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# Investigating the Influence of Trust, Attractiveness, Perceived Expertise, and Perceived Credibility on Attitude Toward the Influencer: The Mediating Role of Attitude Toward the Influencer and Moderating Role and Perceived Risks

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

In recent years, influencer marketing has become an important part of firms' strategic communication. This is mostly due to the declining effectiveness of conventional media channels for communication. The purpose of this study is to find out the impact of trust, attractiveness, perceived expertise, and perceived credibility on the consumer's attitude toward influencers. Moreover, the study examines the mediating role of attitude toward the influencer and the moderating role of perceived risks. The study employed a quantitative research design and data were collected from 250 social media users. PLS-SEM was used for data analysis and hypothesis testing. The findings indicated that perceived credibility, perceived expertise, and attractiveness positively and significantly impact attitudes toward influencers which further significantly and positively mediates the relationship of the three independent variables with purchase intention. The impact of trust on attitude towards influencer was found to be insignificant as well as the mediating role of attitude towards influencer in the relationship between trust and purchase intention. This study aims to provide insights to fashion marketers and advertisers that may improve influencer relationships by understanding how trust, attractiveness, knowledge, and credibility affect consumer perceptions. To create and maintain strong influencer-consumer interactions, risk mitigation measures are needed to moderate perceived dangers. This study illuminates the intricate relationships between trust, attractiveness, perceived expertise, perceived credibility, attitudes toward influencers, and perceived dangers to improve our knowledge of influencer-consumer dynamics. These insights help create more effective influencer marketing campaigns and strengthen influencer-audience relationships in the changing digital marketing landscape

# 1. Introduction

Social media platforms have transformed marketing and consumer behavior in recent years (Sundaram et al., 2020). Influencer marketing is a popular way for brands and advertisers to reach their target audience in the digital age (Novitasari, 2022). Understanding consumers' purchase intentions is crucial in this environment (Nolcheska, 2017). Due to its ability to give users unbounded access to a wealth of information spanning the world, social networking has become an essential part of their routine lifestyles (Agarwal et al., 2018). Since more people are using social media than ever before, which has an impact on market trends and strategies, marketing agencies have come to view social media networking as a crucial platform for connecting with and engaging customers (Sumague & Briones, 2022). Companies all over the world are rapidly leveraging consumers' utilization of social media applications like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram because they know and are conscious of how individuals are utilizing social media (Statista, 2017). Globally, advertising on social media generated 68 billion US dollars in revenue in 2018; this figure is predicted to rise to 185 billion US dollars by 2022 (Statista, 2017).

Individuals who have amassed a sizable social media following different social networking sites are referred to as "social media influencers." Song, Xing, Duan & Mou, (2023). Several years ago, Enterprises used to endorse their products using celebrities' notoriety and getting up in society, but as social media platforms developed, influencers started to boost a greater reverence (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Influencer endorsement in particular has grown to be a crucial tool for marketing communications because it allows for quick engagement with a lot of prospective customers (Evans et al., 2017). A survey was held in 2018 in which expert marketers from various countries reported that 94% of the people claimed marketing held using influencers as a profitable method of advertisements and 79% had budgeted investments for that in the next year (Pereira Mundkur, 2023). TapInfluence (2019) emphasizes in their most recent report that marketing held using influencers can generate profits that are ten times better than that of conventional or traditional marketing channels.

With the introduction of influencers domestically and globally the medium through which firms engage with their clients and customers has overall altered (Ao et al., 2023). More than 75% of marketing firms and professionals now rely on social media influencers to showcase details of the product according to recent studies, and more than 65% of brands and companies around the world have thought of investing to increase their finances for marketing through influencers, with expenditure predicted to hit $373M until 2027 most probably (Ki et al., 2020). Studies examining the effect of influencer evaluation on consumer behavior are few, despite growing interest. Only recently have researchers begun empirically examining the influencers' effects.

Even though Influencers and public figures all affect the choices of buyers while purchasing or shopping, many researchers have demonstrated that celebrity endorsements are much less convincing and effective than influencers (Dhruv Saini et al., 2021). Investigators are now putting the spotlight on sorting out how marketing via social media alters enterprises' bottom lines profitability and service performance because of its significance, with a focus on how Social media influencers deliver and depict their interpretations of the advertised brand (Ki et al., 2020; Wiedmann and von Mettenheim, 2020). In general, earlier research showed how influencers convey their interpretations of the products they endorse, leading to favorable perceptions in consumers' thoughts. This research makes the case that people who follow influencers are prone to buying goods or services recommended by those influencers who are viewed as expert, credible, attractive, or worthy of trust. Consumers perceive

some risk when making a purchase decision because the results (or consequences) of such decisions are frequently uncertain.

Influencer marketing is a popular way for firms to interact with consumers on social media (Vrontis et al., 2021). The efficiency of influencer marketing methods is still being studied. Trust, perceived expertise, beauty, and perceived credibility are crucial characteristics, but their interrelationships and impacts on consumer purchase intentions, mediated by influencer attitudes, are unknown. In this environment, perceived hazards' moderating role has received little attention. This study examines these variables' complicated linkages and interactions to fill these knowledge gaps (Seçilmiş et al., 2022).

Influencer marketing has altered brand-consumer relations. However, the factors that influence customers' views of influencers are still poorly understood. The literature is lacking on how trust, perceived knowledge, attractiveness, and credibility determine customers' attitudes toward influencers and how perceived risk may affect this relationship (Kim & Kim, 2021). This study seeks to illuminate influencer-consumer dynamics to bridge this gap.

## Theoretical Background

The theory of planned behavior and multi-step flow theory underpin this study. The theory of planned behavior has served as our theoretical model (Ajzen, 1991). We, therefore, recommend that TPB is suitable for continuing studies because this principle focuses on the mindset conduct gap. Additionally, this look examines how the TPB assemble interacts with measures of perceived risks impact on attitudes and purchase purpose (PI). Whereas, The multi-step flow theory, developed by sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld et al. (1944) and expanded by Elihu Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), is a communication theory. The hypothesis suggests that ideas spread from mass media to opinion leaders and then to the public [1]. The multi-step flow theory involves more interaction between opinion leaders, information sources, and audiences than the two-step model, which assumes information flows from mass media to influencers who share it with their audience. The multi-step flow hypothesis better explains social information exchange than the one-step or two-step theories. Opinion leaders influence the individuals they are most like—based on personality, interests, demography, or socioeconomic considerations. Opinion leaders can impact behavior more quickly than traditional media due to their greater audience identification and relatability.

## Hypothesis Development

### Perceived credibility of Influencer & attitude towards the influencer

In the newly developed study on influencers (Hudders et al., 2021; Martnez-Lopez' et al., 2020), the source's authority and the marketing message are notable constructs. Considering that credibility is the foundation of hints, influencers must be seen as reliable to sway their admirers (Kim et al., 2018). Although magnificence may result in immediate response, Lagner and Eisend (2011) indicate that a celebrity's legitimacy may affect a customer's perception of a business and a credible influencer is more likely to have an impact on the opinions or purchasing decisions of their followers. According to Chetioui et al. (2020), perceptions of credibility are the most important component, followed by expertise and trust. Therefore:

*H1. Perceived credibility has a positive impact on consumers' attitudes toward the influencer.*

## Trust & attitude toward the influencer

Trust and attitude toward influencers have been researched in influencer marketing. Consumer trust is in the influencer's credibility, reliability, and honesty (Scheer et al., 1992; Kim et al., 2023). Consumer attitude toward the influencer is their overall assessment. Studies show that trust strongly affects influencer attitudes and brand attitudes. Perceived influencer trustworthiness is thought to drive subsequent behavior (Chetioui et al., 2020). Advertising and influencer marketing are more effective when the source is credible and trustworthy. Finally, the literature demonstrates that trust is crucial in influencer-consumer relationships (Pittman et al., 2021). Trust positively affects influencer and brand attitudes. The influencer's perceived trustworthiness is thought to drive behavior. These studies can help marketers and influencers create effective influencer marketing tactics that boost influencer trustworthiness and customer sentiments. A Fashion Influencer (FI) with a high level of credibility is more likely to influence their followers' views, choices, and purchase intentions.

*H2. Trust has a positive impact on consumers' attitudes toward the influencer.*

## Perceived expertise & attitude toward the influencer

Perceived expertise refers to the endorser's competence, knowledge, and skills, while attitude toward the influencer is the consumer's overall evaluation of the influencer. Studies have found that perceived expertise positively affects attitudes toward the influencer and brand attitudes (Chetioui et al., 2020). The literature concludes that perceived knowledge can boost advertising and influencer marketing by boosting source credibility and trustworthiness (Blanche et al., 2021). Perspective on the influencer and brand attitudes are positively correlated with perceived expertise. These studies can help marketers and influencers create effective influencer marketing strategies that boost influencer knowledge and customer trust. Along with perceived competence, the literature reveals that trustworthiness is a significant aspect of influencer marketing efficacy. A more favorable recommendation from experts has been found to exert a considerable influence on individuals' attitudes toward influencers and their subsequent intentions to make a purchase (Schouten, 2019).

H3. Perceived influencer expertise has a positive impact on the consumers' attitude toward the influencer.

## Attractiveness & attitude toward the influencer

The intention to buy is significantly influenced by attractiveness (Rev, 2021). Additionally, investigations have demonstrated that Instagram personalities who have large numbers of followers we seen to be more approached in part because of their popularity and being well-known (Veirman et al., 2017). However, the authors were unable to definitively state that a high follower count poses an affirmative impact on how well a brand is received. According to Lim et al. (2017), the source attractiveness of influencers positively influences consumer attitudes. Additionally, attractiveness influences purchase intention and online engagement and is a strong predictor of attitudes toward influencers, and purchase intentions. (Manag, 2020). In accordance with to investigation on digital influencers, one of the important traits that influences factors like logo picture, logo delight, emblem consideration, and buy intention is beauty (Wiedmann, 2020). Additionally, three fundamental components of attractiveness need specific definitions: i. Popularity: How well a person or item is recognized and accepted. It relies on an influencer's popularity, engagement, and expertise. Our hypothesis suggests that influencers' capacity to establish big, loyal followings affects audience attitudes. Attractiveness: Several traits make a person attractive. These include look, demeanor, charisma, and appeal. Attractiveness may relate to an influencer's ability to connect with their audience beyond appearance. It strongly affects audience opinion. Beauty is more specific and focuses on appearance and visual attractiveness (AlFarraj et al., 2021). Including look, grooming, and presentation. An influencer's beauty may affect audience impressions and attitudes, in our opinion.

*H4. Attractiveness positively affects consumers' attitudes toward the influencer.*

## Attitude toward the influencer as a mediator

Purchasers' degree of trust in the goods and the content related is called perceived credibility (Li, 2018). In line with the supply Credibility principle, aspects of source credibility encompass trustworthiness, understanding, similarity, and attractiveness (Hovland, 1951). According to an investigation by Munnukka et al., social media influencers' perceived credibility is stimulated through their splendor, trustworthiness, expertise, and similarity. The manner in wherein purchasers perceive them will become a crucial difficulty and a good way to influence their purchase selection manner. In times of ambiguity, Customers frequently look for information from comparable or other clientele when conducting research (Ibáez, 2021). According to scientific evidence, sentiments toward influencers, attitudes toward manufacturers, and purchase intentions are all positively impacted by perceived credibility, sometimes known as the authority of experts (Reinikainen, 2020).

*H5: Attitude toward influencers mediates the association between perceived credibility and purchase intention.*

## Attitude toward influencers as a mediator

The first rate of attaining and maintaining a sincere, plausible, quantifiable, and provable kingdom is called trustworthiness. Consequently, the attribute that ensures a person's reputation, reliability, and integrity is their level of trustworthiness. Berhanu (2020) states that "questions on the veracity of social media are often distorted and untrue responses produced by intentional manipulation of online critiques." One key element in determining Customers' assessments of a specific influencer's levels of sincerity, honesty, and truthfulness is another important factor in determining whether or not they will make a purchase (Bawack, 2021). Research data shows that trustworthiness significantly predicts the intention to purchase (Bawack, 2021).

In line with Abdullah et al. (2020), the elements that have an effect on Instagram users' goal to buy apparel are trustworthiness, likeability, and familiarity. Additionally, trustworthiness affects purchase motive circuitously when it miles mediated by means of the caliber of the content produced through virtual influencers (Gomes, 2022). The trustworthiness factor has been diagnosed that affects purchase aims favorably inside the particular context of celebrities (Abdullah et al., 2020). Furthermore, Wiedmann (2020) discovered maximum crucial component influencing purchase intention is the trustworthiness of influencers. Consequently:

*H6: Attitude toward influencers mediates the association between trust and purchase intention.*

## Attitude toward influencer mediator

The need to achieve and retain an honest, achievable, quantifiable, and provable kingdom is called trustworthiness. Berhanu (2020) states that "questions about the veracity of social media are often distorted and unfaithful responses produced through intentional manipulation of online evaluations." One key element in determining customers' perceptions of truthfulness is the trustworthiness of a selected influencer, which additionally performs a considerable feature in influencing their desire to make a purchase (Bawack, 2021). It is a vast predictor of buy reason, consistent with empirical information (Bawack, 2021).

In step with Abdullah et al., (2020) the factors that have an impact on Instagram customers' goal to shop for apparel are trustworthiness, likeability, and familiarity. moreover, trustworthiness affects purchase purpose not directly while it's miles mediated by way of the quality of the content

material produced through digital influencers (Gomes, 2022). Within the particular context of celebrities, the element of trustworthiness has been found as one of the factors that favorably impact purchasing intention (Abdullah et al., 2020).

*H7: Attitude toward influencers mediates the association between perceived expertise and purchase intention.*

## Attitude toward influencers as a mediator

The role of attitudes towards influencers, when utilized as a mediator in research and analysis, plays a crucial role in understanding the complex mechanisms that drive consumer behavior within the context of influencer marketing. Serving as an intermediary construct, it assumes a crucial function in elucidating the relationships among external variables, such as perceived credibility, perceived competence, trust, or qualities, and consumer attitudes (Magano et al., 2022). The mediating role plays a crucial role in providing valuable insights into the underlying reasons and mechanisms via which these elements impact individuals' perceptions and decision-making processes. In addition to providing clarity on the psychological processes involved, comprehending the mediating function of attitude toward influencers holds concrete consequences for marketing tactics (Koay, 2021). This framework guides optimizing influencer marketing campaigns by highlighting the importance of factors that influence consumers' attitudes towards the influencers they follow. Ultimately, this framework aims to improve the effectiveness of influencer-driven initiatives in the changing landscape of consumer preferences and digital engagement (AlFarraj, 2021).

*H8: Attitude toward influencers mediates the association between attractiveness and purchase intention.*

## Attitude toward the influencer & purchase intention

According to more research, a person's attitude toward an influencer can directly predict their intention to make a purchase (Bergkvist et al., 2016). The theory of planned behavior views whether the customers will intend to buy the product as a consequence of attitude along the same lines. The variables in the Theory of Planned Behaviour must be crucial elements that influence the decision-making process, conceptually separate from the original, and possibly useful for analyzing a particular behavior (Meng & Choi, 2016). The expanded model has been extensively applied and includes concepts that are important in many situations, such as influencer marketing (Chetioui et al., 2020; Chopra et al., 2020). Using influencers who are famous increases attitudes toward the influencer and, as a consequence, the intention to purchase the product. TPB believes a person's behavior attitude influences their behavior intention. Positive brand attitude increases purchase intention and brand loyalty (Huang et al., 2011). The theory of planned behavior views whether the customers will intend to buy the product as a consequence of attitude along the same lines.

*H9: Consumers' attitude toward the influencer has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention.*

## Perceived risk as a moderator

Perceived Risk is an important element in determining a consumer's perception (Ariffin et al., 2018). Additionally, it has been noted in the existing literature that Perceived Risk negatively affects attitude and Purchase Intention (Ho et al 2017). The argument that Perceived Risk has no effect on the distinction between attitude and intention was also made. The current study, however, makes the assumption that Perceived Risks' unfavorable nature will cause it to widen even more. In every instance, the public is typically aware to some extent of the financial support that the influencer acquires while offering recommendations (Martnez-Lopez et al., 2020; Stubb et al., 2019), which could raise concerns about the objectivity and credibility of the message and cause skepticism

(Boerman et al., 2017). Additionally, Deshbhag and Mohan (2020) recently showed how attitudes and intentions to buy consumer products were impacted by perceptions of risk.

*H10: Perceived risk moderates the relationship between attitude towards the influencer and purchase intention.*

*Fig 1: The Conceptual Framework*
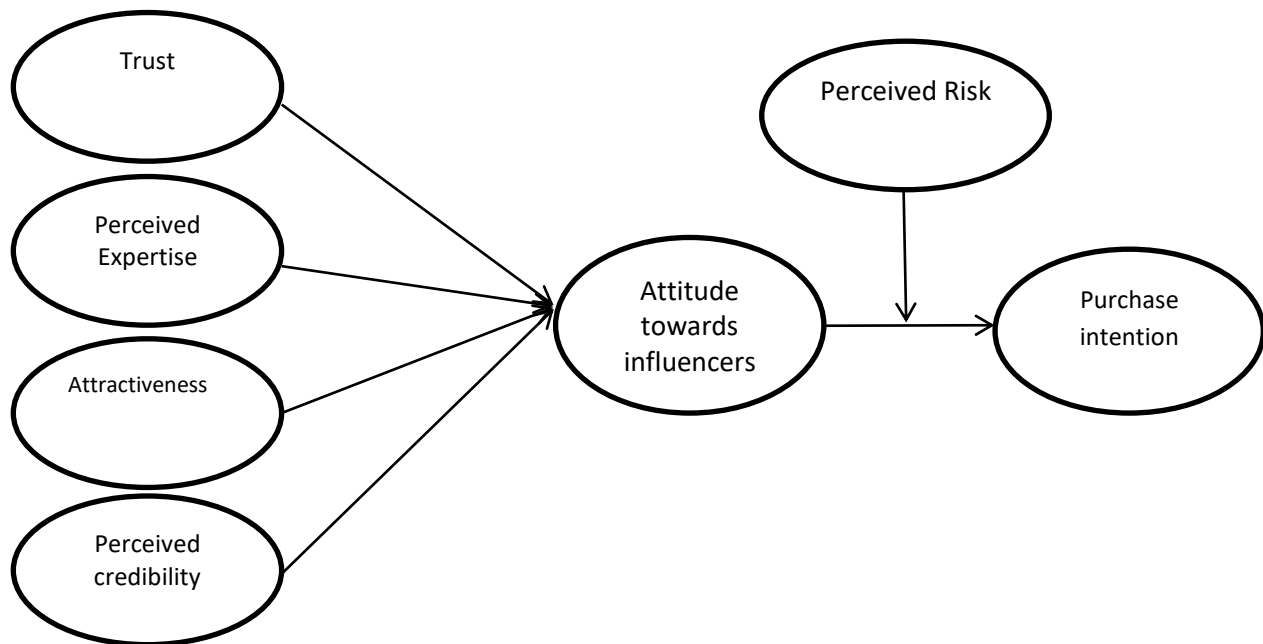


**Methodology**

Data were collected from Millennials and Generation Z. Millennials, born 1981-1996, have a maximum age of 40, whereas Generation Z, born 1997-2012, has a maximum age of 24 (Beresford & Sellas, 2021). The selection of individuals from these two generations was based on their increased social media activity and preference for mobility, technology, and software diversity (Ardill, 2021; Pate and Adams, 2013).). Additionally, both groups follow social media influencers on various social media platforms. Additionally, brand managers are addressing Millennials and Generation Z on social media. This research will aid technology-focused brand managers in selecting suitable social media influencers for brand endorsements.

**Respondent's Profile**

To determine if those who took part in a given study are an adequate representation of the target population for generalization reasons, demographic details about the respondents in the study are required (Lee, 2010). The table below shows an aggregate of 267 respondents who satisfactorily finished the survey over the course of four months (February through May 2023). Fashion customers, particularly generations Y and Z, maybe more influenced by influencers as they view them as assistants and friends. Hence about 250 legitimate responses were collected while 17 responses were disqualified due to a lack of understanding of FIs, age limits, or missing information. The validity, reliability, and suitability to be tested speculation were evaluated for acceptable replies.

**Table 1.** Respondent's profile

| Demographics | Type | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 33 | 13.2 |
| | Female | 217 | 86.8 |
| | Total | 250 | 100% |
| Age group | 18-25 | 81 | 32.4% |
| | 26-30 | 84 | 33.6% |
| | 31-40 | 85 | 34% |
| | Total | 250 | 100% |
| Education | High school | 30 | 12% |
| | Undergraduate | 110 | 44% |
| | Masters | 28 | 11.2% |
| | Doctorate | 15 | 6% |
| | other | 67 | 26.8% |
| Total | Total | 250 | 100% |

**Results & Discussion**

The first research used Smart PLS to analyze data. This section includes the research's two parts. The measurement model examines factor loading, construct validity, and efficacy, whereas the structural model discusses direction research and assumption trials (see "Figure 3. Structural model"). Since mean, median, mode, and range provide essential data information, descriptive statistics are employed to study them. Figure 2 shows the measurement model while Table 2 shows the AVE, CR, and Cronbach's alpha values.

**Table 2 Factor loading, reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE)**

| CONSTRUCTS | ITEM | LOADINGS | CR | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attractiveness | A1 | 0.819 | 0.868 | 0.622 |
| | A2 | 0.828 | | |
| | A3 | 0.795 | | |
| | A4 | 0.708 | | |
| Attitude towards influencer | ATT1 | 0.667 | 0.826 | 0.545 |
| | ATT2 | 0.708 | | |
| | ATT3 | 0.748 | | |
| | ATT4 | 0.821 | | |
| Perceived credibility | PC1 | 0.744 | 0.821 | 0.536 |
| | PC2 | 0.794 | | |
| | PC3 | 0.716 | | |
| | PC4 | 0.669 | | |

| | | Std L | CR | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perceived expertise | PE1 | 0.869 | 0.871 | 0.692 |
| | PE2 | 0.836 | | |
| | PE3 | 0.788 | | |
| Purchase intention | PI1 | 0.891 | 0.89 | 0.801 |
| | PI2 | 0.9 | | |
| Perceived risk | PR1 | 0.915 | 0.822 | 0.716 |
| | PR2 | 0.866 | | |
| | PR3 | 0.748 | | |
| Trust | T1 | 0.867 | 0.898 | 0.746 |
| | T2 | 0.85 | | |
| | T3 | 0.874 | | |

Notes: Std L = Standard loading, CR Composite reliability, AVE = Average variance extracted

**Validity and reliability analysis**

In the current study, the efficacy and authenticity values were assessed. When an element's threshold value is 0.7 or above, it is thought to be sustainable (Henseler et al., 2015). In addition, the element lade must meet the Chin (1998) threshold value of 0.5 to be considered sustainable; values lower than 0.5 were removed. The element latencies in the current investigation are within the implied ranges. According to this study, the lowest Cronbach Alpha value of 0.729 is acceptable, but Van Griethuijsen et al. (2015) said that a threshold value of 0.7 or 0.6 for Cronbach's Alpha is regarded as sustainable. The criterion for compound dependability is 0.70. The compound reliability values in the current study are greater than 0.70, which is considered to be higher than the threshold values. The current study's average variance extracted (AVE) least value is 0.551, which is the lowest threshold, and the compound reliability least value is 0.830, which is amazing (Hair et al., 2017).

*Figure 2 Measurement Model*
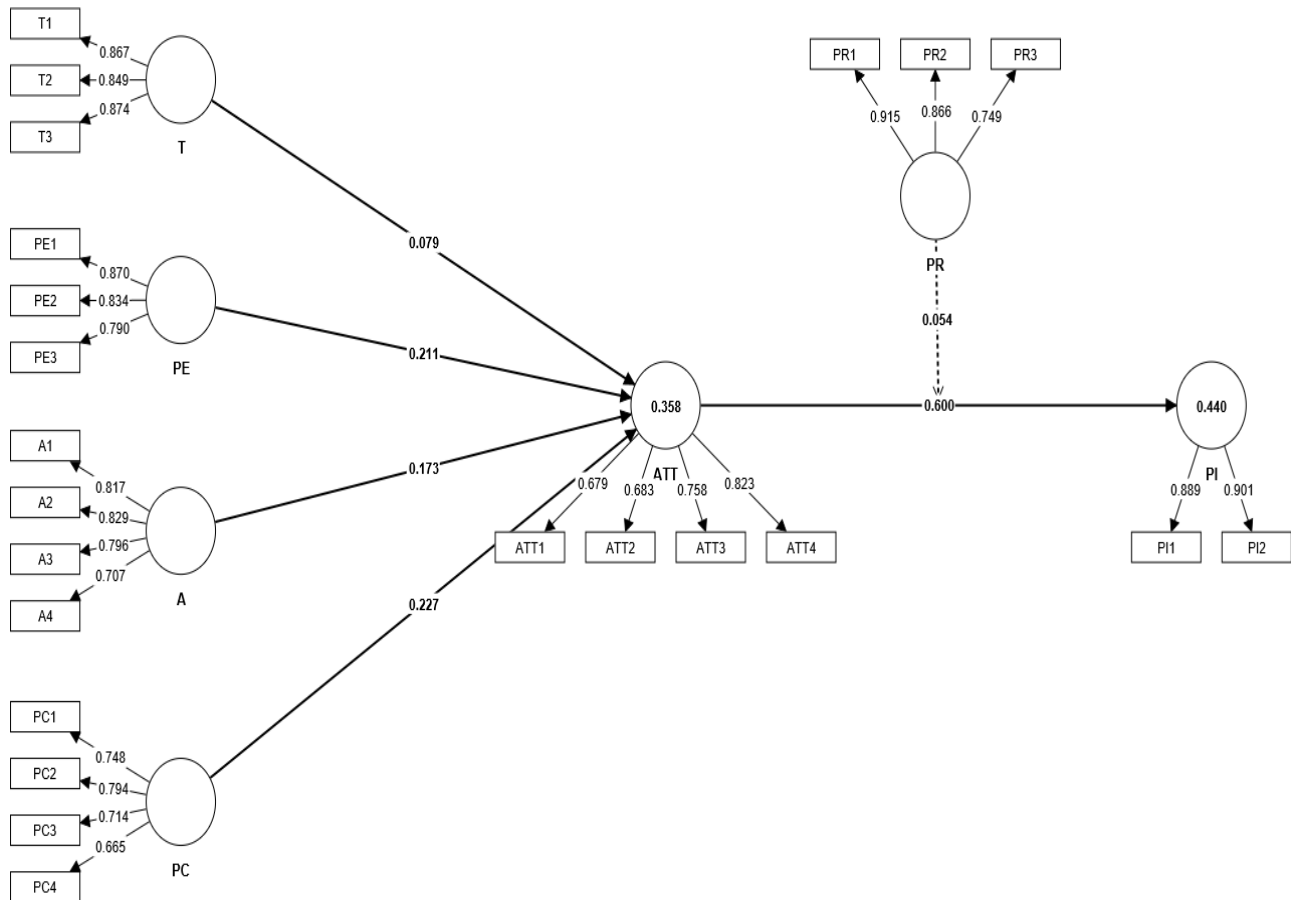
**Table 3: Discriminant Validity**

**HTMT Ratio**

| Constructs | A | ATT | PC | PE | PI | PR | T |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | | | | | | | |
| ATT | 0.645 | | | | | | |
| PC | 0.891 | 0.739 | | | | | |
| PE | 0.827 | 0.707 | 0.924 | | | | |
| PI | 0.493 | 0.858 | 0.545 | 0.547 | | | |
| PR | 0.212 | 0.297 | 0.247 | 0.202 | 0.381 | | |
| T | 0.636 | 0.569 | 0.816 | 0.849 | 0.631 | 0.381 | |

**Table 4. Fornell Larker Criterion**

| Constructs | A | ATT | PC | PE | PI | PR | T |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 0.789 | | | | | | |
| ATT | 0.507 | 0.738 | | | | | |
| PC | 0.671 | 0.543 | 0.732 | | | | |
| PE | 0.661 | 0.538 | 0.681 | 0.832 | | | |
| PI | 0.387 | 0.633 | 0.405 | 0.424 | 0.895 | | |
| PR | -0.115 | -0.236 | -0.166 | -0.157 | -0.314 | 0.846 | |
| T | 0.532 | 0.461 | 0.631 | 0.681 | 0.503 | -0.308 | 0.864 |

**Analysis of discriminant validity**

The scientists recommended two approaches be used to carry out the test of discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017). To begin with, we evaluated the discriminant validity using the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion. In this strategy, the diagonal values of the constructions must be bigger than their dependency. According to Table 3, every slanting quality was more astounding than the dependency between the constructs, which supports the existence of discriminant validity in this procedure. Next, the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) approach was used. The construction results in this process should be less than 0.90 or 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). As seen in Table 4, all HTMT values are below 0.85, suggesting that the constructs exhibit discriminant validity.

**Table 5. Path coefficients**

| Relationships | O | M | STDEV | T-Val | P - Val |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A -> ATT | 0.166 | 0.17 | 0.064 | 2.605 | 0.009 |
| ATT -> PI | 0.594 | 0.592 | 0.042 | 14.049 | 0.000 |
| PC -> ATT | 0.236 | 0.248 | 0.09 | 2.631 | 0.009 |
| PE -> ATT | 0.213 | 0.205 | 0.082 | 2.601 | 0.009 |
| PR -> PI | -0.196 | -0.198 | 0.052 | 3.797 | 0.000 |
| T -> ATT | 0.079 | 0.079 | 0.07 | 1.121 | 0.262 |
| PR x ATT -> PI | 0.055 | 0.053 | 0.034 | 1.627 | 0.104 |

**Hypothesis Testing**

Path coefficients for various relationships in a structural equation model (SEM) or comparable statistical analysis are listed below. These coefficients show model variable relationships' intensity and direction. Explaining table results:

Attractiveness positively affects attitudes (ATT) with a path coefficient of 0.166. Characteristics boost attitudes by 0.166 in each unit. Qualities influence attitudes, as evidenced by the T-value of 2.605 and low p-value of 0.009. Attitudes (ATT) positively correlate with purchase intentions (PI) with a path coefficient of 0.594. Attitudes enhance buying intentions by 0.594. The high T-value of 14.049 and p-value of 0.000 indicate that attitudes strongly influence purchasing intentions. The path coefficient of 0.236 shows a positive relationship between perceived credibility (PC) and attitudes (ATT). Belief increases attitudes by 0.236 units. Credibility significantly increases happy feelings (T-value = 2.631, p-value = 0.009). PE -> ATT (Perceived Expertise -> Attitude): PE positively affects attitudes with a path coefficient of 0.213. Every unit of expertise raises attitudes by 0.213. Perceived knowledge improves attitudes (T-value = 2.601, p-value = 0.009). Perceived Risk -> Purchase Intention: The path coefficient is -0.196, indicating a negative relationship. Every unit of perceived risk decreases purchase intention by 0.196. Higher perceived risk lowers buying intentions (T-value = 3.797, p-value = 0.000). Although weaker than other correlations, the path coefficient of 0.079 suggests a positive relationship between trust (T) and attitudes (ATT). Every unit of trust raises attitudes by 0.079. Trust may not change opinions (p=0.262). PR x ATT -> PI (Interaction impact): The path coefficient of 0.055 reveals that perceived risk (PR) and attitudes (ATT) affect purchase intention. Positive, but not statistically significant (p-value = 0.104). Statistics suggest that perceived risk and attitudes do not affect buying intention. Finally, these path coefficients show the model's relationships between traits, attitudes, perceived credibility, expertise, risk, trust, and purchase intentions. Marketers can use these coefficients' statistical significance to evaluate these correlations' strength and relevance to understand consumer behavior and make informed decisions.

**Table 6. Specific indirect effects**

| Indirect Paths | O | M | STD | T-Val | P-Val |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PE -> ATT -> PI | 0.127 | 0.122 | 0.05 | 2.544 | 0.011 |
| T -> ATT -> PI | 0.047 | 0.047 | 0.042 | 1.107 | 0.268 |
| A -> ATT -> PI | 0.099 | 0.101 | 0.04 | 2.473 | 0.013 |
| PC -> ATT -> PI | 0.14 | 0.147 | 0.054 | 2.621 | 0.009 |

Table 6 lists indirect effects in a structural equation model or statistical study. These indirect effects show how influences affect a target variable via an intermediate. Explaining table results: Perceived expertise (PE) affects buying intentions (PI) through attitudes. Attitudes boost purchasing intentions per unit of perceived knowledge by 0.127. Attitudes moderate the effect of perceived knowledge on purchase intentions (T-value 2.544, p-value 0.011). Through attitudes, trust (T) indirectly affects purchase intentions (PI). Trust enhances attitudes-mediated purchasing intentions by 0.047 units per unit. This indirect effect is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.268), suggesting that views may not significantly affect trust and buying intentions. Characteristics (A) affect purchase intentions (PI) through attitudes (ATT). One unit more attributes increases purchase intentions by 0.099 units. Attitudes mediate attribute-purchase intentions (p-value = 0.013). Through attitudes, perceived credibility (PC) affects purchase intentions (PI). One unit of perceived credibility improves purchase intentions by 0.140 units, mediated through attitudes. Perceived credibility affects purchasing intentions through attitudes (p-value = 0.009). Table 5 concludes that various variables indirectly affect purchasing intentions in the model. Understanding consumer decision-making requires these indirect effects. Researchers might utilize indirect effect p-values to assess these mediated relationships' strength and statistical reliability to design focused marketing and consumer behavior strategies.

## Conclusions & Implications

This study examined how trust, attractiveness, perceived knowledge, and perceived credibility affect bias toward the influencer. The study evaluated how the attitude toward the influencer mediates and how perceived risks moderate. The study's findings can assist marketers and influencers in creating effective influencer marketing tactics that boost the influencer's reputation and consumer perception. The study indicated that trust, attractiveness, perceived knowledge, and perceived credibility positively affect influencer reputation and brand opinions. Perceived influencer trustworthiness is a key element in determining subsequent behavior. Attitude toward the influencer mediates the link between perceived credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, and purchase intention. The study emphasizes the role of perceived risks in moderating the relationship between trust, attractiveness, expertise, credibility, and influencer attitude.

This study has various practical implications for influencer marketers, influencers, and researchers: Marketers should carefully examine influencers' trustworthiness, attractiveness, perceived knowledge, and perceived credibility when collaborating with them. They should also evaluate the influencer and audience's perceived risks to customize their approach. Influencers should create and retain niche-specific trust, credibility, and knowledge. Authentic and transparent content creation can lower perceived risks and improve consumer perceptions toward influencers and advertising items or services. Marketers can reduce consumer risk by informing audiences about influencer-promoted products and services. Clear disclosures, product information, and customer feedback eliminate confusion and increase confidence. Marketers can optimize influencer marketing techniques to improve consumer attitudes and results by understanding these dynamics.

## Limitations and future research

Our study provides useful insights into influencer marketing dynamics, but it has several limitations. Our research uses self-reported data, which may introduce method bias and social desirability bias. To improve results, future studies could include objective metrics and behavioral data. Second, our cross-sectional study limits causation and change tracking. To better understand consumer views towards influencers, longitudinal studies may be useful. The demographics and social media platforms studied may also limit the generalizability of our findings. More diverse and

representative samples and social media context exploration can alleviate this problem. Future influencer marketing studies should explore various intriguing options. First, cross-cultural research could show how cultural differences affect trust, attractiveness, perceived expertise, credibility, influencer attitudes, and perceived dangers. Second, experimental designs can establish causal relationships and isolate each factor's impact, improving knowledge of these dynamics. Thirdly, qualitative research might reveal consumers' nuanced views of influencer marketing risk. Neuroscience is another intriguing area of study on consumer influencer responses. Marketing efforts can be better tailored by segmenting consumers by influencer responses and perceived risks. Long-term studies on influencer effects on attitudes and behaviors and influencer marketing ethics can also help. Finally, understanding digital marketing requires keeping up with new social media platforms and trends like virtual influencers and livestream shopping. We can better comprehend influencer-consumer interactions in the digital age by addressing these limitations and pursuing these research initiatives.

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