Analyzing the Influence of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchase Intention: A Case Study of Fashion market in the Nepalese Market

Rakshya Khadka [1], Chompu Nuangjamnong [2]

Abstract

Purpose – This study investigates the influence of social media influencers on consumer purchase intention within the Nepalese fashion market, focusing on social media influencers trustworthiness, social media influencers credibility, social media influencers authenticity, and social media influencers expertise as key factors. **Design/Methodology/Approach** – The research employs a quantitative approach, utilizing a sample size of 390 respondents who completed a structured questionnaire. Multiple linear regression analysis is used to analyze the data and explore the relationships between social media influencer characteristics and consumer purchase intention. **Findings** – The study reveals that while credibility and expertise significantly impact consumer purchase intention, trustworthiness and authenticity do not. Influencers perceived as credible and knowledgeable about fashion trends are more likely to influence consumer purchasing decisions. **Research Limitations/Implications** – Limitations include a sample population skewed towards younger, higher-income individuals from the central region of Nepal, as well as the reliance on closed-ended survey questions. Future research should consider a more diverse sample and employ mixed-methods approaches for deeper insights. **Originality/value** – This study contributes to understanding the nuances of influencer marketing in the Nepalese fashion industry, highlighting the importance of credibility and expertise in driving consumer purchase intention. It offers valuable insights for businesses and marketers seeking to enhance their influencer marketing strategies in Nepal.

Keywords – Social Media Influencer Trustworthiness, Social Media Influencer Credibility, Social Media Influencer Authenticity, Social Media Expertise and Consumer Purchase Intention
JEL classification code – M31, M37, O33, L81

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of study

With the rise of social media influencers who have a huge impact on consumer behavior, the fashion industry in Nepal has undergone a major shift. Social media influencers, or SMIs, have emerged as important personalities who are influencing attitudes and setting trends in the Nepalese fashion industry. This study explores the dynamic relationship that exists between influencers and consumers, focusing on the effect

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that influencers' authenticity, trustworthiness, credibility, and expertise have on consumers' intentions to make purchases. The fashion industry in Nepal is undergoing a new era as a result of the growing popularity of social media platforms. Customers are increasingly looking to influencers for guidance, recommendations, and trend insights.

A number of social media influencers have become prominent figures in Nepal's fashion industry in recent years.

For example, Parakram SJB Rana. he has a significant following due to his ability to merge traditional and current fashion with ease, and he portrays a variety of styles in an authentic way. As shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. *Social Media followers of Parakram SJB Rana in every social media platform*
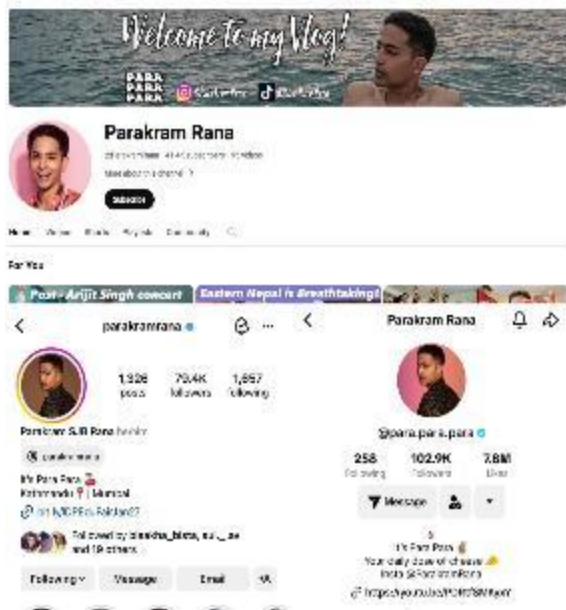
Source: Khadka, T. (2021, July 31). Parakram SJB Rana. *Nepali Trends*. Retrieved from https://www.nepalitrends.com/parakram-sjb-rana/

TikTok has become the source to bring hidden talented personalities among us. Parakram SJB Rana is one of them. He started making TikTok videos in 2019 and soon became popular among thousands of people. His tik tok account Para.Para. Para has more than 100K followers. He is more active in TikTok nowadays than on other platforms.

He posts about fashion trends and insights and also funny skits and fun videos with his family.

Parakram is equally active on Instagram as @parakhamrana and has almost about 80 K followers to date. He also earns from Instagram by posting videos on style and fashion. Similarly, he has started his vlogging journey through his own YouTube channel named 'Parakram Rana' with a 40K subscriber. (Khadka, 2021)

Comparably, by continuously offering insights into fashion techniques, Simpal Kharel has carved out a niche and connected with customers who care about fashion and beauty. As shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. *Social Media followers of Simpal Kharel in every social media platform*

Source: Das, N. (2023, May 5). Simpal Kharel: Age, height, bio, wiki, family, net worth in 2023. *Mumbai Kar's Perspective*. Retrieved from https://www.mumbaikarsperspective.com/entertainment/simpal-kharel-age-height-bio-wiki-family-net-worth-in-2023/cid10818814.htm

Simpal Kharel is a well-known singer, and influencer. She started her career as a singer and worked in many successful music videos alongside creating content in social media platforms. From 2019 – 2023 she got famous because she started to make content on social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube shorts related to fashion and beauty alongside her singing. At

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present, she has 1.5M followers on Instagram, 2.4M on TikTok and has 2.57M subscribers on YouTube. (Das, 2023)

These influencers, along with a few others, serve as examples of the various methods influencers employ to mold the fashion narrative in Nepal. In order to effectively navigate this influential landscape as it changes, brands and marketers must have a deep awareness of the complex connections that exist between customers and influencers.

With the specific context of the Nepalese fashion industry, this study aims to add significant insights to the increasing body of information on influencer marketing. Through an examination of the aspects of authenticity, trustworthiness, credibility, and expertise, this research attempts to break down the complex factors impacting consumer choices within the constantly changing domain of social media-driven fashion trends. This report offers a current and thorough investigation of the dynamic relationship that exists between consumers and social media influencers, providing actionable insights for businesses and stakeholders navigating this rapidly changing landscape as Nepal's fashion ecosystem continues to evolve.

1.2 Problem statements

Despite the growing presence of SMIs in the Nepalese fashion landscape, we don't yet have a clear understanding of how much consumers trust these influencers, perceive their content as authentic, believe in their credibility, or value their fashion expertise. The study aims to bridge this gap by delving into these specific attributes to uncover their impact on consumer behavior. By doing so, it intends to contribute valuable insights that can guide businesses, marketers, and policymakers in developing strategies that resonate more effectively with Nepalese consumers in the fashion market.

Marketers struggle to balance traditional techniques with the significant change of social media influencers (SMIs) in Nepal's dynamic fashion industry. The contradiction between traditional marketing approaches and the complex dynamics of influencer marketing is the root of the problem at hand. Traditional strategies frequently fail to connect with digitally advanced customers in an authentic manner, making it difficult to understand how the essential influencer marketing features such as authenticity, trustworthiness, credibility, and expertise affect consumers' intentions to make purchases. The purpose of this study is to close this gap by explaining the nuanced nature of influencer marketing in the context of Nepalese fashion and guiding marketers in the direction of consumer-resonant strategies.

1.3 Objectives of study

(1) To analyze the extent of influence that social media influencers have on consumer purchase intention in the Nepalese fashion market.

(2) To examine the level of influence trustworthiness perceived by consumers in social media influencers within the Nepalese fashion market.

(3) To identify the influence authenticity of social media influencers and its impact on consumer attitudes and behaviors in the Nepalese context.

(4) To examine the influence credibility of social media influencers and its association with consumer trust and purchase intention in the Nepalese fashion industry.

(5) To examine the influence expertise in fashion demonstrated by social media influencers and its role in shaping consumer perceptions and purchase intentions.

(6) To identify ways for businesses to enhance their influencer marketing strategies based on the findings of the study.

1.4 Research questions

(1) Does the level of influence that social media influencers exert over consumers' intentions of purchasing in Nepal's fashion industry matter?

(2) Do consumer attitudes and purchase intentions in the Nepalese fashion sector have a visible influence on the perceived level of trustworthiness of social media influencers?

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(3) Does the authenticity of social media influencers influence the views and actions of consumers, in the context of Nepal?

(4) Does the Nepalese fashion industry's purchasing intention get influenced by the credibility of social media influencers in relation to customer trust?

(6) Does social media influencers' expertise in fashion sense have a significant influence on how customers perceive the industry and what they intend to buy in Nepal?

(7) Does the research provide businesses with influential methods to improve their influencer marketing strategies in relation to the fashion industry's insights in Nepal?

1.5 Significance of the study

1. This study explores the changing relationship between social media influencers (SMIs) and consumer behavior in Nepal's fashion industry, offering important new information about how much SMIs affect consumers' decision-making.

2. The study provides businesses in Nepal's fashion industry with concrete strategies to improve interaction with customers, improve marketing approaches, and establish genuine connections with their target audience by providing useful advice based on actual studies.

3. By connecting the gap between traditional and new marketing approaches, this study helps businesses better understand how to use influencer marketing while following their brand's values and goals. This will enable them to move confidently and quickly through Nepal's changing influencer market.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Theories related to each variable

2.1.1 SMI's Trustworthiness

It is believed that trust is a relational attribute that grows with regular interaction over time. People are able to forecast and assess the worth of upcoming exchanges based on their level of trust in

their partners. Therefore, trust plays a crucial role in maintaining partnerships (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). Similar to this, followers who trust their influencer feel that their relationship with them would be beneficial. Customers wanted to interact with influencers and planned to buy the recommended product as a result.

Based on the idea that the younger generation is more likely to believe credible sources, Bruns-Siddiqui intends to purchase the model. According to the model, a follower's likelihood of intending to purchase an increase when they trust a genuine source. Following the model, Intention to Buy is directly and positively impacted by Trust. While trends and new items are likely to motivate Gen Z participants (Bruns, 2018), reviews are sure to excite Gen Y participants (Sethi et al., 2018)

2.1.2 SMI's Credibility

It is crucial to emphasize that firms can surpass customers' expectations by leveraging celebrity reputation. Because of the celebrity's credibility, the campaign receives positive feedback from the customer. Customers intend to heed the advice of an influencer with a high trust rating, the study shows. It seems that one of the main factors influencing consumer behavior is the influencer's trustworthiness. Furthermore, (Mainolfi & Vergura, 2021; Lin & Nuangjamnong, 2022) concluded that consumer engagement and buy intention are influenced by the social media influencers' credibility.

According to some research, influencers' credibility positively affects consumers' purchase intentions, brand trust, or both (Shamli, 2019). Influencers have been dubbed a new breed of celebrity (Khamis et al., 2017)

2.1.3 SMI's Authenticity

The significance of digital celebrities' "aura of authenticity" has been emphasized by (Pöyry et al., 2019) Additionally, they discovered that advertising behavioral results, such purchase intention, are positively impacted by providing sponsored material that is consistent with SMIs' goals and

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beliefs. Duffy (2017) found that SMIs' perception of authenticity is influenced by their realness, visibility, and uniqueness, based on empirical evidence.

Authenticity by definition refers to being sincere and genuine. (Solis, 2012) bases his investigation into the use of influencers in marketing strategies on a simple idea of authenticity. He believed influencer marketing would be overused to the point that it compromised the message's legitimacy. As a result, influencer marketing would lose its credibility and lose its significance, becoming just as effective as mass media marketing. Therefore, the main advantage of influencer marketing is authenticity.

2.1.4 SMI,s Expertise

Since it is the product of the communicator's professional experience and knowledge (Schouten et al., 2020), expertise is a crucial component that has been considered in a number of studies on digital influencers (Esteban-Santos et al., 2018; Dowpiset & Nuangjamnong, 2013; Lin & Nuangjamnong, 2022). "Experts are frequently regarded as having a high level of knowledge and being able to make trustworthy, accurate decisions" (Chetioui et al., 2020). Additionally, ref. (Wang & Wong, 2021) supported the idea that consumer involvement and purchase intention are influenced by knowledge.

2.1.5 Consumer purchase intention

Many research studies have demonstrated the impact of social influence on consumer attitudes, behaviors, and preferences. For instance, Youn and Jin (2017) demonstrated how well social impact predicts customers' intent to buy. Additionally, Kim and Johnson (2015) state that two important variables that influence a consumer's buying intentions are tight relationships with family and friends. Most studies also show that social influence impacts purchasing decisions, especially in collectivist cultures where people tend to follow what's popular" (Hanif et al., 2022).

2.2 Related literature review

2.2.1 SMI,s Trustworthiness and Consumer Purchase Intention

Trust in influencers and purchases made through tie-ups will have a significant and positive relationship. After taking into consideration the literature, Sertoglu et al. (2014) study evaluated the reliability of the influencers and purchase intention, finding a positive relationship. A study by Toksari and Murutsoy (2019) found that an individual's decision to buy a product is positively influenced by the recommendations made by influencers regarding the product. Furthermore, it has been observed that the influencers' posted discount coupons encourage purchases, and publishing images of the products on their own accounts is said to increase consumers' interest in making a purchase.

Customers are also more likely to express their desire to purchase the recommended products if they view a digital influencer as a trustworthy source (Lu et al., 2014; Lou & Young, 2018). Esch et al. (2018) state that a consumer's trust in an Instagrammer is measured by how much they believe the opinion leader and find his advice to be trustworthy. The customer's intention for purchase will rise as a result.

H1: Trustworthiness of SMIs significantly influences consumer purchase intentions in the Nepalese fashion market.

2.2.2 SMI,s Credibility and Consumer Purchase Intention

While research by Chai, Das, and Rao (2011) indicates that relatability and authenticity also contribute to influencer credibility, Lou and Yuan (2018) emphasize the significance of influencer credibility in influencing consumer behavior. Consequently, it follows that influencer credibility influences purchase intention in a positive way, as suggested in H2b, highlighting its importance in influencing customer behavior in influencer marketing.

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The previous literature has examined various critical factors related to source credibility in social media, including influencer's endorsement and credibility (Weismueller et al., 2020; Lin & Nuangjamnong, 2022). Studies have consistently found that information from credible sources significantly influences consumers' attitudes and behavior (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018; Dummanonda & Nuangjamnong, 2021).

H2: Authenticity of SMIs significantly influences consumer purchase intentions in the Nepalese fashion market.

2.2.3 SMI's Authenticity and Consumer Purchase Intention

There is a research gap on perceived risk in influencer marketing, and this has been addressed by the huge impact that consumers' purchase intention has from the perceived authenticity of messaging from social media influencers. Previous study indicates that as customers become more aware of the dangers associated with a product, they look for ways to reduce those risks before making a purchase (Hilverda & Kuttschreuter, 2018; Kamalul Ariffin et al., 2018). To reduce perceived risks connected with a purchase, customers respond by turning to influential sources, such as social media influencers, whom they view as relevant and credible (Biswas et al., 2006; Dean & Biswas, 2001). This supports the theory that customer purchase intention is positively influenced by the perceived authenticity of influencer communications.

H3: Credibility attributed to SMIs significantly influences consumer purchase intentions in the Nepalese fashion market

2.2.4 SMI's Expertise and Consumer Purchase Intention

In the context of influencer marketing, social media influencer expertise plays an important role in influencing consumers' views and purchase intentions. Previous studies have shown the importance of influencer expertise in endorsing luxury and useful brands, since buyers depend on
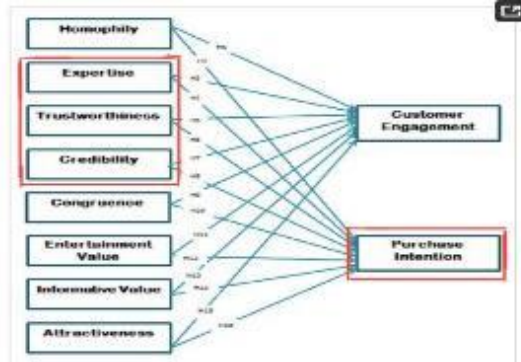
the experience and reliability of advocates (Dean and Biswas, 2001). Customers also respect influencers' knowledge or connection to the product they recommend, which results in favorable perceptions of the advertisement, the advertisement brand, and purchase intentions (Balog et al., 2008; Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017). In conclusion, consumer behavior in influencer marketing is greatly influenced by the selection of influencers with pertinent experience and matching them with products that are in line with their domain knowledge.

H4: Perceived fashion expertise of SMIs significantly influences consumer purchase intentions in the Nepalese fashion market

2.3 Theoretical frameworks

2.3.1 This theoretical framework primarily shows how the SMI's trustworthiness, credibility and expertise influence customers in purchase intention. The relationship between SMI's trustworthiness, credibility and expertise with purchase intention, as shown in Figure 3, is part of the theoretical framework which includes how it influences purchase intention (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). Trustworthiness, credibility, and expertise are key components of the theoretical framework, each playing a distinct yet interconnected role in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors in the context of influencer marketing. Studies such as (Ao et al., 2023), conducted in the context of social media influencing, have demonstrated the relationship between these SMI's variables in influencing consumer intention.

Figure 3. *Impact of Social Media Influencers on Customer Engagement and Purchase Intention: A Meta-Analysis*

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Source: Ao, L., Bansal, R., Pruthi, N., & Khaskheli, M. B. (2023). Impact of Social Media Influencers on Customer Engagement and Purchase Intention: A Meta-Analysis. *Sustainability, 15*(3), 2744.

2.3.2 The second theoretical framework among the connections between SMI's authenticity and consumer purchase intention. The theoretical framework proposed here focuses on the relationship between the personal authenticity of social media influencers (SMIs) and consumers' intentions to purchase products endorsed by them, considering measures of effectiveness and consumer behavior indicators (Schwarz, 2019). Due to research studies in Figure 4 personal authenticity of SMIs is posited to have a positive relationship with consumers' intentions to purchase endorsed products. Consumers are more likely to trust and engage with influencers perceived as authentic, leading to higher purchase intentions. (Andonopoulos et al., 2023)

Figure 4. *Authentic isn't always best: When inauthentic social media influencers induce positive consumer purchase intention through inspiration*
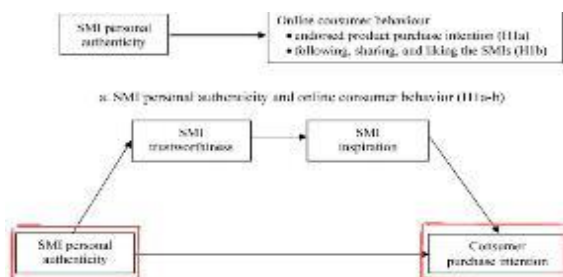
Source: Andonopoulos, V., Lee, J. (Jiyeon), & Mathies, C. (2023). Authentic isn't always best: When inauthentic social media influencers induce positive consumer purchase intention through inspiration. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 75*, 103521.

2.4 Hypotheses development

The researcher indicated four hyper strategies based on the conceptual framework to analyze the influence of social media influencing consumer purchase intention in the Nepalese fashion market.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Trustworthiness of SMIs significantly influences consumer purchase intentions in the Nepalese fashion market.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Authenticity of SMIs significantly influences consumer purchase intentions in the Nepalese fashion market.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Credibility attributed to SMIs significantly influences consumer purchase intentions in the Nepalese fashion market

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Perceived fashion expertise of SMIs significantly influences consumer purchase intentions in the Nepalese fashion market

2.5 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework is based on a synthesis of previous research, theoretical concepts, and literature reviews, with Social Media Influencers's trustworthiness, credibility, authenticity and expertise being the independent variable that influences the consumer purchase intention in buying fashion products in Nepal.

In the context of fashion market in Nepalese market, the conceptual framework shows how the relationship between SMI's trustworthiness, credibility, authenticity, expertise in fashion and purchase intention functions as shown in the figure below:

Figure 5. *Conceptual Framework*
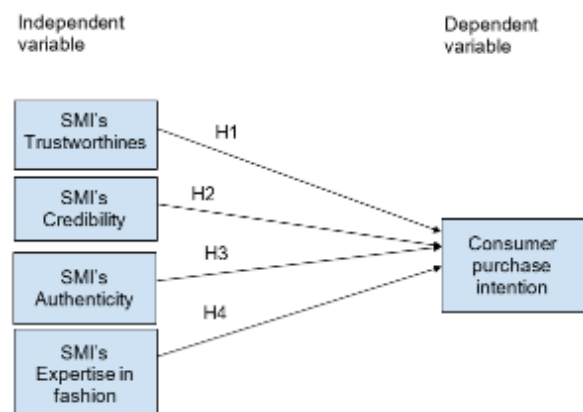
Source: Authors

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

The main purpose of this research is to explore the influence of social media influencer's trust, credibility, authenticity and expertise on the purchase intention of the customer. This research also aims to employ a research design to comprehensively explore the influence of social media influencers on consumer purchase intention in the Nepalese fashion market. he quantitative component will involve surveying a sample of consumers in the Nepalese fashion market to gather numerical data on their perceptions of social media influencers and their purchase intentions. A structured questionnaire will be administered to collect data on variables such as trustworthiness, authenticity, credibility, expertise, and purchase intention. The survey responses will be analyzed using statistical methods. For this quantitative study, Cronbach's alpha, Simple Linear Regression, and Descriptive Statistics are among the types of analysis used in this study.

The questionnaire is divided into three sections with 28 questions in total. All the questions relate to variables from the conceptual framework including 3 screening questions, 7 questions regarding demographic aspects and 18 questions related to variables.

Primarily, we begin by employing Cronbach's Alpha to assess the questionnaire's reliability and to explore potential instances of confusion or ambiguity in the measurement items.

3.2 Sampling Plan

3.2.1 Sampling Population

The sampling population for this study encompasses individuals in Nepal actively involved in the fashion market and engaged with social media platforms. Specifically, the target population includes social media users who follow and interact with fashion-related content on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other relevant platforms. Nepal, with its diverse population and growing digital presence, offers a suitable backdrop for exploring the impact of social media influencers on consumer purchase intentions in the fashion sector. According to the latest available data, the population of Nepal in 2024 is estimated to be 31,240,315

3.2.2 Sampling Size

The determination of the sampling size in this study follows the guidelines proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) and considers the estimated population of social media users in Nepal. After conducting preliminary data analysis and power calculations, the sample size is determined to be 400 respondents. This sample size ensures adequate statistical power to detect meaningful relationships between the variables of interest, given the complexity of the research model and the multiple factors being examined. Additionally, the researcher will utilize stratified sampling techniques to ensure representation across demographic variables such as age, gender, education level, and geographic location. This approach enhances the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of social media users in Nepal.

3.3 Research Instrument

Among the research questionnaires employed to be the indicator for evaluating the essential factors and the relationships allying with the research variables. The questionnaires were distributed as an online survey to the qualified samples and there are three parts consisting of. Screening questions were included in the **first section** to screen only particular respondents who are influenced in any way by social media influencers. Respondents demographic information questions are displayed in the **second section**. The **third section** consists of 18 scale items in total including dependent and independent variables.

3.4 Content validity (IOC)

The content validity of questionnaire items was evaluated by the researchers using the IOC index. After seeking the opinion of three experts, 18 out of 25 questions achieved IOC scores exceeding 0.5,

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demonstrating satisfactory validity. Consequently, a refined set of 18 questions was selected, precisely tailored to the variables under investigation. This meticulous procedure guaranteed the precision and

pertinence of the questionnaire, thereby ensuring the collection of valid data for the study has shown Table 1.

Table 1: *The item Objective Congruence (IOC) index with three experts*

Variables	Before Number of items	After number of items	Range of IOC Weight Scores
Media Factors	5	4	0.67 - 1.00
Content Factors	5	4	0.67 - 1.00
Connection Motivation	5	4	0.67 - 1.00
Ad Clicks	5	3	0.67 - 1.00
Purchase intention	5	3	0.67 - 1.00

3.5 Reliability Test

The researchers chose 50 respondents to take part in the pilot test in order to check for any errors or dislocations among the questionnaire's variables. One method for ensuring consistency is Cronbach's alpha.

To ensure that the questionnaire accurately measured the desired variables and contributed to the overall validity and reliability of the study's data collection instrument, the researchers conducted a pilot test and used the Cronbach's Alpha method. Cronbach's Alpha (CA) approach is conducted to apply for the pilot for the pilot test research reliability (Cronbach, 1951). Cronbach's Alpha and Internal Consistency's Rules - α > 0.9 Excellent, 0.8 < α < 0.9 Good, 0.7 < α < 0.8 Acceptable, 0.6 < α <

0.7 Questionable, 0.5 < α < 0.6 Poor, and α < 0.5 Unacceptable

The independent variable was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha in a pilot test of 50 respondents. According to Cronbach's Alpha values (shown in Table 2), the Social Media Influencer's Trustworthiness is 0.913, Social Media Influencer's Credibility is 0.879, Social Media Influencer's Authenticity is 0.818, Social Media Influencer's Expertise is 0.772 and Customer Purchase Intention is 0.806. In order for the research questionnaire to be accepted for continued use, the value must be at least 0.60 or higher according to the thumb's rule. The overall result of the construct's internal consistency indicates that the research questionnaire has dependability.

Table 2. *The value of Reliability Analysis of each Item and Variable in the study*

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Strength of Association
Social Media Influencer's Trustworthiness	0.93	Excellent
Social Media Influencer's Credibility	0.879	Good
Social Media Influencer's Authenticity	0.818	Good
Social Media Influencer's Expertise	0.772	Acceptable
Customer Purchase Intention	0.806	Good

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Descriptive analysis of demographic data

Through a questionnaire distributed to the target respondents, demographic data was analyzed to understand the influence of social media

influencers in customer purchase intention. The questionnaires were filled out by 390 respondents, and all were included in the study. Hence, the entire sample size was used for data analysis. The analysis included information on age, gender, annual income, the frequency of using social media platforms and engagement with social media

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influencers. Table 3 displays the frequency distribution and percentage of demographic information for the 390 respondents as follow:

Gender: In the sample of 390 respondents, gender-wise distribution reveals that the majority of respondents 80.5% were female, making up 314 individuals. The remaining respondents, comprising 19.5% of the total sample, were male, with a total of 76 respondents.

Age: Based on the collected data, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents, accounting for a total of 51.8%, fell within the age range of 18-24 years old, constituting 202 individuals. Following closely were the respondents belonging to the age range of 25-34 years old, comprising 46.7% of all respondents, with a total of 182 individuals. And finally, 1.5% of all respondents which falls within the age group of 35-44 years old, with a total of 6 individuals.

Location: The data analysis shows that 219 individuals, accounting for 56.2% of the sample, live in the Central part of Nepal. On the other hand, 124 respondents, making up 31.8% of the participants, live in Western part of Nepal. Following with 41 individuals, accounting for 10.5% of the sample, live in the Eastern part of Nepal and finally, 6 respondents, making up 1.5% of the participants, live in the Mid-Western part of Nepal.

Monthly household Income: The majority of the 390 respondents, comprising 77.4% or 302 individuals, reported having a monthly household income above 80,000 NPR. A total of 70 respondents, which is 17.9% of the sample, reported earning 60,001-80,000 NPR. Following, a total of 15 respondents, which is 3.8% of the sample, reported earning 40,001-60,000 NPR. Only 0.8% of the respondents, which equates to 3 individuals, reported having an annual income of 20,000-40000 NPR. These findings suggest that the respondents have relatively good household incomes. It is essential to consider participants' household

income levels while interpreting their responses because people with different income levels may have different preferences, attitudes, priorities, and limitations.

Consumer purchase habit: The analysis of the respondents' consumer purchase habit reveals how often they purchase fashion items online or instore. So, among the total of 390 individuals, 88 respondents, constituting 22.6%, stated that they purchase fashion items a few times a year. In contrast, 12 participants, making up 3.1% of the sample, reported that they purchase fashion items rarely. The majority of the respondents, making up 54.4% or a total of 212 individuals, identified purchasing fashion items once a month. Following with 20.0% or 78 individuals, identified purchasing items several times a month. These findings indicate a significant proportion of respondents who like purchasing fashion products from stores or online. Nonetheless, it is essential to consider their purchasing pattern while interpreting their responses to understand attitudes.

Engagement in Social Media: The majority of the 390 respondents, comprising 93.3% or 364 individuals, reported that they use social media several times a day. A total of 25 respondents, corresponding to 6.4% of the sample, marked that they use social media once a day. And only 0.3% or 1 respondent stated that they use social media 2-3 times a week.

Frequently used Social Media platform: The majority of the 390 respondents, comprising 56.9% or 222 individuals, reported using Instagram. A total of 90 respondents, corresponding to 23.1% of the sample, reported using Facebook. A total of 48 respondents, corresponding to 12.3% of the sample, marked that they use YouTube. And 7.7% or 30 respondents stated that they use TikTok. The popularity of Instagram may be due to its user-friendly interface and features such as private messaging, groups, and events.

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Table 3. *Demographic information analysis by using frequency distribution and percentage. (n=390)*

Demographic Factors	Frequency	Percent
Gender Female Male	314 76	80.5% 19.5%
Total	**390**	**100%**
Age 18-24 25-34 35-44	202 182 6	51.8% 46.7% 1.5%
Total	**390**	**100%**
Location Central Western Eastern Mid-Western	219 124 41 6	56.2% 31.8% 10.5% 1.5%
Total	**390**	**100%**
Monthly household Income Above 80,000 60-001-80,000 40,001-60,000 20,000-40,000	302 70 15 3	77.4% 17.9% 3.8% 0.8%
Total	**390**	**100%**
Consumer purchase habit Once a month Few times a year Several times a year Rarely	212 88 78 12	54.4% 22.6% 20.0% 3.1%
Total	**390**	**100%**
Engagement in Social Media Several times a day Once a day 2-3 times a week	364 25 1	93.3% 6.4% 0.3%
Total	**390**	**100%**
Frequently used Social Media platform Instagram Facebook YouTube TikTok	222 90 48 30	56.9% 23.1% 12.3% 7.7%
Total	**390**	**100%**

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4.2 Descriptive analysis with mean and standard deviation

This section provides a summary of the Mean and Standard Deviation for each group variable, which includes social media influencer trustworthiness, social media influencer credibility, social media influencer authenticity, social media influencer expertise and customer purchase intention. The evaluation of mean scores based on the criteria adapted from Imsa-ard et al. (2021) is presented below.

The criteria of the interpretation of mean scores

Mean score
Interpretation

4.21 - 5.00	Strongly agree
3.41 - 4.20	Agree
2.61 - 3.20	Neutral
1.81 - 2.00	Disagree
1.00 - 1.80	Strongly disagree

Social Media Influencer Trustworthiness

Among the 390 respondents without missing any respondents, Table 4 presents the highest mean of social media influencers trustworthiness as: "I am likely to trust their recommendation, when the social media influencer recommends a fashion product" with a value of 4.08. In contrast, the lowest mean score was "I trust the information provided by the social media influencer in their fashion-related content.," with a mean score 3.80. The variable with the highest standard deviation was "I perceive the social media influencer as a reliable source for fashion recommendations.," having a value of 1.032. On the other hand, the lowest standard deviation was found for the statement "I am likely to trust their recommendation, when the social media influencer recommends a fashion product," with a value of 0.863.

Social Media Influencer Credibility

Among the 390 respondents without missing any respondents, Table 4 presents the highest mean of social media influencer credibility as "I believe

the social media influencer conducts thorough research before providing information about fashion products," with a value of 4.00. In contrast, the lowest mean score was "I consider the social media influencer as a credible authority on fashion-related matters.," with a mean score of 3.79. The variable with the highest standard deviation was also "I believe the social media influencer conducts thorough research before providing information about fashion products," with a value of 1.092. On the other hand, the lowest standard deviation was found for the statement "The credibility of the social media influencer is important in influencing my perceptions of fashion-related content," with a value of 0.918.

Social Media Influencer Authenticity

Among the 390 respondents without missing any respondents, Table 4 presents the highest mean of social media influencer authenticity as "In my opinion, the influencer's content aligns with their personal brand and values," and "I am likely to engage with content that I perceive as authentic from the social media influencer with a value of 4.03. In contrast, the lowest mean score was "In my opinion, the social media influencer accurately represents themselves in their content," with a mean score 3.89. The variable with the highest standard deviation was "In my opinion, the social media influencer accurately represents themselves in their content," with a value of 1.025. On the other hand, the lowest standard deviation was found for the statement "I am likely to engage with content that I perceive as authentic from the social media influencer, "with a value of 0.911.

Social Media Influencer Expertise

Among the 390 respondents without missing any respondents, Table 4 presents the highest mean of social media influencer expertise as "I perceive the influencer as knowledgeable about different fashion styles, trends, and subcultures," with a value of 4.25. In contrast, the lowest mean score was "I believe the influencer's content to be informative

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and enriching in terms of fashion knowledge," with a mean score 3.85. The variable with the highest standard deviation was "I believe the social media influencer demonstrates a deep understanding of the aspects of the fashion industry," with a value of 1.216. On the other hand, the lowest standard deviation was found for the statement "I believe the influencer's content to be informative and enriching in terms of fashion knowledge," with a value of 0.864.

Customer Purchase Intention

Among the 390 respondents without missing any respondents, Table 4 presents the highest mean of customer purchase intention as "I am likely to make an immediate fashion-related purchase based on the influencer's recommendation," with a value of 4.03. In contrast, the lowest mean score was "I give careful consideration to the product for which I look for information in social media influencer's content," with a mean score 3.83. The variable with the highest standard deviation was "I give careful consideration to the product for which I look for information in social media influencer's content," with a value of 1.12. On the other hand, the lowest standard deviation was found for the statement "The social media influencer's endorsement influences my intention to purchase fashion products," with a value of 1.01.

Table 4. *Mean and Standard Deviation*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
SMI Trst1: I trust the information provided by the social media influencer in their fashion-related content.	3.80	0.97	Agree
SMI Trst2: I perceive the social media influencer as a reliable source for fashion recommendations.	3.93	1.032	Agree
SMI Trst3: I am confident in the accuracy of the information shared by the social media influencer.	3.92	0.999	Agree
SMI Trst4: I am likely to trust their recommendation, when the social media influencer recommends a fashion product.	4.08	0.863	Agree
Social Media Influencer Trustworthiness	**3.93**	**0.966**	
SMI Cred1: I believe the social media influencer is knowledgeable regarding fashion trends and industry insights.	3.96	0.935	Agree
SMI Cred2: I believe the social media influencer conducts thorough research before providing information about fashion products.	4.00	1.092	Agree
SMI Cred3: I consider the social media influencer as a credible authority on fashion-related matters.	3.79	0.937	Agree
SMI Cred4: The credibility of the social media influencer is important in influencing my perceptions of fashion-related content.	3.85	0.918	Agree
Social Media Influencer Credibility	**3.90**	**0.971**	
SMI Auth1: I perceive the social media influencer as genuine and authentic in their fashion-related content.	3.92	1.012	Agree
SMI Auth2: In my opinion, the influencer's content aligns with their personal brand and values	4.03	0.911	Agree
SMI Auth3: I am likely to engage with content that I perceive as authentic from the social media influencer.	4.03	0.881	Agree
SMI Auth4: In my opinion, the social media influencer accurately represents themselves in their content.	3.89	1.025	Agree
Social Media Influencer Authenticity	**3.97**	**0.957**	

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SMI Exp1: I believe the influencer's content to be informative and enriching in terms of fashion knowledge	3.85	0.864	Agree
SMI Exp2: I perceive the influencer as knowledgeable about different fashion styles, trends, and subcultures	4.25	0.875	Strongly Agree
SMI Exp3: I believe the social media influencer demonstrates a deep understanding of the aspects of the fashion industry.	3.92	1.216	Agree
Social Media Influencer Expertise	**4.01**	**0.985**	
CPI1: The social media influencer's endorsement influences my intention to purchase fashion products.	3.92	1.010	Agree
CPI2: I am likely to make an immediate fashion-related purchase based on the influencer's recommendation.	4.03	1.020	Agree
CPI3: I give careful consideration to the product for which I look for information in social media influencer's content.	3.83	1.120	Agree
Customer Purchase Intention	**3.93**	**1.050**	

4.3 Hypothesis testing results

The researchers used linear regression, a statistical analytical approach, to examine the significant influence of various variables. The analysis aimed to investigate the relationship between variables, including the influence of social media influencers trustworthiness, social media influencer credibility, social media influencer authenticity, and social media influencer expertise in customer purchase intention. In relation to the analysis of linear regression, researchers utilize a straightforward linear regression analysis in conjunction with R-square to assess the amount of variation in the dependent variable that is accounted for by independent variables. Castro et al. (2017) discovered a significant correlation between independent and dependent variables, and in regression analysis, independent variables should be considered valid if the variance inflation factor value is lower than 5, as well as using R-square to identify the portion of variance in the dependent variable that is influenced by independent variables.

4.3.1 Results of Multiple linear regression of H1, H2, H3, and H4

Null Hypothesis (Ho):

Social Media Influencers Trustworthiness (H1), Social Media Influencers Credibility (H2), Social Media Influencers Authenticity (H3) and Social Media Influencers Expertise (H4) have no significant impact on Consumer Purchase Intention in Nepalese fashion market.

Alternative Hypothesis (Ha):

Social Media Influencers Trustworthiness (H1), Social Media Influencers Credibility (H2), Social Media Influencers Authenticity (H3) and Social Media Influencers Expertise (H4) have a significant impact on Consumer Purchase Intention in Nepalese fashion market

In Table 5, the results of multiple linear regression analysis elucidate the influence of Social Media Influencers Credibility (H2) and Social Media Influencers Expertise (H4) on Consumer Purchase Intention in the fashion market in Nepal. The analysis indicates that Social Media Influencers Credibility (H2) and Social Media Influencers Expertise (H4) significantly impact Consumer Purchase Intention in the Nepalese fashion market, rejecting the null hypotheses (H2 and H4; $p < 0.05$).

However, Social Media Influencers Trustworthiness (H1) and Social Media Influencers Authenticity (H3) do not exert a statistically significant impact on Consumer Purchase Intention in the Nepalese fashion market. The p-values for these variables exceed 0.05, leading to a failure to reject the null hypothesis (H1, H3).

Moreover, the coefficient of determination (R-square) for this analysis is 0.702, indicating that approximately 70.2% of the variance in the dependent variable (Consumer Purchase Intention) can be explained by the independent variables

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integrated into the regression model. This suggests a moderate to high level of explanatory power in understanding the factors influencing purchase

intentions for Fashion products in the Nepalese market.

Table 5. *Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Summary for Hypothesis 1, 2, 3 and 4*

Variables	B	SE B	β	t	p	VIF	Null Hypothesis
SMI Trst (H1)	-0.0692	0.076	-0.064	-0.914	0.361	6.410	Fail to reject Ho
SMI Cred (H2)	0.6361	0.068	0.545	9.390	< 0.001*	4.350	Rejected Ho
SMI Auth (H3)	-0.0485	0.076	-0.043	-0.638	0.524	5.860	Fail to reject Ho
SMI Exp (H4)	0.519	0.051	0.441	10.094	< 0.001*	2.460	Rejected Ho

Noted. $R^2 = 0.702$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.699$, *$p < 0.05$. Dependent Variable= Consumer Purchase Intention (CPI)

B = Unstandardized coefficients B | SE B = the standard error for the unstandardized beta | B = the standardized beta (β) |

t = t-value | p = p-value | VIF = Variance inflation Factor

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

According to overall demographic data from respondents who filled out the research questionnaire and the researchers' analysis, the majority group of the 390 respondents represented a gender group that is female (314, 80.5%), the category of age is between 18-24 years old (202, 51.8%), the majority of the respondents lives in central part of Nepal (219, 56.2%), and respondent's household monthly income is above 80,000(302, 77.4%). The majority of respondents (212, 54.4%) purchase fashion products once a month online or in-store, while the respondents engage with social media platforms several times a day (364, 93.3%) and finally, Instagram is the most popular social media platform among respondents (222, 56.9%).
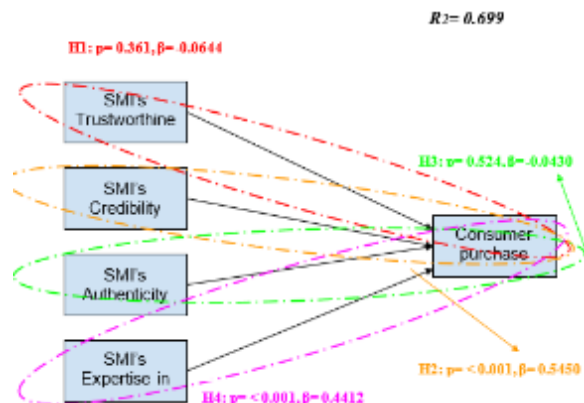
Survey instruments for factors influencing social media influencer trustworthiness, social media influencer credibility, social media influencer authenticity and social media influencer expertise in customer purchase intention include mean and standard deviation of variables. Respectively, social media influencer expertise (4.01), social media influencer authenticity (3.97), social media influencer trustworthiness (3.93), customer purchase intention (3.92) and social media influencer credibility (3.90) had the highest means, respectively. and the customer purchase intention

measure had the highest standard deviation (0.885), which was followed by social media influencer trustworthiness (0.823), social media influencer authenticity (0.785), social media influencer expertise (0.751) and social media influencer credibility (0.758).

5.2 Discussion based on Findings

The findings of this study indicated that Consumer Purchase Intention was significantly influenced by the Social Media Influencers Credibility and Social Media Influencers Expertise, but not Social Media Influencers Trustworthiness and Social Media Influencers Authenticity. Structural research model results as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. *Summary of hypothesis testing result.*

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5.2.1 SMI Trustworthiness and Consumer Purchase Intention

The results of the linear regression analysis show that, in the Nepalese fashion market, trustworthiness has no significant impact on consumer purchase intention, even if the mean score of 3.93 is very high and indicates a positive perception among consumers ($p = 0.361$). Given that respondents felt social media influencers were trustworthy, this conclusion is surprising.

There is a moderate degree of multicollinearity indicated by the trustworthiness variance inflation factor (VIF), which is 6.41. Although there is a connection, it is not significant enough to be concerning with respect to other independent variables. While trustworthiness is sometimes regarded as essential to the success of influencer marketing, this study's minimal impact on customer purchase intention implies that other characteristics may be more important in the Nepalese fashion industry.

5.2.2 SMI Credibility and Consumer Purchase Intention

In the Nepalese fashion market, credibility is found to be a major factor influencing consumers' purchase intention ($p < 0.001$). Customers are more likely to acquire fashion products when they see influencers as reliable sources of information, as indicated by their mean score of 3.90 and relatively high significance level. Credibility's VIF rating is 4.35, indicating a significant degree of multicollinearity. Although there is some correlation with other independent factors, it is not very strong and stays within a reasonable range. The results highlight how crucial it is to establish credibility when working with social media influencers in the Nepalese fashion industry, since this can have a beneficial impact on customers' decisions regarding purchases.

5.2.3 SMI Authenticity and Consumer Purchase Intention

In the Nepalese fashion market, authenticity does not significantly influence customer purchase intention, even with a favorable mean score of 3.97

($p = 0.524$). Considering how important authenticity is to influencer marketing strategies, this result is surprising. Authenticity has a modest degree of multicollinearity, as indicated by its VIF value of 5.86. The association with other independent variables is present, but it is within an acceptable level. Although authenticity is often pointed out as being essential to the success of influencer marketing, this study's low impact on it implies consumers in the Nepalese fashion sector may place a higher value on other considerations when making decisions.

5.2.4 SMI Expertise and Consumer Purchase Intention

In the Nepalese fashion market, expertise has a significant impact on consumers' purchasing intentions ($p < 0.001$). Customers are more inclined to purchase fashion products based on recommendations from influencers they believe to be informed about industry insights and fashion trends, with a mean score of 4.01 and a high importance level. Expertise's VIF rating is 2.46, which suggests a low degree of multicollinearity. Expertise appears to have a distinct influence on consumers' purchasing intentions, as seen by its low correlation with other independent factors. The results underscore the significance of knowledge and skill in influencer marketing strategies in the Nepalese fashion industry, given that influencers displaying ability are more able to influence consumer purchase decisions.

5.4 Recommendations based on Findings

The aim of the researchers in this part is to provide recommendations to establish significant connections between research concepts. It initially represented significant relationships between variables in the conclusion section. A number of recommendations are presented to businesses and influencers to enhance their influencer marketing strategies, build stronger connections with their target audience, and drive consumer engagement and purchase intention in the dynamic landscape of the Nepalese fashion market between social media influencers trustworthiness, social media

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influencers credibility, social media influencers authenticity, social media influencers expertise and consumer purchase intention

First, the data clearly shows that consumers' purchase intentions are greatly influenced by the credibility of social media influencers. As a result, businesses need to give top priority to working with influencers that have a solid track record of producing accurate and dependable information about fashion. Finding influencers that have a proven track record of authenticity and trustworthiness requires in-depth research to ensure that they connect with the target demographic and the values of the business. Businesses can increase consumer trust and confidence in their products or services by forming connections with credible influencers, which will ultimately lead to a rise in purchase intent.

The study also emphasizes how crucial influencer expertise is in influencing consumers' views and purchasing decisions. Influencers with an in-depth understanding of fashion trends, styles, and industry insights should be searched out by businesses, as this knowledge appeals to consumers. Influencers can use their expertise to produce educational and inspiring content that inspires and informs their audience, building relationships and increasing engagement. Businesses can also provide influencers the chance to work with them on unique and creative campaigns that highlight their skills and set them apart from competitors. Influencers can be used by marketers to generate customer interest and purchase intent by establishing them as reliable sources within the fashion industry.

Finally, even though the current study's results did not show authenticity as a strong predictor of customer purchase intention, it is still an important aspect of influencer marketing success. Sincere and open communication develops credibility and trust, brands and influencers should place a high priority on authenticity in their content and interactions with their audience. Sincere brand partnerships, open disclosure of sponsored content, and deep interaction with followers are all ways to strengthen authenticity. Through consistent and authentic influencer marketing, companies may gradually develop stronger relationships with customers and increase brand loyalty. All things considered, businesses may effectively utilize the power of social media influencers to promote consumer engagement and purchase intention in the ever-changing Nepalese fashion market by implementing these guidelines into their influencer marketing strategy.

5.5 Implications based on findings and theories

Based on the findings and theories presented in the research, several implications can be drawn for both academia and industry. First and foremost, the study emphasizes how crucial it is for social media influencers to have credibility and expertise in order to affect consumer purchasing habits in the Nepalese fashion industry. This suggests that businesses in this sector should place a high priority on working with influencers who are regarded as credible sources of information and who also have a thorough awareness of current fashion trends and industry insights. Businesses may increase consumer trust and engagement, which in turn drives purchase intention, by actively associating with skilled and credible influencers.

Additionally, the necessity of authentic and honest communication between brands, influencers, and consumers is highlighted by the focus placed on authenticity in influencer marketing techniques. Since authenticity is a major factor in determining the trust and loyalty of consumers, businesses should place a high priority on developing sincere connections with influencers and encouraging real conversations with their target audience. Businesses may strengthen their consumer relationships and set themselves apart in the competitive Nepalese fashion market by focusing authenticity in their influencer partnerships and content creation.

Finally, the study's implications provide larger insights into influencer marketing strategies across the Nepalese context. The results indicate that businesses in a variety of sectors stand to gain from giving credibility, expertise, and authenticity top

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priority when working with influencers. Businesses may improve their influencer marketing campaigns, create closer bonds with their target market, and increase customer engagement and purchase intention by implementing these ideas and tactics. Overall, the researcher's conclusions highlight how crucial strategic and real influencer collaborations are for navigating Nepal's and other countries' rapidly changing fashion industries.

5.6 Limitations of the study

Understanding the study's limitations is necessary in order to appropriately evaluate the results. The limited demographic profile of the sample population, which was primarily created from the central area of Nepal and fell into a particular age and income range, makes it more difficult to extrapolate the findings to the larger Nepalese community. Furthermore, the study may have missed qualitative insights that are essential for understanding the complexity of consumer purchasing habits in the Nepalese fashion industry because of its focus on quantitative approaches through closed-ended survey questions. To overcome these limitations and offer a more thorough understanding of consumer behavior in this setting, future research should aim for a more diverse sample and think about incorporating qualitative methods.

In conclusion, the study's limitations in sample composition and methodology should be noted even if it provides insight into the impact of social media influencers on customer purchase intention in the Nepalese fashion sector. In order to provide a deeper understanding of the relationships between social media influencer marketing and consumer behavior in Nepal and elsewhere, future research projects should work to overcome these limitations.

5.7 Further Studies

It would be beneficial for future research on influencer marketing in the Nepalese fashion industry to expand the sample population to include a greater range of age groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, and geographic areas. Using a mixed-methods approach could provide a more thorough

knowledge of consumer attitudes and motivations about social media influencers by combining quantitative surveys with qualitative techniques like focus groups and interviews. Further investigation into factors including brand preferences, cultural norms, and the influence of traditional advertising methods may also provide a more in-depth understanding of the dynamics of influencer marketing and consumer purchase intention in Nepal. Future studies can advance our understanding of the variables influencing consumer behavior in the Nepalese fashion market by focusing on these areas.

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