

INFLUENCER MARKETING ON SOCIAL MEDIA: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF SOURCE CREDIBILITY IN GENERATING PARA SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND PRODUCT INTEREST

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to examine the relation of influencer credibility with product interest through the mediation of para-social relationships. Influencer credibility was measured through the constructs of expertise, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and similarity. By making a conceptual framework and then evaluating it, this research tries to fill the theoretical gaps about the study variables in a digital influencing context. A questionnaire was developed based on items from available literature about the study variables. The target respondents of the study were social media users from Pakistan who are also users of various brands. The data analysis was conducted using the Process “Macro by Hayes” model 4 in SPSS. Key findings show that the credibility of a source is important for building parasocial relationships and product interest. All the hypotheses were supported showing the immense importance of influences in brand Marketing in the current era. The underpinning theory of this study is the source credibility theory which is supported by our findings. The study also opens new avenues for future research including the application of the model in e-commerce and business-to-business sectors of the industry. The results of this research will also help brand managers and digital marketers design their promotional campaigns through the endorsement of online influencers.

Key words: Parasocial relationships; Influencers; Social media; Expertise, Credibility



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Introduction

In exploring the role of Source credibility in generating Para social relationships and product interest, the literature review by (Leite & Baptista, 2022) revealed a lack of studies investigating the link between the reliability of a source on social media and the development of parasocial relationships and product interest. By addressing some of the research questions that haven't been addressed before, this article hopes to contribute to the current body of theory and literature. Also, there is a critical need for companies to comprehend the dynamics of social media in the modern, ever-changing world. This investigation on the mediating role of parasocial relationships examines the connections between product interest and the attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, and similarity of social media influencers.

Several studies including (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lou & Kim, 2019; Vazquez et al., 2020; Yuan & Lou, 2020) as well as reviews of related literature, show that parasocial relationships and product interest are strongly linked. Parasocial relationships serve as a foundation for equity, which in turn leads to positive endorsement and loyalty; two key components of advocacy. Brand managers that are having trouble can benefit from this study by learning how to better utilize digital marketing strategies. This study's data comes from a survey of the Pakistani population and focuses on their social media habits. With this data in hand, company and brand directors will be better equipped to create effective digital advertising and social media influencer engagement plans. The results of this study advance theory and influence customer purchasing decisions. This study sheds light on the value of social media influencers as a strategy for influencing consumers' favorable attitudes towards social networking platforms. It is important to emphasize that word-of-mouth and online evaluations are more influential than conventional forms of advertising in the modern world. This study is one of the pioneers to examine how social media influencers affect para-social interactions and consumer behavior using the source credibility hypothesis. As a result, these findings represent a significant theoretical advance. Our study differs from others in its field since it considers both the parasocial interactions of followers and the credibility of the influencer. The objectives of the study are:

- I. To study the association of a social media user's parasocial relationship with the influencer.

- II. To study the role of source credibility in creating para social relationships.
- III. To study the relation of para social relationships with product interest

Literature Review

One of the most significant components behind the success or failure of a product or brand's promotion is the trustworthiness of the source (Harrison, 2017). Social media influencers have established themselves as potential brand advocates over the past few years due to their direct relation with consumers. In comparison to other marketing tactics (such as influencer marketing), influencers are often regarded as the more cost-effective and efficient option (Wolff, 2022). The credibility of the source is frequently considered when assessing the usefulness of endorsements (Taghipoorreynh & De Run, 2016). To be more specific, a credible advertiser has a positive influence on how customers see a product or service. When discussing the credibility of a source, expertise, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and similarity are the main components that are frequently brought up. The views, attitudes, and behaviors of customers can be influenced by information that is offered by credible sources, such as influential users of social media (Wang et al., 2017). Furthermore, experts are more likely to become convincing and are qualified to drive consumer purchase intention. An influencer marketing strategy is based on using influencers to spread a brand's message to the right consumer at the right time (Tanwar et al., 2022). The following table provides a framework for operationally defining the study variables.

Table 1 Variables Definitions

Sr.#	Variables	Definitions	Reference	Type of variables
1	Expertise	Being considered qualified, reliable and knowledgeable.	(Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022)	Independent
2	Attractiveness	Attractiveness refers to an individual's physical attractiveness	(Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022)	Independent
3	Trustworthiness	Trustworthiness refers to the level of confidence of the recipient in the source	(Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022)	Independent

4	Similarity	A similarity is a sameness or likeness	(Bond, 2018)	Independent
5	Parasocial relationship	One sided emotional attachment with famous personalities	(Kim & Song, 2016)	Mediator
6	Product interest	Interests in endorsed brands or purchase intentions	(Yuan & Lou, 2020)	Dependent

1.1 Source Credibility and Parasocial Relationships

According to a recent research study, parasocial relationships can be characterized by the amount of time spent on following media personalities, as well as the intrinsic qualities of the media personalities themselves (Bond, 2018). (Ladhari et al., 2020) examined the factors impacting the following of a beauty vlogger (a.k.a. "youtuber") and subsequent sales of online cosmetics. Further, the study investigates how a vlogger's competence and emotional connection to him/her affects his/her popularity in relation to four aspects of the similarity constructs (i.e., their attitude, value system, background, or appearance). The study shows that because of the vlogger's fame, viewers are more likely to buy the things he or she recommends. A sample of 501 American women were surveyed online about beauty and cosmetics vloggers. It was found that the Vloggers' popularity is influenced by three elements of similarity (attitude, values, and looks). In addition, having a keen sense of emotional connection is more important than having extensive knowledge. The popularity of vloggers has a considerable impact on the purchasing of suggested beauty items by their followers. In the research of vloggers' popularity, it was found that similarity, attraction, and emotional attachment have an important influence.

1.2 Expertise of an Influencer

A source's perceived ability to make legitimate assertions has been described as expertise by (McCracken, 1989). The endorser is therefore seen as capable of conveying valid and precise information or as knowledgeable about a given issue According to research, an endorser with greater influence possesses higher levels of skill, which might lead to a more enthusiastic response from potential customers (Kim & Kim, 2021). According to a survey conducted by (Campbell & Farrell, 2020) consumers trust influencer endorsers' expert advice because they see

them as individuals who care about them in the same way that actual people do. Influencers use social media as a platform of influence, whereas the followers utilize social media to get the latest details regarding brands and to fulfill their need for peer acceptance. According to (Weismueller et al., 2020) the purchasing habits of consumers are heavily impacted by an influencer's expertise.

Furthermore, internet shoppers regard influencers' expertise or relationship to the brand as a significant factor in the success of brand endorsements (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). According to Schouten et al. (2019), influencers, as opposed to regular celebrity endorsers, benefit more from the product-endorser fit in terms of credibility as they have established themselves as experts in their respective fields (e.g., "gaming vloggers," "makeup vloggers," "fitness vloggers," and "fashion bloggers"). They regularly share marketing materials with their online audiences (Balog et al., 2008). Celebrities, on the other hand, are more likely to just endorse a product without really using it themselves, relying more on their fame in a certain industry than on the product's suitability for them. Due to their reliance on the advertisers' information, individuals may be mistaken for being uninformed about the goods. As a result, a solid match between both the influencer and the brand may be more critical than in the case of celebrities.

H1: Expertise of an influencer and parasocial relationships have a significant and positive relation.

H6: Parasocial relationships mediate the relation between an influencer's expertise and product interest.

H10: Influencer expertise has a positive, significant relation with product interest.

1.3 Influencer's Attractiveness

According to (Aggad et al., 2021) beautiful influencers are more likely to get people to agree with them. Hence, it can be implied that a company or product's messaging is more persuasive if it is delivered by attractive influencers. As a result, good looking people are more popular than less attractive ones. As per the congruity theory, a favorable attitude toward a speaker translates into a more favorable outcome of the message. As a result, others are more likely to think highly

of someone because of their close association with a beautiful individual. Hence, social media users may follow the message of popular influencers to form a connection with them. Attractive influencers may have inspirational power, which would be a means of exerting influence. Represented by social adaptation theory, which says that evaluating one's physical beauty to an appealing testimony can be good for self-evaluation and progress (Park & Yim, 2020).

H2: Attractiveness of an influencer and parasocial relationships have a significant and positive relation.

H8: Parasocial relationships mediate the relation between an influencer's attractiveness and product interest.

H11: Influencer attractiveness has a direct and significant relationship with product interest.

1.4 Influencer's Trustworthiness

The second element that determines the credibility of a source is whether you can trust it or not. Credibility is the degree to which the audience believes that the information given by the source is true. (Ismagilova et al., 2020) systematic review found that source trustworthiness is a key component of purchase intent in the consumer goods sector. The same research also investigated how consumers' perceptions of a messenger's integrity or expertise influences information acceptance. This is the process through which people deliberately use information on customer review forums, such as those used by (Cheung et al., 2008). Looking at the research by (Cheung et al., 2008), the study also showed that impact on product sales would be more if the influencer was trustworthy.

H3: Trustworthiness of an influencer and parasocial relationships have a significant and positive relation.

H7: Parasocial relationships mediate the relation between an influencer's trustworthiness and product interest.

H12: Influencer's trustworthiness has a direct and significant relationship with product interest.

1.5 Influencer's Similarity

When it comes to source effects, similarity has been studied since the 1970s, and one example is trust. Similarity has indeed been linked to attractiveness, emotional closeness, and, very recently, consumer connection. Likability can be explained as a human's ability to connect with another person on a personal and emotional level (Feldman, 1984). The (Stone & Eswara, 1969) study indicated that likability or similarity can have an impact on behavior and attitude.

Looking at the impact of similarity between both the source as well as the consumer, (Feldman, 1984) research focused on high school students. In this study, students' snacking and dessert choices were analyzed using an 80-item questionnaire that included questions about the influence of similarity with expertise on their eating habits. Respondents were asked to judge themselves on a range of similar traits with school health instructors. As a next step, subjects were randomly categorized into 4 groups, each getting nutrition advice from a source with a high level of knowledge and a lower level of similarity. According to the findings, higher level of similarity between the students and instructors led to a stronger impact on participants' nutritional habits.

H4: Similarity of an influencer and parasocial relationships have a significant and positive relation.

H9: Para social relationships mediate the relation between an influencer's similarity and product interest.

H13: Influencer similarity has a direct and significant relationship with product interest.

1.6 Parasocial Relationship and Product interest

Influencer-follower para-social relationships can have an impact on marketing results such as brand interest or purchasing behavior, hence it is important to investigate further. Marketers and advertisers place high value on the number of people who express an interest in a product which an influencer has promoted. While several studies have examined how celebrity endorsers affect advertising (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2019), influencers have specific characteristics that set them apart from celebrities, such as their primary function in social and online media as content providers (Lou and Yuan 2019). Many research studies have investigated the impact of

influencer advertising, but few have examined the underlying mechanism of the influencers marketing efficacy (De Veirman et al., 2017).

Branded postings, for example, have been shown to influence followers brand recognition and buyer inclinations, according to a recent study (Yuan & Lou 2019). In another research, it was found that a blogger's personal qualities and blog material have an impact on the level of interaction their followers have with influencers ads, which in turn has an impact on the effectiveness of their advertising (Ladhari et al., 2020). Para social interactions have also been seen to moderate influencer trustworthiness and content value among teenagers (Lou & Kim, 2019). .

H5: There is a significant and positive relationship between para social relationships and product interest.

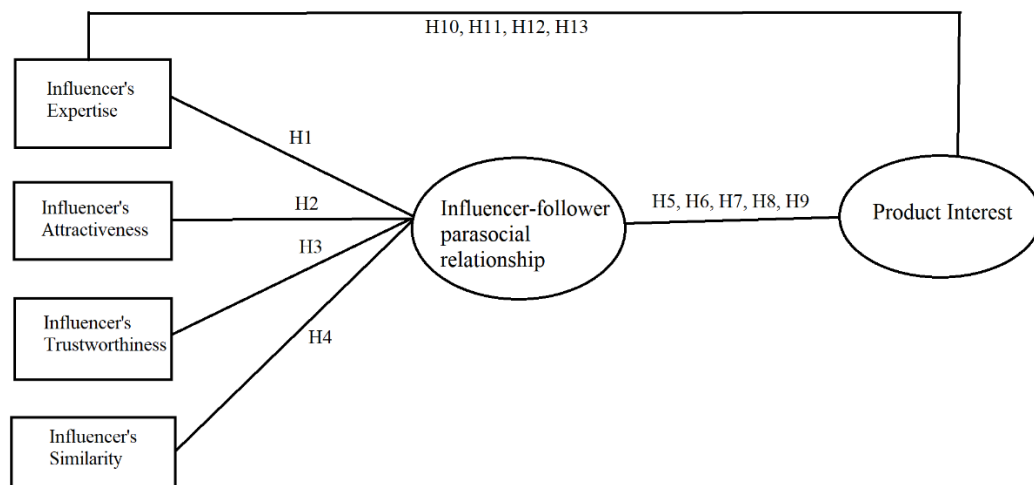


Fig. 1 Theoretical Framework

Methodology

The following is a summary of the research methods used in our study:

Type of Study

The research study is a cross-sectional, one-shot, quantitative study because all the information was gathered at the same time.

Sample size and sampling technique

According to Nunnally (1978), the item response theory can be used to determine sample size. As per this theory, the study sample is determined by multiplying the number of items by ten ($28 \times 10 = 280$). Because our items are 28, 280 replies were collected. We employed a convenience, non-probability sampling approach.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of study were 18–45-year-old social media users who have seen an influencer’s advertisement in the last three months. People in this age group are more active buyers and decision makers when it comes to purchasing a new product.

Research Instruments

Structured questionnaires were utilized as a survey instrument to collect correct responses. The questionnaire was created utilizing published research on the variables under consideration. The questionnaire survey was organized into eight sections. The replies were based on a 5-point Likert scale.

Table 2: Item sources

Sr.#	Variables	Items	Reference
1	Expertise	4	(Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022)
2	Attractiveness	4	(Bond, 2018)
3	Trustworthiness	5	(Bond, 2018)
4	Similarity	3	(Bond, 2018)
5	Parasocial relationship	8	(Kim & Song, 2016)
6	Product interest	4	(Bu et al., 2022)

The data was obtained online using Google forms. Google forms are an accepted online data collection approach that is frequently utilized in several studies throughout the world. It facilitates the generation of data while minimizing the use of natural resources such as paper.

This approach not only provides data transparency but is also environmentally sustainable. There were 8 sections of the questionnaire. The first section was intended to extract demographic data such as age, name, education as well as household Income accompanied by other information such as the brand used, usage of social media and the platforms mostly used.

The second portion showed several renowned influencer-endorsed social media advertisements to provide the viewers a visual representation of the topic. The 3rd portion included questions about "Influencer's Relevant Expertise," our survey's second independent variable. This variable contained four items on which the audience was polled. The 4th section included questions about "Influencers Attractiveness," which is one of our study's independent variables. We adapted four items from relevant research on the subject. The 5th component was about "Influencer's Trustworthiness," which is our study's third independent variable. This characteristic is significant since our literature review shows that trust is the foundation of all relationships, including those between celebrities and their fans. The 6th section included questions about "Influencers Similarity," which was also one of our study's independent variables. The 7th section included questions about "Parasocial relationships," while the 8th section included questions about "Product interest". The data was analyzed using SPSS. Regression analysis was conducted to ascertain the connections between the variables. We ran process macro by Hayes model 4 four times, each time with a different set of values for the independent variables of attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness and similarity among Influencers.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using SPSS. Regression analysis was conducted to ascertain the connections between the variables. We ran process macro by Hayes model 4 four times, each time with a different set of values for the independent variables of attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness and similarity among Influencers.

Following are the results of our study:

Table 3. Demographics characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
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Age	18-24	154	55.1
	25-30	109	38.9
	31-36	13	4.6
	37-42	0	0
	43+	4	1.4
Education	Undergraduate	102	36.4
	Graduate	106	37.9
	Postgraduate	64	22.9
	Doctorate level	8	2.9
Monthly Household income (in thousands)	10-50	58	20.7
	51-100	33	11.8
	101-150	61	21.8
	151 to 200	31	11.1
	200-300	70	25.0
	Above 300	26	9.3
Usage of Social Media	30 to 60 minutes	80	28.6
	60 to 120 minutes	15	5.4
	120 to 150 minutes	23	8.2
	Above 150 minutes	162	57.9
The Most social media Platforms in use	FB	75	26.8
	Insta	130	46.4
	YT	50	17.9
	TikTok	18	6.4
	Twitter	7	2.5

Our demographic data shows that 55.1% individuals surveyed were 18–24 years old, 38.9% were 25-to-30-year-olds and 4.6% of the people were 31–36 years of age. The table further shows that 36.4% were undergraduates, 37.9% were college graduates while 22.9% were postgraduates.

Apart from the above, it was seen that most survey respondents use social media at least 2.5 hours every day. 5.4% respondents use social media for 1-2 hours daily while 28.6% respondents use social media 30–60 minutes daily. Instagram has the highest usage (46.4%), according to 130 people. Facebook was the second-favorite for 75 people (26.8%). YouTube ranks third in online discussion with 50 respondents, 17.9% for Tik Tok and 2.5% of respondents use Twitter. Descriptive statistics provide a concise overview of the information contained in a data set by quantifying and describing it. Descriptive statistics are useful because they are used to summarize, depict, and simplify statistical data into a format that is understandable and intelligible.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
SMI Expertise	280	3.5857	.90984
SMI Attractiveness	280	3.5679	.91238
SMI Trustworthiness	280	3.4786	.90770
SMI Similarity	280	3.6464	.85508
Para-social Relationship	280	3.5429	.89500
Product Interest	280	3.5607	.85712

Table 5: Reliability Test

Variable	Items	Alpha
SMI Expertise	4	.816
SMI Attractiveness	4	.875
SMI Trustworthiness	5	.826

SMI Similarity	3	.811
Para-social Relationship	8	.899
Product Interest	4	.895

Given that Cronbach's Alpha values for all the variables are greater than 0.8, it may be concluded that the values represent the reliability accurately.

Table 6. Correlation Analysis

		MeanIE	MeanIA	MeanIT	MeanIS	MeanPR	MeanPI
MeanIE	Pearson Correlation	1	.701**	.725**	.726**	.711**	.673**
MeanIA	Pearson Correlation	.701**	1	.644**	.630**	.617**	.608**
MeanIT	Pearson Correlation	.725**	.644**	1	.616**	.729**	.700**
MeanIS	Pearson Correlation	.726**	.630**	.616**	1	.673**	.668**
MeanPR	Pearson Correlation	.711**	.617**	.729**	.673**	1	.779**
MeanPI	Pearson Correlation	.673**	.608**	.700**	.668**	.779**	1

Correlation is mostly witnessed to be from moderate to strong.

6.1 Regression analysis

Model 4 of Hayes was used for data analysis (Preacher and Hayes, 2005). The model was run 4 times, for each of the independent variables. The confidence interval was set at 95% with bootstrap level at 5000.

Table 7. Analysis 1

Model : 4

Y : Product Interest

X : Influencer Expertise

M : Para Social Relationship

OUTPUT

Para Social Relationship

Summary of Model

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.7101	.5042	.3986	282.7429	1.0000	278.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	1.0327	.1540	6.7067	.0000	.7296	1.3358
IE	.7000	.0416	16.8150	.0000	.6181	.7820

OUTPUT

Product Interest

Summary of Model

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.7974	.6359	.2694	241.9135	2.0000	277.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	.6818	.1365	4.9970	.0000	.4132	.9505
IE	.2274	.0486	4.6774	.0000	.1317	.3231
PR	.5825	.0493	11.8120	.0000	.4854	.6795

Direct Effect

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.2274	.0486	4.6774	.0000	.1317	.3231

Indirect effect:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
PR	.4077	.0527	.3069	.5154

Following is the framework pertaining to the above table and the data results for the related hypotheses are discussed below:

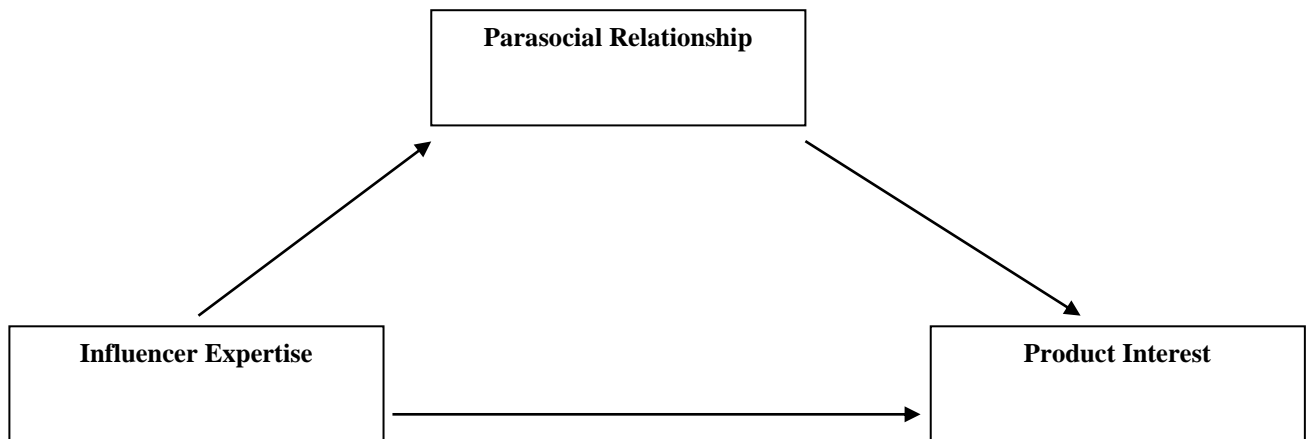


Fig. 2 Framework pertaining to influencer expertise.

H1: Expertise of an influencer and parasocial relationships have a significant and positive relation.

There is a positive relation between these two variables because both the lower plus upper quartiles have positive values. The coefficient value (0.70) also shows that there is an average increase of 0.70 units in para social relationship for every 1 unit increase in SMI attractiveness.

Because P is smaller than 0.05, there is a significant relationship between the variables. R² implies that for every single 0.5042-point variation in the variable that is independent, the dependent variable varies by 50%.

H10: Influencer expertise has a direct and significant relationship with product interest.

Both the upper and lower quartiles are positive, indicating that there is a statistically significant relation between SMI expertise and product interest. According to the coefficient value (0.2272), we may assume that for every 1 unit increase in the expertise of the influencer, there is a corresponding increase of 0.22 units in the interest in products. A significant relation exists between the variables since P is less than 0.05. The R-squared statistic indicates that 63% of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by a change of 0.6359 in the independent variable.

H5: There is a significant and positive relationship between parasocial relationship and product interest.

The presence of positive values in both the upper and lower confidence intervals indicates a significant association between the two factors. The coefficient value of 0.5825 suggests that, on average, a one-unit increase in parasocial relationship corresponds to a 58% increase in product interest. Additionally, since the p-value is less than 0.05, there is a significant relationship between the variables. Thus, it can be concluded that H5 also has a positive relationship.

Indirect Effect

H6: Parasocial relationship mediates the relation between influencer's expertise and product interest.

The results indicate that there is a significant positive indirect effect of influencer expertise (X) on product interest (Y). The meaningful association between the two variables is supported by the fact that both the p-value and confidence intervals are positive and less than 0.05.

Table 8. Analysis 2

Model : 4

Y : Product Interest

X : Influencer Attractiveness

M : Para Social Relationship

OUTPUT

Para Social Relationship

Summary of Model

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.6169	.3806	.4980	170.7993	1.0000	278.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	1.3859	.1703	8.1358	.0000	1.0506	1.7212
IA	.6046	.0463	13.0690	.0000	.5135	.6956

OUTPUT

Product Interest

Summary of Model

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.7959	.6334	.2712	239.3393	2.0000	277.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	.6584	.1399	4.7065	.0000	.3830	.9338
IA	.1933	.0434	4.4560	.0000	.1079	.2787
PR	.6245	.0443	14.1096	.0000	.5374	.7117

Direct effect

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.1933	.0434	4.4560	.0000	.1079	.2787

Indirect effect:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
PR	.3776	.0485	.2852	.4754

Following is the framework pertaining to the above table and the data results for the related hypotheses are discussed below:

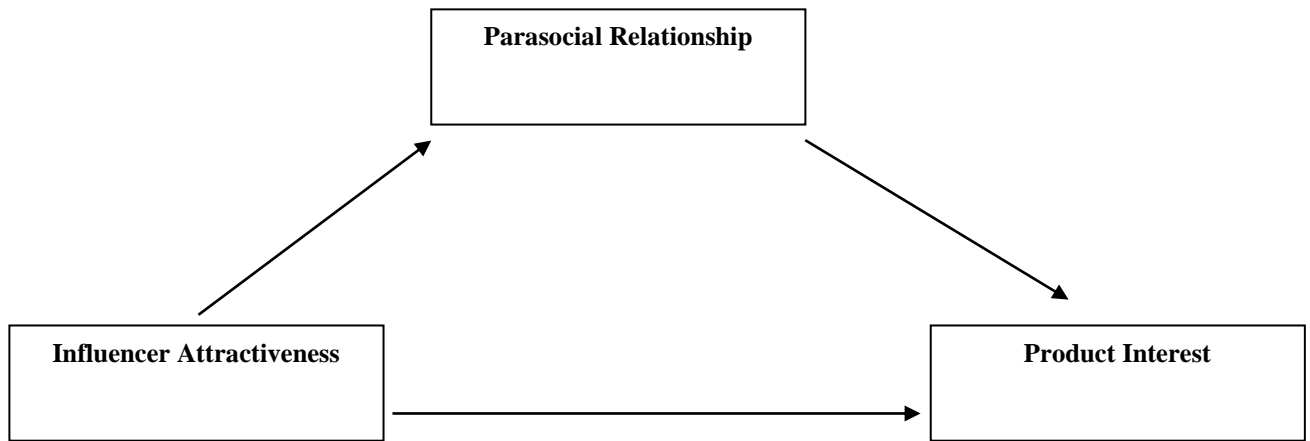


Fig. 3 Framework pertaining to influencer attractiveness.

H2: Attractiveness of an influencer and parasocial relationships have a significant and positive relation.

The presence of positive values in both the upper and lower quartiles suggests a positive association between attractiveness and parasocial relationship. The coefficient value of 0.388 indicates that, on average, a one-unit increase in Influencer's Attractiveness corresponds to a 0.38 unit increase in Product interest. Furthermore, the p-value being less than 0.05 indicates a significant relationship between the variables. The R-squared value suggests that a 0.1460-point shift in the independent variable corresponds to a 14% shift in the dependent variable.

H11: Influencer attractiveness has a direct and significant relationship with product interest.

Both the upper and lower quartiles are positive, indicating that there is a statistically significant relation between SMI attractiveness and product interest. The coefficient value of 0.1933

suggests that, on average, a 1 unit increase in the expertise of an influencer is associated with a 0.19 unit increase in interest in their products. The statistical significance of the relationship is supported by a p-value of less than 0.05. Additionally, the R-squared value indicates that a change of 0.334 in the independent variable can explain approximately 33% of the variation observed in the dependent variable.

H5: There is a significant and positive relationship between parasocial relationship and product interest.

The fact that both the upper and lower confidence intervals have positive values indicates a statistically significant association between the two factors. The coefficient value of 0.5825 implies that, on average, a one unit increase in para-social relationship is associated with a 58% increase in product interest. The strong relationship between the variables is supported by a p-value of less than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that H5 also has a positive association.

Indirect Effect

H7: Parasocial relationship mediates the relation between influencer's attractiveness and product interest.

The analysis shows a positive and statistically significant indirect effect of influencer attractiveness (X) on product interest (Y). The presence of a meaningful association between the two variables is supported by both the probability value and the confidence intervals, which are positive and less than 0.05.

Table 9. Analysis 3

Model : 4

Y : Product Interest

X : Influencer Trustworthiness

M : Para Social Relationship

OUTPUT

Para Social Relationship

Summary of Model

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.7291	.5316	.3765	315.5110	1.0000	278.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	1.0421	.1455	7.1627	.0000	.7557	1.3285
IT	.7189	.0405	17.7626	.0000	.6392	.7986

OUTPUT

Product Interest

Summary of Model

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.8026	.6441	.2634	250.6396	2.0000	277.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	.6893	.1324	5.2050	.0000	.4286	.9499
IT	.2651	.0495	5.3604	.0000	.1678	.3625
PR	.5502	.0502	10.9691	.0000	.4515	.6489

Direct effect

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.2651	.0495	5.3604	.0000	.1678	.3625

Indirect effect

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
PR	.3955	.0534	.2953	.5026

Following is the framework pertaining to the above table and the data results for the related hypotheses are discussed below:

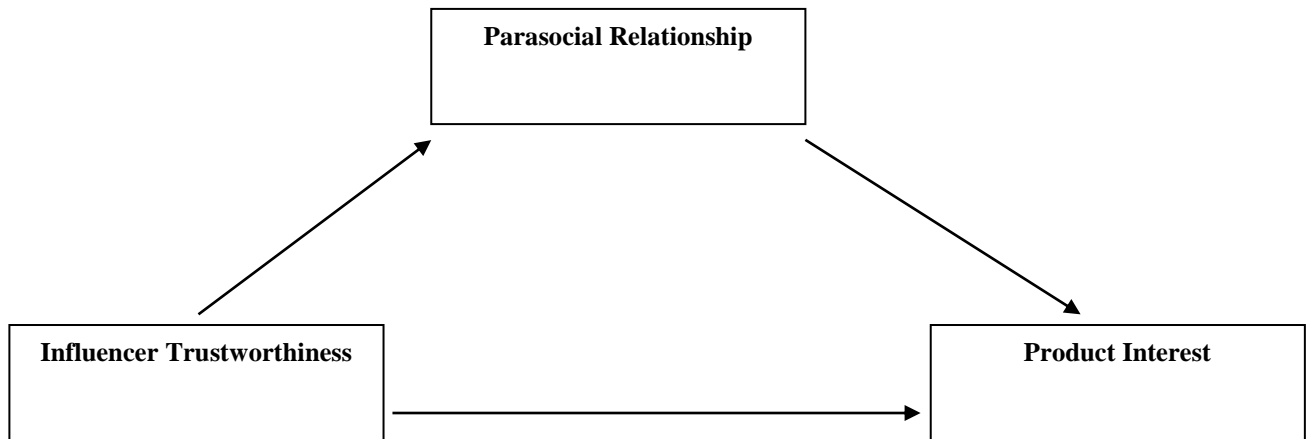


Fig. 4 Framework pertaining to influencer trustworthiness.

H3: Trustworthiness of an influencer and parasocial relationships have a significant and positive relation.

The positive values of upper and lower quartiles depict significance of relation. In addition, the coefficient value of 0.79 indicates that there is an average increase in product interest of 0.79 units for every one unit increase in trustworthiness. Since P is smaller than 0.05, it proves a significance of relation. An R2 value of 0.5316 suggests that a 53% change in the dependent variable may be expected for every 1% change in the independent variable.

H12: Influencer trustworthiness has a direct and significant relationship with product interest.

Both the upper and lower quartiles are positive, indicating that there is a statistically significant relation between SMI attractiveness and product interest. According to the coefficient value (0.2651), we may assume that for every 1 unit increase in the expertise of the influencer, there is a corresponding increase of 0.26 units in the interest in products on average. A significant relation exists between the variables since P is less than 0.05. A change of 0.644 in the independent variable explains 64% of the variation in the dependent variable, as shown by the R-squared statistic.

H5; There is a significant and positive relationship between parasocial relationship and product interest.

Positive results for both the Upper and Lower Confidence Intervals indicate a meaningful relationship between the two variables being studied. The coefficient value (0.5502) indicates that there is an average 55% increase in product interest for every additional unit in parasocial interaction. A substantial relation exists between the variables since P is lower than 0.05. It follows that H5 likewise has a positive relation.

H8: Para social relationship mediates the relation between influencer's trustworthiness and product interest.

The analysis shows a positive and statistically significant indirect effect of influencer attractiveness (X) on product interest (Y). The presence of a meaningful association between the two variables is supported by both the probability value and the confidence intervals, which are positive and less than 0.05.

Table 10. Analysis 4

Model : 4

Y : Product Interest

X : Influencer Similarity

M : Para Social Relationship

OUTPUT

Para Social Relationship

Summary of Model

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.6732	.4532	.4396	230.4226	1.0000	278.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	.9735	.1738	5.5997	.0000	.6312	1.3157
IS	.7046	.0464	15.1797	.0000	.6133	.7960

OUTPUT

Product Interest

Summary of Model

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.8029	.6446	.2630	251.1766	2.0000	277.0000	.0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	.5583	.1418	3.9361	.0001	.2791	.8376
IS	.2622	.0486	5.3996	.0000	.1666	.3578
PR	.5776	.0464	12.4503	.0000	.4863	.6689

Direct effect

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.2622	.0486	5.3996	.0000	.1666	.3578

Indirect effect

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
PR	.4070	.0525	.3070	.5112

Following is the framework pertaining to the above table and the data results for the related hypotheses are discussed below:

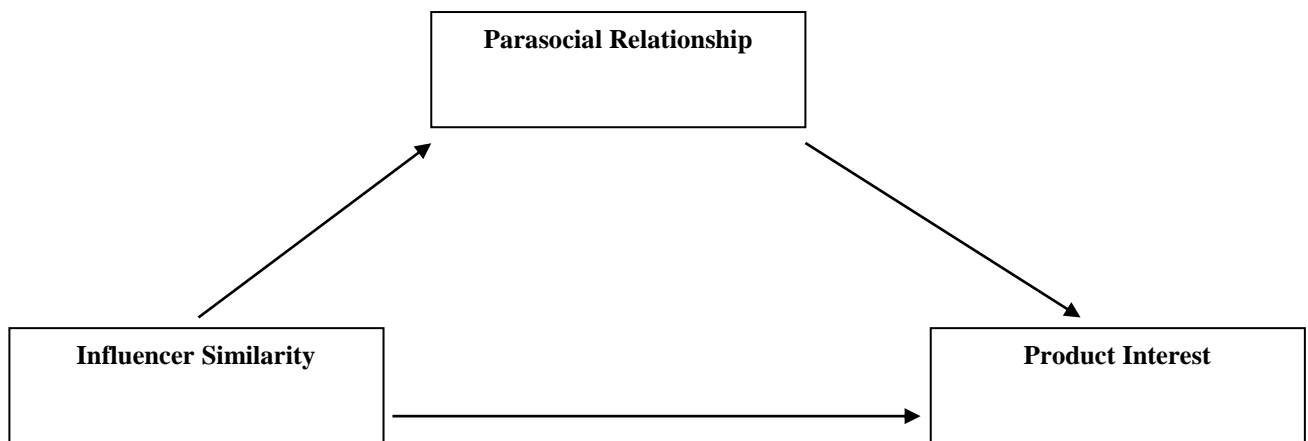


Fig. 5 Framework pertaining to influencer similarity.

H4: Similarity of an influencer and parasocial relationships have a significant and positive relation.

The upper and lower quartiles of positive numbers indicate a positive correlation between the two factors. Moreover, the coefficient value of 0.70 implies that, on average, an increase of one unit in the influencer's trustworthiness results in a 0.79-unit rise in product interest. The P-value being less than 0.05 confirms a significant relationship between the variables. The R2 value suggests that a 0.4532-point shift in the independent variable corresponds to a 45% shift in the dependent variable.

H13: Influencer similarity has a direct and significant relationship with product interest.

Both the upper and lower quartiles are positive, indicating that there is a statistically significant relation between SMI attractiveness and product interest. According to the coefficient value (0.2622), we may assume that for every 1 unit increase in the expertise of the influencer, there is a corresponding increase of 0.26 units in the interest in products on average. A significant relation exists between the variables since P is less than 0.05. A change of 0.6446 in the independent variable explains 64% of the variation in the dependent variable, as shown by the R-squared statistic.

H5: There is a significant and positive relationship between parasocial relationship and product interest.

The upper and lower Confidence Intervals both have positive values which show significance of relation. The coefficient value (0.5502) suggests that for every one unit rise in para social relationship, there is a 55% rise in product interest on average. A substantial relation exists between the variables since P is lower than 0.05. It follows that H5 likewise has a positive relation.

H9: Para social relationship mediates the relation between influencer's similarity and product interest.

Indirect Effect

There is a positive statistically significant indirect influence of influencer trustworthiness (X) on product interest (Y). We know the association between the variables is meaningful because the probability value as well as the confidence intervals both are positive and smaller than 0.05.

1. Discussion

Through a thorough examination of the existing body of knowledge/literature, we have identified a research void and designed a fresh framework to fill it. The primary purpose of this investigation was to evaluate the framework and bring to light new findings related to the study variables.

The findings of the survey supported the first, sixth, and tenth hypotheses of the study, which were related to influencer expertise. The findings show a positive relation between these two variables. Though there is some proof that influencer knowledge increases consumer confidence

in a brand, this describes why as an influencer becomes more famous, the endorsed products also become more popular. It is a good sign that people are more likely to trust a product since a famous person is endorsing it. This is also proved in earlier studies (Jin et al., 2019). Cronbach alpha's test statistic indicates that both independent variables are dependable. Numerous studies provide credence to these hypotheses. Para social interactions with influencers online lead followers to believe that buying a product endorsed by an influencer who is knowledgeable in that industry will help them seem just like the influencer. People will be more committed to a brand if they had a positive experience with the product ((Breves et al., 2019); Yuan et al., 2016; (Lin et al., 2021).

In addition to the above, H2, H7, and H11 were also supported which related to influencer trustworthiness. The study found that a social media influencer's para social relationship as well as trustworthiness were the most critical factors in attracting a larger audience and increasing support for the influencer's cause. An analysis of the factors shows that consumers are more likely to be interested in a product if they believe the advertised influencer promotes it. According to several studies (Ylmazdoan et al., 2021;(Lin et al., 2021);(Sokolova & Kefi, 2020)), consumers who trust an influencer are more inclined to trust the product they recommend. In this case, a positive significant relation exists between the variables.

The survey results supported the third, eighth, and twelfth hypotheses of the study, all of which had to do with the relationship between influencer attractiveness with para social relationships and brand interest. There is a significant relation amongst these factors, as proven by the data analysis. This is a perfect example of why an influencer's physical attractiveness may inspire trust in a product. There is a positive connotation here because the influencer's attractiveness contributes to the viewers' confidence in the advertisement (Gong & Li, 2017); (Manchanda et al., 2022)). Also supported by the data is the fifth hypothesis, which states, "There is a significantly positive link between para social relationship and product interest." This also implies that there will be more and more brand devotees as time goes on (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). An honest two-way dialogue between a brand and its consumers is a sure way to increase the latter's level of confidence in the former. Consumers are more likely to advocate for a brand's goods or services if they have confidence in them.

Although this research primarily focuses on social media, the framework can be extended to other sectors as well. Despite the study's small sample size (5 variables were included), there is adequate data to support further investigation. In addition, future studies can focus on expanding the studies geographical scope as well. The data was collected through Google forms only; collection through face to face administered questionnaires may give more accurate results. In addition, since this was a cross-sectional study, the findings may only be relevant to a specific time -period, as they are indicative of the audience's perspectives and actions at the time of the survey's administration.

The research study on social media influences carries significant implications that can provide valuable insights into the ever-evolving landscape of digital marketing and its impact on society. Firstly, the study's findings can shed light on the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies, enabling brands to better understand how to engage their target audiences authentically and meaningfully. By identifying the most successful influencer characteristics and content styles, businesses can optimize their collaborations and allocate resources more efficiently.

Additionally, the research may unearth the psychological and sociocultural effects of influencer culture on individuals.

Lastly, from an academic standpoint, this research study can open doors for further investigations into the dynamics of online communities, trends in content creation, and the evolving role of influencers in shaping public opinion. By enhancing our understanding of these phenomena, scholars can expand the literature on digital marketing, social influence, and social media's broader impact on society. Overall, this social media influencer research study has implications that span the realms of marketing, psychology, ethics, and academia, contributing to a more informed and responsible use of social media platforms in the digital age.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research study has highlighted the enormous influence that parasocial ties have on product interest through social media influencers. The success of the influencer's marketing initiatives is increased by their capacity to establish a rapport with and sense of relatability with their audience. The study's findings offer useful information to marketers and companies looking to use social media influencers to boost interest in their products. Brands may successfully captivate consumers' attention and have an impact on their purchasing decisions by

carefully working with influencers that are credible and have a strong connection to their audience.

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