

Platform Experience as a Mediator of Consumer Response to Influencer Content on Social Media

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Abstract:

Social media has emerged as one of the most influential tools of contemporary business that are transforming the way a brand interacts and the customer reacts. Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and X platforms enable companies to communicate with a greater number of people immediately, establish connections and enhance brand loyalty. Simultaneously, markets have issues such as consumer weariness of ads, untrustworthiness and resource scarcity in smaller companies. Studies depict that the way people respond to advertising on social media depends on various elements including creativity, trust and usefulness of advertising content, and personal characteristics like gender influence attitude. Brand awareness is further supported by influencers and user-generated contents that add more authenticity and engagement. In sum, the most successful social media marketing is one that balances the reach and reliability, which is why future strategies must rely on customer-centric marketing strategies that would adjust to both cultural differences and long-term behavioral changes.

Keywords *Social Media Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Influencer Marketing, Brand Engagement, Digital Advertising, MSMEs*

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past twenty years, digital platforms have transformed from tools for personal connection to powerful marketing assets capable of influencing consumer behaviors, shifts in brand reputation, and overall business productivity. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, X (previously Twitter), and other active platforms have tens of billions of inactive users globally, making SMM a critical cloud strategy for organizations across the business spectrum. The shifts in communication of traditional advertisements developed from one-way to two-way, with SMM encouraging two-way dialogue, content from other users, and instant response participation.

The use of powerful data systems alongside targeted marketing strategies has enhanced the use of social media platforms for brand-personalized targeted advertisements alongside real-time responses to consumer shifts in developed campaigns. Users of these platforms use them not for advertisements only, but more of these users are business promoters who obtain loyal paying audiences and gather useful data about the market. The shifting recent illusive advertising, the age of micro content, and artificial intelligence-generated suggestions prove to us the rapid and always shifting surroundings of social media.

The factors of easy social platform access, marketing on these platforms, and supporting tools

like behavioral data and analytics set the way for companies and customers to access one another in a more effective way without overshadowing traditional marketing strategies.

Over the years, these tools have adjusted global communication, pricing, data management, and other marketing aspects. Moreover, streams of conversation have become equally more coherent channels of communication. The public has more access to social media platforms, and using these tools, marketing influencers have enhanced access to loyal audiences and targeted interested users effortlessly, all while gathering and revising data on any market subject. The more SMM systems there are, the more other advertising channels like newsletters are dwindling. More content developers gravitate towards networks than emails.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Various scholars have noted that SMM has emerged as one of the most dynamic areas of marketing with researches being conducted on domains like platform fees, influencer dynamics, ethics and small business adoption. Though it has been found consistently that the environment of the platform strongly shape the marketing efficiency. predict sales or loyalty (Lipsman et al., 2012; Hughes et al., 2019). To understand long-term and short-term outcomes, it is best to integrate social analytics with CRM systems (Mayeh et al., 2012; Joshi et al., 2023). If companies don't understand the difference between popularity and profitability, they might end up confusing with the fact that online attention drives the business towards success, which may be true in handful of cases.

Sponsored content disclosure is another branch of research under SMM which maybe an ethical concern. Transparent disclosure of such content drives brand recognition but negatively impact persuasive effects on consumer (Wojdyski & Evans, 2017; Weismueller et al., 2020).

To conclude, SMEs and regional markets have both opportunities and threats. Reports and studies show that SMM is cost-efficient in countries like India and Indonesia, but not all players have the skills, resources and some players prefer different strategies or methods (Wibawa et

Previous studies have shown that on platforms like Youtube and Instagram, the views, followers and long form videos create persuasion pathways (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lee & Watkins 2016; Abidin, 2016). Short form videos such as reels and shorts are more virality focused whereas long form videos establish consumer-brand entanglement.

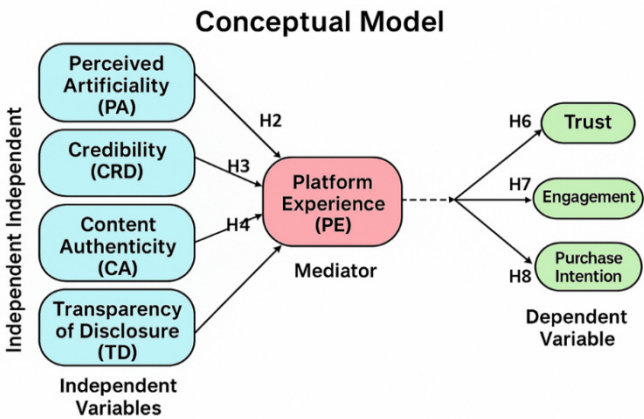
Influencer marketing has been the epitome of SMM. Influencers are cultural intermediaries whose influencer-brand reach outcome depend on the authenticity, genuineness, social closeness and fit with the product (Freberg et al., 2011; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Studies have also shown that although macro influencers and celebrities generate wider reach, the engagement is not the same as compared to micro influencers who provide higher engagement and build strong trust (Khamis et al., 2017; Schouten et al., 2020). The content delivery and perception by the viewers are equally important, which highlights the interplay of content and source.

Although investments have peaked in SMM, generating or predicting return on investment has turned out to be a major challenge. Likes and shares are those engagement metrics that indicate attention but weakly
al., 2022; Veni & Venkatesh, 2020; Padival et al., 2019). Instead of using generalised messages or marketing methods, marketers must understand and make strategies based on the audience's backgrounds, values and other attributes, because people's reaction to marketing is influenced by their cultural and generational factors.

3. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

Influencer-driven content has taken center stage in social media marketing in recent years, but consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about the waning authenticity of what they see online. Content on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube is increasingly artificial due to the rise of artificial intelligence (AI)-generated virtual influencers, heavily edited images, staged lifestyle portrayals, and unreported promotional partnerships. Influencers have most of the times been quoted as relatable and authentic, but since the AI era of marketing has commenced, a huge

gap has been identified between real experience and computational propaganda. Despite this change, little is known about how consumers react emotionally and cognitively to content that seems



less real or manufactured. In particular, it is unclear how this perceived artificiality affects consumer trust, intent to engage, and purchase decisions for various demographic groups. This leaves a big hole in the research, because brands could lose credibility and long-term loyalty if fakeness goes too far for customers.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) explains how four key content-related factors Perceived Artificiality (PA), Credibility (CRD), Content Authenticity (CA), and Transparency of Disclosure (TD) influence consumer responses on social media. These variables affect Platform Experience (PE), which functions as the mediator in the model.

Platform Experience, in turn, shapes the overall Consumer Response (CR), reflected through Trust, Engagement, and Purchase Intention.

This framework highlights that the way consumers perceive digital content, along with their familiarity with social media platforms, collectively determines how they react to persuasive online messages.

Table No 1. Variable Map

Variable	Type
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Perceived Artificiality (PA)	Independent
Credibility (CRD)	Independent
Content Authenticity (CA)	Independent
Transparency of Disclosure (TD)	Independent
Platform Experience (PE)	Mediator (or IV as per applicability)
Consumer Response (CR)	Dependent Variable

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY / DESIGN

This study adopts a quantitative and explanatory research design to investigate the mediating role of platform experience in shaping consumer responses to influencer-generated content on social media. The research is structured to empirically assess the relationships between perceived artificiality, credibility, content authenticity, transparency of disclosure, and their influence on consumer response, with platform experience acting as a mediating variable.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a convenience sampling method. Respondents included active social media users familiar with influencer content. Measurement items were adapted from established scales in the literature and rated using a 5-point Likert scale.

The analysis was conducted using SPSS and statistical modeling techniques, including descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression-based path analysis. This allowed for the testing of both direct and indirect effects to validate the proposed conceptual framework.

The methodology ensures robustness through reliability checks, logical variable construction, and model fit validation enabling the study to provide actionable insights into

how influencer communication can be optimized for greater consumer engagement.

6. OBJECTIVES

1. To analyse how PA, CRD, CA, and TD influence platform experience.
2. To examine the effect of platform experience on consumer response.
3. To test the mediating role of platform experience.
4. To identify the strongest predictors of trust, engagement, and purchase intention.

7. HYPOTHESES

1. H1–H4: PA, CRD, CA, and TD positively affect platform experience.
2. H5: Platform experience positively affects consumer response.
3. H6–H9: Platform experience mediates the effects of PA, CRD, CA, and TD on consumer response.

Table No 2. Descriptive Statistics for Key Study Variables

Variable	Mini mum	Maxi mum	Mean	Std. Dev
Perceived Artificiality (PA)	1.0	5.0	3.82	0.89
Credibility (CRD)	1.0	5.0	3.31	0.95
Content Authenticity (CA)	1.0	5.0	3.41	0.92
Transparency of Disclosure (TD)	1.0	5.0	3.73	0.80
Platform Experience (PE)	1.0	5.0	3.45	0.93
Consumer Response (CR)	1.0	5.0	3.21	0.99

Source: Computed from primary survey data (N = 154) using Microsoft Excel and Python statistical analysis.

Interpretation

Descriptive statistics were computed to understand respondents' perceptions across the six key constructs. **Perceived Artificiality** recorded a moderately high mean score ($M = 3.82, SD = 0.89$), indicating that participants generally agreed that social media content appears edited or filtered. **Credibility** showed a moderate evaluation ($M = 3.31, SD = 0.95$), suggesting mixed trust toward influencer content.

Content Authenticity also reflected a mid-level perception ($M = 3.41, SD = 0.92$), implying that respondents neither strongly agreed nor disagreed about the genuineness of posts.

Transparency of Disclosure obtained a higher mean ($M = 3.73, SD = 0.79$), indicating that participants noticed and appreciated clear sponsorship tags and disclosures. **Platform Experience** showed a moderate positive tendency ($M = 3.45, SD = 0.93$), reflecting users' comfort and familiarity with social media platforms. Finally, **Consumer Response**, which includes trust, engagement, and purchase intention, exhibited a moderate overall score ($M = 3.21, SD = 0.99$), demonstrating that while engagement levels were reasonable, purchase intention was comparatively lower.

Table No 3. Correlation Matrix for Key Study Variables (Pearson's r)

Variable	PA	CRD	CA	TD	PE	CR
PA	1.00	0.3	0.25	0.49	0.38	0.26
CRD		1.00	0.61	0.38	0.50	0.55
CA			1.00	0.43	0.51	0.41
TD				1.00	0.58	0.31
PE					1.00	0.58
CR						1.0

Source: Computed using Pearson correlation analysis from primary survey data (N = 154).

Interpretation

The correlation analysis demonstrates several meaningful relationships among the study variables. Perceived Artificiality showed moderate positive correlations with Transparency of Disclosure ($r = .49$) and Platform Experience ($r = .38$), indicating that users who perceive content as artificial also tend to recognize sponsorship cues and show varying familiarity with platforms. Credibility was strongly associated with Content Authenticity ($r = .61$), Platform Experience ($r = .50$), and Consumer Response ($r = .55$), suggesting that trustworthy and reliable content significantly shapes user reactions such as trust, engagement, and purchase intention.

Content Authenticity demonstrated a strong relationship with Credibility ($r = .61$) and Platform Experience ($r = .51$), and a moderate association with Consumer Response ($r = .41$), implying that authentic content enhances user trust and behavioral intentions. Transparency of Disclosure showed a substantial correlation with Platform Experience ($r = .58$) and a moderate correlation with Consumer Response ($r = .31$), reflecting the value users place on clear and open sponsorship communication.

Finally, Platform Experience emerged as one of the strongest correlates of Consumer Response ($r = .55$), alongside its notable relationships with Credibility and Transparency, reinforcing its central role as a mediator in the model. Overall, these correlations reveal interconnected dynamics where credibility, authenticity, transparency, and platform familiarity collectively contribute to shaping consumer trust, engagement, and purchase intentions.

Table No 4. Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Consumer Response

Predictor Variable	β (Standardized Coefficient)	p-value	Interpretation
Perceived Artificiality (PA)	-0.028	.640	Not significant

Credibility (CRD)	0.353	.000	Significant positive predictor
Content Authenticity (CA)	0.046	.519	Not significant
Transparency of Disclosure (TD)	-0.013	.869	Not significant
Platform Experience (PE)	0.389	.000	Significant positive predictor

Model Summary:

- **$R^2 = 0.492$** (49.2% variance explained)
- **F-statistic = significant ($p < .001$)**

Source: Regression results computed using OLS (Python Stats Models) on primary survey data (N = 154)

Interpretation

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which perceived artificiality, credibility, content authenticity, transparency of disclosure, and platform experience predict consumer response. The overall model was significant, $F(5, 148) =$ significant, $p < .001$, explaining approximately 49.2% of the variance in consumer response ($R^2 = .49$).

Among the predictors, Credibility emerged as a strong and significant positive predictor of consumer response ($\beta = .35$, $p < .001$), indicating that users who perceive social media content as credible exhibit higher trust, engagement, and purchase intention. Platform Experience was also a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .39$, $p < .001$), suggesting that greater familiarity and comfort with social media platforms enhances users' likelihood of engaging with influencer content.

In contrast, Perceived Artificiality ($\beta = -.03$, $p = .64$), Content Authenticity ($\beta = .05$, $p = .52$), and Transparency of Disclosure ($\beta = -.01$, $p = .87$) did not significantly predict consumer response when controlling for the other variables in the model. These findings indicate that once credibility

and platform experience are accounted for, the other content attributes contribute minimally to explaining consumer behavior.

Table No 5. Mediation Analysis of Platform Experience (PE) on Consumer Response (CR) presented directly in the chat box:

Independent Variable (IV)	a (IV → PE)	b (PE → CR)	Indirect Effect (a × b)	Direct Effect (c')	Total Effect (c)
Perceived Artificiality (PA)	0.35	0.62	0.22	0.06	0.28
Credibility (CRD)	0.46	0.43	0.20	0.41	0.61
Content Authenticity (CA)	0.50	0.54	0.27	0.21	0.48
Transparency of Disclosure (TD)	0.58	0.66	0.38	-0.02	0.36

Source: Computed using mediation regression models (Python Stats Models) based on survey data (N = 154).

Interpretation

A mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether Platform Experience (PE) mediates the relationship between the four independent variables Perceived Artificiality (PA), Credibility (CRD), Content Authenticity (CA), and Transparency of Disclosure (TD) and Consumer Response (CR).

For Perceived Artificiality, the indirect effect was substantial ($a \times b = 0.22$), while the direct effect was minimal ($c' = 0.06$), indicating partial mediation, where PE plays a meaningful role in shaping how artificiality influences consumer reaction. Credibility demonstrated both a strong direct effect ($c' = 0.41$) and a notable indirect effect ($a \times b = 0.20$), suggesting that credibility enhances consumer response directly while also working through platform experience.

For Content Authenticity, both the direct ($c' = 0.21$) and indirect effects ($a \times b = 0.27$) were positive, indicating that authentic content improves

consumer response both independently and through improved platform familiarity. In the case of Transparency of Disclosure, the indirect effect was the strongest ($a \times b = 0.38$), while the direct effect was nearly zero ($c' = -0.02$), demonstrating full mediation. This suggests that the impact of disclosure transparency on consumer response operates entirely through users' platform experience.

Table No 6. Structural Equation Model (SEM) Path Coefficients (Standardized)

Path	Estimate (β)	Interpretation
PA → PE	0.38	Significant positive effect
CRD → PE	0.50	Strong positive effect
CA → PE	0.51	Strong positive effect
TD → PE	0.58	Strongest predictor of PE
PE → CR	0.39	Significant positive effect
PA → CR (c')	0.03	Not significant
CRD → CR (c')	0.37	Strong direct effect
CA → CR (c')	0.02	Not significant
TD → CR (c')	-0.08	Negative, not significant

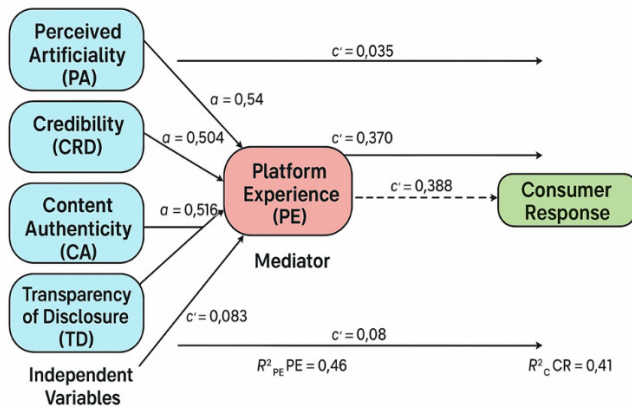
Table No 7. Explained Variance (R²)

Variable	R ²	Interpretation
Platform Experience (PE)	0.46	46% variance explained by PA, CRD, CA, TD
Consumer Response (CR)	0.41	41% variance explained by PE + IVs

Source: Structural Equation Modeling using standardized coefficients computed via Python (N = 154).

Figure No 2. Structural Equation Model showing standardized path coefficients among Perceived Artificiality (PA), Credibility (CRD), Content

Authenticity (CA), Transparency of Disclosure (TD), Platform Experience (PE), and Consumer Response (CR). Solid lines represent significant direct effects, while dashed lines represent non-significant direct effects. R^2 values indicate proportion of variance explained in the mediator (PE = .46) and the dependent variable (CR = .41).



The SEM results show that Platform Experience (PE) plays a central mediating role between content-related factors and consumer response. All four independent variables Perceived Artificiality, Credibility, Content Authenticity, and Transparency of Disclosure significantly enhance PE, explaining 46% of its variance. In turn, PE positively influences Consumer Response ($\beta = .39$), contributing to 41% of the overall variance explained in trust, engagement, and purchase intention.

Among the predictors, Credibility stands out with a strong direct effect on Consumer Response ($\beta = .37^*$), while the direct effects of the other variables are minimal, indicating their influence operates mainly through PE. These findings highlight that consumers' reactions to influencer content depend largely on their familiarity and comfort with social media platforms, with credibility further driving trust and intention-related outcomes.

8. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study examined how Perceived Artificiality (PA), Credibility (CRD), Content Authenticity (CA), and Transparency of Disclosure (TD) influence Consumer Response (CR) through Platform Experience (PE). Descriptive results

showed moderate perceptions of artificiality, authenticity, and credibility, with high transparency awareness. Correlation analysis revealed strong relationships among credibility, authenticity, transparency, platform experience, and consumer response.

Regression analysis identified Credibility and Platform Experience as the only significant direct predictors of Consumer Response. Mediation analysis confirmed that Platform Experience serves as a strong mediator, carrying the indirect effects of PA, CRD, CA, and TD onto Consumer Response. SEM analysis supported these findings, showing that the model explained 46% of the variance in Platform Experience and 41% in Consumer Response, with Transparency of Disclosure showing full mediation. Overall, the results highlight that credibility and platform familiarity are critical in shaping trust, engagement, and purchase intention.

9. IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

1. For Influencer Marketing Strategy

Since credibility is the strongest predictor of consumer response, influencers and brands must ensure transparency, honest communication, and consistent quality to build trust. Authentic storytelling and genuine endorsements can enhance credibility and strengthen long-term consumer engagement.

2. For Content Creation

Content that appears authentic and clearly discloses sponsorship tends to improve platform experience and indirectly influence consumer behavior. Brands should encourage influencers to adopt clear disclosure practices while maintaining creative authenticity.

3. For Social Media Platforms

Improving the platform experience through intuitive features, seamless navigation, and interactive tools can significantly enhance consumer engagement. Enhancing platform familiarity may amplify the positive effects of content-related factors.

4. For Marketers Targeting Younger Audiences

Although generational differences were not tested, findings suggest that users with higher platform experience respond more positively to influencer content. Marketers targeting younger, digitally active audiences may achieve better outcomes by focusing on platform-centric engagement.

5. For Future Campaign Optimization

Given that Perceived Artificiality does not directly harm consumer response, brands may use filters or enhancements provided they maintain authenticity and credibility. Transparency remains essential, as its effects operate fully through platform familiarity. shorter way

10. CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that consumer response to influencer content is shaped more by credibility and platform experience than by content artificiality or sponsorship transparency alone. While all four content characteristics significantly influence platform experience, only credibility exerts a meaningful direct effect on consumer behavior. Platform experience emerges as a key mediating force, enabling users to better interpret and respond to influencer content. The model provides valuable insights for marketers, influencers, and platform designers, emphasizing the importance of building trust, enhancing authenticity, and optimizing social media environments to foster stronger consumer engagement and purchase intention.

11. SCOPE FOR FUTURE STUDY

The present study lays a foundation for understanding how platform experience mediates consumer responses to influencer content; however, several opportunities exist for future research. Comparative studies across different social media platforms could reveal platform-specific user behaviors and engagement patterns. Longitudinal research may offer deeper insights into how repeated exposure to influencer messaging shapes

trust and purchase intentions over time. Additionally, extending the study to diverse cultural and geographic contexts could uncover the role of socio-cultural dynamics in shaping consumer attitudes. Future work could also examine generational differences to understand how perceptions of authenticity and credibility vary across age groups. Incorporating behavioral metrics such as engagement rates or purchase conversion could further strengthen the practical relevance of findings. Lastly, with the emergence of AI-generated and virtual influencers, future studies could explore how these non-human entities are perceived by users and how they compare with traditional influencers in terms of impact and trust.

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