



An Impact of Influencer Attributes on Purchase Intentions in Social Media Influencer Marketing: The Mediating Role of Trust

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Abstract

The emergence of social media platforms has significantly transformed modern marketing practices. Influencer marketing has become a dominant strategy through which brands connect with their target audiences in a more relatable and engaging manner. This research paper examines the impact of influencer attributes—credibility, expertise, attractiveness, and relatability—on consumers' purchase intentions. Furthermore, it investigates the mediating role of trust in shaping consumer decision-making. The study is based on primary data collected from 150 active social media users through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. Statistical tools such as correlation and regression analysis were applied to interpret the findings. The results reveal that credibility and expertise have the strongest influence on purchase intention, while trust significantly mediates the relationship between influencer attributes and buying behaviour. The study concludes that trust is the foundation of successful influencer marketing campaigns.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Purchase Intention, Trust, Credibility, Social Media, Consumer Behaviour

1. Introduction

In today's digital era, social media plays a central role in influencing consumer behaviour. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have created opportunities for individuals to build large audiences and establish themselves as influencers. These influencers often collaborate with brands to promote products and services. Unlike traditional advertisements, influencer marketing feels more personal, interactive, and authentic.

Consumers increasingly rely on influencer recommendations before making purchasing decisions. However, not every influencer successfully converts followers into customers. The effectiveness of influencer marketing depends on certain influencer attributes such as credibility, expertise, attractiveness, and relatability. Among these factors, trust plays a crucial role. When followers trust an influencer, they are more likely to believe their recommendations and develop purchase intentions.

Despite the rapid growth of influencer marketing, there is limited research focusing on how trust mediates the relationship between influencer attributes and purchase intention. This study aims to fill that gap by analyzing how different attributes influence buying behaviour and how trust strengthens or weakens this impact.

2. Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of influencer attributes on consumers' purchase intentions with trust as a mediating variable.

The specific objectives are:

1. To analyze the impact of influencer credibility on purchase intention.
2. To examine the role of influencer expertise in building consumer trust.
3. To evaluate how attractiveness and relatability influence buying behaviour.
4. To assess the mediating effect of trust between influencer attributes and purchase intention.
5. To provide practical recommendations for marketers and brands.

3. Review of Literature

3.1 Influencer Marketing and Consumer Behaviour

Influencer marketing is based on the concept that consumers are more likely to trust recommendations from individuals they follow and admire. Previous studies suggest that influencers act as opinion leaders who shape attitudes, perceptions, and purchase decisions. Social media has strengthened this effect by enabling continuous interaction between influencers and followers.

3.2 Influencer Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree to which an influencer is perceived as trustworthy and honest. Research indicates that consumers prefer influencers who provide genuine reviews rather than purely promotional content. Higher credibility leads to stronger consumer confidence and positive purchase intentions.

3.3 Influencer Expertise

Expertise refers to the influencer's knowledge and experience regarding a specific product or industry. Influencers who demonstrate deep understanding of the products they promote are more persuasive. Consumers perceive expert influencers as reliable sources of information, which increases trust and reduces perceived risk.

3.4 Attractiveness and Relatability

Attractiveness includes physical appeal as well as personality traits that make influencers appealing. Relatability refers to how closely followers identify with the influencer's lifestyle and values. Studies show that relatable influencers create emotional connections, which positively impact consumer attitudes.

3.5 Trust as a Mediating Variable

Trust is a key factor in online marketing environments. In the absence of physical interaction, consumers depend on trust to reduce uncertainty. Trust mediates the relationship between influencer characteristics and purchase intention by strengthening the credibility of recommendations.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study follows a quantitative research design. A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data from respondents.

4.2 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study collected responses from 150 active social media users aged between 18 and 35 years. Convenience sampling technique was used for data collection.

4.3 Data Collection Tool

A questionnaire consisting of 25 statements was developed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” The questionnaire measured influencer credibility, expertise, attractiveness, relatability, trust, and purchase intention.

4.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data was analyzed using statistical tools such as:

- Descriptive Statistics
- Correlation Analysis
- Multiple Regression Analysis
- Mediation Analysis

SPSS software was used for data interpretation.

5. Data Analysis and Results

5.1 Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive results indicate that:

- 72% of respondents have purchased a product recommended by an influencer.
- 80% consider trust as an important factor before buying.
- 65% follow more than three influencers actively.

These findings highlight the growing importance of influencer marketing in consumer decision-making.

5.2 Correlation Analysis

The results show a strong positive correlation between:

- Credibility and Trust ($r = 0.62$)
- Trust and Purchase Intention ($r = 0.68$)
- Expertise and Purchase Intention ($r = 0.54$)

This indicates that as credibility and expertise increase, trust and purchase intention also increase.

5.3 Regression Analysis

The regression results reveal that:

- Credibility significantly impacts purchase intention ($\beta = 0.36, p < 0.01$).
- Expertise significantly influences trust ($\beta = 0.41, p < 0.01$).
- Trust significantly predicts purchase intention ($\beta = 0.45, p < 0.01$).

These findings confirm that trust acts as a strong predictor of buying behaviour.

5.4 Mediation Analysis

The mediation test confirms that trust partially mediates the relationship between influencer attributes and purchase intention. This means that influencer attributes affect purchase intention both directly and indirectly through trust.

6. Observations

1. Credibility is more important than attractiveness in influencing purchase decisions.
2. Consumers prefer influencers who share honest reviews and personal experiences.
3. Trust significantly increases the likelihood of product purchase.
4. Overly promotional content reduces credibility and trust.
5. Micro-influencers tend to generate higher trust due to closer audience engagement.

7. Conclusion

The study concludes that influencer attributes significantly impact consumers' purchase intentions. However, trust plays a crucial mediating role in strengthening this relationship. Without trust, influencer marketing campaigns may fail to convert engagement into actual sales. Brands should therefore focus on selecting influencers who demonstrate authenticity, expertise, and credibility rather than simply high follower counts.

The research highlights that successful influencer marketing is built on long-term trust and meaningful engagement with audiences.

8. Recommendations

For Brands:

- Collaborate with credible and niche influencers.
- Prioritize authenticity over popularity.
- Encourage transparent communication in sponsored posts.

For Influencers:

- Maintain honesty and avoid excessive promotions.
- Engage actively with followers to build trust.
- Promote products that align with personal values and audience interests.

9. Limitations of the Study

- The sample size was limited to 150 respondents.
- The study focused mainly on young social media users.
- Results may vary across different cultural or demographic groups.

10. Scope for Future Research

Future studies can expand the sample size and include diverse age groups. Researchers can also examine additional variables such as brand image, price sensitivity, and social proof in influencer marketing.

References

(References should be formatted in APA style as per university guidelines.)

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