

Impact of Social Media Influencer Marketing on Consumer Behaviour: A Review of Source Credibility Theory

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Abstract:

Social media influencer marketing (SMIM) is now a dominant digital communication strategy shaping consumer decision-making, yet prior SMIM research remains theoretically fragmented and methodologically dispersed, limiting a coherent understanding of how influencer attributes drive behavioural outcomes. This structured literature review synthesises evidence from 17 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2014 and 2024. Guided by Source Credibility Theory, the review analyses the roles of influencer attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness as antecedents of perceived credibility. Descriptive mapping, thematic synthesis, and contextual comparison were used to consolidate key themes, study designs, variables, mediators, and moderators. Across studies, attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness consistently strengthen perceived credibility. Higher perceived credibility is repeatedly associated with stronger consumer trust, engagement, and purchase intention. Influencer-brand fit and disclosure transparency emerge as critical determinants that condition campaign effectiveness and shape how credibility translates into consumer responses. The synthesis clarifies core credibility pathways in SMIM and proposes an integrative framework to reduce fragmentation and guide future theory development. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of aligning influencer selection with brand fit and ensuring authentic, transparent content. Key gaps include limited theory-building, narrow contextual coverage, and heavy reliance on cross-sectional self-reports, indicating the need for longitudinal and behavioural-data research to strengthen causal inference and external validity.

Keywords:

Consumer Behaviour, Consumer Trust, Influencer Marketing, Social Media Influencer, Source Credibility Theory

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Introduction

Overview of Social Media Influencer Marketing

Recently, social media has emerged as a platform for users to create and share content, thereby reshaping communication dynamics (Melumad et al., 2019). As most social interactions have shifted to social media, these platforms have become the primary tool for disseminating important information (Carr & Hayes, 2015). Carr and Hayes (2015) further defined these internet-based channels as allowing users to derive value from user-generated content and actively participate in its discussion. This change affects not only interactions between individuals but also those between consumers and brands, fundamentally altering the way brands engage with consumers and shifting away from traditional channels (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). Among popular social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok, and LinkedIn, Facebook leads with 2.11 billion active monthly users as of December 2023, while Meta (Facebook's parent company) has a total market capitalisation of \$1.19 trillion as of Q1 2024 (Gratton, 2025).

The reach and scalability that social media platforms provide have enabled some users to attract large followings and effectively become social media influencers (SMIs). They are key opinion leaders who have established a loyal audience that subscribes to their curated content and has become a source of advice for their followers (Lou & Yuan, 2019). These social media influencers produce content on a diverse range of topics, including beauty, travel, food, lifestyle, technology, and fashion (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Acknowledging the impact of SMIs on their respective platforms, brands have begun to realise the potential and benefits of engaging these SMIs to promote their brands and serve as digital ambassadors, a practice commonly known as social media influencer marketing (SMIM) (Pick, 2021). These brands utilise SMIM to create a positive brand image aligned with followers' interests, enabling both SMIs and followers to engage in interactions that positively influence consumer behaviour (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2020). The credibility these influencers possess has been found to affect consumers' behaviours and purchase intentions significantly (Munnukka et al., 2018; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

Before the advent of social media platforms, word-of-mouth popularised the use of key opinion leaders to influence consumer behaviour (Godey et al., 2016; Moldovan et al., 2017). For several decades, marketing campaigns have widely used celebrities and public figures (Knoll & Matthes, 2017). Lin et al. (2018) discovered that their superior social standing could significantly influence consumers' attitudes and behaviours. When making a purchase decision, consumers often consider interpersonal interactions with key opinion leaders (Casalo et al., 2020).

Following the establishment of social media platforms, the accessibility and demand for influencer marketing have increased exponentially. According to Young (2018), more than half of social media users rely on recommendations from their followers when making purchase decisions. As a result, more brands have capitalised on this opportunity with the bulk of their marketing outreach strategies. Regulators, such as the Federal Trade Commission, have recognised this phenomenon and heightened regulations surrounding SMIM (Boerman, 2020).

Problem Statement and Rationale for the Study

Although significant research contributes to the theoretical and practical understanding of SMIM, the current body of research lacks a comprehensive evaluation that can analyse the findings in an integrative manner, thereby enabling marketers to utilise this marketing instrument more effectively (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

Furthermore, given the widespread applicability of SMIM across social media platforms and industries, the current body of research appears disjointed and fragmented, underscoring the need for an integrative framework to provide a structural understanding of the literature (Ge & Gretzel, 2018).

To overcome these challenges, this study will conduct a review that collates high-quality peer-reviewed journal articles on SMIM.

Aim and Significance of the Study

The goal of this study is to examine the current body of literature on SMIM across a variety of today's widely used social media platforms. This can be done by conducting an in-depth review of carefully selected studies published in reputable academic journals.

Another purpose of this study is to clarify the processes underlying the appeal of SMIs and their notable ability to influence consumer attitudes and behaviour. By examining these established publications, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how SMIs affect consumers' decision-making processes.

This research aims to present a thorough, multifaceted, integrative framework that considers the variables that arise before, during, and after SMIM, as well as their potential impact on the end product (Kukafka et al., 2003). This paradigm aims to provide a methodical approach to understanding what constitutes SMIM and how it affects consumer behaviour.

Lastly, the study aims to provide marketing managers with practical applications. To provide marketing managers with a thorough understanding of the nuances of SMIM, the research aims to synthesise the existing literature. They will be able to create successful SMIM initiatives as a result.

Research Objectives

Research Objective 1: To identify the impact of social media influencer marketing on consumer behaviour based on journal articles published between 2014 and 2024.

Research Objective 2: To identify the key study themes, geographical scope, social media platforms, research materials and methodologies, variables, theories, antecedents, and consequences pertinent to the literature on social media influencers.

Research Objective 3: To construct an integrative framework that incorporates research themes, key factors that influence a phenomenon, variables that have an impact, outcomes, as well as factors that mediate and moderate the relationship, in order to offer significant insights for practical implementation.

Literature Review

Social Media Influencer Marketing

Chopra et al. (2021) found that the term "influencer" had not been used prior to the rise of social media and the industry of content creation, up until Brown and Hayes (2008), who found that influencer marketing is the practice of a mass-followed content creator on social media platforms influencing the consumer purchase decision. As content creators curate a niche, brands can effectively engage their intended target audience to disseminate their marketing messages.

Additionally, Conick (2018) found that SMIs are more likely to gain consumer trust than other digital media outlets, such as search engine marketing, video marketing, and social media advertising. These forms of digital marketing are more intrusive to the user experience and will often cause users to skip through the advertising content. Conversely, users perceive SMIM as more organic and engaging, thereby increasing acceptance.

As SMIs foster a close relationship with their followers, they have gradually become a reliable and trusted source of information (Freberg et al., 2011; Lee, 2025d). Conick (2018) found that because SMIs engage with their followers in a two-way manner, they can positively influence followers toward brands. In contrast, advertising is often avoided or negatively perceived when presented via intrusive managers, such as pop-ups, paywalls, and banners.

Consumer Behaviour

As influencer marketing can impress potential consumers and has been widely adopted by marketers globally, it has been termed a form of consumer-oriented marketing, as it directly correlates with follower-consumer behaviour. Brands utilise consumer-oriented marketing to progressively deliver their marketing messages from the perspective of consumers, as observed by Kotler and Armstrong (2016).

This includes identifying the characteristics of the brand's target group and selecting the optimal promotional channel. For instance, each social media platform has its own target age group: TikTok, with users mostly aged 18-24; YouTube, with users mostly aged 30-49; and Instagram, with users mostly aged 25-34 (Zhou, 2025). Therefore, brands need to select the appropriate platform, influencers, and content to maximise their impact on consumer behaviour among the target group (Lee, 2025b).

Kim and Lennon (2008) found that social media content that combines visual and audio elements has the most significant cognitive effect on consumer attitudes and behaviours. Shaouf et al. (2016) concur with these findings and report that consumers experience heightened engagement when both their visual and auditory senses are stimulated. Chahal (2016) coined the term "social shoppers" to refer to consumers who regularly search for products on social media platforms and make purchase decisions based on social media posts from influencers they follow.

Kotler and Armstrong (2016) noted that SMIM is an external stimulus that creates a cognitive need in consumers. This will cause them to continue searching for more information regarding the solution/product. For instance, when a consumer sees an influencer using a new beauty product they were previously unaware of, this exposure increases their awareness of the need for that product. It prompts them to seek more information, ideally from the brand first mentioned in the social media post (Lee, 2025a). Once the consumer has acquired sufficient knowledge about the product, they proceed to the next stage of the purchase decision-making process (Lee, 2025c; Vidani & Das, 2021).

Source Credibility Theory

The Source Credibility Theory, posited by Hovland and Weiss (1951), suggests that credible sources are more persuasive than non-credible ones. According to Ohanian (1990), the theory comprises three components related to the source's characteristics: attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness.

Attractiveness, defined as the affection followers show toward influencers, encompasses both physical and social dimensions (Duffy & Hund, 2015). Physical attractiveness is associated with SMI-related physical traits, such as beauty, youth, elegance, and fashion (Antil et al., 2012). To maximise their appeal, SMIs will seek to enhance the aesthetics of their self-portraits while showcasing a trendy fashion and beauty sense (Colucci & Cho, 2014).

On the other hand, social attractiveness is associated with the social and emotional connections that followers can forge with SMIs. By sharing personal experiences and disclosing intimate, personalised information, SMIs can increase their relatability with followers (Reijmersdal et al., 2024). Leite and Baptista (2022) further proposed that this connection fosters greater appreciation among followers, which in turn leads to a more loyal follower base. Lou and Yuan (2019) found that social attractiveness can positively affect consumer behaviour, as people who are relatable to one another often share similar,

more meaningful opinions, leading followers to trust SMIs' opinions regarding the brands they choose to adopt.

Expertise refers to the qualifications of the source in providing accurate knowledge about the subject (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). SMIs emphasise their expertise in persuading their followers that they provide valuable information that deserves their trust (Farivar et al., 2021). Hovland and Weiss (1951) found that a higher degree of perceived expertise will lead to greater persuasiveness in delivering a message. Xiao et al. (2018) found a positive relationship between expertise and purchase intention, as participants perceived SMIs as providing reliable, knowledgeable advice. Casalo et al. (2020), in a study of Instagram users, found that followers tend to follow the advice of SMIs perceived as experts.

Finally, Ohanian (1990) defines trustworthiness as the listener's level of confidence and belief. In the context of SMIs, they attempt to enhance trust by showing more intimate details of their lives and making a personalised connection with their followers, in what Leite and Baptista (2022) dubbed a "truth-telling technique, in which this form of self-disclosure has resulted in positive effects on source credibility and purchase intention. Through engagement with their followers (e.g., Q&A sessions and messages received via comments and direct messages), SMIs emphasise their role as opinion leaders by repeatedly asserting that they are a reliable source of advice (Winter & Neubaum, 2016).

Methodology

Data Selection

Sourcing of Articles

A comprehensive search was conducted using electronic databases, including EBSCOhost, ScienceDirect, and Emerald, with assistance from Scopus. These databases were chosen because they contain extensive collections of high-quality journal articles and are frequently used in systematic reviews (Leonidou et al., 2018).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

For a more accurate review concerning consumer behaviour, only peer-reviewed articles published in English were selected. According to Furrer et al. (2008), peer-reviewed articles provide deeper insight and advance research across theoretical and practical horizons. This study will use only journal articles published in the last 10 years (2014-2024) to maximise the review's relevance. The study will include only articles with at least 10 references, published in a recognised journal.

At the initial stage of keyword identification, a broad pilot search was conducted in the databases using the keyword "influencer marketing". After several rounds of pilot searches, high-impact keywords such

as "social media influencer", "blogger", "microcelebrities", "endorsements", and "key opinion leader" were identified and included in subsequent rounds of searches. The final search and selection have refined the keyword list (Gusenbauer, 2020).

Once the pilot search was completed, the final search was conducted using the Boolean OR and AND operators in the formula: ("influencer marketing" OR "social media influencer" OR "key opinion leader" OR "Instagram influencer" OR "blogger" OR "micro-celebrities") AND ("source credibility theory" OR "purchase intention" OR "consumer trust"). Based on the suggestions of Pisani et al. (2017), the titles, keywords, and abstracts were searched.

Most importantly, these articles must have met the inclusion criteria for investigating Source Credibility Theory. As this review investigates aspects of Source Credibility Theory in relation to consumer behaviour, particularly its practical contributions for marketers, these articles are highly impactful, as each examines components of the theory.

Selection of Articles

The initial search identified 8,434 articles: 7,394 from EBSCOhost, 918 from ScienceDirect, and 122 from Emerald. After applying the exclusion criteria, 1,135 articles remained. Subsequently, a manual review of titles and abstracts was conducted to remove duplicates, yielding 98 articles. During this process, the relevance of several articles could not be determined from their titles and abstracts; therefore, a full-text review was conducted, and 81 articles were excluded. As a result, 17 articles were selected to be included in this review. This process for selecting articles is laid out in Figure 1.

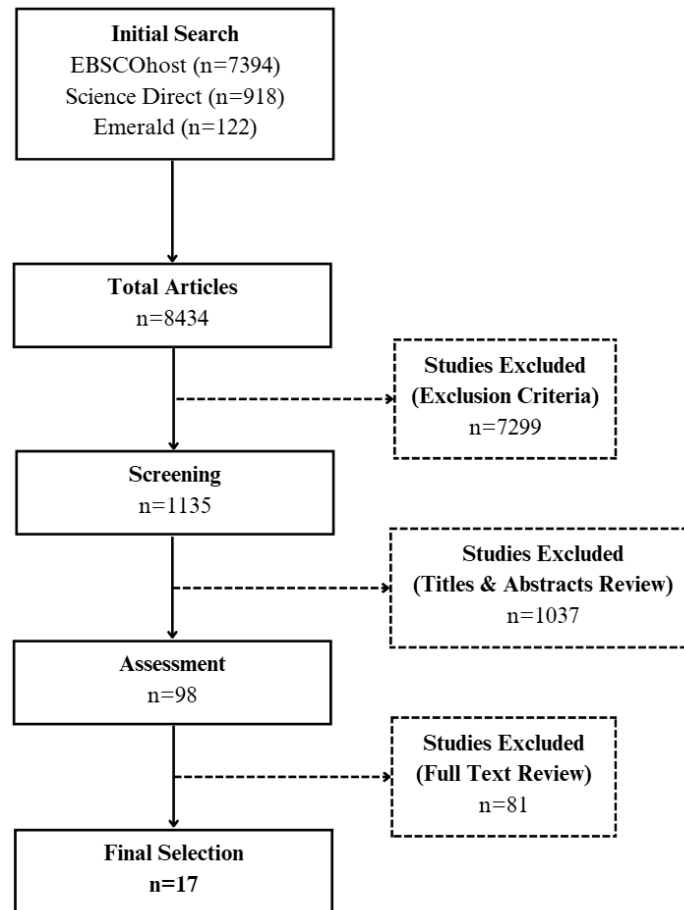


Figure 1: Data Selection

Data Coding

After the articles were selected, a comprehensive data extraction was conducted to obtain key information through a full-text review (Danese et al., 2017). The extracted data points include the author(s), year of publication, aim, methodology, social media platform, findings, etc. This process was conducted by using Scopus and Microsoft Excel.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Analysis

Year of Publication

As SMIM is a relatively new form of digital marketing that gained popularity in the 2010s with the emergence of social media platforms, research in this field remains in its infancy. Furthermore, the

applicability of Source Credibility Theory remains under investigation. This is evident in the fact that the earliest article included in this review is from 2017.

However, it is notable that research in this field has increased in the 2020s, indicating growing interest. In particular, 6 articles were published in 2019 and 7 in 2020, representing approximately 76% of the data pool.

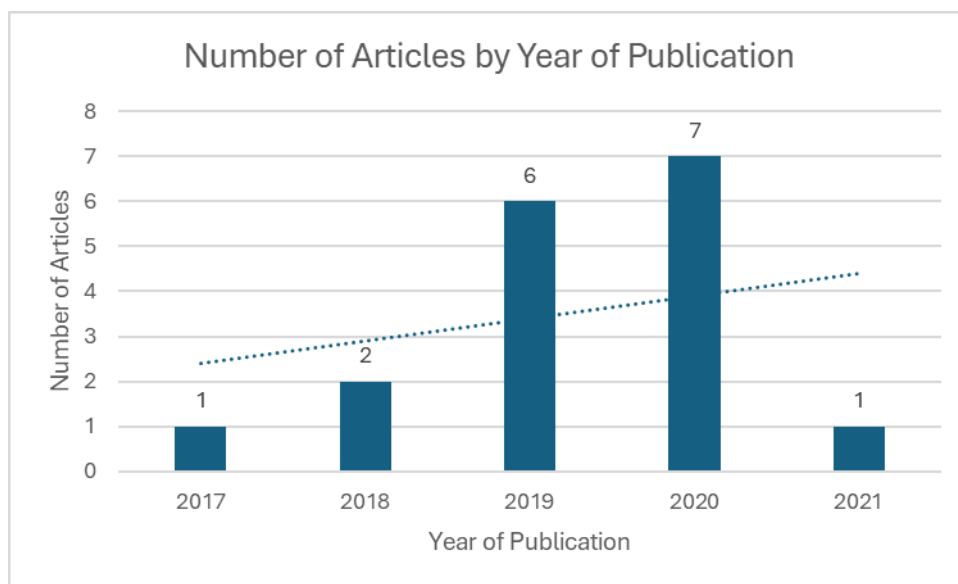


Figure 2: Number of Articles by Year of Publication

Type of Paper and Methodology

Of the 17 articles reviewed, all were empirical studies. This finding indicates that, at present, there is a lack of theoretical contributions to SMIM, which is critical to the development of knowledge in this field (MacInnis, 2011). Therefore, we suggest directing future studies towards theoretical development.

Investigating further the research methods employed in the empirical studies, 82% (n = 14) of the articles deployed quantitative methods, 12% (n = 2) of the articles deployed qualitative methods, and 6% (n = 1) of the articles deployed a mixed-mode approach. This finding indicates that most researchers prioritise testing theories through quantitative methods rather than developing them through qualitative methods. Therefore, we recommend directing future studies towards qualitative methods to expand and enhance SMIM's theoretical knowledge.

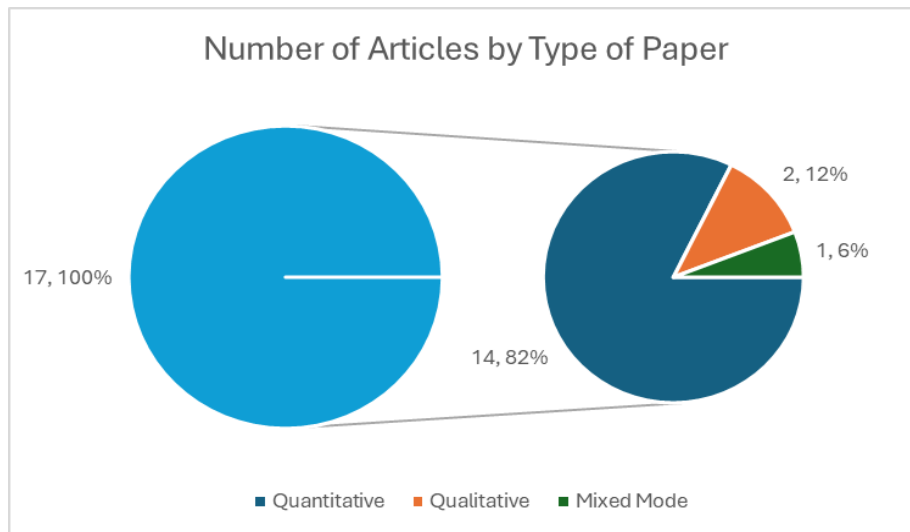


Figure 3: Number of Articles by Type of Paper

Published Journals

To ascertain the impact of the articles selected for this review, data coded in Scopus are analysed. Table 1 is a comprehensive list of the articles listed according to the name of the journal, the field of the journal and the ranking of the journal based on the Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS) Academic Journal Guide 2024. The journals with the most significant number of selected articles are Computers in Human Behaviour and Marketing Intelligence and Planning (n = 2; 12% each).

In terms of field, the majority of the articles were from Marketing (n = 10, 59%), followed by Information Systems (n = 3, 17%), General Management (n = 2, 12%), Social Sciences (n = 1, 6%), and Strategy (n = 1, 6%).

In terms of CABS ranking, the majority of the articles were from ranking 1 (n = 7, 41%), followed by ranking 2 (n = 6, 35%), ranking 3 (n = 3, 18%), and ranking 4* (n = 1, 6%). This indicates that most of the literature on SMIM is published in journals recognised as "good" by CABS, with only one article in the prestigious 4* category, i.e., The Journal of Marketing. Therefore, to enhance the research impact within the academic community, future studies in this area should strive to be published in higher-ranked journals.

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Journal (Field) [CABS Ranking]	Number of Articles
Computers in Human Behaviour (Information Systems) [2]	2
Marketing Intelligence and Planning (Marketing) [1]	2
Australasian Marketing Journal (Marketing) [1]	1
European Business Review (General Management) [2]	1
Information Communication and Society (Social Sciences) [2]	1
International Journal of Strategic Communication (Strategy) [1]	1
Journal of Advertising (Marketing) [3]	1
Journal of Advertising Research (Marketing) [3]	1
Journal of Business Research (General Management) [3]	1
Journal of Internet Commerce (Information Systems) [1]	1
Journal of Marketing (Marketing) [4*]	1
Journal of Marketing Management (Marketing) [2]	1
Journal of Product and Brand Management (Marketing) [1]	1
Journal of Promotion Management (Marketing) [1]	1
Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services (Marketing) [2]	1

Table 1: Number of Articles by Journal, Journal Field & Ranking

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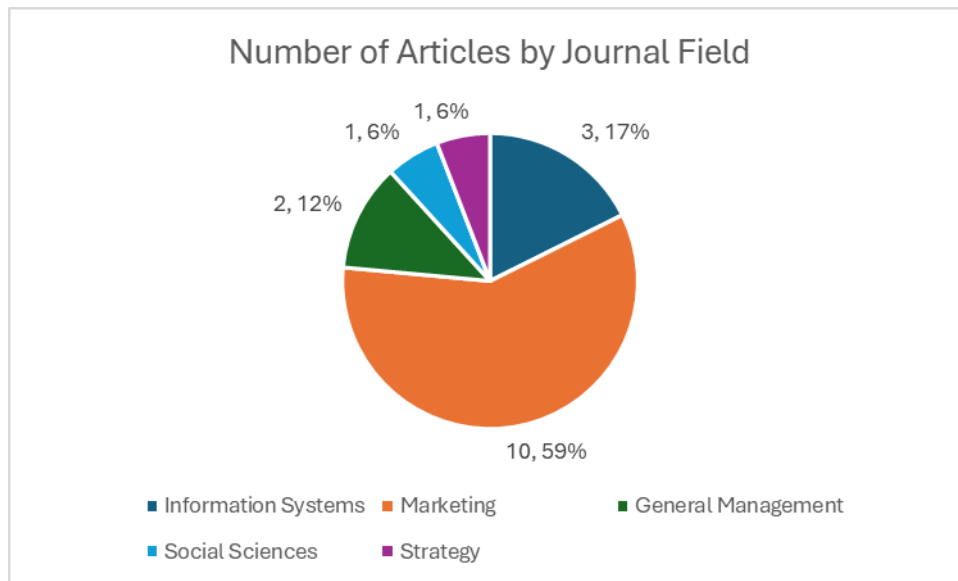


Figure 4: Number of Articles by Journal Field

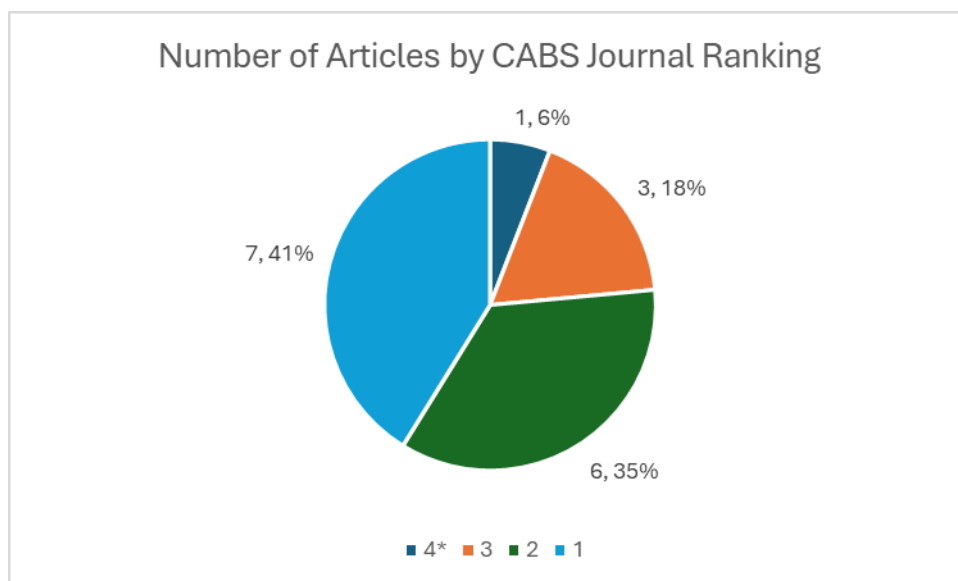


Figure 5: Number of Articles by CABS Journal Ranking

Citation Analysis

To ascertain the applicability of the literature chosen for this review, the number of citations of each article is analysed. Based on Table 2, it is notable that the top five most cited articles of Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), Jin et al. (2019), Hughes et al. (2019), Breves et al. (2019), and Reinikainen et al.

(2020) accounted for approximately 59% of total citations. Based on Figure 6, it is found that these articles have profound usage across many disciplines.

Article	Number of Citations
Djafarova & Rushworth (2017)	782
Jin et al. (2019)	400
Hughes et al. (2019)	331
Breves et al. (2019)	244
Reinikainen et al. (2020)	228
Weismueller et al. (2020)	192
Djafarova & Trofimenko (2019)	163
Wiedmann & Mettenheim (2021)	144
Munnukka et al. (2019)	142
Trivedi & Sama (2020)	139
De Jans et al. (2018)	137
Sakib et al. (2020)	113
Poyry et al. (2019)	106
Saima & Khan (2021)	96
Fink et al. (2020)	70
Pick (2021)	56
Esch et al. (2018)	37

Table 2: Number of Citations by Article

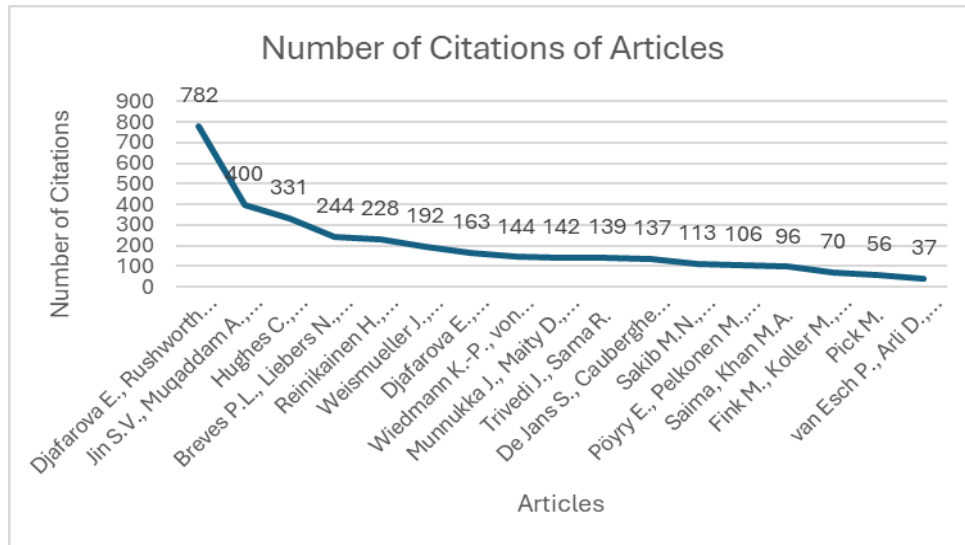


Figure 6: Number of Citations of Articles

Social Media Platform

To ascertain the scope of studies surrounding SMIM, an analysis of the social media platforms studied was carried out. It is found that the majority of the studies focused on Instagram (n = 5, 29%), followed by YouTube (n = 4, 23%), Facebook (n = 3, 18%), Mixed Platforms (n = 3, 18%) and Blogs (n = 2, 12%). This concurs with the findings of Breves et al. (2019), where Instagram is the most renowned platform for SMIM. Although the studies chosen have covered a number of popular social media platforms, there are other platforms which still require exploration, e.g., TikTok, LinkedIn, etc.

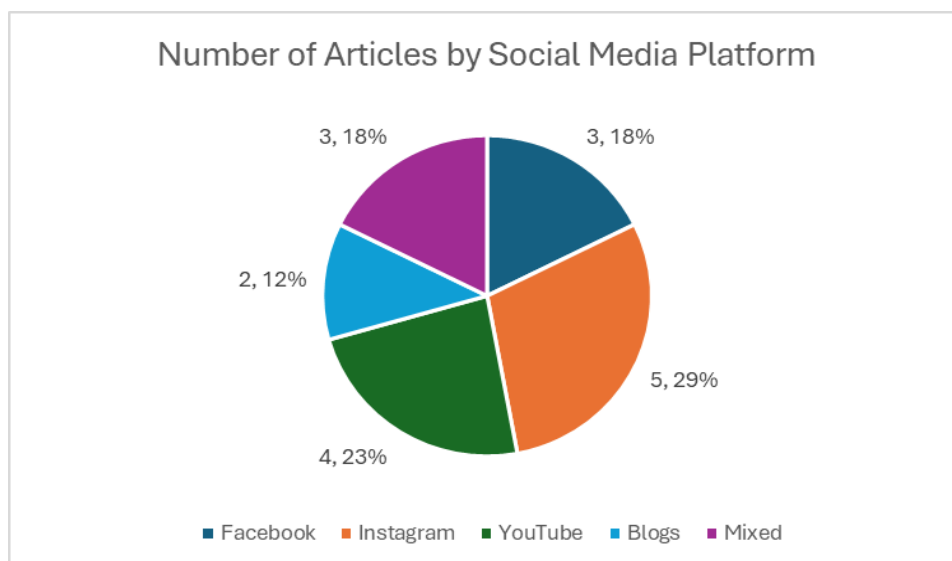


Figure 7: Number of Articles by Social Media Platform

Geographical Coverage

Among the selected articles, the majority of the articles were studied in Germany (n = 4, 23%), followed by the United States (n = 3, 18%), Worldwide (n = 3, 17%), India (n = 2, 12%), Finland (n = 1, 6%), Belgium (n = 1, 6%), Russia (n = 1, 6%), the United Kingdom (n = 1, 6%), and Austria (n = 1, 6%). It is observed that the studies surrounding SMIM have a healthy geographical coverage spanning across Asia, America and Europe. This will allow a more comprehensive analysis, which captures multicultural aspects, to be conducted.

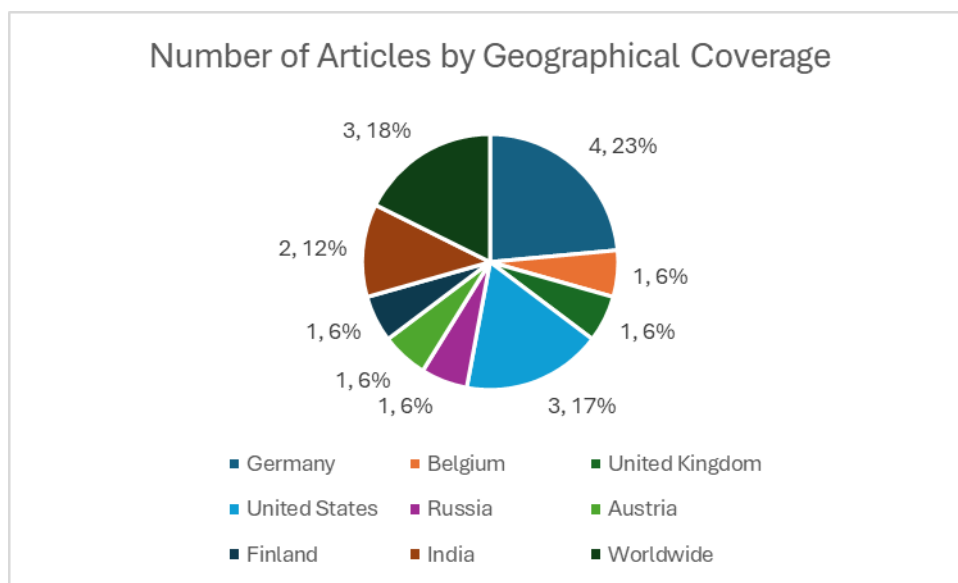


Figure 8: Number of Articles by Geographical Coverage

Thematic Analysis

Characteristics of Source and Consumer Behaviour

Among the selected articles, the most commonly studied research theme related to the Source Credibility Theory is the characteristics of sources (SMIs) and their effects on consumer behaviour. Several articles, including Munnukka et al. (2019) and Reinikainen et al. (2020), found that the influence of SMIM stems from the high perceived credibility of SMIs. To strengthen the point, Fink et al. (2020) were able to carry out a four-year-long study, which provided substantial evidence that perceived credibility does indeed enhance purchase intention.

Using the proposition of Ohanian (1990) as a theoretical underpinning, Breves et al. (2019) were able to describe that the perceived credibility of SMIs matches the components of attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness of the Source Credibility Theory. Furthermore, it was found in Djafarova and

Trofimenko (2019) that interactions between SMIs and their followers possess the ability to manipulate consumer attitudes and behaviours.

To draw a clear distinction between SMIM and traditional forms of public figure endorsements, several articles, including Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) and Jin et al. (2019), found that SMI endorsements produce a stronger influence on consumer behaviour, and this is contributed to by a higher degree of perceived credibility, trustworthiness, and a deeper social presence than typical public figures.

Characteristics of Psychology and Consumer Behaviour

Subsequently, the characteristics of psychology among consumers were also studied in relation to their consumer behaviour. Studies such as Saima and Khan (2021) were able to demonstrate that SMIs attempt to build personalised connections with followers through sharing intimate details of themselves to bridge relatability. Based on the Source Credibility Theory, this emotional construct correlates with the attractiveness of the SMIs, which seems to have a positive effect on the product and brand.

Furthermore, it was found that the effectiveness of SMIM is related to the synergy between the SMI endorser and the brand/product, in what is coined as "endorser-brand-product fit". A high degree of endorser-brand-product fit has the potential to enhance engagement levels and positively impact consumer behaviour. In Breves et al. (2019), it was found that individuals with low levels of parasocial relationships particularly benefit from the persuasive effectiveness of endorser-brand-product fit.

Characteristics of Content and Consumer Behaviour

The main premise of SMIM revolves around the marketing content used in social media posts. As such, it is argued that the characteristics of marketing content, such as appeal, information, prestige, interactivity, etc., will affect consumer behaviour outcomes (Ki & Kim, 2019). In Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019), it is found that perceived originality will increase the likelihood of followers interacting with the SMIs' posts and subsequently have a positive effect on consumer behaviour.

As the marketing content posted by SMIs is largely dictated by the brands which are behind them, it is found that there are reduced levels of perceived originality and credibility. Once this situation heightens to a stage where an excessive level of commercial orientation saturates the social media posts, or when SMIs post paid partnership-associated posts too frequently, it may result in a drop in followers, as investigated in Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019).

Additionally, research reveals that different types of posts, such as product-only and influencer-product posts, elicit different responses from consumers. Jin et al. (2019) found that when a product-only post is used, there is a negative response towards consumer behaviour, as followers will regard the post as purely an advertisement. Conversely, when an influencer-product post is used, there will be greater

levels of perceived credibility and engagement. Furthermore, Hughes et al. (2019) found that posts which feature a high hedonic value, which is associated with a pleasurable emotional connection with followers, will increase the trustworthiness of SMIs and subsequently create positive social media engagement.

Disclosure of Paid Partnership and Consumer Behaviour

One of the strongest concerns regarding SMIM among researchers and regulators is its transparency and ethics. Initially, when SMIM was adopted, social media influencers (SMIs) collaborated with brands without disclosing this to their followers. Based on Boerman (2020), this would result in the followers not being able to identify that the social media post contains a paid partnership and not a completely impartial opinion by the SMI.

It is found in Kay et al. (2020) that the disclosure of paid partnerships can promote consumer behaviour, as a higher degree of ad recognition is achieved. Based on the Source Credibility Theory, De Jans et al. (2018) found that the disclosure of paid partnership can increase the trustworthiness of the SMI. Subsequently, Weismueller et al. (2020) also found that disclosure of a paid partnership can affect consumer behaviour through the increased attractiveness of the SMI.

Framework Development

After synthesising the results obtained from the review, the integrative framework is proposed, as shown in Figure 9. Through the thematic analysis, a comprehensive understanding of SMIM is achieved. This analysis has aided in constructing a framework that illustrates the dynamics of the relationships among the antecedents, consequences, moderators, and mediators associated with the Source Credibility Theory.

By using the antecedents-consequences mechanism, it is found that the antecedents of being perceived as an SMI stem from the elements of the Source Credibility Theory, which are the characteristics of the source. As for consequences, they are based on aspects of consumers' behavioural outcomes. The role of mediators and moderators is discussed comprehensively to consider a wider range of effects that SMIM plays on consumer behaviour.

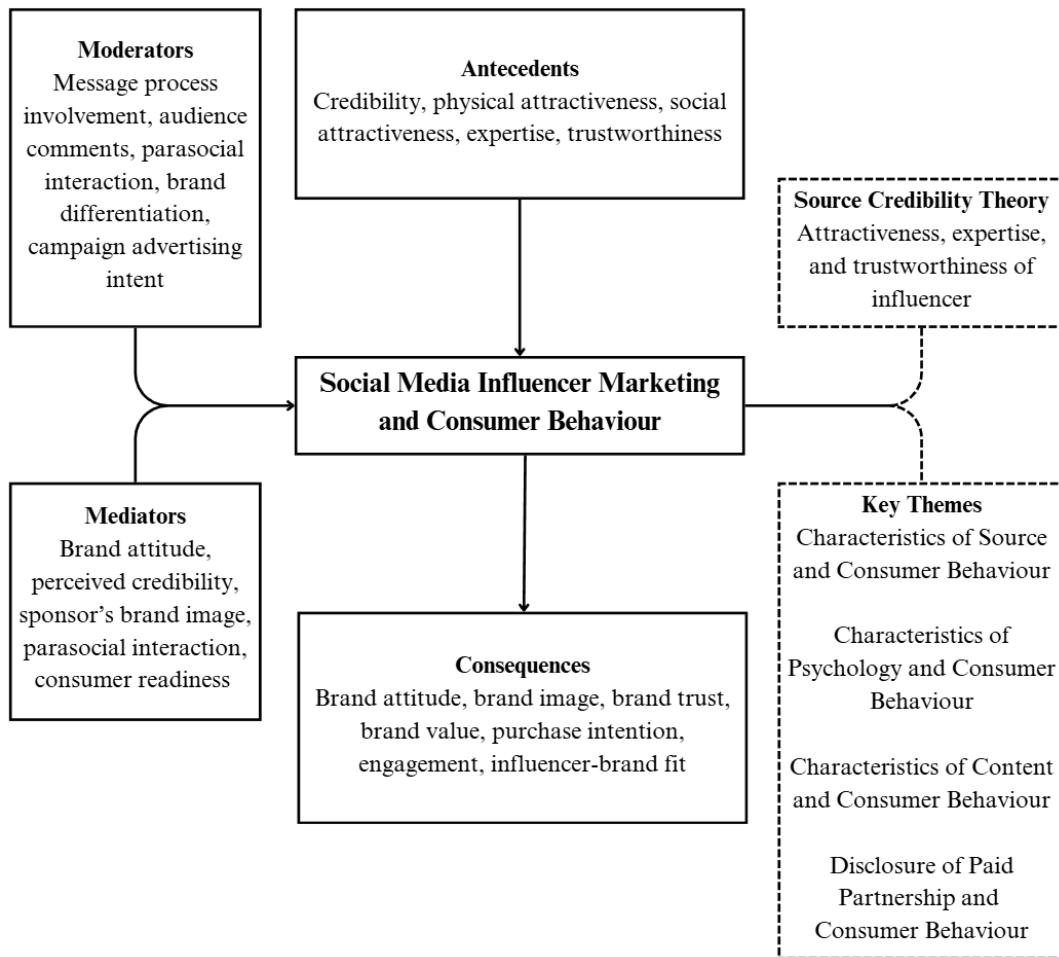


Figure 9: Integrative Framework of Social Media Influencer Marketing and Consumer Behaviour

Variables

Based on Table 3, it is found that there is extensive investigation into the relationship between the main components of Source Credibility Theory, i.e., attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, perceived credibility, and consumer behaviour. However, these articles only investigate one or two of these components, respectively, which may not result in a holistic analysis of the entirety of Source Credibility Theory. As such, it is advisable that future research be carried out with a model that addresses all aspects of the Source Credibility Theory.

Article	Independent	Dependent	Effect
Djafarova & Rushworth (2017)	Credibility	Buying behaviour	+

Jin et al. (2019)	Sponsored posts	Trustworthiness	+
Hughes et al. (2019)	Expertise	Buyer intention	+
Breves et al. (2019)	SMI-brand fit	Consumer behaviour	+
Reinikainen et al. (2020)	Parasocial interaction	Brand trust	+
Weismueller et al. (2020)	Advertising disclosure	Purchase intention	+
Djafarova & Trofimenko (2019)	Credibility, attractiveness	Consumer behaviour	+
Wiedmann & Mettenheim (2021)	Attractiveness	Purchase intention	+
Munnukka et al. (2019)	Parasocial interaction	Perceived credibility	+
Trivedi & Sama (2020)	Expertise, attractiveness	Purchase intention	+
De Jans et al. (2018)	Sponsorship disclosure	Purchase intention	+
Sakib et al. (2020)	Parasocial interaction	Compliance intention	+
Poyry et al. (2019)	Attractiveness	Purchase intention	+
Saima & Khan (2021)	Trustworthiness, information quality	Purchase intention	+
Fink et al. (2020)	Perceived credibility	Purchase intention	+
Pick (2021)	Credibility	Purchase intention	+
Esch et al. (2018)	Credibility	Purchase intention	+

Table 3: Variables Used in the Articles

Antecedents and Consequences

In conjunction with the Source Credibility Theory, the articles place an emphasis on the antecedents of attractiveness, perceived credibility, trustworthiness, and expertise of SMIs, as seen in Table 4. Although there is good coverage on consumer behaviour outcomes, it is recommended that in future research,

other aspects such as brand equity and brand loyalty can be explored (Fink et al., 2020; Trivedi & Sama, 2020). Hughes et al. (2019) also put forth the potential to investigate consumer behaviour from a financial perspective, including measurements of revenue and return on investment.

Article	Antecedents	Consequences	Effect
Jin et al. (2019)	Influencer with product posts	Brand attitude, corporate credibility, purchase intention	+
Hughes et al. (2019)	Hedonic value content, expertise	Engagement	+
Breves et al. (2019)	Credibility	Brand attitude, brand image, post attitude, brand trust, purchase intention	+
Reinikainen et al. (2020)	Credibility	Brand attitude, brand trust, parasocial interaction, purchase intention	+
Trivedi & Sama (2020)	Attractiveness, expertise	Brand attitude, influencer-brand fit, blog post engagement	+
Sakib et al. (2020)	Credibility	Post attribute, brand trust, parasocial interaction	+
Fink et al. (2020)	Credibility	Brand attitude, brand image, brand trust, purchase intention	+

Table 4. Antecedents and Consequences Used in the Articles

Mediators and Moderators

Based on Table 5, there are several significant mediators and moderators investigated in the articles, which will provide us with a more holistic view of the subject matter. However, there is still room for improvement, leading to the recommendation that future research should explore additional elements of motivation, such as peer pressure and impulse buying, which may also influence how SMIs affect consumer behaviour.

Article	Mediators	Moderators
Jin et al. (2019)	Social presence	Gender
Hughes et al. (2019)	-	Campaign intent
Breves et al. (2019)	Perceived credibility, brand attitude	Parasocial interaction
Reinikainen et al. (2020)	Influencer credibility	Audience comments
Weismueller et al. (2020)	Attractiveness	-
Wiedmann & Mettenheim (2021)	Brand satisfaction, brand image	-
Munnukka et al. (2019)	Parasocial interaction	Audience comments
Trivedi & Sama (2020)	Brand attitude, brand admiration	Message process involvement
De Jans et al. (2018)	Affective advertising literacy, trustworthiness	Peer-based advertising literacy intervention
Sakib et al. (2020)	Consumer readiness	Consumer health consciousness
Saima & Khan (2021)	Credibility	-
Fink et al. (2020)	Sponsor's brand image	Brand differentiation
Pick (2021)	Advertising attitude	-
Esch et al. (2018)	Relatability	-

Table 5: Mediators and Moderators Used in the Articles

Contextual Analysis

Product Categories

Based on the selected articles, there is still a wide range of product categories that need to be explored before the findings of this review can be generalised. The majority of the articles, such as Reinikainen

et al. (2020) and Jin et al. (2019), place a greater emphasis on fashion and beauty products. This is due to the fact that many social media platforms are now photo-orientated, which provides a suitable avenue to advertise fashion and beauty products. In future research, other areas, such as lifestyle, technology, FMCG, home improvement, jewellery, etc., can be explored more comprehensively (Trivedi & Sama, 2020; Fink et al., 2020).

Moreover, with the rise of digital goods, e.g., online services, VPN services, travel apps, etc., which are intangible in nature, it is recommended that comparative studies be carried out in order to ascertain consumer behaviour towards the marketing of these goods. This will bring a new perspective to SMIM, as SMIs do not have a tangible product to showcase but rather rely on the delivery of their verbal ad copy to communicate with potential consumers.

Geographical Coverage

Based on the findings, the selected articles have conducted a wide range of studies across Asia, America, and Europe. However, given the rapid growth in popularity and rise of new social media user bases globally, future research needs to have a refined scope to study markets such as those in emerging countries (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Trivedi & Sama, 2020).

Based on Cramer-Flood (2022) and Newberry (2025), Brazil, India, Indonesia, Russia, and numerous Asia-Pacific nations make up almost 90% of the global Instagram user base. Therefore, future studies that venture into these territories might reveal intriguing traits about consumer behaviour, especially when there are significant cultural differences between them.

Social Media Platform

The findings indicate that Instagram has been a popular choice for conducting research. This is due to the fact that Instagram is a photo-orientated platform, which would be friendlier towards marketers who adopt SMIM via visual ad copies.

However, drawing suggestions from Pick (2021), there ought to be greater exploration conducted on global rising social media platforms such as TikTok, LinkedIn, Snapchat, X, etc. In particular, social media platforms that are used in Mainland China, i.e., Douyin, Sina Weibo, WeChat, and Xiaohongshu, have not been specifically investigated. Being a frontrunner in the e-commerce industry, the Chinese market would surely reveal promising findings with regard to consumer behaviour.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Notable Findings

Based on the findings in Chapter 4, it is found that the Source Credibility Theory and the characteristics of the source (SMI) identified from it – attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness, hold a significant impact on consumer behaviour. Therefore, marketers need to utilise these findings as grounds in making decisions regarding which SMI to engage for their brand in order to attain the best results from their SMIM campaign.

In Munnukka et al. (2019) and Reinikainen et al. (2020), it was found that influencer-brand fit, particularly in terms of attractiveness, played a big role in appealing to the brand's target group. Selecting the correct SMI will aid in delivering the marketing message effectively, as they are able to engage with followers on a deeper and more relatable level. Munnukka et al. (2019) extended this point by pointing out that brands should also provide a greater locus of control to the SMI to produce their own original content, instead of dictating the content that they should push out. This is to ensure that there is greater synergy with the followers, as they will engage willingly with content which is perceived to be authentic and original and does not have a strong commercialised tone to it. Therefore, they should be given this capacity to deliver the marketing message in a manner which suits them in order to attain the greatest influencer-brand fit.

Following on, Trivedi and Sama (2020) found that SMIs who are considered experts will also have a greater likelihood of forming positive consumer behaviours. Expertise enables SMIs to demonstrate their knowledge about the brand and product on a personal level, making the SMIM campaign appear more authentic compared to a typical commercial ad. Selecting an SMI whose lifestyle naturally matches the product will showcase greater authenticity and generate greater engagement with their followers.

Disclosure of paid partnership was also greatly discussed in several articles, including Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019), as it is found that followers dislike following SMIs who often promote products without disclosing that they were engaged to do so by a brand. This will affect the perceived credibility of the SMI and might create greater resistance to accepting and positively perceiving the brand. Therefore, it is important that SMIM is carried out in an ethical manner.

Satisfaction of Research Objectives

Research Objective 1: To identify the impact of social media influencer marketing on consumer behaviour based on journal articles published between 2014 and 2024.

RO1 was adequately satisfied, as the review was able to include high-quality peer-reviewed journal articles from the period of 2014-2024. Many of the articles that were selected appeared in the late 2010s,

as SMIM and consumer behaviour were found to be an emerging body of knowledge, and research has not been extensively carried out yet. However, this review demonstrated the great value and significance of the selected articles, all published in CABS-recognised journals.

Research Objective 2: To identify the key study themes, geographical scope, social media platforms, research materials and methodologies, variables, theories, antecedents, and consequences pertinent to the literature on social media influencers.

RO2 was very adequately satisfied, with a substantial number of key study themes identified, pertaining to the characteristics of the source, psychology, content and the disclosure of paid partnership. The geographical scope was also thoroughly analysed, with recommendations made that future studies be conducted in emerging nations, where social media platforms are rising in popularity. The social networking platforms that were studied by the majority of articles were identified, which also led to recommendations that more geographically targeted social media platforms, e.g., Douyin and Sina Weibo, be investigated. We identified the research materials and methodologies, leading to recommendations for the production of more theoretical papers in this field of study. The variables, theories, antecedents, and consequences were also identified extensively and laid the foundation for the construction of the integrative framework.

Research Objective 3: To construct an integrative framework that incorporates research themes, key factors that influence a phenomenon, variables that have an impact, outcomes, as well as factors that mediate and moderate the relationship, in order to offer significant insights for practical implementation.

RO3 was very adequately satisfied, with a holistic and robust integrative framework produced, which carries significant theoretical and practical implications towards the subject matter of SMIM and consumer behaviour. Through the integrative framework, marketers can identify the most crucial aspects of SMIM and create better SMIM campaigns that align with expectations.

Research Gaps and Potential for Future Research

The paper identified numerous shortcomings and weaknesses that could guide future research in SMIM. This includes the lack of coverage in territories where social media networking is an emerging field and major social media platforms were left out of existing research. Future research should expand to include emerging nations like Russia, China, and Germany, as well as social media platforms such as TikTok, Douyin, Sina Weibo, and WeChat.

Furthermore, researchers strongly recommend creating more qualitative research and theoretical studies to expand the theoretical roots of the subject matter, especially given the heavy emphasis on empirical studies and the use of quantitative research methods. This will open greater possibilities in

identifying antecedents, consequences, mediators, moderators, and key themes which may have an impact on consumer behaviour.

Lastly, pertaining to the Source Credibility Theory, no existing article has managed to simultaneously study all three components of the theory, attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness, which may hamper the ability of a comprehensive study on consumer behaviour being carried out. Therefore, we strongly recommend that future research approaches the Source Credibility Theory with greater thoroughness and comprehensiveness.

Research Limitations

The first research limitation of this study pertains to the scope of articles chosen, specifically in terms of language. This study only includes articles published in English; significant articles surrounding SMIM that were published in other languages, such as Chinese, Russian, and German, may have been excluded. This may undermine the impacts of SMIM in social media platforms, which particularly operate in these regions, e.g., Douyin, Sina Weibo, etc. Secondly, this study only included articles published in renowned journals, which means that other forms of literature, such as books, book chapters, presentations, and conference papers, might have been excluded. These articles may have had significant findings that contributed to the accuracy of this study. Thirdly, like other reviews, the search strategy of articles on the electronic databases would not have been the most comprehensive. This would result in the omission of relevant articles from the review.

Altogether, the examination of 17 articles may not provide the most comprehensive understanding on how the Source Credibility Theory operates within SMIM environments, especially in a rapidly evolving landscape. It is thus recommended that in future research, the unexplored areas to be considered as part of the scope of research.

Theoretical Implications

This study has provided significant implications for the theoretical knowledge of SMIM, particularly in the angle of the Source Credibility Theory. This paper has successfully analysed notable existing literature and constructed a comprehensive framework that gathers findings on the antecedents, consequences, mediators, and moderators of SMIM towards consumer behaviour. This framework will identify important aspects of this field of research and act as a guide for future researchers.

The paper identified numerous limitations and research gaps among the selected articles, leading to numerous recommendations. These recommendations will allow future researchers to conduct more relevant and impactful studies to advance the knowledge regarding SMIM.

Practical Implications

The integrative framework also acts as a significant guide to marketers who intend to deploy SMIM campaigns, as it reveals the fundamentals and crucial aspects that will impact the effectiveness of the marketing campaigns. Instead of attempting to deduce findings from an emerging, complex, and disjointed body of knowledge surrounding SMIM, this review has provided marketers with a holistic and conclusive overview of SMIM.

As this paper placed a heavy emphasis on the Source Credibility Theory and attempted to link the theoretical knowledge to practical and actionable measures that marketers can apply to their marketing campaigns, the relevance of the Source Credibility Theory is greatly promoted within the marketing industry.

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