

The Influence of Social Influencers on Awareness of ‘Don’t Drink and Drive’ Social Marketing Campaigns among Thai Youth

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(Received: February 17, 2026; Revised: May 19, 2026; Accepted: June 2, 2026)

Abstract

This study examines the influence of social influencer credibility on awareness of the "Don't Drink and Drive" (DDD) social marketing campaign among Thai youth. Drunk driving remains a major public safety concern in Thailand, particularly among young adults who are highly active on social media platforms. Grounded in the Source Credibility Model, this research investigates how three influencer attributes—attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness—affect campaign awareness. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted with 450 respondents aged 18–24 in Bangkok and Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that all hypothesized relationships are supported. Expertise emerged as the strongest predictor of trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.526$) and also showed the strongest direct effect on DDD campaign awareness ($\beta = 0.267$). In addition, trustworthiness significantly mediates the relationships between both attractiveness and expertise with campaign awareness. The findings extend the Source Credibility Model to a prosocial communication context and provide practical insights for policymakers and social marketing practitioners in designing effective influencer-based road safety campaigns targeting young audiences.

Keywords: 1) Attractiveness 2) Expertise 3) Trustworthiness 4) Awareness 5) Don’t Drink and Drive Social Marketing Campaigns

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Introduction

Drunk driving continues to be a major cause of road accidents around the world, and it remains a serious public health issue. The World Health Organization (WHO) puts the global road traffic death toll at around 1.19 million per year, and alcohol is wrapped up in a significant chunk of those deaths. The WHO points that alcohol is still a primary factor in disastrous traffic incidents, especially among people between 15 and 29 years old. This age group tends to engage in more high risk activities and also represents an important part of a country's developing workforce (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023, p. 9).

In Thailand, road accident fatalities are high compared to many countries in Southeast Asia, and a major contributing factor is driving under the influence of alcohol, especially during major festivals such as New Year and Songkran, which see a high number of reported accidents and fatalities each year (Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, 2023, p. 21). This national context underscores the urgency of identifying more effective communication strategies to reach at-risk populations, particularly Thai youth.

Young Thai people—particularly those aged 18 to 35—represent the highest-risk group for drunk driving in Thailand. National studies have stated that accidents involving alcohol tend to peak during major cultural festivals such as Songkran and the New Year period, with youth cohorts representing a disproportionately large share of offenders and victims. Despite widespread governmental campaigns under the 'Don't Drink and Drive' (DDD) banner,

the effectiveness of these initiatives among younger demographics has been inconsistent. Traditional media channels such as television and radio have demonstrated limited impact and engagement with Generation Z and younger Millennial audiences, who increasingly consume information through digital platforms and social networks (Kemp, 2024, p. 46). Generation Z and younger millennials are less likely to consume public service announcements via traditional television programming. Instead, they actively engage with digital platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, relying heavily on content from creators and influencers they perceive as trustworthy.

In today's digital age, social media has become the primary platform for Thai youth to receive information, especially platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, which play a significant role in shaping users' attitudes, values, and behaviors (Ismagilova, et al., 2020, p. 2; Lou and Yuan, 2019, p. 59). One of the key mechanisms of communication on social media is "social influencers" — individuals with significant followings who can influence the attitudes or behaviors of their followers through natural and intimate communication (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020, p. 2). Grounded in the Source Credibility Model (Ohanian, 1990, p. 41), which posits that communicator attributes — namely attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness — shape audience responses to persuasive messages, social influencers represent a theoretically grounded and practically viable channel for delivering road safety campaigns to young audiences. Numerous studies in the commercial market-

ing context have found that these influencer attributes significantly affect attitudes, brand awareness, and purchase intention (AlFarraj, et al., 2021, p. 356; De Veirman, et al., 2017, p. 799).

However, most research focuses on the context of commercial goods and services, and the application of social influencers in social marketing — particularly in campaigns against drunk driving — remains limited, especially within the Thai context. Furthermore, while existing studies often measure outcomes at the attitudinal or intentional level, campaign awareness as a distinct and earlier-stage outcome has received comparatively little scholarly attention. Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of social influencer attributes — namely attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness — on the awareness of the "Don't Drink and Drive" social marketing campaign among Thai youth. In doing so, this study contributes theoretically by extending the Source Credibility Model to a prosocial communication context, and practically by providing evidence-based insights for policymakers and campaign designers seeking to leverage influencer marketing for road safety communication in Thailand.

Literature Review

The Source Credibility Model

The Source Credibility Model, first introduced by Hovland, et al. (1953, p. 21), and later applied in marketing research by Ohanian (1990, p. 41), who refined source credibility into the three core dimensions of attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness—a framework that has since become a cornerstone of advertising

and communications research. With the digital shift, scholars have confirmed these same dimensions shape how we engage with social media influencers, affecting everything from our attitudes to our purchase intentions (Lou and Yuan, 2019, p. 59; Sokolova and Kefi, 2020, p. 2). More recent inquiries have further refined the model, revealing that these attributes can have distinct effects depending on the context; for instance, while different credibility factors drive engagement on Instagram (Ki, et al., 2020, p. 907), trustworthiness stands out as the primary driver for adopting health-related information online (Alghizzawi, 2019, p. 4). Despite these advancements, a clear gap remains in applying this model to prosocial initiatives in Southeast Asia, particularly in understanding how the structural relationships between attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness influence campaign awareness for issues like drunk driving in Thailand.

The Match-Up Hypothesis

The Match-Up Hypothesis, proposed by Kamins (1990, p. 4) and later extended by Till and Busler (2000, p. 2), suggests that endorsements are most persuasive when there is a strong perceived fit between the endorser and the product or cause. When audiences perceive this congruence, they attribute greater credibility and authenticity to the source, leading to more favorable attitudes and stronger behavioral intentions. Empirical studies across products and media contexts support the importance of this fit, particularly in influencer marketing and health-related decisions (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017, p. 2; Schouten et al., 2020, p. 259). However, limited research has examined the Match-Up Hypothesis in



anti-drunk-driving campaigns within Asian contexts, highlighting a need to explore influencer–campaign congruence in Southeast Asian social marketing initiatives.

Social Marketing Theory

Social marketing applies commercial marketing principles to promote behaviors that benefit individuals and society (Andreasen, 1994, p. 109; Lee and Kotler, 2019, p. 7). It emphasizes audience segmentation, behavior-change communication, and strategic message design, and has long guided road-safety campaigns. With the rise of digital media, influencer-led communication has become increasingly important for reaching younger audiences who rely more on social media than traditional channels (Rundle-Thiele et al., 2019, p. 162). Influencers can tailor messages, expand reach, and deliver health information in authentic and relatable ways. In Thailand, although anti-drunk-driving campaigns have been implemented for years, their effectiveness has varied, partly due to limited empirical evidence on which influencer attributes best enhance youth awareness. Social Marketing Theory positions awareness as a critical precursor to attitude and behavior change (Lee and Kotler, 2019, p. 15), highlighting the importance of examining how influencer-driven strategies can strengthen awareness in drunk-driving prevention contexts.

Attractiveness of Social Influencers

Attractiveness has long been recognized as a key determinant of endorser effectiveness, originating from McGuire's (1985, p. 235) early work on source effects. In contemporary influencer contexts, attractiveness extends beyond physical appearance to encompass

social qualities such as likeability, relatability, and aspirational appeal that shape audience perceptions (Ohanian, 1990, p. 41). Empirical studies in digital environments consistently show that attractive influencers generate higher engagement and stronger persuasive impact; parasocial interaction with attractive influencers has been linked to increased purchase intentions (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020, p. 2), and attractiveness has been shown to influence brand attitudes indirectly through perceived credibility (Lou and Yuan, 2019, p. 59). Even virtual influencers demonstrate similar effects, as digitally constructed attractiveness can foster credibility and behavioral intentions (Jin, et al., 2019, p. 322)

Expertise of Social Influencers

Expertise refers to the perception that a communicator possesses sufficient knowledge or skills to provide accurate and reliable information (Ohanian, 1990, p. 41). In influencer contexts, expertise is reflected through content specialization, transparency, and the consistent delivery of high-quality information (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017, p. 2). Within social marketing, expertise is crucial because audiences are more likely to process and accept messages from knowledgeable sources, consistent with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986, p. 125). The ELM proposes two cognitive routes to persuasion: under the central route, perceived expertise signals message credibility and motivates deeper argument evaluation, producing stronger and more durable attitude change; under the peripheral route, it functions as a heuristic cue, allowing low-involvement audiences to accept messages without extensive elaboration.

tion. In road-safety communication, influencers with relevant backgrounds in automotive, health, or safety advocacy may therefore enhance awareness and promote responsible behavior. Although prior research shows that perceived expertise influences health attitudes and message effectiveness (Argyris, et al., 2020, p. 4; Aw and Labrecque, 2020, p. 32; Simeon, et al., 2020, p. 11), its direct effect on awareness of drunk-driving prevention campaigns in Thailand remains underexplored.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, the third dimension of Ohanian's (1990, p.41) Source Credibility Model, refers to the extent to which a communicator is perceived as honest, sincere, and unbiased. In influencer marketing, it consistently emerges as a strong predictor of persuasion, often exerting greater influence than attractiveness or expertise (Alghizzawi, 2019, p. 4; Kim and Kim, 2021, p. 5). Trust is especially critical in health communication, where message acceptance depends on perceived source integrity (Flanagin and Metzger, 2007, p.321). On social media, trustworthiness is shaped by sponsorship transparency, consistent messaging, responsiveness, and authentic self-presentation (Chapple and Cownie, 2017, p. 10). In this study, trustworthiness functions as a mediating mechanism through which attractiveness and expertise enhance campaign awareness, as these cues build trust that subsequently increases engagement with and recognition of the campaign message. Prior research supports this mediating role (Kim and Kim, 2021, p. 6; Lou and Yuan, 2019, p. 59), providing a foundation for examining this pathway in Thai

drunk-driving prevention campaigns.

Don't Drink and Drive Campaign Awareness

Campaign awareness refers to the extent to which audiences recognize, recall, and understand key messages of a public health campaign and is considered the first step in the behavior-change process (Wakefield, Loken and Hornik, 2010, p. 1262). In drunk-driving prevention, prior research has largely focused on traditional mass media, while campaign awareness remains underexplored in influencer marketing studies. However, emerging evidence suggests that influencers can effectively amplify awareness of social initiatives (Rundle-Thiele, et al., 2019, p. 162). This is particularly relevant in Thailand, where youth primarily consume information through platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube (Kemp, 2024, p. 46), making influencer-driven strategies a critical tool for enhancing awareness of anti-drunk-driving campaigns.

Hypothesis Development

Based on the theoretical foundations and variable reviews presented above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Lou and Yuan (2019, p. 59) and Kim and Kim (2021, p. 6) provide theoretical and empirical support for the attractiveness-trustworthiness pathway, demonstrating that audiences use physical and social attractiveness as a heuristic cue for inferring source sincerity and reliability. In the digital context, where influencer-follower relationships are characterized by parasocial intimacy, attractiveness attributions are expected to translate into robust trust perceptions (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020, p. 2).



H1: The attractiveness of social influencers has a positive influence on the trustworthiness.

Attractive influencers command greater audience attention and engagement, increasing the likelihood that campaign messages are noticed, processed, and retained (Jin, et al., 2019, p. 322; Ohanian, 1990, p. 41). This direct effect of attractiveness on awareness is expected to persist even when controlling for the indirect pathway through trustworthiness.

H2: The attractiveness of social influencers has a positive direct influence on Thai youths' awareness of the 'Don't Drink and Drive' social marketing campaign.

Domain-specific knowledge and demonstrated competence are theoretically associated with enhanced source credibility, including trustworthiness attributions (Ohanian, 1990, p. 41). Empirical support from Aw and Labrecque (2020, p. 32) and Simeon, et al. (2020, p. 11) demonstrates that expertise perceptions significantly predict trust in social media health communicators.

H3: The expertise of social influencers has a positive influence on the trustworthiness.

Expert influencers generate more informative, credible, and persuasive campaign content, which audiences are more likely to attend to, process deeply, and remember (Argyris, et al., 2020, p. 4; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986, p. 125). A direct expertise-awareness pathway is expected in addition to the indirect pathway through trustworthiness.

H4: The expertise of social influencers has a positive direct influence on Thai youths' awareness of the 'Don't Drink and Drive' social

marketing campaign.

Trustworthiness is theorized as the most proximal driver of campaign awareness among source credibility dimensions. Audiences who trust an influencer are more likely to attend to, engage with, and remember the campaign messages they communicate, as trust reduces skepticism and promotes message acceptance (Alghizzawi, 2019, p. 4; Flanagan and Metzger, 2007, p. 321; Kim and Kim, 2021, p. 5).

H5: The trustworthiness of social influencers has a positive influence on Thai youths' awareness of the 'Don't Drink and Drive' social marketing campaign.

H6a: The trustworthiness mediates the relationship between attractiveness and 'Don't Drink and Drive' campaign awareness.

H6b: The trustworthiness mediates the relationship between expertise and 'Don't Drink and Drive' campaign awareness.

Research Framework

The conceptual framework of this study illustrates the proposed structural relationships among the four key variables: influencer attractiveness, influencer expertise, trustworthiness, and DDD campaign awareness. Attractiveness and expertise serve as exogenous predictor variables, each exerting both direct effects on campaign awareness and indirect effects mediated by trustworthiness. Trustworthiness functions as the central mediating variable connecting source characteristics to campaign outcomes.

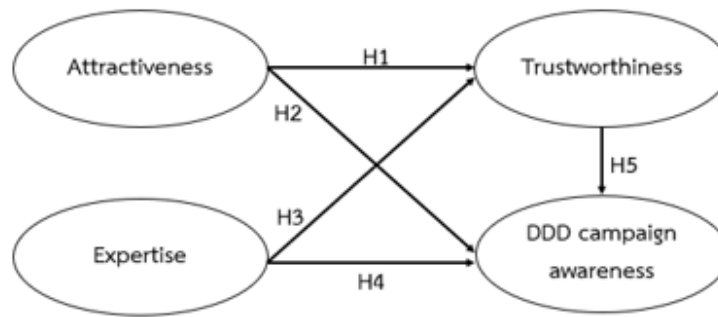


Figure 1 The research model

Research Methods

This study employs quantitative, cross-sectional survey research design utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) as the primary analytical technique. SEM is particularly well-suited to this research because it allows for the simultaneous examination of multiple regression relationships, the modeling of latent constructs measured by multiple indicators, and the testing of mediation pathways—capabilities that are essential for validating the proposed research framework (Hair, et al., 2019, p. 5). In this study, the partial least squares structural equation model (PLS-SEM) was applied. PLS-SEM was preferred over covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) because it is more suitable for exploratory research with complex mediation models, does not require multivariate normality assumptions, and performs well with moderate sample sizes (Hair, et al., 2019, p. 11). Within the PLS context, the assessment of the outer measurement model serves a function analogous to CFA by evaluating indicator reliability and construct validity of reflective constructs (Hair, et al., 2019, p.138).

Population and Target Sample

The target population comprises Thai youth aged 18–24 who actively use social

media platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube and have been exposed to road safety or drunk-driving prevention content, including don't-drink-and-drive campaign awareness, online. This age group is selected because it represents the demographic at highest risk for alcohol-related traffic accidents in Thailand and forms a primary audience for influencer-generated content. The study focuses on respondents living in urban and semi-urban areas of two major provinces — Bangkok, representing the Central region, and Nakhon Ratchasima, representing the Northeastern region — to ensure regional representation across distinct geographic contexts. This pairing is deliberate, as urban populations in Bangkok demonstrate higher social media usage frequency and greater exposure to online health campaigns compared to non-metropolitan counterparts (Electronic Transactions Development Agency [ETDA], 2023, p. 24), while the Northeastern region consistently reports among the highest rates of alcohol-related road traffic fatalities in Thailand (Department of Disease Control, 2023, p. 45), suggesting meaningful differences in don't-drink-and-drive campaign awareness and influencer content exposure across the two provinces.



Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A purposive and snowball sampling technique will be employed. Given the challenges of defining and accessing a comprehensive sampling frame for the target population, purposive sampling enables the researcher to deliberately recruit respondents who meet the inclusion criteria (age 18–24, active social media use, residence in target provinces). Snowball sampling will supplement purposive recruitment by leveraging the social networks of initial respondents to reach additional eligible participants, which is particularly effective in digital research contexts.

Sample size determination was guided by the requirements of SEM. Hair, et al., (2019, p. 24) recommend a minimum of 10 respondents per estimated parameter in SEM, with a minimum absolute sample size of 200.

Given the research model contains five latent constructs with a total of 20 observed indicator variables and a minimum sample of 200 is required. This study targets a sample of $N = 450$ to provide sufficient statistical power (> 0.80) for the detection of small-to-medium effect sizes at a significance level of 0.05, consistent with recommendations from Cohen (1992, p. 157) as applied in SEM contexts (MacCallum, Brown and Sugawara, 1996, p. 134).

Measurement Scales

All constructs will be measured using multi-item reflective scales adapted from validated instruments published in peer-reviewed literature. A five-point Likert scale anchored at 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) will be used for all items to ensure scale consistency and comparability across constructs.

Table 1 Measurement Scales

Constructs	Measurement items	Sources
Attractiveness	ATT1: The influencer is attractive.	Ohanian (1990); Lou & Yuan (2019)
	ATT2: The influencer is classy and sophisticated.	
	ATT3: The influencer is beautiful.	
	ATT4: The influencer is elegant and stylish classy	
	ATT5: The influencer is sexy.	
Expertise	EXP1: The influencer is an expert.	Ohanian (1990); Lou & Yuan (2019); Aw & Labrecque (2020); Kim & Kim (2021)
	EXP2: The influencer is an experienced.	
	EXP3: The influencer is knowledgeable.	
	EXP4: The influencer is qualified.	
	EXP5: The influencer is skilled.	
Trustworthiness	TRU1: The influencer is trustworthy.	Ohanian (1990); Kim & Kim (2021)
	TRU2: The influencer is dependable.	
	TRU3: The influencer is honest.	
	TRU4: The influencer is reliable.	
	TRU5: The influencer is sincere.	

Constructs	Measurement items	Sources
DDD Awareness	AWA1: I am aware of the 'Don't Drink and Drive' campaign promoted by influencers on social media.	Wakefield et al. (2010)
	AWA2: I can recall specific content from the DDD campaign that I saw from influencers.	
	AWA3: I recognize the key messages of the DDD campaign promoted through influencer content.	
	AWA4: I understand the main purpose of the DDD campaign as communicated by influencers.	
	AWA5: I have noticed the DDD campaign frequently appearing in the content of influencers.	

Results

To examine the conceptual framework in this study, the partial least squares structural equation model (PLS-SEM) was adopted. The reliability and validity of the measurement instrument were verified. To evaluate the reliability of this study, the value of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability greater than 0.7 is considered to be reliable (Hair, et al., 2019, p. 115). The convergent validity is considered good if the outer loadings of the measurement items are greater than 0.6 and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each construct greater than 0.5 (Hair, et al., 2019, p. 116). To evaluate discriminant validity, both the Fornell Larcker criterion and heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio were assessed.

Descriptive statistics for scale items

The mean value, standard deviation, kurtosis and skewness of each scale item are shown in Table 2. According to Schumacker and Lomax (2004, p. 69), if the skewness and kurtosis values fall within range of ± 2 , the data can be considered to follow a normal distribution. Thus, the data of this research is normally distributed (Hair, Black and Babin, 2010, p. 36).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

To assess the proposed hypotheses of this research, CFA was conducted using PLS-SEM. The authors followed the procedure suggested by Hair, Howard and Nitzl (2020, p. 1014) for data analysis and reporting of measurement and structural model. With regard to the measurement model, both reliability and validity are confirmed. As shown in Table 3, all scale items' factor loadings are higher than 0.776. In addition, the AVE and CR values of Attractiveness, Expertise, Trustworthiness and DDD Awareness are greater than their benchmarks (i.e. 0.50 and 0.70), respectively. Concerning indicator consistency reliability, the authors referred to rho_A rather than Cronbach's alpha and CR. Dijkstra and Henseler (2015, p.300) explained that Cronbach's alpha usually underestimates true reliability, and CR usually overestimates true reliability. The rho_A value of the latent variables ranges between 0.857 and 0.913, so this research's internal consistency is confirmed Hair, et al., (2019, p. 115). According to convergent validity and discriminant validity, AVE and HTMT shown as Table 4 are used as reference, and the latent variables'



AVE and HTMT are higher than the thresholds Hair, et al. (2019, p. 116). The measurement model is established based on the indicator loadings, rho_A, AVE, and HTMT values.

Before examining the structural model, the variance inflation factor (VIF) of this re-

search was checked for collinearity. As shown in Table 5, all the VIF values are less than the benchmark of 3.3, indicating that there is no multicollinearity issue in this study Hair, Ringle and Sarstedt (2013, p. 5).

Table 2 Descriptive analysis

Construct items	Mean	St. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Attractiveness				
Att_1	3.83	.910	-.076	-.126
Att_2	3.86	.920	.066	.013
Att_3	4.04	.873	-.190	.115
Att_4	3.82	.904	-.023	-.201
Att_5	3.75	.868	-.157	-.240
Expertise				
Exp_1	3.80	.911	-.001	-.341
Exp_2	4.17	.858	.052	.362
Exp_3	3.75	.952	.067	.031
Exp_4	3.88	.908	.105	-.251
Exp_5	3.97	.914	-.110	.307
Trustworthiness				
Trust_1	4.05	.890	-.079	-.220
Trust_2	4.28	.889	.010	.410
Trust_3	4.29	.841	.102	-.007
Trust_4	4.20	.866	-.013	-.130
Trust_5	3.75	.910	.052	-.135
DDD Awareness				
Aware_1	3.90	.927	-.016	-.070
Aware_2	4.11	.914	.024	.032
Aware_3	4.01	.956	.005	-.201
Aware_4	3.89	.853	-.001	.341
Aware_5	3.74	.946	.200	.064

Table 3 Assessment results of the measurement model

Construct items	Loading	Cronbach's α	rho_A	CR	AVE
Attractiveness		0.857	0.857	0.898	0.637
Att_1	0.790				
Att_2	0.790				
Att_3	0.838				
Att_4	0.776				
Att_5	0.795				
Expertise		0.877	0.880	0.911	0.672
Exp_1	0.776				
Exp_2	0.877				
Exp_3	0.781				
Exp_4	0.829				
Exp_5	0.829				
Trustworthiness		0.911	0.913	0.934	0.738
Trust_1	0.844				
Trust_2	0.893				
Trust_3	0.880				
Trust_4	0.871				
Trust_5	0.803				
DDD Awareness		0.857	0.857	0.915	0.682
Aware_1	0.827				
Aware_2	0.847				
Aware_3	0.847				
Aware_4	0.802				
Aware_5	0.807				

Note: CR= Composite Reliability, AVE =Average Variance Explained

Table 4 Discriminant Validity

	Attract	DDD Awareness	Expertise	Trust
Attract	0.798			
DDD Awareness	0.477	0.826		
Expertise	0.567	0.530	0.819	
Trust	0.524	0.506	0.654	0.859

**Table 5** Variance inflation factor (VIF)

	Attract	DDD Awareness	Expertise	Trust
Attract		1.568		1.473
DDD Awareness				
Expertise		1.988		1.473
Trust		1.861		

The structural equation model

The structural model is presented in Fig. 2. The model explains 46.3% of the variance in trustworthiness ($R^2 = 0.463$), indicating a moderate-to-substantial explanatory power, and 35.3% of the variance in DDD awareness ($R^2 = 0.353$), indicating a moderate level of predictive accuracy (Hair, et al., 2019, p. 175). With regard to the path analysis, the authors assessed

path coefficient, t-value, p-value and effect size (f^2) Based on Table 6, H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 are supported. In relation to the assessment of mediation analysis, this research applied “bootstrapping the indirect effect” for testing mediating effect (Hair, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2013, p. 8). The results summary of the bootstrapping analysis is shown in Table 7.

Table 6 Path coefficient

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path coefficient	T-value	P-Value	Effect size	Decision
H1	Attract -> Trust	0.226	5.595	0.000	0.065	Supported
H2	Attract -> DDD Awareness	0.209	5.438	0.000	0.043	Supported
H3	Expertise -> Trust	0.526	14.333	0.000	0.350	Supported
H4	Expertise -> DDD Awareness	0.267	8.502	0.000	0.055	Supported
H5	Trust -> DDD Awareness	0.221	4.254	0.000	0.041	Supported

Table 7 Mediation effects

Hypothesis	Relationship	T-value	P-Value	Decision
H6a	Attract -> Trust -> DDD Awareness	3.537	0.000	Supported
H6b	Expertise -> Trust -> DDD Awareness	4.040	0.000	Supported

Among all predictors, expertise emerged as the strongest predictor as shown in table 6 and table 7, with the largest effect on trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.526$, $t = 14.333$, $p = 0.000$, $f^2 = 0.350$, indicating a large effect) and

the strongest direct effect on DDD awareness ($\beta = 0.267$, $t = 8.502$, $p = 0.000$, $f^2 = 0.055$, indicating a small-to-moderate effect). Attractiveness also showed positive effects on both trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.226$, $t = 5.595$, $p = 0.000$,

$f^2 = 0.065$) and DDD awareness ($\beta = 0.209$, $t = 5.438$, $p = 0.000$, $f^2 = 0.043$). Trustworthiness positively predicted DDD awareness ($\beta = 0.221$, $t = 4.254$, $p = 0.000$, $f^2 = 0.041$). The effect sizes for attractiveness and trustworthiness paths to DDD awareness are small, while expertise demonstrates a comparatively larger influence,

suggesting its central role in driving campaign awareness. Furthermore, trustworthiness significantly mediated the relationships between attractiveness and DDD awareness ($t = 3.537$, $p = 0.000$) and between expertise and DDD awareness ($t = 4.040$, $p = 0.000$), supporting H6a and H6b respectively.

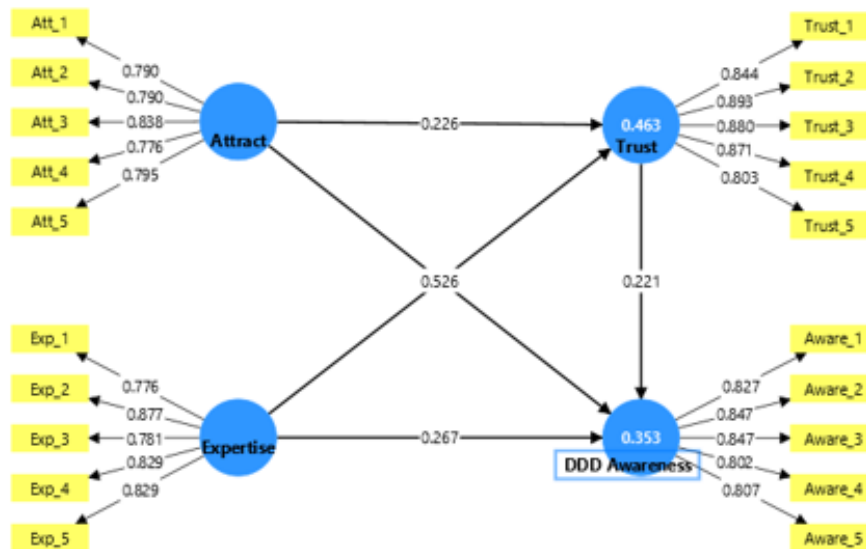


Figure 2 Final model

Discussion

This study empirically examined the influence of social influencer attributes— attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness—on Thai youth awareness of the "Don't Drink and Drive" (DDD) social marketing campaign. All five direct hypotheses (H1–H5) and both mediation hypotheses (H6a–H6b) were supported. The findings are interpreted below in relation to existing literature.

The results showing that influencer attractiveness positively predicts both trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.226$, $p < 0.001$) and DDD campaign awareness ($\beta = 0.209$, $p < 0.001$) align with Ohanian's (1990, p.41) Source Credibility Model and prior endorsement research, which

suggests that physically and socially attractive influencers draw greater attention and foster stronger parasocial connections that support message processing (Lou and Yuan, 2019, p. 59; Sokolova and Kefi, 2020, p. 2). In Thailand's visually driven social media culture, this attractiveness effect is especially relevant, and although its impact on DDD awareness is modest ($f^2 = 0.043$), its consistent significance across direct and indirect pathways highlights its practical value for public health communication. This pattern echoes findings by Jin, Muqaddam and Ryu (2019, p.322), who showed that even virtual influencers' attractiveness can generate credibility and behavioral responses, reinforcing the idea that attractiveness functions as an



initial heuristic cue that encourages young Thai users to pause, attend to, and begin processing campaign content before engaging in deeper credibility evaluations.

Expertise emerged as the strongest predictor in the model, exerting substantial effects on both trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.526$, $f^2 = 0.350$) and DDD awareness ($\beta = 0.267$, $f^2 = 0.055$), far exceeding the influence of attractiveness. This pattern aligns with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986, p. 125), which suggests that expert sources prompt deeper, central route processing of persuasive messages. Prior research reinforces this central role of expertise: Simeon et al. (2020, p. 11) found that perceived influencer expertise predicted shifts in health protective attitudes among young adults, while Argyris et al. (2020, p. 4) showed that expertise strengthened the impact of food safety messages. In Asian contexts, Aw and Labrecque (2020, p. 32) similarly demonstrated that expertise shaped Taiwanese consumers' product attitudes. The disproportionately large effect of expertise relative to attractiveness may be attributable to the high-involvement nature of road safety as a topic — unlike commercial products, drunk-driving prevention carries salient personal risk implications, which motivates audiences to seek out and rely on knowledge-based credibility cues rather than superficial appeal when processing campaign messages (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986, p. 125). This suggests that in prosocial communication contexts, content-specific knowledge signals may carry greater persuasive weight than in commercial endorsement settings. The particularly large

effect of expertise on trustworthiness ($f^2 = 0.350$) indicates that audiences rely heavily on content specific knowledge when forming trust in road safety communication. Given the high involvement nature of drunk driving prevention, influencers with demonstrable knowledge of road safety, accident data, or health policy are therefore far more effective than entertainment focused creators in generating meaningful campaign awareness.

Both mediation hypotheses were supported, showing that trustworthiness partially mediated the effects of attractiveness on DDD awareness (H6a, $t = 3.537$, $p < 0.001$) and of expertise on DDD awareness (H6b, $t = 4.040$, $p < 0.001$). These results extend the Source Credibility Model by illustrating that trustworthiness serves as the key mechanism through which other credibility dimensions exert their persuasive influence. The attractiveness on trustworthiness on awareness pathway suggests that visually appealing influencers first capture attention and evoke likeability, which then fosters trust and improves campaign recall, consistent with Lou and Yuan's (2019, p.59) findings. The stronger mediation through expertise reinforces the importance of knowledge-based credibility, aligning with Kim and Kim's (2021, p. 6) argument that trust mediates how source characteristics shape follower responses. Importantly, the partial mediation indicates that both attractiveness and expertise continue to exert direct effects on DDD awareness, implying that these characteristics influence campaign outcomes through multiple channels—both via trust formation and through direct cognitive engagement—high-

lighting the multidimensional nature of influencer persuasion in prosocial communication.

Conclusion

This study examined how influencer attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness shape Thai youth awareness of the “Don’t Drink and Drive” campaign, using PLS SEM with a sample of 450 young adults from Bangkok and Nakhon Ratchasima, and found support for all hypotheses. The results show that all three credibility dimensions significantly influence campaign awareness, with expertise emerging as the strongest predictor and trustworthiness serving as a key mediating mechanism linking both attractiveness and expertise to awareness. These findings extend the Source Credibility Model into a prosocial digital context, demonstrating its explanatory value for public health communication, as reflected in the model’s R^2 values of 0.463 for trustworthiness and 0.353 for DDD awareness. Practically, the results suggest that Thai public health agencies and social marketing practitioners should prioritize influencers perceived as expert and trustworthy—rather than relying solely on popularity or visual appeal—when designing influencer based drunk driving prevention campaigns for young audiences.

Theoretical Contributions

This study offers four key contributions. First, it extends the Source Credibility Model (Hovland, Janis and Kelley, 1953, p.20; Ohanian, 1990, p.41) to prosocial campaign awareness by providing empirical evidence that attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness jointly predict anti-drunk-driving awareness

among Thai youth, addressing a gap in South-east Asian social marketing research. Second, it shows that trustworthiness partially mediates the effects of attractiveness and expertise on awareness, demonstrating that credibility operates through a trust-based mechanism in socially sensitive contexts. Third, the study advances Social Marketing Theory (Andreasen, 1994, p. 110; Lee and Kotler, 2019, p. 15) by positioning influencer credibility as an antecedent of campaign awareness—the initial stage of behavior change (Wakefield, Loken and Hornik, 2010, p. 1262). Finally, it contributes methodologically by employing PLS-SEM with bootstrapped mediation analysis and rigorous reliability and validity assessments (ρ_A , AVE, HTMT), strengthening analytical robustness in influencer credibility research.

Managerial Contributions

The findings provide several practical implications for public health communicators and social marketing practitioners. First, influencer selection for drunk-driving prevention campaigns should prioritize perceived expertise and trustworthiness over follower count or visual appeal, as influencers with relevant backgrounds in road safety, health, or legal domains are more likely to enhance awareness among Thai youth. Second, campaign designers should actively foster trust through authentic storytelling, transparent sponsorship disclosure, and meaningful engagement, as trust-building strategies significantly strengthen awareness. Third, given Thai youths’ reliance on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, public health efforts should allocate greater resources to influenc-



er-led digital campaigns rather than traditional broadcast media. Finally, although expertise and trustworthiness are the strongest predictors, the significant effect of attractiveness suggests that effective influencers should combine topical credibility with a relatable and visually engaging presence.

Recommendations for Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design limits causal inference, suggesting future research should adopt longitudinal or experimental methods to examine whether influencer-driven awareness leads to attitude and behavioral change. The sample, restricted to youth aged 18–24 in Bangkok and Nakhon Ratchasima, limits generalizability, highlighting

the need to test the model in rural areas, older age groups, and other ASEAN contexts. The Match-Up Hypothesis was not tested as a moderator, leaving open the question of whether influencer–campaign congruence strengthens credibility effects. Additionally, the study focused solely on campaign awareness, calling for future research to explore downstream outcomes such as attitudes, norms, and self-reported behavior. Differences across influencer tiers and platforms were not examined, despite evidence that micro-influencers may generate higher trust and engagement (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017, p. 2; Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget, 2020, p. 262), and cultural factors may further shape credibility mechanisms across ASEAN settings.

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