Communicate your audience through Virtual Influencer: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

In the era of Bot and ChatGPT, virtual influencers on social and digital media have taken the position of many celebrities. Artificial humans are having several followers and they are influencing their following by communicating with different brands and promoting their products. The present study aims to conduct systematic literature reviews and set a future research agenda of Virtual Influencer (VI) research. The researcher's papers are accessed from both Scopus and Web of Science databases, and after applying the PRISMA approach, 67 papers were included in this study. The SPAR-4 method of systematic literature review applied in this study focusing Context, Constructs, Theory, and Method (CCTM). Most of the studies are based on persuasion theory, experimental research methods, constructs of personality and motivation, and parasocial relationship context. Future research agendas are discussed in the manuscript.

1. Introduction

The emergence of social media influencers, who often discuss their experiences with brands through their social networking sites (SNS), has been facilitated by the development of modern technology. These individuals affect the people in their community by propagating messages and influencing the people they interact with online (Uzunoglu and Kip, 2014). Influencers on social media are those who have gained fame as a result of their online personas and output, such as YouTubers, bloggers, and Instagram celebrities. The traits of today's social media influencers are diverse, and their potential for persuading others' behaviour is evolving (Kurdi *et al.*, 2022). The importance of buyer contacts and communication has improved with the expansion of social networking platforms. Social media network activities enable businesses to expand with the help of brand sites and adverts as well as communities where users can interact and participate (Wang, 2021).

Brands depend on the credibility of digital influencers to increase brand awareness by drawing consumers' attention to their goods and services. Further, credibility of SMIs improves, generating a parasocial relationship with influencers and those who follow them that strengthens the perception of the companies' worth and image in the eyes of buyers, leading to the willingness to purchase (Kanwar and Huang, 2022). In simple terms, social media influencers may efficiently promote brand-related messages and aid businesses develop stronger connections with their customers through personalised experiences. Regardless of the influencer's status as a micro or a celebrity, they must remain truthful in their recommendations and disclose any affiliations since this strengthens the trustworthiness of a source (Sesar *et al.*, 2022). Companies strive to support such influencers' product reviews or recommendations as part of their marketing campaigns to increase consumers' demand or choice for their brands (Stubb and Colliander 2019). In the 1990s and 2000s, research in this field shifted from traditional media to web-based media as consumers began seeking out an electronic form of word-of-mouth (eWOM) for product evaluation and selection (Shiva et

al., 2020; Bi and Zhang, 2023). The content created by digital influencers needs to be closely monitored by marketers since it is a powerful form of electronic referrals (eWOM) that is presently influential in consumers' decisions to buy and not to buy (Bi et al., 2019). In addition to this, when millennials choose to make their purchases online, para-social interactions with SMIs also have a big impact on their purchasing intentions ((Mahmood *et al.*, 2023).

There are many various ways for businesses to get noticed on social platforms, including paid display ads (paid media), brands leveraging online communities as brand personalities, providing customised content (owned media), and branded engagement opportunities for users to engage (earned media) (Ashley and Tuten, 2015). Brand communication through digital media is referred to as any form of brand-related conversation "distributed through social media, allowing people on the internet to view, share, interact with, contribute to, and co-create" (Alhabash, *et al.*, 2017, p. 286). Additionally, marketers may quickly reach big audiences of their target customers by working with SMIs.

Brands can magnify their advertising campaigns and strengthen target buyers' willingness to buy their goods by having SMIs seed networks with specific messaging or broadcast fresh product recommendations (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017). The content of SMI was rarely found by people who are not followers when looking through their news feeds on social media networks like Instagram, which uses algorithms for recommending SMI content to non-followers (Lee and Eastin, 2020; Bhatt & Shiva, 2020). Nevertheless, individuals subscribed to the SMI's feeds are typically the recipients of promotional communications.

A significant collection of literature has been inspired by the rapidly expanding use of digital media influencer outreach among professionals and the emergence and growth of digital influencers as a key marketing instrument (Torres *et al.*, 2019) and has also drawn more attention from researchers in business press publications (Hosie, 2019). Both practitioners and scholars must address the topic of these influencers' identities and the way they influence buying intention. Therefore, a deeper and more thorough

comprehension of this phenomenon is unquestionably required for both academic research and commercial practice. Several important advances in marketing theory and practise are advanced by our analysis. First, we give a summary of the bibliographic sources for the publications that researchers have so far looked at. Second, we present the first comprehensive analysis of the body of prior research on the subject, as far as the author is aware. Third, we incorporate and expand an array of CCTM frameworks (construct, context, theory, methods) and research outcomes to construct a consolidative, multifaceted, and transdisciplinary paradigm, thereby explaining the influencer phenomena and its effect on purchase intention. The proposed framework may serve as a more fruitful theoretical base for prospective scholars as well as professionals when they create their social media network marketing plans. Fourth, by identifying a number of research deficiencies, we offer a possible scope for further work with reference to theory, construct, context, and methods.

The following is the breakdown of this article. We start by outlining our review methodology, then list the papers' sources in this study's bibliography and categorise the results. The results of previous research are then combined into the CCTM framework of the SMI effect on purchase intention phenomena. We then suggest directions for additional research before talking about the significance of this study for both practice and research in the final section.

2. Systematic Literature Approach

A systematic literature review approach is thought to be the most appropriate for the intent of this study, specifically to deliver a top-notch synthesis and deliver academics and practitioners a holistic understanding of the existing information (Mihalache & Michalache, 2016), and to find significant gaps in knowledge and prospects for further investigation (Mishra et al., 2020). In addition to this, a SLR technique is an effective instrument for synthesis of research since it strictly adheres to predetermined rules and scientific procedures that are repeatable and unambiguous (Paul & Criado, 2020). We tracked the instructions stated by Paul and Criado (2020) when accomplishing this, and

adopted a domain-based tactic. We used two significant databases to look for pertinent literature: Scopus and Web of Science. This is the reason that Scopus and Web of Science are the greatest transdisciplinary databases of peer-reviewed literature for social science research and are often used by advanced systematic reviews (Norris et al., 2007).

The parameters for inclusion and exclusion were set in accordance with prior research to choose relevant scholarly papers for this study (Nanda & Banerjee, 2021). To be consistent with past systematic studies in the marketing discipline (Christofi et al., 2017), specifically to focus our search, we excluded editorials, books, conference proceedings, book chapters, and other non-refereed publications in favour of English-language articles from peer-reviewed sources. The reason is due to the fact that articles published in peer-reviewed journals maintain a prominent position in terms of impact and are seen as proven knowledge (Mihalache & Michalache, 2016). In order to choose the best search keywords, we first performed an in-depth hunt for articles that were considered closely connected to our topic in order to discover an ongoing trend of keyword frequency in scholarly studies on the influence of digital media influencers on purchase intention. These guidelines are broadly accepted in the scientific community

keywords used by academicians and then abstracts of papers that may be relevant because the experts' terminology or phraseology in these fields reflects the very heart and soul of their research. When a different keyword that was pertinent to the original query string was discovered, it was noted and added to the next search. In order to create the final keyword formula, the formula was constantly improved and enhanced by the addition of search terms. Finally, we discovered a group of relevant keywords that were frequently utilised, so exposing a pattern. Using the Boolean AND, OR operator, the chosen search query was: ("social media influencer" OR "Facebook influencer" OR "Instagram influencer" OR "You Tube influencer") AND ("purchase intention" OR "buying decision" OR "buying intention" OR "purchase decision"). While not comprehensive, we have no doubt that this search algorithm has found the majority of the pertinent articles.

As is customary in a systematic review of the literature (e.g., Pisani et al., 2017), title, keywords and abstract were searched. The search was not limited by date since we intended to analyse all of the research on the effects of SMIs on purchasing intent (Rebouças & Soares, 2020). This early step produced 121 hits in Scopus and 30 hits in Web of Science.

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

Criteria	Scopus		Web of Science	
	Exclude	Include	Exclude	Include
Date: 11th May 2023 Source: Scopus &Web of Science Databases Search Term: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("social media influencer" OR "Facebook influencer" OR "Instagram influencer" OR "YouTube influencer") AND ("purchase intention" OR "buying decision" OR "buying intention" OR "purchase decision")	-	121	-	30
Sub. Area: Business, Management and Accounting	35	86	8	22
Document Type: Articles	20	66	3	19
Language: English	1	65	-	19
Duplicates	5	60	11	8
Content filtering: Select articles if ''Title, abstract, and keywords'' suggest that they are pertinent to the field of research.	3	**57**	1	**7**

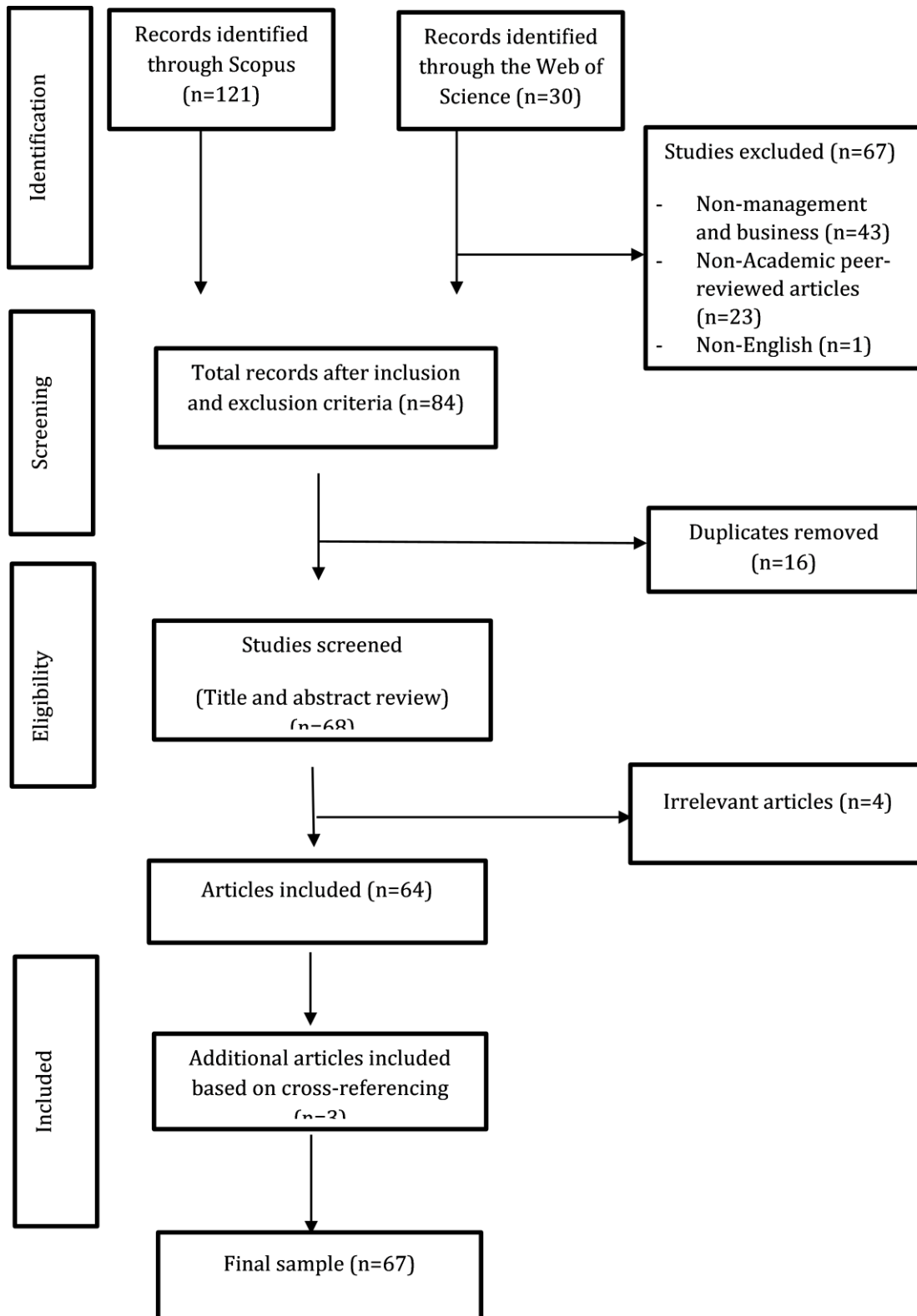and used in numerous investigations (Giudice et al., 2021).

In the first stage, we ran a pilot search using the search terms "social media influencer" AND "purchase intention" to explore the subject in depth. Next, we skimmed titles and

Two databases' first hit counts totalled 151. Once we excluded non-academic peer-reviewed publications (23), non-management and business subject areas (43) and articles that are not published in English (01), We discovered 84 possibly appropriate articles. With the removal of unrelated (04) and

duplicate (16) articles, we were left with a total of 64 journal articles.

We examined the titles and abstracts of all publications that were relevant to the subject of inquiry that were discovered through this

Figure 1: Search strategy using the PRISMA framework

Identification

Records identified through Scopus (n=121)

Records identified through the Web of Science (n=30)

Studies excluded (n=67)

- Non-management and business (n=43)
- Non-Academic peer-reviewed articles (n=23)
- Non-English (n=1)

Screening

Total records after inclusion and exclusion criteria (n=84)

Duplicates removed (n=16)

Eligibility

Studies screened

(Title and abstract review) (n=68)

Irrelevant articles (n=4)

Articles included (n=64)

Included

Additional articles included based on cross-referencing (n=3)

Final sample (n=67)

method. After that, we looked through the references of the articles we had already chosen in order to find any new manuscripts that the search engines might have overlooked (Rana & Paul, 2017). Three further studies were supplied by this subsequent step. In total, 67 articles that discussed the impact of SMI on literature about purchasing intentions were chosen.

After choosing the papers, we read the full texts of each one to find information relevant to our theme (Danese *et al.*, 2018). Every piece article was coded using (1) author(s), (2) document title, (3) publication year, (4) source name, (5) theory used, (6) method (survey, experiment), (7) constructs/variables, (8) context, (9) major findings and (10) prospective research agenda suggested by the author(s). The code facilitates easier to record findings on the technical details of the reviewed papers (e.g., publication year, theory and variables used, methods applied) and aspects of context (e.g., social media platform, industries, and country) which serve as a crucial initial stage in comprehending the scope of this research field and in discovering potential gaps that merit further investigation.

3. SPAR-4 SLR Approach
3.1 Source of Virtual Influencer Studies

The essence of influencer marketing is multidisciplinary. A deeper examination showed that research in the aforementioned research categories is published in a large number of publications. As shown in Table 1, Int'l J. of Advertising has the most articles (n = 5) that are pertinent to our topic. J. of Marketing Mgt., J. of Product and Brand Mgt., and J. of Res. in Interactive Mktg. each has four articles. Additionally, three publications relevant to our study were published in Innovative Mktg., J. of Bus. Research, J. of Interactive Advert., and J. of Promotion Mgt. The other journals mentioned in the table each published a couple of papers. The complete list of the 43 journals used in our review, together with their respective article counts, is listed in Table 2.

3.2 Widely Used Research Methods in Virtual Influencer Studies

In the 67 publications examined, experiment research methods were used in 45% (n = 30) and survey research methods in 55% (n = 37) of the empirical studies. Out of 37 survey

Table 2. Sources of Influence of SMIs on purchase intention

Source Title	TP	Source Title	TP
Int'l J. of Advertising	5	Int'l J. of Recent Tech. and Eng.	1
J. of Marketing Mgt.	4	J. of Advert.	1
J. of Product and Brand Mgt.	4	J. of Advert. Res.	1
J. of Res. in Interactive Mktg.	4	J. of Current Issues. and Res. in Advert.	1
Innovative Mktg.	3	J. of Digit. and Social Media Mktg.	1
J. of Bus. Research	3	J. of Distribution Science	1
J. of Interactive Advert.	3	J. of Global Fashion Mktg.	1
J. of Promotion Mgt.	3	J. of Hospitality and Tour. Tech.	1
European Bus. Review	2	J. of Interactive Mktg.	1
J. of Strategic Mktg.	2	J. Of Org. Studies and Innovation.	1
Technological Forecasting and Social Change	2	J. of Relationship Mktg.	1
Australian Mktg. J.	1	J. of Res. in Mktg. and Entrepreneurship	1
Communication Res. and Practice	1	J. of Retail. and Cons. Services	1
Comm. Today	1	J. of Vacation Mktg.	1
Current Issues in Tourism	1	Mgt. Res. Review	1
Entrepreneurial Business and Economics Review	1	Mktg. Intelligence and Plan.	1
FIIB Business Review	1	Psychology and Mktg.	1
Global Business Review	1	Public Relations Review	1
IBIMA Business Review	1	Qual. Access to Success	1
Int'l J. of Cons. Studies	1	SAGE Open	1
Int'l J. of Internet mktg. and Advert.	1	Service Industries J.	1
International Journal of Organizational Analysis	1	**Grand Total**	**67**

Note: TP-Total Publications

research methodologies, questionnaires or online questionnaires (n = 35) were specifically utilised as a data collection tool in the majority of the papers. Table 3 demonstrates how few authors (n=2) have used interviews as a method of data collection. It is evident that many researchers are inclined to carry out a significant portion of their data collection online, but this is not always the optimal approach, especially if respondents are situated in remote areas. To address this issue, researchers can use cutting-edge survey software platforms that support a wide range of survey modalities comprising online, kiosks, mobile, emails, and more. These platforms enable researchers to conduct surveys even the consumers from remote areas and examine data from each mode individually.

Table 3: Widely used methods in the Virtual Influencer studies

Survey method		Experiment method
Questionnaire	Interview	
Ashraf *et al.* (2023), Aw and Chuah (2021), Bi and Zhang (2023), Chandra and Indrawati (2023), Dhanesh and Duthler (2019), Fakhreddin and Foroudi (2022), Farivar and Wang (2022), Gupta *et al.* (2023), Kanwar and Huang (2022), Kareem and Venugopal (2023), Khan *et al.* (2023), Ki and Kim (2019), Kim and Kim (2022), Koay, *et al.* (2022), Le and Ryu (2023), Li and Peng (2021), Lou and Yuan (2019), Mahmood *et al.* (2023), Masuda *et al.* (2022), Pop *et al.* (2022), Pornsrimate and Khamwon (2021), Rosara and Luthfia (2020), Rudeloff and Damms (2023), Fernandez and Castillo (2021), Satria *et al.* (2019), Shoukat *et al.* (2023), Sudaryanto *et al.* (2022), Tailon *et al.* (2020), Weismueller *et al.* (2020), Yang and Ha (2021), Bejarano *et al.* (2022), Chen *et al.* (2021), Raza *et al.* (2022), Dinh and Lee (2022), Tian *et al.* (2023).	Bharti (2021), Konstantopoulou *et al.* (2019)	Alhaidar and Xue (2023), Breves. *et al.* (2021), Chung *et al.* (2022), Ruiz and Vazquez (2021), Drew *et al.* (2022), Evans *et al.* (2022), Frutos and Ramon (2021), Jamil and Qayyurn (2021), Jiang and Park (2021), Kay *et al.* (2020), Kim and Kim (2021), Beheshti *et al.* (2023), Lopez *et al.* (2020), Pick (2021), Piehler (2022), Pittman and Abell (2021), *Reinikainen et al.* (2021), Saima and Khan (2020), Schouten *et al.* (2020), Shan *et al.* (2020), Shoenberger and Kim (2023), Szymkowiak et al. (2021), Woodroof *et al.* (2020), Zhu et al. (2022), Jin and Phua (2014), Chiu and Ho (2023), Jin and Muqaddam (2021), Hill and Qesia, (2023), Reinikainen *et al.* (2020), Lee and Kim (2020).

3.3 Constructs/Variables Used in Virtual Influencer Studies

Literature on social media influencer marketing, the significance of influencer personal attributes (e.g., attractiveness, similarity, trustworthiness, information quality, entertainment value, expertise) was the dominant variable (21%; n=14), followed by the role of persuasion knowledge, parasocial interaction, and parasocial relationship (n=8) on influencer-follower engagement. Furthermore, influencer and source credibility (n=8) have been employed to comprehend the role of trust variables in this phenomenon. Last but not least,

circumstances involving poor brand endorsement and betrayal feelings need more research in the future.

Table 4: Constructs/Variables widely used in the Virtual Influencers studies

Constructs/ Variables	Author
Influencer attributes (attractiveness, similarity, trustworthiness, information quality, entertainment value, expertise)	Ashraf *et al.* (2023), Gupta *et al.* (2023), Ki and Kim (2019), Kim and Kim (2021), Koay *et al.* (2022) Masuda *et al.* (2022), Piehler (2022), Pop *et al.* (2022), Saima and Khan (2020), Satria *et al.* (2019), Chiu and Ho (2023), Chen *et al.* (2021), Tian *et al.* (2023), Konstantopoulou *et al.* (2019)
Emotional attachment	Fernandez and Castillo (2021), Shoukat *et al.* (2023)
Persuasion knowledge, parasocial interaction, Parasocial relationship	Alhaidar and Xue (2023), Aw and Chuah (2021), Dhanesh and Duthler (2019), Kanwar and Huang (2022), Kim and Kim (2022), Mahmood *et al.* (2023), Rudeloff and Damms (2023), Yang and Ha (2021), Jig and Muqaddam (2021)
Influencer credibility, Source Credibility	Bi and Zhang (2023), Breves *et al.* (2021), Le and Ryu (2023), Lou and Yuan (2019), Mahmood *et al.* (2023), Pick (2021), Bejarano *et al.* (2022), Reinikainen *et al.* (2020)
Sponsorship disclosure	Chung *et aL* (2022), Evans *et al.* (2022), Kay *et al.* (2020), Weismueller *et al.* (2020), Lee and Kim (2020)
Authenticity	Ruiz and Vazquez (2021), Pornsrimate and Khamwon (2021), Shoenberger and Kim (2023)
Electronic word of mouth	Drew *et al.* (2022), Rosara and Luthfia (2020), Jin and Phua (2014)

3.4 Theories Used in Virtual Influencer Studies

Theories provide descriptions for a pattern of behaviour, an event, or a phenomenon that happens in the world naturally or in the community. Technically speaking, an interesting event can be explained logically, methodically, and coherently within a set of assumptions and limitations by a body of ideas and claims that make up a scientific theory. In the literature we gathered to evaluate the impact of SMIs on purchase intention, Table 5 demonstrates the application of the Parasocial Interaction Theory, Social Identity Theory, and Attachment Theory twice each. None of the studies on this phenomenon used the consistency theory, reciprocity theory, or mere-exposure effect theory. In addition, future work that focuses on social media will have increased use for the theories of persuasion and source trustworthiness.

Table 5: Widely used theories in the Virtual Influencer studies

Theory	Author
Signaling theory	Hill and Qesja (2023)
Parasocial interaction theory	Aw and Chuah (2021), Chen *et al.* (2021)
Publication relation theory	Dhanesh and Duthler (2019)
Social identity theory	Farivar and Wang (2022), Jin and Phua (2014)
Reasoned action theory	Kareem and Venugopal (2023)
Social exchange theory	Kim and Kim (2021)
Persuasion theory	Masuda *et al.* (2022)
Planned behaviour theory	Raza. *et al.* (2022)
Customer journey theory	Pop *et al.* (2022)
Source credibility theory	Shoukat *et al.* (2023)
Social capital theory	Jin and Phua (2014)
Attachment theory	Chiu and Ho (2023), Chen *et al.* (2021)

3.5 Context of Virtual Influencer Studies

Our analysis findings show that Instagram (22%; n = 15) has received the greatest attention among digital media platforms. Given that Instagram is widely utilised and significant digital media site for influencer effects on purchase intention (Reinikainen *et al.*, 2020), this is not a surprise. YouTube (12%, n = 8), as indicated in Table 6, was the second-most explored site. The remaining articles (two or one each) are about Facebook, WeChat, Tik Tok, Twitter, and Weibo, which have drawn not as much attention. Seven studies had a broader perspective and provided no details about the social media sites under investigation. Since Instagram is considered to be the most essential and significant medium for influencer marketing initiatives, further investigation is required to look at other digital media sites because the nature of each platform may affect how to purchase intention is influenced by influencers' behaviours. China was the most often examined country in regard to geographical coverage by the empirical

investigations (n = 4), followed by Indonesia (n = 3). Fashion apparel (n=6) was the most commonly researched industry in terms of the industries used in the studies.

Table 6: Context used in the Virtual Influencer studies

Industry/Country/ Social media platform	Author
Fashion	Bharti (2021), Ruiz and Vazquez (2021), Satria *et al.* (2019), Schouten *et al.* (2020), Shoukat *et al.* (2023), Jin and Muqaddam (2021)
Cosmetic	Chandra and Indrawati (2023), Rosara and Luthfia (2020), Schouten et al. (2020), Sudaryanto *et al.* (2022), Konstantopoulou *et al.* (2019)
Hotel	Drew *et al.* (2022), Le and Ryu (2023), Schouten *et al.* (2020)
Tourism/ Travel	Pop *et al.* (2022), Szymkowiak *et al.* (2021), Hill and Qesja (2023)
Indonezia	Rosara and Luthfia (2020), Satria *et al.* (2019), Sudaryanto *et al.* (2022)
China	Li and Peng (2021), Shan *et al.* (2020), Yang and Ha (2021), Chiu and Ho (2023)
Instagram	Breves *et al.* (2021), Farivar and Wang (2022), Gupta *et al.* (2023), Jiang and Park (2021), Kareem and Venugopal (2023), Ki and Kim (2019), Koay *et al.* (2022), Beheshti *et al.* (2023), Mahmood *et al.* (2023), Piehler (2022), Satria *et al.* (2019), Shoenberger and Kim (2023), Sudaryanto *et al.* (2022), Weismueller *et al.* (2020), Lee and Kim (2020)
Youlube	Bi and Zhang (2023), Frutos and Ramon (2021), Jamil and Qayyum (2022), Kim and Kim (2022), Masuda *et al.* (2022), Rosara and Luthfia (2020), Chen *et al.* (2021), Reinikainen, *et al.* (2020)

Table 7: Recent articles on the impact of social media influencers

Author	Purpose	Method	Findings
Raza *et al.* (2022)	To investigate marketing tactics for Generation Z.	Online survey (Questionnaire), 300 Gen Z online shoppers in Pakistan.	The use of social media and the perception of corporate social responsibility is strongly correlated with Generation Z's propensity to buy. Gen Z has a close connection to social media use and is aware of an organization's CSR initiatives.
Hill and Qesja (2023)	To examine how SMI's popularity has an impact on consumer's desire to buy.	Experimental, (n=236), ANOVA analysis.	Consumers are more likely to buy travel products since they perceive micro-influencers as being more sincere, real, and trustworthy.
Ashraf *et al.* (2023)	To investigate how SMI-based communication affects marketing results.	Survey, Purposive sampling, had 506 active social media users.	Positive indirect effects of consumer purchase intentions via PSR on factors such as trustworthiness, similarity, interpersonal, attractiveness, expertise, procedural, and information fairness.
Aw and Chuah (2021)	To investigate the causes and effects of followers' parasocial interactions with digital influencer.	Survey, 361 responses, PLS-SEM analysis.	Influence initiatives (i.e., expertise, attractiveness, and prestige) positively influence parasocial relationships, but parasocial interactions have a negative impact on perceived endorsement motive (self-serving), which in turn lowers purchase intention.
Bharti (2021)	To investigate how aspects of a company's Instagram feed can affect a customer's decision to buy.	Focus group interview, 327 samples.	Purchase intent is induced through visually appealing content, interactive forums with vibrant involvement (views/ followers/likes/comments), and partnerships with reputable businesses and esteemed social media influencers.
Breves *et al.* (2021)	To examine the effect of SMIs on their own followers.	Experiment, (First experiment =144), (Second experiment = 157)	Followers indicated increased brand assessments and purchase intentions, particularly when posts included advertising disclosures.
Kanwar and Huang (2022)	To ascertain how SMIs affect Taiwanese consumers' purchase intentions.	Taiwan, Questionnaire, 384 respondents using convenience sampling	The credibility of influencers has a quantitatively important impact on creating a parasocial relationship with their followers, which results in a favourable impression of the brand along with perceived quality, which in turn leads to purchase intention.
Li and Peng (2021)	To investigate how SMIs inspire target customers to buy a particular brand advertised in their content.	Questionnaire, 510 Weibo users in China, SEM analysis using Lisrel 8.8	Consumers' favourable perceptions (advertising trust and/or image satisfaction) are stimulated by source attributes, which ultimately affect customers' purchase intentions.
Reinikainen *et al.* (2021)	To explore the connections between brands, people, and SMIs, and to examine the impacts of betrayal's ripple effects.	Experiment, 250 samples.	A social media influencer's perceived betrayal can harm consumer attitudes, trust, and intent to purchase a good or service the influencer has suggested.
Yang and Ha (2021)	To examine the driving forces behind young people TikTok use and how those driving forces might connect to the persuasive effect of influencer videos on purchasing.	An online survey, of 382 college students who use Tik Tok (Douyin) in China.	Individuals who were motivated by socialisation had more parasocial contacts and persuasive expertise as well as more plans to purchase the recommended products.

4. Future Research Agenda

We nevertheless have a limited grasp of which influencer types are useful in what circumstances and for what purposes, despite the fact that our systematic study provides significant insights into a variety of elements connected to the effects of SMIs on purchase intention. In social media environments, instant messaging (IM) encompasses pervasive, fluid, and growing processes that vary based on the type of influencer, individual characteristics (attractiveness, similarity, credibility, information quality, entertainment value, expertise), sponsorship disclosure, recommended product/service, and digital media platform. Therefore, additional investigation into conceivably significant interconnections is required to comprehend these complicated issues, increasing the marketing potential and external reliability. Using the methodology of earlier systematic studies (Christofi *et al.*, 2017; Hao *et al.*, 2019), We analyse four domains - context, construct, theory, and methods, where the academic study is scant and inadequate and highlight critical problems that require to be tackled in future research (summarized in Table 8).

Table 8. A summary of future research direction

Future research direction	
Theory	• More usage of planned behaviour theory is reasoned action theory and persuasion theory. • Investigate the negative influence of parasocial relationships on perceived endorser motive. • Examine a perceived betrayal impact on brand engagement and parasocial relationships. • Explore influencers' negative brand endorsement situations and their impact on parasocial interaction.
Methods	• Conduct investigations to forecast the impact of self-esteem alteration on endorsement effects. • Comparative analysis of the various influencer types (such as mega-influencers, macro-influencers, and micro-influencers) to increase brand evangelism and engagement. • Use systematic random sampling techniques. • Use Netnography method to analyse the effect of posts. • Conduct a more mixed-method study.
Construct	• Investigate the role of cumulative exposures on advertising transparency. • Explore the connection between
	• (anti)consumption and engagement and the extent to which this association depends on other social media characteristics, such as the influencer's age, gender, or ethnic background, the size of channel subscribers, or the overall volume of videos posted on the channel. • Explore elements of communication (i.e., message, channel, receiver or destination) on PI. • Consider anxiety obstacles in followers' engagement. • Investigate other message and source elements that are related to the receivers' motivations or personalities or the media channel's affordance or usefulness. • Examine the influencer-follower connection's stability with advertising contexts. • Explore other antecedents (authenticity, secret sharing) of brand evangelism in the setting of micro-influencer. • Pay attention to various advertising circumstances and assess the reliability of the connection. • Investigate antecedents (Big Five personality model- compatibility between influencers and followers, attitude, cost, and benefits appraisal) of parasocial relationships.
Context	• Consider how the time of disclosure affects possible sleeper effects in YouTube videos. • Explore CSR appeals and sources in different aspects of persuasion knowledge in the context of Facebook and Twitter. • Investigate Gratifications and Parasocial relationships in the context beyond China for TikTok influencers. • Explore cultural and social issues brought on by using counterfeit of premium goods. • Carry out additional research on cross-cultural interactions between industrialised and developing nations.

5. Limitations of this study

This study carries multiple limitations. First, this review's initial focus was on publications in English that were exclusively published in subject-to-peer review academic journals, mostly in the Management and business subject fields. Consequently, the study would be more pertinent if conference proceedings, book chapters, dissertations, and other forms of informal writing were also included. Second, Web of Science and Scopus have been used as databases. Even though they are the most well-known and complete scientific databases, they might have missed publications important to our topic. Third, it's possible that the search terms and screening

methodology used didn't turn up all possibly relevant research.

Conclusion

This review paper summarizes the discussion and development of digital influencers' effects on the purchase intention of targeted customers. It delivers a thorough and in-depth analysis. Our investigations highlight the knowledge gaps that are challenging to comprehend the impact of SMIs on purchase intention. We identified prospective areas for additional research based on the prior evaluation and analysis, which may significantly advance the discipline. Agility and adaptability are more likely to be traits of successful businesses in contexts of marketing that are changing quickly. The majority of businesses have networks and partnerships with social media influencers in place to acquire and keep the targeted customers in order to be prepared for these quickly changing conditions. In unpredictable markets, businesses should create marketing plans more methodically and scientifically and rely on networked relationships and collaboration with social media influencers to detect opportunities, capitalise on them, and steer clear of costly mistakes.

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