



Exploring the Potential of Native Language in Micro-influencer Marketing: A Study of Engagement and Purchase Intention Among Pakistani Followers

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Abstract

This study investigates the effects of micro-influencers who speak the local language of their followers on engagement and buying behavior in Pakistan's multilingual digital landscape. The study is based on the theories of Parasocial Interaction and Source Credibility, shows that speaking in a language that one is comfortable with increases emotional resonance and trust, converting passive followers into engaged participants. The results of a survey of 310 social media users and data analysis using PLS-SEM demonstrate that native language material has a big but subtle impact on purchase intent while also considerably increasing engagement and parasocial relationships. Although engagement is increased by trust in the influencer, purchases are not always ensured. This study emphasises how language connects cultures and serves as more than just a means of communication. The findings provide crucial information for companies looking to run genuine, powerful influencer efforts in regions with a wide range of cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: *Micro-influencer marketing, Native language, Purchase intention, Parasocial interaction, Source credibility, Influencer marketing strategies*

JEL Classification: M30, M31, M37



Introduction

Background

In the realm of digital marketing micro-influencers, those with a specialized fan base of 10000–100000, have become significant players, frequently outperform traditional celebrities in terms of engagement and trust. By creating relatable and personalized content which helps them forge stronger more genuine connections with their audiences (Lou and Yuan 2019 Djafarova & Bowes 2021). Social networking sites like Facebook, TikTok and Instagram have a significant influence on the culture and consumption patterns of young people in linguistically diverse nations like Pakistan where people speak Urdu Punjabi Sindhi Pashto Balochi and English. With over 64% of the population under 30 and internet usage rising steadily (PTA, 2023), the language used by influencers significantly impacts consumer responses. When content is delivered in a native or familiar language, it fosters stronger emotional resonance, cultural alignment, and trust; key elements of effective digital influence (Hashem et al., 2024)

Horton & Wohl (1956) introduced the term “Parasocial Relationship” in their research, according to them language, beyond its communicative function, also operates as a cultural and psychological signal that strengthens parasocial relationships which can be defined as the imagined intimacy followers feel toward influencers. In turn follower engagement and purchase decisions are influenced by these perceived bonds. The theory of source credibility (Hovland et al. 1951) goes on to discuss how speaking in one’s mother tongue can increase an influencer perceived credibility and genuineness which in turn makes audiences more open to their messages. Multilingual markets are seeing a significant change as consumers are more interested in influencers who speak their native language and represent their cultural identity. This behavior of social migration represents the desire of belonging and authenticity among followers in digital platforms. But despite its emerging importance, the reasons leading to this shift are less understood especially in developing countries like Pakistan. These are not just academic questions in fact they are essential to understanding how influencer marketing operates across varying cultural environments. How do we know if a message feels personal? How does hearing it in one’s native language build connection and trust; to developing culturally authentic influencer campaigns?

Problem Statement

Digital marketing campaigns, specifically influencer marketing, are extensively done in two dominant languages in Pakistan i.e. English and Urdu. However, Urdu is dominant national and ethnic language in many parts of country but still constrains cultural and audience resonance within the country’s multi-lingual landscape, undermining the impact of campaigns for various linguistic communities. In a time when social media is pivotal in impacting client views, trust, and actions, this oversight may limit the emotional and artistic resonance of influencer content. Although influencer marketing, especially through micro-influencers, has come relatively popular in Pakistan but little is known about how influencers' operation of their original language impacts followership psychology and purchase behavior. Previous exploration on the efficacy of influencers has substantially concentrated on characteristics similar as capability, responsibility, and beauty (Lim et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Djafarova & Bowes, 2021), constantly in Western or monolingual settings. still, in



linguistically varied requests like Pakistan, the cerebral mechanisms via which the influencer's home language increases their responsibility and promotes parasocial contact are still not well understood. Although source credibility is known to have an impact on communication effectiveness (Hovland et al., 1951). Its relationship to language preference and its part in parasocial commerce, both of which influence follower engagement and purchase intention, haven't entered enough theoretical or empirical attention in Pakistan. This difference makes it difficult for marketers and companies to design influencer campaigns that are both linguistically and culturally appropriate, and that truly connect with the local audience in an authentic way.

Gap Analysis

Indeed social media influencers, especially micro-influencers, are gaining high importance in Pakistan's fleetly changing digital marketing geography, there's still a significant dearth of empirical exploration for the behavioral and logical impacts of influencers' communication in native languages. According to Lim et al. (2017), Lou & Yuan (2019), and Djafarova & Bowes (2021), the maturity of the literature on influencer marketing that presently exists has come from western or primarily monolingual societies and focusses primarily on superficial characteristics similar source credibility, attractiveness, and expertise. Though these rudiments are easily significant, these studies constantly overlook the artistic and emotional significance of language, which is an abecedarian aspect of identity and social commerce, especially in multilingual society.

With a linguistically different population that speaks Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi in Pakistan, the maturity of influencer material is in Urdu or English, which may circumscribe its emotional and artistic applicability with people in the region. Despite the fact that source credibility has long been conceded as a crucial element of conclusive communication (Hovland et al., 1951), little is known about how it interacts with the use of original language. likewise, there hasn't been a thorough disquisition of how these rudiments work together to affect parasocial commerce (PSI), which is the perceived closeness and emotional connection that followers have with influencers.

Native language communication improves communication ignorance, emotional engagement, and perceived responsibility, according to earlier psycholinguistic studies (Gao et al., 2022). These results, still, have hardly ever been estimated in digital surrounds with complicated artistic morals or applied to influencer marketing. Theoretically and empirically, it's still unclear how important language- driven trust, which is corroborated by the credibility of the source, enhances parasocial commerce and, therefore, influences client engagement and purchase intention. Addressing this understudied crossroad will make it possible to produce influencer marketing strategies that are more inclusive and culturally apprehensive.

Research Objectives

This study aims to investigate

1. How followers' engagement on social media platforms is impacted when micro-influencers speak in their mother tongue.



2. How followers' purchasing intentions are impacted by the use of their native language.
3. To analyze the mediation role of parasocial interaction between native language of social media influencer and follower engagement.
4. To assess the mediation role of parasocial interaction between native language of influencer and followers' purchase.
5. To determine if the association between native language use and parasocial interaction is moderated by source reliability.

Significance of the Study

In the setting of multilingual and culturally varied societies like Pakistan, this study offers significant theoretical and practical contributions to the domains of influencer marketing, digital communication, and consumer psychology.

Theoretically, this study integrates the ideas of Source Credibility Theory and Parasocial Interaction presented by Hovland et al., (1951) and Horton & Wohl, (1956) respectively, to provide a more complex understanding of how followers' psychological and behavioral reactions are influenced by their preference for the local language. This study widens the applicability of parasocial interaction theory by examining how language serves as a catalyst for the emotional and relational link that followers form with influencers. At the same time, the study deepens our understanding of how trust and perceived expertise condition the effects of language use on parasocial involvement by adding source credibility as a moderating variable. This integrated approach provides a more thorough framework that connects behavioral intention, emotional involvement, and language cues, the areas that have received little attention in the literature on influencer marketing, particularly in the South Asian setting.

For brand managers and digital marketers aiming to reach Pakistan's multilingual people, the report offers useful practical information. Marketers may move above the traditional Urdu-English dichotomy and embrace linguistically inclusive methods that establish a more genuine connection with regional audiences by showcasing the influence of native language content on follower engagement and purchase intention. For brands working with micro-influencers, whose localized communication style enables them to create high levels of relatability and trust inside narrow communities, the findings will be very helpful. By using this information to inform the creation of culturally and emotionally relevant campaigns, marketing effectiveness and conversion rates can be raised.

Socio-culturally, this study emphasises how digital marketing helps to preserve and validate regional languages that are frequently ignored in popular advertising. The study highlights how utilising one's native language on social media may empower marginalized people and promote inclusivity online in a country where linguistic identity and cultural belonging are closely related. By highlighting native language preference as a crucial component of consumer behavior, the study contributes to broader conversations on language parity, cultural representation, and digital democratization in countries like Pakistan which are under development.



Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

Influencer Marketing

De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) argue in favor of this approach, Influencer marketing is a highly dynamic promotional approach that leverages the expertise and credibility of individuals who can shape others' purchasing decisions based on their position, authority, knowledge, or affiliation with their followers. This marketing strategy works especially well on social media spots like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, where influencers may communicate with followers directly by posting frequent and customized content.

Influencers make connections with their followers that go further through influencer marketing, which is a type of relational marketing. Because they're perceived as "one of us" rather than belonging to a remote nobility, influencers can convey an air of authenticity and trustability. Compared to conventional advertising ways, this relatability constantly results in advanced effect and persuasion (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

According to Kay, Mulcahy & Parkinson, (2020) influencers are generally categorized as per the numbers of their followers which affects their capacity for marketing and promotion. Following are the categories of influencers in ascending order

1. Nano- influencers (1,000 – 10,000 followers) Because of their intimate entourages, these people constantly have the loftiest engagement rates. They're seen as veritably secure and relatable.
2. Micro-influencers (10,000 – 100,000 followers) famed for striking a balance between engagement and reach. Because of their apparent availability and further in- depth relations with followers, micro-influencers are regarded as real and have cult that are particular to their specialisation.
3. Macro-influencers (100,000 – less than 1M followers) have a sizable following, but their engagement rates are generally lower. They're constantly employed in larger juggernauts.
4. Mega-influencers (1M + followers) generally celebrities with a large following and wide appeal, these individualities constantly do not interact nearly with their cult.

Micro-influencers are central to this study due to their high commerce and applicability to localized content, particularly in multilingual societies like Pakistan.

Theoretical Support

This exploration is supported by three important cerebral and communication propositions used in this study to explain how native language choice affects micro-influencer marketing:

The implicit frame of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) helps us comprehend how language acts as a sign of group class. This idea holds that people use participated traits like race, language, or culture to organise themselves and other people into social groupings. Native language serves as a potent group identity marker in the environment of this study, enabling followers to identify with influencers who image their verbal and artistic in- groups. This theoretical lens helps explain why language preference may promote intellectual

closeness, laying the root for lesser parasocial connections, indeed though artistic identity isn't directly measured in the model. Because ingroup familiarity, applicability, and emotional comfort are each important factors that impact online engagement and trust, followers may be more inclined to interact with influencers who speak their home language.

The one of the foundation theories of this study is the Parasocial Interaction Theory (Horton & Wohl, 1956). It describes how people make emotionally meaningful yet one- sided connections with influencers and other media personalities. These parasocial connections are strengthened on social media when influencers come across as approachable, real, and emotionally applicable. Language serves as a relationship cue that promotes warmth, connection, and a sense of closeness, particularly when it's native or familiar. This study views parasocial commerce as a mediating element, arguing that preference for the original language increases the follower's emotional bond with the influencer rather than directly impacting engagement or purchase intention. This attachment also facilitates the desired goal of purchase action by followers. In 1951, Hovland and colleagues conducted a study that gave rise to the concept of Source Credibility. It discusses how a person's preferred language might affect how much they relate to an influencer, depending on how reliable the influencer appears to be. Basically, speaking in their mother tongue may not be as important in establishing a relationship if others believe an influencer is reliable. However, the emotional benefits of adopting their native tongue may not be as beneficial if the influencer doesn't seem credible.

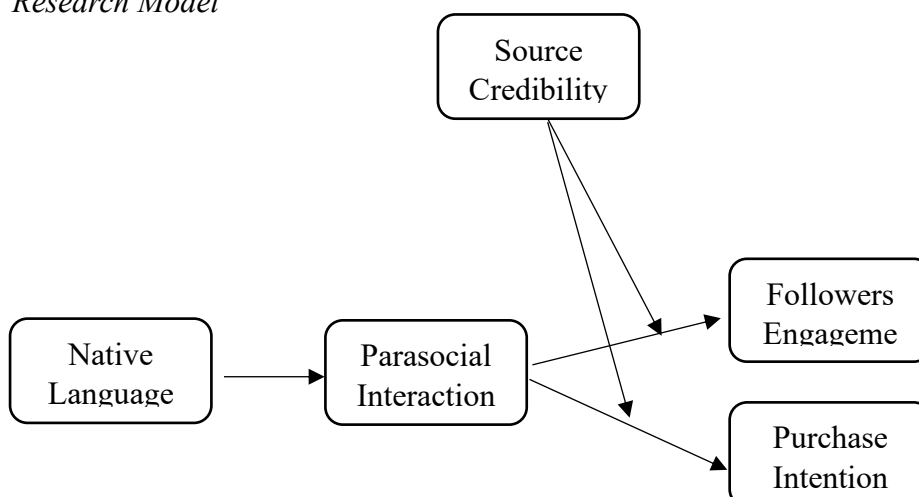
By admitting that language alone is inadequate and that the influencer's perceived authority and trust are important factors in determining follower response, this moderating connection complicates the model.

When taken as a whole, these propositions give a multifaceted account of how language preference works in influencer marketing, not only as a tool for communication, but also as a cerebral ground, a social signal, and an environment-dependent source of conclusive power. The study can contribute to both scholarly literature and real- world operations in linguistically miscellaneous requests like Pakistan thanks to this theoretical integration.

Hypotheses Development

Figure 1

Research Model





Native Language → Parasocial Interaction

Using a language that the followership is familiar with both culturally and geographically is appertained to as "native language." In Pakistan, this could comprise Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, or Balochi. Speaking in one's native language significantly enhances emotional closeness and cultural alignment between influencers and followers. Native-language signalling fosters authenticity and trust; aligning messaging with audience identity cues, which improves credibility, engagement, and even purchase intention in influencer-marketing contexts (Fabeil et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2025).

Parasocial contact is the one-sided emotional bond that followers have with influencers that resembles an in-person relationship (Horton & Wohl, 1956). PSI is supported by interactive social media features including likes, commentary, live sessions, and story (Aw, E.C.X., & Labrecque, 2020).

By speaking in their native language, influencers can produce stronger emotional connections with their cult. parallels in language and culture promote familiarity and a sense of participated identity, which fortifies parasocial bonds (Phua et al., 2017).

H1: Native Language of the Influencer has a positive effect on Parasocial Interaction

Native Language → Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is greatly expressed by the use of native language in marketing dispatches, especially in societies with a different population in terms of language and culture. According to Putoni et al. (2009), influencers who speak in their followership's native language amend communication authenticity, artistic applicability, and emotional resonance all of which are important rudiments that impact consumer behavior. Language that aligns with the consumer's identity acts as a powerful social cue, increasing trust and reducing psychological resistance to persuasive messages. This identity-congruent communication enhances message acceptance by fostering familiarity and credibility (Wang et al., 2025).

Influencers who use their native language foster a sense of community and trust among their followers, which increases their openness to product recommendations in the environment of social media marketing, particularly in nations like Pakistan where several languages (similar as Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, and Pashto) attend. Purchase intention is appreciatively impacted by this verbal relatability since it increases the communication's perceived legality and personalisation (Khare, 2021). Packard, & Berger (2024) emphasized the significance of maintaining balance between brand messaging and customer identification by showing that language congruence, often known as "language typicality," not only increases purchase intentions but also builds trust in online retail settings. Please let me know if you require any more clarifications or references!

H2: Native Language of the Influencer has a positive effect on Purchase Intention

Native Language → Followers Engagement

On social media, stoner relations like likes, commentary, shares, and story replies are appertained to as follower engagement. This commerce is significantly shaped by language. Advanced emotional and cognitive participation results from influencers using a original language that appeals to their followership since it fosters a feeling of closeness and familiarity



(Hinsch et al., 2020). According to Colladon et al. (2021), aligning one's language with an audience' functions as an honest social signal that fosters interpersonal connection and shared values; key drivers of engagement in digital communities.

Cult are more inclined to interact with content that feels individualized or provisioned to their individualities, according to exploration. Native language operation makes material feel more applicable, which encourages followers to engage more actively. (Rao et al., 2022). Language is a potent instrument to increase organic engagement and fortify online communities in micro-influencer marketing, where relatability and authenticity are more important than celebrity status (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019).

H3: Native Language of the Influencer has a positive effect on Followers Engagement

Parasocial Interaction → Follower Engagement

Likes, comments, shares, direct messages, and saves are behavioral expressions of followers' emotional and active involvement (Trunfio & Della Lucia, 2021) One- sided emotional ties between followers and influencers, or parasocial relations, are pivotal for encouraging this kind of commerce. Followers are more likely to engage with content through likes, commentary, or sharing when they perceive a particular connection or relationship with an influencer (Aw, E.C.X., & Labrecque, 2020).

These connections increase followers' comprehensions of authenticity and responsibility and give them a sense of purpose in their participation. These connections are generally strengthened by influencers who respond to followers, partake particular tales, or display vulnerability, all of which promote lesser situations of engagement. Parasocial connections can be a potent engagement supporter, particularly when micro-influencers are involved and relatability is high. In the end, these emotional ties turn followers from unresistant consumers into engaged contributors to the influencer's community and content.

H4: Parasocial interaction positively affects follower engagement

Parasocial Interaction → Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is the likelihood that a client will make a purchase as a result of the satisfying communication they've entered. According to Ajzen (1991), it's a pivotal index of real purchasing geste. This end is significantly shaped by parasocial commerce (PSI) in the environment of social media marketing. The intention to buy effects that influencers promote can be greatly increased by the trust and emotional connection that PSI fosters (Lim et al., 2017).

Influencers are more likely to be seen as trustworthy by followers when they're seen as genuine, dependable, and relatable (Sokolova & Perez, 2021). When paired with emotional attachment, this perceived credibility increases conclusive power and lowers cerebral resistance to marketing dispatches. also, PSI can foster a feeling of social closeness and familiarity, which can appreciatively impact purchase opinions by making product suggestions feel more like friend advise than a deals pitch (Lou & Kim, 2019).



H5: Parasocial interaction positively affects purchase intention

Parasocial Interaction as a Mediator

The term "parasocial interaction" describes the emotional and psychological bonds that viewers form one-sidedly with influencers or media personalities; these bonds are frequently marked by sentiments of closeness, trust, and kinship (Horton & Wohl, 1956). This idea has grown in importance in the online setting, particularly on social media sites where influencers can use language and storytelling to establish a feeling of intimacy and genuineness. Influencers' use of their home tongue is essential for fostering parasocial ties. Being able to communicate in the same language promotes emotional intimacy and relatability, particularly in culturally and linguistically diverse settings like Pakistan. According to Fabeil et al. (2025) influencers who speak in their followers' native tongue increase perceived similarity and decrease psychological distance, which promotes parasocial engagement.

Purchase intention and follower engagement are both strongly influenced by parasocial contact. According to Kim and Song (2016), followers are more inclined to like, remark, share, and trust product endorsements when they sense an emotional connection to the influencer. Because people often internalize advice from people, they have a close connection with, this tie can influence consumer behavior.

As a result, parasocial interaction serves as a mediating mechanism to explain how influencers' usage of their native tongue increases engagement and the possibility that followers will buy the recommended good or service.

H6: Parasocial Interaction positively mediates the relationship between Native Language of the Influencer and Follower Engagement

H7: Parasocial Interaction positively mediates the relationship between Native Language of the Influencer and Purchase Intention

Moderation effects of Source Credibility.

The term "parasocial interaction" (PSI) refers to the deception of a face-to-face relationship that followers develop with media personalities or influencers (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011). Modern platforms amplify these bonds: for instance, virtual influencers' human-like cues significantly enhance PSI and positively influence brand attitudes among followers (Min & Wonjun, 2024). In live-streaming commerce, PSI has been shown to mediate between social anxiety, FOMO, and impulsive purchases—emphasizing the emotional and behavioral impact of these relationships (Huang & Mohamad, 2025). Similarly, Instagram influencer research from Pakistan demonstrated how PSI strengthens brand loyalty and engagement by leveraging shared social and physical attractiveness (Shahid, Nauman, & Ayyaz, 2023)

However, the perceived source credibility (SC) of the influencer—which is usually determined by factors like competence, trustworthiness, and attractiveness—may affect how strong this link is (Ohanian, 1990). Because credibility increases the persuasive power of a message, followers are more tending to interact with information and follow endorsements when they believe the influencer to be reliable and trustworthy (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). According to



their research, the trustworthiness of the source increases the persuasive power of parasocial relationships. They also found that the influence of PSI on followers' behavioral intentions in social media marketing was lessened by the credibility of the source. Similarly, Lou and Yuan (2019) underlined that when influencers are perceived as credible, parasocial interactions lead to higher engagement rates and a higher likelihood of purchase.

This implies that even if followers feel emotionally connected (i.e. high parasocial interaction) they are far more likely to engage with or buy from an influencer when they are seen as a trustworthy information source.

H8: The association between parasocial interaction and followers' involvement is moderated by source credibility, with a higher correlation shown when source credibility is high.

H9: The association between parasocial interaction and purchase intention is moderated by source credibility, with a higher correlation observed when source credibility is high.

Research Methodology

Using a quantitative study technique, the effects of micro-influencers' use of their native language on follower engagement and purchase intention were examined, with particular focus paid to the mediating role of parasocial interaction and the moderating influence of source credibility. The data has been collected using a standardised survey questionnaire that was refined for contextual relevance, clarity, and reliability following a pilot test with ten participants.

To create the final sample of 310 respondents, a non-probability sampling strategy that combined purposive and snowball tactics was utilized. In order to ensure that participants closely matched the study's goals, the researcher used purposive sampling to identify members of native-language-speaking groups who were regular social media users and followers of micro-influencers (Palinkas et al., 2021). Snowball sampling, which enables early participants to recommend friends within their social and cultural networks, was used to increase language variety and reach otherwise inaccessible populations. Particularly in quantitative research, this approach is acknowledged as a successful means of reaching obscure or difficult-to-reach populations while enhancing sample variety and reach (Ting, Memon, Ramayah & Cheah, 2025).

Both offline and online methods were used in the data collection process to guarantee inclusivity and reach a range of populations. While offline data was gathered through in-person contacts and the distribution of printed questionnaires in public places and educational institutions, online responses were gathered using email, Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. While collecting data online, priority was given to respondents from different cities other than Karachi to get diversified data.

The target population consisted of participants who were at least 18 years old, with a greater percentage of females than males. This is consistent with the pattern that women are more likely than men to interact with micro-influencers. In order to evaluate how native language use affects follower behavior and answers, the sample included people from a variety of native



linguistic backgrounds, including Urdu, Sindhi, Punjabi, Balochi, Seraiki, Pushto, Kashmiri, and Gujarati.

As shown in Table 1, the survey instrument contained items that had been modified to fit the social media and cultural context of Pakistan from previously validated scales. This guaranteed the questionnaire's suitability, interpretability, and usefulness within the study's framework.

Table 1

Measuring constructs sources

Construct	Reference
Native Language	Arshad & Aslam (2015)
Parasocial Interaction	Ong, Sun & Ito (2022)
Source Credibility	Yoon & Kim (2016)
Followers' Engagement	Weman (2011)
Purchase Intention	(Kumar, 2010)

Data Analysis Techniques

SmartPLS software, which makes measurement and structural model evaluations easier, will be used to analyze the data using structural equation modelling, or SEM. The first step will be to summarise the respondents' demographics using descriptive statistics. The direct and indirect links between the constructs in the suggested model will next be investigated using Partial Least Squares SEM (PLS-SEM). This entails evaluating how parasocial contact mediates correlations between variables and how source credibility modifies them. Because SmartPLS can estimate both formative and reflective constructs, handle complex models with resilience, and work well with lower sample numbers and non-normal data distributions, it is especially well-suited for application (Sarstedt, Ringle & Hair, 2021).

Results

Reliability Analysis

To measure the reliability and validity of the constructs, a several measurements were examined; the values of Cronbach's alpha for all constructs were above the acceptable cutoff of 0.70, indicating good internal consistency (Hussey et al., 2025).

In Table 2, trustworthy measuring scales were shown for native language ($\alpha = 0.850$), parasocial interaction ($\alpha = 0.856$), source credibility ($\alpha = 0.840$), follower engagement ($\alpha = 0.798$), and purchase intention ($\alpha = 0.702$). Additionally, all variables showed strong construct reliability, with composite reliability (ρ_c) values ranging from 0.829 to 0.913, exceeding the minimum standard of 0.70.



Table 2

Reliability and Convergent Validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
F_Engagement	0.798	0.819	0.864	0.614
N_Language	0.850	0.863	0.899	0.692
P_Intention	0.702	0.786	0.829	0.623
P_Interaction	0.856	0.857	0.913	0.777
S_Credibility	0.840	0.854	0.894	0.680

Because the average variance extracted (AVE) values for each concept were likewise higher than the 0.50 threshold, convergent validity was established. The highest AVE (0.777) was found in parasocial interaction, which was followed by follower engagement (0.614), native language (0.692), source credibility (0.680), and purchase intention (0.623).

HTMT Matrix

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). All of the HTMT values were below the recommended cut-off of 0.90, indicating that the constructions were distinct from one another (Heseler et al., 2015). For instance, the HTMT values between parasocial interaction and purchase intention were 0.625 and native language and buy intention were 0.805, both of which were within reasonable bounds.

Table 3

HTMT Matrix

	F_Engagement	N_Language	P_Intention	P_Interaction
F_Engagement				
N_Language	0.633			
P_Intention	0.795	0.805		
P_Interaction	0.699	0.621	0.625	
S_Credibility	0.707	0.735	0.802	0.675
S_Credibility x	0.189	0.106	0.098	0.142
P_Interaction				

Hypotheses Assessment Summary

Structural model analysis revealed that native language had a statistically significant positive effect on follower engagement ($T = 4.585$, $p < 0.001$), purchase intention ($T = 6.333$, $p < 0.001$), and parasocial interaction ($T = 12.11$, $p < 0.001$). Parasocial interaction also significantly predicted follower engagement ($T = 8.142$, $p < 0.001$) and purchase intention ($T = 2.002$, $p = 0.045$), supporting all direct path hypotheses.



Figure 1
Structural Equation Model

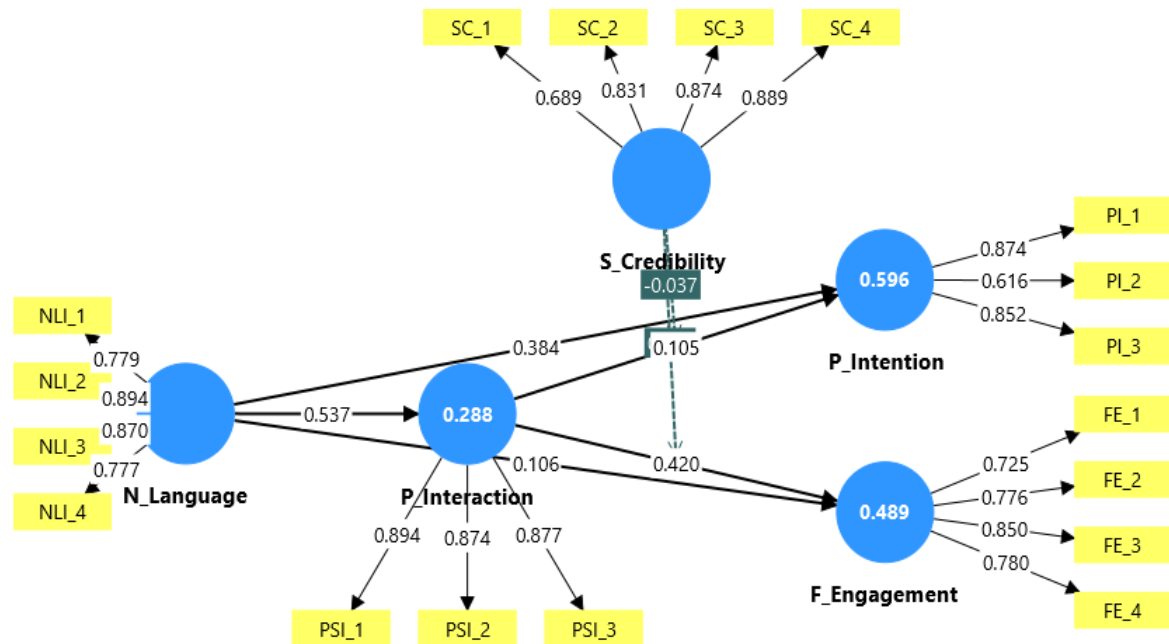


Table 4

Total Effects

	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Direct Effects			
N_Language -> F_Engagement	0.073	4.585	0.000
N_Language -> P_Intention	0.061	6.333	0.000
N_Language -> P_Interaction	0.044	12.11	0.000
P_Interaction -> F_Engagement	0.052	8.142	0.000
P_Interaction -> P_Intention	0.053	2.002	0.045
Mediation Effects			
N_Language -> P_Interaction -> F_Engagement	0.034	6.706	0.000
N_Language -> P_Interaction -> P_Intention	0.03	1.896	0.058
Moderation Effects			
S_Credibility x P_Interaction -> F_Engagement	0.044	2.952	0.003
S_Credibility x P_Interaction -> P_Intention	0.043	0.853	0.394

Mediation analysis further indicated that parasocial interaction significantly mediated the relationship between native language and follower engagement ($T = 6.706$, $p < 0.001$). However, the mediation effect between native language and purchase intention via parasocial interaction was marginally insignificant ($T = 1.896$, $p = 0.058$), suggesting a potential but inconclusive indirect effect.



The connection between parasocial interaction and follower engagement was significantly moderated by source credibility, according to moderation analysis ($T = 2.952$, $p = 0.003$), suggesting that the degree of this association varies depending on how credible the influencer is seen to be. while the association between parasocial interaction and purchase intention was not significantly impacted by source credibility ($T = 0.853$, $p = 0.394$). All things considered, the results lend credence to the theory that using one's native language improves parasocial interaction, which raises engagement and, to a lesser degree, purchase intention. It has been confirmed that source credibility moderates the engagement outcomes, but not purchasing behavior.

Conclusion and Discussion

Discussion

This study looked at the relationship between micro-influencers' usage of their native language and follower engagement and purchase intention, using source trustworthiness as a moderator and parasocial interaction as a mediator. The results, which contextualize the function of language choice in social media marketing within linguistically varied nations like Pakistan, provide new data while generally concurring with previous studies.

Existing literature is supported by the strong and positive correlation between follower engagement and native language. For example, personalisation using local language improves relatability and the audience's emotional connection (Lim et al., 2017). Similarly, Lou and Yuan (2019) and De Veirman et al. (2017) emphasised how engagement metrics like likes, comments, and shares are enhanced by personalized content, such as messages that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. These outcomes are reliable. Our findings that native language considerably improves parasocial interaction ($T = 12.11$, $p < 0.001$) and engagement ($T = 4.585$, $p < 0.001$) are supported by these results.

The significant influence of the native language on purchase intention ($T = 6.333$, $p < 0.001$) further reinforced the persuasive power of culturally directed communication. This is in line with studies by Erkan and Evans (2016), who asserted that credibility and relatability have a significant impact on consumers' purchasing decisions. Although several studies have examined influencer qualities including attractiveness and trustworthiness (e.g., Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017), few have examined language choice as a predictor of purchase intention, making this a novel contribution.

Parasocial contact was identified to be a significant mediator of the relationship between native language and follower engagement. This study is in line with Labrecque's (2014) research, which demonstrated how parasocial ties formed by genuine communication can mimic genuine social interactions and foster loyalty. The lack of statistical significance in the mediation between native language and purchase intention ($p = 0.058$) shows that, despite the fact that language may intensify emotional bonds, these bonds do not always translate into purchasing behavior. Kim and Song (2016) have pointed out this intricacy, finding that emotive attachments alone might not be enough to guarantee customer action unless combined with other persuasive cues like urgency or product quality.



The confirmation of the role of source credibility as moderator on the relationship between parasocial interaction and follower engagement further supports the findings of Ohanian (1990) and Reinikainen et al. (2020), who both emphasised the importance of credibility in bolstering influencer impact. This study found no significant moderating influence on purchase intention, which is in contrast to earlier research (e.g., Sokolova & Kefi, 2020) that indicated believability enhances both engagement and behavioral intentions. This disparity could be the result of sample-specific contextual or cultural factors, such as scepticism towards online promotions or income-related purchase constraints.

Though their direct and indirect effects on purchasing behavior are more complex and may depend on other factors like situational variables, consumer personality, and the quality of the content, the aforementioned results emphasise the significance of native language and parasocial interaction in enhancing digital engagement.

Conclusion

The impact of local language preference in micro-influencer marketing is empirically supported by this study, especially in a multilingual and culturally diverse setting like Pakistan. According to the research, using a follower's mother language greatly increases engagement and fortifies parasocial interactions, or the perceptual and emotional bonds that are forged with influencers. Consequently, follower engagement is positively impacted by these parasocial ties. Additionally, the study demonstrates the persuasive power of native language by confirming that it has a direct impact on purchase intention. Although emotional ties may increase engagement, other elements could be needed to influence real purchasing decisions, as evidenced by the statistically negligible indirect effect of native language on purchase intention through parasocial contact. Furthermore, while source credibility had no obvious effect on the association between parasocial contact and purchase intention, it did emerge as a significant moderator in strengthening the impact of parasocial interaction on engagement.

By presenting native language preference as a culturally grounded but little-studied feature in influencer marketing models, our findings theoretically add to the body of literature. This study focusses on the sociolinguistic alignment between influencers and audiences, which may be especially significant in culturally diverse societies where language is a marker of identity, trust, and belonging. Prior research has mostly concentrated on influencer attributes like trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). The results theoretically lend credence to the social identity hypothesis (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which postulates that language congruence improves participation by fortifying in-group perception and emotional affinity.

Practically speaking, the findings provide marketers, brand managers, and influencer agencies with useful information. Influencer selection in linguistically and culturally diverse markets should take into account more than just follower count and aesthetic appeal. Influencers who are able to speak their target audience's native or regional languages should be given preference by marketers. Customers are more responsive to content when linguistic alignment like this promotes emotional closeness and improves message resonance. Therefore, brands can gain from adjusting influencer relationships and content strategies to linguistic clusters—for



example, promoting Punjabi-language messages in Punjab or Sindhi-language advertising for local audiences in Sindh.

Furthermore, the results imply that although emotional connection (through parasocial interaction) could improve follower engagement, it would not always result in more purchases. Therefore, in order to influence purchasing decisions, marketers should use logical arguments like product benefits, pricing, and credibility cues in addition to emotional bonding techniques. Furthermore, influencer partnerships should be assessed holistically, taking into account both behavioral conversion goals and emotional engagement measures, as source credibility improves engagement but not purchasing outcomes in this model.

The findings support inclusive digital communication tactics in national campaigns, especially in multilingual cultures, at the policy level. Using regional languages could potentially increase the impact of social media-based public health, education, and civic engagement programs, particularly when addressing under-represented or rural groups.

Lastly, the study provides a number of avenues for further investigation. It invites academics to investigate the ways in which language influences consumer behavior in conjunction with other cultural factors like humour, religious affiliation, regional identity, or traditional values. Further understanding of how these factors affect the development and evolution of parasocial interactions and their ultimate impact on consumer behavior may also be possible through longitudinal research or experimental approaches. By expanding this study to more multilingual countries, we could further validate the generalisability of these findings and gain a deeper understanding of influencer marketing in many cultural contexts.

Limitations

Even while this study offers useful information, it should be highlighted that it has certain drawbacks. First, it employed a cross-sectional technique using self-reported survey data, which limits the ability to identify causal relationships between the variables being examined. Second, the study was limited to Karachi, which is not a representative sample of Pakistan's overall population despite its linguistic and cultural diversity.

This limitation affects the findings' generalisability to other cities or regions with different cultural dynamics. A significant barrier to data collection was participant resistance; many respondents were hesitant to share details about their linguistic or cultural identities out of concern for their privacy and mistrust of the intended use of their information. This cynicism may have weakened the analysis's robustness because it led to a smaller-than-expected sample size and limited cooperation. Additionally, native language preference was assessed based on participants' perceptions rather than actual language use in influencer content, which would have overlooked important nuances like dialect, tone, or code-switching.

Last but not least, while the study examined parasocial interaction and the validity of the source, it ignored other possible influencing elements, such as product category, visual appeal, or follower personality traits, that can also have an impact on engagement and purchasing behavior.



Future Research

Future studies should get around these limitations in order to have a more complete grasp of native language effects in influencer marketing. It is recommended that researchers employ experimental or longitudinal methodologies to better illustrate causality and track behavioral changes over time. By expanding the study to other Pakistani cities or provinces, and ideally to other multilingual countries as well, the results' generalisability and the potential for cultural comparisons should be improved. Future studies should use content analysis or experimental stimuli to investigate the effects of actual language use, tone, or dialect in influencer postings rather than relying solely on self-reported assessments.

Incorporating additional moderating and mediating variables, such as cultural values, message framing, brand familiarity, or consumer trust in the platform, may potentially yield new insights into the mechanisms driving follower engagement and purchase inclinations. Comparative research across multiple influencer levels (nano, micro, macro, and celebrity) may also demonstrate the connection between language preference and influencer type.

Finally, promoting wider participation in culturally sensitive research would need building respondent confidence through improved informed consent processes and clear explanations of data utilization.

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