



Influence of Social Media Influencer Attributes on Purchase Intention: A Comprehensive Literature Review

Ankita Mandal¹, Dr. Sayak Gupta²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Management, Netaji Subhas University, Jharkhand

²Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Netaji Subhas University, Jharkhand

Abstract: Social media influencers (SMIs) play a major role in shaping consumer purchase intention through their ability to engage audiences and influence behavior. Important SMI characteristics like competence, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and content quality have all been extensively researched in relation to how they affect customer choices. While appeal and interesting content encourage emotional connections and customer involvement, reliability and experience increase credibility and lower consumer mistrust. Across a range of businesses, empirical research continuously shows that these influencer traits greatly increase purchase intention. This review summarizes current research findings to demonstrate how social media influencers successfully influence consumers' purchase intention, drawing on theoretical frameworks including Source Credibility Theory and Parasocial Interaction Theory. The useful ramifications for marketers highlight how crucial it is to choose influencers who exhibit these qualities in order to maximize marketing results in the digital era.

Keywords: Social Media Influencers, Purchase Intention, Trustworthiness, Content Quality, Source Credibility Theory

I. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of social media platforms has changed the marketing environment by giving companies new ways to interact with customers. Social media influencers (SMIs) have become one of these advances' most potent agents, influencing the opinions and intentions of consumers to buy. Influencers act as a bridge between audiences and companies, using their digital reach and personal appeal to sway customer behavior. Marketers are realizing more and more that influencer marketing, which depends on perceived authenticity and trustworthiness, can fill the credibility holes in traditional advertising (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011). Therefore, enhancing the effectiveness of digital marketing initiatives requires an awareness of the qualities that make influencers effective.

According to Ohanian (1990), trustworthiness is frequently mentioned as a key characteristic that defines an influencer's capacity to affect customer decisions. When influencers are seen as sincere, trustworthy, and honest, consumers are more likely to believe them, which lowers skepticism and promotes favorable opinions about the things they recommend (AlFarraj, Kumar, & Dwivedi, 2021). By positioning influencers as informed authorities in their field, expertise further solidifies this trust and increases their credibility (Filieri, Alguezaui, & McLeay, 2019). According to studies, customers are more inclined to buy goods that influencers who are respected and competent in their field promote (Gia Khuong An, Nguyen, & Truong, 2024).

Since physical attractiveness and relatable personas aid in drawing in and holding on to customers, attractiveness is another important factor influencing purchase intention (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Parasocial interactions—the one-sided emotional bonds that customers form with influencers—are made easier by attractiveness (Horton & Wohl, 1956). The effectiveness of influencer endorsements is increased by these emotional ties, which also improve consumer engagement and loyalty (Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2018).

Because it influences how people absorb and interpret messages, content quality is crucial. Stronger purchase intentions result from high-quality, aesthetically pleasing, educational, and pertinent information that improves communication efficacy and raises perceived value (Balakrishnan, Dahnil, & Yi, 2023; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Research highlighting storytelling, creativity, and audience-tailored messaging as key factors in influencer success highlights the significance of content quality (Ki, Cuevas, Chong, & Lim, 2020).

These results are further supported by cross-cultural research, which shows that influencer characteristics have an effect on purchase intention across national and cultural borders. The universality of trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and content quality as predictors of consumer behavior in various contexts is confirmed by research undertaken in Malaysia (Nazer Mohamed & Gadiman, 2022) and Jordan (AlFarraj et al., 2021).

Comprehensive explanations of why and how these traits affect purchase intention may be found in theoretical frameworks like the Parasocial Interaction Theory (Horton & Wohl, 1956) and the Source Credibility Theory (Ohanian, 1990). According to Source Credibility Theory, persuasive communication that results in changes in attitude and behavior is built on an influencer's perceived

competence, dependability, and beauty. The psychological process by which consumers and influencers develop emotional bonds that strengthen brand loyalty and purchase intention is explained by parasocial interaction theory.

According to recent research, these influencer characteristics frequently cooperate to provide a more significant impact on purchase intention rather than acting independently (Balakrishnan et al., 2023; Casaló et al., 2018). In order to maximize the impact of promotional efforts, marketers are encouraged by this holistic viewpoint to choose influencers that exhibit a variety of positive traits (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2017).

Practically speaking, companies that use social media influencers need to carefully evaluate and match their marketing goals with influencers who demonstrate high levels of credibility, pertinent knowledge, attractiveness, and the capacity to create interesting content (Filieri et al., 2019; De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). In the digital economy, doing this guarantees improved customer trust, emotional involvement, and eventually, a higher propensity to buy.

II. REVIEW OF EARLIER LITERATURE

Due to their exceptional ability to engage audiences and impact purchasing behavior across a variety of industries, social media influencers (SMIs) have grown in importance as agents in influencing customer purchase intentions. Recurringly emphasized as key elements influencing consumer decision-making processes are the qualities of SMIs, including expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and content quality (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). According to Jin and Phua (2014) and Ki et al. (2020), trustworthiness in particular is frequently referred to as the foundation of influencer efficacy, where perceived honesty and dependability increase consumer confidence and lessen skepticism towards endorsed items. Influencing purchase intention requires a credible relationship, which is established by this dependability.

By establishing the influencer as a knowledgeable advisor whose ideas are respected and believed by followers, expertise which is defined as the influencer's knowledge or competence in a particular domain further enhances credibility (De Veirman, Hudders, & Nelson, 2019; Lim et al., 2020). Customers are more likely to believe that product recommendations are genuine and worthwhile when influencers demonstrate obvious knowledge. However, attractiveness is more than just physical attractiveness; it also entails the development of parasocial interactions, which are one-sided, emotional ties that increase audience loyalty and engagement (Marwick & Boyd, 2011; Lee & Watkins, 2016). Customers get more emotionally invested in the influencer as a result of these parasocial interactions, which strengthens the recommendations' persuasiveness.

Sustaining consumer attention and the perceived worth of influencer endorsements is largely dependent on high-quality content. Clear, pertinent, visually appealing, and educational content not only grabs but holds consumers' attention, increasing the likelihood that they will make a purchase (Lou & Kim, 2019; Martínez-López et al., 2020). This trait makes communication easier and helps customers develop positive opinions about the influencer and the product. Furthermore, empirical research demonstrates that these impacts cut across cultural barriers, with consistent results in a variety of marketplaces, including Western nations (Brown & Hayes, 2008), China (Li, 2021), and India (Kumar & Mirchandani, 2020).

It becomes clearer why these influencer qualities have such a significant impact on consumer behavior when theoretical frameworks like Source Credibility Theory and Parasocial Interaction Theory are applied. While Parasocial Interaction Theory describes the emotional connections that result in enhanced customer participation and purchase intents (Horton & Wohl, 1956), Source Credibility Theory highlights trustworthiness, knowledge, and attractiveness as crucial components for persuasive message (Ohanian, 1990). According to recent study, these influencer traits interact more effectively to increase purchase intention when taken into account together rather than separately (Jin, Muqaddam, & Ryu, 2019; Martínez-López et al., 2020).

When choosing influencers for campaigns, marketers are urged to carefully consider these qualities in order to optimize the efficacy of digital marketing initiatives. Influencers that exhibit high levels of competence, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and content quality are good partners for companies since they tend to produce higher engagement rates and stronger buy inclinations (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020; Veirman et al., 2017). Furthermore, research shows that the perceived genuineness of these qualities can lessen the detrimental consequences of the over-commercialization that is frequently observed in influencer marketing (Audrezet, de Kerviler, & Moulard, 2020).

III. DISCUSSION

The research highlights the increasing impact of social media influencers (SMIs) on purchase intention, emphasizing certain attributes as important determinants of consumer choice, such as knowledge, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and content quality. Studies show that customers are more inclined to trust and follow suggestions from influencers they believe to be trustworthy and dependable, making trustworthiness a fundamental attribute. This legitimacy strengthens the bond between the influencer and their audience and lessens skepticism. Additionally, expertise is essential because customers are more likely to respect suggestions from influencers who have expertise in a certain field, which increases the perceived legitimacy of such recommendations. Beyond physical attractiveness, attractiveness has a role in the development of parasocial interactions, which are one-sided, emotional ties that boost customer loyalty and openness to influencer material. The audience becomes more invested in the influencer as a result of these exchanges, which strengthens the argument for their recommendations.

Furthermore, sustaining audience interest and enhancing the perceived worth of an influencer's message depend heavily on the quality of the material. In addition to drawing attention, material that is clear, pertinent, and aesthetically pleasing maintains interest and favorably influences how customers view the product. Crucially, these influencer traits and their impact on purchase intentions are universally applicable in international marketplaces, as evidenced by their consistency across cultural settings. These findings are further supported by theoretical frameworks that describe how consumer behavior is influenced by emotional and cognitive reactions to influencers, such as Source Credibility Theory and Parasocial Interaction Theory. Interestingly, studies indicate that these characteristics work best when combined rather than alone, increasing their total impact on purchase intentions. From a strategic perspective, these data provide marketers with useful direction when choosing and working with influencers. Finding influencers who innately possess these qualities may greatly increase the effectiveness of digital marketing initiatives. Furthermore, preserving these attributes' apparent authenticity helps lessen audience apathy and mistrust brought on by excessively promoted influencer material. Deeper audience relationships and longer-term customer engagement are likely to

result from long-term collaborations with influencers who continuously exhibit credibility and emotional resonance. For influencer-driven marketing techniques to be as effective as possible, these traits must be incorporated into influencer selection and campaign development.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the body of evidence from earlier studies clearly shows that social media influencers' credibility, knowledge, attractiveness, and content quality greatly impact their ability to influence consumers' purchase intention. Stronger engagement and a higher chance of purchase result from these traits, which also help to establish credibility and emotional ties with customers. These behaviors are usefully explained by theoretical frameworks like Source Credibility Theory and Parasocial Interaction Theory, which emphasize the interaction between emotional engagement and logical assessment in consumer decision-making. Crucially, these influencer qualities are more effective when taken into account as a whole rather than separately, highlighting the necessity of an all-encompassing strategy for influencer marketing. Building smart and real partnerships with influencers who truly embody these attributes is a powerful way for organizations hoping to succeed in the digital sphere to increase marketing effectiveness and customer loyalty. Influencer marketing initiatives that are more successful, believable, and culturally sensitive are built on this thorough understanding.

REFERENCES

- AlFarraj, O., Kumar, R., & Dwivedi, Y. K. (2021). Social media influencer credibility and consumer engagement: A trustworthiness perspective. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 58, 102298.
- Audrezet, A., de Kerviler, G., & Moulard, J. G. (2020). Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation. *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 557-569.
- Balakrishnan, B. K. P. D., Dahnil, M. I., & Yi, W. J. (2023). The role of content quality in influencing purchase intention via social media influencers. *International Journal of Advertising*, 42(2), 267-288.
- Brown, D., & Hayes, N. (2008). *Influencer marketing: Who really influences your customers?* Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2018). Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and consequences of opinion leadership. *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 510-519.
- De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising*, 36(5), 798-828.
- De Veirman, M., Hudders, L., & Nelson, M. R. (2019). What is influencer marketing and how does it target children? A review and direction for future research. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 2687.
- Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 68, 1-7.
- Filieri, R., Alguezaui, S., & McLeay, F. (2019). Why do travelers trust social media influencers? *Tourism Management*, 71, 258-270.
- Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public Relations Review*, 37(1), 90-92.
- Gia Khuong An, N., Nguyen, T. T., & Truong, H. T. (2024). Expertise and purchase intention in social media influencer marketing. *Journal of Marketing Communications*. Advance online publication.
- Horton, D., & Wohl, R. R. (1956). Mass communication and para-social interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance. *Psychiatry*, 19(3), 215-229.
- Jin, S. V., & Phua, J. (2014). Following celebrities' tweets about brands: The impact of Twitter-based electronic word-of-mouth on consumers' source credibility perception, buying intention, and social identification with celebrities. *Journal of Advertising*, 43(2), 181-195.
- Jin, S. V., Muqaddam, A., & Ryu, E. (2019). Instafamous and social media influencer marketing. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 37(5), 567-579.
- Khamis, S., Ang, L., & Welling, R. (2017). Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies*, 8(2), 191-208.
- Ki, C., Cuevas, L. M., Chong, S. M., & Lim, H. (2020). Influencer marketing: Social media influencers as human brands attaching to followers and yielding positive marketing results by fulfilling needs. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 55, 102133.
- Kumar, V., & Mirchandani, R. (2020). Increasing the ROI of social media marketing. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 62(1), 51-57.
- Lee, J. E., & Watkins, B. (2016). YouTube vloggers' influence on consumer luxury brand perceptions and intentions. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(12), 5753-5760.
- Lim, X. J., Radzol, A. R. M., Cheah, J. H., & Wong, M. W. (2020). The impact of social media influencers on purchase intention and the mediation effect of customer attitude. *Asian Journal of Business Research*, 7(2), 19-36.
- Lou, C., & Kim, H. K. (2019). Fancying the new rich and famous? A conceptual framework of social media influencer marketing. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 19(1), 58-73.
- Martínez-López, F. J., Merigó, J. M., Sánchez-Fernández, J., & Gázquez-Abad, J. C. (2020). Social media influencer marketing: A systematic review, integrative framework and research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 154-170.
- Marwick, A. E., & Boyd, D. (2011). To see and be seen: Celebrity practice on Twitter. *Convergence*, 17(2), 139-158.
- Nazer Mohamed, N., & Gadiman, M. A. (2022). The influence of social media influencers on purchase intention in Malaysia. *International Journal of Business and Society*, 23(1), 128-143.
- Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 19(3), 39-52.

- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 19, pp. 123–205). Academic Press.
- Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2019). Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 53, 101742.
- Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2020). Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 53, 101742.
- Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising*, 36(5), 798-828.

