

Impact of Influencer Marketing on Customer Engagement in the Organic Food Sector: An Empirical Investigation

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This study examines the influence of influencer marketing on customer engagement in the organic food industry among urban consumers. The study aims to determine whether influencer marketing significantly influences customer engagement in the context of organic food and beverages. A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was adopted, and data were collected from 324 valid respondents using a structured questionnaire and a non-probability sampling approach. The study proposed one hypothesis stating that influencer marketing has a significant positive influence on customer engagement. Influencer marketing was assessed through credibility, attractiveness, content quality, homophily, and parasocial interaction, while customer engagement was measured through cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions. Structural equation modelling was used to test the proposed relationship. The results revealed a strong positive and statistically significant influence of influencer marketing on customer engagement ($\beta = 0.757, p < .001$), with influencer marketing explaining 61.2% of the variance in customer engagement. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis was supported. The findings indicate that favourable perceptions of influencer marketing are associated with stronger customer engagement with organic food-related content. The study provides useful implications for understanding influencer marketing effectiveness and for organic food marketers seeking to strengthen consumer engagement through influencer-based communication.

Keywords Influencer marketing, Customer engagement, Organic food industry, Source credibility, Stimulus-organism-response theory

1. Introduction

The rapid growth of social media has transformed the way consumers obtain product information, interact with brands, and respond to marketing communication. In this digital environment, influencer marketing has emerged as an important form of marketing communication in which individuals with established online audiences share product-

and brand-related information with their followers. Its effectiveness depends not only on the reach of influencers but also on characteristics such as credibility, attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, homophily, entertainment, and informative value. Previous research has established that these influencer-related and content-related characteristics can influence consumer engagement and purchase-related responses (Ao et al., 2023; Pan et al., 2025).

Beyond transactional outcomes such as purchase intention, increasing attention has been given to customer engagement as an important outcome of influencer marketing. Customer engagement represents consumers' cognitive, affective, and behavioural involvement with marketing content and brands. Gu and Duan (2024) found that influencer-related, content-related, and social factors can significantly shape consumer engagement in social media influencer marketing. Similarly, Aldlimi et al. (2025), through a systematic review of 43 studies, identified source-, content-, and audience-related factors as important antecedents of engagement and highlighted its cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions. These findings indicate that influencer marketing can generate consumer responses that extend beyond immediate purchasing behaviour.

Recent empirical evidence further supports the relationship between influencer marketing and customer engagement. Kumar et al. (2025) found that influencer-directed social media marketing can positively influence customer engagement and purchase behaviour, while Pan et al. (2025) demonstrated through meta-analytic evidence that influencer marketing affects both

transactional and non-transactional consumer outcomes. However, much of the existing research has examined general social media contexts, purchase intention, or individual influencer characteristics. Comparatively limited attention has been given to customer engagement within the specific context of organic food and beverages.

The organic food industry provides a relevant context for examining this relationship because consumers increasingly encounter information about organic products through social media and influencer-generated content. Influencers can communicate product information, personal experiences, recommendations, and lifestyle-related content that may encourage consumers to interact with organic food-related content and brands. Therefore, the present study focuses on Influencer Marketing (IM) as the independent variable and Customer Engagement (CE) as the dependent variable, examining whether influencer marketing significantly influences customer engagement among urban adult consumers in the organic food industry.

The study is based on 324 valid responses collected through a structured questionnaire. Influencer Marketing is measured through five dimensions—credibility, attractiveness, content quality, homophily, and parasocial interaction—while Customer Engagement is measured through cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions. The study therefore seeks to provide empirical evidence on whether a favourable perception of influencer marketing is associated with stronger customer engagement in the organic food context.

Accordingly, the present study aims to examine the influence of Influencer Marketing on Customer Engagement among urban adult consumers in the organic food and beverage industry in Bangalore Urban. By focusing on this specific relationship and industry context, the study

contributes to the growing literature on influencer marketing by examining customer engagement as an important non-transactional consumer outcome.

2. Theoretical Background

Source Credibility Theory and the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework provide the theoretical foundation for examining the relationship between Influencer Marketing and Customer Engagement. Source Credibility Theory explains that the effectiveness of persuasive communication depends on how consumers perceive the source, particularly in terms of credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and relatability. These characteristics are particularly relevant to influencer marketing and have been identified as important determinants of consumer responses (Han & Balabanis, 2024). Complementing this perspective, the S-O-R framework proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) explains how external marketing stimuli can influence consumers' internal cognitive and affective states and subsequently generate behavioural responses. In the present study, Influencer Marketing represents the stimulus (S), while Customer Engagement represents the response (R), with consumers' cognitive and affective processing providing the intervening organism (O). Recent evidence also confirms the relevance of influencer-, content-, and social-related factors in shaping consumer engagement (Gu & Duan, 2024).

Together, these theories provide a complementary explanation for the proposed relationship. Source Credibility Theory explains why consumers may respond favourably to influencer-generated communication, whereas S-O-R explains how such marketing stimuli can lead to consumer engagement through internal processing. Based on this integrated perspective, favourable perceptions of influencer marketing—including credibility, attractiveness, content quality, homophily, and parasocial interaction—are expected to encourage consumers to engage cognitively, affectively, and behaviourally with influencer-generated content. This theoretical reasoning is consistent with recent evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of influencer characteristics and content in generating consumer engagement (Gu & Duan,

2024; Pan et al., 2025). Accordingly, the present study proposes the relationship:

Influencer Marketing → Customer Engagement.

3. Literature Review

Influencer marketing has become an important form of social media marketing, as influencers combine commercial communication with personal experiences, recommendations, and continuous interaction with followers. Previous research indicates that influencer characteristics such as credibility, expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, homophily, entertainment, and informative value can influence consumer responses, including customer engagement and purchase intention (Ao et al., 2023; Pan et al., 2025). Aldlimi et al. (2025) further identify source-, content-, audience-, and relationship-related factors as important antecedents of engagement in influencer marketing. These findings suggest that influencer marketing is a multidimensional form of communication in which both influencer and content characteristics can contribute to consumer engagement.

Customer Engagement has increasingly been examined as an important outcome of influencer marketing, extending beyond purchase behaviour to include cognitive, affective, and behavioural responses. Consumers may express engagement through attention, interest, interaction, liking, commenting, sharing, and participation. Evidence from previous studies supports a positive association between influencer marketing and customer engagement (Ao et al., 2023; Gu & Duan, 2024; Pan et al., 2025). Gu and Duan (2024) demonstrate that influencer-

, content-, and social-related factors can shape consumer engagement, while Kumar et al. (2025) find that influencer-directed social media marketing can influence customer engagement and purchase behaviour. Aldlimi et al. (2025) also highlight the multidimensional nature of engagement and the importance of source, content, audience, and relationship factors.

Collectively, these studies provide a strong basis for examining Influencer Marketing as an antecedent of Customer Engagement.

Although the relationship has received growing attention, the organic food industry remains a comparatively specific context for influencer marketing research. Kim et al. (2025) examined influencer credibility in relation to organic food products, while Wang et al. (2026) found that influencer expertise and attractiveness can contribute to sustainable consumption and organic food purchase intention. Liu et al. (2026) further examined virtual influencers, consumer engagement, and organic food purchase intention and reported the relevance of influencer characteristics to consumer engagement. However, existing research has largely concentrated on purchase intention, individual influencer characteristics, or virtual influencers. Therefore, limited empirical evidence is available on Influencer Marketing as an integrated construct and Customer Engagement as the principal outcome in the organic food context. The present study addresses this gap by empirically examining the relationship between Influencer Marketing and Customer Engagement among consumers of organic food.

4. Research Gap

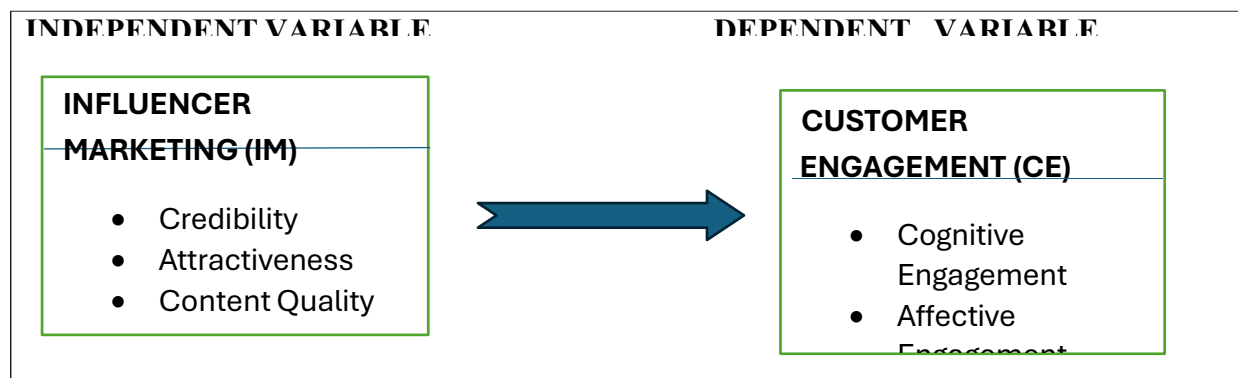
Although previous studies have established the importance of influencer marketing in influencing consumer responses, limited research has examined Influencer Marketing as an integrated construct and Customer Engagement as the main outcome, particularly in the organic food context. Existing studies have largely focused on individual influencer characteristics such as credibility, attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, and homophily, or on outcomes such as purchase intention (Ao et al., 2023; Pan et al., 2025). Although recent research has highlighted the importance of influencer-, content-, and social-related factors in customer engagement (Aldlimi et al., 2025; Gu & Duan, 2024), there remains a need for empirical evidence examining the overall relationship between Influencer Marketing and Customer

Engagement. This gap is particularly evident in the organic food industry, where recent studies have mainly examined influencer credibility, expertise, attractiveness, virtual influencers, and purchase intention (Kim et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2026; Liu et al., 2026). Therefore, the present study addresses this construct and contextual gap by empirically examining the influence of Influencer Marketing, incorporating credibility, attractiveness, content quality, homophily, and parasocial interaction, on Customer Engagement among organic food consumers.

5. Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review and theoretical perspectives, the study proposes that Influencer Marketing positively influences Customer Engagement. Influencer Marketing is conceptualized through credibility, attractiveness, content quality, homophily, and parasocial interaction, while Customer Engagement comprises cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions. The framework provides the basis for testing the proposed hypothesis.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Influencer Marketing and Customer Engagement



Source: Developed by the authors based on the theoretical framework and literature reviewed

6. Objective of the Study

The study aims to examine the influence of Influencer Marketing on Customer Engagement among consumers in the organic food industry.

Specifically, the study examines whether the dimensions of Influencer Marketing—credibility, attractiveness, content quality, homophily, and parasocial interaction—significantly contribute to Customer Engagement, measured through cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions.

7. Hypothesis Development

Previous research provides evidence that influencer marketing characteristics can contribute to consumer engagement. Ao et al. (2023) found that characteristics such as credibility, expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, homophily, entertainment, and informative value are associated with customer engagement. Similarly, Gu and Duan (2024) reported that influencer-related, content-related, and social factors significantly contribute to consumer engagement in social media influencer marketing. Aldlimi et al. (2025) further identified source-, content-, and

audience-related factors as important drivers of engagement and emphasized its cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions.

Evidence from the organic food context also supports this relationship. Liu et al. (2026) found that influencer characteristics such as attractiveness, authenticity, and trustworthiness

positively influence consumer engagement in relation to organic food. However, much of the existing research has examined individual influencer characteristics or considered engagement as a pathway towards purchase intention. Therefore, the present study examines Influencer Marketing as an integrated construct, comprising credibility, attractiveness, content quality, homophily, and parasocial interaction, and Customer Engagement as the principal outcome, comprising cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions. Based on the theoretical and empirical evidence, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Influencer Marketing has a significant positive influence on Customer Engagement among consumers in the organic food industry.

8. Research Methodology

8.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a **quantitative, cross-sectional research design** to examine the influence of Influencer Marketing on Customer Engagement in the organic food industry. A quantitative approach was adopted because the study seeks to measure consumer perceptions using structured questionnaire items and statistically examine the proposed relationship between the study constructs.

The study is based on **primary data** collected through a structured questionnaire from individual consumers exposed to influencer-

generated content related to organic food and beverages. The unit of analysis is the individual

consumer. The final dataset comprised **324 valid responses**.

Table 1. Overview of the Research Design

Component	Description
Research approach	Quantitative
Research design	Cross-sectional
Data source	Primary data
Unit of analysis	Individual consumer
Research context	Organic food industry
Valid responses	324
Measurement scale	Five-point Likert scale

8.2 Sampling Design and Sample Size

The study focused on consumers of organic food and beverages who were exposed to influencer-related content on social media. A **non-probability sampling approach** was adopted because a complete sampling frame of consumers exposed to organic-food influencer content was not available.

Respondents were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives and their exposure to influencer-generated organic food and beverage content. The final sample consisted of **324 valid responses**, which were used for the statistical analysis.

The sample size was considered adequate for examining the proposed relationship between Influencer Marketing and Customer Engagement using structural equation modelling

8.3 Questionnaire and Measurement Instrument

Data were collected using a **structured questionnaire** developed based on the constructs and dimensions identified from the theoretical framework and previous literature. The questionnaire consisted of **35 items**, including 14 items measuring Influencer Marketing, 14 items measuring Customer Engagement, and 7 questions capturing demographic and consumer-profile characteristics.

Influencer Marketing was treated as the **independent variable** and was measured through five dimensions: **credibility, attractiveness, content quality, homophily, and parasocial interaction**. Customer Engagement was treated as the **dependent variable** and was measured through **cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions**.

All construct-related statements were measured using a **five-point Likert scale**, ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*.

Table 2. Measurement Structure of the Study

Construct	Role	Dimensions	Number of Items
Influencer Marketing	Independent variable	Credibility, Attractiveness, Content Quality, Homophily, Parasocial Interaction	14
Customer Engagement	Dependent variable	Cognitive, Affective, Behavioural	14
Total construct items			28

The remaining **7 questions** were used to collect demographic and consumer-profile information and were not included as indicators in the structural model.

8.4 Validity and Reliability Analysis

The validity and reliability of the measurement instrument were assessed before testing the proposed structural relationship. **Cronbach's alpha** was used to examine the internal consistency of the measurement items. The overall 35-item scale demonstrated high internal

consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of **0.936** and a standardized-item alpha of **0.944**.

The adequacy of the data for factor analysis was examined using the **Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure** and **Bartlett's test of sphericity**. The KMO value was **0.911** for **Influencer**

Marketing and **0.917** for **Customer Engagement**, indicating adequate sampling adequacy. Bartlett's tests were statistically significant ($p < .001$), confirming that the correlation matrices were suitable for factor analysis.

For the final measurement model, construct reliability and convergent validity were assessed using **Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**. The results obtained for the two constructs are presented in the Results section.

8.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed in stages. First, **descriptive statistics** were used to summarize the demographic and consumer-profile characteristics of the respondents. Second, reliability and validity analyses were conducted

to assess the measurement properties of the constructs.

The measurement model was subsequently assessed using **factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, AVE, and discriminant validity**. Discriminant validity was examined using the **Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio** and the **Fornell–Larcker criterion**.

Finally, **Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)** was used to examine the proposed relationship between Influencer Marketing and Customer Engagement. The structural model was evaluated using the **path coefficient (β), significance level (p-value), and R^2 value**. These statistics were used to determine whether the proposed hypothesis was supported.

9. Results and Analysis

9.1 Respondent Profile

The study was based on 324 valid responses from consumers of organic food and beverages. The demographic and consumer-profile characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Demographic and Consumer Profile of Respondents (N = 324)

Variable	Category	n	%
Age	25–30 years	82	25.3
	31–35 years	96	29.6
	36–40 years	78	24.1
	41–45 years	68	21.0
Gender	Male	151	46.6
	Female	173	53.4
Education	High school	18	5.6
	Bachelor's degree	126	38.9

	Master's degree	137	42.3
	PhD/Doctorate	43	13.3
Annual Income (₹)	Below 2,00,000	24	7.4
	2,00,000–5,00,000	87	26.9
	5,00,001–10,00,000	112	34.6
	10,00,001–15,00,000	62	19.1
	Above 15,00,000	29	9.0
	Prefer not to say	10	3.1
Following Influencers	Daily	100	30.9
	Weekly	136	42.0
	Monthly	58	17.9
	Rarely	30	9.3
Social Media Platform*	Instagram	250	77.2
	YouTube	198	61.1
	Facebook	116	35.8
	Twitter/X	54	16.7
Organic Food/Beverage Category*	Fruits and vegetables	218	67.3
	Dairy/plant-based alternatives	164	50.6
	Grains and cereals	187	57.7
	Snacks and packaged foods	151	46.6
	Beverages	173	53.4
	Superfoods	142	43.8

Note: Multiple responses were permitted for social media platform and organic food/beverage category; therefore, percentages do not sum to 100%.

The respondent profile indicates representation across all specified age groups, with the largest proportion belonging to the 31–35 years category (29.6%). Female respondents represented 53.4% of the sample, while 46.6% were male. Most respondents possessed a Bachelor's or Master's degree. Regarding influencer-following behaviour, 42.0% followed influencers weekly, while 30.9% did so daily. Instagram was the most frequently reported platform (77.2%), followed by YouTube (61.1%). Among organic food categories, fruits and

vegetables received the highest level of interest (67.3%).

9.2 Measurement Model

The measurement model was evaluated to establish the reliability and validity of the two principal constructs: Influencer Marketing (IM) and Customer Engagement (CE).

The standardized factor loadings for Customer Engagement ranged from 0.602 to 0.802, while those for Influencer Marketing ranged from

0.667 to 0.834. The results indicate that the indicators demonstrated acceptable relationships with their respective constructs. Although some CE indicators recorded loadings slightly below

0.70, they were retained in the final measurement model based on the overall reliability and validity results.

Table 4. Standardized Factor Loadings

Construct	Indicator loading range	Minimum	Maximum
Customer Engagement	CE1–CE14*	0.602	0.802
Influencer Marketing	IM1–IM14	0.667	0.834

CE8 and CE10 were not included in the final factor-loading output provided.

The factor-loading results provide evidence that the indicators contribute to the measurement of their respective constructs and support further assessment of construct reliability and convergent validity.

9.3 Reliability and Convergent Validity

Reliability and convergent validity were assessed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (rho_c), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

Table 5. Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha (Standardized)	Cronbach's Alpha (Unstandardized)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	AVE
Customer Engagement	0.926	0.923	0.923	0.511
Influencer Marketing	0.950	0.950	0.951	0.582

The results demonstrate strong internal consistency for both constructs. Cronbach's alpha values were 0.926 for Customer Engagement and 0.950 for Influencer Marketing. The composite reliability values were also high, at 0.923 and 0.951, respectively.

The AVE values were 0.511 for Customer Engagement and 0.582 for Influencer Marketing, indicating that the constructs achieved adequate convergent validity. Overall, the reliability and convergent validity results support the suitability of the measurement model for testing the proposed structural relationship.

9.4 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the HTMT ratio and Fornell–Larcker criterion.

Table 6. Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio

Construct Relationship	HTMT
IM ↔ CE	0.786

The HTMT value between Influencer Marketing and Customer Engagement was 0.786, indicating adequate discriminant validity between the two constructs.

Table 7. Fornell–Larcker Criterion

Construct	CE	IM
CE	0.715	
IM	0.783	0.763

The Fornell–Larcker results provide additional evidence regarding the distinctiveness of the constructs. Together with the HTMT result, the findings indicate that Influencer Marketing and Customer Engagement can be treated as empirically distinguishable constructs.

9.5 Model Fit Assessment

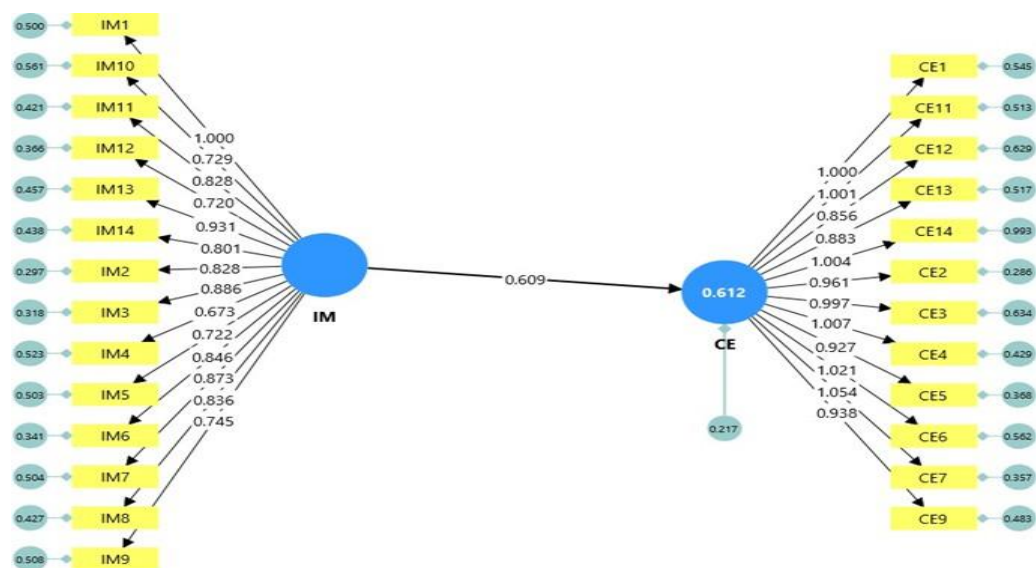


Figure 2 PLS-SEM structural and measurement model

The figure represents the PLS-SEM structural and measurement model for the relationship between Influencer Marketing (IM) and Customer Engagement (CE).

The model contains two main constructs:

- Influencer Marketing (IM) – the independent variable.
- Customer Engagement (CE) – the dependent variable.

Influencer Marketing (IM) is measured by 14 indicators, IM1–IM14. The values shown beside the arrows represent the indicator-level measurement estimates. The indicator values range approximately from 0.673 to 0.931, with IM1 fixed at 1.000 as the reference indicator.

Customer Engagement (CE) is represented by the indicators shown in the figure: CE1, CE2,

CE3, CE4, CE5, CE6, CE7, CE9, CE11, CE12, CE13 and CE14. Thus, the displayed model contains 12 CE indicators. CE8 and CE10 are not present in this final displayed model, which is consistent with your earlier EFA issue concerning those two items.

The structural path from IM to CE has a coefficient of 0.609, indicating a positive relationship between Influencer Marketing and Customer Engagement. In other words, higher perceived Influencer Marketing is associated with higher Customer Engagement.

The value 0.612 displayed inside the CE construct represents R^2 . Therefore, Influencer Marketing explains 61.2% of the variance in Customer Engagement, while the remaining variance is attributable to factors not included in the model.

9.6 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was assessed to determine whether Influencer Marketing significantly influences Customer Engagement. The analysis produced a positive path coefficient of $\beta = 0.757$ for the relationship between Influencer Marketing and Customer Engagement. The

relationship was statistically significant with $p < .001$.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) for Customer Engagement was 0.612, indicating that Influencer Marketing explains 61.2% of the variance in Customer Engagement. The remaining 38.8% may be attributed to other factors not included in the present model.

Table 8. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	R^2 (CE)	p-value	Decision
H1	Influencer Marketing $\rightarrow$ Customer Engagement	0.757	0.612	< .001	Supported

The results provide strong empirical support for the proposed hypothesis. The positive path coefficient indicates that higher perceptions of Influencer Marketing are associated with higher levels of Customer Engagement. Therefore, H1 is supported.

9.7 Overall finding

The measurement-model results establish acceptable reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity for Influencer Marketing and Customer Engagement. The structural model further demonstrates a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between the two constructs ($\beta = 0.757$, $p < .001$), with Influencer Marketing explaining 61.2% of the variance in Customer Engagement. Thus, the findings provide empirical evidence that influencer marketing is an important predictor of customer engagement in the organic food context.

10. Discussion

The findings provide empirical support for the proposed relationship between Influencer Marketing (IM) and Customer Engagement (CE) in the organic food industry. The structural model shows a positive and statistically significant effect of Influencer Marketing on Customer Engagement ($\beta = 0.757$, $p < .001$). Therefore, the proposed hypothesis, H1: Influencer Marketing has a significant positive influence on Customer Engagement, is supported. The result indicates that favourable perceptions of influencer-related characteristics and content are associated with stronger

consumer engagement with organic food-related marketing communication.

This finding is consistent with earlier empirical evidence. Ao et al. (2023) reported that influencer characteristics such as credibility, expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, homophily, entertainment, and informative value are associated with consumer engagement. Similarly, Gu and Duan (2024) found that influencer-related, content-related, and social factors significantly contribute to consumer engagement in social media influencer marketing. The present finding therefore reinforces the view that influencer marketing is not merely a promotional tool but can encourage consumers to become more involved with marketing content. It is also consistent with the systematic review by Aldlimi et al. (2025), which identifies source-, content-, and audience-related factors as important drivers of engagement.

The strength of the relationship is further reflected in the R^2 value of 0.612, indicating that Influencer Marketing explains 61.2% of the variance in Customer Engagement. This represents substantial explanatory power within the present research context and suggests that influencer-related characteristics and communication can play an important role in shaping consumer engagement. The finding is also relevant to the organic food context, where recent studies have demonstrated the importance of influencer characteristics in consumer responses. Kim et al. (2025) examined influencer-endorsed organic food products, while Wang et al. (2026) found that influencer expertise and attractiveness can contribute to organic food-related consumer responses. Further, Liu et al. (2026) reported a positive role of influencer characteristics in generating consumer engagement in the context of organic food.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support the proposed application of Source Credibility Theory and the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework. The positive relationship suggests that consumers' perceptions of influencer-generated marketing stimuli can contribute to stronger engagement. The finding is consistent with the broader evidence

reported by Pan et al. (2025) that influencer effectiveness depends on influencer-, content-, and follower-related characteristics. Overall, the study demonstrates that treating Influencer Marketing as an integrated construct provides meaningful explanatory value for Customer Engagement in the organic food industry.

In summary, the study confirms that Influencer Marketing is a significant positive predictor of Customer Engagement. The findings extend existing influencer-marketing research by examining this relationship specifically within the organic food context and by considering Influencer Marketing as a broader construct rather than focusing only on a single influencer characteristic or purchase intention.

11. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

11.1 Theoretical Implications

The study contributes to influencer marketing literature by empirically establishing a significant positive relationship between Influencer Marketing and Customer Engagement in the organic food industry. The finding ($\beta = 0.757, p < .001$) supports the theoretical proposition that influencer-generated marketing communication can contribute to stronger consumer engagement.

The study also provides support for the application of Source Credibility Theory and the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework in the influencer marketing context. By conceptualizing Influencer Marketing through credibility, attractiveness, content quality, homophily, and parasocial interaction, the study provides an integrated perspective on the factors associated with consumer engagement. The findings further demonstrate the relevance of examining Customer Engagement as an important consumer outcome rather than focusing only on purchase intention.

11.2 Managerial Implications

The findings provide useful implications for marketers and organic food businesses. Since Influencer Marketing has a strong positive relationship with Customer Engagement, organic food marketers can use influencer-based communication to encourage consumers to interact with and respond to organic food-related content.

Managers should give attention to credible, attractive, informative, relatable, and socially engaging influencer content rather than selecting influencers solely on the basis of follower numbers. Influencer campaigns can incorporate product information, demonstrations, personal experiences, and interactive content to encourage consumer involvement.

The findings also suggest that marketers should evaluate influencer campaigns using engagement indicators such as likes, comments, shares, interaction, and consumer involvement, rather

than assessing campaign effectiveness only through immediate purchase outcomes. This can help organic food businesses develop more consumer-oriented and engagement-focused social media strategies.

12. Limitations and Future Research

The study has certain limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the research uses a cross-sectional design, and therefore the findings represent consumer perceptions at a particular point in time. Future studies could adopt longitudinal designs to examine changes in influencer marketing and customer engagement over time.

Second, the study is based on 324 valid responses and focuses on consumers in the organic food context. Therefore, the findings may not necessarily be generalizable to other industries, product categories, or consumer populations. Future research could replicate the study across other sectors and different geographical regions to assess the generalizability of the findings.

Third, the present study examines Influencer Marketing as an integrated construct consisting of credibility, attractiveness, content quality, homophily, and parasocial interaction. Future researchers may examine these dimensions individually to determine which specific characteristics have the strongest influence on Customer Engagement.

Finally, the present study focuses on the direct relationship between Influencer Marketing and Customer Engagement. Future research could extend the framework by examining mediating or moderating variables, such as consumer trust, purchase intention, influencer type, social media platform, or demographic characteristics. Such extensions could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which influencer marketing influences consumer responses.

13. Conclusion

The present study examined the influence of Influencer Marketing on Customer Engagement

in the organic food industry. Based on 324 valid responses, the study found a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between Influencer Marketing and Customer Engagement ($\beta = 0.757, p < .001$). Therefore, H1 was supported.

The structural model produced an R^2 value of 0.612, indicating that Influencer Marketing explains 61.2% of the variance in Customer Engagement. The finding demonstrates the importance of influencer-based communication in encouraging consumers to engage with organic food-related marketing content.

The study contributes to the existing literature by examining Influencer Marketing as an integrated construct comprising credibility, attractiveness, content quality, homophily, and parasocial interaction, while Customer Engagement is considered through cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions. The findings also provide practical guidance for organic food marketers to focus on credible, informative, attractive, relatable, and engaging influencer communication.

Overall, the study concludes that Influencer Marketing is an important predictor of Customer Engagement in the organic food industry. The findings provide both theoretical and managerial insights while offering a basis for future research into influencer marketing and consumer engagement across different contexts.

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