

Gender-Based Differences in Consumers' Perceived Trustworthiness of Instagram Advertisements and Purchase Intention in Jaipur

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Abstract:

Transparency and authenticity can help Instagram users distinguish commercial persuasion from dependable product information. This paper examines whether male and female consumers differ in authenticity- and transparency-based advertisement trustworthiness and purchase intention. Primary data were obtained from 305 eligible respondents in Jaipur, comprising 156 male and 149 female respondents. Each construct was measured through five statements on a five-point Likert scale. Cronbach's alpha was 0.796 for trustworthiness and 0.806 for purchase intention. Independent-samples t-tests found virtually identical scores for male and female respondents. Trustworthiness averaged 3.21 (SD = 0.85) for males and 3.22 (SD = 0.80) for females, $t(303) = -0.061$, $p = .951$, $d = -0.007$. Purchase-intention means were 3.02 (SD = 0.83) and 3.02 (SD = 0.91), respectively, $t(303) = 0.015$, $p = .988$, $d = 0.002$. Both null hypotheses were retained. The results indicate no meaningful gender difference among the respondents. Realistic product presentations, balanced reviews, disclosure of commercial relationships and avoidance of exaggerated claims therefore remain broadly relevant practices rather than gender-specific measures.

Keywords: Instagram advertisements; gender; authenticity; transparency; purchase intention; independent-samples t-test.

INTRODUCTION

Commercial content on Instagram often resembles the ordinary posts surrounding it. Influencers may present products within personal stories, brands may repost customer material, and edited images may make a promotion appear polished without showing how a product performs in everyday use. These features make authenticity and transparency central to advertisement evaluation.

Transparency concerns whether the commercial nature of a message and the relationship between a promoter and brand are made clear. Authenticity concerns whether the presentation appears honest, realistic and consistent with plausible product performance. Disclosure can improve advertising

recognition (Evans et al., 2017), but its broader effect depends on how users interpret both the message and its source (Naderer et al., 2021).

Realistic demonstrations, balanced reviews and user-generated content offer additional judgement cues. Mayrhofer et al. (2020) reported that user-generated brand content can produce stronger purchase responses than conventional brand posts. At the same time, trust may decline when claims appear exaggerated or imagery seems detached from ordinary product use.

Gender is frequently tested in online-shopping research because men and women may differ in information processing, perceived risk, social influence or product involvement. Findings are not uniform across settings. Hasan (2010) observed gender differences in online-shopping attitudes, while later social-media work indicates that the role of gender can depend on word of mouth and the specific acceptance process being studied (Jeljeli et al., 2022).

The present paper tests a straightforward question: do male and female respondents differ in authenticity-based trustworthiness and purchase intention? The analysis compares group means without assuming that gender differences must exist. Its cross-sectional design does not permit causal interpretation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hasan (2010) examined gender differences in online-shopping attitudes and found that perceived usefulness, ease and enjoyment operated differently across gender groups. The research established gender as a plausible comparison variable but also showed that differences depend on the particular attitude being measured.

Evans et al. (2017) experimentally tested Instagram disclosure language. Clear disclosure increased recognition of influencer content as advertising and affected attitudes and behavioural intent. Their work demonstrates that users' responses depend partly on whether commercial persuasion is visible.

Mayrhofer et al. (2020) compared user-generated brand content with disclosed advertising and brand posts. User-generated material increased young adults' purchase intention, indicating that content appearing to arise from genuine consumer experience can carry persuasive value.

Sokolova and Kefi (2020) studied credibility and parasocial interaction among Instagram and YouTube bloggers. Credibility and perceived relationships with content creators contributed to purchase intention. This supports the inclusion of honest presentation and genuine-looking experiences in Instagram research. Yang (2020) found that argument quality and popularity cues in Instagram posts helped build consumer trust and favourable product responses. The study suggests that authenticity judgements are supported by both message substance and visible social cues.

Naderer et al. (2021) examined disclosure and perceived similarity to an Instagram influencer. Disclosure supported advertising recognition, while similarity conditioned responses involving trustworthiness and purchase intentions. The findings show why transparency may not operate identically for every audience segment.

Jeljeli et al. (2022) studied gender in social-media shopping acceptance from a word-of-mouth perspective. Their findings reinforce the view that gender can shape some acceptance pathways, although the direction and strength depend on the surrounding variables and context.

Herzallah et al. (2022) tested drivers of Instagram-commerce purchase intention and included gender among the potential moderators. Their study found that demographic and experience conditions moderated selected relationships rather than producing a single uniform pattern across the model.

RESEARCH GAP

Research has examined sponsorship disclosure, influencer credibility, realistic content and gender differences in online shopping. Fewer studies directly compare male and female consumers using a combined authenticity-and-transparency measure that includes paid-ad identification, brand relationships, realistic imagery, balanced reviews and non-exaggerated claims. Evidence centred on Jaipur is also limited. This study addresses that gap through a two-group comparison alongside a matching purchase-intention measure.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**Research Objective**

To examine whether male and female consumers differ in their perceptions of Instagram advertisement trustworthiness and purchase intention.

Research Design

The study uses a quantitative, cross-sectional comparative design. Two independent gender categories are compared on authenticity- and transparency-based trustworthiness and purchase-intention scores. The design identifies mean differences without treating gender as a causal mechanism.

Study Setting and Respondent Profile

The study was conducted in Jaipur among adult residents who actively use Instagram and had viewed advertisements on the platform. Primary responses were obtained from 305 eligible participants, including 156 male and 149 female respondents. The analysis uses these two reported gender categories for group comparison.

Research Variables

Gender is the binary grouping variable. Authenticity- and transparency-based advertisement trustworthiness and purchase intention are the outcome variables. Each score is the arithmetic mean of five items, with higher values representing a stronger level of the construct.

Instrument Development and Measurement

Ten paper-specific statements were used. Trustworthiness items address paid-ad identification, disclosure of influencer-brand relationships, realistic images, balanced customer reviews and avoidance of exaggerated claims. Purchase-intention items cover realistic demonstrations, open disclosure, genuine-looking experiences, non-exaggerated presentation and comfort in proceeding towards purchase. Responses range from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Data Collection and Analytical Procedure

Primary data were collected from eligible respondents using a structured questionnaire. The responses were compiled for analysis, and all numerical results reported in the study were calculated from the resulting dataset without altering or replacing the recorded values.

Reliability Testing

Table 1.1: Reliability of the Study Constructs

Construct	Items	Cronbach's alpha
Authenticity and transparency-based trustworthiness	5	0.796

Construct	Items	Cronbach's alpha
Purchase intention	5	0.806

Cronbach's alpha was 0.796 for trustworthiness and 0.806 for purchase intention. Both coefficients meet the 0.70 benchmark and support use of the five-item mean scores in this analysis.

Statistical Tools and Techniques

Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations describe the item responses. Cronbach's alpha assesses internal consistency. Independent-samples t-tests compare the two gender categories. Levene's test examines equality of variances. Statistical significance is evaluated at 5%.

LIKERT-SCALE STATEMENT ANALYSIS

Table 1.2: Likert-Scale Statement Analysis for Trustworthiness

Likert statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Paid advertisement or sponsored promotion is clearly identified.	21 6.89%	53 17.38%	120 39.34%	71 23.28%	40 13.11%	3.18	1.09
Influencer-brand commercial relationships are disclosed.	22 7.21%	58 19.02%	99 32.46%	81 26.56%	45 14.75%	3.23	1.14
Realistic product images appear more authentic.	21 6.89%	56 18.36%	106 34.75%	79 25.90%	43 14.10%	3.22	1.11
Reviews describing positive and negative experiences seem credible.	18 5.90%	57 18.69%	114 37.38%	77 25.25%	39 12.79%	3.20	1.07
Non-exaggerated product claims appear more honest.	24 7.87%	58 19.02%	89 29.18%	93 30.49%	41 13.44%	3.23	1.14

Table 1.3: Likert-Scale Statement Analysis for Purchase Intention (N = 305)

Likert statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Realistic demonstrations encourage product consideration.	35 11.48%	74 24.26%	93 30.49%	75 24.59%	28 9.18%	2.96	1.15

Likert statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Open disclosure encourages product exploration.	35 11.48%	72 23.61%	80 26.23%	78 25.57%	40 13.11%	3.05	1.22
Genuine-looking experiences increase brand interest.	35 11.48%	62 20.33%	101 33.11%	79 25.90%	28 9.18%	3.01	1.14
Non-exaggerated presentation encourages purchase consideration.	28 9.18%	76 24.92%	86 28.20%	87 28.52%	28 9.18%	3.04	1.13
Transparent content increases comfort in proceeding towards purchase.	30 9.84%	69 22.62%	92 30.16%	80 26.23%	34 11.15%	3.06	1.15

Findings from Likert-Scale Analysis

Authenticity- and transparency-based trustworthiness had an overall mean of 3.21 (SD = 0.82). Disclosure of a commercial relationship and avoidance of exaggerated claims shared the highest item mean (M = 3.23). Clear identification of sponsored content was lowest (M = 3.18), and 39.34% selected the neutral response for that statement. The construct therefore reflects mild approval rather than strong confidence. Purchase intention remained near the midpoint (M = 3.02, SD = 0.87). Transparent content making consumers comfortable proceeding towards purchase was highest (M = 3.06), while realistic demonstrations were lowest (M = 2.96). Transparency appears to reduce discomfort more readily than it creates an immediate intention to buy.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between male and female consumers regarding their perceived trustworthiness of Instagram advertisements.

H₁₁: There is a significant difference between male and female consumers regarding their perceived trustworthiness of Instagram advertisements.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between male and female consumers regarding their purchase intention towards products advertised on Instagram.

H₁₂: There is a significant difference between male and female consumers regarding their purchase intention towards products advertised on Instagram.

Variables Used

Gender (male/female) is the grouping variable. Authenticity- and transparency-based trustworthiness and purchase intention are the outcome variables.

Statistical Test Applied

Independent-samples t-tests were used. Levene's tests were not significant for trustworthiness ($F = 0.397$, $p = .529$) or purchase intention ($F = 1.433$, $p = .232$), so equal variances were assumed in both comparisons.

Table 1.4: Independent-Samples t-Test Results by Gender

Outcome	Male	Male M (SD)	Female	Female M (SD)	t(df)	p-value	Decision
Trustworthiness	156	3.21 (0.85)	149	3.22 (0.80)	-0.061 (303)	.951	Fail to reject H01
Purchase intention	156	3.02 (0.83)	149	3.02 (0.91)	0.015 (303)	.988	Fail to reject H02

Interpretation

The male and female trustworthiness means differed by only 0.006 scale points. The test was not significant, $t(303) = -0.061$, $p = .951$. Purchase-intention means differed by approximately 0.002 points, $t(303) = 0.015$, $p = .988$, $d = 0.002$. The two distributions are effectively indistinguishable among the respondents.

Decision

H01 and H02 are not rejected at the 5% significance level.

Finding

Gender does not meaningfully separate authenticity-based trustworthiness or purchase intention among the respondents. Male and female participants recorded nearly identical construct averages.

Hypothesis Conclusion

The analysis provides insufficient evidence of gender differences for either outcome among the respondents included in the study. This absence of evidence should not be interpreted as proof that gender can never matter in Instagram purchasing contexts.

OVERALL CONCLUSION

This paper examined gender-based differences in responses to authentic and transparent Instagram advertising. Overall trustworthiness was slightly above neutral, while purchase intention remained close to the midpoint. Respondents valued disclosure, realistic presentation and non-exaggerated claims, yet these practices did not translate into strong purchase readiness.

The male and female means were almost identical, and both effect sizes were effectively zero. The findings therefore provide no basis for gender-specific conclusions among the respondents. Authenticity and transparency should be treated as general standards of responsible advertising. Further research may use inclusive gender measurement and examine product category, prior experience and exposure to influencer content.

SUGGESTIONS BASED ON FINDINGS

1. Paid promotions should be labelled in language that is immediately visible rather than hidden among hashtags. The high neutral response for ad identification indicates room for clearer recognition.
2. Brands and influencers should state their commercial relationship and keep the disclosure close to the promotional claim. Transparency should not depend on whether the viewer is male or female.
3. Product images and demonstrations need to resemble ordinary use. Editing that materially changes size, colour, performance or results may weaken authenticity.
4. Customer reviews should include specific experiences and permit balanced feedback. A page containing only uniformly positive statements can appear managed rather than credible.
5. Advertisements should avoid promises that cannot be demonstrated. Clear limits and realistic outcomes can improve honesty without reducing the product's genuine strengths.
6. Because gender differences were negligible, resources need not be devoted to separate transparency rules for male and female audiences. Segmentation may be more useful for product relevance, prior experience or involvement.
7. Further research should provide inclusive gender options and ensure adequate representation within each category before undertaking group comparisons.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The study is limited to 305 eligible Instagram users in Jaipur, so the findings should be interpreted in relation to the respondents included in the analysis. Gender is represented through male and female categories and therefore does not reflect the full range of identities. The design does not control for age, occupation, product category, prior purchase experience or exposure to influencer content. Likert scores capture stated perceptions rather than actual purchasing behaviour. The cross-sectional design cannot establish causality, and non-significant tests do not establish universal equality between gender groups.

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