Journal of Economics, Business, and Government Challenges

Volume 9 Nomor 2 November 2026
DOI: 10.33005/ebgc.v9i2.1641
Page: 52-68

ISSN (Cetak): 1979-7117
ISSN (Online): 2614-4115

Retail Investors' Trust in Finfluencers: Commercial Orientation and Track-Record Transparency

✉**Muhammad Dimar Alam[1]; Yatnanta Ramadhana[2]; Iqbal Ramadhani Fuadiputra[3], Helmy Aulia Rachman[1]**
[1]Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Brawijaya
[2]Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Negeri Malang
[3]Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang.
✉dimar.alam@ub.ac.id

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Received: 12nd, Oct 2026
Revised: 30th, Oct 2026
Accepted: 5th, Nov 2026

Keywords: finfluencers; commercial orientation; track-record transparency; source credibility; investor trust.

ABSTRACT

Retail investors who encounter finfluencer recommendations must assess both the information offered and the commercial interests behind it. This study examines how perceived commercial orientation and track-record transparency relate to perceived expertise, trust, and intentions to use financial information. Source credibility research and the persuasion knowledge model inform four hypotheses tested with an online survey of Indonesian retail investors. From 463 submissions, 456 passed eligibility and quality screening; 261 complete responses entered the primary PLS-SEM analysis. Track-record transparency was positively associated with source credibility, source credibility with trust, and trust with financial information intention; all three relationships were statistically significant. The negative association between commercial orientation and trust was not statistically significant. These findings suggest that investors consider how easily they can access and verify a finfluencer's past recommendations when evaluating financial information. However, transparent records do not necessarily indicate investment expertise, and commercial motives may still matter. The study contributes a contextual application of credibility and persuasion research to financial information use.

INTRODUCTION

Financial influencers, or finfluencers, have become a source of investment information for retail investors. They explain financial products, discuss market developments, and share recommendations through social media, often combining educational content with commercial activities Mölders et al. (2025). Evidence from the United States illustrates their relevance to investment decisions. Drawing on the 2024 National Financial Capability Study Investor Survey, Ko et al. (2026) report that 26% of respondents made

investment decisions based on recommendations from a social media personality, rising to 61% among investors aged 18–34. These findings raise a practical question: what do investors rely on when deciding whether a finfluencer's information deserves their trust?

This question is also relevant to Indonesia's expanding investor population. Otoritas Jasa Keuangan (2026) reported that the number of capital-market investors reached 20.36 million in December 2025, an increase of 36.95% over the previous year. These figures establish the scale and growth of market participation, although they do not indicate how many Indonesian investors follow finfluencers. This expanding investor base provides a relevant setting for examining how retail investors assess financial information and the credibility of those who provide it.

Research on influencer marketing provides a foundation for understanding how audiences evaluate information sources. Pan et al. (2025) identify source credibility and persuasion knowledge as important processes in explaining influencer effectiveness. Martínez-López et al. (2020) find that perceived commercial orientation can reduce trust in an influencer. These studies explain why audiences consider both a communicator's credibility and the commercial purpose of a message. However, they do not directly resolve how investors use the perceived transparency of earlier investment recommendations to assess a finfluencer's expertise. This distinction matters because perceived commercial orientation concerns the motives attributed to the communicator, whereas track-record transparency concerns the information available for examining the communicator's previous recommendations. The present study examines these distinct considerations within the context of retail investors' evaluations of finfluencers.

Investment recommendations present a particular evaluation problem because their outcomes emerge over time and are affected by market conditions. A profitable recommendation does not necessarily demonstrate sound analysis, just as an unsuccessful recommendation does not necessarily indicate a lack of expertise. Assessing a recommendation therefore requires information about its original reasoning, timing, and subsequent outcome. This makes the transparency of previous recommendations relevant to the evaluation of finfluencers. The question is whether investors perceive that they have sufficient information to examine those recommendations, rather than simply whether they have seen claims of successful investment performance.

Recent finfluencer research approaches this evaluation problem from several perspectives. Mölders et al. (2025) examine finfluencer roles and strategic partnerships in retail investor engagement, while Chandani et al. (2025) investigate intentions to adopt finfluencer recommendations through an extended technology acceptance model. Zülch et al. (2026) develop a multidimensional quality framework based on expert interviews and case analysis, identifying track record and expertise as relevant considerations. Their framework provides a rationale for examining recommendation histories, but does not establish how investors' perceptions of their transparency relate to perceived expertise. The present study addresses this specific empirical question using investor survey data. It also examines perceived commercial orientation in relation to trust, distinguishing concerns about persuasive motives from assessments of expertise. This approach complements existing research on finfluencer roles, advice adoption, and quality assessment by examining how investors evaluate the information available about earlier recommendations.

Perceived commercial orientation concerns the extent to which investors interpret a finfluencer's communication as primarily intended to promote products or encourage transactions. The persuasion knowledge model explains how audiences draw on their understanding of persuasive motives and tactics when evaluating a message (Friestad & Wright, 1994). In investment communication, a strong commercial emphasis may lead investors to question whether recommendations reflect balanced analysis or selectively highlight information that supports a sale. Such concerns provide a theoretical reason to expect lower trust in the information presented. Martínez-López et al. (2020) provide supporting evidence by linking perceived commercial orientation to reduced trust in influencers. However, recognizing a commercial purpose does not necessarily mean rejecting the information. The proposed negative association therefore remains an empirical question in the finfluencer context.

Track-record transparency captures investors' perceptions of the disclosure, clarity, and accuracy of information about a finfluencer's previous recommendations and their outcomes, including whether that information can be checked. Its conceptual basis comes from Schnackenberg et al. (2021), who validate disclosure, clarity, and accuracy as dimensions of transparency and demonstrate their relevance to assessments of a source's trustworthiness, including ability. Applying this perspective to finfluencers, we propose that an accessible and understandable recommendation history provides information that investors can use to assess expertise. Verifiability is included as a contextual consideration because evaluating past recommendations requires checking when claims were made and how their outcomes were reported. It is not presented as an established fourth dimension of the original transparency framework. TRT measures perceived transparency rather than independently verified record quality or investment performance. Accordingly, the eight-item measure used here is a contextual adaptation requiring further validation.

The study distinguishes perceived expertise from trust in investment information. Source credibility research provides the broader foundation for examining how evaluations of a communicator relate to audience responses (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Here, source credibility is operationalized specifically through the expertise dimension identified by Ohanian (1990), capturing whether investors regard a finfluencer as knowledgeable, experienced, and competent. Trust concerns their confidence in the reliability of the investment information that the finfluencer provides. This distinction allows investors to recognize a creator's expertise while still questioning whether particular information deserves their confidence. Financial information intention represents a further judgment: whether investors intend to consider, investigate, or use that information in future investment decisions. The model therefore separates evaluations of the communicator's competence, confidence in the information, and intended information use. These perceptions and intentions do not establish actual trading behavior or investment performance.

This study examines how perceived commercial orientation and track-record transparency relate to Indonesian retail investors' evaluations of finfluencers and their intentions to use investment information. Four relationships are proposed: perceived commercial orientation is negatively associated with trust; track-record transparency is positively associated with expertise-focused source credibility; source credibility is positively associated with trust; and trust is positively associated with financial information intention. The model is examined using an online survey, with 261 complete responses included in the primary partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis. The cross-sectional design supports an assessment of these associations but does not establish causal relationships or the temporal sequence of investors' evaluations.

This study contributes to research on investor trust by examining the perceived transparency of earlier recommendations as a basis for evaluating finfluencer expertise. It connects the broader concept of information transparency to a specific problem in investment communication: whether investors believe they can examine a creator's previous recommendations and reported outcomes. The findings provide initial evidence of a positive association between this perceived transparency and expertise. They also distinguish assessments of competence from perceptions of commercial motives: expertise is positively associated with trust, whereas the proposed negative association between commercial orientation and trust is not statistically significant. This pattern does not establish that commercial motives are irrelevant or that transparency demonstrates investment skill. Rather, it identifies recommendation transparency as a specific aspect of financial communication that warrants further investigation. The contribution remains a contextual application of established theoretical perspectives, with conclusions involving TRT qualified by the adapted measure's limited convergent validity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

This study draws on source credibility research and the persuasion knowledge model to explain two aspects of investors' evaluations: perceived competence and perceived commercial motives. Source credibility research establishes the relevance of a communicator's characteristics to audience responses

(Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Ohanian (1990) distinguishes expertise from trustworthiness and attractiveness within the broader credibility construct. The present study uses the expertise dimension to represent investors' assessments of a finfluencer's knowledge, experience, and competence. Trust is examined separately as confidence in the investment information provided. The theoretical expectation is that perceived competence gives investors a reason to regard the information as dependable, while such confidence makes them more willing to consider or use it.

Transparency research provides a complementary basis for explaining how investors may assess competence. Schnackenberg et al. (2021) conceptualize transparency through disclosure, clarity, and accuracy and link it to perceptions of source trustworthiness, including ability. Applied to investment communication, this suggests that information about earlier recommendations may help investors judge a finfluencer's expertise. The proposed TRT and expertise relationship extends this reasoning to recommendation histories, with verifiability included as a contextual consideration. It remains an empirical expectation because greater transparency can reveal weaknesses as well as strengths in a creator's analysis.

The persuasion knowledge model addresses how audiences interpret persuasive motives and tactics (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Investors who perceive a strong commercial emphasis may question whether recommendations prioritize promotional objectives over balanced information, providing a reason to expect lower trust. Pan et al. (2025) support the broader relevance of persuasion knowledge and source credibility to influencer effectiveness. These perspectives therefore inform distinct relationships in the present model: transparency provides a potential basis for assessing expertise, expertise provides a potential basis for trusting information, and perceived commercial motives may qualify that trust. Trust, in turn, is expected to relate to intended information use. Persuasion knowledge serves as a theoretical explanation rather than an additional measured construct.

Perceived Commercial Orientation and Trust

Perceived commercial orientation refers to the extent to which investors regard a finfluencer's communication as primarily directed toward promotion, selling, or persuasion. It captures the audience's interpretation of the communication rather than the creator's actual compensation or contractual arrangements. The persuasion knowledge model suggests that audiences use their understanding of persuasive intentions to evaluate both a message and its source (Friestad & Wright, 1994). In the investment context, a strong promotional emphasis may lead investors to suspect that recommendations selectively highlight potential returns while giving insufficient attention to risks, uncertainty, or alternative investments. Such concerns provide a reason to question the reliability of the information.

This reasoning concerns confidence in the information rather than necessarily implying a lower assessment of the creator's expertise. An investor may regard a finfluencer as knowledgeable while questioning whether that knowledge is being used to provide balanced recommendations. Although source credibility can encompass several dimensions, SC in the present study refers specifically to expertise. The proposed relationship therefore focuses on perceived commercial orientation and trust in investment information. This specification does not assume that commercial motives cannot affect perceived expertise; it identifies the relationship examined within the scope of this study.

Previous findings support the proposed association. Martínez-López et al. (2020) report that perceived commercial orientation reduces trust in influencers. Gamage & Ashill (2023) similarly find negative relationships between the commercial orientation of influencer-created content, perceived influencer trustworthiness, and content credibility. These findings support the relevance of commercial motives to audience evaluations, although trust in an influencer, perceived trustworthiness, and trust in investment information are not identical constructs. Their application to finfluencer communication therefore requires empirical examination.

Commercial orientation should also be distinguished from sponsorship disclosure. Disclosure identifies a commercial relationship, whereas commercial orientation concerns how strongly the communication appears to prioritize persuasion. Liu & Zhao (2025) find that sponsorship disclosure increases

persuasion knowledge and reduces credibility on average, while its overall effects on attitudes and behavioral intentions are not statistically significant. Their findings concern disclosure rather than perceived commercial orientation, but illustrate why different commercial cues and audience responses should not be treated as interchangeable. For the present study, the expectation is that a stronger perceived emphasis on selling is associated with greater doubt about the dependability of investment information. Accordingly, we propose:

H1: Perceived commercial orientation is negatively associated with trust in a finfluencer's investment information.

Track-Record Transparency and Expertise-Focused Source Credibility

Track-record transparency concerns investors' perceptions of the information available about a finfluencer's earlier recommendations and their outcomes. Its conceptual foundation is the transparency framework developed by Schnackenberg et al. (2021), which identifies disclosure, clarity, and accuracy as distinct but related dimensions. Their findings link transparency to assessments of source trustworthiness, including ability. This provides a theoretical basis for examining whether the perceived transparency of recommendation histories is associated with investors' assessments of a finfluencer's expertise.

The proposed mechanism concerns the information investors can use to evaluate competence. Disclosure makes earlier recommendations available for examination. Clarity helps investors understand the reasoning, assumptions, and criteria used to describe their outcomes. Perceived accuracy concerns whether the information appears correct and consistent with the evidence presented. Together, these qualities may give investors a more concrete basis for judging a creator's knowledge and analytical competence than isolated statements of expertise or success. The proposed positive association rests on the expectation that investors interpret clear and substantiated accounts of previous recommendations as indications of an informed approach to investment analysis.

Verifiability adds a consideration specific to recommendation histories: whether investors believe they can check the timing of a recommendation and the outcome subsequently attributed to it. This may help them distinguish a documented recommendation from a retrospective claim of success. Verifiability is a contextual addition in this study, rather than an established fourth dimension of Schnackenberg et al.'s (2021) framework. All aspects of TRT are measured through investor perceptions; the study does not independently verify recommendation records.

Zülch et al. (2026) provide contextual support by identifying track record and expertise as relevant considerations within their finfluencer quality framework. Their findings do not establish the relationship proposed here, but support its relevance for quantitative investigation. Transparency can also expose weak reasoning or inconsistent recommendations, so a positive association is not inevitable. Nevertheless, the proposed informational basis for assessing competence supports the following expectation:

H2: Track-record transparency is positively associated with expertise-focused source credibility.

Expertise-Focused Source Credibility and Trust

Expertise-focused source credibility refers to investors' perceptions of a finfluencer's knowledge, experience, and competence in discussing investment matters. Following Ohanian (1990), expertise represents an assessment of the communicator's capability. Trust in investment information concerns a related but distinct judgment: whether the information provided is reliable and dependable. A creator may therefore be perceived as knowledgeable without every recommendation being trusted.

Source credibility research provides a basis for expecting a positive relationship between these judgments (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Investors may lack the time or specialized knowledge needed to evaluate every financial claim independently. Under these circumstances, perceived expertise can provide a reason to believe that a recommendation rests on informed analysis. Investors who regard a finfluencer as competent may consequently have greater confidence in the information provided. This reasoning concerns

perceived competence; it does not establish that the creator's analysis is objectively accurate or that the recommended investment will perform well.

Empirical findings suggest that expertise can support trust, although the relationship is not uniform across settings. Kim & Kim (2021) identify expertise as a resource in the formation of followers' trust in influencers. Their study concerns trust in the influencer, providing related evidence rather than a direct test of trust in investment information. By contrast, Lou & Yuan (2019) do not find a significant relationship between expertise and trust in influencers' branded content, although other source characteristics are significant. These findings indicate that expertise should not be assumed to generate trust regardless of the communication context.

In financial communication, the proposed positive association rests on the relevance of subject knowledge to evaluating uncertain and technically complex recommendations. Perceived expertise may give investors confidence that the creator can interpret financial information and explain the basis of a recommendation. Although concerns about motives or presentation may still weaken that confidence, expertise remains a plausible basis for trusting investment information. We therefore propose:

H3: Expertise-focused source credibility is positively associated with trust in a finfluencer's investment information.

Trust and Financial Information Intention

Financial information intention refers to investors' willingness to consider, investigate, or use a finfluencer's information in future investment decisions. It concerns intended engagement with that information, which may include examining a recommendation, comparing it with other sources, or incorporating it into an investment assessment. Such intentions do not establish that an investor has completed a transaction or achieved a particular investment outcome.

Trust provides a reason for investors to regard information as worthy of attention and potential use. When they perceive a finfluencer's investment information as dependable, they may be more willing to devote time to examining it and to consider it in their decisions. Conversely, doubts about its reliability may discourage further engagement, even when the topic is relevant. The proposed relationship therefore concerns confidence in information as a basis for intended use. It does not require unquestioning acceptance: investors can trust a source while still checking its claims and assessing whether its recommendations suit their circumstances.

Previous influencer research provides related empirical support. Lou & Yuan (2019) find that trust in influencers' branded content is positively associated with purchase intentions. Kim & Kim (2021) also link follower trust to loyalty and marketing outcomes. These studies support the broader connection between trust and intended responses, but their outcomes differ from the financial information intention examined here. Their findings therefore inform the proposed relationship without establishing that it necessarily applies to investment communication.

Within the finfluencer context, Chandani et al. (2025) examine investors' intentions to adopt recommendations using an extended technology acceptance model. Their study establishes the relevance of advice-use intention as a research outcome, rather than providing direct evidence for the trust relationship proposed here. Combining this contextual relevance with the argument that confidence in information supports its consideration and use, we propose:

H4: Trust in a finfluencer's investment information is positively associated with financial information intention.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design and Sampling

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey to examine the relationships among perceived commercial orientation, track-record transparency, expertise-focused source credibility, trust, and financial information intention. The target population comprised Indonesian retail investors who had been exposed to finfluencer content. Respondents were recruited through purposive sampling based on three eligibility criteria: (1) being at least 18 years old, (2) currently holding or having previously held at least one capital-market investment product using personal funds, and (3) having encountered investment-related finfluencer content within the preceding six months. Eligibility was assessed through screening questions at the beginning of the online questionnaire.

The individual investor served as the unit of analysis. Each respondent was asked to identify one finfluencer whose content they had encountered relatively frequently and to use that person or account as the reference for all subsequent questions. This approach ensured that assessments of commercial orientation, transparency, expertise, trust, and intended information use referred to the same finfluencer within each response. The study therefore examined investors' perceptions rather than independently verified characteristics of finfluencers.

The primary analysis included 261 complete responses. The structural model was relatively simple, with no more than two predictors for any endogenous construct. A supplementary sensitivity calculation using a multiple-regression approximation with two predictors, a 5% significance level, and 80% statistical power indicated a minimum detectable overall effect of approximately $f^2 = .037$. This calculation provides an indication of sample sensitivity but does not establish sufficient power for every individual PLS-SEM relationship, particularly very small effects. Furthermore, because the study used non-probability sampling and cross-sectional data, the findings should be interpreted as associations within the analytical sample rather than population-level or causal estimates.

Data Collection and Screening

The online questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms from 6 July to 4 September 2026. Electronic consent was obtained before respondents answered the eligibility questions. A total of 463 responses were received. Four responses were excluded following consent and eligibility screening, leaving 459 eligible responses. Three additional responses were removed during quality screening: two failed both attention checks, and one failed the serious-response confirmation. This resulted in 456 responses retained for further analysis.

The primary analysis used complete-case screening across the 27 construct indicators. Of the 456 quality-screened responses, 261 (57.2%) contained complete indicator data, while 195 (42.8%) were excluded because of missing responses. Most missing values concerned track-record transparency (TRT), where respondents could indicate that they had insufficient information to evaluate previous recommendations. These answers were treated as missing rather than assigned a neutral score, since insufficient knowledge does not necessarily represent a neutral perception.

To examine the sensitivity of the results to missing-data treatment, a supplementary analysis was conducted using all 456 quality-screened responses. Missing TRT values were replaced with their corresponding item means, while all non-TRT construct indicators were complete. This supplementary analysis was intended to assess the stability of hypothesis decisions rather than eliminate potential selection bias. Mean replacement does not account fully for missing-data uncertainty and may affect indicator variances and estimated relationships (Little & Rubin, 2019).

Table 1. Response Screening and Analytical Samples

Screening Stage	Number of responses
Initial submissions	463
Excluded: consent and eligibility screening	4
Eligible responses	459
Excluded: response-quality screening	3
Quality-screened responses	456
Excluded: incomplete indicator responses	195
Complete cases used in the primary analysis	**261**

Measurement of Constructs

The questionnaire was administered in Indonesian and contained 27 indicators measuring five constructs. Perceived commercial orientation (PCO), track-record transparency (TRT), trust (TR), and financial information intention (FII) were measured using seven-point agreement scales, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Expertise-focused source credibility (SC) was measured using seven-point semantic differential items. All questions referred to the same finfluencer selected by each respondent.

Perceived commercial orientation was measured using five items contextually adapted from Martínez-López et al. (2020), with wording adjusted to reflect commercial motives in investment-related communication. Source credibility was measured using the five-item expertise dimension developed by Ohanian (1990). The construct therefore captured perceived knowledge and competence rather than all dimensions of source credibility. Trust was measured using five items informed by Lou & Yuan (2019). Financial information intention was measured using four items informed by research on investors' intentions to use finfluencer advice (Chandani et al. 2025). Both measures were adapted to the context of finfluencer investment information rather than reproduced directly from the original studies.

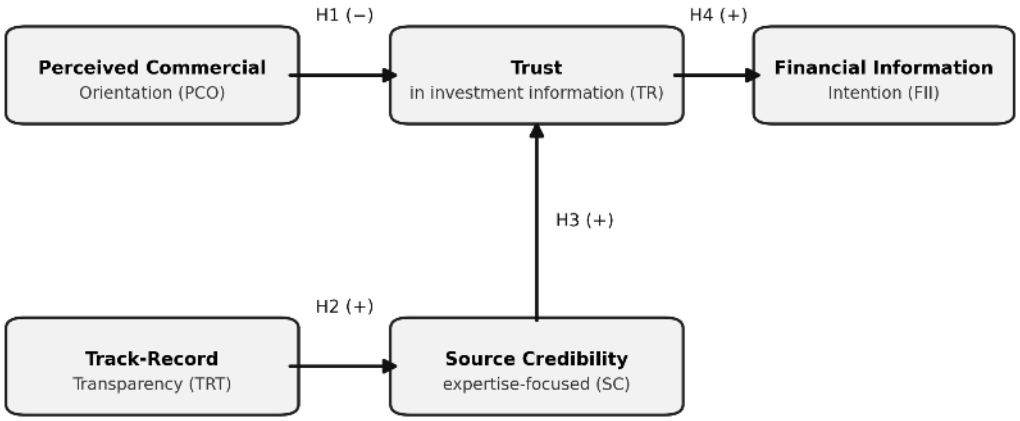
Table 2. Constructs and Measurement Sources

Construct	Operational focus	Items	Measurement source and status
Perceived commercial orientation (PCO)	Perceived emphasis on selling and persuasion in the finfluencer's communication	5	Contextually adapted from Martínez-López et al. (2020)
Track-record transparency (TRT)	Perceived disclosure, clarity, accuracy, and verifiability of previous recommendations and outcomes	8	Newly developed contextual measure informed by Schnackenberg et al. (2021)
Expertise-focused source credibility (SC)	Perceived knowledge, experience, and competence of the finfluencer	5	Expertise subscale from Ohanian (1990), with an adapted referent
Trust (TR)	Confidence in the reliability and dependability of the finfluencer's investment information	5	Contextually adapted items informed by Lou & Yuan (2019)
Financial information intention (FII)	Intention to consider, investigate, or use the information in future investment decisions	4	Contextually adapted items informed by Chandani et al. (2025)

Track-record transparency was measured using eight newly worded items informed by the transparency framework of Schnackenberg et al. (2021). Six items addressed disclosure, clarity, and perceived accuracy of previous investment recommendations and their reported outcomes. Two additional items captured whether recommendation dates and reported outcomes could be independently verified. These items extended the transparency concept to investment communication but did not constitute an established or independently validated finfluencer-specific scale.

The TRT measure was therefore treated as an initial contextual operationalization. Independent expert validation and a separate pilot study were not documented. Its measurement properties were evaluated using the study sample, with internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity assessed separately. The limitations of this measure were considered when interpreting the findings.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



Model Specification and Estimation

The research model was estimated through partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) path analysis using SmartPLS. The analysis examined the four hypothesized relationships among five latent constructs, including perceived commercial orientation, track-record transparency, expertise-focused source credibility, trust, and financial information intention.

All five constructs were specified as reflective measurement models using Mode A, standardized indicators, and the path-weighting scheme. This specification assumed that the indicators reflected their underlying constructs. For track-record transparency, the reflective specification was treated as provisional because its indicators covered disclosure, clarity, perceived accuracy, and verifiability. Its measurement properties were therefore examined carefully.

The primary analysis used 261 complete responses. Statistical inference was based on 5,000 bootstrap resamples, two-tailed tests at the 5% significance level, and percentile 95% confidence intervals. Standardized path coefficients were used to evaluate the direction and magnitude of the hypothesized relationships. Measurement and structural model assessments followed the general recommendations of Hair Jr. et al. (2021) , with the assessment criteria described in the following sections. Given the cross-sectional design and non-probability sampling, the estimated relationships were interpreted as associations rather than causal effects.

Measurement Model Assessment

The reflective measurement models were assessed using indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Indicator reliability was evaluated through outer loadings, with .708 used as the recommended benchmark. Internal consistency was examined using Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, and composite reliability (rho_C), with values of at least .70 generally considered acceptable (Hair Jr. et al. 2021).

Convergent validity was assessed using average variance extracted (AVE), with .50 as the recommended minimum. Indicators with loadings below .708 were evaluated based on their conceptual relevance and contribution to the measurement model rather than automatically removed. Particular attention was given to track-record transparency (TRT), as its eight indicators represented an initial contextual operationalization. The indicators were retained provisionally to preserve the intended content coverage, while any limitations in convergent validity were explicitly acknowledged (Hair Jr. et al., 2021).

Discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT), with .85 adopted as a conservative threshold (Henseler et al. 2015). Reliability and validity were evaluated separately, recognizing that satisfactory internal consistency does not necessarily establish convergent validity. The measurement results are reported in the following section.

Structural Model Assessment and Missing-Data Sensitivity Analysis

The structural model was assessed using standardized path coefficients, confidence intervals, explained variance, and effect sizes. Predictor collinearity was examined using inner variance inflation

factors (VIF). Hypotheses were evaluated based on the direction of the estimated coefficients and their statistical significance, using the bootstrapping procedure described earlier. The model's explanatory power was assessed using R^2 and adjusted R^2, while f^2 was used to evaluate each predictor's contribution to the explained variance. Following Cohen (1988), f^2 values of .02, .15, and .35 were used as approximate benchmarks for small, medium, and large effects.

To assess the sensitivity of the findings to missing-data treatment, the primary complete-case model (N = 261) was compared with a supplementary model using all 456 quality-screened responses. In the supplementary analysis, missing TRT values were replaced with the corresponding item means. Path coefficients, confidence intervals, and hypothesis decisions were compared across the two models. Respondents with complete and incomplete TRT responses were also compared on observed characteristics to examine potential sample-selection differences.

These analyses were intended to assess the stability of the findings under different missing-data treatments. However, mean replacement does not fully account for missing-data uncertainty and cannot eliminate potential selection bias. The results were therefore interpreted with these limitations in mind.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

The primary analysis included 261 complete responses. Respondents had a mean age of 31.86 years (SD = 10.09), ranging from 18 to 65 years. Undergraduate degree holders accounted for 56.7% of the sample, while 55.2% resided in Java. Instagram was the most frequently reported platform for accessing finfluencer content (41.4%), followed by YouTube (23.0%) and TikTok (16.1%).

Investment experience varied across respondents. Approximately 22.6% had invested for less than one year, while 29.9% reported between one and three years of experience. In addition, 65.1% indicated that they had encountered information about the outcomes of their selected finfluencer's previous recommendations. Table 3 summarizes the selected characteristics of the analytical sample.

Table 3. Selected Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Men	130	49.8
Gender	Women	126	48.3
Gender	Other or not reported	5	1.9
Education	Undergraduate degree	148	56.7
Residence	Java	144	55.2
Residence	Sumatra	52	19.9
Primary platform	Instagram	108	41.4
Primary platform	YouTube	60	23.0
Primary platform	TikTok	42	16.1
Investment experience	Less than one year	59	22.6
Investment experience	One to less than three years	78	29.9
Finfluencer exposure	Almost daily or more frequently	76	29.1
Previous recommendation outcomes observed	Yes	170	65.1

Note: Percentages are calculated based on the analytical sample (N = 261). Only selected categories are presented for characteristics with multiple response categories.

Measurement Model Results

Table 4 presents the reliability and convergent validity results. All five constructs demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from .824 to .860 and composite reliability ranging from .880 to .900. Four constructs met the recommended AVE threshold of .50. One PCO indicator (PCO4) had a loading of .703, slightly below the recommended .708. This indicator was retained because the

construct's overall reliability and AVE were satisfactory, and the item remained conceptually relevant. The rho_A value for PCO (.950) was relatively high and warrants attention to possible overlap among its indicators.

Table 4. Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Outer loading range	Cronbach's α	rho_A	Composite reliability (rho_C)	AVE
PCO	.703–.867	.856	.950	.892	.624
TRT	.654–.731	.845	.849	.880	.479
SC	.782–.812	.860	.865	.900	.642
TR	.742–.804	.837	.845	.884	.605
FII	.757–.838	.824	.836	.883	.655

Note: PCO = perceived commercial orientation; TRT = track-record transparency; SC = expertise-focused source credibility; TR = trust; FII = financial information intention.

Track-record transparency (TRT) demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .845; composite reliability = .880). However, its AVE of .479 was below the recommended threshold of .50, and indicator loadings ranged from .654 to .731. These results indicate that convergent validity was not fully established. All eight indicators were retained provisionally to preserve the intended coverage of disclosure, clarity, perceived accuracy, and verifiability. This decision does not resolve the measurement limitation. Accordingly, findings involving TRT should be interpreted as preliminary and require further validation using an independent sample.

Table 5. Track-Record Transparency (TRT) Indicator Loadings

Indicator	Outer loading
TRT1	.660
TRT2	.654
TRT3	.694
TRT4	.698
TRT5	.682
TRT6	.731
TRT7	.719
TRT8	.699

Discriminant validity was examined using HTMT, as reported in Table 6. All values were below the conservative threshold of .85 (Henseler et al., 2015). The highest HTMT value was .615 between TRT and SC, while the value between SC and trust was .433. These results did not indicate substantial discriminant validity concerns based on the reported HTMT values. Nevertheless, the satisfactory HTMT results do not compensate for the convergent validity limitation of TRT.

Table 6. Discriminant Validity Assessment Using HTMT

Construct	PCO	TRT	SC	TR	FII
PCO	—				
TRT	.092	—			
SC	.081	.615	—		
TR	.102	.340	.433	—	
FII	.075	.300	.299	.468	—

Structural Model Results

Table 7 presents the structural model estimates. Three of the four hypotheses were supported. Perceived commercial orientation showed a negative but statistically insignificant relationship with trust (β = −.108, p = .193), with a 95% confidence interval that included zero. Therefore, H1 was not supported. This

finding indicates insufficient statistical evidence for the proposed negative relationship rather than confirming that commercial orientation is unrelated to investor trust.

Track-record transparency was positively associated with expertise-focused source credibility (β = .529, p < .001), supporting H2. Source credibility was also positively associated with trust (β = .376, p < .001), supporting H3. Similarly, trust showed a positive relationship with financial information intention (β = .393, p < .001), supporting H4. The TRT–SC relationship had the largest estimated path coefficient in the model. Together, these findings were consistent with the proposed sequence linking perceived transparency, credibility, trust, and intended information use.

Table 7. Structural Path Estimates and Hypothesis Decisions

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	95% confidence interval	Decision
H1	PCO → TR	−.108	1.302	.193	[−.227, .119]	Not supported
H2	TRT → SC	.529	12.832	< .001	[.453, .612]	Supported
H3	SC → TR	.376	6.562	< .001	[.259, .483]	Supported
H4	TR → FII	.393	7.536	< .001	[.293, .496]	Supported

Note: Inference was based on 5,000 bootstrap resamples, two-tailed tests, and percentile 95% confidence intervals.

As shown in Table 8, the model explained 28.0% of the variance in source credibility, 14.9% in trust, and 15.4% in financial information intention. These results suggest that the model provides some explanatory value, although considerable variation remains unexplained. The effect size for TRT → SC was relatively large (f^2 = .389), while SC → TR (f^2 = .166) and TR → FII (f^2 = .182) showed medium effects. The effect size for PCO → TR was small and below the conventional benchmark (f^2 = .014).

Table 8. Explained Variance, Effect Sizes, and Collinearity

Outcome	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Predictor relationship	f^2	Inner VIF
SC	.280	.277	TRT → SC	.389	1.000
TR	.149	.142	PCO → TR	.014	1.003
TR	.149	.142	SC → TR	.166	1.003
FII	.154	.151	TR → FII	.182	1.000

Inner VIF values ranged from 1.000 to 1.003, indicating no substantial collinearity concerns among the predictors. Overall, the results supported the proposed relationships involving transparency, credibility, and trust, although the model's explanatory power remained limited. These findings represent associations within the analytical sample and should not be interpreted as evidence of causality or out-of-sample predictive performance.

Sensitivity and Supplementary Analyses

Table 9 compares the primary complete-case analysis (N = 261) with the supplementary analysis using 456 quality-screened responses. The two analyses produced consistent hypothesis decisions. Commercial orientation remained negatively but not significantly associated with trust, while the relationships involving track-record transparency, source credibility, trust, and financial information intention remained positive and statistically significant.

Table 9. Comparison of Primary and Missing-Data Sensitivity Estimates

Relationship	Primary β	Primary 95% CI	Sensitivity β	Sensitivity 95% CI
PCO → TR	−.108	[−.227, .119]	−.050	[−.148, .134]
TRT → SC	.529	[.453, .612]	.471	[.406, .542]
SC → TR	.376	[.259, .483]	.337	[.253, .415]
TR → FII	.393	[.293, .496]	.433	[.362, .506]

Note: The primary analysis used 261 complete cases. The sensitivity analysis used 456 quality-screened responses, with item-mean replacement applied to missing TRT indicators only. The sensitivity estimates should not be interpreted as eliminating missing-data uncertainty or selection bias.

Although the hypothesis decisions were unchanged, some coefficient magnitudes differed. The TRT–SC coefficient decreased from .529 to .471, while the TR–FII coefficient increased from .393 to .433. These differences indicate that the estimates were somewhat sensitive to the treatment of missing responses.

Additional comparisons revealed differences between respondents with complete and incomplete TRT assessments. Respondents with complete data reported more frequent exposure to finfluencer content (Cohen's $d = .383$, $p < .001$) and higher perceived commercial orientation ($d = .233$, $p = .012$). This suggests that the primary sample may have included relatively more engaged followers.

Overall, the supplementary analysis provides limited support for the stability of the main findings across the two analytical approaches. However, item-mean replacement does not account for missing-data uncertainty, and the observed differences between respondent groups indicate potential selection bias. The results should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Commercial Orientation and Investor Trust

Perceived commercial orientation showed a negative but statistically insignificant relationship with trust ($\beta = -.108$, $p = .193$). Although the direction was consistent with H1, the evidence was insufficient to support the proposed relationship. This differs from the findings reported by Martínez-López et al. (2020) and Gamage & Ashill (2023), who reported significant negative relationships between commercial orientation and trust-related evaluations in broader influencer marketing contexts.

One possible explanation is that retail investors may evaluate commercial motives alongside other characteristics of finfluencer content, including its perceived usefulness and credibility. However, this interpretation remains tentative because the study did not directly examine how investors respond to different sponsorship practices or commercial arrangements. Liu & Zhao (2025) similarly show that sponsorship disclosure does not consistently produce negative consumer responses, although disclosure and perceived commercial orientation represent different concepts.

From the perspective of persuasion knowledge, the findings suggest that perceived commercial orientation alone was not a statistically reliable correlate of trust in this sample. This does not imply that commercial motives are irrelevant. Rather, their relationship with investor trust remains uncertain and may depend on factors not examined in the present model.

Track-Record Transparency and Perceived Expertise

Track-record transparency was positively associated with expertise-focused source credibility ($\beta = .529$, $p < .001$), supporting H2. This finding suggests that investors who perceived a finfluencer's previous recommendations as more transparent also tended to regard that finfluencer as more knowledgeable and competent. Information about past recommendations may therefore provide an additional basis for evaluating perceived expertise.

This finding extends the transparency framework of Schnackenberg et al. (2021) to financial information communicated through social media. While their framework emphasizes disclosure, clarity, and accuracy, the present study considers how these characteristics apply to previous investment recommendations and their reported outcomes. The inclusion of verifiability is particularly relevant because investors may wish to examine when recommendations were made and how their outcomes were reported. This interpretation also complements Zülch et al. (2026), who emphasize the multidimensional nature of finfluencer quality.

The contribution lies in identifying perceived track-record transparency as a potentially relevant consideration in investors' assessments of finfluencer expertise. However, the study did not independently verify recommendation histories or investment performance. Moreover, TRT's AVE of .479 indicates that its convergent validity requires further improvement. The findings should therefore be regarded as preliminary evidence supporting further investigation of this contextual measure.

Perceived Expertise, Trust, and Intended Information Use

Expertise-focused source credibility was positively associated with trust ($\beta = .376$, $p < .001$), supporting H3. This finding is consistent with source credibility research, which suggests that perceived competence is relevant to how audiences evaluate information providers. Kim & Kim (2021) similarly highlight the role of trust in influencer marketing. In the present study, perceived expertise and trust remained empirically distinguishable, indicating that regarding a finfluencer as knowledgeable is related to, but not identical to, trusting the information provided.

Trust was also positively associated with financial information intention ($\beta = .393$, $p < .001$), supporting H4. Respondents who expressed greater confidence in a finfluencer's information were more willing to consider or investigate that information when making investment decisions. This finding is broadly consistent with Lou & Yuan (2019), who examine credibility and trust in influencer-generated content, and complements the financial-information context discussed by Chandani et al. (2025).

Together, these findings support the relevance of perceived expertise and trust in investors' evaluations of finfluencer information. However, financial information intention represents willingness to consider or use information rather than actual investment behavior. The results do not establish that respondents executed transactions, followed recommendations without independent assessment, or achieved better investment outcomes.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study contributes to finfluencer research by applying source credibility and persuasion knowledge perspectives to retail investors' evaluations of financial information. By examining perceived commercial orientation alongside track-record transparency, the model considers two distinct aspects of finfluencer communication: perceived promotional emphasis and the assessability of previous investment recommendations. The positive association between track-record transparency and perceived expertise suggests that information about earlier recommendations may be relevant to how investors evaluate a finfluencer's competence. However, the nonsignificant relationship between commercial orientation and trust does not establish that commercial motives are unimportant.

The study also distinguishes perceived expertise from trust in information and the intention to consider that information in future investment decisions. These distinctions provide a more specific account of investor evaluations than treating credibility and trust as interchangeable concepts. Nevertheless, the findings represent associations rather than causal relationships, and the adapted track-record transparency measure requires further validation.

From a practical perspective, finfluencers may improve the assessability of their communication by preserving dated recommendations, explaining the assumptions behind their analyses, and reporting unsuccessful as well as successful outcomes. Financial-service providers could consider the accessibility and clarity of such records when evaluating potential communication partners, alongside assessments of expertise, conflicts of interest, and content quality. Investor education may similarly encourage independent examination of past recommendations rather than relying solely on perceived credibility. These practices are proposed implications of the findings, not interventions whose effectiveness was directly tested in this study.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined how perceived commercial orientation and track-record transparency relate to expertise-focused source credibility, trust, and financial information intention among Indonesian retail investors. Three hypothesized relationships were supported: track-record transparency was positively associated with perceived expertise, perceived expertise with trust, and trust with financial information intention. The proposed negative relationship between commercial orientation and trust was not statistically supported.

The study contributes to finfluencer research by examining the perceived transparency of previous investment recommendations alongside commercial orientation while distinguishing perceived expertise from trust in information. The findings suggest that the accessibility and assessability of past recommendations may be relevant to investors' evaluations of finfluencers. From a practical perspective,

maintaining verifiable recommendation histories and reporting outcomes consistently may help investors evaluate financial information more critically. However, these practices were not directly tested as interventions, and perceived transparency does not establish actual investment competence.

Limitations

Several limitations warrant consideration. The cross-sectional, self-reported data and purposive sampling restrict causal interpretation and generalizability. The primary analysis retained 261 of 456 quality-screened responses, raising potential selection concerns that were not eliminated by the sensitivity analysis. In addition, the adapted track-record transparency measure showed insufficient convergent validity (AVE = .479), while financial information intention did not capture actual investment behavior. Future research should independently validate the transparency measure, examine its dimensional structure, and replicate the findings using broader samples. Longitudinal or experimental designs incorporating independently assessed recommendation histories could provide further evidence about the relationships between transparency, perceived expertise, trust, and investor behavior.

References

Chandani, A., Sanghvi, M., Wagholikar, S., Pathak, M., Bagade, S., Ubarhande, P., & Saini, U. (2025). Extending the technology acceptance model (TAM): Factors influencing behavioural intentions of investors to use the advice of finfluencers. *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Finance*, *47*, 101092. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbef.2025.101092

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. https://www.routledge.com/Statistical-Power-Analysis-for-the-Behavioral-Sciences-2nd-Edition/Cohen/p/book/9780805802832

Friestad, M., & Wright, P. (1994). The persuasion knowledge model: How people cope with persuasion attempts. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *21*(1), 1–31. https://doi.org/10.1086/209380

Gamage, T. C., & Ashill, N. J. (2023). # Sponsored-influencer marketing: Effects of the commercial orientation of influencer-created content on followers' willingness to search for information. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, *32*(2), 316–329. https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-10-2021-3681

Hair Jr., J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., Sarstedt, M., Danks, N. P., & Ray, S. (2021). *Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) using R: A workbook*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-80519-7

Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *43*(1), 115–135. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-014-0403-8

Hovland, C. I., & Weiss, W. (1951). The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *15*(4), 635–650. https://doi.org/10.1086/266350

Kim, D. Y., & Kim, H.-Y. (2021). Trust me, trust me not: A nuanced view of influencer marketing on social media. *Journal of Business Research*, *134*, 223–232. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.05.024

Ko, K. J., Green, S., Motolla, G. R., & Valdes, O. (2026). *Finfluencer Followers and Social Media Scrollers: The Profile, Patterns and Pitfalls of Social Media-Informed Retail Investors*. https://www.finrafoundation.org/sites/finrafoundation/files/2026-03/FINRA_Foundation_Research_Brief_Social_Media_Finfluencers.pdf

Little, R. J. A., & Rubin, D. B. (2019). *Statistical analysis with missing data* (3rd ed.). Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119482260

Liu, X., & Zhao, H. (2025). A meta-analysis of the effects of sponsorship disclosure in influencer marketing. *Marketing Letters*, *36*(3), 519–532. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11002-024-09757-z

Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (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

Martínez-López, F. J., Anaya-Sánchez, R., Esteban-Millat, I., Torrez-Meruvia, H., D'Alessandro, S., & Miles, M. (2020). Influencer marketing: Brand control, commercial orientation and post credibility. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *36*(17–18), 1805–1831. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2020.1806906

Mölders, M., Bock, L., Barrantes, E., & Zülch, H. (2025). Understanding finfluencers: Roles and strategic partnerships in retail investor engagement. *Journal of Business Research*, *198*, 115462. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2025.115462

Ohanian, R. (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

Otoritas Jasa Keuangan. (2026). *Stabilitas Sektor Keuangan Terjaga Dalam Menghadapi Prospek Perekonomian Tahun 2026 [Press release]*. https://ojk.go.id/id/berita-dan-kegiatan/siaran-pers/Pages/RDKB-Des-2025.aspx

Pan, M., Blut, M., Ghiassaleh, A., & Lee, Z. W. Y. (2025). Influencer marketing effectiveness: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *53*(1), 52–78. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-024-01052-7

Schnackenberg, A. K., Tomlinson, E., & Coen, C. (2021). The dimensional structure of transparency: A construct validation of transparency as disclosure, clarity, and accuracy in organizations. *Human Relations*, *74*(10), 1628–1660. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726720933317

Zülch, H., Mölders, M., & Hoffmann, C. P. (2026). Navigating the rise of finfluencers: A multidimensional quality framework for strategic partnerships. *Journal of Financial Services Marketing*, *31*, 26. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41264-025-00334-7