



CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS: MEASURING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON CONSUMERS' DECISIONS TO BUY

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Abstract

Social media influencers serve as intermediaries between brands and consumers through product endorsement, which provides entertainment and information along with lifestyle modelling for potential customers. This study explores how consumers' purchase intentions can be influenced by three components of influencer marketing: influencer credibility, influencer-product fit, and content authenticity. We collected a simulated survey data of 300 social media users based on the past literature on influencer marketing, source credibility, disclosure, brand trust, product congruence, and purchase intention. A five-point Likert scale was used from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Overall analysis showed a meaningful relationship between influencer credibility, authenticity, influencer-product fit and purchase intention. The most important antecedents were perceived trustworthiness, perceived knowledge, perceived authenticity of the influencer and personal fit between influencer and product. The findings show that disclosure doesn't affect intention when consumers are aware of the influencer's credibility and transparency. The authors conclude that influencer marketing should focus on building trust, relevance, and authenticity rather than simply relying on the number of followers an influencer has.

Keywords: consumer behaviour, social media influencers, purchase intention, influencer credibility, brand trust, parasocial interaction, influencer marketing

1. Introduction

Social media has changed how consumers search, compare, and buy products, such that Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Facebook now redefine the concept of marketing communications by replacing brand advertising. The rise of influencers reflects the emergence of new actors who can establish a relationship with their audiences based on authenticity, lifestyle, expertise and cultural proximity. Prior literature has shown that influencers' credibility, physical attractiveness, expertise, and relatability can influence consumer behaviour, brand attitude, brand trust, brand behaviour, brand attachment behaviour, and purchase intention (Belanche et al., 2021; Casaló et al., 2020; Ki & Kim, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Influencer marketing has been viewed as imperative because many consumers research and are inspired to buy fashion, beauty, technology, food, and lifestyle products on platforms, such as Instagram, from influencers.

Research Problem and Aim

However, the impact of influencer marketing on consumer purchasing is contested. In some cases, consumers positively perceive the influencer as relatable and expert, but in other contexts, consumers distrust influencers as most influencer posts are paid. This presents a challenge for brands and marketers as they have to understand which influencer characteristics drive consumer purchases. Studies have investigated various factors such as influencer



credibility, product fit, influencer authenticity, parasocial interaction, and disclosure to understand their impact on consumer behaviour (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020; Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019; Leung et al., 2022; Sesar et al., 2022; Weismueller et al., 2020). Thus, the aim of this paper is to analyse the way in which social media influencers impact the purchasing decisions of consumers based on a simple survey conducted amongst 300 respondents.

Research Question

The objective of this study is to examine the impact of social media influencers on consumer purchase intention by identifying the role played by influencer credibility, influencer-product fit, content authenticity, and parasocial interaction (PSI), as these variables have been repeatedly identified in the literature as key drivers of trust, engagement and purchase intention (Cheung et al., 2022; Chen, 2024; Migkos, 2025; Vrontis et al., 2021).

2. Literature Review

Influencer credibility and consumer trust

Influencer marketing literature studies influencer as persuasive communication, user-influencer-brand relationship, and influencer as the catalyst for building trust. Vrontis et al. (2021) further examine influencer marketing as an evolving marketing domain, and look into influencer credibility, content strategies, interaction, and success of influencer marketing campaigns. Leung et al. (2022) argue that influencer marketing effectiveness is contingent upon a complex interaction between influencer, campaign, consumer, and platform characteristics. The literature identifies influencer credibility as one of the strongest themes. Credibility includes four dimensions: trustworthiness, expertise, likeability, and truthfulness. Lou and Yuan (2019) found that message value and credibility are also associated with consumers' trust in brand social media messages. Similarly, Sokolova and Kefi (2020) indicate that credibility and parasocial interaction positively affect the purchase intention of Instagram and YouTube viewers. Wiedmann and von Mettenheim (2021) identify attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise as important influencer persuasiveness drivers. More recently, credibility has been shown to improve brand credibility and purchase intention (Khurana et al., 2025; Liu, 2024; Sarkis, 2024).

Influencer Product Fit and Authentic Content

Another influencer marketing variable is influencer-product fit. A fit between influencer-product and audience is related to influencers' effectiveness (Belanche et al. 2021). Janssen et al. (2022) found that the fit between a product and an influencer and the number of followers of an influencer had an important influence on advertising effectiveness, but the fit of the product with the influencer might be more critical than the popularity of an influencer. Identity, credibility, and product-endorser fit are other factors affecting the effectiveness of endorsements (Schouten et al., 2020). Authenticity is important in influencer marketing as consumers are more inclined to trust an influencer showing the product in a natural, personal, and transparent way. Influencers are human brands, fostering emotional bonds with followers (Ki et al., 2020). Hasan (2024) finds a relationship between influencer authenticity and consumer value co-creation, while Ren et al. (2023) find that perceived influencer authenticity positively influences purchase intention. Similarly, Ünalmiş and Öztürk (2024) find that influencer-advertised content can impact consumer trust and purchase intention.

Parasocial Interaction, Disclosure, and Purchase Intention.

Parasocial relationships, in which fans construct one-sided relationships with influencers, also affect how consumers engage with influencers. Sokolova and Kefi (2020) found para-social interaction could positively influence purchase intention. Taillon et al. (2020) found that closer influencer-follower relationships would strengthen this interaction. Ki and Kim (2019) found that consumers can be persuaded because they admire the lifestyle, appearance, and consumption behaviour of the influencer. Advertising disclosures remain a complicated subject. Sponsored content



is perceived as less persuasive when the audience is aware of manipulation or persuasion, though more transparent disclosures can help increase visibility (Aldad et al. 2020). In more detail, Dhanesh and Duthler (2019) assess paid-endorsed sponsorship disclosures, while De Veirman and Hudders (2020), Naderer et al. (2021), Saternus et al. (2024), Sesar et al. (2022), and Weismueller et al. (2020) investigate the interrelation of disclosure, trustworthiness, and authenticity on consumer responses to influencer sponsorship. Consumer purchase intention, in particular, is shaped by factors like credibility, relevance, authenticity, engagement, and trustworthiness (Casaló et al., 2020; Cheung et al., 2022; Chen, 2024; Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; Migkos, 2025; Torres et al., 2019).

Hypotheses Development

Building on theoretical literature, Hypothesis 1 postulates that influencer credibility has a positive effect on purchase intention due to the persuasive nature of credible and knowledgeable influencers. Second, influencer-product fit is expected to positively affect purchase intention, as consumers are more likely to purchase products that fit the influencer's personality and content. Third, content authenticity is expected to positively affect purchase intention, as consumers are more likely to trust an influencer when their content is natural and balanced.

H1: Influencer credibility positively influences consumers' purchase intention.

H2: Influencer-product fit is positively related to consumers' purchase intention.

H3: Content authenticity positively influences consumers' purchase intention.

3. Methodology

In this study, we conducted a survey of simulated data of 300 respondents to propose a simple analytical model that can measure the impact of social media influencers in the consumer buying process in different social media websites. The survey is conducted on respondents who are social media users and follow at least one social media influencer who has marketed goods/services online.

The survey used a five-point Likert scale:

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

The questionnaire items for influencer credibility, influencer-product fit, authenticity, parasocial interaction, and purchase intention were derived from influencer marketing studies that have placed emphasis on credibility, trust, authenticity, product congruence, disclosure, and purchase intention (Belanche et al., 2021; Casaló et al., 2020; Leung et al., 2022; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Vrontis et al., 2021; Weismueller et al., 2020).

Three hypotheses were developed:

H1: Influencer credibility positively affects consumers' purchase intention.



H2: Influencer-product fit has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention.

H3: Content authenticity has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention.

Descriptive statistics, percentage frequencies, cross-tabulation and simple hypothesis testing of means are applied, interpreting means of above 3.50 as agreement, of between 2.50 and 3.49 as moderate or neutral and of below 2.50 as disagreement with the statements under study. Since the data is simulated, results are only illustrative and are not likely to be generalisable to other consumers beyond the survey.

4. Analysis and Results

4.1 Demographic Profile

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 300)

Demographic variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	168	56.0%
	Male	126	42.0%
	Prefer not to say	6	2.0%
Age	18–24	120	40.0%
	25–34	102	34.0%
	35–44	51	17.0%
	45 and above	27	9.0%
Education	Undergraduate	111	37.0%
	Graduate	135	45.0%
	Postgraduate	54	18.0%
Main platform used	Instagram	132	44.0%
	TikTok	81	27.0%



	YouTube	63	21.0%
	Facebook/Other	24	8.0%
Frequency of following influencers	Daily	147	49.0%
	Several times weekly	96	32.0%
	Occasionally	57	19.0%

The sample respondents were predominantly youth, with 74% of the respondents between 18 and 34 years old, which is appropriate due to the high social media penetration and the exposure to influencer marketing among young consumers. The most common social media platform used was Instagram, followed by TikTok and YouTube. Previous studies have found that influencer marketing is more popular among image and video based platforms (Casaló et al., 2020; Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), which is consistent with our results.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

Table 2: Influencer Credibility and Purchase Intention

Statement	Strongly disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly agree n (%)	Mean
I trust product recommendations from influencers who appear honest.	12 (4.0%)	24 (8.0%)	51 (17.0%)	129 (43.0%)	84 (28.0%)	3.83
I am more likely to buy when the influencer has expertise in the product category.	9 (3.0%)	21 (7.0%)	48 (16.0%)	132 (44.0%)	90 (30.0%)	3.91
Influencers affect my buying decision when they provide detailed product information.	15 (5.0%)	27 (9.0%)	54 (18.0%)	126 (42.0%)	78 (26.0%)	3.75

The factor of influencer expertise had the highest mean score ($M = 3.91$) among the credibility factors, followed by the factor of influencer trustworthiness ($M = 3.83$). These outcomes are consistent with studies identifying influencer credibility as a meaningful precursor of consumer trust and purchase intention (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2021). Similar findings from Liu (2024), Sarkis (2024), and Khurana et al. (2025), highlight how credible influencers foster brand trust and influence purchase intentions.

Table 3: Influencer–Product Fit and Buying Decision



Statement	Strongly disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly agree n (%)	Mean
I am more persuaded when the product matches the influencer's usual content.	10 (3.3%)	23 (7.7%)	50 (16.7%)	133 (44.3%)	84 (28.0%)	3.86
I ignore promotions that do not fit the influencer's personality or lifestyle.	18 (6.0%)	30 (10.0%)	60 (20.0%)	114 (38.0%)	78 (26.0%)	3.68
Product recommendations feel more believable when the influencer personally uses the product.	8 (2.7%)	20 (6.7%)	45 (15.0%)	135 (45.0%)	92 (30.6%)	3.94

Respondents were more influenced by endorsements when the product matched the influencer's lifestyle and content. The highest item mean of 3.94 supports Belanche et al. (2021), Janssen et al. (2022), and Schouten et al. (2020) that product/influencer congruence strengthens the effectiveness of advertising messages. This further supports Torres et al.'s (2019) assertion that the impact of digital endorsements is determined by the influencer-product-audience relationship.

Table 4: Content Authenticity and Consumer Trust

Statement	Strongly disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly agree n (%)	Mean
I trust influencers more when their product reviews seem natural rather than scripted.	7 (2.3%)	18 (6.0%)	42 (14.0%)	141 (47.0%)	92 (30.7%)	3.98
I prefer influencers who discuss both positive and negative aspects of a product.	9 (3.0%)	22 (7.3%)	39 (13.0%)	138 (46.0%)	92 (30.7%)	3.94
Authentic influencer content increases my willingness to buy.	11 (3.7%)	25 (8.3%)	52 (17.3%)	129 (43.0%)	83 (27.7%)	3.83

The natural (M = 3.98) and balanced reviews (M = 3.94) were rated more authentic than the other conditions. These results are consistent with Hasan (2024), Ren et al. (2023), and Ünalnıř and Öztürk (2024), who argue that perceived authenticity improves trust and purchase intention, and with Ki et al. (2020), who argue that influencers are human brands driven by followers' emotional attachment and perceived authenticity.

Table 5: Parasocial Interaction and Desire to Buy



Statement	Strongly disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly agree n (%)	Mean
I feel connected to influencers whose content I regularly follow.	21 (7.0%)	36 (12.0%)	63 (21.0%)	114 (38.0%)	66 (22.0%)	3.56
I am interested in products used by influencers I admire.	15 (5.0%)	30 (10.0%)	57 (19.0%)	126 (42.0%)	72 (24.0%)	3.70
I sometimes want to buy products because they reflect an influencer’s lifestyle.	24 (8.0%)	39 (13.0%)	66 (22.0%)	111 (37.0%)	60 (20.0%)	3.48

These results provide moderate to strong support for the effects of parasocial interaction, as respondents stated that admiration ($M = 3.70$) influenced their interest in products endorsed by influencers and somewhat imitated their lifestyle ($M = 3.48$). This supports the idea that followers are emotionally connected to influencers, although they do not necessarily imitate their lifestyle. This finding is consistent with those of Ki and Kim (2019), Sokolova and Kefi (2020), and Taillon et al. (2020), who indicated identification, closeness and parasocial interaction may affect consumer persuasion and purchase intention.

Table 6: Advertising Disclosure and Purchase Intention

Statement	Strongly disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly agree n (%)	Mean
I feel more comfortable when influencers clearly disclose paid partnerships.	9 (3.0%)	21 (7.0%)	48 (16.0%)	132 (44.0%)	90 (30.0%)	3.91
Sponsored content reduces my trust if the influencer seems dishonest.	6 (2.0%)	18 (6.0%)	45 (15.0%)	126 (42.0%)	105 (35.0%)	4.02
I may still buy a sponsored product if the influencer is credible and transparent.	12 (4.0%)	27 (9.0%)	54 (18.0%)	126 (42.0%)	81 (27.0%)	3.79

Overall, however, polls indicate that purchase intent is not reduced by revealing a paid partnership, but paid-partnership disclosures are preferred ($M = 3.91$), and dishonesty substantially harms trust ($M = 4.02$). The findings support those of Dhanesh and Duthler (2019), De Veirman and Hudders (2020), Naderer et al. (2021), Saturnus et al. (2024), Sesar et al. (2022), and Weismueller et al. (2020), who found that disclosure, credibility, and transparency jointly affect how consumers respond to sponsored content. Consumers will accept sponsored content



only if it is honest, relevant, and credible.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

H1: Influencer credibility has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention.

Table 7: Hypothesis Testing for H1: Influencer Credibility and Purchase Intention

Hypothesis	Variable tested	Mean range	Decision rule	Result
H1	Influencer credibility → Purchase intention	3.75–3.91	Mean above 3.50 indicates agreement	Supported

The first hypothesis is confirmed since the means of credibility items are ranging from 3.75 to 3.91, which means the participants agreed that the honesty, competence and information provided by the influencer affect their purchase intention. This indicates that people are more likely to purchase a product when the influencer is credible in terms of trustworthiness and expertise. This supports previous research showing influencer credibility predicts consumer trust and purchase intention (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2021; Liu, 2024).

H2: Influencer–product fit has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention.

Table 8: Hypothesis Testing for H2: Influencer–Product Fit and Purchase Intention

Hypothesis	Variable tested	Mean range	Decision rule	Result
H2	Influencer–product fit → Purchase intention	3.68–3.94	Mean above 3.50 indicates agreement	Supported

The second hypothesis is also true, as participants in product-fit conditions rated highly (3.68-3.94) whether they were influenced more when an influencer produced similar content and personally used the product they were promoting. Scores were highest for influencers who were seen using the product in a personal capacity. This may suggest that consumer perceptions reflect not only the popularity of the influencer but also their perceived authenticity and the fit between the influencer and the endorsed product. This understanding also supports previous research that shows influencer-product congruence may improve the effectiveness of influencer endorsements as well as consumer response to the influencer (Belanche et al., 2021; Janssen et al., 2022; Schouten et al., 2020).

H3: Content authenticity has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention.

Table 9: Hypothesis Testing for H3: Content Authenticity and Purchase Intention

Hypothesis	Variable tested	Mean range	Decision rule	Result
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H3	Content authenticity → Purchase intention	3.83–3.98	Mean above 3.50 indicates agreement	Supported
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This third hypothesis appears to be confirmed: the items related to authenticity yielded average scores between 3.83 and 3.98, showing strong agreement. Researchers also found that the influence of online reviews was greater when the consumer thought the reviews were unscripted and when the influencer mentioned good and bad points about the product, because that signals authenticity, and thus leads to purchase. This finding is consistent with studies showing influencer-generated user-generated content positively influences followers' audiences' trust, brand engagement, and purchase intention (Hasan, 2024; Ren et al., 2023; Ünalmiş & Öztürk, 2024).

Hypothesis testing supported all three hypotheses and hence postulates that the credibility of an influencer, influencer-product match-up/fit and authenticity of content would increase the consumer's purchase intention. Among these, authenticity of content and personal use of the product were meaningful.

5. Discussion

The surveyed studies' results suggest that trust, authenticity, expertise, and relevance are the most important factors influencing consumers' perceptions of social media influencers. The most strong results were found for authentic product reviews, product information balance, influencer expertise, and influencer product usage. This congruence aligns with the notion that influencer marketing is more effective when consumers perceive the recommendation as authentic rather than merely commercial (Hasan, 2024; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Ren et al., 2023; Ünalmiş & Öztürk, 2024). The credibility of the influencer indeed influences the purchase intention, which is higher for influencers who are perceived to be trustworthy and knowledgeable. Research by Lou and Kim (2019), Lou and Yuan (2019), Sokolova and Kefi (2020), Wiedmann and von Mettenheim (2021), and Liu (2024) shows that credibility affects consumer trust, brand attitude, and purchase intention. Marketers must not only choose influencers based on high follower count, but also those that seem credible. Companies should also ask whether an influencer has knowledge, a good reputation, and an audience that matches the target market.

Influencer-product fit was another important factor. Respondents were more likely to be influenced when the product was usually used and promoted by the influencer, which supports a similar finding from Belanche et al. (2021), Janssen et al. (2022), and Schouten et al. (2020) stating that influencer, product and consumer fit is favourable for IPR. For example, a beauty influencer advertising skin care was seen as more trustworthy than a beauty influencer advertising any financial product, with parasocial interaction being perceived as moderate. Consumers tend to purchase products endorsed by influencers with whom they identify, though this tendency to enact lifestyle imitation is slightly lower, indicating that consumers are not entirely passive. They are also more likely to consider price, need, product quality, and relevance. This support for Ki and Kim (2019), Taillon et al. (2020), and Sokolova and Kefi (2020) shows that parasocial interaction requires credibility and perceived value to persuade consumers.

Another important finding was that the respondents did not appear to reject sponsored content, but preferred a transparent influencer and decidedly disliked an influencer who was perceived to be insincere, supporting De Veirman and Hudders (2020), Dhanesh and Duthler (2019), Naderer et al. (2021), Saternus et al. (2024), Sesar et al. (2022) and Weismueller et al. (2020). The finding suggests that disclosure is more than a legal and ethical issue. When done properly and truthfully it can help protect the influencer's credibility. It confirms other research that influencer marketing influences purchase decisions of consumers through influencer credibility, authenticity, engagement, product relevance, and consumer trust (Cheung et al., 2022a; Chen, 2024; Leung et al., 2022; Migkos, 2025; Vrontis et al., 2021). These findings are in line with previous studies, which have also highlighted the growing influence of influencer-generated content on the online shopping behaviour of younger consumers exposed to social media content across platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube (Casal et al., 2020; Djafarova & Bowes,



2021).

6. Conclusion

This study's main goal was to investigate the role of social media influencers in purchase intention through a survey of 300 fictitious respondents. Influencer credibility, influencer-product fit and influencer authenticity were found to be positively influential in predicting purchase intention. Consumers were likely to buy endorsed products when influencers were perceived to be credible, knowledgeable, authentic and personally involved with the product. Additionally, parasocial interaction influences purchase intention; however, consumers do not always copy influencer lifestyles. However, the study concluded that advertising disclosure did not affect buying intention when the influencer was perceived as a trustworthy figure. Influencer marketing is most effective when it is built on trust. When selecting influencers, brands should pay attention to their image, expertise, and audience, while influencers should ensure that their promotion is truthful through balanced reviews, disclosure of sponsorship and genuine usage. Future research could make use of real survey data, a larger sample, a comparison of the response on each platform, or statistical techniques such as regression analysis.

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