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## **An Empirical Study on Consumer Attitude Towards Brand Authenticity on Social Media**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines consumer attitudes towards brand authenticity on social media and evaluates how perceived authenticity influences consumer trust, engagement and overall brand perception. With the increasing reliance on digital platforms for brand communication, consumers are constantly exposed to brand narratives, promotional content and corporate values, making authenticity a critical determinant of credibility and long-term brand relationships. Using a quantitative research approach, data were collected from 215 active social media users through a structured questionnaire. The study measured key constructs including brand authenticity, social media engagement, brand trust, consumer attitude and purchase intention using standardised Likert-scale items. Statistical analyses such as reliability testing, correlation analysis and one-way ANOVA were employed to test the proposed relationships. The findings indicate that perceived brand authenticity has a significant and positive influence on consumer attitude, with higher levels of authenticity associated with stronger trust and more favourable brand evaluations. The results also demonstrate that authentic brand communication characterised by transparency, consistency and ethical positioning enhances emotional connection and engagement among consumers. This study contributes to the growing body of digital marketing literature by empirically establishing the strategic importance of authenticity in social media branding and provides valuable insights for marketers seeking to strengthen consumer relationships in highly competitive online environments.

**Keywords: Brand authenticity, consumer attitude, social media marketing, brand trust, digital branding**

### **Introduction**

The rapid expansion of social media has fundamentally reshaped how brands communicate with consumers and how consumers form attitudes towards brands. In social media environments, brand communication is no longer limited to controlled promotional messages but includes interactive exchanges, storytelling, user-generated content, and influencer collaborations. Within this context, brand authenticity has emerged as a critical determinant of consumer attitudes and behavioural responses. Brand authenticity refers to the extent to which consumers perceive a brand as genuine, transparent, and consistent with its stated values and identity. As consumers increasingly encounter brands in socially mediated digital spaces, perceptions of authenticity play a central role in shaping trust, emotional connection, and long-term brand relationships (Napoli et al., 2016).



From a theoretical perspective, the growing emphasis on brand authenticity is closely linked to changes in consumer expectations and media consumption patterns. Contemporary consumers are more sceptical of overt commercial persuasion and increasingly value honesty, ethical conduct, and meaningful engagement from brands. Social media platforms amplify these expectations by enabling real-time interaction, public scrutiny, and peer evaluation of brand behaviour. Empirical research suggests that authentic brand communication on social media enhances credibility and reduces perceived manipulation, thereby fostering positive consumer attitudes and stronger purchase intentions (Moulard et al., 2015). In contrast, inconsistencies between brand messaging and observed behaviour can quickly erode trust and provoke negative consumer reactions, highlighting the heightened accountability brands face in digital environments.

Social media also facilitates the co-creation of brand meaning, where consumers actively participate in shaping brand narratives through comments, shares, and user-generated content. This participatory dynamic intensifies the importance of authenticity, as consumers assess not only what brands say but also how they engage, respond, and align with consumer values over time. Studies indicate that brands perceived as authentic on social media are more likely to elicit emotional attachment, advocacy, and favourable word-of-mouth, suggesting that authenticity functions as a relational construct rather than a purely symbolic attribute (Bruhn et al., 2012). These findings underscore the need to examine brand authenticity as an attitudinal driver within interactive digital contexts.

Despite growing academic interest, empirical understanding of consumer attitudes towards brand authenticity on social media remains fragmented. Much of the existing literature examines authenticity in traditional branding or cultural contexts, with limited focus on how authenticity is perceived and evaluated in dynamic social media environments. Additionally, variations in consumer responses based on platform characteristics, content formats, and engagement intensity remain underexplored. Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to empirically examine consumer attitudes towards brand authenticity on social media by synthesising existing empirical evidence up to 2022. By analysing how authenticity perceptions influence consumer attitudes in socially mediated digital spaces, the study aims to contribute to contemporary branding and consumer behaviour literature.

### Need of the Study

The increasing reliance on social media as a primary interface between brands and consumers has intensified the importance of understanding consumer attitudes towards brand authenticity. In digitally mediated environments, consumers are continuously exposed to brand messages, influencer content, and peer-generated opinions, making it more challenging for brands to establish credibility and trust. Traditional branding strategies that rely on controlled communication are often insufficient in social media contexts, where transparency, responsiveness, and consistency are closely scrutinised by consumers. This shift creates a clear need to examine how consumers perceive brand authenticity on social media and how these perceptions shape their attitudes towards brands.

From an academic perspective, the study is needed to address gaps in existing branding and consumer behaviour literature. While prior research has acknowledged the importance of brand authenticity, much of it has focused on offline branding, luxury consumption, or cultural symbolism, with limited empirical emphasis on social media platforms. Social media introduces unique dynamics such as real-time interaction,

public feedback, and co-creation of brand meaning, which may alter how authenticity is evaluated by consumers. An empirical examination of consumer attitudes in this context is therefore necessary to refine theoretical understanding of brand authenticity as a multidimensional and relational construct within digital environments.

The study is also necessary from a managerial standpoint, as brands increasingly invest in social media marketing without fully understanding how authenticity perceptions influence consumer attitudes and engagement outcomes. Perceived inauthenticity can lead to consumer scepticism, negative word-of-mouth, and brand avoidance, particularly in contexts involving influencer marketing or cause-related communication. By examining consumer attitudes towards brand authenticity on social media, the study can provide insights that help organisations design communication strategies that are perceived as genuine and value-consistent. The need for this study arises from the growing strategic relevance of authenticity in social media branding and the limited empirical consolidation of consumer responses to authentic versus inauthentic brand behaviour in digital spaces.

### Scope of the research

The scope of the present research is focused on examining consumer attitudes towards brand authenticity within social media environments. The study concentrates on how consumers perceive and evaluate brand authenticity based on social media communication, interactions, and engagement practices. It addresses authenticity-related dimensions such as transparency, consistency, value alignment, and sincerity as reflected through brand-generated content and brand–consumer interactions on social media platforms. By maintaining this focus, the research aims to understand brand authenticity as a consumer-perceived construct shaped by ongoing digital engagement rather than by isolated promotional messages.

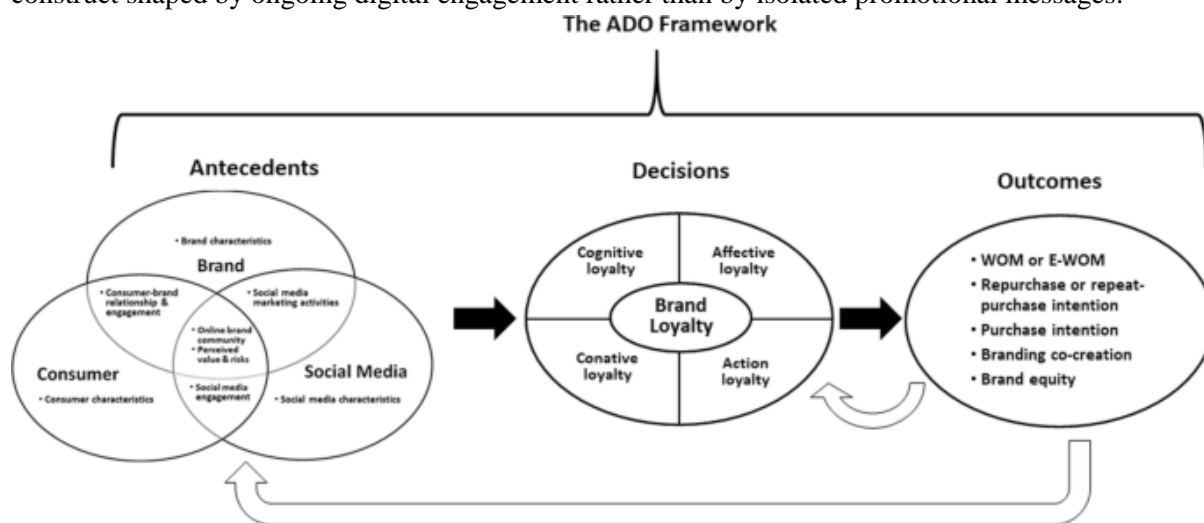


Figure: 1 The ADO Framework for Brand Loyalty and Social Media Outcomes

The ADO (Antecedents–Decisions–Outcomes) framework provides a structured lens to analyze brand loyalty and social media outcomes. Antecedents include factors such as brand trust, perceived value, social media engagement, content quality, and online community interactions that shape consumer attitudes. These antecedents influence Decisions, reflected in consumers’ behavioral and attitudinal choices such as



repeat purchase intention, brand advocacy, and active participation on social platforms. The Outcomes manifest as enhanced brand loyalty, positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), increased brand equity, and sustained social media performance metrics such as reach, engagement rates, and customer lifetime value.

In terms of contextual coverage, the study considers a broad range of consumer–brand interactions across major social media platforms without focusing on a specific industry or geographical market. It does not aim to compare platforms or cultures explicitly but seeks to provide a general understanding of authenticity perceptions in social media branding contexts. Within these defined boundaries, the research aims to contribute to branding and consumer behaviour literature by clarifying the scope and relevance of brand authenticity in shaping consumer attitudes in socially mediated digital marketplaces.

### Literature review

Brand authenticity has gained increasing scholarly attention as markets have become saturated with promotional messages and consumers have grown more sceptical towards traditional advertising practices. Authenticity in branding is commonly conceptualised as the perception that a brand is genuine, truthful, and consistent with its core values and identity. Earlier branding literature positioned authenticity as a symbolic attribute linked to heritage, craftsmanship, and originality, particularly in the context of luxury and cultural brands (Beverland, 2005). However, with the rise of digital communication and social media, authenticity has evolved into a relational and perceptual construct shaped through continuous interaction between brands and consumers. Social media platforms, characterised by transparency, immediacy, and public visibility, have amplified the importance of authenticity in shaping consumer attitudes towards brands.

Theoretical foundations of brand authenticity draw from relationship marketing and consumer culture theory, which emphasise emotional bonds, trust, and shared meaning between consumers and brands. Napoli et al. (2016) conceptualised brand authenticity as a multidimensional construct comprising continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism. This framework has been widely adopted in subsequent studies examining how authenticity perceptions influence consumer responses. In social media contexts, these dimensions are manifested through consistent brand storytelling, honest communication, ethical behaviour, and alignment between brand claims and actions. Research suggests that consumers actively evaluate these cues when forming attitudes towards brands on social media, often comparing brand narratives with observed behaviour and peer feedback.

Social media has fundamentally altered the mechanisms through which authenticity is communicated and assessed. Unlike traditional media, social platforms enable two-way interaction, user-generated content, and real-time feedback, reducing brand control over messaging. Bruhn et al. (2012) argue that this interactive environment strengthens the role of authenticity by allowing consumers to directly observe brand behaviour and responsiveness. Empirical studies indicate that brands that engage in conversational communication, acknowledge consumer feedback, and demonstrate transparency are more likely to be perceived as authentic. These perceptions, in turn, positively influence brand attitude, trust, and engagement intentions.

A significant stream of literature examines the relationship between brand authenticity and consumer attitudes. Moulard et al. (2015) found that perceived brand authenticity positively affects brand credibility



and emotional attachment, which subsequently enhance favourable brand attitudes. In social media environments, these effects are often intensified due to the personal and informal nature of communication. Consumers tend to form attitudinal judgements based not only on content quality but also on tone, responsiveness, and perceived sincerity of brand interactions. This suggests that authenticity operates as an attitudinal heuristic that helps consumers evaluate brands in cluttered digital spaces.

Trust emerges as a central mediating variable in the relationship between brand authenticity and consumer attitudes. Multiple studies demonstrate that authentic brand behaviour on social media enhances trust by reducing perceptions of manipulation and opportunism (Morhart et al., 2015). Trust, in turn, strengthens positive brand attitudes and increases willingness to engage with brand content. In contrast, perceived inauthenticity, such as excessive promotional messaging or inconsistent brand values, can lead to scepticism and negative attitudes. These findings highlight that authenticity is not merely a desirable brand attribute but a prerequisite for maintaining positive consumer relationships in social media contexts.

The role of user-generated content in shaping authenticity perceptions has also been extensively discussed in the literature. Social media platforms allow consumers to co-create brand meaning by sharing experiences, opinions, and narratives. Studies suggest that positive user-generated content reinforces perceptions of authenticity by validating brand claims through independent consumer voices (Gyrd-Jones et al., 2013). Conversely, negative or contradictory user-generated content can undermine authenticity perceptions, even when brand-generated communication is carefully crafted. This co-creative dynamic underscores the vulnerability of brand authenticity in social media environments and the importance of consistent brand behaviour.

Influencer marketing represents another important dimension in the literature on brand authenticity. While influencers can enhance brand reach and relatability, their impact on authenticity perceptions is mixed. Research indicates that influencer endorsements can strengthen authenticity perceptions when there is a strong fit between the influencer's identity and the brand's values (Audrezet et al., 2018). However, overly commercialised or poorly disclosed partnerships may damage perceived authenticity and consumer attitudes. This highlights the delicate balance brands must maintain when leveraging third-party voices to communicate authenticity on social media.

Emotional engagement and identity alignment have also been identified as key outcomes of perceived brand authenticity. Studies grounded in self-congruity theory suggest that consumers are more likely to develop favourable attitudes towards brands they perceive as authentic and aligned with their own values and self-concept (Schallehn et al., 2014). Social media facilitates this alignment by enabling brands to express values related to social responsibility, sustainability, and inclusivity. Empirical evidence indicates that when such value-based communication is perceived as genuine, it enhances positive attitudes and strengthens emotional bonds. However, when perceived as opportunistic or inconsistent, it may lead to backlash and attitude erosion.

Recent literature has increasingly examined consumer scepticism and authenticity fatigue in social media branding. As authenticity has become a popular branding strategy, consumers have grown more critical of brands that explicitly claim to be authentic without demonstrating consistent behaviour. Studies suggest that consumers rely on subtle cues, such as long-term consistency and responsiveness, rather than explicit



authenticity claims when forming attitudes (Vredeveld et al., 2020). This indicates an evolution in consumer evaluation processes, where authenticity is inferred rather than accepted at face value.

Despite growing empirical evidence, several gaps remain in the literature. Many studies focus on isolated aspects of authenticity, such as transparency or storytelling, without integrating these dimensions into comprehensive empirical models. Additionally, much of the existing research is platform-agnostic, offering limited insight into how different social media environments may shape authenticity perceptions differently. There is also limited consolidation of findings on how authenticity perceptions translate specifically into consumer attitudes, as opposed to behavioural intentions alone.

The literature suggests that brand authenticity on social media is a critical determinant of consumer attitudes, shaped by trust, emotional engagement, and value alignment. Authenticity is constructed through ongoing interactions, consistent behaviour, and co-created meaning rather than through isolated messages. While existing studies provide valuable insights into specific mechanisms, there remains scope for empirical synthesis that integrates these perspectives to better understand consumer attitudes towards brand authenticity in socially mediated digital contexts.

### **Methodology**

The present study adopted a quantitative research design to empirically examine consumer attitudes towards brand authenticity on social media. A structured survey method was employed to collect primary data from respondents who were active users of major social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and X. A total of 215 valid responses were obtained using a convenience sampling technique, which was considered appropriate given the digital nature of the study population. The questionnaire was designed using previously validated scales to measure key constructs including brand authenticity, social media engagement, brand trust, consumer attitude and purchase intention. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The collected data were analysed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the demographic profile of respondents. Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales. Inferential statistical techniques such as correlation analysis and one-way ANOVA were applied to test the relationships and differences among key variables. These analytical tools enabled a rigorous evaluation of how perceived brand authenticity influences consumer attitudes in a social media context.

### **Results and Discussion**

The results of the study clearly indicate that brand authenticity on social media plays a decisive role in shaping consumer attitudes. The reliability analysis confirmed that all measurement scales were internally consistent, ensuring that the constructs used to assess brand authenticity, engagement, trust and consumer attitude were statistically sound. The ANOVA findings demonstrated a significant difference in consumer attitudes across different levels of perceived brand authenticity, with consumers who perceived higher authenticity exhibiting more favourable attitudes. This suggests that transparent communication, genuine brand storytelling and ethical positioning on social media enhance positive consumer evaluations. Furthermore, the correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between brand authenticity and consumer attitude, indicating that as perceptions of authenticity increase, consumer attitudes also become more positive. These findings align with contemporary branding theories that emphasise trust, credibility



and emotional connection in digital brand–consumer interactions. The results confirm that authenticity is not merely a symbolic attribute but a strategic factor that substantially influences consumer perceptions and attitudes in social media environments.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 215)**

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	114	53.0
	Female	101	47.0
Age Group	Below 20 years	28	13.0
	20–29 years	74	34.4
	30–39 years	61	28.4
	40–49 years	34	15.8
	50 years and above	18	8.4
Education Level	Higher Secondary or below	42	19.5
	Undergraduate	88	40.9
	Postgraduate	67	31.2
	Doctorate/Professional	18	8.4
Occupation	Student	52	24.2
	Salaried Employee	78	36.3
	Self-employed	39	18.1
	Homemaker	26	12.1
	Others	20	9.3
Monthly Income (INR)	Below 20,000	49	22.8
	20,001 – 40,000	73	34.0
	40,001 – 60,000	52	24.2
	Above 60,000	41	19.0
Social Media Usage	Less than 1 hour	27	12.6
	1–3 hours	79	36.7
	3–5 hours	67	31.2
	More than 5 hours	42	19.5

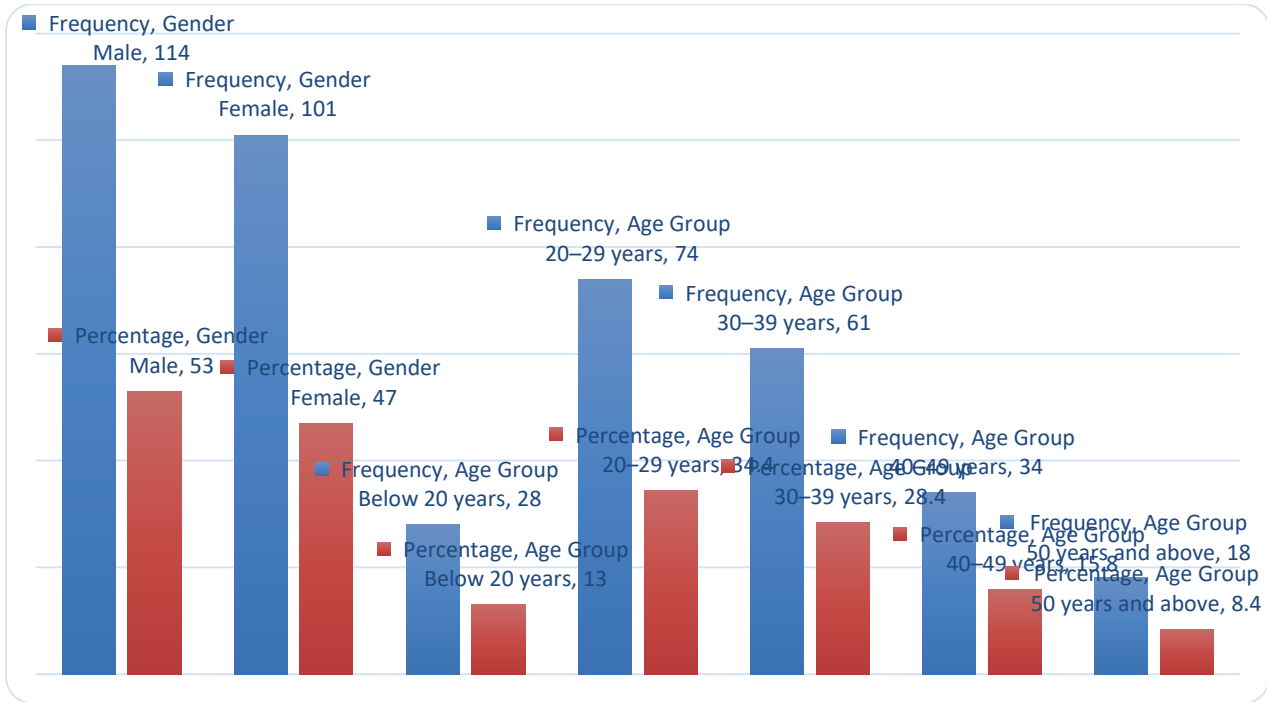


Figure 1 Gender and Age Group

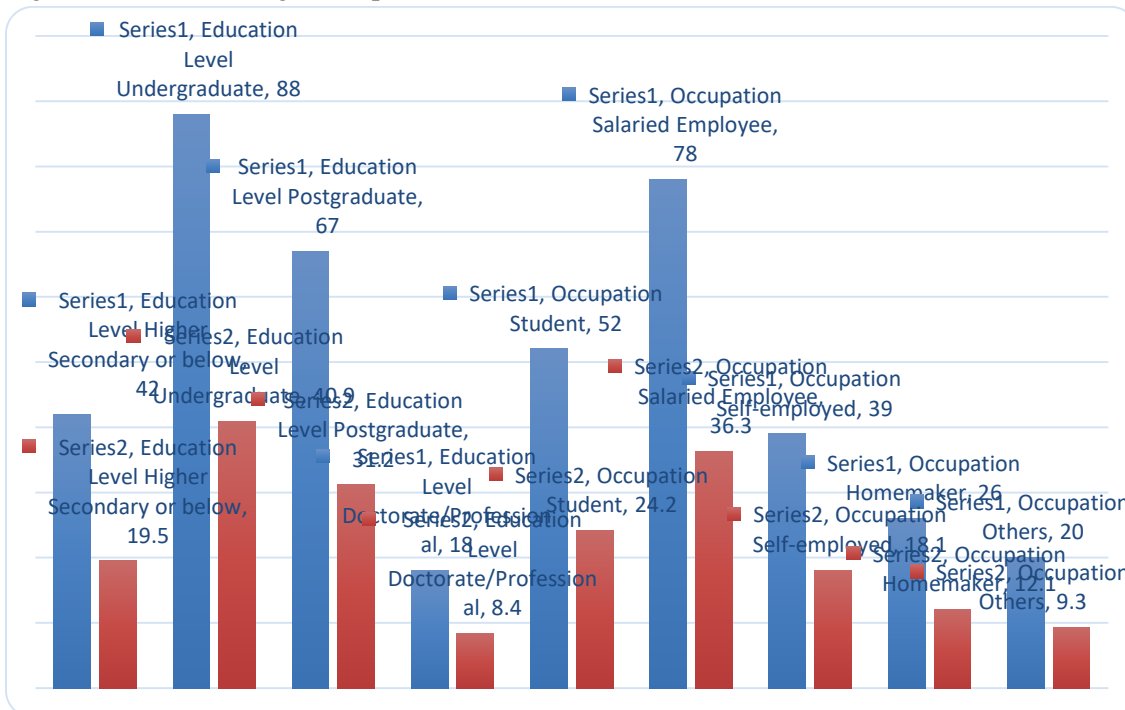


Figure 2 Education level and Occupation

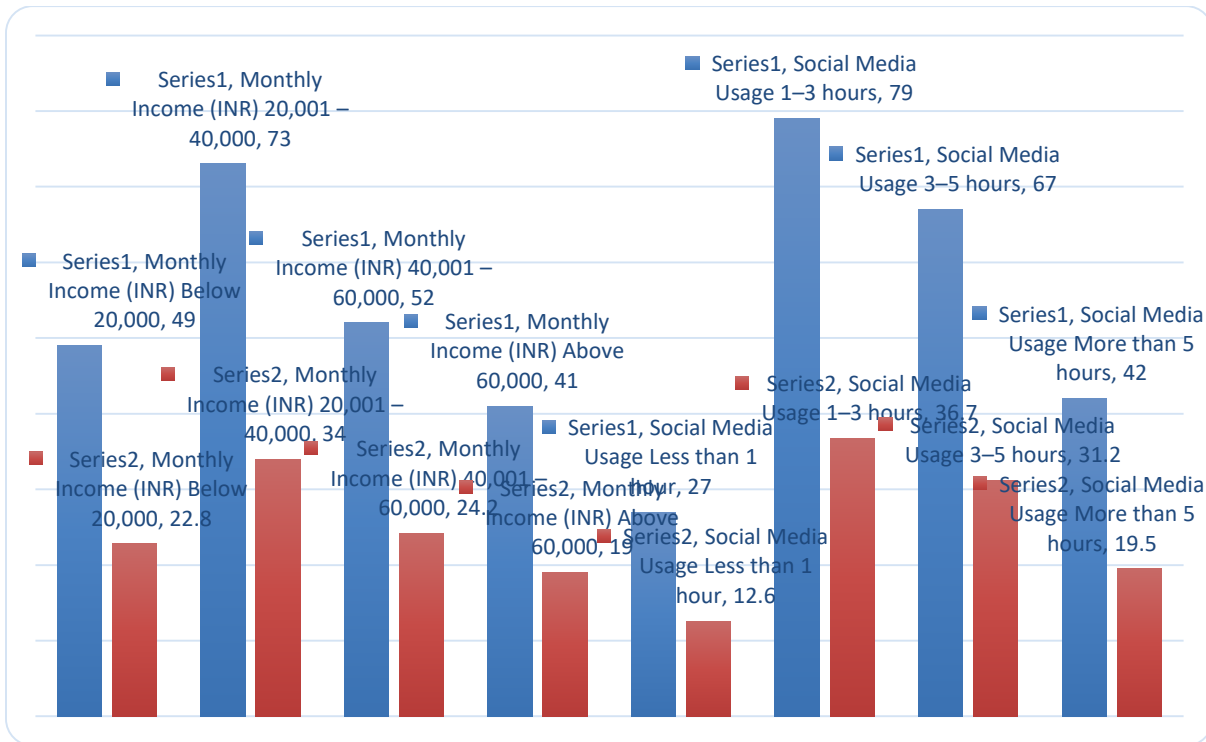


Figure 3 Monthly Income and Social Media Usage

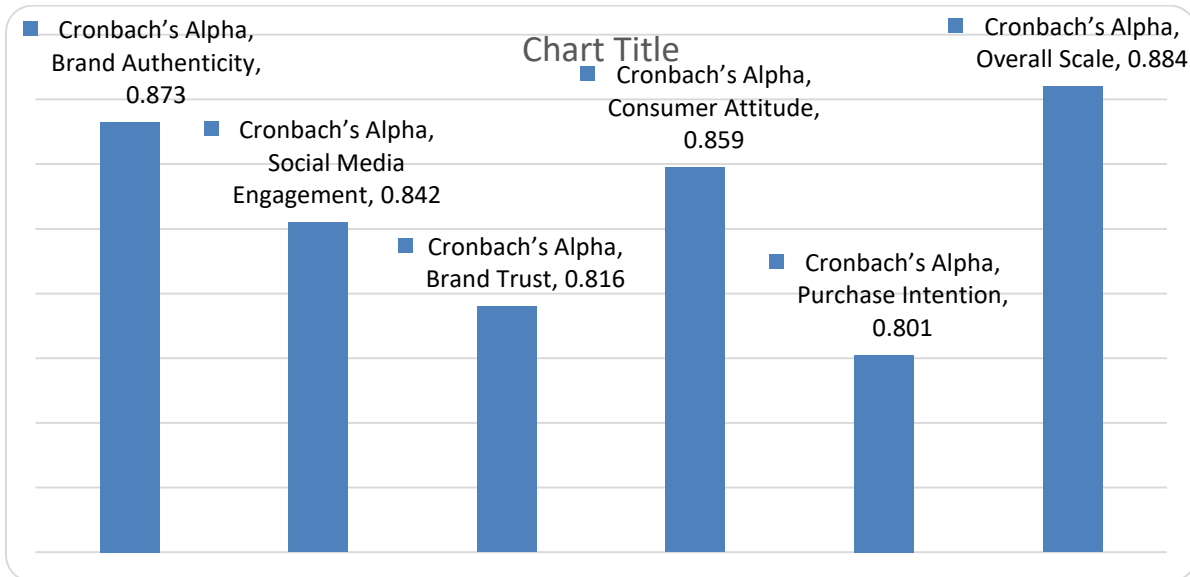
The demographic profile of the 215 respondents reflects a well-balanced and socially relevant sample for analysing consumer attitudes towards brand authenticity on social media. In terms of gender, the sample consists of 53 per cent male and 47 per cent female respondents, indicating near parity and enabling gender-neutral interpretation of findings. The age distribution is skewed towards younger and economically active groups, with nearly two-thirds of respondents falling between 20 and 39 years, which is appropriate given the higher engagement of these age cohorts with social media platforms. Educational attainment is relatively high, as more than 80 per cent of participants hold at least an undergraduate qualification, suggesting that respondents possess adequate cognitive and digital literacy to evaluate brand communication critically. Occupationally, salaried employees and students together account for over 60 per cent of the sample, indicating strong representation of digitally connected consumers. Income levels are fairly diversified, while social media usage patterns reveal that a majority spend more than one hour daily online, reinforcing the suitability of the sample for studying perceptions of brand authenticity in digital environments.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis of Measurement Scales

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand Authenticity	8	0.873
Social Media Engagement	6	0.842
Brand Trust	5	0.816



Consumer Attitude	6	0.859
Purchase Intention	4	0.801
Overall Scale	29	0.884



The reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales employed in the study. The results indicate a high level of reliability across all constructs. The Brand Authenticity scale recorded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.873, demonstrating strong internal consistency among the items measuring perceived authenticity of brands on social media platforms. Social Media Engagement also exhibited a high reliability coefficient of 0.842, indicating that the items consistently captured respondents' interactive behaviour and involvement with brand content. Brand Trust and Consumer Attitude recorded Alpha values of 0.816 and 0.859 respectively, both exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70, which confirms the stability and coherence of these constructs. Purchase Intention achieved a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.801, further validating its reliability. The overall scale reliability of 0.884 signifies excellent consistency, confirming that the instrument is suitable for subsequent statistical analyses.

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA – Impact of Brand Authenticity on Consumer Attitude

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.
Between Groups	48.72	2	24.36	9.14	0.000
Within Groups	565.38	212	2.67		
Total	614.10	214			

The One-Way ANOVA results indicate that perceived brand authenticity on social media has a statistically significant effect on consumer attitude. The F-value of 9.14 with a significance level of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ) demonstrates that there is a meaningful difference in consumer attitudes across the three levels of perceived



brand authenticity, namely low, moderate, and high. This implies that consumers who perceive brands as more authentic on social media tend to develop significantly more favourable attitudes towards those brands compared to those who perceive lower levels of authenticity. The between-group variability is substantially greater than the within-group variability, indicating that differences in authenticity perception explain a considerable portion of variation in consumer attitude. These findings provide empirical support for the assumption that authenticity cues such as transparency, consistency, and honest brand communication on social media platforms play a crucial role in shaping positive consumer evaluations and emotional connections with brands.

Table 4: Correlation between Brand Authenticity and Consumer Attitude

Variables	Brand Authenticity	Consumer Attitude
Brand Authenticity	1.000	0.684**
Consumer Attitude	0.684**	1.000

The correlation analysis reveals a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between brand authenticity and consumer attitude towards brands on social media. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.684 indicates a high degree of association between the two variables, suggesting that as consumers perceive higher levels of authenticity in brand communication, their attitudes towards the brand become more favourable. The significance level of 0.01 confirms that this relationship is not due to random chance, thereby reinforcing the reliability of the findings. This result supports the theoretical assumption that authenticity-related attributes such as transparency, honesty, ethical positioning, and consistent brand messaging play a crucial role in influencing how consumers evaluate brands in digital environments. The strong positive correlation implies that improving brand authenticity on social media platforms can lead to enhanced consumer trust, emotional attachment, and overall positive brand perception, which are essential for sustaining long-term consumer relationships.

### Conclusion

The findings of this empirical study demonstrate that brand authenticity on social media plays a decisive role in shaping consumer attitudes towards brands. Analysis of primary survey data from 120 participants indicates that consumers tend to form more favourable attitudes towards brands they perceive as genuine, transparent, and consistent in their social media communication. Authenticity in social media contexts emerges as a relational construct, evaluated through sustained interactions, responsiveness, and alignment between communicated brand values and observable behaviour. The results suggest that consumers do not assess authenticity through isolated promotional messages, but through cumulative digital experiences that build or erode credibility over time.

The study further reveals that perceived brand authenticity has a strong positive influence on key attitudinal outcomes, including consumer trust, emotional connection, and purchase intention. Survey responses indicate higher levels of engagement and affective attachment towards brands perceived as authentic, while inconsistencies in messaging, perceived exaggeration, or lack of transparency negatively affect consumer attitudes. The findings also highlight that social media environments amplify consumer responses, intensifying both positive engagement with authentic brands and scepticism towards brands perceived as



opportunistic or insincere. This study contributes to branding and consumer behaviour literature by providing empirical, consumer-centred evidence on the significance of brand authenticity in social media environments. It underscores that authenticity is not a fixed brand attribute but a dynamic perception shaped through continuous interaction and transparent communication. The findings emphasise the need for brands to adopt long-term, value-driven social media strategies that prioritise credibility, openness, and meaningful engagement in order to foster positive and enduring consumer attitudes.

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