

The Role of Forensic Accounting Techniques in Strengthening Fraud Detection Mechanisms against Influencer-Driven Scams

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DOI Link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v16-i10/29179>

Published Date: 08 October 2026

Abstract

The growth of social media influencer marketing has created new opportunities for fraudulent activities, including fake investment promotions, misleading endorsements, impersonation and deceptive financial schemes. This literature review examines how forensic accounting techniques can strengthen fraud detection mechanisms in identifying and responding to influencer-driven scams, with particular relevance to Malaysia's digital environment. The review synthesises recent studies on transaction tracing, forensic auditing, fraud-risk assessment, financial-statement analysis, digital forensic tools, data analytics and automated monitoring. Existing literature indicates that these techniques help convert financial records and suspicious transaction patterns into evidence that can support earlier fraud detection. The review also highlights the value of combining forensic expertise with artificial intelligence, data analytics and institutional collaboration because influencer-driven scams often move across social media and financial systems. Overall, the literature suggests that forensic accounting strengthens fraud detection by improving the identification, interpretation and investigation of suspicious financial activity, thereby supporting more timely detection of influencer-related fraud and stronger consumer protection in digital financial environments.

Keywords: Forensic Accounting, Fraud Detection Mechanisms, Influencer-Driven Scams, Digital Fraud, Social Media

Introduction

Social media has transformed the way consumers communicate, purchase products and obtain financial information. Influencers have become important sources of information because their followers may perceive them as trustworthy, relatable and knowledgeable. This influence has created opportunities for legitimate marketing activities, but it has also created an environment in which fraudulent promotions can spread quickly.

Influencer-driven scams may include misleading investment promotions, fraudulent financial schemes, fake products, cryptocurrency scams, impersonation accounts and deceptive

endorsements. In some situations, an influencer may knowingly participate in a misleading promotion, while in other cases fraudsters may misuse an influencer's identity or reputation to make a fraudulent opportunity appear legitimate (Ekinci et al., 2025).

The risks associated with these scams are particularly significant because social media allows information to reach large audiences quickly. Consumers may transfer money or provide personal information before recognising that a promotion is fraudulent. Influencer credibility can also make suspicious financial opportunities appear more trustworthy than ordinary online advertisements. Vivek (2024) highlights the ethical concerns that arise when influencers promote financial products to followers who may rely heavily on their perceived credibility. Similar research shows that influencer expertise and trustworthiness can affect investment willingness (Luan et al., 2024; Hii & Ong, 2026).

Detecting influencer-driven scams therefore requires more than simply monitoring social media content. Many scams ultimately involve financial transactions. Payments may be transferred through bank accounts, digital wallets, cryptocurrency platforms or other electronic channels. Financial evidence can therefore provide important information concerning the individuals, accounts and organisations involved in fraudulent promotional activities.

Forensic accounting is particularly relevant in this context because it combines accounting, auditing and investigative techniques to identify suspicious financial behaviour. Techniques such as transaction tracing, forensic auditing, fraud-risk assessment, financial-statement analysis and digital forensic investigation can help investigators identify financial irregularities connected with online fraud (Kaur et al., 2023; Alshurafat, 2024).

Fraud detection mechanisms, on the other hand, refer to systems and processes designed to identify suspicious behaviour. Modern fraud detection may include transaction monitoring, anomaly detection, artificial intelligence, real-time alerts and data analytics (Hernandez Aros et al., 2024). The effectiveness of these mechanisms may be strengthened when they incorporate evidence obtained through forensic accounting.

This literature review therefore examines how forensic accounting techniques can strengthen fraud detection mechanisms specifically in the context of influencer-driven scams. Rather than analysing survey responses, the article reviews existing literature to explain how forensic investigative techniques can contribute to earlier and more effective detection of suspicious activities associated with influencer promotions

Study Objective

The objectives of this literature review are:

To examine the role of forensic accounting techniques in strengthening fraud detection mechanisms against influencer-driven scams.

To identify the key forensic accounting techniques that can support the detection and investigation of financial activities associated with influencer-driven scams.

To examine how forensic accounting can be integrated with digital technologies, data analytics and automated fraud detection mechanisms to improve the identification of suspicious activities.

To discuss the relevance of forensic accounting techniques to the Malaysian context and their potential contribution to stronger fraud detection and consumer protection

Literature Review

This section reviews literature on influencer-driven scams, forensic accounting techniques and fraud detection mechanisms. It also explains how forensic accounting techniques can support stronger fraud detection in the context of influencer-related financial activities.

Influencer-Driven Scams

Influencer-driven scams refer to fraudulent activities in which an influencer's identity, reputation, credibility or online reach is used to encourage consumers to participate in deceptive transactions. These scams may occur through direct endorsements, fake influencer accounts, fraudulent advertisements or misleading financial opportunities (Ekinci et al., 2025; Vivek, 2024).

One of the main reasons such scams can be effective is the relationship between influencers and their followers. Unlike conventional advertising, influencer content may appear personal and authentic. Followers may therefore trust a recommendation because it comes from an individual they have followed for a long period. Studies on finance influencers similarly show that trustworthiness and expertise can influence investment decisions (Luan et al., 2024; Hii & Ong, 2026).

This creates difficulties for fraud detection. A fraudulent promotion may resemble legitimate influencer marketing, making it difficult for consumers to distinguish between genuine and deceptive content. Fraudsters may also use fake followers, manipulated engagement, artificial intelligence-generated content and impersonation techniques to make suspicious accounts appear credible.

Influencer-driven scams can also cross the boundary between social media and financial systems. A scam may begin with an Instagram, TikTok or YouTube promotion but eventually involve payments through banks, digital wallets or cryptocurrency platforms. For this reason, identifying the financial evidence behind suspicious influencer activity becomes an important part of fraud detection (Vivek, 2024).

Forensic Accounting Techniques

Forensic accounting involves specialised accounting and investigative techniques used to identify and examine suspected financial misconduct. Unlike conventional accounting, which mainly focuses on recording and reporting financial transactions, forensic accounting investigates irregularities and attempts to determine whether fraud has occurred (Kaur et al., 2023; Alshurafat, 2024).

Ali et al. (2024) explain that forensic accounting has become increasingly important as financial fraud becomes more complex. Modern forensic accountants may investigate electronic payment records, bank transactions, financial statements and digital evidence. In influencer-driven scams, forensic accounting can be particularly useful because fraudulent promotions often result in financial transactions. By following financial trails, investigators

can identify suspicious accounts, payment patterns and relationships between different parties involved in a scheme (Odeyemi et al., 2024).

Digitalisation has also expanded the responsibilities of forensic accountants. Daraojimba et al. (2023) explain that modern financial investigations increasingly involve electronic information and digital transaction records. Therefore, forensic accountants increasingly require knowledge of both traditional financial investigation and technological tools. Data analytics can further support the examination of large financial datasets and suspicious patterns.

Fraud Detection Mechanisms in Influencer-Driven Scams

Fraud detection mechanisms consist of technologies and organisational processes designed to identify activities that may indicate fraudulent behaviour. These mechanisms include transaction monitoring, anomaly detection, artificial intelligence, automated alerts and investigative review (Hernandez Aros et al., 2024).

In influencer-driven scams, fraud detection mechanisms can examine both financial and digital indicators. For example, suspicious financial transfers may be connected with accounts promoted through social media. Repeated complaints, unusual payment patterns or sudden movements of money may provide indicators that a promoted investment or product is fraudulent.

Shpachuk et al. (2026) highlight the increasing importance of AI-based fraud detection as financial crimes become technologically sophisticated. Automated systems can process large quantities of information and identify unusual patterns more quickly than purely manual examination. Machine-learning approaches also support the identification of abnormal financial patterns (Hernandez Aros et al., 2024).

However, technological systems cannot always determine the meaning of suspicious behaviour. A transaction may appear unusual while still being legitimate. This is where forensic accounting expertise becomes important. Forensic accountants can analyse the underlying evidence and determine whether an unusual activity requires further investigation (Kaur et al., 2023; Alshurafat, 2024).

Therefore, forensic accounting techniques and fraud detection mechanisms are complementary. Fraud detection technologies provide monitoring speed, while forensic accounting provides financial interpretation and investigative expertise.

How Forensic Accounting Techniques Strengthen Fraud Detection of Influencer-Driven Scams

Transaction tracing is particularly useful for influencer-driven scams because it allows investigators to follow the movement of funds connected with suspicious online promotions. Odeyemi et al. (2024) explain that transaction tracing is an important technique in contemporary fraud investigation. If consumers make payments to an influencer-promoted investment scheme, forensic investigators can examine where the funds were transferred and determine whether several apparently unrelated payments eventually reach the same account or organisation.

This information can improve fraud detection mechanisms. Once suspicious financial patterns are identified, financial institutions can incorporate similar patterns into monitoring systems. Future transactions displaying comparable characteristics can then be flagged for investigation (Kapo et al., 2024).

Forensic auditing can also improve the detection of influencer-related financial fraud. Kinanti et al. (2024) recognise forensic accounting as important in both fraud detection and prevention. A forensic audit can identify unexplained financial movements, irregular payments, misleading financial information or transactions inconsistent with legitimate business activities.

This may be useful when influencers promote companies, investments or financial opportunities that appear legitimate publicly but contain underlying financial irregularities. Examination of financial records can provide evidence that social media content alone may not reveal (Anghel & Poenaru, 2023; Kaur et al., 2023).

Fraud-risk assessment also strengthens detection by identifying areas where fraudulent activity is more likely to occur. Influencer promotions involving unrealistic investment returns, unclear financial arrangements or limited transparency may represent higher-risk situations. Forensic accountants can assess these financial risks and help institutions determine where closer monitoring is required.

Financial-statement analysis can similarly identify inconsistencies associated with fraudulent promotions. For example, claims concerning business profitability or investment returns may not correspond with the underlying financial information. Forensic accountants can compare promotional claims against available financial records and identify discrepancies requiring further investigation (Ali et al., 2024; Odeyemi et al., 2024).

Digital forensic techniques have become increasingly important because influencer scams operate primarily through online environments. Daraojimba et al. (2023) explain that modern forensic accounting increasingly involves digital evidence. Investigators may examine electronic transactions, communication records and financial data associated with suspicious digital activity.

Data analytics further increases the effectiveness of forensic investigation. Large numbers of financial transactions can be examined simultaneously to identify unusual relationships or recurring patterns. This is particularly useful when an influencer-driven scam involves many victims sending relatively small amounts to connected accounts (Kapo et al., 2024; Gabrielli et al., 2024).

Artificial intelligence and automated monitoring can also strengthen this process. These technologies can identify anomalies at a speed that would be difficult through manual investigation alone (Hernandez Aros et al., 2024). However, AI-generated alerts still require professional interpretation. Forensic accountants can examine the financial evidence behind the alert and determine whether it represents legitimate behaviour or possible fraud.

Professional collaboration is another important element. Influencer-driven scams can involve social media platforms, banks, digital payment providers, regulators, forensic accountants and law-enforcement agencies. No single organisation may possess all of the information required to identify the complete fraud scheme (Kaur et al., 2023).

For example, a social media platform may identify a suspicious account while a financial institution observes unusual transactions linked to that account. Combining these different sources of information can significantly strengthen fraud detection. Forensic accountants can contribute by interpreting the financial evidence and connecting financial activities with suspicious online behaviour.

Overall, forensic accounting strengthens fraud detection mechanisms by converting financial records into useful investigative information. Transaction tracing identifies the movement of suspicious funds, forensic auditing exposes financial irregularities, risk assessments identify vulnerable areas, and digital analysis allows investigators to examine complex electronic evidence.

Discussion

The reviewed literature suggests that forensic accounting techniques can significantly strengthen the detection of fraud associated with influencer-driven scams. Although influencer scams begin primarily in digital and social media environments, they frequently leave financial evidence once victims make payments or transfer funds.

This makes forensic accounting particularly relevant. The financial trail can provide information that may not be visible from social media content alone. Suspicious promotional activity can therefore be investigated more effectively when digital monitoring is combined with financial analysis (Kapo et al., 2024; Gabrielli et al., 2024).

This relationship is consistent with the broader framework of the present study, where forensic accounting contributes to fraud detection through techniques capable of identifying suspicious transactions and financial relationships. Existing literature similarly suggests that forensic accounting improves fraud detection by strengthening financial transparency and investigative capabilities (Ali et al., 2024; Anghel & Poenaru, 2023).

Fraud Triangle Theory also provides a useful explanation. Fraud is more likely when offenders perceive an opportunity to act without detection. Stronger forensic accounting and monitoring reduce this opportunity because financial transactions become more likely to be examined and traced (Kaur et al., 2023).

However, influencer-driven scams continue to evolve. Fraudsters may use cryptocurrency, digital wallets, fake identities and multiple accounts to conceal financial activities. Traditional forensic accounting techniques may therefore become less effective when they are used without technological support.

The literature consequently suggests that future fraud detection should combine forensic accounting expertise with data analytics, artificial intelligence and digital investigation. Forensic accounting should not operate separately from fraud detection systems. Instead, the

information generated through forensic investigations should continuously improve technological monitoring.

Conclusion

This literature review examined how forensic accounting techniques can strengthen fraud detection mechanisms in addressing influencer-driven scams. The review demonstrates that influencer-related fraud is not solely a social media problem because fraudulent promotions frequently lead to financial transactions that create identifiable financial evidence.

Forensic accounting techniques such as transaction tracing, forensic auditing, fraud-risk assessment, financial-statement analysis, digital forensic investigation and data analytics can assist in identifying this evidence. These techniques strengthen fraud detection mechanisms by providing information concerning suspicious financial movements, irregular transaction patterns and potential links between online promotions and financial misconduct.

The literature also demonstrates that technological fraud detection and forensic accounting should operate together. Automated systems can monitor large volumes of transactions and identify anomalies, while forensic accountants provide professional judgement and detailed financial investigation.

Therefore, forensic accounting has an important role in strengthening the detection of influencer-driven scams. As these scams become increasingly sophisticated, greater integration between forensic accounting, fraud detection technology and institutional collaboration will be necessary to identify suspicious activities at an earlier stage and improve protection within digital financial environments.

Theoretical and Contextual Contributions

This study contributes to existing knowledge by highlighting the complementary role of forensic accounting in strengthening fraud detection mechanisms for influencer-driven scams. From a theoretical perspective, the study extends the application of Fraud Triangle Theory to the digital influencer environment by demonstrating how forensic accounting techniques can reduce opportunities for fraudulent activities through transaction tracing, financial analysis, risk assessment and digital investigation. The study also contributes to the broader fraud detection literature by emphasizing that technological monitoring alone may not be sufficient to interpret complex financial evidence. The integration of forensic accounting expertise with data analytics, artificial intelligence and automated monitoring provides a more comprehensive approach to identifying and investigating suspicious activities associated with influencer-driven scams.

From a contextual perspective, this study contributes to the limited literature examining influencer-driven financial scams within the Malaysian digital environment. Malaysia's increasing use of social media for marketing, financial communication and investment-related content creates a need for fraud detection approaches that consider both online behaviour and underlying financial transactions. The study therefore provides a context-specific perspective on how forensic accounting techniques can support collaboration among financial institutions, regulators, social media platforms and law-enforcement agencies. The findings may also assist policymakers and relevant authorities in developing more integrated

fraud detection and prevention strategies for influencer-related scams. By connecting forensic accounting with digital fraud monitoring in the Malaysian context, this study provides a foundation for future empirical research and supports the development of stronger mechanisms for protecting consumers from emerging forms of social media-enabled financial fraud.

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