







# “Influencer marketing’s impact on credibility and purchase intention: A study on University of Bisha students in Saudi Arabia”

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<b>ARTICLE INFO</b>	Mudathir Saad, Abdelrehim Awad, Adel Fathy Aziz and Talaat Rashad Shma (2025). Influencer marketing’s impact on credibility and purchase intention: A study on University of Bisha students in Saudi Arabia. <i>Innovative Marketing</i> , 21(1), 326-337. doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.21511/im.21(1).2025.26">10.21511/im.21(1).2025.26</a>
<b>DOI</b>	<a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/im.21(1).2025.26">http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/im.21(1).2025.26</a>
<b>RELEASED ON</b>	Thursday, 27 March 2025
<b>RECEIVED ON</b>	Tuesday, 24 December 2024
<b>ACCEPTED ON</b>	Saturday, 08 February 2025
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<b>JOURNAL</b>	"Innovative Marketing "
<b>ISSN PRINT</b>	1814-2427
<b>ISSN ONLINE</b>	1816-6326
<b>PUBLISHER</b>	LLC “Consulting Publishing Company “Business Perspectives”
<b>FOUNDER</b>	LLC “Consulting Publishing Company “Business Perspectives”



NUMBER OF REFERENCES

41



NUMBER OF FIGURES

1



NUMBER OF TABLES

5

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## BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES



LLC "CPC "Business Perspectives"  
Hryhorii Skovoroda lane, 10,  
Sumy, 40022, Ukraine  
[www.businessperspectives.org](http://www.businessperspectives.org)

**Received on:** 24<sup>th</sup> of December, 2024  
**Accepted on:** 8<sup>th</sup> of February, 2025  
**Published on:** 27<sup>th</sup> of March, 2025

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2025

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**Conflict of interest statement:**  
Author(s) reported no conflict of interest

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# INFLUENCER MARKETING'S IMPACT ON CREDIBILITY AND PURCHASE INTENTION: A STUDY ON UNIVERSITY OF BISHA STUDENTS IN SAUDI ARABIA

## Abstract

This study holds significance due to the increasing impact of influencer marketing on consumer behavior, particularly among the youth demographic in Saudi Arabia. This study aims to examine how influencer marketing influences perceived credibility and purchase intention, emphasizing the roles of transparency and cultural factors in shaping consumer behavior.

A descriptive-analytical method was utilized, the research was conducted at University of Bisha, incorporating a structured survey to gather data from 384 university students, both male and female. The sample was meticulously chosen to embody the characteristics of young consumers, a group recognized for its significant involvement with social media channels and vulnerability to influencer marketing tactics. The findings indicate that the traits of influencers play a crucial role in boosting purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.42, p < 0.001$ ). Furthermore, the influence of brand credibility on purchase intention is significant ( $\beta = 0.51, p < 0.001$ ), and it serves as a partial mediator in the connection between influencer characteristics and purchase intention (indirect effect = 0.27,  $p < 0.001$ ). The results underscore Snapchat's prominence as the leading platform among participants, illustrating its significance for focused influencer marketing initiatives. Marketers are advised to prioritize transparent and authentic collaborations with influencers to strengthen brand credibility and foster consumer trust. Emphasizing partnerships with influencers whose values align with students' interests on Snapchat will enhance engagement and drive purchasing behavior. This information provides actionable direction for marketers aiming to enhance their influencer marketing approaches, cultivating enduring consumer confidence and sustainable brand development among younger demographics.

**Keywords** influencer marketing, brand credibility, purchase intention, social media engagement, consumer behavior, transparency, youth marketing, online advertising

**JEL Classification** M31, M37, D12

## INTRODUCTION

Influencer marketing has become a cornerstone of contemporary marketing strategies, redefining how brands engage with their audiences in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. With global spending on influencer campaigns forecasted to exceed USD 21 billion by 2025 (Statista, 2025), the growing reliance on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat has transformed traditional advertising approaches. These platforms provide brands with unparalleled access to younger demographics who are not only highly active online but also heavily influenced by the opinions and recommendations of social media personalities. The research indicates that nearly half of consumers – 49% – trust influencer endorsements when making purchasing decisions, highlighting the increasing weight of influencers in shaping consumer behavior (Loeb, 2022).

Despite its widespread adoption, influencer marketing presents complexities that challenge its consistent effectiveness. Factors such as the perceived credibility of influencers, the transparency of their endorsements, and the socio-cultural environment in which campaigns are executed significantly affect consumer responses. In regions like Saudi Arabia, cultural norms and social values exert a profound influence on consumer attitudes, making the alignment of influencer strategies with these contextual factors crucial. This cultural sensitivity becomes even more critical when targeting younger audiences who are not only highly engaged with digital media but are also discerning in their consumption of content and brand messaging.

The rapid integration of social media platforms into daily life has further amplified the impact of influencer marketing. Platforms like Snapchat, widely popular among younger users, have become essential tools for brands seeking to leverage the reach and persuasive power of influencers. However, the effectiveness of these campaigns depends on striking a balance between authenticity, transparency, and cultural relevance. As brands increasingly adopt influencer marketing, the need to navigate these dynamics and adapt strategies to local contexts has become imperative, particularly in culturally distinct regions such as the Middle East.

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## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Influencer marketing has emerged as a fundamental element of digital marketing approaches, particularly within younger audiences. It utilizes social media figures – commonly referred to as influencers – to endorse products, services, or brands. Influencer marketing extends the foundational concepts of word-of-mouth communication, enhancing their impact through the expansive reach and accessibility provided by digital platforms. Influencers foster relationships grounded in trust with their followers, which profoundly influences consumer behavior, purchasing choices, and brand allegiance. The effectiveness of influencer marketing stems from its capacity to connect with consumers on a personal level, fostering a sense of credibility for both the influencer and the brand being promoted. This study delves into significant themes surrounding influencer marketing, emphasizing the credibility of influencers, various categories of influencers, and their effects on purchase intentions, particularly in culturally distinct markets such as Saudi Arabia. Influencer marketing represents a rapidly evolving domain in the realm of digital marketing, leveraging the reach of social media personalities to promote brands and products. This approach draws from the traditional idea of word-of-mouth, yet it is devoid of a robust theoretical basis in scholarly works (Bakker, 2018). The swift expansion of this domain can be linked to the capacity of influencers to connect with and captivate audiences, especially among the younger

demographics (Kádeková & Holienčinová, 2018). This approach has opened up new virtual realms, significantly influencing the behaviors of consumers from Generations Y and Z (Kádeková & Holienčinová, 2018). Moreover, the targeting of vulnerable populations, such as children, by influencers has sparked ethical debates and prompted demands for more stringent regulations (Veirman et al., 2019). With the growing effectiveness of influencer marketing, there has been a notable increase in scholarly attention, focused on enhancing comprehension of its underlying mechanisms and effects (Hudders & Lou, 2022).

A pressing demand for additional investigation highlights the importance of understanding the complexities of influencer marketing in digital environments (Taylor, 2020). As this marketing approach becomes embedded in companies' strategic frameworks – particularly in consumer-oriented industries – there is a growing need for understanding how to effectively navigate and thrive in the influencer marketing landscape, especially on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok (Haenlein et al., 2020). The strategic diffusion theory indicates that by effectively engaging influencers in social networks, there is a significant opportunity to enhance sales and profits (Galeotti & Goyal, 2009), highlighting the considerable impact of influencer marketing from a strategic perspective. Influencer marketing has transformed swiftly from a specialized approach to a core component of digital marketing. Initially, brands

partnered with bloggers and specialized content creators to engage communities. The emergence of social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube has significantly transformed the influencer marketing landscape, enabling influencers to cultivate larger and more engaged audiences (Haenlein et al., 2020). These platforms provide dynamic and immersive experiences that significantly captivate younger audiences. Current patterns indicate that consumers, especially among younger demographics, favor genuine engagements and clear promotional messages rather than conventional advertising methods (Lou, 2022). The realm of influencer marketing encompasses a wide variety of influencers, ranging from established celebrities to the rising trend of virtual influencers, each distinctly influencing consumer behavior and marketing approaches. A significant difference is present between human and virtual influencers, which carries consequences for aspects such as customization, flexibility, ownership, and automation (Mouritzen et al., 2023). The relationship between influencer credibility and travel intentions, shaped by follower size, highlights the differing impacts of mega, macro, and micro-influencers in the tourism industry (Hernández-Méndez & Baute-Díaz, 2023). Virtual influencers, characterized by their computer-generated essence, are gaining traction among social media users, influenced by elements like parasocial interaction and perceived source credibility (Jhawar et al., 2023). In contrast, conventional influencers tend to be perceived as more reliable, able to cultivate enhanced brand perceptions and feelings of envy, while digital influencers offer unique avenues for engagement (Jin et al., 2019).

The adaptability of influencer marketing has allowed it to be utilized in a range of sectors, including tourism, retail, and financial services. For instance, both macro and micro-influencers significantly contribute to the promotion of tourist destinations, thereby increasing travel intentions among their followers (Hernández-Méndez & Baute-Díaz, 2023). In a similar vein, financial institutions have begun to utilize influencer marketing as a strategy to connect with younger audiences and familiarize them with financial products, thereby broadening the application of influencer marketing beyond the conventional consumer goods sectors (Walzhofer et al., 2022). The grow-

ing dependence on influencer marketing stems from its capacity to cultivate direct connections with audiences, enhancing brand visibility and shaping consumer behavior. Consumers exhibit varied responses to virtual influencers serving as advertising endorsers, with their effectiveness differing across product categories and influenced by the perceived alignment between the influencer and the product (Franke et al., 2023). The emergence of virtual influencers has ignited conversations surrounding ethical implications and the wider effects of these entities on social media marketing (Conti et al., 2022; Robinson, 2020; Mrad et al., 2022).

In the contemporary landscape, influencer marketing has emerged as a significant mechanism for boosting brand visibility, interaction, and revenue. Strategies have developed to utilize social media platforms and the trustworthiness of influencers in a more effective manner. The capacity of influencer marketing to enhance brand visibility and drive sales for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) underscores its reach and efficacy for businesses across various scales (Agustian et al., 2023). The careful revelation of sponsored content, especially when merging brand influence disclosure with the type of compensation, can boost influencer credibility, foster parasocial interactions, and ultimately increase purchase intentions. This indicates that transparency plays a crucial role in enhancing both credibility and engagement (Xie & Feng, 2023). The traits of influencers, including their expertise, originality, and similarity to the audience, have a favorable impact on consumer attitudes and intentions to purchase. This highlights the significance of choosing influencers whose characteristics resonate with the brand's identity and its target demographic (Li & Peng, 2021). In a similar vein, the appeal and charm of influencers act as guiding signals, shaping how brand authenticity is perceived and affecting consumer involvement. This underscores the importance of ensuring that influencer traits are in harmony with the brand for successful interaction (Hugh Wilkie et al., 2022). Nonetheless, influencer marketing encounters obstacles, especially in terms of transparency. The disclosure of sponsored content plays a vital role in upholding the credibility of influencers. The research indicates that although revealing sponsorships may initially lead to con-

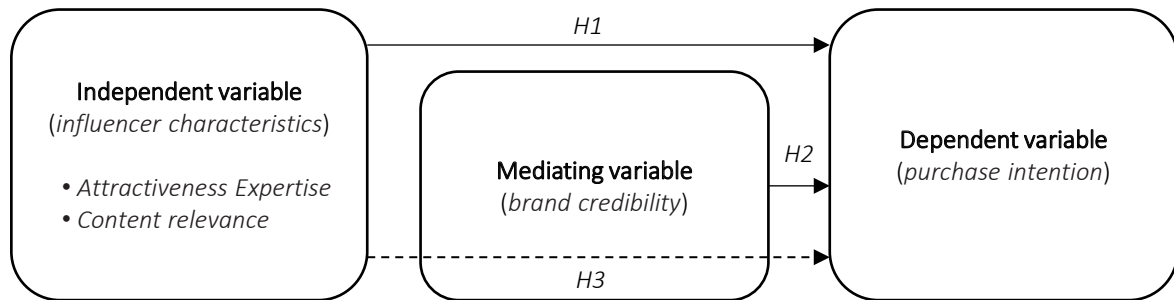
sumer skepticism, it can ultimately enhance trust when executed transparently (Xie & Feng, 2023). Conversely, the emergence of virtual influencers – digital creations – raises ethical dilemmas and questions about authenticity, even as these personas provide fresh avenues for brand interaction (Mrad et al., 2022).

The spectrum of influencers is broad, encompassing both high-profile celebrities with extensive followings and specialized micro-influencers who, despite their smaller audience, foster deeper engagement. Established public figures have a wide audience but often find it challenging to engage with specific communities because of their general popularity (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2017). Conversely, micro-influencers are viewed as more relatable and genuine, leading to deeper connections with their audience (Li & Peng, 2021). Virtual influencers have surfaced as a distinct category, captivating audiences who are well-versed in technology. These digital personas, despite their absence of genuine human qualities, demonstrate remarkable consistency and scalability. Nevertheless, research indicates that human influencers are more effective at fostering emotional connections and brand loyalty, as their followers view them as more credible (Sands et al., 2022). Finding the right equilibrium between human and virtual influencers is essential for enhancing marketing strategies, given that each category presents distinct benefits. The incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) into marketing strategies presents considerable opportunities for improving customer interaction, fostering innovation, and securing competitive edges. The effectiveness of integrating AI hinges not solely on the technological prowess of the AI tools but also on the organizational culture that fosters their deployment (Awad, 2024). The health and beauty sector exemplifies the significance of choosing the appropriate type of influencer. Experts in specific fields, like fitness trainers or beauty influencers, play a crucial role in shaping consumer purchase intentions in this sector (Nagori, 2020). In the tourism sector, it has been observed that influencers with medium to large followings, particularly macro-influencers, play a significant role in influencing travel behaviors, especially among millennial audiences (Han & Chen, 2022). The trustworthiness of influencers significantly impacts the success of

influencer marketing initiatives. The credibility of influencers encompasses various dimensions, such as trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and perceived similarity (Lou & Yuan, 2019). The interplay of these factors fosters a sense of trust among followers towards both the influencer and the brand being promoted, subsequently shaping consumer behavior. Parasocial relationships (PSRs) – the one-sided emotional bonds that followers form with influencers – serve to boost engagement and strengthen trust (Yilmazdogan et al., 2021). The studies show that when influencers engage in self-disclosure by sharing personal experiences or behind-the-scenes content, it enhances their perceived authenticity and credibility (Leite & Baptista, 2021). In a similar vein, two-sided messaging, in which influencers recognize both the advantages and disadvantages of a product, enhances their credibility by promoting transparency and trust (Lee & Johnson, 2021). The connection between the influencer's content and the followers' interests significantly influences engagement (Lou & Kim, 2019).

Clarity in influencer marketing is crucial for upholding trust, particularly regarding paid promotions. Some studies indicate that revealing sponsorships may diminish credibility, whereas others demonstrate that clear disclosures can foster trust, especially when followers align with the influencer's values (Naderer et al., 2021). For virtual influencers, it is essential to uphold a sense of realism and consistent behavior with the promoted product to ensure the success of the campaign (Miao et al., 2021).

The main objective of influencer marketing is to stimulate the desire to make a purchase. The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) posits that consumers engage with influencer messages via two distinct pathways: the central route, which emphasizes the quality of the content, and the peripheral route, where factors like the influencer's attractiveness and credibility come into play (Petty et al., 1983). This dual-process model elucidates the reasons behind the significant influence that credible influencers with congruent brand identities exert on consumer purchase decisions (Wu & Huang, 2023). The clarity of influencer marketing campaigns significantly impacts consumer purchasing decisions. For instance, clear sponsorship



**Figure 1.** Research model

disclosures enhance both trust and engagement, particularly among followers who prioritize authenticity (Xie & Feng, 2023). Conversely, withholding information may foster doubt and diminish the impact of marketing strategies. The studies show that health and wellness influencers significantly affect purchase intentions for organic food products when their recommendations align with followers' personal values and aesthetics (Chetioui et al., 2022).

Live-streaming e-commerce offers another avenue where influencer marketing drives purchase intentions. Trust in the influencer and the promoted product is essential in this context, as it directly influences consumers' willingness to make purchases during live sessions (Wu & Huang, 2023). This underscores the importance of building long-term trust between influencers and followers to sustain purchase behavior. Despite the growing body of literature on influencer marketing, several gaps remain unaddressed. First, more longitudinal studies are needed to understand the long-term effects of influencer marketing on brand loyalty and customer retention (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019). While existing research emphasizes immediate purchase intentions, the transition from short-term behaviors to long-term loyalty is not well-documented. Additionally, most studies focus on Western markets, leaving a gap in understanding influencer marketing's effectiveness in non-Western contexts such as Saudi Arabia (Alshehri, 2022). Another area for future research involves the ethical implications of virtual influencers and the sustainability of influencer marketing strategies. As virtual influencers become more prominent, it is essential to explore how they affect consumer perceptions and whether their use raises ethical concerns (Mrad et al., 2022). Furthermore, research should investigate sustainable influencer market-

ing practices that prioritize long-term relationships over short-term metrics, focusing on trust, transparency, and authenticity.

This study aims to examine how influencer marketing influences perceived credibility and purchase intention, emphasizing the roles of transparency and cultural factors in shaping consumer behavior.

Using an analysis of existing literature and pertinent references, a research model was developed to visually represent the correlation between the research variables, as shown in Figure 1.

Considering the research model and its variables, the following hypotheses can be formulated:

- H1: Influencer characteristics (attractiveness, expertise, and content relevance) have a positive effect on students' purchase intention.*
- H2: Brand credibility has a positive effect on students' purchase intention.*
- H3: Influencer characteristics indirectly affect purchase intention among students through brand credibility as a mediating variable.*

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive-analytical approach to explore how influencer marketing affects brand credibility and purchase intention among students at Bisha University. The primary data were collected using a structured survey, where participants responded to items using a five-point Likert scale to indicate their agreement or disagreement with various statements.

The study sample comprised 384 male and female students from Bisha University in Saudi Arabia. This sample was intentionally selected to represent the youth demographic, which is highly active on social media platforms and significantly engaged with influencer marketing campaigns. Students were chosen from both theoretical and practical faculties to ensure a diverse representation of perspectives and behaviors. The rationale for selecting university students lies in their relevance to the research focus, as they are part of the most active segment in social media usage and are heavily influenced by digital marketing strategies. Their engagement with platforms like Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok makes them a critical demographic for studying the impacts of influencer marketing.

The main variables are structured as follows:

Independent variable (X): influencer characteristics, including attractiveness, expertise, and content relevance.

Mediating variable (M): brand credibility, capturing the trust and authenticity associated with a brand due to influencer endorsement.

Dependent variable (Y): purchase intention, reflecting the likelihood of students purchasing products recommended by influencers.

The relationships between these variables are modeled using the following regression equations:

$$M = \alpha + \beta_1 X + \varepsilon. \quad (1)$$

This equation models the impact of influencer characteristics (X) on brand credibility (M):

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_2 M + \varepsilon. \quad (2)$$

This equation tests how brand credibility (M) affects purchase intention (Y):

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X + \beta_3 M + \varepsilon. \quad (3)$$

This equation captures the indirect effect of influencer characteristics (X) on purchase intention (Y) through brand credibility (M).

Survey items align with these variables. For example, influencer characteristics are measured by statements such as “I follow influencers because of their engaging personality” and “Influencers I follow demonstrate good knowledge of the products they promote.” Brand credibility is assessed using items like “An influencer’s promotion enhances my trust in the brand” and “A brand appears more credible when influencers use its products regularly.” Purchase intention is measured by items such as “I am likely to try a product recommended by an influencer” and “I feel satisfied with products purchased based on influencer recommendations.”

The survey was distributed online and in person, ensuring accessibility for students across various faculties at University of Bisha in Saudi Arabia. Participation was voluntary, and responses were anonymized to maintain confidentiality. The collected data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize participant demographics and inferential statistics, such as regression analysis, to test the hypotheses. Mediation analysis will assess the indirect effect of influencer characteristics on purchase intention via brand credibility.

The study sample consisted of 384 male and female students from Bisha University, selected to represent young consumers in Saudi Arabia, where social media and influencer marketing are prominent. The students were from both theoretical and practical faculties to capture diverse perspectives. This group was chosen because young university students are highly engaged on social media, making them a relevant demographic for analyzing the impact of influencer marketing. This approach ensures a thorough examination of the relationships between variables, offering insights into how influencer marketing can enhance brand credibility and influence purchase behavior among youth.

### 3. RESULTS

This section presents the findings from the analysis of the collected data, including reliability tests, regression analysis, mediation analysis, and hypothesis testing. The results align with the proposed hypotheses and focus on the relationship between influencer characteristics, brand credibility, and purchase intention. The data also re-

**Table 1.** Cronbach’s Alpha for constructs

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach’s Alpha	Reliability interpretation
Influencer characteristics	7	0.83	Good
Brand credibility	7	0.88	Excellent
Purchase intention	7	0.81	Good

flect Snapchat as the most used platform among students, shaping the analysis accordingly.

Cronbach’s Alpha reliability test: the internal consistency of the survey constructs was assessed using Cronbach’s Alpha. A value greater than 0.70 indicates acceptable reliability. The results are summarized in Table 1.

As shown in Table 1, the influencer characteristics construct achieved a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.83, indicating good internal consistency. This confirms that the survey items related to attractiveness, expertise, and content relevance reliably capture students’ perceptions of influencer attributes. Brand credibility scored 0.88, showing excellent reliability, meaning the items measuring trust and authenticity effectively reflect students’ perceptions of credible influencers. The purchase intention construct scored 0.81, indicating good reliability, ensuring that the items used to measure students’ intention to purchase

are consistent and dependable. These high reliability scores suggest that the survey instrument is robust and appropriate for further analysis.

Descriptive statistics: a total of 384 valid responses were analyzed. As expected, Snapchat emerged as the most frequently used platform among students for following influencers. The results are summarized in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2, gender distribution is nearly balanced between male (49.5%) and female (50.5%) students, ensuring that the results reflect the perspectives of both genders equally. Most respondents (57.3%) are from theoretical colleges, suggesting that marketing campaigns may need to be tailored differently for theoretical and practical students. Snapchat emerged as the most frequently used platform, with 45.6% of respondents using it to follow influencers. This underscores the importance of focusing marketing efforts on Snapchat, given its dominance among students.

**Table 2.** Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	190	49.5%
Female	194	50.5%
<b>College type</b>		
Theoretical	220	57.3%
Practical	164	42.7%
<b>Social media usage (daily)</b>		
Less than 1 hour	50	13.0%
1-3 hours	180	46.9%
More than 3 hours	154	40.1%
<b>Primary platform</b>		
Snapchat	175	45.6%
Instagram	120	31.2%
TikTok	60	15.6%
Other	29	7.6%

**Table 3.** Regression results

Predictor	Dependent variable	Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	R <sup>2</sup>
Influencer characteristics	Purchase intention	0.42	7.54	<0.001	0.48
Brand credibility	Purchase intention	0.51	8.76	<0.001	0.55

Regression analysis tests the direct effects of influencer characteristics and brand credibility on purchase intention, as proposed in *H1* and *H2*. The results are summarized in Table 3.

As shown in Table 3, *H1*: The positive relationship between influencer characteristics and purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.42, p < 0.001$ ) indicates that influencers with high attractiveness, expertise, and relevant content significantly enhance students' likelihood of making purchases.

*H2*: Brand credibility ( $\beta = 0.51, p < 0.001$ ) has an even stronger effect on purchase intention, emphasizing the importance of credibility as a driver of consumer behavior.  $R^2$  values indicate that influencer characteristics explain 48% of the variance in purchase intention, while brand credibility explains 55%. These results suggest that both variables are significant predictors of purchase behavior, with brand credibility having a stronger influence.

Mediation analysis was performed to evaluate *H3*, which posits that brand credibility mediates the relationship between influencer characteristics and purchase intention. The Sobel test was used to assess the significance of the mediation path (see Table 4).

According to Table 4, the direct effect of influencer characteristics on purchase intention remains significant ( $\beta = 0.42, p < 0.001$ ), meaning influencers directly encourage students to make purchases. The indirect effect through brand credibility ( $\beta = 0.27, p < 0.001$ ) demonstrates that brand credibility plays a crucial mediating role, amplifying the impact of influencer characteristics. The total ef-

fect ( $\beta = 0.69$ ) reflects the combined influence of direct and indirect paths, indicating that both influencer attributes and credibility are essential for driving purchase behavior.

These findings confirm that brand credibility plays a partial mediating role, enhancing the impact of influencer characteristics on purchase intention.

Accordingly, hypothesis testing summary can be addressed as follows in Table 5.

As shown in Table 5, all hypotheses are supported, demonstrating that influencer characteristics are a key driver of purchase intention; brand credibility strengthens students' likelihood of purchasing products endorsed by influencers, and the mediating role of brand credibility highlights that trust and authenticity are critical for effective influencer marketing.

The results indicate that Snapchat is a vital platform for engaging with students, making it a prime channel for influencer marketing campaigns. Companies should prioritize influencers who align with students' preferences on Snapchat, leveraging their attractiveness, expertise, and content relevance to build trust and drive purchases.

The partial mediation effect of brand credibility emphasizes that while influencer characteristics are essential, the credibility they convey plays a crucial role in ensuring sustained consumer engagement. Marketers should aim to foster long-term collaborations with influencers who consistently align with their brand values to maximize purchase intentions.

**Table 4.** Mediation analysis results

Path	Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Standard error	z-value	p-value
Direct effect ( $X \rightarrow Y$ )	0.42	0.04	10.5	< 0.001
Indirect effect ( $X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$ )	0.27	0.03	9.00	< 0.001
Total effect ( $X \rightarrow Y$ )	0.69	0.05	13.8	< 0.001

**Table 5.** Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
<i>H1</i> : Influencer characteristics positively affect purchase intention	Supported ( $\beta = 0.42, p < 0.001$ )	Supported
<i>H2</i> : Brand credibility positively affects purchase intention	Supported ( $\beta = 0.51, p < 0.001$ )	Supported
<i>H3</i> : Influencer characteristics indirectly affect purchase intention through brand credibility	Supported (indirect effect = 0.27, $p < 0.001$ )	Supported

This study confirms the positive effects of influencer characteristics and brand credibility on purchase intention among students, with Snapchat emerging as the most influential platform. The findings emphasize the importance of credibility as a mediating factor and offer practical insights for marketers seeking to optimize their campaigns on Snapchat to engage youth effectively.

## 4. DISCUSSION

The results of this study confirm the positive impact of influencer characteristics (attractiveness, expertise, and content relevance) and brand credibility on students' purchase intention at Bisha University. The findings also highlight the partial mediation role of brand credibility, reinforcing its importance in influencer marketing campaigns. These results align with earlier studies and offer new insights specific to the Saudi cultural and technological context. The regression analysis revealed that influencer characteristics significantly influence purchase intention. This outcome supports the hypothesis that influencers with relevant content and expertise can positively shape students' purchasing behavior. Furthermore, the stronger influence of brand credibility on purchase intention emphasizes the importance of trust and authenticity. When students perceive the brand as credible, they are more likely to act on influencer recommendations, indicating that brand credibility enhances consumer confidence in product quality. Snapchat emerged as the most frequently used platform, reflecting the preference of students for interactive, visually engaging content. This aligns with previous research suggesting that younger generations favor platforms that facilitate quick and immersive interactions with influencers. The reliance on Snapchat as a primary platform for influencer marketing indicates that marketers should focus their campaigns on channels that align with the consumption patterns of youth.

The findings of this study align with previous research, emphasizing the pivotal role of influencer marketing in shaping consumer behavior. Influencer credibility emerged as a key factor influencing purchase intention, consistent with prior studies such as Kádeková and Holienčinová (2018)

and Hudders and Lou (2022), which highlighted that trustworthiness and expertise significantly enhance consumer engagement with influencers. This study adds to the literature by demonstrating how these factors operate within the specific cultural context of Saudi Arabia.

Transparency in influencer marketing was another significant factor affecting purchase intentions. These findings are in line with Xie and Feng (2023) who showed that sponsorship disclosure positively affects consumer trust and parasocial interactions. The results of this study extend those findings by showing that transparency interacts with cultural factors to shape consumer attitudes and behaviors. This highlights the nuanced ways in which transparency can build trust in culturally specific markets.

Cultural factors were found to mediate the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention. This finding supports Hernández-Méndez and Baute-Díaz (2023) who emphasized the importance of cultural alignment in influencer marketing strategies. However, this study contributes new insights by focusing on a younger demographic in Saudi Arabia, where social norms and values heavily influence consumer behavior. It underscores the necessity of adapting influencer marketing strategies to align with local cultural values for maximum effectiveness.

Moreover, this study's results suggest differences in consumer responses based on demographic factors such as gender and educational background. While previous research, such as Jin et al. (2019), identified general trends in influencer marketing effectiveness, this study highlights the importance of considering subgroup-specific preferences and perceptions. For instance, female respondents showed a higher inclination to trust influencers compared to male respondents, echoing findings in gender-based marketing research.

Finally, exploring cultural variations in the effectiveness of influencer marketing would offer insights into how regional differences shape consumer behavior. Given the influence of culture on trust and credibility, further research in non-Western contexts would deepen our understanding of the global impact of influencer marketing.

## CONCLUSION

This study aims to examine how influencer marketing affects perceived credibility and purchase intention, emphasizing the roles of transparency and cultural factors in shaping consumer behavior.

The findings demonstrate that influencing credibility and transparency significantly enhance purchase intention. Cultural factors were identified as mediators, highlighting the importance of aligning marketing strategies with the values and expectations of the target audience. Furthermore, the study revealed demographic differences, such as gender and educational background, which influence how consumers perceive and respond to influencer marketing.

From these results, several conclusions can be drawn. First, marketers should carefully select influencers whose characteristics resonate with their target audience's cultural and demographic profile. Second, transparency in sponsorship disclosures should be prioritized to build trust and enhance the effectiveness of influencer campaigns. Finally, understanding and incorporating cultural and demographic nuances into influencer marketing strategies is essential for optimizing consumer engagement and driving purchase behavior.

These findings provide actionable recommendations for marketers and open avenues for further research into the interplay between cultural factors, transparency, and influencer marketing in diverse contexts.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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## DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this article, the authors used Neural writer and Google AI Studio to improve the language and readability of the article. After using these tools, the authors have reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

## DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

None.

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