


# Chapter 5


## The Prominent Role of Influencers' Credibility in Establishing Brand Trust: Should I Trust you?

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study aims at investigating the impact of Instagram influencer credibility on brand trust and the subsequent attitudinal and intentional responses. An online experiment involving 300 Instagram users was conducted by manipulating influencer's credibility on an Instagram post. A PLS approach was used for data analysis. Findings show that Instagram posts from credible influencers foster greater brand trust compared to those from less credible influencers. The effect of influencers' credibility on brand trust becomes less pronounced when users exhibit scepticism. Additionally, the study reveals that brand trust positively influences brand attitudes, resulting in a more favourable disposition towards Instagram and heightened electronic word-of-mouth as well as purchase intentions.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the social networking industry, particularly Instagram has experienced remarkable growth (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017). This surge in popularity can be attributed to the myriad of opportunities for social interaction it allows in terms of sharing experiences, information, or integrating virtual brand communities (Pozharliev et al., 2022). Recognizing the profound appeal of this platform to Internet users and its potential for communication, companies have eagerly embraced it. Their primary method of engagement involves leveraging influencers who create viral content capable of capturing attention and fostering increased interaction (Kim and Kim, 2021). These influencers actively curate and share content on various aspects of their lives or specific topics like fashion, sports, health, lifestyle, and more. As a result, research into the impact of influencer marketing on the behaviour of social network users has proliferated, particularly in the Tunisian context (Jegham and Bouzaabia, 2022; Maghraoui and Khrouf, 2024). For example, Maghraoui and Khrouf (2024) proved that influencer–follower congruence enhances Gen Z trust, attitudes and intentions. Interest in influencer marketing in Tunisia is also reflected in the rise of social media, particularly Instagram, which is attracting brands and users. In 2024, 32.6% of Tunisian Internet users have an Instagram account (E-brand, 2024). Because of their growing popularity and perceived expertise, influencers are increasingly sought after by brands to endorse and promote their products (Farivar and Wang, 2022; Conde and Casais, 2023). The growing prevalence of influencer marketing is undeniably attributed to its superior effectiveness compared to traditional company-led campaigns (Venciute et al., 2023; Alboqami, 2023). Messages conveyed by trusted influencers hold more significant credibility in the eyes of their followers than conventional advertising (Janssen et al., 2021). This credibility, along with the perceived expertise of influencers and the authenticity of their recommendations, has been identified in various studies as a pivotal factor in establishing brand trust (Kim and Kim, 2021). Consequently, brands associated with influencers perceived as credible tend to inspire greater trust, resulting in more favourable attitudes and behavioural intentions (Venciute et al., 2023). On platforms like Instagram, the sheer volume of content shared by influencers has led message recipients to become increasingly sceptical and doubtful (Lee et al., 2021b). Therefore, maintaining a high level of credibility presents a significant challenge for influencers aiming to earn the trust and affinity of their audience (Tran and Strutton 2020). The literature overwhelmingly underscores the potential of influencer marketing and the pivotal role played by influencers in the

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