Examining The Nexus Between Social Media Influencers And Customer Purchase Intention: A Multi Regression Approach

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Abstract
In a digital inclusive environment, social media influencers have become one of the most potential segments for marketers because of their persuasive role in customer information networks. They update their followers with offers, new products and even endorse companies’ offerings to encourage purchase direction. Because of the increasing popularity of social networking sites, the significance of social media influencers has become more alive than ever. Marketers have realized the inevitable importance of individual influencers as the information disseminated is trusted and organic. Thus, the current study examined the impact of social media influencers on customer purchase intention considering source credibility, source attractiveness, product matchup and meaning transfer as the main contributing factors of social media influencers. For the current study, data was collected from 250 respondents with personal social media accounts and were analyzed by using a multi regression technique. The results substantially indicate that influencer’s credibility, attractiveness and product match up significantly effect customer intention to purchase different products. The findings of the study will support marketers to devise effective social media strategies in order to revive the former and current customer relationship. Besides, the study concludes recommendations for the marketers to promote their products in such a way that cultivate interest in customers to get their hands on different offerings.
Keywords: Social Media Influencers, Source Credibility, Source Attractiveness, Product Match-up, Meaning Transfer, Purchase Intention.

Introduction:

The role of influencers on social media is increasing exponentially in the recent digital environment. They play a vast role in marketing by becoming an intermediary between the marketers and their audiences. The connections between marketers and their potential customers have now become a source of communication. The influencers are hired by the company as their paid partner for creating a buzz in the markets as these influencers have many followers on their social accounts (Hermanda, Sumarwan, & Tinaprilila, 2019). These influencers are recognized and known as "the third party endorsers" these days. They seem to be credible, compelling, and reliable in the eyes of customers. Companies and big brands invite their third-party endorsers such as bloggers to capture markets and make them their brand ambassadors in a cheap way as compared to the advertisement and stuff. As per a report, consumers do follow the brand influencers of their choice and follow their recommendations. The trend and scope of marketing through social media with the help of influencers are creating new opportunities for brand awareness and acceptance (Saima, & Khan, 2020). However the research on these influences is very limited. So this study will propose marketers and researchers the solution to estimate and predict the effectiveness of marketing strategies which can be utilized to gain the market share. Social media influencers are not a new concept for study but their attributes and their impact; especially in the premises of Pakistan is not yet clearly highlighted. The study that will be conducted will evaluate and analyze the role of social influencers with their impact on the product purchase intention through four different variables. The study would help marketers to adopt new media coverage for increasing their market share. Besides, the research will create an understanding of social media influencers as a marketing tactic by brands through finding their impact on brand purchase intention. Purchase intention is a customer response that is derived by the influencer's opinions in order to make strategies to target markets and earn the business share (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). This study will provide a comprehensive understanding towards the four attributes of the influencers (credibility, attractiveness, product matchup and meaning transfer) and their impact on brand purchase intention.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Bloggers and Influencers

It is a communication way designed by the brands to communicate their desired message to the public and their targeted audience. The Internet is presumed as the very basic strategic tool for bridging the communication gap between them and the people with the help of social influencers for example bloggers. Bloggers have a very huge fan following, the messages shared by them are perceived as reliable. They share their personal experience of brands on a daily basis. Companies hire them or pay them; and with that paid partnership, the bloggers share positive messages and
experiences related to the product or service to their fans. Each blogger on social media has an aim or preference. Some are makeup bloggers while others are travel bloggers. Each blogger has their own set of preferences yet has the fan following of the same interest. As per the "two-step flow theory" people rely on opinion leaders who transfer the information of the product or service, and then they pass on those particular messages through word of mouth to others thus creating a greater influence. The advertisements on the media play a part in creating the awareness of that particular brand but with the help of influencers and endorsers the flow of awareness becomes easy and fast. They play a mediating role in creating awareness. Digital influencers such as bloggers are that opinion leader that was identified by (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1966). These digital people play a great part in spreading messages of product as these messages effect people with a rapid pace. They are the ones whose messages become viral in a very short time span. Brands therefore look for a blogger with the aim of creating awareness. This is the cheapest way of advertising. The engagement of brands and bloggers is created with the aim of delivering authentic and reliable pieces of information with the online users and communities. (Uzunoglu & Kip, 2014) The growth in the communication and the recent technological advancements has made internet and online interactions very important, not only for people but for brands also to get an access and opportunity to spread their communication message within the online community. With the help of influencers, the messages created and shared with the people who have their interest in it makes the power of message strong. As per the two-step theory by (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1966) the direct communicated messages by a brand itself is not as powerful as it should be. The messages delivered by the influencer’s leave an impact on the audience and leveraging their purchase intention as it directly affects the consumer buyer behavior. (Tap influence, 2017)

2.2 Influencer-Marketing and Endorsement
This type of marketing is a tactic that is used by Brand managers and marketers in order to capture the mass public through creating awareness and to reach their targeted audience. (Insights, 2017) In this fast moving world with huge technological advancements, bloggers and influencers are called "The third party endorsers". By utilizing the platforms including facebook, Instagram and twitter they create awareness & try every step in popularizing the product by providing information and latest promotion to its fans and followers. (Markethub, 2016) Social media influencers create content on a daily basis in order to engage its fans and provide them with the latest promotions and updates of the product. (Liu, Jin, Briones, & Kuch, 2012).

In today's competitive world, companies get their strength and a good reputation in the market and among the customers with the help of endorsers. They play a significant role in helping the organization in reaching the desired goals and objectives. Since the growth of social media and its users, these influencers have tried to make their place as potential endorsers and are more successful as compared to other marketing strategies. They are cheaper as compared to other strategies that mean they are cost-efficient and leave a long lasting impact on the followers that
mean they are effective also. (Harrison, 2017) They also play a deviating role in consumer persuasion. (Lim, Radzol, (Jacky), & Wong, 2017)

According to the principles of the product and its attributes and matching them with the influencers, companies invite the social media endorsers; who have more than 1000 followers in their fan list, and appoint them as their brand ambassadors by giving them small incentives or a small amount of fee. The messages communicated by them are perceived as reliable and appealing as compared to the others. According to a study, the recommendations of the bloggers are adopted by the followers more. (Talavera, 2015). As compared to digital marketing; which is way more costly than social media influencers, the organizations yield 11 times higher returns on spending on social media influencers. (Lim, Radzol, (Jacky), & Wong, 2017) Celebrity endorsement in the past was considered as the most powerful strategy for marketing a product which is now replaced by social media influencers. They bring more brand engagement and brand loyalty to the brands, thus are more capable of communicating the brand's message to the target audience and play a great role in increasing the brand's equity. (Tap influence, 2017). Organizations these days believe that the endorser’s works as a warranty in the circulation of the actual attributes of the products and the information related to it. (Amoateng & Poku, 2013) The concept of endorsement has grown so fast, that almost every online business appoint them to boost their businesses and earn revenues. (Lim, Radzol, (Jacky), & Wong, 2017)

2.3 Source Credibility and Purchase Intention

Source credibility is when a customer perceives a source of information as knowledgeable, skillful, trustworthy, reliable, unbiased and full of information. The credibility of a message communicated by the influencers creates an impact on the effectiveness of the product. (Granjon & Benedic, 2017) Source credibility is the key factor that is used to analyze the effectiveness of an influence by a social media influencer. (Taghipoorreyneh & Run, 2016). If an influence by an influence is found to be credible, is able to put a positive influence on the people and can change a perception about a product in the minds of customers then he is the one who is worthy. (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000) Within credibility, two elements are widely discussed. One is trustworthiness and the other is expertise. The information communicated through a credible source to the consumers can change a person's belief, creates a need in his mind, alters his opinions, develops demand, shifts the attitudes and directly puts an impact on the consumer behavior. (W.Wang, Kao, & Ngamsiriudom, 2017) The influencers who are credible are called the experts by the followers as they are the ones whose message is perceived as reliable and is able to create a customer intention. (Lim, Radzol, (Jacky), & Wong, 2017) The experts play a big role in creating a positive influence on the attitude of the consumer and leave an impact on his purchase intention. The messages communicated through the experts would be considered as the final word and the chances of acceptance are high also. (Till & Busler, 2000) The experts having high expertise and are trustworthy are considered as more influential as per their follower’s perception. (Lim, Radzol, (Jacky), & Wong, 2017) As a result of this piece of information, the following hypothesis has been developed:
H1. There is a positive relationship between source credibility and purchase intention.

2.4 Source Attractiveness and Purchase Intention
An endorser who is physically fit and attractive and is able to relate his appearance with the communicated message of the brand is perceived as influential and owns a higher tendency in the acceptance of the rate of the message. The source attractive is the influencer's physical attributes, characteristics and appearance.. (Lim, Radzol, (Jacky), & Wong, 2017) Physical appearance of the endorser is very important as it is the first thing that gets noticed. Physical appearances not only leave an impact on the perception of the consumers, but with the physical appearance, facial appearance plays a great role too. Facial appearance leaves a great impact on the credibility of consumers and their intention of purchase. An endorser with physical as well as facial attractiveness tends to communicate the message of the brand efficiently. (Seiler & Kucza, 2017) There are a number of previous literatures available who have highlighted the relationship between the source attractiveness of the endorser and the purchase intention of the consumer. Both the things are positively interlinked and correlated. An endorsement is perceived as attractive if there is source attractiveness. The results are mostly positive if the endorser is attractive. They are the ones who help in creating a positive attitude in the minds of consumers. (Till & Busler, 2000) The endorsers who are said to be attractive physically as well as mentally are able to capture more followers and can communicate the message of the brand to the masses. Hence, the following hypothesis is developed:

H2. There is a positive relationship between source attractiveness and purchase intention

2.5 Product Match-Up and Purchase Intention
In order to get positive and efficient outcomes, it is very important for the influencer to establish congruence between them and the brand. If there is a fit between these two, then only the strategy is considered as efficient and effective. (Till & Busler, 1998). An endorser is said to be in the matchup relation, when there is a strong association between him and the product. (Lim, Radzol, (Jacky), & Wong, 2017) Basically an endorser is selected as the ambassador for a brand, he or she must create an appropriate matchup with the distinct features and the type of brand. If the matchup is found to be ideal, then only he can cater or impress his audience and could attract them towards himself in order to develop purchase intention in the minds of consumers. . This is the only goal that an endorser wants to achieve. Therefore, the following hypothesis has been constructed.

H3. There is a positive relationship between product celebrity match-up and purchase intention.

2.6 Meaning Transfer and Purchase Intention
It is very important for an influencer to convey or transfer his message to the audience effectively. The endorser's effectiveness depends upon the way he is communicating his message to his audience (Bu, Parkinson, & Thaichon, 2022). The way he is transferring his message, results in measuring how influential he or she is. It is proven that the audience follows the footsteps of their
influencers they follow on social media sites, therefore it is very important for an influencer to be effective enough and that effectiveness could be developed through the meaning transfer (W.Wang, Kao, & Ngamsiriudom, 2017). In the end, the blogger is the one who could shift the perception of the product in the minds of consumers. It is a part of the consumer buying behavior. Intention in the minds of customers is created with the help of strategies designed by marketers. The tactics and strategies create the needs in the minds of customers. Influencers play a major role in creating an intention in the minds of customers. The strength of social media influencers plays an effective role and leaves a long lasting impact in driving the consumer purchase intention. As a result of the above evidences, the following hypothesis is prepared

**H4. There is a positive relationship between meaning transfer and purchase intention.**

**2.7 Conceptual Framework**

The following research framework is a pictorial depiction of the research variables and proposed hypotheses.

![Conceptual Framework Diagram]

**3. Methodology**

This chapter will provide detailed information on the methodology that was adopted for collecting the responses of the respondents to carry out research. The chapter also includes the approach for the research, the data collection, and the methods that are used to carry out the research, the sampling size, and technique with research ethics. To carry out the research, the quantitative technique is being used to gather the information with the help of the valid data Collection instrument that is the questionnaire. The objective of the study is to find out the impact of social media influencers on the purchase intention of consumers.

4145 http://www.webology.org
3.1 Data Collection Details
This is an important part of the research which deals with the collection of the data and information from the authentic and relevant sources in order to answer the design research problem and to test the hypothesis and analyze the results. There are mainly two categories of Data Collection including primary methods and secondary methods. This study is based upon the integration of both the methods including primary and secondary. The primary data for the research was collected from a questionnaire that was distributed to the audience through Google forms. Although there are other methods through which the question could be distributed but keep in mind the COVID situation, Google forms were selected as the most suitable option between the respondents and the research. It was a self-administered questionnaire that was adapted from the literature of authentic journals (Zamora-Antuñano, et al, 2022). For conducting this research, internet-mediated questionnaires were used due to the restrictions that were imposed due to covid-19. In the questionnaire, the respondents feel free to answer the questions that are already predetermined. In designing the questionnaire, the proper technique is utilized.

Research is based on primary as well as secondary data. The primary data is collected from the respondents selected as a targeted audience whereas the secondary data is collected from the literature available in the research articles related to the topic. For the collection of primary data, a deductive approach is used that is the questionnaires. The questionnaire is divided into 5 parts. Each part is related to each variable whereas the first part consists of the demographics of the respondents. For the analysis of data, multi regression is used as the tool helps the researcher to look into each and every aspect of the research at different areas for possible outcomes.

3.2 Sampling Design
In a research study, a sample is a collection of people or a group that are considered as the population for the measurement of the research. A sample must ensure that the findings from their response of the respondents could be generalized to the entire population as a whole. The study utilizes a purposive sampling technique with the help of a questionnaire using online Google forms. There was a criterion set for the respondents. The respondents must have a personal social media account and follow multiple influencers and bloggers. For this research, a total 450 questionnaires were disseminated. However, only 250 survey forms were found complete and authentic for further analysis. Thus, the sample size for the present research was 250 respondents.

3.3 Data Screening and Analysis Techniques
Before testing the data with the help of SPSS, a screening technique was used to identify and ensure the data normality and missing values. The data screening is very important as it ensures that the data that has been selected for this search is clean and ready to go under the statistical instrument. The data in the research screen in order to ensure and satisfy the researcher that the data is valid, usable, and reliable. For the analysis of data, multi-linear regression is used as the tool helps the researcher to look into each and every aspect of the research at different areas for possible outcomes.
4. Results & Discussion

4.1 Respondents Demographic Profiling
According to the survey there were 250 respondents out of 57.5% were females and 42.5% were males. Almost all the respondents agree to the fact that they have access to social media platforms and all of them have their personal social media accounts on different platforms. On an average 81.5% respondents claim that they spend more than 30 minutes out of their 24 hours schedule over social media platforms whereas 16.4% population claim that they spend less than 30 minutes over social media platforms.93% of the population claim that the following the influencer, celebrity or any other popular accounts on social media and responds them positively 9% population was not interested in following any social media blogger or influencer.

Out of the responses 54.5 percent people claim that they follow the social media influencer accounts for getting inspiration whereas 45.5% of the population claim that they follow these accounts for getting updated according to the latest trends. On the other hand 38.5% of the population claim that they follow these accounts for entertainment and time pass whereas one person population claim that they follow them for being creative in their lives. According to the result, the most powerful impact on the purchase intention is the source credibility that means the consumers are motivated towards the purchase intention due to the credibility of the brand influencers. Credibility of the influencer creates a relationship the consumers purchase intention with the product.

4.2 Reliability Statistics
Cronbach's alpha checks the reliability of the research instrument. The value of Cronbach alpha for all the variables is greater than 0.75 which shows significant internal consistency. This means that the data of the questionnaire is perfect and there is no need to alter the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Alpha Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source Credibility</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source Attractiveness</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Match-up</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful Transfer</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Descriptive Statistics
The descriptive analysis provides simple summary about the research and its measure. This basically shows what your statistics and study is all about. The mean in the descriptive analysis is the central tendency of one variable over the other. The results for this research are shown as under:
According to the analysis, the mean of the dependent variable that is the intention is the highest. Out of the four independent variables, the mean of source credibility is the highest whereas the mean of meaning transfer is the lowest. This shows that source credibility of the brand influencer leaves a higher impact on the purchase intention impact on the purchase intention of consumers. The standard deviation of source credibility is the lowest whereas the standard deviation of the meaning transfer is the highest.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source credibility</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>.974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product matchup</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source attractiveness</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>.941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning transfer</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase intention</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>1.129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 Hypotheses Testing
Multi linear regression analysis is used to predict the relationship between the independent and the independent variables. It is used when we want to anticipate the value of the dependent variable based on the value of the independent variables. The predictors that are constant in this study are the independent variables including source credibility, source attractiveness, product match up and meaning transfer.

4.4.1 Analysis of The Model Summary
The model summary table discusses the strength of the relationship of the conceptual model and the dependent variables. The value of R represents the coefficient of correlation whereas the R square is the adjusted value. In the analysis the adjusted R square is 0.26 of the dependent variable; it means that 26% of the purchase intention is explained by all the independent variables. The standard error of estimate is 96.9% which shows that there is a real relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

Table 3: Model Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.522a</td>
<td>.272</td>
<td>.262</td>
<td>.969</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), meaning transfer, product match up, source attractiveness, source credibility
### Table 4: Analysis of Variance

Anova results explain if the model is a good fit for the data. The significant value should be $p<0.05$ to show significant results. The research results show the level of significance 0.000 which is less than 0.05 and demonstrate significant impact of social media influencers on purchase intention.

### 4.4.2 Analysis of the Coefficients

Coefficient shows that as the value of the independent variable increases, this tends to increase the value of the dependent variable as well. And when there is a negative coefficient value, this suggests that as the independent variable increases the dependent variable automatically decreases. In the analysis, we have three positive coefficients and one negative coefficient. This means that as the source credibility increases, the purchase intention of the consumer increases simultaneously. Same is the case with source attractiveness and product matchup. These two independent variables also have their positive coefficient values. Whereas a hypothesis number for that is the meaning transfer shows a negative coefficient value this means that the consumer doesn't perceive meaning transfer as a driver to stimulate the purchase intention. The meaning transfer of the influencer does not leave any impact on the purchase intention of consumers.

### Table 5: Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficient</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>Significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source credibility</td>
<td>0.268</td>
<td>4.811</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product matchup</td>
<td>0.148</td>
<td>2.768</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source attractiveness</td>
<td>0.237</td>
<td>4.284</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning transfer</td>
<td>-0.188</td>
<td>-3.678</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5 Discussion of the Results
According to the overall analysis, almost everyone on social media tends to follow a social media blogger for inspiration, to spend their lives according to the trends or entertainment. The recommendation of the bloggers and influencers related to a product and service creates an impact on the purchase intention of the consumers. In this study 4 variables have been selected that could either positively or negatively impact the purchase intention. Out of the four variables, source credibility is accepted most by the users, this means that if the influencer is considered credible, then he or she will leave the most positive impact on the mindset of consumers and could persuade them towards purchase intention. After that source attractiveness of the blogger also plays a great role in impacting the intention of the consumer related to a product and service followed by product matchup. Whereas the fourth hypothesis that is meaning transfer is not impacting the purchase intention of the consumers therefore this hypothesis is rejected. There is a positive and profound relationship between social media influencers and purchase intention therefore hypothesis 1 is accepted. There is a positive relationship between source credibility and purchase intention; this means that our hypothesis 2 is also accepted. There is a positive relationship between source attractiveness and purchase intention according to the analysis that means hypothesis number 3 is also accepted. There is a positive relationship found between product celebrity matchup and purchase intention, this means that hypothesis 4 is also accepted. Where there is no significant relationship found between the meaning transfer and purchase intention, this clearly states that our hypothesis is not accepted and thus rejected.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations
Social media influencers and their role in transferring the brand's message to the consumer are increasing day by day. They are considered as the most important tool for communicating the branch message to the audience. They are also known as third party endorsers hired by businesses to target their audience. The role of social media influencers is considered very important. They leave a great and long lasting impact on the product purchase intention of the consumers. The effectiveness of their communicated message is measured by different factors out of his four factors as independent variables are selected for the study. The four independent variables are source credibility, source attractiveness, product match up and meaning transfer. Out of these four independent variables, the first three variables are found significant whereas the fourth variable that is the meaning transfer is found significant. This means that the source credibility, attractiveness and their product matchup is likely to alter or stimulate the purchase intention of the consumer where the meaning transfer does not create an impact on the purchase intention of the consumers.

The influencers are therefore recommended to make themselves credible for making their fan following strong and influencing their target audience. Source credibility is highly recommended for effectively creating an impact on the consumers. The brands also must hire influencers who have developed their credibility across the target audience. Then comes the source attractiveness
which is also the factor of the influences that creates an impact on the purchase intention. The influencer must make them attractive so as to catch their fans and develop their images in their mind sets. Brands must also be recommended to hire the influencers who has built their images and are considered attractive. The influencers must always communicate and market the brands that could match their personalities and their contents so far. This product match up creates an influence on the mind of consumers. The meaning transfer is somehow not accepted. For future research, it is recommended to research more on the meaning transfer to find out its impact on the purchase intention.

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