

Influencer Marketing Transparency and Consumer Response: The Effect of Sponsorship Disclosure on Trust, Brand Attitude, and Purchase Intention

Transparence du marketing d'influence et réponse des consommateurs : l'effet de la divulgation du caractère sponsorisé sur la confiance, l'attitude envers la marque et l'intention d'achat

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of social media has fundamentally reshaped how brands communicate with consumers, making influencer marketing one of the most commercially significant advertising formats of the digital age. Yet, as sponsored content increasingly blends into organic posts, the question of commercial transparency has become both a regulatory imperative and a scholarly concern. Despite growing academic interest, the existing literature remains fragmented: studies examining sponsorship disclosure effects tend to address persuasion knowledge activation, source credibility, or behavioral outcomes in isolation, without proposing an integrative framework that connects these mechanisms into a coherent explanatory chain. In particular, the mediating role of consumer trust, namely the psychological mechanism through which disclosure shapes brand attitude and purchase intention, remains insufficiently theorized. This article addresses this gap by developing an integrated conceptual framework that articulates four complementary theoretical perspectives: the Persuasion Knowledge Model, Source Credibility Theory, Parasocial Identity Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behavior. It is worth clarifying from the outset that this contribution is integrative in nature rather than theory-generative in the strict sense. The originality of the proposed framework lies not in the introduction of new theoretical concepts, but in the way existing and complementary frameworks are assembled to produce explanatory predictions that none of them could yield individually. Drawing on a structured narrative literature review guided by a PRISMA-inspired protocol, for which a complete selection flow is provided, the study identifies 187 initial records that were progressively filtered through duplicate removal, abstract screening, and full-text eligibility assessment, yielding a final corpus of 32 articles. The study proposes a processual model in which sponsorship disclosure acts as a signaling mechanism that shapes consumer trust, which in turn drives brand attitude and purchase intention. The moderating role of influencer type, whether micro or macro, is also incorporated into the model. Six research hypotheses are formally stated and theoretically grounded. This research contributes to the influencer marketing literature by offering a unified theoretical framework, reconciling contradictory empirical findings, and opening concrete avenues for future empirical validation, particularly in emerging market contexts, and more specifically in the Moroccan context, where the influencer marketing sector has expanded considerably since 2018 yet continues to operate without a dedicated regulatory framework governing sponsorship disclosure, and where the dynamics of consumer trust in digital advertising remain largely unexplored in the existing literature.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, sponsorship disclosure, consumer trust, brand attitude, purchase intention, persuasion knowledge, source credibility, parasocial relationship.

RÉSUMÉ

L'expansion rapide des réseaux sociaux a profondément transformé la communication entre les marques et les consommateurs, faisant du marketing d'influence l'un des formats publicitaires majeurs de l'ère numérique. Toutefois, la multiplication des contenus sponsorisés soulève des enjeux croissants de transparence commerciale, tant sur le plan réglementaire qu'académique. Malgré l'intérêt croissant pour cette question, la littérature demeure fragmentée, les travaux existants examinant séparément les connaissances relatives à la persuasion, la crédibilité de la source ou les effets comportementaux. Le rôle médiateur de la confiance des consommateurs dans la relation entre divulgation du caractère sponsorisé, attitude envers la marque et intention d'achat demeure notamment insuffisamment théorisé. Cet article propose un cadre conceptuel intégré articulant quatre perspectives complémentaires : le Modèle des connaissances relatives à la persuasion, la Théorie de la crédibilité de la source, la Théorie de l'identité parasociale et la Théorie du comportement planifié. Cette contribution est de nature intégrative : son originalité réside dans l'articulation de cadres théoriques existants afin de construire une chaîne explicative cohérente. Fondée sur une revue narrative structurée inspirée du protocole PRISMA, l'étude a permis d'identifier 187 références initiales, dont 32 ont été retenues après un processus de sélection fondé sur la suppression des doublons, l'examen des résumés et l'évaluation des textes intégraux. Le modèle proposé considère la divulgation du caractère sponsorisé comme un mécanisme de signalisation susceptible d'influencer la confiance des consommateurs, laquelle affecte à son tour l'attitude envers la marque et l'intention d'achat. Le type d'influenceur, micro ou macro, est également envisagé comme variable modératrice. Six hypothèses de recherche sont ainsi formulées. Cette recherche contribue à la littérature sur le marketing d'influence en proposant un cadre théorique unifié permettant de mieux articuler des résultats empiriques parfois contradictoires et d'orienter de futures validations empiriques, notamment dans les marchés émergents. Une attention particulière est accordée au contexte marocain, où le marketing d'influence connaît une expansion significative depuis 2018, alors même que la divulgation des contenus sponsorisés demeure dépourvue d'un cadre réglementaire spécifique et que les mécanismes de confiance des consommateurs à l'égard de la publicité numérique restent peu explorés.

Mots-clés : marketing d'influence, divulgation du caractère sponsorisé, confiance des consommateurs, attitude envers la marque, intention d'achat, connaissances relatives à la persuasion, crédibilité de la source, relation parasociale.

1. Introduction

Influencer marketing has gradually established itself as one of the most strategically consequential developments in contemporary advertising. In a media environment increasingly characterized by audience fragmentation and widespread ad avoidance, brands have turned to social media influencers, specifically individuals who have built substantial, engaged followings on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, as privileged communication intermediaries. By 2023, the global influencer marketing industry had reached an estimated valuation of USD 21.1 billion, expanding at a compound annual growth rate exceeding 25% (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2023). This trajectory is not simply the product of shifting media habits; it reflects a deeper transformation in the social architecture of trust and persuasion in digital environments.

What makes this format commercially compelling is also what makes it ethically ambiguous. The persuasive currency of influencer marketing rests on the perception of authenticity. Unlike conventional advertising, which wears its commercial nature openly, influencer content is structurally designed to resemble personal sharing, more akin to the recommendation of a trusted acquaintance than the pitch of a professional advertiser (Freberg et al., 2011; Lou & Yuan, 2019). This resemblance is not incidental; it is the product. The persuasive advantage of the influencer derives precisely from the audience's belief that the endorsed product reflects genuine preference rather than contractual obligation. The problem arises the moment that distinction collapses without the consumer's knowledge.

Regulatory bodies have responded to this ambiguity with increasing firmness. The U.S. Federal Trade Commission formalized disclosure requirements for paid influencer content in 2015 and substantially tightened its guidance with the publication of *Disclosures 101 for Social Media Influencers* in 2019, mandating the use of clear, conspicuous identifiers such as #ad or "Paid partnership" in all commercial posts (FTC, 2019). Analogous frameworks have since been adopted across the European Union, the United Kingdom, and a growing number of emerging markets. Yet regulatory codification has not resolved the central empirical question: what does sponsorship disclosure actually do to the consumer? The answer, it turns out, is contested and contextually variable and that variability is precisely what this article sets out to explain.

The existing literature is structured around three largely separate currents. The first, anchored in the Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad & Wright, 1994), focuses on the role of disclosure as a trigger of advertising awareness, generating skepticism and persuasion resistance. The second, grounded in Source Credibility Theory (Hovland et al., 1953), examines how influencer trustworthiness shapes consumer acceptance of endorsed messages. The third addresses attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, including brand attitude and purchase intention, without systematically integrating the prior two. This segmentation has produced a literature that is rich in isolated findings but limited in its ability to explain why disclosure sometimes reduces favorability and sometimes enhances it. The integrative mechanisms linking these processes remain undertheorized. In particular, the role of

consumer trust as a mediating variable that conditions the downstream effects of disclosure has received insufficient conceptual attention.

The present article addresses this gap by proposing an integrated conceptual model grounded in four complementary theoretical frameworks: the Persuasion Knowledge Model, Source Credibility Theory, Parasocial Identity Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behavior. The choice of these frameworks is driven by their explanatory complementarity: the PKM captures the cognitive activation triggered by disclosure; Source Credibility Theory accounts for the trust transfer from influencer to brand; Parasocial Identity Theory introduces the relational dimension that moderates disclosure effects; and the Theory of Planned Behavior articulates the attitude-to-behavior transition. Together, they enable a processual, multidimensional reading of how disclosure shapes consumer responses that no single framework could generate alone. It is important to acknowledge, however, that other theoretical frameworks also offer relevant and potentially complementary perspectives. Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973), the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), Attribution Theory (Kelley, 1973), and Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973) each illuminate facets of the disclosure process that the four retained frameworks do not fully capture. The decision to privilege the PKM, Source Credibility Theory, Parasocial Identity Theory, and the TPB rests on their direct articulatory fit with the specific explanatory chain under investigation: from disclosure to trust, from trust to brand attitude, and from attitude to purchase intention. Future research explicitly integrating Signaling Theory or the ELM within this framework would constitute a meaningful theoretical extension.

The central research question guiding this article is the following: How does the integration of the Persuasion Knowledge Model, Source Credibility Theory, Parasocial Identity Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behavior allow us to explain the effects of sponsorship disclosure on consumer trust, brand attitude, and purchase intention in the context of influencer marketing? This central question gives rise to several sub-questions: How does sponsorship disclosure function as a signaling mechanism that shapes consumer trust toward the influencer? To what extent does consumer trust mediate the relationship between disclosure and brand attitude? How do these combined mechanisms influence purchase intention ? And in what way does influencer type , whether micro or macro, moderate these relationships ?

The objective of this article is to develop an integrated conceptual model that makes explicit a processual chain of mediations linking sponsorship disclosure to consumer trust, from trust to brand attitude, and from attitude to purchase intention. The theoretical contribution of this research lies in the integration of four complementary frameworks within a unified model, the identification of consumer trust as a structuring mediating mechanism, and the proposition of a processual reading that remains underexplored in the existing literature. We deliberately refrain from claiming that this model is unprecedented in an absolute sense. Its originality resides in the specific articulation it proposes: the central positioning of consumer trust as a mediating mechanism, and the explicit theorization of influencer type as a boundary condition on this mediation. This particular combination has not, to our knowledge, been assembled in this form within the existing literature.

The article is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the conceptual and theoretical foundations of the key constructs. Section 3 analyzes the synergies among the theoretical frameworks and develops the research hypotheses. Section 4 describes the methodological approach adopted. Section 5 proposes the integrated conceptual model and formally states the research hypotheses. Sections 6 and 7 discuss the scientific, theoretical, and managerial contributions, followed by critical discussion and limitations. Section 8 concludes the article.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

A clear grasp of the foundational constructs, namely sponsorship disclosure, consumer trust, brand attitude, and purchase intention, is essential before examining their interactions. This section maps out these concepts and the theories that underpin them, drawing on definitions and frameworks firmly established in the international academic literature.

2.1.1 The Evolution of Sponsorship Disclosure in Digital Contexts

Sponsorship disclosure refers to any communicative act, whether textual, visual, or verbal, that signals to the audience the commercial nature of the content they are consuming (Evans et al., 2017). While commercial transparency has long been a normative expectation in traditional advertising, its transposition into social media environments has raised unprecedented conceptual and operational challenges. Unlike conventional display advertising, whose commercial identity is visually obvious, sponsored influencer posts are structurally indistinguishable from organic content, making the boundary between genuine recommendation and paid endorsement particularly porous (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020; Boerman et al., 2017).

The emergence of social platforms and digital micro-celebrities has deeply transformed advertising communication dynamics, introducing a form of native advertising whose effectiveness rests precisely on its capacity to mimic the codes of authenticity. In this context, the foundational studies by Evans et al. (2017) and later Boerman (2020) established that disclosure takes a wide variety of forms, including textual mentions, platform-embedded labels, and dedicated hashtags, whose effectiveness varies considerably according to their visibility, their placement within the content, and the audience's familiarity with advertising conventions. The meta-analysis conducted by Eisend et al. (2020), drawing on 57 empirical studies, confirmed that disclosures reliably increase recognition of content as advertising, while their downstream effects on persuasion outcomes remain nuanced and context-dependent.

Rather than simply cataloguing these findings, it is important to reflect on the divergences they reveal. Boerman (2020) observed that disclosure increased persuasion knowledge activation without necessarily generating negative brand evaluations among micro-influencer audiences. This result stands in clear contrast to Woodroof et al. (2020), who found that undisclosed content, when subsequently revealed, produced significantly more negative product attitudes than proactively disclosed content. These opposing conclusions are not

irreconcilable: they reflect fundamentally different research contexts. Boerman's study involved audiences with strong pre-existing parasocial bonds with the influencer, whereas Woodroof et al. examined scenarios of discovered non-disclosure. Understanding why these studies arrive at different conclusions, rather than simply noting that they do, is one of the central interpretive challenges this article takes up.

2.1.2 Influencer Marketing and Source Credibility

Social media influencers are defined as individuals who have built a substantial, engaged following on digital platforms and who exert disproportionate influence on the attitudes and behaviors of their audiences through content creation and social sharing (Khamis et al., 2017; Vrontis et al., 2021). The academic literature has progressively refined its taxonomy of influencers based on follower count, distinguishing between nano-influencers (under 10,000), micro-influencers (10,000 to 100,000), macro-influencers (100,000 to 1 million), and mega-influencers or celebrity-level creators (above 1 million) (Boerman, 2020; Appel et al., 2020). Each tier exhibits distinct trade-offs between reach, engagement density, and perceived authenticity.

What singularizes the effectiveness of influencer marketing relative to conventional advertising is the parasocial dimension of the influencer-audience relationship. Rooted in the foundational concept of Horton and Wohl (1956), parasocial interaction refers to the feeling of personal connection and emotional intimacy that audiences develop toward media figures through repeated exposure, even though the relationship is structurally one-directional. In the social media context, these parasocial bonds are reinforced by the very formats of the platforms: behind-the-scenes stories, real-time Q&A sessions, confessional captions, and unfiltered video create an impression of privileged access to the influencer's daily life. Breves et al. (2021) demonstrated empirically that the strength of the parasocial bond significantly moderates the effects of advertising disclosure on persuasion, establishing that the relational dimension of influencer marketing is not merely contextual, it is mechanistically central.

A fundamental limitation of Source Credibility Theory deserves explicit discussion when it is applied to digital influencer contexts. The theory was originally developed to account for the persuasive impact of institutionally embedded communicators such as experts, officials, and celebrities, whose credibility tends to be perceived as stable and context-independent. Social media influencers, however, construct their credibility dynamically and interactively, through ongoing content production, community management, and audience feedback loops. This co-constructed and continuously negotiated nature of influencer credibility represents a theoretical dimension that the original Hovland et al. (1953) framework does not fully anticipate. Adapting Source Credibility Theory to influencer marketing thus requires acknowledging that trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness are not fixed attributes of the communicator but relational achievements, produced through sustained interaction between the influencer and their audience over time.

2.1.3 Consumer Trust as a Central Construct

Trust is among the most extensively studied constructs in consumer behavior and relationship marketing. In the foundational framework of Morgan and Hunt (1994), it is defined as the conviction that a relational partner is reliable and possesses integrity, a definition that resonates with particular force in the influencer marketing context, where the value of the influencer-audience relationship rests almost entirely on perceived authenticity and assumed benevolence.

Lou and Yuan (2019) developed a context-specific framework for trust in influencer-generated brand content, operationalizing it through five sub-dimensions: informational value, entertainment value, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity. Their empirical findings, drawn from a large-scale consumer survey, established trust as a significant predictor of brand awareness and purchase intention. Weismueller et al. (2020) subsequently replicated and extended these findings, demonstrating that source trustworthiness exerted a stronger effect on purchase intention than either source attractiveness or follower count, a result that reinforces the theoretical primacy of trust in understanding influencer marketing effectiveness.

The relationship between sponsorship disclosure and consumer trust is precisely where the existing literature is most divided. On one hand, the activation of persuasion knowledge through disclosure can lead to the inference that the influencer is acting in a commercially motivated rather than genuinely relational capacity, eroding the trust foundation on which influencer marketing depends (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020). On the other hand, several studies suggest that disclosed content may paradoxically be perceived as more trustworthy, because the very act of disclosing signals ethical transparency and respect for the audience's right to informed choice (Kim & Kim, 2021; Woodroof et al., 2020). Boerman (2020) observed this dynamic most clearly among micro-influencer audiences, where the normative expectation of authenticity is highest.

These divergences can be understood through a contextual reading of the conditions under which each trajectory prevails. The resistance trajectory predicted by the PKM tends to dominate when consumers hold weak parasocial ties with the influencer or when the disclosure appears formulaic and externally mandated rather than genuinely voluntary. The reinforcement trajectory supported by Source Credibility Theory tends to prevail when disclosure is perceived as a spontaneous act of communicative honesty, what Kim and Kim (2021) describe as authentic transparency. This distinction between mandated and voluntary disclosure carries significant implications for both theory and practice, and it is one of the primary conceptual tensions that the integrative model proposed in this article seeks to resolve. It is equally important to distinguish three conceptually adjacent yet theoretically distinct constructs that the existing literature sometimes conflates: trust, credibility, and authenticity. Trust refers to a consumer's generalized expectation that the influencer will act in accordance with their interests. Credibility is a more specific perceptual judgment about the influencer's competence and sincerity as a communicator. Authenticity, for its part, is a higher-order evaluation of the degree to which the influencer's self-presentation is perceived

as congruent with their actual identity and values. Although these constructs are positively correlated, they operate through distinct mechanisms and should not be treated as interchangeable in theoretical modeling.

2.1.4 Brand Attitude and Purchase Intention

Brand attitude, defined as the overall evaluative judgment of a brand along a favorable-unfavorable continuum (Mitchell & Olson, 1981), functions as the affective hinge between the credibility of the communicator and the behavioral response of the audience. De Veirman et al. (2017) demonstrated that brand attitude was significantly shaped by both the perceived trustworthiness of the influencer and the congruence between the product and the influencer's personal brand. Evans et al. (2017) found that disclosure conditions generated differential effects on brand attitude depending on the visibility and explicitness of the disclosure language used.

Purchase intention, conceptualized within the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) as the declared likelihood that an individual will perform a specific purchase behavior, represents the most proximate behavioral outcome in the model. Influencer marketing research has consistently found that purchase intention is sensitive to source credibility (Weismueller et al., 2020), brand attitude (Evans et al., 2017), and the perceived authenticity of the commercial arrangement. Kay et al. (2020) notably found that disclosure, when associated with positive product knowledge, enhanced rather than diminished purchase intention, a finding that underscores the context-dependence of disclosure effects and points toward the role of trust as the intervening mechanism.

A critical limitation of the Theory of Planned Behavior in the influencer marketing context concerns its foundational assumption of rational deliberation. The TPB posits that behavioral intentions emerge from considered attitude assessments, normative evaluations, and perceived behavioral control. Yet the social media consumption environment is one in which decisions are frequently rapid, emotionally driven, and shaped by platform-specific features such as algorithm-curated feeds, ephemeral content formats, and embedded shopping interfaces that do not easily lend themselves to deliberate cost-benefit calculation. Future empirical work should therefore explore whether the attitude-to-intention link holds equally in low-involvement and impulsive consumption scenarios. This question has direct implications for the external validity of the TPB-grounded hypotheses proposed in the present model.

2.2 Theoretical Grounding: Four Complementary Frameworks

2.2.1 The Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM)

The Persuasion Knowledge Model, introduced by Friestad and Wright (1994), provides the dominant theoretical architecture for understanding how consumers respond to recognized advertising. The PKM postulates that individuals develop, through repeated social and commercial experience, a lay theory of persuasion, a personal understanding of how, when, and why others attempt to influence them. When a persuasive intent is recognized, this

knowledge is activated and deployed as a coping mechanism: consumers counterargue, discount the message, or reinterpret the communicator's motives.

In the influencer marketing context, sponsorship disclosure is precisely the trigger that activates persuasion knowledge. Boerman et al. (2012, 2017) demonstrated this mechanism in Facebook and Instagram contexts, showing that disclosed sponsored posts generated higher levels of persuasion knowledge and lower electronic word-of-mouth intentions compared to undisclosed content. Van Reijmersdal et al. (2016) confirmed that persuasion knowledge mediated the negative effects of advertising recognition on brand attitude and purchase intention. Yet the PKM also acknowledges that persuasion knowledge activation is not uniformly negative. Friestad and Wright (1994) themselves noted that consumers may interpret voluntary disclosure as a signal of honesty. Eisend's (2022) meta-analysis of over two decades of PKM research corroborated this nuanced reading, showing that persuasion knowledge leads to both intended and unintended outcomes depending on context, prior consumer experience, and communicative framing.

An important limitation of the PKM in the influencer marketing context warrants explicit discussion. The model was originally developed to explain consumer responses to institutionalized advertising, in which persuasive intent is inferred from clearly recognizable structural cues such as advertising format, placement, or genre. Social media influencer content operates under fundamentally different conditions. Here, persuasive intent is frequently ambiguous not because consumers lack general persuasion knowledge, but because they face genuine uncertainty about whether a specific piece of content is commercially motivated. This ambiguity of intent, which is qualitatively distinct from the clarity of intent assumed in classical PKM applications, may produce systematically different patterns of knowledge activation and coping behavior that deserve dedicated theoretical attention. Moreover, the PKM's implicit assumption that consumers are primarily rational actors likely underestimates the role of emotional engagement and parasocial identification in moderating persuasion knowledge effects among highly involved influencer audiences.

2.2.2 Source Credibility Theory

Source Credibility Theory, developed by Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953) and operationalized by Ohanian (1990), proposes that the persuasive impact of a communicator is a function of three perceiver-based judgments: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. In the influencer marketing literature, these dimensions have been adapted and empirically validated across multiple studies (Weismueller et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). In a particularly consequential study, De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) established that trustworthiness, and not attractiveness or expertise, was the dominant driver of consumer attitudes toward influencer-endorsed brands. This implies that the persuasive advantage of influencer marketing over conventional advertising lies not in perceived competence or aesthetic appeal, but in the degree to which audiences believe the influencer is being sincere. From this perspective, sponsorship disclosure can either reinforce or undermine that sincerity perception depending on how it is framed and received.

2.2.3 Parasocial Identity Theory

The theory of parasocial interaction, first articulated by Horton and Wohl (1956), accounts for the sense of personal connection and affective intimacy that audiences develop toward media figures. In the social media ecosystem, this theory acquires particular explanatory power: short, authenticity-coded formats (stories, vlogs, live sessions) create an impression of proximity and reciprocity that strengthens parasocial bonds and amplifies the trust accorded to recommendations. Breves et al. (2021) demonstrated empirically that the strength of the parasocial bond significantly moderates the effects of advertising disclosure: audiences who are strongly attached to an influencer are less likely to revise their judgment of that influencer downward following a sponsorship disclosure. This finding points toward the parasocial bond as a relational buffer that conditions the intensity of the cognitive and affective responses triggered by disclosure, providing the theoretical basis for the moderating role of influencer type in the present model.

2.2.4 The Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior, developed by Ajzen (1991), postulates that human behaviors are preceded by behavioral intentions, which are themselves determined by attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the influencer marketing domain, this theory supplies the analytical articulation between brand attitude and purchase intention. Several empirical studies in the influencer marketing literature have confirmed that brand attitude constitutes a robust predictor of purchase intention (Evans et al., 2017; De Veirman et al., 2017), validating the relevance of this framework for modeling behavioral outcomes downstream of exposure to a disclosed sponsored influencer post.

The articulation of the four frameworks mobilized in this study reveals a coherent processual logic. The PKM explains the initial cognitive reaction to disclosure, namely the activation of persuasion awareness, which may generate either resistance or, paradoxically, appreciation of transparency. Source Credibility Theory accounts for the trust transfer from the influencer to the endorsed brand, mediated by perceived trustworthiness. Parasocial Identity Theory introduces the relational dimension that moderates the intensity of these effects, with a strong parasocial bond buffering the negative consequences of persuasion knowledge activation. Finally, the Theory of Planned Behavior articulates the attitude-to-behavior transition, linking brand attitude to purchase intention. These four frameworks are not redundant; they are complementary, each illuminating a distinct facet of the influence mechanism that only their integration can capture in its full complexity.

3. Methodology

This research mobilizes a structured narrative literature review from an exploratory perspective, aimed at analyzing the relationships between sponsorship disclosure, consumer trust, brand attitude, and purchase intention in the context of influencer marketing. The choice of this methodological approach is justified by the multidimensional and still fragmented

nature of the field, a landscape that requires an interpretive approach capable of bridging contributions from marketing, communication, consumer psychology, and behavioral economics. Unlike systematic reviews, which prioritize documentary exhaustiveness and strict reproducibility of results, the structured narrative review offers greater analytical flexibility in interpreting concepts and theoretical relationships. It is particularly well-suited to the construction of an integrative conceptual framework aimed at identifying complementarities across theoretical traditions. To strengthen methodological rigor and transparency, this research drew inspiration from the principles of the PRISMA protocol (Page et al., 2021), particularly regarding the identification, filtering, and selection of scientific publications.

This research is grounded in an interpretivist epistemological stance. Trust, brand attitude, and purchase intention are treated not as fixed, objectively measurable states, but as socially constructed phenomena, products of the perceptions, interactions, and meaning-making processes that characterize consumer engagement with influencer content. This epistemological positioning is particularly appropriate for studying constructs such as perceived authenticity, parasocial trust, and persuasion knowledge, which are deeply situational and intersubjectively constituted.

Documentary data collection was conducted using several recognized academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The publications retained cover the period 1953 to 2025, in order to integrate both the classical theoretical foundations and recent developments related to digital sponsorship disclosure. Searches were conducted using multiple keyword combinations: "influencer marketing", "sponsorship disclosure", "consumer trust", "brand attitude", "purchase intention", "persuasion knowledge", "source credibility", "parasocial relationship", "advertising transparency". Inclusion criteria were based on thematic relevance to sponsorship disclosure and consumer behavioral responses, the explicit mobilization of at least one of the four retained theoretical frameworks, peer-reviewed academic status, and publication in English or French. Conversely, duplicates, non-academic publications, and studies lacking significant theoretical or empirical contribution were excluded.

In the interest of full transparency and methodological reproducibility, the complete literature selection process is documented here. The initial database search yielded 187 records: 78 from Scopus, 64 from Web of Science, and 45 from Google Scholar. Following the removal of duplicates, 142 unique records were retained for title and abstract screening. Of these, 89 were excluded on the grounds of thematic irrelevance or because they did not explicitly engage with at least one of the four theoretical frameworks retained for this study. The remaining 53 records were subjected to full-text eligibility assessment, from which 21 were further excluded due to insufficient theoretical or empirical contribution, absence of peer-review status, or unavailability in English or French. This process resulted in a final corpus of 32 articles and scholarly works retained for in-depth thematic analysis. This figure resolves the numerical discrepancy that appeared in earlier versions of this manuscript, where the

figure of 42 was cited. That figure referred to the number of records that reached the full-text screening stage, while 32 represents the final corpus after eligibility assessment.

The analysis of the retained publications was conducted according to a qualitative thematic approach. Each article was subjected to analytical coding aimed at identifying the concepts mobilized, the theoretical relationships proposed, and the complementarities between different conceptual frameworks. Thematic coding proceeded through three successive stages. In the first stage, open coding, each article was read in full and emergent concepts were labeled freely, without prior categorization constraints. In the second stage, axial coding, these codes were grouped into thematic categories corresponding to the four theoretical frameworks and the key constructs of the model. In the third stage, selective coding, the core analytical category was identified as the processual chain linking disclosure to trust, to brand attitude, and to purchase intention, and the relationships among all categories were systematically mapped. Theoretical saturation was considered reached when additional articles no longer yielded new conceptual relationships. This criterion was met at approximately the twenty-eighth article of the final corpus. This process progressively enabled the construction of an integrated theoretical model highlighting the interactions among sponsorship disclosure, consumer trust, brand attitude, and purchase intention.

Table N°1: Research Methodology Summary

Dimension	Specification
Epistemological stance	Interpretivism: the phenomena under study (trust, attitude, intention) are apprehended as social constructions dependent on consumers' perceptions, interactions, and meaning-making processes
Research type	Theoretical research with an exploratory scope
Methodological approach	Structured narrative literature review, guided by PRISMA protocol principles (Page et al., 2021) and Kitchenham & Charters (2007) recommendations
Databases used	Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar
Period covered	1953-2025 (foundational theoretical works and recent developments in influencer marketing disclosure)
Search keywords	"influencer marketing", "sponsorship disclosure", "consumer trust", "brand attitude", "purchase intention", "persuasion knowledge", "source credibility", "parasocial relationship", "advertising transparency"
Inclusion criteria	Thematic relevance to sponsorship disclosure and consumer behavioral responses; explicit mobilization of at least one of the four retained theoretical frameworks; peer-reviewed academic publications; English or French language
Exclusion criteria	Duplicates; non-academic publications; studies lacking significant theoretical or empirical contribution
Selection process	Initial identification (187 records) → duplicate removal (142 unique records) → title/abstract screening (53 records) → full-text eligibility assessment → final selection
Final corpus	32 articles and scholarly works (revised and clarified from

	earlier version; see PRISMA flow diagram in Figure 2)
Analytical approach	Thematic qualitative coding of each publication: open coding → axial coding → selective coding; theoretical saturation reached at article 28

Source: Authors' own elaboration, based on Kitchenham & Charters (2007) and the PRISMA protocol (Page et al., 2021)

4. Integrative Analysis and Proposed Conceptual Model

The literature review reveals a strong complementarity among the Persuasion Knowledge Model, Source Credibility Theory, Parasocial Identity Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behavior. Rather than operating in isolation, these four theoretical frameworks articulate a processual logic that explains the chain of mechanisms linking sponsorship disclosure to consumer behavioral engagement. This articulation constitutes one of the primary conceptual contributions of the present research.

Table N°2: Theoretical Correspondence Matrix

Theory mobilized	Founding authors	Main dimension	Contribution to the study	Variables explained
Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM)	Friestad & Wright (1994); Eisend (2022)	Cognitive dimension: activation of persuasion awareness	Explains how disclosure triggers advertising recognition and consumer resistance mechanisms	Persuasion knowledge, skepticism, attitude toward advertising
Source Credibility Theory	Hovland et al. (1953); Ohanian (1990)	Relational dimension: expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness	Explains how perceived influencer credibility shapes consumer trust and message acceptance	Consumer trust, perceived credibility, brand attitude
Parasocial Identity Theory	Horton & Wohl (1956); Breves et al. (2021)	Relational dimension: parasocial bond between influencer and audience	Illuminates proximity and attachment mechanisms that moderate disclosure effects on trust	Trust, parasocial engagement, moderation of disclosure effects
Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)	Ajzen (1991)	Behavioral dimension: attitude → intention → behavior	Articulates the transition from brand attitude to purchase intention	Brand attitude, purchase intention, future consumer behavior

Source: Authors' own elaboration

4.1 Synergies Across Theoretical Frameworks

Disclosure as a signal and cognitive trigger. The review of the mobilized works shows that sponsorship disclosure operates simultaneously as a signaling mechanism , reducing

informational asymmetry between the influencer and the audience (Evans et al., 2017), and as a trigger of persuasion knowledge, as theorized by Friestad and Wright (1994). In digital environments, the presence of a #ad hashtag or a platform-embedded "Paid partnership" label constitutes an informational signal that leads the consumer to process the content more analytically and less affectively (Boerman et al., 2012; Eisend et al., 2020). The magnitude of this cognitive shift depends on the strength of the consumer's prior persuasion knowledge and on the contextual features of the influencer relationship.

From disclosure to trust: a paradoxical dynamic. The literature review reveals that the effects of disclosure on consumer trust follow two theoretically opposed yet empirically coexistent trajectories. The first, predicted by the PKM, is a resistance trajectory: disclosure activates commercial motive inference, triggering skepticism and counterarguing (Van Reijmersdal et al., 2016). The second, predicted by Source Credibility Theory and supported by Boerman (2020) and Woodroof et al. (2020), is a reinforcement trajectory: the voluntary act of disclosure is interpreted as a signal of reliability, amplifying the influencer's perceived credibility and, by extension, the trust granted to their recommendations. Parasocial Identity Theory moderates this duality: the stronger the parasocial bond between the influencer and their audience, the more the reinforcement trajectory prevails over the resistance trajectory (Breves et al., 2021). This is precisely why micro-influencers, whose audiences tend to maintain stronger parasocial attachments, may benefit more from the trust-enhancing potential of disclosure than their macro-counterparts.

From trust to brand attitude. The literature confirms that consumer trust toward the influencer operates an affective transfer to the endorsed brand. This transfer mechanism, well-documented in source credibility research (Ohanian, 1990; De Veirman et al., 2017), means that the trust granted to the messenger reflects favorably on the evaluation of the object being promoted. Lou and Yuan (2019) confirmed this transfer in the specific context of social media influencers, establishing that trust in influencer content significantly raises brand attitude scores. When disclosure strengthens trust, it therefore has a cascading positive effect on brand evaluations, creating a relational chain that conventional advertising cannot replicate.

From brand attitude to purchase intention. Within the Theory of Planned Behavior, brand attitude constitutes the evaluative antecedent of purchase intention. Evans et al. (2017) and Kay et al. (2020) confirmed this relationship in influencer marketing contexts, showing that a favorable brand attitude, shaped by influencer credibility and disclosure conditions, translates into elevated purchase intentions. The articulation of this final link completes the processual chain from disclosure to behavioral outcome.

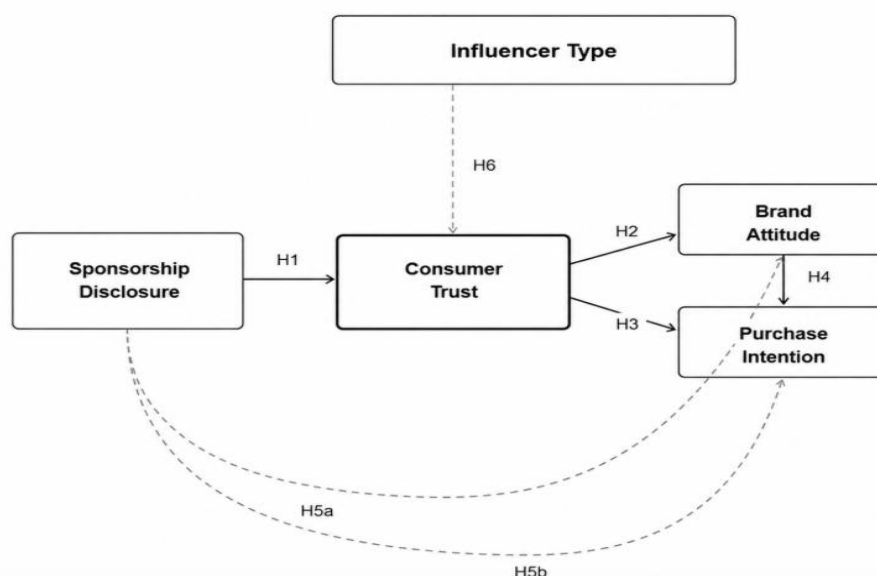
The moderating role of influencer type. The literature suggests that the effects of disclosure on trust are not uniform across influencer tiers. De Veirman et al. (2017) showed that follower count negatively moderates brand attitude effects in certain configurations, with macro-influencers being perceived as more commercial and less authentic. Boerman (2020) did not find significant differences between micro- and meso-influencers in terms of disclosure

effects, but the comparison with macro-influencers remains underexplored. Kay et al. (2020) provided converging evidence suggesting that the trust-enhancing effect of disclosure is stronger for smaller-scale influencers, whose audiences are more sensitive to transparency signals precisely because their commercial saturation is perceived as lower.

4.2 Research Hypotheses

The proposed conceptual model rests on an integrated processual logic in which sponsorship disclosure operates as an organizational signal influencing consumer trust toward the influencer. This trust in turn fosters the development of a positive attitude toward the endorsed brand, which stimulates the consumer's purchase intention. The strength of this causal chain is conditioned by the type of influencer. The model thus articulates multiple levels of analysis, namely cognitive, affective, relational, and behavioral, to offer a multidimensional understanding of consumer responses to disclosed sponsored content.

Figure 1: Proposed Integrated Conceptual Model



Source: Authors' own elaboration

Effects Related to Sponsorship Disclosure

From the PKM perspective, explicit disclosure activates persuasion knowledge, though this activation need not uniformly erode trust. When perceived as voluntary, clear, and consistent with the influencer's authentic communication style, disclosure functions as a transparency signal that reinforces the audience's confidence in the influencer's honesty (Evans et al., 2019; Kim & Kim, 2021). From a Source Credibility standpoint, an influencer who proactively acknowledges a commercial relationship demonstrates precisely the kind of trustworthy behavior that underlies credibility. Boerman (2020) and Woodroof et al. (2020) provide empirical support for this positive disclosure-to-trust pathway.

H1: Explicit sponsorship disclosure (versus no disclosure) positively influences consumer trust toward the influencer and the endorsed content.

H2: Consumer trust in the influencer positively influences attitude toward the endorsed brand.

H3: Consumer trust in the influencer positively influences purchase intention for the promoted product.

From Brand Attitude to Purchase Intention

In line with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and the affective transfer literature, brand attitude constitutes a robust predictor of purchase intention in influencer marketing contexts (Evans et al., 2017; De Veirman et al., 2017).

H4: Positive brand attitude toward the endorsed brand positively influences consumer purchase intention.

Mediating Roles of Consumer Trust

The model positions consumer trust as the central mediating variable in the disclosure-to-outcome chain. This proposition reconciles the divergent predictions of the PKM and Source Credibility Theory by showing that it is trust, rather than disclosure itself, that determines the valence of downstream effects. When trust is strengthened by disclosure, it amplifies favorable brand evaluations and purchase intentions; when trust is eroded, the counterarguing effects predicted by the PKM dominate.

H5a: The effect of sponsorship disclosure on brand attitude is mediated by consumer trust: Disclosure → Consumer Trust → Brand Attitude.

H5b: The effect of sponsorship disclosure on purchase intention is mediated by consumer trust, both directly (Disclosure → Consumer Trust → Purchase Intention) and sequentially through brand attitude (Disclosure → Consumer Trust → Brand Attitude → Purchase Intention).

Moderating Role of Influencer Type

The final hypothesis introduces influencer type as a boundary condition on the disclosure-trust relationship. Micro-influencers, characterized by higher perceived authenticity and more intensive parasocial relationships with their audiences, are theoretically better positioned to benefit from the trust-enhancing effect of disclosure. Macro-influencers, perceived as inherently more commercial, may see this effect attenuated or reversed (De Veirman et al., 2017; Kay et al., 2020).

H6: The positive effect of sponsorship disclosure on consumer trust is moderated by influencer type: the trust-enhancing effect is stronger for micro-influencers than for macro-influencers.

5. Scientific Contributions

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

This research makes a significant contribution to the existing literature, both theoretically and managerially, by proposing a renewed reading of the mechanisms through which commercial transparency in influencer marketing shapes consumer responses.

First, the proposed model constitutes a theoretical synthesis articulating four complementary conceptual frameworks that the literature has until now mobilized in a dissociated manner. It is important to be precise about the nature of this contribution. We do not claim to advance a fundamentally new theory. Rather, we propose an original integrative architecture that generates predictions that no single framework could produce independently, most notably regarding the conditional trust-enhancing role of disclosure. What distinguishes this contribution from existing integrations, such as those proposed by Boerman (2020) and Lou and Yuan (2019), is the simultaneous positioning of consumer trust as a central mediating variable across the full disclosure-to-purchase chain, combined with the explicit theorization of influencer type as a boundary condition on that mediation. This particular combination has not previously been proposed in the literature in an integrated and formalized form.

Second, this research advances the Persuasion Knowledge Model by specifying the psychological mechanism through which disclosure effects propagate: consumer trust. While prior studies have documented the activating role of disclosure on persuasion knowledge, the role of trust as the central mediating variable, rather than a mere covariate, has remained undertheorized. The proposed model fills this gap, offering a more granular and actionable account of why disclosure sometimes helps and sometimes hurts.

Third, the introduction of influencer type as a moderating variable responds to recent calls in the literature (Appel et al., 2020; Boerman, 2020) for greater contextual specificity in disclosure research. By examining whether disclosure effects differ systematically between micro- and macro-influencers, this study contributes to a more differentiated understanding of the influencer ecosystem.

Fourth, this research makes an explicit methodological contribution by providing a fully documented and transparent literature selection process consistent with PRISMA guidelines. This level of methodological transparency has been notably absent from many narrative reviews in the influencer marketing field. By making the selection logic explicit and reproducible, this study strengthens the replicability of the framework-building process and offers a reference protocol for future integrative reviews in this domain.

5.2 Managerial Implications

On the managerial side, this research challenges the assumption that sponsorship disclosure is a regulatory burden to be minimized. If, as the model predicts, explicit disclosure strengthens consumer trust and thereby improves brand attitude and purchase intention, then proactive

transparency can be reframed as a strategic asset rather than a compliance cost. Several managerial orientations can be derived from the literature:

- The development of a proactive disclosure strategy, integrated from the campaign design phase rather than appended as a regulatory afterthought;
- The alignment of disclosure practices with the influencer's authentic communication style, to maximize the trust-reinforcing effect;
- The differentiation of disclosure strategy according to influencer type, with micro-influencer campaigns particularly well-positioned to leverage the trust-enhancing potential of explicit disclosure;
- The strengthening of governance mechanisms for influencer communications to ensure consistency between declared transparency and actual practices
- The development of culturally adapted disclosure strategies for brands operating in the Moroccan market, where the rapid adoption of Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube among younger urban consumers aged 18 to 34 coexists with a relative absence of regulatory enforcement around commercial transparency in influencer content. In this context, proactive disclosure by influencers may function as a particularly powerful trust signal, precisely because it is not yet mandated or normalized, and is therefore more likely to be perceived by audiences as a genuine act of communicative honesty rather than a formulaic compliance gesture.

These orientations should, however, be interpreted as plausible managerial directions grounded in the literature rather than universally validated prescriptions. Their implementation presupposes a careful balance between communicational authenticity, organizational coherence, and the avoidance of an over-instrumentalization of influencer relationships.

6. Discussion and Limitations

6.1 Critical Discussion

The analyses of this research highlight the relevance of an integrated reading of sponsorship disclosure effects, grounded in the articulation of four complementary theoretical frameworks. Unlike traditional approaches that examine persuasion knowledge activation, influencer credibility, or brand attitude in isolation, this study proposes a processual understanding in which cognitive, relational, and affective dynamics interact in an interdependent manner.

The analysis first confirms the pertinence of the Persuasion Knowledge Model in the influencer marketing disclosure context. Digital platforms constitute spaces where consumers are exposed to commercially camouflaged content, making disclosure simultaneously necessary and potentially counterproductive when it feels obligatory rather than genuine. However, the review suggests an important evolution beyond classical PKM applications: in influencer marketing contexts characterized by strong parasocial relationships, the activation of persuasion knowledge does not systematically produce negative persuasion outcomes. This converges with recent scholarship on organizational authenticity and the credibility of communications in digital environments (Evans et al., 2019; Kim & Kim, 2021).

The study equally highlights the contribution of Source Credibility Theory in accounting for the trust transfer mechanism from influencer to brand. The review suggests that this transfer constitutes a central lever that favors favorable attitude and purchase behaviors. This conclusion converges with multiple studies showing that individuals who strongly trust an influencer are more likely to adopt a favorable attitude toward the brands that influencer endorses. However, the analysis also identifies areas of conceptual uncertainty: the literature sometimes uses the terms trust, credibility, and authenticity interchangeably, even though these constructs refer to distinct theoretical mechanisms. As discussed in Section 2.1.3, we propose that these three constructs be treated as theoretically distinct. Trust designates a generalized expectation that the influencer will act in accordance with the consumer's interests. Credibility refers to a more specific perceptual judgment about the influencer's competence and sincerity as a communicator. Authenticity captures a higher-order evaluation of the perceived congruence between the influencer's public self-presentation and their actual identity and values. Future empirical research should operationalize these constructs with terminological precision to avoid measurement overlap and ensure the internal validity of the mediation tests built into the proposed model.

Beyond its immediate domain, this model carries broader implications for theories of digital persuasion and relationship marketing. The proposition that voluntary transparency can function as a trust-building rather than trust-eroding mechanism challenges foundational assumptions in persuasion theory, which has historically treated the recognition of persuasive intent as predominantly harmful to communicative influence. Viewed through the lens of Service Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), in which value is co-created through relational interactions between brands and consumers, the disclosure-to-trust-to-attitude chain can be read as a micro-level illustration of relational value co-creation. From this perspective, the influencer's act of disclosure is not merely a regulatory compliance signal. It is a relational investment that actively builds the intersubjective conditions for favorable evaluative and behavioral responses. This reframing opens productive avenues for cross-disciplinary dialogue between influencer marketing research and broader theories of organizational communication, digital trust, and relationship quality.

6.2 Limitations and Future Research Directions

This research presents several limitations that should be considered in interpreting the scope of the proposed conceptual model.

First, the reliance on a structured narrative literature review introduces an element of subjectivity in the selection, interpretation, and articulation of the works mobilized. Despite the methodological transparency inspired by the PRISMA protocol, selection biases may persist in the constitution of the analyzed corpus.

Second, the heterogeneity of the cultural, sectoral, and platform-specific contexts of the studies mobilized constitutes an important limitation. The research analyzed comes predominantly from North American and European contexts, which may limit the transferability of the model to the Moroccan context and to the broader Arab-speaking world.

Morocco presents a distinctive socio-cultural configuration: a predominantly young, digitally active population with high mobile internet penetration, a dual linguistic environment (Arabic and French), growing influencer marketing activity concentrated in lifestyle, beauty, fashion, and food categories, and an absence of formal sponsorship disclosure regulation at the national level. These characteristics suggest that the mechanisms proposed in the model, particularly the paradoxical trust-enhancing potential of disclosure, may operate differently than in Western markets where advertising literacy and regulatory exposure are higher.

Third, certain conceptual proximities among trust, credibility, and authenticity may generate risks of theoretical overlap. While this research has attempted to distinguish these constructs clearly, their boundaries remain fluid in the existing literature.

Fourth, the proposed model rests exclusively on theoretical construction and has not been empirically validated at this stage. The relationships identified should therefore be interpreted as conceptual propositions susceptible to confirmation, nuancing, or revision through future research.

Fifth, the model does not account for the platform-specific variations in disclosure norms, interface designs, and algorithmic logics that condition how disclosure is encountered, processed, and interpreted by consumers. The experience of encountering a sponsorship disclosure on TikTok, where sponsored content is embedded within short-form video and algorithmically surfaced, may differ fundamentally from the experience on Instagram or YouTube, where disclosure formats, audience expectations, and content consumption habits diverge considerably. Future research should systematically examine whether and how disclosure effects vary across platforms.

Sixth, the binary categorization of influencer type as micro versus macro, while practically convenient, obscures the considerable heterogeneity that exists within each tier. Nano-influencers and mega-celebrities represent extreme ends of a continuum that the current model does not fully capture. Future research designs using continuous measures of follower count, engagement rate, and perceived authenticity, rather than categorical distinctions, would yield more granular and theoretically informative results.

Against this backdrop, several research directions can be envisioned. Quantitative studies could employ structural equation models to empirically test the direct, indirect, and mediating effects proposed in the conceptual model, with particular attention to the serial mediation mechanism linking disclosure to purchase intention through trust and brand attitude. Qualitative approaches such as case studies or semi-structured interviews with consumers and influencers could explore more finely the lived experiences of disclosure in different relational and cultural contexts. Comparative multi-group studies could examine differences across platform types, product categories, consumer generations, or national contexts, with a particular emphasis on the Moroccan context. The growing influencer marketing ecosystem in Morocco, driven primarily by Instagram and TikTok and sustained by a predominantly young and digitally connected population, offers a particularly relevant empirical terrain for testing the proposed model. Morocco is especially interesting for several interconnected reasons:

rapid growth in influencer marketing activity, a total absence of dedicated disclosure regulation at the national level, high levels of parasocial engagement between local audiences and Moroccan content creators, and cultural values centered on personal trust and interpersonal authenticity that may shape the disclosure-to-trust relationship in ways not yet theorized in the international literature.

7. Conclusion

This research set out to examine the effects of sponsorship disclosure in influencer marketing on consumer trust, brand attitude, and purchase intention. Drawing on a structured narrative literature review, it proposed an integrative conceptual model articulating the Persuasion Knowledge Model, Source Credibility Theory, Parasocial Identity Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behavior.

The proposed model highlights a processual logic in which disclosure operates as a signal shaping consumer trust toward the influencer. This trust subsequently fosters the development of a positive attitude toward the endorsed brand, which in turn drives purchase intention. The strength of this causal chain is conditioned by influencer type, with micro-influencers benefiting from a more pronounced trust-reinforcing effect of disclosure than their macro-counterparts.

The central contribution of this research lies in the proposition of an integrated theoretical framework capable of explaining the interactions among cognitive, relational, and affective dimensions in consumer responses to disclosed sponsored content. This contribution is explicitly integrative in nature rather than theory-generative in the foundational sense. The model does not introduce new theoretical concepts. What it demonstrates is that the combination of four existing and complementary frameworks, when articulated around the mediating centrality of consumer trust, yields a more complete and practically actionable account of disclosure effects than any single framework could provide. The study also contributes to repositioning sponsorship disclosure not merely as a regulatory constraint, but as a potential strategic lever for building consumer trust, positive brand attitude, and purchase intention, provided that disclosure is perceived as authentic and consistent with the influencer's positioning.

This research opens several theoretical and managerial perspectives. On the scientific level, it proposes a multidimensional and systemic reading of the relationships among commercial transparency, trust, and purchase behavior in digital influence environments. On the practical level, it invites brands, influencers, and regulators to consider transparency not as a cost, but as an investment in the relational quality of commercial communication. This invitation is particularly pressing in the Moroccan context. Since 2018, the influencer marketing sector in Morocco has expanded at a sustained pace, propelled by the adoption of Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube among a young, digitally engaged population. Yet the sector remains entirely self-regulated, without formal disclosure requirements comparable to those enforced by the FTC in the United States or the AVMS Directive in the European Union. Moroccan

consumers, who tend to develop strong parasocial attachments to local content creators and who have had limited prior exposure to formal advertising disclosure conventions, represent a population for whom the disclosure-to-trust-to-intention chain may produce dynamics that differ substantially from those documented in Western research contexts. Empirically testing the proposed model within Morocco would therefore serve a dual purpose: it would allow researchers to evaluate the generalizability of the theoretical framework, and it would generate directly actionable insights for Moroccan brands, content creators, and the regulatory bodies currently reflecting on the governance of digital advertising transparency in the country. However, the results must be interpreted with caution given the absence of empirical validation of the proposed model, a limitation that opens the way for future quantitative and qualitative research aimed at testing and deepening the identified relationships.

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