

# Instagram Influencers' Source Credibility on Gadget Product Purchase Intention Among Indonesian Generation Z: The Mediating Role of Parasocial Interaction

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## ABSTRACT

Understanding how credibility of influencers shape consumer behaviour is crucial at present as social media becomes a primary source of product information. This study aims to examine the influence of Instagram influencers' source credibility; comprising of *attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise*, on the purchase intention of gadget products among Indonesian Generation Z with parasocial interaction serving as a mediating factor. Conducted through a quantitative method, the study collected data from 410 respondents via an online survey. Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was utilised to analyse and interpret the findings. The results indicated that Indonesian Generation Z heavily relied on Instagram for information-seeking, with influencers playing a critical role in shaping their purchasing decisions. Among the dimensions of source credibility, attractiveness and trustworthiness show a significantly stronger positive influence on purchase intention compared to expertise, which has a comparatively weaker impact. Furthermore, parasocial interaction is confirmed as a significant mediator, amplifying the influence of source credibility on purchase intentions. Respondents reported greater trust in influencer reviews, perceiving them as relatable and authentic, which highlights the importance of engagement and social interaction in shaping consumer behaviour. The study underscores the significant role of influencers' credibility in building trust and driving purchase decisions through meaningful engagement with their followers. It contributes to the growing body of literature on social media interaction and marketing by providing valuable insights into the behaviours of Indonesian Generation Z and their reliance on social media for various needs.

**Keywords:** *Instagram, source credibility, purchase intention, Generation Z, parasocial interaction.*

## INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, social media undoubtedly has emerged as the most compelling tool for brands and businesses to reach and influence consumers, especially younger generations. According to Haenlein et al. (2020), the impact of social media marketing on consumers has indeed been demonstrated, as most social media users are connected and engaged with brands on social media. Research by Kemp (2024) indicates that the number of active social media users in Indonesia reached 139 million users in early January 2024, which is nearly half of the population in Indonesia. Moreover, his report highlights that Instagram users in Indonesia have gained more than 100 million users, which had increased by 12 million compared to the previous year. Furthermore, in the global context, Datareportal (2023) research revealed that Gen Z became the most immersive group of users active on Instagram, which is around 517,7 million users. Thangavel et al. (2019) found that Gen Z is more likely to

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choose online shopping on social media or e-commerce platforms because they have a choice of products which they can compare and make purchases based on their preferences. Therefore, social media marketing emerged as one of the marketing strategies that brands or businesses can utilise to compete with each other.

With that said, the Instagram platform has become the most convincing and popular social media platform among Gen Z (Andreani et al., 2021). Social media influencer marketing exists as one of the highly effective strategies for brands to stay connected with Gen Z (Saima & Khan, 2020). Unlike traditional celebrities who gain recognition and trust through conventional means, social media influencers develop their image (persona) and credibility by creating meaningful content for their followers on social media platforms (Ao et al., 2023). As social media influencers become key sources of information for their vast audiences, their impact on consumer behaviour continues to grow. This leads to the phenomena of “parasocial interaction”; where audiences or consumers engage with digital personas such as influencers, celebrities, and “key opinion leaders” (KOLs), plays a significant role in shaping consumers' perceptions, decision-making, and interests. Parasocial interaction (PSI) concepts posits that a public figure or media figure can connect, influence, and reach the audiences (Clementson & Beatty, 2023). Clementson and Beatty in 2023 declared that public figures who achieve PSI can deliver messages to audiences more effectively. People tend to follow, like, and interact with social media influencers on Instagram, such as visiting the places they recommend and believing in any product they recommend (Jin & Ryu, 2020).

This phenomenon proves that parasocial interaction is a form of communication nowadays and allows audiences to interact with public figures through social media. Any stories or live photos shared by social media influencers can create a massive impact on brands, such as brand awareness, brand recognition, or brand recall as audiences or followers can instantly view the photos and interact with the influencers. In this context, influencers likewise become critical elements in leading potential consumers to purchase a product as they may increase brand awareness and brand recognition among consumers in which will influence Gen Z's purchase intention (Patmawati & Miswanto, 2022). Influencers' source credibility which encompasses *attractiveness*, *trustworthiness* and *expertise*, evolves as a vital element in influencing and delivering messages or reviews to consumers.

Previous studies highlighted influencers and their source credibility approach in various contexts such as travel, culinary interests and in the fashion industry (Jang et al., 2020; Zaharani et al., 2021; Magano et al., 2022; Gomes et al., 2022). Even though influencers have evolved into a very dominant role in affecting consumers' intentions in the digital realm, research regarding the purchase intention of gadget products due to the influence of Instagram influencers is fairly limited. This present study aims is to investigate the impact of the sub-dimension of the source credibility that comprise of *attractiveness*, *trustworthiness* and *expertise* in influencing the purchase intention among Generation Z in Indonesia. Furthermore, the study's second objective is to examine the mediating effect of para-social interaction on the relationship between the sub-dimensions of attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise on purchase intention among Gen Z in the Indonesian context. In doing so, this paper will also examine Gen Z users' habits in using Instagram for information seeking in Indonesia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Generation Z and Instagram Usage*

According to Natiqa et al. (2022), Instagram has evolved into the platform of preference for Generation Z for various purposes, such as communication, entertainment, purchasing goods, or even information-seeking. In this context, specifically in Indonesia, the Instagram platform has become an essential social media among Generation Z. Over 80% of Gen Z utilise this platform for purchasing and information-seeking purposes (Indrayani, 2024; Anisa et al., 2024). Instagram offers numerous features, such as visual appeals, posts with descriptive captions, and swipe-up features that potentially enhance consumers' desire toward something they seek (Herjanto et al., 2020; Ramadhanny, 2020). Furthermore, various studies have also ascertained that social media, such as Instagram, has been widely used by Gen Z for information sources, education, or introducing the characteristics of a place through the filter features on Instagram (Nursanti, 2021; Devi et al., 2024; Albani et al., 2024). Not only that, one of the most influencing features on Instagram is Instagram Reels, in which lots of influencers will produce highly engaging content for their followers, such as product reviews and collaboration, which is believed to convert the influencers' followers into consumers (MacRae, 2020).

### *The Emergence of Influencers Marketing*

Social media influencers have emerged as one of the most effective strategies for businesses and brands to build strong relationships with consumers (Vaidya & Karnawat, 2023). Vrontis et al. (2021) described a social media influencer as an individual who has a reputation, credibility, and high engagement with their audience on the social media platform, which can influence their audience's thoughts from reviews, opinions, or other social interactions with the brands. As KOLs whose voices have the power to change their audience's mind and perception towards a product, service or idea (Casaló et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2021; Zak & Hasprova, 2020). Lee et al. (2021) found that many consumers trust influencers' reviews more than advertisements, which indirectly indicates that influencer marketing has become one of the crucial keys for businesses or brands to compete in this digital landscape. For instance, a female influencer named Fuji (username @fujiiian) with the total of 33.9M followers and more than 2 billion likes in TikTok had successfully caught consumers' attention widely in Indonesia. With an elegant personality, a beautiful face and honesty in recommending and reviewing endorsed products have become Fuji's main key to winning the hearts of consumers in Indonesia. Any product endorsed by Fuji will get good feedback from Indonesian consumers, even the endorsed product will experience out of stock. Therefore, it has been proven that the influencer marketing approach has become a dominant marketing strategy in Generation Z, where those digital natives are highly dependent on social media and tend to do some information collection on social media, especially Instagram, before purchasing a product (Indrayani, 2024).

### *Source Credibility Model*

Source credibility is defined as information or source providers in which the information receivers are more likely to be convinced, trust, and follow the information (Serman & Sims, 2022). The theory also describes that source credibility is a term used to explain that communicators with high credibility might have the potential to increase the value of the information in a message, which later will create a positive impact towards the information

receiver (Rusdiana et al., 2019). Various studies have shown that the dimensions of the Source Credibility Theory have evolved to include factors such as attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, authenticity, social presence, brand fit, and popularity (Weismüller et al., 2020; AlFaraaj et al., 2021; Agitashera et al., 2020; Muda & Hamzah, 2021). However, this study focuses on three core dimensions—attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise—to analyse the causal relationship between influencers' source credibility and purchase intention. The rationale for selecting these three dimensions is that they have been widely recognised as key factors influencing consumer attitudes and behaviours (Van Reijmersdal et al., 2024). In this research, source credibility refers to the influencers who are regarded as credible experts in a specific area, which can influence their followers' minds, perspectives, or even purchase intentions towards a product.

Source *attractiveness* is one of the aspects that becomes the initial judgment for information receivers. This aspect focuses on how likeable the information providers are, which can enhance the receivers' positive attitudes and lead to purchase aspiration (Muda & Hamzah, 2021). AlFarraj et al. (2021) research declares that influencers' attractiveness is not only focused on appearance but also on personality and muscular ability. They further clarify that influencers with high levels of attractiveness can and potentially convert their followers' desire to purchase (AlFarraj et al., 2021).

The *trustworthiness* aspect can be decoded as the audience's acceptance level of information conveyed by the influencer or communicator (Agitashera et al., 2020). Various studies have revealed that source trustworthiness had directly influences persuasion and the level of effectiveness of information (Muda & Hamzah, 2021). They proved that the more reliable a communicator is, the more effective their messages or persuasion will be to the followers or consumers. Also, when consumers have a positive attitude and are likely to trust the influencers or communicators, the communicator or influencer has positively increased the relationship of their followers with the brand or sales (AlFarraj et al., 2021).

The *expertise* aspect can be assessed from the level to which a communicator is assumed to be well-versed in knowledge or skills to endorse the product. In this context, those influencers or communicators who claim expertise can provide more convincing information about a particular product (AlFarraj et al., 2021). A study by Muda & Hamzah (2021) demonstrates that each sub-dimensions of source credibility are interconnected, whereby if the communicator is well-known by everyone but not an expert on the specific topic he or she is discussing, the information or persuasion will not be as practical as those experts. Therefore, expertise likewise plays a vital role in convincing and leading the consumer's perception.

### *Parasocial Interaction*

It is undoubtedly that technological advancement, such as the emergence of social media platforms, performs as the primary communication medium for brands/businesses to reach their target audiences. Furthermore, to reach their target audiences, brands and businesses utilised digital communication channels such as influencers to broadcast their messages, in which parasocial interaction may play a substantial role in the communication and interaction between brands and audiences (Zha et al., 2023). Liao et al. (2022) expressed that parasocial interaction is an experience where audiences or consumers interact with digital personas, such as digital influencers, celebrities, and key opinion leaders (KOLs), where consumers find the persona very interesting and comfortable to interact with. However, parasocial interactions have recently seen two-way communication due to the advancement of social

media. Consumers can engage and interact with their favourable influencers by liking, commenting, and sharing posts made by their influencers (Aw et al., 2022). A case study by Sofi and Rachmawati (2024) demonstrated that parasocial interaction can further enhance consumers' purchase intention toward endorsed products. Their research examined the effectiveness of interactions between Indonesian social media influencer, Tasya Farasya (@tasyafarasya) and her followers in shaping purchase intentions. Tasya Farasya is an Indonesian beauty influencer who often recommends beauty products honestly on her social media accounts. The endorsed products will be used by her to test the results before being recommended to the public. Henceforth, the endorsed products are trusted by the public, which will increase public trust and dependence on her. The findings revealed that consumers who watched her product review content were significantly influenced by the information they perceived, ultimately increasing their likelihood of making a purchase.

Therefore, followers can develop a perception that by consuming the products endorsed by their influencers, they may perceive themselves similarly to the influencers (Corrêa et al., 2020). With the benefit of social media, parasocial interactions have made followers feel closer to the influencers directly and to the brands endorsed by the influencers indirectly (Aw & Labrecque, 2020). This statement can be seen where followers with high PSI will not evaluate the advertisement or endorsement content in detail and critically but rather decrease due to the help of biased perceptions towards the influencer.

#### *Theoretical Framework*

Figure 1 demonstrates the suggested theoretical framework model. The sub-elements of source credibility, such as attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise, become the independent variables influencing purchase intention (dependent variable). Furthermore, the mediating role of parasocial interaction likewise will be examined as well to investigate the influence of parasocial interaction in boosting the purchase intention of Generation Z. By utilizing this theoretical framework model, the relationship and correlation among each sub-element of the source credibility theory and the influence of parasocial interaction will be tested to examine the effects towards purchase intention.

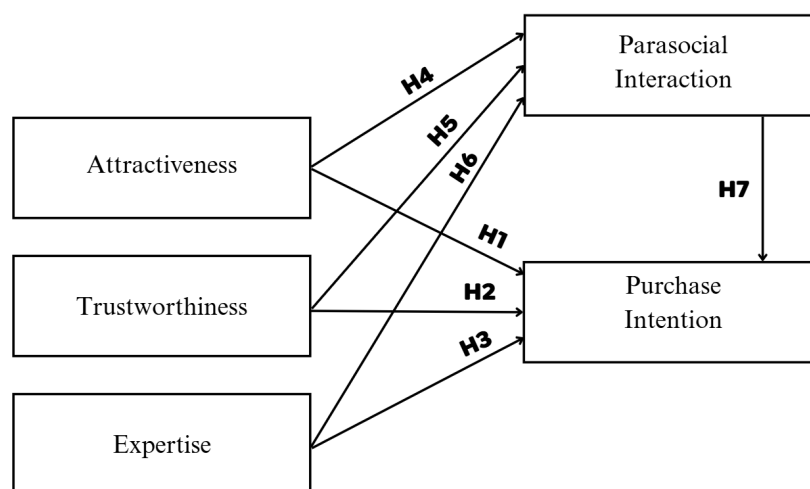


Figure 1: Theoretical framework model

*Hypotheses development:*

- H<sub>1</sub>:** The attractiveness dimension of source credibility model is significantly related to Gen Z's purchase intention.
- H<sub>2</sub>:** The trustworthiness dimension of source credibility model is significantly related to Gen Z's purchase intention.
- H<sub>3</sub>:** The expertise dimension of source credibility model is significantly related to Gen Z's purchase intention.
- H<sub>4</sub>:** The attractiveness dimension of source credibility model is significantly related to the dimension of parasocial interaction.
- H<sub>5</sub>:** The trustworthiness dimension of source credibility model is significantly related to the dimension of parasocial interaction.
- H<sub>6</sub>:** The expertise dimension of source credibility model is significantly related to the dimension of parasocial interaction.
- H<sub>7</sub>:** The dimension of parasocial interaction is significantly related to Gen Z's purchase intention.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Research Design and Sampling Method*

The quantitative research method is one method that emphasises the quantity and accuracy of data by examining the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables within a population (Mohajan, 2020). In other words, quantitative research demonstrates a phenomenon through data collection and analysis (Bakhtiyarovna, 2024). Hence, applying this approach to this study can explain and predict the relationship between sub-dimensions in source credibility and Gen Z's purchase intention through survey, measurement, and analysis.

This study will use non-probability sampling, especially purposive sampling, specifically characteristics sampling targeting those who were categorised as Gen Z and active in using Instagram to gather information. Andrade (2020) stated that the purposive sampling method is where researchers only select data with a significant contribution value to the study. In other words, purposive sampling methods are used when researchers only want valid, consistent, and trustworthy data to be used as analysis material (Thomas, 2022). Furthermore, his research likewise declared several advantages of using purposive sampling for suitable research topics, such as time efficiency, cost-saving, and the highest variance in readability and achievement (Thomas, 2022). Nevertheless, the data collection for this study will be conducted through online survey form distribution. The survey form likewise will be distributed through social media platforms, such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and Line to ensure an effective and efficient data collection process. Therefore, this sampling method is suitable for this research as it aims to predict and examine the influence of several variables on a specific population.

### *Population and Sampling Size*

The target population of this research will be Gen Z, aged 18-28 years old. Furthermore, to conduct the research in a more accessible and accurate way, the target population is narrowed down to those who are active users of Instagram social media when seeking information about a product. According to McCoy (2020), Gen Z is the population born after 1996, with a high exposure to social media and a heavy dependence on it. Majority of the Gen

Z have been connected to the digital world since they were young (Astari et al., 2024). Therefore, targeting Gen Z, especially in Indonesia, will be the best population as most Indonesian Gen Z will utilise Instagram daily for entertainment, information seeking, or just viewing what their surroundings do (Herjanto et al., 2020; Ramadhanny, 2020).

To obtain accuracy and contribute to the understanding, the sample size for this research will be as minimum as 384 people regarded as Generation Z (Rahman, 2023). The rationale for using such several responses is because the population of Generation Z in Indonesia is the biggest generation group in Indonesia, consisting of 27.94%, around 74.93 million people (IDN Research Institute, 2024). Moreover, based on Krejcie & Morgan's Table of sample size determination, the population of over ten thousand people is suggested to take at least 384 responses to have a meaningful result that represents the population (Kharuddin et al., 2020).

#### *Measurement of Variables and Scaling*

The first category, the demographic section, is used to determine the demographic profile of the respondents. Moreover, to acquire accurate data, this section consists of several items: age, gender, monthly-based income range, occupation, average time spent on Instagram in a day, and acquaintance with Instagram Influencers. Hence, collecting theoretical data on the participants' demographic profiles can demonstrate Generation Z's habits in using Instagram for information seeking. The items for this section will be displayed in the appendix.

The second category, the sub-elements of source credibility measurement, is implemented from the Yilmazdoğan et al. (2021) model, where each sub-element of the source credibility model, such as attractiveness (5 items), trustworthiness (5 items) and expertise (5 items) have its question from various aspects which are given to respondents to answer and rate. Furthermore, the parasocial interaction section was adapted from Yilmazdoğan et al. (2021) model consisting of 8 items to determine the parasocial interaction of the influencers. Moreover, to understand the purchase intention among Gen Z, the measurement was adapted from Dinh et al. (2023) model, which consists of 6 items regarding the impact of influencers' source credibility towards consumers' purchase intention. Nevertheless, the respondents will be required to answer each of the items with a five-point Likert-type scale options ranging from "1: Strongly Disagree", "2: Disagree", "3: Neutral", "4: Agree", and "5: Strongly Agree". The items for each of the section will be displayed in the appendix.

#### *Data Analysis*

This research intends to employ descriptive analysis as the first stage to start data processing. Siedlecki (2020) explains that descriptive analysis is often used in quantitative research methods to explain and describe cross-sectional data, such as gender, education, or age groups. Descriptive analysis also explains the natural setting in a particular group without indicating the judgments of the theory to be used, which means that descriptive analysis will not affect the variables to be tested (Kaliyadan & Kulkarni, 2019). Thus, the use of descriptive analysis can demonstrate the habits of Generation Z in Indonesia in using Instagram for information seeking through demographic data that respondents have filled in. Meanwhile, partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) will be utilised in this research to analyse the collected data and test the structural and measurement models. Legate et al. (2021) research suggests that PLS-SEM become the most suitable analysis software for testing

and analysing complex research models. As this research model including mediating role of parasocial interaction towards purchase intention, therefore this PLS-SEM methods of data analysis will be the most appropriate model to be utilised.

### *Ethical Consideration*

As this research involves human participation in collecting data, ethical considerations are crucial to protect the participants' privacy and willingness to participate. Therefore, this research acquired ethical approval from the Research Ethic Committee of Xiamen University Malaysia with the reference number *REC.2411-02*. All the data received from the survey will be strictly used for academic purposes and will be wholly disposed of right after the research is concluded.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Throughout the data collection, the researcher obtained 438 responses from Gen Z in Indonesia. Regardless, after data cleaning, 410 responses will be utilised for the finding analysis. The findings will initiate a descriptive analysis of the demographic profile to comprehend Gen Z users' habits in utilizing Instagram for information seeking. Nevertheless, this research will utilise PLS-SEM calculation to evaluate the measurement model and structural models of the study (Legate et al., 2021). The measurement model will test the reliability and discriminant validity. Furthermore, the calculation likewise will be used to assess the structural model and test the hypotheses.

### *Demographic Profile*

Table 1 shows the preponderance of the respondents were male (62.9%), ages between 23-25 years old (48.3%), with bachelor's degrees (49.8%), and occupations as professionals (75.9%) with income range from Rp. 3.001.000 - Rp. 6.000.000 (RM 801 - RM1600) (49.8%). This data demonstrates that most of the young male generation are more interested in gadget products and have the purchasing power portrayed through the income level range.

Table 1: Demographic profile

Variables (Measurement Items)		Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	152	37.1%
	Male	258	62.9%
Age	17-19	35	8.5%
	20-22	45	11.0%
	23-25	198	48.3%
	26-28	132	32.2%
Last Education Level	Bachelor's Degree	204	49.8%
	High School or Equivalent	74	18.0%
	Master's Degree	132	32.2%
Occupation	Professionals	311	75.9%
	Self-Employed	19	4.6%
	Student	67	16.3%
	Unemployed	13	3.2%
Monthly Income Range	<Rp 500,000 (<RM150)	15	3.7%
	>Rp. 6.000.000 (>RM 1.600)	133	32.4%
	Rp. 1.101.000 – Rp. 3.000.000 (RM 301 – RM 800)	28	6.8%
	Rp. 3.001.000 – Rp. 6.000.000 (RM 801 – RM 1.600)	204	49.8%

	Rp. 551.000 – Rp. 1.100.000 (RM 150 - RM 300)	30	7.3%
TOTAL		410	100%

Additionally, the demographic profile data likewise defines Gen Z's habit patterns in using Instagram for various purposes. Table 2 shows that the average time spent on Instagram for Gen Z is 4-6 hours (74.6%), with the most active period during Afternoon (12 p.m. to 5 p.m.) and Night (7 p.m. to 12 a.m.) (79.5%). This statement indicates the previous study whereby Instagram has undoubtedly become Gen Z's most convenient social media platform for various purposes, including information seeking, entertainment, and even purchasing goods (Natiqa et al., 2022). Furthermore, the data indicated that Gen Z users are motivated to utilise Instagram to discover information about brands and specifications, access to purchase gadget products, such as mobile phones, laptops, and tablets online, and discover tips and reviews regarding gadgets.

Nevertheless, when talking about gadget products, the respondents are more rely on real reviews and opinions from the influencers or KOL (60%) rather than the information announced by the official brands (40%) through the most preferable Instagram feature, which is IGTV/Reels (61.2%). The data portrayed that respondents rely more on the influencers/KOLs' reviews, reflecting the research mentioned previously by Lee et al. (2021), whereby their study declared that most consumers trust the influencers/KOLs' reviews more than advertisements.

Table 2: Gen Z's habits pattern in using Instagram

Variables (Measurement Items)		Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Average time spent on Instagram in a day	<1 hour	39	9.5%
	>9 hours	13	3.2%
	1-3 hour(s)	40	9.8%
	4-6 hours	306	74.6%
	6-9 hours	12	2.9%
Active time period in using Instagram (choose only 2 from these options)	Afternoon (12 p.m. to 5 p.m.), Evening (5 p.m. to 7 p.m.)	1	0.2%
	Afternoon (12 p.m. to 5 p.m.), Evening (5 p.m. to 7 p.m.), Night (7 p.m. to 12 a.m.)	1	0.2%
	Afternoon (12 p.m. to 5 p.m.), Midnight (12 a.m. to 6 a.m.)	6	1.5%
	Afternoon (12 p.m. to 5 p.m.), Night (7 p.m. to 12 a.m.)	326	79.5%
	Evening (5 p.m. to 7 p.m.), Night (7 p.m. to 12 a.m.)	1	0.2%
	Evening (5 p.m. to 7 p.m.), Night (7 p.m. to 12 a.m.), Midnight (12 a.m. to 6 a.m.)	1	0.2%
	Morning (6 a.m. to 12 p.m.), Evening (5 p.m. to 7 p.m.)	19	4.6%
	Morning (6 a.m. to 12 p.m.), Midnight (12 a.m. to 6 a.m.)	36	8.8%

What motivate you to use Instagram for the following purposes in the context of gadgets?	Morning (6 a.m. to 12 p.m.), Night (7 p.m. to 12 a.m.)	18	4.4%
	Night (7 p.m. to 12 a.m.), Midnight (12 a.m. to 6 a.m.)	1	0.2%
	Access to purchase gadget products, such as mobile phone, laptop, tablet online	1	0.2%
	Discovering tips and reviews regarding gadgets	4	1.0%
	Finding information about brands and specifications	52	12.7%
	Finding information about brands and specifications, Access to purchase gadget products, such as mobile phone, laptop, tablet online	23	5.6%
	Finding information about brands and specifications, Access to purchase gadget products, such as mobile phone, laptop, tablet online, Discovering tips and reviews regarding gadgets	291	71.0%
	Finding information about brands and specifications, Discovering tips and reviews regarding gadgets	39	9.5%
	Official brands account	164	40.0%
	Reviews from influencers / KOLs	246	60.0%
Which information source that you are more rely on when talking about gadget products?			
How many gadgets influencers that you follow on Instagram?	>10	73	17.8%
	1-5	264	64.4%
	6-10	73	17.8%
Which types of Instagram features that you prefer the most?	Instagram Feeds/Posts	80	19.5%
	Instagram Reels/IGTV	251	61.2%
	Instagram Stories	79	19.3%
TOTAL		410	100%

### PLS-SEM: Assessment of Measurement Model

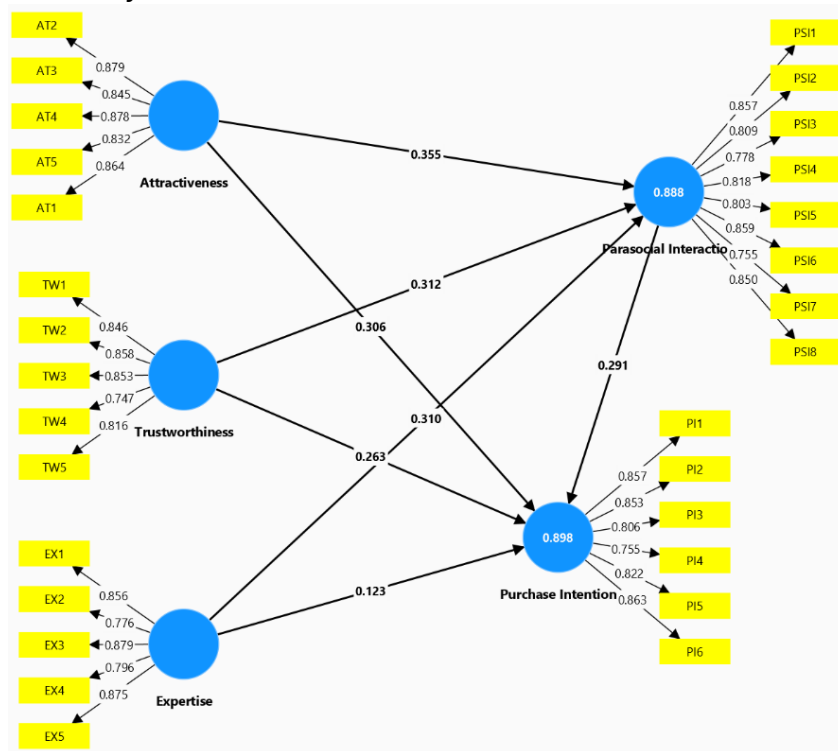


Figure 1: Measurement Model

This study's framework possesses five variables or constructs: attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, parasocial interaction, and purchase intention. Figure 1 shows the measurement model of this study. To examine the measurement model of this study, Multiple measures, consisting of convergent validity, composite reliability (CR), and rho\_A, are utilised to check and establish construct reliability. All of the criteria should be greater than 0.7 to establish reliability (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Aripin et al., 2023). Furthermore, the average variance extracted (AVE) loadings should be greater than 0.5 to establish convergent validity (Cheung et al., 2023). Table 3 illustrates the results of the measurement model and shows that all measurements have passed the criterion, which implies the establishment of reliability and convergent validity for the model.

Table 3: Assessment of measurement model

Items	Loadings	CR	Rho_A	AVE
<b>Attractiveness</b>		<b>0.934</b>	<b>0.912</b>	<b>0.739</b>
The gadget influencer that I like the best & follow on Instagram is:				
Attractive	0.864			
Chic	0.879			
Handsome/Beautiful	0.845			
Elegant	0.878			
Sexy	0.832			
<b>Trustworthiness</b>		<b>0.914</b>	<b>0.886</b>	<b>0.680</b>
The gadget influencer that I like the best & follow on Instagram is:				
Reliable	0.846			
Trustworthy	0.858			
Credible	0.853			
Sincere	0.747			
One who keeps promises	0.816			

<b>Expertise</b>		<b>0.921</b>	<b>0.897</b>	<b>0.701</b>
The gadget influencer that I like the best & follow on Instagram is:				
An expert in his/her field	0.856			
Experienced	0.776			
Knowledgeable	0.879			
Qualified	0.796			
Competent	0.875			
<b>Parasocial Interaction</b>		<b>0.941</b>	<b>0.931</b>	<b>0.667</b>
I look forward to seeing the posts of the influencer I follow on Instagram	0.857			
If the Instagram influencer I am following appears in another profile, I will look at the photo / profile	0.809			
As I follow the Instagram influencer, I feel like part of his team	0.778			
The Instagram influencer I follow is like an old friend	0.818			
I would like to personally meet the Instagram influencer I follow	0.803			
If there was content on a blog or magazine about the Instagram influencer that I follow, I would read it	0.859			
The way the Instagram influencer share things in his/her own account makes me feel as comfortable as if I am with my friends	0.755			
When Instagram influencer share his/her reviews about the gadget products, this sharing helps me create my own opinion about that gadget	0.850			
<b>Purchase Intention</b>		<b>0.928</b>	<b>0.911</b>	<b>0.683</b>
Products endorsed by influencers draw my attention	0.857			
Products endorsed by influencers influence my buying decisions	0.853			
If my favourite influencer endorses a product, I will buy it	0.806			
I buy a product because I like the personality of the influencer endorser	0.755			
I buy a product that is endorsed by my favourite influencer	0.822			
I feel happy in buying a product endorsed by a famous influencer	0.863			

The HTMT ratio was employed to investigate the correlations between constructs in order to evaluate the discriminant validity of the variables or constructs in the model of this study. According to Subhaktiyasa (2024), an HTMT score less than 0.90 signifies that the constructs are separate and not unduly connected. Furthermore, Lim (2024) suggests that the optimal HTMT value be less than 0.70, with a maximum permissible threshold of 0.90. The results of the discriminant validity study are shown in Table 4, which attests to the model's compliance with the necessary discriminant validity requirements.

Table 4: Discriminant validity through HTMT model

	<b>Attractiveness</b>	<b>Expertise</b>	<b>Purchase Intention</b>	<b>Parasocial Interaction</b>	<b>Trustworthiness</b>
<b>Attractiveness</b>					
<b>Expertise</b>	0.656				
<b>Purchase Intention</b>	0.638	0.586			
<b>Parasocial Interaction</b>	0.663	0.613	0.737		
<b>Trustworthiness</b>	0.847	0.810	0.857	0.878	

#### *PLS-SEM: Assessment of Structural Model*

To evaluate the structural model in this study, several measures were employed, including the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for multicollinearity assessment and R-square values.

According to Kyriazos and Poga (2023), high multicollinearity among variables can lead to unreliable and meaningless conclusions. Faiteh and Aasri (2023) recommend that the acceptable threshold for multicollinearity is a VIF value below 5. In this study, the VIF values for all constructs ranged from 1.823 to 3.410, indicating that multicollinearity is within acceptable limits. Additionally, figure 2 shows the R-square values for parasocial interaction and purchase intention were 0.888 and 0.898, respectively, demonstrating that these values meet the criteria commonly accepted in social science research.

The hypotheses were tested using a bootstrapping approach, employing t-values and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (Ardhiansyah et al., 2023; Nabila et al., 2023). According to the literature, a hypothesis is supported if the t-value exceeds 1.96 at a 95% confidence level (Ardhiansyah et al., 2023; Panigrahi et al., 2023). Table 5 presents the results of the hypotheses after applying the bootstrapping approach. The findings reveal that the direct effects of attractiveness on purchase intention (H1), trustworthiness on purchase intention (H2), and parasocial interaction on purchase intention (H7) all have t-values greater than 1.96, indicating support for these hypotheses. However, the direct effect of expertise on purchase intention yielded a t-value below 1.96 at the 0.05 significance level, suggesting that this hypothesis is not supported.

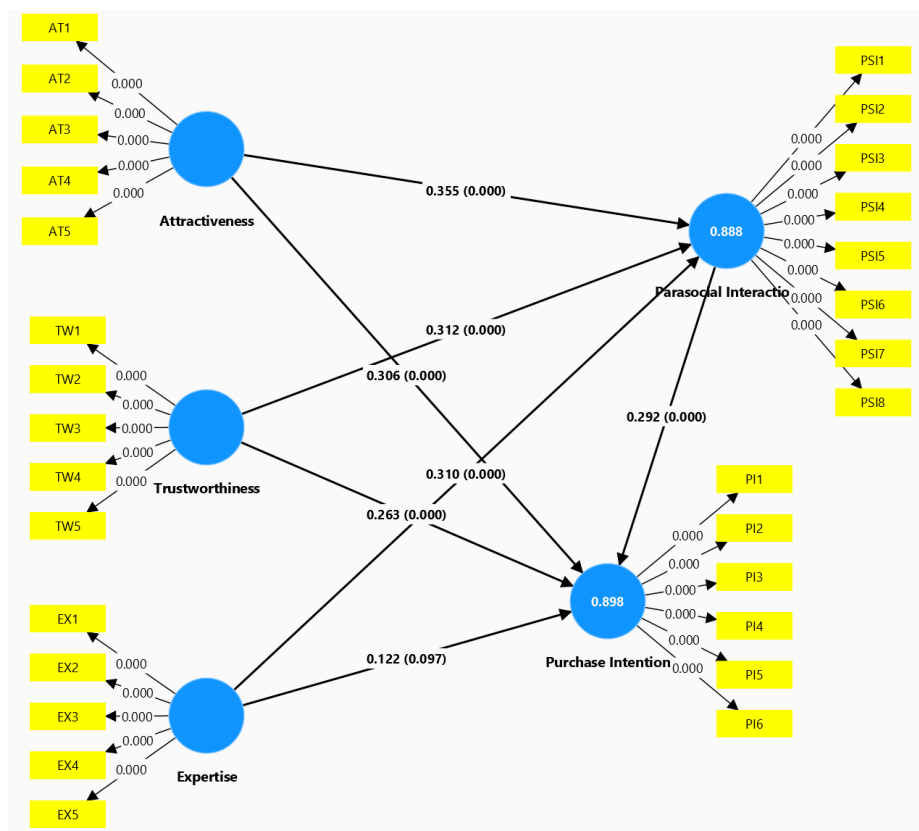


Figure 2: Structural model

Furthermore, the mediating role of parasocial interaction in the indirect effects of attractiveness on purchase intention (H4), trustworthiness on purchase intention (H5), and expertise on purchase intention (H6) is supported, as all t-values exceed 1.96, confirming these hypotheses. However, among these indirect paths from source credibility to purchase intention, the expertise dimension has the lowest value compared to the attractiveness and

trustworthiness dimensions. This finding highlight that the expertise dimension has the least influence on purchase intention when mediated by parasocial interaction. In contrast, the attractiveness and trustworthiness dimensions of source credibility demonstrate a stronger impact on purchase intention through the mediating role of parasocial interaction.

Table 5: Assessment of Structural Model and Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Direct / Indirect Effects	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	Supported
H1	AT -> PI	0.306	0.308	0.048	6.357	YES
H2	TW -> PI	0.263	0.262	0.058	4.532	YES
H3	EX -> PI	0.122	0.123	0.074	1.660	NO
H4	AT -> PSI -> PI	0.104	0.098	0.030	3.490	YES
H5	TW -> PSI -> PI	0.091	0.092	0.028	3.211	YES
H6	EX -> PSI -> PI	0.090	0.094	0.039	2.341	YES
H7	PSI -> PI	0.292	0.291	0.072	4.077	YES

## CONCLUSION

### *a. Theoretical Contribution*

This paper has enriched the existing literature by profoundly exploring the source credibility model (attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) in social media marketing—influencer marketing focuses on gadget product purchase intention among Generation Z in Indonesia. While earlier studies on this source credibility model have been widely executed in various sectors, such as travel (Jang et al., 2020), culinary interests (Zaharani et al., 2021), and the fashion industry (Magano et al., 2022; Gomes et al., 2022), this study has contributed distinctive knowledge and implementation to the mobile technology sector, which has filled a critical gap in the literature. The findings have answered the objectives of this study, where Generation Z relies more on social media, especially social media influencers or people that they perceive as credible rather than official brands when they want to buy a product, where the influencers' source credibility model still plays an essential role in influencing the consumers' intention through endorsement or reviews broadcasted on the social media.

Moreover, with the presence of parasocial interaction as a mediating role, this study has contributed to providing additional valuable insights into how important two-way communication between the influencer and his or her followers is to produce engagement, perceived social closeness, and influence his or her followers' thoughts and purchase desire towards a product. This can be seen from the results of the study where, with parasocial interaction, the relationship between the source credibility model and purchase intention has been boosted even though one of the dimensions in the source credibility model, expertise, does not have much impact on purchase intention. Nevertheless, this finding has underlined the significance of interaction and engagement from influencers to followers if the influencer wants high awareness and the capability to affect the purchase intention of his or her followers. Not only that, this offers a nuanced insight into how digital natives or Generation Z process and perceive information, which later forms a purchase decision in the age of digitalization dominated by social media.

### *b. Practical Contribution*

In terms of practical contribution, this study contributes to sweetening and growing for brands, advertisers or marketers, and influencers. This study underscores the importance of the attractiveness and trustworthiness dimension of the source credibility model as the most

impactful dimension in shaping consumers' purchase intentions. Thus, marketers or advertisers should prioritise visually appealing, trustworthy, or relatable influencers from the audiences' perspective. Although the expertise dimension was found not to have a significant impact, the expertise dimension should also be considered because the three dimensions in the source credibility model are interconnected. Furthermore, the finding highlights that parasocial interaction has been ascertained effective in increasing the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns.

This finding suggests that brands and influencers can create meaningful and engaging content to watch, such as IGTV videos, interactive posts, or live sessions, boosting the interaction between brands/influencers and their audiences. These strategies are believed to increase consumer satisfaction and positive attitudes, ultimately influencing consumer trust and purchase intention. On the other hand, the findings indicate that young-generation consumers prefer genuine reviews and impressions of use from influencers to ideal advertisements from official brand accounts. Therefore, brands can encourage influencers to participate, showcase usage opinions about a gadget, and share valuable tips with audiences.

### *c. Limitations and Further Studies*

This study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, this study only concentrates on and exclusively on Indonesian Generation Z, which restricts the generalizability of its findings in the context of diversity or other demographic aspects. With the focus solely on Indonesian Generation Z, cultural differences and habits in utilizing social media will affect the results of this study. Furthermore, although the sample size implemented is relatively significant and can represent a population, non-probability purposive sampling can result in assumption preferences. In addition, this study only evaluates one social media platform, Instagram, without considering other popular social media platforms that are also favoured by young people, such as TikTok and X, where the engagement, dynamics nature, and user behaviour might differ.

Further studies can address these limitations in several ways. Further research may expand the scope of the study by including comparisons between regions or other demographic aspects to provide a broader and more in-depth interpretation of how the source credibility model and parasocial interaction may influence consumers' purchase intention. In addition, studies may also target research comparing generations, such as Millennials and Generation Alpha, which can offer another level of insight into generational differences in social media usage and consumer behaviour. Also, the increasing popularity of other platforms, such as TikTok and X, popular among young people, can provide another perspective on consumer behaviour across different platforms. Moreover, future researchers may explore additional dimensions of the Source Credibility Model, such as congruence, authenticity, and social presence, to further enrich the existing body of knowledge. Additionally, future researchers may also consider applying different theories to examine influencer effectiveness from various perspectives. For instance, the Uses and Gratifications Theory could be used to measure consumer satisfaction, while the Theory of Planned Behaviour could help analyse how celebrity and product endorsements influence consumers' purchase intentions. By conducting these studies in the future, the findings will contribute to the body of literature and provide more comprehensive knowledge to society regarding source credibility and parasocial interaction.

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