

Effect of Social Media Influencer Credibility on Consumer Purchase Intentions: An Empirical Analysis

PROF. SAGAR BHADANGE, PROF SWATI BEDEKAR,
PROF THARAGESWARI SOUNDARAPANDIAN

Abstract: *Social media influencers are now an unignorable part of today's marketing communication. In contrast to the traditional celebrities, influencers are directly connected with their followers and build more personal relationships with them by interacting with them regularly and sharing content with them. They feel closer to the consumer so they are able to influence the consumer's opinion and purchasing decision. This study aims to explore how the credibility of the social media influencers influences the consumers' buying decisions. Perceptions of credibility are often linked to the sense of trustworthiness, expertise, authenticity and attractiveness and can bias the interpretation and evaluation of promotional messages. With the rise of consumer-centered social media as a source of information, recommendations, and product discovery, the study and understanding of influencer credibility is crucial for marketers and consumers alike. The factors studying the Effect of Social Media Influencer Credibility on Consumer Purchase Intentions are Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness and Authenticity.*

Keywords: Social Media Influencers, Influencer Credibility, Purchase Intention, Consumer Behaviour

Prof. Sagar Bhadange (sagar.bhadange@ifeel.edu.in) Professor, Institute for Future Education, Entrepreneurship and Leadership iFEEL, Lonavala,
Prof Swati Bedekar (swati.b@ifeel.edu.in) Assistant Professor, Institute for Future Education, Entrepreneurship and Leadership iFEEL, Lonavala
Prof Tharageswari Soundarapandian (tharageswari@ifeel.edu.in) Associate Professor, Institute for Future Education, Entrepreneurship and Leadership iFEEL, Lonavala

Introduction

The era of Social Media has changed the dynamics between consumers and brands. Marketing communication, which has traditionally been managed through television commercials, newspaper ads and celebrity endorsements, is now a very interactive digital communication. Social media influencers are individuals who produce content on digital platforms, and have a loyal following of fans that follow their thoughts, recommendations and experiences. These influencers can be found in different areas such as beauty, fashion, tech, fitness, travel, food and more. They are not only a big audience, but also their contents are believed to be authentic and credible. Influencer marketing is increasingly gaining traction, with companies willing to invest a significant amount of resources with content creators to connect with consumers in a more effective way than with traditional advertising.

Social media platforms facilitate continuous customer engagement and trust-building, creating conditions that enhance the effectiveness of influencer marketing (Kudeshia & Mittal, 2015).

One of the reasons influencer marketing is so effective is that consumers will feel more connected with the influencer than they will with traditional celebrities. While actors and athletes are viewed as “actors” and “athletes”, influencers often post about their personal lives, their daily routines, successes, failures and more with their followers. This constant interaction can foster a certain sense of familiarity and trust, thus affecting their buying decisions. When consumers feel that the influencers are credible, and they have a parasocial bond with them, their purchase intentions are boosted (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

In general, credibility is the believability, knowledge and trustworthiness of the communicator. In the social media arena, credibility is what influences consumers' trustworthiness or validity of product endorsements. These perceptions are crucial in determining the success of an influencer marketing campaign since followers will follow an influencer's recommendations if they have a good opinion regarding them. There has been a positive correlation between the credibility of the influencer and the desire to purchase a product by the consumer in various cultural and demographic groups (Mabkhot et al., 2022).

With the increasing significance of credibility, it is important especially in a digital world that consumers are inundated with thousands of promotional messages daily. Most users will rapidly scroll past ads and view them only as quickly as they are able to. However, recommendations from influencers are placed in the content that the followers consent to watch. These endorsements are also embedded in the content, which can be seen as a more genuine and less intrusive type of advertising than traditional advertising. Concurrently, influencer marketing is growing to be a very competitive field. Brands are today working with influencers from the mega-celebrities with millions of followers to those with a smaller, but more engaged following base. While the size of audiences and the number of shows may influence these partnerships to some degree, it may be more about audience trust. Social media influencers have been shown to have a profound impact on consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions, with perceived authenticity and credibility of these influencers being crucial (Ilieva et al., 2024).

Further, the notion of credibility is reflected, which indicate that source attractiveness, expertise and credibility are important variables to influence purchase intentions in social media users (Weismueller et al., 2020). These factors can be part of the answer as to why some influencers can create lots of engagement, and sales, while others are unable to make a difference, despite their large audiences.

Literature Review

The majority of the current studies is based on Source Credibility Theory. From this point of view, he/she who sends the message is the most important part of the message because the credibility of the source determines the persuasiveness of the message. In general, credibility is broken down into three categories: Expertise, Trustworthiness, Attractiveness. If consumers think that the communicator has relevant knowledge and provides honest opinions and is presented in an appealing manner, then they will be more open to the recommendations. These have proven to be dimensions that impact purchase intent online and over and again (Khan & Asim, 2025). Effective influencer communication can shape consumer motivations and purchasing behaviour, similar to how integrated marketing communication influences luxury consumption (Das & Mittal, 2023).

According to a large scale meta analysis, which explores the characteristics of influencers and their ability to influence customer engagement and purchase intent, credibility was one of the most significant factors that predict consumers purchasing behaviour (Ao et al., 2023). The results of the analysis confirmed that the credibility was always moderately–highly correlated with purchase intention, based on numerous empirical studies. Interestingly, the study revealed that the attribute of credibility had the greatest impact on purchase intent compared to other attributes of influencers. This discovery implies that whether it's an industry or a platform, consumers are still focused on trust and reliability when deciding on influencers to follow.

Trustworthiness is regarded as one of the most influential factors of credibility. Bigger consumers are growing conscious of the fact that many influencers are compensated for promoting products financially. Even with this knowledge, recommendations can be convincing as long as followers feel like the influencer is using and endorsing the product. Trustworthiness, expertise and information quality have significant influence on the attitude of consumers and intention to buy, where the attitude of the brand acts as a mediator in these relationships (Al-Mu'ani et al., 2023). It implies that influential people with credibility have an impact on the brand's perception, in turn boosting the predisposition to buy on the part of consumers.

Authenticity means the influencer is perceived as sincere, honest and sincere in their communication. Authenticity can appeal to consumers; it can help alleviate their concerns about manipulation and deceptive advertising practices. The positive influence of authenticity, informative content, and homophily on the parasocial relationship subsequently affects the purchasing intention and brand credibility (Liu & Zheng, 2024). In this context, credibility is not just an influence that drives purchasing action, but also an influencer's ability to build stronger emotional attachments with followers.

Another influence mechanism between influencer credibility and consumer behaviour is parasocial relationships. One-sided emotional ties between the followers and the media personalities are described by these relationships. The relationship is in the followers' minds, but can take the form of elements of interpersonal relationships. Parasocial relationships could have a positive impact on consumer trust, brand evaluation and purchase intention (Yi, 2024). These emotional relationships are strengthened when consumers believe in the credibility of this relationship, leading them to be more receptive to product endorsements.

The importance of emotional connection was also emphasized in the research on understanding consumers' behavior through social media influencers. Attitudes towards influencers, subjective norms, authenticity, emotional bonds and personal relevance are among the factors that influence the purchase intention (Azhar et al., 2023). Consumers' choices are thus not always made on the basis of product attributes. Rather, the social and psychological factors have a significant impact on buying behavior. Often times, consumers buy products not for the product, but for what the influencers stand for and how they live. Other factors influence the effectiveness of influencers too, like platform specific ones. Instagram is a very visual platform that has become one of the most effective digital marketing platforms. A study among Instagram users showed that the credibility of influencers has a positive impact on parasocial interaction and purchasing behavior and enhances EWOM communication (Wahab et al., 2025). The images of content may help to increase the feeling of authenticity as followers are able to see the influencers' daily life, routine, and how their products are used.

As the influencer marketing trend grows, the importance of disclosure has become more and more relevant. More and more, many countries are mandating influencers to disclose sponsored content. First, the marketers worried that disclosure would make their persuasive claims more apparent, which would decrease their persuasiveness. But it is not the simple relationship that is suggested by the empirical evidence as results suggest that disclosure can work to improve the credibility of the influencer and thus boost purchase intention, as it boosts brand awareness (Sesar et al., 2022). Transparency can help consumers to better understand that influencers are being responsible and honest, thus maintaining consumer trust. Further support of the importance of credibility can be found in the research on Instagram endorsements. Among social media users, attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise were confirmed as significant factors that led to an increase in purchase intention (Weismueller et al., 2020). More followers positively correlated with attractiveness and trustworthiness perceptions. Follower numbers don't necessarily mean it's effective, but it can give a sense of social proof to help consumers make decisions about the credibility.

Brand-consumer relationships because of influencer recommendations have also garnered a lot of focus. Having positive endorsement from influencers has proven to boost brand perceptions and elevate consumers' purchasing intentions of advertised products (Kwiatek et al., 2021). In many cases, customers are able to pass their positive emotions on to the brand they are promoting over the promoted brand. The process provides insight into how brands are willing to invest in influencers even when it is difficult to measure ROI. Lim et al. (2017) conducted study on how social media influencers affect the buying intention and found that customer attitude plays a significant role as a mediator between the characteristics of social media

influencers and buying intention. The consumer is seldom persuaded to buy without first making a short stop at the mall. Instead, it is the gradual change in buying behaviour that is caused by the beliefs, attitude, and preferences of influencers. This can take place over weeks or months, as the followers continue to engage with the influencer's content.

While the overall correlation between influencer credibility and purchase intention is positive, there are some differences in the findings across studies. Product type, audience characteristics and platform type can influence the importance of expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness. Beauty and lifestyle products, for instance, might need to tap more into being authentic and relatable, while technical products would need to show more skill and expertise. There may also be cultural differences that affect consumer perceptions of the credibility of influencers. The pattern is fairly similar, with these differences. Recommendations are more likely to be trusted, positive attitudes will be formed, and purchase intentions will be strengthened when the influencers are perceived as credible.

Objective

1. To know the factors “Effect of Social Media Influencer Credibility on Consumer Purchase Intentions”

Methodology

339 participants were surveyed from respondents using different product type. The method of sampling was “Random sampling” for collection of data and examination was done by “Explanatory Factor Analysis” for results.

Findings

Table 1 demonstrates demographic details, it shows that 50.44% are Male, 49.56% are female. Looking at the age, 37.46% are between 20 to 30 years of age, 30.97% are between 30 to 40 years of age, and 31.57% are above 40 years of age. With regards to Product Type, 33.92% are using clothing, 36.28% are Food & Beverages, and 29.80% are Electronic.

Table. 1 Respondent's Details

Variables	Participants	Percentage
Gender		
Male	171	50.44%
Female	168	49.56%
Total	339	100
Ages in years		
20 to 30	127	37.46%
30 to 40	105	30.97%
Above 40	107	31.57%
Total	339	100
Product Type		

Clothing	115	33.92%
Food & Beverages	123	36.28%
Electronics	101	29.80%
Total	339	100

“Factor Analysis”

“KMO and Bartlett's Test”

Table. 2 “Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy”

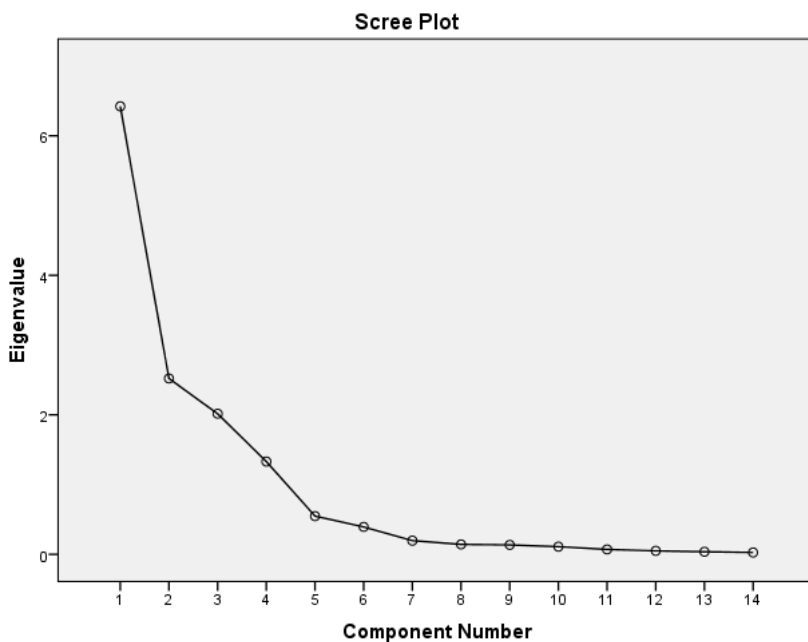
“Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy”		.771
“Bartlett's Test of Sphericity”	“Approx. Chi-Square”	6019.781
	df	91
	Significance	.000

“KMO and Bartlett's Test”, value of KMO is .771 (Table 2).

Table 3 “Total Variance Explained”

“Component”	“Initial Eigenvalues”			“Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings”		
	“Total”	“% Of Variance”	“Cumulative %”	“Total”	“% Of Variance”	“Cumulative %”
1.	6.422	45.871	45.871	3.927	28.052	28.052
2.	2.521	18.011	63.882	3.584	25.602	53.654
3.	2.015	14.394	78.275	2.441	17.434	71.089
4.	1.331	9.505	87.781	2.337	16.692	87.781
5.	.548	3.915	91.696			
6.	.393	2.807	94.503			
7.	.197	1.404	95.907			
8.	.142	1.017	96.924			
9.	.136	.970	97.893			
10.	.110	.788	98.681			
11.	.071	.506	99.187			
12.	.050	.358	99.545			
13.	.037	.265	99.810			
14.	.027	.190	100.000			

The four factors contribute towards explaining total 87.781% of variance. Variance explained by Trustworthiness is 28.052%, Expertise is 25.602%, Attractiveness is 17.434%, and Authenticity is 16.692%. (Table 3).



“Scree Plot”

Table. 4 “Rotated Component Matrix”

S. No.	Statements	Factor Loading	Factor Reliability
	Trustworthiness		.952
1.	Influencers provide honest product recommendations	.954	
2.	Influencers are transparent about sponsored content	.910	
3.	Reviews of influencers appear genuine and unbiased	.847	
4.	Influencers keep interest of followers in mind while recommending products	.845	
	Expertise		.958
1.	Influencers are knowledgeable about the product they promote	.960	
2.	They provide useful and informative product details	.895	
3.	Influencers have sufficient experience in product category	.891	
4.	Their recommendations reflect professional understanding	.863	
	Attractiveness		.867

1.	Influencers are attractive and appealing	.911	
2.	Content of influencers are visually appealing	.863	
3.	Influencer's style makes product promotion more interesting	.745	
	Authenticity		.841
1.	Influencers appear genuine in product endorsement	.941	
2.	Inflrencucers promote products that match their personal values	.934	
3.	They share honest personal experience with products	.629	

Factors of the study and its related variables

The first factor of the study is Trustworthiness, it includes factors like Influencers provide honest product recommendations, Influencers are transparent about sponsored content, Reviews of influencers appear genuine and unbiased and Influencers keep interest of followers in mind while recommending products. Expertise is the second factor, its variables are Influencers are knowledgeable about the product they promote; they provide useful and informative product details, Influencers have sufficient experience in product category and Their recommendations reflect professional understanding. Third factor is Attractiveness, the variables it includes are Influencers are attractive and appealing, Content of influencers are visually appealing and Influencer's style makes product promotion more interesting. Last and fourth factor is Authenticity, the variables are Influencers appear genuine in product endorsement, Influencers promote products that match their personal values and They share honest personal experience with products.

Table 5 “Reliability Statistics”

“Cronbach's Alpha”	“Number of Items”
.899	14

Total reliability of 14 items that includes variables for Factors exploring the “Effect of Social Media Influencer Credibility on Consumer Purchase Intentions” 0.899 (Table 5).

Conclusion

Social media influencers are an essential factor for influencing consumers' purchase intention. Credibility is featured as one of the most consistent predictors of consumers' reactions to influencer endorsements in multiple studies, platforms and cultural settings. The three elements, dimensions of expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness, affect the perception of both the influencers and their recommended products. There are multiple mechanisms whereby credibility comes into play. There is a correlation between purchase intention and influencer credibility, which is often bolstered by positive attitudes toward the brand, parasocial relationships, emotional attachment, authenticity and transparency. The impact of each factor could differ depending on the context, but the general evidence suggests a strong link between

the likelihood of sale and a consumer's trust in the influencer's recommendation. Brands need to pay attention to more than the number of followers as influencer marketing continues to grow; they must also keep the audiences authentic and trustworthy. Future studies could focus on how the changes in consumer expectations, new platforms and digital communication continue to impact consumer perceptions of the credibility of influencers and purchase behavior. The factors studying the Effect of Social Media Influencer Credibility on Consumer Purchase Intentions are Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness and Authenticity.

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