



The Impact of De-influencing Marketing on Consumer Purchase Intention

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ABSTRACT:

De-influencing, a new trend that involves social media personalities suggesting not to purchase specific items, is the opposite of traditional influencer marketing. This study investigates the relationship between de-influencer credibility and consumer trust, as well as consumer trust and the de-influencer authenticity, and the latter relationship between consumer trust and purchase intention. Primary data was obtained from a structured questionnaire administered to 120 social media users which is mainly composed of young Instagram users. The instrument showed acceptable to excellent reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$ to 0.92). Results indicated that chi-square tests revealed that gender and daily social media use and how often they see de-influenced content are significantly associated with purchase-intention level. An analysis using one-way ANOVA demonstrated that purchase intention varied between age groups, but not by platform, while consumer trust varied by platform. All hypotheses were supported by linear regression, with the credibility hypothesis predicting consumer trust ($\beta = 0.69$), the authenticity hypothesis predicting consumer trust ($\beta = 0.71$), and the relationship between consumer trust and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.76$), and between credibility and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.73$). Credibility, authenticity and trust accounted for 67.8% of the variance in the purchase intention, with trust being the strongest predictor. The results indicate that brands can reap rewards of collaborating with credible, authentic and transparent creators, not just as a threat of de-influencing.

Keywords: De-influencing, Purchase intention, Consumer trust, Credibility, Authenticity, Social media marketing, Consumer skepticism

Introduction:

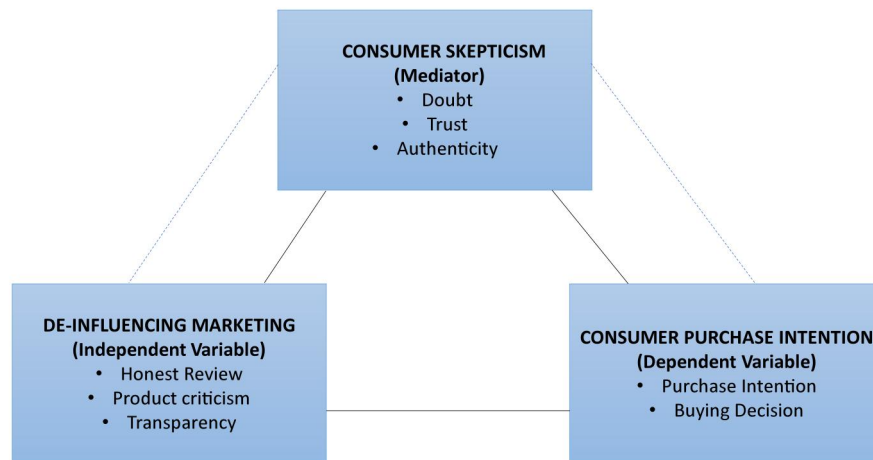
Social media influencers are a focal point for consumers to learn about and assess products. However, paid promotions are becoming more apparent to followers, leading to a growing sense of scepticism towards endorsements that seem scripted or commercial. In this regard, de-influencing has become a thing. It is a type of content where creators discourage following certain products, criticize over-hyped products, question unwarranted purchases, and suggest more budget-friendly options.

De-influencing is a double-edged sword for marketers. Information that dissuades buying could lower the demand for the good or service but it also would increase the credibility of the creator and the trust of the audience in what the creator has to say. Expertise and trustworthiness are identified as key elements of persuasion (Ohanian, 1990) and trust is seen as one of the salient bases of favourable behaviour toward an exchange partner in the context of relationship-marketing research (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). It is an empirical question whether these mechanisms are also in play for de-influencers, and whether these lead to purchase intention.

This study thus investigates effects of the credibility and authenticity of the de-influencer on consumer trust, consumer trust on purchase intention and demographics and platform-based differences. The rest of the paper provides the conceptual framework, hypotheses, methodology, analysis and conclusions.

Review of Literature:

The study reveals that Gen Z is influenced by social media creators (trust and authenticity) and de-influencers (mindful consumption and skepticism towards marketing). The rise of livestreaming and P2P approaches are noted as promising engagements tools, while a greater focus on ethical and sustainable consumer behavior is observed.

Conceptual framework:

The conceptual framework is de-influencing marketing (honest review, product criticism and transparency) → consumer skepticism (doubt, trust and authenticity) → consumer purchase intention (purchase intention and buying decision). The framework signifies that consumers make judgements about the creator and products being promoted based on the honesty, critical, and transparent de-influencing content, and these judgements affect what consumers want to purchase.

The framework was operationalised into the following hypotheses: H1, H2, H3 and H4 for empirical testing. The credibility and authenticity of the De-influencer are treated as antecedents for consumer trust, while credibility and trust are treated as antecedents of the purchase intention. The degree of transparency, product criticism and consumer skepticism was also assessed and is presented in the descriptive and correlation results.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the impact of the credibility of de-influencer on consumer purchase intention.
2. To examine Authenticity-Consumer Trust relationship.
3. To assess the impact consumer trust has on purchase intention.
4. To understand the different effects of de-influencing on various social media.

Research Hypothesis

- H1: The finding shows that the credibility of de-influencer has a significant and positive influence on consumer trust.
- H2: The authenticity is significantly positively related to consumer trust.
- H3: Trust of the consumers also plays a crucial role in the purchase intention.
- H4: The credibility of de-influencers significantly affects people's purchase intentions.

Research Methodology**Research design**

The study is descriptive, cross sectional and also quantitative of survey approach. It examines between hypothesized relationships among de-influencer credibility, authenticity, consumer trust, and purchase intention and between respondent groups.

Sample and data collection

This study collected data online from 120 social media users who acknowledge that they see de-influencing content from 31 August to 2 September 2026. A non-probability sampling approach was used. As seen in Table 1 the sample is student dominated in a young age group.

Research instrument

The questionnaire had two parts. Part A contained ten questions on age, gender, education, occupation, monthly income, daily social media use,

preferred platform, frequency of viewing de-influencing content, main platform for viewing de-influencing content, and type of content viewed. Part B contained 26 statements measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), grouped into seven constructs. Construct scores are the mean of their items.

Table 1: Constructs and measurement items

Construct	Items	Example item
Credibility	3	De-influencers have sufficient expertise to evaluate products.
Authenticity	3	De-influencers express their genuine opinions about products.
Transparency	3	De-influencers clearly disclose their relationships with brands.
Product criticism / honest review	6	De-influencers are willing to criticise products honestly.
Consumer trust	3	I trust de-influencers when they provide negative opinions about products.
Consumer skepticism	3	I become more skeptical of products promoted heavily on social media.
Purchase intention	5	I am willing to postpone a purchase after viewing negative de-influencing content.

Statistical tools

Data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel and using Python as a cross-check. Cronbach's alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument and the minimum acceptable value was 0.70 as determined by Nunnally & Bernstein (1994). The chi-square test of independence was used to test associations between categorical variables with Cramér's V as the effect size. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare the mean scores among groups followed by Tukey HSD post-hoc comparisons and an eta-squared (η^2) effect size. Simple and multiple regression were used to test hypotheses H1 to H4. Throughout the significance level was set at 0.05 throughout.

Table 2: Respondent profile (N = 120)

Variable	Category	n	%
Age	18–25	75	62.5
	Below 18	23	19.2
	36–45	13	10.8
	26–35	9	7.5
Gender	Female	83	69.2
	Male	33	27.5
	Prefer not to say	4	3.3
Education	Undergraduate	81	67.5
	Postgraduate	18	15.0
	Other	17	14.2
	Higher Secondary	4	3.3
	Student	94	78.3
	Business	18	15.0
	Other	4	3.3
	Salaried Employee	4	3.3
	Below ₹20,000	79	65.8
	Above ₹80,000	23	19.2
	₹40,001–₹60,000	13	10.8
	₹60,001–₹80,000	5	4.2
	2–4 hours	40	33.3
	1–2 hours	26	21.7
	More than 6 hours	25	20.8
	4–6 hours	24	20.0

Variable	Category	n	%
	Less than 1 hour	5	4.2
Frequency of viewing de-influencing content	Sometimes	60	50.0
	Often	36	30.0
	Rarely	19	15.8
	Never	5	4.2
Main platform for de-influencing content	Instagram	78	65.0
	YouTube	32	26.7
	Facebook	10	8.3

Most respondents were aged 18–25 (62.5%), female (69.2%), undergraduate students (67.5%) and in the lowest income band (65.8%). Instagram was the main platform for viewing de-influencing content (65.0%), followed by YouTube (26.7%) and Facebook (8.3%). Half of the respondents (50.0%) viewed such content sometimes and 30.0% viewed it often.

Reliability and descriptive statistics

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and reliability of constructs

Construct	Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Credibility	3	2.99	0.96	0.834
Authenticity	3	3.51	0.88	0.849
Transparency	3	3.17	0.86	0.756
Product criticism / honest review	6	3.36	0.99	0.915
Consumer trust	3	3.05	0.97	0.848
Consumer skepticism	3	3.49	0.97	0.837
Purchase intention	5	3.38	0.93	0.906

The internal consistency of the scales is good with all constructs above the 0.70 cut-off ($\alpha = 0.76$ to 0.92). The mean scores were very close to the midpoint of the scale or above. Authenticity (3.51) and consumer skepticism (3.49) were the top two, with credibility (2.99) and consumer trust (3.05) being the lowest. De-influencers are therefore seen as genuine by the respondents, who are more skeptical towards the heavily promoted products but are less convinced of their expertise.

Correlation analysis

Table 4: Pearson correlations among constructs

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Credibility	1						
2. Authenticity	0.83	1					
3. Consumer trust	0.69	0.71	1				
4. Purchase intention	0.73	0.74	0.76	1			
5. Transparency	0.83	0.84	0.66	0.64	1		
6. Product criticism / honest review	0.64	0.72	0.74	0.79	0.65	1	
7. Consumer skepticism	0.65	0.70	0.83	0.82	0.53	0.79	1

The correlation between all constructs were positive and strong. Consumer skepticism ($r = 0.82$), product criticism ($r = 0.79$), consumer trust ($r = 0.76$), authenticity ($r = 0.74$) and credibility ($r = 0.73$) were the factors linked to purchase intention. There was high inter-correlation between the three variables, credibility, authenticity and transparency ($r = 0.83$ to 0.84), as it does on the regression section where it is tested for multicollinearity.

*Chi-square tests of independence***Table 5: Chi-square test results**

Variables	N	χ^2	df	p	Cramér's V	Result
Gender × Viewing frequency	116	8.20	2	.017	0.266	Associated
Gender × Purchase-intention level	116	8.22	2	.016	0.266	Associated
Daily social media use × Purchase-intention level	120	27.66	4	< .001	0.339	Associated
Viewing frequency × Purchase-intention level	120	30.85	4	< .001	0.359	Associated

Gender and viewing frequency were significantly associated, $\chi^2(2, N = 116) = 8.20$, $p = .017$. Most women felt that de-influencing content was sometimes (56.6% against 27.3% of men) while men were more likely to feel that it was often (42.4% vs 26.5% of women).

Gender was also associated with purchase-intention level, $\chi^2(2, N = 116) = 8.22$, $p = .016$. 37.3% of women, and 15.2% of men, reported high level purchase intention, with the majority of men in the moderate purchase intention category (69.7%).

Daily social media use was strongly associated with purchase-intention level, $\chi^2(4, N = 120) = 27.66$, $p = < .001$, $V = 0.34$. Light users (2–4 hours per day) are most likely to report a high purchase intention (57.5%), while heavy users (more than 4 hours) are least likely to report a high purchase intention (10.2%).

Viewing frequency was also strongly associated with purchase-intention level, $\chi^2(4, N = 120) = 30.85$, $p = < .001$, $V = 0.36$. Among those who watched frequently 63.9% indicated high purchase intent, while 28.3% of those who watched occasionally indicated the same and none of the rare or non-viewers indicated high purchase intent. The number of cells observed was slightly less than the number expected (5 is the lower limit, and 4.6 is the observed number) and would fall within the usual range of no more than 20% of the cells. The findings presented here are only indicative of association, not causation.

*One-way ANOVA***Table 6: One-way ANOVA results (group mean (SD))**

Outcome	Factor	Group means (SD)	F	df	p	η^2
Purchase intention	Main platform	Instagram 3.32 (1.05); YouTube 3.36 (0.67); Facebook 3.90 (0.11)	1.75	2, 117	.178	0.029
Consumer trust	Main platform	Instagram 2.90 (1.07); YouTube 3.19 (0.64); Facebook 3.83 (0.53)	4.85	2, 117	.009	0.077
Purchase intention	Age group	Below 18 3.90 (0.58); 18–25 3.16 (1.02); 26+ 3.59 (0.55)	6.82	2, 117	.002	0.104
Purchase intention	Daily social media use	Up to 2 hrs 3.37 (1.15); 2–4 hrs 3.54 (1.10); More than 4 hrs 3.26 (0.52)	1.03	2, 117	.360	0.017
Purchase intention	Viewing frequency	Rarely/Never 3.09 (0.38); Sometimes 3.35 (0.89); Often 3.63 (1.16)	2.55	2, 117	.082	0.042

Objective 4: Is de-influencing different on different platforms? Purchase intention did not differ significantly by main platform, $F(2, 117) = 1.75$, $p = .178$, $\eta^2 = 0.029$. Consumer trust did differ, $F(2, 117) = 4.85$, $p = .009$, $\eta^2 = 0.077$. This test, Tukey's test indicated that the mean difference between the Facebook and Instagram users was statistically significant (mean difference = 0.94, $p = .010$). The other comparisons were not significant. This is a preliminary finding in a small Facebook group ($n = 10$).

Purchase intention differed by age group, $F(2, 117) = 6.82$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = 0.104$. The mean difference for purchase intention was significantly higher for all respondents younger than 18 than for 18-25-year-olds (mean difference = 0.73, $p = .002$), but there was no significant difference between the mean scores for the other age comparisons. There was no significant difference in purchase intention between the various levels of daily social media use ($p = .360$) or viewing frequency ($p = .082$), but the means increased with the number of views.

The purchase-intention scores do not follow a normal distribution and group variances are unequal, as is typical for bounded scores with Likert scales. The purchase intention platform result is confirmed by Kruskal-Wallis test ($p = .164$); the age and trust-by-platform results are confirmed by Kruskal-Wallis test and Welch test.

*Regression analysis and hypothesis testing***Table 7: Simple linear regressions (hypotheses H1 to H4)**

Hyp.	Path	B	SE	β	t	p	R ²	F
H1	Credibility → Consumer trust	0.697	0.068	0.688	10.30	< .001	0.473	106.07
H2	Authenticity → Consumer trust	0.783	0.071	0.712	11.01	< .001	0.507	121.18
H3	Consumer trust → Purchase intention	0.726	0.057	0.760	12.70	< .001	0.578	161.34
H4	Credibility → Purchase intention	0.708	0.061	0.732	11.68	< .001	0.536	136.45

H1 is supported. Consumer trust was strongly positively influenced by De-influencer credibility with a variance accounted for of 47.3% ($B = 0.70$, $\beta = 0.69$, $p < .001$). H2 is supported. Authenticity had a significant positive effect on trust ($B = 0.78$, $\beta = 0.71$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.51$). If credibility and authenticity were both entered, both were still significant ($B = 0.32$, $p = .006$ for credibility; $B = 0.50$, $p < .001$ for authenticity; $R^2 = 0.54$) with authenticity being the stronger of the two.

H3 is supported. Consumer trust had a significant positive effect on purchase intention ($B = 0.73$, $\beta = 0.76$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.58$). H4 is supported. The credibility of the de-influencer positively and significantly predicted purchase intention ($B = 0.71$, $\beta = 0.73$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.54$).

Table 8: Multiple regression predicting purchase intention

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	VIF
Credibility	0.233	0.094	0.241	2.49	.014	3.37
Authenticity	0.257	0.105	0.245	2.45	.016	3.60
Consumer trust	0.401	0.074	0.420	5.41	< .001	2.16
(Constant)	0.559	0.202		2.76	.007	

The fit of the combined model was a good one as it accounted for 67.8% of variance in purchase intention with the credibility, authenticity and consumer trust variables collectively. All three predictors were significant with trust being the strongest ($\beta = 0.42$). When credibility was added to the model, it was reduced from $B = 0.71$ (when entered alone) to $B = 0.23$. This is a recurring theme in the correlation of trust with credibility, but a formal mediation test would be necessary to ascertain this. All variance inflation factors ranged from 2.16 to 3.60 which is lower than a typical threshold of 5 and therefore multicollinearity is not a significant issue.

Table 9: Summary of hypothesis tests

Hypothesis	Result
H1: Credibility has a significant positive effect on consumer trust	Supported
H2: Authenticity has a significant positive effect on consumer trust	Supported
H3: Consumer trust has a significant effect on purchase intention	Supported
H4: Credibility has a significant effect on purchase intention	Supported

The results of the study showed that objective 1, credibility has a positive and significant influence on consumer trust ($\beta = 0.69$) and on buying intention ($\beta = 0.73$). Objective 2: authenticity with consumer's trust is strongly and positively related ($\beta = 0.71$). Objective 3 (consumer trust) is the strongest predictor in the combined model ($\beta = 0.76$) and has a strong influence on purchase intention. Objective 4: Facebook users are more likely to purchase than Instagram users, with a higher level of trust among Facebook users.

Discussion

These findings indicate that the closer consumers perceive de-influencers to be to them in terms of credibility and authenticity, the more they will trust them, and the more they will be inclined to purchase after viewing de-influencers' content. This is consistent with source-credibility and trust based theories of persuasion (Ohanian, 1990; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The purchase intention here is assessed using indicators like comparing options, delaying purchases and avoiding purchases that are not needed, so that the higher the score, the more considered the purchase decision, and not just the more purchases.

Authenticity was found to be a better indicator of trust than credibility, meaning that people are more likely to trust a creator that comes across as sincere, rather than knowledgeable. The fact that purchase intention correlated highly with consumer skepticism and product criticism also implies that the critical and sceptical mindset that de-influencing aims to foster is related to how consumers make their purchase decisions. The mediation role for

skepticism was not formally tested in the framework, and can be studied in further research.

The results of the chi-square tests suggest that the association between heavier or more frequent exposure and stronger intention is not always positive. Those who watched these videos on a daily basis had the highest level of purchase intention, and those who watched them more than four hours a day had the lowest level of purchase intention. Ages also had an impact with younger people (under 18) getting the highest score. These are associations in a young (student) sample and should not be interpreted as causal.

Conclusion

In this paper, the relationship between de-influencing content and consumer trust and purchase intention was analyzed. Support was found for all four hypotheses: credibility and authenticity increased consumer trust and both credibility and trust were positively related to purchase intention. The combination of credibility, authenticity and trust accounted for 67.8% of the variance in purchase intention. There were no significant differences among intent to purchase by platform, and trust was found to be higher for Facebook users than Instagram users.

Managerial Implications

De-influencing should not be interpreted as just a threat, but as a signal of trust building for brands. Working with creators who are seen as credible, authentic and open about brand relationships is likely to make audiences more receptive to product information. Authenticity made the biggest difference in predicting trust, so brands should stay away from scripted or over-managed collaborations. As purchase intention did not differ significantly by platform, it is irrelevant to consider differences in persuasion and platform choice should not be based on them. There are differences in age and usage, indicating that campaigns should be geared towards younger audiences and moderate users as opposed to very heavy users.

Future research and limitations

The sample is small, non-random, young, student dominated and focused on Instagram, therefore results can't be generalized to all consumers. The Facebook group is very small. Data are self-reported and cross-sectional and regression results indicate association, not causation. Items were not factored into constructs, but were simply classified by content. Larger and more diverse random sample, testing de-influencing to include consumer skepticism as a mediator with structural equation modelling, confirmatory factor analysis scales, and an experimental comparison between de-influencing and traditional influencer endorsements.

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