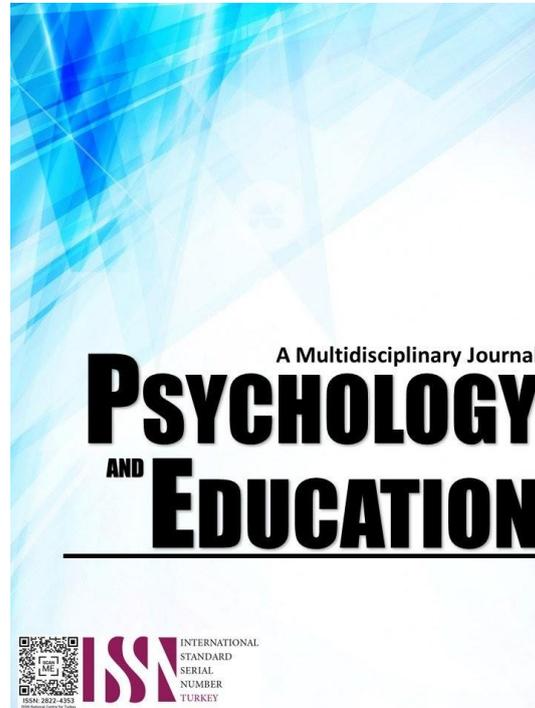# AUTHENTICITY, RELATABILITY, AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES IN CONTEMPORARY MARKETING STRATEGIES: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

Authenticity, Relatability, and Cultural Influences in Contemporary Marketing Strategies: A Qualitative Inquiry

Abrian Joy B. Orencia*
For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

In this qualitative investigation, the researcher explored the nuanced impact of social media influencer marketing on consumer purchase intentions, specifically focusing on cross-cultural dynamics. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study incorporated surveys and in-depth interviews with a diverse cohort of fifteen participants. The findings underscored the pivotal role of authenticity in influencer marketing, with trust emerging as a critical factor influencing past consumer purchase decisions. The research delved into the direct influence of influencer content on consumer choices and investigated how cultural nuances shaped this relationship. Participants consistently highlighted the importance of relatability and identification in influencer effectiveness, revealing insights into the intricate interplay between influencers and diverse cultural contexts. Recommendations included prioritizing authenticity, carefully selecting influencers, leveraging influencer recommendations, recognizing cultural nuances, and establishing ethical guidelines. This research provided unique insights for marketers, brands, and influencers, offering original and actionable recommendations to enhance influencer marketing strategies.

Keywords: *influencer marketing, social media, authenticity, consumer purchase intentions*

Introduction

Social media influencer marketing has emerged as a major force, and is increasingly shaping consumer decision-making processes. Nowadays, a growing group of consumers increasingly rely on social media not only as a means of establishing social relationships, but also as a reliable repository for product reviews, insightful suggestions, and context and are viewed as authoritative sources of information in their particular niches available.

Rigorous empirical research and accuracy in uncovering the many facets of this process requires a comprehensive analysis of the complex fabric including social media dynamics, consumer perspective a it is complex, and the complementary relationship between influencers and their dedicated followers Important stakeholders in this effort are factors that contribute to the power of influencer marketing, such as the authenticity of influencers , besides carefully examining trust, relationships, and consequences on earning consumer trust, mandates a careful consideration of the way information prepared by influencers acts as a key lever pivoting consumer behavior.

Moreover, the integral role delineated by social media algorithms in orchestrating the extent of consumer exposure to influencer content is a critical aspect warranting exhaustive exploration. These algorithms function as gatekeepers, determining the visibility, impact, and reach of influencer communications. Concurrently, the psychological underpinnings that scaffold consumer responses to influencer marketing, encapsulating processes such as identification, social comparison, and parasocial interactions, are essential components requisite for the formulation of a comprehensive and nuanced comprehension of this modern marketing colossus.

Research Questions

To address the research objectives comprehensively, this study will delve into the following research questions:

1. How does the extent of exposure to social media influencer marketing content affect consumer purchase intentions?
2. In what ways does culture act as a moderating factor in the association between influencer marketing and consumer purchase intentions?
3. What key elements contribute to the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns within different cultural settings?

Literature Review

Influencer marketing has become a popular strategy for businesses to sway consumer purchase intentions.

According to a study by Damirchi et al. (2022), four major factors make an influencer effective: source credibility, source attractiveness, influencer-product fit, and meaning transfer. These factors were found to positively impact consumer attitude and buying intentions.The effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns can be influenced by several factors. Moreover, the choice of platform can also affect the campaign's effectiveness. For instance, Gen Z respondents ranked Instagram as the most trustworthy platform, followed by TikTok.

Consumer trust in social media influencers is crucial for the success of influencer marketing campaigns. Factors such as authenticity, credibility, and relatability play a significant role in building this trust. A study by Influence.co revealed that 62% of respondents agreed that it was unethical for influencers to promote products that they didn't actually use themselves. Furthermore, 82% of respondents said social media influencers should disclose any history of personal use when promoting a product.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative, exploratory research design, with the aim of gaining a in-depth and more comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding influencer marketing and its impact on consumer purchase intentions. This method was chosen to facilitate an in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences, perceptions, and responses to influencer marketing campaigns, providing rich, detailed insights that contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge on this topic.

Sampling Method

In selecting participants for the study, the researcher employed purposive sampling, a non-random technique that enabled the careful and deliberate choice of individuals who would provide the most relevant and valuable information for the research objectives. Fifteen participants were chosen from diverse backgrounds, ensuring a broad and representative sample. The criteria for selection included a range of variables such as age, gender, educational background, frequency of social media usage, and current employment status, all of which were considered essential for capturing the diversity of experiences and perspectives on influencer marketing.

Participants

Fifteen participants from diverse backgrounds were selected for this study. Their profiles, including age, gender, educational level, social media usage, and employment status, were collected to ensure a representative sample.

Participant Profile

Participant	Age	Gender	Educational Level	Social Media Usage	Employment
P1	28	Female	Bachelor's Degree	Daily	Full-time Employee
P2	35	Male	Master's Degree	Several times a week	Self-employed
P3	22	Female	Bachelor's Degree	Daily	Student
P4	30	Male	Bachelor's Degree	Daily	Full-time Employee
P5	26	Female	Bachelor's Degree	Several times a week	Part-time Employee
P6	32	Male	Doctorate Degree	Daily	Full-time Employee
P7	27	Female	Bachelor's Degree	Daily	Full-time Employee
P8	29	Male	Master's Degree	Several times a week	Full-time Employee
P9	24	Female	Bachelor's Degree	Daily	Student
P10	31	Male	Bachelor's Degree	Daily	Full-time Employee
P11	23	Female	Bachelor's Degree	Several times a week	Part-time Employee
P12	34	Male	Master's Degree	Daily	Full-time Employee
P13	25	Female	Bachelor's Degree	Daily	Full-time Employee
P14	28	Male	Bachelor's Degree	Several times a week	Full-time Employee
P15	27	Female	Master's Degree	Daily	Full-time Employee

Research Instrument/s

The researcher approached this qualitative exploratory study armed with a variety of instruments meticulously chosen to optimize data collection and analysis. To guide the exploratory interviews, a semi-structured interview guide was crafted with precise, open-ended questions, allowing participants the freedom to delve into their personal experiences with influencer marketing and its effects on their purchase intentions. This flexibility was crucial in allowing the researcher to capture the depth and breadth of participants' perspectives.

Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected through surveys, while qualitative insights were gathered through in-depth interviews. The study incorporated a mixed-methods approach to provide a comprehensive analysis.

Abrian Joy B. Orencia

Data Analysis

Upon completion of the interviews, the researcher engaged in a meticulous process of thematic analysis, which involved reviewing the interview transcripts in detail, coding the data, and identifying recurring themes and patterns. This approach enabled the researcher to extract meaningful insights from the participants' narratives, constructing a rich, nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between influencer marketing and consumer purchase intentions. By carefully analyzing the data in this way, the researcher was able to build a narrative that encapsulated the essence of the

participants' experiences and perceptions, aligning the research with a phenomenological perspective that prioritizes the lived experiences of individuals.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher ensured that ethical considerations was followed throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study, ensuring that they were fully aware of the research objectives and their rights as participants. Additionally, the researcher took extensive measures to anonymize all data, thereby upholding the privacy and confidentiality of the participants and ensuring that their identities were protected.

Limitations

The sample size, while diverse, was limited to fifteen participants, which may not be fully representative of the broader population. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of participant bias, as individuals may have altered their responses based on social desirability or other factors.

Results and Discussion

The research objectives and questions have been comprehensively addressed, providing a nuanced understanding of the role of influencer marketing in shaping consumer behavior.

Table 1. *Participant Comments on Trustworthiness and Authenticity*

Participant	Comments
P3	"Authenticity is everything. I trust influencers who share their real experiences and don't just promote products for money."
P5	"When influencers admit to their mistakes or flaws, it makes them more trustworthy. It's like they're just like us."
P12	"I've unfollowed influencers who I felt were too scripted. Authenticity matters more than perfection."
P15	"Trust is a big deal. If I can't trust an influencer, I won't believe their recommendations, and it won't influence my purchases."

Trustworthiness and Authenticity

Participants consistently emphasized that authenticity is paramount when it comes to trusting influencers. Authenticity fosters trust, which plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer purchase intentions.

The participant comments highlight the significance of authenticity in influencer marketing. Consumers value influencers who are genuine and transparent, and this trust plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer purchase intentions.

Table 2. *Participant Comments on Influence on Purchase Intentions*

Participant	Comments
P2	"I've bought makeup products because my favorite beauty influencer recommended them. Her reviews are so helpful."
P3	"When an influencer demonstrates how a product works, it convinces me. It's like a real-life demo, and it's effective."
P6	"Sometimes, I discover new products through influencers. If they say it's good, I'm more likely to give it a try."
P13	"Influencers make products seem relatable and attainable. That's why I end up buying what they recommend."

Influence on Purchase Intentions

Participants shared their experiences of making purchase decisions based on influencer recommendations and demonstrations. The narratives illustrated the persuasive power of influencers in shaping consumer behavior and purchase intentions.

The participant confirms the direct impact of influencer marketing on purchase intentions. Consumers often make purchase choices and decisions based on influencer recommendations and product demonstrations. This influence highlights the persuasive power of influencers in purchase intentions and shaping consumer behavior.

Table 4. Participant Comments on Relatability and Identification

Participant	Comments
P4	"I follow influencers who have a lifestyle similar to mine. It's like having a virtual friend."
P7	"When an influencer shares my interests, I feel connected to them. I trust their recommendations."
P9	"Relatability is a big factor. If I can relate to an influencer's life, I'm more likely to follow."
P11	"It's like they're one of us. They understand our challenges, and that's why I trust their advice."

Relatability and Identification

The third theme explored in this study was the role of relatability and identification in influencer marketing effectiveness

The participant comments related to relatability and identification highlight the role of these factors in influencer marketing effectiveness, directly aligning with SOP#2. Consumers tend to gravitate toward influencers who share their lifestyles, interests, or challenges. This connection fosters trust and enhances the impact of influencer marketing campaigns. Brands should consider these factors when collaborating with influencers to maximize their effectiveness.

Table 5. *Participant Comments on Cultural Contexts*

Participant	Comments
P13	"Culture plays a role in how we perceive influencers. What works in one country may not work in another."
P14	"Global brands need to adapt their influencer marketing strategies to fit local cultures for better effectiveness."
P15	"Understanding cultural nuances is key. An influencer who respects and understands local culture is more effective."

Pivotal Determinants in Diverse Cultural Contexts

The final theme in this study delved into the pivotal determinants of influencer marketing effectiveness across diverse cultural contexts.

The participant comments emphasize the role of culture as a determinant of influencer marketing effectiveness. Cultural nuances impact how influencers are perceived and how their recommendations are received. Brands seeking international success must consider these factors in their influencer marketing campaigns.

Conclusion

The study explored the multifaceted effects of social media influencer marketing on consumer purchase intentions. It addressed the research objectives outlined in the SOPs, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of influencer marketing in diverse cultural contexts.

The research revealed the paramount importance of authenticity in influencer marketing, as trust is a key determinant of consumer purchase intentions. Influencers who openly shared their experiences and flaws were more likely to be trusted by consumers. Additionally, the study confirmed the direct impact of influencer marketing on purchase intentions. Consumers often relied on influencer recommendations and demonstrations when making purchase decisions.

Moreover, the research highlighted the role of relatability and identification in influencer marketing effectiveness. Consumers tended to follow and trust influencers who shared similar lifestyles, interests, or challenges.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights for marketers, brands, and influencers in the realm of social media influencer marketing. Authenticity, relatability, and the persuasive power of influencers emerge as crucial factors in shaping consumer purchase intentions. Understanding these dynamics can guide the development of more effective marketing strategies and foster stronger connections between influencers and consumers.

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study on the effects of social media influencer marketing on consumer purchase intentions, I would like to make the following recommendations:

Emphasize Authenticity: The study underscores the paramount importance of authenticity in influencer marketing. Brands and influencers should prioritize transparency and honesty in their content. Encourage influencers to openly share their experiences, including both the positives and negatives related to the products or services they promote. This authenticity builds trust with consumers, which is a key driver of purchase intentions.

Select Influencers Wisely: When brands collaborate with influencers, they should carefully consider the authenticity and relatability of the influencers to their target audience. Influencers who share similar

lifestyles, interests, or challenges with their followers are more likely to have a strong impact. Brands should also assess the trustworthiness of influencers and their alignment with brand values.

Leverage Influencer Recommendations: Acknowledge the direct impact of influencer marketing on purchase intentions. Brands should work closely with influencers to craft persuasive and informative content that guides consumers in their purchase decisions. This may include detailed product demonstrations, honest reviews, and clear calls to action.

Cultural Context Matters: Recognize that the dynamics of influencer marketing may vary across different cultural contexts. Tailor influencer marketing strategies to fit the specific cultural nuances and preferences of the target audience. Conduct additional research or partner with local influencers who can bridge cultural gaps effectively.

Measure and Adapt: Continuously monitor and measure the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns. Utilize key performance indicators (KPIs) such as engagement rates, conversion rates, and consumer feedback to assess the impact. Use these insights to refine future influencer collaborations and marketing strategies.

Long-Term Relationships: Consider building long-term relationships with influencers rather than one-off partnerships. Developing enduring partnerships can enhance authenticity and trust over time, as consumers see consistent endorsement of your brand by influencers they trust.

Ethical Considerations: Ensure that influencer marketing practices align with ethical guidelines and regulations. Disclose partnerships transparently and avoid deceptive practices that could erode trust.

Cross-Platform Integration: Explore opportunities for cross-platform integration. Influencers often have a presence on multiple social media platforms, and a multi-platform approach can expand your reach and engagement.

Consumer Feedback Loop: Establish a feedback loop with consumers. Encourage them to provide feedback on influencer marketing campaigns and products/services. This feedback can be valuable for both improving products and refining marketing strategies.

Stay Updated: Stay informed about the evolving landscape of social media and influencer marketing. As platforms and trends change, adapt your strategies accordingly to remain relevant and effective.

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Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Dr. Abrian Joy B. Orencia, MBA, CFMP, LPT, MICB, APRM, CSSBB, ChFM, DBA, DM
New Era University – Philippines