CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Capstone Research Project
For the Degree
BBA (International Business)

ON

Investigating the Impact of Social Media Influencers on

Consumer Behaviour

SUBMITTED TO

Mrs. Kinnarie Singh

By

Ms. Tanaya Ahirrao
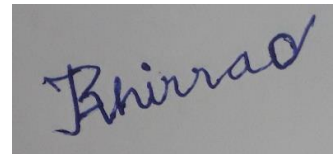
Sap No: 73512200073

Academic Year 2022-23

NMIMS CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
7th Floor, Mithibai College building,
Bhaktivedanta Swami Marg, JVPD, Vile Parle (West), Mumbai – 400 056.

DECLARATION FORM

I, <u>Tanaya Rajesh Ahirrao,</u> student of NMIMS Centre for International Studies, hereby declare that the project report entitled "Investigating the Impact of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Behaviour" has been written and submitted under the guidance of <u>Mrs. Kinnarie Singh</u> in the academic year 2022-23.

I further declare that it is original work done as part of our academic course toward the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of BBA (International Business) of NMIMS University and has not been submitted elsewhere. The conclusion and interpretation written in this project are based on the data collected by me while preparing this report. Any form of plagiarism will lead to the disqualification of the paper.

Student Sign

Date: 10/05/2023

College Seal:

CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

INDEX

| 3. | **Literature Review Chapter** | 3.1 To measure the likelihood or intention of consumers to purchase a product or service promoted by social media influencers.

3.2 To evaluate how social media influencers influence the brand perception of consumers, including various aspects such as brand image, brand personality, and brand credibility.

3.3 To examine the extent to which social media influencers are perceived as trustworthy and credible by consumers and how this perception affects their behaviour.

3.4 To assess the level of engagement and interaction between social media influencers and their followers, including metrics like likes, comments, shares, and the impact on consumer behaviour.

3.5 To investigate how social media influencers shape consumer attitudes towards specific products, brands, or topics, and how these attitudes influence purchasing decisions. | 21-39 |

ABSTRACT

The impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior has become a prominent topic of interest in the marketing and advertising landscape. This research paper aims to investigate the influence of social media influencers on consumer behavior and explore its implications. The research objectives include measuring the likelihood or intention of consumers to purchase products or services promoted by influencers, evaluating the impact of influencers on brand perception, examining the trustworthiness and credibility of influencers, assessing the level of engagement between influencers and their followers, and investigating the influence of influencers on consumer attitudes. In today's digital age, social media influencers have emerged as powerful figures capable of shaping consumer behavior and influencing purchasing decisions. This capstone project aims to investigate the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior and explores various dimensions of this phenomenon. The research objectives include measuring consumer likelihood or intention to purchase products promoted by influencers, evaluating the influence of influencers on brand perception, examining the trustworthiness and credibility of influencers, assessing the level of engagement between influencers and followers, and investigating the role of influencers in shaping consumer attitudes and their impact on purchasing decisions.

The topic of investigating the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior is of paramount importance in the field of marketing and advertising. With the rise of social media platforms and the growing influence of influencers, businesses are increasingly leveraging this form of advertising to connect with their target audience. However, there is a research gap in understanding the effectiveness and implications of influencer marketing on consumer behavior. This capstone project aims to fill this gap by providing insights into the influence of social media influencers and their impact on consumer decision-making processes.

To achieve the research objectives, a mixed-method research approach will be employed. A quantitative survey will be conducted to measure consumer likelihood or intention to purchase products promoted by influencers. It will gather data on consumer preferences, perceptions, and purchasing behavior in relation to influencer-endorsed products or services. The survey findings will provide quantitative evidence on the influence of social media influencers on consumer purchasing decisions.

Qualitative methods, such as interviews and content analysis, will be utilized to evaluate how social media influencers influence brand perception. Through interviews, consumers will share their experiences and perceptions of influencer content and its impact on their perception of brands. Content

analysis of social media posts will provide insights into various aspects of brand perception, including brand image, brand personality, and brand credibility, in the context of influencer marketing. Trustworthiness and credibility are crucial factors in influencer marketing. To examine the perception of social media influencers as trustworthy and credible by consumers, a survey and group discussions will be conducted. These qualitative methods will explore consumer perceptions and attitudes towards influencers' credibility, and how this perception influences their behaviour, particularly in terms of their willingness to engage and make purchase decisions.

The level of engagement and interaction between social media influencers and their followers will be assessed through the analysis of engagement metrics, such as likes, comments, and shares. Additionally, interviews and observation of consumer behavior on social media platforms will provide insights into the impact of this engagement on consumer behavior and decision-making.

Lastly, the project will investigate how social media influencers shape consumer attitudes towards specific products, brands, or topics, and how these attitudes influence purchasing decisions. A combination of surveys, interviews, and sentiment analysis will be utilized to capture consumer sentiments and perceptions related to influencer-led content and its impact on their attitudes and subsequent behavior.

In conclusion, this capstone project aims to investigate the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior. By addressing the research objectives, it seeks to contribute to the understanding of influencer marketing and its implications for consumer decision-making processes. The findings will provide valuable insights for marketers, businesses, and researchers, aiding them in developing effective influencer marketing strategies and enhancing their understanding of consumer behavior in the digital era.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Social media platforms have revolutionized how individuals communicate, share information, and decide what to buy in the current digital era. Social media influencers have grown in power as a result of this transition, giving them the capacity to mold consumer behavior and influence purchasing decisions. This study attempts to investigate how social media influencers affect customer behavior and offers insightful information about the ramifications of this modern type of advertising.

The rise of social media has altered marketing tactics as companies now understand the value of using influencers to reach their target demographic. Social media influencers are those who have a sizable following on Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Through their captivating content and apparent authenticity, they have the power to influence consumers' attitudes, preferences, and purchasing decisions.

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the influence of social media influencers on consumer behavior, filling the research gap that exists in this domain. While the phenomenon of social media influencers has garnered attention from marketers and consumers alike, there remains a need for in-depth examination and analysis. By delving into the impact of influencers on consumer behaviour, we can gain valuable insights into the underlying mechanics and dynamics of this relationship.

To guide this investigation, several research questions will be addressed. These questions delve into the ways in which social media influencers shape consumer attitudes, the psychological factors underlying the influence, the role of authenticity and credibility, the impact of content strategies, and the influence of different social media platforms. By exploring these research questions, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of the influencer-consumer relationship.

In conclusion, this study aims to investigate the impact of social media influencers on consumer behaviour. By filling the existing research gap and addressing key research questions, we seek to contribute to the evolving field of marketing and consumer behavior in the digital age.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to shed light on the influence of social media influencers on consumer behavior and fill the existing research gap in this area. The rapid growth of social media platforms and increasing reliance on influencers in marketing strategies call for a comprehensive investigation into their impact on consumer decision-making processes. By addressing this research gap, we aim to provide valuable knowledge to marketers, businesses, and researchers.

1.3 Problem Statement

To investigate the impact of social media influencers on consumer behaviour.

1.4 Research Objectives

The following are the research objectives.

1) To measure the likelihood or intention of consumers to purchase a product or service promoted by social media influencers.
2) To evaluate how social media influencers influence the brand perception of consumers, including various aspects such as brand image, brand personality, and brand credibility.
3) To examine the extent to which social media influencers are perceived as trustworthy and credible by consumers and how this perception affects their behaviour.
4) To assess the level of engagement and interaction between social media influencers and their followers, including metrics like likes, comments, shares, and the impact on consumer behaviour.
5) To investigate how social media influencers shape consumer attitudes towards specific products, brands, or topics, and how these attitudes influence purchasing decisions.

1.5 Hypothesis

Objective 1: To measure the likelihood or intention of consumers to purchase a product or service promoted by social media influencers.

Null Hypothesis:

There is no significant likelihood or intention of consumers to purchase a product or service promoted by social media influencers.

Alternative Hypothesis:
There is a significant likelihood or intention of consumers to purchase a product or service promoted by social media influencers.

Objective 2: To evaluate how social media influencers influence the brand perception of consumers, including various aspects such as brand image, brand personality, and brand credibility.

Null Hypothesis:

There is no significant relationship between the influence of social media influencers and brand perception of consumers.

Alternative Hypothesis:
There is a significant relationship between the influence of social media influencers and brand perception of consumers.

Objective 3: To examine the extent to which social media influencers are perceived as trustworthy and credible by consumers and how this perception affects their behaviour.

Null Hypothesis:

Social media influencers are not perceived as trustworthy and credible by consumers and this perception does not affect their behaviour.

Alternative Hypothesis:

Social media influencers are perceived as trustworthy and credible by consumers and this perception affects their behaviour.

Objective 4: To assess the level of engagement and interaction between social media influencers and their followers, including metrics like likes, comments, shares, and the impact on consumer behaviour.

Null Hypothesis:

There is no significant engagement and interaction between social media influencers and their followers and metrics like likes, comments, shares, have no impact on consumer behaviour.

Alternative Hypothesis:

There is significant engagement and interaction between social media influencers and their followers and metrics like likes, comments, shares, have an impact on consumer behaviour.

Objective 5: To investigate how social media influencers shape consumer attitudes towards specific products, brands, or topics, and how these attitudes influence purchasing decisions.

Null Hypothesis:
There is no significant relation between social media and consumer attitudes towards specific products, brands, or topics, and their influence on purchasing decisions.

Alternative Hypothesis:

There is a significant relation between social media and consumer attitudes towards specific products, brands, or topics, and their influence on purchasing decisions.

1.6 Research Questions

1. How do social media influencers shape consumer attitudes and perceptions?

2. What are the underlying psychological factors that contribute to the influence of social media influencers on consumer behaviour?

3. How does the authenticity and credibility of social media influencers affect consumer trust and purchase intentions?

4. What are the different types of content strategies employed by influencers and how do they influence consumer engagement and purchasing behaviour?

5. How do social media platforms and the characteristics of influencer content impact consumer behaviour differently?

1.7 Significance of the Research

The study has important ramifications for numerous stakeholders. Businesses and marketers can benefit greatly from understanding how social media influencers affect consumer behavior by using this information to create efficient influencer marketing campaigns. Additionally, having a deeper grasp of how influencers affect consumers' decisions might assist them make better decisions. Additionally, through enhancing knowledge of the changing dynamics of marketing and consumer behavior in the digital era, this research advances the academic discipline.

1.8 Scope of the Research

The primary focus of this study will be on how social media influencers affect consumerbehaviorr. We can learn more about the subtleties of the interaction between influencers and consumers. To give a thorough analysis of consumerbehaviorr, the research will include a variety of social media channels and could use both quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

It is important to acknowledge certain limitations that may impact the findings and generalizability of this research. These limitations include potential biases in the sample selection, the influence of external factors beyond the scope of the study, and the dynamic nature of social media platforms and influencer trends. Time constraints and resource availability may also limit the extent of data collection and analysis. However, efforts will be made to mitigate these limitations and ensure the research provides insights within its defined scope.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The conceptual framework provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the impact of social media influencers on consumer behaviour. It establishes the key concepts, relationships, and variables that will be explored in this study. By constructing a robust conceptual framework, we can gain a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms and dynamics at play in the influencer-consumer relationship.

2.2 Social influence

Understanding how social media impacts affect consumer behaviour is based on the social influence theory. According to this hypothesis, people are impacted by their social environment, which includes other people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. Influencers in the social media space serve as opinion leaders and role models, influencing the attitudes, preferences, and purchases of consumers. In the digital age, the social impact of social media influencers on consumer behaviour is a significant and quickly developing phenomena. The capacity to influence consumer attitudes, preferences, and purchasing decisions through their online presence and influence has made social media influencers into formidable personalities. This social influence has its roots in a number of psychological and social phenomena that influence consumer behaviour.

The idea of social proof is a crucial component of social influence. Social media platforms offer a distinctive setting where users may see how others, including influencers, behave and take inspiration from it. When consumers see influencers endorsing or using specific products, it creates a perception of social proof, indicating that the endorsed products or services are desirable and worthy of consideration. This social proof influences consumer attitudes and may increase the likelihood of consumers choosing those products or services.

Another important mechanism is the concept of liking and identification. Consumers tend to be drawn to influencers they perceive as relatable, likeable, and trustworthy. When consumers identify with influencers in terms of shared interests, values, or lifestyles, they are more likely to be influenced by their recommendations and engage in behavior that aligns with the influencer's choices. The sense of parasocial interaction, where consumers develop a one-sided relationship with influencers, further enhances this liking and identification process.

The credibility and expertise of social media influencers also play a crucial role in their social influence on consumer behavior. Influencers who are perceived as trustworthy, knowledgeable, and authentic have a greater impact on consumer attitudes and behaviors. Consumers place value on the expertise and experience of influencers, leading them to consider their recommendations as reliable and credible sources of information. The perceived credibility of influencers contributes to their ability to shape consumer perceptions, attitudes, and purchasing decisions.

Additionally, the level of engagement and interaction between influencers and their followers further reinforces their social influence. Influencers who actively engage with their followers

through likes, comments, and personalized interactions foster a sense of community and connection. This engagement creates a sense of involvement and loyalty among followers, leading to a stronger influence on their behavior.

In conclusion, the social influence of social media influencers on consumer behavior is a multifaceted phenomenon that is driven by various psychological and social processes. The concept of social proof, liking and identification, credibility, and engagement all contribute to the impact that influencers have on consumer attitudes, preferences, and purchasing decisions. Understanding and harnessing the social influence of social media influencers can be a valuable tool for businesses and marketers in effectively reaching and engaging with their target audience in the digital landscape.

2.3 Source Credibility

Source credibility refers to the perceived trustworthiness and expertise of the social media influencer. Consumers evaluate the credibility of influencers based on factors such as authenticity, expertise, and transparency. Credibility plays a crucial role in influencing consumer trust, engagement, and willingness to act upon the recommendations and endorsements provided by influencers.

Factors Influencing Source Credibility:

Expertise and Knowledge: Social media influencers who demonstrate expertise and knowledge in their niche are more likely to be perceived as credible sources of information. They are seen as individuals who possess the necessary expertise to provide reliable recommendations and insights.

Authenticity and Transparency: Influencers who are authentic, transparent, and genuine in their interactions and content are often regarded as more credible. Being transparent about brand collaborations, disclosing sponsored content, and maintaining honesty in their opinions and experiences foster trust among their audience.

Consistency and Reliability: Consistency in the quality and reliability of content is vital for building source credibility. Influencers who consistently deliver valuable and accurate information, opinions, and recommendations establish a reputation for being reliable sources of information.

Social Proof and Engagement: The engagement level of an influencer with their audience, such as likes, comments, and shares, contributes to their source credibility. Higher engagement indicates that the influencer's content resonates with their audience and is seen as trustworthy and valuable.

Relevance and Niche Expertise: Influencers who focus on specific niches and demonstrate in-depth knowledge and expertise within those niches tend to be perceived as more credible. Their specialization enhances their authority and credibility in their respective fields.

Peer Recommendations and Validation: Social validation from peers and fellow influencers can significantly impact an influencer's credibility. When influencers are recognized and endorsed by others within their industry, it adds to their perceived credibility.

Ethical Conduct: Maintaining ethical conduct, such as avoiding deceptive practices, adhering to disclosure guidelines, and acting responsibly, enhances an influencer's credibility. Ethical behavior builds trust and ensures that the audience perceives the influencer as reliable and trustworthy.

Audience Relationship: Building a genuine and strong relationship with the audience fosters credibility. Influencers who actively engage with their audience, respond to comments and messages, and value their followers' opinions are more likely to be seen as credible sources of information.

Source credibility is a crucial aspect that determines the effectiveness and impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior. Factors such as expertise, authenticity, transparency, consistency, engagement, relevance, peer validation, ethical conduct, and audience relationship collectively contribute to the credibility of social media influencers. Building and maintaining source credibility is essential for influencers to maximize their influence on consumer behavior and to establish long-term relationships with their audience.

As influencer marketing continues to evolve, brands and marketers should carefully consider the source credibility of influencers when planning collaborations and promotional campaigns. By aligning with credible influencers who possess the necessary expertise, authenticity, and transparency, businesses can establish trust with their target audience and effectively leverage the influence of social media influencers to drive consumer behavior and achieve their marketing objectives.

2.4 Parasocial Interaction

Parasocial interaction theory emphasizes the one-sided relationship that develops between media personalities, such as social media influencers, and their followers. Consumers form a sense of connection and familiarity with influencers, even though the interaction is largely mediated through social media platforms. This sense of parasocial interaction influences consumer behaviour, as individuals are more likely to be receptive to the recommendations and suggestions made by influencers, they feel connected to.

The engagement between social media influencers and their followers has changed beyond what was formerly thought possible in the era of social media. The one-sided relationship that forms between customers and influencers is described by the idea of parasocial contact, which has evolved as a crucial component of this dynamic. In the context of social media influencers, this article tries to investigate the phenomena of parasocial interaction by looking at its underlying mechanisms and the effects it has on purchasing decisions.

Understanding Parasocial Interaction:

Parasocial interaction refers to the psychological connection that individuals develop with media personalities, such as influencers, despite the lack of real-life interaction or mutual relationship. It is a one-sided bond in which consumers perceive a sense of intimacy and familiarity with the influencer, often projecting personal connections and feelings of friendship onto them.

Mechanisms of Parasocial Interaction:

Perceived Intimacy: Social media influencers often create content that fosters a sense of intimacy and relatability. Through sharing personal stories, engaging in direct communication, and providing glimpses into their everyday lives, influencers create an illusion of closeness and familiarity. Consumers feel connected to influencers as if they were friends or acquaintances.

Identification and Relatability: Consumers tend to identify with influencers who share similar lifestyles, interests, values, or aspirations. This identification process strengthens the parasocial bond, as consumers see themselves reflected in the influencer's experiences and choices. This relatability cultivates a sense of connection and enhances the parasocial relationship.

Authenticity and Transparency: Influencers who demonstrate authenticity and transparency in their content and interactions foster a deeper sense of trust and connection. When consumers perceive influencers as genuine and sincere, it strengthens the parasocial bond and increases the likelihood of continued engagement and loyalty.

Social Presence: Social media platforms provide a unique environment where influencers can maintain a constant presence in consumers' lives. Regular updates, behind-the-scenes content, and real-time interactions contribute to a sense of presence. This ongoing exposure reinforces the parasocial interaction, as consumers feel a consistent connection with the influencer.

Implications on Consumer Behavior:

Influence on Attitudes and Preferences: Parasocial interaction can shape consumer attitudes and preferences. Consumers may adopt the influencer's opinions, tastes, and preferences, considering them as reliable sources of information and guidance. Influencers' endorsements and recommendations hold significant weight, impacting consumers' perceptions and choices.

Purchase Intentions and Behavior: Parasocial interaction can influence consumer purchase intentions and behavior. Influencers' product recommendations, endorsements, and collaborations can sway consumers' decisions, driving them to try or purchase specific products or services. The perceived connection with the influencer enhances the likelihood of consumer action.

Brand Engagement and Loyalty: Consumers who have a strong parasocial relationship with an influencer are more likely to engage with and remain loyal to brands associated with that influencer. Influencers act as brand advocates, and their endorsement can build trust, credibility, and brand loyalty among their followers.

Consumer Advocacy and Word-of-Mouth: Parasocial interaction can extend beyond individual purchasing decisions. Consumers who feel connected to an influencer are more likely to advocate for the influencer and share their experiences with others. This word-of-mouth promotion can significantly impact brand reputation and consumer behavior.

Parasocial interaction has become a central aspect of the relationship between social media influencers and their consumers. The perceived intimacy, identification, authenticity, and social presence established through parasocial interaction contribute to the influencers' influence on consumer attitudes, preferences, purchase intentions, and brand loyalty. Understanding the

dynamics of parasocial interaction is crucial for marketers and brands to effectively leverage the power of influencers and cultivate meaningful connections with their target audience.

As the influencer landscape continues to evolve, it is important to approach parasocial interaction ethically and transparently. Both influencers and brands should prioritize authenticity and foster genuine connections with consumers, acknowledging the influence they hold and the responsibility that comes with it. By recognizing and respecting the impact of parasocial interaction, stakeholders can create a mutually beneficial relationship that positively impacts consumer behavior and facilitates meaningful engagement in the digital realm.

2.5 Consumer Engagement:

Consumer engagement refers to the level of involvement, interaction, and active participation of consumers with influencer content. It encompasses activities such as liking, commenting, sharing, and creating user-generated content related to the influencer's posts. High levels of consumer engagement   indicate a stronger connection and influence of the influencer on consumer behavior.

Consumer engagement has emerged as a critical statistic for assessing the effectiveness and impact of social media influencers in the age of social media. A consumer's active participation, interaction, and connection with influencers on social media platforms is referred to as their "consumer engagement." This article examines the idea of customer interaction with social media influencers, the role it plays in influencer marketing, and the methods for creating deep connections online.

Importance of Consumer Engagement:

Trust and Authenticity: Consumer engagement plays a crucial role in establishing trust and authenticity. When consumers actively engage with influencers, they develop a sense of trust and perceive the influencer's content as more genuine and reliable. Authentic engagement strengthens the bond between influencers and their followers, enhancing the influencer's credibility and influence.

Brand Awareness and Exposure: Consumer engagement helps increase brand awareness and exposure. When consumers engage with influencer content by liking, commenting, sharing, or tagging others, it amplifies the reach of the brand's message. This engagement exposes the brand to a broader audience, leading to increased visibility and potential customer acquisition.

Consumer-Brand Relationship: Engagement with social media influencers fosters a sense of connection between consumers and the brand they represent. Through interactions with influencers, consumers feel connected to the brand's values, mission, and personality. This emotional connection deepens the consumer-brand relationship, leading to long-term loyalty and advocacy.

Feedback and Co-creation: Consumer engagement provides a valuable feedback loop for influencers and brands. By actively listening to and responding to consumer comments, suggestions, and feedback, influencers and brands can refine their strategies, improve products or

services, and co-create content that resonates with their audience. This collaborative approach strengthens the influencer-consumer relationship and builds a loyal community.

Strategies for Fostering Consumer Engagement:

Authentic and Meaningful Content: Influencers need to create authentic and meaningful content that resonates with their target audience. By sharing personal stories, experiences, and expertise, influencers can connect with their followers on a deeper level. Content that provides value, educates, entertains, or inspires is more likely to elicit engagement from consumers.

Two-Way Communication: Influencers should actively engage in two-way communication with their followers. Responding to comments, messages, and inquiries demonstrates that the influencer values their audience's opinions and inputs. This open dialogue fosters a sense of community and encourages further engagement.

Contests, Giveaways, and Challenges: Running contests, giveaways, and challenges incentivize consumer engagement. These interactive activities encourage followers to participate, share content, and invite others to join. Such initiatives create excitement, foster a sense of belonging, and increase the likelihood of engagement.

Influencer-User Generated Content: Encouraging user-generated content (UGC) allows consumers to actively contribute to the influencer's content. By sharing user-generated photos, videos, testimonials, or reviews, influencers empower their followers and provide a platform for their voices to be heard. This sense of ownership and collaboration strengthens engagement.

Live Streaming and Real-Time Interactions: Live streaming platforms enable influencers to engage with their audience in real-time. Hosting live Q&A sessions, interviews, or behind-the-scenes glimpses creates a sense of exclusivity and immediacy. It allows for direct interactions, making followers feel connected and valued.

Influencer-Brand Partnerships: Collaborating with brands on sponsored content can provide additional opportunities for engagement. Influencers can create engaging campaigns, interactive product reviews, or exclusive discounts that encourage consumers to interact with the brand and participate in promotional activities.

2.6 Cognitive and Emotional Responses:

Cognitive and emotional responses play a significant role in shaping consumer behavior. Exposure to influencer content can evoke cognitive processes such as attention, information processing, and perception. Emotional responses, including positive affect, enjoyment, and identification, further influence consumer attitudes, preferences, and decision-making processes.

Social media influencers have become influential figures in shaping consumer behavior and attitudes. When consumers interact with social media influencers, they engage in cognitive and emotional responses that impact their perceptions, decisions, and behaviors. This write-up explores the cognitive and emotional responses of consumers to social media influencers, highlighting the psychological processes that drive these reactions and their implications for influencer marketing strategies.

Cognitive Responses:

Attention and Perception: Social media influencers capture consumers' attention through captivating content, unique perspectives, and relatable experiences. Consumers actively perceive and process the information presented by influencers, evaluating its relevance and authenticity.

Source Credibility and Expertise: Consumers evaluate the credibility and expertise of social media influencers. Perceptions of an influencer's knowledge, experience, and trustworthiness influence the level of cognitive engagement. Consumers may view influencers as reliable sources of information and seek their recommendations for purchasing decisions.

Cognitive Dissonance Reduction: Social media influencers can trigger cognitive dissonance in consumers when their opinions or recommendations contradict existing beliefs or preferences. Consumers may engage in cognitive processes to reconcile this dissonance, such as seeking additional information, evaluating alternative perspectives, or aligning their beliefs with the influencer's viewpoint.

Information Processing and Decision-Making: Cognitive responses also influence consumers' information processing and decision-making. Consumers may rely on mental shortcuts, such as heuristics or social proof, when evaluating influencer content. The cognitive responses to influencers' messages shape consumers' attitudes, intentions, and choices regarding products or services.

Emotional Responses:

Identification and Relatability: Emotional responses to social media influencers are often rooted in consumers' identification and relatability. Consumers may feel a sense of connection or familiarity with influencers who share similar lifestyles, values, or aspirations. This identification triggers positive emotions and fosters a sense of belonging.

Trust and Authenticity: Emotional responses are influenced by the perceived trust and authenticity of social media influencers. When influencers demonstrate transparency, authenticity, and vulnerability, consumers develop emotional bonds and trust, which enhance their engagement and receptivity to influencer content.

Excitement and Entertainment: Social media influencers often incorporate elements of excitement and entertainment into their content, triggering emotional responses such as joy, amusement, or anticipation. Consumers are drawn to influencers who provide engaging and emotionally appealing experiences, creating positive associations with the brand or product being promoted.

Social Comparison and Envy: Emotional responses to social media influencers can also involve social comparison and envy. Consumers may experience feelings of envy or inadequacy when comparing their lives to the seemingly perfect or aspirational lives portrayed by influencers. These emotions can influence consumer behavior, including desire for products or services endorsed by influencers.

Implications and Strategies:

Understanding the cognitive and emotional responses of consumers to social media influencers can inform influencer marketing strategies:

Authenticity and Transparency: Brands and influencers should prioritize authenticity and transparency to foster emotional connections and trust with their audience. Genuine and relatable content resonates with consumers and elicits positive emotional responses.

Emotional Branding: Leveraging emotional appeals and storytelling techniques can enhance the emotional responses of consumers. Brands can align themselves with influencers who evoke specific emotions that align with their brand values and target audience.

Personalization and Customization: Recognizing the diversity of consumer cognitive and emotional responses, personalized and customized influencer marketing strategies can effectively engage different segments of the audience. Tailoring messages and content to specific consumer preferences and needs enhances cognitive processing and emotional resonance.

Emotional Engagement Strategies: Engaging consumers emotionally through interactive features, contests, challenges, or emotionally resonant narratives can increase consumer involvement and drive desired behaviors.

2.7 Consumer Decision-Making:

Consumer decision-making encompasses the cognitive and behavioral processes consumers undertake when making purchasing decisions. The impact of social media influencers on consumer decision-making can be observed in various stages, including information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase intentions, and post-purchase behavior. Influencers can serve as persuasive sources that guide and influence consumer decision-making processes.

Consumer decision making is a complex process influenced by various factors, including social media influencers. In the digital age, social media platforms have become key sources of information, inspiration, and recommendations for consumers. Social media influencers, with their large followings and persuasive abilities, have a significant impact on consumer behavior and decision-making processes. This write-up explores how social media influencers influence consumer decision making and the underlying mechanisms involved.

Information and Awareness:
Social media influencers play a crucial role in providing consumers with product information and increasing awareness. Through their content, influencers introduce new products, share personal experiences, and provide insights into different brands and offerings. Consumers rely on influencers to discover new options, learn about product features, and stay updated on the latest trends.

Social Proof and Influence:

Social media influencers serve as powerful sources of social proof, influencing consumer decisions. Consumers are more likely to trust and adopt products or services recommended by influencers they perceive as credible, knowledgeable, and trustworthy. The influence of influencers stems from their ability to create a sense of authority and expertise, leading consumers to believe that their recommendations are reliable and valuable.

Engagement and Social Interaction:

Social media influencers engage with their followers through various interactive features, including comments, likes, and direct messages. This interaction fosters a sense of community, involvement, and social connection, influencing consumer decision making. Consumers feel a personal connection with influencers, which enhances their trust, loyalty, and willingness to follow their recommendations.

Social media influencers have a significant impact on consumer decision making. Through providing information, leveraging social proof, and fostering engagement, influencers shape consumer perceptions, preferences, and behaviors. Understanding the influence of influencers on consumer decision making can help marketers develop effective strategies to leverage this phenomenon and enhance their brand's presence in the digital landscape.

By integrating these key concepts into the conceptual framework, we can develop a comprehensive understanding of the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior. The relationships and interplay among social influence theory, source credibility, parasocial interaction, consumer engagement, cognitive and emotional responses, and consumer decision-making provide a holistic view of the influencer-consumer relationship. This framework will guide the analysis and interpretation of data, facilitating a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that drive the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior.

2.8 History

Influencers on social media have significantly influenced consumer behaviour in recent years and have integrated themselves into the consumer environment. The emergence of influencer marketing and the growth of social media platforms have revolutionised how brands interact with consumers and influence their purchasing behaviour. Examining the origins of this phenomena is crucial to comprehending the present influence of social media influencers on consumer behaviour.

Early Influencer Marketing:

The concept of using influential individuals to promote products or services is not new. Traditional forms of advertising, such as celebrity endorsements, have long been used to sway consumer perceptions and behavior. However, the emergence of social media platforms introduced a new era of influencer marketing that is more accessible, targeted, and interactive.

Social media's rise:

The late 2000s witnessed the rapid growth of social media platforms, including Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. These platforms offered individuals a way to connect, share content, and build online communities. As the user base expanded, so did the influence of popular social media users who garnered large followings based on their engaging content, expertise, or unique personalities.

The Birth of Social Media Influencers:

In the early days of social media, individuals with substantial followings began to attract attention from brands seeking to tap into their influence. These early influencers, often referred to as "early adopters," showcased their interests, lifestyles, or expertise through blog posts, videos, and social media updates. Their authentic and relatable content resonated with audiences, leading to increased engagement and brand awareness.

Shift to Visual Platforms:

With the launch of visual-centric platforms like Instagram and Snapchat, the influencer landscape underwent a significant shift. These platforms provided a more visually appealing and immersive experience for users, allowing influencers to showcase their lives and endorse products in a more compelling way. Visual content, combined with clever storytelling, enabled influencers to connect with their audiences on a deeper level.

Professionalization and Monetization:

As social media influencer marketing gained traction, influencers began to professionalize their craft. They invested in improving the quality of their content, collaborations with brands, and building their personal brands. Influencers realized the potential to monetize their platforms and started forming partnerships with brands, creating sponsored content, and participating in affiliate marketing programs.

Regulation and Transparency:

With the increasing commercialization of influencer marketing, regulatory bodies and platforms implemented guidelines and policies to ensure transparency and disclosure of sponsored content. Influencers are now required to disclose their relationships with brands, ensuring that consumers are aware of the promotional nature of the content they consume.

The Evolution of Consumer Behavior:

The impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior has been substantial. Influencers have the power to shape consumer perceptions, preferences, and purchasing decisions. Consumers rely on influencers for product recommendations, lifestyle inspiration, and validation. They seek authenticity and trust the opinions of influencers they perceive as relatable and genuine.
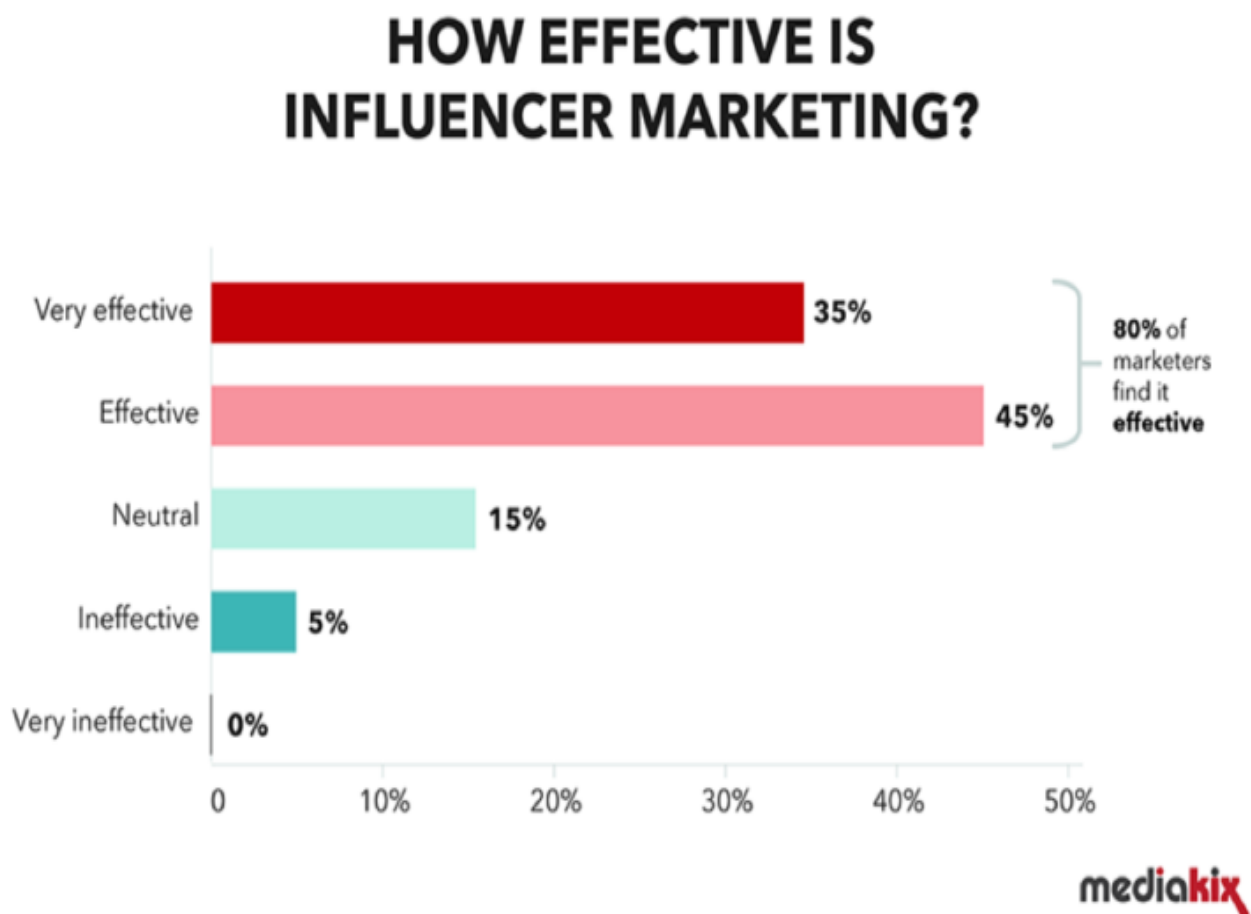
Innovation in Influencer Marketing:

As influencer marketing continues to evolve, new formats and strategies emerge. Micro-influencers, with smaller but highly engaged audiences, have gained prominence due to their niche expertise and closer connections with their followers. Additionally, live streaming, virtual events, and interactive content have created new avenues for influencers to engage with their audiences and influence consumer behavior.

The impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior has come a long way since its early beginnings. From the organic growth of social media platforms to the professionalization of influencer marketing, influencers have become powerful agents of change in the consumer landscape. As technology advances and consumer behavior evolves, it will be intriguing to see how

social media influencers continue to shape the way we discover, evaluate, and purchase products and services in the years to come.

2.9 Graphs and figures

Following is some graphical information on the conceptual framework:

HOW EFFECTIVE IS INFLUENCER MARKETING?

- Very effective — 35%
- Effective — 45%
- Neutral — 15%
- Ineffective — 5%
- Very ineffective — 0%

80% of marketers find it **effective**

mediakix

Ref: **How social media influence 71% consumer buying decisions (searchenginewatch.com)**

Figure 2.1

How frequently do you share recommendations online?

Every few weeks
19%

Every few days
8%

Daily
2%

Every few months
42%

29%
Never
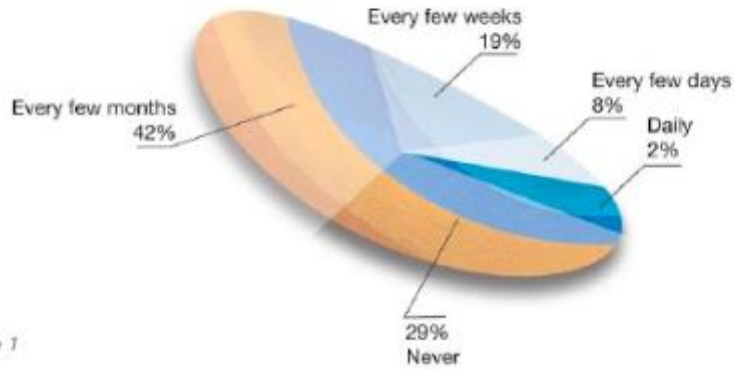
Figure 1

Ref: How social media influence 71% consumer buying decisions (searchenginewatch.com)
Figure 2.2

Used social networks

Facebook	88.41%
Twitter	38.08%
Instagram	81.13%
Youtube	64.57%
Otras	11.59%

Ref: https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/4/1506
Figure 2.3
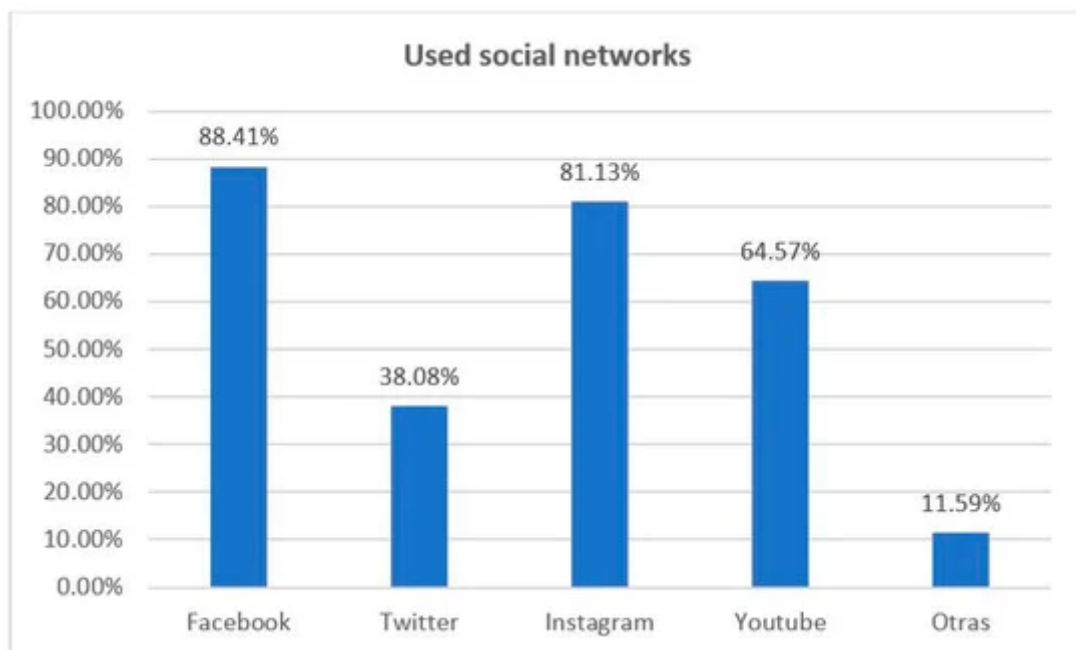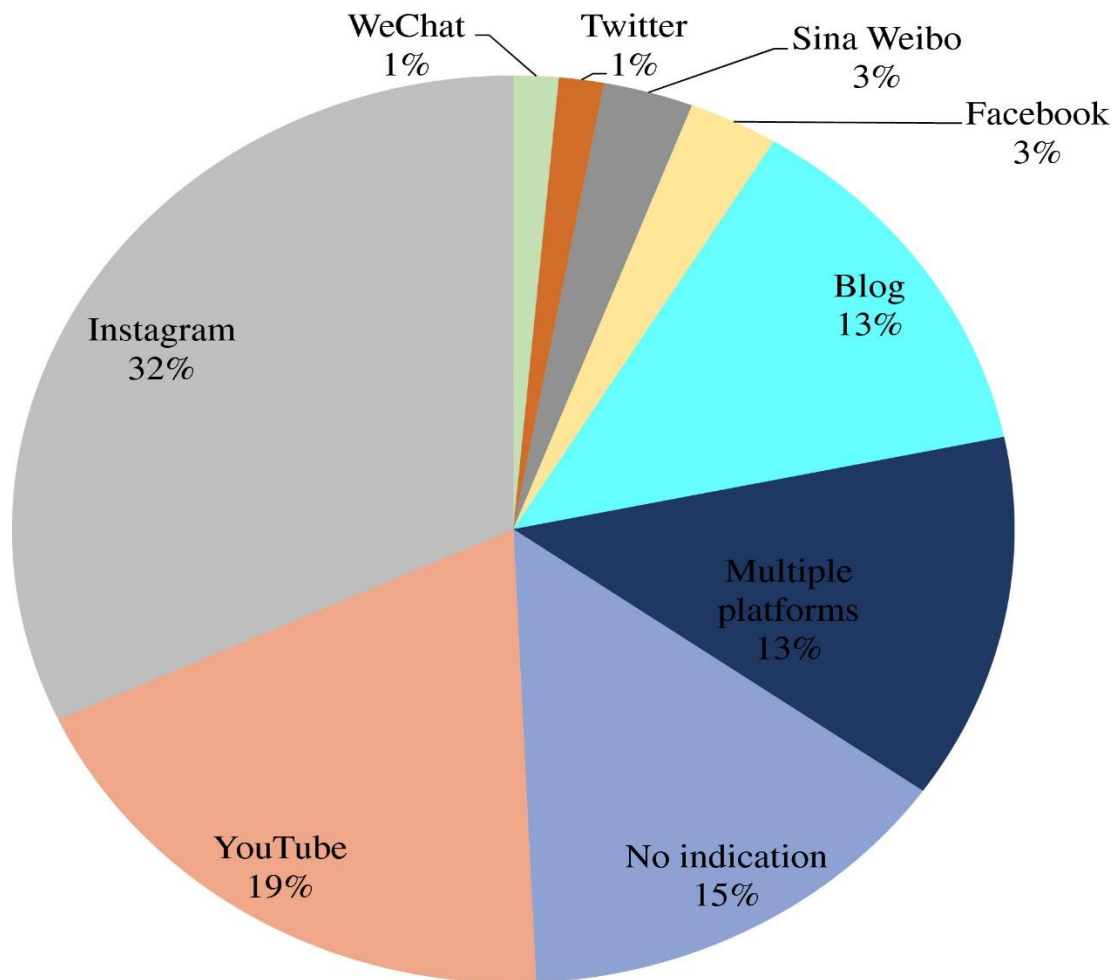
Figure 2.4

The popularity of social media influencers (SMIs) has been rapidly increasing in recent years, leading to the widespread use of influencer marketing (IM) by businesses. However, the existing research on this topic is scattered and incomplete, despite the growing interest from scholars and professionals. Given the significant role of SMIs in the consumer decision-making process and the ongoing development of this research area, there is a pressing need for a comprehensive review of the existing literature. This paper aims to acknowledge this gap by consolidating the current state of research on IM in social media settings. Through a systematic review of 68 articles from 29 respected academic journals in various fields, the study uncovers key themes and concepts related to IM. The findings shed light on the factors that make SMIs appealing and influential in shaping

consumer attitudes and behaviors. The analysis also presents a comprehensive framework that considers the factors influencing outcomes, such as antecedents, mediators, moderators, and contextual factors affecting consumer behavior. The study identifies research gaps and suggests future directions that encompass emerging areas and unexplored aspects, including theory, context, and methodology. Finally, the paper discusses the implications of this research for both theory and practice.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR YOU WHEN SELECTING INFLUENCERS?

Number of followers
8.2%

Her/His niche expertise
15.1%

Rate of engagement
31.8%

Her/His content quality
44.9%
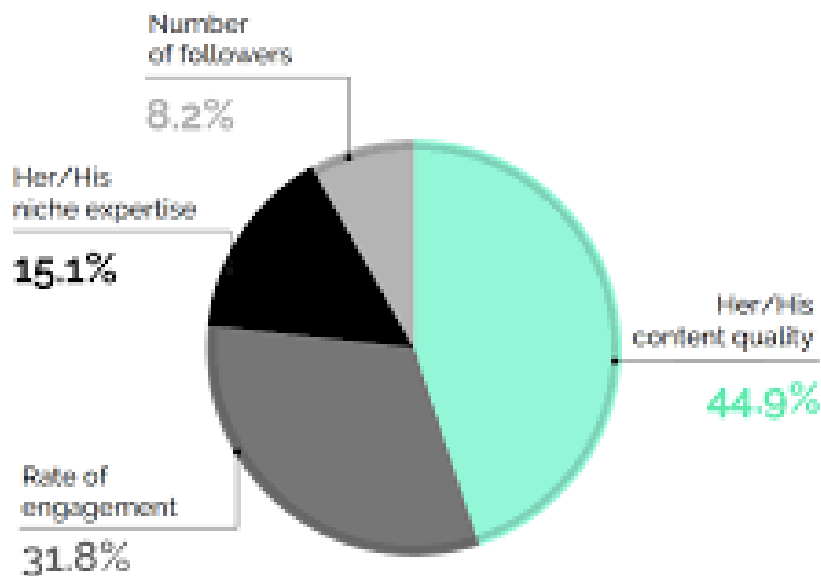
Ref: https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcR1rVsY983P1L6hB8Y_BtSfap0rOWnfatZSog&usqp=CAU

Figure 2.5

According to Figure 2.5, companies recognize the significant impact of social media marketing on product awareness, as it allows them to reach a larger audience. Marketers and business models have adapted to the demands of social media, utilizing these platforms to receive feedback and address customer complaints. Recent studies indicate that social media is not primarily used for direct product sales but rather plays a crucial role in establishing stronger customer relationships within the digital landscape. This notion is complemented by the concept of social commerce, which emphasizes the influence of offers and promotions on social media platforms in driving product sales. Collaborative projects, blogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual gaming worlds, and virtual social worlds are just a few of the six categories that social media is

divided under.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 .1 Chourasia Sarthak, Shrivastava Avishi, Jodhana Lokeshwar, Verma B, (2023), Analyzing the Effects of Social Media Influencers on the Purchase Decision of Consumers, (e-paper), Gurugram University Business Review (GUBR), (vol 2), 2582-9718, Chourasia Sarthak, India.

Social media has become the primary source of travel information for passengers, leading tourist service providers to collaborate with social media influencers (SMIs) as part of their digital marketing strategy. SMIs create and share content on social media platforms, influencing consumer behavior. The impact of an SMI's content spreads quickly through their social media outlets, affecting the views and actions of their followers. Businesses have seen significant returns on investment from influencer marketing. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between consumer decisions and the e-services cape influenced by SMIs, as well as the impact of sponsored content on consumer decisions compared to organic content. The findings of this study can help hotels in developing effective strategies for social media engagement, involving SMIs in marketing communication, and designing a satisfying consumer and hotel communication strategy. In today's digital landscape, social media has become the primary platform for travelers seeking information. As a result, tourist service providers are increasingly collaborating with social media influencers (SMIs) to enhance their marketing efforts. SMIs, who enjoy online recognition and trust from their followers, play a significant role in influencing consumer behavior through their social media content. Whether positive or negative, the impact of an SMI's content is swiftly transmitted to their followers and has the potential to shape their purchasing decisions. According to a survey, businesses have gained substantial returns on their investment in influencer marketing. This study aims to explore the connection between consumer decisions and the digital environment shaped by SMIs, and evaluate the influence of sponsored content compared to organic content. The research findings will provide valuable insights for hotels in developing effective social media strategies, engaging with

SMIs in marketing communication, and creating satisfactory consumer and hotel communication approaches.

When consumers are uncertain about a new product or service, they often seek information from previous customers to reduce the perceived risk. Word-of-mouth (WOM) has been shown to significantly influence consumer purchasing decisions. Traditional WOM involved seeking advice from immediate contacts, but the rise of the internet and social media has transformed how consumers make decisions and how marketers engage with their target audience. Digital marketing through platforms like social media and eWOM has enabled marketers to connect with and interact with consumers in technologically enabled ways. Unlike traditional WOM, eWOM comes from sources unknown to the user and is often accessed through the internet. Social media, in particular, has popularized eWOM as a reliable source of information for potential customers. Studies have shown that consumers trust information shared by other users more than advertisements or information from marketers. In the food and beverage sector, there is a lack of scholarly research specifically focusing on influencer characteristics and skills in the context of eWOM. However, studies in Malaysia have explored eWOM in various industries, with the travel industry being the most prominent.

In the era of social media, consumers have transitioned from brand supporters to content creators, aspiring to become social media influencers. Marketers recognize the potential of these influencers in engaging large and targeted audiences with relevant content, resulting in higher returns on investment compared to traditional advertising. The travel industry attracts influencers due to travel benefits and the opportunity to associate with appealing brands. However, the challenge lies in maintaining authenticity when influencers are paid for endorsements. The professionalization of influencers, the emergence of new intermediaries, and technological advancements in influencer marketing have simplified tracking and monitoring processes. To stay current, travel marketers need to be aware of influencer marketing trends. Despite its significance, research on travel influencer marketing is limited, leaving unanswered questions about consumer perceptions of influencers and the factors driving their persuasiveness. Further exploration is needed to advance the theory and practice of social media marketing in the travel and tourism industry.

3.1.2 Ambalur Gayathri, (2021), Consumers' Perception of the Credibility of Social Media Influencers and its Impact on Purchase Intention, (e-paper), Adalya Journal, (vol 8), 1301-2746, Ambalur Gayathri, India

Social media influencer marketing has become increasingly popular as brands recognize the persuasive power of influencers in influencing consumer purchase decisions. In the digital age, consumers rely on online reviews and recommendations before making purchases, and the credibility of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) plays a crucial role in shaping their acceptance of messages. This study focuses on examining consumers' perception of the credibility of social media influencers and its impact on purchase intention. The data was collected through questionnaires from a purposive sample of 60 female student respondents. This empirical study utilizes a survey method to collect primary data from 60 female undergraduate and postgraduate students. A standardized questionnaire was used as the data collection tool. Secondary data was gathered from various electronic resources, articles, and journals. The study focuses on examining the factors of credibility in social media influencers, including trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise, as independent variables, and their impact on purchase intention, which serves as the dependent variable. Statistical tools such as weighted mean, percentage, correlation, and regression analysis were employed for data analysis.

The study aimed to investigate how consumers perceive the credibility of social media influencers and its influence on their purchase intentions. The findings indicated a positive relationship between the credibility factors (trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise) of influencers and purchase intention. Among these factors, attractiveness was found to have the most significant impact on purchase intention, suggesting that marketers should prioritize working with attractive influencers, as their attractiveness has a strong influence on consumers' purchase decisions. As social media influencer marketing continues to grow, businesses must collaborate with effective influencers who are considered the new brand endorsers and key drivers in influencing consumers' purchase intentions.

3.2.1 Zwicker Sebastian, Tarabashkina Liudmila, Proksch Michael, Hardiman Marco, (2023), How Micro-Influencers' Personality Influences the Personality of Novice and Established Brands, Australasian Marketing Journal, (0), 10.1177/14413582231153191, Tarabashkina Liudmila, Australia and New Zealand.

The rise of social media has led to less control over brand content sharing. While many companies seek brand content sharing by micro-influencers, the impact on brand personality remains unclear. This study combines context effects and schema theories to show that for new brands, assimilation occurs when paired with micro-influencers. In contrast, established brands experience contrast and ceiling effects, where congruent micro-influencers do not enhance brand personality, but incongruent ones do. The findings challenge current branding strategies, suggesting that matching influencers with established brands may not be effective in boosting brand personality. Caution is advised for new brands to avoid assimilating undesirable personalities.

The study involved pilot tests and two main studies to examine the effects of micro-influencers' personality and brand personality on consumer perceptions and purchase intentions.

In the pilot tests, the researchers tested the assimilation, contrast, and ceiling effects using sincerity and excitement brand personality dimensions. They conducted multiple pilot studies to select experimental stimuli, including micro-influencer profiles and automotive brands with different personality traits. The participants in these pilot studies ranked the profiles and brands based on sincerity and excitement scales.

In Study 1, the researchers used a between-subjects experimental design to test Hypothesis 1 (H1) and Hypothesis 3 (H3). Participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups: exciting micro-influencer, sincere micro-influencer, or a control group with no profile. They were exposed to micro-influencer profiles and evaluated the perceived personality of the influencer, credibility, attractiveness, and expertise. They also rated the personality of the brands displayed alongside the profiles. Purchase intentions and self-brand connection were measured as well.

The results showed that the brand personality perceptions differed depending on the experimental conditions. When paired with the sincere micro-influencer, the brand with less salient personality

was perceived as more sincere compared to the control group. Similarly, the brand with less salient personality was rated as more exciting when paired with the exciting micro-influencer. These findings supported H1.

Regarding H3, sincere brand personality positively influenced purchase intentions when self-brand connection was high. The effect of experimental conditions on purchase intentions was fully mediated by sincere brand personality. The same pattern was observed for exciting brand personality, where it influenced purchase intentions only when self-brand connection was high. Again, the mediation was fully mediated by exciting brand personality.

In Study 2, the researchers expanded the design to test H2 and H3. They used a between-subjects experiment with micro-influencer personality (exciting, sincere, or control) and brands with salient personalities (sincere brand or exciting brand). The procedures and measures were similar to Study 1. The results showed that participants rated the influencers' personality as intended, with the sincere influencer being perceived as more sincere and the exciting influencer as more exciting. The same pattern was observed for the salient brand personalities, where the sincere brand was rated as more sincere and the exciting brand as more exciting.

Overall, the studies provided support for the effects of micro-influencers' personality and brand personality on consumer perceptions and purchase intentions. The credibility, attractiveness, and expertise of the influencers did not significantly influence brand personality perceptions, ruling out alternative explanations.

3.2.2 Sijabat Lelasari, Rantung Danny, Mandagi Deske, (2022), The Role of Social Media Influencers in Shaping Customer Brand Engagement and Brand Perception, (e-paper), Jurnal Manajemen Bisnis, 10.33096/jmb.v9i2.459, Mandagi Deske, Indonesia.

Social media has developed into a potent tool for reaching a wider audience in the modern digital world. It is essential to use the right media when marketing a product in order to effectively convey the brand's message to both present and new customers. This study focuses on three key issues: (1) how social media influencers (SMI) affect consumer brand engagement (CBE) and customer brand perception (CBP); (2) how CBE affects CBP; and (3) if CBE serves as a bridge between SMI and CBP. Purposive sampling was used in the study's survey of Big Cola consumers in West Java, Indonesia, to gather quantitative data from 154 respondents in the three regions of Bekasi, Bogor, and Depok.

SEM, or structural equation modelling, was used to analyse the data using the statistical programmes SPSS and SmartPLS. The findings demonstrated that SMI significantly and favourably affected CBE and CBP. Additionally, it was discovered that CBE was a major mediator between SMI and CBP and favourably and significantly influenced brand impression. Influencer marketing on social media can improve consumer engagement and brand reputation. Brand perception grows along with increased customer interaction. When choosing the most effective promotional media, firms can use these data as helpful information.

A descriptive quantitative design was selected to measure the hypotheses and respond to the research questions in order to meet the study's objectives. According to Leavy (2017), this strategy uses logical designs to either disprove or support particular theories and hypotheses. According to Kaur et al. (2018), descriptive studies seek to explain the connection between variables in a sample or population. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to analyse the data after collecting primary data from respondents via a quantitative survey.

Due to West Java's well-known culinary tourism, particularly Sundanese Kitchen, the study concentrated on Big Cola customers there. Purposive sampling, as defined by

Etikan (2016), is a nonprobability sampling approach used to choose individuals or units from a population who meet particular criteria. This method was used to choose the sample. Domestic Big Cola customers who met the requirements of being familiar with the brand's products and having drank the beverage at least once made up the sample. They could name one or two of their favourite social media influencers they followed and they also followed influencers on their chosen social media platforms. The respondents, who had drunk soft drinks, ranged in age from 15 and up and came from every part of West Java, including Bekasi, Bogor, and Depok.

All characteristics were assessed using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first portion asked for demographic data about the respondents, including their age, gender, occupation, and place of residence; the second part contained 24 item indicators that covered the three variables under study. The measurements for consumer engagement (CBE) and the effectiveness of social media influencers (SMI) were taken from Chen et al. (2021), with CBE being measured by eight items and SMI by seven. The nine components that made up the variable customer brand perception (CBP) were taken from Hutter et al. (2020). To evaluate the face validity of the measuring items, a pilot research was carried out with 20 participants who met the same requirements as the full sample. The questionnaire items were clarified and updated in response to comments from the pilot study.

A pre-test study was used during the data gathering process to validate and guarantee the dependability of the selected variable indicators. The researcher specified the main questionnaire's goals and objectives before distributing it to respondents online via Google Forms. For further analysis, the responses were organized in a spreadsheet and exported to SPSS and SmartPLS.

Performing a demographic study on respondents' age, gender, and location was the first step in the data analysis process. Using SPSS, descriptive statistical analysis was carried out to evaluate the data's normal distribution and check the accuracy of the data. According to Hair et al. (2014), many components were combined into a single model using structural equation modelling (SEM) utilising SmartPLS. This allowed for simultaneous testing and estimation of correlations between complex constructs (latent variables) in the measurement model. The SEM technique was used to analyse the data in a number of steps. First, convergent and discriminant validity of the study were assessed.

When all of a variable's indicators had loading factors of at least 0.7, convergent validity

was attained. Cross-loading and the Fornell-Larcker criterion were used to evaluate the discriminant validity of the data. According to these criteria, the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE), which measures discriminant validity, should be larger than the correlation between the variables and the correlation between the variables' indicators as well as the indicators of other variables. Cronbach's alpha (CA), composite reliability (CR), and AVE values were evaluated as part of the reliability test; values above 0.7 were considered reliable. The model was structurally tested once validity and reliability markers were satisfied. To test the structural model or hypotheses, the SmartPLS statistical program's Bootstrapping tool was used to look at the significance of the path coefficients. If the route coefficient was statistically significant, it meant that the model's variables were significantly correlated.

This study sought to examine how social media influencers (SMI), customer brand engagement (CBE), and consumer brand perception (CBP) are related. With the use of a questionnaire and the statistical analysis programmes SPSS and SmartPLS, a quantitative survey was carried out. The findings supported every hypothesis. First, in line with earlier studies, SMI had a favourable and considerable influence on consumer engagement. Second, social media influencers positively and significantly impacted how people perceived a brand. Thirdly, brand impression was positively and significantly impacted by consumer engagement. Last but not least, the link between social media influencers and brand perception was mediated by consumer brand involvement. Future studies can address issues like demographic differences and data collecting that reflects real attitudes. By adding more variables and factors connected to them, the model used in this study can be improved. These results offer insightful knowledge for formulating hypotheses and comprehending the relationships between the components under investigation.

3.3.1 Ao Lie, Bansal Rohit, Pruthi Nishita, Khaskheli Muhammad, (2023), Impact of Social Media Influencers on Customer Engagement and Purchase Intention: A Meta-Analysis, (e-paper), Sustainability 2023, 15(3):2744, (10.3390/su15032744), Basel, Switzerland.

This research presents a meta-analysis that examines the characteristics of social media influencers and their impact on customer engagement and purchase intention. The study

identifies eight influencer characteristics, namely homophily, expertise, trustworthiness, credibility, congruence with the product, entertainment value, informative value, and attractiveness. By analyzing data from 62 individual studies with a combined participant count of 22,554, the study finds a moderate to high correlation between these characteristics and customer engagement as well as purchase intention. Notably, entertainment value exhibits the strongest association with customer engagement, while credibility has the greatest impact on purchase intention. This research significantly contributes to the field of influencer marketing by reducing heterogeneity and providing empirical evidence regarding the direction and magnitude of these relationships.

To achieve these findings, the study adopts a meta-analysis approach, which involves summarizing the results of multiple empirical studies using effect size measures such as correlation coefficients and combining them to derive overall conclusions. This approach is justified for several reasons. Firstly, it enables a comprehensive evaluation of the research landscape by statistically summarizing previous studies on various relationships. It not only determines the presence or absence of a relationship but also assesses the direction and strength of the effect. Additionally, by considering potential moderators and pooling results from multiple quantitative research studies, meta-analysis enhances statistical power and overcomes the limitations of individual studies. It addresses issues such as small sample sizes and provides more accurate estimations by aggregating findings from numerous research publications within the same domain. Furthermore, meta-analysis generates new hypotheses that may not have been explored in individual studies and offers insights for future research in the field.

In today's social media-dominated era, influencer marketing has gained significant traction as a strategy for influencing potential customers. This research conducts a meta-synthesis of existing literature, focusing on eight key attributes of social media influencers: homophily, expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, credibility, informative value, entertainment value, and congruence with the product. The analysis incorporates data from 62 individual studies, comprising 176 effect sizes and involving a total sample of 22,554 individuals. The results demonstrate that these influencer attributes exhibit moderate to high associations with both purchase intention and customer engagement. Given the active presence of customers on

social media platforms and their inclination to follow digital influencers, practitioners are encouraged to leverage these influencers to engage customers and foster purchase intentions. This study not only provides practical implications but also contributes to the academic literature by addressing heterogeneity in influencer marketing research and offering empirical evidence on the direction and magnitude of these relationships. The synthesis of existing literature serves as a foundation for further development and exploration of the discipline, inspiring future research endeavors.

3.3.2 Mabkhot Hashed, Isa Normalisa, Mabkhot Ammar, (2022), The Influence of the Credibility of Social Media Influencers SMIs on the Consumers' Purchase Intentions: Evidence from Saudi Arabia, (e-paper), Sustainability, (vol 14), 10.3390/su141912323, Isa Normalisa, Switzerland.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the influence of social media influencers (SMIs) on consumer purchase intentions has garnered significant attention. One key factor that mediates this relationship is credibility. To investigate these dynamics in the context of Saudi Arabia's Eastern Region, a survey was conducted involving 312 respondents. The collected data was analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings of the study indicate a significant link between social media influencers and purchase intentions, with credibility playing a mediating role. These results contribute to a deeper understanding of consumer behavior. The paper also discusses the implications of these findings and identifies opportunities for future research in this area.

To collect the data, a cross-sectional survey approach was employed in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. Cross-sectional surveys are commonly used to gather information on various aspects of respondents' opinions, attitudes, behaviors, intentions, and knowledge. The objective of this research was to examine the influence of social media influencers and credibility on consumers' purchase intentions during the COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia. The relationship between these variables was analyzed using PLS-SEM, which aligns with the theoretical framework of the study.

To ensure representativeness, a sample size of 384 respondents was determined based on the population size of the Eastern Province and desired levels of confidence and precision. Due to the extensive and diverse nature of social media users in the population, a non-probability convenience sampling method was employed, as it is commonly used in studies focusing on behavior and followers' perceptions.

The survey questionnaire was presented in Arabic to ensure participants' comfort, and back-to-back translation was utilized to maintain equivalence with the original English instruments. Online

questionnaires were created using Google Forms and distributed to regular users of various social media platforms, including Snapchat, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook. Screening questions were used to ensure that participants followed influencers on these platforms and had experience purchasing products or services influenced by influencer advertisements. Only qualified participants were allowed to proceed with the remaining survey questions, and they were encouraged to share the questionnaire within their social networks.

A total of 312 valid responses were collected and analyzed using SPSS version 26 to examine the demographics and basic characteristics of the study sample. The measurement items for the constructs were derived from previous studies. Social media influencers were assessed across five dimensions: expertise, likability, trustworthiness, information quality, and entertainment value. Consumer purchase intention and credibility were measured using five and three items, respectively. The data were then analyzed using PLS-SEM techniques, specifically utilizing smartpls3, which allows for the examination of all pathways in a single analysis.

The study found support for all the hypotheses proposed. Through empirical testing, the research confirmed the relationship between social media influencers and consumers' purchase intentions, with credibility playing a significant mediating role between them. Social media platforms and influencers exert a substantial impact on customer behavior, particularly in terms of purchase intentions. This study focuses on elucidating the connection between customer purchases and social media influencers, highlighting the crucial mediating role of credibility. The research was conducted among customers in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia who actively used online platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic. The observed reciprocal relationship between social media influencers and consumer purchase intention aligns with the principles of social exchange theory.

3.4.1 Tallion Brian, Mueller Steven, Kowalczyk Christine, Jones Daniel, (2020), Understanding the Relationship between Social Media Influencers and their Followers: the moderating role of closeness, (e-paper), Journal of Product and Brand Management, 1061-0421, Tallion Brian, USA.

The aim of this paper is to enhance our understanding of the relationship between social media influencers and their followers, with a particular focus on how influencers can effectively manage their personal brands. Two studies were conducted to investigate this topic, employing qualitative content analysis and path analysis modeling to analyze the collected data. The study findings revealed that the attractiveness and likability of influencers positively predict followers' attitudes towards them, word-of-mouth recommendations, and purchase intentions. However, similarity between the influencer and the follower only predicts word-of-mouth behavior. The concept of

closeness plays a moderating role in these relationships but has varying effects. Closeness positively moderates the impact of attractiveness on purchase intentions but has a negative effect when combined with similarity on purchase intentions. Additionally, closeness moderates the effect of likability on followers' attitudes towards the influencer. It is important to note that the study has limitations, including the use of a student sample and the participants' self-identification as social media influencers. Future research should consider experimental designs that manipulate different types of well-known or fictional influencers on various social media platforms. The practical implications of this study involve providing marketers and advertisers with a better understanding of how consumers engage with influencers on social media. The study's originality lies in identifying the role of closeness as a moderator in consumers' behaviors towards social media influencers.

To gather data for the study, an online survey was conducted, involving a total of 301 respondents. The majority of participants were students enrolled in upper-level business courses at two large state universities, with some receiving extra credit for their participation. Additional participants were recruited through a snowballing technique, where existing respondents were asked to invite up to five friends to participate. After removing respondents who did not follow any celebrities or influencers on social media, the final sample consisted of 201 participants, primarily female (55%) with a mean age of 22.61.

The survey began by collecting information on participants' social media usage, including the platforms they used and the time spent on them. Participants who indicated following social media influencers were asked to name an influencer they followed and categorize them based on the primary platform used. Instagram was the most popular platform (58.5%), followed by YouTube (24.6%) and Facebook (9.4%). Participants then rated their influencers in terms of similarity, likability, attractiveness, and closeness. The dependent variables of attitude toward the influencer, word-of-mouth recommendations, and purchase likelihood were measured. The survey concluded with participants providing demographic information.

This study delved into the influence of likeability, attractiveness, and similarity, as well as the impact of closeness on attitudes, word-of-mouth recommendations, and purchase intentions. The findings underscored the significant role of closeness in shaping attitudes towards influencers and purchase intentions, underscoring its relevance for brand managers and social media influencers. Future research should explore the influence of closeness on other factors that affect attitudes, behaviors, and advertising effectiveness, assisting social media influencers in effectively managing their personal brands and aiding brand managers in identifying suitable influencers. The advent of social media platforms and the persuasive power of influencers are transforming consumer-brand relationships, reshaping the dynamics of modern consumer-brand interactions.

3.4.2 Gerlich Michael, (2023), The Power of Personal Connections in Micro-Influencer Marketing: A Study on Consumer Behaviour and the Impact of Micro-Influencers, (e-paper), Transnational Marketing Journal, (vol 11), 2041-4692, Oxbridge Publishing House, UK.

In the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, influencer marketing has gained significant traction as

businesses seek to leverage influencers for promoting their products and services. Surprisingly, micro-influencers with smaller follower counts tend to have higher engagement and conversion rates compared to celebrities and mega-influencers. Understanding the factors behind the success of certain influencers is crucial. Previous research has primarily focused on micro-influencers as a collective group, without distinguishing between those personally known to their followers and those who are not. This differentiation is important because consumers are skeptical about product promotions by influencers, assuming they are driven by monetary gain and fame. As a result, consumers trust micro-influencers who offer authentic information based on personal experiences and expertise. This research aims to investigate the reasons underlying the success of these micro and nano influencers. Specifically, it explores whether followers who have a personal connection or familiarity with micro-influencers make purchasing decisions based on their recommendations. The research findings emphasize that micro-influencers who are personally known to their followers hold greater persuasive power over them.

The researchers employed a mixed methodology approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection. Qualitative research involves capturing subjective perspectives through non-numerical data sources such as literature reviews, interviews, observations, or focus groups. On the other hand, quantitative methodology aims to obtain objective insights through numerical, mathematical, or statistical data. In this study, numerical data was collected through surveys, which were then supplemented with focused interviews to provide a subjective viewpoint. The research focuses on examining the influence of micro-influencers on people's purchasing decisions, particularly when the micro-influencers are personally known to the followers. Interviews were conducted to gain qualitative insights, while an online survey was used to add objectivity and enhance the study's credibility.

Influencer marketing gained prominence when companies faced budget constraints during social restrictions and turned to more cost-effective options. Micro-influencers emerged as a successful marketing strategy, as research showed they had higher engagement and conversion rates compared to celebrities. Consumers tend to be skeptical of paid advertising and perceive micro-influencers as more authentic due to their specialized expertise. However, as micro-influencers gain popularity, their authenticity may diminish, leading followers to question their promoted products. This research aimed to investigate if micro-influencers influenced purchase decisions,

specifically among followers who knew them personally or had a relationship with them. The survey revealed that participants trusted micro-influencers they knew personally but were not influenced by unfamiliar micro-influencers. Literature review supported the finding that consumers rely on advice from family members and friends for purchase decisions. The chi-square test further supported the lack of interdependence in responses. Overall, the research concluded that personal connections with micro-influencers, particularly as family or friends, yield greater persuasive power. To address the credibility issue, data analytics and AI can be employed for targeted marketing to micro-influencers, allowing them to genuinely experience and promote products without their knowledge of being targeted. This organic approach enhances follower confidence and avoids paid promotions.

3.5.1 Singh Kamaldeep, (2021), Influencer Marketing from a Consumer Perspective: How Attitude, Trust, and Word of Mouth Affect Buying Behaviour, (e-paper), European Integration Studies 1(15), 10.5755/j01.eis.1.15.28803, Singh Kamaldeep, Latvia.

Influencer marketing has become increasingly popular among companies for promoting their brands. The objective of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of how social media influencers impact consumers' buying behavior. The study focused on examining consumers' attitudes and confidence towards influencers and determining whether Word of Mouth (WoM) or social media influencers have a greater influence on buying behavior. The results indicated that the impact of social media influencers on buying behavior depends on consumers' attitudes. Those with positive attitudes are more likely to make purchases, while those with negative attitudes refrain from buying. Factors such as perceived connection, honesty, and expertise of influencers contribute to consumer confidence. Additionally, the study found that the perceptions, opinions, and experiences of the consumer's environment, particularly WoM, play a significant role in influencing buying behavior and attitudes. The study employed a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews to gather and analyze data from at least five participants. The findings from the interviews will be used to formulate the study's conclusions.

The primary data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews, which are

widely used in qualitative research due to their versatility and flexibility. The interviews were conducted using an interview guide that covered various relevant topics. The purpose of the interviews was to understand how the research subjects perceive the phenomenon of influencers and to capture their lived reality. The interviews allowed for a discussion where participants could share their experiences, enabling the researcher to gain a firsthand understanding of their reality. One of the main advantages of this interview format is the reciprocity it creates between the interviewer and the respondent, allowing for follow-up questions and giving the respondent space to express themselves. A total of 13 interviews were conducted, with eight being online interviews and five conducted over the phone. The interviews continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, which means that enough data had been collected to analyze based on the theoretical framework and answer the research questions of the study.

The study findings indicate that confidence in influencer marketing varies based on people's attitudes towards the phenomenon. Previous research has shown that consumers follow social media influencers (SMIs) because of shared interests, a sense of community, and the influencer's reliability. However, this study reveals that consumers develop confidence in SMIs through a sense of belonging, perceiving the person as honest, and recognizing their expertise in the marketed products. Consumers with positive attitudes towards SMIs are more likely to intend to purchase products promoted by them, while negative experiences and attitudes lead to reduced trust and interest in SMIs, resulting in refraining from buying. The study highlights the significant impact of Word of Mouth (WoM) on consumers' buying behavior, particularly when trust in the environment outweighs trust in SMIs. Consumers tend to prefer recommendations from those in their personal network over those from SMIs. This preference for environmental opinions and recommendations is believed to be influential and credible since they are usually independent of the product or service and do not have a self-serving agenda.

It is acknowledged that the overrepresentation of women in the study limits the generalizability of the findings to the entire population of social media users in India. However, the identified tendencies suggest that these perceptions may also exist in the broader population. The study reveals that men tend to hold more negative attitudes towards the phenomenon, while women exhibit more positive attitudes. Additionally, women were the only ones who reported making purchases based on SMI marketing.

These conclusions can aid in improving existing influencer marketing strategies. Companies

utilizing influencer marketing should focus on building trust and fostering positive attitudes among their audience. Recognizing the significant impact of WoM on consumers' purchasing decisions, companies must ensure that their marketing aligns with their actual offerings to avoid negative consumer experiences. It is also crucial for companies to collaborate with SMIs who possess expertise in the promoted products or services, as this factor enhances consumer confidence. SMIs can benefit from designing their advertising campaigns and presenting themselves in ways that resonate positively with consumers, such as offering discount codes.

The study aims to contribute to further research in influencer marketing, consumer behavior related to influencer marketing, and the impact of SMIs on consumers. As the phenomenon is still relatively new, more research in this area is necessary to understand evolving consumer buying behaviors and trends.

3.5.2 Limniou Maria, Ascroft Yasmin, McLean Sarah, (2022), Differences Between Facebook and Instagram Usage in Regard to Problematic Use and Well-Being, (e-paper), Journal of Technology in Behavioral Science, 7(2), 10.1007/s41347-021-00229-z, Crown, UK.

The study aimed to fill the research gap concerning the relationship between well-being indicators (such as self-esteem, symptoms of depression, and feelings of loneliness) and the use of Facebook and Instagram. While previous studies have explored Facebook usage, limited research has focused on Instagram. Additionally, the study aimed to investigate whether problematic use and well-being differed between Facebook and Instagram users based on factors like the number of received "likes," Facebook friends, Instagram followers, and the importance attributed to these metrics.

An online questionnaire was completed by 69 Facebook users and 66 Instagram users, assessing self-esteem, loneliness, depression, and problematic internet use. The results revealed that Instagram users displayed significantly higher levels of problematic use compared to Facebook users. Age and the importance placed on Instagram "followers" were negatively associated with problematic use, whereas only the importance of Facebook "likes" was negatively associated with problematic use on that platform.

The number of Facebook friends was positively linked to depressive symptoms, while the number of Instagram followers did not show a similar association. It is important to note that the number of "likes" on Facebook was negatively associated with self-esteem, but no such association was found with feelings of loneliness. These differences in associations between the two platforms and well-being may be attributed to their distinct functionalities. Instagram, being image-oriented, may boost users' self-esteem through "likes," but only when users have strong connections within the platform.

The research study obtained ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee. Participants were provided with a participant information sheet and a consent form, outlining the study's aim, the reason for their invitation, and the inclusion criteria. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw anonymously at any time without providing a reason. Once they provided consent, participants could anonymously complete the online questionnaire, which was identical for both Facebook and Instagram users.

The study employed an opportunity sampling research design, advertising the online questionnaire on the researchers' social media networks and the School of Psychology recruitment website. This ensured a diverse range of participants in terms of age. Over a two-month period (December 2019 to January 2020), a total of 135 social media users completed the questionnaire. Based on power calculation, the margin of error for these 135 participants was ± 7.2% for a total population of 500 social media users.

At the beginning of the questionnaire, participants were asked to identify which platform they primarily used (Facebook or Instagram) based on where they spent more than 75% of their time. Among the participants, 66 (48.9%) were predominantly Instagram users, while 69 (51.1%) were predominantly Facebook users. In terms of age, 79 participants (58.5%) were between 18 and 30 years old, and 56 participants (41.5%) were aged 31 and above. The study included 43 male

participants (31.9%) and 92 female participants (68.1%).

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction to Methodology

To investigate the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior:

The impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior has become a significant area of investigation. With the rise of social media platforms, influencers have gained immense popularity and can shape consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions. Researchers are exploring the extent to which influencers affect consumer behavior, examining factors such as trust, credibility, and social proof. By studying the influence of social media influencers, scholars aim to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that drive consumer behavior in the digital age. This research is crucial for businesses and marketers seeking to leverage the power of influencers in their marketing strategies and tailor their approach to effectively engage with consumers in an increasingly digital and connected world.

4.2 Research Design

Cross-sectional design: This design involves collecting data at a single point in time from a sample selected from a larger population. This design is useful for examining the prevalence of certain behaviors, attitudes, or health outcomes in a population. The sample is selected using a sampling method such as simple random sampling or stratified sampling. The advantage of this design is that it is quick and relatively inexpensive, but it cannot establish causality or determine changes over time.

Longitudinal design: This design involves collecting data from the same sample over an extended period, such as months or years. This design is useful for examining changes in behavior, attitudes, or health outcomes over time. The sample is selected using a sampling method such as simple random sampling or stratified sampling, and the same participants are followed over time. The advantage of this design is that it can establish causality and determine changes over time, but it is time-consuming and expensive.

4.3 Data selection procedure

4.3.1 Sampling method

To ensure that our study accurately reflects the larger population of social media influencers and consumers, it's important to use a sampling method that reduces potential biases. Simple random sampling is an effective method for achieving this, as it gives every member of the population an equal chance of being selected for the study. This helps to minimize the influence of personal preferences or other factors that could bias the results.

4.3.2 Target audience

The population of interest for this study would be individuals who are consumers of products endorsed by social media influencers and who use social media platforms, including people of different ages, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

4.3.3 Sample size

In addition to the sampling method, we also need to consider the size of our sample and the characteristics of the individuals who will be included. For this study, we have decided on a sample size of 50 participants. This will allow us to collect enough data to draw meaningful conclusions without being too large and unwieldy.

4.4 Data collection (Instrumentation)

4.4.1 Secondary Data

Firstly, we will be using secondary data sources to gather existing information on this topic from published studies, reports, and other relevant sources. This will allow us to build on existing knowledge and identify any gaps that need to be filled through our primary data collection.

4.4.2 Primary Data: Survey Research using google forms.

Secondly, we will be collecting primary data through a survey research approach using Google Forms. This method will allow us to gather new information directly from our sample of social media consumers and will give us a more detailed understanding of their experiences and attitudes toward social media influencers and consumer behavior

4.5 Data analysis

This study has used graphical analysis using Microsoft Excel for data analysis. The survey was done by using google forms and its data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel to come up with an acute result for primary data.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS

5.1. Do you follow any social media influencers?

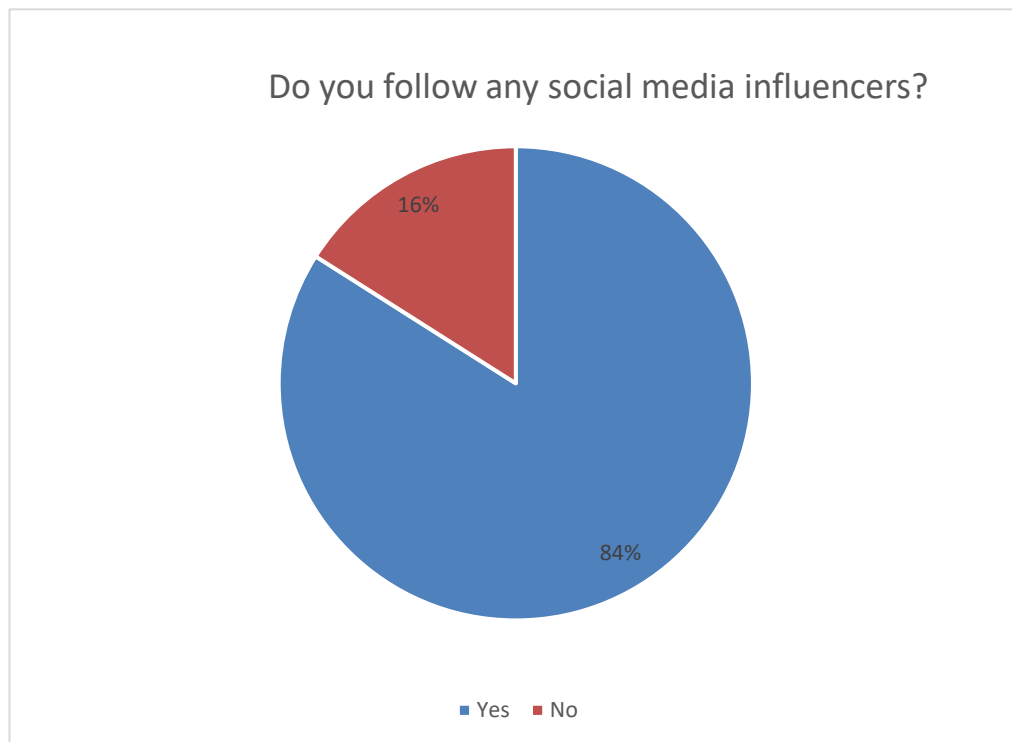| Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	42	84%
No	8	16%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Table 5.1

Figure 5.1

Analysis:

42 (84%) social media consumers follow social media influencers and 8 (16%) social media consumers do not follow any social media influencers.

5.2 If yes, which social media platform do you use to follow influencers? (Check all that apply)

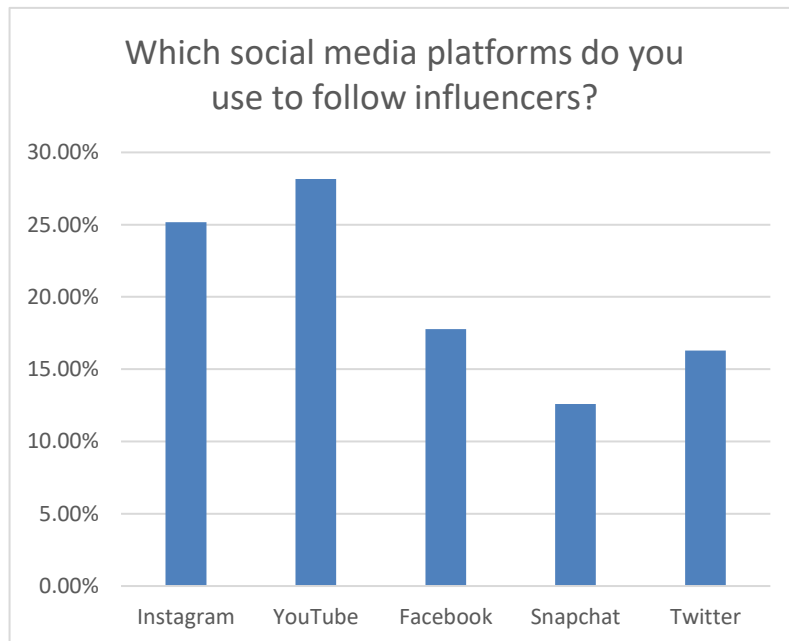| Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Instagram	34	25.18%
YouTube	38	28.15%
Facebook	24	17.78%
Snapchat	17	12.59%
Twitter	22	16.30%
Total	**135**	**100%**

Table 5.2

Figure 5.2

Analysis

This bar chart represents that 34 (25.18%) respondents use Instagram, 38 (28.15%) respondents use YouTube, 24 (17.78%) respondents use Facebook, 17 (12.59%) respondents use Snapchat and 22 (16.30%) respondents use Twitter.

5.3 How often do you come across sponsored posts or product endorsements by social media influencers?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Frequently	17	34%
Occasionally	19	38%
Rarely	14	28%
Never	0	0%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Table5.3

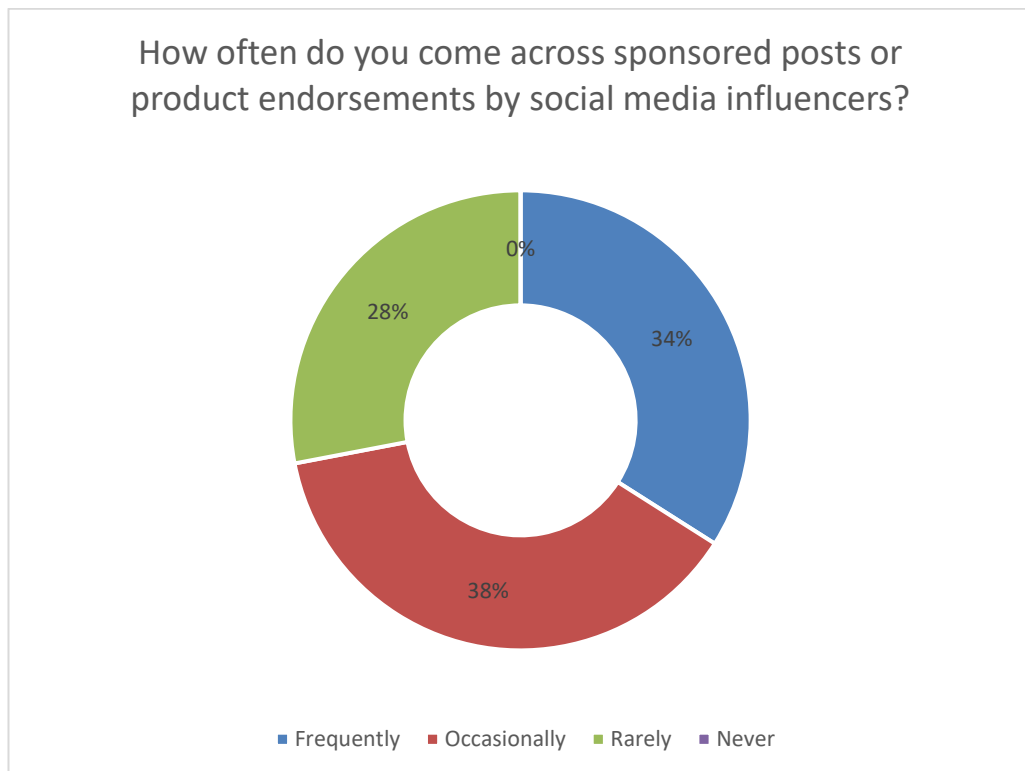How often do you come across sponsored posts or product endorsements by social media influencers?

Figure 5.3

Analysis:

From the graphical analysis through pie-chart , we can conclude that out of 50 (100%) respondents, 17 (34%) came across sponsored posts frequently, 19 (38%) occasionally and

14 (28%) rarely.

5.4 How likely are you to trust a product or service recommended by a social media influencer?

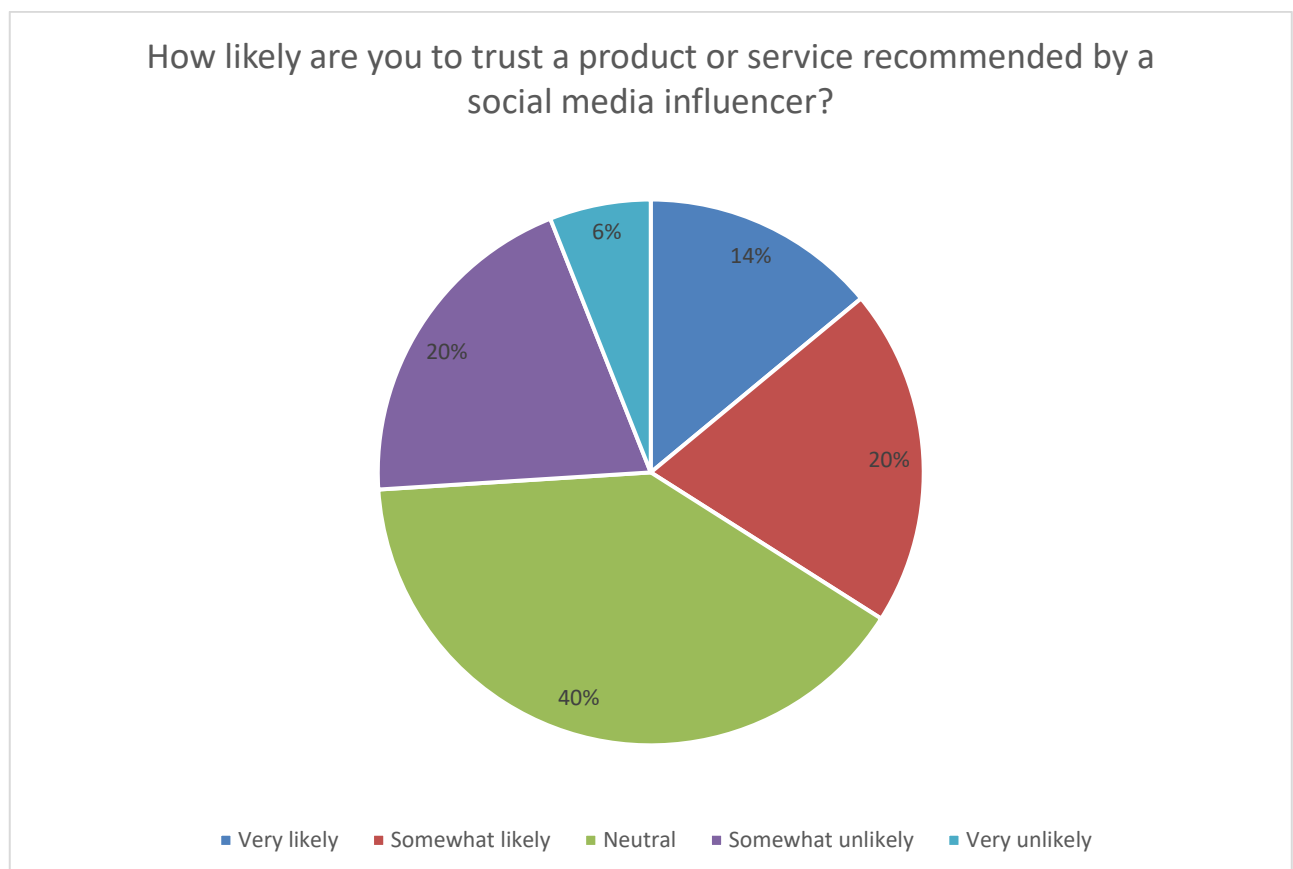| Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Very likely	7	14%
Somewhat likely	10	20%
Neutral	20	40%
Somewhat unlikely	10	20%
Very unlikely	3	6%
Total	50	100%

Table 5.4

Figure 5.4

Analysis

This pie chart represents that out of the total 50 respondents, 7 (14%) are very likely,

10 (20%) are somewhat likely, 20 (40%) are neutral, 10 (20%) are somewhat unlikely, 3 (6%) are very unlikely to trust a product or service recommended by a social media influencer.

5.5 Have you ever purchased a product or service based on a recommendation from a social media influencer?

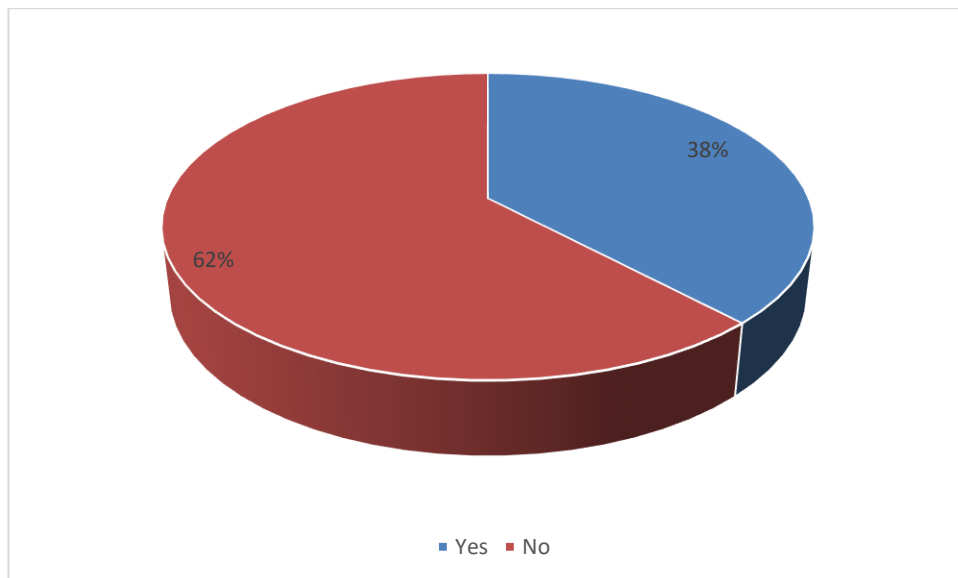| Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	19	38%
No	31	62%
Total	50	100%

Table 5.5

Figure 5.5

<u>Analysis</u>

Out of 50 (100%) respondents, 19 (38%) say yes and 31 (62%) say no.

5.6 If yes, please specify the type of product or service you purchased?

Analysis:

Facewash from health and wellness, Apparels, smart phone from Flipkart, liquid foundation from beauty, a book from books and education, notebooks from books and education and smart phone from electronics.

5.7 How influential are social media influencers in your purchasing decisions?

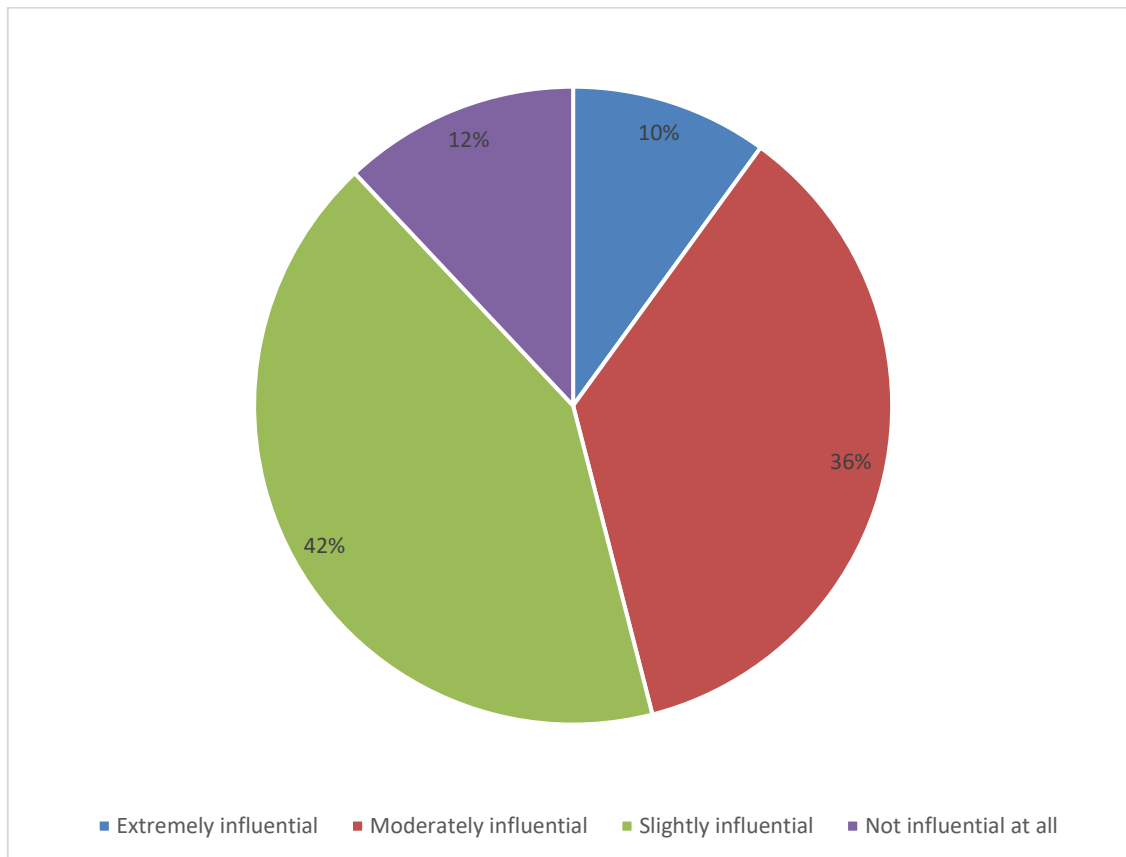| Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Extremely influential	5	10%
Moderately influential	18	36%
Slightly influential	21	42%
Not influential at all	6	12%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Table5.7

Figure 5.7

Analysis

Out of 50 respondents, 6 (12%) say not influential at all, 21 (42%) say slightly influential, 18 (36%) say moderately influential and 5 (10%) say extremely influential.

5.8 What factors do you consider when evaluating the credibility of a social media influencer? (Check all that apply)

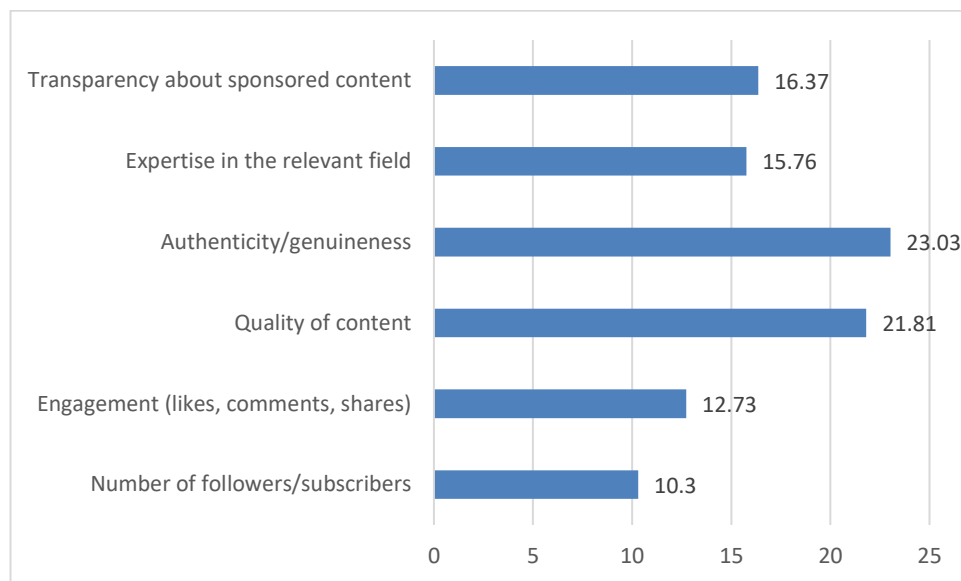| Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Number of followers/subscribers	17	10.3
Engagement (likes, comments, shares)	21	12.73
Quality of content	36	21.81
Authenticity/genuineness	38	23.03
Expertise in the relevant field	26	15.76
Transparency about sponsored content	27	16.37
Total	165	100%

Table 5.8

Figure 5.8

17 (10.3%) said number of followers/subscribers, 21 (12.73%) said engagement (likes, comments, shares), 36 (21.81%) said quality of content, 38 (23.03%) said authenticity/genuineness, 26 (15.76%) said expertise in the relevant field, and 27 (16.37%) said transparency about sponsored content).

5.9 Do you think social media influencers should disclose sponsored content or product endorsements?

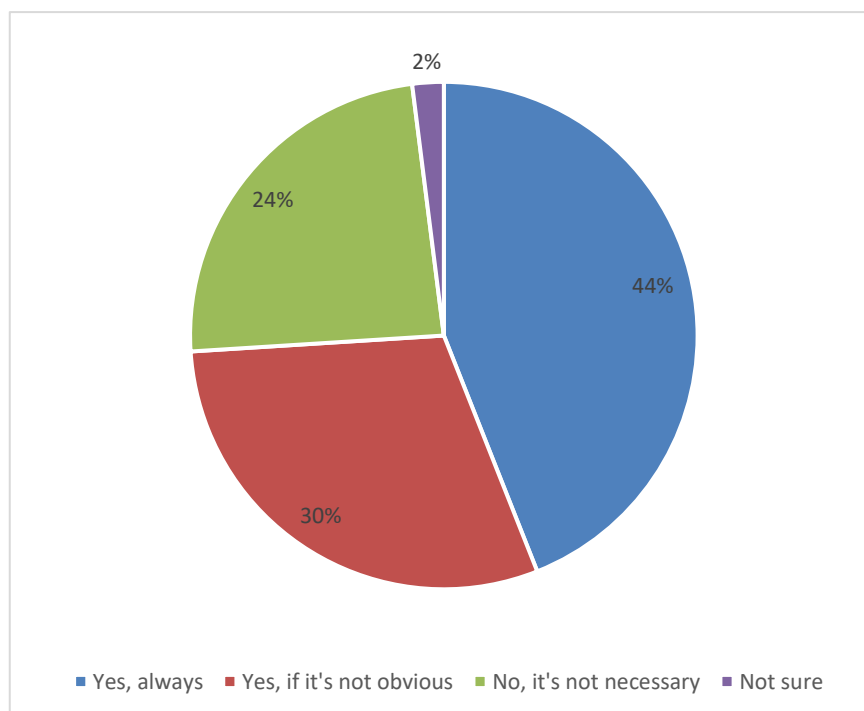| Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, always	22	44%
Yes, if it's not obvious	15	30%
No, it's not necessary	12	24%
Not sure	1	2%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Table 5.9

Figure 5.9

Analysis

Out of 50 respondents, the above pie-chart represents that 22 (44%) say yes, always, 15 (30%) say yes, if it's not obvious, 12 (24%) say no, it's not necessary and 1 (2%) respondent says not sure.

5.10 How likely are you to make a purchase after seeing a limited-time discount or promotion offered by a social media influencer?

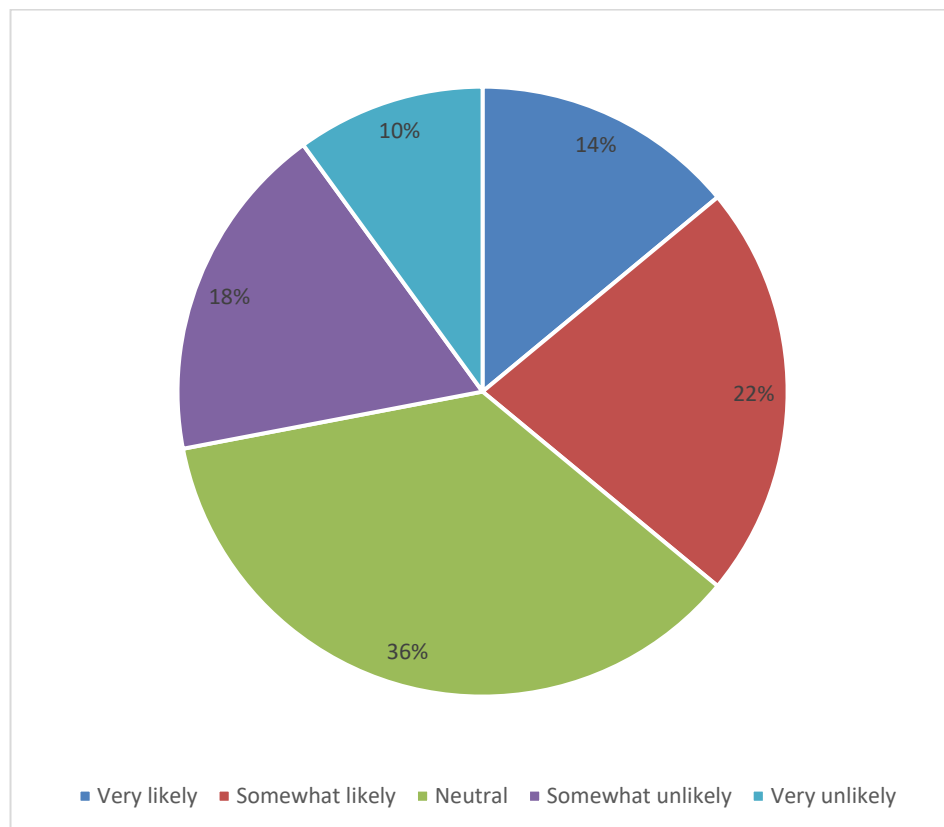| Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Very likely	7	14%
Somewhat likely	11	22%
Neutral	18	36%
Somewhat unlikely	9	18%
Very unlikely	5	10%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Table 5.10

Figure 5.10

This pie chart represents that out of the total 50 respondents, 7 (14%) are very likely,

11 (22%) are somewhat likely, 18 (36%) are neutral, 9 (18%) are somewhat unlikely, 5 (10%) are very unlikely to make a purchase.

5.11 Do metrics such as number of likes, followers, comments, etc. affect your buying decision?

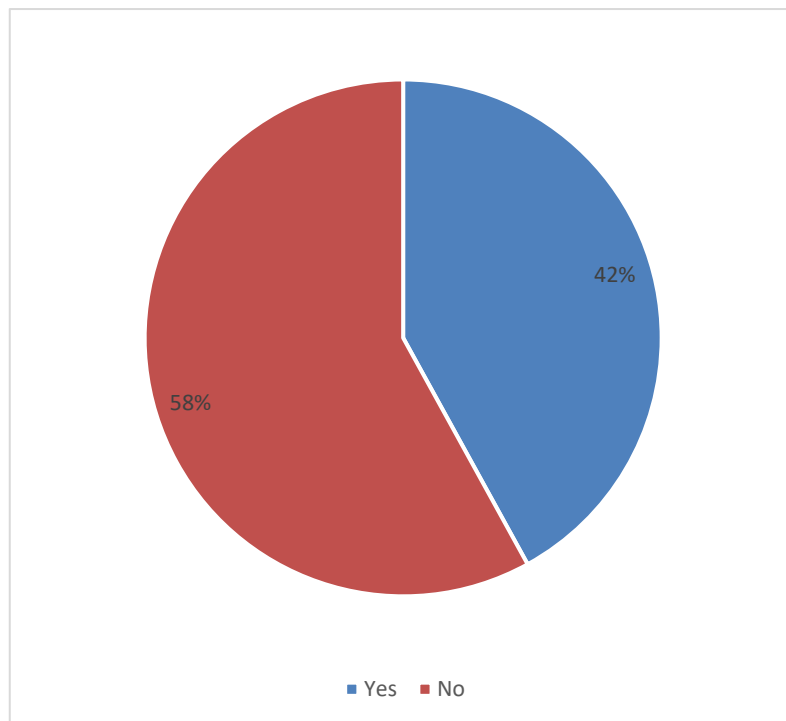| Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	27	54%
No	23	46%
Total	**50**	100%

Table 5.11

Figure 5.11

Analysis

Out of 50 respondents, 27 (54%) say yes and 23 (46%) say no.

5.12 Do metrics such as number of likes, followers, comments, etc. affect your perception about the brand being promoted?

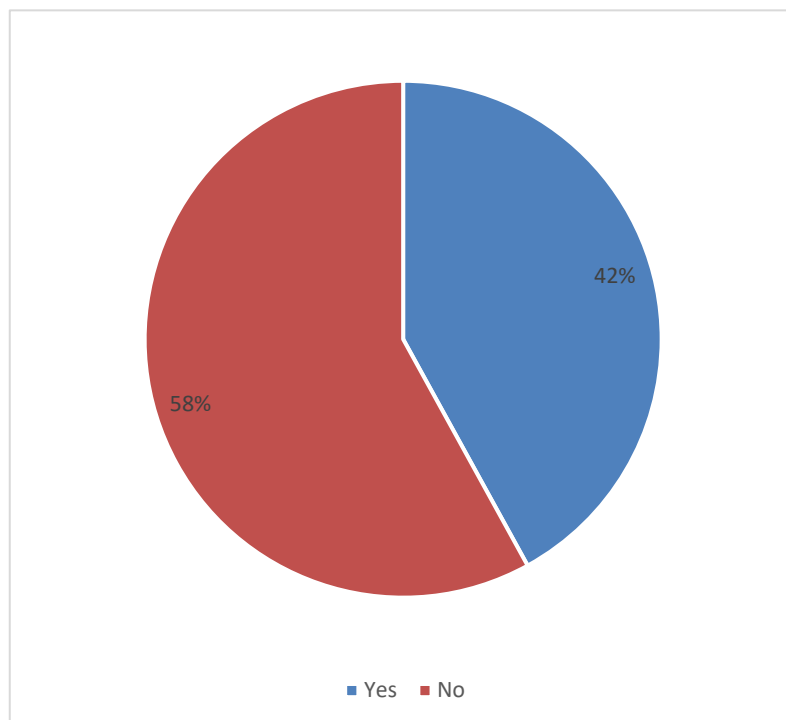| Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	60%
No	20	40%
Total	50	100%

Table 5.12

Figure 5.12

Out of 50 respondents, 30 (60%) say yes and 20 (40%) say no.

5.13 Have you ever felt compelled to purchase a product because of the fear of missing out (FOMO) created by social media influencers?

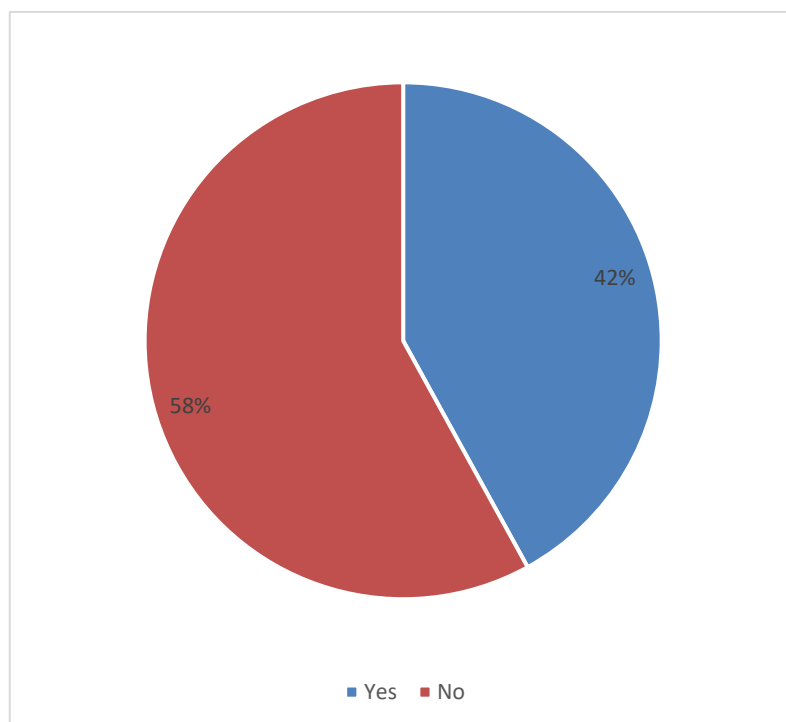| Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	16	32%
No	34	68%
Total	50	100%

Table 5.13

Figure 5.13

Out of 50 respondents, 16 (32%) say yes and 34 (68%) say no.

5.14 Do you believe social media influencers provide honest and unbiased reviews and opinions about the products they promote?

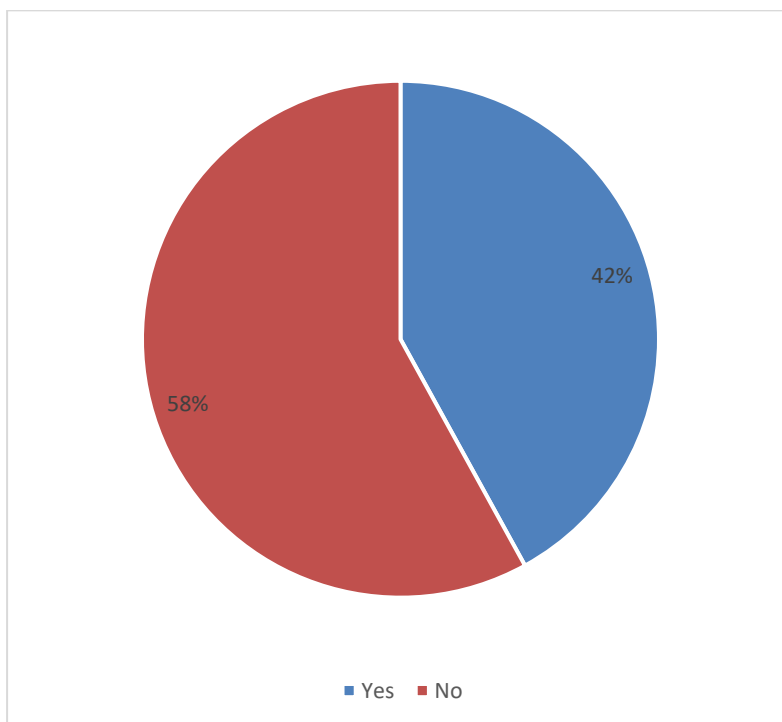| Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	21	42%
No	29	58%
Total	50	100%

Table 5.14

Figure 5.14

Out of 50 respondents, 21 (42%) say yes and 29 (58%) say no.

5.15 How likely are you to research or read reviews about a product before making a purchase, even if it was recommended by a social media influencer?

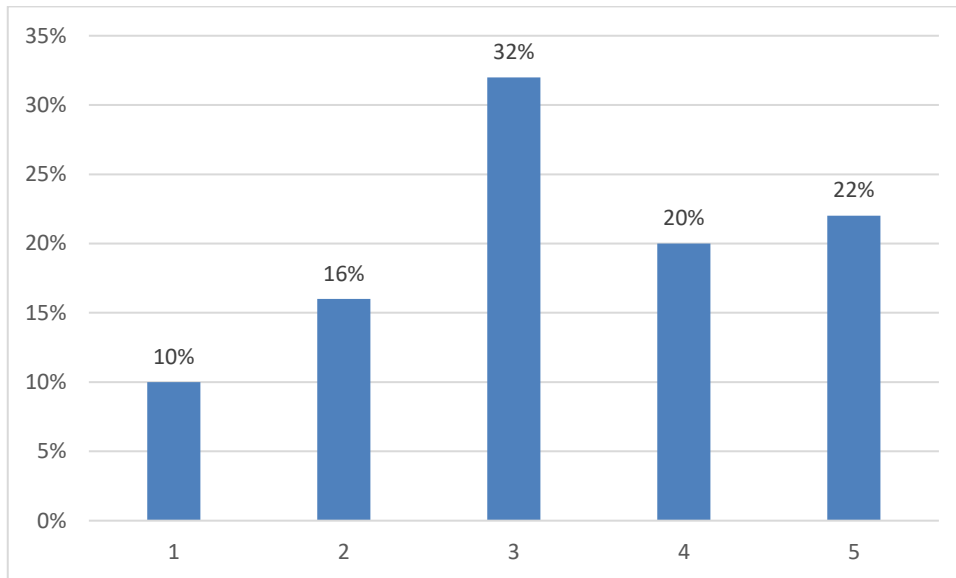| Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1	5	10%
2	8	16%
3	16	32%
4	10	20%
5	11	22%
Total	50	100%

Table5.15

Figure5.15

This figure represents that out of 50 respondents, 10% chose 1, 16% chose 2, 32% chose 3, 20% chose 4 and 22% chose 5.

CENTRE FOR
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

CHAPTER 6: DATA INTERPRETATION

6.1 Findings from Secondary Data

Social media has emerged as the primary source of travel information for travelers, indicating a shift in their information-seeking and consumption behaviors. Tourist service providers are leveraging the power of social media influencers (SMIs) as part of their digital marketing strategies. SMIs possess online recognition and the trust of their followers, and their content significantly influences consumer behavior. The impact of an SMI's content spreads rapidly through social media platforms, shaping the perspectives and actions of their followers. Businesses have witnessed substantial returns on investment through influencer marketing.

This study aims to investigate the relationship between consumer decisions and the digital environment influenced by SMIs, with a particular focus on sponsored content compared to organic content. The findings of this study can assist hotels in developing effective strategies for social media engagement, incorporating SMIs into their marketing communications, and designing satisfying consumer and hotel communication strategies.

Word-of-mouth (WOM) has been found to exert a significant influence on consumer purchase decisions, and the advent of the internet and social media has transformed how consumers make decisions and how marketers engage with their target audience. Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), accessible through the internet and social media, has become a reliable source of information for potential customers. Consumers place more trust in information shared by other users than in advertisements or information from marketers. Although studies in Malaysia have explored eWOM across various industries, including travel, there is a lack of scholarly research specifically focusing on influencer characteristics and skills in the context of eWOM in the food and beverage sector.

Consumers have transitioned from being brand supporters to becoming content creators in the age of social media, aspiring to become social media influencers themselves. Marketers recognize the potential of influencers in engaging large and targeted audiences with relevant content. However, maintaining authenticity poses a challenge when influencers are compensated for endorsements. Nonetheless, advancements in influencer marketing technology have simplified the tracking and monitoring processes.

Research on travel influencer marketing remains limited, highlighting the need for further exploration to advance the theory and practice of social media marketing in the travel and tourism industry. Overall, the information provided underscores the growing influence of social media influencers, the impact of their content on consumer behavior, the significance of eWOM in decision-making, and the importance of research and effective strategies in the travel and tourism sector.

6.2 Findings from Primary Data

In this primary research study, our objective was to examine the relationship between social media influencers and consumer behavior. To achieve this, we conducted a questionnaire survey using Google Forms, which encompassed various dimensions of social media consumer behavior. Our

aim was to expand on existing research in the field and contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between social media influencers and consumer behavior.

The questionnaire survey delved into several aspects of consumer behavior, including the choice of platforms consumers use to follow social media influencers. Additionally, we explored the frequency with which consumers encountered sponsored content. Our goal was to assess the extent to which social media influencers influence consumer behavior and identify potential moderating factors within this relationship.

Social media influencers have garnered substantial attention from researchers in recent years, particularly with the increased usage of social media platforms. Overall, the findings from the survey indicate the significant impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior. Credibility factors such as trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise exhibited by influencers were found to have a positive correlation with purchase intention. Notably, attractiveness emerged as the most influential factor, highlighting the significance of visual appeal in capturing consumers' attention and shaping their purchase decisions.

While the survey provides insights into the influence of social media influencers on consumer behavior, it also underscores the need for further research in this dynamic and evolving field. Future studies can explore additional factors that impact consumer behavior, investigate the effectiveness of different types of content (sponsored versus organic), and delve deeper into the intricacies of influencer marketing across various industries. Continued research and comprehension of social media influencer marketing will assist businesses in adapting to evolving consumer preferences and maintaining successful marketing strategies.

6.3 Hypothesis acceptance/rejection

After analyzing the data from our primary research study, we found evidence to support the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant likelihood or intention of consumers to purchase a product or service promoted by social media influencers. We found that there were several reasons why consumers choose to do so. The most cited reason for the same was to get a new experience and keep up with the trends. This makes us conclude that H0 (Null) is rejected and H1 (Alternative) is accepted.

As per the primary data analysis, we found that there is a significant relationship between the influence of social media influencers and the brand perception of consumers. Thus, H0 (Null) is rejected and H1 (Alternative) is accepted.

As per the primary data analysis, we found that social media influencers are perceived as trustworthy and credible by consumers and this perception affects their behavior. A few chose to take it with a grain of salt, but most consumers trusted the social media influencers they followed. Hence, H0 (Null) is rejected and H1 (Alternative) is accepted.

By analyzing the primary data collected, we found that there is a significant level of

engagement and interaction between social media influencers and their followers. Metrics such as likes, comments, and shares have a significant impact on consumer behavior. Hence, we reject H0 (Null) and accept H1 (Alternative).

By analyzing the primary data collected, we found that there is a significant relationship between social media and consumer attitudes toward specific products, brands, or topics, and their influence on purchasing decisions. Metrics such as the number of followers, likes, comments, and shares do affect the brand perception and purchasing decisions of consumers. Hence, we reject H0 (Null) and accept H1 (Alternative).

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusion

Here, we conclude the final findings from secondary and Primary Data

The results underscore the growing role of social media influencers as new brand endorsers and key drivers in shaping consumer behavior. With social media becoming the primary platform for travelers seeking information, businesses are increasingly collaborating with influencers to enhance their digital marketing strategies. The swift transmission of an influencer's content through their social media outlets further amplifies its impact on their followers, highlighting the importance of selecting the right influencers for marketing collaborations.

The study emphasizes the need for businesses to prioritize working with attractive influencers who possess the credibility factors that resonate with their target audience. By aligning with influential individuals who are perceived as trustworthy, attractive, and knowledgeable, businesses can effectively influence consumers' purchase intentions and achieve significant returns on their marketing investments.

These findings have significant implications for businesses in the travel and tourism industry, as well as other sectors relying on consumer engagement. To maximize the benefits of influencer marketing, businesses should develop effective strategies for social media engagement, involve influencers in marketing communication, and design consumer and brand communication approaches that align with the changing digital landscape.

In conclusion, this research paper has provided valuable insights into the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior. The findings of this study highlight the significant role that influencers play in shaping consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and purchasing decisions in today's digital era.

The research findings indicate a strong positive relationship between social media influencers and consumer behavior. The credibility factors of trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise demonstrated by influencers have been shown to have a considerable impact on consumers' purchase intentions. Among these factors, attractiveness emerged as the most influential, suggesting that visual appeal and aesthetics strongly influence consumers' decision-making processes.

The study highlights the growing importance of influencer marketing as a powerful tool for businesses to connect with their target audience. By collaborating with effective influencers who

possess the desired credibility factors, businesses can effectively influence consumer behavior and drive purchase decisions. Social media platforms have become primary sources of travel information and other product/service recommendations, further emphasizing the need for businesses to leverage influencer marketing strategies.

It is crucial for businesses to carefully select influencers who align with their brand values, target audience, and marketing objectives. By partnering with influencers who have a genuine connection with their followers and maintain authenticity, businesses can enhance their credibility and increase consumer trust.

The research also suggests that the impact of influencer marketing goes beyond immediate purchase decisions. Influencers have the power to shape long-term consumer loyalty and advocacy, as their content resonates with followers on a personal level. Engaging with influencers as brand endorsers and leveraging their social media platforms can lead to sustained customer engagement and brand loyalty.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this research. The study focused primarily on the travel industry, and further research is needed to explore the impact of influencers in other sectors. Additionally, the study primarily considered quantitative data and future research can incorporate qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into the mechanisms and underlying motivations driving consumer behavior influenced by social media influencers.

In conclusion, this research underscores the importance of social media influencers as significant drivers of consumer behavior. Businesses that harness the power of influencer marketing can effectively connect with their target audience, influence purchasing decisions, and build long-term brand loyalty. By understanding the dynamics and strategies of influencer marketing, businesses can leverage this powerful tool to gain a competitive advantage in today's digital landscape.

7.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research paper investigating the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior, the following recommendations are put forth to guide businesses and marketers in effectively leveraging influencer marketing strategies:

Select Influencers Strategically: It is crucial for businesses to carefully select influencers who align with their brand values, target audience, and marketing objectives. Consider factors such as the influencer's credibility, relevance to the industry, engagement levels, and authenticity. Conduct thorough research and analysis to identify influencers who have a genuine connection with their followers and are likely to resonate with the target audience.

Emphasize Authenticity: In the era of influencer marketing, maintaining authenticity is paramount. Encourage influencers to create content that genuinely reflects their experiences and opinions, rather than purely promotional content. Authenticity builds trust with consumers and enhances the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns.

Establish Clear Guidelines: When collaborating with influencers, it is essential to establish clear guidelines and expectations. Clearly communicate the key messages, brand values, and campaign objectives to ensure alignment with the brand's image and goals. Provide influencers with creative freedom while maintaining a consistent brand narrative.

Leverage Micro-Influencers: Consider working with micro-influencers who have a smaller but highly engaged audience within a specific niche. Micro-influencers often have higher engagement rates and a more intimate connection with their followers, leading to a higher level of trust and influence. This approach can be particularly effective for niche markets and specific target audiences.

Foster Long-Term Relationships: Building long-term relationships with influencers can yield greater benefits than one-off collaborations. Invest in nurturing relationships with influencers who

align well with the brand and have a genuine interest in its offerings. Long-term collaborations can result in more authentic and impactful content, increased brand loyalty, and sustained consumer engagement.

Monitor and Measure Results: Continuously monitor and evaluate the outcomes of influencer marketing campaigns. Utilize key performance indicators (KPIs) such as reach, engagement, conversion rates, and return on investment (ROI) to assess the effectiveness of influencer collaborations. Regularly analyze data and feedback to refine strategies and optimize future campaigns.

Stay Abreast of Influencer Trends: Influencer marketing trends and platforms evolve rapidly. Stay up to date with emerging influencers, new social media features, and changes in consumer behavior. Adapt marketing strategies accordingly to stay relevant and maintain a competitive edge in the ever-changing landscape of social media influencer marketing.

Engage in Influencer-Generated Content: Encourage influencers to create user-generated content that encourages their followers to engage with the brand. Run contests, campaigns, or challenges that prompt consumers to share their experiences and opinions related to the brand. This approach fosters a sense of community, increases brand visibility, and amplifies the influence of the influencers.

Collaborate with Multiple Influencers: Consider collaborating with a diverse range of influencers to broaden the reach and impact of influencer marketing campaigns. Engaging with influencers from different backgrounds, demographics, and geographic locations can help to tap into various market segments and expand brand awareness.

Invest in Influencer Relationship Management Tools: As influencer marketing becomes more sophisticated, consider using influencer relationship management (IRM) platforms or tools to streamline and automate influencer collaborations, tracking, and performance measurement. These tools can provide valuable insights, simplify the management process, and enhance the overall effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns.

By implementing these recommendations, businesses can harness the full potential of social media

influencers in influencing consumer behavior. Influencer marketing, when executed strategically and authentically, can drive brand awareness, enhance consumer trust, and ultimately lead to increased sales and brand loyalty.

CHAPTER 8: APPENDIX

8.1 Google Form Questionnaire Survey

Hello there! I am Tanaya Ahirrao, a student at NMIMS University, Mumbai. As a part of my coursework at NMIMS University, I am working on a research paper investigating the impact of social media influencers on consumer behaviour. It would be of great help to me if you could spare a few minutes to fill out this confidential survey.

1. Do you follow any social media influencers?
   Yes
   No

2. If yes, which social media platforms do you use to follow influencers? (Check all that apply)
   Instagram
   YouTube
   Facebook
   Snapchat
   Twitter
   Other

3. How often do you come across sponsored posts or product endorsements by social media influencers?
   Frequently
   Occasionally
   Rarely
   Never

4. How likely are you to trust a product or service recommended by a social media influencer?

   Very likely
   Somewhat likely
   Neutral
   Somewhat unlikely
   Very unlikely

5. Have you ever purchased a product or service based on a recommendation from a social media influencer?
   Yes
   No

6. If yes, please specify the type of product or service you purchased.

7. How influential are social media influencers in your purchasing decisions?
   Extremely influential
   Moderately influential
   Slightly influential
   Not influential at all

8. What factors do you consider while evaluating the credibility of a social media influencer?
   (Check all that apply)
   Number of followers/subscribers
   Engagement (likes, comments, shares)
   Quality of content
   Authenticity/genuineness
   Expertise in the relevant field
   Transparency about sponsored content
   Other

9. Do you think social media influencers should disclose sponsored content or product
   endorsements?
   Yes, always
   Yes, if it's not obvious
   No, it's not necessary
   Not sure

10. How likely are you to make a purchase after seeing a limited time discount or promotion
    offered by a social media influencer?
    Very likely
    Somewhat likely
    Neutral
    Somewhat unlikely
    Very unlikely

11. Do metrics such as number of likes, followers, comments, etc. affect your buying decision?
    Yes
    No

12. Do metrics such as number of likes, followers, comments etc. affect your perception about
    the brand being promoted?
    Yes
    No

13. Have you ever felt compelled to purchase a product because of the fear of missing out
    (FOMO) created by social media influencers?
    Yes
    No

14. Do you believe social media influencers provide honest and unbiased reviews and opinions about the products they promote?
Yes
No

15. How likely are you to research or read reviews about a product before making a purchase, even if it was recommended by a social media influencer?

                    1 2 3 4 5
Very unlikely   Very likely

REFERENCES

1. Li, C., & Bernoff, J. (2011). Groundswell: Winning in a World

2. Gupta, S., & Kim, H. (2020). The Role of Social Media Influencers in Advertising and Its Impact on Consumer Behavior. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 54, 102029.

3. Khamis, S., Ang, L., & Welling, R. (2017). Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of Social Media Influencers. Celebrity Studies, 8(2), 191-208.

4. Mangold, W. G., & Faulds, D. J. (2009). Social Media: The New Hybrid Element of the Promotion Mix. Business Horizons, 52(4), 357-365.

5. Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., Priester, J., Eisingerich, A. B., & Iacobucci, D. (2010). Brand Attachment and Brand Attitude Strength: Conceptual and Empirical Differentiation of Two Critical Brand Equity Drivers. Journal of Marketing, 74(6), 1-17.

6. Chung, C. J., & Cho, H. (2017). A study on factors influencing consumers' responses to social media advertising: From a perspective of self-determination theory. Computers in Human Behavior, 68, 464-475.

7. Grinberg, N., Joseph, K., Friedland, L., Swire-Thompson, B., & Lazer, D. (2019). Fake news on Twitter during the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Science, 363(6425), 374-378.

8. Lin, Y. H., Kim, Y., & Wang, Y. (2020). Social media research in advertising, communication, marketing, and public relations, 1997–2018: A systematic review. Journal of Advertising, 49(1), 85-100.

9. Rauschnabel, P. A., & Krey, N. (2016). Engaging consumers on social media: Challenges for advertisers and agenda for future research. Thunderbird International Business Review, 58(2), 173-184.

10. Song, H., Zinkhan, G. M., & Taylor, C. R. (2018). Consumers' response to social media advertising: The moderating role of product type. Journal of Advertising, 47(2), 162-176.

11. Aswani, R., Kalra, A., & Dhir, A. (2020). Consumer Purchase Intentions Toward Fashion Influencer Recommendations on Social Media Platforms. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 53, 101719.

12. Chang, W. H., & Yen, D. C. (2020). How Social Media Influencers Impact Consumer Purchase Intention: A Conceptual Framework. International Journal of Information Management, 53, 102144.

13. Chen, Y., Fay, S., & Wang, Q. (2011). The Role of Marketing in Social Media: How Online Consumer Reviews Evolve. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 25(2), 85-94.

14. Chen, Y., Wang, Q., & Xie, J. (2019). Who Creates Trends in Online Social Media: The

Crowd or Opinion Leaders? Journal of Consumer Research, 45(6), 1151-1170.

15. Hajli, N., Sims, J., Zadeh, A. H. M., & Richard, M. O. (2017). A Social Commerce Investigation of the Role of Trust in a Social Networking Site on Purchase Intentions. Journal of Business Research, 71, 133-141.

LINKS

https://www.searchenginewatch.com/2020/11/20/how-social-media-influence-71-consumer-buying-decisions/

https://www.modul.ac.at/uploads/files/Theses/Master/Grad_2019/Karina_Dogra_thesis.pdf

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367254415_Analyzing_the_Effect_of_Social_Media_Influencers_on_the_Purchase_Decision_of_Consumers?_sg=Z90OeIdYBmx60q66m7IrzuVTo8PaT45oUIeLvl6WvhWOn9wkRAXfwysocyTSDOybM_esB6Y_lpIZX14

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349945797_Consumers%27_Perception_of_the_Credibility_of_Social_Media_Influencers_and_its_Impact_on_Purchase_Intention

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370731682_How_Micro-Influencers%27_Personality_Influences_the_Personality_of_Novice_and_Established_Brands

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367219473_THE_ROLE_OF_SOCIAL_MEDIA_INFLUENCERS_IN_SHAPING_CUSTOMER_BRAND_ENGAGEMENT_AND_BRAND_PERCEPTION

(PDF) Impact of Social Media Influencers on Customer Engagement and Purchase Intention: A Meta-Analysis (researchgate.net)

(PDF) The Influence of the Credibility of Social Media Influencers SMIs on the Consumers' Purchase Intentions: Evidence from Saudi Arabia (researchgate.net)

(PDF) Understanding the relationships between social media influencers and their followers: the moderating role of closeness (researchgate.net)

(PDF) The Power of Personal Connections in Micro-Influencer Marketing: A Study on Consumer Behaviour and the Impact of Micro-Influencers (researchgate.net)

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354636053_Influencer_Marketing_from_a_Consumer_Perspective_How_Attitude_Trust_and_Word_of_Mouth_Affect_Buying_Behavior?_sg=ikGBvaHLoekyvktEfNi3U6UBDaI-WShB83TZjXgyDk2dse-Q8XeCkqytOVrFSxkcLyXq60_q5U_UK14

(PDF) Differences between Facebook and Instagram Usage in Regard to Problematic Use and Well-Being (researchgate.net)