

## Impact of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article History:</b> Received: December 25, 2024 Revised: January 15, 2025 Accepted: January 20, 2025 Available Online: January 22, 2025</p> <hr/> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Social Media Influencers, Source Credibility Theory, Para Social Relationship, Purchase Intention, Intimate Self Disclosure</p> <hr/> <p><b>Corresponding Author:</b> Javaria Asim Email: <a href="mailto:javaria.asim@kinnaird.edu.pk">javaria.asim@kinnaird.edu.pk</a></p>	<p>With an emphasis on the moderating function of source legitimacy, this study investigates how social media influencers affect customers' purchase intentions. Influencers on social media have grown to be important figures in influencing consumer behavior, especially among younger audience, Gen Z. This study investigates how influencer-generated content influences customers' attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms, resulting in higher purchase intentions. It does this by drawing Source Credibility Theory. According to the study, as compared to influencers with lesser credibility, individuals with higher credibility greatly increase consumers' trust and have a beneficial effect on their buy intentions.</p>



## Introduction

The phrase "purchase intent" describes the likelihood that customers will make a purchase from the brand. A change in the way influencer endorsements function on social media platforms can be seen in the rise of social media influencers, defined as "individuals who have established a likeable online personality by sharing their daily lives, tips, and tricks on social media. "Influencer marketing" is an immensely popular social media tactic that many brands use to influence their consumers' decision-making (Kefi & Sokolova, 2019). Every industry, including food, fashion and beauty, fitness and health, high-tech, and others, has influencers (Raggatt & Klassen et al., 2018). Bloggers test products, offer their opinions, and persuade other people to purchase them on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. The success of Social Media Influencers' recommendations is largely dependent on how they interact with their followers. Therefore, social media influencers can affect how their followers feel about them and how they view their product advertising by

fostering a welcoming and authentic environment. The success of Social Media Influencers' recommendations is largely dependent on how they interact with their followers. Influencer marketing is a highly popular tactic in social media that many firms use as part of their plan to influence consumers' decision-making (Claude et al, 2018, Glucksman, 2017). Nonetheless, it seems that the name "Gen Z" is the most frequently employed to describe this demographic (Bassiouni et al, 2014). This study examines how consumers' attitudes are influenced by social media influencers' intimate self-disclosures, which can result in purchase intentions provided one is aware of how to establish para social relationships and has reliable sources. In order to explain the efficacy of social media influencer endorsements, therefore, within the framework of influencer marketing, we integrate the theoretical perspectives of the consumer-influencer relationship, influencer-brand meaning transfer, and the consumer-brand relationship.

## **Literature Review**

### **Source credibility theory**

Ethos or source credibility theory is the powerful social influence over other things. Different studies discovered that travelers will follow a person who would be wearing good clothes, high status people than an average looking person who would be wearing poor clothes, low status people. Pornpitakpan (2004) research stated that these constructs sensed competence or expertise have an appreciable over their less dependable counterparts in means of social influence. When target market counts on peripheral process rather than central processing, the advantages enjoyed by credible sources are magnified. This happens because someone who hold over the source will be less interested in paying attention to a message content. In comparison to this, when a source is sensed as lacking in being trustworthy or expertise, the target market would more likely to examine the message's content.

### **Purchase Intention**

The thought of "Intention" was first used in psychology, which means the person going through a particular action. It is considered that customer's purchase intention adverts to the decision stated and willingness, mentioned by the customers in the procedure of actual purchase. As a result, we can only foresee a customer's purchasing behavior by understanding its purchase intention. It comes to the understanding that customer attitudes concerning items or brands, when paired with outside variables, determine what customer desires to buy (Younas et al., 2015). Purchase intention is another term for the customer's desire to buy the goods and services. The customer's intention to purchase a product is an additional factor in buying intention. When purchasing a product, a customer's purpose is influenced by a wide range of factors, and their ultimate choice is dependent on their intention and consumption as well as a variety of external variables. (Jiang et al.; 2012).

### **Influencer Intimate Self disclosure and Source Credibility**

Source credibility consists of three attributes: Attractiveness, Expertise and Trustworthiness. Attractiveness is related to consumer perception of the attractiveness of any endorser; Expertise leads to skills, knowledge of any endorser and Trustworthiness is affiliated to honesty, confidence in endorser (Giffin, 2009). To maintain a long-lasting impression on consumer's mind, social media influencers show high levels of familiar and trending information on social media sites. The

more vocal social media influencers are about themselves the more satisfaction their followers get. Credibility is visualized as multidimensional construct that is linked to different communication sources. As intimate self-disclosure inclined to be reciprocated, followers may match to the standards of interchange to perceive social media influencers as credible. It is explained as the response of Intimate self-disclosure from any other person can use as social approval and this response is more appreciated with increased intimacy. Influencers are the real time connections between consumers and brand (Wood et al., 2023). Because of their openness with consumers, influencers they have high social credibility, which is why this make the process so flourishing.

Immense user's mindset depends upon what these influencers are promoting and their purchase intention changes according to their suggestions (Huang et al., 2023).

**H1:** Source Credibility moderates the relationship between Intimate Self- disclosure and Para social Relationship.

### **Source Credibility and Para Social Relationship**

One of the main factors in communication is source credibility and it is characterized as "believably". Source credibility theory explains that people are more convinced when they get to know about the source itself is credible (Dawkins et al., 2021). This source credibility is studied in marketing and its relation with costumers in online content. Prior research examined the source credibility on customer's intention to purchase and service or product through information acceptance, information usefulness and information credibility (Burkell et al., 2021). Parasocial relationships are one sided relationship in which a human develops strong sense of intimacy, connection with someone they don't know. These relationships are with celebrities or famous people. They experience this bond disregard of being reciprocity. Businesses and brands get benefit from followers with the help of an endorsing influencer (Casais et al., 2023). In Para social relationship followers sometimes perceive social media activist as their friends and family. Therefore, they sometimes adopt their recommendations and share similarities. Researchers discovered the prior strength of parasocial ties, including spending time with media influencers and the traits of both individuals and social media influencers. The four dimensions concept of source credibility that is trustworthiness, similarity, expertise and attractiveness depend upon parasocial relationships. The more influencers got these qualities in them the more followers trust what message they are trying to convey (Saeed et al., 2023).

**H2:** Para Social relationship mediates the relationship between Intimate Self Disclosure and User Attitude.

### **User Attitude and Purchase Intention**

Attitude is described as an inclination to measure an entity with level of favorite or not depending upon behavioral responses. Attitude are reasoned to shape individual's mind. As amended the behavior and attitude towards any brand the more likely that person would use the product or brand (Liang et al., 2023). The more the use of social media, their following, their knowledge, their fears about social media affect their attitude toward social media marketing. Different researches have depicted that customer's attitude towards social media influencer marketing were positively linked with purchase intention of the marketed product and service (Barki & Hartwick., 1994).

Researches states that if customer's have a positive attitude towards social media influencers and their promotions, they will be more likely to be interested in making purchase decision, in simpler words customer's attitude towards social media promotions are anticipated to have positive impact on customer's purchase intention (Bodoff & Ho., 2014). A more positive attitude towards a social media influencer will be more inclined towards the item and will visit the websites again in future. Purchase Intention is a dependent variable which depends upon various cause like contentment, likes, dislike etc. Consumers are now targeted by social sites which alternate the consumer's mode of intelligent through demands, emotion and also wants and needs (Suprapti et al., 2023). Consumer's purchasing intention counts on marketing techniques, their contracts and attitudes made by brands. This is apprehensive for purchasers to encounter user activity to make purchase intention better and brands must look after customer's standards. Purchase intention also depicts the attitude of respective individual who are willing to buy products and services when any item is publicized. Positive response through social media influencers definitely changes user attitude and leads customers for purchase intention (Suprapti et al., 2023).

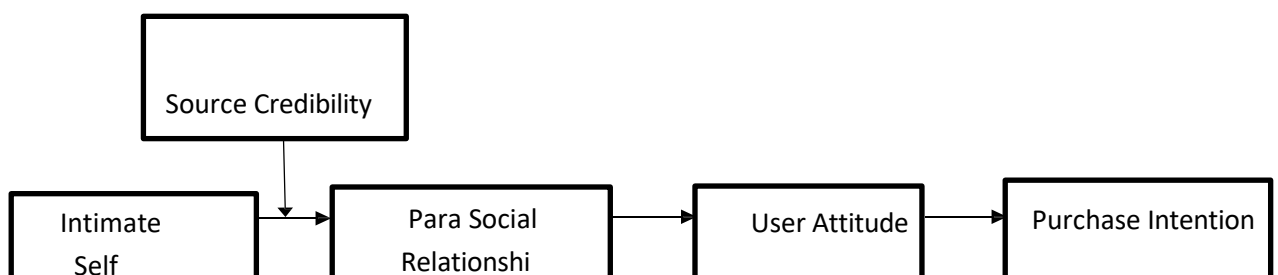
**H3:** User Attitude mediates the relationship between Para Social Relationship and Purchase Intention.

### **Para social Relationship and User Attitude**

Parasocial interactions is defined as feelings reciprocal interactions that happens less during media exposure, which does not count on social tie (Antheunis et al., 2023). Parasocial relationship is long-term commitment that settle of the far side of media exposure. The lack of effective reciprocal is a key characteristic of parasocial relationships, according to certain social psychology studies. This illustrates how a customer can freely select from the relationships available but is unable to initiate communication. Attitude is a psychological concept corresponding a person's level of liking or disliking related to any item. Attitude are combination of three components: affective, behavioral and cognitive ( Mazzotta et al., 2010). User attitudes can change over the years making it challenging to acquire what are the basic needs. Any user can alternate their likings over the time by looking at their favorite influencers. These influencers have a strong impact on follower's mind and they can convince them to adopt their behaviors and their attitudes. User attitude and parasocial relationships are dependent on each other as if some celebrities may suggest something then these user may change their mindset and purchase that particular item ( Mazzotta et al., 2010).

**H4:** Para Social Relationship and User Attitude sequentially mediates the relationship between Intimate Self Disclosure and Purchase Intention.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**



## Methodology

### Research Design Elements

Descriptive and quantitative methodologies are combined in this research. Primary sources are based on data collected from the research community using a specially designed questionnaire. The data is collected, processed, and then interpreted in this process.

The study uses individuals as the primary unit of analysis. Students, adults, parents, and social media users who certainly belong to Generation Z, are all involved in it. Using a cross-sectional technique, the data is compiled at a certain moment in time. Using random selection techniques, universities in Lahore are chosen from the general population. We shall employ convenient sampling. Since, Nunnally (1978) assumed that there were ten times as many items in the questionnaire as there were, or  $(25 \times 10 = 250)$ , the sample size would comprise 250 replies. The survey was given out in hard copy and then uploaded to Google Forms. Every variable was assessed on a five-point Likert scale. Additional details are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1:**

Variables	No. of Items	Sample Items	References
Intimate Self disclosure	9	SMI shares information about their selves.	(Kim, J., & Song, H., 2016)
Para social relationship	6	I have many of the same beliefs as SMI.	(Boyd et al., 2022)
Source Credibility	3	I think the content of the Social Media Influencer’s posts is accurate.	(Moon and Kim, 2001)
User Attitude	3	Does user find SMI interesting?	(Teo, OH, Liu, & Wei, 2003)
Purchase intention	4	I will buy products that are advertised by SMI (Social Media Influencers).	(Hamid Akbariyeh, 2015)

## Data Analysis

**Table 1:**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Intimate Self Disclosure	255	1.33	5.00	3.62	0.746
Source Credibility	255	1.21	5.00	3.35	0.685

Para Social Relationship	255	1.75	5.00	4.68	0.872
User Attitude	255	1.04	5.00	3.94	0.633
Purchase Intention	255	1.37	5.00	3.58	0.757

**Table 2: Reliability Analysis**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items
Intimate Self Disclosure	0.915	9
Source Credibility	0.851	3
Para Social Relationship	0.907	6
User Attitude	0.886	3
Purchase Intention	<b>0.912</b>	<b>4</b>

**Table 3: Correlation Analysis**

Pearson's Correlation					
MISD		MSC	MPSR	MUA	MPI
MISD	1				
MSC	.744**	1			
MPSR	.689**	.775**	1		
MUA	.578**	.645**	.765**	1	
MPI	<b>.604**</b>	<b>.716**</b>	<b>.840**</b>	<b>.762**</b>	<b>1</b>

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**NOTE:** ISD=Intimate Self Disclosure, SC=Source Credibility, PSR=Para Social Relationship, UA=User Attitude, PI=Purchase Intention.

**Regression Analysis**

Process Hayes (2008) Model has been applied to the expected theoretical framework.

**Table 4: Simple Moderation**

<b>Model = 1</b>
Y = Para Social Relationship
X = Intimate Self Disclosure
M = Source Credibility
Sample size

255

Outcome: Para Social Relationship

**Model Summary**

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.7931	.6290	9.3338	141.8424	3.0000	251.0000	.0000

**Model**

coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant		4.5020	2.0901	2.1539	.0322 .3856 8.6184
Source Credibility		1.1597	.2349	4.9381	.0000 .6972 1.6223
Intimate Self Disclosure		.1810	.0809	2.2363	.0262 .0216 .3405
int_1	-.0013	.0073	-.1783	.8587	-.0156 .0130

**Interactions:**

int\_1 Intimate Self Disclosure X Source Credibility

R-square increase due to interaction(s):

R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p
int_1	.0000	.0318	1.0000	251.0000 .8587

**Conditional effect of X on Y at values of the moderator(s):**

Source Credibility	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
8.7157	.1697	.0392	4.3264	.0000	.0925	.2470
11.3255	.1663	.0400	4.1577	.0000	.0876	.2451
13.9353	.1630	.0488	3.3385	.0010	.0668	.2591

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output: 95.00

**Interpretation**

The correlation between ISD and PSR is represented by the value of R, which is 79%. The direction and strength of the association between intimate self-disclosure and para social relationships are indicated by the R square value of 63%. With F value of 141.8424 and a p-value of 0.000, the model is well-fitted. More precisely, the strength of the correlation between ISD and PSR is represented by the estimated value of Moderator M 1.1597. The association between Y1 and Y2 should increase to a value of  $0.2349 + 0.0809 = 0.3158$  if the moderating impact SC has a value of 0.2349 and the simple effect of ISD equals 0.0809. The mean value of the moderator variable M increases by one standard deviation unit. As moderation is less to be seen in this relationship, from previous literature the relationship can be supported as prior studies investigates the moderating function of social media influencer following behavior, by using the self-determination theory to close the gap in the literature (Han & Chen 2020).

**Sequential Mediation**

The following table has been used to examine the sequential mediation and simple mediations between the variables.

**Table 5: Sequential Mediation**

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**Model = 6**

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Y = Purchase Intention  
X = Intimate Self Disclosure  
M1 = Para Social Relationship  
M2 = User Attitude  
Sample size: 255  
Outcome: Para Social Relationship

**Model Summary**

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.6889	.4746	13.1134	228.5350	1.0000	253.0000	.0000

**Model**

Coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant		7.7293	1.0490	7.3686	.0000 5.6635 9.7951
Intimate Self Discloure		.4604	.0305	15.1174	.0000 .4004 .5204

Outcome: User Attitude

**Model Summary**

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.7681	.5900	2.5499	181.3073	2.0000	252.0000	.0000

**Model**

coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant		2.7840	.5098	5.4613	.0000 1.7801 3.7880
Para Social Relationship		.3473	.0277	12.5287	.0000 .2927 .4019

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Intimate self-disclosure .0327 .0185 1.7634 .0790 -.0038 .0692

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**Outcome: Purchase Intention**

**Model Summary**

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.8602	.7399	3.2933	237.9731	3.0000	251.0000	.0000

**Model**

coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant		.3145	.6127	.5134	.6081 -.8921 1.5211
Para social relationship		.4298	.0401	10.7073	.0000 .3507 .5088
User Attitude		.4084	.0716	5.7042	.0000 .2674 .5494
Intimate Self disclosure		.0099	.0212	.4690	.6394 -.0318 .0517

**DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS**

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
		.0099	.0212	.4690	.6394 -.0318 .0517

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Indirect effect(s) of X on Y

Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Total:	.2765	.0328	.2088 .3371
Ind1 :	.1979	.0320	.1372 .2638
Ind2 :	.0653	.0204	.0320 .1133
Ind3 :	.0133	.0102	-.0019 .0396

Indirect effect key

Ind1 : MISD → MPSR → MPI  
 Ind2 : MISD → MPSR → MUA → MPI  
 Ind3 : MISD → MUA → MPI

Number of bootstrap samples for bias corrected bootstrap confidence intervals: 1000

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Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output: 95.00

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### Interpretation

The study's hypothetical or abstract framework is summarized in the table that was previously described. Information describes 47% of the variance in para social relationship, which is mediator 1, according to the value of the R<sup>2</sup> in the outcome variable of para social relationship. The study model is significant, as indicated by the p-value of .0000, or  $p < 0.05$ . The model's good fit is further indicated by the F-value of 228.5350. As evidenced by  $\beta = 7.7293$ ,  $t = 7.3686$ , and  $p = 0.0000$ , significantly affects para social relationship. Second, information in para social relationship describes 59% of the variance in MUA, which is mediator 2, according to the value of the R<sup>2</sup> in the MUA outcome variable. The study model is significant, as evidenced by the p-value of .0000 ( $p < 0.05$ ), and the F-value of 181.3073 shows that the model fits the data well. In the presence of information, a significant association is shown between both mediator's user attitude and para social relationship with  $\beta = 0.3473$ ,  $t = 12.5287$ , and  $p = 0.0000$ . Additionally, information significantly affects intimate self-disclosure when mediator user attitude is present, as shown by  $\beta=0.327$ ,  $t=1.7634$ , and  $p=0.000$ .

Thirdly, information, para social relationship, and user attitude describe 73% of the variance in purchase intention, the dependent variable, according to the value of the R<sup>2</sup> in the purchase intention outcome variable. The study model is significant and has a strong fit, as evidenced by the  $F= 237.9731$  and the p-value of .0000, which indicate that the model is  $p < 0.05$ . As evidenced by  $\beta=0.4298$ ,  $t=10.7073$ , and  $p=0.0000$ , mediator 1 para social relationship significantly affects the main component. Furthermore, mediator 2 (user attitude), with  $\beta=0.4804$ ,  $t=5.7042$ , and  $p=0.0000$ , significantly affects purchase intention. Finally, it can be observed that intimate social disclosure significantly influences purchase intention when both mediators (para social relationship and user attitude) are present, with  $\beta = 0.0099$ ,  $t = 0.4690$ , and  $p = 0.0000$ .

The entire influence of the purchase intention is shown by the intimate self-disclosure ( $p=0.0000$ ), and the boot values (ULCI=0.3322 and LLCI=0.2397) have the same signs. Additionally, since  $p=0.0000$  and boot values have the same signs that is, LLCI= 0.318 and ULCI= 0.517, there is a direct influence of para social relationship on intimate self-disclosure. It is known that there is para social relationship mediation between the independent variable, or intimate self-disclosure, and the dependent variable, or PI (purchase intention), with the values of BootLCCI = 0.388, BootULCI =

0.2641, Effect = 0.1979. Given that Boot UCLI and Boot LCCI exhibit identical signs, PSR's mediation is demonstrated.

Additionally, the following values are shown in the table to verify the mediation of user attitude between the independent variable para social relationship and the dependent variable purchase intention: Effect = 0.1333, BootLCCI = 0.0026, and BootULCI = 0.396. BootLCCI and Boot UCLI exhibit similar signs, indicating that the user attitude mediates the relationship between the intimate self-disclosure and purchase intention.

Ultimately, the association between Intimate Self Disclosure and Purchase Intention is successively mediated by Para Social relationship and User Attitude. With values Effect=0.653, BootLCCI=0.314, and BootULCI=0.1112, partial mediation is demonstrated because the signs of the Boot UCLI and BootLCCI are same.

## **Conclusion**

Purchase intention, source credibility, intimate self-disclosure, para social relationships, user attitude, and their corresponding relationships were all included in this study. Targeting active social media users and those who were persuaded to purchase goods or services recommended by influencers, it was carried out in Pakistan. From the total of 250 responses, the data showed more females (52.7%) than the males (31.3%), the age group of 10-20 and 21-30 that is mostly Generation Z and Alpha responded more to the survey. The family income of 55% responses was 120,000 and above, also the respondents were educated having done undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Reliability analysis, correlation analysis and regression analysis (Process Hayes) was run on the data in SPSS software. The data was reliable and irritation had no or weak correlation with the variables which was later proved with regression results. This study again found out the direct relationships between the variables which were studied before and contributed by finding out indirect effects between the variables which were not studied before. Instagram and other social media platforms are being used by businesses as a marketing tool because of its smart advertising feature, which lets advertisers target specific audiences and customize their ads with eye-catching visuals that are crucial in supporting brands and businesses in overcoming obstacles. Furthermore, the study's conclusions indicate that a user's attitude towards a company, product, or service would be influenced by their intention to purchase based on the intimate self-disclosure and the para social relationships that exist between influencers and their followers.

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