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The Impact of Social Media and Influencers on Generation Z's Purchasing Behaviour: Influencer Marketing

By

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Abstract

This research determines the purchasing tendencies of Generation Z thanks to their trust in influencers.

Generation Z is the name given to the generation born between 1997-2012. They are usually called "Generation Z". Known for their digital innateness, Generation Z's purchasing behaviors are greatly influenced by social media and the personalities they follow online. Shackle (2017) defines applications on digital platforms as media that offer opportunities such as presenting identities as desired, making corrections at any time, and showing them differently. Social media, which has become widespread thanks to its practical use, has a significant impact especially on young people, and this impact continues to increase daily. In this process, social media influencers, who have become the advertising face of brands, reach many followers by sharing their lives in an interesting way on social media. In this period when social media marketing is quite intense, companies use social media, which is a fast and effective method, and influencers, which are a tool, to reach their target audiences. The main reason why brands work with influencers is that influencers have daily contact with their followers. Online retailers can also leverage influencer partnerships as a strategic approach to increase their brand's visibility and credibility. Influencers can increase interest in a brand's offerings and boost trust due to their significant social media following and the perceived authenticity of their endorsements (Feng et al., 2023). Generation Z's consumer choices are significantly influenced by influencer marketing, a strategy that involves brands partnering with individuals who have large and engaged social media followings.

The data collected in the survey was tabulated and displayed in graphs, followed by detailed explanations. The study findings showed that social media marketing significantly impacts the influence of influencers on consumer purchase, consumer patronage, and repeat purchase. Moreover, consumer trust and purchase intentions are significantly influenced by influencer credibility. The behavior of consumers is more likely to be influenced by influencers who are perceived as knowledgeable, relatable, helpful, confident, and understandable.

The findings emphasize the strategic importance of choosing the right influencers and platforms for social media marketing campaigns. To maximize consumer purchase behavior, brands should consider the specific characteristics and authenticity of influencers. Influencer marketing can be a valuable tool for marketers looking to increase consumer engagement, trust, and loyalty through effective use of influencer marketing.

Keywords: Brand, Brand Perception, Influencer, Influencer Marketing, Consumer Behavior

1.   Chapter: Introduction

1.1. Background

Today, with the development of technology and the impact of globalization, people generally socialize through social media (Goyal, 2018). Social media entered our lives in the early 2000s. Today, its widespread adoption worldwide has significantly increased the concept of influencer marketing. As social media has gained popularity, it has allowed marketers to interact with their target audiences in innovative ways. Social media, which has become widespread thanks to its practical use, has a significant impact especially on young people, and this impact continues to increase daily.

In this process, social media influencers (phenomenon), who have become the advertising face of brands, first share their own lives on social media in an interesting way, communicate with their daily followers and reach a wide follower base (Wise, 2022). People constantly connect with influencers and adopt them as a part of their lives, setting them apart from celebrities. Because influencers share everything with their followers and do not allow them to be forgotten, which creates trust and bond. The basis of brands' preference for micro-celebrities, influencers or influencers is that these people are constantly interacting with their followers or potential followers (Wise, 2022) Influencers have created a lifestyle by taking advantage of the opportunities of the digital world and have begun to earn their financial income in this way (Wise, 2022).

1.2. Research Rationale

Ordinary, everyday individuals could gather large follower bases on platforms such as blogs, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. Companies began to use these high follower figures as advertising faces. This strategy was both cost-effective and more effective (Lalwani et al., 2021). Marketers were then able to leverage these follower bases through sponsored posts, strengthening the trust and connection that influencers established with their target audiences (Lalwani et al., 2021) Social media influencers, who establish an emotional bond with most of their followers through social media, become advertising tools by receiving product, service and promotional offers from brands after evaluating this connection and starting to earn income. In order to stand out in the social media environment, influencers need to evaluate all kinds of events, facts and situations and manage this process carefully; Otherwise, it can be said that they may lose their recognition and audience. The primary goal for social media influencers has

become to influence their followers, convince them with their posts and expand their existing audiences by surprising them more and more each passing day (Williams, 2020).

Instagram is our research's main axis, so Instagram influencers and their followers were examined as the study's subject. In this context, a survey was conducted with 100 people to understand the impact of influencers on the purchasing behavior of Generation Z. Our general purpose in conducting this survey is: Which social media platforms are the most effective for Generation Z and we identified the characteristics and types of influencers that are most effective at driving purchases. While learning the frequency and nature of purchases influenced by social media, we understood how Generation Z affects attitudes and perceptions towards influencer marketing. This comprehensive data can inform brands and marketers about best practices for engaging Gen Z through social media and influencers, helping them improve their marketing strategies and increase their effectiveness.

1.3.Objectives of the research study

The main objective of this study is to determine how social media influencers affect Generation Z's purchasing behavior towards the products they buy and approve on social media platforms. The study will examine the behaviors of Generation Z on social media platforms as well as understand the characteristics of social media influencers that influence their behavior and influence their purchasing decisions. Using Generation Z as an example, this study is designed to help brands develop better influencer marketing strategies.

1.4.Research Questions

Based on the literature gap, some questions have arisen in accordance with the research article's theme. Considering the objectives of this research study, broad research questions include:

1.To examine how much social media influencers influence Generation Z's purchasing decisions.

2. Observing how the perceived credibility of an influencer affects Generation Z's purchasing behavior.

3.To examine how information and transparency practices in influencer marketing affect Generation Z's trust and purchasing decisions.

4. To analyze how the role of influencers will develop in the purchasing behavior of Generation Z in the next five years.

1.5.Sections and Structure of the Research Project

Chapter 1 – Introduction

There are several sections in this chapter that provide information about the background of the study, gaps in the literature review chosen for this project study, the rationale for setting objectives, and research questions. It will also present a brief overview of the methodologies to be used in the research study.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

A comprehensive review of various research papers, magazines, and articles has been conducted in order to understand how social media influencers affect Gen Z's purchasing behavior. Research and survey design are then based on these analyses in order to gain a better understanding of relevant literature for conducting research and designing surveys. This study's theoretical framework is based on factors that influence purchase decisions, such as credibility characteristics.

Chapter 3 – The Relationship Between Brand Perception and Consumer Behavior

The brand is defined by society's mental perception, which is influenced by consumer needs and desires. By representing a promise and encompassing all consumer perceptions and experiences, the brand facilitates decision-making and directs the consumer to purchase. In this section, we will talk about the brand, how to create brand identity and the importance of trust in the brand. The trust that the brand creates in the consumer is very important. We will talk about the connection between consumer behavior and brand.

Chapter 4 – Research Methodology

In this section, we consider the research philosophy, the research approach, the research strategy, the research choices that have to be made, the time horizons that need to be chosen, and the procedures that have to be established to collect and analyze data (Saunders et al., 2007).

Chapter 5 – Findings and Analysis

We used a questionnaire to collect data and analyzed the responses from participants around the world using different statistical measures based on the objectives of the study. Based on the research objectives, these findings are discussed in this section.

Chapter 6 – Discussion

The findings from the data collected are discussed in this chapter, along with the implications for the industry, limitations associated with this study, and the extent of further research needed.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion and Recommendation

In this section, a brief analysis is provided of the entire thesis, as well as suggestions for the social media influencer industry. As a result of the research findings, these recommendations are being developed with the aim of improving industry practices.

2.   Chapter: Literature Review

2.1.Generation Z

It is the generation born after Generation Y (the millennial generation). Several opinions differ on when Generation Z began; some claim that it was born in the mid-1990s, while others claim that it was born in the early 2000s. A member of Generation Z is defined as a person born between 1997 and 2012 who lives digitally and may become the largest consumer group by 2022. Developing brand value with this community requires understanding their attitude and digital expectations with regard to social presence and brand authenticity (Meola, 2022).

As a result of technological breakthroughs that have occurred since the mid-2000s, full access and regular use of the Internet are considered to be the defining characteristics of this generation. It has been described that Generation Z is technologically savvy and can connect with each other through social media, sometimes for long periods of time each day.As a generation increasingly reliant on technology, Generation Z is more creative, confident, and communicative (Erdem, 2018).

2.2.Generation Z Character Traits and Purchasing Behavior

Generation Z is a generation that has witnessed the significant economic, social and especially technological changes they have experienced. These changes have brought about behavioral differences.

In the study of Generation Z by SEA research (2021), it is pointed out that this group exhibits some distinct characteristics that have a significant impact on the way they behave and interact with the outside world. Technology has become an intrinsic part of the lives of this generation,

with the internet and mobile phones being indispensable parts of their daily lives. In the digital age, children are capable of navigating digital environments easily, utilizing technology to communicate, express themselves, and remain safe. Due to their constant exposure to vast amounts of information, they have also developed the ability to scan and evaluate content quickly, enabling them to make quick decisions about what to engage with as a result of this continuous exposure.

Among the other things that define them is their ability to multitask, which allows them to manage multiple tasks at the same time, such as doing their homework, chatting online, and listening to music, all at the same time. It is attributed to their upbringing in a fast-paced digital world that they have acquired this ability to multitask. Moreover, Generation Z places a high value on diversity, equality, and non-discrimination, expecting both society and the brands they support to reflect these values in their products and services.

The social awareness that Generation Z exhibits is also a prominent characteristic of its generation. Growing up amidst significant social and environmental challenges has made them more conscious of these issues, and they often take part in activism pertaining to climate change, social justice, and equality. In addition to being ambitious, this generation highly values self-realization and is looking for rewarding work environments and career choices that are driven by personal passion as well as having the desire to make a significant difference in the world.

Moreover, Generation Z has a high sense of importance placed on both physical and mental health. Thus, they are looking for products and ways of living that promote an overall sense of wellbeing. Those who see brands supporting healthy living practices are more likely to adopt these practices themselves and to choose brands that support them. They have also been exposed to diverse cultures and global issues, making them open-minded and tolerant, accepting differences and appreciating multiculturalism, and this has been further facilitated by their extensive use of the Internet, which makes them more open-minded and tolerant. It is crucial for businesses and marketers to gain a deeper understanding of these characteristics if they want to connect with this influential group of people.

2.3. Emergence of the Concept of Social Media

Rapid developments in technology have also led to significant changes in the structure of social media. As a mobile and web-based technology, social media platforms provide a platform for real-time virtual interaction by enabling people to communicate, share, collaborate, and modify user-generated content (Bagley et al., 2014). When we look at the past, all communication tools used are one-way and have been successful in transferring information to agricultural and industrial communities. However, since one-way communication is not enough today, new

media tools have been created to enable mutual communication. Over the years, new media tools have emerged in parallel with technological developments. These tools have adapted to the times and created a new identity.

One-sided communication in the old media is replaced by two-way interaction in the new media (Tokatlı, 2016: 878). New broadcast technologies have been an important factor that has changed social life in recent times and have virtually re-created the world of communication. Through social networks, all individuals in the society have been enabled to participate in information networks, and this has significantly affected the information flow process. Many tools that provide services in traditional media have had to update themselves and adapt to these new media environments and have started to provide services to the society over the internet (Gökçe, 2019).

2.4.Social Media Development and History

The first steps of the concept of social media date back to the late 1990s. In these years, the first platforms where users could interact online began to emerge. This early period can be seen as the period in which the ideas that form the basic building blocks of social media took shape. The early to mid-2000s were a period in which technological developments accelerated. Many new social media platforms have emerged in this period. Although the vision of all sites may seem different, the aim is to socialize. During this period, people began to share their thoughts and lives with each other. Creating content has become popular in this period. Social media has evolved after 2010. Social media, which grew with Zkusagi, continued its evolution through visual content-oriented platforms. With the ease of connecting to the internet anywhere and the widespread use of smartphones, people can access social media at any time. This convenience and rapid accessibility has made content production and consumption of users an integral part of daily life. Users' instant sharing and instant communication has increased the dependence on social media. These three periods help us understand how social media evolved into its current complex and dynamic structure.

Throughout social media's history, there have been three distinct phases: the early beginnings (1970s-1990s), the rise of social networks (2000-2010), and the mobile and visual age (2010-Present).

The Early Beginnings were marked by platforms like Bulletin Board Systems (BBS), which allowed users to exchange messages and share files. Users were able to post articles to newsgroups through Usenet, which was developed by Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis in the 1980s. A social media website called Six Degrees, introduced the concept of "six degrees of separation" in 1997 after users created profiles, listed friends, and browsed friends' lists.

As social networks rose in popularity, several pivotal platforms were launched. The Friendster website was launched in 2002 with the goal of connecting real-life friends but eventually failed due to technical difficulties. A customizable profile made Myspace popular among musicians for a time after its launch in 2003. In 2003, LinkedIn was launched and has become one of the most important tools for job seekers and employers alike. Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 as an online social network for Harvard students, but quickly became popular among the general public as a result of its real-name policy and user-friendly interface. As a result of Steve Chen, Chad Hurley, and Jawed Karim's innovative creation of YouTube in 2005, online media consumption has been revolutionized. YouTube is the go-to platform for sharing and watching videos online. A microblogging service, Twitter, was launched in 2006 as a way for users to share real-time information through short updates (tweets).

As mobile devices and visual content became more prevalent around 2010, we entered the Mobile and Visual Age. As a photo and video sharing service, Instagram was founded by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in 2010. Its filters and visual appeal attracted millions of users. A new form of messaging was introduced in 2011 by Evan Spiegel, Bobby Murphy, and Reggie Brown. Pictures and videos disappear after they have been viewed on Snapchat. In 2011, Google+ launched. Circles, a feature that allowed you to group friends, was one of its unique features, but ultimately failed to compete with Facebook, leading to its demise in 2019. During 2016, Twitter discontinued Vine, a short-form video platform that popularized six-second looping videos. In 2016, ByteDance launched TikTok internationally, making short, creative videos and launching a powerful algorithm that helped it become a global phenomenon.

Throughout this evolution, social media has morphed from basic message boards into sophisticated platforms that cater to a wide range of users' needs and preferences, profoundly altering how people live, connect, share, and consume content.

2.5. Social Media Tools

In addition to catering to various user interests and needs, social media tools have their own unique features that make them stand out. Social networks like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter (now X) facilitate connections and share content, with Facebook allowing relatives and friends to connect, LinkedIn allowing professionals to network, and Twitter facilitating real-time communication. Pinterest and Instagram are both visual sharing sites that emphasize photo and video content. Instagram is popular for its stories and visual interactions, while Pinterest is used to discover and share creative visual ideas.

Videos can be uploaded, shared, and viewed using video sharing sites such as YouTube and TikTok. YouTube offers a variety of content ranging from educational to entertaining, while

TikTok is renowned for its short videos and live broadcasting, especially among young audiences. Text, voice, and video messaging is facilitated through instant messaging apps like WhatsApp and Messenger, while blogging and microblogging is facilitated through platforms like WordPress and Tumblr.

Communities can interact and share information on various topics on forums like Reddit and Quora. There are a variety of professional content sharing sites, such as Medium and SlideShare, for sharing longer articles and professional presentations. Games can be streamed live and communicated in real time through gaming platforms like Twitch and Discord. With these tools, users can create a rich and versatile social media experience tailored to their needs and interests.

2.6.Modern Marketing Concepts

Today, the world of marketing has become very different. It is undergoing a significant transformation under the influence of technology and changes in consumer behavior. Modern marketing approaches can be defined as approaches that center the consumer, use digital and social media platforms effectively, and develop data-driven strategies.

It is the development of customer-oriented marketing practices by moving from traditional marketing approaches to modern marketing approaches (Tekin, Şahin and Göbenez, 2014: 227).

In the world of global competition, changes have been observed in economic, technological, political, cultural and technological areas as well as significant changes in the marketing field as a result of changing and developing technological developments and the growing importance of globalization.

A wide variety of web technologies, information technologies and communication technologies are being incorporated into every aspect of society in order to make life easier. Moods and mood support system features, systems and frameworks, telecommunications system and device management systems, and communications software all contribute to the online environment, enabling the user to view time spent on entertainment.

Globalization has led to increased international competition, which has forced businesses to rethink their marketing practices and activities in relation to the social values of their target markets.

2.7.Social Media Marketing

Marketing literature describes social media as a place where people can interact with others who share their interests and ideas. The market has undergone three fundamental shifts due to social media because they are dynamic, interconnected, egalitarian, and interactive organisms (Peters et al., 2013, p. 281). The first benefit of social media is that it allows brands to engage directly with their target demographics in a way that they were unable to do before. Users can connect with others who share their interests through microblogging and social media networks like Twitter(X) and Facebook (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). According to Granovetter 1973, the terms "social connectedness" and "social ties" refer to deep and wide links, respectively. A study conducted by Verlegh et al. (2013) found that customers' social ties influence their referral propensity significantly.

Social media has significantly altered the relationship between businesses and their customers. Through interactions between individuals, "actions" are created, either proactively through discussion or receptively through observation (Chen et al., 2011). By Nair et al. (2010), such informal exchanges are accounted for by "word-of-mouth" and "contagion" effects. According to Muller and Peres (2019), a company's social network size and quality correlate with its social equity (also called social interactions). Research (e.g., Aral and Walker 2014; Katona et al. 2011) has found that a person's social network activity can be determined by the strength and frequency of connections to others. Consumers' decision-making processes are influenced significantly by social media, according to these studies.

Additionally, social media has enabled companies to better manage their relationships with customers and make more informed business decisions (Libai et al., 2010). A review of social media and other digital data sources can be summarized by the three "Vs" (Alharthi et al., 2017): volume, variety, and velocity. Moe and Schweidel (2017) point out that modern information technology allows us to easily extract and utilize a vast amount of information from social networking sites, blogs, and forums. In this way, social media data can serve as a new strategic resource that can improve marketing results (Gnizy, 2019). In addition to conducting consumer research, analyzing markets, and generating ideas, it can also be used for generating ideas.

" Consumer Media" defines consumer media as a "wide array of new information sources consumers can use to share information about anything they are interested in" **(Kohli, Suri, & Kapoor, 2014). About** a quarter of humanity uses social media, according to Schivinski, Christodoulides, and Daly (2017). The number is expected to reach 2.55 billion by the year 2017. Because of how users report, co-produce, analyze, and edit user content (Kohli, Suri, & Kapoor, 2014), cellphones and the internet can be used as marketing tools to study social media. This

shift in perspective has resulted in businesses marketing and branding their products to consumers, according to Kohli, Suri, & Kapoor (2014).

In comparison to traditional media channels such as print and television, social media can be harder to gauge the impact of a brand's presence. However, negative feedback is part of a brand conversation that must occur for firms marketing on social media (Ho-Dac, Carson, & Moore, 2013; Kohli, Suri, & Kapoor, 2014). (Kohli, Suri, & Kapoor, 2014) Consumers have a significant impact on branding and advertising, but their contributions are often overlooked.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter play a key role in marketing firms' brands (Michael, 2017). Studies conducted by Nelson-Field, Riebe, and Sharp (2012) and Shen and Bissell (2013) found that marketing strategies that use Facebook reviews to promote specific products and brands result in more content. Shen & Bissell (2013) found that Facebook users are more likely to see advertisements about products they've shown interest in. Using this information, marketers can improve their marketing tactics, target audiences, and advertising campaigns to get the best reaction from consumers.

2.8.Marketing Using Social Networks

The purpose of this type of social media content is to encourage action and raise awareness, as described by Hanaysha (2016). In social media advertising or paid social, businesses or products are promoted through social media sites for monetary compensation (Raza, Mohamad, & Abubakar, 2017). As a result of advertising providing information about products, consumers view it as a useful tool for making well-informed purchases (Pollay & Mittal, 1993). (Yang & Wang, 2015) Consumers' perception of companies and willingness to buy are affected by social media marketing. In addition to Instagram (which optimizes photographs and videos), Twitter, YouTube (which allows users to share short videos), TikTok, Pinterest (which has a primarily female audience), and LinkedIn (which caters primarily to professionals), there are several other social networking sites available.

2.9.Consumer Decision Making

Numerous experts have described the consumer decision-making process in a variety of ways, proposing their own unique set of models to explain it. Rassuli and Harrell (1990) consider consumers' choices and purchases to be means rather than ends. As a result of this concept, the choices consumers make influence their actions in the future. The functional, conditional, social, epistemic, and emotional values proposed by Sheth, Newman, and Gross(1991) may influence

consumers' decisions. It is important to analyze the external effects of the pre-purchase, in-store, and post-purchase phases of the consumer journey, which include online marketing, the social-cultural setting, and psychological challenges. The Internet has been proposed as a means for defining consumer decision making by Smith and Rupp (2003). A consumer's decision-making process follows a circular pattern, as described by Court, Elzinga, Mulder, and Vetnik (2009), involving pre-purchase research, evaluation or research to determine whether or not to purchase, and finally reflection on whether the product was useful after purchase.

As described by Kotler and Keller (2012), the buyer's journey includes five stages: identifying a need, gathering relevant information, evaluating options, making a purchase, and modifying behavior. As well, Belch and Belch (2009) explained the psychological processes associated with each of the five consumer purchase phases. A range of factors, including motivation, perception, attitude development, integration, and education, are included in this category.

According to Stankevich (2017), Kotler and Keller (2012) and Belch and Belch (2009) presented consumer decision making models. Customer need recognition occurs when a customer recognizes that they need a product or service (Stankevich, 2017). In the meantime, marketers must bridge the gap between where they are today and where they wish to be in the future. The internal stimuli can be something as simple as an impulse, or they can be as complex as a need for immediate attention. Triggers may also be caused by environmental factors. Advertisement and sales promotions are tools marketers use to manufacture demand. The desire to purchase a product is born when the customer realizes that it will fulfill an unmet need (Stankevich, 2017).

Advertising to consumers who have these needs is most effective when marketers know when they have them. Marketing professionals will sometimes assist customers in identifying their real needs. The marketing industry fabricates conditions in order to create a sense of vulnerability among consumers without the goods. There are a variety of factors, including a desire for a specific status and information available about the new status, such as new versions of products, rival products, or complementary products.

A need triggers a chain reaction that eventually leads to a search for solutions that can satisfy that need. As a result, the shopper is doing both internal and external research to make an informed purchase decision. A search for internal information can be conducted by using one's memory, while a search for external information can be conducted by scanning the environment, asking other people, searching libraries, archives, the internet, and social media! In this situation, the amount of time customers spend researching options is crucial. To take advantage of this opportunity, marketers must explain the product in detail, update discounts, and provide other incentives. As well as comments from past customers and recommendations

from friends and family, we will also take into account their comments. A product's personal experience and sample testing performed during the search will also be taken into consideration.

According to Kotler and Keller (2012), the third stage in a consumer's decision-making process involves assessing the merits of the various options available to them. Finally, the buyer may ask, "Do I actually need the product?" at the third stage of the decision-making process. Would it be possible to try something else? Does the original version have a terrible quality? It is often the case that consumers place more weight on some factors than others when making a purchase decision (price, quality, brand recognition, for example). The moment of decision may involve an emotional connection with a product or caving in to advertising. Businesses must make sure buyers have a thorough understanding of their product and, ideally, of the characteristic that determines their purchase decision. A consumer must take the initiative and shop around for the best deal. Depending on factors such as price, quality, brand, positioning (where to buy), possible consequences of use, and so on, customers have different standards for what they consider a good deal.

Consumer buying process model created by Kotler and Keller (2012) includes the purchase phase as the fourth and final stage. Having chosen a product, the buyer is now ready to make a purchase. Making the actual purchase follows making up one's mind about a particular brand. In the same way, buyers may first decide they want to acquire something, but then change their minds before acquiring it. There are alternatives, such as haggling over the price, spending a certain amount, and shopping at a particular time. If you are purchasing something large ticket like an automobile, computer, or consumer durable, you may have to wait a long time between deciding on the purchase and making it. Commodities that are not durable, such as many everyday consumables, are often purchased relatively soon after deciding to buy them. The importance of engaging consumers so deeply that they are willing to wait for a purchase cannot be overstated.

2.9.1.Consumer Patronage Intention

An important part of Kotler and Keller's (2012) buyer journey model is the post-purchase phase. Customer satisfaction is now determined by how they feel after using the product, which might be positive or negative. Following the use of a product, customers rate their satisfaction with it. There may be concerns among customers regarding the satisfaction of the intended audience with the product. Did they meet their expectations? Following success with a product, a customer may become an advocate for the product and encourage others to buy it in the second phase of the customer journey. Also, unfavorable remarks may lead to a potential customer reconsidering their interest, if they become known during stage two. At this stage, it is

critical to respond quickly to the unhappy customer. The likelihood of a customer purchasing again is greater if they are satisfied with your service. There was either a match or a greater than expected level of satisfaction for customers in this case. It is possible to strengthen customer loyalty by following up after a transaction is completed.

Using Kotler and Keller's (2012) evaluation model, it is found that the best indicators of a consumer's decision-making process are customer patronage, repeat purchase rates, and purchase intent. According to Sam, Fazli, and Tahir (2009), customer patronage intention is how likely a customer is to buy a particular product or brand given the level of information that is currently available to them. As described in this description, the steps of the model are to identify a need, find relevant information, and evaluate the merits of potential solutions. Grewal & Levy (2010) describe consumer patronage as choosing a product, purchasing it, and paying for it (after deciding on one).Consumers' propensity to repurchase from well-established businesses is addressed by the concept of repeat purchase. We perform a comprehensive assessment of consumer decision-making metrics as a result.

2.9.2.Consumer Patronage

A thorough understanding of the psychological factors that play a role in customers' purchase decisions is essential for creating, manufacturing, and distributing items that meet their needs. A customer goes through five stages before deciding which product or brand to support. The purchasing process consists of five stages: identifying needs, gathering information, determining alternatives, selecting, and managing purchases (Grewal & Levy, 2010). Choosing between many options is something customers have to do every day. The economic man makes his decisions differently than the passive, cognitive, or emotional man, even if they are influenced by some level of thought. It is important to note that each shopper's biopsychosocial factors affect their purchase decision.

2.9.3.Repeat Patronage

When clients repeatedly purchase from the same company or brand, they demonstrate intellectual, emotional, and physical assurance in the quality of the product or service. According to Wirtz and Lwin (2009), repeat purchase is a term that describes the likelihood that a customer will shop from the same service provider again. Buying and selling transactions are more likely to be completed when buyers and sellers have faith in one another. As Caudill & Murphy, 2000, point out, customers who trust a business's service providers are more likely to return. Clients who make subsequent purchases indicate they are satisfied with a company's service and want to continue doing business with it.

Having a higher percentage of sales made to current customers may have a significant impact on a company's bottom line, since the cost of acquiring new customers is not included. Customers might be more likely to buy from a company again if they are listened to and acted upon when they have suggestions, ideas, feedback, and complaints regarding the product or service. Customers should be encouraged to purchase frequently if they wish to foster customer loyalty. Continual success for a company is reflected in the amount of repeat business it receives from pleased and satisfied consumers.

2.10.Influencer Marketing (Social Impact Marketing)

Social influencer marketing is the art and science of building relationships with people who have a certain number of audiences online and influence those audiences with the messages they share. Advertisers have always used the endorsements of public figures to increase the recognition of their brands and strengthen the perception of the brand, because people tend to trust public figures they admire (Sammis, Lincoln and Pomponi, 2015: 11-12). Nowadays, an ordinary person can turn into a well-known person and have a certain audience through social media. By keeping their relationships with these people strong, brands can promote themselves through these influencers and appeal to a large audience much more easily, unlike traditional media (Sammis, Lincoln and Pomponi, 2015: 11-12).

The most important reason why social impact marketing differs from old marketing activities is that social impact marketing is the result of effective cooperation between brands and influencers. Influencers, unlike public figures, can be anywhere. They can be anyone. What makes them influencers is the large audience they appeal to on the internet and social media. An influencer can be a popular fashion photographer on Instagram or a cybersecurity expert with a large readership. These people have the power to influence their followers on social media, and all businesses have to do is find them. Influencers can be known by hundreds or thousands of people, and these people are the audiences that businesses are after. When implementing social influence marketing, brands must get organized, determine a strategy, set a plan and budget, and spend time on research. They should be patient during the process and remember that people are in communication with people, but businesses should not be in communication with people. While brands are looking for the influencer they want to work with; They should analyze the influencer's audience well, pay attention to how often they share, and pay attention to whether the language the influencer uses is compatible with them and the message they want to convey. (https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is- influencer-marketing/, 2020).

Information about the products, which isn't always included on official websites of companies, is of interest to consumers. By educating them about all the things they were unaware of,

influencers typically participate in influencer marketing in order to reach out to such consumers (Rolson,2019).

As well as being activists, influencers also possess a strong network of interpersonal relationships, and can persuade others. Another way of putting it is that influencers build their social networks by attending social media events (Tuten and Solomon, 2018).

2.11.Influencer

The term influencer, which has many different definitions in the literature, is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as follows: "People who have the power to influence people, especially potential buyers, by making presentations about a product or service on social media" (https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/influencer?q=influ encer)

Although there is no consensus on it yet, the concepts of "influencer" and "phenomenon" are related to each other and used interchangeably (Gretzel, 2018: 147). From this part of the study, the concept of "phenomenon" will be used instead of "influencer". Influencers are people who have the power to influence individuals' decisions thanks to their authority, knowledge, position or relationship. In addition, influencers are individuals who have active followers and have the power to mobilize their followers. Phenomenons represent third-party supporters who shape the attitudes of the masses. Influencers gain popularity through their participation in social networks and gain their fame through online media channels such as blogs and sites where videos are shared online such as YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. Phenomenons seem more natural to other people than celebrities or actors because influencers live their lives like other people and are associated with their lives by their followers (Forbes, 2016: 79).

Phenomena; They are individuals who are less well-known and known to individuals in society than those in the celebrity world, but who are still influential. These people are opinion leaders of sorts, but they are neither famous nor completely ordinary people. These phenomena; They cooperate with companies, receive wages for their efforts, or have the opportunity to benefit from free products and services offered by the company. Influencers basically share the brand's products or services on the platforms where they are active (Glucksman, 2017: 77). Influencers consist of individuals who have a large follower base and expand their sphere of influence by producing online content. The concept of phenomenon is classified within itself, one of which is micro-influencer. Micro influencers are ordinary people who have expertise on certain topics and appeal to a smaller audience. Even though these people appeal to a smaller audience, they can influence and mobilize a more niche market with the knowledge they have Staden and Van Niekerk, 2018: 9). The passion of these people about a topic or brand attracts

the attention of others, and their sphere of influence expands according to the conversations or events they initiate (Van Staden and Van Niekerk, 2018: 9).

The uniqueness of social influence marketing is that this new marketing concept addresses the needs of influencers rather than the needs of customers. Businesses have to establish live relationships with influencers, for example, the business gives the influencer access to a product it will launch before anyone else or invites the influencer to an event it will organize (Glucksman, 2017: 78). Despite this originality, marketing activities carried out with influencers are more difficult to control than traditional marketing activities.

Nowadays, social media tools are becoming more valuable and becoming one of the main factors in the communication strategy of an ordinary consumer. It is possible to evaluate the factors that make the activities of phenomena increasingly popular in a wide range of areas. These factors vary from criteria such as "content quality", which is difficult to measure, to criteria such as page views and search engine ranking, which are easier to measure. Rapid changes in social media platforms show that these criteria also have to change over time (Glucksman, 2017: 78).

2.11.1. Influencer features that give purchasing confidence

Social media influencers are viewed as more trustworthy when they demonstrate honesty, integrity, and sincerity in their trustworthy and ethical behavior (Buhlmann and Gisler, 2016). By exhibiting these trustworthy characteristics, they can build trust in their target audience and ultimately influence their purchasing decisions. Below are five key reliability characteristics that contribute to this trust:

Information: If influencers want to market a product, they must have knowledge about that product. Influencers who are knowledgeable about the products they promote and the industry they operate in are more attention-grabbing. Their expertise allows them to provide valuable insights and detailed information, making their recommendations more trustworthy. This exchange of information brings a sense of trust to the other party (Moore et al., 2018).

Relatability: Sometimes they use the products in front of the screen and talk about their own experiences. Relatable influencers who share their personal stories and experiences create a bond with their audience. This connection fosters a sense of familiarity and trust as followers see the influencer as someone like themselves, facing similar challenges and needs (Forbes, 2016).

Helpfulness: Influencers who provide helpful advice, personal experiences, tips, and advice are valued for their helpfulness. When influencers actively help their followers make informed decisions, it strengthens their credibility and influence (Moore et al., 2018).

Confidence: Self-confident and self-assured people have always been more reassuring. Trust in their recommendations and opinions increases the influencer's credibility. Confident influencers are seen as more persuasive and authoritative, making their followers more likely to trust them and act on their advice (Glucksman, 2017).

Articulation: The ability to communicate clearly and effectively is very important. Influencers who express their opinions well can convey the information they want to give and the products they want to market in a more persuasive way, and help their followers understand the benefits and value of the products they endorse (Forbes, 2016).

Building trust is important for any type of marketing. The above 5 character traits come to the fore to create trust in influencer marketing. Trust is the cornerstone of the influencer's influence on purchasing behavior. Influencers who have the above features are successful in marketing. When influencers consistently demonstrate these credibility characteristics, they build a loyal and trustworthy audience. This trust means followers are more likely to consider and purchase products recommended by the influencer.

2.11.2.The Concept of Micro Influencers

Individuals with followings between 2,000 and 50,000 are considered micro-influencers. It is common for micro-influencers to speak to a specific passion, topic, or niche market on a particular social media platform. Information about their niche market is often provided by micro-influencers. Influencers, who are experts in certain topics, usually have a very close-knit community that believes and trusts the content they share. Micro-influencers are generally ordinary people who share their passions, their own personal advice, and their likes and dislikes (https://www.scrunch.com/blog/what-is-a-micro- influencer, 2019).

Micro influencers can be found in almost every industry, but they tend to concentrate on areas such as health, food, cooking, entrepreneurship, or fashion and beauty. Micro influencers are individuals who have established relationships with the target audiences that brands are looking for, and in addition to these relationships, they are trusted by their audience. Through their stories, influencers develop relationships with their followers, and when these individuals share a brand's story with their followers, their followers are ready to listen. Brands want to collaborate with influencers and convey their messages to their target audiences through influencers because forty percent of Twitter users make a purchase directly based on tweets shared by influencers

(https://www.forbes.com/sites/barrettwissman/2018/03/02/micro-influencers-the- marketing-force-of-the-future/#3b0c7a0b6707, 2018).

There is no requirement that micro influencers have a significant online presence or be present in an online environment, but they need to be passionate about a particular topic, brand, or product category. It is not uncommon for these individuals to praise organic foods or show their admiration for Apple products, and they tell their friends that they should definitely try these products online and offline (Backaler, 2018: 24).

2.11.3.Celebrities

Influencers with broad reputations have a great deal of success influencing their fans. It is possible to include online influencers with a large following in this category as well as traditional celebrities like actors, athletes, and musicians. Furthermore, some "category influencers" can also be considered famous influencers. Because they have both recognition and influence, they are also known as famous influencers since they have built their well-known person status via the traditional gatekeeping system. Alternatively, a person does not automatically fall into the category of famous influencers just because they are famous; if they do not possess expertise in a field or the power to influence their audience, they are only famous people, not famous influencers (Backaler, 2018: 22). In terms of endorsement work, famous influencers generally do "no matter what.". They may be experts in one field, such as sports, acting, or singing, but they do not limit themselves to just one. People tend to trust other influencer groups more than famous influencers, but brands should still work with famous influencers. A study conducted by the Journal of Advertising Research shows that working with famous influencers increases sales by 4% per week for brands and generates $10 million in additional sales per year (https://izea.com/2019/01/09/celebrity- [influencer-marketing/](https://izea.com/2019/01/09/celebrity-influencer-marketing/), 2019).

Some famous phenomenon examples can be listed as follows;

- The online phenomenon Kim Kardashian became a television star as a result of various speculations and tabloid news: Kardashian became famous through various speculations and tabloid news. As she advanced in age, she became a fashion icon, particularly for women between the ages of 19 and 32, and over time, she established a popular cosmetics brand that made her famous (Backaler, 2018: 23).

- Kylie Jenner's 400 million followers have made her a powerful influencer. As she posts on Instagram, she demonstrates her modeling, socialite status, and makeup empire. In the past, a chicken held the record for most-liked Instagram

post, but then an egg overtook it. Sponsored posts are another source of income for her. As one of the top Instagram influencers, Jenner earns around $1.8 million per sponsored Instagram post, according to Hopper HQ's Instagram Rich List. (https://digitalmarketinginstitute.com/blog/9-of-the-biggest-social-media-influencers-on-instagram#heading_60496,2024).

- Juventus' five-time Ballon d'Or winner has one of the biggest social media presences in the world. In terms of sponsored posts, Ronaldo earns $3.23 million per post, topping the list of highest-paid Instagram influencers. He has 625 million followers who have access to these sponsored posts, which include Nike partnerships and his own lingerie line. The player also shares photos of matches and training sessions, as well as action shots from the pitch. It doesn't matter where Ronaldo goes, the world follows him. Ronaldo's Instagram account is known for his frequent postings. By regularly updating his fans about his life, he keeps them interested in his content. You can engage your followers with your content by posting regularly and following the latest influencer marketing trends (https://digitalmarketinginstitute.com/blog/9-of-the-biggest-social-media-influencers-on-instagram#heading_60496,2024).

2.11.4.Category Influencers

Additionally, social media influencers can be categorized based on the type of content they produce. Following is a list of the 13 most common types of influencers based on their specialization:

1. **Lifestyle Influencers**: personal experiences, hobbies, and general interests are shared by these influencers.

2. **Fashion Influencers**: They provide fashion advice and inspiration by focusing on clothing, accessories, and style trends.

3. **Beauty Influencers**: These individuals often share tutorials, reviews, and beauty advice about makeup, skincare, and haircare.

4. **Travel Influencers**: They document their travel experiences, offer recommendations, and showcase destinations worldwide.

5. **Fitness Influencers:** A variety of health, exercise, and wellness-related content is posted by these individuals, such as workout routines, nutrition tips, and motivational messages.

6. **Food Influencers**: These influencers share recipes, restaurant reviews, and food photography.

7. **Gaming Influencers**: They publish video game content including reviews, gameplay, and news about video games.

8. **Tech Influencers**: They provide reviews, tutorials, and industry insights about the latest technology, gadgets, and innovations.

9. **Parenting Influencers**: These influencers cover topics related to parenting and family life by sharing their experience and advice.

10. **Pet Influencers**: These influencers share content about pet care, training, and pet-friendly products that are often centered around a particular pet.

11. **Business Influencers**: These individuals share their knowledge on entrepreneurship, leadership, and business strategies, as well as industry trends.

12. **Education Influencers**: Providing tutorials, study tips, and insights into many academic subjects, these influencers concentrate on educational content.

13. **Entertainment Influencers**: By creating content that includes humor, music, acting, and other forms of entertainment, these influencers engage and entertain their audience.

(https://www.kynship.co/blog/types-of-influencers).

2.12.The Concept of Social Influence Marketing (Influencer Marketing)

As a new trend in the marketing world, "Influencer Marketing" has entered our language in a variety of ways. However, social impact marketing is the most common term in the literature. The role of social impact marketers is to mobilize individuals to increase a brand's campaigns, sales, and interactions with consumers by affecting a particular audience or media.

Word-of-mouth marketing evolved into social impact marketing, but it has a more structured approach and focuses on more social content. It is quite useful for brands that want to expand their target audience and to create loyalty in their customers by being honest and reliable (Sudha and Sheena, 2017: 16).

There are typically two sub-applications of social influence marketing. First, there is earned social influence marketing. Basically, the influencer uses/promotes the product to expand their own sphere of influence, and the brand has no existing relationship with the influencer or fees paid to the influencer. As a second application, social influence marketing is defined as paid social influence marketing, which involves brands paying influencers a fee in exchange for their

promotions and promotional activities. Influencer fees vary widely, and generally increase according to the size of the audience they can reach. Brands can benefit from social influence marketing in many ways, and its application areas are diverse. Social influence marketing can be used by some marketers to establish credibility in their sector, while others may use it for brand communication. Social influence marketing can help brands increase online sales of their products or in-store sales (Sudha and Sheena, 2017: 16). Social impact marketing also avoids spreading pre-made content created by influencers. The majority of ready-made content is created and edited by advertisers. The purpose of social impact marketing is to spread existing content by reproducing it by influencers. A social media influencer is someone who is active on multiple social media platforms and can influence a brand's followers (Ingrid, 2018: 15).

Shortly, social influence marketing involves companies turning to experts and other individuals who have an impact on the masses to promote their products, as consumers no longer respond to traditional advertising or promotion methods. In addition to having a large social media network and following, these influencers are trusted voices by the masses. Social media platforms where influencers are located are often used to shape promotion activities. You can share anything from a blog post about a hotel review to a photo of a jacket or a video about promotional activities for a clothing store on YouTube. In addition to being products, influencers also serve as distribution channels. These individuals are also used by brands to create articles, images, and videos that arouse curiosity and spread this content (Carter, 2016: 2).

Literature supports the idea that social influence marketing is an extension of word-of-mouth marketing. Despite its simplicity, word of mouth marketing has been used effectively by marketers throughout the 80s and 90s. Consumers are encouraged to recommend products and services that they have a positive opinion of to their relatives and friends through word of mouth marketing. Similarly to social influence marketing, word of mouth marketing is more reliable and persuasive than traditional marketing methods. In this situation, word of mouth marketing plays a major role as an intermediary. Both marketing activities involve mediating consumers or influencers without recommending the products or services. These applications contribute to the brand's credibility. As a result of the use of influencers, brands can also market their products more effectively than they would with traditional marketing methods (Brown and Fiorella, 2013: 73). Brands and consumers communicate directly through word of mouth marketing and social influence marketing. Due to the rise of the internet and social media platforms, direct communication has been disrupted. It is mainly due to the ability of consumers to express and share their ideas and beliefs through social media. Consequently, brands have to consider a multitude of different voices and sources of information on social media in order to influence consumers' decisions. With the right influencer selection, social influence marketing is

able to reach the right segment of consumers with its abundance of sources (Ingrid, 2018: 15-16).

3. Summary

A review of current research on social media's impact on consumers' propensity to purchase online is provided in this chapter. Our discussion and review of major ideas such as online consumer patronage decision making went beyond examining the relationship between online consumer patronage and earlier writers' perspectives. Theories that explained how social media impacts consumer purchase decisions and technology adoption were used to explain how social media impacts customer purchasing decisions. Describes the procedures used throughout the investigation and explains why they were chosen in the next section.

4. CHAPTER: The Relationship Between Brand Perception and Consumer Behavior

4.1. Brand Concept and Brand Identity

It examines the relationship between brand, products and consumer motivation based on consumer behavior. Brand definition is based on the mental perception of the brand by the society and the reflections of the brand in the mind of the society (Batey, 2008: 111-112).

Brands are defined according to their semantic and symbolic properties (Batey, 2008: 111-112). As a result of consumer needs and desires, the definition of the brand is determined in an environment shaped by these needs and desires. Products meet at the intersection of the brand with their intangible features. All definitions of the brand or the semantic structure of the brand have multiple dimensions, like the concept of definition itself (Batey, 2008: 111-112).

In order to establish relationships with consumers, brands need to understand and make sense of this multidimensionality. When determining the brand strategies of a business, it is very important to consider that consumers may also give importance to the emotional functions of the brand rather than its functional functions (Batey, 2008: 111-112).

Many ways have been used to define the brand over the years. Depending on how the brand is perceived, these definitions may differ. According to the classical definition, a brand is a combination of the name of the product, its logo, design, and other symbols and signs that

differentiate it from its competitors. The American Marketing Association's definition of brand is as follows: A name, sign, Symbol and design, or their combination, define a product or service and differentiate it from other competitors (Tilde, Knudtzen and Bjerre, 2009: 9).

Other current brand definitions also include the internal and organizational structure of the business. Today, there are very broad definitions of the brand in many sources on brand management, and the purpose of doing this is to examine the brand in all its aspects and look at the definition from the broadest perspective by including all the features of the brand (Tilde, , Knudtzen and Bjerre, 2009: 10).

Consumers undoubtedly have personal perceptions of what a brand is. Their minds will wander to products, names, logos, and jingles. Many consumers will use these concepts to describe a brand, but it is also important to take into account the emotions and institutions associated with these concepts. As we mentioned at the beginning, consumers also consider the articles and stories they read about a brand when defining it. It is also important to consider consumers' experiences with products, brands, and businesses. There is no concrete definition of a brand. It is used to facilitate the definition of a brand and limit it to a particular framework through marketing communication elements. A brand is much more than these factors, such as promotion, logos, jingles, etc. (Kotler, et al., 2001: 4).

- The brand is a promise

- The brand is the perception of a product, service, or business that is seen, heard, read, felt, thought, etc. All perceptions are subjective. All of them are concepts.

- There is a brand in every consumer's mind; it has a characteristic place according to their past experiences, relationship with the product, and expectations for the future.

- Consumers are more likely to make purchases when they are presented with a brand concept that reduces complexity and facilitates decision-making.

- In addition to creative works and entertaining advertisements, building a brand takes more than that. In order to create a brand perception in consumers' minds, businesses must internalize the brand concept and create this value clearly. A clear, fully defined, meaningful message should be given during the branding process. It is important not to confuse these studies with exaggerated marketing and advertising efforts (Kotler, 2001: 5).

4.2.Brand Loyalty

Consumers continue to purchase a brand's products over those of other brands due to brand loyalty. As per consumer behavior models, consumers continue to purchase the products of companies that offer them a reliable relationship and become loyal customers. Loyalty is vitally important for businesses because ensuring brand loyalty will ensure repeat purchasing behavior by consumers, increase the income of the brand and increase the income of the brand It will increase the preferability of the brand by (https://www.trackmaven.com/marketing-dictionary/ brand-loyalty/: 2019).

For many years, researchers have worked to define brand loyalty comprehensively, utilizing a wide range of literature in the research process. As a result, brand loyalty can be defined as a behavioral response that is not random and influenced by consumers. Brand loyalty also includes a purchasing decision process, in which a brand's products are preferred over those of another. Generally, creating a strong and positive brand affects the preferability of consumers, and this more preferability helps to create brand loyalty towards the brand among the brand's consumers over time (Soo-Shin, et al., 2019: 4).

A brand's loyalty also means that its customers remain loyal to the brand even when its product changes. Despite changes in the product's price or its features, consumers prefer the same product over others regardless of price or features changes. Loyalty to a product, brand, or service can also be expressed as a sense of deep devotion on the part of the buyer. The concept of loyalty is similar to dedication; customers with brand loyalty continue to prefer the same brand and product even in significant changes to the product (Obasan, Ariyo and Hassan 2015: 61).

4.3.Brand Positioning

A brand's differences and changes are based on the products it offers and the studies it has conducted about its target market. This concept governs how and where a brand is positioned in the minds of consumers in relation to other brands in the market and how it differentiates itself from its competitors. There is no doubt that brand fashion requires a specific strategy, and these strategies ultimately aim to create a brand-specific idea in the minds of consumers. As brand schemes are organized and consumption preferences are shaped, brand loyalty and value are known. An effective brand regime aims to make the brand preferable, differentiated and reliable in the minds of its consumers over other brands. (www.thebrandingjournal.com/ 2016/11/brand -positioning-definition/, 2016).

The brand of a business that leaves an impression on consumers is called a brand experience. The brands that are able to leave a positive impression on consumers' minds will benefit greatly in the future since these impressions cannot be easily erased and provide a useful infrastructure for the brand.(Güngör, 2013: 162).

4.4.Brand Image

Brand image is the representation of the brand in the consumer's mind. Brand image emerges as a result of brand identity. The image can contain unique characteristics like a person in Western cultures. This can be a representation of quality and trust in the supplier in collectivist cultures – the product can be part of a reliable product line (Mooij, 2014: 347). A brand image often consists of many associations organized in a meaningful structure and brand associations formed in the minds of consumers. For example, McDonald's is organized into subgroups that are meaningful within itself, and it finds a place in the minds of consumers sometimes as an entertainment brand for children, sometimes as a service provider, and sometimes as a brand that consumers use to meet their food needs. Apart from these, when McDonald's is mentioned, one or more visual images may come to mind in consumers' minds, for example; hamburgers and fries, Ronald Mcdonald, golden arches, etc. (Aaker, 1991: 101).

4.5.Brand Personality

Personality has been a concept that has been studied by theorists in many different studies for many years. While some theorists focus on development as influenced by heredity and early childhood experiences, others focus on broader social and concentration skills, focusing on the continuous development of abilities. Some theorists consider it as a whole, while others focus on specific features. This diversity of personality-related applications makes it difficult to make a single definition for the category. But the general solutions are that developments depend on basic comprehensive psychological freedoms and the scope of diversity in expanding areas. This comprehensive framework includes personality, a person's reactions to reading stimuli (Schiffman, Kanuk, & Hansen, 2008: 126).

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comprehensive framework includes personality, a person's reactions to reading stimuli (Schiffman, Kanuk, & Hansen, 2008: 126).

Brand ability is the set of human characteristics associated with the name of a brand. It is a concept that a trademark can be traded, it is a protection that increases the brand value of a product that has a trademark capacity and stands out among other products in the market. In addition to the functional benefits of personality to the brand, it also provides holistic benefits. The branding ability of the business creates an emotional response in a significant tension segment, and this emotional response results in positive distribution (https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/brand-personality.asp, 2019).

Consumers are much more likely to purchase a brand if it resembles their own personality. There are five basic types of brand capabilities that are common to mention here:

1. Excitement: Carefree, enthusiastic and youthful

2. Sincerity: Courtesy, thoughtfulness, and compliance with family values

3. Hardiness: Tough, challenging, fond of outdoor sports and athletic

4. Competence: Successful, effective, leader

5. Sophisticated Taste: Stylish, prestigious and sometimes even arrogant

- Figure 1: Basic brand personality types

Figure 1
A BRAND PERSONALITY FRAMEWORK

(http://kmcms.net/posts/5693)
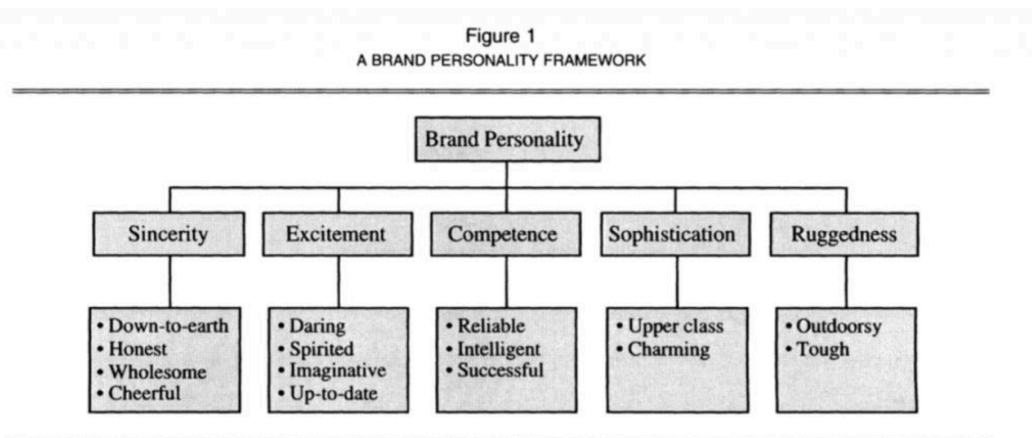
For example, the Dove brand has chosen sincerity as its brand personality and aims to attract the attention of female consumers. Brands such as Michael Kors and Chanel stand out as luxury brands and aim to attract the attention of the upper class audience by choosing a sophisticated brand personality. The brand REI sells mostly sports and

mountaineering products and chooses adventurous people who are actively involved in sports as its target audience (https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/brand-personality.asp, 2019).

4.6.Consumer Behavior

Buying products, how they buy them, where they buy them, and when they buy them are determined by a variety of internal and external factors, including perception, self-perception, cultural and social background, age, family life cycle, behavior, beliefs, values, motivation, personality, and social class.

Consumers also consider which source and seller they will purchase the product from when performing their purchasing behavior. While some communities are very rich and can buy a lot of products, some communities, on the contrary, can barely meet their basic needs (Khan, 2006: 3).

Consumer behavior is the purchasing process that occurs when using, evaluating, and obtaining products and services and the psychological activity in this purchasing process (Khan, 2006: 4). Studies in the field of consumer behavior go beyond just purchasing behavior and include both becoming and possession. Consumer behavior is much more than buying things; The concept covers both how possessions (or lack thereof) affect our lives and how our possessions affect our own lives and our relationships with other people. In addition to understanding why people buy things; Trying to understand the effects of products, services and consumption activities on the social life we live in becomes important in this context. Your lives are touched by the marketing system while shopping, cooking, cleaning, playing football or hockey, lying on the beach, sending e-mails or messages, or even looking at yourself in the mirror (Solomon and Askegaard, 2006: 1).

Consumer behavior; It is a field that examines the influences on purchasing decisions of individuals, groups and organizations. Consumer behavior, which examines the purchasing behavior of consumers while obtaining the products and services they want and need, focuses on many internal and external factors in this process. Understanding consumer behavior is also important in order to understand the factors that affect consumers in their purchasing processes. Understanding why consumers consume or do not consume a product is vital for marketers to see the shortcomings or positive aspects of the product. Understanding this also provides marketers with an idea on how to showcase their products or present the product in a way that will have the best impact on consumers (https://www.feedough.com/what-is-consumer-behaviour-ultimate-guide/: 2019) .

4.7.Factors Affecting Consumer Behavior

Factors affecting consumer behavior can be classified as internal factors (individual factors) and external factors. External factors do not directly affect the decision-making process, but they filter out individual factors and affect the decision-making process. Internal factors affecting consumer behavior can be listed as follows:

- Motivation and participation

- Attitudes

- Personality and self

- Learning and memory

- Information processing process

External factors can be listed as follows:

- Cultural influences

- Subcultural influences

- Social class effects

- Reference group effects (Khan, 2006: 26).

5.   CHAPTER: Research Methodology

5.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to comprehensively analyze the impact of social media and influencers on Generation Z's purchasing behavior by utilizing a mixed-methods approach, which combines both qualitative and quantitative methods. In the quantitative component of the study, questionnaire surveys are conducted with a sample of Generation Z individuals, while in the qualitative component, interviews are conducted and social media platforms are analyzed for content. As a result of this approach, it is possible to develop a more detailed understanding of influencer marketing as a result of both the numerical data and the contextual analysis.

5.2.Research Objectives

The objectives of this study have been developed based on the gap in the literature. As well as developing a theoretical framework based on the literature review, this research work has the primary objective of-

- The purpose of this study is to analyze how credibility traits of social media influencers impact the buying behaviour of generation Z when it comes to products and brands they recommend.

- This research work also includes the following objectives in order to provide a more detailed analysis of its major objective:

- Analysis of generation Z's relationship with social media platforms.
  The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between Generation Z and social media influencers.

- This study aims to examine how Generation Z perceives and reacts to products recommended by social media influencers on social media platforms.

There were a number of methods used to collect data, including:

An online survey was distributed to 102 participants from Generation Z to gather quantitative data on their interactions with social media influencers and their purchasing behaviors in relation to social media influencers. The survey included questions regarding the frequency of social media use, the type of influencers that respondents follow, and the impact that these influencers have on their buying decisions as a result of their social media use.

In order to identify common themes, strategies, and engagement forms that resonate with Generation Z, a detailed analysis of social media content from popular influencers was conducted. An examination of posts, comments, and interactions on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok was part of this process.

5.3.Research assumption & Philosophy

Researchers will unavoidably make certain assumptions while conducting research (Burrell and Morgan, 2016). Ontological assumptions, according to the researcher, refer to the nature of reality, the actuality of the investigation, and the characteristics of existence. Knowledge is defined by epistemological assumptions such as what constitutes true knowledge, whether it can be gained, and how it is transmitted. Axiological assumptions suggest that the research process is influenced by the researcher's values and the primary objective and value of the research (Saunders et al., 2019).

This research philosophy is composed of these assumptions (Saunders et al., 2011). According to (Saunders *et al.*,2019), there are five research philosophies: (1) positivism; (2) critical realism; (3) interpretivism; (4) postmodernism; and (5) pragmatism.

A major assumption of this research paper is epistemology, because it is used to evaluate information that can be proven.According to this assumption, acceptable knowledge is defined as theoretical work based on literature reviews and information provided through testing hypotheses and research questions found in this study.

An important part of the research process is the quantitative design, which provides context and aligns with the research questions. Using theories and practical knowledge, this study examines how social media influencers affect purchasing decisions among generation Z. Moreover, it could contribute to the business research literature. For the purposes of this research, positivism philosophy was considered.Theories, knowledge, and observable facts are combined to form hypotheses aimed at confirming those theories.

5.4.Research Approach

Research efforts involve the use of theory. The design of a research project depends also on whether the research aims to develop theory or test theory, which is determined by inductive, deductive, and abductive reasoning (Saunders et al., 2019). This paper uses a deductive approach to develop a theoretical framework and hypotheses have been generated and tested through questionnaire survey data (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Because of the gap in research and the problem discussion, a deductive approach is the best approach to reveal social phenomena and provide established theories relevant to the principles of the impact of social media influencers on Generation Z. A number of hypotheses and assumptions are made about the subject of the study. Consequently, the mentioned theories and information gathered from the questionnaire survey are analyzed and organized to provide conclusions.

5.5.Methodological choice

As a result of using only survey questionnaire methods to collect data in this study, this is considered a single-method quantitative study. Additionally, quantitative research can help focus on the purpose of the research through the use of numerical data collection and analysis using statistical tools to achieve the objectives.

5.6.Research design Purpose

An investigation's design seeks to provide either an explanation, a description, an exploration, or an evaluation, or any combination of these (Saunders et al., 2019). In an explanation study, concerns not adequately addressed in the previous study are addressed. An answer to what and how questions is provided. Observing and describing the behavior of something being studied without interfering is a scientific methodology used in descriptive research. This type of research identifies or explains a problem and provides answers to the "why," "how," and "when" questions. Finally, evaluative research answers questions like "when," "where," "which," or "who" by evaluating the subject (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).

Research questions, theoretical frameworks, and hypotheses are needed to fill knowledge gaps identified in the literature review. In light of this, this analysis is focused on explanatory research appropriate for conducting this research.

5.7.Research Strategy

A literature review identifies gaps in the literature that can be filled with data for research purposes. In addition to experiments, surveys, case studies, archival research, ethnography, action research, grounded theory, and narrative inquiry, there are also different types of research strategies (Sunders et al., 2019).

This research work uses a survey strategy. Structured questionnaires are useful in collecting responses for research objectives through this strategy. A variety of dichotomous, multiple choice, and likert questions are included in this research survey. Statistics can be used to present research findings through graphs and pie charts, and statistical tests can be used to assess hypotheses examined in this study. As a result of this strategy, cause-and-effect relationships can be identified, thus helping to meet the goal of this study, which is to understand how social media influencers impact generation Z buying habits.

5.8.Population & Sample

Researchers conducted this study with reference to Generation Z. Research participants were all residents of the area where the study took place. Research needs to be conducted on a representative sample of the general population, since focusing on all units within a geographical area is uncommon (Bell et al., 2019). Based on non-probability sampling, 102 respondents who belong to Generation Z from different parts of the country were selected. Sampling without probability consists of four types (i) quotas (ii) purposive samplings (iii) volunteer samplings (iv) haphazard samplings (Saunders et al., 2019). For this research work, purposive sampling method has been used out of four non-probability sampling techniques, where only those samples from 1997-2012 have been considered for filling out questionnaires and participating in surveys.

5.9.Ethical consideration

In conducting an objective rather than subjective research, ethics play a crucial role. Researchers adhere to ethical principles such as objectivity, honesty, morality, caution, transparency, protecting intellectual property, maintaining confidentiality, publishing responsibly, managing responsibly, respecting colleagues, social responsibility, antidiscrimination, integrity, credibility, and protecting data (Zukauskas et al., 2018). Every ethical concern that may arise during the course of this research has been carefully considered. Both in-text and reference citations have been used to properly cite the readings, and the opinions of respondents have been respected without interference. In the course of this investigation, the researcher hasn't encountered any issues that could be considered unethical.

It was difficult to recruit participants for this study from different countries and populations around the world. Consequently, participants were selected on the basis of convenience and a sample size of 102 participants was considered for this project. Since there was limited time to conduct this research, it was difficult to conduct face-to-face interactions with all participants. The research objectives were achieved by conducting a questionnaire survey to collect data from the participants. Finding participants from different parts of the world rather than from a specific country shows the global applicability of this research.

6. **CHAPTER: Finding and Analysis**

By analyzing survey responses, we can gain a deeper understanding of how Gen Z interacts with social media influencers and how this impacts their purchasing decisions. Key patterns in social media usage, influencer preferences, and how influencers influence purchasing decisions are highlighted in the data collected. In total, 102 people were surveyed for this survey.

6.1.Analysis Method: Descriptive Analysis

As a result of the survey, descriptive analysis has been conducted in order to summarize the information collected. In order to determine whether the numerical data had a central tendency (mean, median, mode) and a dispersion (range, standard deviation), a measure of central tendency was calculated. The categorical data were described using frequency distributions and percentages, which are both quantitative methods. The data was represented visually in the form of charts and graphs so that the data could be interpreted more easily. As a result of cross-tabulation analysis, we were able to explore the relationship between demographic variables and other survey responses, which provided insight into the ways in which different groups interact with social media influencers and how this impacts their purchase decisions(https://www.questionpro.com/blog/descriptive-analysis/)

This research selected methods based on its objectives and the nature of the data it needed. In order to provide a broad overview and analyze social media influencers statistically, a quantitative approach was adopted. It was the most practical and efficient way to reach a large and diverse sample of respondents by conducting an online survey. In this study, descriptive analysis was selected because it provides clear insights into patterns and trends from large amounts of data. By choosing these methods, the research was comprehensive, efficient, and capable of addressing the research questions effectively.

6.2.Demographic Results

The findings regarding the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants are as follows.
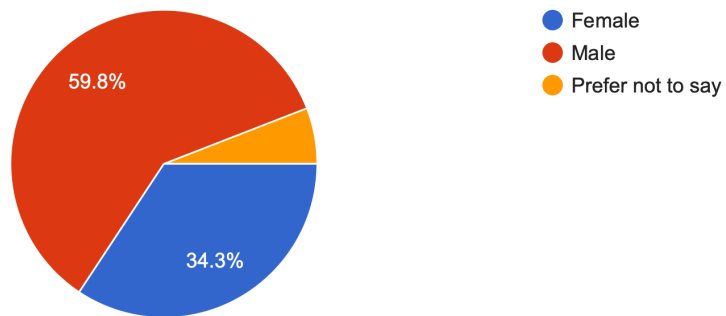
Table 1.

Age:

102 responses
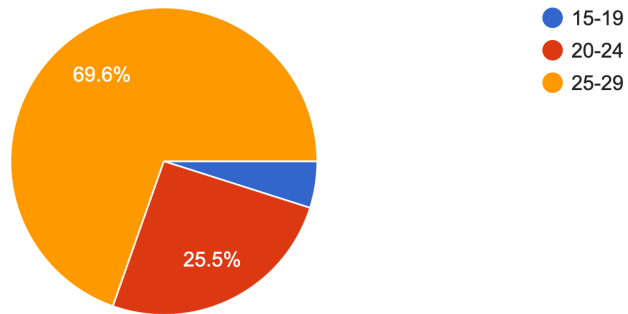
71 of the 102 survey participants are between the ages of 25-29, and 26 people are between the ages of 20-24. Mainly between 20-29 years old. In other words, 97 people who participated in the survey are in the Z generation.
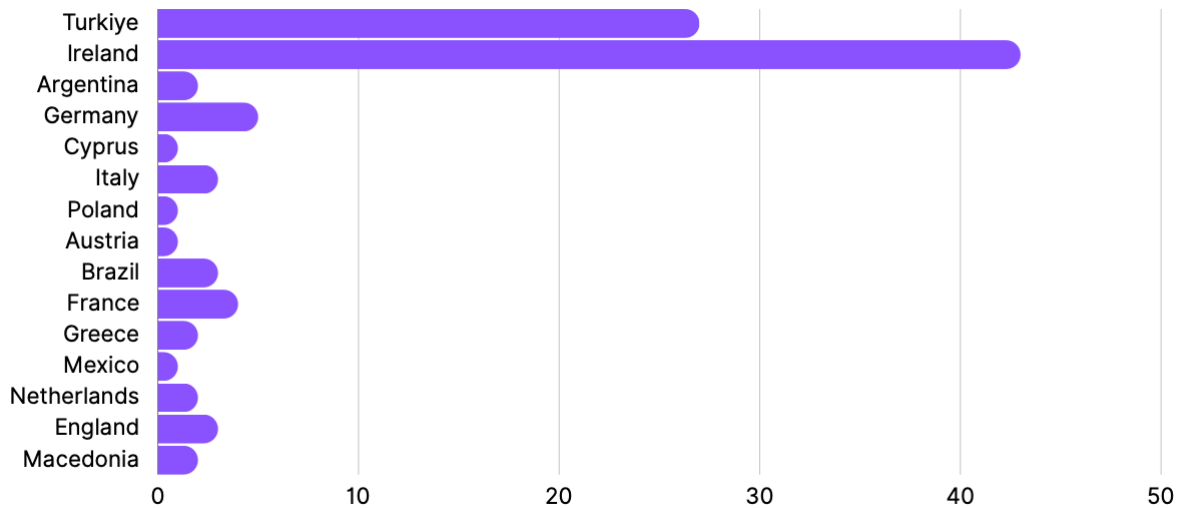
Table 2.

Gender:

102 responses

The majority consists of female participants. 61 of the participants are women.

Table 3.

Among the countries of residence, Ireland is the leader with 43 people. Turkey follows Ireland with 27 people. It is a survey conducted with participants from different countries of the world. The main purposes of using social media were to stay in touch with friends and family, entertainment, to follow influential people and celebrities, and to discover new products.

6.3.Social Media Usage Result

Table 4.

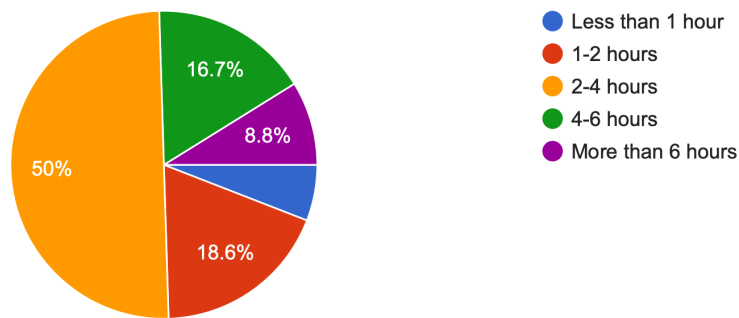Which social media platforms do you use regularly? (Select all that apply)
102 responses
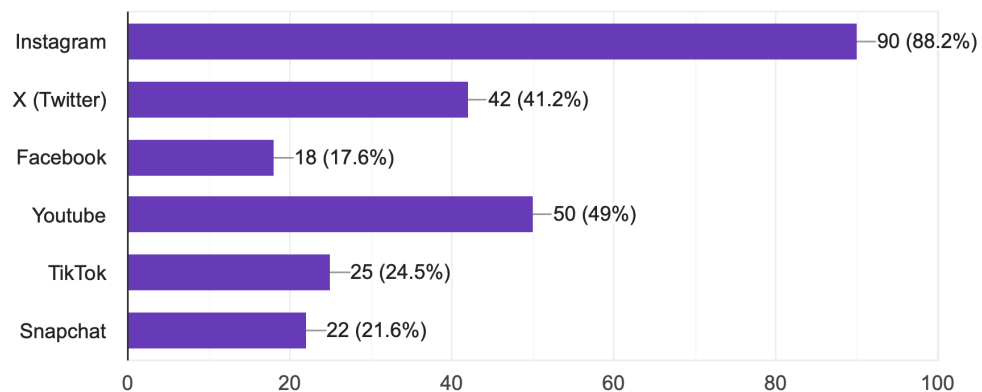
90 out of 102 people use Instagram. This means that Instagram, YouTube and X (Twitter) platforms are ideal platforms for influencer marketing. The total number of people using Facebook, TikTok and Snapchat platforms is less than the total number of people using Instagram.

Table 5.

How many hours per day do you spend on social media?
102 responses

Legend:
- Less than 1 hour
- 1-2 hours
- 2-4 hours
- 4-6 hours
- More than 6 hours

Pie chart values: 16.7%, 8.8%, 50%, 18.6%

A large and significant portion of the participants spend 2-4 hours a day on social media. They spend an average of 1095 hours a year, that is, more than 1.5 months a year, on social media. 19 of the participants spend 1-2 hours on social media. This indicates a high level of engagement that can be leveraged by brands and influencers.

A smaller group spends more than 6 hours on social media. This indicates a very high level of engagement. This may be typical for younger demographic groups or those with high investments in online communities.

Table 6.

What is your primary purpose for using social media? (Select up to 2)
101 responses
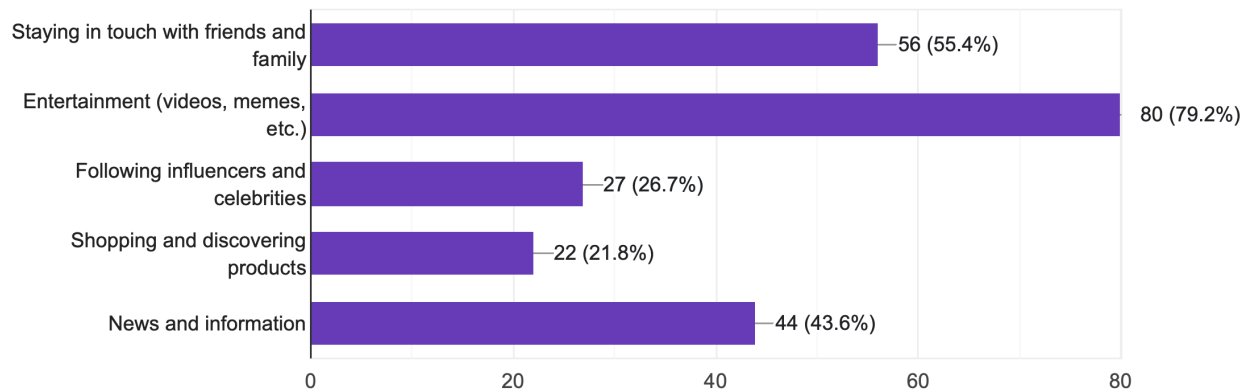
When we look at the main purposes of using social media, entertainment comes first for people. Then, the participants want to be in constant communication and interaction with their friends and families. This highlights the social and leisure-oriented nature of their participation.
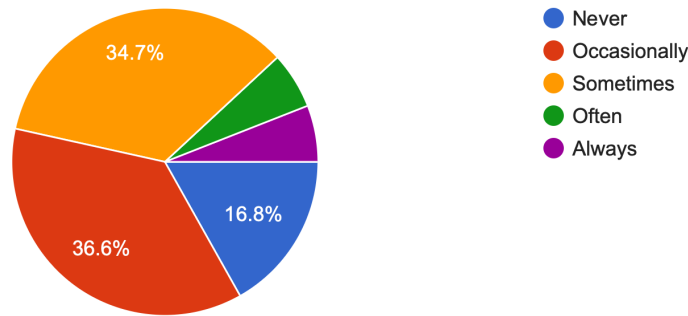
Following influencers and celebrities and obtaining news and information are also important purposes. This shows that social media is an important source of both personal connection and information.

6.4.Interaction Results with Influencers

Table 7.

How often do you follow or engage with influencers on social media?
101 responses

Most respondents interact with influencers "sometimes" or "occasionally." This shows that although influencers are part of their social media experience, they are not the central focus for most users.

Fewer participants rarely or never interact with influencers; This shows that a segment of people is largely unaffected by this phenomenon.

Table 8.

What types of influencers do you follow? (Select all that apply)
97 responses
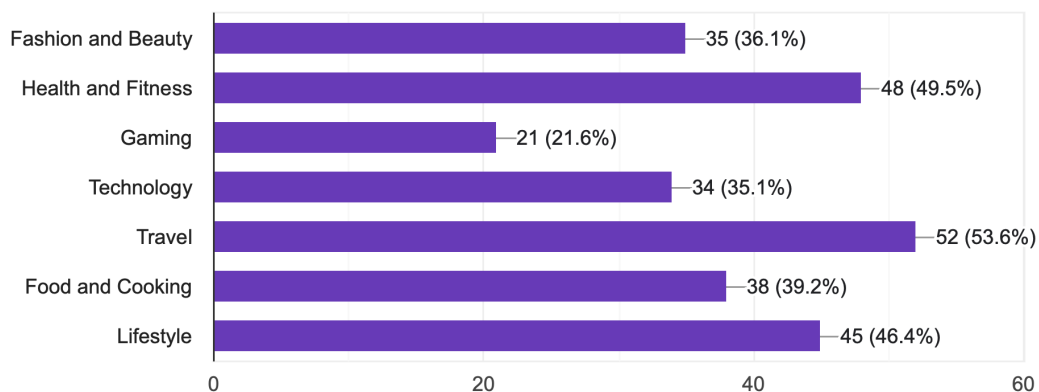
The diversity in influencer types followed (Fashion & Beauty, Health & Fitness, Travel, etc.) reflects different interests among participants. Health and Fitness, travel, Fashion

and beauty tours come first. Fashion and Beauty seems to be particularly popular, which is consistent with the fact that it has a predominately female entrant.

6.5.Characteristics of Influencers

Table 9.

How important are the following characteristics of an influencer to you? (Rate each on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is 'Not Important' and 5 is 'Very Important')
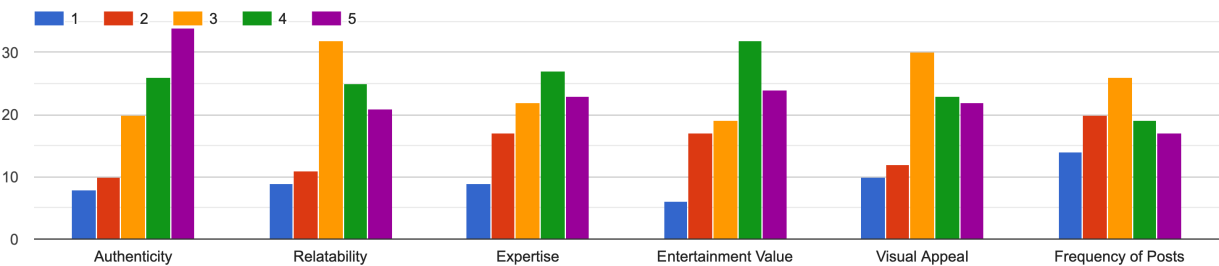
When we look at the importance ratings, we see that some critical features have come to the fore.

Authenticity and Relatability: These are critical attributes, but the ratings indicate moderate importance. Respondents value influencers who appear friendly and relatable but do not prioritize these traits above all else.

Expertise: This varies greatly; This suggests that while expertise is important for some types of influencers (e.g., health and fitness), it is less important for others.

Entertainment Value: Rated as variable, this indicates that entertainment, although important, is not the primary factor for most participants.

Visual Appeal and Frequency of Posts: These are generally rated as being of lower importance; This shows that content (originality, expertise) is more valuable than style and volume of content.

6.6.Purchasing Behavior Influenced by Social Media

Table 10.

How often do you purchase products or services that you see advertised or promoted on social media?

102 responses
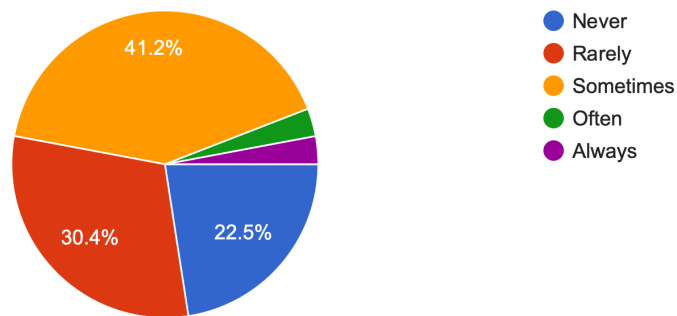
Most respondents purchase products influenced by social media "rarely" or "sometimes," indicating a cautious approach to influencer recommendations. Only a few respondents purchased "often," showing a limited but present segment of highly influenced consumers.

Table 11.

Which factors influence your decision to purchase a product recommended by an influencer? (Select all that apply)
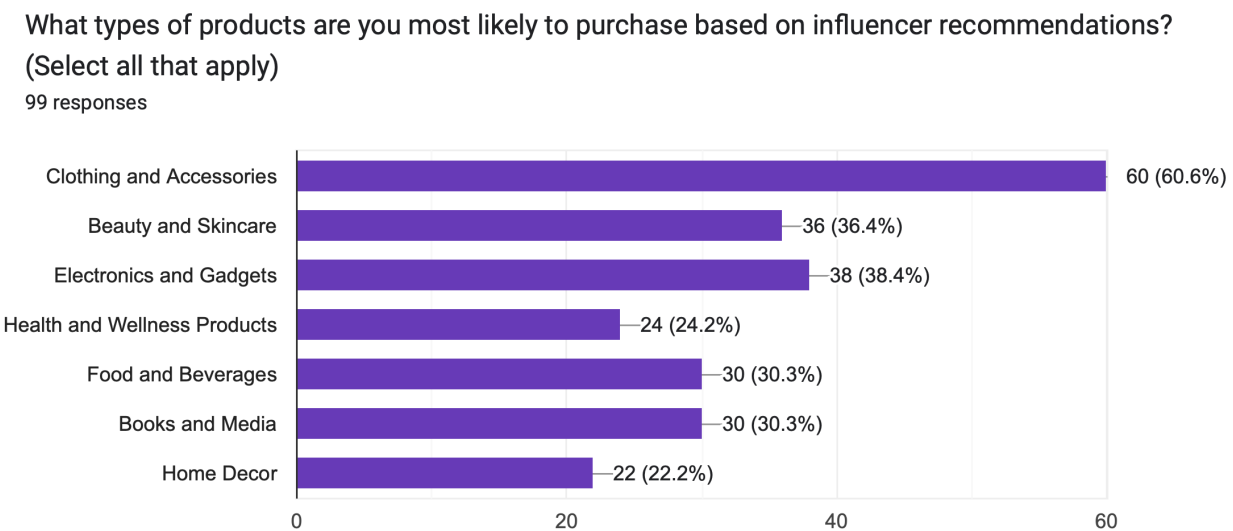
100 responses
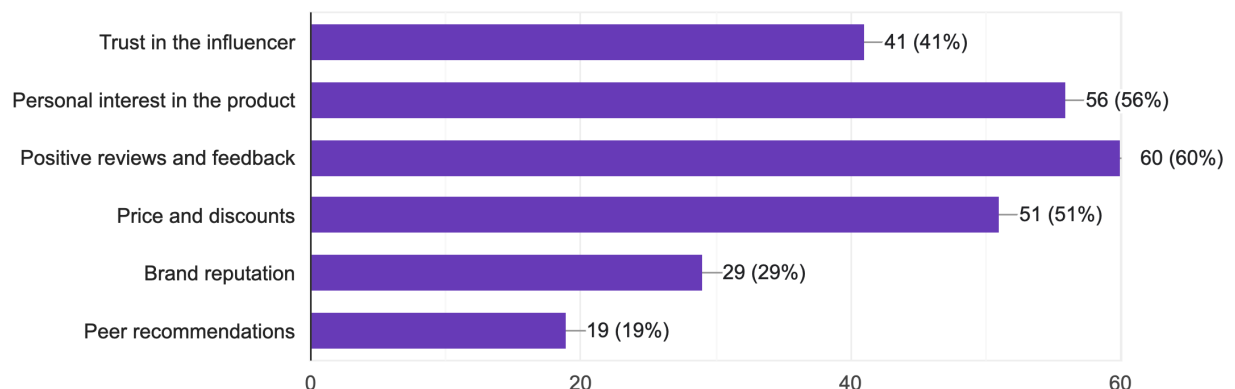
With the positive feedback received about the product marketed by the participants, it is an important factor in the decision to purchase the products. At the same time, the feedback and comments of people who purchased the product show the trust in the majority. These are the most influential factors that highlight the importance of credibility and social proof.

Personal Attention, Price and Discounts: These practical considerations highlight that although influencers can direct attention, the final decision largely depends on personal needs and financial factors.

Table 12.

What types of products are you most likely to purchase based on influencer recommendations? (Select all that apply)

99 responses
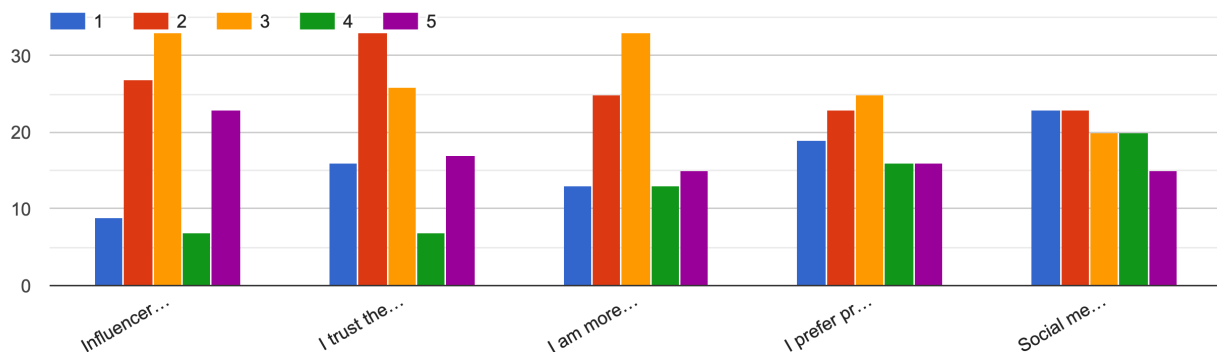

The product types purchased, in order of Clothing, Beauty, Electronics, Food and Health products, are common purchases that reflect a variety of interests and needs influenced by social media.

Table 13.

How much do you agree with the following statements? (Rate each on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 is 'Strongly Agree')

-Influencers provide valuable information about products and services.

-I trust the product recommendations made by influencers.

-I am more likely to purchase a product if it is promoted by an influencer I follow.

-I prefer products that are endorsed by multiple influencers.

-Social media has a significant impact on my purchasing decisions.

Responses are mixed but tend to be unanimous; This shows that while influencers are trusted to some degree, there is also a healthy amount of skepticism.

Impact on Purchasing Decisions: Social media significantly influences some respondents, demonstrating its role as a powerful marketing tool for certain demographic groups.

Table 14.

Have you ever been disappointed by a product recommended by an influencer?
101 responses

- ● Yes
- ● No

37.6%

62.4%
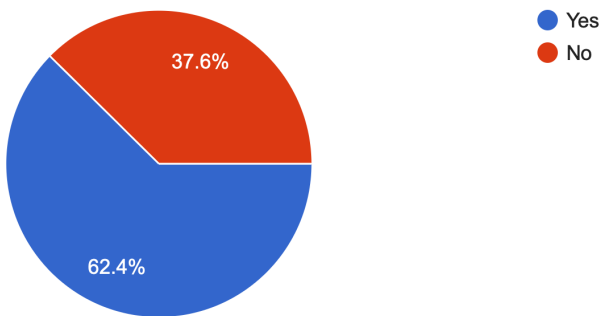
In general, participants do not attach much importance to multiple endorsements, indicating that they prefer originality over widespread publicity.

Table 14.

If yes, what was the main reason for your disappointment? (Select all that apply)
69 responses

Poor product quality	41 (59.4%)
Misleading information	21 (30.4%)
High Price	23 (33.3%)
Incompatibility with personal preferences	18 (26.1%)
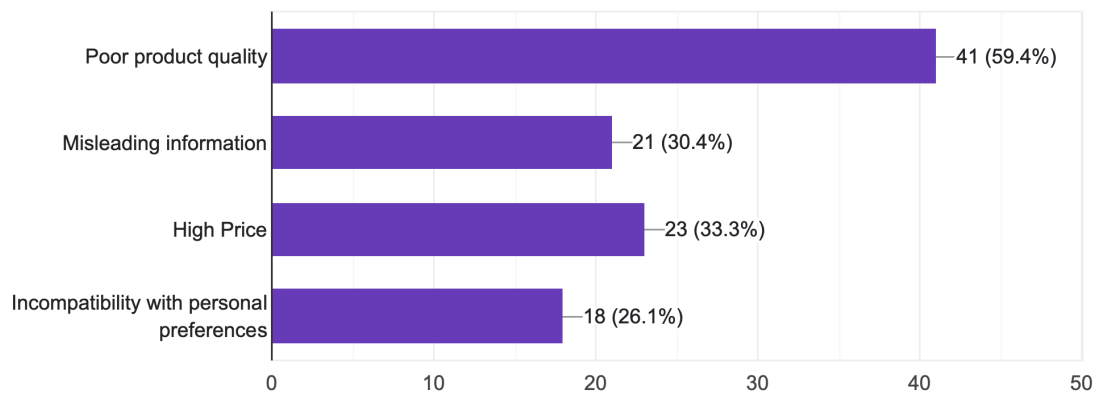
If we look at common problems, the main problems are poor product quality and misleading information, reflecting the gap between Influencer promotions and actual product performance.

Specific examples where influencer recommendations led to purchases were cited, reinforcing that influencers have a tangible impact on consumer behavior. Originality, genuine interest,

consistency and transparency are key characteristics. Participants value influencers who are honest and have a genuine connection to the products they support. There are concerns about reliability and trustworthiness. Participants expressed concerns about the trustworthiness of products and the trustworthiness of influencers, suggesting that influencers need to carefully establish and maintain trust.

The role of community feedback is very important. Community feedback and peer recommendations are crucial, as participants often rely on them before making purchasing decisions. Therefore, before making a purchasing decision, consumers use social media to lower the risk (Kulkarni and Mohapatra, 2021).

The survey results provide a detailed look at how young adults, or Generation Z, use social media and interact with influencers. While social media has significantly influenced their behavior, especially in terms of entertainment and staying connected, their interactions with influencers are moderate and cautious. Additionally, the high number of hours spent using social media explains why social media marketing is at the forefront among marketing types. Trust and authenticity are crucial for influencers to effectively influence purchasing decisions. The findings highlight the importance of credibility and the need for influencers to balance promotion with genuine engagement to maintain their influence.

7.   CHAPTER : Discussion

7.1.Discussion based on Research Questions

This study examined the effect of social media influencers on Generation Z's purchasing decisions based on survey data:

1. Influence of Social Media Influencers on Generation Z's **Purchasing Decisions**

According to survey responses, social media influencers influence Generation Z's purchasing decisions in varying degrees. The number of respondents who engage with influencers varies depending on whether they engage with them frequently or only occasionally. It appears that individuals are not equally influenced by social media advertisements or promotions when it comes to purchasing products.

A significant number of respondents indicated they "sometimes" or "rarely" purchased products recommended by influencers, suggesting an overall moderate influence. A key determinant in

the decision-making process is trust in the influencer, positive reviews, feedback, and price and discounts.

Digitalization is transforming the world of business, and social media is promoting almost all purchases consumers want/need. Similarly, Chukwu and Uzoma (2014) assert that online retailers have greatly influenced consumer expectations, which is also supported by other scholarly findings.

2. Perceived Credibility of Influencers and Its Effect on Purchasing Behavior

How influencers affect Generation Z's purchasing behavior is heavily influenced by perceived credibility. According to responses to questions on the relevance of various characteristics of influencers, such as authenticity, relatability, and expertise, these factors have a significant impact on their credibility.

"Trust in the influencer" and "positive reviews and feedback" were rated as important factors influencing purchasing decisions by several respondents. Consequently, Generation Z is more likely to purchase from influencers perceived as trustworthy and credible.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) argue that consumers' propensity to purchase provides a good indication of their actual purchasing behavior. A consumer's purchase intent refers to their propensity to make a future purchase.

3. Information and Transparency Practices in Influencer Marketing and Their Impact on **Trust and Purchasing Decisions**

Generation Z has a strong relationship with influencer marketing when it comes to transparency and information practices. There is a wide range of agreement with the statement "Influencers provide valuable information about products and services," according to the survey.

Influencers' transparency and quality of information are important, according to many respondents. A number of factors contribute to this, such as positive reviews and feedback, as well as a need to see detailed product information before making a purchase. Disappointment and distrust among followers resulted from influencers providing misleading information or promoting poor-quality products. Gen Z will continue to be influenced by influencers who maintain transparency about their endorsements and present themselves as trustworthy sources of information. Sponsorship disclosures and genuine endorsements promote trust and credibility (Jin, Muqaddam, & Ryu, 2019).

4.Future Role of Influencers in the Purchasing Behavior of Generation Z

Over the next five years, influencers are expected to play an increasingly important role in Generation Z's purchasing behavior. The survey suggests that influencers will continue to play an important role, but credibility and trust will become increasingly important as well.

A number of respondents emphasized the importance of authentic and genuine recommendations. It is likely that influencers will play a more important role in the future if they can maintain credibility and provide valuable, transparent information. In addition, advanced marketing strategies and technologies may enhance influencer marketing's effectiveness in shaping purchase decisions. Authenticity and personal connections are important to Gen Z. It is likely that influencers who establish genuine connections with their audience and offer personalized content will have a greater impact on purchase decisions (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

7.2.Impact of Research Studies on Industry

Data-driven insights provided by research and survey studies influence decision-making, strategic planning, and market understanding in a variety of industries. The following industries are affected by these studies:

- Market trends, consumer preferences, and behaviors are uncovered through research and surveys. By understanding the needs and expectations of their target audience, companies can tailor their products, services, and marketing strategies.

- Market segmentation allows businesses to target specific groups with marketing campaigns and product development, thus increasing their effectiveness.

- Surveys assist companies in identifying unmet needs and desires of consumers, enabling new products to be developed or existing ones to be improved.

- The feedback loop enables companies to continuously improve their products and services based on consumer feedback.

- Making data-driven decisions reduces the risk associated with new ventures and investments. Companies can use research and survey data to make more informed decisions.

- Analysis of trends: Understanding current and emerging trends can assist businesses in anticipating market changes and adapting their strategies accordingly.

- Research studies provide insights into industry standards and best practices, enabling companies to compare their performance with their competitors.

- A competitive edge in innovation and market positioning comes from staying informed about industry trends and consumer preferences.

- Businesses are able to increase engagement and conversions by creating marketing campaigns based on survey insights.

- Through survey data, companies can understand consumers' perceptions of a brand and address any negative perceptions proactively.

- Surveys on customer satisfaction provide valuable information on the quality of products and services, highlighting areas for improvement.

- The development of loyalty programs that enhance customer retention can be enhanced through insight into what drives customer loyalty.

- An organization can improve its operational performance by identifying inefficiencies and areas for improvement through internal surveys.

- Employee engagement surveys provide insight into workplace culture and productivity that can be used to improve the work environment.

- Research helps industries stay informed about regulatory changes and compliance requirements, reducing the risk of lawsuits.

- A study can provide evidence-based arguments for policy shifts or regulatory adjustments, which can be used in industry advocacy efforts.

7.3. Limitations of Study

The sample size and representation of the study are its main limitations. Due to a small sample size and geographic constraints, the study might not adequately represent the entire Generation Z demographic. Additionally, self-reported data can introduce accuracy issues, since responses may be influenced by social desirability bias, and participants may not always provide accurate information. There is also a limitation of the study's temporal nature, in that the findings represent a specific point in time, which does not take account of the dynamics of social media and influencers, which can change rapidly over time.

Another constraint is the scope of the study's influencers. Micro and macro influencers may not be addressed, and it might focus on certain social media platforms, overlooking others. Furthermore, consumer behavior poses a challenge due to its complexity. Buying decisions are influenced by multiple factors beyond social media influencers, making it difficult to establish clear causal relationships between influencer marketing and purchasing decisions. It is also important to consider cultural differences, since findings might not be generalizable internationally due to cultural norms. A language barrier could lead to misinterpretations, further affecting the quality of the data.

7.4.Scope for Further Study

There is significant scope for further research in this area. Observing changes and trends over time could provide insight into how Gen Z's purchasing behavior evolves through longitudinal studies. This would enable a deeper understanding of different subgroups within Generation Z if the sample was expanded to include a larger and more diverse group, enhancing generalizability and providing demographic segmentation. Moreover, a platform-specific analysis can reveal how social media platforms impact influence effectiveness and explore emerging platforms.

Additionally, different influencer types and strategies should be analyzed, such as micro versus macro influencers and content strategies' impact on purchasing decisions. It would be beneficial for brands and marketers to examine these areas in the future to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how social media influencers influence Generation Z's buying behavior.

7.5.Summary of Key Findings

- **Influence Level:** Generation Z is moderately influenced by social media influencers. Trust and personal interest are important factors.

- **Credibility:** Consumers value authenticity, relatability, and expertise when it comes to influencers' credibility.

- **Transparency:** Honest reviews and transparent information foster trust and help consumers make informed decisions.

- **Future Trends:** Influencer marketing will increasingly focus on maintaining credibility and providing valuable, genuine recommendations.

Based on the survey data, this study explores how social media influencers influence Generation Z's purchasing decisions. In order for industries to grow, innovate, and maintain competitive advantages, research and survey studies are crucial. In order to develop strategies aligned with consumer needs and market trends, they help businesses understand their markets.

8.   CHAPTER: Conclusion

This study examined the influence of social media and influencers on Generation Z's purchasing behavior. A key finding from the study is that influencers have a profound effect on Gen Z's purchasing decisions as a result of their digital nativeness as well as their deep trust in social media personalities. Through constant interaction and personalized content, social media platforms, particularly Instagram, serve as important mediums where influencers can engage with this demographic.

Purchasing decisions are heavily influenced by the credibility of influencers according to the data. The buying choices of their followers are significantly influenced by influencers who are perceived as authentic and trustworthy. Through consistent and transparent communication, as well as their lifestyle and values, influencers build trust. Information and transparency practices play a crucial role in influencing marketing, according to the study. They expect honesty and clarity from influencers regarding promotional content, and if these expectations are not met, their trust in them may be eroded. While endorsing products and brands, generation Z perceives social media influencers as experts, competent, honest, trustworthy, and benevolent (Buhlmann and Gisler, 2016). In order to gain the trust of generation Z, social media influencers need to be knowledgeable, helpful, related, confident, and articulate. In order to gain trust and build a strong and sympathetic relationship with generation Z, social media influencers must demonstrate these five traits, in order to encourage them to buy products endorsed, recommended and advised by social media influencers (Buhlmann and Gisler, 2016).

Generation Z's purchasing behaviors are expected to be further influenced by influencers in the future. As the generation matures, their criteria for credibility and trust may become more stringent, requiring influencers to maintain higher standards of transparency and authenticity. Influencer collaborations need to be perceived as authentic and value-driven by brands as they adapt their strategies.

A limitation of this study is that it only looks at a specific demographic and geographic area, which may not fully represent Generation Z's global diversity. The rapidly changing landscape of social media platforms may also affect the long-term applicability of the findings because trends and behaviors can change quickly.

Research could expand upon this study by examining how different types of influencers affect purchasing behavior (e.g., micro-influencers versus macro-influencers). Additionally, longitudinal studies could offer deeper insight into how influencers' relationship with Gen Z develops over time. As brands plan to engage with this influential group in the future, understanding their dynamics will be crucial.

These findings can be used by companies to enhance their marketing strategies. To mitigate risks in new ventures, they should develop data-driven marketing strategies based on research and survey data. By adapting strategies based on current and emerging trends, they will be able to anticipate market changes. Utilizing survey results to manage consumer perceptions and proactively address negative perceptions is vital. By creating marketing campaigns based on survey findings, you can increase engagement and conversions with Generation Z.

Customers' satisfaction can be improved by using data from customer satisfaction surveys to enhance products and services, and by developing loyalty programs to increase customer retention. Employee satisfaction surveys can improve the work environment and identify operational efficiency issues. Lastly, staying informed about regulatory changes and compliance requirements will reduce legal risks and ensure industry compliance.

As a result of these recommendations, companies will be able to use influencer marketing strategies effectively to enhance engagement with Generation Z and enhance overall business performance.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX-1 Survey Form

Research on Influencer Marketing Applications

Survey Questions

1. Age:

- 10-14

- 15-19

- 20-24

- 25-29

2. Gender:

- Male

- Female

- Non-binary/Third gender

- Prefer not to say

3. Country of Residence:

- [Open-ended]

4. Which social media platforms do you use regularly? (Select all that apply)

- Instagram

- TikTok

- YouTube

- Snapchat

- Twitter

- Facebook

- Other (please specify)

5. How many hours per day do you spend on social media?

   - Less than 1 hour

   - 1-2 hours

   - 2-4 hours

   - 4-6 hours

   - More than 6 hours

6. What is your primary purpose for using social media? (Select up to **2)**

   - Staying in touch with friends and family

   - Entertainment (videos, memes, etc.)

   - Following influencers and celebrities

   - Shopping and discovering products

   - News and information

   - Other (please specify)

7. How often do you follow or engage with influencers on social media**?**

   - Never

   - Rarely

   - Sometimes

   - Often

   - Very Often

8. What types of influencers do you follow? (Select all that apply)

- Fashion and Beauty

- Health and Fitness

- Gaming

- Technology

- Travel

- Food and Cooking

- Lifestyle

- Other (please specify)

9. How important are the following characteristics of an influencer to you? (Rate each on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is 'Not Important' and 5 is 'Very Important')

- Authenticity

- Relatability

- Expertise

- Entertainment Value

- Visual Appeal

- Frequency of Posts

10. How often do you purchase products or services that you see advertised or promoted on social media?

- Never

- Rarely

- Sometimes

- Often

- Very Often

11. Which factors influence your decision to purchase a product recommended by an influencer? (Select all that apply)

- Trust in the influencer

- Personal interest in the product

- Positive reviews and feedback

- Price and discounts

- Brand reputation

- Peer recommendations

- Other (please specify)

12. What types of products **are you most likely to** purchase based on **influencer** recommendations? (Select all that apply)

- Clothing and Accessories

- Beauty and Skincare

- Electronics and Gadgets

- Health and Wellness Products

- Food and Beverages

- Books and Media

- Home Decor

- Other (please specify)

13. How much do you agree with the following statements? (Rate **each on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 is** 'Strongly Agree')

- Influencers provide valuable information about products and services.

- I trust the product recommendations made by influencers.

- I am more likely to purchase a product if it is promoted by an influencer I follow.

- I prefer products that are endorsed by multiple influencers.

- Social media has a significant impact on my purchasing decisions.

14. Have you ever been disappointed **by a product recommended by an influencer?**

   - Yes

   - No

15. If yes, what was the main reason for your disappointment? (Select all that apply)

   - Poor product quality

   - Misleading information

   - High price

   - Incompatibility with personal preferences

   - Other (please specify)

16. Can you describe a specific instance where an influencer's recommendation significantly influenced your **purchasing decision?**

   - [Open-ended]

17. What qualities make an influencer's recommendation trustworthy or untrustworthy in your opinion?

   - [Open-ended]

18. Do you have any additional comments or thoughts on the impact of social media **and influencers on your purchasing behavior?**

   - [Open-ended]