



University Students' Attitudes Toward Influencer-Style Pedagogical Delivery: A Cross-National Study of Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received Jun 01, 2026

Revised Jul 7, 2026

Accepted Jul 20, 2026

Keywords:

pedagogical delivery,
influencer-style
communication, elaboration
likelihood model, student
attitudes, university education

Conflict of Interest:

None

Funding:

None

ABSTRACT

The characteristics of social media influencers (charismatic personas, storytelling, humour and the use of layman's terms) have increasingly permeated into higher education, but there has been little empirical research on how the delivery of social media influencers influences the attitudes of students in formal university setting, especially in Southeast Asian settings. The study investigates the attitudes of university students towards the use of influencer's pedagogical style, based on Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which distinguishes between the academic content quality (central route) and the stylistic/persona cues (peripheral route). A quantitative, cross-sectional survey was conducted on a convenience sample of 120 students (70 from Brunei Darussalam and 50 from Bandung, Indonesia) with five-point Likert scales and analysed with SPSS with Pearson correlation, multiple linear regression and independent samples t-test. The reliability of all constructs was very high ($\alpha = .908 - .951$). The results showed that there was a strong and positive correlation between content quality and attitudes ($r = .860$) and also between stylistic/persona cues and attitudes ($r = .796$). The overall model accounted 80.2% of the variance in attitude, with content quality being the more powerful predictor ($\beta = .597$) and stylistic/persona cues being a significant independent predictor ($\beta = .363$). A significant difference in positive attitudes was found between the Indonesian ($M = 3.83$) and Bruneian ($M = 3.51$) respondents. Lastly, the study suggests that the influence-pedagogy approach combine intellectual rigour with entertaining presentations and be applied culturally appropriate to each country's higher education system.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

Social media has changed the way information is produced, used and judged in various social contexts during the last 20 years. One of the key developments is the emergence of the social media influencer, a content creator who creates and disseminates information in a communicative narrative style that is perceived as authentic, compelling, accessible and attention-grabbing (Freberg et al., 2011). The communicative norms of these influencers have infiltrated educational settings, and informal learning content on platforms like

YouTube, Instagram and TikTok has now gained the attention and preference of students in educational settings, competing with formal learning instruction (Reinikainen et al., 2020; Trivedi & Sama, 2020). This mismatch has so far occurred in universities across the world, between students' everyday digital communicative norms, such as their compulsion of using slang to showcase meanings and emotion (Suhaini & Mumin, 2025), and the pedagogical norms of the formal classroom. In the words of Seemiller and Grace (2019), today's college students are a generation that is cognitively stimulated and personally engaging, tolerant of informal registers, and expects relatability to be more important than intellectual authority, and has high expectations for engaging instruction (Twenge, 2023). In the university setting, whilst criticality posits importance as part of learning (Mumin, 2022), a mismatch has been found to contribute to attitudinal disengagement, a sense of irrelevance of teaching, and decreased motivation (Selwyn, 2019; Moran et al., 2022). As a response to this, a clear pedagogical shift has occurred in which the teacher deliberately adopts communicative strategies from influencers' culture, including a personal and charismatic image, storytelling, humor, simplicity and interesting language (Thi-Hai & Murphy, 2025). From this study, this phenomenon is defined as the deliberate application of the communicative conventions by the university lecturers in face-to-face teaching context. A good introduction answers these questions in just a few pages and, by summarizing the relevant arguments and the past evidence, gives the reader a firm sense of What was done and why (Beck & Sales, 2001).

1.2 Problem Statement

Although there is extensive research on the persuasive influence of influencers in the commercial realm, there is relatively little systematic empirical research on the communicative strategies of influencers in formal university instruction (Audrezet et al., 2020; Ki & Kim, 2019). In contrast, educational technology and pedagogical-innovation research has focused on platform- and system-level innovations (e.g., learning management systems, AI-integrated instruction and digitally mediated delivery) while comparatively little attention has been paid to the communicative style and personal delivery of the human instructor as the unit of pedagogical adoption (Salama & Hinton, 2023; Scherer et al., 2018). This is important because the way a lecturer communicates, as well as the content of the communication, has a significant impact on students' attitudes to the learning experience and is demonstrable especially in this era of globalization (Mumin, 2023). The direct operationalisation of the ELM in face-to-face university instruction, where academic content quality and stylistic persona cues are explicitly distinguished and independently measured as predictors of student attitudinal outcomes, has not been well established, although the ELM has been applied successfully in other fields such as health communication and technology acceptance (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006; Jayawardena, 2020). It is important to note that the question of whether the students' attitude towards the delivery of the influencer is more affected by the content of the learning or the interpersonal and stylistic aspects of the delivery is important practically and empirically. This is further compounded by the lack of representation of students from Southeast Asian countries in such investigations, especially in cross-national comparative studies that are attuned to attitudinal differences between national education cultures. For teachers and institutional decision makers in Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia, pedagogical decision-making might be based on assumption instead of evidence if quantitative data is not reported.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

Theoretically, this study is based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of Petty and Cacioppo (1986) that posits two routes to persuasion. The central route is elaboration on the quality/content of the message, and the peripheral route is elaboration on the source-related cues to the message, which are the stylistic features and persona of the source. Academic content quality is the operationalisation of the central route and stylistic/persona cues are the operationalisation of the peripheral route in the present study. The study should be conducted in the Southeast Asian context of Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia due to the high penetration of social media in both countries and the large number of university students, as well as the fact that both countries are comparatively limited in pedagogical-attitudinal research of this kind (Statista, 2024). A more detailed discussion of the conceptual definitions, empirical results and theoretical underpinnings of the relevant concepts is presented in the following Literature Review.

1.4 Aims, Research Questions & Objectives

This study aims to empirically investigate the attitudes of university students to the adoption of the pedagogical delivery of the influencer model in formal higher education, highlighting the individual and combined predictive power of the two determinants of the ELM dual route model. The primary research question is "What do university students think about the use of an influencer pedagogical delivery in formal academic teaching?" There are three sub-questions that follow:

Three supporting questions further structure the initial question:

RQ1: How do academic content quality (central route) and stylistic/persona cues (peripheral route) individually relate to students' attitudes toward this delivery?

RQ2: To what extent do academic content quality and stylistic/persona cues combined predict students' attitudes toward adopting influencer-style teaching?

RQ3: Is there a significant difference in attitudes toward influencer-style pedagogical delivery between students in Brunei and Indonesia?

The corresponding objectives to the questions are:

RO1: To measure attitudinal response across both national samples

RO2: To assess the individual correlational relationships between each independent variable and the dependent variable

RO3: To assess the combined predictive contribution of both independent variables on attitudinal outcomes

RO4: To determine whether significant cross-national attitudinal differences exist between Bruneian and Indonesian respondents

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study is based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of Petty and Cacioppo (1986) that posits that attitude change and formation take place in two qualitatively distinct ways of processing information. The central route is an active mindful processing of the message content, specifically the logical quality, the quality of the argument and the factual strength of the message, and attitudes formed through this route are enduring, counter-persuasive, and predictive of subsequent behavior (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Petty et al., 2004). Peripheral route is heuristic, low effort processing, and attitudes are formed based on cues related to the communicator, not on the systematic evaluation of the content of the message (Petty & Wegener, 1999). Elaboration likelihood serves as a construct to explain the route that dominates and reflects the probability that a receiver will have the motivation and cognitive capacity to process a message in an elaborative manner, while peripheral cues exert a relatively greater influence when elaboration likelihood is low, either due to limited motivation or ability (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The ELM is particularly relevant to the university instructional context where students have a range of engagement with the subject, prior knowledge, and dispositional motivation. It has also been applied to communication context, with Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006) using it to predict information-system acceptance and observing the differential attitudinal effects that the model predicts, and with Jayawardena (2020) finding that argument quality and presenter characteristics had independent and significant attitudinal effects on responses to instructional technology. The current emphasis on face-to-face communication is consistent with the original focus of the model which was on the analysis of persuasive communication in direct, real-time interaction. While the model's rigid two-route structure has been subject to criticism as an oversimplification of the real psychological complexity (Chaiken & Trope, 1999), its empirical readiness and cross-disciplinary validation, make it the most reliable and coherent framework for this investigation.

2.2 Academic Content Quality (Central Route)

Academic content quality is the quality of information provided by a university lecturer, regardless of the form of teaching, and includes the information accuracy, conceptual complexity, analytical depth, coherence and relevance to the curriculum (Hattie, 2009; Mayer, 2009). The strength and quality of the content is the central-route variable in the ELM; when students are motivated and have the cognitive resources to process instruction intentionally, their attitudinal reactions are most likely to be influenced by the strength and quality of the content (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Content clarity, structural coherence and intellectual challenge are consistently identified as strong predictors of satisfaction, and of the perceived effectiveness of learning and positive attitudes to on-site learning (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Trigwell & Prosser, 2020). Similarly, Matheson (2008) found that perceived content accuracy and educational value are attitudinal anchors for learning intentions and positive assessments of the presenting lecturer, irrespective of the informality of the

presentation. In the previous studies, Liu et al. (2010) also showed that content quality was the most important factor in digital learning contexts for learning satisfaction and positive attitudes especially in this era where AI writing tools such as ChatGPT is considered of value (Rozaimee & Mumin, 2025). But argues that pedagogies of influencers can demoralise learning when they become informalised in order to entertain (Moran et al., 2022; Selwyn, 2019). However, when lecturers use the conventions of the influencers, the question arises whether it is possible to maintain the central route as the dominant route in the context of highly stylised, persona-based communicative frame, because of the conflict between accessibility and intellectual depth. The conflicting views highlight the importance of empirical research to investigate the relative importance of content quality for attitudinal results.

2.3 Stylistic/Persona Cues (Peripheral Route)

In this sense, stylistic and persona cues are the communicative aspects of a lecturer's speech that are not related to the content of the message, but are instead integrated into the way the message is presented, as done by social media influencers. They include expressive communication style, perceived authenticity, enthusiasm, relatable humour, storytelling techniques, personal branding, charismatic presence and approachability (Audrezet et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). The cues in the ELM are part of the peripheral route to attitude development, which involves affective and evaluative responses to the communicator's persona (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The most common predictors of the positive attitudes and behavioural intentions of influencers' audience in influencer-marketing research are source credibility, perceived authenticity and communicator effectiveness (De Veirman et al., 2017; Ki & Kim, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019). In the instructional context where the audience's attitude formation depends on the trust placed on the lecturer, Lou and Yuan (2019) revealed that the characteristics of persona had significant influence on the attitudes of the audience. On the other hand, critics state that using too many stylistic features at the periphery of a text in formal academic settings can remove the authority from intellectual credibility to likeability (Evans et al., 2017; Selwyn, 2019). In addition, Martinez-Lopez et al. (2020) suggest that such a peripheral-cue effect could be moderated by the domain expertise of the audience, which would result in relatively weak effects of style on attitudes. These restrictions highlight the context-dependency of peripheral-route effects and bolster the present comparative study.

2.4 Attitudes Toward Adopting Influencer-Style Delivery

Attitude is a fundamental psychological trait, defined as a predisposition to approach an attitude object with a positive or negative evaluation, which can be learned (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Attitude of the students towards the adoption of the pedagogical delivery style of influencers in formal teaching in universities is understood as the overall evaluative reaction of the students to the purposeful use of pedagogical communicative conventions: an engaging persona, narrative style, humour and accessible language, in formal teaching in universities. The study is based on the tripartite attitude model (Ajzen, 1991) and educational research (Davis, 1989; Scherer et al., 2018) which divides students' response into three evaluative components. The cognitive component is related to the students' perception of the effectiveness, appropriateness and academic validity of the approach, the affective component is related to emotional reactions such as enjoyment, interest and comfort, and the conative component is related to the students' behavioural intention to support, endorse or continue this mode of delivery. Educational studies in recent years show that the functional value of a method (central-route processing) and the teacher's own communicative approach (peripheral-route processing) influence the attitude of the students towards the new method (Jayawardena, 2020; Torres et al., 2019). These two attitude formation pathways are consistent with the ELM and are the theoretical underpinnings of the variable structure of this study. Importantly, the attitudinal object in this study is the way humans teach, not a digital platform, as this places the study in the larger pedagogical communication context instead of the dominant technology-acceptance stream.

2.5 Empirical Relationships and Research Gap

There is a general consensus in the literature that students' perceptions of content quality, organisation and intellectual stimulation are positively linked to their attitudes toward an instructional approach and to their dispositional willingness to engage with it (Hattie, 2009; Trigwell & Prosser, 2020). This relationship is particularly important for new or different pedagogical approaches in which content serves as a point of reference for assessing an unfamiliar approach. Student evaluations have shown that perceived content quality continues to be a key predictor of satisfaction and positive evaluations regardless of the delivery format, with more accurate teachers rated higher than less demanding teachers and less accurate teachers (Cook et al., 2024), meaning that intellectual credibility is an attitudinal factor beyond the effects of informality. The central route is also of central importance in learning satisfaction, as Liu et al. (2010) found

that content quality was the most significant in learning satisfaction. However, this relationship between content and engagement is not direct; some scholars question the direct influence of content on engagement, suggesting that the relationship between content and engagement is mediated by emotional and interpersonal mechanisms (Fredricks et al., 2004), as well as peripheral influence interacting with the quality of content (Scherer et al., 2018) which requires modeling both pathways simultaneously. The attitudinal effect of stylistic and persona cues has been well documented in many contexts of communication for the peripheral route. Some of the most recurrent predictors of positive attitudes and message receptivity include source credibility, perceived authenticity and parasocial identification (Audrezet et al., 2020; Chetoui et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). In the context of a situation that requires trust between the lecturer and the student, Lou and Yuan (2019) discovered that attitudes were significantly influenced by engaging communication style, which in turn was mediated by trust. In the educational context, research on student engagement has found that the relational and communicative aspects of teaching and learning are more important than the content of the instruction, as they impact students' affective and behavioural reactions to instruction (Fredricks et al., 2004), and reviews of lecturing have found that the way in which instruction is delivered has a significant impact on the educational value that students gain from it (Matheson, 2008). Authenticity and relatability were identified as key factors in engagement by Reinikainen et al. (2020), and communicator trustworthiness and attractiveness were identified as important predictors of young adults' intentions by Trivedi and Sama (2020). However, De Veirman et al. (2017) caution that audiences do not like to see inauthenticity, and Martinez-Lopez et al. (2020) find that peripheral effects are reduced if recipients elaborate substantively. Even with this emerging research, no study has been operationalized to measure academic content quality and stylistic/persona cues as two independent predictors of the attitudes toward influencer-style face-to-face delivery, and Southeast Asian students, especially in Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia, are under-represented. The current study aims to fill these compounded gaps by exploring the dual-route model in a new pedagogical context and also by bringing a cross-national comparative dimension to the study.

2.6 Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

The conceptual framework for this study is shown in figure 1. The ELM proposes that student attitudes toward adopting an influencer style of pedagogical delivery follow two pathways: content quality (central route) and cues associated with the style/persona (peripheral route). The first two hypotheses suggest that the two routes separately predict attitudes; the third hypothesis suggests that both routes together predict attitudes; while the fourth examines the cross-national comparative dimension which is whether attitudinal differences exist between Bruneian, whose preference for English language is prevalent (Mumin et.al., 2025) and Indonesian respondents. The following hypotheses are suggested:

H1: There is a correlation between content quality (central route) and attitudes toward the adoption of influencer-style pedagogical delivery.

H2: There is a correlation between stylistic and persona cues (peripheral route) and attitudes toward the adoption of influencer style pedagogical delivery.

H3: Both content quality (central route) and stylistic and persona cues (peripheral route) play significant effect on the attitudes toward the adoption of influencer-style pedagogical delivery.

H4: There is a significant difference between Bruneian and Indonesian respondents in terms of attitudes toward the adoption on influencer-style pedagogical delivery.

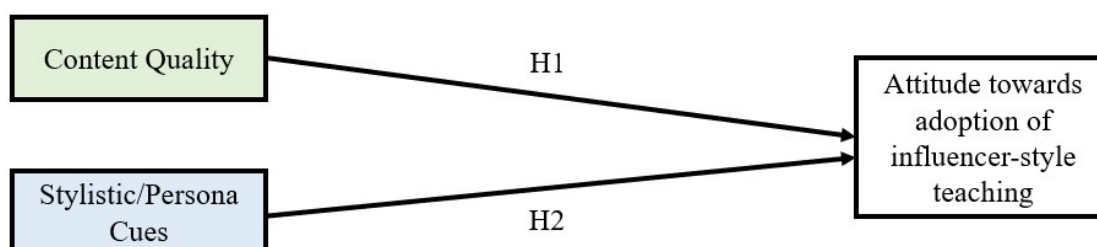


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

The design used in this study was quantitative, cross sectional. The selection of a quantitative approach was made because it allows the researcher to test the research hypotheses, measure relationships between variables that are theoretically related and to make numerical comparisons across groups of respondents, which directly support the inferential goals of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Quantitative methods are particularly appropriate for measuring the strength and direction of relationships between constructs derived from ELM, which provide replicable, objective data that can be analysed using standardised statistics (Bryman, 2016). A cross-sectional design was used because data was gathered from two national samples at one point in time, and so could be analyzed at the same time without the time and resources required of a longitudinal design (Bryman, 2016). While cross-sectional designs do not allow for causal inferences, they are appropriate for attitudinal research that aims for correlational and predictive relationships within specific populations (Pallant, 2020), which is the aim of this research.

3.2 Research Participant

The participants were university students studying at universities in Brunei Darussalam and in the Bandung region of Indonesia. The sample obtained was 120 students (70 from Brunei and 50 from Indonesia). Only current students who were taking face-to-face courses were eligible and there were no additional demographic limitations. Detailed demographic characteristics of both subsamples are reported in the Results and Discussion section.

3.3 Sampling Procedures

Convenience sampling technique was employed. In this preliminary quantitative research, Bandung was chosen as the location for conducting the research because the researcher has a professional network in one of the universities in Bandung, which made it easier to recruit in the limited time for the research (Etikan et al., 2016). The respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the questionnaire without any penalty before they began the survey and the participation was voluntary. Anonymity and confidentiality were respected and no personally identifying data were collected, and data were used only for research purposes.

3.3.1 Sample Size, Power, and Precision

The desired sample size was 50 respondents per country. Brunei had a higher number of respondents (70) due to the researcher's broader network within the country and effective recruitment using personal contacts, whereas Indonesia met the minimum requirement of 50 respondents due to the tight timeframe of the data collection period despite the researcher having distributed QR-codes face-to-face on campus and promoted them online. This resulted in a total of 120 respondents ($N = 120$). The attained sample is not nationally representative of either country and should not be considered as such.

3.3.2 Measures and Instruments

The main instrument used was a self-administered Google forms questionnaire which was prepared in two equivalent forms, one in English for Bruneians, and the other in Bahasa Indonesia for Indonesians, and each consisted of four parts. Section A measured the first independent variable, academic content quality; Section B measured the second independent variable, stylistic/persona cues; Section C measured the dependent variable, attitudes toward influencer-style pedagogical delivery; and Section D collected demographic information (age, gender, current university, educational level and academic major). Demographic information was used to facilitate the cross-national comparison, and to provide background for the attitudinal responses. For substantive items in Sections A – C, a 5-point Likert scale was used, which is suitable for the ordinal measurement of attitudinal constructs in social-science research (DeVellis, 2016; Likert, 1932). Since there was no standardised scale validated for attitudes toward delivery in the influencer style, the items were adapted systematically from the scales available in the literature on influencer-communication. Table 1 shows the operational definitions, measurement items and primary adaptation sources for each variable.

Table 1. Measure of Variables

Variable	Operational Definition	Measure Items	Source
Academic Content Quality (Central	The perceived depth, factual accuracy, curriculum relevance, and pedagogical rigour	CQ1: I believe that influencer-style teaching can cover complex topics deeply enough for university-level learning	Adapted from Hattie (2009); Liu et al. (2010); Mayer (2009)

Variable	Operational Definition	Measure Items	Source
Route) [IV1]	of instructional material presented by a university lecturer in a formal on-site setting.	CQ2: I think influencer-style teaching can convey course material in a way that is academically accurate and of high-quality information CQ3: I feel that the academic content delivered through an influencer-style approach can be meaningfully aligned with my course learning objectives CQ4: I believe influencer-style delivery can stimulate critical thinking through the way academic content is structured and presented CQ5: I think academic content communicated through influencer-style methods can be as educationally valuable as traditional lecture formats	
Stylistic and Persona Cues (Peripheral Route) [IV2]	Non-content presentational and interpersonal characteristics adopted by the lecturer, including enthusiasm, perceived authenticity, relatable humour, storytelling, personal branding, and approachability that is consistent with social media influencer communication.	SPC1: I find lecturers who adopt an energetic and charismatic persona similar to social media influencers more engaging in class SPC2: I think the entertaining and visually appealing presentation style associated with influencer-style delivery makes academic content more attractive SPC3: I am more drawn to instructors who present themselves as relatable and personable in a manner consistent with influencer-style communication SPC4: I feel that the visual aesthetics, pacing, and tone of influencer-style delivery make lectures more stimulating and enjoyable SPC5: I think a lecturer's stylistic presentation and personal charisma positively shape how I receive and engage with academic material	Adapted from Freberg et al. (2011); Lou & Yuan (2019); Audrezet et al. (2020); Thi-Hai and Murphy (2025)
Attitudes toward Influencer-Style	Students' cognitive, affective and conative evaluation of the on-purpose use of	AT1: I have a positive attitude toward the adoption of influencer-style pedagogical delivery in university courses	Adapted from Ajzen (1991); Davis (1989); Scherer et al. (2019); Jayawardena

Variable	Operational Definition	Measure Items	Source
Pedagogical Delivery [DV]	university educator's communicative conventions (charismatic persona, relatable narrative, humour, accessible language) in formal on-site teaching.	AT2: I would welcome my lecturers using an influencer-style approach as part of their teaching in higher education AT3: I believe influencer-style pedagogical delivery is a suitable instructional approach for university-level education AT4: I am in favour of universities formally integrating influencer-style delivery methods into their academic instruction AT5: Overall, I think the adoption of influencer-style pedagogical delivery would be a positive development for higher education	(2020)

3.3.3 Procedure and Data Collection

The first step in the research process was to develop the items for the questionnaire based on previous literature and to tailor them to the influencer-delivery setting. The English instrument was created first and then translated into Bahasa Indonesia to make it more understandable for the local participants. Items were conceptual rather than literal, with translation focusing on conceptual equivalence rather than literal correspondence, to ensure items were not ambiguous for respondents whose first language was not English (Cruchinho et al., 2024). The extra preparation is the reason for the delay in data collection in Indonesia compared to Brunei. The survey was sent online via WhatsApp and email, and to potential respondents via QR codes on Bandung university campuses. Once the collection window was closed on 22 May 2026, all responses to the Google Forms were downloaded and inconsistencies were systematically cleaned out before being uploaded into IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25 for analysis.

3.3.3 Research Design and Data Analysis

All data was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25, which has a wide range of inferential functions needed to analyse the four hypotheses of the study and is commonly used in quantitative social-science research (Pallant, 2020). Data were cleaned and analyzed inferentially, with the computation of means and standard deviations to summarise the central tendencies and distribution of the responses. To determine the internal consistency of each of the three constructs, Cronbach's alpha was computed for each (DeVellis, 2016). In educational research, Likert composite scores are often considered interval-level data (Field, 2018; Pallant, 2020), so for H1 and H2, the bivariate relationship of each independent variable with the dependent variable was examined using Pearson correlation. H3 used multiple linear regression to calculate the combined and simultaneous predictive power of both independent variables, and the standardised beta coefficients for each variable were compared to each other while controlling for the other variable (Field, 2018). H4 was analyzed with an independent-samples t-test to compare the mean attitudinal scores of the two independent national groups (Field, 2018). The primary methodological constraints are that the sample is a convenience sample of universities in the researcher's network and that the instrument used for data collection is a self-report instrument, which may result in social-desirability bias and recall error (Podsakoff et al., 2003); both are limitations that should be considered when generalizing the results.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Recruitment

Data were collected between 1 May 2026 and 22 May 2026, in Brunei and between 11 May 2026 and 22 May 2026 in Indonesia, with the latter period of data collection staggered to accommodate the time taken to translate and prepare the Indonesian instrument. Potential respondents were selected from the researcher's network in both countries and further in Indonesia with the distribution of QR codes on the campus. The final sample consisted of 120 respondents of which 70 were from Brunei and 50 were from Indonesia.

4.2 Statistics and Data Analysis

The results are presented in the following sequence. Demographic profile and reliability analysis, Pearson correlations (H1 and H2), multiple linear regression (H3) and independent-samples t-test (H4). IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25 was used for all analyses. Bruneian sample was 65.7% female and 34.3% male, and the majority of respondents were aged between 22-25 years (67.1%). Most of the students were from Universiti Teknologi Brunei (72.69%) and were undergraduates (91.4%) with the most common areas of study being Business (27.1%) and Economics and Finance (21.4%). The female population in the sample was 52.0% and the male was 48.0%, and the majority of the respondents was aged 18-21 years (70.0%). Most of them were undergraduates (98.0%) who studied at Telkom University, Bandung (88.0%) and Communication was the major discipline. These distributions are representative of the populations sampled and representative of the convenience sampling approach (Etikan et al., 2016). The full demographic details are summarised in Table 2. To assess the consistency of each composite construct, the internal consistency was examined before the inferential testing using Cronbach's alpha. All three variables scored above the standard of $\alpha \geq .70$ (George & Mallery, 2003; DeVellis, 2016); content quality $\alpha = .951$, stylistic/persona cues $\alpha = .908$, attitudes toward adoption $\alpha = .928$. The mean scores for all values support composite mean scores in subsequent analysis (Pallant, 2020) and are summarised in Table 3. It should be noted, however, that an alpha of .95 (content quality, $\alpha = .951$) may not necessarily reflect desirable consistency, but rather item redundancy (Taber, 2018), which is further considered among the limitations.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Brunei (n=70)	Indonesia (n=50)
Gender	Male	34.3%	48.0%
	Female	65.7%	52.0%
Age	18–21 years	21.4%	70.0%
	22–25 years	67.1%	24.0%
	26–28 years	7.1%	4.0%
	29 and above	4.3%	0.0%
Education Level	Undergraduate	91.4%	98.0%
	Postgraduate	8.6%	2.0%
Primary Academic Field	Business, Economics & Finance	27.1%	10.0%
	Engineering & Technology	21.4%	10.0%
	Computing & Digital Science	15.7%	8.0%
	Communication, Humanities & Social Sciences	10.0%	56.0%
	Sciences & Medicine	14.3%	0.0%

Table 3. Reliability Analysis Results (Cronbach's Alpha)

Variable	Cronbach Alpha Values
Content Quality	0.951
Stylistic/Persona Cues	0.908
Attitudes toward Adoption of Influencer-Style Delivery	0.928

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

4.3.1 Pearson Correlation Analysis (H1 and H2)

Two Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to look at the individual bivariate relationships between each independent variable and students' attitudes toward adoption. There was a strong, positive, and significant correlation between academic content quality (central route) and attitudes toward adoption ($r = .860$, $p < .001$, $N = 120$), a large effect (Cohen, 1988), suggesting that when students perceived higher content quality, they reported significantly more positive attitudes toward influencer-style delivery. H1 is thus sustained (Table 4).

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Results for H1

Correlations			
		ContentQuality	AttitudeTowardAdoptionofInfluencerStyleTeaching
ContentQuality	Pearson Correlation	1	.860**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
AttitudeTowardAdoptionofInfluencerStyleTeaching	Pearson Correlation	.860**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Stylistic/persona cues (peripheral route) also exhibited a strong and significant positive correlation with attitudes toward adoption ($r = .796$, $p < .001$, $N = 120$), a large effect (Cohen, 1988) and comparable size to H1, suggesting that positive ratings of the lecturer's stylistic/persona cues were significantly correlated with more positive attitudes. H2 is thus promoted (Table 5).

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Results for H2

Correlations			
		AttitudeTowardAdoptionofInfluencerStyleTeaching	StylisticPersonaCues
AttitudeTowardAdoptionofInfluencerStyleTeaching	Pearson Correlation	1	.796**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
StylisticPersonaCues	Pearson Correlation	.796**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.3.2 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis (H3)

Multiple linear regression was conducted with academic content quality and stylistic/persona cues as simultaneous predictors of attitudes toward adoption. The overall model was highly significant, $F(2, 117) = 236.400$, $p < .001$, and explained a large proportion of the variance in attitudinal scores ($R\text{-squared} = .802$, $\text{Adjusted } R\text{-squared} = .798$) which is a substantial and practically significant proportion (Cohen, 1988) indicating that the ELM dual-route model provides a strong and parsimonious explanation of students' attitudes. Academic content quality was the strongest predictor ($\beta = .597$, $t = 9.962$, $p < .001$), followed by stylistic/persona cues ($\beta = .363$, $t = 6.054$, $p < .001$). The dual-route architecture of the ELM (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) was supported by both predictors making statistically significant independent contributions

when controlling for each other. H3 is thus fully endorsed. Table 6 shows the model summary and Table 7 shows the standardised coefficients.

Table 6. Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.895 ^a	.802	.798	.41348

a. Predictors: (Constant), StylisticPersonaCues, ContentQuality

Table 7. Standardised Regression Coefficients

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.466	.198		-2.351	.020
	ContentQuality	.676	.068	.597	9.962	.000
	StylisticPersonaCues	.409	.067	.363	6.054	.000

a. Dependent Variable: AttitudeTowardAdoptionofInfluencerStyleTeaching

4.3.3 Independent Samples T-Test (H4)

A t-test for independent samples was used to determine if there was a significant difference between attitudinal scores for Bruneian (n = 70) and Indonesian (n = 50) respondents. Levene's test for equality of variances was significant ($F = 5.163$, $p = .025$), indicating that the assumption of equal variances was not met, so the equal-variances-not-assumed result was interpreted. The results of this test showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the two countries, $t(117.490) = -1.988$, $p = .049$, with a mean difference of $-.321$. The mean attitudinal score of the Indonesian respondents ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .763$) was higher than the mean attitudinal score of the Bruneian respondents ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.002$). The difference is statistically significant at the .05 level (Field, 2018), but small enough to be considered meaningful and repeatable attitudinal difference between the two groups. Hence, H4 is supported. Group statistics and test results are shown in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8. Group Statistics

Group Statistics					
	Country	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
ContentQuality	Brunei	70	3.5000	.84904	.10148
	Indonesia	50	3.7720	.73625	.10412
StylisticPersonaCues	Brunei	70	4.0400	.91721	.10963
	Indonesia	50	4.1360	.65582	.09275
AttitudeTowardAdoptionof InfluencerStyleTeaching	Brunei	70	3.5114	1.00239	.11981
	Indonesia	50	3.8320	.76277	.10787

Table 9: Independent Samples T-Test (H4)

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
ContentQuality	Equal variances assumed	1.138	.288	-1.827	118	.070	-.27200	.14890	-.56685	.02285
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.871	113.547	.064	-.27200	.14539	-.56004	.01604
StylisticPersonaCues	Equal variances assumed	3.109	.080	-.633	118	.528	-.09600	.15162	-.39626	.20426
	Equal variances not assumed			-.669	117.998	.505	-.09600	.14360	-.38036	.18836
AttitudeTowardAdoptionof InfluencerStyleTeaching	Equal variances assumed	5.163	.025	-1.901	118	.060	-.32057	.16861	-.65446	.01331
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.988	117.490	.049	-.32057	.16122	-.63984	-.00131

4.4 Discussion

4.4.1 Content Quality and Attitudes (H1)

In this study, the bivariate predictor with the highest correlation was academic content quality ($r = .860$), suggesting that students' evaluative dispositions are significantly dependent on intellectual substance even in a stylised, persona-based method of delivery. This is consistent with the ELM (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986): high elaboration likelihood, central-route processing, meaning that the sampled students processed the material of the instructions in a deliberate manner, not just heuristically. Interestingly, while the bivariate correlation for the two routes are similar in size ($r = .860$ versus $r = .796$), once shared variance is controlled for, the regression results demonstrate that content quality is the stronger unique predictor for the two routes ($\beta = .597$ versus $\beta = .363$), answering RQ1 in favour of the central route. This finding is consistent with that of the reviewed literature. The quality of the instructional content has been identified as one of the most important factors that affect student outcomes and attitudes, Hattie (2009); academic accuracy and educational value were found to be the most important factors that positively predicted student evaluations, Liu et al. (2010); academic accuracy and educational value were found to be the most important factors that positively predicted student evaluations, Ali and Ajmi (2013). The current findings further corroborate the constructive-alignment perspective of Biggs and Tang (2011) that quality of the content is a prerequisite for meaningful engagement, and Petty et al.'s (2002) argument that motivated recipients process argument quality above surface cues. The discovery supports the notion that academic rigor is the foundation of an influencer approach to teaching and directly challenges concerns that influencer pedagogy must be "less rigorous" in relation to academic standards (Moran et al., 2022; Selwyn, 2019). The central route is comforting and practical for educators and policy makers: even if it is delivered in a very stylised manner, it still remains accessible as long as the content integrity is preserved. This is also consistent with Cook et al.'s (2024) findings that accurate teachers would be rated more positively than less demanding teachers, suggesting that content quality impacts positive evaluations across diverse delivery formats. Combined, this finding with the current findings supports the belief that the central-route effect is not a sample-specific artifact, and that institutions can work towards a more engaging delivery format without compromising on the scholarly content that is the basis for positive student attitudes.

4.4.2 Stylistic/Persona Cues and Attitudes (H2)

Stylistic/persona cues also were highly correlated with students' process of persona cues ($r = .796$), which demonstrates that students also process persona cues (authenticity, expressive delivery, relatable humour and storytelling) as heuristic inputs that influence their overall evaluative attitude, consistent with ELM peripheral-route predictions (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Petty & Wegener, 1999). The peripheral route effect, though somewhat less than the central-route effect ($r = .796$ vs. $r = .860$), is still very strong, and the peripheral route is an important effect in its own right—significant, but secondary to the central route. This finding is strongly supported by the reviewed literature. In the context of lecturing, where lecturer-student relational trust plays a key role, Lou and Yuan (2019) found that the characteristics of influencer persona, including engaging communication style and perceived informativeness, had significant effects on audience attitudes through trust. The findings of expressive, relationally warm communication reveal that it is a strong predictor of positive audience response (Lou & Yuan, 2019), and Trivedi and Sama (2020) discovered that communicator trustworthiness and attractiveness were significant predictors of young adults' intentions. However, De Veirman et al., 2017, warn that the negative reactions to perceived inauthenticity can be provoked, suggesting that persona cues should be organically congruent with the lecturer's communicative

identity as a natural person, and Martinez-Lopez et al., 2020, report that peripheral effects are weaker in high elaboration conditions, as seen here. The results support the notion that students do not only evaluate the intellectual content of the message, but also the interpersonal and delivery aspects of it, which have a significant impact on attitudes and which should therefore be included in the definition of professional pedagogical competences, especially in the domain of intentional communicative skill, including enthusiasm, accessibility and relational warmth. The result also builds on the work of Chetioui et al. (2020) and Sokolova & Kefi (2020) on parasocial identification and authenticity in the context of influencer-marketing, extending these insights into the instructional context, where relational dynamics that result in engagement with commercial influencers also appear, albeit in an attenuated but still significant form between lecturers and students. This has direct implications for academic development: communicative competence can be developed intentionally, rather than as a natural gift; and this seems to have tangible attitudinal benefits without compromising the rigour of the discipline.

4.4.3 The Combined Dual-Route Model (H3)

Both of the ELM-derived predictors were entered into the combined regression model, which yielded a highly significant and very good fit, $F(2, 117) = 236.400$, $p < .001$, $R\text{-squared} = .802$, $\text{Adjusted } R\text{-squared} = .798$, with the two predictors explaining 80.2% of the variance in attitudinal scores, a large effect (Cohen, 1988). Academic content quality was the most significant predictor ($\beta = .597$) and stylistic/persona cues contributed significantly independently ($\beta = .363$), suggesting that students were more likely to be engaged in central-route processing, spending cognitive resources assessing the quality of the academic content when both cues were present. Despite the fact that stylistic/persona cues have a significant independent contribution, both routes are operating at the same time, each explaining attitudinal variance not accounted for by the other, and reflecting the conceptually orthogonal nature of the two ELM pathways (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The findings are consistent with the literature reviewed, as Jayawardena (2020) noted that there is independent significant dual-route effect in instructional-technology adoption, while Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006) reported central-route processing in the recipients who have domain knowledge. The dual-process view of Chaiken and Trope (1999) is consistent with modelling both routes, and, in the present study, dual-route processing was the best model of the two. Petty et al. (2004) found that dual-route processing led to the most enduring attitudes. Therefore, the most effective pedagogically attitudinal approach is one that combines intellectual rigor with style. Neither route alone achieves maximum attitudinal variation, and this is clear evidence to those designing the curriculum and leading the academic enterprise that the best lecturer is not only rigorous, but also engaging.

4.4.4 Cross-National Difference (H4)

The Levene's test was significant ($F = 5.163$, $p = .025$) and the difference between Indonesian ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .763$) and Bruneian ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.002$) respondents was significant ($t(117.490) = -1.988$, $p = .049$) with equal variances not assumed, suggesting that national context has an impact on receptivity to influencer-style delivery. The demographic and disciplinary differences between the two samples provide the best explanation for the positive attitudinal difference of .321. The Indonesian sample was mainly composed of Communication, Humanities and Social Sciences (56%), disciplines that are more flexible in terms of instructional conventions, while the Bruneian sample had more students from Business, Economics and Finance (27.1%) and Engineering and Technology (21.4%) disciplines that are more conventional in terms of instructional conventions (Biggs & Tang, 2011). The younger age group of the Indonesian sample (70% 18–21 years old) also points to greater social-media acculturation, as compared with the more concentrated age group of the Bruneians (22–25 years old). The patterns are directly predicted by reviewed literature: digitally socialised generations are significantly more open to informal, expressive registers of instruction (Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Twenge, 2023) and this difference is explained by the fact that demographic factors moderate attitudinal reactions to influencer communication (Reinikainen et al., 2020). Narrative-driven communication also influences receptivity, which is in line with the high scores obtained by students in Communication and Social Sciences in Indonesia, and Scherer et al. (2018) state that systems of higher education that are still in its early stages, like Indonesia, are more receptive to innovation in pedagogical approaches than older systems. This interpretation is, however, tempered by the fact that the two national groups are not only different in academic discipline, but also in age profile and institution, so that nationality cannot be singled out as the cause of the observed difference, and the effect is small and marginally significant when the assumption of equal variances is violated ($p = .049$). The cross-national comparison therefore highlights the importance of implementing the programme in a context-specific and culturally sensitive way, and not in a uniform way across the higher education sector in Southeast Asia.

4.4.5 Integrated Interpretation

The four results are read together and provide a coherent picture that directly answers the study's research questions. The individual correlations (RQ1) confirm that both ELM routes are meaningful attitudinal determinants, the regression (RQ2) indicates that the two ELM routes together account for a significant share of the attitudinal variance and that the central route continues to be the dominant route, and the cross-national test (RQ3) confirms that the dual-route structure is sensitive to demographic and cultural context. The overall pattern suggests that the use of the "influencer" approach to pedagogy is not a challenge to academic rigor, but rather a method of delivery whose attitudinal success depends on the substance. The results suggest that in the context of higher education in the Southeast Asian region, professional development programs should not prioritize either rigour or communicative engagement as mutually exclusive goals, and should be mindful of the disciplinary and generational differences that may influence students' receptivity to the conventions of instruction that are found in the realm of influencers.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Achievement of Objectives

Four research goals were established and were all accomplished. The first objective was to collect the attitudinal responses from two samples of university students (Brunei $n = 70$; Indonesia $n = 50$), which were measured using a questionnaire on attitudes towards the pedagogical delivery style of an influencer, with both samples showing moderate to strongly positive attitudes, with the Indonesian sample ($M = 3.83$) being slightly more positive than the Bruneian sample ($M = 3.51$) to provide an empirical basis for comparison. The second goal, determining the relationship between each ELM-derived predictor and the dependent variable, was achieved by two Pearson correlations: academic content quality ($r = .860$, $p < .001$) and stylistic/persona cues ($r = .796$, $p < .001$), which were both significant, indicating operational validity for both independent variables. The third goal of determining the combined predictive power of both independent variables was achieved by multiple linear regression, which resulted in 80.2% of the variance in attitudes being accounted for ($R\text{-squared} = .802$), with content quality ($\beta = .597$) the better predictor than attitude toward the source ($\beta = .363$). To determine whether there were any differences in attitudes across nations, the fourth objective was met by conducting an independent-samples t -test which yielded a statistically significant difference, $t(117.49) = -1.988$, $p = .049$. The systematic attainment of all four goals shows the methodological rigor and thematic consistency of the research design.

5.2 Key Findings

The results of this research can be summarized as follows. First, the correlation between academic content quality and attitudes toward influencer-style delivery was significant and positive ($r = .860$, $p < .001$), and thus the central route was found to be a major determinant of student attitudes in this context (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Second, there was a similarly high and significant positive correlation between stylistic and persona cues ($r = .796$, $p < .001$), confirming the peripheral route as a complementary route. Third, the ELM dual-route model accounted for 80.2% of the variance in attitudes ($R\text{-squared} = .802$), and content quality was the most powerful predictor ($\beta = .597$), while stylistic/persona cues was a significant and independent predictor ($\beta = .363$). Finally, Indonesian respondents had significantly more positive attitudes than their Bruneian counterparts ($M = 3.83$ versus $M = 3.51$; $p = .049$), indicating that the disciplinary composition, age profile and national educational context significantly shaped receptivity to pedagogical delivery by influencers.

5.3 Implications

The findings have theoretical, practical and policy implications. Theoretically, the study is an extension of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) to a new context, the face-to-face delivery of content in the formal instruction of the university, with direct and methodologically rigorous empirical support for the dual-route architecture of the model in an instructional setting. The high value of the $R\text{-squared}$ here (0.802) indicates that the model is a useful tool for future studies in the field of educational-communication (Jayawardena, 2020). Furthermore, the study aligns with the growing body of literature on the topic of influencer-style teaching, and demonstrates that both route-specific predictors act simultaneously and independently, casting doubt on the notion that attitudinal outcomes are explained by a single factor. From a practical perspective, academic content quality ($\beta = .597$) strongly messages lecturers: intellectual rigour must form the cornerstone of any approach that aims to be an influencer; stylistic and persona cues are important catalysts to complement academic content quality and depth and not a replacement. The findings at the policy level contribute to Brunei's instructional-quality and human-capital objectives under Wawasan

2035, which involves the creation of world-class teachers and a highly-skilled, engaged citizenry (Government of Brunei Darussalam, 2007) and provide evidence-based suggestions for pedagogical innovation in the rapidly developing higher-education sector in Indonesia, where investments in professional development for instructional quality and in the development of rigorous delivery and stylistic communicative competence are both needed and desired. Both national contexts provide empirical evidence for the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education, highlighting the evaluation of instructionally innovative approaches in attitudinal terms for digitally socialised student populations (United Nations, 2015). In more general terms, the study provides an institution with a defensible basis for resourcing decisions, where budgets need to be prioritised, investment in the substantive quality of curricula and lecturer subject mastery should take precedence over investment in presentational training, although the latter has an intrinsic and independent attitudinal return.

5.4 Limitations

There are some restrictions to be noted. As the findings are from a convenience sampling design, they cannot be generalized to the national student populations of either country. The self-administered survey format has the potential for social-desirability and recall-based measurement error (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Because of the cross-sectional design, causal inferences regarding the direction of the observed relationships are not possible and the sample size ($N = 120$) was large enough for the planned analyses, but may be too small for more complex subgroup and/or moderation analyses. The Indonesian subsample is dominated by two universities in Bandung and one academic field (Communication, Humanities and Social Sciences) which could be a disciplinary bias. Finally, collinearity diagnostics were not performed, as there is a high correlation between the two predictors, which is likely to cause some shared variance; future studies should report variance inflation factor and tolerance values.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

There are several extensions recommended to overcome these shortcomings. A larger number of institutions sampled stratified or in clusters in both countries would greatly enhance external validity and cross-national comparisons. Longitudinal designs would also enable the study of the stability of attitudinal reactions to influencer-like delivery over long periods of teaching and multiple exposures. The present quantitative results could be complemented by explanations of the content-quality attributes and persona/stylistic characteristics that gave rise to the attitudinal responses at the individual level, provided by qualitative and mixed-methods approaches (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Other studies are needed to investigate moderating factors that might affect the relative contribution of the central and peripheral routes, including students' previous academic achievement, orientation towards instructional innovation, and subject and level of media use. Lastly, when the ELM is expanded to other higher-education systems in Southeast Asia outside of Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia, it would further contribute to the ecological and cultural validity of the model for formal pedagogical communication and to the generalisability of the knowledge of students' attitudinal reactions to instruction from influencers.

5.6 Concluding Remarks

Finally, this study brings the issue that inspired it back to the study: the disparity between the communicative norms that students experience in digital life and those they experience in the formal classroom. The evidence presented here suggests that this gap does not require any compromises in academic quality. Intellectual rigour and authentic, engaging delivery go hand in hand, and the dual-route structure of the Elaboration Likelihood Model is a good representation of this in a face-to-face instructional context. The study shows that content quality has a significant effect on students' attitude toward the subject, whereas communicative style has an independent and meaningful effect on it, providing clear evidence-based guidance for educators, curriculum designers and policy makers to deal with a digitally socialised generation, and reminding them that these responses should be culturally and disciplinary sensitive.

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