



FROM CREDIBILITY TO CONSUMPTION: A CROSS CONTEXTUAL REVIEW OF PARASOCIAL INTERACTION AND PURCHASE INTENTION IN INFLUENCER MARKETING

DARI KREDIBILITAS KE KONSUMSI: TINJAUAN LINTAS KONTEKSTUAL TENTANG INTERAKSI PARASOSIAL DAN NIAT PEMBELIAN DALAM PEMASARAN INFLUENCER

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally reshaped consumer behavior globally, with social media becoming the primary channel for product information seeking. Approximately 51% of Indonesians rely on user reviews before purchasing, and 62% have bought products under the direct influence of Social Media Influencers (SMIs). Despite this, the psychological mechanisms linking influencer characteristics to purchase intention remain fragmented across sectors and platforms. This systematic literature review synthesizes nineteen empirical studies published between 2020 and 2025, spanning beauty, fashion, gadget, and sustainable product sectors across multiple countries, to examine how Source Credibility (attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise) and Parasocial Interaction (PSI) jointly shape consumer purchase intentions. Three core findings emerge: (1) trustworthiness is the sole credibility dimension that is universally and consistently significant across all contexts, fundamentally challenging assumptions about the equal contribution of the three credibility dimensions; (2) PSI operates not as a single mediator but as a multi-pathway psychological bridge through hedonic value, brand attitude, vicarious experience, and social-personal value whose specific active pathway is contingent on platform, product type, and cultural context; and (3) generational and cultural moderators systematically shape which credibility dimension most powerfully drives PSI. A Proposed Integrative Conceptual Framework and a synthetic cross-study comparison matrix (Table 2) consolidate these findings. Results offer strategic implications for influencer marketing practice and identify priority directions for future research.

Keywords : Source Credibility, Parasocial Interaction, Purchase Intention, Influencer Marketing, Brand Attitude, Systematic Literature Review, Indonesia.

Abstrak

Pesatnya perkembangan teknologi digital telah mengubah perilaku konsumen secara mendasar, di mana media sosial menjadi saluran utama pencarian informasi produk. Sekitar 51% masyarakat Indonesia mengandalkan ulasan pengguna sebelum berbelanja, dan 62% pernah membeli produk karena pengaruh langsung Social Media Influencer (SMI). Tinjauan literatur sistematis ini mensintesis sembilan belas studi empiris (2020–2025) yang mencakup sektor kecantikan, fesyen, gawai, dan produk berkelanjutan lintas negara. Tiga temuan utama diperoleh: (1) trustworthiness adalah satu-satunya dimensi kredibilitas yang secara universal dan konsisten signifikan, menantang asumsi dominan tentang peran expertise dan attractiveness; (2) PSI bekerja bukan sebagai mediator tunggal



melainkan sebagai jembatan psikologis multi jalur melalui nilai hedonis, brand attitude, vicarious experience, dan nilai sosial personal yang jalur spesifiknya ditentukan oleh platform, jenis produk, dan konteks budaya; serta (3) faktor moderasi generasi dan budaya secara sistematis menentukan dimensi kredibilitas mana yang paling kuat mendorong PSI. Sebuah kerangka konseptual integratif diusulkan untuk mengkonsolidasikan jalur-jalur tersebut. Temuan ini menawarkan implikasi strategis bagi praktisi pemasaran influencer dan mengidentifikasi prioritas arah penelitian mendatang.

Kata Kunci : Kredibilitas Sumber, Interaksi Parasosial, Niat Beli, Pemasaran Influencer, Brand Attitude, Systematic Literature Review, Indonesia.

1. INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of social media has catalyzed a fundamental shift in how consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products. In Indonesia one of the world's largest social media markets 139 million active users were recorded in early 2024, with Instagram alone surpassing 100 million users. This penetration has transformed the information seeking landscape: approximately 51% of Indonesian consumers heavily rely on user reviews before making purchases (Sofi & Rachmawati, 2024). Against this backdrop, Social Media Influencers (SMIs) have emerged as powerful intermediaries, capable of shaping purchase decisions for an estimated 62% of their followers (Sofi & Rachmawati, 2024).

SMIs are regarded as more effective than traditional celebrities in product endorsement, largely because they share personal life content and cultivate a sense of intimate connection with their audiences (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Yet, as corporate investment in influencer marketing has surged, a paradox has emerged: approximately 24% of Indonesian social media users report growing skepticism toward influencer reviews (Sofi & Rachmawati, 2024). This simultaneous growth in both influence and skepticism underscores an urgent need to understand the psychological mechanisms that govern the influencer-consumer relationship and its impact on purchase intention.

Two constructs are central to explaining these mechanisms. First, Source Credibility Theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) identifies three dimensions; attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise as determinants of a communicator's persuasive power (Gubalane & Ha, 2023; Garg & Bakshi, 2023; Hossain et al., 2024). Second, the concept of Parasocial Interaction (PSI), conceptualized by Horton and Wohl (1956), refers to the one-sided illusion of intimacy an audience develops toward a media persona, resembling a genuine friendship despite the absence of reciprocal communication (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Olfat et al., 2024). While both constructs have been studied extensively in isolation, the literature remains fragmented across sectors, platforms, and cultural contexts, limiting its ability to generate actionable theoretical or practical insights.

Research Gaps and Contribution of This Study

A preliminary mapping of the literature reveals four interconnected gaps that this review directly addresses. The first gap is theoretical integrative: no prior synthesis has explicitly mapped the mediating pathways connecting PSI to purchase intention whether through hedonic value, brand attitude, vicarious experience, or social-personal value in a comparative, cross contextual manner. Existing studies tend to test one specific mediating pathway in isolation, leaving the question of "which mediation pathway is more effective under which conditions?" unanswered. The second gap is contextual moderating: the influence of platform type, product category, and demographic characteristics (particularly generational cohort) on the relative strength of specific credibility dimensions has not been synthesized comparatively (Bratina, 2023; Poh Ling Tan & Dickson Roger Marklen, 2024). The third gap is geographic-cultural: despite Indonesia being the largest influencer marketing market in Southeast Asia, the majority of existing SLRs focus on Western or East Asian contexts without systematically positioning Indonesia in a cross-cultural comparison. The fourth gap is temporal-behavioral: no synthesis has examined how PSI influences not only immediate purchase



intention but also long-term retention and repurchase intention within a unified framework (Olfat et al., 2024).

Addressing these four gaps, this study contributes: (1) a comparative synthesis of nineteen empirical studies that explicitly maps the conditionality of PSI mediating pathways; (2) identification of which patterns are *universal* versus *context-contingent* in the Credibility, PSI, and PI relationship; (3) positioning of the Indonesian context within a global cultural comparison through analysis of generational and cultural moderation; and (4) a Proposed Integrative Conceptual Framework and a synthetic cross-study matrix (Table 2) that consolidate these findings into empirically testable propositions for future research.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology with a narrative synthetic approach, designed to identify, evaluate, and synthesize empirical evidence on the relationships among source credibility, parasocial interaction, and consumer purchase intention within the context of influencer marketing.

Literature Search Protocol

A comprehensive search was conducted across three major academic databases: Google Scholar, Scopus, and Science Direct. Boolean keyword combinations included: "parasocial interaction", "source credibility", "influencer marketing", "purchase intention", "social media influencer", "attractiveness", "trustworthiness", "expertise", "vicarious experience", "perceived value", "brand attitude", "influencer credibility", and "consumer behavior". The search was restricted to publications from 2020 to 2025 to ensure relevance to the current social media ecosystem.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Articles were included if they met all of the following criteria: (1) empirical quantitative studies employing SEM (PLS-SEM or CB-SEM/AMOS) or structured quantitative surveys; (2) investigation of at least one core construct source credibility, PSI, or purchase intention in a social media influencer marketing context; (3) published in peer-reviewed academic journals; and (4) available in full text. Articles were excluded if they: (1) were conceptual papers, books, or industry reports without primary data; (2) did not include purchase intention or consumer behavior as a dependent variable; or (3) did not specifically address social media influencer contexts.

Article Selection Process and PRISMA Flow Diagram

The selection process followed PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. Initial database searches yielded 247 records, supplemented by 21 articles from reference lists and grey literature, totaling 268 records identified. After removing 31 duplicates, 237 records were screened by title and abstract, with 171 excluded for insufficient topical relevance. Of the 66 full-text articles assessed for eligibility, 47 were excluded for the following reasons: absence of a purchase intention variable ($n=18$), conceptual or book-format articles ($n=15$), and not published in a peer-reviewed journal ($n=14$). This process yielded 19 final articles meeting all inclusion criteria. The complete selection flow is presented in Figure 1.

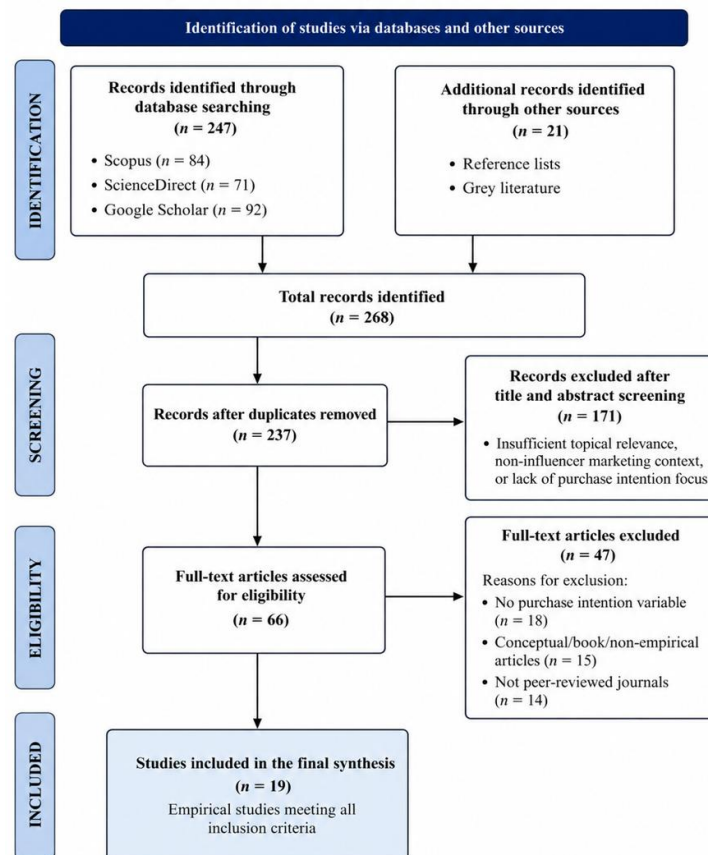


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of Article Selection Process

Source: Compiled by the author (2026)

Synthesis Technique

Synthesis was conducted using thematic narrative content analysis. Each article was coded according to: constructs examined, hypotheses tested, direction and significance of path coefficients, platform sector country context, and acknowledged limitations. Findings were then organized into five analytical themes: (a) credibility dimension effects on PSI and purchase intention; (b) PSI antecedents and consequences; (c) PSI to purchase intention mediating pathways and their conditionality; (d) generational and cultural moderation; and (e) cross study synthesis toward a proposed framework. This approach enables the identification of both consistent cross-contextual patterns and contradictions across studies.

Table 1. Summary of Reviewed Articles (n=19)

No.	Author & Year	Title	Method & Sample	Context / Platform	Key Findings
1	Sokolova & Kefi (2020)	Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and PSI influence purchase intentions	PLS-SEM; N=1,209 females, France	Instagram & YouTube; beauty & fashion	Credibility ($\beta=0.41$) and PSI ($\beta=0.35$) significantly affect PI. Attitude homophily is the strongest PSI predictor. Physical attractiveness has a negative/non-significant effect on PSI.
2	Sofi & Rachmawati (2024)	Parasocial Interaction on Indonesia's Beauty Influencer:	PLS-SEM; N=363; followers of Tasya	Instagram; beauty	Attractiveness ($\beta=0.325$) & interactivity ($\beta=0.328$) significantly affect PSI. Expertise not significant



		Antecedents and Consequences	Farasya, Indonesia		($\beta=0.034$). PSI mediates PI through perceived enjoyment & credibility.
3	Gubalane & Ha (2023)	The effects of social media influencers' credibility on product evaluation, product attitude, and purchase intention	SEM-AMOS; N=271; global social media users	Multi-platform; general product	Only trustworthiness is significant toward product evaluation. Expertise & attractiveness are not significant. Product influencer fit fully mediates the trustworthiness and PI relationship.
4	Lee & Lee (2021)	Do parasocial interactions and vicarious experiences in the beauty YouTube channels promote consumer purchase intention?	SEM-AMOS; N=318; Korean women in their 20s	YouTube; beauty	PSI ($\beta=0.636$) has the strongest direct effect on PI. Full mediation chain: PSI $\rightarrow$ vicarious expression $\rightarrow$ content diagnosticity $\rightarrow$ reduced perceived risk $\rightarrow$ PI.
5	Anwarsyah et al. (2025)	The Influence of Parasocial Interaction on Purchase Intention Through Value Perception	SEM-AMOS; N=164; social media users, Indonesia	Instagram; local fashion	Social attractiveness ($\beta=0.684$) & physical attractiveness ($\beta=0.559$) significant toward PSI. PSI not directly significant to PI without social/personal value mediators.
6	Garg & Bakshi (2023)	Exploring the impact of beauty vloggers' credible attributes, parasocial interaction, and trust on consumer purchase intention	PLS-SEM; N=312; beauty consumers, India	YouTube; beauty vloggers	All three credibility attributes significantly affect PSI. PSI and trust jointly mediate the credibility and PI relationship. Trust amplifies the PSI effect on PI.
7	Sharma et al. (2024)	From endorsement to action: how influencer characteristics and perceived value drive purchase intentions for sustainable beauty products	PLS-SEM; N=284; sustainable beauty consumers	Instagram & YouTube; sustainable beauty	Credibility & authenticity towards perceived value & PI. Authenticity is more influential for environmentally conscious consumer segments.
8	Li et al. (2024)	Parasocial Relationship, Brand Attitude, and Purchase Intention: A Dual Mediation Model	SEM; N=376; social media users, China	Weibo/Instagram; general products	Parasocial relationship affects PI via dual mediation: brand attitude (stronger) and brand identification. Credibility positively affects the parasocial relationship.
9	Gopakumar & Dananjayan (2023)	It Must Be Excellent If an Instagram Star Endorses It, Right? Inquiring About the Parasocial Interactions and Online Purchase	PLS-SEM; N=248; Instagram users	Instagram; general product endorsement	PSI positively affects online PI. Credibility moderates the PSI & PI relationship. Perceived authenticity strengthens the PSI & PI link.



		Intention			
10	Bratina (2023)	An Investigation of Celebrities' and Influencers' Credibility Dimensions in Different Generations	Quantitative survey; N=391; multi-generational (Gen X, Y, Z), Slovenia	Multi-platform; celebrities & influencers	Credibility dimensions differ significantly across generations. Gen Z is more responsive to influencer trustworthiness; Gen X prioritizes celebrity expertise.
11	An et al. (2024)	Investigating the influence of social media influencer credibility on beauty product purchase behaviors: a case study from Vietnam	PLS-SEM; N=302; beauty consumers, Vietnam	TikTok & Instagram; beauty products	Trustworthiness and expertise significantly affect purchase behavior. PSI mediates the credibility & purchase behavior relationship. Similar patterns found across Southeast Asia.
12	Saad et al. (2024)	Influencer marketing's impact on credibility and purchase intention: A study on University of Bisha students in Saudi Arabia	Quantitative survey; N=220; students, Saudi Arabia	Instagram & Snapchat; various products	Influencer credibility positively affects PI. Trustworthiness is the most influential dimension. PSI partially mediates the credibility and PI relationship.
13	Olfat et al. (2024)	I buy because I like you more now: The role of influencer-follower emotional relationship in followers' retention and repurchase intentions	PLS-SEM; N=341; fashion & lifestyle influencers	Instagram; fashion & lifestyle	Emotional influencer-follower relationship positively affects retention and repurchase intention. PSI mediates emotional closeness and repurchase. Long-term PSI effects exceed single interaction.
14	Gong (2023)	Effects of parasocial interaction, brand credibility and product involvement on celebrity endorsement on microblog	SEM-AMOS; N=289; Weibo users, China	Weibo (microblog); celebrity endorsement	PSI and brand credibility both positively affect PI. Product involvement moderates the PSI-PI relationship. High involvement strengthens PSI influence.
15	Atta et al. (2023)	Exploring the Influence of Vlogger Attributes on Followers Purchase Intentions: The Moderating Effect of Parasocial Interaction	PLS-SEM; N=267; vlogger followers, Pakistan	YouTube; various vlogger content	Vlogger attributes (informativeness, entertainment, credibility) positively affect PI. PSI moderates the vlogger attributes-PI relationship. High-PSI vloggers have stronger endorsement effects.
16	Chavare et al. (2024)	Does Brand Attitude Complement Influencer Credibility in Shaping Purchase Intention of Indian GenZ Consumers?	PLS-SEM; N=315; Gen Z, India	Instagram & YouTube; beauty & fashion	Influencer credibility positively affects Gen Z PI. Brand attitude partially mediates credibility-PI. High credibility + positive brand attitude yields the strongest PI.
17	Poh Ling Tan & Dickson Roger	Instagram Influencers' Source Credibility on	PLS-SEM; N=296; Gen Z, Indonesia	Instagram; gadget products, Indonesia	Source credibility positively affects PI. PSI fully mediates the source



	Marklen (2024)	Gadget Product Purchase Intention Among Indonesian Generation Z			credibility–PI relationship. Trustworthiness is the strongest predictor of PSI.
18	Hasim & Mahbob (2023)	Perceived Influencer Credibility and Perceived Content Usefulness in Influencing Consumer Purchase Decisions	PLS-SEM (SmartPLS); N=251; consumers, Malaysia	Instagram & YouTube; various products	Both perceived credibility and content usefulness significantly affect purchase decisions. Content usefulness moderates the credibility–purchase decision relationship.
19	Hossain et al. (2024)	The influence of celebrity credibility, attractiveness, and social media influence on trustworthiness, perceived quality, and purchase intention for natural beauty care products	PLS-SEM; N=308; natural beauty consumers, Bangladesh	Instagram & Facebook; natural beauty care	Celebrity credibility & attractiveness affect trustworthiness and perceived quality. Both mediate the celebrity credibility–PI relationship for natural beauty products.

Source: Compiled by the author (2026)

Table 2. Synthetic Cross-Study Comparison Matrix: Significance of Credibility Dimensions and PSI Pathways

Study	ATT to PSI	TRUST to PSI	EXP to PSI	PSI to PI	Key Mediating Variable	Platform
Sokolova & Kefi (2020)	~	Yes	–	Yes	Attitude homophily	Instagram/YouTube
Sofi & Rachmawati (2024)	Yes	–	No	Yes	Perceived enjoyment	Instagram
Gubalane & Ha (2023)	No	Yes	No	–	Product-influencer fit	Multi-platform
Lee & Lee (2021)	–	–	–	Yes	Vicarious exp. / Risk ↓	YouTube
Anwarsyah et al. (2025)	Yes	–	–	No	Social & personal value	Instagram
Garg & Bakshi (2023)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Trust	YouTube
Sharma et al. (2024)	–	Yes	~	–	Perceived value	Instagram/YouTube
Li et al. (2024)	–	Yes	–	Yes	Brand attitude / Brand ID	Weibo/Instagram
Gopakumar & Dananjayan (2023)	~	Yes	–	Yes	Perceived authenticity	Instagram
Bratina (2023)	~	Yes	~	–	Generational moderation	Multi-platform
An et al. (2024)	–	Yes	Yes	Yes	PSI (full mediation)	TikTok/Instagram



Saad et al. (2024)	–	Yes	~	~	PSI (partial mediation)	Instagram/Snapchat
Olfat et al. (2024)	–	–	–	Yes	Emotional relationship	Instagram
Gong (2023)	–	Yes	–	Yes	Brand credibility	Weibo
Atta et al. (2023)	–	Yes	Yes	~	PSI (moderation)	YouTube
Chavare et al. (2024)	–	Yes	–	Yes	Brand attitude	Instagram/YouTube
Poh Ling Tan & Marklen (2024)	~	Yes	~	Yes	PSI (full mediation)	Instagram
Hasim & Mahbob (2023)	–	Yes	~	~	Content usefulness	Instagram/YouTube
Hossain et al. (2024)	Yes	Yes	–	–	Trustworthiness / Perc. quality	Instagram/Facebook
SUMMARY	Yes 4 No 1 ~4 –10	Yes 15 No 0 ~0 –4	Yes 3 No 2 ~5 –9	Yes 11 No 1 ~3 –4	6 distinct mediating pathways identified	5 platforms across 10+ countries

Notes: ATT = Attractiveness; TRUST = Trustworthiness; EXP = Expertise; PSI→PI = Direct PSI effect on Purchase Intention. Yes = Significant; No = Not significant; ~ = Mixed/partial results; – = Not tested in this study. Source: Compiled by the author (2026).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of nineteen articles reveals a layered mechanism linking influencer characteristics to purchase intention through psychological processes that are fundamentally contextual in nature. What distinguishes the findings of this synthesis from any individual study is its capacity to identify which patterns are consistent across contexts and which are condition dependent, a question that no single study can answer. Findings are organized into five analytical themes.

Trustworthiness as the Only Universal Credibility Dimension: Challenging Prevailing Assumptions

The most consistent and theoretically significant finding from this synthesis is that of the three source credibility dimensions, only trustworthiness demonstrates significant influence consistently across all reviewed contexts while expertise and attractiveness exhibit far more context-dependent patterns. This directly challenges the widespread assumption in both marketing practice and some theoretical frameworks that all three dimensions contribute relatively equally to persuasion.

As Table 2 demonstrates visually, trustworthiness registers as significant (Yes) in 14 out of 19 studies, with only mixed (~) or untested (–) results in the remainder never a clear non-significant finding. Gubalane and Ha (2023) explicitly show that when all three dimensions are tested simultaneously, only trustworthiness significantly affects product evaluation. This is independently confirmed by Saad et al. (2024) in Saudi Arabia and An et al. (2024) in Vietnam. Hossain et al. (2024) in Bangladesh take this further: trustworthiness functions as a mediator between overall celebrity credibility and purchase intention, implying that the influence of other dimensions must operate through trustworthiness to be effective.

The theoretical implication is profound: in the social media environment, consumers have developed sophisticated mechanisms for detecting insincerity, making honesty and reliability a non-negotiable prerequisite that cannot be compensated by physical attractiveness or technical expertise. This reflects a fundamental shift from authority-based persuasion toward integrity based persuasion a proposition that demands further empirical testing using experimental designs that can establish causal direction.



Expertise presents a more nuanced pattern. Sofi and Rachmawati (2024) find expertise nonsignificant in predicting PSI among Indonesian beauty influencer followers ($\beta=0.034$, $p=0.607$), as does Gubalane and Ha (2023). Yet An et al. (2024) find expertise remains significant for certain beauty product segments in Vietnam. This inconsistency points toward a conditional hypothesis: the relevance of expertise is moderated by product involvement the more technical and functional a product, the more important expertise becomes as a credibility signal. This hypothesis warrants dedicated empirical testing.

Attractiveness yields the most paradoxical pattern across studies. Sofi and Rachmawati (2024) and Garg and Bakshi (2023) find attractiveness positively and significantly predicts PSI in Indonesia and India respectively, while Sokolova and Kefi (2020) find physical attractiveness negatively relates to PSI in France ($\beta=-0.06$) a contradiction that cannot be explained by methodological differences alone. The more productive explanation lies in the distinction between physical attractiveness and social attractiveness: the latter which encompasses relatability, warmth, and perceived similarity consistently predicts PSI more strongly than the former (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Anwarsyah et al., 2025). In more marketing-saturated Western markets, an overly polished appearance signals commercialization and reduces the sense of authentic intimacy that is the very essence of PSI.

PSI as a Psychological Bridge: Antecedents, Consequences, and Strength Variation

PSI consistently functions as the psychological connector between influencer characteristics and purchase intention, but the strength and specific mechanism of this connection vary systematically a pattern only visible through cross-study synthesis.

On the antecedent side, social attractiveness and content interactivity are the most consistent and cross-contextual PSI predictors. Anwarsyah et al. (2025) find social attractiveness ($\beta=0.684$) to be the strongest PSI antecedent in the Indonesian fashion context. Sofi and Rachmawati (2024) find interactivity ($\beta=0.328$) equally predictive as attractiveness ($\beta=0.325$). Garg and Bakshi (2023) confirm that the combination of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness collectively builds PSI, suggesting that PSI responds more to the overall credibility package than to any single dimension in isolation.

On the consequent side, the variation in direct PSI to purchase intention coefficients across studies reveals an informative pattern: Lee and Lee (2021) record the highest coefficient ($\beta=0.636$) in the Korean YouTube beauty context, while Anwarsyah et al. (2025) find direct PSI effects nonsignificant for Indonesian fashion on Instagram. This extreme divergence reflects not mere sampling variation but a fundamental difference in how platform and product type mediate PSI effectiveness. YouTube's long form, demonstration rich video content creates parasocial intensity sufficient to directly stimulate purchase. Instagram fashion, by contrast, involves identity and social value considerations complex enough that PSI alone without a value mediator is insufficient to convert parasocial closeness into purchasing action.

Olfat et al.'s (2024) findings add a temporal dimension that the literature has largely neglected: the emotional influencer follower relationship drives not only initial purchase intention but also retention and repurchase intention. This indicates that strong PSI has cumulative effects that extend well beyond single transactions a strategic implication that fundamentally reframes how brands should evaluate the ROI of influencer collaborations, from a transactional orientation toward a long-term relational investment.

Multi Pathway Mediation of PSI to Purchase Intention: Conditionality as the Central Finding

If a single conclusion can be drawn from this synthesis, it is this: no single mediating pathway universally explains the PSI to purchase intention relationship. The conditionality of mediation pathways "which mediation occurs under which conditions" is the most substantively important finding produced by this cross contextual synthesis, and it is precisely what distinguishes the contribution of this SLR from any individual empirical study.

The first pathway, through hedonic value (perceived enjoyment), is dominant in beauty product contexts. Sofi and Rachmawati (2024) find that PSI toward perceived enjoyment ($\beta=0.587$) to



purchase intention ($\beta=0.338$) constitutes a significant chain, while the PSI and informativeness and purchase intention path is nonsignificant. This indicates that beauty consumers with strong PSI toward an influencer are motivated not by product technical information, but by the enjoyment and entertainment experienced while consuming content, a finding that directly challenges the assumption that more informative content is always more persuasive.

The second pathway, through brand attitude, is dominant in multi-product and younger generation contexts. Li et al. (2024) find that parasocial relationships affect PI through dual mediation brand attitude and brand identification with brand attitude as the stronger mediator. Chavare et al. (2024) confirm this pattern among Gen Z consumers in India, where the combination of high influencer credibility and positive brand attitude produces the strongest PI. The implication: PSI builds purchase intention not only directly but also indirectly by first constructing positive brand evaluations a mechanism with significant implications for the importance of long-term, consistent influencer-brand collaboration.

The third pathway, through vicarious experience and perceived risk reduction, is the most mechanistically elaborate. Lee and Lee (2021) document the full causal chain: PSI and vicarious expression and content diagnosticity and reduced perceived risk to purchase intention. This is the only study in the review that explains why PSI driven tutorial content works: not because of technical information, but because PSI enables consumers to "experience" a product vicariously through identification with the influencer, thereby reducing the uncertainty that constitutes the primary purchase barrier for products that cannot be tried before buying.

The fourth pathway, through social and personal value, is the most complex and least resolved. Anwarsyah et al. (2025) find PSI powerfully affects social value ($\beta=0.932$) and personal value ($\beta=0.900$), yet these values do not significantly affect PI directly. This suggests the existence of an as-yet unidentified mediator most likely brand trust or customer equity required to transform felt value into concrete purchase intention. Sharma et al. (2024) provide a partial clue: for sustainable beauty products, perceived value derived from influencer credibility and authenticity successfully drives PI, suggesting that alignment of values among consumer, influencer, and brand is the critical catalytic condition.

Generational and Cultural Moderation: Why One Strategy Cannot Serve All

One of the most significant contributions of this synthesis is the systematic documentation that the Credibility and PSI to PI relationship is not universal but is fundamentally moderated by generational and cultural context, a fact with direct implications for influencer marketing segmentation strategies.

Bratina's (2023) multi-generational study ($N=391$, Gen X, Y, Z in Slovenia) is the most comprehensive generational analysis in the reviewed literature. It finds that credibility dimensions prioritized differ significantly across generations: Gen Z is more responsive to influencer trustworthiness and less concerned with expertise, while Gen X prioritizes celebrity expertise as the primary trust foundation. Poh Ling Tan and Dickson Roger Marklen (2024) confirm Gen Z's high PSI responsiveness specifically in the Indonesian context for gadget products a category that intuitively demands expertise above relational intimacy. This suggests Gen Z has developed a fundamentally different epistemic framework for trust: they do not require formal expertise; they require authenticity and consistency.

Cultural moderation is even more fundamental. The contradiction between Sokolova and Kefi (2020) physical attractiveness negatively relates to PSI in France and Anwarsyah et al. (2025) and Sofi and Rachmawati (2024), who find positive relationships in Indonesia, cannot be explained by statistical noise. It reflects a difference in how "authenticity" is culturally constructed. In more saturated Western influencer marketing markets, an overly polished appearance is read as over-commercialization that erodes the sense of genuine closeness. In Indonesia, where influencer marketing adoption is at an earlier stage, attractive appearance remains associated with aspiration and competence building the admiration that is one of PSI's foundational components.



An et al. (2024) from Vietnam and Saad et al. (2024) from Saudi Arabia demonstrate that while the basic Credibility & PSI toward PI pattern is consistent across Southeast Asia and the Middle East, the relative strength of individual dimensions varies by local cultural context and platform infrastructure. The practical implication is direct: global brands operating across Asian markets cannot import Western influencer marketing strategies without substantial local adaptation.

Critical Synthesis: Universal Patterns, Contextual Patterns, and Research Agenda

Across the five analytical themes, this synthesis produces three principal propositions that form the theoretical foundation of the proposed framework. Proposition 1 (universal): Trustworthiness is a fundamental prerequisite that cannot be compensated by other credibility dimensions. Without trustworthiness, neither attractiveness nor expertise is sufficient to build meaningful PSI or drive purchase intention.

Proposition 2 (context conditional): PSI functions as a mediator between influencer credibility and purchase intention across all reviewed contexts, but the specific active mediating pathway depends on three moderating conditions: (a) platform YouTube generates stronger and more direct PSI to PI effects than Instagram due to deeper content engagement; (b) product type experiential products such as beauty items are more susceptible to vicarious experience and perceived enjoyment pathways, while fashion products depend more on social value and brand attitude pathways; (c) audience profile Gen Z is significantly more responsive to the relational and emotional dimensions of PSI than preceding generational cohorts.

Proposition 3 (temporal): PSI is not only a predictor of immediate purchase intention but also a predictor of long-term retention and repurchase, making it a strategic asset that must be managed differently from conventional advertising campaigns. These three propositions, together with the remaining gaps particularly the unidentified mediator between social personal value and PI, and the near absence of TikTok research in the reviewed literature constitute the most urgent agenda for future empirical investigation.

4. CONCLUSION

Summary of Core Findings

This systematic literature review of nineteen empirical studies yields three core conclusions. First, among the three dimensions of source credibility, only trustworthiness is proven as a universally consistent predictor of PSI and purchase intention across all examined contexts spanning beauty, fashion, gadget, and sustainable product sectors from Indonesia, Vietnam, India, Saudi Arabia, to Europe. Expertise and attractiveness demonstrate context-dependent patterns requiring specific conditions product involvement level for expertise, and cultural authenticity perception alignment for attractiveness to become effective. Second, PSI functions as a multi-pathway psychological bridge between influencer credibility and purchase intention, with specific mediating pathways varying systematically according to platform (YouTube vs. Instagram), product type (experiential vs. identity expressive), and audience profile (Gen Z vs. older cohorts). Third, PSI's influence extends beyond transactional purchase intention toward long term loyalty formation, demanding a fundamental reorientation in how brands evaluate investment returns in influencer collaborations.

Proposed Integrative Conceptual Framework

Based on the synthesis findings, this study proposes a Proposed Integrative Conceptual Framework (Figure 2) that integrates three relational levels: (1) the antecedent level, where Source Credibility dimensions with trustworthiness as the most robust build PSI; (2) the layered mediation level, where PSI influences purchase intention through context dependent pathways (perceived enjoyment, brand attitude, vicarious experience, social or personal value,



product influencer fit, and content usefulness); and (3) the moderation level, where generational factors (Gen Z vs. older cohorts) and cultural context (emerging vs. mature markets) determine the relative strength of PSI antecedents and which mediating pathways are activated. This framework not only synthesizes the existing literature but also explicitly identifies pathways requiring further empirical testing most critically, the relationship between PSI generated social personal value and purchase intention, which lacks a consistently confirmed mediator in the reviewed studies.

Figure 2. Proposed Integrative Conceptual Framework

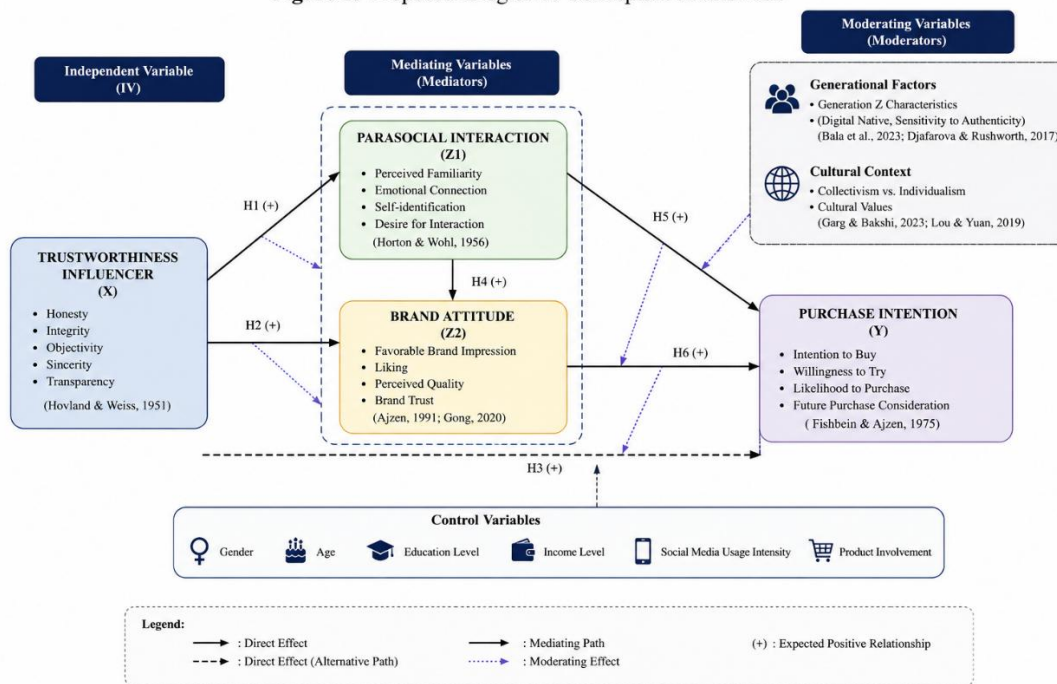


Figure 2. Proposed Integrative Conceptual Framework: Influencer Credibility, PSI, and Purchase Intention

Source: Compiled by the author based on synthesis of 19 articles (2026)

Theoretical Contributions

This study makes four theoretical contributions. First, by synthesizing nineteen studies, it is the first to explicitly map the conditionality of PSI mediating pathways comparatively demonstrating that PSI effectiveness is determined not by its mere presence, but by which specific pathway is activated under given contextual conditions. Second, this study elevates trustworthiness from "one of three credibility dimensions" to "a non-negotiable prerequisite" a proposition that warrants experimental testing capable of establishing causal direction. Third, by incorporating multi-generational (Bratina, 2023) and multi cultural studies, this review documents generational and cultural moderation as systematic factors rather than methodological noise. Fourth, the finding regarding PSI's temporal effects on repurchase and retention (Olfat et al., 2024) opens a longitudinal research agenda that has been largely absent from the existing literature.

Practical Implications for Brands and Marketers

First, influencer selection criteria should prioritize trustworthiness and attitude homophily not follower count or physical appearance as the primary basis for collaboration decisions. Second, content designed to facilitate vicarious product experience (step by step tutorials, detailed unboxings) is particularly effective for products that cannot be tested before purchase, as it directly reduces consumer uncertainty. Third, platform strategy matters mechanistically: for YouTube, deep PSI investment through long form content tends to produce a direct PI effect; for Instagram, a hybrid



strategy that simultaneously builds brand attitude and social value is required. Fourth, generational segmentation in influencer marketing strategy is not optional Gen Z demands trustworthiness and authenticity as prerequisites, not expertise or status. Fifth, ROI evaluation for influencer collaborations must extend beyond immediate purchase conversion to include customer retention and repurchase intention as long-term success indicators.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study acknowledges several limitations. First, although the scope has been expanded to nineteen articles, future research employing quantitative meta-analysis would provide more precise effect size estimates by statistically pooling results. Second, nearly all reviewed studies rely on self-reported survey data, which is susceptible to common method bias and social desirability effects. Third, TikTok currently the fastest-growing platform among Indonesian and global users is almost entirely absent from the reviewed literature; this constitutes the most urgent gap for immediate empirical investigation. Fourth, the mediating variable(s) connecting PSI generated social and personal value to purchase intention remain unconfirmed across studies and require dedicated empirical identification, with brand trust and customer equity as the most plausible candidate constructs. Fifth, longitudinal designs capable of measuring how PSI develops over time and shapes brand loyalty are nearly non-existent in the reviewed literature and represent a high-priority direction for future research.

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