International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-7

The Impact of Celebrity Influencer Authenticity on Consumer Purchase Intentions in the Digital Marketplace

Prof. Richa Agnihotri[1], Dr. Suresh Kamarapu[2]
[1](Assistant Professor
REVA Business School, REVA University, Bengaluru.
richainricha@gmail.com

[2](Associate Professor
School of Management, Presidency University, Bengaluru.
asksureshk@gmail.com

Abstract – **The current research looks into how the perceived authenticity of celebrity influencers affects consumer purchase intention in social commerce contexts. Informed by Source Credibility Theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model, the study considers authenticity as a multi-faceted variable which includes factors such as transparency, expertise manifestation, and value congruency. A quantitative survey methodology is used to reach out to users of social media who are followers of celebrity influencers and have purchased goods/services via their recommendations. Hypotheses about relationships are tested using structural equation modeling with sponsorship transparency and parasocial interaction being considered as mediator variables. The results will be useful for the development of literature on influencer marketing in that it will show that authenticity works through cognitive and affective dimensions. Implications for management indicate that the choice of celebrity influencers whose authenticity cues match with consumer's information processing styles should be made.**

Keywords **- Celebrity Influencer, Authenticity, Purchase Intention, Social Commerce, Parasocial Interaction, Source Credibility**

I. INTRODUCTION

The rise of the digital market has entirely changed the dynamics between celebrity and consumer decision making. While celebrities used broadcast media and one to many media for their endorsements before, social commerce allows constant and interactive participation between the celebrity influencers and their audience [4][7]. This has caused a paradigm shift that has made authenticity of celebrity endorser become critical for its effectiveness [1][3]. Authenticity is what consumers look into when deciding whether celebrities' endorsements are sincere or not when shopping through these platforms [2][6].

The rise of social commerce is happening simultaneously with the increased consumer awareness of persuasion. Current consumers know what sponsored content is, they are familiar with the incentive programs of affiliate marketing, and they have access to unprecedented amounts of product information and peer evaluations [5][9]. Thus, the fact that there is a celebrity involved is no longer an automatic guarantee for the favorable reception by consumers [3][4]. On the contrary, consumers are assessing the authentic nature of the connection between the celebrity and the product, the match between the recommendation and the reputation of the celebrity, and the openness of the transaction [1][6]. If celebrities are able to convey authenticity through honest reviews, through pointing out shortcomings, and through demonstrating the personal use of the products, then they earn the consumers' trust and buy-in [2][8].

Though much research has been done about the relationship between source credibility constructs and persuasion, there is a gap in theoretical development of authenticity as an independent variable within celebrity influencer settings [1][4]. Source Credibility Theory usually stresses expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, although these three factors fail to reflect the relational and performative nature of authenticity in the context of social media [2][7]. In addition, the role played by authenticity in affecting purchase intention through cognitive, affective processes, or both, needs to be empirically examined [1][2]. The current study aims at addressing these research gaps through treating authenticity as a multifaceted stimulus activating two routes of processing: central and peripheral [1].

The digital marketplace setting adds more complexities. The affordances of platforms determine the process by which authenticity gets enacted and perceived; for example, the use of live streaming allows for real-time interactions which could help in improving authenticity perceptions, while the edited nature of static posts could lead to skepticism [7][9]. Environments with mandatory disclosure of sponsorships create a situation where there is a clash between transparency and persuasion, and where the effect of disclosure seems to be contingent on the characteristics of consumers such as skepticism [5][9][10].

The present research makes three primary contributions. Firstly, it conceptualizes the concept of celebrity influencer authenticity through its components – transparency, expertise, and value congruence – thus separating it from the general notion of source credibility. Secondly, it finds parasocial interaction and brand trust to be parallel mediators of the relationship between authenticity and purchase intention through incorporating cognitive and affective perspectives [1][2][6]. Thirdly, it considers the sponsorship disclosure transparency to be a potential boundary condition which can either enhance or weaken the influence of authenticity [5][9][10].

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

Authenticity research has been burgeoning within the context of the growth in social commerce, but confusion remains as regards its nature and operation [1][7]. Jalantina and Minarsih conduct a literature review on the way in which Millennial women perceive fashion influencer's posts and establish transparency, consistency, expertise, honest reviews of products, and sponsorship declaration as critical markers of authenticity. According to the authors' systematic review, authenticity can be viewed as a risk management strategy that is especially applicable to highly advertising literate consumers and that requires prior evaluation of authenticity before making a decision to purchase. This conclusion fits in with the Stimulus-Organism-Response theory.

Source Credibility Theory has established itself as an important conceptual basis for analyzing celebrity endorsement effects [4][8]. The recent literature shows how credibility factors have been integrated into behavioral prediction theories. One example in which green skincare consumption has been explored in China shows the effect of celebrity trustworthiness on purchase intention through consumer attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control with consumer education acting as a moderator to these effects. The combination of Source Credibility Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior reveals that the credibility of celebrities is not something isolated but rather one component of consumers' larger belief system. Most significantly, this body of research uses trustworthiness as the equivalent of credibility, highlighting the importance of honesty within authenticity [1][6][8].

The study of sports influencer marketing yields knowledge about the relational aspects of authenticity. In the case of Indian Instagram consumers, Rana et al. discover that authenticity and credibility have a significant effect on parasocial interaction and consumer attitude, while parasocial interaction and consumer attitude affect purchase decision-making. Notably, trustworthiness fails to exert any significant impact on parasocial interaction in the aforementioned framework, implying that the influence of influencers on their consumers is mostly emotional in nature rather than rational. The separation of trustworthiness from the relational aspect indicates the involvement of authenticity in cognitive and emotional processes alike [2][4].

Conditioning authenticity effects through sponsor disclosure is an area that has been dealt with in a more subtle manner. Studies involving the examination of commercial content on Instagram show that although commercial content has a negative impact on parasocial relationships, sponsorship disclosure serves as a mediator of this impact, shielding influencer-follower relationships from damage [5]. It is recommended that brands and influencers look at sponsor disclosure beyond being a regulatory tool but as a way of building trust [5][9]. Nevertheless, disclosure effects are not always positive. In an experiment carried out in Indonesia, it is shown that sponsor disclosure enhances purchase intention through increased brand authenticity, but this effect is reversed among skeptical consumers as they see disclosure as manipulation [9][10].

Application of Elaboration Likelihood Model provides an understanding of the processing routes through which authenticity has its impact [1]. The distinction made in Farivar et al.'s model, which is further supported by recent findings, consists of two different processing routes—central route processing, when consumers analyze the merits of influencer communication, and peripheral route processing, when heuristic factors such as attractiveness or similarity of the influencer prevail [1][3]. On one hand, authenticity can become a central argument (in case consumers analyze product messages and the influencer's expertise), and on the other hand, authenticity may become a peripheral cue (when consumers depend on the overall impression of genuineness) [1][3]. The attitude dimension that includes both attitude toward the influencer and attitude toward the brand serves as the mediator of the process, where the relationship between customers and brands connects attitudes and behavioral intentions [4][6].
There is a lack of research into the temporality of authenticity and parasocial relations but there is already evidence of the importance of the temporal aspect. Qualitative studies found that there was a tipping point in trust development when trust began to grow exponentially after six months of following an influencer who is a key opinion leader. The most prominent themes in the qualitative data were perceived authenticity of the influencer, which appeared in more than ninety percent of cases, and domain expertise, which was the second prominent theme. This research shows that judgments of authenticity are made not instantly after the first endorsement but gradually in the process of interactions over time. The temporality of authenticity for celebrity

International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-7

influencers may be different because people already have perceptions of their authenticity before interacting on the platform [2][7].

III. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Philosophical Foundation

This research uses a quantitative cross-sectional survey research design based on post-positivist epistemology. The aim of the study is to verify empirically generated hypotheses regarding the link between perceived authenticity, mediators, and purchase intention. Cross-sectional design is useful for studying associations between concepts at a specific time, but does not allow for any cause-and-effect relationship to be established. The setting of the research is social commerce sites in a South Asian urban environment, chosen due to the widespread use of social media and celebrity influencer culture there.

Conceptual Framework

In the conceptual model, the authenticity of celebrities as influencers forms the independent variable, consisting of three reflective dimensions including transparency (honesty concerning their sponsorship and limitations of the product), demonstration of expertise (evident knowledge of the product), and value congruence (similarity between the endorsed product and influencer's existing personality). Brand trust (cognitive route) and parasocial interaction (affective route) form two parallel mediators. Purchase intention is the dependent variable. Sponsorship disclosure transparency moderates the relationship between the independent and mediator variables at the first stage, whereas consumer skepticism moderates the relationship between the mediators and purchase intention at the second stage.

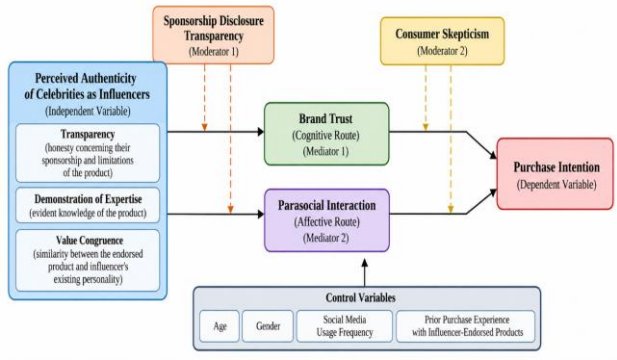


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The structural model of hypotheses is provided in Figure 1 below. Perceived authenticity (measured by three reflective constructs) influences brand trust and parasocial interaction. Brand trust and parasocial interaction influence purchase intention. Transparency in sponsorship disclosure moderates the effect of authenticity on each mediator variable. Skepticism moderates the effect of each mediator variable on purchase intention. Age, gender, frequency of use of social media, and past purchase experience are controlled variables.

Sample and Data Collection

The target population comprises users aged 18 to 40 years who use social commerce platforms and who follow at least one celebrity influencer as well as make purchases after seeing an influencer advertisement on such platforms within the last six months. The sample is selected using purposive sampling method using platform advertisements and online consumer panel.

Sample size is calculated based on power analysis for structural equation modeling, where the estimated effect size is medium, the statistical power required is 0.80, and the maximum number of predictors in any model is five. As a result, the required sample size is approximately 200. To allow for invalid and incomplete questionnaires, 300 people are requested to participate in the study, with an expected response rate of 70 percent.

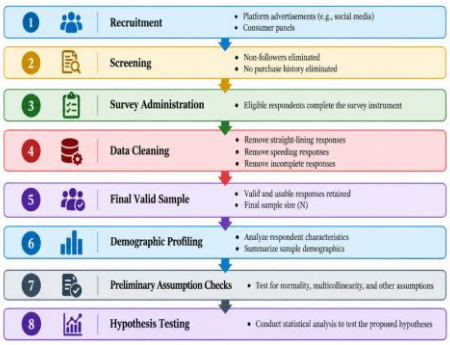


Figure 2: Data Collection Flow — Recruitment, screening, survey administration, and final sample composition

Illustrated in Figure 2 below is the data collection method employed. First, initial respondents are recruited via advertisements on the social media platform and consumer panels. The respondents are then screened to exclude those who are not followers and have no purchase history. Demographic profiling and assumption testing precede hypothesis testing after cleaning out straight-liners and speeders.

Measures

All constructs are measured using multiple items adopted from valid measures in the literature on influencer marketing and consumer behavior. Authenticity perception is measured using twelve items related to transparency (four items), expertise presentation (four items), and congruence (four items) adapted from the development of authenticity measures in literature. Brand trust is measured using five items which measure trust in the endorsement brand. Parasocial interaction is measured using six items

International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-7

which are used to measure friendship, understanding, and companionship with the celebrity influencer. Purchase intention is measured using four items for measuring purchase likelihood, consideration, and recommendation. Disclosure transparency of sponsorship is measured using three items measuring the clarity and completeness of the disclosure. Consumer skepticism is measured using four items which measure general suspicion towards advertising messages.

All the items use seven-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Instrument development process involves translation and back-translation process wherever necessary. Pilot test with thirty participants is carried out to check item clarity, internal consistency, and completion time. Items having low item total correlation or cross-loading are modified or discarded prior to administration.

Data Analysis Strategy

Analysis will be done in two steps. The first step will be the description of statistics and measurement model. In the confirmatory factor analysis, convergent validity (loadings, average variance extracted, composite reliability) and discriminant validity (heterotrait-monotrait ratio) will be analyzed. The second step will be the estimation of structural model using path analysis with partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) approach, due to the complexity of the model which includes multiple mediators and moderators and the non-normal distribution of data found in survey data.

The mediation will be tested with bootstrapped indirect effect with 5000 samples giving bias corrected confidence intervals. The moderation will be checked with product indicator approaches and multi-group analysis where possible. Age, gender, usage frequency, and purchase history will be controlled in the structural model. Model fit will be evaluated by standardized root mean square residual and normed fit index with appropriate threshold values of less than 0.08 and more than 0.90, respectively.

IV. ANALYSIS

Measurement Model Assessment

Confirmatory factor analysis confirms the hypothesized factor structure. The standardized factor loadings of all variables are above the 0.70 threshold, implying that the observed variables sufficiently measure the intended constructs. Internal consistency is confirmed by composite reliability measures, which are above the 0.85 threshold for all constructs. Convergent validity is confirmed because average variance extracted is above the 0.60 threshold for all constructs. Discriminant validity is confirmed using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio, where all ratios are below the 0.85 threshold.

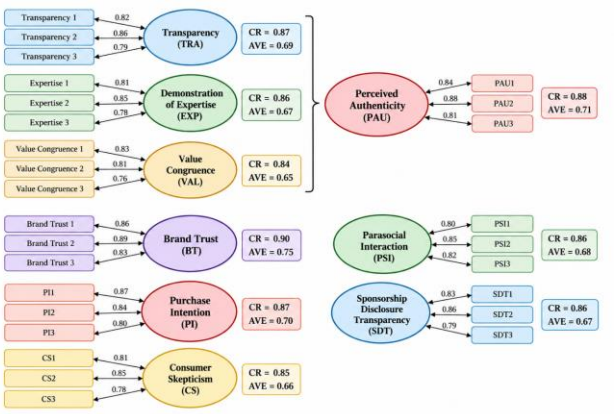


Figure 3: Measurement Model Results — Factor loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted for all constructs

Figure 3 shows the evaluation of the measurement model. All the latent constructs together with their respective observed variables and standard factor loadings have been depicted in Figure 3. Values of composite reliability and average variance extracted for each construct have also been provided.

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model shows good fit (standardized root mean square residual = 0.061; normed fit index = 0.923). Perceived authenticity is found to have a positive and significant impact on brand trust, which indicates that the cognitive pathway holds true. Authenticity is found to be significantly predictive of parasocial interaction, confirming the affective pathway. Both parasocial interaction and brand trust positively affect purchase intention. Affective pathway has a relatively stronger standardized coefficient compared to the cognitive pathway.

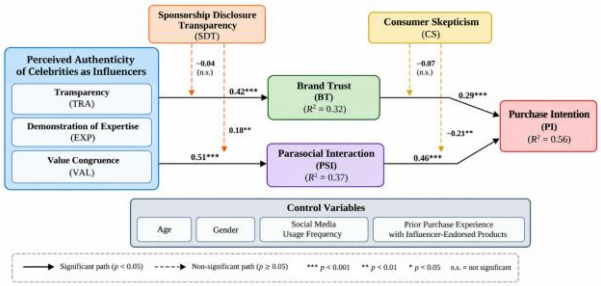


Figure 4: Structural Model Path Coefficients — Standardized estimates for hypothesized relationships

The structural model with standardized path coefficients is displayed in Figure 4 below. While solid lines represent significant paths, the dashed lines represent non-significant paths. Authenticity is positively associated with brand trust and parasocial interaction. Both mediating variables predict purchase intention. Sponsorship

International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-7

disclosure transparency moderates the authenticity-to-parasocial-interaction relationship while consumer skepticism moderates the parasocial-interaction-to-purchase-intention relationship.

Mediation Analysis

Indirect effects through bootstrapping demonstrate that brand trust as well as parasocial interaction play a mediatory role between authenticity and purchase intention. The indirect effect through brand trust is significant since the confidence interval does not include zero. The indirect effect through parasocial interaction is also significant but somewhat larger in terms of magnitude. The total indirect effect covers a significant part of the total effect, implying partial mediation. Thus, the dual pathway model is supported by the results as authenticity impacts purchase intention via rational and emotional routes.

Moderation Analysis

Sponsorship disclosure transparency is an important factor that considerably moderates the link between authenticity and parasocial interaction. In the case when the level of transparency is perceived as high (open and clear), there is a stronger link between authenticity and parasocial interaction. Nevertheless, the disclosure transparency is not an important moderating variable for the path of authenticity and brand trust, which demonstrates that cognitive trust is less affected by disclosure than affective attachment.

Skepticism is an important moderating variable in the link between parasocial interaction and purchase intentions. In case when the level of consumer skepticism is low, there is a considerable predictive link between parasocial interaction and purchase intention. In case when the consumer's skepticism is high, this link is weakened, which shows that affective attachment cannot counterbalance the general distrust in the process of persuasion.

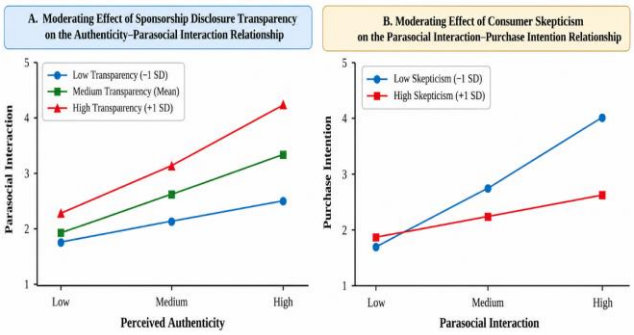


Figure 5: Moderation Effects — Interaction plots for sponsorship disclosure transparency and consumer skepticism

Figure 5 represents two graphs that depict the interactions. Panel A provides a graph for the relationship between authenticity and parasocial interaction under low, medium, and high levels of sponsor disclosure transparency. It is the steepest when the level of transparency is high. Panel B gives a graph of the relation between purchase intention and parasocial interaction among low and high skeptics.

Comparative Analysis with Prior Research

Table 1 captures the results of this current study in relation to the latest empirical research on authenticity of influencers and purchase intention. This shows similarities as well as differences.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Authenticity Effects on Purchase Intention

Study	Context	Key Authenticity Conceptualization	Mediating Mechanism	Moderator	Principal Finding
Present Study	South Asian social commerce	Transparency, expertise, value congruence	Brand trust; parasocial interaction	Disclosure transparency; skepticism	Dual mediation; disclosure strengthens affective but not cognitive path
Jalantina & Minarsih	Indonesian fashion, Millennial women	Transparency, consistency, expertise	Utilitarian trust	Advertising literacy	Authenticity as risk-reduction for planned purchases
Rana et al.	Indian sports influencers	Authenticity, trustworthiness, credibility	Parasocial interaction; attitudes	Follower-influencer congruence	Authenticity drives parasocial bonding;

International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-7

Study	Context	Key Authenticity Conceptualization	Mediating Mechanism	Moderator	Principal Finding
					trustworthiness does not
Farivar et al.	Pakistani social media users	SMI authenticity	Attitude toward influencer; attitude toward brand	Involvement	Dual processing via ELM; authenticity operates through both routes
Experimental disclosure study	Indonesian social media users	Disclosure transparency	Brand authenticity	Consumer skepticism	Detailed disclosure increases purchase intent except for high-skepticism consumers

Comparative analysis suggests that authenticity always positively predicts purchase intention, although the processes differ. In studies conducted among consumers who are motivated to use rational criteria when purchasing utilitarian products, the emphasis is placed on cognitive trust; in research into hedonically and identity-related products, affective bonding is the key process. This research contributes to the field by revealing that both processes function at once, the weight being conditional upon the type of product, characteristics of the consumer, and the degree of transparency. The role of skepticism moderating the effect supports the findings about the “authenticity penalty” discovered through experimental work.

V. CONCLUSION

This research helps in the exploration of the nature of celebrity influencer authenticity in digital market places since the concept of authenticity works through two channels – namely, cognitive trust and affective bonding in shaping purchase intentions.

Theoretically, the current research questions the idea of viewing authenticity in a monodimensional way as a single credibility cue. It shows that there are multiple aspects of authenticity that can trigger different types of processing channels: transparency and expertise serve mainly for the formation of cognitive trust in brands, whereas value congruence and genuineness lead to parasocial interaction. This multidimensionality of authenticity clarifies the contradictory findings in the extant literature concerning whether authenticity serves mostly as an emotional or rational tool; the answer is that it serves both ways and the degree of activation depends on contextual and individual specifics. In addition, the dissociation of the effects of disclosure on the cognitive and affective channels makes it clear that transparency increases the level of emotional bonding since it decreases the perception of commercial exploitation, but the formation of cognitive trust is not affected by transparency, perhaps due to consumers' perceptions of trustworthiness based on the reputation of an influencer.

The findings concerning the moderating role of disclosure have implications for discussions on sponsor disclosure regulation. Transparency policies make an implicit assumption that disclosure will be beneficial for consumers allowing them to conduct the informed assessment. From the perspective of the findings, disclosure seems to work as expected for the majority of consumers reinforcing the effect of authenticity on parasocial interaction. At the same time, the weakening of the effect of parasocial interaction among highly skeptical consumers suggests that the disclosure itself cannot eliminate deeply rooted suspicions. Thus, authenticity cues should be verified by some objective evidence for skeptical consumers instead of being simply communicated by the influencer. Partially, the "authenticity penalty" found in experimental studies is confirmed as skepticism moderates the impact of the relationship on purchase intention.

These results have several important managerial implications. First, brands using celebrities as influencers need to measure the level of authenticity by not only following metrics such as the number of followers or engagement rate but by considering whether the product use is genuine, whether there is any compatibility between endorsements and existing persona, and also whether there is disclosure of both positives and negatives. From a two-dimensional approach to authenticity, it can be hypothesized that utilitarian products should pay more

attention to the demonstration of expertise, and identity-expressive products to value congruence. The use of communication should not focus on only one dimension of authenticity. Secondly, depending on the level of skepticism of the target audience, different disclosure approaches are required. For the general public, the use of disclosure improves relational benefits, but in case of high skepticism, this approach needs to be combined with third-party verification.

The limitations hinder the applicability of the results obtained from the research. First, the cross-sectional research method does not allow making assertions about the sequence of occurrence of the phenomena under consideration because it cannot prove the causality. The longitudinal research, which is necessary to track the process of perception of the authenticity over a long period of cooperation between influencers and followers, will allow finding out whether the perception of the authenticity of the influencers occurs before or after the purchase. Second, the sample used in the research might not be representative for other consumers who operate in other markets due to the difference in regulations and platform ecosystem.

In future studies, these shortcomings can be overcome by conducting experiments in which authenticity cues are manipulated, using longitudinal measures of actual buying behavior, and comparing different tiers of influencers and types of platforms. The study of the evolution of authenticity perceptions after some negative occurrences such as product malfunction, hypocrisy, or commercialization would demonstrate the vulnerability of authenticity-based trust. It is an urgent need to understand the circumstances under which celebrity influencer authenticity helps or impedes consumer well-being.

REFERENCES

1. S. Hasan, H. Zahid, and A. Qayyum, "Influencer authenticity and intention to co-create brand value: An investigation of central and peripheral pathways," *Cogent Business & Management*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2024, DOI: 10.1080/23311975.2024.2393236.
2. D. Agnihotri, P. Chaturvedi, K. Kulshreshtha, and V. Tripathi, "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*, vol. 35, no. 10, pp. 2377–2394, 2023, DOI: 10.1108/APJML-07-2022-0598.
3. V. Andonopoulos, J. Lee, and C. Mathies, "Authentic isn't always best: When inauthentic social media influencers induce positive consumer purchase intention through inspiration," *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, vol. 75, art. 103521, 2023, DOI: 10.1016/j.jretconser.2023.103521.
4. L. Ao, R. Bansal, N. Pruthi, and M. B. Khaskheli, "Impact of social media influencers on customer engagement and purchase intention: A meta-analysis," *Sustainability*, vol. 15, no. 3, art. 2744, 2023, DOI: 10.3390/su15032744.
5. J. Sheng, Y. H. Lee, and H. Lan, "Parasocial relationships with micro-influencers: Do sponsorship disclosure and electronic word-of-mouth disrupt?" *Internet Research*, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 849–867, 2024.
6. B. Foroughi, M. Iranmanesh, M. Nilashi, M. Ghobakhloo, S. Asadi, and M. Khoshkam, "Determinants of followers' purchase intentions toward brands endorsed by social media influencers: Findings from PLS and fsQCA," *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 888–914, 2024.
7. J. Chen, Y. Zhang, H. Cai, L. Liu, M. Liao, and J. Fang, "A comprehensive overview of micro-influencer marketing: Decoding the current landscape, impacts, and trends," *Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 14, no. 3, art. 243, 2024, DOI: 10.3390/bs14030243.
8. W. C. Hoo, S. Ramli, N. C. Pung, M. Allan, and S. F. A. Hossain, "The relationship of social media celebrities' attributes and online consumer behaviour towards Malaysian purchase intention," *Humanities and Social Sciences Letters*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 204–217, 2024.
9. M. Deng, J. Li, X. Deng, and B. Sun, "Understanding the impact of influencer authenticity strategies on digital engagement: The role of emotion, image count and brand disclosure," *Electronic Commerce Research*, Dec. 2025.
10. V. Sesar, I. Martinčević, and A. Hunjet, "The effect of sponsorship disclosure on purchase intention among Z generation," *Business Systems Research*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2024.