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Information relevance perspective: Boosting market engagement through social influencer-generated content

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Abstract

The businesses are developing dynamically and need brilliant ideas to be sustainable in the market. One of them is using influencers as an effective tool for their marketing activities. Although some studies discuss how influencers are one of the most effective marketing tools, few discuss the relationship between the influencers and social media users. Therefore, businesses must know several factors that may influence this relationship between the two. This study is based on the theory of information relevance. Therefore, the findings have been presented to show the link between influencer-generated content with emotional attachment and the quality of the information in deducing the relationship between influencers and consumers on social media. Results from 230 respondents indicated that influencer-generated content that is interesting, updated, reliable, and understandable to consumers is more able to increase the emotional interest of consumers in the influencers. Reliability and understandability contribute positively to information quality. This encourages the consumer to follow or recommend the influencer to many on social media. This can also boost the popularity of influencers on social media. The study should help researchers and businesses improve their understanding of the social media relationship between influencers and consumers. In addition, it also offers recommendations regarding influencer performance management for businesses.

Introduction

Social media influencers have become significant during this rapidly changing digital era in molding buyer behavior and perception. It leverages a wide reach and personal relationship with the followers to create content that greatly influences user cognition and emotional attachment. As more brands use influencer-generated content to connect with audiences, there is an increased need to consider exactly how this type of content affects users. In Indonesia, a country with a rapidly growing digital landscape and a vibrant social media culture, influencers are crucial in connecting brands with their audiences. The use of social media in Indonesia has experienced rapid development. There were a total of 167 million social media users with 153 million are users over the age of 18, which is 79.5% of the total population (GoodStats, 2023). It has been noticed that many users have risen to fame on social media websites, which is proved by the enormous number of their followers. Influencers are the ones who create useful content and publish it on social media regularly. These kinds of users succeed in attracting lots of followers, and their opinions may influence the purchasing decisions of other users (Lou & Yuan, 2019). As a result, influencers are viewed as more genuine, easy to connect with, and positioned to inspire the decision-making processes of consumers developing emotional bonds (Agustian et al., 2023; Szakal et al., 2024).

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Information disseminated by influencers is highly relevant to Indonesian consumers because they are shaped by diverse cultural, social, and economic backgrounds (Fasya, 2022; Mahy et al., 2022). Influencer marketing has become a key digital strategy, leveraging social media platforms to promote products or brands to highly targeted audiences (Okonkwo & Namkoisse, 2023). Previous research has shown that influencers are one of the most effective ways to reach consumers (Tafesse & Wood, 2021), and marketers prefer influencers with large followings when selecting brand partners (Chopra et al., 2021). Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube have become key battlegrounds for brand-influencer partnerships (Anggraeni et al., 2023), and the rise of short-form video content has strengthened influencers' financial and promotional power (Statista, 2024).

Beyond exposure, influencer endorsements can influence consumer attitudes and purchasing behavior through perceived authenticity and identification (Leung et al., 2022; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Additional research suggests that the effectiveness of influencer-generated content depends not only on message exposure but also on consumer relevance, credibility, novelty, and understanding. For example, Bowen and Ozuem (2019) and Herrando and Martín-De Hoyos (2022) illustrate how the cognitive impact of content depends on how it is framed and processed, which then influences affective responses. People who share personal experiences and identify with similar values form stronger emotional attachment, ultimately leading to increased engagement and self-confidence (Ao et al., 2023; Chan, 2022). Similarly, content relevance leads to sharing and interaction (Chavda & Chauhan, 2024), while interest congruence leads to higher perceived information utility (Belanche et al., 2021). Individuals are more engaged when content relates to their desires or past experiences (Fan et al., 2023; Kim & Kim, 2022; Wang & Huang, 2023), as relevance leads to cognitive processing and affective engagement (Breves, 2023; Hollebeek et al., 2014). However, subsequent research has shown that even if information is novel or interesting, it is not emotionally engaging unless it is perceived as high-quality and credible (Shah et al., 2023; Zaman et al., 2024). Cognitive responses to influencer-generated content are determined by the extent to which the content resonates with the user's experience and expectations (Sijabat et al., 2022). This is particularly important especially in Indonesia because the development of local cultural nuances and regional differences plays a paramount role in shaping consumer perceptions of interaction with digital content (Okonkwo et al., 2023).

To better explain how external stimuli, such as influencer-generated content, influence users' internal states and behavioral responses, this study utilizes the stimulus–organism–response (SOR) model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Here, the stimulus is the informative nature of influencer posts (interesting, novel, reliable, and understandable), the organism is the user's internal psychological state (emotional connection and perceived information quality), and the response is their behavioral plan to follow or support the influencer. This view allows for a systematic examination of how content properties trigger cognitive and affective processes that ultimately influence social media user behavior (Jeong et al., 2022; Rahman, 2024). Furthermore, media richness theory (MRT) by Daft and Lengel (1986) also predicts that richer communication media. Those that convey more cues, provide immediate feedback, and individually frame messages, reduce ambiguity and enhance comprehension. Applied to influencer-generated content, MRT can explain how visually engaging, interactive, and individually framed media can better convey quality information and build stronger emotional bonds (Ishii et al., 2019). Therefore, combining SOR and MRT provides a unified framework for examining how and why influencer content creates user engagement. While the literature on influencer marketing continues to grow, it remains lacking. Most studies examine the influence of influencers on purchase intentions or brand attitudes (Jun & Yi, 2020; Venciute et al., 2023), but few examine how multiple content features simultaneously influence emotional engagement and information quality, especially in developing countries like Indonesia. However, most of these studies also fail to account for the mediating effect of information relevance features on enhancing user engagement and behavioral intentions. Therefore, it remains unclear which content features most motivate users to follow or forward influencers, which are highly significant measures of an influencer's popularity and ongoing engagement.

Addressing this gap, this study aims to (1) examine how the quality of content created by influencers (interestingness, novelty, reliability, and understandability) influences information quality and perceived emotional engagement among users, (2) investigate how information quality and emotional engagement, in turn, influence users' behavioral intentions to follow and recommend influencers, and (3) provide a synthetic framework based on SOR and informed by MRT to explain the interrelationships between content quality, emotional responses, and engagement behavior. The novelty of this study is that it addresses information quality and emotional engagement as competing mechanisms for simultaneously linking content features and user engagement, a feature lacking in the existing literature. By applying information relevance theory within the context of SOR and incorporating media richness variables, this study provides a new conceptual understanding of how influencers can strategically produce content to enhance their credibility, build emotional connections, and strengthen their long-term influence on users.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Theoretical background

This study relies on the stimulus–organism–response (SOR) model by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), which posits that environmental stimuli shape an individual's internal state and thus trigger behavioral responses. The highlights of influencer-generated content attributes such as interestingness, novelty, reliability, and understandability, are treated as the stimuli (S) perceived by users on social media. These stimuli elicit the user's internal cognitive and affective states (O), namely, perceived information quality (cognitive evaluation of the content) and emotional attachment (affective relationship with the influencer). These internal states subsequently influence behavioral responses (R), for example, the user's intention to follow or recommend the influencer. The use of SOR provides a structured approach to examining the psychological processes that influence user engagement behavior through content quality.

To support this model, this study also utilized media richness theory (MRT) by Daft and Lengel (1986), which states that media with greater richness, more cues, instant feedback, and personalization are better at understanding and reducing ambiguity. Content rich in visual, verbal, and emotional cues from influencers is perceived as credible and understandable, enhancing perceived information quality and emotional connection. Therefore, MRT complements the SOR process, arguing why influencer-generated content with higher richness is more effective in improving users' psychological and behavioral outcomes. The combination of SOR and MRT provides a dual explanation for how influencer-generated content goes beyond mere exposure to build emotional connections and engagement intentions.

Finally, this study integrates the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model with media richness theory (MRT) and assesses the stimuli dimension using four aspects of the theory of information relevance by Wilson and Sperber (2015). The theory of information relevance afterwards improved by Xu and Chen (2006), draws several criteria which are interestingness, novelty, reliability, understandability, and topicality to measure the internet content. Following Zhang and Choi (2022), use the first four dimensions as operational stimuli within this research except for topicality because users will self-select influencers who are relevant to their interests. In this study, topicality being excluded. The reason is that topicality is satisfied automatically to a high extent, since users tend to follow influencers whose recent content already matches their interests. Thus, topicality has only limited explanatory value in this sense. These four traits operationalize the stimuli stage of the SOR model, encapsulating the influencer content's attributes that drive user judgements.

Social media influencers (SMIs)

People who maintain contact with social media users to market products to specific consumers are known as social media influencers (Zhang & Choi, 2022). An influencer seeks to build a close community with their audience by consistently sharing positive messages on social media and offering guidance and education to their followers (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Social media influencer

practices are those situations when a brand hires an influencer to advertise their commodities in return for brand benefits. This has proved to be one effective technique in communicating brands with their respective customers (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Marketers always use influencers with huge followings to promote their brands and products. Because, to the extent that follows an influencer, that follows his perceived popularity, the much more trusts opinion leaders, parasocial interactions, and sales culminate in improving their marketing outcomes (Patrício et al., 2024; Yudha, 2023). After all, one could account for an influencer with a large number of followers as an influential advertiser. It therefore applies very comfortably that the number of followers is also the metric marketers apply when considering the extent of an influencer's powers (Lim et al., 2017; Liu & Zheng, 2024).

Stimuli (S): influencer-generated content

Influencer marketing and user-generated content (UGC) have shaped how marketing is done today, especially how consumers make purchase decisions. UGC shapes consumers' perceptions of authentic consumer experiences, demonstrating transparency and the importance of community in digital marketing content (Kohli & Gupta, 2024). UGC ranges from reviews, images, and videos to comments from other users. This lends a sense of authenticity to the site and fosters emotional connections and trust with other users (Christopher & Sibarani, 2024). The nature of online content can also influence consumer perceptions and evaluations (Ki et al., 2020). Visual appeal in brand posts can get shared. This is an indication that among the key drivers of consumer choices and actions, the content seems to come out on top. For instance, rich visuals within the content are negatively related to cognitive engagement but positively to emotional and behavioral engagement. Indeed, previous research already showed that the context of the information influences how well social media content is able to generate user engagement (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021). For example, short videos' content characteristics have significantly influenced consumer engagement (Dong et al., 2023). Moreover, especially for emotional and cognitive engagement, the posts' text length weakens this relationship (Zhao et al., 2023), especially for emotional and cognitive engagement. Consistent with the SOR model, influencer-generated content features act as stimuli that elicit cognitive (information quality) and affective (emotional attachment) responses. Consistent with IRT and past research on influencer marketing, the following hypotheses are developed in this research.

Interestingness

According to Chu et al. (2013), interest can be described as an attribute of the object, an expression of the interested receptivity of the user to the object, an emotion, or simply a behavioral and psychological response. As authenticity has become more important and relevant to brands, professional communicators, and social media users, it would appear that digital communication now rules the world (Zaman et al., 2024). Hence, in the light of relevant literature, review how the interest level of the content of the influencer's message influences emotional attachment:
H_{1a}: Interestingness significantly influences information quality.
H_{1b}: Interestingness significantly influences emotional attachment.

Novelty

According to self-determination theory, the desire for novelty is considered a fundamental psychological demand (González-Cutre et al., 2016). Novelty means that the information is perceived by the users as new or different from what is already known (Xu & Chen, 2006). Based on this, the current study attempts to develop a new novelty measure in need of satisfaction. According to the literature on psychology, novelty-seeking may be considered a type of intrinsic motivation for humans (Harrigan et al., 2012; Morris et al., 2022). If the content created by the influencers had been something already known to the people, it would not lead to any cognitive change. The novelty contribution towards estimating the popularity of a blog post is by predicting the number of comments a fresh blog post is expected to attract (Carmel et al., 2012). Drawing

consumer attention would be easier if novel content was published on social media since it is always attracted by unique and unusual information. Based on the foregoing, this study propose:
H2a: Novelty significantly influences information quality.
H2b: Novelty significantly influences emotional attachment.

Reliability

Reliability refers to how much the information is perceived to be true, factual, accurate, or credible (Xu & Chen, 2006). The nature of content that an influencer produces is normally based on personal experiences or expert knowledge (Rundin & Colliander, 2021). Readers are more likely to embrace and pay greater attention to content-or rather, the influencer-if they perceive the influencer's content as authentic and trustworthy (Coutinho et al., 2023). More reliable information might be more effective and credible than unreliable information, as it could decrease the confusion consumers perceive about the information, increasing the persuasiveness of the latter (Sui & Zhang, 2021). Obviously, people would yield more to information from a highly reliable rather than a low-reliability source (Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2021). Therefore, postulates the following hypothesis:
H_{3a}: Reliability significantly influences information quality.
H_{3b}: Reliability significantly influences emotional attachment.

Understandability

Understandability refers to the level at which people think the material is easy to read and comprehend (Xu & Chen, 2006). Information that is hard to be understood tends to confuse consumers, while information that is easy to grasp is preferred over information perceived to be difficult to understand (Britton et al., 1978). However, due to the fact that influencer-generated content is an information source for users who entertain and educate themselves, it can be logically assumed that positive emotions may make the content easier to read and comprehend by the users. Emotional connections may be improved both for users and influencers (Wu & Yu, 2022; Zhang & Choi, 2022). Based on the above, we presented the following hypotheses:
H_{4a}: Understandability significantly influences information quality.
H_{4b}: Understandability significantly influences emotional attachment.

Organism (O): information quality and emotional attachment

Information quality

Information quality (IQ) refers to users' perception of the adequacy, accuracy, and consistency of online information (Wang & Yan, 2022). Social media content generated by followers is evaluated by followers based on its quality and sufficiency in guiding decision-making (Lee & Eastin, 2021). Current studies indicate that high-quality information reduces uncertainty, increases user satisfaction, and strengthens trust towards opinion leaders (Melovic et al., 2020; Tran & Uehara, 2023). In influencer marketing, high-quality content facilitates higher-order cognitive processing and favorably influences brand and influencer assessments (Belanche et al., 2021; Jiang et al., 2022). Perceived information quality is thus an underlying cognitive state that motivates both emotional attachment with influencers and long-term participation behaviors (Zaman et al., 2024).

Emotional attachment

Emotional attachment (EA), according to attachment theory by Bowlby (1982), refers to the intense affective bond people form with others, objects, or entities that meet their needs. While first theorized in the caregiver in child context, the concept has been extended to brands, virtual publics, and online influencers (Dwivedi et al., 2019). Emotional attachment in influencer marketing occurs when consumers experience authenticity, closeness, and shared values in the communication of influencers (Putri & Putra, 2024; Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo, 2021). These connections have an impact on loyalty, purchase intention, and word-of-mouth behavior

and are therefore a significant emotional state within the SOR model (Liu & Zheng, 2024; Zhang & Choi, 2022). Based on the foregoing, therefore, this study hypothesizes the following:
H_5: Information quality significantly influences emotional attachment.

Response (R): continuance to follow the influencers and intention to recommend the influencers

Continuance to follow the influencers

Continuance defined as an intention of users to maintain an ongoing relationship with a digital platform, service, or content provider. In social media influencers, it refers to followers' intention to persist in engaging with the influencer by viewing their content, subscribing to updates, or experiencing a parasocial relationship (Su et al., 2021). The prior work suggests that continuance intention is driven by cognitive appraisals (e.g., credibility, quality of information) and affective bonds (e.g., attachment, trust) (Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo, 2021). Hence, within the SOR framework, continuity intention is a behavioral response, where in the lasting impact of content cues and organismic states on followers' extended involvement is modeled.

Intention to recommend the influencers

Intention to recommend the influencer is the willingness to recommend or endorse an influencer to others, frequently word-of-mouth or online sharing behavior. On social media, the response reflects a deeper engagement, as fans not only continue to consume influencer content but even proceed to share it with their networks (Naeem et al., 2025). This measure is in alignment with previous studies that established emotional attachment and perceived content quality to affect referral behavior and subsequently enhance the reach and credibility of the influencer (Jun & Yi, 2020; Putri & Putra, 2024). Recommendation intention, thus, is another best behavioral response in the SOR model.

Both mentioned above are theorized here as behavioral responses (O) within the SOR model, indicating how input from external to the individual and states from internal to the individual ultimately emerge as follower action. Furthermore, the hypothesis proposed are below:
H_{6a}: Information quality significantly influences continuance to follow the influencer.
H_{6b}: Information quality significantly influences intention to recommend the influencer.
H_{7a}: Emotional attachment significantly influences continuance to follow the influencer.
H_{7b}: Emotional attachment significantly influences intention to recommend the influencer.

Research Methods

Research design

This study employed a quantitative with survey-based design, were to empirically test the conceptual model based on the stimulus–organism–response (SOR) model and media richness theory (MRT) guidance, as presented in Figure 1. The model indicates that the qualities of influencer-generated content such as interestingness, novelty, reliability, and understandability as the Stimulus (S) to affects users' cognitive and affective states as the Organism (O), represented by information quality and emotional attachment. These states, in turn, affect behavioral consequences as the Response (R), such as continuance to follow the influencers and intention to recommend the influencers. For the validation of this model, the constructs were operationalized with existing scales from prior research, measured with a structured questionnaire, and tested using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM).

Sampling and respondents

The sample population was Indonesian social media users who actively follow at least one social media influencer. The respondents were sampled by using a non-probability purposive sampling approach since prior exposure to content created by an influencer is required. An online survey was developed and distributed via Google Forms and shared with Instagram and WhatsApp

networks. It was voluntary and anonymous. To achieve wider coverage and reduce selection bias, a snowballing technique was also used by requesting first-time respondents to disseminate the survey link among their contacts. The 296 respondents were obtained in total. After data cleansing and removal of missing or inadmissible cases, 230 valid replies were retained for analysis. This sample was ample enough for partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) and way above the threshold of 10 times the largest number of structural paths to any construct (Hair et al., 2019).

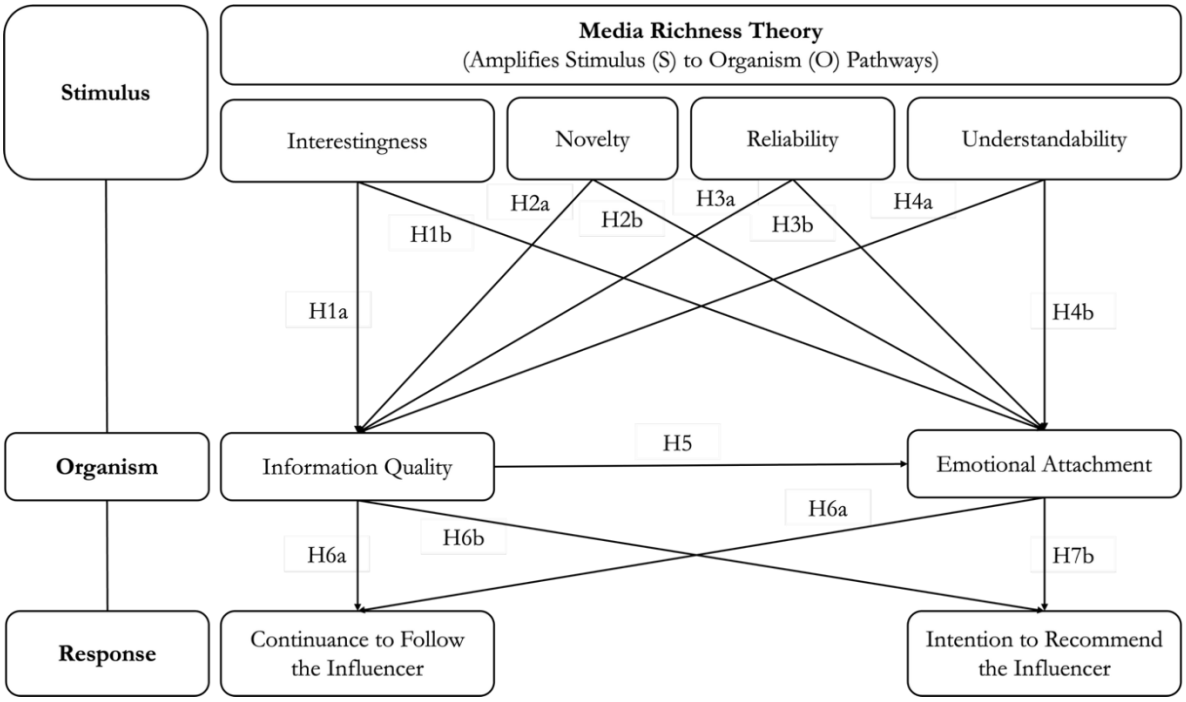

Figure 1. Research Framework
Source: Adapted from Zhang and Choi (2022)

Data collection process

Data were collected over a five-months between February until June 2024, through a self-administered online based survey constructed using Google Forms. A pretest of ten respondents was conducted to determine item clarity and reliability. Responses that failed to meet the inclusion criteria (such as exposed by influencer-generated content on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube) were excluded from the dataset. There were 230 valid responses included for analysis.

Questionnaire design

The survey included three parts:

1) Filter questions to determine eligibility, asking about the platforms they use to follow influencers and got exposed by the influencer-generated content, how much time they spend on influencer content, and their preferred categories of content.
2) Demographics, such as gender, age, and level of education.
3) Study construct measurement items: interestingness, novelty, reliability, understandability, information quality, emotional attachment, continuance to follow the influencers, and intention to recommend the influencers. All of the constructs' items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree").

Measurement instruments

All the measures were adopted from available scales in prior studies by Zhang and Choi (2022). The items were translated into Bahasa Indonesia and back-translated into English for linguistic accuracy. Face validity was secured through the results of the pretest (Table 1).

Table 1. Research Instruments

Constructs	Items
Interestingness (INT)	Influencer-generated content is enjoyable. Influencer-generated content is engaging. I like influencer-generated content.
Novelty (NOV)	Influencer-created content is unique. There's a lot of new information in influencer-generated content. Influencer-generated content contains a lot of information I previously unaware of. Influencer-generated content satisfies my curiosity.
Reliability (REL)	I find influencer-generated content accurate. I find influencer-generated content consistent with established facts. I find influencer-generated content reliable.
Understandability (UND)	Influencer-generated content is easy to understand. Influencer-generated content is easy to interpret. Influencer-generated content is easy to read.
Information Quality (INF)	I am satisfied with the quality of the information in influencer-generated content. Influencer-generated content can provide exactly what I need. The content generated by the influencer can provide me with the information I need accurately.
Emotional Attachment (EMO)	I feel emotionally connected to influencers. I am very attached to influencers. Influencers are special to me. I miss influencers when they don't post content or when I can't see their posts.
Continuance to Follow The Influencers (CON)	I anticipate continuing to follow this influencer. I intend to continue following this influencer in the near future. I tend to seek out new content posted by this influencer.
Intention to Recommend The Influencers (INTENT)	I will refer this influencer to others. I will say positive things about this influencer to others. This influencer is someone I would recommend to others.

Source: Authors elaboration

Data analysis methods

The study employed partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to test both the measurement and structural models due to their suitability for complex models with multiple constructs and their predictive capability. The tests were run with the use of SmartPLS 3.0. Reliability tests, convergent validity, and discriminant validity tests were carried out prior to the hypothesis testing.

Results and Discussion

Respondents' demographics

In all, 230 answers were collected. Of the respondents, 43.04% % belonged to respondents who ever watch influencer content from TikTok, 38.26% from Instagram, and 18.7% from YouTube. We Are Social (2024) cited TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube as the most used social networking sites with the most consumed time in Indonesia. Regarding influencer marketing, though, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are arguably the most comprehensive and widespread social media outlets being applied. In duration to watch influencers' content, 38.26% of respondent mostly spend more than an hour. 36.96% of respondents spend 30 minutes – an hour to watch. The remaining, 24.78% of respondents, only spent the time less than 30 minutes watching the content. The categories of respondents' interests vary. Here is the recapitulation of some categories of contents with sum of

the respondents (Table 2). By gender, it dominated by female in frequency of 145 (63.04%) and male 85 in frequency (36.96%). The education background of the respondents dominated by diploma and undergraduate as it mentioned 145 in frequency (63.04%). Followed by respondents with high school education background in 71 of frequency (30.87%), and graduate / postgraduate education background in frequency of 14 (6.09%). In age, in order reported respondents belong to 20-29 years old (46.52%), 10-19 years old (36.09%), 40-49 years old (9.57%), and 30-39 years old (7.83%). The respondents' demographics summarize in Table 1.

Table 2. Respondents Demographics

Measures	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	85	36.96
	Female	145	63.04
Education	High School	71	30.87
	Diploma/Undergraduate	145	63.04
	Graduate/Postgraduate	14	6.09
Age	10-19 years old	83	36.09
	20-29 years old	107	46.52
	30-39 years old	18	7.83
	40-49 years old	22	9.57
Time spent on influencers' posts per day	< 30 minutes	57	24.78
	30 minutes – 1 hour	85	36.96
	> 1 hours	88	38.26
Social media platform respondents mostly use to follow influencers	Instagram	88	38.26
	TikTok	99	43.04
	YouTube	43	18.7
Content preferences	Music	121	19.8
	Sports	38	6.22
	Game	72	11.78
	Film	95	15.55
	Fitness	20	3.27
	News	45	7.36
	Product reviews	64	10.47
	Live streaming	23	3.76
	Study	41	6.71
	Vicarious experience video (travel, food, etc.)	92	15.06

Source: Data processing, 2025

There is a correlation between the participants' answers concerning the categories of influencers to better understand the results of this research. Based on Zhang and Choi (2022) influencers works on some categories such as music, sports, game, film, fitness, news, product reviews, live streaming, study, and vicarious experience video (travel, food, etc.). All categories applied in this research, and results vary. It can be obtained from the results that the influencers in the music category had a higher percentage, which is 19.8 %, while that of the film was 15.55 %, and the game had 11.78 %. This reflects that the participants have different types of interests. This might be, in addition, since the age group of 20–29 added up to a big portion of the survey. Younger Indonesian has a strong affinity for influencers of their age regarding their interests and activities (Erwin et al., 2023; Fisu et al., 2024). Influencers have become quite influential and impactful as the preferences of the younger generation in Indonesia to purchase any products (Huwaida et al., 2024). The present research has adopted partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) to test the research models with associated hypotheses. PLS-SEM can confirm an instrument's construct validity and analyse the structural relationships between the constructs (Hair & Alamer, 2022). Besides, it is assumed to be an effective method for analyzing composite-based

path models. Therefore, PLS-SEM can be more appropriate for model estimation in this exploratory research. The analyses were done using the SmartPLS software, with the two-staged data analysis models based on PLS-SEM: the measurement and structural models.

Data analysis

Measurement model assessment

The first step in testing the measurement model was assessing item loadings on respective constructs to evaluate the indicator reliability. Secondly, the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha for every construct were evaluated to test internal consistency. Thirdly, convergent validity was checked by calculating AVE values for every construct. Discriminant validity was assessed using the correlations' HTMT ratio.

Table 3. Result of Measurement Model Assessment

Constructs	Items	Indicator-Loadings	VIF	CA	rho_A	CR	AVE
Interestingness (INT)	INT1	0.884	2.267	0.859	0.869	0.914	0.780
	INT2	0.878	2.291				
	INT3	0.887	2.011				
Novelty (NOV)	NOV1	0.833	1.789	0.851	0.861	0.899	0.691
	NOV2	0.871	2.488				
	NOV3	0.822	2.102				
	NOV4	0.797	1.724				
Reliability (REL)	REL1	0.907	2.690	0.894	0.896	0.934	0.825
	REL2	0.905	2.674				
	REL3	0.913	2.651				
Understandability (UND)	UND1	0.885	2.164	0.850	0.850	0.909	0.769
	UND2	0.882	2.221				
	UND3	0.863	1.899				
Information quality (INF)	INF1	0.812	1.676	0.833	0.846	0.900	0.750
	INF2	0.892	2.255				
	INF3	0.890	2.117				
Emotional attachment (EMO)	EMO1	0.743	1.493	0.835	0.837	0.891	0.671
	EMO2	0.859	2.450				
	EMO3	0.844	2.390				
	EMO4	0.827	1.814				
Continuance to follow the influencers (CON)	CON1	0.920	3.140	0.869	0.876	0.920	0.794
	CON2	0.916	2.972				
	CON3	0.835	1.800				
Intention to recommend the influencers (INTENT)	INTENT1	0.859	2.084	0.863	0.869	0.917	0.786
	INTENT2	0.870	2.204				
	INTENT3	0.929	2.999				

Source: Data processing, 2025

Confirmatory factor analysis was performed using partial least squares-based structural equation modeling. The predictive validity of the study and the capability to test complex models along with both formative and reflective elements justified the selection of methodology (Jeon et al., 2019). Construct validity and reliability should be measured by applying these three following measures (Hair et al., 2019). The loadings on each indicator factor must be greater than 0.7. Therefore, the CA, rho A, and CR values must be above the 0.7 threshold. The AVE must be checked against a minimum reference standard of 0.5 (Cheah et al., 2023). The loadings on each indicator exceeded the minimum standard of 0.7. Every construct's dependability was satisfied as its CR and CA values were above 0.7. In every construct, the AVE value is greater than the threshold value of 0.5.

Table 4. HTMT Assessment for Testing Discriminant Validity

	CON	EMO	INF	INT	INTENT	NOV	REL	UND
CON								
EMO	0.701							
INF	0.725	0.505						
INT	0.570	0.354	0.612					
INTENT	0.789	0.552	0.755	0.606				
NOV	0.501	0.317	0.719	0.794	0.595			
REL	0.480	0.527	0.637	0.514	0.587	0.641		
UND	0.526	0.248	0.704	0.660	0.694	0.710	0.533	

Note. CON: Continuance to follow the influencers, EMO: Emotional attachment, INF: Information quality, INTENT: Intention to recommend the influencers, NOV: Novelty, REL: Reliability, UND: Understandability

Source: Data processing, 2025

Discriminant validity can be assessed by the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlation, Fornell & Larcker criterion, and cross-loading of the indicator. The HTMT ratio's allowable value is below the 0.85 threshold. All values fell below the 0.85 cut-off mark, thus satisfying the discriminant validity conditions (Cheung et al., 2024). Table 3 has other information.

Structural model assessment

Multicollinearity must be studied first before investigating the structural relationships. Because it may lead to biased regression results, multicollinearity must be assured to have a negligible effect (Hair et al., 2019). The variance factor can be used to identify the latter. Each VIF value in the predictor structure of the research model, as shown in Table 3, has a value that is less than the threshold of 5.0. SmartPLS was used to compute the R^2 and Q^2 values through bootstrapping and blindfolding processes to assess the model's explanatory power and prediction accuracy. R^2 values of endogenous constructs, R^2 corrected, and Q^2 are provided in Table 5. The R^2 explains the percentage variance explained by independent constructs of the model. In other words, the variance explanation can be measured for each endogenous factor. According to Hair and Alamer (2022), the critical R^2 score is well above 0.20. The results showed that content attributes of interestingness, novelty, reliability and understandability explained 28.0 % in the variance of emotional attachment. Understandability and interestingness were significant antecedents. Also, the dependability and comprehensibility of the content account for approximately 45.1% variation in the information quality. However, emotional attachment and content quality account for 52.5% of the intentions to keep following or follow an influencer and 46.5% of the intentions to recommend them. Q^2 was used in the present work to check the predictive relevance of exogenous components. In the case of $Q^2 > 0$, it suggests that with positive values of Q^2, endogenous constructs have developed to a degree of predictive relevance suitable for the study model (Abbasi et al., 2021).

Table 5. R2, R2 Adjusted, and Q2

	R^2	R^2 Adjusted	Q^2
INF	0.500	0.491	0.359
EMO	0.281	0.265	0.169
CON	0.525	0.521	0.410
INTENT	0.466	0.461	0.360

Source: Data processing, 2025

The magnitude of the path coefficients was estimated in SmartPLS using 5,000 subsamples to establish the structural validity of the model based on a bootstrapping approach. The values of p and t will be provided after testing the hypothesis. Table 6 below describes how the data are collated and explains the casual relationship between constructs and the hypothesis test. According

to Kamranfar et al. (2023), the path coefficient is significant at a level of 5% significance when the empirical t-value of the two indicators is greater than the threshold value of 1.96.

Table 6. Structural Relationships and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficients	t-statistics	P-values	Decision
H1a	INT → INF	0.077	1.006	0.315	Rejected
H1b	INT → EMO	0.159	1.502	0.134	Rejected
H2a	NOV → INF	0.255	3.895	0.000	Accepted
H2b	NOV → EMO	-0.146	1.360	0.174	Rejected
H3a	REL → INF	0.234	2.585	0.010	Accepted
H3b	REL → EMO	0.361	5.318	0.000	Accepted
H4a	UND → INF	0.291	4.330	0.000	Accepted
H4b	UND → EMO	-0.155	1.778	0.076	Rejected
H5	INF → EMO	0.327	4.649	0.000	Accepted
H6a	INF → CON	0.448	7.873	0.000	Accepted
H6b	INF → INTENT	0.544	8.654	0.000	Accepted
H7a	EMO → CON	0.410	7.975	0.000	Accepted
H7b	EMO → INTENT	0.241	4.127	0.000	Accepted

Note. CON: Continuance to follow the influencers, EMO: Emotional attachment, INF: Information quality, INTENT: Intention to recommend the influencers, NOV: Novelty, REL: Reliability, UND: Understandability
Source: Data processing, 2025

Stimulus: information quality

Among the four content features tested, novelty, reliability, and understandability exhibited strong positive impacts on information quality perception, but interestingness did not. More specifically, novelty ($\beta = 0.255$, $p < 0.001$), reliability ($\beta = 0.234$, $p = 0.010$), and understandability ($\beta = 0.291$, $p < 0.001$) were found to be key determinants in how the audience perceives the overall quality of influencer content. On the contrary, interestingness ($\beta = 0.077$, $p = 0.315$) was not significant in influencing information quality, meaning that attention-grabbing or fun content is not sufficient without depth.

Stimulus: emotional attachment

As a direct predictor of emotional attachment, reliability was the only variable that emerged as significant ($\beta = 0.361$, $p < 0.001$). Interestingness ($\beta = 0.159$, $p = 0.134$), novelty ($\beta = -0.146$, $p = 0.174$), and understandability ($\beta = -0.155$, $p = 0.076$) did not provide significant predictions. In fact, novelty and understandability had weak negative coefficients, indicating that while novelty or understandability on content can educate audiences, it does not necessarily build emotional attachment. These findings further emphasize the important role of credibility and trust in building strong emotional attachment with influencers.

Organism: behavioral responses (response stage)

Information quality and emotional attachment strongly predicted behavioral intentions, but with varying strengths. Information quality had the greatest influence on continuance to follow the influencer ($\beta = 0.448$, $p < 0.001$) and intention to recommend the influencer ($\beta = 0.544$, $p < 0.001$). Emotional attachment also had a positive effect, with a significant effect on continuance to follow the influencer ($\beta = 0.410$, $p < 0.001$) and intention to recommend the influencer ($\beta = 0.241$, $p < 0.001$). While both variables were significant, these findings suggest that people's perceptions of information quality are a more effective predictor of long-term engagement and advocacy than emotional attachment alone.

Information quality is the most basic construct, to which novelty, reliability, and understandability are determinants. Reliability is the only content attribute to actively build emotional attachment. Interestingness predicts neither quality nor emotional bonds and therefore

surface-level attractiveness is not enough to force more profound interaction. Behavioral intentions such as continuance to follow and intention to recommend the influencers are best explained by a combination of information quality and emotional attachment, with quality playing the larger role.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the influence of influencer-generated content, viewed in light of stimulus–organism–response (SOR) theory and based on media richness theory (MRT), in driving consumer emotional attachment and involvement of behaviors within the Indonesian market. The study was specifically interested in four dimensions of content relevance such as interestingness, novelty, reliability, and understandability, and how these are interwoven with information quality, emotional attachment, and two key outcomes: continuance intention to follow the influencers and intention to recommend the influencers.

The findings show that interestingness has no significant effect on information quality or emotional attachment. This contradicts earlier literature that suggested that consumers' curiosity and entertainment content can enhance engagement (Belanche et al., 2021; Zaman et al., 2024). With the SOR approach, interestingness as a stimulus did not correspond to more intense organism stage (information quality or emotional attachment). The lack of applicability of interest and understandability to forecasting emotional bonding means entertainment and message clarity likely won't be sufficient to establish affective bonds with influencers (Rizvanović et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2025). This is because content saturation on Indonesian social media platforms, where users are exposed to always entertaining and easily comprehensible content, leads to desensitization. Another possible reason is that Indonesian social media users are continuously being flooded with interesting content, so interestingness in and of itself isn't sufficient for more complete cognitive or affective processing (Dahlqvist & Persson, 2023). MRT is further suggest that richness depends not only on content attractiveness but also on its ability to reduce uncertainty and provide clarity, which attractiveness is not necessarily in a position to do.

The further results confirm that novelty significantly influences the informativeness of information quality but not the emotional attachment. This contributes to current research of Breves (2023) and González-Cutre et al. (2016), which indicates that new or novel content is more likely to create reports of informativeness and credibility and enhance the cognitive component of the organism. However, novelty does not entail emotional attachment on its own, perhaps due to the fact that new content may trigger curiosity but not confidence or emotional attachment (Niehoff & Oosterwijk, 2020).

The limited effect of novelty on emotional attachment allows new content to be engaging, but it may not necessarily build deeper relational connections unless authenticity and trust are present. From an MRT perspective, novelty enriches communication channels by reducing redundancy and generating novel signals, but it may lack the interpersonal salience needed to trigger engagement. These findings suggest that emotional attachment relies more on relational and credibility cues than on the content itself.

Reliability significantly impacts information quality and emotional attachment, corroborating previous studies linking credibility and trustworthiness as foundations of influencer expertise (Coutinho et al., 2023; Xu & Chen, 2006). In the SOR model, reliability is a powerful stimulus that reinforces both cognitive (information quality) and affective (emotional attachment). Hasan et al. (2024) and Liao and Chen (2024) note that reinforcement in both directions highlights the importance of influencer authenticity and competence in building long-term engagement. MRT is not surprising, as authentic content eliminates uncertainty and ambiguity, allowing followers to perceive information with greater confidence and emotional resonance.

Understandability does not play a significant role in emotional attachment, but it does significantly influence information quality. This means that information must be understandable and uncomplicated for cognitive measurement, but this alone is not sufficient to create emotional attachment (Alvarez-Monzoncillo, 2022; Eilert & Buchheim, 2023). Previous research has highlighted that processing ease reduces cognitive load and strengthens persuasion by Herrando and Martín-De Hoyos (2022) and Wu and Yu (2022), which aligns with this study findings on

information quality. However, affective closeness appears to require additional insight into relational cues such as empathy, storytelling, or sincerity to accompany message congruence (Bai et al., 2025; Salman et al., 2023). These findings demonstrate the fallacy of influencer research that equates cognitive ease with affective closeness.

The strong positive relationship between information quality and emotional attachment demonstrates the role of high-quality information in building consumer-influencer relationships. This is in line with (Zaman et al., 2024), who demonstrated that when content is perceived as accurate, adequate, and relevant, it triggers trust and affective commitment. Information quality is an organismal state that mediates SOR, transforming external stimuli into stronger emotional effects. MRT also implies that rich, high-quality messages reduce uncertainty, thereby enabling users to develop additional emotional attachment.

Contributions and research novelty

With the addition of SOR and MRT, this study makes the following contributions to knowledge. It demonstrates that each aspect of information relevance is not equally effective in influencing responses, with understandability and reliability being greater than novelty and interestingness in influencing user responses. This finding contrasts with previous research that suggests all relevance dimensions have equal effects (Ecker et al., 2022; Zhang & Choi, 2022). This study highlights the dual importance of cognitive (information quality) and affective (emotional attachment) processes, illustrating their complementary effects on intention. Finally, this study contextualizes these dynamics within Indonesia's rapidly changing social media society, with findings revealing that cultural and informational needs shape the effectiveness of influencer-generated content differently than in other industries.

Conclusion and Implications

This study investigates the significance of the dimensions of interestingness, novelty, reliability, and understandability in shaping consumers' perceptions of information quality, emotional attachment with influencer-generated content, and resulting consumer behavioral intentions. Findings indicate that understandability and reliability best predict information quality, and that information quality and reliability significantly enhance emotional attachment. Emotional attachment and information quality are also shown to have a beneficial impact on continuance to follow the influencer and intention to recommend the influencer, reflecting the cognitive (information quality) and affective (emotional attachment) channels through which long-term interactions with influencers are organized. Meanwhile, interestingness, novelty, and understandability do not influence emotional attachment, suggesting that these content qualities alone are not sufficient to generate closer relational relationships with influencers.

The results of this study complement the stimulus–organism–response (SOR) model with a concrete process through which influencer-generated content features are conveyed to consumer behavioral intentions. Specifically, this study determines that cognitive appraisal (information quality) and affective bond (emotional attachment) are independent but complementary organism states that shape long-term responses. By integrating media richness theory (MRT), this study has determined that information quality and reliability provide richer communication cues than novelty or interestingness, which benefits the theory in determining that surface appeal is inferior to message credibility in forming consumer-influencer bonds messages.

Practically, this study provides direct insights into influencer marketing behavior. Brands and influencers need to focus on providing credible, reliable, and transparent information, as it plays a significant role in improving information quality and building future consumer loyalty. While interestingness and novelty can generate short-term attention, they are not ideal indicators of emotional attachment. Therefore, managers should focus on establishing credibility and authenticity through genuine endorsements, open messaging, and transparency. Furthermore, improving information quality and emotional attachment with followers has the potential to increase the sustainability of word-of-mouth intentions and commitments to follow or recommend influencers.

These insignificant results have important implications for managers. The fact that interesting and novelty do not influence emotional closeness and engagement suggests that engaging with content that is entertaining or innovative is not enough to foster strong relationships between influencers and consumers. Understanding, while crucial for mental processing, is not always synonymous with emotional intimacy. This study demonstrates that engagement tactics go beyond simply attracting attention and focus more on relationship depth, honesty, and building trust. Managers are encouraged to prioritize creativity and credibility with content that not only engages viewers but also engages them in a broader relationship.

Limitations and future research

Despite its findings, this study has several limitations that provide valuable directions for future research. First, the cross-sectional survey design requires consumer attitudes to be measured at a single point in time, preventing causality from being inferred. Because relationships between influencers and consumers take time to develop, future research could employ longitudinal or experimental designs to better capture differences in engagement behavior over time. Second, this study used self-report data from a web-based survey. While common in social media research, this type of data is generally susceptible to response bias. Future research would be stronger by complementing self-report data with behavioral measures such as actual user behavior (likes, shares, comments, and time spent interacting) to better understand consumer intentions. Third, this study was conducted with Indonesian social media users and yielded some interesting cultural observations, but with the caveat that its applicability to other settings is limited. Given the variation in internet usage and cultural values across countries, future comparative research could explore how information relevance and media richness play a role in different cultural or geographic contexts. Cross-cultural understanding would enhance theoretical and managerial insights.

Finally, several variables such as interestingness, novelty, and understandability were unable to predict emotional attachment. While this study clarifies explanations at an abstract level, it may be important for future research to examine potential moderating variables such as user personality, platform type, or the strength of parasocial relationships. This would likely allow future studies to determine in advance under what conditions the beauty and novelty of content translate into stronger emotional attachment. This study addresses an area that requires more diverse methods, broader cultural contexts, and a more in-depth exploration of moderation processes. Closing this gap will not only enhance the use of SOR and MRT in influencer marketing studies but also enable practitioners to develop more effective strategies that meet the requirements for collaboration, credibility, persuasiveness, and maintained relationship depth.

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