

Beyond Influence: How Influencer Credibility and Self-Congruence Drive Skincare and Bodycare Purchase Intention Among Millennials and Gen Z

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ABSTRACT

In today's digital age, beauty influencers play a big role in shaping how people choose skincare and bodycare products. This study looks at how two factors source credibility (how trustworthy an influencer seems) and self-influencer congruence (how similar the influencer feels to the consumer) affect the purchase intentions of Millennials and Gen Z in Indonesia. The research also explores whether parasocial relationships (feelings of closeness with an influencer) and trust help explain this influence. Using questionnaire data from 360 social media users who follow beauty influencers, the study applied statistical analysis (PLS-SEM) to test these relationships. Results show that both credibility and similarity significantly impact purchase intentions—both directly and through trust and parasocial bonds. These psychological connections are key in turning influencer influence into actual buying behavior. This study enhances the understanding of influencer marketing and offers brands valuable insights into creating more genuine and impactful campaigns by selecting influencers who connect well with their target audience.

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INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of digital media ecosystems has reconfigured contemporary persuasion processes, shifting the locus of influence from traditional celebrity endorsers to social media influencers who operate within algorithm-driven, participatory platforms. In highly involvement-driven categories such as skincare and bodycare, influencers no longer function merely as content disseminators but as symbolic agents who shape identity aspirations, relational expectations, and consumption norms. This transformation is particularly salient in Indonesia, one of the world's most digitally saturated markets, where Millennials and Gen Z demonstrate an elevated dependence on influencer-generated content to navigate product complexity, evaluate credibility, and reduce perceived risk in beauty product decision-making. Within this socio-technological environment, influencer persuasion can no longer be understood solely through message attributes or surface-level endorsements; instead, it demands a deeper theorization of the multi-layered psychological and relational mechanisms through which influencers exert their persuasive efficacy.

Theoretically, three major strands of research have attempted to explain these mechanisms. First, Self-Congruence Theory (Sirgy, 1982) emphasizes the role of self-endorser alignment, positing that consumers are more receptive to persuasive messages when they perceive an influencer as reflective of their actual or ideal self. This alignment is not merely cosmetic; it functions as a psychological gateway that enhances identification, reduces social distance, and strengthens internalization of persuasive cues. Second, the Source Credibility Framework (Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1990) conceptualizes persuasion as a function of perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. While this framework has been extensively applied in digital contexts, its explanatory power diminishes when credibility is treated as an isolated construct, divorced from identity-driven antecedents and relational pathways. Third, Parasocial Interaction Theory (Horton & Wohl, 1956) provides a relational lens, explaining how audiences form quasi-social bonds

with influencers through repeated exposure, perceived intimacy, and imagined reciprocity. These parasocial relationships increasingly substitute for traditional interpersonal trust, shaping emotional responses, social learning, and behavioral conformity within influencer-follower dynamics.

Despite substantial empirical development within each strand, extant literature remains conceptually fragmented. Most studies isolate variables—examining either congruence, credibility, or parasocial relationships—without systematically articulating how these mechanisms interact. This fragmentation limits theoretical clarity, especially in digital beauty consumption, where persuasion emerges from a combination of identity alignment, emotional resonance, and cognitive evaluation. For example, Sokolova and Kefi (2020) demonstrate that self-influencer congruence enhances credibility judgments, yet they omit relational constructs such as parasocial closeness, thereby excluding the affective route through which congruence typically operates. Conversely, Breves et al. (2021) underscore that repeated interactions strengthen parasocial bonds but do not connect these bonds to credibility formation or trust. Koay et al. (2023) propose a sequential pathway linking congruence → parasocial → credibility, but their model excludes trust—one of the most central mediators of online persuasion—and is tested outside the Indonesian context. Meanwhile, Garg and Bakshi (2024) emphasize the mediating role of trust in credibility-purchase intention linkages but do not incorporate congruence or parasocial mechanisms as antecedents.

Taken together, these limitations reveal a substantive research gap: no existing study integrates self-influencer congruence, parasocial relationship, source credibility, and trust into a unified sequential model capable of explaining how influencers psychologically shape purchase intention—particularly in collectivist, high digital-engagement contexts like Indonesia. This is theoretically consequential, as influencer persuasion does not emerge from any single psychological dimension but from an interplay across identity-based, affective-relational, and cognitive-evaluative processes. Without an

integrated model, current scholarship falls short of explaining the full pathway through which consumers move from initial identification with an influencer to the formation of behavioral intentions.

Therefore, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does self-influencer congruence influence parasocial relationships, source credibility, trust, and purchase intention?
2. How do parasocial relationships affect source credibility and purchase intention?
3. How does source credibility influence trust and purchase intention?
4. What is the mediating role of trust in the relationship between source credibility and purchase intention?
5. How do parasocial relationships mediate the effects of self-influencer congruence on source credibility and purchase intention?
6. Do parasocial relationships and source credibility jointly mediate the effect of self-influencer congruence on purchase intention?

Correspondingly, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the influence of self-influencer congruence on parasocial relationships, source credibility, trust, and purchase intention.
2. To analyze the effects of parasocial relationships on source credibility and purchase intention.
3. To assess how source credibility influences trust and purchase intention.
4. To evaluate the mediating role of trust between source credibility and purchase intention.
5. To investigate the mediating role of parasocial relationships in the links between self-influencer congruence and (a) source credibility and (b) purchase intention.
6. To test the joint sequential mediation of parasocial relationships and source credibility in the relationship between self-influencer congruence and purchase intention.

This study makes several significant contributions. Theoretically, it bridges long-standing

fragmentation in the literature by synthesizing endorsement-based, identity-driven, and relational perspectives into a comprehensive psychological model of influencer persuasion. This integrative approach advances conceptual understanding by demonstrating how congruence, emotional bonding, credibility formation, and trust operate in a sequential manner to shape purchase intention. Methodologically, the study employs higher-order PLS-SEM using a large sample of Indonesian Millennial and Gen Z beauty consumers, contributing empirical evidence from a non-Western, high-engagement digital context that has been underrepresented in prior research. Practically, the findings offer actionable insights for marketers by identifying the influencer characteristics—identity alignment, relational resonance, credibility cues, and trust-building capability—that most effectively drive behavioral intentions in the contemporary beauty sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The evolution of digital technologies has reshaped how consumers process persuasive messages, shifting communication from one-directional mass media to interactive, identity-driven, and socially embedded channels. Within this landscape, social media influencers become strategic actors who mediate marketing communication (MarComm) in ways that blend interpersonal cues, symbolic identity signaling, and quasi-social interactions. In beauty-related categories—where consumer decisions carry aesthetic, expressive, and emotional weight—the interplay of communication exposure, identity alignment, relational bonds, and credibility judgments becomes particularly influential.

Marketing Communication

Marketing communication is crucial in shaping how consumers perceive brands and make purchasing decisions (Griffin, Ledbetter & Sparks, 2019). Lasswell's communication model (as cited in Dani, 2018) identifies five key components of effective communication: sender, message, channel, receiver, and effect. These elements serve as the framework for developing, delivering, and receiving marketing messages targeted at specific audiences. According to Kotler and Keller (2016),

effective marketing strategies must be aligned with consumer needs and expectations, utilizing integrated communication tools to inform, persuade, and reinforce brand awareness. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), as defined by Sitaniapessy (2021), involves the strategic coordination of various communication channels—such as advertising, public relations, and digital media—to convey consistent and impactful brand messaging. In today's evolving digital environment, IMC increasingly incorporates social media platforms where influencers play a vital role in brand communication. Shimp (2010) points out that marketing communication is essential not only for showcasing product value but also for fostering long-term consumer relationships. The communication process includes encoding, decoding, feedback, and managing interference or "noise" (Kotler & Keller, 2014). Successful communication ensures that the intended message is clearly understood and prompts the desired consumer response. However, in digital marketing, this process has become more interactive and fluid due to real-time engagement and the growing influence of opinion leaders like social media influencers.

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing has become a powerful component of contemporary marketing strategies, fueled by the widespread use of social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube (Khamis, Vaughn & Dufresne, 2017). Influencers are individuals who can influence public opinions, attitudes, and behaviors through content that feels genuine and engaging (Freberg et al., 2011; Caseló et al., 2020). Compared to traditional celebrities, influencers are often seen as more relatable and trustworthy, especially by younger audiences (Brown & Hayes, 2008). As noted by Glucksman (2017), influencer marketing capitalizes on the strong trust and engagement influencers have cultivated with their followers to effectively promote brands. Lou and Yuan (2019) suggest that the storytelling style commonly used by influencers enhances the authenticity of brand messages, increasing their effectiveness. Parayow and Magdalena (2023) refer to influencers as "human brands," capable of forming deep emotional connections with their audience

connections that can be extended to the brands they support. Influencers are typically classified based on their follower base into four categories: nano-influencers (1,000–10,000 followers), micro-influencers (10,000–50,000), macro-influencers (50,000–1 million), and mega-influencers (over 1 million followers) (Indonesia Creators Economy, 2023). Each category offers unique benefits depending on campaign objectives, budget, and target audience. For instance, micro-influencers tend to deliver higher engagement and stronger niche relevance, whereas mega-influencers offer greater reach at a higher cost.

Source Credibility Model

Source Credibility Theory has long been recognized as a central foundation for understanding persuasive communication. Initially proposed by Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953) and later refined by Ohanian (1990), the construct encompasses expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness as key components shaping audience evaluations. Expertise reflects the influencer's perceived knowledge and competence; trustworthiness relates to perceptions of honesty and reliability; while attractiveness includes both physical appeal and interpersonal charm, which help cultivate emotional affinity with the audience.

The effectiveness of influencer marketing is closely tied to these dimensions of credibility, as demonstrated by prior studies showing that influencers perceived as knowledgeable, honest, and appealing exert stronger impacts on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). This is particularly relevant in high-involvement categories such as skincare and bodycare, where consumers rely heavily on credible recommendations to mitigate perceived risks related to product safety and efficacy.

However, credibility is not merely a trait-based attribute; it is relationally constructed through repeated exposure, perceived authenticity, identity fit, and emotional closeness. Factors such as self-influencer congruence and parasocial relationships significantly shape how audiences infer expertise and trustworthiness, especially among Millennial and Gen Z consumers. Thus, within the broader

persuasion process, source credibility functions as a cognitive evaluation shaped by identity and relational cues, and subsequently serves as a key antecedent to trust and purchase intention.

Self-Influencer Congruence

Self-influencer congruence describes how closely a consumer's self-image aligns with the persona or image of an influencer (Zhu et al., 2021). Self-congruence describes the perceived fit between one's self-concept and an external figure such as an influencer (Sirgy, 1982), which suggests that individuals are more likely to connect with influencers whose values, lifestyle, or aspirations mirror their own. A strong alignment between the influencer and the audience fosters emotional connection and increases the likelihood of consumer engagement and purchase behavior (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Supporting this idea, Kamins (1990), as referenced by Koay et al. (2023), introduced the match-up hypothesis, stating that endorsements are more effective when there is a clear fit between the influencer and the target audience. In the beauty sector where personal identity and self-expression play key roles self-influencer congruence significantly influences consumer interaction, trust, and brand loyalty.

In beauty contexts, where self-image and ideal-self projection are central to consumer behavior, congruence acts as a powerful antecedent shaping emotional engagement and message receptivity. However, prior studies reveal gaps:

- Congruence is often treated as a direct predictor, failing to capture the intermediate processes through which identity fit translates into persuasion.
- The strength of congruence effects varies cross-culturally, with collectivistic societies (like Indonesia) exhibiting stronger identity-driven relational responses.
- Younger consumers (Gen Z/Millennials) actively curate digital selves, making congruence a dynamic, socially negotiated construct rather than a static trait.

These issues justify modeling congruence as a starting point in a *multi-stage relational-cognitive pathway*, not as a direct behavioral determinant.

Trust

Trust is a crucial component in any marketing relationship, especially in the digital realm where interactions are often indirect (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995). According to McKnight et al. (2002), online trust is defined as the willingness of an individual to be vulnerable to another party's actions, based on the belief that the other party is dependable. In marketing, trust plays a key role in shaping consumer decisions and fostering brand loyalty (Pennanen et al., 2007). Influencer marketing, in particular, depends heavily on building trust. Consumers generally place more confidence in influencers than in traditional ads due to the perceived authenticity and relatable nature of influencers (Di Napoli et al., 2019). Ki et al. (2023) highlight that trust serves as a mediating factor between an influencer's credibility and consumer behavior, underscoring the importance of choosing influencers who genuinely connect with their audience.

Parasocial Relationship

Parasocial relationship theory, first introduced by Horton and Wohl (1956), explains the one-sided emotional connections that media users develop with media personalities. Dibble, Wohl, and Bowman (2016) differentiate parasocial interaction which refers to short-term engagement from parasocial relationships, which are long-term emotional bonds. According to Chung and Cho (2017), these relationships often mirror real-life friendships, marked by a sense of closeness and shared understanding. In the social media era, influencers build parasocial relationships through regular content updates, direct communication, and personal narratives (Gong & Li, 2017). Tukachinsky and Stever (2019) describe the progression of these relationships through stages: initiation, experimentation, intensification, and bonding. As noted by Breves et al. (2021), frequent exposure and ongoing interaction help strengthen these connections, resulting in deeper emotional ties and increased influence on consumer behavior.

In modern influencer ecosystems, these bonds are intensified by platform affordances enabling continuous visibility, micro-interactions, and perceived authenticity. Parasocial closeness is

especially pronounced in beauty contexts: followers often look to influencers for emotional reassurance, routines that shape their self-image, and cues for navigating social expectations about appearance. While the parasocial construct has strong empirical validation, several theoretical inconsistencies persist. Some studies position parasocial relationship as primarily emotional, while others treat it as a cognitive cue that shapes information processing. Its role in persuasion remains contested: is it an antecedent to credibility, a parallel driver of purchase intention, or a mediating mechanism linking identity alignment to cognitive evaluations? This conceptual ambiguity is worsened by methodological inconsistencies—experimental designs often manipulate exposure but neglect identity fit, while survey-based models ignore relational formation processes. Such contradictions underscore the need to articulate the causal ordering between parasocial closeness, credibility, and trust. This study addresses that gap.

Consumer Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is a crucial measure of future consumer behavior, reflecting the likelihood that an individual plans to buy a particular product or service (Ajzen, 2019). Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior, purchase intention is influenced

by three main factors: an individual's attitude toward the behavior, social pressure (subjective norms), and perceived control over the behavior. Morwitz, Steckel, and Gupta (2007) note that purchase intention is a strong predictor of actual buying behavior, especially when consumers have evaluated different options. In the beauty sector, purchase intention is affected by elements such as product reviews, brand image, and recommendations from credible sources. Influencer endorsements play a significant role in shaping these intentions, particularly when the influencers are seen as trustworthy, relatable, and aligned with the values of their audience (Kotler, 2005). Studies on beauty consumers highlight that purchase intention is especially sensitive to:

- Perceived authenticity,
- Experiential relevance of content,
- Emotional resonance with influencer narratives, and
- Trust in influencer recommendations.

Previous Studies

Numerous studies have examined how influencer characteristics influence consumer behavior, shedding light on the key factors that shape purchase intentions.

Table 1. Previous Studies

Author(s)	Title	Variables	Key Findings
Garg & Bakshi (2024)	Exploring the Impact of Beauty Vloggers' Credible Attributes, Parasocial Interaction, and Trust on Consumer Purchase Intention in Influencer Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Source Credibility Trust Parasocial Interaction Purchase Intention 	The study demonstrates that all three dimensions of source credibility (expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness) significantly enhance consumer trust, which serves as the primary mediator driving purchase intention. Parasocial interaction positively influences purchase intention but with weaker effect strength compared to credibility-driven trust, especially among adult consumers.
Koay et al. (2023)	Self-Influencer Congruence, Parasocial Relationships, Credibility, and Purchase Intentions: A Sequential Mediation Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-Influencer Congruence Parasocial Relationship Source Credibility Purchase Intention 	Findings confirm a sequential mediation mechanism: self-influencer congruence strengthens parasocial relationship, which subsequently enhances influencer credibility, ultimately increasing purchase intention. Self-influencer congruence has no direct effect, indicating that its influence operates entirely through parasocial bonding and credibility formation.
Leite & Baptista (2022)	The Effects of Social Media Influencers' Self-Disclosure on Behavioral Intentions: The Role of Source Credibility, Parasocial Relationships, and Brand Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-Intimate Disclosure Parasocial Relationship Source Credibility Brand Trust Purchase Intention 	High levels of self-disclosure significantly intensify parasocial relationship, strengthen perceptions of source credibility, and build brand trust. Parasocial relationship exhibits the strongest predictive power for purchase intention, surpassing source credibility, highlighting the dominance of emotional closeness in influencer persuasion.
Shailza & Sarkar (2024)	Assessing the Impact of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention of Male Cosmetics: Mediating Role of Desire to Mimic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expertise Attractiveness Trustworthiness Congruence Desire to Mimic Purchase Intention 	The study finds that credible, attractive, and expert influencers significantly increase the desire to mimic among Gen Y and Gen Z consumers. Desire to mimic mediates the effect on purchase intention, while congruence influences mimicry but not purchase intention directly. The mechanism operates primarily through imitation tendencies.
Shan, et al. (2020)	When Social Media Influencers Endorse Brands: The Effects of Self-Influencer Congruence, Parasocial Identification, and Perceived Endorser Motive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-Influencer Congruence Parasocial Identification Perceived Self-serving Motive Brand Outcomes (attitude toward brand content, engagement with brand content, purchase intention) 	Results show that self-influencer congruence elevates parasocial identification and reduces perceived self-serving motives, which together improve attitudes toward brand content, engagement levels, and purchase intention. This highlights congruence as a strategic foundation for building persuasive influencer-audience relationships.

Across studies, scholars demonstrate the importance of identity fit, relational attachment, and credibility. However, none integrate all three within a coherent causal system. Most models are structurally incomplete, culturally narrow, or conceptually under-theorized. This fragmentation provides strong justification for the integrated model proposed here.

Indonesia embodies cultural characteristics that intensify influencer persuasion mechanisms:

- High collectivism increases sensitivity to identity alignment and perceived similarity.
- Relational trust orientation amplifies the impact of parasocial bonds.
- High digital immersion creates continuous influencer exposure, accelerating parasocial formation.
- Beauty consumption as social signaling magnifies the identity and aspirational dynamics relevant to congruence-based persuasion.

Thus, the Indonesian beauty-influencer context is not merely a practical setting—it is a theoretically meaningful context for stress-testing relational and cognitive persuasion models. The proposed conceptual model theorizes that:

- Self-congruence initiates psychological identification.
- Parasocial relationship emerges from perceived similarity and repeated mediated interaction.
- Credibility is shaped by emotional closeness and perceived authenticity.
- Trust emerges from credibility and relational security.
- Purchase intention represents the final action-oriented judgment.

This relational-cognitive chain reflects both marketing communication logic and influencer persuasion dynamics.

Theoretical Linkages

This subsection articulates the theoretical integration underpinning the proposed model.

Linkage 1: Self-Congruence → Parasocial Relationship

Symbolic alignment fosters perceived similarity, identification, and psychological closeness, which naturally evolve into parasocial bonds.

Linkage 2: Parasocial Relationship → Credibility

Parasocial intimacy enhances perceptions of authenticity and expertise; emotional closeness modulates cognitive evaluation.

Linkage 3: Credibility → Trust

Credibility establishes the cognitive basis for relying on the influencer's recommendations; trust is its behavioral manifestation.

Linkage 4: Parasocial Relationship & Credibility → Purchase Intention

Parasocial processes motivate approach behavior; credibility reduces perceived risk; trust consolidates behavioral commitment.

Thus, the overall model posits a sequential, identity-driven → relational → cognitive → behavioral pathway.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a quantitative approach to investigate the relationships among variables within the established theoretical framework. The main goal is to test hypotheses concerning the impact of source credibility and self-influencer congruence on purchase intention, with trust and parasocial relationship serving as mediating factors. The study is grounded in a positivist paradigm, which assumes that social phenomena can be systematically observed, measured, and analyzed using structured research methods (Creswell, 2014).

The study adopts an explanatory research design, which aims to clarify causal relationships among variables and understand the mechanisms behind observed consumer behavior (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). This approach enables the researchers to

not only identify whether certain factors influence purchase intention but also to explore how these effects are transmitted through mediating constructs such as trust and parasocial relationships.

Data Collection Procedure

Primary data were collected through an online structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms to ensure broad reach and convenience for respondents. The survey was disseminated across various social media platforms—including Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube—where users are regularly exposed to beauty influencer content. To ensure relevance, respondents were selected based on their engagement with skincare and bodycare influencers.

A systematic procedure was followed to collect valid responses:

1. Pilot Testing: Prior to full-scale distribution, a pre-test was conducted with 30 respondents to assess the validity and reliability of the instrument.
2. Wording Test: A separate wording test involving five participants was conducted to evaluate the clarity and comprehensibility of the questionnaire items.
3. Main Survey Distribution: Following revisions to the instrument based on input from the pilot test and wording evaluations, the finalized questionnaire was distributed to the target audience..
4. Data Screening: Responses were screened to exclude incomplete or inconsistent entries, ensuring data quality before analysis.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The study utilized purposive sampling, where respondents were selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. These criteria included:

Being aged between 14 and 39 years (Millennials and Gen Z),

Regularly using social media,

Having been exposed to beauty influencer content,

Having made at least one skincare or bodycare product purchase influenced by an influencer.

Based on power analysis and guidelines from Hair et al. (2021), a minimum sample size of 300 was deemed adequate for conducting structural equation modeling (SEM) involving multiple latent variables. To further improve statistical power and the generalizability of the findings, the final dataset included 360 completed responses, which were used in the subsequent analysis.

Measurement Instruments

All constructs were operationalized using established scales from prior literature to ensure validity and reliability :

Source Credibility was measured using the scale developed by Ohanian (1990), comprising three dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness.

Self-Influencer Congruence was adapted from Zhu et al. (2021), assessing the alignment between consumers' self-concept and influencer image.

Parasocial Relationship was assessed using the scale proposed by Dibble, Wohl, and Bowman (2016).

Trust was measured using the scale validated by McKnight et al. (2002).

Purchase Intention was evaluated using a scale adapted from Ajzen (2019).

Each item was presented in a five-point Likert format , ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree"). This scale allows for nuanced measurement of respondents' attitudes and perceptions toward influencer marketing.

Table 2. Measurement Items

Variables	Research Indicators	Sources
Source Credibility		
Trustworthiness	<p>SC1: I believe the beauty influencer provides skincare and bodycare product recommendations or reviews honestly and sincerely. Venciuete et al. (2023); Shailza & Sarkar (2024)</p> <p>SC2: I perceive the beauty influencer as transparent when delivering skincare and bodycare product recommendations or reviews.</p> <p>SC3: I consider the beauty influencer a trustworthy source of skincare and bodycare product recommendations or reviews.</p> <p>SC4: I feel that the beauty influencer who recommends skincare and bodycare products genuinely cares about their audience.</p>	Venciuete et al. (2023); Shailza & Sarkar (2024)
Attractiveness	<p>SC5: I think the beauty influencer recommending or reviewing skincare and bodycare products is physically attractive.</p> <p>SC6: I think the beauty influencer has an appealing overall appearance.</p> <p>SC7: I think the beauty influencer has an engaging way of delivering information when recommending or reviewing skincare and bodycare products.</p> <p>SC8: I perceive the beauty influencer as charismatic.</p>	Venciuete et al. (2023); An et al. (2024)
Expertise	<p>SC9: The beauty influencer providing recommendations or reviews is someone who is knowledgeable or familiar with skincare and bodycare products.</p> <p>SC10: I believe the beauty influencer has extensive knowledge about skincare and bodycare products.</p> <p>SC11: I believe the beauty influencer is competent in giving skincare and bodycare product recommendations or reviews.</p> <p>SC12: The beauty influencer has experience in recommending or reviewing skincare and bodycare products.</p>	Koay et al. (2024); Agnihotri et al. (2024)
Self-Influencer Congruence	<p>SIC1: The beauty influencer shares similar values and lifestyle with me in daily life.</p> <p>SIC2: The beauty influencer recommending or reviewing skincare and bodycare products reflects my personality.</p> <p>SIC3: I feel identified with the beauty influencer because we share similar characteristics.</p> <p>SIC4: I view the beauty influencer as a role model when choosing skincare and bodycare products.</p> <p>SIC5: I feel the beauty influencer represents who I am, especially in terms of skincare and bodycare needs and preferences.</p> <p>SIC6: I feel connected to or share similarities with the beauty influencer who promotes skincare and bodycare products.</p>	Koay et al. (2024); Alharbi, K. et al. (2022); Liang S-Z et al (2022)
Trust	<p>T1: I believe the beauty influencer provides accurate information when recommending or reviewing skincare and bodycare products.</p> <p>T2: I feel that the beauty influencer recommends skincare and bodycare products sincerely.</p> <p>T3: I consider the beauty influencer a reliable source of information.</p> <p>T4: I feel I can depend on the beauty influencer when seeking information about skincare and bodycare products.</p>	Ki et al., 2023; Kim & Kim (2021)

Variables	Research Indicators	Sources
Parasocial Relationship	<p>PR1: I feel comfortable when watching skincare and bodycare product recommendations or reviews from the beauty influencer, as if they were a close friend.</p> <p>PR2: When I watch the beauty influencer's skincare and bodycare content, I feel like part of their community.</p> <p>PR3: I look forward to the beauty influencer's skincare and bodycare recommendations or review content.</p> <p>PR4: I would like to meet the beauty influencer who recommends or reviews skincare and bodycare products.</p> <p>PR5: I feel that the beauty influencer understands what is important for me when choosing skincare and bodycare products.</p> <p>PR6: The beauty influencer's product recommendations or reviews help shape my views about skincare and bodycare products.</p>	Koay et al. (2024); Koay et al (2023); Reinikainen et al. (2020)
Purchase Intention	<p>PI1: I believe the skincare and bodycare products recommended or reviewed by the beauty influencer are worth buying.</p> <p>PI2: I intend to buy the skincare and bodycare products recommended or reviewed by the beauty influencer.</p> <p>PI3: I want to try the skincare and bodycare products recommended or reviewed by the beauty influencer.</p> <p>PI4: I am likely to recommend to others the skincare or bodycare products recommended or reviewed by the beauty influencer.</p> <p>PI5: When I need skincare or bodycare products, I may purchase the ones recommended or reviewed by the beauty influencer.</p>	Koay et al. (2024); Park & Lin (2020); Belanche et al (2021).

Questionnaire Structure

The questionnaire was divided into four sections:

1. Introduction Section: A brief overview of the study's purpose was provided, confidentiality was assured to participants, and clear instructions were given on how to complete the questionnaire.
2. Screening Questions: Included demographic questions and initial filters to ensure respondents met the inclusion criteria.
3. Main Survey Questions: Contained all items measuring the latent constructs: source credibility, self-influencer congruence, parasocial relationship, trust, and purchase intention.
4. Demographic Information: Collected data on age, gender, education level, occupation, and location, as well as additional information on skincare consumption habits, preferred brands, and monthly spending.

Data Analysis Techniques

To analyze the data and test the proposed hypotheses, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach was employed. SmartPLS software was used for data processing due to its suitability for predictive modeling and ability to handle small to moderate sample sizes without strict assumptions about data normality (Hair et al., 2021).

The SEM-PLS method consists of two stages:

1. Additionally, multi-group analysis (MGA) was Measurement Model (Outer Model): The reliability and validity of the indicators linked to each latent variable were assessed.

This included examining internal consistency (using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability), convergent validity (through average variance extracted), and discriminant validity (applying the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings).

2. Structural Model (Inner Model):

Examined the hypothesized relationships between constructs using bootstrapping to estimate path coefficients and significance levels.

Conducted to compare the strength of relationships across Millennial and Gen Z cohorts, following Hair et al. (2021). This allowed for insights into generational differences in response to influencer marketing strategies. To assess potential generational differences between Millennials and Gen Z, PLS-MGA was employed. Incorporating MGA is justified based on:

(1) Theoretical Foundation

Generational Cohort Theory posits that individuals born in different generational periods develop distinct value systems, digital habits, and media processing patterns. Prior research in digital marketing consistently shows contrasting influencer engagement patterns between Millennials and Gen Z, including differences in how they evaluate authenticity, credibility, and trust.

(2) Empirical Relevance

Industry reports in Indonesia reveal that Gen Z demonstrate higher parasocial sensitivity and authenticity-driven evaluations, whereas Millennials are more influenced by credibility and informational content. MGA enables the identification of whether such generational

distinctions manifest within the psychological pathways tested.

(3) Methodological Rationale

PLS-MGA is appropriate for non-parametric data and unequal group sizes, avoiding the strict normality assumptions inherent in covariance-based multigroup testing. MGA provides meaningful differentiation in path significance across cohorts, validating its inclusion in the present study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical compliance was ensured throughout the research process, aligned with the ethical procedures reported in the thesis' approval documentation.

- **Ethical Approval:** The study was reviewed and approved under the academic research ethics protocol of the Master of Management program, Universitas Indonesia.
- **Informed Consent:** Respondents were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, anonymity, and voluntary nature before participation. Consent was obtained electronically.
- **Confidentiality and Data Protection:** No personally identifiable data were collected. All responses remained anonymous and were stored securely.
- **Non-maleficence Principle:** Participation posed minimal risk; no sensitive questions or interventions were involved.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

The conceptual framework guiding this study is grounded in three key theoretical perspectives: source credibility theory, self-congruity theory, and parasocial relationship theory. These theories collectively provide a robust foundation for understanding how influencer attributes—such as expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and perceived similarity—shape consumer behavior through psychological mechanisms like trust and parasocial relationships.

Source credibility theory (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953; Ohanian, 1990) emphasizes the role of an influencer's perceived expertise, integrity, and attractiveness in shaping audience perceptions and

responses. Influencers who are seen as credible are more likely to influence consumer attitudes and behaviors, particularly in high-involvement decision-making contexts such as skincare and bodycare purchases.

Self-congruity theory (Sirgy, 1982), adapted in this context as self-influencer congruence, suggests that consumers are more receptive to influencers whose image aligns with their self-concept. This alignment fosters emotional closeness and enhances engagement, making it a critical factor in influencer marketing effectiveness.

Lastly, parasocial relationship theory (Horton & Wohl, 1956) explains the one-sided emotional bonds that viewers form with media figures, including social media influencers. These quasi-intimate relationships can significantly influence consumer behavior by enhancing perceived familiarity, trust, and loyalty toward the influencer and the products they endorse.

Building on these theoretical foundations, the following ten research hypotheses were formulated to examine both the direct and indirect effects of source credibility and self-influencer congruence on purchase intention, mediated by trust and parasocial relationships:

H1: Source Credibility has a positive effect on Trust.

Rationale: Influencers perceived as having high expertise, integrity, and attractiveness are more likely to be trusted by their audience (Ohanian, 1990; Garg & Bakshi, 2024).

H2: Source Credibility has a positive effect on Purchase Intention.

Rationale: A credible source enhances consumer confidence in product recommendations, thereby encouraging purchase intentions (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Ismagilova et al., 2020).

H3: Trust positively influences Purchase Intention.

Rationale: Consumer confidence in an influencer plays a crucial role in shaping purchasing decisions (Chang & Chen, 2008; Ki et al., 2023).

H4: Self-Influencer Congruence has a positive effect on Parasocial Relationship.

Rationale: Similarity between the consumer's self-image and the influencer fosters emotional

closeness and parasocial bonds (Zhu et al., 2021; Tafheem et al., 2022).

H5: Parasocial Relationship positively influences Purchase Intention.

Rationale: A strong emotional bond with an influencer makes consumers more likely to act on their product recommendations (Lueck, 2015; Leite & Baptista, 2022).

H6: Parasocial Relationship has a positive effect Source Credibility.

Rationale: Strong parasocial relationships enhance the audience's perception of an influencer's credibility (Labrecque, 2014; Koay et al., 2023).

H7: Trust mediates the relationship between Source Credibility and Purchase Intention.

Rationale: An influencer's credibility builds trust, which subsequently influences purchase intention (Chang & Chen, 2008; Garg & Bakshi, 2024).

H8: Parasocial Relationship mediates the relationship between Self-Influencer Congruence and Purchase Intention.

Rationale: Self-congruence with the influencer strengthens parasocial relationships, which in turn encourage purchase intention (Shan et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2021).

H9: Parasocial Relationship mediates the relationship between Self-Influencer Congruence and Source Credibility.

Rationale: Self-congruence with the influencer reinforces parasocial relationships, which enhance perceived credibility (Koay et al., 2023; Labrecque, 2014).

H10: Parasocial Relationship and Source Credibility together mediate the link between Self-Influencer Congruence and Purchase Intention.

Rationale: The interconnected dynamics of self-congruence, parasocial bonds, credibility, and trust collectively shape consumer purchase intentions (Kamins, 1990; Shan et al., 2020).

This unified conceptual framework provides a detailed perspective on the psychological processes that explain how influencer traits influence consumer purchasing decisions, especially in the fast-growing Indonesian skincare and bodycare industry. By analyzing both direct and indirect effects, the study enhances understanding of how influencer marketing strategies can be refined to more effectively connect with Millennial and Gen Z audiences.

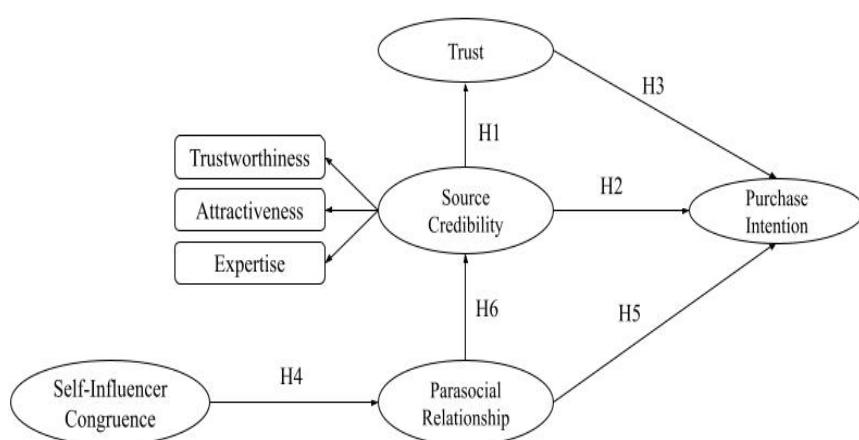


Figure 1. Hypothesis Tested

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Wording Test & Pre-Test

Prior to the main data collection, a wording test was conducted to evaluate the clarity, understandability, and appropriateness of the questionnaire items. nine out of 33 indicators

underwent rewording to align with the respondents' level of comprehension. Following the wording test, a pre-test was performed using SPSS software to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement scales.

Table 3. Reliability Test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Source Credibility	0,967	0,971
Self-Influencer Congruence	0,922	0,940
Trust	0,890	0,923
Parasocial Relationship	0,922	0,939
Purchase Intention	0,851	0,892

All constructs demonstrated strong reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR)

values exceeding the threshold of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 4. Validity Test

Variables	Indicators	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)	Bartlett's Test	Component Matrix
Source Credibility (SC)	SC1	0,918	<0,001	0,886
	SC2			0,874
	SC3			0,783
	SC4			0,902
	SC5			0,841
	SC6			0,859
	SC7			0,780
	SC8			0,903
	SC9			0,852
	SC10			0,948
	SC11			0,790
	SC12			0,867
Self-Influencer Congruence (SIC)	SIC1	0,883	<0,001	0,740
	SIC2			0,873
	SIC3			0,886
	SIC4			0,868
	SIC5			0,781
	SIC6			0,939
Trust (T)	T1	0,796	<0,001	0,832
	T2			0,851
	T3			0,870
	T4			0,913
Parasocial Relationship (PR)	PR1	0,828	<0,001	0,839
	PR2			0,865
	PR3			0,845
	PR4			0,871
	PR5			0,808
	PR6			0,859
Purchase Intention (PI)	PI1	0,742	<0,001	0,762
	PI2			0,817
	PI3			0,827
	PI4			0,745
	PI5			0,808

Furthermore, all variables exhibited a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value > 0.5 and a Bartlett's Test significance < 0.001 , indicating adequate correlation among indicators and sufficient validity for subsequent analysis. All indicators also possessed factor loading values of ≥ 0.5 , thus confirming their validity and suitability for use in the final questionnaire and analysis stages.

content. Demographically, the respondents consisted of the Millennial Generation (50%) and Gen Z (50%), who are recognized as digital natives and are heavily influenced by social media trends. The majority of the respondents were female (90%), indicating a high inherent interest in skincare and bodycare products. Additionally, 68% of the respondents considered skin and body care to be highly important in their daily routines.

Data Collection and Respondent Profile

The main survey was distributed via Google Forms to 360 respondents who actively use social media and have been exposed to beauty influencer

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics showed high mean scores for variables such as Trust ($M = 4.18$), Parasocial

Relationship ($M = 4.199$), and Source Credibility ($M = 3.989$), indicating strong agreement among respondents regarding the influence of these factors. In contrast, Purchase Intention had a

slightly lower average score ($M = 3.737$), suggesting room for improvement in converting influencer influence into actual purchase behavior.

Table 5. Descriptive Analysis Result

Variables	Indicators	Scale Min	Scale Max	Mean	Mean Variabel	Standard Deviation
Source Credibility (SC)	SC1	3,000	5,000	4,178	3,989	0,584
	SC2	3,000	5,000	3,992		0,669
	SC3	3,000	5,000	4,389		0,504
	SC4	3,000	5,000	3,775		0,72
	SC5	3,000	5,000	4,306		0,523
	SC6	2,000	5,000	3,664		0,692
	SC7	3,000	5,000	4,106		0,628
	SC8	3,000	5,000	4,233		0,559
	SC9	2,000	5,000	3,544		0,648
	SC10	3,000	5,000	4,344		0,509
	SC11	3,000	5,000	3,889		0,702
	SC12	2,000	5,000	3,450		0,575
Self-Influencer Congruence (SIC)	SIC1	2,000	5,000	3,778	3,789	0,803
	SIC2	2,000	5,000	3,778		0,789
	SIC3	2,000	5,000	3,847		0,754
	SIC4	2,000	5,000	3,775		0,79
	SIC5	2,000	5,000	3,803		0,798
	SIC6	2,000	5,000	3,756		0,817
Trust (T)	T1	3,000	5,000	4,328	4,180	0,541
	T2	3,000	5,000	4,111		0,649
	T3	3,000	5,000	3,817		0,703
	T4	4,000	5,000	4,467		0,499
Parasocial Relationship (PR)	PR1	3,000	5,000	4,167	4,199	0,596
	PR2	3,000	5,000	4,017		0,641
	PR3	3,000	5,000	4,497		0,506
	PR4	3,000	5,000	3,811		0,709
	PR5	3,000	5,000	4,289		0,558
	PR6	3,000	5,000	4,414		0,515
Purchase Intention (PI)	PI1	2,000	5,000	4,019	3,737	0,519
	PI2	2,000	5,000	3,319		0,538
	PI3	2,000	5,000	4,156		0,481
	PI4	2,000	5,000	3,433		0,597
	PI5	2,000	5,000	3,758		0,605

Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

The outer model was analyzed using SmartPLS,

focusing on Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability.

Table 6. Reliability Results of Lower-Order

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability
Attractiveness	0,933	0,933	0,952
Expertise	0,935	0,936	0,954
Trustworthiness	0,925	0,925	0,947
Self-Influencer Congruence	0,892	0,896	0,917
Trust	0,920	0,922	0,943
Parasocial Relationship	0,947	0,949	0,957
Purchase Intention	0,825	0,838	0,877

Table 7. Reliability Results of Higher-Order

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability
Source Credibility	0,977	0,978	0,979
Self-Influencer Congruence	0,892	0,896	0,917
Trust	0,920	0,922	0,943
Parasocial Relationship	0,947	0,949	0,957
Purchase Intention	0,825	0,838	0,877

All constructs consistently exhibited rho_A values above 0.89 and Composite Reliability above 0.91,

confirming excellent internal consistency and reliability (Hair et al., 2022). Construct validity

was assessed through tests of convergent and discriminant validity

Table 8. Convergent Validity Results of Lower-Order

Variables	Indicators	Outer Loading	AVE
Attractiveness (AT)	AT1	0,928	0,833
	AT2	0,862	
	AT3	0,915	
	AT4	0,944	
Expertise (EX)	EX1	0,938	0,839
	EX2	0,913	
	EX3	0,867	
	EX4	0,944	
Trustworthiness (TR)	TR1	0,907	0,816
	TR2	0,920	
	TR3	0,873	
	TR4	0,913	
Self-Influencer Congruence (SIC)	SIC1	0,798	0,648
	SIC2	0,780	
	SIC3	0,808	
	SIC4	0,817	
	SIC5	0,820	
	SIC6	0,806	
Trust (T)	T1	0,912	0,807
	T2	0,899	
	T3	0,894	
	T4	0,887	
Parasocial Relationship (PR)	PR1	0,898	0,790
	PR2	0,879	
	PR3	0,861	
	PR4	0,892	
	PR5	0,907	
	PR6	0,894	
Purchase Intention (PI)	PI1	0,723	0,588
	PI2	0,758	
	PI3	0,800	
	PI4	0,823	
	PI5	0,722	

Table 9. Convergent Validity Results of Higher-Order

Variables	Indicators	Outer Loading	AVE
Source Credibility (SC)	SC1	0,891	0,799
	SC2	0,876	
	SC3	0,902	
	SC4	0,892	
	SC5	0,909	
	SC6	0,887	
	SC7	0,885	
	SC8	0,900	
	SC9	0,892	
	SC10	0,910	
	SC11	0,883	
	SC12	0,895	
Self-Influencer Congruence (SIC)	SIC1	0,798	0,648
	SIC2	0,780	
	SIC3	0,808	
	SIC4	0,817	
	SIC5	0,820	
	SIC6	0,806	
Trust (T)	T1	0,912	0,807
	T2	0,899	
	T3	0,894	
	T4	0,887	
Parasocial Relationship (PR)	PR1	0,898	0,790
	PR2	0,879	
	PR3	0,861	
	PR4	0,892	
	PR5	0,907	
	PR6	0,894	
Purchase Intention (PI)	PI1	0,723	0,588
	PI2	0,758	
	PI3	0,800	
	PI4	0,823	
	PI5	0,722	

Convergent validity was established as all factor loadings were > 0.5 (Malhotra & Dash, 2016), and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were > 0.5 , signifying that each construct accounts for more than 50% of the variance in its

associated indicators.

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, cross-loadings, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT).

Table 10. HTMT Results of Lower-Order

	AT	EX	PR	PI	SIC	T	TR
AT							
EX	0,994						
PR	0,835	0,885					
PI	0,851	0,861	0,889				
SIC	0,658	0,558	0,351	0,507			
T	0,880	0,881	0,896	0,860	0,485		
TR	1,038	1,017	0,845	0,829	0,650	0,880	

Table 11. HTMT Results of Higher-Order

	PR	PI	SIC	SC	T
PR	0,889				
PI	0,801	0,767			
SIC	0,328	0,444	0,805		
SC	0,824	0,774	0,573	0,894	
T	0,839	0,766	0,442	0,832	0,898

The results indicated that the square root of the AVE for each construct was higher than its inter-

construct correlations, confirming sufficient discriminant validity.

Table 12. Cross Loading Result of Lower-Order

	AT	EX	TR	SIC	T	PR	PI
AT1	0,928	0,874	0,865	0,485	0,786	0,775	0,743
AT2	0,862	0,887	0,868	0,504	0,728	0,699	0,661
AT3	0,915	0,803	0,902	0,645	0,717	0,657	0,654
AT4	0,944	0,825	0,882	0,562	0,747	0,742	0,721
EX1	0,836	0,938	0,847	0,447	0,733	0,772	0,711
EX2	0,888	0,913	0,864	0,437	0,784	0,813	0,749
EX3	0,845	0,867	0,905	0,604	0,709	0,656	0,618
EX4	0,831	0,944	0,849	0,385	0,771	0,813	0,740
TR1	0,921	0,805	0,907	0,608	0,715	0,701	0,686
TR2	0,859	0,821	0,920	0,631	0,694	0,636	0,615
TR3	0,849	0,918	0,873	0,353	0,793	0,833	0,732
TR4	0,852	0,874	0,913	0,547	0,735	0,695	0,638
SIC1	0,474	0,384	0,456	0,798	0,376	0,245	0,364
SIC2	0,486	0,400	0,462	0,780	0,341	0,269	0,327
SIC3	0,462	0,407	0,467	0,808	0,325	0,222	0,335
SIC4	0,512	0,451	0,511	0,817	0,367	0,309	0,386
SIC5	0,495	0,425	0,491	0,820	0,369	0,270	0,366
SIC6	0,467	0,392	0,460	0,806	0,350	0,255	0,360
T1	0,777	0,778	0,769	0,417	0,912	0,806	0,750
T2	0,718	0,692	0,702	0,416	0,899	0,726	0,679
T3	0,722	0,740	0,733	0,429	0,894	0,742	0,692
T4	0,710	0,727	0,713	0,319	0,887	0,735	0,623
PR1	0,725	0,707	0,709	0,321	0,750	0,898	0,743
PR2	0,643	0,676	0,658	0,278	0,694	0,879	0,678
PR3	0,626	0,723	0,647	0,202	0,712	0,861	0,634
PR4	0,694	0,746	0,712	0,326	0,745	0,892	0,720
PR5	0,760	0,769	0,742	0,347	0,786	0,907	0,753
PR6	0,736	0,821	0,751	0,263	0,777	0,893	0,732
PI1	0,457	0,483	0,444	0,291	0,456	0,492	0,723
PI2	0,647	0,612	0,619	0,415	0,634	0,635	0,759
PI3	0,579	0,568	0,562	0,434	0,570	0,552	0,800
PI4	0,712	0,727	0,695	0,379	0,715	0,750	0,823
PI5	0,468	0,512	0,459	0,155	0,509	0,593	0,722

Table 13. Cross Loading Result of Higher-Order

	SC	SIC	T	PR	PI
SC1	0,891	0,608	0,715	0,701	0,686
SC2	0,876	0,631	0,694	0,636	0,615
SC3	0,902	0,353	0,793	0,833	0,732
SC4	0,892	0,547	0,735	0,695	0,638
SC5	0,909	0,485	0,786	0,775	0,743
SC6	0,887	0,504	0,728	0,699	0,661
SC7	0,885	0,645	0,717	0,657	0,654
SC8	0,900	0,562	0,747	0,742	0,721
SC9	0,892	0,447	0,733	0,772	0,711
SC10	0,91	0,437	0,784	0,813	0,749
SC11	0,883	0,604	0,709	0,655	0,618
SC12	0,895	0,385	0,771	0,813	0,740
SIC1	0,442	0,798	0,376	0,245	0,364
SIC2	0,453	0,780	0,341	0,269	0,327
SIC3	0,449	0,808	0,325	0,222	0,335
SIC4	0,496	0,817	0,367	0,309	0,386
SIC5	0,474	0,820	0,369	0,270	0,366
SIC6	0,443	0,806	0,350	0,255	0,360
T1	0,791	0,417	0,912	0,806	0,750
T2	0,717	0,416	0,899	0,726	0,679
T3	0,745	0,429	0,894	0,742	0,692
T4	0,733	0,319	0,887	0,735	0,623
PR1	0,729	0,321	0,750	0,898	0,743
PR2	0,672	0,278	0,694	0,879	0,678
PR3	0,684	0,202	0,713	0,861	0,634
PR4	0,732	0,326	0,745	0,892	0,720
PR5	0,775	0,347	0,786	0,907	0,753
PR6	0,79	0,263	0,777	0,894	0,732
PI1	0,472	0,291	0,456	0,492	0,723
PI2	0,638	0,415	0,634	0,634	0,758
PI3	0,581	0,434	0,570	0,552	0,800
PI4	0,728	0,379	0,715	0,750	0,823
PI5	0,493	0,155	0,509	0,593	0,722

Furthermore, cross-loading analysis showed that each item loaded most strongly on its respective construct, supporting the uniqueness and independence of the latent variables.

Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model was evaluated based on the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). The R^2 values for Trust ($R^2 = 0.612$), Parasocial Relationship ($R^2 = 0.547$), and Purchase Intention ($R^2 = 0.673$) demonstrate that the model accounts for a considerable proportion of the variance in these dependent constructs, indicating strong explanatory capability.

Table 14. R-square Result

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Parasocial Relationship	0,108	0,105
Purchase Intention	0,690	0,688
Source Credibility	0,679	0,678
Trust	0,693	0,692

The predictive relevance (Q^2) values for Trust, Parasocial Relationship, and Purchase Intention were all greater than zero, suggesting that the model possesses adequate predictive power

(Chin, 1998).

Table 15. Q^2 Result

	Q^2 Predict
Parasocial Relationship	0,083
Purchase Intention	0,391
Source Credibility	0,533
Trust	0,554

The effect size (f^2) values indicated medium to large effects, particularly for the paths Source Credibility → Trust ($f^2 = 0.42$) and Self-Influencer Congruence → Parasocial Relationship ($f^2 = 0.37$), highlighting a meaningful contribution to the explained variance.

Table 16. f^2 Result

	PR	PI	SIC	SC	T
PR		0,139		2,113	
PI					
SIC	0,121				
SC		0,060			2,257
T	0,027				

Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses were tested using bootstrapping procedures in SmartPLS, with path coefficients and p-values calculated to determine significance. The results are summarized below:

Table 17. Hypothesis Tested

Path	Original sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-statistics	P-values	Decision
H1: Source Credibility → Trust	0,832	0,833	0,020	40,728	0,000	Supported
H2: Source Credibility → Purchase Intention	0,272	0,271	0,057	4,736	0,000	Supported
H3: Trust → Purchase Intention	0,188	0,190	0,061	3,091	0,002	Supported
H4: Self-Influencer Congruence → Parasocial Relationship	0,328	0,333	0,048	6,893	0,000	Supported
H5: Parasocial Relationship → Purchase Intention	0,420	0,418	0,051	8,213	0,000	Supported
H6: Parasocial Relationship → Source Credibility	0,824	0,825	0,023	35,411	0,000	Supported
H7: Source Credibility → Trust → Purchase Intention	0,156	0,158	0,050	3,129	0,002	Supported
H8: Self-Influencer Congruence → Parasocial Relationship → Purchase Intention	0,138	0,140	0,027	5,028	0,000	Supported
H9: Self-Influencer Congruence → Parasocial Relationship → Source Credibility	0,270	0,275	0,044	6,208	0,000	Supported
H10: Self-Influencer Congruence → Parasocial Relationship → Source Credibility → Purchase Intention	0,073	0,075	0,021	3,564	0,000	Supported

All ten hypotheses were supported at the 5% significance level, confirming the theoretical relationships within the proposed conceptual framework.

H1: Source Credibility → Trust

The analysis shows a strong positive effect of Source Credibility on Trust ($\beta = 0.832$; $p < 0.001$). This confirms that higher perceptions of influencer trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise significantly strengthen consumer trust, consistent with Ohanian (1990) and recent findings (Garg & Bakshi, 2024). In influencer contexts, credibility serves as the foundation for relational confidence, reinforcing consumers' belief in the authenticity and accuracy of product information.

H2: Source Credibility → Purchase Intention

Source Credibility also positively influences Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.272$; $p < 0.001$). When influencers are perceived as knowledgeable, sincere, and appealing, consumers develop more favorable attitudes toward the recommended products, aligning with Lim et al. (2017) and Ki et al. (2023). Credibility thus acts as an attitudinal driver that enhances consumers' willingness to follow influencer recommendations.

H3: Trust → Purchase Intention

Trust significantly predicts Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.188$; $p = 0.002$), confirming that consumers rely

on trusted influencers when evaluating beauty products. As supported by Ki et al. (2023) and Garg & Bakshi (2024), trust acts as a decisive behavioral trigger, especially in product categories where consumers cannot physically assess product quality before purchase.

H4: Self-Influencer Congruence → Parasocial Relationship

Self-Influencer Congruence positively affects Parasocial Relationship ($\beta = 0.328$; $p < 0.001$). Consumers are more likely to develop emotional closeness with influencers who reflect their values, personality, or lifestyle, in line with self-congruity theory (Casaló et al., 2020). This identity-based alignment reinforces emotional bonding and audience engagement.

H5: Parasocial Relationship → Purchase Intention

Parasocial Relationship has the strongest direct effect on Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.420$; $p < 0.001$). Emotional closeness makes consumers perceive influencers as friends or trusted companions, increasing the likelihood of adopting their product recommendations. This supports prior work emphasizing parasocial influence on consumer decisions (Leite & Baptista, 2022).

H6: Parasocial Relationship → Source Credibility

Parasocial Relationship significantly enhances Source Credibility ($\beta = 0.824$; $p < 0.001$). As consumers feel emotionally connected to influencers, they are more inclined to perceive them as honest, competent, and appealing—aligning with findings from Labrecque (2014) and Su et al. (2021). Emotional ties thus strengthen cognitive evaluations of credibility.

The analysis revealed that parasocial relationship has the strongest direct influence on purchase intention (path coefficient = 0.420; $p = 0.000$), affirming that the perceived emotional closeness consumers feel toward the beauty influencer plays a key role in driving purchase intentions.

Mediation Analysis

The mediation effects were analyzed using the bootstrapping method with 5,000 resamples. The results indicate that:

H7: Trust mediates SC → PI

Trust significantly mediates the relationship between Source Credibility and Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.156$; $p = 0.002$). This indicates that credibility increases purchase intention primarily by fostering trust, which serves as a psychological gateway for consumers to accept influencer recommendations (Yuan & Lou, 2020).

H8: Parasocial Relationship mediates SIC → PI

Parasocial Relationship significantly mediates the effect of Self-Influencer Congruence on Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.138$; $p < 0.001$). Identity-matching

strengthens emotional attachment, which then enhances willingness to purchase recommended products—consistent with parasocial formation literature (Tukachinsky et al., 2021).

H9: Parasocial Relationship mediates SIC → SC

Parasocial Relationship also mediates the relationship between Self-Influencer Congruence and Source Credibility ($\beta = 0.270$; $p < 0.001$). Psychological closeness derived from perceived similarity improves evaluations of influencer credibility (Shan et al., 2020; Su et al., 2021).

H10: Joint Mediation of PR and SC in SIC → PI

The combined mediation of Parasocial Relationship and Source Credibility is significant ($\beta = 0.073$; $p < 0.001$), demonstrating a sequential persuasion mechanism in which identity alignment fosters emotional closeness, enhances credibility, and ultimately increases purchase intention. This aligns with the match-up hypothesis (Kamins, 1990) and recent influencer persuasion models (Koay et al., 2024).

Multi-Group Analysis (MGA)

A Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) was performed to explore differences between the Millennial and Gen Z generations. Utilizing a non-parametric bootstrapping method, the results revealed generational differences in responding to influencer marketing. The results are summarized below:

Table 18. Multigroup Analysis Results

Path	Millennial			Gen Z		
	β Coefficient	T-Value	P-Value	β Coefficient	T-Value	P-Value
H1: SC → T	0,075	0,958	0,325	0,815	22,760	0,000
H2: SC → PI	-0,474	4,634	0,000	0,221	1,468	0,141
H3: T → PI	-0,261	3,993	0,000	0,340	7,089	0,000
H4: SIC → PR	-0,245	3,640	0,000	0,844	41,929	0,000
H5: PR → PI	-0,02	0,185	0,859	0,404	2,985	0,002
H6: PR → SC	-0,344	4,366	0,000	0,911	27,632	0,000
H7: SC → T → PI	-0,019	0,868	0,386	0,277	7,434	0,000
H8: SIC → PR → PI	0,005	0,163	0,874	0,341	2,946	0,004
H9: SIC → PR → SC	0,084	2,159	0,035	0,769	21,294	0,000
H10: SIC → PR → SC → PI	-0,004	1,639	0,109	0,170	1,370	0,168

Based on the bootstrapping results, generational differences are apparent in the influence of

Parasocial Relationship on Purchase Intention (H5), where Gen Z demonstrated strong

significance ($p = 0.002$), while Millennials were non-significant ($p = 0.859$). This is supported by the positive path coefficient and high T-value for Gen Z. This finding suggests that Gen Z is more responsive to emotional attachment with influencers in forming purchase intentions. Conversely, in H2, only Millennials showed significance for the path Source Credibility → Purchase Intention ($p = 0.000$), whereas Gen Z was non-significant ($p = 0.141$). For Millennials, this path revealed a negative coefficient of -0.474 with a T-value of 4.634, indicating that while the influence is significant, it is negative in direction.

The generational comparisons reveal sharp psychological distinctions in how consumers respond to influencer marketing.

Gen Z: Affective and Authenticity-Driven Decision Making

For Gen Z, emotional connectedness—via Parasocial Relationship—dominates the persuasion process. Significant effects were observed for PR → PI, SC → T, and all PR-based mediation paths. This suggests that Gen Z's digital socialization fosters an intimacy-seeking orientation in which authenticity, relatability, and identity alignment outweigh rational assessments. This aligns with literature describing Gen Z as "connection-seeking digital natives" (Fromm & Read, 2018) who prioritize personal relevance over formal expertise.

Millennials: Rational, Skeptical, and Authenticity-Sensitive

Conversely, Millennials showed significance only in pathways involving Source Credibility → Purchase Intention—but with a negative coefficient. This anomaly indicates that overt attempts at signalling credibility may trigger skepticism in a generation more experienced with digital persuasion and commercial messaging. Millennials are described in media psychology literature as "evaluative information processors" (Smith, 2012), relying more on rational cues, cross-checking, and authenticity verification before forming purchase intentions. The negative effect suggests that if credibility signals feel scripted, commercialized, or excessive, they may backfire, reducing purchase

intention rather than enhancing it.

Taken together, these findings reinforce the importance of generational cohort theory in digital marketing. Gen Z's persuasion model is relational-emotional, while Millennials' is rational-evaluative with heightened sensitivity to authenticity disparity. This divergence underscores that influencer persuasion is not universally processed—even with identical content and influencers. The theoretical implication is that parasocial and credibility pathways must be conceptualized as generationally contingent rather than universally linear.

Discussion of Findings

These findings collectively validate the central role of Parasocial Relationship as the strongest and most consistent determinant of purchase intention in the context of beauty influencer marketing. Emotional closeness built through repeated digital interactions generates trust, engagement, and perceived intimacy, acting as a critical psychological bridge between content exposure and consumer response. The results further indicate that Self-Influencer Congruence significantly shapes the formation of Parasocial Relationship, reinforcing prior evidence that identity alignment enhances emotional bonding and strengthens consumers' receptivity to influencer messages (Zhu et al., 2021; Tafheem et al., 2022). This relational pathway is complemented by the cognitive mechanism in which Source Credibility serves as a major driver of Trust, which subsequently increases Purchase Intention—consistent with Ohanian's (1990) credibility framework and recent findings by Garg & Bakshi (2024). The mediation outcomes across Parasocial Relationship, Source Credibility, and Trust support a sequential persuasion process in which identity congruence fosters emotional closeness, strengthens credibility judgments, builds trust, and ultimately elevates purchase intention.

Furthermore, these results reveal that the persuasion mechanisms are not uniform across generations. Gen Z exhibits a stronger reliance on affective cues—particularly parasocial bonding—

reflecting their preference for authenticity, emotional resonance, and peer-like influencer relationships. In contrast, Millennials respond more strongly to cognitive cues such as source credibility; however, the negative direction observed suggests that overly commercialized or inauthentic presentations may reduce their purchase intention. This underscores that purchase intention is contextually shaped by generational preferences, highlighting the need for differentiated marketing strategies. Overall, these insights enrich the influencer marketing literature by illustrating that consumer decision-making arises from interconnected psychological processes rather than isolated factors. For practitioners, the findings emphasize the importance of selecting influencers who not only possess expertise and trustworthiness but also reflect the audience's values and identity. Cultivating parasocial relationships through transparent, engaging, and relatable content is essential to enhancing trust and strengthening the pathway from influencer communication to purchase intention.

CONCLUSION

This study provides compelling empirical evidence that influencer persuasion in Indonesia's skincare and bodycare market operates through a multi-layered psychological mechanism in which emotional, cognitive, and identity-based processes mutually reinforce each other. The findings reveal that self-influencer congruence is not merely a peripheral factor but the *initiating driver* that activates the sequential pathway of digital persuasion. When consumers perceive an influencer as aligned with their identity, they form stronger parasocial bonds—an effect significantly more powerful than credibility or trust alone. This emotional attachment subsequently elevates the influencer's perceived credibility and trustworthiness, demonstrating that credibility is not solely a function of expertise or transparency, but also of relational closeness. The integrated mediation through parasocial relationship and source credibility further underscores that purchase intention is shaped by *interdependent mechanisms*, not isolated constructs. Importantly, generational differences reveal that Gen Z relies predominantly on affective bonds, while

Millennials depend on credibility evaluations that must feel authentic rather than performative. These distinctions confirm that digital persuasion is segmented not just by demographics, but by *psychological processing styles* shaped by cohort-specific media socialization.

Theoretically, this research advances the literature by offering one of the first empirically validated frameworks that integrates Self-Congruence Theory, Source Credibility Theory, and Parasocial Relationship Theory within a Southeast Asian environment. By demonstrating that parasocial bonding exerts the strongest effect on purchase intention—exceeding the traditionally dominant role of credibility—this study challenges existing models that privilege cognitive evaluations and argues for a relational-emotional paradigm in influencer marketing. It also deepens the understanding of generational cohort theory by showing that Gen Z operates within an affect-driven decision framework, while Millennials maintain a cognition-driven evaluative process, thus refining how scholars conceptualize digital audiences.

Practically, the findings call for a fundamental shift in influencer marketing strategy. For Gen Z, the priority is not expertise but *perceived authenticity and emotional resonance*; brands must therefore collaborate with influencers capable of building narrative intimacy, everyday relatability, and interactive engagement. For Millennials, the strategic focus should emphasize *substantive credibility signals*—demonstrated knowledge, transparent product evaluation, and balanced reviews that avoid the appearance of commercial exaggeration. Across both generations, long-term partnerships outperform one-off endorsements because relational continuity strengthens parasocial bonds and stabilizes trust. Identity alignment should be a central criterion in influencer selection, as self-influencer congruence initiates the entire sequential process that ultimately drives purchase intention.

Despite its contributions, this study is constrained by its cross-sectional design, which cannot capture how trust or parasocial bonds evolve over time, and by its focus on a single product category with high emotional involvement. Platform-specific

effects were also not isolated, even though algorithms and interaction modalities likely moderate persuasion pathways. Furthermore, variables such as perceived risk, brand reputation, and authenticity cues were not included but may play important roles. Future research should adopt longitudinal or experimental designs, expand to

other product categories and generational groups, and explore platform-level mechanisms. The rise of virtual influencers, AI-generated human brands, AR/VR tutorials, and interactive livestream commerce also presents fertile ground for examining new forms of relational influence and digital intimacy.

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