IMPACT INFLUENCERS HAVE ON PURCHASE DECISIONS FOR CONSUMERS AGED 18-24

Jack Dempsey

Master's in Marketing
National College of Ireland

Abstract

Influencer marketing has taken the world by storm with brands and companies constantly investing more and more money into using influencers to try and ultimately increase their sales. Why is it that influencers work so well for brands and why is the market for influencers doubling year after year.

This dissertation aims at examining how influencers impact the purchase decisions of consumers aged between 18-24. The author has drawn on the use of the empirical data of past literature and found gaps needed to be studied.

The study therefore addresses the gaps on influencers impact on the full decision-making process and gets in depth perspectives off consumers to understand the impacts influencers has had on them. This information can help organisations have a better understanding on how they can utilise influencers and know which types of influencers work best.

The research approaches the author took was a mono method process drawing on semi structured interviews using a qualitative data analysis. Due to the nature of this approach applying an inductive method supported the process allowing the researcher to interpret which information gathered answered and filled in the gaps that was left in the research

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland
Research Students Declaration Form
(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

Name: Jack Dempsey

Student Number: X21104794

Degree for which thesis is submitted: MSc Marketing

Title of Thesis: IMPACT INFLUENCERS HAVE ON PURCHASE DECISIONS FOR CONSUMERS AGED 18-24

Date: 17th of August 2022

Material submitted for award

A. I declare that this work submitted has been composed by myself. ☐

B. I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged. ☐

C. I agree to my thesis being deposited in the NCI Library online open access repository NORMA. ☐

D. ***Either*** *I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
   Or *I declare that the following material contained in the thesis formed part of a submission for the award of

   _____

   (State the award and the awarding body and list the material below) ☐

Acknowledgments

I firstly would like to thank my thesis supervisor Dave Hurley for his incredible guidance throughout my thesis. His incredible guidance and direction played an integral part in the completion of my project

Id like to thank all the lectures and staff of NCI who throughout the year helped my classmates and myself. My MSc of Marketing class who were extremely supportive with one another through the year.

My sincere gratitude goes out to all the people who gave their time to participate in my interviews helping me conduct my reach project with their open and honest opinions.

Finally, I'd like to thank my friends and family who gave me all the support, love and encouragement needed to help me get through the year. A special thanks to my Mam and Shane for their patience and for being there for me throughout the entire process

Table of Contents

List Of Figures

Figure 1- "Consumers following virtual influencers by age"- p2

Figure 2- "Saunders Research Onion"

Figure 3- "Induction vs Deduction Emphasis"

Chapter 1 Introduction to the Topic and Thesis

1.1   Background to the study

1.1.1   Increasing trend of using influencers in marketing

Influencer marketing is a relatively new marketing strategy that is increasingly being adopted by companies. It involves the use of influencers who are online personalities who have gained a large following on platform across different forms of social media. The investment into influencer marketing has been doubled every year recently. Investment on Instagram, YouTube, and Twitch in 2018 was an estimated 6.3 billion dollars. In 2019 estimated budgets for influencer marketing from individual companies in the US was between $25,000 to $100,000. These figures continue to grow year after year (Martínez-López, F.J. *et a.*,2020)

1.1.2   The Impact influencers have on consumers

Many recent studies have looked at influencers and the impact they have on consumers from a marketing perspective. Many companies are trying to utilise them to grow their brands and profits. Some studies have found influencer marketing increases consumer engagement in a company and return of investment can be doubled (Martínez-López, F.J. *et al,* 2020). Influencers have also been found to increase brand awareness for companies and help grow a brands name across the globe (Singh, K, 2021). Influencers have even been found at time to increase purchase intention of consumers showing just how powerful it is as a marketing strategy.

1.2   Gaps in Literature

1.2.1   The impact influencers have on the full purchase decision-making process

Many studies have looked at if influencers have an impact on purchase intention and the perceived attributes that influencers have such as trustworthiness, credibility and attractiveness that persuade consumers to buy product or services off them (Dewi Mustikasari Immanuel and Alexandria Bianda H. S, 2021). This does tell companies that influencers can have a positive effect on purchase intention however it doesn't look at why consumers are persuaded by influencers or look at how consumers think during their full decision-making process when dealing with influencers. The consumer decision making process is activity humans do with the aim of finding the best variants (Hudson, R, 2015). If businesses can understand the reasoning behind how influence impact this process, then a greater understanding on how to utilise influencers from a marketing perspective can be made.

1.2.2   The post purchase feelings consumers get after buying from influencers

Previous studies have never looked at how consumers feel after buying a product or service off an influencer. Post purchase evaluation is a key part of the decision-making process and can be essential for customers coming back to a brand or business. This is because this is when consumers decide if they were satisfied and happy with their purchase or sad. Previous studies have looked at social commerce effects on the decision-making process and post evaluation part of the process and found significant impacts. This shows that potential is there for influencers to also have an impact on the decision-making process.

1.3 Research Justification and Rationale

Influencer marketing is a rapidly increasing marketing strategy as more and more people tend to start following and liking these internet personalities. Surveys being carried in the US have found that age groups are increasingly likely to follow at least one influencer on a social media platform (Statista, 2022).

Figure-1

Source:
)https://www.statista.com/statistics/1304080/consumers-follow-virtual-influencers-age-us/)
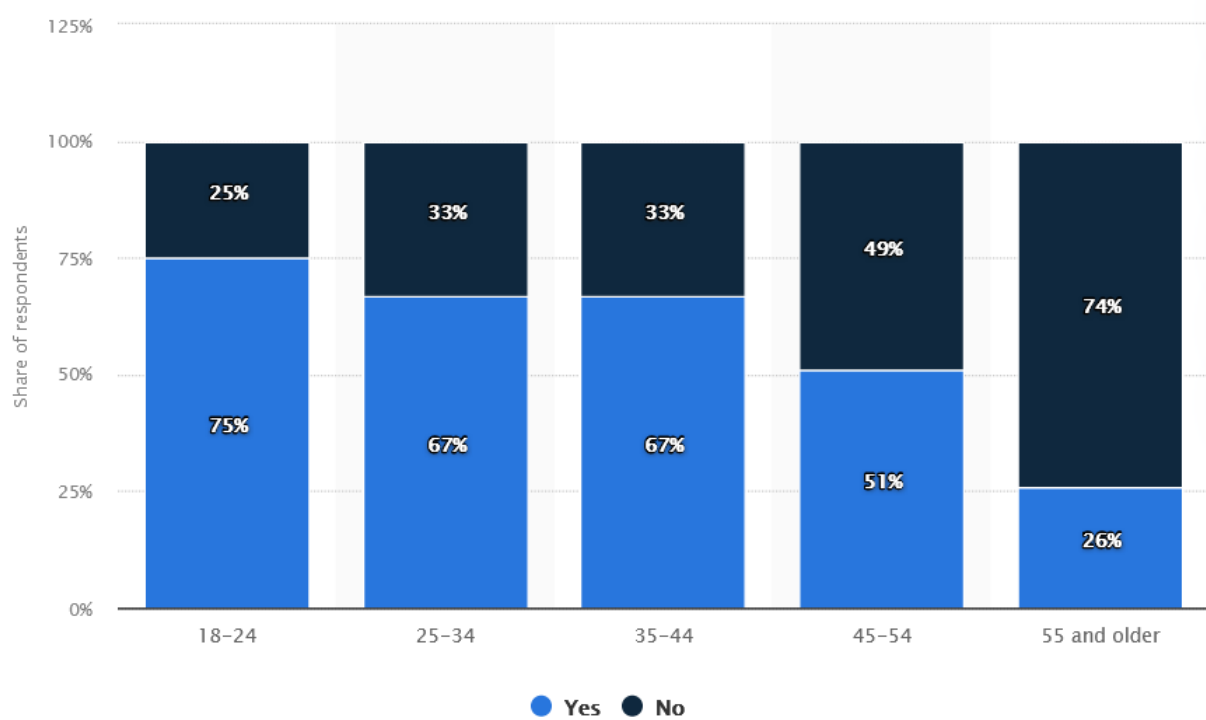
Figure-1 shows that the age following influencers the most are consumers aged 18-24 with a trend of the percentage lowering as people get older.

The decision-making process is a key process in the lead up to consumers buying any product or service off a brand, company, or induvial. Key studies have shown that it has direct involvement with purchase intention of consumers and people Companies have the power online to control what information customers see and can manipulate it to help increase sales (Panwar, D. *et al,* 2019). The traditional 5 step process is having been found to be influenced and affected by companies using social media as a marketing tool. Companies have been able to use this knowledge to target specific steps in the decision-making process in order to increase purchase intention thus increasing sales (Vikas Gupta, 2019).

1.4   Overall Aim of the Study

This research project aims to begin filling in the literature gaps as discussed earlier when it comes to influencers and the link, they have to younger consumers decision making processes. This study will help businesses and brands gain a better understanding of the perceptions younger adult consumers get off influencers and how these perceptions effect the different decision-making stages with the overall aim to purchase something. Although past literature has looked at influencers and their impacts on consumers purchase intention, the complete impact on all the decision-making stages has not been adequately studied.

1.5   Research Question

The main overarching research question Do influencers have an impact on purchase decisions of consumers aged between 18-24?

The research question stemmed from the authors own interest in influencers and the effect and power they can have on their followers. To gain a better understanding of this the author devised questions that could break down the main research question into more concise smaller parts have a better overall understanding on influencers effects on the full decision-making process.

Main Research Questions

1. *How does an influencer impact a consumer's recognition of need for a product?*
2. *Do consumers use influencers when looking for information on a product or service?*
3. *When evaluating alternatives do customers use influencers as a deciding factor?*
4. *Have consumers bought products or service because of an influencer?*
5. *How do consumers feel after buying a product or service if influenced by an influencer?*

Additional sub questions were used to support the research questions.

1.6   Research Method
1.6.1   Primary research sample

Marketing insights found that the age range that followed influencers the most was young adults aged between 18-24 (Statista, 2022). These showed the main target audiences organisations could target heavily when using influencer marketing. Further statistics also found that TikTok which is the fastest growing social media platform for users and influencers has a 60% user base of 16–24-year-olds. A sample of 18–24-year-old consumers was taken as they are at an age where they have their own money and influencers can target them for products and services

1.6.2   Scope of the study

Six semi structured qualitative interviews were conducted with individuals who use social media platforms and follow and interact with influencers in some way. It was important for the research that the interviewees knew about influencers and what they were as this would be needed to answer the questions prepared. It was also important the participants were in the age range of 18-24.

1.7   Structure and Overview of the Research Project

Chapter 1 *Introduction*

The first chapter gives a brief introduction into the chosen research topic of influencers and the decision-making process and their effects on purchase intention. The overall aim and structure of the paper is also introduced to the reader

Chapter 2 *Literature Review*

This chapter compromises of in-depth academic literature and relevant industry information based on the research topic. The chapter is split into 5 main sections all with different sub sections with the goal of gaining an overall better understanding on the research topic.

Chapter 3 *Research Methodology*

The research methodology chapter provides a detailed insight into the research objectives for the projects and the methods to be used to find these objectives. Data collection and analyse methods were discussed in this chapter along with an in-depth review on how primary research was carried.

Chapter 4 *Research Findings and Discussions*

This Chapter presents the findings from the primary research and discusses while critically analysing what these findings show. The decision-making model was used to support the objectives and sub objectives of the study.

Chapter 5 *Conclusions and Recommendations*

The final chapter is a comprehensive summary outlining salient points of the research. Indicters for future academic study as well as any practical implications for professional is also discussed

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1   Influencers

Social media Influencers are online personalities who have either become celebrities and gained a following on different platforms by posting content on their different social media accounts or they are traditional celebrities who have gotten their popularity from an institutional setting such as sports or television (Rundin, K. and Colliander, J, 2021). They are seen as people who through personal branding on social media they build and maintain relationships with multiples of followers. They are seen as potentially having the ability to influence or change people's attitudes, thoughts, and behaviour through their content (Shu-Chen Chang, Chih-Chien Wang and Chia-Yu Kuo, 2020). Influencers share endorsed opinions on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook which helps get people talking about certain products or companies online (Kay, S., Mulcahy, R. and Parkinson, J, 2020). The most common part between all the research on influencers is that they have influence on the actions of their followers to a certain extent by using their social media power (Shu-Chen Chang, Chih-Chien Wang and Chia-Yu Kuo, 2020). Social media influencers can be split into two different categories. These are micro influencers and mega influencers. A micro-influencer is a person that has between ten thousand followers and one hundred thousand whereas a mega-influencer has over 1 million followers across their social platforms. These micro-influencers are found to be more persuasive from a marketing point of view rather than the mega-influencers as they have higher perceptions of authenticity on their endorsed brands (Park, J. *et al,*2021) Social media influencers are looked up to by their followers usually when they have a good level of credibility, attractiveness, and consistency. Influencers look to have these attributes to be perceived by customers as that's how they can gain followers and sell products. Influencers achieve this perception by interacting with their followers by staying active in their online communities and interacting with people (Kangmin Cho *et al,* 2022).

2.1.1   Celebrity Influencers

While celebrities are seen as a type of influencer and can have huge followings on different social media platforms, people who are solely social media influencers are much more likely to have a closer connection or bond with followers as they seem to be more relatable to their audiences. This is usually down to social media influencers sharing parts of their personal lives with their followers while creating content (Tanwar, A.S., Chaudhry, H. and Srivastava, M.K, 2022). (Shu-Chen Chang, Chih-Chien Wang and Chia-Yu Kuo, 2020). states "a celebrity endorser is any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in and advertisement". (Lou, C,2022) define celebrities as people who "are famous for theatrical talents, such as acting, singing, or sports, often have gained their fame through traditional media such as movies, TV, and radio". This is different to a social media influencer who endorse and promote products in their content they post on their social platforms. These people are very persuasive on social media instead of being persuasive on advertisements like celebrities (Shu-Chen Chang, Chih-Chien Wang and Chia-Yu Kuo, 2020). The effectiveness of celebrities as a marketing tactic is constantly being researched and studied. Looking at new ways to research their effectiveness and how to utilise them is constantly being sought for. (Moraes, M. *et al.* (2019). is a key example of this with this research being done for the author to find research gaps and understand their effectiveness on the different psychological aspects of the consumer's mind.

2.1.2 Social media influencers vs Celebrity Influencers

It's argued that normal social media influencers are seen as more credible sources vs celebrities in terms of influencing people as they define themselves as ordinary people and would be seen as relatable due to this (Lou, C,2022). This "relatedness" or "influence" can be affected depending on the type of influencer that is posting the content. Influencers would communicate with their followers in a genuine way which in turn results to them interacting with the content of the influencer (Singh, K, 2021). A key difference between both celebrities and influencers is celebrity capital. Celebrity capital refers to a person power to gain media attention and promotional opportunities due to this attention. Traditional celebrities acquire this through institutional intermediaries such as sport, movies, and television (Brooks, G., Drenten, J. and Piskorski, M.J, 2021). A study by (Brooks, G., Drenten, J. and Piskorski, M.J,2021) looked at how influencers gain this capital themselves. The results found that influencers gain their own celebrity capital by interacting with their audiences, staying active in their community conversations, and found that doing promotion and advertising for brand can bring more celebrity capital for the influencer. A study done by (Arash Ahmadi and Siriwan Ieamsom, 2021) looked directly at the engagement social media influencers get from followers on posts with products they are endorsing compared to celebrity influencers doing the same. The study was done to help brands increase their knowledge in marketing campaigns. The results found that the fit of the influencer product encouraged more engagements than the fit of a celebrity product. The study also found that the more active and highly involved on Instagram influencers brought in the most engagement for brands. A similar study comparing both social media influencers and celebrities' effectiveness at exposing a brands name was also examined. The study by (ZEREN, D. and KAPUKAYA, N, 2021) looked at 6 Turkish celebrities alongside 6 Turkish influencers and compared a total of 126 posts between the two. The research supported the study by (Arash Ahmadi and Siriwan Ieamsom, 2021) stating that influencers had a larger positive impact on consumers than the celebrities. It was also found from this study that endorsements where the influencer and celebrity use the product were the most common way they advertised throughout the posts.

2.2 Influencers social media platforms

Social media platforms are like the workplace for influencers. Without social media platforms there would be no such thing as influencers (Chukwuere, J.E, 2021). defines social media platforms as "a virtual community that connects friends, including students, in sharing information and communication". It's a set of networking communication platforms that operate thanks to the internet. The largest of these platforms that tend to also have the most influencers are Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and YouTube. These platforms are extremely interactive and allow people to communicate, collaborate and share content with one another in a rapid amount of time across the whole world (Silva, M.J. de B. *et al,* 2020).

2.2.1 YouTube

 YouTube is a content sharing website that allows people to record and upload video content onto the platform. This content can then be consumed by audiences who can interact with the content by liking, sharing, or commenting on the video. YouTube is seen as a perfect medium for social media influencers to build up their brand according to (Erdoğmuş, Z.İ. and Arslan, M.K, 2022). Research has shown that social media influencers also known as Youtubers that upload content have become very popular with firms as their content often feel more organic and realistic. YouTube also converges traditional entertainment such as music, film, and television. (Erdoğmuş, Z.İ. and Arslan, M.K, 2022). Studies have shown that people are twice as likely to view video content rather than read text. People are also three times as likely to

remember something they watched than what they read. This shows how videos and video content is key to the future of advertising and marketing. The platform receives 3.25 billion hours' worth of views each month as of 2017 with the number increasing (George Pain, 2017).

2.2.2 TikTok

TikTok is the newest of all the platforms and one of the fastest growing apps worldwide. In 2020 it was named marketer of the year which shows the influence it had on marketing. The app is a unique video sharing content app with most videos being less than 60 seconds long. It has simple background filters and background music that allow video creators to add and make their content more entertaining. These Tik Tok videos can be shared seamlessly to other messaging and video platforms. The app uses sophisticated algorithms that track what people are watching and recommend them videos based off what they continue to like and watch. This is called the for you page (Yang, Y. and Ha, L,2021). TikTok Users who consistently upload videos and manage to produce viral content often become influencers or content creators on the app. The most common and notorious ways people do this is by uploading dance videos with music behind it. The application is owned by a company based in China called ByteDance Ltd. It is the most valuable start-up company in the world. As of January 2022, the app had over 3 billion downloads worldwide showing how much the app has captivated users since its launch in 2016 (Zulkifli, A., Ahmad, N. and Chauhan, P, 2022).

2.2.3 Facebook

Facebook is the oldest of the social media platforms and was made in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg who was a student in Harvard. The app is a text, video and image-based platform that allows people to connect with one another, share their thoughts and opinions on different posts and post things themselves. It was the largest out of all platforms with the most users, but TikTok recently surpassed it as the app has slowly been deteriorating (Haenlein, M. *et al,* 2020). The app is often used by businesses as a marketing tool. The app allows businesses, organisers, influencers, artists to create pages. These pages can then be liked and followed by fans or customers. These pages can be managed by the owner of the page's personal profile. The app can be used to help improve traffic to websites and for gaining feedback by creating engaging content (Dana Kilroy, 2017).

2.2.4 Instagram

The final socializing network app that is constantly used by influencers is Instagram. It consists of profiles which users and brands use to post photos with a small description and usually a hashtag which is a keyword related to the content. Like Tik Tok the app has built in filters to add to photos and videos. The app is mainly about visual content. The app has a higher level of co-creation, interaction and engagement compared to all the other platforms (Silva, M.J. de B. *et al,* 2020). The app is great for brand building. Since 2014 when Facebook bought Instagram a lot of effort and time was put in to improve and increase the paid advertising side of Instagram. The two apps have very similar things yet are completely different at the same time. One feature that is unique is that your Instagram account can be directly linked to your Facebook profile therefore when advertising on Instagram you can features things like Facebook Manager (Cook,2020).

2.2.5 Comparing Social Media Platforms

When comparing the different apps, you see Facebook has the largest number of active Users in 2020 with 2.498 billion then YouTube following with 2 billion, Instagram third with 1 billion and Tik Tok last at 800 million. Statistics also how the average age of users. Tik Tok was the lowest with 27 years old then Instagram with 34s old and Facebook having the oldest

average age with 40. When the apps get compared to the year before it was clear Tik Tok was rising, with the app from 2017 to 2019 gaining a %153 increase in engagement with Facebook with the largest fall at minus %26. When looking at the Network apps in influencer marketing and the performance each app offered brands and companies was clearly different between the apps. The average cost for a post on Facebook was $395 with YouTube being the most expensive at $6700 and Instagram being the middle ground at $1643. The most effective content was also measured with Instagram being the best at 78% followed by 56% from YouTube and a very low 23% effectiveness from Facebook (Haenlein, M. *et al,*2020).

2.3 The use of social media and influencers in marketing

According to (Schoja, V,2016) to understand social media an understanding of the internet terms web 1.0 and web 2.0 is needed. Web 1.0 relates to any communication that is sent one way for example emails and ecommerce. Web 2.0 allows users to generate content and share content across different platforms. Social media takes this a step further since users can create, share, follow and like different content with other users. (Kaplan, A.M. and Haenlein, M, 2010) described social media as a group of web and mobile applications with technology from web 2.0 that allows users to turn interpersonal communication into interactive dialogue between organisations, people, and communities. Social media marketing cis used across different industries and its effectiveness is constantly being researched. A Study in India was done by (Safiullah, M. *et al,* 2017) to find how effective it is in the politics sector. Research was taking place over 100 days for a political campaign in 2014. The result from the study indicated that social media buzz had not only a positive effect on the outcome of the election, but it was also quite significant. From a communications point of view two studies by (Sony Kusumasondjaja, 2018) and (Liu, X., Shin, H. and Burns, A.C, 2021) looked at the use of social media in creating more customer engagement. Both studies looked at brands and their social media marketing to find just how effective social media marketing was. (Sony Kusumasondjaja, 2018) researched across three different social media platforms which type of posts tended to be most effective at promoting interactive engagement with customers. Results showed posts with a mix of entertainment appeals and informative appeals suited best. The study by (Liu, X., Shin, H. and Burns, A.C, 2021) found similarities in their results when looking at luxury brands social media activities. They found that posts with entertainment within them promoted customer engagement. The study also found that trendiness and customisation dimensions also significantly increased customer engagement for the brands. Social media can be a cheap form of marketing and is used widely by small and medium businesses across the globe. A study by (Devereux, E., Grimmer, L. and Grimmer, M, 2020) taken in Tasmania looked at the effectiveness social media had for small retailers. (Gbandi, E.C. and Iyamu, G.O,2022) to similarly undertook a study in Benin Nigeria to see how social media could affect the growth of small to medium businesses in the city. Both studies collected data which indicated that social media had a positive effect on the growth of business and on creating customer engagement. The study by (Devereux, E., Grimmer, L. and Grimmer, M, 2020) also found that no specific day had any impact on increasing engagement from customers. Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and twitter were all used in the study by (Gbandi, E.C. and Iyamu, G.O,2022) to see if growth was increased for businesses across all different platforms. The results were the same throughout indicating all forms of social media can positively effect business growth.

2.3.1 Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is constantly growing with the number of companies and brands that are investing their money into influencer marketing constantly increasing. The influencer marketing industry was being represented as a ten-billion-dollar industry in 2020. It is an industry that became very relevant for businesses in the business to consumers industry very quickly (Haenlein, M. *et al,* 2020). The industry over the last few years has experienced extraordinary growth with Forbes stating by 2022 it would an industry worth fifteen billion dollars. This shows a five-billion-dollar growth in just two years (Park, J. *et al,* 2021). Nearly 75% of marketers today are using influencer to spread the word of mouth about their products and brand across social media. 65% of brand in 2018 said they were going to increase their spending and budget on influencer marketing (Arum Nurhandayani, Rizal Syarief and Mukhamad Najib, 2019). In recent years academic research has increased on Influencer marketing and if it's good. This is due to it being a good cost-effective marketing tool while also being effective. This is due to the fact it hides a bit under the radar as advertising and reaches a wide mass of audience guaranteed (Guoquan Ye *et al,* 2021). There is also research suggesting that influencers happen to have a strong influence or effect on a consumers decision making process therefore companies and advertisers are constantly approaching influencers to do brand endorsements and advertise for them (Hudders, L., De Jans, S. and De Veirman, M., 2021). We see from (Rosengren, S. and Campbell, 2021) that people react better to the same content from influencers than they do brands. People also seem to react better to influencers than celebrities (Rosengren, S. and Campbell, 2021) because of the relationship building that influencer's do, in not only the marketplace but in consumers personal lives also (FARRELL, J.R., CAMPBELL, C. and SANDS, S,2022). A large amount to how effective the influence will be would come down to the reliability and trust the consumer has in the influencer (FARRELL, J.R., CAMPBELL, C. and SANDS, S,2022). with studies from 2019 showing attractiveness, credibility, and similarity to followers creates both brand awareness and helps increase brand value (Singh, K, 2021). A study looked at why influencer can be effective from a social identity perspective. Social identity refers to a follower's perception of themselves in relation to the influencer community. The study by (Farivar, S. and Wang, F, 2022) also looked at the storytelling process influencers use to enhance the social identity of its followers. The research overall found positive feedback from using influencers for marketing. Influencer marketing isn't always positive though. At times using influencer marketing has found to have a negative effect on a brand or business. (Zhou, S. *et al,* 2021) states how there can be real issues and challenges with using influencer marketing. Past studies found that low quality content, commercial orientation and disclosure of sponsorships coming from influencers can have a negative impact on consumers response. To lower the chances of this, happen influencers maintain a high quality and persuasive performance while keeping credibility (Zhou, S. *et al,* 2021).

2.4   The decision-making process

Decision making can be defined as the form of activity humans do with the aim of finding the best variants. There are many different decision-making models (Hudson, R, 2015). One popular model known as the classical consumer decision making process consists of five different stages. The first stage is recognition of need which is when a person recognises that they need something like a product or service. The second stage is information search which is when consumers search about products and search to find out information on them. The third stage is known as evaluation of alternative and this is when the consumers compare different alternatives of product s and services to find the best one that suits them. After this stage comes purchase decisions which is the actual purchase of the product or service. Finally

comes the post purchase evaluation which is the stage after the purchase has been made. This stage is where consumers evaluate their purchase and decide if they were happy or not with their choice (MAKUDZA, F., SANDADA, M. and MADZIKANDA, D.D, 2022). The decision-making process is spilt into two types. Individual decision making and group decision making. Individual decision making is a single person making the choices and all responsibility is on them including the consequences whereas group decision making is usually decisions made by a group of experts based on the members individual preferences being considered (Hudson, R,2015). Attitude has been strongly linked with a person's decision-making process. Attitude can be defined as an individual likes or dislikes towards a particular object, person, behaviour, idea, or product. If a person likes a particular behaviour, they are more likely to conduct this type of behaviour. Studies have found people with more positive attitudes are linked to possibly having a higher degree of attachment to their buying decision. It can be stated that attitude can have a positive effect on purchase decision.

2.4.1 Online Decision-Making Process

A study was done on the online and virtual consumer decision- making processes by interesting relevant decision-making models. The study suggested that consumers purchase things when mediated by different websites. This process is influenced by information overload and interactivity. The study found many different models linked to decision making online by consumers. The seller has a lot of power online as they have the power to show what information, mitigate ethe online purchasing risk and allow and control interactivity between the site online and the customers (Panwar, D. *et al*, 2019). Looking further into this idea that the decision-making process can be influenced by online factor a study was conducted on the role social media has on the process for consumers making decisions on hotels. The qualitive research done by (Vikas Gupta, 2019) consisted of 32 semi structured interviews to find how important social media was to influence their decision-making process. The key finding was that social media helped with the information search stage of decision-making. Participants found it extremely helpful at finding information on hotels. Social Media also helped with evaluating and comparing alternatives hotels to one another to help them make a choice on which hotel best suited them. This study showed variety of social media and its influence on the decision-making process adds complexity to how companies should approach internet related content when it comes to marketing. The study by (Vikas Gupta, 2019) matches with another one that was done by (MAKUDZA, F., SANDADA, M. and MADZIKANDA, D.D, 2022) which sought to look how social commerce influenced the decision-making model of consumers in the hotel industry. This study however took a qualitative approach to research with 411 people being surveyed using a structured questionnaire. It was found that social commerce need construct, information search construct and evaluation construct were very significant in determining social commerce purchase intention (MAKUDZA, F., SANDADA, M. and MADZIKANDA, D.D, 2022).

2.4.2 The Role of Trust in the Decision-Making Process

As the world continuously moves towards an online structure for buying and selling the role of trust and credibility continues to become more important in the decision-making process of consumers. During older face to face transactions consumers only need to trust the personal relationship they had with the seller but nowadays trust is also on the information provided online and the transaction itself. Trust when it comes to purchase intention can be defined as the global belief on the part of the buyer that the salesperson, product, and organisation will fulfil their obligations as understood by the buyer (Kim, D.J., Ferrin, D.L. and Rao, H.R, 2008). A research study done by (Kim, D.J., Ferrin, D.L. and Rao, H.R, 2008) found that trust directly and indirectly affects a consumers purchase intention. The study found that trust has a strong positive affect as well as a strong negative affect on a consumer's perceived risk

when thinking about purchasing something. This mattered as perceived risk was found to have a direct effect on purchase decision. The study concluded that trust, perceived risk, and perceived benefit all had a "downstream" effect on a consumer's actual purchase decisions. A study by (Petcharat, T. and Leelasantitham, A, 2021) also looked at trust as a factor that influences the decision-making process along with quality. The study looked at how perceived trust and perceived quality influenced the different stages of the traditional decision-making model. The study found perceived trust had a significant effect during the payment transaction section when purchasing. Perceived quality also seemed to have an affect along with trust. The quality of information influenced the information search stage as well as the quality of the service or product provided had an influence on the post purchase evaluation stage. It concluded that both perceived trust and perceived quality had significant influence, positive and negative on a consumers purchase decision-making process (Petcharat, T. and Leelasantitham, A, 2021).

2.5   Influencers Impact on the decision-making process

A study done by (Kadam, N., Deshmukh, A. and Kadam, R,2021) checked to see whether micro influencers had an influence on purchase intention of consumers. The result came back that there was a positive relationship between micro influencer marketing and a consumer's buying interest which matched up with plenty of studies done before. (Xin Jean Lim *et al,* 2017) found when interviewing students on the effect influencers had on their buying intention, that many students had no effect happen to do them and the amount of people considering buying promoted products staying low. A reason for this may be because the people being surveyed were all students therefore, they may not of had the buying capacity. Another possible reason may have been due to the product not matching up with the influencer (Xin Jean Lim *et al,* 2017). Research by (Hughes, C., Swaminathan, V. and Brooks, G,2019) showed that even when the source being used was credible there happened to be an insignificant relationship with attitude and purchase intention. A test was then done to see when there was a product match up was a relationship made. The results found a positive relationship with product match up. This shows that products should be matching with the influencer that is promoting it and that the brand and influencer should give off the same interests (Hughes, C., Swaminathan, V. and Brooks, G, 2019). This research was also backed by a study done in 2019 by (Arum Nurhandayani, Rizal Syarief and Mukhamad Najib, 2019) which surveyed females aged between 19-34. They study was done to see if influencers and brand images had an impact on purchase decision making. The study found there to be a slight impact on the decision-making process when influencers were used by companies but the impact it had on brand image was very large. The author recommended that companies pick their influencers carefully to match their brand and what their company stands for. Attitude is a big factor when it comes to brands and companies. This is also the case for influencers. Consumers attitudes towards influencers has been found to significantly effect purchase intention. Research by (Dewi Mustikasari Immanuel and Alexandria Bianda H. S, 2021) found that perceived credibility, trust, and attractiveness had a positive impact on a consumers purchase intention and their attitude towards that influencer in the fashion industry. Perceived expertise was found to not have a significant impact on attitude towards the influencer. When Consumers have a positive attitude towards the influence it correlated with having a higher purchase intention and stronger brand attitude. Trust and credibility had a huge factor in this study and other studies have found that influencers can help bring this to a brand and increase the company's figure. (Haihua Hu, Dandan Zhang and Chengjun Wang, 2019) studied how influencers could be used from a trust transfer perspective to help downloads of an app. The study demonstrated that when consumers had good trust in a social

media influencer, this trust could be gained and transferred and put onto their app. Similarly, to (Dewi Mustikasari Immanuel and Alexandria Bianda H. S, 2021), (Haihua Hu, Dandan Zhang and Chengjun Wang, 2019) found that when trust was gained other statistics were positively impacted such as download volume and ratings.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1   Introduction

Research is a way in which someone gathers records investigates and translates data. According to (Susan Romberg, 2018) it provides accurate information that helps answer questions, provide insights, and make predictions. Research allows for compiling and analysing the latest information to help support and understand concepts and ideas before communicating them. It also helps and supports objectives of people and companies (Susan Romberg, 2018). (Holden, M.T. and Lynch, P, 2004) suggests when developing your research that recognising research philosophy, understanding research approach, and choosing the right research strategy are all a critical part of the process.

- Aims and Objectives
- Recognition of need
- Information search
- Evaluation of Alternatives
- Purchase Decisions
- Post- Purchase Evaluation

## 3.2   Proposed research methodology and structure

The main aim of this research was to find out an influencer's role in changing the purchase decision making process of young adult's aged between twenty to twenty-five years old.

Critical to this research was the role social media had on people's lives and how influencers across the different platforms could have an impact on an individual's decision on whether to buy a product off a company. This chapter discuss the approach the researcher took when collecting and gathering information and reasoning behind these decisions.

As a guidance the author chose Saunders Research Onion to help lead the chosen qualitative study. Saunders research onion is a concept designed by (Saunders, M,2009) which as a diagram is in the shape of an onion(fig2). The onion consists of outer layers, inner layers, and central layers. These layers represent different various methods of research. The idea is that the outer layer must be defined and unwrapped before the researcher can move onto the next layer. The Research onion helps chart the various methodology approaches available to the researcher and helps narrow down the decisions and exact approach that suits the subject being studied.

The outer layers of the onion focus on the different research philosophies and the types of research development and possible ways to approach it. This is the starting point of the research methodology analysis. The inner layers which come next focus more on the strategies and techniques part of the research. The inner layer is all about data collection and data analysis. Adopting Saunders research strategy and following the layers the chapter broadly looks at the Philosophies, the research approaches, the research strategies, design, data collecting sample and the techniques used to analyse the data.

Figure-2
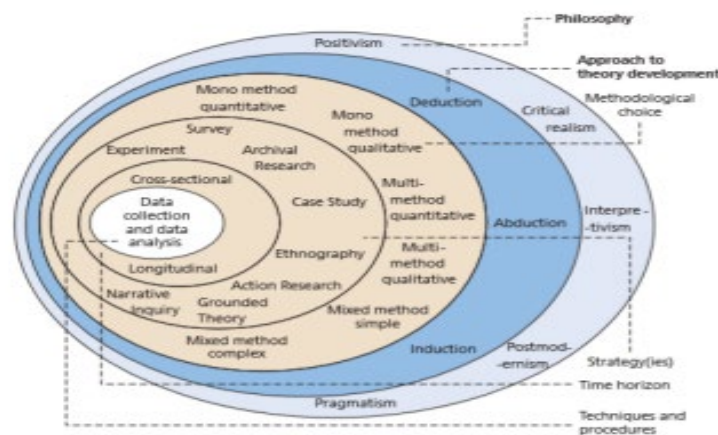
Source (Saunders et al, 2009)

3.3   Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is the first layer of Saunders onion. The research question must be aligned who matched with the research question being presented. Research philosophies are often founded by the researchers' personal values and views according to Saunders (2019). The researcher's goal throughout the study was to gain understanding on how individuals

perceive and see thing differently to one another. (Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A, 2019) suggest that choosing the right philosophy is important as although they carry similar assumptions to one another the implication of those assumptions is very different. They adopt different categorisation and classification. Saunders separates the philosophies into three different types. These are ontology, epistemology, and axiology. These three can change and influence the way the researcher conducts the study.

3.3.1 Ontology, Axiology, Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with research based on the study with the nature of knowledge. It's based on how people can gain more knowledge form the world and that reality is objective. The idea is that knowledge is out in the world just waiting to be discovered and that this knowledge can be identified and communicated to other people. In contrast axiology concerns itself with the value and meaning of things. This would suit a researcher looking at a viewpoint based on a respondent perceived value or worth of something. The researcher values are also considered within this philosophy (Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A, 2019).

The researcher decided that the philosophy that best suited the research question and the ideas was ontology. Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality and how humans perceive things going on in the world. It concerns the researcher with assumptions on how the world operates and how things can be viewed in particular ways. Ontology is split into two separate aspects. These are known as subjectivism and objectivism. Objectivism is a view that social entities exist, external to social actors. This is a very structural view of the world. It assumes that structures such as management in a company is very similar from business to business due to their job descriptions being similar. It assumes that areas of structure may be different but the essence on how it functions are the same. The researcher opted to take a subjectivism approach to the research. Subjectivism concerns itself more with reality based on human perception and imagination rather than on structure (Mukhles M. Al-Ababneh, 2020). The study is based on social actors which can also be known as customers, perceptions on influencers and how they perceive them. Different social actors can have different interpretations on things depending on their own world view. This interpretation can affect their actions and decisions (Mukhles M. Al-Ababneh, 2020). People can see the same things but interpret it differently. This is exactly what the author is attempting to research on.

3.3.2 Positivism, Critical realism, Interpretivism, Pragmatism

There are four different approaches that can follow ontology, epistemology, and axiology. These four diverse methods called positivism, critical realism, interpretivism and pragmatism change the perspectives of the first 3 philosophies.

Positivism, critical realism, and pragmatism are the 3 diverse approaches the researcher decided didn't suit the research project. Positivism is a very scientific approaching philosophy that studies society and relies specifically on experiments and statistics. It is a belief that researchers should not go beyond what can be observed. Arguably this is an opposite to interpretivism which is the philosophy which suited the researcher. Pragmatism is a philosophy that uses words and thought as tools as instruments for prediction and is usually a choice if interpretivism and positivism doesn't suit the researcher. Finally critical realism or realism is an approach which underpins a positivist philosophy and the experience of faculty (Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A, 2019).

The researcher opted for an interpretivism approach for the research. An argument can be made for this study that the most appropriate brand of ontology for the study was interpretivism. Interpretivism is an analysis of and interpretation of individuals and organisations and their perspectives on how they view reality (Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A, 2019). This is a very qualitative based approach and nature. This supports the author trying to see things from the participants points of view and the perceptions that influencers give to them all individually. The only problem is that the measurement and accuracy of the data can be challenged (Wilson, J, 2014). Interpretivism however allows the researcher to have research based on what their interests are and observe the social world, in particular social actors such as consumers (Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A, 2019).

3.4   Research Approach

There is evidence that understanding and knowing the right research approach an author should take can have huge benefits to the study overall. There are values and benefits in knowing and understanding the different approaches the researcher can take when conducting their study. Studies have looked at how researchers in their planning need to have examine their concept and decide on a research approach as it will contribute to their theory development (Pearse, N,2021).

3.4.1   Inductive vs deductive

Deductive approach to studies entails moving from the general to the particular. It usually starts with a theory developed hypothesis and testing that hypothesis. An Inductive research approach, on the other hand, involves moving from a particular to the general usually done by making observations about some phenomenon   and forming concepts and theory on this study of interest (Jaana Woiceshyn and Urs Daellenbach, 2018). Inductive theory looks at using participants to work from the bottom up by using participants to build new views with broader themes and concepts. This is different from deductive theory that works from top down from a theory to hypotheses. Inductive theory usually associates itself with qualitative research and deductive e research is more associated with quantitative research (Soiferman, L.K, 2010).

An inductive approach to research was used in this study. This approach to the research will help support the research to gain a better understanding of how exactly influencers have an impact on a consumers purchase intention particular in relation to the consumer decision making process. Each of the participant's perceptions and interpretations on influencers is a vital aspect to the research process. The participants in the study can be looked at as examples of social actors (Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A, 2019). An inductive approach can help the research find patterns to develop explanations and theories. The inductive approach was initiated by the researcher using qualitative interviews. A small sample size of individuals is much more effective as opposed to a large sample of participants which is more beneficial when taking a deductive research approach (Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A, 2019). Inductive approaches to research are constantly being questioned over the quality it has as a research approach. This is due to quality being hard to measure in inductive research as it can sometimes be based on the "eye of the beholder" (Corley, K., Bansal, P. (Tima) and Yu, H, 2021). To counter this the researcher took an inductive approach also using secondary data collection to the research. This approach looks at past research and theories that have been collected on social behaviour and tries to add information and contribute to these theories (Young, M. *et al,* 2020).

Figure-3

Deduction emphasizes	Induction emphasizes
• Scientific principles • Moving from theory to data • The need to explain causal relationships between variables • The collection of quantitative data • The application of controls to ensure validity of data • The operationalization of concepts to ensure clarity of definition • A highly structured approach • Researcher independence of what is being researched • The necessity to select samples of sufficient size in order to generalize conclusions	• Gaining an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events • A close understanding of the research context • The collection of qualitative data • A more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis as the research progresses • A realization that the research is part of the research process • Less concern with the need to generalize

Source (Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A, 2019)

3.5 Research Strategy

The researcher looked at two possible strategies to conduct the study using. These were qualitative and quantitative. According to (Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A, 2019) the type of philosophy expectations and research approach can influencer what type of research strategy should be undertaken for the study.

3.5.1 Qualitative vs Quantitative

Quantitative research is a formal, mathematical, deductive approach that uses systematic strategies for generating and refining knowledge. The study design is usually experimental and non-experimental and seek to find accurate and reliable measurements. Quantitative research explains phenomena by collecting numerical unchanging data that can be analysed in a mathematical way using different methods which can pose questions of who, what, when how much and how many. It's good for researchers dealing with specific narrow questions (MOHAJAN, H.K, 2020). Qualitative data can be seen as primarily introspective and can rely a bit on interpretations from the researcher conducting the study (Carlson, L, 2008). It involves examining the participants and seeing them express their opinions and perspectives about things or people. It counts on the researcher not having subjective bias and trustworthiness of the researcher may get considered (John Adams, Hafiz T. A. Khan and Robert Raeside, 2014).

Qualitative research suited the researcher the most when conducting this research. The research looked at psychological aspect of the consumer mind and needed to get ideas of the different perceptions consumers had that effected their decision-making process. Qualitative research has become very popular in recent years when undertaking consumer research and the ideas and perceptions consumers have. It's become a very powerful force in business research. The interpretivism and inductive view which the researcher chose as methods also support a qualitative research design. Qualitative methods of research although may be seen as less efficient than its quantitative counterpart as there's claims that it removes all subjective bias, it is much better at finding out why something is happening. Plenty of studies have found that influencers do have a positive impact on purchase intention however fail to explain the effect they have on the purchase decision making process and why they have an impact.

The qualitative approach taken is in the form of semi structured interviews as outline below:

1. Six semi structured interviews were carried out for data collection
2. Participants took part in 20-minute-long interview session
3. Participants involved were aged between 18-24 and follow or have followed some type of influencer
4. The purpose was the gain insights on the perspectives participants had on influencers across 15 different questions involving the decision-making process

3.6 Data Collection

Data collection is loosely defined as a systematic process of gathering information needed to answer research questions, solve particular research problems, or used as a basic for accepting or rejecting a research hypothesis. When not done correctly and the right appropriate method is not chosen it may fail to answer research question and ultimately research problems. There are multiple of data collection method but not all are right for different research. Choosing the wrong one may result in finding invalid research results (Sipes, J.B., Mullan, B. and Roberts, L.D, 2020).

3.6.1 Qualitive data primary collection

Qualitative data collection seeks to answer questions like "how" and "why" rather than "what" and "how often". In doing so qualitative research usually involves collecting rich data that is understood within context and is associate with an interpretivist philosophy. It requires researchers to embrace subjectivity for them to interpret the data (Mattimoe, R. *et al,* 2021). Data collection has been called the most complex and mysterious of all the phases of a qualitative project. Most qualitative research papers lack explicit description of the methods informing data analysis (Kiger, M.E. and Varpio, L, 2020). This has caused qualitative data to come under criticism often by researchers due to the subjective nature of the analysis (Easton, K.L., McComish, J.F. and Greenberg, R, 2000). This has called for more transparency and trustworthiness at times in the data collection methods (O'Kane, P., Smith, A. and Lerman, M.P, 2021)

The researcher used a process involving semi-structured interviews over the phone and conducted remotely. These interviews were recorded and saved securely on the researcher's phone. This was to assist on accurate data analysis. Interviews can follow a tightly written script like a survey or questions can be loosely written to give participants more freedom in their answers. Interviews usually give rich more detailed data than surveys. (Paradis, E. *et al,* 2016) Individual interviews are a significantly effective method that allows the researcher to gain insight into the beliefs, views, and behaviours of the participants (Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A, 2019). The questions the researcher used were fully prepared beforehand and designed to gain critical information from interviewees however the questions were not closed off and gave flexibility for the participant's answers.

3.6.2 Secondary data collection

The secondary data undertaken in this project was in the form of a literature review. The researcher looked at multiple of past studies and books in relation to influencers and the consumers purchase decision making process. This allowed the author to gain a critical understanding of the research topic. (Schuster, C.P., Anderson, B. and Brodowsky, G, 2014) states that secondary data collection will help the researcher create a better research project overall. The information gathered was over an extended period from primarily the National College of Ireland library using mainly peer reviewed academic journals and books.

3.6.3 Population Sample

The researcher conducted a total of 6 semi structured interviews. A critical aspect to the research was to gain the perspectives and viewpoints from all the participants that could help contribute to the research topic. The interviews were all young adults who had a good general knowledge of the internet and social media. The had all interacted with or knew of some type of influencer. The interviews were conducted over the phone with all participants giving consent to the researcher to record the audio from the interview.

The sample size was quite small which presented challenges as discussed in limitations. Of the 6 participants who took part 66% were male and 34% were female. The questions used for the interview can be seen in appendix 1. For privacy reasons the personal data of the participants will be kept hidden. The participants will be referred to as interviewee in the discussion and findings chapter. For any specific quotes or responses from participants will be referenced by the author as, for example interviewee 2 will be referred as (IV 2).

The researcher conducted all interviews and took responsibility for the collection and storing of the recordings. The interviews were recorded using the audio recorder app on mobile. Additionally, when the author took down notes and key points during the interviews. Recordings were then re listened to and analysed to gain better understandings and ideas from the participants responses. The author also looked to find common themes and patterns shared between the different interviews. Parallels were also looked for from literature in chapter 2 as well as new phenomena that possibly have not been identified.

3.6.4 Analysing data

Conducting qualitative research meant the researcher was required to listen carefully to what the participants articulate and interpret what they are saying. (Yin, R.K, 2016) states to do this there are 5 exercises that researchers must do.1) Actively listening (2) Having an inquisitive nature, (3) Sensitive to managing others time (4) Differentiating between traditional, primary, and secondary information, (5) Triangulating information from different sources. To ensure accuracy researchers are also encouraged to recheck data that's been collected thoroughly. The author must not have a subjective bias opinion when doing the interviews.

3.7   Ethical approach

Ethical approach was how the interviewer treated individuals when the research was being carried out. The author took all the necessary steps to ensure a good ethical approach was taken for research study. Prior to carrying out the research, the author filled out and completed a full ethical review, outlining the steps the research study would take to ensure that participants of the study were all treated fairly and ethically. The ethical form was filed with the national college of Ireland.

3.8   Limitations in research

The sample size of the research that was conducted is quite small with only six interviews, therefore it is fair to assume that results from the research wouldn't be entirely conclusive, as bias and subjectivity can be expected. The themes and patterns may be difficult to prove due to different individual perspectives and anomalies that can occur due to various experiences and exposure that the participants have to influencers. With more time a larger sample size would have been used meaning a higher number of interviews would have been conducted in order to gain more accurate results.

Chapter 4 Research Findings and Discussions

This section aims to present any parallels between past studies and literature and the primary research found in this study. The data collected from the sample give insights on influencers currently and their impact on the consumers purchase decision making process. The inductive approach applied allowed that author to gain a more in-depth perspective of the participant partaking in the study. The purpose of the objectives was to gain better perspective from the participants on the research question "Impact influencers have on purchase decision for consumers". The sub objectives were underpinned by purchase decision-making process theory.

4.1   Qualitative Research Findings

The questions had an overarching query which built the framework for the sub questions to help support and gather the data (See appendix 1). The findings of the study found that 66% of the interviewees had directly purchased a product or services due to an influencer. This shows that influencers had a direct impact on their purchase intention. 100% of the participants had been directly impacted by an influencer in one way or another in their decision-making process when buying a product or service. This allows an argument to say that influencers do have impact on the purchase decision of consumers aged 18-24 even if the impact doesn't directly link to buying a product solely because of an influencer or influencers.

4.2   Objective 1 "To investigate how an influencer impacts a consumer's recognition of need for a product".

The researcher wanted to gain an idea on the influence that influencers had on the first section of the consumer decision making process. This section highlights how influencers impact the consumers judgement on whether they need a product or not. It also briefly looks at where influencers tend to advertise to people. Interviewees gave insight to why influencers could have this impact on them.

4.2.1   Influencers pull power

The pull power that influencers had on the interviewees was quite evident throughout all the six interviews. Four of the six interviewees stated that they had decided that they needed to get a certain product or service due to an influencer using the product and advertising it. "I bought it and started taking it as they persuaded me with their results" (IV3) The two interviewees who stated they never solely bought a product due to an influencer did state however that they have bought products they were thinking of getting because an influencer advertised it to them and convinced them "They influenced my decision on products I was thinking of getting" (IV 4).

4.2.2   Where influencers advertise

The interviewer wanted to get an idea on where consumers within the age range were mainly getting targeted. It was found from the interviews that social media was the main area the participants were seeing advertisements from influencers. Instagram was the most popular platform with all six interviewees mentioning the app followed by TikTok which was mentioned four times. Other platforms mentioned were YouTube and Snapchat Stories.

4.2.3   Influence on the judgement of a product

Research findings also demonstrated how influencers could change a consumer's thoughts on a particular product or company. This could be for the better or for the worse. When asked participants gave examples of when their thoughts on a brand or product was influenced by an influencer. Half of the responses were examples of negatives thoughts on products and brands due to an influencer while the other half were positive. The positive responses talked about how their likeness for an influencer get transferred over to a brand that they work with as they trust that person. "I've been more interested in a product seeing someone else using it" (IV 5). The participants who stated they've gained negative thoughts on a brand or product due to an influencer all gave examples from the fitness industry. The interviewees explained how Influencers in the industry constantly expose each other and brands who are trying to swindle consumers who are new to gym and fitness. "In the fitness industry there are a lot of influencers who mislead their consumers" (IV 4)

4.3   Objective 2 "To find if consumers use influencers when looking for information on a product or service"

The researcher wanted to see if the consumers used influencers as a main source of information when looking at buying a product. This researcher also wanted to understand if the consumers trust the I formation given to them by influencers.

4.3.1   Influencer product use

The findings from the interviews found that none of the participants would search if a certain influencer used a product or service, they were thinking about buying to find more information. Interviewees tended to look up information themselves on the products whether that was on the website or through reviews on the product. "I'd look at the reviews of that product from just your average consumer" (IV 1)

4.3.2   Influencers social platforms

Influencers tend to sell products and services directly off their social platforms and pages. This could be products owned by them or links for other companies they are partnered with. The research found that the participants were unlikely to buy directly from an influencers page with only two participants saying they bought directly from an influencers page. Both participants mentioned the beauty and makeup industry was the industry they've done this in which may be the reason why the other 4 participants haven't as they are unlikely to follow or like influencers in this industry "I've done this plenty of times mainly in the makeup and beauty industry" (IV 5)

4.3.3   Information trustworthiness

Trust is a very important attraction in the influencer industry with previous studies by (Dewi Mustikasari Immanuel and Alexandria Bianda H. S, 2021) and (Haihua Hu, Dandan Zhang and Chengjun Wang, 2019) showing how important it is in the overall purchase decision making process. When it comes to information on products and services from influencers trust as an attribute is clearly prevalent. All participants stated how influencers are paid to market products therefore you can't trust every single influencer. "I believe some influencers" (IV 3) The participants however mentioned how there were some influencers they trusted that they followed. "I rarely trust influencers; I trust certain influencers over others" (IV4) When the participants followed the influencer and trusted them, they stated that they would buy products or services that the influencer advertised if they were interested in

the product. This was because they were loyal to certain influencers and valued their opinions. "From the influencers I follow on Instagram I do trust the reviews and the opinions they have on a products or services because they use it themselves." (IV 2)

4.4 Objective 3 "To investigate when evaluating alternatives do customers use influencers as a deciding factor"

This section of the interview raised the questions to see the different ways influencers impact or interfere with consumers when evaluating products and deciding which product suits their need the most.

4.4.1 Influencer products vs non influencer products

The participants all agreed that they tended to trust products that had influencers marketing them over similar products with no influencers. Interviewee 5 talked about how they felt it was because so many people valued the opinion of certain influencers that when they were marketing a product an automatic psychological factor makes you think that the product is probably better. Interviewee 6 explained how they felt most influencers have expertise in certain industries and that product the enforce usually come from these industries, so they value the opinion of influencers making the products more attractive than those without influencer endorsement.

4.4.2 Influencers vs influencers regarding trust

Past studies constantly talk about how trust and reliability are extremely important in influencer marketing. A study by (Kim, D.J., Ferrin, D.L. and Rao, H.R, 2008) looked at the importance of trust in the evaluating stage of decision making. Data from the primary research, matched with the previous study with participants mentioning how they a more likely to trust influencers with more credibility over others. "Some influencers are more credible than others just because of the type of person they are" (IV 4). Data from some interviews however showed Influencer marketing does have its challenges and trust can be hard to gain "Clearly just advertising a product to get paid and doesn't care themselves" (IV 6). A past study by (Zhou, S. *et al,* 2021) mentioned how influencers must produce high quality content in a persuasive nature to keep followers liking them. This matched what interviewee 5 had to say. "If they are more persuasive, I'm more likely to trust them" (IV 5)

4.4.3 Influencers association with Brands

The data collected on whether the participants stick to certain products or services solely because a certain influencer is associated with them or promotes them was found to be consistent throughout. All interviewees stated that when evaluating brands, they like the influencers they're associated with doesn't matter to them. "I stick to brands and services due to loyalty and good past interactions with the product or service" (IV 3) Interviewee 2 spoke about how influencers can help a brand look better and may make them like a certain brand more but states it's up to the brand themselves and what they offer and provide to keep them being a consumer. Some participants took a more rational consumer approach to answering "If the same product or service is being offered to me by a different company for cheaper or has easier access, I will change" (IV 4).

4.5 Objective 4 "To examine if consumers have bought products or service because of an influencer"

This section looks directly at influencers effect on purchase intention and the transaction period of the decision-making process where the product or service is bought. It also looks at which industry has the most influence when it comes to impacting the consumers purchase intention.

4.5.1 Influence on purchase intention

Most past studies on influencers researched if purchase intention was impacted by influencers and if people bought products because influencers promoted them. Past studies by (Kadam, N., Deshmukh, A. and Kadam, R, 2021) (Arum Nurhandayani, Rizal Syarief and Mukhamad Najib, 2019) and (Dewi Mustikasari Immanuel and Alexandria Bianda H. S, 2021) all found influencers had a positive impact on purchase intentions. The primary data collected from the interviews matched these studies for the most part. Four of the candidates agreed to have bought products because of an influencer while the other two said they've never bought products because an influencer promoted it. "I have been persuaded to buy a product just because an influencer was promoting it" (IV 1) "Yes, I seen an influencer I trusted promote her sunglasses brand making me buy one for a festival" (IV 5)

4.5.2 Factors effecting purchase intention

There was a consistency throughout the data collected across all 6 interviews on whether influencers were the main deciding factor when buying a product. It was consistent throughout that influencers were not the main deciding factor and price was the number one factor. "It would be the price, the brand and then the influencer" (IV 2). This may be due to the age of the interviewees partaking in the study. A similar study done by (Xin Jean Lim *et al*, 2017) found when interviewing students, the impact influencers had on their purchase decision making wasn't as high. This was possibly a factor why price was so important to the participants. "Price is obviously a big one as a student I don't have a lot of money to be spending" (IV 4)

4.5.3 What industry has strongest influence

The fashion industry was found to have the most influence when it came to participants buying off influencer with 5 of the 6 participants stating they have bought fashion type products off influencers. The fitness industry was next mentioned with 2 participants mentioning buying products from that area of business. Both industries are strongly associated with image and looks. This information found is not surprising with a past study by (FARRELL, J.R., CAMPBELL, C. and SANDS, S, 2022) showing how attractiveness is an important factor when it comes to influencer marketing.

4.6 Objective 5 "To see how consumers feel after buying a product or service if influenced by an influencer"

The final section looks at how the emotions consumers feel after buying a product off an influencer. It also gets insight into if the participants have had good and bad experiences impactful experiences when dealing with influencers.

4.6.1   Feelings after purchase

From past experiences 5 of the participants have had both a good and a bad time buying products with the involvements of influencers. This cause them to have good emotions and bad emotions depending on the time. "I've been happy and sad by products being promoted by influencers" (IV 2). Interviewee 5 was lucky enough to never have a bad experience buying off influencers online. "From experience I've always been happy and satisfied with products I've bought online" (IV 5) This wasn't the case for the others with most of them describing how the products they got was not up to standard, broke after 3 months or as described. "The material was different, and the fitting was different" (IV 3).

4.6.2   Trust after purchases

The researcher wanted to see if consumers would trust influencers as an entire entity more if a product or service they got was as described and they were happy with an influencer's advertisement. Two participants gained no trust at all when getting a product as describing stating that it's more the brands duty to fulfil the requirements and trust shouldn't be gained for just doing what you said you would do. The other participants did gain more trust but not on influencers as a whole. They stated they only gained more trust in that individual influencer who sold them the product or service. "I only trust the influencer I bought from even more not more as a whole" (IV 4). "It makes me trust that particular influencer not influencers as a whole" (IV 2).

4.6.3   Feeling after misinformed

Looking at the participants post evaluation of a purchase when they were misinformed the data shows that consumers may lose interest in certain influencers if they spread and advertise a product with wrong information. Participants said they'd be disappointed and unhappy if mislead by an influencer they like "Not impressed at all" (IV 6). Loss of respect for the influence was talked about by the participants when this happened. "If the product wasn't as described I wouldn't look up to that influencer as much" (IV 1). Interviewee 3 and 4 both talked about how they even stopped following influences who misinformed them which shows the backlash that can happen to influencers if they're not careful.

4.7   Study Limitations

The data was found to produce consistent similarities from the interviewees and the existing literature however its must be recognised that the data in not significantly conclusive due to the qualitative nature of the research approach taken and the time constraints on the author. With more time the researcher could have interviewed a larger cohort of individuals allowing for further statical analysis. The inductive nature of the study heavily relied on the individual's experiences with influencers and the different perspectives they gained on them. The study also relied on the researcher's interpretations of the data gained and given by the interviewees. The interviewers and interviewee's ability to also remove bias and personal opinion from the research topic could also pose challenges.

Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1   Conclusion

Influencer marketing is a growing marketing tactic that many organisations, businesses, and brands are opting for over older more traditional marketing methods. The 5-step decision-making process has also been a long-studied concept for many years. The impact influencers have on the process has been studied rigorously in recent years as businesses and organisation try to gain better understanding on the impact influencers can have on purchase intention. The main point of this paper was to gain a thorough understanding of the impact influencers have on the full decision-making process and try find out why they have been such a successful marketing tactic in recent times.

After examination of studies researching similar studies addressing similar points there is clearly flawed studies who don't go into much detail on why the decision-making process in being impacted by influencers and how they impact all the different separate stages. This paper aimed to bring clarity into these gaps and uses 18-24 as the consumer age as they the age group who are most likely to follow influencers that have money therefore can purchase things being advertised to them.

The paper was successful at gaining insight into the minds of the participants from a consumer perspective and was able to point out and see how which areas of the decision-making process was impacted by influencers and why this was happening.

Unfortunately, the scope of the study was not very large due to time constraints therefore anholonomies had a huge impact on the results from the interviews had to be interoperated. For instance, older generations may have different answers to some questions due to their experiences and perspectives.

Ultimately the study hope to have brought some clarity into why influencers have an impact into the decision-making process and how they do it.

5.2   Recommendations
5.2.1   Recommendations for future research

In order to account for possible geographical dimensions that may cause differences in perspectives and experiences with influencers for different consumers, researcher should replicate similar approach across a global scale to understand if consumers all over the world are impacted by influencers the same way. Due to time the paper was unable to carry out a randomised sampling method opting for a convenience sampling method instead. Future research should aim to correct this opting for a more random sampling method to gain a better more representative slice of just your average young consumer.

Away from study design for researchers should possibly look at different types of consumers and split up and categorise them differently rather that just by age. Researchers could look at influencers in certain sector like fashion or sports and see the effect they have on consumers as the research showed that influencers in different industries had more impact on the decision-making process for consumers than others.

5.2.2   Recommendations for professionals

Professionals can use this research to gain more insight into the mind of young adult consumers and how their decision-making processes are impacted by influencers. This information can be used to create influencers marketing campaign that can target consumers and increase their probability of purchasing a product or service you sell. More research is need to see how brand scan effectively use influencers to target all age group and influence all types of customers purchase decision making and purchase intentions.

References

Alf H. Walle, A. (2015) *Qualitative Research in Business: A Practical Overview*. Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=e020mww&AN=1014736&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 14 August 2022).

Arash Ahmadi and Siriwan Ieamsom (2021) 'Influencer fit post vs celebrity fit post: which one engages Instagram users more?', *Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC*, 26(1), pp. 98–116. doi:10.1108/SJME-12-2020-0217.

Arum Nurhandayani, Rizal Syarief and Mukhamad Najib (2019) 'The Impact of Social Media Influencer and Brand Images to Purchase Intention', *Jurnal Aplikasi Manajemen*, 17(4), pp. 650–661. doi:10.21776/ub.jam.2019.017.04.09.

Batt, R. and Kahn, L. (2021) 'Data Transparency and Methods in Quantitative and Qualitative Research: Letter from the Editors', *ILR Review*, 74(5), pp. 1079–1082. doi:10.1177/00197939211032932.

Brooks, G., Drenten, J. and Piskorski, M.J. (2021) 'Influencer Celebrification: How Social Media Influencers Acquire Celebrity Capital', *Journal of Advertising*, 50(5), pp. 528–547. doi:10.1080/00913367.2021.1977737.

Carlson, L. (2008) 'Qualitative vs quantitative research traditions: a needless and useless debate that hampers advertising and marketing knowledge development', *International Journal of Advertising*, 27(4), pp. 660–663. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bsu&AN=34216848&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 14 August 2022).

Chukwuere, J.E. (2021) 'Understanding the impacts of social media platforms on students' academic learning progress', *Review of International Geographical Education Online*, 11(9), pp. 2671–2677. doi:10.48047/rigeo.11.09.233.

Corley, K., Bansal, P. (Tima) and Yu, H. (2021) 'An editorial perspective on judging the quality of inductive research when the methodological straightjacket is loosened', *Strategic Organization*, 19(1), pp. 161–175. doi:10.1177/1476127020968180.

Dana Kilroy (2017) *Facebook : An In-Depth Quick Start Guide to Marketing Your Business*. [Boca Raton]: QuickStudy Reference Guides. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=e020mww&AN=1917830&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 12 August 2022).

Devereux, E., Grimmer, L. and Grimmer, M. (2020) 'Consumer engagement on social media: Evidence from small retailers', *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 19(2), pp. 151–159. doi:10.1002/cb.1800.

Dewi Mustikasari Immanuel and Alexandria Bianda H. S. (2021) 'The Impact of Using Influencer on Consumer Purchase Intention with Attitude Towards Influencer and Brand Attitude as Mediator', *Jurnal Aplikasi Manajemen*, 19(4). doi:10.21776/ub.jam.2021.019.04.06

Easton, K.L., McComish, J.F. and Greenberg, R. (2000) 'Avoiding common pitfalls in qualitative data collection and transcription', *Qualitative health research*, 10(5), pp. 703–707. doi:10.1177/104973200129118651.

Erdoğmuş, Z.İ. and Arslan, M.K. (2022) 'Engaging with Social Media Influencers on Youtube: A Cluster Analysis', *Istanbul University Journal of the School of Business Administration*, 51(1), pp. 359–373. doi:10.26650/ibr.2022.51.842750.

Faems, D. (2020) 'Moving forward quantitative research on innovation management: a call for an inductive turn on using and presenting quantitative research', *R&D Management*, 50(3), pp. 352–363. doi:10.1111/radm.12406.

Farivar, S. and Wang, F. (2022) 'Effective influencer marketing: A social identity perspective', *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 67. doi:10.1016/j.jretconser.2022.103026.

FARRELL, J.R., CAMPBELL, C. and SANDS, S. (2022) 'What Drives Consumers To Engage with Influencers? Segmenting Consumer Response to Influencers: Insights for Managing Social-Media Relationships', *Journal of Advertising Research*, 62(1), pp. 35–48. doi:10.2501/JAR-2021-017.

Gbandi, E.C. and Iyamu, G.O. (2022) 'The effect of social media marketing on the growth of business: evidence from selected Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Benin City, Nigeria', *Journal of Enterprise & Development (JED)*, 4(1), pp. 77–98. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bsu&AN=157759465&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 13 August 2022).

George Pain (2017) *YouTube Marketing : A Beginners' Guide to Building a YouTube Channel Audience and Make Passive Income*. [Place of publication not identified]: Abhishek Kumar. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=e020mww&AN=2618734&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 12 August 2022).

Guoquan Ye *et al.* (2021) 'The Value of Influencer Marketing for Business: A Bibliometric Analysis and Managerial Implications', *Journal of Advertising*, 50(2), pp. 160–178. doi:10.1080/00913367.2020.1857888.

Haenlein, M. *et al.* (2020) 'Navigating the New Era of Influencer Marketing: How to be Successful on Instagram, TikTok, & Co', *California Management Review*, 63(1), pp. 5–25. doi:10.1177/0008125620958166.

Haihua Hu, Dandan Zhang and Chengjun Wang (2019) 'Impact of social media influencers' endorsement on application adoption: A trust transfer perspective', *Social Behavior & Personality: an international journal*, 47(11), pp. 1–12. doi:10.2224/sbp.8518.

Holden, M.T. and Lynch, P. (2004) 'Choosing the Appropriate Methodology: Understanding Research Philosophy', *Marketing Review*, 4(4), pp. 397–409. doi:10.1362/1469347042772428.

Hudders, L., De Jans, S. and De Veirman, M. (2021) 'The commercialization of social media stars: a literature review and conceptual framework on the strategic use of social media influencers', *International Journal of Advertising*, 40(3), pp. 327–375. doi:10.1080/02650487.2020.1836925.

Hudson, R. (2015) *Decision-making: Processes, Behavioral Influences and Role in Business Management*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc (Business Issues, Competition and Entrepreneurship). Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=e020mww&AN=1049868&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 10 August 2022).

Hughes, C., Swaminathan, V. and Brooks, G. (2019) 'Driving Brand Engagement Through Online Social Influencers: An Empirical Investigation of Sponsored Blogging Campaigns', *Journal of Marketing*, 83(5), pp. 78–96. doi:10.1177/0022242919854374.

Isyanto, P., Sapitri, R.G. and Sinaga, O. (2020) 'Micro Influencers Marketing and Brand Image to Purchase Intention of Cosmetic Products Focallure', *Systematic Reviews in Pharmacy*, 11(1), pp. 601–605. doi:10.5530/srp.2020.1.75.

Jaana Woiceshyn and Urs Daellenbach (2018) 'Evaluating inductive vs deductive research in management studies : Implications for authors, editors, and reviewers', *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, 13(2), pp. 183–195. doi:10.1108/QROM-06-2017-1538.

Jodie Cook (2020) *Instagram Rules : The Essential Guide to Building Brands, Business and Community*. London, United Kingdom: Frances Lincoln. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=e020mww&AN=2707993&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 12 August 2022).

John Adams, Hafiz T. A. Khan and Robert Raeside (2014) *Research Methods for Business and Social Science Students*. New Delhi: Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=e020mww&AN=784882&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 14 August 2022).

Kadam, N., Deshmukh, A. and Kadam, R. (2021) 'A Study on Impact of Social Media Influencers' Endorsements on the Buying Behaviour of Gen Z, for Lifestyle and Electronics Product Category with Special Reference to Pune City', *Parikalpana: KIIT Journal of Management*, 17(1), pp. 218–227. doi:10.23862/kiit-parikalpana/2021/v17/i1/209032.

Kangmin Cho *et al.* (2022) 'Qualitative Approaches to Evaluating Social Media Influencers: A case-based LITERATURE review', *International Journal of Electronic Commerce Studies*, 13(2), pp. 119–136. doi:10.7903/ijecs.2025.

Kaplan, A.M. and Haenlein, M. (2010) Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media [Online] Business Horizons, Vol. 53 (2010), S. 59-68 Available from http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0007681309001232.

Kay, S., Mulcahy, R. and Parkinson, J. (2020) 'When less is more: the impact of macro and micro social media influencers' disclosure', *Journal of Marketing Management*, 36(3/4), pp. 248–278. doi:10.1080/0267257X.2020.1718740.

Kiger, M.E. and Varpio, L. (2020) 'Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131', *Medical Teacher*, 42(8), pp. 846–854. doi:10.1080/0142159X.2020.1755030.

Kim, D.J., Ferrin, D.L. and Rao, H.R. (2008) 'A trust-based consumer decision-making model in electronic commerce: The role of trust, perceived risk, and their antecedents', *Decision Support Systems*, 44(2), pp. 544–564. doi:10.1016/j.dss.2007.07.001.

Liu, X., Shin, H. and Burns, A.C. (2021) 'Examining the impact of luxury brand's social media marketing on customer engagement: Using big data analytics and natural language processing', *Journal of Business Research*, 125, pp. 815–826. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.04.042.

Lou, C. (2022) 'Social Media Influencers and Followers: Theorization of a Trans-Parasocial Relation and Explication of Its Implications for Influencer Advertising', *Journal of Advertising*, 51(1), pp. 4–21. doi:10.1080/00913367.2021.1880345.

MAKUDZA, F., SANDADA, M. and MADZIKANDA, D.D. (2022) 'Modelling Social Commerce Buying Behaviour: An Adaption of the Sequential Consumer Decision Making Model', *Management Research & Practice*, 14(1), pp. 17–29. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bsu &AN=157166024&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 10 August 2022).

Martínez-López, F.J. *et al.* (2020) 'Behind influencer marketing: key marketing decisions and their effects on followers' responses', *Journal of Marketing Management*, 36(7/8), pp. 579–607. doi:10.1080/0267257X.2020.1738525.

Mattimoe, R. *et al.* (2021) 'Approaches to Analysis of Qualitative Research Data: A Reflection on the Manual and Technological Approaches', *Accounting, Finance & Governance Review*, 27(1), pp. 1–14. doi:10.52399/001c.22026.

MOHAJAN, H.K. (2020) 'Quantitative Research: A Successful Investigation in Natural and Social Sciences', *Journal of Economic Development, Environment & People*, 9(4), pp. 50–79. doi:10.26458/jedep.v9i4.679.

Moraes, M. *et al.* (2019) 'Celebrity influences on consumer decision making: new insights and research directions', *Journal of Marketing Management*, 35(13/14), pp. 1159–1192. doi:10.1080/0267257X.2019.1632373.

Muhammad Yaseen Bhutto *et al.* (2019) 'Young Chinese Consumer Decision Making in Buying Green Products: An Application of Theory of Planned Behavior with Gender and Price Transparency', *Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences*, 13(3), pp. 599–619. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=edsd oj&AN=edsdoj.1870c5ad9649949dd805ff621823c7&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 10 August 2022).

Mukhles M. Al-Ababneh (2020) 'Linking Ontology, Epistemology And Research Methodology', *Science & Philosophy*, 8(1), pp. 75–91. doi:10.23756/sp.v8i1.500.

Mwita, K.M. (2022) 'Factors to consider when choosing data collection methods', *International Journal of Research in Business & Social Science*, 11(5), pp. 532–538. doi:10.20525/ijrbs.v11i5.1842.

O'Kane, P., Smith, A. and Lerman, M.P. (2021) 'Building Transparency and Trustworthiness in Inductive Research Through Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software', *Organizational Research Methods*, 24(1), pp. 104–139. doi:10.1177/1094428119865016

Panwar, D. *et al.* (2019) 'Consumer Decision Making Process Models and their Applications to Market Strategy', *International Management Review*, 15(1), pp. 36–44. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bsu &AN=135847331&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 10 August 2022).

Paradis, E. *et al.* (2016) 'Design: Selection of Data Collection Methods', *Journal of graduate medical education*, 8(2), pp. 263–264. doi:10.4300/JGME-D-16-00098.1

Park, J. *et al.* (2021) 'David and Goliath: When and Why Micro-Influencers Are More Persuasive Than Mega-Influencers', *Journal of Advertising*, 50(5), pp. 584–602. doi:10.1080/00913367.2021.1980470.

Pearse, N. (2021) 'Guidelines for Theory Development using Qualitative Research Approaches', *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 19(2), pp. 95–103. doi:10.34190/ejbrm.19.2.2512.

Petcharat, T. and Leelasantitham, A. (2021) 'A retentive consumer behavior assessment model of the online purchase decision-making process', *Heliyon*, 7(10). doi:10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e08169.

Rosengren, S. and Campbell, C. (2021) 'Navigating the Future of Influencer Advertising: Consolidating What Is Known and Identifying New Research Directions', *Journal of Advertising*, 50(5), pp. 505–509. doi:10.1080/00913367.2021.1984346

Rundin, K. and Colliander, J. (2021) 'Multifaceted Influencers: Toward a New Typology for Influencer Roles in Advertising', *Journal of Advertising*, 50(5), pp. 548–564. doi:10.1080/00913367.2021.1980471.

Safiullah, M. *et al.* (2017) 'Social media as an upcoming tool for political marketing effectiveness', *Asia Pacific Management Review*, 22(1), pp. 10–15. doi:10.1016/j.apmrv.2016.10.007

Saunders, M. (2009). Research methods for business students. 5th ed. UK: Pearson.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2019) *Research methods for business students. [electronic book]*. Eighth edition. Pearson. Available at: https://search.ebsco-host.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=cat05743a&AN=nci.33365&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 13 August 2022).

Schoja, V. (2016) *Why Should Companies Invest in Social Media Marketing? Parameters and Means for Performance Measurement*. [Place of publication not identified]: Anchor Academic Publishing. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=e020mww&AN=1412493&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 13 August 2022).

Schuster, C.P., Anderson, B. and Brodowsky, G. (2014) 'Secondary Data: Collection and Analysis - Classroom Activities for Learning', *Journal of the Academy of Business Education*, 15, pp. 97–118. Available at: https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bsu&AN=101788624&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 17 August 2022).

Shu-Chen Chang, Chih-Chien Wang and Chia-Yu Kuo (2020) 'Social Media Influencer Research: An Bibliometric Analysis', *International Journal of Electronic Commerce Studies*, 11(2), pp. 75–86. doi:10.7903/ijecs.1975.

Silva, M.J. de B. *et al.* (2020) 'Online Engagement and the Role of Digital Influencers in Product Endorsement on Instagram', *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, 19(2), pp. 133–163. doi:10.1080/15332667.2019.1664872.

Singh, K. (2021) 'Influencer Marketing from a Consumer Perspective: How Attitude, Trust, and Word of Mouth Affect Buying Behavior', *European Integration Studies*, (15), pp. 231–241. doi:10.5755/j01.eis.1.15.28803.

Sipes, J.B., Mullan, B. and Roberts, L.D. (2020) 'Ethical considerations when using online research methods to study sensitive topics', *Translational Issues in Psychological Science*, 6(3), pp. 235–239. doi:10.1037/tps0000266.

Soiferman, L.K. (2010) *Compare and Contrast Inductive and Deductive Research Approaches*, *Online Submission*. Online Submission. Available at: https://search.ebsco-host.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=eric&AN=ED542066&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 14 August 2022).

Sony Kusumasondjaja (2018) 'The roles of message appeals and orientation on social media brand communication effectiveness : An evidence from Indonesia', *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 30(4), pp. 1135–1158. doi:10.1108/APJML-10-2017-0267

Statista, 2022. *Consumers following virtual influencers by age U.S. 2022 | Statista.* [online] Statista. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1304080/consumers-follow-virtual-influencers-age-us/> [Accessed 17 August 2022].

Susan Romberg (2018) *Business Research : A QuickStudy Laminated Reference Guide.* [S.l.]: QuickStudy Reference Guides. Available at: https://search.ebsco-host.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=e020mww&AN=2803701&site=ehost-live (Accessed: 13 August 2022).

Tanwar, A.S., Chaudhry, H. and Srivastava, M.K. (2022) 'Trends in Influencer Marketing: A Review and Bibliometric Analysis', *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 22(1), pp. 1–27. doi:10.1080/15252019.2021.2007822.

Vikas Gupta (2019) 'The influencing role of social media in the consumer's hotel decision-making process', *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, 11(4), pp. 378–391. doi:10.1108/WHATT-04-2019-0019.

Wilson, J. (2014) Essentials of Business Research: A Guide to Doing Your Research Project. Sage publications. London

Xin Jean Lim *et al.* (2017) 'The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention and the Mediation Effect of Customer Attitude', *Asian Journal of Business Research*, 7(2), pp. 19–36. doi:10.14707/ajbr.170035.

Yang, Y. and Ha, L. (2021) 'Why People Use TikTok (Douyin) and How Their Purchase Intentions Are Affected by Social Media Influencers in China: A Uses and Gratifications and Parasocial Relationship Perspective', *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 21(3), pp. 297–305. doi:10.1080/15252019.2021.1995544.

Yin, R.K. (2016) Qualitative Research from Start to Finish. Second Edition. New York: The Guilford Press. ISBN: 978-1-4625-1797-8. 386 pp

Young, M. *et al.* (2020) 'The Spectrum of Inductive and Deductive Research Approaches Using Quantitative and Qualitative Data', *Academic medicine : journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges*, 95(7), p. 1122. doi:10.1097/ACM.0000000000003101

ZEREN, D. and KAPUKAYA, N. (2021) 'Whose Voice Is Louder? Influencer and Celebrity Endorsement on Instagram', *Omer Halisdemir Universitesi Iktisadi ve Idari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 14(3), pp. 1038–1050. doi:10.25287/ohuiibf.815713.

Zhou, S. *et al.* (2021) 'How social media influencers' narrative strategies benefit cultivating influencer marketing: Tackling issues of cultural barriers, commercialised content, and sponsorship disclosure', *Journal of Business Research*, 134, pp. 122–142. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.05.011.

Zulkifli, A., Ahmad, N. and Chauhan, P. (2022) 'TikTok in 2022: Revisiting Data and Privacy', *Computer*, 55(6), pp. 77–80. doi:10.1109/MC.2022.3164226.

Appendix 1

Objective 1-To investigate how an influencer impacts a consumer's recognition of need for a product.

1.Do influencers ever make you want to buy something that you weren't thinking of getting? Why? (Persuasive, liked the influencer, etc)

2.Where do you usually see influencers advertising products? (Social media, tv etc)

3.Has an influencer ever changed how you thought about a product or service? (Good or bad) why? (You liked the influencer, or you didn't like them etc)

Objective 2-To find if consumers use influencers when looking for information on a product or service

4.Do you ever look up if influencers used a certain product before buying it? If Yes, Why? (Trust, loyalty, etc)

5.Do you ever go onto influencers pages to purchase products off them? What industry? (Sports, beauty etc)

6. Do you trust the information influencers give on products? Why? (Trust some influencers but not others etc)

Objective 3-To investigate if when evaluating alternatives do customers use influencers as a deciding factor

7.When comparing products and services with one another would certain influencers using a product over another be a deciding factor? (Would you buy products if a famous athlete used it over one that no athletes used)

8.Would you trust some influencers over other influencers even if they were promoting the same product? Why? (You like what one person stands for over the other person, etc)

9. Do you stick with certain services and brands over others because of the influencers associated with them?

Objective 4-To examine if consumers have bought products or service because of an influencer

10. Have you ever bought a product or service due to an influencer promoting it? Why? (Liked the influencer and trusted them etc)

11. Are influencers ever first choice when purchasing something or are factors such as price always ahead?

12. What industry do you find yourself buying products being promoted by influencers the most? Why do you think that is? (Fashion, sports etc)

Objective 5-To see how consumers feel after buying a product or service if influenced by an influencer

13.Have you ever been happy or sad with a purchase being promoted by some type of influencer? Why?

14.When you get a product as described by influencer does that make your trust influencers more as a whole? Why?

15.If you got a product that wasn't as described by an influencer you liked, would you dislike that influencer or distrust them more? Evaluate?