

Influencer Credibility and Purchase Intention among Young Consumers

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of social media platforms has transformed the manner in which consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products. Among young consumers, digital influencers have emerged as important sources of brand-related information because of their perceived authenticity, expertise, and interpersonal connection with online audiences. This study examines the relationship between influencer credibility dimensions and purchase intention among young consumers by focusing on three major credibility components: trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. The study adopts a quantitative analytical framework using a structured conceptual model to examine how influencer characteristics influence consumer decision-making processes in digital environments.

The research explores the role of influencer-generated content in shaping consumer perceptions, reducing purchase uncertainty, and strengthening brand engagement. A simulation-based dataset representing young consumer responses was developed to demonstrate the application of statistical analysis techniques, including descriptive analysis and relationship assessment among variables. The findings indicate that perceived trustworthiness and expertise demonstrate stronger associations with purchase intention compared with attractiveness alone. The study highlights that young consumers are more likely to consider influencer recommendations when the information appears genuine, knowledgeable, and aligned with their personal values.

The research contributes to digital marketing literature by providing insights into influencer-based communication strategies and consumer psychology in social media environments. The findings offer practical implications for marketers, brands, and content creators seeking to develop effective influencer partnerships that enhance consumer confidence and purchasing decisions.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Credibility, Trustworthiness, Expertise, Social Media Marketing, Purchase Intention, Young Consumers, Consumer Behaviour.

1. Introduction

The emergence of social media has significantly changed traditional marketing communication by enabling direct interaction between brands and consumers. Digital platforms have created new opportunities for organizations to communicate with target audiences through personalized content, community engagement, and interactive experiences. Within this changing marketing landscape, social media influencers have become influential intermediaries who connect brands with consumers through perceived personal relationships and authentic digital narratives.

Influencer marketing has gained considerable attention because consumers increasingly seek recommendations from individuals they follow online rather than relying exclusively on conventional advertisements. Young consumers, particularly those who actively engage with social media platforms, often perceive influencers as relatable sources of product information. Unlike traditional celebrity endorsements, influencer-based communication frequently emphasizes personal experiences, product demonstrations, reviews, and lifestyle integration, which may increase consumer involvement and trust.

The effectiveness of influencer marketing largely depends on influencer credibility. Credibility represents the extent to which audiences perceive a communicator as reliable, knowledgeable, and capable of providing valuable information. According to source credibility theory, consumers are more likely to accept and act upon messages delivered by communicators who demonstrate expertise and trustworthiness. In digital environments, these credibility characteristics influence how consumers evaluate promotional messages and determine whether a product recommendation appears convincing.

Young consumers represent an important market segment because of their high level of digital engagement and changing purchasing behaviours. Their decisions are often influenced by online reviews, social recommendations, electronic word-of-mouth, and influencer-generated content. However, the increasing commercialization of influencer activities has also raised concerns regarding authenticity, sponsorship transparency, and consumer trust. Therefore, understanding the factors that strengthen influencer credibility has become essential for developing responsible and effective marketing strategies.

This study investigates the influence of influencer credibility on purchase intention among young consumers. By examining the contribution of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, the research provides a structured understanding of how influencer characteristics shape consumer responses. The study also discusses the implications of influencer credibility management for brands seeking sustainable relationships with digitally connected consumers.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Influencer Credibility and Digital Consumer Behaviour

The concept of influencer credibility has become an important area of investigation within contemporary marketing research because consumers increasingly depend on online personalities for product-related information. Credibility refers to the perceived reliability and effectiveness of a communicator in delivering persuasive information.

In influencer marketing environments, credibility is generally associated with three major dimensions: trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. These dimensions influence how audiences interpret promotional messages and whether they consider influencer recommendations valuable for their purchasing decisions.

Source credibility theory explains that persuasive communication becomes more effective when the receiver perceives the information provider as trustworthy and knowledgeable. Influencers who consistently share authentic experiences, demonstrate product knowledge, and maintain transparent communication are more likely to develop stronger relationships with followers. Young consumers often evaluate influencer recommendations through personal connection and perceived honesty rather than considering promotional messages only from a commercial perspective.

Previous marketing studies have highlighted that digital influencers function as opinion leaders who can shape consumer attitudes through electronic word-of-mouth communication. Their ability to create engaging content and establish interactive relationships differentiates them from traditional advertising channels. However, credibility is not automatically achieved through popularity or follower numbers; rather, it depends on the perceived quality, consistency, and authenticity of influencer communication.

2.2 Purchase Intention in Social Media Marketing Context

Purchase intention represents a consumer's willingness or likelihood to purchase a product or service after evaluating available information. In digital marketing environments, purchase intention is influenced by multiple psychological and social factors, including perceived value, brand attitude, trust, social influence, and online recommendations. Social media platforms have strengthened these influences by enabling consumers to access real-time opinions and experiences from other users.

Young consumers frequently use influencer-generated content as a decision-support mechanism because such content provides practical demonstrations, personal opinions, and usage experiences. Influencers can reduce perceived risk by offering information that consumers consider more relatable than traditional promotional campaigns. When consumers perceive influencer recommendations as credible, they may develop stronger confidence toward the promoted brand and demonstrate higher purchase intention.

Research on consumer behaviour indicates that credibility-based communication can enhance brand evaluation and encourage favourable behavioural outcomes. However, excessive commercialisation, undisclosed sponsorships, or inconsistent recommendations may negatively affect audience trust. Therefore, maintaining credibility is a critical factor for influencers and brands aiming to achieve long-term marketing effectiveness.

2.3 Relationship between Influencer Characteristics and Consumer Purchase Decisions

The relationship between influencer characteristics and consumer purchase decisions has received increasing attention due to the growing importance of influencer marketing strategies. Trustworthiness influences whether consumers believe that influencer recommendations are sincere, while expertise determines whether audiences consider the influencer capable of providing useful product information. Attractiveness, including physical appeal and lifestyle similarity, may enhance attention and engagement but may not independently guarantee purchasing behaviour.

Studies suggest that consumers respond more positively when influencers demonstrate alignment between their personal identity and the products they promote. A strong match between influencer values, audience expectations, and brand positioning can improve message acceptance and strengthen purchase intention. Therefore, successful influencer marketing requires more than selecting individuals with large audiences; it requires identifying influencers whose credibility dimensions correspond with consumer expectations.

The existing literature indicates that influencer credibility plays a significant role in shaping consumer attitudes and behavioural intentions. However, further examination is required to understand how different credibility dimensions contribute comparatively to purchase intention among young consumers in evolving social media environments.

3. Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to examine the role of influencer credibility in influencing purchase intention among young consumers. The research focuses on understanding how specific credibility attributes affect consumer responses toward influencer-based marketing communication.

The objectives of the study are:

- To examine the relationship between influencer credibility dimensions and purchase intention among young consumers.
- To analyse the influence of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness of influencers on consumer buying decisions.
- To evaluate the importance of credible influencer communication in improving consumer confidence toward promoted products and brands.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study follows a quantitative analytical research design to examine the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention. A structured conceptual framework was developed using influencer credibility dimensions as independent variables and purchase intention as the dependent variable. The research approach is simulation-based, where hypothetical response values are used only to demonstrate analytical procedures and interpretation patterns.

The research model considers three major influencer credibility factors: trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. These variables were selected because they represent commonly discussed dimensions of persuasive communication and digital influence.

4.2 Data Framework and Measurement Approach

For analytical demonstration, a simulated dataset representing young consumers was developed. The assumed respondents belong to the age group actively engaged with social media platforms and exposed to influencer marketing content. Each construct was measured through conceptual questionnaire statements using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The measurement framework was designed to examine whether consumers perceive influencers as reliable information sources and whether these perceptions influence their intention to purchase recommended products.

Table 1: Research Variables and Measurement Framework

Variable Category	Construct	Measurement Focus
Independent Variable	Trustworthiness	Perceived honesty and authenticity of influencer recommendations
Independent Variable	Expertise	Knowledge and product-related competence of influencers
Independent	Attractiveness	Appeal, similarity, and audience engagement capability

Variable Category	Construct	Measurement Focus
Variable		
Dependent Variable	Purchase Intention	Consumer willingness to purchase influencer-recommended products

4.3 Analytical Procedure

The simulated responses were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques to identify patterns among study variables. Comparative evaluation was conducted to understand which influencer credibility dimensions demonstrate stronger associations with purchase intention.

The analysis framework includes variable-wise mean comparison and interpretation of consumer response tendencies. The methodology emphasizes transparency by clearly identifying that the dataset is illustrative and intended for demonstrating research design application rather than reporting completed field-based empirical findings.

5. Analysis

5.1 Descriptive Analysis of Influencer Credibility Factors

The analysis examines the influence of influencer credibility dimensions on young consumers' purchase intention. Since the study follows a simulation-based analytical framework, the presented values are illustrative and are used to demonstrate the application of quantitative analysis techniques. The analysis considers four major constructs: trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and purchase intention.

The simulated results indicate that trustworthiness received the highest average evaluation among influencer credibility dimensions. This suggests that young consumers are more likely to respond positively when influencers are perceived as honest, transparent, and authentic in their communication. Expertise also demonstrates a strong influence, indicating that audiences value influencers who possess adequate knowledge about the products or services they recommend.

Attractiveness shows a comparatively lower mean score, suggesting that visual appeal and personal style may contribute to audience engagement but may not independently determine purchase decisions. The results indicate that psychological factors related to confidence and information reliability play a more important role in converting influencer exposure into purchase intention.

Table 2: Simulated Descriptive Analysis of Study Variables

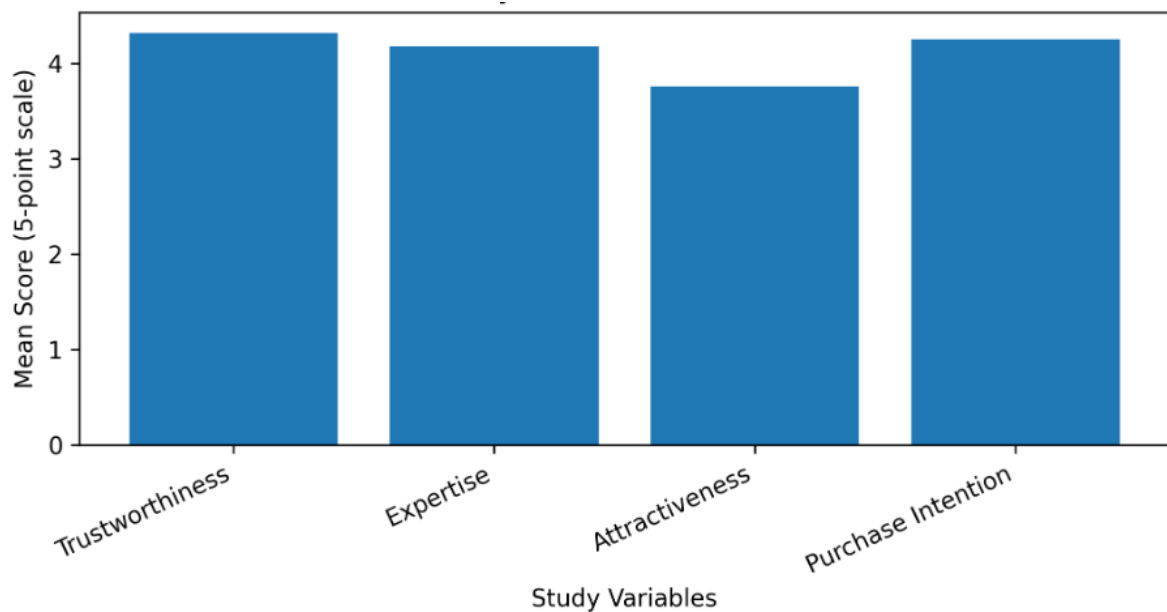
Study Variable	Mean Score	Interpretation
Trustworthiness	4.32	Strong influence on consumer confidence
Expertise	4.18	High influence through product knowledge
Attractiveness	3.76	Moderate influence through engagement appeal
Purchase Intention	4.25	High willingness toward recommended products

Note: Values are simulated for methodological demonstration and do not represent actual survey findings.

5.2 Graphical Representation of Influencer Credibility and Purchase Intention

The following graph presents the comparative mean scores of influencer credibility dimensions and purchase intention.

Figure 1: Influencer Credibility Dimensions and Purchase Intention



Interpretation: The graphical analysis demonstrates that trustworthiness represents the strongest credibility dimension among the evaluated factors. The high score associated with trustworthiness indicates that young consumers place considerable importance on authenticity and perceived honesty when evaluating influencer recommendations.

The results further show that expertise contributes significantly to purchase intention because consumers prefer influencers who provide informed opinions and meaningful product-related insights. Although attractiveness supports audience attention and content engagement, its influence appears comparatively weaker when credibility-based factors are considered.

6. Challenges

6.1 Maintaining Authenticity in Commercial Influencer Marketing

One of the major challenges in influencer marketing is maintaining authenticity while managing commercial partnerships. As influencers increasingly collaborate with brands, audiences may become concerned about whether recommendations represent genuine opinions or paid promotional activities. The balance between commercial objectives and authentic communication remains essential for preserving consumer trust.

Young consumers are particularly sensitive toward exaggerated claims and inconsistent product endorsements. Therefore, influencers and brands must focus on transparent communication, responsible promotion, and alignment between influencer identity and brand values.

6.2 Measuring Actual Consumer Behaviour through Digital Influence

Another challenge involves accurately measuring the transition from online engagement to actual purchasing behaviour. Social media interactions such as likes, comments, and shares do not always represent real buying decisions. Consumer purchase intention may also be affected by external factors including price, product quality, brand reputation, and personal preferences.

Therefore, researchers and marketers need comprehensive analytical approaches that examine both psychological responses and behavioural outcomes rather than depending only on engagement metrics.

7. Discussion

7.1 Role of Trustworthiness in Influencing Consumer Decisions

The findings highlight that trustworthiness is a central factor influencing young consumers' responses toward influencer marketing. In digital environments where consumers encounter large volumes of promotional content, credible communication helps reduce uncertainty and improves confidence in product evaluation. Influencers who share balanced opinions, demonstrate transparency, and maintain consistency are more likely to develop stronger relationships with their audiences.

The importance of trustworthiness reflects a broader shift in consumer expectations. Modern consumers increasingly value authenticity and personal connection rather than purely promotional communication. Influencers who successfully establish credibility can function as reliable information intermediaries between brands and consumers.

7.2 Influence of Expertise and Content Quality

Expertise contributes significantly to consumer perception because audiences often evaluate influencers based on their knowledge and ability to provide useful information. Product demonstrations, detailed reviews, comparisons, and practical experiences strengthen the informational value of influencer content.

The results suggest that expertise-based influence is particularly relevant when consumers face complex purchasing decisions. Influencers who provide meaningful explanations can improve consumer understanding and support more confident purchase decisions.

7.3 Implications for Brands and Influencer Strategies

The study indicates that brands should consider credibility characteristics rather than focusing only on follower numbers when selecting influencer partners. A smaller influencer with strong audience trust may generate more effective consumer responses than a highly popular influencer with limited credibility.

For sustainable influencer marketing outcomes, organizations should develop partnerships with influencers whose communication style, expertise, and audience relationship match the brand's objectives. Long-term credibility development can contribute to stronger consumer engagement and improved purchase intentions.

8. Conclusion

The present study examined the role of influencer credibility in shaping purchase intention among young consumers within the context of social media marketing. The research highlights that influencer-based communication has become an important component of contemporary consumer decision-making because young audiences increasingly rely on digital personalities for product information, recommendations, and brand evaluations. The findings from the simulation-based analytical framework indicate that credibility-related factors, particularly trustworthiness and expertise, play a significant role in influencing consumer confidence and purchase-related intentions.

The analysis demonstrates that trustworthiness represents the most influential dimension of influencer credibility. Young consumers are more likely to accept recommendations when influencers are perceived as genuine, transparent, and consistent in their communication. This finding reflects the changing nature of digital consumer behaviour, where authenticity has become a valuable element of persuasive marketing. Consumers no longer evaluate promotional content only through brand reputation but also consider the reliability and personal credibility of the individual delivering the message.

The study further indicates that expertise contributes substantially to purchase intention because consumers seek meaningful information before making purchasing decisions. Influencers who demonstrate product knowledge, provide practical experiences, and create informative content can reduce consumer uncertainty and strengthen brand perceptions. Although attractiveness contributes to audience engagement and initial attention, the results suggest that appearance-based appeal alone may not be sufficient to generate strong purchasing responses without supporting credibility characteristics.

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that organizations should adopt a strategic approach while selecting influencer partners. Brands should prioritize authenticity, expertise, and audience relationship quality rather than relying exclusively on follower count or popularity indicators. Developing long-term collaborations with credible influencers can help organizations create stronger consumer connections and improve marketing effectiveness.

The study also acknowledges certain limitations. Since the research follows a simulation-based analytical approach, the findings should not be interpreted as direct evidence of actual consumer behaviour. Future research may conduct empirical investigations using larger and diverse respondent groups across different demographic and cultural contexts. Additionally, future studies may explore other variables such as influencer-brand fit, sponsorship disclosure, consumer involvement, and platform-specific effects to develop a more comprehensive understanding of influencer marketing effectiveness.

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