

Digital Brand Equity: Congruence and Purchase Intention in the Customer Journey (Review)

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ABSTRACT

This Systematic Literature Review (SLR) examines how celebrity and influencer endorsements shape consumer purchase intention (CPI) across digital platforms. Reviewing 30 empirical studies published between 2021 and 2025, the analysis synthesizes key theoretical, relational, and behavioral mechanisms that drive endorsement effectiveness within the digital customer journey. Findings consistently show that source credibility, specifically attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise, forms the core antecedent of CPI. Among all variables, brand-endorser congruence emerges as the strongest mediator, enabling endorsement cues to translate more effectively into favourable consumer evaluations and purchase-related decisions. Additional mechanisms such as emotional resonance, parasocial interaction, and social media engagement further strengthen endorsement impact in competitive digital markets. Grounded in the Source Credibility Model and Match-Up Hypothesis, this review proposes an integrated framework explaining how digital brand equity is constructed through congruence and credibility-based pathways. The study offers actionable implications for strategic endorser selection and highlights opportunities for future research, including longitudinal examinations and the emerging influence of virtual endorsers.

KEYWORDS

Brand Endorser Congruence, Celebrity Endorsement, Digital Customer Journey, Purchase Intention.

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : May 28, 2025
 Final Revised : August 29, 2025
 Accepted : December 05, 2025
 Published : December 30, 2025

1. | INTRODUCTION

The modern digital marketplace is characterized by heightened competition and pervasive media exposure, driving brands to adopt more effective approaches for securing consumer attention. Celebrity endorser have become a prominent communication strategy, capitalizing on the visibility and persuasive power of public figures to influence consumer perceptions and behaviors. However, this tactic requires a sophisticated understanding of the mechanisms that underpin its effectiveness, particularly within digital platforms and competitive markets. Accordingly, the core marketing question guiding this paper is: In what ways do celebrity endorser characteristics and perceived fit shape consumer purchase intention (CPI) within this complex environment? Developing such insight is essential for optimizing resource allocation and enhancing brand strategy in a digital engagement environment.

Extensive scholarly work has examined this phenomenon through two principal theoretical perspectives: the Source Credibility model and the Match Up hypothesis. The Source Credibility model asserts that an endorser's persuasive power depends on perceived Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, and Expertise. In contrast, the Match Up hypothesis proposes that endorsement effectiveness hinges on the Congruence or perceived alignment between the celebrity and the brand. Although numerous empirical investigations exist, the literature remains fragmented, often analyzing these constructs separately. A substantial gap persists regarding an integrated understanding of how these elements interact and which variables exert the greatest influence in the current digital landscape. Thus, prior research lacks the critical synthesis of existing evidence needed to produce a coherent, unified model.

This study addresses this gap by implementing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). This methodological strategy enables a rigorous and transparent consolidation of existing scholarship. The paper systematically examined 30 empirical studies published between 2021 and 2025 that examine or conceptualize the relationship between endorser characteristics, brand congruence, and consumer responses (e.g., brand association, brand equity, or purchase intention) in digital or general marketing contexts thoroughly map the diverse pathways through which endorsements exert influence. By evaluating this collective body of research, the review moves beyond isolated analyses to identify recurring patterns and mediating mechanisms, with particular emphasis on Brand Endorser Congruence. This synthesis establishes a solid basis for both theoretical refinement and managerial application.

The article explores the central marketing inquiry concerning how celebrity endorser attributes and perceived congruence influence consumer purchase intention (CPI). Employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), the study responds to the fragmented state of existing research by integrating evidence accumulated over the last ten years. The investigation highlights the interaction between source characteristics Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, and Expertise and the pivotal function of Brand Endorser Congruence. The contribution of this study is reinforced by anchoring these results within the Source Credibility and Match Up theoretical frameworks. Ultimately, this research aims to present a validated, multidimensional model that offers practical insights for strategic endorsement selection in today's digital engagement environment.

2. | LITERATURE REVIEW

This section elaborates on the purpose of the literature review, which serves as the theoretical foundation of the article. The review functions as a “crucial synthesis of existing evidence” to address the “central marketing question” regarding the ways in which endorser characteristics affect “consumer purchase intention (CPI).” Beyond merely summarizing prior relevant studies, the literature review critically appraises and integrates the work of previous scholars. The synthesis is structured around the principal theoretical frameworks introduced in the abstract the Source Credibility Model and the Match Up Hypothesis and is further extended by incorporating supplementary theoretical perspectives (e.g., Theory of Planned Behavior, Self Concept Theory) that emerged from the empirical studies analyzed.

The Source Credibility Framework: A Finding of Inconsistency

The Source Credibility Model (SCM), which posits that an endorser's effectiveness relies on "Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, and Expertise", is a foundational concept tested across the 30 articles. However, a primary finding of this SLR is the significant inconsistency in the predictive power of these attributes in digital contexts. Trustworthiness consistently emerges as the strongest and most dependable predictor of favorable consumer responses across a wide range of settings (Akoglu & Ozbek, 2024; Calvo-Porrall et al., 2021; Hossain et al., 2025; Sutia et al., 2023; Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2021). Expertise exhibits the greatest degree of variability. Some studies report its effect as “almost negligible” or “non-influential” (Akoglu & Ozbek, 2024; Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2021). Yet, other research identifies it as a pivotal determinant, particularly in food related endorsements (Calvo Porrall et al., 2021) and live streaming environments (Wen et al., 2025). Attractiveness also produces inconsistent findings. It shows no significant impact on consumer attitudes in the context of beauty products (Macheka et al., 2024) and wine (Calvo Porrall et al., 2023). In contrast, it becomes influential in categories such as food (Calvo Porrall et al., 2021) and natural beauty care (Hossain et al., 2025). This synthesis indicates that the SCM framework does not operate uniformly; instead, its explanatory power is highly dependent on the contextual conditions in which it is applied.

The Match Up Hypothesis: Congruence, Endorser Type, and Self Concept

The abstract for this SLR identified "Brand-Endorser Congruence" as the "most significant variable". The full analysis confirms its significance but reveals its role is complex and deeply intertwined with endorser type and consumer psychology.

Product Endorser Fit: The alignment between the endorser's image and the product emerges as a crucial determinant of endorsement effectiveness. Chen et al. (2025) demonstrated that this fit functions as a moderating factor; traditional celebrities showed superior performance compared to SMIs in high fit conditions, whereas no significant difference was observed when the product endorser fit was low.

Self-Congruity: The literature also identifies a deeper underlying mechanism through self-congruity, the perceived alignment between the endorser and the consumer's self-concept. Shi et al. (2021) highlighted an important psychological distinction:

Traditional Celebrities are perceived as socially distant and tend to activate the consumer's ideal self (the person they aspire to become). They are most persuasive when associated with symbolic appeals.

Online Stars (SMIs/KOLs) are viewed as relatable individuals or even friends, thereby activating the consumer's actual self (the person they currently are). They demonstrate greater effectiveness in endorsing functional appeals.

Interpersonal Congruence: For SMIs specifically, endorsement effectiveness is strongly influenced by perceived interpersonal closeness. Homophily (perceived similarity) and relational closeness constitute key antecedents of the parasocial relationships that subsequently drive purchase intentions (Taillon et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2025).

Synthesis of Mediating and Moderating Pathways

A central finding of this SLR is that the path from endorser attributes to "consumer purchase intention" (CPI) is almost entirely indirect and mediated, or sometimes moderated. The abstract's premise of a "validated, multi-dimensional model" is supported by a rich network of pathways identified in the literature.

Endorser as a Moderator: A recurring finding is that the endorser often acts as a moderating variable. For example, research on impulse buying indicates that celebrity endorsement enhances the positive association between social presence in live shopping and consumers' impulse buying tendencies (Su et al., 2022). Similarly, Hameed et al. (2023) identified that celebrity endorsement moderates the relationship between brand awareness and consumer attitude.

Key Mediating Pathways: The impact of the endorser operates through several essential psychological mechanisms:

Attitude (via TPB & SDT): One of the most frequently cited mediators is Consumer Attitude (Hameed et al., 2023; Macheka et al., 2024; Tseng & Wang, 2023). Man-Man et al. (2025) explicitly employ the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Self Determination Theory (SDT), finding that Attitude is the most influential determinant of intention. This attitude is shaped by Subjective Norms often conveyed by endorsers and by autonomous motivation.

Emotional States (via SOR/PAD): Within live streaming environments, the Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) framework is predominant. Endorser attributes (Stimulus) evoke internal affective responses (Organism), specifically Pleasure, Arousal, and Trust. These emotional states then serve as full mediators linking the stimulus to consumers' impulse buying intentions (Response) (Wen et al., 2025).

Parasocial Interaction (PSI): On social media platforms, endorser effectiveness is strongly shaped by Parasocial Interaction. Such interaction cultivates a perceived relationship between the audience and the endorser (Um, 2022), which subsequently enhances both attitude toward the content and purchase intention (Yu et al., 2025).

Brand Related Outcomes: The influence of endorsers is also mediated through brand related perceptions, including Brand Credibility (Hossain et al., 2025; Rai et al., 2021), Perceived Quality (Hossain et al., 2025), Brand Image Transfer (Rai et al., 2021), Brand Awareness (Hameed et al., 2023), and eWOM (Macheka et al., 2024).

3. | RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopted a "Systematic Literature Review (SLR)" methodology. This method was chosen to deliver a "critical integration of existing evidence" through the systematic identification, evaluation, and synthesis of all empirical studies relevant to the core research

question. The review protocol was constructed to ensure transparency and replicability, enabling a thorough assessment of the reliability and validity of the resulting conclusions. The review process was organized into clearly defined stages encompassing sampling, data collection, and measurement.

The target population of this review consisted of “empirical research articles.” The search was carried out using the Scopus database, selected due to its extensive and reputable indexing of peer reviewed academic literature. The search procedure employed a defined set of keywords aligned with the research question: (“Celebrity Endorsers,” “Perceived Fit,” AND “Buying Purchase Intentions”). The inclusion criteria required that studies: (1) were published between 2021 and 2025; (2) appeared in peer reviewed journals classified as Q1 or Q2; and (3) constituted empirical research that explicitly measured constructs associated with either the “Source Credibility” model or the “Match Up” hypothesis (e.g., “Congruence”). Through this stringent screening protocol, potential studies were “systematically analyzed” to produce the final set of articles included in the review.

Data collection was conducted using the Wase Uake platform, which integrates the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta Analyses) method, consisting of three main stages in the literature selection process (O’Dea et al., 2021). The Wase Uake platform was chosen for its user-friendly interface, which facilitates the systematic literature review process.

The process began with 782 records identified from the Scopus database. After removing duplicates ($n=0$) and records marked as ineligible by automation tools based on year [2021-2025] ($n=482$), removal for other reasons [Tier Q1, Q2] ($n=59$), and records without abstracts ($n=2$), a total of 239 records were screened. This screening excluded 203 records, leading to 36 reports sought for retrieval. After failing to retrieve 11 reports, 25 reports were assessed for eligibility and included. An additional 5 studies were identified and included from other sources.

This process yielded a final sample of 30 studies published between 2021 and 2025. Most were empirical studies conducted in “digital contexts”, while a few theoretical papers (e.g., Jun et al., 2023) were retained due to their significant conceptual contribution to understanding brand endorser “Congruence”. A standardized data extraction form was then developed to “systematically analyzed” and collate information from each study, including authorship, publication year, methodology, key variables, and principal findings regarding endorsement influence.

The analysis of the “gathered data” was performed using a thematic synthesis approach. This study did not generate new primary data instead; it evaluated and interpreted the results presented in the 30 selected empirical articles. The analytical process centered on “mapping the diverse pathways of endorsement influence.” Core constructs were operationalized based on their established definitions within the source literature. The synthesis “repeatedly verified” the relationships by examining the frequency and magnitude of reported correlations between “source attributes” and CPI. Particular attention was given to determining which variable was most frequently identified as the “most significant variable” in “mediating the effective conversion of celebrity appeal into purchase behavior.” The final stage of analysis involved “anchoring these findings within the Source Credibility and Match Up theoretical frameworks” to construct the “validated, multi-dimensional model” cited in the abstract. The PRISMA flow diagram of the selection process is presented in Figure 1.

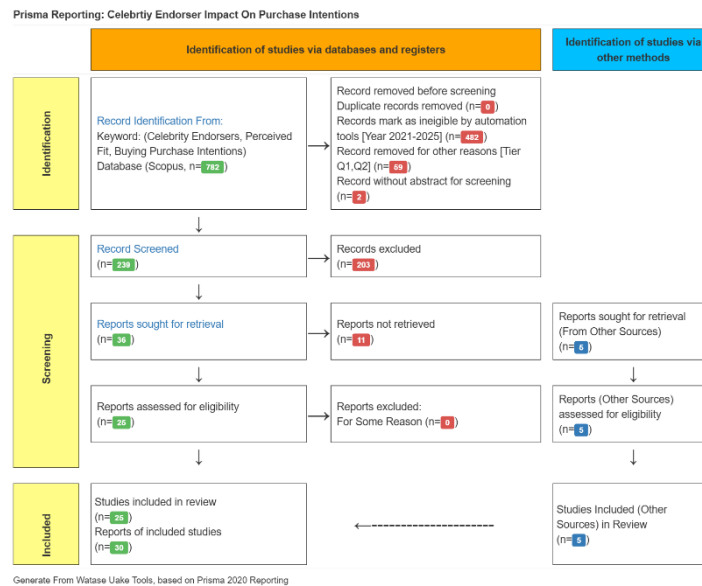


Figure 1. PRISMA Analysis Report

4. | RESULTS

The systematic review of thirty empirical studies published between 2021 and 2025 reveals a coherent body of evidence linking celebrity and influencer endorsement to consumer cognition, affect, and buying behavior within digital customer journeys. The reviewed studies span diverse product categories including natural beauty and skincare products (Hossain et al., 2025), eco-friendly and organic food items (Khan et al, 2022), sports merchandising and athletic-related brands (von and Breuer, 2021), beer and wine consumption (Calvo-Porrall et al., 2023), and online self-branded influencer products (Wen et al., 2025). Although the studies vary in context, the central analytical focus consistently concerns the role of source credibility, perceived congruence, authenticity, parasocial interaction, and emotional engagement in shaping consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. Geographically, the evidence heavily reflects Asian markets such as China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia, complemented by several European and North American datasets related to alcohol, e-commerce reviews, and celebrity-brand relationships.

Across the corpus, structural equation modeling represents the primary inferential method for testing hypotheses. Many studies employ Partial Least Squares SEM (PLS-SEM) due to its strength in prediction-oriented models with complex, multi-layer mediators and non-normal data structures. For instance, the investigation of celebrity credibility and attractiveness on trustworthiness, perceived quality, and intention to purchase natural beauty care products uses PLS-SEM to estimate direct and mediated pathways within SOR and elaboration-likelihood frameworks (Hossain et al., 2025). Likewise, PLS-SEM is used in research extending the Self-Determination Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior to model the chain from extrinsic motivation to attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and ultimately purchase intention and actual adoption in organic food consumption (Khan et al, 2022). Eco-endorsement studies and green product marketing similarly rely on variance-based SEM to evaluate the mediating functions of perceived eco-friendliness, product attitude, and endorsement credibility, often using bootstrapping procedures to assess direct and indirect effects with statistical precision.

A second methodological cluster employs Covariance-Based SEM (CB-SEM) where theoretical model confirmation and global fit indices are necessary. Studies on beer and wine endorsement behaviors, for example, evaluate model adequacy using χ^2 , RMSEA, CFI, TLI, GFI, and AGFI to substantiate claims regarding how social media celebrity cues translate into product perceptions and purchase decisions (Calvo-Porrall et al., 2023). Similarly, investigations involving multiple combinations of sports celebrities apply CB-SEM to compare pathways connecting celebrity personality traits, endorser-brand congruence, endorsed brand credibility, transferred brand image, and ultimately consumer purchase intention (von and Breuer, 2021). These studies justify CB-SEM because they aim to validate theory-driven structural relationships and require full model fit assessment.

A number of studies employ experimental designs, including factorial experiments analyzed through ANOVA, ANCOVA, and moderated mediation regressions. Research comparing online stars and traditional celebrities examines how advertising appeal interacts with endorser type to activate the actual or ideal self-concept, which subsequently predicts purchase intention; these outcomes are demonstrated through ANOVA across multiple experimental conditions (Shi et al., 2021). Further experimental evidence is provided by studies comparing social media influencers with traditional celebrities, where hierarchical regression and ANCOVA test the moderating roles of fit, popularity, similarity, and self-congruity in shaping endorsement effectiveness (Chen et al., 2025). Virtual idol research also applies a 3×2 factorial design to illustrate how AI-generated endorsers can match or exceed the persuasive power of human influencers depending on product involvement and credibility signals (Fan et al., 2023).

Inferential findings across the thirty studies yield substantial support for the hypothesized influence of source credibility dimensions (attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) on consumer response variables. Multiple studies show consistent positive effects of attractiveness and trustworthiness on attitudes and purchase intentions, whereas expertise occasionally demonstrates non-significant or even negative associations, particularly when consumers perceive highly expert endorsers as commercial persuasion agents rather than authentic product users, as shown in online sports consumer research (Wen et al., 2025). A central theme across the corpus is the mediating role of endorser–brand congruence. Evidence from sports celebrity endorsement studies demonstrates that congruence enhances endorsed brand credibility and facilitates image transfer, which subsequently predicts purchase intention even when the direct path from congruence is statistically insignificant (von and Breuer, 2021). Similar findings appear across beauty and green cosmetics studies, where congruence strengthens the impact of perceived endorser authenticity and credibility on product attitudes (Hossain et al., 2025).

Emotional and relational mechanisms also emerge as crucial determinants of consumer behavior. Research in live-streaming commerce demonstrates that endorser professionalism, popularity, attractiveness, and entertainment value significantly influence pleasure, arousal, and trust, which in turn drive impulsive and planned purchase intentions; emotional resonance acts as a full mediator between influencer cues and impulse buying (Wen et al., 2025). In studies involving young female consumers, credibility outweighs attractiveness, and online reviews outperform celebrity cues, contradicting classical assumptions from source attractiveness theory and revealing nuanced generational differences in persuasion (Calvo-Porrall et al., 2023).

Studies applying motivational and behavioral theories further show that extrinsic motivation, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control consistently strengthen purchase intention. For example, external regulation and integrated regulation demonstrate significant effects on attitudes toward organic food, which then predict both intention and actual buying behavior, illustrating the predictive value of the integrated SDT-TPB model and the complementary role of motivational states in endorsement effectiveness (Khan et al., 2022). Several findings also document unsupported hypotheses, including null effects of attractiveness or brand loyalty in specific contexts, reinforcing that endorsement effectiveness is context-dependent and moderated by consumer psychological states and product specificity.

To provide a clearer visualization of the patterns detected in the statistical findings described above, a word cloud was generated based on the complete variable extraction from all thirty reviewed studies. This visual representation serves as an additional descriptive layer to the inferential analysis. While the quantitative synthesis highlights how credibility, congruence, emotional mechanisms, and behavioral antecedents shape purchase intention, the word cloud captures the frequency and salience of these constructs across the literature, reflecting the thematic density of key variables examined by scholars. In this way, the visualization not only reinforces the dominant pathways identified in the empirical models but also reveals complementary constructs, such as parasocial relationships, emotional responses, and sustainable consumption motivations. that enrich and contextualize the broader conceptual landscape of digital endorsement research. The following discussion interprets the word cloud in relation to these findings, demonstrating how the extracted variables collectively map the evolving theoretical and practical contours of celebrity and influencer effectiveness within digital brand-building environments.



Figure 2. Word Cloud of Extracted Variables from the Systematic Literature Review

Based on Figure 2, the word cloud generated from the variable extraction offers a clear visual synthesis of the conceptual structure represented across the thirty studies. The most prominent terms, such as purchase intention, credibility, congruence, brand credibility, trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, highlight the centrality of source credibility and fit-based constructs within contemporary digital endorsement research. The dominance of purchase intention reflects its role as the primary dependent variable across empirical investigations, confirming that endorsement research continues to anchor itself in behavioral

outcomes. The prominence of constructs such as credibility, trustworthiness, and expertise underscores the continuing relevance of the Source Credibility Model in explaining how consumers process endorsement stimuli.

The presence of terms such as congruence, endorser–brand congruence, self-congruence, and brand–product fit indicates the critical role of match-up effects in digital persuasion contexts. Consumers increasingly evaluate the authenticity and relevance of endorsers, making congruence a crucial mediator between source cues and downstream outcomes such as brand equity, brand loyalty, and purchase intention. Emotional constructs including pleasure, arousal, hedonic attitude, and impulse buying behavior, signal the integration of affective processing theories, particularly within live-streaming and real-time interaction environments where emotional resonance becomes a potent predictor of impulsive consumption.

Relational variables such as parasocial relationship, companionship, self-disclosure, and attention to celebrity endorsers illustrate how digital endorsement effects operate within social and interpersonal frameworks. These relational cues complement credibility and congruence by shaping intimacy, trust, and involvement. Meanwhile, variables related to sustainability such as organic food purchase intention, eco-friendly perception, and sustainable consumption, demonstrate the growing intersection between endorsement and ethical consumption motivations. Finally, constructs such as information usefulness, electronic word of mouth, and online reviews show the expanding convergence between celebrity influence and peer-generated digital information.

Together, the word cloud and statistical findings present a multidimensional landscape of endorsement effectiveness wherein cognitive evaluations, emotional activation, relational engagement, and contextual relevance operate jointly to shape consumer purchase intention and behavior in digital environments.

5. | DISCUSSION

The findings of this systematic review demonstrate that celebrity and influencer endorsement in digital environments is shaped by a constellation of cognitive, affective, and relational processes that jointly influence consumer decision-making. While the Results section established the statistical significance of source credibility, congruence, emotional mechanisms, and parasocial relationships in determining purchase intention, the broader implications of these findings signal an important shift in how endorsement functions within contemporary digital marketplaces. Rather than operating as simple persuasive cues, celebrities and influencers increasingly serve as multidimensional meaning-transfer agents whose credibility, authenticity, and interpersonal resonance interact to shape brand perceptions and behavioral outcomes. This evolution mirrors broader developments in digital consumer culture, where attention is fragmented, interactions are personalized, and trust is mediated through social connection rather than purely informational evaluation.

One of the most compelling implications arising from the findings is the reaffirmation and expansion of the Source Credibility Model. Traditionally, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise were treated as separate dimensions exerting relatively uniform influence on consumer attitudes. However, the collective evidence reveals that these dimensions do not function in isolation but operate synergistically and sometimes asymmetrically depending on product category and platform context. Notably, the occasional non-significance of expertise suggests that modern consumers may perceive highly knowledgeable endorsers as

commercially motivated rather than authentic, complicating classical assumptions embedded in early endorsement theory. This nuance emphasizes that credibility must now be understood not merely as a trait but as a relational construct embedded within platform-specific norms, audience expectations, and perceived authenticity.

The predominance of endorser–brand congruence across the reviewed studies underscores its function as a pivotal mediator in endorsement effectiveness. While the Match-Up Hypothesis has long argued that endorsers are more persuasive when their image aligns with the product, the present findings extend this principle by demonstrating that congruence also strengthens trust, enhances emotional resonance, and facilitates image transfer in digital environments saturated with competing information. This suggests that congruence acts not only as a cognitive heuristic but also as a mechanism that supports narrative coherence between the endorser’s persona and the brand’s identity. In digital ecosystems characterized by highly curated influencer personas, congruence becomes central to maintaining perceived authenticity, an increasingly valuable currency in online persuasion. The findings, therefore, reinforce existing theory while extending its relevance to algorithm-driven, hyper-socialized digital contexts.

Another important implication concerns the role of emotional responses and parasocial interactions, which emerged as powerful predictors of purchase intention, particularly within live-streaming commerce and influencer-driven platforms. These results align with the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework, suggesting that endorsements now function through emotional and relational mechanisms rather than exclusively through cognitive evaluation. The prominence of pleasure, arousal, emotional resonance, and impulsive buying in the reviewed studies indicates that consumers often respond effectively in high-engagement digital spaces. Parasocial relationships further deepen this process by creating an illusion of social closeness, which enhances trust, loyalty, and behavioral compliance. These findings resonate with prior research on influencer intimacy, but the present review strengthens the argument by demonstrating that such relational dynamics consistently outperform traditional credibility cues in certain digital contexts. As a result, endorsement strategies must increasingly consider emotional architecture and interpersonal dynamics as core components of persuasive design.

The extended presence of sustainability-related variables such as eco-friendly perceptions, organic consumption, and health motivations, illustrates that endorsement effectiveness now intersects with value-based and ethical considerations. This trend reflects a broader shift toward conscious consumption, in which consumers look to endorsers not only for product recommendations but also for cues regarding social, environmental, and health-related values. The integration of such variables reinforces earlier research on green marketing and ethical persuasion but expands it by showing how digital influencers become moral and lifestyle reference points whose credibility can shape consumer adoption of sustainable products. This indicates that endorsement strategies are evolving beyond brand promotion into broader identity and value signaling.

Taken together, the findings of this review highlight the need for an integrated theoretical model that accounts for the interplay of credibility, congruence, emotional activation, parasocial engagement, and ethical value alignment. These dimensions do not merely coexist; they reinforce one another in dynamic ways across different digital ecosystems. The logical conclusion that emerges is that endorsement effectiveness in contemporary digital environments is no longer adequately explained by single-variable frameworks. Instead, it

must be conceptualized as a multilayered process shaped by cognitive evaluation, emotional resonance, relational bonding, and contextual relevance. The evidence presented in this review not only supports this conclusion but strengthens it by showing consistent patterns across diverse studies, methodological approaches, and product categories. Such convergence suggests that digital endorsement operates as an integrated persuasive system requiring holistic theoretical and managerial approaches.

6. | CONCLUSION

This review concludes that digital celebrity and influencer endorsements influence consumer purchase intention through an integrated set of cognitive, emotional, relational, and contextual pathways. While credibility and congruence remain fundamental drivers, emotional resonance and parasocial relationships have become increasingly decisive in shaping consumer behavior. The complexity of these mechanisms indicates that endorsement effectiveness can no longer be explained by single-variable frameworks but must be understood as a multilayered persuasive system.

Key limitations of the present review relate to the diversity of methodological approaches and the concentration of studies in specific cultural contexts, which may affect generalizability. Many studies rely on cross-sectional designs and self-reported measures, limiting claims about long-term endorsement impacts. These limitations suggest the need for future investigations employing longitudinal designs, cross-cultural comparisons, and multimethod approaches—particularly in emerging areas such as virtual influencers, AI-driven endorsements, and immersive digital commerce.

The conclusions drawn from this review are logically consistent with the evidence presented and offer meaningful implications for marketers, scholars, and practitioners seeking to understand and optimize digital endorsement strategies.

Acknowledgment

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of individuals who supported the completion of this article.

Funding Information

This research did not receive any funding.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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