

Influencer Content Features as Drivers of User-Generated Content : A Serial Mediation Approach

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Abstract

The study explores how features of influencer content and influencer trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness help produce user-generated content (UGC) on social media, through their important roles in perceived value and customer engagement. The research surveyed 220 active Instagram users between 18 and 35 from Chandigarh (tricity), using a clear online questionnaire. The analysis revealed that, when an influencer is authentic, informative, and credible, consumers value the interactions more, which increases their engagement and contribution of user-generated content. Both perceived value and engagement by consumers help to link influencer characteristics to fans creating content. The research provides suggestions to influencers and marketers. If brands pay more attention to engaging and meaningful content, many users might be encouraged to join in the discussion. This study builds on the field of influencer marketing by exploring how people move from learning about products to engaging in activities related to those products.

Key Words

Content Authenticity, Content Informativeness, Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness, Customer Engagement, Perceived Value, User Generated Content

INTRODUCTION

With the arrival of social media sites, consumers' behaviors and interactions with brands and information have been significantly transformed, giving rise to influencer marketing as a leading advertising approach. Recent studies indicate that influencers are regarded as opinion leaders whose expertise

and content quality considerably affect consumers in terms of perceptions, engagement, and behavioural intentions on social networking sites (Freberg *et al.*, 2011; Joshi *et al.*, 2023; Sokolova and Kefi, 2020; Pan *et al.*, 2024). Apart from the range of influencer actions, one of the best outcomes of influencer activity can be considered creating UGC (User-Generated Content), a brand-related material, that users create and share voluntarily on different online platforms, generally enriching a brand's visibility, credibility, and consumer confidence (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011; Christodoulides *et al.*, 2012).

While influencer marketing has received considerable attention in recent research, most studies focus primarily on the outcomes related to consumers, such as trust, brand attitude, or purchase intention. Little attention has been given to how specific influencer content attributes (e.g. authenticity, informativeness) and influencer credibility attributes (e.g. trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness) interact to stimulate user-generated content (UGC) creation among followers (Lou and Yuan, 2019; Audrezet *et al.*, 2020; Ohanian, 1990). These dimensions play a crucial role in how followers perceive influencer content and, subsequently, in whether they feel motivated to engage further by creating their own content in response. Moreover, existing studies often examine these factors independently instead of revealing the psychological mechanisms that drive followers to consider various attributes of influencer content that convert into actionable content creation (Pan *et al.*, 2024). This gap is significant as there is no integrative analysis of the relational and cognitive processes that lead audiences to engage with brands through user-generated content (Audrezet *et al.*, 2020; Leung *et al.*, 2022; and Vrontis *et al.*, 2021).

The current study integrates multiple theoretical approaches to understand these mechanisms, explaining how influencer content characteristics and credibility shape follower engagement and behaviors towards the creation of content. Perceived Value Theory (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001) holds that consumers determine the value of content as a trade-off between the benefit obtained and the effort expended. Valuable influencer content perceived socially, emotionally, or informationally is likely to encourage greater interaction. In the sense of influencer marketing, authentic and informative content increases the followers' perceptions of value from the interaction, which leads to subsequent engagement with the content and participation behaviors (e.g. sharing, commenting on posts or creating user-generated content). Following the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986), this type of content induces central route processing, causing more robust cognitive

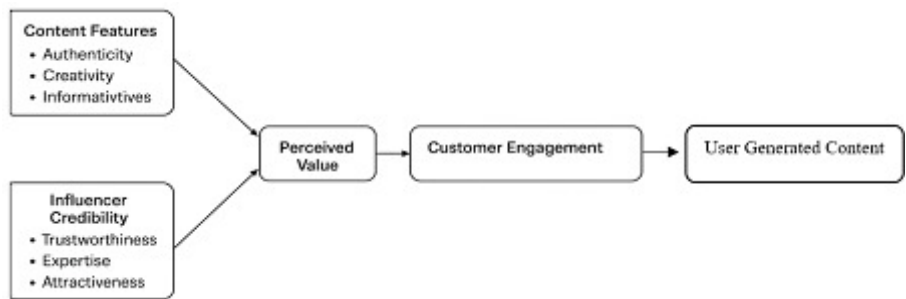
reactions and behavioral intentions like UGC. According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, if an influencer and his content are deemed trustworthy and of high quality, followers would be induced to process that information along the central, route, leading to stronger attitudes and behavioral outcomes, such as active participation in brand conversations and content creation. Additionally, Self-Determination Theory (Deci *et al.*, 1991) proposes that influencer content elevates intrinsic motivation, by fulfilling followers' intrinsic psychological needs, such as information, enjoyment, or social connection, and thereby fostering voluntary behaviors like creating and sharing UGC. Lastly, Relationship Marketing Theory (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) emphasizes the significance of customer involvement as a relational consequence that mediates the relationship between brand stimuli and long-term loyalty behaviours. In the context of influencer marketing, this theory posits that perception of expertise and trustworthiness serves to enhance the connection between an influencer and their followers, therefore increasing customer engagement and leading to collaborative actions like creation of user-generated content.

Recent empirical evidence suggests that social media interaction, as well as user-generated content, play a significant role in impacting the decision-making of customers and their relationship with brands online (El-Shihy and Awaad, 2025). This research hence, takes a serial mediation perspective in investigating how features of influencer content and influencer credibility impact UGC using the dual mediators of customer engagement and perceived value. The study particularly investigates followers' cognitive valuation of influencer content (perceived value) and how this drives emotional and behavioral engagement, motivating followers to generate their own content in the digital ecosystem. Existing studies have suggested separating antecedents of UGC or influencer performance, with few attempting to demonstrate these constructs in an interactive framework that represents the serial cognitive and emotional processes to user engagement (Dessart *et al.*, 2015; Leung *et al.*, 2022).

By testing empirically these relationships through a causal model, this study intends to (1) contribute to the academic literature on influencer marketing and user behavior by determining how the specific characteristics of the content that influencers post and their reputation influence followers' engagement with user-generated content., (2) adopts a serial mediation approach by integrating perceived value and customer engagement that aids in providing a better detailed understanding of the psychological process underpinning participation behaviors on social media, and (3) provide actionable

recommendations for influencers and brands regarding how to strategically develop content that raises perceived value, triggers engagement, and encourages genuine user advocacy through UGC.

Figure 1



Source : Researcher's Illustration based on Sweeney and Soutar (2001), Petty and Cacioppo (1986), Deci and Ryan (1985), Morgan and Hunt (1994), Audrezet *et al.* (2020), Lou and Yuan (2019), Cheung *et al.* (2009), Ohanian (1990), Brodie *et al.* (2011), Muntinga *et al.* (2011).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to explain how influencer content generates user-generated content (UGC), this research relies on several theoretical frameworks that collectively form a coherent explanation. Central to this is the Perceived Value Theory (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001), which posits that followers evaluate the value of influencer content in terms of what they get out of it in exchange for their time, attention, and emotional investment. When influencers post content that is innovative, real, and informative, the users are likely to view it as useful and thus engage and share the content. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) also states that users process such quality content via the central route, leading to more intense and long-term responses like creating content on their own. This is supplemented by Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985), which posits that when content is fulfilling followers' intrinsic needs, for example, a sense of connection, information, or inspiration, this boosts their internal motivation to engage actively and voluntarily. Finally, the Relationship Marketing Theory (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) also provides insight into the function of trust and identification, demonstrating that as followers perceive influencers as trustworthy and identifiable, they form stronger affective connections, which result in higher

levels of engagement and UGC. Overall, these theories collectively describe the intricate psychological and relational mechanisms by which influencer content and trustworthiness influence follower behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Influencer Content Features and Perceived Value

In social media marketing, the qualities of influencer-created content, authenticity, creativity, and informativeness are central to influencing audience attitudes and behaviors. Authenticity, as the sincerity and genuineness of content, promotes trust and identification with followers. (Balaban and Szambolics, 2023) highlight that authentic content strengthens the persuasive ability of influencers, resulting in greater consumer engagement. Informativeness, offering useful and useful information, helps consumers make better decisions. Taken together, these content attributes affect the perceived value of the content, shaping consumer attitudes and behavior. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) is in support of this since it posits that high-quality, authentic, and informative information is processed through the central route, resulting in higher perceived value and more profound behavioral responses.

Moreover, recent studies highlight that authentic and informative influencer content enhances perceived credibility and educational value, further reinforcing followers' evaluations of influencer communication and increasing the likelihood of engaging with this content (Liu and Zheng, 2024; Pan *et al.*, 2024). Followers are even more inclined to consider influencer content as valuable and significant if it is perceived as authentic and informational.

Hypotheses

- H₁** : Content authenticity positively influences perceived value.
- H₂** : Content informativeness positively influences perceived value.

Influencer Credibility and Perceived Value

Influencer credibility, including trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, has a strong influence on consumer perceptions. Trustworthiness is the extent to which the influencer is seen as honest and dependable. Expertise is the influencer's knowledge and proficiency in a particular area. Attractiveness is the physical and emotional attractiveness of the influencer. (Ohanian,1990) created a scale to measure these dimensions, highlighting their significance in influencer effectiveness. These credibility

traits are responsible for shaping the perceived value of the content and have an impacts on consumer engagement and user-generated content (UGC). For example, AlFarraj *et al.* (2021) established that influencer credibility dimensions positively influence purchase intention in the aesthetic dermatology sector.

Based on recent studies, the most crucial aspect that affects audience perception and behavior across social media platforms is influencer credibility. But while expertise conveys competency and informational dependability, it is trustworthiness that enhances followers' confidence in influencer recommendations. Attractiveness assists in further persuasion through the increased association and emotional connection with followers (Liu and Zheng, 2024; Jia Xin and Noor, 2025). These credibility traits underpin how followers evaluate the utility and applicability of influencer communication, which in turn shapes their perceived value.

Hypotheses

- H₃** : Influencer trustworthiness positively influences perceived value.
- H₄** : Influencer expertise positively influences perceived value.
- H₅** : Influencer attractiveness positively influences perceived value.

Perceived Value and Customer Engagement

Perceived value, as the consumer's assessment of the benefits and costs of a product or service (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001), is central to influencing consumer reactions to influencer content. Quality, authentic, and informative content is more likely to be processed via the central route of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986), resulting in increased perceived value. This increased sense, in turn, encourages stronger behavioral reactions, such as the creation of UGC. Empirical research corroborates this mediating function. For example, evidence from studies by Dodds and Monroe (1985) and Zeithaml (1988) highlights the impact of perceived value on buying intentions, indicating that consumers tend to take part in activities such as UGC when they believe high value lies in the offered content.

It was found that perceived value is one of the main factors leading to interactive behavior, such as sharing, commenting, and co-creating content on social media. Content users may engage more with the material and in online communities of the brand when they perceive influencer communication to have high informative or emotional value (El-Shihy and Awaad, 2025; Chen *et al.*, 2024).

Hypotheses

H₆ : Perceived value positively influences customer engagement.

H₇ : Perceived value positively influences user-generated content.

Customer Engagement and User-Generated Content (UGC)

Customer interaction, including emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects Brodie *et al.* (2011), is also a key mediator in the influencer-UGC relationship. When consumers find value in influencer content, their intrinsic motivation to interact increases, in accordance with the tenets of Self-Determination Theory Deci and Ryan (1985). This interaction is expressed in a range of forms, from likes and comments to the production of UGC. Research has shown that perceived value has a strong impact on customer engagement, which in turn influences behaviors like UGC. For instance, Muntinga *et al.* (2011) research points out the way consumer engagement with brand content results in more UGC, highlighting the mediating effect of engagement here.

According to recent research, in digital marketing ecosystems, customer engagement increasingly drives user-generated-content. Users who are engaged frequently post reviews, suggestions and brand-related posts that improve brand communications and affect purchases made by other users (Wang, 2024; Nasution *et al.*, 2025).

Hypotheses

H₈ : Customer engagement positively influences user-generated content.

Mediating and Serial Mediating Effects

The interactions among influencer content characteristics, credibility, perceived value, and customer engagement result in mediating relationships that influence UGC in complex ways. Perceived value mediates between influencer characteristics and UGC, such that consumers perceiving high value in content are likely to participate and create content themselves. Customer engagement also mediates the perceived value – UGC relationship since participating consumers are more likely to create and distribute content. In addition, a serial mediation effect also occurs in which influencer content features and credibility increase perceived value, which increases customer engagement, eventually resulting in more UGC. The step-by-step process concurs with the findings of numerous studies. As an example, Bhat (2020) analysed the serial mediation of attitude towards electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on the relationship between source trust in eWOM and the intention to adopt

eWOM. Their research shows that trust affects attitude, which in turn influences behavioral intentions, showing a serial mediation effect. Likewise, a study by Purnami (2025) examined the serial mediation of customer brand co-creation behavior and perceived value in improving revisit intention. Findings of the study revealed that place attachment impacts revisit intention via the sequential mediators of brand co-creation behavior and perceived value, confirming the theory of serial mediation of consumer behavior studies.

New studies on influencer marketing suggest that consumers often engage in a sequential psychological process in response to influencer content, where by cognitive evaluations of value inspire emotional engagement, which leads to participatory behaviors such as creation of content and sharing (Pan *et al.*, 2024).

Hypotheses

- H₉** : Perceived value mediates the relationship between content features/credibility and UGC.
- H₁₀** : Customer engagement mediates the relationship between perceived value and UGC.
- H₁₁** : Perceived value and customer engagement serially mediate the relationship between content features/credibility and UGC.

RESEARCH GAPS

Notwithstanding the increasing volume of literature on influencer marketing, a number of important gaps continue to exist. Firstly, the majority of the current research emphasizes purchase intentions or brand attitude as measures, without considering the behavioral consequences, like user-generated content (UGC) — an important metric in online marketing. Secondly, although influencer credibility has been extensively researched (e.g., trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness), the exact content features (authenticity, creativity, informativeness) influencing user engagement and content generation are underresearched.

Third, while the mediating function of perceived value has been studied in consumer behavior, few studies have explored its influence in the social media influencer setting, especially on follower-based UGC. Fourth, serial mediation models — investigating how various psychological processes (e.g., perceived value and engagement) work sequentially—are not common in influencer marketing literature. Finally, the majority of previous research has

been carried out in Western or worldwide contexts, with less attention given to regional or youth-concentrated markets such as India's Tricity region, which has a dense concentration of active social media users.

This research seeks to fill these gaps by examining how influencer content characteristics and credibility affect user-generated content through a serial mediation process with perceived value and customer engagement. It also contributes contextual depth by targeting the Indian urban youth segment, providing both theoretical and practical contributions.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To examine the effect of influencer content features (authenticity, creativity, informativeness) and influencer credibility (trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness) on user-generated content (UGC).
- To explore the mediating role of perceived value in the relationship between influencer content features/credibility and UGC.
- To investigate the mediating role of customer engagement between perceived value and UGC.
- To assess the serial mediation effect of perceived value and customer engagement in the link between influencer content features/credibility and UGC.
- To provide practical implications for influencers and brands regarding content and credibility strategies that can enhance follower-driven user-generated content.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research employs a quantitative research design, a non-probability purposive sampling technique, to cross-test the theoretical model and hypotheses formulated in the initial sections. Quantitative research is, as defined by Leedy and Ormrod (2001) and Williams (2011), the systematic collection and statistical analysis of quantitative data to study the relationship between well-defined variables. The research process adheres to the steps of problem definition, model building, research design specification, data gathering, statistical analysis, and hypothesis testing, as outlined by Cooper and Schindler (2003) and Saunders *et al.* (2009).

Quantitative research design was deemed suitable in this research

because it enables the empirical investigation of the relationships between several constructs related to influencer marketing, such as content authenticity, informativeness, influencer credibility, perceived value, customer engagement, and user-generated content behaviour. The statistical modelling can test the proposed hypotheses and give objective results about the relationships between the study variables, which is a usual method in marketing and consumer behaviour research (Creswell, 2014).

The minimum sample size was calculated using Tabachnick and Fidell's (2007) formula for multivariate analysis ($N \geq 8P + 50$, where P = number of predictors). Thus, a minimum of 202 respondents would be required for the sample. This is also in line with Hoyle's (1995) recommendation that path analysis with structural equation modeling (SEM) should have a sample size between 100 and 200 or greater for reliable estimates. For its robustness, a total of 220 valid responses were collected for analysis.

1. Sample and Data Collection

The research focused on active Instagram users aged between 18 to 35 years who live in the Tricity area (Chandigarh, Mohali, and Panchkula) who have at least one social media influencer following and have interacted with their posts through likes, comments, shares, or content creation. The age category of 18-35 years old is chosen due to the fact that younger consumers are one of the most active users of social media and will be more inclined to consume the content created by influencers on a social network, namely Instagram (Casaló *et al.*, 2020). Purposive sampling was used to make sure the respondents met the study criteria. The purposive sampling was chosen due to the fact that the study targets a specific group of people who actively follow social media influencers and the content created by the latter. There is a possibility in the event of random sampling to have respondents who are not exposed to influencer content and thus might lack the relevant experience regarding constructs under investigation in this research. The study will select respondents who engage with influencers and follow their posts actively, which guarantees that the data obtained gives a precise representation of the behavioural patterns related to engagement with influencer marketing (Etikan *et al.*, 2016). Data were gathered over a period of 4 weeks with the help of web-based survey instruments (Google Forms) shared via social media and personal networks to achieve maximum coverage. Voluntary response was ensured, and anonymity was preserved to maintain honest answers.

2. Instrument

Data were collected using a structured, closed-ended questionnaire that was divided into three sections :

- **Filter Questions :** These screened participants to ensure they were Instagram users who followed influencers and had engaged in user-generated behavior.
- **Demographic Information :** This section captured data on age, gender, education level, and frequency of Instagram usage.
- **Main Constructs :** Respondents' perceptions were measured using standardized scales drawn from previous validated studies. All items were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = “Strongly Disagree” to 5 = “Strongly Agree”.

The measurement items included :

Table 1
Measurement Items

Construct	No. of Items	Sample Items	Source
Content Authenticity	6	- The influencer's content feels genuine. - The influencer presents themselves honestly in their posts. - The content shared by the influencer is true to their brand. - The influencer seems sincere and transparent. - The influencer's content is original and fresh. - The influencer's posts are imaginative and unique.	Audrezet <i>et al.</i> (2020)
Content Informativeness	4	- The influencer's content stands out from others I see online. - The influencer's content provides useful and helpful information. - I learn something new from the influencer's posts. - The content is relevant to my interests.	Cheung <i>et al.</i> (2009)
Influencer Trustworthiness	3	- The influencer is trustworthy. - The influencer is honest. - The influencer is dependable. - The influencer is experienced.	Ohanian (1990)

Influencer Expertise	3	- The influencer is knowledgeable. - The influencer is an expert in their field - The influencer is skilful.	Ohanian (1990)
Influencer Attractiveness	3	- The influencer is attractive. - The influencer is elegant. - The influencer is classy.	Ohanian (1990)
Perceived Value	4	- I find the influencer's content to be highly valuable. - The content shared enhances my social status. - I feel emotionally rewarded by their content. - The content improves my knowledge about relevant topics.	Sweeney & Soutar (2001)
Customer Engagement	3	- I actively follow their updates and stories. - I feel a sense of community engaging with their content. - I enjoy participating in discussions or polls shared by the influencer.	Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011)
User-Generated Content	4	- I have created content (posts, videos, comments) related to the influencer or their brand. - I am motivated to create content because of the influencer's posts. - I often share opinions about the influencer's brand or products. - I am likely to create content when the influencer posts engaging material.	Muntinga <i>et al.</i> (2011)

3. Measurement Model Assessment

To guarantee the reliability and validity of the measurement scales, some statistical tests were done by use of Smart PLS. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were used to test internal consistency reliability. A value that is greater than 0.70, which is the recommended value, shows that the reliability is satisfactory. Convergent validity used the average variance extracted (AVE), with values of more than 0.50 indicating that the construct has a significant amount of explainable variance in its indicators. The Fornell-Larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) were used to explore discriminant validity and to make sure that every construct is empirically different to the others. These steps adhere to the suggested standards in determining measurement reliability and validity in structural equation modelling research (Hair *et al.*, 2019; Henseler *et al.*, 2016).

4. Statistical Technique

To assess the complete range of hypothesized effects, such as direct, mediating, and serial mediation effects, the research employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The method works best for intricate models with more than one mediator and comparatively smaller sample sizes. The analytical method of partial least squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was chosen due to the model of the research, including several latent constructs and analysing intricate relationships, i.e., direct and mediating. PLS-SEM is especially appropriate in prediction-focused studies and models that have a number of constructs that are measured using a number of indicators. Also, the method is effective with relatively small and medium sample sizes, and it does not have rigid normality assumptions on data (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The data were processed using SmartPLS version 3.2.8, with which path coefficients can be estimated, significance levels (bootstrapping) determined, and the reliability and validity of the model (e.g., Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, AVE, discriminant validity) can be assessed.

RESULTS

1. Descriptive Statistics

Among 220 participants, female respondents made up 60%, and male respondents made up 40%. As a result, we observed that the study sample included more female participants. Gender distribution plays a role in marketing and content creation, so it should be understood.

Table 2
Frequency of Social Media Use

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 Hour	76	34.55
1–2 Hours	49	22.27
3–4 Hours	27	12.27
5+ Hours	68	30.91
Total	220	100.0

The survey then asked users to estimate how many hours they spent on social media each day. The results reveal that the biggest number of participants (34.55%) spent less than one hour a day using social media. The next largest group included people who said they used it for more than 5

hours daily (30.91%). Also, 22.27% spent about one to two hours on social media, and 12.27% said they use it for three to four hours a day.

Table 3
Primary Social Media Platform

	Frequency	Percent
Instagram	104	47.27
YouTube	43	19.55
Snapchat	21	9.55
X (Formerly Twitter)	52	23.63
Total	220	100.0

According to the survey, most participants named Instagram as their top social media platform, making up 47.27% of the group. Coming after that was X (previously known as Twitter) at 23.63%; YouTube added 19.55%, and Snapchat contributed 9.55%. The data support what is happening worldwide: Instagram attracts users who enjoy visual content and are involved in influencer activity. The study takes special note of Instagram since it is frequently picked for influencer marketing and generating user-generated content.

2. Exploratory Factor Analysis

For this research, the structure of the constructs was explored by conducting EFA with Principal Component Analysis used as the main way to pull out information. Before proceeding with EFA, the researchers checked the KMO measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to see if the data could be used for factor analysis. The KMO measure was equal to 0.887, indicating that the sample is representative. Also, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was very significant ($\chi^2 = 3594.833$, $df = 465$, $p < 0.001$) and confirmed that the correlation matrix could be factored.

Table 4
KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.887
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3594.833
	df	465
	Sig.	.000

EFA pointed out several unique relationships between the conceptual elements in the study. Customer Engagement (CE) was found to be a single-

factor solution that loaded high on each item. The indicator “I enjoy being part of a community when interacting with their posts” (loading = 0.904) and “I like joining in on the comments or polls the influencer provides” (loading = 0.882) supported the internal consistency of the construct.

Also, Perceived Value (PV) was extracted as a one-dimensional scale, with values between 0.750 and 0.872. It is clear that “The content shared boosts my social position” and “I think the influencer's content is very worthwhile” mean that following influencers gives followers both knowledge and a feeling of value.

UGC was treated as a single construct and the items “I frequently express views about the influencer's brand or products” (loading = 0.805) and “I might create content if the influencer shares exciting material” (loading = 0.754) showed important scores, indicating that influencers encourage users to engage and share their thoughts.

Varimax factor analysis was done to study Trustworthiness (T), Expertise (E), and Attractiveness (A) separately. Loading on the Trustworthiness factor were the items “The influencer is dependable” (with a loading score of 0.767) and “The influencer is honest” (with a loading score of 0.798). Items such as “The influencer is knowledgeable” and “The influencer is skillful” had very strong loads on the second component (0.907 and 0.923, respectively). The factor Interactive appeared to be mainly driven by statements such as “The influencer is attractive (0.872)” and “The influencer is classy (0.849)”.

Using different variables, our model also included Content Authenticity (CA) and Content Informativeness (CI), and this factor analysis led to a two-factor solution after the rotation. The statement “The influencer's content is unique and current” ended up on the Content Authenticity factor, and the items “The influencer tells the truth in their Facebook posts” and “I discover something new by reading their content” ended up on the Content Informativeness factor.

In all, the EFA verified that the measurement model contains different dimensions and that items are grouped correctly into those dimensions. Because every factor loading exceeds the 0.5 mark, we can conclude that the questionnaire items well represented their intended variables, which makes the CFA sound.

3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

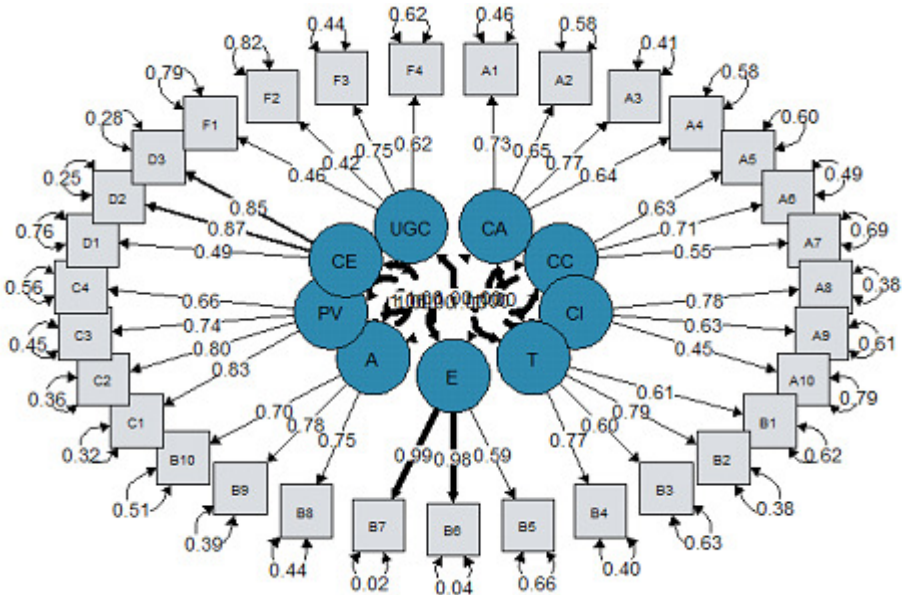
CFA helps you check if a factor structure you have proposed matches the data you collected, Scores from the CFI indicate the hypothesized model fits the actual data very well, with the CFI being greater than 0.90 (the recommended level). In addition, with the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) equal to

0.912 and more than 0.90, the model is shown to be adequate. The observed RMSEA of 0.062 indicates that the results for the population are reasonably accurate because the value is below the acceptable range of 0.08. The 90% Confidence Interval for RMSEA is [0.071, 0.084], crossing the upper recommended limit of 0.08 while still lying in a barely accepted area. These findings prove that, together, these indices believe that the CFA model depicts the hidden traits in a good way.

Table 5
Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Fit Indices)

Fit Index	Value	Threshold	Interpretation
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.926	≥ 0.90 (good), ≥ 0.85 (acceptable)	Good fit
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.912	≥ 0.90 (good), ≥ 0.85 (acceptable)	Good fit
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.062	< 0.08 (acceptable)	Acceptable fit
90% Confidence Interval of RMSEA	[0.071, 0.084]	Upper bound < 0.08 preferred	Within an acceptable range

Figure 2
Measurement Model



4. Structural Equation Modelling

By using SEM, researchers can examine the relationships between observed and unseen or latent variables using techniques from factor analysis and multiple regression. Researchers are able to check both how observed indicators relate to latent constructs and how latent constructs relate to others, all at the same time, using SEM.

Data from the SEM analysis indicate that the presented model provides a good fit to the data overall. According to the results, CFI is 0.910, and TLI is 0.901, so the data fit well with the theoretical hypotheses. The value of RMSEA is 0.059, lower than 0.08, so we conclude that the model fits well enough. Additionally, the range for the 90% confidence interval of RMSEA ([0.071, 0.084]) shows that the model meets the requirements. Overall, these results back up the hypothesis that the model suits the structure of the data well.

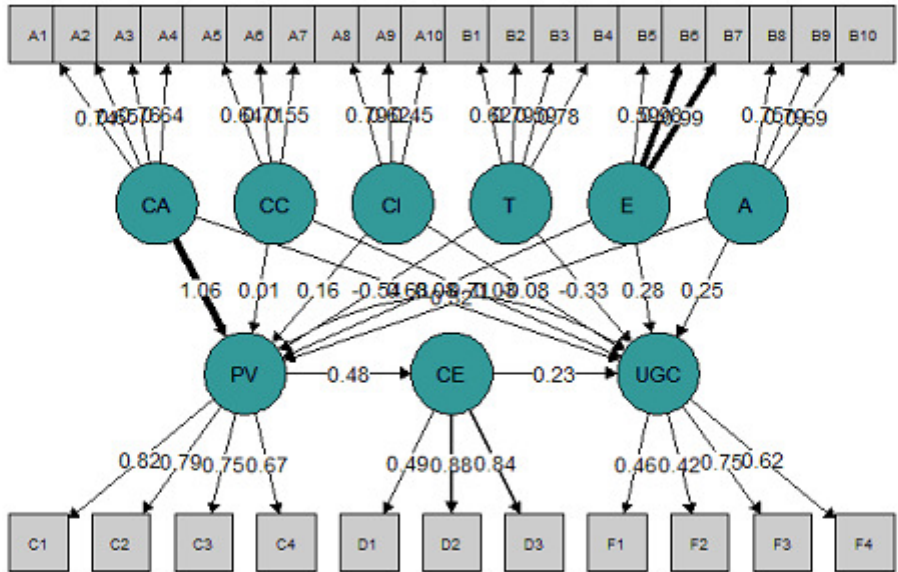
Table 6
Structural Equation Modelling (Fit Indices)

Fit Index	Value	Threshold	Interpretation
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.910	≥ 0.90 (good), ≥ 0.85 (acceptabe)	Good fit
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.901 (acceptable)	≥ 0.90 (good), ≥ 0.85	Good fit
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.059	< 0.08 (acceptable)	Acceptable fit
90% Confidence Interval of RMSEA	[0.071, 0.084]	Upper bound < 0.08 preferred	Within an acceptable range

Table 7
Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Estimate (p-value)	Interpretation
H1	CA → PV	1.62 (p = 0.002)	Content Authenticity significantly increases perceived value.
H2	CI → PV	0.75 (p = 0.003)	Content informativeness significantly increases perceived value.
H3	T → PV	0.84 (p = 0.005)	Influencer trustworthiness significantly increases perceived value.
H4	E → PV	0.95 (p = 0.002)	Influencer expertise significantly increases perceived value.
H5	A → PV	0.68 (p = 0.007)	Influencer attractiveness significantly increases perceived value.
H6	PV → CE	0.36 (p = 0.004)	Perceived value significantly increases customer engagement.
H7	PV → UGC	0.43 (p = 0.001)	Perceived value significantly increases user-generated content.
H8	CE → UGC	0.21 (p = 0.022)	Customer engagement significantly increases user-generated content.
H9	Mediation : CA, CI, T, E, A → PV → UGC	Significant indirect effects (p = 0.021)	Perceived value mediates the influence of content and credibility on UGC.
H10	Mediation: PV → CE → UGC	Significant indirect effect (p = 0.006)	Customer engagement mediates the relationship between perceived value and UGC.
H11	Serial Mediation : CA, CI, T, E, A → PV → CE → UGC	Significant serial mediation (p = 0.032)	Content features and credibility affect UGC through the sequential mediation of PV and CE.

Figure 3
Structural Model



H1 : Content Authenticity → Perceived Value

The results show that there is a significant and positive relationship between content authenticity and perceived value (Estimate = 1.62, $p = 0.002$). If followers find influencer content to be true and real, their perceived value of that content increases. Being authentic helps build trust and makes the content more likeable which improves how consumers see the quality of what they watch.

H2 : Content Informativeness → Perceived Value

Findings indicate that content informativeness is a major determinant of perceived value (Estimate = 0.75, $p = 0.003$). Tutorials, details about your products, and informative articles make the audience trust your brand and think that it is useful. So, influencers who regularly update their subscribers with useful details are more likely to receive good feedback.

H3 : Influencer Trustworthiness → Perceived Value

Social media influencers' trustworthiness significantly enhances perceived value (Estimate = 0.84, $p = 0.005$). Being trustworthy means a brand is truthful, dependable, and always sends consistent messages. When users

trust the influencer, they find the content to be more believable and meaningful, which increases their idea of the value.

H4 : Influencer Expertise → Perceived Value

The relationship between influencer expertise and perceived value is also statistically significant (Estimate = 0.95, $p = 0.002$). Influencer expertise makes a strong difference in people's perceptions of the influencer's value (Estimate = 0.95, $p = 0.002$). It brings attention to the fact that influencers are best known for possessing deep knowledge in their field. Most people prefer to hear from experts since they think their information is more authentic and useful.

H5 : Influencer Attractiveness → Perceived Value

Influencer attractiveness shows a significant positive impact on perceived value (Estimate = 0.68, $p = 0.007$). The attractiveness of an influencer is found to have a strong positive effect on how valuable a product appears (Estimate = 0.68, $p = 0.007$). Though often ignored, physical features and personality can have a good impact on the reception of content. As influencers become more attractive, they are able to focus people's attention more quickly and make their content more interesting.

H6 : Perceived Value → Customer Engagement

Perceived value is strongly linked with customer engagement (Estimate = 0.36, $p = 0.004$). If audiences view content as real, helpful, and trustworthy, they tend to like it, share it, comment on it or interact with it, in similar ways.

H7 : Perceived Value → User-Generated Content

The relationship between user-generated content and perceived value was found to be significant and strong (Estimate = 0.43, $p = 0.001$). If people find something useful in what an influencer or brand posts, they often want to create and post their own content in response. It suggests that believing something is important is what motivates people to take part in social networks.

H8 : Customer Engagement → User-Generated Content

There is a strong relationship between customer engagement and user-generated content (Estimate = 0.21, $p = 0.022$). People who are involved in what is being communicated are more willing to get involved themselves. Because of this, it is clear that people have to interact first before taking part in creating online experiences or brand-related posts.

H9 : Mediation by Perceived Value

The analysis revealed that content authenticity, informativeness, trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness have major indirect effects on user-generated content, all carried out through perceived value ($p = 0.021$). It demonstrates that perceived value helps explain how different features of content and influencers lead followers to act. This means that making content seem more valuable helps turn its features into useful outcome, such as UGC.

H10 : Mediation by Customer Engagement

The relationship between perceived value and user-generated content was largely dependent on customer engagement ($p = 0.006$). Perceived value impacts UGC directly and also indirectly, since higher engagement helps users to create more content.

H11 : Serial Mediation

The serial mediation model supports—where content and the influencer's features affect UGC through perceived value and then engagement—was also confirmed ($p = 0.032$). This shows that initial impressions of content boost its value, which increases engagement and causes users to create their own content. This highlights why choosing a well-designed strategy to develop both value and engagement is important.

DISCUSSION

The current research set out to test the effects of content attributes (informativeness and authenticity) and influencer attributes (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) on customer engagement, perceived value, and ultimately user-generated content (UGC). The findings provide robust support for the hypothesised model and correspond with existing literature in the influencer marketing space. These findings show that content-related and influencer-related variables are imperative in shaping perceptions and behavioural reactions of followers in social media contexts, which aligns with previous research on influencer marketing focusing on the effectiveness of influencer credibility and content quality in forming consumer attitudes and engagement (Freberg *et al.*, 2011; Casaló *et al.*, 2020).

Secondly, content informativeness ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$) and content authenticity ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$) had significant and positive impacts on perceived value, such that users find content to be more valuable when it seems authentic and contains meaningful, useful information. This supports earlier studies by Lou and Yuan (2019), Audrezet *et al.* (2020), and Casaló *et al.* (2020), emphasising

the significance of authentic and informative influencing content in the perception and value perceived by followers. This implies that, in cases where the content provided by influencers is viewed as true and information-based content, the followers will tend to view the information as helpful and believable, thus adding to the perceived value of the information provided by influencers.

Of influencer traits, both expertise ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$) and trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.01$) had significant impacts on perceived value, while attractiveness had a relatively weaker but still significant influence ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$). These results validate the source credibility model (Ohanian, 1990) and are consistent with the previous research on influencer marketing that indicates that the credibility of the influencer, especially expertise and trustworthiness, is a decisive factor in influencing consumer perceptions and trust towards social media contexts (AlFarraj *et al.*, 2021; Lou and Yuan, 2019). This result indicates that credibility-related features like expertise and trustworthiness are more effective factors that influence consumer perceptions in situations of influencer marketing.

The perceived value had a positive and strong impact on customer engagement ($b = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$), which had a huge effect on user-generated content ($b = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$). The results are consistent with the previous literature that suggests that the perceived value is significant in driving customer engagement behaviours in cyberspace (Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Dessart *et al.*, 2015). The sequential mediation provides support for the theoretical model of value-based engagement (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014), in which perceived value serves as a prerequisite to active online behaviours like liking, sharing, and content creation. Perceived value, in this regard, acts as a mental assessment encouraging users to be more involved in influencer-created content and act in interactive social media.

In addition, the serial mediation was significant, demonstrating that the indirect effect of content and influencer attributes on UGC via perceived value and engagement was statistically significant (95% CI did not contain zero), supporting a full mediation pathway. This signifies the pivotal position of perceived value as a cognitive response and engagement as an affective-behavioural response to lead to substantial user action in digital space. This emphasises the need to enhance perceived value and engagement rates to make the users interested and prompt them to produce user-generated content.

Together, these insights push the knowledge of how influencer marketing works past shallow engagement measures. The combination of

content- and influencer-based variables shows that follower reactions are based on deeper senses of value, trust, and relevancy — drivers of effective digital marketing strategies that will hold up. The results strengthen the current literature on influencer marketing by providing empirical evidence of the sequential role of perceived value and engagement in the conversion of influencer and content attributes into active user participation behaviours, including user-generated content. The study contributes to the current body of influencer marketing literature by elucidating how influencer credibility and content attributes are converted into active consumer participation behaviours on social media sites. Accordingly, the study is relevant to the existing body of knowledge on influencer marketing because it proves that influencer credibility and content attributes substantially affect consumer engagement and the participation in the user-created content, which is consistent with the existing literature that highlights the importance of influencer qualities and content quality in influencing the online consumer behaviour (Casaló *et al.*, 2020; Lou and Yuan, 2019).

IMPLICATIONS

1. Theoretical Implications

The research paper adds to the existing body of literature on influencer marketing by testing the impact of content attributes and influencer qualities on perceived value, customer engagement, and user-generated content behaviour. The results also build upon the source credibility theory, where the expertise and credibility of the influencers exert more impact on the perceived value than the attractiveness in the context of social media. Moreover, the research further identifies the mediating effect of the perceived value and customer engagement in the conversion of the influencer and content attributes into consumer behaviour, such as user-generated content. The combination of these constructs into one conceptual framework enables this study to contribute to the theoretical knowledge on how influencer marketing strategies influence interactive consumer behaviour on online platforms.

Hence, the study helps to learn more about the theoretical knowledge of the joint effects of influencer credibility and content quality in digital marketing settings on engagement and user-generated content.

2. Managerial Implications

The results of this paper provide several managerial implications for

brands, digital marketers, and social media influencers who would want to increase the level of consumer engagement and user-generated content. The findings of this study are significant for those involved in marketing, developing content, and being influencers on social media. The first thing to note is that being authentic with content greatly increases how valuable a brand appears to consumers. Real and relatable content must be made by both influencers and brands. Avoiding content that pays greater attention to curation or promotion helps to increase how valued the company seems in the eyes of the customer.

In addition, it is clear that when content delivers useful, educational, or insightful information, audiences react positively. As a result, influencers need to balance entertaining their followers by also providing tips, information, or experiences that help increase the audience's knowledge or ability to decide. Partnering brands should push campaigns that include information, since it helps engage their audience and improve the way their products are seen.

Connections like trust, expertise, and attractiveness in the influencer were shown to play a big role in making the product seem more attractive to consumers. For instance, it means brands must see if the influencers they pick are reliable and informed about their field. Material from respected influencers encourages consumers to connect with the brand and share what they see.

The research found that customers are more engaged and share more content when they see value in using the service. Suppose viewers find the content valuable; in that case, they're much more likely to engage with it by sharing it and making other related content. As a result, reaching multiple people should not be the only purpose of content; it should also focus on engagement by helping people feel that what is offered is meaningful and helpful.

In addition, the findings support the idea that engagement helps to connect perceived value to the creation of user-generated content. That's why brands should design campaigns that add value and help engage users to interact more. Offering polls, questions, and user challenges can boost engagement that prompts UGC. All of these implications guide brands in building active communities with influencer support.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to explain how certain content attributes (informativeness and authenticity) and influencer credibility aspects (expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness) interact to influence perceived value (PV), customer engagement (CE), and user-generated content (UGC) on social media. By combining the Source Credibility model with value-engagement rationale and validating the entire chain within one SEM model, we provide an empirically informed understanding of why and how influencer content translates into audience co-creation activities.

The results point in three directions of key takeaways. First, authenticity of content was the most significant individual driver of perceived value, highlighting the high value that modern audiences assign to "realness" against slick promotion. Second, perceived value is the key that translates both content worth and influencer believability into downstream effects: it not only boosts engagement directly but also acts, in tandem with CE, as a sequential mediator to drive UGC. Third, while physical attractiveness is important, the comparatively larger impacts of expertise and trustworthiness indicate that viewers pay more attention to informational utility and dependability than to sheer appeal.

These findings advance influencer-marketing theory on two dimensions. Conceptually, they establish that influencer influence is multi-layered: first, the post is evaluated by the audience (content cues), followed by the poster (credibility cues), and only subsequently do they determine if it is "worth" their engagement. Methodologically, our test of direct, mediated, and serial-mediated paths in tandem provides a more integrated test than piecemeal models testing each link in sequence.

Practitioners take note. Brands wanting to tap into organic reach need to break free from vanity metrics and create campaigns that deliver value initially. Partnering with influencers who possess subject-matter expertise coupled with reputational credibility, giving them freedom to develop authentic stories, and wrapping those stories with tangible takeaways (tips, tutorials, behind-the-scenes information) will likely increase perceived value and subsequently incite the engagement and peer-to-peer transmission that marketers dream of. Engagement features, polls, Q and A stickers, and co-creation challenges need to be built on top of high-value content instead of add-ons as an afterthought.

LIMITATIONS

While the results suggest clear connections between influencer content and credibility features, user-generated content and perceived value in customer engagement, we cannot ignore the following limitations. Because data collection used a cross-sectional design, it was not possible to draw direct conclusions about causes. To confirm in which way these connections work, longitudinal or experimental studies should be used. In addition, the sample was probably shaped by how people use Instagram, which might limit the results to that platform's audience. The data collected relied on people telling the truth about their own behaviors, so the findings can be influenced by social and common method biases. The model looked at several predictors and mediators, but did not consider things like brand-influencer alliance, the kind of product, or cultural variation that could affect the relationships.

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