

From Influence to Purchase: Unraveling the Impact of Influencer Credibility, Brand-Involvement and Influencer Professionalism on Perceived Quality and Trust-Driven Purchase intention

Asif Iqbal*¹, Haniya Shahid², Sara Sohaib³, Muhammad Tahir Abbasi⁴

^{1*,4}Lecturer, College of Management Sciences (CoMS), Karachi Institute of Economics & Technology (KIET), Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.

²Research Scholar, College of Management Sciences (CoMS), Karachi Institute of Economics & Technology (KIET), Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.

³Assistant Professor, Bahria Business School, Bahria University Karachi Campus, Sindh, Pakistan.

Corresponding author: asif.coms123@gmail.com

Keywords: Influencer Credibility, Influencer Professionalism, Brand-Involvement, Content Quality, Customer Perceived Quality, Customer Trust, Purchase Intention

DOI No:

<https://doi.org/10.56976/rjsi.v6i2.265>

This study aims to examine the impact of influencer attributes specifically, influencer credibility, professionalism, brand involvement and content quality on customer perceived quality in the realm of influencer marketing. The study also investigates the moderating role of customer trust in the relationship between perceived quality and purchase intention, offering insights into the mechanisms by which influencers impact consumer behavior. In the digital era, influencer marketing has emerged as a crucial instrument for firms to connect with consumers. However, considerable research has concentrated on the direct impact of influencer marketing on purchase intention; lack of emphasis has been given on elucidating the mediating role of customer perceived quality and the moderating impact of customer trust. The paucity in the literature constrains our comprehension of the mechanisms by which influencer marketing influences customer behavior, especially for perceived quality and ensuing purchase decisions. The study employed a quantitative design, employing survey data gathered from 330 a varied sample of social media users who actively interact with influencer content. Structural equation modeling (SEM) analyzes the interactions among independent variables influencer credibility, professionalism, brand involvement, and content quality, the mediating variable consumer perceived quality, and the dependent variable purchase intention. The influence of customer trust on the relationship between perceived quality and purchase intention is also examined. The results show that influencer professionalism and content quality strongly predict customer perceived quality, while brand involvement and influencer credibility also found significant, with moderating role of customer trust in the relationship between perceived quality and purchase intention. The study's findings provide significant insights for marketers and brands utilizing influencer marketing methods. By comprehending the essential qualities of influencers that elevate customer perceived quality and how trust can improve these impacts, marketers can more effectively plan and optimize campaigns to increase purchase intention.

1. Introduction

The emergence of social media has fundamentally altered the marketing environment, resulting in the ascendance of influencer marketing as a potent method for engaging consumers and pushing products. Influencers, individuals with significant followings on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, utilize their online presence to change consumer perceptions and affect purchasing behaviors (Pourazad et al., 2023; Kurdi et al., 2022). In this scenario, brands increasingly depend on influencers to engage target audiences in more genuine and relatable manners than traditional advertising. As influencer marketing expands, comprehending the elements that enhance its efficacy is essential for both marketers and academics (Chung et al., 2023).

A primary result of influencer marketing is the augmentation of purchase intention, which denotes a consumer's propensity to acquire a product or service influenced by the promoter's endorsement. The transition from influencer involvement to genuine purchase intention is intricate and affected by multiple factors (Choi & Rifon, 2016; Iqbal et al., 2023). Customer perceived quality is a crucial component among these elements. Perceived quality denotes a consumer's comprehensive assessment of a product's excellence or superiority, frequently influenced by information and endorsements from influencers (Haenlein et al., 2020). Consumers are more inclined to consider purchasing a product when they perceive it as high quality thanks to an influencer's endorsement (Rebelo et al., 2017).

To comprehend how influencer marketing affects customer perceived quality and, subsequently, purchase intention, it is crucial to analyze the particular features of influencers that lead to these results (Saima, & Khan, 2020). The authenticity and professionalism of influencers are two essential traits that greatly influence consumer perceptions of the quality of endorsed products. Influencer credibility includes the trustworthiness, expertise, and authenticity of the influencer, which combined augment the credibility of the recommendation. Professionalism pertains to the influencer's compliance with ethical norms, the caliber of content, and their ongoing interaction with followers (Yangzi et al., 2023). Both qualities are expected to enhance customer perceived quality, as reputable and professional influencers are regarded as more reliable and authoritative information sources (Keshavarz et al., 2021).

Regarding the unique characteristics of influencers, brand participation, and content quality may moderate the effect on the customers' perceived quality in influencer marketing (Cheung et al., 2022). Brand involvement refers to the perceived personal relevance or importance of the brand to the consumer along with the behavioral involvement of the consumer with regard to the brand. Higher brand involvement will increase the ability of the influencer credibility and professionalism to moderate the perceived quality of the brand and their purchase intentions. As for the quality of the content, it includes the creativity, informativeness, and visual quality of the influencer's posts (Javed et al., 2022). Higher content quality will increase the perceived value of the product from the influencer.

The relationship to the consumer perceived quality and the purchase intention is not that direct and can be moderated by customer trust to the influencer (Chiu et al., 2012; Ponte et al., 2015). This level of trust can either moderate the effect of the perceived quality on the actual intention or can strengthen this relationship. Other studies claim that despite the high perceived quality of the influencer with regard to the particular product, influencers' skill and reputation, some customers would not think that they can rely on these sources and still purchase no products promoted in the studied posts.

The emerging expansion of social media to the vast majority of internet users has paved the road to influencer marketing as one of the central tools of digital marketing (Macarthy, 2020). Unlike traditional marketing techniques, influencer marketing is employing the reputation and reach of the influencer on the social media that has substantial impacts on the behaviors and thoughts of the target audience. Those influencers can be both celebrities and specialized content creators, or "influencers" that have developed close-knit relationships with their audience (Jin et al., 2019; Vrontis et al., 2021). The increased reliance on the influencer marketing techniques by the organizations meant understanding the unique characteristics of influencer operations as one of the central concerns of the academic and practical research.

Perhaps one of the essential elements in this equation is customer perceived quality. Perceived quality is the buying public's overall assessment of a product's excellence or superiority often based on information disseminated by the influencer (Hazen et al., 2017). The influencer's role in shaping this perception is considerable as they tend to provide their opinion of the product, share reviews, comments, and even conduct a product demo. For instance, if an influencer successfully communicates to their audience why a given product is beneficial and has value, this increases the perceived quality of the said product in the eyes of the buyer and share, thus, the intent to purchase it (Zhou et al., 2021). The ability of influencer marketing in increasing perceived quality and buying intent is significantly determined by the credibility and professionalism of the influencer. The concept of credibility is not a simple one and encompasses the perceived level of knowledge of the source, honesty, and authenticity. Those the buyer perceives as having these characteristics are more easily believed or swayed (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Brinson & Lemon, 2023). Credible influencers, in turn, are regarded as reliable sources of information, which is particularly important in creating a high level of perceived quality in the product endorsed.

Professionalism of an influencer achieved through the use of codes of conduct, high-quality production, and frequency of engaging with the followers adds to the credibility of an influencer (Berne-Manero & Marzo-Navarro, 2020). First, through professionalism, the influencer guarantees the adherence to certain ethical standards in ensuring high-quality and frequent engagement with the followers. With high professionalism, the influencers also ensure that they deliver exact and relevant information (Han & Balabanis, 2024). From the customers' point of view, these actions reduce the risks associated with the products. The consumers can trust the ideas presented by the influencer and, thus, are more likely to purchase the item (McClure & Seock, 2020). The involvement with the brand also significantly impacts customers' perceptions of the

product quality. The brand involvement refers to the extent to which the brand is personally relevant to the consumer. As shown in a study by Aswani, and Kumar (2021), when a consumer is highly involved with the brand, they are more likely to engage with the content and get persuaded by the influencer's ideas. In the present case, high brand involvement might contribute to the effects of influencers' credibility and professionalism and increase the customers' perceptions of the quality. If the latter is true, the purchase intentions of the customers would increase as well (Argyris et al., 2021).

For all companies attempting to implement their influencer marketing strategies, understanding the moderating effect of customer trust is crucial (Kim & Kim, 2021). This way, once the marketers comprehend the importance of the role that trust plays in their activities, they are more likely to select influencers more efficiently. At this point, the chosen influencers will be not only the people that they target as highly authentic and professional, but also the ones that maintain deep levels of trust between them and their audiences due to, for example, the transparent and ethically developed content they produce. In terms of these elements, the connection breaks down to the actual purchase results and the perceived product quality developed as a result of the analyzed approach (Iglesias et al., 2020).

With the growing role of influencer marketing in the promotion of products and services through social networking, the present study will look into the correlations between the above-identified elements. To be more specific, it will be focused on the cumulative effect that influencer credibility, professionalism and involvement with the brand, and quality of the content produced by the influencers have on the perceived quality on the part of the customers and the moderating influence of the issue of customer trust in the connection between the perceived quality and the intention to purchase the products advertised. On the one hand, a detailed analysis of the above-mentioned factors will offer a profound insight into the mechanisms through which influencer marketing affects decision-making processes adopted by potential buyers. On the other hand, the study can also be seen as the foundation for developing a set of recommendations that can help businesses create better influencer marketing strategies and guidelines to follow when opting to use the tool as a means of their promotion in the digital environment.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Influence Theory

The concept of influencer marketing can be effectively elucidated through the lens of the social influence theory (SIT). The present theoretical framework on social control encompasses the examination of how individuals are subjected to the influence exerted by their counterparts within a specific social network, hence leading to the manifestation of specific behavioral patterns (Li, 2013; Venkatesh & Brown, 2001). According to Venkatesh and Brown (2001), social effect is regarded as an obligation to conform to specific behaviors, which is influenced by communication and indicators that shape expectations. The classification of social influence can be delineated into two categories: informational and normative (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). The informational social influence is characterized by individuals accepting information obtained from

other sources as factual proof, whereas the normative social effect pertains to individuals conforming to the preferences of another individual within a collective setting (Li, 2013). This implies that the utilization of celebrity endorsements effectively conveys messages or brand information that is perceived as credible and sincere, hence potentially influencing individuals' perceptions of the brand due to the influence of social identity (Hsu & Lin, 2008). The importance of factors such as reliability, attractiveness, trustworthiness, familiarity, and objectivity in selecting the type of knowledge communicated to the public domain has been emphasized by researchers (Ilicic & Webster, 2015; Munnukka et al., 2016; Samu & Wymer, 2014).

2.2 Influencer Marketing

Influencers are accomplished individuals recognized in their respective domains (Mallipeddi et al., 2022; Spry et al., 2011). An influencer may be an entertainer, politician, athlete, actor, or another renowned someone who has made contributions in areas beyond the products or services they endorse. Influencers, celebrities, and experts can advocate and promote companies (Leung et al., 2022; Lisichkova & Othman, 2017; Wei & Lu, 2013), presenting a brand image that aligns with their identity. Celebrity brand endorsement enables the celebrity to convey brand information through many methods (Zhang, 2010; Patra & Datta, 2010). Influencers play a crucial role in contemporary brand promotion and marketing. Accomplished professionals can impact a specific demographic. Their expertise, renown, or charisma may attract attention (Spry et al., 2011). These individuals may include renowned entertainers, politicians, athletes, actors, or others. Celebrities, social media influencers, and specialists can endorse and advertise products (Erdogan, 1999; Wei & Lu, 2013; Vrontis et al., 2021).

The primary aim of brand endorsement is to effectively communicate brand values and relevant information to the target audience. When a celebrity endorses a firm, they assume the position of the brand's spokesperson and utilize their power to communicate the brand's values and specifics (Zhang, 2010; Patra & Datta, 2010). The influencer's personality significantly influences the audience's view of the endorsed brand, fostering a deeper connection between them (Coates et al., 2019; Chung et al., 2023).

2.3 Hypothesis Development

2.4 Influencer Credibility and Customer Perceived Quality

Influencer reputation is one of the leading determinants of customer-perceived quality in influencer marketing. The credibility of an influencer, which includes such factors as integrity, knowledge, and sincerity, has a direct impact on customer understanding of marketed goods or services' quality. AlFarraj et al. (2021) found that if an influencer is viewed as credible, people are more likely to take the information and advice they receive, which is why the very quality of the product that receives a recommendation would improve (Belanche et al., 2021). Influencers are considered credible in case they are honest and objects. As a result, the perceived product value and quality standards would also become higher. What is more, an influencer's proficiency in a specific field or business strengthens the tendency. People value influential opinions more when they have experience and education is the same field (Dhun, & Dangi, 2023). An influencer's

authenticity, meaning how real a persona they are, is another critical factor. An individual who is regarded as a real person with the audience and establishing a relationship with others will always be more credible (Hassan et al., 2021). In turn, it will increase the likelihood of a consumer view of an endorsed product as a high-quality one as it is advocated by a credible peer. Therefore, the trustworthiness of an influencer is highly essential for the successful conduction of influencer marketing as it is one of the primary determinants of customer-perceived quality.

H1: Influencer Credibility has a positive impact on customer perceived quality.

2.5 Influencer Professionalism and Customer Perceived Quality

Influencer professionalism is significant in marketing from modern marketing perspectives, more so the instances of consumer-perceived quality. Based on research, influencer professionalism results from how the influencer carries them and how they interact with their audience (Aswani & Kumar, 2021). This is inclusive of their competence and trustworthiness among other expectations. When an influencer is professional, it profiles them as more authoritative and credible, which is what important for consumer perception of their endorsements (Jun & Yi, 2020). Consumer-perceived quality represents the buyer's opinion regarding how goods and services stacked up against accepted charges (Saima & Khan, 2020). Influencers are significant in the context since before buying a new product from a developing brand or company, customers usually depend on influencer endorsements before concluding about the quality or cost-effectiveness of the item (Vrontis et al., 2021). Generally, consumers are more likely to be fond of items marketed by a person who consistently provides helpful and insightful assessments. As such, it is clear that influencer professionalism is relatively significant in the development of consumer notions and their buying intentions (Wellman et al., 2023). Hostility against influencers arises from a contentious viewpoint that influenced facilitate anxiety and, in certain instances, based on the influencer's inadequacy in carrying a professional posture may insinuate inferior consumer-perceived quality.

H2: Influencer Professionalism has a positive impact on customer perceived quality

2.6 Brand Involvement and Customer Perceived Quality

The relationship between brand participation and customer perceived quality is an essential characteristic to modulate customers' behavior and brand loyalty (Akoglu et al., 2022). The term "brand engagement" is used to define by the amount of "cognitive or emotional brand attitude" by marketing scholars. If customers are to engage with a company, they are highly likely to pay close attention to the products they produce or the firm's marketing and general reputation. This acts as a catalyst to make the brand seem real and have a higher level of quality. In effect, customer perceived quality is enhanced by acquiring a positive effect (Vera et al., 2015). This relationship is activated if highly engaged consumers display attachment to a brand as they feel the brand is constantly producing great products or services (Coelho et al., 2020). An assessment of the total sales of the goods of a fashion brand to an individual customer helps in the establishment of the level of brand participation. Personality is the degree to which one becomes attached to a brand's

characteristics (Rane et al., 2023). To aggregate all the fashion products purchased by a single customer, the square of the average standardized sum of sales will be estimated. For all the people who buy the product, the estimates will be recorded, particularly in a fiercely competitive market. Additionally, it will trigger more loyalty, which will drive consumers to stay customers and buy other products from the brand repeatedly (Tran et al., 2023). Thus, organizations must focus on optimizing brand participation through consistent product quality and interaction with customers to generate a more sustainable perception of its goods in their eyes.

H4: Brand involvement has a positive impact on customer perceived quality

2.7 Customer Perceived Quality and Purchase Intention

Understanding the relationship between customers' perceived quality and purchase intention is vital in comprehending consumer behavior, particularly in the contexts of marketing and brand management (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Customer perceived quality is described as a consumer's assessment regarding a product's overall excellence or superiority, accounting for various factors such as performance, durability, and reliability (Marakanon & Panjakajornsak, 2017). High perceived quality tends to increase consumer satisfaction and their level of trust, also increasing the probability of a purchase. When consumers consider a product to be high quality, they will usually consider that a sound investment, thereby increasing their purchase intention. This relationship assumes that high-quality products will meet or exceed consumer expectations, reducing the level of perceived risk associated with the purchase (Wu et al., 2021). Furthermore, perceived quality can also be instrumental in differentiating a product from its many competitors, meaning that consumers that prioritize value for their money will be more likely to purchase it. This is particularly applicable in markets with numerous options for consumers (Tosun, & Tosun, 2024). As such, the relationship between perceived quality and purchase intention works particularly well for brands that consistently deliver high perceived quality, as evidenced by enduring customer loyalty and strong sales. Such a relationship could be moderated by consumer trust, brand reputation, and various external factors, such as social proof or recommendations from third parties.

H:5 Customer perceived quality has a positive impact on customer perceived quality

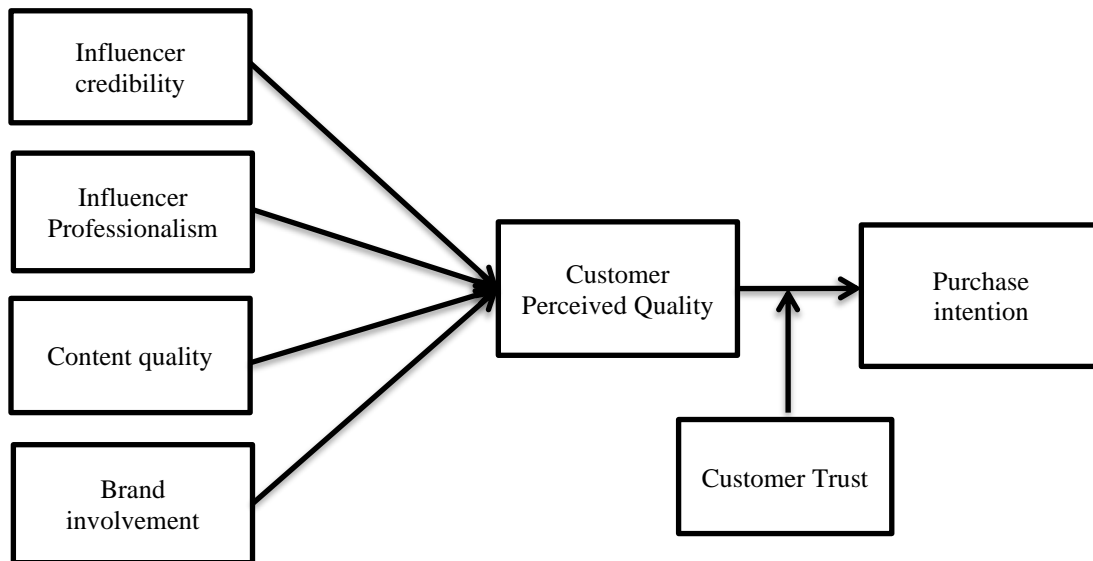
2.8 Customer Trust as a Moderator

Customer trust plays a vital role moderating in the relationship between perceived quality and purchase intention. According to Honora et al. (2023) when consumers trust a brand, they are more likely to perceive legitimacy and reliability in the company's product or service. The good quality perception will be a beneficial moderator, increasing the influence of quality perception on customers' purchase intention. When customers perceive a product as good quality, their purchase intention is strong. The intention is reinforced by brand trust (Senali et al., 2023). Bao and Yang (2021) also agree that trust reduces the objective risk of a purchase decision, which affects customer confidence that high perceived quality will lead to satisfaction. For example, a buyer may regard a product as good quality but may refrain from purchasing if they lack complete trust

in the brand. However, when trust is elevated, even a moderately perceived quality can lead to a strong purchase intention, as trust compensates for the perceived value deficit (Chae et al., 2023). Consequently, cultivating customer trust is essential for businesses, as it not only enhances loyalty but also amplifies the impact of their perceived quality on purchase intentions.

H6: Customer Trust positively moderates the relationship between customer’s perceived quality and purchase intention

Figure No 1: Conceptual Framework



3. Methodology

The study employed a quantitative survey design, with the data collection approach being cross-sectional. The target population was 330 university students from a specific region. A feature of the sample was that all the students had the experience of using influencer marketing. The researchers used the principle of convenience sampling and asked the respondents to participate in the online survey. A self-administrative questionnaire was used. Overall, the questionnaire includes an assessment of seven key constructs. The study used a 5-point Likert scale to show how much they agreed with the provided items. The researchers used two primary stages for data analysis. They first conducted a measuring model to determine the validity and reliability of the scales used. The second stage was the evaluation of the structural model, which was performed to verify the developed hypotheses and discover the relationships between the variables. Structural equation modeling was used to evaluate these relationships.

Apart from that, the researchers investigated the effect of the moderating variable, customer trust interaction, on the link between perceived quality and purchase intention, which was also conducted in the measuring model. A number of analytical tools were used to evaluate the moderating effect, with the most important being moderated regression analysis. To

summarize, the study used convenience sampling, a cross-sectional survey, an online form of data collection, SEM, and moderated regression analysis to obtain an in-depth analysis of the effect of influencer marketing on purchase intention and the impact of the moderating variable, customer trust interaction, on this relationship.

3.1 Respondents' Profile

In this study Google form questions were completed by 330 people. Both men and women aged 20 and older with monthly salaries over 20,000 PKR participated. However, 35 replies were removed since their monthly wage was less than 20,000 PKR. Thus, 330 responses were used for analysis. Table 1 provides participation demographics.

Table No 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Criteria	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	217	65.75
Female	113	34.24
Age		
20 to 30 years	95	28.78
31 to 40 years	160	48.48
41 to 50 years	50	15.15
60 years and above	15	4.54
Monthly Income		
20,000 to 39,000	25	7.57
40,000 to 59,000	60	18.18
60,000 to 79,000	73	22.12
80,000 to 99,000	82	24.84
100,000 and above	90	27.27

The demographic profile of the respondents indicates that males comprise 65.75% of the sample, and females account for 34.24%. The predominant age group among respondents is 31 to 40 years (48.48%), followed by the 20 to 30 years cohort (28.78%), with lesser percentages in the 41 to 50 years (15.15%) and 60 years and above (4.54%) categories. The predominant income bracket is 100,000 and above, accounting for 27.27% of the sample. The subsequent groups consist of individuals earning between 80,000 and 99,000 (24.84%), 60,000 and 79,000 (22.12%), 40,000 and 59,000 (18.18%), and the smallest cohort earning between 20,000 and 39,000 (7.5%).

Table No 2: Factor Loadings

	CPQ	IC	IP	CQ	PI	CT
CPQ1	0.730					
CPQ2	0.780					
CPQ3	0.760					
CPQ4	0.778					
IC1		0.880				
IC2		0.892				
IC3		0.793				
IC4		0.772				
IPF1			0.855			
IP2			0.954			
IP3			0.822			
CQ1				0.826		
CQ2				0.657		
CQ3				0.782		
CQ4		0.825				
CQ5		0.802				
BI1		0.952				
BI2		0.946				
BI3		0.740				
BI4		0.690				
BI5		0.789				
BI6		0.688				
CT1		0.846				
CT2		0.923				

CT3	0.692
CT4	0.777
CT5	0.862
PI1	0.941
PI2	0.683
PI3	0.821
PI4	0.877

The table shows factor loadings for Customer Perceived Quality (CPQ), Influencer Credibility (IC), Influencer Professionalism (IP), Content Quality (CQ), Brand Involvement (BI), Customer Trust (CT), and Purchase Intention. Stronger correlations between items and their constructs are shown by factor loadings near 1.0.

This study shows that all factor loadings surpass 0.6, indicating that the items accurately measure their constructs. Examples of good alignment with the CPQ construct include Customer Perceived Quality (CPQ1-CPQ4) items with loadings from 0.730 to 0.780. Influencer Credibility (IC1-IC4) components also have strong loadings between 0.772 and 0.892, indicating their substantial IC construct representation.

Influencer Professionalism (IPF1-IP3) and Content Quality (CQ1-CQ4) also have strong loadings, particularly IP2 with 0.954, indicating their reliability in capturing the constructs. Brand Involvement (BI1-BI6) has significant loadings above 0.9 for BI1 and BI2, but lesser loadings for BI4 and BI6. Last, Customer Trust (CT1-CT5) and Purchase Intention (PI1-PI4) items have substantial loadings, indicating that they well-represent these dimensions.

Factor loadings show that measurement items are valid markers of their constructs, supporting the reliability and validity of this study's measurement approach.

Table No 3: Assessment of Measurement Model

Variable Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
CPQ	0.786	0.856	0.597
IC	0.811	0.901	0.603
IP	0.871	0.951	0.511
CQ	0.725	0.842	0.527
BI	0.701	0.793	0.505
CT	0.730	0.852	0.712

Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted are used to assess the measurement model's reliability and validity of the study's constructs—Customer Perceived Quality (CPQ), Influencer Credibility (IC), Influencer Professionalism (IP), Content Quality (CQ), Brand Involvement (BI), and Customer Trust (CT).

All constructions have Cronbach's Alpha values over 0.7, indicating strong item internal consistency and reliability. All constructions had Composite Reliability (CR) values above 0.7, confirming that they are reliably measured. All constructs' Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are over 0.5, indicating that they explain a significant share of their indicators' variance. These metrics show that the measuring model is reliable and valid, ensuring that the study's constructs appropriately capture theoretical concepts.

Table No 4: Discriminant Validity of Variable Constructs Through HTMT

Latent Variables	CPQ	IC	IP	CQ	BI	CT	PI
CPQ							
IC	0.212						
IP	0.222	0.202					
CQ	0.082	0.120	0.116				
BI	0.196	0.267	0.271	0.106			
CT	0.208	0.193	0.277	0.107	0.257		

Customer Perceived Quality (CPQ), Influencer Credibility (IC), Influencer Professionalism (IP), Content Quality (CQ), Brand Involvement (BI), Customer Trust (CT), and Purchase Intention (PSI) are the latent variables in the study. The table "Discriminant Validity of Variable Constructs through HTMT" shows their Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT).

Discriminant validity guarantees model constructs are distinct. Lower HTMT scores indicate stronger construct discriminant validity. To ensure construct distinction, HTMT values should be below 0.85 (or 0.90 in some circumstances). This table shows that all HTMT values between latent variables are below 0.85, showing that each construct is different. HTMT values between CPQ and IC and IP are 0.212 and 0.222, respectively, far below 0.85. This shows that consumer perceived quality, influencer reputation, and influencer professionalism are connected but unique enough to be regarded separate categories. The pattern of HTMT values supports the discriminant validity of the model's components, guaranteeing that each measures a unique feature of the underlying phenomena. Validation is essential for research dependability and correctness.

Table No 5: Summary of Hypothesis Test and Results

Hypotheses	β	SD	T Statistic	P value	Result
IC -> CPQ	0.168	0.182	1.992	0.050	Supported
IP -> CPQ	0.1721	0.153	1.906	0.001	Supported
CQ -> CPQ	0.079	0.104	0.742	0.004	Supported
BI -> CPQ	0.072	0.047	2.498	0.057	Supported
CT* CP -> PI	0.111	0.146	2.225	0.027	Supported

The hypothesis test results provide significant insights into the relationships between influencer credibility (IC), influencer professionalism (IP), content quality (CQ), brand involvement (BI), and customer perceived quality (CPQ), as well as the moderating role of customer trust (PT) on the relationship between customer perceived quality and purchase intention (PI).

Regarding the first hypothesis, it is possible to draw the conclusion that there is a positive relationship between IS and CPQ. This hypothesis is supported as there are the following values: a β of 0.168, and T statistic of 1.99 and the p-value of 0.050. Thus, it is apparent that if the influencer has a high level of credibility, the customer perceives quality as better. The second hypothesis is also accepted since the β is 0.1721, T statistic is 1.906, and the p value is 0.001. Thus, it is possible to state that influencer professionalism is likely to increase the level of customer perceived quality. The third one is also relevant; it is confirmed since the β is 0.079, T statistic is 0.742, and the p value of 0.004. High quality of the influencer-led content is likely to increase the

attitude of the customers towards the quality of online products. Finally, the fourth hypothesis is also supported, and the β is 0.072, T statistic is 2.498, and the obtained p-value of 0.057. It is apparent that devote involvement in the brand is important to increasing online products perception.

Thus, all the hypotheses are supported, and the final one is the most interesting as it is one, which is most relevant and challenging to be explained by the researcher as it is focused on trust level. It is possible to agree with the proposition that PT which is the moderating effect of trust or CT*CP on PT is supported. The β is 0.111, the T statistic is 2.225, and the p value is 0.027. Hence, trust increases the impact of perceived quality on purchase intentions.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study explored the impact of influencer credibility, influencer professionalism, brand involvement, and content quality on customer perceived quality, with a focus on how customer trust moderates the relationship between perceived quality and purchase intention. The findings indicate that all four factors—credibility, professionalism, brand involvement, and content quality—significantly contribute to enhancing customer perceived quality. This highlights the crucial role that influencers and brands play in shaping consumer perceptions, particularly in the digital age where social media platforms serve as key channels for brand communication.

Influencer credibility and professionalism emerged as particularly strong predictors of perceived quality. Consumers are more likely to trust and value the opinions of influencers who demonstrate expertise, reliability, and ethical conduct. This trust is further reinforced when influencers engage with brands that resonate with their audience, thereby enhancing brand involvement. Content quality also plays a vital role, as well-produced, informative, and engaging content can effectively convey the value of a product or service, positively influencing customer perceptions.

The moderating role of customer trust is also critical. When trust is present, it strengthens the impact of perceived quality on purchase intention, making customers more likely to commit to a purchase. This finding underscores the importance of building and maintaining trust in the customer-influencer-brand relationship. Without trust, even high perceived quality may not be sufficient to drive purchase decisions.

In conclusion, this study underscores the interconnected nature of influencer-related factors and their combined effect on customer perceptions and behaviors. For brands, the key takeaway is the importance of partnering with credible and professional influencers who can produce high-quality content and foster strong brand involvement. Additionally, cultivating customer trust should be a strategic priority, as it significantly enhances the likelihood that perceived quality will translate into actual purchase intentions. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics across different contexts and platforms to further refine our understanding of these critical relationships.

5.1 Implications

The results of this study have implications for both the marketers/brands and influencers for boosting the customer perceived quality and purchase intentions of customers through digital platforms. The highest importance was found to be the influencers' credibility and professionalism. Therefore, marketers should both identify credible influencers through their ethical characteristics and working understandings and ensure that the influencer is adapted to the brand. Hence, a marketer should work with influencers who have an acceptable level of credibility and have a high level of trust with their audience since consumer trust has a positive relationship with the perceived quality of the product / service. Involvement of the brand also plays a key role in the perceived quality of customers.

Therefore, brands need to work with influencers who fit their brand message and adopt their values; working with such influencers will create content that is unique to the brand and therefore, perceived as more credible. Brands should aim to strengthen these by creating long-term partnerships with influencers. Also, content quality should be emphasized, as not every type of content is effective. Therefore, content that is visually appealing, informative, and emotionally appealing should be produced by both the brand and the influencer. This results in an impact on customer perceptions and their relationships with the brand. Finally, the results also showed the moderating effect of trust on the perceived quality purchased for the product. Consequently, brands should focus on building trust with the client through the specified requirements. To put in differently, brands should, first of all, be transparent and continue to guarantee customer satisfaction in their service or product quality. Furthermore, the influencers should avoid having their own interests and not selling that influence. Precautions should be taken since the customers' trust in the influencer also affects the trust coefficient on the brand and the integrated source.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

This study makes significant contribution to the current literature despite this it has several limitations. The study employed cross sectional research design it is based on self-reported data, potentially introducing bias from respondents' and social desirability. Future studies should conduct longitudinal research may yield profound insights into the impact of these factors on customer perceptions and behaviors over time. The study's was conducting in Pakistan and data was collecting using convenience sampling that may not adequately reflect the diversity of consumer behavior across various ethnicities, cultures, and industries, hence constraining the generalizability of the findings. Future study should investigate these links across many businesses and cultural situations to corroborate and enhance the findings. Furthermore, future research could investigate other moderating or mediating variables, such as or brand loyalty, consumer involvement to enhance the understanding of the complex dynamics involved.

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