



Influencer credibility and halal identity on purchase intention: The role of brand engagement and digital religious expression

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ABSTRACT

Article History

Received: 23 September 2025

Revised: 29 January 2026

Accepted: 13 February 2026

Published: 1 October 2026

Keywords

Brand engagement

Halal identity

Influencer credibility

Purchase intention

Religious expression.

This study investigates the effect of influencer credibility on purchase intention, with brand engagement as a mediating variable and digital religious expression as a contextual factor. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), this research seeks to explain how trust in social media influencers influences consumer behavior within religiously oriented digital communities. Data were collected through an online survey of Indonesian social media users who actively participate in online religious communities, particularly in the halal fashion sector. The analysis employed Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS–SEM). The results indicate that influencer trustworthiness has a significant positive effect on brand engagement ($p = 0.000$) but does not directly affect purchase intention ($p = 0.450$). Brand engagement plays a crucial mediating role in the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention ($p = 0.000$) and is identified as a strong predictor of consumers' buying intentions ($p = 0.000$). However, the moderating effect of digital religious expression is not supported ($p = 0.164$), suggesting that digital religiosity does not strengthen the influence of influencer credibility on purchase intention. These findings extend TPB by highlighting the indirect mechanism through which influencer credibility shapes consumer behavior via engagement. The study contributes to the literature by integrating influencer credibility, brand engagement, and digital religious expression into the TPB framework. Practically, the findings offer insights for marketers targeting Muslim consumers by emphasizing engagement-based influencer strategies. Limitations include the cross-sectional design and cultural specificity of the sample, indicating opportunities for future longitudinal and cross-cultural research.

Contribution/Originality: This study offers originality by integrating influencer credibility, brand engagement, and digital religious expression within the Theory of Planned Behaviour. It reveals engagement as a key mediator and highlights contextual insights from Indonesia's halal fashion market.

1. INTRODUCTION

One thing that makes modern Muslim markets different is how they combine faith and the internet. The halal fashion industry in Indonesia is growing quickly, which shows that there is a bigger cultural and social fight going on in that country about religion, individuality, and how to live. This assertion is supported by the findings of the Katadata Insight Centre, which indicated that 72 percent of Muslim consumers in Indonesia are concerned about halal quality when they are shopping. Nearly two-thirds of Muslim women who are members of Generation Z read fashion websites that discuss how to dress modestly while yet adhering to Islamic regulations. These data

demonstrate that religion has evolved into a form of digital performance art that influences desire, consumerism, and the way individuals display themselves to the world.

Several studies on Islamic marketing and influencer communication have been conducted, and among these studies, trust and emotional attachment have been examined as indicators of whether or not a person is likely to purchase a product or service. Some of these studies are Zaki and Elseidi (2024); Yunus, Mahmood, and Abd Mansor (2014), and Wijaya, Wijaya, and Jaolis (2025). The problem is that studies like this usually only look at how people use things, not the larger social and digital spaces that shape who they are. In the new digital world, religious expression online is more than just a way to show what you believe. It's also a way to build your identity by following, acknowledging, and reinforcing norms. Thus, it is essential to incorporate not only behavioral antecedents but also the mechanisms of digital identity formation and the internalization of social norms that characterize online religious groups to understand the purchasing intentions of Muslim consumers.

One theoretical perspective on the construction of online religious identities is to perceive it as an ongoing conflict between individual commitment and the aspiration for visibility among peers. Social media platforms influence online communities and individual behavior by facilitating the expression, contestation, and validation of religious beliefs through user ratings. These social norms resemble external referents that modify individuals' intentions to act within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework (Ajzen, 1991). People who follow influencers in online religious ecosystems think they are honest, knowledgeable, and share their values. They have symbolic validity because they are credible. In the domain of digital religion, trustworthiness has evolved from a mere persuasive tool into a means of social validation.

To better understand the relationship between Muslim customers and brands, it is helpful to look at the theoretical framework that connects influencer credibility and digital religiosity. Brand engagement is a concept that brings together the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive parts of the consumer. It lets social influence turn into buying behavior. People connect with a brand when a trustworthy influencer who shares their religious beliefs supports it. This creates a participatory identity. In this case, brand engagement means using digital contact to make your goal happen. This is the aspect of TPB that is concerned with behavioral control.

A significant amount of study has been conducted on influencer marketing; nevertheless, the incorporation of online religious expression as a moderating factor is still relatively new. A hybrid space where offline beliefs and online communication come together is what Campbell and Tsuria (2021) refer to as "digital religion." On the other hand, there is a dearth of study about the ways in which these expressions influence consumer involvement and how trust might affect sales. The amount of theoretical research conducted on the relationship between religiosity, identity performance, and influencer reputation in online marketplaces is extremely limited in non-Western contexts focused on faith, such as Indonesia.

Through the development and analysis of a structural model based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), this research aims to address identified deficiencies. The study investigates the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention. It also considers the role of brand interaction as a mediator and the moderated role of digital religious expression. This research contributes to expanding the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by incorporating socio-religious dimensions of digital identity into a well-established behavioral framework. Additionally, it situates these components within the context of the debate on digital religiosity.

Thirdly, the study will examine the impact of digital religious expression on the correlation between influencer credibility and purchase intention. The primary aim of the study is to examine the impact of influencer credibility on brand engagement and purchase intention. The second objective is to examine the function of brand engagement as a mediator in the correlation between influencer credibility and purchase intention. The third goal is to look into how digital religious expression affects the link between influencer credibility and the desire to buy something.

The findings of this study are a valuable resource for fashion marketers, brand strategists, and digital influencers interested in engaging with Muslims in an ethical and positive manner. Increasing the likelihood that people will

purchase from you and enhancing your brand's equity can be achieved by collaborating with influencers who are genuine, principled, and accepted. Legislators and halal certifiers should benefit from a better understanding of the connections between customer trust in businesses, online actions, and products that meet halal standards. The research not only provides insightful information but also teaches Muslim business owners in the fashion industry how to deliver effective customer care in the modern digital marketplace. These observable outcomes contribute to the development of a responsible, ethical, and long-term strategy for the Muslim market.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *TPB Stands for the Theory of Planned Behaviour*

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) posits that individuals' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control influence their actions and intentions. The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) has proven very useful in consumer research and marketing when explaining choices based on values, such as buying items for religious or moral reasons. This is especially true when discussing choices rooted in values. In traditional TPB applications, the impact of digital social environments, where norms are constantly created and reinforced through online interactions, is not always fully understood. For example, online interactions continually set and strengthen norms. Along with seeking social acceptance through human connections, Muslim consumers also desire social acceptance through digital displays of faith that link consumption to moral identity.

Alalwan (2018) and Shah and Sayuti (2011) assert that recent advancements in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) have elucidated the importance of contextual variables as boundary conditions that either amplify or attenuate behavioural intentions. These factors include culture, the use of technology, and how much time people spend on social media. In this case, the credibility of influencers may act as an informal norm by changing what people expect. Conversely, the degree of engagement individuals possess with a company reflects their perception of agency in influencing their own conduct. Meanwhile, the expression of religious beliefs on digital platforms could change how people act and think by raising moral issues in the context of online interactions. This integration changes the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) from a psychological model of intention to a socio-digital framework that includes online interactions and identity performance as factors that lead to behaviour.

2.2. *The Credibility of Those Who Have Influence*

(Erdogan, 1999) and Ohanian (1990) says that an influencer's credibility depends on three things: how good they are at what they do, how good they look, and how trustworthy they are both on and off the job. Lou and Yuan (2019) assert that the incorporation of symbolic congruence and social authenticity into digital contexts enhances credibility beyond traditional endorsement concepts. Research by Lim, Mohd Radzol, Cheah, and Wong (2017) and Sokolova and Kefi (2020) indicates that influencers perceived as authentic and aligned with group values exert a greater influence on public opinion. Conversely, this effect may not consistently manifest or be unequivocally evident. Believers assess both knowledge and adherence to spiritual and ethical standards in religious markets, highlighting the robust connection between credibility and moral legitimacy (Ishak, Che Omar, Khalid, Ab. Ghafar, & Hussain, 2020). This underscores that adherents assess both adherence and understanding.

There is a growing body of evidence (Qureshi, Shahzadi, & Hussain, 2024) that suggests the credibility of an influencer has an indirect impact on the desire to make a purchase. This influence can be exerted either through involvement or by modifying the qualities of the situational identity. The findings of this contradict prior studies that established the trustworthiness of influencers as a direct predictor. This study contributes to the discourse by contextualizing trustworthiness within a moral-symbolic framework. Influencers serve as communicators and normative agents who establish behavioral standards. The TPB viewpoint contends that individuals' perceptions of societal pressure to follow trusted authority figures are influenced by the legitimacy of those authorities.

2.3. Active Participation with a Brand

According to Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, and Ilić (2011) and Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie (2014), the term "brand engagement" describes the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral commitment that customers demonstrate while interacting with brands. Engagement, as opposed to transactional loyalty, refers to active engagement and the collaborative construction of one's identity, particularly within social media settings. In Islamic marketing, brand engagement is highly significant because it reflects how a person's religious beliefs and personal connection to a product are perceived. People eat halal food for various reasons, some practical and some moral (Abbasi et al., 2018; Hasanah et al., 2025).

Dessart, Veloutsou, and Morgan-Thomas (2016) conducted an analysis of studies, illustrating that engagement serves as a mediator in the relationship between trust and intention. Engagement is when a person's perception of an influencer's authenticity changes into real participation in ecosystems driven by influencers. This change connects credibility to action. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) states that how much control someone perceives they have over their behavior indicates how well they can follow through on their goals through contact. To measure this, they examine how much people interact with the brand. Consequently, it is posited that the credibility of influencers enhances engagement, thereby increasing the likelihood of a purchase.

2.4. Expressions of Religion Conducted Online

According to Campbell and Tsuria (2021), "digital religious expression" is the act of expressing and negotiating religious ideas in online settings. This process entails the enactment, mediation, and validation of religion through digital interaction. This phenomenon indicates that conventional distinctions between private spirituality and public discourse are being contested, resulting in the emergence of a hybrid realm where religiosity can be both individual and communal. Butt, Khong, and Alam (2021) assert that digital religiosity within Muslim consumer culture integrates moral discourse into the marketplace, thereby influencing perceptions of authenticity and halal compliance.

This study examines the contextual moderator that can alter the psychological associations posited by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), offering a critical analysis of digital religious expression. Butt et al. (2021) assert that individuals exhibiting heightened digital religiosity may assess influencer messages through a moral lens. This perception may lead to heightened engagement when the content aligns with faith-based principles and diminished engagement when the information is perceived as incongruent. Consequently, the dissemination of ideas via digital platforms not only fortifies prevailing social norms but also transforms the ethical parameters of trust and influence. In theory, it serves as a boundary condition that governs the influence of subjective norms and perceived behavioral control on the intention to act in a specific manner.

2.5. Desire to Make a Purchase

"Purchase intention" is the term for the mental steps that happen before someone actually buys something. Aslan (2023) and Alalwan (2018) assert that the probability of purchase is influenced by evaluative judgments, emotional reactions, and perceived social factors. For Muslim consumers, intention is highly moralized, and they make decisions based on their faith, morals, and community expectations. Research conducted by Nazir (2023) indicates that religion and halal assurance significantly influence purchasing intentions. Nonetheless, these effects are progressively mitigated by digital narratives and influencer communications.

The integration of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and digital religiosity has revealed that the intention to purchase arises not solely from rational evaluation, but from socialized cognition, characterized by the confluence of perceived norms, engagement, and religious identity. Consequently, the study redefines purchase intention as the behavioral manifestation of both digital identity performance and normative adherence within online Muslim communities.

2.6. Formulation of the Hypothesis

The following hypotheses, which are founded in the extended TPB framework, are proposed by the study on the basis of the theoretical synthesis that was presented earlier.

In the first hypothesis, the legitimacy of an influencer has a favorable impact on the intention to purchase.

There is a favorable correlation between the credibility of an influencer and the level of interaction with a company.

The level of interaction with a brand has a favorable impact on the intention to make a purchase.

When it comes to the connection between the credibility of an influencer and the intention to buy, brand engagement serves as a mediator when it comes to the connection.

The credibility of an influencer is linked to the desire to buy, and digital religious expression has an impact on this link.

These hypotheses collectively position influencer credibility as a normative stimulus, brand engagement as a behavioral mechanism, and digital religious expression as a contextual amplifier, all of which collaboratively impact purchase intention. This integrated model augments the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) within the realm of digital religiosity and Islamic consumer behaviour, linking psychological theory with socio-cultural transformation in digital markets.

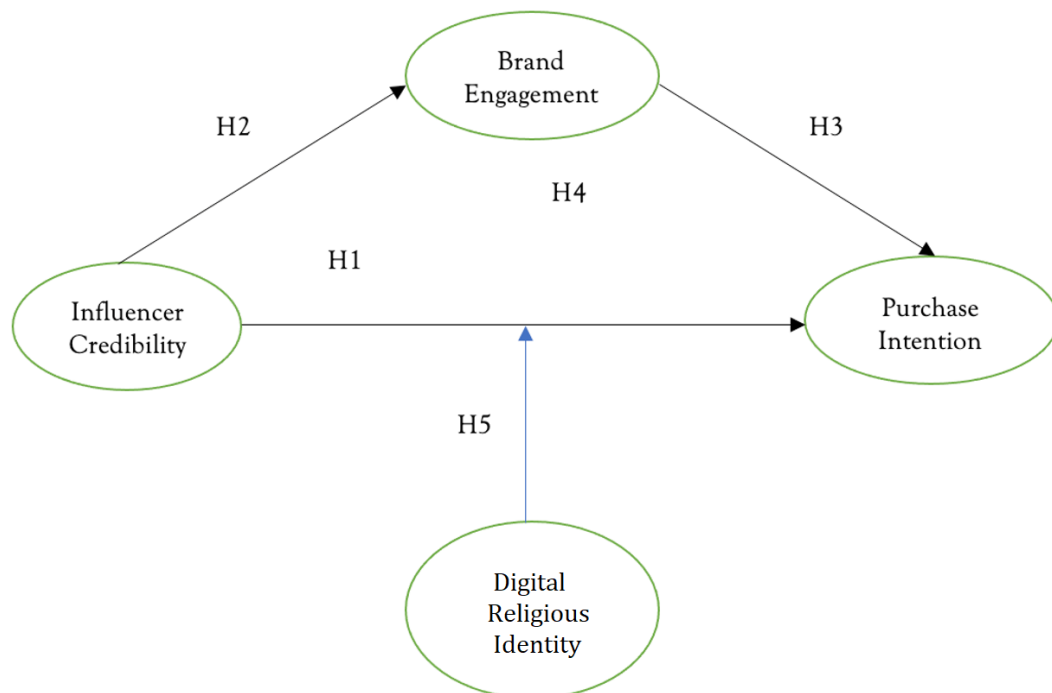


Figure 1. Research model.

Figure 1 illustrates the research model that explains the relationships among influencer credibility, brand engagement, purchase intention, and digital religious identity. In this model, influencer credibility is positioned as the main antecedent that influences consumer purchase intention both directly and indirectly. The direct pathway reflects the assumption that consumers may form buying intentions based on their trust in social media influencers. In addition, influencer credibility is proposed to stimulate brand engagement, representing consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement with a brand promoted by influencers. Brand engagement is then positioned as a key explanatory mechanism through which influencer credibility affects purchase intention, indicating that engagement plays an important role in translating influencer trust into buying behavior.

3. METHOD

3.1. Design of the Study

This study utilizes a quantitative, explanatory research design to examine causal relationships among influencer credibility, brand engagement, digital religious expression, and purchase intention, based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The explanatory design was chosen to enable hypothesis testing and the verification of structural relationships among latent variables derived from established theoretical frameworks (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To do Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), we used a program called SmartPLS 4. This software is useful for doing research that is both predictive and theory-building, as well as for looking at models that have complicated mediating and moderating effects (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2019).

Utilizing PLS-SEM aligns with the study's objective to quantify latent components encompassing psychological, behavioral, and environmental dimensions that are not directly observable. PLS-SEM is better than covariance-based Support Vector Machines (SEM) for working with non-normal data and sample sizes that are small to medium. This is an important point to remember for behavioral research that looks into new digital trends like influencer marketing and online religiosity.

3.2. Context of the Research and Sampling

The research took place in Indonesia, which has the most Muslims in the world and is one of the fastest-growing markets for halal fashion. The situation is especially important because Indonesia has a unique mix of digitalization, religiosity, and modern consumerism. Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya were the three big cities where Muslim teens hung out and used the internet. The data came from these three major cities.

In accordance with the following three inclusion criteria, respondents were selected through the use of purposive sampling: Muslim consumers between the ages of 18 and 40, active users of social media who follow fashion influencers, and acquaintances with at least one halal fashion brand are the three criteria that fall under this category. By utilizing this strategy, it is ensured that the individuals who are participating have sufficient prior information to evaluate the things that are being investigated. According to Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, and Kuppelwieser (2014), the minimum number of replies required for PLS-SEM is 250, and we found that we had received 250 valid responses. It is ten times the number of indicators that are present in the construct that is the most complicated. The preservation of demographic variety with regard to gender, education, and occupation was done in order to improve the study's external validity.

3.3. Instrumentation and Measurement

All of the concepts were operationalized using established, validated scales from prior research. We utilized six items from Ohanian (1990) to assess influencer credibility. These items examined trustworthiness, expertise, and appeal. Five indicators that looked at cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects were used to measure brand engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Campbell and Tsuria (2021) say that four indicators were used to measure digital religious expression. These signs were online engagement, value articulation, and faith-based communication. To ascertain purchase intention, four components from Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal (1991) were employed, focusing specifically on willingness and consideration for a purchase.

We used a five-point Likert scale for each indicator, where one represented the strongest disagreement and five the strongest agreement. Three academics knowledgeable about Islamic consumer behavior and marketing reviewed the content to ensure accuracy. A pilot test with thirty participants indicated that the items were clear and reliable before full implementation (Cronbach's Alpha was greater than 0.70). We employed Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to assess the construct's reliability and validity in subsequent research steps. Hair et al. (2019) study established thresholds at +0.70 and +0.50, respectively.

3.4. Examination of Data and Model Fit

The analysis was conducted in two phases: initially, the measurement model was assessed, followed by an evaluation of the structural model through inspection. We used the Fornell-Larcker criterion to test the measurement model by looking at indicator loadings, reliability indices, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The fact that all of the item loadings were greater than 0.70 and all of the AVE values were greater than 0.50 showed that convergent validity was present. The validation of discriminant validity was established when the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct exceeded the correlations among the constructs.

To ascertain the significance of path coefficients, bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was employed for the structural model. Indirect impact estimation and interaction term analysis in SmartPLS were used to examine mediation and moderation, respectively. We referenced Cohen (1990) thresholds of 0.02 (small), 0.15 (mid), and 0.35 (big) to determine effect sizes (f^2). The blindfolding process was also used to assess predictive relevance (Q^2).

Furthermore, model fit indices were calculated to ensure adherence to the advanced PLS-SEM reporting standards. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was 0.061, which is lower than the suggested criterion of 0.08. This indicates that the model fit was good. According to Hair et al. (2019) study, the Normed Fit Index (NFI) was 0.911, which exceeds the acceptable level of 0.90 and demonstrates that the model performs well. The endogenous components explain a substantial amount of information, evidenced by R^2 values of 0.786 for Brand Engagement and 0.764 for Purchase Intention. The combined use of these indices confirms that the model is consistent, valid, and strong overall.

4. RESULTS AND THE DISCUSSION

The outer loading value of the indicator is the most important aspect to consider when using PLS-SEM to assess an indication. This value indicates how strongly each observable variable relates to its corresponding latent construct. When the loading factor of an indicator exceeds 0.70, it demonstrates that the construct is valid. This signifies that the construct explains more than half of the changes in the indicator, confirming its validity. Indicators that do not meet this standard should be regarded as unnecessary if they compromise the model's validity and only slightly impact the construct's reliability.

Table 1. Loading factor.

Indicator	Brand engagement	Digital religious expression	Influencer credibility	Purchase intention
BE1	0.848			
BE2	0.831			
BE3	0.879			
BE4	0.868			
BE5	0.857			
DRE1		0.815		
DRE2		0.907		
DRE3		0.915		
DRE4		0.843		
IC2			0.899	
IC3			0.852	
IC4			0.882	
IC5			0.820	
IC6			0.755	
PI1				0.873
PI2				0.844
PI3				0.880
PI4				0.858
IC1			0.760	

Source: At work, 2025.

Table 1 presents the loading factor values for each indicator used to measure the latent constructs in the model, including Brand Engagement, Digital Religious Expression, Influencer Credibility, and Purchase Intention. The results indicate that all retained indicators demonstrate satisfactory convergent validity. For the Brand Engagement construct, all indicators (BE1–BE5) show strong loadings ranging from 0.831 to 0.879, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. This confirms that the indicators adequately represent the Brand Engagement construct. Similarly, the Digital Religious Expression indicators (DRE1–DRE4) exhibit high loading values between 0.815 and 0.915, indicating strong indicator reliability and construct validity. The Influencer Credibility construct is also well represented, with loading values ranging from 0.755 to 0.899 across indicators IC2–IC6 and IC1, all of which meet the minimum acceptable criteria. Furthermore, the Purchase Intention indicators (PI1–PI4) demonstrate strong loadings between 0.844 and 0.880, suggesting that the items consistently capture consumers' intention to purchase.

The PLS-SEM model has four latent variables: Brand Engagement, Digital Religious Expression, Influencer Credibility, and Purchase Intention. Table 1 shows the outer loading values for each of the indicators that are related to these variables. Every indicator value that is greater than the specified threshold of 0.70 demonstrates that there are substantial linkages between the components and demonstrates that convergent validity is present. Indications of Brand Engagement consistently reveal high loadings, with values ranging from 0.831 to 0.879. On the other hand, indications of Digital Religious Expression display loadings that range from 0.815 to 0.915. The range of scores for the markers of influencer credibility ranges from 0.755 to 0.899, which is considered to be extremely encouraging. Even at their lowest loading (IC6 = 0.755), they still meet the standards for exploratory research. The Purchase Intention indicators, which range from 0.844 to 0.880, also show that each construct in the model is reliable. The validity also shows that the items that make up each construct do make up a coherent and unified measure of the underlying latent variable.

In the PLS-SEM measurement model, reliability and validity regarding the construct are of utmost importance. Reliabilities such as Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) exceeding 0.70 indicate the internal consistency of a construct's indicators, serving as a reflective measure of construct reliability. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is used to measure convergence validity. It is acceptable when it is above 0.50, which means that the latent construct explains more than half of the variance of the indicators.

Table 2. Construct reliability and validity.

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	rho_A	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Brand engagement	0.909	0.909	0.932	0.734
Digital religious expression	0.893	0.896	0.926	0.759
Influencer credibility	0.908	0.913	0.930	0.689
Moderating effect 1	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Purchase intention	0.887	0.888	0.922	0.746

Source: At work, 2025.

Table 2 presents the results of the construct reliability and validity assessment for the five latent variables assessed for construct reliability and validity comprised brand engagement, digital religious expression, influencer credibility, moderating effect 1, and purchase intention. This is what the results show. The fact that all of the constructs had high scores for Cronbach's Alphas and Composite Reliabilities (CR), both of which were much higher than the benchmarks of 0.70, shows that the internal consistency is strong. The Composite Reliability values, which can be anywhere from 0.922 to 1.000, also show that the way the measurement was done is strong. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each latent construct, which range from 0.689 to 1.000, show that they all come together. These numbers are between these numbers. It is much higher than the lowest value of 0.50. These findings confirm the validity and reliability of the constructs, allowing future research to concentrate on the structural relationships among the components. The Fornell-Larcker criterion, a widely acknowledged method for assessing

the distinctiveness of each latent construct in PLS-SEM, was employed to validate the study's discriminant validity. In this case, the square root of each construct's Average Variance Extracted (AVE) must be higher than the highest correlation it has with any other constructs in the model. This will confirm the study's discriminant validity.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity.

Variables	Brand engagement	Digital religious expression	Influencer credibility	Moderating effect 1	Purchase intention
Brand engagement	0.857				
Digital religious expression	0.785	0.871			
Influencer credibility	0.887	0.760	0.830		
Moderating effect 1	-0.212	-0.134	-0.201	1.000	
Purchase intention	0.841	0.801	0.782	-0.106	0.864

Source: At work, 2025.

Table 3 shows the results of the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which show that the latent variables in the structural model still have discriminant validity. The square root of the AVE for each construct is shown in bold on the graph's diagonal. These numbers must be larger than the correlations in the same row or column. Brand Engagement (AVE = 0.857) has a higher correlation than Digital Religious Expression (0.785), Influencer Credibility (0.887), and Purchase Intention (0.841), which means it has enough discriminant validity. Digital Religious Expression also has a diagonal value of 0.871, which means it does better in relationships than the other constructs. The discriminant validity exhibited in this model arises from the diagonal values across all constructs, including the moderating effect consistently surpassing their inter-construct correlations. Each variable encapsulates a distinct dimension. This model has shown that discriminant validity exists.

The F^2 effect size criteria in PLS-SEM assess the model's R^2 by determining whether the predictor is present. This indicates how much an outside latent variable influences an inside latent variable within a model. Cohen's widely accepted benchmarks for the F^2 effect size specify that 0.02 is a small effect, 0.15 is a moderate effect, and 0.35 is a large effect. If the effect is less than 0.02, it suggests that removing the predictor would significantly reduce the explained variance of the outcome construct, indicating a small effect. This measure, combined with the significance tests of path coefficients, helps researchers identify which predictors to prioritize for model simplification and which variables have substantial explanatory value. The F^2 test thus confirms the structural model's statistical relevance and offers meaningful insights into the relationships among the study variables.

Table 4. f^2 Effect Size

Variables	Brand engagement	Purchase intention
Brand engagement	-	0.209
Digital religious expression	-	0.187
Influencer credibility	3.672	0.004
Moderating effect 1	-	0.017

Source: At work, 2025.

Table 4 presents the f^2 effect size values used to assess the contribution of each predictor to the endogenous constructs in the structural model. Following Cohen's effect size guidelines, f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicate small, medium, and large effects, respectively. However, values substantially above 0.35 may occur when a predictor has a very strong contribution to an endogenous construct and should be interpreted in relation to the structure of the model (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). The results show that Influencer Credibility has an exceptionally large effect on Brand Engagement, with an f^2 value of 3.672. Although this value is very high, it is theoretically and statistically consistent with the model because Influencer Credibility is the dominant predictor of Brand Engagement and shows

a very strong significant path coefficient. Therefore, this result should be interpreted as evidence that consumers' engagement with the brand is strongly shaped by the perceived credibility of influencers.

For Purchase Intention, the effect size values are more moderate and limited. Brand Engagement has a medium effect on Purchase Intention, with an f^2 value of 0.209, indicating that engagement plays an important role in explaining consumers' purchase intention. Digital Religious Expression also shows a medium effect, with an f^2 value of 0.187, suggesting that religious expression in digital contexts contributes meaningfully to purchase intention. In contrast, Influencer Credibility has a negligible direct effect on Purchase Intention, with an f^2 value of 0.004. This finding supports the mediation result, indicating that Influencer Credibility influences Purchase Intention primarily through Brand Engagement rather than through a direct pathway. Furthermore, Moderating Effect 1 has a small effect size of 0.017, suggesting that the interaction effect does not substantially improve the explanatory power of the model. In Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), R^2 shows how well the outside predictors explain the changes in the inside (dependent) variable. A value of R^2 close to 0 means that the model doesn't do a good job of predicting, while a value of R^2 close to 1 means that it does a good job of explaining. Hair et al. (2019) say that the R^2 value can be large (≥ 0.75), medium (≥ 0.50), or small (≤ 0.25).

Table 5. R-Square.

Variables	R Square	R square adjusted
Brand engagement	0.786	0.785
Purchase intention	0.764	0.759

Source: At work, 2025.

Table 5 presents the R-square and adjusted R-square values for the endogenous variables in the structural model. The results indicate that the model demonstrates strong explanatory power. Specifically, Brand Engagement shows an R^2 value of 0.786 and an adjusted R^2 of 0.785, indicating that a substantial proportion of its variance is explained by the predictor variables in the model. Similarly, Purchase Intention records an R^2 value of 0.764 with an adjusted R^2 of 0.759, suggesting that the model explains a large portion of the variance in consumers' purchase intention. Both R^2 values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.50, indicating a moderate to strong level of predictive accuracy. Additionally, the effect size (f^2) analysis indicates that Brand Engagement ($f^2 = 0.209$) and Digital Religious Expression ($f^2 = 0.187$) exert moderate effects on Purchase Intention. In contrast, Influencer Credibility shows a negligible direct effect on Purchase Intention ($f^2 = 0.004$), reinforcing the finding that its influence is primarily indirect through Brand Engagement. SmartPLS researchers used structural equation modeling to test the hypothesis. A thorough examination of the t-values, p-values, and path coefficients was carried out. There is a strong statistical link between the variables when the t-value is larger than 1.96 (at 95% confidence) and the p-value is less than 0.05. This indicates that the association is statistically significant. It can be concluded from this that the hypothesis is correct.

Table 6. Hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis	Original sample (O)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Result
Influencer credibility -> Purchase intention	0.070	0.092	0.757	0.450	Insignificant
Influencer credibility -> Brand engagement	0.887	0.022	40.791	0.000	Significant
Brand engagement -> Purchase intention	0.519	0.107	4.869	0.000	Significant
Influencer credibility -> Brand engagement -> Purchase intention	0.460	0.094	4.899	0.000	Significant
Moderating effect 1 -> Purchase intention	0.052	0.037	1.393	0.164	Insignificant

Source: At work, 2025.

Table 6 reports the results of the hypothesis testing in the structural model. The findings indicate that influencer credibility does not have a significant direct effect on purchase intention, as reflected by a low path coefficient ($\beta = 0.070$) and a non-significant p-value ($p = 0.450$). This result suggests that influencer credibility alone is insufficient to directly stimulate consumers' intention to purchase. In contrast, influencer credibility shows a strong and significant effect on brand engagement ($\beta = 0.887$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that credible influencers are effective in encouraging consumers to engage with the brand. Furthermore, brand engagement has a significant positive effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.519$, $p = 0.000$), highlighting its central role in shaping buying intentions. The mediation analysis further demonstrates that brand engagement significantly mediates the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.460$, $p = 0.000$). This finding confirms that influencer credibility influences purchase intention primarily through engagement mechanisms rather than through a direct pathway. Finally, the moderating effect of digital religious expression on purchase intention is not supported ($\beta = 0.052$, $p = 0.164$), indicating that this contextual factor does not significantly alter the relationship under investigation.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. How Managers Comprehend the Magnitudes of Effects

When viewed from a managerial perspective, the findings provide a great deal of guidance and information. According to the findings, the credibility of influencers has a considerable impact on brand engagement ($\beta = 0.887$, $f^2 = 3.672$). This suggests that authentic influencers greatly increase the level of involvement and emotional commitment of consumers. The establishment of long-term collaborations with influencers whose values are congruent with halal principles should be a top priority for marketers. This is because such alignment increases the perception of trust and encourages sustainable engagement loops.

As demonstrated by the fact that the medium influence of brand engagement on purchase intention ($f^2 = 0.209$) demonstrates that it can be strategically utilized to convert trust into sales results. The possibility of Muslim customers making a purchase can be significantly increased with the implementation of campaigns that are centered on involving people in the process, such as interactive question and answer sessions, user-generated material, and the sharing of testimonials.

Given the fact that the contextual role of digital religious expression is very minor but substantial ($f^2 = 0.187$), it is clear that it is essential to brand in a manner that is sensitive to religious beliefs. In spite of the fact that it does not immediately alter how individuals intend to behave, incorporating religious beliefs into internet stories can make a brand appear more legitimate and assist it in fitting in with the community. Instead of making overtly religious appeals, which could make them appear less genuine, businesses that wish to connect with Muslim clients can use subtle spiritual clues, such as tone, imagery, and representations of modesty.

5.2. A Combination of Theory and Practice with Integration

By demonstrating that social validation, rather than religiosity itself, promotes online behavioral intentions, these findings contribute to the theoretical integration of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) with digital religiosity. Their results enhance the theoretical framework. The credibility of an influencer reflects a subjective norm, while engagement signifies behavioral control. Conversely, digital religious expression functions as a cultural filter rather than a causal agent.

The research underscores the necessity of transcending mere endorsement rationale in influencer marketing within the halal fashion sector. Creating participatory ecosystems where customers can help shape the meaning of a brand through digital participation leads to better behavior than just seeing real endorsements. Engagement is not a measure of output; it is a strategic input that keeps brands alive in markets that care about value.

The p-value of 0.450 shows that how trustworthy an influencer is has no effect on whether or not someone wants to buy a product. This shows that how credible the audience thinks the material is doesn't have a big effect on how

much they want to buy it. The relationship between the credibility of integrated decision influencers and the ultimate purchase decision is negligible; nevertheless, other factors may mediate and/or modify this interaction.

The TPB states that attitude, subjective norms, and behavioral control influence behavioral intention. Influencers' social norms, legitimacy, trust perceptions, and purchase cues can impact consumers' attitudes and perceived control over the purchase. However, if the product does not directly change these factors, the change is likely unplanned. Therefore, the insignificance of the path may suggest that relying solely on influencers is insufficient for establishing strong behavioral intention; however, trust in influencers combined with positive brand evaluations is effective.

Previous studies investigating this relationship have yielded inconclusive results. Some research suggests that an influencer's credibility has a positive effect on consumers' intentions to buy, while other studies have shown that the content's engagement and relevance are more important in turning trust into action (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). People in Indonesia, which has many social media sites, may not be as affected by influencer marketing and may value real interactions more than just content credibility. Brands need to make content that is both strategically useful and emotionally satisfying. They also need to work with and trust marketers who will put the brand into believable stories.

The path coefficient analysis shows that the credibility of an influencer affects how much people interact with the brand ($p < 0.000$). The fact that people believe the influencer to be trustworthy makes it more likely that they will purchase products from the brand that the influencer endorses. In this context, engagement refers to seeking out additional information about the brand, as well as liking, sharing, and commenting on content related to the brand.

Within the context of the TPB paradigm, brand engagement is recognized as a particularly significant normative and attitude-based aspect that could potentially influence future behavior. There is a correlation between a favorable perception of the brand (the credibility of the influencer) and a feeling of social validation (the subjectivity of the influencer), which might be linked to the increase in brand engagement. The results of this study reveal beyond a reasonable doubt that the legitimacy of influencers is absolutely necessary for the formation and maintenance of authentic relationships between brands and their customers. Through the utilization of the audiences and communities that they create as a kind of social validation, influencers have the ability to improve the level of customer engagement with brands.

Numerous studies have shown that the traits of an influencer, especially how knowledgeable and trustworthy they are, have a significant effect on how people interact with brands on social media. Lim et al. (2017) also found this to be true. Endorsers in Indonesia, for example, have a lot of power over followers because they are role models in the community. This makes it easier for them to get followers to interact with a company. This is because people see endorsers as good examples. The results of this study show how important it is to build trust with influential people, especially when it comes to engagement, which is now a main goal of digital marketing.

The statistical analysis shows that the p -value is 0.000, which indicates a strong link between interacting with the brand and the desire to buy. The conclusion is that people are more likely to purchase when they engage with a business by liking, commenting on, or sharing content. Engagement is the first step in building trust and commitment, both of which are important factors to consider when making a purchase.

A compelling emotional connection to a brand is a significant indicator of the likelihood that a person would purchase a product or service. According to the theory of planned behavior, engagement not only demonstrates that a person has a favorable attitude toward a brand but also has the ability to forecast how that person will behave in the future. As a result of customers actively participating, they are more likely to support subjective norms and connect themselves with advocates of the brand, which ultimately strengthens the legitimacy of the company throughout their social circles.

This is in line with what Hollebeek et al. (2014) found in earlier studies, which said that engagement leads to future buying behaviour and brand loyalty. Islam and Rahman (2016) elucidate that purchase intentions and online

brand encounters are interconnected through a relationship of involvement. Indonesian MSMEs and brands on social media should focus on the engagement loops because real interactions are more likely to lead to the ultimate conversion goals.

When the p-value is 0.000, as in the studies, it is logical to deduce that the brand equity of the social media influencer substantially influences purchase intention via brand engagement. This indicates the underlying influencer's equity in shaping consumer purchase decisions, although this decision is not the principal factor driving brand engagement. Nonetheless, influencer equity is crucial for brand engagement. No to participation, and engagement is a more active state that helps to close the gap between the exclusion of social media influencers and consumer buying behaviour, as shown in the studies.

The theory of planned behaviour posits that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control each influence covarying behavioural intentions to varying extents. Consumers' attitudes towards a brand associated with a prominent celebrity, influencer, or micro-influencer are influenced by the influencer's positive reputation and sentiments. The pleasant feelings associated with a brand backed by an influencer often result in a more profound initial emotional commitment, and in the context of emotional advertising, this commitment is more likely to lead to a purchase. It is possible that the TPB provides theoretical support for the credibility of the influencer concerning purchase intention.

In this context, it is essential to emphasize the fact that there is empirical data to back up these mediated linkages. For instance, research conducted by Lou and Yuan (2019) reveals that confidence in influencers increases audience engagement with branded social media, which in turn contributes to an increase in the intention to make a certain purchase. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) indirectly examined purchase intention among a younger demographic by assessing perceived knowledge and authenticity of the brand, emphasising engagement. In Indonesia, social media is used and talked about, and people interact with it. This means that there is a positive link between direct brand engagement with social media and social media engagement with purchase intention to branded consumed and used by influencers.

A value of 0.164 confirms that the moderating effect does not significantly influence the relationship between the independent variables and the desire to purchase. Consequently, the anticipated moderator does not significantly alter the direction or strength of the relationship between the predictors and the outcome variable.

From the perspective of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), moderators may influence the relationship between attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and behavioural intentions. Therefore, the direct predictors of pathways to purchase intention are considered uninterrupted at all moderator levels, as the moderating effect is statistically insignificant. The moderator may have exerted sufficient influence on the studied population or behaviour to facilitate this occurrence.

The literature has yielded contradictory evidence concerning the moderating effects on consumer behaviour. Some studies have found that cultural factors and customer involvement do not affect the link between marketing stimuli and the desire to buy. Conversely, certain studies suggest that these factors do affect the relationship. It is probable that the particular mediator examined in this study is inconsequential regarding its capacity to affect purchase intention. Cultural norms or market dynamics in Indonesia might explain why this isn't important.

6. CONCLUSION

The goal of this study is to find out how social media marketing, the credibility of influencers, branding, digital religious expression, purchase intention, and brand engagement all work together. These help us understand the most important statistical parameters that are significant to these interactions. Out of all the hypotheses evaluated, the one asserting that the credibility of the influencer has a significant impact on the level of engagement with the brand and the desire to make a purchase carried the greatest weight. Furthermore, brand engagement acts as a complete mediator in the connection between the trustworthiness of influencers and the intention to make a purchase.

There is no significant association between the moderator variable and the direct relationship between the credibility of the influencer and the intention to make a purchase. One of the major mechanisms that turn influence into action is engagement, which sheds light on the baffling lack of customer action despite the trust that influencers wield.

From a theoretical point of view, the findings have the potential to improve and contribute to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). Brand involvement appears to be a significant attitude component that affects behavioural intentions, aligning with the TPB, which emphasizes attitudes and subjective standards. Customers are more likely to behave in ways that are consistent with societal expectations when they believe that important people trust them. This is because the subjective norm increases when customers receive this information. Although credibility is essential, it is not sufficient to convince people to purchase a product without first inspiring them to feel an emotional or active connection to the product. Therefore, it is even more important to have a comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior that considers both individual cognitive evaluations and societal indicators related to customer behavior.

Nevertheless, there are a few qualifications to these findings. First, it is possible that the findings are only applicable to the Indonesian market because the sample size is rather small and the researchers primarily focused on Indonesian clients. In addition, the utilization of cross-sectional data makes it impossible to draw any conclusions on the causal relationships between the variables. People might worry about response bias when it comes to the data from the self-reported survey on subjective things like trust and intent.

The operationalization of the concepts of "moderating effect" and "digital religious expression" uncovers additional opportunities that were not utilized, while also elucidating the complex relationships that exist between these constructs and consumer contexts. The theory of planned behavior (TPB) serves as an effective guiding framework; however, incorporating additional models, such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, would enhance our understanding of the psychological aspects of the phenomenon. It is strongly suggested that this research be expanded to include long-term metrics for tracking consumer participation and intent over time. Taking into consideration the level of client skepticism, the standard of the material, and the reliability of the platform would provide us with additional information regarding the challenges associated with influencer marketing. It is possible that cross-cultural analysis will make it easier to evaluate the cultural sensitivity that is necessarily present in these interactions. Incorporating qualitative research techniques into this investigation, such as doing a netnography or conducting in-depth interviews, would help improve comprehension of the context and contribute to the triangulation of the quantitative findings.

Funding: This study received no specific financial support.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This study involved adult respondents aged 18 years or older and employed a non-interventional, online survey design. The study received an ethical determination from the Research and Community Service Institute (LPPM), International Women University, Indonesia, under [Reference No. 001.1/05/DP2M-KW/IX]. Based on the documents reviewed, the study was classified as minimal risk and exempt from further ethics review. Informed consent was presented on the introductory page of the Google Form and was obtained before respondents proceeded to the questionnaire. Participation was entirely voluntary. No direct personal identifiers, including names, email addresses, telephone numbers, or other identifying information, were collected. Participant anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research process.

Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' Contributions: All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Disclosure of AI Use: The authors thank OpenAI's ChatGPT (version GPT-5) for helping them translate parts of the manuscript into academic English and find relevant journal articles. The only thing the tool was used for was language and bibliography help. The authors independently created, checked, and approved all analyses, interpretations, and conclusions.

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