

“Unpacking Influencer Strategies”: Review of Social Media Influencer Product Promotions and Consumer Purchase Decisions Using The TCCM Framework

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Abstract

Social media influencers are more than just trend-setters in a world where digital opinions can dwarf conventional persuasion strategies; they subtly influence what consumers purchase, how they think, and who they trust. Despite prevalent research on how influencers influence consumer engagement and buying behavior, there remains an insufficient understanding of how influencer promotional strategies psychologically alter customer perception and behavioral outcomes. This study fills the gap by evaluating 91 peer-reviewed publications from ABDC-ranked journals that were indexed in the Web of Science and Scopus databases using a TCCM (Theory, Context, Characteristics, Methodology), a framework-based review to analyze the effects of promotional persuasion techniques on the cognitive and emotional processes influencing customer behavior. Encompassing TCCM framework in this review provides holistic knowledge of most prevalent theories, (psychology and behavioral theories, persuasion and communication theories, social influence and identity theories and source credibility theories), context (digital contexts such as platforms and countries), characteristics (groups as attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, persuasion and promotional tactics, psychological and relational outcomes and influencer characteristics and methods(methodological and analytical approaches). It provides an overview of existing research through the analysis and uncovers pivotal themes from the perspective of influencers' promotional strategies, driving psychological responses such as consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior; Influencer Marketing; Product Promotion; Social Media Influencers (SMI); TCCM.

1. Introduction

Social media has redefined our lives in how people interact and influence each other. Social networking environments act as a prevailing medium by which peer-influencers and celebrity influencers strategically enhance promotional tactics such as persuasion and credibility cues, emotional and cognitive appeals, social influence, engagement triggers, motivational appeals, and psychological and behavioral influence strategies. Two major forces contributed to the abrupt growth of influencer-based promotions in the virtual world: an increase in interactive social media platforms and the consumption habits of social media network users. According to Influencer Marketing Hub, in 2025, the global worth of social networking influencer campaigns is predicted to reach \$32.55 billion by this year. This forecasting growth also emphasizes a psychological shift as consumers are possibly persuaded by influencers, thus guiding consumer perception and behavior. Social media influencers are becoming a universal force influencing consumer behavior rather than a niche phenomenon, as the influencer market size and financial value continue to expand constantly. Influencer marketing refers to selecting and rewarding influencers to endorse a business or product to their followers, and acts as a vital communication tool in marketing by offering effective consumer engagement within a short duration in comparison with traditional advertisements. Social Media Influencers (SMI) are influential persons with a social network of followers across various platforms (Ki, Cuevas, Chong, Lim, & services, 2020; Tanwar, Chaudhry, & Srivastava, 2024; Y. Zhang & Mac, 2023). In general, promotion refers to connecting a brand or service through communication and persuasive strategies to make the marketers' offerings more appealing to their audience, and integrated marketing communication comprises of paid advertisements, PR and publicity, sales promotion and direct marketing through personal sellers are playing a crucial role in it (Belanche, Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2021; Joshi, Lim, Jagani, & Kumar, 2023). Major psychological underpinnings in the influencer context such as source persuasiveness and credibility includes trust, expertise and authenticity reshapes consumers perception, emotional, cognitive and motivational appeals enhance attitude, purchase decision, perceived value and brand loyalty, social influence which enhances perceive credibility, perception, brand trust and behavioral outcomes, parasocial relationships, engagement and interaction tactics increases consumers involvement, emotional connection and drive behavioral outcomes.

SMI has reformed the way brands communicate or engage with their consumers by elevating various forms/strategies of product promotion. Influencer partnerships are thought to be more successful for marketers than traditional celebrity partnerships. (Belanche, Casaló, Flavián, Ibáñez-Sánchez, & Services, 2021). Influencer marketing is gaining more attention, and companies are slowly changing their promotional tactics to fit this trend. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the trend to turn their followers into consumers, so as to support the products and influence consumer behavior (Joshi et al., 2023; Zheng, Huang, Qiu, & Bai, 2024). Most influencers benefit from endorsing products and services to their own following, regardless of the variances and procedures across different platforms (Duffy & communication, 2020). SMI uses tailored content to promote products in the social media environment for a specific target audience (Tanwar et al., 2024). Influencers are great for product launches and persuasive marketing communications because they build trust and engagement with their audience. (Angraini & Accounting, 2023; Schwemmer & Ziewiecki, 2018).

Influencers significantly impact consumers' perception and their buying behavior intention through several channels, including product endorsement, new product launches, product reviews and comparisons, giveaways and recommendations, and product placements (Cabeza-Ramírez, Sánchez-Cañizares, Santos-Roldán, Fuentes-García, & Change, 2022; Cocker, Mardon, & Daunt, 2021; Karagür, Becker, Klein, & Edeling, 2022; D. Lee & Wan, 2023; Petrescu, O'Leary, Goldring, Mrad, & Services, 2018; Sokolova, Kefi, & Services, 2020). Domain-based reviews focused on social media endorsement marketing and purchase likelihood of consumers, behavioral engagement by influencers, and impact on endorsement disclosure, consumer decision-making journey, and marketing effectiveness.

Similarly extensive literature focuses on advertising disclosures and parasocial relationships on persuasive effect on consumers, disclosure of sponsorship (Breves, Amrehn, Heidenreich, Liebers, & Schramm, 2021; Giuffredi-Kähr, Petrova, & Malär, 2022), consumers spreading EWOM through product reviews and experiences, WOM reputation of influencers in live streaming platforms (Filieri, Acikgoz, & Du, 2023; Wang, Wang, Wang, Zhao, & Logistics, 2022), influencers product endorsements on purchase intention and followers attitude (Cabeza-Ramírez et al., 2022), influencer narratives (Feng, Chen, & Kong, 2021), product endorsement effectiveness of influencers, Influencer endorsement and how ad disclosure and credibility impacts purchase intention (Gräve & Bartsch, 2022; Weismueller, Harrigan, Wang, & Soutar, 2020), influencer's advertising disclosure and purchase intention (De Jans, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2018; Han, Yi, Jun, Ahn, & Logistics, 2020), livestreaming to enhance consumer immersion and consumption behavior (D. Lee & Wan, 2023; Tian, Frank, & Services, 2024).

Although literature in social networking influencer has gaining attention in the areas of consumer engagement based on influencer credibility and parasocial interaction, purchase intention and buying behavior, consumer attitudes and behavioral outcomes, consumer trust and authenticity and endorsement effectiveness,, first this study intends to fill the gap that there is lack of comprehensive study on influencer promotional strategies impacting consumer perception and buying behavior patterns. Second, there is a need to analyze the psychological influence and consumer perceptual processing, as it is stated that either product review or recommendation, the promotional campaigns, social influence, persuasion strategies, as well as the context, decide the influencer communication effectiveness and impact on audience reactions. As a result, this study uses the TCCM framework to structure the review and develop the research questions,

- 1) Which theories are crucial for determining the role of SMI in promotional strategies?
- 2) How can diverse context outlines affect SMI in product promotional strategies?
- 3) What are the key characteristics of SMI across different promotional strategies?
- 4) What research methodologies have been used to examine the effectiveness of SMI in product promotion?
- 5) What avenues for future research can be followed to determine how various promotional tactics of SMI shift consumer cognitive, affective, and behavioral patterns?

2. Methodology

A Systematic literature review is a structured and transparent process that provides a thorough understanding and fair analysis of prevailing findings, which recognizes research gaps, and suggests future research directions by evaluating various studies on a specific area or topic. This study adopts a domain-based systematic literature review, which is focused mainly on a particular field or topic, and more precisely, this study integrates the TCCM approach (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019). TCCM is a widely used framework for review articles, which encompasses various theoretical methods, frequently used constructs, various research designs and methodologies, data sources, most relevant journals, and context-specific information.

This study uses the PRISMA methodology (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis), which is one of the most often used techniques for reporting results and carrying out systematic literature reviews. The PRISMA protocol encompasses four steps: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Figure 1 displays a systematic review of the PRISMA approach under consideration in this paper.

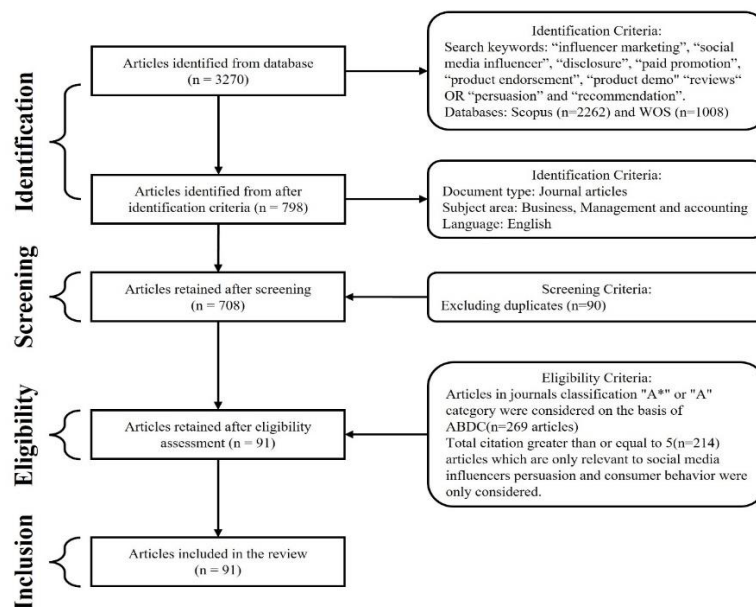


Fig. 1: PRISMA Search Strategy.

2.1. Identification

The data were initially grouped from Web of Science and Scopus databases from 2012 to 2024 for an extensive literature review process. The database search keywords were identified from various published articles, definitions, and existing literature reviews. Keywords concluded for the study are “influencer marketing”, “social media influencer”, “Sponsorship”, “disclosure”, “paid promotion”, “digital influencer”, “product endorsement”, “product demo”, “reviews”, “affiliate code” OR “persuasion”, “product promotion”, “product launch” and “recommendation”. Initially, 3270 data was found based on the keyword search. Subsequent filtration criteria, such as subject type, business, and management accounting, were applied to narrow down the identified search results. In addition to these filters, only English-language articles were selected. As a result, 784 articles were identified for the screening process.

2.2. Screening

To advance the screening process, duplicate items were identified and eliminated; 90 articles were found to be duplicates, and the other 694 were evaluated for the next stage of screening. The next step is abstract screening and full text review of articles; as a result, 395 articles were included, and 295 were excluded from the study, which are not related to the research objectives. At last, the articles were assessed for retrieval; those without complete text access were excluded from the study. The source publisher websites or the Google Scholar website provided the remaining 395 articles with full-text access.

2.3. Screening

After the screening process, 395 articles were considered for eligibility criteria. Based on the ABDC (Australian Business Deans Council) journal list, 269 articles categorized "A*" or "A" were considered for the study; with a total citation count equal to or more than five (214 articles) were considered for the study. Consequently, 91 articles qualified and finished for the next stage of review. 123 articles were excluded by this procedure as irrelevant to the study. At this point, a further check was carried out to verify that no relevant documents for the review were overlooked throughout the process.

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Domain	Criteria
Inclusion	Peer-reviewed articles from 2012-2024, English language, business and management accounting, ABDC category listing Focus mainly on influencer product promotional strategies and behavior. Both empirical and systematic reviews.
Exclusion	Non-peer-reviewed articles, editorials, and blogs, non-English studies outside the marketing domain, no full-text availability access

3. TCCM Review

3.1. Theories

The theoretical underpinnings of using social media influencers in product promotion strategies are examined in this study. The current study, which is based on 91 peer-reviewed articles, highlights the value of theories in clarifying the ways in which SMI in product promotion influences the purchasing behavior of consumers and how well individual characteristics relate to one another to depict the outcomes. Based on article reviews, identified theories have been grouped based on commonality, such as persuasion and communication theories, social influence and identity theories, source credibility and influencer theories, and psychological and behavioral theories. Among the studied articles, Attribution Theory in nine articles is most commonly employed in SMI product promotion research (Hudders, Lou, & de

Brabandere, 2022; Zheng et al., 2024). This theory states that Consumers' perceptions of an influencer's underlying motivation significantly shape how a promotional message is interpreted. When influencers are driven by internal motives rather than external influences, they are seen as more authentic; in other words, they seem more reliable when their behaviors are consistent with their true personality and values (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020; Kapitan, van Esch, Soma, & Kietzmann, 2022). The second most important theory includes the Persuasion Knowledge Model in nine articles (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019; Feng et al., 2021; Ghosh & Islam, 2023). It states that people's interpretation, assessment, and reaction to the persuasive content will be influenced by their prior exposure to advertising or by societal opinions under a native advertising context, resulting in negative outcomes (Hayes, Golan, Britt, & Applequist, 2020). Similarly, it examines how followers' understanding of persuasion message tactics, such as disclosure, affects, and how they react to it (Geng, Chen, & Wang, 2024; Saturnus, Weber, & Hinz, 2022).

Another most prominently used theory in this review is source credibility theory, which is used in seven articles (Crnjak-Karanović, Kursan Milaković, & Elez, 2023). (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019). It states that reliable sources of communication are more influential than others due to their identity for providing accurate and reputable information. The source credibility of influencers varies across product types, such as utilitarian and hedonic products (Arenas-Márquez, Martínez-Torres, Toral, & Change, 2021), and along with other dimensions such as homophily, where perceived information quality was discovered as a common factor of behavioral and attitudinal outcomes (Filieri et al., 2023).

The other most popular theories, which have each been constituted five times, are reactance theory, stimulus-organization-response (SOR) theory, and parasocial interaction theory. In general, parasocial interaction theory describes a person/viewer who develops and expresses an attitude or a sense of closeness with the performer (Dam, Borsai, & Burroughs, 2024; Saturnus et al., 2022). Customers' purchase intentions are linked to both parasocial engagement and source trustworthiness, indicating that loyal followers of reliable influencers are more likely to purchase goods and services that are being highlighted (Farrell, Campbell, & Sands, 2022; Sokolova et al., 2020). According to reactance theory, customers respect their freedom and autonomy highly and become alarmed when they perceive manipulation. Consumers do not want to be manipulated, and they value their independence. When consumers learn about a persuasive endeavor, such as revealing sponsorship, they become reactive because they feel that their independence is being challenged. Therefore, brand reactions may suffer if sponsorship is disclosed (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020; Weismueller et al., 2020). The SOR framework provides an understanding of how purchasing behavior is influenced by persuasive content, which impacts the purchase intention (D. Lee & Wan, 2023). Other theoretical underpinnings in the area of SMI product promotion include social influence and identity theories, each represented once or twice in reviewed articles (Dinh & Lee, 2022; Fan & Chan, 2023; D. Y. Kim & Kim, 2022). Similarly, some of the theories are less frequently utilized in this context, such as affect transfer theory, trust transfer theory, warranting and leading theory, construct level theory, consistency theory, homophily theory, flow theory, psychological arousal theory, and transportation theory. Table 2 describes the theories used in SMI promotional strategies, enhancing consumer behavior.

Table 2: Theories Guiding SMI Promotional Strategies

Theory	Frequency	Examples
Attribution theory	9	(De Veirman & Hudders, 2020)
Affect transfer theory	1	(Van Reijmersdal et al., 2020)
Balance theory	2	(Belanche, Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2021)
Categorization theory	1	(Hayes et al., 2020)
Cognitive dissonance theory	2	(Suri, Huang, & Sénécal, 2023), (Fazli-Salehi, Jahangard, Torres, Madadi, & Zúñiga, 2022)
Cognitive-emotional system theory	1	(Zheng et al., 2024)
Communication theory	1	(Leung, Gu, Li, Zhang, & Palmatier, 2022)
Congruity theory	3	(Sun, Leung, & Bai, 2021)
Consistency theory	1	(Weismueller et al., 2020)
Construct level theory	1	(Kapoor, Balaji, & Jiang, 2023)
Consumer inference theory	1	(Sheng, Lee, & Lan, 2023)
Consumer socialization theory	1	(De Jans et al., 2018)
Deliberate practice theory	1	(Mehraliyev, Choi, & King, 2021)
Dual process theory	1	(Cascio Rizzo, Berger, De Angelis, & Pozharliev, 2023)
Elaboration Likelihood Model	1	(Xie & Feng, 2023)
Exchange theory	1	(Petrescu et al., 2018)
Expectancy violation theory	1	(De Cicco, Iacobucci, & Pagliaro, 2021)
Flow theory	1	(Tian et al., 2024)
Grounded theory	1	(Wang et al., 2022)
Homophily theory	1	(Fazli-Salehi et al., 2022)
Human brand theory	2	(Ki et al., 2020)
Influencer brand fit theory	1	(G. Li, Tang, Feng, & Logistics, 2023)
Institutional theory	1	(Shan, Chen, & Lin, 2020)
Language expectancy theory	1	(Kapoor et al., 2023)
Leading theory	1	(Geng et al., 2024)
Limited processing capacity theory	1	(Van Reijmersdal et al., 2020)
Parasocial interaction theory	5	(Sokolova et al., 2020)
Persuasion knowledge model	9	(Hayes et al., 2020)
Persuasion knowledge theory	3	(Cascio Rizzo, Villarroel Ordenes, Pozharliev, De Angelis, & Costabile, 2024)
Persuasion theory	3	(Sokolova et al., 2020)
Power theory	1	(Hudders, De Jans, & De Veirman, 2021)
Psychological arousal theory	1	(Wang et al., 2022)
Public relations theory	1	(Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019)
Reactance theory	5	(De Veirman & Hudders, 2020)
Relationship management theory	1	(Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019)
Role theory	1	(Grgurić Čop, Culiberg, & First Komen, 2024)
Self-congruence theory	1	(Sinh My, Nguyen, Pham, & Logistics, 2024)
Self-determination theory	3	(Audrezet, De Kerviler, & Moulard, 2020)
Self-expansion theory	1	(Fazli-Salehi et al., 2022)
Signalling theory	3	(Xie & Feng, 2023)
Social capital theory	1	(Beichert, Bayerl, Goldenberg, & Lanz, 2024)
Social cognitive theory	2	(Shan et al., 2020)

Social comparison theory	1	(Geng et al., 2024)
Social contagion theory	1	(Suri et al., 2023)
Social exchange theory	2	(Shuqair, Viglia, Costa Pinto, & Mattila, 2024)
Social identity theory	2	(Belanche, Casaló, & Flavián, 2024)
Social influence theory	2	(Zhou et al., 2022)
Social learning theory	1	(Hudders et al., 2021)
Social penetration theory	2	(Feng et al., 2021)
Social power theory	1	(H. J. I. J. o. A. Kim, 2022)
Social cognitive theory	2	(Shan et al., 2020)
SOR	5	(D. Lee & Wan, 2023)
Source credibility theory	7	(De Veirman & Hudders, 2020; Filieri et al., 2023)
The theory of channel control	1	(Kapitan et al., 2022)
Theory of marketing control	1	(Kapitan et al., 2022)
Theory of opinion change	1	(Yan et al., 2023)
Theory of Planned Behaviour	2	(Belanche, Casaló, Flavián, Ibáñez-Sánchez, et al., 2021)
Theory of reasoned action	1	(Y. Zhang & Mac, 2023)
Transportation theory	1	(H. J. I. J. o. A. Kim, 2022)
Trust transfer theory	1	(Choi, Choi, Lee, & Research, 2024)
Two-factor theory of repetition	1	(J. Zhang, Li, Wu, Zhou, & Chen, 2023)
Two-sided message theory	1	(S. S. Lee & Johnson, 2022)
Two-level communication theory	1	(Wang et al., 2022)
Uncanny valley theory	3	(El Hedhli, Zourrig, Al Khateeb, Alnawas, & Services, 2023)
Uses and gratifications theory	2	(Sinh My et al., 2024)
Warranting theory	1	(Geng et al., 2024)
Risk theory	1	(Cabeza-Ramírez et al., 2022)
Theory of involvement	1	(Cabeza-Ramírez et al., 2022)
Observational learning theory	1	(Cabeza-Ramírez et al., 2022)

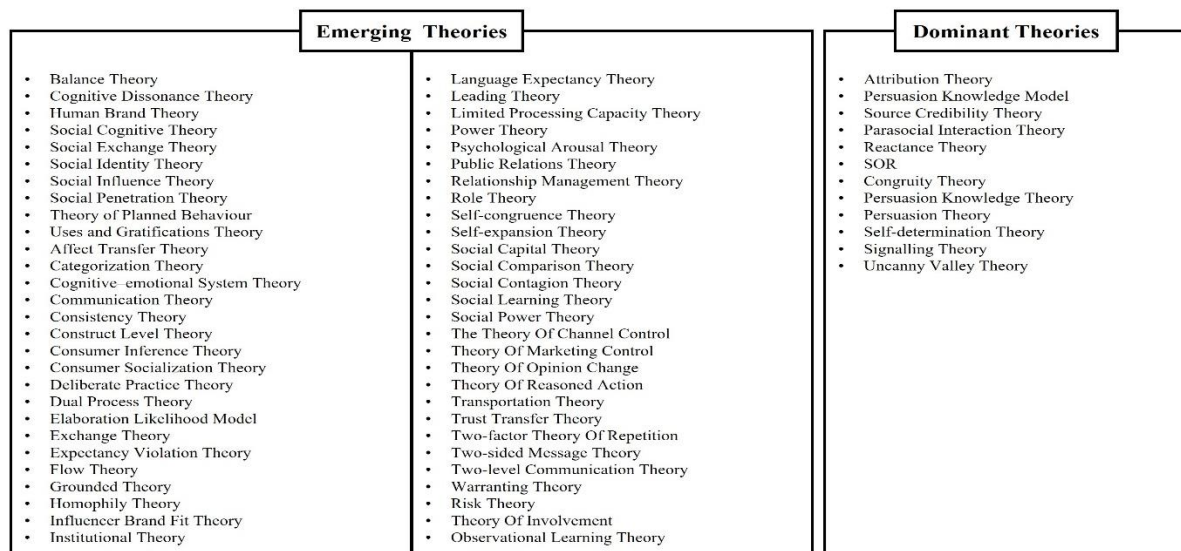


Fig. 2: Dominant vs. Emerging Theories Overview

3.2. Context

Context examines the social, environmental, and platform-specific circumstances of studies on influencer marketing. Contextually, we look at particular social media platforms and countries that have produced studies on SMI product promotion marketing. Tables 3 and 4 outline the study contexts, which are based on 91 examined studies. Based on the findings, a substantial number of studies have been conducted in North American and East Asia countries, such as the US (16 studies), which is then followed by China (13 studies) (Suri et al., 2023; Tian et al., 2024). Numerous studies in this field have been carried out in China and the US, concentrating on the widespread consumption of communication technologies via social media with a strong social presence, which leads to a high audience reach in the marketplace. Consequently, studies performed in other countries determine the future of SMI in product promotion worldwide, which is in the emerging phase, such as Western European and Southeast and Middle East countries (Feng et al., 2021; Petrescu et al., 2018). Based on studying the studies that focus on the role of SMI on product marketing by influencers, much research predominantly focuses on the Instagram platform, with forty-one studies (Boerman & Müller, 2022; Xie & Feng, 2023), collective use of popular media sharing platforms was integrated in twenty-four studies (Kapitan et al., 2022; Zheng et al., 2024). Similarly, the second most leading platform with twelve articles is YouTube with twelve studies. Some research focuses on new or local platforms. For example, some studies analyze SMI promotions using data from Weibo, Taobao, and Chinese microblogging sites (Geng et al., 2024; Tian et al., 2024). Other studies solely look at live streaming platforms, while others concentrate on online reviews and community-based platforms (De Cicco et al., 2021; Shan et al., 2020).

Table 3: Country-Specific Context in SMI Product Promotion

Country	Count	Examples
US	16	(Fazli-Salehi, Jahangard, Torres, Madadi, & Zúñiga, 2022; Suri, Huang, & Sénécal, 2023)
China	13	(Liao, He, Feng, & Filieri, 2024)
Europe	3	(Shuqair, Viglia, Costa Pinto, & Mattila, 2024)
Belgium	2	(Feng, Chen, & Kong, 2021)
FRANCE	2	(Belanche, Casaló, Flavián, Ibáñez-Sánchez, & Services, 2021)
Germany	2	(Naderer, Matthes, & Schäfer, 2021)
Italy	2	(Choi, Choi, Lee, & Research, 2024)
Spain	2	(Shan, Chen, & Lin, 2020)
UAE	2	(Petrescu, O'Leary, Goldring, Mrad, & Services, 2018)
UK	2	(Choi et al., 2024)
Australia	1	(De Jans, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2018)
Korea	1	(Hayes, Golan, Britt, & Applequist, 2020)
Vietnam	1	(Sinh My, Nguyen, Pham, & Logistics, 2024)

Table 4: Platform-Specific Context in SMI Product Promotion

Platforms	Count	Examples
Instagram	41	(Weismueller, Harrigan, Wang, & Soutar, 2020; Xie & Feng, 2023)
Social media platforms (combined)	24	(Kapitan, van Esch, Soma, & Kietzmann, 2022; Sun, Leung, & Bai, 2021)
YouTube	12	(De Jans et al., 2018; Filieri, Acikgoz, & Du, 2023)
Taobao & related E-commerce	7	(Geng, Chen, & Wang, 2024)
Facebook	7	(Sinh My et al., 2024)
TikTok	6	(Tian, Frank, & Services, 2024)
Live Streaming Platforms	5	(Lee & Wan, 2023)
Online Communities Reviews	4	(Shan et al., 2020)
Blogs & Forums	3	(Audrezet, De Kerviler, & Moulard, 2020)
Twitter	3	(Naderer et al., 2021)

3.3. Characteristics

Table 5 describes the most dominant variables studied in 91 peer-reviewed articles. Depending on the background of the study, the authors have employed factors in each group as antecedents, mediators, moderators, or outcomes. Later, the characteristics have been grouped into multiple clusters based on similar functionalities, such as disclosure and authenticity, attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, influencer characteristics, and psychological and relational outcomes. The first cluster, named disclosure and authenticity, relates to variables such as sponsorship, advertising disclosure, transparency, authenticity (Audrezet et al., 2020), message content, and persuasion (Kapoor, Balaji, Jiang, & Jebarajakirthy, 2022). These factors significantly affect how successful influencer messages and consumer perception of the brand are in connection with the promotional strategy adopted, such as transparent disclosure or informative content (Naderer et al., 2021). Accordingly, in comparing heavy users with light users, heavy users are more familiar with networking sites and the language of content when compared to light users, and a better knowledge of persuasion among heavy users will result in improved behavioral outcomes (Breves et al., 2021; De Cicco et al., 2021; Saternus et al., 2022).

The second cluster includes variables, such as EWOM, purchase and sharing intention, attitude towards the product and brand (Cabeza-Ramírez et al., 2022; Gräve & Bartsch, 2022; Liao et al., 2024; Van Reijmersdal et al., 2020). User-generated content is considered the major support of social media environments. Through this review-based analysis, the researcher has also identified that the influencers are reigning this world with the power of alluring their audience with preference similarities, and if brand/product buyers find any of the endorser's frequency matches with their mental schema, the chances for enhancing brand attitude, brand-related content, and buying behavior of consumers are high (Shan et al., 2020). When native advertisements are developed by peer influencers rather than celebrity influencers, they have a strong influence on forming a positive attitude with the brand, buying patterns, and sharing intentions. When promotional content holds both positive and negative statements, as in the case of an influencer's effort to critically examine the merits and demerits of a product, it guides the consumer to make a rational decision towards the brand in discussion. This will pave the way for increasing the credibility of influencers, parasocial bonding, and brand attitudes (Xie & Feng, 2023).

The third cluster explores variables such as followership Level, Influencer motive, Influencer type, source credibility, Trustworthiness, and Attractiveness (Beichert et al., 2024; D. Lee & Wan, 2023; G. Li, Cao, Lu, Yu, & Liu, 2023; Mehraliyev et al., 2021). Intrinsically motivated influencers are perceived as more authentic, which enhances consumer willingness to pay for recommended products. Unlike celebrities, influencers are seen as independent, reliable, and genuine in promoting the product (Kapitan et al., 2022). The influencer nature affects how consumers trust sellers, which is influenced by how much trust people have in the platform and the motive of the sponsored post. When a human influencer is shown, consumers regard the marketplace as trustworthy and the content as non-sponsored, which greatly increases trust. Conversely, when a virtual influencer is shown, consumers view the marketplace as trustworthy and the content as sponsored, indicating that perceived transparency is more important for non-human endorsements (Choi et al., 2024). Consumer mindset and social context play a critical role in how the SMI type influences WOM. Consumer mindset and social environment have a pivotal role in how SMI shapes WOM (W. Li et al., 2024).

The fourth cluster represents psychological and relational outcomes, which include the most prominent characteristics such as parasocial interaction, awareness of paid endorsement, anthropomorphism, and brand evaluation (El Hedhli et al., 2023; Sheng et al., 2023; Sinh My et al., 2024). Channel interactivity and identity sharing strengthen parasocial interaction, trustworthiness, brand identification, and psychological closeness with the influencer. These relational outcomes improve consumer response to source persuasion, increasing purchasing mindset and willingness to make the purchase (Fazli-Salehi et al., 2022). Influencers who are perceived as motivating and informative foster a strong emotional connection with followers by satisfying their needs. This attachment enhances the emotional transfer from the influencer to their recommended products, increasing customers' possibilities of accepting the recommended brands. Thus, the stronger the bond, the more effective the product promotion (Ki et al., 2020).9pt).

Table 5: Characteristics/Variables Employed in SMI Product Promotion

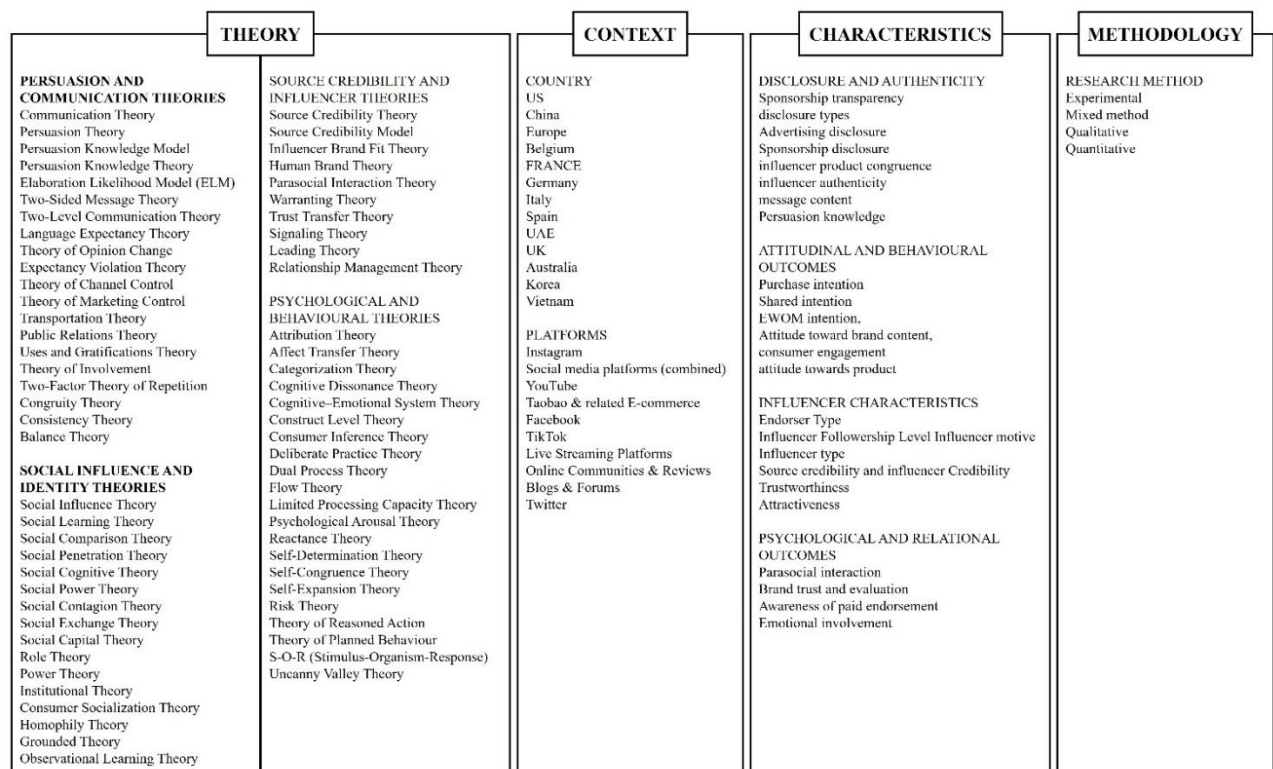
Cluster	Variables	Examples
Disclosure and authenticity	Sponsorship transparency and disclosure	(Naderer et al., 2021)
	Influencer product congruence, Influencer authenticity	(Weismueller et al., 2020)
	Message content	(De Cicco, Iacobucci, & Pagliaro, 2021)
	Persuasion knowledge	(Saternus, Weber, & Hinz, 2022)
Attitudinal and behavioral outcomes	Purchase intention	
	Shared intention	(Hayes et al., 2020)
	EWOM intention	(Shan et al., 2020)
	Attitude toward brand	(Xie & Feng, 2023)
	consumer engagement	(Sokolova, Kefi, & Services, 2020)
Influencer characteristics	Attitude towards the product	
	Endorser Type	
	Influencer Followership Level	(Gräve & Bartsch, 2022)
	Influencer motive	(De Veirman & Hudders, 2020)
	Influencer type	(Kapitan et al., 2022)
	Source credibility	(Beichert, Bayerl, Goldenberg, & Lanz, 2024)
Psychological and relational outcomes	Trustworthiness	
	Attractiveness	
	Parasocial interaction	(Shan et al., 2020)
	Brand trust and evaluation	(Liao et al., 2024)
	Awareness of paid endorsement	(De Jans et al., 2018)
	Emotional involvement	(Fazli-Salehi et al., 2022)

3.4. Methodologies

Table 6 presents an overview of various research studies and research designs recognized in the peer-reviewed literature. This section evaluates the methodological and analytical approaches, particularly in the context of SMI-driven product promotion. The findings indicate that the field is predominantly with quantitative research, with thirty-four studies employing statistical analysis such as SEM (21 studies), ANOVA (14 studies), Regression (9 studies), MANCOVA (2 studies), ANCOVA (2 studies), and MANOVA (3 studies) to examine key relationships between consumer and influencer promotional tactics resulting in attitude, purchase intent and engagement. The second pre-dominant method involves twenty-five studies that employed experimental designs. In contrast, only ten studies employed qualitative methodologies, including content and thematic analysis, fuzzy set analysis, and netnography. Furthermore, twenty-two papers used mixed methods approaches, indicating a growing interest in combining qualitative and quantitative research, and providing fascinating options for future studies to focus on the multidimensional nature of SMI.

Table 6: Research Methods Employed in SMI Product Promotion

Country	Count	Examples
Mixed method	22	(Gräve & Bartsch, 2022; Wies, Bleier, & Edeling, 2023) (Ki et al., 2020)
Qualitative	10	(Audrezet et al., 2020; Beichert et al., 2024; Cocker et al., 2021; Rundin & Colliander, 2021; Zhou et al., 2022)
Quantitative	34	(Cocker et al., 2021; Geng et al., 2024; Hofstetter & Gollnhofer, 2024)
Experimental	25	(Cascio Rizzo et al., 2024; Giuffredi-Kähr et al., 2022; Kapitan et al., 2022; Saternus et al., 2022; Xie & Feng, 2023)

**Fig. 3:** TCCM Framework.

4. Discussion and Future Research Directions

Marketers and advertisers rely more and more on SMI for impactful influence. To give a holistic perspective, this review uses the TCCM framework to show how SMI uses promotional strategy techniques to change the attitudes and behaviors of its followers. At first, numerous theories related to the persuasion of influencers were found, with attribution theory and the persuasive knowledge model being the most extensively used in this field of research, as people evaluate source credibility and persuasion tactics to determine the success of persuasive campaigns (Breves et al., 2021; Hudders et al., 2022; Zheng et al., 2024). The success of influencer promotion is determined not just by content or characteristics, but also by how subtly consumers perceive it, since overt persuasion leads to reverse psychology (J. A. Lee et al., 2022; Shuqair et al., 2024). This predominantly relies on other theories such as reactance theory, signalling theory, but there are theories with less integration, such as cognitive emotional system theory, expectancy violation theory, limited process capacity theory, warranting theory, influencer brand fit theory, uses and gratification theory, and homophily theory (De Jans et al., 2018; Feng et al., 2021; Joshi et al., 2023; D. Y. Kim & Kim, 2021; Suri et al., 2023), which needs further exploration studies in this field. The US and China are the most likely to enhance SMI in various persuasion strategies (Petrescu et al., 2018; Shuqair et al., 2024; Suri et al., 2023; Xie & Feng, 2023). Research in this sector is still in its early phases in Europe, the UK, Belgium, and India, and requires foremost attention (Choi et al., 2024; Hofstetter & Gollnhofer, 2024). Research on influencer promotion is dominated by Instagram (Weismueller et al., 2020; Xie & Feng, 2023), whereas e-commerce, live streaming, and country-specific platforms receive little attention, indicating scope for more research (Fazli-Salehi et al., 2022; Sokolova et al., 2020). By addressing independent, dependent, moderating, and mediating variables, this study has grouped variables into four themes, namely disclosure and authenticity, psychological and relational outcomes, influencer characteristics and source credibility, attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Angraini & Accounting, 2023; De Jans et al., 2018; De Veirman & Hudders, 2020; Duffy & Communication, 2020). The most used characteristics under each category are attitude towards brand and product, purchase intention, EWOM, influencer type, parasocial interaction, source credibility, disclosure, etc. (Shan et al., 2020; Tafesse, Wood, & services, 2021; Wang et al., 2022; Weismueller et al., 2020; J. Zhang et al., 2023). Finally, this study depicts various methodologies and data analysis, resulting in the fact that most of the research is conducted utilizing quantitative techniques with cross-sectional and SEM-based analysis (Feng et al., 2021; Geng et al., 2024; Kapitan & Silvera, 2016). But only a few studies emphasize a qualitative and experimental approach, which needs more attention (Jin, Ryu, & Services, 2020; Rundin & Colliander, 2021). Figure 3 represents the overall structure of the TCCM framework.

The study's overall discussion not only implies that behavioral responses of consumers enhance the marketing scope of strategies employed by influencers but also have a greater extent to financial engagement metrics, such as measurement of ROI, consumer acquisition costs, sales revenue, and regulatory economic policies by means of influencer campaigns. Understanding the various behavioral outcomes of consumers in response to influencer-endorsed strategies not only improves overall marketing efficiency but also helps firms manage their financial valuation, such as the costs and risks of influencer partnerships, and provides long-term financial and economic value, increasing consumer purchase behavior and retention. Positive behavioral responses, such as purchase intention, consumer engagement, and trust etc., contribute to high ROI and lower consumer acquisition costs, whereas negative responses, such as diminished engagement, skepticism, distrust, restrict financial benefits, and reactance. Engagement rates and cost conversions vary depending on the type of social media influencers used; nonetheless, results based on ROI measures from previous studies show that nano influencers outperform macro influencers constantly, and organizations targeting influencers with low follower levels achieve greater ROI (Beichert et al., 2024). Sponsorship disclosure regulations, such as #ad or #sponsored, or #paid, influence consumer responses towards the endorsement. Depending upon the type of disclosure made, such as visible or hidden disclosure, its timing, and its transparency, regulatory risks are reduced by maintaining long-term customer-brand relationships, thus promoting sustainable economic value for the firms. (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020).

This study also has certain limitations. While it focused mainly on Theories, Methods, Characteristics, and Context within influencer marketing research, it did not provide any comparative or in-depth analysis of positive and negative consumer outcomes based on influencer strategies. Most of the studies focused on positive attitudinal, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes, but negative outcomes are underexplored, such as misleading information, fake and overt endorsements, mismatched influencer product congruence, perceived inauthenticity, and influencer brand control. (Bhardwaj, Kumar, Gupta, Baber, & Venkatesh, 2024; Joshi, Lim, Jagani, & Kumar, 2023). Existing studies have shown that over-promotion and repeated exposure of ads lead to lower engagement and reduced trust. Due to misleading advertisements, inflated claims, and covert or concealed sponsorships, social media influencers and brand reputation have been negatively impacted. (Hudders & Lou, 2023; Kim & Kim, 2021). Much attention is needed on ethical and regulatory issues, such as disclosure guidelines and how they affect buying behavior and long-term brand-customer relationships (Beichert et al., 2024). The disclosure effects trigger resistance by generating psychological responses resulting in avoidance or rejection, source derogation, cognitive dissonance, influencer switching, ad fatigue, or saturation. (Shuqair et al., 2024; Van Reijmersdal et al., 2020). Similarly, the risks associated with misleading product promotions result in ethical and regulatory practices that are still underexplored phase.

Table 7: Future Research Avenues in SMI Product Promotion Based on TCCM Framework

TCCM Elements	Future Research Directions	
Theory	1.	How CARE model used to examine brand influencer fit, product influencer fit, and influencer schema fit for various product promotion categories?
	2.	How do human-computer interaction theories affect consumer purchase intent across different types of influencers in varying contexts of product promotion?
	3.	How can psychological arousal theory characteristics be used to elicit consumer responses in different content of product promotion?
	4.	What is the role of warranting theory across AI-generated influencer content vs. user-generated content in various e-commerce platforms?
	5.	How do information processing models evaluate product reviews in paid or unpaid promotion?
Context	1.	How can influencers in a social media context be used to promote offerings across diverse sectors such as fashion, tourism, retail, education, and healthcare?
	2.	How does user intention differ across different platforms and product types, resulting in consumer behavioral outcomes?
	3.	How do varying cross-country guidelines impact ad recognition and attitude towards the brand?
	4.	How do different product reviews, such as expert reviews or consumer reviews, impact brand trust and purchase intent?
Characteristics	1.	How to examine the brand effects of different disclosure styles for the long term among different consumer groups in product promotion?
	2.	How do different categories of influencers, such as virtual and human types and content styles, affect the likelihood of purchase and brand recall?
	3.	How do different influencer characteristics and message framing impact long-term buying behavior?
	4.	What are the effects of parasocial interaction on different influencer content and sponsorship types, which impact brand commitment and loyalty?
Methodology	1.	How mixed-method study on influencers' identity in shaping consumer attitudes toward product promotions?
	2.	How do influencers build trust through disclosure strategies upon long-term emotional impressions of consumers?
	3.	How do customers perceive and describe their immersion levels and involvement when exposed to live streaming and e-commerce advertisements?
	4.	How do influencers' appearance and personality influence consumers towards product advertising, and do these effects persist over time in terms of trust, interest, and purchasing behavior?

5. Conclusion

This study examined the comprehensive TCCM review on SMI product promotion strategies, starting from product evaluation, reviews, recommendations, unboxing, and tutorials to product endorsement, and how it persuades consumer buying behavior. According to the review, influencer efficacy mostly depends on their strategic marketing, as well as on the influencer's type and platform environment. These strategies vary based on various characteristics such as advertisement disclosure, unboxing, gifts, recommendation links, storytelling, content and message framing, product comparisons, and reviews, so that consumers are persuaded to buy the product and recommend it to others, thereby increasing long-term engagement and trustworthiness with influencers. Though this study provides a comprehensive overview of dominant theories, various platforms and methodologies, and individual characteristics, it is still restricted to the business and management sector, neglecting fields such as consumer psychology and social sciences, resulting in highly effective promotion. Consequently, this study explored different contexts with countries and platforms, but did not consider across various industries such as retail, fashion, lifestyle, tourism, etc., and platforms are not generalized. Finally, this study doesn't encompass negative outcomes, which are less explored in this field.

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