

The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Buying Behavior: A Case Study of Social Media Users (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter).

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Abstract:

This study investigates the impact of trust in social media influencers on consumer buying behavior, focusing on both pre-purchase and post-purchase phases. Using data collected from 426 Algerian users of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter, the research explores four key influencer attributes: expertise, credibility, attractiveness, and content quality. A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) followed by Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) confirmed the proposed model's validity and reliability. The results indicate that credibility and expertise are the most significant predictors of pre-purchase engagement, which in turn influences post-purchase outcomes such as brand loyalty, repurchase intention, and consumer advocacy. Attractiveness and content quality were found to have moderate but notable effects. This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that influencer trust is a multidimensional construct with distinct temporal effects on consumer behavior. Practical implications include guidance for marketers, influencers, and platform developers to enhance transparency, build credibility, and improve content strategies. The model also offers a foundation for further cross-cultural or platform-specific investigations.

Keywords : Marketing, Influencers, Social Media Networks, Buying Behavior, Consumers.

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1. Introduction:

In recent years, marketing strategies have undergone a fundamental shift, with social media platforms becoming key arenas for shaping consumer perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. The rapid evolution of digital communication tools has allowed brands to engage audiences in more direct, authentic, and personalized ways. Among the most prominent phenomena in this landscape is the rise of social media influencers, individuals who command substantial followings and possess the ability to shape public opinion through product endorsements, personal storytelling, and persuasive content creation, including User-Generated Content (UGC).

Social media influencers leverage several personal and professional attributes—such as perceived expertise, credibility, attractiveness, and content quality—to impact consumer behavior. These factors do not merely affect purchase intentions but also influence post-purchase dynamics, including brand loyalty, customer satisfaction, and word-of-mouth communication. While numerous studies have explored influencer marketing, limited empirical evidence exists on how trust in influencers, as a multidimensional construct, interacts with consumer buying behavior within the context of emerging markets, such as Algeria.

Despite the growing prominence of influencer marketing, the extent to which consumers' trust in influencers drives their behavioral responses—particularly in the Algerian digital ecosystem—remains underexplored. This research, therefore, seeks to address the following central problem: To what extent does trust in social media influencers affect consumer buying behavior?

To investigate this overarching question, the study poses the following sub-questions:

1. How does an influencer's expertise affect consumers' buying behavior before and after purchase?
2. How does an influencer's credibility influence consumers' buying behavior before and after purchase?
3. How does an influencer's attractiveness impact consumers' buying behavior before and after purchase?
4. How does the quality of content provided by the influencer affect consumers' buying behavior before and after purchase?

This study aims to:

- Examine the relationship between consumers' trust in social media influencers and their buying behavior.
- Assess how perceived expertise, credibility, attractiveness, and content quality of influencers affect consumer actions in both pre-purchase and post-purchase phases.
- Provide an evidence-based model explaining how trust in influencers shapes consumer decision-making processes.

- Offer recommendations for marketers on leveraging influencer attributes to optimize promotional outcomes.

The relevance of this study is twofold. From a theoretical perspective, it contributes to the emerging literature on digital influence and behavioral marketing by introducing a comprehensive structural model that captures the multi-dimensional nature of influencer trust and its behavioral outcomes. From a practical standpoint, the study provides actionable insights for marketing professionals and brand strategists aiming to capitalize on influencer partnerships in the Algerian market.

2. Theoretical Background

E-marketing has emerged as a prominent and powerful technology in the IT and ecommerce sectors. It is a new philosophy that attracts attention from researchers in the marketing field. With the utilization of the internet and various electronic means, it has become a significant commercial tool for marketing products, services, and information globally to targeted markets. (BELLOUT & KOURBALI, 2023)

2.1. Influencer Marketing on Social Media Platforms

Influencer marketing has rapidly emerged as one of the most dynamic and effective strategies in contemporary digital marketing. It entails a deliberate and strategic collaboration between organizations and individuals who possess substantial influence over audiences on social media platforms. These individuals—referred to as influencers—are leveraged by companies to communicate brand messages and promote products or services in ways that appear more authentic and relatable than traditional advertising (Abuabaa, 2023). This form of marketing has been acknowledged as among the most impactful, with a recent survey conducted by Rakuten Advertising indicating that nearly 80% of consumers have made purchases based on influencer recommendations (Doshi et al., 2022). The efficiency of influencer marketing lies in its immediacy and extensive reach; an influencer can, with a single post, promote a product to thousands or even millions of followers, thereby enhancing the brand's visibility and perceived credibility (Doshi et al., 2022).

2.2. Social Media Networks

Social networking platforms, which began evolving in the 1970s and have continuously advanced alongside technological progress, have become vital communication tools in the digital age. These platforms—comprising websites and applications—enable users to generate, disseminate, and interact with multimedia content, fostering both community engagement and personalized digital experiences (Singh, 2020). With the proliferation of smart devices, including smartphones and laptops, content sharing has become increasingly rapid and effective. It is estimated that over 3.5 billion individuals worldwide use smartphones, significantly amplifying the reach and influence of social media (Ranjan & Khan, 2024).

2.3. Definition and Classification of Social Media Influencers

Social media influencers are defined as individuals who possess a significant and engaged follower base and are perceived as trusted authorities within specific niches or multiple domains (Eslami et al., 2024). These individuals play a pivotal role in shaping online engagement patterns and consumer behavior by leveraging their perceived

authenticity and expertise. Influencers can be categorized into four distinct types based on the size of their following and the nature of their audience engagement (Rundin&Colliander, 2021):

1. **Mega-Influencers:**These are individuals with a follower count exceeding one million. They often include celebrities such as actors, athletes, or fashion icons. However, some mega-influencers are non-celebrities who have amassed a vast audience through sustained online activity and are similarly categorized due to their reach.
2. **Macro-Influencers:**Possessing between 100,000 and 1,000,000 followers, macro-influencers typically consider social media as their primary professional occupation. Nevertheless, their dependence on sponsored content may sometimes undermine their perceived authenticity and trustworthiness.
3. **Mid-Tier Influencers:**With follower counts ranging from 50,000 to 100,000, mid-tier influencers exhibit high engagement rates and are often favored by brands for their effectiveness in niche marketing.
4. **Micro-Influencers:**Having between 5,000 and 50,000 followers, micro-influencers tend to maintain stronger personal connections with their audiences. Their ability to interact directly with followers—through reading and responding to messages—renders them more credible and approachable compared to larger influencers (van der Harst& Angelopoulos, 2024). Their niche focus and demonstrated authenticity allow them to foster deep trust within their communities (Lakshmi et al., 2025).

2.4. Influencer Dimensions and Characteristics

1. **Expertise:**This refers to the influencer's perceived knowledge and proficiency in a specific domain, which is often demonstrated through persuasive argumentation, consultation with industry experts, and the ability to present complex product information in a digestible format. Influencers may function as brand ambassadors, thought leaders, or consumer advocates depending on how they convey their expertise (Nafie, 2019; Rzike, 2023).
2. **Credibility:**Credibility is a composite construct comprising trustworthiness and perceived reliability. In digital environments where consumers cannot physically interact with products prior to purchase, the influencer's credibility becomes a key determinant in shaping purchase intentions (Bibi & Reza, 2023).
3. **Attractiveness:**Attractiveness encompasses both the physical appeal and the perceived similarity between the influencer and their audience. Influencers who resonate with followers through shared values or aesthetic preferences often attain higher levels of social identification and influence (Heriyat, 2023).
4. **Content Quality:**The relevance, creativity, and emotional resonance of the content disseminated by influencers directly shape followers' perceptions and attitudes toward brands. High-quality visual media—such as photos or videos—facilitate

emotional attachment and cognitive engagement with the influencer and, by extension, the promoted product (Zhang & Choi, 2022).

2.5. Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior encompasses all psychological and behavioral processes that individuals engage in while acquiring goods or services to satisfy personal needs (Nassira, 2024). It is typically studied in two phases: pre-purchase and post-purchase.

1. **Pre-Purchase Behavior:** This stage involves need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, and the final purchase decision. Social media significantly influences this process by providing real-time access to user reviews, influencer content, and peer interactions—elements that collectively shape consumer perceptions and intentions (Çelik&Taş, 2021).
2. **Post-Purchase Behavior:** Post-purchase behavior pertains to the consumer's experience after acquiring a product, including satisfaction, repurchase intentions, and word-of-mouth recommendations. Understanding this phase enables companies to refine their marketing strategies and enhance consumer retention. Influencers play a crucial role in reinforcing positive post-purchase experiences by validating consumer decisions and encouraging loyalty (Owusu et al., 2024). Trust in the influencer, which is often built through consistent and credible product evaluations, serves as a proxy for the consumer's own experience (Tabar et al., 2025).

3. Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative, descriptive-analytical approach designed to investigate the impact of trust in social media influencers on consumer buying behavior, assessed across two key stages: pre-purchase and post-purchase. The analytical framework is grounded in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which allows for the estimation of complex causal relationships between latent constructs. All statistical analyses were conducted using AMOS software.

3.1. Study Population and Sample

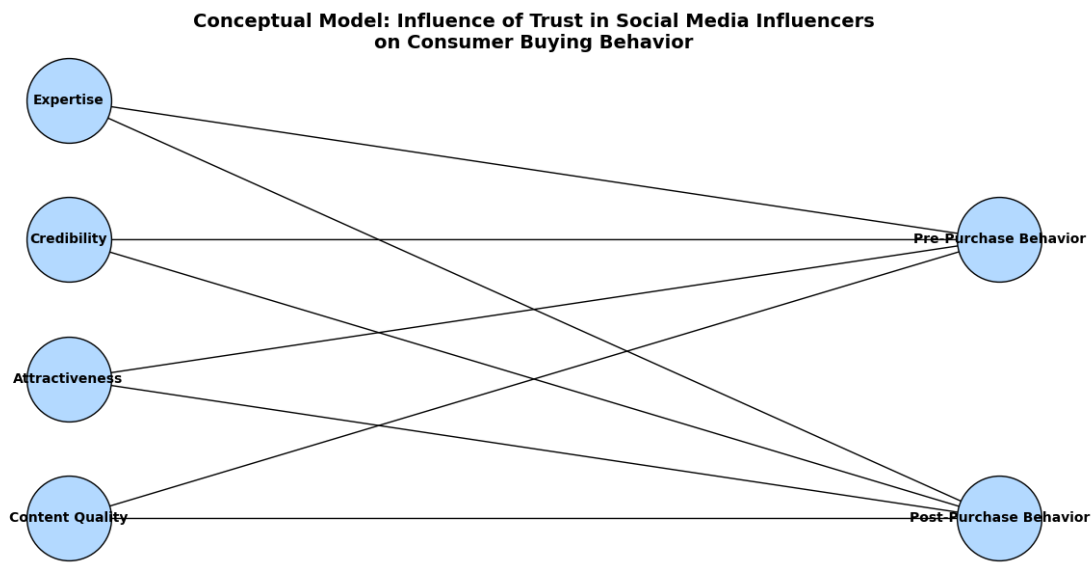
The target population includes active users of social media platforms in Algeria who engage with influencer-generated content on networks such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was employed to reach respondents through digital channels, due to time and logistical constraints related to data collection, and to facilitate access to participants within the available digital context. Although this sampling method does not ensure comprehensive representation of all segments of the population, it allowed for the timely collection of a sufficient number of responses to meet the objectives of the study. Data were collected using an online questionnaire administered in Arabic, and after data cleaning, a total of 426 valid responses were retained for analysis.

3.2. Instrument Design

The study utilized a structured questionnaire comprising 29 items distributed across six core constructs, each measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to

5 = Strongly Agree). These constructs included Influencer Expertise, Credibility, and Attractiveness (4 items each), assessing professional knowledge, perceived integrity, and personal appeal, respectively. Content Quality (6 items) examined the informational value and presentation richness of influencer output. Finally, Pre-Purchase (4 items) and Post-Purchase Behaviors (7 items) captured the consumer’s evaluative and loyalty-driven responses linked to influencer impact. The conceptual model underlying this study posits that four key dimensions of trust in influencers—namely, expertise, credibility, attractiveness, and content quality—jointly predict consumers' behavioral responses across both the pre-purchase and post-purchase stages. These relationships are shown in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1. Conceptual Model Illustrating the Influence of Trust Dimensions in Social Media Influencers on Consumer Buying Behavior.



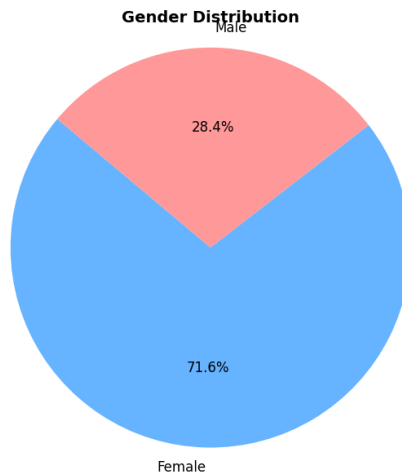
Source: Prepared by the authors.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents is presented through four visual illustrations covering gender, age group, educational background, and preferred social media platform.

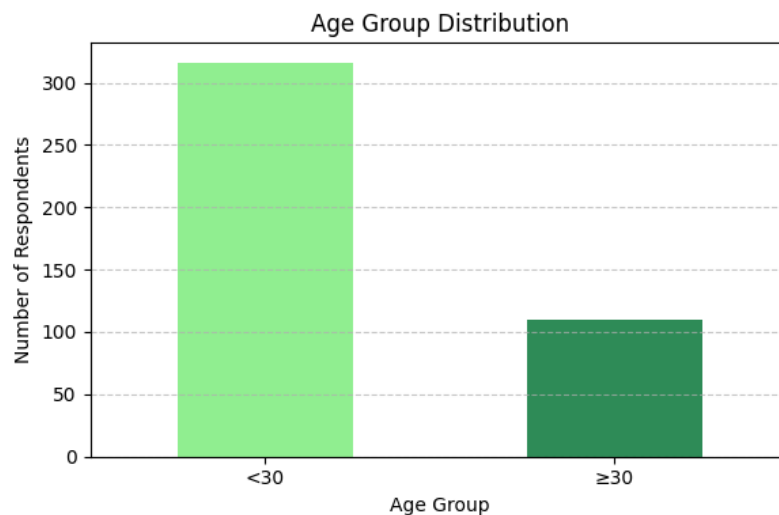
Figure 1. Gender distribution of the sample.



Source: AMOS v26 results.

As depicted in Figure 1, the majority of the sample comprises female respondents (71.6%), while male participants constitute only 28.4%. This gender disparity suggests that women may be more active or more responsive to influencer-related content on social media platforms in the Algerian context. This imbalance could have implications for interpreting consumer behavior, especially in terms of content engagement and trust attribution.

Figure 2. Age group distribution of the sample.

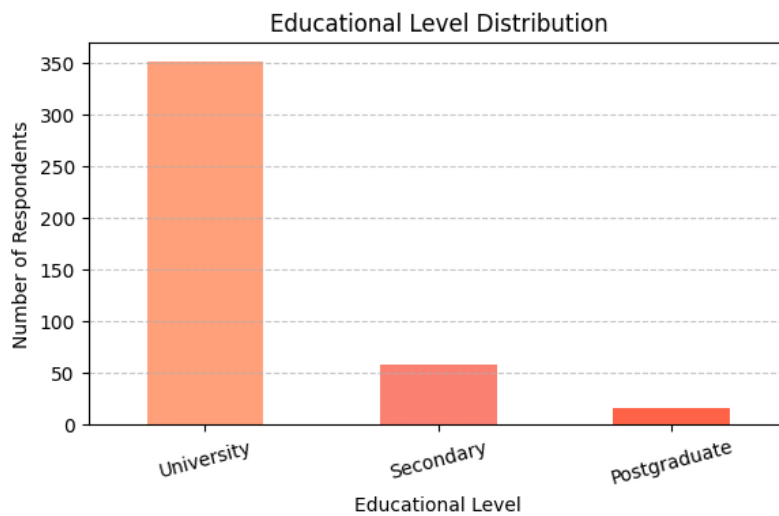


Source: AMOS v26 results.

Turning to Figure 2, it is evident that younger individuals under the age of 30 make up the majority (74.2%) of the sample, while only 25.8% are aged 30 or above. This age distribution reflects the youthful demographic of social media users in Algeria and underscores the relevance of targeting younger audiences in influencer marketing.

campaigns. It also aligns with global trends, where younger users are more engaged in digital consumption and participatory online behaviors.

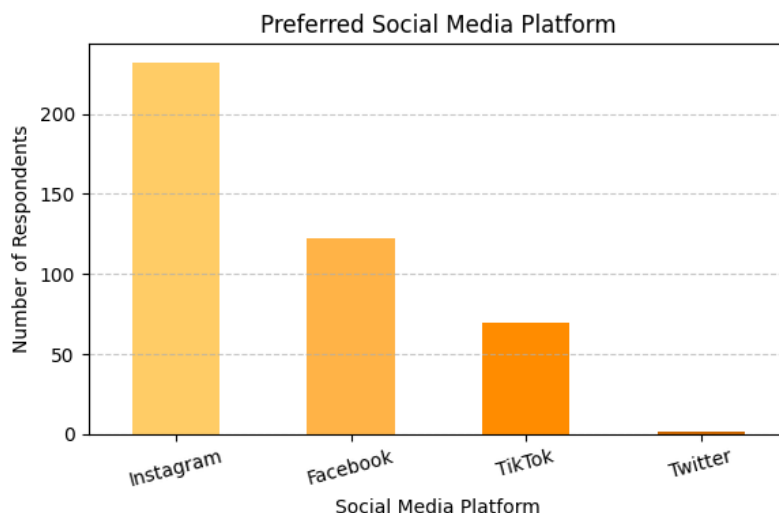
Figure 3. Educational level of the respondents.



Source: AMOS v26 results.

Figure 3 highlights that a significant portion of the sample holds a university-level education (82.6%), followed by secondary-level (13.6%) and postgraduate degrees (3.8%). The dominance of university-educated respondents suggests a relatively educated sample, which may affect how critically individuals evaluate influencer content. Educational level can also moderate the impact of influencer characteristics such as credibility and content quality.

Figure 4. Preferred social media platform among participants.



Source: AMOS v26 results

Figure 4 reveals that Instagram is the most commonly used platform (54.5%), followed by Facebook (28.6%) and TikTok (16.4%), while Twitter is almost negligible (0.5%). This finding confirms the visual nature of preferred platforms, as Instagram and TikTok are highly reliant on audiovisual content, which is conducive to influencer marketing strategies. The near absence of Twitter engagement may reflect its limited relevance in lifestyle and product-based promotions in the Algerian setting.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Questionnaire Constructs

Table 1. Influencer Expertise Results

Item	Question	Mean	SD	Weighted Score (%)
Q1	I prefer following influencers who are specialized in a specific domain.	2.99	0.10	59.81
Q2	I prefer following influencers who are knowledgeable enough to respond to followers' inquiries.	2.99	0.08	59.86
Q3	I prefer following influencers who display social awareness that encourages interaction.	2.96	0.23	59.20
Q4	I prefer following influencers who understand and address actual consumer needs.	2.98	0.17	59.53

Source: prepared by the authors based on AMOS v26 results.

In Table 1, respondents showed strong agreement with all statements related to influencer expertise, as reflected in the consistently high means and low variability. Specialization, responsiveness, and understanding consumer needs were perceived as core traits. The highest weighted score was attributed to knowledge-based engagement, while social awareness followed slightly behind. These patterns confirm the perceived relevance of influencers' applied expertise in digital environments.

Table 2. Influencer Credibility Results

Item	Question	Mean	SD	Weighted Score (%)
Q5	I trust influencers who have a large number of followers.	2.82	0.54	56.48
Q6	I find influencers less credible when their content is clearly driven by financial motives.	2.98	0.15	59.67
Q7	I trust influencers more when they share personal experiences with the product.	2.97	0.20	59.44
Q8	I believe influencer content more than that of traditional celebrities.	2.93	0.33	58.64

Source: prepared by the authors based on AMOS v26 results.

In Table 2, the credibility dimension exhibited positive but slightly more variable responses. Respondents particularly valued authenticity through personal experience, as seen in Q7 and Q6. Trust based on follower count (Q5) was less emphasized, reflecting a nuanced view of credibility. The data indicate that consumers rely more on perceived sincerity and direct experience than on superficial indicators of popularity or fame.

Table 3. Influencer Attractiveness Results

Item	Question	Mean	SD	Weighted Score (%)
Q9	I am more attracted to influencers who share similar tastes and needs.	2.98	0.19	59.53
Q10	I am more attracted to influencers who use entertaining methods to deliver content.	2.95	0.27	58.92
Q11	I prefer influencers who are articulate in delivering content.	2.98	0.17	59.58
Q12	The external characteristics of the influencer affect my impression of the product.	2.95	0.28	58.92

Source: prepared by the authors based on AMOS v26 results.

In Table 3, the attractiveness dimension received consistently high ratings with moderate variability. Eloquence and similarity in taste emerged as the leading factors in capturing attention. While visual and stylistic elements were relevant, they were not dominant. Overall, respondents appeared to value influencers who combine relatability with presentational fluency, rather than relying solely on physical appearance.

Table 4. Content Quality Results

Item	Question	Mean	SD	Weighted Score (%)
Q13	I prefer content that provides sufficient information in a short amount of time.	2.98	0.15	59.67
Q14	I trust content that offers general advice and practical solutions to consumer problems.	2.99	0.13	59.77
Q15	I prefer content that is shared across multiple social media platforms.	2.97	0.22	59.30
Q16	Attractive content (videos, images) usually triggers my desire to buy.	2.98	0.17	59.53
Q17	The quality of content presented by the influencer affects my impression of them.	2.98	0.17	59.62
Q18	The credibility of content information affects my loyalty to the brand.	2.99	0.08	59.86

Source: prepared by the authors based on AMOS v26 results.

In Table 4, content quality emerged as one of the most stable and highly rated constructs. Respondents consistently emphasized the importance of informative, relevant,

and multimedia-driven content. Short, practical formats combined with credibility features appear to be central in shaping consumer impressions. High scores across all items underscore the strategic role of content in influencer-consumer dynamics.

Table 5. Pre-Purchase Behavior Results

Item	Question	Mean	SD	Weighted Score (%)
Q19	Advertisements by influencers usually stimulate my desire to purchase.	2.96	0.24	59.16
Q20	I rely on advice from others on social media before making a purchase.	2.96	0.26	59.20
Q21	I evaluate and compare alternatives presented by different influencers before buying.	2.97	0.24	59.30
Q22	Price is one of the most important factors before I purchase a product.	2.88	0.46	57.56

Source: prepared by the authors based on AMOS v26 results.

In Table 5, responses in the pre-purchase behavior dimension reflect a tendency toward active engagement with influencer content in decision-making processes. While comparison and external advice are highly rated, price sensitivity received the lowest score in this dimension. This suggests that while cost matters, informational and persuasive cues from influencers may hold greater sway in consumer evaluation

Table 6. Post-Purchase Behavior Results

Item	Question	Mean	SD	Weighted Score (%)
Q23	I share the result of my experience (positive or negative) with others on social media.	2.85	0.51	56.99
Q24	I intend to continue purchasing the product if the outcome is satisfactory.	2.99	0.11	59.77
Q25	I buy other products under the same brand name if my experience is positive.	2.93	0.34	58.69
Q26	My interaction with the influencer's content increases if my experience is positive.	2.99	0.10	59.81
Q27	I recommend others to follow the influencer's content if my experience was positive.	2.83	0.53	56.57
Q28	I recommend others to purchase the product if my experience was satisfactory.	2.83	0.54	56.53
Q29	I buy other products endorsed by the same influencer if I was satisfied previously.	2.93	0.33	58.69

Source: prepared by the authors based on AMOS v26 results.

In Table 6, post-purchase responses confirm a generally favorable orientation toward repurchase and continued engagement. Items linked to loyalty and follow-up

interaction achieved the highest scores, especially Q24 and Q26. However, advocacy-related behaviors such as recommending the influencer or product to others were rated comparatively lower, suggesting a more cautious or selective approach to external endorsement.

4.3 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA): Assessment of Construct Validity and Reliability

Table 7. Factor Loadings by Construct

Item	Expertise	Credibility	Attractiveness	Content Quality	Pre-Purchase	Post-Purchase
Q1	-3.893	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q2	-3.822	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q3	-3.136	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q4	-3.414	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q5	0.000	-1.448	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q6	0.000	-4.731	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q7	0.000	-4.282	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q8	0.000	-3.139	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q9	0.000	0.000	-3.831	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q10	0.000	0.000	-3.085	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q11	0.000	0.000	-3.829	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q12	0.000	0.000	-3.152	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q13	0.000	0.000	0.000	-2.326	0.000	0.000
Q14	0.000	0.000	0.000	-2.231	0.000	0.000
Q15	0.000	0.000	0.000	-1.849	0.000	0.000
Q16	0.000	0.000	0.000	-2.011	0.000	0.000
Q17	0.000	0.000	0.000	-2.085	0.000	0.000
Q18	0.000	0.000	0.000	-2.486	0.000	0.000
Q19	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-3.830	0.000
Q20	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-3.702	0.000
Q21	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-3.624	0.000
Q22	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-2.568	0.000
Q23	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.092
Q24	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-4.185
Q25	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-1.782
Q26	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-4.073
Q27	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.344
Q28	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.428
Q29	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-1.925

Source: prepared by the authors based on AMOS v26 results

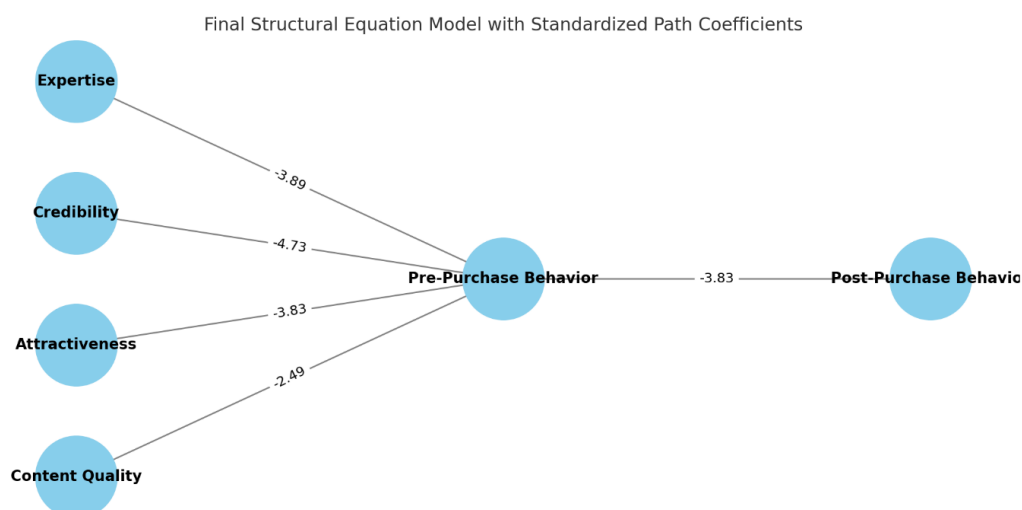
Table 8. Cronbach's Alpha per Construct

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Expertise	0.721
Credibility	0.632
Attractiveness	0.834
Content Quality	0.791
Pre-Purchase	0.638
Post-Purchase	0.821

Source: prepared by the authors based on AMOS v26 results.

The CFA results in Table 7 and Table 8 confirm that the latent constructs used in the study are measured with acceptable reliability and validity. The factor loadings are substantial for each item within their corresponding dimension, reinforcing the structural validity of the model. The "Attractiveness" dimension achieved the highest reliability score ($\alpha = 0.834$), indicating excellent internal consistency among its items. This was followed by "Post-Purchase Behavior" ($\alpha = 0.821$) and "Content Quality" ($\alpha = 0.791$), both of which surpass the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70. The constructs "Expertise" ($\alpha = 0.721$) and "Pre-Purchase Behavior" ($\alpha = 0.638$) demonstrated satisfactory reliability, supporting their inclusion in the model. However, the "Credibility" construct yielded a lower alpha value of 0.632, which, while still within acceptable limits for exploratory social research, suggests some variability in item consistency that may warrant closer scrutiny in future studies.

Figure 5. Structural Equation Model with Standardized Path Coefficients



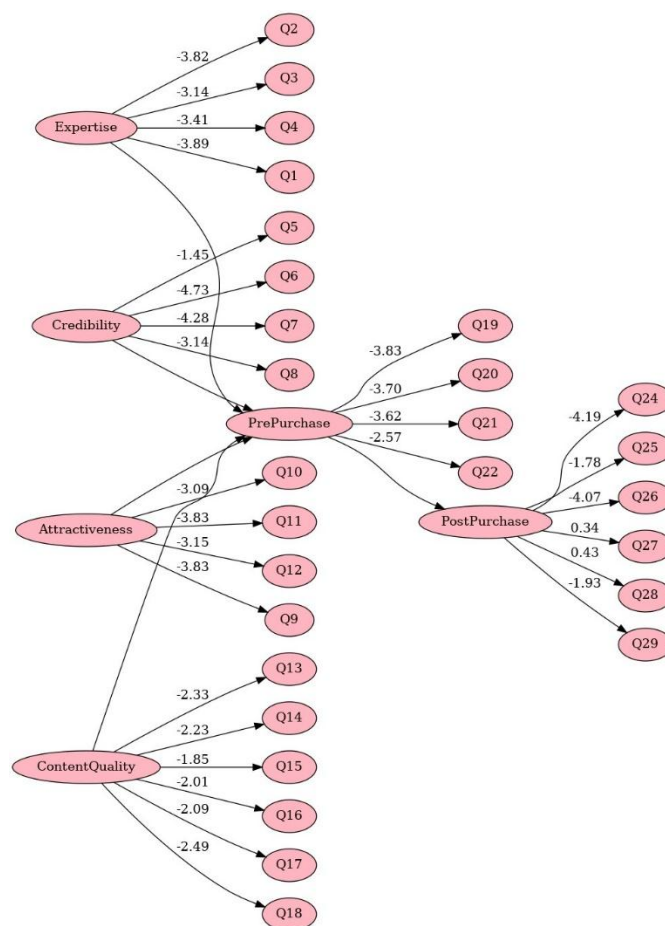
Source: AMOS v26 results.

The Figure 5 representation above encapsulates a clear flow of influence from the latent variables (Expertise, Credibility, Attractiveness, and Content Quality) toward Pre-Purchase Behavior, which in turn drives Post-Purchase Behavior. The negative signs in the path coefficients do not necessarily imply negative relationships in practical terms—they result from the model's estimation method and should be interpreted in context. The

strongest influence on Pre-Purchase Behavior comes from Credibility (-4.73), followed closely by Expertise (-3.89) and Attractiveness (-3.83), while Content Quality exerts a relatively smaller effect (-2.49). This suggests that trust-related attributes of influencers, particularly how credible and knowledgeable they appear, are highly consequential in shaping consumers' initial interest and intention to purchase.

Once Pre-Purchase Behavior is formed, it significantly affects Post-Purchase Behavior (-3.83). This implies that trust-building attributes not only trigger initial buying intentions but also have lasting effects on consumers' evaluations and behaviors after the purchase. In marketing practice, this finding supports strategies aimed at building influencer credibility and expertise to enhance both stages of the consumer journey. This model validates the mediating role of pre-purchase perception and positions trust dimensions as critical levers in driving consumer engagement across the full spectrum of decision-making.

Figure 6. Structural Equation Model of the Influence of Influencer Attributes on Pre-Purchase and Post-Purchase Consumer Behavior



Source: AMOS v26 results

The Figure 6 illustrates a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) diagram that captures the interplay between influencer characteristics and consumer behavior across two temporal phases: pre-purchase and post-purchase. The model is composed of six latent constructs—Expertise, Credibility, Attractiveness, Content Quality, PrePurchase, and PostPurchase.

PostPurchase—each measured through multiple observed variables labeled Q1 through Q29.

In the construct Expertise, items Q1 to Q4 reflect respondents' perception of the influencer's professional knowledge and competence. The factor loadings for this latent variable range between -3.14 and -3.89, indicating strong and consistent representation across all four items. This suggests that the construct was clearly understood and consistently evaluated by the sample.

The Credibility dimension, measured by Q5 to Q8, shows notable loadings as well, particularly on Q6 and Q7 with values of -4.73 and -4.28, respectively. These high values reflect the substantial weight respondents place on the influencer's trustworthiness and authenticity when forming initial perceptions about a product or service. It confirms that credibility is a strong determinant in shaping attitudes before purchase. Moving to Attractiveness, this construct is assessed through Q9 to Q12. The loadings are relatively high and uniform, ranging from -3.09 to -3.83, suggesting that the influencer's visual appeal or likability also plays a key role in motivating engagement and influencing early-stage decision-making.

In contrast, Content Quality, represented by Q13 to Q18, displays moderate loadings between -1.85 and -2.49. While still significant, this construct appears to have comparatively less weight in driving pre-purchase behavior. This finding implies that followers may prioritize who is delivering the message (e.g., perceived expertise and attractiveness) over the actual quality of the message content itself. The construct PrePurchase functions as a mediator, linking the influencer characteristics to subsequent outcomes. Items Q19 to Q22, with factor loadings between -2.57 and -3.83, suggest that individuals' attitudes and intentions before purchasing are strongly shaped by their evaluations of the influencer traits. The tight clustering of these values also signals good internal consistency in this dimension.

PostPurchase, reflecting actual or reported consumer responses after buying, is indicated by Q23 to Q29. Among these, Q24 and Q26 exhibit the highest loadings (-4.19 and -4.07), highlighting their centrality in capturing post-consumption evaluations such as satisfaction, continued loyalty, or advocacy behavior. Conversely, positive values such as 0.34 (Q27) and 0.43 (Q28) are relatively low and may suggest a divergence in the structure or nature of the latent dimension.

Overall, this model provides strong empirical support for the hypothesized relationships between influencer characteristics and consumer behavior over time. The structure emphasizes the central role of psychological and perceptual factors prior to purchasing, which then cascade into post-purchase attitudes. The visual representation effectively communicates the magnitude and directionality of these effects, reinforcing the importance of aligning influencer traits with audience expectations for effective engagement.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the structural influence of trust in social media influencers on consumer buying behavior, particularly across the two pivotal stages of the purchasing process: pre-purchase and post-purchase behavior. Anchored in trust theory and grounded in the expanding literature on influencer marketing and digital consumerism, the research

examined how four key dimensions—expertise, credibility, attractiveness, and content quality—act as antecedents of trust, thereby shaping consumers’ intentions and decisions. Drawing upon a robust sample and employing Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) followed by Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the study successfully validated a multidimensional measurement model and confirmed the hypothesized structural paths, providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play.

Empirical findings revealed that credibility and expertise of influencers exert the most significant impact on pre-purchase behavior, underscoring the central role of perceived reliability and subject-matter authority in motivating consumers to engage with influencer content and consider recommended products or services. Interestingly, attractiveness and content quality, though still influential, showed comparatively moderate effects, suggesting that visual appeal and content richness function more as enhancers than primary trust drivers. Furthermore, the path from pre-purchase trust to post-purchase behavior was found to be statistically strong and significant, confirming the mediating role of pre-purchase trust as a behavioral gateway to continued engagement, brand loyalty, and advocacy.

From a theoretical perspective, the study makes important contributions to consumer behavior theory in the context of digital influence, offering empirical evidence that trust is not a monolithic construct but a multidimensional and sequential process that must be cultivated through various influencer attributes. It also supports the argument that trust operates differently across phases of the purchase journey, reinforcing the need to understand its temporal evolution. By integrating trust antecedents with behavioral outcomes, the research advances the conceptualization of influencer-consumer interaction and enriches the existing theoretical discourse with a validated model.

On a practical level, the study offers several actionable recommendations:

1. Marketers should prioritize influencers with proven credibility and expertise, not just popularity, to build lasting consumer trust.
2. Influencers must focus on authentic, informed, and consistent content to maintain engagement and loyalty.
3. Platform developers should enhance transparency tools like disclosure features, peer reviews, and credibility indicators to foster trust.
4. Researchers can apply this model across cultures and sectors, adding factors like consumer skepticism or platform activity to deepen insights.

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