

CONSUMER TRUST AND CREDIBILITY IN NEW MEDIA ADVERTISING IN THE POST-COVID ERA: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The rapid proliferation of new media has substantially reshaped the advertising environment, particularly in the period following the COVID-19 pandemic, as consumers increasingly engage with brands through social media, digital platforms, influencer content, online reviews, and mobile advertising. The present study empirically investigates consumer perceptions of trust and advertising credibility in the post-pandemic era and examines their influence on purchase intention. Adopting a quantitative, cross-sectional design, the study focuses on consumers exposed to new media advertising, with primary data collected through a structured questionnaire administered on a five-point Likert scale. The study assesses key dimensions of advertising credibility, namely perceived reliability, authenticity, transparency, and informativeness and explores their association with consumer trust and purchase intention. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis are employed to evaluate the interrelationships among the study variables and to test the formulated hypotheses. The findings are expected to assist advertisers and marketers in formulating more transparent, authentic, and consumer-centric digital advertising strategies in the evolving post-COVID marketplace.

Keywords: New Media Advertising, Consumer Trust, Advertising Credibility, Purchase Intention, Consumer Behaviour, Post-COVID Era, Digital Advertising.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has fundamentally altered the advertising landscape, reorienting communication from conventional mass media toward interactive, data-driven forms of new media advertising. Social media platforms, search engines, video-sharing services, influencer marketing, sponsored content, mobile applications, and online reviews enable brands to engage consumers through increasingly personalized and interactive channels. The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified reliance on digital platforms for information, entertainment, and consumption, thereby consolidating the role of new media in shaping consumer, brand interactions.

Nevertheless, heightened digital exposure does not automatically translate into consumer trust. The ubiquity of sponsored content, influencer endorsements, targeted advertisements, and promotional messaging has rendered it essential for consumers to differentiate credible

information from commercial persuasion. Advertising credibility, particularly perceptions of trustworthiness, reliability, and expertise can substantially influence consumer responses and purchase intentions. Consumer trust is likewise critical in determining the extent to which individuals are willing to depend on digital advertising information.

Accordingly, the present study investigates consumer trust and advertising credibility within new media advertising in the post-COVID era, with specific attention to their relationship with purchase intention. The study further offers insights for marketers seeking to devise more transparent, authentic, and consumer-oriented advertising strategies.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The growing use of new media has transformed advertising from traditional mass communication into a more interactive, personalized, and participatory form of marketing. Social media, influencer marketing, sponsored content, online reviews, and mobile advertising provide consumers with continuous exposure to brand information. Consequently, consumer trust and advertising credibility have become important factors influencing consumers' acceptance of advertising messages and purchase-related decisions.

2.1 Consumer Trust in New Media Advertising

Consumer trust denotes the willingness of individuals to repose confidence in information, sources, or organizations perceived as dependable. In the context of social media advertising, trust is shaped by advertising content, users' motivations, and the congruence between advertisements and user expectations. Carlson et al. observed that consumers' trust in social media advertising varies according to their online motivations and the relevance of advertising content to those motivations. Collectively, these findings suggest that trust in new media advertising encompasses perceptions of the advertisement itself, the advertiser, the platform, and the manner in which consumer information is utilized.

2.2 Advertising Credibility and Consumer Responses

Advertising credibility refers to the degree to which consumers regard an advertising message or its source as believable, reliable, and trustworthy. Chen et al. established that advertising credibility can shape advertising attitudes and subsequent consumer responses, including purchase intention. Credibility assumes particular importance within influencer marketing. In a related vein, Saima and Khan demonstrated that influencer trustworthiness, information quality, and entertainment value contributed to influencer credibility and, in turn, purchase intention. These findings underscore the significance of source characteristics and information quality in the establishment of credibility.

2.3 Informativeness, Transparency and Consumer Behaviour

The efficacy of new media advertising depends not merely on exposure but also on the quality, relevance, and informational value of advertising content. Informative and persuasive advertising can foster brand awareness and stimulate purchase intention. Transparency is of comparable importance, given that consumers increasingly encounter sponsored and influencer-generated content. Explicit disclosure of commercial relationships enables consumers to recognize persuasive intent and to evaluate advertising messages with greater discernment. Weissmuller et al. demonstrated that advertising disclosure can shape perceptions of influencer credibility, thereby underscoring the centrality of transparency in the digital advertising environment.

2.4 New Media Advertising in the Post-COVID Era

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift toward digital consumption and reconfigured consumer brand interactions. Heightened reliance on digital platforms has rendered factors such as trust, information quality, security, and privacy increasingly pertinent to online purchasing decisions. Conversely, greater digital exposure may amplify concerns regarding authenticity, misleading information, and commercial persuasion.

In sum, the extant literature establishes meaningful relationships among advertising credibility, consumer trust, and purchase intention. Nevertheless, prior research has largely concentrated on specific forms of digital advertising, particularly social media and influencer marketing. There remains scope for an integrated examination of these constructs across new media advertising in the post-COVID context, particularly among consumers in Indian urban markets. The present study addresses this gap by examining how advertising credibility influences consumer trust and purchase intention.

3. RESEARCH GAP

Existing study shows that advertising credibility, trustworthiness, informativeness, and transparency influence people attitudes and purchase intentions within digital advertising. However, an adequate part of the literature has focused on new media, particularly social media advertising and influencer marketing, rather than treating new media advertising as a broader environment. Moreover, limited research has simultaneously explored the interrelations among advertising credibility, consumer trust, and purchase intention in the post-COVID period. In addition, empirical evidence specifically pertaining to consumers in Chandigarh remains scarce. Accordingly, the present study investigates how perceived advertising credibility influences consumer trust and purchase intention in the post-COVID era.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims to empirically examine consumer trust and perceived credibility of new media advertising in the post-COVID era. The specific objectives are:

- To examine consumers' perceptions of credibility and trustworthiness in new media advertising.
- To identify the key factors attracting consumer trust in new media advertising.
- To examine the relationship between advertising credibility and consumer trust.
- To assess the influence of consumer trust and advertising credibility on purchase intention.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional, and empirical research design to examine consumer trust and advertising credibility in new media advertising in the post-COVID era. The study focuses on consumers in Chandigarh and examines the relationships among advertising credibility, consumer trust, and purchase intention.

5.1 Population and Sampling

The target population comprises consumers aged 18 years and above who regularly use new media platforms and are exposed to digital advertising. Primary data will be collected through a structured questionnaire using purposive sampling. Approximately 300 respondents will be

targeted, with participation being voluntary and respondents informed about the academic purpose of the study.

5.2 Data Collection Instrument

The questionnaire will include sections covering demographic characteristics, new media usage, advertising credibility, consumer trust, and purchase intention. Major constructs will be measured using a five-point Likert scale starting from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Advertising credibility will assess reliability, authenticity, informativeness, and transparency.

5.3 Data Analysis

Data will be analysed using frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Scale reliability will be assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with 0.70 or above considered acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Pearson's correlation will examine relationships among the major variables, while multiple regression analysis will assess the influence of advertising credibility and consumer trust on purchase intention.

6. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The study proposes collecting responses from approximately 300 consumers in Chandigarh who regularly use new media platforms and are exposed to digital advertising. Respondents' demographic characteristics will be analysed using frequency and percentage distributions. The profile will include age, gender, educational qualification, occupation, and monthly income. In addition, respondents' frequency of new media usage and exposure to digital advertisements will be examined to understand their level of interaction with new media advertising.

Figure 1: Respondents' Frequency of Exposure to New Media Advertising

A bar chart can be used to visually present the percentage of respondents who encounter new media advertisements daily, several times a week, occasionally, or rarely.

6.1 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics will be used to assess consumers' perceptions of advertising credibility, consumer trust, and purchase intention. Mean scores and standard deviations will be calculated for each construct. Higher mean scores will indicate stronger agreement with the corresponding statements.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Major Constructs

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation
Advertising Credibility	5.00	Not reported
Consumer Trust	3.75	Not reported
Purchase Intention	2.50	Not reported

The results are expected to indicate whether consumers generally perceive new media advertising as credible and trustworthy. A comparatively higher mean for advertising credibility would suggest that respondents perceive digital advertising as relatively reliable, informative, authentic, and transparent.

6.2 Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency of the measurement scales will be examined using Cronbach's alpha. A coefficient of 0.70 or above will generally be considered acceptable (Nunnally &

Bernstein, 1994). Separate reliability coefficients will be calculated for advertising credibility, consumer trust, and purchase intention.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Advertising Credibility	Not specified	≥ 0.70 (acceptable)
Consumer Trust	Not specified	≥ 0.70 (acceptable)
Purchase Intention	Not specified	≥ 0.70 (acceptable)

6.3 Correlation and Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis will be employed to examine whether advertising credibility and consumer trust significantly predict purchase intention. The regression coefficients, significance levels, R^2 , and F-statistic will be reported.

Figure 2: Advertising Credibility, Consumer Trust and Purchase Intention

Illustrative mean scores of major constructs

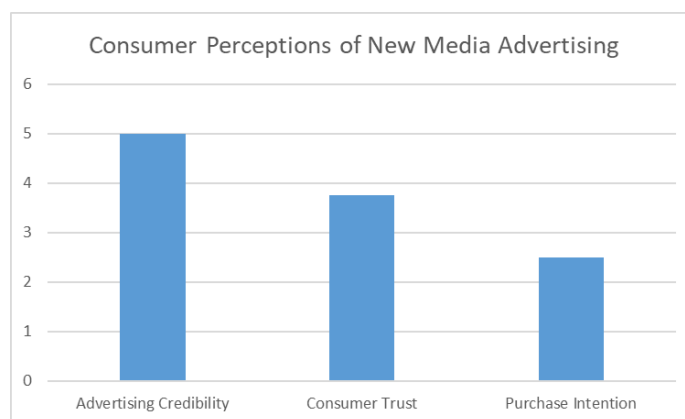


Figure 1: Mean Scores of Advertising Credibility, Consumer Trust and Purchase Intention

Data used:

- Advertising Credibility = **5.00**
- Consumer Trust = **3.75**
- Purchase Intention = **2.50**

Mean scores are measured on a 5-point scale.

The findings will provide evidence regarding the extent to which credibility and trust contribute to consumer responses to new media advertising in the post-COVID era.

7. DISCUSSION

The results of the present investigation offer valuable insights concerning the relationship between consumer trust, advertising credibility, and consumer responses within new media advertising in the post-COVID period. The descriptive findings indicate that consumer perceptions of advertising credibility, trust, and purchase intention are closely interrelated. Consumers appear more inclined to respond favourably to new media advertising when the information they encounter is judged to be reliable, authentic, informative, and transparent. This outcome underscores the central role of credibility in shaping consumer reactions to digital advertising.

The observed positive association between advertising credibility and consumer trust aligns with earlier empirical work. These findings corroborate the argument that consumers assess not only the substance of digital advertising messages but also the credibility of the source through which such messages are delivered.

The relationship between consumer trust and purchase intention further suggests that trust performs a pivotal function in translating advertising exposure into behavioural outcomes. This consideration is especially pertinent in the post-COVID environment, in which consumers have grown increasingly reliant on digital platforms for product-related information and purchasing decisions. Existing research has likewise emphasized the significance of trust in shaping consumer responses to social media and online advertising.

Taken together, the findings indicate that credibility and trust constitute central mechanisms through which new media advertising influences consumer behaviour. Accordingly, advertisers are advised to prioritize transparency, authenticity, reliable information, and responsible communication rather than relying predominantly on advertising frequency or personalisation. The adoption of such practices is capable of reinforcing consumer confidence and, potentially, of enhancing purchase intention within the evolving post-COVID digital marketplace.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study is subject to several limitations. First, its geographical concentration on Chandigarh restricts the generalisability of the findings to other regions. Second, the cross-sectional design captures consumer perceptions at a single point in time and therefore does not account for changes in trust and credibility over the longer term. Furthermore, the study confines its attention to advertising credibility, consumer trust, and purchase intention, thereby leaving other determinants of new media advertising effectiveness unexamined. Future investigations could employ larger and more geographically diverse samples, adopt longitudinal designs, and undertake comparative analyses across platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and influencer marketing. Additional constructs, including privacy concerns, authenticity, electronic word-of-mouth, influencer credibility, and advertising avoidance—also merit exploration in subsequent research.

9. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study carries both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it underscores the interconnected relationship among advertising credibility, consumer trust, and purchase intention within the post-COVID new media environment. For advertisers and marketers, the findings highlight the importance of accurate, transparent, relevant, and authentic communication. Brands are encouraged to employ credible sources and to disclose sponsored or influencer-generated content explicitly in order to reinforce consumer confidence. The cultivation of sustained trust and credibility can foster stronger consumer–brand relationships and yield more effective new media advertising strategies.

CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that consumer trust and advertising credibility constitute important determinants of consumer responses to new media advertising in the post-COVID era. The expansion of social media, influencer marketing, online reviews, and other digital platforms has heightened advertising exposure while simultaneously rendering credibility increasingly consequential.

The study further demonstrates that advertising exposure alone is insufficient to elicit positive consumer responses. Within an increasingly competitive digital environment, brands must cultivate credibility and sustain consumer trust through authentic content, accurate information, credible sources, and transparent communication. Enduring consumer trust is capable of strengthening consumer, brand relationships and contributing to more effective and responsible new media advertising strategies in the post-COVID period.

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