

Impact of Social Media Influencer Marketing, Brand Trust and Perceived Price on Purchase of Smart Watches

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Abstract: In the current digital era, social media influencers can have a big impact on what consumers decide to buy. Notwithstanding the existence of research in the field of social media influencer marketing, it remains crucial to comprehend the diverse attributes of social media influencers and the ways in which these attributes can motivate consumers to make purchases. Through the influence of social media influencers, the research investigated the impact of various factors on smart watch purchases. A research framework with six constructs has been formulated and tested empirically. The study examined constructs such as the expertise of social media influencers and their trustworthiness, attractiveness, brand trust, perceived price, and behavioural intention to purchase smart watch. 256 responses were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed through structural equation modeling. The findings revealed that all the predictors significantly influence purchase intention towards smart watches. The research has implication for both academia and practioners.

Keywords: Social media influencer, expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, brand trust, perceived price, purchase intention, smart watch

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has been very popular among the youth. It dramatically revolutionized the way businesses operate and consumers purchase products and services. Social media influencers are well-known figures who have garnered a substantial fan base across various platforms, including Instagram, Facebook etc. who can entice their followers towards purchase. Influencers on social media are online figures that have a sizable following on multiple social media platforms (e.g. G. , personal blogs, Vine, Snapchat, YouTube, Instagram, and so on) and who have the ability to influence their followers. Indian youth spends majority of their leisure time on various social media platforms.

On average, Indian youth dedicate about 3.5 hours each day to various social media platforms (Business standard, 2023). By 2025, it is projected that over 4.41 billion individuals will be using social media globally (Statista, 2021). Social media's latest advertising trend is influencer marketing. In this context, is quick rise is remarkable. Marketers utilize social media influencers, with substantial online followings, to advertise their products. Many young people tend to buy popular, fashionable goods as a result of being influenced by social media celebrities. Thus, the goal of the study was to analyze different aspects of the impact of social media influencers on the desire to buy products. A compressive framework based on elaborate literature review was designed= and tested empirically.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE & HYPOTHESES

2.1 Influencer Marketing

External entities, such as social media influencers, can significantly impact consumer buying decisions and may even take on some responsibility for customers' choices (Brown & Hayes, 2008). Influencer marketing is a combination of creativity and strategic approach, wherein brands collaborate with online influencers to relay their messages to their audiences through paid content (Sammis et al., 2015). Influencer marketing is focused to enhance an individual's intention to purchase a product by instituting a brands legitimate power by enhancing brand awareness and drives positive conversations. Key individuals are utilized in influencer marketing as brand endorsers. Opinion leaders influence brand awareness and purchases (Scott, 2015). Social media influencers' in built traits showcase a crucial part to entice and encourage customers to purchase products. The concept of credibility, which encompasses expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, has always been important in the realm of influencer marketing (Dwivedi et al., 2015)

2.2 Social Media Influencer Expertise

Expertise is the level at which an endorser is seen as having the necessary knowledge, experience, or skills to successfully promote the product. Expertise refers to the knowledge, understanding, and experience

that an individual acquires through regular involvement in a specific field. In the realm of social media influencers, expertise signifies an advertising influencer whose professionalism effectively persuades consumers to buy a product (Goldsmith et al., 2000). This term also indicates the recognized level of knowledge, skills, and understanding possessed by the endorser (Hovland et al., 1953). Research has illustrated that the expertise of social media influencers has a favorable impact on consumers' intention to make purchases (Rathnayake & Lakshika, 2022; Nugroho et al., 2022). In a recent study involving 313 participants in South Korea, Masuda et al. (2022) examined the attributes of social media influencers, confirming that expertise positively affects purchasing decisions. Furthermore, social media influencer expertise has been shown to significantly enhance the intention to buy smart watches (Ermiş, 2021). Consequently, we propose that,

H1: The propensity to buy smart watches is positively influenced by social media influencers' knowledge.

2.3 Social Media Influencer Trustworthiness

According to Erdem and Swait (2004) trustworthiness is rooted in the reliability of fulfilling promises made. Giffin (1967) describes the trustworthiness of a source as “the extent to which the recipients believe the source to be truthful, honest, or sincere.” It is the critical aspect of a social influencer to build trust towards the products or services customers purchase. The social media influencer's credibility is built on their honesty and moral character across a range of social media platforms. As social influencers endorse a product or service, consumers are more inclined to view the influencer as genuinely credible, particularly when evaluating the product's positive attributes. The trustworthiness of social media influencers and purchase intention have been positively correlated, according to prior research (Lou and Yuan, 2019; Schouten et al. 20, 2021). According to a research study by Al Jaed and Badghish (2021), social media influencer trustworthiness has a positive impact on smartphone purchase intentions. Consequently, we propose that,

H2: The likelihood of buying a smart watch is positively influenced by social media influencers who are trustworthy.

2.4 Social media influencer attractiveness

Attractiveness pertains to how effectively influencers visually or aesthetically appeal to their intended consumers (Till and Busler, 2000). It is the familiarity and likeability of the social media influencer by his/her followers. Recent research on influencers has explored physical attractiveness as a significant contributing factor, alongside audience engagement and the influencer themselves (Woodroof et al., 2020). In addition to mainstream influencers, 'micro-influencers'—who have a modest number of followers—often possess greater expertise in a specialized area and typically have more interactive relationships with their audience. As a result, they may appear to have more congruence with their followers (De Veirman et al., 2017). Physical attractiveness has been a vital predictor of purchase intention (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Previous studies (Gayathri and Anwar, 2021; Nugroho et al.) showed that the attractiveness of social media influencers positively impacted consumers' intentions to purchase a range of products. 2022; Masuda et al., 2022). Research work conducted by Etim et al. (2024) in the domain of smartphone segments proved a positive effect of attractiveness on purchase intention of smart watches. Consequently, we propose that,

H3: The attractiveness of social media influencers positively influences the intention to purchase smart watches.

2.5 Brand trust

Trust is characterized as the confidence that consumers have in the quality and reliability of the products or services offered by a business (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). Brand trust, as a mindset of feeling secure while engaging with the brand, depends on the belief that the brand will consistently act in a reliable and responsible manner to meet consumer satisfaction (Munuera-Aleman et al., 2013). Brand trust refers to how consumers view a brand's dependability, shaped by their experiences or a series of transactions and interactions that consistently fulfill their expectations related to product performance and satisfaction (Ferrinadewi, 2008). Brand trust is a critical predictor of purchase intention as it develops reliability among the customers. Research explained a positively influenced by brand trust on intention to purchase laptops (Cuong, 2020); social networking platforms (Kemeç & Yüksel, 2021); social commerce (Fariza & Wiyadi, 2023). In the case of smart watches, brand trust significantly influences the intention to buy (Ramkumar & Liang, 2020). Consequently, we propose that,

H4: Brand trust positively influences the intention to purchase smart watches.

2.6 Perceived price

Price refers to the value that consumers trade in order to obtain the advantages of using or possessing a product or service offered in exchange (Widyastuti & Said, 2017). Pricing is a major factor in customers' purchasing decisions and has been shown to be a reliable indicator of such decisions (Oosthuizen et al. Ayub and Kusumadewi, 2021; 2015). Online shopping has been shown to have a significant positive impact on purchase intention in previous studies (Setiawan & Achyar, 2012); the healthcare sector (Lai et al. in 2020). Perceived price has significantly influenced in smartphone product category (Manorek, 2016). Consequently, we propose that,

H5: Smart watch's intention to buy is positively influenced by perceived price.

3. Research methods

3.1 Sample

Current research was based on cross-sectional data within a quantitative framework, gathering data from participants in India to test the proposed model. An online structured questionnaire was distributed to collect participant responses. The questionnaire was completed by respondents in an average of ten to fifteen minutes. Out of 600 questionnaires distributed, 27 were returned. However, 14 responses were excluded due to incompleteness and unsuitability for analysis. A response rate of 42.66 percent was ultimately obtained from the 256 valid responses that were included.

3.2 Measures

For the current study, the data collection survey was developed based on established research, modified to suit the specific needs of this investigation. The research model features six constructs, all of which were measured using existing scales. The three items that were used to measure the social media influencer expertise construct were modified from Chetoui et al. 2019). Five items assessing social media influencer trustworthiness were drawn from the work of Ohanian, (1990). Items related to social media influencer attractiveness were sourced from Wiedmann & Mettenheim (2020). Items related to brand trust were taken from He et al.'s research. (2012). The perceived price was assessed through a four-item scale and behavioural intention to purchase smart watch developed from Venkatesh et al. (2012). A research model was created to direct the study based on the body of knowledge already available in the field of social influential marketing

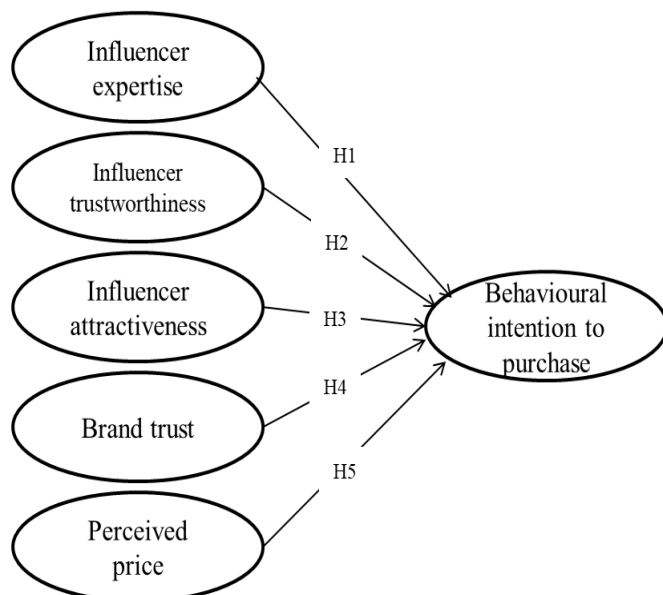


Fig 1: Research framework

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The instrument's internal consistency is measured by the Cronbach's alpha value, which is 0.883, which is higher than the suggested threshold number established by Hair et al. (2010).

Table I: Demographic Description

Measure	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	141	54.65
	Female	116	44.57
Age (years)	18-24	102	39.53
	25-30	75	29.07

	31-36	44	17.05
	37-45	26	10.08
	Above 45	9	3.49
Education	High school	32	12.40
	Intermediate	47	18.2
	UG	93	36.1
	PG	76	29.5
	Other	8	3.100
Marital status	Married	114	44.19
	Unmarried	142	55.04
Family Monthly income (Rs.)	Less than 30,000	54	20.93
	30,000-60,000	79	30.62
	60,000-One lakh	97	37.60
	Above one lakh	26	10.08
Area of residence	Rural	57	22.09
	Urban	83	32.17
	Metro	116	44.96
		256	100.00

The demographic information of the participants is displayed in Table I. There were 44.57 percent female survey respondents and 54.65 percent male survey respondents.. Additionally, majority of the 39.53 percent of the sample in the range of belongs 18 to 24 years. Regarding educational qualifications, 36.1 percent of the participants were undergraduates, while 29.5 percent had completed postgraduate studies. Furthermore, 55.04 sample were not unmarried. With respect to income, 37.60 percent fell within the 60,000 to 100,000 range, followed by 30.62 percent who had an income between 30,000 and 60,000.

Table II: Social media usage

Statement	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Among all social media platforms, which one find most appealing?	Instagram	97	37.89
	Facebook	65	25.39
	Youtube	55	21.48
	Snapchat	23	8.98
	Wechat	16	6.25
How often do you use social media?	Daily	122	47.65
	Thrice a week	75	29.29
	twice a week	47	18.35
	Once in a week	9	3.51
	Once in a fortnight	3	1.17
How many hours on an average do you use social media platform per day?	Less than one hour	54	21.09
	1-3 hours	95	37.1
	3-5 hours	78	30.46
	above five hours	29	11.32

Instagram is the most widely used social media platform, with 37.89% of users using it.. Almost half of the respondents i.e. 47.65 per cent use social media platforms daily. Close to 30 per cent use social media three times a week. 37.1 per cent of the sample use social media 1-3 hours per day, while 30.46 per cent use 3 to 5 hours per day. (Table II).

Table III: Item values

Rotated Component Matrix ^a						
	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
IT1	.890					
IT2	.890					
IT3	.861					

IT4	.857					
IT5	.851					
IA1		.873				
IA2		.869				
IA3		.837				
IA4		.820				
IA5		.787				
PP1			.923			
PP2			.911			
PP3			.899			
PP4			.876			
BT1				.945		
BT2				.928		
BT3				.921		
BT4				.890		
BISW1					.877	
BISW2					.868	
BISW3					.847	
BISW4					.797	
IE1						.907
IE2						.899
IE3						.857
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.						
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.						

From table III, Item loadings are clearly present above 0.50 that is more than the prescribed figures referred according to Hair et al. (2010). (Table III).

Table IV: Internal consistency, CR and AVE

Measure	Code	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Influencer expertise	IE	0.912	0.914	0.78
Influencer trustworthiness	IT	0.955	0.952	0.799
Influencer attractiveness	IA	0.924	0.925	0.712
Brand trust	BT	0.942	0.944	0.808
Perceived price	PP	0.94	0.934	0.78
Behavioural intention to purchase	BISW	0.911	0.914	0.727

The composite reliabilities for the constructs ranged from 0.914 to 0.952, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values fell between 0.712 and 0.808. These findings demonstrated the attainment of convergent validity, suggesting that the constructs within the proposed model exhibited adequate internal consistency.

Additionally, the Cronbach's α coefficients that were computed for every construct ranged from 0.911 to 0.955., as shown in Table IV. This provided additional evidence that each construct displayed a high level of internal reliability.

Table V: Inter-correlation matrix

	PP	IE	IT	IA	BT	BISW
PP	0.883					
IE	0.408	0.883				
IT	0.142	0.138	0.894			
IA	0.071	-0.011	0.534	0.844		
BT	0.013	-0.012	0.083	0.082	0.899	
BISW	0.245	0.276	0.438	0.339	0.158	0.853

When evaluating the discriminant validity of a coefficient, the coefficient of an indicator should show greater significance within the same sample compared to others. According to Chin (1998b), the criterion for determining discriminant validity is the square root of the AVE values of a coefficient need to exceed correlations between that specific dimension as well as other constructs within the model, as demonstrated in Table V.

Table VI Hypotheses results

Hypothesis	Hypothesis	relationships	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Result
H1	BISW	↔ IE	0.196	0.05	3.899	***	Supported
H2	BISW	↔ IT	0.392	0.063	6.256	***	Supported
H3	BISW	↔ IA	0.223	0.067	3.319	***	Supported
H4	BISW	↔ BT	0.115	0.047	2.465	0.014	Supported
H5	BISW	↔ PP	0.105	0.047	2.244	0.025	Supported

*** $P \leq 0.001$

The hypothesised correlation between the expertise of social media influencers and their influence on the behavioral intention to buy a smart watch was validated ($\beta=0.196$, $p=***$). Social media influencer trustworthiness significantly impacts behavioural intention to purchase smart watch ($\beta=0.392$, $p=***$). Additionally, behavioral intention to buy a smart watch is influenced by the attractiveness of social media influencers ($\beta=0.223$, $p=***$). Hypothesized relationship between brand trust and behavioural intention to purchase smart watch significant ($\beta=0.115$, $p=0.014$). Finally, perceived price exhibits positive influence on behavioural intention to purchase smart watch ($\beta=0.105$, $p=0.025$). (Table VI)

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Investigating how different factors influence consumers' behavioural intentions towards buying smart watches is the goal of this study. Social influencer characteristics such as expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness along with brand trust and perceived price were employed as predictors. Results revealed a positive effect of each factor on behavioural intention to purchase smart watches. According to Ermis (2021), the influence of social media influencers on purchase intention for smart watches is substantial. People rely on the proficiency and information of a particular social media influence. The influencers are proficient promoting products on social media. Eventually people prefer to purchase a product. Social media influencer trustworthiness positively influences purchase intention of smart watch which was supported with the study by Al Jaed & Badghish (2021). Trustworthiness is a critical factor in purchase behaviour. Individuals tend trust social media influencers more than the promotion from the brands. Trustworthiness of social media influencer includes being honest and showing integrity when they endorse a product or service. As a result, there is increased trust in the social media influencer. The appeal of social media influencers notably impacts the intention to buy smart watches. These findings align with the research conducted by Etim et al. (2024). Physical as well as social attractiveness are the crucial aspects of attractiveness. Social media influencers are attracted or got caught attention due to the respect and recognition they gain through their popularity. This leading to individuals feel that the social media influencers have similar thought process with themselves. Brand trust had significantly influenced purchase intention of smart watches which is corroborated from the research work by (Ramkumar & Liang, 2020). Brand trust plays a critical role in motivating customers to make purchases. This trust is established through the product's reliability and the impact of social media influencers. Moreover, the perceived price has a favorable effect on the intention to purchase smart watches, aligning with the findings of Manorek (2016). Price has been a critical predictor of purchase decision over the decades. Individuals compare the benefits they derive and what they pay for it. Customers always tend to be value-conscious during their purchase decisions. The study carries significance for both academic and practical communities. The primary contribution of this study is its analysis of different characteristics of social media influencers and their influence on purchasing behavior regarding smart watches. Young people typically dedicate a significant portion of their time to using social media platform and attracted to endorsements of social media influencers and buy fancy and trendy products. Hence, the practitioners wisely choose social media influencers with enough knowledge and skill so that the objective is fulfilled. Further, trustworthiness of social media influencer is a vital element to attract customers. Practitioners must evaluate the reliability of social media influencers who embody integrity and honesty, as these qualities ultimately benefit both consumers and the brand. Additionally, the appeal of social media influencers is important; traits like likability and relatability enable customers to connect more readily with these influencers. Finally, price of a product hugely impact purchase decision. Customers tend to buy products or services which offer them superior value. At the end, creating trust in brand among customers is critical aspect for enhanced sales which can be a bundle of various aspects a product which the practitioners need to consider.

6. LIMITATIONS, FUTURE SCOPE AND CONCLUSION

The research examines how several factors influence the intention to buy smart watches which includes social media influencer's traits such as expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, brand trust and perceived price. The study is reasonably comprehensive, contains some limitation for further investigation. The study focused on smart watch which is one popular product category among the youth. The study is based on cross-sectional study; longitudinal studies might provide more comprehensive findings concerning behavioural intention towards purchase of smart watches. The findings of the research do not apply to all populations due to its small size of respondents. The model's validation improves with a larger sample. The study was majorly focused on a metro city and few urban areas; if conducted only in rural areas; different results can be expected. The study included a limited number of factors; there are numerous factors such as attitude of homophily, customer engagement, brand image, entertainment value, informative value, parasocial relationship etc. could be considered for a highly comprehensive research work. Further, the study may include moderating factors like age, education, occupation, gender which certainly has a huge impact when customers purchase various types of products. Previous experience with utilizing social media influencer marketing can have a considerable impact.

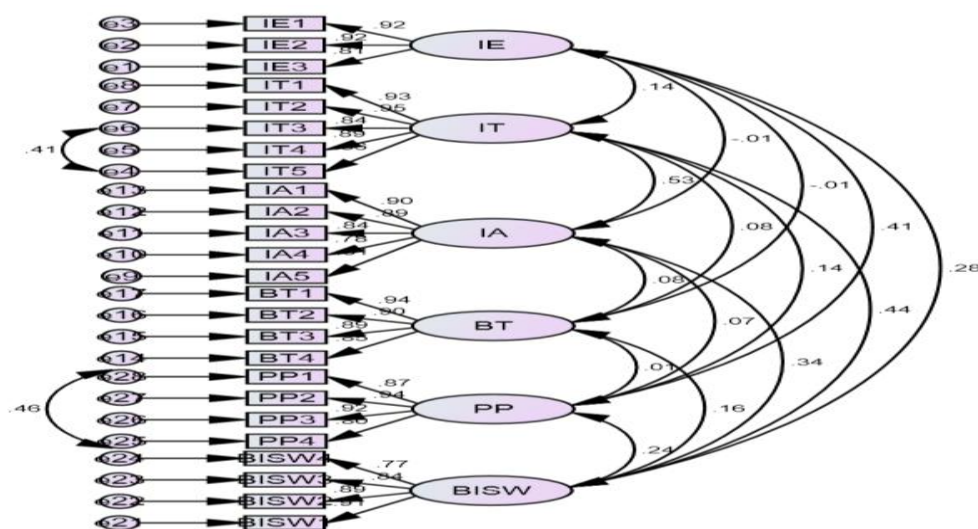
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Annexure A: Measurement Model



Annexure B: Path analysis

