

Consumer Perceptions of CGI Influencers in Conservative Markets

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Abstract

Computer-generated images (CGI) influencers represent a new force in digital marketing, yet their adoption in conservative markets remains under-researched. This study examines the influence of influencer personalisation on building consumer attachment, the impact of attachment on purchase intention, and the mediating role of brand credibility. We sampled 150-200 social media users who were exposed to CGI influencers in conservative societies, i.e., in the Middle East and South Asia. Findings indicate that personalisation has a significant positive impact on attachment, and this effect is, in turn, mediated by personalisation and purchase intention. In addition, brand credibility amplifies this mediated effect, underscoring the importance of trust in a culturally sensitive context. The results suggest the use of CGI-driven campaigns, personalised with cultural authenticity, to influence consumer behaviour in conservative markets.

Keywords: Computer-generated Images; Purchase Intention, Brand Credibility, Social Media Marketing.

Introduction

Consumer behaviour in conservative markets considers culture, religious teachings, and collective social norms to incorporate ideas of authenticity, modesty, and interaction grounded in trustworthiness (Khan et al., 2024; Shi, 2023). For example, in areas like the Middle East and South Asia, audiences are more likely to respond well to a brand message that aligns with family values, a sense of tradition, and communal ideologies. Marketing activities that appear unnatural or unrelated to these norms can elicit distrust, thereby reducing their effectiveness (Wilkie et al., 2022). Suspicion of the credibility of unproven new digital trends, such as CGI influencers, may increase in such situations as consumers give greater consideration to them in their consumption choices (Collini et al., 2022).

Previous research carried out in liberal markets and markets driven by creativity and innovation, mainly in North America and Western Europe, has shown that CGI influencers are effective in brand engagement and establishing parasocial relationships as well as exceeding human influencers in their novelty and consistency (e.g., Sobande, 2021; Belanche et al., 2024; Bohnfeld

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et al., 2023). However, these findings are not readily applicable in the case of conservative markets where consumers would react to the use of digital avatars with suspicion due to inauthenticity, the lack of cultural considerations, or the fear of being duped (Lou et al., 2022; Favela, 2021; Wibawa et al., 2022). The CGI campaigns can address threats such as declining trust, manipulation of consumer attention, and perceptions of manipulative advertising. Consequently, what is successful in a liberal context cannot be applied in a conservative market, so it is essential to research the means and methods of personalisation and brand credibility to address the above issues and establish a consumer bond (Sijabat et al., 2022).

The proposed study is expected to further knowledge of how to effectively engage consumers in conservative markets by introducing CGI influencers and focusing on underlying psychological processes (Sands et al., 2022). Specifically, it aims to examine whether and how personalisation can engender attachment to CGI influencers, and whether attachment, in turn, relates to purchase intention, as well as whether the relationship between attachment and purchase intention is mediated by brand credibility (Szakal et al., 2024). In doing so, the study provides an explanation not only of the functional essence of CGI influencers in culturally oriented environments but also of theoretical and practical issues of trust and authenticity, as well as cultural orientation in the sphere of digital marketing. The following objectives and research questions are investigated by this study (Mrad et al., 2022).

Research Objectives

1. To analyse the impact of CGI influencers' personalisation on consumer attachment to influencers.
2. To investigate the effect of consumers' attachment to CGI influencers' personalisation on their purchase intention.
3. To examine the mediating role of CGI influencer attachment between personalisation and purchase intention.
4. To evaluate the moderating effect of brand credibility on the relationship between CGI influencer attachment and purchase intention.

Research Questions

1. How does personalisation influence consumer attachment to CGI influencers?
2. What is the impact of influencer attachment on consumer purchase intention?
3. Does influencer attachment mediate the relationship between personalisation and purchase intention?
4. Does brand credibility moderate the link between influencer attachment and purchase intention?

Significance of the Study

This study can be summarised as the influence of CGI on conservative markets, where culture and trust are central phenomena. It offers a finer-grained perspective on consumer psychology, highlighting individualisation as a motivation for influencer attachment and purchase intention, which is mediated by brand credibility (Taheran, 2023). The results offer a helpful guideline for marketers and agencies on how to conduct culturally appropriate, trustworthy campaigns using CGI (Albertus et al., 2024; Gerlich, 2023). It is hypothetically based on the Technology Acceptance Model, Source Credibility Theory, and Parasocial Interaction Theory in the framework of digital marketing (Schorr, 2023; Gavrilova & Shuleska, 2022; Liebers & Schramm, 2019).

Nevertheless, the study has weaknesses. Its spatial focus on definite conservative markets and its cross-sectional character, which included the evaluation of the short-term purpose of purchasing, could limit the generalizability and applicability of the outcomes in the long run (Zhang, 2025; Volles et al., 2024). Moreover, it does not counterpoint CGI against human influencers, nor does it delve into the technical generation of CGI avatars, but only into consumer perceptions (Allal-Chérif et al., 2024; Lou et al., 2022). These areas could be dealt with in future studies.

Literature Review

This section reviews literature on digital influencer marketing (Gomes et al., 2022), CGI personalisation, consumer attachment, purchase intention, and brand credibility. It synthesises theory and evidence to map how CGI influencers operate amid cultural sensitivities, highlighting a key gap in their acceptance within conservative markets. This critical review establishes the foundation for testing hypotheses on the relationships between personalisation, attachment, brand credibility, and purchase intention (Khan et al., 2024; Zhang, 2025; Coutinho et al., 2023).

Theoretical Frameworks

This section conducts a literature review on digital influencer marketing, CGI personalisation, consumer attachment, purchase intention, and brand credibility. It brings together theory and evidence to trace how the work of CGI influencers will operate in contexts of cultural sensitivity, thereby addressing a crucial gap in their acceptance in conservative markets. The present critical review will serve as the basis for testing hypotheses regarding the relationships between the elements of personalisation and attachment and those of brand credibility and purchase intention (Khan et al., 2024; Zhang, 2025; Coutinho et al., 2023).

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Theoretically, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) will provide an essential foundation for this study, enabling the understanding of consumer behaviour and their intention to adopt and engage with CGI influencers. The TAM assumes (Schorr, 2023) that the primary determinants of user acceptance of any new technology are two primary constructs, namely:

Perceived usefulness (PU): This is the extent to which an individual is convinced that the application of a specific system would improve their performance at work, or rather be of value in this case (Abate et al., 2025). In the case of CGI influencers, perceived usefulness is linked to how much consumers feel that these virtual entities will provide the information that could be relevant and useful to them, including accurate product suggestions, useful reviews, or novel entertainments that can meaningfully contribute to their social media life (Lou & Yuan, 2018; Allal-Chérif et al., 2024). This utility may also be seen in conservative markets through the potential of the influencer to appeal to local culture and offer culturally compatible content without the risks of human influencers (Khan et al., 2024; Sobande, 2021).

Perceived ease of use (PEU): It is the extent to which an individual convinces themselves that they would not put in any effort to utilise a given system. In the case of CGI influencers, perceived ease of use refers to the extent to which consumers find it easy to communicate with, understand, and identify with digital personas (Lou et al., 2022; Böhdnel et al., 2023). This involves the simplicity of their messages, the ease of their content structures, and the fluidity of the engagement activities (e.g., commenting, liking, and sharing). If consumers cannot relate to CGI influencers or find them hard to understand, acceptance and, consequently, influence will be reduced. PEU can also concern the ease with which cultural sensitivities are avoided and addressed, and how natural the

interactions between the CGI influencer and others seem in conservative markets (Favela, 2021; Shi, 2023).

The acceptance of CGI influencers by consumers, therefore, depends on the perceived usefulness and ease of interaction with them, particularly when the cultural and ethical issues, which may be applicable in the conservative markets, are included in the perceived usefulness and credibility of CGI influencers (Favela, 2021; Khan et al., 2024; Yan et al., 2024).

Source Credibility Theory

When discussing the evaluation process by consumers of the trustworthiness and competency of influencers, the source credibility theory is used. According to this theory, whether a message is persuasive depends on the credibility of the person delivering it (Gavrilova & Shuleska, 2022). Whereas the credibility of traditional human influencers is usually based on their ability to appear authentic, their real-life experiences, and their relatability with human weaknesses (Bi & Zhang, 2022; Kim & Kim, 2022), CGI influencers lack these qualities. Their affiliation with well-known brands, the uniformity and quality of the content, advanced personalisation tactics, and their general engagement strategy are among the significant factors that help them achieve it (Allal-Chérif et al., 2024; Babatunde et al., 2024; Baghel, 2023). This is especially essential, as it provides a solid foundation for explaining the moderating effect of brand credibility, which is key to generating greater trust in CGI influencer partnerships by brands (Khan, 2023; Rahayu et al., 2024; Volles et al., 2024).

Parasocial Interaction Theory

The Parasocial Interaction Theory (Liebers & Schramm, 2019) implies that consumers can develop one-sided psychological relationships with media personas, including influencers. These parasocial interactions include intimacy, friendship, and identification, although there is no reciprocity. The human influence paradigm has long facilitated parasocial relationships through the efforts of human influencers, driven by the relatability involved (Belanche et al., 2024; Bi & Zhang, 2022). It is more complicated with CGI influencers, however. Being digital figures with no real-life experience, CGI influencers have to rely on even more sophisticated personalisation methods and highly captivating content to create the same emotional attachment and connection with their followers (Allal-Chérif et al., 2024; Böhnndel et al., 2023; Kim & Park, 2023). This theory helps explain how personalisation can lead to attachment to an influencer, even though the influencer is a non-human object (Yan et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2024).

Personalisation of CGI Influencers

CGI influencers employ personalisation, content and interaction customisation, and aesthetics to align with personal values and cultural backgrounds (Volles et al., 2024). It incorporates AI to make conversations more dynamic and a visual design that aligns with local understandings of beauty and values (Balamurugan, 2024; Kumar, 2023). In conservative markets, such culturally sensitive personalisation is essential for establishing an atmosphere of trust and bridging the authenticity gap between the digital self and the audience (Khan et al., 2024; Favela, 2021). It creates a sense of closeness, making the influencer seem more authentic and approachable. Subsequently, the hypothesis is that the more personalised a person is, the more attached the consumer will become toward the CGI influencer (H1) (Allal-Chérif et al., 2024).

It is an emotional bond that shapes this influencer's impact on a consumer's attitude towards promoted brands and purchase intentions (Yan et al., 2024). Even though CGI influencers lack

human flaws, they can still experience a high level of attachment due to their better personalisation, regular, consistent content, and interactive features (Yu et al., 2024). This personal attachment is significant, and it is predicted to directly elevate a consumer's (H2) intention to purchase a product. The greater the attachment, the more consumers tend to believe the influencer's recommendations and implement them (Coutinho et al., 2023).

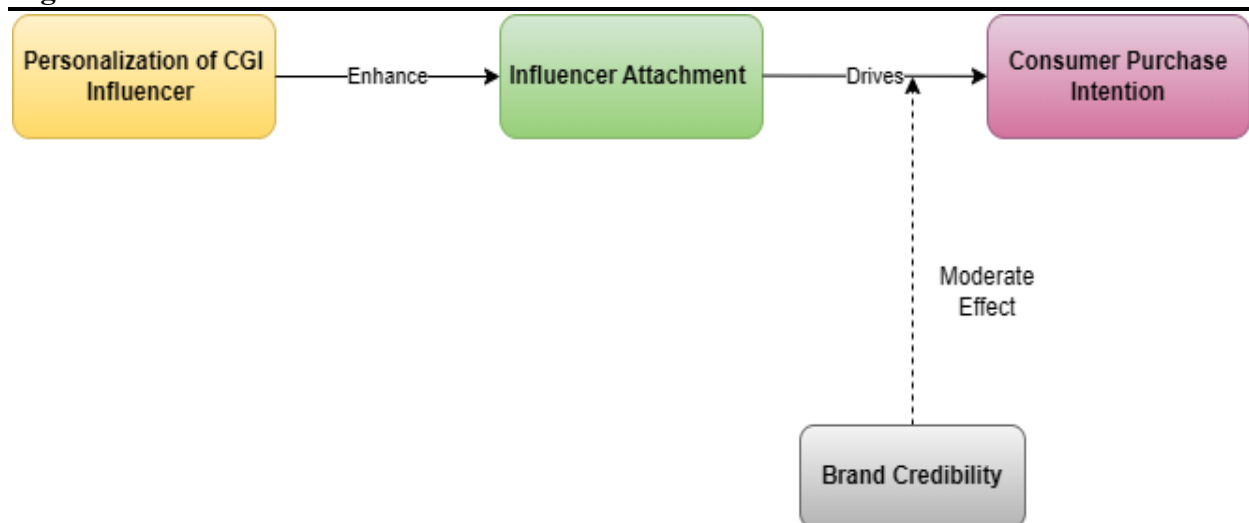
Additionally, attachment has an important mediating role. It is theorised that the favourable impact of personalisation on purchase intention is not merely direct but also indirect, through the development of an emotional bond it cultivates (H3) (Rahayu et al., 2024). Attachment is created through personalisation, which subsequently increases the purchasing intent.

Lastly, brand credibility is a moderator. Given the perceived reliability and expertise of a brand, it is particularly essential in conservative markets where distrust of new promotional methods, such as CGI influencers, is prevalent (Khan, 2023; Shi, 2023). The development of a credible brand transfers its legitimacy to the CGI influencer, overcoming the fears of inauthenticity. It is then expected that the relationship between influencer attachment and purchase intention is strengthened by brand credibility (H4); attachment to the buying intent is, instead, considerably improved when the brand endorsed is considered highly credible (Rahayu et al., 2024).

Conceptual Framework

The hypothesised relationships between the study key variables, namely Personalisation, Influencer Attachment, Brand Credibility and Purchase Intention, are depicted visually in this conceptual framework. It shows that personalisation should affect purchase intention, with attachment to the influencer mediating that impact, and brand credibility moderating the association between attachment to the influencer and purchase intention. The framework aligns with the paper's goals and provides an excellent guideline for the empirical analysis (Pan et al., 2024; Jayasingh et al., 2025).

Figure 1: CGI Influencer in the Conservative Market



Methodology

This part outlines the approach used in studying the effect of CGI influencers in conservative markets, personalization, and attachment as a mediator, and brand credibility as a moderator.

Research Design and Data Collection

A cross-sectional survey design, which is quantitative, was done to gather standardized information to test the hypothesized relationships statistically. Purposive sampling was used to select a sample of 150-200 social media users in conservative markets who knew about CGI influencers to have a relevant and informed sample (Memon et al., 2020). The data was obtained in the form of a survey, done through an online Google Forms because it was convenient and easy to manage data.

Measurement of Variables

A five-point Likert scale was used in measuring all constructs. Key variables included:

- *Personalization*: The conformity of CGI influencers to the interests and culture of the users (Lou and Yuan, 2018).
- *Influencer Attachment*: The emotional connection between consumers and persons in CGI (Yan et al., 2024).
- *Brand Credibility*: These are the perceived credibility of the endorsing brand (Khan, 2023).
- *Purchase Intention*: The probability to buy accepted products (Baghel, 2023). The scales used in measuring reliability (Cronbachs Alpha greater than 0.78) and validity (AVE greater than 0.50) showed a high level of reliability and validity, which validated the readiness of the scales to be analyzed (Yan et al., 2024).

Data Analysis

The SPSS was used to analyze data. Following a summary of the sample by descriptive statistics, a number of analyses were carried out:

- The regression analysis was used to test the direct impact of personalization on attachment (H1) and purchase intention (H2).
- Mediation test was used to determine that the link between personalization and purchase intention was mediated by attachment (H3).
- Moderation analysis was used to determine whether or not brand credibility enhanced attachment-purchase intention relationship (H4).

Ethical Considerations

The research followed an extremely ethical guideline where the informed consent was obtained, anonymity and confidentiality ensured, and voluntary access was ensured, with the ability to withdraw at any time.

Data Analysis and Results

The section offers the empirical results of the research that are directly connected to the objectives of the research and the methodology provided in the paper earlier. This analysis has been performed to examine the hypotheses based on our conceptual model, and to see how CGI influencer personalization can affect the consumer purchase intention in conservative-type markets, where influencer attachment plays the mediator role and the brand credibility is a moderator. Initially, we will give a descriptive report of the sample, followed by the reliability and validity tests of survey tools, and followed by the results of the hypothesis test.

Descriptive Analysis

In this analysis section, the general overview of all the participating individuals, including their demographics and general attitude toward CGI influencers, is outlined. This analysis is intended to give a basic knowledge about the sample, but will elaborate on important features that will be significant to the study in question.

Frequency Distribution

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of the Sample (N = 200)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age Distribution	18–24 years	90	45%
	25–35 years	70	35%
	36–45 years	24	12%
	46+ years	16	8%
Gender	Male	100	50%
	Female	100	50%
Social Media Usage	Instagram	140	70%
	YouTube	120	60%
	TikTok	110	55%
	Facebook	60	30%
Familiarity with CGI Influencers	Aware	124	62%
	Not aware	76	38%
Perception of Authenticity	Consider CGI authentic	50	25%
	Consider CGI inauthentic	150	75%

The descriptive analysis reveals the following key demographic and behavioral findings:

The majority of the respondents (80%) were aged 18–35 with equal gender representation. The most used ones were Instagram (70%), YouTube (60%), and TikTok (55%). The awareness of CGI influencers was 62%, yet only 25% felt they were authentic, and there is something of a trust problem. Popular platforms and the appeal to credibility are a set of campaign focuses in conservative markets where it matters most to engage the audience in a successful manner (Bohndel et al., 2023).

Reliability Analysis

Strictly, the internal consistency of the survey scales was established with the aid of Cronbach's Alpha to establish the reliability of the scales. Values higher than 0.7 (generally) indicate that there is good internal consistency, that is, that items in each scale tend to measure similar amounts of the same underlying construct.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis of Study Variables

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Reliability Status
Personalization	0.85	0.87	0.58	High
Influencer Attachment	0.81	0.83	0.55	High
Brand Credibility	0.78	0.80	0.52	Acceptable
Purchase Intention	0.83	0.85	0.60	High

The survey scales demonstrated strong reliability and validity, with Cronbach's Alpha (0.78–0.85) and Composite Reliability (0.80–0.87) exceeding recommended thresholds. Convergent validity was confirmed through AVE values (0.52–0.60) and factor loadings (0.62–0.89), while discriminant validity was established using HTMT (<0.85) and Fornell-Larcker criteria. These results confirm that the constructs are consistent, valid, and distinct for further analysis.

Validity Analysis

Table 3: Validity Analysis of Study Variables

Test / Construct	Value	Threshold	Interpretation
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.82	> 0.70	Meritorious - sample adequate for factor analysis
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	$\chi^2 = 654.32$, $p < 0.001$	$p < 0.05$	Significant - variables are correlated and suitable for factor analysis
Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	0.52 – 0.64	> 0.50	Convergent validity established
Composite Reliability (CR)	0.79 – 0.87	> 0.70	Constructs demonstrate strong internal validity

The combination of these findings legitimates the fact that the measurement model used in the study is both valid and reliable. In the validity analysis, it is affirmed that the survey is correct and should undergo a further statistical test. KMO value (0.82) denotes meritorious sampling adequacy, and the Bartlett test of significance is significant, which presupposes factor analysis. The AVE and CR values of more than 0.50 and 0.70 display the convergent validity and construct reliability.

Hypothesis Testing (Regression Analysis)

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship / Test	β (Beta)	t-value	p-value	Effect Type	Result
H1	Personalization → Influencer Attachment	0.62	7.84	< 0.01	Direct Effect	Supported
H2	Influencer Attachment → Purchase Intention	0.55	6.91	< 0.01	Direct Effect	Supported
H3	Personalization → Purchase Intention (via Influencer Attachment)	Direct: 0.38 Indirect: 0.34 Total: 0.72	—	< 0.01	Mediation (Partial)	Supported
H4	Influencer Attachment → Purchase Intention × Brand Credibility	0.47	2.95	< 0.05	Moderation	Supported

The Cronbach's Alpha values for all the research variables provide adequate evidence of acceptable to high levels of reliability and internal consistency for the measurement scales.

Discussion

The chapter presents the research findings, connects them to existing theories, and emphasises the cultural and managerial implications of conservative markets. It discusses the consequences of the CGI influencer personalisation, influencer attachment mediation and the moderating influence of brand credibility.

Customised Impact Increases Influencer Attachment

The findings support the hypothesis that personalisation has a significant positive influence on consumer attachment to CGI influencers, consistent with the existing body of knowledge on digital interaction (Jayasingh et al., 2025; Casaca & Miguel, 2024). This personalisation must align with cultural and religious norms in conservative markets to build trust and turn generic digital characters into familiar ones (Baghel, 2023; Allal-Cherif et al., 2024).

Implication: To build more trust and long-term loyalty between consumers and the influencer (consumers), brands should use AI-based strategies to achieve an advanced, culturally-sensitive personalisation solution (Babatunde et al., 2024; Balamurugan, 2024).

Influencer Attachment Prevents Purchase Intention

There is a strong, positive correlation between influencer attachment and purchase intention. The results support previous studies that have identified emotional connection as a key success factor in influencer marketing (Pan et al., 2024; Bi & Zhang, 2022).

Implication: Marketers should prioritise strategies that enhance emotional appeal, including persuasive storytelling and interaction with CGI influencers, to make the avocations of their proposals more convincing (Mandung, 2024; Lou et al., 2022).

The Personalisation still affects Purchase Intention, and this is mediated by Influencer Attachment.

One significant discovery is that influencer attachment partially mediates the association between personalisation and purchase intention. It shows that personalisation has a direct impact on purchasing behaviour, but a significant portion of this impact is mediated by the emotional connection it produces (Zhao et al., 2024; Yan et al., 2024).

Implication: Brands need to maximise this mediating effect by using CGI influencers to create highly engaging, dialogic content, such as interactive questions and answers and personalised recommendations, and by enhancing the attachment pathway to purchase (Faruq, 2025; Yu et al., 2024).

Brand Credibility mediates the Role of Attachment on Purchase Intention.

The research demonstrates that brand credibility serves as a mediator between attachment and purchase intention. This aligns with evidence that consumers tend to trust a brand more when an influencer offers advice (Rahayu et al., 2024; Liu & Zheng, 2024). In cynical conservative marketplaces, someone with credibility in the brand justifies the CGI influencer and the lack of trust (Khan et al., 2024; Sobande, 2021).

Implication: To improve overall effectiveness and credibility, companies should develop a recognised brand image and ensure that their CGI influencers align with the brand's ethical conduct and values (Albertus et al., 2024; Kareem & Venugopal, 2023).

Conclusion

This paper investigates consumers' attitudes towards CGI influencers in conservative markets and identifies key relationships. To start with, personalisation plays an important role in increasing consumer loyalty to CGI influencers, demonstrating that emotionally suggestive content is more effective when personalised (Suganya & Bawa, 2024). The role of emotion in decision-making is clear in this attachment, which directly increases purchase intention (Bi & Zhang, 2022). Second, influencer attachment is also a key mediator of the indirect effect of personalisation on purchase behaviour (Rahayu et al., 2024). Lastly, brand credibility is a powerful moderator in this relationship because brand trust emboldens emotional reactions to purchase (Liu & Zheng, 2024). In theory, this study builds on Source Credibility Theory by examining attitudes towards virtual participants (Conti et al., 2022). Moreover, the Technology Acceptance Model and Parasocial Interaction Theory offer a more refined understanding of the acceptance of CGI influencers in culturally sensitive situations (Gavrilova & Shuleska, 2022; Schorr, 2023).

In real life, AI-powered, culturally proportionate personalisation will have to be invested in by brands to ensure attachment and trust (Babatunde et al., 2024). Companies involved in social media should focus on partnerships with trustworthy brands whose values are attractive to target audiences (Jayasingh et al., 2025).

Among limitations, there are geographical specificity and the use of self-reports (Khan et al., 2024; Faruq, 2025). Long-term effects, cross-cultural comparisons, and direct comparisons of CGI with human influencers should be studied in the future (Volles et al., 2024; Belanche et al., 2024).

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