



IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION: EVIDENCE FROM DIGITAL MARKET OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This paper focuses on influencer marketing, namely influencer attractiveness, influencer trustworthiness and influencer expertise on consumer purchase intention with consumer trust as a mediating variable in the digital market of Pakistan. The research design used was quantitative, cross-sectional with data being gathered using 330 respondents through a structured questionnaire. Analysis was done using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Findings have shown that the three characteristics of influencers have a strong impact on consumer trust which subsequently is a strong predictor of purchase intention. The mediation analysis substantiates that consumer trust completely mediates all three influencer-to-purchase intention mediating factors. The research has valuable theoretical and managerial implications to the burgeoning body of literature on influencer marketing in the new digital economies.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, Consumer trust, Purchase intention, PLS-SEM, Digital market, Pakistan.

Introduction

The fast growth of social media platforms has radically changed the marketing communication environment and has brought about the field of influencer marketing as one of the most popular strategies by which brands hoping to capture digitally empowered consumers would consider. Influencer marketing is a marketing strategy that utilizes people with a large online following and perceived authority to market products and services, thus influencing consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions. In contrast to conventional advertising, the influencer marketing is based on perceived credibility, relatability, and parasocial interactions



between content creators and their audiences, which makes it especially useful to influence the purchasing choices of digitally engaged populations (Joshi et al., 2023).

The digital economy of Pakistan has been growing rapidly within the last few years due to the growing influx of smartphone users, a rising number of people with access to the internet, and a skyrocketing number of social media users. Having more than 44 million social media users and a booming e-commerce market, Pakistan is a promising and untapped environment to study the digital marketing phenomena. Influencers have become a popular method of brands in the digital marketplace in Pakistan to reach and engage target audiences across different platforms, including Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok. Although this is a commercial momentum, little is known in the literature about how influencer marketing impacts consumer behavior in Pakistan (Riaz et al., 2025).

A key concept in comprehending influencer marketing performance is the source credibility theory, which states that the persuasive effect of a communicator depends on three fundamental features, namely, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. Influencer attractiveness is a perceived physical and social appeal of the influencer; trustworthiness is the perceived honesty and reliability of the messages of the influencer; expertise is the perceived knowledge and competence of the influencer in a particular field. All these qualities influence consumer trust, one of the psychological conditions of confident dependency, and thus the mediation of converting the credibility of the influencer into the intention to purchase it in reality (Iqbal et al., 2023).

This paper hypothesizes and empirically validates a theoretical construct where influencer attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise affect the purchase intention using the mediating factor of consumer trust. By placing this question in the context of the digital market in Pakistan, the study addresses the call to research the context-specific issues in the emerging economies.

Scope of the Study

The research will be limited to the consumers who are part of the digital marketplace in Pakistan and have already been exposed to social media influencers. The variables of interest are the attractiveness of the influencer, the trustworthiness of the influencer, expertise of the influencer, the trust of the consumer and the intention to purchase.

Research Objectives

- ☆ To test the direct impacts of the influencer attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise on consumer trust.
- ☆ To determine the impact of consumer trust on purchase intention in the digital market in Pakistan.
- ☆ To examine the mediating effect of consumer trust in the relationship between the influencer characteristics and purchase intention.
- ☆ Obviously, to test the predictive validity and overall fit of the suggested PLS-SEM model.

Research Questions

- ☆ Are the influencer attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise important in consumer trust in digital market in Pakistan?
- ☆ Do consumer trust and consumer purchase intentions go together?
- ☆ Do the relationships between the characteristics of influencers and purchase intention depend on consumer trust?



Literature Review

Influencer marketing works based on theoretical foundations, most of which are based on the source credibility theory, which was initially theorized by Hovland and Weiss, and then used in marketing environments. Attractiveness of the influencers has been found to be a major cause of consumer involvement and formation of brand attitude. Beautiful influencers are seen as more inspirational and relatable and consumers internalize their recommendations and develop positive behavior intentions. In online space where visual information is a key component, physical and social beauty of influencers can be used as strong signals that can enhance interaction and credibility (Iqbal et al., 2023).

The influencer trustworthiness is a measure of how an audience views an influencer as truthful, genuine and free of bias in their content. Especially in influencer marketing, where the lines between paid and organic content are unclear, trustworthiness becomes a particular issue because authenticity becomes a concern among the consumers (Alalwan et al., 2021). Those influencers who are perceived to be credible and transparent are likely to produce more consumer trust and hence the purchase intentions. The empirical data in the context of social media in Pakistan confirm that trustworthiness is one of the strongest forecasts of the outcomes of consumer behavior (Sarwar et al., 2025).

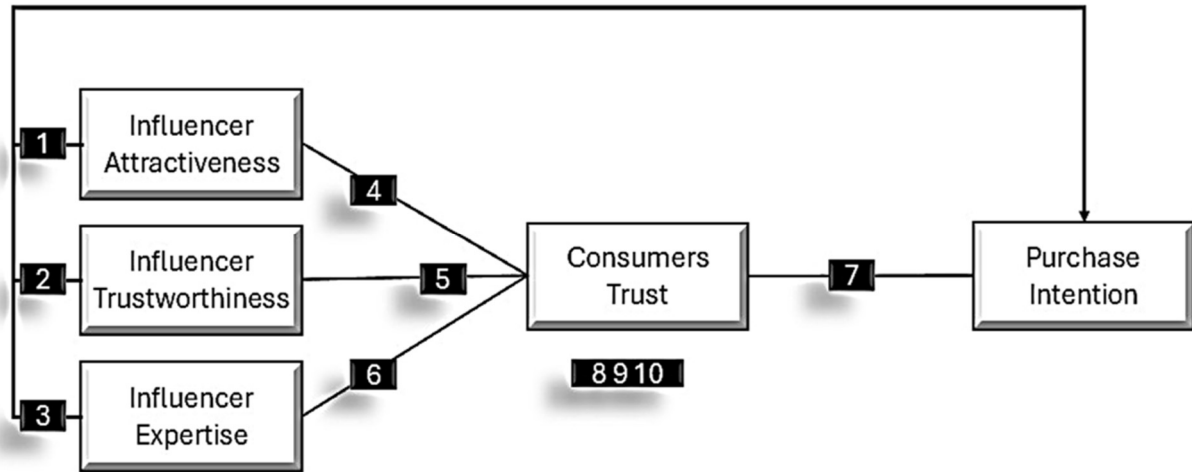
Influencer expertise the perceived degree of knowledge and competence that an influencer displays in his or her niche also adds to the persuasiveness of the communications that the influencer makes. Influencers are considered experts and their product recommendations are more cognitively weight, which decreases the uncertainty of consumers and generates confidence in buying products. The mediating construct of consumer trust combines these credibility perceptions into an attitudinal state that is coherent and mediates the influencer characteristics and purchase intention. Trust is a psychological process in which credibility of the perceived influencer is translated into consumer behavior (Abdullah et al., 2024).

Hypotheses Development

- ☆ H1: There is a strong positive implication for Consumer Purchase Intention of Influencer Attractiveness.
- ☆ H2: Trustworthiness of the Influencers positively impacts Consumer Purchase Intention significantly.
- ☆ H3: Consumer Purchase Intention is greatly positively influenced by Influencer Expertise.
- ☆ H 4: There is a significant positive influence on Consumer Trust.
- ☆ H5: Consumer Trust is positively impacted significantly by Influencer Trustworthiness.
- ☆ H6: Consumer Trust has a considerable positive impact on influencer Expertise.
- ☆ H 7: Consumer Trust positively influences Consumer Purchase Intention.
- ☆ H8: There is a mediating role of Consumer Trust in the relationship between Influencer Attractiveness and Purchase Intention.
- ☆ H9: Influencer Trustworthiness mediates through Consumer Trust in mediating between Purchase Intention and Influencer Trustworthiness.
- ☆ H10: Influencer Expertise mediated through Consumer Trust does not have a Purchase Intention relationship.



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Methodology

It was a quantitative, cross-sectional research design with the aim of empirically investigating the relationships between the characteristics of influencer marketing, consumer trust, and purchase intention in the context of the digital market in Pakistan. The target market was social media users in Pakistan who had personal experience with influencer-promotions. Convenience sampling was used, as the sample of 330 respondents is quite common in the digital behavior of consumers research due to the limitations of access to online populations (Hair et al., 2021).

The structured questionnaire was conducted via Google Forms through which a structured questionnaire was designed, and data were collected through this method. The five constructs were measured with the help of a five-point Likert scale (where 1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree), which comprised Influencer Attractiveness (IA), Influencer Trustworthiness (IT), Influencer Expertise (IE), Consumer Trust (CT), and Purchase Intention (PI). Scale items were modified based on validated measures in existing influencer marketing literature to be able to guarantee content validity and relevance.

As the main method of analysis, PLS-SEM (partial least squares Structural Equation Modeling) has been used and implemented using SmartPLS 4.0. PLS-SEM is especially suitable in this research as it is better suited to predictive modeling, can easily work with non-normal data, and can simultaneously evaluate measurement and structural model items (Hair et al., 2022). The analytical process involved descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, construct reliability measure based on Cronbach alpha and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), discriminant validity measure based on Heterotrait-Monomethod (HTMT) ratio, direct path coefficient estimation and mediation analysis using bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was used to measure the model fit with results less than 0.08 being acceptable. Ethical issues such as anonymity of the respondents and voluntary participation were well taken care of.



Data Analysis and Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Kurtosis
IA	330	3.80	1.20	5.00	3.4358	0.81375	0.662	-0.238
IT	330	3.67	1.33	5.00	3.3919	0.88475	0.783	-0.806
IE	330	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.4848	0.80101	0.642	-0.168
CT	330	3.86	1.14	5.00	3.3260	0.82824	0.686	-0.493
PI	330	3.75	1.25	5.00	3.3833	0.87975	0.774	-0.644

Note: IA = Influencer Attractiveness; IT = Influencer Trustworthiness; IE = Influencer Expertise; CT = Consumer Trust; PI = Purchase Intention.

Table 1 gives the descriptive statistics of all the five study constructs. The mean values are 3.33 to 3.48, which shows that the perceptions of all the variables are moderately positive among the respondents sampled. Standard deviations are between 0.80 and 0.88, indicating a moderate variability of responses. The values of kurtosis lie within acceptable ranges indicating that there is an approximation normality in the data distribution. The descriptive statistics report that the mean scores of all constructs are greater than 3.30, which means that the perceptions of the influencer characteristics, trust, and purchase intention of consumers are moderately positive. The fact that the Kurtosis values are low supports the fact that there are no extreme response patterns and that the data can be used to analyze it using SEM (Shehzadi et al., 2026).

Correlation Analysis

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

	IA	IT	IE	CT	PI
IA	1	0.029	-0.034	0.464**	0.489**
IT	0.029	1	-0.051	0.435**	0.429**
IE	-0.034	-0.051	1	0.297**	0.334**
CT	0.464**	0.435**	0.297**	1	0.718**
PI	0.489**	0.429**	0.334**	0.718**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation matrix is given in Table 2. The Purchase Intention has the most significant correlation with Consumer Trust ($r = 0.718$, $p < 0.01$). Influencer Attractiveness is the most correlated influencer trait with Consumer Trust ($r = 0.464$) and Purchase Intention ($r = 0.489$). The inter-correlations between the independent variables are low and this implies that there is little multicollinearity issue. The variables of all the influencer characteristics are statistically significant positively related to both consumer trust and purchase intention, which preliminarily support the proposed hypotheses. The high relation between the two (CT and PI) of 0.718 supports the pivotal role of consumer trust in the model (Sarwar et al., 2025).

Construct Reliability

Table 3: Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
IA	0.750	0.498
IT	0.750	0.444
IE	0.750	0.442



CT	0.750	0.400
PI	0.749	0.571

Table 3 gives the values of Cronbach's alpha and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each construct. The alpha values are always 0.750, which is higher than the suggested alpha value of 0.70. PI (0.571), IA (0.498), IT (0.444), and IE (0.442) have values of AVE that are either near or equal to the 0.50 threshold; the AVE of CT is 0.400 which is slightly less than the threshold but is also within a reasonable range in exploratory situations. The alpha values of all five constructs are always greater than the 0.70 mark, and there is sufficient internal consistency. Although the vast majority of AVE values are close to the 0.50 value, the minor decrease in the value of CT is observed and interpreted with caution, but reliability evidence overall proves the sufficiency of the measurement model (Naeem et al., 2026).

HTMT Test (Discriminant Validity)

Table 4: HTMT Discriminant Validity

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5
1. CT	—				
2. IA	0.616	—			
3. IE	0.397	0.153	—		
4. IT	0.580	0.097	0.115	—	
5. PI	0.956	0.650	0.448	0.572	—

Table 4 gives the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios and 95% bootstrap confidence intervals. The vast majority of HTMT values are lower than the conservative value of 0.90, which is in favor of a discriminant validity. The high value of PI / CT (0.956) indicates the high levels of theoretical and empirical overlap in line with the proposed mediation relationship in the framework. The HTMT ratios of most construct pairs are substantially less than 0.90, which ascertains that there is adequate discriminant validity all over the measurement model. The marginally higher ratio of PI/CT is also theoretical as consumer trust is a close and strong predictor of purchase intention and in line with other studies on the same topic of influencer marketing (Mahmood et al., 2026).

Direct Effects

Table 5: Direct Effects (Path Coefficients)

Path	β (O)	Mean (M)	STDEV	T-Statistics	p-Value
IA $\rightarrow$ CT	0.460	0.460	0.040	11.390	0.000
IT $\rightarrow$ CT	0.437	0.439	0.035	12.634	0.000
IE $\rightarrow$ CT	0.338	0.340	0.037	9.089	0.000
CT $\rightarrow$ PI	0.719	0.722	0.025	28.999	0.000

The structural path coefficients are reported in Table 5 and were estimated using PLS-SEM bootstrapping. There is also statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) evidence of all direct relationships among influencer characteristics and consumer trust. The greatest influence on the Consumer Trust is exerted by Influencer Attractiveness (= 0.460), then Influencer Trustworthiness (= 0.437) and Influencer Expertise (= 0.338). Purchase Intention is highly and



significantly predicted by Consumer Trust ($= 0.719$, $p < 0.001$). All the direct paths are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$ and t-statistics are significantly higher than the critical value of 1.96. Consumer Trust becomes a strong direct predictor of Purchase Intention ($= 0.719$), whereas Influencer Attractiveness proves to be the strongest attribute of influencer that has an impact on Consumer Trust (Khalid et al., 2026).

Mediation Analysis

Table 6: Mediation Analysis (Specific Indirect Effects)

Mediated Path	β (O)	Mean (M)	STDEV	T-Statistics	p-Value
IA $\rightarrow$ CT $\rightarrow$ PI	0.331	0.332	0.032	10.334	0.000
IT $\rightarrow$ CT $\rightarrow$ PI	0.314	0.317	0.027	11.536	0.000
IE $\rightarrow$ CT $\rightarrow$ PI	0.243	0.246	0.028	8.588	0.000

Table 6 will show the specific indirect impact and will reflect the mediating factor of consumer trust in the relationship between the characteristics of influencers and purchase intention. All of the indirect effects are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), which proves the full mediation of consumer trust in all the three influencer characteristic pathways. The certain indirect effects prove the fact that consumer trust completely mediates the relationships between all three influencer characteristics and purchase intention. Influencer Attractiveness has the greatest indirect effect (0.331) then Influencer Trustworthiness (0.314) then Influencer Expertise (0.243) with all of the paths being practically and statistically significant (Kamran et al., 2026).

Moderation Effect

Table 7: R-Square and Effect Size (f^2)

Construct / Path	R ²	R ² Adjusted	f^2
CT	0.513	0.508	—
PI	0.517	0.515	—
IA $\rightarrow$ CT	—	—	0.434
IT $\rightarrow$ CT	—	—	0.391
IE $\rightarrow$ CT	—	—	0.233
CT $\rightarrow$ PI	—	—	1.070

A moderation variable is not included in the conceptual framework. Table 7 however provides the R-square and f-square values that support the power of explanation and size of effects in the structural model. The model describes 51.3% variance of Consumer Trust and 51.7% variance of Purchase Intention, which is a good predictive value. The R² of 0.513 and 0.517 of CT and PI respectively indicate that the model has good explanatory power. The f^2 value of CT PI (1.070) represents a large effect, the f^2 value of IA CT (0.434) and IT CT (0.391) also represent large effect sizes and the f^2 value of IE CT (0.233) represents a medium effect size, all of which substantiate the substantive significance of all structural relationships (Fahad et al., 2026).

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Table 8: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	B	T-Stat	p-Value	Decision
H1	IA $\rightarrow$ PI	0.331	10.334	0.000	Supported



H2	IT → PI	0.314	11.536	0.000	Supported
H3	IE → PI	0.243	8.588	0.000	Supported
H4	IA → CT	0.460	11.390	0.000	Supported
H5	IT → CT	0.437	12.634	0.000	Supported
H6	IE → CT	0.338	9.089	0.000	Supported
H7	CT → PI	0.719	28.999	0.000	Supported
H8	IA → CT → PI	0.331	10.334	0.000	Supported
H9	IT → CT → PI	0.314	11.536	0.000	Supported
H10	IE → CT → PI	0.243	8.588	0.000	Supported

Summary table 8 is the combination of the ten hypothesis testing results in accordance with the PLS-SEM results. The empirical evidence of all ten hypotheses is at $p < 0.001$, which proves the strength and soundness of the conceptual framework proposed in the context of the digital market of Pakistan (Bibi et al., 2026).

Discussion

The results of this research demonstrate that the nature of influencer marketing, which includes being attractive, trustworthy, and an expert, has a profound empirical basis on the perception of the consumer trust and, consequently, purchase intention of the digital market in Pakistan. Each of the ten hypotheses is accepted providing a logical and theoretically supported image of the functioning of influencer-mediated persuasion in a situation of an emerging digital economy.

Influencer Attractiveness turned out to be the greatest predictor of Consumer Trust (0.460), which is aligned with the fact that influencers who look and socially attractive create a stronger parasocial bond with their followers, thus creating perceptions of reliability and identifiability with consumer values (Sarwar et al., 2025). The observation applies especially to the context of the Pakistani social media, where the aesthetically edited content on such platforms as Instagram and Tik Tok has a strong influence on consumer attitudes. Next in line was Influencer Trustworthiness ($= 0.437$) with its critical significance of perceived authenticity and transparency of an influencer communication (Alalwan et al., 2021). In a market where the consumers are becoming more and more skeptical of paid endorsements, credibility is a major differentiator of the effectiveness of influencers. The Influencer Expertise ($\beta = 0.338$) had also a significant influence on consumer trust, which confirms that the domain-specific knowledge increases the persuasion power of influencer content and decreases consumer uncertainty when assessing a particular product.

The prevailing influence of Consumer Trust on Purchase Intention (0.719) highlights its potential as the main psychological process according to which the influence of influencer marketing is transformed into business results. The result is quite reminiscent of social exchange theory and the trust-commitment model, where trust is viewed as a precondition to consumer commitment and action. A value of 51.7% explains the variance of Purchase Intention in the model indicates that the model predicts a lot and the theoretical model is therefore suitable to the Pakistani digital market context.

Limitations

The study has shortcomings in the sense that it is cross-sectional and thus it cannot be used to draw conclusions on a causal basis in the long term. The convenience sampling technique could be a limitation to the generalizability of the results to the heterogeneous



population of digital consumers in Pakistan. Moreover, the data is self-reported, which means that there is a possibility of social desirability bias. The paper is also limited to three types of influencer features, and other potential dimensions, including the quality of content or the type of platform are not discussed.

Future Research Direction

Longitudinal designs should be adopted in future studies to determine the development of influencer-consumer relationships and track the change of trust and purchase intention in the long run. Other moderate variables that researchers could investigate to enhance theoretical knowledge are product involvement, type of platform or consumer skepticism. Further comparison of these findings with other South Asian digital market would contextualize and further extend the findings. Inclusion of objective data of behavior like actual purchase records would enhance validity of future models (Ahmad et al., 2021).

Conclusion

This work confirms that the elements of influence marketing including attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise are important elements that influence consumer purchase intention in the digital market in Pakistan and the mediator of these elements is consumer trust. This study is contextually relevant and useful in influencer marketing research through empirically validating a trust-mediated influencer marketing model in the context of a developing economy. Researchers in Pakistan suggest that influencer choice should be based on perceived attractiveness, authenticity, and expertise in a specific domain to attract the highest consumer trust and motivate them to make a purchase in an ever-changing digital market.

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