

# Trust, Authenticity, and Consumer Purchase Intention: Comparing Celebrity and Micro-Influencers in Social Media Marketing

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## Abstract:

This research examines how trust and authenticity affect consumer buying behaviour using comparisons between different types of social media influencers: celebrities and micro-influencers. A quantitative approach was taken to collect data from participants aged 18 to 33+ via a structured questionnaire developed using Google Forms. A survey was distributed to 200 social media users. The data collected were then analysed using descriptive statistics and paired sample t-tests. According to the results of this study, the perception of authenticity by consumers is directly related to their level of trust, which subsequently increases their likelihood of purchasing products. Micro-influencers tend to have a more significant effect on consumer behaviour, including driving purchase decisions, than celebrity influencers [5, 23]. Even though celebrity influencers give brands access to larger audiences and increased brand awareness than micro-influencers do, celebrity influencers do not influence consumers as much when making purchase decisions. Marketers will gain access to various influencer plan styles for better determination of the target demographic, as well as increased effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns.

*Keywords* — Authenticity, Celebrity Influencers, Influencer Marketing, Micro-Influencers, Purchase Intention, Trust.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### Background Study

The use of social media has gone up over the years in relation to how we use it day-to-day. Social

networks (such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook) are now more than just a way to communicate; we also use them to research and shop for new products and services [13]. Because of this

increase in social media activity, many businesses are now utilizing social media for connecting directly with their customers while also increasing the size of their customer base.

One of the most significant trends that have recently developed as a result of the recent rise in the use of social media is that of influencer marketing [12]. Many companies have turned away from traditional advertising methods and are instead using individuals who have become well-known in social media circles for their ability to create compelling content and provide opinions on products/services. As a result, many companies are forming partnerships with individuals based upon their ability to promote brands to their followers [9].

Influencer marketers can be sorted into several distinct classifications, depending on the size of their following or their other distinguishing characteristics. For example, celebrity influencers tend to have very large followings (usually in the millions) which create an ability for brands to gain tremendous brand exposure very quickly [8]. Conversely, micro-influencers typically have much fewer followers (usually <100k) but tend to have a much stronger emotional attachment with their followers due to their smaller communities and high levels of engagement within those communities [4]; therefore the relationship between micro-influencers and their followers is typically much stronger than that of celebrity influencers and their followers. In

general, celebrity-style influencers tend to reach larger audiences than micro-influencers, and both types of influencer have proven successful at generating sales, as well as adding credibility and relatability of the brand for their audience [20].

A significant aspect of establishing confidence in someone is being able to evaluate the degree of confidence that has been established with them [1]. This means that once someone has established a certain level of confidence, they are much more likely to be influenced by you and/or by someone that is trusted by them to purchase a specific product. When utilising influencer marketing, marketers need to take into account both trust and authenticity as these two factors will help determine how influencers will impact consumer behaviour [5]. By carefully selecting the appropriate influencer, a company will improve its chance of success through marketing. The ability for firms to distinguish between celebrity and micro-influencer (or nano-influencer) has been an important factor in helping them find the proper target market(s) for marketing [23].

### **Problem Statement**

The rapid growth in popularity of influencer advertising has created uncertainty regarding which type of influencer can best guide consumers in their purchase decisions [8]. Celebrity influencers provide brands with a way to increase their visibility since celebrities control an enormous amount of influence

over others and possess a tremendous amount of popularity. In comparison, micro-influencers remain relatable but may be more limited in terms of audience size and hence reach [4]. The distinction between both celebrity and micro-influencers creates confusion amongst marketers as to what kind of influencer should be selected for marketing campaigns. As a result of this confusion, marketers will need to be aware of trust and authenticity issues before engaging in any form of credible influencer marketing [11].

### **Research Gap**

A lot of previous research on influencer marketing has studied independent variables such as trust, authenticity, and type of influencer rather than their relationship to one another [7]. This can be seen with researchers who have only looked at the effectiveness of celebrity influencers vs. the effectiveness of micro-influencers.

Today, researchers have looked at each of these influencer types independently through a few studies that compare celebrity and micro-influencers, but very few have looked at both influencers together while taking trust and how they work through their effectiveness into consideration [5, 11]. This still leaves room for confusion on exactly how these two types of influencer impact consumer purchasing behavior when combined, which leads us to the aim of this current study—to look at both types of influencer together during our comparisons.

### **Research Objectives**

- To examine the effect of trust on consumer purchase intention.
- To analyse the role of authenticity in influencer marketing.
- To compare celebrity influencers and micro-influencers.
- To identify which influencer type has a greater impact on purchase decisions.

### **Research Questions**

1. Does trust influence consumer purchase intention?
2. Which influencer type creates stronger purchase intention?
3. Are followers engaging with an influencer's content to build trust toward them?
4. Does having trust in an influencer affect a consumer's attitude toward the brand?
5. Does relatability with an influencer affect a consumer's purchasing decisions?

### **Significance of the Study**

This research is important for improving understanding of how trust and authenticity affect consumers' likelihood to buy from influencers' endorsements [18]. With many businesses currently using social media such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook to advertise products and create connections with consumers [13], marketers report difficulty determining whether celebrity or micro-influencers are more effective at achieving their goals.

Through this research, we find major conclusions about the behavioural effects of various kinds of influencers on consumer behaviour [16, 17]. By examining these differences, there is evidence to

support marketing professionals assessing their influencer choices based on trustworthiness and relatability as well as their ability to create authentic content.

In addition, marketers can use the information provided in this article to develop an effective influencer strategy for their target demographic and marketing objective. This research study addresses an important area of research in influencer marketing—it has investigated both a celebrity influencer and a micro-influencer that exhibit both trustworthiness and authenticity at the same time [11, 25]. The results of this study will provide valuable information to future digital marketing and consumer behaviour researchers.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Over the last several years, businesses have developed new ways to interact with customers using social media; in addition, businesses have discovered new ways to use social media to build brand loyalty by using social influencers as a way to promote and sell their products and services via social influencer marketing [14]. Social influencer marketing is a proven method of advertising due to its effectiveness at changing consumer attitudes toward brands and products by utilizing the content created by influencers to develop what is perceived as honest and objective content on social media [15].

According to research, trust is one of the key factors that determines how well influencer marketing will

perform [1]. Specifically, consumers place more trust in a credible and trustworthy influencer's recommendation about a product compared to traditional advertising formats or other sources of marketing. Numerous studies have proven that prior to making a purchase, consumers will be more likely to develop an intention to buy from an influencer that they trust [1]. In addition, if followers of an influencer perceive that the influencer is providing unbiased and objective recommendations or reviews about a promoted product or brand, followers will typically have a positive perspective of the product or brand being promoted [10].

Authenticity and credibility are closely related to and equally important to the successful implementation of an effective influencer marketing campaign [2]. Research has shown that followers view influencers who share their personal experiences, provide honest reviews, and create realistic content positively and develop strong relationships with that influencer as a result [2]. Furthermore, transparency about paid endorsements is essential to developing trust among both consumers and influencers [10].

Different types of influencers' level of influence on consumers can differ greatly. For example, a celebrity influencer with millions of followers can be effective in increasing awareness and exposure of a product or brand rapidly [8]. Nevertheless, studies suggest that some consumers feel that using a

celebrity endorsement tends to be “commercialized” and reduces the perception of authenticity [3].

Micro-influencers have much smaller follower counts but are considered to have very engaged and friendly audiences [4]. Because micro-influencers interact with their followers more consistently than do celebrity influencers, there is generally a greater feeling of trust and “belonging” by their community members toward them [4]. As a result, micro-influencer communities tend to be much more engaged and make a more significant purchasing decision impact than celebrity communities [6].

Research findings suggest that micro-influencers are far more effective than celebrity influencers when it comes to influencing actual consumer behavioural decisions, notwithstanding their lack of having a large following [5]. Micro-influencer product endorsements are viewed by consumers as being relatable; hence, they trust endorsed products more than if they were endorsed by larger celebrities [7]. Micro-influencers may also be viewed as less expensive ways for companies to reach niche customers [23].

Although there has been much past research on trust and authenticity of micro-influencers, most of it has been performed separately [11]. Some studies have focused on all celebrity endorsements, while other studies have only focused on micro-influencers in digital marketing [16, 17]. Few studies have examined the relationship between trust and

authenticity across both celebrity and micro-influencer endorsements to influence the purchase intention of consumers [18].

Therefore, there is still limited understanding regarding the interaction between trust and authenticity when determining whether consumers purchase endorsed products [25]. This study attempts to compare the two types of influencers and examine how trust and authenticity affect consumer buying behaviour through social media marketing [22].

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

This study employs a quantitative research design in order to examine the correlation between trustworthiness, authenticity, and purchasers' intended purchases via the use of influencer marketing. The research uses a survey method of data collection in order to gather data from as many users as possible that have provided structured survey results.

#### **Data Collection Method**

The primary data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire created using Google Forms. The questionnaire included a combination of multiple-choice and Likert scale questions focusing on trust and authenticity perceptions as well as making purchase decisions while using either a celebrity or micro-influencer.

#### **Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

- The data analysed for this study consists of 200 respondents aged between 18 and 33+.

- Active social media users served as the source of survey respondents for this study.
- The sampling method employed to select participants included the criteria of being available and willing to complete the survey.
- Convenience sample techniques were implemented when selecting participants for this study.

### **Tools and Technologies Used**

I have collected data from Google Survey Questionnaire form and analysed using Microsoft Excel. Basic statistical tools including percentages and comparative analyses were applied to interpret the gathered data.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

The following techniques were applied to the collected data:

- Descriptive statistics using percentages and tables.
- Comparative analysis between celebrity and micro-influencers.
- Paired sample t-tests where applicable.
- Consumer patterns and differences were identified using these methods.

### **Ethical Consideration**

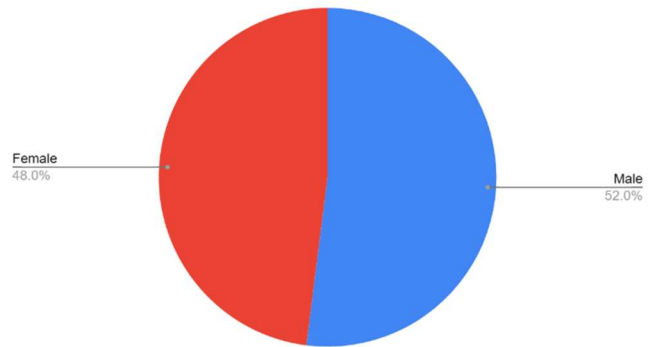
In this research, confidential voluntary participation was maintained. The research did not gather any type of personally identifiable or sensitive information about the participants; thus, the information collected was for academic purposes only.

## **IV. Results and Analysis**

### **4.1 Demographic Analysis**

Fig. 1: Gender Distribution

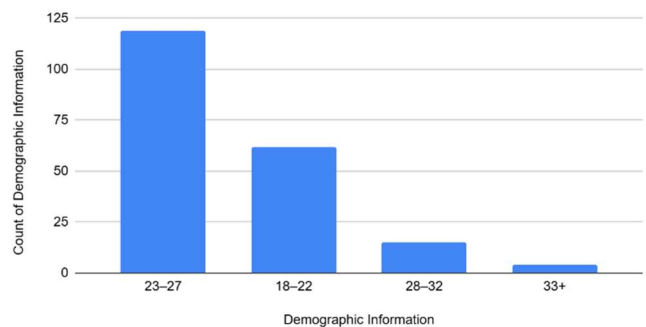
Count of Gender



**Analysis:** Based on the sample used, a fairly balanced distribution was achieved among male and female participants, which decreases the possibility of bias to any degree toward individuals of either gender.

Fig. 2: Age Group Distribution

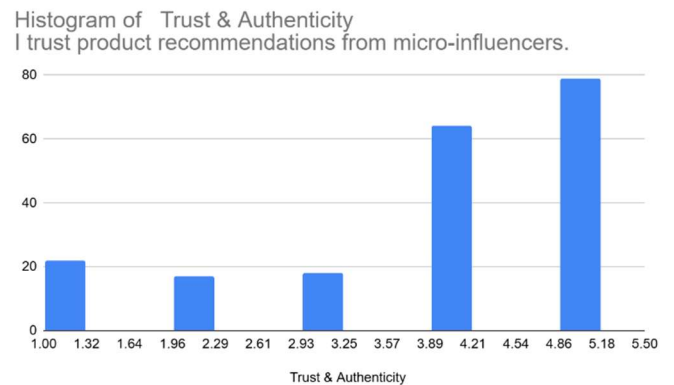
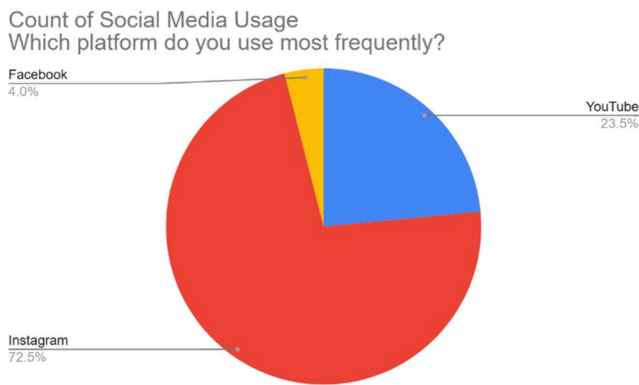
Count of Demographic Information Age Group



**Analysis:** There are more respondents within the 23–27 age range; therefore, the majority of the respondents represent the behaviours of young social media users.

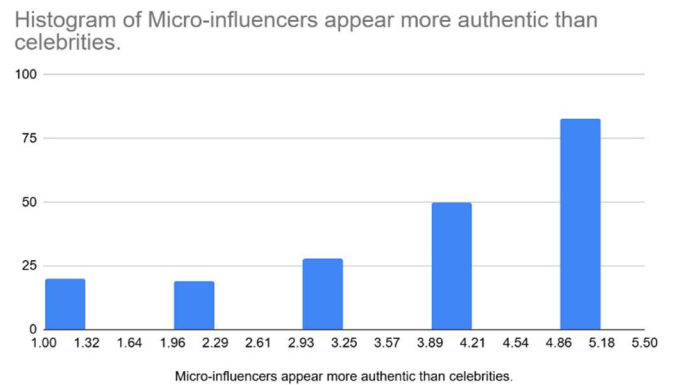
### **4.2 Social Media Usage**

Fig. 3: Most Used Platform



**Analysis:** According to the results of this survey, Instagram is the most frequently used form of social media for respondents; therefore, there may be a greater influence of influencer marketing efforts on Instagram [3].

Fig. 4: Time Spent on Social Media



**Analysis:** The average survey respondent spent between 1–3 hours on social media, thus providing ample opportunity for them to interact with, view, or otherwise be exposed to popular social media content including influencer posts [6].

**4.3 Trust & Authenticity Analysis**  
 Based on Likert scale (1–5)

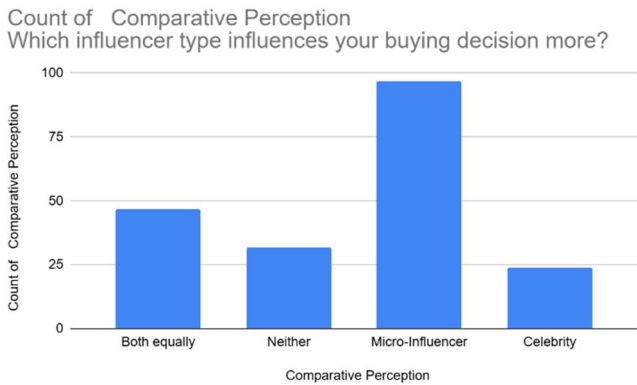
**Key Findings:**

- Majority of respondents rated 4 or 5 for trust in micro-influencers.
- Majority of respondents rated 4 or 5 for authenticity of micro-influencers.

**Analysis:** In terms of reliability and authenticity, micro-influencers outperform celebrity types as seen in this research [4, 5].

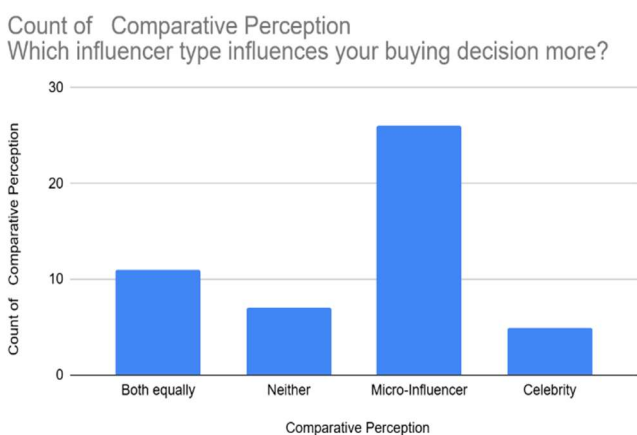
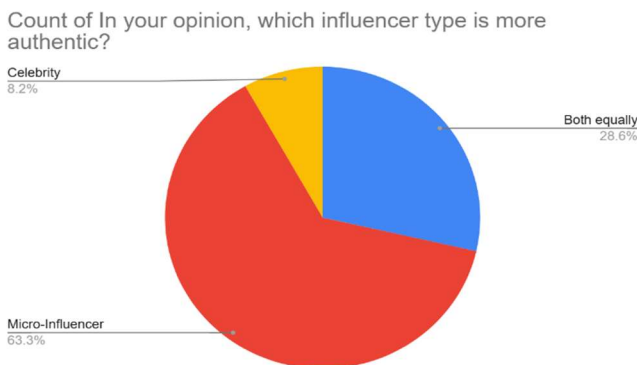
**4.4 Purchase Behaviour**

Fig. 5: Purchase Based on Influencers



**Analysis:** The research indicated that there were more survey respondents claiming to purchase products as a result of micro-influencer recommendations compared to celebrity influencer endorsements [5, 7].

#### 4.5 Comparative Perception



#### Key Findings:

- Majority of respondents selected micro-influencers as more authentic.
- Majority of respondents selected micro-influencers as more influential in their buying decision.

**Analysis:** This indicates that relatability and trust play a stronger role than popularity in influencing purchase decisions [24].

#### 4.6 Overall Insight

From the analysis, it can be observed that:

- Trust and authenticity significantly influence consumer purchase intention [1, 11].
- Micro-influencers perform better in driving actual purchase decisions [5].
- Celebrity influencers are more useful for brand awareness [8].

#### V. Discussion

This study demonstrates that trust and authenticity are primary aspects of successful influencer marketing [11]. Micro-influencers were found to be more trustworthy than celebrity influencers by the respondents in our study. This is likely due to the fact that micro-influencers typically post on a much more personal level, with relatable content, leading to their recommendations appearing authentic and trustworthy [2].

The research indicates that trust is largely determined by authenticity [21]. If an influencer is perceived to be honest and transparent, they will typically earn the trust of consumers. Previous

studies have shown that the degree of trustworthiness has a direct impact on consumer attitude and behavioural intention towards purchasing products they learn about through influencer marketing [5, 11]. An additional key finding from this study was that celebrity influencers can positively impact the visibility of a brand; however, they may have challenges persuading consumers to purchase [8]. Conversely, micro-influencers can also drive consumer action, with typically lower levels of visibility, due in large part to higher engagement levels and closer relationships with their followers [6, 22].

This study supports that relationship, connection, and trust are more beneficial than popularity when it comes to influencing consumer behaviour [24, 25].

## **VI. Conclusion**

The research conducted in this paper evaluated whether there is a connection between trust, authenticity, and decision to buy from influencer types (celebrity or micro). The results show that both trust and authenticity significantly impact the consumer's decision to purchase from either type of influencer [18].

According to the findings, consumers perceive micro-influencers as more trustworthy and believable than celebrity influencers [4, 5]. Moreover, marketers believe micro-influencers have a greater impact on creating influences on purchases.

In contrast, marketers believe that celebrities are the better option for creating awareness and communicating with larger audiences [8].

Thus, companies should be selective of their influencer based upon their marketing objectives. To build trust and motivate buying behaviour, use of a micro-influencer is likely the best option [23]. To increase brand exposure, celebrity influencers should still be considered [8].

## **VII. Limitations**

- The study is limited to respondents within a specific social media user category.
- Respondents are limited to a specific age range (18–33+ years).
- Results were based on self-reported data, which may contain bias.
- The study is limited to selected social media platforms.
- Future research can expand the sample size to include a broader population.

## **VIII. Future Scope**

- Future research may additionally include other types of influencers (macro, nano).
- Future research can explore different platforms of social media (Instagram, YouTube, etc.).
- Advanced statistical methods can be used for deeper analysis.

## **Acknowledgment**

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