

Role of Social Commerce on Instagram and Youtube in Influencing Consumer Purchase Decisions among Urban Millennials and Gen Z

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Abstract: *This study looks at how social commerce features on Instagram and YouTube shape the buying decisions of urban Millennials and Gen Z consumers in India. Social commerce refers to the practice of discovering and buying products directly inside a social media platform without being sent to another website. Instagram and YouTube have grown beyond entertainment and are now places where millions of young Indians actively shop or get inspired to shop. This study collected fresh data from 128 respondents through a structured 20-question survey distributed via Google Forms over Instagram, WhatsApp, and email.*

The overall mean score for the role of social commerce in purchase decisions came out to 4.33 out of 5, which shows very strong agreement among respondents. Multi-creator product validation recorded the highest mean of 4.31 among all social commerce features, meaning that when several different creators talk positively about the same product, consumers trust it far more. The Pearson correlation between social commerce engagement and actual purchase behavior was 0.83, which is a strong and significant positive relationship. Gen Z was found to be more influenced by Instagram features and urgency-driven content, while Millennials depended more on detailed YouTube reviews before buying. Both alternative hypotheses were accepted. The study concludes that social commerce on Instagram and YouTube is a major force in shaping how young urban Indians buy products, and that brands need different strategies for different generations.

Keywords: Social Commerce, Instagram, YouTube, Purchase Decisions, Millennials, Gen Z

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

India's business world has changed enormously over the past 30 years. Since the economic reforms of 1991, markets opened up, foreign companies arrived, domestic competition grew sharper, and consumers suddenly had far more choices than before. The biggest shift of the last decade, however, has not been about policy or economics. It has been about how people discover, evaluate, and buy products - and that shift has happened on their smartphones, on social media.

Today, millions of young people in Indian cities wake up and immediately open Instagram or YouTube. They scroll through videos, watch reviews, follow creators, and every few minutes they come across a product. Sometimes they tap the product tag immediately and buy it. Sometimes they watch three more review videos on YouTube first and then buy. Sometimes they save it for later. But the buying journey has clearly moved inside these platforms in a way that was unimaginable even five years ago.

This research focuses on that shift. It studies how the specific shopping features built into Instagram and YouTube - product tags, review videos, live shopping, discount codes, short video demos, comparison videos - are actively influencing whether and what young urban Indians decide to buy.



1.2 Understanding Social Commerce

Social commerce is not the same as social media marketing. In traditional social media marketing, a brand shows you an advertisement on Instagram or YouTube, and if you are interested, you click a link that takes you to the brand's website, where you browse, add to cart, and check out. Social commerce removes that extra step. The entire journey - from discovery to payment - happens inside the social media platform itself.

Instagram introduced product tags, Instagram Shopping, and in-app checkout. YouTube added affiliate links in video descriptions, shopping shelves below videos, and links within Shorts. Both platforms integrated influencer content with buying options so seamlessly that many young consumers barely notice the transition from watching content to making a purchase.

The key difference that makes social commerce powerful is trust. When a creator you follow recommends a product on Instagram or does an honest unboxing video on YouTube, it does not feel like advertising. It feels like advice from someone you know. That feeling of personal trust is what drives young consumers to buy, and it is what makes social commerce far more effective than traditional advertising for this age group.

1.3 Why Instagram and YouTube

Instagram and YouTube are not just the two biggest social media platforms in India. They are fundamentally different from each other in how their content works and how they influence consumers.

Instagram is built around short, visually engaging content - Reels, Stories, posts, and live sessions. It is the platform of quick discovery, trend awareness, and impulse purchases. A consumer might see a reel while casually scrolling, spot a product they did not know they wanted, tap the product tag, and complete a purchase within two minutes. The entire experience is emotional, visual, and fast.

YouTube, on the other hand, is built around longer, more detailed video content. It is the platform where consumers go when they have already decided to buy something but want to be sure they are making the right choice. They search for review videos, watch unboxing content, and compare multiple products before finally deciding. The buying behavior here is more deliberate, more research-driven, and more analytical.

Studying both platforms together, within a single research, gives a much fuller picture of the complete social commerce journey - from the moment a consumer first discovers a product on Instagram to the moment they confirm their decision after watching a YouTube review.

1.4 Why Millennials and Gen Z

Millennials are people born between 1981 and 1996, currently aged between 30 and 45. Gen Z are people born between 1997 and 2012, currently aged between 14 and 29. Together, these two generations represent the largest and most economically active group of social media users in India. They are also the two generations that have grown up in a world shaped by smartphones and the internet.

However, these two generations are not the same. Millennials entered adulthood before smartphones became universal. They have experienced both offline and online shopping worlds. They tend to be more cautious buyers, more skeptical of promotional content, and more likely to spend time researching before committing. Gen Z, on the other hand, grew up entirely in the digital era. They have never known a world without smartphones. They are faster buyers, more trend-sensitive, more influenced by what their peers are doing, and more emotionally connected to the creators they follow.

Understanding how these two groups respond differently to social commerce features is important not just academically but practically - because any brand that treats them the same will end up with a social commerce strategy that works for neither.

1.5 Research Objectives

This study has two specific objectives:



Objective 1: To identify which social commerce features on Instagram and YouTube most influence the purchase decisions of urban Millennials and Gen Z consumers in India.

Objective 2: To analyze the relationship between the level of social commerce engagement on Instagram and YouTube and the actual purchase behavior of urban Millennial and Gen Z consumers.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research has practical significance for brands and businesses selling products to young Indian consumers. It tells them which specific features of Instagram and YouTube are doing the real work in driving purchases, and it tells them that different features work differently for Millennials versus Gen Z.

It has policy significance because regulators and platform companies need data on how social commerce content is influencing young consumers, including the risks of misrepresentation and post-purchase regret.

It has academic significance because it fills a clear gap in existing research - most studies look at either Instagram or YouTube alone, and most do not compare Millennials and Gen Z within the same study using primary data from India.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter covers 25 studies on social commerce, platform behavior, influencer marketing, and consumer buying decisions among young people. All studies reviewed are from 2022 to 2026, making them directly relevant to the current digital environment.

2.2 Summary of Key Studies

Sharma and Mehta (2022) found that consumers who could shop without leaving a social media app converted at much higher rates than those who were redirected to external websites. The interruption of leaving an app broke the buying impulse. This was among the first studies to quantify the value of seamless in-app shopping in the Indian context.

Kapoor, Singh, and Jain (2022) showed that micro-influencers with smaller but more engaged audiences generated stronger purchase intent than celebrity endorsers. Young consumers treated micro-creators as real people sharing honest opinions rather than paid spokespersons. The study was based on 200 respondents across five cities.

Banerjee and Roy (2022) studied impulse buying through Instagram specifically. They found that the platform's visual nature - colorful, engaging short videos - created immediate desire for products consumers had never thought about before. This impulse was stronger among women and among the youngest age group surveyed.

Desai, Nair, and Kulkarni (2022) introduced the concept of digital social proof - the online equivalent of asking friends for recommendations. When real customers left positive reviews and comments on Instagram posts or YouTube videos, other consumers' confidence in buying increased significantly. Negative reviews had an even stronger deterrent effect.

Gupta and Agarwal (2023) found that short-form videos had become the most effective format for product discovery. A 30 to 60 second video showing a product being used in a realistic, relatable context was more convincing than any amount of text. The algorithm-driven delivery of these videos also meant that the right consumer saw the right product at the right time.

Verma and Bhatnagar (2023) showed that Instagram Live Shopping created strong purchase urgency through real-time interaction. When creators answered a viewer's question about a product live, trust increased dramatically and the probability of purchase rose.

Pandey, Mishra, and Tiwari (2023) is one of the few studies that directly compared Millennials and Gen Z social commerce behavior in India. Their key finding was that Gen Z relied more on Instagram and short content while Millennials used YouTube more for research, and these groups could not be effectively reached with the same strategy.



Rao and Krishnan (2023) confirmed that influencer discount codes were effective purchase triggers. Consumers saw them as rewards for loyalty rather than marketing tactics, which made them more likely to use them.

Joshi and Saxena (2023) found a counterintuitive truth - overly polished, studio-quality creator content was trusted less than authentic, slightly imperfect content that felt genuine. Gen Z in particular was very good at detecting when something felt staged.

Malhotra, Bose, and Dey (2023) showed that platform choice should match product category. Fashion and lifestyle products were better sold through Instagram's visual format. Technology and high-value items were better sold through YouTube's detailed review format.

Reddy and Narayan (2024) studied parasocial relationships - the one-sided emotional bonds viewers develop with creators they watch regularly. Consumers with strong parasocial connections to creators were significantly more likely to purchase products those creators recommended, treating the recommendation like advice from a close friend.

Mehrotra and Pillai (2024) found that YouTube review videos played a critical role in the final stage of buying decisions for mid to high-value products. Consumers spent 30 minutes to 2 hours watching reviews before deciding on expensive purchases. Creators who mentioned both positives and negatives were trusted most.

Tiwari and Ghosh (2024) studied Instagram Stories specifically and found that their 24-hour disappearing nature created purchase urgency. Viewers felt they had to act now rather than save for later, leading to significant numbers of unplanned purchases through Story swipe-up links.

Kulkarni and Deshpande (2024) showed a growing problem - Millennial consumers were becoming more skeptical of visibly sponsored content. When paid partnerships were disclosed, purchase intent dropped. This finding warned brands that obvious promotion was increasingly ineffective with older young consumers.

Nambiar and Joseph (2024) documented how Instagram and YouTube had effectively democratized marketing for small businesses. A small handmade jewelry brand in Jaipur could reach lakhs of potential buyers through well-made Reels without a large advertising budget.

Acharya and Saha (2024) found that YouTube Shorts worked well as a first point of contact for Gen Z but were rarely sufficient alone for purchase decisions on higher-involvement products. Consumers would watch a Short, get interested, then look for a full YouTube review or visit the brand's Instagram page before actually buying.

Mathur and Tripathi (2024) named the "multi-creator validation effect" - when a consumer sees the same product recommended by multiple different creators they follow, their confidence in the product increases dramatically. Gen Z was especially responsive to this form of community consensus.

Iyer and Krishnamurthy (2025) found that when a social commerce purchase matched product expectations from the content, it built strong loyalty to both the brand and the creator. When the product did not match, consumers lost trust in both simultaneously.

Batra and Mahajan (2025) showed that YouTube unboxing videos - where creators open and react to products live on camera - were trusted by Millennial consumers because they showed the product unedited and in its real state.



Pillai and George (2025) found that integrating social commerce with quick delivery options eliminated the final friction in the purchase journey for Gen Z. When a product discovered on Instagram could be delivered within hours, conversion rates went up significantly.

Choudhary, Rana, and Bajaj (2025) documented a growing trend among Millennials of using social commerce to discover and buy from brands that match their personal values - sustainable, cruelty-free, or ethically sourced products. Value alignment was driving purchase decisions alongside product desire.

Das, Mukherjee, and Sengupta (2026), in the most recent and directly relevant study, conducted a comprehensive comparison of how Millennials and Gen Z used Instagram and YouTube as shopping platforms. They confirmed that Gen Z was driven by trends, peer behavior, FOMO, and emotional connection to creators, while Millennials were driven by factual detail, honest comparison, and value-for-money assessments.

2.3 Research Gap

After reviewing all 25 studies, four clear gaps were found.

First, most studies examine Instagram or YouTube separately. Very few study both platforms together in one research to enable platform-level comparison. This study covers both.

Second, most studies focus on either Millennials or Gen Z alone. Very few compare both generations using the same instrument in the same research. This study does that directly.

Third, existing India-specific quantitative studies tend to have small sample sizes, often under 60 respondents. This study uses 128 respondents.

Fourth, most studies focus on one or two social commerce features. This study covers eight features from both platforms within a single research instrument.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a descriptive research design. The purpose was to describe and measure how social commerce features on Instagram and YouTube are currently influencing the purchase decisions of urban Millennials and Gen Z - not to manipulate variables or create artificial conditions. The design fits because the study observes and measures real behavior and attitudes of real consumers as they currently exist.

3.2 Research Approach

A quantitative research approach was used. Data was collected in numerical form through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using statistical tools. This approach was chosen because the study needed to measure the level of agreement among 128 respondents toward specific statements and to calculate the correlation between two sets of variables - both of which require numerical analysis.

3.3 Research Objectives

Objective 1: To identify the social commerce features on Instagram and YouTube that most influence urban Millennial and Gen Z purchase decisions in India.

Objective 2: To analyze the relationship between social commerce engagement on Instagram and YouTube and actual purchase behavior among urban Millennials and Gen Z.



3.4 Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 H_01 - Social commerce features on Instagram and YouTube do not significantly impact urban Millennial and Gen Z purchase decisions. H_11 - Social commerce features on Instagram and YouTube significantly impact urban Millennial and Gen Z purchase decisions.

Hypothesis 2 H_02 - There is no significant relationship between the level of social commerce engagement on Instagram and YouTube and actual purchase behavior. H_12 - There is a significant relationship between the level of social commerce engagement on Instagram and YouTube and actual purchase behavior.

3.5 Data Sources

This study is based entirely on primary data. The data was collected directly from respondents through a structured questionnaire specifically designed for this research. Secondary sources were used only for the literature review.

3.6 Sampling Design

The target population was urban Millennials and Gen Z individuals in India aged 18 to 40 who actively use Instagram and/or YouTube. The geographic scope covered metro cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Chennai, and tier-2 cities including Jaipur, Lucknow, Pune, and Chandigarh. Convenience sampling was used since there is no public directory of Instagram and YouTube users in India. Respondents were reached through Instagram direct messages, WhatsApp groups, and email. The final sample size was 128 respondents.

3.7 Data Collection

An online survey was conducted using Google Forms. The link was distributed via Instagram DMs, WhatsApp groups, and email over a three-week period. Participation was voluntary. Respondents were informed of the study's purpose before beginning. The questionnaire took approximately 5 to 7 minutes to complete. All 128 responses collected were complete and valid.

3.8 Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire with 20 questions was used. Section A (Questions 1–5) contained demographic questions with closed-ended answers. Section B (Questions 6–20) contained 15 Likert scale statements where respondents rated their agreement from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Questions 6 to 13 were designed to address Objective 1, identifying influential social commerce features. Questions 14 to 20 were designed to address Objective 2, measuring the relationship between engagement and actual purchase behavior.

3.9 Data Analysis Techniques

All data was entered and analyzed in Microsoft Excel using:

- Percentage analysis for demographic questions
- Mean and Standard Deviation for all 15 Likert scale questions
- Generational comparison of mean scores between Millennials and Gen Z
- Pearson correlation analysis to test Hypothesis 2

3.10 Reliability and Validity

The questionnaire was pre-tested with 10 respondents before the main data collection. Their feedback was used to refine wording. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated in Excel to confirm internal reliability. Content validity was ensured by directly linking each question to a specific research objective based on the literature review.



3.11 Ethical Standards

All respondents were informed of the study's purpose and their participation was voluntary. No personally identifiable information was collected. All data was handled confidentially and used only for this research. All findings are reported exactly as produced by the data without alteration.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Section A - Demographic Analysis

Table 4.1 - Age Group Distribution

Age Group	Generation	Number of Respondents	Percentage
18 to 24 years	Gen Z	54	42.19%
25 to 32 years	Millennial	45	35.16%
33 to 40 years	Millennial	24	18.75%
Above 40 years	Out of scope	5	3.91%
Total		128	100%

The largest group - 42.19% - belongs to Gen Z (18–24). Combined Millennials (25–40) make up 53.91%. Only 5 respondents were above 40, included in overall analysis but excluded from generational comparison tables. For generational comparison, Gen Z = 54 respondents; Millennials = 69 respondents.

Table 4.2 - Gender Distribution

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Male	61	47.66%
Female	63	49.22%
Prefer not to say	4	3.13%
Total	128	100%

Gender distribution is nearly equal - 49.22% female and 47.66% male. This balance prevents gender bias in the findings and makes the results more representative of the general urban young consumer population.

Table 4.3 - Platform Preference

Platform Used for Product Discovery and Buying	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Instagram	48	37.50%
YouTube	31	24.22%
Both equally	43	33.59%
Neither	6	4.69%
Total	128	100%

Instagram leads as the preferred social commerce platform at 37.50%. A large group - 33.59% - use both platforms equally, showing that many consumers move between Instagram and YouTube as part of a connected purchase journey rather than sticking to just one platform.

Table 4.4 - Daily Usage Hours on Instagram and YouTube Combined

Hours Per Day	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	9	7.03%
1 to 2 hours	28	21.88%
2 to 4 hours	52	40.63%
More than 4 hours	39	30.47%
Total	128	100%

71.09% of respondents spend more than 2 hours daily on these platforms combined. Heavy daily usage means constant exposure to social commerce content - product tags, reviews, influencer recommendations - which naturally increases the opportunities for this content to influence buying decisions.



Table 4.5 - Purchase Experience Through Social Commerce

Purchase Experience	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes, many times	52	40.63%
Yes, once or twice	41	32.03%
No, but felt like buying	27	21.09%
No, never	8	6.25%
Total	128	100%

72.66% of respondents have made at least one purchase after seeing a product on Instagram or YouTube. Of these, 40.63% have done so many times. An additional 21.09% experienced strong purchase intent even without completing a purchase. Only 6.25% reported no influence at all. This is perhaps the most direct proof that social commerce on these platforms is actively and widely shaping real buying behavior - not just awareness.

4.2 Section B - Likert Scale Analysis

Table 4.6 - Overall Mean and Standard Deviation for All 15 Likert Scale Questions

Q. No.	Statement Summary	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level of Agreement
Q6	Instagram product tags in Reels help discover and buy	4.21	0.74	High
Q7	YouTube reviews and unboxing build purchase confidence	4.18	0.79	High
Q8	Instagram Live Shopping makes me want to buy immediately	3.74	0.91	Moderate
Q9	YouTube comparison videos help decide which product to buy	4.09	0.82	High
Q10	Discount codes and affiliate links push me to purchase	3.98	0.87	Moderate-High
Q11	Multiple creators featuring a product builds trust	4.31	0.71	High
Q12	Instagram Stories swipe-up links cause unplanned purchases	3.62	0.96	Moderate
Q13	YouTube Shorts product demos introduced products I later bought	3.89	0.88	Moderate-High
Q14	Completed purchase directly through Instagram Shopping	3.71	0.99	Moderate
Q15	Trust influencer recommendations more than traditional ads	4.26	0.76	High
Q16	Positive buyer comments in sections increase purchase confidence	4.19	0.78	High
Q17	Feel urgency when influencer says product is trending or selling out	3.83	0.93	Moderate-High
Q18	Social commerce has increased my monthly online purchases	3.94	0.89	Moderate-High
Q19	Sometimes regret purchases because product did not match content	3.41	1.02	Moderate
Q20	Overall, social commerce plays a major role in my purchase decision	4.33	0.69	Very High

Interpretation: The most important finding is the mean of 4.33 for Question 20, which confirms that social commerce overall plays a major role in final purchase decisions. Q11 (multi-creator validation, mean 4.31) and Q15 (trust in influencers over traditional ads, mean 4.26) are close behind. Q19 on post-purchase regret has the lowest mean of 3.41 and the highest standard deviation of 1.02, showing this is where opinions were most divided - some strongly agreed they had experienced regret; others had not.

Table 4.7 - Ranking of Social Commerce Features by Influence (Questions 6–13)

Rank	Q. No.	Social Commerce Feature	Mean Score
1st	Q11	Multiple creators featuring the same product builds trust	4.31
2nd	Q6	Instagram product tags in Reels and posts	4.21
3rd	Q7	YouTube review and unboxing videos	4.18
4th	Q9	YouTube comparison videos between multiple products	4.09



5th	Q10	Discount codes and affiliate links from influencers	3.98
6th	Q13	YouTube Shorts showing quick product demonstrations	3.89
7th	Q8	Instagram Live Shopping sessions	3.74
8th	Q12	Instagram Stories swipe-up shopping links	3.62

Interpretation: Multi-creator validation is the most powerful single social commerce factor, confirming that community-level trust - seeing multiple creators recommend a product - is more influential than any single platform feature. Instagram product tags rank second, confirming the power of seamless in-app discovery. YouTube reviews rank third, confirming that detailed informational content plays a critical role. Instagram Stories and Live Shopping rank lower, suggesting these are supplementary rather than primary purchase drivers, at least at the current stage of platform usage.

Table 4.8 - Mean Scores for Purchase Decision and Behavior Questions (Q14–Q20)

Rank	Q. No.	Purchase Decision Statement	Mean Score
1st	Q20	Overall role of social commerce in final purchase decision	4.33
2nd	Q15	Trust in influencer recommendations over traditional advertising	4.26
3rd	Q16	Positive buyer comments increase purchase confidence	4.19
4th	Q18	Social commerce increased total monthly online purchases	3.94
5th	Q17	Urgency felt when creator says product is trending or selling out	3.83
6th	Q14	Completed purchase directly through Instagram Shopping	3.71
7th	Q19	Post-purchase regret due to product mismatch	3.41

Interpretation: The high agreement on Q15 (mean 4.26) signals a fundamental change - young consumers no longer see TV or newspaper ads as credible sources for product decisions, but they do trust a creator they follow. Q16 (mean 4.19) confirms social proof is working - comments from real buyers matter enormously. Q19 (mean 3.41) is a warning - a meaningful number of respondents have experienced the product not matching what was shown in social commerce content. While this is not the majority experience, it represents a real risk for platforms and brands.

Table 4.9 - Generational Comparison: Gen Z vs. Millennial Mean Scores

Q. No.	Statement Summary	Gen Z Mean	Millennial Mean	Higher Influence
Q6	Instagram product tags in Reels	4.39	4.07	Gen Z
Q7	YouTube review and unboxing videos	3.96	4.36	Millennial
Q8	Instagram Live Shopping	3.91	3.61	Gen Z
Q9	YouTube comparison videos	3.87	4.27	Millennial
Q10	Discount codes and affiliate links	4.04	3.94	Gen Z
Q11	Multi-creator product validation	4.43	4.21	Gen Z
Q12	Instagram Stories swipe-up links	3.81	3.47	Gen Z
Q13	YouTube Shorts product demos	3.96	3.83	Gen Z
Q14	Completed purchase via Instagram Shopping	3.87	3.58	Gen Z
Q15	Trust influencer recommendations over traditional ads	4.41	4.14	Gen Z
Q16	Positive buyer comments increase confidence	4.28	4.12	Gen Z
Q17	Urgency when creator says product trending/selling out	4.11	3.61	Gen Z
Q18	Social commerce increased monthly purchases	4.02	3.88	Gen Z
Q19	Post-purchase regret	3.59	3.27	Gen Z
Q20	Overall role in final purchase decision	4.48	4.21	Gen Z



Interpretation: Gen Z scored higher than Millennials on 13 out of 15 questions, confirming that Gen Z is more broadly and deeply influenced by social commerce across almost every dimension. The biggest gap was on Q17 (urgency/FOMO) - Gen Z mean of 4.11 versus Millennial mean of 3.61, a difference of 0.50. This is the largest generational gap in the entire study and confirms that urgency-based social commerce content works strongly on Gen Z but far less so on Millennials.

On the two questions where Millennials scored higher - Q7 (YouTube reviews, mean 4.36 vs. 3.96) and Q9 (YouTube comparisons, mean 4.27 vs. 3.87) - the data confirms that Millennials are more research-oriented buyers who use YouTube as a serious information tool before making purchase decisions.

Table 4.10 - Platform-Specific Feature Comparison

Platform	Questions Covered	Average Mean Score
Instagram-specific features	Q6, Q8, Q12	3.86
YouTube-specific features	Q7, Q9, Q13	4.05
Features common to both platforms	Q10, Q11	4.15

Interpretation: Features common to both platforms - discount codes and multi-creator validation - scored highest. YouTube-specific features averaged higher than Instagram-specific ones, likely because detailed review and comparison content builds deeper purchase confidence. However, Instagram remains the dominant discovery platform, particularly for Gen Z, even if individual Instagram features scored slightly lower on average.

Table 4.11 - Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Strength	Direction
Social commerce engagement (Q6–Q13) and Actual purchase behavior (Q14–Q20)	$r = 0.83$	Strong	Positive

Interpretation: A Pearson r of 0.83 indicates a strong positive correlation. As social commerce engagement increases - using product tags, watching reviews, following influencer codes, engaging with live shopping - actual purchase behavior increases significantly alongside it. This provides clear statistical evidence that social commerce engagement is not simply passive entertainment; it actively and measurably translates into real buying decisions. An r value this high leaves very little room for doubt about the direction and strength of the relationship.

Table 4.12 - Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hypothesis	Statement	Evidence	Decision
H ₀₁	Social commerce does not significantly impact purchase decisions	High mean scores (8 of 15 above 4.0; overall = 4.33) disprove this	Rejected
H ₁₁	Social commerce significantly impacts purchase decisions	Consistently high mean scores confirm this	Accepted
H ₀₂	No significant relationship between engagement and purchase behavior	$r = 0.83$ disproves this	Rejected
H ₁₂	Significant relationship exists between engagement and purchase behavior	$r = 0.83$ confirms strong positive relationship	Accepted

Both null hypotheses are rejected. Both alternative hypotheses are accepted.

Table 4.13 - Summary of Key Findings

Finding No.	Key Finding
1	72.66% of respondents have made at least one purchase through Instagram or YouTube social commerce
2	71.09% spend more than 2 hours daily on both platforms combined
3	Multi-creator product validation is the most influential feature (mean 4.31)
4	Instagram product tags in Reels rank second most influential (mean 4.21)
5	YouTube review and unboxing videos rank third (mean 4.18)



6	Respondents trust influencer recommendations over traditional ads (mean 4.26)
7	Gen Z is more strongly influenced on 13 out of 15 questions
8	Gen Z is far more susceptible to FOMO/urgency content (mean 4.11 vs. Millennial mean 3.61)
9	Millennials rely more on YouTube review and comparison videos than Gen Z
10	Strong positive correlation of $r = 0.83$ between social commerce engagement and actual purchases
11	Both alternative hypotheses H_{11} and H_{12} are accepted
12	Post-purchase regret exists but is the weakest agreed-upon statement (mean 3.41)

V. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Major Findings

From Demographic Analysis:

Gen Z makes up 42.19% of the sample - the largest single age group - which is consistent with the real-world age profile of heavy social media users in India. Gender is almost perfectly balanced between male and female respondents, which removes gender bias from the findings.

Instagram is the most preferred platform for product discovery and buying at 37.50%. A further 33.59% use both platforms equally, which means many young consumers use Instagram and YouTube together in the same purchase journey - Instagram for discovery, YouTube for research.

71.09% of respondents spend more than 2 hours daily on these platforms. This level of exposure makes it almost impossible for social commerce content not to affect buying decisions over time.

72.66% of respondents have made at least one purchase through social commerce. This is the clearest single piece of evidence that this phenomenon is real, widespread, and not marginal.

From Likert Scale Analysis:

The overall role of social commerce in purchase decisions recorded the highest mean of 4.33, confirming strong, consistent influence across the full sample.

Multi-creator product validation (mean 4.31) is the most influential social commerce factor - not a single creator, not a single platform feature, but the combined effect of multiple trusted voices recommending the same product.

Trust in influencer recommendations over traditional advertising (mean 4.26) shows that the migration of consumer trust from mass media to social media creators is already complete for this demographic.

Positive buyer comments boosting confidence (mean 4.19) confirms that social proof operates powerfully - what real customers say in comments matters as much as what creators say in videos.

YouTube-specific features consistently influence Millennials more, while Instagram-specific and trend-driven features influence Gen Z more.

Post-purchase regret (mean 3.41) is real but not the dominant experience. However, its relatively high standard deviation shows divided opinions - for a meaningful minority, products have not matched the social media content that led to the purchase.

From Correlation Analysis:

The Pearson r of 0.83 is a strong finding. It rules out the possibility that social commerce engagement and purchase behavior are unrelated or only weakly related. They are strongly and positively linked. Higher engagement means more buying.

5.2 Conclusions

Conclusion for Objective 1: All eight social commerce features tested influence purchase decisions to varying degrees. The four most influential are multi-creator validation, Instagram product tags in Reels, YouTube review videos, and YouTube comparison videos. These four together form the most powerful social commerce toolkit for



reaching young urban Indian consumers. Crucially, which feature works best depends on which generation is being targeted.

Conclusion for Objective 2: There is a strong and statistically significant relationship ($r = 0.83$) between social commerce engagement on Instagram and YouTube and actual purchase behavior. Social commerce is not merely an awareness or inspiration tool - it is an active purchase driver.

Overall Conclusion: Social commerce on Instagram and YouTube is a major and growing force in shaping how urban young Indians decide what to buy. With nearly three out of four respondents having already made social commerce purchases and an overall influence score of 4.33 out of 5, the evidence is clear and consistent. Brands, creators, and marketers who do not take social commerce seriously are already behind. And those who treat Millennials and Gen Z as one group are leaving effectiveness on the table.

5.3 Recommendations

For Brands and Businesses:

Build social commerce as a core business function, not a side activity, given that 72.66% of the target market is already buying through these channels.

Work with multiple creators simultaneously rather than investing in single celebrity deals. Multi-creator validation was the most influential factor in this study. A network of five mid-tier creators is more effective than one expensive celebrity.

Use Instagram for trend-based product discovery and impulse purchase campaigns aimed at Gen Z. Use YouTube for detailed, informational content aimed at Millennials who are in the research phase of buying.

Ensure that social commerce content represents products accurately. The post-purchase regret finding (mean 3.41) shows that misrepresentation causes real damage to brand trust. The cost of returns and lost loyalty far outweighs any short-term sales gained from exaggerated content.

Make creator-specific discount codes a standard part of every influencer partnership - they work (mean 3.98) and they allow precise measurement of each creator's sales contribution.

For Creators:

Be honest in product reviews, including mentioning weaknesses. Consumers trust informative, genuine opinions (mean 4.26 for influencer trust vs. traditional ads). That trust, once lost, is extremely difficult to rebuild.

Always add product tags in relevant Instagram posts and shopping links in YouTube video descriptions. Removing the step of "go search for this product yourself" directly increases the number of viewers who actually buy.

For Digital Marketers:

Measure Instagram social commerce through product tag click-through rates, Story swipe-up rates, and Live Shopping conversion data - not just likes and follower counts.

Measure YouTube social commerce through affiliate link clicks, watch time on review content, and discount code usage rates.

Build long-term creator partnerships rather than one-off campaigns. Consumer trust in a creator builds over months of regular exposure, and that accumulated trust is what converts viewers into buyers.

For Regulators and Platform Companies:

Introduce clear standards requiring social commerce content to accurately represent products - especially regarding size, color, material, and quality. This protects consumers from the post-purchase regret this study documented.



Continue investing in seamless in-app purchasing features, since frictionless buying experiences directly drive conversion and consumer satisfaction.

5.4 Scope for Future Research

A longitudinal study tracking the same consumers over one to two years would show how social commerce behavior and its purchase influence evolve as platforms change and consumers grow more experienced.

Future research could compare social commerce behavior and influence across specific product categories - electronics, fashion, beauty, food - since this study examined overall purchase behavior without distinguishing by product type.

A study comparing urban and rural Indian consumers' social commerce behavior would fill an important gap, since this study focused exclusively on urban consumers.

Research examining the psychological and financial wellbeing impact of FOMO-driven social commerce purchases on Gen Z specifically would be valuable, given the strong 4.11 mean score on urgency-based buying among this group.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A - Demographic Information (*Please select the most appropriate answer for each question*)

Question 1: What is your age group?

- 18 to 24 years
- 25 to 32 years
- 33 to 40 years
- Above 40 years

Question 2: What is your gender?

- Male
- (b) Female
- (c) Prefer not to say

Question 3: Which platform do you use more for discovering and buying products?

- Instagram
- YouTube
- Both equally
- Neither

Question 4: How many hours per day do you spend on Instagram and YouTube combined?

- Less than 1 hour
- 1 to 2 hours
- 2 to 4 hours
- More than 4 hours



Question 5: Have you ever purchased a product directly after seeing it on Instagram or YouTube?

- Yes, many times
- Yes, once or twice
- No, but I felt like buying
- No, never

SECTION B - Social Commerce Features and Purchase Influence

Please rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5.

1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

Question 6: Instagram product tags in Reels and posts make it very easy for me to discover and buy new products.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Question 7: YouTube product review and unboxing videos give me enough information and confidence to make a purchase decision.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Question 8: Instagram Live Shopping sessions with influencers presenting products in real time make me want to buy immediately.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Question 9: YouTube comparison videos showing multiple products side by side help me decide which product to buy.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Question 10: Discount codes and affiliate links shared by influencers on Instagram and YouTube directly push me to make a purchase.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Question 11: Seeing a product repeatedly featured by multiple different creators on Instagram or YouTube makes me feel it is trustworthy and worth buying.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Question 12: Instagram Stories with swipe-up shopping links have led me to make quick and unplanned purchases.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Question 13: YouTube Shorts showing quick product demonstrations have introduced me to products I later purchased.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Question 14: I have completed a product purchase directly through Instagram Shopping without visiting any other website or app.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Question 15: I trust product recommendations from Instagram and YouTube influencers more than traditional advertisements on TV or in newspapers.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Question 16: Seeing comments from other buyers praising a product on Instagram or YouTube increases my confidence and pushes me to buy it.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Question 17: I feel a sense of urgency to buy a product when an Instagram or YouTube influencer says it is trending or selling out fast.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Question 18: The social commerce experience on Instagram and YouTube has increased the total number of purchases I make online every month.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5



Question 19: I sometimes regret purchases made through Instagram or YouTube social commerce because the product did not match what was shown in the content.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Question 20: Overall, Instagram and YouTube social commerce features play a major role in my final decision to buy a product.

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

