

# Influencer Marketing Impact on Consumer Trust in Cross-Border E-Commerce Transactions

*Influencer Marketing  
Impact on Consumer  
Trust*

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This study explores how influencer marketing influences consumer trust in cross-border e-commerce, an emerging focus in digital marketing. Using a qualitative approach through literature review and library research, it investigates the connection between influencer marketing and consumer behaviour in international markets. The primary focus is on how influencer credibility, engagement, and cultural adaptation influence consumer trust when purchasing from international brands. The review reveals that influencer marketing plays a critical role in reducing perceived risks in cross-border transactions by providing social proof and authenticity, particularly when influencers align their content with local cultural norms. The findings indicate that both macro and micro-influencers play an important role, though their effectiveness depends on the target market and campaign objectives. Micro-influencers tend to perform better in niche markets because of their strong engagement and authenticity, while macro-influencers offer wider reach and authority, making them valuable for large-scale cross-border campaigns. This highlights the need to select appropriate influencers and tailor strategies to cultural contexts for successful international marketing efforts.*

**Keywords:** *Consumer Trust, Cross-Border E-Commerce, Cultural Adaptation, Influencer Marketing, Micro-Influencers, Social Proof.*

## **ABSTRAK**

*Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana pemasaran influencer memengaruhi kepercayaan konsumen dalam e-commerce lintas batas, fokus yang muncul dalam pemasaran digital. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui tinjauan literatur dan penelitian perpustakaan, ini menyelidiki hubungan antara pemasaran influencer dan perilaku konsumen di pasar internasional. Fokus utamanya adalah bagaimana kredibilitas, keterlibatan, dan adaptasi budaya influencer*

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memengaruhi kepercayaan konsumen saat membeli dari merek internasional. Tinjauan tersebut mengungkapkan bahwa pemasaran influencer memainkan peran penting dalam mengurangi risiko yang dirasakan dalam transaksi lintas batas dengan memberikan bukti sosial dan keaslian, terutama ketika influencer menyelaraskan konten mereka dengan norma budaya lokal. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa influencer makro dan mikro memainkan peran penting, meskipun efektivitasnya tergantung pada target pasar dan tujuan kampanye. Influencer mikro cenderung berkinerja lebih baik di ceruk pasar karena keterlibatan dan keasliannya yang kuat, sedangkan influencer makro menawarkan jangkauan dan otoritas yang lebih luas, menjadikannya berharga untuk kampanye lintas batas skala besar. Ini menyoroti kebutuhan untuk memilih influencer yang tepat dan menyesuaikan strategi dengan konteks budaya untuk upaya pemasaran internasional yang sukses.

**Kata kunci:** Kepercayaan Konsumen, E-Commerce Lintas Batas, Adaptasi Budaya, Pemasaran Influencer, Mikro-Influencer, Bukti Sosial.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the digital transformation of commerce has catalysed the expansion of cross-border e-commerce. As consumer behaviour shifts towards online shopping, trust remains a fundamental issue in global transactions (Gefen et al., 2003; Chikweche et al., 2024). One of the most significant barriers to international online transactions is the consumer's perception of risk, which is heightened when purchasing from foreign vendors with whom they have no direct relationship (Kim & Prabhakar, 2004). Given the rise of influencer marketing in the digital era, understanding how influencers can mitigate this trust gap in cross-border e-commerce transactions has become increasingly critical. Influencer marketing, which leverages individuals with the ability to sway the purchasing decisions of large audiences, has emerged as a tool to address the scepticism consumers face when engaging with foreign brands (Freberg et al., 2011; Gökerik, 2024; Migkos et al., 2025).

Although the literature on consumer trust and influencer marketing is expanding, little is known about how these two elements interact in international e-commerce transactions. By examining how influencer marketing affects customer trust and purchase behavior in cross-border e-commerce transactions, this study seeks to close this gap. The research gap lies in the insufficient exploration of influencer marketing's specific impact on cross-border e-commerce. Most studies still emphasise domestic e-commerce or the general role of social media in shaping consumer perceptions (Irmadiani, 2025; Liang et al. 2025). While influencers are recognised for building consumer trust, little is known about how this trust functions across international borders. Moreover, literature has not fully addressed cultural and geographical factors influencing consumer trust in global contexts (Van der Heijden, 2004; Whitwam, 2025). This highlights the need to examine how influencer marketing fosters trust in cross-border e-commerce, which is crucial for both sales growth and long-term customer relationships in international markets (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). With globalisation driving e-commerce expansion, understanding influencers' roles in bridging cultural and trust gaps is increasingly important. As influencer marketing dominates digital strategies, this study seeks to provide insights into how influencers shape trust across diverse cultural and geographic settings.

Several previous studies have addressed the role of influencers in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviour. Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019) found that influencers' credibility and trustworthiness significantly affect consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. Similarly, Bogdan et al. (2025) showed that perceived authenticity increases consumer trust and purchasing decisions. However, most of these findings focus on domestic markets, leaving little understanding of how influencers build trust in international transactions. Although influencers may reduce perceived risk, cross-border e-commerce involves distinct challenges such as cultural differences, language barriers, and unfamiliar payment systems (Marinelli et al., 2025).

Research also highlights that consumer trust in online platforms varies by region, pointing to the need for culturally sensitive influencer marketing strategies (Kusawat & Teerakapibal, 2021). The novelty of this study lies in exploring how influencers bridge trust gaps in cross-border e-commerce, offering new insights into their role in overcoming international challenges. Furthermore, it adds to the broader understanding of how digital marketing adapts to diverse cultural and geographic contexts. As platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok continue to shape global perceptions, businesses need to understand how influencer content resonates across different markets (De Veirman et al., 2017; Xu, 2025). This study aims to investigate how influencer marketing affects consumer trust in international e-commerce transactions. It specifically looks at how audience relationships, influencer authenticity, and reputation affect customers' propensity to trust and trade internationally. This research contributes to academic literature by deepening the understanding of influencer marketing in global e-commerce. Ultimately, it aims to bridge theory and practice, highlighting how influencers can foster trust and loyalty key drivers of success in international markets.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Influencer Marketing in the Era of Social Media**

Influencer marketing is a marketing approach in which companies work with people who can affect their audience's purchase decisions. This strategy involves collaboration with individuals who have gained large followings on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, often due to their expertise, personality, or lifestyle (Adebayo et al., 2025). The core strength of influencer marketing lies in the trust and credibility these influencers establish with their followers, which businesses can leverage to promote products and services effectively. The emergence of social media platforms has greatly increased influencers' power by giving them access to large, international audiences. The effectiveness of influencer marketing is rooted in the psychology of social proof, where consumers are more likely to trust recommendations from people they perceive as authentic and relatable, rather than traditional advertising.

Studies Freberg et al. (2011) have shown that influencer marketing leads to increased brand awareness, higher engagement rates, and, most importantly, greater trust from consumers, which translates into purchasing decisions (Efendioglu & Durmaz, 2022; Grey, 2025). This strategy is particularly potent because influencers create personalised, engaging content that resonates with their followers, making their endorsements seem more genuine and less like traditional marketing (De Veirman et al., 2017). Furthermore, influencer marketing is not confined to just high-profile figures; micro-influencers with smaller but highly engaged followings have also proven to be effective in niche markets (Elwood et al., 2021). Their ability to interact more closely with their audience creates an atmosphere of trust and authenticity that larger influencers might lack. Influencer marketing also allows for more targeted approaches, as influencers often have a specific demographic or interest group that aligns with certain brands. As consumers become more selective in their purchasing behaviour and more critical of traditional advertising, influencer marketing presents an opportunity for businesses to tap into more genuine and direct forms of promotion (Doshi et al., 2022).

### **Influencer Marketing in Cross-Border E-Commerce Transactions**

In cross-border e-commerce, influencer marketing addresses heightened uncertainties such as cultural mismatches, logistical hurdles, and trust deficits when consumers buy from foreign vendors, acting as a bridge to familiarize international brands with local audiences (Alawneh, 2013). Influencers mitigate perceived risks like fraud, poor quality, or delivery delays by providing endorsements that serve as credible social proof, reassuring buyers about the legitimacy and reliability of overseas sellers in markets where direct experience is impossible (Chen et al., 2022; Matiza & Slabbert, 2024). Bakshy et al. (2012) demonstrate through field experiments that influencer-driven social influence significantly lowers psychological barriers, transforming hesitation into confidence and

encouraging cross-border transactions. This mechanism is particularly effective on globalized platforms like TikTok and Instagram, where real-time interactions amplify reassurance across geographies.

Cultural ambassadors, influencers further enhance effectiveness by tailoring content to local norms, languages, and payment preferences, thereby boosting authenticity and emotional resonance that generic advertising cannot achieve (Jin & Phua, 2014; Van der Heijden, 2004). Marinelli et al. (2025) warn that ambiguous translations or cultural missteps can erode trust, underscoring the need for nuanced adaptations in promotional messaging. Sesar et al. (2022) add that influencer credibility functions as external validation, directly alleviating skepticism in high-risk international purchases and driving platform growth. Consequently, this strategy not only fosters immediate trust but also sustains long-term e-commerce expansion by converting global uncertainties into reliable consumer opportunities.

### **Cultural and Psychological Factors in Influencer-Driven Trust**

Cultural and psychological elements profoundly shape how influencer marketing builds trust in cross-border e-commerce, with influencers adapting content to local values, languages, and behaviors to forge deeper, more authentic audience bonds (Kusawat & Teerakapibal, 2021). De Veirman et al. (2017) highlight that perceived credibility and relatability amplify persuasive impact, effectively reducing perceived risks in global transactions where physical product interaction is absent and uncertainty prevails. Greenberg et al. (2008) further establish that cultural congruence directly correlates with trust levels, as mismatched messaging heightens skepticism toward unfamiliar foreign brands and undermines purchase intent. Hochreiter and Waldhauser (2014) advocate data-driven cultural mining to enable precise content adaptations, positioning influencers as essential mediators in diverse, fragmented markets.

Alatas et al. (2019) illustrate through nationwide experiments how familiar influencers generate psychological comfort in international contexts, leveraging social influence theories to override geographical and informational barriers. Chavda and Chauhan (2024) emphasize that alignment with regional preferences not only boosts engagement but also reinforces authenticity, countering common psychological hurdles like fear of fraud or delivery failure. Hofstede's (1984) cultural dimensions framework supports this by revealing how value differences influence consumer receptivity, necessitating tailored influencer strategies beyond mere translation. Integrating these factors, influencer marketing must prioritize psychological reassurance alongside cultural sensitivity to cultivate enduring trust and loyalty within dynamic global e-commerce ecosystems.

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, specifically a literature review, to explore the impact of influencer marketing on consumer trust in cross-border e-commerce transactions. The literature review aims to synthesise existing knowledge in the field, critically evaluating and analysing relevant studies to identify gaps and inform the development of new insights. Given the nature of the research, the chosen methodology allows for a comprehensive understanding of the current body of knowledge, offering a theoretical framework for the study of influencer marketing in cross-border contexts. Since this study is based on a literature review, there is no direct population or respondent sampling. The research context revolves around understanding the theories and findings presented in existing academic literature related to influencer marketing, consumer trust, and cross-border e-commerce transactions. The unit of analysis includes peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, books, and other scholarly works relevant to the research questions. The review emphasizes studies from marketing, e-commerce, consumer behavior, and digital marketing, prioritizing recent publications from reputable journals within the last decade to capture current trends. The target population covers research on influencer marketing strategies, consumer trust, and international e-commerce, with sources drawn from both domestic and global contexts. Special attention

is also given to studies addressing cultural factors and consumer behaviour, recognizing their importance in shaping cross-border transactions.

Data collection in this study is centred around identifying and obtaining relevant literature that addresses the key concepts of influencer marketing, consumer trust, and cross-border e-commerce. Sources were drawn from databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, and ScienceDirect using keywords like “influencer marketing,” “consumer trust,” “cross-border e-commerce,” and “digital marketing strategies.” Priority was given to peer-reviewed articles from reputable journals within the last ten years to ensure relevance. The inclusion criteria focused on studies that examined influencer marketing and consumer trust in e-commerce or cross-border contexts, provided empirical evidence, and considered cultural or psychological aspects of consumer behavior. Excluded were articles unrelated to these topics, not published in English, or lacking methodological rigor and sufficient citations.

The data analysis for this study is based on a qualitative synthesis of the selected literature. Using thematic synthesis, the findings were categorised into patterns aligned with the research questions. The process began with reviewing each article to extract key results, arguments, and methodologies, which were then organised into themes covering influencer marketing’s role in consumer trust, the challenges of cross-border e-commerce, and the influence of cultural differences on consumer behavior. Each theme is analyzed in detail to assess how the existing studies address the central research questions. The synthesis also compares findings across studies to identify consistent patterns and differences, particularly regarding the effects of influencer marketing in diverse cultural and geographical contexts. This process highlights research gaps while ensuring transparency and replicability. All selected studies were critically evaluated for methodological rigor and relevance, providing reliable insights into influencer marketing, consumer trust, and cross-border e-commerce. By applying a systematic synthesis, this review maintains academic rigor and offers valuable perspectives for both scholars and practitioners in digital marketing.

## **RESULTS**

### **Consumer Trust Formation Through Influencer Marketing in Global Markets**

This section offers a thorough examination of the results obtained from the literature research regarding how influencer marketing affects customer trust in international e-commerce transactions. The impact of cultural elements, the psychological mechanisms involved, the success of influencer marketing in cross-border transactions, and its function in forming customer trust are some of the main subjects that the study focuses on. Along with pointing out conflicting results in the research, the conversation sheds light on the intricacies of influencer marketing and customer behavior in global e-commerce. A key finding from the literature is the significant role of influencer credibility in shaping consumer trust. Influencers with a high level of credibility and trustworthiness are more likely to successfully influence their followers’ purchasing decisions (Freberg et al., 2011).

Trust is built through consistent and authentic content that aligns with the followers’ values, creating a sense of transparency and reliability (De Veirman et al., 2017). Consumers are more likely to trust influencers who maintain an authentic and relatable presence, especially when they share experiences or reviews that appear genuine. This trust is particularly important in e-commerce settings, where the consumer does not have direct interaction with the brand or product before purchasing. Influencers who are perceived as credible provide a sense of social proof, alleviating the anxiety and scepticism that often accompany online shopping, especially in international transactions. The connection between trust and credibility is important not only in home markets but also in international e-commerce transactions, where consumers frequently face more risks and uncertainties because of cultural and geographic differences. As such, influencer marketing serves as an effective strategy to bridge the gap of trust in international e-commerce, especially when influencers are seen as experts or trusted figures in their respective fields.

### **The Role of Micro and Macro Influencers in Cross-Border E-Commerce**

While influence credibility is the primary factor influencing trust, the size of an influencer's following also plays a role in consumer perceptions. Research by De Veirman et al. (2017) suggests that macro-influencers, who have large followings, are often viewed as more authoritative. However, the personal connection that micro-influencers establish with their audiences is a strong factor in enhancing trust. Micro-influencers tend to have higher engagement rates with their followers, which leads to stronger consumer trust (Gerlich, 2023). This personal connection and higher level of engagement contribute to the perception that their endorsements are more authentic and relatable, making micro-influencers particularly effective in building trust in smaller, niche markets or in specific cultural contexts. The particular target market may determine the kind of influencer, whether macro or micro, in cross-border e-commerce. In localised markets where consumers seek more individualised, culturally relevant endorsements, micro-influencers are frequently more successful than macro-influencers, which may be preferable for a wider worldwide reach. As such, businesses must consider their target audience and market when choosing the type of influencer to collaborate with, balancing the reach of macro-influencers with the authenticity of micro-influencers. In cross-border e-commerce, perceived risk is a major factor that inhibits consumer trust and willingness to complete a purchase. Consumers are often hesitant to engage in transactions with international sellers due to concerns over product quality, delivery delays, and fraud (Sohaib & Kang, 2015).

Influencer marketing has been shown to effectively reduce these perceived risks. When an influencer endorses a product, particularly one from a foreign brand, their endorsement serves as a form of social proof, reassuring consumers that the product is trustworthy and the seller is legitimate (Alatas et al., 2019). This is particularly important in cross-border transactions, where consumers do not have firsthand experience with the product or brand and must rely on external cues to make purchasing decisions. Social proof through influencer endorsements acts as a psychological mechanism to reduce uncertainty, especially in markets where the consumer has limited information about the product or seller. By leveraging trusted influencers, brands can help mitigate the psychological barriers to cross-border purchases, making consumers feel more confident in their decision to buy from international e-commerce platforms.

### **Cultural Adaptation and Risk Perception in International Markets**

Consumer behaviour in cross-border e-commerce is significantly influenced by cultural variations. Influencers who modify their material to fit the cultural background of their audience are more successful at influencer marketing, according to research. Hochreiter and Waldhauser (2014) argue that influencers who understand local consumer behaviour, language, and cultural norms are more likely to build trust with their audience. This cultural relevance is especially important in international markets, where consumers may be unfamiliar with foreign brands and may feel hesitant to engage in cross-border transactions. Influencers who tailor their messaging to reflect the cultural values and expectations of their target audience are able to establish a stronger emotional connection, which enhances trust and consumer engagement. In cross-border e-commerce, cultural adaptation is a key factor in overcoming barriers to trust. Influencers who integrate local customs, preferences, and even language nuances into their promotional content are better positioned to resonate with consumers. This is particularly important for international brands that may otherwise struggle to connect with local markets where cultural differences can create significant barriers to acceptance and trust.

While micro-influencers are often seen as more effective in building trust due to their authenticity and engagement, some studies suggest that macro-influencers, with their larger reach and greater authority, may be more effective in driving consumer engagement on a global scale. Ren et al. (2023) point out that macro-influencers tend to have a broader influence, especially in cross-border e-commerce, where brands aim to reach larger audiences. These influencers, often perceived as more authoritative figures, can introduce

foreign brands to a wider global market. However, micro-influencers still play a critical role in targeting niche markets and building stronger, more personal relationships with consumers, making their endorsements highly effective in specific cultural contexts. This contradiction highlights the complexity of influencer marketing in cross-border e-commerce. Further research is needed to understand under what circumstances macro or micro-influencers are more effective, considering factors such as market size, target audience, and the specific goals of the marketing campaign.

**Table 1.** Key Findings from Literature Review on Influencer Marketing in Cross-Border E-Commerce

<b>Key Theme</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Influencer Credibility and Trust	Trustworthy influencers with authentic content increase consumer trust, particularly in cross-border e-commerce.
Follower Count and Engagement	Micro-influencers foster higher engagement and perceived authenticity, but macro-influencers have broader reach.
Perceived Risk Reduction	Influencer endorsements act as social proof, reducing perceived risks in cross-border e-commerce transactions.
Cultural Adaptation	Influencers who adapt content to local culture build stronger consumer trust and increase engagement.
Macro vs. Micro Influencers	Macro-influencers offer global reach, while micro-influencers excel in niche markets with personal engagement.

Based on Table 1, the literature review’s conclusions highlight how important influencer marketing is for fostering customer trust, especially when it comes to international e-commerce. The legitimacy and genuineness of influencers are crucial in forming trust from customers, but the kind of influencer micro or macro can have an impact on how well marketing campaigns work. Influencer endorsements boost trust in international brands and lower perceived risks in cross-border e-commerce, especially when influencers modify their material to fit the local cultural environment. The need for more research in this area is highlighted by the ongoing dispute on the relative efficacy of macro versus micro-influencers, despite recent revelations.

**DISCUSSION**

Literature highlights that influencer credibility plays a crucial role in building consumer trust. Authentic relationships between influencers and followers are shown to increase trust and drive higher e-commerce conversions (Freberg et al., 2011). This is particularly relevant in cross-border e-commerce, where consumers often show scepticism toward unfamiliar brands and international sellers (Sohaib & Kang, 2015). Influencers’ trustworthiness helps reduce perceived risks, functioning as “trusted third parties” that connect consumers with foreign brands. This reflects the principles of source credibility and social influence theories, which explain that audiences are more persuaded by credible and authentic sources (Hovland & Weiss, 1951).

Businesses should collaborate with influencers who demonstrate genuine connections with their audiences to strengthen emotional bonds and purchasing intention, while also evaluating authenticity to avoid overly promotional content. Another key discussion concerns macro- versus micro-influencers. Macro-influencers provide wider reach, but micro-influencers often achieve higher engagement and are perceived as more authentic (De Veirman et al., 2017). This creates a dilemma for cross-border e-commerce: pursue broad visibility or target deeper engagement within niche audiences. Research shows micro-influencers are particularly effective in industries like beauty, fashion, and lifestyle, where their strong follower relationships enhance trust (Elwood et al., 2021). However, the global exposure offered by macro-influencers remains valuable for large-scale brand awareness campaigns. Therefore, firms may benefit from a hybrid strategy, combining macro- and micro-influencers depending on specific campaign goals.

One of the most important impacts of influencer marketing in cross-border trade is its effectiveness in reducing consumer-perceived risk. Consumers are often hesitant to purchase from international sellers due to concerns about product quality, delivery, and

payment security. Influencers help address this by providing social proof and reassurance (Casaló et al., 2020; Dagher, 2022). This aligns with risk perception theory, which explains that consumers evaluate risk based on available information, experience, and external cues. Through trusted recommendations, influencers not only promote products but also establish credibility for international brands lacking local recognition. This reflects a broader shift in consumer decision-making, where social proof has become a central factor in purchase behaviour.

Cultural relevance also plays a vital role in influencer marketing across borders. Influencers who adapt their content to local norms and cultural values are more successful in building trust (Hochreiter & Waldhauser, 2014). This corresponds with cultural adaptation theory, which highlights the need for marketing strategies to adjust beyond language to encompass local customs, values, and consumer behavior (Hofstede, 1984). For businesses, this means influencer strategies must involve deeper cultural understanding, as simple translation is insufficient to foster trust in international markets. The debate between macro- and micro-influencers further underscores the complexity of influencer strategies. Micro-influencers tend to be more effective in niche markets due to higher engagement and perceived authenticity, whereas macro-influencers provide broader reach and authority (Şenyapar, 2024). The choice depends on campaign goals and target markets, indicating that a flexible rather than one-size-fits-all approach is necessary in influencer marketing.

These findings emphasize the crucial role of influencer marketing in strengthening consumer trust in cross-border e-commerce (Abid, 2025). Influencer credibility, engagement, and cultural adaptation are key drivers of trust. While both macro- and micro-influencers offer distinct advantages, businesses must carefully align their selection with campaign objectives. Importantly, the ability of influencers to reduce risk and deliver social proof is particularly significant in international transactions, making influencer marketing a powerful tool for global brand expansion.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study reveals that influencer marketing significantly enhances consumer trust in cross-border e-commerce by leveraging credibility, engagement, and cultural adaptation to reduce perceived risks and provide social proof. Influencers bridge trust gaps between international brands and local consumers through authentic endorsements, with micro-influencers excelling in niche markets due to stronger personal connections and macro-influencers offering broader reach for large-scale campaigns. Cultural relevance emerges as a critical factor, as tailored content aligned with local norms fosters emotional resonance and overcomes barriers like language differences and unfamiliar payment systems. The effectiveness of influencer strategies depends on aligning influencer type, content authenticity, and market context to drive purchase intentions in global transactions.

The findings imply that businesses should prioritize culturally sensitive influencer selection and hybrid macro-micro approaches to optimize trust-building in international markets. However, the study is limited by its reliance on secondary literature and a focus on general trends rather than specific regional data. Future research should incorporate primary data from emerging economies, explore influencer-product congruence, and examine real-time campaign metrics to refine strategies for diverse cultural settings and strengthen global e-commerce outcomes.

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heartfelt thanks to our families and colleagues for their continuous encouragement. In conclusion, influencer marketing plays a key role in fostering consumer trust in cross-border e-commerce, yet further research is needed to identify effective strategies for diverse global markets and to strengthen international campaigns.

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