Impact of Influencers on Purchase Intention in Digital Environments

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Abstract: *The present study analyses the influence of digital influencers on consumer purchase intentions in Medellín, considering dimensions such as brand awareness, credibility, influencer type, advertising information, and purchase intent. A quantitative and descriptive approach was adopted, whereby 204 participants were surveyed using a structured 20-item questionnaire, administered both in person and online. The results indicate that over half of the respondents (55%) consider influencers' recommendations when selecting between similar products or services, thereby confirming their role as agents of persuasion in digital environments. Furthermore, 56% of participants recalled specific attributes of recommended products, demonstrating the influencers' contribution to brand recall. With regard to the credibility of the information provided, the results were equivocal: 39% of respondents expressed trust in the information conveyed, while 36% remained neutral and 24% expressed distrust. This finding underscores the necessity to enhance the perception of authenticity and transparency in order to ensure the reliability of the information provided. Conversely, 53% of consumers placed a higher value on niche influencers, despite their comparatively lower follower numbers. This finding underscores the prevailing significance of expertise over mass popularity. Finally, advertising information received the highest rating, with 62% approval, thus highlighting the importance of clarity and transparency in commercial communication. In conclusion, influencers represent a pivotal resource within the domain of digital marketing, the effectiveness of which is contingent upon their credibility, specialisation, and transparency in their messages.*

Keywords: *Digital Influencers, Purchase Intent, Credibility, Influencer Marketing, Consumers, Social Media, Transparency.*

1. Introduction

The advent of digital technologies and the consolidation of social media as forums for interaction have precipitated a radical transformation in the dynamics between consumers and brands. In the contemporary era,

the act of purchasing is no longer solely determined by conventional advertising methods. Instead, it is significantly influenced by the experiences, opinions and recommendations disseminated within digital spaces. In this context, digital influencers have become strategic actors who mediate consumer relationships, build narratives around products, and shape user perceptions [1].

The concept of an 'influencer' is not only associated with popularity, measured by the number of followers, but is also related to aspects such as credibility, congruence with the values of the audience, expertise in a specific niche, and the ability to generate emotional bonds. As asserted by Chetioui, Benlafqih, and Lebdaoui [2], attitudes towards influencers exert a direct influence on purchase intention, with the strengthening of positive attitudes towards products being concomitant with heightened perceived trust and brand congruence.

A plethora of studies have demonstrated that the attributes of influencers, including their perceived expertise, the transparency of their messages, and the aspirational identification they engender, exert a significant influence on consumers' purchasing intentions. Franco Ledesma, Ortega Roller, and Rioja Palacios [3] established that congruence between consumers, brands, and influencers, in conjunction with digital engagement, has a significant impact on impulse purchases on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. This finding serves to substantiate the hypothesis that the established relationship is not merely transactional in nature, but is also symbolic and aspirational in essence.

Moreover, the pertinence of influencers in the contemporary context extends beyond the realm of commercial persuasion, encompassing the establishment of identity and sense of belonging within digital communities. As Burciaga Sánchez et al. [4] have demonstrated, social media platforms such as Instagram exert a direct influence on the consumer behaviour of university students. These students utilise such platforms not only to access product information, but also to encounter lifestyle references and social validation. In this sense, recommendations from content creators are perceived as more relatable and authentic than traditional advertising, which increases brand trust and recall.

On a global scale, it has been observed that the influence of digital technologies is not limited by industry or consumer segment. For instance, Gomes, Marques, and Dias [5] have highlighted that in the domain of fashion, factors such as content quality and parasocial interaction with followers serve to reinforce purchase intentions. In a similar vein, studies conducted in Pakistan demonstrate that the integration of analytics systems, underpinned by artificial intelligence and decision-making models, can accurately gauge the influence of influencers on purchase intentions within sectors such as personal care [6]. These findings underscore the necessity to comprehend the influence of digital technologies across diverse sociocultural contexts.

In Latin America, and more specifically in Colombia, digital consumption has increased significantly over the last decade, driven by internet penetration and widespread access to mobile devices. Medellín, a city that has gained renown for its dynamism in innovation and technology, serves as a pertinent setting for the analysis of the phenomenon, given its high concentration of young, active social media users. This population consumes digital information and partakes in content co-creation and dissemination processes, thereby amplifying the impact of influencers on purchasing decisions.

Within this theoretical framework, the present article aims to analyse the influence of digital influencers on the purchasing intentions of consumers in Medellín, considering five key dimensions: purchase intention, brand awareness, credibility, influencer type, and advertising information. The present study seeks to provide empirical evidence on the role of content creators as agents of persuasion in digital environments, as well as contributing to the academic and business debate on the effectiveness of influencer marketing in Latin America.

2. Methodology

The present study was conducted using a quantitative and descriptive approach, with the purpose of analysing the factors that influence purchase intentions within digital environments based on the influence exerted by content creators. This approach was selected in response to the necessity for objective data that would facilitate systematic measurement and description of consumer perceptions of messages conveyed by influencers.

In contradistinction to qualitative studies, which are concerned with the deepening of subjective understanding of phenomena, the quantitative method facilitates the identification of general patterns within a given population and the subsequent comparison of results in different contexts [7].

The descriptive nature of the research is predicated on the intention to characterize a social and consumer phenomenon without intervening directly in the variables analysed. In this case, the objective was not to establish causal relationships or to perform experimental manipulations, but rather to offer a detailed snapshot of the behaviour of digital consumers in Medellín regarding the figure of the influencer. This design paradigm finds particular pertinence in domains such as digital marketing, where the evolving landscape of user perceptions and attitudes is in constant flux, influenced by social, technological, and cultural shifts [8].

Moreover, the quantitative approach enabled an examination of the phenomenon through the numerical measurement of attitudes and beliefs. This, in turn, facilitated the utilisation of statistical tools for the organisation of the information and the generation of evidence-based interpretations. This methodological strategy aligns with prior research examining the relationship between influencer attributes and purchase intention, wherein structured questionnaires and frequency analysis are prevalent techniques for observing trends and generalising findings at the population level [2, 9].

In summary, the decision to adopt a quantitative and descriptive approach ensured the collection of reliable and comparable data, thereby providing relevant input for the academic debate surrounding the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Consequently, a robust empirical foundation has been established, reflecting the reality of digital consumers in Medellín and paving the way for international comparisons.

2.1. Population and sample

The reference population comprised digital consumers residing in the city of Medellín (Colombia). In light of the exploratory nature of the study and the unavailability of a complete user database, a non-probability convenience sample was employed. A total of 204 participants voluntarily consented to the administration of the questionnaire, thereby ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the information provided.

The city of Medellín was selected as the context for this study due to its status as an innovative city and technology hub in Colombia. It is notable that Medellín has a high level of digital penetration and social media use, especially among younger demographics, including university students. Research conducted in analogous contexts has demonstrated that this demographic exhibits a high degree of receptivity to influencer-generated content. This renders it an optimal audience for the investigation of digital consumption patterns [4].

2.2. Data collection instrument

The collection of data was facilitated by the administration of a structured questionnaire consisting of 20 items, which was designed and administered based on a review of specialised literature on influencer marketing, consumer behaviour, and purchasing decision-making processes in digital environments. The purpose of the present instrument was to systematically and quantifiably capture participants' perceptions of different aspects related to the influence of content creators on social media.

The questionnaire was organised around five core constructs. Initially, purchase intention was incorporated, thus enabling the investigation of consumers' propensity to procure products or services that have been recommended by digital influencers. This construct was considered fundamental, as it is the most direct indicator of the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies. Secondly, brand awareness was addressed, a variable aimed at measuring consumers' ability to recall and associate key attributes of products or services promoted on digital platforms.

Thirdly, the influencer credibility dimension was incorporated, with the objective of identifying the level of trust consumers place in the information conveyed by these figures. This aspect has been highlighted in the literature as a determining factor in online decision-making. The fourth dimension focused on the type of influencer, with the objective of exploring whether consumers place greater importance on niche experts with

specialised knowledge or, conversely, on those creators with a large follower base. Finally, the dissemination of advertising information was assessed, understood as the perception of transparency, clarity, and honesty in the promotional messages disseminated by influencers. This constitutes a key element in building digital trust and credibility.

Responses to each item were recorded using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (score 1) to "strongly agree" (score 5). The selection of this scale is predicated on its extensive utilisation in research pertaining to consumer behaviour and digital influence, a domain in which it has been demonstrated to facilitate the identification of subtle nuances in participant perceptions. This scale offers a range that permits the differentiation between negative, neutral and positive attitudes [2].

2.3. Procedure

The administration of the questionnaire occurred in both physical and digital formats, utilising both digital forms and physical surveys in academic and social settings. Prior to the implementation of the final administration, a preliminary trial was conducted with a small group of participants. This trial ensured the clarity of the questions and the internal consistency of the instrument.

The participants were informed about the research objectives and assured that their participation was voluntary, in accordance with the ethical principles of social research. To mitigate the potential for bias, no financial incentives were provided to the participants.

2.4. Data analysis

The collected data were then tabulated and organised into databases for subsequent analysis. A descriptive univariate analysis based on absolute and relative frequencies was employed, which facilitated the identification of response trends and the measurement of the degree of acceptance, neutrality, or rejection of the proposed constructs.

This form of analysis is consistent with the findings of earlier studies that examined the impact of digital environments on consumer decision-making. These studies concluded that descriptive indicators can serve as a reliable initial estimate for characterising perceptions and attitudes [8, 9].

3. Results and Discussion

The analysis of the collected data allowed for the identification of clear trends regarding the influence that content creators exert on the purchasing behaviour of digital consumers in Medellín. The results demonstrate that the influencer fulfils a promotional role in addition to impacting variables associated with brand awareness, trust in information, and the perception of transparency in advertising messages.

With regard to the question of purchase intention, a majority of survey respondents (55%) acknowledged that they typically give consideration to the recommendations of influencers when confronted with a choice between similar products or services. This finding is consistent with that suggested by Chetioui, Benlafqih, and Lebdaoui [2], who demonstrate that a positive attitude toward influencers translates into a greater willingness to purchase products promoted on digital platforms. While there exists a minority of dissenting opinions, the prevailing tendency is one of positivity, thereby serving to consolidate the role of influencers as agents of persuasion.

With regard to brand awareness, 56% of participants stated that they easily remembered specific features of the products or services recommended by these figures. This finding lends further credence to the notion that influencers are adept at positioning distinctive attributes in the minds of consumers, thereby fostering favourable associations with brands. Research conducted by Vega Atiencie, Tapia Jaramillo, and Tapia Espinoza [10] lends further support to this finding, demonstrating that content marketing, when disseminated through the medium of influencers, exerts a more substantial influence on user recall.

With regard to the credibility of the information provided by influencers, the results were more equivocal: 39% of respondents expressed trust in the information transmitted by influencers, while 36% remained neutral and 24% expressed distrust. This comprehensive view suggests that, despite the acknowledgement of influencers' authority by a segment of consumers, a substantial degree of scepticism persists. This finding aligns with the observations made by Aparicio [8], who posits that young consumers place significant value on authenticity and transparency. The absence of these qualities, it is argued, can erode the trust consumers have in brands and their promoters.

The analysis of the influencer type variable demonstrated that 53% of respondents attributed greater importance to creators specialising in a niche, despite having a smaller following. This finding is significant because it underscores the tendency of consumers to prioritise knowledge and expertise over mass fame. In accordance with this assertion, Gomes, Marques, and Dias [5] posit that content quality and close interaction exert a more substantial influence on purchase intention than the quantity of followers.

Finally, advertising information obtained the most positive results: Furthermore, 62% of participants stated that they perceived the promotional messages disseminated by influencers to be clear and transparent. This finding underscores the pivotal role of honesty in communication in fostering consumer trust. As Gonçalves, Oliveira, Abreu and Mesquita [9] argue, transparency is a fundamental element in building lasting relationships between consumers and influencers.

The findings are summarised in Table 1, which presents a comparative overview of the positive, neutral, and negative trends in each of the dimensions analysed. The table provides a visual representation of the proportions, emphasising the most valued factors by consumers, namely information transparency and influencer expertise.

TABLE 1. RESULTS OF THE DIMENSIONS ANALYZED ON THE INFLUENCE OF INFLUENCERS

Variable	Positive trend (Agree + Strongly agree)	Neutrality	Negative trend (Disagree + Strongly disagree)	Main interpretation
Purchase intention	55%	29%	16%	Influencers influence product choices, although there is a skeptical group.
Brand awareness	56%	26%	17%	They reinforce attribute recall and brand association.
Credibility	39%	36%	24%	A significant level of neutrality and mistrust persists.
Type of influencer	53%	27%	19%	Consumers value specialization more than popularity.
Advertising information	62%	26%	12%	Transparency in messages strengthens brand trust.

4. Conclusions

This study demonstrated the central role that digital influencers play in consumer processes within virtual environments, particularly in Medellín, a city with high levels of connectivity and social media penetration. The findings of the present study demonstrate that these figures exert a significant influence on purchase intentions, thereby establishing themselves as agents of persuasion that directly impact consumer decisions. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that more than half of the participants reported that they had consulted influencer

recommendations when choosing between products or services. This finding serves to confirm the effectiveness of this strategy in the dynamics of digital marketing.

Furthermore, the analysis demonstrated that influencers play a significant role in brand awareness, as they assist consumers in retaining specific characteristics of the promoted products. This finding serves to reinforce the notion that the impact of these activities extends beyond immediate persuasion, instead leading to the establishment of positive and enduring associations with brands.

With regard to the question of credibility, the results were more equivocal. While a considerable proportion of respondents expressed confidence in the information conveyed by these figures, another significant group expressed neutrality or distrust. This underscores one of the pivotal challenges confronting influencer marketing: the necessity to fortify the perception of authenticity, ethics, and transparency in messages to mitigate scepticism and to fortify long-term relationships of trust.

Furthermore, it was evident that consumers place a higher value on influencers who specialise in specific niches than on celebrities with large audiences. This finding presents a strategic opportunity for brands, which may find more effective allies in micro- and nano-influencers with which to build credibility and generate greater engagement with segmented audiences.

The advertising information dimension was found to be the most widely accepted, thereby confirming that digital consumers place a high value on clarity and transparency in commercial messages. It is evident that communicative honesty is a pivotal factor in the relationship between brands, influencers, and audiences.

To summarise, the present study demonstrates that influencers represent a pivotal resource in the realm of contemporary digital marketing. Nevertheless, the efficacy of these individuals is contingent upon their capacity to convey messages that are transparent, to engender trust, and to establish authentic relationships with their respective communities. In order to facilitate a more informed future, it is recommended that brands strengthen ethical criteria in the selection of influencers and in the design of their campaigns, and that comparative research be conducted in other Latin American contexts to deepen our understanding of this global phenomenon.

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