

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Influencer marketing and buying behaviour: The role of governance and integrity

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Abstract - Influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful strategy for shaping young consumers' purchasing behaviour through authentic, relatable, and engaging content. However, its effectiveness depends heavily on strong governance and integrity, particularly transparency, honesty, accountability, and responsible consumer communication. This study aims to identify the key social influencing factors that affect young adults' purchasing behavior, evaluate the overall impact of influencer marketing using descriptive analysis and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and examine the relationship between social media influencers and consumer decision-making through correlation analysis. Data were collected through a survey of young adults aged 18 to 26, focusing on their responses to influencer marketing across diverse product and service categories. The findings reveal that influencer credibility exerts the strongest influence on young consumers' purchase intentions, followed by trustworthiness and attractiveness. Furthermore, the frequency of consumer interaction with influencers demonstrated a statistically significant association with purchasing frequency. These results underscore the critical role of governance and ethical integrity in marketing; transparent disclosures, honest recommendations, and responsible communication foster consumer trust while reinforcing ethical standards. Ultimately, this study offers practical insights for businesses and marketers aiming to build effective, responsible influencer strategies that harmonise consumer engagement with strong governance, integrity, and ethical responsibility.

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1. Introduction

Influencer marketing plays a significant role in shaping young consumers' choices and highlights the importance of transparency, integrity, and responsible marketing practices. Influencers, trusted for their credibility and authenticity, now greatly impact attitudes and consumer behaviour, often more than traditional advertising. While existing studies have examined the general influence of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour, there is limited research that delves into the nuanced impact of different influencer attributes such as credibility, trustworthiness, and attractiveness on young consumers' purchasing decisions. This gap raises questions about how these distinct characteristics contribute, individually and collectively, to consumer behaviour. This study aims to bridge this gap by focusing specifically on these attributes and their effects on purchase intentions. Using a quantitative approach and surveying 207 young consumers, the research aims to provide valuable insights to help marketers develop effective influencer marketing strategies that resonate with the youth market. The paper is structured into four main sections: literature review, methodology, results, and discussion, providing a comprehensive examination of the factors influencing consumer decision-making and highlighting the importance of governance, transparency, and integrity in the digital marketing environment.

Social media's ascent has transformed marketing and communication, opening a new arena for influencer marketing, a practice in which people with sizable online followings promote products or services. With approximately 4.80 billion social media user identities worldwide and an average daily usage of 2 hours and 24 minutes, social media has become a key environment for understanding consumer behaviour, particularly among young, highly engaged online consumers (Kemp, 2023). Influencers on social media sites like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok strongly influence their followers' choices and preferences because they are often seen as reliable peers. Influencer marketing is becoming increasingly popular, yet little is known about the subtle ways it affects young customers' purchasing decisions. Concerns about dishonest practices, including buying fake followers, highlight the need for a deeper understanding of the real impact of genuine influencer marketing. By investigating the link between young customers' purchasing habits and influencer marketing tactics, this study seeks to close this knowledge gap and provide marketers with actionable insights. This study aims to understand how influencer marketing affects young consumers' buying behaviour, while highlighting the importance of governance and integrity in promoting transparent, trustworthy, and responsible influencer marketing practices. To achieve this purpose, the study aims to: (i) identify the social factors influencing young adults' purchasing behaviour; (ii) analyse the effects of influencer marketing on the buying behaviour of young consumers; and (iii) examine the relationship between social media influencers and consumer buying behaviour. The study also emphasises the importance of governance and integrity in ensuring that influencer marketing practices are conducted ethically, transparently, and responsibly.

2. Literature Review

With an emphasis on young consumers, this section examines the research on influencer marketing and its effects on consumer behaviour. The review emphasises how social media influencers are becoming increasingly important in

contemporary marketing, and how their perceived legitimacy, dependability, and beauty can affect customer preferences. Unlike traditional advertising, influencer marketing uses relatability and personal ties to increase engagement and foster trust. Although consumer behaviour and source credibility theories have been widely studied, gaps remain in our understanding of how these influencer characteristics affect young consumers across diverse demographic groups and cultural contexts. To lay the groundwork for a more thorough examination of how influencer traits affect young customers' purchase decisions, this literature review summarises key conclusions from earlier research and highlights the theoretical and practical implications.

2.1 Influencer Marketing and Social Media Influencers

Influencer marketing has redefined digital advertising by harnessing individuals with significant social media followings to endorse products. Byrne et al. (2017) and De Veirman et al. (2017) define influencer marketing as a strategy that leverages an influencer's audience to promote products, while Abidin (2016) emphasises that real, relevant influencers can significantly enhance brand credibility and trust. However, the strategy presents theoretical gaps, as limited research has examined how consumers' perceptions of influencers' originality, uniqueness, and perceived fit may affect their responses to influencer marketing across different consumer groups (Casaló et al., 2020). Marketers face challenges in identifying and selecting influencers who effectively resonate with their target audiences (De Veirman et al., 2017), while also managing the electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) generated through social media. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) argue that social media influencers (SMIs), who often serve as opinion leaders, can sway consumer behaviour more effectively than traditional celebrities, particularly on platforms such as YouTube and Instagram. Authenticity concerns continue to affect influencer marketing, particularly as influencers may purchase fake followers to artificially increase their perceived popularity, raising questions about the authenticity and quality of audience engagement (Anand et al., 2020). This challenge points to a methodological gap, as more longitudinal studies are needed to track how consumer engagement and perceptions of authenticity evolve. This review synthesises existing research on the complex effects of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour. It identifies a need to explore generational differences and cross-platform dynamics more deeply to better understand how influencer impact varies across social media.

2.2 Consumer Buying Behaviour

In today's digital marketplace, consumer buying behaviour shaped by attitudes, preferences, intentions, and purchasing decisions has experienced significant shifts (Wansi, 2020; Khaniwale, 2015). Although Generation Z has traditionally favoured in-store shopping, recent findings suggest they increasingly embrace online shopping (Pham, 2021). Mobile payments have surged, with studies indicating that 67% of individuals use mobile devices for online purchases (Brown, 2017). Key influences on consumer decisions include personality, age, gender, socioeconomic status, and peer influences (Khaniwale, 2015). Although celebrity endorsements can significantly shape consumers' perceptions of brands, research suggests their effectiveness may vary across younger consumer groups. Camilleri (2015), for example, found that celebrity endorsements positively influenced young consumers' perceptions, while differences were observed across age groups. This suggests marketers should consider younger consumers' characteristics and preferences when selecting celebrity or influencer endorsers. A conceptual gap remains: little is known about how social media influencer endorsements compare with traditional endorsements in shaping perceptions across demographics. This review of consumer behaviour highlights evolving dynamics and underscores the need for research into the specific role of influencers in driving purchase decisions across age groups and platforms.

2.2.1 Source credibility

Influencer credibility profoundly impacts the effectiveness of eWOM in shaping consumer purchasing decisions. Research underscores the roles of expertise and reliability as core aspects of source credibility (Sternthal et al., 1978; Erdogan, 1999). Influencers, often perceived as more relatable than traditional celebrities, significantly impact consumer opinions, especially when they appear as "regular" people (Schouten et al., 2020; Evans et al., 2017). While trustworthiness is widely recognised as crucial to purchase intentions (Weismueller et al., 2020; Wiedmann & Mettenheim, 2019), contradictory findings suggest that influencer trustworthiness does not consistently translate into consumers' purchase intentions (Lou & Yuan, 2018; Balabanis & Chatzopoulou, 2019). This variation proposes a theoretical gap, as more nuanced research is needed to understand when and why trustworthiness affects consumer decisions differently across demographic groups. In the context of social media and influencer marketing, source credibility can influence consumers' evaluations and purchase-related responses (Aljazzaf et al., 2010). Nevertheless, further research is needed to examine whether the influence of these credibility dimensions varies across different audience characteristics and consumer segments. These insights would benefit from longitudinal research that captures evolving consumer responses to credibility over time.

2.2.2 Source trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a key dimension of influencer credibility that can strengthen consumers' confidence in an influencer's recommendations and positively influence purchase intentions (Rebelo, 2017). Trust is a key factor in building strong relationships between influencers and consumers. Recent studies highlight generational differences in trust perceptions, revealing that Gen Z values transparency and authenticity more than Millennials, who prioritise expertise and professionalism (Smith & Johnson, 2022). However, methodological gaps remain, and more survey-based research could clarify these generational distinctions and inform marketing strategies tailored to different age groups. Trust between

influencers and their followers can strengthen the influence of influencer-generated content on consumers' purchasing decisions (İşoraité et al., 2020). This calls for a more detailed understanding of the long-term effects of trustworthiness across diverse consumer demographics.

2.2.3 Source attractiveness

Influencers' physical attractiveness can enhance consumers' attention and positive perceptions of online advertisements, potentially increasing the persuasive effectiveness of product endorsements (Agam, 2017). This effect may be particularly relevant among young adults, for whom appearance, social trends, and influencers' perceived attractiveness can play an important role in shaping consumer responses. Attractive influencers can attract consumers' attention and enhance their engagement with endorsed products, which may subsequently influence purchase intentions (Agam, 2017; Rahmah & Ren, 2019). Research further suggests that consumers are more likely to favour products endorsed by physically attractive influencers (Agam, 2017; Rebelo, 2017). Erdogan (1999) expands attractiveness to include charisma and likability, underscoring its strategic importance in influencer effectiveness. However, a practical gap exists in understanding how attractiveness influences brand preferences across different age groups and cultural contexts. Survey-based research on attractiveness appeal in influencer marketing could improve understanding of this dynamic and its role in consumer decision-making across social media platforms.

3. Methodology

This section describes the study's methodological approach, including the data gathering and analysis strategies used to investigate how social media influencers affect the buying habits of young customers. The study used an online poll of young Malaysians aged 18 to 26 who frequently use social media as part of the data collection process. Focusing on influencers' perceived reliability, dependability, and attractiveness, the study aimed to gather behavioural insights, demographic data, and social influence variables. To examine the data and produce insightful interpretations, the study used statistical techniques such as correlation analysis, ANOVA, and descriptive statistics. These techniques ensured a thorough analysis of the data, yielding solid results that support the study's goals and advance knowledge. These techniques ensured a thorough analysis of the data, yielding solid results that support the study's goals and advance understanding of how influencer marketing affects customer behaviour.

3.1 Data Collection

A systematic survey method was used to gather data from young Malaysian individuals who use social media regularly, specifically those between the ages of 18 and 26. In this research, the attributes considered in the survey are demographics (age, gender, education level, and social media use), social influencing factors (influencer types followed, frequency of interacting with content from influencers, and perceived impact of social media on buying decisions), and behavioural insights (the significance of peer recommendations and recent purchases influenced by social media). The credibility, trustworthiness, and attractiveness of influencers were given special attention in the survey because they are important variables that determine how they affect customer behaviour. To reach as many people as possible, the survey was made available online via social media channels. This study used Likert rating scales and closed-ended questionnaires to collect data.

The researchers developed the questionnaire items by drawing on earlier studies. The researchers assessed the validity and reliability of the measurement tools. The study used a five-point Likert scale to measure all primary variables. The classifications were as follows: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Data types that were gathered included count, binary, open-ended, ordinal, and categorical data. Questions 1 to 7 covered demographic information and young consumers' buying behaviour, particularly in the context of social media usage and influence, while Questions 8 through 18 used a Likert scale to measure respondents' views. To simplify statistical analysis, the number of influencers followed and their age were categorised. Between December 23, 2023, and March 7, 2024, 207 respondents took part in total, adding 208 rows and 21 columns to the dataset. Using the dataset as a single source, this study will take a targeted approach to understanding the impact of social media on young adults' purchasing behaviour.

3.2 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse respondents' demographics using frequencies and percentages. The findings for each variable and questionnaire item were analysed using mean scores. Cronbach's alpha was employed to assess the reliability and internal consistency of the measurement items, with a value greater than 0.70 considered acceptable according to Ahmad and Halim (2017). The survey responses were cleaned and arranged to ensure accuracy and consistency. To compare the effects of varying degrees of influencer exposure on purchase behaviour, the study used analysis of variance (ANOVA) and tested the null hypothesis that purchase intentions did not differ significantly across levels of credibility, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Using ANOVA, it was possible to determine whether groups with different levels of influencer contact showed statistically significant changes in purchasing behaviour. By combining these data, it was possible to examine influencer marketing and consumer behaviour in detail and identify important trends and contrasts. The ANOVA test was essential because it allowed comparison of means across consumer groups to determine whether significant differences in behaviour existed due to different influencer marketing strategies.

Furthermore, correlation analysis was used to investigate associations among the principal variables in the investigation, alongside descriptive and inferential statistical approaches. This analysis aimed to determine the direction and strength of relationships between several factors, including purchase intentions, levels of beauty, credibility, and

trustworthiness, and the frequency of influencer exposure. To determine how strongly these variables are related, we measured their linear correlation using Pearson's correlation coefficient. For example, a positive association between purchase intentions and influencer credibility would imply that customers are more likely to purchase when they perceive influencers as credible. This research provided a more thorough understanding of the relationship between these factors and the effect of influencer marketing on young consumers' behaviour. To ensure a comprehensive assessment of the data, the correlation analysis results were crucial in supporting the outcomes from the descriptive analysis and ANOVA. The structured survey approach was selected because it quickly gathered quantitative data from a sizable sample. Online distribution ensured wide reach and accessibility for the intended audience. The study's conclusions were robustly supported by statistical evidence from descriptive and inferential analyses. The study used these approaches to collect accurate, credible data on how influencer marketing affects younger customers. The research was conducted in a way that guaranteed its thoroughness, allowing for a critical assessment of the results and their significance for marketing tactics.

4. Results and Discussion

The report's results and discussion section thoroughly examines the impact of influencer marketing on young consumers' purchasing behaviour. Cronbach's alpha was employed to evaluate the reliability of Likert scale questions related to influencer marketing and purchasing behaviour. The reliability of these questions was categorised into ranges: excellent (≥ 0.90), good (0.80–0.89), acceptable (0.70–0.79), questionable (0.60–0.69), poor (0.50–0.59), and unacceptable (< 0.50). The mean score is a basic statistical metric that shows the average value of a collection of numbers. To identify central trends and patterns in the data, this report computed mean scores for ordinal variables. These mean scores provide insights into the perceived difficulty or intensity of the attributes being measured. Higher mean scores indicate a greater perceived intensity, while lower scores suggest a lesser perception of difficulty. This approach effectively summarises and analyses data, supporting decision-making and facilitating further statistical research (Tanujaya et al., 2023). Table 1 shows the mean score and Cronbach's Alpha result.

Table 1

The mean score and Cronbach's Alpha

Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Source of Trustworthiness	0.9003
a) I trust social media recommendations more than celebrity endorsements (Mean=3.5894)	
b) I trust social media influencers' recommendations because he/she is a person of excellent character. (Mean=3.5459)	
c) The more followers a social media influencer has, the more trustworthy and professional he/she is. (Mean=3.3382)	
d) If a social media influencer is recommending a product/ service when the social media influencers I trust is using/ promoting it. (Mean=3.5362)	
Source of Attractiveness	0.8956
a) I will try a new brand/product/service because social media influencers recommend it. (Mean=3.5507)	
b) I find the recommendations by social media influencers are effective. (Mean=3.5362)	
c) I am more likely to purchase products/ services that are promoted by social media influencers. (Mean=3.4879)	
d) I think social media influencers are effective in influencing my buying behaviour. (Mean=3.4879)	
Source of Credibility	0.9087
a) Social media influencers' product reviews are trustworthy. (Mean=3.4686)	
b) I find the recommendations by social media influencers are trustworthy. (Mean=3.5024)	
c) Overall, I am happy buying products/ services promoted by social media influencers. (Mean=3.6039)	
Purchase Intentions	0.9054
a) I will try a new brand/product/service because social media influencers recommend it. (Mean=3.5507)	
b) I am more likely to purchase products/ service that are promoted by social media influencers. (Mean=3.4879)	
c) Overall, I am happy buying products/ services promoted by social media influencers. (Mean=3.6039)	
d) I think social media influencers are effective in influencing my buying behaviour. (Mean=3.5121)	

Cronbach's Alpha values indicate that the Source of Trustworthiness construct has a robust alpha of 0.9003, underscoring strong measurement of trustworthiness. Similarly, the Source of Attractiveness construct has an alpha of 0.8956, reflecting good reliability and consistency in how consumers perceive attractiveness. The Source of Credibility construct shows a high Cronbach's Alpha of 0.9087, indicating excellent internal consistency among these items and

suggesting they effectively measure perceived source credibility. Lastly, the Purchase Intentions construct, with items measuring intent influenced by influencers, shows an alpha of 0.9054, indicating excellent reliability in capturing consumers' purchase intentions based on influencer marketing efforts. The average replies, which range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), are used to create mean scores that show how people generally feel about each statement. The mean score for the statement "I trust social media recommendations more than celebrity endorsements" was 3.5894, suggesting that respondents generally trust influencers about as much as they trust celebrities. This is noteworthy for influencer marketing since it emphasises how credible influencers are compared to more established superstars. Similarly, mean scores for "I trust social media influencers' recommendations because he/she is a person of excellent character" and "Overall, I am happy buying products/ services promoted by social media influencers" (3.5459 and 3.6039, respectively) indicate that young consumers place a high value on influencer character and pleasure with influencer-driven purchases. Respondents give high-intensity ratings to these factors, indicating strong agreement.

"High" and "Moderate" intensity categories provide a qualitative evaluation of how strongly respondents feel about each element. Strong agreement with these characteristics of influencer marketing is indicated by high intensity in criteria such as "I trust social media recommendations more than celebrity endorsement," "I trust social media influencers recommendations because he/she is a person of excellent character," and "Overall, I am happy buying products/ services promoted by social media influencers," which are significant majority of respondents. This recommendation underlines how influential people can effectively influence consumers' purchase decisions. Conversely, variables such as "I am more likely to purchase products/ service that are promoted by social media influencers" and "The more followers a social media influencer has, the more trustworthy and professional he/ she is," which had mean values of 3.4879 and 3.3382, respectively, are categorised as moderately intense. These ratings suggest a more nuanced view: although these aspects are considered, agreement with them is not as high as for other categories.

Table 2

Summary of hypothesis testing for ANOVA

Hypotheses	Paths	Pr(>F)	Decision
H1	Purchase Intentions □ Source of Credibility	$p < 0.05$	Supported
H2	Purchase Intention □ Source of Trustworthiness	$p < 0.05$	Supported
H3	Purchase Intention □ Source of Attractiveness	$p < 0.05$	Supported

Note: $p < 0.05$ (1-tailed)

Table 3

Correlation analysis between social media influencers and young consumers' buying behaviours

Item	WTN	TR	TS	TI	TC	TF	TTI	EIR	TR	LTP	SP	IIB
WTN	1	.6780	.7315	.6491	.8092	.6210	.7960	.6203	.8436	.7192	.8140	.6634
TR	.6778	1	.6783	.8262	.6881	.7990	.6603	.7616	.7273	.8236	.6632	.7572
TS	.7315	.6783	1	.6933	.7782	.6980	.7678	.6179	.7893	.6866	.7149	.5378
TI	.6491	.8262	.6933	1	.7344	.8120	.7216	.8134	.7210	.8310	.6871	.7897
TC	.8092	.6881	.7782	.7344	1	.7099	.8424	.6151	.8680	.7268	.8196	.6666
TF	.6210	.7990	.6980	.8120	.7099	1	.6908	.7553	.6856	.8068	.6197	.7144
TTI	.7960	.6603	.7678	.7216	.8424	.6908	1	.6803	.8426	.6829	.8439	.6849
EIR	.6202	.7616	.6179	.8134	.6151	.7553	.6803	1	.6576	.7954	.6643	.7914
TR	.8436	.7273	.7893	.7210	.8680	.6856	.8426	.6576	1	.7490	.8257	.6589
LTP	.7192	.8236	.6866	.8310	.7268	.8068	.6829	.7954	.7490	1	.7505	.8274
SP	.8140	.6632	.7149	.6871	.8196	.6197	.8439	.6643	.8527	.7505	1	.7837
IIB	.6634	.7572	.5378	.7897	.6666	.7144	.6849	.7914	.6589	.8274	.7837	1

Note: WTN = Willing_to_Try_New_Product; TR = Trust_In_Influencer_Review; TS = Trust_Social_vs_Celebrity;

TI = Trust_Industry_Knowledge; TC = Trust_Character; TF = Trust_Follower_Count;

TTI = Trust_From_Trusted_Influencers; EIR = Effective_Influencer_Recommendation;

TR = Trustworthy_Recommendations; LTP = Likelihood_To_Purchase; SP = Satisfaction_with_Purchase;

IIB = Influencer_Influence_On_Buying.

Next, Table 2 evaluates the effect of different influencer marketing components, such as the frequency of commercials and social media trends, on young consumers' purchase behaviour using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). By comparing means across groups, this statistical technique determines whether variations in purchasing behaviour are statistically significant. For instance, the study examines theories of credibility in influencer endorsements and finds that, among young consumers, higher credibility strongly increases purchase intentions. These studies' rejection of the null hypothesis attests to the significant impact influencer marketing has on customer behaviour. The analysis indicates that the p -value associated with the F -statistic is below the 5% significance level, suggesting a very low probability that the observed results could occur under the null hypothesis of no effect. This leads to rejecting the null hypothesis and confirming that different levels of trustworthiness, attractiveness, and credibility significantly affect the dependent variable. These findings highlight the critical role of trustworthiness, attractiveness, and credibility in strategic planning and consumer engagement. Therefore, enhancing these attributes in a product, service, or brand can positively affect consumer reactions and decision-making, guiding strategic efforts to achieve better market outcomes.

The study also uses correlation analysis to examine the relationship between young customers' purchasing behaviour and influencer marketing. This statistical method assesses the direction and strength of relationships between variables. In this case, the correlation analysis focuses on elements such as customer engagement levels, influencer credibility, and endorsement frequency. Table 3 shows that these variables and young customers' purchase decisions have varying degrees of positive association. Influencer credibility and customer purchase intent, for example, are found to be strongly positively correlated, underscoring the importance of authenticity and trust in influencer marketing. These results highlight the importance of carefully choosing influencers who connect with the target audience to maximise marketing effectiveness. The results show noteworthy patterns and correlations, indicating that purchasing decisions are significantly influenced by factors such as the frequency of endorsements and influencers' authority.

5. Conclusion

This study investigates how social media influencers' credibility, trustworthiness, and attractiveness influence young customers' purchase intentions. The results offer crucial insights into influencer marketing and support theories that these elements strongly affect purchase intention. The study's main conclusions highlight how crucial attractiveness, trustworthiness, and credibility are in shaping customer behaviour. Trust emerged as a significant factor, supporting the idea that people are more likely to buy products recommended by someone they trust. Trust is important in the interaction between influencers and their audience. Credibility is also important because customers value influencers' knowledge and dependability. Influencer appeal increases consumer engagement, and this attractiveness has a major impact on purchase intentions. By combining credibility, trust, and attractiveness into a single model and analysing their combined influence on purchase intentions, this study fills a significant vacuum in the literature. While researchers have often studied these characteristics separately, this study offers a more complete understanding of their combined impact. This method not only demonstrates how important each component is but also how interrelated they are in influencing customer behaviour in the digital age.

The findings also highlight the important role of governance and integrity in influencer marketing. The significant effects of credibility, trustworthiness, and attractiveness on young consumers' purchase intentions suggest that consumers rely heavily on influencers' perceived honesty, reliability, and credibility when making purchasing decisions. Therefore, influencers and businesses have a responsibility to ensure that promotional content is truthful, transparent, and presented responsibly. From a governance perspective, clear disclosure of sponsored content, accurate product information, and accountability for promotional claims are important for maintaining consumer trust. Similarly, integrity in influencer marketing requires influencers to provide genuine recommendations and avoid misleading practices that may exploit consumers' trust. The strong positive relationships identified in the correlation analysis further reinforce the importance of authenticity and trust in developing sustainable relationships between influencers, brands, and young consumers. Thus, while this study did not directly test governance and integrity as variables, they provide an important ethical framework for ensuring that the persuasive power of influencer marketing is exercised responsibly and does not undermine consumer confidence.

Notably, the study offers fresh perspectives on the impact of social media influencers. It suggests that instead of focusing on specific qualities, marketers should consider influencers' overall profiles. Better consumer engagement and more successful marketing techniques may result from this all-encompassing strategy. Future studies should examine how demographic factors moderate these effects and how different influencer types influence purchase intentions, including differences between macro- and micro-influencers. Furthermore, longitudinal research may offer a more profound understanding of how influencer-consumer connections change over time. In the context of social media influencer marketing, this study concludes that trust, trustworthiness, and attractiveness are critical elements influencing purchasing intentions. The study advances academic understanding and real-world applications in digital marketing by filling a gap in the literature and offering practical guidance for marketers. These results open the door to more focused and effective marketing tactics, enabling companies to leverage influencers' ability to engage and convert customers.

From a practical perspective, the findings provide useful guidance for businesses when selecting influencers for marketing campaigns. Businesses should consider influencers who demonstrate credibility, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, as these attributes can strengthen consumer engagement and purchase intentions. However, influencers' persuasive power should also be supported by good governance and integrity. Transparent disclosure of sponsored content, honest product recommendations, accurate information, and responsible communication are essential for maintaining consumer trust. By combining effective influencer selection with ethical and responsible marketing practices, businesses can develop more credible and sustainable relationships with young consumers, potentially improving engagement and marketing effectiveness.

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Declaration of Competing Interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement

Kavvina Selvaraju: Writing - original draft; Methodology; Data analysis

Siti Zanariah Satari: Writing - review & editing; Conceptualisation; Formal analysis

Sahimel Azwal Sulaiman: Writing - review & editing; Data validation

Availability of Data and Materials

The data supporting this study's findings are available on request from the corresponding author.

Ethics Declarations

This study did not involve human participants or animals. Ethical approval was therefore not required.

Generative Artificial Intelligence Declarations

The authors claim that artificially intelligent-assisted technologies, such as generative AI, were not used to generate content, ideas, or theories. We have just utilised AI to enhance readability and refine the language. This was used with extreme human control and oversight. The authors take full responsibility for reviewing and approving the content.

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