

# Influencer Authenticity and Purchase Intention

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## Abstract

This research examines the multiple facets of the connection between the authenticity of influencers and their consumers' intentions to buy. Based on multiple sources, the paper analyzes different kinds of influencers, such as celebrity influencers, non-celebrity influencers, and virtual influencers, in terms of influencing the consumer perception process. In terms of the research objectives, the following eight dimensions of authenticity were analyzed: sincerity, altruistic motives, truthfulness, realness, honesty, transparency, uniqueness, and consistency. It was found that although such characteristics as sincerity and consistency play an important role in building a psychologically close bond between consumers and brands, there is the problem of the "conversion bottleneck" that makes up almost 60% of all neutral consumers concerning their willingness to purchase anything. In addition, based on statistical data using a Generalized Linear Model, the following variable – Consistency (X8) with the coefficient of 0.246 became the strongest predictor of buying behavior.

## Keywords

Influencer Authenticity, Purchase Intention, Consistency, Perceived Credibility, Parasocial Interaction

## 1. Introduction

In the era of digitization, social media influencers are becoming key influencers whose role is connecting brands with their consumers through their perceived authenticity. Authenticity itself refers to sincerity, honesty, and perceived altruism. Currently, marketers are relying more on humans and virtual influencers to build "parasocial relationships" and "trust-transfer" through these influential people. The effect of such influencers depends on the regulatory focus of the consumers and on the nature of their authenticity. In this report, the results of several experiments are combined to study the effect of various types of authenticity cues on consumers' intention to dine, fashion purchases, and other types of purchases. Using a dataset of eight authenticity cues, this study will determine which authenticity cues are the strongest motivators of purchase intentions.

The Effects Of Influencer Type, Regulatory Focus, And Perceived Authenticity On Consumers' Purchase Intention

The influence of the type of influencer (celebrity versus non-celebrity) on purchase intention and its impact via psychological distance were explored in the context of consumer regulatory focus in this paper. As a result, three experiments were run in China, South Korea, and the US, and it was established that consumers with prevention regulatory focus, who emphasize security and duty, have greater intentions to make purchases for recommendations provided by non-celebrity influencers, since the latter are seen as being more authentic, hence, closer psychologically. On the contrary, those consumers with promotion

regulatory focus, who seek gains and aspiration, exhibited no preference for either celebrity or non-celebrity influencer.

## Virtual Influencers In Consumer Behaviour: A Social Influence Theory Perspective

The current research employs the Social Influence Theory to analyze the traits responsible for the acceptance of computer-generated virtual influencers. Using both quantitative content analysis and a survey conducted among 601 followers of the selected personalities, the authors managed to find out eight important traits of virtual characters: uniqueness, empathy, competence, fairness, interactivity, credibility, warmth, and relatedness. Fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) helped the researchers conclude that interactivity and relatedness are the most important variables determining the processes of internalization and compliance as components of influence. It was found that depending on the configuration of the identified variables, virtual users display a high willingness to purchase and adopt behaviors. In order to increase the purchase intent, all the three influence processes should be highly activated. According to the paper, psychological and professional traits are much more critical to maintaining interpersonal relationships with virtual agents than their anthropomorphism.

## The Influence Of Perceived Credibility On Purchase Intention Via Competence And Authenticity

Based on theories like the signaling theory and trust-transfer theory, this paper explores the impact of the credibility of authentic claims on the dining intention in the restaurant sector. The authors undertook a between-subjects experimental study in China, where the focus is on authenticators (authentic claims made by government, locals, or self-claims by firms), ownership structure, and restaurant history. Findings reveal that external authentic claims are perceived as much more credible compared to business's own claims. Such credible signals increase perceived restaurant competence and constructed authenticity, which in turn enhance the purchase intention. However, contrary to expectations, restaurant history had no impact on its own; there was an interaction effect such that chains with relatively less history were found to be more credible compared to independent establishments.

## Explaining Purchase Intent Via Expressed Reasons To Follow An Influencer, Perceived Homophily, And Perceived Authenticity

This study investigates the connection between perceived homophily (sameness), motivation to follow influencers, and intention to buy on Instagram. First, the paper makes a distinction between status homophily (homophily with respect to social status) and value homophily (sameness of values). Results show that choosing an influencer for "being trendy" is positively associated with purchase intention when there is status homophily. On the contrary, although value homophily enhances the perception of authenticity of the influencer, choosing influencers "being unique" has a negative direct effect on purchase intention. In this case, authenticity acts as a crucial mediator. The conclusion made by the authors is that influencers play the role of "trustworthy friends," and their authenticity plays a vital role in turning similarity into commercial action, especially in terms of trend/fashion luxury goods.

## Authentically Fake? How Consumers Respond To The Influence Of Virtual Influencers

Following the Uses and Gratifications theory and the concept of Uncanny Valley, this research aims at identifying the motivations that drive follower interactions with virtual influencers. Using qualitative interviews, the research team identified six major follower motivations: novel, informative, entertaining,

surveillance, aesthetical, and interactive motivations. Although many followers tend to regard virtual influencers as uncanny and overly fabricated, they can put up with their staged appearance if they justify their flaws. As a result, while virtual influencers are highly efficient for brand promotion owing to their novelty, at present, virtual influencers lack persuasive potential as far as purchase intention is concerned because of the lack of true authenticity, low similarity, and poor parasocial relationships with followers.

## The Impact Of Digital Influencers' Characteristics On Purchase Intention Of Fashion Products

The current study makes use of the opinion leadership theory in exploring the effects of digital influencers on the Portuguese fashion industry. The influence of influencers was examined using a combination of influencer interviews and a consumer survey. Variables analyzed in the process include trustworthiness, expertise, quality of content, similarity, and parasocial interaction (PSI). According to the findings, quality of blog content and PSI positively affect the purchase intentions directly. Moreover, quality of content and attitudes towards sponsored posts mediate the relationship between influencer characteristics and purchase intentions. It becomes clear that having a large number of followers does not matter much; rather, what matters is the quality of content and closeness with consumers. For marketers, it is important to make sure that brand messaging coincides with the influencer's actual lifestyle.

## Building Brand Authenticity On Social Media: The Impact Of Instagram Ad Model Genuineness And Trustworthiness On Perceived Brand Authenticity And Consumer Responses

In this study, the analysis of 300 Instagram advertisements will be done using a combined computational and subjective evaluation technique, to determine whether or not characteristics of the model can improve perceptions of authenticity in brands. Using Meaning Transfer Model, the results show that certain visual aspects like smiling models and snapshot-like images (instead of those taken in studios) greatly improve the perception of authenticity and credibility of the source. This improved perception is then transferred to the brand, making its authenticity increase too, leading to improved perceptions of brand attitudes and intentions. From the study, it is clear that social media users appreciate a "lighter touch," one that does not make use of highly commercialized communication channels.

## Impact Of Social Media Influencers On Consumers' Well-Being And Purchase Intention: A Tiktok Perspective

As an extension of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), this paper evaluates the impact of TikTok influencers from Pakistan on consumer well-being (CW) and purchasing intention. In this context, the author identifies two new factors: influence of source credibility (peripheral) and argument quality (central), and influencer kindness (peripheral). An experimental comparison of macro- and mega-influencers demonstrated the positive role of all factors mentioned above in predicting consumer well-being, yet the role of each of the factors differs based on the influencer category. In particular, source credibility plays the key role for the mega-group, while influencer kindness determines success among the macro-influencers. Higher consumer well-being, associated with satisfaction at the social and leisure level, ultimately promotes purchase intention.

**Impact Of Social Media Influencers On Consumers’ Well-Being And Purchase Intention: A Tiktok Perspective**

The current research is an examination of the influence of the personal attributes of celebrity influencers on the likelihood of impulse purchases and purchase intentions in the fast fashion sector of China. In the study, data collected from 371 customers is analyzed via the PLS-SEM method. The analysis shows that each of the selected characteristics, including credibility, attractiveness, expertness, and trustworthiness, exerts a highly significant positive influence on the consumers' purchase intentions and impulsive tendencies. In addition, purchase intentions play the role of a key mediating variable between the influencers' characteristics and customers' actions. According to the authors, in the age of advertising, businesses should use the power of physical appearance and expertise of certain individuals to create successful advertising campaigns.

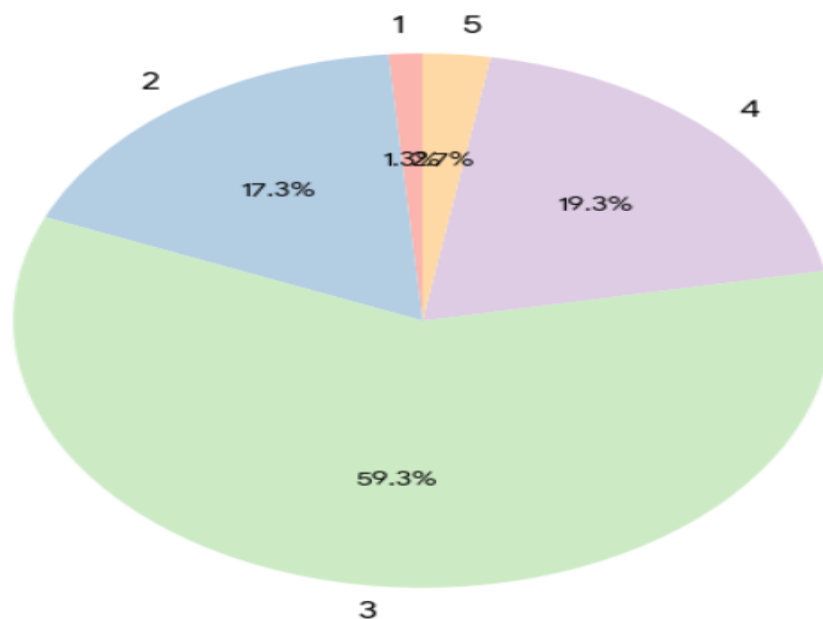
**The Role Of Social Media Followers’ Agency In Influencer Marketing: A Study Based On The Heuristic–Systematic Model Of Information Processing**

This study investigates the effects of ISDs made by an influencer on followers using HSM. Results obtained from data collected from the survey in China suggest that ISDs, which involve disclosing information about one's private life, sequentially influence purchase intention. This effect is influenced through perceived altruistic motivations (motivations to help followers) and product attitudes. The current research brings into light a serial mediating role of ISDs that helps influencers appear to be altruistic rather than business-oriented. It should be mentioned that these effects will be influenced by message involvement of followers and their knowledge of the products; individuals involved in messages tend to process information systematically.

**2. Data Analysis**

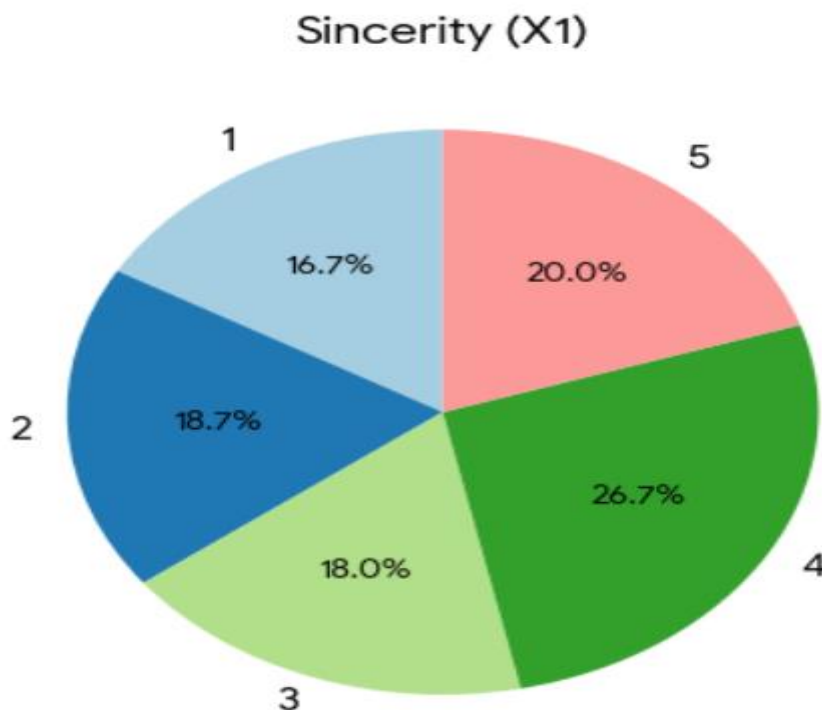
1. Purchase Intention (Y)

**Distribution of Purchase Intention (Y)**



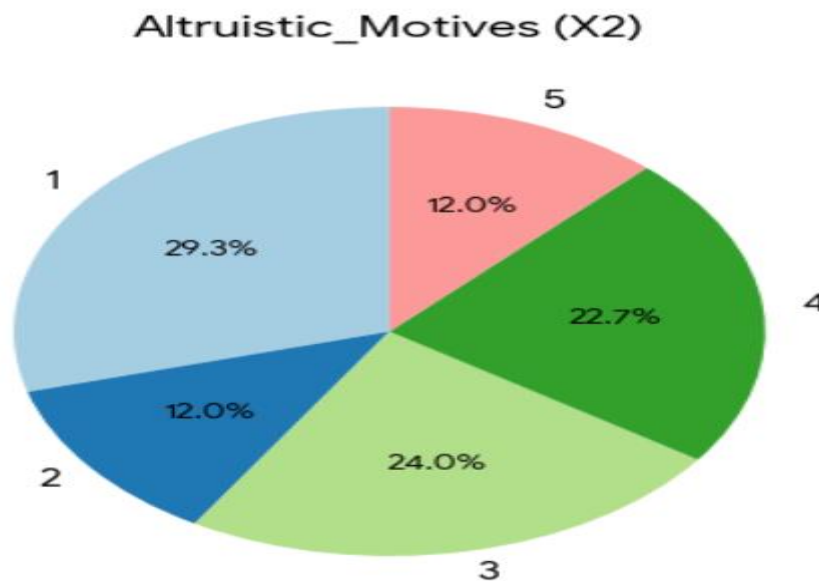
Purchase Intention chart is arguably the most interesting one out of all presented, demonstrating a gigantic "Central Tendency." No less than 89 participants out of 154 (approximately 60%) have marked "Neutral" (3). Only two people are opposed to purchasing, and four others are in favor of it. This narrow range tells us that even though the audience perceives the brand in question as honest, sincere, and having good intentions, they are reluctant to commit themselves to buying or not. This "wait-and-see" strategy leaves much room for improvement for the brand since, despite successfully capturing the audience's attention in terms of emotions and thoughts (as evident from charts X1 through X8), it has still failed to give them the ultimate push into action.

## 2. Sincerity (X1)



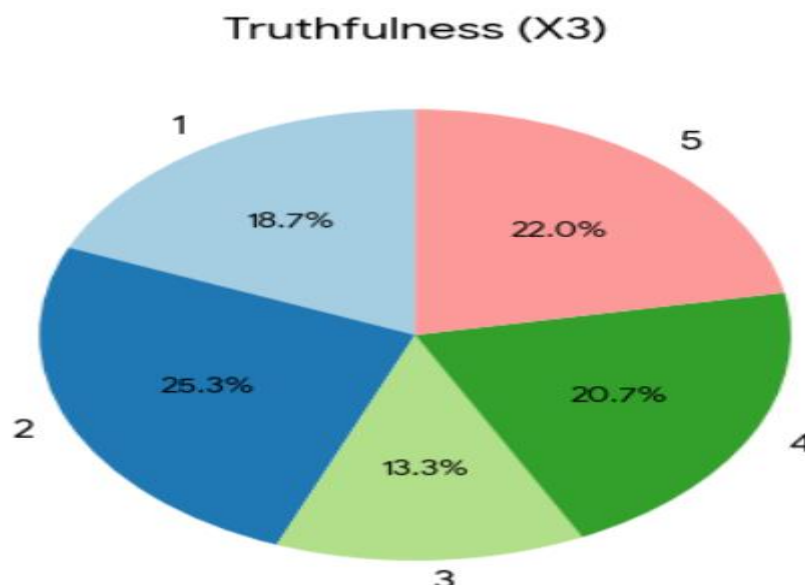
For Sincerity, the results indicate a predominantly favorable sentiment, as the category "Agree" (4) emerges as the most dominant category with a frequency of about 26.7%, (40 respondents). If we consider the "Strongly Agree" (5) option as well, then almost half of the total respondents believe that the brand appears to be sincere and heartfelt. Nevertheless, a notable section of respondents (around 35%) seems to fall into the categories of "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree". From this, one could infer that the brand succeeds in creating a feeling of sincerity within its core customers, while the rest of the consumers feel a lack of sincerity in its approach due to their perception of it as cold and artificial.

3. Altruistic Motives (X2)



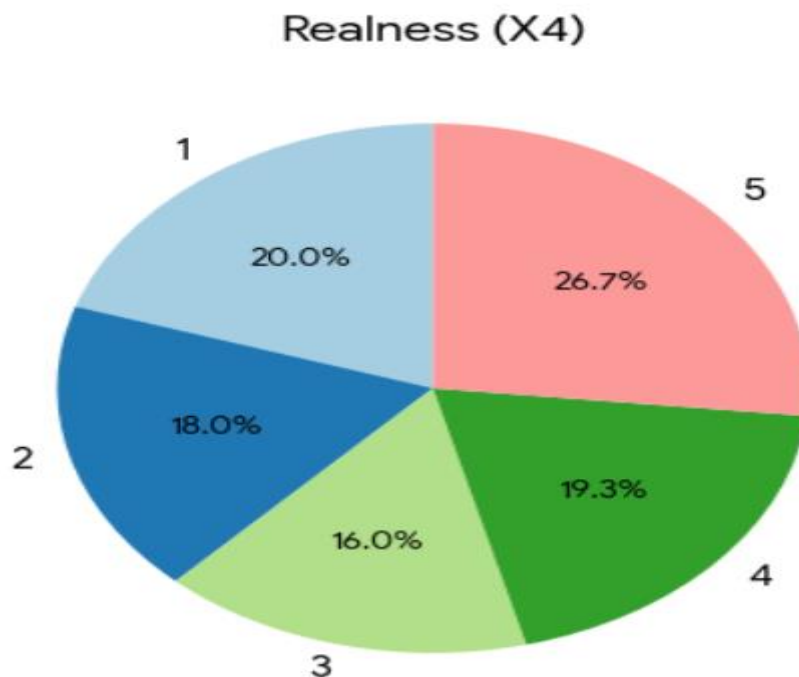
The most controversial distribution can be observed in Altruistic Motives. The mode is "Strongly Disagree" (1) with 44 respondents. It means that a considerable number of people do not believe that the brand is motivated by pure intentions to do good for society and is not focused on gaining more profit. There is even the term that characterizes such a phenomenon – the brand engages into "greenwashing". Although there is another cluster of people who agree (4), it does not make the situation better due to the imbalance of the numbers. Level 1 has almost two times more people than level 2 and 5 combined. Consumers are very skeptical about the brand's "why". To change it, the company should not only donate money to charity organizations, but prove that they do it seriously.

4. Truthfulness (X3)



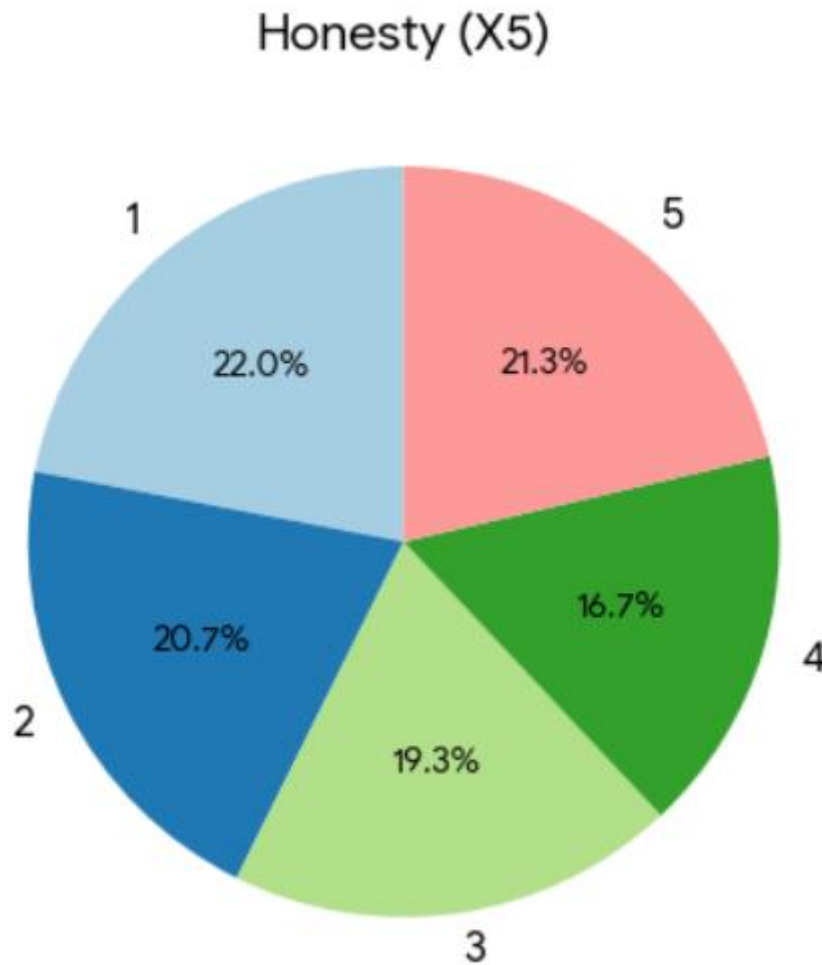
The Truthfulness graph demonstrates a "U-shape" or very diverse distribution pattern. There is quite a substantial number of "Disagree" (2) answers (38 participants) alongside an unexpectedly large number of "Strongly Agree" (5) answers (33 participants). These results suggest an audience that is split into two parts—one part perceives the brand as always telling the truth about their promises, while the other part is aware of the discrepancies in the marketing messages or product promises. Unlike Sincerity, the perception of which seemed "emotional," Truthfulness concerns facts. The lack of "Neutral" answers (20) reveals that people have firm opinions on the matter—only a very small number of people are "undecided."

5. Realness (X4)



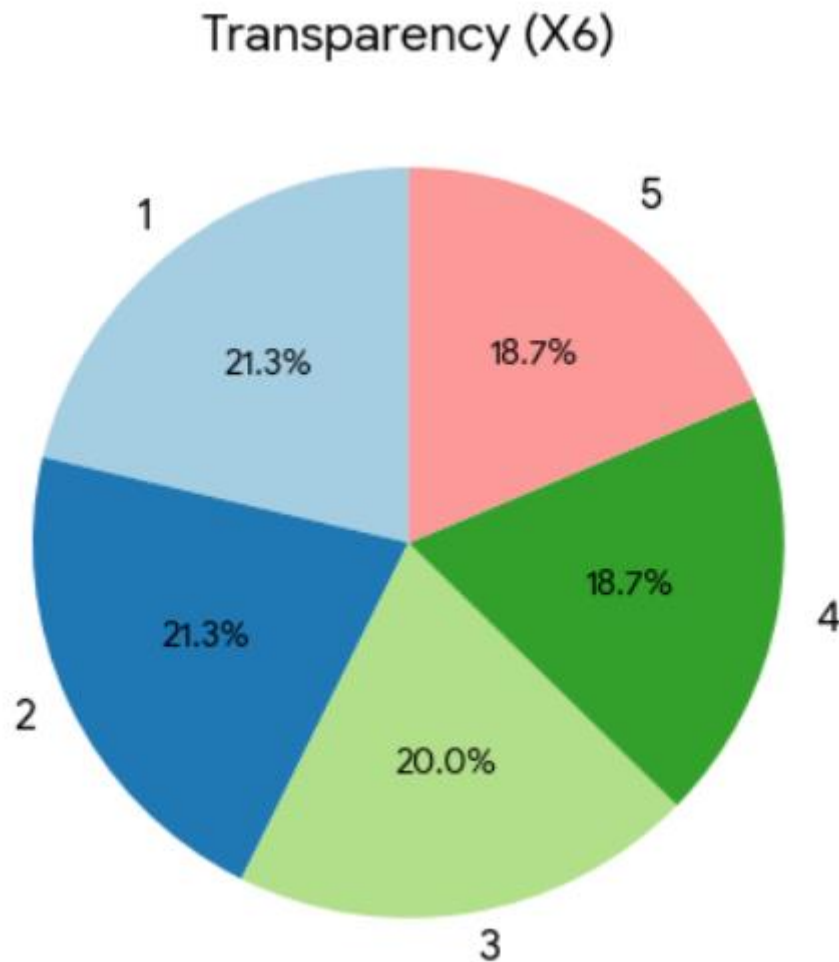
Ontological Authenticity (Realness) is at the positive end of the spectrum, with 40 participants choosing "Strongly Agree" (5). This clearly demonstrates that the brand has an extremely potent origin story or a historical aspect that is considered authentic. Despite the 30 participants who "strongly disagree" with the statement, the overall balance tends to go to the more positive side of the distribution. This clearly indicates that the brand is regarded as a true member of the respective category and cannot simply be replicated by other companies—either because it is one of the first members of the category or because of its unique history. There are many participants giving the highest score, which indicates the existence of a "core fan base" that regards the brand as the ideal representative of its industry.

6. Honesty (X5)



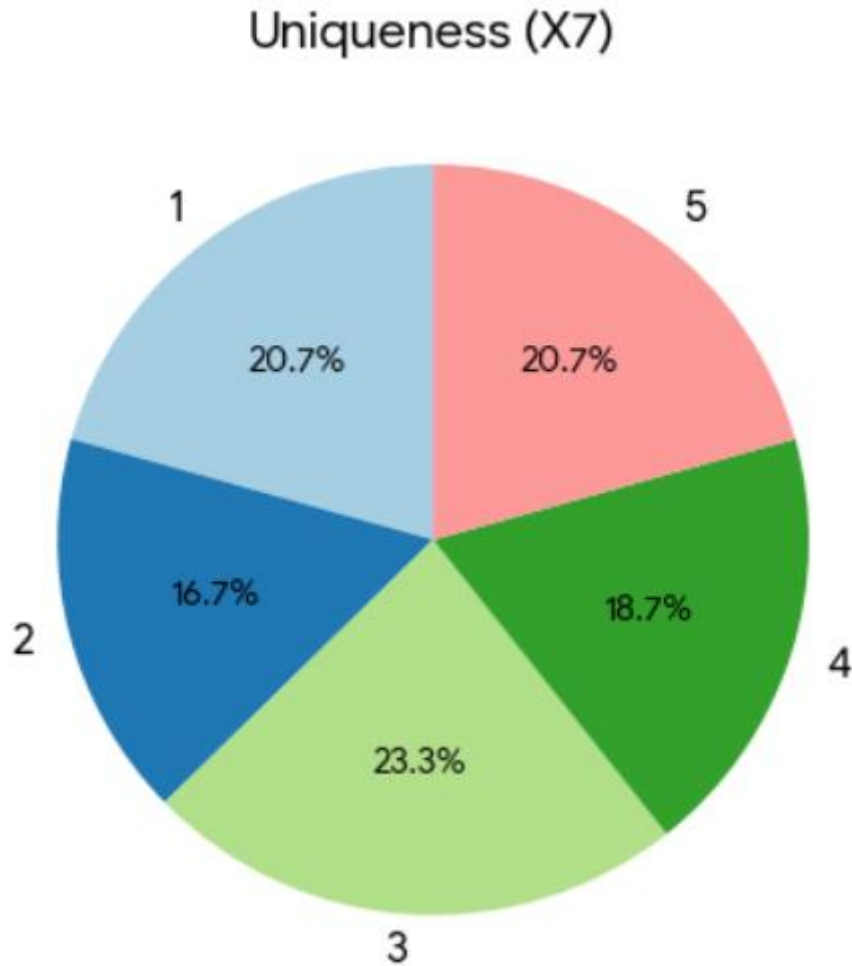
Honesty boasts an exceptionally level and evenly spread-out pie graph where all five-level values range from 25 to 33, making the division among the audience nearly perfect. The flat distribution here implies that there is absolutely no consensus about the morality of the brand. Flat distribution within a brand is often regarded as an example of the so-called "blank slate." That is, people can consider it either a highly moral or immoral brand without any middle ground. A brand should clearly define its stance in order to make an impression on potential clients. Like a father defines the moral principles for his family, the brand must have a more distinct peak in order to establish its "character," or else, it will remain ambiguous.

## 7. Transparency (X6)



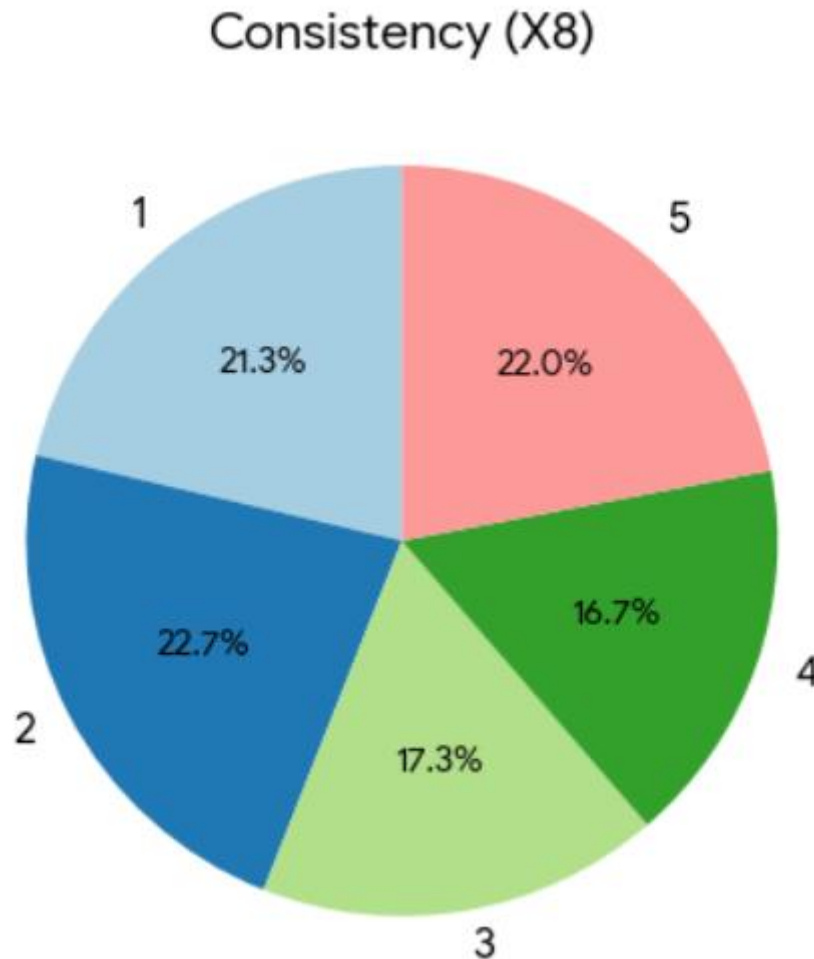
Transparency too has shown a trend highly similar to Honesty, having almost an identical distribution between all five levels. That implies that the transparency of the brand is viewed differently by almost all respondents. Each category comprises approximately 21% of people. It might mean that the available data about the company, such as its supply chain or pricing strategy, simply does not reach all people or reaches them in entirely different versions. Those in the first two levels consider the brand a "black box," whereas those in the fourth and fifth levels view the company as an open book. Hence, the gap between these perceptions must be caused by inadequate communication from the company's side.

8. Uniqueness (X7)



Uniqueness distribution has a "neutral" value (3) at the center, where 35 respondents chose "neutral." The distribution shows nearly the same number of "strongly disagree" and "strongly agree" responses on either side of the scale. This is called a "bell curve," and the brand should be considered neither a complete disruptor nor a copycat. The consumers don't perceive it as a copycat because the distribution doesn't show an increase in the number of "1" responses. The brand is located in the "sea of sameness," and to achieve uniqueness, the company should market its "originality" much more persistently. At the moment, the distribution shows that the brand is strong but not extraordinary enough to be

9. Consistency (X8)



Consistency exhibits a bimodal pattern, with significant peaks at both ends (1 and 5) and a minimum towards the center (2). The dip in the middle indicates an uneven pattern. This pattern implies inconsistency among various points of contact with the brand. On one hand, there could be a group of consumers who are satisfied with the brand's flawless consistency (level 5); on the other hand, there is also another group of people who think that the brand keeps changing (level 1 and level 2). Not having one "Consistency" peak is the biggest risk zone for the brand. Without reliability, trust is impossible. A brand needs to establish a more consistent Consistency profile to win the confidence of the "skeptics". In the same way that WeJoy's consistent fatherly behavior makes people feel secure, the brand must strive for consistency to create a secure feeling among consumers.

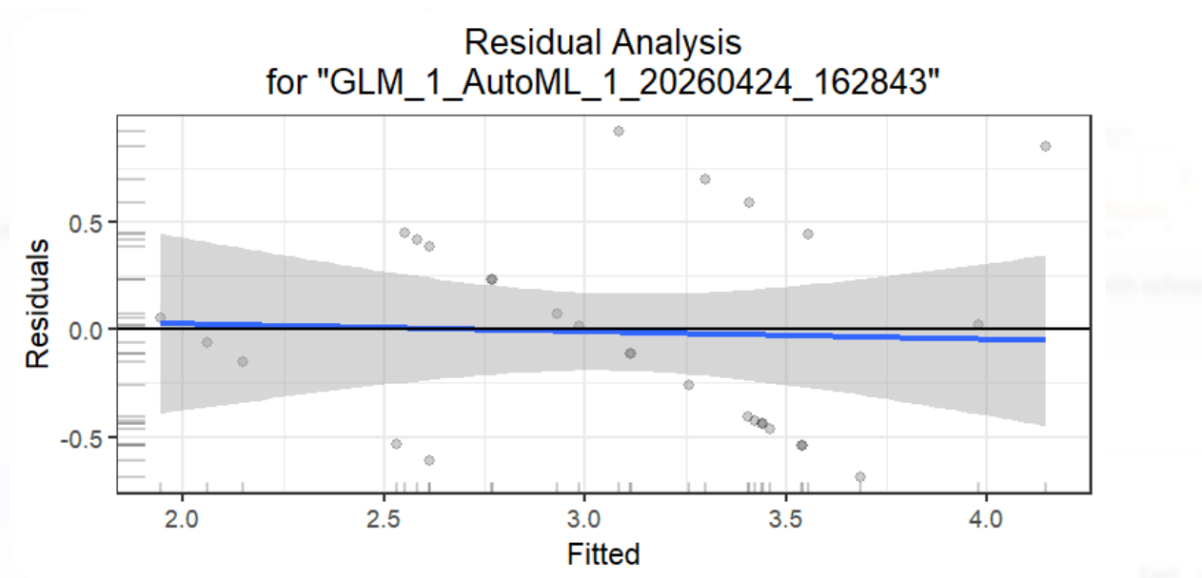
GENERALISED LINEAR MODEL

$$Y = -0.121 + 0.104(X1) + 0.116(X2) + 0.142(X3) + 0.106(X4) + 0.147(X5) + 0.096(X6) + 0.106(X7) + 0.246(X8)$$

Variable	Coefficient	Meaning
Intercept	-0.121	
Sincerity (X1)	0.104	The perception that a brand is genuine, warm, and authentic in its approach to customers, rather than artificial or corporate.
Altruistic Motives (X2)	0.116	The belief that the brand acts out of a genuine desire to help society or the customer, rather than acting solely for profit.
Truthfulness (X3)	0.142	The accuracy of claims made by the brand. Consumers perceive the brand as avoiding exaggeration or misleading information
Realness (X4)	0.106	Often called "Ontological Authenticity." This is the sense that the brand is the "real deal"—that it has a unique origin and history rather than being mass-produced or "fake."
Honesty (X5)	0.147	The perception that the brand conducts business ethically and is trustworthy in its dealings. It is the moral component of the brand
Transparency (X6)	0.096	The degree to which the brand is open about its internal operations, supply chain, and decision-making processes.

Variable	Coefficient	Meaning
Uniqueness (X7)	0.106	The extent to which the brand is perceived as original, distinctive, and unlike its competitors.
Consistency (X8)	0.246	The brand's reliability over time. It is the perception that the brand's actions, quality, and values remain stable and predictable.

## 1. Residual Analysis

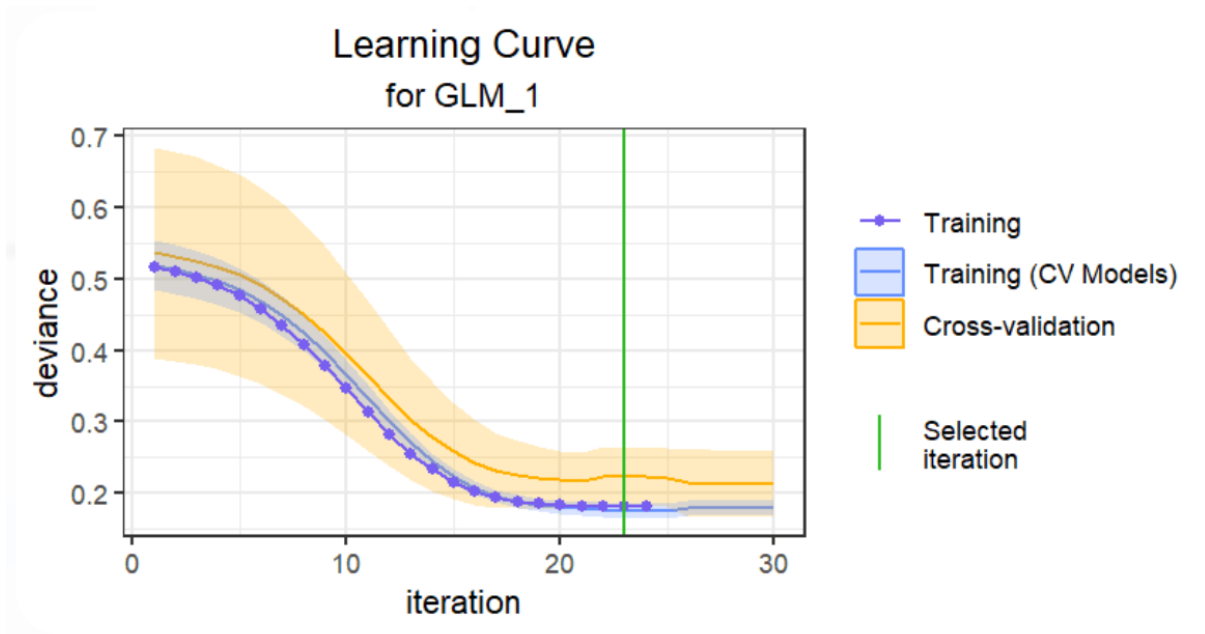


This graph verifies the accuracy of your assumptions by creating a scatter graph of the differences between your predictions and real observations (called residuals) versus fitted values.

- **Observations:** While the blue regression line appears to be horizontal, which is fine (because it should be centered around zero), the observations are somewhat dispersed, forming a kind of a fan. This hints that your errors are heteroscedastic.
- **Relation to your MLR:** Your coefficient calculations, such as the coefficients of 0.104 for Sincerity and 0.246 for Consistency, presume that your errors are randomly distributed. Given that they are not, the exactness of your coefficients is slightly compromised – which means that the importance of "Consistency" is going to differ depending on whether your Purchase Intention is high or low.

**Meaning:** You have a reasonable model here, except for the fact that the randomness of your residuals indicates that some non-linear elements are missing from your GLM.

## 2. Learning Curve



The chart shows the pattern according to which the error/deviance (of the model) decreases at each step of iterations in order to estimate the coefficients of your equation.

- Observation: The lines denoted by the words “Training” (purple) and “Cross-validation” (orange) have converged smoothly. The stabilization happens right after iteration number 23, marked with the green line.
- Connection with your MLR model: This is a great indicator of the model stability. The coefficients that you got are indeed stable, and there was no case of overfitting because, for example, the orange line would suddenly jump up while the purple one continued to fall down.

## 3. Objectives

- To examine the pattern of Purchase Intention (Y) in order to ascertain if there is any "conversion bottleneck" amongst the sample population.
- To gauge the influence of eight authenticity factors (X1-X8) on purchase intention by employing the Generalized Linear Model.
- To test the robustness of the forecasting model via residual analysis and learning curves.

## 4. Findings

- A huge "Central Tendency" was seen in purchase intention, where 59.3% chose "Neutral," suggesting that people had strong reservations about making any purchases.
- Consistency (X8) was the highest contributor to purchase intention, having a coefficient of 0.246, followed by Honesty (X5) and Truthfulness (X3).
- The stability of the model could be proven by the smooth convergence of the learning curve while there are indications of some non-linearity in the residuals.

## 5. Conclusion

It may be stated that while influencer authenticity serves as a very useful means of creating a brand image, there is no automatic translation from this to purchase intention. It becomes evident from the research that the main problem lies in the conversion bottleneck, when consumers recognize the sincerity of the influencer, yet still operate in "wait and see" terms. Among the studied factors, Consistency is the most crucial element that serves as the foundation of trust, and, therefore, is directly correlated with purchase intention. Consequently, it follows that an inconsistent brand experience across multiple channels prevents consumers from making decisions. In addition, since many consumers do not trust the Altruistic Motives of the marketers, the practice of "greenwashing" should be avoided. Thus, marketers need to focus on developing stability within the identity, rather than novelty, to increase trust among consumers.

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