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Vaibhav Shivnath Devadhe
 MBA Scholar, Department of
 Agribusiness Management, Dr.
 Sharadchandra Pawar College
 of MBA (Agri.), Baramati, Pune,
 Maharashtra, India

Abhishek A Gadhave
 Research Guide and Assistant
 Professor, Department of
 Agribusiness Management, Dr.
 Sharadchandra Pawar College
 of MBA (Agri.), Baramati, Pune,
 Maharashtra, India

MS Pisal
 Assistant Professor, Department
 of Agricultural Economics, Dr.
 Sharadchandra Pawar College
 of MBA (Agri.), Baramati, Pune,
 Maharashtra, India

PS Deokate
 Assistant Professor, Department
 of Agricultural Economics, Dr.
 Sharadchandra Pawar College
 of MBA (Agri.), Baramati, Pune,
 Maharashtra, India

PA Shitole
 Assistant Professor, Department
 of Agricultural Statistics, Dr.
 Sharadchandra Pawar College
 of MBA (Agri.), Baramati, Pune,
 Maharashtra, India

**Corresponding Author:
 Vaibhav Shivnath
 Devadhe**

MBA Scholar, Department
 of Agribusiness
 Management, Dr.
 Sharadchandra Pawar
 College of MBA (Agri.),
 Baramati, Pune,
 Maharashtra, India

The role of influencer marketing in promoting purchases of agricultural products in the direct-to-consumer (D2C) model

Vaibhav Shivnath Devadhe¹, Abhishek A Gadhave², MS Pisal³, PS Deokate⁴, PA Shitole⁵

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ABSTRACT

The Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) model is reshaping agricultural marketing in India by allowing farmers, agri-businesses and Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) to reach consumers directly through digital and social media channels. Within this environment, influencer marketing has emerged as an important promotional tool, but its specific contribution to agricultural D2C outcomes remains under-researched. This study examines the role of influencer marketing in creating awareness of agricultural products, identifies the influencer types and social media platforms preferred by consumers, and evaluates the influence of influencer credibility and content quality on consumer trust and purchase intention. A descriptive and analytical research design was adopted, and primary data were collected through a structured Google Form questionnaire from 120 farmers selected by convenience sampling. Data were analysed using percentage analysis, mean score analysis, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. The results show that influencer posts or videos were the first source of awareness for 50.83 per cent of respondents, and 67.50 per cent agreed that influencer marketing increased their awareness of agricultural D2C brands. Micro-influencers were the most trusted influencer type (50.83%), while agricultural experts/scientists were the most influential category for purchase decisions (35.00%). Regression analysis showed that influencer credibility and content quality jointly explained 83.09 per cent of the variation in consumer trust ($R^2 = 0.8309$, $p < 0.01$), with influencer credibility the stronger predictor.

Influencer marketing also explained 75.39 per cent of the variation in consumer purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.7539$, $p < 0.01$). The study concludes that influencer marketing is a statistically significant driver of awareness, trust and purchase intention in agricultural D2C markets, and recommends that agricultural businesses build long-term partnerships with credible micro-influencers and agricultural experts using informative, authentic content on platforms such as Instagram and YouTube.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Direct-to-Consumer (D2C), Agricultural Products, Consumer Trust, Purchase Intention, Social Media

Introduction

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of the Indian economy, contributing significantly to employment generation, rural livelihoods and national income. The agricultural marketing system has traditionally relied on physical markets and layers of intermediaries, but the growth of digital technologies and social media has created new opportunities for producers and agri-businesses to communicate directly with consumers. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook now enable agricultural stakeholders to demonstrate products, share information and build relationships with consumers beyond geographical boundaries.

The Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) model has strengthened this shift by allowing agricultural and food businesses to sell directly to consumers rather than depending entirely on conventional distribution channels. Within this digital marketing environment, influencer marketing has emerged as an important promotional mechanism. Farmers, agricultural experts, food creators and lifestyle creators can share product information, demonstrations, reviews and recommendations that shape consumer awareness, trust and purchase intention. Because agricultural products often require product-specific and technical knowledge before a purchase decision is made, the credibility of the person delivering that information becomes particularly important. Although social media's role in agricultural information dissemination and general influencer-marketing research on consumer trust and purchase intention have both been studied separately, there remains limited research that connects influencer marketing specifically with agricultural products sold through the D2C model. This creates a research gap at the intersection of agricultural digital marketing and influencer-marketing literature, which the present study seeks to address.

Objectives of the study

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To study the role of influencer marketing in creating awareness of agricultural products in Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) models.
2. To study the different types of influencers and platforms in promoting agricultural products.
3. To examine the impact of influencer credibility and content quality on consumer trust towards agricultural products.
4. To evaluate the effect of influencer marketing on consumer purchase intention in D2C agricultural markets.

Hypotheses

H₀: Influencer credibility and content quality have no significant influence on consumer trust. H₁: Influencer credibility and content quality have a significant influence on consumer trust. H₀: Influencer marketing has no significant effect on consumer purchase intention in D2C agricultural markets.

H₁: Influencer marketing has a significant effect on consumer purchase intention in D2C agricultural markets.

Research methodology

The study adopted a descriptive and analytical research design to understand consumer perceptions of influencer marketing and to examine statistical relationships among the study variables. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered via

Google Forms to 120 farmers, selected using convenience sampling. The questionnaire used categorical, multiple-response and five-point Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to capture respondent demographics, awareness of D2C agricultural brands, influencer and platform preferences, influencer credibility, content quality, consumer trust and purchase intention. Secondary data were drawn from research papers, journals, reports and websites relevant to influencer marketing, social media marketing and agricultural digital marketing.

The collected data were analysed using percentage analysis, mean score analysis, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. Percentage analysis summarised categorical and demographic responses; mean score analysis measured average perception levels on Likert-scale items; correlation analysis examined the direction and strength of association among variables; and multiple regression analysis tested the two hypotheses by evaluating the influence of influencer credibility and content quality on consumer trust, and the effect of influencer marketing on consumer purchase intention.

Results and Discussion

The findings are presented under five sections: respondent profile, the role of influencer marketing in creating awareness, preferred influencer types and platforms, the influence of influencer credibility and content quality on consumer trust, and the effect of influencer marketing on consumer purchase intention.

Respondent profile

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (*n* = 120)

Category	Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	88	73.33
	Female	32	26.67
Age Group	Below 20	14	11.67
	20–30 years	58	48.33
	31–40 years	29	24.17
	41–50 years	14	11.67
	Above 50 years	5	4.17
Education	Primary	18	15.00
	SSC	22	18.33
	HSC	28	23.33
	Graduate	50	41.67
	Other	2	1.67

Age Group

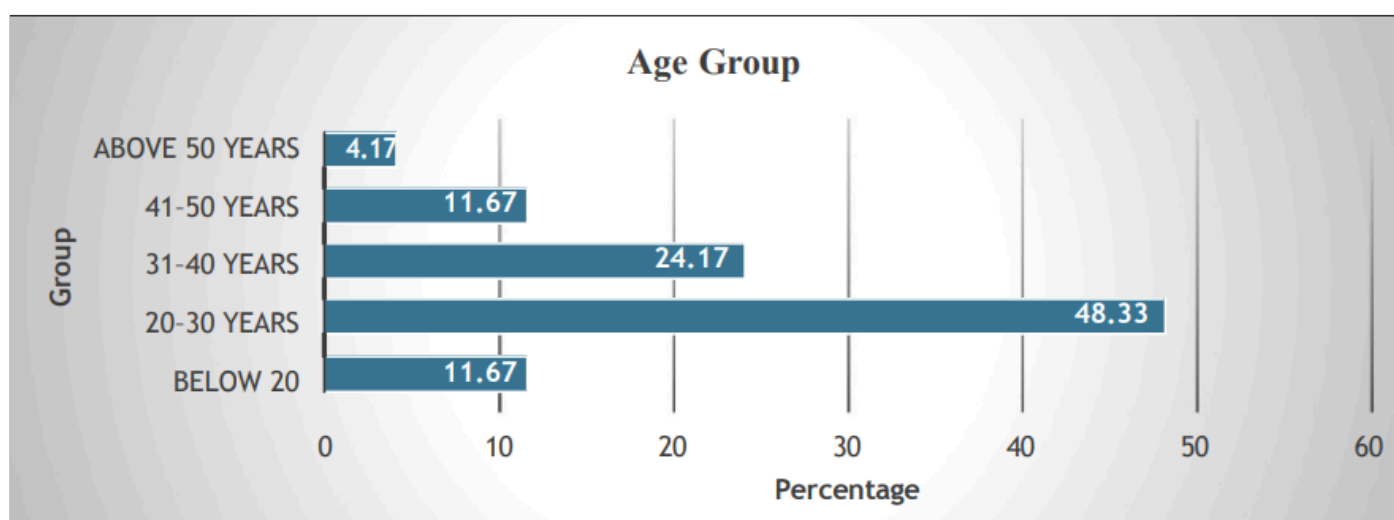


Figure 1. Age group of respondents

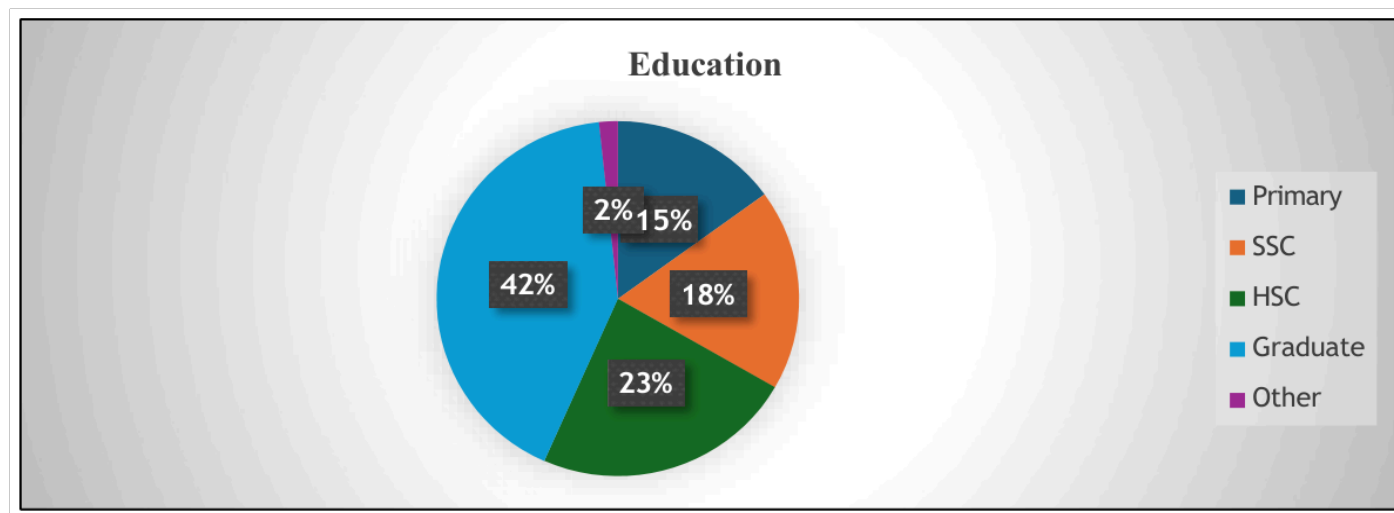


Figure 2. Education of respondents

The sample was predominantly male (73.33%) and young, with 48.33 per cent of respondents aged 20–30 years and a further 24.17 per cent aged 31–40 years. Graduates formed the largest educational group (41.67%). Since influencer marketing is communicated mainly through digital platforms, this relatively young, digitally engaged sample is well suited to the objectives of the study. Regarding platform usage, YouTube was used by 55.83 per cent of respondents for

agricultural or food-related content, followed by Instagram (51.67%), WhatsApp (41.67%) and Facebook (29.17%), confirming the importance of video-based and visually oriented platforms for agricultural product communication.

Role of Influencer Marketing in Creating Awareness Table 2: Awareness-Related Responses

Indicator	Response / Category	Percentage (%)
First source of awareness of D2C brand	Influencer post/video	50.83
	Friends/Family	25.83
	Advertisement	17.50
	Search engine	5.83
Influencer marketing increases awareness	Agree / Strongly Agree	67.50
Most effective content for awareness	Educational posts	34.17
	Testimonials	26.67
	Farm/product videos	22.50
Indicator	Response / Category	Percentage (%)
Recall of a D2C brand promoted by an influencer	Yes	80.00
Influencer content more attention-grabbing than ads	Agree / Strongly Agree	74.17

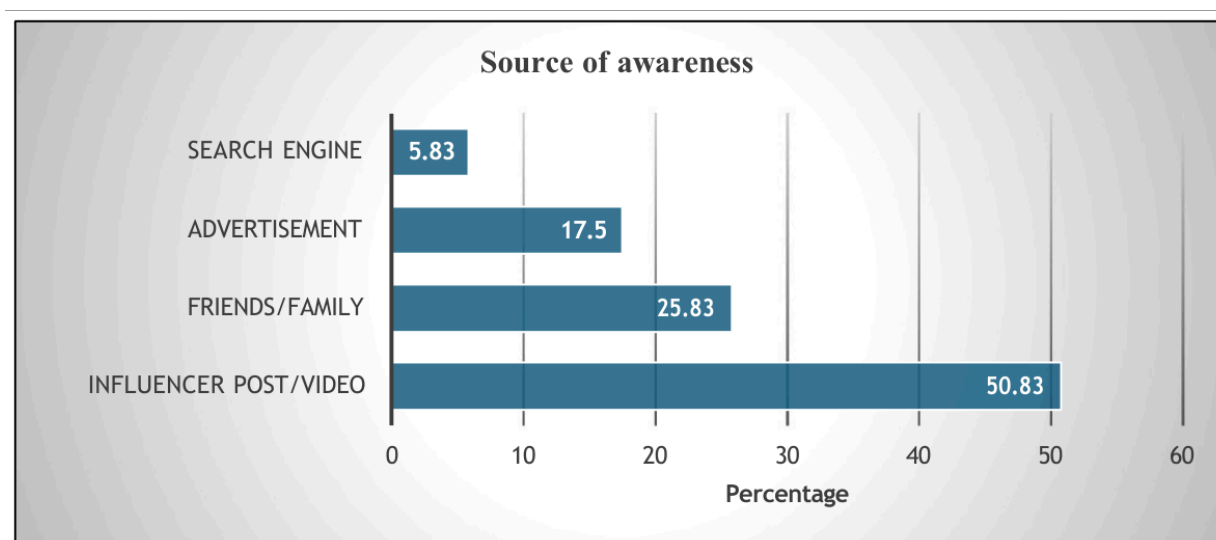


Figure 3. source of awareness of D2C brand

Categories

Influencer posts or videos were the leading first-touch source of awareness (50.83%), ahead of friends/family, advertisements and

search engines. A majority of respondents (67.50%) agreed or strongly agreed that influencer marketing increased their awareness of D2C agricultural brands, and 80.00 per cent could recall at least one

agricultural D2C brand promoted by an influencer. Educational, informative content was rated the most effective format for building awareness (34.17%), ahead of testimonials and farm/product videos, indicating that consumers value knowledge-oriented content over purely promotional messaging for agricultural products. In addition,

74.17 per cent of respondents agreed that influencer-created content was more attention-grabbing than traditional agricultural advertisements.

Types of influencers and platforms

Table 3. Influencer and Platform Preferences

Indicator	Category	Percentage (%)
Most trusted influencer type	Micro-influencer	50.83
	Nano-influencer	23.33
	Macro-influencer	23.33
	Celebrity/Mega	2.50
Most influential category for purchase decisions	Agri-experts/Scientists	35.00
	General content creators	33.33
	Farmer influencers	16.67
	Lifestyle/Food bloggers	15.00
Preference varies by product type	Yes	73.33
Most effective platform for promotion	Instagram	30.00
	YouTube	29.17
	Facebook	24.17
	WhatsApp	16.67

Micro-influencers were the most trusted influencer type (50.83%), ahead of nano- and macro-influencers (23.33% each), while celebrity or mega influencers were the least trusted (2.50%), suggesting that respondents favour relatable, focused audiences over sheer reach. For purchase-related decisions, agricultural experts and scientists were the most influential category (35.00%), closely followed by general content creators (33.33%), reflecting the importance of expertise for products that involve technical or quality-related claims. A large majority (73.33%) indicated that their preferred influencer type varies with the product being promoted, implying that agricultural D2C

brands should match influencer selection to product characteristics rather than applying a single approach. Instagram (30.00%) and YouTube (29.17%) were rated the most effective platforms, reflecting their complementary strengths in short-form visual content and longer educational or demonstration videos respectively.

Influence of influencer credibility and content quality on consumer trust

Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the joint influence of influencer credibility and content quality (independent variables) on consumer trust (dependent variable).

Table 4. Regression Analysis of Consumer Trust

Factor	Coefficient (β)	t-value	P-value	Significance
Constant	-0.7505	-4.564	1.25×10^{-5}	Significant
Influencer Credibility	0.7984***	20.523	1.41×10^{-40}	Significant
Content Quality	0.4699***	12.505	2.66×10^{-23}	Significant

*** Significant at the 1 per cent level ($p < 0.01$). Multiple $R = 0.9116$; $R^2 = 0.8309$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.8280$; $F = 287.51$ (Significance $F = 6.95 \times 10^{-46}$); $n = 120$.

The model explains 83.09 per cent of the variation in consumer trust ($R^2 = 0.8309$), with a very strong multiple correlation ($R = 0.9116$) and only a small drop between R^2 and Adjusted R^2 (0.8280), indicating a robust and well-fitted model. Both influencer credibility ($\beta = 0.7984$) and content quality ($\beta = 0.4699$) are positive and statistically significant at the 1 per cent level. Influencer credibility is the stronger predictor, suggesting that consumers place particular weight on an influencer's perceived expertise, honesty, authenticity and transparency when deciding how much to trust information about an agri-

cultural product. Since the significance level for both variables is below 0.01, the null hypothesis (H_0) that influencer credibility and content quality have no significant influence on consumer trust is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted.

Effect of influencer marketing on consumer purchase intention

A second regression model examined the effect of influencer marketing (independent variable) on consumer purchase intention (dependent variable).

Table 5. Regression Analysis of Consumer Purchase Intention

Factor	Coefficient (β)	t-value	P-value	Significance
Constant	0.3341	0.839	0.403	Not significant
Influencer Marketing	0.3135***	19.015	9.91×10^{-38}	Significant

*** Significant at the 1 per cent level ($p < 0.01$). Multiple $R = 0.8683$; $R^2 = 0.7539$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.7519$; $F = 361.57$ (Significance $F = 9.91 \times 10^{-38}$); $n = 120$.

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Influencer marketing shows a strong, positive and statistically significant relationship with consumer purchase intention ($\beta = 0.3135$, $p < 0.01$), explaining 75.39 per cent of the variation in purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.7539$). The intercept is not statistically significant ($p = 0.403$), so the coefficient of influencer marketing is the substantive result of interest. Because the significance level is below 0.01, the null hypothesis (H_0) that influencer marketing has no significant effect on consumer purchase intention is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted. This confirms that influencer-based communication contributes not only to awareness but also translates into consumers' willingness to purchase agricultural products through D2C channels.

Findings

Influencer posts/videos were the leading first source of awareness of D2C agricultural brands (50.83%), and 67.50 per cent of respondents agreed that influencer marketing increased their awareness; 80.00 per cent could recall a brand promoted by an influencer. Educational content was the most effective format for building awareness (34.17%), and 74.17 per cent found influencer content more attention-grabbing than traditional advertisements. Micro-influencers were the most trusted influencer type (50.83%), while agricultural experts/scientists were the most influential category for purchase decisions (35.00%); 73.33 per cent of respondents said their influencer preference varies by product. Instagram (30.00%) and YouTube (29.17%) were the most effective platforms for agricultural influencer promotion. Regression analysis confirmed that influencer credibility and content quality jointly and significantly explain 83.09 per cent of the variation in consumer trust, with credibility the stronger predictor, and that influencer marketing significantly explains 75.39 per cent of the variation in consumer purchase intention. Both hypotheses tested in the study were supported at the 1 per cent level of significance.

Conclusion

The study concludes that influencer marketing plays a statistically significant and practically important role in agricultural D2C marketing. It builds awareness by serving as consumers' primary point of discovery for D2C agricultural brands, and it generates strong brand recall. There is no single "best" influencer type or platform: micro-influencers are the most trusted for relatability and authenticity, while agricultural experts and scientists carry the greatest weight in purchase-related decisions, and influencer suitability varies with the product being promoted. Influencer credibility and content quality are strong, significant drivers of consumer trust, with credibility the more influential of the two, while influencer marketing as a whole is a strong, significant driver of purchase intention. Taken together, these results

indicate that influencer marketing in the agricultural D2C context works through a chain of awareness, credibility-driven trust and purchase intention rather than through visibility alone. D2C agricultural businesses, farmers and Farmer Producer Organisations are therefore advised to build long-term partnerships with credible micro-influencers and agricultural experts, prioritise informative and authentic content — including educational posts, testimonials and genuine product demonstrations — over purely promotional messaging, maintain transparency in paid partnerships, and concentrate promotional efforts on Instagram and YouTube while linking influencer campaigns to simple, convenient D2C purchasing options to convert awareness and trust into actual sales.

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