

Impact of Influencer Marketing On Consumer Buying Behaviour

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Abstract- This literature review examines the influence of influencer marketing on consumer behavior through various empirical and meta-analyses on influencer marketing. Influencers affect consumer attitudes and purchase intentions positively because of personal perceptions like credibility, levels of trust, message quality, levels of engagement, popularity of the influencer, and parasocial relationships. Two main mediators are trust and authenticity, as high credibility, including genuineness and devotion towards the brand can build brand perceptions and impulse buying, particularly in Millennials and Gen Z responders. Content quality and influencer popularity can escalate personal engagement towards influencers and consequently branding effectiveness. Specific common characteristics include immediate effects from influencer strategies on consumer attitudes, brand resonance and purchase behavior across product categories (i.e., fashion, fitness, technology). Parasocial connections in influencers take on the form of consumer attitudes and connections and switch it into purchase action. The literature review provides limits related to influencer marketing, limitations of declining effectiveness of influencer content that are valued above influencer marketing or an authentic disclosure apart from simply promotional offers). The literature review outlines ethical and regulatory concerns about authenticity in influencer marketing, and whether the accent is on the message or brand, instead of audience. Likewise accurate to influencer marketing on the growth of representing cultural (and often platform-specific) targets and differences in relation to influencer marketing strategies, and the platforms to best utilize them (for example, TikTok).

Keywords- Influencer Marketing, Consumer Buying Behavior, Purchase Intention, Brand Attitude.

I. INTRODUCTION

Marketing has seen a tremendous transformation in recent years due to an expanding number of digital channels and the use of social media. Consequently, social media influencers can now exert much greater influence on consumer behavior—something many researchers have recently taken notice of. (bognar et al. 2019; cernikovaite, 2019; chan, 2022,

chopra et al. 2021; hapsari et al., 2024; khan phung, 2021; rachmad, 2024; ramya et al., 2024; saldanha et al. 2024; varghese agrawal, 2021; verplancke gelati, 2022; vidani das, 2021; ye et al., 2021). influencers are individuals who have a strong social media presence and a strong opinion others' optional- behavior and influencers have become an important aspect of the marketing environment, and their ability to personally connect with followers has made influencer marketing and effective marketing strategy for brands seeking to increase visibility, engagement, and sales (yesiloglu costello, 2020). the primary purpose of any business is to build new customers, and expanding one's consumer base to secure sustainable profits (o'brien, 2024). new technology and media have changed fundamentally, how companies work, interact with customers, and market their products (sayudin et al, 2023). Considering the relevance of influencer marketing, the problem of study arises from the literature gap regarding how influencer variables (influencer trustworthiness, parasocial relationships, and unpaid collaboration) influence consumers' buying behavior in a context of Lebanon. Therefore, by reviewing the literature gap reaffirmed above, we aim to fill the gap. The results of this study will not only provide valuable information for the academic literature in influencer marketing but for marketers trying to improve their campaigns. By providing information based on the variables that impact consumer behavior, the study will also serve as an important resource for businesses wanting to enter the many facets of digital marketing. In the end, the relevance of this study is to help inform strategies

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Political & Demographic Landscape Qatar is one of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries located on a small peninsula in the Arabian Gulf, and is situated to the south of Saudi Arabia and west of Bahrain. Its capital city of Doha houses almost half of Qatar's country population (Anthony & Crystal, 2025). With an area of 11,586 square kilometre, Qatar is among the smallest countries in the Middle East (Whereig.com, 2023). As of November 2024, Qatar's population is 3,173,024 (Qatar Open Data Portal, 2025).

Qatar's cultural identity is influenced by Islamic customs and traditions, and while Arabic is the country's official language, English is also commonly spoken, especially in business, educational, and urban contexts. Representing a collectivist society in terms of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Qatari social norms emphasize group loyalty and family. Qatar ranks low in individualism (Hofstede Insights, 2024). Much of life is influenced by this collectivist aspect, including hospitality which values sharing and generosity and is entrenched in the cultural fabric (Reid, 2023). At the beginning of 2024, there were 2.70 million internet users in Qatar when internet penetration was 99.0 percent. This means that internet access is broadly available to nearly the entire population, alluding to Qatar's digital sophistication and the ease of access to online services, social media, and e-commerce (Kemp, 2024).

III. INFLUENCERS ARE INCREASINGLY LAUNCHING VIRTUAL BOUTIQUES

The evolving model of Social Media Influencers' Virtual Boutiques represents a new form of social commerce with influencers as online storefronts on hosting platforms. Unlike other online marketplaces that are organised by brand or retailer, these virtual boutiques are personalised shops created by influencers (Richter Talk, 2018). Influencers select and endorse products ranging from fashion and beauty, to electronics and lifestyle, with the goal providing their audience followers with a streamlined and personalised shopping experience (Cabeza-Ramirez et al., 2022). Often, a follower trusts the taste of their favourite influencer is good enough to browse and purchase products in these curated spaces. Influencers are compensated for their efforts from the platform they are contracted with and have a boutique on, such as Rafeeq, Boutiqaat, or Mercati (Mena Bytes, 2019). Influencers share these products through print-style advertisements posted to their social media channels like Snapchat and Instagram, capitalising on their platform to utilise their credibility, personal brand, and audience engagement (Ao et al., 2023).

This model helps consumers and businesses as well: consumers get trusted, curated product recommendations, and businesses have access to a highly engaged niche market (Masuda et al., 2022). With the first influencer boutique hosting company launched in Kuwait in 2015, called Boutiqaat (Mena Bytes, 2019), the model spread across the Gulf area to similar platforms like Rafeeq, Mercati, and Tajer in Qatar (Rafeeq, personal communication, 2022).

IV. NAVIGATING THE SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE ECONOMY

Social media sites are an essential source for self-expression and marketing companies as it allows users to contribute content and develop interest-oriented communities (Evans McKee, 2021). Social media is part of Web 2.0 and is highly leveraged; each social media platform like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter has completely transformed and is continuing to transform how businesses are conducting business-to-consumer interactions these days, making it difficult to ignore when considering marketing strategies (Kumar Sharma, 2022; Tuten, 2008). Digitalisation has altered the marketplace, significantly expanding the reach of products as well as customers' engagement with products and brand awareness (Tomyuk et al., 2022; Cham et al., 2022). Therefore, social media can be an incredibly powerful marketing tool for companies (Ibrahim, 2022; Rebelo, 2017). Social media can induce consumer behaviour and push brands for increased reach and exposure (Ibrahim, 2022; Rebelo, 2017). It is important for businesses to be careful and cautious about how and which content is managed by themselves and users, to avoid negative media channels and reputational risks, as well as ensuring satisfactory ROI measurement (Agostino, 2017; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Chaffey Smith, 2022).

Consumer Purchase Intent

Purchase intentions are a measure of the probability or inclination a consumer has towards purchasing a product or brand (Spears Singh, 2004). They are indicative of a person's intention to behave in a purchasing manner. Purchase intentions derive from a combination of personal attitudes, along with contextual and environmental factors (Bagozzi, 1981). For this reason, purchase intentions have become an important predictor of consumer behaviour since purchase intentions may reflect an attempt to perform a deliberate act in obtaining a product (Huang et al., 2011). However, purchase intentions are subjective, do not always result in a purchase, and may be influenced by external variables that can restrict purchase intentions or lead to purchase abandonment, such as return policies, changing consumer choices, and so forth (Al-Adwan et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2016).

Various theories of purchase intention such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1988) and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein Ajzen, 1975) established purchase intentions derive from a combination of personal beliefs and attitudes and influenced by external motivation, thereby leading to a purchase or the decision-making process of a consumer. On the other

hand, spontaneous purchases (Bagozzi Warshaw, 1992) demonstrate not all purchases came with antecedent intentions.

Recently, researchers have begun to focus more on examining the role of social media influencers on consumer purchase intention (Brooks et al., 2021). Influencer credibility has a proven effect on purchase intention (Hassan et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2021; Masuda et al., 2022; Nugroho et al., 2022). However, not all studies are consistent in their findings. Bacay et al. (2022) examined influencer marketing on the e-commerce platform Shopee and identified no direct link between influencer promotions and consumer purchase decisions, which negates the idea that influencers always impact consumers' purchases. In sum, consumer purchase intentions remain a necessary part of consumer behaviour, which is shaped by cognitive, social, and external factors. The importance of social media influencers on purchase decisions is an emerging focus of contemporary marketing research; research is ongoing on their effectiveness in practice.

Evaluating Source Reliability

Trust is critical to communication in constructing relationships and thus influencing attitudes and behaviors (Giffin, 1967). The credibility of the source is important not only because messages are received differently, but also because they are accepted differently (Hovland et al., 1953). Trustworthiness—where the communicator is perceived/needed the communicator to be sincere, honest, and reliable—can be influenced by a number of factors, including expertise, attractiveness and perceived similarity to the audience (Friedman et al., 1978). Celebrities and social media influencers can take advantage of this as many individuals tend to trust people they like, relate to, and know something about (Friedman Friedman, 1976).

Trust is vital in persuasion and attitude change in personal opinion and marketing. (Ohanian, 1990) A source that is trusted will have the most substantial effect on decision-making by consumers and as such trust is necessary for determining the effectiveness of influencers. In the current situation, social media influencers are the most significant source of persuasion, and more studies are beginning to explore their credibility and impact on purchase intention. In the United States, Kim and Kim (2021) found a strong correlation between trust in influencers and purchase intentions.

There is growing evidence backing the correlation between purchase intentions and trust in influencers. Koay et al. (2022) showed the relationship in the case of Instagram users and the positive and robust correlation between

influencer trust and purchase intentions; they highlighted materialism as a moderating variable. Nugroho et al. (2022) studied Gen Z consumers in Indonesia and demonstrated trust and credibility in influencers are key factors in shaping purchase intentions with trust being more important than an influencer's credibility as a key factor in cosmetics. Khan et al. (2022) established that influencer credibility is considered competence, reliability, and trustworthiness while also determining correlations with consumer behaviour.

Perceived Physical Appeal

According to McCroskey and McCain (1974), attractiveness relates to a social value, with the emphasis placed on how people perceive a source or channel in terms of its attractiveness. In persuasive advertising, the appeal of a source depends largely on the extent to which it is similar to, familiar with, or likeable to the target audience (McGuire, 1985). On Ohanian's (1990) source credibility scale, attractiveness is measured by such qualities as being attractive, classy, beautiful, elegant, and sexy, something mostly related to physical attractiveness. According to Singer et al. (1983), physical appearance matters in advertising, and endorsers are selected on the basis of it. Erdogan (1999) builds on this by stating that, physically attractive persons are often selected for appearances on television. Studies confirm that positive attitudes and behaviour changes among consumers usually occur when messages emanate from attractive sources. Thus, Attractive source messages were accepted positively, and consumer behaviour was altered more (Baker Churchill, 1977; Chaiken, 1979).

According to Lin et al. (2021) the visual appeal of influencers creates parasocial connections which directly affect buying patterns when they promote women's gymwear through Instagram channels. Masuda et al. (2022) evaluated South Korean influencers to discover that social and physical attractiveness led to stronger trust and purchase intentions than attitude homophily. Nugroho et al. (2022) performed research on Gen Z consumers to understand buying behavior which revealed that influencer attractiveness stands as an essential factor for effective marketing. German university students studied by Weismueller et al. (2020) showed that physical attractiveness of Instagram influencers strongly influences consumers' purchase intentions. The research by AlFarraj et al. (2021) revealed an unanticipated link between social media influencers' looks and purchase decisions for the aesthetic dermatology market in Jordan. Kim and Kim (2021) analyzed U.S. consumers older than 18 to investigate physical attractiveness and homophily which means consumer identification with influencers who share their values. The

research demonstrated that homophily effectively builds trust but attractiveness does not.

Domain Knowledge

Expertise of the source is defined as the sum of the knowledge, skills, and authority that an individual or organization possesses in a specific field (Eagly Chaiken, 1993; Ohanian, 1990). It is typically gained through the normal processes of education, extensive experience, and a pretty consistent record of providing accurate and reliable information.

Of course, it's clear to us now that those we consider as knowledge authorities aren't the only ones whose information is trusted. Indeed, we've taken to trusting all kinds of people—with all kinds of supposedly valid credentials or tenuous ties to facts—for all kinds of information that, back in the day, we were less inclined to question (Flanagin Metzger, 2008; Zhao Dholakia, 2009). Still, when you consider whom to trust with what, humans are and always have been wired to find refuge in the embrace of knowledge authorities.

Recent investigations into social media influencers have tried to gauge their effectiveness as a new kind of marketing tool. For instance, Kim and Kim (2021) explored the medium's influence on followers by studying the influencer's expertise as a source and referring to the source credibility model from Ohanian (1990). They found that the influencers' knowledge and experience in a particular domain significantly added to their persuasiveness. In a similar vein, Masuda et al. (2022) focused on video blogging in their cross-sectional study of dimensions of influencer effectiveness. They were primarily interested in gauging influencer expertise.

Perceived Genuineness

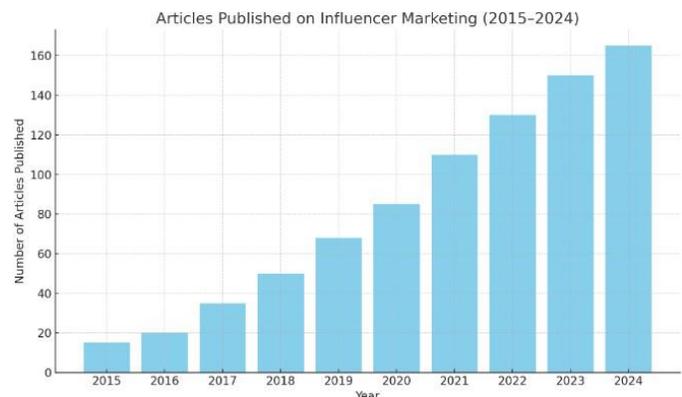
Authenticity is staying true to oneself and being genuine in his/her endeavors (Guignon, 2008). This paper captures the concept of authenticity through the dimensions of trueness, genuineness, and passion (Moulard et al., 2015, 2016). Source authenticity is an important component of communication because it shapes how audiences receive and respond to messages (Hovland Weiss, 1951). The elaboration likelihood model (Petty Cacioppo, 1986) identifies authenticity as an important peripheral cue that impacts persuasion and long-lasting changes in attitude. In the case of social media influencers, authenticity is a key predictor of purchase intention. As noted by Hassan et al. (2021), relatability in an influencer strengthens their perceived authenticity. Masuda et al. (2021) established authenticity as

an important construct impacting expertise and credibility. Nugroho et al. (2022) found that authenticity in influencer marketing messages serves to reinforce trust, while Lin et al. (2021) found that product knowledge reinforces authenticity in a way that makes endorsements more believable. As a result of this discussion, the following hypothesis is presented.

V. METHODOLOGY

Research Methodology and Data Gathering Techniques

This study utilised a quantitative research method in an attempt to analyse the relationship between social media influencers and consumer purchase intentions for a virtual boutique purchase in Qatar. We selected a quantitative research approach because quantitative research provides evidence, assesses if our hypotheses can be accepted or rejected, and can provide a clearly defined because it supports the variance of the relationships statistically (Creswell Plano Clark, 2011). We collected the data through a survey instrument, because it can provide easily usable, standardized and widespread data from a representative sample of respondents, adding to the robustness and reliability of the analysis.



Structured Survey Methodology

The survey instrument was created using established scales from the literature for validity and reliability when measuring the key constructs. Each scale was adapted and modified where necessary to fit the specific context of the study. The intended constructs examined the purchase intention to purchase products, expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and authenticity of the influencer. The constructs and scales used measured what various studies have used regarding the purchase intention to purchase products of influencers. The purchase intention (PI) construct was measured using Duffett's (2015) scale intended to measure the likelihood to purchase the products promoted by influencers. The dimensions expertise, trustworthiness and henceforth, are

referred to here as ETA, were measured by Ohanian's (1990) scale which uses positive statements to measure influencer credibility based on knowledge, honesty and physical attractiveness. Authenticity was also measured through utilizing a scale designed by Moulard et al. (2015, 2016) that focused on the perceived honesty and excitement exhibit of influencers promoting products. The survey had three sections comprised of screening questions, demographic information, and questions pertaining to the form of study.

As the scales are developed in English, the questions were developed first in English and subsequently translated into Arabic so that the target population in Qatar could access the survey questions. A professional translator was used for the translation, and a back-translation approach was used (Son, 2018) so that one could ensure that the meaning of the items was similar across both languages. A pilot test was conducted with ten respondents to check how clear and relevant the questions were, which resulted in minor changes made to the survey. Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each of the key constructs to examine the reliability of the survey instrument. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency, whereby items within the same scale are measuring the same construct. George Mallery (2010) say that a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 or more is appropriate for most social science research. In the pilot test conducted, the reliability of the instrument prior to data analysis was checked and changes were made where needed to improve the internal consistency of the survey. For example, items that were lower item total correlation were reworded or deleted to get to the reliability of the constructs.

Sampling Method

Given the nature of the research, convenience sampling was justification for data collection. Convenience sampling allowed for the collection of data quickly and with less effort as the target population was available through social media. The survey was dispersed through social media channels through some influencers like WhatsApp, Instagram, and Snapchat. Some of the snowball sampling techniques were employed, as respondents shared the survey link to their contacts who met the eligibility criteria (Etikan, Musa, Alkassim, 2016).

There were 150 collected responses through the survey, yet only 64 were valid after applying the initial screening filter, which included three filtering questions and excluded participants who did not complete the response. I was satisfied for the final sample size given the rule of thumb Yao, (2022) procedure to take as 10 times the number of paths in the model for SEM and in this study it needed at least 100

valid responses from the model as outlined in Yao (2022). I have accepted more valid responses to improve study robustness and generalizability.

Tools and Techniques for Data Evaluation

Data analysis was performed using SPSS 27.0. The focus of the analysis was predominantly on descriptive statistics, calculating means and standard deviations in order to describe the demographic characteristics of respondents and the main variables within the study. Following that, correlation and regression analysis were performed to test the hypothesised relationships between the variables. The Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was used to measure the strength and direction of the relationships between the independent variables (the influencer characteristics) and the dependent variable (purchase intention). Multiple regression was then used to examine the characteristics of influencer characteristics that predicted purchase intention. To investigate if purchase intention varies with age, gender, and education, we employed t-tests and ANOVA. These two conventional methods of statistics provide a good, fair understanding of the differences between traits of social media influencers and how they influence consumer buying behavior concerning virtual boutiques in Qatar.

VI. RESULTS INTERPRETATION

The regression analysis demonstrated that authenticity was the most significant predictor of purchase intention for a product ($\beta = .451, p < .01$). This was in line with previous studies which found authenticity - showing realness and being genuine- was relevant in influencer marketing (Nugroho et al., 2022; Hassan et al., 2021; Masuda et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2021). In summary, people are more likely follow and trust influencers who appear authentic and relatable, and authenticity has a greater impact on engaging and persuading consumers than attractiveness, trustworthiness, or expertise.

In the contrast, attractiveness ($\beta = .194, p < .05$) had negligible effects on consumers' purchase intentions, which differs from previous studies (Ao et al., 2023; Chekima et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021, etc.) The variable trustworthiness ($\beta = .110, p < .05$) was also clearly not significant and was clearly also unexpected, given the history of research that has considered trust to be one of the central factors influencing influencer credibility (Hassan et al., 2021; Koay et al., 2022; Ohanian, 1990). Ao et al. (2023) mentioned how trustworthiness was one of the strongest influencing predictors of purchase intention, but we suggest that within the Qatari

market they might consider the influencer trustworthy simply given their extended social media presence - which would basically weight trustworthiness as not an important differentiating factor in decision-making (Kim et al., 2025). This was the assumption that trust is probably considered to be intertwined with an undistinguished sense of authenticity, as opposed to another individual construct.

The negative and non-significance of expertise ($\beta = -.270, p < .05$) effect was also most surprising, and there exists a lot of work that has suggested expertise typically contributed to the increased purchase intentions of consumers (Chekima et al., 2020; Koay et al., 2022; Masuda et al., 2022; Nugroho et al., 2022; Weismueller et al., 2020). Our results are consistent with AlFarraj et al. (2021), having evaluated and found that expertise directly did not significantly contribute to purchase intent in the cosmetic dermatology field. This inquiry could denote that expertise in influencer marketing, tends to only be of value when the influencing experience is either technical or more highly specialized in nature, and when influencers were involved in lifestyle and fashion, perhaps personal relatability trumps and makes professional knowledge less meaningful.

VII. DEMOGRAPHIC-BASED ANALYSIS

As a secondary analysis, we considered various demographic factors (age, gender and nationality (both Qatari and non-Qatari)) to understand if there is a systematic difference in purchase intentions from influencers virtual boutiques, and the only factor that presented a difference was gender with respect to purchase intentions, the other factors were all quite similar, our t-test displayed a statistically significant difference in purchase intentions between male ($M = 4.09, SD = 1.70$) and females ($M = 3.17, SD = 1.43$) clients ($t = 2.249, p < .05$), which demonstrates that male clients are more likely to be influenced negatively and complete the purchase, that finding from our analysis supports earlier findings by Saleem (2018) who found that in general men in Qatar are more likely to continue with online shopping than women. It is likely that cultural factors including gender roles and cultural expectations, play a role in these behaviours (Ibrahim, 2023), and marketers should be aware of these factors when planning and executing influencer collaborations in the Qatari market.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Focusing on the emerging trend of influencer-curated online stores (or “virtual boutiques”), this research explored how certain characteristics of online influencers influence consumers’ buying behavior. According to these findings, the single best predictor of people’s willingness to buy from a

virtual boutique is authenticity. In much further back predictive value of other influencer characteristics with trust, skill, and beauty trailing. This finding suggests that customers see strong value in influencers (as they represent an entirely new group of companies) who reflect traits of authenticity and relatability much greater than their beauty and perceived skill. The results also fortify existing knowledge of social media purchasing behavior not only in the rapidly developing digital economy in Qatar but also around the world. This research also extends existing research related to influencer virtual boutiques to include Qatar in this new area. Past research only looks at influencing characteristics like trust, beauty, and expertise by themselves. This investigation revealed that when looking at influencers for online purchasing, authenticity is the most influential characteristic impacting purchasing through virtual boutiques.

The current findings contradict past conceptions of influencer marketing by presenting that genuineness outweighing looking beautiful and being an expert. This evaluation also contributes new knowledge concerning what influencer marketing looks like in Qatar by aligning international research with the rapidly developing local digital economy. The conclusions of this study are significantly limited in their applicability because it only looked at the Qatari surroundings. In order to contrast influencer-led e-shopping in various circumstances, a future study could expand the scope, possibly by incorporating additional Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations.

Another limitation includes the difference in products. Our study did not examine a difference in types of products. Future research could articulate whether characteristics of an influencer, such as their attractiveness and expertise, leave different impressions on consumers toward different types of products (e.g., cosmetics or fashion or technology). Lastly, convenience sampling (reaching out to those participants who were easiest to reach) was carried out in this study and may account for the limitations to generalizability in relation to the general population. Future research should use random sampling methods to provide more valid and generalizable conclusions. If these limitations are addressed in future research, we can have a fuller understanding of influencer-led virtual boutiques on consumer buying behavior across products, markets, and regions.

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