



ASTUDY ON THE ROLE OF ONLINE INFLUENCERS IN SHAPING CUSTOMER CONFIDENCE

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Abstract: In the digital age, digital influencers have become important in shaping customers' attitudes and behaviors. This study examines the effect of digital influencers on customer brand involvement and brand reputation. When making use of SPSS, the research shows that digital influencers positively and significantly control customer brand involvement and brand reputation. Moreover, customer brand involvement act as an important negotiator between digital influencers and brand reputation, proposing that increased customer interaction leads to better brand image. These findings provide precious awareness for businesses pointing to hold influencer marketing successfully.

Keywords: Digital Influencers, Customer Brand Involvement, Brand Reputation, Influencer Marketing, Consumer Trust

I. INTRODUCTION

The increase of social media platforms has changed classical marketing models. Influencers, individuals who have gathered a considerable backing on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, etc., now play a pivotal part in forming consumer judgements and behaviors. Their capacity to connect with audiences on a personal level has made them precious assets for brands seeking to increase consumer confidence and engagement.

II. Objectives

1. To study the effect of online influencers on consumers' confidence and faith in brands
2. To examine how influencer reliability influence consumer trust in buying choice.
3. To recognize the connection between influencer involvement strategies and customer trust.
4. To assess the extent to which influencer support affect brand perception and consumer loyalty.

III. Literature review

Influencer marketing has evolved into one of the most effective tools for digital engagement, surpassing traditional marketing methods in terms of consumer trust and ROI [14]. In 2023, the global influencer marketing industry was valued at \$21.1 billion, more than doubling since 2019 [15]. This growth reflects a shift in consumer preferences toward peer-endorsed content, with nearly half of social media users making purchases influenced by influencer recommendations [16]. The effectiveness of influencer marketing lies in its ability to provide authentic, relatable content that resonates more than conventional digital ads, which are often perceived as intrusive [17].

Compared to traditional digital marketing, such as email campaigns, display ads, and search engine optimization, influencer marketing offers stronger emotional engagement and audience segmentation. While traditional strategies offer broad reach, influencers foster more personalized, trust-based interactions [18]. According to Beichert et al. [19], influencer marketing yields up to 11 times higher ROI than banner ads, due to increased click-through rates and higher conversion stemming from influencer credibility. Moreover, brands using micro- and nano-influencers report more loyal followings and niche-targeted results, challenging the one-size-fits-all logic of traditional approaches [20].

Several emerging trends define the current influencer marketing ecosystem. First, the rise of nano-influencers (under 10,000 followers) provides businesses access to niche markets with highly engaged audiences [21]. Second, long-term partnerships are replacing one-off collaborations to ensure continuity and trust between influencers and audiences [22]. Third, content diversification—especially in the form of short videos, livestreams, and behind-the-scenes reels—is improving campaign versatility

[23]. Brands must also manage the balance between authenticity and promotional messaging. Excessive sales-driven content often results in ad fatigue and diminished trust [24], whereas value-driven storytelling is more likely to cultivate engagement [25].

As influencer marketing matures, ethical transparency becomes critical. Recent enforcement by regulatory agencies, such as the FTC's 2024 mandate on disclosing sponsored content, emphasizes the importance of transparency [26]. Fake endorsements and undisclosed promotions now risk legal consequences, pushing influencers and brands to prioritize authenticity and accurate representation. Additionally, ethical practices influence campaign performance, as studies reveal that perceived honesty in influencer content significantly impacts consumer trust and purchase intention [27]. Ethical guidelines also vary across regions, suggesting a growing need for international harmonization of digital advertising regulations [28].

Social Media and Influencer Marketing

Social media platforms have transformed into powerful mass media channels that enable the dissemination of news and information on an unprecedented scale through user interaction. These platforms allow individuals to stay connected more frequently and intimately than ever before, fostering opportunities for self-education and interaction within an interconnected digital ecosystem [45]. The evolution of marketing science into "social marketing" highlights the critical role of these platforms in reshaping consumer engagement and promoting business objectives. For businesses to unlock the full potential of social media, they must adopt strategic approaches that emphasize community building, absorptive capacity, and timely implementation of innovative practices [32].

Digital Consumers and Purchase Intention

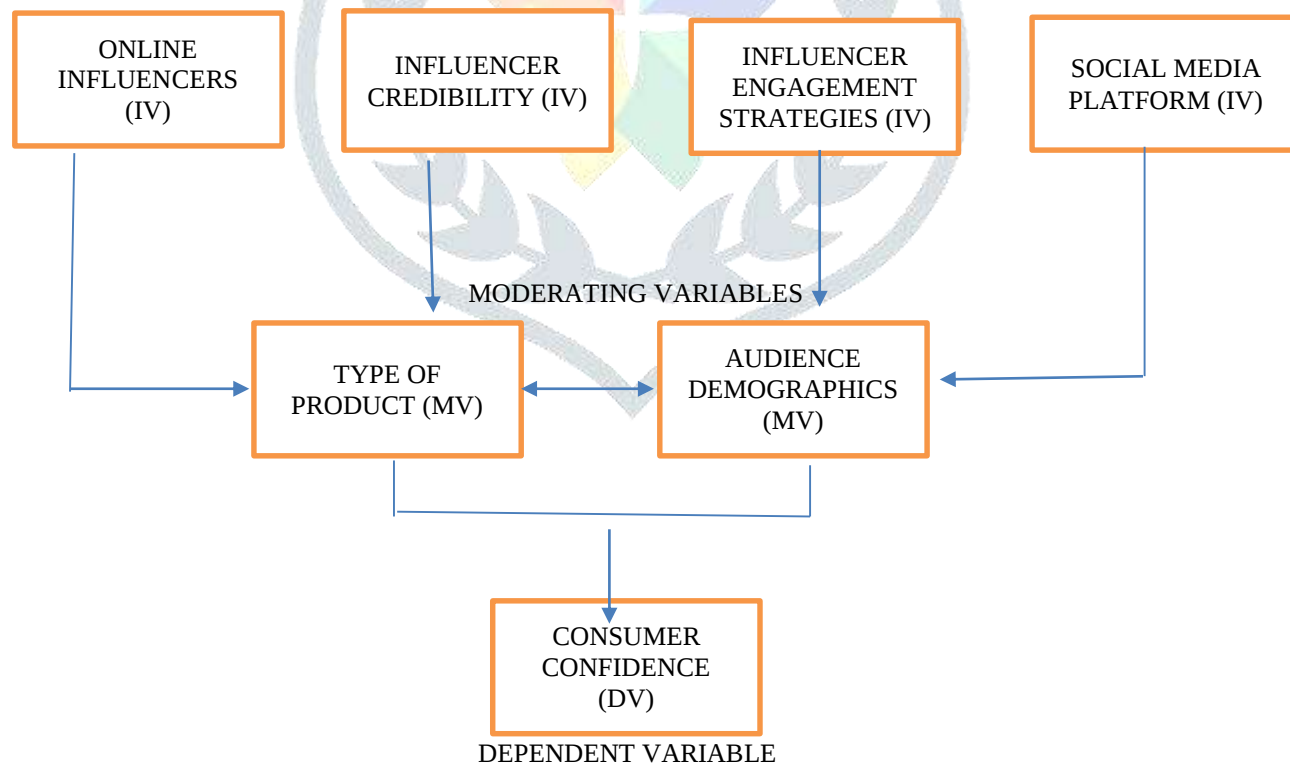
A digital consumer refers to an individual who interacts, engages, and transacts with businesses, products, or services through digital platforms such as websites, mobile apps, and social media. These consumers rely heavily on technology and the internet to access information, compare options, and make purchasing decisions. They are characterized by their constant connectivity, preference for convenience, and ability to influence and be influenced through digital channels [40].

Digital consumers leverage multiple online tools and platforms, including search engines, social media, and e-commerce sites, to fulfill their needs. They expect personalized, seamless experiences and often prioritize brands that can offer instant access to products, services, and information [40]. Moreover, their behaviors are shaped by a variety of factors, including online reviews, influencer marketing, and targeted advertising campaigns, making them a dynamic and influential demographic in the digital economy.

IV. Methodology

The descriptive research method was employed in this study. A structured questionnaire was issued to 100 clients in semi-urban and urban regions of Kerala for gathering information. The method of purposeful sampling is used. The questionnaire included enquiries regarding education level, factors influencing consumers choices, willingness to pay, and the impact of branding on consumer preferences. Data was analyzed using SPSS software.

FIGURE 4.1



Interpretation: Figure 4.1 shows the conceptual model of the study, highlighting how different independent variables such as online influencers, influencer credibility, influencer engagement strategies and social media platform affect consumer confidence. Type of product and audience demographics act as mediating variables, proposing that type of product and audience demographics can nourish the relationship between these factors and consumer confidence. This framework shows that while multiple external factors drive choices of consumer, their confidence towards various brands is formed by how well educated they are about various products and various other demographic factors.

TABLE 4.2

Statistics						
			I feel more confident purchasing products recommended by influencers	I consider influencers' opinions reliable when deciding what to buy.	Influencers play a major role in shaping my trust toward new brands.	I am more likely to try a brand endorsed by a well-known influencer.
N	Valid	100	100	100	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.8700	2.9400	3.8900	3.8800	3.5200
Median		4.0000	3.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
Mode		4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Std. Deviation		.58006	.34289	.52982	.59084	1.10536

Interpretation: The descriptive statistics disclose that digital influencers normally have a useful effect on consumer trust and confidence. Most respondents agreed that influencers assist them trust brands more effortlessly (mean= 3.87, SD=0.58) and consider their judgements dependable when making buying decisions (mean=3.89, SD= 0.53). Similarly, they admitted that influencers play a major role in forming their trust toward new brands (mean=3.88, SD=0.59). Nevertheless, the level of confidence in purchasing products advocated by influencers was moderate (mean=2.94, SD=0.34), stipulating some delay among consumers.

TABLE 4.3

Statistics						
			I trust influencers who seem knowledgeable about the products they promote	Authentic influencers make me feel more confident about their recommendations	I am influenced more by honest and transparent reviews from influencers.	The expertise of an influencer increases my confidence in their product suggestions.
N	Valid	100	100	100	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		2.9400	3.5600	3.7500	2.5300	3.7900
Median		4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
Mode		4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Std. Deviation		1.42715	1.01822	.82112	1.50726	.76930

Interpretation: The results shows that respondents normally trust influencers who are genuine, sincere and frank as shown by higher mean scores for these items (mean= 3.56-3.79). The highest mean value (3.79) suggests that reliable influencers strongly enhance consumers' buying confidence. Nevertheless, lower mean scores for expertise (mean=2.94) suggested that not all respondents view influencer knowledgeability as an important factor in establishing confidence. Overall, the results highlight that genuineness and trustworthiness have considerable effect on consumer confidence than recognized competence alone.

TABLE 4.4

Statistics						
			I feel more confident in an influencer who interacts regularly with followers.	High-quality and creative content from influencers increases my trust.	I tend to follow influencers who respond to audience comments.	Frequent posting by influencers keeps me engaged and confident in their content
N	Valid	100	100	100	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.6700	3.5800	4.5200	4.7900	4.3200
Median		4.0000	4.0000	5.0000	5.0000	5.0000
Mode		4.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Std. Deviation		.94340	1.04621	1.25915	.72884	1.51010

Interpretation: The fact shows that respondents thoroughly value influencer engagement with recurrent posting (mean=4.79) and responding to comments (mean=4.52) being the powerful drivers of trust and confidence. Consistent communication also increases perceived trustworthiness (mean=4.32), though judgements differ more (higher SD). High quality and innovative content are crucial but slightly insignificant (mean=3.58). Overall, active interaction and trustworthiness matter more to consumers than content quality alone.

TABLE 4.5

Statistics		I trust influencer promotions more on certain platforms (e.g., Instagram, YouTube).	The type of platform affects how confident I feel in an influencer's recommendation	I find micro-influencers more believable than celebrities	I am more likely to follow product suggestions from influencers who share my interests.	The platform where an influencer operates impacts my trust in them.
N	Valid	100	100	100	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		4.4100	2.7800	2.9000	3.8700	2.9400
Median		5.0000	3.0000	3.0000	4.0000	3.0000
Mode		5.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00
Std. Deviation		1.34911	.71887	.43809	.58006	.34289

Interpretation: The results shows that participants normally rely on influencer endorsements particularly on certain channels, with the strongest consensus for platform preference (mean=4.41). Assurance in suggestions is minimally influenced by platform type (mean=2.78) and micro influencers (mean=2.90), indicating limited impact. Audiences are inclined to follow suggestions from influencers who share their interests (mean=3.87), indicating significance of applicability rather than fame. Overall, channel selection matters for trust, but personal interest alignment encourages interaction rather than celebrity status or platform alone.

V. Conclusion

According to the findings, the study determines that digital content creators have major impact in influencing consumer trust, with interaction and communication being main factors. Audiences rely most in influencers who post regularly, answer messages, and keep regular contact, while media caliber has an average influence. Channel choice affects confidence to some extent, but matching individual preferences is more important in deciding whether followers implement suggestions. Overall, influencer efficacy, depends not primarily on fame or platform and more on regular involvement, promptness and suitability for consumers.

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