



NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

**THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON PURCHASE
INTENTION**

MBA THESIS

ABIODUN SAMUEL MEDOYE

Nicosia
January, 2025

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MASTERTHESIS

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ABIODUN SAMUELMEDOYE

**Supervisor
Asst. Prof. Dr. Özlem Ercantan**

**Nicosia
January, 2025**

Approval

We certify that we have read the thesis submitted by Abiodun Samuelmedoye titled “The Impact Of Influencer Marketing on Purchase Intention” and that in our combined opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

Examining Committee

Name-Surname

Signature

Head of the Committee:

Assoc. Prof. Dr Ahmet Ertugan

.....

Committee Member:

Asst. Prof. Dr. Ayşe Gözde Karaatmaca

.....

Supervisor:

Asst. Prof. Dr. Özlem Ercantan

.....

Approved by the Head of the Department

03./03/2025
.....

Prof Dr Şerife Eyüpoğlu

Head of the Department

Approved by the Institute of Graduate Studies

...../...../ 20...

Prof. Dr. Kemal Hüsnü Can Başer

Head of the Institute of Graduate Studies

Declaration of Ethical Principles

I hereby declare that all information, documents, analysis and results in this thesis have been collected and presented according to the academic rules and ethical guidelines of Institute of Graduate Studies, Near East University. I also declare that as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced information and data that are not original to this study.

Abiodun Samuelmedoye

24/01/2025

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I acknowledged the contributions from my friends, family and supervisor in the thesis.

Abiodun Samuelmedoye

Abstract**The Impact Of Influencer Marketing On Purchase Intention****Abiodun Samuelmedoye****MBA, Department of Business Administration****January 2025, 74 pages**

This research aims to study the effect of perceived characteristics of influencer marketing on consumer purchase intentions, which are influencer credibility, influencer information quality and follower-influencer emotional attachment. The investigation also fills a gap in existing literature regarding the interaction between these perceived characteristics of influencer marketing and purchase intentions among foreign higher education student residing in North Cyprus. To achieve this aim, this study used quantitative design with Statistical Paackage for Social Sciences (SPSS) software for data analysis purposes in order to provide empirical evidence linking these variables. The result from this study suggest that influencer credibility and influencer information quality have strong positive impacts on purchase decision making process among consumers. In contrast, follower-influencer emotional attachment does not influence consumers' purchasing decisions in any way according to results obtained from survey conducted. This study's implications are quite significant, especially in view of the projection that influencer marketing will grow significantly thereby emphasizing the importance of understanding consumer behavior with respect to influencer attributes

Key Words: influencer marketing, influencer credibility, influencer information quality, follower-influencer emotional attachment, purchase intentions

Özet

Influencer Pazarlamasının Satın Alma Niyeti Üzerindeki Etkisi

Samuelmedoye, Abiodun

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Bu araştırma, etkileyici pazarlamanın algılanan özelliklerinin, yani etkileyicinin güvenilirliği, etkileyicinin bilgi kalitesi ve takipçi-etkileyicinin duygusal bağlılığı olan tüketici satın alma niyetleri üzerindeki etkisini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma ayrıca, sosyal medya kullanım oranı yüksek olan Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta ikamet eden yabancı yüksek öğrenim öğrencileri arasındaki etkileyici pazarlamanın algılanan özellikleri ile satın alma niyetleri arasındaki etkileşime ilişkin mevcut literatürdeki bir boşluğu da doldurmaktadır. Bu amaca ulaşmak için bu çalışmada, bu değişkenleri birbirine bağlayan ampirik kanıtlar sağlamak amacıyla veri analizi amacıyla Statistical Paackage for Social Sciences (SPSS) yazılımı ile nicel tasarım kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın sonucu, etkileyicinin güvenilirliğinin ve etkileyicinin bilgi kalitesinin, tüketiciler arasında satın alma kararı verme süreci üzerinde güçlü olumlu etkilere sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Buna karşılık yapılan anketten elde edilen sonuçlara göre takipçi-etkileyici duygusal bağlılığı tüketicilerin satın alma kararlarını hiçbir şekilde etkilemiyor. Bu çalışmanın çıkarımları, özellikle etkileyici pazarlamanın önemli ölçüde büyüyeceği öngörüsü göz önüne alındığında oldukça önemlidir ve böylece tüketici davranışını etkileyici özelliklerine göre anlamının önemini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Influencer pazarlaması, Influencer güvenilirliği, Influencer bilgi kalitesi, Takipçi-Influencer duygusal bağlılığı, Satın alma niyetleri

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List of Abbreviations

FIA:	Follower Influencer Attachment
IIQ:	Influencer Information Quality
IC:	Influencer Credibility
PCSMIM:	Perceived Characteristics of Influencer Marketing
PI:	Purchase Intention
SPSS:	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TRNC:	Turkish Republic of North Cyprus

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The perceived characteristics of influencer marketing have also become critical in recent years especially with the rise of influencers as a marketing tool for brands (Ki et al., 2020). This can be seen as part of a more general evolution in which more and more marketers are opting to complement or replace advertising with influencers who develop relationships with their audiences (Richards-Carpenter & Tafoya, 2021). For the case of Northern Cyprus, Bolat et al. (2020) note that there is a high level of online interaction among communities which correlates with high purchase intention. Given that almost 90% of people go to the internet daily and 87% are active users, it's clear that these online spaces have impact on the way consumers behave (Kouros et al., 2023). Such kind of high involvement on internet use creates an opportunity for brands to make the most of influencers who can reach out to their consumers in a market that is dominated by high visual content (Feng et al., 2021). In this regard, it is also important to comprehend how certain variables such as the influence of perceived characteristics like influence credibility, the quality of information, and emotional attachment to followers of the accounts impacts the intentions to engage in the purchase of products recommended by the accounts.

The purchase decisions of consumers are heavily influenced by the credibility of an influencer. This is true especially in the case of the fashion sector as the influencers on are seen as reliable experts who provide recommendations to the followers (AlFarraj, et al., 2021). Further, Lin et al. (2021) and Chetioui et al. (2020) concur that the trustworthy and knowledgeable influencers can effectively change attitudes of their followers towards certain brands not only because of their claims but promises as well. In broad terms, credibility refers to the integration of one's knowledge, experience and reputation (AlFarraj et al., 2021). As stated by Wang et al. (2022), many consumers are selective regarding the information sources they want to trust which inevitably underscores the importance of influencer's credibility.

Another crucial aspect is influencer information quality which relates to the trustworthiness and accuracy of information provided by the influencers. Such information enables the consumer to better and more closely appreciate the products

being advertised (Zhao et al., 2022). Shah et al. (2023) have also established that when influencers present detailed content, which is informative as well, it has a positive impact on the attitude of the consumers and hence influences purchasing intentions. As the consumers have recently become demanding regarding the want of information, and in particular the need for reliable information prior making purchasing transactions, the content of the influencer's communication truly matters.

The third characteristic is the mental link that emerges between followers and influencers and is termed as follower-influencer emotional attachment (Shah et al., 2023; Hu et al., 2020). Relatability and authenticity are the two major core factors that lead to emotional attachment. In particular, when a follower is emotionally attached to an influencer, there are high chances that the follower will believe the influencer's recommendations and buy the endorsed products (Cabeza-Ramírez et al., 2022). Not only does this emotional bond strengthen consumers' attachment to the brand, but it also shapes the way they perceive the brand in regards to its trustworthiness (Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2021).

So as marketers try to keep up with these changes, having a clear understanding of follower-influencer emotional attachment will be crucial for developing effective marketing in the future (Rachmad, 2024). Influencers, with their providing information and emotional attachment have impact on brand – consumer relationships encouraging consumers to make a purchase. In the final analysis, the evolution of influencer marketing is a strategy to capture the attention of brands aiming to operate in an active and growing digital environment, like North Cyprus, where social networks are strongly active.

Statement of the Problem

In the context of influencer marketing and its effects on purchase intention has got several aspects that remain unaddressed in the existing studies (Masuda et al., 2022). Due to the earlier assertion, the concern still exists on how the perceived characteristics of the influencer affect the consumer's purchase intention. The basis for the credibility, information quality and emotional attachment of the followers to the influencer's marketing, in this case, has not been adequately explained in the existing literature as a performance indicator which enhances or affects the purchase intention of the consumer (Chen, 2024; Borchers, 2022). While all-encompassing literature that

investigates the effects that influencer marketing has in a wide scope is growing, the driver in this phenomenon, which is the specific social features remains vastly overlooked. Several such as Cheah et al. (2024) have inquired into the effectiveness of influencer marketing but such studies do not probe into details of such marketing on its effectiveness on purchase intention.

There is limited investigation on the factors that explain influencer's credibility such as trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. Some variables have been established to exert an influence on consumer's perception; however, the connection is largely lacking to the empirical evidence that shows how it leads to the purchase intention (Dabbous et al., 2020; Chatterjee et al., 2022). Existing studies on this matter tend to focus on single variables instead of inter-pretng the cumulative effect of various characteristics on buying behavior. This integrative gap weakens our understanding on the impact that the whole perception of the credibility of a influencer has on the purchasing readiness of consumers for products endorsed by that influencer (Belanche et al., 2021).

In addition, the content quality given to consumers by the influencer is another aspect that needs thorough scholarly work. There is a general agreement that strong content increases the involvement and interest of the consumer. However, there is a dearth of studies that seek to explain how the information quality improves the intention of consumers to purchase influencer products (Saima, & Khan, 2020; Gomes et al., 2022). Most consumers are more likely to desire clear and trustworthy information before purchasing; however, available studies do not sufficiently pay attention to the positive impact of information quality by the influences to the consumers that would persuade them to purchase.

Another crucial aspect which has not been adequately addressed in the body of literature is the emotional bond that exists between the followers and the influencer and how such a bond influences their purchase intention. The existing research is insufficiently advanced in explaining such emotional bonds as authenticity and relatability which are attributes that influences follower's emotions toward the influencer (Lee et al., 2022; De Brito Silva et al., 2022). As the role of emotional attachment in the generation of trust or loyalty is important in making the analysis complete, it is also essential to know the influence of emotional attachment on trust or loyalty towards the influencer. Marketers may find it difficult to implement or gain the

emotional aspects of the dynamics in their marketing partnership with the influencer without this knowledge.

This study attempts to decrease these fractures by examining the characteristics possessed by influencer marketing that consist of credibility, information quality, and emotional attachment and the lesion that they cause in purchase intention. This study attempts to add value to the literature and practice of making influencer marketing strategies by examining the relationship between the variables under consideration in a single framework. The closing of these gaps will in the end improve the understanding of how consumers can be reached in a competitive online environment through brand partnerships with influencers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceived characteristics of influencer marketing—specifically credibility, information quality, and emotional attachment—and their impact on consumer purchase intentions. Influencer marketing has recently emerged as a strong element in marketing strategies, therefore for brands it is important to comprehend how such characteristics may influence consumer behavior in order to effectively utilize them. The objective of this research is to provide the details which were lacking in the literature by addressing the questions on the interactions among these perceived characteristics of influencer marketing and their roles in influencing consumers' intentions to purchase the products that are being endorsed by the influencers.

Hypotheses

As a result of this study's research objectives and research model in figure 1, the following hypotheses are proposed

H1: Perceived Characteristics of Influencer marketing has positive effect on Purchase Intention

H1a: Influencer Credibility has a positive impact on Purchase Intention

H1b: Influencer Information Quality has a positive impact on Purchase Intention

H1c: Follower-Influencer Emotional Attachment has a positive impact on Purchase Intention

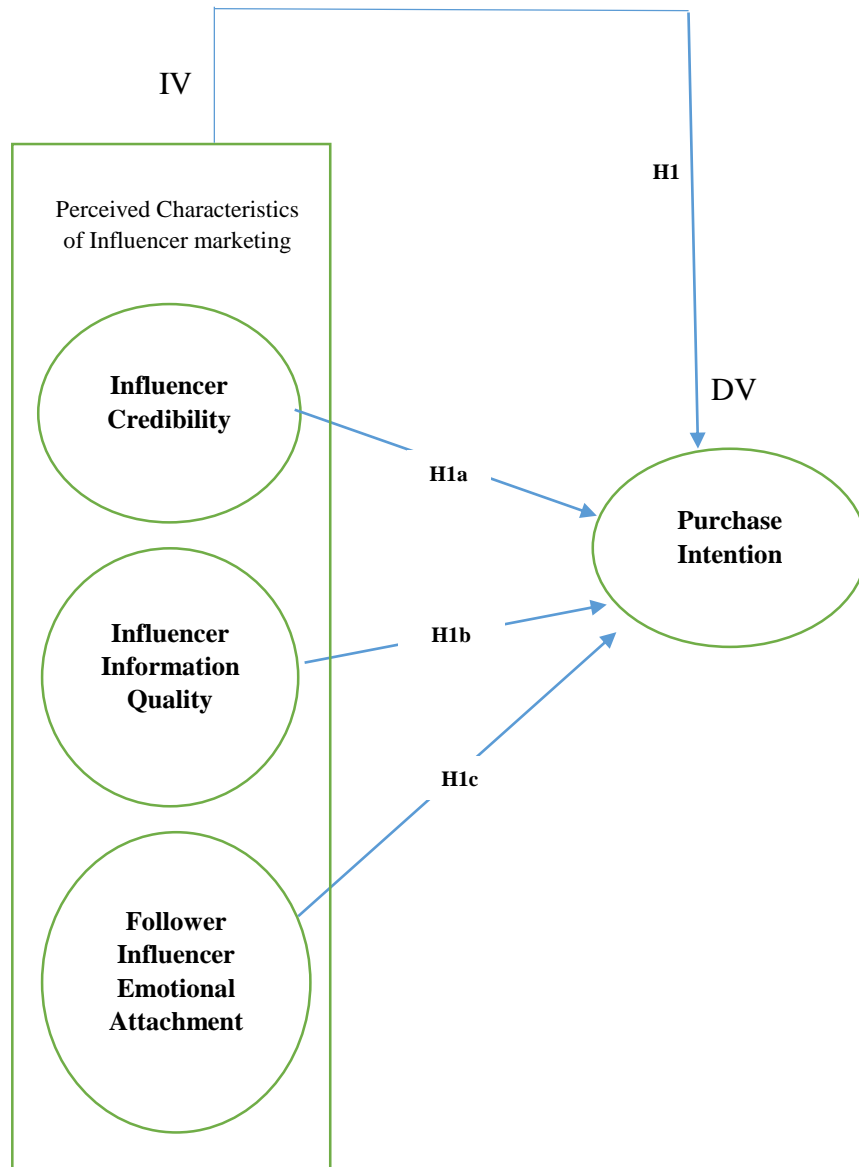


Figure 1.1. Research Model

The independent constructs of the research model consist of three perceived characteristics of influencer marketing (influencer credibility, influencer information quality, followers-influencer emotional attachment) selected from previous literature review (Shah et al., 2023; Abdinur et al., 2024; Masuda et al., 2022). Also, the dependent construct of the research model is purchase intention.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to broaden how sources of social influence are perceived, in particular such dimensions as credibility, information

quality, and emotional attachment on, and their impact on purchase intentions. Since influencer marketing is continually evolving as a dominant strategy for the consumption economy in the digital platforms, it is important in both academic inquiry and real application to put into account the factors influencing consumption behavior. Investigating these characteristics, this study seeks to help marketers and brands learn how to reach and interact with their target audience more effectively.

This research fills the lacking literature by tackling the investigatory gaps connected with the interaction between the influences of specific features of the influencers and their purchase intentions (Gomes et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2021). Pioneering research (Vrontis et al., 2021; Farivar & Wang, 2022) has expanded the focus on influencer marketing, nonetheless there is still insufficient attention dedicated on how three factors, such as credibility, information quality and emotional attachment, all together shape people's behavior. Addressing such relationships in this research will contribute to the academic debate and a more intricate picture of the constituent processes of efficiency of influencer marketing will emerge.

The study has practical implications for marketers who wish to improve their influencer marketing strategies. It is important for brands to know about different values when selecting influencers and how their perceived credibility on affects consumers' love and purchase intentions. Furthermore, during the consideration of the category factors, one aspect is the quality of the information, and the brand can integrate more content that is useful to the customers.

Also, studying the effect of emotional ties between influencers and followers on purchase intentions may be helpful for brands that will want to interact better with their consumers. With emotional attachments for followers being critical with respect to trust and loyalty, marketers can utilize these in creating resonant campaigns. This is important in this time when people are more discerning about the brands they seek to connect with.

The findings on this study do not only add to the body of the existing literature; it also provides practical guidelines for brands trying to make sense of the challenges posed by influencer marketing in the highly contestable digital environment. As the industry of influencer marketing especially on filters on the increase- set to be at 24 billion dollars by the year 2025- knowing how consumers' behavior is related to influencer

attributes will be a key success factor for companies' looking to invest (Rachmad, 2024). This research will demonstrate how these characteristics affect intent to purchase and therefore will help marketers improve the operational part of using influencers.

Limitation

The limitations of this study on the effect of the perceived characteristics of influencer marketing on purchase intention of consumers in North Cyprus, might be due to the fact that it uses only quantitative methods. While quantitative research makes it possible to gather numerical data and apply statistical methods, it may not explain the more detailed aspects of the buying behavior of consumers with regard to influencer marketing. For example, the investigation might neglect, among other things, the emotional and psychological elements influencing the way the consumers perceive the influencers and their endorsements. Furthermore, the emphasis on specific perceived characteristics on— trustworthiness, information quality and emotional attachment to the influencer may prevent the evaluation of other relevant variables that might affect the purchase intention such as cultural or consumer differences. In addition, as cited in the objective in the present study, the findings may be constrained by sample size, demographic diversity or even the relationship between cultural and social variables which may limit the scope of the findings across different groups of people. Finally, due to the constantly changing nature of the landscapes and consumer behavior, some of the findings may not be relevant after some time; thus, there is the need for further studies to keep track of these changes.

Definition of Key Terms

Influencers: According to Freberg et al. (2021), influencers affect audience perceptions via blogs, tweets, and other forms of media. They are a new kind of independent third-party endorser. According to Abidin (2016), influencers are a type of micro-celebrity who shape public opinion through the careful alignment of their persona by documenting their daily lives, from the ordinary and boring to the exciting bits of their exclusive opportunities in their line of work.

Influencer Credibility: refers to an influencers' trustworthiness, integrity and reliability (AlFarraj et al., 2021), which in turn affects the message's acceptance by their followers (Lee and Kim 2020).

Influencer Information Quality: refers to how people view the reliability, completeness, and correctness of the material that influencers post (Zhang & Choi, 2022).

Follower-Influencer Emotional Attachment: According to Zhang and Choi (2022), an emotional attachment occurs when an influencer and their followers develop a deep and meaningful relationship.

Purchase Intention: refers to the degree to which a buyer feels confident about purchasing a product or service (Balakrishnan et al., 2014).

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Influencers for Marketing

Influencers are individuals who have garnered a significant following on media platforms and who predominantly promote products to their audience in return for compensation (Chen et al., 2024). These endorsers are distinctive since they provide content specifically designed for their target audience and followers (Hamilton et al., 2021). Over time, they exert influence on the behavior and convictions of their adherents. Consequently, the people who follow them become customers who rely on and trust the product recommendations of influencers (Ki et al., 2020). Followers see influencers as endorsers and role models, hence augmenting their authenticity and trustworthiness relative to both modern and traditional advertising, as they provide a more effective connection (Schouten et al., 2021).

Influencers include a diverse range of individuals, including established figures from modeling or performing, individuals showcasing their interests online, such as fitness aficionados, and even average individuals like students. (Lou, 2022). Influencers may also be classified based on their follower numbers on at least one platform. Mega-influencers are influencers with at least 1 million followers on a single media platform (Feng et al., 2021). Macroinfluencers often possess a follower count between 40,000 and 1 million, whereas micro-influencers normally have a follower count ranging from 1,000 to 40,000 (Gerlich, 2023). Furthermore, several nano-influencers possess a small following of fewer than 1,000 highly engaged individuals. Mega-influencers mostly include mainstream figures, many of whom are already established celebrities. Feng et al. (2021) assert that influencers may be categorized according to their particular areas of interest or the composition of their content. Examples of this classification may include photography, culinary arts, aesthetics, creative expression, or humor-focused performances.

Due to the rising prominence of influencer marketing, it is advisable to provide a budget above 10% exclusively for this strategy (Leung et al., 2022). Furthermore, media platforms are adjusting their functionalities to improve the efficacy of influencer

marketing. An example of this trait is the "shop" function on Instagram or TikTok, which amplifies the allure of influencing and marketing on these platforms (Hasim & Sherlina, 2022). This technology allows users to execute direct purchases from sponsored advertisements. Furthermore, organizations may use influencers to foster stronger ties with their audience by creating a deep emotional link with their customers (Zimand Sheiner et al., 2021). Furthermore, marketing departments and enterprises should choose influencers based on their appeal, credibility, and expertise, rather than only depending on follower count and engagement metrics (Delbaere et al., 2021). Neglecting this activity may lead to the spread of misinformation to their audience or susceptibility to fraud, as some influencers may resort to acquiring followers. A firm should prioritize the product itself instead of just focusing on the SMI link since the product is the primary determinant of overall purchasing behavior (Chan, 2022).

Consumers often connect more effectively with products that resonate with their identities and have a preference for advertisements that are unconventional and customized to their identities (Roggeveen et al., 2021). Consequently, to augment the efficacy of advertisements, the message needs to resonate with the relevant customer demographics and their social identities. Consequently, owing to the rise in media utilization, firms have begun using new or traditional media platforms as a modern marketing technique (Mahoney & Tang, 2024). Moreover, users include a heterogeneous demographic with varying interests and preferences, making traditional advertising techniques, such as mass advertising campaigns, potentially ineffective (Zhou et al., 2021). Consequently, firms have developed notable figures to act as influencers. These influencers convey their viewpoints, concepts, experiences, and views to a substantial audience inside their media networks (Harrigan et al., 2021). Consequently, to forge more robust relationships with consumers and endorse items that resonate with client identities, firms are favoring media platforms and influencers over conventional promotional figures. Nekmahmud et al. (2022) discovered that using influencers for marketing is successful, significantly impacting customers' subjective standards, product knowledge, and confidence in their capacity to engage in environmental conservation via green buying behaviors. Conversely, Mahoney and Tang (2024) contend that engaging in face-to-face connection with the target audience via media platforms is a more prudent method for successfully conveying socially responsible behaviors. Moreover, Schouten et al. (2019) posited that influencers had

an enhanced capacity to forge relationships with consumers owing to their perceived resemblance to customers.

Significant disparities among influencers regarding branding, expertise, audience size, engagement metrics, and collaboration expenses result in differing marketing goals based on the kind of influencer (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). This categorization method categorizes influencers into four separate categories based on their follower numbers (Ryding et al., 2023):

- Celebrity-influencer / Mega-influencer
- Macro-influencer
- Micro-influencer
- Nano-influencer

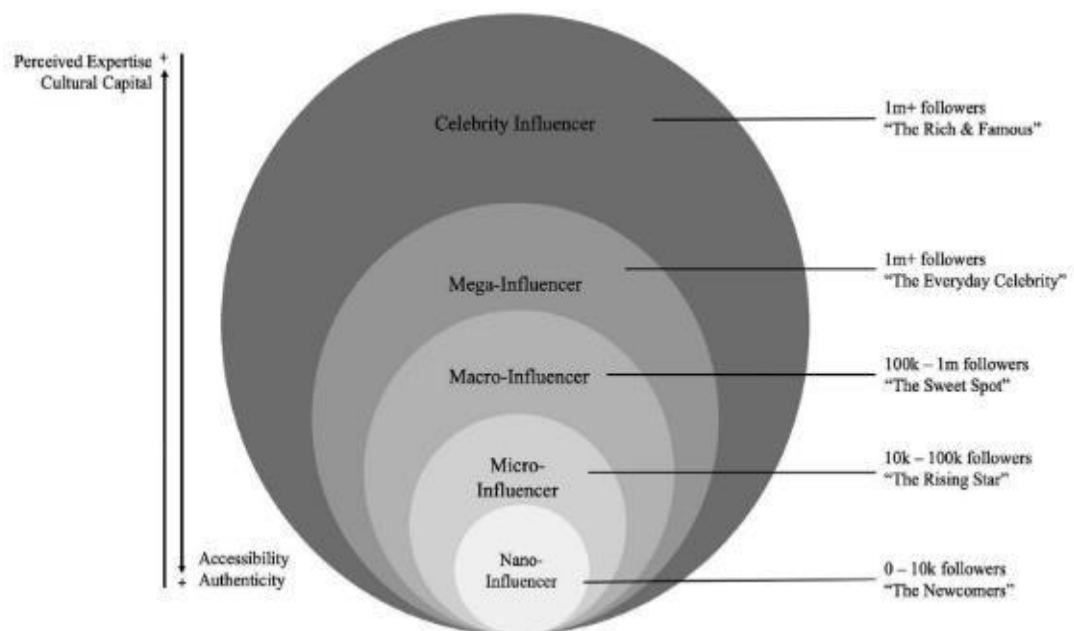


Figure 2.1: Influencer categorization (Campbell and Farrell, 2020).

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is the identification and selection of influencers to promote goods or services via their activity (Santiago & Castelo, 2020). Marketers have a favorable impression of the efficacy of influencer marketing, which is assuming an increasingly significant position in brand marketing strategies (Farivar & Wang, 2022; Blanche et al., 2021). Investment in influencer marketing has risen, particularly within the fashion

and beauty industries (Abraham et al., 2022; Guptaa, 2021). Considering the modernity of this technique, orchestrating an influencer marketing strategy remains a formidable task for marketers (Haenlein et al., 2020). As businesses progressively spend on influencer marketing, there is a growing need to organize these activities systematically (Leung et al., 2022).

Borchers and Enke (2021) delineate a five-step method for using influencers to endorse a brand's products/services: 1) planning, 2) recognition, 3) alignment, 4) motivation, and 5) coordination. Figure 2 shows the steps of influencer marketing process.

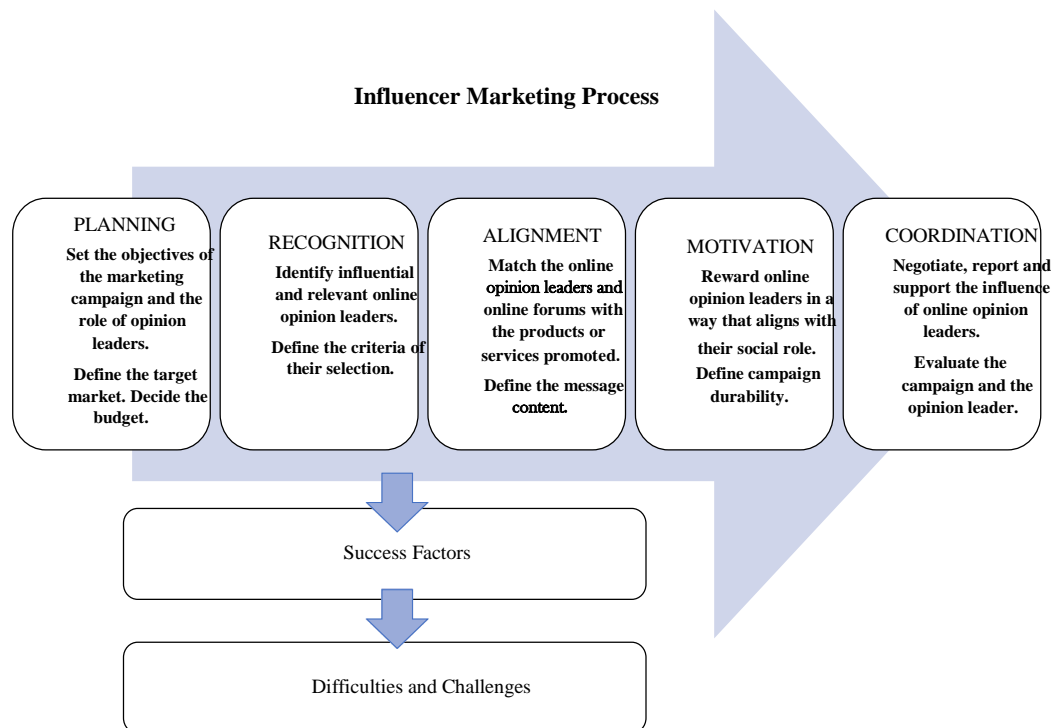


Figure 2.2. Influencer Marketing Process (Borchers & Enke, 2021)

The first phase of an influencer marketing campaign should establish the campaign's goals and identify the target demographic, ensuring alignment with the company's brand strategy. It should also address the definition of the influencer's role and the resources available for the campaign (Borchers & Enke 2021). The first stage will provide a strategic foundation for subsequent choices about the choice of influencers and the characteristics and length of the engagement (Berne-Manero & Marzo-Navarro, 2020). The primary objectives linked to influencer marketing include enhancing awareness, boosting sales, and generating user-created content (Rachmad,

2024; Chopra et al., 2021). The introduction of new goods is a frequent context in which marketers use influencer marketing efforts (Mallipeddi et al., 2022).

The second stage is to find influencers pertinent to the brand and assess the alignment between the specified campaign's target audience and the audience of the influencers (Rosenthal & Arcuri, 2020; Santiago & Castelo, 2020). The criteria for selecting influencers encompass the alignment between the brand and the influencer, the communication style, follower count, content type, influencer credibility, and popularity, as well as the collaboration cost or compensation (Gracias et al., 2024). Many firms and agencies find the identification of appropriate influencers for a campaign to be problematic (Huttula & Karjaluoto, 2023). The quantity of followers often serves as the first criterion for identifying and selecting influencers; nevertheless, it does not always correspond to genuine impact (Hu et al., 2020). When choosing influencers, the engagement rate, clicks, publishing frequency, visualizations, and reach are also considered (Munaro et al., 2024; Srivastava, 2021).

The third phase involves aligning the chosen influencers with the products/services to be marketed, together with the media platform designated for the campaign (Santiago & Castelo, 2020; Wielki, 2020). The strategies for executing influencer marketing campaigns might vary based on the established goals and the substance of the brand communications (Borchers & Enke, 2021). Brands' endorsement of events orchestrated by influencers, including workshops and gatherings, serves as a strategy to establish a rapport with these influencers and, subsequently, to convey brand messages to their followers (Femenia-Serra et al., 2022). The social networking platforms used for communication by influencers vary, leading to differing implementation strategies for influencer marketing campaigns according to the selected media platforms (Ong et al., 2024). Influencer marketing strategies include the endorsement of products via sponsored posts, stories, and IGTV videos featuring tutorials, reviews, and hauls—videos wherein influencers showcase products they have purchased or received (Ong et al., 2024).

The method by which the brand will compensate influencers is delineated in the fourth phase. Marketers must identify methods to persistently inspire and incentivize influencers to disseminate favorable material about the brand and/or goods (Santiago & Castelo, 2020). The sustainability of the partnership must also be evaluated at this stage. Fostering enduring connections may enhance the brand by ensuring a constant

and coherent rapport with influencers, who may be more inclined to disseminate material about the company in the future (Bastrygina et al., 2024). Influencer marketing strategies may or may not include financial compensation for the actions of influencers. Distributing goods and event invites generates content (earned media), although financial compensation (paid media) for product-related articles is also a reality (Leung et al., 2022). Compensation for influencers lacks unanimity among organizations; 29% report routinely offering monetary compensation, 12% assert they always pay, 24.4% acknowledge occasional payments, and 15.6% claim to never provide remuneration (Robinson & Shan, 2021).

The fifth and final phase includes negotiation, monitoring, and assistance for influencers during the campaign and its assessment (Lin et al., 2018). The assessment and quantification of the investment return in influencer marketing practices have been identified as a challenge in influencer marketing initiatives (Martínez-López et al., 2020). Influencers possess superior insight into the language and content that resonates with their audience; therefore, brands should convey the campaign's guidelines and objectives while preserving the influencers' creative autonomy, enabling them to produce authentic and original content that is regarded as appealing and credible by their audience (Cheng et al., 2024).

Perceived Characterization of Influencer Marketing

Perceived characterization of influencer marketing serves as a trigger in enhancing customers' intention toward the recommended items (Bhardwaj et al., 2024). Satisfaction, trust, and information credibility are deemed essential for enhancing customer intentions (Feng et al., 2021; Camilleri & Filieri, 2023). Fashion awareness, influencer appeal, and perceptions of popularity may be essential in fostering positive intents since these individual characteristics are defined by influencer-driven and consumer-focused constructions, therefore bridging the demand-supply gap.

The literature analysis of this work highlighted three dimensions for characterization: influencer credibility, influencer information quality, and follower-influencer emotional connection (Bhardwaj et al., 2024; Shah et al., 2023). These factors are crucial in elucidating the purchasing intents of followers in influencer marketing.

Influencer Credibility

The notion of credibility has always been crucial in the realm of marketing (AlFarraj et al., 2021). Credibility refers to the degree of trustworthiness of the information presented and its sources (Verma et al., 2021). Thus, seeing a party as credible signifies that the individual or business is reliable and trustworthy. Credibility is defined by many aspects related to an individual's capability (expertise) and inclination (trustworthiness) to adhere to performance-enhancing qualifications (Dwivedi et al., 2018). Credibility seems to be a perceived construct (Nafees et al., 2021). Consequently, one cannot ascertain that a particular piece of information is universally regarded as trustworthy, since this decision resides in the perceptions of the recipient. Over the previous several decades, material and information production in conventional media that addressed big audiences was limited to those with financial resources and legal authority (Alzubi, 2022). Currently, digital advancements remove these obstacles; thus, Susanto et al. (2021) asserted that individuals can disseminate messages to a wide audience via the Internet, without requiring authority or incurring significant costs and risks to accomplish their objectives or convey their messages.

According to marketing literature, the effectiveness of a message is directly related to how credible the influencer is, which in turn is dependent on how trustworthy and skilled the influencer is (Schouten et al., 2021). The extent to which beliefs, values, and practices are internalised is greatly affected by the credibility of the information that is conveyed (AlFarraj et al., 2021). People are more likely to listen to an influencer's messages if they demonstrate certain characteristics to a higher degree (Feng et al., 2021). Academic works on the traits of social influencers have been under-researched, even if they have helped shed light on influencer marketing ideas. This is especially true in Jordan, an expanding market, and the aesthetic dermatology industry in particular. While influencer marketing is legal, easy, and inexpensive, it really depends on a few key success factors and core pieces that the influencer and business need to achieve their sponsorship goals. According to Campbell and Farrell (2020), influential people should target those whose desires and goals align with their own. Although influencers use Instagram to share details about their everyday lives, the content they post may cover a wide range of subjects, including but not limited to: travel, style, beauty, politics, and sports. Drawing connections between general ideas and their way of life is crucial for demonstrating their reality and achieving resonance and uniqueness (AlFarraj et al., 2021).

Consequently, the use of influencers in marketing has become more popular across all sectors (Ye, et al., 2021). Even while platforms and influencers have many positive effects, they also increase competition in the market and need thorough consumer research into public information in order to help businesses keep their reputations and market shares intact and avoid a drop in profits. Still, there are a lot of unanswered questions on how to build trustworthy relationships with customers via involvement, acknowledging and appreciating their comments, feedback, and EWOM, as well as credibility and perceived influence (PI).

Dimension of Influencer Credibility

The present research will evaluate consumers' perceived credibility based on three key factors identified by Ohanian (1990):

- **Attractiveness:** According to Erdogan (1999, p. 299), beauty encompasses more than simply a person's physical appearance; it also includes attributes like their personality and athletic ability. A very attractive influencer has a greater impact on the purchase decisions of their followers (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Furthermore, as shown by Liu et al. (2024), beauty is considered a critical component in improving the effectiveness of helpful messages. Beauty may have a positive effect on evaluations, but how it affects willingness to buy is unclear, according to some researchers. Marketers often use attractive influencers in their promotional activities because of the substantial effect they have on altering customer perceptions towards the targeted firms, according to Belanche et al. (2021).
- **Trustworthiness:** is defined as the integrity, honesty, and credibility that an endorser has (Sari et al., 2021). It is the degree to which consumers believe that influencers want to disseminate the assertions that they find most credible, according to Ohanian (1990). According to AlFarraj et al. (2021), viewers determine an influencer's reputation based on whether they see them as trustworthy, credible, dependable, honest, or reliable. Sustainability of relationships, revenue, and brand performance are favourably impacted by the level of trust and loyalty between consumers and their influencers. In their study, Rathnayake and Lakshika (2022) found that influencers are significantly correlated with the most critically scrutinised problem in the beauty market, which is the trustworthiness of public personalities. They came to the conclusion that physical

beauty is a key factor in influencing consumers' opinions and matching suitable brand ambassadors with trustworthy companies.

- **Expertise:** The degree to which an endorser is believed to have the necessary knowledge, skills, or talents to promote a product is the primary indicator of their level of competence (Schimmelpfennig & Hunt, 2020). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that subject-matter experts will provide more reliable commentary on the matters at hand than laypeople who are unfamiliar with the field or its background. Put simply, when you interact with a highly competent person in a well-defined advertising, their impact should decrease, just as other celebrities of that era's credibility drops (Mihelj et al., 2022; Zniva et al., 2023). Hung (2020) argues that in order for an influencer to be successful, well-respected, and seen as an authoritative source by their followers, they must possess extensive knowledge. According to Chetioui et al. (2020), customers' faith in influencers and their buying habits are both affected by their level of competence. According to Erdogan (1999) and Ohanian (1990), an endorser's persuasiveness and brand engagement may be increased with greater expertise and perceived authority.

Influencer Information Quality

Information quality pertains to the correctness, dependability, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the information provided to customers (An et al., 2021). The quality of information is a vital component of marketing communications, as it includes the correctness, authenticity, and credibility of the material. Song et al. (2021) discovered that the perceived quality of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) information favorably affects information usefulness, adoption, and purchase intention. Onofrei et al. (2022) contend that high-quality material, exemplified by blogs, fosters enhanced engagement and elevates buying intention for suggested items. Goh et al. (2020) showed in their research that advertising value, assessed by perceived informativeness, amusement, and legitimacy, significantly influenced consumers' purchase intentions. Within influencer marketing, the quality, creativity, and distinctiveness of postings are recognized as essential elements in cultivating opinion leadership (Farivar et al., 2021).

The quality of information is defined as its suitability for use. Influencers, as opinion leaders, may amplify the effectiveness of the messages they receive and convey to

their followers (Wang et al., 2022). The quality of information conveyed, encompassing posts, shares, comments, and reviews, mirrors the overall attitudes and perceptions of influencers regarding the communicative quality of information about their endorsed products (Moran et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2021). The caliber of information may influence the purchasing intentions of consumers toward companies (Nikbin et al., 2022). Ultimately, followers recognize the impact of their preferred influencers, hence increasing their reliance on them.

Influencers are essential to the dissemination of knowledge. They inform their followers with new goods, projects, and updates (Pourkarim et al., 2023). When an influencer disseminates erroneous material on their media channels, they see a reduction in their following and credibility, which adversely affects their brand. The consumer's confidence in the sponsored post enhances brand recognition, hence favorably affecting the consumer's purchase intention (Lee & Kim, 2020). Zatwarnicka-Madura et al. (2022) assert that prompt responses and accessibility of information are crucial for both a brand and the influencer, as influencer marketing facilitates two-way communication, in contrast to advertisements, which represent a one-way communication from the brand to potential customers. Followers and viewers may promptly communicate their inquiries to the influencer or brand, and precise information on the product or service should be easily accessible for a quick and correct answer (Harrigan et al., 2021).

Follower-Influencer Emotional Attachment

Emotion is a mental state of preparedness that arises from cognitive evaluations of events or self-reflections (Shoukat et al., 2023). Intense emotions emerge throughout the establishment, maintenance, breakdown, and renewal of attachment relationships (Shah et al., 2023). Research by MacNeill and DiTommaso (2022) indicates that, in contrast to the likelihood of attachment development, such attachment occurs when intense negative emotions characterize the first phase of a relationship. Moilanen (2023) similarly discovered that in favorably successful circumstances, attachment is consistently strong. The significance of emotional connection in follower-influencer engagement is paramount in marketing. Some academics, however, emphasize the little literature on emotional attachment for other behavioral categories (i.e., purchase intention and perceived impact).

Previous study indicates that customers develop emotional attachments to certain service providers since these providers provide distinct emotional experiences for the consumers (Ozuem et al., 2021). Certain research indicates that customers develop an attachment to certain service establishments due to the provision of emotional support (Mathieu et al., 2020; Nyamekye et al., 2023). Relationships are the foundation of media platforms, since influencers own a significant platform on Instagram to use their advantages in engaging with their followers (Bastrygina et al., 2024). Individuals who have captivated and fulfilled their audience are more likely to maintain a connection; hence, influencers may benefit from audience retention (Hu et al., 2020). A crucial aspect of sustaining an influencer-follower connection is communication (Jun & Yi, 2020).

The emotional bond with celebrities on different media platforms influences purchasing intention (Meng et al., 2021). Followers develop an attachment to the perceived impact of information disseminated by influencers. Consequently, personal interactions form between followers and influencers since new followers see the ideas of existing followers as reliable (Belanche et al., 2021). The good emotions and strong emotional bonds between followers and influencers substantially enhance perceived impact, although the influencer marketing literature remains inadequately understood.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention has been examined across several marketing domains, including conventional retail (Peña-García et al., 2020), luxury brands and items (Husain et al., 2022), B2B transactions (Yuan et al., 2021), and internet shopping (Dastane, 2020). Jung et al. (2020) assert that consumer intentions serve as a measure of an individual's willingness to engage in a certain behavior, which in this study is interpreted as purchase intention. Purchase intentions may assess the viability of a new distribution channel, aiding managers in evaluating the concept's potential for future growth and identifying appropriate geographic markets and customer categories for targeting (Weissmann & Hock, 2022). Their significance stems from the notion that intentions are regarded as the primary predictor of actual behavior (Sohn & Kim, 2020).

Purchase intention refers to an individual's deliberate purpose to exert effort in acquiring a brand (Kumar et al., 2021). Jansom and Pongsakornrungsilp (2021) said that brand attitude is a cumulative assessment, whereas purchase intention represents

an individual predisposition associated with a brand, aimed at facilitating purchasing behavior. In recent years, marketers have increasingly focused on media platforms to exploit chances to influence customer purchases (Dwivedi et al., 2021). A significant factor that might affect the probability of customer purchase intention.

Purchase intention, as an effect of marketing campaigns, may assist marketers in their collaborations with SMIs (Syed et al., 2023). The majority of transactions are driven by brand qualities that align with the buyer's purchasing motives. The transition from buy intention to actual purchase often requires time and is crucial for forecasting purchasing behavior (Kumar et al., 2021). Numerous marketers and researchers have consistently used purchase intents to assess the efficacy of marketing techniques (Sharma et al., 2021; Mustafi & Hosain, 2020). Marketers use celebrities as marketing instruments to establish robust connections between the brand and the celebrity, thereby enhancing customers' buying intentions (Sufian et al., 2021).

Theoretical Framework

This research integrates the Persuasion Theory and Social Cognitive Theory so that the relationship that exists between the elements of influencer marketing that are perceived with regard to influencer credibility, information quality, and follower-influencer emotional attachment—and purchase intention can be explained. This interplay creates a robust framework for understanding how these perceived characteristics collectively shape followers' purchase intentions in the context of influencer marketing.

Theory of persuasion

The Theory of Persuasion appears to have its origins in studies from the 1940s and 50's where the effectiveness of communications through persuasion, especially of propaganda during World War II, was sought to be understood (Gass and Seiter, 2022). Persuasion theory describes an influence where people's state of mind is changed through the use of reasoned arguments whereby the individual being persuaded has free will as to whether they want to consider the arguments to be able to comprehend something that has been designed and delivered in a specific way by a persuader (Briñol and Petty, 2012). In simplest terms, influence is the ability to change a person. One sub-sector of applying persuasion theory makes use of the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) which emphasizes two routes of persuasion which are; the central core

which possesses greater elaboration and the peripheral core which has a low level of elaboration (Crano and Prislin, 2006; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). In the central route, the individual evaluates whether what is fed into them is relevant to their values held while in the peripheral, it is how persuasive the communicator is without deep thinking.

According to this route theory of ELM, it is the peripheral route that best suits those forms of communication that do not call for the integration of one's personal value system (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Dotson and Hyatt, 2000). This peripheral route on the other hand appears to be aimed towards more persuasion by rule of thumb, whereby attitudes or beliefs are expressed by us making appeals to view the sources of the information in terms of their reliability. In addition, it has also been found that people have a positive target impression based on very few cues. The theory of persuasion can be extended to influencers as follows. The followers' perception of the influencer (e.g., credibility or information quality) changes their behavioral intentions (i.e., purchase intentions). When the followers view an influencer as credible or feel attached, they purchase more. This perception or view of the followers on the credibility of the influencer is formed as a result of the followers' observations of the influencer's characteristics which include physical appearance. Figure 1 shows the research framework applied in the present research.

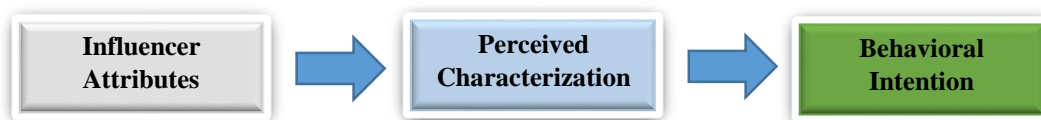


Figure 2.3. Adapted theory of persuasion framework (Masuda et al., 2022).

The personal attributes of influencers mediate how their followers perceive them. Consequently, these characterizations activate the followers' peripheral route which then results in behavioral intention. Based on this research premise, critical antecedents that lead to followers' purchase intentions were analyzed and identified from existing literature.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) has its roots in the works of psychologist Albert Bandura back in the 1960s as a branch of his previous work Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 2023). In Bandura's studies, he focused on learning through observation, which made it possible for individuals to learn certain behaviors by observing others and the results of those behaviors. Outline of Social Cognitive Theory has been used in various disciplines, such as psychology, education, and also marketing, to better understand how social factors influence learning and behavior. Taking into account the relationship between cognition and society, SCT offers a broad explanation of how people can adapt to various environments by observing relevant behavior models and their consequences. What is assumed based on SCT is that people can control the actions they do (McCormick and Martinko, 2004).

SCT may be incorporated into the dynamics between the influencers' perceived characteristics where credibility, quality of information, and emotional connection between followers and influencers are considered to have an impact on the purchase intention. SCT underlines the reciprocal relationships between personal factors (beliefs, or attitudes), behavioral (any actions taken), and environmental (social influences). Zhu (2020) identifies an influencer's credibility as a crucial personal factor when considering followers' behaviors in the context of influencer marketing. If they are taken to be credible passive followers because of their expertise, trustworthiness, or attractiveness they will boost the confidence of their passive followers in the information given increasing chances of purchasing actions. This is consistent with Bandura's concept of outcome expectancies when followers expect favorable outcomes after association with some credible influencers.

In this context, the information that influencers disseminate is extremely important. Fidelity is important to an influencer's ego, and high-quality content that is informative, entertaining, and original increases the emotional rapport with followers. The engagement can also be studied with the SCT perspective, which suggests that followers will catch and model behavior from the trusted source when they are exposed to those behaviors (Bandura, 2009). The emotions that bind people in parasocial relationships, because people feel closer to the various influencers, can amplify and increase the ability of the influencer's message to persuade. As they seek out such influencers, likely, their ideational endorses will also be carried out which raises purchase intentions.

At last, the interplay between these perceived characteristics illustrates the principle of reciprocal determinism central to SCT (Riley et al., 2016). Target, for instance, highlights that the credibility of the influencer and the quality of the information provided are important aspects that can stimulate positive changes in follower attitudes, motivations, and even purchase intentions. For example, these followers are likely to become emotionally involved and more willing to trust the information presented to them when they are convinced an influencer is reputable and the content provided is of good quality. Such perceptions emphasize how one's belief toward a influencer can influence consumer behavior on a platform (Lisun et al., 2024). In addition, such insights from SCT can help marketers design better influencer partnerships addressing audiences and enhancing purchase behavior.

Related Research

The findings of Saima and Khan (2020) demonstrated that customers' purchase intentions and the credibility of influencers were favorably impacted by confidence in influencers. In addition, Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) performed a qualitative study and discovered that the trustworthiness of various online celebrities has a considerable impact on the purchase intentions of young women. In their study, Lou and Yuan (2019) did not discover a direct influence of expertise on purchase intention. Similarly, AlFarraj et al. (2021) did not discover such an effect in the cosmetic dermatology business, while Gomes et al. (2022) did not discover it in connection to fashion items. In a similar vein, Widyanto and Agusti (2020) discovered comparable findings among customers belonging to Generation Z in Indonesia. Other research, on the other hand, has discovered beneficial impacts. A good illustration of this would be the findings that Abdullah et al. (2020) discovered in the fashion sector. Similar to what was discovered by Weismueller, Harrigan, Wang, and Soutar (2020), the correlation was shown to be positive in the German cosmetics industry. In addition, Hmoud et al. (2022) discovered a similar phenomenon among Jordanian customers. As a result of these results, it was determined that expertise had an impact on the intention to buy in a variety of marketplaces. Influencers can earn the confidence of their audience by displaying their competence in their respective fields. This, in turn, increases the possibility that customers would make purchases based on the advice that they provide.

It was also discovered by Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) that the quality of postings is a significant factor in consumers' judgments about whether or not to follow influencers. Influencers are responsible for producing updates consistently that include both informative and entertaining content (Lou & Yuan, 2019). It is possible for followers' perceptions of the informational value of branded postings to affect how they react to such messages. Moreover, several empirical studies have shown a wide range of outcomes regarding the impact of the quality of information provided by influencers on the intention to make a purchase. According to research conducted by Hmoud et al. (2022) in the Jordanian market, Gomes et al. (2022) in the fashion goods industry, and Lou & Yuan (2019), the quality of the information provided by influencers had a substantial impact on the intention to make a purchase. On the other hand, Saima and Khan (2020) did not discover any effects in their research. Yuan (2019) established a value model, which indicated that the informational value of influencer-generated content has a favorable impact on the trust that their followers have in the influencers' sponsored posts and their intention to make a purchase.

According to the findings of the literature review, the connection between customers and celebrities as influencers (emotional attachment being one of the types) has the potential to impact consumer attitudes and purchasing behavior (Huang et al., 2015; Hung, 2014). In addition, the findings of previous research conducted by Xi-Aw and Labrecque (2020) show that emotional connection has the potential to influence purchase intention either directly or indirectly via confidence in the brand. When customers have a strong emotional connection to influencers, they are more likely to be interested in acquiring the products that the influencers support (Aw et al., 2022; Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2016; Lee & Eastin, 2020). This highlights the significance of developing authentic connections in influencer marketing techniques, as it leads to greater buy intentions as a result of the deepening of emotional attachments that occur as a result of these interactions.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology employed in the study, focusing on quantitative approaches to gather and analyze data from higher education students in North Cyprus. The chapter further explains the sampling technique, specifically convenience sampling, and provides a comprehensive overview of the participant population. Additionally, the chapter discusses the development of the questionnaire. Ethical considerations are highlighted, including approval from the Ethics Committee at Near East University and the process of obtaining informed consent from participants. Finally, the chapter concludes with a description of the data analysis plan utilizing SPSS software to perform various statistical tests aimed at validating research hypotheses and exploring relationships among variables.

Research Design

For this study's research goals, quantitative methods are used. This method is used by scholars to communicate thoughts using numbers (Mohajan, 2020). This study seeks facts, information, and evidence, gathers and examines ideas and structures, investigates hypotheses and speculation, and evaluates values and laws. Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach to study events in particular circumstances without manipulating them (Patton, 2001). Instead of statistical calculation or other quantification, this technique uses natural phenomena to draw conclusions. Qualitative research analyses non-numerical aspects, according to Kothari (2004). According to Creswell (2011), qualitative research involves gathering non-numerical data from people in a natural setting to understand a phenomenon of interest, usually expressed in words or images. Researchers try to explain discoveries using writings. According to Carter et al. (2014), qualitative research allows researchers to gather participants' subjective descriptions of a phenomena or circumstance. Bryman (2004) emphasises storytelling above quantitative in study analysis and data. It also lets researchers utilise flexible data gathering methods like interviews to investigate concerns (Gäre & Melin, 2011). Qualitative research explains events and interprets interaction in a specified space, according to Patton (2002). A rich and thorough qualitative technique allows

research participants to offer material in its entirety and provides context for any phenomena of significance.

Qualitative research emphasises the complexity of human experience and the necessity to investigate it in depth in the ecological environment of the participants (Streubert & Carpenter 1999; Polit & Beck 2004). Creswell & Creswell (2017) describe quantitative research as objective exploration of a social issue based on a hypothesis made up of study variables to test it. Thus, statistical procedures are used to count and analyse data to verify the hypothesis. According to Cohen and Manion (1980), quantitative research is social study that uses empirical methods and deduces numerical claims. Quantitative research uses a lot of numerical data to describe, forecast, or regulate a phenomenon. It uses numerical data and calculations to describe and illustrate phenomena (Creswell 1994). As predicted, quantitative research tests ideas, establishes facts, correlates variables, and predicts outcomes (Van der Merwe, 1996). Natural science methods help quantitative research generalise, objectify, and be credible. (Weinreich 2009). According to Naoum (2002), as stated in Baiden (2006), the purpose of quantitative research and the accessible quantitative data are the main elements in choosing a research technique and approach. Hinton & Crossman (2011) defined convenience and purposive sampling as non-probability approaches. Quantitative approaches were used to gather and analyse study data. Quantitative research that regulated study areas can compute the necessity to measure and quantify boosting research (Polit & Beck 2004). Quantitative designs are tight to improve objectivity. Quantitative research uses a lot of statistical data converted into numerical values that the researcher can interpret and draw conclusions from (Cormack 1996).

This study focused on facts rather than opinions, allowing the researcher to think inquisitively, acquire data and evidence, and analyse research structures, ideas, hypotheses, and laws. The research needs Northern Cyprus higher education students' questionnaire data. Multiple quantitative methods and an integrated study methodology were used to test the variables' validity and reliability. This model best fits the issue being explored.

Population & The Sample

The study employed convenience sampling. Convenience sampling uses the first data source that fits testing requirements without considering objective circumstances

(Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020). Convenience sampling selects respondents without a sample. This project collects data from North Cyprus higher education students. This study includes TRNC college students. Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC) institutions have 81,000 students, according to the Ministry of Education, Higher Education, and Foreign Relations Office.

To determine how many participants to include in our research, we will use Fisher's Sampling Formula (Fisher, 1922). Where:

- $N = Z^2 pq / d^2$
- n = The desired sample size (when population is >10,000).
- z = The standard deviate, usually set at 1.96 which corresponds to the 95% confidence level.
- p = The proportion in the target population estimated to have a particular characteristic; since there is no reasonable estimate, 50% was used (i.e., 0.50).
- $q = 1.0 - p$
- d = Degree of accuracy desired, usually set at 0.05.
- $n = (1.96)^2 (0.50) (0.50) / 0.05^2 = 384$ (Sample size).

The sample size will be 384, where 384 questionnaires will be distributed to respondents. However, this study will distribute 500 questionnaires to participants. A total of 350 questionnaire is received following the return from respondent.

Data Collection Tools

Data were collected from Higher education students in North Cyprus adopting the use a questionnaire. The questionnaire comprises of a set of research questions adopted from previous research studies. The questionnaire survey started with a formed list of questions including demographic questions and questions measuring the independent constructs consisting of three perceived characteristics of influencer marketing (influencer credibility, influencer information quality, followers-influencer emotional attachment) and the dependent construct purchase intention. Influencer credibility was measured with five items and adopted from AlFarraj et al. (2021) research. Influencer information quality was measured with four items and adopted from Shah et al. (2023) research. Followers-influencer emotional attachment was measured with three items and adopted from Shah et al. (2023) research. Lastly, purchase intention was measured with four items and adopted from Ge (2024) research. All measures were designed

according to the five points Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process included a structured questionnaire and was administered to students in higher educational institutions in North Cyprus with the authorization of the Ethics Committee at Near East University. For ethical purposes, the questionnaire developed by the researcher was subjected to the ethics review and, prior to distribution, was deemed in conformity to the ethical guidelines for research with human subjects. Respondents were given an informed consent which elaborated on the nature of the study, the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time and guaranteed that their responses would remain confidential. The questionnaires were administered face to face so that students could better understand the purpose of the research, the instructions provided, and to stress the expected confidentiality of the information provided.

The researchers collected the questionnaires immediately after the students had completed them ensuring that the procedure of accessing the data was secure and anonymized. This method not only built confidence among the students, but also led to higher rates of response as they felt more at ease in a face-to-face setting.

Data Analysis Plan

This study collects data in a quantitative manner. The statistical program SPSS 22.0 (Statistics Program for Social Sciences) was used to methodically enter participant response, and several experiments were conducted to evaluate the proposed associations. The study analyses respondent data using SPSS. For a number of years, they have unquestionably emerged as the most widely used and accessible complete statistical computer program for social scientists (Abu-Bader, 2021). However, it was utilised to analyse user data, including demographic frequency distribution, reliability, validity, correlation, and regression tests.

This research will use a frequency distribution for age, gender, education, and nationality. The researcher will examine scale reliability and validity. The measuring scales' validity and reliability were tested using confirmatory factor analysis and reliability. The claimed relationship was tested using a correlation test between study

variables. Correlation analysis evaluates linear or nonlinear (exponential, polynomial, and logistic) relationships between two variables (Zou, et al., 2003). Positive or negative route coefficients influence relationship direction. The absolute value may be used to determine connection frequency. The regression test determines whether the independent and dependent variables are statistically related (Zou, et al., 2003). To ascertain the statistical significance of this interaction, a linear regression using the beta coefficient and p-value may be used.

CHAPTER IV

Findings and Comments

Demographic of Respondents

The table 1 presents demographic data of a surveyed population. The gender distribution shows that 64% are male and 36% are female. In the age category, the majority are between 21-30 years with 65%, followed by 18 to 20 years with 19%, and smallest category are participant 51 and above age group with 1%. The education category shows that more than half of the participants (65%) in this study are bachelors students, 32% are Masters students, then 3% are PhD students. In terms of nationality, a high percentage of respondents in this study are from Nigeria (35%), followed by Zimbabwe (20%), and smaller proportions from Congo (18%), Ghana (12%), Cameroon (6%), Iraq (3%), Libya (3%), and Turkey (3%).

Table 1: Demographics

Variables	MCQ	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	223	64
	Female	127	36
Age	18-20	65	19
	21- 30	228	65
	31 -40	47	13
	41 -50	7	2
	51 & above	3	1
	Bachelors	229	65
	Masters	111	32
Nationality	PhD	10	3
	Congo	62	18
	Nigeria	122	35
	Zimbabwe	72	20
	Iraq	10	3
	Libya	12	3

Ghana	42	12
Cameron	20	6
Turkey	10	3

Factor Analysis

Factor examination incorporates KMO and Bartlett's test as appeared in the tables beneath:

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.735
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx.	3764.008
Chi-Square		
Df		120
Sig.		.000

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy revealed an estimation of .735, which is suitable as it exceeds 0.60 accepted benchmark (Thao et al., 2022). The Bartlett's test of sphericity and significance level is also within the accepted threshold esteem ($\chi^2(210) = 4451.121, p < .05$).

Table 3: Pattern Matrix

	1	2	3	4
IC1	.808			
IC2	.892			
IC3	.873			
IC4	.848			
IC5	.725			
IIQ1		.839		

IIQ2	.775	
IIQ3	.689	
IIQ4	.604	
FIEA1	.872	
FIEA2	.856	
FIEA3	.880	
PI1	.810	
PI2	.743	
PI3	.797	
PI4	.583	

Information Credibility (IC), Influencer Information Quality (IIQ), Follower-Influencer Emotional Attachment (FIEA), Purchase Intention (PI)

The table 3 above shows the factor loading for each item in the four variables in this study. Items in each variable in this study was used without removing any item, because all item were with the acceptable threshold of above 0.40, those below are to be removed as shown in the research of Basnet (2013).

Reliability Test

The reliability test includes a Cronbach reliability as shown in the table below:

Table 4: Reliability Statistics

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
IC	.892	5
IIQ	.748	4
FIEA	.840	3
PI	.796	4

Above in Table 4, Cronbach's alpha is indicated alongside the number of items for each variable. All the metrics are above the threshold of 70%. The accepted rule of thumb for determining the internal consistency of a scale using Cronbach's alpha is that any value α that exceeds 70% is acceptable (Whitley, 2002; Robinson, 2009).

Correlation Analysis

This research examined the correlation between all five variables as shown in the table below.

Table 5: Correlation

		IC	IIQ	FIEA	PI	PCIM
IC	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig (2 – tailed)					
	N	350				
IIQ	Pearson Correlation	.175**	1			
	Sig (2 – tailed)	.001				
	N	350	350			
FIEA	Pearson Correlation	.043	.498**	1		
	Sig (2 – tailed)	.423	.000			
	N	350	350	350		
PI	Pearson Correlation	.211**	.813**	.404**	1	
	Sig (2 – tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	350	350	350	350	
PCIM	Pearson Correlation	.775**	.692**	.560**	.609**	1
	Sig (2 – tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	350	350	350	350	350
Perceived Characteristics of Influencer Marketing (PCIM)						

From the table 5 above it can be deduced that:

The table for correlation is employed to determine the degree of the relationship between the constructs of Influencer Credibility (IC), Influencer Information Quality (IIQ), Follower-Influencer Emotional Attachment (FIEA) conducting Pearson and significance levels (Yurdakul and Tansel İÇ, 2009). From the table above it can be deduced that IC ($r = .211^{**}$ $p < 0.05$), IIQ ($r = .813^{**}$, $p < 0.05$), FIEA ($r = .404^{**}$

$p < 0.05$), all has a positive and significant correlation with PI. Lastly, PCIM ($r = .609^{**}$, $p < 0.05$), has a positive and significant correlation with PI.

Regression analysis

This section focuses on models which utilize both a simple and multiple linear regression to estimate the relationships between various variables as depicted in the table 4.6 to 4.11 below.

Table 6: Model Summary of PCIM

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig F change
1	.609 ^a	.371	.370	.63971	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), PCIM

The table 6 above shows that PI is explained by PCIM. The closeness of the R square and adjusted R square confirms the relationship between PCIM and PI. In addition, the R is above 0, where significance level is less than 0.05 which confirms the relationship.

Table 7: ANOVA of PCIM

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	84.119	3	84.119	205.558	.000 ^b
Residual	142.410	348	.409		
Total	226.529	349			

a. Dependent Variable: PI

b. Predictor: (constant), PCIM

The table 7 shows the p-value is less than 0.05 for the ANOVA table indicating statistically significant relationship between the predictors and dependent variable.

Table 8: Coefficients of PCSMIM

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	T	Sig.
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.147	.192		5.960	.000
IC	.754	.053	.690	14.337	.026

a. Dependent Variable: PI

According to Table 8, the standardized beta coefficients is (PCSMIM to PI =.609), where $P < 0.05$, the model indicates that an increase in the impacts of PCIM on PI of 1 unit will cause a change in the value of the standardized coefficient. Thus, hypotheses 1 is supported. This implies that PCIM significantly and positively affect PI.

Table 9: Model Summary of IC FIEA and IIQ

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig F change
1	.816 ^a	.666	.663	.46737	.000

b. Predictors: (Constant), FIEA, IC, IIQ

The table 9 above shows that PI is explained by IC, IIQ and FIEA. The closeness of the r square and adjusted r square confirms the relationship between IC, IIQ and FIEA. In addition, the r is above 0, where significance level is less than 0.05 which confirms the relationship.

Table 10: ANOVA of IC FIEA and IIQ

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	150.952	3	50.317	230.356	.000 ^b
Residual	75.578	346	.218		
Total	226.529	349			

c. Dependent Variable: PI

d. Predictor: (constant). FIEA, IC, IIQ

The table 10 shows the p-value is less than 0.05 for the ANOVA table indicating statistically significant relationship between the predictors and dependent variable.

Table 11: Coefficients of IC FIEA and IIQ

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Beta		
(Constant)	.634	.149	4.254	.000
IC	.053	.024	2.243	.026
IIQ	.809	.037	21.980	.000
FIEA	.002	.034	.055	.956

a. Dependent Variable: PI

According to Table 11, the standardized beta coefficients is (IC =.71; IIQ =.800; FIEA=.002, where $P < 0.05$), the model indicates that an increase in the impacts of IC, IIQ on PI of 1 unit will cause a change in the value of the standardized coefficient. Nevertheless, the correlation between FIEA and PI is more or less, but weak, where the p-value is more than 0.05. Thus, hypotheses 1a, 1b is supported but 1c is disproved. This implies that IC and IIQ significantly and positively affect PI. On the other hand, FIEA have a negligible effect on PI.

Summary of Findings

This study explains the insights that brands and marketers need to consider before engaging in influencer marketing in the context of Instagram. Most of the sample used were social science and engineering students from TRNC. The demographic analysis shows a young male bias, with most of the respondents being undergraduate students from Nigeria and Zimbabwe. Factor analysis confirmed the adequacy of the sample and identified distinct constructs related; ‘Influencer Credibility’ (IC), ‘Influencer Information Quality’ (IIQ), ‘Follower-Influencer Emotional Attachment’ (FIEA), and ‘Purchase Intention’(PI). The results of the reliability tests confirmed that the internal consistency of all variables was satisfactory and the threshold of composite reliability was exceeded. Correlation tests revealed a significant degree of positively associated PCIM, IC, IIQ, and FIEA with PI, specifically, IIQ received the greatest emphasis. The regression result shows the existence of strong positive relationships between Perceived Characteristics of Influencer Marketing (PCIM) and Purchase Intention. Also, the regression result shows the existence of strong positive relationships between Influencer Credibility (IC) and Influencer Information Quality (IIQ) and Purchase Intention (PI) suggesting that business brands ought to seek out partnerships with credible influencers whose scope is provision of informative content. More specifically, the findings suggest that messages designed to increase the perceived credibility and quality of an influencer will help consumers to make up their minds on whether to purchase or not.

Moreover, the dismissal of the regression hypothesis in regard to the Follower-Influencer Emotional Attachment signifies that while emotional bonds may result in higher engagement, they do not lead to an increase in purchase intentions.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Discussion

This research investigates the relationship between perceived characteristics of influencer marketing (including information credibility, influencer information quality, follower-influencer emotional attachment) and purchase intention. The investigation's findings accept hypothesis 1a and 1b, while rejecting hypothesis 1c.

The study reveals valuable insights and positive relationship concerning the effect of influencer's perceived characteristics of on purchase intention of the consumers. The present study also validates Hypothesis 1a which states that Influencer Credibility positively influences the purchase intention. This is consistent with the previous studies where it was argued that there is a perception, particularly in this case, that credibility is the linchpin of persuasive communication. It has been shown that when followers see the influencer as a credible person, who is trustworthy and knowledgeable, they are more likely to accept the recommendations made and to thereafter make the purchases (Saima and Khan, 2020; Hmoud et al., 2022; AlFarraj et al., 2021). This clearly indicates how critical the role of influencer credibility, among other dynamics, is in determining the behavior of consumers in the context of online shopping.

Further, the analysis aided the substantiating of Hypothesis 1b which infers the effects of Influencer Information Quality and its positive impact on Purchase Intention as well. In the past, the works produced on this assumption have shown that the endorsement of influencers with valuable information makes them more convincing, making it more probable for consumers to adopt their recommendations (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Ki et al., 2020). The quality of information disseminated is not only sufficient but can be attractive to followers and therefore more prone to marketing. Brands should strive to cooperate with influencers who provide effective and informative content regularly in order to enhance the effectiveness of their marketing.

On the other hand, the study does not support Hypothesis 1c which argued that Follower-Influencer Emotional Attachment positively correlates with Purchase Intention. This finding appears to contradict some previous studies arguing that emotional attachment improves consumer loyalty and purchasing decisions (Aw et al., 2022; Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2016; Lee & Eastin, 2020). The rejection of this hypothesis may mean that engagement based on emotional attachment, although possible, does not strengthen this intention. Several considerations can explain this case, for example, the type of products being endorsed or details of the context of using influencer marketing. This suggests that further studies are warranted to examine how the emotional bond with the influencer interacts with other drivers of purchasing decisions.

This confirms that this study has theoretical and practical contributions which explain in more details the connection between perceived characteristics of influencer marketing and purchase intention.

Theoretical Implication

Theoretical implications of this research greatly contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding the understanding of the complex relationship that exists between Influencer Credibility, Influencer Information Quality, Follower-Influencer Emotional Attachment and how these factors affect Purchase Intention with a focus on Persuasion Theory and Social Cognitive Theory. Persuasion Theory argues that the nature of the source of a message plays an important role in the success of the message in prompting change in attitude or behavior (Gass and Seiter, 2022; Masuda et al., 2022). In this connection, the relevant results of the study suggest that both influencer credibility and information quality are vital determinant of consumers' intention to make purchases. This agrees with previous research which found that followers who are engaged by credible influencers tend to trust and are more willing to act on the recommendations. Emphasizing on the relationship of the influencer credibility with the purchase intention, it is important for the brands to ensure that the influencers they work with fully understand the information in order to convey it in a reliable manner and enhance communications.

Social Cognitive Theory aids in determining how observational learning, and social influence affects consumer behaviour (Bandura, 2009; Riley et al., 2016). It can be

inferred from the findings of the study that emotional attachment with influencers does not mean high purchasing intention, which might suggest that even though there is a strong emotional attachment, which leads emotional engagement, it does not ensure a change in behaviours such as purchase. This has been against Social Cognitive Theory's traditional theories of consumer behaviour where the formation of emotional bonds is attributed to changes in marketing behaviour. Rather the results contribute towards understanding the impact of these relations through a more complicated interrelation where kinds of informational and credibility factors on may be more critical than emotions in making purchasing decisions on platform like Instagram. This information opens new questions for understanding the role of different types of social influence in the consumer's choice process.

While integrating Persuasion Theory and Social Cognitive Theory enables the functioning of influencer marketing to be explained, the present study research further pushes the existing boundaries of theoretical discussion. It underscores the significance of trust and non-void content but also serves to disprove the limb of purchase intents that emotional attachment is said to be subservient. Looking at the differences between aspects or products outside of these parameters would be a great direction for future works as it would allow for a better understanding of the behavior patterns of consumers within the realm of the marketing.

Practical Implication

The implications for marketers and brands utilizing to influencers to target audience are tremendous. Considering the endorsement of the existence of positive influences of Influencer Credibility and Influencer Information Quality on Purchase Intention, the finding emphasizes that brands must seek to engage with influencers of high credibility who create relevant quality content. This implies choosing say for instance, influencers who have a high standing with the audience in terms of knowledge and trustworthiness in their field. The partnership with credible influencers enhances brand authenticity among potential customers by increasing their relevance to the audience and therefore increasing the chances of engagement to the brand enhancing sales.

As signified in the study the hypothesis on Follower-Influencer Emotional Attachment was rejected, suggests that emotional ties do add value however by

themselves are not enough to sway decisions for purchasing. Therefore, brands need to concentrate on designing and executing campaigns that highlight the credibility and information aspects of the influencer partnerships rather than depend exclusively on emotional stories. In turn, this can change the outcome of marketing initiatives towards the rational decisions which the customers may take.

Moreover, the research calls for the shedding of light in the practices around marketing influencers. As users pay more attention to promotional materials, the brand must take caution in how their influencers' activities are depicted so as to avoid the perception of untruths. Adopting methods that are almost explicit can assist in preserving customer loyalty in a world of doubts as is the case today, where advertising is concerned.

The research sheds light on the significance of trust in marketing and explains the rationale for pursuing a more strategic direction, one that balances quality information and credibility to emotional engagement which has its limitations in stimulating purchase intentions. Applying their recommendations, the marketers can take their influence cooperation a step further, resulting in campaigns more suited to the audiences.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

To summarize, this research investigates the critical levers that shape the consumers' willingness to buy when influencer marketing is applied. The results established the relevance of both Influencer Credibility and Influencer Information Quality which distinctly increases the chances of the consumers responding to influencer marketing. This implies that brands should be selective when enlisting influencers so that not only do they have a reputed image but also are able to provide good quality content. Emphasizing these traits would help develop marketing efforts that are more in sync with the needs of the consumers and hence increase trust and engagement.

The invalidation of the hypothesis concerning Follower-Influencer Emotional Attachment changes the picture of influencer marketing. While followers' emotional attachment can deepen the level of engagement and promote belongingness in the follower base, strong feelings towards an influencer may not greatly change their willingness to purchase a brand's merchandise. This conclusion seems to defy the commonly held view of the influence of emotional attachment on the act of consumption, and should make marketers concentrate more on the rational dimension of persuasion credibility and information quality of the message itself. With this knowledge, there is a need to change the strategy, showing how the brands should use the influencers with whom they want to build authentic relationships, without colluding with them.

Also, this research adds to the body of knowledge on Influencer marketing by incorporating it into the wider body of knowledge on persuasion and social cognitive theories. The identified positive correlations between the factors of credibility, informative content and the intention to buy corresponds to the assumptions of persuasion theory on how source factors can affect the attitude and behavior of the consumers. The implications concerning emotional attachment, on the other hand, prompt a reconsideration on the relevance of Social Cognitive Theory in this case, indicating that social factors exist but they do not have to result in observable changes such as change in purchase behavior.

This study also has implications to the growing literature about influencers and their marketing strategies. As competition for visibility becomes fierce in the media sphere, It helps practitioners better understand how to optimize their campaigns; for example, by targeting credible influencers with informative content on platform like Instagram, brands can increase their effectiveness in persuading customers to stimulate purchases across a wide spectrum of categories and products. Further this relationship can be looked at in different markets so as to have a holistic view on the intersection of influencers and consumer behavior.

Recommendation

This research offers some insights for brands and marketers that avails influencer marketing activity. Firstly, it is important to focus on working with influencers who are credible and offer good quality information because these factors are best to increase consumer purchase intentions. Thus, brands must spend on finding appropriate influencers and establishing long-term partnerships with them so that the content created appears natural to the viewers. Furthermore, there is a need for marketers to put in much effort in conceptualizing and coming out with effective comprehensive campaigns that focus on the informative dimensions of influencers rather than just the emotional appeal. In this way, consumers are more likely to be able to trust and engage in the company's marketing which will subsequently improve the conversion rates.

Despite the findings, the research is constrained by certain limitations. Firstly, the sample for this study consisted of participants from the TRNC only which involves tertiary education level students making it impossible to transfer the outcome of this study to other populations. Secondly, the investigation placed a greater emphasis on quantitative measurements of influencer credibility and the information they provide, which may have led to an under appreciation of the qualitative aspects, particularly the emotions involved in the dynamics between followers and influencers. These factors can be addressed in future work by examining whether these emotions affect the intention to purchase across different cultures or education systems. More insight as to how the effectiveness of influencer marketing develops, over time and with transitions, could be furnished by cross-sectional studies. As such, the international landscape continues to grow, opening opportunities for more comprehensive studies focusing on the enhancement of influencer marketing tools.

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APPENDICES

Questionnaire

We hope that you will answer all parts of this questionnaire according to the instructions mentioned in every part. We inform you that all gathered data keep completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of scientific research. Expressing our thanks and appreciation for your cooperation.

PART 1

Question 1: Your gender: male ☐ Female ☐

Question 2: How old are you?

18 - 20 ☐ 21-30 ☐ 31-40 ☐ 41-50 ☐ above 51 ☐

Question 3: What is your academic level?

Bachelors ☐ Masters ☐ PhD ☐

Question 4: Nationality:

PART B:

Degree of Frequency:

1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree

QUESTIONS					
Influencer Credibility	1	2	3	4	5
I believe that advertisements for products are more effective when promoted by trustworthy influencers					
Advertisements featuring honest influencers lead to a more positive perception of the product					
I am less likely to recall negative information about a product when it is advertised by a sincere					
The reliability of an influencer positively influences my overall perception of the brand being advertised					
I pay more attention to the advertisements product using an expert influencer					

Influencer Information Quality	1	2	3	4	5
Influencers I follow provides correct information.					
Influencers I follow provides up-to-date content information.					
The information provided by influencers I follow is helpful to me.					
The information provided by influencers I follow is complete					
Follower-Influencer Emotional Attachment	1	2	3	4	5
I am very attached to the influencers I follow.					
I feel the influencers I follow is a part of my life.					
I feel like there is a bond between me and the influencers I follow.					
Purchase Intention	1	2	3	4	5
I would purchase products promoted by influencer I follow in the future.					
I will probably buy products after viewing influencer's post I follow					
My willingness to buy products would be high after viewing influencer's post I follow.					
I would encourage people close to me to buy products promoted by influencers I follow.					

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18.11.2024

Dear Abiobun Samuelmedoye

Your application titled “**The impact of influencer marketing on purchase intention**” with the application number NEU/SS/2024/1881 has been evaluated by the Scientific Research Ethics Committee and granted approval. You can start your research on the condition that you will abide by the information provided in your application form.

Prof. Dr. Aşkın KİRAZ

The Coordinator of the Scientific Research Ethics Committee