

The Impact of Reviewers on Social Media on the Buying Intentions of GenZ in Vietnam

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Abstract

This research delved into the influence of social media reviewers on the buying intentions of Generation Z individuals in Vietnam. Drawing from the concepts of attraction theory and signaling theory, the authors formulated a research model to examine the correlation between the characteristics of social media reviewers and the purchase intentions of Gen Z customers. Utilizing a survey involving 488 valid respondents out of a total of 632 respondents and analyzed using PLS-SEM, the findings indicated that trust, attraction, and expertise significantly affected attitudes toward social media reviewers. However, only trust and attraction had discernible impacts on buying intentions. Despite the general influence of attitude on buying intentions, only trust emerged as a predictor for Gen Z customers' purchasing decisions. In contrast to earlier studies, this research suggests that positive attitudes toward social media reviewers may not necessarily translate into immediate purchases but could contribute to fostering brand awareness and engagement.

Keywords: *Social media reviewers, buying intentions, Gen Z, trust, attraction, expertise*

1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of the industry 4.0 era and the Internet, along with the progression of modern network-connected devices such as tablets and smartphones, has led to the swift development of media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. According to Rose, and Samouel (2009), the growth of the Internet has made online shopping indispensable in the digital age, offering significant benefits for both information retrieval and the purchasing process. Reviewing products or services is a marketing strategy that utilizes individuals with substantial social media followings to convey brand messages to target customers. These influencers exert some level of influence on consumer decision-making (The Influencer, 2021). According to Joseph Communication, 99% of influencers in 2018 used Instagram primarily for communication. Consequently, fashion brands frequently collaborate with these influencers to endorse messages and new products (Elle Vietnam, 2018). Currently, more than 88% of users typically consult reviews from fellow users on social media before making purchasing decisions. Alternatively, 94% of marketers believe that engaging in review activities for products or services is effective in their communication campaigns (Advertising Vietnam, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic induced substantial changes in people's lifestyles and communication patterns (Dias, Pessôa, & Andrade, 2020). Many brands had to adjust their marketing strategies to adapt to communicating through various social media platforms (Enberg, 2020). According to a study by Campbell, and Farrell (2020), some brands and influencers fostered relationships with their followers on social networking sites. Reviewers play a pivotal role in introducing, testing/wearing, and offering feedback on products for users. Furthermore, similar studies have been conducted by previous researchers (Jin, Muqaddam, & Ryu, 2019; Ryu, & Han, 2021; Saima & Khan, 2020; Scheer, & Stern, 1992). TikTok is a prominent social media application that allows users to create, view, and share 15-second video clips recorded on mobile devices. Both professional and amateur content creators can upload a variety of videos enhanced with filters, songs, stickers, and numerous other effects to make their content more appealing (D'Souza, 2021). TikTok has emerged as a powerful social media platform, considered one of the most popular globally, significantly impacting the perceptions and behaviors of Generation Z (Gen Z), born between 1995 and 2010 (Francis, & Hoefel, 2018). TikTok is reshaping how Gen Z engages with social media, representing 33% of the global population and 21% of Vietnam's total population (Nguyen, Nguyen, & Tran, 2021). This

generation exhibits a positive attitude towards advertisements featuring real people in authentic environments (Levin, 2020). While they can spend hours browsing social media and watching online videos, they are resistant to viewing even 30-second advertisements. For Gen Z, TikTok is not merely a social entertainment platform with limitless content; they also utilize it to generate income by creating product marketing advertisements.

A recent report from Influencer Marketing Factory indicates that approximately 62% of Gen Z prefers shopping from online stores rather than visiting physical shops. The report further highlights that Gen Z primarily draws inspiration for online shopping from social media platforms, as they can receive recommendations from others who have already tried or used the products (Ahmed, 2021). Ahmed's (2021) study reveals that around 40% of Gen Z follows various brands on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. Specifically, Muliadi (2020) found that over 60% of TikTok users belong to Gen Z. This underscores the strong relationship between the nature of Gen Z and social media, which greatly influences their purchasing intentions.

Reviewers are regarded as influencers, having gained prominence and strength in Vietnam's marketing and advertising activities. However, there is a scarcity of studies on the impact of reviewers on the buying intentions of consumers, particularly on social media platforms (Le, & Hoang, 2018; Ninh, Oanh, Duong, & Nhu, 2019), especially concerning Generation Z in emerging markets like Vietnam.

2. Objectives

The objective of this research is to explore how reviewers influence consumers' attitudes towards them and their buying intentions when exposed to reviewers' content. Elements like expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness play a role in shaping the attitude towards influential individuals, subsequently influencing the purchasing intentions of Generation Z consumers in Vietnam. This study aims to provide insights to businesses, helping them comprehend whether engaging in review activities effectively contributes to sales among the Gen Z demographic.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Generation Z

Generation Z, born between 1995 and 2010 (Francis, & Hoefel, 2018), is aptly termed the "network generation" due to their upbringing in a highly digital era. Raised amidst social networks, their existence is more intertwined with the electronic and digital world (Singh, & Dangmei, 2016). They are also known as "digital natives" or "iGeneration" Csobanka (2016), they have matured during the first true mobile era (Palley, 2012), with digital technology intricately woven into their daily lives. The Kaiser Family Foundation reports that Gen Z adolescents engage with media more than any other activity besides sleeping, with their media interaction time increasing by 67 minutes per day from 2004 to 2009 (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010).

This generation has distinct characteristics shaped by their constant interaction with modern technology. They predominantly use online platforms such as social media, online games, online education, and online communication (Greydanus, & Greydanus, 2012). Gen Z not only consumes media but also uses it to create and disseminate information (Berkup, 2014).

This extensive media engagement makes social media pivotal in shaping their purchasing intentions. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter serve as influential spaces where Gen Z forms identities, interacts with brands, and makes buying decisions. Their preference for online shopping is driven by the convenience and peer recommendations they find on these platforms. Understanding their media habits is crucial for brands aiming to influence Gen Z's consumer behavior, as traditional advertising often fails to engage this digitally savvy audience.

Despite extensive research on Generation Z's media habits and characteristics, there is a gap in understanding how these factors influence their purchasing decisions in the context of social media influencers in Vietnam. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the impact of reviewers who are influencers for Gen Z's buying intentions.

3.2 Social Media Platform and Reviewers

Social media platforms have revolutionized the way individuals communicate, share information, and engage with content worldwide. These digital spaces, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and local applications like Zalo, have become integral to daily life, offering users a variety of ways to connect with others and express themselves. The proliferation of these platforms has also transformed marketing strategies, allowing brands to reach targeted audiences with unprecedented precision and engagement. According to Statista, as of 2021, over 3.6 billion people were using social media worldwide, a number projected to increase to almost 4.41 billion by 2025 (Statista, 2021). The term social media in this study refers specifically to popular social networking applications in Vietnam today: Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, Zalo, YouTube and Twitter (X application). This widespread usage underscores the importance of social media as a powerful tool for communication and influence in contemporary society. Social media platforms not only facilitate personal interactions but also serve as critical channels for news dissemination, entertainment, and consumer engagement, significantly shaping public opinion and behavior.

The practice of reviewing products or services on social media has evolved into a significant marketing strategy, leveraging influencers to influence consumer behavior. The term “reviewer” has gained prominence within this context. From 2015 to 2018, searches for “influencer marketing” increased dramatically from 3,900 to 61,000 (Geyser, 2021). Social media reviewers' interactions with their communities can effectively promote brand and product messages to a global audience (Gillin, 2017). These reviewers, a subset of influencers, are categorized into celebrities, influencers, and micro-influencers (Le, 2022). The rise of “social media influencers” in advertising reflects a consumer preference for experiential marketing. Enthusiastic product reviewers focusing on beauty, fitness, food, and fashion have amassed large followings on social media, particularly among women (Lin, Bruning, & Swarna, 2018). Barker (2018) differentiates influencers from celebrities by their channels of influence, noting that while celebrities gain followers through traditional media like TV and radio, influencers build their impact through social media platforms such as blogs, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram. Celebrities attract followers due to their talents and media presence, whereas influencers engage niche audiences by creating relevant content. Influencer marketing leverages word-of-mouth to create buzz around a brand or product, utilizing the trust and rapport influencers have with their audiences to foster meaningful consumer connections. This trend underscores the critical role of social media influencers or reviewers in contemporary marketing and highlights the shifting landscape of consumer engagement in the digital era.

While existing literature highlights the importance of social media influencers and their impact on consumer behavior, it lacks focus on how different types of influencers-such as celebrities, micro-influencers, and reviewers-specifically affect the purchasing intentions of Gen Z in Vietnam. This study addresses this gap by categorizing influencers, with a particular focus on reviewers who have used and evaluated products or services, and analyzing their distinct impacts on this demographic.

3.3 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is a subjective consumer behaviour wherein individuals are inclined to purchase a particular product or service based on their past experiences and desires (Kotler, & Keller, 2016). This intricate process involves a combination of behaviour, cognition, and preferences, typically following a thorough evaluation of the product or service (Belch, & Michael, 2009). Various external factors significantly influence consumers' choices and purchase intentions, reflecting the interaction between environmental stimuli and human perception (Keller, 2001). Generation Z exhibits distinct behaviour patterns, characterized by technological fluency, agility, impatience, and high interactivity (Chaturvedi, Kulshreshtha, & Tripathi, 2020; Turner, 2015; Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018; Yazici & Ayazlar, 2021). This generation has seen significant changes in values and behaviors due to numerous external influences (Twenge, 2017). Online shopping has become a dominant trend among Gen Z, with many using their phones to make purchases even in physical stores (Harrigan, et al., 2021; Brown, 2017). For companies targeting online business models, Gen Z is crucial as they provide valuable feedback and drive innovation, helping businesses refine their products and services.

Although the literature extensively covers purchase intentions and their determinants, there is limited research on how social media influencers specifically drive purchase intentions among Gen Z in Vietnam.

This study aims to bridge this gap by focusing on the interplay between reviewers' characteristics and Gen Z's buying intention in the Vietnamese market.

3.4 Attraction theory and signaling theory

Reviewers, deemed as influencers, possess distinct characteristics and hold significant credibility within specific domains (Cha, Haddadi, Benevenuto, & Gummadi, 2010; Kim, Kandampully, & Bilgihan, 2018). Their ability to generate valuable content attracts a considerable following on online social media platforms (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).

The concept of buying intentions, synonymous with customer or buyer intentions, revolves around consumers' likelihood or readiness to make future product purchases (Huang, Jim Wu, Wang, & Boulanger, 2011). In the realm of influencer marketing, research indicates that consumer attitudes towards a particular brand directly influence their buying intentions (Pradhan, Duraipandian, & Sethi, 2016). Kudeshia, and Kumar (2017) underscore the impact of electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) volume on customer buying intentions. Aligned with these perspectives, marketing scholars widely recognize buying intentions as a crucial factor in the decision-making process (Raza, Ahad, Shafqat, Aurangzaib, & Rizwan, 2014).

The signaling theory, introduced by Spence (1973), addresses information asymmetry between sellers and buyers, particularly prevalent in online shopping where buyers assess products through images and seller descriptions. Bloom, and Reve (1990) define a marketing signal as external information easily observable, controlled by marketers, influencing consumers' judgments on product quality or value. Herbig, and Milewicz (1996) assert that a positive seller reputation positively impacts consumer perceptions of the advertised product. Influencers, by showcasing authenticity, expertise, and reliability, build credibility over time, making the authenticity of the product a marketing signal that influences followers through the influencer's credibility.

Attraction theory posits that individuals are drawn to those similar to themselves, supported by studies like Berscheid, and Hatfield (1969) and Baskett, Byrne, and Hodges (1971). In social psychology, McCracken (1989) argues that message effectiveness depends on factors such as familiarity, likability, similarity, and the source's appeal to recipients. Attraction is linked to customers' perceptions of the brand representative's appeal (Ohanian, 1990).

Reviewers create attraction by addressing fundamental human desires, such as the need for social harmony and information processing. Serving as a widespread word-of-mouth channel, reviewers allow everyone to listen to a trusted communicator who effectively communicates and aligns with the recipients' views. If followers perceive a message's similarity to their own, they are influenced by the influencer's message (Ohanian, 1990).

While the signaling theory and the attraction theory provide valuable insights into how influencers can impact consumer behavior, there is a need to empirically test these theories in the context of social media influencers and Gen Z's purchasing intentions in Vietnam. This study seeks to fill this research gap by examining the influence of trust, expertise, and attractiveness of reviewers on Gen Z's buying intentions.

3.5 Hypotheses Development:

The concept of belief, characterized as "truthful, straightforward, and reliable" (Van der Walddt, Van Loggerenberg, & Wehmeyer, 2009), or the level of trust consumers place in influencers, including the credibility of the claims they find most reasonable (Ohanian, 1990), is pivotal within this study. In this context, belief refers to the trust customers bestow in reviewers, encompassing both their statements and actions. Establishing trust with customers is deemed crucial for successful marketing in the current digital era (Jabr, & Zheng, 2014). In the online marketing landscape, customers are inclined to trust reviewers with higher competence, influencing their perceptions of the product and subsequent purchasing behavior (Hsu, Lin, & Chiang, 2013). The author proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: Trust in reviewers has a positive impact on the attitude toward reviewers.

H2: Trust in reviewers has a positive impact on buying intentions.

Reviewers' expertise is defined as the "level at which a person conveying information is considered a source of quality information" (Erdogan, 1999). This expertise is gauged when users on social networking sites view reviewers as professionals, experienced, knowledgeable, qualified, or possessing high skills in their respective fields (Ohanian, 1990). Expertise is identified as a critical factor shaping followers' perceptions of reviewers and their purchasing intentions. Therefore, customers are more likely to view content and recommendations from experienced well known reviewers positively (Yadav, Valck, Hennig-Thurau, Hoffman, & Spann, 2013). The specialized knowledge of reviewers enhances customer credibility, influencing their perceptions and buying intentions (Smith, Menon, & Sivakumar, 2005). The author proposes the following hypotheses:

- H3: The expertise of reviewers has a positive impact on the attitude toward reviewers.
- H4: The expertise of reviewers has a positive impact on buying intentions.

Attractiveness, as per Erdogan (1999), encompasses a "positive connection prototype," involving not only physical appeal but also personality traits. Reviewers who possess attractiveness tend to exert a more substantial influence on potential customers (Joseph, 1982). McGuire (1985) argues that communication effectiveness, including the formation of positive attitudes, may hinge on distinctive features such as attractiveness, appropriateness, and social media alignment of influencers. Recent studies on reviewer social media have highlighted the significance of attractiveness in shaping buying intentions (Lim, Radzol, Cheah, & Wong, 2017). Additionally, Liu, Huang, and Minghua (2007) found that the appeal of renowned testimonials significantly influences customers' buying intentions. The author proposes the following hypotheses:

- H5: The attractiveness of reviewers has a positive impact on the attitude toward reviewers.
- H6: The attractiveness of reviewers has a positive impact on buying intentions.

Consumers regard reviewers as role models, a source of inspiration, often aspiring to achieve what celebrities have accomplished (McCracken, 1989). Consumers consider product endorsements by reviewers as authentic, making these products more accessible when endorsed by reviewers (Berne-Manero, & Marzo-Navarro, 2020). Cooke, and Sheeran (2004) highlight that the relationship between customer attitude and intention is most consistent when consumers actively engage and interact. Utilizing widely admired reviewers positively impacts brand image and, consequently, enhances buying intentions. Further research suggests that attitude towards reviewers directly predicts buying intentions (Bergkvist, Hjalmarson, & Mägi, 2016). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) also views buying intentions as a direct outcome of attitude (Ajzen, 2011). The author proposes the hypothesis:

- H7: The attitude toward reviewers has a positive impact on buying intentions.

3.6 Research Methodology:

3.6.1 Research Approach:

This study employs a quantitative methodology, utilizing an online survey meticulously designed and distributed across various social media applications. The online survey, administered via Google Forms, includes validated scales to ensure reliability and validity. Rooted in prior scholarly research, the study framework draws upon validated variables synthesized from an exhaustive review of relevant literature, as presented in Table 1. This amalgamation of established constructs forms the basis for a comprehensive research framework, aiming to elucidate the complex dynamics between Trust (TRUS), Expertise (EXPT), Attractiveness (ATTR), and Attitude (ATTU) in shaping the purchase intentions of products endorsed by reviewers who introduce, and evaluate products or experience services on social media. The investigation spans a wide spectrum of popular social networking platforms prevalent in the Vietnamese digital landscape, encompassing Facebook, YouTube, Tiktok, Zalo, and Instagram.

In refining the sample, the research meticulously excludes individuals who engaged with review videos but did not convert this engagement into actual product purchases within a 7-day timeframe.

Additionally, with a keen awareness of the digital inclinations of contemporary consumer demographics, particular emphasis is placed on the Generation Z cohort, delineated as individuals born between 1995 and 2010 according to the classification established by Francis, & Hoefel (2018).

Acknowledging the imperative of cost-efficiency and accessibility inherent in modern research methodologies, the study integrates a purposive sampling strategy. Specifically targeting individuals who have demonstrably acted upon reviewer content by making purchases within a stipulated 7-day timeframe post-viewing, facilitated through Google Form, the research endeavor aims to assemble a substantial and diverse participant cohort. This approach ensures the accumulation of ample statistical power, enabling the discernment of significant insights and trends pertinent to influencer-driven consumer behavior within the Vietnamese context.

3.6.2 Sample and Data Collection

The survey targeted individuals who follow one or more reviewers on social networking sites (SNS) and have the intention to make online purchases through various social media platforms. The ideal sample size typically falls within the range of 30 to 500, according to Cooper, and Schindler (2014). Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2014) recommend that the sample size should be at least five times the number of variables analyzed, while Hair and colleagues (Hair et al., 2014) propose a sample size ranging from 200 to 400. In line with these considerations, this study aimed to survey 500 subjects. Data collection was conducted over the last two months of 2023, from October 2023 to December 2023. This period coincided with a peak in consumer purchasing activity in Vietnam as individuals prepared for the new year and the Vietnamese traditional Tet holiday. Collecting data during this time is advantageous because it captures heightened buying intentions, providing richer insights into consumer behavior influenced by social media reviewers. Respondents were surveyed within 7 days of engaging with reviewers' content. This timeframe ensures that any changes in buying intentions can be attributed to the influence of the reviewers' content rather than other factors.

The collected results comprised responses from 632 subjects, and after data cleaning and meeting the analysis conditions, 488 responses were deemed valid, achieving a response rate of 77.2%. All participants confirmed their followership of influencers on SNS.

Following data cleaning, the information was imported into SmartPLS 3.3.3 software for analysis to identify correlations between the research concepts in the model.

3.6.3 Questionnaire Development

To ensure that participants actively use social media and engage in online purchasing, a partial filter was applied during the participant selection process. The measurement scales employed in the survey were largely adapted from previous studies cited in the theoretical framework, with adjustments made to better align with the practical context of the Vietnamese market. Specifically, these measurement scales were inherited from prior research documents and are detailed in Table 1.

The survey is structured into three primary sections. The first section is a screening section designed to filter out participants who do not meet the criteria for active social media use and online purchasing. The second section aims to gauge key research concepts, focusing on the impact of social media influencers on the purchasing intentions of Generation Z in Vietnam by applying a set of carefully defined key variables. These key variables include Trust, Expertise, Attractiveness, Attitude towards Reviewers and Buying Intentions, each operationalized based on five observed variables adapted from prior research, as detailed in Table 1. Trust (TRUS) is defined as the perceived reliability and integrity of the influencer. Expertise (EXPT) refers to the perceived knowledge and skill of the influencer regarding the products they review. Attractiveness (ATTR) encompasses the physical appeal and likability of the influencer. Attitude towards Reviewers (ATTU) captures the overall evaluative response of consumers towards the products endorsed by influencers. Buying Intentions (BUYI) refers to the likelihood of consumers purchasing products endorsed by influencers. By clearly defining and measuring these variables using established observed variables, this study aims to rigorously assess the influence of social media reviewers on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z consumers in Vietnam.

The final section collects demographic information and additional relevant data to contextualize the responses. This comprehensive structure ensures that the collected data is both reliable and relevant to the research objectives.

Table 1 The scale of research concepts in the model

| | Variables | Code | N of OVs | Reference |
|---|-------------------------------|------|----------|--|
| 1 | Trust | TRUS | 5 | Lu, Chang, & Chang (2014), Ohanian (1990) |
| 2 | Expertise | EXPT | 5 | Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell (2000) |
| 3 | Attractiveness | ATTR | 5 | Ohanian (1990) |
| 4 | The attitude toward reviewers | ATTU | 5 | Ajzen (2011), Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez (2020), Silvera, and Austad (2004) |
| 5 | Buying intentions | BUYI | 5 | Ajzen (2011), Hsu, and Lin (2015), Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández (2019), Kumar, Lee, and Kim (2009), Martins, Costa, Oliveira, Gonçalves, & Branco (2017) |

4. Results and Discussion

Out of the 488 valid respondents meeting the criteria, 43.03% were male, and 56.97% were female. The distribution of ages was as follows: 6.15% were aged 12 to 14, 19.88% were aged 15 to 17, 52.46% were aged 18 to 22, 18.24% were aged 23 to 25, and 3.28% were aged 26 to 27. Regarding income, 19.67% earned less than 5M VND, 21.93% earned from 5M VND to under 10M VND, 53.48% earned from 10M VND to under 20M VND, and 4.92% earned from and over 20M VND (refer to Table 2).

After thorough analysis and the removal of variables STT1 and YD3 due to low factor loading, the outer loadings model underwent a re-analysis, converging after five iterations with all 23 observed variables. The data analysis results in Table 3 indicate that the outer loadings are all above 0.7, deemed acceptable (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016; Hulland, 1999). The Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability scores of the latent variables consistently exceed 0.7 and 0.8, respectively, as advised by Hair et al. (2016), signifying the internal consistency and reliability of the measurement scales.

Table 2 Demographic Information Statistics

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 210 | 43.03 |
| Female | 278 | 56.97 |
| Age | | |
| 12 - 14 | 30 | 6.15 |
| 15 - 17 | 97 | 19.88 |
| 18 - 22 | 256 | 52.46 |
| 23 - 25 | 89 | 18.24 |
| 26 - 27 | 16 | 3.28 |
| Income | | |
| Under 5M VND | 96 | 19.67 |
| From 5M VND to under 10M VND | 107 | 21.93 |
| From 10M VND to under 20M VND | 261 | 53.48 |
| From and over 20M VND | 24 | 4.92 |

The results of the analysis of the average variance extracted for the measurement scales are all greater than 0.5, meeting the convergence criteria for the scales (Bagozzi, & Yi, 1988; Gerbing, & Anderson, 1988; Hair, et al., 2018; Malhotra, & Dash, 2011)

Table 3 Results of reliability analysis

| Code | OVs | Outer loading | Cronbach's Alpha | Composite Reliability (CR) | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|------------------|-------|---------------|------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Trust | TRUS1 | eliminated | 0.829 | 0.830 | 0.887 |
| | TRUS2 | 0.819 | | | |
| | TRUS3 | 0.774 | | | |
| | TRUS4 | 0.815 | | | |
| | TRUS5 | 0.817 | | | |
| Expertise | EXPT1 | 0.773 | 0.831 | 0.831 | 0.877 |
| | EXPT2 | 0.747 | | | |
| | EXPT3 | 0.768 | | | |
| | EXPT4 | 0.789 | | | |
| | EXPT5 | 0.771 | | | |
| Attractiveness | ATTR1 | 0.733 | 0.842 | 0.834 | 0.880 |
| | ATTR2 | 0.818 | | | |
| | ATTR3 | 0.779 | | | |
| | ATTR4 | 0.789 | | | |
| | ATTR5 | 0.729 | | | |
| Attitude | ATTU1 | 0.821 | 0.837 | 0.843 | 0.879 |
| | ATTU2 | 0.760 | | | |
| | ATTU3 | 0.788 | | | |
| | ATTU4 | 0.773 | | | |
| | ATTU5 | 0.757 | | | |
| Buying Intention | BUYI1 | 0.766 | 0.789 | 0.800 | 0.863 |
| | BUYI2 | 0.763 | | | |
| | BUYI3 | eliminated | | | |
| | BUYI4 | 0.791 | | | |
| | BUYI5 | 0.815 | | | |

The assessment of discriminant validity in the measurement scales necessitates factor loadings exceeding 0.7, which holds statistical significance and can be verified using the heterotrait-heteromethod (HTMT) correlations (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014). Additionally, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values should surpass 0.5, and the comparison of $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ with the correlation coefficients between the model's concepts, known as the Fornell & Larcker criterion (Bagozzi, Yi, & Phillips, 1991; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The analysis results presented in Table 4 affirm that the measurement scales of the model's variables demonstrate satisfactory discriminant validity values.

Table 4 Discriminant validity analysis:

| The Fornell & Larcker criterion | | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | EXPT | ATTU | ATTR | TRUS | BUYI |
| EXPT | 0.779 | | | | |
| ATTU | 0.675 | 0.783 | | | |
| ATTR | 0.518 | 0.554 | 0.763 | | |
| TRUS | 0.643 | 0.609 | 0.354 | 0.822 | |
| BUYI | 0.549 | 0.576 | 0.408 | 0.645 | 0.776 |
| The heterotrait-heteromethod (HTMT) correlations | | | | | |
| | EXPT | ATTU | ATTR | TRUS | BUYI |
| EXPT | | | | | |
| ATTU | 0.871 | | | | |

| The heterotrait-heteromethod (HTMT) correlations | | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| | EXPT | ATTU | ATTR | TRUS | BUYI |
| ATTR | 0.567 | 0.576 | | | |
| TRUS | 0.743 | 0.772 | 0.456 | | |
| BUYI | 0.667 | 0.713 | 0.489 | 0.762 | |

After assessing the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of the endogenous variables in the structural model, all values remain below 5, suggesting that issues related to multicollinearity are unlikely to arise (Hair et al., 2021). Additionally, in accordance with Henseler, Ringle, and Sinkovics (2009), further consideration is needed regarding the explanatory power of the endogenous variables in the research model.

The findings reveal that the explanatory power of the endogenous variables ATTU and BUYI is 54.3% and 47.8%, respectively. The Q-squared coefficient for ATTU and BUYI is 0.398 and 0.299, respectively. According to Hair et al. (2016), these values indicate that the predictive capabilities of these endogenous variables beyond the sample are at an acceptable level, achieving moderate effectiveness in out-of-sample predictions (refer to Table 5).

Following bootstrap analysis for the relationships in the research model, the results, presented in Figure 2 and Table 6, indicate that the relationships are accepted and statistically significant, except for the connection from expertise (EXPT) to buying intentions (BUYI). This relationship is not accepted due to a p-value exceeding 0.05. Notably, expertise significantly influences the attitude toward reviewers (ATTU), and ATTU further impacts buying intentions (BUYI).

The assessment of the importance of exogenous variables in explaining endogenous variables reveals a moderate explanatory power. Expertise follows a similar pattern, with its impact only being significant in the relationship with ATTU, while its association with BUYI lacks statistical significance. Attraction (ATTR) has a minor impact on both ATTU and BUYI. Although ATTU influences the BUYI factor, it lacks significance according to Cohen's (1988) standards when considering the f^2 standard.

Table 5 Results of analyzing research concepts in the model

| Variables | CR | AVE | VIF | R-squared | Adjusted R-squared | Q-squared |
|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|
| EXPT | 0.877 | 0.587 | 2.454 | | | |
| ATTU | 0.887 | 0.621 | 2.322 | 0.543 | 0.599 | 0.398 |
| ATTR | 0.882 | 0.586 | 1.432 | | | |
| TRUS | 0.885 | 0.658 | 1.911 | | | |
| BUYI | 0.863 | 0.601 | | 0.478 | 0.451 | 0.299 |

Evaluating the capacity of exogenous variables to predict endogenous variables beyond the sample indicates that, overall, most variables demonstrate predictive coefficients falling within the range of 0.02 to 0.15, in line with Cohen's criteria (1988). Additionally, the connections from expertise to buying intentions and attraction to buying intentions display limited predictive capabilities beyond the sample, with coefficients below 0.02. Further details can be found in Table 6.

Table 6 Results of Hypothesis Testing

| | Relationships | Impact | STDEV | T-Statistics | P | f^2 | q^2 |
|----|---------------|--------|-------|--------------|-------|--------|-------|
| H1 | TRUS -> ATTU | 0.311 | 0.051 | 6.123 | 0.000 | 0.120 | 0.05 |
| H2 | TRUS -> BUYI | 0.382 | 0.055 | 7.401 | 0.000 | 0.140 | 0.06 |
| H3 | EXPT -> ATTU | 0.415 | 0.057 | 7.532 | 0.000 | 0.190 | 0.07 |
| H4 | EXPT -> BUYI | 0.080 | 0.068 | 1.701 | 0.021 | 0.005* | 0.00 |
| H5 | ATTR -> ATTU | 0.191 | 0.039 | 4.210 | 0.000 | 0.070 | 0.02 |
| H6 | ATTR -> BUYI | 0.121 | 0.053 | 2.104 | 0.031 | 0.019* | 0.00 |
| H7 | ATTU -> BUYI | 0.224 | 0.077 | 3.421 | 0.001 | 0.041* | 0.01 |

*p-value > 0.05, not statistically significant

The findings reveal a statistical significance for the majority of hypotheses (H1-H3 & H5-H7). However, when examining the explanatory power of exogenous variables for endogenous variables, both attractiveness (ATTR) and attitude with reviewers (ATTU) prove insufficient in explaining buying intentions (BUYI), leading to the non-fulfillment of requirements for H6 and H7. In terms of predictive ability beyond the model, it is generally low, and certain variables, particularly those associated with expertise and attractiveness, lack substantial predictive value for specific dimensions of buying intentions (BUYI). Furthermore, ATTU encounters challenges in predicting the buying intentions of young consumers. A comparison with previous studies, such as Weismueller, Harrigan, Wang, and Soutar (2020), Manran (2019) and Chetioui et al. (2020), highlights that while expertise (H4), attractiveness (H6), and attitude (H7) do influence buying intentions, the predictive ability of H6 and H7 for purchase behavior in this study is notably low or unpredictable.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the study demonstrates that trust, attractiveness, and expertise influence the attitude towards reviewers (ATTU), with only trust and attractiveness directly affecting purchase intention (BUYI). However, ATTU has an indirect impact on BUYI. Notably, trust emerges as the sole significant factor capable of predicting changes in young consumers' purchase intentions based on influencer endorsements. Contrary to previous research, this study reveals that a positive attitude towards reviewers does not necessarily translate into purchase behaviour among young consumers, particularly Generation Z. This discrepancy may stem from reviewers predominantly sharing images without sufficiently demonstrating their expertise or providing detailed explanations to help customers make more informed choices. Furthermore, recent reports indicate that reviewers in various fields are increasingly perceived as overly promotional, fostering customer skepticism towards purchase decisions based on their recommendations.

Consequently, businesses should approach engagement with social media reviewers cautiously, thoughtfully aligning their objectives. Instead of focusing solely on achieving sales targets, companies should prioritize enhancing brand awareness and communication. Leveraging social media reviewers effectively requires a nuanced understanding of the dynamics between the reviewer and their audience. Companies should ensure that reviewers provide in-depth insights and authentic content that goes beyond superficial endorsements, fostering genuine trust and credibility.

However, this study has specific limitations. Firstly, it generalizes across all social media applications prevalent in the Vietnamese market, such as Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Zalo, and Twitter, without differentiating the unique characteristics and content strategies of each platform. Each social media platform possesses distinct user demographics, engagement patterns, and content dissemination methods, which can significantly influence the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies. Additionally, the research does not target a specific product category, affecting the specificity and applicability of the analysis. Different product categories may interact with influencer marketing strategies in varied ways, necessitating more focused studies to draw accurate conclusions.

Secondly, the study delves into the relationships between specific key concepts-trust, attractiveness, expertise, attitude towards reviewers, and purchase intention-while overlooking other contributing factors. Factors such as cultural context, the perceived authenticity of influencers, the type of content shared, and the overall digital literacy of the target audience can also play crucial roles in shaping consumer behaviour. Future research should incorporate these variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms driving purchase intentions influenced by social media reviewers.

Thirdly, the survey's target demographic and sample size are limited, primarily encompassing young individuals, specifically Generation Z. While this focus provides valuable insights into the behaviours and preferences of this digitally native cohort, it limits the generalizability of the findings to other demographic groups. Expanding the demographic scope to include a broader age range and diverse socio-economic backgrounds can offer a more holistic view of how different segments of the population interact with social media influencers and their endorsements.

This study serves as a preliminary investigation for subsequent research by the authors. Future studies will focus on a specific social media platform and product category to compare findings with this research. This targeted approach will enable a more precise assessment of the interactions between influencers

and consumers within particular contexts, enhancing the applicability of the findings to specific marketing strategies. Additionally, upcoming studies will examine different target groups, such as Generation Y or nonspecific social media users in Vietnam, to broaden the understanding of influencer-driven consumer behaviour in diverse contexts. By exploring these various dimensions, future research can contribute to a more nuanced and actionable understanding of the impact of social media influencers on consumer behaviour, ultimately aiding businesses in crafting more effective and trustworthy marketing strategies

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7. References

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