

International Journal of Business and Emerging Markets

ISSN online: 1753-6227 - ISSN print: 1753-6219

<https://www.inderscience.com/ijbem>

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DOI: [10.1504/IJBEM.2024.10057175](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBEM.2024.10057175)

Article History:

Received:	05 July 2021
Last revised:	28 December 2022
Accepted:	03 May 2023
Published online:	30 November 2023

The rise of new age social media influencers and their impact on the consumers' reaction and purchase intention

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Abstract: The internet revolution and digitisation have created innovative platforms and spokespersons for brands beyond traditional media. The marketing landscape for brands and customers is evolving towards a more personal and authentic approach; adopting various social media platforms and influencers creates more brand engagement. Influencers are the new third-party endorsers, catering to and recommending products to their loyal community of followers. The influencer and their fans/followers are a brand's new storytellers. However, selecting the right influencer for a brand's promotional strategy requires careful consideration of several factors. This paper aims to study the impact/effect of these variables, namely, endorser's credibility and corporate credibility, on consumers' attitudes towards the brand and its impact on purchase intention, with respect to the millennial era. In the present study, 14 Likert-based questions were designed, asking the respondents to rank their choice of agreement on a scale of 1 to 5. The results were obtained through statistical analysis, including measuring the relationship between variables using confirmatory factor analysis and regression techniques. And the study found that corporate credibility has a significantly higher impact (approximately 90%) than individual endorsements (including those by celebrities) in enhancing customers' brand perception.

Keywords: social media; influencer marketing; endorser credibility; corporate credibility; consumer perception; purchase intention; millennials.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Kumar, S., Nair, P. and Sridharan, A. (2024) 'The rise of new age social media influencers and their impact on the consumers' reaction and purchase intention', *Int. J. Business and Emerging Markets*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp.89–106.

Biographical notes: Sunita Kumar is an Associate Professor in the School of Business and Management at Christ University, Bangalore, India. Her doctoral thesis was on brand strategies in retail marketing. She has published articles in various international and national refereed journals. Her areas of research interests include social media marketing, branding, advertising and neuromarketing. She has chaired various international conferences and was a keynote speaker.

Poornima Nair is an entrepreneur with an experience of more than six years in the fashion industry. She is also a qualified assistant professor, having taught marketing at post-graduation level. She is currently a research scholar at Christ University, School of Business and Management, Bangalore, pursuing her doctoral research in branding and co-creation. Her research is motivated by her passion to encourage fresh entrepreneurship.

A. Sridharan is a Professor in the School of Business and Management at Christ University, having 28 years of industry and 14 years of teaching experience. He has published more than 20 research papers. His areas of research are marketing and supply chain.

1 Introduction

Amongst a population of 1.3 billion, India has around 622 million online users, making it the second-largest digital economy globally (Statista Research Department, 2021). In this increasingly connected and modern marketing society, new areas are being thoroughly explored and discovered, taking brand engagement and brand loyalty to the next level. One of the significant aspects contributing to this change is marketing through social media – a platform created to initiate, enhance, and maintain relationships. Social media has emerged as an essential mode of communication, both on organisational and personal levels (Bodhi et al., 2021). Social media is transforming the way brands communicate with consumers. It is impacting a brand's marketing strategy, with the emergence of influencers gaining prominent attention in the past decade. The concept of influencers, specifically celebrity endorsers, has gained importance in the past few years (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020).

Keller (2008) explains the concept of traditional celebrity endorsements, stating that pairing a brand with a celebrity leads to a brand leveraging unique and positive secondary brand associations from the celebrity. This bolsters consumer awareness, transferring positive associations tied to the celebrity onto the brand, building brand image and ultimately enhancing the brand's equity. The creation of social media has resulted in a shift from traditional endorsement to a radically new notion in marketing called influencer marketing, which is a medium that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Influencer marketing has gained importance in the recent past. It is defined as a relationship between a brand and an influencer. The influencer is a third-party endorser with a loyal community of followers, expertise, and knowledge about what they are advertising (Forbes, 2016). These influencers may be celebrities using their platforms to personally showcase the endorsed product – Virat Kohli being a perfect example of this – or they could be fresh/new-found influencers; their primary job is to create content, influence, and converse with their online community of fans, such as bloggers and YouTubers. In her paper, Sharma (2016) emphasises this point, taking an Indian perspective on endorsements. Johnson and Thomas (2018) mention the importance of various factors determining the effectiveness of influencers. As per various studies, around 88% of brands use social media and influencers as a marketing strategy (Whiting and William, 2013). This increased use can be attributed to many reasons, one being the rise of online businesses leading to an increase in stimulating purchase intention.

Another reason can be influencer marketing, where the influencer has complete control and independence over the brand's message, helping promote authenticity and realness (Forbes, 2016). Customers find an influencer's review of endorsed products much more reliable and convincing and are more likely to purchase these products (Talaverna, 2015). Perhaps this is due to their close connection with the younger generation and ability to build camaraderie with their audience (Freberg et al., 2011). While traditional celebrity endorsements can increase brand awareness and create a positive image, social media influencers are instrumental in enhancing brand engagement and loyalty, increasing ROI for a brand (Tapinfluence, 2017).

The present study seeks to understand the concept of influencer marketing by further analysing its impact on consumers' attitudes towards the brand and, as a result, positively affecting purchase intention. This study focuses on measuring the impact of two main variables, endorser credibility and corporate credibility (Goldsmith et al., 2000), and understanding the effects of brand and celebrity endorsement on purchase intention (Fleck et al., 2012). While endorser credibility, an essential part of the source credibility model, has received quite a lot of attention, the concept of corporate credibility and congruence between a brand and a celebrity is sparse in research. The paper seeks to add to this concept of corporate and endorser credibility to further our understanding of social media influencers and their ability to shape positive consumer decision-making.

2 Review of literature

To understand the idea of social media and influencer marketing and meaningfully study their impact on purchase intention and attitude towards the brand, let us delve into some essential concepts, theories, and definitions needed for the research by analysing multiple related research papers and articles.

2.1 Social media as a platform

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) explained the concept of social media as various platforms and networks through which customers share information among themselves or with organisations. With the advent of social media platforms and easy accessibility to them, organisations have been able to blur geographical boundaries greatly (Gao et al., 2018). In this new era of marketing, consumers are developing more personal and curated tastes. Interactive marketing is the way forward, and social media platforms used by organisations are the best examples of the same, where there is constant interaction between the company and consumers. They co-create value through this continuous interaction (Wang, 2021). Satisfaction expectations are increasing with an increase in the choice of brands. For a company to be taken seriously, an online presence is a must, not just through conventional websites but through the wide variety of social media platforms on the vast abyss of the internet (Rantanen, 2017). Social media joins the top new trends in marketing, going hand in hand with analytics and big data. This can be attributed to social media being inexpensive and user-friendly (Whiting and William, 2013). Apps and websites such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube are growing in popularity for businesses of all sizes. Social media enables a business to stay in constant touch with its target audience irrespective of geographical or time constraints (Kumar and Ayodeji, 2019). Brands need to create creative content that captures the customer's attention and

personally caters to their needs. Godey et al. (2016) seamlessly sum up the definition of social media in five dimensions: entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customisation, and word of mouth. Social media platforms are widely used by individuals and organisations alike. However, the ultimate aim of the organisations should be to leverage the full potential of social media by using them strategically to not only gain more customers but to increase the connectivity, interaction, and network with the customers leading to value generation through feedback and voluntary participation (Li et al., 2020).

2.2 Who are influencers?

Social media influencers have gained a lot of importance over the last decade as they are able to influence their followers to purchase products promoted by them, which is highly advantageous to brands and organisations (Femenia-Serra and Gretzel, 2020). Social media influencers are a prominent and upcoming area that is evolving into a significant component of an organisation's marketing strategy and a crucial area in marketing research (Boerman, 2020; Ki and Kim, 2019). Brands perceive social media influencers as individuals with a loyal and devoted following on various social media platforms (Gautam and Jaitly, 2021). Social media influencers have gained prominence in the recent past because of rapid technological developments with options like shopping through the link from online posts, etc. They have become one of the most sought-after channels of promoting products, which in turn leads to almost more than eleven times of return on investment (García-de-Frutos and Estrella-Ramón, 2021; Wang, 2021). With new social media influencers mushrooming in explosive numbers, the primary role of the customers has transformed from being only a receiver of information to active participants and creators of information that is spread to other customers in the market (Wang, 2021). Instead of celebrity endorsers, social media influencers behave as third-party endorsers, creating brand-based content to reach out to their followers and attain recognition or fame (Glucksman, 2017). One of the main objectives of any organisation is to increase its customer base and maintain a long-term relationship with its existing customers. Social media platforms and influencers play a crucial role in achieving this objective (Pina et al., 2019; Raji et al., 2020).

According to Gautam and Jaitly (2021), social media influencers significantly impact followers as they are highly influential regarding a focused or niche segment. They forge a way for brands to create substantial competitive advantages, which leads to more brand awareness in the market and attracts new and existing customers. They are the ones who possess digital influence and can create a strong impact, change behaviour, and strongly influence purchase intention. These influencers disclose most of their personal lives to their fans, making their relationship unique and authentic. As followers are given a glimpse into their favourite influencer's life, they feel closer and more relatable to the influencer, almost like a friend. There exists a two-way candid conversation, and while brands are not directly a part of this dialogue, the trust instilled in the customer by the influencer is a phenomenon that will lead to brand loyalty.

Moreover, customers tend to follow examples and adopt the behaviour of influencers they admire (Forbes, 2016). These are just a few of the many superpowers influencers have over celebrities, enticing brands to use social media influencers to grow closer to their customers. However, with great power comes the great responsibility of maintaining the delicate balance between creating and promoting branded products through their

content and managing customers' trust. It is essential for the influencers themselves and imperative to the organisations being promoted (Lou and Yuan, 2019).

2.3 Electronic word of mouth

Customers typically prefer informal modes of communication due to the immense lack of trust in advertising. One such way is word of mouth, where customers are influenced by their friends, family, and peers. It is known to have a more impactful influence on consumer behaviour than marketing-controlled sources (Slavica Kostic, 2018). In the current scenario where the digitised world has become a norm, eWOM has replaced traditional WOM. eWOM interactions and conversations have received a considerable boost due to various social media platforms which are easily accessible to the customers and which, in turn, have opened up a plethora of opportunities for the business to communicate with their target audience (Khwaja et al., 2020). It strongly influences consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and purchase behaviour, encouraging them to purchase and actively participate in the process (Dwivedi et al., 2021). WOM generates a sense of trust among customers as it comes mainly from personal experience. eWOM has an added advantage that it is easily accessible to anyone who can access the internet, and it plays a crucial role in the consumer's decision-making process (Moran et al., 2014). With the emergence of the internet, consumers can be part of an online community and communicate all their likes, dislikes, and desires to each other, leading to electronic word of mouth. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) state that customers worldwide can converse with each other without any advertising intention. Hence, social media has led to more organic and widespread word of mouth.

2.4 The millennial generation

To understand who the millennials are, we first need to understand what the term generation means. Guha (2010) defines a generation as a group characterised by their age, birth, location, and certain distinguishing events in their era that help define their personality and make them who they are today. Most generations have each gone through significant life-changing events and practices that shape their way of thinking and behavioural mindset for their entire generation, such as war, new technology, new political ideologies, etc. The millennial generation consists of individuals born between 1990 and 2000. Millennials are referred to as Millennials because they are born and raised in this digitalised world, where technology runs their lives. There is generally a more positive and open acceptance of modern practices and values (Nichols et al., 2014).

2.5 Endorser credibility

The concept of endorser credibility first emerged in the source credibility model developed by Hovland and Weiss (1951). The model explained endorser credibility as a combination of two variables – expertise and trustworthiness of an endorser. Expertise refers to how knowledgeable the endorser is in his professional field and how relevant the information he passes along as an endorsement (Fleck et al., 2012). A credible endorser with high levels of expertise is known to positively impact a customer's attitude and be more convincing in driving purchase intention (Lim et al., 2017). Trustworthiness denotes the endorser's honesty, integrity, dignity, and believability, increasing the

acceptance of a brand's promotional message (Metzger et al., 2003). In their study, Kapoor et al. (2020) cautioned businesses and advised them to exercise caution while choosing to associate with an influencer for promotions for the brand, as the influencer's authenticity will depend on various cues of credibility. Therefore, a higher value of the endorser's expertise, knowledge, and honesty will be more influential in inducing purchasing behaviour from the desired audience. Another relevant determinant was proposed to be added to the source credibility (McGuire, 1985), namely source attractiveness or likability, which plays an essential role in endorser credibility; as consumers choose to follow endorsers they find attractive. Ultimately, a good fit between the brand and the endorser positively affects the customer's attitude towards the brand and their purchase intention (Kim and Kim, 2021; Silva et al., 2020).

2.6 Corporate credibility

While source credibility as a model has been explored sufficiently in research papers, the notion of corporate credibility is yet to be discovered and reaped. Goldsmith et al. (2000) define corporate credibility as the perceived level of expertise, trustworthiness, and reputation a firm is said to have with its customers. Many companies are anxious about events that affect their corporate reputation as it will directly impact a customer's desire or lack of it to buy the firm's products. This is because customers use a company's reputation as a determinant while making purchase decisions and judging product quality (Grund, 1996). One of the earliest studies conducted by Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999) analyses the combined impact of the endorser and corporate credibility on a customer's attitude towards brand and advertisement.

2.7 Purchase intention

Spears and Singh (2004) explained purchase intention as a conscious effort made by a consumer to purchase a brand. Purchase intention is the probability or willingness of a consumer to buy a specific brand in the future (Huang et al., 2011). Trust plays an important role that ultimately leads to consumers' intention to purchase a product, and this has been proven through several studies (Chen and Shen, 2015; Hajli and Sims, 2015; Zhao et al., 2019). Endorser and corporate credibility create an environment of trust among its loyal followers, leading to the intention to purchase the products or services. The two variables discussed in this paper essentially shape the consumer's attitude towards the product. Endorser and corporate credibility, individually or together, significantly influence attitude. Corporate credibility considerably impacts consumers' purchase intention (Goldsmith et al., 2000). The ultimate aim of any marketing strategy adopted by an organisation is to attain its final goal of having a significant impact on consumers' purchase intention, which in turn leads to actual purchases and creates a future customer base.

3 Statement of problem

As emphasised earlier on, the world is growing increasingly well-connected and modern, with the rise in free and easy-to-use social media platforms and a new method of endorsements in the form of influencers as evidenced by the multitude of studies conducted in the field (Glucksmam, 2017; Kostic et al., 2018; Rantanen, 2017; Samarasinghe, 2018). Hence, it is a growing field of importance. It has become necessary to study the social media industry regarding influencers, endorsements, and their power on the new age consumer's behaviour. While there is no shortage of research papers on this field of study, very scanty literature is available that evaluates and interprets literature on endorser and corporate credibility.

3.1 Research aim and objectives

The main aim of this paper is to understand the impact of endorser credibility, corporate credibility and attitude toward the brand that leads to the consumer's purchase intention. The primary objective helps in the conception of the secondary objectives of this paper, which are as follows:

- 1 To study the concepts of the endorser and corporate credibility by statistically measuring the effect of the variables on consumers' purchase intention and attitude towards the brand.
- 2 To analyse the impact of social media influencer marketing on different age groups and understand if only millennials are susceptible to sponsored advertisements on social media platforms.

4 Conceptual model and hypothesis development

The research focuses on studying three dependent variables: endorser credibility, corporate credibility, consumer's attitude towards the brand, and its effect on purchase intention. The variables instrumental for the research include the age group of respondents, the frequency of visits made to social media sites by the respondents, and the frequency of coming across sponsored content on social media. The model and selection of variables were inspired by Fleck et al. (2012) study on the congruence or likeability factor, Goldsmith et al.'s (2000) research comparing endorser and corporate credibility on a customer's attitude, and Lim et al.'s (2017) paper exploring the impact of influencer marketing on the buying behaviour of a customer.

5 Theoretical framework

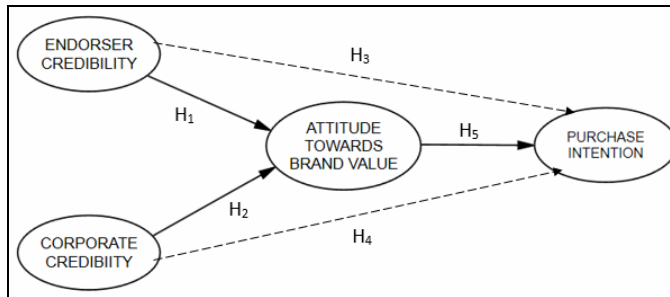
- H₁ Endorser credibility through social media significantly influences attitude towards building brand value.
- H₂ Corporate credibility through social media significantly influences attitude towards building brand value.

H₃ Endorser credibility has a significant and direct influence directly on purchase intention.

H₄ Corporate credibility has a significant and direct influence on purchase intention.

H₅ Positive attitude towards brand value will significantly influence the purchase intention.

Figure 1 Conceptual framework of the research study



6 Research methodology

6.1 Questionnaire and measurements

The first section of the survey distributed constituted questions regarding the demographic profile of the respondents. The latter questions covered all the variables of the study, which are proposed to be measured. These latent variables are all measured by a five-point Likert scale, and the scales have been based on formerly validated questionnaires to conduct accurate data analysis. The already reliable and valid questions have been adopted from Bruner's (2013) *Marketing Scales Handbook*, Volumes 5, 6 and 7, which consist of multiple multi-item measures for consumer insight research purposes.

The research survey questionnaire for the present research was designed based on literature reviews (Hovland and Weiss, 1951). In the present study, 14 Likert-based questions were designed to ask the respondents to rank their agreement choice on a scale of 1 to 5, with '1 strongly disagree' and '5 as strongly agree'. Regarding data collection, 177 respondents were interviewed through a structured online questionnaire from randomly selected respondents from Bengaluru City.

6.2 Analysis and results

Table 2 presented the relevant items, their standardised loading (correlation coefficients), and the composite reliability and Cronbach alpha results through *confirmatory factor analysis* (CFA) technique adopted to validate the measurement model consisting of *four* dimensions, as shown in Figure 1. The standardised loading of items under each dimension is given in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender	Male	84	47.5	Occupation	Student	39	22.0
	Female	93	52.5		Self-employed	18	10.2
Age (in yrs.)	< 30	134	75.7		Business	34	19.2
	30–40	18	10.2		Salaried	86	48.6
	40–50	21	11.9	Frequency of visit to social media sites/apps	Once a day	18	10.2
	> 50	4	2.3		2 to 5 times	30	16.9
Education	PUC	9	5.1	5 to 10 times	53	29.9	
	Bachelor	146	82.5	> 10 times	76	42.9	
	Post graduate	20	11.3	How often do you come across sponsored content on social media? (Celebrities endorsed posts)	Never	2	1.1
	Doctorate	2	1.1		Sometimes	27	15.3
			Never		2	1.1	
			Very often		81	45.8	
				Always	67	37.9	
				Very often	81	45.8	

First, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was calculated to assess the questionnaire's psychometric properties. Cronbach's alpha value ranges from 0 to 1, with a value closer to 1 indicating greater stability and consistency. However, the cut-off value for basic research is 0.60 (Abdullah et al., 2012; Nunnally, 1978). The results of Cronbach's alpha are depicted in Table 2, indicating the instrument's acceptable consistency and stability. Secondly, with respect to composite reliability, it is observed from Table 1 it is observed that the majority of the items demonstrated a loading greater than 0.50, clearly validating the convergence. Also, the Cronbach alpha values of each dimension are above 0.60, more than the accepted value. Similarly, discriminate validity result is depicted in Table 3 establishes the discriminant validity among the latent variables in that they do not statistically overlap each other (since the inter-item correlation values are less than the square root of AVE value) and are free from the problem of multicollinearity.

The regression result is provided in Table 4. It is observed that *endorser credibility* has a significant ($\beta = 0.225$; $CR = 4.684$, $p < 0.05$) influence on *attitude towards brand value*. Thus, H_1 could be completely accepted. The interpretation is that, for one unit increase in the rating scale of agreement on *endorser credibility* construct, one could expect about 0.225 times (about 23% increase in *attitude towards brand value* dimension given other factors remain fixed or the same. In other words, in future, for every new ten respondents rating as agree or strongly agree for *endorser credibility* dimension, one would expect about two respondents ($\beta = 0.225$) likely to give a rating of agree or strongly agree on *attitude towards brand value* factor.

Similarly, *corporate credibility* has a significant ($\beta = 0.895$; $CR = 11.775$, $p < 0.05$) influence on *attitude towards brand value*. Thus, H_2 could be completely accepted. The interpretation is that, for one unit increase in the rating scale of agreement on *corporate credibility* construct, one could expect about 0.895 times (about 90% increase in *attitude towards brand value* dimension given other factors remain fixed or the same. In other words, for every new ten respondents rating as agree or strongly agree for *corporate*

credibility dimension, one would expect about nine respondents ($\beta = 0.895$) likely to give a rating of agree or strongly agree on *attitude towards brand value* factor.

Table 2 Reliability and loadings of constructs influencing attitude towards brand value and purchase intention of buying

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Item/indicators</i>	<i>Loading</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>CA</i>	<i>AVE</i>
Endorser credibility	I buy the product because the social media endorser is skilled and qualified enough to endorse the product (ECPI_1).	0.876	0.878	0.906	0.706
	I buy the product because the social media endorser is experienced enough to endorse the product (ECPI_2).	0.895			
	I trust the social media endorser's claim and hence buy his/her endorsed product (ECPI_3).	0.887			
	I believe that the social media endorser is dependable, sincere and reliable regarding the endorsed product (ECPI_4).	0.834			
Corporate credibility	The endorsed company has a strong, reliable company with a strong social media presence (CCPI_1).	0.870	0.810	0.895	0.681
	The endorsed company is a highly reputable and dependable company (CCPI_2).	0.884			
	The endorsed company stands behind the products it offers (CCPI_3).	0.864			
	The endorsed company offers high-quality, innovative products/services through social media channels also (CCPI_4).	0.861			
Attitude	A knowledgeable and honest social media endorser makes me react favourably towards the brand (ATTIT_1).	0.833	0.818	0.871	0.692
	I feel positively towards an endorsed brand from a highly reputable company even on social media (ATTIT_2).	0.890			
	The endorser has favourably affected my attitude towards the brand (ATTIT_3).	0.897			
Purchase intention	I intend to give more importance to endorser Credibility on a social media platform (PUR_INT_1).	0.923	0.864	0.905	0.761
	I intend to purchase a product that is endorsed by my favourite endorser on the social media (PUR_INT_2).	0.879			
	I intend to buy a product by giving more importance to corporate credibility on a social media platform (PUR_INT_3).	0.929			

Note: CR – Composite reliability, CA – Cronbach alpha, AVE – average variance explained.

Figure 2 SEM result of factors influencing attitude towards brand value and purchase Intention of buying

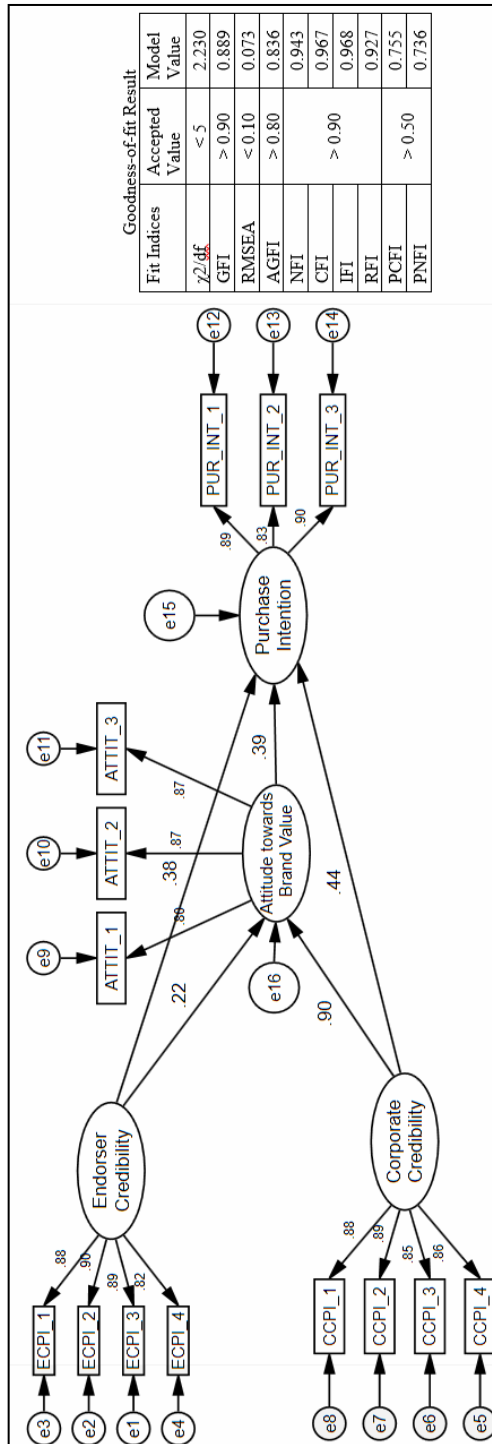


Table 3 Discriminant validity of the measurement model

	<i>ECPI</i>	<i>CCPI</i>	<i>ATTI</i>	<i>PUR_INT</i>
ECPI	0.840*			
CCPI	<i>0.684</i>	0.825*		
ATTI	<i>0.676</i>	<i>0.724</i>	0.832*	
PUR_INT	<i>0.773</i>	<i>0.783</i>	<i>0.824</i>	0.872*

Notes: *Square root of AVE values shown in Table 2. The figures in italics are the correlation value between the two dimensions.

Table 4 Standardised regression weights for dimensions attitude towards brand value and purchase intention of buying

			<i>Standard estimate</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>C.R.</i>	<i>P</i>
Attitude towards brand	←	Endorser credibility	0.225	0.044	4.684	0.000*
Attitude towards brand	←	Corporate credibility	0.895	0.072	11.775	0.000*
Purchase intention	←	Endorser credibility	0.379	0.054	6.423	0.000*
Purchase intention	←	Corporate credibility	0.443	0.144	2.908	0.004*
Purchase intention	←	Attitude towards brand	0.392	0.158	2.477	0.013*

Note: *Significant at 5% level.

Although there is a statistical significance (on the influence of *endorser credibility* directly on *purchase intention* (*Hypothesis H₃* is accepted with $p < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.375$), yet in terms of actual *purchase intention* of brand consumables, endorsers' credibility is about 40%. Similarly, the direct influence or impact of *corporate credibility* on actual *purchase intention* is about 44% (*Hypothesis H₄* is accepted with $p < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.443$). However, it has become abundantly evident that *corporate credibility* has a much more significant influence (about 90%) than an individual's endorsement (including any celebrities) in fostering a favourable perception of brand value. Additionally, despite being statistically significant (*Hypothesis H₅* is accepted with $p < 0.05$ and $\beta = 0.395$), the influence or the impact of attitude toward brand value on *purchase intention* is less than 40%. This demonstrates the necessity for businesses to focus more on creating a good attitude in consumers' behaviour to cultivate a future affinity for brand values.

6.3 Relationship between frequency of usage and credibility

This paper aims to test the hypothesis that there is, in theory, a correlation or association between the respondents' level of agreement with the credibility of corporate endorsers and the frequency of visits to social media sites/apps. This is the test with the formulation of a hypothesis:

H₆ There is an *association/relationship* between the frequency of usage of new social media and the level of agreement on endorser and corporate credibility.

Chi-square test result:

Table 5 Cross-tabulation of frequency of usage of social media and agreement on *endorser credibility*

<i>Frequency of visits per day</i>	<i>Level of agreement</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>	
Once a day	1 (5.6)	1 (5.6)	4 (22.2)	6 (33.3)	6 (33.3)	18 (100.0)
2 to 5 times	3 (10.0)	1 (3.3)	7 (23.3)	15 (50.0)	4 (13.3)	30 100.0)
5 to 10 times	3 (5.7)	9 (17.0)	8 (15.1)	21 (39.6)	12 (22.6)	53 (100.0)
> 10 times	5 (6.6)	17 (22.4)	14 (18.4)	30 (39.5)	10 (13.2)	76 (100.0)

Notes: Chi-square test result (Table 5).

Pearson Chi-square value = 12.947

Asymptotic significance (p-value) = 0.373.

The Chi-square test result shows that the p-value is 0.373 (Chi-square = 12.947), which is greater than the significant alpha level of 0.05 (at 95% confidence level). Hence, the alternative hypothesis (H_6) is rejected. There is no statistical evidence to conclude that there is an *association/relationship* between the frequency of usage of new social media and the level of agreement on *endorser credibility*. In essence, the respondent's acceptance of endorser's credibility is unrelated to the number of social media sites/app visits. The same holds good for corporate credibility also (Table 6).

Table 6 Cross-tabulation of frequency of usage of social media and agreement on *corporate credibility*

<i>Frequency of visits per day</i>	<i>Level of agreement</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>	
Once a day	1 (5.6)	2 (11.1)	4 (22.2)	9 (50.0)	2 (11.1)	18 (100.0)
2 to 5 times	2 (6.7)	1 (3.3)	6 (20.0)	20 (66.7)	1 (3.3)	30 100.0)
5 to 10 times	3 (5.7)	8 (15.1)	7 (13.2)	32 (60.4)	3 (5.7)	53 (100.0)
> 10 times	5 (6.6)	16 (21.1)	12 (15.8)	37 (48.7)	6 (7.9)	76 (100.0)

Notes: Chi-square test result (Table 6).

Pearson Chi-square value = 8.396.

Asymptotic significance (p-value) = 0.753.

7 Conclusions

To sum up, the social media revolution is a bandwagon all companies must jump on to reap the benefits of the internet generation/digitised world. Customers appreciate the

personal touch that brands provide and are more likely to be loyal to the ones who consistently make an effort to reach out, connect and relate to customers. To promote authenticity and reliability, influencer marketing is a tool that brands are encouraged to use. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Pinterest are growing in terms of users, sponsored advertisements, and influencers. This growth has led to influencers being a literal career path that people opt for, using their platform to post content that their fans will relate to. To earn revenue from their platform, they endorse products and recommend them to their fans, showcasing how they use them in their everyday lives. This paper, however, found that influencers are generally not as knowledgeable and credible in whatever they endorse. Hence, customers look towards a company's reputation while evaluating the brand. Likewise, the influencer should match or be congruent with the endorsed product to make the relationship more believable and genuine. Overall, technology is changing the way the world behaves, and social media plays a substantial part in it.

8 Managerial implications

From a managerial implication perspective, the paper enables marketers and public relations agencies to take more informed and creative decisions. It is clear from the study that not only social media but influencer marketing is an essential part of an organisation's marketing strategy. The onus falls on the marketing and brand managers to decide how and when they want to collaborate with celebrity endorsers to attract customers. The brand has to consider many factors to perfect its social media strategy, choosing the right influencer for the right product and catering to the right audience. It was also deduced that a brand should pay more attention to the corporate firm's reputation and credibility, as this variable significantly impacts a customer's purchase intent. Thus, to captivate the younger audience who use social media for every little activity, they must formulate an interactive and personal social media strategy to develop a two-way communication process and keep the customers connected and committed to the brand.

9 Research limitations and scope for further research

For the study to be more conclusive, secondary data and qualitative analysis should be taken into consideration to develop more accurate and real-time results. Relying on existing literature is required for a holistic study and should be complemented with real-time data. The existing literature has limitations of its own, which subsequently impact the findings of this study. Additionally, most of the variables of the study have been thoroughly explored. One variable that has not been taken into consideration is that of source attractiveness, which includes the physical appearance and likeability of the influencer. This makes the study a bit biased and incomplete, as most customers are fans of influencers or buy endorsed products based on how attractive they find the celebrity/influencer. Moreover, real-life case studies and examples should be used to understand the concept better.

Analytics and data should be used to the researcher's advantage to develop a more holistic future research paper. This includes readily available data through the social

media platform's analytics, which the brand can access if the account is converted to a business profile. Hence, the brand can make more informed and sound strategies to monitor how customers navigate through the brand's social media page and what posts/products are the most popular. Furthermore, brand communication can be taken as another variable to test their impact on purchase intention and consumer attitude. This is because social media has created a platform where two-way direct communication can occur. Future research could also focus on one category of product or one influencer and their community to observe and interpret the findings in more specific detail.

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