

# Influencer Marketing and Electronic Word-of-Mouth: Assessing Their Combined Influence on Smartwatch Purchase Intention Among Youth Consumers in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar

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**Abstract** - The Indian wearable technology market, led by smartwatches, has expanded rapidly among young consumers, whose purchase decisions are increasingly shaped by digital platforms rather than traditional advertising. Social media influencers and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) have emerged as two of the most influential digital forces guiding how youth evaluate and select technology products. This conceptual paper examines the combined role of influencer marketing and eWOM in shaping the purchase intention of smartwatches among youth consumers, with specific reference to Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, India. Drawing on existing literature on source credibility, eWOM adoption, and digital consumer behaviour, the paper proposes a conceptual framework linking influencer credibility and eWOM valence to perceived brand trust and, in turn, purchase intention. The paper also outlines a proposed research methodology for empirically validating the framework in a future primary study. The discussion offers implications for smartwatch brands and digital marketers seeking to design more effective influencer and eWOM-based campaigns for regional Indian youth markets, and identifies directions for further empirical research.

**Keywords**—Influencer Marketing; Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM); Purchase Intention; Smartwatches; Youth Consumers; Digital Marketing; Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar

## I. INTRODUCTION

India's smartwatch market has grown into one of the largest in the world, driven overwhelmingly by younger buyers who treat the device as both a technology purchase and a lifestyle statement. Unlike earlier generations of consumer electronics buyers, today's youth consumers form purchase intentions largely through digital touchpoints – Instagram reels, YouTube unboxing videos, influencer reviews, and peer discussions on social platforms – rather than through television or print advertising.

Two digital forces stand out in this shift: influencer marketing, where individuals with perceived expertise or reliability endorse a brand to their followers, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), the informal, consumer-generated commentary shared through reviews, ratings, and social posts. Both operate on trust and social proof, and both are particularly powerful among youth audiences who are heavy consumers of social media content.

While national-level studies on digital influence and smartwatch adoption exist, region-specific evidence from Tier-2 Indian cities such as Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar remains limited. This paper addresses that gap conceptually, proposing a framework for how influencer marketing and eWOM jointly shape smartwatch purchase intention among youth in this region, and outlining a methodology for its future empirical validation as part of an ongoing doctoral study.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. INFLUENCER MARKETING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Influencer marketing rests on classical source-credibility theory, which holds that a message is more persuasive when its source is seen as trustworthy, attractive, or expert (Erdogan, 1999). Social media influencers extend this idea into digital spaces, functioning as opinion leaders whose recommendations can shift follower attitudes and purchase intentions, particularly for visible, identity-linked products such as smartwatches.

### B. ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH AND PURCHASE DECISIONS

eWOM has been shown to influence consumer decisions through both the volume and valence of online opinions (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) identify motivations such as social benefits and concern for other consumers as drivers of eWOM engagement, while later studies link eWOM directly to perceived product trust and reduced purchase risk – both relevant to technology purchases where buyers cannot physically evaluate the product beforehand.

### C. DIGITAL INFLUENCE ON YOUTH PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR FOR WEARABLE TECHNOLOGY

Youth consumers, as digital natives, rely heavily on social media for pre-purchase research (Solomon, 2020; Kotler & Keller, 2016). For wearable technology such as smartwatches, this research typically combines influencer content for aspirational appeal with peer and stranger eWOM for functional reassurance, suggesting the two mechanisms work in tandem rather than independently.

### III. RESEARCH GAP AND OBJECTIVES

Existing literature tends to examine influencer marketing and eWOM separately, and largely in metro-city or national contexts. Their combined, region-specific effect on smartwatch purchase intention among youth in Tier-2 cities such as Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar has not been adequately explored. This paper sets out the following objectives:

- To review the theoretical linkages between influencer marketing, eWOM, and purchase intention.
- To propose a conceptual framework linking influencer credibility and eWOM to brand trust and smartwatch purchase intention among youth.
- To outline a research methodology for empirically testing the proposed framework among youth consumers in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar.

### IV. PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the literature reviewed, this paper proposes that influencer credibility and eWOM valence act as independent digital-influence variables that jointly shape perceived brand trust, which in turn mediates their effect on purchase intention. Formally, the paper proposes the following relationships for empirical testing:

- H1: Influencer credibility positively influences perceived brand trust in smartwatch brands among youth consumers.
- H2: eWOM valence positively influences perceived brand trust in smartwatch brands among youth consumers.
- H3: Perceived brand trust positively influences purchase intention for smartwatches among youth consumers.
- H4: Perceived brand trust mediates the relationship between digital influence (influencer marketing and eWOM) and purchase intention.

### V. PROPOSED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To empirically validate the framework above, a descriptive, quantitative research design is proposed. The target population comprises youth consumers aged 18–30 years residing in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar who own or intend to purchase a smartwatch. A purposive sampling method is proposed, with a target sample size of approximately 200 respondents, considered adequate for structural relationship testing at this exploratory stage.

Data would be collected through a structured questionnaire using validated five-point Likert-scale items adapted from prior influencer-credibility and eWOM studies. Proposed statistical tools include reliability testing (Cronbach's alpha), correlation analysis, and multiple regression or PLS-SEM to test the hypothesised relationships and the mediating role of brand trust.

### VI. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

If empirically supported, the proposed framework would suggest that smartwatch brands and digital marketers should treat influencer marketing and eWOM as complementary rather than substitute strategies – using influencers to build initial aspirational appeal and actively encouraging authentic eWOM to reinforce trust at the decision stage. For regional markets such as Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, this may mean prioritising micro-influencers with strong local credibility alongside visible review and rating mechanisms.

### VII. CONCLUSION

This paper has proposed a conceptual framework linking influencer marketing and eWOM, through perceived brand trust, to smartwatch purchase intention among youth consumers in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, along with a methodology for its empirical testing. As a conceptual paper, its primary limitation is the absence of primary data; the proposed hypotheses require empirical validation, which forms the next phase of this research. Future work should also explore moderating variables such as income level and prior brand experience.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors thank Alard University, Pune, for institutional support extended during this research.

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