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Influencer Marketing and Parental Decision-Making: An Empirical Study of Trust and Purchase Intention in the Childcare Market

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Keyword	Abstract
	In a market where childcare products are highly demanded by parents, successful marketing strategies exist through media and as Influencer marketing approaches continue to grow rapidly and become more common, this means that Influencers are a great resource for getting parents to buy products like toys, clothing, etc., for their child, but sometimes its a problem if people think that Influencers are not sharing honest opinions. When working with Influencers to promote their products, child care providers have an obligation to provide reliable information to parents to build and sustain their trust and to find out who each of the child care providers will be and if the child care providers are trustworthy and they can trust that the influencer they are working with has been interested in promoting the child's well-being since before they had children and not just to help the company make money through sponsorship fees that they will no longer pay to those companies after they have spent their money making a purchase. This research looks globally at how parental perceptions of the impact of Influencer marketing on their purchase decisions when buying products for their children are defined by each parent, based on how much they value the ability of Influencers to help them make informed purchasing decisions about products to purchase for their child. The study utilized a survey approach to measure the impact of Influencers on individual parent's decision-making process and parental perceptions of how Influencer Marketing influences and impacts parent behavior.

1. Introduction:

The explosion of social media and digital platforms has dramatically changed how marketers communicate today, creating influencers as a major tool in marketing. Influencers can be parenting bloggers, medical professionals, lifestyle content creators, etc. and influence how consumers see products. In the childcare industry, where parents' choices impact the health, safety, and development of their children, influencer marketing is especially valuable[1].

The use of influencer-created content can help parents fill in the information voids they experience by providing information about products in ways that are relatable and experiential; with the ability to persuade parents to buy a product from an influencer being greater than that of an advertiser. However, the persuasive power of influencers can be problematic in this sensitive area due to the issues of trustworthiness, transparency, ethical responsibility, and misinformation [2].

The childcare market is one in which parents need to feel confident that the products they purchase for their children will be safe, high-quality, and trustworthy (as opposed to purchasing products primarily based on cost or convenience). Thus, it is essential for marketers to ensure that the influencer(s) they utilize for marketing purposes have credibility, relate the content to the audience, and disclose their relationship with the product. This situation reflects the more significant challenge of the current digital marketing landscape – balancing the need for personalized, persuasive communication with the need for ethical engagement of consumers, particularly when the stakes are so high.

This study provides the marketing field with new knowledge regarding the ethical and trust-based digital marketing that is found in the childcare industry. The findings provide empirical examples for marketers, brands, and policymakers to help develop influence strategies that drive both engagement/sales and create long-term trust with influencers.

2. Literature Review

Social media has completely transformed the landscape of marketing communications, advancing influencer marketing as an effective tool for influencing consumer perceptions and ultimately their buying behaviours. Influencers are seen as opinion leaders by sharing their real-life experiences, recommendations and evaluations of products, and many times those experiences are more believable and relatable than traditional advertisements. Research indicates that the quality of influencer-generated content helps assure consumers through increasing levels of trust, credibility and social proof, and therefore they are particularly effective in influencing the behaviour of consumers in high-involvement product categories.

In the childcare industry, purchasing decisions are high risk and emotionally charged (e.g., safety, quality and trust will outweigh price and convenience), so using influencer marketing helps address information barriers to purchasing and makes product features easier to understand. Parent influencers (typically seen as experts by other parents) can provide experiential information to help parents in evaluating childcare products, ultimately influencing their attitudes and purchase intention.

The credibility of the influencer is key to their ability to influence consumers. Trustworthiness, reliability and expertise are all significantly related to how consumers perceive the endorsed products. For example, credible influencers are more likely to help build trust and confidence with parents, while misleading endorsements or overly promotional content may increase the level of scepticism and decrease the likelihood of a purchase. Numerous studies have provided evidence that relevance and positive sentiment surrounding influencers' content improves consumers' evaluations of brands and increases their likelihood of making a purchase [3].

Brand trust acts as a primary mediator in the relationship between an influencer's characteristics and consumers' purchase decisions; the greater the consumer's confidence in product quality, brand ethos and ability to address problems in a timely manner greatly diminishes perceived risk associated with making that decision. Additionally, brand trust has been identified through numerous empirical studies as a significant predictor of consumers' intention to buy a product, particularly in high involvement/trust sensitive markets, notably childcare [4].

As influencer marketing shown figure-1 has evolved, it has placed greater emphasis on ethics and transparency. All stakeholders must adhere to appropriate disclosure standards and responsible communication practices; such practices ensure the continued development of long-term trust relationships. In addition to enhancing the overall effectiveness of influencer marketing in the context of childcare, ethical behaviours exhibited through influencer marketing enhance consumers' wellbeing and engagement with brands over the long-term. While influencer

marketing is a popular area of research, there remains a lack of empirical research that investigates influencer marketing's impact on childcare from both a trust-based and ethical perspective. This research aims to fill this gap by exploring the influence of credible influencers and product alignment on parental purchase intentions with brand trust serving as a central mediating factor [5].
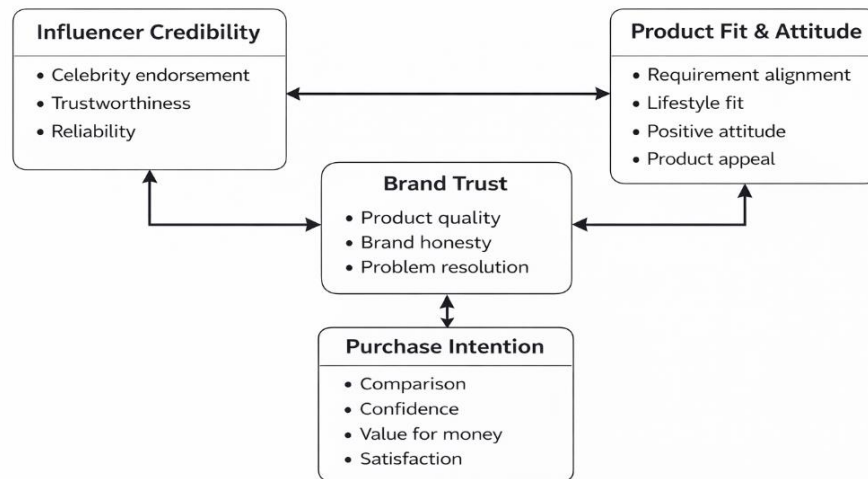

Figure-1: Influencer Marketing

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1:

The level of credibility possessed by influencers directly relates to how likely parents will be to purchase a child care product.

Hypothesis 2:

The perceived authenticity of content provided by an influencer directly relates to the level of trust, parents have in an influencer's recommendation of a child care product.

Hypothesis 3:

The level of transparency and full disclosure in influencer marketing will impact how likely parents are to purchase a child care product.

Hypothesis 4:

The perceived relevance of an influencer's message and the amount of information provided to parents about the benefits of a child care product will significantly impact how they make decisions regarding the purchase of these products.

Hypothesis 5:

There is a statistically significant connection between the number of times that a parent has been exposed to influencer marketing communications and the likelihood that they will buy a child care product.

Hypothesis 6:

Parental trust mediates the relationships between the influencer marketing attributes (credibility, authenticity, relevance, and disclosure) and the extent of parents' intention to purchase a child care product.

Dependent Variable (DV)

Parenting Purchases - Will I be Buying Parenting Supplies? How do Parents feel about Their Ability to Make Decisions About The Product/Service When They Buy Parenting Items for Their Kids? This is Measured by These Variables:

• How likely to purchase parenting supplies
• What brand the parent prefers
• Willing to recommend to other parents

• Will continue to buy these products/services

Independent Variables (IVs)
1. Influencer Credibility
Measured through:
•   Confidence gained due to celebrity/influencer endorsement
•   Trustworthiness of influencer marketing in childcare
•   Reliability of influencer recommendations
(Strong reliability: Cronbach's Alpha ≈ 0.804)

2. Content Authenticity
Sub-dimensions:
•   Transparency and disclosure of sponsorships
•   Perceived honesty of product recommendations
(Conceptually linked to Brand Trust in your model)

3. Content Relevance
Measured through:
•   Product suitability for child's requirements
•   Alignment with family lifestyle and routine
•   Informational value of influencer content
(Aligned with Product Fit & Attitude, Cronbach's Alpha ≈ 0.751)

4. Frequency of Exposure
Measured through:
•   Repeated visibility of influencer recommendations
•   Recall and familiarity due to consistent exposure

Mediating Variable
Brand Trust / Parental Trust
Measured through:
•   Trust in product quality
•   Perceived brand honesty
•   Confidence in brand's problem handling
(Acceptable reliability: Cronbach's Alpha ≈ 0.709)

3. OBJECTIVES:

A. Objective 1
This project investigates the impact of influencer marketing on parents' intentions to purchase and their trust in baby products for their children.
This research will explore how influencer marketing influences parental decision-making during childhood, particularly in such an emotional way.
Specifically, this study will address three areas of concern:

1) Building trust through influencer credibility—Parents will trust those influencers who they believe know what they are talking about, are experienced, and will trust them. On the other hand, if there is

a lack of credibility or if the influencer makes false claims regarding the product, it may hinder a parent's purchase decision.

2) Authenticity of content and consumer engagement—Influencer content that is overly advertising or scripted will likely detract from its perceived authenticity. This will also affect a parent's level of engagement and will result in distrust in the child's product recommendation from that influencer.

3) Transparency in sponsored content and disclosure—If there is not adequate disclosure that an influencer has been financially compensated for a specific product endorsement (paid to endorse), this may lead to ethical concerns and a loss of trust in the influencer from the parent's perspective. This will decrease the credibility of the brand being promoted by that influencer, making it less likely for parents to buy that product in the future and also limit the chances of establishing a long-term relationship (loyalty) with that brand.

B. Objective 2

Investigate parent-specific factors impacting influencer marketing for child care. Specifically focus on the demographic/behavioural characteristics of parents that will affect the impact of the influencer marketers on their buying decisions

Three specific aspects of this research area will be looked at.

1. 1.Parental Sensitivity to Safe and Quality Products: Parents who value their child's health and safety have higher expectations than normal when evaluating an influencer as well as to verify that what they promote is ethically responsible and accurate.

2. Real time Engagement Habits for Parents: Generally speaking, parents who use social media often and extensively will be more receptive to marketing from influencers than parents who do not use social media at all.

3. Parental Values and Expectations of Ethics: Influencer messages resonate with parents most strongly when the brand and influencer's values align with parental values like being honest, responsible and caring for children. As such, when they align trust, loyalty and purchase intent will be significantly increased.

C. Objective 3

The long-term effects of influencer marketing methods on brand loyalty and trust over time will be evaluated in the childcare industry.

This study focuses on using influencer marketing to establish long-term relationships with consumers versus creating short-term purchases. Three areas are included in this scope of investigation:

1. Brand Loyalty Impact: By frequently providing consistent, credible, and value-effective content to influencers' followers, consumers develop a stronger emotional attachment to a company and are more likely to repeat their purchase of that company's products or services when the company does not provide inconsistent or misrepresenting content.

2. Influencer Consistency and Expertise: Using the same influencer long-term with childcare expertise, who delivers a consistent messaging experience will likely produce long-term trust from parents.

3. Volunteer Creation of Excessive Promotional Content: Excessive promotional messaging (overused and/or frequent) can create fatigue for consumers and decrease the likelihood of them being engaged with that promotional messaging creating a negative perception of that brand within the childcare industry over time.

4. METHODOLOGY

1. Topic Selection:

In this research project, we will be using descriptive research with a quantitative research design to assess how influencer marketing impacts parents' trust and their intent to purchase childcare products. Quantitative research provides a reliable way to measure how various attributes of influencer marketing influence consumer behavior by using objective statistical analysis. Descriptive research provides data on parents' attitudes, perceptions, and responses to influencer marketing in relation to purchasing childcare products.

2. Survey Design:

This survey was created to assess what parents are thinking when deciding whether or not to purchase childcare products that are promoted through influencer marketing.

These factors represent what this survey focused on studying:

1. Brand Trust: This section examined the Parent's trust level of the influencer promoted childcare brands by looking into the parent's perception regarding the quality of the product, the perceived authenticity of the brand, how honest the brand is, and whether or not the brand responds appropriately to parent concerns. The purpose of this section was to examine the effectiveness of influencer endorsements on trust towards brands that belong in a high-involvement product category.

2. Purchase Intention: This section measured parent purchase intentions based on confidence in their decision making, the perceived value for their money, how satisfied they are with the benefits of the product(s), and how much influence (if any) the endorsement of an influencer/celebrity has on their purchase intention decision. This section used both Yes/No as well as Likert scale type questions to gather the degree of certainty of decision making as well as to quantify the level of strength in their decision to purchase.

3. Influencer Credibility: This construct described the perceived level of trustworthiness, authenticity, and reliability of an influencer within the childcare product category. The result of this construct examined if parents perceive that the influencer is a credible source of information and if they can rely on the influencer's endorsement of a childcare product.

4. Brand Fit and Attitude: Brand fit measured the degree to which the promoted products matched the child(ren)'s needs, as well as how well they fit into the family lifestyle. The attitude questions in this section measured the overall positive feelings towards products referred by an influencer and how appealing an influencer's content is.

3. Analysis Tools

The analysis of reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) shown in figure-2 was performed to assess the reliability of all of the scales in the survey. The scales included Brand Trust, Purchase Intention, Influencer Credibility, and Brand Fit & Attitude. All of the constructs had values over .70, therefore indicating that the survey items are consistently measuring the constructs intended and are appropriate for further statistical analysis.

Factor	Sub-factor (Survey Item)	Cronbach Alpha (Factor Level)
Brand Trust	I trust the quality of this brand's products.	
Brand Trust	This brand is honest with its customers.	0.709
Brand Trust	If I have faced with any problem regarding the product that is produced by this brand name, this brand with definite	
Purchase Intention	I can easily compare this product with alternatives.	
Purchase Intention	I feel confident when making purchase decisions about this product.	
Purchase Intention	This product offers good value for money.	0.706
Purchase Intention	I feel satisfied with the benefits received from this product.	
Influencer Credibility	I feel more confident about the product because of the celebrity endorsement.	
Influencer Credibility	Influencer marketing is trustworthy in childcare product	0.804
Influencer Credibility	Influencing marketing is reliable.	
Product Fit & Attitude	I feel that this childcare product aligns well with my child's requirements.	
Product Fit & Attitude	The product promoted seems suitable for my family's lifestyle and routine	
Product Fit & Attitude	I feel positive about using the childcare product recommended by the influencer.	0.751
Product Fit & Attitude	The influencer's content makes the product seem appealing.	

Figure-2: Analysis of reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)

Correlation analysis was used to determine the relationships between the attributes of influencer marketing, brand trust, product fit and attitude and the parents' purchase intentions for childcare products. This analysis provided initial evidence of significant correlations between the variables and served as a preliminary basis for hypothesizing.

The chi-square test was utilized to explore the relationship between the demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, age) of the participants and the effects of these characteristics on purchasing decisions. It enabled us to determine if there was an association between the purchasing behaviour of parents and their demographic characteristics.

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was employed to compare the differences in the overall perception of influencer marketing and influencer marketing related perceptions and trust of respondents based upon demographic characteristics (e.g. sex) and frequency of purchases. This analysis also enabled us to determine statistically significant differences between respondent sub-groups.

A regression analysis was conducted to quantify the extent to which three attributes of influencer marketing (e.g. influencer credibility, brand trust and product fit and attitude) were predictive of parents' purchasing intentions for childcare products. The analysis determined the presence of statistically significant predictors and evaluated the strength of these predictive factors using R, R^2, F-statistics and p-values.

5. Analysis Results

Reliability Analysis Outcomes (Cronbach's Alpha)

The reliability analysis showed solid internal consistency for all constructs. Brand Trust was found to have a Cronbach's Alpha of .709; Purchase Intention had a score of .706; Influencer Credibility had a high reliability with an Alpha of .804; and Product Fit & Attitude had an Alpha of .751. Therefore, all constructs will be reliable enough to perform further inferential analysis.

ANOVA Outcomes

The ANOVA findings indicate that gender does not have a significant influence on either overall perceptions of childcare products or on perception of particular influencer (p-value > 0.05). Therefore, parents of both genders have similarly perceived influencer marketing.

Conversely, age group was shown to be a statistically significant predictor of overall perception (p < .05) signifying that families with different aged children have dissimilar perceptions of influencer marketing on a general level. Additionally, frequency of purchase did not significantly influence either overall perception or influencer-specific perception. Thus, age group is the only demographic factor shown to have a statistically significant influence upon overall perceptions of influencer marketing in your family/infant product category.

Chi-Square Test Results

The findings from the Chi-square Test indicated that there was a significant association between gender and intention to purchase childcare products, concluding that the genders differ regarding purchase intent for childcare items. A second finding of significance was that there was also a strong correlation between gender and age; however, no significant association was found between age group and intention to purchase child care products indicating that purchasing patterns are similar regardless of age. As a result of this research, it is clear that gender is a significant demographic variable affecting intention to purchase childcare products.

Correlation analysis verified that Brand Trust, Influencer Credibility, Product Fit & Attitude and Intent to Purchase all had positive correlations with one another. Specifically, Brand Trust demonstrated a strong positive correlation with Intent to Purchase (r = .587), which means that the greater the trust the greater the Intent to Purchase was found by participants. Influencer Credibility also had a moderate positive correlation with Intent to Purchase (r = .332); whereas, Product Fit & Attitude also had a positive correlation with Intent to Purchase (r = .399). Additionally, Influencer Credibility and Product Fit & Attitude also had a strong positive correlation with each other (r = .721). Therefore, credible influencers create increases in the perception of how appropriate

a product is for a given parent. In summary, results indicated that trust, credibility and perceived Product Fit are major influencers of a parent's intention to purchase childcare products.

Regression Analysis Results

Table-1: Regression analysis

	Brand Trust	Purchase Intention	Influencer Credibility	Product Fit & Attitude
Brand Trust	1	0.586921431	0.263810732	0.367025913
Purchase Intention	0.586921431	1	0.331818588	0.399805262
Influencer Credibility	0.263810732	0.331818588	1	0.721332253
Product Fit & Attitude	0.367025913	0.399805262	0.721332253	1

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	R_Value	p_Value	Decision
Influencer Credibility	Brand Trust	0.264	0.0051	Supported
Influencer Credibility	Purchase Intention	0.332	0.0004	Supported
Product Fit & Attitude	Purchase Intention	0.4	0	Supported
Brand Trust	Purchase Intention	0.587	0	Supported

Regression analysis shown in above table-1 supports the correlation analysis. Influencer Credibility has a positive predictive relationship with Brand Trust (R = 0.264, R^2 = 0.07, F = 8.153, p = 0.0051). Therefore, Influencer Credibility is positively contributing to developing a sense of trust from parents towards brands.

Additionally, Influencer Credibility has a positive predictive relationship with Purchase Intention (R = 0.332, R^2 = 0.11, F = 13.486, p = 0.0004).

Product Fit & Attitude has a positive predictive relationship with Purchase Intention (R = 0.400, R^2 = 0.16, F = 20.738, $p < 0.001$). Brand Trust is the strongest predictor of Purchase Intention (R = 0.587, R^2 = 0.344, F = 57.279, $p < 0.001$), therefore, Brand Trust is accounting for the most variance in how parents will purchase from a brand.

Results and Findings

1. **Scales for Measurement Have Acceptable Levels of Reliability**
   The internal consistency of the survey tool employed in this investigation is verified via Cronbach's Alpha score of all five concepts is greater than the prescribed threshold of 0.70.

2. **Gender Has No Statistical Effect on Perceptions; However, It Has an Effect on Purchase Intent**
   The findings derived from ANOVA reveal there is no effect due to gender on either the overall or influencer perceptions. That stated, the results from the Chi Square analysis reflect a statistically significant relationship exists between gender and purchasing intention.

3. **Age groups Can Affect Perceptions, but Will Not Affect Purchase Intention**
   There is statistical significance with respect to the various age group perceptions; representing the difference between perceptions towards influencer marketing in that individuals from different demographic categories have different overall perceptions.

4. **Brand Trust Is The Primary Factor That Predicts Purchase Intention**
   Brand Trust has the highest correlation, as seen through the correlation and regression analysis, with Purchase Intention; being responsible for approximately 34.4 percent of the variance in purchasing behaviour.

5. **Credible Influencers Provide Trust and Confidence for Purchases**
   Influencer Credibility is a statistically significant predictor of both Brand Trust and Purchase Intention.

6. Attitudes Towards Product Fit, Influence Purchase Intention By Enhancing Endorsement Credibility

There is a statistically significant relationship between Product Fit and Attitude towards Purchase Intention in conjunction where recommended products representing the needs of the Child and Family in their Lifestyle.

7. Trust Factors are More Influential than Demographic Characteristics

Any Firm Conclusions Drawn from the results of the calculations show there are a limited amount of variances that can be explained by using demographic variables in examining Purchase Behaviour. Where there are statistically significant factors to consider when making comparisons; Trust Factors.

Analysis and Insights

According to the study, the roots of the effectiveness of influencer marketing for childcare brands lie less in characteristics such as age and gender than in parameters related to trust. Statistical analysis indicates that while age and gender do not have a significant effect on parents' perceptions of marketing communications, brand trust, influencer credibility and influencer reliability are the major factors that influence parents' intentions to make purchases. This demonstrates the way in which parents are cautious purchasers of items for their children, as they are primarily concerned with safety, authenticity and ethical assurances rather than intensity of promotion.

In terms of correlations, the results indicate that there are strong positive relationships between brand trust and influencer credibility to content appeal, and to purchasing behaviours such as decision-making confidence and satisfaction. Trustworthy, honest and reliable influencers significantly enhance parents' levels of confidence when making decisions on various child care products. On the other hand, repeated exposure and frequency of purchases have little or no real impact on the parents' perceptions of the influencer and therefore indicate that the quality and credibility of the influence is much more significant than the frequency of exposure to the influencer.

From an insight perspective, the findings indicate that, while parents are sophisticated consumers of influencer marketing, they also do not just blindly accept influencer marketing as a given. Rather, parents critically evaluate and analyse the authenticity, relevance and transparency of the influencer content before they make a decision whether or not to purchase the product. There are some significant differences in the way mothers vs. fathers perceive influencer marketing, and therefore differences in how each parent views their respective roles and decision-making authority within the household, even though both parents have similar perceptions of the effectiveness of influencer marketing.

Overall, the findings of this research suggest that the Íslands of the influence of marketing in the childcare sector is being largely driven by trust, rather than by demographic variables such as age or gender.

6. Conclusion

The relationship between influencer marketing and its effects on parental confidence and intentions to buy childcare products was evaluated within this study. Overall, our findings show that parental buying behaviour is greatly affected by influencer marketing through trust-based factors including: the credibility of the influencer, reliability of the brand, authenticity of the content, and transparency. Because childcare is a sensitive area for parents, it is possible that they will be more influenced to buy products based on credible, value-laden information than they would be based on how often they are exposed to advertisements.

Demographic factors such as age or frequency of purchase do not strongly affect decision making, but gender does have a significant relationship with parental purchase intentions. In addition, brand trust and influencer credibility were found to be the strongest drivers of parental buying behaviour, as they provide greater confidence and satisfaction. Influencer content that aligns with the values of parents, accounts for the safety of children, and meets the lifestyle needs of families has been shown to be successful in building long-term trust.

A conclusion drawn from this research is that ethical, honest and credible influencer marketing is crucial to the success of brands in the childcare sector. Brands that work with responsible influencers and emphasise authentic content rather than overly promotional will likely develop enduring consumer trust and positive purchase intentions. This research expands on the existing literature regarding influencer marketing by highlighting the direct importance that trust-based strategies have on high-involvement child-focused markets.

7. Conflict Of Interest

The authors declared that no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

8. Plagiarism Policy

The authors declare that any kind of violation of plagiarism, copyright, and ethical matters will be handled by all authors. Journalists and editors are not liable for the aforesaid matters.

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