

**Impact of Influencers Marketing on Consumers Behavior and Purchase Intention:
Mediating Role of Influencer Credibility**

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Abstract

In the realm of digital marketing, influencer marketing has risen to prominence, particularly on platforms like TikTok, which wield considerable influence among younger demographics. This study focused on the faculty and students from four different public and private universities in KPK. Employing a non-probability simple random sampling technique for sample selection, the study utilized an adopted questionnaire to measure responses, confirming the reliability of the measurement scales with an impressive Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.967. Results of the study revealed that influencer marketing significantly and positively impacts consumer attitudes toward brands and their purchase intentions. Further influencer credibility has significantly mediated the effect of influencer marketing on attitude towards brand and purchase intention. This underscores the critical need for culturally tailored influencer marketing strategies to maximize relevance and effectiveness in the Pakistani market. Moreover, it highlights the untapped potential of TikTok as a powerful platform for influencer marketing. These results offer invaluable, actionable insights for marketers and significantly advance our theoretical understanding of influencer marketing's profound impact on consumer behavior, laying the groundwork for future research on emerging social media platforms.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, consumer attitude, purchase intention, tiktok

Introduction

In today's fast-paced global era, rapid development and technological progress have reshaped our lives, offering practical solutions for almost every aspect of our daily routines. Information and communication technology have become integral to our modern existence, facilitating seamless interactions and driving the world towards unprecedented sophistication. This technological revolution has given rise to digital marketing, particularly the powerful realm of social media marketing, which empowers individuals and businesses to promote, sell, and purchase goods and services with remarkable efficiency. Social media marketing has transformed traditional advertising into an immersive and interactive experience, empowering consumers to directly connect with brands, influencers, and brand ambassadors, and share their firsthand experiences (Dahl, 2018). Consumers are increasingly turning to social media for guidance in their decision-making processes. This shift has given rise to influencers—prominent figures on social networks who are revered as role models by their followers. These individuals trust influencers' opinions and heed their recommendations on fashion, lifestyle, photography, and travel (Casaló et al., 2020; Audrezet et al., 2020). Influencers have

become indispensable tools for brands to engage with consumers (Bu et al., 2022). Research indicates that influencers foster stronger, more trustworthy, and more credible relationships with their followers compared to traditional celebrities (Johnstone & Lindh, 2022). While influencer marketing has been extensively studied on platforms such as Instagram (Tafesse & Wood, 2021; Casaló et al., 2020; Ibáñez-Sánchez et al., 2021), Facebook (Hughes et al., 2019), Twitter, and YouTube (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), it has not been thoroughly explored on TikTok. TikTok has emerged as a powerful social platform, offering creative features that enable users to create short, engaging videos ranging from advertisements to dance choreography and comedic skits (Mutiarra, Yuliaty, & Putri, 2023). TikTok is primarily centered around entertainment and leisure, unlike Twitter and FB, which are more focused on sharing knowledge, news, and connecting with friends and family (Haenlein et al., 2020). The visual appeal of TikTok allows users to showcase products and services in an engaging and entertaining manner. The platform even encourages brands with the slogan, "Don't Make Ads. Make TikToks" (Forbes, 2022), emphasizing how much viewers appreciate the smooth, enjoyable experience of scrolling through one TikTok after another. Influencers have increasingly started using TikTok (Agustina & Sari, 2021). This rise in promotional activity by celebrities and influencers on TikTok, compared to other social media platforms, has boosted marketing activities on the app and can significantly influence consumers' purchase intentions. TikTok has gained a lot of popularity, especially among schoolchildren, millennials, and Generation Z. Millennials are a key market segment because they spend much of their time on social media. Recognizing this, TikTok introduced a new feature in April 2021 called TikTok Shop. This innovative feature turns TikTok into a new type of e-commerce platform within the social media space. In e-commerce companies, including TikTok, which now offers online shopping features, purchase intention significantly impacts the company's success in achieving its goals and consistently meeting consumer needs (Azizah et al., 2021). The content on TikTok is playful and focuses on fun and entertainment (Wang, 2020). Additionally, TikTok is a favorite among teenagers and young adults, making it the top social network for this demographic (Haenlein et al., 2020).

To examine the role of influencer marketing over social media, study has considered attitude towards brand and purchase intention of consumers. Further role of influencer marketing is explained through the mediating role of influencer credibility. Influencer marketing shape the behavior of consumer such as perception, attitude and purchase intention towards brand. Most academic studies on influencer marketing have been conducted in Western countries, but the growth of influencert marketing is evident globally. In Pakistan, social media influencers are becoming increasingly popular, yet little research has been done in this context. The researchers have examined influencer marketing from a consumer perspective in Pakistan. Despite a significant increase in academic research on influencer marketing in recent years, there remains a gap in understanding how influencer marketing on TikTok affects consumer attitudes and PI in the Pakistani market. Investigating the impact of post quality and influencer credibility on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions could provide valuable insights for marketers in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Influencer Marketing:

The evolution of influencer marketing has undergone significant changes due to shifts in consumer behavior and advancements in technology. Initially, it relied on traditional celebrity endorsements (McCracken, 1989). However, the landscape has transformed with social media platforms like YouTube and Instagram, giving birth to digital influencers who connect with audiences through niche-specific content (Brown & Hayes, 2018). The paradigm shifted notably with the introduction of TikTok, where everyday individuals gained massive followings by sharing relatable short-form videos (Laverie & Stewart, 2020). This platform revolutionized influencer marketing, encouraging brands to explore new ways to connect with younger demographics. In the coming years, brands will invest billions in influencer

marketing. Modern marketers who want to leverage influencer marketing face contemporary challenges, such as finding the right influencers, tracking and measuring results, and ensuring this new strategy aligns with their overall business goals (Levin, 2020). The new marketing approach focuses on promoting brands online to connect with potential customers through platforms like email, social media, and web-based advertising. This method offers better ways for marketers to engage with customers in the digital world. Social media, including platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, has become the most popular form of interaction and advertising. Marketers have also realized the value of using influencers to build genuine customer relationships. According to Wood (2016), influencer marketing is an advertising and sales strategy that leverages individuals (influencers) who can shape a brand's image. This approach involves collaborating with social media users to disseminate messages and promote brands. Influencers, due to their authority, experience, status, or strong relationships with their audience, can effectively sway others' purchasing decisions (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Influencer marketing relies on the powerful synergy between brands and influencers for campaign success. It involves crafting and disseminating advertising messages through influential individuals and opinion leaders, making it a uniquely impactful marketing approach. In recent years, influencer marketing has witnessed remarkable growth as a marketing approach, with an increasing number of brands opting for it over traditional advertising methods. This shift towards influencer marketing is not limited to large brands; it has also become a vital strategy for smaller businesses. In the coming years, brands are projected to invest billions in influencer marketing. This approach, which has already seen tremendous success on platforms like Instagram and YouTube, represents a major shift in digital advertising rather than a fleeting trend. "Influencer Marketing for Brands" is the ultimate guide for navigating this digital age (Levin, 2020). As Levin notes, influencer marketing was already popular before the pandemic accelerated its adoption. While Instagram and YouTube were its primary platforms, this paper explores how TikTok has become a significant player in the field.

Influencer Marketing and Social Media Platform (Tiktok):

According To Johnstone and Lindh (2022) Influencers are pivotal in social media, viewed as role models by their followers who feel a strong connection to them. They gather large followings through their perceived expertise and by sharing personal stories across various media, shaping their public personas. (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020, Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Many people follow influencers because they admire certain qualities or see reflections of themselves in the influencer. This shared identity often leads followers to appreciate the products endorsed. According to Diggitt Magazine (2020), this dynamic significantly impacts IMA, especially as TikTok has established strong partnerships with agencies, enabling nationwide brands to accelerate their TikTok influencer campaigns (Working Influencer, 2019)

Influencer Marketing and Consumer Purchase Intention:

Research literature supports the use of Source Credibility Theory in studying social media influencers (SMIs), emphasizing attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, and audience similarity (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Highly popular SMIs are perceived as more attractive by their followers (Gupta et al., 2020). Popularity is measured by viewership numbers and follower count (Zhao et al., 2019) According to SCT, social media influencers (SMIs) with greater popularity are perceived as more trustworthy (Gupta, Agarwal, & Singh, 2020; Hill, Troshani, & Chandrasekar, 2020). Hayes, Singer, and Ceppos (2007) explain that trust is about feeling assured that one is receiving honest information, and this trust is earned through consistently reliable content. This creates a sensitive relationship between SMIs and their followers, who tend to view the influencers as unbiased and credible sources (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011). Thus, trustworthiness is a crucial quality for SMIs, vital for fostering strong connections with their audiences, communities, and brands. Various characteristics of social media influencers (SMIs) that can impact consumer behavior have been studied. This

literature review section focuses on two such characteristics: similarity and authenticity. Similarity, which refers to how much the audience perceives the influencer to resemble themselves, is a component of the Social Cognitive Theory (Balaban & Mustățea, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Additionally, the authenticity of influencers has been chosen for discussion due to its extensive relevance in the context of social media influencers (Duffy, 2017; Leparoux et al., 2019; Dekavalla, 2020). Influencers build their authenticity by connecting with their audience in ways that align with the subculture they are part of (Duffy, 2017). This authenticity strengthens their credibility and trustworthiness. Genuine interactions are essential for influencers to establish trust (Leparoux et al., 2019; Schwemmer & Ziewiecki, 2018). In essence, the authentic image of social media influencers greatly enhances how trustworthy they are seen to be. Key factors to consider include whether the content is descriptive, well-structured, innovative, reliable, and tailored for TikTok (Pöyry et al., 2019). Purchase intention is sparked when someone sees a product and feels an initial interest, leading them to want to try it and eventually buy it (Thamizhvanan & Xavier, 2012). Kim and Ko (2012) explain that purchase intention encompasses both consumer interest and the likelihood of purchasing a product. Choedon and Lee (2020) add that purchase intention can be understood as the likelihood and desire of consumers to buy recommended products after engaging with them on social media. Based on the above discussion, following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: Influencer marketing significantly influences the consumers' attitude towards brand
H2: Influencer marketing significantly influences the consumers' purchase intention

Mediating role of influencer credibility

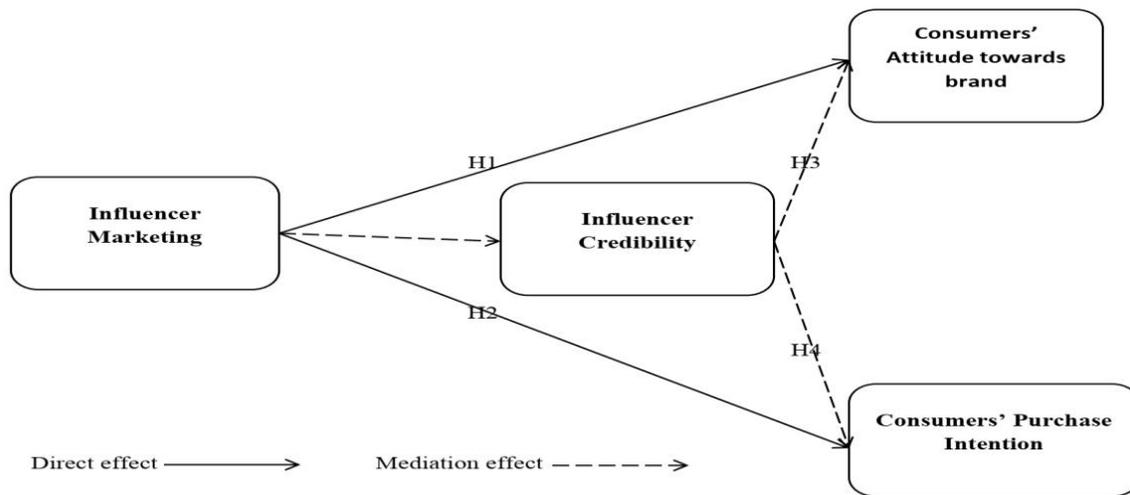
Influencers' credibility plays vital role in brand's promotion strategies. Credibility in marketing described as the level of trust and believability on the source of information and provider of information (Lou and Yuan, 2019). Influencer credibility is the perception of consumer regarding trustworthiness of information provider. According to Rebelo (2017), influencer credibility is the multiple dimensions construct which includes the expertise, trustworthiness, truthfulness of influencer. Social media is often considered as the less reliable source of information because of fake and unauthentic information dissemination and social media user mostly evaluate the source credibility. Information is considered more reliable if the influencer or information provider is known and credible. Though dissemination of information over social media is less expensive but mostly it does not attract their target audience. Ameen et al. (2020) discussed that brands engage credible social media influencer to attract their target audience and maximize their viewership. Rebelo (2017) has examined the role of source credibility on consumers' attitude towards brand and purchase intention and their findings revealed that influencer credibility positively influence the consumers' attitude towards brand and purchase intention. Further Lou and Yuan (2019) discussed the effect of influencer credibility on consumer consumption behavior and their results indicated that influencer credibility significantly influence the pre-purchase and post purchase behavior of consumer. So based on above discussion it can be established that influencer credibility can mediate the relationship between Social media influencer and consumers' attitude towards brand and purchase intention.

- H3: Influencer credibility significantly mediates the relationship between Influencer marketing and consumers' attitude towards brand
H4: Influencer credibility significantly mediates the relationship between Influencer marketing and consumers' purchase intention

The thorough review of literature showed that there exists a notable scarcity of literature specifically focusing on TikTok influencer marketing in Pakistan, despite the platform's increasing prominence in the country. This gap highlights the need for empirical studies to understand how influencer marketing using TikTok influences consumer attitudes and PI

within the Pakistani market. Additionally, while the proposed study identifies quality of posts and influencer credibility as components of independent variable, there is limited research specifically exploring these factors within the context of TikTok influencer marketing in Pakistan. Investigating the impact of post quality and influencer credibility on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions could offer valuable insights for marketers operating in this emerging digital landscape. By addressing these gaps, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics to inform more effective marketing strategies on TikTok in Pakistan. Based on the comprehensive discussion, theoretical framework is presented in figure 1.

Fig: 1: Theoretical Framework



Methodology

This part of the research describes the methodology used in this study. The details of the research methodology are explained as follows:

Research Design:

The research employed a quantitative design to achieve the set objectives. An adopted questionnaire was used to collect data through self-administrative survey design.

Study Population:

The research population for this study consists of staff, faculty and students from four different public and private sector universities in KPK. Universities were randomly selected.

Sample Size:

The sample size comprised of 135 staff, faculty and students from four different public sector universities in KPK. Due to the quantitative nature of the study, a non-probability sampling technique was utilized. Specifically, a simple random sampling method was adopted to ensure the unbiased selection of participants. Respondents were randomly chosen from various departments within these universities to ensure a representative sample for the study.

Collection of Data:

This study utilized primary data collection method, gathering firsthand data from four different public and private sector universities in KPK. A self-administered survey design was employed as the primary tool for data collection, ensuring direct and relevant responses from the participants.

Measurement Scale:

To fulfill the research aims, the questionnaire was adopted from (The-Bao Luong & Ching-Hua Ho,2023). The Likert scale was employed for the measuring scale (1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree).The research questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A consists of questions about the respondents demographic profile, such as gender, age, education, and whether or not the respondent using TikTok as influencer marketing tool. Section B include various questions, 8 items for measuring influencer marketing , 4 items for measuring attitude towards brand and 3 items for purchase intention.

Results and Analysis

Demographic Analysis:

The demographic breakdown, as presented in Table 2, reveals intriguing insights. Out of the 135 participants in this study, 53 were male, representing 39.3% of the sample, while 82 were female, constituting 60.7% of the participants. This highlights the predominance of female respondents in our study.

In terms of age, the majority of participants, accounting for 54.1%, fell into the 21-25 age group, followed by the 26-30 age group at 20.7%, the 31-35 age group at 13.3%, and the 36-40 age group at 11.9%. These findings suggest that a significant portion of the sample population is young, particularly within the 21-25 age range, and actively engages with influencers on social media platforms like TikTok.

The distribution of education levels is equally compelling: 53.3% of the sample had completed their graduation, 23.7% had achieved a master's degree, and the remaining 23.0% fell into the "Others" category, encompassing various educational diplomas, certifications, and courses.

Demographic Statistics			
Variable	Category	Number	Percentage%
Gender	Male	53	39.3
	Female	82	60.7
Age	21-25	73	54.1
	26-30	28	20.7
	31-35	18	13.3
	36-40	16	11.9
Education	Graduation	72	53.3
	Masters	32	23.7
	Others	31	23.0

Analysis for Measurement Scale

Before testing hypotheses, study examined the reliability and validity of scale using multiple indices and results are presented in the Table 2. Factor loading results for all constructs are above the threshold value of .60, indicating the relevancy of the construct. Further reliability through Cronbach's alpha (α) is examined and all values are well above the asked range of .70 (Hair et al., 2017). Internal consistency is examined through rho_A and composite reliability (CR) which are above the asked range of 0.70. Finally average variance extracted (AVE) results are also above the .50 indicating the validity of the scale.

Construct	Loading	CR	AVE	rho_A	α
IM1	.728	.788	.649	.784	.843

IM2	.773				
IM3	.692				
IM4	.750				
IM5	.804				
IM6	.719				
IM7	.820				
IM8	.663				
Influencer Credibility					
IC1	.748				
IC2	.845				
IC3	.663				
IC4	.736	.801	.694	.780	.813
IC5	.703				
IC6	.710				
IC7	.663				
IC8	.791				
IC9	.826				
Attitude toward Brand					
ATB	.775				
ATB	.893	.694	.750	.802	.837
ATB	.759				
ATB	.819				
Purchase intention					
PI	.883				
PI	.730	.794	.662	.791	.886
PI	.773				

Hypotheses Testing:

Bootstrapping through PLS with 5,000 resamplings is used for testing hypotheses (Hair et al., 2017). Results in Table 3 indicated that influencer marketing has significant effect on the attitude towards brand as LLCI = .114 and ULCI = .285 do not contain zero. Moreover significant value is also less than .05, P = .000. Hence based on the above results hypothesis H1 is accepted. Further results in Table 3 indicated that influencer marketing has significant effect on the purchase intention as LLCI = .267 and ULCI = .375 do not contain zero. Moreover significant value is also less than .05, P = .000. Hence based on the above results hypothesis H2 is accepted.

Hypotheses	Direction	t Value	P Value	Boot strapping CI at 95%		Status
				LLCI	ULCI	
H1	IM ----->ATTB	5.63	.000	.114	.285	Accepted
H2	IM ----->PI	4.33	.000	.267	.375	Accepted
H3	IM -----> IC ----->ATTB	3.75	.000	.382	.504	Accepted
H4	IM -----> IC ----->PI	4.22	.000	.105	.215	Accepted

Further results for mediation in Table 3 indicated that influencer credibility has significantly mediated the relationship between influencer marketing and attitude towards brand as LLCI = .382 and ULCI = .504 do not contain zero. Moreover significant value is also less than .05, P = .000. Hence based on the above results hypothesis H3 is accepted. Finally results in Table 3 indicated that influencer credibility has significantly mediated the relationship between

influencer marketing and attitude towards brand as $LLCI = .105$ and $ULCI = .215$ do not contain zero. Moreover significant value is also less than $.05$, $P = .000$. Hence based on the above results hypothesis H4 is accepted.

Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to delve into the profound impact of influencer marketing on consumer attitude and purchase intention. Further study has examined the mediating role of source credibility. The focus was specifically on TikTok as a social media platform. The study meticulously evaluated how influencer marketing shapes consumer attitudes towards brands and their subsequent purchase intentions. Study has comprehensively discussed the role of influencer marketing with the mediation of source credibility and is among few to explain the attitude toward brand and purchase intention in this context. The results of this study underscore the significant enhancement of consumer attitudes towards brands through influencer marketing on TikTok. This finding robustly supports the acceptance of H1, which posits that influencer marketing significantly impacts consumer attitude towards the brand. This outcome is in alignment with previous research, suggesting that influencers form closer, more trusting, and more credible relationships with their followers than traditional celebrities (Johnstone & Lindh, 2022). Influencers on TikTok leverage their brand, authenticity, and engagement with followers to create a sense of trust and reliability, which resonates with consumers, ultimately leading to more favorable attitudes towards the brands they promote. The interactive nature of TikTok, with its focus on short, engaging videos, allows influencers to effectively capture and retain consumer attention. This, in turn, helps convey brand messages more compellingly than traditional marketing methods, thereby enhancing the overall consumer experience and fostering a positive attitude towards the brand. Furthermore, the study found that influencer marketing has a strong positive impact on consumers' purchase intentions, thereby supporting the acceptance of H2. This is consistent with the findings of Casaló et al. (2020), which highlighted that influencers can drive purchase decisions through relatable and persuasive product recommendations. Influencers' persuasive power is crucial in shaping consumer buying decisions. By sharing their experiences and opinions about a product, influencers reduce the perceived risk for consumers, making them more likely to purchase the product. The trust and credibility influencers have built with their followers translate into a higher likelihood of followers taking their recommendations seriously and acting upon them. However, it's crucial to consider potential contradictions arising from regional and cultural differences. While this study finds a strong positive impact of influencer marketing in the Pakistani context, previous studies, such as De Veirman et al. (2017), report mixed results across different regions, suggesting that cultural and regional factors can moderate these effects. Additionally, the focus on TikTok as a platform contrasts with much of the existing literature, which predominantly examines Instagram and Facebook, highlighting TikTok's unique dynamics and potential for influencer marketing. Finally, the study's focus on university students in Peshawar may yield results specific to younger demographics, whereas previous research, such as Lim et al. (2017), indicates that the impact of influencer marketing can vary across different age groups and demographics. Further study has explained the relationship between influencer marketing, attitude toward brand and purchase intention with the mediating role of influencer credibility. Findings of the study indicated that influencer credibility has significantly mediated the effect of influencer marketing on attitude toward brand and effect of influencer marketing on purchase intention. Results of the study are consistent with the findings of previous researches (Lou and Yuan, 2019; Rebelo 2017; Ameen et al., 2020). Influencer credibility can enhance the trust of consumer on brand and lead them to the purchase. Further influencer credibility transfers to the brand and consumers perceive brand as credible brand.

Implications

This study sets out to explore the profound impact of influencer marketing on consumer attitudes towards brands and purchase intentions in the Pakistani market, with a keen focus on TikTok as the primary social media platform. The compelling findings unequivocally demonstrate that influencer marketing significantly shapes consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, boasting a remarkable Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.967 that solidifies the reliability of our measurement scales. Our research unequivocally confirms that influencer marketing distinctly influences consumers' attitudes toward brands (H1) and purchase intentions (H2). Influencers play a pivotal role in nurturing positive brand perceptions and driving purchase behaviour through their unwavering credibility and captivating content. These findings underscore the critical significance of carefully selecting credible and authentic influencers who deeply resonate with the target audience. For marketers, this underscores the immense potential of TikTok as a powerful platform for reaching younger demographics and elevating brand engagement. Furthermore, the results accentuate the paramount need for culturally tailored marketing strategies to maximize relevance and impact in the Pakistani market. While our study offers invaluable insights, it is constrained by a relatively small sample size and a focus on university students in Peshawar, potentially impacting the generalizability of our findings. Moreover, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits our understanding of long-term effects. Future research endeavours should encompass more extensive and diverse samples to validate these findings across various demographic groups. Longitudinal studies hold the promise of offering a deeper understanding of the enduring impact of influencer marketing on consumer behavior and brand loyalty. Comparative studies across diverse cultural contexts would undoubtedly enrich our understanding of the effectiveness of influencer marketing on a global scale. In conclusion, this research underscores the pivotal role of influencer marketing in shaping consumer attitudes and purchase intentions within the Pakistani context. By leveraging these findings, brands can refine their marketing strategies, amplify consumer engagement, and achieve more robust business outcomes. This study contributes to the burgeoning body of literature on social media marketing and paves the way for future research on emerging platforms such as TikTok.

Limitation of the study

Though study has significantly contributed in the existing literature and findings are also helpful for online marketers but still some areas need to be improved. First the sample of the study is restricted to the universities, further study can include respondents from multiple professions and geographically areas. Secondly, current study has considered influencer marketing as a single construct, further study can consider different dimensions of influencer marketing such as celebrity as influencer, expert as influencer and activists as influencer on social media.

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