



The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Vietnamese Consumers' Purchase Intention in the Post-period of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Hau Le* and Phuong Mai Nguyen

Faculty of Digital Communication, Gia Dinh University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

*Corresponding author, Email: lh.lehau@gmail.com

Abstract

The primary goal of this study was to investigate if social media influencers' expertise, popularity, the quality of information that social media influencers convey, consumer preference for social media influencers, and the attractiveness of social media influencer-generated content influenced Vietnamese consumers' purchase intention in the new normal of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Theory of Consumer Behavior and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) served as the foundation for the study's suggested paradigm. Five hypotheses were tested using a survey of Vietnamese consumers from the North, Central, and South regions who had made at least one purchase after watching social media influencer-generated content that was shared on social media. With the aid of an online survey method and convenience sampling, the researcher gathered 652 valid questionnaires. The effect of social media influencers on Vietnamese consumers' purchase intentions was examined using a regression analysis. The results of the research showed that social media influencers significantly influenced the purchase intentions of Vietnamese consumers. Consumer preference for social media influencers had the greatest impact, followed by the quality of information conveyed by social media influencers, the attractiveness of social media influencer-generated content, the social media influencers' expertise, and finally the social media influencers' popularity.

Keywords: Vietnamese Consumers, Purchase Intention, Social Media in Vietnam, Social Media Influencer, COVID-19, New Normal Life.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic first appeared in Vietnam in early 2021. Previous studies on the pandemic's impact have focused on disease prevention, but very few have looked at its impact on consumer behavior and economic activities in Vietnam. Therefore, developing a research model to investigate changes in Vietnamese consumer behavior following the new normal after COVID-19 pandemic is critical, as the pandemic has a significant impact on consumer behavior (Mass, 2020; Zietek, 2016) as well as their decision-making process (Mass, Narcom, & Mass, 2020).

The new normal phase began in the first six months of 2022. Shopping at retail points, distribution systems, and large and small stores are showing many signs of improvement. According to VNDirect Securities Company - VND's forecast, the retail industry will resume growth in the final six months of 2022. As a result, businesses should accelerate the transition from traditional to modern retail. Retailers in Vietnam make extensive use of online channels, sales applications, delivery channels, and multi-channel integration. Many retailers, such as Lotte Mart, have increased their online sales from 100% to 200%, particularly in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam Report, 2021).

According to a report by the social media research organization We Are Social, Vietnam's population reached 97.75 million in January 2021, with more than 68.72 million internet users (70.3% of the population) and 154.4 million internet-connected devices (Kemp, 2021). This is an opportunity for businesses to quickly and easily bring their products to the public. Social media has grown in popularity as a means for brands to achieve their marketing objectives and strengthen their brand equity (Arora & Sanni, 2019), (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018), (Dodoo, 2018), (Ibrahim, Aljarah, & Ababneh, 2020), (Kumar, Spais, Kumar, & Sureka, 2020), (Ott, Vafeiadis, Kumble, & Waddell, 2016), (Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012), (Pinto, Loureiro, Rita, & Sarmento, 2019).



The birth of a new concept, social media influencers are individuals who review products, provide product experience information to the public as a customer, provide comments, and evaluate the products based on their own experience. They establish their own community. These influencers have built a social network with a large following on the pages and are regarded as trustworthy trend locators (Abidin, 2016).

Because social media now has the presence of people with diverse backgrounds, the use of social media influencers for advertising communication has emerged as an effective and valuable vehicle for brands (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017), (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011), (Godey, et al., 2016) and for businesses looking to grow their consumer base and convert them into long-term customers. This type of marketing is valuable in building long-term customer relationships (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeftang, 2012), (Pinto, Loureiro, Rita, & Sarmiento, 2019), (Raji, Mohd Rashid, Mohd Ishak, & Mohamad, 2020).

Because of the differentiating factors of social media influencers and the creative nature of content, marketing through social media influencers is one of the most effective advertising methods. In order to have effective and appropriate marketing and advertising strategies in the post-pandemic period, it is necessary to have theories and data on the intermediary role as well as the effectiveness of marketing through social media influencers. However, no research paper has been published on the influencing factors of social media influencers on consumer purchase intentions, particularly among Vietnamese consumers.

A number of studies have been conducted to investigate how influencer marketing influences consumer purchase intention (Abreu, 2019), (Godey, et al., 2016), (Lim, Radzol, Cheah, & Wong, 2017), (Lou & Yuan, 2019), (Trivedi & Sama, 2020) in the context of influencer marketing; however, these studies failed to consider the role of trust in influencing consumers' online purchase intentions (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018), (Chin, Isa, & Alodin, 2020), (Hayes & Carr, 2015), (La Ferle & Choi, 2005).

As a result of their necessity and urgency, the author decided to conduct a specific and in-depth study on the factors of social media influencers influencing consumer purchase intention.

- RQ#1: Does the social media influencers' credibility impact on consumer purchase intention, including expertise, popularity, and the quality of information conveyed by social media influencers?
- RQ#2: Does preference of consumers for social media influencers impact on purchase intention?
- RQ#3: Does the attractiveness of social media influencer generated content impact on consumer purchase intention?

2. Objectives

This study was carried out to determine consumer purchase intentions in the presence of social media influencers in the new normal of COVID-19 pandemic. The following are the study's objectives:

- 1) To examine whether the social media influencers' credibility, including expertise, popularity, and the quality of information conveyed impacts on consumers' purchase intention.
- 2) To investigate whether the preference of consumers for social media influencers impacts on consumers' purchase intention.
- 3) To examine whether the attractiveness of social media influencer generated content impacts on consumers' purchase intention.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Social media influencers

3.1.1 Overview of influencers on social media in Vietnam:

Influencer marketing on social media is a type of marketing that uses influential people to influence consumer behavior. Between 2015 and 2018, the number of searches for "influencer marketing" increased 15 times, from 3,900 to 61,000 (Geyser, 2021). The interaction between social media influencers and their communities can promote the message of brands and products to the global market (Gillin, 2017). When it comes to influencers, there are three types: celebrities, influencers, and influencers in small customer groups (mass seeders) (Le H., 2022). The term "social media influencers" has become popular in the advertising industry due to consumers' interest in experiential advertisements. Small and medium-sized FMCG,



consumer packaged goods, cosmetics, food, and fashion advertisers have chosen social media influencers for specific communication strategies.

3.1.2 Consumer behavior:

According to Philip Kotler (2020), consumer behavior is defined as the precise actions taken by a person when deciding whether to buy, use, or discard a product or service.

Consumer behavior, according to Lamb and colleagues (2000), is the process by which consumers make decisions about the purchase or rejection of a product or service. The process of consumer choice decision adoption, according to Philip Kotler (2020), involves five stages: need recognition, information search, choice evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. The steps of information search and choice evaluation, in particular, are two critical steps that lead to purchase intention and purchase decision. As a result, in these two steps, businesses frequently focus on promoting marketing and persuading customers through promotion and advertising.

With the concepts discussed above, it is clear that consumer behavior is more than just actions that are visible to the outside world. Consumer behavior is a process of thinking, pondering, and comparing in order to arrive at a purchase intention and purchase decision.

As a result, consumer behavior can be defined as:

- People's thoughts and feelings throughout the buying and consuming process.
- Consumer behavior can be influenced by many external factors.
- Consumer behavior includes actions such as purchasing, using, or disposing of a product or service.

3.2 Purchase intention:

Purchase intention is the desire to buy a product in the near future (Che, Cheung, & Thadani, 2017). Purchase intention is thought to be a motivator and influencer of behavior. It indicates how far a person is willing to go to complete a consumption behavior. Perceiving and understanding the product and related information, evaluating and comparing products, and purchasing and evaluating products while using them are all part of the consumer decision-making process (Kotler & Armstrong, 2020). Before making a purchase decision or forming a purchase intention, consumers use social media influencers product experience information as a reference channel.

3.2.1 Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA):

The foundation for this research is Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which was built by Fishbein and Ajzen in 1975. TRA is interested in consumer behavior as well as determining behavioral biases, which is part of attitudes toward behavior. The purpose of this study is to investigate how Vietnamese consumers receive information from social media influencers and how that information influences their purchase intentions. This model's goal is to predict and explain the tendency to perform behaviors by attitudes toward consumer behavior which are better than consumer attitudes toward a product or service (Karami, 2006). TRA combines components which are beliefs, attitudes, norms, intentions, and behaviors. These components are not in the same order as in the three-component attitude model. As a result, the author believes that perceptions of the content generated by social media influencers, as well as feelings about social media influencers, should be included as independent variables in the proposed research model.

3.3 Hypotheses Development

The study builds and develops hypotheses based on the e-WOM model for consumers by Fan and research team (2013) and by Milad Kamtarin (2012).

3.3.1 Social media influencers' credibility:

The most important factor influencing consumers' purchasing decisions is the influencer's credibility (Dimitrova, 2013) in fashion field (Zietek, 2016). When a communicator is regarded as highly trustworthy, the information provided by that person has a greater impact on consumer attitudes (Ohanian, 1990). The trustworthiness of others will also influence consumers' purchase intentions and brand attitudes



(Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018), (Chin, Isa, & Alodin, 2020), (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017), (Hayes & Carr, 2015). Therefore, the first hypothesis was:

HP#1: Social media influencers' credibility impacts on Vietnamese consumers' purchase intentions

In Southeast Asia's transition economies, information characteristics, entertainment characteristics, message content, and reliability have a positive impact on consumers' perceived value of social media advertising, influencing their online purchase intention (Dao, Le, Cheng, & Chen, 2014).

Researchers have recognized various aspects of credibility in the past, but expertise and trustworthiness are still considered key aspects of credibility (Pornpitakpan, 2004), and these two factors are also the main determinants of the effectiveness of a message according to the source reliability model (Hovland, Janis, & Kelly, 1953).

Credibility affects the perceived reliability of information by consumers (Xiao, Wang, & Chan-Olmsted, 2018) and influences consumers' purchasing decisions (Hu, Lin, & Zhang, 2003). To be considered an expert, a collaborator must be well-versed in a subject, possess the necessary skills, or hold a prestigious title (Gass & Seiter, 2011). The audience perceives a communicator's expertise, which is linked to positive perceptions of advertising as well as purchase intention (Hayes & Carr, 2015), (Ohanian, 1990).

Sources from highly specialized individuals are frequently more persuasive than those from less specialized individuals, and they also have a more positive effect on attitudes, behavioral intentions, and even real-world consumer behavior (Maddux & Rogers, 1980).

Popularity is another factor that contributes to an influencer's credibility. Popularity begins to take shape and is a factor influencing consumers when an influencer has the knowledge and expertise to have their communication community. Customers' purchasing decisions and use of services are influenced by celebrities (Rashid, Nallamuthu, & Sidin, 2002). Celebrity images will attract customers or even improve product recognition (Rafique & Zafar, 2012). Through social media, a social media influencer can independently endorse and shape audience attitudes (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011). The popularity of an individual aids in attracting an audience and drawing attention to individual's actions. As a result, the popularity of the trust factor and the credibility of social media influencers are factors for research in this study.

Many previous studies have mentioned the quality of information provided by this group of people when discussing the reliability and credibility of influencers. According to the criterion, information quality is positively related to information reliability (Cheung, Sia, & Kuan, 2012), (Slater & Rouner, 1996). The trustworthiness of an influencer's sponsored post is positively influenced by its informative value, which shapes brand perception as well as consumer purchase intention (Arlı, 2017), (Lou & Yuan, 2019), (Ott, Vafeiadis, Kumble, & Waddell, 2016), (Taylor, Lewin, & Strutton, 2011). Furthermore, message quality and credibility influence consumer trust in social media (Lou & Yuan, 2019). The quality of information is also an important factor in establishing long-term and sustainable credibility and trust. Social media influencers gain credibility as their information becomes more reliable.

As a result, this study focuses on social media influencers' credibility factor, which has three characteristics: expertise, popularity, and the quality of information that social media influencers provide to consumers..

HP#1.1: Expertise of social media influencers impacts on Vietnamese consumers' purchase intentions

HP#1.2: Popularity of social media influencers impacts on Vietnamese consumers' purchase intentions

HP#1.3: Quality of information generated by social media influencers impacts on Vietnamese consumers' purchase intentions

3.3.2 Preference of consumers for social media influencers

The recipient's tendency to be attracted to the communicator's charm or personality, or the communicator's friendliness and approachability is likability (Desarbo & Harshman, 1985). A positive validator's preferred ability boosts credibility, consumer attitudes, and purchase intention (Kumar, Spais, Kumar, & Sureka, 2020), (La Ferle & Choi, 2005), (Wang, Kao, & Ngamsiriudom, 2017), (Xiao, Wang, & Chan-Olmsted, 2018). According to Surana (2008), if a consumer likes an influencer, the consumer will regard the influencer as a reliable source of information, resulting in the use of influencers in advertising.



Consumers will be more confident and positive as a result of the promotion. As a result, the factor "Preference of consumers for social media influencers" must be studied to determine whether consumers are biased toward the products that influencers' reviews provide.

HP#2: Preference of consumers for social media influencers impacts on Vietnamese consumers' purchase intentions

3.3.3 The attractiveness of social media influencer generated content:

Consumer perceptions of advertising on social media are positively influenced by its informational qualities, amusement value, message content, and dependability, which have a positive impact on their internet purchase intention (Dao, Le, Cheng, & Chen, 2014).

According to definitions, attractiveness refers to customers' feelings of affection, familiarity, and likeness (McGuire, 1985). In addition to originality and style, the attractiveness is a component of an attractive appearance (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017), (Ohanian, 1990). As a result, research needs to continually examine the variable "the attractiveness of social media influencer generated content."

HP#3: Attractiveness of social media influencer generated content impacts on Vietnamese consumers' purchase intentions

3.4 Methodology

3.4.1 Research design, Population, and Sample

The quantitative research method was used for this study, which included two stages: pilot test and official research. The researcher developed the model after researching the foundation theories, previous studies, and basic models of variables influencing consumers' purchase intention. The author investigated and developed research hypotheses. Preliminary and official research put the proposed model and hypotheses based on the previous model's relationships to the test. Because of its high efficiency, cost savings, and appropriate access to respondents during the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey was conducted in the form of an online survey via e-survey. 652 valid questionnaires were gathered from the online customer survey by email, Facebook Group, and Zalo application.

The survey's target audience is Vietnamese consumers aged 18 and older who intend to buy goods through social media influencers' content. At the same time, the author agreed to select subjects who bought goods after watching or viewing content of social media influencers at least one time in order to collect relevant and valuable data for the study.

3.4.2 Research Measurement

To reach Vietnamese consumers, this study employed the questionnaire in Vietnam. Based on the results of the pilot test with 30 respondents, it was conducted on the Cronbach's alpha reliability, and the necessary adjustments to the scale and items of the questionnaire were made before official use to collect data. Before the study was further conducted, the low observation indicators of low Cronbach's alpha were removed from the final version of the survey questionnaire.

3.4.3 Data Analysis

The multi-linear regression (MLR) method was used to determine the relationship between two or more independent and dependent variables (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2011). The MLR model was created and tested with a significance level of 5% in order to test the proposed causal relationship between independent dependent variables. The ENTER method was used for regression research. All variables were included at the same time, and statistical results were obtained. Through tolerance values or VIF, the regression results were used to test the hypotheses of multi-linear phenomena (correlation between independent variables) (coefficient of variance inflation). The VIF, or tolerance coefficient, was used to determine whether or not there was a multi-community phenomenon (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2011). The coefficient β also determined the influence of factors impacting on Vietnamese consumers' purchase intentions. The higher the Beta, the greater the influence on purchase intention.



3.4.4 Validity of the Study

The precision of the measurement in the questionnaire was tested in this study using the index of item-objective congruence (I.O.C) developed by Rovinelli and Hambleton (1977). After expert evaluation, each item in the questionnaire has an IOC greater than 0.5. Furthermore, the IOC gives the entire questionnaire a score of 0.82 (greater than 0.5). Therefore, the questionnaire with no observation variables was eliminated before the main survey was implemented.

3.4.5 Reliability of the Study

According to the pilot test, the alpha coefficient criterion of the questionnaire's reliability must be greater than or equal to 0.7.

According to the reliability test results in Table 1, all Cronbach's Alpha coefficients after 2 rounds are greater than 0.7 in the preliminary research step, satisfying the research's reliability criteria, therefore reliable scale for practical research.

Table 1 Results of alpha reliability tests

Coding	Variables	Round 1		Round 2	
		Cronbach's Alpha	N of item	Cronbach's Alpha	N of item
CRE	Social media influencers' credibility	0.855	16	0.879	12
- EXP	- Expertise of social media influencers	0.730	5	0.813	4
- POP	- Popularity of social media influencers	0.821	6	0.832	4
- QUA	- Quality of information	0.762	5	0.811	4
PRE	Preference of consumers for social media influencers	0.834	4	0.857	4
ATT	Attractiveness of social media influencer generated content	0.877	5	0.899	4

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results of Descriptive Statistics on Survey Respondents

The data was gathered through an online survey administered by the e-survey system; after removing invalid questionnaires, the group received 652 satisfactory answer sheets for statistical analysis.

Table 2 Demographic Information

Variables	Discription	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	297	45.6
	Female	355	54.4
	Total	652	100
Age	18 - 24	241	37.0
	25 - 30	211	32.4
	31 - 40	119	18.2
	41 - 50	51	7.8
	Over 50	30	4.6
	Total	652	100
Occupation	Student	251	38.5
	Officer	196	30.1
	Business owner	129	19.8
	Employee	34	5.3
	Other	41	6.3
	Total	652	100



Variables	Discription	Frequency	Percent
Income per month (VND)	< 10 mil	307	47.1
	10 mil - 20 mil	201	30.8
	20 mil - 35 mil	82	12.6
	>35 mil	62	9.5
	Total	652	100

The frequency and percentage of their demographic scores are shown in Table 2. In terms of gender, a large proportion were female respondents (54.4%). The majority of respondents were between the ages of 18 and 24 (37%), followed by those between the ages of 25 and 30 (32.4%), and those over the age of 30 (30.6%). Students accounted for 38.5% of all job questions, followed by officers (30.1%), business owners (19.8%), employees (5.3%), and others (6.3%). In terms of income, the majority of those who polled (47.1%) had income less than 10 million dong, followed by those earning between 10 million dong and 20 million dong (30.8%), those earning between 20 million dong and 35 million dong (12.6%), and those earning more than 35 million dong (9.5%).

4.2 Results of Descriptive Statistics on Examined Variables:

According to Table 3, the mean value of the observed variables was greater than 3.0 and the standard deviation (S.D) was less than 1.0. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were all greater than 0.7. As a result, the scales were reliable and were used in the next steps of this study. According to the statistics table, the variable "Quality of information" had the highest mean value (QUA = 4.028).

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics and Alpha Reliability Test of Examined Variables

Scales	Mean	S.D.	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Social media influencers' credibility				
- Expertise of social media influencers	3.719	0.4791	4	0.875
- Popularity of social media influencers	3.321	0.5481	4	0.888
- Quality of information	4.028	0.5992	4	0.847
Preference of consumers for social media influencers	3.913	0.5891	4	0.863
Attractiveness of social media influencer generated content	3.905	0.5634	4	0.814

4.3 Exploratory Factor Analysis - EFA:

The outcomes of the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) were divided into those that shared similar criteria and those that did not. The criteria in Table 4 which the factor loading higher than or equal to 0.5 were kept. Therefore, there were 5 groups created from the 20 criteria.

Table 4 Results of exploratory factor analysis EFA

OVs	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
POP1	0.831				
POP2	0.890				
POP5	0.874				
POP4	0.813				
ATT2		0.792			
ATT5		0.771			
ATT3		0.719			
ATT1		0.701			
QUA1			0.799		
QUA4			0.772		
QUA3			0.763		

[413]



OVs	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
QUA2			0.729		
PRE2				0.890	
PRE4				0.831	
PRE3				0.814	
PRE1				0.791	
EXP1					0.751
EXP3					0.722
EXP4					0.719
EXP2					0.703
Sig. = 0.000					
KMO = 0.882					
Principle Axis Factoring, Promax Rotation					

According to the requirements of the approach, factor loading of the observed variables in each scale had increased and was acceptable (factor loading > 0.5). The author can use it in the next study steps thanks to EFA analysis.

4.4 Results of Hypothesis Testing

4.4.1 Correlation analysis

Table 5 Correlations between variables

		EXP	POP	QUA	PRE	ATT	PI
Expertise (EXP)	Pearson Correlation	1	.072	.280**	.251**	.345**	.389**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002	.000	.000	.000	.000
	Interpretation		+	+	+	+	+
Popularity (POP)	Pearson Correlation	.076	1	.178**	.177**	.159**	.371**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.004	.003	.045	.000
	Interpretation	+		+	+	+	+
Quality of information (QUA)	Pearson Correlation	.278**	.167**	1	.283**	.349**	.426**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.002		.001	.000	.000
	Interpretation	+	+		+	+	+
Preference (PRE)	Pearson Correlation	.255**	.188**	.259**	1	.369**	.477**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001		.000	.000
	Interpretation	+	+	+		+	+
Attractiveness (ATT)	Pearson Correlation	.376**	.321**	.289**	.371**	1	.331**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	Interpretation	+	+	+	+		+
Purchase intention (PI)	Pearson Correlation	.394**	.354**	.437**	.599**	.471**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	Interpretation	+	+	+	+	+	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

“+”: Positive correlation

“-”: Negative correlation

Table 5 shows Pearson coefficient r which was positive (+) with the correlation of the independent variables and one dependent variable, indicating that as each independent variable increases, so does the

[414]



dependent variable. Second, the Pearson correlation between the predictor and the dependent variable varies between 0.3 and 0.5. They were found to be significantly positively correlated. The Sig. 2-tailed value between each independent and dependent variables was 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the correlation results were statistically significant at the 5% level. Furthermore, it met the requirements for performing regression analysis.

4.4.2 Regression analysis

Table 6 Regression analysis results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.533	.212			.000		
EXP	.201	.042	.157	3.135	.000	.821	1.121
POP	.182	.047	.141	3.016	.000	.779	1.056
QUA	.312	.039	.207	4.243	.000	.842	1.212
PRE	.501	.037	.405	13.057	.000	.835	1.323
ATT	.199	.040	.189	3.642	.000	.821	1.043

Adjusted R^2 : 0.721

Durbin-Watson: 1.801

ANOVA^a (sig.): 0.000

Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention (PI)

According to Table 6, adjusted R-square was 0.721 ($p < 0.001$), indicating that 5 independent variables can explain 72.1% of the change in purchase intention. The Durbin-Watson coefficient of 1.801 in this analysis fell within the accepted safe zone. The ANOVA sig was 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating that the independent and dependent variables had a linear relationship, which means that the independent variables can explain the change in the dependent variable (PI). The VIF coefficients of the dependent variables (EXP, POP, QUA, PRE, and ATT) ranged from 1 to 10, indicating that multi-collinearity was absent in this study. As a result, the relationship between the independent variables had no bearing on the linear regression model's interpretation, analysis, and conclusion. The linear regression model can be concluded to be well formed and statistically significant. For this study, the regression model with an unnormalized beta coefficient is as follows:

$$PI = 0.533 + 0.201EXP + 0.182POP + 0.312QUA + 0.501PRE + 0.199ATT + \varepsilon$$

4.5 Hypothesis Testing Results

The following are the results of hypothesis testing based on the above equation.

Table 7 Results of Hypothesis Testing

	Description	Result
HP#1:	Social media influencers' credibility impacts on Vietnamese consumers' purchase intentions	accepted
HP#1.1:	Expertise of social media influencers impacts on Vietnamese consumers' purchase intentions	accepted
HP#1.2:	Popularity of social media influencers impacts on Vietnamese consumers' purchase intentions	accepted
HP#1.3:	Quality of information generated by social media influencers impacts on Vietnamese consumers' purchase intentions	accepted
HP#2:	Preference of consumers for social media influencers impacts on Vietnamese consumers' purchase intentions	accepted
HP#3:	Attractiveness of social media influencer generated content impacts on Vietnamese consumers' purchase intentions	accepted



5. Discussions:

5.1 Discussions Based on Theories:

5.1.1 Theory of Consumer Behavior:

The consumer goes through the stages of information search and information evaluation before making a purchase choice. Referencing multiple sources is crucial because depending solely on one source of information cannot be enough to influence consumers' decision-making. The Vietnam Government adopted a social isolation strategy during the epidemic era, and Vietnamese consumers used influencers' social media channels as a source of entertainment in their leisure time. A sense of enjoyment spent on the influencers develops from there. Customers then have a tendency to believe and be intrigued by the information provided by the social media influencers. Consumers can readily obtain information, consult it, assess it, and decide whether to make a purchase.

5.1.2. Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA):

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) contends that people act in accordance with their preexisting attitudes and behavioral plans. People will behave based on the outcomes they anticipate from engaging in the behavior. When knowledge comes from a reliable source, Vietnamese consumers are significantly impacted. As a result, the customer selects the influencer's credibility. According to research, consumers are less interested in influencers than they are in the attributes that contribute to an influencer's image, such as expertise, popularity, and quality. Customers have restricted hands-on time with products during the COVID-19 pandemic's affected period. Owing to technology, consumers now have reached information from social media influencers before making a purchasing choice. This information enables customers to purchase exactly the goods they expect.

5.2 Discussions Based on the Past Studies:

5.2.1 Social media influencers' credibility:

The regression study results show a positive relationship between the factors of expertise, popularity, and quality of information in social media influencers' trustworthiness and consumer purchase intention. This demonstrates that this study's findings are consistent with previous research, indicating that trust influences consumers' purchase intentions. This study also delves deeper into the factors that contribute to social media influencers' reliability. According to the study, the quality of information that builds trust for social media influencers had the greatest influence on three factors: quality of information (0.312), expertise (0.201), and popularity (0.182), respectively.

5.2.2 Preference of consumers for social media influencers:

According to the findings of this study, the preference of consumers for social media influencers had the greatest influence on consumer purchase intention, with a coefficient $X(PRE) = 0.501$. This is a novel finding when compared to previous studies that found the factor of trustworthiness of influencers to be the most powerful (Le & Hoang, 2018), (Zietek, 2016), (Dimitrova, 2013).

5.2.3 The attractiveness of social media influencer generated content:

According to the findings, the attractiveness of social media influencer generated content had an impact on consumer purchase intentions, ranking third after preference for social media influencers and quality of information in social media influencers' trust. This study brought to light a previously unknown factor - the attractiveness of content produced by social media influencers which influences consumers' purchase intentions on social media.

Thus, in general, the findings of this study are consistent with previous research. The study did not deviate from some of the previous studies' findings and discovered interesting results when compared to previous research that the factor of "Preference of consumers for social media influencers" had the highest Beta coefficient. That is, consumers will be influenced and tend to form purchase intentions when watching videos of their favorite influencers.

5.3 Discussions Based on Researcher's Expectations:

Three research questions are addressed in the study:

[416]



RQ#1: Does the social media influencers' credibility impact on consumer purchase intention, including expertise, popularity, and the quality of information conveyed by social media influencers?

RQ#2: Does preference of consumers for social media influencers impact on purchase intention?

RQ#3: Does the attractiveness of social media influencer generated content impact on consumer purchase intention?

Furthermore, the research results show that the consumer preference for social media influencers is the influencing factor of social media influencers on the purchase intention of Vietnamese consumers besides the quality of the information, the attractiveness of the social media influencers' content, the expertise of the social media influencers, and finally the popularity of the social media influencers. Thus, it cannot be concluded that influencers' famous personality accounts for Vietnamese consumers' purchase intentions.

6. Conclusion

This research contributes to a research model on the influence of social media influencers on Vietnamese consumers' purchase intentions, including social media influencers' credibility, consumer preference for social media influencers, and the attractiveness of social media influencer generated content in a new normal life. This study also includes more specific scales in the credibility factor of social media influencers, such as expertise, popularity, and the quality of information provided by social media influencers, which can be useful for academic research from marketing and application to the operation of social media influencers and businesses in their marketing strategies.

The study's findings are as follows: consumer preference for social media influencers has the greatest impact, followed by the quality of the information social media influencers convey, the attractiveness of the social media influencer generated content, the expertise of the social media influencers, and last but not least, the popularity of social media influencers. According to the findings of the preceding studies, factors such as consumer preference for social media influencers and their meaningful messages have a greater influence on the purchase intention of Vietnamese consumers on the Internet. The remaining study results show that the factors of content attractiveness and popularity of social media influencers have a minor impact on consumers' purchase intentions. We provide references and suggestions for researchers, businesses, and social media influencers in conducting research and developing effective communication plans.

For the researcher, this study can be used as a resource for students and researchers studying media. This is a source of information for students and researchers to draw on to continue conducting similar or more in-depth studies integrating one or more of the influencing factors in the research model that this study has proposed.

For social media influencers, this study has fully demonstrated the influencing factors that social media influencers must keep in mind in order to develop a better plan for their own content. According to the findings of this study, social media influencers should invest in developing a close, friendly image and a positive attitude that will encourage purchasing behavior, among other things.

For the businesses, they can consider the factors that influence their customer groups, such as social media influencers' expertise in the product that the business has, to make the right choice in hiring a social media influencer for a product, while the rest of the factors can also be applied in hiring a more suitable social media influencer for the business. This study demonstrates that the most important factor is the consumer preference for social media influencers, which can serve as a criterion for a business or a media strategist in selecting appropriate social media influencers for their communication activities. The results of this study can be used as a basis to select social media influencers for the company's marketing activities across all consumer goods, but they may be best suited to FMCG, consumer packaged goods (CPGs), and cosmetics.

Firstly, this study is time-limited. After discovering that users have a habit of using social media and forming purchase intentions, the research was built and conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the researcher completed the study in a short and limited time frame, which may have been flawed in terms of utilizing previous research data. It was also more difficult to gain access to and capitalize on the audience. Although an online survey form was chosen for this study to be more convenient, the researcher



did not approach the respondents well to gain a better understanding of the interviewees directly and record their thoughts and feelings.

Based on this research, the research team will continue to investigate new forms of communication influencing the behavior and purchase intentions of Vietnamese consumers. Furthermore, further research on Vietnamese consumers is suggested to be conducted on specific media platforms.

7. Acknowledgements

This study was supported by Gia Dinh University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

8. References

- Mass, A., Narcom, J., & Mass, K. (2020). Changes in consumer decision-making resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Customer Behaviour*, 19(3).
- Vietnam Report. (2021). Retrieved from vietnamreport.net.vn: <https://vietnamreport.net.vn/Doanh-nghiep-nganh-ban-le-tim-cach-phuc-hoi-tang-truong-hau-COVID19-10056-1006.html>
- Kemp, S. (2021). *We Are Social*. Retrieved from We Are Social: <https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2021/01/digital-2021-the-latest-insights-into-the-state-of-digital/>
- Arora, A. S., & Sanni, S. A. (2019). Ten Years of 'Social Media Marketing' Research in the Journal of Promotion Management: Research Synthesis, Emerging Themes, and New Directions. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 25(4), 476–499.
- Chakraborty, U., & Bhat, S. (2018). The Effects of Credible Online Reviews on Brand Equity Dimensions and Its Consequence on Consumer Behavior. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 24(1), 57-82.
- Dodoo, N. A. (2018). Why Consumers Like Facebook Brands: The Role of Aspirational Brand Personality in Consumer Behavior. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 24(1), 103-127.
- Ibrahim, B., Aljarah, A., & Ababneh, B. (2020). Do Social Media Marketing Activities Enhance Consumer Perception of Brands? A Meta-Analytic Examination. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 26(4), 544–568.
- Kumar, S., Spais, G. S., Kumar, D., & Sureka, R. (2020). A Bibliometric History of the Journal of Promotion Management. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 26(1), 97-120.
- Ott, H. K., Vafeiadis, M., Kumble, S., & Waddell, T. F. (2016). Effect of Message Interactivity on Product Attitudes and Purchase Intentions. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 22(1), 89-106.
- Papasolomou, I., & Melanthiou, Y. (2012). Social Media: Marketing Public Relations' New Best Friend. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 18(3), 319-328.
- Pinto, L., Loureiro, S. M., Rita, P., & Sarmento, E. M. (2019). Fostering Online Relationships With Brands Through Websites and Social Media Brand Pages. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 25(3), 379-393.
- Abidin, C. (2016). Visibility labour: Engaging with Influencers' fashion brands and #OOTD advertorial campaigns on Instagram. *Media International Australia*, 161(1), 86-100.
- De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising*, 36(5), 798-828.
- Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public Relations Review*, 37(1), 90-92.
- Godey, B., Manthiou, A., Pederzoli, D., Rokka, J., Aiello, G., Donvito, R., & Singh, R. (2016). Social media marketing efforts of luxury brands: Influence on brand equity and consumer behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(12), 5833-5841.
- De Vries, L., Gensler, S., & Leeftang, P. S. (2012). Popularity of Brand Posts on Brand Fan Pages: An Investigation of the Effects of Social Media Marketing. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(2), 83-91.



- Raji, R. A., Mohd Rashid, S., Mohd Ishak, S., & Mohamad, B. (2020). Do Firm-Created Contents on Social Media Enhance Brand Equity and Consumer Response Among Consumers of Automotive Brands? *Journal of Promotion Management*, 26(1), 19-49.
- Abreu, R. (2019). Social media micro-influencer marketing and purchasing intention of millennials: The role of perceived authenticity and trust [Doctoral dissertation].
- Lim, X. J., Radzol, A. M., Cheah, J., & Wong, M. W. (2017). The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention and the Mediation Effect of Customer Attitude. *Asian Journal of Business Research*, 7(2), 19-36.
- Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 19(1), 58-73.
- Trivedi, ., & Sama, R. (2020). The Effect of Influencer Marketing on Consumers' Brand Admiration and Online Purchase Intentions: An Emerging Market Perspective. *Journal of Internet Commerce*, 19(1), 103-124.
- Chin, P. N., Isa, S. M., & Alodin, Y. (2020). The impact of endorser and brand credibility on consumers purchase intention: The mediating effect of attitude towards brand and brand credibility. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 26(8), 896-912.
- Hayes, R. A., & Carr, C. T. (2015). Does Being Social Matter? Effects of Enabled Commenting on Credibility and Brand Attitude in Social Media. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 21(3), 371-390.
- La Ferle, C., & Choi, S. M. (2005). The importance of perceived endorser credibility in south korean advertising. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 27(2), 67-81.
- Geyser, W. (2021). *The State of Influencer Marketing 2019: Benchmark Report [+Infographic]*. Retrieved from Influencer Marketing Hub: <https://influencermarketinghub.com/influencer-marketing-2019-benchmark-report/#:~:text=Therefore%2C%20it%20is%20interesting%20that,their%20budget%20to%20the%20practice>.
- Gillin, P. (2017). *The New Influencers: A Marketer's Guide to the New Social Media*. Word Dancer Press.
- Le, H. (2022). How Do the Influencing Factors of Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) on Social Networks Affect Vietnamese Consumers' Purchase Intention? *RSU International Research Conference 2022* (pp. 252-269). Bangkok, Thailand: Rangsit University.
- Lamb, C. W., Hair, J. F., & McDaniel, C. (2000). *Essentials of Marketing*. South-Western College Pub.
- Che, J. W., Cheung, C. M., & Thadani, D. (2017). Consumer Purchase Decision in Instagram Stores. The Role of Consumer Trust. *HICSS*, 24-33.
- Karami, M. (2006). Factors influencing adoptions of online ticketing. Lulea University of Technology, Master thesis.
- Fan, Y. M., Miao, Y. F., Fang, Y. F., Fang, Y. H., & Lin, R. L. (2013). Establishing the Adoption of Electronic Word-of-Mouth through Consumers' Perceived Credibility. *International Business Research*, 6(3).
- Kamtarin, M. (2012). The Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth, Trust and Perceived Value on Behavioral Intention from the Perspective of Consumers. *International Journal of Academic Research in Economics and Management Science*, 1(4).
- Dimitrova, I. (2013). Influential word-of-mouth on social media. *Multi Behavior Research*.
- Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 19(3), 39-52.
- Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 68, 1-7.
- Dao, W. V., Le, A. N., Cheng, J. M., & Chen, D. C. (2014). Social media advertising value: The case of transitional economies in Southeast Asia. *International Journal of Advertising*, 33(2), 271-294.



- Pornpitakpan, C. (2004). The Persuasiveness of Source Credibility: A Critical Review of Five Decades' Evidence. *In Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 34(2), 243–281.
- Hovland, C. I., Janis, I. L., & Kelly, H. H. (1953). *Communication and persuasion*. Yale University Press. New Haven, Conn.
- Xiao, M., Wang, R., & Chan-Olmsted, S. (2018). Factors affecting YouTube influencer marketing credibility: A heuristic-systematic model. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 15(3), 188-213.
- Hu, X., Lin, ., & Zhang, H. (2003). Trust promoting seals in electronic markets: An exploratory study of their effectiveness for online sales promotion. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 9(1-2), 163-180.
- Gass, R. H., & Seiter, J. S. (2011). *Persuasion, social influence and compliance gaining*. Routledge.
- Maddux, J. E., & Rogers, R. W. (1980). Effects of source expertness, physical attractiveness, and supporting arguments on persuasion: A case of brains over beauty. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 39(2), 235-244.
- Rashid, M. Z., Nallamuthu, J., & Sidin, S. M. (2002). Perceptions of advertising and celebrity endorsement in Malaysia. *Asia Pacific Management Review*, 7(4), Asia Pacific Management Review.
- Rafique, M., & Zafar, Q. U. (2012). Impact of celebrity advertisement on customers' brand perception and purchase intention. *Asian Journal of Business and Management Sciences*, 1(11), 53-67.
- Cheung, C. M., Sia, C. L., & Kuan, K. K. (2012). Is this review believable? A study of factors affecting the credibility of online consumer reviews from an ELM perspective. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 13(8), 618–635.
- Slater, M. D., & Rouner, D. (1996). How Message Evaluation and Source Attributes May Influence Credibility Assessment and Belief Change. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 73(4), 974–991.
- Arli, D. (2017). Does Social Media Matter? Investigating the Effect of Social Media Features on Consumer Attitudes. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 23(4), 521-539.
- Taylor, D. G., Lewin, J. E., & Strutton, D. (2011). Friends, fans, and followers: Do ads work on social networks? How gender and age shape receptivity. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 51(1), 258–276.
- McGuire, W. . (1985). Attitudes and attitude change. *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, 2, 233–346.
- Nguyen, T. D., & Nguyen, T. T. (2011). *Nghiên cứu Thị trường (Marketing Research)*. Hà Nội: Lao Động.
- Rovinelli, R. J., & Hambleton, R. K. (1977). On the Use of Content Specialists in the Assessment of CriterionReferenced Test Item Validity. *Institute of Education Science*, 37.
- Le, N. G., & Hoang, D. T. (2018). Impact of social media Influencer marketing on consumer at Ho Chi Minh City. *The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention*, 5(5), 4710-4714.
- Desarbo, W. S., & Harshman, R. A. (1985). Celebrity-brand congruence analysis. *Current issues and research in advertising*, 8(1), 17-52.
- Wang, S. W., Kao, G. ., & Ngamsiriudom. (2017). Consumers' attitude of endorser credibility, brand and intention with respect to celebrity endorsement of the airline sector. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 60, 10-17.
- Surana, R. (2008). The effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in India. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration*, 21, 178-184.
- Mass, A. (2020). Coronavirus disrupts the United States economy: A preliminary conceptual investigation. *Journal of International Business and Economics*, 20(3), 77.
- Zietek, N. (2016). Influencer Marketing - the characteristics and components of fashion influencer marketing. *Student Thesis*. The Swedish School of Textiles.
- Kotler, P., & Armstrong, G. (2020). *Principles of Marketing (1E) (18th)*. Harlow, United Kingdom: Pearson Education (JP).