

## **Influencer Marketing and Consumer Purchase Intention: A Conceptual Holistic Model**

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### **ABSTRACT**

#### **Keywords:**

*Influencer marketing, purchase intention, message value, source credibility, brand attitude, brand trust, eWOM.*

In today's digitally driven market, consumer purchase intention is significantly affected by influencer marketing. Despite the established and recognized role of influencer marketing on customer positive purchase intent, this is worth mentioning that several intervening factors play important roles in shaping consumer intent to purchase. A comprehensive model that reflects the powerplay of such factors that transmit the effects of the influencer marketing into purchase intent. This study ingrains source credibility, message value, customer trust and attitude, and electronic word-of-mouth, as the important factors that transmit the effect of the influencer marketing to purchase intention. As a result of the causality chain, the study examines the association between the credibility of message source and the value of the message with customer attitude, consumer trust, and electronic word-of-mouth, ultimately resulting in positive purchase intent. As a result of the multiple mediating relationships, the proposed model deems to offer a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between influencer marketing and its positive effect on customer purchase decision, involving several important factors.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The advancement of technology implies the importance of influencer marketing as ultramodern marketing strategy that captures the attention of numerous researchers (Nofal, Bayram, Emeagwali, & Al-Mu'ani, 2022; Alrwashdeh, Jahmani, Ibrahim, & Aljuhmani,

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2020; Balaban, & Mustătea, 2019). Influencer marketing involves prominent individuals having significant numbers of followers on social media platforms (Piehler, Schade, Sinnig, Burmann, 2022). Given the extensive following these influencers have on multiple social media platforms, they possess the ability to effectively shape their followers' attitudes and behaviors by uploading and sharing images and Vlogs that endorse specific businesses on social networking sites, as their followers place a great deal of trust on them (Breves, & Liebers, 2022; Gomes, Marques, & Dias, 2022; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Giles & Edwards, 2018). Influencer marketing has been described to be eleven times greater than what's usually achieved through other digital media (Solutions & Tapinfluence, 2016). As compared to traditional advertising, researchers claim that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) strongly impacts customer decision-making because customers consider word of mouth more credible as compared to traditional advertisement (Chen, Lin, & Shan, 2021; Hu & hua, Wang , Jiang , Yang, 2019; Roy, Datta, & Mukherjee 2019).

Influencer marketing plays a key role in influencing customer purchase decisions as concluded in the previous studies e.g. (Qureshi, Shahzadi, & Hussain, 2024; Gautam, Shrestha, Basnet, Khadka, Ghale, & Jadhav, 2023; Asan, & Yolal, 2022; Misshka Gupta, 2021; Nagori, 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). However, despite the significant impact of influencer marketing on customers purchase decisions, there has been noticeable dearth of research dedicated to this area within social media domain (Hmoud, Nofal, Yaseen, Al-Masaeed, & Alfawwaz, 2022; Chekima, Chekima, & Adis, 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). In last few years, scholars have directed their attention towards influencer marketing; however, it is pertinent to mention that a constructive and holistic model is missing, as indicated by Vrontis, Makrides, Christofi, & Thrassou (2021) and Guruge (2018). Furthermore, previous studies measure the direct impact of influencer marketing on consumer purchase intentions (Qureshi, Shahzadi, & Hussain, 2024; Gautam, Shrestha, Basnet, Khadka, Ghale, & Jadhav, 2023; Trivedi & Sama, 2020), while neglecting the significant mediating role of different variables in this relationship. The present study will address this gap in the literature by proposing certain mediating variables. For instance, Coutinho, Dias, and Pereira (2023), Sesar, Martinčević, and Boguszewicz-Kreft (2022), Thilina (2021), Saima and Khan (2020), Lim, Radzol, Cheah and Wong (2017) in their studies confirmed the significant mediating effect of source credibility in the relationship between influencer marketing effect and customer purchase intentions within the social media realm. Similarly, Absar, Riaz, and Ahmed (2024); Sheng, Zeng, Zhang, and Hu (2022), Tsen and Cheng (2021), Sánchez-Fernández, &

Jiménez-Castillo (2021), Lee (2021) in their studies concluded the significant mediating role of message value in the relationship between influencer and customer purchase intention. Furthermore, brand trust (Absar, Riaz, & Ahmed, 2024; Shamim, & Islam, 2022; Lou, & Yuan, 2019), brand attitude (Thilina, 2021; Gupta, 2021; Nagori, 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019) and electronic word of mouth (Kamaldeep, 2021; Lim, Radzol, Cheah & Wong, 2017) perform a significant role as mediator in linking source credibility and message value and their influence over customer buying behavior.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

- To establish the significantly positive impact of influencer marketing over customer purchasing intent.
- To establish the suggested intervening role of message value and source credibility in linking influencer marketing to customer purchasing intent.
- To establish the suggested intervening role of customer positive attitude, their trust and electronic word of mouth in the association among message value, source credibility and their influence over customer final purchase decision.

### ***Influencer Marketing and Consumer Purchase Intentions***

Influencer marketing combines content-driven marketing and celebrity endorsement to create a hybrid of traditional and contemporary persuasive approaches (Brooks & Piskorski, 2022). According to Gupta (2021) celebrity endorsement stands out as a potent advertising and promotional tactics that effectively boost brand awareness, fostering favorable brand attitude, and enhance customers purchase intent. While celebrity endorsement can certainly contribute to boosting brand visibility and expanding reach, influencer marketing exerts a more significant impact by fostering consumer engagement through the establishment of emotional connections and genuine para-social relationships with influencers (Solis, 2016). Consumer purchase intention is commonly assumed as the cognitive inclination or predisposition to acquire a specific brand (Shah, Aziz, Jaffari, Wari, & Ejaz, 2012). As stated by Vineyard (2014), consumers purchase intention refers to probability that a prospective buyer will opt to acquire a particular product or service. This insight holds substantial significance for companies, as it enhances the probability of achieving greater sales and optimizing profits (Hosein, 2012).

Influencer marketing has gained prominent as an effective marketing strategy, as followers tends to exhibit greater trust and confidence as well as feel at ease with influencer generated content than celebrity-endorsed materials. This, in turn, shapes their ultimate purchasing

decisions as study conducted by (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020). According to Misshka Gupta, (2021) influencer marketing exerts substantial influence on customers buying intent. Kumar (2011) support the argument for the assertion that influencer marketing substantially effect consumer purchase intent. Similarly, Nagori (2020) corroborates the results of the previous studies, affirming the significantly positive influence of influencer marketing over customer buying intent. Additionally, research conducted by Lou and Yuan, (2019) investigating the influence of various endorser traits on consumers' purchase intentions concluded that these attributes do, in fact, positively affect consumers' intents to make purchases.

**H1:** *Influencer marketing has a significant positive impact on customer purchase intentions.*

### ***Impact of influencer marketing on source credibility***

The source credibility concept emphasized on the positive characteristics of the message sender and how these attributes can influence the recipient's propensity to trust the message (Ohanian & Roobina, 1990). In advertising, endorsers or spokespersons are commonly employed due to their perceived credibility, which notably affects consumers' purchase intents (Tsen and Cheng 2021). Correspondingly, Muda, Musa, Mohamed, & Borhan (2014) revealed that endorser credibility positively affect customers perception of the brand, that, in turn, influence their purchase decisions. While, earlier researchers Trivedi and Sama (2020) primarily focus on examining the direct effect of influencer marketing over customer buying intent. However, Chen Lou and Shupe Yuan (2019) argue that the honesty, reliability and credibility of the influencer or celebrity positively intervene the link among influencer marketing and its impact over customer purchase decision. Correspondingly, Lim et al (2017) recommended that effect of influencer marketing on customers purchasing intent as significantly mediated by source credibility.

**H2:** *Influencer marketing has a significantly positive impact on source credibility.*

### ***Impact of influencer marketing on message value***

Quality and contents of information significantly affect the advertisement effectiveness (Saxena & Khanna, 2013). Shareef, Mukerji, Dwivedi, Rana, & Islam (2019) also of the opinion that there is strong link between the contents and the effectiveness of advertisement. The result of the study suggests that the advertisement will be effective if the contents and information conveyed are relevant to customers. The message value of advertisement in social media effect customers' decision to make online purchases (Lou & Yuan, 2019). In line with this, Khan and Saima (2020) identify factors such as the quality of information,

entertainment value, and influencers' perceived trustworthiness collectively enhances the overall credibility of influencers, these factors in turn shapes the customer inclination to purchases. Keeping in view the influencer-generated content, value of message alongside, influencers' credibility, the influencer charisma, and their association with followers considerably develops followers' interest with the products and services being promoted by these influencers (Lou and Yuan, 2019). Various scholars examine the mediating function of message value in the association among influencer marketing and its positive impact over customer purchase decision. According to Chakraborty and Bhat (2018) and Ferle and Choi (2005) the direct impact of influencer marketing over customer purchase decision is significantly mediated by the message value. Correspondingly, Hayes and Carr (2015) contend that beside the direct impact of influencer marketing on customer buying intent, their relationship is significantly mediated by the value of message.

**H3:** *Influencer marketing has significantly positive impact on perceived message value.*

***Impact of Source credibility on consumer purchase intention: Examining mediating role of consumer trust, consumer attitude, and electronic word of mouth***

Advertisers frequently occupy endorsers or spokespersons services because of the substantial impact that their credibility exert on buyers purchase intent (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000). These results are confirmed by Ohanian and Roobina (1991) suggesting that the integrity and credibility of influencer and celebrities impact the consumers' propensity to make purchases. Earlier studies confirmed a strong and positive influence of influencer credibility in generating customer brand trust that in turn results in their positive purchase decision. Such as, Ishani (2019) concluded in the study the significantly positive mediating role of customer trust in the association among credibility of message source and its positive effect over customer purchase intent. Similarly, Shamli (2019), Nascimento (2019) and Eru, Karapnar-Elik, Elik, and Cop (2018) establish that the influence of source credibility over customer purchase intentions is positively intervene by customer brand trust. Correspondingly, Sokolova and Kefi (2020) confirmed the positive and strong impact of influencer credibility and the customer buying intent and the vital role of brand trust as mediator. In line with this, Eru, Karapnar-Elik, Elik, and Cop (2018) studies the relation between the purchasing behavior of customers, their trust towards brand and the integrity and credibility of celebrities and YouTubers. The findings of the study revealed that influencer credibility significantly affect buyers' attitude and behavior and other brand-related outcomes.

Phelps and Hoy (1996) revealed that customers buying intent is significantly influenced by the source credibility and customers attitude towards brand. As advocated by Daneshvary and Schwer (2000), consumers tend to more inclined towards the products and services for which they hold positive attitude. Goldsmith et al (2002) suggest that endorser and celebrities' credibility and their integrity develop customer positive attitude that resulting in buyers purchase decision. According to Weismueller, Harrigan, Wang, and Soutar (2020) customers tend to develop positive attitude towards brand when the source is credible, that eventually results in customer purchase decision. Godey et al (2016) revealed the significantly positive relation between brand attitudes, credible endorsers, and their impact on customers buying behavior. As concluded by Brinol, Petty, and Tormala (2004) source credibility is known for its ability to result in consumer positive attitude that in turn, results in customers positive purchase intent (Harmon and Coney, 1982).

Besides the crucial role consumer positive attitude towards brand, electronic word of mouth also plays key role in influencer marketing. As Erkan and Evans (2016) in their study explore the significant role of eWOM in influencer marketing, the results of the study reveal that customers' finale purchase decision is often based on the reviews and opinion of the previous customers. Moreover, Fang et al (2014) reveal the significantly positive role of source credibility in the approval of electronic word of mouth across diverse social media platforms. Similarly, Fan and Miao (2012) and Alalwan et al (2017) in their study findings confirmed the strong and positive influence of source credibility in establishing the word of mouth acceptance. These finding are confirmed by different researchers such as Ukpabi and Karjaluoto (2018). Moreover, Hu et al (2019) examine the positive relationship between electronic word of mouth and its effect on customer buying decision.

**H4:** *Source credibility has a significantly positive impact on customers' purchase intentions.*

**H6:** *Source credibility has a significantly positive impact on consumer attitudes.*

**H7:** *Source credibility has a significantly positive influence customer trust.*

**H8:** *Source credibility has a significantly positive impact on electronic word-of-mouth.*

***Influence of message value on consumer purchase intention: examining the mediating role of consumer trust, consumer attitude, and electronic word of mouth***

Martins et al (2019) confirmed the positive and essential role of message value in customer purchase decision making process. Correspondingly, Zeng, Huang and Dou (2009) found a strong and positive connection between advertising value and customers positive purchase intentions. These findings are supported by Liu, Kumar, and Mookerjee (2012) in their

empirical study, suggesting a strong and positive impact of message value over customer purchase intentions. In addition to that, the charisma and friendliness demonstrated by social media influencer positively influence customer brand attitude, that in turn results in customer positive word of mouth that leads towards customer final purchase decision (Taillon, Mueller, Kowalczyk, & Jones, 2020).

Shareef et al (2019) established that perceived advertisement value had a significantly positive influence on consumers' attitudes toward these advertisements. Likewise, Hayes and King (2014) contend that when consumers regard an advertisement is having higher value, their sentiment towards it become more positive about it. Consistent with this, Schulze, Schöler, and Skiera (2014) concluded strong and significant association among customer positive attitude and customer perceived value of advertisement. Thilina (2021) in his study concluded that both attitude and credibility of social media influencers has an effective relationship on purchase intention of consumers. Fleck, Korchia, and Le Roy's (2012) and Suher and Hoyer (2020) further elaborated the relation between the customers' acceptance of advertisements (message value) that in turn result in customer positive attitude, consecutively leading towards customer finale purchase decision.

Baniya (2017) suggested that celebrity credibility and trustworthiness play a key role in encouraging customers' impulsive buying behavior. Celebrities' credibility is increased by the level of customer trust towards them that in turn increase their chances to make impulsive purchases. The finding of the study is supported by Munjal (2020) suggested that celebrity-related attributes particularly trustworthiness, integrity have an impact on customers impulsive purchasing decisions. Similarly, Kang and Hustvedt (2014) revealed that customers' intent to buy is directly determined by their level of trust towards the endorser.

Electronic word of mouth is totally different from conventional advertisement because eWOM is produced and managed by customers rather than marketers (Chen & Xie, 2008). Liu et al (2012) confirmed the significantly positive effect of user generated content (WOM) in generating customer positive attitude towards brands. Various studies examine the attributes of eWOM and their connection to advertisement and message value. For instance, Park and Kim (2008) unveiled that the message value and celebrity credibility positively influence brand likeability, brand attitude, this, in turn, increase the purchase intent for the advertised brand. In line with this, Severi, ling and Nasermodeli (2014) posited that increase in the likeability of the message appeal in an electronic communication and the influencer credibility and integrity might influence customers' attitudes towards the brand and their

propensity to make a purchase. Similarly, Hennig-Thurau et al (2004) in their study concluded significantly positive impact of celebrity credibility and message appeal in advertisement on customer purchase intent. In similar vein, Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) suggest the positive effect of source credibility and message value on eWOM and finally resulting in customer purchase intent.

**H5:** *Message value has significantly positive influence on customers' purchase intentions.*

**H9:** *Message value has a significantly positive impact on consumer trust.*

**H10:** *Message value has a significantly positive impact on consumer attitudes.*

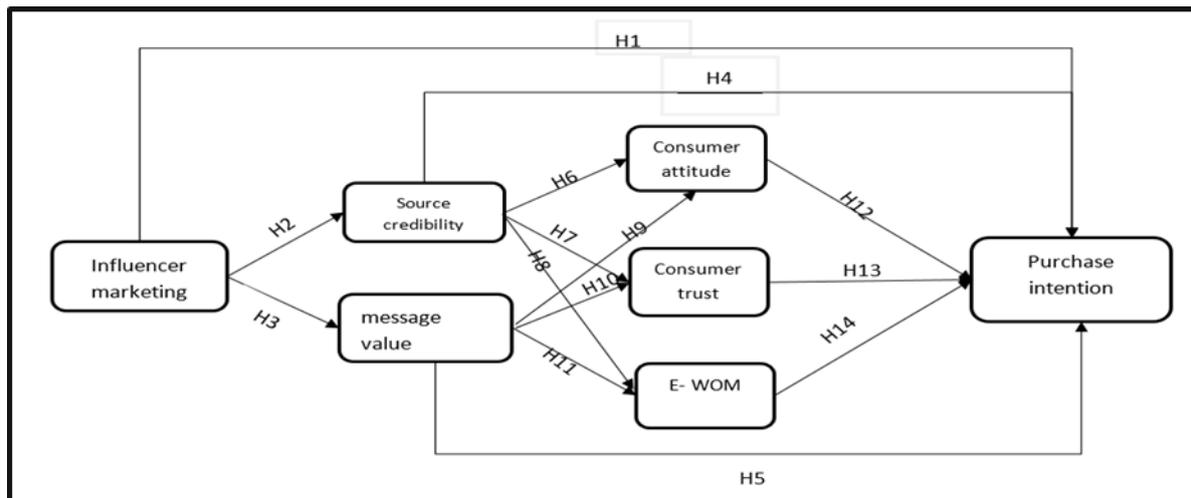
**H11:** *Message value has a significantly positive affect on electronic word-of-mouth.*

**H12:** *Consumer positive attitude have significantly positive affect on customer purchase intentions.*

**H13:** *Consumer trust has a significantly positive influence on customer purchase intentions.*

**H14:** *Consumer electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has a significantly positive influence on customer purchase intentions.*

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study provides both theoretical and practical contributions to the marketing domain. This study develops a thorough, multi-dimensional and holistic model of influencer marketing, encompassing two mediating relationships, which will explore different perspectives on its influences over customer purchase decision. This newly developed model offers a detailed analysis of the role of the influencer marketing on consumers' intentions, enabling a detailed investigation of the mediating mechanisms involving source credibility and message value in the link between influencer marketing and customer buying intent. Additionally, this study proposed the mediating role of customer positive attitude, their trust

towards brand and word of mouth on different social media in the association among influencer marketing and its influence over customer purchase decision making. The purpose of the study is to increase the understanding of the complex relation among message value, source credibility, and consumers' purchase intent.

From a managerial perspective, this study will provide valuable strategic insights for the professional operating in the social media domain. It provides directions on how to choose appropriate social media influencers and to design advertising campaigns successfully. The framework thus developed can be used by marketing experts to create promotional methods that successfully influence consumers' purchasing decisions, ultimately yielding tangible benefits for their businesses. This is also pertinent to mention the significance of the proposed model from the perspective of mediating role of different important variables. For instance, the mediating role of source credibility between influencer marketing and customer purchase intention signifies that the managers should hire those social media influencer who have greater source credibility. In the same vein, the mediating role of message value in the relationship between influencer marketing and customer purchase intention emphasize that the message value should be related to the social media influencer. Moreover, the model also shows the mediating role of customer attitude in the relationship between source credibility, message value and customer purchase intention. This shows implies that when the social media influencer is credible, customer will develop a positive attitude towards the product being promoted. In the same vein, the mediating role of customer trust in the relationship between source credibility, message value and customer purchase intention implies that before the source credibility influencer the message value and hence the purchase intention, the role of customer trust is also very important.

### **CONCLUSION**

The primary aim of the current study is to conceptualize the influencer marketing impact on customer purchase intention. To the best of the author's knowledge, this study presents the first ever holistic model of social media influencer and its role in consumer purchase intention while taking into account various mediating factors. Simultaneously, this study proposes that the direct impact of influencer marketing on customer purchase intentions is positively mediated by source credibility and message value. In other words, this implies that source credibility as well as the quality of message value is extremely important before the influencer marketing affect te customer purchase intention. Additionally, this relationship is once again mediated by consumer positive attitude, their brand trust, and electronic word of

mouth (eWOM). More explicitly, this implies that the consumer should develop positive attitude, have a trust in the brand being promoted as well as should have a positive word of mouth. The study proposes fourteen hypotheses for further testing. Paramount to mention that current study is totally conceptual in nature. Hence, future researchers are encouraged to adopt a rigorous methodology to test the hypothesized model. It is recommended that the proposed model developed in the study should be empirically tested among university students' consumers as they are more aware of and users of the social media.

### **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

This study aimed to propose a holistic conceptual model of influence marketing and its relationship with consumer purchase intention while taking into account various mediating factors. Based on this conceptualization, fourteen hypotheses were deduced. It is recommended that the model propose should be empirically validated and the associated hypotheses should be tested. More explicitly, it is recommended that such a study should be conducted among the young consumers whose use of social media is high. Besides a self-administered survey, the same study can also be conducted through an online survey. Moreover, other variables such as demographics and consumer psychographics may also be studied.

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