Source Credibility Dimensions and Follower's Loyalty with Reference to Social Media Marketing

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This Study aims to examine the Source Credibility Dimensions in Social Media Marketing that may affect Follower's Loyalty, which in turn shall affect the Purchase Intention of followers. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire from a sample of 122 Social Media Influencer followers, employing a convenience sampling approach. The result of correlation underscores significant positive correlations between Source Credibility Dimensions and Follower's Loyalty, as well as Follower's Loyalty and Purchase Intention. Findings reveal a significant positive impact of social media influencers' trustworthiness, expertise and information quality on Follower's Loyalty. Further, Purchase Intention has found to be significantly influenced by Follower's Loyalty. In summary, this research elucidates the intricate relationships between Source Credibility Dimensions, Follower's Loyalty, and Purchase Intention within the realm of Social Media Marketing. These findings provide valuable insights for businesses and influencers seeking to understand and harness the dynamics of trust, expertise, and loyalty in the digital marketing landscape.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A Social Media Influencer (SMI) is a person having the ability to sway the target audience's decisions on an online platform through their appeal, credibility, knowledge, and affinity with the audience. Easy accessibility to the internet and high-speed information dissemination paved the way for some contributors to gain a sizable following, develop a fan base, and influence their followers. The count of Social Media Influencers has increased considerably since 2016, owing to a shift in

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consumers' attention from television to social media & other OTT (Over The Top) platforms. Instagram, YouTube, X (*formerly* Twitter), and Facebook (Meta) are the prominent social media platforms for supporters. The ability of SMI to create trends and convince the followers to purchase the goods they suggest makes them valuable to brands. Owing to the success of websites linked to social media, now a lot more people use social media than before. Ohanian (1990) quoted source credibility as "the perceived positive characteristics of the communicator that impact the degree of the acceptance of the content."

Hence, four important variables viz: perceived "Social Media Influencers' Attractiveness," "Social Media Influencers' Trustworthiness," "Social Media Influencers' Expertise" and "Social Media Influencers' Information Quality" were taken into consideration to assess the perceived credibility of Social Media Influencers.

Loyalty toward SMI creates a strong brand association amongst followers which in turn can influence their purchase decision.

1.1 Review of Literature

Suleman *et al.,* (2023) researched on "The effects of brand ambassador and trust on purchase decisions through social media." Sample comprised 120 brand ambassadors of fashion products. The study was based on primary data. Results showed that trust and brand advocates exert a prominent influence on customer purchases through social media platforms.

Nugroho *et al.,* (2022) initiated research on "The impact of Social Media Influencer's credibility attributes on gen Z Purchase Intention with brand image as mediation: Study on consumers of Korea cosmetic product." The data was gathered from 210 Gen Z individuals in Indonesia who use Korean cosmetic products. Questionnaires were administered for the purpose of data collection. All three attributes of Influencer's credibility (Attractiveness, Expertise and Trustworthiness) were found to have a considerable impact on brand image and the latter significantly influenced the purchasing decisions of Gen Z.

Es-Safi and Sağlam (2021) researched on "Examining the Effects of Social Media Influencers' Characteristics on Brand Equity and Purchase Intention." Primary data was collected from 213 users of social media through questionnaires. Frequency, Percentage, Correlation and Path Analysis were used for data analysis. It was confirmed that communication skills of influencer significantly affect the perception of brand awareness, brand loyalty, quality, and Purchase Intention while influencer's authenticity significantly affects perception of quality, brand association, brand loyalty, and Purchase Intention.

Agitashera *et al.,* (2020) studied "The Effect of Endorsers' Source Credibility on Emotion Towards Youtube's Advertisement Source Credibility on Emotion." Sample comprised 385 persons who know about LAKMÉ Make-Up Products. Study was based on primary data. T-test, ANOVA and Regression were the statistical tools used. Findings confirm the significant relationship among emotional pleasure, arousal and the credibility of Social Media Influencers.

Ata *et al.,* (2019) researched on "The Effect of Social Media Influencer's Credibility on Consumer Processing and Purchase Intention." 453 fluent social media users were the sample for the Study. Study was based on primary data. Affective reaction was most significantly influenced by credibility. Higher levels of social influence do not result in higher individual reactions when Social Media Influencers try to persuade their followers.

1.2 Need for the Study

The rise of social media has revolutionized the way businesses advertise, making it an essential tool for promoting brands and gaining a competitive edge. This shift has captured the interest of companies using online platforms to market their products and services (Tuten and Solomon, 2017; Khan and Jan, 2019). Social Media Influencers (SMI) are content creators having a large audience on social media and sharing information to persuade the followers through their reach and authenticity. They partner with brands to share information about various products and services with followers on social networking sites through videos, pictures for monetary compensation or other benefits.

Thus, it becomes vital to examine the Source Credibility Dimensions with reference to Social Media Marketing, that could have an impact on Follower's Loyalty which in turn shall affect the Purchase Intention of Social Media users.

1.3 Objectives of the study

- To examine the relationship between Source Credibility Dimensions and Follower's Loyalty.
- To determine the relationship between Follower's Loyalty and Purchase Intention.
- To analyse the impact of Source Credibility Dimensions on Follower's Loyalty.
- To estimate the impact of Follower's Loyalty on Purchase Intention.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Nature of the Study

The study is empirical, which means it relies on real-world data and observations to draw conclusions.

2.2 Data Collection Method

Data for the study was collected using a Standardized Structured Questionnaire. This implies that participants were asked a set of predetermined questions in a consistent manner to ensure uniformity in responses.

2.3 Sample Size

The sample consisted of 122 followers of Social Media Influencers. This is the group of people from whom data was collected and analysed.

2.4 Sampling Technique

The study used a convenience sampling technique. Convenience sampling involves selecting participants who are easily accessible or readily available. It is a non-probabilistic sampling method and is often used when practicality and ease of data collection are a priority.

2.5 Statistical Tools

- *Descriptive Statistics and Percentage Analysis:* Descriptive statistics and percentage analysis are used to summarize and describe the demographic profile of the respondents.

- *Correlation:* Correlation analysis is used to examine the relationship between (i) Source Credibility Dimensions and Follower's Loyalty, and (ii) Follower's Loyalty and Purchase Intention. It helps determine whether and to what extent variables are related.

- *Regression:* Regression analysis is employed to understand how one or more independent variables are related to a dependent variable. It can help in making predictions based on these relationships.

2.1 Hypotheses

- **H₁:** There is a significant correlation between Source Credibility Dimensions and Followers' Loyalty.

- **H₂:** There is a significant correlation between Followers' Loyalty and Purchase Intention.

- **H₃:** Source Credibility Dimensions have a significant impact on Followers' Loyalty.

- **H₄:** Follower's Loyalty has a significant impact on Purchase Intention.

3.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Variables	Frequency (N=122)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	59	48.4
Female	63	51.6
Age		
Below 20 years	23	18.9
20-30 years	64	52.5
31-40 years	18	14.7
41-50 years	11	9.0
Above 50 years	6	4.9
Monthly Family Income (in ₹)		
Below 50000	62	50.8
50000-75000	32	26.2
76000-100000	17	13.9
Above 100000	11	9.0
Social Media Usage (per day)		
30 minutes -1 hour	31	25.4
1 hour - 2 hours	31	25.4
2 hours - 2.5hours	26	21.3
Above 2.5 hours	34	27.8

Source: Primary data

Table 1 reveals that the majority of respondents (51.6%) are Female. The Age of the majority respondents (52.5%) range from 20 to 30 years. Most respondents (50.8%) have a Monthly Family Income of below ₹50,000, while Social Media Usage of most respondents (27.8%) is found to be 2.5 hours and above.

Table 2

Weighted Mean Score

Constructs	Weighted Mean
Source Credibility Dimensions	3.93
Followers' Loyalty	3.95
Purchase Intention	3.98

Source: As on Table 1

It can be inferred from Table 2 that the respondents have almost agreed to the statements measuring Purchase Intention, Followers' Loyalty and Source Credibility Dimensions as the weighted mean scores are around 4. Further, it can be observed that statements measuring Purchase Intention have the highest weighted mean score.

3.1 Correlation Analysis

- **H₁:** There is a significant correlation between Source Credibility Dimensions and Followers' Loyalty.

- **H₂:** There is a significant correlation between Followers' Loyalty and Purchase Intention.

Table 3

Relationship among the Constructs of the Study

Constructs	"r" value
Source Credibility Dimensions and Follower's Loyalty	0.909**
Follower's Loyalty and Purchase Intention	0.862**

Source: As on Table 1

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 3 shows that the relationship between Source Credibility Dimensions and Follower's Loyalty is significantly positive at 1% level as there exists 90.9% correlation between them. This confirms that if the influencers are highly credible, Followers' Loyalty to the influencer also increases and vice versa.

Further, it is evident that, there is a significant positive relationship between Followers' Loyalty and Purchase Intention at 1% level and there exists a positive correlation of 86.2% between them. This shows that the followers who are loyal to the influencers have intentions to purchase the products that latter suggest and vice-versa.

3.2 Multiple Regression

3.2.1 Impact of Source Credibility Dimensions on Follower's Loyalty

- **H₃:** Source Credibility Dimensions have a significant impact on Followers' Loyalty.

Table 4

Impact of Source Credibility Dimensions on Follower's Loyalty

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig. (p)
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.226	0.152		1.483	0.141
Attractiveness	-0.019	0.093	-0.018	-0.203	0.840(NS)
Trustworthiness	0.229	0.086	0.237	2.649	0.009**
Expertise	0.563	0.077	0.573	7.313	0.000**
Information Quality	0.175	0.077	0.173	2.279	0.025*
R	0.923**				
R^2	0.853				
F value	169.245				
P value	0.000**				

Source: As on Table 1

Note: ** denotes significance at 0.01% level

              * denotes Significant at 0.05% level

              NS denotes Not Significant

Dependent Variable: Follower's Loyalty

Table 4 shows the impact of Source Credibility Dimensions namely Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Expertise and Information Quality on Follower's Loyalty. Based on the regression model, it is obvious   that there is a significant positive impact of Trustworthiness and Expertise on Follower's Loyalty at 1% level ($p < 0.01$). Further, Information Quality significantly impacts Follower's Loyalty at 5% level ($p < 0.05$).

It is also clear that there is no significant impact of Attractiveness on Follower's Loyalty at 5% level ($p > 0.05$). R^2 value (0.853) shows that 85.3% of variance in Follower's Loyalty is caused by Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Expertise and Information Quality. Of all factors, Expertise has the highest impact on Follower's Loyalty.

3.2.2 Impact of Follower's Loyalty on Purchase Intention

- **H₄:** Follower's Loyalty has a significant impact on Purchase Intention.

Table 5

Impact of Follower's Loyalty on Purchase Intention

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig. (p)
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.729	0.179		4.076	0.000**
Follower's Loyalty	0.824	0.044	0.862	18.627	0.000**
R	0.862**				
R^2	0.743				
F value	346.968				
P value	0.000**				

Source and Note: As on Table 4

Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention

Table 5 shows the impact of Follower's Loyalty on Social Media Influencers and Purchase Intention. Based on the regression model, it can be inferred that there is a significant positive impact of Follower's Loyalty on Purchase Intention as 'p' <0.01 at 1% level. R^2 value of 0.743 shows that 74.3% of variance in Follower's Loyalty is caused by Purchase Intention.

4.0 CONCLUSION

To sum up, the current study aimed to determine how various dimensions of Source Credibility impact Social Media Influencer marketing. Findings revealed that the Follower's Loyalty is significantly driven by the influencer's trustworthiness, expertise and also the quality of information they provide. Further, it was evident that the influencers with loyal followers were able to positively impact the followers' Purchase Intentions to a great extent. This study would aid businesses to understand the significance of hiring suitable Social Media Influencers who can target the potential customers through their credibility and reach.

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