

Attractiveness, Credibility, and Consumer Response: The Role of Social Media Influencers in Brand Love and Purchase Intention

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ABSTRACT

The advent of and expansion of social media has significantly transformed brand–consumer communication, positioning social media influencers (SMIs) as influential intermediaries in contemporary marketing. SMIs, a distinct category of digital content creators, possess strong online visibility, personal branding, and complex commercial relationships with firms through which they promote sponsored products and services. Unlike traditional endorsers, SMIs influence consumers not only by disseminating product information but also by shaping aspirational lifestyles, values, and consumption norms. In recent times influencer marketing has emerged as a cost-effective strategy that often escapes consumer resistance to paid advertising, enabling brands to reach highly targeted audiences. By consistently sharing personal content related to daily life, interests, and social relationships, influencers cultivate perceived closeness and relatability, blurring the boundary between authentic recommendation and commercial persuasion. This study contributes to branding literature by examining the distinct roles of influencer attributes—attractiveness, trustworthiness, and experience—in shaping affective and behavioural outcomes. The findings reveal that influencer attractiveness plays a dominant role in fostering brand love, highlighting the symbolic and affective nature of emotional brand attachment, where visual appeal and aspirational identity outweigh credibility-based evaluations. In contrast, trustworthiness and experience exert stronger influence on purchase intention, emphasizing the importance of expertise and credibility in transactional decision-making. Notably, brand love does not significantly predict purchase intention, indicating a decoupling between emotional attachment and purchasing behaviour. Instead, purchase intention appears to be driven more directly by influencer attributes than by emotional bonds with the brand. These insights suggest that marketers should prioritize aesthetic and symbolic cues to build emotional attachment, while emphasizing credibility and expertise to stimulate purchase intentions.

Keywords: Social Media Influencers (SMI's), Influencer Marketing, Impulsive Buying, Brand Love, Purchase Intention, Attractiveness, Trustworthiness.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of digital platforms has fundamentally transformed the way brands communicate with consumers, giving rise to social media influencers (SMIs) as powerful intermediaries in marketing communication. Social media influencers are a subset of digital content creators characterized by a strong online presence, a distinct personal identity, and complex commercial relationships with brands, through which they promote sponsored products and services to their follower communities (Duffy, 2020). Unlike traditional endorsers or opinion leaders, SMIs exert influence not only by sharing product-related information but also by shaping

aspirational lifestyles, values, and consumption norms that followers admire and seek to emulate (Chan, 2022) which has proved to an effective and cost-efficient marketing strategy generally not perceived by consumers as paid advertising thereby providing a wide reach to a targeted audience. As the influencers cultivate a close relationship with their followers by consistently sharing content related to their daily lives, personal interests, hobbies, friends and families fostering a sense of relatability and social interaction among followers (Chan, 2022). As a result, influencer generated content often blurs the boundary between personal recommendation and persuasion for commercial purpose.

However, measuring the impact of social media communication can be a challenge because of the commercialization of social media influencers (SMIs). This is even more complicated because brands that embrace influencer marketing have restricted or very little control over the content and context (Gräve, 2019). Moreover, brands typically exercise limited control over the content and contextual framing of influencer posts, making it difficult to manage brand messaging consistently (Hudders, Jans, & De Veirman, 2020). Empirical evidence on influencer marketing effectiveness is also mixed, for instance a study by Jarrar, Awobamise, and Aderibigbe (2020) indicate that sponsored advertisements generated higher engagement than influencer posts due to their broader and more targeted reach, suggesting that influencer marketing may not always outperform traditional digital advertising formats.

Within this evolving digital context, brand love has emerged as an important relational construct in marketing research. Brand love can be defined as a feeling of deep emotional attachment that is experienced by consumers towards a brand, often resulting from satisfying consumer experience (Albert & Merunka, 2013). Earlier studies suggest that brand love strengthens customer loyalty, advocacy, and willingness to pay premium pricing, considerably reducing overall marketing costs (Bairrada et al., 2018; Gumparathi & Patra, 2020; Unal & Aydın, 2013). With the rise of social media marketing, brand love has gained further relevance due to its role in enhancing engagement and emotional bonding in digital environments (Palusuk et al., 2013; Verma, 2020). Studies indicate that social media marketing activities such as trendiness, customization, and word-of-mouth may directly influence brand loyalty and brand love (Ebrahim, 2020; Bigne, et al., 2020), brand equity and brand attitude which drives purchase intention (Schivinski, & Dabrowski 2016; Yasin & Shamim, 2013).

Additionally, influencer characteristics such as trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise have been found to affect brand awareness and purchase intention (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Saima & Khan, 2020; Shangui & Zhen Zhu, 2022). However, the strength and nature of these relationships remain inconclusive, particularly regarding whether emotional attachment in the form of brand love translates into actual purchase intention.

While prior studies acknowledge the role of social media on consumer decision making (Hutter et al., 2013), studies also suggest that purchase intention is shaped by rational evaluations such as perceived usefulness, quality, and value (Chang & Wildt, 1994). Johansen & Guldvik, (2017) argue that influencer marketing does not necessarily exert a direct effect on purchase intention and may not be more effective than traditional online advertising. This calls for an important question regarding whether consumer's buying decisions are driven by emotional factors such as brand love or rational factors such as product utility and influencer credibility.

The present study is an attempt to examine the role of social media influencers attributes- namely trustworthiness, experience and attractiveness- in shaping brand love and purchase intention among consumers. By

addressing these relationships, the study aims to contribute to the role of influencer marketing in developing cognitive and emotional mechanisms influencing purchase intention.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the effect of social media influencer trustworthiness, experience and attractiveness on brand love and purchase intention.
2. To assess the effect of brand love on consumers' purchase intention and
3. To compare the relative importance of influencer attributes in driving emotional (brand love) versus behavioural (purchase intention) consumer responses.

Based on the objectives, the study seeks to address the following research questions:

- Does the perceived trustworthiness of social media influencers significantly influence brand love and purchase intention?
- What role does influencer experience play in shaping brand love and purchase intention?
- How does influencer attractiveness affect consumers' brand love and their purchase intention?
- Does brand love significantly influence purchase intention in the context of influencer marketing?
- Are influencer attributes more influential in driving purchase intention than brand love?

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. SMI's and Impulsive Buying

Safeer, A. A. (2024) investigated how social media marketing affects consumers' tendency to make impulsive buying online by considering brand resonance and emotional responses, along with the role of social network proneness towards fashion retail brands. They found that social media marketing has a significant influence on brand resonance, consumer emotions, and online impulse buying intentions. Moreover, brand resonance and emotional responses play a pivotal role as mediators in influencing online impulse buying intentions. Nyrhinen et al. (2024) explored the impulsive buying behaviour of young adults concerning self-control and persuasion in online settings. Their findings indicate that low self-control not only directly leads to impulsive buying but also encourages a positive attitude towards targeted advertisements and impulsiveness within social networks. Sehra et al. (2024) revealed that materialism, psychological factors, and social media significantly affect young adults' impulsive purchasing behaviour in housing and real estate. However, they found that website quality and hedonic value do not have a substantial impact on this behaviour. Shamim et al. (2024) developed a comprehensive conceptual model to understand the role of influencer-related communication factors in influencer marketing success, focusing specifically on trust in

fashion influencers' branded posts and its impact on urge to buy impulsively. Their results emphasize the importance of trust in fashion influencers' posts, influencer credibility, message credibility, and media credibility being crucial factors contributing to this trust.

Social Media platforms like Facebook and Instagram have a great degree of penetration and users have acknowledged that these social networks had triggered some impulse buying and showed a notable intention to use them to make purchases (Aragoncillo & Orus, 2018); (Kshatriya & Shah, 2023). Whereas some studies have directed to the fact that certain other factors may also be attested for impulsive buying like cultural factors which moderate many aspects of consumer's impulsive buying behaviour, including self-identity, normative influences, the suppression of emotion, and the postponement of instant gratification (Kacen & Lee, 2022). Definitely online convenience often reduce customers' time and effort costs and increase their happiness (Lina, Hou, & Ali, 2022) but consumers' emotional states and their age too influence their impulsive buying behaviour (Kacen & Lee, 2002) as impulsive consumers are shopping not just to buy products but also to satisfy needs such as having fun and seeking novelty (Geetha & Bharadhwaj, 2016). Impulsive buying is common in individuals having an urge to regulate mood and who have the least effective emotion regulation strategies (Fenton-O'Creevy, Dibb & Furnham, 2018). (Jung et al., 2021) highlighted that the activities of social media influencers are firmly linked with a consumer's contentment as consumers were found often visiting SMIs profiles for latest trends leading to more frequent purchase of goods recommended by SMIs, which influenced their happiness positively. It was also observed that in an e-commerce context, social influence could drive a consumer to purchase something he/she didn't intend to buy without full deliberation about the intended purchase (Hu, et. al., 2016). In the most recent developments of product endorsing on social media platforms, it was found that consumers in live streamed product endorsement tend to have impulsive buying through the presentation and positive influence by the streamer (SMI) (Lee & Chen, 2021) as live streaming allowed the influencers to have a direct interaction on e-commerce platforms (Yan, et. al., 2022) which establishes the relationship between live streaming of social media towards the impulsive buying behaviour of customers.

2.2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development

2.2.1. Stimulus-Organism-Response Mode

According to the SOR theory, there are two general ways in which individuals react to their environments. The approach behaviour of the consumers includes several positive actions such as the desire to explore, stay, affiliate, or work. The other kind of behaviour referred to as averting behaviour includes the opposite which is the desire not to act positively (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). This theory has been extended to include the internal and external sources of information as stimuli that affect the purchase intention of the consumers (Response) through their cognition and emotion (Organism) (Kim et al., 2020).

2.2.2. Hypotheses Development

Trustworthiness plays a very important role in the social media influencer marketing of products. Research suggests that the credibility of Social Media Influencers will play a big role in determining the validity of their respective claims from the perspective of their trustworthiness. This will reflect the viability of their respective claims. Trustworthiness can be defined as the perceived honesty of Social Media Influencers (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020). Also, trustworthiness has a positive impact on the outcomes of social media marketing (Chapple and Cownie, 2017; Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017; Schouten et al., 2020).

Research indicates that if the consumers have a level of trustworthiness in the Social Media Influencers and if they believe in the brand, it will likely generate brand love in the consumers as well. For example, it was noted that there is a positive relationship between consumers and Social Media influencers who share their videos on various online platforms. If the onscreen relationship is positive between the two parties, it will likely have a positive impact on their attitude as well (Su et al., 2011).

Research studies have investigated the credibility of the influencers as a strong determinant of the purchase intention of consumers (Reichelt et al., 2014; Erkan and Evans, 2016; Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017; Schouten et al., 2020). Especially, Young adults in the age group of 10 to 19 years were excessively influenced by their respective Social Media Influencers whom they follow, and that has a consequent effect on their purchase intention (Lou and Kim, 2019).

H1: Trustworthiness in Social Media Influencers has a positive impact on the brand love of the consumers.

H4: Trustworthiness of the Social Media Influencers has a positive impact on the impulse purchase intention of the consumers.

Expertise is considered to be one of the main domains describing the credibility of Social Media Influencers (Hovland and Weiss, 1951; Sternthal et al., 1978; McCroskey and Teven, 1999). The expertise of Social Media Influencers can be defined as the degree of perception of the understanding, knowledge, and skills of the Social Media Influencer about the type of products that they are promoting (Hovland et al., 1953). Credible influencers induce the belief in the consumers that the products and services that they are promoting are good and valid (Sternthal et al., 1978).

Research indicates that source expertise has a positive impact on both brand love and purchase intention (Till and Busler, 2000). It is directly related to the purchase intention of the consumers. Followers of credible Social Media Influencers are more likely to buy the featured products and services as compared to others (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020).

H2: The expertise of the Social Media Influencers has a positive impact on the brand love of the consumers.

H5: The expertise of the Social Media Influencers has a positive impact on the impulse purchase intention of the consumers.

In a study by (Chen, Xie, Zhang & Li, 2021) ‘trust’ was found to be an important factor that affected impulse buying. In another study by (Koay, et. al., 2021) pertaining to all dimensions of source credibility (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) only attractiveness and trustworthiness were found to have a noteworthy influence on online impulse buying (Mayya & Joseph, 2022). Internet celebrities with a humble and relatable image can earn consumers’ trust as followers were inclined to trust the popular influencers with whom they were able to identify and feel close to, and apt with the brand endorsed (Chen, Xie, Zhang & Li, 2021). Attractiveness of social media influencers formed a highly favourable attitude among the followers towards a brand or product, resulting in purchase intention and impulsive buying behaviour (Lim, Xin Jean, et al., 2017); (Trivedi, 2021). It was also observed that perceived enjoyment had a positive impact on the urge to buy impulsively where attractiveness and expertise of the SMI positively affect perceived enjoyment (Lee & Chen, 2021).

H3: Attractiveness of the Social Media Influencers has a positive impact on the brand love of the consumers.

H6: Attractiveness of the Social Media Influencers has a positive impact on the impulse purchase intention of the consumers.

Technology does not create impulse buyers, it provides impulsive consumers more resources to shop and the ability to complete transactions in a short amount of time, making those purchases truly a reaction to an impulse (Crafts, 2012). Age, gender, and the time taken to purchase were found to have a significant impact on impulse purchases of customers (Gandhi, Vajpayee, & Gautam, 2015) as teen impulsive buyers possess more prestige sensitivity and less price consciousness and value consciousness than non-impulsive buyers. Moreover, teenage females were more inclined to be impulsive buyers than male counterparts (Muratore, 2016); the relationship between the buying impulsiveness trait and related buying behaviours is significant (Rook & Fisher, 1995). Factors like product presentation, promotion strategy, positive comments from social peers and the perceived enjoyment are the factors affecting the Gen Z’s online impulsive buying behaviour (Nguye & Nguyen, 2022). Generation Z, the digital natives a major contributor to moulding the future of online shopping even though well versed in using the technology were found to be weak in controlling their hedonic happiness (Ruban & Balakrishnan, 2023). In addition to this the existence of Buy Now Pay Later seems to harm its users as it impacts trigger impulsive buying and overconsumption intention supporting the generation Z stereotypes about instant gratification, where they can enjoy goods without having to save first (Lia & Natswa, 2021). The use of credit was found to have a significant positive impact on online impulse buying (Aragoncillo & Orus, 2018). (Hu, et. al., 2016) suggested that the younger a consumer is, the more likely he/she tends to buy things impulsively which is in line with the general understanding that youngsters are generally more impulsive than matured adults. In this aspect the traditional thought that availability of money encourages impulsive buying is found to be valid as higher income is

definitely an important factor which encourage a consumer’s impulse buying and the fact that money availability and credit card use were found to be significantly impacting the urge to buy impulsively (Badgaiyan & Verma, 2012). Apart from credit availability other key factors that influences the shopping behaviour of the Z generation were found to be the design of the website, the importance of delivery methods together with the possibility of online payment, merchant reviews, informativeness, enjoyment and shopping at a well-known seller (Laitkep & Stofkova, 2021); (Hoang & Khoa, 2022). Generation Z consumers also seek authentic, meaningful connections to their brand of choice (Barcelona, et. al, 2022) including atmospherics (navigational characteristics, informativeness, and entertainment) in virtual community which tend to have positive effects on online impulse buying intention (Li, Cui & Cheng, 2016).

H7: Brand love has a positive impact on the impulse purchase intention of consumers.

3. METHOD

The study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the influence of social media influencer (SMI) attributes—trustworthiness, experience, and attractiveness—on brand love and purchase intention. A quantitative, survey-based approach was considered appropriate, as it enables the empirical testing of hypothesized relationships among latent constructs and statistical generalization within the selected population is possible.

3.1. Data Collection

Questionnaire was distributed to 450 respondents using both online and offline modes. The study focused on individuals who spend a significant amount of time on the Internet and are actively engaged with social media platforms. Generation Z respondents were considered most suitable for this purpose due to their high digital usage and frequent exposure to influencer-generated content. Youth from Generation Z were best suited on this parameter. To ensure the active online engagement of respondents, a Webography Profile was created to assess their social media usage patterns, including frequency of platform usage, time spent online, and engagement with influencer content. Out of 450 people, only 300 responded complete with all the necessary details, resulting in a valid response rate of 66.7%. The final sample size was considered adequate for structural equation modelling and path analysis.

3.2. Respondents’ Profile and Characteristics

In terms of demographic indicators, 61% sample in our study consisted of female participants and 39% male. Among the respondents 37% respondents were Undergraduate Students while 63% were Post Graduate Students. All the respondents belong the age-group 18-25 as we needed representation only from Generation Z. All respondents reported active usage of at least one major social media platform such as Instagram, YouTube, or Facebook and acknowledged following at least one social media influencer. This demographic profile aligns with prior studies on influencer marketing that identify

younger consumers as the most responsive to influencer-driven communication. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality.

3.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaire comprised two sections, where the first section captured demographic information and respondents' social media usage behaviour while the second section measured the study constructs using established scales adapted from prior research to ensure content validity. The Source Credibility Scale (Ohanian, 1990) was adapted and used to measure trustworthiness, experience and attractiveness of social media influencers, whereas items from Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) were adapted to measure Brand Love. Purchase Intention was measured using items adapted from Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal (1991). All items were

measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree."

4. RESULT

4.1. Measurement Model

To measure Validity and Reliability of the Measurement Model, Confirmatory Factor Analysis was used. It was discovered that the Chi-square value of 189.840 (df = 67, P-Value < 0.05). The CMIN/DF was 2.833; thus, the model was acceptable (MacCallum *et al.*, 1996; Marsh and Hocevar, 1985). In the proposed Model, the values of GFI (.914), NFI (.929) and CFI (0.952) indicated an acceptable and good fit (Hu and Bentler 1999; Marsh *et al.*, 1988). RMSEA value for the proposed model was found to be 0.078, revealing it to be a modest fit (MacCallum *et al.*, 1996).

Table 1 : Factor Loading, Mean, Standard Deviation and Reliability Analysis (Cronbach-Alpha)

Item	Factor Loading	Mean	Standard Deviation	Critical Ratio of Variance	Cronbach Alpha
<u>Trustworthiness</u>					
1. I feel Social Media Influencers are Genuine.	.857	2.42	0.755	6.534	0.863
2. I feel Social Media Influencers are virtuous.	.949	2.34	0.742		
3. I feel Social Media influencers are Sincere	.685	2.38	0.780		
<u>Expertise</u>					
1. I feel Social Media influencer are experienced in their field.	.832	1.79	0.82	6.482	0.816
2. I feel Social Media influencers have in-depth knowledge	.830	1.92	0.85		
<u>Attractiveness</u>					
1. I feel Social Media influencers are friendly	.855	2.39	1.04	6.552	0.836
2. I feel Social Media influencers are very attractive	.830	2.32	1.03		
3. I feel Social Media influencers are pleasant.	.702	2.64	1.07		
<u>Brand Love</u>					
1. The Brand makes me feel good	.798	2.16	1.22	7.578	0.832
2. The Brand is wonderful	.732	2.20	1.26		
3. I am Passionately attach to the Brand	.842	2.30	1.18		
<u>Purchase Intention</u>					
1. I think I will buy products or services recommended by the SMI.	.786	2.42	0.92	7.873	0.890
2. I prefer buying the product or service after watching videos of SMI.	.922	2.57	0.93		
3. I regularly watch videos of SMI to decide about my product	.861	2.77	1.02		

With Construct Reliability values ranging from 0.719 to 0.969, all the factors correctly exceeded the cut-off of 0.7. According to Hair et al. (2006), standardised factor loadings were found to be sufficiently high with values over the cutoff of 0.6 (range from 0.629 to 0.912), as shown in Table 1. Moreover, each construct sufficiently surpassed the AVE cutoff limit of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2006), suggesting that the variation deriving from the measurement model is less than the variance indicated by the construct.

The value of AVE was greater than MSV (Maximum Shared Variance) for each construct, establishing discriminant validity as well. All Construct Validity requirements were therefore examined, and no validity problems were found. Additionally, the average extracted variance's standard deviation is 0.5. (Hair *et al.*, 2006). The fact that the AVE value is greater than the cutoff suggests that the variance of the measurement model is lower than the variance produced by the concept.

Table 2- Construct Reliability, Average Variance Explained and Maximum Shared Variance

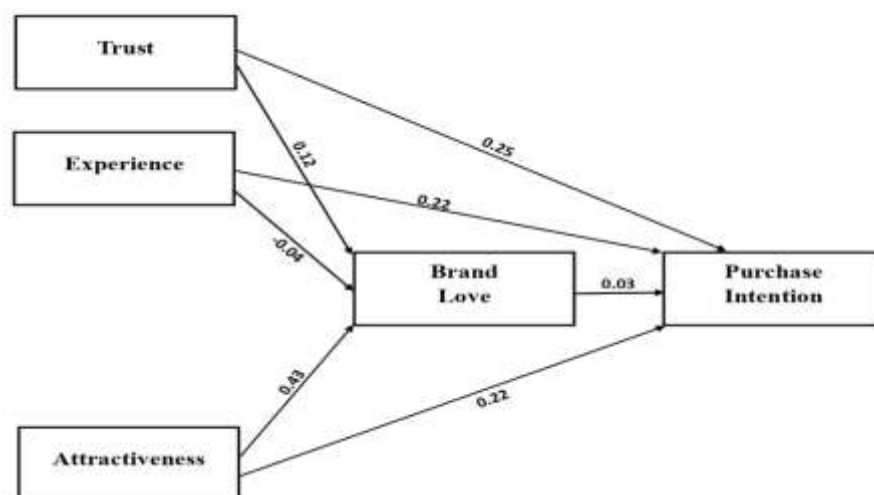
	CR	AVE	MSV	Purchase Intention	Trustworthiness	Expertise	Attractiveness	Brand Love
Purchase Intention	0.893	0.736	0.180	0.858				
Trustworthiness	0.874	0.701	0.199	0.372	0.838			
Expertise	0.817	0.691	0.154	0.392	0.369	0.831		
Attractiveness	0.840	0.638	0.221	0.424	0.446	0.371	0.798	
Brand Love	0.834	0.627	0.221	0.227	0.211	0.128	0.470	0.792

4.2. Hypothesis Testing

The result is summarised as follows:

Table 3: Regression Weights

S.No.	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Beta Value	P- Value	Result
1	Trustworthiness	Brand Love	0.122	.188	Rejected
2	Experience	Brand Love	-0.039	.618	Rejected
3	Attractiveness	Brand Love	0.429	.000	Supported
4	Trustworthiness	Purchase Intention	0.250	.000	Supported
5	Experience	Purchase Intention	0.225	.000	Supported
6	Attractiveness	Purchase Intention	0.224	.000	Supported
7	Brand Love	Purchase Intention	0.033	.457	Rejected



5. DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to examine the social media influencer attributes- namely trustworthiness, experience and attractiveness on brand love and purchase intention among consumers, as well as the role of brand love on purchase intention. The findings reveal a differentiated pattern in how influencer attributes shape affective and behavioral consumer responses.

The results indicate that among the antecedents of brand love, attractiveness is the only significant predictor ($\beta = 0.429$, $p < .001$), while trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.122$, $p = .188$) and experience of the influencers ($\beta = -0.039$, $p = .618$) do not exert a statistically significant influence. This suggests that brand love is primarily an emotional appeal, and not driven by cognitive evaluations of credibility, experience and trustworthiness. Attractiveness is likely to enhance aspirational value and emotional resonance among the youth which are central to developing strong affinity with the brand. The results also indicate that although credibility and experience may be essential for reducing uncertainty, it is not sufficient to evoke deep emotional attachment. The findings therefore support the view that brand love is an affective construct that emerges from aesthetic cues rather than from rational assessments by the consumers.

However, in contrast to their effects on brand love, the results indicate that trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.250$, $p < .001$), experience ($\beta = 0.225$, $p < .001$), and attractiveness ($\beta = 0.224$, $p < .001$) all significantly and positively influence purchase intention. This indicates that purchase intention is shaped by a broader set of antecedents, encompassing both emotional and cognitive credibility. Trustworthiness emerges as the strongest predictor of purchase intention, along with experience and attractiveness that contribute meaningfully to consumers' willingness to buy. Collectively, these findings suggest that while emotional appeal is important, functional and credibility-based evaluations are indispensable in driving actual buying decisions.

Contrary to earlier studies, brand love does not have a significant effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.033$, $p = .457$). This finding challenges the commonly assumed

direct linkage between emotional attachment and behavioural intention, suggesting that although consumers may feel emotionally connected to a brand, the emotional connect may not translate to purchase intention. Factors such as price, situational constraints or availability of alternatives may override emotional connect during purchase. This result indicates that brand love may represent a long-term relational outcome rather than a direct antecedent of transactional behaviour. It also underscores that linear models need to be reconsidered which positions brand love as a direct antecedent of purchase intention, especially in contexts where rational evaluations remain salient.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

The findings of the study contribute to the literature on branding by demonstrating the distinct roles of social media influencers in shaping affective and behavioural outcomes. The findings suggest that attractiveness play a dominant role in cultivating brand love, whereas trustworthiness and experience are more influential in driving purchase intention.

The findings also implies that strategies aimed at building emotional attachment should prioritize symbolic and aesthetic elements, while strategies focused on purchase intention should emphasize credibility and expertise cues.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While the study offers valuable insights, its scope is limited to direct relationships among the examined variables. Future research may explore moderating or mediating mechanisms to better understand when and how brand love translates into purchase behavior. Longitudinal designs could also help capture the evolving nature of brand relationships and purchasing decisions. Influencers use narratives to create a sense of authenticity and avoid dilution of their carefully created online identity, but studies revealed that influencers could set standards and change public opinions. Women consumers tend to be influenced more by the opinion of others pertaining to insecurities or weaknesses such as self-confidence, self-esteem, body image and personality which results in impulsive buying (Hashem, 2021). Brands often exploit these vulnerabilities of the consumer

psyche to maximize successful online impulse sales using social media marketing as stimulant (Budree, et., al. 2021) and at times shoppers' impulsive purchasing due to influence was positively linked to the feeling of regret (Prasad, Parashar, Vijay, & Sahay, 2019).

7. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the influence of social media influencer (SMI) attributes—trustworthiness, experience, and attractiveness—on brand love and purchase intention and further assessed whether brand love translates into purchase intention. The findings provide important insights into the distinct cognitive and behavioural pathways through which influencer marketing affects purchase intentions.

The results reveal that influencer attractiveness plays a dominant role in fostering brand love, whereas trustworthiness and experience do not significantly contribute to emotional attachment. This underscores the affective and symbolic nature of brand love, where attractiveness, visual appeal and aspirational identity appear to outweigh cognitive evaluations of credibility in shaping emotional bonds. However, all these three attributes of social media influencers influence purchase intention, highlighting that purchase decisions are a combination of cognitive and emotional factors.

Contrary to conventional assumptions, brand love does not significantly predict purchase intention, suggesting a decoupling between emotional attachment and impulse purchase behaviour. This indicates that while consumers may develop emotion with the brand in terms of brand love, it doesn't necessarily result in transactional outcomes. Instead purchase intention appears to be more directly shaped by influencer attributes.

Future research may adopt longitudinal designs, incorporate moderating variables such as product category or price sensitivity, and examine additional psychological or contextual factors that bridge the gap between brand love and purchase intention.

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