



# THE ROLE OF INFLUENCER MARKETING IN ENHANCING HOTEL ROOM OCCUPANCY: EVIDENCE FROM THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF PURCHASE INTENTION

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## ABSTRACT

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*This study examines the role of influencer marketing in enhancing hotel room occupancy through the mediating effect of purchase intention among hotel customers in Chennai. The study adopted a quantitative research design and collected primary data from a sample of 200 hotel customers. Path analysis was employed to examine the direct and mediated relationships among nano influencers, micro influencers, purchase intention, and hotel room occupancy. The results indicate that nano influencers have a significant positive effect on purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.446$ ), while micro influencers also have a significant positive effect on purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.384$ ). Purchase intention significantly influences hotel room occupancy ( $\beta = 0.134$ ). In addition, nano influencers ( $\beta = 0.363$ ) and micro influencers ( $\beta = 0.319$ ) have significant positive direct effects on hotel room occupancy. The findings suggest that influencer marketing, particularly through nano and micro influencers, can strengthen customers' purchase intentions and contribute to improved hotel room occupancy. The study concludes that hotels in Chennai can strategically use credible and relatable influencers to stimulate customer engagement, booking intention, and occupancy performance.*

**KEYWORDS:** Influencer Marketing, Nano Influencers, Micro Influencers, Purchase Intention, Hotel Room Occupancy, Hotel Customers, Chennai.

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of digital marketing has transformed the hospitality industry, with influencer marketing emerging as an effective promotional strategy for increasing customer engagement and hotel room occupancy. Social media influencers create authentic and persuasive content that shapes consumers' travel decisions by providing credible reviews, destination experiences, and hotel recommendations. Compared to traditional advertising, influencer marketing enhances trust, brand awareness, and customer engagement, making it an essential component of hotel marketing strategies. In Chennai, a rapidly growing tourism and business destination, hotels increasingly collaborate with travel influencers to strengthen their online presence and attract potential guests. The effectiveness of influencer marketing is largely attributed to its ability to influence consumers' purchase intentions, which ultimately affect hotel booking behaviour (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Lim, et al. 2017; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

Purchase intention has been recognized as a significant psychological factor that mediates the relationship between marketing communication and actual purchasing behaviour.

Influencers shape consumer perceptions by delivering informative, entertaining, and trustworthy content, thereby reducing perceived risk associated with hotel bookings. The credibility, attractiveness, and expertise of influencers positively affect consumers' confidence in selecting hotel accommodations. In the hospitality industry, customers often rely on online reviews, influencer endorsements, and user-generated content before making reservation decisions. Consequently, influencer marketing strengthens purchase intention, leading to higher booking rates and improved hotel occupancy. Understanding this mediating mechanism is particularly important for hotel managers seeking cost-effective promotional strategies in highly competitive tourism markets such as Chennai (Ki & Kim, 2019; Casalo, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2018; Jin & Muqaddam, 2019; Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016).

Chennai has experienced significant growth in domestic and international tourism due to its cultural heritage, medical tourism, educational institutions, and business activities. This competitive environment has encouraged hotels to adopt innovative digital marketing strategies to attract diverse customer segments. Influencer marketing provides hotels with

opportunities to reach targeted audiences through social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and travel blogs. Despite its growing popularity, empirical evidence on the effectiveness of influencer marketing in enhancing hotel room occupancy through purchase intention remains limited, particularly in the Indian hospitality sector. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of influencer marketing in improving hotel room occupancy by investigating the mediating effect of purchase intention among hotel customers in Chennai. The findings are expected to contribute to hospitality marketing literature while providing practical insights for hotel managers, digital marketers, and tourism stakeholders (Leung, et al. 2013; Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang, & Koo, 2015; Buhalis & Law, 2008; Sigala, 2018).

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Influencer Marketing and Purchase Intention

Influencer marketing as a significant determinant of consumers' purchase intentions in the hotel and hospitality industry. Djafarova and Bowes (2021) found that influencer credibility, authenticity, and trust positively influence consumers' intentions to book hospitality services through social media recommendations. Akhtar et al. (2024) further demonstrated that virtual influencers can enhance customer engagement and online booking intentions when perceived as authentic and informative. Similarly, Lou and Yuan (2020) emphasized that influencer expertise, trustworthiness, and content quality improve brand attitudes, ultimately increasing purchase intention. Sokolova and Kefi (2020) reported that parasocial interaction between influencers and followers significantly strengthens consumers' trust and willingness to purchase recommended hospitality services. Additionally, Polat, et al. (2024) comprehensive review of hospitality influencer marketing highlighted that authentic storytelling and destination-related content effectively shape tourists' hotel selection decisions.

More recent evidence confirms that influencer marketing continues to play a strategic role in consumers' hotel booking decisions. Huang, et al. (2026), through a meta-analysis of 25 studies, concluded that trustworthiness, expertise, authenticity, entertainment, and parasocial relationships are the strongest predictors of behavioural and purchase intentions in tourism and hospitality. Sun, et al. (2026) similarly found that informational, normative, and value-expressive characteristics of social media influencers significantly influence tourists' purchase intentions through psychological identification and internalization. John and Supramaniam (2026) reviewed 304 tourism studies and proposed that influencer marketing positively shapes tourist attitudes, intentions, and booking behaviours across multiple hospitality contexts. Alizadeh, et al. (2026) synthesized 163 hospitality studies and concluded that influencer marketing has become an indispensable promotional strategy for hotels because influencer authenticity, engagement, and credibility consistently enhance consumers' purchase intentions. Overall, the literature consistently demonstrates that influencer marketing positively affects hotel purchase intention by fostering trust, credibility, emotional attachment, and favourable brand attitudes. Hence, the hypothesis is

**H<sub>A</sub>:** Influencer Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Purchase Intention in hotel industry.

### Influencer Marketing and Enhancing Hotel Room Occupancy

Influencer marketing has become an important digital marketing strategy for increasing hotel room occupancy by influencing travellers' purchase intentions, destination image, and booking decisions. Research consistently shows that influencer credibility, authenticity, expertise, and content quality significantly affect consumers' trust and intention to book hotels. Studies by Zhu, et al. (2023), Pop, et al. (2021), and Leung, et al. (2022) reported that hotel customers are more likely to choose accommodation recommended by trusted social media influencers than through traditional advertising. Similarly, the review by Alizadeh, Leung, and Gursoy (2026) synthesized 163 studies and concluded that influencer marketing has evolved into a strategic promotional tool for hospitality businesses, particularly through Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, where influencers create engaging experiences that stimulate hotel bookings and improve occupancy rates. Meta-analytic evidence by Sun, et al. (2026) further demonstrated that influencer characteristics such as trustworthiness, authenticity, and entertainment value significantly improve tourists' behavioural intentions, ultimately contributing to higher hotel demand. These findings collectively suggest that influencer-generated content strengthens hotel brand awareness, customer engagement, and booking intentions.

Several review studies have also emphasized that influencer marketing enhances hotel performance by improving electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), destination attractiveness, customer loyalty, and online reputation. Javed, et al. (2025) found that nearly 89% of tourism and hospitality influencer research has been published after 2020, reflecting the rapid growth of this marketing approach. Their systematic review identified authenticity, destination storytelling, visual content, and influencer-brand congruence as key determinants of successful hospitality campaigns. Likewise, the review by the Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing (2024) highlighted a shift from celebrity endorsement toward micro- and nano-influencers because of their higher engagement and stronger customer trust. The meta-analysis by Alizadeh, et al. (2026) further confirmed that relational factors such as parasocial interaction and emotional attachment produce stronger booking intentions than influencer popularity alone. Overall, the recent literature concludes that hotels adopting strategic influencer marketing campaigns achieve greater online visibility, stronger customer engagement, improved booking intentions, and ultimately enhanced hotel room occupancy. Future studies are encouraged to examine the long-term return on investment, artificial intelligence-driven influencer selection, and the effectiveness of influencer marketing across different hotel categories and customer segments. Hence, the hypothesis is

**H<sub>A</sub>:** Influencer Marketing has a positive and significant effect on hotel room occupancy.

### Purchase Intention and Enhancing Hotel Room Occupancy

Purchase intention is one of the strongest predictors of hotel room occupancy because it directly influences customers' booking decisions. Shukla and Rodrigues (2022) found that informative online booking platforms, website quality, and e-trust significantly improve customers' purchase intentions. Sim,

et al. (2021) demonstrated that positive online reviews regarding room quality, service, ambience, and value increase booking intention, whereas negative reviews reduce customers' willingness to reserve hotel rooms. Kim, et al. (2021) further explained that perceived value, attitude, and the Theory of Planned Behaviour strongly influence accommodation purchase intentions. Wang and Li (2022), through a meta-analysis of tourism purchase intention studies, concluded that safety, trust, service quality, price fairness, and information quality are the most influential determinants of booking intention. Ahmad and Gandhi (2023) reviewed hotel booking literature and highlighted that customer satisfaction, online experience, service quality, and digital engagement consistently enhance hotel booking intention. These studies collectively indicate that hotels can improve occupancy rates by strengthening customer trust, providing transparent information, maintaining high service quality, and encouraging positive electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM).

Growing importance of digital marketing, brand image, and online customer engagement in improving hotel occupancy. Wang and Long (2026) reported that e-WOM reviews positively influence customer attitudes, hotel image, and purchase intention, leading to higher booking rates. Abdalla, et al. (2026) showed that brand perception strengthens the relationship between customer attitudes and hotel booking intentions in digital hospitality environments. Author, et al. (2026) revealed that customer-generated room photos may either increase or decrease booking intention depending on perceived cleanliness and hotel responses to reviews. Barman and Gupta (2026), in a systematic literature review, concluded that trust, website quality, perceived usefulness, brand image,

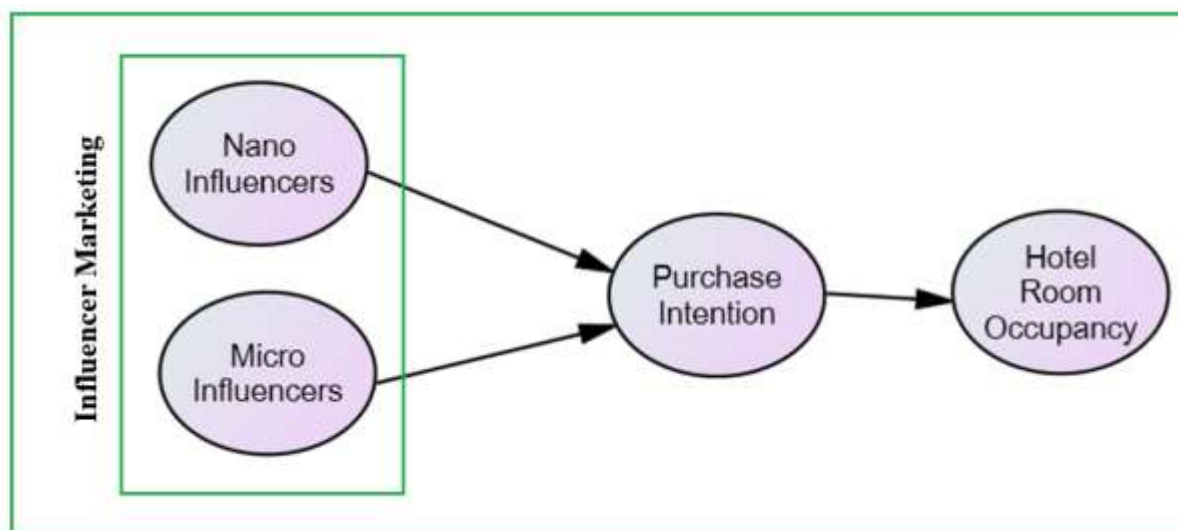
and value perception remain the primary determinants of online hotel booking intention. Overall, the recent literature consistently concludes that enhancing purchase intention through superior service quality, positive online reviews, strong brand reputation, secure booking systems, customer trust, and effective digital marketing significantly contributes to increasing hotel room occupancy and long-term business performance in the hospitality industry. Hence, the hypothesis is

**H<sub>A</sub>:** Purchase intention has a positive and significant effect on hotel room occupancy.

## RESEARCH GAP

Influencer marketing can positively shape consumers' attitudes, engagement, purchase intention, and hotel booking intention; however, existing studies have largely examined influencer characteristics, content features, parasocial interaction, or specific forms of influencer communication rather than establishing a comprehensive pathway from influencer marketing to actual hotel room occupancy through purchase intention. For example, Kapoor, et al. (2022) examined the effectiveness of travel social media influencers in influencing tourists' intention to stay at eco-friendly hotels, while Nuru, et al. (2024) investigated influencer content characteristics and followers' purchase intention in the hotel industry, highlighting the need for further research connecting influencer marketing, purchase intention, and measurable hotel performance outcomes. Therefore, the present study addresses this gap by examining the mediating role of purchase intention in the relationship between influencer marketing and hotel room occupancy, particularly within the Chennai hotel industry.

## Framework of the Research



**Figure 1: Research Framework of the Research**

The research framework proposes that Influencer Marketing, represented by Nano-Influencers and Micro-Influencers, acts as the independent variable influencing Hotel Room Occupancy, while Purchase Intention serves as the mediating variable. The framework is grounded in the view that credible and engaging influencer content can shape consumers' perceptions and intentions to book hotel rooms, which may subsequently contribute to higher occupancy. Previous hospitality research demonstrates that social media influencers can affect hotel-

related purchase and booking intentions, while micro- and nano-influencers can generate stronger identification, engagement, and behavioural intentions among followers (Peres & Silva, 2021; Han & Zhang, 2024). Thus, the proposed framework examines the direct effects of nano- and micro-influencer marketing on hotel room occupancy and the indirect effect through purchase intention, consistent with evidence that influencer characteristics and content can significantly

influence consumers' hotel purchase intentions (Szymkowiak, et al. 2021; Jin & Han, 2023).

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The hotel industry is facing increasing competition in attracting customers and maintaining high room occupancy, while traditional marketing approaches are becoming less effective in reaching digitally connected consumers. Although influencer marketing has emerged as an important digital strategy for creating awareness, trust, and engagement, its direct contribution to hotel room occupancy is not yet sufficiently understood, particularly in the Indian hotel context. Moreover, purchase intention may act as an important mechanism through which influencer marketing influences customers' decisions to book hotel rooms. Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is the need to determine whether influencer marketing significantly enhances hotel room occupancy and to examine whether purchase intention mediates this relationship. The study seeks to provide empirical evidence that can help hotels develop more effective influencer-based marketing strategies for improving customer booking decisions and room occupancy.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a quantitative, descriptive and explanatory research design to examine the influence of influencer marketing on hotel room occupancy, with purchase intention as a mediating variable, focusing on hotel customers in Chennai. Primary data will be collected through a structured questionnaire from respondents who have encountered hotel-related influencer content on social media. The relationships among influencer marketing, purchase intention, and hotel room occupancy will be examined using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), including mediation analysis. This design is appropriate because recent hospitality research demonstrates that influencer characteristics and content can significantly affect consumers' purchase or hotel-booking intentions (Nadzri, et al. 2024; Szymkowiak, et al. 2021).

### Questionnaire Construction

The questionnaire was constructed systematically to measure the major variables of the study, namely Influencer Marketing, Purchase Intention, and Hotel Room Occupancy, along with the demographic profile of the respondents. The demographic profile consisted of seven items, while the Influencer Marketing construct consisted of ten self-designed items covering Nano Influencers and Micro Influencers, with five items assigned to each dimension. The items were developed based on the objectives of the study and supported by recent hospitality and tourism literature concerning influencer characteristics, influencer marketing, and consumer responses. Research on hotel influencers demonstrates that influencer characteristics such as trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise can influence hotel purchase intention, while recent tourism research also confirms the importance of influencer-related

constructs in explaining consumers' behavioural intentions (Jin & Han, 2023; Kılıc & Gurlek, 2024).

The Purchase Intention variable was measured using five items, with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.90, whereas Hotel Room Occupancy was measured using five items with a reliability coefficient of 0.89. The Influencer Marketing scale recorded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.86, with Nano Influencer = 0.88 and Micro Influencer = 0.84, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. The reported item-level validity values for Influencer Marketing ranged from 0.324 to 0.845. These reliability and validity results indicate that the questionnaire provides an acceptable basis for subsequent statistical analysis. This approach is consistent with recent tourism research in which Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70 and adequate factor loadings are treated as evidence of reliable measurement, while purchase-intention measures have also demonstrated satisfactory reliability in influencer-marketing research (Teng, et al. 2024; Darlingon, et al. 2023).

### Population and Sample Size

The population of the present study comprises hotel customers in Chennai, including customers who have stayed in or used hotel services and are therefore capable of providing informed responses regarding influencer marketing, purchase intention, and hotel room occupancy. Defining the population as hotel customers is appropriate because recent hospitality research has examined hotel guests and travellers as the primary unit of analysis when investigating booking intentions, customer experiences, and behavioural responses (Ahmad & Sharma, 2025; Baykal, 2024). The study adopts a sample size of 200 hotel customers, selected as respondents for the empirical investigation. A sample of 200 is considered practically manageable for primary-data collection and adequate for examining relationships among the study variables through commonly used statistical techniques, particularly when the research focuses on a defined customer population within a specific geographical area. Previous hospitality studies have successfully employed several hundred respondents to examine hotel booking and purchase intentions, supporting the use of a structured customer sample for quantitative hospitality research (Islam, 2024; Srivastava, 2023).

### Statistical analysis

Path analysis was employed to examine the direct and indirect relationships among influencer marketing, purchase intention, and hotel room occupancy. The technique enables the researcher to estimate the strength and significance of hypothesised causal paths and to assess the mediating effect of purchase intention within the proposed research model. Path coefficients, significance levels, and explained variance were considered to evaluate the structural relationships, following recommended practices for mediation and structural path modelling in hospitality research (Rasoolimanesh, et al. 2021; Manosuthi, et al. 2021).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

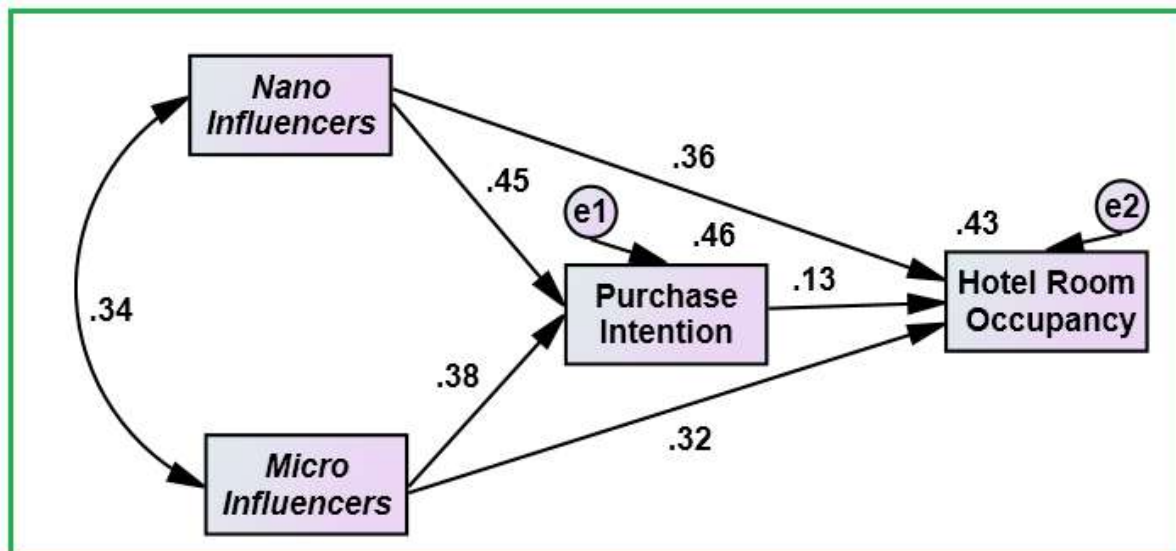


Figure 2: The Role of Influencer Marketing on Enhancing Hotel Room Occupancy with Mediating Effect of Purchase Intention

Table 1: Model fit indication of the role of influencer marketing on enhancing hotel room occupancy with mediating effect of purchase intention

| S.No. |                 | Model Fit Indicators | Suggested standards (Premapriya, et al. 2016) | Calculated Values |
|-------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1     | Chi-Square Test | Chi-Square           | ---                                           | 0.186             |
|       |                 | p                    | >0.050                                        | 0.857             |
| 2     | Goodness Fit    | GFI                  | > 0.90                                        | 1.000             |
|       |                 | AGFI                 |                                               | 1.000             |
|       |                 | CFI                  |                                               | 1.000             |
|       |                 | NFI                  |                                               | 1.000             |
| 3     | Badness Fit     | RMR                  | < 0.080                                       | 0.001             |
|       |                 | RMSEA                |                                               | 0.008             |

Source: Primary data

Table 1 presents the model-fit indicators for examining the role of influencer marketing in enhancing hotel room occupancy through the mediating effect of purchase intention. The calculated Chi-square value of 0.186 with a p-value of 0.857 ( $>0.05$ ) indicates that the proposed model does not significantly differ from the observed data, suggesting an acceptable model fit. The goodness-of-fit indices are exceptionally strong, with GFI, AGFI, CFI, and NFI all recording values of 1.000, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.90. In addition, the badness-of-fit measures are very low, with RMR = 0.001 and RMSEA = 0.008, both substantially below the recommended limit of 0.080. Therefore, all the reported fit statistics confirm

that the proposed model provides an excellent fit to the empirical data and is suitable for examining the relationships among influencer marketing, purchase intention, and hotel room occupancy. Similar model-fit criteria have been used to establish the adequacy of structural and path models, particularly when GFI, AGFI, CFI, and NFI exceed 0.90 and RMR and RMSEA remain below 0.08 (Velaudham & Baskar, 2015a; Velaudham & Baskar, 2015b; Velaudham & Baskar, 2016; Premapriya, et al. 2016; Velaudham & Baskar, 2017; Deepak, et al. 2019; Josephine Reena, et al. 2019; Indra, et al. 2020; Hariprabhu Dhakal, et al. 2025).

Table 2: Regression Weights of the role of influencer marketing on enhancing hotel room occupancy with mediating effect of purchase intention

| DV                   |      | IV                 | Estimate | S.E.  | C.R.   | Beta  | P Value |
|----------------------|------|--------------------|----------|-------|--------|-------|---------|
| Purchase Intention   | <--- | Nano Influencers   | 0.621    | 0.040 | 15.449 | 0.446 | 0.001   |
| Purchase Intention   | <--- | Micro Influencers  | 0.622    | 0.047 | 13.290 | 0.384 | 0.001   |
| Hotel Room Occupancy | <--- | Purchase Intention | 0.073    | 0.021 | 3.505  | 0.134 | 0.001   |
| Hotel Room Occupancy | <--- | Nano Influencers   | 0.277    | 0.026 | 10.615 | 0.363 | 0.001   |
| Hotel Room Occupancy | <--- | Micro Influencers  | 0.282    | 0.029 | 9.629  | 0.319 | 0.001   |

Source: Primary data

Table 2 presents the regression weights examining the role of nano and micro influencers in enhancing hotel room

occupancy, with purchase intention serving as a mediating variable. The results indicate that both nano influencers and

micro influencers have a positive and statistically significant influence on purchase intention. Specifically, nano influencers have an estimate of 0.621, standard error of 0.040, critical ratio of 15.449, and standardized beta of 0.446 ( $p = 0.001$ ), while micro influencers show an estimate of 0.622, standard error of 0.047, critical ratio of 13.290, and beta of 0.384 ( $p = 0.001$ ). These findings demonstrate that exposure to influencer-generated hotel content can substantially strengthen consumers' intention to purchase or book hotel services. The comparatively higher beta value for nano influencers suggests that their influence on purchase intention is somewhat stronger than that of micro influencers in the present model. This finding is consistent with Jin and Han (2023), who reported that hotel influencer characteristics such as trustworthiness and attractiveness positively affect hotel purchase intention, while Nuru, et al. (2024) found that influencer content characteristics significantly influence followers' purchase intention in the hotel industry. Similarly, Ying, et al. (2023) demonstrated that influencer-generated messages can affect consumers' hotel booking intentions, and Nguyen, et al. (2026) confirmed that informational social influence and parasocial interaction contribute to online hotel-booking behaviour.

The second part of Table 2 shows that purchase intention has a positive and significant effect on hotel room occupancy

(Estimate = 0.073, S.E. = 0.021, C.R. = 3.505,  $\beta = 0.134$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). In addition, nano influencers directly and significantly influence hotel room occupancy (Estimate = 0.277, S.E. = 0.026, C.R. = 10.615,  $\beta = 0.363$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), while micro influencers also have a positive and significant direct effect (Estimate = 0.282, S.E. = 0.029, C.R. = 9.629,  $\beta = 0.319$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). Thus, all five regression paths are statistically significant, supporting the proposed relationships among influencer marketing, purchase intention, and hotel room occupancy. The findings further indicate that purchase intention functions as a meaningful mediating mechanism through which influencer marketing can contribute to hotel occupancy, while the significant direct paths suggest that nano and micro influencers also affect occupancy independently of the mediator. The results are supported by Jin and Han (2023), who identified a significant relationship between hotel influencer characteristics and purchase intention, and by Nuru, et al. (2024), who demonstrated the importance of influencer content in generating hotel purchase intentions. Ying, et al. (2025) further showed that influencer message characteristics can influence hotel booking intention, while Thirakulwanich (2025) found that influencer credibility, authenticity, and relatability significantly affect hotel booking decisions.

**Table 3: Mediation Effect of the role of influencer marketing on enhancing hotel room occupancy with mediating effect of purchase intention**

| DV                   |     | Micro Influencers | Nano Influencers | Purchase Intention |
|----------------------|-----|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Purchase Intention   | DE  | 0.384             | 0.446            | 0.000              |
|                      | IDE | 0.000             | 0.000            | 0.000              |
|                      | TE  | <b>0.384</b>      | <b>0.446</b>     | <b>0.000</b>       |
| Hotel Room Occupancy | DE  | 0.319             | 0.363            | 0.134              |
|                      | IDE | 0.051             | 0.060            | 0.000              |
|                      | TE  | <b>0.370</b>      | <b>0.423</b>     | <b>0.134</b>       |

Source: Primary data

Table 3 presents the mediation effect of purchase intention in the relationship between influencer marketing and hotel room occupancy. The results show that micro-influencers have a direct effect (DE) of 0.319 on hotel room occupancy, while their indirect effect (IDE) through purchase intention is 0.051, producing a total effect (TE) of 0.370. Similarly, nano-influencers demonstrate a stronger direct effect of 0.363, an indirect effect of 0.060, and a total effect of 0.423 on hotel room occupancy. The results further indicate that both micro-influencers (0.384) and nano-influencers (0.446) positively influence purchase intention, while purchase intention itself has a positive direct effect of 0.134 on hotel room occupancy. Although the indirect effects are smaller than the direct effects, the positive values indicate that purchase intention contributes to the mechanism through which influencer marketing improves hotel room occupancy, suggesting partial mediation. This finding is consistent with Jin and Han (2023), who found that hotel influencer characteristics positively influence purchase intention and that relational mechanisms can mediate this relationship. Similarly, Wukkadada, et al. (2024) reported that micro-influencers play an important role in consumer decision-making and the conversion of purchase intentions into hotel purchase actions. Bastrygina, et al. (2024) emphasized that social media influencers can generate consumer

engagement and subsequent behavioural outcomes in hospitality and tourism, supporting the importance of influencer-driven consumer responses. In addition, Wei, et al. (2025) demonstrated that influencer marketing can influence hotel booking intention, confirming the relevance of influencer communication in shaping hospitality customers' booking decisions.

### Managerial Implications

The findings provide important managerial implications for hotel managers in Chennai by demonstrating that both nano and micro influencer marketing can effectively stimulate purchase intention and enhance hotel room occupancy. Nano influencers show a relatively stronger effect on purchase intention than micro influencers, indicating that their highly personalized communication and perceived closeness with followers can be particularly useful for building customer interest and booking intentions. Therefore, hotel managers should develop targeted collaborations with credible nano influencers who have strong engagement within specific local or niche audiences. At the same time, micro influencers should be strategically employed to achieve broader audience reach, as they also demonstrate a significant positive influence on purchase intention. Hotels can allocate their digital marketing budgets across both influencer

categories rather than relying exclusively on high-reach influencers, while selecting influencers according to audience relevance, engagement quality, credibility, and alignment with the hotel's positioning.

The results further indicate that purchase intention significantly contributes to hotel room occupancy, while nano influencers and micro influencers also have significant direct effects on occupancy. This suggests that hotel managers should design influencer campaigns that move customers beyond awareness toward actual booking decisions by providing attractive room packages, exclusive promotional codes, limited period offers, compelling hotel experiences, and direct booking links. Since purchase intention functions as an important mediating mechanism, managers should monitor not only influencer reach and engagement but also measurable outcomes such as enquiries, website visits, booking conversions, and occupancy rates. Integrating influencer-generated content with the hotel's reservation platforms, customer relationship management activities, and promotional campaigns can therefore strengthen the conversion of social-media exposure into actual room bookings and improve overall occupancy performance in the Chennai hotel market.

## CONCLUSION

The primary data collected from 200 customers of the hotel industry in Chennai, the study concludes that influencer marketing plays a significant role in enhancing hotel room occupancy, both directly and through the mediating effect of purchase intention. The results indicate that nano influencers have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.446$ ), while micro influencers also positively influence purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.384$ ). Purchase intention, in turn, has a positive and significant effect on hotel room occupancy ( $\beta = 0.134$ ), confirming its mediating role. Furthermore, nano influencers ( $\beta = 0.363$ ) and micro influencers ( $\beta = 0.319$ ) have significant direct effects on hotel room occupancy. Therefore, the findings establish that both nano and micro influencer marketing contribute significantly to improving hotel room occupancy among Chennai hotel customers, with purchase intention providing an additional pathway through which influencer-generated content can translate into customers' booking decisions and higher occupancy levels.

## Limitations and Future Research Direction

The study has certain limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the study is geographically restricted to hotel customers in Chennai, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cities, regions, or countries with different tourism and consumer characteristics. Second, the study uses a sample of 200 respondents and relies on self-reported responses, which may be influenced by individual perceptions, recall bias, or social desirability. Third, the study primarily examines influencer marketing through nano and micro influencers, purchase intention, and hotel room occupancy, while other influential factors such as hotel brand image, online reviews, service quality, pricing, customer experience, and macro influencers are not included. Future research could therefore employ larger and more diverse samples across different geographical locations and compare different categories of influencers. Longitudinal studies could also examine how influencer campaigns influence actual hotel

bookings and occupancy over time rather than relying mainly on purchase intention. Further research may incorporate additional mediating or moderating variables, such as trust, perceived authenticity, influencer credibility, customer engagement, age, and social-media usage intensity, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which influencer marketing affects hotel performance.

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