

Research Article

The Impact of Social Media Influencers on The Decision to Enroll in English Language Centers in Ho Chi Minh City

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Abstract

The study was conducted in Ho Chi Minh City with the aim of identifying the influencing social media influencers decision to choose English language centers. The proposed theoretical model include five independent variables: credibility, attractiveness, relevance, engagement density, and product experience. A mixed-method approach combining qualitative and quantitative analyses was employed. Based on 400 valid survey responses, the findings indicate that all factors in the model positively influenced the decision to enroll in English language centers; in descending order of impact: credibility ($\beta_{SUT} = 0.278$), engagement density ($\beta_{TT} = 0.234$), product relevance ($\beta_{SPH} = 0.206$), attractiveness ($\beta_{SHD} = 0.159$), and product experience ($\beta_{TN} = 0.155$). These findings serve as a scientific foundation for English language centers to develop appropriate plans and strategies when leveraging social media influencers to promote their services to learners in Ho Chi Minh City.

Keywords

Social media influencer, Influencer Impact, Influencer Marketing, Trust in third parties

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Currently, the world is undergoing a process of globalization and is advancing toward the peak of the digital era. Today, people spend a significant portion of their daily time on smart devices such as smartphones and laptops, making social media a basic necessity and an indispensable habit in daily life (Yost et al., 2021). Consequently, social media has emerged as a vital platform for product marketing and has; gradually become one of the most favored approaches for reaching consumers (X. J. Lim et al., 2017). The Covid-19 pandemic has profoundly altered how people

live and communicate with each other (Bongelli et al., 2023). As traditional advertising and branding channels lose influence and become increasingly ineffective in reaching consumers, many brands have been compelled to shift their marketing strategies to adapt to brand communication through various social media platforms. One marketing approach that has risen and flourished in the post-Covid-19 period is Influencer Marketing (Larano et al., 2023).

In contrast to celebrities and public figures known through traditional media, this study (Lou & Yuan, 2019) highlights that social media influencers are individuals actively participating in social media and possess expertise in specific fields such as food, fashion, travel, education, health,

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technology, product reviews, cinema, music, and sports. They are recognized and followed by others as role models, offering valuable information and maintaining close connections with their audiences. According to (X. J. Lim et al., 2017), influencers provide more effective public outreach, facilitate the delivery of messages, enhance brand value dissemination, and optimize marketing costs more efficiently than celebrity endorsements do. Influencer marketing on social media is especially valuable for businesses seeking to build long-term customer relationships, expand their consumer base, and convert potential customers into loyal customers.

Research on third-party credibility (Cao & Huang, 2022) indicates that, when making purchasing decisions, consumers tend to place greater trust in third parties, such as friends, family members, or social media influencers, than in direct brand marketing. Both large and small enterprises have increasingly adopted influencer marketing on social media to strengthen the connections between their products, services, and consumers. This is achieved through influencer posts, reviews, or by having influencers personally use products or services, thereby creating trends among their followers. (More & Lingam, 2019)

1.2. Problem Statement

Several studies have explored social media influencers from various perspectives, both globally and in Vietnam. These studies typically examine the relationships between key factors such as credibility, attractiveness, congruence, product experience, influencer interaction, attitudes toward influencers, and purchase intention. However, previous research has yet to comprehensively integrate all of these factors into a single model.

1.3. Objective

To achieve the objective, the paper hopes to answer three research questions:

1. Systematize the theoretical foundations and research models on the impact of social media influencers.
2. Identify the factors influencing the decision to enroll in foreign language centers in Ho Chi Minh City.
3. Provide managerial implications for foreign language centers in effectively utilizing social media influencers for marketing their services.

1.4. Contributions

Theoretically, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on consumer behavior in foreign language centers by integrating the role of social media influencers into strategic marketing frameworks. Specifically, it helps refine and contextualize measurement scales for key constructs, such as credibility, attractiveness, congruence, interaction frequency, and product experience of influencers on social

media platforms. The findings also provide a standardized set of scales that future academic researchers can adopt when conducting studies on the English language education market in Vietnam.

Practically, this study offers valuable insights for administrators and managers in the English language education sector, enabling them to assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of using social media influencers as part of their marketing strategies. The research findings provide a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of consumer behavior under the influence of social media personalities in choosing English language learning services at centers in Ho Chi Minh City, particularly in the context of ongoing digital transformation.

2. Literature Review

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), developed in, (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) is a well-established psychological theory that explains the relationship between attitudes, intentions, and behavior. According to TRA, an individual's behavioral intention is the immediate predictor of their actual behavior. This intention is, influenced by two main factors:

Attitude toward the behavior – the individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing the behavior.

Subjective norms – the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform the behavior, based on the expectations of significant others (e.g., family, friends, peers).

The TRA assumes that individuals are rational decision-makers who systematically use available information and consider the potential consequences of their actions before forming an intention and ultimately behaving accordingly.

In the context of consumer behavior and marketing, TRA has been widely used to explain purchasing decisions, including those influenced by social media influencers. Consumers' attitudes toward influencers and the perceived social expectations surrounding influencer-endorsed products can significantly affect their intention to purchase or adopt certain behaviors, such as enrolling in a service or choosing a brand.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by, (Ajzen, 1991) is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), and is widely applied in studies of human behavior, including consumer decision-making. The TPB suggests that behavioral intention is the most immediate determinant of behavior and it is influenced by three key components:

Attitude toward the behavior, the individual's overall evaluation of performing the behavior (favorable or unfavorable).

Subjective norm – The perceived social pressure to perform or not perform the behavior, influenced by the expectations of important referents such as family, friends, or social groups.

Perceived behavioral control (PBC) is– an individual's perception of their ability to perform a behavior, which reflects past experiences, anticipated obstacles, and available resources.

Perceived behavioral control not only influences behavioral intention, but may also have a direct effect on actual behavior, especially when the behavior is not fully under volitional control.

In the context of marketing and social media, TPB provides a robust framework to explain how consumer attitudes, social influence (including from social media influencers), and perceived ease or difficulty of purchasing jointly affect consumers' intention to buy and actual purchasing behavior.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), introduced by (Davis, 1989), is one of the most influential theoretical frameworks used to explain and predict user acceptance of information technology. The TAM is grounded in the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and suggests that two primary factors determine an individual's intention to use a new technology:

Perceived Usefulness (PU) – the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system will enhance their job performance or fulfill their needs.

Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU): the degree to which a person believes that using the system would be free of effort.

These two perceptions influence the user's attitude toward using the system, which subsequently affects their behavioral intention to use, and eventually leads to actual system usage.

In later TAM developments, attitudes toward use are sometimes excluded to simplify the model, and perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are considered to directly influence behavioral intention.

The TAM has been widely applied across different domains, including social media usage, e-commerce platforms, mobile applications, and digital marketing. In the context of social media influencers, TAM helps explain how consumers' acceptance of platforms (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Facebook) influences their exposure to influencer content and subsequent purchasing behavior.

Related Studies

Table 1. Synthesis of domestic and foreign research

Author(s) and Year	Research Focus	Research Findings
(Nam & Dân, 2018)	Influencer marketing: How the value and	The study found that consumers tend to have strong trust in social media

Author(s) and Year	Research Focus	Research Findings
	credibility of messages influence consumer trust in branded content on social media	influencers, and their purchase intention is significantly influenced by four factors: influencer credibility, content quality, the relevance between influencer and product, and consumer engagement.
(Nguyen, 2019)	The impact of influencer-based social media marketing on consumer attitudes towards F&B brands in Vietnam	The findings indicate that consumer attitudes toward F&B brands promoted by influencers are affected by two key factors: their attitude toward the influencer and their prior experience with the brand. Among these, the attitude toward the influencer is shaped by five attributes: trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, congruence, and brand relationship.
(Minh et al., 2023)	The impact of influencers on the purchase intention of Generation Z in the fashion industry in Ho Chi Minh City	The study revealed that trust, attractiveness, and expertise influence attitudes toward influencers. However, only trust and attractiveness significantly affect purchase intention. While attitudes toward influencers do impact purchase intention, trust alone is a significant predictor of purchase intention variance among young consumers.
(Saima & Khan, 2021)	The influence of social media influencer marketing on consumers' purchase intention and the mediating role of credibility	The study identifies the attributes of influencers that affect consumers' purchase intentions through the mediating role of credibility.
(A.-F.	Social media	The research emphasizes

Author(s) and Year	Research Focus	Research Findings
Lim et al., (2023)	influencers: An effective marketing approach?	that marketers should carefully select influencers based on their attractiveness, credibility, and expertise. It warns against relying solely on follower counts, which can be misleading due to the possibility of artificially inflated numbers.
(Lou & Yuan, 2019)	Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility influence consumer trust in branded content on social media	The study demonstrates that the informational value of influencer-generated content, credibility, attractiveness, and similarity of the influencer positively affect followers' trust in branded posts, which subsequently influences brand perception and purchase intention.

Summary of Prior Research

Table 2. Summary of Prior Research

Authors	Credibility	Attractiveness	Congruence	Engagement	Experience
Nam & Dan (2018)	✓			✓	
Hai Ninh et al. (2019)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Binh Minh et al. (2022)	✓	✓			
Lou & Yuan (2019)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Saima & Khan (2020)	✓	✓	✓		

Authors	Credibility	Attractiveness	Congruence	Engagement	Experience
Lim et al. (2023)	✓	✓		✓	

Proposed Model

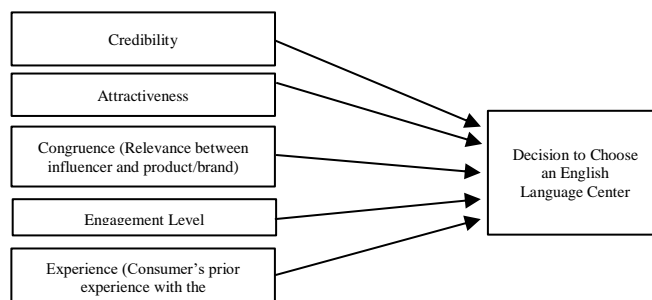


Figure 2.1. The Proposed Model Developed by the

3. Methods

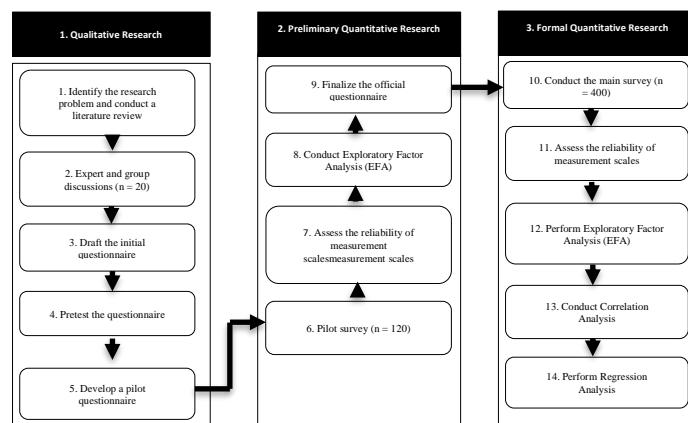


Figure 2.2. The Proposed Model Developed by the Author

4. Results

Scale reliability

Table 3. Summary of Prior Research

Item	Cronbach's Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation (1-5)
SUT	.908	.742 - .805
SHD	.873	.690 - .718
SPH	.862	.639 - .742

TT	.865	.670 - .696
TN	.867	.673 - .711
Item	Cronbach's Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation (1-3)
HV	.863	.720 - .761

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was greater than 0.6, and the corrected item-total correlations of all measurement items within this construct exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.3. Therefore, these variables meet the reliability requirements and were included in the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Table 4. Summary of Prior Research

The KMO value		.931
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx, Chi-Square	5652.722
	df	300
	Sig.	0.00

After verifying reliability, 28 observed variables were subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). Initially, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were employed to assess the appropriateness of applying EFA to the dataset.

The results indicated that the KMO value was 0.931 (greater than the minimum threshold of 0.5), and Bartlett's test was statistically significant ($\text{Sig.} = 0.000 < 0.05$).

These findings suggest that the EFA method is appropriate for the survey data and that the observed variables are sufficiently correlated within the population to justify the factor extraction.

At an Eigenvalue threshold of 1.345 (>1), Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) extracted five factors, with a total variance of 67.429%. This indicates that the extracted factors accounted for 67.429% of the total variance in the dataset, which exceeded the commonly accepted threshold of 50%. Therefore, the extracted factors were considered to adequately represent the underlying structures of the independent variables in the research model.

Table 5. EFA analysis results

Variables Observation	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
SUT5	.835				
SUT4	.795				
SUT1	.789				
SUT2	.786				
SUT3	.742				
TT2		.782			
TT3		.772			
TT4		.740			
TT1		.731			
TT5		.730			
SPH4			.781		
SPH1			.767		
SPH2			.762		
SPH3			.731		
SPH5			.681		
TN3				.782	
TN4				.759	
TN5				.752	
TN2				.727	
TN1				.723	
SHD1					.747
SHD2					.728
SHD5					.723
SHD4					.709
SHD3					.670

Using the Varimax rotation method, factor analysis extracted five distinct factors, and all observed variables loaded significantly (factor loadings > 0.5), satisfying the threshold for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). There was no evidence of cross-loading or improper grouping of variables, as a result, no observed variables were excluded from the model. This confirms construct validity and supports the theoretical structure of the measurement model.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Table 6. Correlation Matrix between Independent Variables and the Dependent Variable

		Correlations ^b					
		HVtb	SUTtb	SHDtb	SPHtb	TTtb	TNtb
HVtb	Pearson	1	.626**	.616**	.564**	.590**	.551**
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
SUTtb	Pearson	.626**	1	.520**	.385**	.483**	.467**
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
SHDtb	Pearson	.616**	.520**	1	.565**	.509**	.491**
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
SPHtb	Pearson	.564**	.385**	.565**	1	.382**	.457**
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
TTtb	Pearson	.590**	.483**	.509**	.382**	1	.401**
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
TNtb	Pearson	.551**	.467**	.491**	.457**	.401**	1
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).							
b. Listwise N=400							

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis (Table 4.14) indicate that all independent factors were positively and significantly correlated with the dependent variable, Learning Intention (HV), with p-values of 0.000 (< 0.05), confirming the statistical significance of the model.

Specifically, the correlation coefficients are as follows:

Credibility (SUT): $r = 0.626$

Attractiveness (SHD): $r = 0.616$

Congruence (SPH): $r = 0.564$

Engagement (TT): $r = 0.590$

Experience (TN): $r = 0.551$

These results suggest that all the independent variables have a moderate to strong positive relationship with the dependent variable. Therefore, they were suitable for inclusion in subsequent multiple linear regression analysis.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 7. Model Fit Evaluation

Model Summary ^b						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.782 ^a	.612	.607	.45576	.000	1.942

The adjusted R-squared value of 0.607 indicates that the independent variables collectively explain 60.7% of the variance in the dependent variable (HV – learning intention), whereas the remaining 39.3% is attributed to other factors outside the model and random error.

In addition, the Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.942, which falls within the acceptable range of [1.5 – 2.5], suggesting no evidence of first-order autocorrelation among the residuals

Table 8. Summary of Prior Research

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	128.922	5	25.784	124.132	.000 ^b
	Residual	81.840	394	.208		
	Total	210.762	399			
a. Dependent Variable: HVtb						
b. Predictors: (Constant), TNtb, TTtb, SPHtb, SUTtb, SHDtb						

The results in the table indicate that the significance value (Sig.) for the F-test was 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This suggests that the regression analysis is statistically significant and that the proposed research model is well-suited to the collected dataset.

Table 9. Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.163	.146		1.119	.264		
	SUTtb	.234	.033	.278	7.000	.000	.626	1.599
	SHDtb	.148	.041	.159	3.641	.000	.516	1.939
	SPHtb	.201	.038	.206	5.225	.000	.632	1.582
	TTtb	.214	.035	.234	6.067	.000	.661	1.513
	TNtb	.146	.037	.155	3.986	.000	.655	1.528

The analysis of the regression results indicates that the tolerance values are acceptable, with the lowest being 0.516. Furthermore, all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were below 10, with the highest at 1.939 (< 2), confirming that the assumption of no multicollinearity among the independent variables was satisfied. Therefore, multicollinearity was not a concern in this model.

The results also show that all independent variables included in the model exhibit significant relationships with the dependent variable. Consequently, the regression coefficients can be reliably used to explain and quantify the relationships between independent and dependent variables.

Based on the results presented in the table, all independent variables are statistically significant with $\text{Sig.} = 0.000 < 0.05$. An examination of the standardized beta coefficients reveals that all five components — (1) credibility, (2) attractiveness, (3) relevance, (4) interactivity, and (5) Product Experience — have a significant impact on consumers' online purchasing behavior for fashion products.

Among these factors, credibility had the highest beta coefficient, followed by Interactivity, Relevance, Attractiveness, and Product Experience.

The multiple regression equation can be expressed as follows:

$$HV = 0.278SUT + 0.234TT + 0.206SPH + 0.159SHD + 0.155TN$$

5. Discussion

Table 10. Summary of Prior Research

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Statement	Standardized Beta	Result
H1	Influencer's Credibility positively affects purchasing behavior	0.278	Accepted

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Statement	Standardized Beta	Result
H2	Influencer's Attractiveness positively affects purchasing behavior	0.159	Accepted
H3	Influencer's Relevance to the Product positively affects purchasing behavior	0.206	Accepted
H4	Influencer's Level of Interactivity positively affects purchasing behavior	0.234	Accepted
H5	Influencer's Product Experience positively affects purchasing behavior	0.155	Accepted

6. Conclusions

Utilizing influencers with high credibility in promotional campaigns fosters consumer trust in product quality, brand reputation, and brand value. Based on the research findings, the credibility factor (SUT) has a relatively strong impact ($\beta_{SUT} = 0.278$) on consumers' online purchasing behavior for fashion products in Ho Chi Minh City, implying that English language centers adopting influencer marketing strategies on social media should carefully select influencers with high credibility, not only within the broader community but also specifically in the field of education. This enhances the perceived value and trustworthiness of the promoted services, increases brand visibility, and expands the reach of marketing messages. Conversely, collaborating with low-credibility influencers may pose risks to both the services being promoted and the overall brand image.

Nowadays, consumers browse social media platforms to consume a wide range of content, including images, videos, articles, and news. Through this diverse media exposure, they seek information, entertainment, and a sense of community. The frequency of influencer interaction is a significant factor that influences consumer purchasing behavior ($\beta_{TT} = 0.234$). Therefore, businesses, particularly English language centers, should consider the interaction level of influencers when selecting representatives for their promotional strategies. High-frequency interactions allow the influencer's content and brand messages to penetrate consumer awareness more effectively. When consumers have a learning need, they are more likely to consider the promoted center among their top choices. Moreover, influencers who maintain a high level of engagement can enhance brand awareness and coverage for language centers, facilitating easier access to potential learners. Influencers who interact well with their audiences can also help establish a positive relationship between the brand and its target consumers.

To maximize the effectiveness of influencer-based marketing strategies, businesses should not only select trending influencers with high credibility, but also ensure that

these influencers are aligned with the product and possess relevant expertise. According to the research findings, product-influencer fit exerts a relatively strong influence ($\beta_{SPH} = 0.206$) on consumers' online purchasing behavior for fashion products. In the context of English language centers, selecting influencers who possess knowledge of the education sector and a clear understanding of the services being promoted enables businesses to reach a pre-existing audience base. These influencers can communicate service-related information in a more in-depth and authentic manner, fostering stronger connections between the brand and its potential learners. The alignment between the influencer and the service helps ensure consistency between the product and the influencer's personal image, values, and lifestyle as well as the expectations of their followers. This alignment enhances the effectiveness of social-media-based influencer marketing strategies in promoting educational services.

The appeal of the influencer plays a crucial role in building a large follower base. Consumers tend to be drawn to influencers with distinctive personalities and styles. English language centers should carefully consider this factor as it positively influences consumers' enrollment decisions ($\beta_{SHD} = 0.159$). Selecting influencers with a strong personal appeal enables language centers to broaden their customer base by reaching the influencer's audience and fan community across social media platforms. Moreover, an attractive influencer can draw greater attention to promoted services, increase brand awareness, and potentially boost enrollment rates. In the education sector, an influencer's appeal also contributes to enhancing perceived service value, increasing consumer trust in the offering, and effectively conveying the brand's intended message.

Vietnamese consumers, especially those in Ho Chi Minh City, often tend to select educational centers after reviewing the experiences of previous users. Influencers who have directly experienced promoted educational services have a notable impact on consumers' decision-making behavior ($\beta_{TN} = 0.155$). This suggests that language centers should incorporate this factor when selecting influencers to represent their services. When influencers share their own service experiences, their followers gain a clearer understanding and more comprehensive perspective on the offering. Positive experiences communicated by influencers serve as emotional triggers and contribute to shaping consumers' perceptions of the brand.

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