



Research Article

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Elucidating Information Adoption in YouTube Influencer Marketing: The Role of Influencer Attributes, Information Credibility, and Purchase Intentions

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Abstract

Consumers are increasingly gravitating toward social media influencers as credible information sources for products and services, owing to the authenticity, domain knowledge, and relatability inherent in their experiential narratives. In Malawi, beauty influencers on YouTube significantly influence consumers' buying choices, especially in the fashion, fitness, beauty, and food industries. This research analyzes the impact of influencer characteristics on perceived information credibility and investigates how this credibility influences information adoption and buying intentions among consumer in Malawi's cosmetics sector. Data were gathered using an online survey that utilized purposive and snowball sampling methods, yielding 358 valid responses for analysis. The proposed relationships were evaluated through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results show that the characteristics of influencers greatly improve the perceived trustworthiness of information created by them. Moreover, the credibility of information has a positive impact on both the adoption of information and intentions to make a purchase, while the adoption of information significantly enhances purchase intentions. These results emphasize the key importance of information credibility in converting influencer traits into consumers' behaviours regarding information adoption and their purchasing choices. The research provides significant theoretical and managerial insights for marketers and cosmetic brands looking to improve the efficacy of influencer marketing techniques and strengthen consumer engagement via trustworthy social media endorsements.

Keywords: YouTube, information credibility, purchase intention, influencer attributes.

1. Introduction

Currently, users are eager to embrace new technologies and integrate them into their everyday routines. The internet is a commonly utilized platform that offers access to a wide array of information and data sources presented from different perspectives (Statista, 2025). Consequently, with technological progress and the extensive utilization of the internet, consumers are inundated with an overwhelming amount of information regarding the products and services present in the market Andoy, et al., (2023). With the growth of e-commerce, it has transformed consumer purchasing habits, substituting numerous conventional face-to-face transactions with online platforms (Bakar et al., 2025).

The internet has enabled dialogue among consumers, permitting them to effortlessly share information with a wide audience in a brief time (Tran, Rosales & Copes, 2020). As buyers become more

involved in online conversations regarding their shopping experiences, marketing managers currently possess a remarkable chance to obtain market insights (Tor-Kadioglu & Bozyigit, 2025). The online traces that users create in digital spaces offer information about their views on products or services, as well as their individual experiences and assessments of business performance (Peltier et al., 2020). This transformation has altered the dissemination of information from a traditional one-way communication model to an engaging and fluid interaction, in which users actively exchange and obtain information through various online platforms (Dahl et al., 2019).

Grasping the reliability of information disseminated by influencers is essential in today's digital era, where social media platforms play a pivotal role in consumer behaviour (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Marketers must ascertain the credibility of information, as it aids in presenting data that enhances the perception of trustworthiness for businesses (Andoy, et al., 2023).

Worldwide, YouTube boasts around 2.7 billion monthly active users, cementing its status as one of the foremost digital media platforms globally (Statista, 2025; YouTube, 2024). In Malawi, the digital landscape has seen significant expansion, especially in video advertising, with YouTube ad spending projected to reach around US\$3.2 million in 2025/2026. The platform's popularity keeps rising, with approximately 4.5 million users interacting with video content each month. These advancements highlight the increasing use of digital technologies in Malawi and emphasize the strategic significance of video marketing for local brands aiming to enhance their visibility and access larger audiences (DataReportal, 2025).

Around 80% of marketers globally utilize social media influencers to capture customer interest and promote their businesses (Dinh & Lee, 2021). Social media influencers are individuals who have gained a large following due to their activities in content creation and sharing on various social media platforms (Yuan & Lou, 2020). The swift growth of social media platforms has greatly increased the demand for efficient customer interaction and engagement (Dinh & Lee, 2021).

YouTube is notable for being a favoured option for obtaining product-related information prior to making buying choices, due to the vast amount of user-generated content present (Weismueller et al., 2020).

Additionally, videos made by beauty influencers are a trending sensation on YouTube and are highly favoured among women. Beauty influencers create these videos to express their opinions on a beauty product or to contrast similar products from different brands (Afifah, 2019). The term 'beauty influencer' mainly designates an aesthetic specialist who educates others on different topics concerning enhancement and beauty techniques (Tran et al., 2020). The desire of customers to view videos online is growing stronger, and YouTube has rapidly emerged as the favoured social media site for beauty influencers (Dankwa, 2021). In Malawi, the adoption of YouTube has significantly grown in the last ten years, fueled by greater access to smartphones, mobile internet, and digital content. This increase signifies wider patterns in digital usage and emphasizes the platform's rising significance for communication, entertainment, and marketing efforts (Statista, 2025).

The connection between consumers' acceptance of information from social media and their buying intentions is still unclear because of insufficient research (Tor-Kadioglu & Bozyigit, 2025). Though the impact of information adoption on purchase attention has garnered some interest, earlier studies have mainly centered on electronic word of mouth (Abedi et al., 2020; Daowd et al., 2020; Intansari & Roostika, 2022; Khwaja et al., 2020; Leong et al., 2021), resulting in a deficiency in comprehending how information shared by influencers, especially beauty influencers, influences purchase intention.

This study aims to explore how trustworthy information shared by beauty influencers on YouTube impacts consumers' acceptance of information and their purchasing intentions.

The subsequent three research inquiries can direct the exploration: RQ1: In what ways do the characteristics of YouTube influencers specifically authenticity, similarity, informational usefulness, likability, and knowledgeability affect consumers' acceptance of information? RQ2: How significantly does the adoption of information affect consumers' intentions to purchase within the framework of YouTube influencer marketing? RQ3: Does the adoption of information serve as a mediator in the

relationship between attributes of influencers (authenticity, similarity, informational usefulness, likeability, and knowledgeable) and consumers' intentions to purchase?

2. Related works

2.1 User-Generated Content as a Form of Electronic Word of Mouth

User-created content is identical to digital word of mouth, operating just like conventional word of mouth (De Costa & Abd Aziz, 2021). but the information disseminates via social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. Traditional media, like television and magazines, is increasingly being supplanted by social media, which has emerged as a crucial platform for marketers to advertise brands and products. Individuals generate and upload multimedia content, sharing their opinions on brands and products, which can then be distributed to others (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). User-generated content allows online users to articulate their thoughts, opinions, and feedback regarding the products and services they have utilized or experienced (Intansari & Roostika, 2022).

User-created content signifies an array of digital information resources that can be produced, started, and disseminated for consumers to access (De Costa & Abd Aziz, 2021). Content created by users can take various forms, and it often includes images, videos, reviews, or testimonials shared on social media. Utilizing user-generated content stands out as one of the most powerful and delicate digital marketing techniques in use today, given that the information disseminates rapidly, broadly, and successfully (Al-Rawabdeh et al., 2021). Social media marketing relates to the use of content created by users (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). The majority of social media users are the consumers often possess a substantial follower count and post original content related to subjects like beauty, fashion, food, and fitness (Bakar, Fauziyah & Rahmat, 2025). Such social media users are generally referred to as influencers, and they gain fame by effectively establishing themselves as authorities on particular subjects within social media channels (Andoy et al., 2023).

2.2 Purchase Intention

It is widely recognized that purchase intention serves as an indicator of buying behavior (Chakraborty, 2019). Intent to buy has demonstrated its significance as a crucial element in primary market research, as it can underpin the buying behaviour of consumers (Bakar, Fauziyah & Rahmat, 2025). Purchase intention denotes a consumer's intentional strategy to obtain a product, influenced by a personal decision-making approach that includes both evaluative and normative considerations (Visentin et al., 2019). The goal is to examine the fundamental influences that impact this behaviour to comprehend how these elements interact and influence individual reactions (Shaari et al., 2022).

When users seek more details about a product, they will consult the virtual community for help. The likelihood that online users will buy products from a specific brand due to online reviews is referred to as the purchase intention of online users (Hsu, 2021). The attitudes of consumers toward a product can also be taken into account when assessing their likelihood of making a purchase (Sun, 2021).

For example, buyers will examine the reviews and feedback of other users prior to making a purchase decision. When the information's content is pertinent to the consumer, it positively influences their intention to buy (Weismueller et al., 2020). Marketers are paying more attention to social networking platforms as a way to leverage the chance to affect consumers' purchase intentions (Weismueller et al., 2020). Customers may exhibit varying views on whether the perspectives shared on networking platforms might help them make improved buying choices (Jiang et al., 2021).

2.3 Hypotheses development and conceptual framework

2.4 Authenticity

Authenticity is a crucial trait of influencers that affects how consumers receive information in YouTube influencer marketing (AlFarraj, et al., 2021). Influencers are frequently viewed as genuine when they showcase real-life experiences, such as videos demonstrating their use or testing of the products they endorse AlFarraj et al., (2021). This type of content fosters emotional bonds with followers, enhancing audience receptiveness to their suggestions and boosting the chances of product adoption (Ki et al., 2020). Genuineness also enhances trust and allegiance between influencers and their followers, which can improve brand performance and purchasing outcomes (AlFarraj et al., 2021).

When influencers showcase products in familiar, daily situations, consumers are more inclined to see their messages as authentic and trustworthy. As purchase decisions frequently rely on online information from credible sources, the perceived authenticity significantly influences behavioural intentions (Yuan & Lou, 2020). In general, influencers who show honesty, transparency, and impartiality are seen as more genuine and trustworthy, enhancing consumers' readiness to accept and follow their suggestions (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Thus, this study hypothesised that:

H1: *Information authenticity has a influence impact on information credibility.*

2.5 Similarity

Similarity signifies the extent to which consumers see an influencer as having traits like values, interests, lifestyle, demographics, or experiences in common with them (Andoy et al., 2023). Based on the homophily principle, people tend to trust and be swayed by those they see as resembling themselves (Intansari & Roostika, 2022). In YouTube influencer marketing, perceived likeness decreases psychological distance between influencers and their audience, increasing the credibility and persuasive impact of the content presented (Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim, 2020). Previous research has consistently shown the significance of similarity in influencing consumers' reactions to influencer content.

For example, AlFarraj et al., (2021) discovered that the perceived similarity between influencers and their followers greatly boosted trust and credibility perceptions, leading to an increase in consumers' intentions to purchase. In the same vein, Hsu, (2021) found that consumers who viewed influencers as resembling themselves were more inclined to trust and adopt their suggestions. In the beauty sector, Intansari and Roostika, (2022) found that similarity had a positive effect on trust in influencers and the buying intentions of consumers. These results indicate that consumers tend to view information from comparable influencers as trustworthy and deserving of acceptance. In the context of YouTube cosmetics, women who see beauty influencers as having comparable traits are likely to view the information given as more trustworthy (Andoy et al., 2023). Thus, the research proposes that:

H2: *Similarity positively influences the perceived credibility of influencer-generated information*

2.6 Informational usefulness

Informational usefulness denotes the degree to which online material is viewed as pertinent, correct, and beneficial for consumers' choices (Leong, Loi & Woon, 2021). In YouTube influencer marketing, consumers are relying more on online reviews and content created by influencers for product information, since the internet offers quick and easy access to extensive content (Astarini & Sumardi, 2022). The general quality of this type of information is typically evaluated based on its practicality and capacity to satisfy users' informational requirements (Jiang et al., 2021). Social media sites allow users to exchange experiences and product assessments, especially in comment sections and influencer

reviews, where consumers can gain insights from others' usage experiences (Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim, 2020).

Nonetheless, the extensive amount of accessible information can result in information overload, making the quality of information a crucial element in influencing consumer choices (Zhang et al., 2022). In these situations, consumers frequently depend on the assumed value of information to assess its trustworthiness and significance (Balabanis & Chatzopoulou, 2019). When information is seen as beneficial, well-organized, and based on experience, consumers tend to trust it more and incorporate it into their decision-making, including their intention to buy (Balabanis & Chatzopoulou, 2019).

On the other hand, poor-quality or ambiguous information can lead to doubts regarding trustworthiness (Astarini & Sumardi, 2022). Previous studies validate that the quality of information greatly impacts perceived credibility and the adoption of information in social media environments (Saima & Khan, 2020). Thus, this study hypothesised that:

H3: *Informational usefulness has a significant and positive impact on information credibility.*

2.7 Likeability

Likeability is a key influencer characteristic that impacts consumers' acceptance of information and intentions to buy in YouTube influencer marketing (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Consumers are more inclined to embrace product suggestions from influencers they respect or consider attractive (Leong, Loi & Woon, 2021). Likeability is frequently associated with perceived attractiveness, which encompasses physical looks and general presentation style (Balabanis & Chatzopoulou, 2019). In beauty and lifestyle content, influencers with physical attractiveness often have greater persuasive power, particularly when showcasing products in relatable everyday situations (Pinda et al., 2021).

Skincare influencers demonstrating visibly healthy skin are frequently viewed as more trustworthy, raising the chances that their followers will believe and embrace their advice (Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim, 2020).

Accordingly, relatable influencers typically establish greater trust and interaction with their followers, which boosts the reliability of their communications and raises the chances of buying behaviour (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Previous research also indicates that the appeal and likability of influencers greatly impact the perceived credibility of information in social media contexts (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Thus, this study hypothesised that:

H4: *Likeability has a significant and positive impact on information credibility.*

2.8 Knowledgeability

Knowledgeability pertains to how much YouTube influencers are viewed as knowledgeable, adept, and capable in a particular product area (Astarini & Sumardi, 2022). Consumers evaluate this by observing influencers' shown comprehension of products, which includes their capacity to clarify features, advantages, and drawbacks derived from real usage (Schouten et al., 2020). Influencers who regularly share knowledgeable, experience-driven content tend to be seen as trustworthy sources of information (Chih et al., 2020).

Consumers commonly depend more on informed influencers, especially when they have no previous experience with a product or service (Leong, Loi & Woon, 2021). In these situations, perceived expertise serves as a crucial factor in establishing trust and adopting information, which ultimately affects purchasing intentions (Ismagilova et al., 2020). When influencers display evident knowledge of products through thorough demonstrations, evaluations, and comparisons followers are more inclined to trust their suggestions and contemplate buying the recommended items (Pinda et al., 2021). Accordingly, expertise enhances perceived trustworthiness as information from experts is seen as more

dependable and convincing (Astarini & Sumardi, 2022). As a result, influencers who possess greater expertise are more successful in influencing consumer perceptions and motivating purchase behaviour in YouTube influencer marketing scenarios (AlFarraj et al., 2021). Thus, this study hypothesised that:

H5: *Knowledgeability has a significant and positive impact on information credibility.*

2.9 Information Adoption

Information adoption signifies how much individuals embrace and plan to utilize information acquired from online sources when making decisions (Luo et al., 2019). In contemporary digital environments, particularly social media, consumers often depend on user-generated content like reviews and influencer suggestions when deciding on purchases (Chih et al., 2020). The voluntary acceptance of this information relies on users' perceptions of its usefulness, credibility, and relevance (Nik Mud et al., 2020).

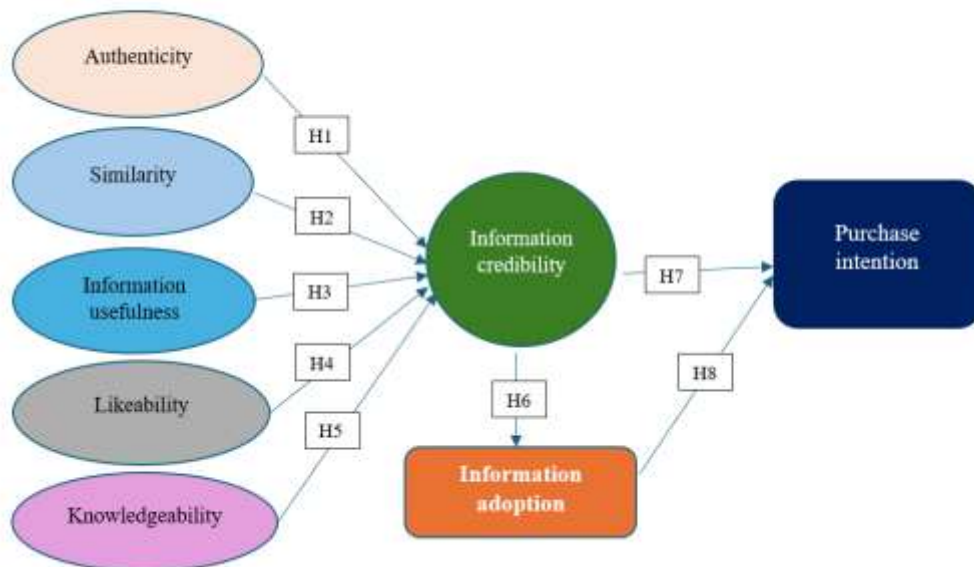
The procedure includes internal acknowledgment, in which information is initially assessed and subsequently incorporated into the person's consciousness and decision-making (Astarini & Sumardi, 2022). Consumers tend to adopt information when they view it as credible and significant, which facilitates improved decision-making by selecting and utilizing beneficial content (Leong, Loi & Woon, 2021).

In online forums, individuals frequently look for direction based on others' experiences, particularly when assessing products and services (Pinda et al., 202). The acceptance of information is crucial in influencing consumer mindset and buying intentions, as choices are significantly affected by how social media information is embraced and utilized (Daowd et al., 2020). Thus, this study hypothesised that:

H6: *Information adoption has a significant and positive impact on purchase intention.*

H7: *Information adoption mediates the relationship between information credibility and purchase intention.*

Expanding on the earlier conversation, a conceptual model was developed to analyse the characteristics of influencers that influence the trustworthiness of information presented in product review videos on YouTube. This trust, in turn, influences consumers' acceptance of information and their buying intentions. Figure 1 presents the proposed conceptual model for this study.



3. Methodology

The target population included online shoppers who have viewed beauty and fashion products reviewed by beauty influencers on YouTube. Individuals on social media tend to retain advertisement information better and engage with the content more deeply (Tor-Kadioglu & Bozyigit, 2025.) The cosmetics and fashion items in Malawi have consistently experienced promising growth, attributed to a rise in smartphone users and heightened self-awareness (Nik Mud et al., 2020).

Earlier research has shown that videos produced by beauty and fashion vloggers and shared on YouTube represent a novel trend that has become increasingly popular among smartphone users (Afifah, 2019). Consequently, the participants selected for this research were online shoppers in Malawi who had utilized YouTube as an informational resource for cosmetic and fashion items. This choice was made because cosmetic and fashion items typically utilize social media more and are therefore more inclined to impact their behaviour.

3.1 Research design, data collection

This research employed a mix of purposive sampling methods. Earlier research has mainly utilized the purposive sampling technique (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Andoy et al., 2022; Astarini & Sumardi, 2022; Roostika, 2022), whereas Daowd et al. (2020) utilized a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods. The exact count of women who have viewed beauty influencers' makeup product review videos on YouTube is still unclear. Beauty influencers on YouTube review cosmetic products, often focusing on a particular niche audience. For purposive sampling, screening questions were included to guarantee the data came from the appropriate target respondents.

The inquiry is: "How regularly do you view product review videos made by beauty or fashion influencers on YouTube?" If a respondent replied "No" or "Never" to the question, the online questionnaire was disregarded. The researchers could not influence the individuals who opted to take part in this study since the data was gathered online. The questionnaire was created using Google Forms, and links to it were distributed on Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegram. While recruitment was

underway, a weekly strategy for reposting and sharing the postings was created to increase participation in the survey. Ultimately, the announcement was phrased to motivate the participants to distribute the survey's URL: "This research employs a snowball sampling method; please share this questionnaire with your relatives and acquaintances who may wish to participate in this study." "I appreciate your participation and help in advance." Snowball sampling can be useful for locating and connecting with individuals in this niche who have viewed these reviews, as they might not be readily identifiable using conventional sampling techniques.

3.2 Sample size and distribution

There is no universally established sample size for research studies (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2021), but the objective is to gather the largest sample feasible to provide a robust statistical foundation for analysis. Conducting a study involving the entire population of consumers engaging in YouTube user in Malawi would be a highly challenging endeavour. The necessary sample size was established based on a population of 4.5 million users of YouTube in Malawi. To establish the suitable sample size, as indicated by Zeithaml et al. (2020), the research employed the G*Power sample size calculator, frequently utilized in social science studies for preparing survey-oriented research.

Using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007), a widely recognized power analysis tool, the minimum sample size was calculated to ensure adequate statistical power and accuracy. The package reduces the likelihood of underpowered or inflated studies by calculating sample sizes based on effect sizes, desired power, and significance levels.

Central and noncentral distributions

Protocol of power analyses

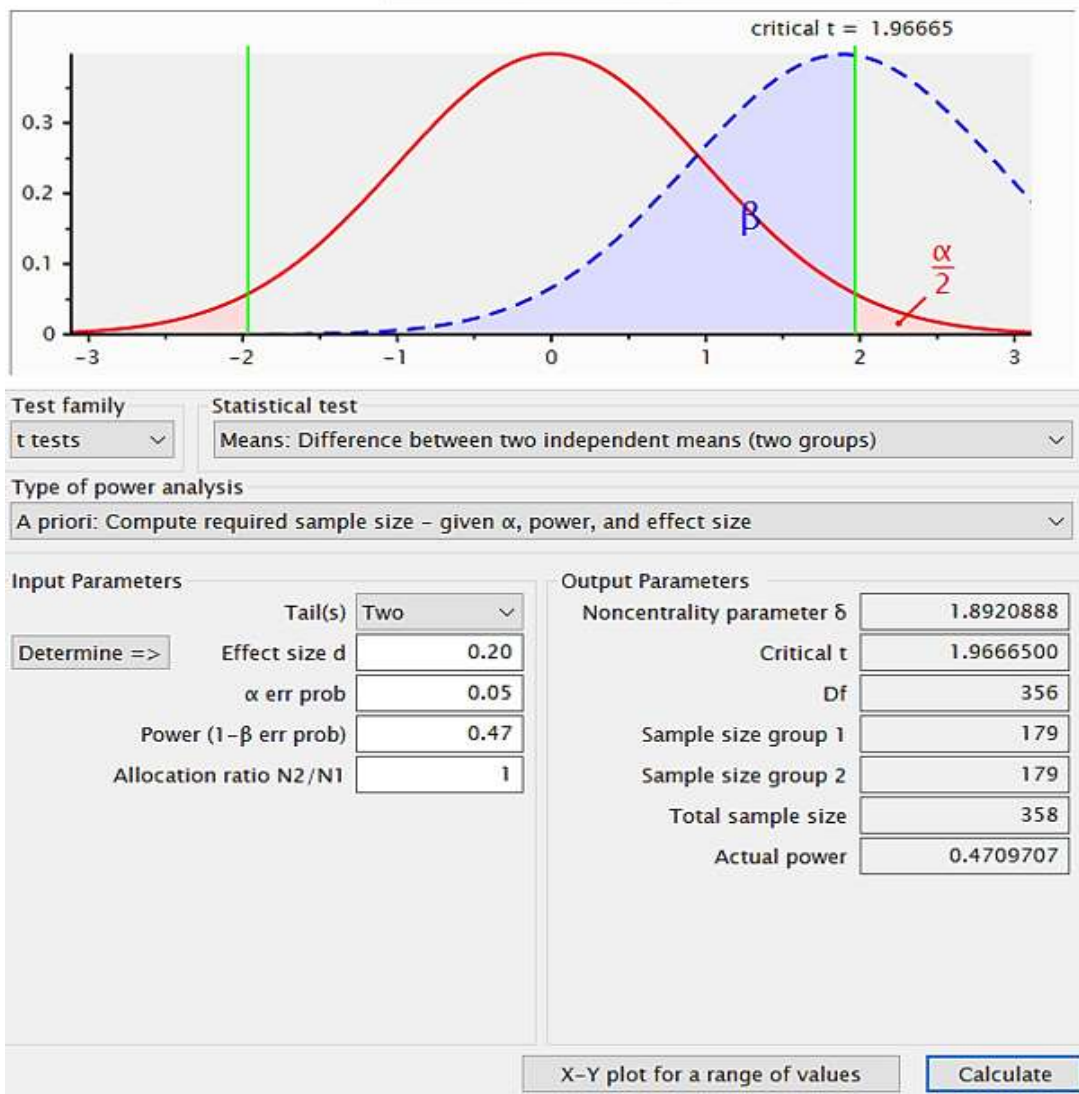


Figure 2. Central and noncentral distributions.

Source: Faul et al., (2007)

The illustration (Figure 2) displays priori power analysis performed for a two-tailed independent-samples t-test aimed at identifying the smallest sample size necessary to reveal a statistically significant difference between two independent groups (Faul et al., 2007). The red solid line indicates the null hypothesis distribution, presuming no difference in group means, whereas the blue dashed line depicts the distribution for the alternative hypothesis founded on a minimal effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.20$) (Cohen, 1988). At a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, the critical t-values (± 1.966), shown by green vertical lines, establish the rejection areas, each representing $\alpha/2$ in the two tails (Faul et al., 2007).

The shaded region under the alternative hypothesis beyond the critical value illustrates the statistical power ($1 - \beta$), which is about 0.50 in this analysis, signifying a 50% chance of accurately identifying a true effect of the given magnitude (Faul et al., 2007). Considering these criteria and equal distribution among groups, the analysis indicates a necessary sample size of 179 respondents for each group, leading to an overall sample size of 358. This power analysis verifies the sufficiency of the sample size by showing its capacity to identify even minor yet significant differences among groups, thus enhancing the study's methodological robustness and the reliability of its quantitative results (Hair et al., 2024).

4. Results

4.1 Evaluation of measurement model

The structural model assesses the connections between constructs by utilizing path coefficients, t-values, and p-values to evaluate significance ($t > 1.96$; $p < 0.05$). Before this, the measurement model was evaluated for robustness by analyzing indicator reliability (loadings > 0.70), internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability > 0.70), and convergent validity (AVE > 0.50). Setting these criteria verifies that the constructs are both reliable and valid, offering a solid foundation for interpreting the structural relationships and examining the study hypotheses.

Table 1. Evaluation of measurement model.

Constructs	Outer loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Authenticity		0.815	0.820	0.879	0.645
A1	0.846				
A2	0.823				
A3	0.719				
A4	0.820				
Information adoption		0.825	0.827	0.877	0.588
IA1	0.728				
IA2	0.806				
IA3	0.765				
IA4	0.787				
IA5	0.745				
Information credibility		0.776	0.778	0.849	0.531
IC1	0.672				
IC2	0.768				
IC3	0.796				
IC4	0.749				
IC5	0.647				
Information usefulness		0.763	0.754	0.847	0.583
IU1	0.767				
IU2	0.810				
IU3	0.836				

IU4	0.625				
Knowledgeability		0.700	0.704	0.817	0.528
K1	0.678				
K2	0.691				
K3	0.774				
K4	0.758				
Likeability		0.743	0.760	0.840	0.571
L1	0.690				
L2	0.855				
L3	0.814				
L4	0.643				
Purchase intention		0.871	0.873	0.907	0.661
PI1	0.768				
PI2	0.814				
PI3	0.835				
PI4	0.780				
PI5	0.864				
Similarity		0.872	0.873	0.913	0.723
S1	0.836				
S2	0.878				
S3	0.851				
S4	0.836				

Table 1, demonstrates that the outer loadings for the majority of indicators surpassed the suggested minimum of 0.70, indicating adequate reliability of the indicators. Despite some items showing loadings under 0.70 (IC1 = 0.672, IC5 = 0.647, IU4 = 0.625, K1 = 0.678, K2 = 0.691, L1 = 0.690, and L4 = 0.643), these figures were still above the minimum acceptable limit of 0.40 for exploratory research and thus were kept. The choice to keep items with loadings from 0.40 to 0.70 is backed by the guidelines of Hair et al. (2022), which state that such indicators should only be discarded if their removal significantly enhances composite reliability or average variance extracted (AVE). In this research, the elimination of these items did not significantly enhance the reliability and validity metrics.

Additionally, all constructs reached acceptable levels of composite reliability ($\rho_c = 0.817-0.913$), surpassing the suggested cutoff of 0.70, thus indicating sufficient internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2022). Cronbach's alpha values varied between 0.700 and 0.872, exceeding the acceptable level of 0.70, thus reinforcing the reliability of the constructs. Similarly, composite reliability (ρ_a) values varied from 0.704 to 0.873, signifying acceptable construct reliability. The AVE criterion was used to evaluate convergent validity, with all constructs displaying AVE values exceeding the suggested minimum of 0.50 (between 0.528 and 0.723). This shows that every construct accounted for over 50% of the variance in its indicators, thus confirming sufficient convergent validity (Hair et al., 2022).

4.2 Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

The Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) was utilized to evaluate discriminant validity. Hair et al. (2022) state that HTMT values lower than 0.90 demonstrate sufficient discriminant validity, indicating that constructs are empirically separate from each other.

Table 2. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT).

Variable	Authenticity	Information adoption	Information credibility	Information usefulness	Knowledgeability	Likeability	Purchase intention	Similarity
Authenticity								
Information adoption	0.740							
Information credibility	0.674	0.833						
Information usefulness	0.658	0.724	0.652					
Knowledgeability	0.861	0.768	0.749	0.759				
Likeability	0.779	0.720	0.809	0.726	0.815			
Purchase intention	0.735	0.826	0.847	0.624	0.767	0.714		
Similarity	0.833	0.738	0.756	0.761	0.794	0.811	0.719	

As shown in Table 2, all HTMT values varied between 0.624 and 0.861, remaining below the advised threshold of 0.90. The greatest HTMT value recorded was between authenticity and knowledgeability (HTMT = 0.861), with information credibility and purchase intention following closely (HTMT = 0.847). Even though certain HTMT values like authenticity–knowledgeability (0.861), information credibility–purchase intention (0.847), and authenticity similarity (0.833) was quite elevated, they were kept since they stayed under the advised conservative limit of 0.90 suggested by Joseph F. Hair Jr. et al. (2022). Values below this limit signify that constructs are empirically different even though they show conceptual interrelation.

The notably high HTMT values can be explained by the conceptual closeness between these constructs. For example, authenticity, expertise, and similarity are all attributes related to influencers and are thus anticipated to have some shared variance.

4.3 Fornell- Larcker

The Fornell–Larcker criterion findings show that discriminant validity is sufficiently established for every construct in the model, since the square root of AVE for each construct (diagonal value) surpasses its correlations with other constructs.

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker.

Variable	Authenticity	Information adoption	Information credibility	Information usefulness	Knowledgeability	Likeability	Purchase intention	Similarity
Authenticity	0.803							
Information adoption	0.612	0.767						
Information credibility	0.544	0.673	0.729					
Information usefulness	0.548	0.605	0.532	0.764				
Knowledgeability	0.653	0.587	0.554	0.570	0.727			
Likeability	0.607	0.567	0.618	0.558	0.588	0.756		
Purchase intention	0.626	0.702	0.700	0.554	0.601	0.576	0.813	

Similarity	0.689	0.582	0.601	0.501	0.566	0.617	0.601	0.851
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As shown in Table 3, authenticity has a diagonal value of 0.803, surpassing its highest correlation with Similarity (0.689). Likewise, Information Adoption (0.767) surpasses its strongest correlation with Purchase Intention (0.702), whereas Information Credibility (0.729) exceeds its highest connection with Purchase Intention (0.700). Information Usefulness also satisfies the criterion, featuring a diagonal value of 0.764 that exceeds its peak correlation of 0.605 (with Information Adoption). The identical trend applies to Knowledgeability (0.727 > 0.653 regarding Authenticity), Likeability (0.756 > 0.618 concerning Information Credibility), and Purchase Intention (0.813 > 0.702 related to Information Adoption).

Ultimately, Similarity has the highest diagonal value (0.851), surpassing its strongest correlation with Authenticity (0.689). These comparisons demonstrate that each construct exhibits greater variance with its own indicators compared to other constructs, highlighting clear construct distinctiveness and reinforcing the overall discriminant validity of the measurement model.

4.4 Collinearity (Variance Inflation Factor, VIF)

Collinearity (or multicollinearity) happens when two or more independent variables in a regression model are strongly correlated with one another. This implies that one predictor can be accurately predicted in a linear manner from the others. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is a frequently utilized indicator for identifying multicollinearity in regression assessments. The VIF for predictor is computed as:

$$VIF_j = \frac{1}{1 - R_j^2}$$

where:

R_j^2 is the coefficient of determination obtained by regressing X_j on all other independent variables.

Table 4. Collinearity (Variance Inflation Factor, VIF).

Item	VIF
A1	2.106
A2	2.086
A3	1.366
A4	1.709
IA1	1.636
IA2	1.886
IA3	1.657
IA4	1.731
IA5	1.520
IC1	1.307
IC2	1.637
IC3	1.890
IC4	1.697
IC5	1.244
IU1	1.944
IU2	2.413
IU3	2.576

IU ₄	1.063
K ₁	1.219
K ₂	1.297
K ₃	1.431
K ₄	1.399
L ₁	1.357
L ₂	1.873
L ₃	1.754
L ₄	1.231
PI ₁	1.698
PI ₂	2.029
PI ₃	2.212
PI ₄	1.882
PI ₅	2.539
S ₁	2.000
S ₂	2.594
S ₃	2.284
S ₄	1.904

As shown in Table 4, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was utilized to evaluate the occurrence of multicollinearity among the measurement variables. A VIF value under 5 is usually deemed acceptable, suggesting that multicollinearity is not a significant issue, whereas values exceeding 5 could indicate troublesome collinearity. The findings indicate that all VIF values varied between 1.063 and 2.594, remaining significantly below the suggested limit of 5. In particular, the minimal VIF value was noted for IU₄ (VIF = 1.063), suggesting nearly no correlation with additional predictor variables.

The greatest VIF value was noted for S₂ (VIF = 2.594), with IU₃ (VIF = 2.576) and PI₅ (VIF = 2.539) following. Even though these items showed comparatively higher VIF values than the other indicators, they stayed well below the critical threshold, indicating that multicollinearity is not an issue. The majority of items showed VIF values ranging from 1.2 to 2.2, indicating low to moderate correlations between the indicators. The constructs A, IA, IC, IU, K, L, PI, and S showed acceptable VIF values, suggesting that none of the items shared too much variance with other variables in the model. The results indicate that multicollinearity is not present in the dataset, since all VIF values are within acceptable ranges. The indicators are adequately different from each other, and the regression estimates may be regarded as dependable and consistent.

4.5 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) evaluated the predictive capability of the structural model by showing the percentage of variance in the endogenous constructs accounted for by their corresponding exogenous variables. As per Joseph F. Hair Jr. et al. (2022), R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are regarded as substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively.

Table 5. R^2 .

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Information adoption	0.453	0.452
Information	0.499	0.492

credibility		
Purchase intention	0.588	0.586

The model (Table 5) accounts for 49.9% of the variance in information credibility ($R^2 = 0.499$), suggesting a moderate level of explanatory strength. Likewise, the predictors explain 45.3% of the variance in information adoption ($R^2 = 0.453$), indicating a moderate level of explanatory power. Additionally, the model accounts for 58.8% of the variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.588$), indicating a moderate-to-high degree of predictive accuracy. The adjusted R^2 values (0.492, 0.452, and 0.586, respectively) closely align with the associated R^2 values, suggesting model reliability and negligible bias due to the quantity of predictors present in the model.

4.6 Magnitude of Effect (f^2)

The effect size (f^2) serves as an indicator in PLS-SEM to evaluate the influence of an exogenous construct on the explained variance (R^2) of an endogenous construct. It assesses the impact of a predictor variable on a dependent variable by contrasting the R^2 value with the predictor included in the model against when it is not included. Consequently, f^2 aids in assessing the real-world relevance of each connection beyond just statistical significance.

Table 6. f^2

Relationship of variables	f-square
Information adoption -> Purchase intention	0.236
Information credibility -> Information adoption	0.830
Information credibility -> Purchase intention	0.230
Information usefulness -> Information credibility	0.028
Knowledgeability -> Information credibility	0.056
Likeability -> Information credibility	0.074
Similarity -> Information credibility	0.060

Table 6, the contribution of each exogenous construct to the endogenous constructs was evaluated by assessing the effect size (f^2). As per Jacob Cohen (1988), f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively. The credibility of information had a significant impact on its adoption ($f^2 = 0.830$), showing that credibility is a key factor in the process of adopting information. Additionally, both information adoption ($f^2 = 0.236$) and information credibility ($f^2 = 0.230$) exhibited medium effects on purchase intention, indicating that these factors significantly impact consumers' buying choices. Concerning the factors influencing information credibility, likeability ($f^2 = 0.074$), similarity ($f^2 = 0.060$), usefulness of information ($f^2 = 0.028$), and knowledgeability ($f^2 = 0.056$) demonstrated moderate effects.

4.7 Manifest Variable (MV) in PLSpredict

In PLSpredict, a Manifest Variable (MV) signifies an observed measurement item or indicator employed to implement a latent construct in a PLS-SEM model. In contrast to latent variables, which are abstract concepts that cannot be directly measured, manifest variables are the specific survey items or observed indicators (e.g., IC1-IC5, IA1-IA5, and PI1-PI5) from which the latent constructs are formulated..

Table 7. MV in PLSpredict.

Items	Mean	Median	Observed min	Observed max	Number of observations used	Standard deviation	Excess kurtosis	Skewness	Cramér-von Mises test statistic	Cramér-von Mises p value
IC1	2.103	2.146	1.302	3.241	3890.000	0.439	-0.694	0.021	1.930	0.000
IC2	1.838	1.878	1.091	2.918	3890.000	0.417	-0.692	0.021	1.954	0.000
IC3	1.823	1.859	1.120	2.862	3890.000	0.396	-0.693	0.018	1.993	0.000
IC4	1.802	1.838	1.099	2.836	3890.000	0.392	-0.695	0.015	2.001	0.000
IC5	2.075	2.113	1.323	3.189	3890.000	0.422	-0.687	0.023	1.963	0.000
IA1	1.730	1.754	1.220	2.486	3890.000	0.280	-0.682	0.020	1.918	0.000
IA2	1.730	1.754	1.232	2.462	3890.000	0.276	-0.699	0.016	1.980	0.000
IA3	1.918	1.943	1.409	2.643	3890.000	0.281	-0.694	0.016	1.980	0.000
IA4	1.890	1.919	1.306	2.733	3890.000	0.316	-0.690	0.019	1.972	0.000
IA5	2.088	2.116	1.510	2.901	3890.000	0.313	-0.690	0.021	1.944	0.000
PI1	1.867	1.897	1.306	2.659	3890.000	0.302	-0.692	0.014	1.981	0.000
PI2	1.707	1.735	1.167	2.494	3890.000	0.302	-0.700	0.013	2.004	0.000
PI3	1.728	1.759	1.166	2.546	3890.000	0.314	-0.695	0.016	1.977	0.000
PI4	1.553	1.576	1.107	2.184	3890.000	0.246	-0.697	0.016	1.914	0.000
PI5	1.668	1.697	1.120	2.467	3890.000	0.305	-0.697	0.015	1.988	0.000

The descriptive statistics (Table 7) for the manifest variable (MV) in PLSpredict depict a very positive assessment of the data quality and distribution of the measurement items. The average values for all indicators are fairly stable, spanning from 1.553 to 2.103, and the median values closely reflect the means, suggesting an even distribution of responses and no significant bias.

The standard deviations typically range from low to moderate (0.246 to 0.439), indicating that participants showed a significant level of consistency in their answers. Additionally, all measures show skewness values that are nearly zero (ranging from 0.013 to 0.023), indicating almost symmetrical distributions, while the negative kurtosis values (around -0.68 to -0.70) suggest somewhat flatter distributions with no significant outliers. Even though the Cramér-von Mises test yielded significant p-values ($p < 0.001$) for every indicator, this result is anticipated due to the very large sample size ($n = 3,890$), which makes normality tests highly sensitive to minor deviations. Significantly, the pairing of closely related mean and median values, low skewness, appropriate kurtosis levels, and moderate variability indicates that the indicators are stable and well-structured.

4.8 Structural model

The structural model evaluated the proposed connections between constructs by analysing path coefficients, their significance levels, and explanatory strength. It assesses the extent to which the independent variables forecast the dependent variables utilizing measurements like path coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values. In this research, bootstrapping was utilized to assess the significance of the associations, with paths showing t-values exceeding 1.96 and p-values below 0.05 being regarded as statistically significant. The structural model thus offers understanding of the strength and direction of relationships between variables, along with the model's overall predictive power.

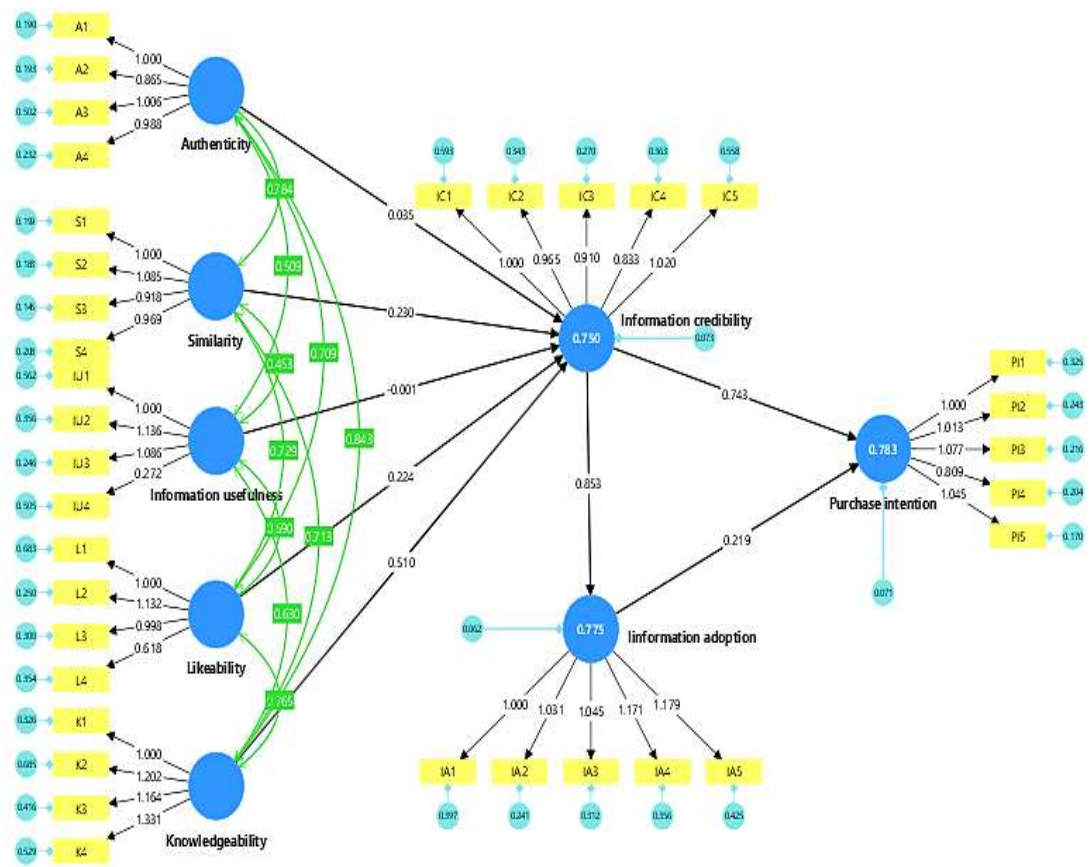


Figure 3. Structural model.

4.9 Hypotheses testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping method in PLS-SEM to evaluate the significance of the suggested relationships among the constructs of the study. The importance of each hypothesis was assessed by examining the path coefficients, t-values, p-values, and confidence intervals, offering empirical support for either accepting or rejecting the proposed relationships. The outcomes of hypothesis testing offer support concerning the predictive and explanatory strength of the research model. A notable path coefficient suggests that alterations in one construct correspond with significant alterations in another construct, thereby reinforcing the theoretical premises of the study. As a result, hypothesis testing both confirms the suggested conceptual framework and shows how well the model explains and anticipates the phenomena being studied.

Table 8. Hypotheses testing of the study.

Relationship of variables	Hypothesis	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Results
Authenticity -> Information credibility	H1	0.018	0.017	0.061	0.296	0.767	Not Supported
Similarity -> Information credibility	H2	0.258	0.257	0.056	4.633	0.000	Supported
Information usefulness -> Information credibility	H3	0.157	0.160	0.049	3.225	0.001	Supported
Likeability -> Information credibility	H4	0.276	0.275	0.062	4.461	0.000	Supported
Knowledgeability -> Information credibility	H5	0.144	0.148	0.054	2.660	0.008	Supported
Information credibility -> Information adoption	H6	0.674	0.678	0.031	21.666	0.000	Supported
Information credibility -> Purchase intention	H7	0.701	0.703	0.027	26.107	0.000	Supported
Information adoption -> Purchase intention	H8	0.422	0.422	0.048	8.712	0.000	Supported

The results (Table 8) of the path coefficient show that multiple associations in the model are statistically significant, whereas one is not validated. The connection between Authenticity and Information Credibility is weak and trivial ($\beta = 0.037$, $t = 0.621$, $p = 0.534$), indicating that authenticity has no significant impact on information credibility in this model. Conversely, Information Adoption is a strong predictor of Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.422$, $t = 8.711$, $p = 0.000$), demonstrating a significant positive impact. In the same way, Information Credibility exerts a strong and notable influence on Information Adoption ($\beta = 0.674$, $t = 21.668$, $p = 0.000$) and on Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.416$, $t = 9.064$, $p = 0.000$), emphasizing its pivotal role in the model. Concerning the factors influencing information credibility, Information Usefulness ($\beta = 0.130$, $t = 2.665$, $p = 0.008$) and Knowledgeability ($\beta = 0.144$, $t = 2.646$, $p = 0.008$) both exhibit small yet significant positive impacts.

More pronounced effects are noted for Likeability ($\beta = 0.283$, $t = 4.586$, $p = 0.000$) and Similarity ($\beta = 0.244$, $t = 4.083$, $p = 0.000$), both of which significantly affect the credibility of information. In general, the majority of the proposed relationships are upheld, with statistically significant pathways showing important contributions to the model, apart from the non-significant impact of authenticity.

5. Discussion

Interestingly, against expectations, authenticity showed no substantial impact on information credibility; therefore, the hypothesis was not validated. This implies that consumers might not view information as trustworthy just because an influencer seems genuine. Within the realm of cosmetic products, consumers might prioritize the quality, knowledge, and practicality of information over its perceived authenticity. This discovery opposes earlier research by Saima and Khan (2020), which indicated that influencer authenticity greatly improved credibility. In a similar vein, Chih et al. (2020) discovered that trustworthiness had a positive effect on the credibility of information, whereas Ismagilova et al. (2020) indicated that information conveyed by trustworthy and sincere sources was regarded as more credible.

The inconsistency might be due to contextual variations, cultural influences, or growing consumer doubt regarding sponsored influencer material. The results indicated that similarity has a significant positive effect on information credibility, implying that consumers view information as more credible when they relate to or see themselves as similar to the influencer. Common values, ways of life, and preferences can enhance trust and reinforce perceptions of credibility. This result aligns

with Astarini and Sumardi (2022), who discovered that similarity in attitudes enhances perceived credibility. Similarly, Ismagilova et al. (2020) found that increased similarity between information senders and recipients boosts information reliability, whereas Chih et al. (2020) recognized similarity as a crucial factor in the credibility of electronic word-of-mouth.

The findings showed that expertise has a significant and positive impact on information credibility, suggesting that consumers view knowledgeable influencers as more trustworthy sources of information. In the realm of cosmetic products, knowledge can diminish uncertainty and enhance trust in the information given. This result aligns with Andoy et al. (2022), who recognized reviewer expertise as a key factor in establishing review credibility. Likewise, Ismagilova et al. (2020) discovered that information coming from informed and experienced sources is more likely to be perceived as credible. The research revealed that likeability greatly and positively affects the credibility of information, indicating that consumers tend to trust information provided by influencers they perceive as attractive, pleasant, or appealing.

Appealing influencers can generate positive perceptions that boost message trustworthiness. This result reinforces earlier research. Pinda et al. (2021) discovered that the appeal of video bloggers positively affected information credibility, whereas Astarini and Sumardi (2022) identified a favourable correlation between influencer attractiveness and credibility. Likewise, Sokolova and Kefi (2020) found that appealing beauty and fashion influencers were viewed as more trustworthy. The results show that the usefulness of information has a significant positive impact on its credibility, suggesting that consumers view informative, pertinent, and valuable content as increasingly credible. Valuable details help consumers make educated choices, which improves their perceptions of credibility.

This result aligns with Saima and Khan (2020), who discovered that the quality of information greatly influences credibility. In a similar vein, Chakraborty and Bhat (2018) found that comprehensive and high-quality online reviews boost perceived credibility, whereas Jiang et al. (2021) showed that improved information quality elevates the credibility of online reviews.

The results also show that the adoption of information has a significant and positive impact on purchase intention, indicating that consumers who adopt information from influencers tend to be more inclined to buy the suggested products. This finding aligns with earlier research by Abedi et al. (2020), which discovered that the adoption of information has a direct effect on purchase intention. In a similar vein, Andoy et al., (2023) showed that exposure to electronic word-of-mouth influences consumers' intentions to buy, while Khwaja et al. (2020) found a significant positive correlation between the adoption of information and purchase intention in online settings.

5.1 Theoretical contribution

This research enhances the fields of digital marketing and influencer studies by merging well-established theories with empirical results to elucidate how influencer characteristics influence consumer behaviour regarding YouTube beauty influencers. Based on the Source Credibility Model (Ohanian, 1990), the results indicate that expertise, likeability, similarity, and usefulness of information greatly boost perceived information credibility, supporting the notion that credible sources enhance message persuasiveness.

The findings can also be understood via the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (1981), where traits of influencers serve as peripheral signals impacting perceptions of credibility, especially in low-involvement scenarios like cosmetic use. Moreover, Signalling Theory illustrates how expertise and the quality of information act as signals that diminish uncertainty and information imbalance, consequently enhancing credibility perceptions in online settings. In agreement with previous studies, expertise was shown to greatly improve credibility, in line with Andoy et al. (2022) and Ismagilova et al. (2020), who highlight the significance of informed sources in lessening uncertainty.

Likewise, likeability had a positive effect on credibility, corroborating the results of Pinda et al. (2021), Astarini and Sumardi (2022), and Sokolova and Kefi (2020), while reaffirming ELM's claim that attractive and appealing sources boost persuasion. The important role of similarity corresponds with

Social Identity Theory and previous research (Astarini & Sumardi, 2022; Ismagilova et al., 2020; Chih et al., 2020), indicating that common values and ways of life enhance trust and perceived dependability. Moreover, the significant impact of information usefulness endorses Information Quality Theory, aligning with Saima and Khan (2020), Chakraborty and Bhat (2018), and Jiang et al. (2021), showing that pertinent and valuable information enhances credibility perceptions.

Nevertheless, against what was anticipated, authenticity failed to significantly influence the credibility of information. This discovery opposes previous research, including Saima and Khan (2020), that emphasize authenticity as a crucial factor in establishing credibility. A potential reason for this difference is rooted in persuasion knowledge theory, which indicates that consumers are becoming more conscious of sponsored influencer material and may consequently doubt the genuineness of perceived authenticity. Within the cosmetics realm, buyers might prioritize functional qualities like knowledgeability and the caliber of information over the perceived authenticity. This suggests a possible change in the evaluation of credibility in heavily commercialized influencer settings.

By expanding the Information Adoption Model (Sussman & Siegal, 2003), the research further illustrates that the credibility of information significantly influences its adoption, aligning with earlier results (Sardar et al., 2021; Intansari & Roostika, 2022). This connection is further backed by Social Learning Theory, which suggests that people are more inclined to accept information from sources they view as reliable and informed. Moreover, the favorable influence of adopting information on purchasing intention corresponds with prior studies (Abedi et al., 2020; Andoy et al., 2023; Khwaja et al., 2020), strengthening the connection between accepted data and consumer behaviour results. Significantly, this research offers a theoretical enhancement by combining information credibility, information adoption, and purchase intention into one cohesive framework, thus filling a void in previous studies where these elements were frequently analysed separately. This holistic method provides a deeper insight into how influencer characteristics ultimately impact consumer choices.

5.2 Practical contribution

This research provides significant practical value by converting recognized theoretical ideas into practical strategies for marketers, influencers, and companies. It highlights essential factors influencing information credibility on social media, stressing how characteristics of influencers like expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity affect consumers' acceptance of information and their intentions to buy.

These results align with earlier studies indicating that trustworthy and relatable influencers greatly boost consumer confidence and involvement (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). In addition, research has emphasized that the expertise and credibility of influencers play a vital role in enhancing persuasive communication and boosting marketing effectiveness (Schouten et al., 2020; Ismagilova et al., 2020). The findings also show that trustworthy and genuine content enhances consumers' readiness to trust influencer suggestions, ultimately boosting their intention to buy. This corresponds with earlier studies indicating that credible and high-quality influencer content fosters better consumer-brand connections and positive behavioural results (De Veirman et al., 2017; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). On the other hand, deceptive, irrelevant, or misaligned endorsements can harm influencer credibility and diminish consumer trust, reinforcing the view that endorsement alignment is crucial for upholding credibility (Till & Busler, 2000; Erdogan, 1999).

Consequently, marketers should intentionally partner with influencers whose values match their brand and are viewed as trustworthy and informed sources. This research offers a tangible framework for creating efficient influencer marketing strategies, especially in the Malawian cosmetics and clothing sector. Nevertheless, the framework was tested with data from Malawi consumers, restricting its applicability. Variations in culture, lifestyle, and demographics may affect consumers' assessment of influencer trustworthiness and their reactions to marketing communications (Hofstede, 2001; Casaló et al., 2018). Consequently, the influence of characteristics of influencers might differ across various

cultural environments.

6. Limitation and direction for future Research studies

Although this research enhances our comprehension of information adoption within YouTube influencer marketing, it faces multiple limitations. Initially, the research utilized cross-sectional data, which reflects participants' views at one specific moment and restricts the capacity to determine causal connections between influencer traits, credibility of information, acceptance of information, and purchasing intentions. Secondly, the research concentrated solely on YouTube influencers, which restricts the applicability of the results to other platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, or X, where the dynamics of influencer marketing might vary. Third, while crucial influencer-related aspects were analysed, additional possibly significant variables like consumer trust, engagement rates, parasocial connections, type of product, and cultural factors were excluded from the model. Ultimately, the traits of the sample and its geographical context may limit the generalizability of the results to wider populations and varying market settings.

Future research should utilize longitudinal or experimental design methods to more accurately determine causal links and track shifts in consumer behaviour over time. Researchers might also enhance the model by integrating extra variables, including trust, consumer engagement, perceived value, brand attitude, and parasocial interaction, to offer a more thorough insight into information adoption in influencer marketing. Comparative analyses across various social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook would assist in identifying if the identified relationships are specific to particular platforms. Additionally, subsequent studies ought to explore the moderating impacts of demographic variables, cultural variations, product types, and types of influencers to improve the applicability of the results.

7. Conclusion

This study explored how the traits of influencers impact the credibility of information, the acceptance of information, and purchasing intentions in YouTube influencer marketing. The results indicate that similarity, likeability, the usefulness of information, and knowledgeability greatly improve information credibility, with similarity and likeability being the most powerful predictors. Conversely, authenticity had little impact on credibility, indicating that consumers might prioritize expertise, relevance, and content quality more than on perceived honesty. The research adds to both theory and practice by showing that consumer assessments of influencer content are more and more influenced by knowledge, utility, and relatability, underscoring the changing dynamics of credibility evaluation in influencer marketing.

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