

The Sway of Credibility: How Influencer Trustworthiness Impacts Millennials' Purchase Intentions

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Abstract. The rise of social media has led to an increasing impact of influencers on consumers, shaping their perspectives and beliefs. Recent research on social media influencers (SMIs) has made significant progress in examining their influence on consumer buying decisions. However, there is a need to understand the relationship between SMI attributes and consumer choices. This research gap underscores the importance of delving deeper into the attributes of SMIs that shape consumer behaviour. This study aims to explore how the attributes of social media influencers (SMIs) impact consumers' inclination to purchase a product. The research focused on 200 millennials residing in the Klang Valley region of Malaysia who actively follow SMIs on social media, with 135 of them meeting the criteria as eligible participants. The research employed a quantitative method, utilizing an online questionnaire to collect information about how millennials perceive the attributes of SMIs on their PI. The results reveal that the only attribute influencing PI is the credibility of the source. These results add to the body of Social Learning Theory by confirming its principles within the realm of SMIs and their impact on consumer PI. Furthermore, the study enhances our understanding of SMIs by identifying the key determinants of influencer marketing's impact on purchase intent. It highlights the importance for marketers to prioritize selecting credible influencers for their campaigns, emphasizing the need for careful consideration in choosing influencers who maintain a trustworthy and genuine online presence.

Keywords: social media, influencers, purchase intention, source credibility, millennials.

1. Introduction

The introduction of social media has revolutionized online marketing by allowing businesses to reach a wide audience in real-time (Kemp, 2021). Social media can be described as a website that enables users to create profiles, exchange relationship information, and engage in various activities such as sharing content, building relationships, creating groups, and having conversations (Evans et al. 2021). As stated by Kapoor (2021), the study confirms that social media is a technology-driven tool that facilitates interaction and networking.

Web 2.0 technology is the foundation of social media creation, harnessing collective intelligence and providing a platform for media-rich content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It evolved from an open-source ideology, enabling users to share work and collaborate on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn (Asur & Huberman, 2010). Social media has become a reliable marketing source due to its aggressive usage and growth in users (Evans et al. 2021). This has led to the formation of social media influencers (SMI), who are key opinion leaders with a strong circle of influence and active presence on social media (Evans et al. 2021). SMIs can influence their audience by spreading information and making a significant impact through their knowledge, attractiveness, and skills (Evans et al. 2021). Influencer marketing is a growing trend in Malaysia, with influencers working alongside marketers and brand owners to influence consumers' decisions (Mohd Thas Thaker et al., 2021). As a result, market growth driven by media traffic, engagement, and the ability of influencers requiring product influencers for marketability has become a norm for each product.

In 2023, Malaysia holds the 10th position globally for internet usage (Digital, 2023). According to Digital's report, Malaysia has around 30.25 million social media users, which makes up 91.7% of the country's total population of 33.5 million (Digital, 2022). In a survey conducted by Rakuten Insight (2023), it was revealed that approximately 89% of Malaysians aged 16 to 24 follow at least one SMI. Additionally, the survey found that most of these respondents had made purchases based on influencer endorsements (Statista, 2023). The surge in e-commerce is also noteworthy, often paralleling the growth in social media usage. Users frequently shop directly through apps like Instagram and Facebook. Recent statistics on Malaysia's e-commerce sector indicate that the country is poised to achieve the highest e-commerce growth rate among all ASEAN nations (Factory, 2023).

Social media influencers (SMIs) have garnered significant attention in recent social media research. Prior studies have explored various aspects, including the reliability and growth of social media as a marketing communication channel (Kemp, 2021), the role of SMIs in social media marketing (Asur & Huberman, 2010; Moreno et al., 2015; Osayemi, 2019), their success (Jin et al., 2019), comparisons with traditional media (Conde & Casais, 2023; Maden, 2018), the impact of organic engagement on purchase intention (PI) (Lou & Yuan, 2019), factors influencing SMI effectiveness (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lim et al., 2017), consumers' positive reactions to SMIs (Ge & Gretzel, 2018), and the effect of SMIs on PI (Conde & Casais, 2023). While Gräve's (2019) study focused on various metrics to support influencer marketing efforts and campaign evaluation, there exists a research gap concerning the role of SMIs as endorsers. To fill the gap, this study aims to investigate the characteristics of SMI, specifically source credibility, source attractiveness, product match-up, and communication, as suggested in future research by Lim et al. (2017). The objective is to gain insights into how these factors influence PI.

To summarize, there is a research gap in understanding the impact of SMI endorsement on consumer PI. Although previous research has suggested its significance, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the specific aspects of SMI endorsement that affect consumer PI. The present study aims to identify the most critical attributes of SMI endorsers that influence the PI of Millennials.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical underpinning

Bandura's social learning theory (1963) has found extensive application, particularly in academic research within the domains of communication and advertising. This theory offers a solid foundation for scholarly exploration, as supported by Kinf and Multon (1996) and Martin & Bush (2000). Moschis & Churchill (1978) provide justification for this theory by highlighting its capacity to explain the influence of both direct and indirect social interactions among individuals, which, in turn, propel motivation and foster the development of favourable attitudes. Within the context of adopting the social learning theory, previous studies have delved into socialization factors such as celebrities, peers, and family, as exemplified by Martin & Bush (2000) and North & Kotze (2001). Their empirical findings underscore the relevance and applicability of this theory in understanding how individuals acquire behaviours. In our study, the incorporation of Bandura's social learning theory aligns seamlessly with our research objectives and is bolstered by a body of empirical evidence within the field. This theory serves as a strong theoretical underpinning for our research, connecting it to a well-established framework while drawing support from existing research findings.

A number of empirical studies have consistently shown that the social learning theory is highly applicable in understanding consumer behaviour and the impact of external influences on it. For instance, Kinf and Multon (1996) and Martin & Bush (2000) have applied this theory effectively to predict and explain consumption behaviours. These studies underline the theory's relevance and utility in the realm of consumer research. Moschis & Churchill (1978) have provided empirical evidence supporting this concept, reinforcing the idea that individuals are indeed influenced by their social environment. Moreover, Makgosa's (2010) prior investigation has empirically demonstrated the impact of celebrities on consumption behaviours, providing a precedent for exploring the influence of SMIs in our study. While the social learning theory serves as a strong theoretical underpinning for our research, connecting it to a well-established framework, empirical finding underscores the relevance of our research focus and suggests that SMIs can play a pivotal role in shaping consumer choices.

2.2. Attributes of Social Media Influencers

Social media influencers (SMIs) assume a pivotal role in the realm of social media marketing by capturing attention and amplifying brand visibility (Moran & Muzellec, 2017; Zhao et al. 2018). Recognizing the influential sway of SMIs, businesses and marketing agencies have incorporated them into their strategies to effectively target audiences and enhance the overall efficacy of their campaigns, as emphasized by Ong & Ito (2019). Collaborating with SMIs fosters improved communication and promotional efforts, ensuring precise and resonant messaging with the intended audience, an observation supported by Ge et al. (2018). De Veirman et al. (2017) define SMIs as internet users who boast a substantial following on social media platforms and command high respect for their expertise, perspectives, and reputation. They actively engage with their audience, offering glimpses into their personal lives, lifestyles, and consumer choices, thereby stimulating the generation of user-generated content (UGC) and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Gräve, 2019; Rosario et al. 2020). SMIs evoke feelings of aspiration, admiration, and association among their followers, rendering them figures of widespread recognition and renown, an insight echoed by Jafarova & Tolon (2022).

Social media influencers (SMIs) can be likened to micro-celebrities who independently create and share content on social media platforms without the involvement of professional marketing or agencies (Alassani & Goretz, 2019; Rathore et al. 2016). These individuals have the capacity to amass followers and fans organically, without resorting to traditional marketing techniques, as highlighted by Gräve (2019). Unlike earlier times when conventional celebrities garnered followers without the aid of social media marketing, SMIs today can establish themselves in influencer roles by consistently producing content on social media and engaging with their audience (Pachitanu, A. (2016). SMIs forge a sense of

connection with their followers by offering daily glimpses into their personal lives and lifestyles, as emphasized by Alassani & Goretz (2019). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that not all SMIs adopt an open approach, as some prefer more private interactions, as pointed out by Dhanesh & Duthler (2019). In navigating their roles, SMIs must make choices regarding honesty, authenticity, and genuineness to effectively engage their followers and maintain transparent relationships, as these factors significantly impact their brand image (Berryman & Kavka, 2017). The popularity of SMIs hinges on their affability, relatability, interactivity, confidence, and effective communication skills when disseminating information, a phenomenon ascertained by Conde & Casais (2023).

2.2.1. Source Credibility

Source credibility is a crucial factor in understanding the effectiveness of endorsements, as it positively influences PI. Expertise plays a significant role in this process, as studies have shown that credible information from credible sources affects consumers' PI (Al Mamun et al., 2023; Weismueller et al., 2020). Studies also show that source credibility has a highly relevant effect on PI (Saima & Khan, 2020; Sokilova & Kefi, 2020). Credible sources can change consumers' intentions to purchase by creating a positive influence through the process of accepting others' attitudes, values, and perceptions (Wang et al. 2017). Influencers' credibility and persuasion ability are dependent on expertise and trustworthiness, as noted by Hovland & Weiss (1951).

Consumers are more confident and more likely to buy the product if SMI can produce truthful and accurate information (Zhang & Gursoy, 2020). On the contrary, the honesty, integrity, and believability of the SMI impact consumers' confidence in the information and influence their PI (Jafarova & Tolon, 2022). Consumers prefer digital celebrities like SMIs as they appear closer to them and provide more transparent information (Schouten et al., 2020; Ge et al., 2018). However, consumers may perceive paid reviews or endorsements as less trustworthy, as they may assume the SMI is solely endorsing the product based on financial benefits rather than based on the SMI's beliefs (Bergkvist et al., 2016). Finally, SMIs that demonstrate expert and trustworthy values have a better influence on their followers which results in high acceptance of assisting consumers' intention to purchase (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Rahmi et al. 2017).

2.2.2. Source Attractiveness

Source attractiveness in social media influencers (SMIs) is influenced by their physical and social attributes, personal traits, creativity, and lifestyle (Delbaere et al., 2021). It is influenced by attractive features like personalities and qualities, which can change consumer beliefs (Chekima et al., 2020). Source attractiveness is based on social psychology (McGuire, 1985) and is dependent on factors like similarity, familiarity, and likeability (Chun et al., 2018; Grave, 2017; De Veriman et al., 2017).

Social media influencers (SMIs) are considered preferred sources if their demographic is similar to the audience. They are more influential if they appear less expert and share similarities with the audience (Conde, 2019). Shared interests, attitudes, values, and appearances demonstrate public demonstrations, fostering a positive influence on consumers' PI and enhancing their connection (Ladhari et al., 2020). The audience's familiarity with a source of information (SMI) is crucial for its effectiveness (Li & Yin, 2018). By understanding SMI better, consumers are more likely to follow their recommendations and make positive purchasing decisions (Chun et al., 2018). Moreover, products promoted by the attractive SMI are more likeable than those presented by less attractive SMI (Peng et al., 2020). An example of this is the study conducted by Tp and Mohan (2023), which determined that in the context of cosmetic products, the appeal of SMIs is as significant as their credibility in influencing customers' PI. As a result, consumers are positively impacted by source attractiveness in terms of similarity, familiarity, and likeability (Lim et al., 2017).

2.2.3. Product Match-up

The effectiveness of the endorsement from the SMI is dependent on the good relationship between SMI and the product characteristics (Kamins, 1990). Customers expect the product to be compatible with the SMI by comparing the product qualities with SMI characteristics (Khan et al., 2019). Lim (2017) mentioned in her study that it is important to collaborate with the SMI that has a relation with the endorsed product and is knowledgeable about it. According to Kumar (2011), the consumer intention to purchase may change if they identify an inconsistency between the SMI and the endorsed product. Similarly, Lee & Koo (2015) argued that consumer intention may be disturbed if the credibility of the SMI to endorse the product was not at the right pace. Moreover, Ezenwafor et al., (2021) concluded that the likelihood of positive responses to the endorsement, like increased customer engagement and potential PI, is directly related to the degree of alignment between the influencer and the product they are endorsing.

The close alignment between the social media influencer (SMI) and the product they endorse plays a pivotal role in enhancing the impact of the SMI's recommendation, ultimately influencing consumers' intentions to make a purchase (Gong and Li, 2017). Similarly, as shown by Lim et al. in 2017, a strong compatibility between the product and the SMI significantly enhances the effectiveness of the endorsement. To summarize, it is crucial that the product brand is represented by a suitable SMI whose characteristics align with those of the product. Furthermore, ensuring that the brand image harmonizes with the SMI's message and content is essential for capturing the audience's attention and motivating them to buy the product (Schouten et al. in 2020).

2.2.4. Communication

In the process of creating value, the initial stage of interaction between brands and consumers is communication (Lim et al., 2017). Persuasion is influenced by how communication takes place and the content of the message. Social media influencers (SMIs) functioned as the human representation of brands, facilitating a human connection between both consumers and the brands themselves. The results from Qian and Mao's (2023) research finding demonstrate that proficiency and effective communication exert a positive influence on followers' willingness to persist in following a blogger. It's crucial to comprehend the type of message conveyed by social media influencers (SMIs) in order to impact consumer PI, (Lou and Yuan, 2019).

Social media communication has the ability to generate various experiences and perceptions for consumers due to its capacity to increase engagement through comments and likes (Khan et al., 2019). Effective social media communication can boost purchase intention by shaping consumer decision-making processes and fostering positive perceptions (Shareef et al., 2019). The effectiveness of SMI endorsements on purchase intent has received limited attention in research. Consequently, Lim et al. (2017) recommended that the role of communication should be thoroughly investigated in this context to better understand how SMI communication affects consumers' PI.

2.3. Purchase Intention (PI)

The possibility of a consumer being interested in the product or having the intention to buy or plan to purchase a product is known as PI (Martins et al., 2019). It is a continuation of a consumer's desire or need to purchase a certain product after completing the evaluation or socialisation process of the product (Younus et al., 2015). It evaluates marketing effectiveness and predicts sales and market share for a brand (Wardani et al., 2019). The consumers' increasing intention to purchase will determine the high possibility of the product purchase (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Using influencers in marketing is an effective strategy as they impact consumer decisions, opinions, attitudes, and behaviour (Huang & Copeland, 2020; Shah et al. 2019).

3. Methodology

This study aims to assess how effective social media influencers (SMIs) are in influencing consumers' PI. The research framework is built upon the widely recognized social learning theory, a common approach in academic research, as discussed by Bust et al. (2004). This choice is in line with Makgosa's (2010) recommendation that the social learning theory serves as a foundational concept for understanding social media influencers. SMIs, being like celebrities in their ability to influence and guide audience attitudes and decision-making via social media, make this theory particularly relevant. The effectiveness of SMIs, including factors like source attractiveness, communication, source credibility, and product match-up, is expected to positively impact individuals' PI by leveraging insights from the social learning theory. Drawing from previous research, a conceptual framework with associated hypotheses has been developed.

Figure 1 represents the research framework of the study.

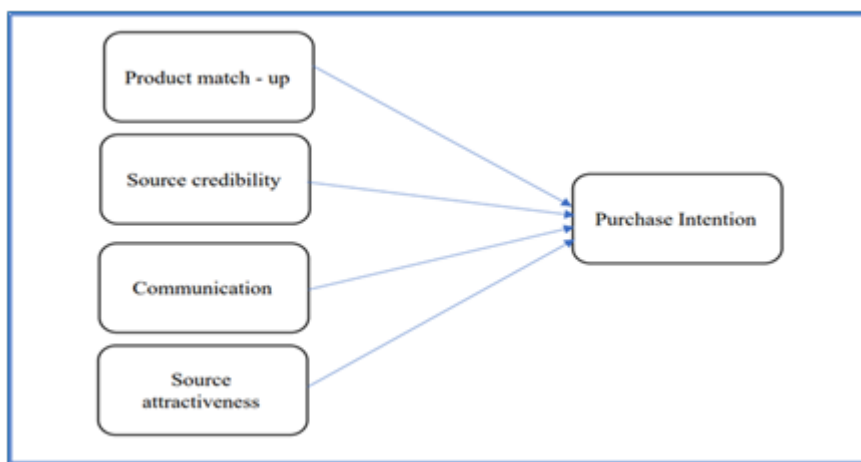


Fig.1: The research framework of the study

Based on the existing literature the following hypotheses are assumed:

- H1: Source credibility has an influence on PI.
- H2: Source attractiveness has an influence on PI.
- H3: Product match-up has an influence on PI.
- H4: Communication has an influence on PI.

To achieve the research objective, this study utilized primary data collection methods, focusing on the millennial demographic aged between 26 and 41, employed in private sectors within the Klang Valley region. An online self-administered questionnaire was employed as the data collection tool, chosen for its ability to gather data in a standardized, efficient, and cost-effective manner, as outlined by Ponchio et al. (2021). Before distributing the questionnaire, experts were consulted to ensure its reliability and alignment with the study's context. Subsequently, a pilot test involving 20 targeted respondents was conducted to assess the questionnaire's content and practicality. This pilot testing phase allowed for improvements to be made to the questionnaire before the main data collection, while also helping identify any necessary refinements to the questions.

This study employed a convenient sampling approach to select a sample from a specific target population. The desired sample size for the study was set at 200 respondents, and two criteria were applied to determine eligible participants: they had to fall within the millennial age range of 26 to 41 years and be followers of social media influencers. The questionnaire employed a Likert scale format, where respondents rated each response on a scale of 1 to 5, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly

agree. For the practical measurement of variables, the questionnaire adopted the items from existing studies to assess PI (Alalwan, 2018), source credibility (Ohanian, 1991), source attractiveness (Kent & Allen, 1994), product match-up (Till & Busler, 2000), and communication (Venkatesh et al., 2012; Alalwan, 2018). Out of the 200 questionnaires distributed, 135 were completed and deemed usable, resulting in a response rate of 67%. Data analysis was conducted by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Multiple regression was used to analyse the data. The Multiple Linear Regression method, as outlined by Zikmund et al. (2013), can help reveal how two or more independent variables collectively influence a single dependent variable.

4. Results

The percentage rate of the respondent was calculated under the response rate element. In this research, a total of 200 questionnaires were distributed and 135 responses were collected to make up the 67% response rate. The data collected in this study is considered normal since the skewness and kurtosis within +/- 2. Multicollinearity was assessed to confirm the independence of all four independent variables. The outcome revealed that each of the four independent variables had VIF values below 2, signifying the absence of multicollinearity. In simpler terms, there is no notable correlation between the specific independent variable and the others. As a result, the precision of the coefficient estimate remains unaffected, indicating their independence.

4.1. Reliability Analysis

Table 1 presents the value of Cronbach’s Alpha for the variables to ensure the consistency of the instruments. The Cronbach’s alpha value ranges from 0.68 to 0.87. Based on Table 1, PI provides a very good alpha coefficient of 0.87 followed by product match-up where the alpha coefficient was 0.86. Overall, all the constructs managed to represent a very good strength of association for the alpha coefficient.

Table 1. Reliability Analysis

Constructs	Cronbach’s Alpha	Number of items
Purchase Intention	0.87	4
Source Credibility	0.68	4
Source Attractiveness	0.81	4
Product Match-Up	0.86	4
Communication	0.87	4

4.2. Correlation Analysis

Table 2 presents the construct's correlation matrix. The independent and dependent variables exhibit a positive relationship. The correlation between the variables is between 0.639 and 0.785, which is a strong correlation and meets the validity criteria of the constructs (Robinson et al., 1991).

Table 2. Correlation Matrix

	Purchase intention	Source Credibility	Source attractiveness	Product match up	Communication
Purchase intention	1.00				
Source credibility	0.780**	1.00			
Source attractiveness	0.725**	0.747**	1.00		
Product match-up	0.694**	0.659**	0.785**	1.00	
Communication	0.671**	0.639**	0.720**	0.732**	1.00

Note: ** p<0.05

4.3. Descriptive statistics

Tables 3 and 4 provide an overview of the study participants' characteristics and their social media usage patterns. Table 3 reveals the demographic profile of 135 respondents, The gender distribution consists of 80 males and 55 females, representing 59.3% and 40.7%, respectively. The age group with the largest proportion is 31 to 35 years, covering the majority at 48.1%. Conversely, the age group with the smallest representation is 36 to 41 years, accounting for 16.3%. In the middle, we find the age group of 26 to 30 years, contributing 35.6%. Marital status indicates that most respondents, comprising 88 individuals, are married, representing 65.2%. The remaining respondents, totalling 47, are single, accounting for 34.8%. In terms of occupation, most respondents (119) are employed, constituting 88.1%. The second most common occupation among respondents is self-employment, with 11 participants, or 8.1%. The least represented group in this study consists of students, with five participants, contributing 3.7%.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

Particulars	Number	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	80	59.3
Female	55	40.7
<i>Age</i>		
26-30	48	38.6
31-35	65	48.1
36-41	22	16.3
<i>Marital status</i>		
Married	88	65.2
Single	47	34.8
<i>Employment status</i>		
Student	5	3.7
Self-employed	11	8.1
Employee	119	88.1

Table 4 displays various statistics regarding social media usage as reported by the respondents. The data indicates that the majority of respondents favour Instagram as their primary social media platform, with 38.5% of them using it, closely followed by Facebook at 33.3%. This preference for Instagram extends to their choice of social media influencers (SMIs). A significant number of respondents follow fewer than five media influencers. Regarding the frequency of accessing SMIs through social media, a substantial portion of respondents reported doing so sometimes (32%) and always (31%). When it comes to the preferred content topics, fashion and sports are the top choices among the respondents, with 31% and 25% expressing a strong interest in these categories.

Table 4. Statistics on Social Media

Particulars	Number	Percentage
<i>Channels</i>		
Facebook	45	33.3
Instagram	52	38.5
TikTok	15	11.1
Twitter	14	10.4
You Tube	9	6.7
<i>Preferred SM to follow SMI</i>		
Facebook	19	14.1
Instagram	79	58.5
TikTok	7	5.2
Twitter	8	5.9
You Tube	20	14.8
Others	2	1.50
<i>Number of SMIs followed by</i>		
Less than 5	43	31.9
5-10	41	30.3
11-20	33	24.4
21-30	5	3.7
30+	13	9.6
<i>SM usage for access to SMIs</i>		
Always	42	31.1
Sometimes	43	31.9
Usually	32	23.7
Rarely	15	11.1
Never	3	2.2

Insights on the primary topics frequently discussed by social media influencers (SMIs) are presented in Table 5. Fashion emerges as the most dominant topic, accounting for 31% of the conversation. Sports closely follows, capturing the attention of about 34 respondents, which translates to 25% of the total discourse. General knowledge also contributes significantly, making up 20% of the discussions. However, entertainment and technology receive less attention, each contributing only 3% and 4%, respectively. Video games and food occupy an intermediate space, with 9% and 8% of the overall discourse, respectively.

Table 5. The predominant topic discussed by social media influencers

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Sport	34	25	25
Fashion	42	31	56
General Knowledge	27	20	76
Technology	5	4	80
Entertainment	4	3	83

Table 6 presents descriptive statistics of different variables, including standard deviation and mean. The table provides insight into how consumers perceive and intend to use social media influencers to affect their purchasing decisions, as well as how credible and appealing these influencers are. Purchase

intention measures peoples' propensity to buy goods marketed by social media influencers. The items in this dimension have mean values ranging from 3.04 to 3.24 and standard deviations from 0.957 to 1.109. The reliability of social media influencers in swaying consumer decisions is evaluated by source credibility. The items in this dimension have mean scores that range from 2.70 to 3.08 and standard deviations that fall between 1.065 and 1.192. Similarly, the Source attractiveness dimension assesses how consumer behaviour is influenced by the attractiveness of social media influencers. The standard deviations for these items are between 1.012 and 1.175, and the mean values range from 2.73 to 3.40. Product Match-Up investigates the compatibility of a product with the persona or style of a social media influencer. With standard deviations ranging from 1.035 to 1.156, the mean values for the items in this dimension range from 3.02 to 3.40. How well social media influencers convey product information is examined in the communication dimension. The standard deviations for these items are between 1.052 and 1.148, and the mean values range from 3.05 to 3.45.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Items and Variables

Construct	Items	Mean	Standard deviation
Purchase intention	Q1) I'm more inclined to purchase a product that a social media influencer promotes	3.24	1.009
	Q2) I generally recommend products advertised by social media influencers	3.04	0.957
	Q3) I have the intention to buy a product that a social media influencer promotes	3.16	1.031
	Q4) The opinion of social media influencers is crucial when purchasing a new product	3.04	1.109
Source Credibility	Q1) I am more likely to try a product that is endorsed by a social media influencer	3.08	1.065
	Q2) If a product is recommended by my favourite social media influencer, I will buy it	2.93	1.073
	Q3) Social media influencers are always my reference when purchasing products	2.70	1.192
	Q4) If a social media influencer is paid to promote a product, it would not negatively impact my perception of their credibility	2.86	1.141
Source attractiveness	Q1) The persuasive voice of a social media influencer makes me buy the product	2.78	1.012
	Q2) I actively look for social media influencer reviews before making a purchasing decision	2.73	1.175
	Q3) Social media influencers who produce creative content make me interested in buying the product	3.28	1.111
	Q4) I would buy the product if the social media influencer related it to their lifestyle	3.40	1.094
Product match-up	Q1) I will buy the product if the product matches the social media influencer's personality	3.03	1.133
	Q2) The reliability of the product will increase if the social media influencer's personality matches the product	3.24	1.143
	Q3) I would buy the product if it has been used by the social media influencer me interested to buy the product	3.02	1.156
	Q4) I am more likely to buy a product that is presented on a social media influencer's live video.	2.87	1.035
Communication	Q1) I will purchase the product based on positive feedback from a social media influencer	3.45	1.056
	Q2) Social media influencers always provide complete product information that makes me purchase the product	3.05	1.148

Q3) Social media influencers provide product information better than product advertisements on media	3.26	1.072
Q4) Social media influencers provide clear guidance on how to choose a suitable product	3.21	1.052

4.4. Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 7 presents the results from multiple regression analysis. From the result, it is observed that the model is significant at <0.001 and $F= 70.129$ implying that at least one of the independent variables shows a significant effect on the PI. $R^2 = 0.683$ indicates that the model explains 68.3% of the variance of the dependent variable. The coefficient of all the variables is positive to the dependent variable, PI. The standardized coefficient ranges from 0.124 to 0.479. Even though the model is significant, only one independent variable—source credibility—is significantly (at <0.05 level) influencing PI. As a result, an increase in source credibility of one unit would result in a 0.489 unit increase in PI.

Table 7. Regression Analysis

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the estimate		
1	0.827	0.683	0.674	0.49963		

ANOVA						
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	70.026	4	17.507	70.129	<.001
	Residual	32.452	130	0.250		
	Total	102.479	134			

Regression Analysis

Variable	Un-standardized coefficient Beta	standardized coefficient Beta	t value	Sig.
Constant	0.379	-	2.188	0.03
Source credibility	0.489	0.479	6.257	0.001*
Source attractiveness	0.123	0.124	1.313	0.192
Product match-up	0.158	0.171	1.962	0.052
Communication	0.145	0.151	1.935	0.055

* Significant at <0.05 level

4.5. Hypothesis Testing

Table 8 presents the summary of the hypothesis results. The first hypothesis (H1) is supported as the significant value for source credibility is less than 0.001, which is below the conventional significance level of 0.05. This indicates a significant and positive relationship between source credibility and PI. On the other hand, the second hypothesis (H2) is rejected since the p-value for source attractiveness is 0.192, which is higher than the conventional significance levels of 0.05 and 0.10. Thus, we conclude that there is no significant relationship between source attractiveness and PI. The third hypothesis is also rejected as the significant value for product match-up is 0.052, which is greater than the accepted significance level of 0.05. This means that there is no significant relationship between product match-up and PI. Lastly, the fourth hypothesis is rejected due to a significant value of 0.055, which is above the 0.05 threshold. This suggests a weak and non-significant relationship between communication and PI.

Table 8. Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Supported / Rejected
H1: Source credibility impact on PI	Supported
H2: Source attractiveness impact on PI	Rejected
H3: Product match-up impact on PI	Rejected
H4: Communication impact on PI	Rejected

5. Discussions

Social media influencers (SMIs) have reshaped the marketing and advertising landscape, offering brands and products a platform to engage users and enhance sales. This research explores the influence of SMIs on consumer PI, with a specific focus on elements like source credibility, attractiveness, product alignment, and communication. The study reveals that the 26-41 age group, predominantly comprising millennials, demonstrates a preference for Instagram as their primary social media platform, closely followed by Facebook. Among this demographic, the 31-35 age bracket is the most prominent. Most survey participants follow around five SMI accounts on their social media platforms, which aligns with a 2019 Mediakix study highlighting Instagram's popularity. Respondents frequently utilize social media, using it at times to balance various aspects of their lives. The central goal of this research was to validate the impact of SMIs on purchase intent by scrutinizing four key factors: product alignment, source attractiveness, source credibility, and communication. It is worth noting that not all the hypotheses proposed in the study's findings were substantiated.

The results demonstrate a noteworthy and positive association between source credibility and PI. In accordance with the principles of Social Learning Theory, individuals have a propensity to trust and base their decisions on information emanating from reliable sources. When a source is deemed credible, people are more inclined to learn from it and heed its recommendations. This may elucidate why source credibility exerts a substantial influence on PI. In this study, source credibility stands out as the sole influential factor that exhibits an impact on PI. Besides, these findings align with previous research conducted by Gayathri & Anwar (2019), Ismagilova et al. (2019), and Seiler & Kucza (2017), all of which suggest that source credibility tends to have a positive effect on PI. Consequently, source credibility can serve as a connecting link with other studies, thereby enhancing our comprehension of the efficacy of SMIs.

Given that the results indicate the absence of a significant connection between source attractiveness and PI, we can infer that individuals in this context may not be influenced by or learn from the appeal of the source. This could be attributed to the presence of other overriding factors in this specific scenario, exerting a more dominant role in shaping PI, thus overshadowing the impact of source attractiveness. In contrast, other studies, such as the work of Wang & Scheibaum (2018), have found a positive relationship between source attractiveness and PI, suggesting that a more appealing source tends to have a more favourable impact on consumer purchasing intentions. Consequently, it appears that various characteristics yield different results when compared to the existing literature.

The Social Learning Theory also provides insight into this outcome. When a negative correlation exists between product match-up and PI, it implies that individuals might be learning from instances where the product does not align with their requirements or anticipations. In accordance with this theory, this learning process can lead to a diminished PI when the product does not meet their perceived needs or preferences. The suitability of the product match-up plays a dual role in determining the effectiveness of SMIs in influencing PI. If the product is endorsed by an ill-suited SMI, it can evoke skepticism. Conversely, when a well-matched SMI endorses the product, it can generate positive intentions among consumers to purchase the product (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016).

The limited and statistically insignificant correlation between communication and PI implies that, in this context, communication might not exert a substantial influence. In accordance with the principles of the Social Learning Theory, if communication were a pivotal factor, individuals would typically glean information from the messages they receive and be more influenced in their purchasing decisions. However, in this case, it appears that other determinants may hold more sway in shaping PI. It is worth noting that prior research has demonstrated a positive association between communication and PI. For instance, Alalwan (2018) established a link between three communication and consumer intent to purchase. Additionally, Sarraf & Teshnizi (2020) provided evidence that when social media influencers (SMIs) offer interactive and entertaining content, they can indeed impact consumer purchase intent.

5.1. Contribution and Implications

These findings contribute to Social Learning Theory by validating its principles in the context of SMIs and consumer PI. It also provides a framework to understand how individuals learn and make decisions by observing and modelling the behaviour of others, as well as the role of credibility, product match-up, and communication in influencing PI. The theory can be used to interpret the results as a reflection of how learning from different sources and social interactions impacts consumer decision-making in the given context.

The practical implications provide valuable insights for marketers looking to leverage influencer marketing effectively and adapt their strategies to changing external circumstances. The findings emphasize the importance of utilizing credible sources for product endorsements. Marketers should carefully select SMIs known for their credibility to maximize their influence on PI. In addition, understanding the impact of product match-ups is crucial. Brands should ensure that their products align with SMI's image and audience to avoid scepticism and foster positive PI. Furthermore, the study suggests that not all communication strategies are equally effective. Marketers should focus on the communication aspects that resonate with their target audience and the chosen social media platform.

5.2. Limitations and Future Research

The current study does come with a set of limitations. To begin with, the study was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic, and data was collected through an online self-administered questionnaire using a convenience sample method. Consequently, the sample size wasn't large enough to allow for generalizations from the study's findings. In future research, it would be beneficial to expand the scope of the study to encompass a more diverse age range and broader geographical locations. Additionally, the influence of the COVID-19 situation should be acknowledged as a factor that could potentially impact respondents' feedback. The pandemic has brought about significant economic challenges and budget constraints for many individuals, thereby affecting their purchasing capabilities and daily routines. These factors may lead to changes in their behaviours and, consequently, impact their purchasing power.

Lastly, it's important to note that this research draws its results from respondents who utilize various social media platforms. Each of these platforms caters to distinct user groups with different perceptions and understandings of social media influencers. Future research may consider investigating the same variables but with a focus on a single social media platform, thereby ensuring that the outcomes are more valuable and can serve as a reference for marketing agencies.

6. Conclusion

The current research explores the effect of SMIs on consumer PI. A focus is placed on attributes of influencers such as source credibility, source attractiveness, product match-up, and communication between the source and the consumer. The study found that consumers prefer SMIs with high source credibility over goods with comparable looks, presentations, and packaging, supporting the idea that source credibility affects consumer PI. This study emphasizes how important it is for influencer

marketing to have credible sources, as this can greatly impact consumer PI. Brands can effectively use influencer marketing to build trust, engage with consumers, and drive purchase behaviour by prioritizing transparency and establishing credible partnerships with influencers.

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