

# Role of Social Media Influencers in Shaping Brand Trust and Loyalty Among Consumers

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**Abstract:** This study examines the relationship between the legitimacy of social media influencers and customer trust in brands, emphasizing the significant impact influencers have on modern marketing. In a time when social media has transformed consumer interactions, influencers have become crucial personalities, utilizing their authenticity to cultivate trust and loyalty among consumers. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted with 150 participants aged 18 and older who interact with influencers on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Data were gathered on influencer credibility, assessed through expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, as well as consumer brand trust. The analysis demonstrated a substantial positive connection ( $r = 0.75$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), signifying that enhanced views of influencer credibility are associated with improved brand trust. This discovery emphasizes the necessity of using reputable influencers in marketing tactics to enhance brand loyalty. The hypothesis testing validated the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis, indicating that influencer credibility greatly affects consumer brand trust. The findings from this research are essential for marketers aiming to enhance consumer relationships and cultivate brand loyalty via strategic influencer collaborations.

**Keywords:** Social media influencers, Brand Trust, Consumer Loyalty, Influencer Credibility, Marketing Strategies.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, social media has revolutionized the marketing landscape, establishing new channels for firms to interact with consumers. Leading this transition are social media influencers, individuals who have cultivated significant followings by producing material that appeals to particular populations. These influencers possess significant influence in moulding consumer perceptions and actions, rendering them vital collaborators for brands aiming to cultivate trust and loyalty (Nair & Bhagat, 2024). In contrast to conventional advertising, which frequently depends on direct promotions, influencer marketing utilizes the authenticity and relatability of individuals to engage consumers on a more personal level. This strategic shift signifies a wider transformation in consumer behaviour, as individuals increasingly pursue authentic connections and place greater reliance in peer recommendations over the communications of impersonal organizations (Baharuddin et al., 2022).

Brand trust is essential for cultivating customer loyalty. Trust is commonly characterized as the conviction that a brand will fulfil its commitments, offer high-quality products or services, and prioritize the welfare of its customers. Social media influencers are crucial in fostering trust, as their endorsements can enhance the trustworthiness of brands (Mammadli, 2021). Consumers perceive influencers as personable individuals who comprehend their needs and preferences, facilitating an emotional bond with both the influencer & the companies they promote. Research indicates that the perceived authenticity of influencers markedly influences customer trust, with followers demonstrating a greater propensity to trust a brand endorsed by an admired influencer. This link underscores the significance of choosing appropriate influencers whose beliefs correspond with the brands to optimize the potential for fostering consumer trust (Nafees et al., 2021).

Consumer loyalty towards brands is additionally influenced by their interactions with social media influencers, alongside brand trust. Loyal consumers are not merely repeat buyers; they also promote the brand, disseminate their favourable experiences, and exhibit a propensity to disregard competition. Influencers foster loyalty by cultivating a feeling of community among their followers, promoting engagement and connection with the business. Influencers may humanize companies through storytelling, behind-the-scenes content, and personal experiences, rendering them more approachable

and relatable (Kim et al., 2024). This strategy not only increases brand visibility but also cultivates an emotional bond, essential for establishing enduring loyalty. As customers increasingly desire personalized experiences, the significance of influencers in establishing these relationships becomes crucial, compelling firms to re-evaluate their marketing strategies to incorporate influencer partnerships (Anjaria & Satpati, 2024).

This research analysed characteristics including influencer reputation, audience engagement, and content authenticity to elucidate the dynamics of influencer-brand-consumer connections. Furthermore, it will examine the ramifications of these findings for firms seeking to improve their marketing strategies in a landscape driven by social media engagement (Perdana et al., 2023). Comprehending the intricacies of this relationship will enable organizations to utilize influencer marketing not merely as a promotional instrument, but as a strategic method for fostering deeper, more significant connections with consumers.

### **Objective of Study**

“To investigate the correlation between social media influencer credibility and consumer brand trust.”

### **Hypothesis of Study**

**H<sub>0</sub>**: “There is no significant correlation between social media influencer credibility and consumer brand trust.”

**H<sub>1</sub>**: “There is a significant positive correlation between social media influencer credibility and consumer brand trust.”

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Influencer Marketing is a digital communication strategy employed by the corporation, involving the marketing of items via prominent figures in digital media. The literature confirms that trust in celebrities or branded individuals necessitates consideration of the brand trust notion. The role of brand trust as a mediator in the influence of endorsement by influencers on purchase intention was examined (Mammadli, 2021).

The study by Matin et al., 2022 aims to determine “how social media influencers affect consumers' perceptions of brands, their faith in those brands, and the amount of money spent on sponsored content”. This research looks at how social media users react to influencer marketing campaigns. The results provide light on how the traits of social media influencers affect how consumers see sponsored brands and the material they post.

Digital influencers facilitate the connection between customers and brands, enhancing their relationship and enabling brands to engage their target audience more organically, hence influencing consumer purchasing behaviour. In this chapter by Antunes (2022), the author presents a narrative review about the “influence of digital influencers on consumer decision-making processes”.

The study conducted by Sankala, 2024 examines the power of social media influencers to shape consumer behaviour and brand loyalty. Here we take a look at how influencer marketing impacts consumers' thoughts, wallets, and brand loyalty.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The impact of social media influencers on customer trust and loyalty was investigated in this study using a quantitative cross-sectional survey technique. Fifteen hundred people who were at least 18 years old and who regularly engaged with social media influencers on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok were selected using a stratified random selection technique. An online survey with two parts was used to collect data. One part measured influencer credibility (using a validated scale to assess qualities including attractiveness, knowledge, and trustworthiness). The second part measured consumer brand trust (using a modified Brand Trust Scale). The survey was disseminated through multiple social media platforms and online forums over a duration of four weeks, followed by a statistical analysis to investigate the relationship between the credibility of social media influencers and consumer brand trust, ultimately evaluating the null hypothesis of no significant correlation (H<sub>0</sub>) against the alternative hypothesis of a significant positive correlation (H<sub>1</sub>).

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Table 1 delineates the demographic profile of respondents in this study, emphasizing essential parameters such as age, gender, educational attainment, and income level. The age distribution indicates that the predominant group comprises participants aged 25-34, totalling 50 respondents, followed by the 35-44 age group, which includes 40 respondents. Gender representation revealed a modest predominance of females (75) compared to males (70), with a limited number identifying

as non-binary (5). The respondents primarily possessed a Bachelor's degree (60), while 45 held a Master's degree. The predominant income bracket consisted of 60 respondents earning between 3 to 5 lakhs, and 40 persons reported an income below 3 lakhs. This varied demographic profile offers essential information for analysing the correlation between social media influencer credibility and consumer brand trust.

**Table.1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Variable	Sub-Construct	Frequency
Age	18-24	30
	25-34	50
	35-44	40
	45+	30
Gender	Male	70
	Female	75
	Other	5
Education Level	High School	25
	Bachelor's	60
	Master's	45
	Doctorate	20
Income Level	Below 3 Lacs	40
	3-5 Lacs	60
	5-10 Lacs	20
	Above 10 Lacs	30

**Correlation Analysis**

Using Pearson correlation analysis, this study looked at how social media influencer reputation relates to customer trust in brands. A significance threshold of  $p < 0.05$  was used to construct the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ). The study showed that there is a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.75, p < 0.01$ ) between the credibility of influencers and the trust that consumers have in their brands. Consumers are more likely to trust brands when they believe influencers are credible, according to this finding.

**Table.2: Correlation Matrix**

Variable	Influencer Credibility	Consumer Brand Trust
Influencer Credibility	1.00	
Consumer Brand Trust	0.75	1.00

The results of the correlation study showed that there is a robust positive association ( $r = 0.75, p < 0.01$ ) between the credibility of social media influencers and the trust that consumers have in brands. As consumers view influencers as more credible—defined by attributes like competence, integrity, and authenticity—they are inclined to place greater faith in the products that these influencers endorse. This conclusion is quite significant. This link highlights the importance of influencer credibility in influencing consumer views and behaviors. It suggests that brands can improve their reputation by working with influencers who are highly credible. In light of this new information, it is clear that marketing plans that include well-chosen influencers are more effective in building trust in the brand and, eventually, customer loyalty.

**Table.3: Results of Hypothesis Testing**

Objective	Hypothesis	Results
“To investigate the correlation between social media influencer credibility and consumer brand trust.”	<b>H<sub>0</sub></b> : “There is no significant correlation between social media influencer credibility and consumer brand trust.”	Rejected
	<b>H<sub>1</sub></b> : “There is a significant positive correlation between social media influencer credibility and consumer brand trust.”	Accepted

Consequently, the demographic profile of respondents, as outlined in Table 1, elucidates critical factors necessary for comprehending the setting of this study. The predominant age group of participants was 25-34, comprising 50 respondents, indicating that the results may predominantly represent younger customers who exhibit greater engagement with social media. Gender representation exhibited a little predominance of females (75) over males (70), with a limited proportion

identifying as non-binary (5). The majority of respondents possessed a minimum of a Bachelor's degree (60), potentially affecting their critical evaluation of influencer trustworthiness. The income distribution revealed that 60 respondents earned between 3 to 5 lakhs, whilst 40 earned below 3 lakhs, underscoring potential disparities in consumer behaviour influenced by economic background. The correlation study revealed a substantial positive association ( $r = 0.75, p < 0.01$ ) between the credibility of social media influencers and consumer brand trust, suggesting that heightened perceptions of influencer credibility correspond with increased trust in the endorsed businesses. This research highlights the essential importance of influencer reputation in influencing consumer views, indicating that firms should deliberately partner with reputable influencers to improve brand trust and cultivate consumer loyalty. The hypothesis testing results indicated the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0) and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H1), thereby affirming that influencer credibility significantly affects consumer brand trust, providing essential insights for marketers and brand managers in developing effective marketing strategies.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This research highlights the importance of social media influencers in the modern marketing landscape, particularly in shaping customers' opinions and loyalty to certain brands. The strong positive link between influencer credibility and consumer brand trust indicates that consumers are more inclined to trust brands pushed by credible influencers who exhibit experience, trustworthiness, and relatability. Organisations need to carefully select influencers whose values align with their own in order to maximise the chances of building trust, as customers are looking for more personalised experiences and real connections. The importance of influencer alliances as a tool for increasing brand awareness and building long-term customer relationships is highlighted in this study, which provides valuable information for marketers and brand managers. Brand loyalty and purchase decisions are both influenced by how well companies handle the complexities of online consumer behaviour, which can be achieved through the credibility of influencers. To keep up with the ever-changing marketplace and understand how influencer marketing affects customer trust and engagement, study into its dynamics must be ongoing.

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