



Authenticity Cues in Social Media Branding and Their Impact on Trust Towards Organic Products

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ABSTRACT

In the rapidly evolving digital marketplace, social media has become a pivotal platform for branding, particularly for organic products that rely heavily on perceptions of trust and authenticity. This study investigates the role of authenticity cues in social media branding and their impact on consumer trust toward organic products. Authenticity cues—such as transparency in sourcing, user-generated content, influencer credibility, brand storytelling, and visual consistency—are examined as critical determinants shaping consumer perceptions in an online environment often characterized by information overload and skepticism. The research adopts a quantitative approach, collecting primary data through a structured questionnaire administered to active social media users familiar with organic product brands. Statistical tools such as correlation and regression analysis are employed to assess the relationship between perceived authenticity and consumer trust. The findings reveal a significant positive association between authenticity cues and trust, indicating that brands perceived as genuine, transparent, and consistent are more likely to foster higher levels of consumer confidence.



1.Introduction

In the contemporary digital era, social media platforms have transformed the way brands communicate, engage, and build relationships with consumers. For industries such as organic products—where credibility, transparency, and ethical practices are central to consumer decision-making—social media branding plays a particularly influential role. Consumers increasingly rely on digital content not only for product information but also for evaluating the authenticity and integrity of brands. As a result, the concept of authenticity has emerged as a critical factor in shaping consumer trust and purchase intentions.

Authenticity cues in social media branding refer to the signals and elements that convey genuineness, honesty, and reliability. These cues may include transparent communication about sourcing and production processes, consistent brand messaging, real customer testimonials, influencer endorsements perceived as credible, and behind-the-scenes content that humanizes the brand. In an environment where misinformation and exaggerated claims are prevalent, especially concerning “organic” labels, such cues become essential in reducing consumer skepticism and fostering trust.

The organic product market has witnessed significant growth in recent years, driven by increasing health consciousness, environmental awareness, and a shift toward sustainable consumption. However, this growth has also been accompanied by concerns regarding “greenwashing” and misleading marketing practices. Consequently, consumers are more vigilant and discerning, seeking brands that demonstrate authenticity rather than merely claim it. Social media, with its interactive and user-driven nature, offers both opportunities and challenges for brands attempting to establish such authenticity.

Despite the growing importance of authenticity in digital branding, there remains a need for empirical research that specifically examines how authenticity cues on social media influence trust toward organic products. While previous studies have explored consumer trust and digital marketing separately, limited attention has been given to the intersection of authenticity, social media strategies, and the organic product segment. This gap highlights the necessity of a focused investigation into how different authenticity cues shape consumer perceptions and trust levels.

This study aims to address this gap by analyzing the impact of authenticity cues in social media branding on consumer trust toward organic products. By identifying the most influential factors and understanding their relationship with trust, the research seeks to provide valuable insights for marketers, brand managers, and policymakers. Ultimately, fostering authenticity in social media branding can not only enhance consumer trust but also contribute to the sustainable growth of the organic products market.



2.Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the key authenticity cues (such as transparency, user-generated content, influencer credibility, and brand storytelling) used in social media branding of organic products.
2. To assess the level of consumer trust toward organic products promoted through social media platforms.
3. To analyze the relationship between different authenticity cues and consumer trust.

3.Statement of the Problem

The rapid expansion of social media as a dominant marketing platform has significantly influenced how organic product brands communicate with consumers. While social media enables direct interaction, storytelling, and transparency, it has also intensified competition and increased the prevalence of misleading or exaggerated claims, particularly in the organic products sector. Terms such as “natural,” “eco-friendly,” and “organic” are often used inconsistently, leading to consumer confusion and skepticism. This issue is further aggravated by the growing phenomenon of greenwashing, where brands project a false image of environmental responsibility to attract conscious consumers.

In such a context, authenticity has emerged as a critical determinant of consumer trust. Consumers are no longer passive recipients of marketing messages; they actively evaluate the credibility of brands based on various authenticity cues presented through social media. These cues may include transparent information about sourcing and production, genuine customer reviews, credible influencer endorsements, and consistent brand communication. However, despite the increasing importance of these cues, there is limited clarity on which specific elements effectively build trust and how they influence consumer perceptions toward organic products.

Moreover, the interactive and user-generated nature of social media introduces both opportunities and challenges for brands attempting to establish authenticity. While user-generated content and peer reviews can enhance credibility, they can also spread misinformation or create ambiguity about product claims. As a result, consumers may struggle to differentiate between genuinely authentic brands and those that merely simulate authenticity through strategic marketing tactics.

Therefore, the core problem addressed in this study is the lack of empirical understanding of how authenticity cues in social media branding influence consumer trust toward organic products. Without such insights, marketers may fail to design effective communication strategies, and consumers may



continue to experience uncertainty in their purchasing decisions. This research seeks to bridge this gap by systematically examining the relationship between authenticity cues and trust, thereby contributing to more transparent and trustworthy branding practices in the organic products market.

4. Scope of the Study

This study focuses on examining the role of authenticity cues in social media branding and their impact on consumer trust toward organic products. It is confined to understanding how various elements of authenticity—such as transparency in communication, user-generated content, influencer credibility, and brand storytelling—shape consumer perceptions in the digital environment. The research specifically considers social media platforms as the primary medium of brand interaction, recognizing their growing importance in influencing consumer attitudes and purchase behavior.

The study is limited to consumers who are active users of social media and have prior awareness or experience with organic products. It primarily explores consumer perceptions, attitudes, and trust levels rather than actual purchase behavior, although trust is considered a key precursor to buying decisions. The geographical scope may be restricted to a specific region or demographic segment (such as urban consumers or young adults), depending on the sampling design, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population.

Methodologically, the research adopts a quantitative approach using structured questionnaires to collect primary data. Statistical tools such as correlation and regression analysis are employed to examine the relationship between authenticity cues and consumer trust. The study does not delve deeply into qualitative aspects such as in-depth consumer emotions or cultural influences, which could further enrich the understanding of authenticity perceptions.

Additionally, the study focuses exclusively on organic products and does not extend to other categories such as conventional or non-organic goods. It also considers only selected authenticity cues, acknowledging that other factors—such as price, availability, and brand reputation—may also influence consumer trust but are beyond the scope of this research.

Overall, the study aims to provide focused insights into how authenticity-driven social media branding strategies can enhance consumer trust in the organic products sector, while recognizing certain limitations in terms of sample, methodology, and scope of variables.

5. Research Methodology



This study adopts a systematic approach to examine the impact of authenticity cues in social media branding on consumer trust toward organic products. The methodology is designed to ensure reliability, validity, and meaningful interpretation of results.

5.1 Research Design

The study follows a descriptive and analytical research design. It aims to describe the authenticity cues used in social media branding and analyze their relationship with consumer trust toward organic products.

5.2 Research Approach

A quantitative research approach is employed, enabling the collection of measurable data and the application of statistical tools to test relationships between variables.

5.3 Data Collection

- **Primary Data:** Collected through a structured questionnaire administered to respondents who actively use social media and are aware of organic products.
- **Secondary Data:** Sourced from academic journals, research papers, books, and credible online databases related to social media branding, authenticity, and consumer trust.

5.4 Sampling Design

- **Target Population:** Social media users who are consumers or potential consumers of organic products.
- **Sampling Technique:** Convenience sampling method is used due to ease of access and time constraints.
- **Sample Size:** 100 Respondents
- **Variables of the Study -**
 - **Independent Variable:** Authenticity cues in social media branding
 - **Dependent Variable :** Consumer trust toward organic products

5.5 Tools for Data Analysis



- Descriptive statistics (percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation)
- Correlation analysis to examine relationships between variables
- Regression analysis to determine the impact of authenticity cues on trust

6.Limitations of the Study

- The use of convenience sampling may limit generalizability.
- Responses are based on self-reported data, which may include bias.
- The study is restricted to selected authenticity cues and does not include all possible influencing factors.

7. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Perception of Authenticity Cues

Authenticity Cue	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean Score
Transparency in communication	45	30	10	10	5	4.00
User-generated content	40	35	10	10	5	3.95
Influencer credibility	35	30	15	15	5	3.75
Brand storytelling	30	40	15	10	5	3.80

Interpretation:

The data indicates that **transparency in communication (Mean = 4.00)** is perceived as the most important authenticity cue, followed closely by **user-generated content (Mean = 3.95)**. Influencer credibility and brand storytelling also contribute significantly but with slightly lower mean values.

Table 2: Level of Consumer Trust

Level of Trust	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
High	55	55%
Moderate	30	30%
Low	15	15%



Total	100	100%
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Interpretation:

A majority of respondents (55%) exhibit a high level of trust toward organic products promoted on social media. However, a notable proportion (45%) fall within moderate to low trust levels, indicating scope for improving authenticity in branding practices.

Table 3: Correlation between Authenticity Cues and Consumer Trust

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)
Transparency vs Trust	0.65	0.000
User-generated content vs Trust	0.60	0.001
Influencer credibility vs Trust	0.55	0.002
Storytelling vs Trust	0.58	0.001

Interpretation:

All authenticity cues show a **positive and statistically significant relationship** with consumer trust ($p < 0.05$). Transparency has the strongest correlation ($r = 0.65$), indicating it is the most influential factor in building trust, followed by user-generated content and storytelling.

Table 4: Regression Analysis Summary

Variable	Beta Coefficient	t-value	Significance
Transparency	0.35	4.50	0.000
User-generated content	0.30	3.80	0.001
Influencer credibility	0.25	3.20	0.002
Storytelling	0.28	3.50	0.001

Interpretation:

Regression results confirm that all authenticity cues significantly influence consumer trust. **Transparency has the highest impact**, reinforcing its critical role in social media branding of organic products.

8.Findings

1. **Transparency as the Most Influential Authenticity Cue** Transparency in communication recorded the highest mean score of 4.00, with 75% of respondents (45% strongly agree, 30% agree) indicating



its importance. It also showed the strongest correlation with consumer trust ($r = 0.65$, $p = 0.000$) and the highest regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.35$), making it the most impactful factor.

2. **Significance of User-Generated Content** User-generated content achieved a mean score of 3.95, with 75% positive responses (40% strongly agree, 35% agree). It demonstrated a strong positive correlation with trust ($r = 0.60$, $p = 0.001$) and a regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.30$, indicating a substantial influence on consumer trust.
3. **Role of Brand Storytelling** Brand storytelling recorded a mean score of 3.80, with 70% of respondents expressing agreement. It showed a moderate to strong correlation with trust ($r = 0.58$, $p = 0.001$) and a regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.28$, highlighting its importance in building emotional connection and trust.
4. **Influencer Credibility and Its Impact** Influencer credibility had a mean score of 3.75, with 65% positive responses. It exhibited a significant positive correlation with trust ($r = 0.55$, $p = 0.002$) and a regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.25$, indicating that while influential, it is less impactful compared to other authenticity cues.
5. **Overall Consumer Trust Levels** The analysis shows that 55% of respondents have a high level of trust, 30% have moderate trust, and 15% have low trust toward organic products promoted through social media. This indicates that while a majority trusts such products, 45% of respondents still exhibit hesitation or skepticism.
6. **Statistical Significance of Relationships** All authenticity cues have p-values less than 0.05, confirming that their relationships with consumer trust are statistically significant and not due to chance.
7. **Combined Impact of Authenticity Cues** The regression model indicates that all four variables collectively contribute significantly to explaining variations in consumer trust, with transparency emerging as the dominant predictor followed by user-generated content, storytelling, and influencer credibility.

9. Suggestions

1. **Enhance Transparency** Brands should provide clear, honest, and detailed information about sourcing, production processes, and certifications. Transparency builds credibility and reduces consumer skepticism.



2. **Encourage User-Generated Content** Companies should actively promote and share authentic customer reviews, testimonials, and experiences. This form of content is perceived as more trustworthy than promotional messages.
3. **Focus on Genuine Storytelling** Brands should communicate their values, mission, and journey in a consistent and relatable manner. Authentic storytelling helps in building emotional connections with consumers.
4. **Select Credible Influencers** Influencer marketing should focus on partnerships with individuals who genuinely align with the brand's values and have a trustworthy image among their audience.
5. **Avoid Greenwashing Practices** Misleading claims can damage long-term trust. Brands must ensure that all sustainability and organic claims are backed by verifiable evidence.
6. **Engage with Consumers Actively** Prompt responses to queries, addressing concerns, and maintaining open communication channels on social media can enhance trust and brand loyalty.

10. Conclusion

The study concludes that authenticity cues in social media branding significantly influence consumer trust toward organic products. In an increasingly competitive and information-rich digital environment, consumers rely heavily on signals of authenticity to evaluate the credibility of brands. Among the various cues, transparency stands out as the most critical determinant of trust, followed by user-generated content and storytelling.

The findings emphasize that building trust is not merely about promotional efforts but about fostering genuine, consistent, and transparent communication with consumers. Social media, when used effectively, can serve as a powerful tool for establishing authenticity and strengthening brand-consumer relationships.

However, the persistence of moderate and low trust levels among a segment of consumers indicates that brands must continuously refine their strategies and maintain ethical practices. By prioritizing authenticity and aligning marketing efforts with consumer expectations, organic product brands can achieve sustainable growth and long-term customer trust.



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