

The Role of Social Media Influencer, Trustworthiness, and its Impact on Consumers' Purchase Intention: A Conceptual Paper

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Abstract

In an evolving digital marketing landscape, understanding the factors that shape consumer purchase intention is crucial for brand success. This conceptual paper proposes the roles of influencer credibility, influencer attractiveness, perceived quality, and trustworthiness in influencing consumers' intention to purchase. Guided by the Social Credibility theory and Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory, this study proposes a framework that integrates these constructs to explain their impact on consumer decision making. This study examines the consumer behaviour pathway through which influencer credibility (stimuli) impacts consumer purchase intention (response) via the mediating role of trustworthiness (organism). This study hypothesises that influencer credibility and influencer attractiveness act as external marketing cues that enhance the trustworthiness of endorsed products. These stimuli in turn significantly strengthens consumer' intention to purchase. Therefore, this paper contributes to the theoretical understanding of consumer behaviour in the digital landscape and offers insight for marketers to develop their branding strategies. Future empirical research is encouraged to validate the proposed framework across different digital platforms and cultural settings.

Keywords: Influencer Credibility, Trustworthiness, Purchase Intention, Digital Consumer Behaviour

Introduction

In today's digital age, marketing strategies have evolved from traditional marketing to digital marketing platforms. Social media influencers and perceived quality act as vital tools for shaping consumer behaviour. Consumers today spend more time online and rely heavily on social media tools. Therefore, understanding the factors that drive consumers' purchase intention in the 21st century has become a priority for brands as well as marketers. This is

consistent with the findings of Belanche et al. (2021) which indicate a significant growth in collaborations between social media influencers and brands in recent years. The study also emphasised that influencers' credibility is enhanced when there is a strong fit between the influencer and the promoted product, ultimately generating positive consumer behaviour.

Hossain et al. (2025) asserted the key role of influencer credibility in influencing trustworthiness, along with influencer attractiveness. The study, which focused on beauty products, highlighted the importance of hiring credible, trustworthy, and visually appealing influencers because these elements significantly drive purchase intention in the studied context. Likewise, Rizomyliotis et al. (2024) underscored the significance of trustworthiness, expertise, entertainment value, and attractiveness of the influencer in shaping Gen Z consumers' intention and decision to purchase cosmetic products.

This current study theorises the significance of influencer credibility, trustworthiness, and attractiveness in driving purchase intention, underpinned by the Source Credibility Theory and the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework. With the proposed theoretical framework, this work aims to enrich the current body of knowledge on digital consumer behaviour and provide practical marketing suggestions for optimising the selection of influencers.

Literature Review

Source Credibility Theory

According to this theory, the perceived trustworthiness and credibility of the source pulls significant weight in persuading people to behave in a certain way. A brainchild of Hovland et al. (1953), this theory asserts that the source's honesty, expertise, and trustworthiness as perceived by the receiver determine the latter's acceptance of the information relayed. Due to its broad relevance, this theory has been used to explore consumer behaviour in numerous industries including micro health and fitness (Schultz, 2025), education (Mohan, 2025), and online gaming (Kubat Dokumaci, 2024).

S-O-R Theory

One of the most prominent underpinning theories for understanding consumer behaviour is the S-O-R theory introduced by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). This theory suggests that the external stimuli (S) coming from the external environment influence consumers' internal state (O) and enhance the behavioural response (R). Previous studies applied this theory for understanding purchase intention in different digital business environments such as retail (Iranmanesh et al., 2022), hospitality (Sohaib et al., 2022), and banking (Shahid et al., 2022). In the context of digital marketing, influencers' credibility, the fit between celebrities and brands, as well as the brand communities' engagement act as external stimuli that affect consumers' internal evaluations such as brand trust (organism). This internal trust subsequently influences consumers' purchase intention (response).

Influencer Credibility

Influencer credibility significantly influences perceived trustworthiness in the context of cosmetics products (Hossain et al., 2025). The study suggests that credibility is one of the most important elements when selecting influencers as endorsers. Therefore, choosing influencers who are reliable and knowledgeable will enhance emotional connection with

customers and indirectly align the influencer's persona with the brand values. Furthermore, previous empirical studies indicated that influencer attractiveness increases the level of customer satisfaction towards the brand and boosts brand passion (Gilal et al., 2020).

Influencer Attractiveness

Putri and Roostika (2022) revealed that influencer trustworthiness and attractiveness have a positive effect on brand attitude and, ultimately, purchase intention. Hossain et al. (2025) likewise highlighted the crucial role of influencer attractiveness in driving the trust of consumers to buy influencer-endorsed cosmetic products. Influencer attractiveness was also found to be significant in shaping consumer perception and influencing their purchase decision.

Trustworthiness

This element is a crucial driver of consumer support for influencer-endorsed products. According to Rizomyliotis et al. (2024), trustworthiness has a positive and significant effect on consumers' intention to buy cosmetic products. Koay et al. (2022) also indicated the significance of influencer trustworthiness in driving purchase intention. The study stated that reliable, trustworthy, and honest influencer reviews as perceived by the consumers can improve their purchase intention.

Purchase Intention

There is consistent evidence indicating that purchase intention is significantly affected by trustworthiness (Koay et al., 2022; Leung et al., 2022; Rizomyliotis et al., 2024). These studies elucidate that a positive attitude towards a brand or product and, ultimately, a favourable decision to purchase the product are driven by perceived influencer trustworthiness.

Methodology

This study explores the significance of influencer credibility and attractiveness in stimulating consumer behaviour (i.e., the organism) both cognitively and emotionally, especially via the trustworthiness construct. An influencer-endorsed product that is deemed trustworthy would lead to a positive behavioural response, i.e., intention to purchase.

This study primarily aims to elucidate how influencer credibility, trustworthiness, and attractiveness affect the purchase intention of consumers. Towards this end, a structured questionnaire will be disseminated to the relevant respondents which will be chosen via convenience sampling. Following the collection of data, a statistical analysis will be carried out for the purpose of hypothesis testing.

The proposed conceptual framework is illustrated as follows:

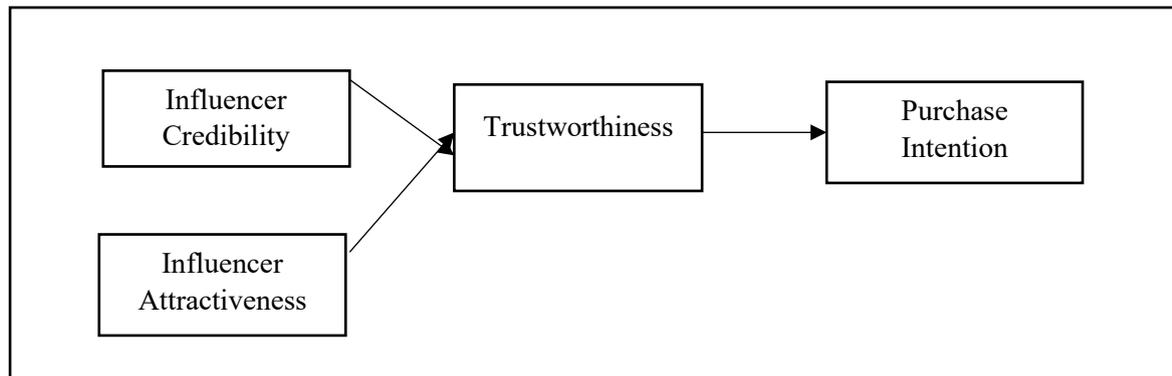


Figure 1: Proposed Framework

Conclusion

A conceptual framework is proposed in this study, primarily to explore the significance of influencer credibility, trustworthiness, and attractiveness in driving the purchase intention of consumers. The findings are expected to enrich current marketing and business knowledge about consumer behaviour as well as provide guidance for future related research. Further empirical studies are encouraged to validate and expand the findings of this work.

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