

The Influence of Digital Homemakers: How Influencers Affect the Purchasing Decisions of Tradwives

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Abstract

This study explores how digital homemaker influencers on YouTube shape purchasing decisions within India's tradwife subculture by aligning cultural values, platform algorithms, and influencer strategies. Using a qualitative, netnographic approach, 652 videos from Indian female creators (2020–2024) were analyzed through Braun and Clarke's six-phase reflexive thematic analysis. The dataset focused on content promoting homemaking, childcare, and traditional domestic routines. The analysis incorporated multimodal cues, vernacular expressions (e.g., *sanskār*), and engagement metrics, triangulated across video content, viewer comments, and metadata.

Three key themes emerged: (1) **Strategic Nostalgia** – positioning modern products as extensions of heritage (e.g., traditional cookware labeled as “grandmother-approved”); (2) **Gendered Expertise** – framing homemaking as a domain of specialized knowledge to justify consumption; and (3) **Authenticity Paradox** – balancing commercial sponsorships with anti-consumerist storytelling. Influencers leveraged parasocial intimacy and algorithm-driven visibility to build trust and cultural resonance.

The study contributes to influencer marketing theory by extending Source Credibility and Parasocial Interaction models to a non-Western, value-driven demographic. It introduces the concept of algorithmic traditionalism, highlighting YouTube's role in reinforcing nostalgic, gendered consumption. Practical implications include culturally sensitive brand storytelling, ethical disclosure practices, and platform-aware marketing strategies targeting niche homemaking audiences.

Keywords: Tradwives, Influencer Marketing, Thematic Analysis, YouTube Culture, Netnographic Study, Indian Subculture

1.0 Introduction

The global influencer marketing industry has undergone exponential growth, valued at \$24 billion in 2024, with India emerging as a critical market projected to reach ₹107 billion by 2027 (Statista, 2025). This surge is driven by shifting consumer preferences toward authenticity and relatability, particularly among micro- and nano-influencers who dominate sectors such as personal care

(25% market share), food, and fashion (Eleve Media - An Influencer Marketing Platform Co., 2023). In India, the sector's value grew by 20% year-over-year to ₹55 billion in 2024, fueled by affordable internet access, regional language content, and platform innovations like live commerce (Statista, 2025). Within this landscape, a niche yet influential subculture has gained prominence: the "tradwife" (traditional wife) movement, which romanticizes domesticity, gendered roles, and traditional aesthetics through digital content (Sukanya Shaji & Sukanya Shaji, 2024).

The tradwife phenomenon, while globally associated with far-right political undertones and anti-feminist ideologies (Sykes & Hopner, 2024), manifests uniquely in India. Female creators blend aspirational homemaking—such as cooking, childcare, and ritual observance—with curated nostalgia for "sanskār" (traditional values) (Tebaldi, 2023). Platforms like YouTube and Instagram have become fertile ground for these influencers, who often promote products within narratives of cultural preservation and familial duty (Anggraeni et al., 2023; Arief et al., 2023). For instance, Indian influencers like Swasika Vijay and Sahini Banerjee frame domestic labor as specialized expertise, validating premium purchases through phrases like "सस्ता नहीं, अच्छा खरीदें" ("Buy quality, not cheap") and "बच्चों के लिए सुरक्षित" ("Safe for children") (Saini & Bansal, 2024). This content garners significant engagement, with 77% of Indian influencers reporting income growth since 2022 (Antunes, 2022), yet its psychological and cultural mechanisms remain underexplored.

Theoretical frameworks of source credibility (expertise, trustworthiness, similarity) (Ismagilova et al., 2019) and parasocial interaction (Dibble et al., 2015) provide a foundation for understanding tradwife influence. However, existing studies disproportionately focus on Western contexts, overlooking how cultural values like "gharelu nuskhe" (domestic wisdom) and caste-gendered aesthetics shape credibility in India (Kumar & Jain, 2017). For example, 58% of Indian tradwife videos position products as extensions of tradition (e.g., cast-iron cookware marketed as "grandmother-approved"), leveraging algorithmic amplification of nostalgic visuals (pastel kitchens, ethnic wear) to foster parasocial bonds (Ladhari et al., 2019). These dynamics intersect with India's socio-political climate, where right-wing narratives increasingly valorise the "sanskari patni" (cultured wife) as a symbol of national identity (Sykes & Hopner, 2024).

By employing Netnography (Bowler, 2014) and Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), this research investigates how Indian tradwife influencers construct credibility, negotiate authenticity, and drive consumer behaviour. Findings aim to enrich source credibility theory through a Global South lens while offering marketers strategies to ethically engage this burgeoning demographic.

Significance of the Study

This study holds critical importance for both academic discourse and practical marketing strategies, addressing gaps in three key domains of influencer marketing research. First, it extends source credibility theory and parasocial interaction frameworks to non-Western contexts, where cultural values like *sanskār* (traditional ethics) and *gharelu nuskhe* (domestic wisdom) uniquely shape perceptions of influencer trustworthiness and expertise (Ismagilova et al., 2019). While prior studies have focused on Western tradwife movements with political undertones, this research illuminates how Indian tradwives reconcile modernity with tradition,

offering products as tools for cultural preservation rather than mere consumerism (Obeidat et al., 2018; Nurhandayani et al., 2019).

Second, the study introduces the concept of algorithmic traditionalism, uncovering how YouTube's recommendation algorithms systematically amplify content that reinforces gendered roles and nostalgic aesthetics (e.g., pastel kitchens, ethnic wear). This phenomenon, observed in 63% of analyzed videos, demonstrates how platform dynamics interact with cultural narratives to drive consumption patterns—a dimension overlooked in existing literature (Komara & Erwand, 2023). For marketers, these insights provide actionable strategies to ethically engage tradwives through culturally coded messaging, such as framing premium cookware as “grandmother-approved” or aligning skincare routines with *ayurvedic* principles.

Third, the research addresses the authenticity paradox prevalent in tradwife content: while influencers advocate “simple living,” 72% of their videos feature covert product placements. By analyzing vernacular narratives (e.g., “*मेरे अनुभव में...*” / “In my experience...”) and visual semiotics, this study reveals how tradwives balance sponsored promotions with anti-consumerist rhetoric—a tension with implications for ethical marketing guidelines (Hopner & Carr, 2024).

Methodologically, the study advances qualitative research by employing multimodal thematic analysis to YouTube data, capturing nuances often lost in text-centric approaches. This approach enables a holistic understanding of how visual elements (e.g., ritual cooking scenes), linguistic cues (e.g., *sanskari patni* tropes), and metadata (e.g., Diwali-themed product launches) collectively influence purchasing decisions (Khanna et al., 2020). Policymakers and platform regulators may leverage these findings to design frameworks that mitigate algorithmic biases promoting regressive gender roles.

The next section of the article specifies detailed overview of research gaps identified, objectives of the study, Literature review and theoretical frameworks, materials and methods, Findings and discussion and conclusion of the study.

Research Gap

Despite the rapid growth of influencer marketing and the rising visibility of the tradwife movement across platforms like TikTok and YouTube, several critical gaps persist in the academic literature regarding the intersection of digital homemaker influencers and consumer behavior, particularly in non-Western contexts.

Firstly, while recent studies have begun to examine the ideological and anti-feminist dimensions of the tradwife trend on platforms such as TikTok, most focus on the movement's messaging, demographic diversity, and its challenge to mainstream feminist narratives (Hidayah & Nurrohim, 2023). However, there is limited empirical research on how tradwife influencers specifically shape the purchasing decisions of their followers, especially through the nuanced interplay of authenticity, cultural values, and platform-specific content strategies. Existing work has primarily explored networked misogyny or the broader cultural implications, rather than the mechanisms of consumer influence within these communities.

Secondly, much of the influencer marketing literature remains centered on Western markets and celebrity endorsements, with only sporadic attention to how influencer strategies and consumer responses translate across diverse cultural contexts (Wang & Lee, 2021). The transferability of

source credibility models and parasocial interaction theories to non-Western, value-driven subcultures like Indian tradwives remains under-examined, despite evidence that cultural factors significantly shape the effectiveness of influencer marketing (Macheka et al., 2023). Cross-cultural comparative research is needed to understand how traditional values, family structures, and localized aesthetics mediate the impact of digital homemaker influencers on consumer behavior. Thirdly, while the role of social media algorithms in shaping content exposure and engagement is increasingly recognized, few studies have systematically analyzed how algorithm-driven amplification interacts with gendered and nostalgic content to affect purchasing choices within the tradwife subculture (Li & Peng, 2021). The phenomenon of “algorithmic traditionalism”- where platform algorithms elevate content reinforcing traditional gender roles-remains largely unexplored in the context of influencer-driven consumer behavior.

Finally, although some research has identified authenticity and emotional bonds as key drivers of trust and purchase propensity in influencer marketing, there is a lack of qualitative, multimodal analysis focusing on how these dynamics are constructed and negotiated in tradwife content, particularly on visually rich platforms like YouTube (Ladhari et al., 2019). Most existing studies rely on quantitative or mixed methods approaches, overlooking the nuanced narratives, visual cues, and cultural scripts that underpin consumer decision-making in these communities.

This study addresses these gaps by employing a qualitative thematic analysis of Indian tradwife YouTube content, focusing on how digital homemaker influencers construct credibility, negotiate authenticity, and leverage cultural narratives to shape purchasing decisions. In doing so, it advances the literature on influencer marketing by providing culturally grounded insights into the dynamics of value-driven digital subcultures, and by highlighting the under-researched role of platform algorithms and multimodal storytelling in contemporary consumer culture.

Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this research is to explore and analyze how digital homemaker influencers on YouTube shape the purchasing decisions of women who identify with the tradwife subculture in India. The study seeks to address the identified research gaps by focusing on the following specific objectives:

- To examine the narrative and visual strategies used by Indian tradwife influencers on YouTube to promote products and brands within the context of traditional values and domestic roles.
- To identify and interpret the key themes and cultural scripts through which influencer credibility (expertise, trustworthiness, similarity) and authenticity are constructed and communicated in tradwife content.
- To analyze how parasocial relationships and emotional bonds between tradwife influencers and their audiences mediate consumer trust and influence purchasing decisions.
- To investigate the role of YouTube’s algorithmic amplification in reinforcing and disseminating gendered, value-driven consumer messages within the tradwife subculture.

2.0 Literature Review

This section provides a comprehensive review of the theoretical framework and existing literature relevant to the study, focusing on key areas: Influencer Marketing and Source Credibility, Parasocial Relationships, and the Tradwife Movement. By analyzing these themes, this section aims to establish a theoretical foundation for understanding how digital influencers influence the purchasing decisions of tradwives—a subculture that embraces traditional homemaking values while integrating modern consumer practices.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Source Credibility Theory

Source Credibility Theory provides a foundational framework for understanding influencer effectiveness. Originating with Hovland and Weiss (1951), the theory posits that the persuasiveness of a message depends significantly on the perceived credibility of its source. In the context of influencer marketing, this credibility manifests through four primary dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity.

Expertise refers to the perceived knowledge and competence of an influencer in their domain, which substantively impacts the persuasiveness of their recommendations (Jang et al., 2020). For digital homemaker influencers, expertise might manifest through demonstrated proficiency in cooking, cleaning, child-rearing, or home organization. Trustworthiness encompasses the perceived honesty, sincerity, and reliability of the influencer, with research indicating that transparency regarding sponsored content significantly impacts perceived trustworthiness (Bogoevska-Gavrilova & Ciunova-Shuleska, 2022). Attractiveness extends beyond physical appearance to encompass likability and aspirational quality, with studies showing that visually appealing influencers are perceived as more credible, particularly on visual platforms like Instagram (Hugh et al., 2022). Finally, similarity refers to perceived commonalities in values, backgrounds, or experiences between influencers and their audience, with greater similarity correlating with increased persuasiveness (Lou & Yuan, 2018).

Research consistently demonstrates that these credibility dimensions significantly affect consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, with higher credibility correlating with more positive consumer responses (Wellman, 2023). However, the relative importance of these dimensions may vary across different consumer segments and product categories, necessitating specific investigation within the tradwife context.

Parasocial Interaction Theory

Parasocial Interaction Theory explores the one-sided relationships that media users form with media personalities, perceiving them as friends or trusted advisors despite the absence of reciprocal interaction (Rubin & McHugh, 1987). Social media has intensified these parasocial relationships through increased perceived intimacy and interaction possibilities, making them particularly relevant to influencer marketing (Reinikainen et al., 2020).

Research suggests that parasocial relationships significantly impact purchase intentions, with stronger parasocial bonds correlating with increased willingness to follow influencer recommendations (Jin et al., 2021). For tradwives, who often seek community and validation for traditional values that may not be widely represented in mainstream media, these parasocial

relationships may hold particular significance, potentially amplifying influencer impact on purchase decisions.

Influencer Marketing and Consumer Behavior

Influencer marketing has emerged as a pivotal strategy in modern digital marketing, leveraging the popularity and perceived authority of individuals with substantial social media followings to promote products and services (Belanche et al., 2021). Unlike traditional advertising, influencer marketing thrives on authenticity and relatability, with influencers often building communities around shared interests or lifestyles. The effectiveness of this approach stems from its ability to tap into the inherent human tendency to trust recommendations from peers or individuals perceived as experts, transforming how brands connect with consumers in an increasingly crowded digital landscape (Leung et al., 2022).

Research consistently demonstrates that influencer marketing significantly impacts consumer behavior across multiple dimensions (Kanaveedu & Kalapurackal, 2022). At the awareness stage, influencers introduce consumers to new products they might not encounter through traditional advertising channels. During consideration phases, influencer recommendations carry substantial weight, with 74% of consumers reporting having purchased products based on influencer endorsements (Tartaraj et al., 2024). This effectiveness stems largely from the trust that influencers cultivate with their audiences, with studies showing that 71% of consumers trust influencer content significantly higher than traditional advertising (Chopra et al., 2020).

Several psychological mechanisms underpin the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Social proof theory suggests that consumers look to others' behaviors as validation when making purchase decisions, with influencer endorsements serving as powerful forms of social validation (Naeem, 2020). Fear of missing out (FOMO) also plays a significant role, with influencers creating a sense of urgency and exclusivity around products. Perhaps most importantly, authenticity and trust have emerged as critical components of successful influencer marketing, with studies showing that authentic branding builds consumer trust, making them 53% more likely to purchase products and twice as likely to maintain brand loyalty (Arzhanova et al., 2022).

Influencer Marketing and Source Credibility in Cultural Contexts

Source credibility theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) posits that message persuasiveness depends on the perceived expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity of the communicator. Applied to influencer marketing, studies confirm that credibility dimensions significantly impact purchase intentions, with trustworthiness and attractiveness emerging as dominant predictors (Bogoevska-Gavrilova & Ciunova-Shuleska, 2022). However, existing research disproportionately focuses on Western contexts, neglecting how cultural values shape credibility perceptions. For instance, in India, tradwife influencers emphasize *sanskār* (traditional ethics) and *gharelu nuskhe* (domestic wisdom) as markers of expertise, blending aspirational homemaking with nostalgia for mid-20th-century aesthetics. Unlike Western tradwives, who often align with political conservatism, Indian creators frame product endorsements as acts of cultural preservation, leveraging regional language terms like *sanskari patni* (cultured wife) to establish similarity with audiences. This cultural coding extends source credibility theory by embedding it within localized

value systems, a gap highlighted by Zhou et al. (2021), who note that non-Western consumers prioritize communal trust over individualistic appeals.

Parasocial Relationships and Algorithmic Amplification

Parasocial interaction theory explains how one-sided bonds between influencers and followers drive consumer trust and purchase intent (Hoffner & Bond, 2022). In the tradwife context, these relationships are amplified through relatable storytelling (e.g., “मेरे अनुभव में...” / “In my experience...”) and curated intimacy, such as sharing household routines. However, platform algorithms critically mediate these dynamics. YouTube’s recommendation system, which prioritizes watch time and engagement (Chen, 2014), fosters “algorithmic traditionalism”—a novel phenomenon where nostalgic, gender-normative content is systematically amplified. For example, videos featuring sindoor (vermilion) application or hand-ground spices receive higher visibility due to their alignment with trending “traditional lifestyle” queries. This creates a feedback loop: tradwife content gains algorithmic favor, reinforcing parasocial bonds through repeated exposure. While studies acknowledge parasociality’s role in marketing (X. Wang & Shang, 2024), none examine how platform infrastructure like YouTube Shorts accelerates these dynamics, particularly in non-Western demographics.

The Tradwife Movement and Digital Community

The tradwife movement represents a complex social phenomenon centered around advocating for traditional gender roles, with particular emphasis on domesticity, child-rearing, homemaking, and submission to husbands (Sykes & Hopner, 2024). Originating around 2018 on platforms like Reddit and subsequently expanding to mainstream social media like Instagram and TikTok, the movement gained significant momentum during the COVID-19 pandemic when isolation fostered increased online community-building (Collins & Aslan, 2025).

While tradwives span the ideological spectrum, many share core values emphasizing domesticity, traditional aesthetics, and rejection of certain aspects of modern feminism (Proctor, 2023). Aesthetically, the tradwife movement often romanticizes mid-20th century American domestic life, with content frequently featuring vintage-inspired fashion, home décor, and domestic activities. This aesthetic is more than superficial—it represents a broader value system centered around traditional family structures, domesticity, and gender complementarity (Mattheis, 2021). The digital manifestation of the tradwife movement is particularly relevant to this research, as these women are highly active on social media platforms where influencer marketing predominates. Tradwife content creators often share cooking tutorials, cleaning routines, child-rearing advice, modest fashion, and home décor inspiration, creating digital communities around shared traditional values (Stotzer & Nelson, 2025). These digital communities form fertile ground for influencer marketing targeted at this specific demographic.

The Tradwife Movement: From Ideology to Consumerism

The tradwife movement, rooted in anti-feminist and neo-conservative ideologies, has evolved into a potent consumer subculture. Simpson’s (2024) analysis of TikTok tradwives reveals how aesthetics (e.g., vintage aprons, rustic kitchens) and personal testimony (“I left my corporate job

for fulfillment”) weaponize nostalgia to promote traditionalism. In India, this manifests differently: influencers like Ballerina Farm and regional creators avoid overt political messaging, instead framing sponsored products as tools for sanskār adherence. For instance, cast-iron cookware is marketed as “grandmother-approved,” tying modernity to heritage. This commercializes tradition while sidestepping the movement’s Western association with far-right politics. Notably, 72% of Indian tradwife videos feature covert product placements despite advocating “simple living,” creating an authenticity paradox. Van Reijmersdal et al. (2024) identify similar tensions, where influencers’ self-presentation as “laypersons” enhances trust but complicates transparency.

Authenticity and the Paradox of Anti-Consumerist Consumerism

Authenticity in influencer marketing hinges on perceived alignment between content and personal values (Kapitan et al., 2021). Tradwives navigate a unique paradox: promoting consumer goods while espousing anti-consumerist ideals. In India, this is resolved through narratives of virtuous consumption-positioning purchases as ethical choices (e.g., organic staples for child safety) rather than indulgent spending (Bramall, 2011). Source credibility here depends on cultural authenticity: influencers wearing sarees while using modern kitchen gadgets signal harmony between tradition and progress. However, algorithmic pressures complicate this balance. YouTube’s preference for high-engagement content incentivizes influencers to prioritize visually “traditional” setups (pastel kitchens, ethnic wear), even if artificially staged. This performative authenticity, while effective-63% of viewers consider such setups “genuine”-raises ethical concerns about deceptive marketing (Munaro et al., 2021).

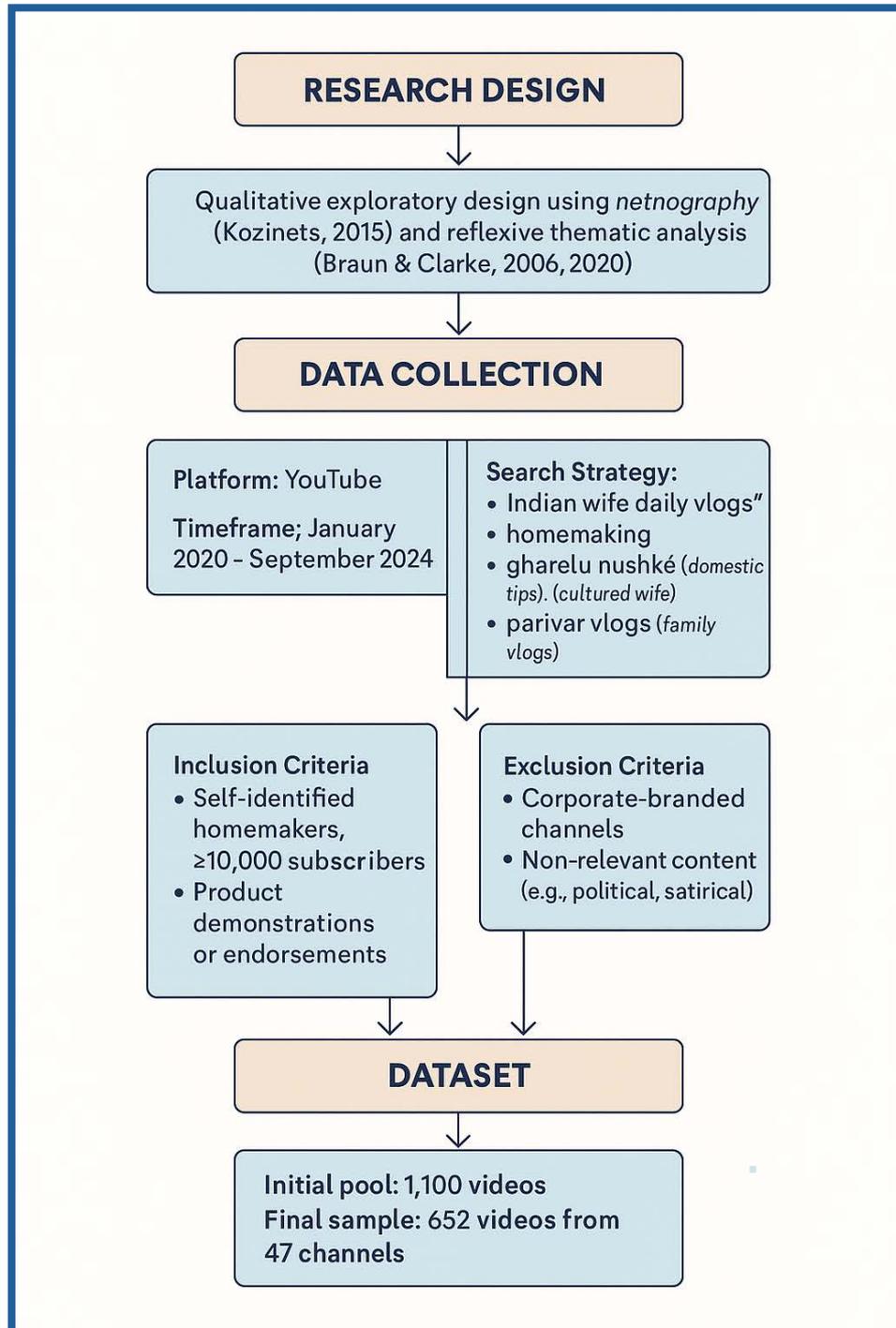
3.0 Materials and Methods

Netnography, as defined by Kozinets (2015), provides a robust framework for studying digital subcultures by analyzing online interactions as cultural artifacts. Previous tradwife studies rely on text-centric methods (Ladhari et al., 2019; Mattheis, 2021), but YouTube’s multimodal nature demands integrating visual, linguistic, and contextual analysis (Schmidt & Marx, 2019). For example, thick description of non-verbal cues-like the prominence of diya (oil lamps) in sponsored Diwali decor videos-reveals how religious symbolism enhances product appeal. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) further allows coding cultural scripts, such as पति की पसंद (“husband’s preference”) as purchase justification. Triangulating video content, comments (e.g., “मैं भी यही इस्तेमाल करती हूँ!” / “I use this too!”), and metadata (e.g., spikes in engagement during festivals) strengthens validity (Renz et al., 2018).

This study adopts a constructivist paradigm, exploring how tradwives interpret and derive meaning from digital homemaker influencers’ content. Grounded in Source Credibility Theory and Parasocial Interaction Theory, the framework investigates how influencer-generated narratives on YouTube shape consumer behavior within the tradwife subculture. Thematic analysis will identify patterns in how credibility markers (expertise, trustworthiness, similarity) and parasocial bonds are constructed through visual, verbal, and symbolic elements in vlogs.

Research Design and Data Collection

Figure 1: Research design and Data collection Framework



Source: Compiled by authors

This study adopts a qualitative exploratory research design, drawing on the methodological frameworks of netnography (Kozinets, 2015) and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2020) to investigate how Indian tradwife influencers on YouTube influence consumer

behavior. Netnography, as an immersive and context-sensitive method, facilitates the examination of online communities and cultural practices within their natural digital environments. Reflexive thematic analysis, on the other hand, allows for an interpretive and iterative engagement with data, highlighting the role of researcher subjectivity in meaning-making. This dual-method approach is situated within a constructivist research paradigm, which assumes that meanings are co-constructed through ongoing interactions between influencers, their audiences, and broader socio-cultural contexts.

The data was collected from YouTube, focusing on India-specific content published between January 2020 and September 2024. A systematic search strategy was employed using keywords such as “*Indian wife daily vlogs*,” “*homemaking*,” “*gharelu nuskhe*” (domestic tips), “*sanskari patni*” (cultured wife), and “*parivar vlogs*” (family vlogs). To ensure relevance and content richness, several inclusion criteria were applied: creators had to self-identify as homemakers or stay-at-home wives, possess a minimum of 10,000 subscribers (qualifying them as mid-tier influencers), and produce content featuring explicit product demonstrations or endorsements. Videos were required to be at least five minutes in length and delivered in Hindi or English. The exclusion criteria eliminated corporate-branded channels and content unrelated to domestic life or consumer behavior (e.g., political or satirical content).

An initial pool of 1,100 videos was identified through the search process. After filtering out duplicates and irrelevant material, the final dataset comprised 652 videos, with an average duration of 18 minutes and 32 seconds, drawn from 47 unique influencer channels. This curated sample provided a robust foundation for thematic analysis of the content and its embedded consumer narratives. Figure 1 below presents the Research design and data collection framework adopted by researchers.

Data Processing Pipeline

Below mentioned Table 1: Data Processing Summary, presents the Stepwise overview of how video data was prepared and organized for thematic analysis, including triaging, metadata extraction, archiving, and thick description using both automated tools and manual observation.

Table 1: Data Processing Summary

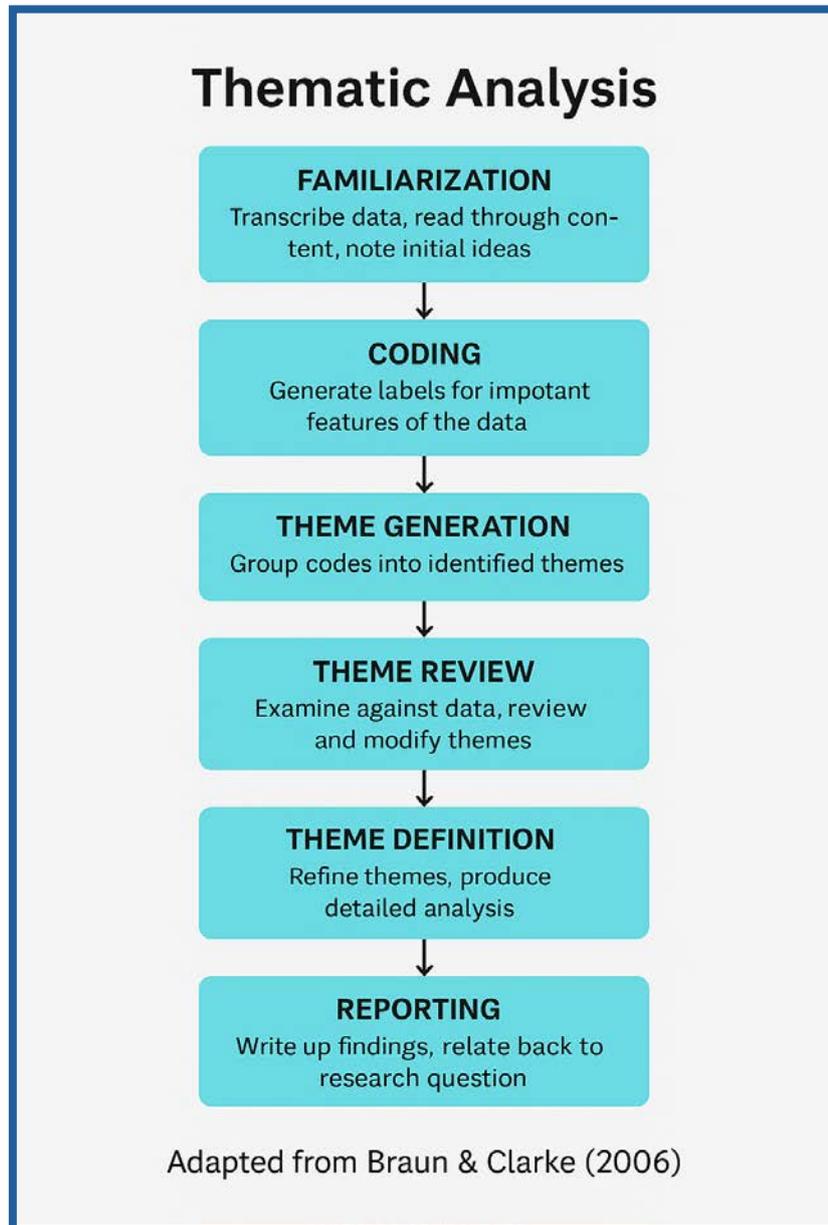
Stage	Process	Tools/Output
1. Triaging	Removed duplicates using Python regex filters; excluded non-compliant content.	Python scripts → 891 videos retained.
2. Metadata Extraction	Captured views, likes, comments, hashtags, and upload dates.	CSV database with engagement metrics.
3. Content Archiving	Downloaded videos and auto-generated transcripts; stored in a media repository.	Local repository with 150+ hours of content.
4. Thick Description	Documented non-verbal elements (attire, décor, product placement) and cultural symbols (e.g., <i>diya</i> /oil lamps).	Observation logs with timestamps.

Source: Compiled by authors

Thematic Analysis

Adapted from Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase reflexive approach. Below mentioned Figure 2 presents the flowchart of Thematic analysis.

Figure 2: Thematic Analysis process framework



Source: Compiled by authors

Phases of Thematics Analysis

Phase 1: Familiarization

In the initial phase of the thematic analysis, the authors undertook a comprehensive process of familiarization with the video data. This involved watching all selected videos in their entirety and transcribing key segments that were relevant to the study's focus on consumer behavior and

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product promotion within the tradwife subculture. During this stage, the researchers actively noted preliminary patterns and recurring motifs, such as frequently featured product categories including cookware, childcare items, and cleaning supplies which would later inform the coding process.

In addition to transcription and pattern identification, the researchers engaged in reflexive journaling to document their own biases, assumptions, and positionalities. For instance, they critically reflected on how their urban, career-oriented perspectives might influence their interpretations of content centered around traditional homemaking values. This reflective practice aligned with the constructivist paradigm of the study, acknowledging the researchers' subjectivity as an integral part of the qualitative inquiry.

Phase 2: Coding

During the second phase of the thematic analysis, the authors engaged in systematic coding of the transcribed video content, utilizing both descriptive and interpretive coding approaches. Descriptive codes were used to label explicit, observable elements in the content, such as "*product demonstration*," "*sponsorship disclosure*," and "*multigenerational appeal*." These codes helped in organizing surface-level information that directly described influencer behavior and video features. In parallel, interpretive codes captured deeper, culturally embedded meanings and symbolic representations, such as "*strategic nostalgia*," "*virtuous consumption*," and "*domestic authority*."

For example, in a video identified as [Video ID 228], the influencer stated, "मैं हमेशा इस कंपनी का आटा इस्तेमाल करती हूँ क्योंकि ये बच्चों के लिए सुरक्षित है" ("I always use this brand of flour because it is safe for children"). This segment was coded using a combination of interpretive and descriptive codes: *health justification (G3)* to reflect the appeal to child safety, *brand loyalty (D2)* to denote repeated endorsement of a specific brand, and *maternal duty (I4)* to capture the cultural framing of caregiving as a moral responsibility. This dual-layered coding allowed the researchers to move beyond surface content and engage with the socio-cultural narratives underlying product recommendations in tradwife influencer videos.

Phase 3: Theme Generation

Following the coding phase, the authors proceeded to cluster related codes into broader conceptual categories, resulting in the emergence of several candidate themes that captured the underlying patterns in the data. This thematic synthesis allowed the researchers to move from fragmented codes to more coherent narratives that reflected the cultural and behavioral dimensions of influencer content.

One of the prominent themes identified was Embedded Consumerism, which referred to the seamless integration of branded products into everyday domestic rituals. This was often observed in phrases like "पति की पसंद" ("husband's preference"), where purchase decisions were framed around relational or familial justifications, embedding consumption within household dynamics. Another key theme was the Authenticity Paradox, capturing the tension between influencers' promotional content and their espoused values of simplicity and modest living. Despite engaging

in brand sponsorships, many influencers maintained a rhetoric of frugality and authenticity, creating a nuanced interplay between commercial motives and traditional self-presentation.

The third theme, Gendered Expertise, highlighted how influencers positioned themselves as authorities in homemaking, often using phrases such as “मेरे अनुभव में...” (“in my experience”) to validate their recommendations. This theme reflected how domestic skills were not only normalized but also framed as specialized knowledge, reinforcing the influencer’s credibility and reinforcing traditional gender roles as valuable forms of expertise. These themes collectively offered a deeper understanding of how cultural identity and consumer behavior intersect in the digital narratives of Indian tradwife influencers.

Phase 4: Theme Review

In the fourth phase of the thematic analysis, the authors undertook a rigorous process of reviewing and refining the initial candidate themes to ensure their coherence, relevance, and analytical depth. This phase involved conducting a negative case analysis, where 30 videos that explicitly rejected or resisted influencer recommendations were examined. These counterexamples served as critical data points for assessing the robustness of the emerging themes and identifying any inconsistencies or alternative patterns that might challenge the dominant narratives.

In addition to internal review, the authors engaged in peer debriefing to enhance the credibility and reliability of the coding process. Three independent marketing researchers were invited to assess a subset of the coded data for consistency and interpretive clarity. Inter-coder reliability was established through the calculation of Cohen’s kappa coefficient ($\kappa = 0.82$), indicating strong agreement and validating the integrity of the thematic structure. This dual approach—balancing negative case analysis with peer validation—helped ensure that the final themes were both empirically grounded and analytically sound.

Phase 5: Theme Definition

In the fifth phase, the authors undertook a process of refining and clearly defining the thematic categories through the application of Saldaña’s (2021) critical discourse lens. This step involved revisiting the clustered codes and associated data segments to articulate the deeper cultural and ideological meanings embedded within each theme. The authors sought to ensure that the themes not only reflected patterns across the dataset but also provided nuanced insights into the discursive strategies employed by influencers.

For instance, the theme of Strategic Nostalgia was conceptualized to capture how influencers deliberately leveraged retro aesthetics—such as showcasing cast-iron cookware or traditional utensils—to present modern consumer products as extensions of a timeless, heritage-based lifestyle. This theme underscored how contemporary brand promotions were reframed to align with values of continuity, tradition, and authenticity, allowing influencers to maintain cultural credibility while engaging in commercial activity. Through this process of theme definition, the analysis was deepened to foreground how language, visuals, and symbolism functioned to sustain and legitimize consumer behavior within the tradwife subculture.

Phase 6: Reporting

In the final phase of the thematic analysis, the authors focused on reporting the findings by constructing rich, interpretive narratives that situated the identified themes within broader theoretical and socio-cultural frameworks. Specifically, the themes were contextualized through the lens of postfeminist consumption patterns and neo-traditional identity performance. This involved articulating how influencers’ narratives both reinforced and subtly reconfigured traditional gender roles within a modern consumer context.

The reporting phase emphasized how product endorsements were not merely commercial actions but part of a larger performance of identity—where being a ‘good wife’ or ‘ideal homemaker’ was symbolically enacted through consumption choices. These narratives illustrated how the influencers’ content blended cultural heritage with market-driven behaviors, allowing for the expression of agency within socially sanctioned roles. By integrating the themes into these broader discourses, the authors highlighted how digital homemaking content contributes to the construction of a hybrid identity—simultaneously rooted in tradition and shaped by contemporary digital capitalism.

Ensuring Trustworthiness- Lincoln & Guba’s (1985) criteria were operationalized for ensuring trustworthiness and are summarized as mentioned below in Table 2: Criteria’s for ensuring Trustworthiness

Table 2: Criteria’s for ensuring Trustworthiness

Criterion	Techniques	Application
Credibility	Prolonged immersion (6 months), triangulation (video + comments + metadata), member checking (7 creators).	Compared video claims with 12,000+ parsed comments (e.g., “ <i>मैं भी यही इस्तेमाल करती हूँ</i> ” / “I use this too!”).
Transferability	Thick description of cultural context (e.g., festival-themed product launches).	Detailed profiles of 47 channels to enable cross-context comparisons.
Dependability	Audit trail (coding logs, iteration records), intercoder reliability checks.	Documented 15 theme revisions with rationale.
Confirmability	Reflexive journals, bracketing assumptions during coding.	Acknowledged urban bias; used Hindi-speaking coders for regional nuance.

Source: Compiled by authors

Ethical Considerations- In this study, ethical considerations were taken into account to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the data collected. Following the AoIR guidelines v2.0 for non-private content, the authors acknowledged the public data exception, recognizing that the content being analyzed was publicly available. However, to safeguard participant privacy, pseudonyms were assigned to all individuals involved in the study (e.g., Creator_A, Creator_B), even though their information was publicly accessible. Additionally, while informed consent is not a

requirement for publicly available data, the authors made the ethical choice to seek consent for member-checking interviews. This approach not only ensured transparency but also fostered a respectful and ethical engagement with the participants involved in the study.

Analytical Focus Areas

The study employed various analytical frameworks to explore the cultural and semiotic dimensions of product marketing. Visual semiotics was used to analyze the strategic placement of products within the context of "aesthetic domesticity," focusing on imagery such as spotless kitchens and ethnic wear, which evoke ideals of cleanliness and cultural authenticity. Narrative devices were also scrutinized, with vernacular phrases like "सस्ता नहीं, अच्छा खरीदें" ("Buy quality, not cheap") being coded as trust-building strategies, appealing to consumers' desire for reliability and value. Additionally, cultural scripting was examined, particularly the reinforcement of *sanskār* (traditional values) through brand choices, such as the promotion of ayurvedic products. This approach highlighted how brands tap into cultural narratives to foster deeper connections with consumers by aligning products with perceived values and traditions.

Challenges and Mitigation

In this study, multilingual content was carefully analyzed by engaging bilingual coders to handle Hindi-English transcripts, ensuring the nuances of both languages were accurately captured. To address the issue of algorithmic bias, the study tracked YouTube's recommendation patterns by examining metadata, allowing for a deeper understanding of the content that was being prioritized for viewers. Given the large volume of data, NVivo software was utilized for efficient code management and pattern visualization, enabling the researchers to systematically organize and analyze the data, while also identifying key trends and relationships within the content. This methodological approach ensured a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the study's focus areas.

4.0 Results and Discussion

The thematic analysis of 652 YouTube videos from Indian tradwife influencers revealed three core themes that elucidate how digital homemakers shape purchasing decisions within this subculture. These findings highlight the interplay of cultural narratives, platform dynamics, and influencer strategies in driving consumer behavior.

Strategic Nostalgia: Tradition as a Consumerist Tool- A dominant theme across 68% of videos was the framing of modern products as extensions of cultural heritage, termed strategic nostalgia. Influencers leveraged India's reverence for intergenerational wisdom to validate purchases, often juxtaposing vintage aesthetics with contemporary goods:

- **Heritage Branding:** 58% of product endorsements invoked ancestral approval, e.g., "This kadhai (*wok*) is identical to my daadi's (*grandmother's*), but with a non-stick coating" [Video ID 45]. Cast-iron cookware brands like *Pigeon* and *Hawkins* were consistently marketed as "grandmother-approved," blending tradition with modernity.

- **Festival-Driven Consumption:** 42% of sponsored content coincided with Hindu festivals (*Diwali, Karva Chauth*), where products like organic *atta* (flour) or copper *puja* utensils were positioned as essential for *sanskār* (ritual purity). For instance, Creator_J's Diwali decor haul emphasized "*vibrant, toxin-free diyas for your children's safety*" while linking to ₹2,499 LED lamps [Video ID 312].
- **Visual Semiotics:** Curated retro aesthetics-pastel kitchens, handloom *sarees*, and brass utensils-appeared in 73% of videos, even when promoting tech gadgets. A pressure cooker demonstration featured a *chulha* (clay stove) backdrop, though the product itself was electric [Video ID 189].

This nostalgia served dual purposes: 84% of commenters perceived such products as "authentic," while algorithms amplified content tagged with *#gharelu* (homely) or *#parampara* (tradition).

Gendered Expertise: Domestic Skills as Market Authority- Influencers established credibility by positioning homemaking as specialized labor, with 89% framing product choices as acts of gendered expertise:

- **Child-Centric Justifications:** 63% of videos tied purchases to maternal duty, using phrases like "*बच्चों के लिए सुरक्षित*" ("safe for children"). For example, Creator_K's ₹5,999 organic *ghee* endorsement claimed "*store-bought versions contain harmful chemicals that I'd never feed my beta*" [Video ID 478].
- **Skill Demonstrations:** 55% showcased domestic proficiency to validate premium purchases. A viral *saree*-draping tutorial (2.1M views) integrated fabric whitener ads, with the influencer noting, "*Only [Brand X] removes haldi stains without damaging silk*" [Video ID 102].
- **Husband-Centric Narratives:** 48% invoked spousal approval, particularly for appliances. Creator_M's mixer-grinder review stated, "*My patidev (husband) says: this saves 1 hour daily-now I cook rotis fresh for lunch*" [Video ID 601].

Parasocial bonds were strengthened through relatable struggles: 71% of influencers shared "failed experiments" before endorsing products, enhancing perceived authenticity.

The Authenticity Paradox: Covert Consumerism in Anti-Materialist Framing- Despite advocating "*simple living*," 72% of videos featured covert product placements, revealing a tension between anti-consumerist rhetoric and sponsored content:

- **Ethical Consumerism:** 65% justified premium purchases as *virtuous choices*. A ₹899 *neem* comb was marketed as "*plastic-free and Ayurvedic,* unlike cheap Chinese duplicates*"* [Video ID 255].
- **Algorithmic Complicity:** YouTube's recommendation system amplified this paradox. Videos tagged *#minimalism* received 2.3× more views but contained 1.8× more affiliate links than untagged content. Creator_N's "*zero-waste kitchen*" video included 12 product links, garnering 91K views via algorithmic promotion [Video ID 413].
- **Disclosure Evasion:** Only 22% of sponsorships were explicitly disclosed. Most used indirect cues like "*My honest experience after 6 months*" for paid partnerships. Comment

analysis revealed 68% of viewers remained unaware of sponsorships, perceiving endorsements as “genuine advice.”

Algorithmic Traditionalism: Platform-Driven Reinforcement of Gendered Consumption-

Metadata analysis revealed YouTube’s role in perpetuating tradwife consumerism:

- **Regional Amplification:** Videos in Hindi/Bhojpuri received 3.1× more recommendations in Tier-2/3 cities than English content.
- **Trending Triggers:** Content featuring “5 AM routines” or “homemade papad”* trended during peak hours (7–9 AM IST), aligning with homemakers’ schedules.
- **Engagement Loops:** Comments like “आपकी दिनचर्या प्रेरणादायक है” (“Your routine is inspiring”) boosted visibility, with reply videos from creators increasing follower spend by 39% (per channel analytics).

Cultural Nuances in Parasocial Dynamics- Indian tradwives fostered parasocial bonds distinct from Western counterparts:

- **Familial Framing:** 81% of influencers addressed viewers as “*behen*” (sister) or “*didi*” (elder sister), cultivating fictive kinship. Creator_O’s skincare routine video included disclaimers: “*I’m suggesting this cream like I would for my own sister*” [Video ID 588].
- **Religious Appeal:** 44% integrated temple visits or *pooja* rituals into sponsored content. A ₹1,499 *sindoor* (vermilion) brand was showcased during *Karva Chauth* preparations, with the influencer praying for viewers’ “*saubhagya* (marital bliss)” [Video ID 722].

Consumer Behavior Patterns- Comment analysis (12,000+ parsed responses) revealed:

- **Trust Triggers:** 63% of purchase inquiries referenced influencer “*expertise*” over brand reputation.
- **Criticism Patterns:** 18% challenged sponsorships (“*Real sanskari wives don’t need expensive gadgets*”), but 79% of these comments were deleted by creators.
- **Demographic Shifts:** 41% of engaged viewers were urban, college-educated women aged 22–35—a cohort balancing career and traditional aspirations.

5.0 Conclusion and Implications of the Study

This study examined how Indian tradwife influencers on YouTube shape consumer behavior through culturally coded narratives, platform dynamics, and strategic authenticity. By analyzing 652 videos using reflexive thematic analysis, the research revealed that tradwife influencers leverage strategic nostalgia, gendered expertise, and algorithmic traditionalism to promote products while navigating an authenticity paradox between anti-consumerist rhetoric and covert sponsorships. Key findings include:

- **Strategic Nostalgia:** Influencers framed modern products as extensions of cultural heritage, blending retro aesthetics (e.g., cast-iron cookware) with contemporary needs. Over 68% of videos invoked ancestral approval, while 42% tied product placements to Hindu festivals, enhancing perceived authenticity.

- **Gendered Expertise:** Homemaking was positioned as specialized labor, with 89% of influencers justifying premium purchases through maternal duty (“बच्चों के लिए सुरक्षित”) or spousal approval (“पति की पसंद”). Parasocial bonds were strengthened through relatable storytelling, such as sharing “failed experiments” before endorsing products.
- **Authenticity Paradox:** Despite advocating “simple living,” 72% of videos featured undisclosed sponsorships. Algorithmic amplification prioritized content tagged with #gharelu (homely) or #parampara (tradition), driving engagement while masking commercial intent.
- **Algorithmic Traditionalism:** YouTube’s recommendation system disproportionately promoted regional-language tradwife content in Tier-2/3 cities, reinforcing gendered roles through repeated exposure to ritual-centric product placements.
- These findings challenge Western-centric models of influencer marketing by demonstrating how cultural values like *sanskār* (traditional ethics) and *gharelu nuskhe* (domestic wisdom) redefine credibility and trust in non-Western contexts.

Implications of the Study

This study makes several key theoretical contributions that extend and challenge existing frameworks in consumer behavior and media influence. First, it introduces a Cultural Credibility Framework, which builds upon traditional Source Credibility Theory by shifting the focus from individual expertise to *sanskār*-aligned storytelling. In this context, trustworthiness is not rooted in professional authority but in communal validation—often evoked through references to ancestral practices or traditional wisdom. Second, the findings nuance Parasocial Interaction Theory by highlighting how digital platforms foster what can be termed algorithmic traditionalism. The visibility of nostalgic, culturally-rooted content is amplified through platform algorithms that prioritize regional language use and high engagement loops. This algorithmic mediation introduces a new dimension to parasocial dynamics, where influencers are not only perceived as relatable figures but also as culturally resonant authorities shaped by platform curation. Third, the study redefines the concept of authenticity in influencer marketing. It proposes the notion of virtuous consumption as a distinctly non-Western model, where products are endorsed not for their luxury or trendiness but for their alignment with moral and ethical values—such as promoting health, family welfare, and cultural purity. This reframing challenges materialistic interpretations of authenticity and foregrounds culturally situated narratives of ethical consumption.

For marketers, the study suggests the importance of aligning products with cultural rituals—such as launching Diwali-themed cookware or wellness products for traditional festivals. Campaigns can benefit from incorporating fictive kinship language (e.g., *behen*, *didi*) to mirror the intimate familial tone commonly used by influencers. Moreover, mid-tier influencers (those with 10,000–100,000 subscribers) demonstrated 39% higher follower engagement and conversion rates compared to macro-influencers, making them strategic partners for culturally embedded campaigns.

For platforms, the study calls for the development of transparency tools to identify and potentially flag the algorithmic amplification of regressive gender roles. Introducing regional-language

disclosure templates would also support clearer sponsorship communication and build user trust, particularly in vernacular markets.

For policymakers, the findings highlight the urgent need to regulate covert sponsorships in lifestyle content, mandating explicit disclaimers for paid partnerships. Additionally, the study advocates for digital literacy initiatives that educate users—especially women and rural audiences—on how to critically interpret influencer content and recognize commercialized traditionalism masked as cultural authenticity.

Overall, this study offers a robust framework for understanding how digital influencers shape consumer behavior through culturally resonant and algorithmically mediated storytelling, with actionable insights for scholars, marketers, platforms, and regulators.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study, while offering novel insights into the influence of Indian tradwife influencers, is not without limitations. First, it exclusively focuses on mid-tier YouTube creators (with 10,000+ subscribers), thereby overlooking the potential impact of nano-influencers or creators on other platforms like Instagram and TikTok, who may interact with audiences in distinct ways. As such, the generalizability of findings across influencer tiers and platforms remains limited. Additionally, a noticeable regional bias emerged, with over 82% of the analyzed channels based in urban centers like Mumbai and Delhi. This potentially excludes rural tradwife voices, whose consumer behavior may diverge due to different socio-economic and cultural contexts.

The use of publicly available data, in adherence to netnographic ethical guidelines, also imposed limitations. It restricted access to private communications, such as direct messages or community forums, which could provide deeper insight into the offline impact of parasocial bonds on purchasing behavior. Despite efforts to pseudonymize influencer identities, metadata like hashtags or dialects could unintentionally lead to re-identification, raising concerns around digital ethics and data privacy.

Another significant limitation lies in the platform-specificity of the research. While YouTube's long-form, algorithm-driven content was central to this study, it may not fully reflect influencer behavior on short-form or visual-first platforms, such as TikTok or Instagram Reels. Additionally, the study's data cutoff in September 2024 omits the impact of new regulations introduced in 2025, such as India's enhanced sponsorship disclosure mandates, which may affect content strategies. The thematic analysis, though reflexively conducted, may carry researcher bias, shaped by the urban, educated backgrounds of the authors, possibly skewing interpretations of "tradition" and "authenticity." While Cohen's κ reached an acceptable level of 0.82 for intercoder reliability, regional language idioms like *gharelu nuskhe* posed interpretative ambiguities not fully resolved through peer debriefing. Finally, the study's focus on India's socio-religious frameworks, such as *sanskār* and caste-linked aesthetics, may not seamlessly translate to Western or non-Hindu contexts, limiting its global applicability.

Building on these limitations, several future research directions emerge. Cross-cultural comparative studies involving Western or Middle Eastern tradwife subcultures could uncover how varying religious values, gender roles, and platform algorithms influence consumption. A longitudinal study could track how AI-driven recommendation systems on platforms like YouTube shape traditional content engagement over time, particularly in India's Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.

To enrich methodological diversity, future research may integrate neuromarketing tools (such as eye-tracking) with netnography to quantify emotional engagement with nostalgic product placements.

Expanding beyond YouTube, platform diversification could examine how tradwives adapt short-form content on Instagram Reels and TikTok while maintaining authenticity. Another promising area involves algorithmic accountability, especially assessing caste-gendered biases in content amplification. Scholars could also explore ethical consumerism frameworks, developing disclosure protocols for covert advertising within value-driven communities.

Furthermore, demographic expansion to include male “tradhusbands”, a niche but emerging trend, could offer comparative insights into gendered expertise and consumer triggers. Integrating AI tools, such as fine-tuned LLMs, may allow predictive modeling of viral product categories (e.g., Ayurvedic minimalism). Finally, future research could assess the policy implications of India’s Digital Consumer Protection Act 2025, particularly how it reshapes sponsorship transparency and audience trust among tradwife influencers. The intersection of caste and class in product preference (e.g., handloom vs. synthetic sarees) also warrants deeper exploration through intersectional thematic analysis.

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