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Factors Affecting Social Media Influencer Endorsements on Brand Preference: Evidence From the Fast Moving Consumer Goods Sector of Karachi, Pakistan

[1]Uzair Ahmed Mughal, [2] Dr. Emadul Karim

[1] PhD Scholar, Department of Business, Economics and Finance, Greenwich University, Karachi, Pakistan. (Corresponding Author) uzairmughal10015@hotmail.com

[2]Associate Professor, Faculty of Management Sciences and Information Studies, Greenwich University, Karachi, Pakistan. emad@greenwich.edu.pk

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Abstract

This study examines the factors through which social media influencer endorsements shape brand preference in the fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector of Pakistan, using evidence from Karachi. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory and the source credibility model, it tests the effects of five antecedents: influencer brand relationships, influencer type, engagement disclosure practices, social media engagement, and negotiation practices. A positivist, deductive, cross sectional design was adopted. Data were collected from 385 FMCG consumers through a structured online questionnaire measured on a five point Likert scale and analyzed in IBM SPSS Statistics using reliability and validity assessment, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression. All scales demonstrated adequate reliability (Cronbach alpha .751 to .851), convergent validity (AVE .573 to .692), and discriminant validity. The model explained 65.3 percent of the variance in brand preference ($F(5, 379) = 142.35$, $p < .001$), and all five hypotheses were supported. Influencer type ($\beta = .342$) and influencer brand relationships ($\beta = .308$) were the strongest predictors, followed by social media engagement ($\beta = .193$), engagement disclosure practices ($\beta = .181$), and negotiation practices ($\beta = .157$). The findings extend influencer marketing research to an under researched South Asian context and offer FMCG marketers evidence based guidance on selecting endorsers, structuring long term partnerships, and disclosing sponsorship transparently.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, influencer categories, sponsorship transparency, social media interaction, brand selection, FMCG sector, Pakistan

JEL Classification: M31, M37, D12

1. Introduction

Influencer marketing has become one of the fastest growing channels in the digital economy, reshaping how organizations communicate with consumers and build brand equity (Leung et al., 2022). Whereas firms once relied on print and broadcast advertising fronted by celebrities, social networks are now a primary conduit for consumer and brand interaction (Arora & Siddhey, 2024). Social media influencers shape consumer attention, trust, and brand preference in ways that traditional advertising rarely achieves, because their recommendations are embedded in content that followers experience as personal and authentic (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Ozuem & Willis, 2022).

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Pakistan offers a significant and understudied setting for this phenomenon. At the start of 2025 the country had about 116 million internet users and 66.9 million social media user identities (Kemp, 2025), and Karachi, its largest city with a population of 20.38 million (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics [PBS], 2023), concentrates the country's media, retail, and FMCG distribution activity. FMCG brands in categories such as soft drinks, juices, mineral water, dairy, and tea routinely engage entertainers, sports personalities, and digital creators to promote their products on Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok. Because FMCG products are purchased frequently and with low involvement, brand preference in this sector is both volatile and commercially consequential.

Despite the visible adoption of influencer marketing by Pakistani brands, academic understanding of how it operates in this market remains limited (Azhar et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2022). Most empirical work concentrates on Western markets and on single mechanisms such as influencer credibility, leaving a gap in evidence on how several influencers related factors jointly shape brand preference in an emerging South Asian economy (Chen et al., 2024; Kalam et al., 2023). The present study addresses this gap by examining five antecedents of brand preference: influencer brand relationships, influencer type, engagement disclosure practices, social media engagement, and negotiation practices.

The study pursues two objectives: (a) to assess the effect of each of the five antecedents on brand preference among FMCG consumers in Karachi and (b) to compare their relative strength within a single integrated model. In doing so it makes three contributions. Moreover, it advances influencer marketing theory in a scarcely researched national context; it supplies empirical estimates of the relative importance of five antecedents, which are often studied separately; and it offers practical directions to marketers when making decisions regarding the allocation of influencer budgets. Because influencer marketing creates new forms of self-employment and market participation in the digital economy, the study also relates to Sustainable Development Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth.

The rest of the paper provides review of literature and derivation of the hypotheses, followed by methodology, results, discussion of the results, and, finally, conclusion, implications, limitations and future directions.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

Drawing on Social Exchange Theory – which assumes that people only establish and maintain relationships when there is an assessment of costs and benefits and that reciprocity, trust, and commitment develop through repeated exchanges (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) – followers form influencer communities in which they exchange their attention, engagement, and trust for entertainment, information, and social contact with influencers and brands exchange monetary and social and material resources with influencers for access to their audiences (Ahmad et al., 2023). When followers' perceptions of these exchanges are high and fair, trust is transferred from the influencer to the endorsed brand which increases brand preference (Utami & Praswati, 2023).

The source credibility perspective adds that the endorser's influence will be influenced by perceptions of expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990). Influencer type, the nature of the relationship, and disclosures all impact source credibility (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Shan et al., 2020). The two perspectives as a whole justify why the construct of influencer exchanges,

and credibility of the endorser should form the basis of how endorsements influence brand preference.

2.2 Brand Preference and Influencer Endorsements

Brand preference denotes a consumer's inclination to favor a particular brand over alternatives based on experience, satisfaction, and perceived value (Ebrahim et al., 2016). Influencer endorsement has become a recognized antecedent of this preference because influencers act as trusted intermediaries who translate commercial messages into relatable recommendations for defined niches (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Chen et al., 2024). Followers often perceive influencers as more relatable and trustworthy than traditional celebrities (Freberg et al., 2011), and they treat influencer recommendations as social proof of a brand's quality (Nafees et al., 2021). These dynamics establish the conceptual link between endorsements and brand preference that motivates the antecedents examined below.

2.3 Influencer Brand Relationships

Early endorsement arrangements involved a single payment in exchange for a celebrity's appearance in television or print advertising. Social platforms transformed this model, because influencers interact continuously with followers and co create content with brands, converting one off endorsements into ongoing partnerships (Azhar et al., 2023; Leung et al., 2022). Long term relationships allow influencers to integrate products into their everyday content, which strengthens the perceived fit between influencer and brand and enhances the credibility of the endorsement (Breves et al., 2019). Trust and relationship commitment toward an influencer have also been shown to raise followers' purchase intentions toward endorsed brands (Chen et al., 2022). Consistent with Social Exchange Theory, a sustained and authentic relationship signals reciprocal commitment rather than a purely transactional exchange.

H1: Influencer brand relationships have a significant positive effect on brand preference.

2.4 Influencer Type

Influencer marketing can be defined by range, costs, and amount of relationship with followers. Campbell and Farrell (2020) address celebrity, mega, macro, micro, and nano influencers, with small-scale influencers having more engagement and with higher perceived authenticity while macro influencers provide reach and awareness. Micro influencers are abler to create trusting and engaged communities with niche interests (Chen et al., 2024), with professional endorsers such as doctors and dietitians bringing domain expertise which helps when endorsing food-related and health-related products (Shan et al., 2020). Self-influencer congruence and endorser motive also influence effectiveness of endorsement (Shan et al., 2020). Because consumers evaluate the suitability and credibility of the endorser type for a given product, the selection of influencer type is expected to shape brand preference.

H2: Influencer type has a significant positive effect on brand preference.

2.5 Engagement Disclosure Practices

Transparency regarding sponsored content materially affects how followers respond to endorsements. Regulators such as the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (2019) require influencers

to disclose material connections with brands clearly. Research shows that disclosure language affects advertising recognition and attitudes (Evans et al., 2017), and that disclosures shape how consumers process sponsored posts (Boerman et al., 2017). De Veirman and Hudders (2020) found that disclosure combined with a two sided message can preserve source credibility, whereas content perceived as overtly commercial reduces followers' willingness to engage (Gamage & Ashill, 2023). From an exchange perspective, honest disclosure signals fairness and protects the trust on which influencer relationships depend.

H3: Engagement disclosure practices have a significant positive effect on brand preference.

2.6 Social Media Engagement

Social media engagement comprises consumers' consumption of, contribution to, and creation of brand related content, including liking, commenting, sharing, and user generated content (Schivinski et al., 2016). Consumer brand engagement has been linked to self brand connection and brand usage intentions (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Participatory engagement deepens emotional connection and fosters loyalty because consumers who feel recognized develop more favorable brand attitudes (Khan et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2020), and influencer endorsements in brand posts increase engagement and online store performance (Waltenrath et al., 2022). Higher quality engagement around endorsements is therefore expected to raise brand preference.

H4: Social media engagement has a significant positive effect on brand preference.

2.7 Negotiation Practices

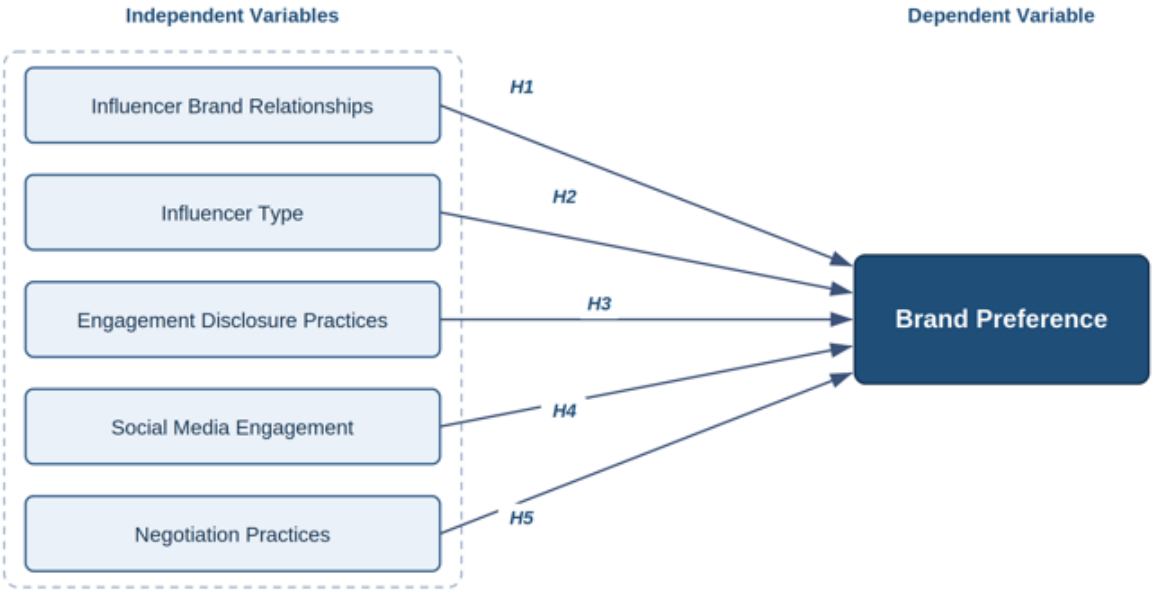
Negotiation practices refer to the ways in which brands and influencers structure their collaborations and the value propositions they offer audiences through them (Sebenius et al., 2021). Influencer agreements have moved from lump sum payments toward performance contingent terms specifying deliverables, exclusivity, and content guidelines, and evaluation has shifted from follower counts toward engagement and attributable sales (Gräve, 2019). From the consumer's perspective, well negotiated collaborations are visible as consistent messaging, exclusive discount codes, giveaways, and content in which the influencer retains creative freedom, all of which create value for followers and make the exchange appear fair (Macarthy, 2021). In this study the construct is therefore measured as consumers' perception of the value and fairness of the brand influencer arrangement.

H5: Negotiation practices have a significant positive effect on brand preference.

2.8 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework, in which the five antecedents are modeled as independent variables and brand preference as the dependent variable. Social media endorsement is treated as the overarching practice within which these antecedents operate rather than as a separate mediating construct.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of the Study



Note. Developed by the authors on the basis of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), the source credibility model (Ohanian, 1990), and Campbell and Farrell (2020).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy and Design

The study adopts a positivist paradigm, which treats knowledge as the verification of theory against observable evidence (Bell et al., 2019). Consistent with this orientation, it uses a quantitative, deductive, and explanatory design in which hypotheses derived from theory are tested empirically (Saunders et al., 2019). The design is cross sectional, as data were collected at a single point in time.

3.2 Population, Sample Size, and Sampling

The target population comprised adult FMCG consumers in Karachi who use social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, or TikTok. Because the population is large and no sampling frame exists, the minimum sample size was estimated with Cochran's (1977) formula, $n = z^2p(1 - p)/e^2$, at a 95 percent confidence level ($z = 1.96$), maximum variability ($p = .50$), and a 5 percent margin of error ($e = .05$), which yields 384.16, rounded to 385 (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). An a priori power analysis in G*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009) for a multiple regression with five predictors, a medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$), $\alpha = .05$, and power of .95 indicated a minimum of 138 respondents, so the sample of 385 provides ample power.

Nonprobability convenience sampling was used. Screening questions restricted participation to respondents who (a) were 18 years or older, (b) lived in Karachi, (c) had purchased at least one FMCG product (such as soft drinks, juices, bottled water, dairy, tea, or snacks) in the previous month, and (d) had seen an influencer endorsement of an FMCG brand on social media in the previous three months. Data were collected between January and March 2026. Of 452 responses received, 26 failed the screening criteria, 21 were incomplete, 14 showed straight lining across all

items, and 6 were multivariate outliers by Mahalanobis distance ($p < .001$), leaving 385 usable responses (85.2 percent of responses received).

3.3 Research Instrument

Data were collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire in English. The first section captured gender, age, education, monthly income, and the most used platform for viewing influencer content. The remaining sections contained 26 items measured on a five point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Items were adapted from validated sources: influencer brand relationships from Breves et al. (2019) and Chen et al. (2022); influencer type from Campbell and Farrell (2020) and Shan et al. (2020); engagement disclosure practices from Evans et al. (2017) and Boerman et al. (2017); social media engagement from Schivinski et al. (2016); negotiation practices developed for this study from Sebenius et al. (2021) and Gräve (2019); and brand preference from Ebrahim et al. (2016). The full item list appears in Appendix A. Two marketing academics reviewed the instrument for content validity, and a pilot test with 30 FMCG consumers, who were excluded from the main sample, led to minor wording changes; all pilot scales returned Cronbach alpha values above .70.

3.4 Data Collection and Ethical Considerations

The questionnaire was administered through Google Forms and disseminated through email, WhatsApp groups, and social networking platforms. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, informed consent was obtained on the first page, no identifying information was collected, and participants could withdraw at any time before submission. The study was approved by the research ethics committee of Greenwich University, Karachi.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed in IBM SPSS Statistics. After describing the sample, the measurement model was assessed through exploratory factor analysis (principal component extraction with varimax rotation), the Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett tests, Cronbach alpha, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion, and the heterotrait monotrait ratio (HTMT; Henseler et al., 2015); CR, AVE, and HTMT were computed from the SPSS output using standard formulas. Common method bias, normality, multicollinearity, independence of errors, and homoscedasticity were then examined. Lastly, Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression were also employed to test each of the hypotheses, the latter was supported for the coefficients in which they were both positive and significant at $p < .05$ (two tailed).

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the 385 respondents. Most were male (67.5 percent) and young, with 86.8 percent aged between 18 and 35 years. The majority held a master's degree (59.7 percent) or a bachelor's degree (36.9 percent), and just over half reported a monthly income above PKR 80,000. Instagram was the most common platform for viewing influencer content (34.3

percent), followed by YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok. These features are consistent with the profile of socially active urban FMCG consumers.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 385)

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	260	67.5
Female	125	32.5
Age (years)		
18 to 25	115	29.9
26 to 35	219	56.9
36 to 45	39	10.1
Above 45	12	3.1
Education		
Intermediate	13	3.4
Bachelor's (graduate)	142	36.9
Master's or above	230	59.7
Monthly income (PKR)		
40,000 or below	40	10.4
40,001 to 80,000	142	36.9
Above 80,000	203	52.7
Most used platform for influencer content		
Instagram	132	34.3
YouTube	101	26.2
Facebook	94	24.4
TikTok	58	15.1

Note. PKR = Pakistani rupees. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

4.2 Model: Reliability and Validity

Sampling adequacy was excellent (KMO = .917), and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(325) = 4072.59$, $p < .001$). The six factor solution corresponding to the theorized constructs explained 62.6 percent of the total variance. As Table 2 shows, standardized loadings ranged from .685 to .867, above the .60 threshold (Hair et al., 2019). Cronbach alpha values (.751 to .851) and composite reliability values (.843 to .900) exceeded .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), and the alpha for the full 26 item instrument was .909. AVE values ranged from .573 to .692, above .50, confirming convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 2 Reliability and Convergent Validity of Measurement Scales

Construct	Items	Loadings	α	CR	AVE
Influencer brand relationships (IBR)	5	.741 to .811	.850	.893	.626
Influencer type (IT)	4	.737 to .827	.803	.871	.629
Engagement disclosure practices (EDP)	4	.739 to .782	.761	.848	.582
Social media engagement (SME)	4	.805 to .867	.851	.900	.692
Negotiation practices (NP)	4	.685 to .797	.751	.843	.573
Brand preference (BP)	5	.741 to .798	.833	.883	.601

Note. α = Cronbach alpha; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted. Overall instrument α = .909 (26 items).

Discriminant validity was established because the square root of each construct's AVE exceeded its correlations with all other constructs (Table 4), satisfying the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion, and because the highest HTMT ratio (.763) was below the conservative .85 threshold (Henseler et al., 2015).

4.3 Common Method Bias and Regression Assumptions

Procedural remedies recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003), including guaranteed anonymity and separation of predictor and criterion sections, were applied. Harman's single factor test showed that one factor explained 31.3 percent of the variance, below the 50 percent threshold, so common method bias is unlikely to be a serious concern. Skewness (−0.88 to −0.59) and kurtosis (−0.02 to 0.77) values fell within ±2, indicating acceptable normality (George & Mallery, 2019). Tolerance values (.755 to .841) and variance inflation factors (1.189 to 1.325) ruled out multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2019). The Durbin Watson statistic (1.932) indicated independent residuals, and the Breusch Pagan test was not significant ($\chi^2(5) = 9.36$, $p = .095$), indicating homoscedasticity.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 shows that mean scores ranged from 3.88 for engagement disclosure practices to 4.07 for social media engagement, indicating general agreement that influencer related factors shape respondents' brand preferences. Standard deviations between 0.65 and 0.71 indicate moderate dispersion.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (N = 385)

Variable	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Influencer brand relationships	1.20	5.00	3.93	0.71	−0.77	0.55
Influencer type	1.75	5.00	4.04	0.68	−0.62	0.19
Engagement disclosure practices	1.50	5.00	3.88	0.67	−0.61	0.29
Social media engagement	1.25	5.00	4.07	0.71	−0.88	0.72
Negotiation practices	1.50	5.00	3.96	0.65	−0.80	0.77
Brand preference	2.00	5.00	4.03	0.66	−0.59	−0.02

Note. Scores are item means on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Standard error of skewness = 0.124; standard error of kurtosis = 0.248.

4.4 Correlation Analysis

Table 4 reports Pearson correlations. All five antecedents correlated positively and significantly with brand preference ($p < .001$): influencer type ($r = .625$), influencer brand relationships ($r = .607$), social media engagement ($r = .488$), negotiation practices ($r = .474$), and engagement disclosure practices ($r = .460$). Correlations among the independent variables were moderate ($r = .257$ to .397), well below .80, supporting the absence of multicollinearity.

Table 4. Correlation Matrix and Fornell and Larcker Criterion

Construct	IBR	IT	EDP	SME	NP	BP
IBR	**.791**					
IT	.397	**.793**				
EDP	.257	.304	**.763**			
SME	.331	.294	.266	**.832**		
NP	.337	.314	.284	.284	**.757**	
BP	.607	.625	.460	.488	.474	**.775**

Note. Bold diagonal values are square roots of AVE; values below the diagonal are Pearson correlations, all significant at $p < .001$ (two tailed). IBR = influencer brand relationships; IT = influencer type; EDP = engagement disclosure practices; SME = social media engagement; NP = negotiation practices; BP = brand preference.

4.5 Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 5 shows that the model achieved $R = .808$ and $R^2 = .653$ (adjusted $R^2 = .648$), indicating that the five antecedents jointly explain 65.3 percent of the variance in brand preference, a large effect ($f^2 = 1.88$). The analysis of variance in Table 6 confirms that the model is statistically significant, $F(5, 379) = 142.35$, $p < .001$.

Table 5. Regression Model Summary

Model	*R*	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. error of the estimate	Durbin Watson
1	.808	.653	.648	0.390	1.932

Note. Predictors: (constant), influencer brand relationships, influencer type, engagement disclosure practices, social media engagement, negotiation practices. Dependent variable: brand preference.

Table 6. Analysis of Variance

Source	Sum of squares	*df*	Mean square	*F*	*p*
Regression	108.093	5	21.619	142.35	< .001
Residual	57.561	379	0.152		
Total	165.654	384			

Note. Dependent variable: brand preference.

Table 7 reports the coefficients. All five antecedents had positive and significant effects. Influencer type was the strongest predictor (β = .342, t = 9.88, p < .001), followed by influencer brand relationships (β = .308, t = 8.83, p < .001), social media engagement (β = .193, t = 5.77, p < .001), engagement disclosure practices (β = .181, t = 5.48, p < .001), and negotiation practices (β = .157, t = 4.65, p < .001). None of the 95 percent confidence intervals for the predictors included zero.

Table 7. Regression Coefficients

Predictor	*B*	*SE*	β	*t*	*p*	95% CI for *B*	VIF
(Constant)	−0.465	0.175		−2.65	.008	[−0.809, −0.120]	
Influencer brand relationships	0.285	0.032	.308	8.83	< .001	[0.221, 0.348]	1.325
Influencer type	0.333	0.034	.342	9.88	< .001	[0.266, 0.399]	1.308
Engagement disclosure practices	0.177	0.032	.181	5.48	< .001	[0.114, 0.240]	1.189
Social media engagement	0.178	0.031	.193	5.77	< .001	[0.117, 0.238]	1.219
Negotiation practices	0.158	0.034	.157	4.65	< .001	[0.091, 0.225]	1.241

Note. *B* = unstandardized coefficient; *SE* = standard error; β = standardized coefficient; CI = confidence interval; VIF = variance inflation factor. Dependent variable: brand preference.

4.6 Hypothesis Testing

Table 8 summarizes the hypothesis tests. All five coefficients were positive and significant at p < .05, so all five hypotheses were supported.

Table 8. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis and path	β	*t*	*p*	Decision
H1: Influencer brand relationships → Brand preference	.308	8.83	< .001	Supported
H2: Influencer type → Brand preference	.342	9.88	< .001	Supported
H3: Engagement disclosure practices → Brand preference	.181	5.48	< .001	Supported
H4: Social media engagement → Brand preference	.193	5.77	< .001	Supported
H5: Negotiation practices → Brand preference	.157	4.65	< .001	Supported

Note. Decision rule: positive coefficient significant at p < .05 (two tailed).

5. Discussion

The findings show that five influencer related factors jointly explain about two thirds of the variance in brand preference among FMCG consumers in Karachi, confirming that influencer endorsements are a substantial driver of brand choice even in a low involvement, habitually purchased product category.

Influencer type was the strongest predictor (H2), which is consistent with evidence that celebrities, macro, micro, nano, and professional influencers differ in their capacity to shape attitudes (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Chen et al., 2024). In terms of the source credibility model, the right endorser type supplies the expertise, trustworthiness, or attractiveness that a given product requires

(Ohanian, 1990); for example, a nutrition professional may lend credibility to a dairy product, whereas a popular entertainer may suit a soft drink. This suggests that endorser selection, matched to product category and target audience, is the most consequential decision available to FMCG marketers in Karachi (Shan et al., 2020).

Influencer brand relationships ranked a close second (H1). The result supports the view that endorsements gain force when influencers maintain an authentic, sustained association with brands, because consumers interpret long term relationships as evidence of genuine use rather than a one off transaction (Breves et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2022). This is consistent with Social Exchange Theory, under which repeated, reciprocal exchanges build the trust and commitment that are transferred to the endorsed brand (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Social media engagement (H4) also had a meaningful effect, corroborating research showing that participatory interaction and user generated content deepen consumers' connection with brands (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Schivinski et al., 2016) and that influencer endorsements raise engagement and store performance (Waltenrath et al., 2022). Brands that cultivate two-way interaction around endorsements, rather than merely broadcasting them, appear better placed to convert attention into preference.

Engagement disclosure practices (H3) significantly increased brand preference. Although critics fear that disclosure reduces persuasion, the result accords with evidence that clear and honest disclosure can preserve credibility (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020; Evans et al., 2017), whereas concealed sponsorship risks reputational harm (Gamage & Ashill, 2023). Pakistani consumers, like those in other markets, appear to reward transparency. Finally, negotiation practices (H5) had the smallest but still significant effect, indicating that the visible outcomes of brand influencer agreements, such as exclusive offers, consistent messaging, and creative freedom for the influencer, add value for followers and make the exchange appear fair (Sebenius et al., 2021). Their smaller effect is plausible because consumers observe negotiation only indirectly.

Taken together, the results indicate that the mechanisms identified in Western research also operate in Pakistan, while the strong role of influencer type and relationships suggests that credibility and authenticity are especially important in a market where consumers are increasingly exposed to paid endorsements. The predominance of young, educated, male respondents means that the findings describe the most digitally active consumers most accurately and should be generalized to other segments with caution.

6. Conclusion

This study examined how five factors shape the effect of social media influencer endorsements on brand preference in the FMCG sector of Karachi, Pakistan. Using data from 385 consumers, it found that influencer type, influencer brand relationships, social media engagement, engagement disclosure practices, and negotiation practices all significantly and positively affect brand preference, with influencer type and influencer brand relationships having the strongest effects. The model explained 65.3 percent of the variance in brand preference.

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

The study contributes to influencer marketing research in three ways. First, it provides evidence from an under researched emerging economy, confirming the cross cultural relevance of established mechanisms. Second, it integrates five antecedents in a single model and quantifies their relative influence, offering a fuller account of brand preference formation than studies that examine them in isolation. Third, it shows how Social Exchange Theory and the source credibility model jointly explain influencer effects: credibility determines whether an endorser is persuasive,

while the reciprocity and fairness of exchanges determine whether that credibility is transferred to the brand.

6.2 Managerial Implications

FMCG marketers should treat endorser selection as a strategic decision, matching influencer type to the product category, target audience, and campaign objective rather than choosing on follower counts alone. They should favor long term partnerships over one off promotions so that products are integrated naturally into influencers' content. Clear and consistent sponsorship disclosure should be required in influencer contracts as a means of preserving trust, and brands should invest in interactive content, user generated content campaigns, and follower centered offers such as exclusive codes and giveaways. Allowing influencers creative freedom within agreed brand guidelines is likely to strengthen the authenticity on which these effects depend.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

The study focused on the FMCG sector in Karachi and used convenience sampling, which limits generalizability to other industries, cities, and consumer segments; the sample was also skewed toward young, highly educated male respondents. The cross sectional design and self reported measures limit causal inference, and brand preference may not translate fully into purchase behavior. Future research could use probability sampling across multiple cities with balanced demographic representation, longitudinal or experimental designs, and structural equation modeling to test mediators such as trust and credibility and moderators such as gender, product category, and platform. Studies could also examine purchase behavior, brand equity, and brand image as outcomes, and use qualitative methods to explore authenticity and engagement in greater depth.

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