

# Impact of Social Media Influencers on Consumers' Well-Being and Purchase Intention. A Case Study on Douyin Platform

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of social media influencers on consumers' well-being and purchase intention within the Douyin platform, employing the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) as the conceptual framework. The research delves into key variables such as argument quality, source credibility, kindness, and parasocial interaction, and their respective impacts on consumers' well-being, and purchase intention. By addressing the gaps in extant literature on influencer marketing in the Chinese context, this study explains the relevance of dual-process theories like the ELM in interpreting consumer responses to influencer endorsements. The literature review provides a robust theoretical underpinning, examining argument quality, source credibility, kindness, and parasocial interaction in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors. Utilizing a quantitative methodology, data was gathered from 270 samples of Douyin users. Results indicate that argument quality, source credibility, kindness, and parasocial interaction significantly affect consumers' well-being. This study also found that consumers' well-being found to be a significant mediators towards purchase intentions. The findings yield critical theoretical and practical implications, underscoring the importance for brands to engage with credible, emotionally resonant influencers to boost consumers' well-being and drive purchase behaviors. This study acknowledges certain limitations, including its cross-sectional design and focus on a single social media platform, suggesting future research to consider longitudinal effects and cultural variances in influencer marketing. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between social media influencers and consumer behavior, providing actionable insights for marketers aiming to optimize influencer collaborations.

**Keywords:** consumers' well-being, douyin, Elaboration Likelihood Model, purchase intention

## INTRODUCTION

With social media networking being incorporated into everyday life, the number of active social media user identities rose to 5.07 billion during April 2024 from the previous year, which recorded a 5.4% rise globally. In the one-year period between April 2023 and April 2024, 259 million new user identities have been created for social media platforms, which is more than 700,000 new users per day. This has caused the market to evolve faster, making clients more selective in their choice of products and services. The blurring of the lines between traditional and digital marketing is another trend witnessed in the marketing landscape today. Marketing with the right influencer assists marketers in obtaining a competitive advantage that they could not achieve on their own (Kanwar and Huang, 2022).

Social media influencers are relatively cheap third-party advocates, and because social media is more persuasive and attractive, influencer marketing is growing rapidly, and more and more people are learning

about products and services through social media influencers. (Yahan and Cheng-Jui, 2023). 54.8 percent of internet users aged 16 to 64 buy something online every week, according to the latest data from GWI. According to Insider Intelligence, the e-commerce market's size in the global market will be around \$ 6.3 trillion in the year 2023 and is anticipated to grow further in the subsequent years. These numbers further lay emphasis on the increasing trend of profitability in online purchasing, which in turn makes this path more and more appealing and profitable for almost every firm regardless of the industry (Pool, 2024).

The China economy is one of the world's most connected to the internet. Data obtained shows that in December, 2023, there were 1.092 billion Internet users in China out of a population of 1.40 billion, hence the Internet penetration rate being 77.5%. Similarly, China's online purchasing users reached 915 million in this year, which is increased by 69.67 million as compared to that of December 2022; the proportion of online purchasing users = 83.8% with total Internet users. Douyin, Xiaohongshu, Weibo and Bilibili, the most commonly used social media platforms, have also launched online shopping features on their software. As China's largest short video social media, Douyin is visited by more than 750 million users every day. Douyin e-commerce sales have continued to grow significantly since 2021, with an increase of 101% in 2022 and a 77% increase in 2023. It has become another successful e-commerce platform after Taobao, JD.com and Pinduoduo (Huizhen, 2024). Due to the integration of the platform and e-commerce functions, Douyin users participate in e-commerce activities more frequently, which has also spawned many text message users. Also, three-quarters of brands dedicate a portion of their marketing budgets for influencer collaborations because it becomes a tactical move to enhance brand awareness as well as revenues (Cheah et al., 2024).

Social media influencer can be referred to as a person who is socially influential because of the extensive audience count (Joshi et al., 2023). Lou and Yuan (2019) moving further by classifying social media influencers as ordinary people who were not known personalities but gained popularity through posting unusual content on social media. These influencers are experts in the chosen fields and regularly create quality content to both create and maintain the active audience (Liu & Zheng, 2024). New generation consumers trust Social Media Influencers than traditional celebrity endorsement advertising and the former is more persuasive (Jin et al., 2019). Social media influencers, as opposed to celebrities, have to uphold devoted fan bases and establish credibility in their communities. They also frequently need to be knowledgeable about the goods they endorse (Lou & Yuan, 2019). According to recent academic studies, customer attitudes, brand trust, and awareness are positively impacted by influencer attributes such as trustworthiness, knowledge, and attractiveness (Reinikainen et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Because social media influencers are professionals, consumers are coming to rely more and more on their material when making decisions. Studies also show how followers' behavioral engagement is influenced by social media influencers' narrative techniques, content quality, and characteristics (Zhou et al., 2021; Onofrei et al., 2022; Cheung et al., 2022).

However, despite the importance of social media influencers in increasing brand awareness and revenue, Scholars have highlighted the lack of sufficient theoretical support on how social media influencers influence consumers, especially Douyin influencers, and the limited attention given to Parasocial Interaction as a peripheral cue in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) that affects consumers' and Consumers' well-being. Furthermore, the prevalence of negative reports about social media influencers on social media leading to consumer skepticism and its potential impact on and consumers' well-being and purchase intention is also noted as a significant concern. These gaps in the literature highlight the need for further research to enrich the current social media influencer field, especially the impact of social media influencer characteristics on and Consumers' well-being and Purchase Intention on platforms such as Douyin. Therefore, this study aims to explore the impact of argument quality, source credibility, and kindness on and consumers' well-being while also investigate the mediating role of and Consumers' well-being on Purchase Intention.

The remaining details of this paper are as follows. The literature review of the study is presented in Section 2. Thereafter, the methodology consisting of research design, data collection methods, and analysis

techniques are presented. It is followed by the results and discussion of the analysis. Finally, the paper is concluded with the conclusion and future studies of this research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The impact of social media influencer and strategies on consumers' purchasing behaviour is the aim of this study. The principles of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) appear suitable for achieving these research objectives. Argument quality is pointed out by the previous research as the primary central route by which consumers can be convinced; however, the link between consumers' well-being and argument quality has not been fully investigated. Source credibility creates parasocial interactions between social media influencers and audience, hereby improves trust levels and positive behaviors. Furthermore, kindness, one of the important drivers of consumer purchase behavior, remains under researched within the influencer marketing literature. The illusion of closeness or parasocial interaction enables interaction with social media influencers which has been found to positively influence the degree of individual purchase behavior. Although there has been increasing concern in these dimensions, few scholars have investigated the moderation effect between consumers' well-being and purchase intention. Prior research confirms that attitudes are powerful predictors of behavioral intentions pointing to the importance of continued research in the area of influencer marketing.

### Argument Quality

Argument quality is defined as the extent to which an argument convinces and changes the behaviour of target audiences via an informational message (Chu & Kamal, 2008). Cheung et al. (2009) provide further details pointing to it as the level to which identity persuades the recipients that a specific opinion is worthy of a defense. Sia et al. (1999) have found that the role of argument quality is rather important for changing the attitude of the people, especially when the discussion is held within social sites. In particular, when customer consider such information to be related to their individual preferences and needs, they are more likely to evaluate the importance of the product in terms of their own buying standards (Andrews & Shimp, 1990). That's why, such online reviews or content that are considered legitimate by the consumer evokes a positive attitude towards the related product or services, and the argument quality is considered valid here. If the reviews are viewed as being of low credibility, the consumers are apt to hold negative attitude toward the products or services and the argument quality is evaluated as being questionable (Cheung et al., 2009). Thus, it is important to determine the factors based on which consumers assess the quality of information displayed across online contexts to predict their purchasing intention.

Similarly, the frameworks proposed by DeLone and McLean (2003) and Cheung et al. (2008) emphasize the importance of evaluating argument quality through four commonly used dimensions of information quality: about its relevance, time sensitivity, precision, and scope. Reference to relevance made by Cacioppo and Petty (1986) worked with the notion that relevance of a message or a review is how meaningful it is to the user. Since most internet users are oriented to time, they usually do not thoroughly study the content but rather look for the desired information in the desired section (Madu & Madu, 2002). People want to locate specific information as fast as possible and with as little effort as possible (Nah & Davis, 2002). Therefore, the best approach is to find, select and provide the best information that should appear on the social media platforms in order to help users get the information they are searching for quickly and easily.

In their respective studies, Castellacci and Tveito (2018) opined that information availability on the internet reduces consumer decision satisfaction and improves their well-being. In this vein, Tien et al. (2019) revealed that quality of arguments which are exchanged in information and communication media leads to positive attitudes of consumers. The prior literature mainly validates the positive impact of argument quality on its outcomes (Cheung, et al., 2008; Sussman & Siegal, 2003). But the studies related to social media and influencer marketing are not as definite. According to Winter (2020), traditional social media shows less persuasive power than new traditional media like websites or newspapers. Further, Jamil and Qayyum (2021) noticed that the association between argument quality and consumer attitudes is comparatively weaker with

social media influencers than with eWord of Mouth. Based on these insights, the following hypothesis has been developed:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Argument quality positively influences consumers' well-being in the context of social media influencer marketing.

### **Source Credibility**

It pertains to the qualities of a source of communication that makes the recipient to accept the message being passed. Authentic messengers always convey positive and compelling appeals with positive tones that affect the receivers to have positive dispositions when perceiving features of products or services that are the subject of the message (Eagly, 1993). It is based on the source credibility model advanced by Hovland et al. (1953), where it argued that source credibility of communication has a positive effect on recipients' attitudes, opinions and behaviors. Credibility has therefore emerged as significant aspect in consumption studies as the subsequent research on online credibility suggests. According to Wathen and Burkell (2002), the product recommendations increase credibility from the information senders affecting recipients. Source credibility generally comprises two key elements: credibility or perceived competence (Hovland et al., 1953; Kim et al., 2018; Tien et al., 2018).

A major distinction is that trustworthiness deals with the credibility of the sender of the message while expertise concerns the believability that the sender has concerning the given product or service. Consumers rely on the information they gather from recognized websites and are more credible when received from a person with better knowledge, background, and proficiency in a particular product, service, or brand (Wu & Wang, 2011; Daowd et al., 2021). Since in low elaboration likelihood situations consumers cannot fully process complex information, peripheral cues such as source credibility take central roles. The peripheral cues are derived from the dual-process models where source credibility deals with recipient's perception of expertise, trustworthiness and believability of the communicator (Sussman & Siegal, 2003; Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006). Source credibility also strengthens parasocial bonds with personalities and audiences, a consequence of which was zeal, good disposition, and behaviors (Leung et al., 2022; Yuan & Lou, 2020; Bi & Zhang, 2022).

Newer research have attempted to reveal a connection between source credibility and consumers' well-being. For example, Mundel et al., (2022) established that believable influencer marketing can lessen social media pressure and boost the lives of folks. Chetioui et al. (2022) distinguished match, appeal and believability as other relevant indicators of the perceived attitudes toward TikTok health influencer content. These findings underline the broader implications of source credibility, leading to the formulation of Hypothesis 2 for this study.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Source credibility positively influences consumers' well-being in the context of social media influencer marketing.

### **Kindness**

Kindness which is defined as being warmhearted, compassionate, humane, and empathetic (Comunian, 1998) is an underexplored yet potentially vital aspect of influencer marketing. Although research on influencer kindness is limited, Vrontis et al. (2021) suggest that it may be a critical factor in enhancing influencer persuasion, leading to positive consumer outcomes. Kindness in influencer interactions can improve consumers' well-being, much like how a satisfactory experience with a service provider contributes to well-being (Su et al., 2023). This indicates that integrating kindness into influencer marketing strategies could significantly shape consumer attitudes and behaviors.

As for kindness, there is a lack of many scholarly articles published in the area of influencer marketing, but the subject has been debated thoroughly in social and psychological science with regards to its connection to well-being. Like the previous studies, Lopez discovered that the positive attributes of information sources

such as kindness and generosity have a positive impact on audience happiness, well-being, and/ or positive intentions (Ciocarlan et al., 2018; Jasielska, 2020). Such an approach of research was also conducted by Perkins and others in 2022 where they pointed out that existence or level of kindness directly influences cognition and health. In addition, Jin et al. (2021) also found out that kindness play a role in maintaining the positive and well-being island during the stress circumstances. In the case of influencer marketing, it can be assumed that an optimistic person leads to less online skepticism among consumers resulting in qualities of well-being intention. Based on this, Hypothesis 3 (H3) is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Kindness positively influences consumers' well-being in the context of social media influencer marketing.

### **Parasocial Interaction**

Parasocial interaction is a well-established concept in media research introduced by Horton and Wohl (1956) to describe the illusionary experience where consumers perceive media personalities as part of a real, reciprocal relationship. Initially prevalent in traditional media like television and radio, parasocial interaction fostered a sense of friendship with celebrities such as actors, singers, and athletes by creating an illusion of mutual exchange (Labrecque, 2014; Lee & Watkins, 2016). With the advent of social media, this concept has evolved, enabling celebrities and influencers to engage more directly and frequently with their audiences (Garg & Bakshi, 2024). For instance, beauty vloggers often form pseudo-friendships with their followers through regular updates and interactive content (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

In the digital era, parasocial interaction has transformed into a form of interactive communication that involves reciprocal engagement. Social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook facilitate two-way interactions, enriching the depth of parasocial relationships and amplifying their influence on marketing strategies (Garg & Bakshi, 2024). This connection allows marketers to leverage illusionary friendships between influencers and their followers to promote products effectively, as increased parasocial interaction is shown to correlate with higher purchase intentions (Lee & Watkins, 2016).

Parasocial interaction is also acknowledged as another important predictor of purchase intention (Choi & Lee, 2019; Lee & Lee, 2022; Manchanda et al., 2022). Social media influencers interfere with consumer decisions on what to purchase most of the time. It helps the marketers to take advantage of the so-called 'friendship' between influencers and their so-called audience. The frequent conversations between influencers and audience can change consumers' evaluation of brands or products to an extent (Lee & Lee, 2022). Although the effects of parasocial interaction on purchase intentions have been explained to a considerable extent, its implications for positive consumer outcomes do not receive adequate attention, and more so, in emerging economies. Furthermore, limited research has been conducted to analyse the moderation of information source credibility (Manchanda et al., 2022; Ashraf et al., 2023) and parasocial interaction (Lee & Watkins, 2016; Lee & Lee, 2022) on consumer decisions. To fill this research gap, this research assesses the effects of parasocial interaction on consumer satisfaction and buying behaviour. Based on the above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Parasocial interaction positively influences consumers' well-being in the context of social media influencer marketing.

### **Consumers' well-being**

Customers' well-being has recently become a research concern, especially within the field of influencer marketing (Zhang, 2021; Sirgy, 2021; Vrontis et al., 2021). Although influencer marketing has captured positive and negative outcomes, the implications of the studies on the consumers' well-being is equivocal. For example, poor health status has been associated with upward social comparison in use of social media (Jang et al., 2016). Likewise, consumption of attractive influencers and their lavish lifestyle reduces the consumers' well-being since they learn to impulse-buy to fulfill their desires (Jin & Ryu, 2020; Jin & Muqaddam, 2021).

Conversely, a sense of acquaintance and congruity with influencers has been shown to enhance consumers' well-being, fostering commitment and loyalty (Kim & Kim, 2020). Positive interactions with influencers can contribute to a greater sense of happiness and satisfaction, further linking well-being to improved consumer attitudes and behaviors (Sirgy, 2021). Despite these insights, research exploring the relationship between consumers' well-being and purchase intention remains limited.

Studies in the field of consumer attitudes and behavior regarding online purchasing reveal that attitudes have a connection with the behavioral intent and show a very high level of predictability (Andronie et al., 2021; Musova et al., 2021; Nica et al., 2022). This is consistent with the ELM and theories on dual processes, because positive consumer attitudes mean a positive disposition towards intentions, and actions (Cheung et al., 2008; Jamil & Qayyum, 2021). Moreover, it has been established that consumer well-being relates to improved results of consumers including loyalty, commitment (Kim & Kim, 2020) happiness (Sirgy, 2021) and overall purchase intentions (Kim & Lee, 2020). In conclusion, based on the analysis of the impact of consumers' perceptions, this research postulated that the well-being of these consumers is likely to enhance the intended favorable outcome such as purchase intention. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Consumers' well-being positively influences purchase intention in the context of social media influencer marketing.

### Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study modifies the model originally presented by Jamil and Qayyum et al. (2023) by incorporating parasocial interaction as a peripheral route. The parasocial interaction theory introduced by Horton and Wohl (1956) is employed to investigate the impact of social media influencers on consumers' purchase intentions. The modified model examines the relationships between key variables, including argument quality, source credibility, kindness, parasocial interaction, consumers' well-being, and purchase intention. These relationships are illustrated in Figure 1, which provides a comprehensive view of the conceptual framework underpinning this research.

Table 1 Interpretation of the variables in a conceptual framework.

Variables	Indicators
Independent Variables	Argument Quality
	Source Credibility
	Kindness
	Parasocial Interaction
Mediating Variable	Consumers' well-being
Dependent Variable	consumers' purchase intention

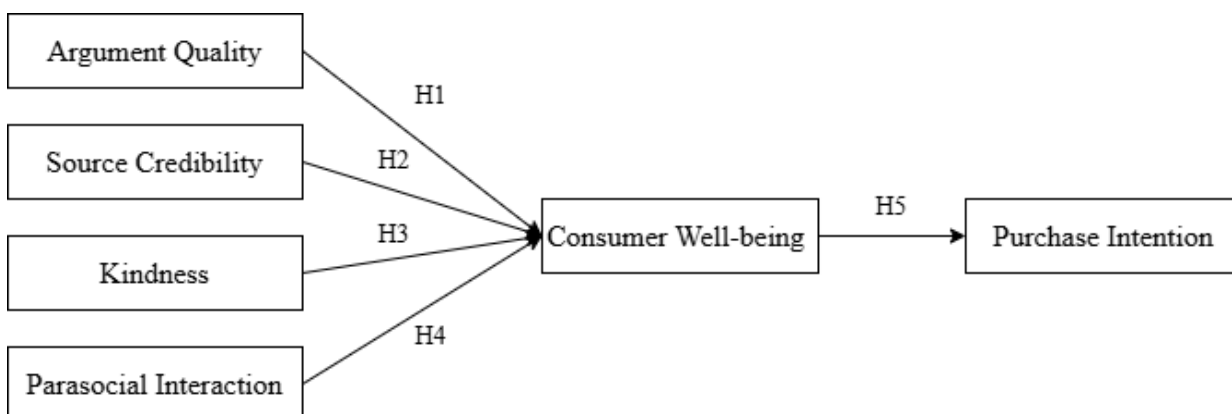


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

## METHODOLOGY

There are two commonly used sampling methods in research, namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Zikmund et al., 2014). This study adopted a nonprobability sampling method, namely purposive sampling. The questionnaires were distributed through online personal messaging systems on social networking sites, including Douyin, WeChat, QQ, and Whatsapp. These social media and messaging applications were chosen because these are the applications that most Chinese people use. The survey was conducted on consumers who regularly use and have made purchases on Douyin, with the designated data collection period being from March to May 2024. The link to the questionnaire was shared through private messages on the above social networking sites, allowing researchers to save time and money while effectively contacting respondents. Another advantage of online surveys is that they can reduce the problem of missing data because if respondents do not answer a question, the online survey software will prevent them from moving to the next stage (Hair, 2019). Respondents were asked to assist in answering the questionnaire and follow the instructions given by clicking on the link. The answers provided by each respondent were carefully tracked and recorded anonymously in the Wenjuanxing system, ultimately collecting 270 valid data sets. The sample was drawn from customers aged 18 and above who used Douyin and had purchased goods on the platform. The researcher also briefly explained the background and purpose of the study to the respondents through a short introductory paragraph at the beginning of the questionnaire. A five-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree") is used. After completing the questionnaire, the researcher recorded the responses and tracked the number of samples until the required sample size was met.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 summarizes the socio-demographic profile of the 270 respondents who participated in this survey. Of the 270 respondents, slightly more than half (57.4%) were male, and the rest were female, accounting for 42.6%. The data shows that the majority (40.0%) of the respondents who participated in this survey were adults aged 20 to 30 years old. The second largest age group of respondents was 31 to 40 years old, accounting for about 24.4%. The rest were below 20 years old and above 40 years old, accounting for 16.3% and 19.3% respectively. The vast majority of respondents (71.9%) received higher education, and among the 270 respondents, 49 obtained a postgraduate degree, accounting for 18.1%. 27 respondents obtained a Doctor's degree, accounting for 10.0%. The descriptive statistical analysis of samples is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics of the participants

Demographic Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	155	57.4
	Female	115	42.6
Age	Less Than 20	44	16.3
	20 – 30	108	40.0
	31 – 40	66	24.4
	Above 40	52	19.3
Education	Bachelors	194	71.9
	Masters	49	18.1
	Doctoral	27	10.0

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4.1. This method is widely favored by researchers due to its ability to estimate complex models with numerous constructs, indicator variables, and structural pathways without requiring strict assumptions about data distribution. PLS-SEM is a causal-predictive statistical approach that emphasizes prediction accuracy (Hair et al., 2021). The analysis involves the evaluation of both measurement and structural models (Hair et al., 2019).

To assess the measurement model, multiple parameters were utilized, including internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019). Additional metrics, such as composite reliability (CR), variance inflation factor (VIF), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), were examined to evaluate model fitness. Cronbach's alpha, a measure of internal consistency, was calculated for all constructs, with values ranging from 0 to 1. Values above 0.70 are considered acceptable for research (Hair et al., 2019). In this study, all Cronbach's alpha values exceeded 0.70, confirming acceptable internal consistency.

Convergent validity was determined using composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). CR values, which range from 0 to 1, must exceed 0.70 to be considered acceptable (Graciola et al., 2020). In this study, CR values ranged from 0.715 to 0.872, indicating satisfactory results. Similarly, AVE scores must be above 0.50 to meet the threshold for acceptability (Hair et al., 2021). The AVE scores in this study ranged from 0.535 to 0.635, verifying convergent validity. Details of these measures are summarized in Table 3. To evaluate collinearity among formative indicators, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was assessed. According to Hair et al. (2021), VIF scores should remain below 5, as higher values indicate potential collinearity issues. In this study, all VIF values were under 5, confirming no multicollinearity concerns (see Table 3).

Discriminant validity, which ensures that each construct is distinct from others within the structural model, was also analyzed (Hair et al., 2019). The Fornell-Larcker criterion was applied by comparing the AVE of each construct to the squared inter-construct correlations. These results, presented in Table 4, indicated no issues with discriminant validity. Additionally, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations was used, as it is considered a more robust measure of discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2021). HTMT values below 1.00 are deemed satisfactory (Henseler et al., 2015), and in this study, all observed HTMT values were less than 1.00, confirming discriminant validity.

Table 3 Scale refinement

<b>Argument Quality (AQ)</b>	<b>Loadings</b>	<b>VIF</b>
$\alpha = 0.724$ ; CR = 0.741; AVE = 0.548 ;		
The information provided by social media influencers is informative	0.719	1.340
The information provided by social media influencers is helpful	0.798	1.486
The information provided by social media influencers is valuable	0.747	1.271
The information provided by social media influencers is persuasive	0.787	1.440
<b>Source credibility (SC)</b>	<b>Loadings</b>	<b>VIF</b>
$\alpha = 0.719$ ; CR = 0.722; AVE = 0.543		
Social media influencers are knowledgeable on this topic	0.738	1.344
Social media influencers are trustworthy	0.789	1.274
Social media influencers are credible	0.750	1.463
Social media influencers appear to be an expert on this topic	0.769	1.447
<b>Kindness (KN)</b>	<b>Loadings</b>	<b>VIF</b>
$\alpha = 0.759$ ; CR = 0.762; AVE = 0.594		
The kindness of social media influencers gives me internal satisfaction	0.784	1.368
When social media influencers is kind, they can truly communicate	0.740	1.241
Social media influencers know how to be properly courteous with others	0.788	1.283
<b>Parasocial interaction (PSI)</b>	<b>Loadings</b>	<b>VIF</b>
$\alpha = 0.869$ ; CR = 0.872; AVE = 0.535		
Social media influencers make me feel comfortable, as if I am with a friend	0.766	1.670
I always look forward to seeing social media influencers post	0.727	1.492



I see social media influencers as a natural, down-to-earth person	0.725	1.458
If social media influencers start another social media channel, I will follow them	0.707	1.712
Social media influencers seem to understand the kind of things I want to know	0.755	1.634
If I see a story about, social media influencers in other places, I will read it	0.791	1.699
I would love to meet social media influencers in person	0.770	1.680
Social media influencers would fit in well with my group of friends	0.763	1.571
If something happens to social media influencers, I will feel sad	0.708	1.793
Social media influencers are the kind of person I would like to hang out with	0.727	1.424
If social media influencers lived in my neighbourhood, we would be friends	0.725	1.512
<b>Consumers' well-being (CW)</b>	<b>Loadings</b>	<b>VIF</b>
$\alpha = 0.713$ ; CR = 0.715; AVE = 0.635		
Social media influencers play a very important role in my social well-being	0.808	1.415
Social media influencers play an important role in my leisure well-being	0.777	1.377
Social media influencers play an important role in enhancing the quality of my life	0.805	1.389
<b>Purchase intention (PI)</b>	<b>Loadings</b>	<b>VIF</b>
$\alpha = 0.782$ ; CR = 0.785; AVE = 0.611		
After watching social media influencers promotional videos, I intend to buy the products they recommend	0.796	1.336
After watching social media influencers promotional videos, I am very likely to buy the products they recommend	0.786	1.307
After watching social media influencers promotional videos, I am willing to buy the products they recommend	0.761	1.334

Note. CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted; VIF = variance inflation factor.

Table 4 Discriminant validity

Variable	Fornell-larcker criterion					HTMT Ratios						
	AQ	CW	KN	PSI	PI	SC	AQ	CW	KN	PSI	PI	SC
Argument quality (AQ)	0.81											
Consumers' well-being (CW)	0.67	0.80					0.92					
Kindness (KN)	0.68	0.66	0.77				0.97	0.95				
Parasocial interaction (PSI)	0.79	0.77	0.76	0.85			0.99	0.97	0.97			
Purchase intention (PI)	0.72	0.65	0.68	0.76	0.78		0.93	0.92	0.99	0.99		
Source credibility (SC)	0.75	0.70	0.69	0.83	0.68	0.84	0.94	0.98	0.98	0.95	0.97	

Table 5 Path coefficients

Paths	Standardized beta	t-value	f2	p	Decision
H1: AQ → CW	0.29	2.21	0.03	**	Supported
H2: SC → CW	0.24	16.75	0.72	***	Supported
H3: KN → CW	0.28	2.95	0.03	**	Supported
H4: PSI → CW	0.31	4.28	0.11	***	Supported
H5: CW → PI	0.29	1.99	0.02	**	Supported

Note(s): \*\*p < 0.05; \*\*\*p < 0.001

H1, which posits that argument quality positively influences consumers' well-being, is supported by a standardized beta of 0.29, a t-value of 2.21, and significance at the 0.05 level. This suggests that high-quality, persuasive, and relevant arguments presented by influencers enhance consumer satisfaction and emotional well-being. Similarly, H2, which states that source credibility positively influences consumers' well-being, is strongly valued with a standardized beta of 0.24, a t-value of 16.75, and a p-value of less than 0.001. This finding highlights the critical role of trustworthy and knowledgeable influencers in fostering confidence and reducing skepticism, thereby improving consumers' well-being.

The results also support H3, which hypothesizes that kindness positively influences consumers' well-being. With a standardized beta of 0.28, a t-value of 2.95, and significance at the 0.05 level, the findings indicate that influencers who exhibit warmth, compassion, and empathy significantly enhance consumer satisfaction and emotional health. Furthermore, H4, which posits that parasocial interaction positively influences consumers' well-being, is strongly supported with a standardized beta of 0.31, a t-value of 4.28, and a p-value of less than 0.001. This underscores the importance of the perceived connection or pseudo-relationship between influencers and their followers in fostering a sense of engagement and improving emotional well-being.

H5, which proposes that consumers' well-being positively influences purchase intention, is confirmed with a standardized beta of 0.29, a t-value of 1.99, and significance at the 0.05 level. This demonstrates that when consumers feel satisfied and valued, they are more likely to develop favorable purchase intentions. These findings collectively validate the mediating role of consumers' well-being in the relationships between argument quality, source credibility, kindness, parasocial interaction, and purchase intention, highlighting the importance of these variables in enhancing consumer satisfaction and driving purchasing behavior. Figure 2 shows the model test results for the 5 hypotheses developed.

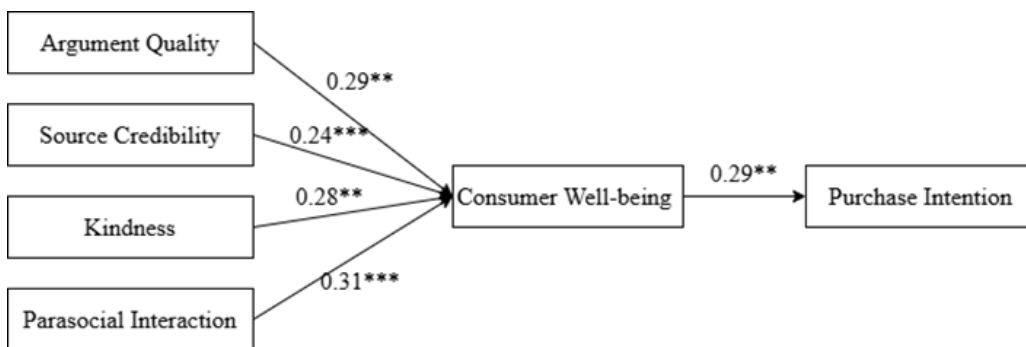


Figure 2 Model test results

Hypothesis 1 was supported by the results which showed that argument quality had a positive effect on consumers' well-being. Consumers have positive attitudes towards high-quality messages because they think these messages are accurate and reliable. These results support the previous studies (Jamil & Qayyum, 2021; Leong et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2016) on the dual-process models, stressing that argument quality determines the consumers' attitudes and intentions influenced by the influencers. While there is not a great deal of research conducted on the relationship between argument quality and consumer well-being, the findings of this study indicate that high quality arguments are beneficial in terms of positive attitudes and well-being. Furthermore, following Castellacci and Tveito (2018), improved access to accurate information through the internet increases decision utility and overall consumer welfare.

The significance of the relationship between source credibility and consumers' well-being also supported H2. When consumers are either unwilling or unable to engage in elaboration, they turn to peripheral cues to develop attitudes (Sussman and Siegal, 2003). These results are aligned with the past literature on the dual-process models (Jamil and Qayyum, 2021) that emphasize the role of peripheral signals, including source credibility. This has been so because the nature of social media is such that it is intangible and the identity of the consumer is also anonymous. In this regard, influencer credibility is a crucial variable that minimizes these concerns and enhances consumers' well-being (Chetioui et al., 2022; Mundel et al., 2022).

First, the study supported H3 by identifying kindness as another positive factor that had a positive impact on consumers' well-being and was novel to the literature. These findings are consistent with the dual-process models that suggest that peripheral cues may lead to positive attitude (Xiao et al., 2018). Prior research has associated kindness with lower levels of anxiety (Jin et al., 2021), higher levels of cognitive performance (Perkins et al., 2022) and well-being (Ciocarlan et al., 2018). This kind gesture makes the influencers' atmosphere of the social media platform friendly and supportive to consumers, thus improving the satisfaction level. In the same way, Su et al., 2022 found that a positive and satisfactory interaction with a service provider enhances the consumers' welfare. These findings are also in line with Vrontis et al. (2021) who suggested that influencer kindness as peripheral cue is essential in shaping positive attitudes and improve consumers' welfare.

Parasocial interaction was found to positively influence consumers' well-being, supporting H4. These findings are consistent with dual-process models, which propose that peripheral cues such as parasocial interaction can foster positive attitudes. The results highlight the pivotal role of parasocial interaction in establishing meaningful and lasting connections between social media influencers and their audiences. Through repeated interactions, consumers begin to perceive influencers as "surrogate friends" and increasingly trust their advice and recommendations. This perceived bond positively impacts consumer attitudes and well-being, with many consumers seeking influencers' opinions, much like they would from close friends, before making purchase decisions (Handriana et al., 2019).

Last of all, H5 was established, suggesting that the consumers' well-being has a direct and positive effect on the purchase intention. This finding is also in support of the ELM and other dual-process theories that have it that positive consumer attitude towards a product brand is likely to lead to positive consumer intentions and behaviors (Cheung et al., 2008; Jamil and Qayyum, 2021; Sussman and Siegal, 2003). Higher level consumers' well-being that is reflected in decreased anxiety, increased commitment, and increased happiness was found to be associated with more purchase intentions (Kim and Kim, 2020; Sirgy, 2021). Furthermore, consumer happiness itself has a straight relationship with the purchase intention (Kim and Lee, 2020). Therefore, the studies presented in this work support the notion that purchase intention is a logical consequence of increased consumer well-being.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study contributes to the literature on influencer marketing and ELM by introducing parasocial interaction as a peripheral cue. As social media influencers continue to gain popularity, the number of consumers aspiring to become influencers is also on the rise. Consequently, characteristics such as argument quality, source credibility, and kindness may no longer be sufficient to differentiate exceptional influencers from average ones. Influencers who foster friendships and build close, intimate connections with their followers are likely to achieve higher persuasiveness. This study highlights parasocial interaction as a critical peripheral cue associated with positive outcomes, reinforcing its relevance in dual-process theory and its application to influencer marketing. Additionally, this study positions consumers' well-being as an important outcome influenced by key influencer characteristics, including argument quality, source credibility, kindness, and parasocial interaction. Although consumers' well-being is closely tied to influencer persuasiveness, it has not been extensively studied as a central variable in the influencer marketing field. Prior research has identified the potential adverse effects of social media influencers on consumers' well-being (Jang et al., 2016; Jin and Ryu, 2020), making it an essential consideration. By emphasizing consumers' well-being, this study extends its relevance to the domain of influencer marketing, highlighting its importance in understanding the broader impact of social media influencers on consumer attitudes and behaviors.

This study provides important practical implications. As more and more consumers aspire to become influencers, brands need influencers who are both credible and distinctive. Although the influence of argument quality, source credibility, and kindness is crucial, the addition of Parasocial interaction will be an enhancing factor. For example, Li Jiaqi, a well-known influencer in China, is sought out by countless well-

known cosmetics brands because of his professional makeup skills and in-depth understanding of products. He is able to provide professional advice and demonstrations to consumers, insists on integrity when recommending products, does not exaggerate the effects of products, and wins the trust of consumers. He also shows strong personal charm and sincerity, which makes consumers feel close and establish an emotional connection.

It is important to recognize that the online environment's inherent intangibility and anonymity can foster skepticism and distrust among consumers. For instance, the portrayal of luxurious lifestyles and attractive appearances by influencers can trigger upward social comparisons, leading to stress and anxiety for consumers. To mitigate these negative effects, marketers should carefully select influencers who can deliver high-quality arguments, demonstrate kindness, and establish credibility, thereby enhancing consumers' well-being. Ultimately, happy and emotionally healthy consumers are more likely to make purchasing decisions. For corporate marketers, the selection of influencers for brand promotion should align with the company's marketing objectives and the desired type of persuasion. By prioritizing influencers whose characteristics resonate with their target audience and marketing goals, companies can effectively foster positive consumer attitudes and drive successful promotional outcomes. For example, L'Oreal's cooperation with Douyin beauty blogger Cheng Shian. Cheng Shian has many videos related to the beauty field on her channel, which is consistent with L'Oreal's marketing goals. By combining Cheng Shian's professional beauty content with L'Oreal's brand image and showcasing product effects through videos and interacting with fans to enhance persuasiveness and consumers' trust in the products, the marketing objectives are achieved.

Regarding the limitations of this study, it represents a novel effort to examine the impact of influencer parasocial interaction, as a peripheral cue, on consumers' well-being. However, other influencer characteristics, such as intimacy, sensitivity, or humor, may also play a role in influencing consumers' well-being. These unexplored characteristics present opportunities for future research to broaden the scope of this inquiry. Secondly, the study was conducted within the specific context of Douyin and China, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future studies could address this limitation by investigating other social media platforms and conducting cross-cultural comparisons to gain a more comprehensive understanding and improve the applicability of the results to diverse settings. Thirdly, due to funding and time constraints, this study adopted a cross-sectional design, so the data obtained are from a single time point. The results cannot capture the long-term impact of each variable on consumers. In the future, if there is enough time and funding, longitudinal research should be conducted to obtain more in-depth results. Finally, the results provide some interesting insights into the impact of influencers on consumers. However, in addition to Douyin, Tiktok is a more international social media platform, and its influencers and consumers will be more differentiated by country and region. Future research can explore the differences in influencer marketing from one social platform to another and between countries and regions. In addition, future research can consider different types of influencers, such as celebrity influencers, super influencers, and micro influencers, to examine the impact of influencers. Research can directly highlight the impact of each type of influencer on brands and customer behavior. Therefore, highlight the most suitable type of influencer for each industry.

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