

The role of influencers' credibility in shaping female students' skincare purchase intentions

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of social media influencers' credibility (attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, and attitude toward the brand) on shaping female students' intentions to purchase endorsed skincare products. A descriptive-correlational study was employed to determine the degree of agreement between the parameters of social media influencers' credibility and purchasing intention, and to explore the interplay of these variables. Responses from 385 female students were randomly selected using the Cochran sampling technique and gathered using an adapted survey questionnaire. The collected data were subsequently tallied, tabulated, and evaluated using a weighted mean and a Pearson correlation coefficient (r). The study illustrated that the female students agreed on all aspects of social media influencers' credibility. Additionally, the interplay of variables revealed that trustworthiness ($r = 0.169$) and attitude towards the brand ($r = 0.347$) are correlated with purchasing intention; however, attractiveness and expertise are not correlated. This implies that social media influencers are perceived as trustworthy and have positive attitudes towards the brand, influencing female students' purchase decisions for endorsed skincare products. These findings have practical implications for brand owners who are actively present on social media platforms, suggesting that partnering with trusted and reliable social media influencers can serve as a valuable marketing leverage in their business. However, these findings are limited to female senior high school students in Cebu City, Philippines.

Keywords: social media influencers, attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, attitude toward the brand, skincare products

JEL Classification: M1, M2, M3, O1

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of study

Social media is an excellent tool for getting a brand's attention online. It is essential to note that the social media landscape is constantly evolving, with new platforms and changes to existing ones occurring regularly, thereby reshaping the way people communicate and collaborate. (Kane, 2017). Companies that establish a presence through social media often consider hiring social media influencers to promote their products and services. Using social media influencers is a modern marketing strategy in today's generation. A social media influencer is an individual who has established credibility, authority, and a substantial following on one or more social media platforms. (Lou & Yuan, 2019). These people leverage their following and engagement to promote products, services, causes, or ideas to their audience. Their opinions and recommendations are often regarded as influential and can significantly impact their followers' purchasing decisions and opinions, particularly in the beauty product industry. Social media influencers promote products they use and share their opinions or feedback on specific products. In fact, studies show that 75% of companies utilize social media influencers to reach a broader audience and enhance brand recognition, which is far from the traditional marketing approach (Abdou et al., 2024; Galdón et al., 2024). Similarly, Munnukka et al. (2016) stresses that an influencer may positively review a product that appeals to consumers and persuades them to buy it. Furthermore, they offer the most recent information and have an impact on consumers' attitudes and actions (Liu et al., 2015).

The potential consumers of today's generation are Generation Z, and according to Petruzzi (2022), Generation Z (or Zoomer) refers to individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (ages 11-26 years), following the so-called "millennials" (ages 27-42 years) generation. With the rise of social media and the increasing digitization of our world, it is no surprise that companies recently shifted their focus to this new generation, given that the group is the most knowledgeable about technology and, thus, likely to become aware of current events quickly. Through Facebook marketing, companies can easily reach Generation Z, as they are highly influenced by brand-generated content on fan pages and tend to purchase products as a result. In other words, marketing and advertising strategies are now targeting Gen Z, attempting to respond to their needs and adapt to an ever-evolving digital space. This shift in focus is evident in the cosmetics industry, for example, which reached a revenue of over \$ 14.7 billion in the United States alone in 2021. The industry is forecast

to continue growing even further by 2026, with Gen Z emerging as its newest trendsetter and target audience for social media influencers.

In the United States, 74 percent of Generation Z respondents in a 2021 survey reported being influenced by influencers when purchasing beauty products (Petruzzi, 2022). This was true for around 66 percent of millennials and only 34 percent of baby boomers polled for the survey. This generation, raised with the internet, is the newest entry into the job market, comprising around 20 percent of the entire U.S. population. According to studies in the Philippines, social media influencers influenced Generation Z individuals by putting trust, attractiveness, perceived credibility, image, and similarity to followers as factors that shape their purchasing decisions (Castillo et al., 2022).

Social media credibility includes expertise, attractiveness, an attitude towards the brand, and trustworthiness. Multiple studies have confirmed that trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness positively contribute to customers' purchase intentions (Liu, 2022; Meng et al., 2024). Even on different platforms, such as Instagram, a study found that source attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness substantially increase consumer purchase intentions (Weismuller et al., 2020). Similarly, another study showed that social media influencers' trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise, and attitude toward the brand play a crucial role in improving purchasing intention (Chekima et al., 2020).

Several studies found relevant to the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior in different contexts, such as entertainment value (Ao et al., 2023), consumer trust (Pop et al., 2022), word of mouth (Palalic et al., 2020), and psychological ownership (Pick, 2021). While previous scholarly outputs examined influencer credibility in other contexts, little is known about its role in shaping skincare product purchasing intentions among senior high school students in Cebu City.

The study aims to determine the behavior of female senior high school students toward the credibility of social media influencers when purchasing products, particularly skin care products. Additionally, this study investigates whether the credibility parameters of social media influencers are correlated with the purchasing intentions of female students. Moreover, the findings offer fresh insights for brand owners and provide valuable information for consumers, enabling them to become more informed individuals.

1.2 Hypothesis development

1.2.1 Attractiveness and purchasing intention

H₁: Social media influencers' attractiveness has a significant relationship with purchasing intention

One of the components of the Source-credibility theory is attractiveness, wherein the overall appearance, relatability, and likability matter to people who tend to buy the endorsed products, as propounded by Hovland and Weiss (1951). According to the theory, the more attractive a celebrity appears, the more likely consumers are to purchase whatever they sell. In other words, the level of visual appeal influences buying behaviors, brand preferences, and attitudes (Umeogu, 2012). Marketers should concentrate on attractive influencers because the more beautiful a source is, the more it can influence consumers' purchase intention (Ao et al., 2023; Gayathri & Anwar, 2019). Similarly, Regina and Anindita (2022) indicated that good attractiveness does not improve brand attitude but will increase consumers' buying intentions. Additionally, the source's physical attractiveness could be used to increase the efficacy of the marketing (Singh & Banerjee, 2018).

1.2.2 Trustworthiness and purchasing intention

H₂: Social media influencers' trustworthiness has a significant relationship with purchasing intention

Trust is a critical component that builds and sustains fruitful, enduring relationships between businesses and customers, as Pop et al. (2022) stated. This is another component of the social credibility theory. Aside from competence and goodwill, trustworthiness is one of the key dimensions that advertising emphasizes, as it creates a positive impression for the audience and reflects the current media landscape. Additionally, Stahl and King (2020) noted that trustworthiness refers to the extent to which one believes the person presenting the story is credible, which depends on the confidence level assigned to the message conveyed in the story. Rathnayake and Lakshika (2023) stated that trustworthiness is the most significant credibility component influencing purchasing intention. When people perceive a source of social credibility as untrustworthy, they will be more strict in the content of the message (Gass, 2015). Furthermore, as Schouten et al. (2020) noted, trust plays a crucial role in explaining the effectiveness of product endorsements, with influencer endorsements outperforming those of celebrities.

1.2.3 Expertise and purchasing intention

H₃: Social media influencers' expertise has a significant relationship with purchasing intention

Expertise is a basis for people likely to be persuaded to purchase goods or services. Expertise refers to an endorser's perceived knowledge, skills, and experience (Shimp, 1997). There varying levels of expertise revealed patterns of influence variation: for example, (1) celebrities with high levels of expertise have a more significant influence on the "audience" in their expertise domains; (2) expertise appears to be more significant than participation and relevance in social media influence; and (3) audiences of top celebrities with high levels of expertise are more likely to forward tweets from celebrities with high levels of expertise on topics outside of their expertise domains (Zhao et al., 2016). Moreover, several studies confirm that the expertise of an influencer significantly impacts consumers' intentions to purchase on social media (Hmoud et al., 2022; Mya et al., 2025; Taher et al., 2022).

1.2.4 Attitude towards the brand and purchasing intention

H₄: Social media influencers' attitude towards the brand has a significant relationship with purchasing intention

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) posits that an individual's behavior directly contributes to the intention to perform that behavior, and attitude toward the brand is one of the factors (Ajzen, 1991). This theory suggests that people are more likely to behave positively, think that others approve of the behavior, and feel in control of their actions (Pinto-Foltz & Logsdon, 2009). Social media influencers post a product with a positive attitude toward the brand (Saputra & Dewobroto, 2022). It turned out that loyalty to brands did not significantly connect with young female customers' inclination to acquire beauty goods, and that the attractiveness of celebrity influencers did not considerably affect consumer sentiments (Macheka et al., 2023). Also, a positive brand attitude can increase a customer's desire to purchase, and good credibility will improve the brand's attitude (Regina & Anindita, 2022). However, good credibility does not increase a consumer's buying intentions.

In the context of social media influencers, a positive attitude toward the brand, expanding their product selection, and taking a chance on these kinds of campaigns without adversely affecting the opinions of clients and supporters on social media networks are essential (Bilro et al., 2022).

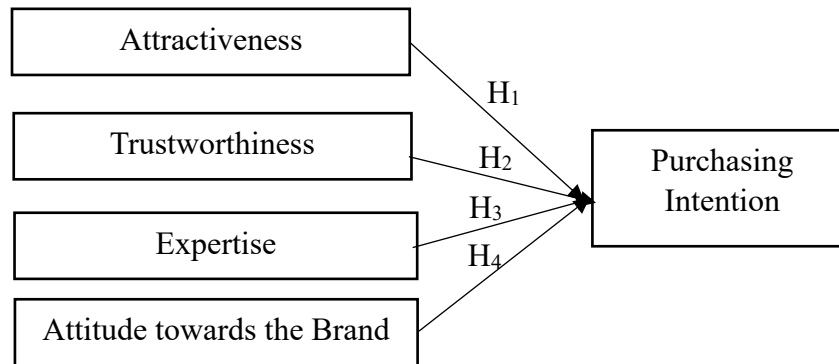


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

2 Methodology

2.1 Research design

The study employed a quantitative method, specifically a descriptive-correlational design, to investigate the interplay between social media influencers' trustworthiness, attractiveness, attitude toward the brand, and expertise, and their impact on respondents' purchase intentions for skincare products. The descriptive role was to determine the degree of agreement between the social media influencers' credibility sub-variables and purchasing intention. Additionally, to determine if the indicators of social media influencers' credibility have a significant relationship with purchasing intention, the correlational design addressed this objective.

2.2 Research environment and respondents

The study was performed in Cebu City, Philippines, and targeted female senior high school students as the respondents. As the population was unknown due to the unavailability of the total number of female students in Cebu City, Philippines, the researcher used Cochran's sample size method for an unknown population and generated 385 respondents as representatives of the population. They were filtered based on the inclusion criteria that all respondents were female, biologically, and avid users of skincare products promoted by these social media influencers. Furthermore, a cluster sampling technique was employed, and qualified respondents were selected randomly based on the clusters established by the researcher, which comprised the selected ten (10) barangays.

2.3 Research instrument

An adapted four-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to gather data addressing the study's objectives, ensuring that no neutral responses were included. The tool focused on determining the degree of agreement among female students regarding the attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, and attitude toward the brands of social media influencers.

To assess the validity and reliability of the study's intention, content validity was performed by two scholars and one industry practitioner using a standardized assessment tool. Additionally, the researcher conducted a pilot test to ensure reliability, which yielded an internal consistency of 0.77, indicating that the tool was at an acceptable level.

2.4 Data analysis

After counting, tallying, and tabulating the collected data, the study utilized the weighted mean and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient as the statistical treatments. The former was used to determine the degree of the respondents' responses; subsequently, the latter centers on the interplay of the variables.

2.5 Ethical considerations

All stages in this research were conducted in accordance with ethical considerations. Firstly, the research prioritized the protection of human rights, as the author ensured confidentiality by not disclosing the respondents' identities in the data collection. Secondly, the study's respondents have access to the research once it is published, as they can use it as a reference to understand the current situation of female senior high school students. Another consideration is the potential risks involved. During data collection, respondents may experience discomfort, such as exhaustion and boredom, which can lead them to answer the survey without reflecting on their true well-being. Moreover, self-disclosure, introspection, or mental strain when responding to a survey might result in psychological or emotional distress.

3 Result

3.1 Preliminary analysis

Table 1 presents the results of the credibility parameters of social media influencers, including attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, and attitude towards the brand. The respective descriptive equivalent is also included in the table.

Table 1. Weighted Mean Results under Social Media Influencers' Credibility

Indicators of Social Media Influencers' Credibility	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
Attractiveness	3.16	Agree
Trustworthiness	2.84	Agree
Expertise	3.08	Agree
Attitude towards the Brands	2.80	Agree
Grand Mean	2.97	Agree

Table 3 presents the results of the respondents' purchasing intention. The crafted statements, weighted mean per statement, and descriptive equivalent are presented below.

Table 2. Degree of agreement about purchasing intention as perceived by the respondents

Statements	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
I most frequently intend to buy skincare products advertised by a social media influencer I follow.	2.77	Agree
Social media influencers' endorsements positively influenced my decision to buy and patronize skincare products.	2.84	Agree
When a social media influencer incorporates a skincare product into their routine, I consider purchasing the same product.	2.81	Agree
I feel delighted and confident in the quality of skincare products endorsed by a social media influencer.	2.88	Agree
I consider the opinions expressed by social media influencers to be valuable in my decision-making process for purchasing.	2.82	Agree
I am more willing to try skincare products for the first time if a trusted social media influencer promotes them.	2.87	Agree
Grand Mean	2.83	Agree

3.2 Hypothesis testing

Table 3 presents the interplay between the independent variables (attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, and attitudes toward the brands) and the dependent variable (purchasing intention) in analyzing the factors that influence female students' purchasing of skincare products.

Table 3. Correlation Result

X	Y	Computed r	Critical r value	Interpretation
Attractiveness	Purchasing Intention	-0.300	0.159	Not Significant Relationship
Trustworthiness		0.169		Significant Relationship
Expertise		-0.017		Not Significant Relationship
Attitudes toward the Brand		0.347		Significant Relationship

4 Discussion

4.1 Social media influencers' attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, and attitude towards the brands

Table 2 shows that attractiveness has a 3.16, with a descriptive equivalent of 'agree', implying that respondents perceived the influencers as engaging and appealing. The style, appearance, and overall presentation resonate well with the public, creating a positive impression on the audience. Additionally, it suggests that respondents agree that the social media influencer's attractiveness can influence their purchase intention of skincare products. With that, attractiveness will encourage more people to make purchases (Regina & Anindita, 2022), and the physical appeal of the source could be leveraged to boost marketing effectiveness (Singh & Banerjee, 2018).

Another parameter in the table is trustworthiness, which obtained a weighted mean of 2.84, signifying that respondents find these influencers trustworthy, reliable, and credible in promoting skincare products. Perceived trust was built through genuine interactions, consistency, results, and engaging social media content, which these influencers performed over time. Furthermore, the findings suggest that the extent to which one believes the person telling the narrative relies on their faith in its message. This is the storyteller's trustworthiness (Stahl & King, 2020), and reliability is a crucial factor associated with believability (Rathnayake & Lakshika, 2023).

Expertise secures a weighted mean of 3.08 with an agreed-upon descriptive equivalent. This implies that respondents perceived influencers as informed individuals with a skill set in promoting skincare products. Additionally, influencers are observed by respondents who have substantial expertise, making their charisma and opinions significant to the brands they promote. Studies show that having expertise in the products can help gain followers' trust (Kim & Kim, 2021) and positively connect with customers, dependent on the advice these influencers give (Nafees et al., 2019).

The social media influencers' attitude towards the brands is perceived as relevant by the respondents, with a weighted mean of 2.80, indicating that influencers are seen as supportive and enthusiastic about the brands they promote; thus, it enhances the perceived value of the brands. Therefore, influencers' product endorsement on social media brings a significant impact on brand awareness and sales, making them more likely to buy the advertised products (Raghani & Jadvani, 2022). Furthermore, a study concluded that keeping a positive outlook on the business, increasing the range of things they offer, and taking a chance on these kinds of campaigns without negatively impacting customers' and supporters' opinions on social media (Abashidze, 2023; Bilro et al., 2022)

Respondents agreed that social media influencers are credible in endorsing skincare products, indicating a positive perception that contributes to purchasing intentions. The respondents perceive these influencers as attractive and engaging, trustworthy and factual, knowledgeable and expert, and sincerely positive towards the brands they support. Furthermore, the credibility of social media influencers is a marketing move that companies with skincare products should consider highly.

4.2 Purchasing intention

Table 3 presents the statements under purchasing intention, weighted mean results, and the descriptive equivalent. One statement obtained the highest weighted mean of 2.88, indicating that respondents expressed emotional satisfaction and assurance regarding skincare products promoted by the influencers. Different studies corroborate the findings that strong skincare product quality influences female customers' purchasing decisions (Monika et al., 2023; Senavirathne & Kumaradeepan, 2020; Lee et al., 2019)

Another statement obtained a weighted mean of 2.87, meaning that endorsements made by skincare influencers boost their willingness to use a new product. Moreover, the literature confirms that these influential individuals in social media can easily tap the market and generate high revenue for businesses (Dajah, 2020; Doshi et al., 2023)

Overall, the respondents scored the purchasing intention positively, with a grand mean of 2.83, indicating that the presence of social media influencers contributes to their intention to patronize skincare products. Influencers have a substantial role in social media marketing activities, as they positively impact the purchasing intention of skincare products (Chrisniyanti & Fah, 2022). Also, it serves as a significant positive mediating effect on consumer behavior and intention to buy cosmetic products in the context of Brunei Darussalam (Ringim & Reni, 2019).

4.3 The Interplay between attractiveness and purchasing intention

The result of attractiveness towards the purchasing intention towards their relationship shows that it is insignificant. Therefore, the study accepts the null hypothesis that the two variables have no significant relationship, as the computed r-value is less than the critical r-value. This implies that attractiveness does not significantly contribute to the respondents' decision to purchase skincare products. Some studies confirmed that attractiveness does not correlate with purchasing intention (Mishra, 2023; Till & Busler, 2000), and it does not correlate to female athlete-related products (Liu & Brock, 2011). In contrast, multiple studies found that the more attractive the appearance evaluation, the more likely customers are to purchase (Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022; Arora et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2007).

4.4 The interplay between trustworthiness and purchasing intention

As shown in the table, the computed r-value exceeds the critical r-value, indicating a significant relationship. With that, the study rejects the null hypothesis. Therefore, the two variables have a significant relationship. The finding suggests that trustworthiness does not significantly influence respondents' purchasing decisions for skincare products endorsed by social media influencers. However, multiple studies negate the study's findings, suggesting that trustworthiness is a crucial factor in why people patronize skincare products promoted by social media influencers (Hastiana & Astuti, 2023; Marmora & Aprilianty, 2022; Zhu et al., 2020; Schouten et al., 2020).

4.5 The interplay between expertise and purchasing intention

Expertise in the table yielded an insignificant relationship with purchasing intention, suggesting that expertise and purchasing intention are not correlated. Therefore, the study accepts the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the two variables. This means that the higher the degree of knowledge a social media influencer has, the more likely female students are to make a purchase decision for skincare products. With the result, a series of literature found by the researcher contradicts that the expertise of social media influencers, including the quality content about the endorsed products, positively shapes the purchase intent of the customers (Koay et al., 2022; Dabbous & Barakat, 2020; McClure & Seock, 2020; Weismueller et al., 2020; Fu et al., 2020).

4.6 The interplay between attitude towards the brand and purchasing intention

Table 4 shows that the social media influencers' attitude towards the brands has a significant relationship with the female students' purchase intention, as indicated by a computed r-value greater than the critical r-value. Therefore, the study rejects the null hypothesis. The finding indicates that the higher the attitude toward the brand of a social media influencer, the more likely female students are to make a purchase decision. A positive attitude towards the brand, as demonstrated by the endorser, can significantly help businesses, potentially increasing their revenue substantially. Two studies found the same evidence (Kareem & Venugopal, 2023; Li & Peng, 2021).

5 Conclusion and recommendations

It can be concluded that senior high school female students find these social media influencers visually appealing, trusted, competent, and users of the brands they endorse. As the trustworthiness and attitude towards the brand correlate with purchasing intention, it signifies that these students primarily consider trust in the influencers and have a positive attitude towards the brand as a basis of credibility and reliability in endorsing skincare products through high-quality social media content. Additionally, authenticity and genuine support for the skin care products make social media influencers credible in the eyes of customers.

These findings have practical implications for brand owners who are actively present on social media platforms, suggesting that partnering with trusted and reliable social media influencers can serve as a valuable marketing leverage in their business. The collaboration with the influencers intensifies the presence of the skincare brands in the virtual market. Furthermore, investigating influencers who are users of the skincare products they endorse and have a positive attitude can contribute to brand loyalty, as customers develop a strong rapport with the brand and its products.

In addition, the study has theoretical implications, extending Social Credibility Theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) by examining how different dimensions of source credibility influence the purchasing intentions of senior high school female consumers. Traditionally, attractiveness and expertise have been highlighted as key determinants of persuasive effectiveness in consumer

decision-making. However, the study reveals that trustworthiness and attitudes toward the brand emerge as key factors influencing purchasing intention, surpassing attractiveness and expertise.

For future studies, as the study concentrated specifically on female senior high school students, this might limit the generalizability of the results to other demographic groups, such as males, older people (ages 25 to 60), or younger adolescents. Additionally, incorporating other variables such as brand reputation, brand equity, and the 4Ps of the marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion), as well as peer recommendations, may also influence consumers' purchasing intentions.

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