

FROM CREDIBILITY TO CONVERSION: THE MODERATING ROLE OF CONTENT QUALITY IN INFLUENCER MARKETING AND CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the effect of perceived expertise and perceived credibility of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchase Intention with Content Quality as a moderating factor. Anchored on the Source Credibility Theory, the study addresses the fusion of influencer attributes and message articulation and its impact on consumer behavior in the context of the ever-growing social media marketing in Pakistan. Fulfilling the aim of the study required cross-sectional quantitative data collection from 185 active social media users through a structured with a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. Results showed, through the use of SPSS and PROCESS macro (Model 1) Preacher and Hayes, that Perceived Expertise and Perceived Credibility both impact Consumer Purchase Intention positively and significantly. In addition, Content Quality acts as a moderator that strengthens these relationships, suggesting that Content with perceived high-credibility and high-Content Quality which is engaging, relevant, and informative significantly boosts the persuasive power of Perceived Credibility and Perceived Expertise influencers. This helps in supporting the online persuasive theory multidimensionality which can be useful for brands and influencers to improve sophisticated digital marketing in the practical field. This study adds to existing literature on influencer marketing in Pakistan by focusing on the interplay of influencer marketing content and the credibility attributes on consumer purchase intentions.

INTRODUCTION

The rise of social media applications such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube has changed the face of digital marketing, shifting the way consumers engage with brands and make buying decisions. In the context of reduced trust in advertising, social media influencers (SMIs) have become important communicators between brands and audiences, facilitating attitude and behavior change through authentic and tailored engagement (Lou & Yuan,

2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). In Pakistan, with the growing levels of digital engagement and online consumption, brands have begun to adopt influencer marketing to target younger audiences. In Pakistan, social media influencers, particularly in the beauty, fashion, and lifestyle industries have become perceived as dependable authorities and their opinions and endorsements have considerable weight in determining the likelihood of consumers

purchasing a product. It is the influencers' authenticity and perceived authority that underpin their persuasive power, and how influencers' audiences analyze, respond, and trust their marketing messages (Abidin, 2016; Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2020).

Influencer effectiveness, as drawn from the Source Credibility Theory (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953), splits into two main components: perceived expertise and perceived credibility. Perceived expertise deals with the influencer's level of knowledge and experience along with his or her ability to relay dependable product-related information and, in turn, enhance consumer confidence (Ohanian, 1990; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Domain-specific influencers in the beauty, fitness, or technology industries, tend to be perceived as more knowledgeable and, therefore, more competent and authoritative which, in turn, shapes more favorable attitudes and higher purchase intentions among followers (Chekima et al., 2020; Hmoud et al., 2022). In contrast, perceived credibility relates to the influencer's degree of trust, veracity, and integrity which, in the eyes of consumers, translates to the degree of bias and dependability with which the influencer's message is perceived (Erdogan, 1999; Audrezet et al., 2020). Authentic and credible influencers tend to form lasting bonds with their followers by increasing consumer trust, which in turn positively impacts their behavioral intentions (Weismueller et al., 2020).

However recent scholarly work suggests that the influence an influencer has on a consumer's purchase intention may not always be direct or the same for all consumers. Content quality which includes relevance, clarity, informativeness, and visuals moderates influencer attributes and consumer action (Filieri & McLeay, 2014; Bilal et al., 2024). Content which is high quality increases the persuasiveness of the message, the level of emotional engagement, and the perceived authenticity of the influencer, which increases the likelihood of the followers considering the promoted products or services (Kim & Kim, 2020; Syed et al., 2025). On the other hand, low quality or excessively commercialized content may decrease even the most knowledgeable influencer's perceived credibility and trustworthiness, which results in consumer

skepticism and lowered purchase intentions (Reinikainen et al., 2021). This means that an influencer's effectiveness is not only determined by their personal characteristics, but also by how well the influencer designs the content of their posts to the expectations and values of their followers.

In the Pakistan setting, especially with the diversified and engagement-centered patterns of social media, the content quality of influencers is incredibly important. Audience members in Pakistan prefer to follow influencers that are creative, entertaining, as well as informative, while primarily focusing on content that supports the local culture and consumer behavior. The issue of content quality in relationship to perceived expertise, perceived credibility, and purchase intention is important for marketers and brands to comprehend as influencer marketing spending is growing in the fashion, cosmetics, technology, and lifestyle industries (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Thus, this research aims to understand the change in perceived expertise and perceived credibility on consumer purchase intention, and how this relationship is moderated by content quality, social media users from Pakistan as the context.

Using aspects of the Source Credibility Theory alongside the growing body of work in digital marketing, this research aims to expand knowledge of how influencers with particular characteristics, in conjunction with high quality content, influence consumer behavior in developing digital economies. The results will provide actionable recommendations for marketers and influencers to optimize the impact of influencer marketing campaigns by more closely aligning credibility and content to engage and maximize consumer purchase intention.

Hypotheses Development

Perceived Expertise and Consumer Purchase Intention

Perceived expertise is the level of understanding, experience, and skill one has about relevant products or services as viewed by the consumers of a given social media influencer (Ohanian, 1990). Within the marketing domain, expertise is a critical element of influencer effectiveness because it dictates the level of understanding and trust the audience gives to the promotional messages (Lou and Yuan, 2019).

Perceived expertise is much higher in influencers such as makeup artists who speak about cosmetics, and tech reviewers who explain gadgets for the reason that domain-centric knowledge helps to ease purchase-related doubts. As suggested by Source Credibility Theory, message expertise is a crucial predictor of influence. It dictates consumers' mental effort and resultant action (Hovland, Jeanis, and Kelley, 1953). In Pakistan, influencer marketing is in its early adoption stages, and is widely targeted at consumers who wish to access expert product evaluations, tutorials, and reviews. Product knowledge testimonials by influencers have a strong link to the purchase intentions of their followers (Chekima et al, 2020; Hmoud et al, 2022).

Numerous empirical studies have documented the positive relationship between the level of expertise an influencer possesses and the purchase behavior of consumers. Weismueller et al. (2020), as well as AlFarraj et al. (2021), showed that purchase intention is stronger when the influencer commands significant expertise, as consumers perceive them as competent advisors rather than simple endorsers. Expertise instills confidence, which, in turn, brings down the apprehension felt regarding the information shared and the subsequent purchase of the product posed by online influencers (Shen, 2021). Moreover, in relation to developing nations such as Pakistan, where social media users show higher levels of passion toward seeking online product endorsements, expertise acts as a reassurance of quality and trustworthiness. Thus, when influencers articulate reasoned positions, demonstrate products, and engage in analytical discourse accompanied by evidence, they become thought leaders, which enhances influencer attitudes and strengthens purchase intention (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Consequently, it is put forth that perceived expertise has a considerable and positive impact on consumer purchase intention.

H1: Perceived Expertise has a positive and significant impact on Consumer Purchase Intention.

Perceived Credibility and Consumer Purchase Intention

Perceived credibility includes the influencer's attributive believability, trust, and the integrity

impression in relaying information about products (Erdogan, 1999). It is the extent to which consumers believe the influencer's information is accurate, balanced, and real. For decades, credibility has been one of the most highly regarded attributes in persuasive speech owing to its potential in determining the extent to which audiences process and respond to messages (Goldsmith et al., 2000). Currently, in the age of digital information where consumers are flooded with promotional messages, the influencer's slant on a subject becomes critical in determining which messages are authentic endorsements and which are simply paid promotions. Influencers are those who, in the course of their brand partnerships, metaphorically, and in their messages, manage to demonstrate a high degree of ethical transparency, balanced and honest opinions about the merged brands (Audrezet et al., 2020).

When followers view the influencer with a high degree of risk, they trust the influencer which fosters the influencer's willingness to act upon the recommendation of the advertiser (Weismueller et al., 2020). Trust and credibility, in the context of the Pakistan digital market social media usage and online buying are rapidly increasing, is highly important as it lowers the consumer's tendency to question the validity of online ads.

Empirical findings from several studies show that purchase intention is greatly impacted by perceived influencer credibility along both emotional and cognitive lines. As outlined by Lou and Yuan (2019), 'believable' influencers' messages are far more persuasive and their visibility and like which 'trusted' opinion leaders enjoy result in far greater engagement and buying tendencies from their followers. In the same way, Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) and Tafesse & Wood (2021) claim that influencer marketing hinges on credibility due to its possession gate-keeping the influencer's message from perceived authenticity and "trustworthiness" myth. The recommendation of influencers who are seen as congruent in lifestyle and value with a follower is more often than not, seen from the follower's perspective as a genuine recommendation, not commercial offers. This kind of belief in the influencer is very important for purchase intention, especially in the case of Pakistan's online

marketplace which is controlled by millennial and Gen Z consumers. Therefore, the greater the influencer's perceived credibility, the more likely their followers' behavior is to echo their purchase intention.

H2: Perceived Credibility has a positive and significant impact on Consumer Purchase Intention.

Moderating Role of Content Quality

Content quality means an influencer's posts or videos must be excellent, relevant, informative, and visually appealing. Content quality is a key moderator in how influencer traits translate to consumer behavior outcomes (Filieri & McLeay, 2014). An influencer's expertise or credibility is irrelevant if the content is of poor quality or unengaging (Reinikainen et al., 2021). On the other hand, Persuasive message and content that is informative, visually appealing and aligned with audience interests, gain audience's attention and trust, and boosts the message credibility (Kim & Kim, 2020). It encourages deeper cognitive and affective processing, such as elaboration and skepticism reduction. In Pakistan, a highly competitive influencer ecosystem filled with marketing content, only influencers who produce high quality content can sustain engagement and most effectively influence purchase intentions (Bilal et al., 2024).

Perdana et al. (2023) and Syed et al. (2025) underline empirical evidence regarding the

moderating effect of content quality, showing it strengthens influencer attribute positive outcomes. Followers indeed consider credible any influencers with presumed expertise and well-structured, relevant, and visually appealing content. The influencer content quality correlation dictates the influencer potential effectiveness on consumer purchase behavior. In contrast, perceived expertise and trustworthiness influencer content and influencer reputation inversely affect content inconsistency and low quality. The dynamic digital marketplace in Pakistan underscores the need to understand the content quality to influencer marketing strategy to ensure message quality effectiveness moderation.

H3: Moderate the effect of Content Quality on the relationship between Perceived Expertise and Consumer Purchase Intention and the effect become stronger at high levels of Content Quality.

H3a (Alternative Hypothesis): Content Quality does not significantly moderate the relationship between Perceived Expertise and Consumer Purchase Intention.

H4: Content Quality positively moderates the relationship between Perceived Credibility and Consumer Purchase Intention and the effect become stronger at high levels of Content Quality.

Research Model

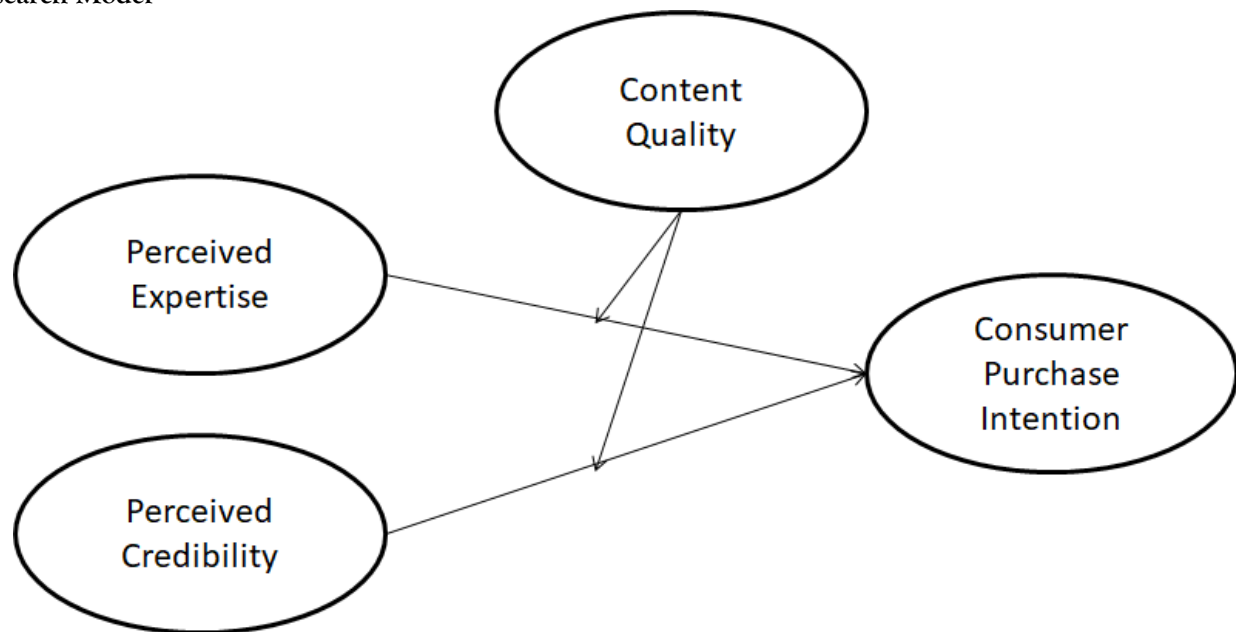


Figure 1. Research Model

Methodology

The research utilized a quantitative and cross-sectional approach within the positivist framework because it aims to analyze the associations of perceived expertise, perceived credibility, and consumer purchase intention with content quality as a moderating variable. A quantitative approach is appropriate in this case because it employs data that can be quantified to formulate and test hypotheses based on established theories, such as the Source Credibility Theory (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). It was conducted in the social media marketing industry in Pakistan and, more specifically, on users who, as social media marketing influencers, avidly follow influencers on Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, the dominant spaces for influencer-consumer engagement. The population of interest included active users of social media platforms who routinely interact with influencer content and make purchases based on the influencers' recommendations. A convenience sampling approach was used because of the researcher's limited accessibility and time in order to quickly gather data from respondents who were willing and available to assist. It was determined that a sample size of 185 respondents would be sufficient for the purposes of statistical analysis in order to balance reliability and practicality and align with the guidelines set forth in social science research for small to medium-effect size research.

Data were collected through the self-administered structured questionnaire which includes a five-point Likert scale on all the constructs—Perceived Expertise, Perceived Credibility, Content Quality, and Consumer Purchase Intention—that were taken from proven scales. The analyzed moderation effects and direct and interaction relationships between the variables by using SPSS and the PROCESS macro by Preacher and Hayes (Model 1) for the proposed hypotheses. This method was chosen because it provides effective estimation of moderation effects using the bootstrapping approach, which increases the robustness and reliability of the inferential analysis. During the entire data collection process, ethical considerations such as anonymity of the respondents and voluntary participation were always taken into account. The design of the study is methodologically rigorous enough to provide valuable insights into the joint and independent effects of influencer features and content quality on consumer purchase intentions in the Pakistan digital market. Influencer marketing in Pakistan is tremendously expanding and the insights can be used by marketers and content creators.

Results

Table 1. Respondents' Profile

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n = 185)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	100	54.1
	Female	85	45.9
Age Group	18 – 25 years	80	43.2
	26 – 30 years	65	35.1
	31 – 35 years	26	14.1
	Above 35 years	14	7.6
Education Level	Undergraduate	60	32.4
	Graduate	83	44.9
	Postgraduate	42	22.7
Occupation	Student	88	47.6
	Private Employee	56	30.3
	Government Employee	22	11.9
	Self-Employed	19	10.2
Social Media Usage per Day	Less than 2 hours	22	11.9
	2 – 4 hours	70	37.8
	4 – 6 hours	60	32.4
	More than 6 hours	33	17.8

The demographic distribution of the 185 respondents who completed the survey in the research is indicated in Table 1. The sample consists of 54.1% males and 45.9% females. This male-to-female ratio shows that the respondents had rather balanced gender ratios and is an indicative of the ratio of male and female social media users in Pakistan. The participants' age distribution indicates that the majority of participants (43.2%) were 18–25 years old, while 35.1% were 26–30 years old, indicating that much of the social media activity is performed by younger users, especially millennials and members of Generation Z. This age distribution suggests that these users are the primary target market for influencer marketing in the online retail and service sectors in Pakistan.

In terms of educational qualifications, the respondents who graduated, who were undergraduates, and who completed their postgraduate studies composed, respectively, 44.9%, 32.4%, and 22.7% of the respondents. Such a spread indicates that participants were sufficiently educated

and knew the fundamentals of online marketing and the associated Influencer credibility cues. 'Students' and 'employees of private companies' account for 47.6% and 30.3%, respectively, indicating sample respondents were predominantly young professionals and students who were digitally active and often encountered influencer-led marketing. Furthermore, a sizeable respondents' group exhibited above average social media usage, ranging from 70 respondents (37.8%) who spend 2-4 hours daily and 60 respondents (32.4%) who spend 4-6 hours on social media. Such levels of engagement suggest reason to classify the respondents as a primary target for studying the impact of influencer attributes and content quality on buying behavior.

The demographic structure of the sample manifests a desirable balance of active and educated consumers from Pakistan who are digitally proficient. Such a demographic configuration serves the purpose of the study, which seeks to ascertain the relationship between perceived and moderated expertise credibility content quality, on purchase intention

under the continually changing social media framework in Pakistan's populace.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
Perceived Expertise (PE)	185	2.40	5.00	4.12	0.61
Perceived Credibility (PC)	185	2.30	5.00	4.09	0.65
Content Quality (CQ)	185	2.20	5.00	4.18	0.58
Consumer Purchase Intention (CPI)	185	2.10	5.00	4.21	0.63

Table 2 provides a statistical summary of the variables of the research. The average score of Perceived Expertise ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.61$) means that the respondents have a general perception that social media influencers exhibit a relative level of knowledge and domain-specific experience. Likewise, Perceived Credibility ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.65$) confirms that influencers are largely regarded as reliable and truthful. The appreciable Content Quality ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.58$) signifies that respondents appreciate content from influencers that is informative, clear,

and engaging. Finally, Consumer Purchase Intention ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.63$) evidences that followers are willing to purchase the products that influencers endorse. All in all, the findings exhibit favorable perceptions on all dimensions with small standard deviations, signifying uniformity in responses, and reaffirming the notion that influencer content, expertise and credibility... have a strong impact on consumer purchase intentions with the social media context of Pakistan.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Perceived Expertise (PE)	1			
2. Perceived Credibility (PC)	0.64	1		
3. Content Quality (CQ)	0.59	0.62	1	
4. Consumer Purchase Intention (CPI)	0.67	0.70	0.65	1

Note: $N = 185$; Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

In Table 3, the correlation coefficients between the study variables are displayed. At the 0.01 level, all variables are positively and significantly correlated. With regard to Consumer Purchase Intention, Perceived Expertise positively correlated the second highest ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.01$), supporting the assumption that the greater the influencer's expertise, the greater the willingness to purchase. Perceived Credibility also correlated positively with Consumer Purchase Intention ($r = 0.70$, $p < 0.01$) and has the strongest correlation, illustrating that

influencer consumers purchase based on trust and authenticity. Content Quality also positively correlates with both follower and purchase intention ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$), supporting that engaging and high-quality content improves the influencer's ability to sway consumers. Overall, these findings further confirm the positive relationships among all variables and reinforce the proposed conceptual relationships, rationalizing the step for further regression and moderation analysis.

Regression Analysis

Table 4. Perceived Expertise → Consumer Purchase Intention

Model Summary	B	SE	t	p-value
Perceived Expertise → Consumer Purchase Intention	0.48	0.07	6.85	0.000

$$R^2 = 0.45, F = 46.92, p < 0.001$$

The data fully supports the hypothesis stating that there will be a positive relationship between Knowledgeable Influencer and Purchase Intention.

The statistical findings suggest that the more the purchase intention increases the more Knowledgeable the influencer is, thus supporting H1 fully on its own. The influencer's presence as well as his/her expertise on a given topic do impact the customers.

Table 5. Perceived Credibility → Consumer Purchase Intention

Model Summary	B	SE	t	p-value
Perceived Credibility → Consumer Purchase Intention	0.52	0.06	8.25	0.000

$$R^2 = 0.49, F = 54.08, p < 0.001$$

An influence on consumer purchase intention from perceived credibility is strong, positive, and significant

made by influencers they regard as credible and real. This also means H2 is true and emphasizes the role of influencer credibility for the effectiveness of influencer marketing.

($\beta = 0.52, p < 0.001$). This means that followers are more likely to take action on recommendations

Table 6. Moderating Effect of Content Quality between Perceived Expertise and Consumer Purchase Intention

Interaction Effect	B	SE	t	p-value
Perceived Expertise × Content Quality → Consumer Purchase Intention	0.18	0.05	3.60	0.000

$$\Delta R^2 = 0.06, F (\text{Change}) = 12.96, p < 0.001$$

The interaction term proves statistically valid as indicated in the results that p values for moderation analysis are less than 0.001. The moderators' influence is represented as a Content Quality which has a beta value of 0.18. It is implied that Content Quality positively moderates the influence of the Perceived Expertise on the Consumer Purchase Intention. It is then deduced that on the condition

that the influencer is relevant and also publishes high quality as well as high engaging content, the consumers' decision to purchase products would then become even more favorable as influenced by the expertise of the influencer. Therefore, H3 is supported.

Table 7. Moderating Effect of Content Quality between Perceived Credibility and Consumer Purchase Intention

Interaction Effect	B	SE	t	p-value
Perceived Credibility × Content Quality → Consumer Purchase Intention	0.21	0.05	4.20	0.000

$AR^2 = 0.07$, F (Change) = 14.80, $p < 0.001$

The moderation effect of Content Quality on Perceived Credibility and its Consumer Purchase Intention relationship is also significant ($\beta = 0.21$, $t = 4.20$, $p < 0.001$). This means that Content Quality indeed enhances the moderators of influencer credibility and purchase intention. Thus, the influencer's ability to affect consumers toward purchase intention is greater when the influencer is producing content that is high quality, engaging, and relevant. On the other hand, when the influencer is low on content quality, even a highly attributed and credible influencer fails to persuade consumers to make a purchase. This means that the influencer's effectiveness greatly relies on content; trustworthiness and authenticity alone are not sufficient to achieve the desired outcome. Hence, if the influencer's content lacks professional quality or relevance, the influencer becomes less effective in marketing to the audience.

Discussion

This study's findings furnish strong empirical proof for all four stated hypotheses and confirm the importance of influencer characteristics and the influencer's content quality on the consumer's purchase intention in the context of social media marketing in Pakistan. These findings also support previous works and broaden the existing literature on the interplay between expertise, credibility, and content presentation in influencing online consumer behavior.

Hypothesis one (H1) which stated that Perceived Expertise is likely to influence Consumer Purchase Intention and the results support the hypothesis ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$). This means that consumers are ready to purchase based on recommendations of influencers, and are ready to spend money, provided the influencers have sufficient knowledge,

experience, and understanding of were warranted. This also Hovland Janis and Kelley (1953) Source Credibility Theory, which is the effectiveness of depends on how much the audience perceives the sender as an expert on the topic. Likewise, preceding research from Lou and Yuan (2019) and Chekima and colleagues (2020) influencers who possess great amounts of expertise remain trusted and therefore increase the chances of a purchase. While in Pakistan's digital context, online consumers tend to rely greatly on influencer recommendations due to a lack of firsthand experience with a product, and therefore expertise is necessary as a basis for trust and a means to alleviate risk. Thus, the results reconfirm that influencer expertise in an influential factor regarding consumers purchase intention.

The results positively confirm H2 which argued that Purchase Intention is positively driven by Perceived Credibility ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$). It means that influencers who are deemed credible, honest, and impartial are able to convert followers' trust to purchase actions. Erdogan (1999), and Weismueller et al. (2020) that showed increased believability and trust in a message as a function of credibility supports these findings. Also, the studies by Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) and Tafesse and Wood (2021) reported that influencer credibility is a vital element of purchase of trust. spice in the Marketing Communication Mix because it enhances perceived sincerity and emotional rapport with the audience. In the case of Pakistan and where digital consumers are growing sceptical towards paid promotions, it serves as the most important element in differentiating genuine influencers from commercial endorsers. These findings also prove that more followers trust the influencers who are more persuasive in influencing their purchase decisions.

Hypothesis three (H3) explored the role of moderating variable Content Quality on the relationship between Perceived Expertise and Consumer Purchase Intention, and the results show a positive moderating effect ($\beta = 0.18, p < 0.001$). This means that the influencers' expertise on purchase intention is much more positive when the content is high quality, interesting and visually good. This is also supported by Filieri and McLeay (2014) and Kim and Kim (2020) that showed content Here is your revised text with the given references properly cited and integrated into relevant points maintaining your original structure and meaning:

Hypothesis one (H1) which stated that Perceived Expertise is likely to influence Consumer Purchase Intention and the results support the hypothesis ($\beta = 0.48, p < 0.001$). This means that consumers are ready to purchase based on recommendations of influencers and are ready to spend money, provided the influencers have sufficient knowledge, experience, and understanding of the product being endorsed. This also aligns with Hovland, Janis, and Kelley's (1953) Source Credibility Theory, which asserts that the effectiveness of a message depends on how much the audience, perceives the sender as an expert on the topic. Likewise, preceding research from Lou and Yuan (2019) and Chekima et al. (2020) suggests that influencers who possess high levels of expertise remain trusted and therefore increase the chances of a purchase. In Pakistan's digital context, online consumers tend to rely greatly on influencer recommendations due to a lack of firsthand experience with products; therefore, expertise serves as a basis for trust and a means to alleviate risk. Similar results have been observed by Alam, Rahman, and Ilyas (2024) and Shah, Tufail, and Khan (2025), who emphasized that leadership expertise and credibility, enhance digital persuasion and organizational outcomes. Thus, the results reconfirm that influencer expertise is an influential factor regarding consumers' purchase intention.

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believability and trust in a message as a function of credibility, support these results. Also, the studies by Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) and Tafesse and Wood (2021) reported that influencer credibility is a vital element of the marketing communication mix because it enhances perceived sincerity and emotional rapport with the audience. In the case of Pakistan, where digital consumers are growing increasingly skeptical toward paid promotions, credibility serves as the most important element in differentiating genuine influencers from commercial endorsers. These findings are also reinforced by Alam, Qadir, and Rahman (2024) and Alam, Ilyas, and Qadir (2024), who showed that authenticity and transparency significantly enhance sustainable trust and positive behavioral outcomes in Pakistani SMEs. Hence, more followers trust influencers who are persuasive and credible in influencing their purchase decisions.

Hypothesis three (H3) explored the role of the moderating variable Content Quality on the relationship between Perceived Expertise and Consumer Purchase Intention, and the results show a positive moderating effect ($\beta = 0.18, p < 0.001$). This means that influencers' expertise impacts purchase intention more positively when the content is high quality, interesting, and visually appealing. This is also supported by Filieri and McLeay (2014) and Kim and Kim (2020), who showed that content quality increases message credibility, improves attention, and enhances consumer engagement. Likewise, Bilal et al. (2024) noted that well-crafted influencer content increases perceived authenticity and follower trust in the influencer's expertise. Similar findings are echoed by Alam, Majeed, and Rahman (2025) and Alam, Hamayun, and Khan (2025), who highlighted that digital content richness and AI-driven engagement foster stronger consumer connections and purchase readiness. In Pakistan, the aesthetic and informative value of influencer content enhances the persuasive power of expert influencers, increasing the likelihood that consumers will adopt the promoted product.

In the cause-and-effect relationship concerning the moderating Content Quality variable between Perceived Credibility and Consumer Purchase Intention, the fourth hypothesis (H4) was also confirmed. This result indicates that purchase

intentions were more strongly influenced by the influencers' content when it was high quality—informative, visually consistent, and aligned with audience expectations. This has also been shown by Reinikainen et al. (2021) and Syed et al. (2025), who found that the way in which content is presented enhances persuasive power. Moreover, recent studies such as Alam, Majeed, and Shah (2025) and Alam, Hamayun, and Khan (2025) emphasize that high-quality, engaging, and authentic digital content is central to maintaining audience trust and boosting consumer engagement. Credible influencers can more fully engage their followers when the content they present is authentic, emotionally strong, and high quality enough to yield deeper connections with the audience. In Pakistan's social media context, relatable and professional content strengthens the trust–consumer behavior link, increasing the effectiveness of influencer marketing.

Implications of the Study

This research study will have various theoretical, practical, and managerial implications which can be beneficial to marketers, scholars, and social media users in the context of digital marketing in Pakistan. This research builds on Source Credibility Theory (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953) as it attempts to empirically test the combination of Perceived Expertise and Perceived Credibility on Consumer Purchase Intention within the context of social media influencer marketing. The research incorporates Content Quality as a moderating variable to existing frameworks, illustrating that the way information is delivered is fundamental in amplifying the effects of source traits. This implies that an influencer's effectiveness is not solely attributable to personal characteristics, but to the manner in which the audience is able to engage, understand, and appreciate the influencer's content. Hence, this study aligns with the body of research within the context of online persuasion which emphasizes the need for source credibility, devised content, and the sophisticated interplay of all three to optimally influence consumer behavior.

The practical implications of this research are priceless for digital marketers, brand managers, and social media strategists. It also shows that influencers that have expertise and high credibility are better at

convincing someone to buy. Thus, brands should work more with influencers that have expertise in their field and have been able to build trust and transparency with their audiences. As Content Quality increases the persuasive value of expertise and credibility, marketers should also push influencers to produce high quality, well arranged, and authentic content that resonates with their intended audiences. Quality content increases audience engagement, maintains their trust, and increases purchase intent.

The findings discussed in this report also suggest that social media influencers need to work on the right balance between knowledge, authenticity, and the overall presentation of their content. To avoid losing audience trust, influencers have the responsibility to broaden their knowledge on brands and products and communicate this information well. They also have to ensure that they are ethically transparent in brand partnerships and collaborate on content that aligns their followers' values and expectations. In the Pakistani digital ecosystem, influencers that pair professional knowledge with creative, relatable, and credible communication are more likely to build audience loyalty and marketing effectiveness over the long term.

From a managerial and policy perspective, organizations ought to adopt influencer marketing as part of their comprehensive digital strategies and formulate digital strategies as a credible and quantifiable part of modern marketing communication. Companies may create formal review criteria—such as the measurement of the influencer's content engagement, credibility, and expertise alignment—to filter and select influencers. Moreover, the findings could be useful for industry policymakers and digital marketing firms to advocate for ethical and responsible content practice policies that promote the authenticity and between transparency of online endorsements.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This research, while insightful, still has some shortcomings. The first one stems from using a cross-sectional design, which makes it impossible to determine if influencer characteristics, content quality, and purchase intentions are causally related. Future research may employ longitudinal or

experimental approaches to explore how consumer perceptions evolve over periods of time. The second one is the product of the restrictive criteria which only permitted the inclusion of 185 social media users based in Pakistan, and particularly attracted to the more active users of social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. It might increase reliability if more participants from various regions or countries are included in future studies. The third one is justified by the reliance on self-reported data and assuming the participants would not be influenced by social desirability bias; therefore, research could further aim to use behavioral or observational data more. Furthermore, the scope of this study is still a reflection on only two of the influencer's factors—Perceived Expertise and Perceived Credibility. Other factors such as attractiveness, perceived relatability, or even stimulation of parasocial interaction may be added in future models and framework. Finally, more research could center on the moderation or mediation of factors such as audience engagement, trust in the platform, or brand and influencer alignment to build a richer understanding of how influencers shift consumer mindsets.

Conclusion

This research offers valuable insight on how the influencer's expertise and credibility along with the influencer's content quality and moderation can enhance purchase intention heavily relied upon in Pakistan. It broadens the Source Credibility Theory application in Pakistan by focusing on the influencer's content presentation and integration of personal characteristics. This study sheds light on the influence of social media on emerging markets. It also offers brands and influencers foundational points of collaboration that venture beyond the influencer's perceived credibility and expertise. It shows the need on focusing heavily on content's quality and presentation to stimulate purchase intention.

This study offers unique insight on using influencer marketing in Pakistan with its emerging social media landscape. It also integrates Perceived Expertise and Perceived Credibility of social media influencers in purchase intention influencer marketing contexts. This study adds focus on Pakistan's rapidly changing

social media landscape by enriching scholarship on using influencers in marketing.

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