

## THE ROLE OF DIGITAL INFLUENCER CREDIBILITY ON PURCHASE INTENTION AND THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF CUSTOMER TRUST AND ENGAGEMENT

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### Abstract

In today's digital era, social networking influencers' (SMIs) ability to drive consumer purchase behaviour has become a focal point of interest. Despite the widespread utilisation of SMIs in marketing, there is a need to comprehend how their varied characteristics impact consumers' purchasing inclinations. This study seeks to address this gap, focusing on the role of influencer credibility as a novel and effective brand marketing strategy. This paper proposes a dual-route effect framework that explores the relationship between influencer credibility, customer engagement, and trust. This framework suggests that audience engagement with an influencer's content bolsters the source's credibility based on the strength of the relationship with the influencer, thereby enhancing the brand's credibility. The audience's immersion in the influencer's content elevates the appreciation of brand content. Expert impressions and bite-sized video content can foster trust and generate interest among target audiences. The proposed framework provides a base for future researchers to delve deeper into the dynamics of influencer marketing. The study also explores other possible mediating and moderating variables that could further explain the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention. From a managerial perspective, this paper's insights shed light on how influencer credibility can be effectively leveraged as a brand marketing strategy. The dual-route effect framework proposed provides a roadmap for enhancing brand credibility and customer trust through strategic influencer marketing. This study adds to the growing body of literature on influencer marketing, focusing on influencer credibility. The proposed framework offers a novel perspective on how audience engagement with influencer content can indirectly strengthen brand credibility and drive purchase intentions.

**Keywords:** Influencer Credibility, Customer Engagement and Trust, An Attitude of Homophiles, Information Credibility, Perceived Expertise, Brand Image.

### Introduction

Due to the Internet's widespread availability, online shopping has become increasingly popular worldwide. For twenty years, Internet use has only increased. In 2019, out of the 7.676 billion population, 4.388 billion individuals were using the Internet, among whom 3.484 billion were engaged social network users, and 3.256 billion were using the web over mobile phones. With a total audience of 4.24 billion, Asia has a penetration rate of 54.2% (Internet World Stats, 2019), meaning that 2.33 billion people in the region use the Internet—online retailers like Walmart, Amazon, and Daraz. Pk and

Flipkart.com saw nearly 1.8 billion customers in 2018. In 2018, sales via the Internet reached \$US2.8 trillion, predicted to rise to US\$4.8 trillion in 2021. Most online shoppers (76.9%), including 37 percent of those between the ages of 30 and 39, are located in the United Kingdom, China, and Finland. This percentage is higher than the global average (47.3%). The proliferation of social network platforms greatly increases the impact of individuals by providing them with more venues for advocating for causes close to their hearts and attracting the attention of a wider audience. Some people can share their lives, passions, and views with a wide audience thanks to the reach of social media and thus grow into influencers over time. Social media influencers (SMIs) are social relationship resources organisations can collaborate with to accomplish their marketing objectives (Geysler, 2021).

This means that SMIs are more than just advertising instruments for social networking sites like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, etc. According to market research, influencer marketing's global market reached \$148 million in 2019, up roughly 7.95% from 2018, and is projected to exceed the amount of \$373 million by 2027 (Statista, 2016). Business Insider predicts that by 2022, companies will have spent \$15 billion worldwide on influencer marketing. Since SMIs can better communicate with subsets of consumers, they play an important role in driving interest in products and advocacy for brands (Top Influence, 2015).

People who encourage celebrity capital on social networking sites by building a genuine personal brand and qualifying organisations to make the most of their prominence for outreach to customers are known as social media influencers (SMIs). Social media influencer advertising has evolved from a \$5-10 billion business to an ancillary marketing method over the past decade as brands collaborated with influencers across avenues to increase brand awareness and influence consumer behaviour (Zaman et al., 2018). About half of the global population, or over 3.4 billion people, are active social media users (Shujahat et al., 2019). More and more business owners are finding success with influencer marketing because it is easier to implement and track than ever (Mubarik et al., 2021a). Influencer marketing describes the practice of businesses partnering with influential people to increase awareness of the brand or conversions between a specific demographic (Agha et al., 2021). Consumers are increasingly turning to the Internet in search of information. Traditional and electronic word-of-mouth popularity has increased with the meteoric rise of online communication through social media, websites, and blogs (Jiang et al., 2021).

### **The growing significance of digital marketing and influencer marketing**

As a result of technological developments and broad acceptance of digital platforms, digital marketing has significantly altered the modern corporate landscape. The explosion of social media as a subset of digital marketing has revolutionised communication between businesses and their target audiences. By 2025, it is expected that there will be 4.41 billion active social media users worldwide (Statista, 2021). Influencer marketing is a relatively new type of social media advertising. Therefore, its rapid ascent is especially noteworthy in this context. Marketers use "Social Media Influencers" (SMIs), well-known Internet users who have built up sizable online fan bases, to spread the word

about their products. The Influencer Marketing Hub (2021) estimates that by 2021, the influencer marketing industry will be valued at \$13.8 billion. This expansion reflects the expanding acknowledgement of influencer marketing's efficacy as a strategic marketing tactic.

Influencer marketing aims to increase consumer intent to buy a product or service by establishing the brand's legitimacy, increasing brand awareness, and stimulating conversation. Endorsements from SMIs have the potential to be more convincing than those from more impersonal brands because they are associated with more accessible public figures. They have sway over their listeners because of their credibility, trustworthiness, and ability to keep their attention. Therefore, academics and professionals must comprehend the interconnected nature of influencer credibility, customer engagement, consumer trust, and buying intent. This study aims to advance this comprehension by offering a thorough framework that clarifies these relationships.

Companies and brands pay close attention to influencers on social media because they see them as valuable social relationship assets and potential marketing channels. They result in marketing and sales partnerships that may last for the long haul (Mubarik et al., 2021b). Trust is established when an influencer is themselves. If they start making posts that appear like advertisements or advocate for a brand they do not use, they risk losing the trust of their followers (Khan & Khan, 2022). The confidence with which users approach their work after consulting a website's resources is also crucial. Consumers' propensity to purchase is influenced when they have access to relevant information during tasks like researching a brand-new product like bubble tea (Akbar et al., 2017). Site visitors can fill their common but unique knowledge gaps about specific tasks using information task-fit (Jiang et al., 2019). Task-related questions are thus also answered. For instance, a website that offers in-depth information about a given product is said to have a good "information task fit."

The point at which consumers "see" the brand as able to satisfy their expectations is considered by many researchers to be the ultimate goal of marketing (Islam et al., 2021, page number). This is achieved through brand engagement (Jiang et al.). Real attachment correlates strongly with positive customer behaviour, sales, and profitability, so the more consumers interact with a brand, the more likely they are to behave positively towards the brand (Khan et al., 2016). As previous results suggest that gaining consideration and even consciousness for a brand cannot affect purchase intention, this research framework proposed customer loyalty as the moderator between customer attitudes and buying intentions (Jiang et al., 2018).

## **Purpose**

This research examines how customer involvement and confidence on social media mediates the effect of an influencer's credibility (homophile attitude, trustworthiness, Expertise, brief multimedia content, information quality).

### **Research Questions**

As a result, this study will be looking forward and try to answer the following main.

1. What is the impact of influencers' credibility on customer engagement?
2. What is the impact of influencers' credibility on the relation of customer trust on P.I.?
3. How much contribution of the short video content on P.I.?
4. What is the mediating role of customer engagement on the relationship between the attitude of homophiles from the role of influencer credibility and their P.I.?

### **Research Problem**

The two most crucial factors are the reliability problem of social media and its effect on consumers' purchase propensity. Customers are crucial in increasing an influencer's popularity, so marketers should encourage them to talk about their experiences openly. The second implication has to do with the administration of social media platforms. It advises marketing managers to interact with followers using short videos, perceived Expertise, and improving service levels.

### **Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

Further investigation into various issues connected to influencer marketing's function is required to advance and consolidate this knowledge. It is based on studies investigating the growing credibility of influential people on consumer buying choices. Since promotional efforts are such a fluid field, staying on top of new patterns and ways to reach potential customers is essential. The implementation of the web has increased the development of the global interaction system, with a single of the leads getting a boost in median social advertising. We primarily assigned this study to the concept of the intended actions that try to anticipate the desire of individuals to execute a behaviour. Following the principle, there are basic motives that influence human behaviour: Expectations and opinions about the possible repercussions of the behaviour, the standards of others and the significance of these goals, and expectations and opinions about the variables that promote or impede the achievement of the behaviour all contribute to the individual's motivation to engage in that behaviour.

There have been many advancements in influencer marketing in recent years, so it is time to look back at how things have changed. Digital marketing in general and influencer marketing in particular have been disrupted by the proliferation of social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube (Freberg et al., 2021). Because of the power of social media influencers, these sites have replaced traditional media as the primary means by which marketers communicate with their target audiences. People with a large online following and credibility in a certain field are called "social media influencers" (Jin & Phua, 2021, page number). These leaders have considerable sway over their followers and can affect their thoughts, feelings, and actions. De Veirman, Hudders,

& Nelson, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019) and similar studies find that the trustworthiness of influencers significantly impacts customer views and behavioural intentions, including purchase intentions.

However, the legitimacy of an influencer is not a singular idea. In contrast, it has many other aspects, such as honesty, expertise, and physical allure (Amos et al., 2008). The degree to which a person's followers believe they are reliable and honest is a gauge of their credibility. Important variables include the influencer's perceived Expertise in a particular profession and their physical attractiveness. Customer engagement is key in determining purchase intent in the current digital era. When influencers interact with their audience on social media, customer engagement can increase (Brodie et al., 2021).

According to recent studies, trust and engagement mediate between a consumer's decision to make a purchase and the credibility of an influencer (Casaló et al., 2020; Liang, 2021). For instance, according to Casaló, Flavián, and Ibáñez-Sánchez (2020), the relationship between a customer's willingness to make a purchase and an influencer's credibility is mediated by the customer's trust. TikTok and Instagram, among others, have made it easier for influencers to interact with their audience and earn their trust through short-form video content and live streaming. In turn, trust is a major factor in determining whether or not a consumer would make a purchase. Finally, emerging trends in influencer marketing highlight the significance of influencer credibility, consumer engagement, and trust in influencing buying intent. Understanding these connections in depth is important for academics and professionals, and the dual-route impact approach provided in this paper does just that.

### **Influencer Credibility and customer engagement**

Influencers are considered the source of information on social media, and consumers often refer to the information published by influencers before making a purchase (Jamil et al., 2023). Scholars believe that the success of influencer marketing in social media is due to the high credibility Consumers can make decisions through information from sources with high credibility and trust. Such emotional connections between influencers and audiences are prerequisites for obtaining preference and trust in influencer marketing. The interaction between the audience and influencers on social media platforms enhances their perceived approachability and authenticity to influencers. The audience's familiarity and likability towards influencers determine their attitude towards influencer endorsements and brands, eventually strengthening their trust in the brand and turning them into customers or potential customers (Jiang et al.). Therefore, influencer marketing depends on continuously maintaining relationships with the follower groups. Customer reviews have been known to improve sales significantly and increase the website's credibility. Reviews make consumer visits more attractive and increase the time spent on the website. They also enhance consumer confidence in the product.

Based on the literature review above, the hypotheses of my study are:

**H<sub>1</sub>**: Influencer credibility positively impacts customer engagement.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Customer engagement mediates the influencer's credibility and purchase intention

### **Information Quality and customer engagement**

According to Hardiawan (2013), when presenting information about online shopping, it is preferable to include the connection between the goods and services that are available online. This information should be helpful and pertinent in predicting the efficacy and value of the good or service. Knowledge of items and services must be up-to-date to meet the needs of end-users or online buyers. It helps consumers make decisions and remains consistent and understandable. Mukhtar (in Luthfiya, 2014) argues that online retailers should highlight details about their wares and services in their marketing materials. This information should be helpful and pertinent to forecasting the value and efficacy of the good or service. Further, to meet the knowledge needs of customers / online buyers, information about products and services must be current, help online consumers render decisions, and be reliable and simple to understand. As defined by (Jogiyanto, 2009), knowledge is data processed into something significant for those who receive it and has tangible and real value for present or future decisions (Khan et al., 2022a). How much data regarding goods and services is helpful and pertinent for online buyers? According to (Peterson et al., 1997, and Park and Kim, 2003), the information standard helps customers compare the products they will buy; furthermore, the wider and higher the quality of information accessible through online stores, the better purchasing decisions. And greater client satisfaction. Kolesar and Galbraith (2000) claimed that the accessibility of data does not only think product or service data but additionally the ease and individualisation of details to retain clients.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Information quality positively impacts customer trust.

**H<sub>4</sub>:** Customer trust mediates the information quality and purchase intention

### **Attitude of Homophile and Customer Engagement**

Customer value co-creation can be prompted by homophiles, as predicted. Customers' propensity to seek and share information, as well as their elicitation of responsible behaviour and personal interaction, are all positively influenced by homophiles (Khan et al., 2023). These results are consistent with a prior study that found that a recipient's favourable reaction to homophiles was related to the recipient's level of engagement (scholars define information quality as "consumers' perception about the data according to a collection of decision-making criteria that cover precision, reliability, usefulness, timeliness, and impartiality (Shaikh et al., 2013).

According to studies of individual behaviour, there is also a positive correlation between online public engagement and information quality, virtual interaction, and incentives (Khan et al., 2023). The wealth of high-quality information available in online communities bolsters users' optimistic perspectives on online participation (Mazhar et al., 2022). Shim and Jo (2020) came to a similar conclusion, discovering that the quality of information was positively related to users' perceived benefits and satisfaction and their intention to reuse sites in health-related contexts. The information's quality also impacts

users' happiness and brand value. Additionally, client attitudes and behaviours regarding brand involvement via the SNSs are influenced by benefits such as simplicity of use, perceived value, and satisfaction. People's risk perception and ambiguity when acting on information may be mitigated when it is well-organized and high quality (more pertinent, precise, and comprehensive).

**H<sub>5</sub>:** The attitude of homophily positively impacts customer engagement.

**H<sub>6</sub>:** Customer engagement mediates the attitude of homophily and purchase intention

### **Perceived Expertise and customer engagement**

According to one definition, "expertise" is "the extent to which an endorser is seen as having the necessary knowledge, experience, or skills to encourage the product." Therefore, the information provided by the experts in the field is expected to be more credible than that provided by individuals unfamiliar with the setting or the field (KHAN et al., 2022c). Expertise is a crucial trait that an influencer must possess to be successful, widely recognised, and thought about as a credible source of knowledge by their fans—in other words, working with someone with outstanding knowledge in an indicated advertising, as their knowledge ought to make less of an impact identical to any reduced reliability with other famous people in the same era.

If a celebrity's followers do not think they are competent and knowledgeable in a certain field, the public will not view them as an authority. Following Schouten et al. (2019), knowledge will not only form the level of credibility viewed by celebrities but also could shape consumer buying behaviour and intention. A more knowledgeable and authoritative endorser can have a greater impact on consumers' opinions of the brand and their actions in response to it (Khan et al., 2022b). Therefore, the level of customer participation, and consequently, their intention to purchase, may be significantly influenced by the knowledge and experience of social media influencers: When a customer uses a product or service, they gain insight into how it meets their needs and how the good or service improves their life.

**H<sub>7</sub>:** Perceived Expertise positively impacts customer engagement.

**H<sub>8</sub>:** Customer engagement mediates the perceived Expertise and purchase intention.

### **Short video content and customer engagement**

Agribusiness marketers can save money and provide a better shopping experience for their customers by switching to a model that emphasises using short videos to promote their wares. Short videos are the new carriers of fragmented information; as a dynamic display of online goods, they can increase the notice value of the material on display and the consumers' effective perception of the value of the products on offer. Marketing with branded videos keeps the dialogue going between the brand and the consumer. It has long been an obstacle for many brands to develop content with sufficient value to cut through the clutter and speed up the process of brand building. Based on what has already been written about content marketing, the usual statistics of YouTube video

appeal and consumer engagement behaviour include the number of views, the number of likes, the number of dislikes, the number of comments, and the number of shares. They have a significant impact on how people interpret a YouTube video. To what extent readers are connected with the information presented in a post can be inferred from these online metrics. For example, managers should invest more in social media material and approaches that will result in personal consumer engagement because one unit of view for a specific video for U.S. films is associated with \$2.00 gross revenue on average. Consumer reactions are heavily influenced by the number of likes a post receives on social media, which is a good proxy for the influencer's following. Social connection and video popularity can be increased through the expression of likes and dislikes, as well as commentary and judgment. Users can be persuaded to "like" a publication more easily than "share" it. People are cognitive misers, so they only read comments that have already been "liked" by other readers. Online viewers' first impressions of the content may be influenced by its popularity as measured by the number of views and likes. The act of endorsing a piece of content or a brand can have a profound effect on a person's sense of identity and pride.

**H<sub>9</sub>:** Short video content positively impacts customer engagement.

**H<sub>10</sub>:** Customer engagement mediates the short video content and purchase intention

### **Influencer Credibility and customer trust**

Having "honesty, integrity, and believability" makes an endorser trustworthy. Defined it as "the extent to which consumers trust the credibility of the claims made by influencers." If Instagram followers rate an influencer as "safe," "solid," "dependable," "honest," or "trustworthy," that speaks to the influencer's honesty and reliability. Consumers' trust in and loyalty to their celebrities has been shown to have a positive impact on the longevity of their relationships with their influencers, as well as on sales and brand loyalty. According to research conducted by Full Screen and Shareable (2018), roughly half of a sample of young adults (18–24 years old) trust the posts made by their influential individuals.

In addition, 40% value the influencer's opinion more than the brand promotion's. These findings, in turn, underscore the significance of social media influencers' credibility (Full Screen and Shareable, 2018). In this context, Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) discovered that social media influencers are more connected to the trustworthiness of public figures in the beauty industry. They found that attractiveness is key to changing consumer attitudes and corresponding the right supporters to the right and reliable brand. As well as looking into the effect on product endorsement of the engagement generated by advertising services or products by mostly online influencers using the platform known as Instagram.

Therefore, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

**H<sub>11</sub>:** Influencer credibility positively impacts customer trust.

**H<sub>12</sub>:** Customer trust mediates the influencer's credibility and purchase intention.



### **Information Quality and customer trust**

The quality of the information provided significantly impacts the satisfaction of a company's customers. This demonstrates that consumers expect commonplace forms of e-commerce to provide precise and trustworthy data that is also up-to-date, comprehensive, and simple to comprehend. High-quality information is data that another party can use. The information they have access to must be of high quality to aid those in need in making decisions. The information provided in the online store should include details about the goods and services on offer. High-quality information is data that another party can use. The information they have access to must be of high quality to aid those in need in making decisions. The information displayed in the online store should include details about the goods and services on offer. To sum up, quality information is data that is shared between parties. The information they have access to must be of high quality to aid those in need in making decisions.

**H13:** Information quality positively impacts customer trust.

**H14:** Customer trust mediates information and purchase intention.

### **Attitude of homophiles and customer trust**

As social beings, humans are hardwired to seek out and interact with others like themselves. Although some research suggests otherwise, homophiles may be fostered by social media because it brings together people who share similar interests. By social identity theory, people's perceptions of an individual are heavily influenced by their demographic characteristics. The extent to which others place stock in reviews is likely to be heavily influenced by the reviewers' demographic characteristics (such as age or gender) as well as the reviewers' beliefs and attitudes. Consumers need help to ascertain the credibility of data provided on review sites and the motives of the information seller because of the anonymity of the online environment. Homophile, as noted by Wei and Liu (2020) (also see Trandoc, 2019), encourages users to form favourable opinions of things that are similar to them rather than things that are different. According to Liu and Park (2015), people will accept information as credible if it confirms their worldview and reject information that goes against it, regardless of how well it is argued or sourced. Organisations and professionals can benefit from homophily data by emphasising the opinions of already satisfied customers whose characteristics are similar to those of prospective buyers. In other words, organisations and professionals should use findings on the effect of homophily on trust to inform their personalised marketing strategies. Therefore, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

**H15:** The attitude of homophily positively impacts customer trust.

**H16:** Customer trust mediates the attitude of homophily and purchase intention

### **Perceived Expertise and customer trust**

One of the more important factors of trust in purchasing goods online is the perceived quality of the service provided. A definition provided by Agag and El-Masry is

"consumers' perceptions about receptivity and assurance." Most e-commerce sites attract and retain buyers because of their service's superiority. Perceived quality of service from retailers has been shown to impact consumers' willingness to shop online substantially. Specifically, Lien et al. (2017) conducted exploratory research to assess the relationship between WeChat users' satisfaction and service quality (environmental quality, relationship quality, and outcome quality) and the effects of contentment and stickiness on users' intentions to continue using the app. Finding that service quality has a positive effect on future usage intentions, the study surveyed 310 Chinese respondents. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H17:** Perceived Expertise positively impacts customer trust.

**H18:** Customer trust mediates the perceived expertise and purchase intention

### **Short video content and customer trust**

What we mean by "customer loyalty" is the propensity of consumers to continue buying products from a business or brand that has earned their trust and satisfaction. Customer loyalty can be broken down into four distinct phases: the cognitive, attitude, emotional, and behavioural stages Oliver (1997). According to Chen Mingliang, these four factors—perceived value, transfer cost, customer confidence, and customer satisfaction—make or break customer loyalty. Loyalty from customers is always measurable through their propensity to make repeat purchases. The more dedicated a customer base is, the more likely they will make another purchase. Thus, loyalty is a further psychological indicator of this purpose. E-satisfaction and e-trust, as noted by Lv Xiaoping (2008), have an impact on e-loyalty. That is to say, unless a customer is completely happy with a network's performance, they will not choose to use that network again. In most cases, a rise in customer satisfaction will also lead to an uptick in customer loyalty, an important factor in viewing short videos. Customer loyalty is earned only after a threshold level of customer satisfaction.

**H19:** Short video positively impacts customer trust.

**H20:** Customer trust mediates the short video and purchase intention

### **Moderating Role of Brand Engagement**

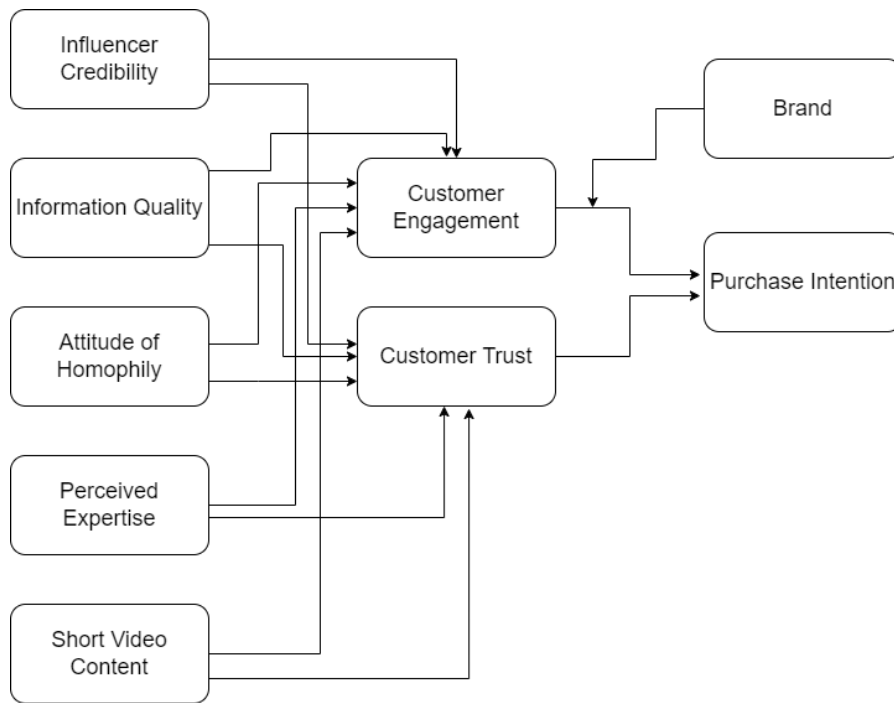
Several academic perspectives have been taken to define brand engagement. Consumers' motivational states with brands vary depending on the circumstances and are characterised by various degrees of thought, feeling, and action. Depending on your definition, engagement can mean anything from customers' perceptions of a brand or company that go beyond a simple purchase due to motivational stimuli to the extent to which an individual participates in and is connected to an entity or its activities. From a business's point of view, the marketing literature confirms that customer brand engagement has a substantial, positive effect on customer retention. There is also strong evidence that customer loyalty and intent to buy increase in tandem with the extent to which they are engaged with a brand. Previous studies have also established a causal relationship between consumer engagement and brand sales, finding that customers who

are highly involved in media generate three times more sales than customers who are subjected to the brand and that engaged consumers give eight times as much as those who are just exposed to the brand through advertising. Also, previous studies have shown that customer involvement improves intent to buy. Dwivedi (2015) examined customer loyalty in the cell phone setting and found that it was positively associated with brand loyalty, intent to buy, and word of mouth. Similarly, a Google survey discovered that consumers interacting with brands frequently online tend to make larger purchases.

Following this discussion, the hypothesis was generated as follows:

**H<sub>21</sub>:** Brand engagement moderates the relationship between customer engagement and purchase intention, where the positive relationship becomes stronger when brand engagement is high.

Figure: 1



## Methodology

### Research Design

Research papers typically have a methodology part that details the extensive procedures used to perform the research. This section covers everything from sample

selection to instrument validation. To establish credibility and assure the trustworthiness of the results, the methodology of the present study intends to provide a full explanation of the data collection approach, the justification for the chosen sample size, and the reliability and validity of the survey instrument.

### **Methods for Choosing a Sample**

The reliability of a study depends on how well its sample is chosen. Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method in which the researcher exercises discretion in selecting study participants to ensure that they are representative of the population of interest, guided our sample selection. Due to the importance placed on the trustworthiness of influencers, the selection criterion centred on social media users who had engaged with SMIs or their content. The study's sample size was set at 191 participants. Limitations in time, money, and other resources led to this estimate. Structural Equation Modeling, employed in this research, has a rule of thumb that says the sample size should be 10 times the number of survey items (Hair et al., 2010). The chosen sample size was considered valid and suitable given the survey's 20-item length.

### **Demographics**

Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the demographic features of the sample. Most people who completed the survey were young adults (57.5%) between 25 and 34. Fifty-three percent of respondents have completed at least a bachelor's degree. When asked about their occupation, approximately 51% of respondents indicated they were either high school or college students, highlighting the skew toward a younger, more educated population typical of social media platforms. Finally, 25.5% of people surveyed said they make less than Rs. 100,000 monthly. Knowing these details about the sample's demographics is crucial for correctly interpreting the results.

### **Survey Instrument**

In this survey study, participants completed an online questionnaire at their own pace. Content validity was achieved by deriving and adapting the survey questions from established scales in the available literature. The survey was pilot-tested with a small target audience to evaluate its readability and ensure it captured the necessary information. The pilot test results were used to refine and complete the survey's instrument.

The study incorporates several variables to investigate different aspects of influencer marketing and its impact on consumer behaviour. These variables include Influencer Credibility (I.C.), Information Quality (I.Q.), Attitude of Homophile (AOH), Perceived Expertise (P.E.), Short Video Content (SVC), Customer Engagement (C.E.), Customer Trust (C.T.), and Purchase Intention (P.I.). The credibility of influencers has been explored in the context of celebrity endorsement effects and advertising effectiveness (Amos et al., 2008). Information quality and user satisfaction have been integrated to understand technology acceptance (Wixom & Todd, 2005). The attitude of individuals with similar preferences has been studied about the diffusion of innovations (Rogers, 2010). Perceived Expertise of celebrity endorsers has been measured for trustworthiness

and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990). Video content creation and consumption have been discussed in the digital marketplace (Hobbs, 2020). Customer engagement beyond purchase has been explored to understand post-purchase behaviour (Vivek et al., 2012). Consumer trust, value, and loyalty have been analysed within relational exchanges (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). Finally, the effects of price, brand, and store information on purchase intention have been examined (Dodds et al., 1991). These variables collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the complex landscape of influencer marketing and consumer responses.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are critical when it comes to a study's results. While validity relates to whether the instrument accurately measures what it claims to measure, reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the measurements across multiple instances. The reliability of the survey instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, a widely used statistical method for measuring internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha values for all scales employed in the survey were above 0.7, indicating adequate reliability (Nunnally, 1978). Both content and construct validity were examined to verify validity. As was previously noted, the content validity was guaranteed through the use of preexisting scale elements. Factor analysis assessed construct validity, ensuring a construct's operationalisation faithfully captures the concept. All factor loadings were more than 0.7, the cutoff suggested by Hair et al. (2010), demonstrating adequate construct validity. By taking such a thorough approach, we aimed to prove our technique's validity and reliability, solidifying the study's results.

### **Onion Model of Methodology**

The research design incorporates various elements that shape its methodology. The chosen research philosophy is positivism, emphasising empirical observation and measurable phenomena. Employing a deductive research approach, the study derives hypotheses from existing theories and tests them through data analysis. The research strategy employed is survey research, involving collecting data from a selected group of respondents. The research opted for a mono-method approach, conducting quantitative research through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). In terms of time horizon, a cross-sectional approach was adopted, collecting data at a single point in time, thus providing a snapshot of the subject under investigation. These methodological decisions collectively define the research's framework to explore and analyse its targeted phenomena.

### **Analysis**

The study used advanced PLS software to determine the relationship between the structural equation modelling's independent, mediating, and moderating variables. Variable reliant on this type of study requires metric data, which can be challenging to elicit. Several different elements influenced the decision to use intelligent PLS software. The initial and most significant factor is the clarity and trustworthiness of the data referenced. When comparing the PLS system to other parametric statistics-based software like AMOS, the PLS system is simpler and more non-parametric in its structure, thereby

decreasing accuracy but increasing robustness. When it comes to analysis software, this one is the first choice of even the most junior researchers because of how intuitively and efficiently it performs even the most complex tasks. This study's dependent variable is purchase intention (P.I.), and its independent variables are the credibility (I.C.) of the influencers, the quality (I.Q.) of the information provided, the attitude of homophile (AOH), the perceived Expertise (P.E.), and the length (SVC) of any accompanying videos.

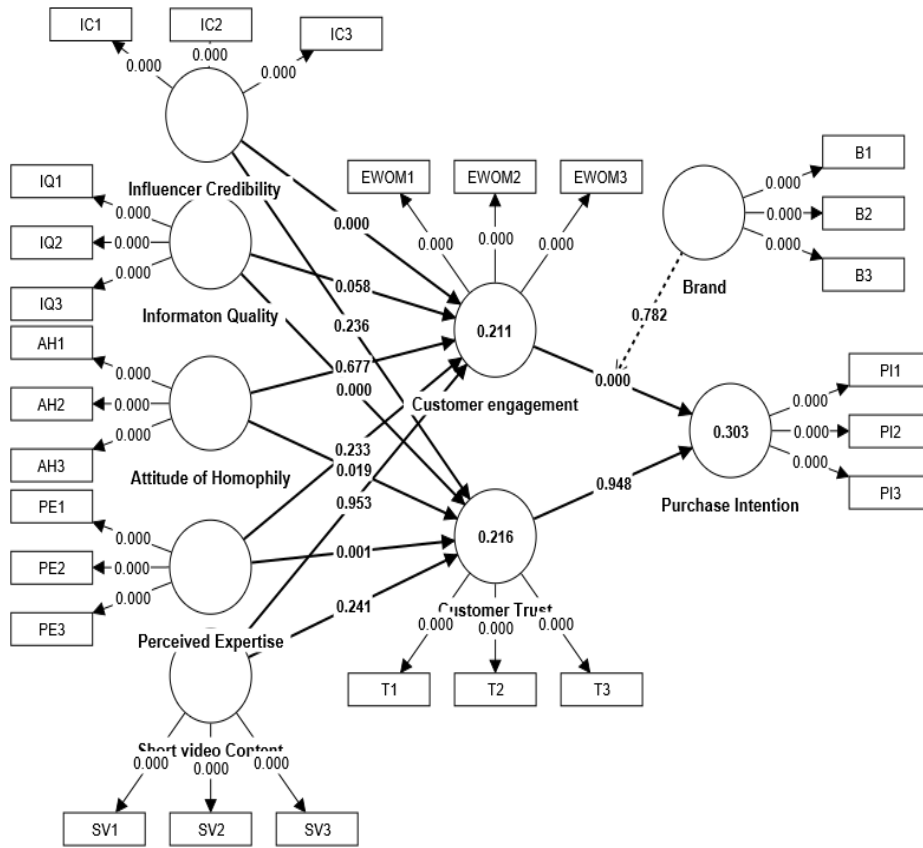
<b>Table 01: Loading, Reliability, and Validity</b>				
	Loading	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
AH1 <- Attitude of Homophile	0.841	0.812	0.819	0.725
AH2 <- Attitude of Homophile	0.869			
AH3 <- Attitude of Homophile	0.844			
B1 <- Brand	0.813	0.744	0.774	0.653
B2 <- Brand	0.77			
B3 <- Brand	0.839			
CE1 <- Customer engagement	0.775	0.773	0.774	0.689
CE2 <- Customer engagement	0.87			
CE3 <- Customer engagement	0.768			
IC1 <- Influencer Credibility	0.797	0.729	0.742	0.649
IC2 <- Influencer Credibility	0.837			
IC3 <- Influencer Credibility	0.758			
IQ1 <- Information Quality	0.858	0.716	0.726	0.637
IQ2 <- Information Quality	0.874			
IQ3 <- Information Quality	0.882			
PE1 <- Perceived Expertise	0.839	0.842	0.849	0.76
PE2 <- Perceived Expertise	0.84			
PE3 <- Perceived Expertise	0.741			
PI1 <- Purchase Intention	0.857	0.732	0.739	0.653
PI2 <- Purchase Intention	0.854			
PI3 <- Purchase Intention	0.67			
SV1 <- Short Video Content	0.66	0.722	0.776	0.638
SV2 <- Short Video Content	0.833			
SV3 <- Short Video Content	0.89			
T1 <- Customer Trust	0.799	0.744	0.877	0.64
T2 <- Customer Trust	0.863			
T3 <- Customer Trust	0.827			

Note: AVE= Average Variance Extracted, CR= Composite Reliability, CA=Cronbach Alpha,

<b>Table 02: Discriminant validity: Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) - Matrix</b>									
	AOH	Brand	CT	CE	I.C.	IQ	PE	PI	SVC
AOH									
B	0.383								
CT	0.38	0.6							
CE	0.291	0.36	0.67						
IC	0.578	0.381	0.405	0.6					
IQ	0.139	0.611	0.401	0.33	0.45				
PE	0.69	0.479	0.492	0.379	0.651	0.338			
PI	0.663	0.495	0.431	0.624	0.847	0.302	0.61		
SVC	0.089	0.21	0.129	0.182	0.321	0.507	0.228	0.223	
B	0.291	0.212	0.374	0.471	0.363	0.238	0.296	0.249	0.102

<b>Table 03: Fornell-Larcker criterion</b>									
	AOH	B	CT	CE	I.C.	IQ	PE	PI	SVC
AOH	0.852								
B	0.293	0.808							
CT	0.304	0.456	0.83						
CE	0.232	0.286	0.502	0.806					
IC	0.435	0.298	0.309	0.439	0.798				
IQ	0.116	0.487	0.324	0.26	0.355	0.872			
PE	0.535	0.345	0.369	0.286	0.472	0.269	0.808		
PI	0.495	0.376	0.323	0.493	0.597	0.232	0.435	0.799	
SVC	0.051	0.157	0.107	0.148	0.247	0.442	0.165	0.161	0.8

Note: IC=Influencer Credibility, IQ=Information Quality, AOH=Attitude of Homophile, PE=Perceive Expertise, SVC=Short Video Content, CE=Customer Engagement, CT=Customer Trust, PI=Purchase Intention.



**Figure 2:** Structural Model

**Table 4.** Mediation and Moderation Analysis Results



### Direct Relationship

Table 03: Direct Relationship					
Relationship	Beta	SD	T	P values	Relationship
Attitude of Homophily -> Customer Trust	-0.062	0.057	1.077	0.282	Insignificant
Attitude of Homophily -> Customer engagement	0.044	0.063	0.696	0.487	Insignificant
Brand -> Purchase Intention	0.490	0.053	9.306	0.000	Significant
Customer Trust -> Purchase Intention	0.361	0.072	5.014	0.000	Significant
Customer engagement -> Purchase Intention	0.031	0.055	0.549	0.583	Insignificant
Influencer Credibility -> Customer Trust	0.313	0.049	6.428	0.000	Significant
Influencer Credibility -> Customer engagement	0.232	0.060	3.841	0.000	Significant
Information Quality -> Customer Trust	0.415	0.052	8.063	0.000	Significant
Information Quality -> Customer engagement	0.454	0.054	8.533	0.000	Significant
Perceived Expertise -> Customer Trust	-0.040	0.074	0.636	0.525	Insignificant
Perceived Expertise -> Customer engagement	-0.110	0.083	1.382	0.167	Insignificant
Short video Content -> Customer Trust	0.288	0.057	5.085	0.000	Significant
Short video Content -> Customer engagement	0.262	0.061	4.285	0.000	Significant
Brand x Customer engagement -> Purchase Intention	0.002	0.019	0.087	0.931	Insignificant

### Indirect Relationship (Mediating)

Table 04: Indirect Relationship					
Hypotheses Testing	Beta	SD	T	P values	Hypotheses
Attitude of Homophily -> Customer Trust -> Purchase Intention	-0.022	0.021	1.035	0.301	Insignificant
Short video Content -> Customer engagement -> Purchase Intention	0.007	0.015	0.538	0.591	Insignificant
Perceived Expertise -> Customer Engagement -> Purchase Intention	-0.002	0.008	0.456	0.649	Insignificant
Short video Content -> Customer Trust -> Purchase Intention	0.102	0.024	4.397	0.000	Significant
Attitude of Homophily -> Customer Engagement -> Purchase Intention	0.001	0.005	0.287	0.774	Insignificant
Perceived Expertise -> Customer Trust -> Purchase Intention	-0.012	0.027	0.644	0.520	Insignificant
Information Quality -> Customer Trust -> Purchase Intention	0.149	0.033	4.665	0.000	Significant
Influencer Credibility -> Customer Trust -> Purchase Intention	0.114	0.032	3.571	0.000	Significant
Influencer Credibility -> Customer engagement -> Purchase Intention	0.007	0.013	0.524	0.600	Insignificant
Information Quality -> Customer engagement -> Purchase Intention	0.013	0.025	0.555	0.579	Insignificant

H<sub>1</sub> (AOH et al.) fails to hold, confirming that there is a negative relationship between the attitude of homophiles and purchase desire via the mediation of customer trust ( $= -0.001, p > 0.05$ ); transformational leadership has a substantial impact on motivating towards influencing credibility. Short video content does not moderate the connection between customer engagement and purchase intent (H<sub>2</sub>;  $= -0.001, p > 0.05$ ). The data shows consumers are not persuaded to purchase after watching brief videos online. Also, the results indicate that there is no positive connection between perceived Expertise and purchase intention via customer engagement ( $= 0.03, p > 0.05$ ), so hypothesis H<sub>3</sub> (P.E. et al.) is also rejected. This is the first time, to the best of my knowledge, that this hypothesis has been tested.

Rejecting H<sub>4</sub> (SVC et al.) verifies that there is a positive effect between P.I. and customer trust in short video content ( $= 0, p > 0.05$ ). In addition, the findings suggest there is no link.

Next, we find that H<sub>5</sub> (AOH et al.) is false because customer engagement is not a significant mediating factor between AOH and P.I. ( $= 0.01, p > 0.05$ ). To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first study to test hypothesis H<sub>6</sub> (P.E. et al.), which states that there is no relationship between perceived Expertise and purchase intention via the mediation of customer trust ( $= -0.001, p > 0.05$ ). It is concluded that there is a strong effect between information quality, customer trust, and purchase intentions ( $= -0.001, p < 0.05$ ), thus accepting hypothesis H<sub>7</sub> (I.Q. et al.). In the presence of a mediation effect of customer trust, the following hypothesis, H<sub>8</sub> (I.C. et al.) is accepted, and there is a significant interaction between influences and influencer credibility ( $= 0, p < 0.05$ ). The relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention is mediated by customers' trust in those influencers, so H<sub>9</sub> (I.C. et al.) is accepted ( $= 0.151, p > 0.005$ ). Customer confidence is not a significant mediating variable among attitude of homophiles and purchase intention ( $= 0.048, p > 0.05$ ), thus refuting H<sub>10</sub> (AOH et al.). As a result, the findings indicate that the homophilic attitude does not affect the likelihood of a consumer purchasing. The positive correlation between customer trust and P.I. ( $= 0.011, p > 0.05$ ) is supported by rejecting the null hypothesis H<sub>11</sub> (CT et al.). In addition, the findings suggest there is no link.

### **Mediating relationship**

The table 04 analyses the mediating role of Customer Trust and Customer Engagement in the relationships between several variables (Homophily et al. Video Content, Perceived Expertise, Information Quality, Influencer Credibility, and Purchase Intention). This study aims to determine whether or not the mediator variable mediates the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The Beta values in the preceding table indicate the strength and direction of the relationship between variables. The Beta value's dispersion is measured by its standard deviation (S.D.). For this purpose, we employ the t-statistic (T), where the P-value is the chance of detecting a value equal to or greater than  $|t|$  (in either direction), to determine whether or not the relationship is statistically significant. The only way to know is to check out the experiment's results.

The independent variable does not significantly influence the dependent variable through the mediator if the p-value exceeds 0.05, indicating that the hypothesis is rejected. Brief Video Content > Consumer Confidence > Intention to Buy (p=0.0001): Customer trust significantly mediates the relationship between the information conveyed in short videos and the consumer's propensity to purchase. Therefore, the quality of short video content affects customer trust and intention to purchase. Consumer Confidence in Accuracy of Information Predicts Future Intention to Buy (p=0.000): In this case, Customer Trust plays a significant role in mediating the influence of Information Quality on Purchase Intention. This indicates that the quality of the information influencers offer impacts the customer's trust, influencing their intention to purchase. A significant mediating impact played by Customer Trust between Influencer Credibility and Purchase Intention (p=0.000) was found. This suggests that an influencer's credibility affects customer trust, affecting purchase intention.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that the mediating role of Customer Trust is critical in establishing a stronger causal relationship between Influencer Credibility and Purchase Intention. The relationships between short video content, information quality, influencer credibility, and eventual purchase intent are considerably mediated by customers' trust in these three factors. Current results showed no significant mediating role; nonetheless, more research may be needed to understand how to improve Customer Engagement as a mediator.

## **Discussions**

A conceptual framework was used to guide the research in this study, and it included the following nine components: credibility of influencers, quality of data, attitude toward homophilia, perceived Expertise, brief video content, customer trust, consumer engagement, brand engagement, and intent to purchase. The paper seeks to place these considerations within the framework of the existing academic research and offer suggestions for marketing applicability. Our research challenges the theory that consumers are more likely to purchase after exposure to high-quality content from social media influencers (SMIs) (Cronley et al., 2000). One possible explanation is that consumers view influencers promoting multiple brands as dishonest. These results are consistent with those of Eisend (2015), who found that audiences rated endorsers with many affiliations as less credible.

It was shown that consumers' purchase decisions were significantly impacted by the source's credibility, measured by the provider's level of Expertise and trustworthiness. Similarly to what Erdogan (1999) discovered, our research found that influencers' reputations and their audience's purchase intentions suffer when they recommend products outside their Expertise. We discovered that trust between customers and businesses did not significantly buffer the relationship between an influencer's credibility and a consumer's willingness to purchase. More study has to be done in this area. The findings corroborated Ohanian's (199) suggestion that brief video content minimally affects consumers' purchase propensity. Similarly, homophilous attitudes (consumers with similar values and beliefs) do not substantially mediate the relationship between customer trust and purchase intent. However, there was only a moderate relationship between

perceived Expertise and actual purchases. Consistent with the work of Atkin and Block (1983), we show that endorsements from famous people do not automatically boost consumer opinion of a business or make them more likely to make a purchase.

According to the results of our study, the relationship between information quality and purchase intention is mediated by the level of consumer trust. Because of this, it is clear that authenticity is crucial for online influencer marketing campaigns. This could be used to a marketer's advantage if they collaborated with influencers who connected with their target demographic. The study found that the correlation between consumer engagement and the purchase of a product is inversely correlated with the degree to which the product is sold. In line with the findings of Bowden (2009), we find that active participation on the part of customers increases their loyalty to a certain brand. This supports the claim made by Brodie et al. (2011) that the more a consumer interacts with a brand, the more emotionally invested they become. It emphasises the significance of producing compelling content to create customer-brand relationships. Overall, our research sheds light on the complex aspects of influencer marketing, offering invaluable insights for marketers and organisations. By analysing these factors, companies may develop advertising campaigns that more successfully connect with their target demographics and persuade consumers to purchase. This study raises further concerns and suggests additional lines of inquiry like any other. The importance of customer trust and involvement is highlighted in this study, which focuses on the impact digital influencers have on purchase intent. There is no significant effect of information quality, brief video content, or expert impressions on intent to buy. The investigation in this study does not include quantitative variables such as the WOM. New approaches to analysis, like regression analysis, will allow EWOM to be incorporated into future studies. Consumer involvement in terms of EWOM data can be compared across countries through a cross-country analysis.

## **Conclusion**

Understanding the influence of consumer engagement with companies and the perceived authority of social media influencers (SMIs) on purchase decisions was the primary goal of this study. Understanding consumer reactions to SMIs is vital in influencer marketing, where endorsement deals may cost millions. The key insight for marketers from this study is that a web of interrelated factors mediates the influence of SMIs on consumer purchase intention. The research has several caveats, but that is expected with any study. While this does provide some preliminary insights, the very small sample size of 191 people does limit the larger generalizability of our findings. Students and recent graduates make up the bulk of our sample, which could distort the results due to the reduced purchasing power of this group. We also cannot rule out the possibility that participants' prior experiences with buying products advocated by celebrities influenced our results. Due to this potential for bias, replies may reflect respondents' experiences rather than their opinion of the SMI's reliability. Our results should, therefore, be interpreted with caution as a preliminary investigation of this area.

To provide a more thorough knowledge of the influence of SMIs on consumer purchase intention, future research should build upon existing work by including bigger,

more diverse samples. A wide range of ages and socioeconomic backgrounds should be represented, as well as people with different amounts of disposable cash. It has been suggested that in future studies, the introduction of fake brands or SMIs might be used to control for brand bias and avoid participants' responses being influenced by their preexisting associations with the brands in question. We also recommend adding e-word-of-mouth (eWOM) as a secondary moderator to the model. Marketers can encourage prospective customers to engage in a conversation in real-time, thanks to the two-way nature of eWOM. This may help show how to target and disseminate promotional materials within the intended audience effectively. In conclusion, this study lays the groundwork for future research by offering basic insights into the intricate workings of influencer marketing. It shows the role of complicated, multi-attribute decision-making processes in shaping purchase intentions and the importance of understanding consumer behaviour in the context of SMI endorsements.

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