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ÜRETİM YÖNETİMİ VE PAZARLAMA(İNGİLİZCE) BİLİM DALI

BEHAVIORAL CONSEQUENCES OF EXPOSURE TO INFODEMIC BY INFLUENCERS

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

ECE ÜNALMIŞ

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INFLUENCERLAR TARAFINDAN INFODEMIYE MARUZ KALMANIN DAVRANIŞSAL SONUÇLARI

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Danışman: Assoc. Prof. Taşkın Dirsehan

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İstanbul,2021 Ece Ünalmış

ÖZET

INFLUENCERLAR TARAFINDAN INFODEMIYE MARUZ KALMANIN DAVRANIŞSAL SONUÇLARI

Influencer pazarlama, pazarlamacıların bütçelerinin önemli bir kısmını yatırım yaptıkları ve günümüzde giderek daha önemli hale gelen bir pazarlama alanıdır. Influencer'lar, Covid 19 döneminde Infodemi adlı yanlış bilgilerin paylaşılmasında büyük rol oynadı ve sosyal medya kullanıcıları influencerlar tarafından Infodemiye maruz kaldı. Bu nedenle bu çalışma, Covid19 sırasında influencerlar tarafından Infodemiye maruz kalmanın güven,özgünlük, parasosyal ilişki, eğlence ve bilgilendiricilik kavramlarının üzerindeki rolünü anlamak ve bu değişkenlerin birbirleriyle ilişkilerini test etmek amacıyla yapılmıştır. Bu çalışma için 445 sosyal medya kullanıcısı arasında çevrimiçi bir anket yapıldı. Kısmi en küçük kare yol modellemesi ile analiz edilen hipotez sonuçları, influencerlar tarafından Infodemiye maruz kalmanın markalı gönderiye olan güven, algılanan influencer özgünlüğü ve influencerlar ile takipçiler arasındaki algılanan parasosyal ilişki üzerinde önemli bir olumsuz etkiye sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Analitik sonuçlar ayrıca, markalı paylaşımlarda algılanan eğlence ve markalı paylaşıma güvenin, markalı içeriğe yönelik tutumda önemli bir rol oynadığını ve algılanan bilgilendiriciliğin ve algılanan otantikliğin markalı gönderilere olan güveni olumlu yönde etkilediğini göstermektedir. Son olarak, güven ve tutumun satın alma niyeti üzerinde önemli bir olumlu etkisi olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yanlış Bilgilendirme, Influencer Pazarlama, Influencerların İçerik Değerleri, Özgünlük, Parasosyal İlişki; Sosyal medya, Covid19

ABSTRACT

BEHAVIORAL CONSEQUENCES OF EXPOSURE TO INFODEMIC BY INFLUENCERS

Influencer marketing is a marketing area where marketers invest a meaningful part of their budget, which turns increasingly substantial today. Influencers played a major role in sharing false information, Infodemic, during the Covid 19 period, and social media users were exposed to Infodemic by influencers. Thus, this study was carried out to understand the role of exposure to Infodemic by influencers during Covid19 in trust, authenticity, parasocial relationship, entertainment and informativeness and to test the relations of these items between each other. An online survey was conducted among 445 social media users. Hypothesis results analyzed by partial least square path modeling indicate that exposure to Infodemic by influencers has a significant negative effect on trust in the branded post, perceived influencer authenticity, and perceived parasocial relationship between influencers and followers. Analytic results also show that perceived entertainment and trust in branded posts play an important role in attitude toward branded content and perceived informativeness and perceived authenticity positively affect trust in branded posts. And finally, trust and attitude have a significant positive effect on purchase intention.

Keywords:

Misinformation, Influencer Marketing, Influencer Content Value, Authenticity, Parasocial Relationship; Social Media, Covid19

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INTRODUCTION

Unlike celebrities, influencers have gained fame with their posts on social media (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2017). Their contents shape as health, fitness ,fashion, beauty, food, high- tec, diet, health, lifestyle etc.(Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Companies that reach a higher quality customer through influencers have higher ROIs, and thus the investment plans of companies in the field of influencer marketing has been increased for the coming years (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2020c). A study shows that half of women decide to buy a product because of influencers' post on social media (Morrison, K, 2016). And another study indicates that 67% of woman search reviews of social media influencers about beauty products, before they buy it (Gerdeman, 2019). However, influencer marketing can be successful if influencers establish an authentic and trustworthy relationship with the community on social media instead of being they are selling the product (Backaler, 2018).

The mode of communication in social media, such as the ease of interaction and information transfer, has had a positive effect in terms of brands to communicate more effectively with consumers, but it has also facilitated the spread of fake news (Chen Zifei & Cheng, 2019). Fake news can influence the digital brand community, for example, with increased skepticism towards information sources and impede brand strategies (Borges-Tiago, Tiago, Silva, Guaita Martínez, & Botella-Carrubi, 2020). Consumers' perceptions of an advertised brand can be cultivated with the presence of fake news, regardless of their trust in the source and previous beliefs about the source. With the decrease of trust in digital media, it is necessary to understand whether there is any change in the customer's brand attitude in cases of fake news and brands' advertisements (Visentin, Pizzi, & Pichierri, 2019).

Following the announcement of Covid19 as a pandemic in March 2020, states imposed some restrictions for their citizens, such as lockdowns, closing borders, schools, university and restaurants (Taylor, 2021). And this forced people to stay at their homes. During lockdowns, social media usage of people, for example Instagram usage 32%, Facebook usage 53%, has increased (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2020b). Contents circulating on social media at beginning of Covid19 pandemic were generally related with

conspiracy theories, treatment methods, anti-virus choices and recommended drugs. In this period, not only ordinary people, but also influencers share fake news which caused the rapid spread of Infodemic is defined as" The vast volume of news and information around COVID-19 – and the ambiguity, uncertainty, and sometimes low-quality, misleading character, or outright false nature of some of it"(Nielsen, Fletcher, Newman, Brennen, & Howard, 2020). With the Infodemic, many people have repeatedly witnessed that the information they see on social media would be wrong. One of the foremost important samples of this is that influencers, who have an existing relationship of trust with their followers (Delbaere, Michael, & Phillips, 2020). Influencers have been the main distribution tools to spread misinformation during the Covid19 time (Greenspan, 2020; Waterson, 2020). For example, many famous names shared in COVID-19 period to support the spread of conspiracy theories on social media. British boxer Amir Khan said in his post that the Corona Virus is man-made (Waterson, 2020) without having any prove of it. Other than that, for example famous singer Madonna shared a post about Corona treatment from her Instagram account, which was later deleted by Instagram Management (Savage, 2020). During Covid19, influencers also shared ads, for example, about improving the immune system, defending the Corona Virus, and suggested products such as cannabis, supplements, ozone therapy etc. (Lindsay, 2020) and advertised brands, but there is not an evidence that a medicine or treatment method would protect people from Corona and WHO (2021) suggested way of protection from Corona is physical distance, wearing masks and cleaning. The fact of exposure to Infodemic by influencers may therefore change perception of their followers. Therefore, the aim of this study is to understand if exposure of Infodemic by influencers may have a negative role in influencers' authenticity, content value, parasocial relationship and followers' trust in influencers' post.

It is important to examine consumer perceptions of advertisement and advertiser for Covid19 case in terms of influencer marketing, in which companies make an important investment today (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2020c). There is still not a specific information about if there are any positive or negative influences of perception of Covid19 Infodemic in terms of trust in branded posts of influencers, consumer perception of influencers and their content. Since influencers were a part of dissemination of fake

news, unfounded advertising during Covid19 (e.g. Lindsay, 2020; Waterson, 2020), it was assumed that it is possible that trust in influencers' advertising, consumers perception for influencers and their advertising content value may have been negatively changed. This study will be focusing on influencer marketing in terms of "beauty and personal care" products since this category is mainly about consumers' skin and appearance. And consumers search the reviews about the products to not having any health and skin problems. Beauty and personal care industry include categories such as cosmetics, skin care, personal care and fragrances and this category has 169billion annual content views on Youtube (Statista, 2020d). The industry has 505billion USD annual revenue (Statista, 2020a) and which can focused wide range of influencer categories such beauty, cosmetics, skincare& makeup, lifestyle, travel influencers etc. Beauty and personal care companies investigate successful influencer marketing campaign through paid, sponsored advertisement and gather good engagement rate. For example, Nivea worked with influencers under the hashtag #rethinksoft in 2019 (e.g., HilariaBaldwin, Colormecourtney). And Dove worked with influencers for the #ArmsUp campaign in 2019 (e. g. NadineBaggott, Beingjustus). The campaign reached 1.4M users with 10 posts and its estimated return is 417K. dollar (Young, 2019).

Last research focuses on source credibility, content value and their effect on trust in branded advertising, brand awareness and purchase intention (Lou & Yuan, 2019), but literature shows that there is not a study which explains relationship between perception of followers and exposure to Infodemic by influencers during Covid19. Moreover, in influencer marketing context, the relationship between authenticity of influencer, and trust in branded post; parasocial relationship, perceived entertainment and attitude toward branded content were not examined yet. In addition, the relationship between attitude toward branded content and purchase intention; trust in branded post and attitude toward branded content were not focused by previous studies. Therefore, this study will close the gap in the literature.

For summary, in this study authenticity, parasocial relationship, dimensions of content value (perceived informativeness and entertainment), trust were examined in order to understand whether exposure to Infodemic by influencers has a negative effect

on consumer behavior against "beauty and personal care" product advertisements made by influencers on social media. And also, this study will examine the relationship between the dimensions of authenticity, influencer content value, parasocial relationship, trust, and attitude by applying Elaboration Likelihood Model; and the relationship between trust, attitude and purchase intention by applying theory of reasoned action.

Based on proposed model mentioned above, this study aims to answers following research questions:

- Does exposure to Infodemic by influencers have a negative role in trust in branded post, parasocial relationship, authenticity, entertainment and informativeness?
- Do parasocial relationship, authenticity, entertainment and informativeness have a role in trust in branded post and attitude toward branded content?
- Do trust in branded post and attitude toward branded content have a role in purchase intention?
- Does trust in branded post have a role in attitude toward branded content?

The study is organized as followed: introduction part consists of the scope and importance of this study. The next part is literature review, which includes overview of social media, overview of influencer marketing and hypothesis development. First social media, social media marketing, content marketing and e-WOM are clarified. Then the influencer marketing is explained in detailed. Afterall model development and hypothesis in terms of attitude, trust, authenticity, influencer content value, parasocial relationship, purchase intention, elaboration likelihood model, theory of reasoned actioned and exposure to Infodemic by influencers are clarified, and hypotheses are explained. In the following section research design and methodology are clarified. After research design and methodology, research findings are explained. And the study is concluded with discussion and conclusion part.

With the emergence of social media, the companies have started to assume social media as a marketing tool (Jacobson, Gruzd, & Hernández-García, 2020) for their

marketing activities since social media brings a lot of advantages to brands in terms of creating brand awareness, investigating consumer opinions, recognizing the opinion leaders, spreading messages, improving brand image, creating customer database, infusing credibility and trust in a brand (Tuten, 2008). With the advantages of social media to create a content and share information socially, now it is more easy to become famous (Korotina & Jargalsaikhan, 2016). And these people who are called as influencers on social media started to affect consumers' attitude, behavior and decisions (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). Therefore, influential people are now applied by companies to promote their products (Stubb, Nyström, & Colliander, 2019). This leaded to emerge influencer marketing.

Influencer marketing is now one of the most important marketing concepts, which is preferred by marketers. And the growth of this marketing has been growing year by year (InfluencerMarketingHub,2021a). Therefore, it is important to understand influencer marketing better. However, literature shows that there are scant academical studies which focused on influencer marketing. Moreover, since the studies of influencer marketing about Covid19 time are also limited. Therefore, this study is important since it sheds light on the scant sides of literature of influencer marketing.

This study will explain the consequences of Infodemic during Covid19 on influencer marketing. And this study will give insight about if exposure to Infodemic by influencer during Covid19 has any role in perception and trust of followers. Moreover, there is not a specific study that explains the relationship between exposure to Infodemic by influencers and perceived authenticity of influencer, trust in branded post, perceived entertainment and informativeness of influencers' post, parasocial relationship between influencers and followers. The results will also support to understand the relationship of authenticity, entertainment, informativeness and parasocial relationship with trust in branded post and attitude toward branded content, the relationship of trust in branded post and attitude toward branded content with purchase intention and the relationship between trust in branded post and attitude toward branded content.

All in all, this study will shed light on shortcomings of the literature of influencer marketing. In addition, since the study focuses on beauty and personal care products, this

study will lead to understand influencer marketing in terms of beauty and personal care products. And the study will give the brands based on beauty and personal care insight.

Table 1

Categorization of fake news

FAKE NEWS	YEAR	AUTHOR	TITLE
sloppy reporting, propaganda	2019	Quandt, T., Frischlich, L., Boberg, S., & Schatto-Eckrodt, T	Fake News
manipulation, disinformation, falseness, rumors, conspiracy theories	2018	Kalsnes, B.	Fake News
rumors, counter knowledge, misinformation, post-truths, alternative facts	2017	Klein, D., & Wueller, J.	Fake News: A Legal Perspective
news satire, news parody, fabrication, manipulation, advertising, and propaganda	2018	Tandoc Jr, E. C., Lim, Z. W., & Ling, R.	Defining "fake news" A typology of scholarly definitions.
hoaxes, conspiracy theories, propaganda, and true specialist information presented in distorted ways	2020	Di Domenico, G., & Visentin, M	Fake news or true lies? Reflections about problematic contents in marketing
inaccurate, misleading, inappropriately attributed, or altogether fabricated information	2019	Kim, A., & Dennis, A. R.	Says who? the effects of presentation format and source rating on fake news in social media

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Before explaining influencer marketing, it is important to focus on the concepts that shape and influence influencer marketing to better understand influencer marketing. Figure 1 shows the relationship of social media marketing, content marketing and e-WOM with influencer marketing. These marketing concepts form and interact with influencer marketing. Therefore, in the next sections, social media marketing, content marketing and e-WOM will be explained.

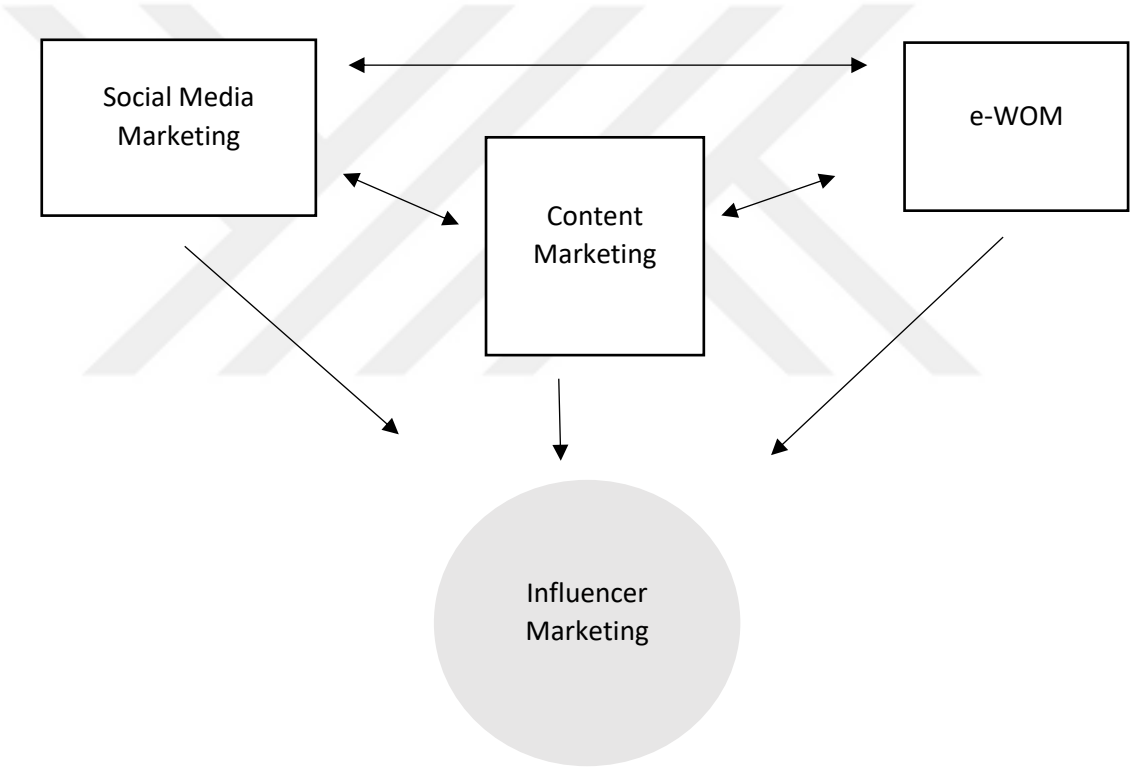

Figure 1 : Influencer's marketing and relationship between related marketing concepts

Source: Nirschl, M., & Steinberg, L. (2018). Einstieg in das Influencer Marketing: Springer, p7.

1.1 Overview of Social Media

To understand social media marketing, content marketing and e-WOM better, first it is important to understand how social media concept has been appeared. Therefore, in the following sections, evolution of Web, user generated content, social media, and motivations to use social media will be clarified to understand social media better. Afterall, social media marketing, content marketing and e-WOM will be explained.

1.1.1 Evolution of Web

The notion of Web 2.0 was first introduced by O'Reilly (Blank & Reisdorf, 2012) and the term emerged during a brainstorming in a conference between O'Reilly and Media Live (O'reilly, 2009). It is still controversial to give a specific definition for the term, nevertheless O'Reilly (2005) defined the term Web 2.0 as a network platform which includes all devices which have a connection between each other. Since attendance is one of the vital attributes of Web 2.0, the term is in general called "social web" (Paroutis & Al Saleh, 2009).

The concept of Web 2.0 brings a new extent to the Internet. In this manner, ordinary users who have the Internet started to create content contrary to the last 150 years, because in the mass society, content generation was only dominated by large organizations. Since production and distribution of content were only possible with a big amount of capital, content production was available only for large organizations, and they could share their contents only via newspapers, radio, television, etc. However, with Web 2.0, the mass society model has evolved into personal production and distribution model (Blank & Reisdorf, 2012).

Web 2.0 is a concept based on internet-based services such as social networking sites, collaborative publishing sites, wikis, blogs, bookmarking sites, photo sharing sites, it is considered or suggested as "Second Generation" (Paroutis & Al Saleh, 2009). The main idea of Web 2.0 is being able to communicate with other people, share the owned data easily, reach platforms freely, and get lightly the idea about how to utilize these applied platforms (Hudson-Smith, Crooks, Gibin, Milton, & Batty, 2009). Web 2.0 includes all connected tools and works in a better way when more people utilize these

tools, because, the case of utilization the connected tools by more people creates a network effect as a result (Lytras, Damiani, & de Pablos, 2008).

Table 2 shows the main differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0. As it can be seen from the Table 2, unlike Web 1.0, with the possibilities brought by Web 2.0, an environment where users are active, users can create content rather than just read the content and add value by creating content. Unlike a content or digital media dominated by companies or professionals, a new digital environment has begun to form, in which the user also has a right to speak. And unlike Web 1.0 features of only publishing, with Web 2.0 it is now available for attendances for a virtual world that they can collaborate and have social interaction. In addition, the concept of Web 3.0 has started to be popular topic lately. This concept supports the idea of creating individual based content by using Artificial Intelligence and support virtual environment which will bring a new formation to marketing (Erragcha & Romdhane, 2014).

Table 2

Differences between Web 1.0, Web 2.0, and Web 3.0

Web 1.0	**Web 2.0**	**Web 3.0**
first generation	second generation	third generation
read only	read-write	read-write-execute
information system under the guideline and control of businesses	emerging value with large number of attendances	adapted by individual focus and needs
contents controlled by web master	community driven content	individual content
personal websites, content management system	wikis, blogs, social networks	ubiquitous, pervasive content and services
Britannica Online	Wikipedia	Dpedia, igoogle
HTML	XML	RDF / OWL
domain name speculation	SEO	databases with metadata are used to find information
directories	Tagging	user engagement

Source: The author based on the literature

1.1.2 User Generated Content

With the emergence of Web 2.0, today people are able to generate a content and share this content with their network (Van Looy, 2016). These people also now can control their media content as a result of Web 2.0 (Tuten, 2008).

User generated content (UGC), which is also known as “participative web”, refers to a content which is developed and shared online (Tuten, 2008). UGC refers to a structure that is shaped by being social. And it is formed either individually or collectively (Smith, Fischer, & Yongjian, 2012). OECD (2007) defined the UGC as “1) content made publicly available over the Internet, 2) which reflects a certain amount of creative effort, and 3) which is created outside of professional routines and practices". UGC is seen in the form of UGTs -User Generated Text, UGI-User Generated Images and UGVs-User Generated Videos (Shah & Zimmermann, 2017).

UGCs are shaped differently based on social media platform. For example, on twitter UGC is a twit, on Facebook UGC is an updating status, on Youtube it is a shared video, comment. Beyond this, podcasts, comments, stories, and consumer-generated advertising are also the forms of UGC (Smith, Fischer, & Yongjian, 2012). The quantity of UGC has raised quickly in recent years, with the easy availability of the smartphone, cameras, auto uploaders. In this manner, at the same time it has become popular with social media. Instagram, one of the most popular social media platforms today with its 1.000 million active users, is an important example of it. In 2019 500 million Instagram stories were generated on Instagram and until 2019, 1 billion UGCs were uploaded by its users (Statista, 2019b).

With the possibility of creating creative UGC, it is now more possible to influence consumers’ purchase decision. The social media tools are assumed by marketers as a possibility to form consumer brand perception with the UGCs. However, it is important for brands to consider of the platforms to create a content, since UGC is dissimilar across different type of social media tools. Therefore marketers must be pay attention to these distinctions, if they are willing to create a mutual brand creation (Tuten, 2008; Shah & Zimmermann, 2017).

1.1.3 Social Media

The ways in which people communicate with each other, gather, and provide information are changing day by day. Due to the development of Web 2.0, the use of socially based information is increasing. This, in turn, causes the increase in the scope and effectiveness of social media (Power & Phillips-Wren, 2011).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined the social media term as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content". Concept of social media has been started to appear with shared news, videos and photos by massive number of people (Snelson, 2016). Today, people use social media for experiencing personal enjoyment, being able to socialize, seeking information, expressing themselves and gaining reputation (Chen, Sin, Theng, & Lee, 2015) and a significant part of their lives take place on social media (Appel, Grewal, Hadi, & Stephen, 2020). Recently, social media is considered one of the most fashionable online activities, and every day its users rise. There was 3,81 billion people who use social media around the world in 2020. And it is estimated that this usage will have reached 4,41 billion people in 5 years (Statista, 2020d). Figure 2 shows the penetration rate from 2017 to 2025. Social media is popular among Millennials. 90% of Millennials are utilizing social media actively; at the same time, 77.5% of Gen X and 48.2% of baby boomers are active as social media users (Mohsin, 2020).

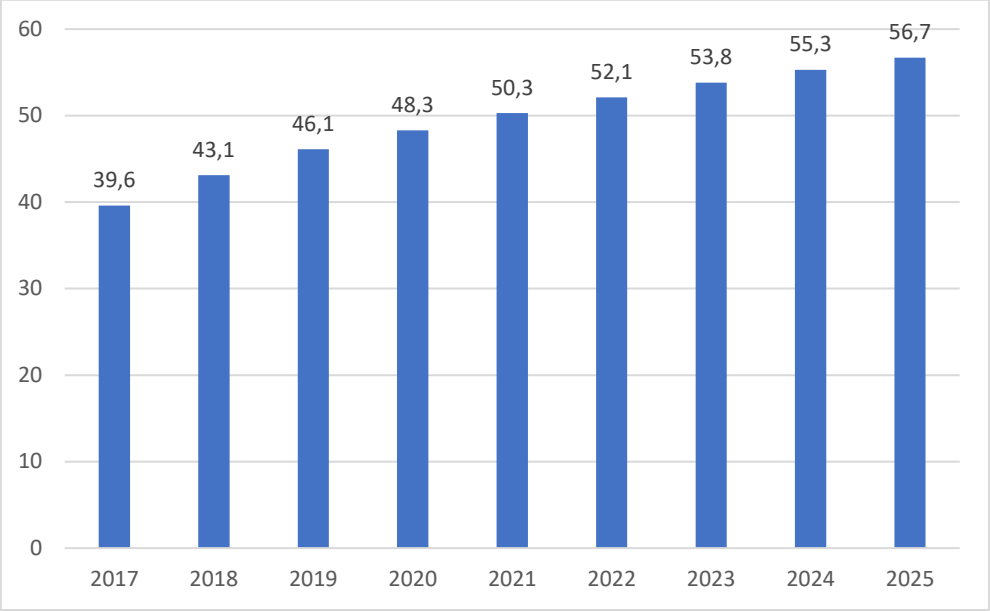

Figure 2: Social network penetration worldwide from 2017 to 2025

Source: Statista,2021. Social network penetration worldwide from 2017 to 2025. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/260811/social-network-penetration-worldwide/

Opposite of prior internet platforms based on communicating with strangers, who share common interests, social media is based on a relationship which is already existed (Miller et al., 2016). Social media provides its users with the advantage of socializing and communicating together without any limits and places (Appel et al., 2020). Social media makes use of mobile and web-based technology. This turns communication into interactive conversation. Social media landscape (See Fig.3) is categorized into ten groups as "a) publish; b) share c) discuss; d) social networks; e) microblogs; f) livestream; g) live cast; h) virtual worlds; ı) social games; j) online games" (Power & Phillips-Wren, 2011). These social media platforms differ in their functionalities and contents. For example, a platform such as Facebook is available for the general masses. LinkedIn is available for a professional environment, and YouTube, Myspace, Flickr are websites where one can share videos and photos (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011).

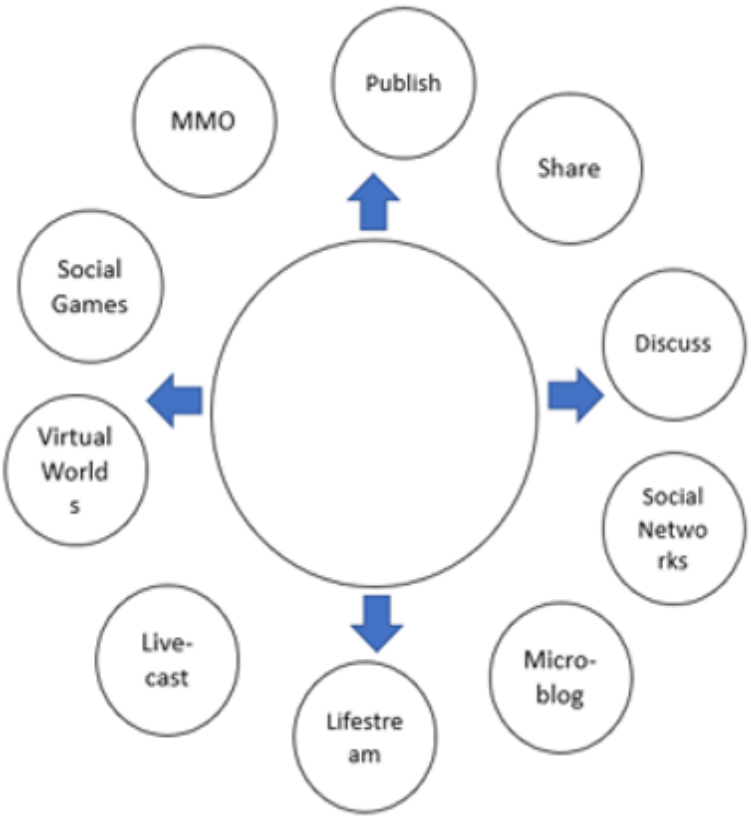

Figure 3: Social Media Landscape

Source: Power, D. J., & Phillips-Wren, G. (2011). Impact of social media and Web 2.0 on Decision-Making. Journal of Decision Systems, 20(3), 249–261. doi:10.3166/jds.20.249-261, p251.

27% of Internet users ranges from 16 years old to 64 discover new brands or products through advertising on social media, and 23% of them find the products through recommendations or comments on social media. Therefore, the importance of social media marketing has gradually increased. And marketers spent 89.91 million dollars on social media advertising in 2019. This spend was 18 % increased comparing last years. Facebook has an important place in this spent of social media advertising. In 2019 67.4 of 89.91 million dollars social media advertising belonged to Facebook.(Hootsuite, 2020).

1.1.4 Motivations to Use Social Media

There are several literature studies which focus on why people prefer social media. According to study of Whiting & Williams (2013) there are 10 main factors which can explain why people utilize social media platforms. The factors are listed as followed:

- ***social interaction***- people use social media to communicate or interact with other people.
- ***information seeking***- social media is preferred to be able to self-educate or search information.
- ***pass time***- people prefer social media to get rid of boredom and to try to find enjoy.
- ***entertainment***- social media is used to provide or have enjoy.
- ***relaxation***- social media is used to get rid of daily stress.
- ***communicatory utility***- social media is preferred to ease communication and to be able to provide information which can be shared with others.
- ***convenience utility***- social media provides usefulness and simplicity to its users.
- ***expression of opinion***- people use social media to be able to like posts, photos, to share comment.
- ***information sharing***- people use social media to share some information about their own lives with other people.
- ***surveillance***- social media is used to watch others.

But every factor has different weight on preferring to utilize social media. Out of all factors, the reason of social interaction has the biggest influences on utilizing social media platform.

Nevertheless, reason why people use social media may change in terms of which social media platform people prefer. Since every social media platform has different type of target on their customers, motivations of people to use them may alter. For example, Facebook targets to enhance personal relationships and Twitter is assumed that a platform that one can share short messages or comments. Therefore, while the users of Facebook

are motivated by learning, connected with others, self-activity, accepted by others, explaining themselves etc.; the users of Twitter are motivated by receiving feedback, becoming famous (Avcilar & Demirgunes, 2016).

1.1.5 Social Media Marketing

The border of social media has been constantly altering, and social media become an economic environment which is shaped and controlled by customers. Social media eases the interactive, creative, and collaborative brand communication and content sharing of users with low cost (Vernuccio, 2014). Social media marketing is defined by Chi (2011) as "connection between brands and consumers and offering a personal channel and currency for user centered networking and social interaction.".

Social media, a platform where consumers are more active, provides a new perspective for brands' marketing communications. Therefore, social media is commonly acknowledged as a marketing tool. Social media marketing mainly focuses on "opining mining, targeted advertising and customer relationship". In the private sector, brands use social media as a communication tool to promote and sale products or services. Beyond being a communication tool, social media marketing enables to build a strong social and professional relationship (Jacobson, Gruzd, & Hernández-García, 2020). Since social media is shaped as a spreading information in a faster way, it gives an opportunity to have a direct connection with customers (Van Looy,2016).

Social media marketing is a marketing concept that considers the relationship, and which changes the "selling products" idea to "building a connection" (Danniswara, Sandhyaduhita, & Munajat, 2020). It is assumed that social media is an effective tool which enables companies to reach their marketing target and strategies in terms of customer relationship management, communication, and involvement of customers. To be able to increase interaction with the customers, social media is utilized (Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi, & Algharabat, 2017). Social media platforms become a vital element for companies which are willing to have deep customer relationships. Firms use social media not only for advertising their products and service, but also for engaging with customers, extracting inventive opinions, and handling with customer service subjects (Smith et al.,

2012). It is utilized by companies to generate personalized messages and to reach their target audiences. As customer relationship, social media is a tool to attract customer attention with user-generated content which helps to reach customers with the help of two-way social interaction. Therefore, marketers use social media as a" relationship marketing" which can help to provide mutual satisfaction. (Jacobson et al., 2020). And social media marketing also is used by marketers to improve new ideas, promote the brands, increase the mobility of stores, and convert consumers to customers. Moreover, social media marketing provides companies the opportunities such as creating brand awareness, investigating consumer opinions, recognizing the opinion leaders, spreading messages, improving brand image, creating customer database, infusing credibility and trust in a brand (Tuten, 2008).

Not only traditional media but also social media has an important positive effect on brand equity. However, each media has different kind of impacts on brand equity (Bruhn, Schoenmueller, & Schäfer Daniela, 2012). For example, the study of Chahal Wirtz, Chahal, and Verma (2019) shows that social media brand engagement drivers such as social factors, user-based factors and firm-generated factors affect social media brand engagement which are shaped by utilitarian, hedonic and social dimensions (See fig.4). And in results brand equity is affected by social media brand engagement. Social media communication has a strong impact on brand image. Therewithal, firm-created social media and user generated social media communication also have different kind of impacts on brand image. While firm created social media communication has a significant role in "functional" brand image, user generated social media communication has role in "hedonic" brand image (Bruhn, Schoenmueller, & Schäfer Daniela, 2012).

Keller (2013) shows to the source of brand equity as brand image and brand awareness. Brand awareness consists of brand recognition and brand recall. Customer-based brand equity is created when consumers have high level awareness and tend to recognize the brand, thus a strong and unique association in the consumers' mind may occur. In some cases, such low participative decision or tending to select based on product familiarity, brand awareness is enough for favorable brand response. Research show that the main goals of social marketers are to increase brand awareness. Since high level of

brand awareness is the one of the main reasons for customer purchase motivation and purchase ability (Keller, 2013; SproutSocial, 2018), focusing on the factors which influence social media brand awareness is important. This social media brand awareness influencing factors are listed as customer engagement, brand page commitment, e-WOM and content quality (Shojaee & Azman, 2013).

Figure 4: Relationship between social media brand engagement drivers, brand engagement and brand equity

Source: Chahal, H., Wirtz, J., & Verma, A. (2019). Social media brand engagement: dimensions, drivers, and consequences. Journal of Consumer Marketing, 37(2), 191-204,p192.

1.1.6 Content Marketing

Digital content marketing refers to a management process which has responsibility to determine, predict, and offer the customer needs in terms of digital content and bit-based objects which are spread through digital channels (Rowley, 2008). In the times of fixed internet access, digital contents were spreading by using desktop and laptop through videos, infographics, e-newspapers etc., whereas after the era of mobile internet, digital content marketing interacts with people through social media and mobile applications by applying videos, live stream etc. (Bu, Parkinson, & Thaichon, 2020).

Digital content marketing refers to:

- created value of a brand by offering the related and free content to potential customers
- build long-term relationship with consumers, instead of asking customers to quick buy
- the proactivity of consumers to find brand contents themselves, instead of pushing consumers brand contents
- gaining consumers by proving them valuable or rewarding items opposite of paid advertising

Content marketing helps to create brands by adding consumers values. Therefore, it can be said that it is not about sales of products for brands, rather it is a way of attracting consumers (Lou & Xie, 2020).

Contrary to the case of limiting or restricting of traditional advertising by consumers, digital content marketing enables an environment that consumers share the information of companies and follow them because brands apply items of emotions, information, and entertainment in their content. In addition, digital content marketing applies inconspicuously value propositions, instead of directly pushing consumers to purchase their products. Digital content marketing is basically based on building long term relationship, strengthening brand loyalty, and enhancing brand awareness. Therefore, digital content marketing and generating content are important for companies to attract target audiences (Bu et al., 2020).

In content marketing, content can be, for example, photos, videos, infographics, blog posts, forum posts, Facebook posts. Content marketers not only have to produce content, but also distribute content in a targeted way (for example, on Forums, blogs, social media), so content marketing requires a complex job. Content marketing is balanced this with influencer collaborations (Jahnke, 2018).

In terms of social media marketing content plays an important role. Digital contents are for example blog posts, recommendations. In influencer marketing, content can be created by opinion leaders to interact and create a network. Contents that are created and shared by influencers for a company is called branded content. Influencers are an important source for companies to improve an idea for a content. And they can

create a suitable content for target groups. In addition, influencers have knowledge about which channels are suitable for created content. Therefore, companies work with influencers (Nirschl & Steinberg, 2018).

1.1.7 E-Word of Mouth

E-Word of Mouth (e-WOM) is "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company which is made available to a multitude of people and institutes via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). WOM is an influential tool because of its non-commercial nature that creates a long-lasting touchpoint with the consumers (Childers et al., 2019). Research shows that e-WOM is one of the most significant factors affecting the purchase intention and brand image (Reza Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). The study of Ladhari & Michaud (2015) revealed that positive e-WOM influences trust level and attitude.

As social media platforms enable their users to communicate over their network, these platforms have brought a new direction for e-WOM (Erkan & Evans, 2016). With the effect of social media networks, there have been changes in the way consumers communicate with their friends, obtain information, and make decisions (Chu & Choi, 2011). Thus, instead of reading comments about a product by people who are not familiar, they can also access unbiased comments made by their circle of friends (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). Reduced anonymity allowed for making e-WOM information more reliable and trustworthy (Erkan & Evans, 2016). At the same time, the E-WOM trend is strengthened by the advice of famous people, which is called influencer marketing. The starting point and goals of WOM marketing and influencer marketing are the same since both approaches assume the power of communication between consumers and aim to affect consumer communication about products as positively as possible. The main difference between two concepts, influencer marketing focuses solely on social media offers to achieve the goal of identifying only suitable opinion leaders and of using superior analysis options to more precisely address the desired target audience (Fries, 2019), whereas E-WOM is more shaped for example on retailers' website, brand community, independent websites (Jeong & Koo, 2015). It means that the target audience

that influencer marketing reaches reduces further waste, so influencer marketing refers to a digital optimization of a classic WOM approach. (Fries, 2019).

1.2 Overview of Influencer Marketing

Today, there is a debate between marketers that advertising is no longer useful. Consumers encounter the brand messages constantly (D. Brown & Hayes, 2008), therefore, they restrict, skip these messages, or install ad-blocking programs. Influencer marketing brings a solution for bypasses deficiencies of traditional marketing techniques (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). For example, influencer marketing addresses a specific target audience rather than focusing on the general potential customers. In addition, influencer marketing can tackle with the problems of the traditional WOM. Traditional WOM may lead to a state of increased inaccuracy and out of control. However, to solve this problem, an influencer can send a corrective message (see Fig. 5) to the decision makers directly, also optimize and expand the message (D. Brown & Hayes, 2008).

Social media marketing frequently is shaped as product recommendations. Companies, therefore, apply people who have great number of followers (influencers) who promote a product or brand that have lots of followers, since the recommendations of them about the product can reach a significant number of people through social media (Bigne & Rosengren, 2019). Marketers have realized that collaboration with an influencer may affect consumers' emotions (Chopra, Avhad, Jaju, & Sonali, 2020), since the information comes from someone who is known and perceived as authentic (Fries, 2019) and whom followers already have a trust in their opinions (Stubb & Colliander, 2019). Therefore, nowadays, brands apply influencer marketing to promote products, get their products reviewed (Stubb et al., 2019) , deliver their brand messages to consumers (Stubb & Colliander, 2019) to initiate new trends, and boost sales (Jin, Muqaddam, & Ryu, 2019), and build brand engagement (Delbaere et al., 2020).

Influencer marketing is a marketing strategy which based on using opinion leaders, celebrities, non-celebrities with a high number of followers on social media to stimulate positive attitude, brand interest and co-creation of brand image (Martínez-

López, Anaya-Sánchez, Fernández Giordano, & Lopez-Lopez, 2020). Carter (2016) defines influencer marketing as "a rapidly growing industry that attempts to promote products or increase brand awareness through content spread by social media users who are considered to be influential".

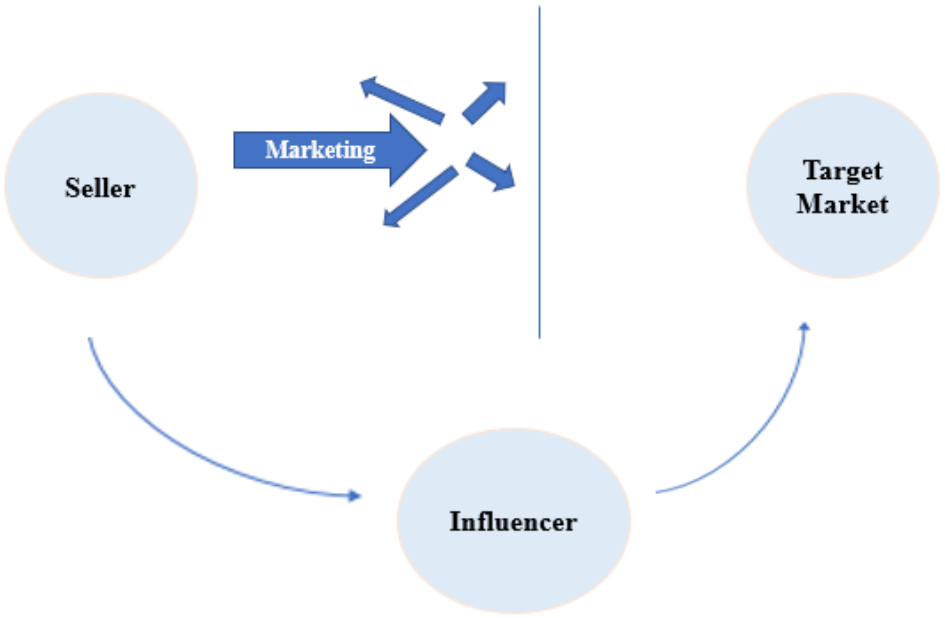

Figure 5: Influencer bypass the traditional "wall of indifferences."

Source: Brown, D., & Hayes, N. (2008). Influencer marketing: Routledge, p140.

Influencer marketing enables companies an insight to find the specific consumers they are targeting (Campbell & Farrell, 2020), and it supports marketers in reaching the optimum goal of an advertising message and the ideal target group with minimum waste. Influencer marketing offers companies access, image, and a homogeneous target audience at manageable costs (Fries, 2019).

The main target of influencer marketing is not to achieve a certain amount of increase in sales, but rather to develop a positive brand image, brand sympathy, and increase brand awareness of interested buyers (Fries, 2019). However, it enables, for sure, that companies make more sales with the support of influencer marketing and can calculate the return on investment because influencers can increase sales speed by

interacting with their followers, which means the sales cycle will be easy (D. Brown & Hayes, 2008).

The importance of influencer marketing increases continuously as time passes. While the value of influencer marketing in 2018 was 137 million USD, it is estimated that this number will be reached to 370 million USD in 2027 (Statista, 2020b). Influencer marketing has beside an effective ROI. According to a study which was implemented by Influencer Marketing Hub (2021a), companies are earning 5,20 dollars for 1-dollar spending on influencer marketing and more than 50% of marketers are willing to increase their influencer marketing budget in the coming years.

1.2.1 Influencer Marketing and Social Media Platforms

Table 3 shows the categorized social media classes and position of these classes on self-presentation and social present. Since low social present and self-presentation do not relevant to influencer marketing and since these features do not give people opportunity to be recognized, it can be said that not all the social media classes are relevant to influencer marketing. For example, Wikipedia cannot be a suitable platform for becoming an influencer. Because it does not give people enough reputation and reach to be considered. In addition, virtual games world is also not considered as a relevant platform for influencer marketing. For all that, blogs, content communities and social networks are platforms which are relevant for influencer marketing in which people can get reputation and be considered (Fries, 2019). In the following part the most important social media classes for influencer marketing will be explained, which are Instagram, Youtube, Facebook, Blogs, Twitter, Snapchat and Tiktok.

Table 3

Categorization of Social Media Classes

		Social Presence/Media Richness		
		Low	**Medium**	**High**
Self-presentation/Self-disclosure	**High**	Blogs	Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)	Virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life)
	Low	Collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia)	Content communities (e.g., Youtube)	Virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft)

Source: Fries, P. J. (2019). Influencer-Marketing. Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

Instagram is a platform turning into a channel that is used widely in the influencer marketing industry (See Fig 8). Its users mainly consist of Millennials, GenZ, and GenX (Mediakix). Influencers on Instagram is called Instagrammer and Instagrammer is defined as "someone who regularly shares images, or other things such as video or text, on the social media service Instagram"(CambridgeDictionary,2021). Today there are approximately 500.000 Instagrammers around the world (Droesch, 2019). And they are powerful for spreading out new product messages, creating novel trends and increase the sales (Jin et al., 2019).

Instagram has some features such as Instagram Post, Instagram Story, Instagram Video, Instagram Tv. Instagram posts enable marketers to share impressive product photos, write an explanation about a product, and present a discount code. And with Instagram story feature of "Swipe up" a product can be easily advertised (Mediakix). The platform takes the attention of younger people, with plenty of image processing with filters and effects. Since Instagram has image and story options, it is appropriate for influencers who create fashion and beauty contents (Deges, 2018) and supports luxurious lifestyles and important luxury brands (Jin et al., 2019). 77% of fashion micro influencers apply Instagram to reach to their audiences. Instagram is the most important and most

efficient platform for influencer marketing. The engagement rate of the platform is highest (see Fig. 6) comparing to other platforms (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2021a). %69 of marketers is planning to focus on and spend their budget for Instagram. And a research shows that it is the most vital and impactful platform for influencer marketing because it creates a powerful effect on niche target due to easy photo sharing features of Instagram (Mediakix).

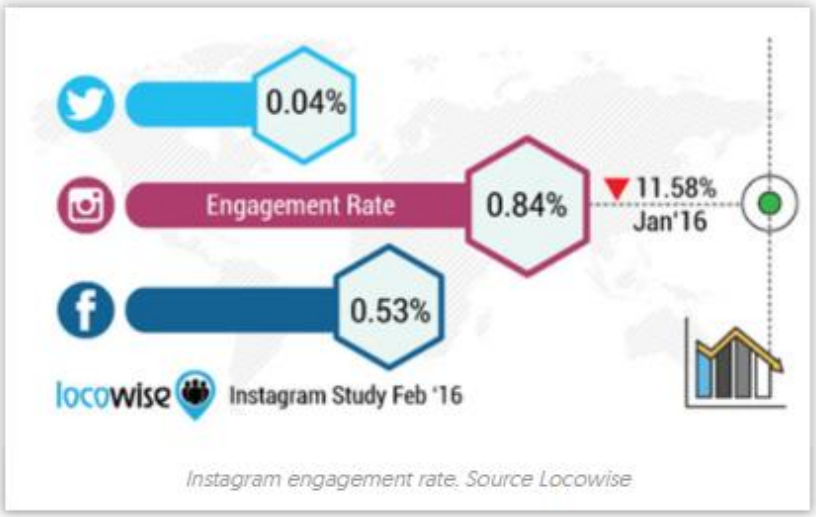

Figure 6: Instagram engagement rate

Source: InfluencerMarketingHub. (2021). 100 Influencer Marketing Statistics For 2021. Retrieved from https://influencermarketinghub.com/influencer-marketing-statistics/

YouTube is the second most preferred platform for influencer marketing where %11 of marketers plan to spend money (Mediakix). The platform allows its users to share videos and make progress as a TV alternative for the young target audiences (Deges, 2018). Influencers on YouTube are called Youtuber- also called YouTube influencers- can be defined as "a person who often uses the website YouTube, especially someone who makes and appears in videos on the website" (CambridgeDictionary, 2021).

YouTube has features such as YouTube Video, YouTube Live (Mediakix). 56% of marketers think that YouTube videos are effective content formats, coming after Instagram posts and stories (Bailis, 2020). % 60 of YouTube viewers would purchase a product which is endorsed by a Youtuber (Mediakix). The platform is the most professionalized influencer marketing platform. Cosmetic industry is the top that can take the advantages of marketing their products on Youtube, because how to use a cosmetic product can present properly by beauty influencers with Youtube videos. These beauty influencers are mostly in their mid-twenties and they have more followers than the channels of cosmetic companies (Deges, 2018).

Facebook is the third favorite and preferred platform of marketers in the influencer marketing context. It has features such as Facebook Post, Facebook Video, Facebook Live. 5% of marketers are planning to spend their influencer marketing budget for Facebook. Whereas 23% of marketers think that Facebook posts are the most effective content formats in the influencer marketing context, 22% of them find Facebook videos are most effective (Mediakix). The platform is the most popular social media platform in the world. It has greatest reach opportunity to all age groups. However, the older target who has a high power of buying increasingly prefer mostly Facebook (Deges, 2018).

Blogs are the next important social media platform that is coming after Facebook. They are managed by bloggers (Mediakix). Blogs are a kind of online diary and are akin to editorial article which is structed with authenticity and credibility. Today blogs are integrated with other social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter etc., which supports bloggers to attain larger groups (Deges, 2018). Its target groups consist of people who are between 25-49 years old. Bloggers are one of the effective alternatives for marketers to attain large and engaged audiences. Last study showed (Fig. 7) half of participants find blogs important for formation of opinions, because it is represented by independent opinions. 36% of marketers think that blog is an effective content platform and 7% of marketers are planning to apply blogs for influencer marketing activities (Mediakix).

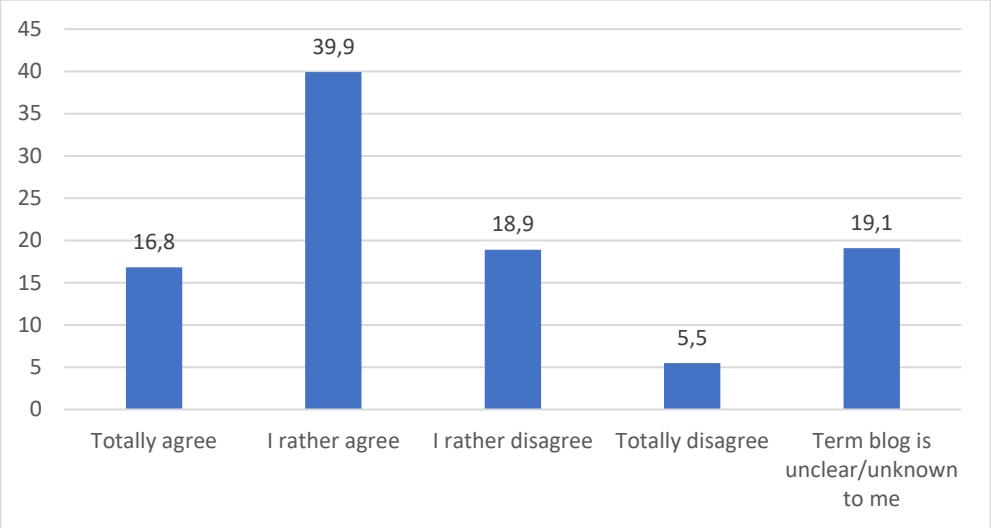

Figure 7: The study of Statista about "To what extent do you agree with the statement that blogs are important for the formation of opinions, since independent opinions are represented there."

Source: Nirschl, M., & Steinberg, L. (2018). Einstieg in das Influencer Marketing. Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden,p20.

Twitter is the 5th most important social media platform for influencer marketing. But marketers do not plan to spend a lot of money on Twitter for their influencer marketing activities. Only %18 of marketers think that Twitter is an effective platform for influencer marketing (Mediakix). It is a microblogging platform in which users can share short messages. These short messages are called Tweet. Since Twitter is not assumed as a suitable tool for the depth of content, it is not a primary canal for influencer marketing (Deges, 2018). However last studies show that followers of twitter influencers have high level of trust to be confident to purchase the products what twitter influencers recommend (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2021a).

Snapchat is another social media platform through which marketers can apply for influencer marketing. It provides instant messaging. Users can take photos, record videos, and send them to their friends or share them as a story. Snapchat has a young

target group that includes users whose ages range from 12 to 19 years old (Mediakix). However, according to last studies Snapchat is the least preferred social media platform in terms of influencer marketing since Instagram has the same story feature of Snapchat and it is more effective comparing the story features of Snapchat. Therefore, most of marketers prefer Instagram rather Snapchat (Bailis, 2020).

TikTok is a social media platform that has begun to become popular lately. The platform has reached 1.1 billion installs since 2019. Tiktok allows users to shoot short videos and share them by producing content. Therefore, Tiktok started to be the favorite of marketers. The engagement rate of the platform is higher than any other social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2020d).

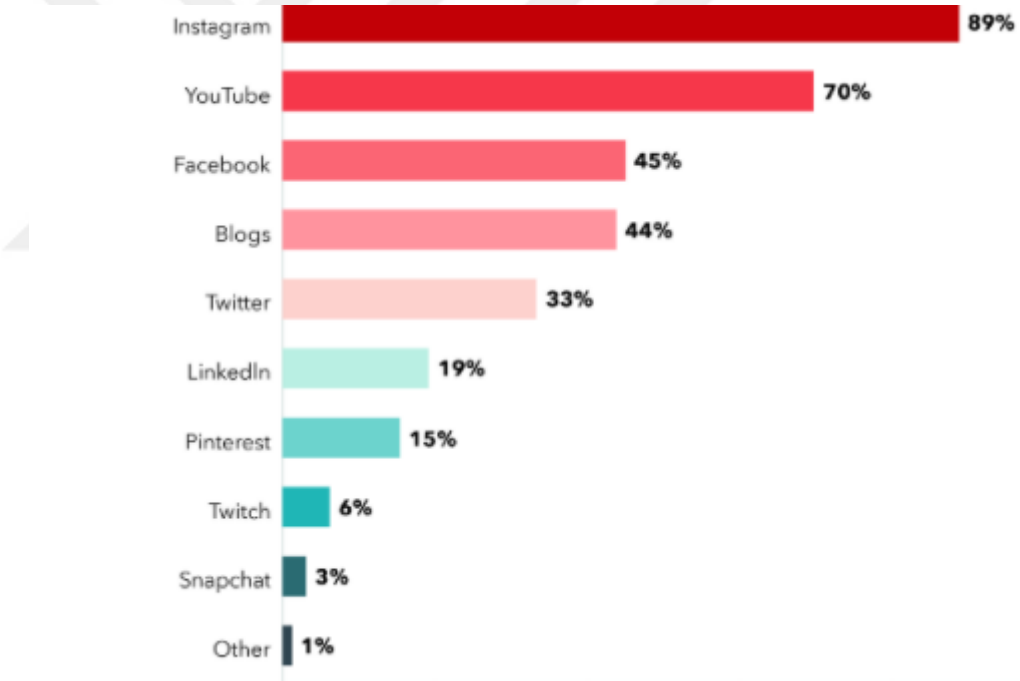

Figure 8: Most important social media platforms for influencer marketing

Source: Mediakix. What is the best social channel for influencer marketing? Retrieved from https://mediakix.com/blog/how-to-choose-social-media-channels-influencer marketing/.

1.2.2 Influencer Marketing in Turkey

According to the study of Creatorden on influencer marketing in 2020, there are 60.000 influencers in Turkey. While 55 % of these influencers are women, 45% of them are men. The most popular contents which are created by influencers are comedy, lifestyle, fashion, family, sport, and travel (See Fig9). Instagram is the most preferred social media platform by brands in terms of influencer marketing. 66% of brands prefer Instagram. This ratio shows the similar result with an international based study of Mediakix. Youtube is the second most popular platform in terms of influencer marketing in Turkey and %23 of brands applies Youtube. Facebook with 13% of brands is the third most preferred platform. And %13 of brands applies the other social media platforms to implement their influencer marketing studies. Moreover, demographic results show that 41,9% of influencers' followers consist of people who are between 25-34 years old which indicates that Y generation consists of the big part of followers. The second most important age group is the people who are between 18-24 years old, and these age groups form the 36,3% of influencers' followers (Creatorden,2020; Mediakix).

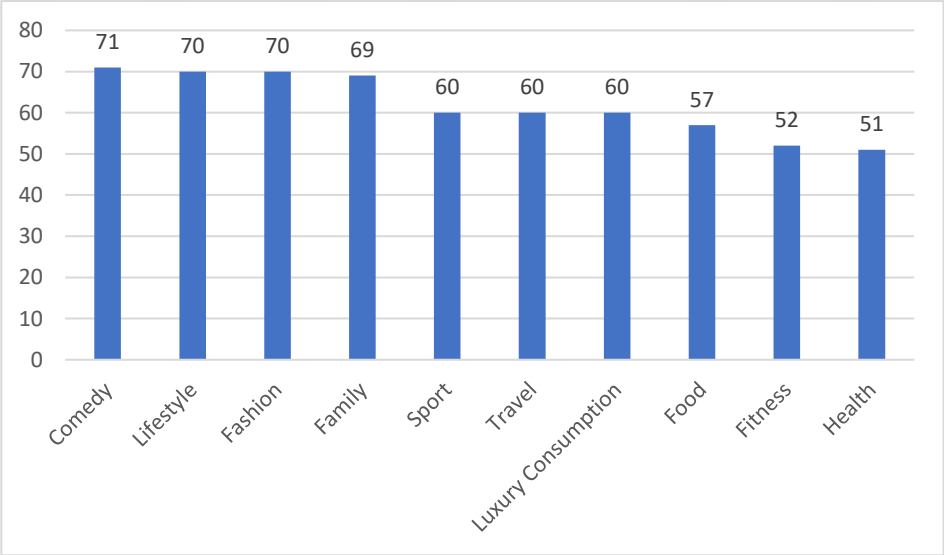

Figure 9: Distribution of most followed influencer content in Turkey in 2020

Source: Creatorden, 2020. 2020 Genel Bakış. Retrieved from https://creatorden.com/2020-creatorden-influencer-marketing-incelemesi-yilin-en-iyilerini-acikliyoruz/#download.

1.2.3 Success Factors of Influencer Marketing

Success factors of influencer marketing are categorized in “reach, relevance, reputation, resonance, target definition and target group”.

First success factor of influencer marketing is reach. Reach refers to the extent of an influencer’s followers. Reach can be defined as the extent of an influencer’s followers such as fan, reach growth rate, media value per post, number of followers in relation. Influencers apply social media to disseminate their content to reach their audiences. In influencer marketing, an influencer’s level of reach to people is the main indicator of success.

Relevance is the other success factors and represents the contribution of influencers with high relevance for the community. Relevance represents personality, brand, target group, and content fit. In influencer marketing, contrary to classic opinion leaders, having general relevance is seldom for influencers. In this case influencer-brand fit for collaboration plays an important role in influencer marketing success.

Another success factor is reputation of influencers. Beyond recognizability, it relies on credibility of audiences on professional features and competence of influencers. And this reflects to the outcome of influencers’ activities, e. g. reaction, comments for influencers’ posts. And this is called resonance.

The use of social media channels as a means of communication has become inevitable today. The contributions of these channels have become more and more important in the process of brand launching new products. While creating the marketing strategies of the brands in these channels, the target definition of audience must be precisely determined.

Demographic characteristics should be considered to determine the target audience and customer profile. As a result, creating special and appropriate suggestions and contents according to gender and age is important for the success of influencer marketing. Gender and age specific recommendations can be derived for specific subject

categories and social media channels to target content appropriate to potential customers (Nirschl & Steinberg, 2018).

1.2.4 Social Media Influencer

The media environment is undergoing a radical change as the internet fundamentally changes our communication and information behavior. With this change, distribution opportunities are also developing and the people we call influencers are also changing. The people we call “idea creators” existed before the digital age began. Josiah Wedgwood, for example, decided to use private individuals to spread messages about the porcelains he produced in 1760. When we look after 1980, publicly recognized people such as actors, singers, etc. became brand ambassadors in the periods when the use of television was at its highest. However, people who are not known for the changing media environment today become brand ambassadors (Jahnke, 2018).

As it is mentioned in previous sections, traditional advertising tools, are becoming less important, and being ignored by people. Because of encountering the excess amount of advertising people are ignoring and blocking them. At the same time diversity of products causes that consumers do not easily have a purchase decision. Therefore, consumers now search for reliable and credible sources. Fig10 indicates the differences between “traditional brand communication between sender and receiver” and “influencer and receivers”. In the traditional way brand message sends through tv, radio or prints, and these are now not suitable for all target groups. However, as Fig10 shows influencers now play an important role in these communications and they are intermediary who sends the information of brands to audiences through social media channels and make recommendation about the brands. These recommendations include implicit suggestion about the action for consumers (e. g. they should buy or should not buy it) (Deges, 2018).

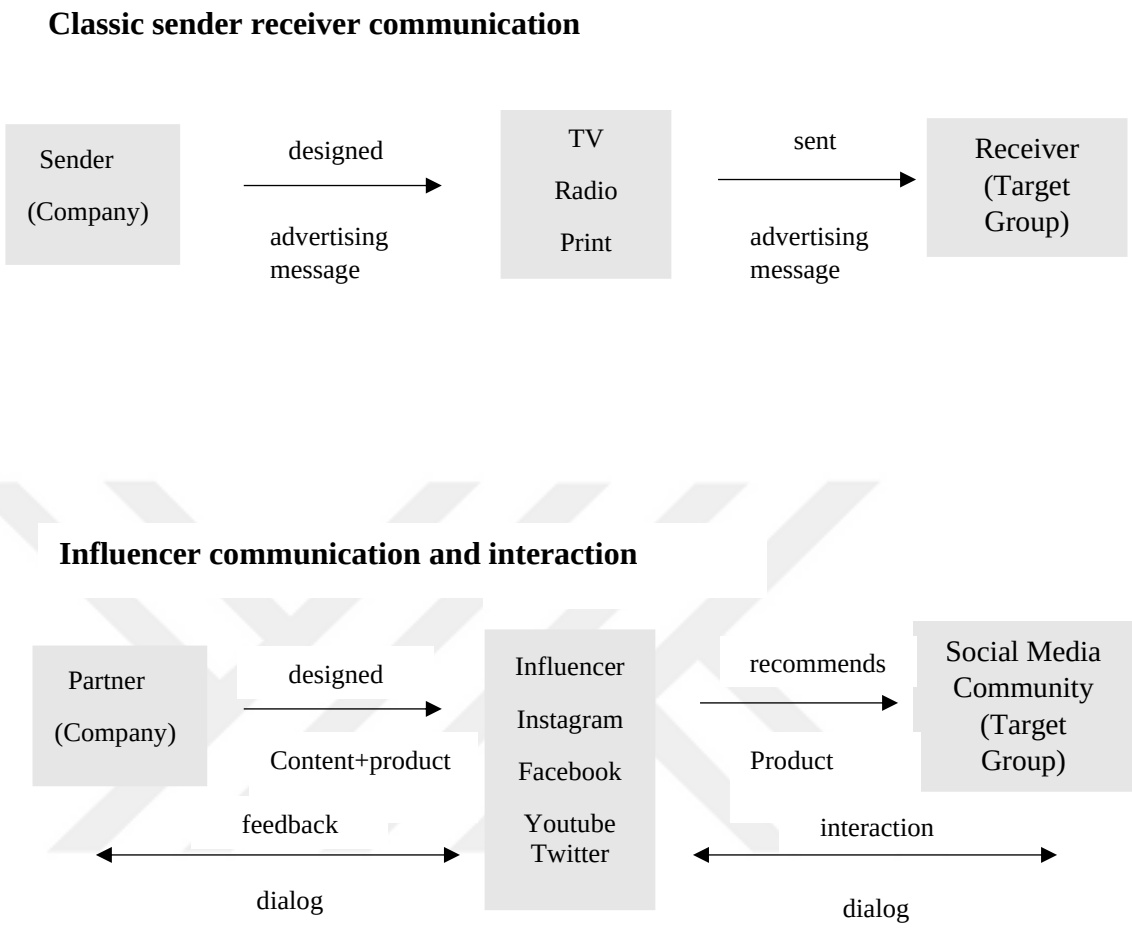

Figure 10*:* Influencer Communication

Source: Deges, F. (2018). Quick Guide Influencer Marketing: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden,p9.

An influencer is "first and foremost a content generator: one who has a status of expertise in a specific area, who has cultivated a sizable number of captive followers—who are of marketing value to brands by regularly producing valuable content via social media "(Lou & Yuan, 2019;p59). Influencer is "a third-party who significantly shapes the customer's purchasing decision but may ever be accountable for it." (D. Brown & Hayes,

2008;p50). They can be “fashion lovers, budding artists, fitness trainers, friends of celebrities” who share their personal and daily lives with their followers (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019). Influencers have the power to reach and influence extensive people by regularly creating contents (Stubb et al., 2019). They can create contents based on health, fitness ,fashion, beauty, food, high- tec, diet, health, lifestyle etc. (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). They generally introduce the products to their followers after testing them, and they share their opinions about the products (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

Influencers are also called “micro-celebrity”. Today being a celebrity is not as hard as before since it is no longer necessary to have some skills to be famous. Because social media now enables people to become famous. Therefore, people can become famous when the produced contents by them attract social media users (Korotina & Jargalsaikhan, 2016). It means that anyone who has an account on social media platforms can be an influencer (Chopra et al., 2020). Efforts of influencers on social media can create their fame (Wiedmann & von Mettenheim).

Influencers are experts in creating content that engages consumers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). These created contents by influencers are a way to build the relationship with their followers and this adds value to their followers (Backaler, 2018). Engagement between influencers and followers is an indicator of the influencers' success and, this success is measured by engagement rate of influencers. The engagement rate is measured by numbers of likes, comments, shares, and favorites on the influencers’ posts (Wiedmann & von Mettenheim).

Applying influencers, who seem like everyone else, enables companies to promote their products directly to customers (Coco & Eckert, 2020). Today, influencers can be representatives or consultants of brands and boost the potential of social media for marketing activities (Stubb & Colliander, 2019), since consumers now care about other people's opinion on a topic. Therefore, consumers research the opinions of other people, such as influencers, about brands. Influencer has an important role that can shape the views of consumers about a brand (Chopra et al., 2020). And they have a power to affect consumers’ attitude, behavior and decisions (De Veirman et al., 2017). In this context, marketers apply to influencers to promote their products / brands. Promotions are usually

in the form of posts shared by influencers on social media platforms. Promotions can be rewarded as e.g., a free subscription for a thousand-dollar promotion (Carter, 2016) or sponsored post that companies give money, free products-services, trips, or experiences in return (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

The perceived realities and deep communication situations of the unconventional celebrities increase the purchasing intention of the products they promote, since followers personally know influencers and imitate them (Jin et al., 2019). Influencers simplify also brand engagement through their created content which includes all tree aspects: cognitive processing, affection, and activation (Delbaere et al., 2020). In addition, the effective power of influencers on their followers depends on their emotional bonding. Emotional bonding positively affects consumers' product / brand approvals (Ki, Cuevas, Chong, & Lim, 2020). Due to parasocial relationships, followers feel as if they are friends with influencers, and they can purchase the products that influencers share with them to maintain and strengthen this (Delbaere et al., 2020). Lucrative relationships can be formed in six criterias which are “relevance between influencer content and brand”, “sort of content posted”, “voice tone of the influencer”, “followers number of influencers”,”reliability of influencer” and “the popularity of influencers among the followers” (Coco & Eckert, 2020).

Influencers who have high number of followers are more likeable, since they are assumed as popular. However, when organizations evaluate influencers, only taking consider of followers number is not adequate, rather it is important for organizations to also consider of product type (De Veirman et al., 2017) and to know that influencers, e.g., vloggers, bloggers and instagrammers, are more inspiring and reliable than traditional celebrities (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Followers, who have average level of issue involvement and who perceive that bloggers are homophiles, are assumed bloggers more influential (Balabanis & Chatzopoulou, 2019). And also the enjoyable personality of the influencer, being inspiring and sharing informative content are the reasons why the influencer is followed (Ki et al., 2020).

Table 4

Definitions of Influencer

	Author	Year	Definition
1	Lou & Yuan	2019	"first and foremost a content generator: one who has a status of expertise in a specific area, who has cultivated a sizable number of captive followers— who are of marketing value to brands by regularly producing valuable content via social media"
2	D. Brown & Hayes	2008	"a third-party who significantly shapes the customer's purchasing decision but may ever be accountable for it"
3	Meral, Y., & Özbay, D. E	2020	"an internet phenomenon, youtuber or Instagram vowel. Influencers are the social media equivalent of "word of mouth" in marketing."
4	Herrada-Lores, S., & Estrella-Ramón, A.	2019	"an individual who is able to exert a high level of influence on the process of adoption of new products by other customers through digital media."
5	Meral, K. Z.	2021	"the person who can change and affect the behavior of people in new media. "
6	Polo, M. P.	2020	"2.0 opinion leaders"
7	Al Medani, Tarek, Ceren Sahin, and Elif Esiyok	2021	"a person on social media who tries to influence the people to specific consumption habits, lifestyle, etc. "

Source: The author based on the literature

The influencer's credibility factors (e.g., trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity) positively affect the trust (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Moreover, influencers' perceived attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise have a positive effect on purchase intention (Weismueller, Harrigan, Wang, & Soutar, 2020). In addition, trustworthiness of influencer has a role in information credibility of consumers (Xiao, Wang, & Chan-Olmsted, 2018).

If consumers aware that a financial collaboration with a brand may give a motivation to influencers to share branded promotional post, this may lead that consumer may assume influencer less transparent in the case of unclear disclosure. And this transparency may influence the perceived product efficiency and purchase intention (Syrdal, VanMeter, Woodroof, & Howie, 2020). Another study shows that trust of influencer may reduce more by commercial orientation than controlled influencer's post by brand (Martínez-López, Anaya-Sánchez, Esteban-Millat, et al., 2020). Sponsorship justification of influencers may lead to consumers' positive attitude toward compensation for sponsorship and this justification may rise source and message credibility reviewed (Stubb et al., 2019).

The other literature studies show that the posts of Instagram celebrities are more trustworthy than traditional celebrities. And Instagram celebrities show more effect on brand attitude than traditional celebrities. The study of De Jans, Van de Sompel, De Veirman, & Hudders (2020) shows that higher brand likes are affected by influencer post, and people like influencers on Instagram more than brands. Other study of De Cicco, Iacobucci, & Pagliaro(2020) indicates that influencer and product fit has a positive role in attitude and credibility and continuance intention to follow influencer and transparency of sponsorship may be improved by clear disclosure. Another study shows that parasocial interaction play a mediator role between source attractiveness and endorsement effectiveness and source credibility and celebrity-product fit play a mediator role between parasocial interaction and endorsement effectiveness (Breves, Liebers, Abt, & Kunze, 2019).

Table 5

Literature Studies on Influencer Marketing

	Author	Year	Name	Sample	Variables	Findings
1	Min Xiao, Rang Wang & Sylvia Chan-Olmsted	2018	Factors affecting YouTube influencer marketing credibility: a heuristic-systematic model	497	Expertise, Trustworthiness, Likeability, Homophily, Social Advocacy, Interactivity, Argument quality, Involvement, Knowledge, Information Credibility, Attitude,	Trustworthiness, social influence, argument quality, and information involvement influence consumer perceived information credibility on YouTube; positive relationship between perceived information credibility and brand/video attitudes
2	Woodroof, P. J., Howie, K. M., Syrdal, H. A., & VanMeter, R.	2020	What is done in the dark will be brought to the light: effects of influencer transparency on product efficacy and purchase intentions	321	Persuasion knowledge, Disclosure Type, Transparency, Product-Efficacy Perception, Purchase Intention	Becoming cognizant of consumers that a financial relationship may motive influencer' s branded promotional post causes evaluating the influencer as significantly less transparent when a more ambiguous disclosure; perceptions of influencer's transparency affect consumers' perceptions of product efficiency and purchase intentions.
3	Francisco J. Martínez-López , Rafael Anaya-Sánchez , Irene Esteban-Millat , Harold Torrez-Meruvia , Steven D' Alessandro & Morgan Miles	2020	Influencer marketing: brand control, commercial orientation and post credibility	503	Brand control, post commercial orientation, Trust in influencer, Post credibility, Interest of post content, Willingness to search for more information about the product in the post.	Trust of influencer may reduce more by commercial orientation than controlled influencers' post by brand

	Author	Year	Name	Sample	Variables	Findings
4	Roberta De Cicco , Serena Iacobucci & Stefano Pagliaro	2020	The effect of influencer–product fit on advertising recognition and the role of an enhanced disclosure in increasing sponsorship transparency	195	Influencer-product congruence, advertising recognition, sponsorship transparency, influencers' credibility, attitude toward the influencer, content int. To follow the influencer	The positive role of influencer product fit in attitude, credibility and continuance intention to follow the influencer; a transparency of sponsorship may be improved by clear disclosure
5	Yan Shan, Kuan-Ju Chen & Jhih-Syuan (Khoo-Lattimore & Yang) Lin	2019	When social media influencers endorse brands: the effects of self-influencer congruence, parasocial identification, and perceived endorser motive	513	Parasocial identification, self-influencer congruence, attitude toward branded content, engagement with brand content, purchase intention	High degree of congruence between the image of a social media influencer and the consumer’ s ideal self-image causes to effective endorsement outcomes.
6	Chen Lou & Shupei Yuan	2019	Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media	538	Informative value, Entertainment value, Trustworthiness, Expertise, Expertise, Similarity, Trust in branded post, Purchase Intention, Brand awareness	Influencer-generated content, influencer’ s trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity to the followers has a positive influence on t followers’ trust in influencers’ branded posts

	Author	Year	Name	Sample	Variables	Findings
7	Dhanesh, G. S., & Duthler, G.	2019	Relationship management through social media influencers: Effects of followers' awareness of paid endorsement	269	Awareness of Paid Endorsement, Ad Recognition, eWOM, Purchase Intention, Influencer-Follower Relationship	Relations of awareness of paid endorsement with ad recognition, purchase and eWOM intentions; correlation of awareness of paid endorsement with influencer-follower relationship, purchase and eWOM intentions.
8	Gong, W	2020	Effects of parasocial interaction, brand credibility and product involvement on celebrity endorsement on microblog	452	Parasocial interaction, Brand credibility, Product involvement, Attitude toward Ad., Attitude toward product	Positive effect of brand credibility on followers' attitude toward advertising and product, positive influence of PSI on followers' attitude and behavioral intentions
9	Stubb, C., Nyström, A. G., & Colliander, J.	2019	Influencer marketing	493	Sponsorship compensation acceptance, Source credibility, Message Credibility, Brand attitude	Sponsorship justification creates positive attitude of consumers toward sponsorship compensation of influencer; sponsorship justification increases source and message credibility

	Author	Year	Name	Sample	Variables	Findings
10	De Jans, S., Van de Sompel, D., De Veirman, M., & Hudders, L.	2020	#Sponsored! How the recognition of sponsoring on Instagram posts affects	131	Source sponsored brand, Advertising recognition, Source admiration, Source credibility, Brand awareness, Brand Liking	Influencers' posts have a role in higher brand liking, whereas brand posts in higher brand awareness
11	Breves, P. L., Liebers, N., Abt, M., & Kunze, A.	2019	The Perceived Fit between Instagram Influencers and the Endorsed Brand	862	Source Attractiveness, Fans-celebrity PSI, Source Credibility, Celebrity-product congruence, Attitude toward the advertising, Attitude toward the product, Purchase intention	PSI's mediator effect on source attractiveness and endorsement effectiveness. Mediator effect of source credibility and celebrity–product congruence between PSI and endorsement effectiveness.
12	Stubb, C., & Co lliander, J	2019	This is not sponsored content" –The effects of impartiality disclosure and e-commerce landing pages on consumer responses to social media influencer posts	375	Persuasion knowledge activation, Product-review credibility, Source credibility, Brand attitude, Purchase intentio	Impartial product post less likely to be assumed as advertising; brand attitude and purchase intention is low when consumers are exposing simultaneously impartiality disclosure

Source : The author based on the literature

1.2.5 Principles of Influences

The action of social influencing of human behavior gives an insight of explaining the potential of recommendations which are made by influencers. Cialdini explains influencing in 6 principles which are reciprocity, commitment, social proof, liking, authority and scarcity Deges, F. (2018).

Figure 11: 6 principles of Influencing

Source: Deges, F. (2018). Quick Guide Influencer Marketing: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden,p3.

Reciprocity refers to a principle of feeling of obligation to another person. For example, a free or discount service may create a feeling to show the thankfulness of someone to other person in return. Reciprocity might be shaped in influencer marketing concept as purchasing products which are recommended by influencers. In this case followers think that influencer spend time to give a free recommendation for them. Reciprocity is appeared also in relationship between influencers and companies. In this context, for example, the products which are rewarded by companies may make that influencer might give a high rating, especially in case these products are high valuable.

Commitment and consistency indicate an automatically repeated behavior pattern. Automatism is based on experiences and provides security. These experiences have proven themselves in daily life and thus simplify the complex situation in the life. In influencer marketing concept, these principals lead followers feel that influencers are reliable because they provide authentic recommendations. And this is a why consumers trust influencers also for other product categories.

Social Proof refers to human behavior which is shaped by social classes and reference groups. Social reliability is applied when to solve unsafe decision making and simplify ambiguous cases. For example, in the case of feeling unsecure, we adopt to majority to simplify the situation. In influencer marketing based, this is, for example, a situation that people think that they can follow the recommendations of influencers, because majority of society also follow them. This means that they are not alone. And following the recommendation is true.

Liking- People look nice because of their resemblance to us. For example, having similar origins, age, interests, and preferences are the reasons of liking someone else. Influencers gain sympathy due to their similar features with followers and the intense interaction with followers in social networks. In this case, if followers feel that there is a friendship relationship with influencers and they have a direct communication with influencers, followers may assume the recommendations made by the influencers are friendship recommendations.

Authority- The principle of credibility is based on the reality of imitating the behavior of a role model without any denials. Authority of people refers not only to hierarchy but also to accepted experiences and knowledge. Therefore, an expert has an authority in terms of his knowledge and experiences. In this case authority plays an important role in influencing people. For example, in influencer marketing beauty influencers share the videos about how to make-up or which products are best. And followers learn something from this knowledge and experiences, and they may buy products to be able to make up like influencers.

Scarcity- The limited number of a product causes a purchase decision. For example, if you have the last few of a product left in a store, this increases the order speed. In influencer marketing context, influencers share limited edition products which is available for limited time. Thus, followers may think that they can have this less amount products which is recommended by influencer (Deges, 2018).

1.2.6 Influencer and Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is one of the most important items for influencer marketing which marketers mainly focus on. The study which is implemented by ANA(2018) points out that 86% of marketers are applying influencer marketing to increase brand awareness. And same study shows that 39% of marketers think that general brand awareness is the main target of their influencer marketing.

Figure 12: Customer Life Cycle

Source: Fries, P. J. (2019). Influencer-Marketing. Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden,p45.

Influencer marketing increases the brand awareness with the help of creating a suitable content to attract consumers' attention. Brand awareness is a key element increasing the possibility of purchasing the products, while purchase decision is made by consumers. Brand awareness has also vital role for a shorter decision-making process. Therefore, the significant goal of influencer marketing campaign is to increase brand awareness and brand sympathy, which is the beginning of the buying process (See Fig12). The brands which focus on working with influencers are expected from influencers to mention about their brand, thus they aim to increase brand awareness of the target consumer groups, and to increase their willingness to purchase product (Fries, 2019). Fig13 shows an example of brand awareness. The examples show the collaboration of THY with influencers (e.g., Jérôme Jarre, Casey Neistat) in 2017 to help people from Somalia. THY created a campaign and work with influencers, and the campaign post of Jérôme Jarre were seen by 83.000 people and 58.000 people liked the post on Instagram in a few days. The company increased their brand awareness with this campaign working with influencers (Patel, 2021).

Figure 13: An example of brand awareness: THY

Source: Patel, S. (2021). How You Can Build A Powerful Influencer Marketing Strategy In 2021. Retrieved from https://www.bigcommerce.com/blog/influencer-marketing/#executive-summary

Brand awareness of consumers can be shaped positively with the help of some factors of influencers. First being expert of an influencer may enable to increase brand awareness. This factor is explained as being an expert of some topic or product make influencers to feel more confident to promote some brands or products effectively. The other factor can be referred as attractiveness. Physical attractiveness is a positive dimension which may enable that influencer fascinate consumers easily about a product or brand. These two factors can affect the brand awareness of consumers, when consumers follow the influencer-generated branded posts. But at the same time trustworthiness of an influencer may sometimes influence brand awareness of consumers negatively. Although contents which are created by influencers can provide information and can affect trust of followers toward a branded post, followers may have unstable and suspicious feelings about the motives of influencers' (Özsaçmacı & Dursun, 2020).

1.2.7 Influencer Categories

Types of influencers can be categorized according to their number of followers, engagement rates, monetary demand for cooperation and their skills (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). These categories (See Fig.14) are listed as: celebrity influencer, mega influencer, mid-tier influencer, macro influencer, micro influencer, and nano influencer (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Mediakix,2020).

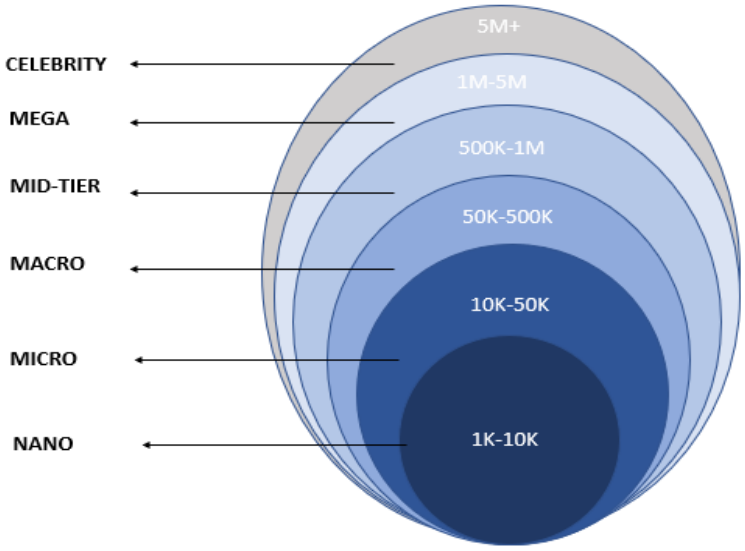

Figure 14: Types of Influencers.

Source: MediaKix, 2020.What Constitutes An Influencer? Retrieved from https://mediakix.com/blog/influencer-definition-marketing/

Celebrity Influencers are individuals who have public familiarization beyond social media platforms. And to define somebody as a celebrity influencer, he/she must have more than 5 million followers. Christiana Ronaldo with 185 million, Ariana Grande with 165 million and Dwayne Johnson with 158 million followers are the most important examples of celebrity influencers(InfluencerMarketingHub, 2020a).Celebrity influencers make a cooperation with well-known brands that are related to their former jobs. Since these types of influencers are already famous, they apply social media to support their career and spread associations with brands. Although celebrities are assumed that they have low brand connections, they are preferred in terms of their perceived brand expertise. Perceived brand expertise is a reason why they earn more money than other types of influencers(Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Mediakix). Celebrity influencers can be used by marketers as a "brand face" of an event, press coverage or media partnership (TheCorner, 2020). Celebrity influencers are still controversial in terms of their efficiency in

influencer marketing context. However recent studies indicate that celebrity influencers fewer influences on brand attitudes and purchase behavior compared to other influencer categories(Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020). A survey from InfluencerMarketingHub (2020c) shows 23% of respondent marketers spend their budget on celebrity influencers. Celebrity influencers can be a power for influencer marketing since, in fact they have huge visibility and existing audiences. Because many people recognize their faces, they can attain different audiences' groups. But in terms of marketing budget, working with celebrities is not effective. Beyond this, celebrity influencers can create also a risk in terms of marketing because people may feel that they are disingenuous and some scandals and misbehavior of them may also create a negative effect on brands (Mediakix). Furthermore, for better marketing activities it is important to have similarities between brand and influencer, therefore marketers should not be only considered the attractiveness and likeability of the celebrity (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

Mega influencers can be assumed as celebrities due to showing their expertise on social media. Therefore, they are also called "internet famous". These influencers were not known by people before their social media activities. At the same time, mega influencers are not still known by people who do not follow them. These influencers have a significant number of followers like celebrity influencers have. Mega influencers have between 1-5 million followers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Mediakix). They support companies to attain millions of people. In addition, they have a power to shape the popular culture, to drive hashtags and to create purchase intention. And by leveraging mega influencers companies can reach the one-time great impact on people (Mediakix). However, working with mega influencers is expensive (see Fig. 15) for companies comparing to macro and micro influencers. And mega influencers have lower engagement rate (SeeTable6) comparing macro, micro and nano influencers (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2020c).

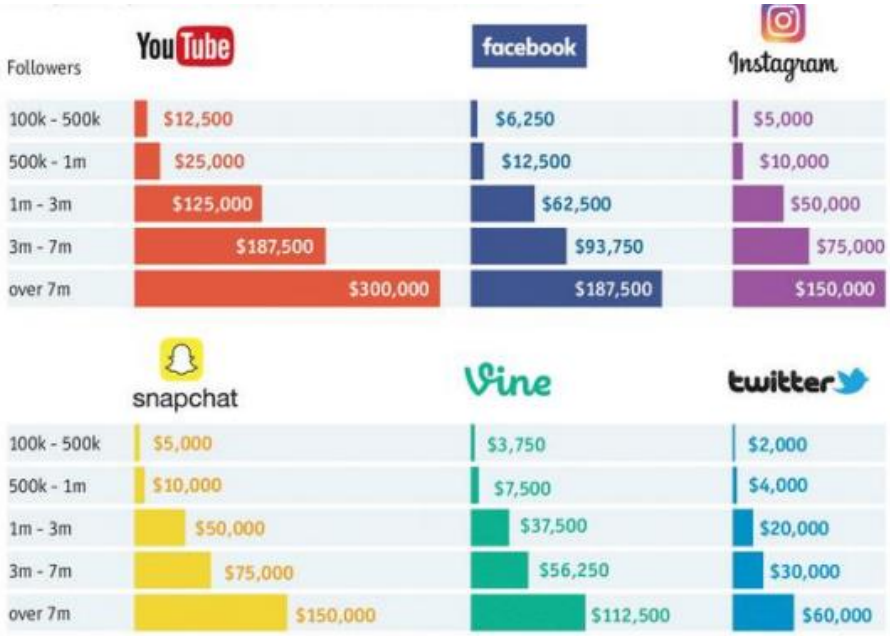

Figure 15: Influencer's income per post according to social media platforms

Source: Fries, P. J. (2019). Influencer-Marketing: Springer.

Macro influencers are people who already get celebrity status on social media. These influencers have 500.000-1.000.000 followers. They have good knowledge about their focused subject. Engagement rates of macro-influencers are strong; therefore, marketers can use their engagement as brand exposure. They earn lower money per post than celebrities, and mega influencers earn. (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Mediakix).

Mid-Tier Influencers are influencers who have 50.000-500.000 followers. Mid-tier influencers represent the gap between macro and micro-influencers. And they are more recognized than micro-influencers but less well-known than macro-influencers, and it represents a middle-ground option (Mediakix).

Micro influencers is the part of the extremely fast-growing rate of influencer marketing (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2018). The number of micro influencers is quite high in the market. For example, the number of micro influencers is 10 times bigger than mega influencers (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2020b). Micro influencers are classified as influencers who have between 10.000-50.000 followers (Mediakix). Micro influencer marketing activities can be shaped as social media partnership (TheCorner, 2020). They

are more reachable and relatable than other influencers. And they have niche, engaged and dedicated followers (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019). They have a strong effect on consumers' decision-making process. They build a real relationship with their followers; thus, they gain more trust of their followers. Since marketers have realized that people trust more in micro-influencers, marketers start to focus more on micro-influencers for their influencer marketing activities (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2018).

Table 6

Average IGC Engagement Rate by Follower Count.

	Nano	**Micro**	**Medium**	**Mega**
	1K-10K	10-100K	100K-1M	1M+
Instagram	4,40%	2,40%	1,80%	0,70%
Youtube	6,70%	6,20%	5,00%	4,0%
Facebook	0,42%	0,13%	0,03%	0,01%
Twitter	0,17%	0,04%	0,015%	0,008%

Source: InfluencerMarketingHub. (2018). Instagram Influencer Generated Content | The Debate Over Micro- vs Macro Influencers [Infographic]. Retrieved from https://influencermarketinghub.com/instagram-influencer-generated-content infographic/#:~:text=For%20all%20their%20content%20(branded,50k%20and%20100k%3A%202.33%25

Nano Influencers have between 1.000-10.000 followers, which mostly consist of followers' friends, family, and acquaintances. Therefore, they can only reach a limited number of people. They are effective for promoting local organizations or attaining niche targets. They have highest engagement rate (See Table6) on Instagram comparing other

types of influencers (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2018). They share their experiences with their followers by supplying high authenticity. Nano influencers are more profitable for organizations, since these influencers can accept unpaid partnership or free product opportunities but since they do not earn from social media, they have limited time to create content. (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

1.2.8 Key Features of Influencers: ABCC

An influencer must have four main features without considering their number of audiences and their role in engaging with a brand. These features are listed as ***authenticity, brand fit, communities, and content*** (Backaler, 2018).

Authenticity represents the "passion, enthusiasm" (Deges, 2018) "sincerity, genuineness, truthfulness and originality" (Molleda, 2010) and "reality" (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). Influencers have developed a certain personal style over time with the information they shared. To establish a clear dialogue with the group whom influencers address, the authenticity of the influencers must match the style, language and color of this group (Deges, 2018). By applying emotional content and direct responses to cultivate intimacy, their followers perceive that influencers are more authentic than traditional media (Coco & Eckert, 2020).

Audrezet, De Kerviler, and Moulard (2018) shows that there are two types of influencer authenticity: "*passionate authenticity"* and "*transparent authenticity"*. Passionate authenticity refers that influencers' passion and desire are more than commercial intent. Therefore, some of them may reject the commercial collaboration because of fulfilling their goals. Transparent authenticity means to give a fact-based information related with endorsed product or services and to disclose the partnership with the brand.

Authenticity of an influencer has a direct influence on brand trust (Jun & Yi, 2020). Authenticity is a leading factor to build a trusted relationship, and that supports influencer to be successful. At the time that influencers promote a brand's product or service, having keep going authenticity become their prior concern, since it is important

to maintain authentic connection with the followers at the same time without being considered that influencer sales the product/service (Backaler, 2018).

Brand Fit refers to the similarity and consistency between influencer and brand. Lack of congruency between brand and influencer may entail negative attributions such as perception of being less credible (Schouten et al., 2020) , whereas high level of congruence may have a positive strong reaction with regard to brand attitudes, purchase intention (Torres, Augusto, & Matos, 2019), influencer image and advertising effectiveness and this may lead to become influencers more effective (Breves et al., 2019). Thus, if influencers want to be successful, it is significant that they must be careful about whether their personal brand has a consistency with the endorsed brand. Since there are two brands in these conditions: companies' brand and influencers' personal brand, they must balance between expectations of brand and influencer during a promotion (Backaler, 2018).

Community which, is targeted, grown, and engaged, is proof of influencers' success. "Reach, Relevance, and Resonance" refer to find correct community members of influencers. ***Reach*** can be defined as the extent of an influencer's followers. Reach represents quantitative reach such as followers, fans; reach growth rate, media value per post, number of followers in relation, the mix of channels and number of accounts. ***Resonance*** is a positive interaction between followers and content. The intensity of interactions is measured by shares, likes, views, comments etc. Spreading content to others creates a resonance. And it supports influencer to reach more than one person. ***Relevance*** represents personality, brand, target group ,and content fit (Deges, 2018; Backaler, 2018). If these three dimensions are good balanced, influencer marketing becomes successful (Deges, 2018).

Content is a way for influencers to create a relationship with their followers and add value to them. Since content is a significant factor for gaining new followers, finding new and creative content becomes hard for influencers. However, social media enables influencers to create content in the areas of they feel comfortable. For example, an influencer who is comfortable with writing can use a blog to reach their followers (Backaler, 2018). Today, content shared by influencers is shaped as sponsored

(commercial) and original (non-commercial) content (Stubb & Colliander, 2019). The attractive and prestigious content that, is shared by influencers, helps influencers that followers like and evaluate them as opinion leaders. And this may result in increasing the desire of their followers to imitate them (Delbaere et al., 2020).

1.2.9 Ideal Properties of Influencers

The personality and some positive character features of an influencer form the basis of their persuasiveness. These personality and character traits support influencers to reach more people (Deges, 2018). In this context, credibility, wishful identification, perceptual homophily, trust and parasocial relationship can be listed as ideal properties of influencers.

Credibility- Influencers make recommendations about a product based on their subjective assessment which may be shaped as satisfaction or dissatisfaction. For this reason, it is expected for their followers that influencers try this recommended product before they comment about it. Thus, followers assume that the product recommendations of influencers are credible (Deges, 2018). Besides, influencers are assumed as credible, since they provide detailed information as an "ordinary people" and provide information about their expertise and personal interest (Delbaere et al., 2020).

The credibility of influencers can be shaped by the level of their perceived trustworthiness, attractiveness, similarity, and expertise of followers (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Influencer credibility, under the name of source credibility, has been an important topic for researchers. And studies indicate that the credibility is a factor that may have a positive influence on the purchase intention of followers (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), branded post trust (Lou & Yuan, 2019); brand attitudes (Breves et al., 2019).

Wishful identification refers to being like media personas or behaving like them. If an influencer has a high wishful identification, that audiences want to have, it is more likely that audiences follow influencers, or they integrate with the influencers. Followers may follow influencers to learn their personality, hobbies, or lifestyle and to imitate them (Hu, Min, Han, & Liu, 2020).

Perceptual homophily is defined as being like someone else in terms of their tastes, expectations, values, and experiences. It is formed in an individual's mind and stimulates the relationships (Miranda, Cunha, & Duarte, 2021). Perceived similarity between influencers and followers leads the followers think that they may be like them (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020). Since influencers show themselves as they are "ordinary", "approachable" and "authentic", their followers may perceive that influencers are akin to them (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020). Perceptual homophily has a positive effect on parasocial interaction and credibility (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). The perception of having a similarity with someone else can help building trust (Miranda et al., 2021) and thus, ease the persuasion (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

Trust is an important factor that affects the relationship between consumers and influencers. Here authenticity plays an important role for followers to trust an influencer (Olapic, 2017). If followers recognize an influencer as a neutral person, they probably will trust the influencer, otherwise, this trust will be broken. For example, inconsistency between promoted products and influencers' organic content can damage the followers' sense of trust in the influencer (Deges, 2018). Herewith, influencers should focus on authenticity, likeability, and authority to create the possibility that their followers trust them (Suciu, 2019). It is possible that consumers will unfollow an influencer, if the influencer acts a disingenuous endorsement, since trust is an important element for the relationship between influencers and followers. According to a survey, it is revealed that disingenuous endorsement is one of the main reasons why consumers do not want to follow an influencer. Another dimension that may affect trust is transparency, since consumers do not want to see unrealistic lifestyle or body image, and a lifestyle that is misrepresented (MarketingCharts, 2019). Once and for all, the expertise of an influencer is another vital factor which is related to trust. And it is assumed as the knowledge level of the influencers (Örs, 2018). Expertise is a factor that affects the perception of consumers toward an influencer. For example, according to a study %41 of male participants stated that expertise is vital for them to trust an influencers' post (Olapic, 2017).

The parasocial relationship is an emotional connection toward media personas that is built by audiences. This relationship is formed by the style of expressions used by the influencer, the sincerity of their language, or the feeling of familiarity with their voice. Their followers become friends with regular sharing by the influencer and associate the events with them. Thus, the perception of a sincere and direct relationship with the influencer is appeared and intimate feelings begin for influencers. The parasocial relationship is not mutual, on the contrary, it is a unidirectional relationship. This relationship is a factor that has a role in the impacts of influencers on followers. When there is a parasocial relationship between influencer and followers, there may be responsive consumption like watching videos and photos and maybe an active contribution to posts of the influencer like commenting photos. And parasocial relationships may enable to affect the stickiness to influencers (Deges, 2018; L. Hu, Min, Han, & Liu, 2020). Followers assume that Influencers are reachable, and they have a long-distance friendship with their followers (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020). Relationship with an influencer indicates that followers are willing to have the same appearance and belong to the parts of influencers' group (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

1.2.10 Influencer Community

GENY (also called millennials or digital natives) and **GENZ** (Smart Natives) are the main target group of social media and influencer marketing. GenY indicates the people who are born between 1981 and 1996. GenY are associated with a life connected to digital, and they are familiar with Information which is available every time and everywhere. And GenZ indicates people who are born between 1995 and 2010 and they are always online in digital world. They especially use social media to contact with others (Deges, 2018; Deloitte, 2020; Tabor, 2019).

A study shows that 56% of Gen Y and Gen Z purchase a product after encountering a post from someone they follow. 50% of them states that social media platforms are the place where they see new products to buy. These both generations are open-minded and different than other generations. Thus, they anticipate that companies mirror their values, uniqueness, and diversity. Therefore, they do not trust in traditional celebrities (Schieber, 2020). They do not look at the traditional TV. Rather they watch

Netflix, Youtube. Young viewers do not hesitate to watch commercials to support their favorite digital platforms. Therefore, influencer marketing is the concept of marketing that generation Y accepts and trusts in (Arnold, 2018). Generation Z use mostly Youtube, Instagram and Snapchat; Generation Y use Youtube, Instagram and Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest. Generation Z utilizes social media to continue with in-store purchase. They are willing to have prioritize authenticity (Wiley, 2019).

GENX and Baby Boomer tend to investigate products online. GenX refers to people who are born between 1965-1980 and Baby Boomer between 1946-1964. Studies show that more than half of baby boomers research on a search engine or check website, after they encounter a product online. And purchasing decision of more than half of GenX is made by online reviews. GenX and baby boomers also follow influencers, and they are active on social media. They follow micro influencers whose contents are informative or cultural (Tabor, 2019). These two generations are also target of influencer marketing, because they are active on social media like GenY and GenZ. Whereas GenX use frequently Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, Pinterest, Blogs; Baby Boomers use Facebook, Youtube and Blogs (Wiley, 2019).

1.2.11 Brands and Influencers

1.2.11.1 Brands and Influencer Selection

Influencers is selected by brands with research and analyses. The brands may follow multiple ways of methods to reach the most appropriate influencers for their marketing strategy. Influencer selection can made either using qualitative or quantitative data (Jahnke, 2018). Fig. 16 shows this selection criteria in detailed. Quantitative data of influencers includes for example demography, interaction rate, price, reach; while qualitative data consists of authenticity, brand fit, focusing on theme or professionality. Fig. 17 shows a typification of influencers. Companies can take consider of the structures in the figure when they select an influencer for their marketing campaign to collaborate with them. In the figure typification of influencers are based on social media channels (instagrammers, youtuber etc.), range (e.g. micro, micro influencers), topics (e.g. travel, fashion influencer), sociodemographic based (e.g. language, nationality, age, gender),

social status(e.g. promi influencers, celebrity testimonials) and other categories such as corporate influencers or peer influencers (Deges, 2018).

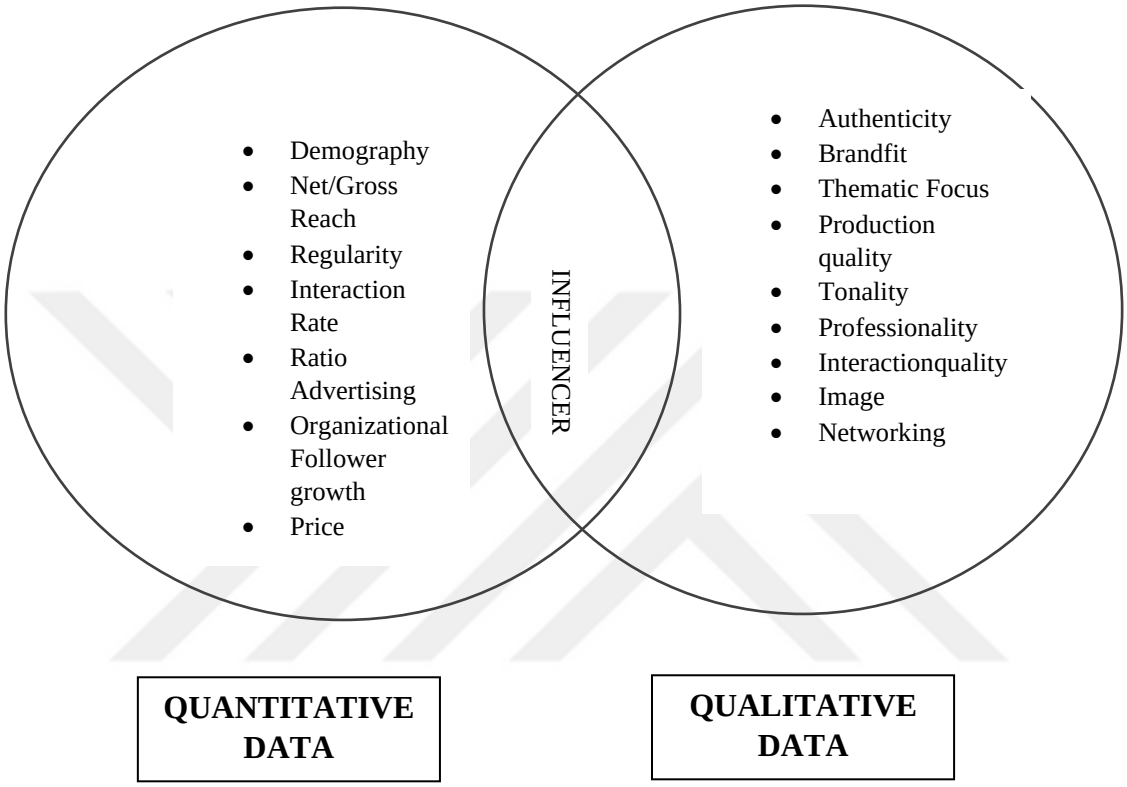

Figure 16: Influencer selection criterias

Source: Jahnke, M. (2018). Influencer marketing: Springer,p79.

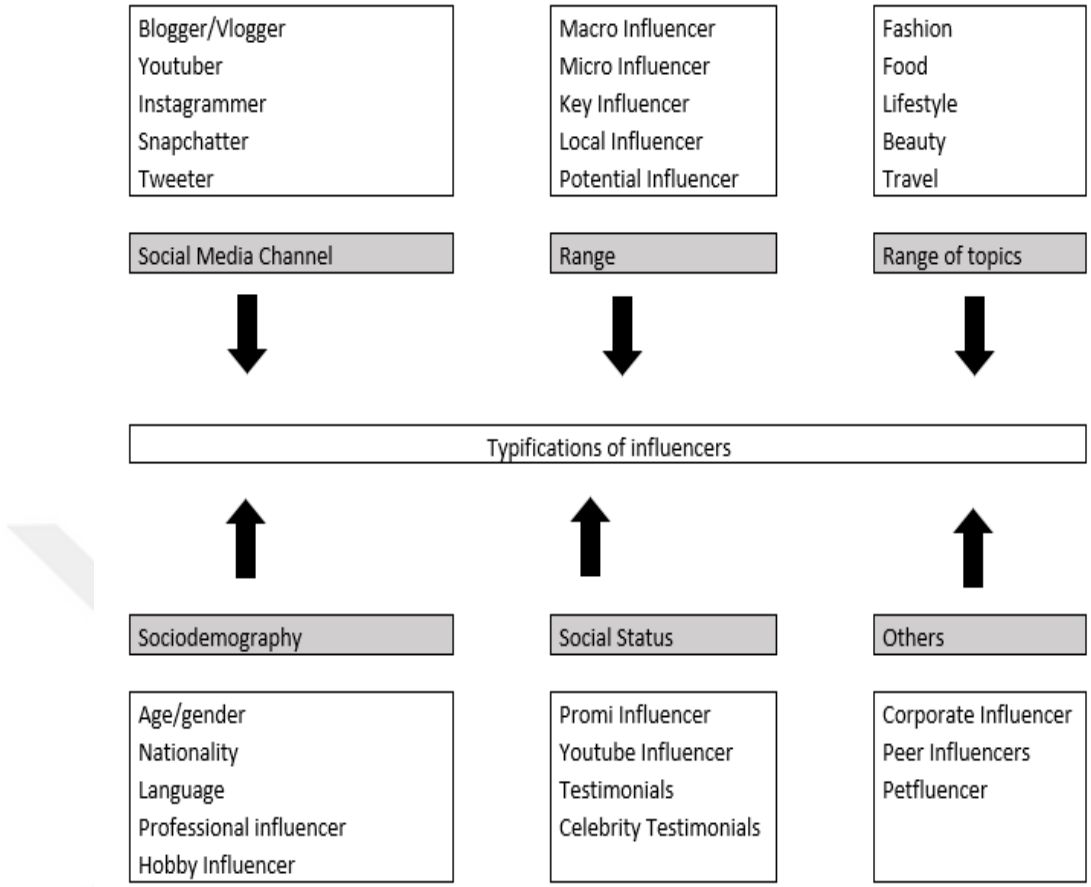

Figure 17: Influencer Typifications

Source: Deges, F. (2018). Quick Guide Influencer Marketing: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden,p22.

In detailed, companies, for example, research the influencers based on their theme expertness or their interest. Or they can determine the best influencer, after analyzing the influencers who have high engagement and access rate. In this case, brands may decide whether they want to reach a high amount of people, by applying an influencer who has a wide-reaching level, or they want to only use a multitude of micro-influencers. This reach level can be categorized as the number of followers or actual reach

(which can be understood from e. g. Instagram account of the Influencer). Companies should also understand whether an influencer has authority- this refers to whether an influencer can convince and influence their followers. And companies may also consider the quality level of an influencer's content and whether the content is suitable for the brand. Brand fit is also another option for companies to select an influencer. Brand fit refers to how high the level of similarity between influencer and brand. The level of brand fit may result in the appreciation of followers from brand-influencer collaborations. Specifying the influencers based on the target group would be another option, such as researching the influencers who are followed by brands' customers. In this case, companies may decide whether they want to leverage an influencer who is suitable with the target group or whether they want to deliberately choose an influencer whose followers are not in their group. There are also more ways of selecting an influencer in terms of canals, budget, and personality. The study of Tabellion, J., & Esch, F. R. (2019) indicates that if companies find expert influencers, they will be able to control their activities and touchpoints on social media (Bigne & Rosengren, 2019; Jahnke, 2018).

1.2.11.2 Brand Collaborations and Influencers

Giveaways- is an efficient alternative for brands to drive up customer engagement by cooperating with influencers on competition and giveaways. Brands supply influencers their products, and influencers announce giveaways on their accounts. And their audiences join the competition to win the prize. For example, the competition can have some rules such as tagging friends, writing a predetermined hashtag. Giveaways, thus, can increase the brand knowledge and create new potential customers (Backaler, 2018) .

Figure 18: An example of Giveaways

Source: Gaid,2020. 6 Top types of Influencer Marketing Campaigns. Retrieved from https://www.oberlo.com/blog/influencer-marketing-examples

Social Media Takeovers- is another way to create brand awareness, attain new audiences, boost engagement. It is akin to giveaways. Influencers take control of the brand's social media account, such as Instagram or Twitter. And they create content for a while through the brand's social media account. The takeover, mostly, is for one day, but for some special events, this period may reach one week-long. Since brands give their account password to the influencer, there must be a trust relationship between them. With the social media takeovers, brands can reach the influencers' audiences in a way that they cannot attain with their organic social media activities (Backaler, 2018).

Affiliate Marketing- is referred to as the best influencer campaign which provides the most efficient mutual collaboration. This type of influencer marketing campaign includes a payment type that brands give the influencer a percentage of their

sales. And this sale is created with the influencers' promotional effort. For B2C activities, companies provide influencers a particular affiliate link to track sales evolving from influencers' efforts. Because of the long-term sales cycle and the higher price point, performing affiliate marketing can be though for B2B companies (Backaler, 2018).

Sponsored Content- is mainly shaped by influencers' product reviews, for example, through Instagram, Youtube, blog, or Twitter. In this case, brands pay influencers to promote their message, product, or brand and increase their brand awareness. Sponsored partnerships that influencers make with brands are formed often as labels (e. g. #sponsored) or descriptions. However, scholars indicate that followers may respond in a different way when they know that content is sponsored. However, influencer sponsored content enables the brands to reach target group cost-effectively by using the popularity of influencers (Mediakix; Stubb & Colliander, 2019).

Figure 19: An example of sponsored content

Source: Gaid,2020. 6 Top types of Influencer Marketing Campaigns. Retrieved from https://www.oberlo.com/blog/influencer-marketing-examples

Product Placement -It is one of the most popular methods of influencer marketing. This method develops in integrating the product, service, or logo of a company into content of the influencers (Mediakix).

1.2.11.3 Disclosure of A Branded Content

Consumers are less aware of the persuasive purpose of the advertisements and campaigns they encounter on social media comparing traditional ad formats. For example, since influencers share posts on their own lives and ideas, it is more difficult for their followers to distinguish whether their posts are commercial or not (Stubb & Colliander, 2019). As a result of the regulations made by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC, 2017), a serious practice has been brought in the United States regarding paid partnerships on social media. Therefore, if influencers have an agreement with a brand, they must state this collaboration transparently. One of the main purposes of this practice is to protect the consumer from deceptive market practices. Influencer branded post disclosure has recently become a popular topic in the literature (e.g.: Evans, Phua, Lim, & Jun, 2017; Stubb & Colliander, 2019) to understand, if non-disclosure, disclosure content play a role in consumers. For instance, study of Evans, Phua, Lim, & Jun (2017) indicates that ad disclosure provides greater ad recognition. Moreover, they examined if different sponsored content language of disclosure has different results in ad effectiveness. The study revealed that "sponsored " language is more effective than other expressions (e.g., "SP" (shows sponsored content; sponsored and paid),"Paid Ad", non-disclosure. Another study is that impartial sponsorship (not disclosing the sponsored post) causes followers to perceive the post as less advertising, and this leads to higher source and message credibility (Stubb & Colliander, 2019).

1.2.12 Covid19 and Influencer Marketing

The emergence of Covid19 has afflicted not only people who live in a specific area or country but also people who live all around the world. After the Virus appeared, the economic situation of countries has been negatively changed. At the same time companies have started to be suffered from the consequences of Covid19. Companies reported that their revenues have decreased after the emergence of Covid19, except

companies that are providing products that are perceived by people as supporting human health, such as disposable gloves, bread machines, cough&cold supplements, soups, etc. Contrary to the decreasing sales number of industries, it was observed that the number of e-commerce sales has exploded, since people prefer distant purchases. Therefore, this period had some influences on the marketing strategies of companies. Companies started to change their plans for their marketing activities. For example, according to a study which is revealed by InfluencerMarketingHub %69 of brands which are attendant to study will make their advertising spending smaller. But another study that is implemented by Klaviyo shows that 22% of brands are spending more on advertising after Covid19 has been appeared (InfluencerMarketingHub, 2021b)

Many organizations, where people constantly must go has been negatively affected in the beginning of Covid-19 because of staying at home during the lockdown period. But this case was not valid for influencers who create their content at home. With the obligation to stay at home "homefluencer" term has arisen, since at that time influencers were creating their content at home. During the lockdown, many influencers were able to adapt their content to actual cases, such as doing sport at home, learning new hobbies. Besides the reason that people had to stay at home, they started to spend more time on social media. For example, the ratio of users' Instagram usage increased to 32% and the ratio of Facebook increased to 53%. Therefore, influencer engagement has raised, and they were able to reach more audiences than an ordinary time before Covid19. For example, according to a study it is observed that the number of likes and comments of posts has at least 50% increased (Taylor, 2021).

However, a study which was carried out by Statista shows that, the spending of companies for influencer marketing has not been dramatically changed during Covid19. For example, while the spending of influencer marketing was 479 million dollars in 2019 Q1, Q1 2020 it was 453 million dollars(Statista, 2020c). As a result of this research, it can be said that there is no proof of whether there is a negative or positive impact of Covid19 on global influencer marketing spend. In addition, influencers become a "key distributor of COVID-19 misinformation" (Waterson, 2020). However, there are still limited studies about Covid19 and its impacts on influencer marketing. It is still not clear

which consequences have appeared after Covid19 for influencer marketing. For example, there is not a clear study about the effects of circulation fake news (which is called Infodemic) through social media platforms at the beginning of Covid19 on and its related effects on influencers and influencer marketing. Therefore, in this study, relationship between Infodemic and influencer marketing will be explained.

1.3 Hypothesis Development

In the following section, trust, attitude, elaboration likelihood model, purchase intention and Infodemic will be explained for hypothesis development.

1.3.1 Trust in Branded Post

Trust is a positive impression about "the perceived reliability of, dependability of, and confidence in a person, object, or process" (Fogg & Tseng, 1999). Trust attributes to individual feelings and knowledge (Seppänen, Mäkelä, Luokkala, & Virrantaus, 2013) and it has been a subject of numerous marketing studies for years (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). However, when looking at the field of trust in advertising, there is limited works on it. Trust in advertising is an important field to work on it since consumers have consistent tendency to distrust in advertising. Advertising literature shows that trust is an important factor of persuasion and it is vital for a relationship between consumers and sellers (Soh, Reid, & King, 2007).

1.3.2 Attitude toward Branded Content

Attitude is defined as "mental states which are used by individuals to organize the way they perceive their environment and control the way they respond to it" (Aaker, Kumar, & Day, 1995) in the advertisement based it is defined as "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner toward advertising in general" (Lutz, 1985). Negative or positive feelings are a shaped state of attitudes towards a behavior (Hassan Fathelrahman Mansour & Mohammed Elzubier Diab, 2016). It is a pleasant and an unpleasant emotion which is awaken by advertising (MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986) . Attitude toward advertising has a significant impact with different variables such as advertising credibility, advertising perception, attitude toward advertiser

and mood together (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). The effectiveness of an advertising can be measured by attitude towards advertisements (Hassan Fathelrahman Mansour & Mohammed Elzubier Diab, 2016).

1.3.3 Elaboration Likelihood Model

Elaboration Likelihood Model was developed by Richard Petty and John Cacioppo. ELM is a theory which is about how “classical source, recipient, contextual variables” leads a role in attitude toward a topic, human or stuff and is about processes of judgement which causes changes, factors that stimulates these processes and power of judgements which are the results of these processes (Chaiken & Trope, 1999). Elaboration Likelihood Model examines how attitudes change depending on the degree of interest and the adoption pathway of information depending on the level of detailing the persuasion process, ELM is divided into 2 main ways. These are the "central route" and "peripheral route” (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Central route means that an individual carefully evaluates the true value of the message content, expresses the information, and constructs an argument, and this route occurs when individuals are highly motivated, while the peripheral route possibly occurs because of a simple clue which causes a change and in the case that the true value of presented information is not evaluated. It happens when participant has low participation and has low motivation. In cases where the possibility of elaboration increases in the case of persuasion, the first type (central route) of persuasion occurs. Vice versa, when the probability of elaboration decreases, the second type (peripheral route) of persuasion occurs (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In the peripheral route, e.g., source credibility (Amelina & Zhu, 2016), consistency, volume, and rating of information (Reyes-Menendez, Saura, & Martinez-Navalon, 2019) play a role for attitude change. In the case of following a central route, e.g., the quality of information and decisive information play an important role (Reyes-Menendez et al., 2019) for attitude change.

In the literature there are many studies the using the ELM model. For example for source credibility (Reyes-Menendez et al., 2019), argument quality (Cheung, Sia, & Kuan, 2012), effects of types and number of consumer reviews (Park & Kim, 2008), e-

WOM recommendation (Gupta & Harris, 2010; Lee, Lee, & Yang, 2017), advertising value (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

ELM is a suitable model for working on persuasive messages advocated in social media networks (Teng, Khong, & Goh, 2014). In this context we will use influencer content value as entertainment, informativeness, authenticity and parasocial relationship as antecedents of ELM to understand their effects on attitude and trust.

1.3.3.1 Influencer Content Value

Message content is an important factor for determining perceived advertising value and understanding effectiveness of advertising (ul Haq, 2009). Ducoffe (1995) explained advertising value which is shaped by 3 dimensions of advertising message content of online based advertising: ***Entertainment, Informativeness, and Irritation***. With increased popularity of digitized news market, news companies are trying to satisfy their audiences needs in different way. Therefore, they focus on infotainment, which compromises of entertainment and informativeness notions (Thussu, 2015). Therefore, in this study only influencer content values associated with infotainment, which are informativeness and entertainment, will be considered.

Entertainment is related to needs of people for «escapism, diversion, aesthetic enjoyment, or emotional release» and it shows the possibility that an advertisement is likeable Ducoffe (1995). During the interaction with computer based media, a greater level of pleasure and interaction drives consumers to have positive affect and mood (ul Haq, 2009). ***Informativeness*** is an important factor of consumers to approve the advertising. If consumers think that the information is relevant, this will support to form a value (Van-Tien Dao, Nhat Hanh Le, Ming-Sung Cheng, & Chao Chen, 2014). ***Irritation*** is an outcome of utilizing annoying, offensive, insulting, manipulative techniques used by advertisers and reduces the effectiveness of and advertisement (Duccoffe,1995).

Argument quality means the quality of information shared by online services and includes dimensions such as timeliness, currency, convenience, and entertainment

(Rodgers, Negash, & Suk, 2005), therefore it can be regarded that informativeness and entertainment are the parts of argument quality.

Argument quality follows the central route in the persuasion process (Reyes-Menendez et al., 2019). Messages containing strong arguments are more likely to convince the recipient of the message (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). ELM predicts that increased elaboration strengthens persuasion in situations where the message is strong (Coulter & assistant, 2004) and predicts the effect of argument quality on consumer attitude change with high elaboration (Scholten, 1996). Argument quality may result in a positive attitude (Shin, Van Der Heide, Beyea, Dai, & Prchal, 2017). Previous studies proved that characteristics of message content which is entertainment, has a direct positive effect on attitude towards online advertising (Tsang, Ho, & Liang, 2004; ul Haq, 2009; Zha, Li, & Yan, 2015). In the light of this information, it was assumed that perceived entertainment of influencer branded content may also have an influence on attitude toward branded content. Therefore, it is assumed that:

H1: High perceived entertainment of influencer message content has a significant positive role in attitude toward branded content of influencer.

Online information quality shows a relation with initial trust of influencers. For example, the study of Yang, Kim, and Tanoff (2020) shows that argument quality is a significant starting point of trust of consumer in a post and it has a positive relationship with trust in post. The literature, in the advertising trust, is limited in terms of direct relationship with trust and perceived informativeness. Study of Bakr, Tolba, and Meshreki (2019) indicates a significant positive relation between informativeness and ad trust. In addition, Lou and Yuan (2019) examined this relation in terms of influencer marketing perspective, explained that advertising value of «informativeness» has a positive relation with trust in branded post. So based on this information, it is assumed that:

H2: High perceived informativeness of influencer message content has a significant positive role in trust in branded post.

1.3.3.2 Authenticity

Another dimension is authenticity which represents “sincerity, genuineness, truthfulness and originality” (Molleda, 2010). Numerous consumers assume famous people as authentic, when they rely on the public image that famous people present (Ilicic & Webster, 2016).

Vannini & Franzese (2008, p1621) defined authenticity as “the feeling and practice of being true to one’s self or others”. The terms is linked to features such as “sincerity, genuineness, truthfulness and originality” (Molleda, 2010) or to being “true, genuine, or real” (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). Heidegger (1947) states that the key to authenticity is the separation of oneself from others, from the strengths and interests that prevail in daily life (Hardt, 1993).

Authenticity is a concept which increases the effectiveness of the message (Pöyry, Pelkonen, Naumanen, & Laaksonen, 2019). Previous studies shows that today consumers are looking for authenticity. Therefore, principles of brands are connected to authenticity and it consists of brand elements that consumers perceive as uniquely (S. Brown, Kozinets, & Sherry Jr, 2003) and they assume that inauthentic brands are trying only to rise their profits and prestige up by increasing their sales (Audrezet et al., 2018).

In information-authenticity based, it can be said that authenticity has an important place in the persuasion process, because when the source sends the messages which is perceived as correct, the message receivers may refrain from examining the message carefully and accepting the message as valid without thinking (Chu & Kamal, 2008). Authenticity, of both brand (Fritz, Schoenmueller, & Bruhn, 2017) and information (Shoffner & Koo, 2020) ,includes cognitive processing of evaluation. In information-authenticity based, during the evaluation of non-authentic, inconsistent messages, people go into detail and they elaborate the messages; as a result, non-authentic information may create a long-lasting and damaging change in behaviors (Shoffner & Koo, 2020). In brand based, literature also shows that evaluation of authentic or non-authentic brands includes cognitive effort, due to subjectivity of brand authenticity (Fritz et al., 2017). For example, in the cases when an endorser face with a public scandal,

engaged-consumers may activate their deep-processing for authenticity of endorser, and this may lead to underestimate either message or endorsed product (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016). All in all, authenticity follows central route of evaluation which includes high elaboration.

If followers think that influencers enjoy creating a content without anticipating any compensation, this means authenticity support consumers to feel that influencers share their own thought without being intervened by third parties (Jun & Yi, 2020). It is stated that authenticity encourages the trust of audiences (Luoma-aho, Pirttimäki, Maity, Munnukka, & Reinikainen, 2019), especially transparent authenticity creates trustworthy relationship between followers and influencers (Audrezet et al., 2018). Previous study of Moulard, Raggio, and Folse (2016) states in their study that brand authenticity boosts the perception of trust. Another study of M. Kim and Kim (2019) posits in their study that authenticity has a significant positive effect on cognitive and affective trust. In their study they proved that perceived authenticity has a role in trust toward mega review sites and destination. Therefore, it is assumed that:

H3: High perceived authenticity of influencers has a significant positive role in trust in branded post.

1.3.3.3 Parasocial Relationship

Parasocial interaction is a one-sided interaction that is not open to mutual communication and is under the control of the person who is sending the message; however, the audience lives an illusion that this communication with performer, such as an actor, who communicates through media tools is two-sided. Therefore, the performer is greeted by the audience as if he / she is from his peer circle (Horton & Richard Wohl, 1956). Parasocial interaction plays an important role in social and emotional hedonism and increases desire of audience to accept an information which is sent by someone (Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985).

Parasocial relations is based on the parasocial interaction experiences (e.g., making eye contact with the audience, feeling of a personal, private, and informal conversation, greeting the audience) (Reinikainen, Munnukka, Maity, & Luoma-aho,

2020). And these relationships can be defined as the sincerity, perceived friendship, and acceptance of the famous person as a result of having repeated exposure to the media character (Horton & Richard Wohl, 1956). Parasocial relationships can be shaped as loving media performers, nurturing romantic feelings, and the desire to communicate with the performer. But these relationships don't always develop positively (e.g., criticism) (Reinikainen et al., 2020). In marketing context, benefits of parasocial relationships mirror in the influences on consumers and companies (Yuan, Moon, Kim, & Wang, 2019).

Lastly, parasocial relationship may be assumed a part of persuasion process which proceeds along the central route, since it amplifies the likelihood of participation and boosts the message processing motivation of the recipient (Dunn & Nisbett, 2014). High motivation is important for the formation of central processing. This causes people to learn more about the message (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Based on the ELM model, it was assumed that the parasocial relationship increases motivation and increases elaboration as a result, which is part of central processing.

If the parasocial relationship is high, it is most probably that interaction tends to be a positive valance. This may cause to evaluate interaction in message-consistent way. Elaboration might be negative, such as disagreeing, if the media persona is a stranger. Contrarily, interaction would be positive if there is an ongoing relationship between viewer and media persona (Tukachinsky, 2010). In addition, strong relationships would cause a reason to have enjoy. Thus, highly connected recipients find the more important information from media for their lives, comparing to less connected viewers (Russell, Norman, & Heckler, 2004)

Emotional bonds amplify consumers' positive evaluation of credibility, attitude, or image (Hwang & Kandampully, 2012). For example, experiencing a strong parasocial relationship with the television characters will provide a creation or alteration of consumer's attitudes toward consumption (Russell et al., 2004). In the social media context, this correlation situation has been examined and the study of Yuan, Kim, and Kim (2016) has been indicated in their studies that the parasocial relationships between

celebrities and their followers directly affect consumer attitude. In the light of these information, it is assumed that:

H4: High perceived parasocial relationship has a significant positive role in attitude toward branded content.

1.3.3.4 Exposure to Infodemic by Influencers

Besides World Health Organization warned people about Corona Virus, this organization at the same time warned people about diffusion of misinformation, which is named as Infodemic. Infodemic phenomenon refers to extent number of information which includes either wrong or correct news about Corona Virus. (Lexico) defined the concept as "An excessive amount of information about a problem that is typically unreliable, spreads rapidly, and makes a solution more difficult to achieve".

During Covid19 period, changes were observed in consumer behavior towards social media. A study of 25000 people from 300 countries in 2020 shows that trust in social media was damaged during Covid19. This survey reveals that social media has the least reliability from which people can learn about the news and that traditional media tools are more reliable (Kantar, 2020).

With the concept of Infodemic, as it was mentioned, the belief in the news shared on social media decreased. Since the baseless posts shared by influencers and sponsored advertisements about Corona Virus protection are also a part of the news shared on social media, therefore it was estimated that consumers' trust in the information shared by influencers may have decreased. Based on the unfounded information shared by many people, especially by influencers during COVID-19, hypotheses were developed to understand if being exposure to Infodemic has a role in the advertising content value, authenticity, parasocial relationship of influencer, trust in branded post, especially after hearing that there are a lot of unfounded information on social media platforms. Seeing that fake news about Corona on social media can be shared not only by ordinary people but also by celebrities and influencers may have changed consumer behavior. It may cause to think that the advertisements of influencers which is based on getting sponsorship from brands may be unfounded and that they do this just for the sake of

making money and do not actually meet the given information. This is already a concern for consumers because influencer apply for product placement and hiding advertising (Audrezet et al., 2018). And therefore, it was assumed that exposure to Infodemic related unfounded advertisements made by influencers during Covid19 on this sensitive issue related to the health of consumers may have caused changes in the perception and behavior of consumers about the beauty and personal care products they will buy in the future, because of these products are also related with health and skin problem.

The literature of misinformation shows that even after correct information come out, incorrect information continues to spread (Duraisamy, Rathinaswamy, & Sengottaiyan, 2020). Because it is very difficult to correct misinformation, and even after discrediting the misinformation, its continuing effects are seen. And this misinformation may continue to change the beliefs and behavior of the exposed people (Nyhan & Reifler, 2015). Misinformation can affect people's judgment. Even if misinformation is corrected afterwards, it can continue to affect personal judgments, because the person makes evaluations ,which are based on his first knowledge(Johnson & Seifert, 1994). Those who are exposed to high levels of misinformation are more likely to become suspicious and skeptics (Pena, Klemfuss, Loftus, & Mindthoff, 2017). Therefore, it can be said that conspiracy theories and general misinformation have negative effects on the individual response and cause distrust within the community (Barua, Barua, Aktar, Kabir, & Li, 2020). In the light of these information, it is assumed that:

H5: Exposure to Infodemic by influencers has a direct negative effect on trust in branded post.

The authentic nature of influencers has been discussed for a long time. There are already people who are skeptical about whether their posts are advertisements or really willing to advice a product. Consumers may think that inauthentic brands have only a target to increase their profit and their sales number (Audrezet et al., 2018). Therefore, it was assumed that the pandemic period, false and erroneous information shared by many influencers on social media has a negative effect on perception of authenticity. Since they clearly shared the information, which is not correct willingly or unwillingly, it may have caused people to be skeptical about the case whether influencers who they follow are

authentic. Therefore, the hypothesis is:

H6: Exposure to Infodemic by influencers has a direct negative effect on perceived influencer authenticity.

Reaction of fake news and misinformation toward past case(e.g US presidental election in 2016) shows that perception of people towards news quality would be negative, even they trust the media.(Wagner & Boczkowski, 2019). Therefore, based on the fact that fake news and misinformation shared in the media in the past caused people to have negative perceptions towards news, it was assumed that people who were exposed to posts by influencers who shared fake news during the covid19 period may cause similar reactions to the quality of posts shared by influencers in an ordinary time .Thus it is hypothized that

H7: Exposure to Infodemic by influencers has a direct negative effect on perceived entertainment(a) and perceived informativeness(b).

People express their feelings about fake news they encounter on social media, with skeptical thoughts and sensational reactions through posts (Shu, Sliva, Wang, Tang, & Liu, 2017). Those who are exposed to high levels of misinformation are more likely to become suspicious and skeptics (Pena, Klemfuss, Loftus, & Mindthoff, 2017). This case, for example, may lead approach to people who share fake news on social media in a suspicious way. In fact, previous studies show that, for example, viewing fake news about politicians has an indirect effect on alienation from this politician (Bastick, 2021). For example, it has been shown in previous studies (e.g. (M. Hu, 2016) that negative news about celebrities (e.g scandals) has negative effects on parasocial relationship. Since infidelity and betrayal increase uncertainty between individuals, it can lead to deterioration of friendships. Repeated and consistent communication with individuals creates an expectation of how they will behave in the future, and negative reactions can occur if this expectation is broken (M. Hu, 2016). Therefore, it was anticipated that fake information, which is witnessed to be shared by influencers personally, may have negative emotional effects on followers as they may disrupt the expectations of the followers. Therefore it is assumed that:

H8: Exposure to Infodemic has a direct negative effect on perceived parasocial relationship.

1.3.3.5 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to the consumer's preference to purchase a product / service (Younus, Rasheed, & Zia, 2015). A definition of purchase intentions explains the term “Consumers’ willingness to buy a given product at a specific time or in a specific situation” (Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2014). Although there are many factors that affect the consumer's purchase intention when a consumer chooses a product, the purchase decision depends on the consumer's intention (Younus et al., 2015). Purchase intentions should predict the consumer's future behavior; because in the decision-making process, the person includes the most relevant factors in this process. Therefore, purchase intention is analyzed as a prediction for predicting the purchasing behavior of the consumer, and marketers use the purchase intention as representative of the consumer's future behavior. Empirical studies (e.g. (Ferber & Piskie, 1965) reveal that there is a significant positive relationship between purchase intention and purchasing (Morwitz, 2014). In the marketing area purchase intention and its effecting factors such as price image, brand image (Erdil, 2015); hedonic motivations, social beliefs (Aggarwal, Syed, & Garg, 2019) has been examined.

Theory of Reasoned Action is a theory which is developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1980) to understand the relationship between attitude, intentions, and behaviors. The theory focuses on theorical structures about individual motivation factors as determinants of likelihood of performing specific behaviors. Theory lies on assumptions that social normative perceptions and attitudes toward determined intentions which is best predictor of behavior (Glanz, Rimer, & Viswanath, 2008)

The theory lies on two main antecedents: which are "attitude towards behavior", the degree of evaluation of behavior in question negatively or positively, and "subjective norm", a social factor, which alludes to pressure which is perceived by someone to perform or not perform the behavior. These two antecedents of theory of reasoned action

are the factors that are assumed as collectively determinants of intentional behavior(See Fig.20) (Ajzen & Madden, 1986).

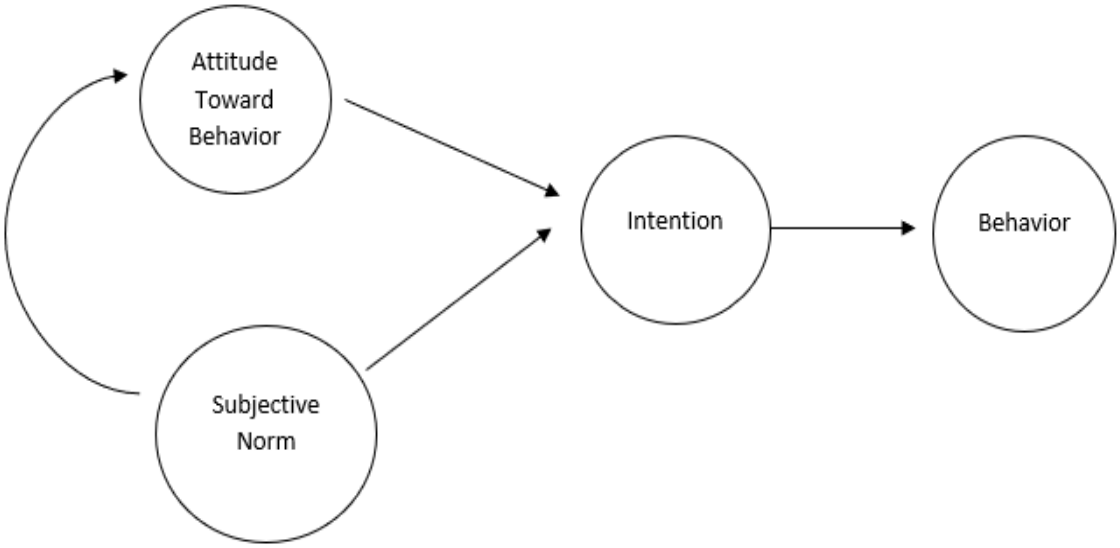

Figure 20 :Model of theory of reasoned action

Source: Ajzen, I., & Madden, T. J. (1986). Prediction of goal-directed behavior: Attitudes, intentions, and perceived behavioral control. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 22(5), 453-474,p454.

In the literature, based on theory of reasoned action, it can be seen that there are several studies that test relationship between purchase intention and attitude. For example, studies have shown that attitude toward a brand has a significant and positive effect on purchase intention (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Abzari, Ghassemi, & Vosta, 2014). Another study showed that attitude towards the product is a positive factor that predicts purchase intention (Gong, 2020; Gong & Li, 2017) . But influencer marketing based, relationship between attitude toward branded content and purchase intention were not examined. Therefore, in the light of the positive relationship between brand/product attitude and purchase intention, it is assumed that:

H9: Attitude toward branded content has a significant positive role in purchase intention.

The relationship between trust and purchase intention were examined in the past studies (e. g. (Chiu, Hsu, Lai, & Chang, 2012) and these studies indicated the positive relationship between trust and purchase intention. In the influencer marketing context, previous study of Lou and Yuan (2019) examined the relationship between trust in branded content and purchase intention and the study revealed that trust in branded post may significantly affect purchase intention. In this context it is assumed:

H10: Trust in branded post has a significant positive role in purchase intention.

In influencer marketing literature there is a scant study which examines trust and attitude relationship. The study of Panggati, Wandoko, SasmokoSimatupang, and Abdinagoro (2019) shows the study about trust in digital influencer and its impact on a brand attitude, however there is not a study which indicates the correlation between trust in branded post and attitude toward branded content. Since trust is a factor which affects significantly attitude (I.-L. Wu & Chen, 2005), it is assumed that

H11: Trust in branded post has a significant positive role in attitude toward branded content

1.3.4 Group Differences

Demographic and socioeconomic differences have been one of the most important topics for years in terms of psychology, marketing, and behavioral studies. These studies showed that purchasing involvement, attitude, evaluation may show differences in terms of different age groups, income levels and gender (Czaja & Sharit, 1998; Slama & Tashchian, 1985; Williams, 2002). In this study it was also assumed that gender, age groups and income levels may vary in terms of some important variables of this study. Therefore, we assume following hypothesis:

H12: There is a difference between women and men in terms of (a) purchase intention, (b) trust, (c) attitude, (d) entertainment, (e) informativeness, (f) authenticity.

H13: There is a difference between age groups in terms of (a) purchase intention, (b) trust, (c) attitude.

H14: There is a difference between income levels in terms of purchase intention.

2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This research is about application of elaboration likelihood model and theory of reasoned action in influencer marketing. The research has been conducted to understand whether exposure to Infodemic by influencer during Covid19 has any role in perception, trust, of followers and relationship of parasocial relationship, entertainment and informativeness with trust and attitude. The data has been collected by descriptive research which is developed by applying a survey. Details were explained in previous sections.

2.1 Research Purpose and Objectives

During Covid19 pandemic, not only ordinary people but also influencers become a key of sharing mis- and fake information, which is called as Infodemic, which is a term refers to misinformation and fake information during Covid-19. After emerging of Covid-19, people have witnessed that the information that are shared by influencers would be also wrong. Therefore, it is possible that perception of people after exposure to Infodemic by influencers would cause negative consequences. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand if there are any negative consequences of exposure to Infodemic in terms of trust in beauty and personal care products related branded post of influencers, perceived influencer authenticity, perceived parasocial relationship between influencer and follower, perceived entertainment and informativeness of influencers' post.

In addition, the aim of this study is to brighten some shortcomings of the influencer marketing. This study aims to understand the roles of perceived influencer authenticity, perceived parasocial relationship, perceived informativeness and entertainment in trust and attitude considering elaboration likelihood model. Moreover, it aims to understand the roles of trust and attitude in purchase intention and the roles of trust in attitude considering theory of reasoned action.

2.2 Research Model

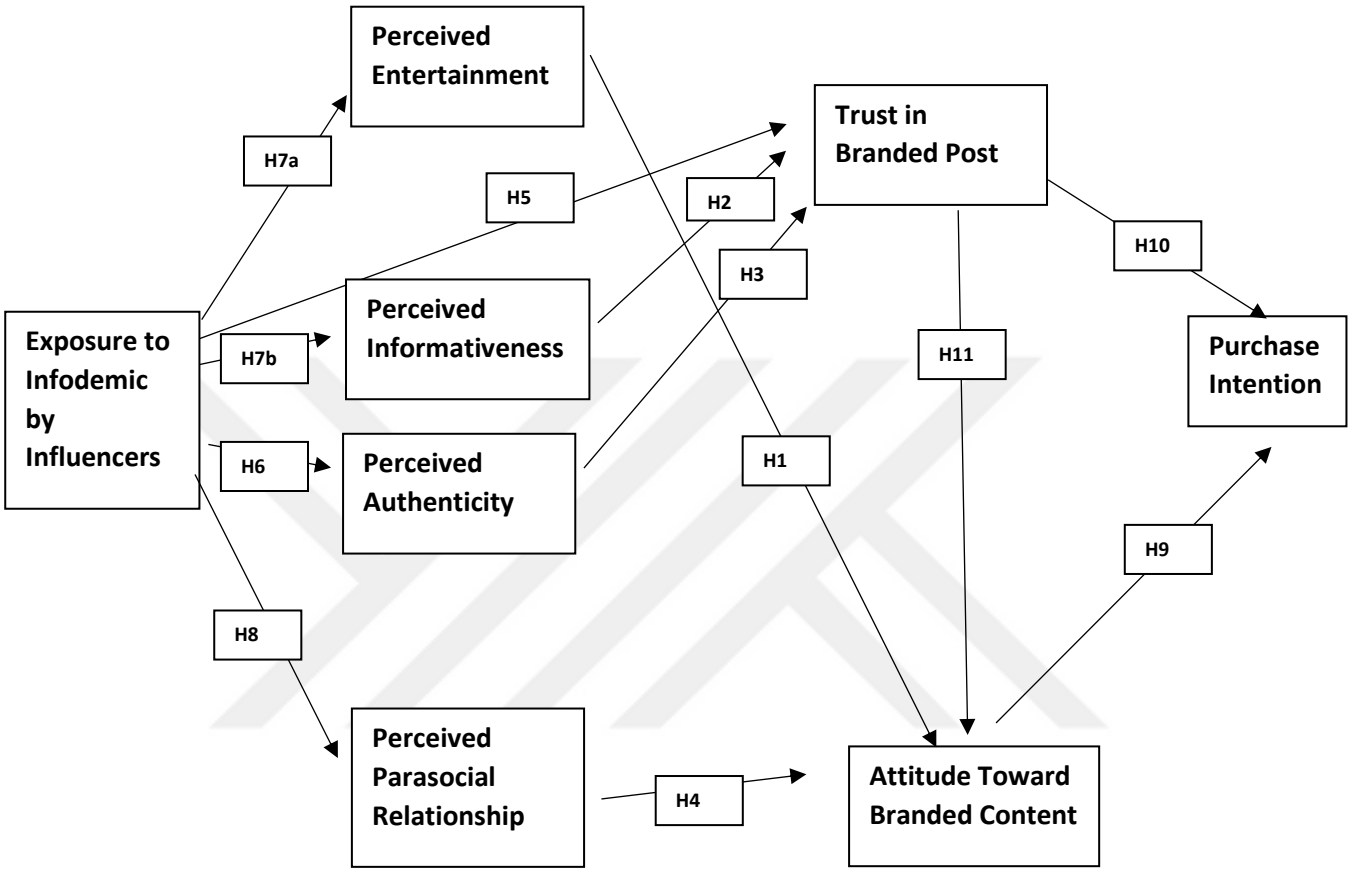

Figure 21: Research Model

2.3 Variables of the Study

The research model is presented in Figure 21. The model shows the relationship between variables. The variables of these study are exposure to Infodemic, perceived authenticity, perceived entertainment, perceived informativeness, perceived parasocial relationship, trust in branded post, trust in branded content and purchase intention.

The relationship between exposure to Infodemic by influencers and" trust in branded post"," perceived entertainment", "perceived informativeness", "perceived authenticity", "perceived parasocial relationship" is assumed to be in the negative direction, while the relationship between "perceived informativeness", "perceived authenticity" and trust in branded post ; the relationship between "perceived entertainment", "perceived parasocial relationship" and "attitude toward branded content" are assumed to be in the positive direction. In addition, the relationship between "trust in branded post" and "attitude toward branded content", and the relationship between "trust in branded post" and "purchase intention", the relationship between "attitude toward branded content" and "purchase intention" are assumed also to be in the positive direction.

The variables of "trust in branded post", "attitude toward branded content" and "purchase intention" were tested in terms of beauty and personal care products aspects. Moreover, "perceived entertainment" and "perceived informativeness" were tested in terms of non-branded/branded posts shared by influencers.

2.4 Hypothesis of The Study

As it is clarified in the previous sections, the purpose of this study is to understand the role of Infodemic in terms of influencer marketing and to understand the role of some aspects of influencers and their posts in trust and attitude. Based on conceptual model, hypotheses were developed. Table 7 indicates the list of developed hypotheses based on conceptual model.

Table 7

List of Hypothesis

H1	High perceived entertainment of influencer message content has a significant positive role in attitude toward branded content of influencer (p65)
H2	High perceived informativeness of influencer message content has a significant positive role in trust in branded post (p65)
H3	High perceived authenticity of influencers has a significant positive role in trust in branded post(p67)
H4	High perceived parasocial relationship has a significant positive role in attitude toward branded content(p69)
H5	Exposure to Infodemic by influencers has a direct negative effect on trust in branded post(p70)
H6	Exposure to Infodemic by influencers has a direct negative effect on perceived influencer authenticity(p71)
H7	Exposure to Infodemic by influencers has a direct negative effect on perceived entertainment(a) and perceived informativeness(b)(p71)
H8	Exposure to Infodemic by influencers has a direct negative effect on perceived parasocial relationship(p72)
H9	Attitude toward branded content has a significant positive role in purchase intention(p73)
H10	Trust in branded post has a significant positive role in purchase intention(p74)
H11	Trust in branded post has a significant positive role in attitude toward branded content(p74)
H12	There is a difference between women and men in terms of (a) purchase intention, (b) trust, (c) attitude, (d) entertainment, (e) informativeness, (f) authenticity, (g)parasocial relationship(p74)
H13	There is a difference between age groups in terms of (a) purchase intention, (b) trust, (c) attitude(p75)
H14	There is a difference between income levels in terms of purchase intention. (p75)

2.5 Research Method

The design is applied in a study is chosen depending on the nature of the problems related to the research purposes. Each type of research design has a set of research methods which are commonly utilized to collect and analyze the types of data produced by investigations (Walliman, 2011). Main classification of the research design consists of two parts which are exploratory research design and conclusive research design (Malhotra & Malhotra, 2012). Exploratory research design is applied to gain the insights about the problem. And conclusive design is applied when to examine specific hypothesis and understand relationship. Then, conclusive research design is separated into descriptive and causal research. Descriptive research is featured by the previous formulation of certain hypotheses. While causal research is applied to gather proof of cause-and-effect relationship. Since the sample of this study is collected for only once, this study is a single cross-sectional descriptive research with a survey.

2.6 Measurement Development

Hypotheses are examined based on quantitative method. Therefore, a survey is designed to collect data. The survey is designed based on following items.

There are 8 different variables, which are "exposure to Infodemic by influencers", "authenticity", "entertainment", "informativeness", "parasocial relationship", "trust", "attitude", and "purchase intention". Every variable has been tested by different items which are based on literature survey. Totally 28 items are applied to design the survey as a survey question. To test all items, it was used 5 points Likert scales, ranging from "strongly don't agree (1)" to "strongly agree (5)".

To analyze the exposure to Infodemic, we used 3 items questions, and it was adapted from the questions of Apuke and Omar (2021) into the study.

For trust and attitude, survey was designed the questions based on "I think that the branded posts about beauty and personal care products by influencers I follow on social media are…" and trust in branded post was measured with 6 items which are " ineffective/effective; unhelpful/ helpful; not functional/ Functional; unnecessary/

necessary; impractical/ practical ” from the study of T.-Y. Wu and Lin (2017). And attitude related questions were asked as “ attitude toward branded content” with 2 items “interesting/boring: pleasant/unpleasant ” from the study of Gong and Li (2017).

Perceived parasocial relationships was measured with the 3 items and adapted questions from the study of Reinikainen et al. (2020), perceived authenticity with 3 items from the study of Pöyry et al. (2019), perceived entertainment with 4 items “Not fun/ Fun, Dull/ Exciting, Not delightful/ Delightful, Unenjoyable/ Enjoyable and Not thrilling/ Thrilling” from the study of Lou & Yuan (2019) ; perceived informativeness with 3 items from the study of Ducoffe (1995). And finally, purchased intention was measured with 4 items from the study of H.-W. Kim, Xu, & Gupta(2012). Table 8 shows all items in listed and their references.

Table 8

Table of measured items

Variables	Items	References
Parasocial Relationship	The influencer makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends I think the influencer is like an old friend When I am watching the influencer, I feel as if I am part of her group.	Reinikainen,Munnukka,Maity,& Luoma-aho(2020).
Authenticity	Genuine Honest Sincere	Pöyry,Pelkonen, Naumanen & Laaksonen, (2019).
Entertainment	Not fun/Fun Dull/Exciting Not delightful/Delightful Unenjoyable/Enjoyable	Lou & Yuan (2019)

Informativeness	… supply relevant information ...provides timely information ... tell people about products when they need the information	Ducoffe(1995)
Trust	Dishonest/Honest Trustworthy/ untrustworthy Phony/Genuine Ethical/ unethical Sincere/ insincere Authentic/ not authentic	Wu & Lin (2017)
Attitude	Interesting/boring Pleasant/unpleasant.	Gong& Li (2017)
Purchase Intention	The probability that I would ... high If I were to ..., I would consider buying The likelihood of my purchasing ...high My willingness to buy ... is high	Kim& Gupta (2012)
Exposure to Infodemic by Influencers	I have seen information related to COVID-19 virus shared by influencers that I later found out as a hoax I have seen content on social media related to COVID- 19 shared by influencers that seem accurate at a time, and I later found was made up I have seen content on social media related to COVID-19 shared by influencers that was exaggerated, but was not aware it was exaggerated at the time of see	Apuke& Omar (2020)

2.7 Sampling Design

Before conducting the survey, the target group of the survey, sample size and sample technique was determined. In previous sections this determination is explained in detailed.

2.7.1 Target Population

The target population of the study is people who have access to social media platforms such as Instagram, Youtube etc. and who is older than 18 years old.

2.7.2 Sampling Techniques

Participants were found by applying the snowball method on digital platforms such as Instagram and Facebook etc. Snowball sampling is a technique which is applied extensively in social science studies. Snowball sampling is provided through the orientation of people who know and share with people with similar characteristics to the study (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

2.7.3 Sample Size

Previous studies which are analyzed by Smart PLS was focused on sample sizes over 350 (e.g. Chatterjee, Rana, & Dwivedi, 2021; Wiedmann, Hennigs, Schmidt, & Wuestefeld, 2011). Therefore, according to this information, the study was conducted with 445 people.

2.8 Data Collection Method

Before questionnaire was delivered to extended number of people, a pre-study was implemented and volunteer participants who are marketing students from Marmara University were asked to evaluate the survey to understand if there is a misunderstanding about the survey. 13 people were participated the study. And results showed that there is not a misunderstanding about the questions and all questions are clear. Volunteers recommended to add a few sections about general information about followed

influencers. Thereupon, it was added a few questions into influencer marketing related part of the questionnaire based on our participants' recommendations.

In order to test the hypothesis data was collected by an applying a survey as quantitative method. Questionnaire was prepared to measure the variables of exposure to Infodemic by influencers, perceived authenticity, perceived parasocial relationship, perceived entertainment, perceived informativeness, trust in branded post, attitude toward branded content and purchase intention. Participants were also asked demographic questions related to age, gender, income level, education level etc. and were asked to answer questions related to influencers and influencer marketing. For example, what type of influencers do they follow; influencer categories which have likelihood to change purchase intention of followers after influencers share branded beauty and personal care products, and influencer categories which are found credible by followers, when influencers share branded post about beauty and personal care products.

After implementing pre-study, the survey was redesigned based on the influencer related questions. Participants were found by applying the snowball method on digital platforms such as Instagram and Facebook and spreading it online. Total of 489 people were reached.

42 of them did not continue to answer questions because they did not follow any influencer on social media. Therefore, the data of these participants were extracted, and the analysis was continued with data from 447 people. Since 2 of them did not fully answer the demographic questions, the data of these 2 participants was not considered. As a result, analysis was conducted with the data of 445 people.

2.9 Data Analysis Method

To analyze the data, Smart PLS 3 was utilized. To make inferences about hypotheses, partial least square (PLS) path modeling was applied , since PLS-PM is fitted with exploratory and early-stage research (Benitez, Henseler, Castillo, & Schuberth, 2020). Due to its consistent prediction of linear and nonlinear latent variable models (Benitez et al., 2020), consistent PLS (PLSc) was applied, rather than traditional PLS. First, the consistent PLS algorithm were used to test Cronbach's alpha, average variance

extracted (AVE), construct reliability (CR), factors loading, model fit. Then, consistent PLS bootstrapping were applied for path analysis. 5000 subsamples, with a 95% significance level were considered.

3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

In the following sections non-response bias test, descriptive analysis of respondent, analysis of constructs, the model's of goodness of fit, analysis of the structural model, testing group differences will be clarified.

3.1 Non-Response Bias Test

Non-response bias is analyzed by using the extrapolation method, which is a well-known method to avoid non-response bias. This method gives possibility by comparing early and late responses to identify dissimilarity in variables (Armstrong & Overton, 1977). An independent sample t-test was applied to compare early respondents (280) and late respondents (165) as practiced by (Jusoh & Miryazdi, 2015) to analyze if there is a difference between variables. Therefore, all variables were analyzed by applying independent t-test. The results show that p values of parasocial relationship (t=-1,194; p=0,233), authenticity (t=-0,863; p=0,389), entertainment (t=0,257; p=0,798); informativeness (t=-0,417; p=0,677), trust (t=-1,139; p=0,255), attitude (t=-0,414; p=0,679), purchase intention (t=1,536; p=0,125) and exposure to Infodemic (t=1,343; p=0,180) are over 0,05 (See Table9). Therefore, it is assumed that there is not a difference between variables.

Table 9

Independent Samples t-Test Results

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Parasocial relationship	Equal variances assumed	1,417	,235	-1,194	443	,233
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,157	311,606	,248

Authenticity	Equal variances assumed	,076	,783	-,863	443	,389
	Equal variances not assumed			-,860	340,756	,390
Entertainment	Equal variances assumed	4,023	,046	,268	443	,789
	Equal variances not assumed			,257	300,554	,798
Informativeness	Equal variances assumed	,093	,760	-,417	443	,677
	Equal variances not assumed			-,409	323,099	,683
Trust	Equal variances assumed	,069	,793	-1,139	443	,255
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,132	336,940	,258
Attitude	Equal variances assumed	,985	,322	,414	443	,679
	Equal variances not assumed			,408	329,462	,683
Purchase Intention	Equal variances assumed	,312	,577	1,536	443	,125
	Equal variances not assumed			1,533	341,997	,126
Exposure to Infodemic	Equal variances assumed	,640	,424	1,343	443	,180
	Equal variances not assumed			1,319	324,417	,188

3.2 Descriptive Analysis of Respondents

Descriptive analysis of respondents includes the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of samples. As it was mentioned before, survey was conducted with 445 people. Previous section includes the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of 445 respondents.

3.2.1 Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics of Respondents

Sample demographics are shown in Table 10. 68,8% of sample consists of female, while only 31,20% of them are male. In the influencer marketing context, Instagram is the most preferred platform of marketers (Statista, 2019a). And Instagram's ad audiences are formed more as female than male (Statista, 2021). Therefore, gender distribution of our samples is consistent with target audiences of Instagram.

Table 10

Sample Demographics

Gender		Age		Education Level		Income Level	
Woman	**68,80%**	18-27	42,90%	Primary School	1%	0-1000	10%
Man	31,20%	28-35	41,80%	High School	5%	1001-3000	11%
		36-44	10,30%	University	65%	3001-5000	26%
		45-54	4%	Master/PHD	29%	5001-7000	21%
		55+	1,00%			7001-10000	19%
						10000+	13%

42,9% of sample consists of people who are between 18-27 years old, 41,8% of them is between 28-35 years old,10% of them are between 35-44 years old, 4% of them between 45-54 years old and only %1 percentage of them older than 55 years. This statistic shows that the sample mostly consists of young generation, which indicates that the data supports the fact that social media are applied mostly by young generation (Statista, 2019c).

Education level of sample is distributed as follow: 65% of sample is university level, 29% of them are Master/PHD level, 5% of them are high school level and only 1% of then are primary school level.

Income levels of sample shows that 26% of sample earn 3001-5000 TL, 21% of them earn 5001-7000 TL, 19% of them earn 7001-10000 TL,13% of them earn more than 10000TL, 11% of them earn 1001-3000 TL, and 10% of them earn 0-1000TL.

3.2.2 Influencer and Influencer Marketing Related Aspects

Influencer and influencer marketing related questions were asked to participants. According to results of the data, it turns out that the most preferred social media platform (See Fig.22.) to follow an influencer is Instagram by 71.7%, YouTube by 16.6%, twitter by 5.4%, Facebook by 1.1%, snapchat by 0.7%, 0.7% Tiktok. And 3.8% participants prefer other platforms.

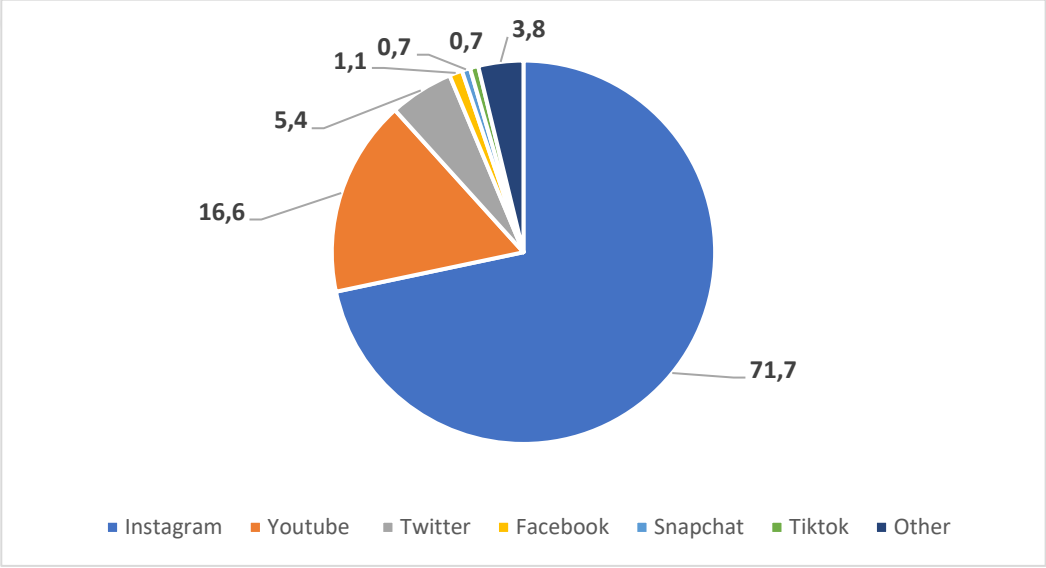

Figure 22 :Preferred social media platforms to follow influencers

The participants were asked if they had purchased a beauty and personal care product, after an influencer who they follow shared the product as a branded post. Results show that 45% of the participants bought the product after the post of the influencer, 55% of them have not bought it yet (See Fig.23).

Participants were asked which type of influencers they follow (see appendix4) and in question it was mentioned that they can choose more than one option. According to answers of participants, influencers who create food contents are the most followed one by samples. 282 people said that they follow influencers who share content about food. 198 people said that they follow influencers who create health/sport content and entertainment. It is followed by beauty influencers. 183 participants follow beauty influencers. 180 participants follow fashion related influencers.179 of them follow influencer who create home&decoration content. Travel influencers are followed by 128 of participants and 87 people said that they follow influencers which creates contents about Mom&Kid. There are also 225 people who mentioned that they follow also other types of influencers out of it was mentioned in the survey.

In the survey, participants were asked “in which field content-producing influencer do they find credible when the influencer share the branded beauty and personal care product” (see Appendix5). And 105 of them answered that they do not find influencers credible. Out of 340 people who find influencers credible, surprisingly influencers who share food content are the most mentioned one. 165 of them think travel influencers are credible in terms of sharing branded beauty and personal care product. It is followed by health/sport (120), home/decoration (104), beauty (101), fashion (99), mom/kid(84), entertainment(70).

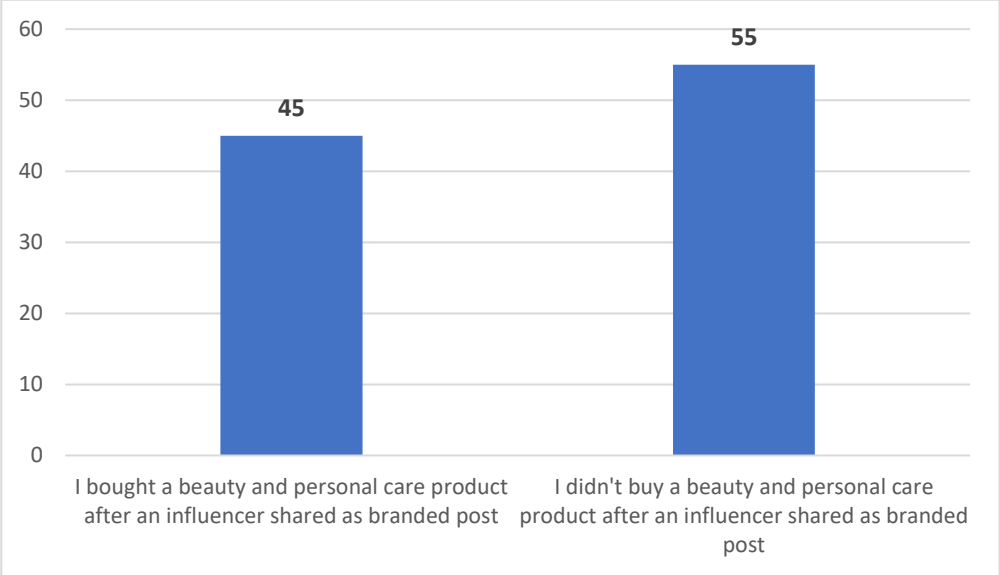

Figure 23: Have you already bought a beauty and personal care product, after an influencer shared it as a branded post?

Lastly, participants were asked “in which field content-producing influencer if shares a branded beauty and personal care products, do they have a possibility to purchase product” (see Appendix6). 90 of them answered that they do not buy the product after influencer share a branded content about beauty and personal care product. 355 people said that they would buy them. 160 of them mentioned this influencer would be beauty influencers. 120 of them think this would be fashion influencers. Travel influencers are third most mentioned one in this question with 116 people. And foods with 111 people, home/decoration with 101 people, health/sport with 99 people, entertainment with 73 people and lastly mom/kid with 60 people.

3.3 Analysis of the Constructs

Normality test was implemented by SPSS to understand if the data are normally distributed. The distribution of skewness and kurtosis values are presented in the Appendix 8.

Skewness and kurtosis values shows if there is a problem about normal distribution of the data. If the skewness is between +0,8 and -0,8 and kurtosis is between +3 and -3, this means that the data is normally distributed (George, 2011). The results of skewness and kurtosis values show that all values range from +1,067 to -1,103. This can be interpreted that all values are not out of +1,5 and -1,5. Therefore it can be said that the data is normally distributed.

Construct Reliability (CR) is a method to measure internal consistency. And the values of CR over 0,70 is acceptable (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2014) to be interpreted as there is internal consistency. Table 11 shows all construct reliability values. The results show that all construct reliability values are between 0,818 and 0,967. Therefore, since all values are above 0,70, it can be interpreted that all CR values are acceptable.

Cronbach's Alpha is another way of understanding internal consistency and it is a method to measure reliability (Wasko & Faraj, 2005). According to Hair et al. (2014), the values of Cronbach alpha over 0,70 are acceptable. In this study Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0,815 to 0,967. The result of PLS algorithm indicated that all values of Cronbach Alpha are above 0,70 for all variables, which is acceptable. Therefore, it can be said that data has internal consistency.

Discriminant validity and convergent validity are the evaluation way of construct validity (Chin, Gopal, & Salisbury, 1997). Convergent validity is measured by the average variance extracted (AVE) and standardized factor loadings (Wasko & Faraj, 2005). According to Hair et al.(2014), AVE values must be higher than 0,50 to be assumed as acceptable. Table 11 shows that values of AVE ranging from 0,600 to 0,874 which shows that all values are higher than acceptable value of 0,50 (Hair et al., 2014). And it can be seen on Table 11 that factors loadings of all items are between 0,712 and 0,962. The values are higher than 0,70 is acceptable for factor loadings (Benitez et al., 2020). Therefore, the values of factor loadings are also acceptable.

Table 11
Evaluation of scales for reliability and convergent validity

Constructs	Items	Standardized Loadings	Cronbach's a	CR	AVE
Authenticity	Authenticity1	0,791	0.904	0,907	0,763
	Authenticity2	0,948			
	Authenticity3	0,879			
Attitude	Attitude1	0,962	0.933	0,934	0,876
	Attitude2	0,910			
Entertainment	Entertainment1	0,823	0.900	0,903	0,702
	Entertainment2	0,752			
	Entertainment3	0,927			
	Entertainment4	0,835			
Informativeness	Informativeness1	0,819	0.892	0,892	0,735
	Informativeness2	0,846			
	Informativeness3	0,903			
Exposure to Infodemic	Exposure to Infodemic1	0,938	0.954	0,954	0,874
	Exposure to Infodemic2	0,908			
	Exposure to Infodemic3	0,957			
Parasocial	Parasocial R1	0,832	0.815	0,818	0,600
	Parasocial R2	0,776			
	Parasocial R3	0,712			
Purchase Int_	Purchase Int1	0,943	0.955	0,955	0,842
	Purchase Int2	0,877			
	Purchase Int3	0,901			
	Purchase Int4	0,947			
Trust	Trust1	0,872	0.967	0,967	0,830
	Trust2	0,944			
	Trust3	0,873			
	Trust4	0,875			
	Trust5	0,948			
	Trust6	0,947			

Another way of evaluating validity is discriminant validity. Table12 indicates correlation matrix and discriminant validity. According to Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015), if the HTMT values are under 0,85, two reflective constructs established a discriminant validity. And study of Voorhees, Brady, Calantone, and Ramirez (2016) states that 0,85 cutoffs provides best evaluation and this should be standard of marketing publications. Table 12 shows that each reflective construct is lower than 0,85. The correlations range from 0,008 to 0,699. This means that all variables are correlated between each other.

Table 12

Evaluation of correlation matrix and discriminant validity (HTMT)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Attitude								
2. Authenticity	0,406							
3. Entertainment	0,387	0,527						
4. Exposure to Infodemic	0,008	0,196	0,039					
5. Informativeness	0,394	0,600	0,616	0,047				
6. Parasocial	0,364	0,528	0,451	0,124	0,483			
7. Purchase Int_	0,699	0,410	0,259	0,024	0,396	0,310		
8. Trust	0,635	0,605	0,307	0,206	0,448	0,382	0,627	

3.4 The Model's Goodness of Fit

To evaluate the model fit, Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and Normal Fit Index (NFI) must be controlled. Therefore, following information indicates the information about model fit.

To be able to assume the model fits well, SRMR values must be lower than 0,08 (L. t. Hu & Bentler, 1999). The results of SMRM of this study is 0.034. Since it is lower than 0,08, SMRM can be acceptable. NFI is the other value to be able to assume the model fits well. In this context NFI values must be higher than 0.90 (Lohmöller, 1989). The

results show that NFI value equal to 0.922 which is higher than 0.90. Therefore, it can be said that NFI is also acceptable. According to results of NFI and SRMR, it can be said that model fits well.

3.5 Analysis of The Structural Model

The structural model was examined by PLS-PM. Table 14 shows the results of paths analysis. The table indicates that path coefficients, standard error, and T values. T values shows the significant relations of path analysis. According to analysis, which is shown on Table 14, following information was interpreted.

H1 estimates that perceived entertainment has a significant positive role in attitude toward branded content. The results show that perceived entertainment (ß= .185; SE=.052; p=.000) has a significant positive effect (H1) on attitude toward branded content. H2 estimates that perceived informativeness has a significant positive role in trust in branded post. Results show that perceived informativeness (ß=.152; SE=.057; p=0,008) has a significant positive effect on trust in branded post. Thus, H1 and H2 were supported.

H3 posits the positive impact of authenticity on trust in branded post. Results show that H3 was supported and perceived authenticity (ß= .492; SE=.058; p=.000) does have a role in trust in branded post. Thus, H3 was supported. H4 estimated the positive effect of parasocial relationship between followers and influencers and its role in attitude. The results revealed that parasocial relationship does not have a significant positive effect on attitude toward branded content (ß=.073; SE=.051; p=.153). Thus, only H4 was not supported.

H5, H6, H7, H8 predict the role of exposure to Infodemic by influencers. The results shows that H5 were supported and exposure to Infodemic by influencers has a significant negative effect on trust in branded post (H8; ß= -.105; SE=.042; p=.012). In testing H6, H8 it was revealed that exposure to Infodemic by influencers has a significant negative effect on perceived authenticity of influencers (H6; ß= -.196; SE=.057; p=.001; R^2=0.039) and perceived parasocial relationship (H8; ß= -.122; SE=.057; p=.032; R^2=0.015). Therefore, H6 and H8 were supported. Lastly, H7a and H7b were not

supported. Exposure to Infodemic by influencers does not play any role in (H7a) perceived entertainment (ß= -.030; SE=.066; p=.647) and (H7b) perceived informativeness (ß= -.024; SE=.067; p=.717) of posts shared by influencers.

H9, H10 and H11 posit the role of attitude and trust in purchase intention and role of trust in attitude. And results were revealed that all hypotheses were supported. H9 shows that attitude toward branded content has a significant positive role in purchase intention (ß=.504; SE=.063; p=.000); H10 indicates that trust in branded post has a significant positive effect on PI (ß=.307; SE=.061; p=.000) and H11 there is a significant positive effect of trust in branded post on attitude toward branded content (ß=.551; SE=.046; p=.000).

Finally, attitude (ß=0,504), and trust (ß=0,307) both significantly influence purchase intention and jointly explain 54% of the total variance in purchase intention. And authenticity (ß=0,491), exposure to Infodemic (ß=-0.100) and informativeness (ß=0,179) have a significant role in trust and they explain 39% of trust. Entertainment (ß=0,212), parasocial relationship (ß=0,097) and trust (ß=0,601) explains %45 total variance in attitude (See Table13).

Table 13

R Square Results

	R Square
Attitude	0,448
Authenticity	0,039
Entertainment	0,001
Informativeness	0,001
Parasocial	0,015
Purchase Int_	0,545
Trust	0,387

Table15 shows the indirect effects between variables. The results show that authenticity of influencer has an indirect effect on attitude toward branded content (ß=0,271; SE=0,040; p=.000) and purchase intention (ß=0,288; SE=0,041; p=.000). Perceived entertainment of branded content also has an indirect effect on purchase intention (ß=0,093; SE=0,027; p=.001).

Exposure to Infodemic by influencer has a negative indirect effect on attitude toward branded content (ß=-0,128; SE=0,039; p=.001), purchase intention (ß=-0,127; SE=0,036; p=.000) and trust in branded post (ß=-0,100; SE=0,037; p=.006).

Perceived informativeness of branded content has a positive indirect effect on attitude toward branded content (ß=0,084; SE=0,033; p=.010) and purchase intention (ß=0,089; SE=0,035; p=.012). Parasocial interaction between influencers and followers does not have indirect effect on purchase intention (ß=0,037; SE=0,027; p=.173). And lastly trust in branded content has an indirect influence on purchase intention (ß=0,277; SE=0,042; p=.000).

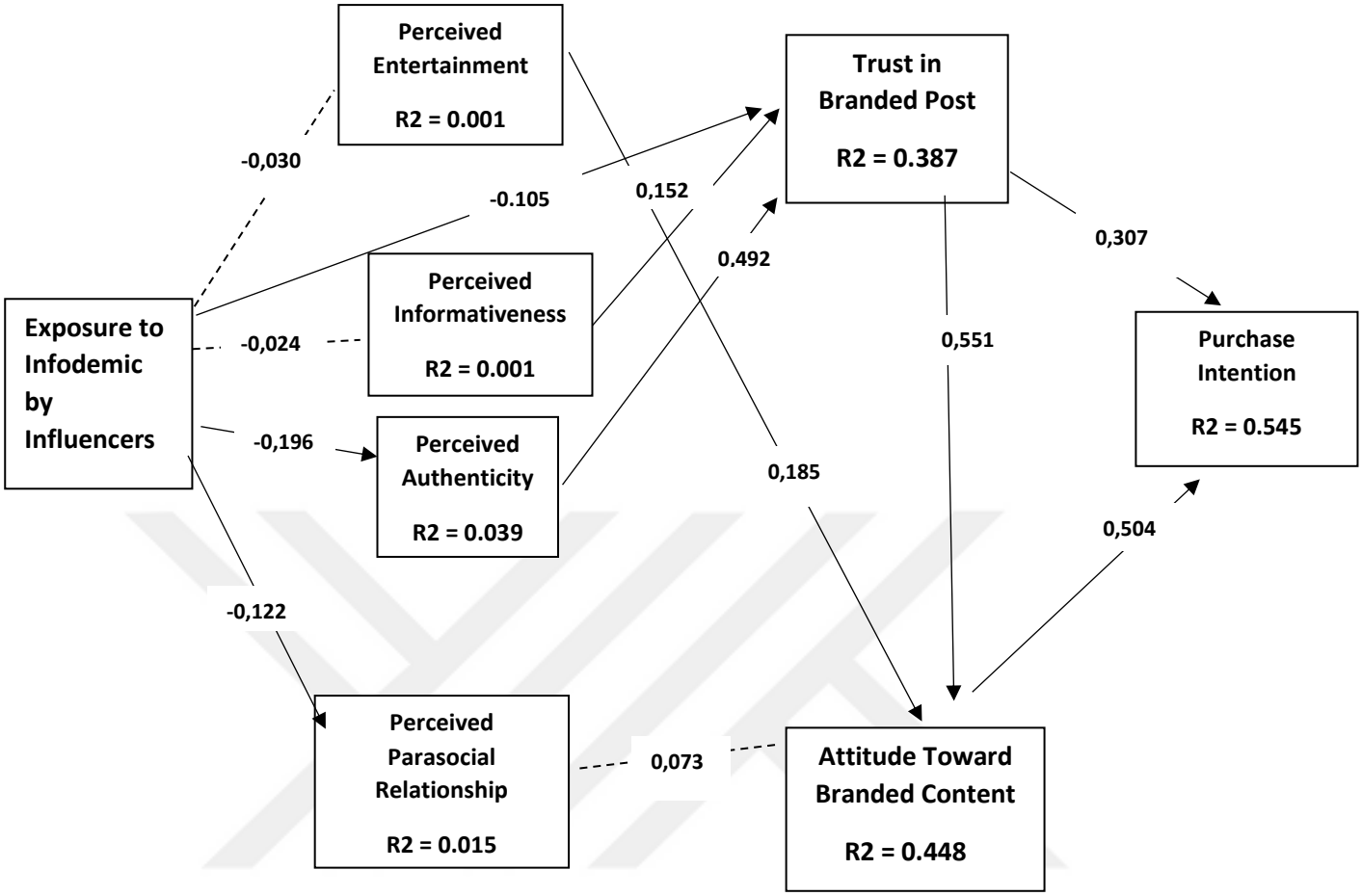

Figure 24: Hypothesized Model and Path Coefficients

Table 14

Structural Model Results

	Path Coefficients	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics
Attitude -> Purchase Int_	0,504	0,063	7,999***
Authenticity -> Trust	0,492	0,058	8,534***
Entertainment -> Attitude	0,185	0,052	3,562***
Exposure to Infodemic -> Authenticity	-0,196	0,057	3,463***
Exposure to Infodemic -> Entertainment	-0,030	0,066	0,458
Exposure to Infodemic -> Informativeness	-0,024	0,067	0,363
Exposure to Infodemic -> Parasocial	-0,122	0,057	2,149*
Exposure to Infodemic -> Trust	-0,105	0,042	2,499*
Informativeness -> Trust	0,152	0,057	2,653**
Parasocial -> Attitude	0,073	0,051	1,429
Trust -> Attitude	0,551	0,046	11,982***
Trust -> Purchase Int_	0,307	0,061	5,059***

p < .05*, p < .01, p < .001*****

Table 15

Total Indirect Effects

	Path Coefficients	Standard Error	T Statistics
Authenticity -> Attitude	0,271	0,040	6,777***
Authenticity -> Purchase Int_	0,288	0,041	7,074***
Entertainment -> Purchase Int_	0,093	0,027	3,475***
Exposure to Infodemic -> Attitude	-0,128	0,039	3,252***
Exposure to Infodemic -> Purchase Int_	-0,127	0,036	3,555***
Exposure to Infodemic -> Trust	-0,100	0,037	2,726**
Informativeness -> Attitude	0,084	0,033	2,567**
Informativeness -> Purchase Int_	0,089	0,035	2,512*
Parasocial -> Purchase Int_	0,037	0,027	1,362
Trust -> Purchase Int_	0,277	0,042	6,627***

p < .05*, p < .01, p < .001*****

Table 16

Summary of Hypothesis

	Hypothesis	Supported	Not Supported
H1	High perceived entertainment of influencer message content has a significant positive role in attitude toward branded content of influencer	x	
H2	High perceived informativeness of influencer message content has a significant positive role in trust in branded post	x	
H3	High perceived authenticity of influencers has a significant positive role in trust in branded post	x	
H4	High perceived parasocial relationship has a significant positive role in attitude toward branded content		x
H5	Exposure to Infodemic by influencers has a direct negative effect on trust in branded post	x	
H6	Exposure to Infodemic by influencers has a direct negative effect on perceived influencer authenticity	x	
H7	Exposure to Infodemic by influencers has a direct negative effect on perceived entertainment(a) and perceived informativeness(b)		x
H8	Exposure to Infodemic has a direct negative effect on perceived parasocial relationship	x	
H9	Attitude toward branded content has a significant positive role in purchase intention	x	
H10	Trust in branded post has a significant positive role in purchase intention	x	
H11	Trust in branded post has a significant positive role in attitude toward branded content	x	

3.6 Testing Group Differences

For further analysis, it was checked if there is a difference between mean of different income levels, age groups and gender in terms of purchase intention, attitude, trust, parasocial relation relationship, authenticity, entertainment and informativeness. For testing differences, it was applied to one way-ANOVA and independent t-test by utilizing SPSS.

First, gender group was considered to understand if there is a difference between gender in terms of trust, attitude and purchase intention, authenticity, entertainment, informativeness. An independent t tests was applied by using SPSS. Table 17 shows the results of independent t tests. The results show that there is a difference between men and women in terms of trust in branded post (t= -3,947; p=0,00); attitude toward branded content (t= -7,494; p=0,00) and purchase intention (t= -7, 9074; p=0,00). When comparing means of women and men in terms of trust; it can be said that women ($\bar{x}$= 2,4815) have more trust in branded post about beauty and personal care products than men ($\bar{x}$=2,1051). The result of attitude toward branded content also indicates that women($\bar{x}$=2,9397) have more attitude toward branded content about beauty and personal care products than men($\bar{x}$=2,1377). Lastly, the results of t-test shows that women ($\bar{x}$=2,7761) have more purchase intention than men ($\bar{x}$=1.9565). The further results of authenticity (t= -2,0345; p=0,04); informativeness (t= -3,3749; p=0,00) and entertainment (t= -3,2794; p=0,00) show that there are differences between groups. Women have more perceived influencer authenticity ($\bar{x}$= 2,6048) than men ($\bar{x}$= 2,4082). And perceived informativeness ($\bar{x}$= 3,3149) and entertainment ($\bar{x}$= 3,4829) of women are higher than perceived informativeness ($\bar{x}$= 2,9976) and entertainment ($\bar{x}$= 3,2101) of men. All in all, H12 a, b, c, d, e, f, g was supported. These results can be explained by beauty and personal care products are mostly preferred by women comparing to men (Statista, 2018), and this might affect their perception about content or post related to beauty and personal care products.

Table 17

Differences Between Respondents of Different Age, Income and Gender Group

Trust	**Gender**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**t**	**Sig.**
	Men	108	2,1051	0,9865	-3,9477	0,00
	Women	307	2,4815	0,9043		
Attitude	**Gender**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**t**	**Sig.**
	Men	108	2,1377	1,1103	-7,4947	0,00
	Women	307	2,9397	1,0132		
Purchase Intention	**Gender**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**t**	**Sig.**
	Men	108	1,9565	0,9806	-7,9074	0,00
	Women	307	2,7761	1,0247		
Authenticity	**Gender**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**t**	**Sig.**
	Men	108	2,4082	0,9471	-2,0345	0,04
	Women	307	2,6048	0,9328		
Entertainment	**Gender**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**t**	**Sig.**
	Men	108	3,2101	1,0146	-3,2794	0,00
	Women	307	3,4829	0,7018		
Informativeness	**Gender**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**t**	**Sig.**
	Men	108	2,9976	1,0598	-3,3749	0,00
	Women	307	3,3149	0,8458		
Purchase Intention	**Age**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**F**	**Sig.**
	18-27(1)	191	2,7029	1,0723	5,6211	0,00
	28-35(2)	186	2,5013	1,0900		
	36+(3)	68	2,0699	0,9343		
Attitude	**Age**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**F**	**Sig.**
	18-27(1)	191	2,8037	1,0560	0,1139	0,012
	28-35(2)	186	2,6398	1,1231		
	36+(3)	68	2,5147	1,1844		
Purchase Intention	**Income**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**F**	**Sig.**
	0-1000(1)	44	2,8636	1,2488	4,2120	0,00
	1001-3000(2)	47	2,3191	0,9594		
	3001-5000(3)	115	2,7196	1,0882		
	5001-7000(4)	95	2,6000	1,0783		
	7001-10000(5)	86	2,3866	1,0344		
	10000+(6)	58	2,1078	0,9237		

Second, age group was considered to understand if there is a difference between age group in terms of purchase intention and attitude. Table 17 shows the result of one-way ANOVA of age groups in terms of purchase intention and attitude. The result of one-way ANOVA shows that there is a difference between age groups in terms of purchase intention (F=5,6211; p=0,00) and attitude (F=0,1139; p=0,012), so H13a and b were supported. According to the result of post-hoc test, the differences in terms of purchase intention in different age groups are between 1-3; 2-3(See Fig.25). The age group between 18-27 has the most purchase intention. The age group 36+ has the least purchase intention. The result of attitude shows that age group between 18-27 has the greatest attitude toward branded content($\bar{x}$=2,8037). The age group 36+ has the least attitude toward branded content ($\bar{x}$= 2,5147).

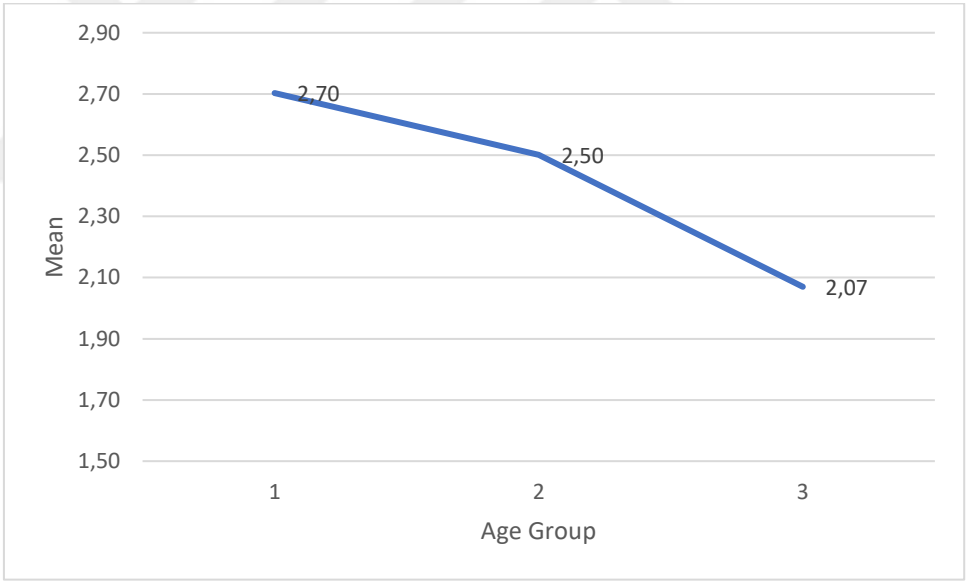

Figure 25: Mean of Purchase Intention According to Age Group

Last, income level was considered to understand if there is a difference between mean of different income levels in terms of purchase intention. Table 17 shows the one-way ANOVA results of different income levels. The results shows that there is a difference between respondents at different income levels in terms of purchase intention (F=4,212; p=0,00), so H14 was supported. To determine differences between groups post-hoc method was applied. According to the result of post-hoc the differences between income level groups are between 1-6; 3-6. Income group between 0-1000 has the most purchase intention comparing to other income group (see Figure 26). This can be explained by 80% of people who have income level between 0-1000 mostly consist of students and their income level might be mentioned without considering any other expenses such as rent, food etc.

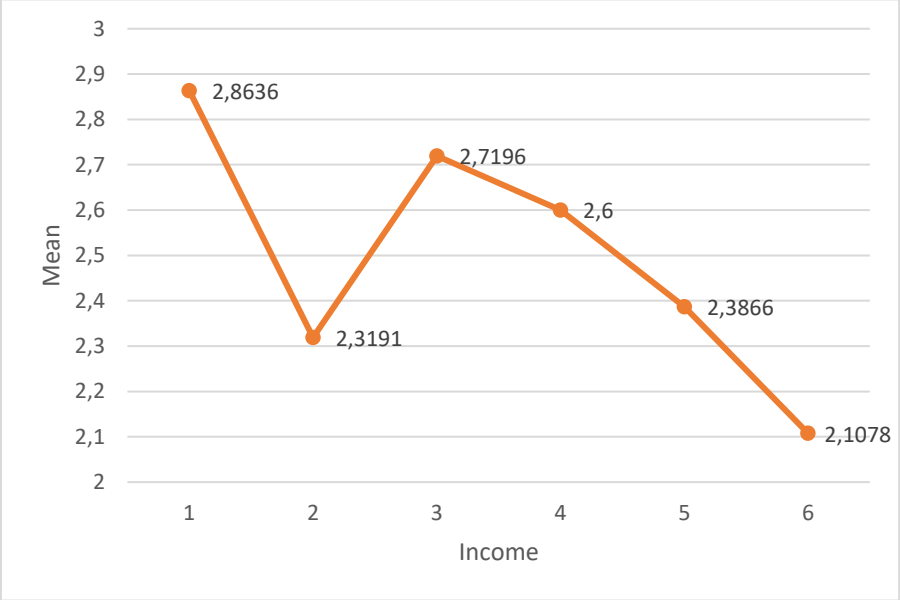

Figure 26: Mean of Purchase Intention According to Income Level

Table 18

Summary of Group Differences Hypothesis

	Hypothesis		Supported	Not Supported
H12	There is a difference between women and men in terms of	(a) purchase intention	x	
		(b) trust	x	
		(c) attitude	x	
		(d) entertainment	x	
		(e) informativeness	x	
		(f) authenticity	x	
H13	There is a difference between age groups in terms of	(a) purchase intention	x	
		(c) attitude	x	
H14	There is a difference between income levels in terms of	(a) purchase intention	x	

4 DISCUSSION

Nowadays, the importance of influencer marketing is increasing. Given the numerous Infodemic shared by influencers on social media during Covid19, it has become reasonably vital to understand people's perception on influencer marketing after exposure to Infodemic. Because the negative impact of Infodemic shared by influencers on the perception, trust, and behavior of misinformation on social media may result in negative marketing efficiency, therefore, this study proposes a new model to better understand influencer marketing. The study examines the role of Infodemic shared by influencers on social media in the Covid19 period as a new field of study. Also, the study extends the previous studies of Lou & Yuan(2019) in the field of influencer marketing and makes significant inferences.

After examining the proposed model, the results show that Infodemic, shared by influencers during the pandemic period, has an important role in influencer marketing. The exposure of the followers to Infodemic by the influencers has a significant negative effect on the trust in influencers' branded posts based on beauty and personal care products. This might be explained by misinformation may have negative effects on individuals' response and may cause distrust within the community (Barua et al., 2020). On the other hand, exposure to Infodemic by influencers negatively affects perceived influencer authenticity. This case might create a consequence that influencers are more perceived that they only focus on increasing the profit and sales number like Audrezet et al.(2018) mentioned in their study. Moreover, the results show that exposure to Infodemic by influencers affects parasocial relationship between influencer and followers negatively. This can explain negative effects of negative news about celebrities (e.g scandals) on parasocial relationship (M. Hu, 2016) due to broken expectation(M. Hu, 2016). However, when looking at the perceived informativeness and entertainment of content, it was observed that exposure to Infodemic by influencers does not play any role in them. This gives a different results than negative perception of people towards news quality for reaction of fake news and misinformation (Wagner & Boczkowski, 2019). This result can be interpreted as that exposure to Infodemic does not play any role in argument quality. The study also revealed the negative indirect effect of exposure to

Infodemic on purchase intention and attitude toward branded content.

Besides the exposure to Infodemic by influencers, important features of influencers and their post such as informativeness, entertainment, parasocial relationship, authenticity, and their correlation between trust in branded post and attitude toward branded content by considering elaboration likelihood model were examined. As a part of argument quality, perceived entertainment show it has a positive effect on attitude toward branded content, which has same results with past studies (e.g. Tsang, Ho, & Liang, 2004; ul Haq, 2009; Zha, Li, & Yan, 2015). And also perceived informativeness of posts has a significant positive effect on the trust in these branded posts, which is a same results of previous study of Lou & Yuan (2019). The study of M. Kim and Kim (2019) shows the positive effect of authenticity on trust. The study also showed the same direction result that was revealed that the authenticity of an influencer has a significant positive effect on trust in branded posts. On the other hand, when the relationship between parasocial relationship and attitude toward branded content is examined, contrary to the study of Yuan et al. (2016), this study shows that there is not a relationship between parasocial relationship and attitude. As a results, this study shows that the positive relationship of perceived informativeness, perceived authenticity with trust; and also perceived entertainment with attitude based on the elaboration likelihood model show that the authenticity of influencers and informativeness, entertainment of posts may cause that people high elaborate received information by influencers. And as a result, this affects attitude toward branded content and trust in branded posts in a positive way.

In addition theory of reasoned action was applied to examine the correlation between trust, attitude, and purchase intention. Results indicated that trust in the branded post has a significant positive impact on attitude toward branded content. Moreover, this study revealed that trust and attitude shape purchase intention positively. Results shows that trust in branded posts related to beauty and personal care products, and attitude toward the content of branded posts related to beauty and personal care products can positively affect followers' intentions to buy these products. This result proves theory of reasoned action's explanation of relationship between attitude, intention, and behaviors, because all hypotheses assumed based on theory of reasoned action were supported. This

showed that trust has a positive impact on attitude, and trust and attitude have positive impact on purchase intention. Finally, it can be said that perceived authenticity, informativeness, entertainment and parasocial relationship have an indirect effect on the purchase intention.

The study also revealed the indirect effects of variables. First, authenticity of influencer plays an indirect effect in attitude toward branded content and purchase intention. Exposure to Infodemic by influencers has a negative indirect effect on attitude toward branded content, purchase intention and trust in branded post.

Perceived informativeness of branded content has a positive indirect effect on attitude toward branded content and purchase intention. Moreover, parasocial relationship has a positive indirect effect on purchase intention. And lastly trust in branded content has an indirect influence on purchase intention.

5 CONCLUSION

In the following sections academic implications, managerial implications limitation and further research direction will be stated.

5.1 Academic Implications

This study is based on elaboration likelihood model and theory of reasoned action to measure variables that affect attitude, trust, purchase intention. The study tried to understand the role of authenticity and perceived informativeness variables on trust. It also measured the role of parasocial relationships and perceived entertainment variables on attitude. As a result of the study, it was hypothesized that authenticity might influence trust as it causes detailing the information received. As a result, it has been revealed that this relationship is in a positive way. In addition, in a same direction of previous studies showing that argument quality, one of the main studies of elaboration likelihood model, has a positive effect, it has been observed in this study that there is also an effect on both trust and attitude in terms of perceived entertainment and perceived informativeness. Contrarily, it has been revealed that there is no relationship between parasocial relations and attitude. As a result, the positive relationship between perceived authenticity with trust based on the elaboration likelihood model shows that the authenticity of influencers causes the information received by influencers to be detailed, and this provides trust in branded posts. Therefore, it can be said that high authenticity of influencers and informativeness, entertainment of posts may result in that follower may elaborate the information which is sent by influencers. And this causes to trust in influencers' branded posts and to have positive attitude toward branded content.

On the other hand, all hypotheses assumed based on theory of reasoned action were supported. This showed that trust has a positive impact on attitude, and trust and attitude have positive impact on purchase intention.

5.2 Managerial Implications

In the Covid19 period, people came across Infodemic shared by influencers(e.g. Lindsay, 2020; Waterson, 2020) quite often on social media. As a result of this study, it

can be said that exposure to false information shared by the people they inspire, influencers, plays an important role in the perceptions, trust of the followers. Therefore, it is important to focus on this model while creating influencer marketing strategies. With exposure to Infodemic by influencers, people's trust in the branded post, perceived influencer authenticity, and the perceived parasocial relationships between influencers and their followers have been negatively affected because of exposure to false information during Covid19. Therefore, influencers and marketers working in the field of influencer marketing should pay attention to build a strategy reducing the negative impact on the concepts of "trust in the branded post", "authenticity", "parasocial relations" as this may result in negative indirectly effects on the purchase intention and attitude as a result. It can be effective for brands to work with authentic influencers to increase followers' trust in branded posts. Besides, creating informative content for a branded post related to beauty and personal care products can be another positive factor to increase trust in branded posts. To develop a positive attitude towards the content of branded posts about a beauty and personal care product, brands should pay attention to whether the content includes entertainment or not. Also, since the trust in branded post results in a positive attitude toward branded content, trust in branded post and factors affecting trust again becomes significant here for attitude. Finally, the increase of the purchase intention about advertised beauty and personal care products depends on the trust in the branded post and positive attitude toward branded content. Therefore, it is vital to focus on the concepts mentioned above to increase consumer purchase intentions.

5.3 Limitations

This study also has its limitations. First, the study only focused on the branded post and branded content of beauty and personal care-related products. Since it was not focused on other sectors, the result might show differences when focusing on different industries. Second, it was not considered in this study the differences of the gender, age, and nationality factors may affect the relationship between dimensions. The study might give different results when taking consider the differences between these items. For example, since our gender demography consist mainly of women, the results may vary, if the decision of women may be biased compared to men. And, since the major age group

of this study are young people, the results might be different, when if mainly focusing on older age group. Third, it was not specified the type of influencers (e.g., micro, macro etc.) or expertness area of them (e.g., beauty, fashion, entertainment etc.) in this study, therefore results of exposure to Infodemic, perception, trust, attitude might show changes when detailing in these categories. For example, the results of influencer marketing questions shows that followers mostly trust influencers who produce food and travel contents, when they share branded posts about beauty and personal care products. Therefore, next studies might take also consider these factors, especially in terms of brand-influencer fit. Lastly, the study includes only people who live in Turkey, citizens from other countries did get involved in the study. Therefore, the result might be different when focusing on different cultures around the world.

5.4 Further Research Directions

Further research must be implemented for influencer marketing studies. This study only explains the relationship between variables in terms of beauty and personal care product industry. The other industries related to health, pharmaceutical can also focus on to understand if exposure to Infodemic by influencers affected the perception of consumers about influencers and trust in their branded posts. In this study influencer categories were not considered. The study can be extended in terms of different influencer categories as it is shown in Figure 17. And the study can be extended in terms of different influencer content categories. The result of influencer credibility questions show that participants find influencers who produce content about food and travel more credible (see Appendix 5) than other influencers. Therefore, next studies can be implemented to understand why people find food and travel influencers more credible in terms of beauty and personal care products. Thus, further studies can focus on influencer-brand fit. Further research should also take consider if influencers in different social media platforms affect the variables in a same direction.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1- Questionnaire in Turkish

SORU FORMU

SOSYAL MEDYA INFLUENCERLARININ TAKİPÇİLERİ ÜZERİNDEKİ ALGISI

Sayın katılımcı,

Bu çalışma, Marmara Üniversitesi İşletme Fakültesi, Üretim Yönetimi ve Pazarlama bölümü tez çalışması olan Sosyal Medya Influencerlarının takipçileri üzerindeki algısını incelemek amacıyla hazırlanmıştır. Soruların hiçbirinin "doğru cevabı" yoktur. Yanıtlarınız, anonim olarak, yalnızca bilimsel çalışma amacıyla kullanılacaktır. Sonuçların geçerliliği, soruları ve yanıtları dikkatlice okuyup size en uygun yanıtı vermenize bağlıdır.

Anketi yanıtlamak üzere zaman ayırdığınız ve katkı sağladığınız için teşekkür ederiz.

Yüksek Lisans Öğrencisi Ece ÜNALMIŞ

Doç.Dr. Taşkın DİRSEHAN

Influencer Nedir?
"Influencer, insanların davranışlarını etkileyen ya da değiştiren kişidir. Günümüzün yeni medya dünyasında influencer, sosyal medya kanallarında belirli bir güce ve popülerliğe sahip olan, hitap ettiği takipçi kitlesini etkileyen bilirkişidir.Bu bilirkişi konumlandırmasını influencer'ın kendisi değil, onun deneyim ve paylaşımlarının samimiyetine güvenip inanan takipçi kitlesi yapar. Influencer ünlü bir kişi, internet fenomeni, blogger, Youtube vloggerı ya da Instagram ünlüsü olabilir. "

Sosyal medya üzerinde influencer/ları takip ediyor musunuz?	☐Evet	☐Hayır	

Takip ettiğiniz sosyal medya influencerlarının yaptıkları güzellik ve kişisel bakım ürünü (örneğin: fondoten,krem, traş losyonu diş macunu vs.)ile ilgili daha önce yaptıkları markalı paylaşımlarından sonra bu ürün/leri satın aldınız mı?	☐Evet	☐Hayır	
Hangi alanda içerik üreten influencerları takip ediyorsunuz? (Birden fazla seçim yapabilirsiniz)	☐Güzellik ☐Seyahat ☐Moda ☐Eğlence ☐ Anne&Çocuk ☐Sağlık/Spor ☐Ev-Dekorasyon ☐Yemek ☐Diğer		
Güzellik ve kişisel bakım ürünleri ile ilgili markalı paylaşım yapan hangi alanda uzman influencerın paylaşımını güvenilir buluyorsunuz? (Birden fazla seçim yapabilirsiniz)	☐Güzellik ☐Seyahat ☐Moda ☐Eğlence ☐ Anne&Çocuk ☐Sağlık/Spor ☐Ev-Dekorasyon ☐Yemek ☐Diğer		

Hangi alanda içerik üreten influencer/ların yaptığı markalı güzellik ve kişisel bakım ürünü paylaşımından sonra o ürünü satın alma ihtimaliniz var?(Birden fazla seçim yapabilirsiniz)	☐Güzellik ☐Seyahat ☐Moda ☐Eğlence ☐ Anne&Çocuk ☐Sağlık/Spor ☐Ev-Dekorasyon ☐Yemek ☐Diğer		
Influencer/ları takip ederken en çok hangi platformu tercih ediyorsunuz?	☐Instagram ☐Facebook ☐Youtube ☐Twitter ☐Blog ☐Snapchat ☐Tiktok		
Yaşınız			
Cinsiyetiniz	☐Kadın	☐Erkek	
Medeni Durumunuz	☐Bekar ☐Evli		

Eğitim Durumunuz	☐İlkokul Mezunu ☐Lise Mezunu ☐Üniversite ☐Yüksek Lisans/Doktora		
Çalışma Durumunuz	☐ Çalışmıyorum ☐Öğrenciyim ☐Part-time çalışıyorum ☐Full-time çalışıyorum ☐Emekliyim		
Gelir Durumunuz	☐0-999 ☐1000-3000 ☐3001-5000 ☐5001-7000 ☐7001-10000 ☐10001+		

Lütfen sosyal medyada takip ettiğiniz influencerları dikkate alarak aşağıdaki soruları cevaplayınız

		Kesinlikle Katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Ne Katılıyorum ne Katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum
1	Sosyal medyada takip ettiğim Influencer/lar, sanki arkadaşımlaymışım gibi rahat hissetmemi sağlıyor					
2	Sosyal medyada takip ettiğim influencer/ların eski bir arkadaşım gibi olduğunu düşünüyorum.					

3	Sosyal medyada takip ettiğim Influencer/ları izlerken/takip ederken onun grubunun bir parçası olduğumu hissediyorum.					

		Kesinlikle Katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Ne Katılıyorum ne Katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum
	Sosyal medyada takip ettiğim influencer/ların … olduğunu düşünüyorum					
4	hilesiz/içi dışı bir					
5	dürüst					
6	samimi					

		Kesinlikle Katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Ne Katılıyorum ne Katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum
	Sosyal medyada takip ettiğim influencer/ların yaptıkları paylaşımların / güncellemelerin … olduğunu düşünüyorum					
7	eğlenceli					
8	heyecan verici					
9	zevkli olduğunu					
10	keyifli olduğunu					

		Kesinlikle Katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Ne Katılıyorum Ne Katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum
	Sosyal medyada takip ettiğim influencer/ların yaptıkları paylaşımların / güncellemelerin … düşünüyorum					
11	amacına uygun bilgiler sağladığını					
12	güncel bilgiler sağladığını					
13	ihtiyacım olan bilgiyi verdiğini					

Soru		Kesinlikle Katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Ne Katılıyorum ne Katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum
	Sosyal medyada takip ettiğim influencer/ların güzelilk ve kişisel bakım ürünleri ile ilgili yaptıkları markalaşmış paylaşımların … olduğunu düşünüyorum					
14	dürüst					
15	güvenilir					
16	hilesiz					
17	etik					
18	samimi					
19	doğru					

		Kesinlikle Katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Ne Katılıyorum ne Katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum
20	Sosyal medyada takip ettiğim influencer/ların güzelilk ve kişisel bakım ürünleri ile ilgili yaptıkları markalı paylaşımların içeriğinin oldukça ilgi çekici olması hoşuma gidiyor					
21	Sosyal medyada takip ettiğim influencer/ların güzelilk ve kişisel bakım ürünleri ile ilgili yaptıkları markalı paylaşımların içeriğinin oldukça keyifli olması hoşuma gidiyor					

Soru		Kesinlikle Katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Ne Katılıyorum ne Katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum
22	Sosyal medyada takip ettiğim influencerın markalı paylaşımını yaptıkları güzelilk ve kişisel bakım ürünlerini satın alma ihtimalim oldukça yüksektir.					
23	Eğer bir güzelilk ve kişisel bakım ürünü satın almak istersem, bu sosyal medyada takip ettiğim influencerın markalı paylaşımını yaptıkları ürünlerden olur.					
24	Sosyal medyada takip ettiğim influencerın markalı paylaşımını yaptıkları güzelilk ve kişisel bakım ürünlerini satın alma olasılığım oldukça yüksektir.					
25	Sosyal medyada takip ettiğim influencerın markalı paylaşımını yaptıkları güzelilk ve kişisel bakım ürünlerini satın alma istekliliğim oldukça yüksektir.					

Soru		Kesinlikle Katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Ne Katılıyorum ne Katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum
26	COVID-19 döneminde sosyal medyada sıklıkla influencerlar tarafından paylaşılan ,daha sonra bir aldatmaca olduğunu öğrendiğim bilgiler ile karşılaştım					
27	COVID-19 döneminde sosyal medyada sıklıkla influencerlar tarafından paylaşılan, abartılan, ancak görüldüğünde abartı olduğu farkedilmeyen içeriklerle karşılaştım					
28	COVID-19 döneminde sosyal medyada sıklıkla influencerlar tarafından paylaşılan, ilk seferde doğru görünen ; ama sonrasında doğru olmadığını öğrendiğim içerikler ile karşılaştım.					

Appendix 2 - Questionnaire in English

QUESTIONARE

THE PERCETION OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON THEIR FOLLOWERS

Dear participant,

This study was prepared to examine the perception of Social Media Influencers, which is a thesis study of Marmara University Faculty of Business Administration, Production Management and Marketing Department, on their followers. None of the questions have a "correct answer". Your answers will be used anonymously, for scientific study purposes only. The validity of the results depends on you carefully reading the questions and answers and giving you the most appropriate answer.

Thank you for taking the time and contributing to answering the questionnaire.

What is an Influencer?
"An influencer is someone who influences or changes people's behavior. In today's new media world, the influencer is an expert who has a certain power and popularity in social media channels and affects the audience that it addresses. This expert is positioned not by the influencer itself, but by the followers who trust and believe in the sincerity of his experiences and shares. Influencer can be a famous person, internet phenomenon, blogger, Youtube vlogger or Instagram celebrity. "

Do you follow influencer / s on social media?	☐Yes	☐No	
Have you already bought a beauty and personal care product (for example: foundation, cream, shaving lotion, toothpaste etc.), after an influencer shared it as a branded post??	☐Yes	☐No	
In which field do you follow content	☐Beauty ☐Travel		

producing influencers? (You can choose more than one)	☐Fashion ☐Entertainment ☐Mom&Child ☐Health/Sport ☐Home-Decoration ☐Food ☐Other		
In which content creating influencers do you find credible when they share branded post about beauty and personal care product? (You can choose more than one)	☐Beauty ☐Travel ☐Fashion ☐Entertainment ☐Mom&Child ☐Health/Sport ☐Home-Decoration ☐Food ☐Other		
in which field content-producing influencer if shares a branded beauty and personal care products, do you have a possibility to purchase product? (You can choose more than one)	☐Beauty ☐Travel ☐Fashion ☐Entertainment ☐Mom&Child ☐Health/Sport ☐Home-Decoration ☐Food ☐Other		
Which platform do you prefer most while following the influencer / s?	☐Instagram ☐Facebook ☐Youtube ☐Twitter ☐Blog ☐Snapchat ☐Tiktok		

Age			
Gender	☐Woman	☐Man	
Marital Status	☐Single ☐Married		
Education	☐Primary School ☐High School ☐University ☐Master/PHD		
Job Status	☐unemployed ☐student ☐Part-time ☐Full-time ☐Retired		
Income	☐0-999 ☐1000-3000 ☐3001-5000 ☐5001-7000 ☐7001-10000 ☐10001+		

Please answer the questions below, considering the influencers you follow on social media.

		I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	I agree	I strongly agree
1	The influencers I follow on social media make me feel comfortable as if I am with my friend.					
2	I think the influencers I follow on social media are like an old friend of mine.					
3	While watching / following the influencers I follow on social media, I feel that I am a part of her group.					

		I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	I agree	I strongly agree
	I think the influencers I follow on social media are…					
4	Genuine					
5	Honest					
6	Sincere					

		I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	I agree	I strongly agree
	I think the posts / updates of influencers / s that I follow on social media are…					
7	Fun					
8	Exciting					
9	Delightful					
10	Enjoyable					

		I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neither agree nor Disagree	I agree	I strongly agree
	I think the posts / updates of influencers / s that I follow on social media are…					
11	… supply relevant information					
12	...provides timely information					
13	... tell people about products when they need the information					

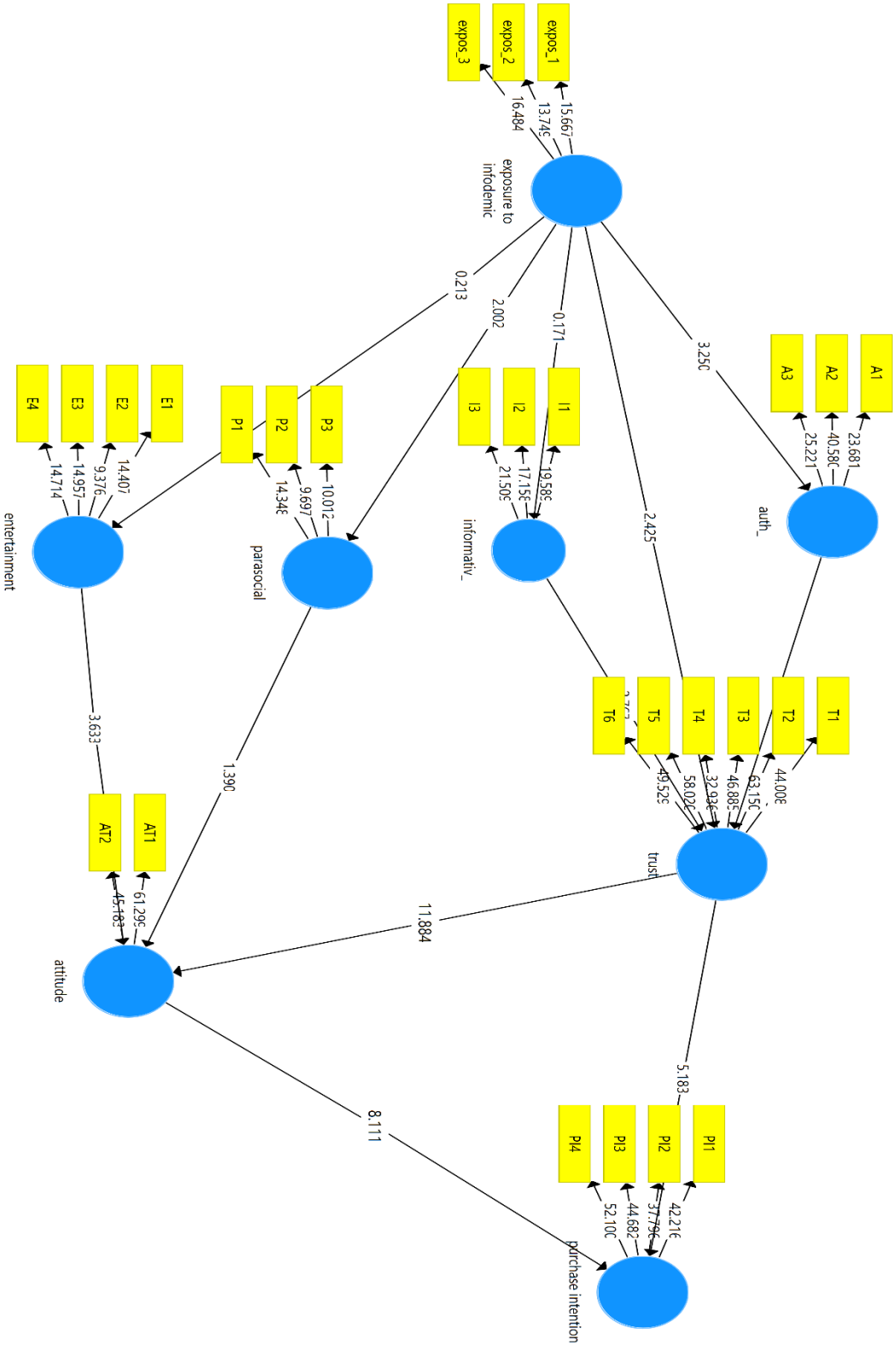
		I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	I agree	I strongly agree
	I think that the branded posts which are shared by influencers that I follow on Instagram are…					
14	Dishonest/Honest					
15	Trustworthy/ untrustworthy					
16	Phony/Genuine					
17	Ethical/ unethical					
18	Sincere/ insincere					
19	Authentic/ not authentic					

		I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	I agree	I strongly agree
20	I like that the content of the branded posts about the beauty and personal care products of the influencers I follow on social media is quite interesting.					
21	I like that the content of the branded posts about beauty and personal care products by influencers that I follow on social media is quite enjoyable.					

		I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	I agree	I strongly agree
22	It is very likely that I will buy the beauty and personal care products that the influencer I follow on social media share with brands.					
23	If I want to buy a beauty and personal care product, this is one of the products that the influencer I follow on social media share with brands.					
24	I have a high probability of buying the beauty and personal care products they share with the branded influencer I follow on social media.					
25	I have a high willingness to buy the beauty and personal care products that the influencer I follow on social media share with brands.					

		I strongly disagree	I disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	I agree	I strongly agree
26	During the COVID-19 period, I came across information shared by influencers frequently on social media, which I later learned was a scam.					
27	During the COVID-19 period, I encountered content that was frequently shared by influencers on social media, exaggerated but not noticeable when seen					
28	During the COVID-19 period, shared by influencers on social media, it seems right at the first time; but then I came across content that I learned was not correct.					

Appendix 3- Path Analysis of The Model



Appendix 4- Influencer categories which are followed by samples.

Categories	Number of People
Beauty	183
Mom&Kid	87
Entertainment	198
Home-Decoration	179
Fashion	180
Health/Sport	198
Travel	128
Food	282
Other	225[1]

[1] more than one choice

Appendix 5- Influencer categories which are found credible by samples, when influencers share branded post about beauty and personal care products.

I find them credible	340
I do not find them credible	105

Categories	**Number of people**
Beauty	101
Mom&Kid	84
Entertainment	70
Home-Decoration	104
Fashion	99
Health/Sport	120
Travel	165
Food	167
Other	34 [2]

[2] more than one choice

Appendix 6- Influencer categories that samples have a possibility to purchase the product, after influencer shared a branded content of beauty and personal care products.

I would buy the product after they share a branded content	355
I do not buy the product after they share a branded content	90

Categories	**Number of people**
Beauty	160
Mom&Kid	60
Entertainment	73
Home-Decoration	101
Fashion	120
Health/Sport	99
Travel	116
Food	111
Other	70[3]

[3] More than one choice

Appendix 7- Measures of Central Tendency and Dispersion

Construct/Item	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Parasocial Relationship	2,49	0,846	0,221	-0,361
Authenticity	2,54	0,94	-0,54	-0,602
Perceived Entertainment	3,17	0,777	-0,955	1,067
Perceived Informativess	3,21	0,928	-0,848	0,197
Attitude	2,66	1,04	-0,229	-1,103
Trust	2,36	0,945	0,11	-0,772
Exposure to Infodemic	3,36	0,976	-0,648	-0,228
Purchase Intention	2,51	1,07	0,129	-0,906