

# ***The Impact of Digital Influencers on Attitude Towards Brand, Purchase Intention, and Brand Attachment***

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## **Abstract**

*The purpose of this research is to discover if there are any links between digital influencers and three main marketing concepts: attitude towards brand, brand attachment, and purchase intention. The research focused on relationship between the perception of digital influencers and their impact on attitude towards brand, brand attachment, and purchase intention. The result showed significant relationship between credibility and attitude towards brand. Also showed significant relation between familiarity and attitude towards brand but showed insignificant between similarity and attitude towards brand. Likewise, it showed significant relationship between similarity and brand attachment. Also showed significant between familiarity and brand attachment but showed insignificant between credibility and brand attachment. And lastly it showed significant between purchase intention and familiarity. Correspondingly, it showed insignificant between credibility and purchase intention, also showed insignificant between similarity and purchase intention.*

**Key words:** *Digital Influencers, Attitude towards Brand, Brand Attachment, Purchase Intention*

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Social media has become a major instrument for spreading information about companies, goods, and services. Social media has the power to create interactions both between customers and businesses (Shaari & Ahmad, 2017). Traditional media is no longer competitive with social media's ability to connect people, engage audiences, and foster long-term relationships between many players (Bianchi & Andrews, 2015). As a result, businesses have used social media to develop communities for their own brands.

Due to the rapid increase in advertising on social media, websites, and games, marketers are struggling to cut through the noise and discover fresh, creative methods to engage with their target audience (Baker, 2018). Even though the world is shifting from traditional to digital or online, issues like security and trust can still be identified as problems that need to be solved.

In the light of the global crisis caused by the closure and halt of tourism in every key market, the new study of Bain & Company carried out following the Covid 19 crisis, announces the unprecedented challenge facing the luxury industry (Forsans, 2020). Following a 25 percent estimated decline in the first quarter of 2020, the slowdown is expected to pick up momentum in the second quarter and might lead to an estimated 20-35 percent contraction for the entire year (Forsans, 2020). The market will need more time to recover from the effects of the crisis.

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**Rational of the study**

The purpose of this study is to scientifically examine the impact of digital influencers on important marketing ideas, given the void in the literature on their effects on marketing.

The findings may suggest that there is a significant link between customer social involvement and digital influencer perceptions, as well as influencer credibility and all three marketing dimensions studied in this study. For businesses, this means that rather than a sense of familiarity or similarity, honesty can inspire favorable emotions from users and customers.

This study tries to add the marketing literature by providing new information about the role of digital influencers and the outcomes of users' perceptions of them. Marketing professionals may develop their strategies and build better relationships with both influencers and consumers by studying how these persons are seen and whether this can inspire attitudinal changes and influence attachment.

The influencers themselves may benefit from this research. Adapting their strategy and exposure to better reflect their authenticity, trustworthiness, credibility, competence, legitimacy, and honesty could benefit them. Staying faithful to these ideals and traits will be helpful in the long run, especially as their popularity grows

**Research gap**

Social media's influence has been growing quickly, affecting practically everyone in our immediate surroundings. The present market can no longer be satisfied by relying solely on TV and advertising, so society and business must advance and consider solutions that can assist customers in resolving their problems and changing their purchasing habits for the better. Businesses need to draw in customers and make them want their offerings.

On many levels, social media is transforming the way businesses operate and evolve. Social media is changing businesses and their relationships with society, customers, and the marketplace (Aral et al., 2013).

According to Sokolova and Kefi (2020), digital influencers have a significant impact on how consumers perceive a company and encourage them to try and purchase the goods they recommend. They assert that the likelihood that a user would make a purchase of a featured product is positively correlated with the influencer's credibility. Additionally, the followers identify with the influencer and would buy a product.

**Research questions**

- Do influencers similarity, influencers credibility, influencers familiarity have any effect on attitude towards brand?
- Do influencers similarity, influencers credibility, influencers familiarity have any effect purchase intention?
- Do influencers similarity, influencers credibility, influencers familiarity have any effect brand attachment?

**Research objectives**

- To examine the effect of influencers similarity, influencers credibility, influencers familiarity and attitude towards brand?
- To assess the effect of influencers similarity, influencers credibility, influencers familiarity and purchase intention?

- To examine the effect of influencers similarity, influencers credibility, influencers familiarity and brand attachment?

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Theoretical Review

#### Consumer Behavior Theory

The Andreasen Model of Consumer Decision Making, is one of the earliest models on consumer behavior. Andreasen (1965) proposed a model that captures the relationship between the main factors influencing consumer behavior, it focused on the manner in which information is received, accepted and interpreted by consumers during the decision making process. Such information could be personal, and transmitted via communication among consumers or word-of-mouth communication. It could also originate from impersonal or non-personal sources like marketing communication via advertisements etc. Andreasen model talks about consumer attitudes and change in attitudes. According to the Andreasen model change in consumer attitudes takes place because of exposure to information over a period of time.

Nicosia and Mayer (1976) proposed the Nicosia model, which concentrates on the buying decision for a new product. Nicosia model shows the relationship between attributes of customers, consumer decision-making process, and marketing communications of an organization, as well as, the feedback from the customer to the organization. This model focuses on the relationship between the firm and its potential consumers. The firm communicates with consumers through its marketing messages (advertising), and the consumers react to these messages by purchasing response. Nicosia model explains the consumers buying behavior from the marketer's perspective.

#### Empirical Review

According to Khan et al. (2016), attitudes can be favorable or unfavorable, and it is beneficial to cultivate a favorable and positive attitude toward the brand. A positive attitude toward a brand can be created by influencing an individual's beliefs. Beliefs have a direct impact on how an individual feel about an object.

There is a strong correlation between brand attitude and credibility (Khan et al., 2016). Additionally, it was found in the research that greater credibility has a direct impact on consumer perceptions and fosters a favorable attitude toward the brand.

Influencers are seen by followers as long-distance friends because they seem more relevant and approachable. Influencers tend to talk directly to their fans in their posts, which can foster intimacy. A further claim made by Schouten et al. (2020) was that being able to respond on an influencer's posts helps followers feel more like the influencer.

People who are familiar with and attached to a brand are more likely to connect with it and are less likely to be influenced by other offers made by alternative providers. In light of these findings, it can be concluded that customers' familiarity with the brand fosters a feeling of attachment and closeness to it, which may be characterized as having a favorable attitude toward the brand (Phelps & Hoy, 1996).

People have consistently showed greater interest in familiar brands and products than in those that are unfamiliar to them (Phua et al., 2017). Because of underlying interests and beliefs that motivate a desire to buy the goods, consumers consistently seem to seek for

brands they are familiar with and that are similar to them. This can be due to personal experience or reviews from influencers (Kelman, 2006).

According to Martensen et al. (2018), a follower's familiarity with the influencer indicates a favorable association with the follower's desire to make a purchase. It affects trust if the follower is more accustomed to the influencer. Accordingly, if a customer feels a connection to the brand, they are more inclined to trust them and are therefore more likely to make a purchase (Al-Darraj et al., 2020; Martensen et al., 2018).

According to a study by Gadalla (2019), credibility significantly affects both normative and informational social impact. In this regard, Jin & Phua (2014) made the argument that an influencer is more trustworthy as a result of the connections they have in a particular group and the perception of their social effect that their followers have of them. Higher levels of trustworthiness therefore indicate a bigger quantity of societal influence.

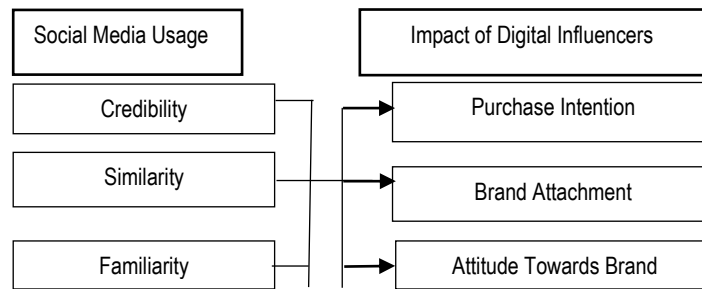
Ohanian (1990) asserts that customers' perceptions of brands are substantially improved by their favorable evaluations of honesty, leading to higher levels of confidence and positive brand evaluations as dependable and trustworthy.

Phua et al. (2017) illustrate that when the sender and receiver have a high degree of resemblance, the information being transmitted is more likely to be trusted by the recipient, increasing the likelihood of the recipient purchasing the endorsed product or service.

A study by Dwivedi et al. (2019) found that when consumers interact with their favorite brand, they tend to feel warm and comfortable and are able to express themselves through this brand. Additionally, their emotional attachment to the company provide customers a sense of reassurance and credibility.

**Research Framework**

Figure 1  
*Research Framework*



Note: Research Framework 2022

**Definition of Variables**

**Influencers Credibility**

A person's perception of an influencer's credibility determines whether they view the influencer's advice as objective, believable, real, or factual (Rebelo, 2017).

The success of a message is dependent on the perceived level of an influencer's knowledge and dependability (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990), according to the concept of an influencer's perceived credibility. And that knowledge from a reliable source has the power to change beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and/or behaviors through a process known as "internalization," which takes place when recipients accept the impact of the source in terms of their attitude and value systems (Rebelo, 2017).

### **Influencers Similarity**

According to Martensen et al. (2018), The similarity between a sender and a receiver is acknowledged as the similarity. Meaning that people who are similar to one another are more likely to experience interpersonal attraction, trust, and understanding than people who are perceived to be different from one another.

Similarity is defined as the degree of similarity and likeness between two parties in terms of social standing, education, viewpoints, and other characteristics (Lou & Yuan, 2019). People who are similar to them are preferred (Fu et al., 2018).

### **Influencers Familiarity**

According to Reis et al. (2011), familiarity is the level of exposure to another person. Participants attraction to one another increased as they engaged more, providing strong evidence that familiarity generates attraction.

Although the relationship between the follower and the influencer is believed to be one-sided when it comes to digital influencers, the follower frequently feels as though they know the influencer. As a result, they will accept their opinion regarding appropriate product decisions, product use, and personal consumption (Martensen et al., 2018).

### **Attitude Towards Brand**

The definition of attitude towards a brand is "a tendency to respond favorably or unfavorably to a particular brand once the advertising stimulus has been shown to the individual" (Phelps & Hoy, 1996).

According to Spears & Singh (2004), Attitude toward the brand is a reasonably persistent, unidimensional summary appraisal of the brand that unquestionably motivates behavior. In contrast to the "implicit assessment of belief, feeling, behavior, and other components of the attitude and expressions," attitude is considered as a "summary analysis."

### **Purchase Intention**

Purchase intentions are a person's deliberate decision to try to purchase a particular brand. According to Spears and Singh (2004), attitudes are distinct from intentions. Studies are comprehensive evaluations, whereas intentions are what drives a person to make an effort to engage in a behavior.

The frequency of Internet purchases made by consumers is considered the online purchasing behavior. An indication of how prepared people are to act themselves are the intentions of the consumer (Peña-García et al., 2020).

### **Brand Attachment**

Brand attachment is the strength of the bond that exists between a brand and the self (Park et al., 2010). Consumers have a bad perception if the brand does not exist due to brand attachment, which is the emotional closeness of the customer to the brand (Dwivedi et al., 2019).

Additionally, Thomson (2006) defines emotional brand attachment in terms of three dimensions: affection, connection, and passion at a higher level of abstraction. Intense attachments are associated with a variety of marketing outcomes. Marketing attachments, for instance, can forecast brand loyalty and desire to pay as well as minimize consumer churn in the face of unfavorable information.

### III. Research Methodology

#### Research design

The research design used in this study is descriptive in nature as it describes the collected data in relation to their particular characteristics, such as gender, age group, education, income.

#### Population and sample size

In this study, population is defined as individual using social media in Butwal sub-metropolitan. Since it is unknown we will use the formula developed by Cochran to calculate appropriate sample size of the population. At 95% level of confidence level and  $\pm 5\%$  precision, we calculate:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Assuming } p &= 0.5, q = 1 - 0.5 = 0.5 \\ \text{Now,} \\ n &= (Z^2 * p * q) / e^2 \\ &= (1.96^2 * 0.5 * 0.5) / (0.05)^2 \\ &= 38 \end{aligned}$$

### IV. Result and Analysis

#### Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha was used to do an internal factor consistency analysis. The internal consistency scale ranges from 0 to 1 and is used to determine the internal consistency of the variables.

Table 1

*Reliability Test of different Variables*

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Credibility	0.903
Similarity	0.802
Familiarity	0.854
Attitude Towards Brand	0.818
Brand Attachment	0.846
Purchase Intention	0.727

Source: Output from L.B.C digital library SPSS Version 21

All of the variables presented Cronbach's Alpha of over 0.7, which means that there is good consistency in the data. Nunnally, (1978) recommended the value of Cronbach 's Alpha more than 0.7 is acceptable. The reliability coefficient should be evaluated as poor if it is less than 0.60, acceptable if it is between 0.70 and 0.80, and good if it is between 0.80 and 0.90. As shown in table 4.3.1, Cronbach's Alpha value in this case is 0.7 for 39 statements. This implies that the variables have a strong relationship with the population, enabling the carry out more analysis on the study's data.

**Correlation**

Spearman 's rank correlation coefficient was used to obtain the relationship between the dependent variable (brand attitude, brand attachment, or purchase intention) and independent variables (Credibility, Similarity, Familiarity).

Table 2

*Correlation Matrix*

	Credibility	Similarity	Familiarity	Attitude Towards Brand	Brand Attachment	Purchase Intention
Credibility	1.000					
Similarity	.485**	1.000				
Familiarity	.563**	.662**	1.000			
Attitude Towards Brand	.476**	.501**	.603**	1.000		
Brand Attachment	.434**	.584**	.608**	.606**	1.000	
Purchase Intention	.373**	.505**	.654**	.573**	.663**	1.000

Source: Output from L.B.C digital library SPSS Version 21 \*\*=significant at 95% confidence level.

Table reflects the results of spearman 's correlation analysis which shows that all the p-values are less than 0.01 (p<0.01) and all coefficient values between attitude towards brand and credibility (0.476\*\*), attitude towards brand and similarity (0.501\*\*), attitude towards brand and familiarity (0.603\*\*), brand attachment and credibility (0.434\*\*), brand attachment and similarity (0.584\*\*), brand attachment and familiarity (0.608\*\*), purchase intention and credibility (0.373\*\*), purchase intention and similarity (0.505\*\*), purchase intention and familiarity (0.654\*\*). There is moderate positive relationship between the all dependent variables and all other independent variables.

### Path Analysis

Path Analysis was employed to identify the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable.

Table 3

#### *Variables in the Path Analysis*

Variables		Unstandardised co-efficient	S.E	Standardised co-efficient	t value	P value	R2
		(B)	of B	(Beta)			
Attitude Towards Brand	Credibility	0.169	0.045	0.194	3.773	<0.001**	
Attitude Towards Brand	Similarity	0.056	0.034	0.092	1.676	0.094	0.36
Attitude Towards Brand	Familiarity	0.371	0.053	0.408	6.943	<0.001**	
Brand Attachment	Credibility	0.068	0.052	0.065	1.312	0.19	
Brand Attachment	Similarity	0.193	0.039	0.261	4.938	<0.001**	0.4
Brand Attachment	Familiarity	0.434	0.062	0.397	6.987	<0.001**	
Purchase Intention	Credibility	0.011	0.047	0.011	0.228	0.82	
Purchase Intention	Similarity	0.068	0.035	0.1	1.938	0.053	0.43
Purchase Intention	Familiarity	0.58	0.056	0.581	10.442	<0.001**	

Source: Author's calculation from amos, 2022

Unstandardized coefficient of Credibility on Attitude towards brand is 0.169 represents the partial effect of Credibility on Attitude towards brand, holding the other path variables as constant. The estimated positive sign implies that such effect is positive that Attitude towards brand would increase by 0.169 for every unit increase in Credibility and this coefficient value is significant at 1% level.

Unstandardized coefficient of Similarity on Attitude towards brand is 0.056 represents the partial effect of Similarity on Attitude towards brand, holding the other path variables as constant. The estimated positive sign implies that such effect is positive that Attitude



towards brand would increase by 0.056 for every unit increase in Similarity and this coefficient value is insignificant at 1% level.

Unstandardized coefficient of Familiarity on Attitude towards brand is 0.371 represents the partial effect of Familiarity on Attitude towards brand, holding the other path variables as constant. The estimated positive sign implies that such effect is positive that Attitude towards brand would increase by 0.371 for every unit increase in Familiarity and this coefficient value is significant at 1% level.

Unstandardized coefficient of Credibility on Brand attachment is 0.068 represents the partial effect of Credibility on Brand attachment, holding the other path variables as constant. The estimated positive sign implies that such effect is positive that Brand attachment would increase by 0.068 for every unit increase in Expectation and this coefficient value is insignificant at 1% level.

Unstandardized coefficient of Similarity on Brand attachment is 0.193 represents the partial effect of Similarity on Brand attachment, holding the other path variables as constant. The estimated positive sign implies that such effect is positive that Brand attachment would increase by 0.193 for every unit increase in Satisfaction and this coefficient value is significant at 1% level.

Unstandardized coefficient of Familiarity on Brand attachment is 0.434 represents the partial effect of Familiarity on Brand attachment, holding the other path variables as constant. The estimated positive sign implies that such effect is positive that Brand attachment would increase by 0.434 for every unit increase in Satisfaction and this coefficient value is significant at 1% level.

Unstandardized coefficient of Credibility on Purchase intention is 0.011 represents the partial effect of Credibility on Purchase intention, holding the other path variables as constant. The estimated positive sign implies that such effect is positive that Purchase intention would increase by 0.011 for every unit increase in Satisfaction and this coefficient value is insignificant at 1% level.

Unstandardized coefficient of Similarity on Purchase intention is 0.068 represents the partial effect of Similarity on Purchase intention, holding the other path variables as constant. The estimated positive sign implies that such effect is positive that Purchase intention would increase by 0.068 for every unit increase in Satisfaction and this coefficient value is insignificant at 1% level.

Unstandardized coefficient of Familiarity on Purchase intention is 0.580 represents the partial effect of Familiarity on Purchase intention, holding the other path variables as constant. The estimated positive sign implies that such effect is positive that Purchase intention would increase by 0.580 for every unit increase in Satisfaction and this coefficient value is significant at 1% level.

Based on Standardized coefficient, Familiarity on Purchase intention (0.581) is most influencing path in this SEM model, followed by Familiarity on Attitude towards brand (0.408), Familiarity on Brand attachment (0.397) and so on.

## V. Discussion

The analysis pertaining to social media usage and the perception of digital influencers that showed significant relationship between credibility and attitude towards brand. The finding supports previous research, like Khan et al., (2016) which explains that higher credibility has a direct impact on the attitudes of consumer and leads to a positive attitude towards the brand. It also supports previous research done by Lee & Watkins (2016), which explains that the development of interpersonal interactions can be attributed to perceived openness

and readiness to be vulnerable, which in turn leads to more favorable brand perceptions and attitudes toward brands. Contrarily to the findings of Sokolova & Kefi (2020) the relationship between credibility and purchase intention was not supported by the results of the statistical analysis. Similarly, credibility was not found to have a statistically relevant relationship with brand attachment, thus the work does not corroborate the findings of (Ohanian, 1990), (Gadalla, 2019).

Likewise, statistically relevant relationship found between similarity and brand attachment. Thus this study corroborates the findings of Phua et al. (2017), Spears & Singh (2004), which clarifies the sender and receiver have a high degree of resemblance, the information being transmitted is more likely to be trusted by the recipient, increasing the likelihood of the recipient purchasing the endorsed product or service. However, similarity was found to have a statistically insignificant connection with attitude towards brand, thus the work does not corroborate the findings of (Schouten et al. 2020). Likewise, similarity was found statistically insignificant result with purchase intention, hence, the research does not support the findings of (Kelman, 2006).

Finally, relationships between familiarity and brand attachment were confirmed by the statistical analysis. Supporting the findings of Dwivedi et al. (2019), showing that customers familiarity with the brand creates a sense of attachment and closeness towards the brand also has an impact on trust and when consumers interact with their preferred brand they tend to experience positive emotions like warmth and comfort. Correspondingly, statistically relevant relationship found between familiarity and attitude towards brand. Thus the study does corroborate the findings of Phelps & Hoy (1996), showing that customers familiarity with the brand creates a sense of attachment and closeness towards the brand, which can be said to have a positive attitude towards the brand. Similarly, relationship between familiarity and purchase intention showed statistically significant. Therefore, the research does support the conclusions of Martensen et al. (2018), which found that trust is affected by the degree of familiarity between the influencer and the follower. Meaning that they are more likely to gain the customer's trust if they feel a sense of familiarity.

## VI. Conclusion and Implication

This research aimed to investigate the consequences of using internet influencers as marketing tools, specifically how customers' perceptions of these individuals might affect brand attachment, brand attitude, and purchase intention. The relationship between credibility and attitude toward brands was significant. Additionally, study shows a significant relationship between brand attachment and similarity and familiarity, as well as between familiarity and attitude toward the brand. Finally, it revealed a relationship between familiarity and purchase intention.

This research found the effects of digital influencers as marketing tools, especially how consumer's views of digital influencers influence brand attachment, brand attitude, and purchase intention.

This study looked the connection between social media usage and impact of digital influencers. The following implications are put out in light of the findings and judgments made:

- The findings indicate a substantial relationship between consumer social participation and digital influencer perceptions. For businesses, this implies that, a sense of familiarity or likeness can generate positive emotions from influencers.
- Marketing professionals may improve their strategies and interactions with both influencers and customers by researching how these individuals are seen and whether this might inspire behavioral change and impact attachment.

- This research may benefit the influencers themselves. They may benefit from changing their approach and exposure to better represent their authenticity, trustworthiness, credibility, competency, authenticity, and honesty. Staying true to these beliefs and characteristics can benefit you in the long run, especially as their popularity rises.

This study provides significant insight into how viewers perceive digital content creators, allowing them to personalize better their recommendations, sponsored material, and interactions with viewers.

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