"Investigating the influence of social media influencer credibility on beauty product purchase behaviors: a case study from Vietnam"

AUTHORS	Gia Khuong An (iD) Thi Thuy An Ngo (iD) Thanh Tu Tran (iD) Phuong Thy Nguyen (iD)

NUMBER OF REFERENCES	NUMBER OF FIGURES	NUMBER OF TABLES
74	2	5

BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES

Gia Khuong An, Student, Department
of International Business, FPT
University, Vietnam.

Thi Thuy An Ngo, Master in Economic
Management, Lecturer, Head of
Department of Soft Skills, FPT
University, Vietnam. (Corresponding
author)

Thanh Tu Tran, Student, Department of
International Business, FPT University,
Vietnam.

Phuong Thy Nguyen, Student,
Department of International Business,
FPT University, Vietnam.

Gia Khuong An (Vietnam), Thi Thuy An Ngo (Vietnam), Thanh Tu Tran (Vietnam), Phuong Thy Nguyen (Vietnam)

INVESTIGATING THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER CREDIBILITY ON BEAUTY PRODUCT PURCHASE BEHAVIORS: A CASE STUDY FROM VIETNAM

Abstract

The growing dominance of social media as a marketing platform underscores the importance of understanding how influencer credibility affects consumer behavior. Social media influencers, through effective personal branding and content creation, form strong connections with their followers, significantly impacting their audience's perceptions, attitudes, and purchasing decisions. This study explores the effects of social media influencers' source credibility, comprising trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, on consumers' purchase intentions and behaviors regarding beauty products in Vietnam. A quantitative approach was utilized, with data collected from 269 Vietnamese consumers through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling. The results showed that all three components of source credibility, including trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, significantly and positively influenced consumers' purchase intentions for beauty products. Among these factors, expertise had the strongest effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.289$, $p < 0.001$), followed by trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.216$, $p = 0.001$), and attractiveness had the weakest influence on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.195$, $p < 0.001$). Moreover, purchase intention was found to have a significant positive impact on purchase behavior ($\beta = 0.545$, $p = 0.004$). These findings provide valuable insights for marketing managers and companies seeking to optimize their influencer partnerships by selecting influencers whose credibility aligns with their brand values and leveraging their expertise to build consumer trust, drive engagement, and influence purchase decisions.

Keywords	social media influencer, source credibility, beauty products, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness
JEL Classification	C38, M30, M31

INTRODUCTION

Social media is a type of online communication platform that enables users to establish virtual communities for sharing diverse content such as information, ideas, messages, images and videos (Permadani & Hartono, 2022). It has grown rapidly and extensively in recent years, with billions of users worldwide utilizing it daily for diverse purposes. Social media is increasingly displacing traditional media as a source of information regarding products and their consumption (Loitongbam et al., 2023). As social media platforms become increasingly important in shaping an individual's perception of news, ideas, and culture, researchers have been dedicating substantial attention to exploring the diversity and potential impact of social media.

Social media influencers are people who establish a unique persona on social media platforms, aiming for societal influence and/or monetary benefits (Khamis et al., 2016). According to Dhanesh and Duthler (2019), social media influencers are individuals who, via personal

branding, cultivate and sustain connections with their audiences on social media platforms, they possess the capability to educate, amuse, and sway their followers' perceptions, attitudes, and actions. Social media influencers have amassed a large following and hold considerable impact over their audiences. They actively promote product-related information through leveraging the interactive capabilities of numerous social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok and Weibo (Jin et al., 2019). While celebrity endorsements were the early form of influencer marketing, the digital age has seen the emergence of social media influencers with niche audiences who often provide more value to brands. A recent report indicates that 75% of marketers plan to spend their marketing budgets for social media influencer marketing. Furthermore, 68% of businesses intend to increase their spending on social media influencers, reaching USD 16.4 billion in 2022, highlighting the growth and significance of this marketing channel (Chetioui et al., 2022).

According to Ohanian (1990), credibility, which refers to communicator's trustworthiness and positive personal attributes, influences the persuasiveness of their message. This concept is defined as a three-dimensional construct comprising trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. An endorser who is recognized as a credible source of information can effectively create purchase aspirations. In a study by Bogoevska-Gavrilova and Ciunova-Shuleska (2022), the results showed that trustworthiness and attractiveness positively influenced customers' purchase intentions, while expertise yielded unexpected outcomes. Conversely, research on social media influencers by Olasanmi et al. (2023) revealed that all three factors – trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness – influenced followers' purchasing intentions. In case of beauty products, it was supposed that the surge in advertising through social media influencers has led to a significant increase in women purchasing beauty products on social media platforms. Besides, Rathnayake and Lakshika (2023) suggested that the credibility of social media influencers positively impacted purchase intention. Although existing research has investigated the impact of social media on purchase behavior of consumers, the role of influencer credibility on this relationship is still underexplored (Rathnayake & Lakshika, 2023).

Therefore, it is essential for industry stakeholders to identify the social media influencer characteristics that influence the consumer purchase behaviors. Understanding these characteristics will offer valuable insights into the impact of social media influencer marketing on consumer behavior and the key drivers behind it. Consequently, marketing practitioners can design targeted and effective campaigns that align with consumer needs and preferences, enhancing the overall effectiveness of their marketing strategies.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

The beauty industry has experienced a substantial increase in social media influencer marketing, leveraging the power of online personalities to promote products. This literature review explores existing research on the impact of source credibility, particularly that of beauty influencers, on consumer purchase behavior. The insights from this review serve as a foundation for developing hypotheses and establishing the theoretical framework for this study.

Social media influencers are "individuals who create online content" and have gained a significant following and influence over their audience (Permadani & Hartono, 2022).

Social media influencers include a diverse group of individuals, ranging from bloggers, traditional celebrities to online business owners who share insights on topics related to health and lifestyles (Al-Ansi et al., 2023). According to Zhou et al. (2021), social media influencers differ from regular online users in that they have expertise in a specific field and the ability to influence their audience's decisions. Besides, the remarkable development of the internet and social networks has made social media influencers a modern industry in the digital age, with a notable impact on sectors such as education, the economy, and entertainment (Rathnayake & Lakshika, 2023). Interactions between social media influencers and their audiences can quickly change the behaviors and attitudes of their audiences (Vrontis et al., 2021). Recent stud-

ies have also emphasized the importance of social media influencers in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors across various domains, including fashion (Wu et al., 2023), and beauty-related products (Rathnayake & Lakshika, 2023).

The use of beauty products dates to ancient times, around 6000 years ago (Jiang et al., 2023). In modern life, beauty care is increasingly seen as an essential part of life, especially for women. With rising incomes, people are not only spending more on secondary needs like clothes, shoes, and bags to improve their appearance, but also investing in beauty products to enhance their appearance and maintain skin health. Ningrum and Ruspitasari (2022) define cosmetic beauty products as an extensive variety of items utilized for "the care, cleansing, protection, and enhancement of the skin, hair, teeth, and nails". Among these, products like lipstick, mascara, nail polish, and makeup powder are commonly used in daily routines, collectively referred to as beauty products in this study. According to Kaličanin and Velimirović (2015), Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs), influencers, and bloggers have a substantial impact on buying intentions, particularly for beauty and cosmetic products, often through video content on platforms like YouTube. The persuasive power of beauty vloggers is most potent when their reviews are positive and educational (Garg & Bakshi, 2024).

Purchase intention is customer's inclination to buy a product and their continued buying behavior, with perceived value representing their overall evaluation of the usefulness of a product based on their expectations and perceived costs associated with its acquisition (Zhang et al., 2014). In marketing context, purchase intention refers to a consumer's conscious decision to attempt to buy a product (Zegarra et al., 2020). As illustrated in a study conducted by Rathnayake and Lakshika (2023), both consumer purchase intention and brand attitude are contingent upon the credibility of the communicator, which is also known as source credibility. Ao et al. (2023) found that social media influencers have a positive impact on purchase intentions among social media users. Their study showed that social media influencers' credibility influences consumers' purchase intentions on social media. Several studies have investigated the way the power of influencers affects consumers' purchase intentions and attitudes (AlKoheji et al., 2023).

According to Patmawati and Sitompul (2022), consumer intentions are a measure of how likely people are to engage in a specific behavior, it means that if a consumer has a strong intention to buy a product or service, they are more likely to do so. Purchase behavior has been studied in many fields such as organic food (Ferreira & Pereira, 2023), and smartphones (Rai et al., 2023). Moreover, Lim et al. (2017) identified a significant positive link between purchase intention and online shopping behavior, indicating the need for further exploration in the context of online shopping. In social media marketing for cosmetic products, Sriram et al. (2021) discovered that social media marketing and consumer reviews significantly influence purchase behavior, while promotions and advertisements do not have significant effects.

The source credibility model is a theory that explains how the perceived trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness of a communicator affect the reception and utilization of their message (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Source credibility is essential for social marketing campaigns, as they often communicate complex messages in simple arguments, Rathnayake and Lakshika (2023) discovered the impact of source credibility dimensions in social media marketing on follower loyalty, subsequently affecting purchase intention. These authors also revealed that the establishment of follower loyalty to social media influencers contributes to robust brand association, exerting influence on their purchasing decisions.

Trustworthiness (TRU), as defined by Wiedmann and Von Mettenheim (2020), refers to the believability of a specific individual. This involves whether an influencer evaluates a brand impartially or with bias, considering financial or material incentives. Trustworthiness carries substantial implications; it not only affects a customer's purchase decision, but also increases the credibility of an endorsement (Chao et al., 2005). Several studies concur that consumer trust in brands is demonstrably influenced by endorsements from credible influencers (Lim et al., 2017). This phenomenon can be attributed to the perceived au-

thenticity and relatability that influencers often cultivate with their audience. Empirical research has consistently demonstrated the considerable influence of social media influencers on purchase intention (Patmawati & Miswanto, 2022). In the beauty industry, credibility dimensions have a positive impact on purchase intention, with trustworthiness standing out as the most influential credibility factor (Rathnayake & Lakshika, 2023).

Expertise (EXP) refers to the deep knowledge and skills in a particular field, combined with the authority, ability, and qualifications (Whitehead, 1968). In other words, expertise means that the communicator possesses a profound understanding and competence in a particular subject area, enabling them to deliver valid and precise information (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). The confluence of an influencer's expertise, unique qualities, and communication style differentiates their product presentations from those delivered by non-experts (Fitriani et al., 2023). Consequently, the influencer's proficiency in conveying product information becomes paramount. Social media influencers with strong expertise tend to create professional and informative content, facilitating consumers' learning and enhancing their interaction (Permadani & Hartono, 2022). According to Fitriani et al. (2023), expertise has a substantial positive impact on purchase intention in beauty product brand image.

Influencer Attractiveness (ATR) refers to the perception of an influencer as being physically appealing, also attractiveness is a key determinant for social media influencers because their followers are constantly exposed to it (Koay et al., 2021). The attractiveness of social media influencers is in showcasing themselves through their physical attributes, including their looks, physique, hairstyle, and voice (Palupi et al., 2024). These factors contribute to the overall perception of consumers towards them. Previous studies have explored the influence of social media influencers' attractiveness and credibility on consumers' intent to purchase cosmetic products (Gubalane & Ha, 2023). For instance, a study by Tp and Mohan (2023) and Palupi et al. (2024) found a significant impact of influencers' attractiveness and credibility on customers' purchase intentions for cosmetic products. The credibility of influencers is highlighted

as a key factor in boosting brand awareness and shaping purchase decisions. Therefore, companies, particularly in the cosmetics industry, should carefully consider these elements when formulating influencer marketing strategies.

Purchase Intention (PI) is essential for understanding, interpreting, predicting, and influencing consumer behavior (Hill et al., 1977). Kim and Lee (2023) suggested that for better understanding consumer purchasing behavior for beauty products, we must examine the relationship between PI and PB. Therefore, previous study has suggested purchase intention has a positive influence on consumers' purchasing behavior and showed that there is a significant impact of purchase intention on consumer purchasing behavior (Peña-García et al., 2020).

In conclusion, existing research indicates a positive correlation between influencer credibility and consumer purchase behavior for beauty products. Studies emphasize the significance of influencer trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness in shaping consumer perceptions. However, the specific factors that influence this relationship and the long-term effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies require further investigation. This study aims to bridge this gap by assessing the impact of social media influencers' credibility on consumers' online purchase intentions and behavior, applying the theory of source credibility. It specifically explores how the trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness of social media influencers affect online purchase intentions and behavior, focusing on beauty products across various platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram.

This research framework was built upon on the study by Rathnayake and Lakshika (2023), aiming to evaluate the relationship between social media influencers' source credibility components including trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and their impacts on purchase intention and subsequent purchase behavior within the beauty industry. The research framework and its associated hypotheses (*H1-H4*) are presented in Figure 1.

Based on the understanding gained from the literature review, the research hypotheses were developed as follows:
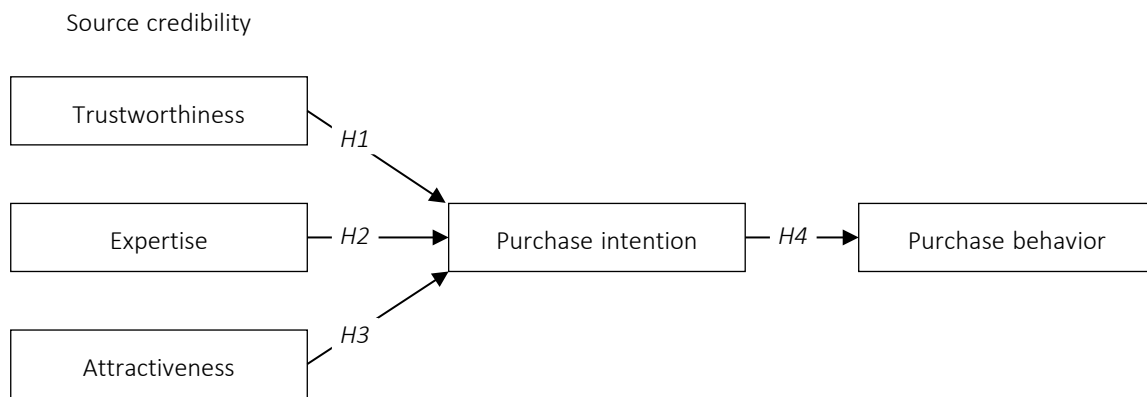
Source credibility

Figure 1. Research framework

H1: *Trustworthiness positively influences the purchase intention.*

H2: *Expertise positively influences the purchase intention.*

H3: *Attractiveness positively influences the purchase intention.*

H4: *Purchase intention positively influences the purchase behavior.*

2. METHODOLOGY

The study targeted individuals actively engaged with popular social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram, who have been exposed to influencer content on these platforms. A quantitative approach was employed to evaluate the research model and its hypotheses. Following structural equation modeling guidelines by Hair (2010), the recommended sample size that is ideally 10-20 times the number of items, was applied. With a proposed model of five variables and 24 items, a sample size of 240-480 was considered appropriate. The purposive sampling method was employed based on two criteria: respondents needed to be active social media users and have practical experience in purchasing and using beauty products. These criteria were used to ensure that selected respondents had the expertise and relevance to contribute meaningfully to the research.

Data collection was conducted utilizing a three-section questionnaire. Section 1 focused on capturing respondents' demographic information such as age, gender, and income. Section 2 provided an overview of beauty products and social media influencers, and explored respondents' behaviors regarding social media, such as their preferred platforms and duration of use. Section 3 included scale items to assess five key constructs: Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness, Purchase Intention, and Purchase Behavior, using 5-point Likert scale. Specifically, Trustworthiness (TRU) comprised five items adapted from Rungruangjit (2022). Expertise (EXP) was evaluated using four items from Ohanian (1990). Attractiveness (ATR) was assessed with a five-item measurement based on Amos et al. (2008), McCracken (1989), and Ohanian (1990). Purchase Intention (PI) was probed with three items from Hwang and Zhang (2018). Purchase Behavior (PB) was assessed using seven items adapted from Peña-García et al. (2020).

To guarantee the research scales' reliability and validity, a preliminary study was undertaken. The preliminary reliability test was carried out on all the variables involving a sample size of n = 50 participants, with Cronbach's alpha values (α) calculated as follows: Trustworthiness (TRU: α = 0.859), Expertise (EXP: α = 0.766), Attractiveness (ATR: α = 0.790), Purchase Intention (PI: α = 0.849), and Purchase Behavior (PB: α = 0.773). The obtained Cronbach's alpha values exceed the recommended value of 0.7 (Taber, 2017), signifying sufficient internal consistency for all the constructs.

In the empirical study, a structured questionnaire was sent via Google Forms to anonymous users of social media platforms using a non-probability

sampling technique. Non-probability sampling is a method of selecting participants that does not rely on randomization, but rather on the availability and accessibility of the target population which make the process more practical within the constraints of time and resources. During August 2023, valid responses of 269 Vietnamese consumers were collected. All of the participants are individual who follow social media influencers, actively engage with prominent social media platforms, including YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram and have a history of exposure to influencer content disseminated on these platforms. Due to their frequent exposure to influencer marketing content on social media platforms, participants in this study represent a population with significant experience in online purchasing. Consequently, their insights regarding the influence of online celebrities hold potential value for understanding consumer behavior in this domain were collected through an online survey. The collected data covering a diverse age range from 17 to over 35 years. The majority (51.30%) fell within the 20-22 age range. In terms of gender, 104 respondents (38.66%) identified as male, while 165 (61.34%) identified as female. Regarding income, a significant proportion (69.14%) earned less than VND 5 million, 26.02% fell within the VND 5-10 million income range, and 4.83% earned over VND 10 million. The survey revealed varied social media usage among respondents, with 23.4% using it less than one hour a day, 50.2% between 1 and 3 hours a day, and 26.4% using it more than 3 hours a day.

To analyze the collected quantitative data, SmartPLS version 3 software was used for executing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which aimed to test the formulated hypotheses and evaluate the research model. The intentional choice of PLS-SEM was due to its suitability for handling complex models, its emphasis on predictive power and relationships between constructs, its flexibility in assuming fewer constraints compared to other structural equation modeling methods, and its iterative approach, that aligns well with the evolving nature of the research (Hair et al., 2021a). To ensure the reliability of the study's items, Cronbach's alpha was employed for assessment, measuring the relatedness of items to each other and to the over-

all construct. A higher Cronbach's alpha value indicates a more reliable measurement instrument. Additionally, the research adopted Confirmatory Composite Analysis (CAA), encompassing measures such as factor loadings, composite reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. This comprehensive approach was undertaken to further validate the robustness and adequacy of the research measures, ensuring a rigorous evaluation of the formulated hypotheses and the overall research model.

3. RESULTS

To evaluate the reliability and appropriateness of the study's constructs and their respective items, the study conducted factor loading, Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability assessments. The results of the reliability and validity analysis for the five constructs (Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness, Purchase Intention, and Purchase Behavior) presented in Table 1 show a positive overall evaluation of the measurement model's quality. The factor loadings for the items within each construct were assessed to determine the strength of their association with their corresponding underlying constructs. The findings revealed varying levels of loading strength across the constructs, consistently falling within an acceptable to good range, with values ranging from 0.614 to 0.899 (Henseler et al., 2009). Additionally, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for these constructs showed values ranging from 0.768 to 0.859, all aligning with the acceptable to good range, signifying a strong internal consistency reliability (Taber, 2017). In addition to this, the Composite Reliability (CR) values, which varied from 0.833 to 0.912, provided further confirmation of the effectiveness of these constructs in accurately measuring the latent variables they represent.

Furthermore, the examination of Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) results has been utilized in this study to examine multicollinearity among the components that make up the latent constructs. Multicollinearity is a phenomenon in which the independent variables in a regression model exhibit intercorrelations, which can potentially create complications in statistical analyses (James et al., 2013). In the results obtained, VIF values have

been observed to fall within a range of 1.324 to 2.873. These values consistently remain well below the conventional threshold of 5, a benchmark recommended by James et al. (2013). This low VIF range suggested that multicollinearity does not pose a significant threat to the integrity of the study statistical analyses.

In the assessment of convergent validity, the study employed the evaluation of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, which is the ratio of the sum of the squared factor loadings to the number of indicators. It indicates how much variance in the indicators is explained by the latent construct, compared to the variance due to measurement error. A higher AVE value means a higher convergent validity, which means that the indicators are more closely related to the construct. A common rule of thumb is that the AVE should be at least 0.5 for satisfactory convergent validity (Hair et al., 2021b). As the AVE values presented in Table 2, most of the constructs AVE value met the recommended threshold above 0.5 which suggested that the items within each construct were reasonably related to one another compared to the measurement error (Hair et al., 2021b). While the AVE for PB was relatively lower at 0.417, it still maintained a CR of 0.833 which aligned with the criteria established by Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Lam (2012). According to these guidelines, when a construct's AVE is below 0.5 but its CR exceeds 0.6, the convergent validity of the construct remains acceptable.

Table 1. Construct reliability and validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	VIF
Trustworthiness (TRU)	I think influencers are sincere people.	0.691	0.859	0.898	1.524
	I think influencers are honest people.	0.841			2.851
	I think influencer is a trustworthy person	0.884			2.873
	I think influencer is a reliable source of information	0.804			2.115
	I think that influencers of beauty products impact my purchase intention toward a brand.	0.768			1.61
Expertise (EXP)	I think influencers have expertise in their field.	0.747	0.768	0.851	1.381
	Influencers have product experience	0.710			1.431
	Influencers have extensive product knowledge.	0.807			1.982
	I see influencer has high professional sales qualifications.	0.802			1.668
Attractiveness (ATR)	I think that attractiveness is an essential characteristic of influencer.	0.754	0.790	0.856	1.521
	I prefer to watch/ follow influencer have physically attractive (sexy, elegant, classy).	0.789			1.833
	I feel that the physically attractive influencer impacts my purchase intention toward a brand.	0.709			1.568
	I prefer to watch/follow how influencer of beauty products is similar, familiar, and likable to me.	0.696			1.691
	I feel that the similar, familiar, and likable of influencer impact my purchase intention toward a brand.	0.732			1.672
Purchase Intention (PI)	Influencers have a good influence on my tendency to purchase beauty products.	0.891	0.854	0.912	2.256
	I'm interested in purchasing products that my favorite influencer recommends.	0.899			2.397
	Next time, I will refer to influencers when buying beauty products.	0.850			1.879
Purchase Behavior (PB)	I have been purchasing online products regularly.	0.655	0.777	0.833	1.849
	I have purchased online products for my daily needs.	0.614			1.679
	Influencers help me buy better products online.	0.741			1.324
	I keep knowledge about new trends brand.	0.615			1.441
	I am aware of how to shop online for beauty brands and products.	0.626			1.406
	I obtain information about emerging trends through online shopping.	0.620			1.417
	I always prefer known brands for any purchase decision.	0.639			1.492

Table 2. Construct convergent validity

Construct	AVE
TRU	0.640
EXP	0.589
ATR	0.543
PI	0.775
PB	0.417

Note: TRU = Trustworthiness, EXP = Expertise, ATR = Attractiveness, PI = Purchase Intention, PB = Purchase Behavior.

Discriminant validity is a critical aspect of evaluating the quality of measurement instruments in PLS-SEM. It confirms that the constructs being studied are distinct and not simply measuring the same underlying concept. To assess the discriminant validity, two commonly used methods, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio and the Fornell-Larcker criterion, were employed in this study.

The HTMT ratio method involves assessing the correlations between constructs in relation to the square root of the AVE for each individual construct. In Table 3, the off-diagonal HTMT values are all below the recommended threshold of 0.9, as suggested by Henseler et al. (2014), thereby affirming a strong level of discriminant validity. Specifically, the HTMT values for pairs of constructs range from 0.483 to 0.891. This indicates that the constructs are statistically distinct from each other which demonstrated a clear separation and reducing the likelihood of multicollinearity. The values, being well within the acceptable range, reinforce the confidence in the discriminant validity of the measurement model used in this analysis.

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio

	ATR	EXP	PB	PI	TRU
ATR					
EXP	0.735				
PB	0.649	0.659			
PI	0.564	0.674	0.596		
TRU	0.617	0.891	0.483	0.604	

Note: TRU = Trustworthiness, EXP = Expertise, ATR = Attractiveness, PI = Purchase Intention, PB = Purchase Behavior.

Besides, the Fornell-Larcker criterion provides another perspective on discriminant validity by examining how the square root of its AVE compares to the correlations between that construct and other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As displayed in Table 4, all constructs meet this criterion, with diagonal values (the square root of AVE) as follows: ATR = 0.737; EXP = 0.768; PB = 0.646; PI = 0.880; TRU = 0.800. These values surpassed the corresponding off-diagonal correlations. In particular, the AVE' square root values for each construct consistently exceeded the corresponding correlations in both the row and column. This pattern confirms that each construct exhibits a stronger internal correlation compared to its correlation with other constructs. The Fornell-Larcker criterion statistics obtained from this study further validate the measurement model's discriminant validity.

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker citerion

	ATR	EXP	PB	PI	TRU
ATR	0.737				
EXP	0.576	0.768			
PB	0.545	0.537	0.646		
PI	0.474	0.562	0.545	0.880	
TRU	0.521	0.745	0.433	0.533	0.800

Note: TRU = Trustworthiness, EXP = Expertise, ATR = Attractiveness, PI = Purchase Intention, PB = Purchase Behavior.

To assess the goodness of fit in the present study, various metrics were employed, including the coefficient of determination (R^2), the predictive relevance measure (Q^2), and effect size (f^2).

R^2 was utilized to assess the explanatory power of the regression power; this statistical measure quantified how much the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables (Ozili, 2022).The analysis results revealed the R^2 value of 0.370 for PI and 0.297 for PB. These results suggest that 37% of the variance in PI can be attributed to the factors TRU, EXP, and ATR, while 29.7% of the variance in PB can be explained by PI. These R^2 values meet the suggested cutoff value of 0.1, a criterion proposed byOzili (2022). This indicates that the model obtained acceptable R^2 statistics for PI and PB are significant.

Furthermore, Q^2 was used to assess the predictive relevance of the partial least square structural equation model. This measure evaluated how effectively the model predicted (Cohen, 2013). The obtained values of Q^2 for PI and PB are 0.273 and 0.101, respectively. Based on the guidelines from

Table 5. Hypothesis testing result

Hypothesis	Paths	β	SD	f²	t-statistics	p	Results
H1	TRU → PI	0.216	0.058	0.032	3.389	0.001	Accepted
H2	EXP → PI	0.289	0.076	0.053	3.797	0.000	Accepted
H3	ATR → PI	0.195	0.041	0.039	13.305	0.000	Accepted
H4	PI → PB	0.545	0.075	0.423	2.877	0.004	Accepted

Note: β is path coefficient, SD is standard deviation, f² is effect sizes.

Cohen (2013), the statistics emphasized the independent variables that have moderate effect on generating Q^2 for PI, signifying a medium level of predictive relevance. On the other hand, the Q^2 value for PB is considered to possess a low level of predictive relevance.

According to Cohen (2013), f² is a statistical measure that indicates the magnitude of a relationship, or the size of an effect observed in research. Table 5 presents a spectrum of f² values, spanning from 0.032 to 0.423, denoting a diverse range of effect sizes. Particularly, the most substantial effect size is observed for the PI toPB path, signifying a significant influence of PI on purchase behavior. In contrast, the remaining three paths exhibit comparatively smaller effect sizes which signified a relatively weaker associations of TRU, EXP, and ATR with PI. The obtained value of f² statistic indicated that in the assessing model, the removal of PI will have significant impact on purchase behavior (Hair et al., 2014).

The results in Table 5 provide insightful observations on the relationships between the study variables which supported all the hypotheses tested at significant level of 5%. Specifically, *H1* was accepted, this indicated a significant positive association between TRU and PI (*H1*, β = 0.216, t = 3.389, p = 0.001). The obtained results suggested a significant and positive relationship and indicated that perceived trustworthiness of social media influencers is an important factor influencing purchase intentions. This implies that if social media users trust the content delivered by social media influencers on beauty products, they are more likely to express intent to buy these products. The obtained statistics also supported *H2*, revealing a significant positive influence of EXP on PI (*H2*: β = 0.289, t = 3.797, p = 0.000). This reveals the substantial role of expertise in shaping customers' purchase intentions. In other words, if consumers believe that the social media influencers they follow have expertise in the beauty products they introduce; these consumers are more inclined toward making a
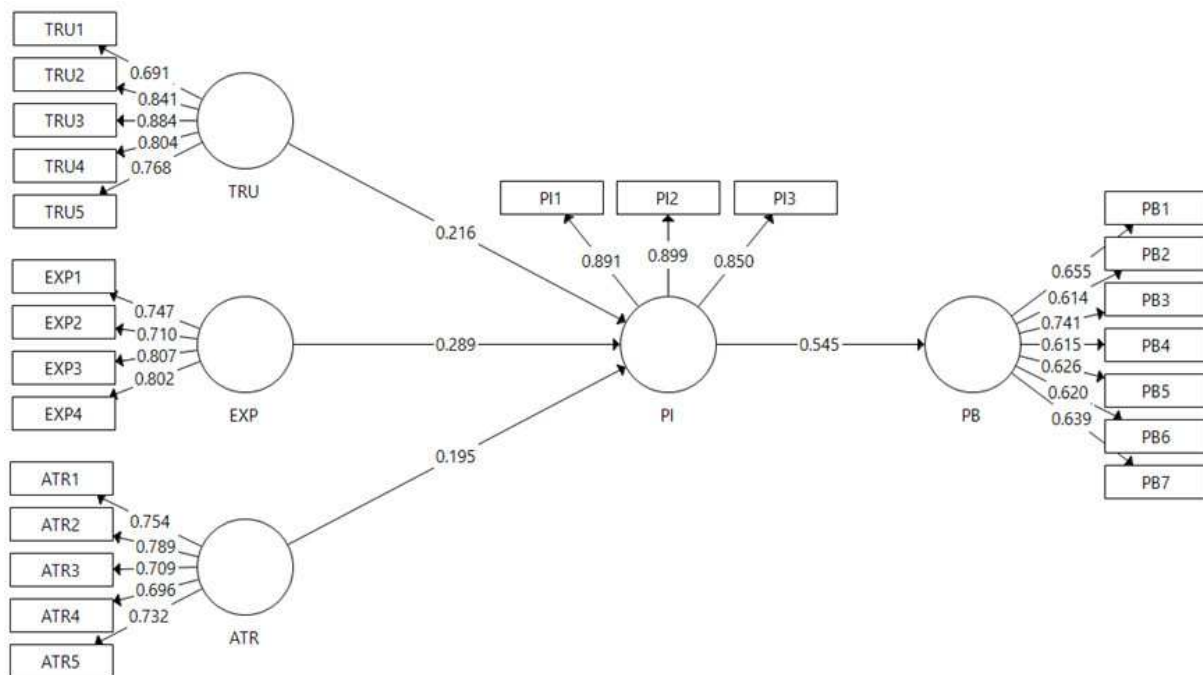

Figure 2. Results of PLS-SEM analysis

purchase. Moreover, a particularly strong correlation was found between ATR and PI (*H3*: β = 0.195, t = 13.305, p = 0.000). This result emphasizes the influential role of attractiveness in driving purchase intentions. These findings align with prior studies conducted by Jian et al. (2022), Koay et al. (2021), and Rungruangjit (2022), suggesting that when social media users find their social media influencers attractive, they are more likely to purchase the products introduced by them. Lastly, *H4* examines the influence of PI on purchase behavior (PB), specifically whether PI has a significant positive impact on PB. The results demonstrated that PI exerts a substantial positive effect on PB (H4: β = 0.545, t = 2.877, p = 0.004), there by confirming *H4*. This indicates that strong purchase intentions significantly increase the likelihood of actual purchase behavior, consistent with previous research by Peña-García et al. (2020). Overall, these findings contribute to existing literature by reaffirming that factors such as trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness of influencers, and purchase intentions are critical in shaping consumer behavior in the beauty product market via social media platforms.

4. DISCUSSION

This study found that the trustworthiness dimension of source credibility had significant positive effects on purchase intention in social media influencer marketing. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have shown the important role of source credibility in shaping consumers' attitudes and behaviors toward products or brands endorsed by social media influencers (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Influencers possessing credibility are viewed as reliable sources of product recommendations and have a strong positive correlation with consumers' intentions to purchase endorsed products in general and beauty products in particular (Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022). Furthermore, influencer credibility has indirect impact on purchase intentions through brand trust and purchase intentions. This demonstrates the fact that consumers tend to place their trust in products endorsed by credible influencers who exhibit trustworthiness, expertise, integrity, and goodwill (Mabkhot et al., 2022). Besides, sponsorship transparency and authenticity in posts can

increase perceptions of trustworthiness, which in turn increases purchase intent especially for beauty products (Balaban et al., 2022). These findings suggest that leveraging social media influencers can prove to be a highly effective approach for enhancing consumers' purchase intentions, especially considering the perceived reliability of these influencers by their audiences. To capitalize on this strategy, marketers should carefully select and collaborate with credible influencers, trusted beauty bloggers and experts in the beauty, who can provide honest and authentic product reviews or endorsements while transparently disclosing their sponsorship relationships.

This study showed that social media influencers' expertise had significant and positive effects on purchase intention of beauty products. This result is in accordance with earlier studies which indicated that expertise could enhance the credibility and persuasiveness of asocial media influencer's message, thus increasing the consumers' confidence and trust in the social media influencer's recommendations. Expertise can also reduce the consumers' perceived risk and uncertainty associated with online product or service purchases (Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim, 2020). In particular, influencer expertise, originality and homophily are observed to positively impact consumer attitudes, consequently shaping purchase intentions including beauty products. These source features increase customers' visual satisfaction and/or trust in advertising, which are both essential factors in online purchasing decisions (Shoenberger & Kim, 2022). Additionally, influencer expertise enhances message crafting directly influencing purchase consideration especially for beauty products, and positively shaping brand attitudes, as consumers view influential experts as sources of higher-quality product information (Chetioui et al., 2020). These findings imply that social media influencers' expertise is essential in purchase intention and that it may depend on various factors as product category, consumer engagement level and the extent of interaction with followers. Therefore, beauty products brands should thoroughly select and partner with social media influencers that are highly specialized in their respective fields and leverage their expertise to create effective and engaging marketing campaigns.

This study revealed that social media influencers' attractiveness had significant and positive effects on purchase intention of beauty products. This finding aligns with the "halo effect," which is the tendency to associate positive attributes with individuals based on their physical appearance. In this context, consumers tend to assume that attractive influencers are also credible, knowledgeable, and successful, and thus more persuasive and influential (Belanche et al., 2021). Consistent with this insight, previous studies have found a moderately favorable association between purchase intention toward beauty products and the aspects of influencer attractiveness, encompassing both physical and social appeal. These dimensions of influencer attractiveness can significantly enhance the influencer's credibility and trustworthiness, consequently elevating the likelihood of consumers purchasing products endorsed by these influencers (Chen et al., 2021). In short, influencer attractiveness is a key factor in consumer behavior which enhances the perceived social association between consumers and influencers, thereby promoting purchase intentions for beauty products (Jansom & Pongsakornrungsilp, 2021). However, this finding contradicts some previous studies that suggested attractiveness only affected image satisfaction, which is the consumer's level of satisfaction with the product's image. Importantly, this research underscores that attractiveness in isolation does not suffice to impact on purchase intention. Instead, it requires the concurrent presence of complementary elements, such as interactivity and self-brand connection, to exert a significant impact on the inclination of consumer to make a purchase (Ji et al., 2023). This divergence in the results indicates the potential dependence of influencer attractiveness effects on contextual factors, the nature of the product category, the specific social media platform utilized, and the unique attributes of consumers (Koay et al., 2021). Moreover, influencer attractiveness may have different degrees of impact contingent on the levels of consumer involvement, trust, or self-esteem (AlFarraj et al., 2021). Therefore, future research should explore these moderating factors and examine how they interact with influencer attractiveness to influence purchase intent, especially for beauty products.

Moreover, the study discovered that among the three dimensions of source credibility, expertise had the strongest effect on purchase intention, followed by trustworthiness and attractiveness. This observation implies that consumers value the knowledge and competence of social media influencers more than their honesty and physical appeal when it comes to making purchase decisions for beauty products. This may be because consumers perceive social media influencers as experts who can provide useful and reliable information about beauty products, such as product features, benefits, quality, performance, usage, and reviews (Hassan et al., 2021). Furthermore, consumers are more likely to place trust in social media influencers who demonstrate their expertise by showing their credentials, qualifications, experience, or achievements in the beauty domain (Castillo et al., 2022). Additionally, consumers may be influenced by the social proof effect, which means that they tend to follow the opinions or actions of others who are perceived as experts or authorities within a given field (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004).

Furthermore, this study indicates the significantly positive impact of purchase intention on the purchase behavior of beauty products. In other words, purchase intention serves as a mediating factor in the relationship between source credibility and purchase behavior. This result is consistent with prior study where customers' perceptions of the ease or difficulty associated with acquiring a product or service can influence both their purchase intention and subsequent behavior. Customers who feel confident and capable of buying a product or service are more inclined to follow through with the purchase, in contrast to those who experience uncertainty or constraints (Xie et al., 2022). Furthermore, a clear intention to purchase a beauty product often signifies a higher probability of the actual purchase, as individuals tend to buy when they believe the product aligns with their needs, enhances their appearance, or provides other tangible benefits (Mamun et al., 2020). These findings suggest that purchase intention is an accurate indicator of purchase behavior. This understanding can empower marketers to design effective strategies that stimulate consumer demand and foster brand loyalty for product brands in general and beauty product brands in particular.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

The objective of this study was to investigate the effects of source credibility of social media influencers on consumers' purchase intention and purchase behavior of beauty products on social media platforms. The analysis results supported all research hypotheses, indicating that trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness of social media influencers have significant positive effects on consumers' purchase intention. Notably, expertise exerted the most significant influence on purchase intention, while attractiveness had the least impact. Additionally, the study revealed a significant positive correlation between purchase intention and actual purchase behavior.

The findings of this study offer actionable insights for social media influencers and marketers. For social media influencers, they should prioritize transparency, consistency, and authenticity in their product reviews. By providing genuine information and showcasing their expertise, they can build strong, trust-based relationships with their audience. Additionally, using engaging visuals and creating content that evokes positive emotions, such as admiration or aspiration, can enhance their appeal and credibility, motivating followers to embrace and act on their recommendations. For marketers, they should carefully choose influencers who align with their brand's image and values. It is essential for marketers to ensure that influencers openly disclose sponsored content, as this transparency can strengthen consumer trust. Moreover, marketers should support influencers in creating informative and engaging content that highlights their expertise, thereby enhancing consumer confidence in their recommendations.

This study has several limitations. First, the use of a convenience sample of social media followers may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research should use more diverse and representative samples to enhance the applicability of the results. Second, the reliance on self-reported measures may introduce bias or inaccuracies. Future studies could incorporate additional data collection methods, such as behavioral data or objective measures, to validate findings and reduce potential bias. Moreover, this study did not account for other factors that might influence consumer purchase intentions and behaviors, such as product quality, price, or individual characteristics. Future research should explore these variables to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting consumer behavior in the context of social media influencer marketing.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Thi Thuy An Ngo, Gia Khuong An, Thanh Tu Tran, Phuong Thy Nguyen.
Data curation: Thi Thuy An Ngo, Thanh Tu Tran.
Formal analysis: Gia Khuong An, Thanh Tu Tran, Phuong Thy Nguyen.
Investigation: Gia Khuong An, Thanh Tu Tran, Phuong Thy Nguyen.
Methodology: Thi Thuy An Ngo, Gia Khuong An, Thanh Tu Tran, Phuong Thy Nguyen.
Project administration: Thi Thuy An Ngo.
Resources: Thi Thuy An Ngo, Gia Khuong An, Thanh Tu Tran, Phuong Thy Nguyen.
Software: Thanh Tu Tran.
Supervision: Thi Thuy An Ngo.
Validation: Thi Thuy An Ngo.
Visualization:Gia Khuong An; Thanh Tu Tran.
Writing – original draft: Gia Khuong An, Thanh Tu Tran, Phuong Thy Nguyen.
Writing – review & editing: Thi Thuy An Ngo.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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