

Influencer Reputation, Trust, and Communication Skills as Determinants of Skincare Buying Intention Among Male Models

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of social media influencers' reputations on male models' buying intentions for skincare products in Cagayan de Oro City. Influencer reputation, treated as the independent variable, was assessed through communication skills and trust, while buying intention served as the dependent variable. A quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design was employed, with data collected through a survey questionnaire. Findings revealed that influencers were perceived as credible, particularly for their trustworthiness and effective communication. These qualities were found to play a meaningful role in shaping skincare product decisions among male models. Also, a focus group discussion was conducted. The FGDs revealed that trust is the primary driver of buying intention, with male models expressing greater confidence in products endorsed by influencers perceived as credible, authentic, and consistent. Participants emphasized that influencers who demonstrate transparency, expertise, and effective communication—such as showing real product use, explaining ingredients, and engaging like consultants rather than salespeople—are more persuasive. Conversely, scripted content, frequent brand-switching, or overtly commercial promotion weakened trust and reduced buying intention. The study concludes that influencer reputation significantly affects consumer buying intention, highlighting the importance of trust and communication in professions centered on appearance, such as modeling. The results provide valuable insights for skincare brands, influencers, and advertising agencies to develop targeted, credible marketing strategies. Future research is recommended to explore additional factors, such as emotional appeal and authenticity cues, better to understand the impact of influencer credibility on consumer behavior.

Keywords: Social Media Influencers, Influencer's Reputation, Communication Skills, Trust, Buying Intention, Skincare Products, Credibility, Consumer Behavior

1. Introduction

Buying intention refers to the likelihood that male models in Cagayan de Oro City will purchase skincare products, reflecting their decision-making process influenced by their perceptions of social media influencers and the products they promote (Ajzen, 1991). Understanding buying intention is important because it directly impacts consumer behavior and marketing success in the competitive skincare industry. This study focuses on buying intention as the dependent variable and examines how social media influencers' reputations influence it. Social media influencer reputation is conceptualized through two key components: communication skills and trust. These elements collectively shape the influencer's reputation and significantly influence consumer attitudes and behaviors. As per Ortega (2025), transparent communication was found to enhance trust and confidence; effective communication also fosters a connection with followers, while trust encourages them to consider and decide to purchase the skincare products endorsed by influencers (Audrezet et al., 2018; Liu, 2024). The relationship between buying intention and social media influencer reputation is significant. Influencers' communication skills and trustworthiness are expected to affect male models' buying intentions strongly.

This study narrows its focus specifically to social media influencers instead of the broader category of content creators to better align with the dynamics of the target population—male models in Cagayan de Oro City. While content creators focus on producing high-quality content with a craft-oriented approach, such as storytelling, tutorials, or entertainment, influencers prioritize leveraging their personal brand and trustworthiness to sway their audience's opinions and purchasing behavior. Also, influencers excel at nurturing close, trust-based relationships with their followers, which are crucial for driving immediate and authentic purchase intentions (StackInfluence, 2025). For male models, whose profession emphasizes appearance and lifestyle perception, the persuasive power of influencers' endorsements is more important than that of general content creators, whose work may lack the direct intent or ability to influence buying decisions. Thus,

influencers' specific roles in fostering trust and effective communication make them a more suitable focus for this study's objective of examining buying intentions for skincare products (Billo, 2025). Despite some overlapping roles, all influencers are content creators, but not all content creators act as influencers with a measurable impact on consumer buying behavior. Focusing on influencers enables a precise analysis of reputation factors directly affecting consumer motivation and trust within this niche group (StackInfluence, 2025).

This study explores the influence of social media influencer reputation on male models' buying intentions for skincare products in Cagayan de Oro City. Despite the growing importance of influencer marketing, there is limited research on how specific dimensions of influencer reputation, such as communication skills and trust, affect purchase intentions among male consumers in specialized groups like male models. Some existing studies examine broad consumer populations without differentiating by profession or gender, leaving a gap in understanding how these variables operate within niche demographics (Liu, 2024; Alkan, 2023; Al-Mu'ania, 2023).

The four types of social media influencers are nano, micro, macro, and mega influencers. Nano-influencers are everyday social media users who have a small but very loyal audience. They usually influence their local neighborhood or community (Hawley & Ismail, 2024). Two examples are Akki Pajara and Jean Berger Peritos. Unlike macro or mega-influencers, Micro-influencers usually focus on a specific brand or niche and are generally known as topic specialists (Hawley & Ismail, 2024). Two examples are Greta Quina and Julia Chaves. Macro-influencers usually fall between micro- and mega-influencers. They gain a significant following through activities such as vlogging and creating funny or inspiring content (Hawley & Ismail, 2024). Lastly, Mega-influencers are often celebrities and "a very diverse audience with different topics of interest" (Eyal, Hawley, & Ismail, 2024). Two examples are Louie Jay Baloc and Jamie Lim. Below are the ranks of each type of social media influencer according to the number of followers on every social media platform, such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube (Hawley & Ismail, 2024):

Table 1 Mega-Influencers in Cagayan De Oro

Name	Screen Name	Followers	Overall Likes	Product Endorsed
Bryan Roy Tagarao	Brenda Mage	1.1M (Tiktok)	6.8M	Skincare product
Louiejay Cagalawan Colab	Daddy Louie	12.3M (Tiktok)	129.7M	Skincare product
Jamie Lim	Jamie Lim	1.4M (Tiktok)	49.2M	Skincare product
Rechelle Mae Maghanoy	Resyel	1.3M (Tiktok)	35.3M	Probiotic Supplement
Al Moralde	Al Moralde	1M (Tiktok)	7.4M	Tourist destinations
-	Softenic	1.2M (Facebook)	98.3K	Tourist destinations
-	Katawa CDO Doodzkie	1.2M (Facebook)	226K	Tourist destinations
-	Kusina Chef	2.4M (Facebook)	13.6K	Culinary content

Legend for Type of Influencer: Nano: 1,000-10,000, Micro: 10,000-100,000, Macro: 100,000-1,000,000, Mega: 1,000,000+

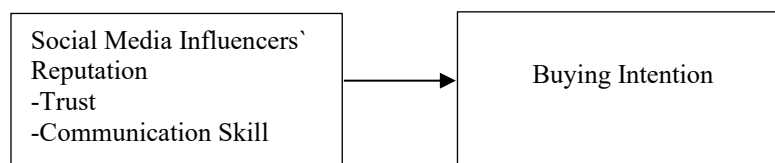
These are the local social media influencers in Cagayan de Oro City who are part of the Mega-influencers; however, only 3 of them are promoting skincare products: Jamie Lim, Brenda Mage, and Daddy Louie. Among the four types of influencers, this study focuses on mega influencers for their extensive follower base, which exceeds 1 million, enabling them to generate broad, immediate brand visibility. Their professionally produced content, strong public credibility, and celebrity-like appeal make them highly effective in creating brand image and influencing consumer behavior (Avanii, 2025). Furthermore, it seeks to determine the intent to purchase skincare products from mega influencers and examine how their content influences male models' buying intentions.

This study examines how skin-focused social media influencers (SMIs) influence male models' buying intentions for skincare products in Cagayan de Oro City. Among the critical reputation factors, communication skills and trustworthiness of skin SMIs are pivotal, as they foster strong connections and credibility with followers, thereby shaping purchase decisions. The research narrows its scope to mega influencers due to their broad reach of over 1 million followers, professional-quality content, and high public appeal, which are particularly influential in the beauty and skincare market. Male models, whose professional image relies heavily on aesthetics, tend to be more receptive to endorsements from such influencers, whose persuasive communication and established trust can significantly impact their intent to buy. By focusing on this niche demographic and specific influencer type, the study aims to fill research gaps by analyzing how these reputation dimensions of skin SMIs translate into concrete buying behaviors, offering valuable insights for more effective influencer marketing in the competitive skincare industry. (Liu, 2024; Alkan, 2023). This study is based on a conceptual framework that posits that social media influencer reputation, operationalized as communication skills and trust, influences buying intention among male models in Cagayan de Oro City (Lee & Watkins, 2016; Audrezet et al., 2018). Communication skills refer to how well influencers interact and keep meaningful conversations with their followers (Lee & Watkins, 2016).

Trust refers to how much followers believe the influencer is honest and reliable, which strongly affects whether they accept the products the influencer promotes (Audrezet et al., 2018). Buying intention is defined as the likelihood that male models in Cagayan de Oro City will purchase skincare products, influenced by their perceptions of the influencer and the products they endorse (Ajzen, 1991). This framework proposes communication skills and trust as part of influencer reputation, encouraging buying intention by shaping attitudes and motivating purchase decisions in online marketing (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

The variables are drawn from previous studies that emphasize influencer credibility and consumer trust in social media marketing. Communication skills are key for consumer engagement (Lee & Watkins, 2016), and trust is essential for convincing consumers to buy (Audrezet et al., 2018). Buying intention is a primary measure of consumer motivation to purchase (Ajzen, 1991). The social media influencer's reputation, as measured by Trust and Communication Skills, fits within TPB as external variables strongly predictive of the core determinants of Buying Intention. (Brookes, E.,2023). Trust-in particular, perceived honesty and knowledge about the product-and Communication Skills-specifically, clarity and engagingness feed into the male models' Attitude toward buying the skincare product by establishing the perceived benefits and reducing risk shape Subjective Norms by casting the influencer as a reference figure whose considered opinion exerts social pressure for adoption and Perceived Behavioral Control by providing the detailed information and confidence needed for an easily made purchasing decision (Long, M., Huang, X., & Liu, X.,2024).

To sum up, the conceptual framework illustrates that social media influencer reputation, through communication skills and trust, affects male models' buying intention in Cagayan de Oro City.



Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study aims to investigate the influence of influencer reputation and product trust on purchasing intentions. Specifically, it aims to address the following questions: (1) What is the level of reputation of social media influencers in terms of (a) trust and (b) communication skills, (2) What is the level of buying intentions of male models toward skincare products? And (3) Is there a relationship between social media influencers' reputation and buying intentions?

2. Material and Methods

2.1. Research Methodology

This chapter explains the methods and procedures used in the study. It covers the research design, research setting, participant selection, data collection tools, validation and reliability measures, data collection process, scoring guidelines, statistical analyses, and ethical considerations.

2.2 Research Design

The research design of this study is quantitative and descriptive-correlational, aimed at identifying and examining the relationships among social media influencers' reputation, product trust, and male models' buying intentions for skincare products in Cagayan de Oro City. This design allows for measuring the strength and direction of these relationships using structured surveys and statistical analysis.

2.3 Research Locale

The study was conducted in Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines, focusing on male models. This population was chosen because male models are appearance-driven consumers highly influenced by social media marketing in the skincare industry. Data collection occurred within the city, targeting male models actively engaging with social media influencers.

2.4 Respondents and Sampling Technique

The study population consists of 100 male models in Cagayan de Oro City. A sample of 80 respondents was selected. According to sampling theory and literature on small population sizes, when a population is less than 100, a sample size of about 80% or more is recommended to attain high confidence (95%) and an acceptable margin of error (5%) for representativeness and statistical power (Memon et al., 2020). This approach balances practical data collection constraints with the need for reliable and valid results. The study's population comprises one hundred male models from Cagayan de

Oro City. Male models were chosen as respondents because they regularly interact with social media influencers in their line of work and are active consumers of skincare products, making them ideal subjects for researching how influencer reputation affects purchase intention. They can better represent more general consumer buying intentions in the male skincare market because of their deliberate, well-informed purchase behavior. Given a population of 100, a sample of 80 respondents ensures a high confidence level (95%) with a margin of error of around 5%, balancing accuracy and feasibility in data collection. Taro Yamane was considered for sample size determination.

Convenience sampling was used to select male models affiliated with modeling agencies or freelance professionals who are active on social media and accessible, and to select participants for the Focus Group Discussion to validate the quantitative data. The researchers engaged four respondents identified as male models in Cagayan de Oro. This sample aligns with the idea of Krueger & Casey (2015), who state that 4 participants might still work in a niche group. A focus group discussion (FGD) consisting of only four people is highly effective for researching a niche group primarily because this small size fosters an environment conducive to depth of insight and rich, candid dialogue. When dealing with a specialized or narrow population, the goal shifts from achieving broad coverage of opinions to securing a detailed understanding of a shared experience or particular attitudes. In this context, a four-person group, often termed a mini-focus group or quad, ensures that each participant has ample opportunity to contribute extensively, elaborate on complex concepts, and respond to the moderator's probes without the time constraints or pressure often felt in larger groups (Qualtrics, 2023). This enhanced contribution enables researchers to quickly reach saturation on core themes relevant to the niche topic.

Furthermore, for niche groups that may involve sensitive, technical, or highly personal subject matter, the limited size of the quad significantly reduces the potential for social desirability bias and inhibition, as per SIS International Research. Participants feel less intimidated by the smaller audience, promoting a more trusting, intimate dynamic in which they are more likely to share honest, perhaps controversial, or detailed information crucial to the research (Trymata, n.d.). The moderator can more easily manage the flow, ensuring that even reserved participants have their voices heard, preventing one or two individuals from dominating the discussion, a common challenge in traditional focus groups of six to ten people. Therefore, for research targeting a homogeneous, niche population, the four-person format is strategically superior for eliciting high-quality, focused, and deeply contextualized qualitative data (B2B International).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Level of Reputation of Social Media Influencers in Terms of Trust

The descriptive analysis of Trust reveals that male model respondents maintain a strong, positive perception of social media influencers, indicated by an overall mean score of 3.26, which falls within the Very High Trust range. This high level of confidence is driven by the highest mean scores for the beliefs that influencers know the product they are promoting ($\bar{x} = 3.35$) and that influencers are honest ($\bar{x} = 3.34$). This emphasis on perceived expertise and honesty aligns with studies that find influencer credibility is rooted in perceived honesty and product familiarity (Ohanian, 1990; Audrezet et al., 2018). The data confirms that for this consumer segment, high perceived integrity, including the belief that the influencer genuinely uses the products, remains strong ($\bar{x} = 3.11$), reinforcing the conclusion that customer trust is a strong driver of purchase intention in the beauty and personal care industry (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Han & Balabanis, 2024).

3.2 Level of Reputation of Social Media Influencers in Terms of Communication Skills

The descriptive analysis of Communication Skills in Table 3.1 clearly indicates that male model respondents hold a Very High Reputation for their influencers, evidenced by an overall mean score of 3.40. This strong positive perception is evident in the fact that 97.50% of respondents rated the influencers in the High or Very High Reputation categories, indicating high satisfaction with how information is conveyed. The highest ratings focus on the influencers' didactic ability, specifically their skill to explain the product's features and benefits effectively ($\bar{x} = 3.48$) and to present information in an engaging and organized manner ($\bar{x} = 3.45$). This effectiveness confirms the conceptual framework, which emphasizes that effective communication is key for consumer engagement (Lee & Watkins, 2016) and is integral to delivering perceived expertise (Ohanian, 1990). The data confirm that high communicative effectiveness acts as a crucial facilitator of credibility, ultimately leading to stronger trust and influencing consumer decisions in the skincare market (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Han & Balabanis, 2024).

3.3 Level of Buying Intentions of Male Models Toward Skincare Products

The analysis of Buying Intentions in Table 4.1 clearly reveals that male models exhibit a strong propensity to purchase skincare products based on influencer endorsements, with an overall mean score of 3.33, interpreted as Very High Intention. This finding is overwhelmingly supported, as 90% of respondents fell into the High or Very High intention categories. Crucially, the highest-rated indicator explicitly links this decision to the influencer's character: "I would likely buy skincare products endorsed by a trustworthy influencer ($\bar{x} = 3.50$). This direct correlation confirms the study's core premise that the

high level of trust established in Problem 1 successfully translates into consumer motivation. The high confidence in purchasing ($\bar{x} = 3.33$) and the plan to purchase based on positive online reviews ($\bar{x} = 3.43$) demonstrate the high persuasive power of influencers within this appearance-driven segment, reinforcing academic findings that trust in social media sources is a strong, significant driver of consumer purchase intention in the beauty and personal care industry (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Han & Balabanis, 2024).

3.4 Significant Relationship Between Social Media Influencers' Reputation and Buying Intentions

The combined measure of Social Media Influencer Reputation (Trust and Communication Skills) versus Buying Intention yields the study's strongest positive, highly significant relationship, with a coefficient of $r = 0.754$. Since the p-value (0.000) is less than the standard significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), the relationship is considered statistically significant. This strong positive correlation confirms the existence of this significant relationship, leading to the correct rejection of the original null hypothesis. This supports the conclusion that a significant positive relationship exists between social media influencers' reputation and the buying intentions of male models in Cagayan de Oro City.

3.5 Qualitative Findings: Focus Group Discussion

The FGD responses support the quantitative finding that trust is the primary driver of intent to buy among male models in skincare. Often, male models purchase skincare products after being exposed to influencer content, particularly when the influencers provide convincing demonstrations such as detailed reviews, before-and-after photos or videos, or daily routine videos. Many participants shared that the products endorsed by influencers do not really live up to what influencers claim. Despite these reviews, the participants still rated the product positively and learned that promoted expectations and actual results helped them better manage their expectations. This implies that influencers succeed in motivating, driving product discovery, and building buying intention, but unmet expectations may undermine perceived honesty and credibility. Influencers' overall reputations overwhelmingly drive male models' buying intentions toward social media-recommended skincare. Participants consistently emphasized that trust, credibility, and the influencer's perceived integrity are the key factors influencing their desire to purchase. Models feel more confident buying products endorsed by influencers with a strong, positive reputation, especially those with consistently good skin, a reputation for honesty, or a professional background in skincare (e.g., estheticians), which significantly increases their confidence in purchasing. The respondents see a good reputation with reduced risk, given that their appearance is tied to their work. They avoid influencers that seem dishonest, overly self-promotional, or controversial. Ultimately, the FGD confirmed that an influencer's reputation functions as a critical proxy for brand reliability and a strong predictor of buying intention.

When discussing what makes influencer endorsements convincing, the participants emphasized factors such as authenticity, transparency, expertise, and communication quality. Influencers become more persuasive when they actually show they are using the product in their promotions, incorporate it into their routine, and explain the ingredients in detail. The participants expressed a clear preference for influencers who communicate like "consultants" rather than "salespeople," providing organized, informative, and thorough explanations. On the other hand, trust declined when influencers frequently switched brands, ignored questions, sounded scripted, or produced content that appeared overly commercial. These perceived signs were seen as inauthentic, reducing the credibility and weakening the models' desire to buy the recommended product. Among all participants, when buying skincare products, they mostly rely on personal and product-focused criteria, including ingredient composition, overall quality, skin compatibility, cost, and reviews from peers and other users. Although these internal factors are prioritized, the participants unanimously agreed that Social Media Influencer (SMI) recommendations play a vital role in generating awareness and establishing initial trust for new products. SMIs are valued for helping to filter options and validate product claims, especially when their advice is grounded in expertise, scientific reasoning, and positive community feedback. Participants find influencers more relatable and trustworthy than conventional advertising, due to the feelings of authenticity and parasocial closeness they evoke. However, SMI recommendations are considered supplementary; before making a purchase, the models consistently cross-reference all claims against ingredient lists, clinical data, and independent user reviewers.

Overall, the findings consistently reveal a strong link between the key themes: trust, reputation, authenticity, communication ability, and perceived expertise, all of which directly influence male models' skincare buying intention. These themes highlight the unique vulnerability of male models, as it is their job to maintain their skin, making them selective consumers entirely.

3.6 Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

3.6.1. Level of Trust

Respondents showed a very high level of trust in social media influencers ($\bar{x} = 3.26$). This means they view influencers as highly credible and trustworthy in endorsing skincare products. The highest-rated statements were: "The influencer knows the products they endorse. ($\bar{x} = 3.35$) The influencer is honest with me. ($\bar{x} = 3.34$)"

3.6.2. Level of Communication Skills

Influencers' communication skills were rated as very high ($\bar{x} = 3.40$). Respondents agreed that influencers clearly explain product features, maintain audience engagement, and present information clearly and concisely.

3.6.3. Level of Buying Intention

Male models have a very high level of buying intention ($\bar{x} = 3.33$). Data showed that the respondents are more likely to purchase skincare products featured by credible influencers than by regular advertising sources.

3.6.4. The relationship between influencer reputation and buying intention

The Pearson correlation analysis identified influencer reputation and buying intention as strongly and significantly related ($r = 0.754$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that both trust ($r = 0.743$) and communication skills ($r = 0.737$) are significant predictors of buying intention among male models.¹ Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between influencer reputation and buying intention was rejected.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Influencers' reputations play a crucial role in shaping male consumers' buying intentions in Cagayan de Oro City. Trust became the most important factor in product consumption, as respondents were more willing to buy skincare products, having confidence in influencers' knowledge and familiarity with the products they endorse. Effective communication also reinforced influencers' credibility; clear, engaging influencers were seen as more credible, thereby increasing consumer confidence. In general, perceptions of influencers regarding trust and communication showed a significant positive relationship with buying intentions. These findings affirm that influencer marketing is a highly effective strategy in the skincare industry, especially for the visually attentive audiences, such as male models, who value appearance and expertise when making purchasing decisions. Based on the findings and scope of this study, several recommendations are offered to improve influencer marketing strategies and guide future research.

First, skincare brands can focus on collaborating with influencers who are highly credible, transparent, and knowledgeable about products, since trust was identified as the most significant factor influencing buying intention. Instead of one-time paid promotions, brands can establish long-term partnerships with influencers who actively use their products, which builds deeper trust among male model consumers. Communication skills also play an essential role in influencing buying intention. Influencers may undergo training on effective communication techniques, including clear product explanation, honest disclosure, and audience engagement strategies. These skills may help influencers make more meaningful interactions with their audience.

Furthermore, brands that focus on a male audience, particularly male models, must be keen to align the type of influencer with the lifestyle, beauty standards, and grooming needs to enhance reliability. Given that male models are appearance-oriented and influenced by social media visuals, marketers should develop more educational, demonstration-based content, such as skincare routines, ingredient breakdowns, and before-and-after comparisons. This will build more trust and communication, aligning with the study's results. Marketers should also develop influencer campaigns that are authentic and credible, rather than focusing solely on aesthetics or popularity, and ensure that influencer endorsements align with consumers' preferences and values.

In terms of research and academic practice, future research should focus on models beyond male subjects in Cagayan de Oro City to improve generalizability and to discover and capture differences across other professions, genders, and regions. As this study used convenience sampling and self-report surveys, the researchers can examine probability sampling techniques or mixed-methods approaches, such as interviews or focus groups, in the future to identify additional emotional and psychological factors that may influence trust and buying intention. Other influencer qualities, such as authenticity, expertise, and consistency, as well as visual appeal, may predict buying intention. Researchers can also examine how educators, entertainers, reviewers, and influencers shape purchase behavior as social media roles evolve.

Lastly, influencer marketing trends and online consumer behavior change quickly; thus, longitudinal studies are recommended to assess how trust, communication, and buying intention vary over time. By addressing these aspects, future research may yield stronger insights and guide brands in maximizing the effectiveness of influencer marketing in the skincare industry.

Compliance with ethical standards

Authors declare that the present research work complies with the institutional and ethical standards. It does not contain any studies performed on animals or human subjects by the author.

Conflict of interest statement

All authors declare no conflict of interest or competing interest related to the publication of this manuscript or any institution or product mention herein.

Statement of ethical approval

The present research work does not contain any studies performed on animals/humans' subjects by any of the authors.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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