"Evaluating the Effectiveness of YouTube Influencer Reviews Videos on Consumer Purchase Intentions for Mobile Phones: A Digital Marketing Perspective"

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Abstract

The term "influencer marketing" refers to a relatively new type of digital marketing that has surfaced in recent decades. Influencers shape consumers' perceptions of a product or brand through videos, photos, and other updates on various digital platforms. This paper specifically focuses on YouTube influencers who make review videos on mobile phone purchases. This study explores the effect of various attributes of influencer credibility and purchase intention of consumers in Lucknow. Google Forms was used to send a questionnaire for data collection. A Total of 453 individuals completed the questionnaire; however, only 319 individuals were chosen for further analysis owing to the inclusion of screening questions, utilization of convenience sampling, and application of structural equation modelling through SmartPLS 4 for the analysis of the data. The finding reveal Argument quality has significant impact on credibility and purchase intention however attractiveness, trustworthiness have impact on credibility but not purchase intention, expertise does not show impact on both credibility or purchase intention.

Keywords- Influencer Marketing, YouTube Reviews videos, Source Credibility, Purchase Intention

Introduction

Technology, which plays an extremely crucial role in changing marketing practices, is one of the many reasons why marketing is a discipline that is constantly evolving and has undergone many changes over the last few decades.Every time there is a change in technology, such as when the printing press, radio, and television were invented, there is also a change in marketing practices. These technological developments have resulted in the current state of affairs, where we live in a digital world, with the invention of computers, the Internet, and smart-phones. This has led to the creation of a new type of marketing, known as digital marketing.

In line with the Institute of Direct and Digital Marketing (IDM), it is described as "the management and execution of marketing through electronic media, including the web, email, interactive television, and wireless media, in conjunction with digital data regarding customer characteristics and behaviour."

Digital marketing, like every other industry, continues to evolve with the advent of new technologies as worldwide web launched in 1991, but not able to make much impact until the first popular browser , search engines such as Google came into existence between the years 1990 and the early 2000s.This coincided with the introduction of Netscape to the market in 1994, which coincided with increase in the number of people using the internet. As a result, the field of search engine marketing (SEM) has been formed , which is the practice of promoting websites and blogs by increasing their visibility through the utilization of strategies such as paid promotions and search engine optimization (SEO). Due to the widespread use of search engine optimization (SEO), pay-per-click (PPC) advertising, and social media platforms, the way companies or brands interact with their intended consumers has been completely transformed. Among these, social media has grown into a powerful platform that enables businesses to foster relationships with their customers in a more personal way. Platforms like Facebook (2004), Twitter (2006), and YouTube (2005) made it possible for individuals to establish a connection with larger audiences. As these platforms grew, so did the level of popularity of these individuals by sharing their knowledge, lifestyle, and opinions on a particular niche through authentic and engaging content, which give rises to influencer marketing a modern strategy that leverages the trust and engagement influencers with their followers.

Influencer Marketing

Advertising products and services on social media channels with the help of well-known influencers is an example of a technique known as influencer marketing. A social media influencer is someone who creates and shares content on social media sites, such as YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram, which are pertinent to their specialized interests or areas of knowledge (e.g. video games, food, consumer electronics, or fitness). It is possible for individuals or customers who have an interest in a certain field to follow and connect with influencers to maintain themselves up to date on the latest news and trends.

According to Hair et al. (2010) and Hall (2016), influencers can, therefore, be at the core of a substantial, active, and trustworthy community, which will capture the interest of important brand marketers who collaborate with these influential digital voices . As stated by Lou and Yuan (2019, p. 2), an influencer on social media is primarily a content creator, someone with a reputation for being an authority in a particular field who, via consistent social media content creation, gained substantial following of captives, valuable for brand marketing. Influencer, developed an online persona and fan base by producing material for social media as opposed to conventional celebrities while traditional celebrities, became well known through traditional channels and utilise social media as an additional tool to establish a connection with their audience.

In essence , influencer marketing is all about connection when someone we follow online on YouTube, whether a tech reviewer, fashion blogger, or fitness blogger on Instagram, they discuss their individual experience with the product. According to De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017), influencer marketing is powerful because they act as opinion leaders which shapes the attitude and behaviour of their followers by integrating product messages into relatable content .

Influencer marketing surfaced as enterprises started understanding the limitations of conventional advertising, especially the declining effectiveness of direct advertisements and celebrity endorsements. Consumers now want to get his buy authenticated before purchase so they seek the opinions of influencers whom they see as opinion leaders that assist them in making well-informed decisions. When these influencers make review videos , unboxing and detailed specifications videos about the mobile phones not only they benefitted the mobile phone brand as they got reach but also helped consumers become aware of the new launch and updated technology in mobile phones .

People see these influencers because they are more relatable and honest about their opinions than traditional promotional channels, as they discuss both negative and positive aspects of the product which helps them to make an informed choice . Influencer are not digital personalities they are lifestyle role models especially for the youth . Research by Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) shows that young consumers particularly women aged between 18-30 were more persuaded and more likely to trust influencers than traditional celebrities and the reason is simple as they appear more accessible or real often tell their own stories and give honest reviews

According to a 2022 Edelman survey, 63% of consumers are more inclined to believe influencers' opinions about a product than the brand's claims. Influencers are viewed as more trustworthy and personable by public which increases the persuasiveness of their recommendation. In India, influencer marketing is gaining traction, and smartphone penetration and social media usage are skyrocketing. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and increasingly, regional language short-video apps and have enabled influencers from diverse backgrounds to build loyal followings. According to a study by Influencer.in (2023), over 80% of Indian marketers, discovered that influencer marketing works well, especially in sectors like fashion, electronics, food, and personal care.

One rationale for the efficacy of influencer marketing is that it integrates social proof with emotional connection when followers see these influencers using a product and endorsing it reduces uncertainty in their minds as they admire them . Influencer help in bridge the gap between brand and consumers by offering expertise and trustworthiness two main critical components in modern decision making as per by Kapitan and Silvera (2016).

In the current competitive and crowded mobile phone market sponsored YouTube review videos are employed to influence consumers because these videos offer comprehensive information , features, and comparisons with other mobile phones within the same price . The Interactive nature of these platforms helps Influencers to build genuine connections with their audiences and influencers who are perceived as trustworthy , knowledgeable , attractive, and also present high quality arguments that tend to have greater impact on consumer decisions.

A 2021 survey by GlobalWebIndex revealed that nearly half of consumers (49%) consider influencer recommendations when deciding what to buy, showing just how many influencers can shape and guide consumer behaviour. In short , influencer marketing is not just a paradigm shift in how consumers interact with a brand; and in this era of information is overloaded and distortion of attention it offers clarity , confidence and connection in the minds of consumers in the ever expanding marketplace.

Research Objectives

To examine the effect of influencer attributes (expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness) on influencer credibility and purchase intention.

To study how argument quality in influencer review videos can affect credibility and purchase intention.

To test that does influencer credibility mediates the relationships between the two(Independent and dependent variable) for the purchase mobile phones.

To determine how each influencer attribute affects customer buying intention who watch influencer review videos on YouTube.

Research Gap and Contribution of the Study

Although there is increase in use of influencer marketing and YouTube as platforms to persuade digital consumers, prior studies mostly focus on influencers on social media and celebrity endorsements who endorse products, without examining the specific role of YouTube influencer reviews videos on the purchase of mobile phones. Most literature have focused on Instagram and Facebook based influencers and not focused on informational ,depth knowledgeable videos shared by influencers on YouTube. Prior studies have treated influencer credibility as a unified construct without segregating it from expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness or investigating the different aspect of each attribute of purchase intention. While argument quality is widely recognized in persuasion theory, few studies have linked it to influencer traits in a digital marketing framework.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Influencer marketing has grown in importance in digital marketing strategies, and YouTube has emerged as a key platform for influencer-led campaigns. Marketers must comprehend the elements influencing consumers' purchasing intentions, as an increasing number of customers use YouTube to review and suggest products. This study aimed to evaluate the YouTube Influencer characteristics that influence credibility and purchase intention The proposed conceptual framework is grounded in several well-established theories in the fields of communication and persuasion, namely the Source Credibility Model, Source Attractiveness Model, and the concept of Argument Quality.

Source Credibility

The Source Credibility Model, introduced by Hovland and Weiss (1951), assert that message efficacy is largely dependent on the reliability of the source. Source credibility within the structure of YouTube influencers is frequently linked to influencers' perceived level of competence and dependability. While trustworthiness concern the influencer's perceived honesty and integrity, expertise is the level to which the influencer is knowledgeable and competent in the subject matter. By creating a scale to gauge these qualities, Ohanian (1990) further validated this model which has since been utilized extensively in the research on influencer marketing and celebrity endorsements.

Source Attractiveness

The Source Attractiveness Model, formulated by McGuire (1985), posits that the appeal of a source significantly influences persuasion. According to the attractiveness model, the success of a given message is hinged on the appearance of its sender. In this regard, it is believed that the process of identification makes an endorser who is physically attractive to affect the target in accepting the advertisement (Stefan, 2009). Specifically, the appeal of the advertisement lies in the similarity, likeability as well as the familiarity of the endorser with the consumer. Conclusions made regarding the attractiveness model proved by Cialdini (2007), who states that people like people who resemble them and that the same can be said about opinions, personality, backgrounds and lifestyles. Physical attractiveness of social media influencers is also regarded as a good element in boosting the adoption of advertising. The physicality or physical trait of the endorser is important in source attractiveness (Erdogan 1999). A lot of past research has linked the source attractiveness to the customer attitude this is positively associated with buy intention (petty et al; 1983; Erdogan; 1999) Effectiveness of endorsements is directly dependent on the source that is attractive as said by McGuire (1985). Attractive social media influencers have beneficial effect on consumers. According to Till and Busler (2000), endorsing products with appealing qualities might influence buyers to have a positive attitude and ultimately make a purchase.

Argument Quality

Argument Quality is a concept that derived from Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) proposed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) and it distinguishes the two modes of persuasion one that is central route which involves rational and thoughtful evaluation of arguments and the other is peripheral route where superficial cues such as the attractiveness or credibility of the source dominate According to Cacioppo, Petty, and Morris (1983), logical coherence, evidentiary support, and alignment with the audience's informational needs are characteristics of high-quality arguments. Empirical studies have underscored the role of argument strength in influencing perceived information credibility. According to Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006, p. 811), argument quality is defined as "the persuasive strength of arguments embedded in an informational message." Cheung et al. (2012), Li and Suh (2015), and Zha et al. (2018) consistently determined that high argument quality positively correlates with users' evaluations of information credibility across digital platforms.

Conceptual Framework

By integrating important theoretical models, such as source credibility model, source attractiveness model, and argument quality, which are based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model, this conceptual framework investigates the complex relationship between influencer review videos and mobile phone purchase intention. It also considers influencer credibility to be as a mediating factor that affects purchase intention. Hovland et al. (1953) introduced the source credibility model, asserting that perceived knowledge and trustworthiness are the primary factors influencing source credibility. Expertise enables recipients to ascertain the sources of influencers, thus improving the dissemination of accurate and effective information. Expertise is demonstrated through experience, abilities, skills, and knowledge. Celebrity endorsers acknowledged as authorities in particular domains exhibit superior brand recognition compared to individuals without such experience. The heightened competence of celebrities improves their endorsement effectiveness. Adverse publicity does not change a celebrity's talent; however, it affects trust and credibility (Speck et al., 1988). The trust paradigm in communication refers to the listener's acceptance of both the speaker and message (Abdulmajid-Sallam and Wahid, 2012) stated that, irrespective of understanding, an adept communicator was influential. Ohanian, (1990) found that trustworthiness is the strength of consumers' confidence in communicator's intentions to consider that the claims they are making are credible. Trustworthiness significantly influences effectiveness, as evidenced by extensive research (Chao et al., 2005). In the YouTube world , where a wide range of audiences constantly watch videos influencer's perceived expertise and trustworthiness are important factors that boost their overall reputation. The source attractiveness model builds on the source credibility model by showing how an endorser's appearance, familiarity, and likability affect the effectiveness of a

message (McGuire, 1985). The attractiveness model states that how well a message works depends on how the messenger looks, and it is thought that the physical attraction of an endorser might alter how well the target accepts the ad by making them feel like they are like the endorser (Stefan, 2009). The attraction of an ad depends on how similar, likable, and familiar the sponsor is to the viewer, and the study of the attractiveness model backs up Cialdini's (2007) claim that people are drawn to others who are like them, whether in terms of views, personality traits, backgrounds, or lifestyles. Moreover, the commonalities between the endorser and viewers are crucial when a diverse array of products and services is presented and when the audience is heterogeneous (Shimp, 2003). Consequently, when a representative is regarded as comparable, the likelihood of significantly impacting consumer opinions and decisions increases. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) proposed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) enhances this paradigm by underscoring that the significance of soundness of arguments is crucial in persuading an audience that is highly engaged in a topic. Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006) characterized argument quality as "the persuasive efficacy of arguments included in an informative message (p. 811). Cacioppo et al., (1983) posited that the strength of an argument serves as an indicator of information quality. Empirical research has identified information quality as a precursor to perceived information credibility (Cheung et al., 2012; Li & Suh, 2015; Slater & Rouner, 1996). Cheung et al. (2012) discovered a comparable finding of a positive association between the standards of arguments and the perceived legitimacy of user-generated reviews. As the research showed previously, In YouTube review videos it is quite likely that the quality and level of the arguments would make viewers think the videos are more credible as Individuals are more inclined to interact with influencers who give full descriptions of product features and specs and give full information to support their purchase and this framework shows how important credibility is in influencer marketing and helps marketers figure out what makes someone credible. It also looks at whether an influencer's expertise, trustworthiness, and argument quality affect whether or not someone purchase intention as previous studies have shown that credibility mediates between source models to affect customers' inclinations to purchase (La Ferle & Choi, 2005; Spry et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2017). This means that source attributes do not directly impact buyers' plans to purchase anything, but other factors also work; however, these studies, on the other hand, were conducted in the context of traditional celebrity endorsements and not explicitly on influencer marketing and YouTube influencer review videos. Thus, it can be asserted that in influencer marketing, customer purchase intentions are shaped by the influencer's traits (including expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, via the mediating effect of credibility. Consequently, a conceptual framework is established (Figure 1).

Hypothesis Development

Expertise refers to the ability of a communicator to make true claims in a particular domain of knowledge and includes subject specific knowledge, understanding, and experience gained by continuously working in the same field of knowledge. To be considered as an expert, a communicator must be, well informed about a topic must possess the necessary skills and have a renowned position (Gass & Seiter, 2011). As per Hovland, et al. Whether a sponsor is an expert or not is insignificant, but it is actually dependent on the receiver of the message regarding how they perceive him/her. The audience's assessment of a communicator's knowledge in an advertisement correlates with a favourable assessment of the advertisement and intention to purchase (Hayes & Carr, 2015; Ohanian, 1991).

Hypothesis (H1): There is a positive relationship between influencer expertise and influencer credibility.

Hypothesis (H2): There is a positive relationship between influencer expertise and purchase intention.

Giffin (1967) characterized the trustworthiness of a source as the receivers' opinion of the source as honest, sincere, or true. Researchers have delineated several dimensions of credibility, identifying knowledge and trustworthiness as the principal elements (Pornpitakpan, 2004). These aspects are acknowledged as essential factors that influence communication efficacy under the source credibility concept (Hovland et al., 1953). Within the realm of YouTube, trustworthiness affects consumers' perceptions of information veracity (Xiao et al., 2018) and shapes their purchasing decisions (Hu et al., 2003).

Hypothesis (H3): There is a positive relationship between influencer trustworthiness and influencer credibility.

Hypothesis(H4): There is a positive relationship between influencer trustworthiness and purchase intention.

A person's level of attractiveness is the degree to which they are kind, agreeable, and easy to get along with. Individuals are more inclined to influence those they like or feel good about. Likeability, as defined by Desarbo and Harshman (1985), is the tendency of the recipient to be drawn to the communicator's charm, personality, or friendliness/approachability. An

endorser's attractiveness has a favorable impact on consumer attitudes, purchase intentions, and credibility (Kumar, 2011; La Ferle & Choi, 2005; Wang et al., 2017; Xiao et al., 2018).

Hypothesis (H5): There is a positive relationship between influencer attractiveness and credibility.

Hypothesis (H6): There is a positive relationship between influencer attractiveness and purchase intention.

Bhattacherjee and Sanford (2006, p. 811) describe the persuasive power of arguments incorporated into an educational message. According to Cacioppo et al., (1983), an argument's strength serves as a gauge of how well it provides information. Previous studies using real-world data have shown that the perceived trustworthiness of information correlates with its quality. (Cheung et al., 2012; Li & Suh, 2015; Slater & Rouner, 1996). Using Facebook as an of example social media communication, Li and Suh (2015) discovered a favourable correlation between the strength of an argument and the perceived credibility of the information. Cheung et al. (2012) discovered a comparable finding of a positive association between the standards of arguments and the perceived legitimacy of user-generated reviews. As per the previously explained logic, argument quality may increase viewers' perception of the influencer's credibility within this structure of YouTube influencer marketing.

Hypothesis (H7): There is a positive relationship between argument quality and credibility. **Hypothesis (H8):** There is a positive relationship between argument quality and purchase intention.

Credibility is the audience's perception of influencer knowledge, dependability, and attractiveness in the scene of influencer marketing, and exerts considerable influence on consumer behavior, including their intentions to make purchases as their recommendations are considered trustworthy and dependable. Influencers exhibiting a considerable degree of credibility have the greatest potential to impact their followers' likelihood in order to construct a purchase and brands often work in tandem with influencers who are well known in their respective fields. O'Keefe (1990), defines source credibility as a judgment made by a perceiver with regard to the credibility of the speaker who is communicating. Ohanian(1990), denotes the positive aspects of a communicator will determine the degree to which the recipient will accepts the message that is transmitted. Attitude to the brand and desire to purchase it have been found to depend on the credibility of an endorser amongst consumers (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018; Chin et al., 2020; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Hayes & Carr, 2015).

Hypothesis (H9): Influencer credibility has a positive relationship with consumer purchase intention.

In the framework of the traditional format of a celebrity endorsement, it is noted that the endorser credibility stimulates purchase intentions among the consumers and endorser characteristics (La Ferle & Choi, 2005; Wang et al, 2017) Consequently, we speculate that credibility of an influencer will prove to be a mediator in relationships between personal characteristics and the disposition to purchase by the customers.

Hypothesis (H10): Influencer expertise is positively related to the purchase intentions of consumers which are mediated by credibility

Hypothesis (H11): Credibility mediates the relationship between the influencer trustworthiness and purchase intentions of consumer.

Hypothesis (H12): The relationship between influencer attractiveness and consumer purchase intention is mediated by credibility of the influencer.

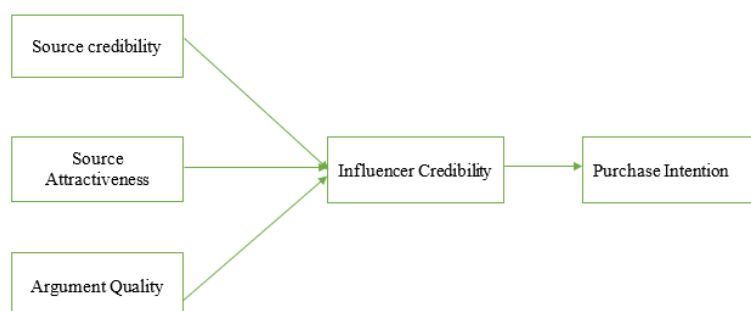**Hypothesis(H13):** Credibility mediates the relationship between Argument quality and consumer purchase intentions.

Figure 1. Research Methodology

Instrument Development

The instrument created for this research was developed using 5 point of Likert scale. The scale used to measure expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness was extracted by Ohanian (1990) with items adapted from Research conducted by Xiao et al. (2018). The items adapted for source attractiveness were adapted from Yi, (2012), while for Argument quality and influencer credibility items adapted from Xiao et al. (2018), purchase intention items taken from Kumar (2010).

Sampling and Data Collection

The data were gathered using an online questionnaire distributed in Google Forms. The survey link was sent over several digital channels, including social media and messaging applications. Additionally, physical visits were made to colleges and other public spaces where potential respondents were encouraged to participate in the survey in Lucknow City. This study employs a descriptive survey research design to assess the efficacy of YouTube influencer reviews on consumers' purchase intentions for mobile phones. The target population comprised young adults and tech-savvy consumers who actively participated with YouTube for product information. A non-probability purposive sampling was ensured to guarantee that participants had relevant experience to YouTube influencer reviews and to guarantee data relevance, questionnaire include filtering questions Initially, participants were enquired whether they watch YouTube influencer review videos before purchasing a mobile phone. Those who selected "NO" were excluded from the study. The second filter question asked about the number of YouTube influencers who followed specifically to ensure mobile phone purchases, ensuring participants had sufficient exposure to influencer content; - 453 responses were collected, out of which 319 responses were selected for further research.

Data Analysis

Respondent's Demographic Profile

The respondents' demographic details shown in Table 1. There existed 44.2% female and 55.8 % male respondents.15-20 years old compromised 48.6% respondents, 21-25 years compromised 34.9%,26-30 years were 10.8% ,31-35 years were 3.8% ,35 and above compromise 2%. Regarding their educational background, 36.2% had graduated,30.9% were intermediate, 30% were masters, 2.4% were doctorates, and 2.4% were high school.

Table 2. Demographic profile

Profile	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	253	55.8%
	Female	200	44.2%
Age	15-20	220	48.6%
	21-25	158	34.9%
	26-30	49	10.8%
	31-35	17	3.8%
	35 above	9	2%
Educational qualification	Graduated	164	36.2%
	Intermediate	140	30.9%
	Masters	136	30%
	Doctorate	11	2.4%
	Highschool	2	0.4%

Data Analysis Method

The research employed Smart pls4 was used to analyse the research hypothesis. PLS – SEM was selected for data analysis primarily owing to its greater suitability for models with complex and small sample sizes, as it does not necessitate multivariate normality of the data. A two-step procedure was implemented to assess the measurements and structural models.

Measurement Model Evaluation

To ensure the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments, the reflective measurement model was assessed using the Smart PLS 4. This included an evaluation of indicator reliability, discriminant validity, convergent validity, and internal consistency. The outer loading of all items was examined, with most items displaying loadings exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70,indicating that the indicators consistently assessed their corresponding latent constructs(Hair et al., 2017). Two items from each Two construct (expertise and trustworthiness) were deleted for weak loading and cross loading as they can affect discriminant validity (see Table 2).The evaluation the constructs of reliability and convergent validity involved the assessment of Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), as presented in Table 3. All constructs surpassed the 0.70 threshold for Cronbach's alpha, demonstrating strong internal consistency reliability. Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Similarly, the Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeded 0.70, thereby confirming the strength of internal consistency (Hair et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each construct were above the recommended 0.50 level (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), confirming convergent validity;- over half of the variance in the observed variables was captured by their respective latent constructs. The Fornell-Larcker, cross-loading, and Heterotrait-Monotrait criteria were analyzed to assess discriminant validity. Discriminant validity refers to "the degree to which the measure is sufficiently differentiated from associated constructs within the nomological framework. (Dinev & Hart, 2004, p. 417). Table 4 illustrates the Fornell-Larcker criterion, showcasing the square roots of the Average Variance Extracted for the constructs of argument quality (0.848), attractiveness (0.867), expertise (0.884), trustworthiness (0.866), IC (0.885), and PI (0.895), which exceeded the correlation values observed between each construct and all other constructs. Discriminant validity was confirmed in alignment with the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

Table 2. Outer loading

Construct	Indicator	Loading
Argument Quality	AQ1	0.872
	AQ2	0.825
	AQ3	0.830
	AQ4	0.862
Attractiveness	A2	0.876
	A3	0.900
	A4	0.840
	A5	0.852
Expertise	E1	0.879
	E2	0.893
	E3	0.879
Trustworthiness	T1	0.823
	T2	0.901
	T3	0.872

Influencer Credibility (IC)	IC1	0.903	
	IC2	0.899	
	IC3	0.872	
	IC4	0.867	
Purchase Intention (PI)	PI1	0.882	
	PI2	0.900	
	PI3	0.903	

Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted for the constructs.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability(CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Argument Quality	0.870	0.911	0.718
Attractiveness	0.890	0.924	0.752
Expertise	0.860	0.914	0.781
Influencer Credibility (IC)	0.908	0.935	0.784
Trustworthiness	0.832	0.900	0.750
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.876	0.924	0.801

Table 4. Discriminant validity–Fornell-Larcker criterion.

	Argument Quality	Attractiveness	Expertise	IC	PI	Trustworthiness
Argument quality	0.848					
Attractiveness	0.667	0.867				
Expertise	0.634	0.753	0.884			
IC	0.801	0.661	0.620	0.885		
PI	0.725	0.608	0.572	0.703	0.895	
Trustworthiness	0.564	0.674	0.707	0.592	0.483	0.866

Table 5 illustrates the cross-loading criterion, demonstrating that the loadings for all constructs exceeded the cross-loadings associated with other constructs throughout the columns. Discriminant validity was determined based on the cross-loading criterion. Table 6 presents the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of the constructs, and given that all constructs exhibited HTMT values below 0.9 (Henseler et al., 2015), the discriminant validity of the measurement model has been confirmed.

Table 5. Discriminant validity – loading and cross-loading criteria

Item	Argument Quality	Attractive	Expert	IC	PI	Trustworthiness
A2	0.614	0.876	0.671	0.571	0.525	0.558
A3	0.593	0.900	0.655	0.621	0.538	0.569
A4	0.542	0.840	0.626	0.536	0.500	0.586
A5	0.564	0.852	0.661	0.562	0.545	0.628
AQ1	0.872	0.563	0.533	0.723	0.635	0.519
AQ2	0.825	0.517	0.498	0.619	0.517	0.443
AQ3	0.830	0.549	0.527	0.633	0.598	0.440
AQ4	0.862	0.624	0.585	0.729	0.692	0.501
E1	0.544	0.647	0.879	0.551	0.495	0.638
E2	0.599	0.682	0.893	0.586	0.542	0.635
E3	0.533	0.667	0.879	0.502	0.474	0.599
IC1	0.754	0.583	0.555	0.903	0.680	0.535
IC2	0.710	0.595	0.548	0.899	0.621	0.559
IC3	0.660	0.554	0.527	0.872	0.581	0.504
IC4	0.709	0.609	0.565	0.867	0.601	0.497
PI1	0.633	0.503	0.471	0.616	0.882	0.406
PI2	0.638	0.519	0.495	0.602	0.900	0.420
PI3	0.675	0.605	0.563	0.666	0.903	0.469
T1	0.471	0.580	0.618	0.482	0.385	0.823
T2	0.511	0.600	0.620	0.537	0.456	0.901
T3	0.481	0.572	0.599	0.518	0.412	0.872

Table 6. Discriminant validity–Heterotrait-Monotrait criterion.

	Argument Quality	Attractive	Expertise	IC	PI	Trust
Argument Quality		0.755	0.729	0.896	0.824	0.660
Attractiveness			0.861	0.735	0.686	0.785
Expertise				0.699	0.654	0.836
IC					0.785	0.680
PI						0.563

Trustworthiness						

Assessment of Structural Models

Before evaluating the structural model, it was essential to assess multicollinearity to verify the validity of the results. All VIF values varied between 1.680 and 3.111, (TABLE 6),which is well below the commonly accepted threshold of 5. This indicated the absence of significant multicollinearity issues. Even under a more conservative threshold of 3.3, the indicators remained within the acceptable limits. Notably, the highest VIF observed was 3.111 for indicator IC1, which fell within the acceptable range. It can be inferred that multicollinearity is not an issue in the measurement model. No indicators were removed based on VIF assessment. The structural model was evaluated through the bootstrapping method, utilizing 5,000 resamples to ascertain the significance of the hypotheses (Table 7). Hypotheses H1and H2 were not supported, which showed that neither of the paths from Expertise to IC ($\beta = 0.037$, $p = 0.532$) or PI ($\beta = 0.091$, $p = 0.192$) were significant; - however, H3 Trustworthiness positively influenced IC ($\beta = 0.127$, $p = 0.027$). However, its direct effect on PI was negative and non-significant ($\beta = -0.055$, $p = 0.461$), leading to the rejection of H4. Attractiveness had a significant positive effect on IC ($\beta = 0.138$, $t = 2.061$, $p = 0.039$), supporting H5;- however, it did not exhibit a substantial effect on PI ($\beta = 0.134$, $t = 1.848$, $p = 0.065$), Thus H6 was not accepted.

Table 7. VIF Values for Outer Model Indicators

Construct	Indicator	VIF
A	A2	2.780
	A3	3.107
	A4	2.119
	A5	2.194
AQ	AQ1	2.324
	AQ2	2.013
	AQ3	1.973
	AQ4	2.121
E	E1	2.116
	E2	2.182
	E3	2.236
IC	IC1	3.111
	IC2	3.061
	IC3	2.579
	IC4	2.445
PI	PI1	2.233
	PI2	2.532
	PI3	2.420
T	T1	1.680
	T2	2.321
	T3	2.083

Attractiveness had a significant positive effect on IC (β = 0.138, t = 2.061, p = 0.039), supporting H5, but did not exert a substantial influence on PI (β = 0.134, t = 1.848, p = 0.065), thus H6 was not supported. Argument Quality significantly influenced both Influencer Credibility (IC) (β = 0.614, t = 12.899, p < 0.001) and Purchase Intention (PI) (β = 0.381, t = 6.129, p < 0.001), supporting H7 and H8. The connection between Influencer Credibility and Purchase Intention is considerable (β = 0.285, t = 3.770, p < 0.001), supporting H9.

Table 8 . Results of hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H7	Argument Quality → IC	0.614	12.899	0.000	Supported
H8	Argument Quality → PI	0.381	6.129	0.000	Supported
H5	Attractiveness → IC	0.138	2.061	0.039	Supported
H6	Attractiveness → PI	0.134	1.848	0.065	Not Supported
H1	Expertise → IC	0.037	0.625	0.532	Not Supported
H2	Expertise → PI	0.091	1.304	0.192	Not Supported
H9	IC → PI	0.285	3.770	0.000	Supported
H3	Trustworthiness → IC	0.127	2.211	0.027	Supported
H4	Trustworthiness → PI	0.055	0.738	0.461	Not Supported

The Mediating Role of Credibility

To evaluate the mediating function of Influencer Credibility (IC) between (Argument Quality, Source Attractiveness, Expertise, and Trustworthiness) and Purchase Intention (PI),specific indirect impacts were analyzed , as shown Table 9.

Table 9. Mediation Analysis

Mediation path Interpretation	Indirect Effect (β)	T-value	P-value	Mediation
Argument Quality → IC → PI	0.175	3.713	0.000	Partial Mediation
Attractiveness→ IC → PI	0.039	1.828	0.068	Not Significant
Expertise → IC → PI	0.011	0.596	0.551	Not Significant
Trustworthiness → IC → PI	0.036	1.755	0.079	Not Significant

The findings suggest that Argument Quality is a significant mediation path (β = 0.175, t = 3.713, p < 0.001). This demonstrates that the relationship between Argument Quality and Purchase Intention is significantly mediated by Influencer Credibility. In other words an elevated degree of argument quality increases the perceived credibility of the

influencer, which exerts a positive impact on the purchase of consumer electronics. The direct and indirect effects are considerable showing that there is a partial mediation effect (Hair et al. 2019). According to results (β = 0.039, t = 1.828, p = 0.068),the source attractiveness was not significant , although it was close to the threshold level of 0.05. It can be deduced from this that the an influencer's attractiveness has lacks a substantial influence on the credibility of the influencer. The outcome of the study shows that expertise lacks substantial influence (β = 0.011, t = 0.596, p = 0.551), an indirect effect indicating that Influencer Credibility does not have any impact on the intention to purchase. Comparing it to the credibility of influencers, the mediating effect of trustworthiness is not significant (0036, t =1755, p = 0079), even though the magnitude of it is considerable. The argument quality is the only aspect that would affect the buy intention based on the influencer credibility. Rational justifications must be provided as convincing to influence purchases with regard to the digital marketing communications, and therefore one can come up with the conclusion that H13 was supported, but the opposite is true in the case of H10, 11 and 12. The R² values were considered in an effort to judge the explanatory ability of the model. The adjusted R² Influencer Credibility (IC) is 0.678, meaning its predictors account for 67.8% of the variance. The model explained 57.7% of variance in Purchase Intention (PI) and had an adjusted R² of 0.577. Both IC (t = 19.136) and PI (t = 13.980) have T-values greater than 1.96 and p-values less than 0.000, demonstrating the model's predictive potential.

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the correlation between expertise , trustworthiness, attractiveness, and argument quality on purchase intention mediated by the credibility of the influencer within the context of consumer electronic purchase intention. The findings reveal that Argument quality significantly influences both the credibility of the influencer and purchase intention which support the prior research that highlights the critical role of strong, logical, and high quality arguments in enhancing customer evaluations (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006). Credibility was found to mediate argument quality and Purchase Intention (Hair et al., 2019). This shows that powerful arguments directly affect consumers' buying intents and boost the influencer's reputation, which boosts their purchase intention.

Conversely, Credibility and Purchase Intention were not independently influenced by Attractiveness and Expertise, however Trustworthiness influenced credibility but had no significant direct effect on purchase intention. This contradicts Ohanian's (1990) notion that personal attributes of celebrity will improve customer attitudes. One possible explanation is that in the context of consumer electronics, buyers seem to prioritize the quality and persuasiveness of information over who is delivering it (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). These findings reflect current consumer behaviour, in which people favour reliable and useful content over celebrity or influencer attributes. Ultimately, our findings illustrate strong , evidence based arguments driving purchase intentions for consumer electronics, highlighting the importance for marketers and digital communicators to focus on delivering high-quality, credible information in high involvement product like mobile phones to effectively influence consumer behaviour.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, the results demonstrate that argument quality shapes information credibility and purchase intention more than source attributes such as attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness. In high-involvement product categories, the central channel—message quality—is more important than peripheral cues—source attributes. This supports and expands upon the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). Additionally, it challenges previous assumptions, particularly those in Ohanian's (1990) model, by showing that in product categories with more information- and logic-oriented customers the source's personal attributes might not have as much persuasive power. It is useful to understand that consumers value the message clarity and strength's rather than person who is delivering it when it comes to consumer electronics. The results of the study indicate a shift in consumer behaviour, as they now critically evaluate the content without relying solely on the qualities of the source.

Managerial Implications

Invest in Content Development: ÷Marketers and those who strategize the digital communication strategy of the brand and company need to understand that they need to focus on developing not only messages that are convincing but also sensible

and of great quality. When the authenticity and reliability of the messages brought in to the doubt than aesthetically attractive celebrity endorsement or presenters alone are not sufficient to influence the behaviour of consumers .

De-Emphasize Celebrity-Driven Strategies*:* Businesses that promote consumer electronics should take precautions to ensure that message is understandable, sensible and supported by facts instead of investing a significant amount of money on influencer collaborations or celebrity endorsements based on physical attractiveness and expertise. Businesses should put greater emphasis on the information quality and argument that they provided as now consumers appear to be more analytical and evaluate the content of the message instead of being persuaded by outer appearances.

Enhance Influencer Training: The research also advises that influencers should have given better equip with information that is credible and honest and they should focus on more information rather than advocating things based on their reputation and personality.

Realign Budgets*:* Marketers should align their investments in more on improving the quality of content, such as full product descriptions, technical information and validated claims as they provide superior results rather than by superficial endorsements and business not only devotee money forming partnerships with influencers that focus more on giving information that both substantial and authentic.

Ultimately, this study suggests a strategic shift in influencer marketing , from identity centric towards content or information centric persuasion within high-involvement product categories

Limitations and Prospects for Further Study

This section outlines several limitations of this research study that warrant careful consideration.

Geographic And Demographic Limitations*:* The data came mostly from Lucknow City, with the bulk of respondents aged between 19 and 35 years. This Homogeneity in demographics may restrict the applicability of the findings across broader age groups. Future research may utilize a larger sample size and concentrate on individuals over 40 years of age, as their perceptions of influencer marketing may change. Additionally, they can perform comparative research across various age groups to investigate whether the focus on argument quality differs according to customer demographics as opposed to source characteristics.

Product Category Limitation: This study focused only on mobile phones , which could restrict the applicability of the findings to other product categories in which emotional or source-based persuasion may play a stronger role. Future studies might examine other industries, such as fashion, beauty, or luxury goods, where attractiveness or expertise might exert greater influence.

Model Scope*:* This study is based on only one mediator that is credibility and future research may expand the model by considering additional potential mediators, such as perceived risk, brand trust, and emotional involvement.

Sampling Method and Study Design*:* Convenience sampling was used to determine the respondents taken in this study. In future research probability sampling technique can be used that may enhance the applicability of the findings. This study also used cross- sectional design, in future researcher can use longitudinal design to track influencer marketing long term effect on purchase intentions and view regarding the reliability of information over time, particularly in the quickly evolving technological sector

Self-Reported Measures*:* Assessment of all constructs was dependent on self-reported data which can lead to biasness. In future studies experimental or observational techniques can be employed to validate the result.

Lastly, in future researcher can also use qualitative methods to identify other influencers' attributes that affect purchase intention or investigate its effect on brand awareness, brand engagement etc. Future research can strengthen the theoretical underpinnings of digital marketing and better assist practitioners looking to maximise their marketing communications strategies by tackling these limitations.

Conclusion

This study examines the impact of argument quality and source characteristics, namely attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness on information credibility and purchase intention within the framework of mobile phones. The results unequivocally demonstrate that the quality of arguments is crucial, as they have substantial direct and indirect impacts on purchase   intention mediated   by credibility (Petty   &   Cacioppo,   1986;   Pornpitakpan,   2004).

Conversely, attractiveness, competence, and trustworthiness exhibited no significant direct effects, suggesting that consumers are influenced by the quality of the information itself than by the characteristics of the information source (Eisend & Küster, 2011).

The results underscore that, in a digitally interconnected economy, particularly for high-involvement products such as consumer electronics, the potency of the message is crucial. As Consumers become more analytical, they prioritize evidence-based, reputable information over vague indicators related to the source (Cotte et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2007).The study try to adds to the current corpus of work that emphasizes content-centric persuasion, suggesting that the clarity and quality of a message are more influential than the sponsor identity in affecting purchase intention (Chu & Kamal, 2008; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).This study provides clear directions, to practitioners, stating that it is more beneficial to concentrate on producing arguments that are powerful, understandable, and credible rather than relying entirely on influencers or endorsers predicated on their personal traits they possess (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016).The purpose of this research is to highlight the dynamic nature of consumer behaviour in surroundings that are rich in information while also laying the framework for additional research into the various elements that influence purchase intention.

Lou and Yuan (2019) assert that influencer attributes alone are insufficient to persuade customers to engage in impulsive purchase. The characteristics in question may either enhance or diminish the intention to purchase, when considered alongside other factors. Additionally, factors such as perceived value, price, brand perception, and consumer necessity for the product significantly influence purchase intention, along with influencer traits (Grewal et al., 1998; Kim et al., 2012). Thus, while not the only determining factor, an influencer's characteristics can substantially enhance purchasing decisions when other conditions are advantageous.

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