

ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of social media marketing has increased the business importance of strategically utilizing influencers within building consumer trust. Alongside human influencers, brands are increasingly experimenting with artificial intelligence (AI) influencers, with many raising questions regarding their usage effectiveness in different marketing contexts. Building on prior research suggesting that consumer trust in AI varies depending on product characteristics, this study examines how influencer type (human vs. AI) and product framing type (hedonic vs. utilitarian) interact to influence consumer trust in social media advertising.

Using a 2×2 between-subjects experimental design, this study exposed participants to simulated Instagram advertisements featuring either a human or an AI influencer promoting a clothing/fashion product framed as either hedonic or utilitarian. Consumer trust was measured using a multidimensional 7-point Likert scale. Data were collected from 146 active social media users through an online experiment and analyzed using descriptive statistics and two-way ANOVA.

The primary results indicate no statistically significant main effects of influencer type or product framing on consumer trust, nor a significant interaction effect between the two variables. While descriptive trends suggested higher trust for human influencers in utilitarian framing and for AI influencers in hedonic framing, these patterns were not statistically supported. Exploratory analysis conducted revealed that age had a small but significant positive relationship with consumer trust, while social media usage frequency showed no significant effect.

These findings suggests that consumer trust toward influencer marketing may not be driven solely by influencer identity or product framing in isolation. Instead, consumers' trust formation appears to be influenced by more complex factors beyond the scope of influencer type and hedonic–utilitarian positioning. This study contributes to the growing literature on AI influencers by providing empirical evidence that challenges common assumptions about optimal influencer–product fit. Practically, the findings caution marketers against relying exclusively on influencer type or product framing when designing trust-based social media marketing strategies.

Keywords: AI influencers; human influencers; consumer trust; hedonic and utilitarian product framing; social media marketing; influencer marketing