

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON CONSUMERS PURCHASE INTENTIONS TO BUY PAKISTANI FOOD: INVESTIGATING THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CONSUMER ATTITUDE

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to find out how influencers affect consumers' purchase intentions to purchase Pakistani food. This paper evaluates the relationship between expertise online, trust in online influencers, influencer credibility, influencer attractiveness, and the mediating function of consumer attitude toward consumer purchase intention. A closed-ended questionnaire having a Likert scale of 5 points is used. Data is collected from 250 respondents. These respondents are users of social media who follow at least one food influencer. The result from smart PLS 4 indicates that online experts, trust, credibility, and attractiveness impact consumer purchase intention. Customer attitude works as a mediator between independent and dependent variables. This study has benefits for business owners and marketers in online marketing. The study aids in better comprehension of the power of online influencers as well as the choice of marketing tactics for business development.

Keywords: Social media influencer (SMI), Expertise Online (EO), Trust in Online Influencer (TOI), Influencer Credibility (IC), Influencer Attractiveness (IA), Consumer Attitude (CA), Consumer Purchase intention (CPI), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

INTRODUCTION

Social media sites would inevitably be exploited for marketing purposes once they were established (Freberg et al., 2011). Influencer marketing, a new style of advertising in which companies and social media influencers team together to promote their products, has recently gained popularity (De Veirman et al., 2017). We're all aware of the idea of utilizing social media influencers to market items; before these platforms existed, businesses used public figures like actors and other celebrities to advertise their goods and build their brands (Ford, 2018). Due to the increase in internet usage and the prominence of social media platforms, businesses must sell their brands more than ever on online platforms (Ki et al., 2020). On the other hand, social

media influencers (SMI) have worked hard to build a following on platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. Social media influencers, also known as influencers, are increasingly used to tell online followers about new things and promotions by employing various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube (Lim et al., 2017). These influencers actively create User Generated Content (UGC), which includes sharing multimedia content and providing feedback to followers on tried-and-true services and goods.

User-generated content and influencer-created content are both more credible to consumers than traditional advertising and vendor-provided

information, respectively (Nielsen Catalina Solutions, 2016). The brand uses influencers more frequently than celebrities as a result. Rather than celebrities or media endorsements, people will be more likely to trust one another. Before buying, customers will look for it (Akyüz, 2013). Influencers' reviews or posts on social media are used to inform consumers about particular products. It's important to note that the age of those influencers varied, and 55% of those clients claimed that influencers or bloggers on social media had told them about a new good, service, or company (Nielsen, 2015). Engaging influencers can also assist new brands in obtaining more reviews, and further study can result in more customer purchases (Laohasukkasem et al., 2021).

Consequently, from a consumer's perspective, internet influencers are crucial for purchasing. Many academics are concentrating on luxury goods due to the recent growth in social media trends and influencers. A different class of influencers exists, namely those in the food industry. An increase in social media influencers has allowed researchers to investigate how social influence affects consumer behavior in the digital era. Managers may create effective alliances and increase the likelihood of positively impacting purchase intention by conducting research on criteria including audience demographics, engagement rates, content alignment, and influencer reputation. Businesses can partner with influencers to advertise their products and services by selecting influencers whose audiences fit their target market. A rise in sales could result from better customer relations, brand recognition, and customer engagement.

Food influencers also display food love for eating and provide information about food (Cox & Blake, 2011). Very limited research must be done on how online influencers affect consumers' purchasing intentions. As a result, the earlier study should address some factors, including expertise-online influencers, trust in online influencers, the credibility of online influencers, and the mediating effect of attitude toward Purchase intention. This study fills the knowledge vacuum by elaborating on these significant elements within a conceptual framework, "Influence of Social Media". The study's focus is "Influencers on Food Purchase Intentions of Pakistani Consumers." Owners of businesses and marketers who work in web marketing may find it useful. The study helps

marketers choose the best methods for their online businesses and understand the power of influencers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Planned Behavior

According to TPB, attitudes, subjective standards, and perceptions of behavioral control are excellent indicators of intention and behavior. TPB is a result of the justification of action theory proposed by (Douglass, 1977). Two latent variables, attitudes, and subjective norms, were presented as potential tools for evaluating intention. According to the idea, attitudes and arbitrary norms serve as the primary drivers of behavioral intentions, which in turn determine individual behavior. The aim was to predict human behavior (such as purchasing, making decisions, or acting in response to circumstances or subjective context). Therefore, the theory is based on two key assumptions: the relationship between observed magnitudes (attitude) and potential activities that consumers may identify with. Subjective norms are the expectation that a significant individual or group will endorse a specific behavior. People's willingness to agree with others and how much pressure they feel from them to behave in a particular way serve as the basis for subjective norms. It might change the strength of some components and the degree to which they have an impact on specific behaviors. They look at the underlying factors and actions (Eriksson, 2007). Perceived behavioral control is a new variable in the TPB, a more advanced version of the TRA (Ajzen, 1991). The theory proposes that a person's preparation for engaging in a particular behavior, which is believed to be a direct cause of the behavior, is their mental representation of intent. This goal is influenced by their perceptions of particular behaviors, subjective norms, and how much control they believe they have over their behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In order to shed light on a person's unique behaviors in relation to a given environment, the concept is frequently employed in a range of fields (Nahapetyan et al., 2019; Sharma & Foropon, 2019).

The TPB asserts that behavioral controversies' intentions and perceptions can be utilized to accurately forecast the conduct of purposeful, intentional behavior (Ajzen, 1991). TPB can be employed to predict certain actions in a range of situations, conditions, and modes of activity.

According to TPB, to a considerable extent, intention affects behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The following definitions apply to the five components of TPB: A person's behavior in a scenario is the outcome of their intention and PBC; as a result, a desirable intention will only be carried out if PBC is a strong intention, which describes people's readiness to engage in a given behavior, is the essential element of TPB. The definition of an individual's attitude is their evaluation of how good or unfavourable a course of action is. It depends on how someone's beliefs are evaluated.

Expertise Online and Consumers' Attitude toward Purchase Intention

Expertise means the state of possessing a high level of abilities. Influencers are more knowledgeable and experienced than spokespersons contracted to promote specific products (Van der Waldt et al., 2009). The majority of experts found that it influenced customers' purchase decisions favourably (Schouten et al., 2020). Online marketing factors such as expertise and attractiveness have an impact on consumers' purchasing decisions. Customers place a higher value on expertise because of their experiences with the items. The consumer might choose to buy based on information rather than appeal (Frimpong & Alam, 2020). Influencers have the ability to create distinctive messaging for a business or product that is both trustworthy and appealing to buyers. The more trustworthy social media influencers, the more likely target audiences are to make purchases (Silvera & Austad, 2004). Social media influencers advertise companies and products on platforms like Instagram and Twitter, where their followers will likely see them. The messaging of the companies and products is seen as more real and reliable here than in sponsored sponsorship advertising (Abdullah et al., 2020). Thus based on the above discussion we proposed:

H1: There is a significant relationship between expertise online and consumer attitude.

H2: There is a significant relationship between expertise online and consumer purchase intentions.

Trust in Online Influencers and Consumers' Attitude toward Purchase Intention

Trust depends on a person's behavior to accomplish an ambiguous aim (Giffin, 1967). Trust is defined as the degree to which consumers believe

influencers to be reliable in their deeds. According to earlier research, trust may boost a person's "willingness to act on ad-conveyed information" (including its behavioral, emotional, and cognitive elements) (Soh et al., 2009). In general, people are said to need trust to create connections with one another and to provide and receive information online, just like they do in the offline world. Trust is viewed as a critical component of online knowledge exchanges and consumer decision-making (Chai & Kim, 2010). Customers declare their intent to buy in response to a product suggestion if they perceive a digital influencer as a trustworthy source (Lu et al., 2014). According to van Esch et al. (2018), Customers are said to have won the Instagrammer's confidence when they take the opinion leader's claim at face value and regard his advice as reliable. As a result, the consumer will be more motivated to make a purchase. The research shows that attitude and trust have a good association (Macintosh & Lockshin, 1997). Suppose a consumer trusts an influencer in an internet marketing context. In that case, they are more likely to accept the advice, which could impact their attitude toward the product and purchasing behavior (Hsu et al., 2013). As a result, a social media influencer with a solid reputation has a better chance of influencing its followers' opinions and purchasing intentions. Hence on the basis of above literature we proposed:

H3: There is a significant relationship between trust in online influencers and consumers attitude.

H4: There is a significant relationship between trust in online influencers and consumer purchase intentions.

Influencer Credibility and Consumers' Attitude toward Purchase Intention

When determining the effectiveness of any source, the source's credibility is often taken into endorsement (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Taghipoorreynah & De Run, 2016). Because of a trustworthy endorsement in particular, consumers often have a positive opinion of a product. Reliability and competency are two factors that influence credibility. Consumer attitudes, behaviour, beliefs, and perceptions may change due to information from reliable sources such as social media influencers (Wang et al., 2017). Influencers who have authority also tend to be more persuasive (Batra et al., 2006), as well as being able to

influence customer buying intention Ohanian, (1991) and consumer buying attitude (Till & Busler, 2000). Being credible is a reflection of someone's moral character, decency, and believability (Erdogan, 1999). Viewed as extremely reliable and knowledgeable, this led to higher acceptance of the message being delivered. Influencers who are perceived as having high credibility and dependability affect their followers. Consequently, the following hypotheses are presented:

H5: There is a significant relationship between influencer credibility and consumer attitude.

H6: There is a significant relationship between influencer credibility and consumer purchase intentions.

Influencer Attractiveness and Consumers' Attitude toward Purchase Intention

According to some research, an important factor in how well advertisements are perceived is the physical characteristics of influencers. An influencer's physical characteristics or qualities are the emphasis of appeal (Erdogan, 1999). In earlier studies, it is found that there is a connection between source attractiveness and customer attitude as well as a connection between attractiveness and buying intention (Erdogan, 1999; Petty et al., 1983) McGuire (1985) highlighted the direct relationship between a source's attractiveness and the effectiveness of their recommendation. People may respond favourably to a visually appealing social media influencer. Endorsers with alluring qualities have the potential to sway consumers' attitudes and induce purchase intent (Till & Busler, 2000). If someone looks well, their followers will pay more attention to them. Thus, based on the above discussion, we proposed:

H7: There is a significant relationship between influencer attractiveness and consumer attitude.

H8: There is a significant relationship between influencer attractiveness and consumer purchase intentions.

The mediating role of Consumer Attitude between Expertise Online, Trust in Online Influencers, Influencer Credibility, and Influencer Attractiveness

According to the literature, digital influencers are a key component of persuasion because they have a big impact on customer's purchase intentions. Expertise is one of the variables affecting buyers'

intentions (Bawack & Bonhoure, 2021). Empirical research shows that influencer skill strongly predicts purchase intention (Koay et al., 2022; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Additionally, attitudes towards influencers, purchase intentions, and attitudes towards businesses are positively impacted by perceptions of perceived knowledge and trust, both of which are social science factors that have been the subject of much research (Chetioui et al., 2020). According to consumer studies, attitudes and purchase intentions are related concepts (Tarkiainen & Sundqvist, 2005; Ting & de Run, 2015). Relatively, Chen, (2007) asserted that a consumer's favourable perception of a product is a dependable determinant of their tendency to make a buy. Similar to this, a customer's propensity to buy could be affected by how they perceive a product as supported by influencers.

The ability to achieve and sustain a trust, believable, quantifiable, and verifiable state is what we refer to as trust as a moral good. Gaining others' trust ensures a person's dependability, integrity, and honesty. Online reviews that have been deliberately manipulated provide biased and fraudulent feedback, which frequently weakens social media trust (Berhanu & Raj, 2020). Sincerity, honesty, and truthfulness that consumers perceive a product or service to possess are greatly influenced by the influences they respect Alyahya, (2021), constituting a crucial element in determining the buyer's intent (Bawack & Bonhoure, 2021). Empirical studies show that confidence in social media influencers strongly predicts intention to buy (Alyahya, 2021; Balaban & Mustătea, 2019).

Influencer credibility is considered to have enhanced consumer perceptions Briñol et al., (2004), increasing the likelihood of purchasing the product (Harmon & Coney, 1982). Evidently, there is a positive relationship between attitudes, influencer credibility, and purchasing intent (Chan et al., 2013). If consumers regard social media influencers as reliable, they will surely make a purchase.

Additionally, a celebrity's appearance could affect how their endorsement is perceived by fans (Lim et al., 2017). To put it another way, a likable and effective brand ambassador can have a big impact (Atkin et al., 1984; Freiden, 1984). By appealing to their positive beliefs, marketers can convince customers to purchase a product (Kahle & Homer,

1985). It has been hypothesized that persuasive advertising may change people’s attitudes and buying tendencies. The study's background reflects this phenomenon, according to which social media influencers’ appeal can significantly affect customer sentiments. Based on the above literature we proposed:

H9: Consumer attitude mediates the relationship between expertise online and consumer purchase intentions.

H10: Consumer attitude mediates the relationship between trust in online influencers and Consumer purchase intentions.

H11: Consumer attitude mediates the relationship between influencer credibility and consumers’ purchase intention.

H12: Consumer attitude mediates the relationship between influencers’ attractiveness and consumers’ purchase intention.

Consumer Attitude and Purchase Intention

Understanding consumer sentiments is essential for developing effective marketing strategies, so marketing professors are interested in this topic (Hogg et al., 2006). According to consumer studies, attitudes and purchase intentions are related (Tarkiainen & Sundqvist, 2005; Ting & de Run, 2015). Relatively, Chen (2007) claimed that a consumer’s attitude towards a product is a reliable indicator of their purchase propensity. Similarly, a patron’s propensity to buy might be influenced by their perception of a product, as reinforced by social media influencers. Thus we proposed:

H13: There is a significant relationship between consumer attitude and consumer purchase intention.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

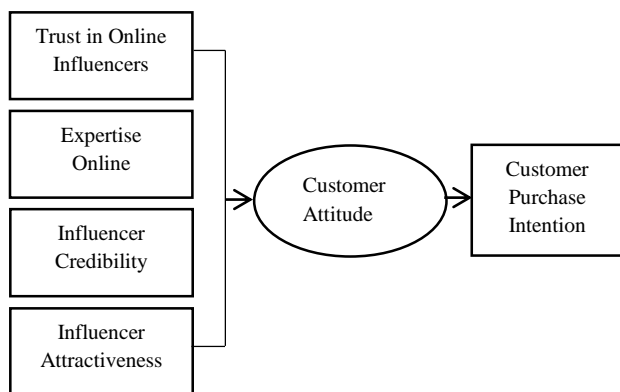


Figure 1: *Conceptual Model*

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample and procedures

Online influencer credibility, trust, and attractiveness are independent variables in this study, whereas consumer buy intention is a dependent variable. Consumer attitude serves as a mediator between independent and dependent variables. In a questionnaire, there are 27 items divided into seven categories. We select study participants who regularly use a minimum of one social media site and follow a minimum of one food influencer. For this purpose, we used purposive sampling, a type of non-probability sampling, and 250 individuals were included in the sample. The survey was made with Google Forms and sent out to respondents via social media. We collected data from 250 individuals.

Measures

The researchers based the questionnaire’s items on earlier research. The study’s key factors were rated on a five-point Likert scale. Four items were used to evaluate online expertise. The first two questions in the online questionnaire for competence were based on (Chetioui et al., 2020) and the last item by (Ohanian, 1990). Three items were used to gauge online influencer trust. The items of trust were adopted from (Al Mashh Adani, 2019). Four items were used to gauge an internet influencer’s credibility. The credibility items were based on (Akyüz, 2013). Four items were used to assess attractiveness. The first question on attractiveness on the questionnaire was based on (Pashaei, 2020) and the last three items by (Jansom & Pongsakornrungrungsilp, 2021; Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim, 2020). Based on the following, customer attitude questions in the questionnaire were adopted from (Belanche et al., 2021). Three items were used to gauge it. Consumer purchasing intention survey questions were based on (Chetioui et al., 2020). It was measured by three items.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Demographics

Gender: There were 250 responders in this survey, of whom 150 were men and 100 were women. Only a few of the responses were women, with men making up the majority. 40% of the study’s total participants were female, while 60% of the participants were male.

Age: Out of 250 respondents, 100 are under the age of 25, or 40% of all respondents, according to the age groups we grouped into in the research questions. In contrast, 20% of the 50 responders are in the 26 to 35 age range. The age range of 36 to 49 years is represented by 65 respondents or 26% of the total respondents. The age category of respondents over 50 comprises 35 respondents or roughly 14% of the total.

Qualification: Five sections—intermediate, bachelor, master, MPhil, and Ph.D. are included in this. 50 out of 250 had intermediate-level education, accounting for 20% of the research study. Of the total, 75 people had bachelor’s degrees, making up 30% of the population. A master’s degree is another level of education that was added to the research questions; out of 250 participants, 40 are master’s degree holders, accounting for roughly 16% of the study. Approximately 24% of the research study was contributed by 60 people with MPhil degrees, while 25 people with PhD degrees contributed 10%. The table below displays the frequency, cumulative percentage, and valid % of this research study.

Table 1
Respondent Profile

Demographic	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	150	60
	Female	100	40
Age	Below 25	100	40
	26-35	50	20
	36-49	65	26
	50year or Above	35	14
Qualification	Intermediate	50	20
	Bachelor	75	30
	Master	40	16
	MPhil	60	24
	PhD	25	10

Empirical Findings

The Smart PLS 4.0 is used in this study to evaluate all variables and their linkages as described in our model. The researchers have performed the analysis. Both the “measurement model simultaneously” and the “structural model” are analyzed by the current measurement instrument,

PLS-SEM, using multivariate methods (Hair et al., 2011). It is regarded as a cutting-edge measurement approach. Higher prediction powers, fewer sample sizes and data standardization requirements, and greater customizability are all features of the PLS-SEM model. The study’s analysis was divided into two parts, including measurements and structural model evaluations. To evaluate the applicability of correlations of the route coefficient, the PLS-SEM bootstrapping technique is a novel approach that normally entails 500 re-samples.

Measurement Model Assessment

In this case, the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement model is evaluated via “confirmatory factor analysis”. How reliable a system is can be determined by factor loading, Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

The CR is expected to be greater than 0.70, the AVE greater than 0.5, and the Cronbach’s alpha higher than 0.7. The loadings of the factors ought to be more than 0.5. The results of the convergent validity test that meets the requirements are shown in Table 2. Figure 2 illustrates how our data confirmed the convergence of the theory and its validity. In our data, most factor loadings are greater than 0.7, and all factor loadings are greater than 0.5.

Table 2:
Convergent Validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Alpha	CR	AVE
Customer Attitude	CA1	0.705	0.902	0.921	0.694
	CA2	0.771			
	CA3	0.904			
	CA4	0.932			
Customer purchase Intention	CPI1	0.769	0.869	0.871	0.693
	CPI2	0.887			
	CPI3	0.836			
Experts Online	EO1	0.791	0.889	0.890	0.671
	EO2	0.910			
	EO3	0.813			
	EO4	0.755			
Influencer Attractiveness	IA1	0.886	0.901	0.900	0.694
	IA2	0.824			
	IA3	0.773			
	IA4	0.845			
Influencer Credibility	IC1	0.864	0.863	0.862	0.611

	IC2	0.722			
	IC3	0.760			
	IC4	0.775			
Trust in Online Influencer	T1	0.636	0.788	0.786	0.553
	T2	0.764			
	T3	0.820			

Cronbach’s alpha indicates that the scale’s elements are related to one another and that greater similarity is preferred. (Sarstedt et al., 2021). There is a wider range than 0.70, ranging from 0.805 to 0.90. The internal consistency of the scale item is evaluated by CR, which for the observed data ranges from 0.856 to 0.917 and satisfies the requirement of 0.70. AVE is a strong indicator of internal consistency since it captured a concept’s fluctuation that was connected to measurement error variance. Our data’s AVE is greater than the generally accepted threshold of >0.5.

By using the Fornell-Larcker and Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) criteria, the discriminative ability of the measurement variables was assessed. Table 3 demonstrates that all variable diagonal values meet the Larcker condition (Farrell, 2010). Table 4 displays each hidden variable’s HTMT ratio score. According to both (Gold et al., 2001) and (Kline, 2011), It is recommended to lower the HTMT threshold to 0.90 or less. Only numbers below the threshold are valid, as shown in Table 4.

Table 3
Fornell and Larcker (Discriminant validity)

	CA	CPI	EO	IA	IC	TOI
CA						
CPI	0.83					
EO	0.49	0.631				
IA	0.430	0.483	0.839			
IC	0.680	0.557	0.692	0.750		
TOI	0.430	0.465	0.752	0.530	0.820	

Table 4:
HTMT Ratio (Discriminant validity)

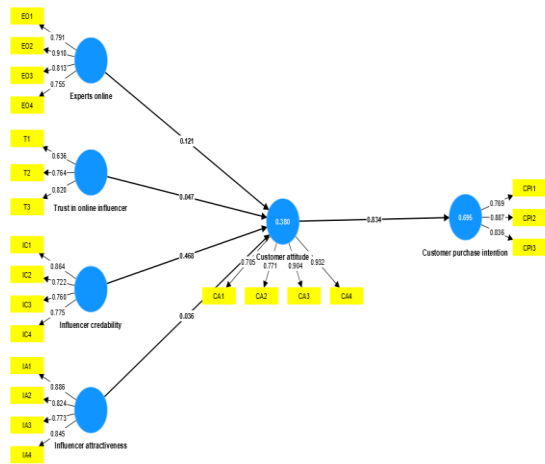
	CA	CPI	EO	IA	IC	TOI
CA	0.833					
CPI	0.834	0.865				
EO	0.502	0.528	0.819			
IA	0.433	0.481	0.538	0.830		
IC	0.605	0.555	0.695	0.650	0.780	
TOI	0.440	0.469	0.749	0.530	0.600	0.840

The also-significant cross-loading values are shown in Table 5 (Hair et al., 2011). No issues with discriminant validity were found in our analysis of the measurement models. The outcomes of these empirical tests demonstrated the measurement model’s sufficient dependability by confirming its convergent validity and discriminant validity.

Table 5
Outer Loadings

	CA	CPI	EO	IA	IC	TOI
CA1	0.705	0.603	0.312	0.296	0.457	0.296
CA2	0.771	0.652	0.366	0.355	0.48	0.299
CA3	0.904	0.762	0.477	0.365	0.546	0.379
CA4	0.932	0.749	0.494	0.419	0.529	0.471
CPI1	0.641	0.769	0.4	0.397	0.467	0.385
CPI2	0.74	0.887	0.469	0.391	0.459	0.405
CPI3	0.697	0.836	0.448	0.414	0.462	0.382
EO1	0.397	0.401	0.791	0.389	0.537	0.533
EO2	0.456	0.446	0.910	0.455	0.635	0.619
EO3	0.408	0.454	0.813	0.473	0.576	0.653
EO4	0.379	0.432	0.755	0.446	0.523	0.654
IA1	0.383	0.371	0.427	0.886	0.536	0.491
IA2	0.357	0.444	0.492	0.824	0.575	0.42
IA3	0.334	0.385	0.415	0.773	0.488	0.454
IA4	0.366	0.404	0.46	0.845	0.58	0.393
IC1	0.522	0.457	0.615	0.533	0.864	0.527
IC2	0.436	0.404	0.463	0.521	0.722	0.443
IC3	0.459	0.426	0.519	0.504	0.760	0.429
IC4	0.469	0.446	0.567	0.491	0.775	0.483
T1	0.28	0.26	0.527	0.362	0.421	0.636
T2	0.336	0.373	0.523	0.443	0.371	0.764
T3	0.361	0.401	0.62	0.375	0.55	0.820

Figure 2
 Measurement Model Assessment



Structural Model Assessment

To put the theories guiding our conceptual research technique to the test, we looked at the structural model in Smart PLS 4. We require some PLS indices to support or refute these research ideas. By using bootstrapping in Smart PLS, we may produce indices that help with value interpretation, such as R2 for exogenous to endogenous correlations and path coefficients for regression analysis. These results are strongly recommended because of their great quality and ability to demonstrate the validity and efficacy of the data (Farrell, 2010).

Path coefficients, T values, standard errors, and p values are required to test our hypothesis. These results are obtained by applying (re-samples 500) to the 250 respondents whose responses we have compiled. Table 6 displays the conclusions of our hypothesis. The hypothesis' acceptance or rejection was amply demonstrated by the route coefficients, t-values, confidence interval, and p-values.

Table 6
 Direct Relationships

	Beta	SD	T value	P values	LL	UL	Decisions
CA -> CPI	0.744	0.033	22.281	0.000	0.676	0.807	Supported
EO -> CA	0.152	0.078	1.940	0.042	0.003	0.307	Supported
EO -> CPI	0.113	0.058	1.934	0.040	0.002	0.228	Supported
IA -> CA	0.080	0.070	1.838	0.025	-0.049	-0.222	Supported
IA -> CPI	0.059	0.053	2.127	0.024	0.037	0.167	Supported
IC -> CA	0.369	0.077	4.772	0.000	0.209	0.521	Supported
IC -> CPI	0.274	0.059	4.615	0.000	0.155	0.391	Supported
TOI -> CA	0.058	0.071	3.819	0.013	0.079	0.201	Supported
TOI -> CPI	0.043	0.053	2.812	0.017	0.058	0.150	Supported

In Table 6 , the relationship between consumer attitude and consumer purchase intention reveals the following results ($\beta=0.744$, $t=22.281$, $p=0.000$, $LL=0.676$, $UL=0.807$), experts online and

consumer attitude ($\beta=0.152$, $t=1.940$, $p=0.042$, $LL=0.003$, $UL=0.307$), experts online and consumer purchase intentions ($\beta=0.113$, $t=1.934$, $p=0.040$, $LL=0.002$, $UL=0.228$), influencer attractiveness and consumer attitude ($\beta=0.080$, $t=1.838$, $p=0.025$, $LL=-0.049$, $UL=-0.222$), influencer attractiveness and consumer purchase intention ($\beta=0.059$, $t=2.127$, $p=0.024$, $LL=0.037$, $UL=0.167$) and influencer credibility and consumer attitude ($\beta=0.369$, $t=4.772$, $P=0.000$, $LL=0.209$, $UL=0.521$), the relationship between influencer credibility and consumer purchase intention ($\beta=0.274$, $t=4.615$, $p=0.000$, $LL=-0.155$, $UL=0.391$), trust in online influencer and consumer attitude ($\beta=0.058$, $t=3.819$, $p=0.013$, $LL=-0.079$, $UL=0.201$) and trust in online influencers and customer purchase intention ($\beta=0.043$, $t=2.812$, $p=0.017$, $LL=-0.058$, $UL=0.150$) these all have significant relationship and support decision criteria.

The study's second goal is to examine the mediating role of consumer attitude and how it impacts results. Multivariate analysis software called Smart PLS. It supports the analysis of intricate models and yields accurate outcomes for indirect influence and mediation analyses. The results of the mediation hypothesis are shown in Table 7, and they are as follows. Customer attitude served as a mediator between the factors influencing consumer purchase intentions and attractiveness: $LL=-0.037$, $UL=-0.167$, $t=1.827$, $p=0.026$, $B=0.059$. In a relationship between consumers' purchase intentions and expertise online with a mediating role of consumer attitude ($\beta=0.113$, $t=1.934$, $p=0.043$, $LL=-0.002$, $UL=0.228$). Consumer attitude mediates between consumer purchase intentions and influencer credibility: $B=0.274$, $t=4.615$, $p=0.000$, $LL=-0.155$, $UL=0.391$. The following numbers represent the outcomes of the consumer attitude mediation between online influencer trust and customer purchase intention: $B=0.043$, $t=3.812$, $p=0.017$, $LL=-0.015$, $UL=-0.15$ and the last mediation hypothesis between online influencer trust and customer purchase intention. All of these findings show that the data support all hypotheses and that there is a significant relationship between them.

Table 7
Indirect Relationships

	Beta	SD	T value	P values	LL	UL	Decisions
IA -> CA -> CPI	0.059	0.053	1.827	0.026	-0.037	-0.167	Supported
EO -> CA -> CPI	0.113	0.058	1.934	0.043	0.002	0.228	Supported
IC -> CA -> CPI	0.274	0.059	4.615	0.000	0.155	0.391	Supported
TOI -> CA -> CPI	0.043	0.053	3.812	0.017	-0.058	-0.15	Supported

The following factors were employed in this study to support the social learning hypothesis: attractiveness, influencer credibility, trust in online influencers, and online experts. These elements may impact consumer attitudes and, eventually, purchasing intentions. The results of this study thus confirmed the hypothesis that consumer attitudes mediate consumer purchase intention.

DISCUSSION

The hypotheses under investigation received confirmation. The results showed that consumers’ intentions to buy are influenced by online influencers (expertise, trust, credibility and attractiveness). Online influencers can anticipate consumers’ purchase intentions. Research conducted earlier by Frimpong & Alam, (2020), Rebelo, (2017), Ziadkhani Ghasemi & Palmet, (2019), and Işoraitè et al., (2020), Consumers’ intentions to make purchases are significantly predicted by trust and supports our results. By being beneficial and encouraging, the trust might affect a consumer’s decision to purchase. It has been found that trust influences consumer choice. Agreement at the general level is crucial when making a buying decision. Based on previous studies by Laohasukkasem et al., (2021), Demba et al., (2019), Khan et al., (2021), and Silvera & Austad, (2004), Credibility sources can enlighten followers about pertinent facts and motivate them to adopt a more positive attitude. Consumer choice to make a purchase may be influenced by credibility. Credibility was discovered to influence purchasing choices. The level of agreement is generally high, which is significant when deciding whether to purchase. RAHMAH et al., (2019), Agam, (2017) and Rebelo, (2017) all lend credence to the notion that attractive influencers can draw sponsors and fans.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The study employed the theory of planned behavior to better understand consumers’ attitudes and the connection between social media influencers and consumer purchase intentions. Strong influencers were proven to positively affect consumers’ intentions to buy. The study’s findings and the theory of planned behavior hold that behaviors are acquired through processes of environmental observational learning.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

From the perspective of management consequences, the study gave marketers a piece of good practical advice to select a social media influencer to entice customers. It is entirely up to the marketer’s discretion and prerogative to choose the influencers who can grab an audience’s attention and hold it with a compelling message. According to data analysis, consumer conduct has the most influence on purchasers’ intentions. Therefore, marketers need to be careful when selecting a social media influencer to alter consumer perceptions and influence their intent to make purchases.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Just like every other research project, this one has some restrictions. The sample size is the first restriction. The study’s findings can be used for future research, increasing the sample size to 500 or more. Second, another limitation is the single-time response collection through the survey questionnaire. For further studies, the research can be modified by longitudinal data collection techniques. Third, the survey was limited to consumers from one country. To address social, cultural, and economic inequalities, comparable research must be conducted in various cultural contexts for comparison of findings. Fourth, other factors of online influencers like knowledge and personality should also be discussed. There’s a chance that certain things are left out. The researchers propose more variables related to Pakistani food customers’ buying intentions be studied in the future. However, an upcoming poll with many respondents from different countries may help explain this study.

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