

## Self-Disclosure Enhances the Mitigating Role of Parasocial Relationships in Influencer-Brand Incongruence

Ágnes Buvár, Nikolett Kalóz, Mirkó Gáti, Andrea Dúll & Ágnes Zsila

To cite this article: Ágnes Buvár, Nikolett Kalóz, Mirkó Gáti, Andrea Dúll & Ágnes Zsila (01 Jun 2026): Self-Disclosure Enhances the Mitigating Role of Parasocial Relationships in Influencer-Brand Incongruence, Journal of Interactive Advertising, DOI: [10.1080/15252019.2026.2656658](https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2026.2656658)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2026.2656658>



© 2026 The Author(s). Published with license by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.



[View supplementary material](#)



Published online: 01 Jun 2026.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)

# Self-Disclosure Enhances the Mitigating Role of Parasocial Relationships in Influencer-Brand Incongruence

Ágnes Buvár<sup>a</sup> , Nikolett Kalóz<sup>b</sup>, Mirkó Gáti<sup>c</sup> , Andrea Dúll<sup>a,d</sup>  and Ágnes Zsila<sup>b,e</sup> 

<sup>a</sup>Institute of People-Environment Transaction, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary; <sup>b</sup>Institute of Psychology, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary; <sup>c</sup>Institute of Marketing and Communication Sciences, Corvinus University of Budapest, Budapest, Hungary; <sup>d</sup>Budapest University of Technology and Economics, Budapest, Hungary; <sup>e</sup>Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest, Hungary

## ABSTRACT

Parasocial relationships represent a key mechanism in influencer marketing success. Beyond their direct positive effects on persuasion outcomes, they may mitigate potential negative effects, such as incongruence between the influencer and the advertised brand. Yet prior findings are somewhat unclear regarding the conditions under which parasocial relationships exert this mitigating role. This study examined the moderating effect of self-disclosure, defined as the sharing of intimate personal information. A total of 304 respondents (58.3% women,  $M_{\text{age}} = 25.3$  years,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 9.36$ ) participated in a between-subject online field experiment conducted in collaboration with a fitness micro-influencer on Instagram. A moderated mediation model was tested. Results showed that including self-disclosure in the post enhanced the mitigating role of parasocial relationships: respondents with stronger parasocial relationships did not perceive the influencer as less trustworthy when influencer-brand congruence was lower, whereas respondents with weaker parasocial relationships did. Moreover, when self-disclosure was absent, no interaction effect between parasocial relationships and influencer-brand congruence was found. Theoretical and practical implications for influencer marketing are discussed.

## KEYWORDS



Influencer-brand congruence; influencer marketing; purchase intent; self-disclosure; trustworthiness

## Introduction

Influencer marketing, defined as brands compensating social media influencers for posting sponsored content on their accounts and newsfeeds, is thriving. A social media influencer's typical post, even the sponsored ones, often contains personal details, which is a form of self-disclosure (De Veirman, Cauberghe, Hudders 2017; Evans et al. 2017; Hudson and Hudson 2006). This personal touch makes influencer marketing special and effective because it nurtures the unique relationship that influencers build with their primary audience (Hudders et al. 2021).

Indeed, social media influencers share personal information about themselves, including intimate and


often highly confidential details about their lives (Kim and Song 2016), to increase perceived intimacy and establish a close relationship with their followers, forming strong parasocial connections with the audience. Parasocial relationships are described as long-term, one-sided emotional and communicative bonds that viewers form with a media person (Dibble, Hartmann, and Rosaen 2016; Rubin and McHugh 1987). Previous research demonstrated the positive effect of parasocial relationships on persuasion outcomes of sponsored posts (Farivar et al. 2021; Wei et al. 2022). The present study focuses on the interplay among self-disclosure, parasocial relationships, and influencer-brand congruence on the persuasive impact of influencer posts.

**CONTACT** Mirkó Gáti  [mirko.gati@uni-corvinus.hu](mailto:mirko.gati@uni-corvinus.hu)  Institute of Marketing and Communication Sciences, Corvinus University of Budapest, Budapest, Hungary  
Ágnes Buvár (Ph.D. in Communication, Corvinus University of Budapest) is a Research Fellow at the Institute of People-Environment Transactions, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University.

Nikolett Kalóz (MA in Counseling and School Psychology, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University) is a school psychologist and a counseling psychologist in private practice.  
Mirkó Gáti (Ph.D. in Management and Organization Sciences, Corvinus University of Budapest) is an Associate Professor at the Institute of Marketing and Communication Sciences, in the Department of Digital Marketing, Corvinus University of Budapest.

Andrea Dúll (Ph.D., Institute of Psychology of ELTE Eötvös Loránd University) is a Full Professor at the Institute of People-Environment Transactions, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, and in the Department of Sociology and Communication, Budapest University of Technology and Economics.

Ágnes Zsila (Ph.D., Institute of Psychology of ELTE Eötvös Loránd University) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Clinical Psychology and Addictions, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University.

 Supplemental data for this article can be accessed online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2026.2656658>.

© 2026 The Author(s). Published with license by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

Prior research showed that influencer-brand congruence can positively affect persuasion outcomes of sponsored influencer posts through the positive perception of influencer credibility (Schouten et al. 2020). Moreover, stronger parasocial relationships can mitigate the negative consequences of lower influencer-brand congruence (Breves et al. 2019). In contrast, research also found that higher influencer-brand congruence leads to more positive persuasion outcomes among consumers with stronger bonds with the influencer (Belanche et al. 2021). Additionally, product involvement has been shown to serve as a boundary condition in the interaction between the influencer-consumer relationship and influencer-product congruence (Ju and Lou 2022). Given these findings, we aim to identify boundary conditions under which parasocial relationships and influencer-brand congruence interact to affect persuasion outcomes.

Previous research suggested that embedding self-disclosure in sponsored social media posts promoting incongruent brands could elicit high levels of parasocial interactions and parasocial relationships, potentially enhancing persuasion outcomes (Breves et al. 2019). Parasocial interactions describe the viewer's situational feeling of being engaged in a social interaction with a media persona during media exposure (Hartmann and Goldhoorn 2011; Horton and Wohl 1956), whereas parasocial relationships refer to a more enduring sense of intimacy that extends beyond the media encounter (Tukachinsky et al. 2020). Self-disclosure can heighten parasocial interaction, which in turn makes the existing parasocial relationship more salient by bringing the associated feelings to the forefront during message processing (Breves and Liebers 2025; Zhou et al. 2024).

However, self-disclosure in sponsored influencer posts can be a double-edged sword: whereas this disclosure can strengthen parasocial experiences, it may also be perceived as inappropriate and calculative. Previous research showed that self-disclosure is more appreciated by those with stronger parasocial relationships (Baek et al. 2013), and storytelling posts including self-disclosure intensified the effect of parasocial relationships on purchase intention (Farivar et al. 2021). In contrast, when self-disclosures in sponsored posts are perceived as disconnected from the content or as part of a manipulative tactic, they can lead to lower source credibility that can be negatively related to consumer responses to the persuasive attempt (AlRabiah et al. 2022; Johnson et al. 2021; Leite et al. 2022, 2024). This study examines how self-disclosure moderates the effects of influencer-brand congruence and parasocial relationships on the influencer's perceived

trustworthiness, and whether these effects indirectly affect the purchase intention of the advertised brand.

Whereas previous studies investigated the effects of influencer-brand congruence and parasocial relationships using various methodological approaches (e.g., Belanche et al. 2021; Breves et al. 2019; Wei et al. 2022), less is known about how these processes operate among highly engaged followers of the influencers. To address this gap, the present study conducted a field experiment in collaboration with a fitness micro-influencer on Instagram, who shared the link to the online questionnaire on her Instagram Stories.

This study contributes to the influencer marketing literature by reconciling mixed findings and providing empirical evidence that self-disclosure in sponsored social media posts represents a boundary condition for the mitigating role of parasocial relationships in reducing the negative effects of low influencer-brand congruence on persuasion outcomes. Additionally, it also offers practical insights into how to promote brands that are more versus less congruent with the influencer's image across audiences with different levels of parasocial attachment.

## Theoretical Background

### *Influencer Marketing*

The widespread acceptance and popularity of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube or Instagram have offered everyday people a possibility to become social media influencers with follower bases large enough to draw the interest of advertisers (Khamis et al. 2017). These social media influencers can take advantage of their popularity by selling products, thereby connecting brands with potential consumers (Uzunoglu and Misci Kip 2014). Indeed, in recent years, companies were increasingly engaged with social media influencers to promote their products and services, making influencer marketing an integral part of their marketing strategy (Leung et al. 2022; Vrontis et al. 2021). However, advertising clutter is also increasing on social media platforms. In this saturated environment, influencers and marketers must optimize their strategies that drive consumer engagement while maintaining the influencer's authentic and credible image (Wellman et al. 2020).

The effectiveness of influencer marketing relies on several factors, including the influencer's follower-network, relationship with the audience, personal brand, and credibility (Hudders et al. 2021; Leung et al. 2022). An influencer's persuasive power rests on being perceived as approachable and

trustworthy information sources, which constitute their unique competitive advantage over other advertising vehicles (Djafarova and Rushworth 2017; Gräve 2017). Trustworthiness, as the fundamental element of source credibility, is defined as the consumer's confidence in and acceptance of the communicator and the message (Erdogan 1999; Ohanian 1990). Previous studies have provided empirical evidence that influencer credibility can increase the success of the persuasion attempt (Balaban and Mustătea 2019; Lou and Yuan 2019; Schouten, Janssen, and Verspaget 2020; Sokolova and Kefi 2020; Xiao, Wang, and Chan-Olmsted 2018).

### ***Parasocial Relationships between the Influencer and the Audience***

A crucial component of influencer communication is the close-knit bond that influencers build up with their audiences (Hudders et al. 2021). This one-sided, intimate emotional relationship between the influencer and the viewer is traditionally viewed as illusory, such that the viewer feels as if the influencer is a good friend (Giles 2002; Horton and Wohl 1956). Parasocial relationships develop through the exposure to the influencer's media content (Hwang and Zhang 2018). In fact, parasocial relationships are dynamic processes that evolve over time with different stages characterized by distinct cognitive, affective and behavioral manifestations (Tukachinsky and Stever 2019). Research shows followers tend to form stronger parasocial relationships with influencers than non-followers (Breves, Amrehn, et al. 2021; Breves, Liebers, et al. 2021), and also perceive influencers as more credible (Balaban, Szambolics, and Chirică 2022).

Stronger parasocial relationships positively affect the perceived credibility of influencers, which in turn is associated with more successful persuasion outcomes (Breves, Amrehn, et al. 2021; Chung and Cho 2017; Hwang and Zhang 2018; Labrecque 2014; Lou and Kim 2019; Munnukka et al. 2019; Reinikainen et al. 2020; Sokolova and Kefi 2020). Viewers with stronger parasocial relationships showed more positive attitudes toward the advertised product and exhibited higher purchase intent (Farivar, Wang, and Yuan 2021; Lee and Watkins 2016; Wei et al. 2022). Parasocial relationships can create a halo effect, causing viewers to disregard negative connotations related to the influencer (Breves, Liebers, et al. 2021; Djafarova and Rushworth 2017).

In sum, parasocial relationships not only directly affect influencer credibility perceptions but can also help mitigate potential negative effects on the persuasion outcomes of sponsored content.

### ***Influencer-Brand Congruence***

Whereas parasocial relationships strengthen the persuasive impact of influencer marketing, its effectiveness also depends on the perceived congruence between the endorser and the advertised brand (Till and Busler 2000). Influencer-brand congruence refers to the consistency between the endorser's image and the brand or product attributes (Misra and Beatty 1990). Several theories help understand the positive effects of influencer-brand congruence. Congruency theory posits a preference of congruent information (Osgood and Tannenbaum 1955); schema theory proposes that congruent information is easier to process (Misra and Beatty 1990); and attribution theory suggests that congruent endorsements lead consumers to attribute an affective motive to the influencer that transforms the sponsored post to a personal suggestion (Kim and Kim 2021).

Consistent with these theories, the match-up hypothesis predicts that the advertisement is more effective when influencer-brand congruence is high (Kamins 1990). Empirical studies provided evidence that such congruence enhances attitudes toward the ad and the brand, purchase intention (Kamins 1990; Kamins and Gupta 1994; Qian and Park 2021), and follower's engagement with sponsored content (Wei et al. 2022). However, incongruent endorsements reduce perceived credibility, which in turn can reduce persuasion effectiveness (Lee, Chen, and Lee 2022; Mishra, Roy, and Bailey 2015; Schouten, Janssen, and Verspaget 2020).

Prior research indicates that the negative effects of incongruent endorsements may be mitigated when parasocial relationships are strong (Breves et al. 2019). Whereas influencer-brand congruence enhanced perceived credibility and advertising effectiveness, particularly among followers with weaker parasocial relationships, those with stronger parasocial relationships did not evaluate the incongruent advertisement more negatively than the congruent post. In contrast, other studies report that influencer-brand congruence remains important even among consumers with a strong bond with the influencer. For instance, among followers with presumably stronger parasocial relationships, greater influencer-product congruence led to higher consumer-product congruence, which in turn was associated with more positive attitudes and stronger purchase intentions (Belanche et al. 2021). Additionally, Ju and Lou (2022) found that product involvement serves as a boundary condition in the interaction between relationship type and influencer-product congruence. When product involvement was high, influencer-product congruence positively affected influencer credibility regardless of the relationship type.

However, under low product involvement, the communal-oriented relationship (characterized by strong emotional involvement) mitigated the negative effects of low influencer-product congruence.

These mixed results suggest that boundary conditions under which parasocial relationships mitigate the negative effects of low influencer-brand congruence should be further explored.

### **Self-Disclosure**

Influencers use self-disclosure as a key mechanism to develop and strengthen parasocial relationships with their audiences. Self-disclosure refers to the act of sharing personal information with others including biographical data, feelings, thoughts, desires, values, and beliefs (Kim and Song 2016). Influencer self-disclosure can enhance feelings of connectedness (Utz 2015), perceived authenticity (Ferchaud et al. 2018), and perceived familiarity and closeness (Lin and Utz 2017). Prior research also showed that self-disclosure can intensify parasocial experiences with the influencer, which in turn can increase perceived source credibility, trustworthiness, and lead to higher purchase intention (Chung and Cho 2017; Penttinen et al. 2022; Zhang 2025). Moreover, when influencers share personal information, viewers may feel trusted and appreciated, creating a sense of obligation to reciprocate this feeling, which further strengthens perceived influencer credibility (Leite and Baptista 2022).

Prior literature distinguishes several dimensions of self-disclosure. Depth refers to the sensitivity of information shared, and breadth captures the variety of topics disclosed (Krämer and Schäwel 2020). Typically, both depth and breadth increase as a relationship becomes more intimate (Greene et al. 2006). Another dimension is authenticity, defined as the extent to which the self-disclosure is perceived as sincere and genuine (Wang and Carlson 2024). Authenticity has been shown to positively affect persuasion outcomes (Luo and Hancock 2020; Nah 2022). However, highly intimate disclosures may be perceived as less appropriate and can weaken the relationship between the source and its audience (Orben and Dunbar 2017). In this study, we focus primarily on the authenticity of self-disclosure and use low to moderate depth to ensure that the disclosure is relationally appropriate. Authenticity is expected to enhance parasocial experiences and influence persuasion outcomes. Low to moderate depth was selected to avoid perceptions of inappropriateness, while enabling the disclosure to be perceived as genuine.

Self-disclosure is common in sponsored social media posts as influencers integrate advertising into seemingly noncommercial content such as daily routines (Hwang and Zhang 2018). By doing so, influencers aim to create a friendly and realistic environment to increase the effectiveness of persuasion (Leite and Baptista 2022). In sum, because self-disclosure plays a role in reinforcing parasocial relationships and enhancing influencer trustworthiness, it may act as a boundary condition that moderates the interaction effect between influencer-brand congruence and parasocial relationships on perceived influencer trustworthiness.

### **Hypotheses Development**

The literature review summarized three central mechanisms that affect the persuasion outcomes of influencer marketing: parasocial relationships, influencer-brand congruence, and self-disclosure. Parasocial relationships not only directly enhance credibility perceptions but may also mitigate the negative effects on persuasion outcomes (Breves, Liebers, et al. 2021; Djafarova and Rushworth 2017). Indeed, Breves et al. (2019) found that stronger parasocial relationships mitigated the negative effects of influencer-brand incongruence on perceived influencer credibility and subsequent purchase intentions. However, other studies reported mixed results regarding how parasocial relationships interact with influencer-brand congruence to influence persuasion outcomes (Belanche et al. 2021; Ju and Lou 2022).

Beyond direct effects on credibility perceptions, self-disclosure can also strengthen parasocial experiences, suggesting that it can positively enhance the mitigation effect of parasocial relationships on persuasion outcomes (Breves et al. 2019). Indeed, prior research showed that those with stronger parasocial relationships appreciated acts of self-disclosure more because of the greater intimacy experienced with the influencer (Baek et al. 2013). Similarly, storytelling posts also enhanced the effect of parasocial relationships on followers' purchase intention (Farivar et al. 2021), and self-disclosure in online product review videos fostered stronger parasocial interaction, which in turn was related to higher source credibility and increased purchase intention (Penttinen et al. 2022).

However, when parasocial relationships are already strong, it is unlikely that a single instance of self-disclosure in a sponsored post would significantly alter the relationship. In such cases, we propose that, during exposure to the influencer's post, self-disclosure may increase consumers' level of parasocial interaction

because consumers with strong parasocial relationships tend to be interested in the influencer's personal life (Breves and Liebers 2025). This increased involvement activates positive feelings associated with existing parasocial relationships and makes these feelings more salient (Zhou et al. 2024). In turn, this heightened salience reduces viewers' capacity to counterargue (Moyer-Gusé 2008; Tukachinsky and Stever 2019), thereby enhancing the mitigation effect. In other words, although the underlying parasocial relationship does not change, self-disclosure increases its salience; thus, it exerts a stronger impact on persuasion outcomes.

In contrast, prior studies suggest that self-disclosures in sponsored posts can also lead to negative effects. When perceived as less appropriate, self-disclosure reduced source trust and credibility, which was related to lower purchase intention (AlRabiah et al. 2022; Leite et al. 2022, 2024). Similarly, in the case of a fictitious influencer's sponsored video, self-disclosure also lowered perceived trustworthiness, which in turn reduced positive attitudes toward the influencer, the video, the brand, and several behavioral intentions, such as subscription and sharing intentions (Johnson et al. 2021). We therefore posit that individuals with weaker parasocial relationships are more likely to view self-disclosures in sponsored posts as inappropriate rather than genuine, especially when the brand is incongruent with the influencer and the content feels less authentic.

When self-disclosure is not included in the sponsored post, we do not expect consumers with strong parasocial relationships to experience an increased level of parasocial interaction. Thus, due to the lower involvement, parasocial relationships and influencer-brand congruence are more likely to be used as heuristics and to exert main effects on persuasion outcomes rather than an interactive effect that mitigates the negative impact of brand incongruence. On this basis, we formulated the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1:** When self-disclosure is present in the sponsored post, weaker parasocial relationships and lower influencer-brand congruence will negatively affect perceived influencer trustworthiness, while this effect will not occur when parasocial relationships are stronger (Hypothesis 1A). Moreover, the simultaneous effect of parasocial relationships and influencer-brand congruence will not be observed when self-disclosure is not included in the sponsored post (Hypothesis 1B).

Moreover, based on the positive effect of influencer trustworthiness on purchase intention reported in previous studies, our second hypothesis is:

**Hypothesis 2:** The moderation effect described in Hypothesis 1 will have an indirect effect on purchase intention, mediated by perceived influencer trustworthiness.

Table 1 summarizes prior evidence, identifies gaps, and explains which hypothesis responds to which gap exactly.

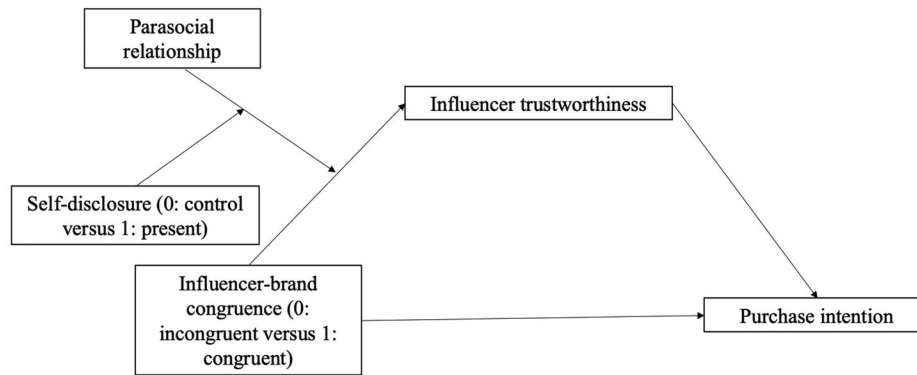
Figure 1 summarizes the research model.

## Present Study

Prior studies investigated the effects of influencer-brand congruence and parasocial relationships using surveys (Wei et al. 2022), experiments with mega-influencers (Belanche et al. 2021), or experiments with multiple influencers in which influencer-brand congruence was

**Table 1.** Prior evidence, identified gaps, and hypotheses.

Prior evidence	Identified gap	Hypothesis addressing the gap
Parasocial relationships enhance credibility perceptions and can mitigate negative effects of influencer-brand incongruence on persuasion outcomes (Breves, Liebers et al. 2021; Breves et al. 2019; Djafarova and Rushworth 2017).	Evidence is mixed regarding how and under which conditions parasocial relationships interact with influencer-brand congruence, especially in sponsored post contexts (Belanche et al. 2021; Ju and Lou 2022).	Hypothesis 1
Self-disclosure strengthens parasocial experiences and enhances persuasion outcomes (Baek et al. 2013; Farivar et al. 2021; Penttinen et al. 2022).	It remains unclear whether a single self-disclosure in a sponsored post meaningfully alters outcomes when parasocial relationships are already strong.	Hypothesis 1A
Self-disclosure in sponsored posts can also produce negative outcomes—when perceived as inappropriate, it reduces trustworthiness and credibility (AlRabiah et al. 2022; Johnson et al. 2021; Leite et al. 2022, 2024).	Little is known about whether individuals with weak parasocial relationships interpret self-disclosure as strategic or inauthentic, and how this affects trustworthiness across different levels of influencer-product congruence.	Hypothesis 1A
Some studies indicate that parasocial relationships and congruence jointly shape outcomes.	It is unclear whether the interaction effect persists in the absence of self-disclosure in sponsored posts.	Hypothesis 1B
Influencer trustworthiness consistently predicts purchase intention in influencer marketing studies.	Past work has not examined whether the moderated effects described in Hypothesis 1 translate into indirect effects on behavioral intentions.	Hypothesis 2



**Figure 1.** Study research model to examine the conditional effect of influencer-brand congruence on purchase intention, mediated by influencer trustworthiness.

**Table 2.** Summarizes the means and standard deviations of trustworthiness and purchase intention per experimental groups (N = 304).

Brand	N	Control				Self-disclosure				
		Trustworthiness		Purchase intention		Trustworthiness		Purchase intention		
		M	SD	M	SD	N	M	SD	M	SD
Incongruent	73	5.37	1.27	3.28	1.37	96	4.96	1.58	3	1.49
Congruent	69	5.19	1.46	2.36	1.23	66	5.01	1.46	2.4	1.19

measured rather than experimentally manipulated (Breves et al. 2019). The present study aimed to extend this line of research in two ways: first, by experimentally manipulating influencer-brand congruence rather than measuring it, and second, by focusing on a highly engaged audience with frequent contact with the influencer. To achieve this goal, we approached several influencers for potential collaboration. Although most did not respond, a fitness influencer (with 23500 followers as of September 2024) who is personally acquainted with one of the authors agreed to collaborate with the research team without compensation.

While the fitness influencer's micro-influencer status aligned with the study's goals of sampling a highly engaged audience, a review of her Instagram account (available at: <https://www.instagram.com/szeghalmivivi/>) revealed a strong emphasis on aesthetic labor in most posts. Prior research demonstrated that visual presentation and aesthetic labor can affect parasocial relationships and persuasion outcomes (Cheung et al. 2022; Xie et al. 2023). Therefore, we included physical appearance as a control variable to account for the potential confounding effects.

## Materials and Methods

### Design

A 2 (congruent brand vs. incongruent brand) × 2 (control vs. self-disclosure) between-subject online

experiment was designed and conducted controlled for the physical appearance of the influencer (control vs. physical appearance). The study was performed in compliance APA Ethical Standards and the Declaration of Helsinki guidelines and was approved by the first author's institutional ethical committee (date of approval: 13/04/2022; No 2022/243).

### Stimuli Selection<sup>1</sup>

Both the congruent and incongruent brands and the self-disclosure materials were pretested using a within (brands)-between (disclosure types) online experiment to select the most congruent and incongruent brand, and the self-disclosure that is perceived to be the most personal and intimate.

First, the research team created the stimuli material. To maintain ecological validity, the stimuli were based on sponsored posts previously published on the influencer's account featuring brands that the influencer had promoted. Moreover, the author who was acquainted with the influencer consulted with her during the process, especially regarding the content of self-disclosures. Finally, the influencer reviewed and approved the final stimuli set prior to data collection, ensuring that the materials are consistent with her online persona.

A total of six brands (three congruent and three incongruent) were selected from the influencer's

Instagram account. For each brand, three different posts were created: (1) one without self-disclosure based on one of the published posts of the influencer; (2) one with a self-disclosure related to the influencer's family; and (3) another one with a self-disclosure related to the influencer's ideal partner. Thus, the pretest stimuli material consisted of 18 posts in total (see [Supplementary Material](#), Section 1).

To minimize the risk that the self-disclosure would be perceived as inappropriate due to a disconnect between the disclosure and the advertised brand, and to seamlessly integrate the commercial and noncommercial content of the post to further increase ecological validity, the self-disclosures were tailored to the promoted brand. Accordingly, different self-disclosures were used for congruent and incongruent brands to ensure a better match.

During the pretest, each respondent was exposed to six posts (one from each brand) with a self-disclosure condition (control, family, ideal partner) randomly assigned by the Qualtrics randomizer feature. For each post, respondents assessed the influencer-brand congruence and the presence of self-disclosure. Overall, 128 students from a large Hungarian university completed the pretest.

Influencer-brand congruence was assessed by four pairs of adjectives: *very appropriate/very inappropriate*; *very consistent/very inconsistent*; *very likely match/very unlikely match*; and *very relevant/very irrelevant* (Thomas and Johnson 2017). Answers were provided on a 7-point bipolar scale. The items were reversed and averaged to create a single variable so that higher scores mean stronger influencer-brand congruence.

The presence of self-disclosure was assessed by two items adapted from Kim and Song (2016): "In this post, [name of the influencer] intimately disclosed who she really is" and "In this post, [name of the influencer] disclosed personal things and feelings about herself." Answers were provided on a 7-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (*definitely agree*) to 7 (*definitely disagree*). The items were averaged to create a single variable that was reversed so that higher scores indicate stronger presence of self-disclosure.

To select the congruent and incongruent brands for the main study, a repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed. Brand was included as a predictor variable and perceived influencer-brand congruence as the outcome variable in the model. The results indicated significant difference between the brands regarding influencer-brand congruence ( $F(4.404, 519.649) = 49.68, p < .001$ ). The post-hoc pairwise comparison test indicated a significant difference between the most congruent brand (Magenta,

an apparel brand) and the least congruent one (IKEA, a furniture store brand) ( $EMM_{\text{congruent}} = 5.49, SE_{\text{congruent}} = 0.090$  vs.  $M_{\text{incongruent}} = 3.61, SE_{\text{incongruent}} = 0.122$ , mean difference: 1.89,  $p < .001$ ).

To select the self-disclosure post, one-way ANOVAs were conducted for each brand, with the type of self-disclosure as the independent variable and the perceived level of self-disclosure as the dependent variable. Concerning the congruent brand, results indicated a significant difference regarding the presence of self-disclosure ( $F(2, 125) = 11.6, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = .156$ ). The family-related self-disclosure post received the highest rating among the three posts (post-hoc test control vs. family-related post:  $M_{\text{control}} = 2.27, SD_{\text{control}} = 1.51$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-disclosure}} = 3.94, SD_{\text{self-disclosure}} = 1.59$ , mean difference = 1.68,  $p < .001$ ). Results showed a similar pattern regarding the incongruent brand, with a significant difference between the three posts regarding the presence of self-disclosure ( $F(2,125) = 11.9, p < .001$ ). Again, the family-related self-disclosure post received the highest rating on the self-disclosure scale (post-hoc test control vs. family-related post:  $M_{\text{control}} = 2.07, SD_{\text{control}} = 1.49$  vs.  $M_{\text{self-disclosure}} = 3.62, SD_{\text{self-disclosure}} = 1.69$ , mean difference = 1.55,  $p < .001$ ). Therefore, the family-related self-disclosure was selected for both the congruent and incongruent brands.

Finally, to control for the effect of attractive physical appearance of the influencer, control images were selected by the research team in which only a part of the influencer's body could be seen on the images (see Appendix A for translation and [Supplementary Material](#), Section 2 for the stimuli set). This variable was included as a control variable in all subsequent analyses.

### Participants and Procedure

Participants were recruited using the Instagram account of the influencer. She published the link to the questionnaire on Instagram Stories asking her followers and visitors to fill out the questionnaire. The post was available for 24 hours and was published three times. During the first and second posts, no compensation was offered to the participants ( $N = 564$ ). To increase the number of respondents, in the third round, a 5 EUR virtual gift card was offered for each 25th participant who completed the questionnaire ( $N = 91$ ). Due to the targeted data collection that narrowed possibilities for recruitment, a priori sample size was not calculated.

Participants first read general information about the study and provided informed consent to

participate. Then, questions regarding their familiarity and their parasocial relationship with the influencer were measured. In the following step, participants were randomly exposed to one of the eight experimental stimuli for at least 10 seconds. Subsequently, they answered questions related to the post and the brand, followed by questions about the influencer, control questions, manipulation checks, and demographic questions. At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were debriefed.

Overall, 655 respondents started filling out the questionnaire. Respondents who did not provide an informed consent ( $n=2$ ) or did not answer to at least one major outcome variable were excluded from further data analysis ( $n=349$ ). Therefore, the final sample consisted of 304 respondents ( $M_{\text{age}} = 25.3$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 9.36$ , age 18-96 years;  $n=28$  did not answer these questions). Of these respondents, 58.3% were female, and 1.4% indicated “other than male/female”; 41.4% were university students, and an additional 22.7% had a BA degree; 39.2% lived in the capital and 31.7% lived in the county capitals; 70.4% never studied marketing or advertising or had only basic knowledge of marketing and advertising; and 84.8% used Instagram several times a day ( $n=27$  did not answer the question). All respondents were familiar with the influencer; moreover, 83.2% indicated that they were followers of the influencer.

## Measures

### Trustworthiness of the Influencer

Trustworthiness was assessed using a 5-item scale containing five pair of adjectives: *undependable/dependable*; *dishonest/honest*; *unreliable/reliable*; *insincere/sincere*; and *untrustworthy/trustworthy* (Ohanian 1990). Answers were provided on a 7-point bipolar scale. Items were averaged to create a single variable (Cronbach's  $\alpha$  (5 items) = .954,  $M=5.14$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ). Higher scores correspond to higher perceived trustworthiness.

### Purchase Intention

Purchase intention was assessed using three items (Chung and Cho 2017): “How likely is it that you would consider purchasing the brand shown in the post?”; “It is likely that this brand would be my first choice when going out shopping next time”; “I would not buy another brand if this brand was available at the store.” Answers were provided on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*definitely likely/definitely agree*) to 7 (*not at all likely/definitely disagree*). Given the

satisfactory reliability, items were averaged to create a single variable that was reversed, so that higher scores indicate stronger purchase intention (Cronbach's  $\alpha$  (3 items) = .813,  $M=2.74$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ).

### Parasocial Relationship

To assess parasocial relationships with the influencer, the 7-item version of the scale by Rubin et al. (Rubin, Perse, and Powell 1985) was adapted (Riles 2020; Slater, Ewoldsen, and Woods 2018). Answers were provided on a 7-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (*definitely agree*) to 7 (*definitely disagree*). The reliability of the scale was excellent (Cronbach's  $\alpha$  (7 items) = .897,  $M=4.18$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ). Items were averaged and reversed, so that higher scores indicate stronger parasocial relationships.

### Control and Demographic Variables

The presence of self-disclosure ( $r(295) = .771$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $M=3.54$ ,  $SD = 1.75$ ) and influencer-brand congruence (Cronbach's  $\alpha$  (4 items) = .694,  $M=4.33$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ) were assessed in the same way as in the pretest.

Category involvement (furniture or apparel depending on the stimuli respondents were exposed to) was assessed by adopting three pairs of adjectives from Zaichkowsky (1985): *very interesting/very uninteresting*; *very appealing/very unappealing*; and *very relevant/very irrelevant*. Answers were provided on a 7-point bipolar scale. Items were averaged and reversed to create a single variable, higher scores correspond to stronger category involvement (Cronbach's  $\alpha$  (3 items) = .894,  $M=2.77$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ).

Brand familiarity was assessed using a single question: “To what extent are you familiar with the brand that you just encountered?” Answers were given on a slider (0: “not at all familiar,” 100: “completely familiar”) ( $M=64.7$ ,  $SD = 38.2$ ).

## Results<sup>2</sup>

### Testing the Equality of Distribution across Experimental Groups

First, it was checked whether demographic and control variables were equally distributed across the experimental groups using one-way ANOVAs and  $\chi^2$  tests. No significant differences were found regarding familiarity with the influencer ( $p = .597$ ), respondent age ( $p = .097$ ), or category involvement ( $p = .746$ ) across the groups. However, familiarity with the brand differed across experimental groups ( $F(7, 227.487) =$

24.17,  $p < .001$ ). Therefore, familiarity with the brand was included in all subsequent analyses. Missing values ( $n=23$ ) were computed using the linear interpolation method.

Furthermore, results indicated no significant differences regarding marketing expertise ( $p = .508$ ), highest level of education ( $p = .307$ ), residence ( $p = .087$ ), or Instagram usage ( $p = .332$ ) among the groups. Nevertheless, a significant difference was found among the experimental groups regarding the gender of respondents ( $\chi^2(14) = 27.6, p = .016$ ). Thus, this variable was dummy-coded and included as control variable in all subsequent analyses.

### Manipulation Check

A general linear model was conducted using congruence as the outcome variable, and brand, physical presence, and self-disclosure as predictor variables to confirm that the more congruent brand is perceived as more congruent. Results indicated that the more congruent brand was indeed perceived as more congruent than the incongruent brand ( $F(1, 295) = 15.1, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .074, EMM_{\text{congruent}} = 4.60$  vs.  $EMM_{\text{incongruent}} = 4.03$ ). The same analysis was conducted using presence of self-disclosure as the outcome variable. As expected, the post containing self-disclosure was perceived as more personal and intimate ( $F(1, 291) = 15.2, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .050, EMM_{\text{control}} = 3.19, EMM_{\text{self-disclosure}} = 3.97$ ).

### Moderated Mediation Model Examining the Effect of Parasocial Relationship, Self-Disclosure and Brand-Influencer Congruence on Trustworthiness and the Purchase Intention of the Promoted Product

To test Hypothesis 1, a three-way ANOVA was conducted. Influencer-brand congruence, parasocial

relationship, and the presence of self-disclosure were included as predictor variables; trustworthiness was included as the outcome variable; and brand familiarity, gender and physical presence were defined as control variables. Results indicated a significant three-way interaction ( $F(1, 290) = 6.43, p = .012, \eta_p^2 = .022$ ). Table 3 contains the details.

To demonstrate the stability of the results, we reconducted the three-way ANOVA without the control variables. Results indicated a significant three-way interaction,  $F(1, 294) = 6.05, p = .014, \eta_p^2 = .020$ .

To further examine the interaction effect, two-way ANOVAs were conducted on two subsamples, with influencer-brand congruence and parasocial relationship as predictor variables, trustworthiness as the outcome variable and brand familiarity, gender and physical attractiveness as control variables. When self-disclosure was not present in the post ( $N=167$ ), results indicated no significant interaction effect between influencer-product congruence and parasocial relationship ( $F(1, 159) = 2.63, p = .107, \eta_p^2 = .016$ ). Only parasocial relationship had a significant main effect on perceived influencer trustworthiness ( $F(1, 159) = 309.0, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .660$ ).

In contrast, when self-disclosure was included in the post ( $N=135$ ), the interaction effect between the two predictor variables was significant ( $F(1, 127) = 4.39, p = .038, \eta_p^2 = .033$ ). Figure 2 summarizes the results, showing that if parasocial relationships are weaker ( $-1$  SD), the more congruent brand leads to higher influencer trustworthiness ( $B=0.787, t(127) = 2.15, p = .033$ ). However, this difference is non-significant ( $p = .872$ ) when parasocial relationships are stronger ( $+1$  SD). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

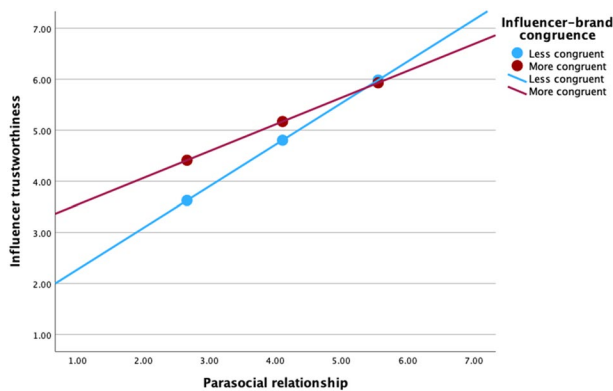
To test Hypothesis 2, a moderated mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS macro (model 11 with 5000 bootstrap samples; (Hayes 2018). In the

**Table 3.** Results of the three-way ANOVA for influencer trustworthiness ( $N=302$ ).

Predictor variables	df	Outcome variable: trustworthiness			
		Mean square	F	p	$\eta_p^2$
Intercept	1	42.247	45.738	<.001	0.136
Influencer-brand congruence	1	1.4	1.515	0.219	0.005
Parasocial relationship	1	308.64	334.145	<.001	0.535
Self-disclosure	1	0.112	0.122	0.728	0
Congruence $\times$ Parasocial relationship	1	0.702	0.76	0.384	0.003
Congruence $\times$ Self-disclosure	1	5.103	5.524	0.019	0.019
Parasocial relationship $\times$ Self-disclosure	1	0.951	1.029	0.311	0.004
Congruence $\times$ Parasocial relationship $\times$ Self-disclosure	1	5.941	6.431	0.012	0.022
Brand familiarity	1	4.383	4.746	0.03	0.016
Male–female (gender dummy 1)	1	0.184	0.199	0.656	0.001
Male–other/don't want to tell (gender dummy 2)	1	0.631	0.683	0.409	0.002
Physical attractiveness	1	0.095	0.103	0.749	0
Error	290	0.924	—	—	—

model, purchase intention was the outcome variable, and influencer-brand congruence was the predictor variable. Parasocial relationship and the presence of self-disclosure were included as moderator variables; influencer trustworthiness was specified as a mediator; and physical presence, gender, and brand familiarity were included as control variables. Figure 3 depicts the results of the moderated mediation model.

Results showed that higher influencer trustworthiness was positively associated with purchase intention. Moreover, the three-way interaction indirectly affected the purchase intention of the promoted product, and the effect was mediated by influencer trustworthiness (index of the moderated mediation:  $-0.164$ ,  $CI = [-0.299, -0.046]$ ). In more details, the interaction of influencer-brand congruence and parasocial relationship affected influencer trustworthiness, and indirectly,



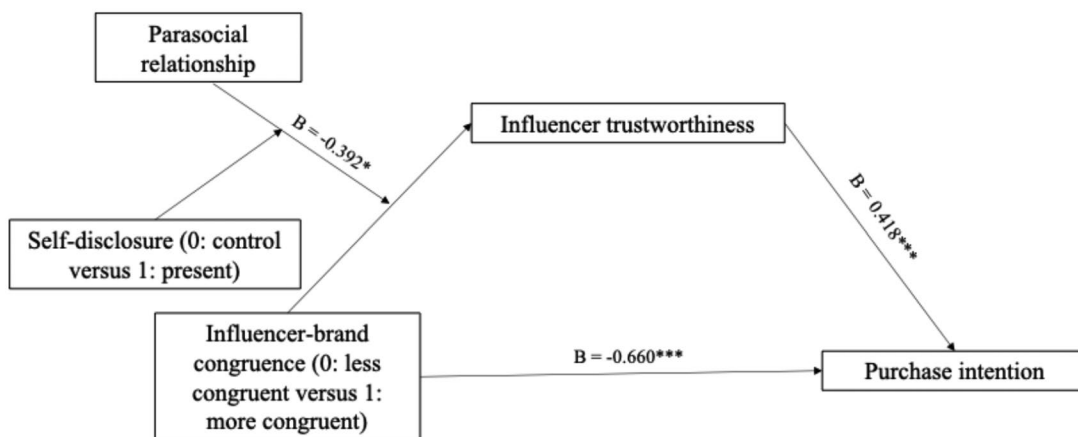
**Figure 2.** The interaction effect of influencer-brand congruence and parasocial relationship on the influencer's perceived trustworthiness when self-disclosure is present in the post ( $N = 135$ ).

Note. Dots indicate the level of trustworthiness when parasocial relationship is lower ( $-1$  SD) average (mean) and higher ( $+1$  SD).

purchase intention, when self-disclosure was present in the post (conditional moderated mediation index:  $-0.110$ ,  $CI = [-0.228, -0.007]$ ).

## Discussion

Parasocial relationships, which describe the unique bond between influencers and their audience, are considered the cornerstone of influencer marketing (Hudders et al. 2021). The important question arises whether strong parasocial relationships can attenuate the negative effects of other factors on persuasion outcomes, and if so, under what conditions this shielding effect is activated. To address this question, the present study tested the moderating role of self-disclosure on the mitigating effect of parasocial relationships in the context of influencer-brand congruence, using a field experiment conducted in collaboration with a fitness micro-influencer on Instagram. Results showed that when self-disclosure was present in the post, the simultaneous effect of parasocial relationships and influencer-brand congruence was significant. At high levels of parasocial relationships, there was no difference between the effect of the more congruent and less congruent brand on influencer trustworthiness, whereas at low levels of parasocial relationships, the less congruent brand led to lower perceived influencer trustworthiness (Hypothesis 1A). In contrast, when self-disclosure was absent, the interaction effect did not emerge (Hypothesis 1B); results showed only a main effect of parasocial relationships on influencer trustworthiness. Furthermore, this three-way interaction indirectly affected purchase intention through influencer trustworthiness (Hypothesis 2).



**Figure 3.** The three-way interaction between influencer-brand congruence, parasocial relationship, and self-disclosure indirectly affects purchase intention through influencer trustworthiness ( $N = 302$ ).

Note. \*:  $p < .05$ , \*\*:  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*:  $p < .001$ .

Our results demonstrated that the mitigating role of parasocial relationships against the negative effects on influencer-brand incongruence was activated when self-disclosure was present. This finding aligns with earlier results from Breves et al. (2019) and provides further empirical evidence to the halo effect of parasocial relationships (Breves, Amrehn, et al. 2021; Breves et al. 2019; Djafarova and Rushworth 2017). As discussed, self-disclosure may enhance parasocial interactions, which in turn activate positive, parasocial relationships-related feelings (Zhou et al. 2024), and reduce counterarguing (Moyer-Gusé 2008; Tukachinsky and Stever 2019). In other words, respondents were more likely to overlook potential negative cues, such as the calculative intent behind including personal self-disclosure in a sponsored post (Kim and Kim 2021). Moreover, at lower levels of parasocial relationship, lower influencer-brand congruence led to lower perceived trustworthiness. In this case, respondents were probably more likely to perceive self-disclosure as irrelevant or as a manipulative tactic included in the post solely for promotional purposes (AlRabiah et al. 2022).

When self-disclosure was not included in the post, no interaction effect was found between influencer-brand congruence and parasocial relationships; that is, the mitigating role of parasocial relationships was not activated. These results are consistent with findings by Ju and Lou (2022) in relation to communal-oriented relationships.

Finally, the results of the second hypothesis are in line with numerous previous research showing that influencer trustworthiness or influencer credibility lead to more effective persuasion outcomes (Balaban and Mustățea 2019; Lou and Yuan 2019; Schouten, Janssen, and Verspaget 2020; Sokolova and Kefi 2020; Xiao, Wang, and Chan-Olmsted 2018).

### **Theoretical Implications**

This study contributes to the influencer marketing literature by providing experimental evidence that self-disclosure can activate the mitigating role of parasocial relationships against the negative effects of influencer-brand incongruence. These findings help explain the seemingly contradictory results in previous studies on the interaction between parasocial relationships and influencer-brand congruence. When self-disclosure is present and parasocial relationships are strong, parasocial relationships can mitigate the negative effects of influencer-brand incongruence. In all other cases, however, influencer-brand incongruence leads to lower credibility perceptions. Our results

suggests that the mitigating role of parasocial relationships may extend beyond influencer-brand congruence. Strong parasocial bonds could potentially buffer against other harmful factors, such as the promotion of controversial products or lower consumer-product congruence. However, further research is needed to explore these possibilities and identify the boundary conditions of such effects.

Second, the study advances the understanding of self-disclosure in influencer marketing. At high levels of parasocial relationships, self-disclosure in a sponsored post can enhance parasocial interactions activating a positive halo effect of parasocial relationships (Breves, Liebers, et al. 2021; Djafarova and Rushworth 2017). In contrast, at lower levels of parasocial relationships, self-disclosure might be perceived as irrelevant or merely manipulative especially when paired with a less congruent brand (AlRabiah et al. 2022). Further research is needed to identify the underlying mechanisms such as increased parasocial interactions, positive affect, and reduced counterarguing, that explain how self-disclosure can activate the mitigating role of parasocial relationships.

Finally, this study demonstrates the methodological value of field experiments in collaboration with influencers, enabling the access to a more engaged audience of the influencer. As emphasized in the literature, experiments with the influencers' primary audience can provide valuable insights with greater ecological validity than laboratory experiments in which researchers commonly use stimuli material from a fictitious or an unknown influencer (Hudders et al. 2021).

### **Practical Implications**

The present results have practical implications. Whereas the lowest-risk option remains partnering with influencers whose image is congruent with the promoted brand, our findings suggest that when influencer-brand congruence is weaker, including self-disclosure can mitigate credibility loss among followers with stronger parasocial relationships. Similarly, we recommend that influencers include product-relevant self-disclosure in sponsored posts to engage audiences with stronger parasocial ties, particularly when the brand is less congruent with their image. By contrast, among audiences with lower levels of parasocial relationships, combining self-disclosure with a less congruent brand may backfire. Thus, the final decision to use self-disclosure should be based on a thorough analysis of the target group and the dissemination strategy of the sponsored post. We can say that different types of influencers tend to follow different content strategies.

For instance, micro-influencers usually maintain a stronger bond with their followers. They might be an optimal choice to promote less congruent brands when the post also contains a product-relevant self-disclosure. In contrast, for macro-influencers, especially for those who also reach a sizeable secondary audience, it is safer to promote primarily brands that are congruent with their image, because for them, it is a higher risk to work with less congruent brands. Finally, including intimate disclosures in sponsored social media posts might raise some ethical concerns. For instance, influencers might share information about a third person that violates the privacy of this person, especially if the person is identifiable and the information might cast a negative light on them. Additionally, influencers should not invent personal stories to increase the popularity of their sponsored posts. These made-up self-disclosures can have a serious negative impact on the influencer's credibility and authenticity, damaging their personal brand.

### **Limitations and Further Research**

This study is not without limitations. First, due to the sampling method, the sample size was limited. Future research should aim for a larger sample to ensure the appropriate power for the analyses. Second, due to the data collection method and the voluntary nature of the participation, the sample might be biased in a way that it does not represent the influencer's primary audience accurately. Participation in the study was completely voluntary, so it is likely that those with stronger parasocial relationships or higher engagement were overrepresented in the sample. Consequently, the observed effects may be amplified because participants with stronger parasocial relationships might respond more strongly to self-disclosure than the influencer's broader primary audience. Future research could address this issue through alternative recruitment strategies, such as panel-based sampling, to obtain a more diverse sample. Despite these shortcomings, the study has a strong external validity as the cooperation with the influencer enabled the research team to conduct a study on a sample derived from the influencer's primary audience.

The generalizability of the present results is limited as only one influencer was involved in the study. Moreover, the research team collaborated with a micro-influencer, which limits external validity because micro-influencers generally form stronger relationships with their audiences than macro- or mega-influencers (Conde and Casais 2023). Thus, the results may not generalize to these influencer types. Future research

should consider involving influencers with a greater follower base, and influencers with different backgrounds (e.g., cultural, content creation). Additionally, the study was conducted in a single country, which limits the generalizability to culturally diverse influencer-follower dynamics. Finally, the findings may not extend to other content domains. Future studies could replicate results in different countries using different content domains to enhance generalizability.

Although the stimuli materials were pretested, it is possible that variables that were not studied in this research affected the results. For instance, the word length difference between the self-disclosure and control conditions might have influenced the study's results through the information processing of the posts. Future research should use a different set of stimuli regarding both the congruent and incongruent brands and the self-disclosure used in the posts. Furthermore, future research should use a more standardized stimuli set regarding the length of the text, the number of hashtags and the aesthetics of the image used for the post.

Regarding the manipulations, the results indicate relative rather than absolute differences between the two conditions: the mean score for the incongruent condition was slightly above the scale midpoint, whereas the self-disclosure was slightly below the midpoint. Nonetheless, both manipulations produced significant differences across conditions, supporting the validity of the present study. Further research could explore alternative operationalizations or further strengthen the contrasts to achieve clearer distinctions between experimental conditions.

In this study, influencer-brand congruence was operationalized broadly, which aligns with prior work using generic congruence assessments. However, depending on the abstractness or concreteness of the influencer-brand fit, prior research distinguishes between functional and image or symbolic fit in influencer marketing (Che et al. 2025; Junho Kim and Choi 2025). Functional fit refers to the matching between influencers and brands at a concrete level, such as functional use or functional product attributes, whereas symbolic fit reflects the fit on more abstract dimensions such as image, style, values, and personality. Future research should examine functional and symbolic fit separately to better understand how each dimension affects persuasion outcomes and underlying mechanisms.

Future studies should also control for potential confounders such as ad skepticism, persuasion knowledge, the participants' prior exposure to similar posts

promoting the same brands used in the experiment. Also, future research should extend the scope of variables to the perception of influencer motives which could explain the mechanisms underlying perceived trustworthiness of the influencer.

## Conclusion

High levels of parasocial relationships can mitigate the negative effects of influencer-brand incongruence on credibility perceptions, yet prior empirical results have not always been consistent. The present study identifies a boundary condition by demonstrating the moderating role of self-disclosure. When self-disclosure was included in the sponsored post, stronger parasocial relationships mitigated the negative effects of influencer-brand incongruence on trustworthiness. By contrast, respondents with weaker parasocial relationships perceived the influencer as less trustworthy when the brand was less congruent with her. No mitigating effect was observed when self-disclosure was absent.

These findings suggest that adding self-disclosure to a sponsored post can mitigate the negative effects of influencer-brand incongruence, but only when parasocial relationships with the influencer are strong. Consequently, self-disclosure in sponsored posts promoting a less congruent brand should be used based on the assessment of the target audience's level of parasocial attachment.

Future research could extend the investigation of the mitigating role of parasocial relationships beyond influencer-brand incongruence and identify key underlying mechanisms that activate the halo effect of parasocial relationships.

## Notes

1. The stimuli set is available on the following link: [https://osf.io/u3d9c/?view\\_only=5c67693b236248619502ca1125469e34](https://osf.io/u3d9c/?view_only=5c67693b236248619502ca1125469e34).
2. The dataset is available on the following link: [https://osf.io/u3d9c/?view\\_only=5c67693b236248619502ca1125469e34](https://osf.io/u3d9c/?view_only=5c67693b236248619502ca1125469e34).

## Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was obtained from the research ethics committee at the first author's university (No 2020/414-4). Written informed consent was obtained from all respondents.

## Generative Artificial Intelligence

We used a generative AI tool (ChatGPT-5) for language editing and for translation of the experimental stimuli, with the aim of improving the clarity and overall English language quality of this manuscript.

## ORCID

Ágnes Buvár  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9856-9251>

Mirkó Gáti  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5879-6353>

Andrea Dúll  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0087-3309>

Ágnes Zsila  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8291-5997>

## Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on the following link: [https://osf.io/u3d9c/?view\\_only=5c67693b236248619502ca1125469e34](https://osf.io/u3d9c/?view_only=5c67693b236248619502ca1125469e34).

## References

- AlRabiah, Sara, Ben Marder, David Marshall, and Rob Angell. 2022. "Too Much Information: An Examination of the Effects of Social Self-Disclosure Embedded within Influencer eWOM Campaigns." *Journal of Business Research* 152 (vember): 93–105. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.07.029>.
- Baek, Young Min, Young Bae, and Hyunmi Jang. 2013. "Social and Parasocial Relationships on Social Network Sites and Their Differential Relationships with Users' Psychological Well-Being." *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking* 16 (7): 512–517. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2012.0510>.
- Balaban, Delia, and Maria Mustățea. 2019. "Users' Perspective on the Credibility of Social Media Influencers in Romania and Germany." *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations* 21 (1): 31–46. <https://doi.org/10.21018/rjcp.2019.1.269>.
- Balaban, Delia Cristina, Julia Szambolics, and Mihai Chirică. 2022. "Parasocial Relations and Social Media Influencers' Persuasive Power. Exploring the Moderating Role of Product Involvement." *Acta Psychologica* 230 (October): 103731. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2022.103731>.
- Belanche, Daniel, Luis V. Casaló, Marta Flavián, and Sergio Ibáñez-Sánchez. 2021. "Understanding Influencer Marketing: The Role of Congruence between Influencers, Products and Consumers." *Journal of Business Research* 132 (August): 186–195. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.03.067>.
- Breves, Priska, and Nicole Liebers. 2025. "The Impact of Following Duration on the Perception of Influencers and Their Persuasive Effectiveness Explained by Parasocial Relationship Stages." *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising* 46 (1): 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2024.2320186>.
- Breves, Priska, Jana Amrehn, Anna Heidenreich, Nicole Liebers, and Holger Schramm. 2021. "Blind Trust? The Importance and Interplay of Parasocial Relationships and Advertising Disclosures in Explaining Influencers' Persuasive Effects on Their Followers." *International*

- Journal of Advertising* 40 (7): 1209–1229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2021.1881237>.
- Breves, Priska, Nicole Liebers, Bernadette Motschenbacher, and Leonie Reus. 2021. “Reducing Resistance: The Impact of Nonfollowers’ and Followers’ Parasocial Relationships with Social Media Influencers on Persuasive Resistance and Advertising Effectiveness.” *Human Communication Research* 47 (4): 418–443. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hcr/hqab006>.
- Breves, Priska Linda, Nicole Liebers, Marina Abt, and Annika Kunze. 2019. “The Perceived Fit between Instagram Influencers and the Endorsed Brand: How Influencer–Brand Fit Affects Source Credibility and Persuasive Effectiveness.” *Journal of Advertising Research* 59 (4): 440–454. <https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-2019-030>.
- Che, Siyu, Xiaotong Jin, Guanghua Sheng, and Zhengnan Lin. 2025. “Seeking Effective Fit: The Impact of Brand-Influencer Fit Types on Consumer Brand Attitude.” *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 84 (May): 104188. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2024.104188>.
- Cheung, Man Lai, Wilson K. S. Leung, Eugene Cheng-Xi Aw, and Kian Yeik Koay. 2022. “I Follow What You Post!': The Role of Social Media Influencers’ Content Characteristics in Consumers’ Online Brand-Related Activities (COBRAs).” *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 66 (May): 102940. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2022.102940>.
- Chung, Siyoung, and Hichang Cho. 2017. “Fostering Parasocial Relationships with Celebrities on Social Media: Implications for Celebrity Endorsement: CELEBRITY PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS ON SOCIAL MEDIA.” *Psychology & Marketing* 34 (4): 481–495. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21001>.
- Conde, Rita, and Beatriz Casais. 2023. “Micro, Macro and Mega-Influencers on Instagram: The Power of Persuasion via the Parasocial Relationship.” *Journal of Business Research* 158 (March): 113708. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.113708>.
- De Veirman, Marijke, Veroline Cauberghe, and Liselot Hudders. 2017. “Marketing through Instagram Influencers: The Impact of Number of Followers and Product Divergence on Brand Attitude.” *International Journal of Advertising* 36 (5): 798–828. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035>.
- Dibble, Jayson L., Tilo Hartmann, and Sarah F. Rosaen. 2016. “Parasocial Interaction and Parasocial Relationship: Conceptual Clarification and a Critical Assessment of Measures: Parasocial Interaction and Parasocial Relationship.” *Human Communication Research* 42 (1): 21–44. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hcre.12063>.
- Djafarova, Elmira, and Chloe Rushworth. 2017. “Exploring the Credibility of Online Celebrities’ Instagram Profiles in Influencing the Purchase Decisions of Young Female Users.” *Computers in Human Behavior* 68 (March): 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.009>.
- Erdogan, B. Zafer. 1999. “Celebrity Endorsement: A Literature Review.” *Journal of Marketing Management* 15 (4): 291–314. <https://doi.org/10.1362/026725799784870379>.
- Evans, Nathaniel J., Joe Phua, Jay Lim, and Hyoyeun Jun. 2017. “Disclosing Instagram Influencer Advertising: The Effects of Disclosure Language on Advertising Recognition, Attitudes, and Behavioral Intent.” *Journal of Interactive Advertising* 17 (2): 138–149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2017.1366885>.
- Farivar, Samira, Fang Wang, and Yufei Yuan. 2021. “Opinion Leadership vs. Para-Social Relationship: Key Factors in Influencer Marketing.” *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 59 (March): 102371. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102371>.
- Ferchaud, Arienne, Jenna Grzeslo, Stephanie Orme, and Jared LaGroue. 2018. “Parasocial Attributes and YouTube Personalities: Exploring Content Trends across the Most Subscribed YouTube Channels.” *Computers in Human Behavior* 80 (March): 88–96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.10.041>.
- Giles, David C. 2002. “Parasocial Interaction: A Review of the Literature and a Model for Future Research.” *Media Psychology* 4 (3): 279–305. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532785XMEP0403\\_04](https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532785XMEP0403_04).
- Gräve, Jan-Frederik. 2017. “Exploring the Perception of Influencers vs. Traditional Celebrities: Are Social Media Stars a New Type of Endorser?” *Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Social Media & Society - #SMSociety*, 17, 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3097286.3097322>.
- Greene, Kathryn, Valerian J. Derlega, and Alicia Mathews. 2006. “Self-Disclosure in Personal Relationships.” In *The Cambridge Handbook of Personal Relationships*, edited by Anita L. Vangelisti and Daniel Perlman, 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511606632.023>.
- Hartmann, Tilo, and Charlotte Goldhoorn. 2011. “Horton and Wohl Revisited: Exploring Viewers’ Experience of Parasocial Interaction.” *Journal of Communication* 61 (6): 1104–1121. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01595.x>.
- Hayes, Andrew F. 2018. *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis: A Regression-Based Approach*. Methodology in the Social Sciences. 2nd ed. New York: Guilford Press.
- Horton, Donald, and R. Richard Wohl. 1956. “Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance.” *Psychiatry* 19 (3): 215–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049>.
- Hudders, Liselot, Steffi De Jans, and Marijke De Veirman. 2021. “The Commercialization of Social Media Stars: A Literature Review and Conceptual Framework on the Strategic Use of Social Media Influencers.” *International Journal of Advertising* 40 (3): 327–375. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2020.1836925>.
- Hudson, Simon, and David Hudson. 2006. “Branded Entertainment: A New Advertising Technique or Product Placement in Disguise?” *Journal of Marketing Management* 22 (5-6): 489–504. <https://doi.org/10.1362/02672570677978703>.
- Hwang, Kumju, and Qi Zhang. 2018. “Influence of Parasocial Relationship between Digital Celebrities and Their Followers on Followers’ Purchase and Electronic Word-of-Mouth Intentions, and Persuasion Knowledge.” *Computers in Human Behavior* 87 (October): 155–173. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.05.029>.
- Johnson, Benjamin K., Amanda S. Bradshaw, Julia Davis, Vanessa Diegue, Lily Frost, Jonathan Hinds, Tracy Lin, Cassidy Mizell, Deanna Quintana, Ruowen Wang, et al. 2021. “Credible Influencers: Sponsored YouTube Personalities and Effects of Warranting Cues.” *Journal of Media Psychology* 26: 1864–1105/a000310. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000310>.

- Ju, Ilyoung, and Chen Lou. 2022. "Does Influencer-Follower Relationship Matter? Exploring How Relationship Norms and Influencer-Product Congruence Affect Advertising Effectiveness across Product Categories." *Journal of Interactive Advertising* 22 (2): 157-177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2022.2087809>.
- Kamins, Michael A. 1990. "An Investigation into the 'Match-Up' Hypothesis in Celebrity Advertising: When Beauty May Be Only Skin Deep." *Journal of Advertising* 19 (1): 4-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1990.10673175>.
- Kamins, Michael A., and Kamal Gupta. 1994. "Congruence between Spokesperson and Product Type: A Matchup Hypothesis Perspective." *Psychology & Marketing* 11 (6): 569-586. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.4220110605>.
- Khamis, Susie, Lawrence Ang, and Raymond Welling. 2017. "Self-Branding, 'Micro-Celebrity' and the Rise of Social Media Influencers." *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191-208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2016.1218292>.
- Kim, Do Yuon, and Hye-Young Kim. 2021. "Influencer Advertising on Social Media: The Multiple Inference Model on Influencer-Product Congruence and Sponsorship Disclosure." *Journal of Business Research* 130 (June): 405-415. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.02.020>.
- Kim, Jihyun, and Hayeon Song. 2016. "Celebrity's Self-Disclosure on Twitter and Parasocial Relationships: A Mediating Role of Social Presence." *Computers in Human Behavior* 62 (September): 570-577. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.03.083>.
- Kim, Junho, and Kyuhyun Choi. 2025. "The Effects of Functional and Symbolic Brand Fit on Consumer Behavior in Co-Branding Eco-Friendly Sportswear Products." *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship* 16: 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-07-2025-0314>.
- Krämer, Nicole C., and Johanna Schäwel. 2020. "Mastering the Challenge of Balancing Self-Disclosure and Privacy in Social Media." *Current Opinion in Psychology* 31: 67-71. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2019.08.003>.
- Labrecque, Lauren I. 2014. "Fostering Consumer-Brand Relationships in Social Media Environments: The Role of Parasocial Interaction." *Journal of Interactive Marketing* 28 (2): 134-148. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.003>.
- Lee, Jung Eun, and Brandi Watkins. 2016. "YouTube Vloggers' Influence on Consumer Luxury Brand Perceptions and Intentions." *Journal of Business Research* 69 (12): 5753-5760. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.04.171>.
- Lee, Susanna S., Huan Chen, and Yu-Hao Lee. 2022. "How Endorser-Product Congruity and Self-Expressiveness Affect Instagram Micro-Celebrities' Native Advertising Effectiveness." *Journal of Product & Brand Management* 31 (1): 149-162. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPB-02-2020-2757>.
- Leite, Fernanda Polli, and Paulo De Paula Baptista. 2022. "The Effects of Social Media Influencers' Self-Disclosure on Behavioral Intentions: The Role of Source Credibility, Parasocial Relationships, and Brand Trust." *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice* 30 (3): 295-311. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10696679.2021.1935275>.
- Leite, Fernanda Polli, Nicolas Pontes, and Bruno Schivinski. 2024. "Influencer Marketing Effectiveness: Giving Competence, Receiving Credibility." *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing* 41 (3): 307-321. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2024.2317748>.
- Leite, Fernanda Polli, Nicolas Pontes, and Paulo De Paula Baptista. 2022. "Oops, I've Overshared! When Social Media Influencers' Self-Disclosure Damage Perceptions of Source Credibility." *Computers in Human Behavior* 133 (August): 107274. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2022.107274>.
- Leung, Fine F., Flora F. Gu, and Robert W. Palmatier. 2022. "Online Influencer Marketing." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 50 (2): 226-251. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-021-00829-4>.
- Lin, Ruoyun, and Sonja Utz. 2017. "Self-Disclosure on SNS: Do Disclosure Intimacy and Narrativity Influence Interpersonal Closeness and Social Attraction?" *Computers in Human Behavior* 70 (May): 426-436. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.01.012>.
- Lou, Chen, and Hye Kyung Kim. 2019. "Fancying the New Rich and Famous? Explicating the Roles of Influencer Content, Credibility, and Parental Mediation in Adolescents' Parasocial Relationship, Materialism, and Purchase Intentions." *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (vember): 2567. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02567>.
- Lou, Chen, and Shupe Yuan. 2019. "Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media." *Journal of Interactive Advertising* 19 (1): 58-73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501>.
- Luo, Mufan, and Jeffrey T. Hancock. 2020. "Self-Disclosure and Social Media: Motivations, Mechanisms and Psychological Well-Being." *Current Opinion in Psychology* 31 (February): 110-115. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2019.08.019>.
- Mishra, Aditya S., Subhadip Roy, and Ainsworth Anthony Bailey. 2015. "Exploring Brand Personality-Celebrity Endorser Personality Congruence in Celebrity Endorsements in the Indian Context: BRAND-CELEBRITY PERSONALITY." *Psychology & Marketing* 32 (12): 1158-1174. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20846>.
- Misra, Shekhar, and Sharon E. Beatty. 1990. "Celebrity Spokesperson and Brand Congruence." *Journal of Business Research* 21 (2): 159-173. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0148-2963\(90\)90050-N](https://doi.org/10.1016/0148-2963(90)90050-N).
- Moyer-Gusé, Emily. 2008. "Toward a Theory of Entertainment Persuasion: Explaining the Persuasive Effects of Entertainment-Education Messages." *Communication Theory* 18 (3): 407-425. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2008.00328.x>.
- Munnukka, Juha, Devdeep Maity, Hanna Reinikainen, and Vilma Luoma-Aho. 2019. "'Thanks for Watching': The Effectiveness of YouTube Vlogendorsements." *Computers in Human Behavior* 93 (April): 226-234. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.12.014>.
- Nah, Hye Soo. 2022. "The Appeal of 'Real' in Parasocial Interaction: The Effect of Self-Disclosure on Message Acceptance via Perceived Authenticity and Liking." *Computers in Human Behavior* 134 (September): 107330. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2022.107330>.
- Ohanian, Roobina. 1990. "Construction and Validation of a Scale to Measure Celebrity Endorsers' Perceived Expertise, Trustworthiness, and Attractiveness." *Journal of Advertising* 19 (3): 39-52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1990.10673191>.
- Orben, Amy C., and Robin I. M. Dunbar. 2017. "Social Media and Relationship Development: The Effect of

- Valence and Intimacy of Posts.” *Computers in Human Behavior* 73 (August): 489–498. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.04.006>.
- Osgood, Charles E., and Percy H. Tannenbaum. 1955. “The Principle of Congruity in the Prediction of Attitude Change.” *Psychological Review* 62 (1): 42–55. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0048153>.
- Penttinen, Valeria, Robert Ciuchita, and Martina Čaić. 2022. “YouTube It before You Buy It: The Role of Parasocial Interaction in Consumer-to-Consumer Video Reviews.” *Journal of Interactive Marketing* 57 (4): 561–582. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10949968221102825>.
- Qian, Jiayu, and Jee-Sun Park. 2021. “Influencer-Brand Fit and Brand Dilution in China’s Luxury Market: The Moderating Role of Self-Concept Clarity.” *Journal of Brand Management* 28 (2): 199–220. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-020-00226-2>.
- Reinikainen, Hanna, Juha Munnukka, Devdeep Maity, and Vilma Luoma-Aho. 2020. “‘You Really Are a Great Big Sister’—Parasocial Relationships, Credibility, and the Moderating Role of Audience Comments in Influencer Marketing.” *Journal of Marketing Management* 36 (3-4): 279–298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2019.1708781>.
- Riles, Julius Matthew. 2020. “The Social Effect of Exposure to Mental Illness Media Portrayals: Influencing Interpersonal Interaction Intentions.” *Psychology of Popular Media* 9 (2): 145–154. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000217>.
- Rubin, Alan M., Elizabeth M. Perse, and Robert A. Powell. 1985. “Loneliness, Parasocial Interaction, and Local Television News Viewing.” *Human Communication Research* 12 (2): 155–180. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1985.tb00071.x>.
- Rubin, Rebecca B., and Michael P. McHugh. 1987. “Development of Parasocial Interaction Relationships.” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 31 (3): 279–292. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838158709386664>.
- Schouten, Alexander P., Loes Janssen, and Maegan Verspaget. 2020. “Celebrity vs. Influencer Endorsements in Advertising: The Role of Identification, Credibility, and Product-Endorser Fit.” *International Journal of Advertising* 39 (2): 258–281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1634898>.
- Slater, Michael D., David R. Ewoldsen, and Kelsey W. Woods. 2018. “Extending Conceptualization and Measurement of Narrative Engagement after-the-Fact: Parasocial Relationship and Retrospective Imaginative Involvement.” *Media Psychology* 21 (3): 329–351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2017.1328313>.
- Sokolova, Karina, and Hajer Kefi. 2020. “Instagram and YouTube Bloggers Promote It, Why Should I Buy? How Credibility and Parasocial Interaction Influence Purchase Intentions.” *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 53 (March): 101742. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.011>.
- Thomas, Tijo, and Johney Johnson. 2017. “The Impact of Celebrity Expertise on Advertising Effectiveness: The Mediating Role of Celebrity Brand Fit.” *Vision: The Journal of Business Perspective* 21 (4): 367–374. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0972262917733174>.
- Till, Brian D., and Michael Busler. 2000. “The Match-Up Hypothesis: Physical Attractiveness, Expertise, and the Role of Fit on Brand Attitude, Purchase Intent and Brand Beliefs.” *Journal of Advertising* 29 (3): 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2000.10673613>.
- Tukachinsky, Riva, and Gayle Stever. 2019. “Theorizing Development of Parasocial Engagement.” *Communication Theory* 29 (3): 209–230. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qty032>.
- Tukachinsky, Riva, Nathan Walter, and Camille J. Saucier. 2020. “Antecedents and Effects of Parasocial Relationships: A Meta-Analysis.” *Journal of Communication* 70 (6): 868–894. <https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqaa034>.
- Utz, Sonja. 2015. “The Function of Self-Disclosure on Social Network Sites: Not Only Intimate, but Also Positive and Entertaining Self-Disclosures Increase the Feeling of Connection.” *Computers in Human Behavior* 45 (April): 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.11.076>.
- Uzunoglu, Ebru, and Sema Misci Kip. 2014. “Brand Communication through Digital Influencers: Leveraging Blogger Engagement.” *International Journal of Information Management* 34 (5): 592–602. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2014.04.007>.
- Vrontis, Demetris, Anna Makrides, Michael Christofi, and Alkis Thrassou. 2021. “Social Media Influencer Marketing: A Systematic Review, Integrative Framework and Future Research Agenda.” *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 45 (4): 617–644. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12647>.
- Wang, Fan, and Brad D. Carlson. 2024. “Self-Disclosure of Content Creators: A Systematic Review and Holistic Framework.” *AMS Review* 14 (3-4): 239–257. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13162-024-00290-w>.
- Wellman, Mariah L., Ryan Stoldt, Melissa Tully, and Brian Ekdale. 2020. “Ethics of Authenticity: Social Media Influencers and the Production of Sponsored Content.” *Journal of Media Ethics* 35 (2): 68–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2020.1736078>.
- Wei, Xiaofan, Huan Chen, Artemio Ramirez, Yongwoog Jeon, and Yao Sun. 2022. “Influencers as Endorsers and Followers as Consumers: Exploring the Role of Parasocial Relationship, Congruence, and Followers’ Identifications on Consumer–Brand Engagement.” *Journal of Interactive Advertising* 22 (3): 269–288. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2022.2116963>.
- Xiao, Min, Rang Wang, and Sylvia Chan-Olmsted. 2018. “Factors Affecting YouTube Influencer Marketing Credibility: A Heuristic-Systematic Model.” *Journal of Media Business Studies* 15 (3): 188–213. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2018.1501146>.
- Xie, Shengcheng, Haiying Wei, and Fu Liu. 2023. “Is Beauty Always Good? Effects of Visual Presentation of Influencer’s Aesthetic Labor on Brand Purchase Intention.” *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 75 (vember): 103528. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2023.103528>.
- Zaichkowsky, Judith Lynne. 1985. “Measuring the Involvement Construct.” *Journal of Consumer Research* 12 (3): 341. <https://doi.org/10.1086/208520>.
- Zhang, Honghong. 2025. “Influencer-Generated Content on Social Media: how Does Influencers’ Self-Disclosure Affect Followers’ Purchase Intentions?” *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics* 37 (2): 314–330. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-07-2023-0618>.
- Zhou, Xiaoxiao, Yi Huang, and Yuki Inoue. 2024. “Parasocial Interactions and Parasocial Relationships on Instagram: An in-Depth Analysis of Fashion and Beauty Influencers.” *Heliyon* 10 (21): e39708. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e39708>.