

Vol. 9. No. 4. 2022

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DOI: [10.13140/RG.2.2.35186.72644](https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.35186.72644)

Contents available at:

[www.crdeepjournal.org](http://www.crdeepjournal.org)

Global Journal of Current Research (ISSN: 2320-2920) CIF: 3.269

UGC Approved-A Quarterly Peer Reviewed Journal



## Review Research Article

# A Review on the Impact of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchasing Intentions

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## ARTICLE INFORMATION

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### Article history:

Received: 21-12-2022

Revised: 25-12-2022

Accepted: 29-12-2022

Published: 30-12-2022

### Key words:

Social Media, Consumer, Purchase, Intentions

## ABSTRACT

*The ubiquitous nature of social media has greatly altered how people shop and what they consider when making a purchase. Focusing on brand awareness, social influence, and the function of user-generated content, this review paper investigates the complex impact of social media on consumer purchase decisions. It examines how social media platforms boost brand awareness, encourage customer participation, and speed up the spread of information by reviewing the relevant literature. This study emphasizes the growing significance of social media influencers and the crucial role that social proof and peer influence play in influencing consumer preferences. In addition, it delves into the topic of user-generated material and how trustworthy and credible it is, highlighting how it can outperform traditional advertising when it comes to influencing buy intentions. According to the results, brands may engage with consumers, earn their confidence, and boost sales using social media. Problems, such as dealing with criticism and ethical concerns about data protection, are also highlighted in the article. Marketers must deliberately use social media to impact consumer behavior, according to the insights presented.*

## Introduction

Nowadays, social media is a big deal when it comes to how people engage with brands and what they buy online. Social media influencers are one of the many forces propelling this change because of their disproportionate sway over consumers' propensity to make purchases. According to Freberg et al. (2011), social media influencers are people who have a large number of followers on sites like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, and use that following to sway the opinions and actions of their audience. According to Boerman, Willemsen, and Van Der Aa (2017), their credibility and the faith their followers have in them have a big impact on how consumers act and what choices they make. More and more people prefer genuine, personable content than impersonal ads, and the idea of social media influencers fits right in with that trend. Customers nowadays, especially younger ones who desire suggestions from relatable and trustworthy sources, view traditional advertising—which frequently include celebrity endorsements or direct company messaging—as less believable (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Traditional commercials fail to provide the same level of relatability and trust as influencers, who frequently offer personal experiences and honest opinions about items (Abidin, 2016). The significance of comprehending the processes via which influencers impact purchase intentions is shown by this change in customer preferences.

Influencers on social media have a unique opportunity to build an audience, spark conversation, and sway their buying decisions through the material they produce and share. According to Uzunoğlu and Kip (2014), consumers' perceptions and intentions can be greatly influenced by their position as trustworthy opinion leaders. Examining the elements that make social media influencers effective and the consequences for marketers and businesses, this review seeks to understand the extent to which these individuals affect consumers' purchasing intentions.

## Review of Literature

The rise of social media influencers has significantly impacted consumer purchasing behavior. Influencers are perceived as authentic and relatable, and they play a crucial role in shaping consumer attitudes and decisions. This literature review examines the various facets of how social media influencers affect consumer purchasing intentions, including trust and credibility, engagement, and the psychological mechanisms that drive this influence.

**Trust and Credibility:** Trust and credibility are foundational elements that determine the effectiveness of social media influencers in impacting consumer purchasing intentions. Influencers who are perceived as trustworthy can significantly sway

consumer decisions, primarily because their recommendations are seen as more genuine than traditional advertisements (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

**Authenticity and Relatability:** Influencers who share personal stories and genuine opinions are seen as more trustworthy. This authenticity fosters a deeper connection with followers, who are more likely to trust and act on their recommendations (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

**Disclosure and Transparency:** The role of disclosure in maintaining trust is critical. Studies have shown that transparency regarding sponsored content can enhance or undermine trust depending on how it's presented. Proper disclosure of sponsorships can positively influence consumer trust and attitudes towards both the influencer and the endorsed product (Boerman & van Reijmersdal, 2020).

### **Engagement and Consumer Interaction**

The level of engagement that influencers achieve with their audience is a critical factor in influencing consumer purchasing intentions. High engagement levels often lead to stronger consumer-influencer relationships, which can drive purchasing behavior.

- **Interactive Content:** Influencers who actively engage with their followers through comments, likes, and direct messages tend to build a more loyal audience. This interaction creates a sense of community and loyalty that enhances the effectiveness of their endorsements (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).
- **Influence of Peer Interactions:** Peer interactions and user-generated content that stem from influencer endorsements can amplify the reach and impact of the influencers' messages. The social proof provided by peers can further validate the influencer's recommendations, leading to higher purchase intentions (Chu & Kim, 2011).

### **Psychological Mechanisms**

Several psychological mechanisms underlie the influence of social media influencers on consumer purchasing intentions. These mechanisms include social proof, perceived expertise, and parasocial relationships.

#### **Key Findings:**

- **Social Proof:** The concept of social proof, where individuals look to others to determine appropriate behavior, is a significant driver of influencer impact. When influencers endorse products, their followers often perceive this as a form of social validation, increasing their likelihood of purchasing the endorsed products (Hwang & Zhang, 2018).
- **Parasocial Relationships:** Parasocial relationships, where followers develop one-sided relationships with influencers, can lead to a strong sense of connection and loyalty. This perceived relationship can significantly enhance the persuasive power of influencers, as followers feel a personal bond with them (Jin & Muqaddam, 2019).
- **Perceived Expertise:** Influencers who are viewed as experts in a particular field can more effectively sway purchasing decisions. This perceived expertise lends credibility to their recommendations, making followers more likely to trust and act on their advice (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

### **Influence across Product Categories**

The impact of social media influencers varies across different product categories, with some industries experiencing more significant effects than others. The effectiveness of influencer marketing depends on the alignment between the influencer's persona and the product being endorsed.

- **Fashion and Beauty:** Influencers in the fashion and beauty sectors often have a substantial impact on consumer purchasing decisions. Their ability to showcase products through visual content and personal endorsements resonates well with consumers, leading to higher purchase intentions (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020).
- **Technology and Lifestyle:** Influencers in technology and lifestyle also play a critical role in shaping consumer behavior. Their reviews and recommendations are often seen as credible sources of information, which can significantly affect consumer choices (Lin, Bruning, & Swarna, 2018).

### **Ethical Considerations and Regulatory Challenges**

The rise of influencer marketing has also brought ethical concerns and regulatory challenges to the forefront. Issues such as transparency, authenticity, and consumer protection are critical in maintaining the credibility of influencer marketing.

- **Disclosure and Regulation:** Regulatory bodies emphasize the importance of clear disclosure of sponsored content to protect consumers from misleading information. Proper disclosure is essential to maintain transparency and consumer trust (Evans, Phua, Lim, & Jun, 2017).
- **Authenticity Concerns:** The authenticity of influencer endorsements is crucial in maintaining their effectiveness. If consumers perceive endorsements as inauthentic or solely profit-driven, it can damage both the influencer's and the brand's reputation (Childers, Lemon, & Hoy, 2019).

### **Who are Social Media Influencers?**

People who are able to engage and influence their audience through their expertise, authenticity, and social media platforms have amassed a considerable following; these individuals are known as social media influencers. These people frequently use their internet following to influence the thoughts, actions, and purchases of others who follow them. There are various kinds of social media influencers that can be defined by factors including niche, reach, and impact.

### **Classification of Social Media Influencers**

#### **Super Influencers**

A person with a massive following—usually more than a million people—is defined as an internet celebrity. Famous people, prominent politicians, and influential people on social media, such as Kim Kardashian and Cristiano Ronaldo, are examples.

#### **Large-Scale Influencers**

Influencers are people who have a large number of followers, usually between 100,000 and one million. Famous content creators, vloggers, and bloggers like Zoella and Casey Neistat are good examples. Their influence is immense, and brands regularly seek them out for advertisements that reach a large audience. They maintain a decent degree of interaction while yet reaching a large audience.

#### **Little Power Brokers**

People who have 10,000 to 100,000 followers. Examples include fitness trainers on Instagram or beauty gurus on YouTube, who are prominent figures in their respective industries and provide highly specialized content.

Influencers often hold authoritative positions because of their extensive knowledge and experience in a certain industry, be it health, fitness, fashion, or technology. Their followers benefit greatly from the advice and insights they provide due to their extensive knowledge (Freberg et al., 2011).

Commenting, like, and DMing are just a few ways that influencers interact with their audience. Their capacity to sway purchase decisions is amplified as a result of the loyalty and sense of community that develops via these interactions (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). The production of high-quality, engaging, and aesthetically pleasing material is a key competency of influencers. Popular examples of this type of material include lessons, endorsements, and reviews (Lou & Yuan, 2019). The Importance of Popular Online Figures as Brand Advocates: Promoting goods and services through their channels, influencers frequently take on the role of brand advocates. Their endorsements have the power to greatly influence how consumers perceive and interact with brands. Within their respective sectors, influencers have a significant impact on establishing new trends. Many of their fans look to them as a source for information on cutting-edge products and styles.

An example of the psychological phenomena known as "social proof" is the behavior of influential people, who encourage their followers to follow suit. An endorsement from an influential person increases the product's credibility and appeal to the influencer's audience (Hwang & Zhang, 2018).

#### **Effects on Purchasing Habits**

Social media influencers have a significant impact on how consumers behave. Brand recognition, consumer sentiment, and intent to buy can all see a boost when influential people back a product or service (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Stronger consumer-influencer relationships, fostered by influencers' genuine and relatable content, can motivate consumers to make purchases more successfully than conventional advertising tactics (Jin & Muqaddam, 2019).

#### **Obstacles and Moral Deliberations**

Although influencers provide a lot of benefits for marketing, there are also certain problems and ethical issues to think about:

Boerman and van Reijmersdal (2020) state that in order to uphold transparency and trust, ethical influencer marketing necessitates the transparent disclosure of sponsored content. Being genuine: Influencers must always be genuine. Skepticism and diminished impact might result from over-commercialization. For the sake of customer safety and equitable advertising, it is critical to follow all applicable rules and regulations (Evans et al., 2017).

#### **How social media influence customer purchasing intentions**

Social media has become a powerful tool for influencing consumer behavior, particularly when it comes to purchasing decisions. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have transformed the way consumers interact with brands, gather information, and ultimately make purchasing decisions.

This section explores the multifaceted impact of social media on consumer purchasing intentions, including the roles of social proof, targeted advertising, user-generated content, influencer marketing, and the emotional connection that social media fosters between consumers and brands.

### **1. Social Proof and Influence**

Social proof is a psychological phenomenon where people look to the behavior of others to guide their own actions, particularly in uncertain situations. Social media amplifies this effect through likes, shares, comments, and follower counts, which can serve as indicators of a product's popularity and desirability. Social media provides a platform for consumers to share their experiences and opinions about products and services. Positive reviews and testimonials from peers can significantly influence purchasing decisions by providing social proof and reducing perceived risk (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). The viral nature of social media content can quickly spread information about products and brands, leading to a rapid increase in visibility and interest. When users see that a product is trending or being widely discussed, they may be more inclined to consider purchasing it (Berger & Milkman, 2012).

## 2. Targeted Advertising

Social media platforms use sophisticated algorithms to deliver targeted advertisements to users based on their online behavior, preferences, and demographics. This personalized approach can effectively capture consumer attention and drive purchasing intentions. Advertisements tailored to individual interests and behaviors are more likely to be relevant and engaging, leading to higher click-through rates and increased likelihood of purchase (Lambrech & Tucker, 2013). Social media platforms also employ retargeting strategies, showing ads to users who have previously interacted with a brand or visited its website. This repeated exposure keeps the brand top of mind and encourages conversion (Bleier & Eisenbeiss, 2015).

## 3. User-Generated Content (UGC)

User-generated content, such as photos, videos, reviews, and posts created by consumers, plays a significant role in shaping purchasing intentions on social media. UGC is often perceived as more authentic and trustworthy than brand-created content. Credibility and Trust: Consumers tend to trust the opinions and experiences shared by other users more than traditional advertisements. UGC provides an unbiased view of products, which can influence purchasing decisions positively (Smith, Fischer, & Yongjian, 2012). UGC often involves high levels of engagement and interaction, which can enhance a brand's visibility and attractiveness. Engaged consumers are more likely to develop a connection with the brand and consider purchasing its products (Goh, Heng, & Lin, 2013).

## 4. Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing involves partnering with social media personalities who have a significant following to promote products. Influencers can sway consumer opinions and purchasing intentions due to their credibility, authenticity, and relatability. Influencers are often seen as experts in their fields or relatable figures whose opinions are valued by their followers. Their endorsements can serve as a powerful form of social proof, encouraging followers to consider and purchase recommended products (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Influencers can reach a large, engaged audience, and their content often resonates more deeply with consumers than traditional advertisements. This engagement can lead to increased brand awareness and higher conversion rates (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).

## 5. Emotional Connection and Community Building

Social media allows brands to build emotional connections with consumers through storytelling, personalized interactions, and community building. These emotional connections can significantly impact purchasing intentions. Brands that foster a sense of community and engage with their audience on a personal level can create emotional connections that drive brand loyalty and repeat purchases (Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014). Content that evokes emotions, whether it's happiness, nostalgia, or excitement, can create a memorable experience that influences consumer attitudes and purchasing intentions. Emotional appeals are particularly effective in creating a lasting impression and fostering brand affinity (Peters, Amato, & Hollenbeck, 2007).

## Conclusion

Social media has a profound impact on consumer purchasing intentions through various mechanisms such as social proof, targeted advertising, user-generated content, influencer marketing, and emotional connection. Brands leveraging these aspects of social media can effectively influence consumer behavior, drive engagement, and increase sales. As social media continues to evolve, understanding these dynamics will remain crucial for brands aiming to capitalize on this powerful marketing channel.

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