



The Impact of Influencer Credibility on Library Visit Intentions: An Experiment-Based Study of University Students

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Abstract

Social Media Influencers (SMIs) have evolved as a valuable marketing tool for promoting products, services and even destinations. The collaboration with SMIs is surging in a commercial context as credible SMIs substantially influence the buying/visit intention of their followers. The study investigates the impact of influencer credibility (IC) on the visit intention of students to the library. The study adopted a pre-and post-experimental design using the Source Credibility Model as the foundation. The sample consists of 30 MBA (Master of Business Administration) students studying at the Central University of Kashmir, India. Data analysis was done using SPSS 27 software with statistical techniques such as linear regression and t-tests. The findings reveal that IC has a significant and positive impact on the library visit intention of the students to the library. Further, the study also finds that library visit intentions significantly improve post-exposure to influencers' content. The study adds to the influencer marketing literature in an academic context and provides some noteworthy implications for various stakeholders.

Keywords: *Social Media Influencer, Influencer Credibility, Digital Community, BookTube, Bookstagram*

Introduction

The advent of social media platforms and social networks has significantly reshaped consumer behaviour. Consumers have transformed from being the recipients of advertising messages to content creators and promoters of brands and products. This shift has occurred due to the increased and easy access to the internet, particularly social media. Hence, it has become an integral part of users' daily lives (Krishen et al., 2016). With time, social networks have evolved as platforms where users form digital communities. As members of these digital communities, people connect, share information and content (Oh et al., 2014). This has given birth to a new form of marketing popularly known as influencer marketing.

Under influencer marketing, SMIs are considered effective tools for marketing (Xu & Pratt, 2018). SMIs are the daily users of the internet who share their personal lives through blogs, vlogs, reels and pictures on social media platforms, engaging with a broad audience and thereby gaining a huge social media following, which further enables them to feature sponsored advertisements within their daily content (Ye et al., 2021). These SMIs have gained credibility in some fields such as fashion, travel, cosmetics, health, etc, and have demonstrated the ability to shape the behaviours of other users (Brown & Hayes, 2008). In this regard, marketers have started leveraging

SMIs to establish connections with their consumers and cultivate strong relationships with them (Ye et al., 2020). For example, SMIs are being widely utilised in the tourism industry to shape visit intentions because of the major role they play in establishing connections with prospective tourists (Mokhare et al., 2021).

In recent years, research has witnessed a surge in understanding how customer relationships have evolved through engagement with SMIs and celebrities on some popular social media sites like Instagram (Liu et al., 2018; Ye et al., 2020). Depending on the type of content they promote, SMIs are further categorised as *greenfluencers* (promoting sustainable consumption), *techfluencers* (promoting technology-related gadgets), *fashion influencers* (promoting fashion, beauty) and *bookfluencers* (promoting book reviews, literature).

In today's digital era, promoting and encouraging literature and reading are essential for cultural enrichment and educational advancement. The increased digitisation has not only posed some serious challenges but also reshaped the conventional approaches to promoting literature and reading. Historically, libraries have been and continue to serve as the vital spots of learning and reading (Szabó & Dani, 2024), particularly in a digital world where reading and writing are essential for creative thinking. However, in the contemporary digital era, where entertainment competes with reading, libraries must devise and implement strategies to effectively foster reading culture across different generations (Szabó & Dani, 2024). Accordingly, within this context, the emergence of book influencers (known as bookfluencers) can play a critical role in advocating reading and promoting literature. Book influencers are the content creators who create and share content related to reading, books and literature on social media. They are also book lovers and readers who engage with other readers on these platforms (Marwick, 2017). They gain credibility from their followers through their reading tastes and habits (Albrecht, 2017). An essential part of their engagement with the audience is facilitated through book reviews.

A study by Szabó and Dani (2024) reveals that book influencers have created numerous digital communities with trending hashtags on social media platforms. One of them is BookTube, which is a sub-community of YouTube centred around literature. In this community, the users usually engage in learning informally. Irrespective of its informal nature, BookTube serves as a valuable platform for researchers and educators by providing space for comprehensive literary analysis (Vizcaíno-Verdú et al., 2019). The users make connections and often ask for book recommendations (Reddan, 2022). Another such book community is Bookstagram, which is Instagram's sub-community. Bookstagram also fosters readers' participation through discussions and book reviews (Reddan, 2022). Thus, influencers can be very useful in encouraging a reading culture on social media platforms.

With these digital advancements and social media book communities, students are also exposed to online content and learning, leaving the vital hubs of learning—libraries, vacant. The visit intention of students to the libraries and the engagement in the libraries has gradually declined, irrespective of the fact that libraries are the most important places of knowledge acquisition, literacy, information and personal growth. Therefore, one such strategy to deal with this issue can be the utilisation of SMIs who possess the capability of shaping the behaviours and attitudes of a young audience.

SMIs and influencer marketing have been extensively researched in many sectors, such as tourism, food, fashion and other consumer products, but their role in promoting educational resources and literacy sources remains unexplored. This warrants an understanding of how SMIs, through their relatable approach, communication style and credibility, influence and shape the attitudes and perceptions of students towards their visit to libraries.

The present study addresses this gap by investigating the impact of influencer credibility (IC) on the students' visit intention to the library. The study used a pre- and post-experimental design to assess whether a credible influencer's video content on the library can affect the students' intention and inclination towards library visits. The study contributes to the influencer marketing literature and offers some insightful implications to all the stakeholders involved for encouraging library visits.

Literature Review

Social Media Influencers (SMIs)

SMIs are defined as "online personalities with large numbers of followers, across one or more social media platforms (e.g., YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, or personal blogs), who have an influence on their followers" (Lou & Yuan, 2019). They are the third-party endorsers who share their personal experiences with the brand or product on social media and thus establish an effective connection with a large audience. Prior research (for example, Glucksman, 2017; Jang et al., 2021) argues that SMIs have become a new tool for marketers to promote products/ services through recommendations and promotions on social media platforms by these influencers through their everyday content, thus impacting the purchase decisions of consumers. These SMIs are known as online stars, creators, and micro-celebrities (Gaenssle & Budzinski, 2020). The information conveyed by SMIs is often perceived as highly credible and shapes consumers' attitudes, opinions and behaviours (Lim et al., 2017).

In the context of promoting visit intentions, SMIs have demonstrated the ability to positively influence visit intentions to different places and destinations. Therefore, they have been widely used by many destination

management organisations (Ong & Ito, 2019). They can also enhance youths' destination choices through their Instagram posts (Hayhurst, 2017; Ihsanuddin & Anuar, 2016). Similarly, studies also find that food-fluencers (those who promote food and restaurants) successfully drive visit intentions. Therefore, it is logical to assume that credible SMIs may be able to promote library visit intentions as well.

Instagram as a Social Media Platform

India has the highest Instagram users in the world, with around 360 million users. Instagram is witnessing an increasing growth, with engagement rising over 25% in early 2024. The platform is more preferred by Millennials and Gen Z, who constitute around 31% of its user base. The platform is highly recognised by marketers, as around 80% of the marketers utilise it for advertising. The platform provides many options in the form of filters, effects and 'good VI-Bes content', entertaining the users. Instagram has enabled individuals to adopt content creation as a career, thus shaping the influencer economy (Dixon, 2024). Instagram enables users to share posts and endorse promotions through these posts in the form of videos or photos, leading to eWOM (Constine, 2018; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016; Yilmazdogan et al., 2021). On Instagram, influencers post details of their personal lives and experiences, covering a wide variety of topics, like fashion, travel, food, fitness, photography, etc. Because of its popularity, Instagram has become one of the leading platforms for people to share and gain information and has been widely used in advertising. By engaging with SMIs, consumers can shape their visit intention and visit the places that SMIs visit (Jin & Ryu, 2020). Individuals who are interested in the posts of SMIs have a higher tendency to visit the places posted by these SMIs.

Source Credibility (SC) Model

To evaluate the effectiveness of influencer marketing, SC emerges as a pivotal framework. Source credibility is a fundamental factor which plays a defining role in shaping consumer perceptions. The term "credibility" refers to the believability of a communicator's message perceived by the recipient (Kwiatek et al., 2021). The SC is related to the sources' reliability, along with the accuracy of the content (Han & Chen, 2021). It is a tripartite measurement model that was developed by Ohanian (1990). This model encompasses an endorser's expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness and was developed to assess the endorser's credibility. Therefore, in a social media's context, SC is the extent to which these digital influencers are perceived as reliable, credible and possessing desired knowledgeable (Zha et al., 2018). A message from a source perceived as highly credible is likely to be more persuasive (Sundermann & Raabe, 2019). Research has revealed that the credibility of influencers positively impacts loyalty, attitude towards

the brand and purchase intention of their followers (Hussain & Ali, 2021), thus making credibility a central element for their followers (Fayez et al., 2022).

The three dimensions of the SC model have been frequently employed in recent literature to measure the effectiveness of SMIs in shaping consumer purchase intention or visit intention (Balaban & Mustăţea, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Felicia, 2021; Yilmazdoğan et al., 2021). Expertise - one of the dimensions of the SC model refers to the endorser's ability to be knowledgeable, skilled and experienced in a particular field (Muda & Hamzah, 2021). Influencers that are perceived as experts by followers are more likely to affect their behaviours and consequently influence their attitudes and intentions (Lim et al., 2017).

Another dimension of the SC is trustworthiness-which refers to sincerity, integrity and honesty of an influencer perceived by the receiver (Lou & Yuan, 2019). According to Al-Qatamai (2019), SMIs often engage in building positive relationships and rapport with their audiences to enhance their perceived trustworthiness. Fred (2015) finds a positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an endorser and the persuasiveness of his/her message.

While the two dimensions (expertise and trustworthiness) of an endorser enhance the effectiveness of the message (Keel & Natarajan, 2012), there is yet another dimension of credibility that plays an important role in the persuasion process. Attractiveness encompasses the physical appearance of the influencer. Attractiveness enhances an influencer's image and is critical in generating initial impression. Several studies show that the perceived attractiveness of SMI positively impacts the consumer's attitude towards the influencers and their buying intentions (Lim et al., 2017; Taillon et al., 2020).

Subsequently, in the realm of influencer marketing, the dimensions of source credibility are considered essential determinants of consumers' engagement and endorser's effectiveness. An influencer who is an expert, looks good and is perceived as trustworthy exerts a greater influence in shaping consumer evaluations of the brand and the message (Goldsmith et al., 2000).

Visit Intention

Several scholars have proposed definitions of "visit intention". In the context of travel, one of the simplest definitions of visit intention is the motivation to travel. This motivation is influenced by many factors or sources such as stories, visuals, content creators and other variables (Nguyen et al., 2021). This motivation leads individuals to visit a destination (Şengül, 2018; Yilmazdoğan et al., 2021). For the current study, visit intention is defined as 'motivation to visit the library'.

The study by Badreldin and Elbaza (2016) reveals that visit intention is the first step in the decision-making process and affirms that eWOM plays a major role in influencing visit intentions. Hung and Khoa (2022), in the same context, validated that eWOM positively influences attitudes and their intentions to visit destinations. Thus, the greater the intention of an individual to visit a particular place, more likely they are to visit in the future (Lu et al., 2016). Hence, it becomes critical to understand factors that affect visit intentions. According to Caraka et al. (2022), accounts of SMIs could influence visit intentions, thereby validating that SMIs positively influence visit intentions.

Influencer Credibility (IC) and Visit Intention

Prior research has highlighted that the credibility of SMIs significantly impacts consumer and buying intentions and behaviours (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Xiao et al., 2018; Nascimento, 2019). Notably, Instagram influencers and advertising on Instagram elicit positive responses, thereby influencing people to visit an advertised destination (Asyraff et al., 2022). SMIs' credibility has a positive association with the followers' visit intention to the promoted destination (Han & Chen, 2021). The SMIs' perceived credibility encourages social media users to visit based on the content presented in their posts. It also encourages them to select the content that is aligned with their preferences from among abundant posts (Cheng et al., 2020).

Thus, in this regard, the trustworthiness, attractiveness and the quality of information of the influencers are proved to influence the visitor's intention (Magno & Cassia, 2018; Negm & El-Halawany, 2020). However, some studies (Yilmazdoğan et al., 2021), on the contrary, show that attractiveness and visit intentions are not associated. Therefore, source credibility becomes an important driver of visit intention as social media plays a critical role in influencing the destination choice of users, particularly millennials (Kasim et al., 2019).

Objectives

- 1) To understand the visit intentions of MBA students to the university library.
- 2) To examine the relationship between influencer credibility and the extent of students' library visit intentions.
- 3) To analyse the pre and post-influencer impact on the visit intentions of students.
- 4) To suggest appropriate measures for the use of credible influencers to enhance the footfall of students to the library.

Hypotheses

H01: There is a positive correlation between influencer credibility and library visit intention.

H02: Influencer credibility positively impacts library visit intention.

H03: There is a significant difference between pre and post-visit intentions, indicating an increase after viewing the influencer's post.

Methodology

The study is shortitudinal, experimental and quantitative. The study adopted a pre-post experimental design examining the impact of influencer credibility on the library visit intention of MBA students at Central University of Kashmir. Thirty respondents were selected randomly from a class of forty. In the pre-exposure phase, the Visit Intention of students (VI-A) was assessed by intercepting them outside their classroom, when in isolation. A month later, the students were exposed to a video (reel) on Instagram created by a classmate who is an SMI. The reel was kept live for seven days. The reel was shared by classmates who were not selected as respondents for the study. They shared the reel repeatedly in formal and informal groups through WhatsApp and Instagram, as well as individually to their friends who were a part of the study sample.

The video contained content that highlighted the environment, ambience, resources and other facilities of the library. Following this, the students were again surveyed to measure their perceptions of Influencer Credibility and post-test Visit Intention (VI-B). The data was analysed using IBM-SPSS 27. The statistical techniques used to test the hypotheses were Pearson's correlation, linear regression and paired samples t-test.

Survey Instrument

The instrument for measuring Influencer Credibility was adopted from Müller et al. (2018), while the instrument for measuring Library Visit Intention was adopted from Bruner II (2009) using a five-point Likert scale with 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Data Analysis

The usable sample consists of 30 respondents, with 16 female and 14 male respondents. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Min	Max	μ	σ
CRED	30	1	5	3.05	1.121
VI-A	30	1	5	2.02	.835
VI-B	30	1	5	3.12	1.291

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

The KMO value for the study is .809, which is above the recommended threshold of .50 and considered meritorious (Kaiser & Rice, 1974). Further, the BTS is significant with $p < .001$ (See Table 2), making factor analysis feasible (Hair et al., 2010)

Table 2: Sample Adequacy (KMO and Bartlett's Test)

KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.809	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (BTS)	Approx. X^2	203.453
	df	21
	p	<.001

All the items have factor loading above .5 (Table 3), load on their respective construct and do not cross-load significantly on any other factor; therefore, ensuring that none of the items need to be removed before proceeding with further analysis (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 3: Factor Extraction

Dimensionality		
Items	Factors	
	CRED	VI
CRED1	.909	
CRED2	.886	
CRED3	.900	
CRED4	.925	
CRED5	.839	
VI21		.945
VI22		.930

Common Method Bias (CMB) & Multi-Collinearity

The VIF value of 1 indicates CMB is not present as the value is below the recommended threshold of 5 (Kock & Lynn, 2012). While VIF is also used to test multi-collinearity, as the model has only one independent variable, the model doesn't suffer from the issue of multi-collinearity.

As the data was collected from MBA students belonging to the same batch with questionnaires distributed in the classroom setting, there is a probability that the respondents might have been influenced by their fellow batchmates while filling out the questionnaire. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the data does not suffer from autocorrelation before proceeding with further analysis. The results (See Table 4) of the Durbin-Watson test indicate that the data do not suffer from autocorrelation as the value lies between the recommended range of 1.5 to 2.5 (Turner, 2019).

The R^2 value of .220 indicates that Influencer Credibility explains 22% of the change in library visit intention. The values exceed the acceptable value of .1 in social sciences (Ozili, 2022).

Table 4: Auto-correlation and Explanatory Power

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	Durbin-Watson
Regression	.469	.220	.193	1.160	1.745
<i>Predictor: Influencer Credibility; Dependent Variable: VI-B</i>					

The researchers used ANOVA as recommended by Hair et al. (2010) to test whether the relationship between Influencer Credibility and Library Visit Intention is linear. The results in Table 5 indicate significant linearity of the data.

Table 5: Data Linearity (Anova Results)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
CRED * VI-B	(Combined)	28.676	8	3.585	9.652	< .001
	Linearity	8.039	1	8.039	21.647	< .001

Hair et al. (2010) recommend that skewness and kurtosis values lie within the range of ± 1.96 for data normality. As seen in Table 6, all the values fall within the range, thereby confirming data normality.

Table 6: Data Normality

	N	μ	σ	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
CRED	30	3.05	1.121	-.132	.427	-1.030	.833
VI-A	30	2.02	.835	.894	.427	1.198	.833
VI-B	30	3.12	1.291	-.109	.427	-1.323	.833

To test whether the data is homoscedastic, the researchers used the Breusch-Pagan Test. As seen in Table 7, the p-value of .120 indicates data does not suffer from Heteroskedasticity (Breusch & Pagan, 1979). Therefore, all the assumptions necessary before performing regression analysis are met.

Table 7: Homoskedasticity (Breusch-Pagan Test)

χ^2	df	p
2.422	1	.120

Reliability and Validity Analysis

The reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha (α) and Composite Reliability (CR). As seen in Table 8, the values of α and CR exceed the threshold of .7, as recommended by Hair et al. (2017) and Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), establishing instrument reliability.

Convergent Validity: The convergent validity was established using CR and AVE. These values exceed the values of .7 and .5, respectively (See Table 8) as recommended by Fornell and Larcker's (1981).

Discriminant Validity: The discriminant validity was established using F&L

criteria, maximum shared variance (MSV) and HTMT analysis. The MSV values (Table 8) are lower than the AVE values for both constructs, establishing discriminant validity (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Moreover, the square root of AVE values (in bold) exceeds the correlation between Influencer Credibility and Library Visit Intention (See Table 8), further supporting discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Finally, the HTMT value is .495, which is below the threshold of .85 recommended by Kline (2011).

Table 8: Reliability and Validity Analysis

	α	CR	AVE	MSV	CRED	VI-B
CRED	.952	.954	.808	.244	.899	
VI-B	.923	.928	.866	.244	.494*	.931

Correlations: * $p < .050$

As seen in Table 9, a significant correlation exists between Influencer credibility and Visit Intention with $p = .004$. Therefore, the first hypothesis (**H01**) is accepted. The researchers proceed with regression analysis to check whether influencer credibility impacts Visit Intention to the library.

Table 9: Correlation between Influencer Credibility and Visit Intention (B)

		VI-B	CRED
Pearson Correlation	VI-B	1.000	.469
	CRED	.469	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	VI-B		.004
	CRED	.004	
N	VI-B	30	30
	CRED	30	30

Note: Visit Intention (VI-B) is the visit intention after being exposed to the influencer's post.

The results of the regression (Table 10) show that the Influencers' Credibility significantly and positively influences the Library Visit Intentions with $\beta = .469$ among MBA students. This value indicates that the exposure to the influencers post strongly impacts the library visit intention. Therefore, the second hypothesis (**H02**) is accepted.

Table 10: Regression Analysis

	β	Error (Standardized)	β (Standardized)	t	p
(Constant)	1.466	.624		2.352	.026
CRED	.540	.192	.469	2.813	.009

Note: VI-B is the Dependent Variable

Table 11 represents the descriptive statistics of pre-test library visit intentions and post-test library visit intentions. The mean score of 2.02 before exposure to the social media post and the mean score of 3.12 after exposure to the social media post indicate that the library visit intention of

students was increased by the SMIs post. Now that it has been established that SMIs posts increase library visit intention, the next step is to establish whether this improvement is statistically significant

Table 11: Paired Samples Statistics

		μ	N	σ	Std. Error μ
Pair 1	VI-A	2.02	30	.835	.153
	VI-B	3.12	30	1.291	.236

To check whether the change in library visit intention is significant, a paired sample t-test was conducted. The result (see Table 12) indicates that the library visit intention after getting exposed to the social media post has increased by a mean score of 1.1, and this difference is significant ($p < .001$), supporting the third hypothesis (**H03**). Therefore, influencers not only drive visit intentions but also improve them significantly.

Table 12: Difference in Pre-test and Post-test Library Visit Intention Correlations

	μ	σ	μ^*	Lower ^t	Upper ^t	t	df	p
VI-A - VI-B	-1.100	.977	.178	-1.465	-.735	-6.165	29	<.001

*Standard Error; ^tConfidence Interval (95%) of Difference

Discussion

The study reveals that the influencers' credibility has a meaningful impact on the library visit intentions in an academic environment. The results also show that a moderate positive correlation exists between the influencers' perceived credibility and the visit intention. This means that the students who view the influencer as a credible source are more likely to visit the library. This was further supported by regression analysis with an R^2 value of .220, indicating that influencer credibility accounts for 22% of the variance in the visit intention of students. Notably, the paired samples t-test also strengthens the findings by revealing an increase in the library visit intentions post-exposure to the video on Instagram, with a mean difference of 1.1. The study conclusively highlights that influencer marketing and SMIs can also be used to promote the academic resources and facilities. The study supports the Source Credibility Model (Ohanian, 1990), which posits that a credible source is highly likely to impact the behaviours and intentions of the target audience.

Conclusion

The study seeks to extend the SC model to the academic context and fills the gap in existing literature by investigating the impact of SMI's credibility on the library visit intention of students. The findings suggest that credible peer influencers significantly impact the visit intention of MBA students to the

university library at Central University of Kashmir, India. Following the exposure to an Instagram video by a peer influencer, the visit intention of the students was enhanced further. This highlights the power of source credibility and digital media campaigns in effectively promoting the university's resources. The study also emphasises peer influencer campaigns to create a positive perception of the institutional facilities and enhance utilisation of the resources.

Theoretical Implications

The study provides an extension of influencer marketing to the academic setting, hence contributing to the influencer marketing literature. The study highlights that credible SMIs can shape the attitudes and intentions of the students in an academic setting. The study further affirms the validity of the SC Model, suggesting that the influencers, who are experts, relatable and honest, can play an important role in enhancing the desired intentions of their followers.

Practical Implications

The study offers several noteworthy implications for universities, libraries, students, and influencers.

Firstly, universities, libraries, and marketing teams (if available) should identify and collaborate with student influencers perceived as credible in creating content and promoting the academic resources and facilities of the campus. By doing so, not only would a new interest be generated among students, but also the existing perceptions of the facilities would be enhanced. This, in turn, would position the library as a central academic hub and increase meaningful student engagement. Programs like "Student Ambassadors" and "Peer Influencer Campaigns" should be developed to improve the outreach efforts and reinforce visit intentions among students. This collaboration with student influencers is cost-effective, alongside a valuable and powerful communication strategy.

Secondly, student influencers should recognise their positive impact in shaping their peers' behavioural intentions and thus enhance their credibility and leverage social media platforms in promoting academic resources and other campus facilities. This would help create an overall positive impression of the university and its resources.

Lastly, this peer-endorsement model would appear more relatable to fellow students, thus establishing an effective connection between students and libraries.

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