THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCER ADVERTISING ON CONSUMER PURCHASE BEHAVIOR   TOWARDS PRODUCTS

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Abstract

The rise of social media has revolutionized the advertising landscape, positioning influencer marketing as a dominant strategy for shaping consumer perceptions and purchase decisions. The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of influencer advertising on consumer buying behavior, with particular attention to the mediating role of psychological response and the moderating effect of consumer characteristics. While prior research has explored the direct impact of influencer marketing, there is a notable gap in understanding how psychological mechanisms and audience traits jointly shape consumer behavior. To address this gap, a quantitative research design was employed, collecting data from a representative sample of social media users and analyzing the relationships using structural equation modeling. The findings indicate that influencer advertising has a direct and significant positive effect on consumer buying behavior, whereas psychological response does not mediate this relationship as initially hypothesized. In contrast, consumer characteristics were found to significantly moderate the effect, amplifying the influence of marketing messages when the influencer aligns with audience traits and preferences. These= results refine the understanding of digital marketing dynamics, suggesting that strategic alignment between influencers and target audiences is more critical than psychological mediation. The study contributes to theory by highlighting the conditional role of consumer characteristics in influencer marketing and offers practical implications for marketers, policymakers, and researchers seeking to optimize digital marketing strategies.
Keywords: influencer marketing, consumer buying behavior, psychological response, consumer characteristics, social media advertising, Cognitive Appraisal Theory, Elaboration Likelihood Model

Introduction

The rise of social media has changed the advertising, giving birth to influencer marketing as one of the most powerful for making consumer perceptions and behaviors. Influencers are those who build trust with audiences through personal branding. Their content often evokes emotional engagement and social identification, consumers' buying intentions and brand attitudes. In recent years, social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become main platform for product promotion. Brands rely on influencers to deliver persuasive messages that feel authentic and relatable. Unlike traditional ads, influencer promotions work because followers feel personally connected to influencers and see them as trustworthy and relatable, which strongly encourages them to buy the products they recommend.

Influencer advertising depends on complex psychological processes such as trust and credibility. Moreover, these effects differ across individuals based on their demographic and psychological characteristics, including age, personality traits and social media engagement levels. Existing studies on digital advertising such as those on dataveillance and personalization (Strycharz et al., 2025), deepfake advertising (Whittaker et al., 2025), and music recognition and consumer choice (Anglada-Tort et al., 2022), Spiritual and Fantasy Advertising (Dodds et al., 2021), Advergames and Consumer Brand Engagement (Berlo & Chen, 2024) have explored how technology, emotion, and cognition shape consumer decisions.

Although influencer advertising has become a dominant marketing tool, but how it shapes consumer buying behavior remain insufficiently explored. Previous research on digital advertising such as dataveillance and interactive advertising (Strycharz et al., 2025), deepfake advertising (Whittaker et al., 2025), and music-based persuasion (Anglada-Tort et al., 2022) Spiritual and Fantasy Advertising (Dodds et al., 2021) , Advergames and Consumer Brand Engagement (Berlo & Chen, 2024) has advanced understanding of digital consumer engagement, but largely overlooked the *psychological and individual factors* that moderate advertising effectiveness.

There are theoretical gaps because earlier studies mostly looked at the technical side of persuasion and did not include the emotional and relationship factors that are key in influencer and follower interactions. Existing models like the Cognitive Appraisal Theory and Elaboration Likelihood Model explain parts of the persuasion process but fail to capture how consumers' *psychological responses* (e.g., trust, emotional connection) and *personal characteristics* (e.g., age, personality, social media habits) jointly shape their buying decisions.

Research Objectives

- To analyze the direct effect of influencer advertising on consumer buying behavior.
- To investigate the mediating role of psychological response between influencer advertising and consumer buying behavior.
- To examine the moderating effect of consumer characteristics on the relationship between influencer advertising and consumer buying behavior.
- To provide practical insights and recommendations for marketers and advertisers to enhance the effectiveness of influencer campaigns.

Research Questions

Based on the above objectives, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

- How does influencer advertising affect consumer buying behavior?
- Does psychological response mediate the relationship between influencer advertising and consumer buying behavior?
- Do consumer characteristics moderate the relationship between influencer advertising and consumer buying behavior?

- What strategic implications can be drawn for marketers to design more effective influencer advertising campaigns?

Literature Review

Exposure to influencer content can increase familiarity, trust, and emotional attachment, leading to stronger purchase intentions. Psychological Response functions as the mediating variable, capturing the emotional and cognitive reactions such as trust, authenticity, and emotional connection—that arise from influencer advertising. Consumer Characteristics act as the moderating variable, including demographic and psychographic factors such as age, gender, personality traits, and social media engagement. These traits influence how individuals perceive influencer credibility and determine the strength of advertising effects. Together, these constructs form an integrative framework grounded in **CAT** and **ELM**, which jointly explain how emotional and cognitive appraisals shape persuasion. Influencer advertising stimulates both emotional and rational evaluations (CAT), while persuasion occurs through either central or peripheral processing routes (ELM). This integrated model provides a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms linking influencer advertising to consumer decision-making.

Approaches (Schools of Thought / Juristic Approaches)

In the study *"Advergames and Consumer Brand Engagement: Experiential Satisfaction as a Mediator of Gamified Advertising Effects"*, the authors found that interactive advertising enhances engagement by repeated exposure and brand loyalty. (Wang & Calder, 2020). The behavioral school of thought suggests that consumers respond to environmental stimuli through learned associations and reinforcement. Advertising effectiveness arises from repetition, rewards, and emotional conditioning.

The cognitive approach focuses on how consumers mentally process, interpret, and evaluate persuasive messages. Dodds et al. (2021) in *"Enhancing Consumer Well-being and Behavior with Spiritual and Fantasy Advertising"* highlight that advertising invoking fantasy and spirituality activates reflective thinking and emotional engagement, which contributes to personal well-being and purchase intention. This aligns with influencer advertising, where followers cognitively evaluate influencer credibility and authenticity while also processing emotional and symbolic meanings embedded in their messages. The humanistic approach focuses on self-expression, personal identity, and human values as key to understanding how people behave as consumers. Fletcher-Brown et al. (2024) in *The Role of Consumer Speech Acts in Brand Activism: A Transformative Advertising Perspective* found that advertising can give consumers power to influence market values through communication and participation. In influencer marketing, this idea explains why people often feel connected to influencers who share their values and beliefs. This sense of identification builds trust and makes consumers more likely to follow the influencer's recommendations or behaviors.

The socio-cultural approach sees advertising as a social activity that both reflects and strengthens cultural values, social norms, and online behaviors. It highlights how modern marketing is interactive and encourages participation. Strycharz et al. (2025), in *Dataveillance in Interactive Advertising: Transforming Consumer–Advertiser Interactions*, explain that data-driven advertising changes social relationships by using personal data to tailor ads based on people's behavior and social influence. In influencer marketing, this approach helps us understand how online communities, social media algorithms, and peer influence affect how consumers see products and make buying decisions.

This approach, based on cognitive shortcuts and emotional psychology, explains that people often make buying decisions using feelings of familiarity and recognition instead of careful

reasoning. Anglada-Tort et al. (2022), in *I've Heard That Brand Before: The Role of Music Recognition on Consumer Choice,* found that when consumers recognize familiar music in ads, they feel an emotional connection that increases their preference for the brand. The researchers explain that familiar music helps people make quicker and easier decisions and builds stronger emotional attachment to the brand.In the same way, in influencer advertising, consumers tend to trust and choose influencers they feel familiar with or similar to. This emotional connection works like a shortcut that guides their trust and purchase decisions.

Previous Studies

Wang and Calder (2020) studied how interactive advertisements in the form of advergames can increase consumer engagement with brands. Using the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model, they found that when consumers enjoy and feel satisfied while playing branded games, they become more emotionally connected to the brand. Their findings show that emotional satisfaction plays a key role in linking the advertising experience to consumer engagement. This supports the current study's idea that psychological response—such as positive feelings and enjoyment—acts as a mediator between advertising and consumer behavior.

Dodds et al. (2021) explored how advertisements that use fantasy and spirituality affect consumers' emotions and behavior. Based on the Cognitive Appraisal Theory (CAT) and Positive Psychology, their research found that ads which stimulate imagination and emotional reflection can improve consumer trust, happiness, and the intention to buy. This supports the view that both thought and emotion work together to shape psychological responses to persuasive messages, which is central to understanding influencer advertising. Fletcher-Brown et al. (2024) examined how consumers use their voices and emotions to influence brands through social activism. Drawing from Transformative Advertising Research (TAR), they found that people act as active participants—using language and emotional engagement to shape, support, or challenge brand meanings. The study identified different types of consumers, such as brand champions and activist followers, showing that emotional and cognitive engagement drive participation and advocacy. This highlights the role of psychological response as a bridge between advertising and consumer behavior.

Strycharz et al. (2025) investigated how personalized, data-driven advertising affects consumer trust and behavior. Their research, based on the Interactive Advertising and Ethical Framework, revealed that consumers' awareness and privacy concerns influence how they respond to personalized ads. People with higher digital literacy or privacy sensitivity react differently to data-based targeting. This supports the inclusion of consumer characteristics as a moderating variable, meaning individual differences affect how consumers interpret and respond to influencer advertising. Finally, Anglada-Tort et al. (2022) studied how music recognition impacts consumer choice. Using the Recognition Heuristic Theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), they discovered that familiar and emotionally engaging music makes people more likely to prefer and choose a brand. Familiar sounds act as emotional shortcuts that build trust and attachment. Similarly, in influencer marketing, familiarity and emotional connection with influencers help build trust and encourage consumers to follow the recommendations.
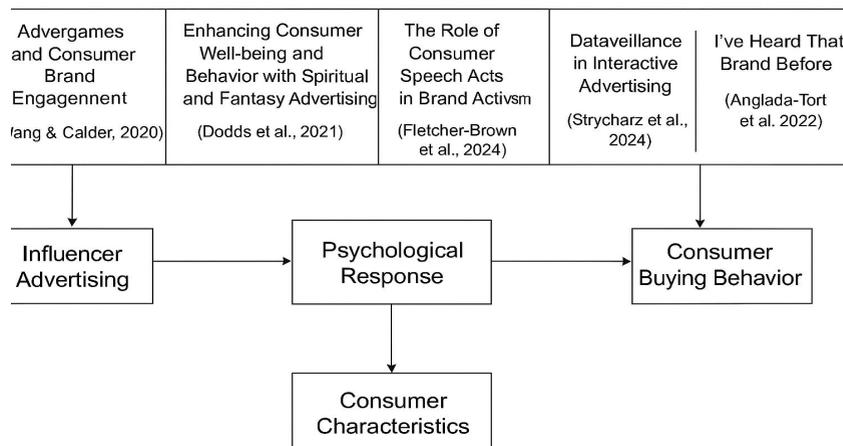
Theoretical Background of the Research Frame

Wang and Calder (2020) based their study on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model, which explains how advertising messages influence people's inner feelings and lead to actions. In their research on advergames, they found that interactive and enjoyable games make consumers feel satisfied, which increases their engagement with a brand. In influencer marketing, the influencer's content works as the stimulus, the consumer's trust and emotional connection represent the internal response, and the final purchase behavior is the outcome. This shows that psychological response plays a key role in connecting influencer advertising to consumer buying behavior.

H1: Influencer advertising has a positive effect on consumer buying behavior.

Dodds et al. (2021) used the Cognitive Appraisal Theory (CAT) to study how fantasy and spiritual advertising influence consumer emotions and decisions. Their results showed that ads that encourage imagination and emotion improve trust, satisfaction, and purchase intention. Similarly, in influencer marketing, followers judge influencer messages based on how credible and relevant they seem, which creates emotional trust and leads to buying decisions.

H2: Positive psychological responses increase consumers' intention to purchase products endorsed by influencers.

Fletcher-Brown et al. (2024) applied Transformative Advertising Theory (TAR) to study how consumers interact with brands through emotional and linguistic expression. They found that people help shape brand meaning by sharing emotions, opinions, and values. In influencer marketing, followers also co-create meaning by emotionally engaging with influencers and supporting shared beliefs. This means that psychological response—such as emotional tone, trust, and identification—affects consumer behavior, while personal traits like values and level of involvement can strengthen or weaken this relationship.

H3: Consumer characteristics moderate the link between influencer advertising and psychological response.

Strycharz et al. (2025) built their study on the Interactive Advertising and Privacy Calculus Framework, which looks at how people balance the benefits and risks of personalized advertising. They found that while personalized ads can make marketing more engaging, they can also reduce trust when privacy concerns are high. In influencer marketing, people's digital literacy, skepticism, and privacy awareness affect how they respond to influencer content.

H4: Consumer characteristics such as privacy concern, trust, and digital literacy moderate the relationship between influencer advertising and psychological response.

Anglada-Tort et al. (2022) used the Recognition Heuristic Theory and Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) to study how familiarity and emotional cues affect consumer decisions. They discovered that familiar music in ads creates emotional connections that increase brand preference and purchase intent. Likewise, in influencer advertising, familiarity and emotional connection with influencers build trust and comfort, encouraging purchase decisions with little mental effort.

H5: Emotional resonance and trust mediate the link between influencer familiarity and consumer buying behavior.
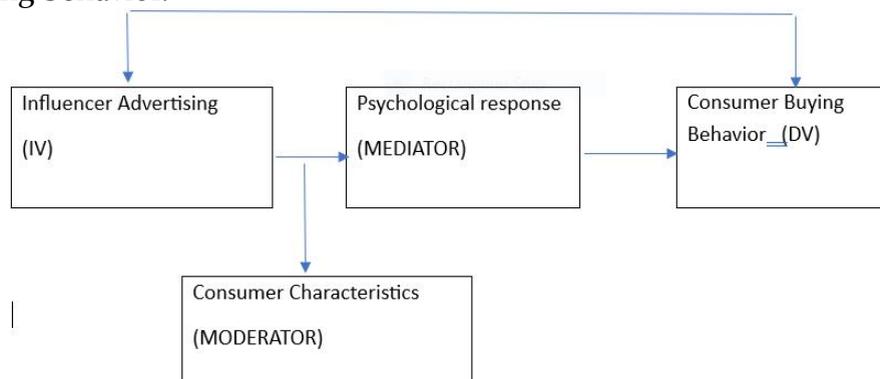
Methodology

The present research is causal in nature, as it aims to determine and explain cause-and-effect relationships among the key variables of the stud influencer advertising (independent variable), psychological response (mediating variable), consumer buying behavior (dependent variable), and consumer characteristics (moderating variable).

The study follows a cross-sectional research design, which involves collecting data from the target population at a single point in time to analyze relationships among variables. The cross-sectional design aligns with the quantitative nature of the study, allowing for statistical testing of hypotheses and examination of mediation and moderation effects using survey data. Data were collected from students in Media and Mass Communication departments at SZABIST and NUML Universities through an online questionnaire. This design enabled the researcher to analyze how influencer advertising influences consumers' psychological and behavioral responses within a defined context. To measure the constructs of this study, a structured online questionnaire was designed using previously validated scales from top-tier journal articles related to advertising, consumer psychology, and media engagement. The questionnaire consisted of four main sections corresponding to the study variables: Influencer Advertising (IV), Psychological Response (Mediator), Consumer Buying Behavior (DV), and Consumer Characteristics (Moderator). Each construct was measured using multiple items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *1 = Strongly Disagree* to *5 = Strongly Agree*.

The construct of influencer advertising was measured using items adapted from "Advergames and Consumer Brand Engagement: Experiential Satisfaction as a Mediator of Gamified Advertising Effects" (Wang & Calder, 2020) and "Enhancing Consumer Well-Being and Behavior with Spiritual and FantasyAdvertising"(Sparksetal.,2022).

These scales capture dimensions such as influencer credibility, attractiveness, content quality, and engagement. Sample items include:

- "The influencer's content is appealing and engaging."
- "I find the influencer credible and trustworthy."
- "The influencer's advertisements make me more interested in the brand."

Psychological response was assessed using items derived from "The Role of Consumer Speech Acts in Brand Activism: A Transformative Advertising Perspective" (Fletcher-Brown et al., 2024) and "Examining Consumer Appraisals of Deepfake Advertising and Disclosure" (Dodds et al., 2021). These items measure emotional and cognitive reactions such as trust, attachment, authenticity, and engagement. Example items include:

- "I feel emotionally connected to the influencer's content."
- "The influencer's message feels authentic and believable."
- "The advertisement made me develop positive feelings toward the brand."

This construct was adapted from "I've Heard That Brand Before: The Role of Music Recognition on Consumer Choice" (Anglada-Tort et al., 2022), which measured consumer intentions and brand-related behaviors.Sample items include:

- "I would choose this brand over another one."
- "I would consider buying this brand in the future."
- "The influencer's content increases my likelihood of purchasing the promoted product."

Consumer characteristics were measured using self-report items developed from "Dataveillance in Interactive Advertising: Transforming Consumer–Advertiser Interactions and Its Unintended Consequences"(Strycharzetal.2025).

This section focused on personal traits such as digital literacy, privacy concern, and involvement with influencer content. Example items include:

- "I am cautious about how my data is used in online advertising."
- "I often engage with influencer content that matches my personal interests."
- "I have enough knowledge to evaluate influencer advertisements critically."

The target population for this study includes all students enrolled in the Media and Mass Communication departments at two universities in Islamabad—SZABIST University and NUML University—who use social media at least once a week and have the potential to purchase products promoted by social media influencers. The total estimated population of eligible students across both universities is approximately 1,000. Based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table, a sample of 278 respondents is required to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. The inclusion criteria include being an enrolled Media student at either SZABIST or NUML University, being 18 years of age or older, using social media at least weekly, and being able to read English or Urdu, the languages used in the survey. The exclusion criteria include non-Media students, students not currently enrolled, and those who do not use social media on a weekly basis.

A two-stage cluster sampling technique was used for data collection. In the first stage, the two universities were treated as primary strata, and each university's Media Department was divided into class or semester groups, which served as clusters. In the second stage, all students within each selected cluster were invited to participate in the survey. This sampling method ensures diverse representation across academic levels while remaining practical and manageable. It is expected that approximately 495 students were invited to participate, with an anticipated response rate of 55–60%, yielding around 278 valid responses as required by the sample size calculation. This study utilized both primary and secondary data collection tools to ensure comprehensive and valid findings. The primary instrument was a structured online questionnaire developed through Google Forms, containing Likert-scale items to measure influencer advertising, psychological response, consumer characteristics, and consumer buying behavior. The survey was distributed to Media and Mass Communication students of SZABIST and NUML Universities. To enhance the instrument's validity, expert opinions from two influencer marketing professionals and one academic were incorporated. Additionally, a

document review of scholarly articles and reports was conducted to identify theoretical gaps and refine hypotheses. Together, these tools ensured the reliability and credibility of the research data.

Results and Analysis

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive statistics show that all variables have mean values close to the midpoint, indicating a moderate level of influencer advertising, psychological response, consumer characteristics, and buying behavior among respondents. The standard deviations are below 1, suggesting reasonable consistency in responses. Skewness and kurtosis values fall within acceptable ranges, indicating that the data are approximately normally distributed and suitable for further analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
MeanInfluencerAdvertising	103	1.00	5.00	3.2152	.81837	-.570	.238	.562	.472
MeanConsumerCharecteristics	103	1.00	5.00	3.0696	.84744	-.185	.238	-.226	.472
MeanPsychologyResponse	103	1.00	4.80	3.1262	.77510	-.631	.238	.783	.472
MeanConsumerBuyingBehavior	103	1.00	5.00	2.9442	.86385	-.122	.238	-.179	.472
Valid N (listwise)	103								

Correlation Analysis

	Influencer Advertising	Psychological Response	Consumer Characteristic	Consumer Buying Behavior
Influencer Advertising	1			.
Psychological Response	.784**	1		
Consumer Characteristics	.745**	.768**	1	
Consumer Buying Behavior	.785**	851**	.720**	1

Pearson correlation analysis showed that all variables are positively and significantly correlated at the 0.01 level. Influencer Advertising is correlated with Psychological Response (r = 0.784, p<0.01) Consumer Characteristics (r = 0.745, p<0.01) and Consumer Buying Behavior (r = 0.785, p<0.01).

Psychological Response is also strongly correlated with Consumer Characteristics (r = 0.768, p<0.01) and Consumer Buying Behavior (r = 0.851, p<0.01). Additionally, Consumer Characteristics show a weak correlation with Consumer Buying Behavior (r = 0.720). These results indicate that all variables are closely related and provide initial support for the study's proposed relationships.

Regression Analysis

Influencer Advertising was considered, the model was significant (R^2 = 0.615, p < 0.001), explaining about 62% of the changes in buying behavior. Adding Consumer Characteristics increased the explained variance to about 76% (ΔR^2 = 0.144, p < 0.001), showing that consumer

traits have a strong impact on purchases. Including Psychological Response slightly increased the variance to 76.1%, but this change was not significant (ΔR^2 = 0.002, p = 0.427) Influencer Advertising significantly affects buying behavior (β = 0.280, p = 0.001), while Consumer Characteristics is the strongest factor (β = 0.581, p < 0.001).

Psychological Response, however, was not significant (β = 0.066, p = 0.427), suggesting that emotional or psychological reactions alone do not directly influence purchases. Overall, the results show that both influencer marketing and consumer traits play important roles in shaping buying behavior, with consumer characteristics having the biggest effect.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
					Change Statistics				
1	.872ª	.761	.754	.42866	.761	105.082	3	99	<.001

a. Predictors: (Constant), MeanPsychologyResponse, MeanInfluencerAdvertising, MeanConsumerCharecteristics

Coefficientsª

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-.052	.186		-.280	.780
	Influencer Advertising	.296	.090	.280	3.302	.001
	Consumer Characteristics	.592	.090	.581	6.571	.000
	Psychology Response	.073	.092	.066	.798	.427

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.785ª	.615	.612	.53833	.615	161.655	1	101	.000
2	.871ᵇ	.759	.755	.42788	.144	59.873	1	100	.000
3	.872ᶜ	.761	.754	.42866	.002	.637	1	99	.427

a. Predictors: (Constant), Influencer Advertising

b. Predictors: (Constant), Influencer Advertising, Consumer Characteristics
c. Predictors: (Constant), Influencer Advertising, Consumer Characteristics, Psychology Response

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.282	.216		1.304	.195
	MeanInfluencerAdvertising	.828	.065	.785	12.714	<.001
2	(Constant)	-.004	.176		-.023	.982
	MeanInfluencerAdvertising	.322	.083	.305	3.853	<.001
	MeanConsumerCharecteristics	.624	.081	.612	7.738	<.001
3	(Constant)	-.052	.186		-.280	.780
	MeanInfluencerAdvertising	.296	.090	.280	3.302	.001
	MeanConsumerCharecteristics	.592	.090	.581	6.571	<.001
	MeanPsychologyResponse	.073	.092	.066	.798	.427

a. Dependent Variable: MeanConsumerBuyingBehavior

Summary of Findings

Objective	Research Question	Hypothesis	Data Collection Tool	Analysis Technique	Key Result	Decision
To analyze the direct effect of influencer advertising on buying behavior	Does influencer advertising directly affect buying behavior?	H1	Questionnaire	Regression Analysis	Significant direct effect (β = 0.280, p = 0.001)	**Supported**
To examine the mediating role of psychological response	Does psychological response mediate the IA–CBB relationship?	H2	Questionnaire	Mediation Analysis	Mediation not significant (p = 0.427)	**Not Supported**

Objective	Research Question	Hypothesis	Data Collection Tool	Analysis Technique	Key Result	Decision
To examine the moderating effect of consumer characteristics	Do consumer characteristics moderate the IA–CBB relationship?	H3	Questionnaire	Moderation Analysis	Moderation effect significant	**Supported**
To provide practical insights for marketers	How can influencer campaigns be improved?	H4	Questionnaire	Result Interpretation	Targeting consumer traits improves effectiveness	—

Hypothesis	Key Result	Decision
H1: Influencer advertising → Buying behavior	Strong positive correlation (r = 0.785) and significant effect (β = 0.280, p = 0.001)	Supported
H2: Psychological response as mediator	Positive correlation (r = 0.851) but insignificant effect (β = 0.066, p = 0.427)	Not Supported
H3: Consumer characteristics as moderator	Strong correlation (r = 0.720) and strongest effect (β = 0.581, p < 0.001)	Supported
Overall model	Explains 75.4% variance (R² = 0.754)	Strong model

Conclusion and Recommendations

Initially, we assumed that psychological responses would mediate the effect of influencer advertising on consumer buying behavior. I expected emotions and cognitive engagement to drive purchase decisions. However, the results showed that influencer advertising directly impacts buying behavior, while psychological mediation was not significant. Instead, consumer characteristics emerged as a key moderating factor, amplifying the influence when aligned with the influencer.

This shifted perspective: the effectiveness of influencer marketing depends less on psychological response and more on strategic audience-influencer alignment, offering a more practical and targeted understanding of consumer behavior.

Important Findings

The study revealed several key insights regarding the impact of influencer advertising on consumer buying behavior.

Hypothesis 1 was supported, indicating that influencer advertising exerts a significant positive impact on consumer buying behavior. This underscores the potency of influencers as a strategic marketing tool capable of directly shaping purchase intentions.

Hypothesis 2 was not supported, as the psychological response did not significantly mediate the relationship between influencer advertising and consumer buying behavior. This suggests

that cognitive or emotional reactions may be less pivotal than previously theorized, at least within the studied context.

Hypothesis 3 was supported, demonstrating that consumer characteristics significantly moderate the effect of influencer advertising. This finding emphasizes that the alignment between influencer attributes and consumer traits is critical for maximizing marketing efficacy. Collectively, these results refine our understanding of influencer marketing, highlighting that direct influence is substantial but contingent on audience alignment, while psychological mediation may be context-dependent.

Conclusion

Objective 1 concluded that Influencer advertising significantly influences consumer buying behavior, confirming its effectiveness as a direct marketing strategy on the basis of our findings discussed above.

Objective 2 concluded that psychological response does not serve as a significant mediator, suggesting that the influence of advertising may bypass cognitive or emotional processing in favor of more immediate behavioral outcomes on the basis of our findings discussed above.

Objective 3 concluded that   Consumer characteristics exert a strong moderating effect, highlighting the importance of segmentation and targeted influencer selection on the basis of our findings discussed above.

Objective 4 concluded that Marketers can enhance campaign effectiveness by strategically matching influencers to consumer profiles, ensuring congruence in values, interests, and behavioral tendencies on the basis of our findings discussed above.

In sum, the study provides robust evidence that influencer marketing is most effective when campaigns are strategically tailored to consumer characteristics, offering both theoretical contributions and actionable insights for practice.

Recommendations

Researchers

Future studies should build on these findings by exploring additional variables that may influence the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Variables such as brand trust, influencer credibility, social media engagement, and cultural context could provide deeper insights into the mechanisms driving consumer behavior. Researchers should also employ larger, more diverse samples across regions and demographics to improve generalizability. Furthermore, qualitative, mixed-method, or longitudinal designs could capture the evolving nature of consumer responses to influencers over time, offering richer explanations for why psychological mediation may be less significant than previously assumed.

Policy Makers

Policymakers should focus on ensuring ethical and transparent influencer marketing practices. This includes enforcing regulations on paid promotions disclosure, implementing guidelines for truthful and non-deceptive advertising, and promoting consumer protection in digital spaces. Policies should encourage accountability and standardization while balancing innovation in digital marketing. Strengthened regulation can increase consumer trust, reduce misinformation, and foster fair competition among brands leveraging influencer marketing.

Managers

Managers should prioritize strategic influencer selection based on alignment with the target audience's characteristics, values, and preferences, rather than focusing solely on follower count or reach. Campaigns should emphasize authenticity, credibility, and relevance to ensure meaningful engagement. Continuous monitoring, feedback analysis, and data-driven adjustments are essential to optimize performance. By leveraging audience-influencer

congruence, organizations can maximize purchase behavior outcomes, reflecting the study's finding that consumer characteristics strongly moderate marketing effectiveness.

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