

SHAPING BRAND PERCEPTION: THE ROLE OF INFLUENCER MARKETING IN CONSUMER ATTITUDES AND ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Influencer marketing has become a powerful tool in shaping consumer attitudes and engagement, significantly impacting brand-consumer relationships in the digital age. This research examines the role of influencer credibility, authenticity, and engagement strategies in influencing consumer trust, purchase intention, and brand loyalty. Using a quantitative research approach, data was collected from 500 respondents actively engaging with influencer content on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. The analysis revealed that influencer credibility ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$) and authenticity ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$) are key drivers of consumer trust and purchase intention. Additionally, micro-influencers showed higher engagement rates than celebrity influencers, emphasizing the importance of relatability in fostering consumer-brand connections. Regression analysis further confirmed that influencer credibility ($B = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$) and authenticity ($B = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$) significantly predict positive consumer attitudes, while platform-specific effects were less influential ($B = 0.15$, $p = 0.08$). These findings highlight the need for brands to focus on building genuine relationships through trusted influencers rather than relying solely on large follower counts or platform trends.

The study's results have important implications for businesses and marketers aiming to leverage influencer marketing effectively. Brands should prioritize collaborations with credible and authentic influencers to maximize consumer trust and engagement. Micro-influencers, due to their relatability and higher engagement levels, present a valuable opportunity for brands seeking to connect with niche audiences. Furthermore, the research suggests that content quality and influencer trustworthiness are more critical factors in consumer response than the specific platform used. As influencer marketing continues to evolve, future research should explore emerging trends such as AI-driven content and virtual influencers to assess their impact on consumer behavior. By understanding the key factors that drive consumer attitudes and engagement, brands can refine their influencer marketing strategies to enhance brand loyalty and long-term consumer relationships.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Consumer Engagement, Brand Trust, Social Media Influence

INTRODUCTION

Influencer marketing has transformed the way brands communicate with consumers in the digital age. Unlike traditional advertising methods, which rely on mass media and celebrity endorsements, influencer marketing leverages social media personalities to build trust and

engagement among target audiences (Brown & Hayes, 2008). Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have provided influencers with a direct channel to interact with consumers, leading to more personalized and authentic brand experiences (Hudders, De Jans, & De Veirman, 2021). The rise of digital influencers has changed consumer behavior, as individuals increasingly rely on recommendations from influencers rather than traditional advertising when making purchase decisions (Evans, Phua, Lim, & Jun, 2017). This shift highlights the growing importance of influencer marketing in shaping consumer perceptions, driving brand awareness, and fostering long-term customer relationships.

One of the key elements of successful influencer marketing is credibility, which significantly impacts consumer trust and engagement. The **Source Credibility Theory** (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) suggests that an influencer's perceived trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness influence consumer attitudes. Additionally, the **Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)** (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) explains that consumers process influencer messages based on their level of involvement—either through careful evaluation or through peripheral cues such as influencer popularity and aesthetics (De Veirman, et al. 2017). Authenticity also plays a crucial role in consumer engagement, as consumers are more likely to interact with influencers who demonstrate honesty, transparency, and a personal connection with their followers (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Research indicates that micro-influencers, who have smaller but highly engaged audiences, tend to be more effective in driving consumer trust and brand loyalty compared to celebrity influencers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

Despite the growing popularity of influencer marketing, there are still gaps in understanding its long-term impact on consumer attitudes and brand engagement. While past studies have focused on the short-term effects of influencer marketing campaigns, there is a need for further research on how influencer credibility, authenticity, and engagement strategies contribute to brand loyalty over time (Martínez-López, Anaya-Sánchez, Aguilar-Illescas, & Molinillo, 2020). Additionally, with the rise of AI-driven influencers and virtual brand ambassadors, new questions arise regarding the authenticity and effectiveness of non-human influencers in engaging consumers (Chopra, Avhad, & Jaju, 2021). This research aims to address these gaps by analyzing the impact of influencer credibility, authenticity, and engagement metrics on consumer attitudes and purchase behavior. By examining platform-specific strategies and the role of different influencer types, this study seeks to provide valuable insights for brands looking to optimize their influencer marketing campaigns for long-term success.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the impact of influencer credibility on consumer trust and purchase intention.
2. To analyze the role of influencer authenticity in consumer engagement.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of micro-influencers versus macro-influencers in driving consumer engagement.
4. To assess the role of engagement metrics in measuring influencer marketing success.

Hypotheses

- H_1 : *Influencer credibility positively affects consumer trust in a brand.*
- H_2 : *Influencer authenticity enhances engagement and purchase intent.*
- H_3 : *Different influencer types (micro, macro, celebrity) have varying impacts on consumer attitudes.*
- H_4 : *Platform-specific influencer marketing strategies impact consumer response differently.*

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Jin & Ryu (2020) distinguished between micro and macro-influencers, noting that micro-influencers drive higher engagement, whereas macro-influencers increase brand reach. Their study showed that micro-influencers create a more intimate brand connection. However, macro-influencers are effective for mass-market appeal. They concluded that brands should strategically select influencers based on campaign objectives.
2. Kim & Kim (2021) analyzed platform-specific effects, stating that Instagram and TikTok facilitate stronger brand engagement compared to Facebook due to their visual nature. The study found that short-form video content is particularly effective for engagement. They also suggested that platform algorithms play a role in influencer marketing effectiveness. Brands were advised to optimize content formats based on platform-specific trends.
3. Schouten et al. (2020) discussed that influencers who disclose sponsorships transparently maintain higher consumer trust and credibility. The research found that hidden sponsorships lead to consumer skepticism. They suggested that ethical advertising practices enhance brand reputation. Their findings support the need for regulatory policies in influencer marketing.
4. De Veirman & Hudders (2019) explored how high-quality, engaging content boosts consumer willingness to purchase endorsed products. The study emphasized that production quality and creativity affect consumer responses. They found that informative content leads to higher purchase intentions. The research concluded that influencers who balance entertainment and information drive higher conversion rates.
5. Campbell & Farrell (2020) identified that excessive sponsorships may reduce influencer credibility, leading to consumer skepticism. Their study found that consumers prefer influencers who maintain authenticity in paid partnerships. They suggested that brands should limit over-commercialization to maintain trust. The research also indicated that skepticism is higher in younger audiences.
6. AlFarraj et al. (2021) emphasized that the alignment between influencer values and brand image determines consumer engagement levels. The study found that misalignment leads to negative brand perception. They suggested that selecting influencers with shared values enhances marketing effectiveness. Their research also emphasized that authenticity in influencer-brand partnerships strengthens brand equity.
7. Sokolova & Kefi (2020) demonstrated that influencer posts with interactive elements (polls, Q&A, etc.) enhance consumer engagement and trust. Their study found that interactivity increases follower participation. They suggested that brands should encourage influencers to create two-way communication. The research also emphasized that interactive content leads to longer audience retention.
8. Erkan & Evans (2016) highlighted that influencer endorsements significantly contribute to electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), shaping consumer attitudes toward brands. Their research found that e-WOM has a stronger influence on purchase decisions than traditional advertising. They suggested that brand discussions in comment sections improve brand perception. The study also emphasized that credibility in influencer recommendations amplifies e-WOM effects.
9. Chatzigeorgiou (2017) explored the halo effect, where consumers perceive brands more favorably when endorsed by their favorite influencers. Their study found that positive influencer perception transfers to brands. They suggested that this effect is stronger when influencers have consistent personal branding. The research emphasized that brands should maintain long-term partnerships with influencers to reinforce the halo effect.
10. Khamis et al. (2017) studied how influencers build personal brands that enhance their persuasive power in marketing campaigns. Their research found that strong personal branding increases influencer credibility. They suggested that influencers should maintain a consistent image across platforms. The study also emphasized that personal branding differentiates influencers in a saturated market.
11. Geyser (2022) predicted the growing importance of nano-influencers due to their niche audiences and higher engagement rates. Their study found that nano-influencers have stronger community ties. They suggested that brands should collaborate with nano-influencers for targeted campaigns. The research also emphasized that authenticity is the driving factor behind nano-influencer success.

Data Analysis

This section presents the data analysis for the research on the role of influencer marketing in consumer attitudes and engagement. The analysis includes descriptive statistics, correlation

analysis, regression models, and hypothesis testing to evaluate the impact of influencer credibility, authenticity, and engagement strategies on consumer attitudes and behaviors.

Data Collection and Sample Description

Data was collected through a structured online survey distributed to 500 respondents who actively engage with influencer content on social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. The sample included consumers from various age groups, demographics, and purchasing behaviors Tables 1-4.

Table 1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS		
Demographic Factor	Categories	Percentage (%)
Age	18-24	40
	25-34	35
	35-44	15
	45+	10
Gender	Female	60
	Male	35
	Non-binary/Prefer not to say	5
Social Media Usage	Instagram	85
	TikTok	70
	YouTube	60
Frequency of Engagement with Influencer Content	Daily	55
	Weekly	30
	Occasionally	15

Interpretation

The demographic analysis shows that the majority of respondents (75%) are between 18-34 years old, indicating that influencer marketing primarily appeals to younger consumers. Gender distribution reveals a higher representation of female respondents (60%), suggesting that women engage more with influencer content than men (35%) or non-binary/prefer not to say respondents (5%).

Regarding social media usage, Instagram is the most popular platform (85%), followed by TikTok (70%) and YouTube (60%). This suggests that brands targeting younger audiences should prioritize Instagram and TikTok for influencer marketing campaigns.

The frequency of engagement with influencer content indicates that 55% of respondents engage daily, 30% weekly, and only 15% occasionally. This suggests that influencer marketing is a regular part of many users' online experiences, reinforcing its importance for brand promotions.

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Scale (1-5)
Trust in Influencers	3.8	1.2	1-5
Perceived Authenticity	4.1	1.0	1-5
Brand Loyalty After Influencer Promotion	3.6	1.1	1-5

Engagement Metrics

Metric	Average per Post
Likes & Shares	5000
Comments	300
User-Generated Content	25%

Interpretation

Trust in Influencers (M = 3.8, SD = 1.2): Respondents generally trust influencers, though the standard deviation of 1.2 suggests varying opinions. **Perceived Authenticity (M = 4.1, SD = 1.0):** Consumers tend to perceive influencers as authentic, which may contribute to higher trust and engagement. **Brand Loyalty After Influencer Promotion (M = 3.6, SD = 1.1):** Influencer marketing has a moderate impact on brand loyalty, but some consumers remain skeptical.

Engagement metrics reveal that, on average, influencer posts receive **5,000 likes and shares, 300 comments, and 25% user-generated content participation**. This suggests a high level of interaction, reinforcing the effectiveness of influencer campaigns.

Correlation Analysis

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)
Influencer Credibility vs. Consumer Trust	0.72	p < 0.01
Influencer Authenticity vs. Purchase Intention	0.68	p < 0.01
Engagement (Likes, Comments) vs. Brand Recall	0.55	p < 0.01

Interpretation

Influencer Credibility and Consumer Trust ($r = 0.72, p < 0.01$): A strong positive correlation suggests that as consumers perceive influencers as more credible, their trust in them increases significantly. **Influencer Authenticity and Purchase Intention ($r = 0.68, p < 0.01$):** A significant positive correlation suggests that authentic influencers are more likely to influence purchase decisions. **Engagement (Likes, Comments) and Brand Recall ($r = 0.55, p < 0.01$):** A moderate positive correlation indicates that higher engagement levels are associated with stronger brand recall, emphasizing the role of social interaction in marketing effectiveness.

Regression Analysis

Table 2 DEPENDENT VARIABLE: CONSUMER ATTITUDE TOWARD BRANDS		
Independent Variable	Coefficient (B)	Significance (p-value)
Influencer Credibility	0.42	$p < 0.01$
Authenticity	0.38	$p < 0.01$
Engagement Level	0.29	$p < 0.05$
Social Media Platform Used	0.15	$p = 0.08$ (not significant)

Table 3 DEPENDENT VARIABLE: CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT (LIKES, SHARES, COMMENTS)		
Independent Variable	Coefficient (B)	Significance (p-value)
Influencer Trustworthiness	0.5	$p < 0.01$
Emotional Connection in Content	0.33	$p < 0.01$
Brand Fit with Influencer	0.4	$p < 0.05$

Consumer Attitude toward Brands

- **Influencer Credibility ($B = 0.42, p < 0.01$):** Strongly influences consumer attitudes, reinforcing that credibility is crucial in influencer marketing. **Authenticity ($B = 0.38, p < 0.01$):** Also significantly impacts consumer attitudes, indicating that consumers prefer

influencers who appear genuine. **Engagement Level ($B = 0.29, p < 0.05$)**: Has a positive effect, though weaker than credibility and authenticity. This suggests that while engagement matters, credibility and authenticity are more critical. **Social Media Platform Used ($B = 0.15, p = 0.08$)**: Not statistically significant, suggesting that the choice of platform alone does not strongly influence consumer attitudes.

Consumer Engagement (Likes, Shares, Comments)

Influencer Trustworthiness ($B = 0.50, p < 0.01$): Has the strongest impact, reinforcing that trusted influencers drive higher engagement. **Emotional Connection in Content ($B = 0.33, p < 0.01$)**: Significantly impacts engagement, suggesting that emotional storytelling enhances interactions. **Brand Fit with Influencer ($B = 0.40, p < 0.05$)**: Moderately affects engagement, implying that aligning brand values with influencer identity boosts effectiveness.

Table 4 HYPOTHESIS TESTING	
Hypothesis	Result
H1: Influencer credibility positively affects consumer trust	Supported
H2: Influencer authenticity enhances engagement and purchase intent	Supported
H3: Different influencer types (micro, macro, celebrity) have varying impacts on consumer attitudes	Partially Supported
H4: Platform-specific influencer marketing strategies impact consumer response differently	Not Supported

Interpretation

H₁: *Influencer credibility positively affects consumer trust → Supported*

- Strong correlation ($r = 0.72$) and significant regression coefficient ($B = 0.42$) confirm that influencer credibility builds consumer trust.

H₂: *Influencer authenticity enhances engagement and purchase intent → Supported*

- Correlation ($r = 0.68$) and regression analysis ($B = 0.38$) show authenticity drives engagement and influences purchasing behavior.

H₃: *Different influencer types (micro, macro, celebrity) have varying impacts on consumer attitudes → Partially Supported*

- The effect of influencer types varies but is not equally strong across all measures, suggesting differences exist but are not universally consistent.

H₄: *Platform-specific influencer marketing strategies impact consumer response differently → Not Supported*

- Social media platform choice was not a significant predictor ($p = 0.08$), indicating that other factors, such as credibility and authenticity, play a bigger role than the platform itself.

Discussion

The analysis highlights that influencer credibility and authenticity are crucial in shaping consumer trust and engagement. The strong positive correlation ($r = 0.72$) between influencer credibility and consumer trust suggests that consumers are more likely to trust influencers who exhibit expertise, honesty, and relatability. This finding aligns with prior research that emphasizes the importance of perceived authenticity in influencer marketing. Additionally, influencer authenticity is strongly linked to purchase intention ($r = 0.68$), indicating that consumers value genuine and transparent influencer endorsements. These findings suggest that brands should prioritize collaborations with influencers who maintain credibility rather than those who simply have high follower counts.

Furthermore, engagement metrics, such as likes, shares, and comments, play a significant role in reinforcing consumer-brand relationships. The regression analysis suggests that emotional connection ($B = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$) and influencer trustworthiness ($B = 0.50$, $p < 0.01$) are key predictors of consumer engagement. This implies that influencer marketing strategies should focus not only on promotional content but also on fostering interactive and meaningful conversations with the audience. Interestingly, the platform-specific impact was found to be less significant ($p = 0.08$), indicating that content quality and influencer personality matter more than the social media platform used. These insights suggest that brands should develop influencer partnerships that prioritize authenticity, trust-building, and engagement-driven content rather than focusing solely on influencer reach or platform selection.

CONCLUSION

The data analysis provides strong evidence that influencer marketing plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer attitudes and engagement. The study highlights that influencer credibility and authenticity significantly impact consumer trust and purchasing decisions. Social media platforms continue to evolve, requiring brands to adapt their influencer marketing strategies to stay relevant. Additionally, emerging trends such as nano-influencers and interactive content play a crucial role in deepening consumer relationships. Future research should explore long-term brand loyalty effects and the potential for artificial intelligence-driven influencer marketing. As the digital landscape shifts, brands must remain agile and embrace innovative approaches to maximize influencer marketing effectiveness.

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