



Female gamers' evaluation of influencer-generated gaming content: The roles of informativeness, playfulness, and homophily

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ABSTRACT

Influencer-generated content has become a prominent source of information and entertainment in digital gaming environments, yet limited research has examined how female gamers cognitively and affectively evaluate such content. This study examines how perceived informativeness, playfulness, and homophily are associated with attitudes toward influencer-generated gaming content and how these attitudes, in turn, are associated with purchase intention. The study uses a TPB-informed attitude-intention model, complemented by Social Influence Theory and a gender-sensitive contextual perspective. Survey data from 340 female gamers were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Perceived informativeness and playfulness were significantly positively associated with attitude, whereas homophily was not significantly associated with attitude. Attitude, in turn, was significantly positively associated with purchase intention. Formal coefficient comparisons showed that the associations of informativeness and playfulness with attitude were significantly stronger than the association of homophily with attitude, while the informativeness and playfulness associations did not differ significantly. The study provides a contextual extension of influencer-marketing and digital-persuasion research by examining content-based and relational evaluations within an underexamined female-gamer context.

1. Introduction

Influencer-generated content has become a prominent source of information and entertainment within digital media environments, shaping how users engage with and interpret online information across multiple domains, including gaming. Influencers shape consumer perceptions through personalized narratives, experiential demonstrations, and parasocial interactions (Breves et al., 2019; De Veirman et al., 2017; Hughes et al., 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019). The gaming industry provides a particularly relevant context for this phenomenon, as gaming communities are particularly interactive and rely on continuous content creation, social belonging, and digital participation (Bakach et al., 2024). Despite women's substantial participation in gaming, recent research indicates that their experiences remain comparatively underexamined and that gendered barriers continue to shape their participation and recognition within gaming cultures (Drenten et al., 2023; Hébert-Ratté et al., 2025; Scidone et al., 2024). Recent studies have primarily examined gamer identity, representation, exclusion, harassment, and participation in competitive gaming, leaving less understood how

female gamers evaluate influencer-generated gaming content and how specific content-related and relational evaluations are associated with their attitudes and purchase intentions.

Although emerging research has begun to examine women in game-streaming and influencer-related environments, it has largely focused on creators' visibility, identity, authenticity, and experiences within digital platforms rather than on female gamers' evaluations of influencer-generated content as an audience (Chen & Ku, 2025). Consequently, evidence remains limited on how female gamers evaluate the informational, experiential, and relational characteristics of gaming-influencer content and how these evaluations relate to attitude and purchase intention. Related research has examined the credibility of female gaming influencers, including expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness, in relation to purchase intention among gaming audiences (Boonchutima & Surakanon, 2023); however, less attention has been given to how cognitive, affective, and relational evaluations of influencer-generated gaming content jointly relate to attitude and subsequent purchase intention. Accordingly, the present study simultaneously examines informativeness as a cognitive evaluation, playfulness

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as an affective evaluation, and homophily as a relational evaluation within a single model, allowing these three complementary dimensions of influencer-generated gaming content to be considered together.

Gender scholarship suggests that social and cultural expectations can influence how women experience and participate in digital gaming environments (Connell, 2005). Rather than directly examining gender identity negotiation, discrimination, or other gender-related experiences, this study adopts a gender-sensitive perspective by focusing on female gamers, an audience that remains underrepresented in gaming and influencer marketing research. This perspective provides a useful context for examining how female gamers evaluate influencer-generated gaming content and form attitudes toward such content. Accordingly, adopting a gender-sensitive perspective helps contextualize influencer-generated gaming content within an underexplored segment of the gaming community.

Prior studies in influencer marketing have emphasized two categories of determinants: influencer characteristics (e.g., credibility, attractiveness, trustworthiness) and content attributes (e.g., informativeness, transparency, hedonic value) (Breves et al., 2019; Hughes et al., 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019). However, it remains unclear whether these established determinants operate similarly among female gamers, whose experiences with gaming content and gaming communities may differ from those of broader gaming audiences. Moreover, although perceived playfulness (Kim et al., 2025; Moon & Kim, 2001), informativeness (Alalwan, 2018; Filieri et al., 2018), and homophily (Eyal & Rubin, 2003; Ismagilova et al., 2020) have each been associated with favorable consumer attitudes, it remains unclear whether female gamers rely more strongly on content-related characteristics than on perceived similarity when evaluating influencer-generated gaming content. This unresolved issue provides the central motivation for the present study.

To address this gap, this study draws on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), Social Influence Theory (Kelman, 1958), and insights from Gender Theory (Connell, 2005) to develop and test a conceptual model examining the associations of content characteristics with female gamers' attitudes and purchase intentions. Specifically, the model proposes that perceived playfulness, informativeness, and homophily are associated with attitudes toward influencer-generated gaming content, which, in turn, are associated with purchase intention. The study therefore adopts a TPB-informed attitude-intention model, focusing on the attitudinal pathway of TPB rather than testing the theory in its entirety; it does not include subjective norm or perceived behavioral control. TPB serves as the primary explanatory framework for the relationship between attitude and purchase intention; Social Influence Theory provides the theoretical foundation for understanding influencer-mediated persuasion; and Gender Theory provides a contextual lens for understanding female participation in gaming environments.

Accordingly, this study examines how perceived informativeness, perceived playfulness, and perceived homophily are associated with attitudes toward influencer-generated gaming content and how these attitudes, in turn, are associated with purchase intention among female gamers.

The primary contribution of this study lies in extending influencer marketing research by examining how female gamers evaluate influencer-generated gaming content and how these evaluations are associated with purchase intention. By focusing on an underrepresented audience within gaming environments, the study contributes to research on digital media use and online consumer behavior while providing a gender-sensitive perspective on the evaluation of influencer-generated content. In doing so, it offers evidence on the roles of perceived informativeness, playfulness, and homophily in their associations with attitudes toward influencer-generated gaming content.

2. Literature review

2.1. Influencer marketing in gaming

With the rapid growth of the gaming industry, influencer marketing has become a key strategy for gaming companies to promote new games, increase user engagement, and boost revenue. Recent research has highlighted the growing significance of influencer marketing within the gaming industry, particularly in shaping consumer behavior. Xu et al. (2022) found that streamer credibility, trustworthiness, and expertise positively influence viewers' brand attitudes during esports livestreams. Similarly, the literature also emphasizes the role of social influence and self-congruity in enhancing gamer engagement, proposing that alignment between influencers and audience identity strengthens marketing impact (Bakach et al., 2024). However, influencer marketing is not always effective in the gaming industry. Prior research has shown that while influencer promotions can increase awareness, they often yield a low or negative short-term return on investment (ROI), especially for popular titles (Huang & Morozov, 2022). For example, YouTube influencers can increase engagement with games but may reduce purchase intentions for story-driven games due to content overexposure (Li et al., 2025). In contrast, niche games benefit more significantly from such exposure. Collectively, the literature suggests that the effectiveness of influencer marketing in gaming is highly context-dependent, shaped by platform, content type, and game monetization models. This context underscores the importance of understanding which characteristics of influencer-generated content most strongly shape female gamers' evaluations and subsequent purchase intentions.

2.2. Theoretical framework: TPB, social Influence, and gender perspectives

Influencer marketing and consumer behavior are commonly examined through theories of social influence and gender, which help explain how individuals evaluate persuasive communication in digital environments. Within Social Influence Theory (Kelman, 1958), identification provides a relevant basis for understanding relational influence in influencer-mediated communication, as individuals may respond favorably to sources with whom they perceive a meaningful connection or similarity. In the present model, this perspective is specifically linked to perceived homophily, which captures perceived similarity between followers and influencers, and to its proposed association with attitudes toward influencer-generated gaming content. Gender Theory (Connell, 2005) provides a complementary perspective by highlighting how social and cultural expectations may shape individuals' participation and experiences in different social contexts. In the present study, Gender Theory is used as a contextual framework to justify the focus on female gamers rather than as a direct explanatory mechanism of consumer behavior. Together, these perspectives complement the Theory of Planned Behavior by providing the broader social and cultural context within which female gamers evaluate influencer-generated gaming content.

Against this background, the three theoretical perspectives serve distinct and complementary roles in the present study. The Theory of Planned Behavior provides the primary framework for the attitude-intention relationship, with the study focusing specifically on its attitudinal pathway. Social Influence Theory informs the relational dimension of influencer-mediated persuasion, particularly the role of perceived homophily in evaluations of influencer-generated gaming content. Gender Theory serves as a contextual perspective for examining these relationships among female gamers but is not modeled as a direct explanatory mechanism or as a basis for inferring gender differences. This focused theoretical architecture therefore distinguishes the attitude-intention pathway, relational social influence, and the gender-sensitive context in which these relationships are examined.

2.3. Attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content and purchase intention

Attitudes are commonly considered evaluations of people toward objects, people, and themselves (Grafström et al., 2018), referring to the extent to which people approve or disapprove of a behavior (Al-Debei et al., 2013). Attitudes can be formed through cognitive, affective, or behavioral experiences, and in turn, they can influence corresponding cognitive, affective, or behavioral processes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Previous research has shown that most consumers hold a positive attitude toward relationship marketing (Jones et al., 2015) and that consumers' attitudes toward social media marketing are generally positive (Duffett, 2017). As influencer marketing can be understood as a form of relationship-building communication, positive attitudes toward influencer-generated content are also expected to influence subsequent behavioral intentions (Grafström et al., 2018).

The existing literature has extensively studied purchase intention, which is generally defined as an individual's subjective probability of performing a specific behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, intention serves as a key predictor of action, capturing the degree to which individuals are willing to exert effort toward a specific behavior, such as online purchasing (Ajzen, 1991). Based on this theoretical foundation, numerous empirical studies have confirmed the predictive validity of purchase intention in both online and offline contexts. For instance, Lim et al. (2016) demonstrated that purchase intention has a significant and positive influence on online shopping behavior, reinforcing its role as a proximal determinant of purchase decisions. Accordingly, purchase intention is widely regarded as a reliable indicator of consumers' future behavioral responses in digital consumption environments (Morwitz et al., 2007).

Although the Theory of Planned Behavior traditionally includes attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control as predictors of behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991), the present study focuses specifically on the attitudinal pathway. Accordingly, the study adopts a TPB-informed attitude-intention model rather than testing TPB in its entirety; subjective norm and perceived behavioral control are acknowledged as components of the broader framework but are not operationalized in the proposed model. This decision is consistent with prior influencer marketing research, which has emphasized consumers' evaluative responses toward digital content as a key mechanism explaining purchase intention in digital media environments (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Zhu & Kanjanamekanant, 2021). Consistent with this focused application of TPB, this study examines attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content as an antecedent of purchase intention.

The literature posits that attitudes can predict and positively influence consumers' purchase intentions (Chen et al., 2017), and that ad attitude has a positive direct relationship with purchase intentions (Zhu & Kanjanamekanant, 2021). Similarly, attitudes toward influencer-generated gaming content are expected to be positively associated with female gamers' purchase intentions. Accordingly, we posit that.

H1. Attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content is positively associated with purchase intention.

2.4. Perceived playfulness

Playfulness is defined as a predisposition to gain pleasure from involvement in activities. It is a complex construct that includes elements such as enjoyment, psychological stimulation, and personal interest (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Playfulness has been associated with innovative attitudes and intrinsic motivational orientation (Glynn & Webster, 1993). In the digital era, perceived playfulness is a subjective experience that arises during interaction between the user and IT, characterized by its ephemeral, unconstrained nature (Almeida et al.,

2024; Liu & Hsu, 2022; Sun et al., 2023; Zhang, 2013).

Moon and Kim (2001) identify two perspectives on playfulness: one considers it a trait, a stable motivational characteristic of individuals, while the other defines it as a state, a situational characteristic that emerges from interactions between an individual and their environment. In this study, playfulness is conceptualized as a situational characteristic of the interaction between female consumers and influencer marketing content. Prior research suggests that perceived playfulness positively influences users' attitudes toward digital content and their intentions to engage with it (Moon & Kim, 2001). Recent research also suggests that playful advertising positively affects perceived advertising value (Dwinanda et al., 2022). Furthermore, playfulness positively affects customers' attitudes and behavioral intentions in social media marketing (Wang et al., 2022).

Gaming environments are inherently experiential and entertainment-oriented. Consequently, female gamers may place considerable value on content that is enjoyable, engaging, and emotionally stimulating. Playful influencer-generated content may enhance users' emotional connection with the content itself and foster more favorable evaluations. This perspective is consistent with previous studies showing that entertaining and playful content positively influences users' attitudes and engagement with influencer-generated media (Moon & Kim, 2001; Wang et al., 2022). Therefore, playfulness is expected to be positively associated with female gamers' attitudes toward influencer-generated gaming content.

The following hypothesis is formulated.

H2. Perceived playfulness is positively associated with attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content.

2.5. Informativeness

Informativeness is a cognitive mechanism that reflects the informational utility and perceived value of the content (Chetioui et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). It refers to the ability to inform users about product alternatives, enabling them to make choices that yield the highest value (Rotzoll et al., 1990). Previous studies by Ducoffe (1995, 1996) have shown a strong positive relationship between perceived informativeness and advertising value. Early research has demonstrated that informative advertising enables consumers to make more intelligent purchase decisions (Resnik & Stern, 1977). In the digital era, informativeness has also been extended to the internet (Oliveira et al., 2022). Luo (2002) defined Web informativeness as the degree to which the Web provides users with valuable information. Recent research suggests that helpful information indirectly increases purchase intention, whereas information uncertainty negatively affects it (Chen et al., 2022; Filieri et al., 2018).

Influencer-generated content has a significant impact on consumer behavior, including brand awareness, purchase intention, and the formation of parasocial relationships between influencers and their followers (Liu & Zheng, 2024; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Based on the existing literature, informative influencer-generated content is expected to enhance consumer attitudes toward a brand and, in turn, positively influence purchase intention.

In gaming environments, users frequently rely on influencer-generated content to learn about gameplay experiences, product performance, and purchasing decisions. This tendency may be particularly relevant for female gamers, who often navigate gaming communities where expertise and credibility are highly valued. Consequently, informative content may serve not only as a source of knowledge but also as a mechanism that supports more confident evaluations of gaming-related products and services by reducing uncertainty during decision-making (Chetioui et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Therefore, informativeness is expected to be positively associated with female gamers' attitudes toward influencer-generated gaming content.

Thus, the hypothesis proposes that.

H3. Perceived informativeness is positively associated with attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content.

2.6. Perceived homophily

Within the present framework, perceived homophily represents the relational dimension of influencer-mediated social influence. Consistent with Social Influence Theory (Kelman, 1958), perceived similarity may facilitate identification with an influencer and thereby be associated with more favorable evaluations of influencer-generated content. Perceived homophily, or a sense of personal connection, is 'the degree to which people who interact are similar in beliefs, education, social status, and the like', which can be objective and subjective (Eyal & Rubin, 2003, p. 80). Homophily is prevalent in human communication because people tend to prefer interacting with others who share similar social status, education, and beliefs (Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970). A recent study by Ismagilova et al. (2020) also suggests that consumers are likely to purchase products recommended by sources exhibiting a high degree of homophily. The increasing prevalence of social media and social environments has contributed to a growing focus on homophily in marketing studies (Mainolfi & Vergura, 2022). In influencer marketing, homophily, or perceived similarity, is a key personal characteristic of influencers, who are often perceived as more relatable to ordinary people than traditional celebrities (Ki et al., 2020; Schouten et al., 2020). Prior research in influencer-marketing contexts has shown that perceived homophily can strengthen engagement and purchase intentions by increasing perceived similarity between audiences and influencers (Mainolfi & Vergura, 2022). Accordingly, the present study examines whether perceived homophily also influences female gamers' attitudes toward influencer-generated gaming content.

Although homophily has been consistently associated with positive attitudinal and behavioral outcomes in influencer marketing research (Gupta et al., 2023), its influence may be less pronounced within female gaming environments. Unlike lifestyle-oriented contexts, gaming communities often involve strong information-seeking behavior, expertise evaluation, and content-driven interactions (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Consequently, female gamers may place greater emphasis on the informational and experiential value of influencer-generated content than on perceived interpersonal similarity. This argument is also consistent with studies showing that content quality and message value can play a central role in shaping attitudes and purchase intentions (Chetioui et al., 2020; Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). Therefore, examining the role of homophily in this context may help determine whether relational similarity cues are less salient than content-related attributes in shaping female gamers' attitudes toward influencer-generated gaming content. Nevertheless, prior influencer marketing research consistently reports positive associations between homophily and consumer attitudes, providing sufficient theoretical support to expect a positive relationship in the present study.

Thus, the hypothesis is.

H4. Perceived homophily is positively associated with attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content.

2.7. Conceptual model

The model (Fig. 1) posits that perceived playfulness, perceived homophily, and informativeness function as distinct antecedents of users' attitudes toward influencer-generated gaming content. Consistent with the study's TPB-informed attitude-intention framework, purchase intention is modeled as an outcome of attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content. The hypothesized model therefore does not specify direct paths from informativeness, playfulness, and homophily to purchase intention, because these constructs are conceptualized as evaluations associated with attitude rather than direct antecedents of purchase intention. Accordingly, the subsequent examination of their specific indirect associations with purchase intention through attitude is treated as a supplementary analysis rather than as a formal test of mediation.

Building on prior influencer marketing and digital persuasion research, this study distinguishes among three complementary mechanisms that may shape female gamers' evaluations of influencer-generated content. Informativeness is a cognitive mechanism that reflects the informational utility and perceived value of the content (Chetioui et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Playfulness is an affective mechanism that captures enjoyment and positive emotional responses during content consumption (Moon & Kim, 2001; Wang et al., 2022). Finally, homophily is a relational mechanism that refers to perceived similarity between followers and influencers (Gupta et al., 2023). Examining these mechanisms simultaneously allows us to explore whether female gamers rely more strongly on content-related evaluations than on relational similarity cues when forming attitudes toward influencer-generated gaming content.

Attitude represents an affective-cognitive evaluative response to the influencer's content and purchase intention captures behavioral readiness to engage in a consumption action and is positioned as the immediate intentional outcome of attitude. Consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior, the model further examines how attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content is associated with purchase intention.

Fig. 1 summarizes the proposed conceptual model, which is primarily grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior and informed by Social Influence Theory and Gender Theory.

3. Method

This cross-sectional study examines the associations specified in the proposed model among female gamers aged 18 years and older recruited through online and university networks. Specifically, the model assesses the associations of perceived informativeness, perceived playfulness, and perceived homophily with attitudes toward influencer-generated

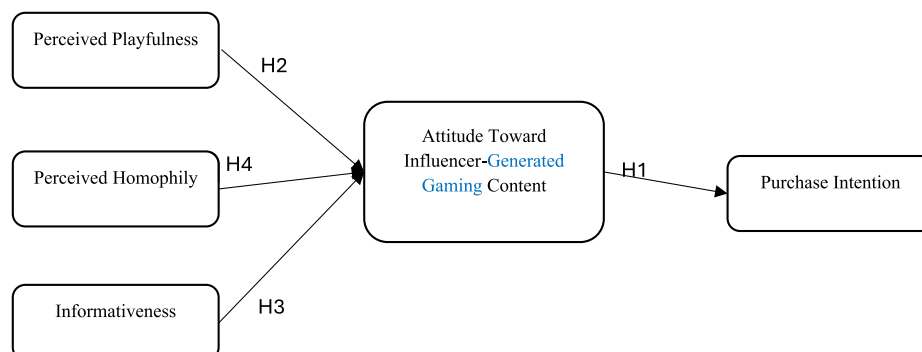


Fig. 1. Proposed conceptual model.

gaming content, as well as the association between these attitudes and purchase intention. This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected through an online questionnaire administered via Qualtrics. Data collection took place from 29 May to 19 June 2025.

Participants were recruited using non-probability convenience sampling through gaming-related social-media groups and online gaming communities, as well as university networks and the researchers' personal social-media channels. Recruitment was not restricted to a specific country. Because respondents' country of residence was not collected, the geographic composition of the final sample cannot be established precisely. Across recruitment channels, the invitation briefly described the study's purpose and provided a link to the Qualtrics questionnaire. No monetary or other incentives were offered. The specific social-media platforms and individual online groups through which the invitation was circulated were not systematically recorded; consequently, these channel-level details cannot be reported retrospectively.

This study was reviewed and approved by the NOVA IMS Ethics Committee, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa (Approval No. DDMKT2025-5-212381, approved in May 2025). Participation was voluntary, and electronic informed consent was obtained from all participants before they completed the questionnaire. Participants were informed that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential and would be used solely for research purposes.

3.1. Questionnaire design and measurement

The questionnaire was made available in both English and Portuguese to accommodate participants recruited through the study's different dissemination networks. The researcher originally developed the questionnaire in English and then translated it into Portuguese. Two native Portuguese-speaking co-authors with expertise in marketing and consumer behavior and quantitative research methodology independently reviewed the Portuguese version. The review focused on conceptual equivalence, clarity of wording, and cultural appropriateness rather than literal equivalence between the two language versions. No independent back-translation was undertaken. When the review process suggested wording changes, the researcher and co-authors discussed differences until they reached consensus on the final Portuguese wording. The questionnaire was not formally pilot-tested with members of the target population before data collection.

Of the 340 participants included in the analytical sample, 318 (93.5%) completed the English-language questionnaire, and 22 (6.5%) completed the Portuguese-language version. Because the Portuguese-language subgroup was small, formal measurement-invariance testing across language groups was not considered sufficiently reliable. As a sensitivity check, the focal structural relationships were therefore estimated separately by questionnaire language. The overall pattern was consistent across the two groups: the estimated informativeness-attitude, playfulness-attitude, and attitude-purchase-intention relationships remained positive, whereas the homophily-attitude relationship remained comparatively small. Given the small Portuguese-language subgroup, these language-specific estimates are interpreted as a sensitivity analysis rather than as evidence of measurement invariance.

The questionnaire began with a gender screening question to filter out respondents who did not identify as female, followed by a set of questions to describe participants' gaming preferences and consumption behaviors. Existing multi-item scales from recent studies were adapted for this study to measure the constructs in the conceptual model presented in [Appendix A](#). All items were measured using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

The measurement items were drawn from previously established scales and adapted to the specific context of gaming-influencer content. The adaptation primarily involved changing the referent of the original items to gaming influencers and the content they generate while retaining the substantive meaning of the underlying constructs. Thus,

references to the original communication, advertising, social-media, or technology contexts were replaced, where necessary, with references to "gaming influencers," "gaming influencers I follow," or their content. For perceived playfulness, the adapted items retained the original emphasis on enjoyment, curiosity, exploration, and engagement but applied these experiences to viewing gaming-influencer content. The homophily items were contextualized to assess respondents' perceived similarity to the gaming influencers they follow. The informativeness items were adapted from the social-media advertising context to assess the usefulness, relevance, and informational value of gaming-influencer content. Similarly, the attitude items were contextualized from evaluations of advertising content to evaluations of gaming-influencer content, while the purchase-intention items were framed around respondents' intentions to purchase products promoted or recommended by gaming influencers. These adaptations were contextual rather than intended to alter the conceptual definitions of the original constructs. Using established measurement scales across all five constructs provides a consistent measurement foundation for the study, while contextual adaptation enables their application to influencer-generated gaming content. No separate formal content-validity assessment, such as a content-validity index, was conducted. However, the adapted and translated questionnaire was reviewed by the two co-authors described above for conceptual consistency, clarity, and appropriateness to the study context, and wording modifications were resolved through discussion and consensus. The questionnaire was not formally pilot-tested with members of the target population before data collection.

Perceived playfulness was measured using six items adapted from [Kim et al. \(2025\)](#). Perceived homophily was assessed through four modified items from [Gupta et al. \(2023\)](#). Five items measuring informativeness were adapted from [Alalwan \(2018\)](#) to evaluate the informational value of content shared by influencers. Attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content was measured using a two-item scale based on [Zhu and Kanjanamekanant \(2021\)](#). The first item ("favorable") directly captures evaluative valence, whereas the second item ("interesting") captures positive interest in influencer-generated gaming content. Although both items were drawn from the source measure and were intended to represent a favorable evaluation of influencer content, we acknowledge that "interesting" may also reflect attention or arousal rather than evaluative valence. A broader multi-item attitude scale was not included in the original questionnaire; therefore, the present analysis is necessarily based on the two administered indicators. A three-item scale developed by [Jiménez-Castillo and Sánchez-Fernández \(2019\)](#) was selected to measure purchase intention because it was considered the most suitable for the influencer marketing context of this study. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked about their demographic profile. Data analysis used partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4.0. PLS-SEM was selected because the study is prediction-oriented and seeks to explain variance in the endogenous constructs rather than to confirm an established theoretical model ([Hair et al., 2017](#)). Furthermore, the proposed model comprises multiple reflective latent constructs and simultaneously examines direct and indirect relationships, making PLS-SEM appropriate for the study's analytical objectives.

3.2. The sample

The sample size adequacy was assessed using the inverse square root method proposed by [Kock and Hadaya \(2018\)](#) for PLS-SEM. This approach provides a more defensible basis for minimum sample-size estimation than the traditional 10-times rule. When the minimum absolute path coefficient cannot be specified prospectively, [Kock and Hadaya \(2018\)](#) propose a rule-of-thumb value of .197; with a significance level of .05 and statistical power of .80, the inverse square root method yields a minimum sample size of approximately 160 observations. The final analytical sample of 340 participants therefore exceeded this prospective benchmark.

3.2.1. Demographic profile

For the original survey, eligibility was operationalized as being aged 18 years or older, self-identifying as female, and self-identifying as a gamer or as a member of the gaming community. No minimum gaming-frequency threshold was imposed, allowing the sample to include participants with different levels of gaming involvement. Exposure to gaming-influencer content was assessed through subsequent questions but was not implemented as a separate screening criterion. Consequently, the original eligibility procedure did not ensure that every participant currently followed gaming influencers, a limitation considered in the sensitivity analyses reported below.

A total of 371 genuine survey submissions were recorded, excluding three Qualtrics preview/test records. Of these submissions, 27 were unfinished and were excluded from the analysis. A further four completed responses were excluded because the respondents did not meet the female-gender eligibility criterion. The final analytical sample therefore comprised 340 participants. No duplicate Response IDs were identified in the Qualtrics data. Because recruitment relied on an open survey link distributed through multiple online channels and the number of individuals exposed to the invitation was unknown, a conventional survey response rate could not be calculated. No separate missing-data exclusion threshold was applied to the retained sample. Among the 340 analytical cases, only two isolated item-level values were missing, each occurring for a different respondent. These missing values were handled in SmartPLS using mean replacement, consistent with the missing-value treatment specified in the analysis settings. No formal attention-check items were included in the questionnaire, and no minimum or maximum completion-time thresholds, straight-lining criteria, or inconsistent-response rules were applied to exclude otherwise completed responses. Response screening was therefore limited to questionnaire completion and the eligibility criteria described above.

Although eligibility required respondents to self-identify as female gamers, current gaming activity and current following of gaming influencers were not used as additional exclusion criteria in the original survey design. In the final sample, 18 participants (5.3%) reported that they were not currently playing video games, and nine respondents explicitly indicated in an open-text response that they did not currently follow gaming influencers; two respondents belonged to both groups. The questionnaire did not provide a separate instruction asking these respondents to refer to a previously viewed gaming influencer when answering the influencer-related items. To examine whether their inclusion affected the structural results, sensitivity analyses were conducted excluding the nine explicit non-followers, the 18 respondents not currently playing, and both groups simultaneously. The focal path coefficients remained substantively stable across these analyses, indicating that the main pattern of findings was not driven by these respondents.

Table 1 provides an overview of the participants' demographic characteristics. Among participants, the largest age group was 25–31 years old, accounting for 26.8% of the sample. This was followed by participants aged 45 and above (21.5%) and those aged 32–38 (20.6%). This indicates that the sample included participants across a broad age range, although the largest groups were young and middle-aged adults. This age diversity is a useful feature of the sample because it allows the study to examine female gamers across different stages of adulthood rather than restricting the analysis to younger participants.

With 42.4% holding a bachelor's degree, 24.7% a master's degree, and 3.5% a doctoral degree, the sample consisted of well-educated individuals. Only 1.8% had not finished high school. In terms of income, the largest group of respondents (35.3%) reported earning between €1001 and €2000 per month, while 25.3% earned less than €1000 per month. A smaller percentage reported monthly earnings of more than €3000 (8.5%), and 10.3% preferred not to disclose their income. Regarding employment status, 46.2% were employed full-time, followed by part-time workers (17.4%) and students (16.2%).

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of the sample (N = 340).

Variable	n (%)
Age (years)	
18–24	67 (19.7)
25–31	91 (26.8)
32–38	70 (20.6)
39–45	39 (11.5)
45 years and above	73 (21.5)
Education	
Less than high school	6 (1.8)
High school diploma or equivalent	94 (27.6)
Bachelor's degree	144 (42.4)
Master's degree	84 (24.7)
Doctoral degree	12 (3.5)
Monthly Income (€)	
Less than €1000	86 (25.3)
€1001–€2000	120 (35.3)
€2001–€3000	70 (20.6)
More than €3000	29 (8.5)
I prefer not to answer	35 (10.3)
Employment status	
Full-time employed	156 (46.2)
Part-time employed	59 (17.4)
Self-employed	30 (8.8)
Student	55 (16.2)
Unemployed	26 (7.6)
Retired/Other	13 (3.8)
Questionnaire language	
	Frequency (n) Percentage (%)
English	318 93.5
Portuguese	22 6.5

3.2.2. Gaming habits and consumer behavior

Table 2 summarizes participants' gaming behavior and engagement

Table 2

Gaming behavior and gaming-influencer engagement of participants.

Characteristic	n	%
Gaming frequency		
Didn't play at all	18	5.3
Once a week	100	29.4
2–3 times a week	115	33.8
4–6 times a week	57	16.8
Every day	50	14.7
Typical gaming-session duration		
<30 min	47	13.8
30 minutes–1 hour	116	34.1
1–2 h	106	31.2
2–3 h	56	16.5
>3 h	14	4.1
Missing	1	.3
Monthly gaming expenditure		
€1–€20	204	60.0
€21–€40	70	20.6
€41–€60	18	5.3
€61–€80	9	2.6
>€80	1	.3
Unsure	35	10.3
Missing	3	.9
Influence of gaming influencers on game-related purchases		
Never	78	22.9
Rarely	103	30.3
Sometimes	130	38.2
Often	26	7.6
Always	3	.9
Primary platform for following gaming influencers/content creators		
YouTube	168	49.4
Twitch	46	13.5
TikTok	62	18.2
Weibo, Bilibili, Facebook and X	43	12.6
Other/open-text response	20	5.9
Missing	1	.3

with gaming-influencer content, including gaming frequency, typical session duration, monthly gaming expenditure, exposure to influencer recommendations, and the primary platforms used to follow gaming influencers.

In terms of preferred game genre, most participants selected Role-Playing Games (21.2%) and Action/Adventure (21.2%) as their favorite game types, followed by Simulation/Casual (20.0%) and Strategy (15.9%). Less frequently selected genres included Sports/Racing, Shooter, MOBA, and Horror. A small proportion of respondents (4.7%) selected "Other," reflecting additional diversity in gaming preferences.

3.3. Data analysis

The PLS-SEM analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0 with the path weighting scheme, a maximum of 3000 iterations, and a stop criterion of 10^{-7} . The data were standardized, and the two isolated item-level missing values were handled using mean replacement. Statistical significance was assessed using nonparametric bootstrapping with 5000 subsamples, two-tailed testing at the 5% significance level, and 95% bias-corrected percentile confidence intervals. A fixed seed was used for the bootstrapping procedure. The saved SmartPLS 4 configuration did not record a separate sign-change setting.

Because indirect effects were not specified as separate hypotheses in the conceptual model, the specific indirect associations of informativeness, playfulness, and homophily with purchase intention through attitude were examined as a supplementary analysis. Given the cross-sectional design, these indirect effects are interpreted as statistical indirect associations through attitude rather than as evidence of a temporal or causal mediating mechanism.

Model assessment proceeded in two stages. First, the reflective measurement model was evaluated in terms of indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Second, the structural model was assessed through collinearity diagnostics, standardized path coefficients, bootstrapped confidence intervals, coefficients of determination (R^2), effect sizes (f^2), and out-of-sample predictive performance. Out-of-sample predictive performance was assessed using PLSpredict with 10 folds and 10 repetitions, reporting indicator-level Q^2 predict values, RMSE, and MAE and comparing the PLS-SEM prediction errors with those of the linear-model benchmark.

4. Results

This section presents the results of the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis conducted using SmartPLS 4.0.

4.1. Measurement model

As illustrated in Appendix A, all indicator loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of .70 (Hair et al., 2017), indicating adequate indicator reliability.

To assess construct reliability, Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, and composite reliability (CR) were examined. As shown in Table 3, Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .917 to .936, rho_A values ranged from .918 to .937, and CR values ranged from .960 to .954.

Table 3
Construct reliability and convergent validity.

Construct	Cronbach's α	rho_A	CR	AVE
AT	.917	.918	.960	.924
HO	.936	.939	.954	.838
IN	.932	.936	.949	.787
PI	.924	.928	.952	.868
PL	.932	.937	.946	.746

Note. AT = Attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content; HO = Perceived homophily; IN = Informativeness; PI = Purchase intention; PL = Perceived playfulness.

.939, and CR values ranged from .946 to .960. All values exceeded the recommended threshold of .70, indicating high internal consistency (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010). Convergent validity was assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE). AVE values ranged from .746 to .924 and exceeded the recommended threshold of .50 for all constructs, supporting convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010; Henseler et al., 2009).

Given that attitude was measured with two indicators, its reliability was additionally assessed using the Spearman–Brown coefficient, which was .917, indicating high inter-item reliability.

Discriminant validity was first assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. As shown in Table 4, the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with the other constructs, supporting discriminant validity according to this criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 5 presents the construct means, standard deviations, and correlations. The descriptive statistics provide an overview of the distributions of the construct scores, while the correlations show the bivariate associations among the constructs.

Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) was also calculated to assess discriminant validity. As shown in Table 6, all HTMT point estimates were below .90. In addition, the bootstrapped confidence intervals were examined using the inferential HTMT criterion proposed by Henseler et al. (2015).

Although the HTMT values for the relationships between attitude and informativeness (.859) and between attitude and playfulness (.864) were relatively high, the bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals were [.789, .912] and [.807, .891], respectively. Importantly, none of the bootstrapped HTMT confidence intervals for any construct pair included 1.00, providing inferential support for discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

4.2. Structural model

Structural collinearity was assessed using the variance inflation factor (VIF). As shown in Table 7, all inner VIF values ranged from 1.000 to 2.943, indicating that problematic predictor collinearity was not evident in the structural model. Because these inner VIF values constitute a structural-collinearity assessment rather than a full-collinearity common-method-bias test, no inference regarding the absence of common method bias is made on this basis.

Path coefficients represent the standardized direct associations among the latent constructs in the structural model (Xie et al., 2020). The significance of the tested relationships was assessed using bootstrapping with 5000 subsamples and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. As shown in Table 8, attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content was significantly positively associated with purchase intention ($\beta = .679$, $p < .001$). In addition, perceived informativeness ($\beta = .442$, $p < .001$) and perceived playfulness ($\beta = .467$, $p < .001$) were significantly positively associated with attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content. In contrast, perceived homophily was not significantly associated with attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content ($\beta = .017$, $p = .663$). Accordingly,

Table 4
Fornell–Larcker criterion.

Construct	AT	HO	IN	PI	PL
AT	.961				
HO	.555	.916			
IN	.795	.510	.887		
PI	.679	.557	.653	.932	
PL	.787	.650	.731	.709	.864

Note. Diagonal values (bold) are the square roots of AVE; off-diagonal values are construct correlations. AT = Attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content; HO = Perceived homophily; IN = Informativeness; PI = Purchase intention; PL = Perceived playfulness.

Table 5
Descriptive statistics and construct correlations.

Construct	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content (AT)	5.371	1.187	1.000				
2. Perceived homophily (HO)	3.973	1.347	.550	1.000			
3. Informativeness (IN)	5.392	1.124	.794	.507	1.000		
4. Purchase intention (PI)	4.829	1.359	.675	.557	.651	1.000	
5. Perceived playfulness (PL)	4.781	1.317	.799	.666	.733	.715	1.000

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation. Construct scores were calculated as the mean of their respective indicators on the original seven-point scale. AT = attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content; HO = perceived homophily; IN = informativeness; PI = purchase intention; PL = perceived playfulness.

Table 6
Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) and bootstrapped confidence intervals.

Construct pair	HTMT	95% bias-corrected CI
HO ↔ AT	.595	[.502, .678]
IN ↔ AT	.859	[.789, .912]
IN ↔ HO	.544	[.440, .628]
PI ↔ AT	.734	[.641, .805]
PI ↔ HO	.598	[.475, .694]
PI ↔ IN	.702	[.602, .781]
PL ↔ AT	.864	[.807, .891]
PL ↔ HO	.713	[.607, .770]
PL ↔ IN	.787	[.722, .837]
PL ↔ PI	.771	[.683, .833]

Note. Confidence intervals are 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals based on 5000 resamples. AT = attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content; HO = perceived homophily; IN = informativeness; PI = purchase intention; PL = perceived playfulness.

Table 7
Structural collinearity assessment.

Structural path	VIF
AT -> PI	1.000
HO -> AT	1.813
IN -> AT	2.196
PL -> AT	2.943

Table 8
Structural path coefficients.

Structural path	β	SE	t	p	95% bias-corrected CI
Attitude → Purchase intention	.679	.040	16.892	< .001	[.591, .749]
Homophily → Attitude	.017	.039	.436	.663	[−.060, .090]
Informativeness → Attitude	.442	.057	7.689	< .001	[.327, .554]
Playfulness → Attitude	.467	.055	8.542	< .001	[.361, .570]

Note. β = standardized path coefficient; SE = bootstrap standard error. Confidence intervals are 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals based on 5000 subsamples.

H1, H2, and H3 were supported, whereas H4 was not supported.

Pairwise bootstrap comparisons of the structural path coefficients showed that the association between informativeness and attitude was significantly stronger than the association between homophily and attitude ($\Delta\beta = .425$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.288, .559]). Similarly, the association between playfulness and attitude was significantly stronger than the association between homophily and attitude ($\Delta\beta = .451$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.300, .613]). In contrast, the path coefficients for informativeness and playfulness did not differ significantly from one another ($\Delta\beta = -.026$, $p = .811$, 95% CI [−.235, .184]).

As a robustness check, the focal structural relationships were re-estimated while accounting for age, gaming frequency, monthly gaming expenditure, self-reported influence of gaming influencers on

purchase decisions, and primary platform use (YouTube versus other platforms). The substantive pattern of results remained unchanged. Perceived informativeness ($\beta = .443$, $p < .001$) and perceived playfulness ($\beta = .490$, $p < .001$) remained positively associated with attitude, whereas perceived homophily remained nonsignificant ($\beta = .019$, $p = .626$). Attitude also remained positively associated with purchase intention after inclusion of the controls ($\beta = .519$, $p < .001$). These sensitivity results indicate that the focal pattern of findings was robust to the inclusion of these observed covariates, although other unmeasured characteristics may still provide alternative explanations.

As a supplementary analysis, specific indirect associations through attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content were examined using bootstrapping with 5000 subsamples and 95% confidence intervals. As shown in Table 9, perceived informativeness ($\beta = .300$, $p < .001$) and perceived playfulness ($\beta = .317$, $p < .001$) showed significant positive indirect associations with purchase intention through attitude. In contrast, the indirect association between perceived homophily and purchase intention through attitude was not statistically significant ($\beta = .011$, $p = .662$). Given the cross-sectional design, these indirect associations should not be interpreted as evidence of causal mediation.

As shown in Table 10, the model explained 73.6% of the variance in attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content ($R^2 = .736$; adjusted $R^2 = .734$) and 46.0% of the variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = .460$; adjusted $R^2 = .459$). These values are interpreted descriptively as the proportion of variance explained by the specified predictors in the present sample, rather than according to universal thresholds for explanatory power. Because prior influencer-marketing studies differ in their focal constructs, populations, and model specifications, these R^2 values are not treated as directly comparable benchmarks; rather, they indicate the explanatory performance of the specified model within the present female-gamer sample.

Table 11 presents the effect-size (f^2) values for the structural paths. Attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content showed a large effect size in relation to purchase intention ($f^2 = .853$). For attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content, perceived informativeness ($f^2 = .337$) and perceived playfulness ($f^2 = .282$) showed meaningful effect sizes, whereas perceived homophily showed a negligible effect size ($f^2 = .001$).

Table 12 presents the PLSpredict results. All indicator-level Q^2 -predict values were greater than zero, indicating that the PLS-SEM

Table 9
Specific indirect effects through attitude.

Specific indirect pathway	β	SE	t	p	95% bias-corrected CI
Homophily → Attitude → Purchase intention	.011	.026	.437	.662	[−.041, .060]
Informativeness → Attitude → Purchase intention	.300	.047	6.356	< .001	[.212, .398]
Playfulness → Attitude → Purchase intention	.317	.039	8.087	< .001	[.244, .397]

Note. β = standardized specific indirect effect; SE = bootstrap standard error. Confidence intervals are 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals based on 5000 subsamples.

Table 10
R² and adjusted R².

	R ²	Adjusted R ²
AT	.736	.734
PI	.460	.459

Table 11
Effect sizes (f^2).

	f^2
AT - > PI	.853
HO - > AT	.001
IN - > AT	.337
PL - > AT	.282

Note. According to [Cohen \(1988\)](#), f^2 values of .02, .15, and .35 indicate small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively.

Table 12
PLSpredict assessment of out-of-sample predictive performance.

Indicator	Q ² predict	PLS-SEM RMSE	PLS-SEM MAE	LM RMSE	LM MAE
AT1	.677	.704	.531	.698	.508
AT2	.665	.716	.555	.740	.563
PI1	.410	1.161	.901	1.171	.890
PI2	.480	.984	.733	.977	.727
PI3	.446	1.123	.885	1.083	.821

Note. Q²predict = indicator-level predictive relevance statistic; RMSE = root mean squared error; MAE = mean absolute error; LM = linear-model benchmark.

predictions outperformed the naïve indicator-average benchmark. Comparison with the linear-model benchmark, however, showed mixed results. Based on RMSE, the PLS-SEM model produced lower prediction errors for AT2 and PI1, whereas the linear model produced lower errors for AT1, PI2, and PI3. Based on MAE, PLS-SEM produced a lower prediction error for AT2, whereas the linear model produced lower errors for AT1, PI1, PI2, and PI3. Accordingly, although all Q²predict values were positive, the PLS-SEM model did not consistently outperform the linear-model benchmark across the endogenous indicators and error metrics.

5. Discussion

Three of the four proposed hypotheses were supported. Perceived informativeness and perceived playfulness were significantly positively associated with attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content, and attitude was significantly positively associated with purchase intention. In contrast, perceived homophily was not significantly associated with attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content. These findings provide the basis for the discussion of their theoretical and practical implications in the following sections.

5.1. Cognitive and affective evaluation of influencer-generated gaming content

Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior ([Ajzen, 1991](#)), Social Influence Theory ([Kelman, 1958](#)), and a gender-sensitive perspective informed by Gender Theory ([Connell, 2005](#)), the study found that perceived playfulness and perceived informativeness were significantly positively associated with female consumers' attitudes toward influencer-generated gaming content, which, in turn, were significantly positively associated with purchase intention. These findings contribute to influencer marketing and consumer behavior literature by offering a

gender-sensitive understanding of how female gamers evaluate and engage with influencer-generated gaming content.

Consistent with prior research, perceived informativeness showed a significant positive association with attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content ([Taylor et al., 2011](#)). Importantly, its association with attitude was significantly stronger than the corresponding association of perceived homophily, although it did not differ significantly from that of perceived playfulness. This result highlights the importance of informational value in shaping evaluative responses and aligns with studies suggesting that informativeness facilitates goal-oriented decision-making and indirectly enhances purchase intention through attitudinal mechanisms ([Alalwan, 2018](#); [Zafar et al., 2023](#)). Perceived playfulness was also significantly positively associated with attitude and showed a significant positive indirect association with purchase intention through attitude, underscoring the relevance of emotional engagement and entertainment value in gaming-related influencer communication ([Byun et al., 2017](#); [Kang et al., 2020](#); [Moon & Kim, 2001](#); [Wang et al., 2022](#)). Together, these findings suggest that both cognitive (informativeness) and affective (playfulness) evaluations contribute to the formation of favorable attitudes toward influencer-generated gaming content among female gamers.

5.2. Content-based and relational evaluations of gaming influencer content

The nonsignificant association between perceived homophily and attitude contrasts with the significant positive associations observed for perceived informativeness and perceived playfulness. Importantly, the formal coefficient-comparison tests showed that both the informativeness-attitude and playfulness-attitude associations were significantly stronger than the homophily-attitude association. This pattern provides statistical support, within the present female-gamer sample, for distinguishing content-based evaluations from perceived relational similarity when examining attitudes toward influencer-generated gaming content. However, these findings should not be interpreted as evidence that homophily is generally unimportant or that this pattern is unique to female gamers.

One possible explanation is that gaming environments place a stronger emphasis on technical knowledge, gameplay experience, and content usefulness than on perceived interpersonal similarity. Consequently, female gamers may evaluate influencer-generated gaming content primarily by its informational and experiential value rather than by relational similarity. Because the present study did not directly measure gendered experiences, discrimination, or identity-related processes, this interpretation should be viewed as a contextual explanation rather than evidence of broader cultural mechanisms.

Contrary to prior influencer marketing research that consistently positions homophily as a key relational driver of persuasion ([Ki et al., 2020](#); [Mainolfi & Vergura, 2022](#)), the present study did not detect a statistically significant association between perceived homophily and attitude in this female-gamer sample. Compared with prior influencer marketing studies that emphasize relational similarity, the present findings show that, within this sample and model, perceived informativeness and perceived playfulness were more strongly associated with attitude than perceived homophily. This pattern indicates that content-based evaluations were more strongly associated with attitude than perceived relational similarity, without establishing the psychological processes underlying these associations.

Several alternative explanations for the nonsignificant homophily-attitude association should nevertheless be considered. First, participants varied substantially in gaming frequency, expenditure, and exposure to gaming influencers, and a small number explicitly reported that they did not currently follow gaming influencers. Although sensitivity analyses excluding explicit non-followers and participants not currently playing games, as well as robustness analyses accounting for gaming frequency, expenditure, and primary platform use, did not

materially alter the pattern of results, heterogeneity in gaming involvement and influencer exposure may still have affected evaluations of relational similarity. Second, participants engaged with influencer content across different platforms and potentially different content formats, which may provide different opportunities for perceived similarity to become salient. Third, restricted variation in responses to the homophily items could have attenuated its observed association with attitude. Language and cultural heterogeneity may also have influenced how respondents interpreted relational similarity, particularly because the survey was administered in English and Portuguese and respondents' country of residence was not recorded. Finally, the model focused on informativeness, playfulness, and homophily and did not incorporate other influencer characteristics, such as credibility, expertise, attractiveness, or trustworthiness, which prior influencer-marketing research has identified as relevant to audience evaluations (Breves et al., 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Xu et al., 2022). Accordingly, the nonsignificant homophily association should be interpreted as specific to the present model and sample rather than as evidence that relational similarity is unimportant in influencer-mediated gaming contexts.

5.3. Attitude formation and behavioral readiness in digital gaming contexts

Consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior, attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content was significantly positively associated with purchase intention (Ajzen, 1991; Zhu & Kanjanamekanant, 2021), reinforcing the central role of evaluative responses in gaming-related consumption decisions. This finding is consistent with prior research indicating that favorable attitudes toward digital content are associated with stronger behavioral intentions in online environments (Ajzen, 1991; Zhu & Kanjanamekanant, 2021). In the present study, attitudes toward influencer-generated gaming content constituted the intermediate construct in the specified statistical pathway between evaluations of content characteristics and purchase intention. The significant indirect associations of perceived informativeness and perceived playfulness with purchase intention through attitude provide support for the relevance of the attitudinal pathway within the Theory of Planned Behavior in influencer-mediated gaming contexts, while not establishing a temporal or causal mechanism.

5.4. Theoretical implications for digital persuasion and online decision-making

From a theoretical perspective, the findings further clarify the relative roles of content-based and relational evaluations within the present female-gamer sample. Formal coefficient comparisons showed that perceived informativeness and perceived playfulness were more strongly associated with attitude than perceived homophily. This pattern provides a contextual extension of influencer-marketing research by showing that, in this sample, cognitive and affective evaluations of influencer-generated gaming content were more strongly associated with attitude than perceived relational similarity. This interpretation is consistent with recent research emphasizing the importance of informational value, entertainment, and engaging content in consumers' evaluations of influencer-generated communication (Alalwan, 2018; Kim & Baek, 2022; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Wang et al., 2022; Zafar et al., 2023). At the same time, the present findings do not identify the cognitive-processing routes underlying these associations, and alternative contextual explanations, including gaming involvement, platform characteristics, and responses to persuasive content, should also be considered. These dual-process perspectives were not part of the theoretical framework tested in the present study. Future research could examine whether the Heuristic-Systematic Model (Chaiken, 1980) or the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) helps explain how gamers process content-related and relational cues by directly measuring constructs such as elaboration, motivation,

processing route, and heuristic reliance.

5.5. Practical implications for designing influencer-mediated digital content

From a behavioral perspective, the study did not detect a statistically significant association between perceived homophily and attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content in this sample. The findings highlight the significant positive associations of perceived playfulness and content informativeness with attitudes toward influencer-generated gaming content, together with their significant positive indirect associations with purchase intention through attitude. These associations suggest that informational clarity and experiential engagement may be relevant considerations when designing influencer-generated gaming content. However, because the study did not experimentally manipulate content characteristics and assessed purchase intention rather than actual purchasing behavior, these implications should be regarded as tentative rather than as evidence that particular content-design strategies will increase marketing effectiveness or sales.

The positive association between perceived playfulness and attitude suggests that entertainment-oriented features such as humor, creativity, and interactive elements may warrant consideration in influencer-generated gaming content. Prior research indicates that collaborations with skilled improvisers or scriptwriters, as well as incorporating jokes, parodies, or playful narratives, may strengthen engagement (Kim & Baek, 2022). In gaming contexts, such strategies may include interactive polls, unboxing of game-related products, or playful demonstrations, which may foster hedonic motivation and emotional connection.

Similarly, the positive association between perceived informativeness and attitude suggests that experiential knowledge sharing may be a relevant consideration in influencer-generated gaming content. Consistent with prior research (Farivar et al., 2023), content that includes practical advice, tutorials, reactions to new game releases, or FAQs can enhance perceived value. This value may be further reinforced through structural features of influencer-mediated environments that enable experiential access, early exposure, and authentic information sharing.

Finally, the study did not detect a statistically significant association between perceived homophily and attitude, whereas the associations of perceived informativeness and perceived playfulness with attitude were significantly stronger in the formal coefficient comparisons. Although homophily may facilitate trust and identification in other contexts (Bu et al., 2022), the present findings suggest that content quality, informational value, and experiential relevance may warrant particular attention when considering influencer-generated gaming content for female audiences. These implications remain specific to the present sample and should not be interpreted as evidence that prioritizing these characteristics will causally improve campaign effectiveness or purchasing behavior.

5.6. Limitations and directions for future research

Although this study provides valuable insights, several limitations remain. First, participants displayed substantial heterogeneity in gaming involvement, including differences in gaming frequency, typical session duration, and gaming expenditure. Although robustness analyses accounting for gaming frequency and expenditure did not materially alter the focal structural relationships, variation in gaming involvement may still affect how participants evaluate influencer-generated gaming content. Future research could therefore examine these relationships across more clearly differentiated levels of gaming involvement. Additionally, the non-probability convenience-sampling procedure introduces potential self-selection bias and limits the results' generalizability to the broader female-gamer population. Individuals who voluntarily responded to the survey may differ systematically from female gamers who did not participate, for example, in their interest in gaming, influencer-generated content, or willingness to engage with

online surveys. The questionnaire did not collect respondents' country of residence; consequently, the geographic and cultural composition of the sample cannot be established precisely, which further limits the geographic generalizability of the findings. Moreover, recruitment through social-media groups, online gaming communities, university networks, and personal social-media channels may have disproportionately reached individuals who are more digitally connected or comfortable engaging with online platforms and surveys. This recruitment approach may therefore introduce digital-literacy and platform-related selection bias, further limiting the sample's representativeness. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted as contributing to theory testing and explanation rather than population-level estimation or statistical generalization. In addition, eligibility was based primarily on self-identification as a female gamer rather than on a predefined minimum level of exposure to gaming-influencer content; future research should incorporate an explicit exposure-screening criterion to ensure that all participants have sufficient familiarity with the phenomenon being evaluated. The study also relied on cross-sectional self-reported survey data, which may be subject to common method bias and limit the ability to draw causal conclusions. Therefore, the relationships identified in this study should be interpreted as associative rather than causal. Although robustness analyses incorporated several observed covariates, including age, gaming frequency, gaming expenditure, self-reported influencer impact on purchase decisions, and primary platform use, other potentially relevant individual or contextual characteristics were not measured and therefore could not be controlled. Using both English- and Portuguese-language questionnaires represents an additional measurement limitation. Although the Portuguese version was reviewed for conceptual equivalence, clarity, and cultural appropriateness, no independent back-translation was conducted, and the small Portuguese-language subgroup precluded reliable formal measurement-invariance testing across language versions. A further measurement limitation concerns the two-item attitude construct. Although the measure demonstrated high inter-item reliability, its limited number of indicators restricts the breadth of content coverage. In particular, whereas "favorable" directly reflects evaluative valence, "interesting" may partly capture attention or engagement rather than attitude alone. Future research should therefore employ broader multi-item attitude scales that capture multiple facets of consumers' evaluations of influencer-generated content. Although perceived homophily showed substantial observed variability ($M = 3.973$, $SD = 1.347$), possible range restriction in perceived similarity cannot be entirely excluded as a contributing explanation for its nonsignificant association with attitude.

In the future, researchers could compare female gamers with varying levels of gaming involvement to examine their consumer behavior and attitudes toward influencer marketing content. Another limitation is that participants engaged with gaming-influencer content across different social-media platforms, but the structural model did not distinguish relationships by platform. Although the robustness analysis included primary platform use, differences in content formats, interactivity, and user profiles across platforms may still affect how influencer-generated gaming content is evaluated. Future research could therefore examine these relationships separately across platforms. For example, short-form platforms like TikTok may enhance the persuasive power of playful content, while long-form platforms like YouTube may strengthen the impact of informativeness. The study also did not distinguish among different types of gaming influencers or specific forms of influencer-generated content. Because influencer characteristics and content formats may affect how informativeness, playfulness, and homophily are perceived, the observed relationships may vary across different influencer and content contexts. Future research should therefore examine these distinctions explicitly. Finally, because this study measured self-reported purchase intention rather than actual purchasing behavior, future research could incorporate behavioral measures and longitudinal designs to better capture real consumption decisions.

Furthermore, while this study adopts a gender-sensitive perspective by focusing on female gamers, it does not directly measure gender-related experiences such as discrimination, identity negotiation, or exclusion within gaming communities. In addition, because the study did not include male or nonbinary comparison groups, it cannot establish whether the observed relationships differ across gender groups. Future research could incorporate these dimensions to further examine the role of gender in influencer-mediated gaming environments. Such research would contribute to a deeper understanding of how gender-related experiences shape users' cognitive and affective evaluations of influencer-generated gaming content and their subsequent behavioral responses.

6. Conclusion and research contributions

This study examined the associations between perceived informativeness, playfulness, and homophily and attitude toward influencer-generated gaming content, as well as the association between attitude and purchase intention among female gamers. Informativeness and playfulness were significantly positively associated with attitude and showed stronger associations than homophily, which was not significantly associated with attitude. Attitude was significantly positively associated with purchase intention.

The study provides a contextual extension of influencer-marketing and digital-persuasion research by examining content-based and relational evaluations within an underexamined female-gamer context (Behm-Morawitz, 2017), extending research that has predominantly examined influencer effectiveness in broader consumer and lifestyle-oriented settings (Chetioui et al., 2020; Leung et al., 2022; Liu & Zheng, 2024). Given the cross-sectional, non-probability design, the findings should be interpreted as sample-specific associations rather than as evidence of causal or gender-difference effects.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Paulo Rita: Writing – original draft, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Zélia Santos:** Writing – original draft, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Ran Zhou:** Writing – original draft, Investigation, Conceptualization.

Ethics declaration

Written informed consent to take part in the study and to publish the article has been obtained from all participants or their legal representatives. The privacy rights of participants have been observed.

This study was performed in compliance with relevant laws, regulatory frameworks and guidelines where the research took place. This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of NOVA IMS and MagIC Research Center.(Approval No. DDMKT2025-5-212381)

Declaration of use of AI-assisted technologies

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Grammarly for language editing and grammatical checks. The authors developed all substantive content, analysis, interpretation, and conclusions, reviewed and edited the text, and take full responsibility for the content of the published article.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence

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Appendix A. Measurement items, sources, and outer loadings

Construct (Source)	Adapted items	Item code Outer loading
Perceived Playfulness (Kim et al., 2025)	The gaming influencers I follow pique my curiosity.	PL1 .876
	The gaming influencers I follow encourage me to delve deeper into topics.	PL2 .845
	The gaming influencers I follow ignite my imagination.	PL3 .849
	The gaming influencers I follow inspire my creativity.	PL4 .841
	I find enjoyment in following the gaming influencers I follow.	PL5 .891
	The gaming influencers I follow bring me happiness.	PL6 .881
Perceived homophily (Gupta et al., 2023)	The gaming influencers I follow think like me.	HO1 .882
	The gaming influencers I follow behave like me.	HO2 .920
	The gaming influencers I follow are similar to me.	HO3 .928
	The gaming influencers I follow are like me.	HO4 .932
	Gaming content from influencers I follow is a good source of relevant information about games.	IN1 .906
Informativeness (Alalwan, 2018)	Gaming content from influencers I follow provides timely information about games.	IN2 .901
	Gaming content from influencers I follow is a good source of up-to-date gaming information.	IN3 .925
	Gaming content from influencers I follow is a convenient source of information about games.	IN4 .913
	Gaming content from influencers I follow supplies complete information about games.	IN5 .785
	My overall feelings towards gaming content from influencers I follow are favorable.	AT1 .962
Attitude Toward Influencer-Generated Gaming Content (Zhu & Kanjanamekanant, 2021)	My overall feelings towards gaming content from influencers I follow are interesting.	AT2 .960
Purchase Intention (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019)	I would purchase a game based on the advice I am given by the influencer I follow.	PI1 .935
	I would follow game recommendations from the influencers that I follow.	PI2 .936
	In the future, I will purchase the game recommended by the influencers I follow.	PI3 .925

Note. All measurement items were assessed using seven-point Likert scales ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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