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Instagram Influencer Credibility and Menstrual Product Purchase Intention Among Female Consumers in Southeast Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of Instagram influencer credibility on menstrual product purchase intention among female consumers in Southeast Nigeria. Despite the rapid growth of influencer marketing within Nigeria's digital economy, limited empirical research has examined its impact on health-related consumer behaviour in culturally sensitive domains such as menstrual hygiene. Grounded in Source Credibility Theory and the Consumer Online Brand-Related Activities (COBRA) framework, the study investigates how perceived influencer credibility shapes consumer engagement and purchasing decisions. The survey method was adopted. Quantitative data were collected from 420 female Instagram users across the five Southeast Nigerian states namely Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo, while qualitative insights were obtained through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and thematic analysis. The findings indicate that perceived Instagram influencer credibility significantly predicts menstrual product purchase intention. Influencer authenticity, cultural relatability, and experiential communication were found to enhance trust and emotional connection with brands, although affordability and persistent cultural norms moderate long-term loyalty. The study contributes to influencer marketing and health communication scholarship by demonstrating how credibility-driven digital engagement shapes consumer behaviour within culturally sensitive contexts in emerging markets. It highlights the role of Instagram influencers as both marketing agents and facilitators of menstrual health awareness.

Keywords: Instagram influencers, influencer credibility, menstrual hygiene, consumer behaviour, Nigeria



Introduction

The promotion of menstrual hygiene products in Nigeria has historically been shaped by cultural silence, social stigma, and limited public discourse surrounding menstruation. In many communities, particularly within Southeast Nigeria comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo states, menstruation is often treated as a private subject, thereby constraining open communication and limiting the effectiveness of traditional advertising strategies (Hennegan et al., 2019; Sommer et al., 2015). As a result, brands have increasingly turned to digital platforms to engage consumers in more personalised and culturally adaptable ways (Statista, 2024). Similarly, Alordiah (2023) found that influencer credibility and reach significantly drive purchase frequency among consumers in Nassarawa LGA, Nigeria, underscoring digital platforms' role in localized health/personal care decisions.

The rapid growth of social media has transformed marketing communication globally, with Instagram emerging as a dominant platform for influencer marketing. Instagram influencers, through curated visual content, storytelling, and interactive engagement, serve as intermediaries between brands and consumers. Their ability to communicate personal experiences and relatable narratives has positioned them as credible sources of information, particularly among young female audiences (De Veirman et al., 2017; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Israel et al. (2025) reported that 72.1% of Abuja residents considered influencer-recommended products due to perceived credibility (trustworthiness 60.5%, expertise 65.8%), contrasting urban trends with the cultural sensitivities in Southeast Nigeria.

Within the context of menstrual hygiene marketing, Instagram influencers play a critical role in reshaping conversations around menstruation. By normalising discussions through lifestyle content and experiential endorsements, influencers contribute to reducing stigma while simultaneously promoting product awareness and acceptance (Bobel, 2019; Hennegan et al., 2021). Despite this growing trend, empirical research examining the influence of Instagram influencer credibility on menstrual product purchase behaviour in Nigeria remains limited.

This study addresses this gap by examining how perceived credibility of Instagram influencers influences menstrual product purchase intention among female consumers in Southeast Nigeria. The study specifically investigates whether influencer credibility significantly predicts purchase intention and explores how engagement with influencer content shapes consumer perceptions and behaviour (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Source Credibility Theory and the Consumer Online Brand-Related Activities (COBRA) framework, which together provide a comprehensive explanation of how influencer marketing shapes consumer behaviour in digital environments.

Source Credibility Theory originates from Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953), who defined its core tenets in their seminal work, *Communication and Persuasion: Psychological Studies of Opinion Change*, established that message persuasiveness hinges on source expertise (perceived knowledge), trustworthiness (honesty), and attractiveness (likability or relatability). Source Credibility Theory posits that the effectiveness of a persuasive message depends on the perceived credibility of the source delivering the message. Credibility is typically defined through dimensions such as expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness which collectively influence audience attitudes and behavioural intentions (Carl I. Hovland et al., 1953; Ajzen, 1991). In the context of Instagram marketing, influencers who are perceived as authentic, knowledgeable, and relatable are more likely to influence audience



attitudes and behavioural intentions (Ki & Kim, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019). However, regionally consistent evidence from Southwest Nigeria shows influencer credibility robustly predicts purchase intention ($t=19.267$, $p<0.05$), reinforcing its applicability across Nigerian markets including the culturally nuanced Southeast (Oyewumi, 2026). Meanwhile, Kanu et al. (2025) demonstrate that influencer credibility significantly enhances fintech adoption among SMEs in Uyo, where perceived expertise and trustworthiness mirror the persuasive mechanisms in consumer contexts like menstrual products. For menstrual hygiene products in culturally sensitive contexts, credibility becomes even more critical, as consumers are more likely to trust influencers who communicate with empathy and experiential authenticity.

Complementing this perspective, is Muntinga, Moorman, and Smith's Consumer Online Brand Related Activities, COBRA, Framework; introduced in 2011 delineating consumption, contribution, and creation as engagement levels linking content to attitudes/purchase intent. The COBRA framework explains how consumers interact with brand-related content in online environments. The model identifies three levels of engagement: consumption (viewing content), contribution (liking, commenting, sharing), and creation (producing user-generated content) (Muntinga et al., 2011). Within Instagram, influencer-generated content can stimulate these engagement behaviours, which in turn shape consumer attitudes and purchase intentions (De Veirman et al., 2019; Ki & Kim, 2019).

By integrating these frameworks, the study conceptualises influencer marketing as a process in which credible Instagram influencers stimulate consumer engagement, which subsequently translates into purchase intention.

Method

This study adopted the survey research design approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of influencer marketing effects on menstrual product purchase behaviour. The study population comprised female Instagram users in Southeast Nigeria, specifically within Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo states. A total of 420 respondents participated in the survey, selected through a multistage sampling technique to ensure representation across the region.

The study adopted a multistage sampling technique to ensure adequate representation of female Instagram users across Southeast Nigeria. The process was carried out in successive stages as follows:

In the first stage, the Southeast geopolitical zone was purposively selected due to its relevance to the study. This region comprises five states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo, all of which formed the geographical scope of the study.

In the second stage, major urban centres and higher institutions within each state were identified. This was based on the assumption that female Instagram users are more concentrated in urban and semi-urban areas with higher internet penetration and digital engagement.

In the third stage, a selection of accessible institutions and communities within these urban centres was carried out using simple random sampling. This ensured that participants were drawn from diverse socioeconomic and educational backgrounds.

In the fourth stage, respondents were selected using purposive sampling, focusing specifically on female Instagram users who actively engage with influencer content related to lifestyle and personal care



products, including sanitary towels. This criterion ensured that only relevant participants who could provide meaningful responses were included in the study.

Finally, proportionate allocation was used to distribute the sample size of 420 respondents across the five states to ensure balanced representation. Copies of questionnaire were then administered to eligible participants within the selected locations.

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire measuring key constructs, including perceived influencer credibility, exposure to influencer content, emotional brand connection, and purchase intention. The questionnaire utilised a four-point Likert scale to capture respondents' attitudes and perceptions.

To ensure validity, the research instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts in advertising and communication studies, who reviewed the items for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. Necessary corrections and refinements were made based on their feedback.

The reliability of the questionnaire was established through a pilot study, and the internal consistency of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.78, which is considered acceptable for social science research. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and correlational analysis.

Findings

This section takes care of data presentation and analysis in the study.

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables*

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Exposure to Instagram Influencer Content	420	3.45	0.58
Influencer Credibility	420	3.32	0.61
Emotional Brand Connection	420	3.17	0.65
Purchase Intention	420	3.29	0.64

Note. *Values are based on a 4-point Likert scale (4 = Strongly Agree, 3=Agree, 2= Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree).*

The results indicate generally high levels of exposure to influencer content and favourable perceptions of influencer credibility, suggesting that Instagram serves as a key channel for menstrual product promotion in the region.

Correlation Analysis

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between perceived Instagram influencer credibility and menstrual product purchase intention.

Table 3 presents the correlation matrix of the key variables.



Table 2 **Correlation between Influencer Credibility and Purchase Intention**

Variable	1	2	Mean	SD
1. Influencer Credibility	—	.52	3.32	0.61
2. Purchase Intention	.52	—	3.29	0.64

Note. $p < .01$

The results indicate a positive and statistically significant relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention ($r = .52$, $p < .01$). This suggests that higher levels of perceived credibility are associated with stronger purchase intentions among female consumers in Southeast Nigeria.

However, correlation analysis alone does not establish predictive influence; therefore, regression analysis was conducted to test the study hypothesis.

Hypothesis Testing (Regression Analysis)

To determine whether perceived Instagram influencer credibility significantly predicts menstrual product purchase intention, a simple linear regression analysis was performed.

Table 3: *Regression Analysis Predicting Purchase Intention from Instagram Influencer Credibility*

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	P
Constant	1.41	0.29	—	4.86	.000
Influencer Credibility	0.54	0.07	0.48	7.21	.000

Model Summary

$R = .48$

$R^2 = .23$

Adjusted $R^2 = .22$

$F(1, 418) = 52.01$

$p < .001$

The regression results indicate that influencer credibility significantly predicts menstrual product purchase intention ($\beta = .48$, $p < .001$). The model explains approximately 23% of the variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = .23$).

Hypothesis Decision

Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis (H_{01}), which states that perceived credibility of Instagram influencers does not significantly affect purchase intention, is rejected,



while the alternative hypothesis (H_{11}) is supported. This finding confirms that perceived credibility of Instagram influencers significantly influences menstrual product purchasing behaviour among female consumers in Southeast Nigeria.

The alternative hypothesis (H_{11}) is therefore supported, indicating that influencer credibility has a statistically significant effect on menstrual product purchase intention among female consumers in Southeast Nigeria.

Qualitative findings reinforce these results, revealing that influencers who incorporate culturally relevant language and personal storytelling are more effective in reducing stigma and encouraging open discussions about menstrual health. However, factors such as product affordability and persistent cultural beliefs were identified as moderating influences on long-term brand loyalty.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide empirical support for Source Credibility Theory by demonstrating that influencer credibility plays a significant role in shaping consumer purchase intentions within the context of menstrual hygiene products. In culturally sensitive domains, credibility extends beyond expertise to include authenticity and cultural relatability, which enhance trust and persuasion. This finding aligns with prior studies which have shown that perceived influencer credibility significantly predicts consumer trust and purchase intention (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Ki & Kim, 2019). Consistent with Lou and Yuan (2019) and Ki and Kim (2019), the study by Anetoh et.al (2025), in Anambra State, found that influencer credibility and authenticity significantly improve consumer purchase behaviour, suggesting that trust-based influencer effects are not limited to Western or global samples but are also evident in Nigerian settings. This supports the present finding of a moderate positive relationship between influencer credibility and consumer response ($r=.52$), indicating that credibility remains a meaningful predictor of persuasion in culturally proximate markets.

Similarly, research by Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) found that young female consumers are more likely to rely on influencers they perceive as authentic and relatable, particularly in lifestyle and personal care contexts. This pattern tallies with the findings of the study by Okeniyi and Ighomereho (2025) showing that influencer credibility and content quality significantly mediate emotional connections and trust among social media users, supporting the relational mechanisms driving the 23% variance in purchase intention observed in the southeast study.

The integration of the COBRA framework further explains how exposure to influencer content translates into behavioural outcomes. Instagram facilitates interactive engagement, allowing consumers to move from passive exposure to active participation, thereby strengthening emotional connections with brands. This is consistent with Muntinga et al. (2011), who argue that consumer engagement with online brand-related content operates across consumption, contribution, and creation levels. Supporting this, De Veirman et al. (2017) found that influencer-generated content on Instagram enhances consumer engagement and brand attitudes, particularly when the content is perceived as credible and relatable. This engagement process is particularly important in addressing topics that are traditionally considered private or taboo, such as menstruation.

The study contributes to influencer marketing literature by situating digital persuasion within the context of menstrual health communication in an emerging African market. It demonstrates that Instagram influencers not only function as marketing agents but also as facilitators of social change by normalising conversations around menstruation. This finding is in line with studies on menstrual health



communication, which highlight the role of media and advocacy in reducing stigma and promoting open discourse (Hennegan et al., 2019; Bobel, 2019). By combining credibility with culturally sensitive communication, influencers are able to reshape consumer perceptions while simultaneously driving product acceptance and purchase behaviour.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study concludes that Instagram influencer credibility significantly influences menstrual product purchase intention among female consumers in Southeast Nigeria. The findings highlight the importance of authenticity, cultural relatability, and engagement in shaping consumer trust and behaviour.

It is recommended that menstrual hygiene brands prioritise collaboration with influencers who demonstrate strong credibility and cultural alignment with their target audience. Marketing strategies should emphasise storytelling and interactive engagement to foster emotional connections and reduce stigma.

Policymakers and public health organisations should also leverage Instagram influencers as partners in menstrual health advocacy, using digital platforms to promote awareness and education in culturally sensitive contexts.

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