

EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF CREDIBILITY ON CUSTOMER PERCEPTIONS AND VISIT INTENTIONS IN HOTEL INDUSTRY IN VIETNAM

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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT
Received:	19/4/2026	This study examines the influence of credibility on customer perceptions, including informative value and brand awareness, and the impact of customer perception on customer visit intention, particularly in the context of influencer marketing in the Vietnamese hospitality industry. The research is based on the sources of credibility theory, encompassing expertise, similarity, attractiveness, and trustworthiness. Using this methodology, the study aims to clarify research gaps by demonstrating how influencers' sources of credibility impact customer perceptions and visit intention in the hospitality business. Data was collected from 335 participants through a quantitative survey. Data analysis was performed using SPSS and SMARTPLS 4 to assess the relationship among sources of credibility and customer perception, as well as the relationship between customer perception and visit intention. The study indicates that similarity, attractiveness, and trustworthiness influence informative value and brand awareness. Expertise does not significantly affect informative value or brand awareness. Besides, through influencer marketing, informative value and brand awareness positively impact customer visit intentions. These findings support and contribute to academic theories on influencer marketing in the Vietnamese hospitality industry, along with practical applications for future hotel brands.
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NGHIÊN CỨU SỨC ẢNH HƯỞNG CỦA ĐỘ TIN CẬY ĐẾN NHẬN THỨC VÀ Ý ĐỊNH GHÉ THĂM CỦA KHÁCH HÀNG TRONG NGÀNH KHÁCH SẠN TẠI VIỆT NAM

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO		TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài:	19/4/2026	Nghiên cứu này xem xét ảnh hưởng của độ tin cậy đến nhận thức của khách hàng (giá trị thông tin và nhận diện thương hiệu) và tác động của nhận thức khách hàng đến ý định ghé thăm trong bối cảnh tiếp thị người ảnh hưởng của ngành khách sạn Việt Nam. Nghiên cứu dựa trên lý thuyết về các nguồn gốc của độ tin cậy, bao gồm chuyên môn, sự tương đồng, sức hấp dẫn và độ uy tín. Nhằm mục đích làm rõ những khoảng trống trong nghiên cứu trước đây, nghiên cứu này chứng minh cách các nguồn gốc tin cậy của người ảnh hưởng tác động đến nhận thức của khách hàng và ý định ghé thăm trong ngành khách sạn. Dữ liệu được thu thập từ 335 người tham gia và phân tích dữ liệu được thực hiện bằng SPSS và SMARTPLS 4. Kết quả cho thấy sự tương đồng, sức hấp dẫn và độ tin cậy có ảnh hưởng tích cực đến nhận thức khách hàng, trong khi chuyên môn không có tác động đáng kể. Đồng thời, giá trị thông tin và nhận diện thương hiệu đều thúc đẩy ý định ghé thăm. Những phát hiện này đóng góp vào lý thuyết về tiếp thị người ảnh hưởng và cung cấp hàm ý thực tiễn cho ngành khách sạn.
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1. Introduction

Businesses in Vietnam are currently allocating over 30% of their marketing budgets to influencer-related campaigns, with projected spending reaching \$123.10 million by 2027 [1]. In Vietnam, influencer marketing is often segmented according to individual development goals and is becoming a major trend in shaping public opinion on social media platforms. Based on how many followers they have, influencers are divided into four groups: mega influencers, macro influencers, micro influencers, and nano influencers. Influencer marketing is crucial in the hospitality sector for increasing brand awareness, drawing in target clients on social media, and sustaining engaging customer connections. Influencers may develop interactive content, and share personal experiences, which may impact customer visit intentions [2]. Understanding the factors that impact consumers' attitudes, perceptions, and purchasing habits is essential for developing effective marketing strategies. Vietnamese people's purchasing intentions are significantly influenced by collectivism [3], which has contributed to the expansion of influencer marketing in Vietnam. However, loyalty and common standards are measures of the trust of collectivists [3], which directly affect the success of influencer marketing campaigns in Vietnamese social norms.

Studies indicated adding reliable influencers can increase message persuasiveness, resulting in an effective marketing strategy [4] and consumer-based brand equity [5]. Source credibility theory suggests that the effectiveness of a message depends on the perceived credibility of the source, commonly reflected in dimensions such as expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and, in some contexts, perceived similarity. Influencer characteristics such as trustworthiness, expertise, similarity, and attractiveness have been shown to positively affect audience perceptions [6]. Expertise refers to the influencer's knowledge and talents perceived by audience as logical and valuable [7]. Similarity describes the degree of homophily between influencer and audience, such as personality, perceptions, values, and culture [8]. Furthermore, previous research indicates that influencers with physical attractiveness have a significantly positive impact on audience's perception and attitudes, alongside with the message's persuasive effectiveness that influencer wants to convey [9]. In recent years, hotels are increasingly resorting to influencers to connect with a larger audience and raise brand recognition. In an era with a large number of social media influencers, evaluating and selecting trustworthy influencers who truly have an impact on the target market is crucial to improving campaign effectiveness.

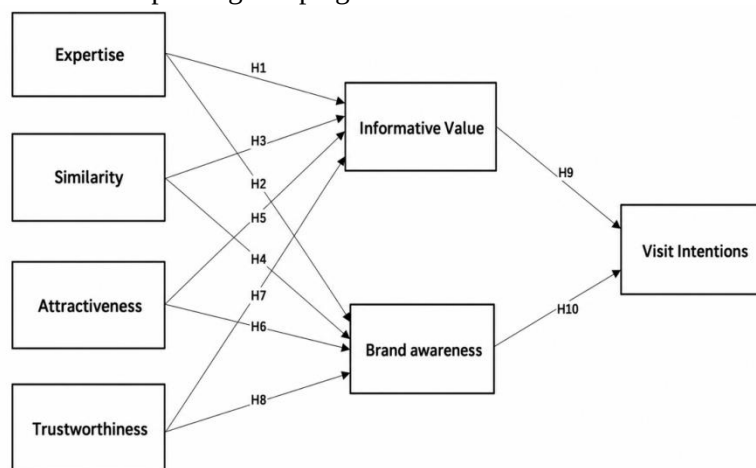


Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework*

Previous studies have delved deeply into influencer marketing across various industries, including cosmetics, food, and fashion; however, research on the impact of sources of credibility on informative value and brand awareness in the context of hospitality industry remains limited.

Thereby, this study will contribute to this influencer marketing phenomenon by providing empirical data and in-depth analysis of Vietnamese customer behavior from the primary research questions: “How does influencer credibility affect informative value, brand awareness and visit intention in Vietnam's hotel industry?”. Understanding and applying influencer marketing theories to the hotel industry can enhance customer awareness and visit intention. In turn, this can help the hotels to acquire a significant competitive advantage in the Vietnamese market.

Given the significance of influencer marketing in Vietnam's hotel business, this study developed a theoretical model (Figure 1) to generate antecedent and consequent hypotheses concerning the source of credibility and customer visit intentions. This proposal model follows a two-step flow. First, the study will investigate the factors of credibility that impact customer perceptions in Vietnam's hotel industry. Following, the study will look into how customer perceptions influence customer visit intentions.

2. Methods

The exploratory approach was used in the beginning stages of research to discover innovative ideas and prospects. The objective of this explanatory research is to gain a better understanding of the causes, impacts, and relationships between various phenomena. This research explored ideas and identifies connections between research factors. Therefore, it used a combination of exploratory research methods to examine the correlation between factors such as sources of credibility, customer perceptions, and visit intentions. Convenience sampling was used in this study to gather data via an online survey. The online survey was distributed through two main channels: an anonymous link and social media. The survey went live on July 28, 2024, and ran for six days. The sample consists predominantly of female students, which can be attributed to the use of convenience sampling and the distribution of the survey through university networks and social media platforms, where young female users are more active and responsive. However, this group represents a key segment of social media users and is highly relevant to influencer marketing in the hospitality context.

In consideration of the study's scope, this survey's target population consists of Vietnamese men and women aged 18 to 44, who are familiar with influencer marketing. This target population should be familiar with and have engaged with travel influencers via Vietnamese social media platforms in order to survey and examine the influencer's sources of credibility. Additionally, participants may consider and plan to visit Vietnamese hotels, as well as the knowledge and maturity needed to assess influential aspects in the survey. There were 626 respondents to this online survey, however only 335 genuine answers were logged so that the investigation could proceed. The filter question for this eliminate stated “In the field of tourism or hotels, do you know any influencers? Or have you ever seen a hotel review/ recommendation from an influencer?”. The minimum sample size should be 5 - 10 times the number of observed variables. With 21 items, the required sample size is between 105 and 210, therefore, the study satisfies this requirement.

The research survey consisted of five sections: demographic survey, social media usage, source of credibility, customer perception, and customer behaviours. In order to improve the survey's validity and reliability and encourage deeper comparison between previous and current research, the questionnaires are modified from previous investigations. Expertise, similarity, attractiveness, trustworthiness, informative value, and brand awareness are characteristics of source credibility and consumer perceptions that are derived from Fernando's research [10]. Cabeza-Ramírez's research [11] served as the foundation for the visit intentions component. Each variable in the survey was evaluated using three statements. A 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represents "strongly disagree" and 5 represents "strongly agree," was used to gauge how much each statement was agreed with by the respondent.

The raw data was cleaned using SPSS to eliminate missing values before analysis while SmartPLS was utilized to construct a correlation structure model between variables and evaluate the relationship between variables based on the hypothesis. Besides, SPSS was employed for descriptive statistics in the data analysis process.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

The survey of 335 respondents, primarily female students aged 18-24 (94.6%), reveals high social media engagement, with TikTok (46%) and Facebook (31.3%) being the most popular platforms. Notably, 94% of participants follow social media influencers, reflecting a dominant digital presence and a strong interest in influencer content within this demographic. To assess common method bias, Harman's single-factor test was conducted using all measurement items. The results indicated that the first factor accounted for 42.9% of the total variance, which is below the recommended threshold of 50% [12]. In addition, multicollinearity was assessed using variance inflation factor (VIF) values. All VIF values were below the threshold of 3.3, indicating that collinearity is not a concern and common method bias is unlikely to affect the results [13].

Attractiveness received the highest agreement among credibility dimensions, with all item means above 4.0. Expertise, similarity, and trustworthiness were moderately agreed upon (means > 3.0), though responses for similarity showed greater variation (SD = 1.308). Informative value was rated slightly higher (M = 3.96, 3.96, 4.16) than brand awareness (M = 3.91, 3.96, 3.79), with brand awareness also exhibiting notable variability (SD = 1.224). Respondents generally showed positive intention to visit hotels recommended by influencers (M = 3.89, 3.92, 3.71), although variation was higher for one item (SD = 1.3).

Descriptive statistics were applied to calculate all observed variables to examine the distribution of responses before proceeding with structural model analysis and effect size measurement. In Table 1, all items had mean values ranging from 3.51 to 4.29. This indicates that participants had a moderate to high level of agreement. Additionally, the standard deviation ranged from 1.007 to 1.308, suggesting an acceptable level of variability in respondents' perceptions.

Table 1. Descriptive statistic

Variable		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Expertise	EXP_1	1	5	3.74	1.295
	EXP_2	1	5	3.75	1.226
	EXP_3	1	5	3.64	1.283
Similarity	SIM_1	1	5	3.51	1.308
	SIM_2	1	5	3.79	1.250
	SIM_3	1	5	3.79	1.261
Attractiveness	ATR_1	1	5	4.07	1.157
	ATR_2	1	5	4.15	1.044
	ATR_3	1	5	4.29	1.007
Trustworthiness	TRU_1	1	5	3.76	1.164
	TRU_2	1	5	3.62	1.286
	TRU_3	1	5	3.78	1.215
Informative Value	INF_1	1	5	3.96	1.142
	INF_2	1	5	3.96	1.127
	INF_3	1	5	4.16	1.084
Brand Awareness	BRD_1	1	5	3.91	1.191
	BRD_2	1	5	3.96	1.155
	BRD_3	1	5	3.79	1.224
Visit Intentions	VIS_1	1	5	3.89	1.197
	VIS_2	1	5	3.92	1.176
	VIS_3	1	5	3.71	1.300

Note: EXP = Expertise; SIM = Similarity; ATR = Attractiveness; TRU = Trust; INF = Informative Value; BRD = Brand Awareness; VIS = Visit Intention.

To ascertain the degree of correlation between items in a single variable, a test known as Cronbach's Alpha was applied. For observed variables to be beneficial for study, their reliability

coefficients should be between 0.7 and higher [14]. There may be an overlap in the variable if the composite reliability is greater than 0.95 [14]. Thus, the reliability coefficients of this survey ranged from 0.743 to 0.916 and met the approval requirements.

The model demonstrates strong discriminant validity using two primary methods. First, according to the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, the square root of the AVE for all variables (e.g., SIM at 0.880) exceeds their correlations with other constructs. Second, the model satisfies the HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio) requirement, with values remaining below the 0.9 threshold recommended.

The results of the structural model are displayed in Figure 2, which illustrates the relationships among the study's variables. The majority of the correlations are positive, according to the path coefficients, and the INF variable significantly affects VIS. Simultaneously, the model's acceptable explanatory power is reflected in the R² values, which show that the model explains a moderate degree of variation of the endogenous variables.

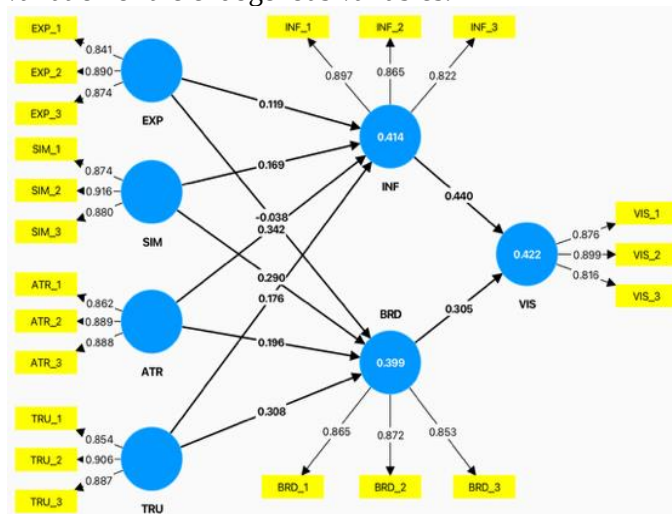


Figure 2. Result of structural model

Table 2 demonstrates how the F-square coefficient assesses the degree to which an independent variable affects a dependent variable. The structural analysis indicates that while all hypothesized relationships show positive impacts, the paths EXP → BRD and EXP → INF are statistically non-significant ($p > 0.05$) with negligible effect sizes (f square < 0.02). Most other relationships exhibit low influence, except for INF, which has a medium impact on VIS (f square > 0.249). Additionally, R-square values confirm the degree of variance explained by the independent variables within the model.

Table 2. Effect size and degree of effect for structural relationships

	F-Square	Degree Of Effect
ATR → BRD	0.042	Low
ATR → INF	0.131	Low
BRD → VIS	0.120	Low
EXP → BRD	0.001	No effect
EXP → INF	0.015	No effect
INF → VIS	0.249	Medium
SIM → BRD	0.090	Low
SIM → INF	0.031	Low
TRU → BRD	0.088	Low
TRU → INF	0.029	Low

Note: EXP = Expertise; SIM = Similarity; ATR = Attractiveness; TRU = Trust; INF = Informative Value; BRD = Brand Awareness; VIS = Visit Intention.

Table 3 presents the results of hypothesis testing, indicating whether each proposed relationship is accepted or rejected. To determine whether the hypothesis is accepted or rejected, the p-value test and comparison are performed at the significance level of 0.05. If the p-value is less than 0.05, the hypothesis is accepted; if it is greater than 0.05, it is rejected.

The findings have demonstrated the connections and impacts of the variables:

- The dependent variables BRD ($p = 0.615$) and INF ($p = 0.097$) are unaffected by EXP. As a result, theories H1 and H2 are disproved.
- The dependent variables INF ($p = 0.014$) and BRD ($p = 0.001$) are not significantly affected by SIM. As a result, hypotheses H3 and H4 are approved.
- The dependent variables INF ($p = 0.000$) and BRD ($p = 0.011$) are affected by the variable ATR, which is a component of hypotheses H5 and H6.
- The influence of TRU on INF ($p = 0.023$) and BRD ($p = 0.001$) supports the acceptance of hypotheses H7 and H8.
- Hypothesis H9 is accepted because INF influences the dependent variable VIS ($p = 0.000$). Lastly, hypothesis H10 is accepted because BRD also affects VIS ($p = 0.000$).

Table 3. Results of hypothesis testing in the structural model

Hypotheses	Result
H1: Influencer expertise positively influences informative value about hotel brands in Vietnam.	Rejected
H2: Influencer expertise positively influences brand awareness about hotel brands in Vietnam.	Rejected
H3: Influencer similarity positively influences informative value about hotel brands in Vietnam.	Accepted
H4: Influencer similarity positively influences brand awareness about hotel brands in Vietnam.	Accepted
H5: Influencer attractiveness positively influences informative value about hotel brands in Vietnam.	Accepted
H6: Influencer attractiveness positively influences brand awareness about hotel brands in Vietnam.	Accepted
H7: Influencer trustworthiness positively influences informative value about hotel brands in Vietnam.	Accepted
H8: Influencer trustworthiness positively influences brand awareness about hotel brands in Vietnam.	Accepted
H9: Informative value positively influences visit intentions in hotel industry in Vietnam.	Accepted
H10: Brand awareness positively influences visit intentions in hotel industry in Vietnam.	Accepted

(Source: Adapted from [15])

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. The effect of source of credibility on customer informative value and brand awareness

This study investigates the impact of influential sources of credibility on consumer perception in Vietnam's hotel sector. The findings show that 40.7% of the variation in informative value and 39.1% of the variation in brand awareness can be explained by source of creditability. Thus, this indicates a moderate impact in the Vietnamese hotel context. The finding indicate that expertise has no significant impact on informative value or brand awareness among Vietnamese customers. This study goes against the source credibility theory, which holds that expertise is a key source for measuring credibility. Vietnamese customers believe in community recommendations and social evidence more than professional advice, which reduces the impact of expertise on brand awareness and informative value in the hotel industry. This outcome is in accordance with the study's finding that customer perception is greatly influenced by similarity. Customers recognize similarities in the experiences, narratives, and sentiments of influencers. As a result, when influencers in the hospitality industry share stories, hobbies, and experiences that are pertinent to and comparable to their target audience, the content appears as valuable and draws more attention. With hypotheses 5 and 6 accepted, attractiveness influence on informative value and brand awareness, similar to the finding of Pham [16] on the Vietnamese market. Additionally, the hotel industry implements visual content to advertise services including food and drink, room service, and ambiance. Thus, presenting neat and eye-catching visual content makes the information appears more reliable and captivating in an image-driven industry. Furthermore, when an attractive influencer promotes a hotel, it not only generates an impression but also

increases the information value and brand awareness in the Vietnamese market. The study suggests that trustworthiness has effect customer behavior in Vietnam, associate with credibility theory of Hovland [17] and the finding of Pham [16] in this collective culture. Vietnamese customers may view a hotel as dependable and honest when a reputable influencer recommends it. Customers will therefore be able to recall and favor hotels that they associate with reliable qualities. Through their networks, trusted influencers can produce positive and substantial word-of-mouth effects that raise the visibility of the brand.

3.2.2. The effect of informative value and brand awareness on customer visit intentions

The acceptance of hypotheses 9 and 10 suggests that brand awareness and informative value affect customer intentions to visit Vietnamese hotels. At the same time, the study provides support to Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior [18], which claims that the customer visit intention is positively impacted by both brand awareness and informative value. Influencers help customers reduce perceived risk and enhance hotel trust when they offer detailed and useful information on hotels, such as room quality, service quality, dining options, and attractions [19]. Since prospective customers think they are making an informed and worthwhile choice, the perceived informational value has a significant impact on visit intention. According to this study, customers' decision-making and purchase intentions are positively impacted by brand awareness. In addition to increasing a hotel's presence on their social media platforms, influencers' endorsements strengthen the hotel's reputation and identity among audiences.

4. Conclusion

This study investigates the impact of influencer marketing on customer perceptions and visit intentions within the Vietnamese hotel and hospitality industry. Using a quantitative approach and SMARTPLS 4 analysis, the research examines four dimensions of source credibility: expertise, similarity, attractiveness, and trustworthiness. The findings reveal that while expertise has no influence on perceived informative value or brand awareness, similarity, trustworthiness and attractiveness emerge as a crucial factor in shaping customer perceptions. Furthermore, both informative value and brand awareness significantly drive customer visit intentions, highlighting the importance of information quality and brand recognition in converting potential guests. Given the specific cultural and industrial context of Vietnam, these results offer valuable theoretical and practical insights for hospitality marketers. From a practical perspective, hotel marketers should prioritize selecting visually appealing influencers who can deliver engaging and well-presented content. At the same time, campaigns should focus on providing clear, relevant, and detailed information about hotel offerings to strengthen perceived value and support customer decision-making. Enhancing brand visibility through consistent influencer presence on social media may further improve customer familiarity and visit intention. This study is subject to sampling bias, as the majority of respondents are young female students, which may limit generalizability. Future research is encouraged to adopt more diverse sampling strategies to better represent different customer segments.

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