



The Role of Source Congruence in Effective Marketing Communications

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Abstract. The study aims to build a more comprehensive model of the relationship between the source's characteristics and the purchase intention by involving several variables that are considered moderating and mediating variables in the relationship between the two variables. The respondent is the individual who follows influencers, whether they are celebrities or non-celebrities, on social media and often reads the influencers' content in the last six months. SEM processes the data obtained. The results show that groups of consumers who have a higher level of conformity, both in Congruence Source Characteristics with the Brand Characteristics, Congruence Source Characteristics with the Customer Characteristics, and Congruence Customer Characteristics with the Brand Characteristics, have a better perception of the influencers' character and have a higher purchase intention in this group. In addition, the results of the study also show that the influencers who have expertise related to the product are considered honest in conveying the message, attractive, and have a positive influence on the positive attitude of consumers towards the influencers. The subsequent impact of a positive perception of the influencers is the emergence of consumers' positive attitudes towards the product or brand being promoted. Furthermore, the consumers' positive attitude towards the product has increased their interest in buying the product or brand.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Influencer, Source Credibility, Congruence.

1 Introduction

Recently, digitalization has developed rapidly in Indonesia through e-commerce, mobile banking, and others [1], [2]. Digitization also encourages the emergence of marketing communications using websites, email, and social media [3]. The development of social media marketing eventually gave rise to the message source phenomenon, which has a strong influence on consumers [4], [5]. They are called endorsers, influencers, celebrities, vloggers, bloggers, and so on [6]–[8]. For this reason, marketers need to understand how to choose a message source suitable for their product or service [4]. One of the early concepts of message source explains the importance of communicators so that consumers trust the company [9]. Therefore, companies need to use message sources whose characters match their products, are perceived by consumers as trustworthy, have expertise that follows the products being promoted, and

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are also attractive according to their followers [7], [10]–[12]. When consumers have a positive perception of the selected message source, a positive attitude will also arise towards the product or service being promoted [13]. So that it is expected to generate consumer interest to buy products or services [4], [13].

Based on the results of previous studies, it appears that there is a lack of consistency regarding the relationship between source characteristics and consumer purchase intention [14]–[17]. Trustworthy, attractive, competent, and expertise influence consumers' desire to buy products [7], [17], [18]. However, it is interesting that one of the critical studies at the beginning of the discussion about message sources still questions the credibility of message sources [19]. Other studies have seen that the transparency or honesty of influencers is an essential factor in influencing consumers' willingness to buy products they recommend [20]. In addition, it was also found that an interactive relationship between influencers and their followers must first be formed before they can give influence; it is not enough to have the attributes above [21].

This causes the thought that other variables can strengthen the role of the three attributes above. One possibility that will encourage the strength of the three attributes is the congruence factor. Compatibility often reinforces certain behaviors; for example, a match in one's self-image can encourage the desire to convey positive news [22], and a match between the values held by a donor and the donor's organization can strengthen the desire to donate [23]. Appropriate self-image or self-image congruity is also very important for leisure travelers to select hotels [24]. Based on the various studies above, the concept was developed that compatibility can moderate the role of message source characteristics in influencing consumer desires in certain behaviors.

2 Hypotheses Development

The selection of influencers is an essential factor in influencing the effectiveness of marketing communications [9], [19], [25]. Opinions, beliefs, and attitudes of consumers towards an object, such as a product or brand, will be significantly influenced by the information submitted by influencers that consumers think are trustworthy [16]. Consumers will be more motivated to buy certain products or brands if there is a match between the influencers and the product offered [16], [26].

Interestingly, the research results on the effect of various dimensions of the influencers' characteristics on the consumer's desire to buy differ. For example, one study found that attractiveness did not have a significant effect on consumers' purchase intentions [10]. Meanwhile, other studies have found that attractiveness has a positive effect on consumers' purchase intentions [27]. Different dimensions, such as expertise, have a strong influence on consumer purchase intentions [16]. Meanwhile, the expertise dimension has a strong influence on the influencers who are knowledgeable compared to celebrities [17].

Variations in the results of this study indicate that the direct relationship model of the influencers' characteristics to the purchase intention of consumers has yet to be able to describe the condition of the data or the actual phenomenon. The model needs to be developed by involving other variables estimated to be mediating and moderating variables of the relationship between the influencers' characteristics and the consumer's purchase intention.

Based on the results of the literature study, several variables that can be moderating variables of the relationship between the two variables are the Congruence variable or

the match between Source Characteristics and Brand Characteristics (SC vs. BC) and Customer Characteristics (SC vs. CC), as well as the match between Customer Characteristics and Brand Characteristics (CC vs. BC) [22], [23], [28]–[30]. The influence of influencers' characteristics on consumer purchase intentions will vary depending on the suitability of the various variables above, so these variables will be used as moderating variables in the new model built into this study.

H1: Effect of Source's Characteristics on Purchase Intention moderated by Congruence of Source Characteristics with the Brand Characteristics (SC vs. BC)

H2: Effect of Source's Characteristics on Purchase Intention moderated by Congruence of Source Characteristics with the Customer Characteristics (SC vs. CC)

H3: Effect of Source's Characteristics on Purchase Intention moderated by Congruence of Customer Characteristics with the Brand Characteristics (CC vs. BC)

Conceptual Framework

Based on the results of the literature study, the relationship of several variables in this study can be seen in the following figure:

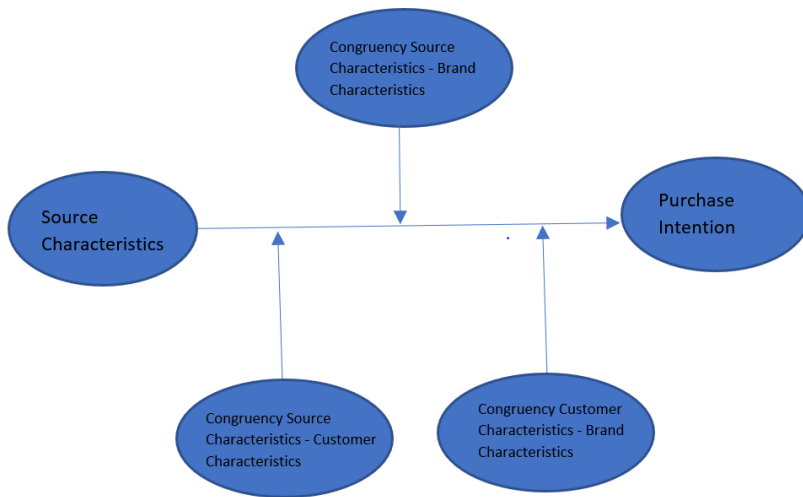


Fig 1. Consequences of source's characteristics.

3 Methods

The research design is a hypothesis test. The proposed hypothesis relates to the relationship between the influencers' characteristics and the consumers' purchase intention, which is moderated by Congruence Source Characteristics with the Brand Characteristics (SC vs. BC), Congruence Source Characteristics with the Customer Characteristics (SC vs. CC), and Congruence Customer Characteristics with the Brand Characteristics (CC vs. BC) and the role of Attitude to Influencers and Attitude to Brand as mediating variables. The respondent is individual consumers with the following criteria: following an influencer on social media and often reading content submitted by that influencer in the last six months. After collecting data for three months, 227 respondents were obtained, but in the end, only 193 could be processed further.

The variables in this study will be measured by modifying the instruments of previous researchers, namely [7], [10], [11], [16], [17], [27], [31], [32]. The instrument has been tested for validity using confirmatory analysis and reliability using Cronbach alpha [33]. The results show that some indicators are invalid, so they are not used in further processing. So, only valid and reliable indicators are used in this study.

Table 1. Validity testing result.

No	Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor	Conclusion	
1.	Source's Characteristics Attractiveness	1. The influencer has a charming appearance	0.549	Valid	
		2. The influencer has high charisma	0.403	Valid	
		Trustworthiness	1. The influencer has an honest character	0.613	Valid
	2. The influencer has a sincere character		0.659	Valid	
	3. The influencer has a trustworthy character		0.575	Valid	
	Expertise	1. The influencer has expertise in the field related to the brand being promoted	0.442	Valid	
			2. The influencer has experience in using the brand being promoted	0.533	Valid
			3. The influencer has much knowledge in the field related to the brand being promoted	0.509	Valid
	2.	Attitudes toward Source	1. Like the influencer	0.845	Valid
2. Interested in the influencer			0.703	Valid	
3. Trust the influencer			0.620	Valid	
3.	Attitudes toward Brand	1. Like the brand being promoted	0.766	Valid	

		2. Interested in the brand being promoted	0.838	Valid
4.	Congruency Source Characteristics with the Brand Characteristics	Matching the character of the influencer with the character of the brand being promoted		
		1. The influencer's character matches the brand's character	0.775	Valid
		2. The similarity of the influencer character with the brand	0.850	Valid
		3. The brand's character represents the influencer	0.224	Valid
5.	Congruency Source Characteristics with the Customer Characteristics	Compatibility of the influencer's character with the consumer's character		
		1. The influencer's character matches the consumer's character	0.624	Valid
		2. The similarity of the influencer's character with the consumer's character	0.834	Valid
		3. Influencer's character reflects the customer	0.734	Valid
		4. The influencer's character represents the customer	0.823	Valid
		5. Having the same self-image	0.525	Valid
6.	Congruency of Customer Characteristics with Brand Characteristics	Matching customers' character with the brand being		

		promoted		
		1. The customer's character matches the brand's character	0.535	Valid
		2. The similarity of the customer's character with the brand	0.771	Valid
		3. The brand's character reflects the customer	0.590	Valid
		4. The brand's character represents the customer	0.705	Valid
		5. The brand can express oneself	0.656	Valid
7.	Purchase Intention	1. Intent of buying	0.798	Valid
		2. Interested in buying	0.830	Valid
		3. Consider as a primary option	0.095	Valid

Based on the last confirmatory test in Table 1, all the indicators from seven variables are already valid because factor loading from all indicators is more than 0.40.

Table 2. Reliability testing result.

No.	Variable	CA	Conclusion
1.	Source's Characteristics (Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Expertise)	0.618	Reliable
2.	Attitudes toward Source	0.552	Reliable
3.	Attitudes toward Brand	0.501	Reliable
4.	Congruency Source Characteristics with the Brand Characteristics	0.527	Reliable
5.	Congruency Source Characteristics with the Customer Characteristics	0.759	Reliable
6.	Congruency of Customer Characteristics with Brand Characteristics	0.653	Reliable
7.	Purchase Intention	0.500	Reliable

Based on Table 2, it can be concluded that all variables are reliable because their value is more than 0.60.

The data analysis method that will be used is the Structured Equation Model (SEM) with Amos. SEM is considered appropriate because the proposed model is quite complex, involving both mediating and intervening variables [34]. In addition,

the variables in this study are unobservable, so they are following the assumptions in using SEM.

Before testing the hypothesis, the model suitability test (Goodness of Fit / GOF) was carried out. GOF test results show that the research model is a reasonable fit. From the GOF test results, it appears that the RMSEA value is close to 1; CMIN/DF is at the GOF, AIC, and ECVI limits, indicating that the default model value is close to the saturated model value. These values meet the requirements of the feasibility of a model so that hypothesis testing can be carried out [34].

Table 3. Goodness of fit models.

Measurement	Value	Criteria GOF	Conclusion
Chi-Square	p-value = 0.000	p-value > 0.05	Poor GOF
RMSEA	0.11	≤ 0,1	GOF
CMIN/DF	3.645	Lower limit 1 Upper limit 5	GOF
AIC	Default Model: 258,956 Saturated Model: 180.000 Independenc Model: 529,809	The default value of the model is close to the saturated value of the model	GOF
ECVI	Default Model: 1,328 Saturated Model: 0,923 Independenc Model: 2,717	The default value of the model is close to the saturated value of the model	GOF

SEM Multi Group will be used to test the role of moderating variables. The model will be divided into several groups according to the number of moderating variables group. In this study, the 3 Congruence variables will be divided into two groups (high and low congruence levels). In general, differences between the groups under comparison will be evaluated. If there is a difference, it will be seen how the difference occurs by looking at the output of each group.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics can describe the variables tested in this study. The mean (average) for each variable is Source Characteristic 4.002; Congruence Source Characteristics with the Brand Characteristics 3,942; Congruence Source Characteristics with the Customer Characteristics 3,784; Congruence Customer Characteristics with the Brand Characteristics 3,891.

The results above illustrate the opinion of respondents that the characteristics of influencers are considered attractive, trustworthy, and expert. In addition, influencers are considered to have character compatibility with the brand being promoted and suitability with the character of the target consumer. Consequently, respondents feel that there is a match between the brand's character and the consumers' character. Respondents' attitudes towards the influencers and the promoted brand have also been assessed as suitable. These conditions may cause consumers to be interested in buying brands that are promoted by the influencers. To prove the relationship between the

variables in the study will be discussed in the section on the results of the hypothesis test below.

4.2 Discussion

Hypothesis Test Results and Discussion

SEM multi-group will be used to test hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, namely the role of three moderating variables consisting of (a) Congruence Source Characteristics with the Brand Characteristics (SC vs. BC); (b) Congruence Source Characteristics with the Customer Characteristics (SC vs. CC) and (c) Congruence Customer Characteristics with the Brand Characteristics (CC vs. BC) in moderating the relationship between source characteristics and purchase intention.

The model was divided into two groups for comparison. The first model is a model that shows the influence of source characteristics on purchase intention for the high SC vs. BC, SC vs. CC, and CC vs. BC groups. Then, the second model is a model that shows the influence of source characteristics on purchase intention for the low SC vs. BC, SC vs. CC, and CC vs. BC groups. The results of testing hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, seen in the output of the notes for model and unconstrained fit summary models, show a probability level 0.000. This shows differences in the effect of source characteristics on purchase intention between the two groups on hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. It can be concluded that Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 are all supported.

In more detail, the difference in the effect of source characteristics on the purchase intention of the two groups in hypothesis 1 can be seen as follows:

Table 4. Average SC and PI based on Congruence Source Characteristics with the Brand Characteristics (CSC-BC) level.

Group Level CSC-BC	Average SC	Average PI	Conclusion
High	4.971	4.045	Groups with high congruence in source characteristics with brand characteristics are better at assessing influencer characteristics and have higher purchase intention.
Low	3.911	3.375	

From the table, it can be seen that the group of respondents who feel that there is a high match between the characteristics of the influencer and the character of the brand being promoted is better at assessing the characteristics of the influencer and has a higher buying interest than the group who feels that the congruence between the characteristics of the influencer and the character of the brand being promoted is low. This indicates that the level of Congruence between Source Characteristics and Brand Characteristics can moderate the effect of source characteristics on purchase intention.

Based on the results of this study, managers can increase consumer buying interest by adjusting the characteristics of the influencers to the characteristics of the product being promoted. This can be done by choosing the influencers that have similar characteristics to the brand being promoted. The brand's characteristics must be determined in advance based on the tastes of the target consumers. Thus, the influencers' characteristics must follow the characteristics of the brand being promoted. The similarity of brand characteristics can be related to the expertise, experience, hobbies, and work of the influencers. The higher the level of conformity between the influencers'

characteristics and the characteristics of the product being promoted, the greater the effect on consumer buying interest.

Furthermore, the difference in the effect of source characteristics on the purchase intention of the two groups in hypothesis 2 can be seen as follows:

Table 5. Average SC and PI based on Congruence Source Characteristics with the Customer Characteristics (CSC-CC) level

Group Level CSC-CC	Average SC	Average PI	Conclusion
High	4.141	3.993	Groups with high congruence characteristics with customer characteristics are better at assessing influencer characteristics and have higher purchase intention.
Low	3.547	3.641	

From the table, the influence of source characteristics on purchase intention is more significant for the group that considers the level of compatibility of the influencers' characteristics with the consumer's character. This shows that the level of Congruence between Source Characteristics and Customer Characteristics can moderate the effect of source characteristics on purchase intention.

Managers can increase consumer buying interest by adjusting the influencers' characteristics to the consumers' characteristics that are being targeted. This can be done by choosing influencers with similar characteristics to the target consumer. Similarities can be related to skills, experience, knowledge, hobbies, work, personality, and lifestyle. The higher the level of conformity between the influencers and the consumers' characteristics of the consumers that are being targeted, the greater the effect on consumer buying interest.

Finally, the difference in the effect of source characteristics on the purchase intention of the two groups in hypothesis 3 can be seen as follows:

Table 6. Average SC and PI based on the Congruence of Customer Characteristics with the Brand Characteristics (CCC-BC-BC) level.

Group Level CCC-BC	Average SC	Average PI	Conclusion
High	4.141	3.993	Groups with high congruence of customer and brand characteristics are better at assessing influencer characteristics and have higher purchase intention.
Low	3.547	3.641	

From the table, it can be seen that the group of respondents who feel there is a high congruence between consumer characteristics and the character of the brand being promoted is better at assessing the characteristics of influencers and has a higher buying interest than the group who feels that the suitability between consumer characteristics and the character of the brand being promoted is low. This proves that the level of Congruence between Customer Characteristics the Brand Characteristics can moderate the effect of source characteristics on purchase intention.

Designing the promoted brand's characteristics in accordance with the consumers' characteristics that are being targeted will raise consumer buying interest. Managers

can dig up information about the profile of the target market segment through segmentation and targeting research. Based on the survey results, managers can design products according to the wants and needs of people in the target segment. Furthermore, marketers can develop an effective marketing communication program, including choosing the right influencers. The higher the level of conformity between the influencers' characteristics and the characteristics of the product being promoted, the greater the effect on consumer buying interest.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research

According to the results of the study, it is proven that all hypotheses are supported. This study is limited to the role of Congruence Source Characteristics with Brand Characteristics, Congruence Source Characteristics with Customer Characteristics, and Congruence Customer Characteristics with Brand Characteristics as moderating variables in the relationship between source characteristics and purchase intention. In addition, this study only focuses on attitude (attitude to source, brand attitude) as a mediating variable in the relationship between source characteristics and purchase intention. Several other variables can also act as moderating and mediating variables. There are still many other variables that need to be considered for further research so that the research model can better represent the actual phenomenon. Future research is expected to overcome the limitations of the problem as described previously. Other variables, such as e-WOM [35] and created spokesperson [36], also have a role in the relationship between source characteristics and purchase intention. By adding these variables, the research model will become more comprehensive.

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