Influencer Marketing and Its Effect on Brand Trust and Purchase Intension

A Review of Literature

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Abstract

Influencer marketing is a significant part of digital marketing that enables brands to speak to consumers through people who have built audiences on social media. Influencer marketing, unlike traditional advertising, often relies on perceived authenticity, credibility, expertise and the relationship between influencers and their followers. These factors may affect consumers' perception of a brand and their intention to purchase its products or services. This review paper combines existing academic research to explore the relationship between influencer marketing, brand trust and purchase intention. The roles of influencer credibility, trustworthiness, content quality, audience-influencer similarity, parasocial relationships, and sponsored-content disclosure are examined. The review also mentions the possible mediating effect of brand trust on the relationship between influencer marketing and purchase intention. Previous research typically indicates that credible and authentic influencer communication can lead to positive brand perceptions and better consumer consideration to buy. Overblown claims, too many sponsorships, misleading endorsements and lack of fit between influencer and brand, however, may reduce trust. In this paper, we highlight research gaps related to long-term brand trust, group differences, platform-specific effects, and artificial intelligence-generated influencers. The paper concludes that effective influencer marketing goes beyond audience reach and includes credibility, transparency, relevance, and maintaining consumer trust.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Brand Trust, Purchase Intention, Influencer Credibility, Social Media Marketing, Consumer Behaviour , Brand Authenticity.

1. Introduction

With the rise of social media, the way companies communicate with consumers has changed. Social networking platforms like Instagram and YouTube enable brands to market products through creators who have built an audience around a particular lifestyle, profession, interest or area of expertise. These creators, often referred to as social media influencers, can influence consumer awareness, attitudes, product evaluations, and buying decisions.

Influencer marketing is when you work with these people to spread your brand's message, show off your products, talk about your experiences or recommend your services. The reason for its popularity is that it has the capacity to deliver promotional messages through content that may feel more personal and relatable than traditional advertising. In some cases, consumers may see influencers as a source of information and inspiration, particularly when the influencer

consistently produces relevant content and shows knowledge of a product category. The reason for its popularity is that it has the capacity to deliver promotional messages through content that may feel more personal and relatable than traditional advertising. In some cases, consumers may see influencers as a source of information and inspiration, particularly when the influencer consistently produces relevant content and shows knowledge of a product category.

Two important ideas in this discussion are brand trust and purchase intention. Brand trust means that consumers believe a brand is reliable, honest and can keep its promises. Purchase intention means that a person says they are likely or willing to buy a product or service. Even if a person says they will buy that does not always happen in life.

I see that influencer marketing can change both brand trust and purchase intention. When an influencer is credible they can show consumers a brand talk about its advantages and make a product feel less risky. Good interactions, with the influencer can also make people think positively about a brand. The effect is not always good. Consumers can doubt an endorsement if it looks too commercial is not clear. Goes against the influencer's known values.

New academic studies look at how the traits of an influencer shape how people view a brand and decide to buy. Liu and Zheng (2024) studied how the features of influencer content the one-to-one bond people feel with an influencer, brand credibility and purchase intention are linked. Pan and colleagues (2025) reviewed 251 papers. Found that the characteristics of the influencer their followers and the content all matter for how well marketing works. These results show that we must see influencer marketing as a mix of information, social connection and psychology not a simple ad.

This review therefore looks at how influencer marketing changes brand trust and purchase intention what makes these changes stronger or weaker and what still needs research.

2. Objectives of the Review

The main goal of this review paper is to look at how influencer marketing, brand trust, and purchase intention's linked.

The specific goals are:

1. To understand what influencer marketing is and why it matters in marketing.

2. To examine how an influencers credibility, ability, authenticity, and trustworthiness change how consumers see them.

3. To analyse how influencer marketing and brand trust are connected.

4. To explore how influencer marketing shapes a consumer's intention to buy.

5. To examine whether brand trust can act as a middle step between influencer marketing and a consumer's intention to buy.

6. To show main challenges gaps in research and chances, for future research.

3. Research Methodology

This paper uses a literature review method drawing from published academic studies. The goal is to bring what we already know not to share results from a new survey or experiment.

To find research I looked at academic search results and journal articles on influencer marketing, influencer credibility, brand trust, consumer behaviour and purchase intention. I focused mostly on peer-reviewed studies, systematic literature reviews and meta-analyses that directly looked at the topics.

The studies I reviewed came from journals like Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, Journal of Promotion Management, International Journal of Consumer Studies and Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science. Research from 2020, to 2025 helped me understand trends. Older studies gave me a grasp of how credibility and consumer choices work.

I grouped the findings into six themes: influencer credibility, brand trust, purchase intention, par asocial relationships, sponsored-content transparency and emerging research directions.

This is a narrative review, not a systematic review. I didn't collect any data didn't interview anyone and didn't do any new statistical analysis. So the conclusions here are based on what's out there. They shouldn't be taken as proof of cause-and-effect relationships.

4. Conceptual Understanding of Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is a way for brands to work with people who can reach and influence an audience online. Influencers can promote products by writing reviews making tutorials showing demos giving recommendations telling stories or posting sponsored content.

Influencers are often sorted by how followers they have and the type of content they make. The usual categories are Nano-influencers, micro-influencers, macro-influencers and mega-influencers. The exact follower limits differ between studies and industry standards.

A big audience can help a brand raise awareness. Reach alone does not ensure trust or a desire to buy. A smaller creator who has knowledge and a close bond with followers can be persuasive in some situations. Whether a collaboration works well depends on things like how relevant the content's the traits of the audience the credibility of the influencer the type of product and how well the influencer and the brand seem to match.

Influencer marketing is different, from advertising because it mixes a commercial message with the influencer's known personality and the bond they share with followers. Because of this consumer check not the product but also the influencer's motives, experience and honesty.

5. Theoretical Foundations

5.1 Source Credibility Theory

Source Credibility Theory explains how the qualities of a person sharing a message can influence how people receive the information. In the world of influencer marketing three main areas are usually looked at. These are trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness.

Trustworthiness is about whether an influencer's seen as honest and someone you can rely on. Expertise is about how much knowledge or experience an influencer has in an area. Attractiveness can be about looks, how much people like the influencer and how appealing they are overall.

An influencer who is smart and honest might share information about a product.. Just being attractive or popular, on its own might not be enough to build trust. People might also wonder if the recommendation feels real and if the product matches what the influencer usually talks about.

5.2 Para social Relationship Theory

A par asocial relationship feels like a one-way friendship. People feel they know a media personality even though they never meet that person. When a media personality shares content, tells personal stories talks directly to the audience and keeps in touch all the time par asocial relationship grows stronger.

In influencer marketing par asocial relationship can draw attention to the recommendations that an influencer shares. Para social relationship also makes product messages feel more personal and relevant. Still I know that feeling close, to an influencer does not mean that followers will automatically trust every endorsement or buy every product that is recommended.

5.3 Persuasion Knowledge Model

The Persuasion Knowledge Model explains how people notice and react to attempts to influence them. When people see an influencer post as an ad they might think about the business reason, behind the message.

Disclosure does not always stop persuasion. Instead how it works may depend on how clear the disclosure's how honest the influencer seems and how good the content is. Open and clear communication can help people make decisions while secret sponsorships or false information can hurt trust.

5.4 Relationship Between the Theories

These theories help explain why influencer marketing can influence brand trust and the desire to buy through connected routes. Credibility can make suggestions more convincing; parasocial relationships can lead to familiarity; and persuasion knowledge can affect how people respond to commercial goals.

The overall view shows that how well influencer marketing works depends on the message being shared and how people understand the connection, between the influencer, the brand and the audience.

6. Review of Existing Literature

6.1 Influencer Credibility and Purchase Intention

Saima and Khan in 2021 looked at how social media influencer marketing affects what consumers want to buy. They also studied how credibility acts as a step in this process. Their research took place in Delhi NCR. Involved 76 people. They discovered that how trustworthy an influencer is, how good the information is and how entertaining the content is all help build influencer credibility and make people want to buy things. The results show how important it is for an influencers recommendation to be seen as quality.

Liu and Zheng in 2024 studied how social media influencers persuade people and how that affects brand credibility and what people want to buy. Their results showed that when influencers share content are real and seem similar to their followers it helps create a special kind of relationship. This kind of relationship is linked to what people want to buy and how much they trust a brand. This means that how well an influencer does their job depends more on the quality of the connection they make with their audience than, on how many people follow them.

6.2 Brand Trust as a Factor in Consumer Decisions

Brand trust is a part of long-term relationships between brands and consumers. Consumers are more likely to consider a brand when they believe that the brands products are reliable and that the brand speaks honestly. Influencers can help build this perception by showing how to use the product sharing information and explaining their own experiences.

However, influencer credibility and brand trust are ideas. A consumer may trust an influencer. Still be unsure about the brand that the influencer promotes. Likewise, a consumer may already trust a brand without any help from influencer credibility. Therefore, it is not safe to assume that trust automatically moves from influencer credibility to brand trust. Research on influencer credibility and brand trust in sectors like green cosmetics and tourism shows how important it is to study this relationship in different product categories. These studies suggest that the link, between influencer traits, brand trust and purchase intention can depend on the product type and the consumers existing attitudes.

6.3 Para social Relationships and Consumer Behaviour

Para social relationships can make followers feel close to influencers. When people watch videos or read posts from an influencer often they may start to feel like they know that person. This sense of familiarity can make recommendations seem trustworthy. It can also make product information feel more personal and relevant to the viewer.

Garg and Bakshi (2024) looked at how credibility, parasocial interaction and trust from beauty vloggers affect consumer's decision to buy products. Their study helps explain how personal feelings formed online can influence how people respond to influencer suggestions.

Still not everyone reacts the way. Some followers might follow influencer advice without thinking. Others might look at the information carefully. Decide for themselves. The power of these relationships can change depending on the product the social media platform and how strong the connection already is, between the influencer and the follower.

6.4 Influencer Marketing Effectiveness

Pan et al. (2025) Carried out a analytic review that looked at 251 studies, including 1,531 effect sizes. Their results showed how influencer characteristics, follower characteristics and content characteristics all play a role in shaping marketing outcomes. They also found that source credibility and persuasion knowledge are mechanisms in how influencer marketing works.

This study matters because it brings together an amount of evidence instead of depending on just one survey. The findings show that the information and entertainment value, in influencer posts can affect a person's chance of making a purchase. It also shows that influencer marketing works depending on the platform and the product being promoted.

These results help build a picture of influencer marketing. A successful campaign needs the influencer content that fits the message and a clear understanding of the audience.

6.5 Recent Reviews and Research Directions

Sardar and Vijay in the year 2025 looked at 76 articles that came out between 2011 and 2023. These articles were about media influencers and how they affect the decision to buy something. Their review put together the research and found places where more study is needed. These places include theories, different situations, different types of influencers and different ways to do research.

Another review in 2025 done by George and other people looked at media influencer marketing and how it affects the decision to buy in the fashion industry. This review shows that it is important to look at the effects of influencers in areas instead of thinking that the same things are true for all products.

In general the research shows that influencer marketing is something that has parts. Things like trustworthiness the quality of the content how much people relate to the influencer and building a relationship are often mentioned.. The exact role of trust in the brand needs more study in different industries and, with different groups of people.

7. Effect of Influencer Marketing on Brand Trust

Brand trust means that customers feel confident, in a brands reliability, integrity and its ability to meet expectations. Influencer marketing can influence brand trust through mechanisms. Influencer marketing can show brand trust by sharing experiences. Influencer marketing can build brand trust when followers see stories. Influencer marketing can strengthen brand trust by sharing reviews. Thus influencer marketing plays a role in shaping brand trust.

7.1 Perceived Authenticity

Authenticity means how much people think an influencers words feel real and match the influencers self. Influencers who share views and talk about real experiences look more trustworthy, than those who repeat the same ads over and over.

Authenticity does not say that every paid post is bad. Authenticity really depends on whether the endorsement feels honest, useful and fits the influencers posts.

7.2 Expertise and Product Knowledge

An influencer with relevant knowledge may help consumers understand product features, uses, limitations, and suitability. For example, a technology creator who explains a smartphone's specifications may provide more useful information than a creator without relevant experience.

Such expertise can improve confidence in the information being communicated. However, expertise in one product category does not necessarily establish expertise in another

7.3 Influencer–Brand Fit

Influencer-brand fit means how well an influencer and a brand match. It is about how the influencers identity, what they post who their audience's the brand they are promoting all go together. When there is a fit the promotion feels more real and makes sense to people.

For example, a fitness expert who shares videos about working out and promotes the kind of sports gear is likely to be seen as a better choice, than someone whose posts have nothing to do with the product. When the fit is not good people might wonder why the influencer is promoting the brand and may not believe the promotion much.

7.4 Transparency and Sponsored Content

Consumers might wonder about an endorsement if they find out that a business relationship was kept secret. Open and clear sponsorship disclosures help people understand that the content is promoting something and let them decide for themselves.

Being open is therefore a part of good influencer marketing. Companies and people who create content should make sure their paid partnerships are easy to see not make claims that can't be backed up and make sure their promotional messages match the facts that're available.

7.5 Consistency and Long-Term Relationships

Repeated exposure to communication that's dependable, meaningful and truthful can help build trust in a brand as time passes. On the hand constantly pushing products that have nothing to do with each other or giving conflicting advice can make people feel like the brand is not genuine.

Trust in a brand should be seen as something that grows over time not a quick reaction to one post, from an influencer.

8. Research Gaps

The literature reviewed in this paper reveals opportunities for future research.

12.1 Long-Term Brand Trust: Many studies look at how consumers react at one moment. Longitudinal research could reveal whether influencer campaigns build lasting brand trust or only give a boost in interest.

12.2 Consumer Context: Further research could explore how Indian consumers judge influencer credibility, sponsored content and brand trust in different regions, languages and product types.

12.3 Micro- and Macro-Influencer Comparisons: Future studies could compare how audience size, perceived accessibility and expertise influence brand trust and purchase intention for micro- influencers versus macro- influencers.

12.4 Human Versus Virtual Influencers: Research could examine whether consumers trust influencers more than AI-generated ones especially when promotional content is disclosed clearly.

12.5 Trust Transfer: More research is needed to find out when trust, in an influencer passes to a brand and when consumers keep their views of the influencer and the brand separate.

12.6 Purchase Intention and Actual Behaviour: Studies should investigate whether stated purchase intention matches purchases, repeat buying and long-term loyalty.

12.7 Sponsorship Disclosure: Further research could examine how the format, clarity, timing and audience awareness of a disclosure affect credibility, brand trust and consumer choice.

12.8 Platform-Specific Differences: Influencer marketing works differently on video-sharing sites, image-based platforms and professional networks. Comparative research could clarify how platform features influence trust and buying decisions.

15. Conclusion

Influencer marketing has become a strategy for brands trying to reach consumers on social media. Success in this area depends on things—what the influencer is like how good the content is, how well the influencer connects with their audience and how consumers feel about the brand being promoted.

The research in this paper shows that a few key factors can lead to reactions from consumers. These include the influencer's credibility, how real they seem their knowledge about the topic, how well they match the brand the quality of the information shared and the emotional bond consumers feel with the influencer. These elements can help build trust in the brand and make people more likely to want to buy.. These effects do not happen the same way for everyone. Their impact can change depending on the social media platform, the type of product who the consumer's how well-known the brand already is.

Brand trust is especially important because it helps explain why people might take an influencer's recommendation seriously. When a consumer sees a brand as trustworthy they are more likely to think about buying from that brand. Still trust is one thing that influences buying decisions. Wanting to buy something does not always mean someone will actually go through with the purchase.

The paper also points out that being open and honest matters. Providing information picking the right influencer and doing things ethically are all important. Many sponsored posts, a bad match between influencer and brand false claims or fake engagement can damage the trust that influencer marketing depends on.

In the end influencer marketing should not be judged by how many followers an influencer has or how many likes a post gets. Its real worth comes from how it supports honest communication builds good relationships, between brands and consumers and helps people make smart choices. More research is needed— long-term studies and studies that include different kinds of consumers—to understand how influencer marketing affects brand trust and the desire to buy over time.

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