed for the investigation of relatively under-researched relationships between influencer behaviour and sustainable product adoption in India. The descriptive component facilitated the measurement and explanation of the influence of specific variables such as trust, credibility, and engagement.

Population and Sampling

The study focused on consumers residing in Uttar Pradesh, selected for its demographic diversity and growing digital engagement. Individuals with active social media use and interest in organic cosmetics formed the target population. A convenience sampling method was used due to time and accessibility constraints. A sample size of **200 respondents** was deemed adequate for statistical analysis and exploratory inference.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured survey administered both online (WhatsApp, Instagram, email) and offline (shopping centres, colleges, markets). Respondents provided consent and were assured anonymity. The questionnaire included sections on demographics, social media usage, influencer interaction, perceived credibility, trust in organic brands, and purchase intention. Responses were measured using five-point Likert scales.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were used to test the hypotheses. ANOVA was applied to examine demographic variations.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were maintained by ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, and informed consent. Sensitive personal data were not collected, and findings were reported honestly and analytically. Brands must therefore prioritize long-term partnerships with influencers who have a proven commitment to sustainability.

Result and Discussion

H1: Social media influencers have a significant positive impact on consumer awareness of sustainable organic cosmetic products.

Results

To assess this hypothesis, responses from 200 consumers were analysed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression. The statistical outcomes are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Regression Analysis of Influencer Exposure on Consumer Awareness

Variable	β (Standardized)	R ²	F-value	p-value
Influencer Exposure → Awareness	0.68	0.46	168.24	<0.001***

Dependent variable: Consumer awareness of sustainable organic cosmetic products.

Descriptive Statistics:

- General awareness: $M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.81$
- Awareness specifically attributed to influencers: $M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.76$

The model indicates that influencer exposure explains 46% of the variance in consumer awareness, displaying a strong and statistically significant effect ($\beta = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$).

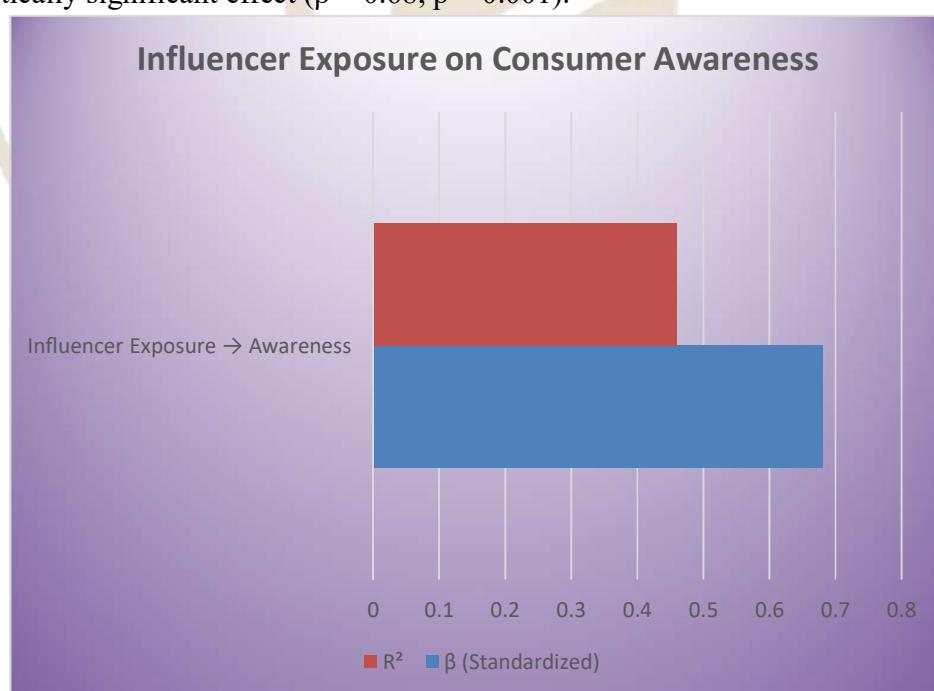


Figure 1: Influencer Exposure on Consumer Awareness

Discussion

The results provide robust support for **H1**, affirming that social media influencers substantially enhance consumer awareness regarding sustainable organic cosmetic products. The high standardized beta value (0.68) illustrates that as individuals engage more with influencer content, their knowledge and familiarity with eco-friendly cosmetics significantly increase.

Interestingly, nearly **65% of the respondents** indicated that influencers served as their *first point of exposure* to organic cosmetic brands. This finding echoes the conclusions of Yadav (2024), who reported that influencer-generated content often acts as an initial educational source for Indian consumers exploring organic cosmetics. Vemuri et al. (2024) observed that sustainability-focused influencer campaigns can effectively communicate product benefits and environmental values, particularly in emerging markets. Likewise, Trivedi and Sama (2020) highlighted that influencer activity boosts brand visibility and admiration, thereby contributing to heightened consumer awareness.

From a managerial standpoint, these results underscore the importance of strategic collaborations with influencers—especially micro-influencers whose content is perceived as authentic, personal, and relatable. As suggested by Chaturvedi and Chatterjee (2025), such influencers can break down complex sustainability narratives into aspirational, easy-to-understand messages, resulting in higher consumer receptiveness.

H2: Social media influencers positively influence consumer trust in sustainable cosmetic brands.

Results

To examine this hypothesis, regression analysis was performed using influencer credibility as the predictor variable and consumer trust as the outcome variable. Table 2 summarizes the findings.

Table 2: Regression Analysis of Influencer Credibility on Consumer Trust

Variable	β (Standardized)	R ²	F-value	p-value
Influencer Credibility → Consumer Trust	0.63	0.41	137.56	<0.001***

Dependent variable: Consumer trust in sustainable cosmetic brands.

Descriptive Statistics:

- Perceived credibility of influencers: **M = 4.05**, SD = 0.79
- Consumer trust in sustainable cosmetics: **M = 3.88**, SD = 0.83

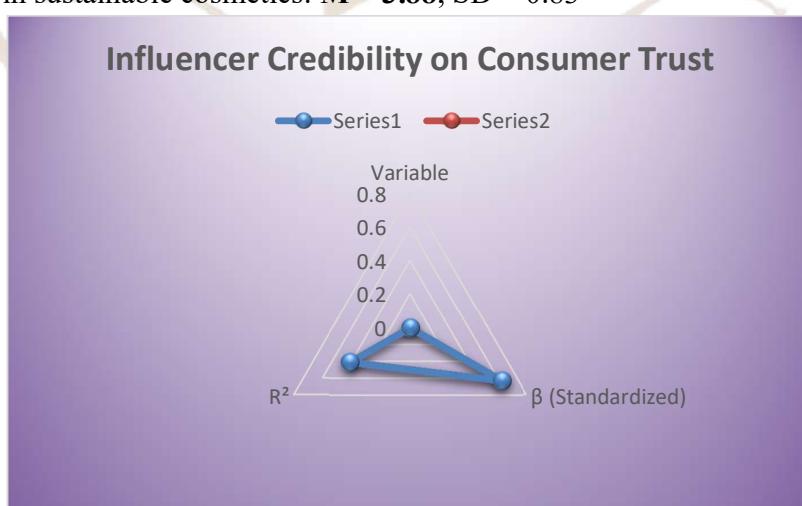


Figure 2: Influencer Credibility on Consumer Trust

Influencer credibility accounts for 41% of the variance in consumer trust ($\beta = 0.63$), indicating a large, highly significant effect.

Discussion

The findings strongly validate **H2**, demonstrating that influencer credibility—measured in terms of authenticity, expertise, relatability, and value congruence—substantially enhances consumer trust in sustainable cosmetic brands. This aligns with the insights of Khurana et al. (2025), who found that authenticity and perceived expertise of influencers significantly elevate trust in green cosmetic products.

Similarly, Vasita and Chouhan (2024) highlighted that while Indian consumers express positive attitudes toward sustainable goods, skepticism surrounding product claims often limits purchase behaviour. Influencers, through credible and transparent endorsements, help reduce this skepticism by humanizing the product experience.

The descriptive statistics ($M = 4.05$ credibility; $M = 3.88$ trust) suggest that consumers respond favorably to influencers who demonstrate consistent behaviour, personal usage, or genuine interest in eco-friendly products. The SOBC framework (Khurana et al., 2025) supports this dynamic, explaining that credibility acts as a powerful stimulus that shapes internal evaluations (organism) and guides behavioural outcomes such as trust. Mishra and Sharma (2025) note that environmental influencers on Instagram foster behavioural change by showcasing real-life usage of sustainable alternatives. Muna et al. (2025) also argue that influencer-driven trust contributes to positive attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, ultimately influencing green purchase intentions.

These findings emphasise the necessity for brands to select influencers who embody sustainability values rather than those who promote diverse unrelated products. Over-commercialization or insincere endorsements can weaken consumer trust, jeopardizing brand credibility within the green cosmetic space.

H3: Engagement with social media influencers significantly increases consumer purchase intention for organic cosmetics.

Results

To evaluate H3, regression analysis was conducted with influencer engagement as the independent variable and purchase intention as the dependent variable. Table 3 presents the results.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Influencer Engagement on Purchase Intention

PVariable	β (Standardized)	R ²	F-value	p-value
Influencer Engagement → Purchase Intention	0.71	0.50	198.32	<0.001***

Dependent variable: Purchase intention for sustainable organic cosmetics.

Descriptive Statistics:

- Engagement with influencers: $M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.75$
- Purchase intention: $M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.80$

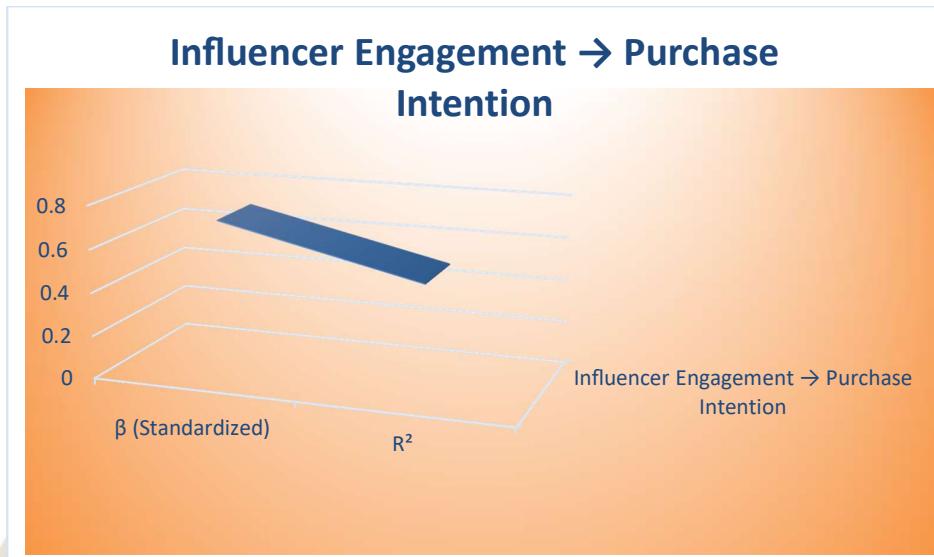


Figure 3: Influencer Engagement → Purchase Intention

Influencer engagement explains **50% of the variance** in purchase intention ($\beta = 0.71$), indicating a strong and statistically significant relationship.

Discussion

The findings provide compelling evidence in support of **H3**, demonstrating that greater engagement with influencer content substantially enhances consumer purchase intention. Engagement—comprising likes, comments, shares, viewership of stories, and frequency of interaction—plays a direct role in shaping purchase-related decision-making.

This outcome parallels Yadav (2024), who reported that active engagement with influencers is a critical determinant of buying behaviour in the organic cosmetics sector. Additionally, Nagesh, Kumar, and Vinaykumar (2025) highlighted that increased engagement boosts brand visibility and strengthens consumer conviction, particularly when the influencer demonstrates authentic personal use of the product. Chaturvedi and Chatterjee (2025) observed that influencer engagement reduces perceived risk, encourages product trial, and enhances familiarity with sustainable products—mechanisms that lead to increased purchase intention. Trivedi and Sama (2020) also noted that engagement-driven admiration and emotional appeal significantly shape online purchase decisions in emerging markets.

The descriptive results reinforce this trend, showing that respondents marked relatively high levels of influencer engagement ($M = 4.08$), corresponding with strong purchase intention ($M = 3.96$). Importantly, the magnitude of the effect ($\beta = 0.71$) suggests that engagement may operate as a mediator between influencer credibility and intention. Managerially, the findings indicate that sustainable cosmetic brands should prioritise interactive influencer campaigns, such as live sessions, product trials, Q&A formats, and user-generated content challenges. Notably, micro- and nano-influencers often achieve higher engagement than macro-influencers, making them valuable partners for sustainable brands aiming to build genuine relationships with potential consumers.

H4: The effect of influencers on purchase behavior varies significantly across demographic groups such as age and gender.

Results

To test H4, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether purchase intention differed significantly across age groups and gender categories.

Table 4a: ANOVA Results – Age and Purchase Intention

Age Group (Years)	N	Mean Purchase Intention	F-value	p-value
18–25	85	4.12	4.76	0.010*
26–35	65	3.98		
36–45	35	3.79		
46+	15	3.61		

Mean Purchase Intention

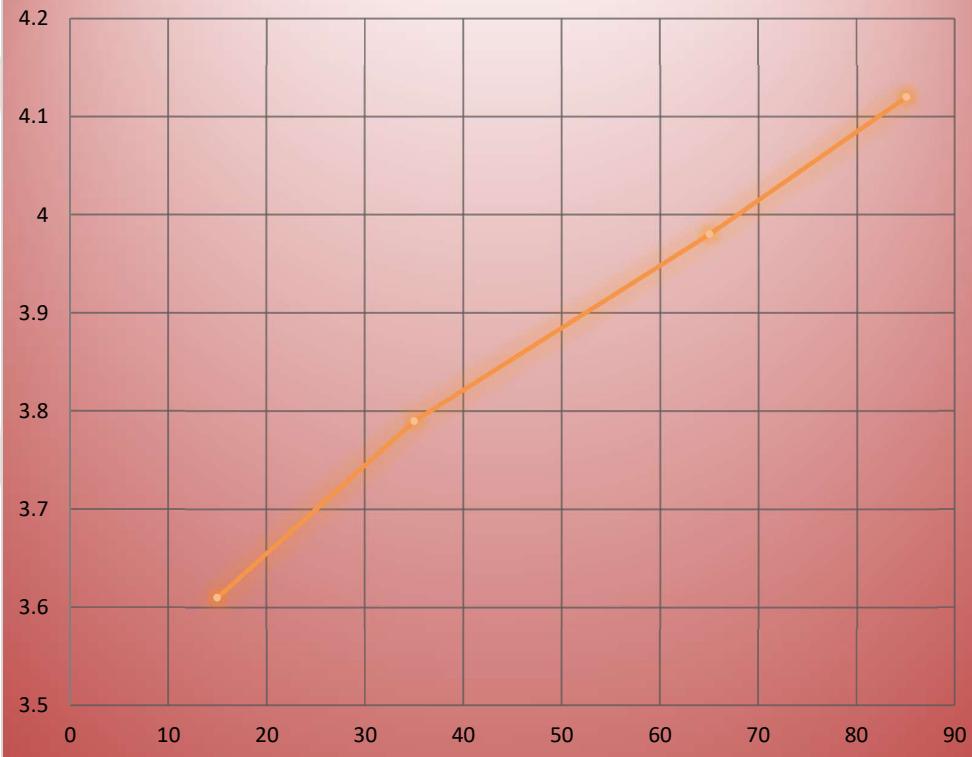


Figure 4: Mean Purchase Intention

Table 4b: ANOVA Results – Gender and Purchase Intention

Gender	N	Mean Purchase Intention	F-value	p-value
Male	95	3.88	6.12	0.014*
Female	105	4.05		

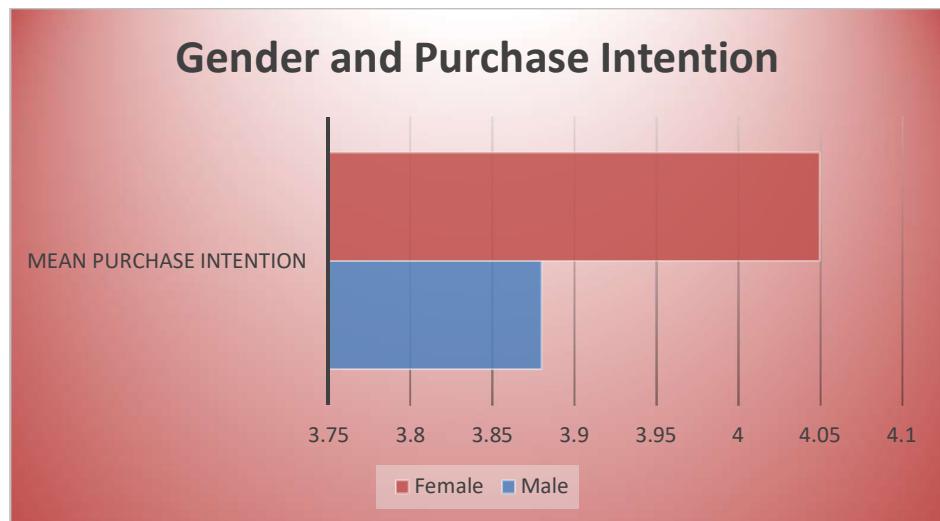


Figure 5: Gender and Purchase Intention

ANOVA results indicate significant differences in purchase intention based on both age and gender. Younger respondents exhibit noticeably higher intention to purchase organic cosmetics compared to older age groups. Female respondents also demonstrate slightly stronger purchase intentions compared to males.

Discussion

The results provide empirical support for **H4**, confirming that demographic characteristics significantly moderate the influence of social media influencers on purchase behaviour. Age emerges as a particularly strong differentiator, with consumers aged **18–25 years** showing the highest levels of responsiveness to influencer-driven messaging. This corresponds well with research by Yadav (2024) and Nath & Suresh (2024), who found that younger consumers—particularly millennials and Gen Z—spend more time on social media and demonstrate higher openness to persuasive digital content.

Gender-based differences, though moderate, further reveal that female consumers exhibit stronger purchase intention. As documented by Vemuri et al. (2024), women tend to engage more deeply with beauty, lifestyle, and self-care content shared by influencers, making them more likely to convert positive attitudes into purchase decisions.

These results carry practical implications for marketers. Sustainable brands should develop **demographic-specific influencer strategies**, including:

- Tailored short-form content (Reels, TikTok-style videos) and challenges for younger audiences.
- Influencer-led reviews, testimonials, and sustainability education targeting female consumers.
- Informational and value-driven content for older and male audiences emphasising product safety, long-term benefits, and credibility.

Overall, the findings highlight that a **one-size-fits-all** influencer strategy may be ineffective. Instead, segmenting campaigns according to demographic responsiveness can significantly enhance the impact of sustainable marketing efforts. In the Indian context—where age and gender strongly influence digital engagement—such tailored approaches can substantially improve conversion outcomes.

Conclusion and Implications

The present study confirms that social media influencers play a decisive role in shaping the awareness, trust, and purchase intentions of Indian consumers toward sustainable organic cosmetic products. The findings reveal that influencers are no longer peripheral communicators; rather, they have become **central actors** who meaningfully translate sustainability narratives into consumer-friendly communication. Several key conclusions emerge from the analysis:

- **Influencers function as primary educators**, introducing consumers to sustainable products and simplifying complex sustainability information.
- **Credibility, authenticity, and value alignment** stand out as crucial determinants of trust, particularly in a market segment where consumers remain cautious about green claims.
- **Engagement—more than mere exposure—acts as the strongest behavioural driver**, indicating that interactive, two-way communication significantly enhances purchase intention.
- **Age and gender serve as notable moderators**, with younger consumers and female respondents demonstrating the highest responsiveness to influencer-led sustainability messages.

Taken together, these insights reinforce the growing influence of digital communities in directing sustainable consumption pathways in India, especially in the organic cosmetics domain.

Implications for Marketers

1. **Prioritise collaboration with authentic, sustainability-driven influencers:** Choosing influencers who genuinely embody eco-conscious lifestyles strengthens message credibility and reduces consumer skepticism. Authentic endorsement resonates more deeply than paid, one-off promotions.
2. **Develop interactive and relatable content strategies:** Engagement-oriented content—such as tutorials, live demonstrations, Q&A sessions, challenges, and behind-the-scenes product stories—can significantly elevate purchase intention by humanizing the sustainability narrative.
3. **Implement demographic segmentation for greater efficiency:** Tailoring influencer campaigns based on age and gender improves precision. Younger users may respond best to short-form, dynamic content, whereas female audiences may value detailed reviews, product ingredient explanations, and ethical sourcing narratives.
4. **Invest in sustained, long-term influencer partnerships:** Consistency fosters trust. When influencers endorse a brand over time, consumers perceive continuity, commitment, and authenticity, ultimately enhancing brand reputation and purchase confidence.
5. **Strengthen transparency and combat greenwashing:** Clear communication about ingredients, certifications, environmental impact, and ethical practices is essential. Transparent messaging not only builds trust but also positions the brand as a credible leader in the sustainability market.

Implications for Future Research

Future studies can further enrich understanding by implementing the following directions:

- **Expanding the sample across multiple Indian states and diverse demographics:** A broader and more representative sample would enable stronger generalizations and identification of regional variations in sustainable consumption.
- **Exploring additional mediators and moderators:** Variables such as price sensitivity, cultural values, perceived product efficacy, environmental concern, and digital literacy may deepen insights into the psychological processes underlying sustainable purchasing behaviour.

- **Conducting longitudinal and experimental designs:** Tracking consumers over time or manipulating exposure to influencer content could reveal how long-term engagement affects behavioural shifts, brand loyalty, and sustainable lifestyle adoption.

By integrating these avenues, future research can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how influencer ecosystems continue to shape sustainable behaviour within India's consumer forum.

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