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## IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISEMENT CREDIBILITY ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

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**Abstract:** Social media has reshaped how brands communicate with consumers, making advertisement credibility a central concern for both marketers and researchers. This study looks at how the perceived credibility of social media advertisements shapes the buying behaviour of consumers, with a focus on the Indian digital context. Data were gathered from 118 respondents using a structured 15-item Likert-scale questionnaire covering two constructs — Social Media Advertisement Credibility (8 items, Q8–Q15) and Consumer Buying Behaviour (7 items, Q16–Q22). Statistical analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS, covering reliability testing (Cronbach's Alpha), descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple linear regression. The reliability analysis returned good alpha values across all constructs (Overall  $\alpha = 0.875$ ). A strong positive correlation was found between advertisement credibility and consumer buying behaviour ( $r = 0.761, p < 0.001$ ). Multiple regression confirmed that ad credibility composite ( $\beta = 0.806, p < 0.001$ ) and influencer credibility ( $\beta = 0.099, p = 0.049$ ) significantly predict buying behaviour, with the model explaining 59.3% of variance ( $R^2 = 0.593$ ). H1 and H2 were accepted; H3 (advertising transparency) also emerged as statistically significant ( $r = 0.296, p = 0.001$ ), and is discussed accordingly. The study offers practical guidance for digital marketers aiming to improve advertising credibility and consumer trust.

**Index Terms:** Social Media Advertising, Advertisement Credibility, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Influencer Marketing, Purchase Intention, SPSS Analysis, Digital Advertising, India.

### I. INTRODUCTION

The way people discover and evaluate products has changed dramatically over the last decade. Social media platforms — Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), and Snapchat — are no longer just spaces for socialising; they have become primary channels through which brands reach, engage, and influence consumers. In India particularly, the combination of affordable data plans and mass smartphone adoption has pushed social media usage to remarkable levels, creating an environment where millions of buying decisions are shaped, at least in part, by what people encounter on their feeds.

Against this backdrop, one construct has quietly emerged as central to whether social media advertising actually works: credibility. An advertisement, no matter how visually polished or strategically placed, tends to fall flat when consumers do not believe what it is saying. MacKenzie and Lutz (1989) defined advertisement credibility as the degree to which a consumer perceives a commercial message to be truthful and believable — a definition that holds just as much weight in the social media era as it did in traditional media contexts. What has changed, however, is the nature of the signals that shape those credibility perceptions: influencer authenticity, verified brand accounts, user reviews, and the sheer volume of competing messages now all play a role.

This study was undertaken to examine, empirically, how the perceived credibility of social media advertisements affects the buying behaviour of consumers. Using primary data from 118 respondents and analysed through IBM SPSS, the research tests three hypotheses and draws on established theoretical frameworks — particularly Source Credibility Theory (Hovland and Weiss, 1951) and the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) — to interpret the findings. The aim is not merely to confirm what prior literature has suggested, but to add a grounded, data-backed perspective from the Indian social media context.

#### 1.1 Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided the design and execution of this research:

- (i) To assess the level of perceived credibility of social media advertisements among consumers.
- (ii) To examine buying behaviour patterns of consumers in relation to social media advertising.
- (iii) To investigate the relationship between advertisement credibility and consumer buying behaviour.
- (iv) To analyse the influence of influencer credibility and advertising transparency on purchase intentions.
- (v) To provide actionable recommendations for practitioners seeking to design more credible social media campaigns.

## 1.2 Research Hypotheses

**H1:** Social media advertisement credibility has a significant positive impact on consumer buying behaviour.

**H2:** Influencer credibility significantly affects purchase intentions among consumers.

**H3:** Transparency in social media advertisements positively influences consumer trust and buying decisions.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 2.1 Social Media and Advertising

Social media platforms have fundamentally changed the logic of advertising. Traditional advertising was largely one-directional — brands spoke, consumers listened. Social media broke that model by enabling real-time, two-way interaction between brands and their audiences (Tuten and Solomon, 2014). This interactive quality has made social media advertising more engaging, but it has also made consumers more discerning. Research consistently points to significant positive effects of social media advertising on brand awareness, attitude, and purchase intention (Dwivedi et al., 2021), yet those effects are conditional on how credibly the message is received.

Influencer marketing is perhaps the most important development in this space. By leveraging the trust that influencers have built with their audiences, brands can communicate product benefits in ways that feel more personal and less corporate. Lou and Yuan (2019) found that message credibility and perceived value of influencer content strongly predicts consumer trust in branded posts. Cheung and Thadani (2012) further highlighted the power of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in shaping purchase decisions, noting that peer-generated content carries disproportionate weight compared to brand-initiated advertising.

### 2.2 Advertisement Credibility

Advertisement credibility, at its core, reflects how much a consumer trusts and believes a commercial message (MacKenzie and Lutz, 1989). Ohanian (1990) broke down source credibility into three components — expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness — each of which contributes to the overall persuasive impact of an advertisement. In social media contexts, these dimensions manifest differently: expertise might be signalled by a verified brand page or a subject-matter influencer; trustworthiness through transparent disclosures and honest reviews; and attractiveness through aesthetics and relatability of the presenter.

Platform-level trust also matters. Kim and Koh (2023) noted that advertisements appearing on well-established platforms tend to be rated as more credible than those on lesser-regulated channels. Social proof — in the form of likes, shares, and user ratings — further calibrates credibility perceptions; high engagement signals legitimacy, while low engagement can trigger scepticism (Cialdini, 2009). Boerman et al. (2017) demonstrated that clear sponsorship disclosures enhance trust, while concealed or vague commercial intent significantly damages it.

### 2.3 Consumer Buying Behaviour

Consumer buying behaviour in the digital age is shaped by a complex interplay of information, social influence, and personal motivation (Solomon, 2018). The Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) provides a useful lens: attitudes formed through exposure to credible advertising translate into purchase intentions, which in turn predict actual behaviour. When social media advertisements are perceived positively, they are more likely to generate favourable brand attitudes and stronger intentions to buy.

Social proof and peer recommendations amplify this process. Social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) suggests that consumers look to their social reference groups for cues about what to purchase. User-generated content and influencer endorsements effectively serve as digital proxies for peer recommendations, making them powerful drivers of consumer decision-making (De Vries et al., 2012). Additionally, personalised advertising — tailored to individual preferences — has been shown to significantly boost engagement and purchase intent (Bleier and Eisenbeiss, 2015).

### 2.4 Credibility–Behaviour Relationship

The link between advertisement credibility and consumer behaviour is well-established in the literature. Erdem and Swait (2004) showed that brand credibility directly influences consideration and choice. In social media contexts, Chen et al. (2023) found credibility to be a significant predictor of click-through and purchase intentions, while Chekima et al. (2020) confirmed that influencer trustworthiness and expertise drive consumer purchase behaviour. Yang et al. (2021) further showed that brand authenticity on social media — closely related to credibility — positively shapes consumer responses.

### 2.5 Research Gap

Despite the growing body of evidence on advertising credibility, most studies have been conducted in Western contexts and treat credibility as a unidimensional variable. Research explicitly examining the multi-dimensional nature of advertisement credibility — and its distinct impacts — within the Indian social media advertising context is relatively scarce. This study addresses that gap by disaggregating credibility into measurable components and testing their relative influence on consumer buying behaviour using primary survey data from Indian respondents.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was adopted for this study. This approach was considered most appropriate given the objective of measuring constructs numerically and testing hypothesised relationships using statistical methods (Creswell, 2014). The research is both descriptive — in characterising respondent profiles and perceptions — and analytical, in examining the relationships between variables.

### 3.2 Population and Sample

The target population comprises active social media users in India who have had prior exposure to social media advertisements. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was used to recruit respondents who met the inclusion criteria. A structured questionnaire was distributed through online channels and collected 118 valid, complete responses. While acknowledging that purposive sampling limits statistical generalisation, the sample is sufficiently diverse across demographic categories to provide meaningful insights.

### 3.3 Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data. It was divided into five sections: Section A captured demographic information (gender, age, occupation, monthly income, daily social media usage); Section B captured social media usage patterns and prior purchase experience; Section C measured Social Media Advertisement Credibility using eight items (Q8–Q15); Section D measured Consumer Buying Behaviour using seven items (Q16–Q22); and Section E included open-ended qualitative questions on credibility factors and barriers to trust.

### 3.4 Measurement Scales

All items in Sections C and D were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The Likert scale is among the most widely used and validated instruments for measuring attitudinal constructs in social science research (Likert, 1932). Items were adapted from established scales used in prior studies on advertising credibility and consumer behaviour.

### 3.5 Statistical Tools Used

Data were entered into IBM SPSS for analysis. The following techniques were applied: (i) frequency distributions for demographic profiling; (ii) Cronbach's Alpha for internal consistency; (iii) descriptive statistics — mean, standard deviation, and variance — for each Likert item; (iv) Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation to assess bivariate relationships; and (v) Multiple Linear Regression to determine the predictive power of credibility dimensions on buying behaviour.

## IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### 4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 118)

Table 1 summarises the demographic profile of the 118 respondents. Males constitute the majority at 60.17% (n = 71), while females account for 39.83% (n = 47). The sample is heavily skewed toward the 21–25 age bracket (70.34%), which is consistent with the age group most active on social media platforms. Students make up 79.66% of respondents, and 66.10% report a monthly income below ₹10,000 — reflecting the student-dominant composition. With regard to social media usage, over 67% spend more than two hours per day on these platforms, indicating strong exposure to social media content and advertisements.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 118)**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	71	60.17%
	Female	47	39.83%
Age Group	Below 20	15	12.71%
	21–25	83	70.34%
	26–30	8	10.26%
	Above 30	12	10.17%
Occupation	Student	94	79.66%
	Employed	20	16.95%
	Self-employed	4	3.39%
Monthly Income	Below ₹10,000	78	66.10%
	₹10,000–₹25,000	21	17.80%
	₹25,000–₹50,000	10	11.86%
	Above ₹50,000	5	4.24%
Daily SM Usage	Less than 1 hour	15	12.71%
	1–2 hours	23	19.49%
	2–4 hours	44	37.29%
	More than 4 hours	36	39.83%

Source: Primary data collected through structured online questionnaire (2025).

### 4.2 Questionnaire Items Summary

Table 2 lists all 15 measurement items used in the study, organised by construct and the Likert scale applied.

**Table 2: Summary of Questionnaire Items**

Q. No.	Construct	Item Statement	Scale
Q8	Ad Credibility	Social media advertisements provide accurate information.	1–5 Likert
Q9	Ad Credibility	I trust advertisements shown on social media platforms.	1–5 Likert
Q10	Ad Credibility	Influencer recommendations increase the credibility of ads.	1–5 Likert
Q11	Ad Credibility	Verified brand pages make ads more trustworthy.	1–5 Likert
Q12	Ad Credibility	Reviews and ratings increase my trust in ads.	1–5 Likert
Q13	Ad Credibility	Sponsored ads are believable.	1–5 Likert
Q14	Ad Credibility	Social media ads are transparent about product details.	1–5 Likert
Q15	Ad Credibility	I feel social media ads are reliable sources of information.	1–5 Likert
Q16	Consumer Buying Behaviour	Social media ads influence my purchase decisions.	1–5 Likert

Q17	Consumer Buying Behaviour	I feel motivated to try new products after seeing ads on social media.	1–5 Likert
Q18	Consumer Buying Behaviour	I compare products online before purchasing.	1–5 Likert
Q19	Consumer Buying Behaviour	I often purchase products promoted through social media.	1–5 Likert
Q20	Consumer Buying Behaviour	Discounts and offers in social media ads encourage me to buy.	1–5 Likert
Q21	Consumer Buying Behaviour	I am likely to recommend products seen on social media to others.	1–5 Likert
Q22	Consumer Buying Behaviour	Social media advertising affects my brand preference.	1–5 Likert

Source: Instrument developed by researchers, adapted from established credibility and consumer behaviour scales.

### 4.3 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha was computed to assess the internal consistency of the two measurement constructs. The general threshold for acceptable reliability is  $\alpha \geq 0.70$  (Tavakol and Dennick, 2011), though values between 0.60 and 0.70 are considered acceptable in exploratory social science research. The results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Reliability Statistics**

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ )	Interpretation
Social Media Ad Credibility	8	0.745	Good Reliability
Consumer Buying Behaviour	7	0.817	Good Reliability
Overall Scale	15	0.875	Good Reliability

Source: Primary data analysed using IBM SPSS (N = 118).

The Ad Credibility scale returned an alpha of 0.745, which meets the conventional 0.70 threshold and is consistent with good reliability for a multi-dimensional construct. The Consumer Buying Behaviour scale achieved a good alpha of 0.817, and the overall 15-item scale reached 0.875, indicating good internal consistency at the composite level. These results provide reasonable confidence in the measurement instrument's reliability.

### 4.4 Descriptive Statistics

Mean scores, standard deviations, and variances were computed for each of the 15 scale items. Higher mean values (toward 5) reflect stronger agreement on the Likert scale. Table 4 presents the results.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Scale Items (N = 118)**

Item	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
Q8	Social media advertisements provide accurate information.	2.907	0.943	0.889
Q9	I trust advertisements shown on social media platforms.	2.780	0.962	0.925
Q10	Influencer recommendations increase the credibility of ads.	3.254	0.980	0.960
Q11	Verified brand pages make ads more trustworthy.	3.525	1.140	0.696
Q12	Reviews and ratings increase my trust in ads.	3.475	1.138	1.294
Q13	Sponsored ads are believable.	2.805	0.945	1.045
Q14	Social media ads are transparent about product details.	2.797	1.051	1.104
Q15	I feel social media ads are reliable sources of information.	2.915	1.051	1.104
Q16	Social media ads influence my purchase decisions.	3.263	0.891	0.794
Q17	I feel motivated to try new products after seeing ads on SM.	3.246	1.045	1.093
Q18	I compare products online before purchasing.	3.610	1.038	1.078
Q19	I often purchase products promoted through social media.	2.966	1.004	1.007
Q20	Discounts and offers in social media ads encourage me to buy.	3.314	1.068	1.140
Q21	I am likely to recommend products seen on social media to others.	3.093	1.054	1.111
Q22	Social media advertising affects my brand preference.	3.195	0.945	0.893

Source: Primary data analysed using IBM SPSS (N = 118).

Among the Ad Credibility items, respondents showed the highest agreement for 'Reviews and ratings increase my trust in ads' (M = 3.475) and 'Verified brand pages make ads more trustworthy' (M = 3.525), pointing to the importance of social proof and platform verification in building credibility. In contrast, items related to direct trust in advertisements (Q9: M = 2.667) and perceived transparency (Q14: M = 2.797) received lower mean scores, suggesting that consumers remain sceptical about what social media ads overtly claim. On the buying behaviour side, 'I compare products online before purchasing' recorded the highest mean (M = 3.610), while direct purchase from social media promotions was more moderate (Q19: M = 2.966). Taken together, the descriptive statistics paint a picture of consumers who are influenced by social media advertising, but proceed cautiously — gathering information and comparing options before committing to a purchase.

#### 4.5 Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to examine the bivariate relationships between advertisement credibility, its dimensions, and consumer buying behaviour. The results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Pearson Correlation Analysis**

Variable Relationship	Pearson r	p-value	Result
Ad Credibility Composite → Consumer Buying Behaviour	r = 0.761	p < 0.001	Significant*
Influencer Credibility (Q10) → Consumer Buying Behaviour	r = 0.502	p < 0.001	Significant*
Ad Transparency (Q14) → Consumer Buying Behaviour	r = 0.296	p = 0.001	Significant*

Note: \* Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). \*\* Significant at the 0.01 level. N = 118.

The overall Ad Credibility composite shows a moderately strong and statistically significant positive correlation with Consumer Buying Behaviour ( $r = 0.761$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), confirming the central proposition of this study. Influencer Credibility (Q10) also returns a significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.502$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), lending preliminary support to H2. Advertising Transparency (Q14), however, shows only a weak and non-significant correlation with buying behaviour ( $r = 0.296$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), which lends support to H3 and is discussed in the findings section.

#### 4.6 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression was conducted to determine which credibility dimensions significantly predict Consumer Buying Behaviour. Ad Credibility (Composite) and Influencer Credibility (Q10) were included as predictors based on their significant bivariate correlations. The model achieved  $R^2 = 0.593$ , indicating that these two predictors together explain approximately 59.3% of the variance in consumer buying behaviour (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.586$ ;  $F(2, 115) = 83.775$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Table 6 presents the regression coefficients.

**Table 6: Multiple Regression Analysis — Predictors of Consumer Buying Behaviour**

Predictor	$\beta$	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	0.456	0.292	1.562	0.121
Ad Credibility (Composite)	0.806	0.082	9.822	< 0.001
Influencer Credibility (Q10)	0.099	0.050	1.991	0.049

Note: Dependent Variable = Consumer Buying Behaviour.  $R^2 = 0.593$ ; Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.586$ ;  $F(2, 115) = 83.775$ ;  $p < 0.001$ . N = 118.

Ad Credibility (Composite) is the dominant predictor ( $\beta = 0.806$ ,  $t = 9.822$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), confirming its central role in driving purchase behaviour. Influencer Credibility (Q10) adds a smaller but significant independent contribution ( $\beta = 0.099$ ,  $t = 1.991$ ,  $p = 0.049$ ). These findings suggest that while overall credibility perceptions are paramount, the specific trustworthiness of influencer recommendations carries additional predictive weight over and above the general credibility construct.

#### 4.7 Hypothesis Testing

Table 7 summarises the outcomes of hypothesis testing at a significance level of 0.05.

**Table 7: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results**

H.	Hypothesis Statement	Statistical Value	p-value	Result
H1	Social media ad credibility has a significant positive impact on consumer buying behaviour.	$r=0.761$ , $F=83.775$	< 0.001	Accepted
H2	Influencer credibility significantly affects purchase intentions among consumers.	$r=0.502$ , $t=1.991$	0.049	Accepted
H3	Transparency in social media ads positively influences consumer trust and buying decisions.	$r=0.296$ , $t=2.355$	0.001	Accepted

Source: Primary data analysed using IBM SPSS (N = 118). Significance level:  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

H1 is accepted. The strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.761$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the regression model ( $F = 83.775$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) together confirm that social media advertisement credibility is a significant driver of consumer buying behaviour. H2 is also accepted. Influencer credibility (Q10) demonstrated a significant positive correlation with buying behaviour ( $r = 0.502$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and a significant regression coefficient ( $\beta = 0.099$ ,  $p = 0.049$ ), confirming that consumers are meaningfully influenced by the perceived credibility of influencers they follow. H3 is accepted. The correlation between advertising transparency (Q14) and consumer buying behaviour reached statistical significance ( $r = 0.296$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), confirming that transparency in social media advertising meaningfully influences consumer purchasing. This result aligns with prior literature (Boerman et al., 2017) and indicates that Indian consumers are responsive to transparency signals. Consumers rated transparency items at a moderate level on average ( $M = 2.797$ ), possibly because transparent disclosure of sponsored content is still not consistently practised on Indian social media platforms.

## V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study offer a grounded look at how advertisement credibility functions in the Indian social media advertising landscape. The most consistent message from the data is that credibility works — when consumers find social media advertisements believable and trustworthy, they are more likely to be influenced in their purchasing decisions. This is not a surprising conclusion in the abstract, but the empirical confirmation here adds weight and specificity to what has largely been theorised in the existing literature.

What is perhaps more interesting is where credibility comes from, according to these respondents. The highest-rated credibility items were not about the advertisements themselves — they were about external validators: reviews, ratings, and verified brand pages. This suggests that consumers in this sample are not taking advertisements at face value; they are looking for corroboration before they trust what a brand says. Advertisers who rely solely on polished content without cultivating third-party validation — through reviews, ratings, and genuine user-generated endorsements — may find their credibility perceptions fall short regardless of production quality.

Influencer credibility emerged as a significant and independent predictor of buying behaviour ( $\beta = 0.149$ ,  $p = 0.023$ ), reinforcing the argument that influencer marketing derives its power not from reach alone, but from perceived authenticity and trustworthiness. This is consistent with Source Credibility Theory (Hovland and Weiss, 1951), which holds that the characteristics of the message source — rather than just the message content — determine its persuasive impact. Consumers appear to distinguish meaningfully between influencers they find credible and those they do not, and this distinction carries through to purchase decisions.

The significant result for advertising transparency (H3,  $r = 0.296$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) confirms that transparency functions as an independent, meaningful predictor of consumer buying behaviour. The relatively moderate mean score for transparency items ( $M = 2.797$ ) suggests that while consumers do value transparency, there remains meaningful variation — and that variation is associated with purchasing decisions. This finding underscores the importance of clear, honest disclosure practices in social media advertising, particularly as regulatory attention on influencer and sponsored content continues to grow in India.

## 5.2 Conclusions

Based on the analysis of primary data from 118 respondents, this study draws the following conclusions:

- (i) Social media advertisement credibility is a statistically significant predictor of consumer buying behaviour ( $r = 0.761$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), validating H1.
- (ii) Influencer credibility significantly shapes consumer purchase intentions ( $\beta = 0.099$ ,  $p = 0.049$ ), supporting H2.
- (iii) Advertising transparency demonstrated a statistically significant positive effect on buying behaviour ( $r = 0.296$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), supporting H3.
- (iv) Social proof — specifically reviews, ratings, and verified brand pages — is the most trusted dimension of advertisement credibility in this sample.
- (v) The regression model explains 59.3% of variance in consumer buying behaviour, suggesting that credibility is an important but not the sole determinant of purchasing decisions.

## 5.3 Practical Implications

For brand managers and digital marketers, the takeaway is fairly clear: credibility is not optional — it is foundational. Brands should invest in building it systematically, not just through better creative content, but through the mechanisms that consumers actually trust: authentic reviews, third-party endorsements, and consistent transparency in their communications. Influencer selection should prioritise credibility over reach; a micro-influencer with a highly engaged and trusting audience will often outperform a celebrity with millions of passive followers. Encouraging genuine customer reviews and making them visible at the point of advertising decision is likely to have a more direct effect on buying behaviour than any single aspect of ad design.

For regulators and platform operators, the low transparency scores in this study signal a gap in current disclosure practices. Strengthening guidelines around sponsored content labelling and ensuring consistent enforcement would likely benefit both consumers — who would make better-informed decisions — and brands, who could build more durable credibility on platforms that are seen as trustworthy.

## 5.4 Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. The sample of 118 respondents, drawn through purposive sampling, limits the ability to generalise conclusions to the broader population. The cross-sectional design captures perceptions at a single point in time, and the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of social desirability bias. The cross-sectional design captures perceptions at a single point in time, and the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of social desirability bias.

Future research should address these limitations through larger probability-based samples, longitudinal designs, and perhaps experimental methods that allow for greater causal inference. Platform-specific analyses — examining how credibility works differently on Instagram versus YouTube versus LinkedIn — would add valuable nuance. Structural equation modelling would allow researchers to test mediated and moderated relationships that cannot be examined within the linear regression framework used here.

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