

INFLUENCER CHARACTERISTICS AND INSPIRATION AS PREDICTORS OF CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION: THE MODERATING ROLE OF GENDER

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Abstract: *In the contemporary digital environment, social media represent one of the most important channels of communication between brands and consumers. Influencers, as key actors on these platforms, shape consumer opinions, attitudes, and behavior. The aim of the research is to analyze the effects of influencer attributes and the moderating role of gender on consumers' purchase intention in a digital context. Additionally, the study examines the role of inspiration as a psychological mechanism that may further explain the influence of emotional and interactive dynamics between influencers and their followers. Special attention is given to exploring gender differences in the perception and effects of influencer impact, to determine whether consumer gender contributes to varying response patterns. Empirical findings highlight the significance of credibility, emotional connection, and inspiration as key factors that strongly shape consumer behavior and foster positive brand attitudes, whereas influencer attractiveness and interactivity did not show a statistically significant effect on purchase intention. The theoretical contribution of this study lies in deepening the understanding of influencer effects on consumers' purchase intention, with an emphasis on emotional and interactive dimensions and gender differences, addressing gaps in the existing literature and providing a basis for developing more precise theoretical and practical models in digital marketing.*

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Keywords: influencers, credibility, emotional connection, attractiveness, interactivity, inspiration, purchase intention

JEL classification: M31, M37, D12

KARAKTERISTIKE INFLUENSERA I INSPIRACIJA KAO PREDIKTORI POTROŠAČKE NAMERE: ULOGA POLA KAO MODERATORA

Apstrakt: U savremenom digitalnom okruženju, društvene mreže predstavljaju jedan od najvažnijih kanala komunikacije između brendova i potrošača. Influenseri, kao ključni akteri na ovim platformama, oblikuju mišljenja, stavove i ponašanje potrošača. Cilj istraživanja je analiza uticaja karakteristika influensera i uloge demografskog faktora pola kao moderatora, na nameru kupovine potrošača u digitalnom okruženju. Pored toga, istraživanje ispituje ulogu inspiracije kao psihološkog mehanizma koji može dodatno objasniti uticaj emocionalne i interaktivne dinamike između influensera i pratilaca. Posebna pažnja posvećena je ispitivanju rodni razlika u percepciji i efektima uticaja influensera, kako bi se sagledalo da li pol potrošača doprinosi različitim obrascima reagovanja. Empirijski nalazi ističu značaj kredibiliteta, emocionalne povezanosti i inspiracije kao ključnih faktora, koji snažno oblikuju ponašanje potrošača i podstiču pozitivne stavove prema brendu, dok nasuprot tome, atraktivnost i interaktivnost influensera nisu pokazale statistički značajan uticaj na nameru kupovine. Teorijski doprinos rada ogleda se u produbljivanju razumevanja efekata influensera na nameru kupovine potrošača, sa akcentom na emocionalne i interaktivne dimenzije i rodne razlike, što popunjava praznine u postojećoj literaturi i pruža osnovu za razvoj preciznijih teorijskih i praktičnih modela digitalnog marketinga.

Ključne reči: influenseri, kredibilitet, emocionalna povezanost, atraktivnost, interaktivnost, inspiracija, namera kupovine

1. INTRODUCTION

There are several methods of advertising on social media that can be applied depending on communication objectives and the target market, and one of the dominant ones is influencer marketing, as the continuous growth of the online market has led to the growth of this form of marketing as well, which is evidenced by the fact that the global influencer marketing market amounted to approximately 28 billion dollars in 2023 (Deng et al., 2025). Dhanesh and Duthler (2019) point out that influencers present their everyday lives and share their experiences in order to attract followers, which is what contemporary consumers want to see, experiencing a certain experience through the

experiences of credible public figures. Contemporary consumers seek authentic experiences, whereby influencer authenticity represents the perception of sincerity, consistency, and alignment of their behavior with their own identity and values, formed through the assessment of factors such as transparency, expertise, originality, and credibility, influencing consumer trust and their attitudes toward the given recommendations (Duffek et al., 2025). As the demand for influencer services by companies increases, research shows that brand communication on social media must take into account various factors that shape effective communication, including the role of influencers as sources and the manner of message transmission (Voorveld, 2019).

Beichert et al. (2024) emphasize that, when observing social media, Instagram is positioned as the dominant platform for communication (nearly 4 billion sponsored posts annually), both in the context of brand communication and within influencer marketing, with sales generation representing the primary objective of their strategies. Similarly, Wies et al. (2022) present Instagram as the leading platform where brands collaborate with influencers, expecting them to create creative content that will lead to follower interaction, considering this precisely as a key indicator of the effectiveness of this form of marketing. Digitalization and the increasing use of this medium have brought significant changes in consumer behavior. According to the Global Digital Report (Kemp, 2022), as many as 84% of the population of the Republic of Serbia uses the internet, while 57.5% of them regularly use social media. The role of influencers is becoming increasingly important, as they are becoming key opinion leaders in the digital world, shaping consumer attitudes and behavior in various ways. The global number of social media users amounts to 4.76 billion, with expected growth to nearly six billion by 2027 (Dixon, 2023).

Previous research indicates that influencer characteristics such as credibility (expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness), interactivity, as well as their ability to inspire and engage followers, can have a strong effect on the formation of consumer attitudes, brand awareness, and their purchase intentions (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2002; Bruhn et al., 2012; Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012; Moulard et al., 2015; Chang et al., 2015; Fritz et al., 2017; Lim et al., 2017; Yadav & Rahman, 2017; Casaló et al., 2020; Schouten et al., 2020; Lee & Eastin, 2021; Ki, Park & Kim, 2022; Zhou, 2025; Sharma et al., 2025). Additionally, there is increasing evidence that consumer gender may play a role in the way these messages are perceived and influence consumer behavioral outcomes when purchasing a specific product (Uslu & Arslan, 2022). The aim of the research is to analyze the influence of influencer characteristics and the role of the demographic factor of gender as a moderator on consumers' purchase intention in a digital environment.

Although research on influencer marketing is increasing, studies still lack integrated models that combine multiple influencer dimensions (such as credibility, emotional connection, attractiveness, and interactivity) in explaining purchase intention. In addition, the moderating role of consumer gender remains insufficiently explored, particularly in digital contexts and emerging markets.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

Influencer marketing involves engaging influencers to promote products and engage their followers, whereby factors such as originality, number of followers, and sponsor visibility significantly affect the final outcomes of campaigns. In this context, it is necessary to ensure that the value of the brand promoted through influencer marketing is aligned with the credibility of the influencer themselves, as well as with their personal value system, since only in this way can optimal results be achieved (Liadeli et al., 2022). Influencer marketing can lead to improved brand recognition, the development of consumer interest in products, as well as the stimulation of purchasing behavior, resulting in increased market value and financial performance (Liu & Zheng, 2024). Influencer credibility, reflected through their expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity, contributes to a positive consumer attitude (Brinol et al., 2004; Chan et al., 2015).

Previous studies emphasize that highly credible sources, such as influencers perceived as expert and trustworthy, can significantly influence consumer attitudes, beliefs, and behavior (Wang et al., 2017). Recent research shows that influencer credibility and authenticity have a significant impact on consumers' purchase intention, with trust and perceived authenticity standing out in particular as key predictors of positive effects on consumer behavior, regardless of whether the influencer is virtual or human (Ying, Y., et al., 2026). The study by Suganye and Bawe (2024) examines the influence of influencer credibility, defined through expertise, trust, and attractiveness, on consumer behavior, primarily on brand perception and purchase intention, with results showing that all three dimensions of credibility have a positive impact on consumer behavior, with trust emerging as the most significant factor.

Zhou (2025) confirms that professionalism, which reflects expertise, has a significant impact on consumers' purchase intentions. Trust and expertise positively influence credibility; however, credibility, expertise, and attractiveness subsequently achieve a positive but not significant contribution to consumer purchasing behavior (Fihasti & Hartono, 2025). Xu and Kim (2022), in their study, confirm that influencer credibility, particularly through trust and interactivity, has a significant positive impact on consumer engagement and

perceived product value, which indirectly stimulates purchase intention. Lim et al. (2017) find that credibility and attractiveness alone do not significantly influence purchase intention, where the most important factors are the congruence between the influencer and the product and the ability to convey relevant messages, which emphasizes the importance of an authentic connection between the influencer and the brand for the success of digital campaigns. Freberg et al. (2011) highlight that authenticity, expertise, and attractiveness contribute to credibility and the ability to establish an emotional connection with followers, whereby authenticity and expertise play a dominant role in strengthening trust and audience engagement, while attractiveness has a secondary but still relevant role.

H1: Influencer credibility has a statistically significant impact on consumers' intention to purchase the products they promote.

Sudha and Sheena (2017) emphasize that influencers not only promote products, but also, through authentic recommendations and lifestyle representation, establish a strong emotional bond with followers, which has a significant impact on consumer behavior and encourages impulsive purchases. Similarly, Opris, Pelau, and Lazar (2020) point out that celebrities and influencers contribute to increased product visibility and the formation of consumer identity by associating products with a particular lifestyle and social status. Kolo and Haumer (2018) emphasize that influencers successfully combine personal integrity and commercial relevance, building authentic relationships with their audiences. Although the audience is aware of the commercial nature of the content, they accept recommendations that are aligned with shared values. This emotional connection increases trust and encourages consumers to engage and make purchases. Ki, Park, and Kim (2022) highlight the importance of emotional connection and a sense of closeness between influencers and their followers on social media.

Oladesu and Igyuve (2024), in their study, show that visual attractiveness and perceived influencer knowledge are not sufficient to build trust if authenticity and cultural relevance are lacking, emphasizing that sincere, contextually relevant connections between influencers and their audiences foster stronger emotional bonds, which positively reflect on engagement and purchasing decisions. Emotional connection can encourage consumers to remain loyal to influencers, exerting a mediating effect on certain influencer characteristics and consumers' purchase intentions (Zhou, 2025). According to Lee and Watkins (2016), the likelihood that people will regularly interact with media personalities increases when they recognize that their values and beliefs correspond to those expressed by influencers. Casaló et al. (2018) emphasize

that the greater the congruence between the values of digital influencers and their followers, the greater the likelihood that followers will comply with their recommendations; thus, the findings suggest that the perception of similarity is a key factor in the development of emotional connection and trust between influencers and consumers, which is reflected in a greater willingness to purchase recommended products.

H2: *Emotional connection and perceived closeness to the influencer have a statistically significant impact on consumers' intention to purchase the products they promote.*

Influencer interactivity on social media represents an important factor that contributes to consumers' intention to purchase a particular brand. Ki, Park, and Kim (2022) point out that regular communication activities of influencers, such as responding to comments, asking questions, and sharing personal stories, allow followers to feel closeness, authenticity, and intimacy. Kolo and Haumer (2018) emphasize that influencers not only combine personal integrity and commercial relevance, but also successfully use interactive communication strategies to strengthen relationships with their audiences. The audience, although aware of the commercial nature of the content, engages through two-way communication, where through such active exchange influencers manage to overcome traditional, passive forms of advertising, encouraging active audience involvement and thereby increasing the likelihood of a positive influence on consumer attitudes and behavior. Therefore, interactivity represents a key element in establishing and maintaining authentic relationships that lead to higher purchase intention.

Xu and Kim (2022) emphasize that influencer interactivity significantly contributes to increased consumer engagement and perceived product value. Two-way, real-time communication, during which the influencer responds to consumer questions and provides additional information, enhances the sense of flow and contributes to greater user trust in the entire purchasing process. Duffy (2021) further emphasizes that influencers, through interactive forms of engagement such as likes, comments, and shares, influence the creation of consumer norms and attitudes. Suganya and Bawe (2024), in their study, confirm that the perception of interactivity, as one of the key elements of influencer credibility, positively affects consumer behavior, including brand perception and purchase intention. Although the focus on interactivity is not always emphasized as an independent variable, its role in building trust and audience engagement is becoming increasingly significant in digital marketing. These findings indicate that successful digital campaigns depend not only on the visual attractiveness or expertise of influencers, but also on their ability to

establish a close and engaged follower community through interactive communication.

H3: *The perception of influencer interactivity has a statistically significant impact on consumers' intention to purchase the products they promote.*

In contemporary marketing, consumer inspiration is gaining importance, as an increasing number of people seek role models that motivate them to achieve a desired lifestyle (Rauschnabel et al., 2019). Böttger et al. (2017) define inspiration as a temporary motivational state that enables the transition from the passive reception of an idea to its active application in consumer behavior. It is precisely here that influencers play a major role, leading to action. Ki, Park, and Kim (2022) emphasize that influencers act as sources of inspiration that encourage emotional connection and follower identification with their lifestyle and values. Perceived value and congruence with the influencers themselves influence consumer behavior, and it is precisely through this combination that inspiration under the influence of this form of marketing is achieved (Sharma et al., 2025). Karatsoli and Nathanail (2021) point out that social media content and active interaction with influencers can significantly affect users' activity planning and decision-making, including the selection of products or services. This confirms that social influence and information coming from online opinion leaders shape consumer behavior in the digital environment through inspiration.

H4: *Inspiration by the influencer has a statistically significant impact on consumers' intention to purchase the products they promote.*

Previous studies show that the visual appeal of influencers can enhance positive consumer attitudes, particularly on visually oriented social media platforms (Bardia et al., 2011). Uslu and Arslan (2022) confirm that attractiveness is especially significant in the digital environment, where influencers' physical appearance and style play an important role in shaping emotional connection and audience attitudes toward products. Although attractiveness alone may not directly influence purchase intention, its role as part of the broader concept of credibility and emotional connection with the audience is undeniable (Lim et al., 2017). Ki, Park, and Kim (2022) point out that influencer personal attractiveness significantly contributes to emotional connection and follower identification with their lifestyle and values, and that attractiveness, together with credibility, interactivity, and a sense of closeness, strengthens audience engagement and encourages the adoption of recommended products. The study by Suganya and Bawe (2024) examines the influence of influencer attractiveness, as one of the key dimensions of credibility, on consumer behavior and their purchase intention, with results showing that attractiveness

positively contributes to consumer behavior, although trust remains the strongest predictor.

H5: *Influencer attractiveness has a statistically significant impact on consumers' intention to purchase the products they promote.*

Uslu and Arslan (2022) arrive at results showing that all three dimensions of credibility (expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness) positively influence purchase intention, but that a significant moderating effect of gender was found only for attractiveness, which was more pronounced among female respondents. This finding indicates that certain dimensions of credibility do not operate universally across all consumers, but that their effects may depend on demographic factors such as gender. Previous studies indicate that men and women respond differently to aesthetic, emotional, and informational cues in the online environment (Haferkamp et al., 2012; Lee & Eastin, 2021), suggesting that the inclusion of gender as a moderating variable could contribute to a deeper understanding of how brand awareness is built under the influence of influencers. Zhou (2025), in his study, confirms that the influence of influencer characteristics on emotional trust is stronger among women than among men; however, this influence is weaker among women when purchase intention is considered, as the influence then becomes more dominant among men.

H6: *Gender moderates the relationship between influencer attractiveness and consumer behavior, such that the effect of attractiveness on consumer behavior is stronger for women than for men.*

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics, and the survey was carried out in the territory of the cities of Arandjelovac, Kragujevac, and Lazarevac during the period from January 10 to February 3, 2026. This study included 304 respondents who completed the questionnaire online. Respondents expressed their level of agreement with the given statements using a five-point Likert scale. *Table 1* presents the statements.

Table 1

Conclusions based on the literature review

OBSERVATION	VARIABLE	SOURCE
Influencer content on social media is reliable	INFLUENCER CREDIBILITY	Ki, et al. (2022)
Influencer content on social media is credible		
Influencer content on social media is authentic		
Influencers are honest	INFLUENCER ATTRACTIVENESS	Ki, C.-W et al., (2022), Singh, R. P., & Banerjee, N. (2018).
Influencers are attractive		
Influencers are charming		
Influencer content on social media is visually appealing		
Influencers are modest		
When I look at an influencer's social media profile, I feel close to him/her	EMOTIONAL CONNECTION	Ki, et al. (2022)
When I look at an influencer's social media profile, I feel I could be their friend		
When I look at an influencer's social media profile, I feel I could belong to the same group as him/her		
I feel the influencer would respond if I send a message on social media	INTERACTIVITY	Ki, et al., (2022)
I feel the influencer would respond if I leave a comment on social media		
I feel the influencer would allow me to directly communicate with him/her		
The influencer is an inspiration to me	INSPIRATION	Ki, et al. (2022)
The influencer inspired me to get new ideas suddenly and spontaneously		
Inspired by the influencer, I want to try some of his/her recommendations		
After seeing the influencer's social media posts, I would buy some of the same products or services they posted		
I want to buy a product promoted by an influencer I admire	PURCHASE INTENTION	Wang et. al., (2017), Singh, R. P., & Banerjee, N. (2018). Opris, et.al. (2020)
I buy a brand promoted by an influencer I admire if I like the brand's product		
I think I have a better social status if I buy products recommended by influencers		
I would buy a product if a famous person/influencer recommends it		
I would buy a product if influencers I like start endorsing it		
I show interest in a brand but need more information		

Source: Created by authors.

Table 2

Sample Structure

VARIABLE	CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
GENDER	Female	151	49,7%
	Male	153	50,3%
AGE	18-25	154	50,7%
	26-35	98	32,2%
	36-50	47	15,5%
	51 +	5	1,6%
EDUCATION	Primary	3	1,0%
	Secondary	96	31,6%
	Higher	205	67,4%
EMPLOYMENT STATUS	Employed	228	75,0%
	Unemployed	12	3,9%
	Student	61	20,1%
	Retired	3	1,0%
MONTHLY INCOME LEVEL	Up to 30.000 RSD	42	13,8%
	from 30.000 to 55.000	20	6,6%
	from 55.000 to 80.000	53	17,4%
	80.000 and above	189	62,2%

Source. Calculated by Authors.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the purpose of conducting the analyses, a reliability analysis was first performed in order to ensure the relevance of the obtained results.

Table 3

Reliability Analysis – Cronbach's alpha Coefficient Values

FACTOR	Cronbach's Alpha
Influencer credibility	0,898
Influencer attractiveness	0,873
Emotional connection	0,900
Interactivity	0,904
Inspiration	0,916
Purchase intention	0,921

Source: Authors

In Table 3, the values of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each constructed factor are presented, confirming the internal consistency of the items used to measure these factors. In order to examine the effects of influencer credibility, influencer attractiveness, emotional connection, interactivity, and inspiration on purchase intention, which is the dependent variable, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. The results of this analysis are presented in the following section of the paper. At the outset, the issue of multicollinearity was examined using VIF values. For all variables in the model, the VIF coefficient values are below 10 (Table 4), indicating that there is no multicollinearity problem. Accordingly, a multiple regression analysis can be performed.

Table 4

Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis

Predictor	B	Beta	T	p	VIF
Influencer credibility	0,194	0,187	3,765	0,000	3,792
Influencer attractiveness	0,105	0,086	1,752	0,081	3,723
Emotional connection	0,153	0,163	3,121	0,002	4,194
Interactivity	0,032	0,034	0,718	0,473	3,473
Inspiration	0,486	0,495	9,03	0,000	4,608

Dependent variable: Purchase intention

$R^2=0,806$; $F=247,337$

** $p < 0,01$ (significant at the 0.01 level, risk of error less than 1%);

* $p < 0,05$ (significant at the 0.05 level, risk of error less than 5%)

Source. Calculated by Authors.

The F-test results = 247.337; $p < 0.001$ indicate that the variables influencer credibility, attractiveness, emotional connection, interactivity, and inspiration, considered as a whole, make a statistically significant contribution to explaining

consumer behavior. This confirms the appropriateness of the applied regression model, meaning that the model is statistically significant. The coefficient of determination R^2 is 0.806, implying that the selected predictors explain 80.6% of the variance in consumer behavior, while 19.4% of the variability is influenced by other factors. When examining the individual contributions of the variables, the most significant predictor in the model is *inspiration*, which has the highest standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.495$; $p < 0.001$), indicating that the feeling of inspiration triggered by the influencer is the strongest factor in shaping consumer behavior. The obtained results *confirm hypothesis H4*, suggesting that the emotional and symbolic experience of inspiration, associated with the relationship between the influencer and their audience, plays a key role in shaping consumer behavior in the digital environment. These results are fully consistent with the theoretical insights presented by Ki, Park, and Kim (2022), as well as Sharma et al., 2025.

Influencer credibility also shows a significant and positive impact on consumer behavior, specifically on their purchase intention ($\beta = 0.187$; $p < 0.001$), confirming that influencers perceived as expert and trustworthy are seen as more influential in motivating certain consumer behaviors. This *supports hypothesis H1*. This finding aligns with the results reported by Chan et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2017; Ying, Y., et al., 2026; Suganye & Bawe, 2024; Zhou, 2025; Xu & Kim, 2022. However, in contrast to Lim et al. (2017), who did not find a direct significant impact of credibility on attitude or purchase intention, but emphasized the importance of influencer-product fit and the conveyance of relevant meaning as key factors, the results suggest that in certain contexts or populations, credibility can act as a direct predictor of consumer behavior regarding the intention to purchase a specific product. This difference may be due to variations in methodological approaches, samples, or market characteristics, but also highlights the need to consider all dimensions of credibility, including its direct effect, when analyzing influencer impact.

Similarly, *emotional connection* with the influencer ($\beta = 0.163$; $p < 0.002$) also proved to be a significant predictor of consumer behavior, consistent with previous findings on the importance of emotional resonance in the context of influencer impact (e.g., Lim et al., 2017; Casaló et al., 2020). The results *confirm hypothesis H2*, indicating that emotional connection and perceived closeness with the influencer have a statistically significant impact on consumers' purchase intention for the products promoted by these influencers. This finding aligns with the work of Sudhe and Sheene, 2017; Ki, Park & Kim, 2022; Zhou, 2025; Oladesu & Igyuve, 2024. Based on these insights, it is important that brands, when engaging influencers, consider not only their

visibility and popularity but also their ability to establish an authentic emotional connection with the audience.

On the other hand, *influencer attractiveness* did not reach statistical significance at the conventional level ($p = 0.081$), although it shows a positive direction of influence. This may indicate that physical attractiveness has a limited or indirect impact on consumer behavior when considered alongside other psychological dimensions such as inspiration and credibility. Based on these results, *hypothesis H5 is not supported*. Although the direction of the effect was positive, attractiveness did not reach statistical significance, indicating that the influencer's physical appeal, when considered alongside other psychological factors such as inspiration and credibility, does not have a direct and independent effect on forming purchase intention. This finding contrasts to some extent with the study by Suganye and Bawe (2024), which showed that attractiveness positively influences consumer behavior. However, in their study, trust emerged as the most significant factor, suggesting that while attractiveness is relevant, it often plays a secondary role compared to dimensions involving emotional and cognitive evaluation of the influencer. In this context, the results of this study indicate that the aesthetic component may be initially appealing but not decisive at the moment the consumer forms a concrete purchase intention. It is also important to note that the effect of attractiveness may depend on context, audience, and type of product, as well as gender differences, as highlighted by Suganye and Bawe (2024), even though they did not include gender as an active variable. These findings also correspond with Lim et al. (2017) and Freberg et al. (2011), who suggest that while attractiveness can initially attract attention and increase emotional connection, its role in shaping the final purchase decision is often secondary to credibility dimensions involving expertise, authenticity, and trust. As noted by Haferkamp et al. (2012) and Lee & Eastin (2021), the effect of attractiveness can vary significantly depending on consumer demographics, particularly gender, as well as the type and context of the promoted product.

Interactivity also did not have a statistically significant effect ($p = 0.473$), which may indicate that the presence or frequency of communication with the influencer is not a decisive factor in shaping behavior when emotional and inspirational components are present. Thus, *hypothesis H3 is rejected*. Although interactivity as a communication strategy plays an important role in building and maintaining the influencer-audience relationship (Suganya & Bawe, 2024; Freberg et al., 2011), its direct connection to purchase intention is not always evident. This finding suggests that the frequency of communication or perception of influencer engagement does not necessarily determine the formation of purchase behavior, especially in the presence of stronger affective

and identification components, such as emotional connection and inspiration. This outcome can be interpreted in light of the research by Ki, Park, and Kim (2022), who emphasize that emotional resonance and inspiration are key mediators in the relationship between influencer characteristics and consumer behavioral intentions. Regular interaction, as well as the ability to convey meaning, allows followers to perceive the influencer as a relevant role model. Interactivity represents a supporting mechanism of influencer impact on consumer behavior and response. Similarly, Kolo and Haumer (2018) indicate that influencer success depends on maintaining an authentic balance between commercial content and personal communication with the audience. When emotional connection and inspiration are already established through visual and narrative content, additional interaction does not necessarily strengthen purchase intention but may have a secondary, supportive effect. These findings complement existing literature by indicating that while interactivity is important for relationship-building and engagement, it is not a universal driver of consumer behavior. For the examination of the moderating role of gender in the relationship between influencer attractiveness and consumer behavior, a moderation regression analysis was conducted.

Table 5

Results of the Moderation Regression Analysis: Gender

Model	Predictor	B	Beta	T	p	VIF
1	Attractiveness	0,938	0,773	21,422	0,000	1,01
	Gender	0,164	0,066	1,838	0,067	1,01
2	Attractiveness	0,897	0,739	12,862	0,000	2,56
	Gender	0,165	0,067	1,853	0,065	1,01
	Interaction	0,068	0,043	0,757	0,450	2,54

Dependent variable: Purchase intention

Model 1: $R^2 = 0.612$

Model 2: $R^2 = 0.613$; $\Delta R^2 = 0.001$

Note:

** $P < 0,01$ (significant at the 0.01 level, risk of error less than 1%);

* $p < 0,05$ (significant at the 0.05 level, risk of error less than 5%)

Source. Created by Authors.

Model 1 includes the main effects, namely the centered influencer attractiveness and gender, while Model 2 adds the interaction effect, the product of attractiveness and gender, to examine whether gender moderates the influence of attractiveness on behavior. The results of Model 1 show that influencer attractiveness has a strong and statistically significant positive effect on consumer behavior ($\beta = 0.773$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that a higher level of

perceived attractiveness leads to more pronounced positive consumer behavior. The regression model with main effects explains a substantial portion of the variability in consumer behavior, with a coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.612$, meaning that approximately 61.2% of the total variance in consumer behavior can be explained by this model. This indicates a strong relationship between the predictor and the dependent variable, as well as the relevance of the included independent variable and the moderating factor in predicting consumer behavior. By adding the interaction variable in Model 2, a very small increase in the coefficient of determination is observed, from $R^2 = 0.612$ in Model 1 to $R^2 = 0.613$ in Model 2. This increase in explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = 0.001$) is statistically negligible, which is also confirmed by the p-value of 0.450 from the R^2 change significance test. The interaction effect is not statistically significant, and therefore, the moderating role of gender in the relationship between influencer attractiveness and purchase intention is not significant. Furthermore, the estimated coefficient for the interaction term is very low ($\beta = 0.043$) and not statistically significant ($p = 0.450$), indicating that there is no relevant moderating role of gender in the relationship between influencer attractiveness and consumer behavior in this sample. This result implies that the strength and direction of the relationship between influencer attractiveness and consumer behavior remain stable, regardless of the participants' gender.

Accordingly, *hypothesis H6*, which assumes that gender moderates the relationship between influencer attractiveness and consumer behavior, so that the effect of attractiveness is stronger for women than for men, is not supported in this study. This finding differs from the results of Uslu and Arslan (2022), who found a statistically significant moderating effect of gender specifically for the attractiveness dimension, with the effect being stronger among female participants. One possible reason for the differences in findings may be the cultural and contextual framework of the research. This may have important implications for marketing strategies, as it suggests that the visual appeal of influencers can have an equally strong effect on both male and female audiences, eliminating the need for gender-differentiated approaches in this segment of consumer communication.

5. CONCLUSION

The research results have significant theoretical implications for the development of influencer impact models in digital marketing, as they confirm a multidimensional understanding of influencer credibility, within which expertise, trust, and attractiveness are viewed as interconnected yet conceptually distinct dimensions. Although attractiveness showed a weaker effect, its role cannot be dismissed, indicating the need for further theoretical consideration in

different contexts. A particular contribution of the study lies in emphasizing emotional connection and inspiration as key psychological mechanisms mediating between influencer characteristics and consumer behavior, thereby theoretically extending existing models that predominantly focus on the direct effects of credibility. This further underscores the importance of including affective and social factors in contemporary theoretical frameworks of digital influence, while the absence of a moderating effect of gender highlights the complexity of relationships between demographic and psychological variables and opens avenues for future theoretical research.

The research results also indicate practical implications, suggesting that marketing professionals and brand managers should approach influencer selection strategically, prioritizing those who possess high credibility and the ability to establish authentic emotional connections with their audience. Instead of relying on superficial criteria such as mere attractiveness or intensity of interaction, the focus should be placed on trust, inspiration, and authenticity, as these factors drive engagement and the formation of purchase intention. Such an approach enables brands to develop long-term relationships with consumers through relevant and meaningful content, while ongoing collaboration with authentic influencers contributes to strengthening loyalty and the positive brand image in the contemporary digital environment.

Although this study provides valuable insights into the impact of influencer characteristics on consumer attitudes and behavior in the digital environment, certain *limitations* should be considered when interpreting the results. The sample of 304 respondents is adequate for analysis but is limited to the domestic population, which may affect the generalizability of findings to other demographic and cultural contexts. In this regard, future research should include larger and more diverse samples to test the applicability of results in different contexts. Additionally, reliance on self-report through questionnaires may introduce response bias, so combining quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as analyzing actual user behavior on social media, could further enrich the approach. Moreover, the study focused on specific influencer characteristics, while factors such as product type, platform specificity, or consumers' personal experiences remained unexplored, providing room for further analysis. Although participant gender was examined as a potential moderator, its role was not confirmed in all relationships, so it would be useful to extend analyses to other demographic and psychological variables that may affect consumer perception and behavior. Considering the rapid changes in the digital environment and the evolution of social media, longitudinal studies are recommended to track these trends and consumer adaptations over time.

Additionally, integrating indicators such as Net Promoter Score (NPS) could complement existing models, providing insights into long-term loyalty and user recommendations, which is particularly important for assessing the effectiveness of influencer marketing.

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