



Influencer Marketing and Purchase Intention among Social Media Users: A Structural Equation Model Approach

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Abstract

The rapid growth of digital markets in emerging economies like Nigeria has intensified the need for brands and marketers to leverage influencer marketing strategies to enhance consumer purchase intention. Hence, the study investigated the influence of key influencer marketing dimensions including credibility, content quality, influencer-brand fit, reach, consumer engagement and authenticity on purchase intention in Osun State, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey research design was employed, with 350 active social media users sampled. The data were collected using a structured questionnaire and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed in analyzing the data. Results from the analysis revealed that consumer engagement ($\beta=1.52, t=5.67, p=0.000<0.05$) and authenticity ($\beta=0.20, t=4.51, p=0.001<0.05$) significantly influence purchase intention, while credibility ($\beta=-0.06, t=0.34, p=0.734>0.05$), content quality ($\beta=-0.14, t=-1.05, p=0.296>0.05$), influencer-brand fit ($\beta=-0.63, t=-1.93, p=0.053>0.05$), and reach ($\beta=-0.05, t=-0.57, p=0.566>0.05$) showed no significant direct effects. The study underscores the importance of prioritizing authenticity and consumer engagement strategies to foster trust and drive purchasing decisions. The study recommends that brand managers and marketers should collaborate with influencers who resonate with social media users and invest in transparent, relatable influencer marketing.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, Purchase intentions, Authenticity, Consumer engagement, Structural equation modeling

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1. INTRODUCTION

Influencer marketing has emerged as a pivotal strategy in contemporary digital advertising, transforming how brands connect with consumers and shape purchasing behaviours (Abidin, 2023; Kapoor & Gupta, 2024). With over 35 million active social media users in Nigeria and internet penetration reaching 55% in 2023 (Statista, 2023), platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and

YouTube have become critical channels for consumer engagement, where a tech-savvy youth population drives digital adoption (Adeyemi & Okafor, 2023). Influencer marketing leverages authenticity and relatability to bridge the gap between brands and audiences, fostering trust and loyalty through parasocial relationships (Chukwuemeka et al., 2023; Lee & Kim, 2024). Studies indicate that 68% of Nigerian consumers perceive influencer endorsements as more credible than traditional celebrity advertisements, attributing this to niche expertise and perceived sincerity (Nwosu et al., 2023). Despite its global relevance, empirical research on influencer marketing in Nigeria remains limited, with most studies focusing on Western or Asian markets (Olanrewaju et al., 2023). This necessitates the need to explore how influencer marketing shapes purchase intention in emerging economies.

The dynamism of digital markets demands a nuanced understanding of the variables driving influencer marketing success. Prior research identified six critical dimensions: influencer credibility, content quality, influencer-brand fit, reach, consumer engagement, and authenticity (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; Kumar & Rao, 2024; Marwick, 2013). These variables collectively determine how digital endorsements resonate with audiences, mediate trust, and translate into purchase intentions. For instance, influencer credibility comprising trustworthiness, expertise, and relatability reduces consumer skepticism (Ohanian, 1991), while high-quality content enhances visibility and engagement (Freberg et al., 2011). Authenticity, defined as genuine communication aligned with audience values, is particularly vital in Nigeria, where peer recommendations mitigate market uncertainties (Adeyemi & Okafor, 2023). Despite their theoretical recognition, the interplay of these dimensions in low-income, high-uncertainty context remains underexplored (Akinola et al., 2023).

A key contention in influencer marketing literature revolves around the conceptualization of these variables as either isolated factors or interconnected dimensions. While some studies treat credibility or authenticity as individual constructs (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2020; Xu & Pratt, 2021), others emphasize their synergistic roles in driving consumer behaviour (Kumar & Rao, 2024; Ng & Kim, 2023). This study adopts a multi-dimensional perspective, positing that influencer marketing which comprises of credibility, content quality, influencer-brand fit, reach, engagement, and authenticity individually influence purchase intention. This study addressed this by testing the following hypotheses:

- i. H₁: Credibility has significant effect on purchase intention among social media users.
- ii. H₂: Content quality has significant influence on purchase intention among social media users.
- iii. H₃: Influencer-brand fit significantly affect purchase intention among social media users.
- iv. H₄: Reach has significant impact on purchase intention among social media users.
- v. H₅: Consumer engagement has significant influence on purchase intention among social media users.
- vi. H₆: Authenticity has significant effect on purchase intention among social media users.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Influencer Marketing

Abidin (2023) defined influencer marketing as a digital advertising strategy where brands collaborate with social media personalities to promote products through authentic, relatable content. Kapoor and Gupta (2024) conceptualized it as the use of online opinion leaders to shape consumer behaviour by leveraging their credibility and niche expertise. Djafarova and Bowes

(2021) described influencer marketing as a bridge between brands and audiences, emphasizing trust-building through personalized endorsements over traditional advertising. In the view of Lee and Kim (2024) influencer marketing is a paradigm rooted in parasocial interactions, where one-sided emotional bonds between influencers and followers drive loyalty and purchasing decisions. Ohanian (1991) emphasized the centrality of credibility in influencer marketing, which can enhance persuasive power. Freberg et al. (2011) highlighted content quality as a critical dimension while Casaló et al. (2018) introduced influencer-brand fit. De Veirman et al. (2017) identified reach and Ng and Kim (2023) noted consumer engagement as measurable interactions, likes, shares and comments that validate an influencer's impact and amplify social proof. Marwick (2013) positioned authenticity as the cornerstone of influencer marketing. Therefore, the dimensions of influencer marketing identified for this study are credibility, content quality, influencer-brand fit, reach, consumer engagement and authenticity.

Credibility

Ohanian (1991) defined influencer credibility as a multidimensional construct comprising trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, where trustworthiness reflects honesty, expertise denotes domain authority, and attractiveness encompasses relatability and charisma. Djafarova and Trofimenko (2020) argued that influencers perceived as genuine and transparent in their endorsements foster greater consumer trust. Lee and Kim (2024) defined credibility as a product of parasocial relationships, where repeated engagement with an influencer's content cultivates perceptions of reliability and authority. Xu and Pratt (2021) emphasized trust as the cornerstone of credibility, positing that consumers rely on influencers' consistent transparency and ethical disclosure of sponsorships to mitigate skepticism. Nwosu et al. (2023) highlighted contextual nuances, noting that in Nigeria, credibility is closely tied to an influencer's ability to demonstrate niche expertise and cultural resonance. This study aligns with Adeleke and Yusuf (2024) who described credibility as a dynamic attribute shaped by alignment between an influencer's values and their audience's expectations, particularly in digitally fragmented markets.

Content Quality

Freberg et al. (2011) defined content quality as the degree to which influencer posts exhibit creativity, originality, and contextual relevance, enabling them to stand out in saturated digital spaces. Djafarova and Bowes (2021) conceptualized it as the aesthetic and functional appeal of content, emphasizing visually engaging formats to capture audience attention. Casaló et al. (2018) described content quality through clarity and alignment with audience interests, arguing that informative and relatable posts foster deeper connections and perceived value. Ng and Kim (2023) defined content quality as a driver of measurable engagement, where detailed tutorials, comparative reviews, or interactive polls enhance consumer interaction and social proof. Kumar and Rao (2024) expanded this definition, highlighting narrative coherence and storytelling as markers of quality, particularly when content aligns with audience values or addresses specific points. Xu and Pratt (2021) underscored transparency and consistency as facets of quality, noting that posts disclosing sponsorships or demonstrating genuine product use build credibility and reduce scepticism.

Influencer-Brand Fit

Casaló et al. (2018) defined influencer-brand fit as the congruence between an influencer's personal values, and the endorsed brand's identity, ensuring endorsements appear organic and

credible. De Veirman et al. (2017) conceptualized it as the alignment of aesthetic and thematic elements between the influencer's content and the brand's image, which enhances perceived authenticity and reduces audience skepticism. Djafarova and Bowes (2021) described it as a strategic partnership where the influencer's niche expertise or lifestyle naturally intersects with the brand's offerings, fostering relatability and trust. Kumar and Rao (2024) described influencer-brand fit as narrative alignment, where the influencer's storytelling style and audience demographics harmonize with the brand's messaging goals, amplifying persuasive impact. Ng and Kim (2023) emphasized functional fit, arguing that influencers who consistently promote products aligned with their usual content themes reinforce credibility and drive higher engagement.

Reach

De Veirman et al. (2017) defined reach as the total audience size accessible to an influencer, distinguishing between macro-influencers (with millions of followers for broad visibility) and micro-influencers (smaller, niche audiences for targeted engagement). Kapoor and Gupta (2024) conceptualized reach as a metric of message dissemination potential, emphasizing its role in amplifying brand awareness across diverse demographics. Ng and Kim (2023) defined reach as a foundational element of influencer marketing, where broader audiences increase opportunities for social proof, though they noted that high reach alone does not guarantee engagement or conversion. Olanrewaju et al. (2023) highlighted contextual challenges to reach in emerging markets like Nigeria, where infrastructural limitations, such as inconsistent internet access, constrain the scalability of influencer campaigns. Kumar and Rao (2024) expanded the definition, arguing that strategic reach involves aligning an influencer's audience demographics with a brand's target market to maximize relevance and impact.

Consumer Engagement

Ng and Kim (2023) defined consumer engagement as measurable interactions such as likes, comments, and shares that validate an influencer's impact and amplify social proof. Xu and Pratt (2021) conceptualized engagement as a participatory process where audiences actively interact with content, fostering trust and emotional connections. Kumar and Rao (2024) described engagement as a reflection of narrative resonance, where content aligned with audience values drives sustained interaction and loyalty. Djafarova and Bowes (2021) emphasized that engagement stems from authentic, high-quality content, which motivates consumers to act on endorsements. Lee and Kim (2024) linked engagement to parasocial relationships, arguing that repeated exposure to an influencer's content cultivates communal bonds, translating into consistent participation and advocacy.

Authenticity

Marwick (2013) defined authenticity in influencer marketing as genuine, unfiltered communication that mirrors real-life experiences, fostering trust through transparency and relatability. Djafarova and Trofimenko (2020) conceptualized it as the alignment between an influencer's endorsements and their personal narrative, where honesty about sponsorships and genuine product use reduces consumer skepticism. Kumar and Rao (2024) described authenticity as narrative congruence, where influencers align their content with audience values to build emotional resonance. Adeyemi and Okafor (2023) emphasized context-specific authenticity in Nigeria, noting that influencers who reflect local cultural norms and peer-driven trust dynamics

are perceived as more credible. Lee and Kim (2024) linked authenticity to parasocial intimacy, arguing that audiences perceive influencers as "digital peers" when content feels unscripted and personally meaningful.

2.2 Purchase Intention

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) defined purchase intention as an individual's conscious plan to perform a purchasing behaviour, shaped by their attitudes toward the product and perceived social norms. This classical perspective, rooted in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), posits that intention is a precursor to action, mediated by cognitive evaluations of product utility and affective responses to marketing stimuli. Dodds et al. (1991) expanded this definition, emphasizing that purchase intention reflects a consumer's perceived value of a product, integrating assessments of quality, price, and brand reputation. Their work highlighted that higher perceived value reduces perceived risk, thereby strengthening the likelihood of purchase.

In the digital era, Tiago and Verissimo (2014) reconceptualized purchase intention as a dynamic outcome of online interactions, where social proof such as influencer endorsements or peer reviews replaces traditional information asymmetry. Kumar and Rao (2024) further nuanced this by linking purchase intention to narrative alignment, arguing that consumers are more likely to intend purchases when a brand's messaging resonates with their personal identity or aspirations. For instance, sustainability-driven campaigns may trigger intent among environmentally conscious audiences. In the view of Xu and Pratt (2021) purchase intention is not merely a rational calculation but an emotional commitment rooted in confidence in the influencer's authenticity.

2.3 Theoretical Review

Social influence theory, parasocial interaction theory and elaboration likelihood model underpin this study. Social influence theory posits that individuals are inclined to adopt behaviours or attitudes endorsed by figures they perceive as credible and authoritative. In the context of influencer marketing, this theory explains why consumers are more receptive to recommendations made by influencers who possess qualities such as expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Ohanian (1991) conceptualized credibility through these three attributes, arguing that influencers perceived as credible exert greater persuasive power. Cialdini's (2009) principles of persuasion further reinforce this idea, emphasizing the role of authority and social proof in shaping consumer decisions. Authority arises from the influencer's perceived expertise, while social proof manifests through visible engagement metrics that signal collective approval. This dual mechanism aligns with the study's focus on influencer credibility as it explains how trust is cultivated and leveraged to drive purchase decisions.

Complementing social influence theory is parasocial interaction theory which provides a framework for understanding the one-sided relationships between influencers and their audiences. Horton and Wohl (1956) introduced this concept, suggesting that repeated exposure to an influencer's content fosters a sense of intimacy and familiarity, despite the absence of direct interaction. This pseudo-relationship transforms followers into "para-friends" who perceive influencers as relatable and trustworthy. Marwick (2013) noted that in the digital age, demonstrating how influencers curate personal narratives such as sharing behind-the-scenes moments or personal challenges to deepen emotional bonds. These bonds enhance loyalty,

making consumers more likely to act on endorsements they perceive as genuine advice from a trusted peer. Empirical studies, such as Xu and Pratt (2021), confirm that parasocial interactions significantly predict both trust and purchase intention, as followers attribute sincerity to influencers who align with their values or lifestyles.

The elaboration likelihood model further elucidates how consumers process persuasive messages in influencer marketing. Petty and Cacioppo (1986) proposed that individuals evaluate information through two distinct routes: the central route, which involves deliberate, logical analysis of content and the peripheral route, which relies on heuristic cues such as influencer attractiveness, popularity, or emotional appeal. In digital environments saturated with information, the peripheral route often dominates, as consumers gravitate toward easily digestible cues like an influencer's charisma or follower count. However, when content is highly relevant or personally meaningful such as a detailed tutorial from a trusted expert, the central route is activated, leading to more enduring attitude changes. Elaboration likelihood model underscores the importance of content quality and contextual relevance, as these factors determine whether consumers engage deeply with the message or rely on superficial cues.

Together, these theories provide a foundation for understanding how influencer marketing shapes consumer behaviour. Social influence theory underscores the importance of credibility and social validation, parasocial interaction theory elucidates the emotional and relational dynamics that foster trust, and elaboration likelihood model clarifies the cognitive processes underlying message reception. In emerging markets like Osun State, Nigeria, these mechanisms are particularly salient. Consumers in such contexts often rely on influencers as cultural intermediaries who bridge gaps in market transparency, offering guidance in environments where counterfeit products or misleading claims are prevalent.

3. METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study is to investigate how key dimensions of influencer marketing namely, credibility, content quality, influencer-brand fit, reach, engagement, and authenticity shape consumer purchase intention among social media users in Osun State, Nigeria. To achieve this, a quantitative research approach was adopted, utilizing a cross-sectional survey research design. Osun State was selected as the study location due to its high social media penetration and the prominence of digital platforms in shaping consumer behaviour, particularly among its tech-savvy youth population.

The target population comprised active social media users in Osun State who interact with influencer marketing content on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook. Given the infinite nature of the population (social media users), Cochran's formula for infinite populations was applied to determine the sample size. The formula, $n = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}{e^2}$, assumes a 95% confidence level ($Z=1.96$), maximum variability ($p=0.5$), and a 5% margin of error ($e=0.05$). This calculation yielded a minimum sample size of 384. A multistage sampling strategy was implemented to select the respondents. First, cluster sampling was used to divide Osun State into three senatorial districts (Osun West, Central, and East). Subsequently, purposive sampling technique was employed to select the participants. Participants were required to meet three inclusion criteria: (1) daily use of at least one social media platform, (2) engagement with

influencer marketing content (e.g., liking, sharing, or purchasing) within the past one year, and (3) residency in Osun State.

Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire divided into three sections. Section A captured demographic details, including sex, age, level of education, primary social media platforms, and frequency of usage of social media. Section B measured the six influencer marketing dimensions. Credibility was assessed using scales adapted from Ohanian (1991), focusing on trustworthiness, expertise, and relatability. Content quality items, derived from Freberg et al. (2011), evaluated creativity, visual appeal, and relevance. Influencer-brand fit was operationalized through alignment metrics adapted from Casaló et al. (2018), while reach was measured using De Veirman et al. (2017)'s framework. Engagement items were drawn from Ng and Kim (2023), emphasizing interactions such as likes, shares, and comments. Authenticity, grounded in Marwick (2013)'s conceptualization, assessed transparency and genuine storytelling. All constructs utilized a 5-point Likert scale. Section C focused on purchase intentions, employing items refined from Fishbein and Ajzen (1975)'s Theory of Planned Behaviour and contextualized for digital environments by Tiago and Verissimo (2014).

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to test the hypothesized relationships between influencer marketing dimensions and purchase intentions. AMOS software was used for its capability to handle complex models with smaller sample sizes and its robustness in partial least squares path modeling (Hair et al., 2022).

4. RESULTS

4.1 Demographic Information

Table 1: Frequency Distribution Showing Respondents' Socio-Demographic Characteristics

		Variables	Frequencies	Percentages
Sex		Male	157	44.9
		Female	193	55.1
		Total	350	100
Age		18-25 years	152	43.5
		26-35 years	103	29.4
		36-45 years	67	19.1
		46 and above years	28	8.0
		Total	350	100
Level of Education		SSCE	87	24.9
		Undergraduate	103	29.4
		Postgraduate	124	35.4
		Other	36	10.3
		Total	350	100.0
Primary Social Media Platform(s)		Instagram	52	14.9
		Facebook	115	32.9
		TikTok	83	23.7
		YouTube	73	20.8
		Twitter/X	23	6.6

	Other	4	1.1
	Total	350	100
Frequency of Social Media Use	Daily	126	36.0
	A few times weekly	103	29.4
	Weekly	88	25.2
	Rarely	33	9.4
	Total	350	100.0

Source: SPSS 28 (2025)

According to Table 1 on demographic analysis, the study sample consisted of 350 participants. The sample was slightly skewed towards females (55.1%, n=193) compared to males (44.9%, n=157). The age distribution was diverse, with the largest group being 18–25-year-olds (43.5%, n = 152), followed closely by 26–35-year-olds (29.4%, n=103). Older age groups were less represented, with 36–45-year-olds comprising 19.1% (n=67) and those 46 and above making up 8.0% (n=28) of the sample. In terms of education level, the sample was relatively well-educated. The largest group held postgraduate degrees (35.4%, n=124), followed by undergraduates (29.4%, n=103) and those with an SSCE (Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination) (24.9%, n=87). A smaller portion (10.3%, n=36) indicated "Other" for their education level.

Regarding primary social media platform usage, Facebook was the most prevalent (32.9%, n=115), followed by TikTok (23.7%, n=83), YouTube (20.8%, n=73), and Instagram (14.9%, n=52). Twitter/X had a relatively low representation (6.6%, n=23), and a very small percentage (1.1%, n=4) used other platforms. On frequency of social media use, the largest portion of participants used social media daily (36.0%, n=126), followed by "a few times weekly" (29.4%, n=103), weekly (25.2%, n=88), and rarely (9.4%, n=33).

4.2 Model Assessment

The assessment of the Structural Equation Model (SEM) included the standardized factor loading, composite reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity tests.

Table 2: Factor loadings, Reliability and Convergent Validity for Constructs

Constructs	Standardized Factor Loadings	α	t-value	AVE
Credibility		0.98		0.95
Influencers I follow are honest and transparent in their recommendation	0.95		52.78	
Influencers I follow have expertise in the topics they discuss.	0.97		65.55	
Influencers I follow are relatable and charismatic.	0.98		76.68	
I believe influencers provide accurate information about products.	0.97		63.32	

Influencers I follow are trustworthy sources of information.	0.98	**	
Content Quality		0.98	0.95
The content shared by influencers is creative and engaging.	0.98	85.65	
Influencer content is visually appealing (e.g., high-quality photos/videos).	0.98	83.64	
The information in influencer posts is clear and easy to understand.	0.97	72.95	
Influencer content is relevant to my personal interests.	0.94	50.45	
Influencer posts provide detailed and useful information about products.	0.99	**	
Influencer–Brand Fit		0.95	0.95
Products promoted by influencers align well with their personal brand.	0.98	67.36	
Influencer endorsements feel natural and not forced.	0.98	69.35	
The brands promoted by influencers match my values and lifestyle.	0.99	71.47	
Influencers consistently promote products that fit their usual content themes.	0.94	44.56	
I find it easy to associate the influencer with the brands they endorse.	0.97	**	
Reach		0.97	0.91
Influencers I follow have a large audience that increases my trust in their recommendations.	0.97	**	
I discover new products through influencers with broad follower bases.	0.97	56.91	
Micro-influencers (with smaller audiences) feel more relatable to me.	0.87	31.86	
Influencers' reach across multiple platforms (e.g., Instagram, YouTube) impacts my purchase decisions.	0.98	70.59	
I trust influencers whose content is widely shared by others.	0.96	54.63	

Consumer engagement		0.98	0.91
I like or react to influencer posts.	0.99	**	
I share influencer content with friends.	0.92	43.99	
I comment on influencer posts.	0.98	82.02	
I save/bookmark influencer content for later.	0.98	84.14	
I participate in polls or Q&A sessions hosted by influencers.	0.89	36.82	
Authenticity		0.97	0.90
Influencers I follow share genuine experiences with products, not scripted ads.	0.96	**	
I trust influencers who admit when a product does not meet their expectations.	0.94	41.58	
Influencers' content reflects their true personality and lifestyle.	0.89	33.39	
I value influencers who prioritize transparency over sponsorships.	0.97	49.89	
Authentic storytelling in influencer posts increases my likelihood of purchasing.	0.97	50.77	
Purchase Intention		0.97	0.95
I research a product/service promoted by an influencer.	0.98	**	
I purchase a product/service endorsed by an influencer.	0.98	71.37	
I recommend an influencer-endorsed product to others.	0.96	57.87	
I choose influencer-endorsed products over non-endorsed ones.	0.97	59.78	
I make repeat purchases based on influencer recommendations.	0.99	81.34	

Model Fit Statistics ($\chi^2 = 11920.486$, $df = 539$; CFI = 0.75, TLI = 0.72, RMSEA = 0.24).

** = Items constrained for identification purposes.

Source: AMOS 28 (2025)

Table 2 reveals the assessment of the measurement items in the SEM. The listed items are those that met the minimum factor loading threshold of 0.6 and are, therefore, retained for their

respective constructs. Furthermore, the Cronbach's Alpha statistics were computed to establish the internal consistency of the construct variables. The results from Table 2 imply that all the statistics are above the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.6, indicating that the retained items are consistent in jointly measuring their respective constructs. Similarly, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) coefficients of the variables are all above the 50% benchmark ($AVE > 0.5$), which affirms their convergent validity.

Table 3: Discriminant validity—HTMT and Fornell and Larcker

Variables	Credibility	Content Quality	Influencer Brand Fit	Reach	Consumer Engagement	Authenticity	Purchase Intention
Credibility	0.97						
Content Quality	0.636	0.97					
Influencer Brand Fit	0.603	0.771	0.97				
Reach	0.610	0.777	0.738	0.95			
Consumer Engagement	0.637	0.807	0.905	0.774	0.95		
Authenticity	0.690	0.863	0.909	0.833	0.963	0.94	
Purchase Intention	0.594	0.758	0.868	0.727	0.941	0.918	0.97

Note: Figures on bold show the square root of the AVE. Values for HTMT are below the diagonal.

Source: AMOS 28 (2025)

Table 3 reveals that discriminant validity, assessed via the Fornell-Larcker criterion (square root of $AVE >$ correlations), was supported despite HTMT ratios exceeding 0.85, suggesting potential construct overlap. Table 3 further reveals the square root of the AVEs (in bold) and the inter-construct correlations (unbolded). The Fornell-Larcker criterion for discriminant validity requires that the square roots be greater than any of the inter-construct correlations, which is satisfied by the results in Table 3.

4.3 Path Analysis

A path analysis was conducted using the Partial Least Squares-SEM estimation technique to test the hypotheses.

Figure 1: Structural Model of Hypothesized Relationships

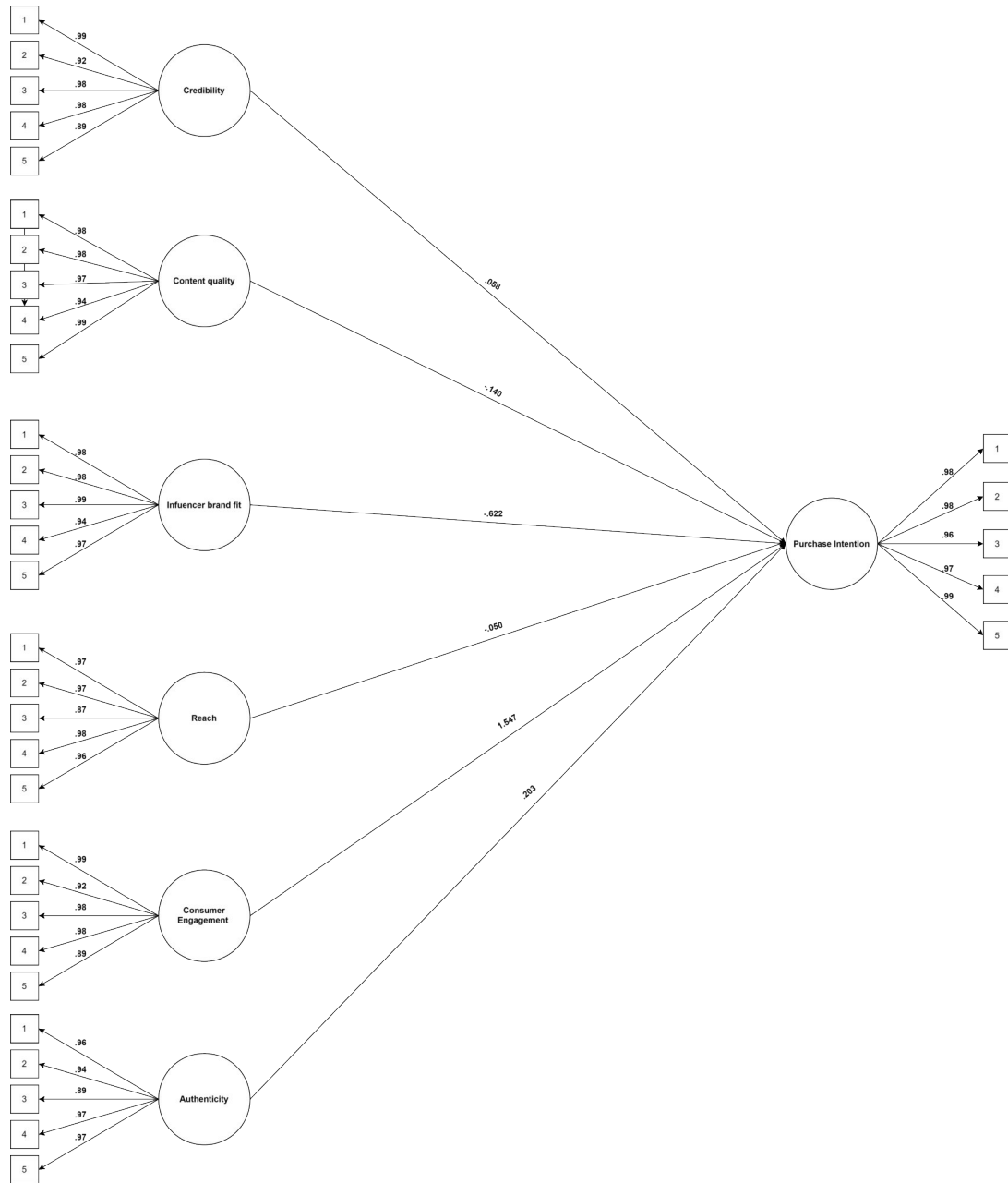


Figure 1: Path Algorithm

Source: AMOS 28 (2025)

Table 4: Structural Model Results

Hypothesized Relationships	Standardized Estimates	P	t-values	Hypothesis Supported
H ₁ : Credibility → Purchase Intention	0.06	0.734	0.34	Not Supported
H ₂ : Content quality → Purchase Intention	-0.14	0.296	-1.05	Not Supported
H ₃ : Influencer-brand fit → Purchase Intention	-0.63	0.053	-1.93	Not Supported
H ₄ : Reach → Purchase Intention	-0.05	0.566	-0.57	Not Supported
H ₅ : Consumer Engagement → Purchase Intention	1.52	0.000	5.67	Supported
H ₆ : Authenticity → Purchase Intention	0.20	0.001	4.51	Supported

Source: AMOS 28 (2025)

The estimates of the path coefficients of the structural model in Figure 1 are presented in Table 4. The results show that the coefficient of the path from credibility to purchase intention is positive ($\beta = 0.06$) but not significant. The t-statistic ($t = 0.34$) of this path is not significant at the 5% level ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, the stated hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that credibility does not significantly affect purchase intention. Furthermore, the results of the path from content quality to purchase intention show a negative coefficient ($\beta = -0.14$), which implies a negative relationship. The t-statistic ($t = -1.05$) of this path is not significant at the 5% level ($p > 0.05$). Thus, the hypothesis is disproved, and it is determined that content quality has no discernible impact on purchase intention.

The link from influencer-brand fit to purchase intention has a negative coefficient ($\beta = -0.63$), indicating negative relationship. The t-statistic ($t = -1.93$) of this path is not significant at the 5% level ($p > 0.05$). Hence, the hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that influencer-brand fit does not significantly influence purchase intention. Similarly, the coefficient of the path from reach to purchase intention is negative ($\beta = -0.05$), suggesting a negative relationship. The t-statistic ($t = -0.57$) is not significant at the 5% level ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected, and reach is deemed insignificant for purchase intention.

Conversely, the path from consumer engagement to purchase intention has a strong positive coefficient ($\beta = 1.52$), indicating a direct relationship. The t-statistic ($t = 5.67$) is significant at the 5% level ($p < 0.05$). Hence, the hypothesis is accepted, indicating that consumer engagement significantly drives purchase intention. Similarly, the coefficient of the path from authenticity to purchase intention is positive ($\beta = 0.20$), suggesting a direct relationship. The t-statistic ($t = 4.51$) is significant at the 5% level ($p < 0.05$). This confirms that authenticity significantly enhances purchase intention.

Discussion

The study examined the influence of six key influencer marketing dimensions including credibility, content quality, influencer-brand fit, reach, consumer engagement and authenticity on purchase intention among social media users in Osun State, Nigeria. The findings provide critical insights into the dynamics of digital marketing in an emerging market context, challenging some established theories while reinforcing others. The hypothesis that credibility significantly drives purchase intentions was not supported. This contradicts Ohanian's (1991) foundational work, which positioned credibility comprising trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness as a cornerstone of persuasive communication. However, the result aligns with recent studies in Nigeria, where skepticism toward polished endorsements has grown due to market saturation and perceived authenticity (Nwosu et al., 2023). In Osun State, consumers increasingly prioritize relatability over traditional markers of expertise, reflecting a cultural shift toward grassroots, unfiltered communication (Adeyemi & Okafor, 2023). For instance, micro-influencers who share personal struggles or local lifestyle content often garner deeper trust than influencers with formal credentials, suggesting that credibility in this context is redefined through parasocial intimacy rather than authority (Lee & Kim, 2024).

Similarly, content quality did not significantly influence purchase intentions, diverging from Freberg et al. (2011), who emphasized the role of high-quality visuals and creativity in capturing attention. This discrepancy may stem from the Nigerian digital landscape, where consumers prioritize authenticity and cultural resonance over production value. For example, low-budget, user-generated content that mirrors local dialects, humor, or communal experiences often resonates more than professionally produced material (Chukwuemeka et al., 2023). This underscores the need to redefine "quality" in environments where raw, relatable storytelling outweighs aesthetic polish, particularly in markets with limited access to high-speed internet or advanced digital tools (Olanrewaju et al., 2023). The lack of significance for influencer-brand fit challenges Casaló et al. (2018), who argued that alignment between influencers and brands enhances credibility. In Osun State, influencers frequently promote products outside their perceived niches without losing audience trust. This aligns with Djafarova and Bowes' (2021) observation that, in fragmented markets, personal connections and parasocial relationships overshadow brand congruence. Followers often prioritize the influencer's authenticity and relatability such as their ability to reflect local values or address socioeconomic challenges over strict thematic alignment with brand messaging (Kumar & Rao, 2024).

Reach, often equated with broad audience size, also showed no significant effect. This contradicts De Veirman et al. (2017), who linked reach to brand visibility in global markets. However, in Nigeria, infrastructural challenges such as inconsistent internet access and platform fragmentation limit the scalability of macro-influencers (Olanrewaju et al., 2023). Instead, micro-influencers with niche, hyper-localized followings thrive, as their audiences value depth of engagement over follower count (Ifeanyi-obi et al., 2024). In contrast, consumer engagement emerged as the strongest predictor of purchase intentions. This supports Ng and Kim's (2023) assertion that active participation liking, sharing, commenting, or participating in polls creates a sense of community and reinforces social proof. Influencers who foster interactive environments such as hosting live Q&A sessions on Instagram or creating WhatsApp groups for product feedback build emotional bonds that translate into purchasing behaviour (Xu & Pratt, 2021). Authenticity also significantly influenced purchase intentions, corroborating Marwick's (2013)

argument that transparency and genuine storytelling are non-negotiable. Nigerian consumers, particularly in Osun State, are wary of deceptive advertising due to historical experiences with counterfeit products (Akinola et al., 2023). Influencers who openly disclose sponsorships, critique products, or share unfiltered reviews are perceived as trustworthy allies rather than corporate mouthpieces (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2020).

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored the influence of influencer marketing dimensions on purchase intention among social media users in Osun State, Nigeria and revealed that consumer engagement and authenticity are pivotal drivers, while credibility, content quality, influencer-brand fit, and reach showed no impact. The findings of this study hold significant implications for theory, practice, and policy, particularly in the context of emerging markets like Nigeria. The dominance of authenticity and engagement as drivers of purchase intentions underscores the need to reconceptualize trust-building in influencer marketing, shifting from transactional endorsements to relational, community-driven interactions. Additionally, the study refines the elaboration likelihood model by illustrating how peripheral cues (e.g., authenticity, relatability) dominate consumer decision-making in low-trust, high-uncertainty environments. This challenges the assumption that central route processing (logical analysis of product features) is universally prioritized, highlighting the role of cultural and infrastructural constraints in shaping cognitive engagement. Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

- i. Businesses should prioritize collaborations with influencers who foster hyper-localized, engaged communities. These influencers often achieve higher conversion rates due to their ability to mirror cultural nuances and socioeconomic realities.
- ii. Businesses should ensure that campaigns emphasize interactive content such as live Q&A sessions, polls, or user-generated testimonials to cultivate participatory environments where followers feel valued and heard.
- iii. Influencers should disclose sponsorships in local dialects or formats to align with cultural expectations of honesty.
- iv. Brands should also incentivize influencers to critique products openly, as this builds long-term credibility.

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