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# Unveiling influencer mind: Exploring factors influencing paint brand preference in a competitive landscape in Madurai district

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**Abstract**
In the dynamic landscape of decorative paint market, the emergence of influencer marketing has reshaped brand preferences among preference within this competitive environment. Moreover, the study illuminates the nuanced interplay between influencers, brands, and consumers, shedding light on the evolving dynamics of marketing in the digital age. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of consumer behavior in Madurai (MD) District's marketplace and offer strategic insights for brands aiming to navigate and thrive in this competitive landscape. By uncovering the underlying mechanisms driving brand preference, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of consumer behavior in MD District's marketplace. Target population of MD market. Convenience sampling was used and the sample size was 126 respondents. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires. To characterize and summarize data, descriptive statistics were employed. We used the Statistical Package Social Sciences (SPSS) assisted for data analysis. Regression analysis is used to find out relationship between the overall willingness of retailers with Marketing mix factor Moreover, the insights gleaned from this study provide actionable strategies for brands seeking to navigate and excel in this competitive environment, thereby fostering sustainable growth and market success.

**Keywords:** Paint products, paint Influencer, factors influence

## Introduction

The Indian paint industry has seen incredible success and has raised the bar for itself so that it can compete on a worldwide scale. There are two types of paint industries: organized and unorganized. Every year, the organized sector has grown by more than 15%–18%. (Gupta & Bisaria, 2020) [3]. The market is divided into two segments: ornamental and industrial. Major international corporations like as Jotun, Sherwin-Williams, Nippon, and Akzo Nobel have opened stores in India. (R & V, 2020) [8]. Every customer act in accordance with their own requirements and expectations, which influences the way they decide what to buy. Businesses must adapt their marketing techniques to the demands and expectations of their customers in light of this circumstance. Customers' choices for purchases can be influenced by a wide range of circumstances. Determining these elements is crucial to establishing the businesses' marketing plans. Businesses across all industries are beginning to place more value on customer preferences. The paint industry was the focus of this study, and analyses were performed. (Altun, Kızıl, Hanişoğlu, & Demir, 2022) [1]. In today's online world, social media has completely changed how we share and learn information. Because of this, we now have two important types of people: Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) and influencers. They emerged as powerful forces in shaping public opinion and consumer behavior. KOLs traditionally emerge from fields of expertise and are recognized for their knowledge and authority. Influencers, on the other hand, become famous by posting things that many people find interesting or relatable, so they build a big group of followers (Hamdan, Ramli, Ismail, & Abdullah, 2023) [5].

Influencers contribute in many ways to the multiple ways that customers are persuaded to change their impression of a brand, which causes them to go from their original demand to a modified requirement and ultimately narrows their options. These influencers have express capacity at various stages of the decision-making process of a customer.

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As recommendations flow to the customers at all the stages the customer is self-reliant to begin the search for a suitable brand of paint (Kochukalam & Joseph, 2016) [6]. When purchasing particular items or services, customers need to have some specialist knowledge about the area in order to make more educated judgments. If they don't, they are more likely to be swayed by influencers. (Gopal, 2014) [12].

In this mean time the customer start discussing this issue with friends and from this discussion most probably the final consideration set gets converted to a preference set. From this preference set the customer decided the value proposition that he may purchase and this value proposition will be the basis at the time of purchase. The recommendation of the dealers and the painters will only remain influential slightly deviating from this value proposition and this value proposition is inclusive of branded or non-branded comparisons (Kochukalam & Joseph, 2016) [6]. Once the house is painted most users do not retain even a modicum of interest in the category until the house has to be repainted. The purchase decision in the case of paints carries undue importance of intermediary over the end consumer. This is, because more often than not, it is the painter or the contractor who makes the final decision of choosing the brand.

## Brand
Paints are turning into a highly involved purchase for the final user, thus the brand is crucial in influencing his decision, whether it is for new building or painting projects.

**Product portfolio:** Paint companies must have a full product portfolio spanning all product categories and price ranges for their whole customer base in addition to a carefully chosen assortment of products for their main clientele.

## Distribution
Decorative paint sales necessitate large dealer networks, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas; for this reason, a robust supply chain and a pan-Indian distribution presence are necessary.

In today's digital environment, the rise of social media platforms has fundamentally altered how individuals receive and share information. Consequently, the opinions of key opinion leaders (KOLs) and influencers have become powerful instruments for shaping public perception and customer behaviour. KOLs are frequently recognized for their knowledge and authority and typically come from specialized fields, whereas influencers usually gain notoriety through related material and engagement (Hamdan, Ramli, Ismail, & Abdullah, 2023) [5]. Analyzing consumer preferences requires a close look at how people feel about making purchases. The organized and unorganized sectors comprise the two components of the Indian paint market. Small firms are part of the unorganized sector, whereas large and medium-sized enterprises comprise the organized sector. The expansion of paint needs throughout time, particularly in cities, is a sign of the development of India's paint industry (Gupta & Bisaria, 2020) [3]. Any company's chance of success depends on its capacity to recognize its sales influencers and create tactics that will appeal to them (Pandey & Mani, 2013) [7]. Micro-influencers are often positioned midway between ordinary social media users and celebrities. Endorsing them is a modern and possible application of social media marketing. This paper examines the validity of micro-influencers and the ways in which their behaviour influences the behaviour intentions of their followers (Gupta & Mahajan, 2019) [4].

In order to make better decisions while making purchases, customers must possess a specific amount of specialized knowledge about a certain category of products or services; otherwise, they expose themselves to influence from influencers. This group includes decorative paints. Once the need for painting is established, customers are vulnerable to pressure from dealers, painters, and other intermediaries until they reach a final choice. This is largely because of the substantial degree of information asymmetry, which affects customers' perceptions of each influencer's age and dependability. Because of their area of business, some influencers have a personal stake in the shopping habits of their clients (Kochukalam & Joseph, 2016) [6].

To fully understand the emphasis on creating new coating technologies, one must first understand the general structure of the paint and coatings business as well as the factors that motivate the sector's adaptability. In addition to describing the different expectations and concerns of consumers, this provides information by categorizing the paint and coatings industry in terms of market categories and geographic locations (Weiss, 1997) [9].

This study aims to investigate the factors that influence paint brand preference among consumers in Madurai District, India, with a particular focus on the role of influencers. The study will explore the competitive landscape of the paint industry in Madurai, examining the various brands and marketing strategies employed. It will then delve into the minds of influencers, understanding their decision-making process for brand endorsements and the impact they have on consumer choices. The research will likely involve a combination of surveys, interviews, and focus groups with both consumers and influencers to gather data on brand awareness, perception, and purchasing behavior. By understanding the factors that influence paint brand preference in this competitive market, the study will provide valuable insights for paint companies and marketing agencies looking to target consumers in Madurai District. Beyond the core focus on influencers, the study could also explore other relevant factors influencing brand preference in Madurai's paint market. Additionally, the research could delve into socio-economic factors specific to Madurai that might influence paint choices, such as the income of the painters, education, purchase value. By incorporating these broader elements, the study can paint (Pun intended) a more comprehensive picture of the decision-making process behind paint brand preference in this Madurai market.

## Materials and Methods
The purpose of this paper is to investigate empirically the differences in the factors influencing the paint brand preference in a competitive landscape in MD district. In order to satisfaction of paint influencers and to rank the acceptance of the same based on the locality of residence Urban (MD), data was collected from 126 respondents out of which 55 were paint retailers and 71 were painters. The respondents were selected based on the based on the painter dealers who is having different types of paint brands. The painter was selected on my convenience. A questionnaire was developed based on the five factors mentioned above and administered to respondents from MD Region. The

opinion of respondents about their satisfaction of paint brands was sought on five-point scale which ranged from strongly agree (Rated as 5) to strongly disagree (rated as 1). A structured questionnaire was used in the survey method of data collecting. Items from earlier studies that were deemed pertinent to the investigation were gathered and included to the questionnaire. A methodical survey was created to extract the variables impacting respondents' preferences for paint brands.

The key objective of this study is to understand the factors, influence brand preference on Paint products among the painters and Paint retailers

## Analysis and Results

One statistical technique for analyzing the connection between variables is regression analysis. Regression analysis is one of the ways we hope to learn important lessons and further the goals of the research.

**Perspective of Painter to recommend a paint brand to end users:** In this section, the impact of factors such as product varieties offered by paint manufactures, quality of paint, customer perspective on various brands of paint, promotions offered by manufactures of paint to painters on the overall willingness to patronize a paint brand and recommend the same to end users by painters is studied. The hypotheses thus proposed are:

### Null Hypothesis (H$_0$)

There is a no significant relationship between overall willingness to patronize a paint brand by painters and different factors.

### Alternate Hypothesis (H$_1$)

There is a significant relationship between overall willingness to patronize a paint brand by painters and different factors.

**Table 1:** Factors influencing willingness to use the paint brands

| Factor | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the estimate | R Square Change | F Change | Df1 | Df2 | Sig. F Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Product Variety | .043[a] | .002 | -.013 | .469 | .002 | .125 | 1 | 69 | .725 |
| Quality | .092[a] | .008 | -.006 | .467 | .008 | .590 | 1 | 69 | .445 |
| Customer Perspective | .321[a] | .103 | .090 | .438 | .103 | 7.953 | 1 | 69 | .006 |
| Promotion | .283[a] | .080 | .067 | .450 | .080 | 5.996 | 1 | 69 | .017 |

From Table – 1, the factor (Product variety) has a very weak positive relationship with the dependent variable (R = 0.043). This coefficient is statistically insignificant (Sig. F Change = 0.725), meaning there's not enough evidence to conclude a real association. R-square change (0.002) and adjusted R-square are very low, indicating product variety barely improves the model's explanatory power. The influence of paint product variety on a painter's willingness to recommend a paint brand can be significant and multifaceted. A wide variety of paint products allows painters to find the right solution for various projects and surface types. Painters often work on a range of surfaces, from walls to woodwork to metal, and having a diverse product line ensures they can find suitable options for each job. Different paint formulations may offer specific benefits such as quick-drying, low odor, or easy application. A diverse range of products allows painters to choose paints that align with their preferred working methods, potentially improving efficiency and job satisfaction. The variety of paint products offered by a brand can significantly influence a painter's willingness to recommend it. A diverse product range not only meets the practical needs of painters but also reflects positively on the brand's reputation for quality, customer satisfaction, and innovation. Among the factors examined, product variety exhibits the weakest relationship with the dependent variable. With an R Square value of 0.002 and a non-significant F Change of 0.125 (p = 0.725), its impact appears minimal in explaining the variance observed. While product variety may still be relevant for certain contexts, such as consumer choice and market differentiation, its direct influence on the dependent variable in this analysis seems limited.

Similar to product variety, quality of paint shows a weak positive association (R = 0.092) but is statistically insignificant (Sig. F Change = 0.445). The quality of paint is a crucial factor that significantly influences a painter's willingness to recommend a paint brand. High-quality paint typically has a smoother consistency and better coverage,

making it easier for painters to apply evenly and achieve professional results. Painters appreciate products that are easy to work with, as it saves time and effort during application. Painters want their work to last, and they rely on paint brands that offer durable products with long-lasting finishes. High-quality paints are more resistant to fading, chipping, and wear over time, leading to greater satisfaction for both the painter and the end customer. The quality of paint plays a critical role in a painter's willingness to recommend a brand. Brands that prioritize quality across various aspects of their products, from application to durability to environmental impact, are more likely to earn the trust and loyalty of painters and, consequently, receive positive recommendations within the industry. The impact on R-square is minimal (0.008). Quality also demonstrates a notable relationship with the dependent variable, although to a lesser extent than customer perspective. It exhibits a moderate R Square value of 0.008 and a significant F Change of 0.590 (p = 0.445). This implies that maintaining or improving product quality can contribute positively to the outcome measured by the dependent variable, albeit not as strongly as customer perspective.

The factor (customer perspective) has a moderate positive relationship with the dependent variable (R = 0.321). It's the first statistically significant factor (Sig. F Change = 0.006), suggesting a genuine impact. R-square change (0.103) is the highest so far, indicating customer perspective explains a decent portion of the variation in the dependent variable. A painter's willingness to recommend a paint brand can be significantly influenced by the customer's perspective towards paint. Customers often have specific color and aesthetic preferences for their spaces. Painters are more likely to recommend brands with a wide range of colors and finishes to accommodate diverse customer tastes. Additionally, if customers express interest in specialty paints such as washable or stain-resistant varieties, painters will recommend brands that offer these options. Customers who prioritize value for money may influence painters to

recommend brands that offer a balance of quality and affordability. Painters understand the importance of staying within budget constraints while delivering satisfactory results, so they'll recommend brands that offer competitive pricing without compromising on performance. In essence, the customer perspective towards paint plays a crucial role in shaping painters' recommendations. Painters aim to meet customer expectations, deliver high-quality results, and maintain professional integrity, all of which are influenced by the paint brands they endorse. This factor emerges as the most influential among those examined. With a relatively high R Square value of 0.103 and a significant F Change of 7.953 (p = 0.006), it suggests that customer perspective plays a crucial role in explaining the variance in the dependent variable. This underscores the importance of aligning products, services, and marketing strategies with the needs and preferences of customers.

Similar to customer perspective, promotion has a moderate positive association (R = 0.283) and is statistically significant (Sig. F Change = 0.017). R-square change (0.080) is significant, showing promotion contributes to explaining the dependent variable. However, it's slightly lower than customer perspective. Promotions can serve as a means for manufacturers to build relationships with painters through personalized offers or incentives based on their purchasing behavior or preferences. Strong relationships can foster loyalty and increase the likelihood of recommendations. Some promotions may include marketing materials or support such as branded clothing, equipment, or training sessions. This can enhance the painter's perception of the brand and make them more likely to recommend it to others. Promotions such as discounts, rebates, or bulk purchase deals can reduce the cost of purchasing paint for painters. This can make the paint more attractive from a financial standpoint, leading to increased recommendation. In conclusion, promotions offered by paint manufacturers play a significant role in influencing a painter's willingness to recommend a paint brand. By providing cost savings, trial incentives, loyalty programs, marketing support, visibility, exclusivity, and relationship-building opportunities, manufacturers can effectively sway painters towards recommending their products to clients. Promotion appears to have a weaker impact compared to customer perspective and quality. While it shows a moderate R Square value of 0.080, indicating some explanatory power, its F Change of 5.996 (p = 0.017) suggests a less significant influence on the dependent variable. Nonetheless, effective promotional strategies remain important in driving awareness, interest, and ultimately, sales.

While customer perspective and promotion show significant relationships, the overall model's explanatory power (R-square = 0.103 + 0.080 = 0.183) remains relatively low. This suggests other factors not included in the model might be influencing the dependent variable.

We conclude that factors like promotion, customer perspective significantly affect whether people want to buy (willingness to buy). So, understanding and working on these factors could really impact how likely people are to make a purchase. On the other hand, product variety and quality doesn't seem to have a big influence.

**Perspective of retailers of decorative paints on their willingness to stock a brand**

A weighted average can be defined as a method to identify the most influential factor among several factors affecting consumer willingness to buy. It assigns greater importance (Weight) to factors that have a stronger impact on purchase

decisions. Here, the factors such as promotion and service offered by the paint manufacturers to retailers, product quality, trust value, ease of use, price of paints and promotion and service offered by paint manufacturers to retailers is studied

**Table 2:** Weighted Average between various factors influencing brand preference of retailers

| Factor | Weighted Average |
|---|---|
| Promotion and Service | 4.30 |
| Product Quality | 4.44 |
| Trust Value | 4.38 |
| Ease of Use | 4.45 |
| Price | 4.33 |
| Promotion and Service | 4.30 |

From Table-2: it is inferred that the factor ease of use has the weighted average of 4.45, the ease of use of a paint brand is a critical factor for paint retailers as it impacts various aspects of their business, including sales, customer satisfaction, returns management, employee morale, and brand reputation. Retailers are more likely to stock paint brands that offer a hassle-free painting experience and align with customer preferences and industry standards which has the rank 1 followed by the product quality factor which has the weighted average of 4.44, the quality of paints directly influences a paint retailer's willingness to stock a paint brand due to its impact on customer satisfaction, returns and complaints, brand reputation, long-term relationships, differentiation, profitability, and customer feedback which has the rank of 2. The factor promotion and the service have the least weighted average of 4.30, promotions offered by paint manufacturers can influence a retailer's decision to stock a particular brand by providing financial incentives, marketing support, training, and other benefits that make carrying the brand more attractive and profitable which has the rank of 5. From the table we can conclude when user have a positive experience with a paint brand due to its ease of use, they're more likely to become repeat buyers and develop loyalty to that brand. This creates a steady stream of revenue for the retailer over time. Stocking brands that foster loyalty can be more profitable in the long run than constantly introducing new, unfamiliar products.

**Table 3:** Weighted Average between Ease-of-Use factors influencing brand preference

| Ease of Use | Weighted Average |
|---|---|
| Easy to use | 4.80 |
| Clear and concise instruction | 4.34 |
| Less external assistance | 4.20 |

From the above table, it is inferred that the dealer is expecting the paint which makes easy to use and made the painter job easier which has the weighted average of 4.80 and the rank of 1 and the dealers are expecting less external assistance for the product which has the least weighted average of 4.20 and the rank of 3.

**Conclusion**

The exploration of factors influencing brand preference in the competitive landscape of MD District unveils a rich insight into consumer behavior and the evolving role of influencers in shaping brand perceptions. Through a mixed-methods approach blending quantitative surveys, this study has delved deep into the influencer mind to unravel the complex dynamics driving consumer choices. The findings

highlight the nuanced interplay between influencers, brands, and consumers, shows evolving landscape of marketing in MD District. Brands that prioritize building authentic relationships with influencers and delivering high-quality to gain a competitive edge in capturing consumer mindshare and brand loyalty. Moreover, the study underscores the importance of understanding the diverse preferences and expectations of consumers within the MD District marketplace. In conclusion, the study offers valuable insights into the factors shaping brand preference and consumer behavior in MD District. By embracing the power of influencer marketing and aligning their strategies with the evolving needs and expectations of consumers, brands can forge meaningful connections, drive engagement, and thrive in the dynamic and competitive landscape of MD District

The regression analysis indicates that factors like promotion, Customer perspective significantly influence retailers' purchase intentions (Willingness to buy), while product variety, quality doesn't show a notable impact. This provides practical insights for businesses in improving strategies for the paint retail sector.

Based on the weighted averages provided for the different aspects related to the ease of use of paints, it's clear that consumers highly value paints that are user-friendly and intuitive. A high weighted average for "easy to use" indicates that customers prioritize paints that require minimal effort and expertise to apply effectively. This suggests that paint brands should focus on developing products that offer a seamless user experience, enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, the weighted average for "clear and concise instructions" highlights the importance of providing comprehensive guidance to customers. Clear instructions can empower users to achieve optimal results, reducing the likelihood of errors or dissatisfaction with the product. Paint brands should invest in developing instructional materials that are easy to understand and follow, catering to consumers who seek guidance throughout the painting process.

Additionally, the weighted average for "less external assistance" underscores the desire for paints that enable independent application. Customers appreciate paints that minimize the need for external support or professional assistance, offering convenience and autonomy. Paint brands should strive to design products that customers can confidently use on their own, enhancing the overall user experience and satisfaction

In conclusion, the weighted averages reflect consumers' preferences for paints that prioritize ease of use, clear instructions, and independence in application. By aligning with these preferences, paint brands can enhance their appeal to retailers and consumers alike, driving sales and fostering positive brand perception in the competitive market.

## Limitation
Focus on influencers might underestimate other factors, while the study investigates the important role of influencers in shaping brand preference, it may overemphasize their influence compared to other factors. Consumer decision-making is complex and involves a multitude of influences beyond just influencer marketing. Traditional advertising, in-store promotions, brand reputation, price sensitivity, and even socio-economic factors can all play a significant role. By solely focusing on influencers, the study might miss out on the complete picture of what drives brand preference in the Madurai paint market. This limitation highlights the need for the study to incorporate additional research methods to capture the influence of these other factors alongside influencer marketing. This could involve including surveys or interviews that gauge consumer awareness of traditional advertising campaigns or price sensitivity for different paint brands

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