MAPPING IDEA & LITERATURE FORMAT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Effect of Influencer Marketing on Purchase Intention: The Mediating Role of Influencer Credibility among Instagram and TikTok Users in Solo Raya

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ABSTRACT
The rapid growth of social media platforms has led firms to increasingly adopt influencer marketing as a strategic digital marketing approach to shape consumer behavior. This study aims to empirically investigate the influence of influencer characteristics namely expertise, trustworthiness, likability, information quality, and entertainment value on consumers' purchase intention, with influencer credibility serving as a mediating variable. A quantitative research approach was employed using a survey method. Data were collected through an online questionnaire administered to 286 active Instagram and TikTok users in the Solo Raya region, Indonesia. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine the proposed research model and hypothesized relationships. The results reveal that all examined influencer characteristics have a positive and significant effect on influencer credibility. Moreover, influencer credibility is found to positively and significantly influence consumers' purchase intention. The mediation analysis further confirms that influencer credibility plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between influencer characteristics and purchase intention. These findings highlight the crucial role of influencer credibility in strengthening the effectiveness of social media–based marketing strategies, particularly in driving consumers' purchase intentions.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Influencer Credibility, Purchase Intention, Social Media Marketing.

I. Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed marketing practices and the way firms communicate with consumers. The emergence of digital platforms has shifted traditional one-way promotional models toward more interactive and consumer-centered communication. Social media, in particular, has become a strategic marketing channel because it enables real-time engagement, facilitates rapid information exchange, and allows brands to reach highly segmented audiences efficiently. Compared to conventional advertising, user-generated content on social media is often perceived as more authentic and relatable, which increases its persuasive power in shaping consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions (Sharma & Verma, 2018). In Indonesia, social media usage continues to increase, with approximately 143 million active users out of a total population of 256.4 million (Isana Sri Christina Meranga, 2025). DataReportal

(2025) reports that WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are the most widely used social media platforms. Among these platforms, Instagram and TikTok play a particularly important role in contemporary digital marketing due to their strong visual orientation, algorithm-driven content distribution, and high engagement rates. These characteristics make them especially effective in influencing Millennials and Generation Z, who dominate the digital consumer landscape and rely heavily on peer recommendations and online reviews when making purchasing decisions (Kustiawan et al., 2025).

The increasing reliance on social media has accelerated the adoption of influencer marketing, a strategy in which individuals with established online presence promote products or services to their followers. Social media influencers are not merely advertising channels; they function as opinion leaders who shape perceptions, construct narratives around brands, and create emotional connections with audiences. Ampornklinkaew (2025) Describe influencers as digital personalities capable of affecting followers' attitudes and behaviors through curated content and perceived personal relationships. Similarly, Lou & Yuan (2019) Highlight that influencers build trust through authenticity, interactivity, and relatability, which distinguishes them from traditional celebrity endorsers.

Despite its popularity, the effectiveness of influencer marketing is not guaranteed. The success of this strategy depends largely on how audiences perceive the credibility of the influencer delivering the message. Credibility reflects the extent to which an influencer is considered knowledgeable, trustworthy, and capable of providing reliable information. According to Source Credibility Theory (Ohanian, 1990), Persuasive communication becomes more effective when the communicator demonstrates expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. These attributes influence how audiences evaluate information and determine whether they accept or reject promotional messages. Previous studies have confirmed that influencer credibility plays a significant role in shaping consumer responses, including trust formation, attitude toward the brand, and ultimately purchase intention (Saima & Khan, 2020). Recent studies confirm that perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and related credibility dimensions significantly influence consumer trust and purchase intentions on platforms like TikTok and Instagram (Akbar Maulana & Indrawati, 2025; Prasetyo & Sobari, 2024). Numerous studies have demonstrated that influencer credibility significantly affects consumers' attitudes and purchase intention (Hermanda et al., 2019). However, the results are not always consistent. Some studies report that certain attributes, particularly attractiveness or entertainment value, do not always translate into stronger purchase intention, suggesting that the relationship between influencer characteristics and consumer behavior remains context-dependent (Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022).

In the context of Indonesia, particularly in the Solo Raya region, the use of influencers has grown rapidly among micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and local brands seeking cost-effective promotional strategies. Businesses increasingly collaborate with local influencers to enhance product visibility and connect with niche communities. While such practices are widespread, many companies select influencers based primarily on popularity metrics such as follower count or engagement rate without fully understanding which attributes actually build credibility and drive consumer purchase intention. This condition reveals an important gap between practice and theory. Although influencer marketing is widely implemented, empirical research explaining how influencer attributes influence purchase intention through the mechanism of credibility remains limited in localized Indonesian contexts. Understanding this mechanism is crucial because consumer trust in developing digital markets is shaped not only by promotional exposure but also by perceived authenticity and informational value. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between influencer characteristics and consumers' purchase intention by positioning credibility as a mediating variable. By focusing on social media users in the Solo Raya region, this research provides contextual evidence on how influencer marketing operates at the local level, where cultural proximity and perceived relatability may strengthen persuasive effects. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of digital marketing literature while offering practical insights for businesses in selecting influencers based not merely on popularity, but on credibility dimensions that meaningfully influence consumer decision-making.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Digital Marketing and the Emergence of Influencer Marketing

The rapid growth of digital technology has transformed marketing communication from a one-way promotional approach into an interactive and relationship-oriented process. Social media platforms allow consumers not only to receive information but also to evaluate, share, and respond to brand messages. This shift has encouraged firms to adopt influencer marketing as a strategy to communicate with audiences in a more personal and credible manner (Saima & Khan, 2020). Influencer marketing utilizes opinion leaders on social media to deliver promotional messages in ways that feel authentic and relatable. Unlike traditional advertising, influencer-generated content is embedded within everyday digital interactions, making it more persuasive and acceptable to consumers. Consequently, influencers function as intermediaries who shape brand perceptions and influence consumer decision-making processes (Fikram et al., 2026; Saputri & Huda, 2026).bThe effectiveness of influencer marketing, however, is not determined solely by visibility or popularity. Instead, it depends on specific influencer attributes that shape how audiences evaluate message credibility. Weismueller et al. (2020) emphasize that characteristics such as expertise, trustworthiness, likability, information quality, and entertainment value significantly influence audience perceptions and influencer effectiveness.

2.2 Influencer Characteristic

To better understand how influencers affect marketing outcomes, this study focuses on five key characteristics that influence credibility formation.

a. Expertise refers to the level of knowledge and competence possessed by influencers in delivering accurate and relevant product information. Influencers with high expertise are perceived as more credible and are more capable of enhancing consumers' purchase intention (Coutinho et al., 2023).

b. Trustworthiness is associated with audiences' perceptions of an influencer's honesty and integrity. This dimension is a crucial factor in the formation of credibility and has been shown to influence consumers' purchase intention significantly (Saima & Khan, 2020).

c. Likability reflects the degree of audience affection and emotional closeness toward influencers, which is developed through relatable personalities and communication styles. Likability strengthens parasocial relationships between influencers and followers, thereby increasing the acceptance of promotional messages (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

d. Information quality refers to the quality of information delivered by influencers, including its accuracy and relevance. High-quality information enhances perceptions of influencer professionalism and strengthens audience trust (Lee & Eastin, 2021).

e. Entertainment value represents the ability of influencer content to provide entertainment and positive experiences. Entertaining content increases audience engagement and reinforces emotional bonds, which subsequently influence purchase intention (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

f. Collectively, these characteristics serve as antecedents that shape how audiences evaluate influencer credibility within digital marketing content.

2.3 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention can be defined as a consumer's conscious plan or probability of buying a product following the evaluation of relevant information. Within social media environments, this intention is strongly shaped by the perceived credibility of the information source and the quality of content delivered (Saima & Khan, 2020). When influencers are regarded as knowledgeable, credible, and relatable, consumers tend to

place greater trust in their recommendations and exhibit stronger intentions to purchase the promoted products (Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022). Therefore, purchase intention serves as an important indicator of the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies.

2.4   Influencer Credibility

Influencer credibility plays a crucial mediating role in explaining the relationship between influencer characteristics and consumers' purchase intention. Based on Source Credibility Theory Ohanian (1990). The persuasiveness of marketing messages depends on the perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness of the message source. In the context of influencer marketing, these dimensions are reflected in influencer characteristics such as expertise, trustworthiness, likability, information quality, and entertainment value, which collectively shape audience perceptions of credibility. Saima & Khan (2020) argue that influencer credibility functions as a mediating mechanism through which influencer characteristics influence purchase intention, as credible influencers are more likely to gain audience trust and foster favorable attitudes toward promoted products. Supporting this argument, Coutinho et al. (2023) demonstrate that higher influencer credibility strengthens consumer confidence in promotional messages and significantly increases purchase intention. Therefore, influencer credibility is expected to mediate the relationship between influencer characteristics and consumers' purchase intention in social media marketing contexts.

2.5   Source Credibility Theory

This study is grounded in Source Credibility Theory, originally proposed by Hovland et al. (1953), which states that communication effectiveness depends on how audiences perceive the credibility of the message source. Messages delivered by highly credible communicators are more likely to be accepted and capable of influencing attitudes and behaviors. Ohanian (1990) further conceptualized credibility through dimensions such as expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, which are reflected in influencer attributes examined in this study. In modern digital contexts, these dimensions help explain why credible influencers are more successful in shaping consumer perceptions and guiding purchase decisions (Saima & Khan, 2020). While previous studies have examined the direct effects of influencer attributes on consumer behavior, this research emphasizes the mediating role of credibility to explain how those attributes influence purchase intention. By focusing on this mechanism, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of how influencer marketing operates within social media environments.
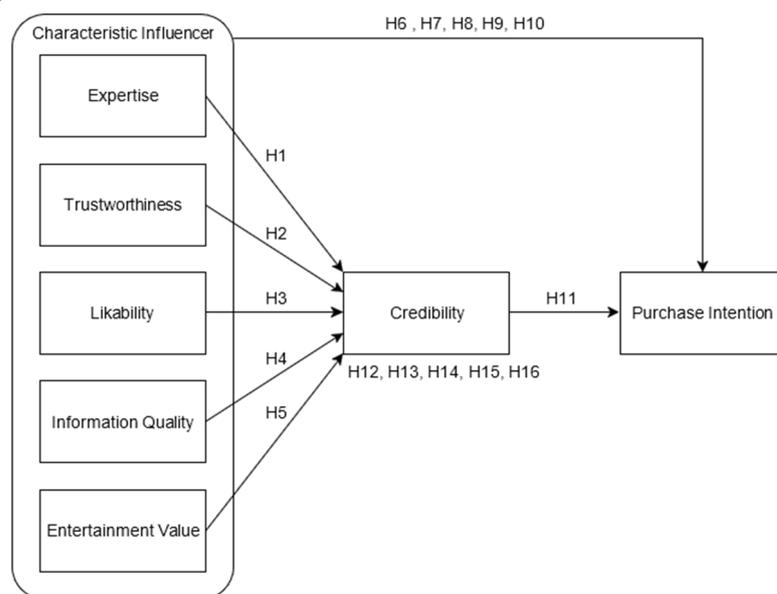
Figure 1. Research Framework

Based on the developed conceptual framework, the research hypotheses are formulated as follows:

H1: Expertise has a positive effect on influencer credibility.
H2: Trustworthiness has a positive effect on influencer credibility.
H3: Likability has a positive effect on influencer credibility.
H4: Information quality has a positive effect on influencer credibility.
H5: Entertainment value has a positive effect on influencer credibility.
H6: Expertise has a positive effect on consumers' purchase intention.
H7: Trustworthiness has a positive effect on consumers' purchase intention.
H8: Likability has a positive effect on consumers' purchase intention.
H9: Information quality has a positive effect on consumers' purchase intention.
H10: Entertainment value has a positive effect on consumers' purchase intention.
H11: Influencer credibility has a positive effect on consumers' purchase intention.
H12: Influencer credibility mediates the relationship between expertise and consumers' purchase intention.
H13: Influencer credibility mediates the relationship between trustworthiness and consumers' purchase intention.
H14: Influencer credibility mediates the relationship between likability and consumers' purchase intention.
H15: Influencer credibility mediates the relationship between information quality and consumers' purchase intention.
H16: Influencer credibility mediates the relationship between entertainment value and consumers' purchase intention.

III.   Research Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships between influencer characteristics, influencer credibility, and consumers' purchase intention. A quantitative methodology enables an objective assessment of relationships among variables through hypothesis testing based on numerical data, making it particularly suitable for predictive behavioral models and theory development (Hair et al., 2022). The research was designed to address inconsistencies in prior studies regarding whether influencer attributes directly influence purchase intention or exert their effects indirectly through credibility formation within social media environments. The study targeted active Instagram and TikTok users in the Solo Raya region who had been exposed to influencer-generated promotional content. A purposive sampling technique was applied to ensure that respondents possessed relevant experiential knowledge. Purposive sampling is appropriate when researchers intentionally select participants who meet specific characteristics aligned with the research objectives, thereby enhancing the relevance and validity of the data collected (Sekaran et al., 2020). Participants were required to meet four inclusion criteria: (1) active use of Instagram or TikTok for approximately one year or more, (2) regular engagement with content on these platforms, (3) prior exposure to influencer-promoted products or services, and (4) residence in the Solo Raya area. These criteria ensured that respondents had sufficient familiarity with digital consumption patterns to meaningfully evaluate influencer credibility.

Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire distributed via social media communities, academic networks, and local digital forums to reach respondents embedded in the digital ecosystem under study. The online survey method reflects the natural environment in which influencer–consumer interactions occur, thereby strengthening ecological validity. All constructs were adapted from previously validated measurement scales to ensure conceptual reliability and comparability with earlier research (Saima & Khan, 2020). Minor wording adjustments were made to improve linguistic clarity and cultural suitability based on preliminary observations conducted in the same regional context. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The data were

analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which is appropriate for predictive analysis, mediation testing, and complex models involving multiple latent constructs (Hair et al., 2022). The analysis followed a two-stage procedure. First, the measurement model was evaluated to confirm indicator reliability, internal consistency, and convergent validity. Indicator reliability was assessed using outer loadings with a recommended threshold of ≥ 0.70. Internal consistency was evaluated through Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability values ≥ 0.70, indicating satisfactory reliability. Convergent validity was established when the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeded 0.50, demonstrating that constructs explained more than half of the variance of their indicators. Discriminant validity was examined using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, with HTMT values below 0.90 indicating adequate construct distinctiveness.

Second, the structural model was assessed to test the hypothesized relationships using a bootstrapping procedure. The significance of path relationships was determined based on t-statistics ≥ 1.96 at a 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). The model's explanatory power was evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2), with values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 interpreted as substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively. Predictive relevance was further assessed using the Stone–Geisser Q^2 value, where $Q^2 > 0$ indicates that the model possesses adequate predictive capability. Methodologically, this study contributes by applying a multi-attribute mediation framework within a dual-platform social media context, offering a more comprehensive modeling strategy than prior studies that examined influencer effects in isolation. This integrated approach provides deeper insight into the mechanism through which influencer marketing shapes consumer decision-making in contemporary digital environments.

IV.   Results and Discussion

4.1   Research Results

The study involved 286 active Instagram and TikTok users in the Solo Raya region who had prior exposure to influencer-promoted products. Data collection was conducted through an online survey distributed during the research period. All responses that met the screening criteria were included in the analysis. The demographic results indicate that the respondents represent a relevant segment of digital consumers. The gender composition was relatively balanced, while geographically most respondents resided in Karanganyar (64%), with additional representation from Surakarta and Sukoharjo, reflecting a reasonable distribution across the Solo Raya area. In terms of age, the majority were between 21 and 25 years old (79.4%), a group recognized as highly active in engaging with social media content and influencer recommendations.

Most respondents had attained higher education, suggesting adequate digital literacy to evaluate influencer credibility. TikTok was the most frequently used platform (67.8%), indicating the growing importance of short-form video content in shaping consumer responses to influencer marketing. Furthermore, the majority of respondents (85.3%) had used social media for more than one year, and 82.5% reported having purchased products based on influencer recommendations. This confirms that the participants possessed sufficient experience interacting with influencer content, making them suitable for examining the relationships among influencer characteristics, influencer credibility, and purchase intention.

To further analyze these relationships, the results of the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) are presented in Figure 2. The figure illustrates both the measurement model and the structural model, including the outer loadings of each indicator and the path coefficients among constructs, thereby providing a visual representation of how influencer characteristics contribute to influencer credibility and subsequently influence purchase intention.
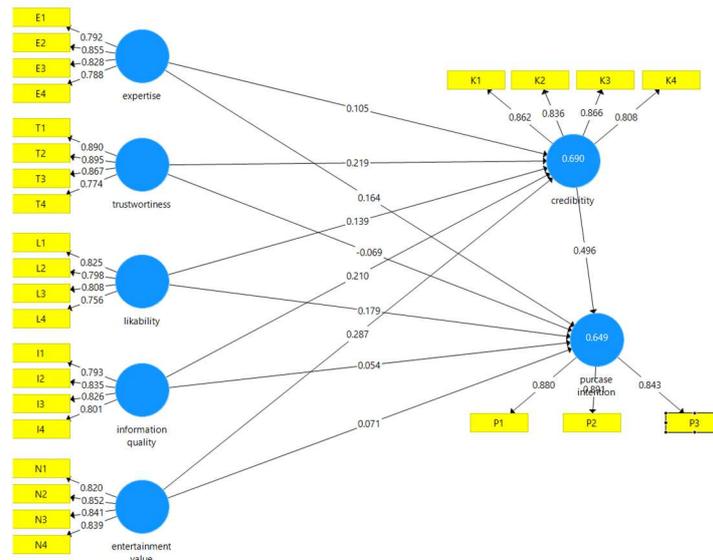
Figure 2. Results Output PLS-SEM

Before testing the hypotheses, the measurement model was assessed to evaluate the validity and reliability of the constructs. Following the approach recommended by Hair et al. (2017) the construct validation process involved examining convergent validity, discriminant validity, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), as well as analyzing the outer loadings of each indicator. The analysis results show that all indicators achieved outer loading values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that the indicators reliably represent their respective latent variables. Therefore, the measurement model satisfies the required criteria and can be used for further structural analysis.(Hair et al., 2022).

Table 1. Construct Validity and Reliability Test (Outer Model)

Variabel	Item	Loading factor	Cronbach ALpha	Pc/Cr	AVE	Percentage (%)
Expertise	E1	0,792	0,833	0,889	0,666	Valid & Reliable
	E2	0,855				
	E3	0,828				
	E4	0,788				
Trustworthiness	T1	0,890	0,879	0,918	0,736	Valid & Reliable
	T2	0,895				
	T3	0,867				
	T4	0,774				
Likability	L1	0,825	0,808	0,874	0,635	Valid & Reliable
	L2	0,798				
	L3	0,808				
	L4	0,756				
Information Quality	I1	0,793	0,831	0,887	0,663	Valid & Reliable
	I2	0,835				
	I3	0,826				
	I4	0,801				
Entertainment Value	N1	0,820	0,858	0,904	0,702	Valid & Reliable
	N2	0,852				
	N3	0,841				
	N4	0,839				
Credibility	K1	0,862	0,864	0,908	0,711	Valid & Reliable
	K2	0,836				
	K3	0,866				
	K4	0,808				

Variabel	Item	Loading factor	Cronbach ALpha	Pc/Cr	AVE	Percentage (%)
Purchase Intention	P1	0,880	0,842	0,905	0,760	Valid & Reliable
	P2	0,891				
	P3	0,843				

Based on Table 1, the measurement model demonstrates satisfactory levels of convergent validity and internal consistency reliability. All measurement indicators exhibit factor loading values greater than 0.70, indicating that each indicator has a strong correlation with its respective construct and contributes meaningfully to explaining the latent variable it represents. In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs exceed the recommended threshold of 0.50, confirming that each construct accounts for more than half of the variance of its indicators. This result indicates that the constructs possess adequate convergent validity.

Concerning reliability, both Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values are above the minimum criterion of 0.70 for all constructs, demonstrating a high level of internal consistency among the indicators used to measure each variable. These findings are consistent with the methodological guidelines of Hair et al. (2019), which suggests that reliability coefficients equal to or greater than 0.70 are considered acceptable in confirmatory research. Taken together, these results confirm that the measurement model meets the established standards of validity and reliability, indicating that the constructs are measured accurately and consistently. Consequently, the model is deemed appropriate for proceeding to the evaluation of the structural model and hypothesis testing.

Table 2. R-Square (R^2) and Q-Square (Q^2) Values of the Structural Model

Variabel	R2	Q2
Credibility (Kredibilitas Influencer)	0,690	0,481
Purchase Intention (Niat Beli)	0,649	0,468

Based on Table 2, the structural model demonstrates substantial explanatory power. The R^2 value for the Credibility construct is 0.690, indicating that the set of exogenous variables expertise, trustworthiness, likability, information quality, and entertainment value collectively explain 69% of the variance in influencer credibility. This suggests that these characteristics play a meaningful role in shaping how audiences evaluate the credibility of influencers within social media contexts. Similarly, the Purchase Intention construct shows an R^2 value of 0.649, meaning that approximately 64.9% of the variance in consumers' purchase intention is explained by the variables included in the proposed model. This level of explained variance indicates that the model has strong predictive capability in understanding behavioral intentions related to influencer marketing.

Furthermore, the Q^2 values for Credibility (0.481) and Purchase Intention (0.468) are both greater than zero, confirming that the model possesses adequate predictive relevance. These findings indicate that the proposed model is not only capable of explaining the relationships among variables but also demonstrates satisfactory predictive capability for the endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2022). In addition to evaluating the coefficient of determination (R^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2), it is important to assess how well the overall model fits the observed data. Therefore, a goodness-of-fit analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which the proposed path model aligns with the empirical data and adequately represents the relationships reflected in the dataset, providing further support for the model's suitability before hypothesis testing (Hair et al., 2019).

To evaluate model fit, the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and the Normed Fit Index (NFI) were employed. SRMR measures the discrepancy between the observed correlations and those predicted by the model, with values below 0.10 indicating an acceptable level of fit, while the NFI ranges from 0 to 1 and reflects how well the proposed model improves fit compared to a null model, where higher values indicate better model adequacy (Hair et al., 2019). The results of the goodness-of-fit evaluation are presented in Table 3. (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 3. Test Model Fit

Variables	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0,060	0,060
NFI	0,803	0,803

Table 3 presents the results of the goodness-of-fit assessment based on the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and the Normed Fit Index (NFI). The SRMR value of 0.060 for both the saturated and estimated models is below the recommended threshold of 0.10, indicating a minimal difference between the observed correlations and those predicted by the model. This finding suggests that the model demonstrates an acceptable level of fit and is capable of adequately reproducing the empirical data structure (Henseler et al., 2016). In addition, the NFI value of 0.803 indicates that the proposed model achieves a satisfactory comparative fit relative to the null model. Values approaching 1.0 reflect a stronger improvement of the estimated model over the baseline model, thereby suggesting that the structural framework provides a meaningful explanation of the relationships among the constructs under investigation (Hair et al., 2019).

Taken together, these goodness-of-fit indices provide empirical support that the model meets established fit criteria and is therefore appropriate for further structural evaluation. Having confirmed the adequacy of the overall model, the next stage is to examine the proposed causal relationships by analyzing the path coefficients, including the significance and strength of the direct effects as well as the mediating role of influencer credibility in influencing purchase intention. The results of the hypothesis testing and mediation analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Hypothesis Test Results Table (Path Coefficient and Mediation)

Influence between variables	β	Tstat	PValue	Conclusion
expertise - credibility	0,105	2,017	0,044*	H1 supported
trustworthiness - credibility	0,219	3,553	0,000**	H2 supported
likability - credibility	0,139	2,144	0,033**	H3 supported
information quality - credibility	0,210	2,700	0,007**	H4 supported
entertainment value – credibility	0,287	4,641	0,000**	H5 supported
expertise - purchase intention	0,164	2,287	0,023	H6 supported
trustworthiness - purchase intention	-0,069	1,034	0,302	H7 not supported
likability - purchase intention	0,179	2,185	0,029	H8 supported
information quality - purchase intention	0,054	0,663	0,508	H9 not supported
entertainment value - purchase intention	0,071	0,906	0,366	H10 not supported
credibility - purchase intention	0,496	7,167	0,000**	H11 supported
expertise - credibility - purchase intention	0,052	1,970	0,049	H12 supported
trustworthiness - credibility - purchase intention	0,109	2,916	0,004	H13 supported
likability - credibility -purchase intention	0,069	2,062	0,040	H14 supported
information quality - credibility - purchase intention	0,104	2,661	0,008	H15 supported
entertainment value - credibility - purchase intention	0,143	3,779	0,000**	H16 supported

Based on Table 4, the overall results indicate that the majority of relationships among variables in the research model are statistically significant.

a. Effects of Exogenous Variables on Influencer Credibility

H1: The expertise variable shows a p-value < 0.05 with a coefficient of 0.105; therefore, the first hypothesis is supported. This result indicates that influencer expertise has a significant effect on shaping influencer credibility.

H2: Trustworthiness has a p-value < 0.05 with a coefficient of 0.219; thus, the second hypothesis is supported. This finding suggests that trust in influencers significantly enhances perceptions of influencer credibility.

H3: The likability variable demonstrates a p-value < 0.05 with a coefficient of 0.139; therefore, the third hypothesis is supported. This result indicates that audience likability plays an important role in strengthening influencer credibility.

H4: Information quality shows a p-value < 0.05 with a coefficient of 0.210; hence, the fourth hypothesis is supported. This finding indicates that the quality of information delivered by influencers significantly affects influencer credibility.

H5: Entertainment value has a p-value < 0.05 with a coefficient of 0.287; therefore, the fifth hypothesis is supported. This result suggests that entertainment value is the most dominant factor in enhancing influencer credibility.

b. Effects of Exogenous Variables on Purchase Intention

H6: The expertise variable shows a p-value < 0.05 with a coefficient of 0.164; thus, the sixth hypothesis is supported. This finding indicates that influencer expertise directly increases consumers' purchase intention.

H7: Trustworthiness has a p-value > 0.05 with a coefficient of –0.069; therefore, the seventh hypothesis is not supported. This result suggests that trustworthiness does not directly influence purchase intention.

H8: The likability variable shows a p-value < 0.05 with a coefficient of 0.179; thus, the eighth hypothesis is supported. This finding indicates that audience likability toward influencers significantly enhances purchase intention.

H9: Information quality shows a p-value > 0.05 with a coefficient of 0.054; therefore, the ninth hypothesis is not supported. This result indicates that information quality does not have a direct effect on purchase intention.

H10: Entertainment value has a p-value > 0.05 with a coefficient of 0.071; thus, the tenth hypothesis is not supported. This finding suggests that entertainment value alone is insufficient to directly drive consumers' purchase intention.

H11: Influencer credibility shows a p-value < 0.05 with a coefficient of 0.496; therefore, the eleventh hypothesis is supported. This result confirms that influencer credibility has a strong positive effect on purchase intention.

c. Indirect Effects through Influencer Credibility as a Mediator

H12: The indirect effect of expertise on purchase intention through influencer credibility has a p-value < 0.05 with a coefficient of 0.052; therefore, the twelfth hypothesis is supported. This finding indicates that influencer credibility mediates the relationship between expertise and purchase intention.

H13: The mediating path from trustworthiness to purchase intention through influencer credibility shows a p-value < 0.05 with a coefficient of 0.109; thus, the thirteenth hypothesis is supported. This result confirms the mediating role of influencer credibility.

H14: The indirect effect of likability on purchase intention through influencer credibility has a p-value < 0.05 with a coefficient of 0.069; therefore, the fourteenth hypothesis is supported. This finding indicates that influencer credibility bridges the effect of likability on purchase intention.

H15: The mediating path from information quality to purchase intention through influencer credibility shows a p-value < 0.05 with a coefficient of 0.104; thus, the fifteenth hypothesis is supported. This result suggests that influencer credibility transmits the effect of information quality on purchase intention.

H16: The indirect effect of entertainment value on purchase intention through influencer credibility has a p-value < 0.05 with a coefficient of 0.143; therefore, the sixteenth hypothesis is supported. This finding indicates that influencer credibility mediates the effect of entertainment value on purchase intention.

These findings provide empirical evidence of how different influencer attributes operate within the proposed model. The following discussion interprets these results by relating them to theoretical perspectives and prior research, thereby explaining the underlying behavioral mechanisms.

4.2 Discussion

While the results identify the statistical relationships among variables, a deeper interpretation is required to understand how and why these relationships emerge in the context of social media consumer behavior.

a. Effects of Influencer Characteristics on Purchase Intention

The findings demonstrate that several influencer characteristics play an important role in shaping influencer credibility; however, their contributions are not uniform in strength or implication. This indicates that credibility is a multidimensional construct formed through a combination of cognitive and affective evaluations rather than being driven equally by all characteristics. These results are consistent with Source Credibility Theory, which emphasizes that expertise, trust-related perceptions, and attractiveness jointly influence how audiences evaluate a communication source (Ohanian, 1990). Expertise emerges as a central determinant of credibility, suggesting that influencers who demonstrate knowledge, experience, and the ability to clearly explain product-related information are more likely to be perceived as reliable sources. This supports prior studies highlighting expertise as a key foundation for building persuasive authority in digital environments (Coutinho et al., 2023; Saima & Khan, 2020; Weismueller et al., 2020). In social media contexts where information overload is common, audiences appear to rely on perceived competence to reduce uncertainty before accepting recommendations.

Trustworthiness also contributes to credibility formation, although its role should be interpreted cautiously. While honesty and transparency remain important evaluative criteria, audiences may not rely solely on moral perception but also consider how consistently influencers align their messages with demonstrated expertise and authentic engagement. This suggests that trustworthiness functions as a supporting condition rather than a standalone driver of credibility, echoing findings by Martiningsih & Setyawan (2022). Likability further reinforces credibility through emotional connection. Influencers perceived as relatable and approachable are more likely to foster psychological closeness, which facilitates the acceptance of their messages (Aurellia & Dewi, 2025). This aligns with the notion that affective attraction enhances receptivity to persuasive communication (N. Rosli & Z. Zulkifli, 2025). However, likability alone is insufficient without informational or professional value, indicating that emotional appeal must be complemented by substantive content.

Information quality contributes to credibility by signaling professionalism and effort in content creation. Clear, relevant, and useful information strengthens audience evaluations of influencers as competent communicators. Nevertheless, this factor operates primarily as a reinforcing mechanism; high-quality information enhances credibility when audiences already perceive the influencer as knowledgeable. Similar patterns were observed by Mabkhot et al. (2022), who identified information quality as an important yet context-dependent predictor in social media persuasion. Entertainment value also supports credibility by

increasing engagement and sustaining audience attention. Creative and enjoyable content fosters positive emotions that make audiences more receptive to promotional messages. However, excessive emphasis on entertainment without informational substance may weaken perceptions of professionalism, suggesting the need for balance between engagement and expertise. This finding is consistent with Saima & Khan (2020), Weismueller et al. (2020), and Coutinho et al. (2023), who note that entertainment enhances persuasive effectiveness when integrated with credible messaging. Overall, the results indicate that influencer credibility is constructed through the interaction of rational evaluation (expertise and information quality) and emotional resonance (likability and entertainment), with trustworthiness acting as a contextual enabler. This nuanced interpretation avoids assuming that all characteristics exert identical influence and instead highlights how different attributes complement one another in shaping credibility perceptions.

b. Effects of Influencer Characteristics on Purchase Intention

The results reveal that influencer characteristics do not uniformly translate into purchase intention, indicating that the pathway from influencer attributes to consumer behavioral intention is selective and mediated by deeper evaluative processes. This finding suggests that consumers do not automatically convert their perceptions of influencers into buying intentions; instead, they differentiate between attributes that provide decision-relevant value and those that merely enhance engagement. Expertise is found to have a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, highlighting the importance of functional and knowledge-based cues in reducing consumers' perceived risk. When influencers demonstrate competence and product understanding, their recommendations are interpreted as informative rather than purely promotional, thereby strengthening consumers' confidence in product performance. This supports prior research showing that expertise enhances consumers' evaluation of product utility and facilitates decision-making (Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022).

In contrast, trustworthiness does not exhibit a significant direct effect on purchase intention. Although honesty and integrity are essential for maintaining audience trust, they appear insufficient to independently motivate purchasing behavior. Consumers may perceive trustworthiness as a baseline expectation rather than a differentiating factor that triggers action. In this regard, trustworthiness functions more as a credibility-building mechanism than as a direct behavioral driver, consistent with the arguments of Lou & Yuan (2019) and Saima & Khan (2020). Likability shows a positive and significant influence on purchase intention, indicating that emotional affinity and perceived relatability can encourage consumers to follow influencers' recommendations. This reflects the role of affective attachment and parasocial interaction in shaping behavioral responses, where consumers feel psychologically connected to influencers and are therefore more open to adopting suggested products (Saima & Khan, 2020). The finding underscores that emotional resonance, when combined with perceived relevance, can facilitate persuasion.

However, information quality does not significantly affect purchase intention. This suggests that, within social media environments, consumers may not engage in extensive cognitive evaluation of informational content before forming purchase intentions. Instead, they rely more on heuristic cues such as familiarity, relatability, or perceived expertise. Information quality, therefore, appears to operate indirectly by strengthening credibility rather than directly prompting purchase decisions, a pattern also observed by Weismueller et al. (2020) and Lee & Eastin (2021). Similarly, entertainment value does not demonstrate a significant direct effect on purchase intention. While entertaining and creative content successfully captures attention and enhances user engagement, it is often interpreted as a source of enjoyment rather than as persuasive product information. As a result, entertainment contributes to building positive attitudes and sustained interaction, but does not necessarily lead to immediate purchasing motivation. This supports findings by Lou & Yuan (2019) and Weismueller et al. (2020), which positions entertainment primarily as an engagement driver rather than a determinant of transactional behavior.

These results highlight an important distinction between engagement-oriented attributes and decision-oriented attributes in influencer marketing. Characteristics such as likability and entertainment may attract and retain audiences, but expertise remains the key factor that converts attention into purchase-

related evaluation. This indicates that consumer responses to influencer marketing involve both emotional and rational processes, with only certain attributes directly influencing purchase intention.

c. The Effect of Influencer Credibility on Purchase Intention

Building on the preceding analysis, credibility emerges as the immediate determinant translating audience evaluations into purchase intention. This finding confirms that credibility serves as a critical evaluative mechanism through which audiences translate their perceptions of influencers into behavioral intentions. When influencers are perceived as competent, honest, and capable of delivering persuasive messages, consumers are more likely to develop confidence in the promoted products and consider purchasing them. This result reinforces the theoretical premise that credibility reduces information asymmetry and perceived risk in online environments, where consumers cannot directly verify product claims. Rather than relying solely on individual influencer attributes, audiences appear to form purchase intentions after developing an overall judgment of credibility. This supports prior research by Lou & Yuan (2019), Weismueller et al. (2020), and Liu & Zheng (2024), which identifies credibility as a central mechanism linking influencer communication to consumer decision-making in social media settings.

Importantly, this finding helps explain why several influencer characteristics did not exert a direct influence on purchase intention, as discussed in the previous section. Attributes such as trustworthiness, information quality, and entertainment value may first contribute to shaping credibility perceptions, which then function as the immediate predictor of behavioral intention. This highlights the mediating role of credibility as a consolidating factor that transforms audience evaluations into actionable responses. From a managerial standpoint, the results suggest that brands should prioritize long-term credibility building rather than relying solely on popularity or entertaining content. Selecting influencers who consistently demonstrate expertise, authenticity, and message clarity is more likely to convert audience engagement into purchase-oriented outcomes. In this sense, credibility operates not merely as an image-related attribute but as a strategic asset in influencer marketing effectiveness. While these findings provide meaningful insights, they should be interpreted within the context of the study's sample characteristics, which were largely composed of young and highly active social media users. Future studies may examine whether the strength of credibility's influence varies across different demographic groups, product categories, or cultural contexts to enhance the broader applicability of the model.

d. The Role of Influencer Credibility as a Mediating Variable

Extending these findings, the mediation analysis confirms that credibility acts as the linking mechanism through which influencer characteristics influence purchase intention. These findings indicate that the effects of influencer attributes do not operate in isolation; rather, they are transmitted through the audience's overall evaluation of credibility. In social media environments, consumers appear to process influencer-related cues by first forming a credibility judgment before translating those perceptions into behavioral intentions. This supports the view that credibility functions as a psychological filter through which persuasive communication becomes actionable.Specifically, expertise shows a significant indirect effect on purchase intention through influencer credibility. Influencers who demonstrate substantial knowledge and competence are more likely to be perceived as credible, which strengthens the persuasiveness of their recommendations and increases consumers' willingness to purchase. This pattern aligns with previous empirical findings emphasizing that expertise enhances promotional effectiveness primarily by reinforcing credibility perceptions (Weismueller et al., 2020) and (Shaheen et al., 2025).

Trustworthiness also exerts a significant indirect influence on purchase intention via credibility, despite its non-significant direct effect. This result suggests that honesty and integrity function as foundational elements that help establish credibility but are insufficient on their own to trigger purchasing behavior. Instead, trustworthiness contributes to a broader evaluative process that culminates in credibility, which subsequently shapes consumer intention. This interpretation is consistent with Lou & Yuan (2019), who positions trustworthiness as a core dimension of source credibility rather than a direct behavioral determinant.

Likability likewise demonstrates a significant indirect effect through credibility. Influencers perceived as relatable and appealing are more readily accepted as credible communicators, which enhances the persuasive impact of their product endorsements. The result suggests that emotional affinity strengthens credibility assessments, thereby indirectly influencing purchase intention, as also noted by Saima & Khan (2020). In addition, information quality influences purchase intention indirectly through credibility. Although the informational aspect alone does not directly motivate consumers to buy, accurate and relevant content signals professionalism and strengthens credibility evaluations. This finding indicates that information quality acts as a supporting mechanism that enhances trust in the influencer's message, which then drives intention (Nazer Mohamed et al., 2023) and (Mabkhot et al., 2022).

Similarly, entertainment value exhibits a significant indirect effect through credibility. Engaging and enjoyable content generates positive affect and sustained interaction, which can enhance how audiences perceive the influencer overall. However, entertainment alone does not directly translate into purchasing decisions; its influence becomes meaningful when it contributes to the formation of credibility. This observation is consistent with prior research suggesting that entertainment primarily facilitates engagement that later supports persuasive outcomes (Saima & Khan, 2020). Overall, the mediation results clarify that influencer credibility serves as the central mechanism integrating both rational cues (such as expertise and information quality) and emotional cues (such as likability and entertainment) into a coherent evaluation that ultimately shapes purchase intention. This explains why several characteristics that fail to show direct effects can still exert meaningful influence through credibility, underscoring its pivotal role within the proposed model. To interpret these findings appropriately, it is important to acknowledge that the sample was largely composed of young and highly active social media users within a specific regional context. Such characteristics may amplify the role of credibility in digital interactions, and future research should consider more diverse populations and platforms to test the stability of this mediating mechanism across different consumer segments.

V.   Conclusion

This study set out to examine how influencer characteristics affect purchase intention and to determine whether influencer credibility functions as a mediating mechanism in this relationship. The findings provide clear answers to the research questions by demonstrating that the influence of influencer attributes on consumer behavior is neither uniform nor entirely direct. Instead, purchase intention is primarily shaped through the formation of perceived credibility, which acts as the key mechanism translating audience evaluations into behavioral outcomes. First, the results show that influencer characteristics contribute differently to the development of credibility. Expertise, likability, information quality, and entertainment value help shape how audiences assess an influencer, although their roles vary in strength and function. Expertise emerged as the most critical cognitive cue, while likability and entertainment enhanced emotional engagement. Trustworthiness, although important, operated more as a foundational expectation than a direct driver of behavioral response.

Second, not all influencer characteristics directly influence purchase intention. Only expertise and likability demonstrated significant direct effects, indicating that consumers respond more strongly to attributes that provide either functional value (knowledge and competence) or emotional connection. Information quality, trustworthiness, and entertainment value did not independently trigger purchase intention, suggesting that engagement alone is insufficient to convert attention into buying decisions. Third, and most importantly, influencer credibility was found to significantly mediate the relationship between influencer characteristics and purchase intention. This confirms that consumers tend to form an overall credibility judgment before acting on influencer recommendations. Thus, credibility represents the central explanatory link that integrates rational evaluations and emotional responses into a unified decision-making process.

These findings offer important practical insights for marketers and practitioners in designing more effective influencer marketing strategies. Rather than prioritizing influencers solely based on popularity metrics such as follower counts or entertainment appeal, organizations should emphasize credibility by selecting influencers who demonstrate relevant expertise, authenticity, and alignment with the promoted product. Campaign effectiveness is likely to increase when influencers clearly communicate product benefits and integrate promotional messages naturally into their content, balancing emotional engagement with meaningful informational value. In addition, long-term collaborations are more advantageous than one-off endorsements, as credibility is built gradually through consistency and repeated exposure, strengthening trust and persuasive impact over time.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. This study focuses primarily on young, digitally active social media users within a specific regional context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader demographic or cultural settings. Consumer responses to influencer credibility may differ across age groups, markets, or product categories with varying levels of involvement. Future research is therefore encouraged to include more diverse populations, cross-cultural comparisons, and different industry contexts to validate the robustness of the mediating role identified in this study. Longitudinal approaches may also provide deeper insight into how credibility develops and evolves over time within influencer–audience relationships.

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