

Virtual Influencers, Real Impact: A Narrative Review on Credibility, Generational Trust, and Purchase Intention in Digital Marketing

Annisa Rizki Ananda¹, Muhammad Nur Tanja Putra², Muhammad Irvan Yazid Azhar Pasaribu³

¹²³Universitas Muhammadiyah Palangkaraya, Indonesia

Correspondent: annisarizkianandas@gmail.com¹

Received : April 20, 2025

Accepted : May 23, 2025

Published : May 31, 2025

Citation: Ananda, A.R., Putra, M.N.T., & Pasaribu, M.I.Y.A., (2025). Virtual Influencers, Real Impact: A Narrative Review on Credibility, Generational Trust, and Purchase Intention in Digital Marketing. Sinergi International Journal of Communication Sciences. 3(2), 99-111.

<https://doi.org/10.61194/ijcs.v3i2.690>

ABSTRACT: This narrative review investigates the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behavior, with a focus on the dimensions of influencer credibility, parasocial relationships, generational response differences, and the emerging role of virtual influencers. The study aims to synthesize current literature and provide an integrative framework to understand how these factors shape consumer purchase intent in digital contexts. Using a narrative synthesis methodology, the review draws from recent empirical studies and theoretical models to analyze how psychological mechanisms and systemic factors interact in influencer marketing. Key findings reveal that credibility attributes such as trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, and consistency are fundamental in influencing consumer trust and brand engagement. Parasocial relationships enhance emotional connections between influencers and followers, mediating the effectiveness of endorsement. Furthermore, generational differences in digital behavior necessitate personalized communication strategies. The review also highlights the dual nature of virtual influencers, offering consistent branding but facing challenges in perceived authenticity. Systemic influences—such as platform algorithms, regulatory frameworks, and ethical standards—play a critical role in either enabling or constraining the reach and effectiveness of campaigns. This review underscores the urgency for adaptive, ethical, and transparent marketing practices. It recommends future research into culturally inclusive frameworks, long-term engagement metrics, and data-driven personalization strategies. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of digital consumer psychology and provide actionable insights for both scholars and marketing practitioners in the age of social media.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Credibility, Parasocial Relationship, Virtual Influencers, Generational Marketing, Digital Transparency.



This is an open access article under the CC-BY 4.0 license

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary digital landscape, the proliferation of social media has profoundly altered the dynamics of consumer behavior and brand engagement. One of the most notable phenomena is the rise of social media influencers (SMIs), individuals who possess the ability to influence

audiences through digital platforms by virtue of their perceived expertise, authenticity, or popularity (Dinh & Lee, 2021; Vrontis et al., 2021). Companies increasingly rely on influencer-based marketing strategies to deliver brand messages effectively to a diverse and segmented audience, leveraging the influencer's ability to build rapport and trust with their followers. Recent studies underscore the importance of emotional triggers, such as the fear of missing out (FOMO), in shaping consumer intent, especially when influencer content is perceived as engaging and timely (Han & Balabanis, 2023).

Emerging literature has confirmed that the marketing ecosystem is experiencing a paradigmatic shift from traditional mass media strategies to more personalized and data-driven influencer campaigns (Han & Balabanis, 2023; Vrontis et al., 2021). This evolution is fueled by technological advancements, high internet penetration, and the demand for real-time, interactive communication between influencers and their audiences (Dinh & Lee, 2021). As a result, marketers are adopting more refined analytics to measure influencer effectiveness and identify behavioral insights. Additionally, the role of influencers in consumer decision-making is becoming more complex, involving psychological, emotional, and socio-cultural factors (Lee & Eastin, 2021).

Statistical data indicate a sharp increase in consumer responsiveness to influencer marketing, particularly among younger demographics. A growing body of research highlights FOMO as a significant psychological mechanism that drives consumers to make impulsive purchases when they observe influencers participating in trendy behaviors or showcasing novel products (Dinh & Lee, 2021; Han & Balabanis, 2023). The sense of urgency created through these curated experiences compels consumers to act swiftly to avoid social exclusion or regret. Influencers thus act not merely as product endorsers but as architects of consumer sentiment and lifestyle aspirations (Lee & Eastin, 2021).

Another notable trend is the emergence of nano-influencers, individuals with relatively small but highly engaged audiences (Yadav et al., 2021; Srivastava et al., 2024). Their close, authentic relationships with followers make them highly effective in niche market penetration. Studies show that nano-influencers can drive significant purchase intent due to the interpersonal credibility they hold, despite lacking mass reach. This highlights a shift in value perception from quantity (number of followers) to quality (depth of engagement) in digital marketing (Srivastava et al., 2024).

Similarly, the integration of influencer marketing into live-streaming commerce has revealed new behavioral insights. Real-time interaction fosters an immersive environment where consumers feel personally engaged with both the influencer and the product (Ma et al., 2023; Song & Kong, 2024). This direct communication not only elevates entertainment value but also increases emotional responsiveness, often leading to spontaneous purchases. Moreover, this phenomenon transcends national boundaries, reinforcing the importance of comparative cross-cultural studies in understanding the impact of influencer engagement (Song & Kong, 2024).

The health and wellness sector is another domain where influencer marketing has had significant traction. Influencers in this space often possess domain-specific knowledge and use their platforms to recommend functional products and services that resonate with health-conscious consumers (Kumar et al., 2024; Samala & Rawas, 2024). The empirical evidence confirms a strong correlation

between perceived expertise and consumer trust, especially among younger audiences who prioritize personal well-being (Kumar et al., 2024).

In parallel, the rise of virtual influencers, powered by artificial intelligence, has sparked new debates regarding authenticity and trust (Angmo & Mahajan, 2024; Lee & Eastin, 2021). While these digital entities offer consistent branding opportunities and mitigate the risk of human fallibility, consumer responses remain divided. Authenticity continues to be a vital criterion for influence, and the perception of "realness" significantly affects trust and engagement levels (Angmo & Mahajan, 2024).

Despite these advancements, significant gaps persist in the literature. While many studies explore individual dimensions of influencer credibility such as trustworthiness, expertise, and authenticity, few have integrated these dimensions into a holistic conceptual framework. Additionally, mediating and moderating factors such as parasocial relationships and consumer personality traits are often overlooked (Pushparaj & Kushwaha, 2024; Mabkhot et al., 2022). This fragmentation limits our understanding of how influencer credibility fully translates into purchase intentions.

The primary objective of this review is to synthesize current literature on how social media influencers impact consumer behavior, with a particular focus on the multi-dimensional nature of influencer credibility. This study aims to construct a theoretical model that integrates key variables such as trust, expertise, authenticity, emotional engagement, and parasocial interaction. By doing so, it seeks to advance the field through a comprehensive evaluation of the mechanisms that drive consumer intention in digital environments.

The scope of this review will be geographically inclusive, drawing from empirical studies across diverse regions including Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Western markets. Particular attention will be given to generational cohorts, especially Gen Z and Millennials, who are disproportionately affected by influencer engagement due to their high social media usage and digital literacy (Afzal et al., 2024; Srivastava et al., 2024).

METHOD

This section presents a comprehensive description of the methodology employed for conducting a literature review on influencer marketing and consumer behavior. The methodological approach was designed to ensure systematic identification, selection, evaluation, and synthesis of relevant academic literature from diverse, credible sources. It involved the application of a strategic search protocol across multiple databases, clearly defined keywords, Boolean operators, and a rigorous filtering process based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria.

To gather relevant literature, three major academic databases—Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar—served as the primary sources. Scopus and Web of Science were prioritized due to their stringent peer-review standards and robust citation indexing features, which enhance the credibility of sourced literature. These databases offered access to high-quality journal articles in the domains of marketing, consumer psychology, and digital technologies. In contrast, Google Scholar, known for its broader reach, including theses, conference proceedings, and non-indexed

journals, was used to complement the literature pool and capture cross-disciplinary insights. The combined use of these databases ensured a thorough and diverse representation of perspectives on influencer marketing and its impact on consumer behavior (Kanaveedu & Kalapurackal, 2022; Mendoza-Moreno & Turriate-Guzmán, 2022).

Additional databases such as EBSCOhost, ProQuest, and Emerald Insight were employed to extract domain-specific insights, especially from the fields of business, communication studies, and marketing. These sources contributed niche and case-specific analyses that helped build a more integrated view of influencer marketing across various industry contexts.

The literature search was guided by specific keywords derived from the core constructs of the research. Keywords included "influencer marketing," "consumer behavior," "social media influencer," "purchase intention," "digital marketing," and "social media engagement." To optimize the search strategy, Boolean operators such as AND, OR, and NOT were utilized. For example, combinations like ("influencer marketing" AND "consumer behavior") or ("social media influencer" AND "purchase intention") helped in retrieving focused and relevant studies. The use of quotation marks ensured that the phrases were treated as single entities during the search process, reducing irrelevant search results.

Inclusion criteria were set to select articles published in peer-reviewed journals, in English, and within the last ten years to ensure currency and relevance. Exclusion criteria ruled out non-academic sources, non-English articles, outdated studies, and literature lacking empirical or theoretical analysis on the topic. Articles were also filtered based on type, including systematic reviews, empirical studies (randomized controlled trials, cohort studies, case studies), and meta-analyses.

The search strategy underwent iterative refinement. Initial trial queries were conducted to test the effectiveness of the keyword combinations and adjust them as necessary. These tests informed the final search strings used across all databases. To maintain consistency, the same set of search terms and Boolean logic was applied to each database, ensuring comparability and replicability of results.

Screening of articles involved reading titles and abstracts to determine their alignment with the research objectives. This was followed by full-text reviews for articles that passed the initial screening phase. An internal database was then created using Microsoft Excel and managed with Mendeley reference management software. Articles were cataloged based on key metadata including author, year, journal, keywords, study design, main findings, and theoretical framework.

A bibliometric approach was applied using tools such as VOSviewer and CitNetExplorer to visualize citation networks, research clusters, and thematic trends. This analytical method enabled the identification of frequently cited studies, dominant themes, and emerging research gaps. These insights guided the thematic synthesis of literature and the development of a conceptual map connecting influencer marketing strategies with consumer decision-making processes.

To support validity and transparency, a documented protocol was developed, detailing each stage of the search and selection process, including the search terms, databases accessed, filtering procedures, and rationale for exclusion. This ensured methodological transparency and facilitated replication by future researchers.

Furthermore, triangulation was applied by comparing outcomes across different databases, keyword combinations, and software analyses. This comprehensive approach minimized selection bias and maximized the representativeness of the literature.

The methodology also emphasized adaptability. Given the evolving nature of digital marketing and the rise of new influencer typologies (e.g., virtual influencers), keyword updates and query modifications were periodically performed to incorporate recent developments. This responsiveness ensured that the literature collected reflected the latest theoretical and practical advancements.

In conclusion, the methodology adopted in this study was designed to capture a wide range of scholarly perspectives on the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer behavior. Through a systematic, iterative, and analytical process, this literature review established a strong foundation for identifying current trends, theoretical contributions, and practical implications in the domain. The structured use of databases, strategic keywording, and analytical tools collectively ensured the robustness and comprehensiveness of the literature selection and review process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents a comprehensive synthesis of research findings on the influence of influencer marketing on consumer behavior, focusing on the primary subthemes of influencer credibility, parasocial relationships, generational response differences, and the impact of virtual influencers. Each subtheme is explored with empirical data and theoretical insights drawn from the literature.

Influencer Credibility – Dimensions of Credibility

The literature consistently identifies credibility as a multidimensional construct encompassing trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness (Ghosh & Islam, 2023; Mabkhot et al., 2022). Trustworthiness relates to the perceived honesty and integrity of influencers. It is central to the consumer's acceptance of promotional content. Expertise denotes the influencer's knowledge and competence in the domain they endorse, instilling confidence in product recommendations. Attractiveness, including physical appeal and personality, facilitates emotional resonance between the influencer and audience (Ghosh & Islam, 2023). These dimensions collectively build the perceived credibility that influences the effectiveness of endorsements.

Additional dimensions, such as authenticity and consistency, have emerged in more recent studies. Authenticity refers to the influencer's ability to project genuine and relatable identities, enhancing consumer trust (Lee & Eastin, 2021). Consistency in content style and value propositions further strengthens credibility by showcasing reliability over time. These components are increasingly viewed as essential in building a holistic understanding of influencer credibility.

Influencer Credibility – Empirical Links to Purchase Intentions

Empirical findings affirm a strong positive correlation between influencer credibility and purchase intention (Mabkhot et al., 2022). Structural equation modeling has demonstrated that influencers scoring highly on trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness significantly boost consumer attitudes towards endorsed brands (Ghosh & Islam, 2023). Moreover, transparent and authentic communication enhances credibility, translating into greater consumer trust and eventual purchase decisions.

The practical implications suggest that marketers should invest in nurturing influencer credibility through training programs and content strategies that align with brand identity (Lee & Eastin, 2021). Brands that partner with credible influencers witness increased emotional and cognitive consumer engagement, which translates into brand loyalty and higher conversion rates (Mabkhot et al., 2022).

Parasocial Relationships – Concept and Role

Parasocial interaction refers to the perceived one-sided emotional bond consumers develop with influencers through continuous exposure to personal content (Taillon et al., 2020). These bonds mimic real interpersonal relationships and are reinforced by consistent, authentic storytelling. Such interactions significantly influence trust and loyalty towards endorsed brands, acting as a mediating mechanism between credibility and purchase behavior.

The psychological state of feeling personally connected to an influencer, despite the absence of reciprocal communication, amplifies the effectiveness of endorsements. Consumers with strong parasocial ties are more receptive to messages, leading to favorable attitudes and purchasing decisions (Taillon et al., 2020). This makes parasocial interaction a pivotal element in influencer marketing success.

Parasocial Relationships – Effects on Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intentions

Parasocial relationships not only drive trust but also foster long-term loyalty. Consumers emotionally invested in influencers are more likely to remain loyal to recommended brands and advocate for them within their networks (Taillon et al., 2020). The presence of such relationships enhances the perceived value of endorsements.

Furthermore, these emotional bonds increase purchase intentions, especially when influencers are perceived as sharing similar values or lifestyles with the audience. This reinforces the need for personalized and emotionally engaging content to cultivate deeper consumer-influencer ties.

Generational Differences – Comparative Responses

Significant differences exist in how various generations respond to influencer marketing. Gen Z exhibits stronger emotional and visual responsiveness, favoring short, interactive formats such as TikTok or live streams (Cabeza-Ramírez et al., 2022). Their upbringing in a digitally immersive environment fosters quick parasocial bond formation. Millennials, conversely, prioritize expertise and information credibility, responding better to in-depth content.

Empirical data suggests that Gen Z is more risk-tolerant and responsive to visually innovative content, while millennials value informative, utility-driven messages (Cabeza-Ramírez et al., 2022). These generational preferences demand customized content strategies that address the specific traits of each demographic.

Virtual Influencers – Pros and Cons

Virtual influencers offer controlled and consistent branding, unhindered by human limitations. They can be customized to reflect any brand identity, providing unmatched creative flexibility (Agnihotri et al., 2024). However, their perceived lack of authenticity poses a challenge. Consumers aware of the AI-generated nature of these influencers often report lower trust and emotional engagement (Muniz et al., 2023).

Comparative studies show that while virtual influencers excel in delivering consistent messaging, human influencers outperform them in emotional connectivity and perceived reliability. Context matters; virtual influencers are better suited for tech-oriented products, while human influencers resonate more in lifestyle and relational branding (Igarashi et al., 2024).

Virtual Influencers – Consumer Perceptions and Purchase Decisions

Consumer reactions to virtual influencers are mixed. While the novelty and futuristic appeal attract attention, emotional disconnect remains a barrier (Muniz et al., 2023). For tech-savvy and younger consumers, this disconnect is less problematic, especially if campaigns highlight creativity and innovation.

Virtual influencers can influence purchasing behavior if positioned with emotionally compelling narratives. Storytelling and interactive design can bridge the emotional gap and increase engagement (Igarashi et al., 2024). Thus, strategic alignment with product type and audience expectations is essential.

Integrated Insights – Synthesizing Themes

A cross-cutting analysis reveals that influencer credibility and parasocial interaction function synergistically to shape consumer responses. High credibility reinforces parasocial bonds, and vice versa, amplifying loyalty and purchase intention (Taillon et al., 2020). Generational differences add

complexity, necessitating strategic segmentation. Meanwhile, virtual influencers represent an innovative but nuanced marketing tool that must balance technological advantages with emotional resonance.

These results offer practical guidance: successful influencer marketing requires not just selecting popular figures but also fostering trust, authenticity, and emotional bonds. Digital strategies must align with audience characteristics, and novel tools like virtual influencers should be humanized to enhance effectiveness. The convergence of these dimensions forms a robust framework for understanding and leveraging influencer marketing's full potential in consumer decision-making.

The results of this narrative review provide robust insights into the evolving dynamics of influencer marketing and its intersection with classical consumer behavior theories, systemic factors, and strategic marketing implications. Drawing upon empirical findings and established literature, the discussion explores theoretical integration, the impact of systemic structures, and potential strategies to enhance transparency and campaign effectiveness in digital influencer marketing (Ma et al., 2023; Vrontis et al., 2021; Agnihotri et al., 2023).

The core constructs of influencer credibility and parasocial interaction align well with existing consumer behavior theories, particularly the Source Credibility Theory and Parasocial Interaction Theory (Vrontis et al., 2021). Classical models such as the Theory of Planned Behavior support the finding that trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness significantly influence consumers' purchase intentions (Agnihotri et al., 2023). Moreover, the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework effectively explains how digital stimuli from influencers generate cognitive and emotional responses, ultimately leading to consumer action (Ma et al., 2023). These integrations enrich traditional behavioral frameworks by introducing interactive and virtual dimensions that are increasingly relevant in today's digital age.

Theoretically, the review confirms that internal factors such as emotion, self-perception, and identification with influencers foster positive brand attitudes. The parasocial interaction model reinforces this by emphasizing how emotionally driven pseudo-relationships between consumers and influencers lead to greater brand loyalty and purchase intent (Vrontis et al., 2021). Thus, consumer behavior models should now incorporate digital social relationships as key variables influencing decision-making. As demonstrated, existing models must evolve to account for mediated and moderated psychological and social variables in digital contexts (Agnihotri et al., 2023).

Further reinforcing the need for updated models, the review underscores the significance of authenticity and emotional triggers such as Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) in influencing impulsive purchase decisions (Dinh & Lee, 2021). These emotional dimensions complement traditional models by accounting for behavior driven by digital content and peer perception. This indicates the necessity for consumer behavior models to incorporate emotional and identity-based drivers more comprehensively to capture the realities of digital consumerism (Vrontis et al., 2021).

A comparative analysis of classical models and digital influencer findings suggests the importance of digital interpersonal components. While traditional theories address face-to-face interactions, findings reveal that virtual engagement can produce comparable trust levels, validating the SOR

theory's extension into digital spaces (Ma et al., 2023). These models must now integrate variables such as real-time interaction, transparency, and social media credibility mechanisms to remain applicable in contemporary marketing settings (Agnihotri et al., 2023).

Additionally, the mediating role of parasocial interaction strengthens the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intent. The impact of variables such as perceived authenticity and trust must be assessed through holistic frameworks that reflect both interpersonal and systemic digital communications (Ma et al., 2023; Vrontis et al., 2021). The current findings suggest that multi-level variables from individual traits to systemic dynamics should be incorporated into conceptual marketing models.

Systemic factors significantly affect influencer marketing effectiveness. Digital regulations, platform algorithms, and ethical marketing policies constitute the operational backbone of influencer content distribution (Boerman, 2020). Regulations that mandate clear sponsor disclosures help reduce misinformation and enhance consumer trust, while algorithmic systems determine the reach and speed of content dissemination (Vrontis et al., 2021).

However, non-transparent or biased algorithms present challenges by restricting message visibility, requiring collaboration between regulators, platforms, and marketers to ensure algorithms support fair and authentic endorsements (Agnihotri et al., 2023). Ethical marketing guidelines further enhance effectiveness by fostering transparency. Standards such as the mandatory use of hashtags like #ad or #sponsored have been shown to reduce consumer skepticism (Boerman, 2020).

Infrastructure quality and technological adoption rates also shape influencer marketing outcomes. Advanced systems allow for real-time data collection and analysis, enhancing campaign adaptability (Agnihotri et al., 2023). Yet, these innovations necessitate clear policies to maintain ethical standards and prevent manipulative practices (Vrontis et al., 2021). The convergence of tech and ethics ensures credibility and consumer trust.

Platform-specific features such as likes, shares, and comments are internal systemic mechanisms that influence engagement levels and consumer behavior. These features not only signal content relevance but also serve as engagement metrics that affect endorsement impact (Agnihotri et al., 2023). A deep understanding of platform dynamics allows marketers to design contextually appropriate communication strategies.

Policy implications stemming from this discussion include the creation of globally adaptable transparency standards. Platforms should require clear sponsor disclosures and employ independent content verification systems to validate influencer claims (Vrontis et al., 2021). Blockchain technology could enhance data integrity and transparency by recording endorsement interactions immutably (Agnihotri et al., 2023).

Further strategies include influencer education and certification on ethical communication practices, ensuring consistent and authentic messaging. Data analytics and AI should be leveraged to monitor campaign impact and guide real-time strategy adjustments (Boerman, 2020). These technological tools improve accuracy and campaign responsiveness.

Multi-stakeholder collaborations involving regulators, platforms, and influencers are essential. Such partnerships can harmonize regulations and platform policies, ensuring consistent ethical practices across markets (Agnihotri et al., 2023). Influencer training programs focused on ethical disclosure and content authenticity enhance content quality and consumer trust.

Market segmentation and audience-specific content design are also vital. Gen Z prefers interactive, visually engaging content, while millennials value credibility and depth (Vrontis et al., 2021). Campaigns must address these preferences with tailored strategies that optimize resonance and effectiveness.

Micro- and nano-influencers present a strategic advantage due to their intimate audience relationships and perceived authenticity. These influencers can effectively target niche markets, often achieving higher engagement rates than their macro counterparts (Boerman, 2020).

Omni-channel marketing strategies that combine online and offline touchpoints ensure message consistency and brand integrity. Integrating influencer marketing with internal brand ambassadors can amplify trust and align messaging with brand values (Agnihotri et al., 2023).

Enhancing digital literacy among consumers empowers them to critically evaluate endorsements and make informed purchasing decisions. Educational initiatives should focus on decoding digital content and identifying authentic messaging (Vrontis et al., 2021).

Open-access data portals for campaign performance evaluation promote transparency and allow stakeholders to assess marketing effectiveness. These platforms can also support the identification of best practices and guide future campaign improvements (Boerman, 2020).

In conclusion, the integration of behavioral theory, systemic factors, and strategic innovations provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and optimizing influencer marketing. As digital ecosystems evolve, marketing strategies must adapt to maintain credibility, transparency, and effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

This narrative review concludes that the effectiveness of influencer marketing in shaping consumer behavior is strongly influenced by a combination of credibility, parasocial relationships, generational differences, and the emerging role of virtual influencers. The study has synthesized key findings from empirical evidence and theoretical models, revealing that attributes such as trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, authenticity, and consistency play central roles in building influencer credibility and consumer purchase intent. Additionally, parasocial relationships have been shown to mediate and moderate the effect of influencer content, enhancing emotional resonance and consumer loyalty.

Systemic factors such as regulatory frameworks, platform algorithms, ethical standards, and digital infrastructure further influence the impact of influencer marketing campaigns. These external variables create both opportunities and barriers that must be addressed through integrated strategies. This review emphasizes the need for transparent disclosure practices, stronger ethical

training for influencers, and technological tools like AI and blockchain for real-time analysis and content verification. Furthermore, adaptive generational segmentation and content personalization are essential strategies to bridge differences in consumer response.

Given the complexity and evolving nature of digital marketing ecosystems, future research should explore cross-cultural validation of influencer models, investigate long-term effects of virtual influencers, and develop frameworks that integrate systemic and psychological variables. A multi-dimensional, interdisciplinary approach is critical to designing ethical, data-driven, and emotionally engaging influencer marketing strategies. Ultimately, aligning technological innovation with transparent communication practices is key to achieving sustained effectiveness in influencer marketing.

REFERENCES

- Afzal, B., Xiao, W., Nazir, A., Junaid, D., & Silva, L. (2024). Analyzing the impact of social media influencers on consumer shopping behavior: empirical evidence from Pakistan. *Sustainability*, 16(14), 6079. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16146079>
- Agnihotri, D., Chaturvedi, P., Kulshreshtha, K., & Tripathi, V. (2023). Investigating the impact of authenticity of social media influencers on followers' purchase behavior: mediating analysis of parasocial interaction on Instagram. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 35(10), 2377-2394. <https://doi.org/10.1108/apjml-07-2022-0598>
- Agnihotri, D., Chaturvedi, P., & Tripathi, V. (2024). "Virtual bonds and actual transactions": investigating the impact of virtual influencers' credibility on buying behavior through virtual engagement. *Journal of Communication Management*, 29(1), 35-52. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jcom-02-2024-0035>
- Angmo, P. and Mahajan, R. (2024). Virtual influencer marketing: a study of millennials and Gen Z consumer behaviour. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 27(2), 280-300. <https://doi.org/10.1108/qmr-01-2023-0009>
- Boerman, S. (2020). The effects of the standardized Instagram disclosure for micro- and meso-influencers. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 103, 199-207. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.09.015>
- Cabeza-Ramírez, L., García, F., Cano-Vicente, M., & Sánchez, M. (2022). How Generation X and millennials perceive influencers' recommendations: perceived trustworthiness, product involvement, and perceived risk. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research*, 17(4), 1431-1449. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jtaer17040072>
- Chen, Y., Qin, Z., Yan, Y., & Yi, H. (2024). The power of influencers: how does influencer marketing shape consumers' purchase intentions? *Sustainability*, 16(13), 5471. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16135471>

- Dinh, T. and Lee, Y. (2021). "I want to be as trendy as influencers" – how “fear of missing out” leads to buying intention for products endorsed by social media influencers. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 16(3), 346-364. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jrim-04-2021-0127>
- Ghosh, M. and Islam, A. (2023). Homefluencers' endorsement of millennial consumers' purchase intention in new normal. *International Marketing Review*, 40(5), 1188-1212. <https://doi.org/10.1108/imr-10-2021-0308>
- Ghosh, P., Upadhyay, S., Srivastava, V., Dhiman, R., & Yu, L. (2024). How influencer characteristics drive Gen Z behavioural intentions of selecting fast-food restaurants: mediating roles of consumer emotions and self-construal. *British Food Journal*, 126(12), 4072-4092. <https://doi.org/10.1108/bfj-12-2023-1154>
- Han, J. and Balabanis, G. (2023). Meta-analysis of social media influencer impact: key antecedents and theoretical foundations. *Psychology and Marketing*, 41(2), 394-426. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21927>
- Igarashi, R., Bhoumik, K., & Thompson, J. (2024). Investigating the effectiveness of virtual influencers in prosocial marketing. *Psychology and Marketing*, 41(9), 2121-2135. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.22031>
- Jhavar, A., Varshney, S., & Kumar, P. (2024). The grey side of influencer marketing: content, contexts, and consequences. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 23(5), 2413-2439. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.2349>
- Kanaveedu, A. and Kalapurackal, J. (2022). Influencer marketing and consumer behaviour: a systematic literature review. *Vision: The Journal of Business Perspective*, 28(5), 547-566. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09722629221114607>
- Kumar, S., Kaur, B., & Goyal, S. (2024). Role of social media health influencers on purchase intention of functional beverages: moderating impact of health consciousness. *Information & Media*, 99, 63-84. <https://doi.org/10.15388/im.2024.99.4>
- Lee, J. and Eastin, M. (2021). Perceived authenticity of social media influencers: scale development and validation. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 15(4), 822-841. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jrim-12-2020-0253>
- Ma, X., Aw, E., & Filieri, R. (2023). From screen to cart: how influencers drive impulsive buying in livestreaming commerce? *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 18(6), 1034-1058. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jrim-05-2023-0142>
- Mabkhot, H., Isa, N., & Mabkhot, A. (2022). The influence of the credibility of social media influencers SMIs on the consumers' purchase intentions: evidence from Saudi Arabia. *Sustainability*, 14(19), 12323. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141912323>

- Mendoza-Moreno, V. and Turriate-Guzmán, A. (2022). Social media influencers and their impact on consumer behavior: a systematic review of the scientific literature. 94-98. <https://doi.org/10.1109/icece56287.2022.10048604>
- Muniz, F., Stewart, K., & Magalhães, L. (2023). Are they humans or are they robots? The effect of virtual influencer disclosure on brand trust. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 23(3), 1234-1250. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.2271>
- Pan, M., Blut, M., Ghiassaleh, A., & Lee, Z. (2024). Influencer marketing effectiveness: a meta-analytic review. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 53(1), 52-78. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-024-01052-7>
- Poureisa, A., Aziz, Y., & Ng, S. (2024). Swipe to sustain: exploring consumer behaviors in organic food purchasing via Instagram social commerce. *Sustainability*, 16(6), 2338. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16062338>
- Pozharliev, R., Rossi, D., & Angelis, M. (2022). Consumers' self-reported and brain responses to advertising post on Instagram: the effect of number of followers and argument quality. *European Journal of Marketing*, 56(3), 922-948. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ejm-09-2020-0719>
- Pushparaj, P. and Kushwaha, B. (2024). Social media influencer marketing: a systematic literature review using TCM and ADO framework. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 48(6). <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.13098>
- Samala, A. and Rawas, S. (2024). From likes to buys: unveiling the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior and market dynamics. *TEM Journal*, 2156-2161. <https://doi.org/10.18421/tem133-43>
- Song, Y. and Kong, Y. (2024). Tripartite evolutionary game analysis of product quality supervision in live-streaming e-commerce. *Mathematics*, 12(16), 2446. <https://doi.org/10.3390/math12162446>
- Srivastava, A., Mukaria, B., & Arora, M. (2024). Influencer marketing: a citation and co-citation analysis within business and management domains. *International Academic Publishing House*, 44, 149-161. <https://doi.org/10.52756/ijerr.2024.v44spl.013>
- Taillon, B., Mueller, S., Kowalczyk, C., & Jones, D. (2020). Understanding the relationships between social media influencers and their followers: the moderating role of closeness. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 29(6), 767-782. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jpbm-03-2019-2292>
- Tian, S., Cho, S., Jia, X., Sun, R., & Tsai, W. (2023). Antecedents and outcomes of Generation Z consumers' contrastive and assimilative upward comparisons with social media influencers. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 32(7), 1046-1062. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jpbm-02-2022-3879>

Virtual Influencers, Real Impact: A Narrative Review on Credibility, Generational Trust, and Purchase Intention in Digital Marketing

Ananda, Putra, and Pasaribu

- Vrontis, D., Makrides, A., Christofi, M., & Thrassou, A. (2021). Social media influencer marketing: a systematic review, integrative framework and future research agenda. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 45(4), 617-644. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12647>
- Willis, E., Friedel, K., Heisten, M., Pickett, M., & Bhowmick, A. (2023). Communicating health literacy on prescription medications on social media: in-depth interviews with “patient influencers”. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 25, e41867. <https://doi.org/10.2196/41867>
- Yadav, J., Misra, M., Rana, N., & Singh, K. (2021). Exploring the synergy between nano-influencers and sports community: behavior mapping through machine learning. *Information Technology and People*, 35(7), 1829-1854. <https://doi.org/10.1108/itp-03-2021-0219>