The Role of Social Media Influencer Attributes in Driving Brand Awareness: A Structural Framework Analysis

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ABSTRACT :

This study investigates the impact of key influencer attributes: attractiveness, expertise, interactivity, and trustworthiness on brand. Grounded in the Source Credibility Model, the research highlights how these attributes influence consumer perceptions and behaviour, focusing on the emerging role of social media influencers in enhancing brand visibility. A structured survey targeting 403 active social media users examined these relationships, employing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to validate findings. The results reveal that interactivity is the most significant predictor of brand awareness, emphasizing the value of two-way communication and dynamic engagement strategies in fostering consumer trust and recall. Expertise and trustworthiness also emerged as critical factors, with influencers perceived as knowledgeable and credible being more effective in driving consumer engagement. Attractiveness, encompassing both physical appeal and social likability, was found to enhance audience retention and trust. The study underscores the importance of aligning influencer attributes with brand goals to maximize marketing outcomes. It contributes to the literature by extending the Source Credibility Model to influencer marketing and providing region-specific insights into consumer behavior. Practical recommendations emphasize strategic influencer selection, interactive campaign design, and ethical practices to build authentic consumer relationships. The findings have broad implications for marketers seeking to optimize influencer campaigns in diverse cultural contexts.

Keywords: Social media influencer, brand awareness, attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, interactivity, source credibility model

1. INTRODUCTION :

In today's interconnected digital landscape, social media platforms have fundamentally transformed how consumers interact with brands and make purchasing decisions. Globally, the number of active social media users has reached a staggering 4.89 billion in 2024, accounting for over 60% of the world's population (Statista, 2024). In India, this transformation is particularly evident, with 59.90% of the population approximately 862 million individuals actively engaging with platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube (GrabOn, 2024). Social media's rise has not only redefined communication but has also introduced innovative marketing strategies that prioritize consumer engagement and trust. Among these strategies, influencer marketing stands out as a powerful tool for building brand visibility, fostering customer loyalty, and driving purchase decisions. Influencers, defined as individuals with significant online followings and perceived expertise in specific niches, have become essential intermediaries between brands and consumers. By leveraging authentic and relatable endorsements, influencers are able to create a deep connection with their audiences, offering content that feels personal and credible (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Unlike traditional advertisements, influencer-generated content is often perceived as organic, relevant, and trustworthy, making it highly effective in capturing consumer attention and driving engagement (Pereira et al., 2014). Research supports this notion, with studies indicating that 61% of consumers trust influencer recommendations more than brand-driven ads (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2023). This trust underscores the growing reliance on influencer marketing as a means to enhance brand awareness and increase sales. The global influencer marketing industry reflects this growth trajectory, with its market size projected to reach $24 billion by 2024, up from $21.1 billion in 2023 (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2024). This expansion highlights the strategy's growing role in modern marketing, driven by its ability to combine relatability, authenticity, and reach. However, despite its success, influencer marketing is not without challenges. One significant issue is the declining credibility of influencers, as the industry becomes saturated with paid partnerships and promotional content (Mscience, 2019). Brands also face difficulties in identifying the right influencers who align with their values and resonate authentically with their target audiences. These challenges underscore the importance of selecting influencers based on critical attributes that determine their effectiveness. To address these challenges, it is essential to examine the key attributes that make influencers effective in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviours. This study focuses on four such attributes: expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and interactivity. Grounded in the Source Credibility Model, these dimensions have long been recognized as crucial in determining the success of persuasive communication (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990). Expertise refers to the influencer's knowledge and competence in a particular domain, which enhances their credibility as a reliable source of information (Chetioui et al., 2020). For instance, influencers specializing in technology, fitness, or fashion are perceived as authoritative figures, making their endorsements more persuasive. Trustworthiness relates to the influencer's honesty, integrity, and transparency. Research shows that consumers are more likely to engage

with influencers they perceive as genuine, as trust plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer attitudes (Reinikainen et al., 2020). Attractiveness encompasses both physical appeal and social likability, making the influencer's content more engaging and relatable (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Interactivity highlights the ability of influencers to foster dynamic, two-way communication with their audiences. Interactive strategies, such as live sessions, polls, and Q&A features, enable influencers to create personalized experiences that strengthen audience connections and enhance brand recall (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2020). While extensive research exists on the role of these attributes in traditional marketing, their application in the context of influencer marketing remains underexplored, particularly in culturally diverse regions like India. This study focuses on Jammu and Kashmir, a region with unique cultural and demographic characteristics that shape consumer behavior in distinct ways. Social media adoption in Jammu and Kashmir reflects broader national trends, presenting a growing opportunity for brands to engage with digitally connected audiences (Statista, 2024). However, the region's socio-cultural nuances necessitate a localized approach to influencer marketing, emphasizing authenticity and cultural relevance. This research aims to explore how influencer attributes influence brand awareness a fundamental marketing objective that encompasses recognition and recall. Brand awareness serves as the foundation for consumer decision-making, influencing whether consumers consider a brand during the purchase process (Keller, 1993). By examining the interplay between influencer attributes and brand awareness, this study seeks to provide actionable insights for optimizing influencer marketing strategies in the region. The study contributes to the existing literature in several significant ways. First, it extends the application of the Source Credibility Model to influencer marketing, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding how expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and interactivity shape consumer perceptions. Second, it focuses on the regional context of Jammu and Kashmir, addressing the gap in research on localized influencer marketing strategies in culturally diverse settings. Third, it provides practical recommendations for marketers, emphasizing the importance of selecting influencers whose attributes align with their brand goals and audience expectations. In assumption, as businesses navigate the complexities of the digital marketplace, influencer marketing continues to offer unparalleled opportunities for building trust and enhancing brand visibility. This study seeks to illuminate the pathways through which influencer attributes contribute to these outcomes, particularly in regions like Jammu and Kashmir, where consumer behaviour is shaped by distinct cultural and social dynamics. By addressing the challenges and opportunities of influencer marketing, this research aims to equip marketers with the tools to create impactful, culturally relevant campaigns that resonate with their audiences.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT :

2.1. Social media and influencer marketing

The emergence of social media networks has presented companies and brands with opportunities to utilize these platforms to accomplish their marketing and business objectives. Today, social media marketing is understood as an interdisciplinary and cross-functional process that leverages social media, often in conjunction with other communication channels, to achieve organizational goals by delivering value to stake holders (Felix et al., 2017). It can also be defined simply as "the practice of utilizing social media channels to promote business products or ser vices" (American Marketing Association). Influencer marketing is regarded as a form of social media marketing that assists companies and brands in increasing awareness and bolstering their image (Reinikainen et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). It is defined as a strategy in which "a firm selects and incentivizes online influencers to engage their followers on social media, leveraging these influencers' unique resources to promote the firm's offerings, with the ultimate goal of enhancing firm performance" (Leung et al., 2022). Social media influencers have emerged as a new type of endorsers (Sands et al., 2022), functioning as self-generated content creators who receive monetary or in-kind compensation in return (Campbell & Grimm, 2019). They are described as 'a new type of independent third-party endorser who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media' (Freberg et al., 2011) and as people who built a large network of followers and are regarded as trusted tastemakers in one or several niches' (De Veirman et al., 2017). An updated definition has been proposed by Lou and Yuan (2019) who defined an influencer as 'first and foremost a content generator: one who has a status of expertise in a specific area, who has cultivated a sizable number of captive followers who are of marketing value to brands by regularly producing valuable content via social media'. Influencer marketing is seen as a new type of marketing strategy where the influence of opinion leaders drives consumer purchase decisions and brand awareness. Over the last years, this strategy has been actively adopted by various organisations (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Scott, 2015). It is often defined as a form of marketing in which companies invest in selected influencers to promote their brands through the influencer's created social media content to their target audience (Giles & Edwards, 2018). While social media influencers are often described as celebrities and public figures, they are regular social media users who became known online by creating interesting and relevant social media content (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Social media influencers typically have expertise in selected areas and gain followers because of the specific content they create, whereas traditional celebrities could also be considered as social media influencers if they regularly create viral content on social media (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Also, celebrities achieve fame through traditional media and social media influencers are more seen as regular who became known on social media thanks to their relatable, close to fo lowers and original content (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Influencers are classified into celebrity influencers, mega influencers, macro influencers, micro influencers, and nano influencers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020), while other authors also classify them into celebrities, macro-influencers, professionals, micro-influencers, and nano-influencers (Schaefer, 2019). Thus, influencers differ in the size and the attributes of the audience, which is important for brands, when they choose them.

2.2 The relevance of Source credibility Model

In the context of endorsement, the source credibility model (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) indicates that information transmitted by a trustworthy source of communication can affect the attitude and beliefs of the customer (Erdogan, 1999). The characteristics of the source become important when there is a need to persuade the audience (Buda & Zhang, 2000). An influencer who is perceived as more credible can affect the purchase behaviour and willingness to buy of the target groups more, as they are seen to possess higher levels of competence and trustworthiness (Silvera & Austad, 2004). In

prior studies, credibility has been explored as a one-dimensional or multi-dimensional reality. In this study, we use a multi-dimensional approach with three components of credibility: expertise (competence), trustworthiness, and attractive ness (Lord & Putrevu, 2009; Ohanian, 1990).

Interactivity in the context of this research is the ability of influencers to create engaging, participatory experiences with their followers. Interactivity reflects the degree to which a communicator fosters two-way communication, allowing for real-time engagement and personal connections (Reinikainen et al., 2020). Influencers who engage in interactive activities, such as live sessions, polls, and Q&A features, enhance audience involvement, fostering a sense of belonging and deeper emotional connections. According to prior research, interactivity enhances audience perceptions of authenticity and plays a critical role in increasing brand awareness by allowing followers to actively engage with both the influencer and the endorsed product or service (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2020). Influencers who foster high levels of interactivity are more effective in shaping consumer perceptions, as they encourage dialogue and participation, making followers more aware of and connected to the brand. Interactivity ensures that audiences recall and recognize brands more easily by associating them with meaningful, engaging experiences. For instance, an influencer who responds to followers' questions about a product during a live session not only increases trust but also reinforces brand visibility. As followers become more engaged with the influencer's content, their awareness of the brand being endorsed increases, solidifying its position in the consumer's mind. Consumers are more likely to associate brands with influencers they perceive as interactive, particularly when influencers create personalized and participatory experiences. Interactivity thus strengthens the link between influencer credibility and brand awareness, allowing the endorsed brands to maintain visibility and relevance within the target audience. Therefore, the following hypothesis is raised:

H1: Interactivity of influencer has a positive and significant impact on brand awareness.

Expertise forms the backbone of an influencer's credibility, directly shaping consumer trust and the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. This variable extends beyond technical knowledge to encompass experiential understanding and the ability to present complex information in an accessible manner (Jin et al., 2019). The Source Credibility Model emphasizes expertise as one of the three primary dimensions of influencer credibility, underscoring its importance in consumer decision-making processes (Ohanian, 1990). For high-involvement products such as technology, fitness, and luxury goods, expertise is indispensable. Consumers actively seek influencers who can guide them through complex product features, offering detailed insights that facilitate informed decisions (Chetioui et al., 2020; Manzoor et al., 2023). Influencers specializing in niche domains, such as sustainable fashion or advanced technology, are perceived as authoritative figures whose endorsements carry significant weight. Vrontis et al. (2021) highlight that this alignment of expertise with product categories fosters deeper engagement and enhances brand credibility. In the context of influencer marketing, expertise also drives authenticity. Influencers who possess in-depth knowledge in their niche align naturally with the products they endorse, creating a sense of congruence that strengthens the perceived authenticity of their recommendations (Balaban et al., 2021). For instance, a medical professional endorsing healthcare product resonates more with audiences than a generic influencer due to their domain-specific expertise. This alignment fosters trust, encouraging followers to act on endorsements. Moreover, expertise influences long-term consumer behaviour by cultivating a perception of reliability. Studies demonstrate that expert-driven endorsements are particularly effective for high-stakes products, where consumers rely heavily on trusted sources for guidance. The credibility established through expertise also enhances consumer loyalty, as followers return to influencers they perceive as reliable for future recommendations (Shin & Lee, 2021). Thus, it is proposed that:

H2: Expertise of influencer has a positive and significant impact on brand awareness.

Trustworthiness is a cornerstone of effective influencer marketing, encompassing honesty, reliability, and transparency. It reflects the degree to which followers perceive an influencer as dependable and genuine, significantly affecting their engagement with endorsements. The Source Credibility Model positions trustworthiness alongside expertise and attractiveness as fundamental to influencer credibility (Ohanian, 1990). Influencers who genuinely align with the brands they endorse and communicate openly about their collaborations are perceived as more honest, fostering stronger consumer relationships (Vashisht & Pillai, 2017). Transparent disclosures, such as the use of #ad or #sponsored tags, further enhance this perception, reducing scepticism and reinforcing the influencer's integrity (Balaban et al., 2022). In an era where consumers are increasingly critical of promotional content, transparency has become a non-negotiable element of trustworthiness. Parasocial relationships amplify the impact of trustworthiness by creating emotional bonds between influencers and followers. These one-sided connections encourage followers to view influencers as approachable and relatable, increasing their receptiveness to endorsements (Rohde & Mau, 2021). Interactive content such as live Q&A sessions and personalized responses strengthens these relationships, making followers feel valued and heard. Trustworthiness also mediates the relationship between influencers and brand perception. Studies reveal that trusted influencers significantly enhance consumer attitudes toward brands, positioning them as credible and reliable (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). This influence extends to purchase intentions, as consumers are more likely to act on recommendations from influencers they perceive as trustworthy. In this context, trustworthiness serves as a bridge between influencer credibility and effective brand communication. Thus, it is expected that the attractiveness of a source will have a positive relationship with brand awareness and the following hypothesis is raised:

H3: Trustworthiness of influencer has a positive and significant impact on brand awareness.

Attractiveness in influencer marketing encompasses both physical appeal and social traits such as likability, relatability, and authenticity. These attributes enhance the influencer's ability to connect with audiences on an emotional level, making their endorsements more impactful (Reinikainen et al., 2020). The Source Credibility Model recognizes attractiveness as a critical factor influencing consumer perceptions of an influencer's credibility and persuasiveness (Ohanian, 1990). Physical attractiveness often captures initial attention, creating a positive impression that enhances consumer engagement. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) note that influencers who are perceived as physically appealing evoke admiration and trust, contributing to higher levels of consumer interaction. However, in the context of modern influencer marketing, social attractiveness defined by authenticity, likability, and relatability has become equally, if not more, important. Social attractiveness fosters deeper connections by aligning the influencer's persona with the audience's values and lifestyle. Influencers who are perceived as authentic and relatable resonate more with their followers, creating a sense of emotional connection that drives trust and loyalty (Pop et al., 2021). The congruence between an influencer's attractiveness and the endorsed

product further amplifies engagement. When there is a strong alignment between the influencer's image and the brand's identity, followers are more likely to perceive endorsements as genuine, strengthening brand recall and purchase intentions (Shin & Lee, 2021). However, brands must balance this alignment to avoid the "vampire effect," where the influencer's appeal overshadows the product, diminishing its visibility and impact (Erfgen et al., 2015). We anticipate that attractiveness of influencer plays a pivotal role in fostering or establishing a relationship with brand awareness.

H4: Attractiveness of influencer has a positive and significant impact on brand awareness.

Brand awareness, which includes recognition and recall, is a fundamental objective of influencer marketing. It serves as the gateway to brand loyalty, influencing consumer behaviour and fostering deeper connections between brands and their audiences (Keller, 1993). Influencers play a pivotal role in enhancing brand awareness by creating relatable content that resonates with their followers. Parasocial relationships significantly contribute to brand awareness, as followers are more likely to remember brands endorsed by influencers they trust. This relational dynamic underscore the importance of authenticity and transparency in influencer marketing, as followers value endorsements that feel genuine and credible (Kim & Kim, 2021). The alignment of influencer values with brand messaging further enhances awareness. Influencers who align their content with the brand's target audience create stronger connections, increasing brand recall and recognition (De Cicco et al., 2020). This effect is particularly pronounced in niche markets, where targeted campaigns resonate deeply with specific consumer segments. Transparency and credibility are also critical for building brand awareness. Influencers who maintain ethical practices and openly disclose sponsorships reinforce trust, making followers more receptive to brand messages. Balaban et al. (2022) highlight that transparent endorsements enhance brand recall by creating positive associations between the influencer and the product. The conceptual model is presented in Figure. 1
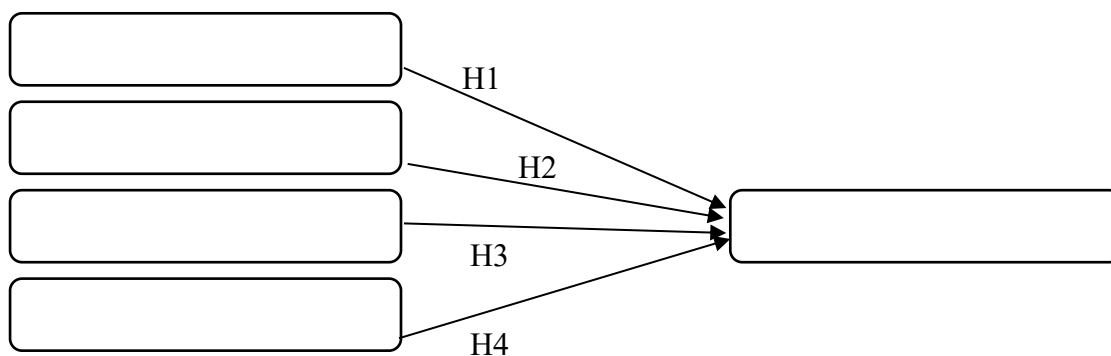
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY :

3.1 Measurement and Sampling

To address the research questions and examine the hypotheses, this study utilized a structured questionnaire for data collection through an online survey method. A descriptive research design was adopted to explore the relationships between influencer attributes Expertise, Trustworthiness, Attractiveness, and Interactivity and Brand Awareness (Malhotra & Dash, 2016). The survey targeted social media users in Jammu and Kashmir, ensuring relevance to the study's objectives. A total of 559 respondents were invited to complete the questionnaire distributed via Google Forms through email, WhatsApp, and social media platforms from June to December 2024. The online survey mode was chosen for its accessibility and cost-effectiveness, particularly to target a digitally active population (Khasawneh et al., 2021). The sample size aligns with the requirements for quantitative research, as a size between 200 and 400 is recommended for studies with fewer than five constructs (Hair et al., 2014), and a minimum of 150 is sufficient for research involving three or more independent variables (Saunders et al., 2012). To ensure the reliability, validity, and accuracy of the survey instrument, a pilot study was conducted with 30 respondents, and feedback was sought from three subject experts (Saunders et al., 2012). The finalized questionnaire was structured in two parts. The first section consisted of screening questions to confirm participants' relevance to the study. Respondents were asked whether they actively followed influencers on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, or Facebook, and if the influencers they followed had collaborated with brands. They were also asked whether they recognized such sponsored content as advertisements. The second section of the questionnaire included 23 close-ended questions measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). These questions covered five key constructs: Expertise, measured using five items adapted from Ohanian (1990); Trustworthiness, measured with four items from Ohanian (1990); Attractiveness, assessed with four items from Ohanian (1990); Interactivity, evaluated with four items adapted from Ooi et al. (2023); and Brand Awareness, measured using six items adapted from Sari et al. (2020) and Wu & Ho (2014). All items were drawn from previously validated studies and reviewed for contextual relevance to social media influencer marketing in Jammu and Kashmir. This approach ensured the questionnaire was tailored to the study's regional context while maintaining methodological rigor. The collected data provide a robust foundation for examining the impact of influencer marketing attributes on brand awareness.

This study employed a non-probability purposive sampling method, deemed appropriate for targeting individuals meeting specific criteria (Bhat et al., 2023a). Purposive sampling allowed the research to focus on respondents who actively engage with influencers and are familiar with influencer-endorsed products and services, ensuring the relevance of the sample to the study objectives (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). The inclusion criteria required respondents to be active social media users aged 18–45, follow at least one influencer on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, or Facebook, and have exposure to influencer-endorsed products or services. This method ensured that the respondents represented a digitally active segment

relevant to the study's scope. The final sample size of 559 responses exceeded the minimum threshold required for robust Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis, as studies involving five or fewer than five constructs typically recommend a sample size of 200–400 (Hair et al., 2014). Additionally, a pilot study involving 30 respondents was conducted to pretest the questionnaire, ensuring the reliability, validity, and accuracy of the measurement items. The collected data were analysed using Smart-PLS 4.0, a robust analytical tool ideal for testing causal relationships between latent variables (Bhat, et al., 2024; Dada et al., 2024; Bhat et al., 2023b). The analysis followed a two-step approach. First, the Measurement Model Assessment was conducted, evaluating the reliability of constructs using Cronbach's Alpha, assessing convergent validity through Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and confirming discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Second, the Structural Model Assessment tested the hypothesized relationships between influencer attributes (Expertise, Trustworthiness, Attractiveness, and Interactivity) and Brand Awareness through path coefficients, t-values, and p-values. The R^2 value for Brand Awareness was also calculated to determine the explained variance, with the model achieving strong predictive relevance. These data collection and analysis methods provide a comprehensive understanding of the influence of influencer marketing attributes on Brand Awareness among social media users in Jammu and Kashmir. This rigorous approach ensures the validity and reliability of the study findings.

4. RESULTS :

4.1 Measurement Model

In Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), outer loadings as shown in Table 1 represent the correlations between observed indicators and their corresponding latent constructs. High outer loadings indicate that the indicators are effective measures of their respective constructs, thereby confirming indicator reliability. Typically, loadings equal to or greater than 0.70 are considered strong, signifying that over 50% of the indicator's variance is explained by the latent construct. Loadings between 0.40 and 0.70 are acceptable but may be considered for removal if their exclusion enhances composite reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Loadings below 0.40 are generally deemed weak and may be candidates for removal. In the provided data, all indicators exhibit outer loadings well above the 0.70 threshold, confirming their reliability in measuring their respective constructs. This indicates that the measurement model possesses strong indicator reliability, contributing to the overall validity of the constructs within the PLS-SEM framework.

Table 1: Outer Loadings

	Attractiveness	Brand Awareness	Expertise	Interactivity	Trustworthiness
A1	0.974				
A2	0.919				
A3	0.865				
A4	0.924				
BA1		0.960			
BA2		0.866			
BA3		0.958			
BA4		0.976			
BA5		0.943			
BA6		0.899			
EI1			0.948		
EI2			0.914		
EI3			0.912		
EI4			0.944		
EI5			0.976		
I1				0.975	
I2				0.981	
I3				0.978	
I4				0.993	
T1					0.993
T2					0.978
T3					0.983
T4					0.977

The reliability analysis of the constructs, as summarized in Table 2, demonstrates robust internal consistency and convergent validity. Cronbach's Alpha values across all constructs surpass the minimum threshold of 0.70, ensuring that the scale items reliably measure their respective constructs. Attractiveness exhibits a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.94, while Brand Awareness, Expertise, Interactivity, and Trustworthiness achieve values of 0.971, 0.966, 0.988, and 0.988, respectively. These high scores indicate a high degree of internal consistency within each construct. The Composite Reliability (CR) values, which provide a more comprehensive measure of reliability, range from 0.957 (Attractiveness) to 0.991 (Interactivity and Trustworthiness). These values confirm that the items consistently represent their respective latent constructs. Additionally, rho_a, an alternative reliability measure, aligns closely with Cronbach's Alpha, further supporting the reliability of the constructs. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, which assess convergent validity, exceed the threshold of 0.50 for all constructs. Attractiveness achieves an AVE of 0.848, Brand Awareness records 0.873, Expertise shows 0.882, while Interactivity and Trustworthiness both exhibit AVEs of 0.964 and 0.966, respectively. These results indicate that the majority of the variance in observed variables is explained by their respective latent constructs, confirming strong convergent validity.

Table 2: Reliability Results

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Attractiveness	0.94	0.941	0.957	0.848
Brand Awareness	0.971	0.971	0.976	0.873
Expertise	0.966	0.967	0.974	0.882
Interactivity	0.988	0.988	0.991	0.964
Trustworthiness	0.988	0.988	0.991	0.966

The discriminant validity of the constructs was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. As shown in Table 3, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct is higher than its correlation with other constructs, confirming discriminant validity. For instance, Attractiveness exhibits a square root of AVE of 0.921, which is greater than its correlations with Brand Awareness (0.655), Expertise (0.544), Interactivity (0.678), and Trustworthiness (0.519).

Table 3: Discriminant Validity

	Attractiveness	Brand Awareness	Expertise	Interactivity	Trustworthiness
Attractiveness	0.921				
Brand Awareness	0.655	0.935			
Expertise	0.544	0.604	0.939		
Interactivity	0.678	0.712	0.587	0.982	
Trustworthiness	0.519	0.549	0.535	0.543	0.983

Similarly, Brand Awareness, Expertise, Interactivity, and Trustworthiness also meet the Fornell-Larcker criterion, with values such as 0.935, 0.939, 0.982, and 0.983, respectively, validating the distinctiveness of each construct. Multi-collinearity among constructs was evaluated using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), with results presented in Table 4. All VIF values are below the threshold of 3.0, indicating no significant multi-collinearity issues among the predictor variables. As Attractiveness has a VIF of 2.036, Expertise has a VIF of 1.758, Interactivity has the highest VIF at 2.208, and Trustworthiness has a VIF of 1.632. These values confirm that the constructs are independent and not overly correlated, ensuring reliable path coefficient estimations in the structural model.

Table 4: Multi-Collinearity

	Attractiveness	Brand Awareness	Expertise	Interactivity	Trustworthiness
Attractiveness		2.036			
Brand Awareness		0.000			
Expertise		1.758			
Interactivity		2.208			
Trustworthiness		1.632			

The predictive power of the model was assessed through the R² value, as presented in Table 5. Brand Awareness, the dependent variable, achieved an R² value of 0.602, indicating that 60.2% of the variance in Brand Awareness is explained by the independent variables (Attractiveness, Expertise,

Interactivity, and Trustworthiness). The adjusted R² value of 0.600 confirms the stability of the model's predictive capability after accounting for the number of predictors.

Table 5: R Square

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Brand Awareness	0.602	0.600

The overall model fit was assessed using multiple fit indices, as presented in Table 6. The results demonstrate that the structural model achieves a good fit to the data, meeting recommended thresholds for key indices. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value for both the Saturated Model and Estimated Model is 0.029, which is well below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating an excellent model fit. This confirms that the residuals between the observed and predicted covariance matrices are minimal. The discrepancy measures, d_ULS (0.228) and d_G (0.411), are within acceptable ranges, further supporting the adequacy of the model fit. The model's chi-square value is 1264.887, which, while statistically significant, is expected in large sample sizes. Instead of relying solely on this metric, complementary indices such as SRMR and NFI are emphasized for a holistic evaluation. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) value is 0.944, surpassing the recommended cutoff of 0.90, indicating that the hypothesized model fits the data significantly better than the null model, where all variables are assumed to be uncorrelated.

Table 6: Model Fit Indices

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.029	0.029
d_ULS	0.228	0.228
d_G	0.411	0.411
Chi-Square	1264.887	1264.887
NFI	0.944	0.944

4.2 Hypotheses Testing Results

The results of the hypothesis testing, as presented in Table 7, confirm the significant influence of influencer attributes like Attractiveness, Expertise, Interactivity, and Trustworthiness on Brand Awareness, with all hypotheses supported by statistically significant path coefficients and p-values below the 0.05 threshold (Bhat et al., 2023). Attractiveness positively impacts Brand Awareness ($\beta = 0.233$, $t = 5.298$, $p < 0.001$), underscoring that influencers' physical appeal and social charm play a crucial role in capturing consumer attention and fostering positive brand associations. This aligns with previous findings, such as De Veirman et al. (2017), which suggest that visually appealing influencers can enhance brand visibility and drive consumer engagement. Similarly, Expertise shows a positive relationship with Brand Awareness ($\beta = 0.191$, $t = 4.763$, $p < 0.001$), emphasizing that influencers with domain-specific knowledge and credibility are effective in shaping consumer perceptions. This is consistent with Lou and Yuan (2019), who highlighted that expertise fosters trust, making consumers more receptive to influencer-endorsed content and brand recommendations. Interactivity emerged as the most influential predictor of Brand Awareness ($\beta = 0.377$, $t = 7.640$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating the critical role of two-way communication and audience engagement. Interactive content, such as polls, Q&A sessions, and live streams, enables influencers to establish deeper connections with their followers, significantly enhancing consumer awareness of endorsed brands. These findings are supported by Forbes (2019), which emphasizes that interactive strategies allow brands to personalize their messaging and create memorable experiences, resulting in higher consumer recall and loyalty. Lastly, Trustworthiness significantly contributes to Brand Awareness ($\beta = 0.121$, $t = 3.567$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that influencers perceived as honest, sincere, and reliable build stronger relationships with their audiences. This finding is consistent with Reinikainen et al. (2020), who demonstrated that trustworthiness is essential in influencer marketing, as it leads to higher levels of consumer trust and positive brand associations.

Table 7: Hypothesis Tesing Results

Hypotheses/ Path	Estimate (β)	Std. Error	t-value	P-Value	Decision
Attractiveness -> Brand Awareness	0.233	0.044	5.298	0.000	Supported
Expertise -> Brand Awareness	0.191	0.040	4.763	0.000	Supported
Interactivity -> Brand Awareness	0.377	0.049	7.640	0.000	Supported
Trustworthiness -> Brand Awareness	0.121	0.034	3.567	0.000	Supported

These results highlight the multifaceted role of influencer attributes in enhancing Brand Awareness. While Attractiveness and Expertise play a crucial role in building initial interest and credibility, Interactivity stands out as a pivotal factor in maintaining engagement and fostering meaningful consumer connections. Trustworthiness acts as the foundation for sustaining long-term brand-consumer relationships. Together, these attributes provide a

comprehensive understanding of how influencer marketing strategies can be optimized to drive brand visibility, recall, and loyalty in the competitive landscape of social media marketing. These findings not only reinforce the theoretical underpinnings of influencer credibility but also offer actionable insights for marketers aiming to maximize the impact of their campaigns.
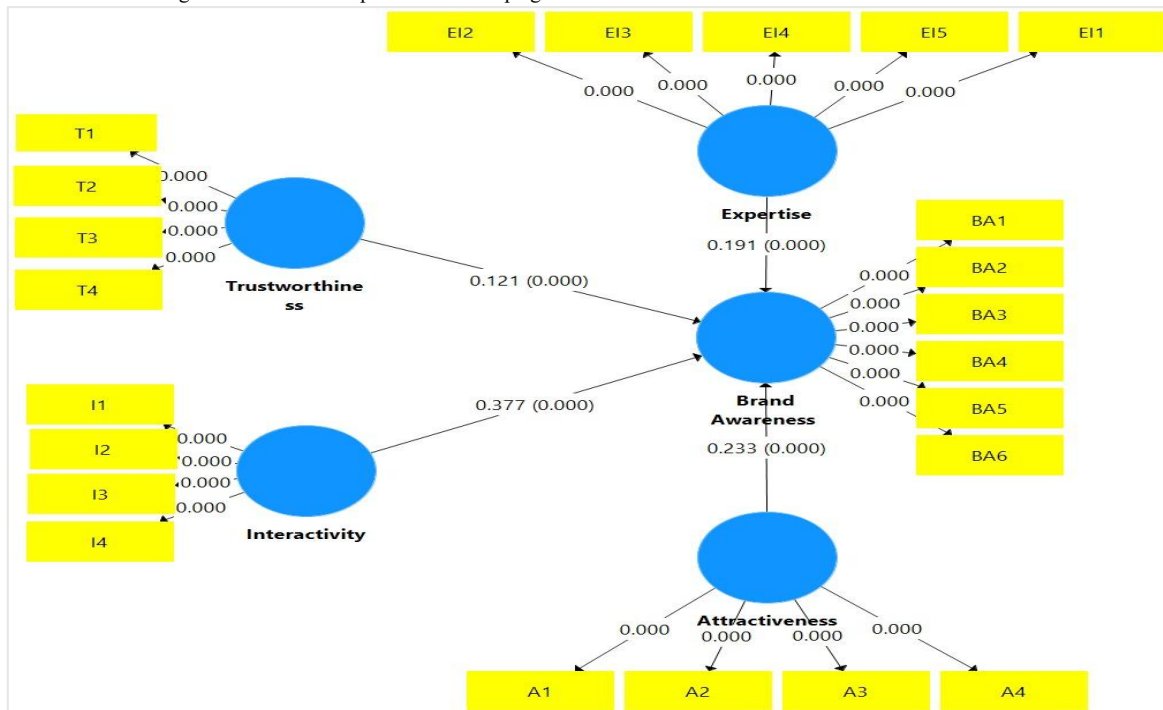

Figure 2: Structural Model

5. DISCUSSION :

This study investigates the role of influencer attributes; attractiveness, expertise, interactivity, and trustworthiness in enhancing brand awareness among social media users, providing both theoretical and practical insights. The findings highlight that each attribute exerts a unique and significant influence on consumer perceptions, aligned with the Source Credibility Model (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) and prior research. Attractiveness emerges as a critical factor, emphasizing the importance of an influencer's physical appeal and social charisma in capturing consumer attention. Studies have consistently shown that attractive influencers create favorable brand perceptions and drive consumer engagement (De Veirman et al., 2017; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Attractive influencers are perceived as aspirational figures, making their endorsements more impactful (Reinikainen et al., 2020). Additionally, their aesthetic appeal often leads to higher audience retention and brand recall (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). The congruence between an influencer's attractiveness and the brand's identity also enhances consumer trust (Shin & Lee, 2021). Furthermore, attractiveness influences the development of parasocial relationships, where followers perceive influencers as relatable and approachable (Pop et al., 2021; Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Visual elements, such as engaging photos and videos, further amplify the effectiveness of attractive influencers in boosting Brand Awareness (Kim & Kim, 2021; Lee & Watkins, 2016). Expertise plays a pivotal role in establishing influencer credibility, as influencers with domain-specific knowledge are perceived as reliable sources of information (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Chetioui et al., 2020). Expertise fosters consumer trust by aligning influencer content with the audience's informational needs (Hwang & Jeong, 2016). Influencers with demonstrated knowledge and skills in their niches enhance the perceived authenticity of their endorsements (Jin & Ryu, 2020; Martínez-López et al., 2020). This is particularly relevant for high-involvement products, where consumers actively seek detailed information before making decisions (Ooi et al., 2023; Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2020). Studies also suggest that expertise strengthens consumer confidence in the endorsed products, leading to higher engagement and loyalty (Rezeki & Ariefianto, 2023; Chan, 2020). Influencers who are perceived as experts are more likely to shape consumer attitudes and behaviors, ultimately driving Brand Awareness (Nazir & Wani, 2024; Cheung et al., 2022). Interactivity emerges as the strongest predictor of Brand Awareness, emphasizing the importance of two-way communication and dynamic engagement. Interactive content, such as polls, Q&A sessions, and live videos, fosters deeper connections between influencers and followers (Forbes, 2019; Jin et al., 2019). Interactivity enables influencers to personalize content, catering to the specific preferences of their audience (Ren et al., 2022; Sari et al., 2020). This active engagement encourages followers to participate in brand-related activities, thereby increasing brand recall (Wismiarsi et al., 2024; Conde & Casais, 2023). Additionally, interactive communication builds a sense of community, enhancing trust and loyalty (Chowdhury et al., 2023; Malik et al., 2022). Parasocial relationships are significantly strengthened through interactivity, as followers perceive influencers as approachable and relatable (Tafesse & Wood, 2021; Sokolova & Perez, 2021). Research also suggests that interactive campaigns are particularly effective in creating memorable consumer experiences, leading to sustained Brand Awareness (Leung et al., 2022; Pop et al., 2021). Trustworthiness, though exhibiting a relatively lower coefficient, remains a foundational element in building long-term consumer relationships. Influencers perceived as sincere, honest, and reliable generate greater trust among their followers, which positively impacts Brand Awareness (Reinikainen et al., 2020; Hwang & Jeong, 2016). Trustworthiness reduces skepticism toward influencer endorsements, enhancing the perceived authenticity of brand messages (Boerman & Van Reijmersdal, 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Influencers who disclose sponsorships transparently are viewed as more credible, further strengthening consumer trust (Balaban et al., 2022; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Studies highlight that

trustworthiness enhances the effectiveness of influencer marketing by fostering deeper consumer engagement and loyalty (Chetioui et al., 2020; Tafesse & Wood, 2021). The development of parasocial relationships is also linked to perceived trustworthiness, as followers feel a stronger connection to influencers they trust (Nazir & Wani, 2024; Ooi et al., 2023).

5.1 Implications of the Research

This research provides significant theoretical and practical implications for influencer marketing, emphasizing how attributes such as Attractiveness, Expertise, Interactivity, and Trustworthiness influence Brand Awareness. These insights contribute to the broader understanding of the role influencers play in shaping consumer perceptions, bridging gaps in existing literature, and offering actionable strategies for marketers. From a theoretical perspective, this study validates and extends the applicability of the Source Credibility Model (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) by demonstrating that Attractiveness, Expertise, and Trustworthiness collectively enhance Brand Awareness. Previous studies (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Chetioui et al., 2020) have explored these constructs in isolated contexts, but this research integrates them into a holistic framework specific to social media influencer marketing. Additionally, the study aligns with the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which posits that reciprocal interactions between influencers and their followers foster trust and loyalty. The inclusion of Interactivity as a predictor expands the theoretical understanding of influencer-follower dynamics by highlighting the importance of two-way communication in building meaningful consumer relationships, as supported by Forbes (2019) and Tafesse & Wood (2021). The findings also contribute to the understanding of how influencer attributes affect consumer behavior across different stages of the decision-making process. By linking influencer characteristics to Brand Awareness, this research provides a foundation for future studies to explore their impact on other marketing outcomes, such as purchase intentions and brand loyalty (De Veirman et al., 2017; Sokolova & Perez, 2021). Furthermore, the regional focus on Jammu and Kashmir adds contextual richness, emphasizing the need for localized strategies in influencer marketing, which can vary significantly across different cultural and demographic settings. The practical implications of this research are equally noteworthy, offering actionable strategies for marketers and practitioners. First, the strong impact of Attractiveness on Brand Awareness suggests that marketers should prioritize influencers who align with their brand's visual identity and target audience preferences. Attractiveness not only draws consumer attention but also enhances engagement and recall (Reinikainen et al., 2020; Shin & Lee, 2021). However, brands must ensure that the influencer's appeal complements the brand's values to avoid the "vampire effect," where the influencer overshadows the brand (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Second, the significant role of Expertise highlights the need for selecting influencers with domain-specific knowledge. Influencers perceived as credible experts are more likely to build trust and positively influence consumer perceptions (Hwang & Jeong, 2016; Martínez-López et al., 2020). Marketers targeting high-involvement product categories, such as technology or fitness, should collaborate with influencers who demonstrate a deep understanding of their niche. This approach ensures that brand messages resonate with informed consumers, leading to higher engagement and awareness. Third, the study underscores Interactivity as the most influential attribute, emphasizing the importance of dynamic and personalized engagement strategies. Interactive content, such as live sessions, polls, and Q&A features, fosters stronger consumer connections and enhances brand recall (Ren et al., 2022; Conde & Casais, 2023). Marketers should invest in creating interactive campaigns that encourage active participation from followers, as these campaigns are more likely to generate memorable consumer experiences and long-term loyalty (Forbes, 2019; Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Additionally, leveraging real-time feedback and co-creating content with audiences can further amplify consumer engagement and brand visibility. Finally, the role of Trustworthiness in enhancing Brand Awareness highlights the importance of transparency and authenticity in influencer marketing. Influencers who openly disclose sponsorships and maintain honest communication are perceived as more credible, reducing consumer scepticism (Balaban et al., 2022; Sokolova & Perez, 2021). Brands should ensure that their collaborations with influencers prioritize ethical practices, as authenticity is critical for building trust and fostering positive brand associations (Reinikainen et al., 2020). Trustworthiness is especially crucial in regions like Jammu and Kashmir, where consumers are increasingly cautious about the authenticity of brand messages. For managers and practitioners, this research underscores the need to adopt a strategic approach to influencer selection and engagement. Marketers should conduct thorough evaluations of potential influencers, considering their alignment with the brand's identity, expertise in the relevant domain, ability to create interactive content, and perceived trustworthiness among their followers. Moreover, regional variations in consumer behaviour should guide the customization of influencer marketing strategies to ensure cultural and demographic relevance.

5.2 Suggestion for future studies and conclusion

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of influencer attributes ; Attractiveness, Expertise, Interactivity, and Trustworthiness in enhancing Brand Awareness, there are opportunities for further exploration to deepen the understanding of influencer marketing dynamics. First, future research could examine the mediating and moderating effects of other psychological constructs, such as trust, consumer engagement, and brand loyalty, to better understand the mechanisms through which influencer attributes impact consumer behaviour. Exploring how cultural and demographic factors influence the effectiveness of these attributes, particularly in different regional contexts, would provide a more nuanced perspective. Second, while this study focuses on quantitative analysis, future studies could adopt qualitative or mixed-method approaches to gain richer insights into consumer perceptions of influencers and their endorsement strategies. In-depth interviews, focus groups, or ethnographic studies could reveal how consumers interpret influencer messages and the factors that drive their trust and engagement. Third, the longitudinal effects of influencer marketing on Brand Awareness and consumer loyalty warrant investigation. Understanding whether and how the impact of influencer attributes persists over time would provide valuable insights into the sustainability of influencer marketing campaigns. Additionally, future research could explore the role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR) in enhancing influencer marketing effectiveness, as these tools are increasingly being used to create immersive and personalized consumer experiences. Lastly, this study focuses on a specific region like Jammu and Kashmir. Replicating the study in diverse cultural and economic settings would offer a broader understanding of the global applicability of the findings. Investigating the role of influencer attributes in niche markets, such as eco-friendly or luxury brands, could also provide valuable insights for targeted marketing strategies.

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