

The Role of Pet Owner Influencer on Social Media in Influencing Consumer Engagement, Attitude Toward Ads, and Purchase Intention on Pet Care Products

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ABSTRACT

The growth of the pet care industry and the increasing use of pet owner influencers on social media have created new opportunities for marketers to influence consumer behavior. However, research examining the effectiveness of pet owner influencers in the pet care context remains limited. This study aims to analyze the effects of source credibility and content characteristics of pet owner influencers on consumer engagement, attitude toward ads, and purchase intention for pet care products. It also examines the mediating roles of consumer engagement and attitude toward ads. A quantitative approach with a survey method and single cross-sectional design was employed. A total of 388 responses were collected, of which 19 failed the screening process, resulting in 369 valid respondents for analysis. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that source trustworthiness does not significantly influence consumer engagement, creativity does not significantly influence consumer engagement, and source similarity does not significantly influence attitude toward ads. Furthermore, consumer engagement does not mediate the relationships between source trustworthiness and purchase intention and between creativity and purchase intention, while attitude toward ads does not mediate the relationship between source similarity and purchase intention. All other proposed relationships are supported. These findings contribute to the influencer marketing literature and provide practical insights for pet care marketers in developing more effective social media marketing strategies.

Keywords: *pet owner influencer, source credibility, content characteristics, consumer engagement, attitude toward ads, purchase intention.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The pet care industry in Indonesia has experienced rapid growth in recent years, driven by the increasing number of pet owners and the growing perception of pets as family members. This trend has increased demand for various pet care products, including pet food, healthcare products, grooming services, and accessories (Dotson & Hyatt, 2008; Driver et al., 2009). According to Cacafly Indonesia (2023), approximately 45% of Indonesians owned pets in 2021, while Rakuten Insight (2021) reported that cats were the most popular pets in the country. Furthermore, Indonesia's pet care market is projected to grow from USD 1.87 billion in 2025 to USD 3.67 billion by 2030, making it one of the fastest-growing pet care markets in Asia (Naibaho, 2025). As competition intensifies, pet care brands must adopt effective marketing strategies to attract and retain consumers.

The rapid adoption of social media in Indonesia has transformed how brands communicate with consumers and promote their products. One increasingly popular strategy is influencer marketing, where brands collaborate with influencers to create and distribute promotional content through social media platforms (Aw & Chuah, 2021; Vrontis et al., 2021). Recently, pet owner influencers have emerged as a growing phenomenon in Indonesia, creating content related to pets' daily activities, pet care education, and product recommendations. Given the strong popularity of pet-related content among Indonesian social media users, pet owner influencers have become an attractive marketing channel for pet care brands seeking to increase consumer engagement and purchase intention.

The effectiveness of pet owner influencer marketing can be explained through the Heuristic-Systematic Model (HSM). According to Sardar et al. (2024), consumers evaluate influencer-generated content through heuristic cues, represented by source credibility (trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise, and similarity), and systematic cues, represented by content characteristics (design quality and creativity). These factors may influence consumer engagement and attitude toward advertisements, which subsequently affect purchase intention (Sardar et al., 2024; Sitorus et al., 2024).

Although previous studies have examined the relationships among source credibility, content characteristics, consumer engagement, attitude toward ads, and purchase intention, most have focused on fashion, beauty, and cosmetic influencers (Sardar et al., 2024; Sitorus et al., 2024). Empirical evidence regarding pet owner influencers, particularly within Indonesia's rapidly growing pet care industry, remains limited. Therefore, this study investigates how source credibility and content characteristics influence consumer engagement, attitude toward ads, and purchase intention toward pet care products promoted by pet owner influencers among Indonesian pet care products consumers.

1.1. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

The Heuristic-Systematic Model (HSM) explains how consumers process information through two distinct routes: heuristic and systematic processing (Chaiken, 1980). In influencer marketing, source credibility serves as a heuristic cue, where consumers rely on characteristics of the communicator such as trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise, and similarity. Conversely, content characteristics represent systematic cues because consumers evaluate the quality and creativity of the information presented (Sardar et al., 2024). Both cues may influence consumers' engagement with influencer content and shape their evaluations of advertising messages.

Source credibility has long been recognized as an important determinant of consumer responses toward marketing communications. Trustworthy influencers are perceived as honest and reliable, attractive influencers can capture consumers' attention, expert influencers are considered knowledgeable, and similar influencers facilitate identification and relatability with audiences (Ohanian, 1990; Munukka et al., 2016). Previous studies have demonstrated that source credibility positively influences consumer engagement and attitude toward advertisements because consumers are more likely to interact with and respond favorably to content delivered by credible influencers (Sardar et al., 2024; Sitorus et al., 2024). Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Source trustworthiness positively affects consumer engagement.

H2: Source attractiveness positively affects consumer engagement.

H3: Source expertise positively affects consumer engagement.

H4: Source similarity positively affects consumer engagement.

H5: Source trustworthiness positively affects attitude toward ads.

H6: Source attractiveness positively affects attitude toward ads.

H7: Source expertise positively affects attitude toward ads.

H8: Source similarity positively affects attitude toward ads.

Content characteristics also play an important role in influencer marketing effectiveness. Design quality refers to the visual appeal, organization, and presentation of content, while creativity reflects the novelty, originality, and meaningfulness of content. High-quality and creative content can attract consumers' attention, improve message processing, and encourage greater interaction with influencer posts (Cheung et al., 2022). Prior research has found that design quality and creativity positively influence consumer engagement in social media environments (Sardar et al., 2024). Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H9: Design quality positively affects consumer engagement.

H10: Creativity positively affects consumer engagement.

Consumer engagement reflects consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement with content, whereas attitude toward ads represents consumers' overall evaluation of an advertisement. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), positive attitudes and stronger engagement can enhance behavioral intentions, including purchase intention (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Prior studies also indicate that consumer engagement and attitude toward ads mediate the effects of influencer-related factors on purchase intention (Sardar et al., 2024; Sitorus et al., 2024). Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H11a: Consumer engagement positively mediates the relationship between source trustworthiness and purchase intention.

H11b: Consumer engagement positively mediates the relationship between source attractiveness and purchase intention.

H11c: Consumer engagement positively mediates the relationship between source expertise and purchase intention.

H11d: Consumer engagement positively mediates the relationship between source similarity and purchase intention.

H11e: Consumer engagement positively mediates the relationship between design quality and purchase intention.

H11f: Consumer engagement positively mediates the relationship between creativity and purchase intention.

H12a: Attitude toward ads positively mediates the relationship between source trustworthiness and purchase intention.

H12b: Attitude toward ads positively mediates the relationship between source attractiveness and purchase intention.

H12c: Attitude toward ads positively mediates the relationship between source expertise and purchase intention.

H12d: Attitude toward ads positively mediates the relationship between source similarity and purchase intention.

Finally, consumer engagement and attitude toward ads are expected to directly influence consumers' purchase intention toward pet care products promoted by pet owner influencers.

H13: Consumer engagement positively affects purchase intention.

H14: Attitude toward ads positively affects purchase intention.

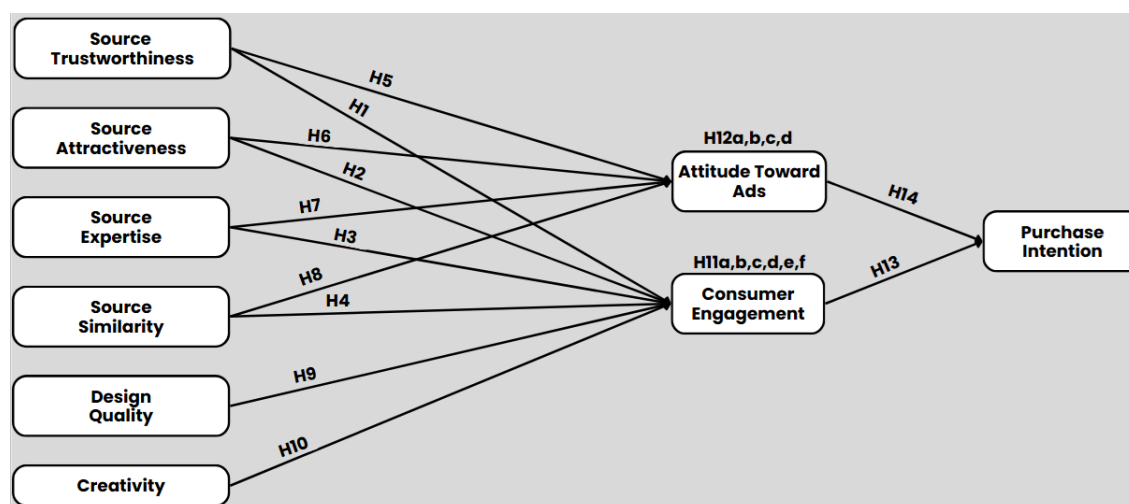


Figure 1. Research model.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative, descriptive, and single cross-sectional survey design. Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed using Google Forms. The target respondents were individuals aged 18 years or older who actively used social media, currently owned or had previously owned pets, were familiar with pet owner influencers, and had previously seen pet owner influencers promoting pet care products on social media. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that respondents met the specific criteria relevant to the study objectives.

A total of 388 responses were collected. After the screening process, 19 responses were excluded because they did not meet the screening criteria, resulting in a final sample of 369 valid respondents. Most respondents were female (61%), aged between 26 and 30 years (31%), held a bachelor's degree (53%), and resided in the western region of Indonesia (85%). Instagram was the most frequently used social media platform (74%), and cats were the most commonly owned pets among respondents (78%).

The research model consisted of eight constructs: source trustworthiness, source attractiveness, source expertise, source similarity, design quality, creativity, consumer engagement, attitude toward ads, and purchase intention. Source trustworthiness, source attractiveness, and source expertise were measured using five items adapted from Ohanian (1990), while source similarity was measured using three items adapted from Munukka et al. (2016). Design quality and creativity were measured using four items each adapted from Cheung et al. (2022). Consumer engagement was measured using six items adapted from So et al. (2014), attitude toward ads was measured using four items adapted

from Sitorus et al. (2024), and purchase intention was measured using four items adapted from Hwang and Zhang (2018). All measurement items used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.1.1.2. The measurement model was evaluated through internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity using Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), outer loadings, and HTMT following procedures recommended by Hair et al. (2022). The structural model was assessed using variance inflation factor (VIF), coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and bootstrapping procedures to test the significance of the proposed hypotheses.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Measurement Model

The measurement model was evaluated using reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity criteria. The results indicate that all constructs met the recommended thresholds for PLS-SEM analysis. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.839 to 0.942, while composite reliability values ranged from 0.848 to 0.942, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. In addition, all constructs achieved average variance extracted (AVE) values above 0.50, ranging from 0.650 to 0.853, confirming convergent validity. All indicator loadings exceeded 0.70, indicating satisfactory indicator reliability. Furthermore, discriminant validity was established as all HTMT values were below the recommended threshold of 0.85. Therefore, the measurement model demonstrated adequate reliability and validity (Table 1) for further structural model evaluation.

Table 1. Reliability and convergent validity of retained constructs

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Source Trustworthiness	0.921	0.922	0.759
Source Attractiveness	0.925	0.928	0.770
Source Expertise	0.890	0.898	0.694
Source Similarity	0.892	0.893	0.822
Design Quality	0.895	0.905	0.760
Creativity	0.839	0.848	0.673
Consumer Engagement	0.922	0.925	0.721
Attitude Toward Ads	0.910	0.911	0.788
Purchase Intention	0.942	0.942	0.853

3.2. Structural Model

The structural model assessment included collinearity, predictive power, model fit, and hypothesis testing. The variance inflation factor (VIF) values were below the recommended threshold of 5, indicating the absence of multicollinearity issues. The model explained 65.2% of the variance in consumer engagement ($R^2 = 0.652$), 49.0% of the variance in attitude toward ads ($R^2 = 0.490$), and 49.4% of the variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.494$). The predictive relevance values (Q^2) for consumer engagement (0.458), attitude toward ads (0.381), and purchase intention (0.417) were above zero, indicating satisfactory predictive capability. The model also demonstrated good fit with an SRMR value of 0.077, which is below the recommended threshold of 0.08. The results and values of direct effects and indirect effects shown in Table 2.

3.3. Discussion

The findings indicate that source attractiveness, source expertise, source similarity, and design quality positively influence consumer engagement. In contrast, source trustworthiness and creativity do not significantly affect consumer engagement. These results suggest that Indonesian consumers are more likely to engage with pet owner influencer content when influencers are perceived as attractive, knowledgeable, relatable, and supported by well-designed content. Regarding attitude toward ads, source trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise have significant positive effects, whereas source similarity does not significantly influence consumers' evaluations of advertising messages.

Furthermore, both consumer engagement and attitude toward ads positively influence purchase intention, with consumer engagement exhibiting the strongest effect. The mediation analysis shows that consumer engagement mediates the effects of source attractiveness, expertise, similarity, and design quality on purchase intention, but does not mediate the effects of trustworthiness and creativity. Similarly, attitude toward ads mediates the effects of trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise on purchase intention, while the mediating effect of attitude toward ads is not significant for source similarity. These findings highlight the importance of fostering consumer engagement and positive advertising attitudes to enhance purchase intention toward pet care products promoted by pet owner influencers.

Table 2. Direct effects and indirect effects value

Hypothesis	Path	Path coefficient	t-statistics	p-value	Decision
H1	TRU → CE	-0.067	0.902	0.184	Not Supported
H2	ATT → CE	0.137	2.125	0.017	Supported
H3	EXP → CE	0.237	2.798	0.003	Supported
H4	SIM → CE	0.384	6.530	0.000	Supported
H5	TRU → ATA	0.259	3.107	0.001	Supported
H6	ATT → ATA	0.164	2.982	0.001	Supported
H7	EXP → ATA	0.344	4.160	0.000	Supported
H8	SIM → ATA	0.045	0.814	0.208	Not Supported
H9	DEQ → CEN	0.216	3.544	0.000	Supported
H10	CRE → CEN	0.052	0.936	0.175	Not Supported
H11a	TRU → CEN → PI	-0.034	0.909	0.182	Not Supported
H11b	ATT → CEN → PI	0.070	1.987	0.023	Supported
H11c	EXP → CEN → PI	0.121	2.720	0.003	Supported
H11d	SIM → CEN → PI	0.196	5.101	0.000	Supported
H11e	DEQ → CEN → PI	0.110	3.572	0.000	Supported
H11f	CRE → CEN → PI	0.027	0.918	0.179	Not Supported
H12a	TRU → ATA → PI	0.069	2.376	0.009	Supported
H12b	ATT → ATA → PI	0.044	2.346	0.009	Supported
H12c	EXP → ATA → PI	0.092	3.142	0.001	Supported
H12d	SIM → ATA → PI	0.012	0.800	0.212	Not Supported
H13	CEN → PI	0.510	9.182	0.000	Supported
H14	ATA → PI	0.268	4.464	0.000	Supported

Note: TRU = trustworthiness, ATT = attractiveness, EXP = expertise, SIM = similarity, DEQ = design quality, CRE = creativity, CEN = consumer engagement, ATA = attitude toward ads, PI = purchase intention.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that source credibility and content characteristics play important roles in shaping consumer responses toward pet care products promoted by pet owner influencers in Indonesia. Source attractiveness, expertise, similarity, and design quality significantly enhance consumer engagement, while trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise positively influence attitude toward ads. Consumer engagement and attitude toward ads subsequently increase purchase intention, with consumer engagement emerging as the strongest predictor.

The mediation results further reveal that consumer engagement and attitude toward ads serve as important mechanisms through which influencer characteristics affect purchase intention. These findings suggest that pet care brands should collaborate with knowledgeable and attractive pet owner influencers while developing visually appealing content that encourages consumer engagement and positive advertising evaluations. Such strategies can help strengthen consumers' purchase intentions toward pet care products in the Indonesian market.

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