

ROLE OF INFLUENCER CREDIBILITY IN SHAPING CONSUMER ATTITUDE TOWARDS PURCHASE INTENTION

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to provide theoretical framework with regards to credibility of social media influencers and their impact on purchase intentions of consumers. This paper takes into consideration key aspects of source credibility theory and explains its impact on consumers attitude towards purchase intention. Since social media influencers are becoming important opinion leaders, it is crucial for academics and professionals to comprehend the aspects of credibility that have the biggest effects on consumer behaviour.

Design methodology the survey was conducted to obtain information about role of influencer credibility in shaping consumer attitude. Using a structured questionnaire with 21 items, a quantitative study strategy was chosen. Purposive sampling was used to gather data from 90 active social media users, primarily Gen Z customers. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.933, which denotes outstanding internal consistency, was used to confirm reliability. Regression analysis, ANOVA, and hypothesis testing were used to assess the correlations between the variables in the data, which were analysed using SPSS version 26.

Finding: The findings revealed that customer buying decisions are significantly influenced favourably by influencer credibility. Purchase intention was found to be strongly influenced by all three predictors: expertise ($\beta = 0.360$, $p < .001$), trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.402$, $p < .001$), and beauty ($\beta = 0.217$, $p = .002$). Among them, expertise and trustworthiness were the most significant predictors, whereas attractiveness had the least impact despite being substantial. With $R^2 = 0.668$, the model showed excellent explanatory power, meaning that the three variables explained 66.8% of the variance in purchase decisions.

Key words: Credibility dimension, purchase intention, predictors.

Introduction

Influencer Marketing

Influencers are powerful intermediaries in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviour. Influencer marketing has emerged as a significant mechanism, frequently exceeding traditional celebrity endorsements in shaping the attitudes and intentions of young consumers (Erdogan, 1999; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Traditional advertising was mostly one way communication where as digital marketing provides a platform where consumers can interact and get a better understanding of products or services. The emergence of social media platforms has changed the way that customers communicate with brands. Influencer marketing is a new type of digital marketing that has emerged as a result of platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Social media influencers (SMIs), as opposed to traditional celebrities, are frequently seen as approachable people who establish close bonds with their fans via regular interaction and genuineness. (Freberg et al., 2011)

Influencer marketing is that type of marketing where brands collaborate with the influencers who will promote their products. Influencer marketing is not just relying on celebrity endorsement but also small niche influencers who are more authentic and are connecting with followers in better way. Today influencer marketing has become one of the most popular marketing strategies which is adopted by many small and large brands. According to recent research, influencer marketing has emerged as one of the fastest-growing digital tactics, with companies devoting more and more of their marketing budgets to collaborations with influencers. (Business Insider, 2022).

Influencers are a powerful tool for promoting fast fashion items because their credibility has a significant impact on how consumers think and act (Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2018). Influencer credibility is defined by three core attributes – expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness. When these attributes align influencers are more likely to generate positive attitude towards the products promoted by them.

Research grounded in Source Credibility theory throws a light on fact that credible communicators are more effective in altering consumer perceptions. In the world where there is information overload in every field, influencer credibility serves as valuable filter in guiding and shaping brand evaluations. Understanding the role of influencer credibility not only helps marketers design effective consumer campaign but also building strong consumer brand relationship.

Objectives

1. To examine the impact of influencer credibility dimensions (expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness) on consumer attitudes towards purchase intention.
2. To analyze how perceived authenticity and reliability of influencers shape consumers brand perception.

Review of literature

The credibility of influencers is generally based on the source-credibility framework, which includes expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, commonly referred to as the "ETA" triad. This framework predicts persuasive outcomes through perceived diagnostic and a decrease in perceived risk. Ohanian's (1990) validated scale continues to be a fundamental tool in the field and is often adapted for social media contexts, frequently in conjunction with match-up and dual-route persuasion theories, such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). Credible post and influencer recommendations reduce consumers burden which will in turn increase brand loyalty. (Mehmet GÖKERİK, 2024). Effectiveness of influencers in attracting consumers and making them buy the product across various generation is altogether different and requires various strategies to be implemented. (Sanjana Thakker, Vanishree Pabalkar, 2021).

Platform also has great impact on purchase intentions of consumer. Studies also show that when YouTube was studied as base platform, expertise of influencer was the major dimension which was considered by consumers (Nurashikin Nazer Mohamed, Nur Suriyanti Gadiman, 2024). The cues provided by the platform and the message significantly influence the perception of credibility. The number of followers and the alignment between the product and the influencer (match-up) play a crucial role in shaping attitudes; an excessive follower count may occasionally undermine authenticity, while a strong congruence enhances persuasive impact. Additionally, sponsorship cues and the manner of disclosure interact with the characteristics of the influencer, thereby affecting engagement levels and subsequent attitudes. (Veirman, M.D. 2016). Recent syntheses and cross-platform studies reinforce the

importance of credibility, while also identifying significant mediators (trust, PSI, brand credibility) and moderators (product type, involvement, cultural context). Meta-analytic and cutting-edge reviews underscore authenticity and information quality as crucial precursors to the pathways of credibility, attitude, and intention. (De Araujo (2025)). In emerging markets and the fast fashion sector, homophily—defined as similarity in age, style, and values—along with cultural context, enhances these connections. When consumers perceive that individuals similar to themselves endorse products, their attitudes become more positive, leading to an increased intention to purchase (Chetioui et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Role played by social media influencers in bridging the gap is very crucial especially with respect to eco friendly products because it's the credibility that can help in familiarise with the product. (Arani Rodrigo and Trevor Mendis, 2023). Sponsored posts are kind of posts that can fetch consumer attention to the greater extent. How sponsored post gain importance amidst the non-sponsored post is the are under research. (Jana Gross & Florian von Wangenheim, 2022). Study revealed how consumers' interactions with influencer content are affected by various kinds of marketing disclosures. Using 3,593 Instagram posts from 61 German influencers in a variety of genres, genders, and follower counts, the study examined the differences between disclosures that were self-generated and those that were platform-initiated. Their results offer empirical support for disclosure policies, emphasizing how consumer interaction with influencer posts can be greatly impacted by the disclosure's source and wording. This implies that audience reactions to influencer marketing are significantly influenced by the sort of disclosure. (Zeynep Karagür, Jan-Michael Becker, Kristina Klein, Alexander Edeling, ()).

There is increase in AI based virtual influencers also overtime, and trend shows that Credibility of AI influencers is even preferred over human influencers (Sudarsan Jayasingh , Arunkumar Sivakumar and Arputha Arockiaraj Vanathaiyan ,2025). Using the Uncanny Valley Theory and the Uses and Gratification (U&G) approach, this study examines the emergence of virtual influencers and their effects on the engagement and decision-making of digital natives. The study investigates how viewers view and engage with synthetic characters through qualitative, semi-structured in-depth interviews. (Chen Lou, Siu Ting Josie Kiew, Tao Chen, Tze Yen Michelle Lee, Jia En Celin Ong & ZhaoXi Phua, 2023). Currently many studies are conducted to understand the extent of AI influencers recommendations has impact on consumers purchase decision. (Jein Sriana Toyib & Widya Paramita, 2024).

Expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness:

The term "expertise" describes an influencer's perceived level of knowledge, proficiency, or competency in a particular field. Because it lowers perceived risk and boosts confidence in buying decisions, consumers are more likely to believe suggestions from influencers who have strong knowledge. Informed influencers lower perceived risk and boost confidence in the marketed products, this study demonstrated that influencer competence considerably increases customer purchase intentions. (Tamara, Rafly, & Mersi, 2021). Similarly, trustworthiness, which represents honesty and reliability, substantially influences purchase decisions, as customers are more likely to accept suggestions from influencers they see as legitimate (Wibisono, Prasetyanto, Sitanggang, & Maryati, 2023). Additionally, attractiveness contributes to persuasive power by attracting attention and developing positive attitudes toward endorsed products, hence enhancing purchase intentions (Liu & Zheng, 2024). When taken as a whole, these aspects of influencer credibility offer a strong framework for comprehending how customers develop opinions and choose products in social media settings.

Research gap

1. Expertise, dependability, and attractiveness are not examined independently in many studies, which regard influencer credibility as a single construct. To determine which dimension has a greater impact on customer sentiments, additional in-depth research is required.
2. Purchase intention and influencer credibility are frequently directly correlated in research, but little is known about how consumer attitude—or how positively or negatively they perceive the product or influencer—mediates this relationship.
3. The credibility of influencers is not fixed and can change due to scandals, fake followers, and excessive visibility. Studies frequently consider credibility to be unchanging, overlooking how the gradual decline in credibility influences consumer attitudes and their purchasing decisions.

Hypothesis

H1: Influencer expertise has positive impact on consumer attitude towards purchase intention

H2: influencer trustworthiness has positive influence on consumer attitude towards purchase intention

H3: Influencer attractiveness has positive impact on consumer purchase intention

Methodology

Sampling method:

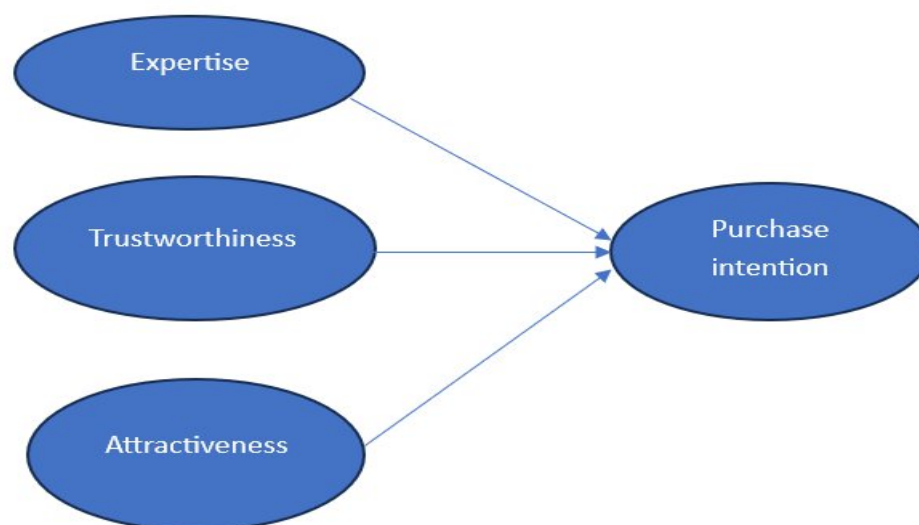
For the study researcher used Stratified and purposive sampling method. Data was collected directly from the respondents with the help of structured Questionnaire.

Tools used for the study:

A questionnaire was prepared keeping in mind various constructs of source credibility theory. Questionnaire is divided into three sections; wherein initial section is about demographic details and rest of the questions were formed to explore the consumers perception on credibility of influencers.

Statistical techniques used in research:

Conceptual model



Data analysis and interpretation

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.933	21

Source: SPSS 26 Output

Reliability test was conducted using SPSS statistics software version 26. Table 1 shows The reliability of 21 items questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The result demonstrated excellent internal consistency, $\alpha = 0.933$, indicating that items were highly consistent in measuring the construct.

Table 2: Demographic Details

Demographic Factor	Frequency	Percent
Age	18-24	72
	25-34	13
	35-44	5
	Total	90
GENDER	Male	53
	Female	37
	Total	90
Education	Graduate	55
	Highschool	1
	Post graduate	33
	Other	1
	Total	90

Source: SPSS output26

Respondents in this study are people who are active in social media. The measured data from Table 2 shows that majority of respondents are Male, with a total of 53(59%) and Female 37 (41%). The information shows that a significant portion of participants (80%) is in the 18–24 age range, suggesting that the sample is predominantly made up of younger consumers, specifically Gen Z. A lesser percentage (14.4%) falls within the 25–34 age range, which corresponds to young millennials, whereas just 5.6% of the respondents are aged 35–44.

The results show that most participants (61.1%) are graduates, whereas over one-third (36.7%) possess a postgraduate degree. Only a small percentage of respondents have merely finished high school (1.1%) or belong to the other category (1.1%).

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.818 ^a	.668	.657	.46750
a. Predictors: (Constant), Attract Score, Exp score, Trust score				

The correlation coefficient ($R = .818$) in the model summary shows a strong association between the predictors and purchasing decision. The three predictors—expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness—account for roughly 66.8% of the variance in purchase decisions, according to the

coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .668$). The robustness of the results is further demonstrated by the adjusted R^2 value of .657, which shows that even after controlling for sample size and predictor count, the model still explains a significant 65.7% of the variance. A respectable degree of model accuracy is also indicated by the standard error of the estimate (0.4675), which indicates that the average departure of the observed data points from the regression line is somewhat small.

Table 4: ANOVA ^a						
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	37.898	3	12.633	57.801	.000 ^b
	Residual	18.796	86	.219		
	Total	56.694	89			
a. Dependent Variable: purchase decision_						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Attract_Score, Exp_score, Trust_score						

The regression model's statistical significance is demonstrated by the ANOVA results, which show an F-value of 57.801 and a p-value below .001. This suggests that the independent factors of attractiveness, knowledge, and trustworthiness all significantly influence purchasing decisions. The difference between the regression total of squares (37.898) and the residual sum of squares (18.796) further demonstrates that the model, not error, accounts for a sizable amount of the variance in purchase decisions. The general suitability of the regression model in elucidating the connection between influencer credibility and consumer purchase decisions is therefore confirmed by the ANOVA.

Table 5: Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.056	.259		.216	.829
	Exp_score	.339	.085	.360	3.999	.000
	Trust_score	.376	.086	.402	4.374	.000
	Attract_Score	.217	.068	.217	3.206	.002
a. Dependent Variable: purchase decision_ Source: SPSS 26 output						

The relative impact of each independent variable to forecasting consumer purchase decisions is shown in the coefficients table (Table 5). The biggest predictor, according to the regression equation, is trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.402$, $t = 4.374$, $p < .001$), indicating that customers are most impacted by the perceived dependability and honesty of influencers when making judgments about what to buy. Additionally, expertise ($\beta = 0.360$, $t = 3.999$, $p < .001$) exhibits a considerable positive impact, underscoring the significance of influencers' expertise and knowledge in influencing customer decisions. Even if it is relatively weaker, attractiveness ($\beta = 0.217$, $t = 3.206$, $p = .002$) still has a substantial impact on buy intention, suggesting that an influencer's appearance and physical appeal are still important in the fast fashion industry. The statistically insignificant constant value (.056, $p = .829$) indicates that the

predictors, not the unexplained baseline characteristics, account for a considerable portion of the purchase decisions. Overall, the results show that purchase intention is greatly increased by all three aspects of influencer credibility, with trustworthiness being the most important component.

Hypothesis	Path	β (Standardized)	t-value	Sig. (p)	Result
H1	Expertise $\rightarrow$ Purchase Decision	0.360	3.999	.000	Supported
H2	Trustworthiness $\rightarrow$ Purchase Decision	0.402	4.374	.000	Supported
H3	Attractiveness $\rightarrow$ Purchase Decision	0.217	3.206	.002	Supported

Source: SPSS 26 output

The regression analysis validated that all the proposed hypotheses were confirmed. Expertise ($\beta = 0.360$, $p < .001$), trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.402$, $p < .001$), and attractiveness ($\beta = 0.217$, $p = .002$) all indicated a significant positive impact on purchasing decisions. Among these three factors, trustworthiness emerged as the most significant predictor, followed by expertise, while attractiveness, though significant, exhibited the least influence. These results highlight that while all dimensions of influencer credibility are important, consumers mainly depend on influencers' perceived integrity and dependability when making purchase decisions.

Discussion and implication

The results of this study show that, in the context of fast fashion, influencer credibility has a major impact on customer purchasing decisions.

Purchase intention is positively and significantly impacted by all three aspects of credibility—expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness—according to the regression analysis. These findings are consistent with Ohanian's (1990) credibility model, which identifies competence, attractiveness, and trustworthiness as the primary factors influencing the efficacy of messages and the attitudes of consumers.

Trustworthiness was the most powerful predictor of purchasing decisions among the three. This demonstrates that when making decisions about what to buy, consumers—specially younger generations like Gen Z place a high value on influencers' dependability, honesty, and authenticity.

This result is consistent with earlier research (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Chetioui et al., 2020) that highlights how consumers are becoming less trusting of commercial motivations and are thus looking for influencers they believe to be sincere and open.

Theoretical implications:

Through empirical confirmation that all three dimensions—expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness—are pertinent in the setting of digital influencers, the study adds to the body of information on source credibility theory.

The greater impact of trustworthiness implies that authenticity is more important in the age of social media marketing than aesthetic appeal, which is a departure from the conventional literature on celebrity endorsements that frequently placed an emphasis on beauty.

The results provide empirical support from the fast fashion industry for the use of attitude–intention models (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) in influencer marketing.

Practical implications

For brands collaboration with trustworthy influencers is very important as authenticity plays major role in the digital marketing.

For influencers it is very important to recommend those products which are authentic and they should try building long term relationship with their followers.

For marketer's announcement of the tie-ups with credible influencers is very important. Disclosure of sponsorship is considered to be the best way to convince people and make them understand genuinely.

Conclusion and Future Studies

This study investigated role of influencer credibility with the help of three dimensions of credibility namely expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness. The findings of the study confirms that all the three dimensions significantly influence purchase intention of consumers. Out of three dimensions trustworthiness is found to be the most influential which indicates the importance of authenticity in purchase decision.

The outcomes validate source credibility theory (Ohanian, 1990), in digital influencer context which discovers that attitudes shaped by credible communication ultimately drive behavioural intention.

Future research direction

The study focused on Gen Z respondents who are very active in social media. future research could examine other generational cohorts to compare how different age groups respond to influencer post. Future research could also explore other dimensions like reliability and authenticity.

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