

Affecting YouTube Lifestyle Influencers on Trust and Brand Awareness

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the effect of lifestyle influencer values on user/consumer purchase intentions through trust and brand awareness on YouTube. The proposed conceptual model is useful and enables researchers and marketers to apply it in academia and industry. The model will demonstrate the significance of considering influence values, trust, brand awareness, and purchase intention. It can contribute to an understanding of lifestyle influencer values that are essential to increase both trust in social media influencers and products as well as brand awareness. The findings of this study will assist entrepreneurs, e-tailers, and e-marketers in identifying the essential influencer values, trust, brand awareness, and purchase intention as an influencer marketing strategy.

Keywords: social media, influencer, YouTube, trust, brand awareness

Introduction and Background

A social media platform (e.g., YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter) is defined as a web-based service and e-communication that allows individuals to share a variety of content quickly and efficiently with other users (Hudson, 2020). In 2021, there were approximately 2.3 billion active worldwide YouTube users who spent an average of 23 minutes per day on the platform, according to the Statista (2021). 74% of American adults watch YouTube, and 90% of these adults discover new brands or products on YouTube (Newberry, 2021)

A social media influencer is considered “first and foremost a content generator: One who has a status of expertise in a specific area, who has cultivated a sizable number of captive followers - who are of marketing value to brands - by regularly producing valuable content via social media” (Lou & Yuan, 2019, p. 59). For example, YouTube allows individuals to spread their unique ideas while creating a following of individuals who support and trust the influencer’s opinions. YouTube lifestyle influencers introduce new items and review products from various brands that they use in their daily lives. Lou and Yuan (2019) argued that values of influence marketing (such as trustworthiness, attractiveness, similarity, and being informative) produce positive associations to a consumer’s purchasing decisions on social media. This influencer impact eventually leads to a type of marketing strategy that affects purchase intentions and buying behaviors (Scott, 2015) as the company sponsors the influencer with the goal of business being to increase their sales and revenues.

Because followers’ emotions, attitudes, and preferences are influenced by social media, and this significantly alters their purchase behaviors (Hudson, 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019) and the goal of businesses is to increase sales and revenues, companies many sponsor influencers to

promote their products and reach broader target audiences. Furthermore, trust in a brand is friendliness associated with a brand and positive user relationships and is one of the significant factors in e-commerce (Seo, Park, & Choi, 2020). Follower's trust could be formed through influencers' values and simultaneously, attract companies promoting products who what these items sponsored by prominent persons on a social media platform. Also, the trust of followers and users could be formed through influencers' values attracting products sponsored and prompted by various brands on the social media platform. Previous studies have focused on the general effects of influencer marketing on social media; however, there is still a lack of basic understanding of and empirical evidence for the mechanism of influencer marketing content and the effect of YouTube lifestyle influencers on YouTube users' behavior intentions. Therefore, this study aims to explore the effect of lifestyle influencer values on user/consumer purchase intentions through trust and brand awareness on YouTube.

Theoretical Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory is described as a sequence of events, akin to consumer behavior in psychology (Mehrabian & Russell, 1975). Several studies have revealed the positive relationship between trust and brand awareness on social media platforms or e-commerce (Ahmad 2018; Schwemmer & Ziewiecki, 2018). Lou and Yuan (2019) reported that trust is positively affected by the influencer promoting the brand, which plays a role in their purchase intentions. Based on the theoretical foundation of SOR, in this study, a proposed conceptual framework is developed (see Figure 1) and five hypotheses are proposed:

- H1*: Lifestyle influencer values (trustworthiness, attractiveness, similarity, being informative) have a significant positive effect on trust.
- H2*: Lifestyle influencer values (trustworthiness, attractiveness, similarity, being informative) have a significant positive effect on purchase intention.
- H3*: Lifestyle influencer values (trustworthiness, attractiveness, similarity, being informative) have a significant positive effect on brand awareness.
- H4*: Trust has a significant positive effect on (a) purchase intention and (b) brand awareness.
- H5*: Brand awareness has a significant positive effect on purchase intention.

Methods and Data Analysis

Participants of 18 years old and over who have an active YouTube account will be recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk in this empirical study. According to statistical power criteria (80% power with $d = 0.3$, $\alpha < 0.05$) (Cohen, 1988), we expect to collect over 300 for sample sizes. The recommended minimum sample size for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) will be recruited in this study. The survey questionnaire consists of three sections: (a) demographic questions, (b) open-ended questions, and (c) multiple-item measurements (trustworthiness, attractiveness, similarity, being informative, trust, brand awareness, and purchase intention) using a seven-point Likert scale adapted and modified from previous research (Lou & Yuan, 2019). SPSS 25 and AMOS 25 will be used for the data analyses. SEM will be performed to test the hypothesized paths in the proposed conceptual framework.

Significances

The proposed conceptual model is useful and enables researchers and marketers to apply it in academia and industry. The model will demonstrate the significance of considering influence values, trust, brand awareness, and purchase intention. It can contribute to an understanding of lifestyle influencer values that are essential to increase both trust in social media influencers and products as well as brand awareness. Influencer marketing has become increasingly significant in social media and e-commerce. We expect that trust plays a vital role in brand awareness and purchase intention through lifestyle Youtubers, who encourage ways of life through their public posts. The influencers promote products sponsored by brands on their YouTube channel while incorporating them into their daily lives because followers deeply consider influencer's information, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity when purchasing products sponsored by certain promoted brands. There is an association between lifestyle YouTubers promoting branded products in their everyday lives and their viewers feeling a sense of personal attachment. These influencers personalize their content to reach their target audiences and, as a result, influence the audience members' purchasing behaviors. The findings of this study will assist entrepreneurs, e-tailers, and e-marketers in identifying the essential influencer values, trust, brand awareness, and purchase intention as an influencer marketing strategy.

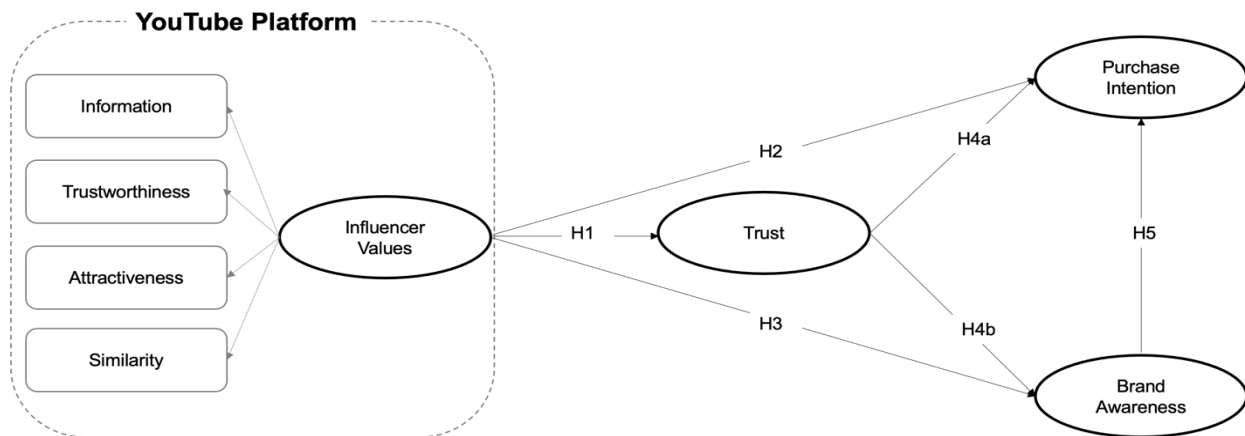


Figure 1. Hypothesized conceptual model.

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