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## **SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS AND INFLUENCER MARKETING: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **ABSTRACT**

The rise of Social Media Influencers (SMIs) has positioned Influencer Marketing (IM) as a pivotal strategy for businesses. Despite growing interest, research remains fragmented. This paper consolidates existing literature, analyzing 61 studies from the SCOPUS database to provide a comprehensive overview of IM dynamics. We explore how SMIs influence consumer intentions and behaviors, culminating in a multidimensional framework that identifies key variables, mediators, and moderators affecting consumer outcomes. This framework highlights various themes and research gaps, paving the way for future inquiries into emerging areas within influencer marketing. Ultimately, this study enriches the understanding of IM and offers valuable insights for academics and practitioners navigating this dynamic field.

*Keywords: Social media influencers, Influencer marketing, systematic literature review, consumer purchase intention*

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## INTRODUCTION

The prominence of social media influencers has garnered considerable attention in light of recent advancements in the marketing industry. Influencer marketing prioritizes allocating funds towards influencers who motivate firms to promote their products or services to a specific target demographic. (Kurdi et al., 2022). The rise of social media and digitalization has changed how people learn, communicate, and purchase as the size of the world market for influencer marketing is expanding quickly (Sesar et al., 2022). Marketers are utilizing social media platforms more and more to disseminate product-related information to consumers, taking advantage of the platforms' extensive reach. (Koay et al., 2022). According to Statista's 2023 report, social networks are used by more than half of India's population. By 2025, social networks will have reached 67% of the population. There are 5.18 billion internet users worldwide, approximately 65 percent of the global population. Furthermore, India's active internet users are expected to exceed 900 million by 2025 (Statista, 2023). As a result, it implies that the social media marketing potential is enormous and promising.

Social media has brought a lot of change in people's interaction and communication. Companies have closely observed social media influencers as possible marketing channels and valuable social connection assets for potential partnerships. This may result in long-lasting partnerships built on marketing and sales (Masuda et al., 2022). Consumers frequently use social media platforms before purchasing. Consumers, in particular, rely on influencers, who have emerged as one of the most potent motivators for buying decisions and are said to impact brands significantly. Consumers view influencers as more relatable, comparable, and reliable compared to celebrities. Consequently, they form more favorable opinions about products that influencers recommend, as opposed to those endorsed by celebrities. (Tian et al., 2023). In marketing, the influencer phenomenon is not new. Before the rise of social media, celebrities held the dominant role in shaping consumer behavior through traditional media. Individuals emulate and adhere to famous personalities who possess significant influence by endorsing items and services through traditional media platforms like television and newspapers, either directly or indirectly (Masuda et al., 2022). The expanding utilization of social media influencer marketing has led to an increase in research on the role of social media influencers (SMIs) as a crucial marketing tool. Furthermore, it has garnered growing attention from researchers in business press publications.

The identification and impact of these Social Media Influencers (SMIs) on consumer behavior have become crucial and unavoidable subjects of interest for both scholars and professionals (Vrontis et al., 2021). Various reviews have been done in previous studies having different objectives regarding social media influencers. Tanwar et al. (2022) evaluated the field of social and digital influencers and also presented a background of how influencer marketing research has evolved. Another scoping review done by Engel et al. (2024) highlighted and synthesized the role of social media influencers in adolescent health. Some Comparison studies done by Brown, A., & Hayes, N. (2018); Chen, Y., & Sparks, B. (2022): highlight the strategic advantage of influencer marketing over traditional advertising. Some reviews were based on evaluating the effectiveness of influencer marketing Cho et al. (2022) Leung et al. (2022) Bahn and Watson (2021). Some meta-reviews providing various aspects of influencer marketing and social media influencers were done by Gruber, Schaarschmidt, and Freiling (2020), and Kumar et al. (2016). Some of the reviews were based on the ethics and disclosure under influencer marketing Jin, Muqaddam, & Ryu (2020) Williams et al. (2019). Other studies have been done regarding consumer behaviour and perception by Pick (2020), Joshi et al. (2023). Thus, it is readily apparent that a deeper and more thorough understanding of this phenomenon is required for both academic research and marketing practice

The current research on social media influencer marketing (IM) contributes in following ways. First, The vast body of literature on social media influencer marketing can be more cohesively analyzed through a systematic review. It makes it simpler to stay updated with the most recent advancements by giving researchers and practitioners access to an extensive summary of the state of the art. Second, it will help identify trends and emerging social media influencer marketing concepts. It allows researchers to trace the field's evolution and highlight key themes that have gained prominence over time. Third, it reveals how influencer marketing affects consumer behavior, including purchase decisions, brand perception, and influencer trust. Understanding these dynamics can be essential for marketers. Fourth, it will analyze how influencers engage with their audience and how this engagement affects the outcomes of marketing campaigns. The review offers numerous advantages for both marketing research and practice. The initial section provides a comprehensive summary of pertinent research and delineates the notable topics investigated by scholars. Furthermore, we introduce the first comprehensive analysis of existing literature about the subject matter. Moreover, we consolidate many theoretical outlines and research discoveries into a broad and interdisciplinary context, which offers organization to

the SMI phenomena and its influence on consumer behavior. The suggested paradigm can guide future scholars and practitioners in constructing social media influencer marketing techniques. Furthermore, we analyze to determine areas in research that have not been well addressed and put up a potential resolution.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This section provides an overview of the methodological approaches and software tools utilized in this investigation. A compilation of publications relevant to social media influencers has been gathered, analyzed, and assessed using software tools to generate diverse findings and technological patterns.

### **Data foundation and depuration**

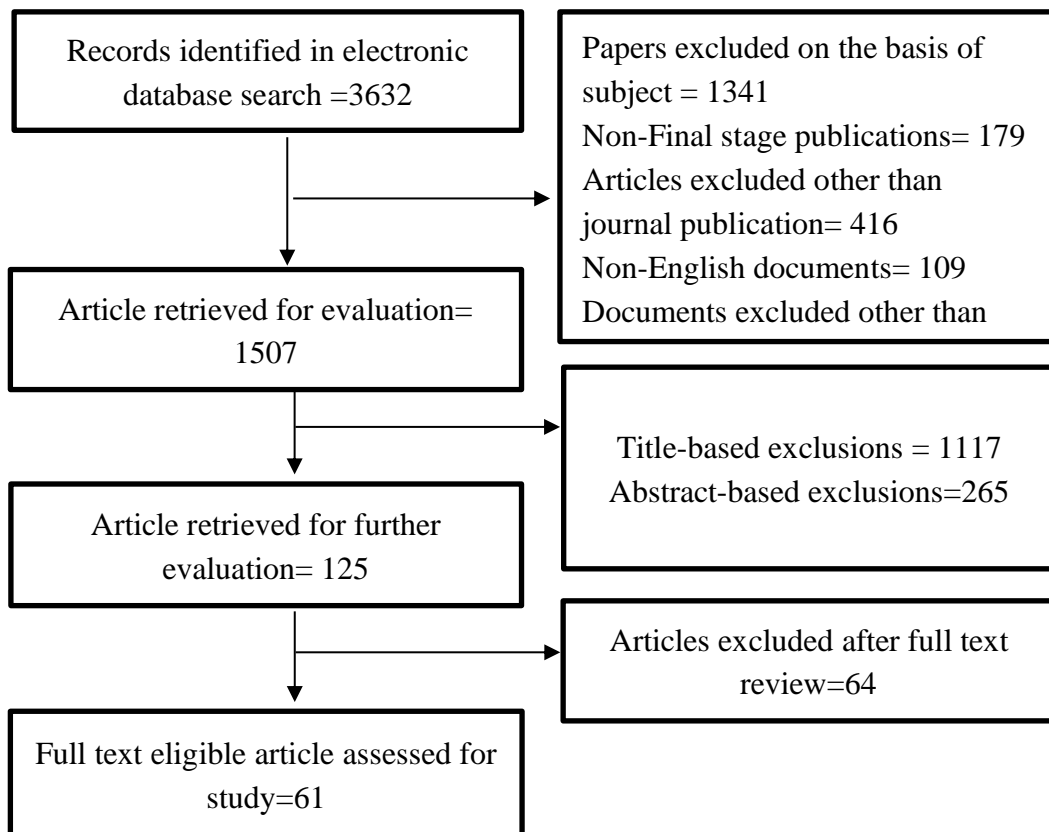
To establish a solid basis and provide trustworthy outcomes, Scopus, a renowned database of scholarly papers encompassing a diverse array of themes, is utilized to search for all relevant publications related to the digital market. We restricted our search to scholarly articles, specifically focusing on those written in English. By including studies from 2015 to 2024, the review is able to capture the emergence and rapid growth of influencer marketing in its early stages.

We excluded books, book chapters, conference proceedings, editorials, and other non-refereed publications. As a first step, we conducted research using the keywords "social media influencers" and "influencer marketing" to cover the topic broadly. To protect the maximum area under this field, the research was not confined to any particular date. The initial step generated 3632 results from the Scopus database. After specifying the results to subjects social science, business management, and accounting, source type, i.e. journal, language, and only final stage publication, we end up with 1507 articles to be studied, as seen in Figure 1. After removing irrelevant and duplicate articles by hand, we carefully reviewed the titles and abstracts of every article found, leaving us with a total of 125 journal articles.

In a systematic literature review on social media influencers and purchase intention, the exclusion of non-purchase intention-related articles is ignored for precision and clarity. This focused approach ensures a specific and manageable scope, promoting methodological consistency and aligning with the research. The review achieves coherence and enables a more thorough investigation of the correlation between social media influencers and customers' purchase intentions by refining the selection criteria. (Vrontis et al., 2021). This

strategic exclusion enhances the quality of synthesis, contributing to a more rigorous examination of the literature and ultimately providing meaningful insights into the targeted aspect of interest. After reading the full-text article, the final number of articles remaining for assessment is 61.

**Figure 1. Search strategy**



## RESULTS

### Descriptive analysis

An essential task in understanding the field of SMIs is to do a descriptive analysis of the literature. This study helps to identify patterns, advantages, and limitations of existing research. This section presents an analysis of the technical aspects of the reviewed studies, such as article type, methods used, and publication outlets. It also examines contextual features, such as the social media platforms studied. This analysis serves as an initial step in comprehending the research domain and identifying any significant gaps that require further investigation.

### Citation analysis

Table 1 shows the top 20 most cited articles. To evaluate the influence of a specific body of literature, we gathered data by utilizing the Scopus database.

**Table 1. Citation count**

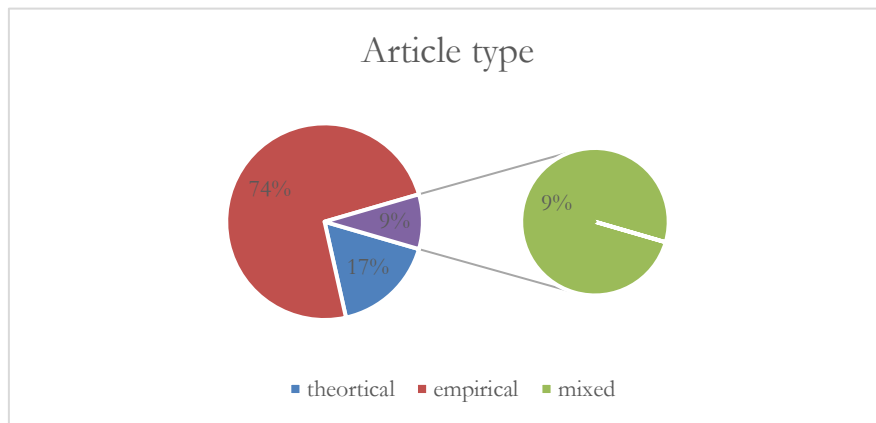
Source Title	Cited by	Author
Journal of Interactive Advertising	697	Lou & Yuan (2019)
Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	401	Sokolova & Kefi (2020)
International Journal of Information Management	178	Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández (2019)
Australasian Marketing Journal	117	Weismueller et al. (2020)
Psychology and Marketing	107	Torres et al. (2019)
Journal of Internet Commerce	100	Trivedi & Sama (2019)
Technological Forecasting and Social Change	74	Masuda et al. (2022)
Journal of Internet Commerce	61	Cooley & Parks-Yancy (2019)
Journal of Promotion Management	48	Saima & Khan (2021)
Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	38	Bu et al. (2022)
Business Perspectives and Research	37	Chopra et al. (2021)
Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice	36	Nafees et al. (2021)
Journal of Marketing Management	35	Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo (2021)
Marketing Intelligence and Planning	23	Li & Peng (2021)
Digital Business	23	Nafees et al. (2021)
European Business Review	16	Masuda et al. (2022)
Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing	14	Bi & Zhang (2022)
Journal of Global Fashion Marketing	12	Gomes et al. (2022)

Sustainability (Switzerland)	12	Jansom & Pongsakornrungrungsilp (2021)
International Journal of Data and Network Science	11	Masuda et al. (2022)

**Article type**

Theoretical pieces made up just 17% (n = 10), and the rest of the studies used a mixed approach. This finding suggests that the existing body of research on Influencer Marketing (IM) is deficient in terms of conceptual advancements, such as comprehensive viewpoints, innovative theories, and substantive inventories. These contributions are crucial for the evolution of knowledge in this field. Hence, future studies must concentrate on broadening the theoretical limits of this line of inquiry.

**Figure 2. Article type**

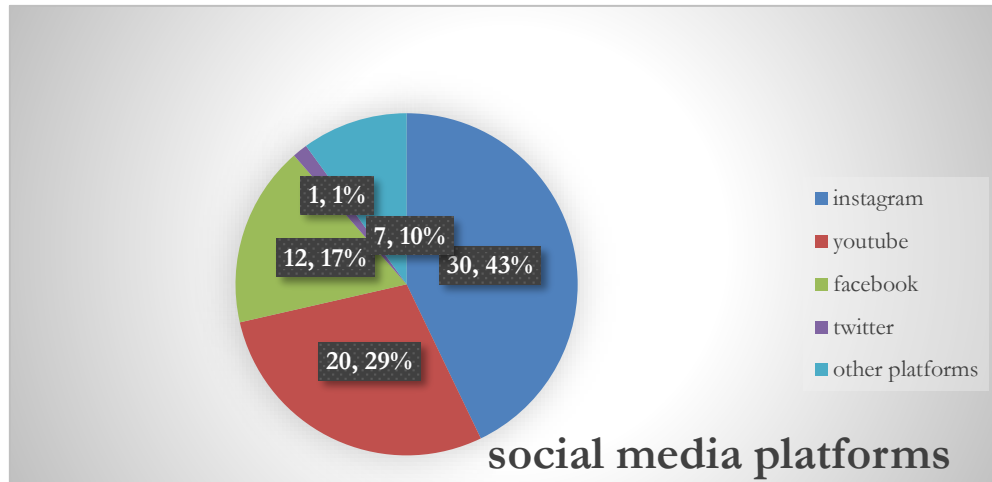


**Social media platform studied**

Figure 3 shows the percentage of different social media platforms studied under the given 61 studies. It is observed that the most used platform is Instagram, which accounts for 43% of other used platforms. The second most studied platform is YouTube, accounting for 29% after Facebook captures that 17% area. Twitter and other platforms account for 1% and 10 % respectively. The statistics show that Instagram is an essential influencer marketing channel. Most studies adopted a broader perspective and did not provide any specific details regarding the social media platforms under investigation. While Instagram remains the primary platform for influencer marketing efforts, further investigation is

required to analyze the impact of other social media networks. This is necessary due to potential variations in consumer behavior and influencer actions across different platforms.

**Figure 3. Social media platform usage**



### **Thematic analysis**

The thematic analysis resulted in a comprehensive synthesis of academic research on SMIs. In this regard, our objective was to identify the primary study emphasis of the examined articles to classify them into more comprehensive research themes. Initially, the 61 papers in the pool underwent content analysis, considering factors such as the declared objective, research questions/hypotheses, central arguments, and main constructions. This analysis aimed to identify the specific phenomena that each article focuses on. Each article was then assigned a descriptive sentence that clearly outlined its main subject. The theme titles for each article were subsequently developed from these explanatory remarks. This process revealed five major research themes, namely: 1. Parasocial Relationships and Engagement, 2. Influencer marketing dynamics as a strategic tool, 3. credibility metrics in influencer marketing, 4. Influencer's characteristics and consumer outcomes, 5. Influencer-induced purchase intention analysis.



**Table 2. Top five research themes**

Research themes	References	Adjusted no. of articles	Weightage
1. Parasocial Relationships and Engagement	Sokolova & Kefi (2020), Masuda et al. (2022), Jansom & Pongsakornrungsilp (2021), Leite & Baptista (2022), Gomes et al. (2022), Kashif MAHMOOD et al. (2023), Koay et al. (2023), Conde & Casais (2023a), Taher Surug (2022), Bi & Zhang (2022)	6.5	10.65%
2. Credibility metrics in influencer marketing	Yan et al. (2022), Ooi et al. (2023), Venciute et al. (2023), Kashif MAHMOOD et al. (2023), Mabkhot et al. (2022), Sesar et al. (2022), Koay et al. (2022a), Leite & Baptista, 2022), Özbölük & Akdogan (2022), Saima & Khan (2020), Barbosa & Añaña (2023), Santiago & Serralha (2022), Zirena-Bejarano et al. (2022), Kwiatek et al. (2021), Weismueller et al. (2020), Sokolova & Kefi (2020)	12	19.67%
3. Influencer's characteristics and consumer outcomes	Shah et al. (2023), Tian et al. (2023), Conde & Casais (2023), Fitriati & Madu Siwi (2023), Fitriati & Madu Siwi (2023), Cabeza-Ramírez et al. (2022), Kurdi et al. (2022), Bu et al. (2022), Alrwashdeh et al. (2022), Santiago & Serralha (2022), Taher Surug (2022), Kwiatek et al. (2021), Gomes et al. (2022), Aggad & Ahmad (2021), Jung & Im (2021), Saima & Khan (2020), Torres et al. (2019), Cooley & Parks-Yancy (2019), Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo (2021), Andonopoulos et al. (2023)	16.5	27.04%

4. Influencer marketing dynamics as a strategic tool	Hsieh (2023), John et al. (2021), Sesar et al. (2022), Kwiatek et al. (2021), School (2022), Trivedi (2021), Gomes et al. (2022), Trivedi & Sama (2020), Jaitly & Gautam (2021), Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández (2019), Lou & Yuan (2019), Chopra et al. (2021), Al-Zyoud (2018), Nafees et al. (2021)	13	21.31%
5. Influencer-induced purchase intention analysis	Ashraf et al. (2023), Koay et al. (2023), Wu et al. (2023), Pérez-Cabañero et al. (2023), Al-Sous et al. (2023), Alkan & Ulas (2023), Barbosa & Añaña (2023), Hmoud et al. (2022), Mabkhot et al. (2022), Li & Peng (2021), Gajanova et al. (2020), Alrwashdeh et al. (2022)	11	18.03%

### Theme 1: Parasocial relationships and engagement

Some studies explore the concept of parasocial relationships between consumers and influencers and how they impact consumer behaviour. Investigate how emotional attachment to influencers affects brand engagement and purchase intentions. Parasocial relationships and engagement with social media influencers explore the unique dynamics shaping online interactions. Parasocial relationships, characterized by a perceived connection between audiences and influencers, drive the success of content creators. The study under this theme delves into the psychological aspects of these relationships, analyzing how influencers strategically build intimate connections with their followers. Understanding the factors influencing engagement, such as likes, comments, and shares, is crucial for comprehending the broader impact on consumer behavior and societal trends. Exploring both the ethical considerations of influencer marketing and the role of media literacy in navigating these relationships, the studies under this theme contribute valuable insights into the evolving landscape of digital interactions and the implications for individuals and society at large. According to (Masuda et al., 2022), PSR has the potential to increase marketing efficacy. Also, PSR has a favorable impact on buying intention in social media influencer marketing (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

### **Theme 2: Influencer marketing dynamics as a strategic tool**

In the current digital marketing environment, influencer marketing has become a powerful and tactical tool that organizations use to increase brand exposure and engage with specific target audiences. This marketing approach involves collaborating with individuals who have amassed a significant following on social media platforms, allowing brands to tap into their influence and credibility. Influencers, often experts or trendsetters in specific niches, can effectively promote products or services through authentic and relatable content. The dynamics of influencer marketing revolve around the symbiotic relationship between influencers and brands, where authenticity and alignment of values play a crucial role (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). As influencers engage with their audiences, the promotional content seamlessly integrates into the authentic narrative of the influencer's life, creating a more genuine connection with consumers. The strategic use of influencer marketing extends beyond conventional advertising methods, providing a more personalized and targeted approach that resonates with today's digitally savvy consumers.

### **Theme 3: Credibility metrics in influencer marketing**

Credibility metrics play a pivotal role in influencer marketing, serving as a critical framework for assessing the effectiveness and authenticity of influencer-brand partnerships. In the dynamic realm of social media, where influencers wield significant influence over their followers, credibility is paramount. These metrics encompass various factors, including influencer expertise, trustworthiness, and the alignment of content with their established niche (Mabkhot et al., 2022). The influencer's credibility is often measured by audience engagement, the authenticity of their voice, and the transparency in their collaborations with brands. Metrics may also include the influencer's ability to maintain a consistent and genuine online persona, avoiding practices that could erode trust, such as misleading promotions or inauthentic endorsements. As brands increasingly recognize the importance of credibility in influencer marketing, the evaluation of these metrics becomes instrumental in selecting influencers who can effectively enhance brand reputation, foster consumer trust, and drive meaningful engagement with the target audience.

### **Theme 4: Influencer's characteristics and consumer outcomes**

Influencers play a pivotal role in shaping consumer outcomes through their unique set of characteristics that distinguish them in the digital landscape. First and foremost, influencers possess a high level of authenticity and relatability, which establishes a genuine connection

with their followers(Conde & Casais, 2023a). The characteristics of influencers, including authenticity, creativity, adaptability, and community-building skills, play a crucial role in shaping consumer outcomes. The trust and connection established between influencers and their followers, combined with engaging content and trend-setting abilities, create a powerful influence on consumer behavior and decision-making processes in the digital age. Consumer outcomes are shaped by the relationship influencers build with their followers(Fitriati & Madu Siwi, 2023). The sense of community and belonging fostered by influencers contributes to a shared identity among their audience. As a result, when influencers recommend a product or endorse a brand, it goes beyond a mere transaction; it becomes a shared experience within a community of like-minded individuals. This sense of belonging and shared values enhance the overall consumer experience and contribute to brand loyalty.

### **Theme 5: Influencer-induced purchase intention analysis**

Influencer-induced purchase intention is a multifaceted phenomenon driven by the unique characteristics of influencers and their impact on consumer behavior. Central to this dynamic is the trust and credibility that influencers cultivate among their followers through authentic and relatable content. Consumers perceive influencers as knowledgeable and genuine, making their product endorsements more influential(Barbosa & Añaña, 2023). The concept of social proof plays a pivotal role, as influencers act as living testimonials, validating the positive attributes of a product and reducing perceived risk. Additionally, influencers excel at creating engaging content that visually showcases products, stimulating interest and desire. The sense of community fostered by influencers further amplifies their influence, turning product endorsements into shared experiences within dedicated fan bases. The aspirational lifestyle association cultivated by influencers, coupled with exclusive promotions and limited-time offers, adds a layer of urgency and exclusivity that can significantly boost purchase intention(Al-Sous et al., 2023). In essence, the analysis of influencer-induced purchase intention involves understanding the interconnected factors of trust, social proof, engaging content, community influence, aspirational associations, and strategic promotional tactics that collectively shape consumer decisions in the digital age.

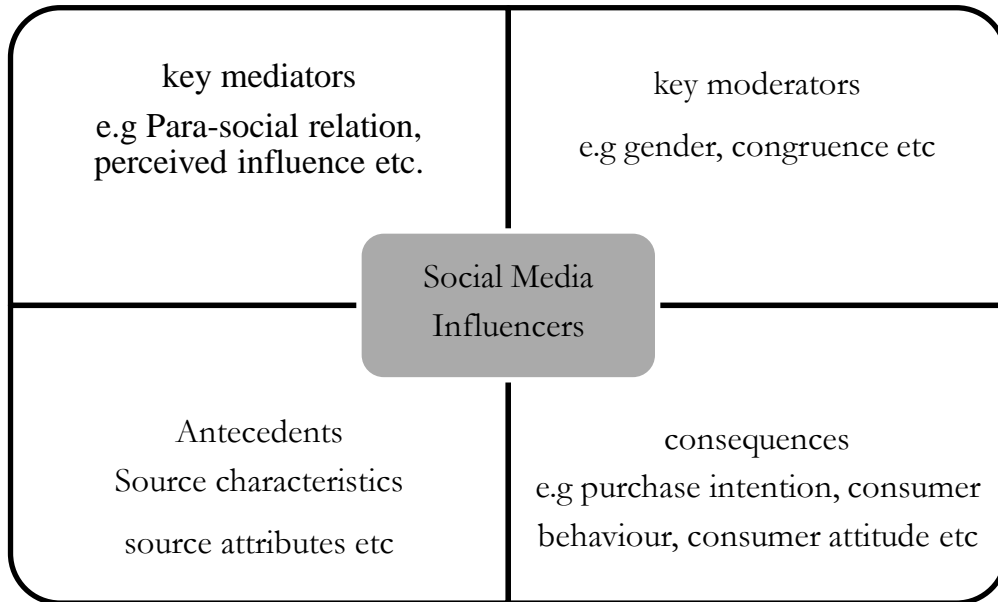
## **CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT**

The integrative framework presented in Figure 4 is developed by combining the results of this systematic review. It explains the phenomenon of social media influencers. The given

analysis demonstrates that this topic is complex and has multiple dimensions. To ensure clarity, supplementary tables are included to provide more detailed information about the dynamics of relationships and interactions. It is important to note that these tables do not offer a comprehensive list but rather highlight critical insights. Table 3 highlights the key antecedents and, further on, their consequences come under the social media influencers study. Significant antecedents are related to source characteristics, psychological factors, and product associated. Consequences are consumer attitudinal and behavioral outcomes at different antecedent levels. To provide broad insights into the study, the mediator table, along with their relationship with other independent and dependent variables, is also given in Table 4. When all of these intricate interactions are considered together, it is possible to get a representation of the influential power that SMIs have in moulding the attitudes and behaviors of consumers. The framework in question is not static; instead, it is dynamic, and it has the potential to function as a theoretical foundation for directing future efforts more constructively.

Moreover, this type of integration is also advantageous for marketers since it provides them with a comprehensive understanding of SMIs as a powerful marketing tool. This is exceptionally beneficial to marketers. This concept has several practical applications, one of which is that it can act as a catalyst for marketers to think about a more extensive variety of challenges. The integrative framework developed from the systematic review contributes significantly to the literature on social media influencers (SMIs) by providing a nuanced understanding of their multifaceted impact on consumer behavior. It identifies key antecedents, such as source characteristics and psychological factors, and links these to consumer outcomes, illustrating how SMIs shape attitudes and behaviors. Furthermore, the framework serves as a dynamic theoretical foundation that can guide future research and marketing strategies, enhancing marketers' comprehension of SMIs as influential marketing tools. This comprehensive approach not only deepens academic discourse but also offers practical insights for effective influencer marketing strategies.

**Figure 4. Conceptual framework**



**Antecedents and outcomes**

Table 3 depicts the key antecedents and consequences related to SMIs. A lot of scholarly work has been done considering antecedents -Attractiveness, Expertise, Trustworthiness, and similarity to check the influence of social media influencers. Many other segments need to be explored more, such as materialism, hedonism, taste leadership, and influencer identification. Another significant antecedent is perceived Expertise and credibility, which enhances an influencer's ability to sway opinions and affect consumer behavior. Additionally, factors like follower engagement, frequency of posts, and the strategic use of platforms contribute to an influencer's success.

Furthermore, personal traits such as likability and relatability play a role in audience connection. In future research, it is essential to focus more on the antecedent factors that influence audience perceptions of authenticity and trustworthiness. As the influencer landscape evolves, understanding how content quality, transparency, and relatability impact audience trust and loyalty will be crucial. Moreover, investigating the role of algorithmic changes on various social media platforms and their effects on influencer reach and engagement should be a priority. By delving deeper into these antecedents, researchers can provide valuable insights for both influencers and brands aiming to navigate the ever-changing dynamics of social media.

**Table 3. Antecedent-consequence table**

Key Antecedents	Outcome Variables	Mediators	Effect	Citation
Attractiveness, Expertise, Trustworthiness, Similarity Perceived Entertainment, Trust, Perceived Usefulness Interactivity	Purchase Intention	Parasocial Relations	Positive	Ashraf et al. (2023)
	Impulse Buying	Celebrity Effect, Trust	Positive	Yan et al. (2022)
	Purchase Behavior	Product or Service Attitude	Negative	Ooi et al. (2023)
Inspirational Capacity, Personal Authenticity	Consumer Behavior	Trustworthiness, Inspirational Capacity	–	Duh & Thabethe (2021)
Influencers' Consistent Cues (Information and Image Consistency) Perceived Similarity, Wishful Identification	Behavioral Intentions	Perceived Credibility, Trust	Positive	Hsieh (2023)
	Brand Attitude, Purchase Intention, Engagement Behaviors	Emotions, Self-Improvement Motives	–	Tian et al. (2023)
Materialism, Hedonism	Purchase Intention	Emotional Appeal, Desire for Status	Positive	John et al. (2021)
Opinion Leadership, Taste Leadership, Expertise Information Quality, Trustworthiness Trust, Purchase	Behavioral Intentions	Opinion Influence, Authority	Positive	Pérez-Cabañero et al. (2023)
	Attitude Toward a Brand	Brand Trust, Perceived Reliability	Positive	Al-Sous et al. (2023)
	Purchase Intention	Perceived Value	–	Alkan & Ulas (2023)
Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Expertise, Homophily Information Quality, Trustworthiness, Attractiveness, Meaning Transfer, Expertise Homophily	Buying Intention	Perceived Trust, Emotional Connection	Positive	(Kashif MAHMOOD et al. (2023)
	Purchase Intention, Attitude Toward the Brand	Brand Trust, Perceived Value	Positive	Hmoud et al. (2022)
	Value Co-Creation, Brand Value	Customer Value Co-Creation Behavior	Positive	Bu et al. (2022)
Communication Skills, Perceived Authenticity, Perceived Expertise Source Credibility, Parasocial Relationships (PSR), Brand Trust Homophily, Physical Attractiveness, Social Attractiveness, PSR	Purchase Intention	Parasocial Relationships	Positive	Taher Surug (2022)
	Behavior Intention	Brand Trust, Emotional Attachment	Positive	Koay et al. (2022b)
	Purchase Intention	Parasocial Relationships (PSR), Trust	Positive	Masuda et al. (2022)
Source Credibility, Influencer Identification Attractive Celebrity Influencers, Expert Influencers	Purchase Decision	Trust, Emotional Engagement	Positive	Özbölük & Akdogan (2022)
	Consumer-Brand Engagement, Online Impulse Purchase	Emotional Engagement, Perceived Credibility	Positive	Trivedi (2021)

Expertise, Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Familiarity, Similarity, Likability	Brand Engagement	Perceived Trust, Engagement	–	Duh & Thabethe (2021)
Social Media Influencers	Brand Awareness, Customer Engagement Perception, Attitude	Perceived Authenticity, Trust	Positive	Jaitly & Gautam (2021)
Emotional Attachment, Perceived Information	Word-of-Mouth, Purchase Intention	Perceived Influence, Emotional Attachment	Positive	Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo (2021)
Intrinsic Influencer Motivation, Communication Style, Influencer Network Involvement, Influencer Character	Consumer Followership, Brand Awareness, Purchase Intention	Perceived Influence, Engagement	Positive	Kwiatek et al. (2021)
Perceived Influential Power	Brand Expected Value, Brand Engagement, Intention to Purchase	Emotional Attachment, Perceived Trust	Positive	Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández (2019)

### Mediators

Mediators play a crucial role in understanding the mechanisms through which influencer content influences audience perceptions and behaviors. (see Table 4) Common mediators include factors like trust, identification, and parasocial interaction. Trust in an influencer, for instance, can mediate the impact of their content on audience attitudes and purchasing decisions. Identifying and comprehending these mediators is essential for a nuanced understanding of the influencer effect. In future research, it is vital to focus more on the mediators related to authenticity and credibility. Exploring how transparency, disclosure practices, and the perceived authenticity of influencer endorsements mediate audience trust and engagement can provide valuable insights for influencers and marketers navigating the evolving landscape of social media. Understanding these mediators can contribute to a more holistic comprehension of the influencer-audience relationship in the context of social media.



**Table 4. Key mediators**

Independent variable	Mediator	Dependent variable	Relationship	citation
Attractiveness, Expertise, Trustworthiness, and similarity	Parasocial relations	purchase intention	Expertise, beauty, trustworthiness, and similarity all make people more likely to buy, and parasocial relationships mediate this effect.	Ashraf et al. (2023)
Celebrity effect, influencer credibility, trust, perceived entertainment, and usefulness	consumer attitude	attitude towards influencers, impulse buying	Consumer attitudes about influencer ads affect impulsive buying. The celebrity effect mediates influencer credibility and consumer attitude. Trust mediates consumer attitude through perceived utility.	Yan et al. (2022)
(SMIs) intimate self-disclosure	Parasocial relations, congruence	purchase intention	The research shows that parasocial relationships do not stand in the way of the connection between SMIs' close self-disclosure and their plans to buy.	Koay et al. (2023)
Interactivity, credibility	attitude towards SMIs	purchase behavior	interactivity negatively impacts attitudes directly and indirectly. Furthermore, product or service attitude mediates the direct effect of social media influencer attitude on purchasing behavior.	Ooi et al. (2023)
Self-disclosure, environmental concern, and self-control	consumption value	purchase intention	Sharing personal information, caring about the environment, and being able to control their spending all had a good effect on SMIs' intentions to buy sustainable food by balancing social and intellectual values.	Wu et al. (2023)
perceived information and emotional attachment	perceived influence	purchase intention	Emotional attachment and perceived information quality boost followers' buying intention through perceived influence.	Shah et al. (2023)
Trustworthiness, Inspirational capacity, personal authenticity	trustworthiness and inspirational capacity	consumer behavior, purchase intention	SMI authenticity also affects purchase intentions through trustworthiness and inspirational capacity.	Andonopoulos et al. (2023)
perceived similarity and wishful identification	emotions and self-improvement motives	brand attitude, purchase intention, and	Similarity perception Encouraged optimism, admiration, and aspiration	Tian et al. (2023)

		engagement behaviors.	and discouraged jealousy, despair, and anger. Identification with desire increased contrast and assimilation. Due to both types of social comparison, customers followed influencers for self-improvement, brand attitude, purchase intention, and engagement.	
parasocial relation	Influencer credibility (IC), product attitude (PAT)	purchase intention	The relationship between PSR and PI is mediated via IC and PAT.	Bi & Zhang (2022)
PSR, number of followers, perceived popularity, and opinion leadership	perceived popularity and opinion leadership	audience intention	The correlation between the number of followers and the inclination to follow advice from social media influencers is influenced by perceived popularity and opinion leadership and is further affected by parasocial interaction. Micro, macro, and mega-influencers differ significantly in terms of credibility, appeal, and established connections.	Conde & Casais (2023b)
opinion leaders, perceived influence	brand engagement in self-concept and brand expected value	brand value perception, brand engagement, and encouraging consumer purchase intention	The existence of perceived influence positively affects the intention to make a purchase, with brand engagement in self-concept and brand expected value acting as the intermediary variables.	Fitriati & Madu Siwi (2023)
perceived homophily	perceived authenticity	purchase intention	The perceived authenticity of an influencer will act as a mediator in the relationship between perceptions of similarity and subsequent intention to purchase.	Fitriati & Madu Siwi (2023)
source credibility, self-brand congruence, consumer involvement	self-brand congruence,	behavior intention	The influence of Instagram users' trustworthiness on their intention to make a purchase is partly influenced by the degree to which the brand aligns with their self-image.	Barbosa & Añaña (2023)
source credibility, product involvement	emotional attachment	purchase intention	Source credibility positively impacts purchase intention with mediating effect of emotional attachment	Chiu & Ho, (2023)

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS AND INFLUENCER MARKETING: A SYSTEMATIC  
LITERATURE REVIEW

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SMTs	credibility	purchase intention.	A strong correlation was found between SMTs and purchase intentions, and it was discovered that credibility acts as a mediator between these variables.	Mabkhot et al. (2022)
Homophily	value co-creation	brand value and purchase intention	Homophily enhances customer value co-creation behavior and is favorably associated with anticipated brand value and purchase intention. Customer value co-creation behavior plays a multi-mediating role.	Bu et al. (2022)
Credibility	brand awareness	purchase intention	The credibility of influencers has a significant and beneficial relationship with the desire to make a purchase, and this association is mediated by brand awareness.	Sesar et al. (2022)
parasocial interaction and attractiveness, perceived realism, and trustworthiness.	attitude toward SMTs.'	purchase intention	The attitude towards virtual influencers plays a crucial role in mediating the relationship between significant elements, such as parasocial interaction and attractiveness, and the desire to make a purchase.	School (2022)
SMIS factors	brand credibility (BC)	patronage intention(PI)	Social media influencers have a direct impact on public opinion and brand credibility. BC Partially acts as a mediator in the connection between SMTs and PIs.	Alrwashdeh et al. (2022)
perceived authenticity, communication skills, and perceived Expertise	PSR	purchase intention	The findings indicate that the communication skills and expertise of social media influencers have an impact on parasocial interactions and the propensity to make purchases. Parasocial interactions served as a mediator for the connection between social media influencer skills and the intention to make a purchase.	Taher surug (2022)
credibility	brand value	purchase decision	significant and clear link between influencer credibility and client purchases. When brand value is included as a	Kwiatek et al. (2021)

			mediator variable, this association strengthens.	
Trustworthiness, Expertise, content quality, similarity, parasocial interaction	Attitude of sponsored content, blog content quality	purchase intention	Quality blog content and parasocial interaction boost fashion brand buying intention. Blog content quality also mediates trustworthiness and purchasing intention.	Gomes et al. (2022)
SMI power and SMI perceived source credibility	expertise and trustworthiness	consumer attitudes	The influence wielded by social media influencers (SMIs) is directly proportional to consumers' perception of the brand. Furthermore, the connection is partially influenced by the perceived Expertise and Trustworthiness of SMI.	Nafees et al. (2021)
content by influencer, influencer characteristics, and trustworthiness of influencer	brand attitude	purchase intention	Influencer qualities, content, and brand attitude boost buy intention. In contrast, influencer credibility does not affect customer purchase intention. Brand attitude adversely mediates the association between influencers and customers' buying intention, while it mediates the relationship between influencer content, trustworthiness, and purchase intention.	Aggad & Ahmad (2021)
centrality and trustworthiness, empathy and immersion	empathy and immersion	consumer product attitude	The centrality and trustworthiness of influencers positively correlated with customers' empathy and absorption in social media posts. Consumer empathy and absorption significantly mediate the link between influencers' traits and product attitudes.	Jung & Im (2021)
emotional attachment and perceived information	perceived influence	purchase intention	Perceived influence acts as a mediator between emotional attachment, perceived information, and purchase intention	Kwiattek et al. (2021)
Influencer characteristics	brand admiration and brand attitude	purchase intention	Expert influencers are better than appealing to celebrity influencers for consumer electronics marketing. Empirical evidence links	Trivedi & Sama (2020)

## **FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA**

### **Understanding cultural variances in influencer marketing**

Subsequent investigations should focus on the cultural aspects to examine the responses of customers from various cultures towards influencer marketing (IM) tactics. Investigating potential variations in consumer responses, preferences, and emotional reactions across different cultural contexts can provide valuable insights for marketers tailoring influencer campaigns for global audiences. This research can help uncover nuanced cultural differences in the effectiveness of IM and inform strategies that resonate with specific cultural values.

### **Exploring the nuances of social media platforms (Snapchat and TikTok)**

As social media continues to evolve, researchers should shift focus beyond popular platforms like Instagram and explore emerging platforms such as Snapchat and TikTok. The influence wielded by social media influencers (SMIs) is directly proportional to consumers' perception of the brand. Furthermore, the connection is partially influenced by the perceived Expertise and Trustworthiness of SMI. Comparing across different platforms can help identify and analyze the similarities and variations in influencer characteristics, content-related factors, consumer behavior, and promotional techniques. This can offer marketers valuable information to develop effective social media strategies that cater to varied audiences.

### **Unraveling the appeal of virtual influencers**

The rise of virtual influencers introduces a novel dimension to influencer marketing. Subsequent research should examine the elements that contribute to the attractiveness of virtual influencers and determine the possible limitations of their achievements. Understanding consumer perceptions, emotional reactions, and behavioral outcomes associated with virtual influencers can offer marketers guidance on leveraging this emerging trend effectively and navigating potential challenges in building trust and engagement with virtual personas.

### **Cognitive dissonance and emotional states in influencer content consumption**

Future research should explore the impact of social media influencers' information intake on consumers' emotional states and subsequent behavioral outcomes, using cognitive dissonance theory. Examining the potential conflicts and psychological tensions that may arise during the consumption of influencer content can shed light on the intricate relationship between influencers and their audiences, guiding marketers in crafting content that aligns with consumer emotions and values.

### **Extending research on influencer marketing outcomes**

To comprehensively understand the impact of influencer marketing, future research should extend investigations into antecedents, outcomes, mediators, and moderators of influencer marketing. This involves examining factors such as reciprocity, reputation, and humor as precursors and further investigating results such as brand recall, brand equity, and purchase intent. Additionally, understanding mediators like influencer loyalty, fantasy fulfillment, and social pressure, as well as exploring moderators like consumer happiness and product characteristics, will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted dynamics of influencer marketing. Moreover, investigating the financial performance of firms concerning influencer marketing can provide insights into the business impact of these strategies.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The implications of social media influencers research extend across various domains, offering valuable insights for academia, industry practitioners, and policymakers alike. Academically, a deeper understanding of the antecedents, consequences, and mediators in influencer marketing enhances theoretical frameworks such as Source Credibility Theory, Social Contagion Theory, and the Elaboration Likelihood Model. Scholars can build on this foundation to develop more nuanced models that capture the complexities of influencer-consumer dynamics. Industry practitioners can leverage these insights to refine influencer marketing strategies, tailoring content to enhance authenticity, trust, and relatability. Additionally, understanding the nuanced differences between various influencer types, from mega-influencers to virtual influencers, guides marketers in making informed choices aligned with campaign objectives. Policymakers benefit from this research by gaining insights into the regulatory aspects of influencer marketing, ensuring consumer protection and ethical practices in the evolving landscape of digital advertising. Overall, social media influencer research not only informs marketing practices but also contributes to the broader

discourse on digital communication, consumer behavior, and the ethical considerations surrounding influencer-brand collaborations

Limitations: Conducting a systematic literature review on social media influencers is a valuable endeavor for synthesizing existing knowledge; however, it is essential to acknowledge several limitations inherent in this process. Firstly, while selecting keywords for the literature search, the challenge lies in striking a balance between specificity and inclusivity. A more extensive focus on keywords could enhance the comprehensiveness of insights, as the field of social media influencers is dynamic and diverse. Moreover, reliance on a single database, such as Scopus, may introduce a potential bias, as different databases may cover distinct sets of journals and publications. To mitigate this limitation, future reviews could consider incorporating multiple databases, including but not limited to IEEE Xplore, PubMed, and Google Scholar, to ensure a more comprehensive coverage of the existing literature. Additionally, the dynamic nature of social media and the rapid evolution of influencer marketing may result in a time lag between the publication of relevant studies and the systematic review process. Researchers should remain vigilant about the potential omission of recent developments in the field and explore strategies to minimize this temporal limitation. However, we are certain that our systematic evaluation, which includes rigorous reference checks and a detailed method, has yielded a complete compilation of studies. This process has also minimized the likelihood that any excluded articles would have significantly impacted our conclusions.

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