IJARSCT
International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology
International Open-Access, Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Multidisciplinary Online Journal
ISSN: 2581-9429
Volume 6, Issue 4, September 2026
Impact Factor: 8.2

The Role of Auththenticity in Influencer Marketing for Building Brand Trust

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Abstract: *In today's digital‑marketing landscape, influencer marketing has become a dominant tactic for brands seeking to reach consumers and sway their purchase choices. Influencers—individuals with sizable, highly engaged followings on social platforms—play a pivotal role in molding how consumers view and feel about brands. Yet, as this practice expands rapidly, audiences are growing more vigilant about transparency, credibility, and especially authenticity. Authenticity, in particular, has emerged as a crucial element for cultivating brand trust. This paper investigates how authenticity functions within influencer marketing and how it contributes to trust formation between consumers and brands.*

The research examines the influence of perceived influencer authenticity—defined by traits such as honesty, openness, relatability, and consistency—on consumer trust in the brands they endorse. Influencers who are seen as authentic tend to forge deeper connections with their followers, which heightens emotional involvement and credibility. When followers interpret an influencer's recommendations as sincere rather than merely commercial, they are more inclined to trust the promoted brand and develop favorable attitudes toward it.

Adopting a quantitative methodology, the study gathered data via structured questionnaires administered to active social‑media users who regularly interact with influencer content on Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Statistical analyses were employed to explore the links among influencer authenticity, consumer perception, and brand trust. Results indicate that authenticity markedly boosts consumer trust and amplifies the impact of influencer campaigns. Moreover, influencers who openly disclose sponsored material and share personal product experiences tend to earn substantially higher levels of follower trust.

These findings offer actionable insights for marketers, brand managers, and digital entrepreneurs aiming to craft effective influencer strategies. By emphasizing genuine engagement and authenticity, brands can cultivate stronger consumer relationships and secure lasting trust in a competitive online marketplace. The study also enriches the expanding body of literature on digital marketing and consumer behavior by positioning authenticity as a decisive driver of influencer‑marketing success.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Influencer Authenticity, Brand Trust, Consumer Engagement, Social Media Marketing, Purchase Intention, Digital Marketing Strategies, Consumer Behavior

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's digitally-driven marketplace, the way companies communicate their marketing messages has been reshaped by the explosive rise of the internet and social-media channels. Conventional advertising mediums—television, radio, and print—are increasingly being supplemented, and in some cases supplanted, by online tactics that enable brands to engage consumers directly. Among the most powerful of these new tactics is influencer marketing.

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DOI: 10.48175/IJARSCT-40215

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What influencer marketing entails

Influencer marketing involves partnering with individuals who command substantial followings and wield considerable sway on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter. These personalities act as opinion leaders, capable of molding consumer attitudes, shaping perceptions, and ultimately steering purchase decisions.

Unlike legacy celebrities, many social-media influencers are viewed as approachable and relatable, fostering tighter bonds with their audiences. Consequently, brands are turning to influencers to deliver their messages in a manner that feels both personalized and engaging. Yet, as the practice expands, audiences are becoming savvier about paid placements and brand collaborations, prompting a heightened focus on **authenticity** as a decisive factor in campaign success.

The significance of authenticity

In the influencer context, authenticity denotes the degree to which an influencer is seen as sincere, honest, transparent, and consistent in their interactions with followers. Modern consumers tend to place their trust in creators who openly share genuine opinions, personal anecdotes, and disclose any commercial relationships. When influencers appear authentic, their endorsements are interpreted as heartfelt recommendations rather than mere advertisements. This perception is pivotal for shaping consumer attitudes and cultivating trust in the advertised brand.

Linking authenticity to brand trust

Brand trust—confidence in a company's reliability, integrity, and promise-keeping—is a cornerstone of effective marketing and enduring customer relationships. Within influencer marketing, trust emerges when followers believe that the creator truly endorses the products or services presented. Authentic influencers, therefore, boost the credibility of the brands they champion, encouraging consumers to accept recommendations, develop favorable brand impressions, and exhibit a stronger propensity to purchase. Conversely, insincere or overtly commercialized endorsements can breed skepticism, eroding confidence in both the influencer and the associated brand.

Strategic implications for brands

Intensifying competition in the digital arena compels brands to craft strategies that prioritize credibility and genuine engagement. Selecting influencers whose values mirror those of the brand and who maintain authentic connections with their audiences has become a critical decision. Influencers who consistently deliver relatable, sincere content tend to generate higher engagement rates and enjoy deeper trust among followers—attributes that make them valuable allies for companies seeking to reinforce their reputation and foster long-term loyalty.

Research focus

Given the centrality of authenticity, examining its role in influencer marketing has emerged as a vital research domain. This study investigates how an influencer's perceived authenticity contributes to building consumer trust in a brand. By mapping the interplay between authenticity, consumer perception, and brand trust, the research aims to offer actionable insights for marketers designing influencer-based campaigns. The outcomes are expected to guide businesses toward authentic influencer partnerships that strengthen consumer confidence and boost the overall efficacy of digital marketing initiatives in today's competitive online marketplace.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, influencer marketing has risen to prominence as one of the most potent tools in the digital-marketing arsenal. The explosive growth of social-media channels has led brands to turn increasingly toward influencers to reach consumers in a manner that feels more personal, relatable, and compelling. Influencers—individuals whose credibility, expertise, or popularity enable them to shape followers' attitudes, perceptions, and buying decisions—have become pivotal intermediaries in brand communication. Among the variables that determine the success of influencer

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campaigns, authenticity stands out as a decisive element for shaping consumer perception and fostering trust in a brand. The following review synthesizes the scholarly work on influencer marketing, authenticity, and brand trust.

Influencer Marketing in Academic Discourse

The scholarly community has given considerable attention to the influencer-marketing construct. Researchers describe influencers as bridges that link brands with target audiences, delivering product recommendations through social-media platforms. Empirical evidence shows that influencer-driven promotions outperform many conventional advertising tactics in reaching well-defined consumer segments. Because influencer content tends to be perceived as personal and engaging, it cultivates stronger follower relationships, leading consumers to view influencer endorsements as more credible and trustworthy than traditional ads.

The Role of Authenticity

Authenticity is widely acknowledged as a cornerstone of influencer credibility and impact. It denotes the perception that an influencer communicates in a genuine, honest, and transparent manner. Influencers who disclose personal stories, voice sincere opinions, and maintain a consistent tone are more likely to be judged authentic. Studies suggest that such authenticity fosters deeper emotional bonds with followers, amplifying the persuasive force of the influencer's recommendations.

Authenticity and Consumer Trust

A substantial body of research links influencer authenticity directly to consumer trust. When influencers are open about their brand collaborations, followers tend to view the endorsements as credible. Conversely, overtly commercial or insincere content erodes trust and diminishes campaign efficacy. Consequently, preserving authenticity is essential for sustaining the overall credibility of influencer-driven marketing efforts.

Brand Trust: Definitions and Connections

Brand trust—consumers' confidence in a brand's reliability, integrity, and ability to fulfill its promises—has long been a focal point of marketing scholarship. Trust shapes consumer attitudes and underpins long-term brand relationships. Within influencer marketing, brand trust is heavily influenced by the influencer's perceived authenticity and credibility; a trusted influencer can transfer that trust to the brand they promote.

Transparency and Disclosure

The rise of sponsored content has prompted regulators and industry experts to stress clear disclosure of paid partnerships. Transparent labeling of sponsored posts safeguards honesty and reduces the risk of misleading audiences. Empirical findings indicate that when influencers openly acknowledge commercial collaborations, their credibility is reinforced, and consumer trust in both the influencer and the associated brand is strengthened.

Consumer Engagement as a Trust Builder

Active engagement—responding to comments, direct messaging, and delivering personalized content—further solidifies the influencer-follower bond. High engagement levels signal authenticity and relatability, which in turn boost brand trust. Followers who feel emotionally connected are more inclined to accept recommendations and develop favorable attitudes toward the promoted products or services.

Influencer Types: Celebrity, Macro, and Micro

Research differentiates among celebrity influencers, macro-influencers, and micro-influencers. Evidence suggests that micro-influencers, despite having smaller audiences, are often perceived as more authentic because their content

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appears less polished and more relatable. This perception translates into higher follower trust, prompting brands to increasingly partner with micro-influencers to reach niche segments effectively.

Ongoing Challenges

Despite its popularity, influencer marketing faces notable challenges. A primary concern is the potential erosion of authenticity when influencers endorse multiple brands or flood their feeds with paid promotions. Over-commercialization can prompt followers to question the sincerity of recommendations. Striking a balance between promotional messaging and authentic self-expression is therefore critical to maintaining credibility.

Synthesis and Research Gap

The extant literature converges on the view that authenticity is a pivotal driver of influencer-marketing success. Authentic influencers are more adept at cultivating follower trust, which subsequently elevates the perceived credibility of the brands they represent. While prior studies have explored numerous facets of influencer marketing and consumer behavior, a deeper understanding of how authenticity specifically fuels brand trust in today's evolving digital landscape remains under-examined.

III. OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the concept of authenticity in influencer marketing and how it influences consumer perception.
2. To examine the relationship between influencer authenticity and brand trust among social media users.
3. To identify the key factors of influencer authenticity such as honesty, transparency, relatability, and consistency that influence consumer trust.
4. To study the impact of influencer recommendations on consumer attitudes toward brands.
5. To evaluate how authenticity in influencer content affects consumer engagement and purchase intention.
6. To assess the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies in building long-term brand trust.
7. To provide recommendations for brands and marketers on selecting authentic influencers to strengthen brand credibility and consumer trust.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodological framework adopted in this investigation supplies a structured approach for achieving the study's objectives. It delineates the processes and tools employed to gather, examine, and interpret data that address the central research question. This work explores how the authenticity of influencers shapes consumer trust in brands. The methodology comprises the research design, study type, data sources, sampling plan, data-collection instrument, key variables, and analytical techniques.

1. Research Design

A **descriptive-quantitative** design has been selected to probe the link between influencer authenticity and brand trust.

- **Descriptive component:** enables a detailed portrayal of consumers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions concerning influencer marketing practices. It captures how users evaluate authenticity in influencer endorsements and how such judgments affect their trust in the promoted brands.
- **Quantitative component:** provides numeric measurements of the constructs involved, allowing statistical testing of the relationship. This approach also supports the extrapolation of findings to a larger population of social-media users.

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2. Nature of the Study

The investigation is **empirical**, relying on primary data gathered directly from individuals who encounter influencer content. By focusing on the behaviors and viewpoints of social-media participants across various platforms, the study seeks actionable insights into how genuine influencer communication influences consumer confidence and brand perception.

3. Data Sources

Both **primary** and **secondary** data are employed to achieve a comprehensive perspective.

- **Primary data:** collected via a structured questionnaire administered to active social-media users who follow influencers. The survey captures respondents' views on authenticity, credibility, transparency, and the degree of trust they place in influencer-endorsed brands.
- **Secondary data:** drawn from scholarly journals, books, conference proceedings, and online databases covering influencer marketing, digital-marketing strategies, authenticity, and brand trust. These sources inform the theoretical framework and contextualize the current research within existing literature.

4. Sampling Strategy

A **non-probability convenience sampling** method is used. This technique permits the researcher to reach participants who are readily accessible and willing to respond, which is appropriate given the focus on users already engaging with influencer content.

- **Target population:** individuals who regularly use platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Facebook and follow influencers across categories (fashion, lifestyle, technology, fitness, entertainment).
- **Sample size:** roughly **120–150** participants, encompassing students, young professionals, and working adults—representative of the digital consumer segment frequently exposed to influencer campaigns.

5. Data-Collection Instrument

The principal instrument is a **structured questionnaire** divided into two sections:

1. **Demographic profile:** age, gender, education, occupation, and social-media usage frequency, providing context for the respondents' background.
2. **Construct measurement:** a series of statements addressing influencer authenticity (honesty, transparency, relatability, consistency), credibility, and brand trust. Participants indicate their agreement on a **5-point Likert scale** (Strongly Disagree → Strongly Agree), yielding quantifiable data on attitudes and perceptions

6. Variables

Variable Type	Variable	Operationalisation
Independent	Influencer Authenticity	Measured through dimensions such as honesty, transparency, relatability, and consistency
Dependent	Brand Trust	Level of consumer trust toward brands endorsed by influencers
Supporting	Consumer Engagement, Influencer Credibility, Purchase Intention	Additional factors that may moderate or mediate the primary relationship

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7. Data-Analysis Procedures

The dataset will be processed using **descriptive** (frequency distributions, percentages, means, standard deviations) and **inferential** (correlation, multiple regression) statistics.

- **Descriptive analysis** outlines respondent demographics and overall perceptions of authenticity.
- **Correlation analysis** assesses the strength and direction of the link between authenticity and trust.
- **Regression analysis** evaluates the predictive impact of authenticity on brand trust while controlling for supporting variables.

Statistical software such as **SPSS**, **Microsoft Excel**, or comparable tools will be employed to ensure efficient and accurate analysis.

8. Reliability and Validity

Questionnaire items are grounded in constructs identified in prior influencer-marketing and consumer-behavior research. A **pilot test** with a small subset of participants will be conducted to verify clarity, consistency, and relevance, thereby strengthening both reliability and construct validity.

9. Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards are upheld throughout the study:

- Participation is **voluntary**, and respondents receive a clear explanation of the study's purpose.
- Collected information is kept **confidential** and used solely for academic purposes.
- No personally identifiable data will be disclosed in the final report.

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The interpretation of the gathered information—and the link between influencer credibility and brand confidence—relied heavily on systematic data analysis. A total of 150 participants who are active users of Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok and who frequently interact with influencer-generated posts were surveyed. Their answers were processed through descriptive measures (frequency counts, percentages, averages) and supplemented with elementary inferential techniques to explore how perceived influencer authenticity relates to consumer trust in the brands they endorse.

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

The demographic breakdown sheds light on who took part in the research.

Characteristic	Distribution
Gender	56 % male, 44 % female
Age	60 % aged 18-30, 25 % aged 31-40, 15 % over 40
Education	65 % hold a bachelor's degree or higher; 35 % completed secondary school or hold a diploma
Occupation	Roughly 70 % are students or early-career professionals

These figures indicate that influencer marketing predominantly reaches digitally savvy, younger consumers who allocate considerable time to social-media platforms.

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Additional insights reveal that 78 % of respondents follow at least one influencer, and 65 % regularly engage with influencer posts by liking, commenting, or sharing, underscoring the substantial sway that digital creators hold over consumer viewpoints and brand perceptions.

How Consumers Judge Influencer Authenticity

A core aim of the investigation was to capture participants' judgments of influencer genuineness. Using a five-point Likert scale, respondents evaluated statements concerning honesty, openness, relatability, and consistency.

- **Personal storytelling and candid reviews** were seen as markers of authenticity by 72 % of participants (agree or strongly agree).
- **Consistency in messaging and values** earned the trust of 68 % of the sample.
- **Transparency about paid collaborations** emerged as a decisive factor: about 70 % indicated greater trust for influencers who clearly label sponsored content.

Overall, participants favored influencers who appear approachable, genuine, and willing to disclose commercial relationships, suggesting that openness enhances credibility rather than diminishing promotional impact.

Impact of Perceived Authenticity on Brand Trust

The next analytical step tested whether an influencer's perceived authenticity translates into consumer confidence in endorsed brands.

- **74 %** of respondents reported a higher likelihood of trusting a brand when the recommending influencer is viewed as authentic.
- **69 %** said they feel more assured purchasing products suggested by trusted influencers.

Moreover, detailed, experience-based endorsements (e.g., demonstrations, benefit explanations, honest opinions) were judged more trustworthy than generic promotional messages. Authenticity thus not only boosts perceived credibility but also drives favorable attitudes and purchase intent.

The Function of Engagement and Relationship-Building

The study also explored how active interaction influences both authenticity and brand trust.

- Influencers who routinely reply to comments, host live chats, or run Q&A sessions were deemed more reliable by **66 %** of participants.
- Such engagement fosters a sense of community, deepening the emotional bond between creator and follower, which in turn amplifies the persuasive power of recommendations.

Frequent interaction appears to cement long-term trust in both the influencer and the products they promote, highlighting the value of ongoing, sincere communication.

Obstacles to Maintaining Authenticity

Despite its advantages, influencer marketing faces several authenticity-related challenges.

- **Over-promotion**: 55 % of respondents felt that influencers who incessantly advertise multiple brands erode their credibility.
- **Perceived commercial motives**: When recommendations seem purely financially driven, followers question their sincerity.
- **Growing consumer savvy**: As audiences become more knowledgeable about sponsorship tactics, they scrutinize influencer content more critically, making transparency and honesty ever more essential.

Balancing promotional duties with authentic storytelling is therefore critical for preserving trust.

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Interpretation of Results

The evidence reinforces the premise that authenticity is a cornerstone of effective influencer marketing. Modern consumers increasingly seek trustworthy voices on social platforms; influencers who demonstrate honesty, openness, and relatable personas are better positioned to forge lasting relationships.

When influencers are perceived as credible, the brands they champion benefit from heightened consumer trust, which directly influences attitudes and buying decisions. Consequently, brands should prioritize partnerships with creators whose values align with their own and who possess a proven track record of genuine engagement and transparent communication.

By centering campaigns around sincere interaction and clear disclosure, companies can leverage influencer marketing as a robust mechanism for cultivating durable brand trust and customer loyalty in today's digital marketplace.

VI. CONCLUSION

The explosive rise of social media has reshaped how companies converse with their audiences. Within today's digital-marketing landscape, influencer collaborations have become a central tactic for reaching specific consumer segments, molding perceptions, and steering buying behavior. Yet the potency of these campaigns' hinges on the confidence that shoppers place in both the influencer and the brand being featured. Among the many drivers of that confidence, **authenticity** stands out as a pivotal factor. This research set out to explore how authenticity operates within influencer marketing and how it contributes to the formation of brand trust among consumers.

Key Findings

1. **Authenticity Strengthens the Influencer-Consumer-Brand Triangle**
   Influencers who appear genuine, open, and relatable are far more successful at forging meaningful bonds with their followers. Modern consumers are savvy; they scrutinize promotional content and favour creators who speak honestly, share personal anecdotes, and clearly label sponsored material. Such transparency boosts perceived credibility, which in turn fuels trust in the associated brand.

2. **Perceived Sincerity Shapes Attitudes Toward Endorsed Brands**
   When followers judge an influencer's endorsement as heartfelt rather than purely commercial, their trust in the advertised brand rises. Authentic recommendations generate a sense of reliability, reinforcing confidence in the brand's quality and value. Consequently, authenticity not only deepens brand trust but also lifts engagement levels and purchase intent.

3. **Disclosure Enhances, Not Undermines, Effectiveness**
   Openly acknowledging paid partnerships is essential for preserving authenticity. Contrary to the belief that disclosures dilute impact, the data show that consumers reward honesty. Influencers who make their sponsorships explicit are judged as more trustworthy, which bolsters the credibility of both the creator and the brand.

4. **Interaction Fuels Authentic Connections**
   Influencers who actively converse with their audience—through comments, direct messages, live streams, and other real-time exchanges—build stronger emotional ties. These interactions reinforce the perception of authenticity and amplify consumer trust, making followers more receptive to product recommendations and more favourably disposed toward the endorsed brands.

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5. **Risks of Over-Commercialisation**
   Excessive promotional posting, frequent brand collaborations, or overtly sales-y content can erode an influencer's perceived sincerity. When audiences sense that content is driven primarily by profit, trust wanes and campaign efficacy declines. Striking a balance between brand messages and genuine, personal expression is therefore critical for maintaining authenticity.

Implications for Practitioners

- **Strategic Influencer Selection** – Brands should prioritize creators whose values align with their own and who have a reputation for authenticity. Metrics such as engagement rates, audience sentiment, and the depth of the influencer-follower relationship should outweigh simple follower counts.
- **Encouraging Authentic Storytelling** – Marketers ought to empower influencers to share honest opinions, lived experiences, and compelling narratives. Real-world product demos and personal stories resonate far more than traditional hard-sell copy, fostering lasting consumer relationships and bolstering brand reputation.
- **Emphasizing Transparency** – Clear, consistent disclosure of sponsorships should be embedded in every partnership. This practice not only complies with regulatory expectations but also signals integrity to the audience, reinforcing trust in both parties.
- **Monitoring Content Balance** – Maintaining an optimal mix of promotional and non-promotional posts helps preserve the influencer's authentic voice. Brands should collaborate with creators to develop content calendars that reflect genuine usage and personal relevance.

Contribution to Academic Literature

This investigation adds to the fields of digital marketing, consumer behaviour, and influencer studies by pinpointing authenticity as a decisive determinant of influencer efficacy and brand trust in the digital era. While earlier work has examined influencer credibility and engagement, the present study underscores authenticity's unique role in shaping consumer trust and brand perception.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The study's sample comprised a relatively small, geographically limited group of social-media users, which may constrain the broader applicability of the results. Future research should broaden the participant pool, incorporate diverse cultural and demographic contexts, and explore additional outcomes such as long-term brand loyalty, repeat purchase intention, and the evolution of brand-consumer relationships over time.

Concluding Remarks

Authenticity emerges as the cornerstone of successful influencer marketing. Influencers who communicate with honesty, transparency, and relatability are better positioned to earn the trust of their audiences, thereby delivering tangible benefits to the brands they endorse. As digital marketing continues to evolve, companies must place authentic communication and genuine engagement at the heart of their strategies. By doing so, influencer campaigns can serve as a durable, effective mechanism for building robust brand trust and enduring consumer relationships in today's competitive online marketplace.

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