



**THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS
ON THE CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

Master's Thesis

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MASTER'S THESIS

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON THE CONSUMER DECISION- MAKING PROCESS

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This thesis focuses on analyzing the different social media platforms to understand marketing strategies for promoting various brands on the market to influence the consumer's purchasing decision. Furthermore, the study demonstrates the factors and levels of influence affecting the consumer decision-making process in recent years. Besides, depict the strategies and visions social media influencers use to make their followers prefer one brand over another by studying their community's consumer behavior and buying intentions.

Accordingly, the study used a qualitative research method with an online database from the literature review and primary data collected from interviews with different social media influencers.

The study's superior results revealed that the best method to segment the market as a social media influencer is to target psychological characteristics such as self-image and attitudes of their followers. Also, the findings of the marketing communication strategy and relationship marketing faced by social media influencers; both sides (influencers and their followers) rely on one another to build a long-term and trustworthy relationship that will benefit all parties.

Keywords: Social media platforms, influencers, Influencer marketing, Consumer behavior, Decision-making ...

ÖZET

SOSYAL MEDYA INFLUENCERLARININ (KANAAT ÖNDERLERİNİN) MÜŞTERİ KARAR VERME SÜRECİ ÜZERİNDE ETKİLERİ

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Uluslararası İşletme Yüksek Lisans Tezi

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Danışman: Doç. Dr. Hakan Sezerel

Bu tez, tüketicinin satın alma kararını etkilemek için pazarda çeşitli markaları tanıtmak için pazarlama stratejilerini anlamak için farklı sosyal medya platformlarını analiz etmeye odaklanmaktadır. Ayrıca, çalışma, son yıllarda tüketici karar verme sürecini etkileyen faktörleri ve etki düzeylerini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, sosyal medya etkileyicilerinin, topluluklarının tüketici davranışlarını ve satın alma niyetlerini inceleyerek takipçilerinin bir markayı diğerine tercih etmesini sağlamak için kullandıkları stratejileri ve vizyonları tasvir edin.

Buna göre, çalışma, literatür taramasından çevrimiçi bir veritabanı ve farklı sosyal medya etkileyicileriyle yapılan görüşmelerden toplanan birincil verilerle nitel bir araştırma yöntemi kullanmıştır.

Çalışmanın sonuçları, bir sosyal medya etkileyicisi olarak pazarı segmentlere ayırmanın en iyi yönteminin, takipçilerinin benlik imajı ve tutumları gibi psikolojik özelliklerini hedef almak olduğunu ortaya koydu. Ayrıca sosyal medya fenomenlerinin karşılaştığı pazarlama iletişimi stratejisi ve ilişkisel pazarlamaya ilişkin bulgular; her iki taraf da (etkileyiciler ve takipçileri), tüm tarafların yararına olacak uzun vadeli ve güvenilir bir ilişki kurmak için birbirlerine güvenmeleridir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal medya platformları, Sosyal medya etkileyicileri, Etkileyici pazarlama, Tüketici davranışı, Karar verme...

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INTRODUCTION

Today, the revolution in information and communication technologies paved the way for a paradigm shift in modern marketing, which is faithful to the sale and purchase via social media in different forms based on marketing information systems. Hence, businesses and consumers cannot ignore the new technologies. Considering the data of internetworldstats.com for 2020, there are 4.930 billion internet users worldwide, representing approximately 63.2% of the world's population. For example, in France, there are more than 60 million internet users representing about 92% of France's population rate. Likewise, there are about 69 million Internet users in Turkey, which is about 82% of Turkey's population (internetworldstats.com, 2020). Also, looking at another data from wearesocial.com for 2020, there are approximately 3.9 billion social media users worldwide. Just in Europe, there are about 470.5 million social media users, representing 55% of Europe's population rate; however, in Africa, there are 217.5 million users, representing only 16% of its population rate (wearesocial.com, 2020). So, by considering the above data, we can say the internet and social media have an important place in daily human life.

In this direction, the development of the internet has brought new marketing applications that transformed social media into a new media environment by breaking down the traditional media understanding. In the emerging new media environment, internet users have made themselves able to write their opinions, feelings, thoughts, and suggestions on every subject. In addition, the social media environment made it possible for users to communicate. Thus, social media users have become content producers (named prosumers) by being involved in many contents produced through social media and mutual communication. As a result, social media users have become active participants while they are passive buyers of traditional advertising (Truzoli et al., 2021).

Subsequently, social media environments have revealed people called "influencers" or social media celebrities followed by many people. Influencers in social media environments lead the behavior of their followers about a product, brand, or service through their social media profiles and transform them into potential customers. Influencers are considered the barometers of social media. They would embody the trends through their comments, discoveries, and inventions (Leite & Baptista, 2021). For example, Audible, an Amazon company, provides monthly memberships for audiobooks and podcasts, and the marketing team often collaborates with celebrities and

influencers of all sizes, including micro-influencers. Photographer Jesse Driftwood (@jessedriftwood) mentioned using Audible to learn more about company management and productivity in the caption of one particular Instagram post. Driftwood has over 156K followers (and probably had fewer), but the Audible team realized that his fans are very devoted and engaged. His short tale makes followers feel like they are getting a genuine recommendation from a friend. According to Nielsen, 83 percent of customers prefer personal recommendations over traditional advertising, so it is no surprise that one commenter said he was "looking forward to giving it a try" (@jessedriftwood).

Thus, brands and companies are attentive to the good word preached by these famous people. In the definition, an influencer is someone whose posts are more likely to be relayed than those of a typical social media user (Sammis et al., 2015). Intuitively, influencers are those with the most subscribers, followers, or visits to their blog. A social media user can become an influencer by posting for a niche audience or sharing content with real added value on social media (Werner, 2022). The influencer is responsible for making the right choices regarding partnerships. They can promote products and services in different fields. Generally, the sectors mainly focus on beauty, fashion, travel, gastronomy, culture, and sport (Sammis et al., 2015).

Furthermore, nowadays, everyone is encountering all types of marketing every day, especially in social media, which has become one of the popular sources that a person can take as a reliable reference to buy any product. Due to the significant number of companies and products in the market, brands are struggling to find the best way to have a peculiar marketing strategy and better publicity for their product. For instance, a person would listen to the opinion of an influencer rather than an advertiser, which makes influencer marketing a highly effective marketing weapon because it fully integrates the communication strategy of companies. However, one should not rely purely on the number of subscribers of these social media celebrities (Frölander & Gullbrandsson, 2022 and Cooley & Parks, 2019). The number of followers or the term "big community" is not synonymous with real influence. The influencer needs to demonstrate trust in their community. They must be consistent in their speech and maintain a close relationship with their subscribers, allowing them to interact and get feedback on the products or services they promote. Today, the influencer is fully established as a prescriber for brands by studying the desires of their community of followers and converting them into a 'want' to 'demand' relationship for successful marketing

(Erin, 2020). Therefore, the critical method to interpret this into an effective marketing strategy is to analyze the form and properties of the consumer, the consumer's physiological, situational, social, and cultural influences, and the environment.

Consequently, consumer behavior studies all these variables, including people, groups, or some organizations' motivations, skills, learnings, attitudes, awareness, and preferences. To increase revenue, profits, popularity, expertise, and choice, customer behavior is vital for brand/service owners. For potential customers, influencers should stay away from conventional brand management. The studies examining the category of target customer may also vary in that the consumer's actions may differ from any other type of consumer listed under the different product categories (Belanche, 2021).

This study examines the impact that influencers have on consumers' decision-making process. The first part of the study explains the development of the internet and the concepts of internet advertising. The second part describes the stages of the consumer's decision-making process and the determinant factors of consumer behavior. In the last part of the study, the role of social media influencers affecting consumer behavior will be analyzed according to social media Instagram influencers by using the online interviews and questionnaires in the methodology section.

The Problem of Study

The new trend of doing business has been radically changed with the introduction of the internet to the world, specifically with social media platforms playing a significant role in consumer decision-making (Cooley & Parks, 2019). Hence the traditional way of doing business cannot go for long sustainably because creating attractive and successful advertising takes time and costs substantial resources. Brands may avoid significant investments by dedicating more effort to finding influencers vested in the products and building solid connections with influencers (Palonkoski, 2021). Building relationships with influencers has been recognized as a technique to assist companies in increasing brand awareness, supporting product launches, and improving the brand's image (Ferina et al., 2021).

Companies use marketing research to manage the risks of offering new products and services. Customers always follow a particular product to know its pros and cons and monitor the

reviews from the general public after using such products. Thereby, the customer's decision is significantly influenced by social media and by these influencers, to be exact. Therefore, the consumer needs to make an act of purchase because there is a need to satisfy. But for this act to succeed, social media content creators will push the consumer and influence their behavior to proceed with the purchase. Previous studies have identified events, training programs, input assistance, feedback, direct communication, free product distribution, and special discounts to develop relationships with influencers and followers (Lou, 2021). However, according to Delbaere et al. (2020), communication techniques that appeal to influencers require more investigation. Especially for followers as they present potential customers because social media influencers must be innovative to overcome resource restrictions while conducting marketing activities (Delbaere et al., 2020).

This study focused on the impact of social media influencers on the consumer's decision-making process since most studies focused on the relationship between the brand and the consumer or the brand and the influencer (Demirel, 2020; Elyousfi, 2019; and Erdoğan, 2020). Therefore, to fill the gap, this study will focus more on the relationship between the social media influencer and the potential consumer (their followers), to more understand the behavioral impacts that make the purchase decision.

Concerning the above problems, this study will overcome the issue by deeply examining a new marketing strategy that aims to understand more the influence of these content creators on a company's brand. Besides, it deals with how influencers manage to affect so many followers and their purchase decision and build a connection with both the brand and the consumer; and become a reliable background that people check before buying any product.

Importance of Study

Research conducted by a team of fellows of the Society for New Communications Research to explore the link between customer care and brand reputation in the age of social media revealed that a staggering 74% of people would choose companies or brands based on others' experiences shared online. So, to say that a third-party endorsement is critical for today's socially engaged consumers would potentially be the understatement of the year (Barnes, 2008, p5).

The impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior has been little studied and research on the topic reached mixed results (Arsenis, T. & Evi. 2020 and Elyousfi, 2019). According to TAWA (an influence marketing digital platform based in Tunisia), the influence marketing market in Tunisia is getting increasingly established. At present, it has over 1,000 influencers. However, thorough research must be conducted to comprehend a market's exclusive features. Therefore, studying the influencers of the Tunisian market will be the perfect example since it is on the horizon and increasing day by day. Also, as a small country, the study will be much more accurate, and the results will be more effective.

The study explores the factors that will affect the customer's decision-making process and help brands concentrate on their weak points to attract and retain customers by offering better products and services. In addition, the companies can use the findings to devise their marketing and selling approach in such a way that will be more appealing for the consumer to decide to buy their products and services. Also, scholars interested in pursuing similar studies could use this research as their study's basis and extend the findings to specific sectors.

Objectives of Study

With the development of the internet, companies worldwide are more involved in the social media platform markets, and social media influencers have become the face of their brand and leading advertisers. Hence, these influencers filled the gap between the brand and the consumer (Lou, 2021). Therefore, this study aims to make a descriptive study on understanding the impact of these social media influencers on consumer decision-making. The secondary objectives of the study are as follows:

- To determine the significant difference between a celebrity and an influencer in perceived self-identification, persuasion, and trust towards the customer's decision-making process.
- Statement and identify required elements for practical application of influencer marketing and take advantage of them in the application and practice.
- To highlight the role of influencer marketing in building the company's competitive advantage and creating value for their customers, which helps to attract them and, at the same time, increases companies' sales.
- To identify the importance of a social media influencer in building a marketing strategy.

- Make recommendations to influencers to help them construct effective designs and implementation strategies related to influencer marketing.
- To Identify the critical role of social media influencers in affecting consumer behavior.

Research Questions

- How do social media influencers contribute to the purchase decision-making process?
- How do social media influencers affect consumer decisions?
- How do social media influencers implement marketing to help brands?
- How do social media influencers affect buying behavior?
- How do social media influencers keep the relationship strong with their followers/potential customers?

Limitations of Study

Although this research covers the target consumer a social media influencer has influenced to purchase a product, some limitations must consider. First, this research only covers the consumers in Tunisia because the Tunisian market has been evolving recently in this type of marketing strategy. Therefore, it will be the perfect example to prove how this advertising method is much more effective than the traditional ones.

Secondly, it can be understood from the in-depth interviews and questionnaires that there are considerable gender differences in shopping habits. For the interviews, mostly reached gender is female.

Thirdly, it was hard to apply zoom interviews for all the interviewed influencers because of their time availability.

Lastly, the online interviews it has been done online by using Zoom Meeting so it can be recorded for the interviewer to go back and analyze any part of the study. The questionnaires have been sent and answered by the influencers who do not want to be recorded through their professional emails.

Definition of Terms

Social Media:

According to the Oxford Dictionary of English (2020), social media is “Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking”.

Social Media Influencers:

Social Media Influencers are independent third-party endorsers who use social media networks to “shape the audience” (Takahashi et al., 2021).

Influencer Marketing:

Influencer marketing is the art and science of engaging people who are influential online to share brand messaging with their audiences (Farivar, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Internet is a network that attracts millions of users all over the world. The popularization of this network has led to a revolution in the marketing field, in particular the marketing strategy of companies and the development of digital marketing. With the emergence of web 2.0, the need to be present on social networks is indisputable for companies that must adapt their communication, not be limited only to a website, television, or press..., and open up to the world of digital.

Social networks continue to attract more and more people to the Internet. As a result, whatever its size and targets, the company can no longer ignore social networks because they represent valuable channels for developing awareness and highlighting the company's added value. It is therefore essential for a company to change its marketing strategy by switching to a digital system to be present in the minds of its customers.

1. The New Concept of Social Media

1.1. The Development of the Internet: Evolution Web 1.0, 2.0, 3.0 to 4.0

The history of the Internet has been focused on the linking four computers to the ARPANET network sponsored by the US Department of Defense (1969) at the Stanford Research Institute, the University of California, Los Angeles, and the University of Santa Barbara. The Advanced Research Projects Agency stands for ARPA. Net is the Network term abbreviation (Marson, 1997: 36). ARPANET, which began to surround the United States in the 1970s, began

to attract institutions' interest. In addition to the military, civil institutions, including universities and scientific institutions, have started to profit from ARPANET. A consensus emerged that the military component is to be separated from ARPANET. MILNET is a separate military section (Küçük, 2020).

The next several years saw computers linked rapidly to the ARPANET network, and host-to-host protocol and other network program operations were done (Erdoğan, 2020). In 1983, the network control protocol / Internet protocol, TCP (IP), was altered by network control protocols in all networks related to ARPANET (NCP). Since then, public-linked networks have been called the Internet through TCP / IP protocols (Erdoğan, 2020).

Tim Berners-Lee and his colleagues developed a sound-specific, visual vocabulary in the structure imagined as a horizontal arrangement of knowledge as a hypertext according to information relations. This vocabulary names documentation as a hypertext markup language (HTML). HTML format can be applied to TCP / IP protocol as a flexible format. In addition, they have developed a hypertext transmission protocol (HTTP) that can connect the web browser and server and a uniform resource search engine (URL) that integrates machine three information sought with existing application protocol information (Mat, 2019).

In 1989 Tim Berners-Lee designed and developed the World Wide Web (WWW) for researchers and universities worldwide in CERN laboratories to satisfy the need for knowledge exchange. In 1993, CERN voluntarily supplied and provided the source code to the World Wide Web (Mat, 2019).

ARPANET has been introduced as an Internet for civilian use and has made it easier to privatize and sell the Internet. However, internet use is increasingly spreading with the unrestricted use of WWW. The Internet provides the ability to disseminate information with a single click around the globe. It is where people and machines collaborate and communicate, regardless of their physical location (Erdoğan, 2020).

WWW, Internet, blogs, chat rooms, and other resources. This is defined as a network of networks that incorporates many technical protocols, enabling people worldwide to use their vehicles to access and share knowledge (Ibrahim, 2021).

Regarding Internet concepts, the meaning of visual, audio, and text networks can be clarified by integrating several communication networks between devices, where individuals and organizations communicate through communication networks, regardless of where they reside.

The free access to the World Wide Web allowed websites to be freely accessible and produced by website material manufacturers. In addition to the increasingly expanding portals, search engines have made the Internet available for different Internet browsers. Since the Internet is inexpensive and readily available, the traditional contact barriers have been eliminated. This condition has encouraged people from all over the world to join forces on the Internet. In many aspects of life, it provides customers with various conveniences and alternatives: Internet, food and beverage, economic finance, shopping, national-international press surveillance, entertainment (films, television shows, music, games), and digital connectivity (Ibrahim, 2021).

1.1.1. Web 1.0

Web 1.0 was the first web development that existed between 1989 and 2005. It has been described as a knowledge web. Tim Berners-Lee sees the web as “read-only” (Tim Berners-Lee, 1998), the worldwide web innovator. It has minimal contact, but it was impossible to communicate with the website so that consumers could share information. The web's role in nature was highly passive. Web 1.0 was referred to as the First World Wide Web Generation, which was essentially described as

"It is an information space in which the items of interest referred to as resources are identified by a global identifier called Uniform Resource Identifiers (URIs)."

The first generation of the website only used static pages and content. In other words, the early web enabled us to find and read the content, the user engagement or material contribution minimal small (Mat, 2019).

Web 1.0 Technology key web protocols include: HTML, HTTP, and URI. Web 1.0 has the following main characteristics (Mat, 2019):

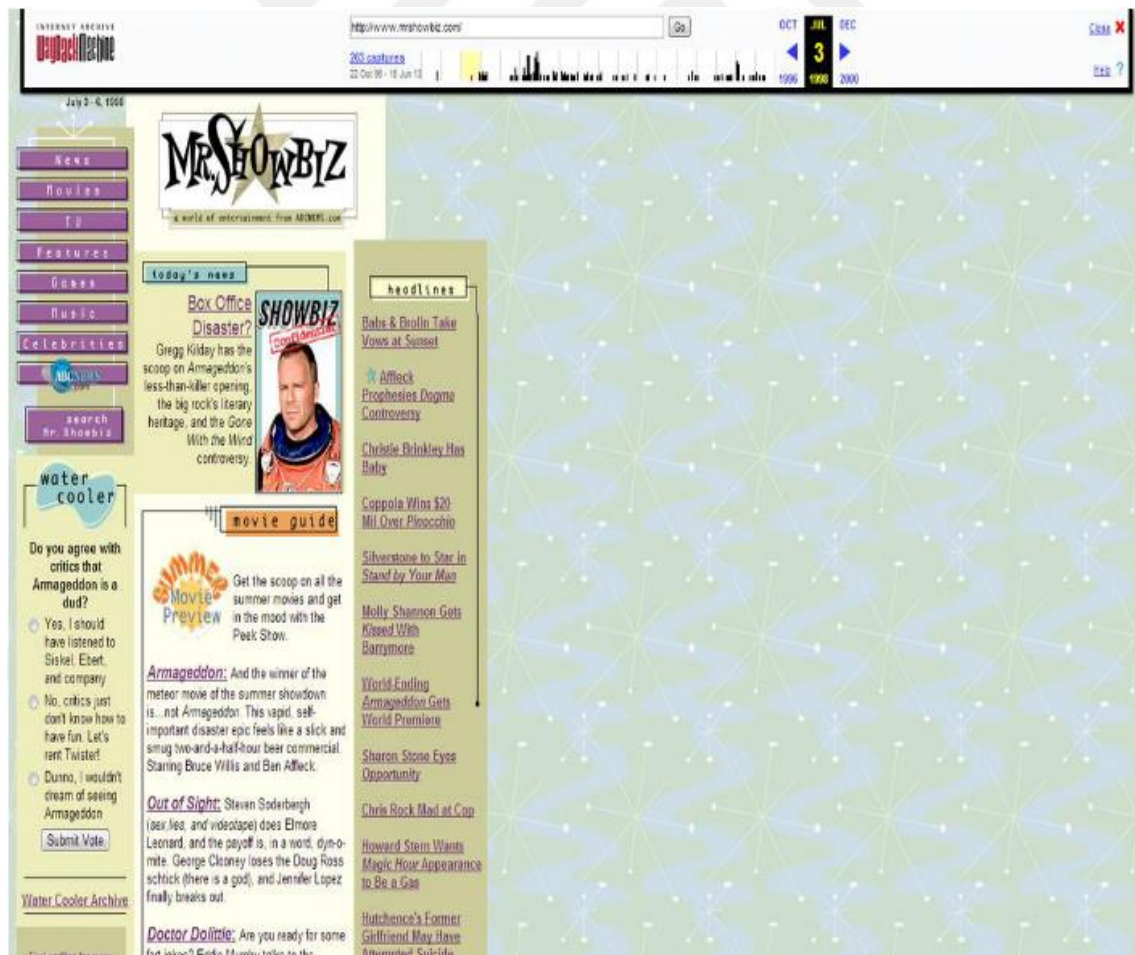
- They have only read content
- Make an online profile open to everyone and have their credentials at all times
- Includes the use of simple mark-up language in static web pages

Web 1.0 has the following limitations:

- Only people (online readers) can understand the Web 1.0 sites that are not compliant with the machine
- The webmaster is responsible for the updating and administration of the website's contents
- To acquired only static information; no dynamic representation was available in the Web console.

Figure 1 shows Mr. Showbiz's website for the Web 1.0 time. As seen in Figure 1, websites from the web1.0 age have more basic text-based content than today's websites, although the interaction is restricted to the customer.

Figure 1. *The 1998 Mr. Showbiz's Web Page (Denise Lu, 2013)*



Web 1.0 ignored the power of network effects, as it was read-only. Because Web 1.0 had a small number of content writers and a large number of readers, it caused the web network to slow down and forced users to starve for content (Ibrahim, 2021).

With a large number of Internet users and their desire to interact more, the insufficient websites and Web 1.0 have too many limitations turned Web 1.0 into Web 2.0, the second big step of the Internet.

1.1.2. Web 2.0

Web 2.0 is the web's second generation. This term was started for the first time by Dale Dougherty of O'Reilly Media at a Live International Brainstorming Meeting. Web 2.0 technologies enable large global audiences with shared interests to be assembled and managed in social interactions.

On his webpage, Tim O'Reilly describes web 2.0 as follows (O'Reilly, 2006):

“Web 2.0 is the business revolution in the computer industry caused by the move to the internet as a platform, and any attempt to understand the rules for success on that new platform. Chief among those rules is this: Build applications that harness network effects to get better the more people use them.”

Web 2.0 is a platform where users can leave many of the controls they have used. In other words, the user of web 2.0 has more interaction with less power (Briciu, 2021). Web 2.0 is not only a new version of web 1.0, but it also implies flexible web design, creative reuse, updates, collaborative content creation, and modification in web 2.0 that should be considered as one of the outstanding features of web 2.0 to support collaboration and to help gather collective intelligence rather than Web 1.0 (Briciu, 2021, p16).

We live in a pivotal period. With the evolution of Web 2.0 or the so-called Participatory Web, any citizen can be active and visible. The locations are built at a futile pace. It allows users to write articles on the encyclopedia of Wikipedia. It also enables users to advise others, such as on the booking.com website. It allows you to find friends on Facebook. Some sites already have more than 20, 30, and 50 million people in communities (Majid, 2018, p10). The past two hundred years of several revolutions have seen the history of information technology: telegraph, telephone,

TV... But still, we are witnessing a rupture phenomenon: everyone can have his blog today. Innovation starts from the bottom of the pyramid: simple people, thanks to participatory web technologies. This is the reverse of the old economy where a factory manufactures a product for sale, where a journal processes and publishes the content (Majid, 2018, p10).

The evolution from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 is a technological and social revolution that allows for exploring new ways in which information is organized and shared while exchanging the knowledge distributed between people worldwide. In this context, content creation and consumption become a unipersonal and collective process. All actors feed this chain as a virtuous circle that promotes society through technology and vice versa. Web 2.0 tools, Web Tools, or applications are nothing more than Web 2.0 office management tools that are easily handled with the Internet connection, and only as a means of accessing the remote program can a device be used (Briciu, 2021).

Table 1. *Comparison of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 (Briciu, 2021)*

Web 1.0	Web 2.0
Reading	Reading / Writing
Companies	Communities
Client-Server	Peer to Peer
HTML, Portals	XML, RSS
Taxonomy	Tags
Owning	Sharing
IPOs	Trade sales
Netscape	Google
Web forms	Web applications
Screen scraping	APIs
Dialup	Broadband
Hardware costs	Bandwidth costs
Lectures	Conversation
Advertising	Word of mouth

Services sold over the web

Web services

Information portals

Platforms

According to Patel (2014: 411), Web 2.0's leading technologies and services include blogs, RSS, wikis, mashups, tags, folkson, my, and tag clouds.

Blogs: A website where people can share their ideas, opinions, suggestions, and comments. Blogs are usually text-based, but some blogs may focus on photography (photoblog or photolog), video (video blog or vlog), or audio (podcast).

RSS is a web format that combines content from blogs or web pages. It is an XML file that summarizes links to RSS information items and resources. RSS notifies users of updates to blogs or websites they follow. RSS feeds are linked with the word subscribe, XML, or RSS words in an orange rectangular box.

Wikis is a web-based collaborative development or content management system for creating and editing content. Allows users to add a new article or revise an existing published article through a web browser.

Mashups: Mashups are web page or a website that brings together information and services from multiple web pages.

Tags: Keywords added to the content on blogs or web pages with social page tag tools. Many blogs and websites use tags.

Folksonomy: It is a unique classification program created by web users to classify the content they find while browsing online.

Tag Clouds: A visual representation of the list of tags on a website or blog, a kind of visualization based on the popularity level of each title.

Web 2.0 allows businesses to take part in their environment less costly, fast, and accessible. At the same time, thanks to its social media tools, it provides companies with commercial sales and word-of-mouth marketing among consumers.

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Wikipedia, Snapchat, Twitch, Tik Tok, etc., originated with Web 2.0 technology. Thanks to this technology, internet users have become not only content consumers but also content producers. Web 2.0 is the second generation of the Internet and offers more human-centered, liberal, creative, and participation opportunities than Web 1.0. Thanks to the developing information and network technologies, web content has enabled them to be understood and used by a machine or artificial intelligence applications. This way, machine or artificial intelligence applications became content producers and started Web 3.0, reading the internet's third step (Ibrahim, 2021).

1.1.3. Web 3.0

Since the beginning of 2010, Web 3.0 has been regularly evoked; it is a term used by certain specialists referring to the near future of web 2.0. According to these experts, the Internet of Things or the Introduction of the Semantic Web can be defined as the next stage of world broad web growth. For certain users, Web 3.0 is mainly characterized by customization, which is possible through data storage and use (La Redaction, 2019).

Web 3.0 was first coined by John Markoff of the New York Times, who suggested web 3.0 as the third generation of the web in 2006 (Nirmala, 2021). Web 3.0 can also be stated as an “executable Web.”

The basic idea of web 3.0 is to define structured data and link them to more effective discovery, automation, integration, and reuse across various applications (Thakuria, 2020). It can improve data management, accessibility support of mobile internet, stimulate creativity and innovation, encourage factors globalization phenomena, enhance customers' satisfaction and help collaboration on the social web.

Web 3.0 is a web where the concept of a website or webpage disappears, where data is not owned but shared, and servant ices show different views for the same web or data. Those services can be applications (like browsers, virtual worlds, or anything else), devices, or others and must focus on context and personalization. Both will be reached by using a vertical search (Thakuria, 2020).

Web 1.0, Web 2.0, and Web 3.0 are the key differences since Web 1.0 is known to be read-only web goals for producer content design, Web 2.0 targets consumer and vendor content

innovation, and Web 3.0 seeks to connect data sets. Bellow in table 2. are the relatively few differences in contrast to Web 1.0, Web 2.0, and Web 3.0:

Table 2. *Comparison of Web 1.0, Web 2.0, and Web 3.0 (Choudhury, 2014: 8099)*

Web 1.0	Web 2.0	Web 3.0
Read-Only	Read-Write	Portable & Personal
Company Focus	Community Focus	Individual Focus
Home Pages	Blogs / Wikis	Livestreams / Waves
Owning Content	Sharing Content	Consolidating Content
Web Forms	Web Applications	Smart Applications
Directories	Tagging	User Behavior
Page Views	Cost Per Click	User Engagement
Banner Advertising	Interactive Advertising	Behavioral Advertising
Britannica Online	Wikipedia	The Semantic Web
HTML / Portals	XML / RSS	RDF / RDFS / OWL

1.1.4. Web 4.0 and Future Internet

Web 4.0 can be considered an Ultra-Intelligent Electronic Agent, symbiotic web, and Ubiquitous web (Fortunatov, 2021). The motive behind the symbiotic network was the connection of people with symbolized computers. Powerful as the human brain, progress in the development of telecommunications, advancement in nanotechnology in the world, and controlled interfaces using web 4.0. In straightforward terms, computerized be wise to read the web's content, respond to the way they work, and determine what to implement first to quickly download and create more applications of high quality and efficiency at Websites (Fortunatov, 2021).

Table 3. *Evolution of the Internet from Web 1.0 to Web 4.0 (Benhaddi, 2017: 688)*

Web 1.0	Web 2.0	Web 3.0	Web 4.0
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Static web page and content.	Human-centered web the non-semantic web.	Semantic web: the layer that defines the semantic link resources.	Web destinations: The smart link to semantic resource targets.
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In short, Web 4.0 is not an entirely new web version but an alternative to the web version we have. Web 4.0 connects all devices in the natural and virtual world simultaneously. Since Web 4.0 and 5.0 are still under development, it is predicted that in the future, there will be a network that communicates with people, such as the communication between people. It is expected to be a web where reading, writing, and executing are simultaneously (Erdoğan, 2020).

1.2. Social Media: Terms and Features

1.2.1. Concepts of Social Media

The first social media platform website in 1997 was SixDegrees.com (Bhargava, 2020). Users could create accounts, link, and browse the lists of friends on the Website. However, this social media site has not been sufficient to sustain connections due to the small number of online users at the time (Bhargava, 2020: 322).

With Web 2.0, the internet has evolved to enable mutual communication. The increase in the mutual interaction between internet users made the internet a more social environment, and as a result, the concept of social media emerged (Ibrahim, 2021).

Web 2.0 is defined as how the content and applications on the internet are shaped not only by individuals but also by all internet users coming together, publishing and cons, instantly changing them to be updated. This relates to Web 2.0 and the content created by users together with the concept of social media (Briciu, 2021).

Although we know what social media is, we cannot clearly define social media. Because it is handled in a completely different way by various disciplines (Carr & Hayes, 2015: 46), social media is most simply defined as a media group that includes most or all the following features (Erdoğan, 2020: 31):

- *Participation:* Social media includes contributions and feedback from everyone who has an interest.

- *Openness:* Social media sites are generally open to feedback and participation. These sites include voting, commenting, and sharing information. These sites rarely restrict or block their content and usage.
- *Mutual Communication:* While the broadcast in traditional media is about one-way content sent to the listener, social media is seen as two-way mutual communication.
- *Community:* Social media enables communities to be built quickly and communicate effectively. These communities share common interests, such as a love of photography, painting, politics, music, or favorite TV show.
- *Connectivity:* Many social media sites develop in connection with each other, allowing links to other sites related to resources and people.

Social media sites allow users to create a limited profile that can be seen by everyone on the site or certain users (such as friends, family, and groups). They are also websites that allow users to create a list of other users (such as a friend, family, or group list) with whom they share a common link and to view and navigate lists of links created by other users (Erdoğan, 2020).

1.2.2. Social Media in Business Marketing

The evolution of the Internet has led to the creation of new communication and work tools for businesses and individuals. 4.72 billion people worldwide used the internet in April 2021 which represents 60% of the world's total population. Internet users are growing at an annual rate of 7.6%, equating to an average of more than 900,000 new users daily. Social media users continue to grow, too, with global users reaching 4.33 billion in April 2021. That equals more than 55% of the world's population (datareportal.com, 2021).

As of 2019 and 2020, internet users' average daily social media usage amounted to 145 minutes per day (statista.com, 2021). This amplification makes social media a significant leading market, which companies can no longer ignore. Social media is a beneficial business tool with its low-cost information disclosure, wide networking, and instant on. So much so that no successful communication policy can do without a social media plan.

1.2.3. Social Media Advantages and Disadvantages

Table 4. *Advantages and disadvantages of social media (Alobaidi, 2021)*

Advantages	Disadvantages
Direct interaction with customers, partners, and suppliers.	Creating new content and being present to respond to feedback.
Reach new and highly targeted future customers.	The need for resources like hiring and training new staff.
An easy and low-commitment way for potential customers to express interest in the business and the products.	We are investing in paid advertising and paying for the costs of creating video or image content.
Social media accounts are a critical part of the sales funnel and the process through which a new contact becomes a customer.	Social media's brand awareness and reputation might be challenging to evaluate and put a monetary value on.
Stimulate targeted company activities like promotions, stock ends or sales.	Social media can be used ineffectively it to push for sales without engaging with customers.
Connect with fans and followers (consumers) every time they log in.	
Creates a massive amount of data about customers in real-time.	
Optimized public relations and created a real human connection.	
The vision is broadcasted to a larger audience with more potential.	
Builds brand awareness and credibility.	

1.2.4. Popular Social Media Platforms

The most popular Social Media Tools are social networking apps (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), video sharing apps (YouTube, Vimeo), blogs (blogger.com, WordPress) and professional networking apps (LinkedIn) (Aichner, 2020).

- **Facebook**

In 2004, Mark Zuckerberg founded Facebook, which was available solely to students at Harvard University. Other universities joined the network in 2006 and later became publicly known. Facebook presents itself as a platform for people to communicate with each other and to discover the globe. Consumers and companies are increasingly using Facebook (Haupt, 2021).

Facebook users may publish information on their profile page, create an event, invite friends, or see user feedback on a product, such as images, videos, or written messages. On the other hand, companies and brands may develop business sites and connect with existing and future clients (Sharif, 2020).

Facebook acquired several more potential social media businesses as a large social media of billions of dollars. In 2012, Facebook bought Instagram for \$1 billion, and in 2014, Facebook bought WhatsApp for \$19 billion in social media prices, the highest acquisition price in social media networks (Haupt, 2021).

- **YouTube**

YouTube is a platform for social media users to share and watch videos. The foundation was established by Steve Chan, Chad Hurley, and Jawed Karim. YouTube is the world's second most visited website and reaches 95% of active internet users (Chen, 2021).

YouTube is quite popular for influential marketing since it is a visual tool, and because of its YouTube followers, many people have been acknowledged as influencers.

The term "vlog" was initially used on a video blog in 1998 and became popular with the rise of YouTube (Silaban, 2022). People started to create and share videos on social media platforms instead of sharing viewers on blogs. These vlogs usually have a subject: health, beauty, vehicles, etc. People offer their ideas about every material (Silaban, 2022).

For a first-time product introduction, many brands and companies use YouTube as an informative source. If an enterprise produces a new product, they create videos and publish relevant material on YouTube. Also, there are ads at the beginning of a video and in the video, even if you wish to bypass the ad for 4-5 seconds. YouTube users are very often exposed to advertisement (Chen, 2021).

- **Instagram**

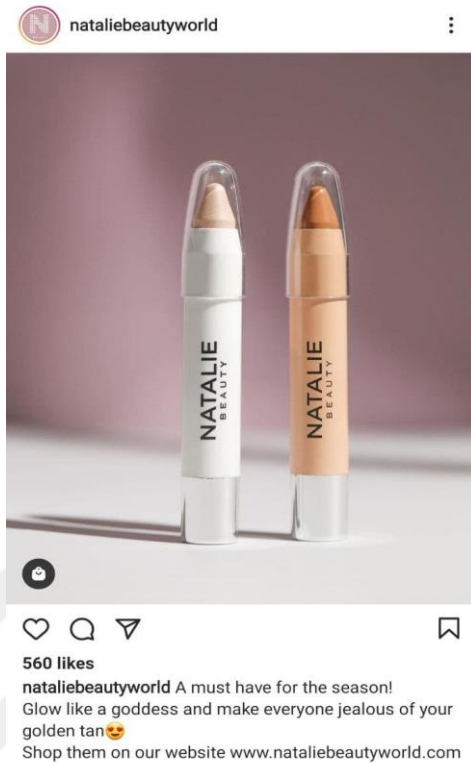
Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger launched Instagram in 2010. Users may see images or videos of other users and upload pictures or videos of their own. For animated photos or videos, Instagram offers a choice of filters (Frier, 2021). A hashtag or location can be shared with the post. Hashtag (#) is one of Instagram's significant features, as users may do a hashtag-based search. In 2016, Instagram launched its new "Stories" feature, a 24-hour feed for pictures or videos, and immediately deleted it. Users may also make Instagram live streaming. Records of the live broadcasts listed remain in the feed for 24 hours (Frier, 2021).

Instagram is a platform that brings together individuals from all regions worldwide and shares inspirational content. Instagram is a leading company's platform for connections between brands and users, providing information about products and services and displaying products and services in their lives, with its accessibility and creativity potential. Instagrammers are the focus of this interaction and product placement (Challa, 2021).

Instagram helps businesses with a wide range of ad styles access large groups of people. Ads can be photographed or videoed with a direct content link, e.g., a hotel may serve excellent accommodation, and you can see a "book for reservation" link under the post or makeup products with a "shop now" link. One example is in figure 2.

As a social media platform, Instagram provides detailed analytics to help advertisers track how many people saw and interacted with the content (Al-Subhi, 2022).

Figure 2. *Instagram photo advertisement example (Adapted from @nataliebeautyworld)*



- **Twitter**

The R&D project on the Obvious Initiative in San Francisco brought Twitter to light for the first time in 2006. It was initially used solely to communicate within the company until it became the most popular social media platform for microblogging. People follow familiar and related subjects when sharing digital content such as photos, links, and videos. People use this application to maintain their contacts, follow posts of their loved celebrities, and track the calendar of events of politicians, writers, and educators (Lusk, 2021).

Twitter was launched on the Internet for everybody in October 2006. Today, microblogs have become an application used by many government leaders and businesses, not only for amusement reasons. Barack Obama, for example, revealed his electoral campaign information on Twitter and showed interest in this microblogging platform (Bandy et al., 2021).

- **TikTok**

With over 1.5 billion downloads on the App Store and Google Play and over 500 million active monthly users, TikTok is the newest social media trend. There are 15- and 60-second videos recorded by users, which enable editing and integration with other social players to be

implemented. TikTok users' primary demographics are from 16 to 24 years of age. Also, you can find everyone from influencers and celebrities to politicians and the average person. TikTok has developed from a video production app since its start in 2018 to provide people their creativity for marketing and commercial purposes alone (Rimadiaz, 2021).

Like Instagram influencers use posts, stories, Live Videos, and IGTV to communicate with the consumers, TikTok lets companies just in shorter mini clips to share with people through video. Therefore, brands have established platform accounts to investigate and interact with customers. TikTok attracts companies throughout the platform and a large number of active users. The algorithm's functioning is yet uncertain, but your video contents seem simpler for TikTok than for other social media platforms to go viral (Rimadiaz, 2021).

2. The Concept of Internet Advertising

The primary purpose of creating the Internet was not for the sake of commercial advertising. Still, it became an indispensable tool for companies to seek new ways to interact with their future customers. In today's business and brand-consumer dynamic, the ability to control when, how, and even if brand engagement will occur became in the hand of the consumer. With increasing internet usage, marketers use the Internet as a source of commercial advertisement ((Forest, 2021).

Traditional media may still be talking, but those captive audiences of old have voluntarily shifted their attention to a new breed of influencers they are more likely to believe and resonate with. In other words, a brand is no longer what the company tells the consumer it is – it is what consumers tell each other it is. These modern influencers come from all different categories: industry and topical experts, activists, celebrities, bloggers, academics, YouTube producers, etc. They are leveraging social media's connective tissue to build, inform, engage, and influence dedicated populations of followers (Forest, 2021).

In the beginning, users shared their opinion about a brand or a product they used in a blog post. However, the post did not reach enough audiences. Then, with the development of the Internet, sharing and posting different content became more visual and interactive on all social media platforms. Eventually, every brand's marketing strategy and activity moved to social media as a new marketing strategy (Olson, 2020).

The different social media platforms explained at the beginning of the first chapter of the study created a new environment where brands and advertisers could be able to target their future customers and explore a new audience.

Through these social media platforms, users individually share information like their personal taste, pleasure, or demographic data. Therefore, commercial advertising can be performed through these collected data. Advertisers nowadays prefer the new media environment due to its various features (Meng, 2022).

There are several ways that brands can use to promote their product and attract potential customers, like word of mouth (WOM), viral marketing and influencer marketing, etc.

2.1. Word of Mouth (WOM)

Customer-to-customer interaction became an essential communication tool in marketing strategies for brands to promote their products and services. After both marketers and academics realized the importance of such interactions, the concept emerged in the form of WOM, as validated by the Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association (Cuffie, 2022). By definition, WOM is a natural marketing tool that Consumers use to talk about their experiences, opinions, or any new information about a product and share all this data on social media with their friends, followers, and family members (Cuffie, 2022).

Consequently, WOM defines how messages occur in honest conversations between social media users about brands, products, and services. While WOM is an unpaid marketing tool, the disseminated information is regarded to be the most reliable for consumers' eyes (Trabelsi, 2021). Thus, compared with most other communication tools, leveraging WOM as a communication tool in a Marketing Strategy is beneficial in businesses since it allows consumers to communicate and overcome more effectively at a much lesser cost (Trabelsi, 2021).

Generally, WOM is a highly effective communication technique that brands must develop to compete with their competitors. (Guerreiro, 2021). Users and investors effectively build awareness and make customers aware of their products and services using social media and corporate marketing techniques. In addition, studies have revealed that customers react and so depend more on WOM when deciding on or trusting a brand (Guerreiro, 2021).

WOM may, of course, be both negative and positive, and the reaction to brands may therefore vary. This feature assembles WOM into a double-edged sword, which brands must learn to manage. Research on human behavior further indicates that negative WOM has a higher value in the consumer than positive WOM when it comes to decision-making (Talwar et al., 2021).

Research published by Hollebeek and Chen (2014) provided a sufficient explanation of the fact that word-of-mouth is one of the consequences and significant relationship outcomes of customer engagement. This conclusion is also supported by the recent research of Srivastava et al. (2020) and further highlight those engagements make customers endorse, advocate, share information, and learn from the interactions and knowledge gained about brands in an online community. Engaged online community members interact more and spread positive word-of-mouth, which may influence customers.

Figure 3. *The relationship between engagement and word-of-mouth (Adapted from Bhandari, (2013))*

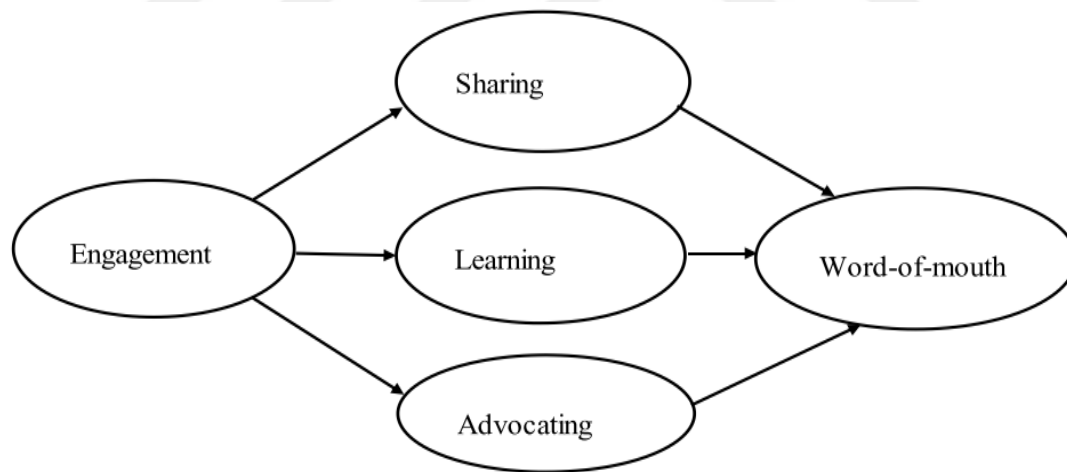
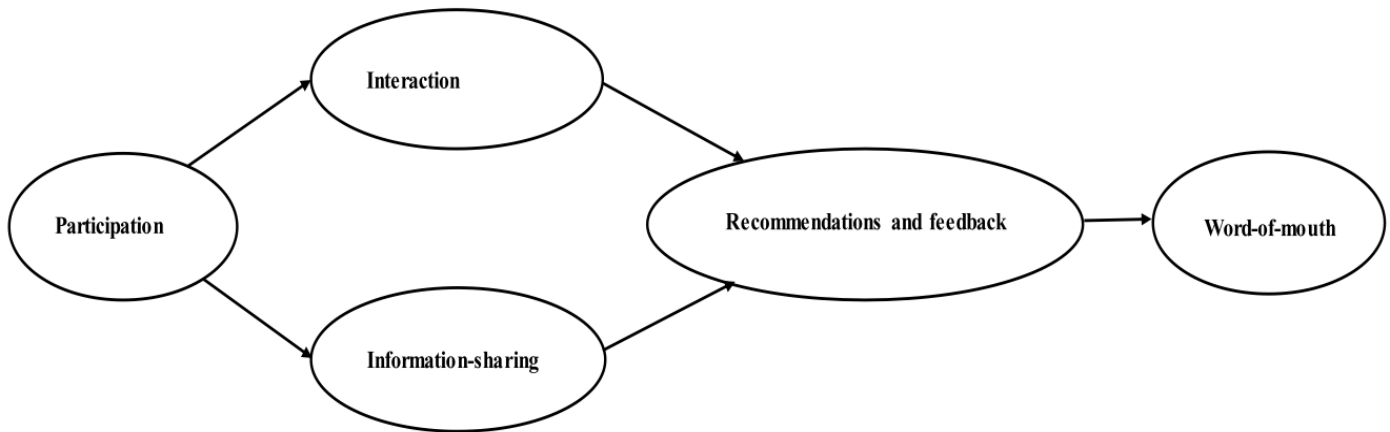


Figure 4. *The relationship between participation and word-of-mouth (Adapted from Bhandari, (2018))*



2.2. Viral Marketing

With the development of technology, specifically the internet, WOM marketing has evolved and upgraded to Viral Marketing (Wibawa et al., 2022). This marketing has the same concept as WOM marketing, with the difference in the number of reached people. In other words, the product or the brand must become a trend on social media and runs a specific high number of shares and posts. The way to do that is by users or customers to share information and talk about different products through social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to a friend or any other user. Thus, the reach potential is very high since internet usage has increased worldwide (Ibrahim, 2021).

Traditionally, WOM marketing has been proven to be most effective in obtaining a customer base and increasing sales; however, "Viral Marketing has become the defining marketing trend of the decade" (Yanuar et al., 2021).

The companies must adequately develop the message of the content or product to succeed at Viral Marketing. The content should attract people's attention instantly. They are then creating interest and desire. Successfully building and operating viral marketing will allow marketers to anticipate the intention of consumers to purchase their products. E-mails were utilized in the early phases of Viral marketing (Yanuar et al., 2021). It was easy for a consumer to share or send a letter, so if someone liked it, they would share the content. After that, social media platforms such

as Facebook and Instagram became primary sources. Brands and agencies are spending more on digital advertising, depending on the rise of social media, and are continually looking for cost-effective methods. One of these viral strategies is influencer marketing, allowing brands to target a particular individual rather than an entire audience (Brown & Fiorella 2013).

2.3. Influencer Marketing

Most of the time, people are on their phones online and interacting on different social media platforms, which surround them with influencer marketing. The definition of influencer marketing is "essentially virtual Word of Mouth (WOM), and consumers are much more likely to positively perceive and react to a message that comes from a trusted friend or persona over a sponsored post that comes from a company" (Woods, 2016, p.6). The foundation of influencer marketing is influencing people already affected by someone or something. It identifies people who influence potential customers and guides marketing activities to deal with these influences. Influencer marketing uses key leaders or influencers to drive a brand's message to the targeted market (Hudders et al., 2020).

While there is some misunderstanding between celebrity endorsement and influencer marketing campaigns, influencer campaigns are created to tap into an existing community of engaged followers. However, influencers are specialists in their niche and have established a high level of trust and two-way communication with their followers; their fans trust that their endorsement of a product or brand comes from a well-researched place rather than something as simple as a signed contract. While there is often a formal agreement between brands and influencers, influencers tend to be more selective about their affiliations, partnering with brands that reflect their unique personnel brands and will not alienate their followers (Geppert 2016).

Influencer marketing may be trending right now, but it is not new; it has been happening for a long time, and the change in social media platforms creates a new base. An example from the recent past is Oprah Winfrey, an influencer; in her TV talk show, she had a segment on office and books, and if she featured or recommended a book, every book retailer in the country knew that they would run out of copies. This is powerfully influenced by a recommendation from someone of national and international renown.

Influencer marketing states that the marketplace will blindly believe the words of an expert. Influencers typically have solid followers and a notable impact within their social media communities and platforms. They usually play the roles of content writers, bloggers, CEOs, entertainers, and advertisers. They are connected to other people around them, looked up to for advice and opinions, and regarded as influential. When an influencer shares information or posts an update, it will be read and followed by many people; that is where the business benefit lies. If these influencing personalities speak for a company's brand, the business will reach out to its followers. Unlike other marketing methods, this brand marketing method is powerful enough to influence customers' purchasing decisions. Research on influencer marketing held by Steven Wood in 2016 claims that 67% of the marketers include influencer marketing in their marketing strategies, and influencer marketing increases the ROI (Return on Investment) by 11 times more than any other traditional marketing strategy. According to the research, Instagram is the top-of-mind social media platform for influencer marketing (Woods, 2016, p.11). Therefore, no matter how many claims the brand makes, the buyer's decision is usually influenced by who tells it to them. That is where influencer marketing is the tool most companies are adapting.

3. The Impact of Social Media Influencers on The Consumer's Decision-Making Process

3.1. Consumer's Decision-Making Process

"The advent of the Internet has extended consumers' options for gathering unbiased product information from other consumers and provides the opportunity for consumers to offer their consumption-related advice by engaging in electronic word-of-mouth," state Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004, p. 39). As a result, marketers are currently spending billions of dollars on social media each year to establish and maintain a presence on social media platforms (John et al., 2017), and consumers are increasingly using social media to obtain information to support their decision-making process (Casaló et al., 2020). Furthermore, influencers have developed as prominent members of social media platforms and a source of guidance for other customers (Casaló et al., 2020).

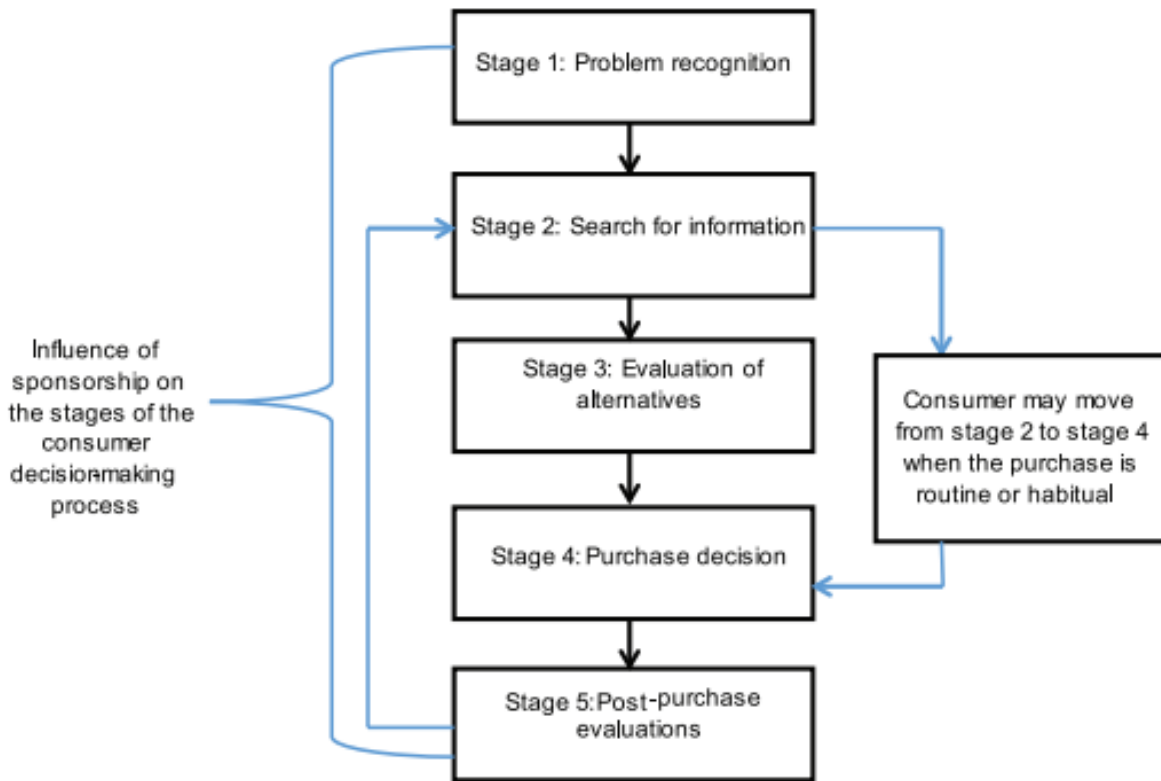
In addition, consumers utilize social media content as a source of inspiration, and these platforms may readily influence their purchasing behavior (Casaló et al., 2020). Furthermore, consumers discuss new trends and styles with one another, share information, and make ideas,

highlighting social media platforms' significance in spreading recent trends (Casaló et al., 2020). As a result, "social media has an important role in the customer journey or decision-making process, influencing every stage from awareness, consideration, evaluation to purchase and repurchase," stated Vinerean (2019, p. 144).

In addition, as Jiménez-Castillo and Sánchez-Fernández (2019) describe, influencers have a role in guiding followers' views and decision-making behaviors by functioning as a reference. Indeed, consumers frequently struggle to find the right products to meet their demands, which leads to a reliance on influencers for targeted recommendations (Trivedi & Sama, 2020). The relationship between influencers and followers can be described as a dependency relationship that emerges from consumers' need to find online sources that provide valuable and trustworthy product information, allowing them to simplify their decision-making process and influence their purchasing behavior (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). Influencers may increase their followers' susceptibility to being influenced. They may arise a need or desire for specific products, making consumers want to purchase them by sharing compelling and inspiring content, including opinions that arouse their followers' interest and fit with their needs and interests (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). As a result, influencers and followers form a dependent connection, impacting followers' attitudes and behavior toward the recommended products (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019).

Furthermore, considering the massive marketing expenditures related to this strategy, this research still needs to acquire a deeper understanding of what drives the success of influencer marketing itself (Hughes et al., 2019). As a result, it is critical that research provides light on the vital role of influencers in customers' choices and buying behavior at various stages of the purchase process (Hughes et al., 2019). According to Kotler (2020), the decision-making process for customers contains five steps, which are represented in the image below:

Figure 5. *The consumer decision-making process (Adapted from Mullins and Walker (2013. p. 100))*



Consequently, it is critical to understand each step's meaning better understand this phenomenon.

3.1.1. Stage 1: Problem recognition

The problem/need recognition stage is the first stage of the consumer decision-making process. Consumers realize they need/want something at this level (Stankevich, 2017). According to Stankevich (2017), businesses apply strategies that purposely create an imbalance between consumers' current and desirable conditions. This mismatch generates a desire and compels people to purchase a specific product/service (Stankevich, 2017). Furthermore, this demand might be triggered by an internal stimulation or by an external stimulus, which happens when outside factors influence the consumer. In our case, these factors are social media influencers (Stankevich, 2017). According to Stankevich (2017, p.10), "Factors that influence these moments are existence/creation of desired (preferred) status, availability of information about the new status (new products or versions of the products) or related/complementary products for this product that

may create a need." As a result, influencer marketing is one of the tactics businesses are now implementing to stimulate this need/want in the consumer (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019).

3.1.2. Stage 2: Search for information

After the consumer has identified their need/desire, they move on to the second stage of the decision-making process: the information search. At this point, the consumer begins an information search for the many options they may purchase to meet the need/desire (Stankevich, 2017). The customer will seek this knowledge inside and outside to make a better accurate decision (Stankevich, 2017). Furthermore, according to Stankevich (2017), "An internal information search includes using information from memory, such as previous experiences with the product, while an external search asks friends and family about their experiences with buying a brand-new product." Additionally, consumers may search for information in public sources such as reviews, blogs, banners, television ads, and brochures. Finally, these many sources will impact the purchasing decision (Stankevich, 2017). Furthermore, as Jiménez- Castillo, and Sánchez-Fernández (2019) stated, social media influencers are a source of external information that consumers mainly utilize to support their purchasing decisions.

3.1.3. Stage 3: Evaluation of alternatives

In the third stage of a consumer's decision-making process, the evaluation of choices, the consumer starts asking themselves if they need the product, what options exist, and other questions that lead them to select the essential attribute on which they will base a final decision on (Stankevich, 2017). At this level, consumers will assess price, quality, brand positioning, and so on (Stankevich, 2017). Furthermore, because social media influencers are significant sources of information, customers use the information they provide to support their decision-making purchases (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019).

3.1.4. Stage 4: Purchase decision

When consumers decide which brand/product to purchase, they enter the fourth stage of the decision-making process: the purchase decision. In this case, the consumer must execute their decision and start to make the purchase (Stankevich, 2017). In the beginning, the consumer may have a purchasing intention to buy a specific product but does not follow through on the purchase

(Stankevich, 2017). However, other factors, such as purchasing power and product pricing, may impact the purchase choice (Stankevich, 2017).

3.1.5. Stage 5: Post-purchase evaluations

The final step of a customer's decision-making process, post-purchase behavior, is when the consumer assesses and reviews the product they have opted to purchase (Stankevich, 2017). The consumer evaluates if the product was the correct one to suit their need/desire, whether it exceeded expectations, and whether it lived up to the promises made and shared by the social media influencers (Stankevich, 2017). Furthermore, as Stankevich (2017) explains, if the customer had a positive experience with the purchased product, they are very likely to become a brand ambassador, influencing other potential clients in the second stage of their customer journey and increasing the likelihood of the product being purchased again.

3.2. Determinants of Consumer Behavior

With the emergence of these social media influencers day by day, to satisfy both the brand and the consumer at the same time, they will have to present themselves on their platforms accordingly to each different follower they have because not all consumers are the same: It is like there are additional variables needs to be determined according to their behavior.

3.2.1. Demographic Factors

Age is a factor that influences consumer behavior. Depending on their age, each consumer may have different desires and expectations. For both businesses and influencers, according to Schiffman & Wisenblit (2015, pp.328-331), there are four main groups: generation Z (born between 1997 and present), generation Y (or as they called millennials) (born between 1980 and 1996), generation X (born between 1966 and 1979), and baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964). Therefore, all marketing actions should be carried out following the generation of the targeted group.

Another demographic component is gender. Male and female groupings must be analyzed for their buying behavior. Because of the social and economic changes in women's positions in society, women became the focal focus of brand managers. They are not only responsible for purchasing household things; as they advance in their careers, they will be able to consume a broader range of products. Other gender groupings began to emerge around the end of the

nineteenth century, and they had distinct consuming patterns that should not be overlooked (Tekvar, 2016, pp.1603-1604).

Marital status is also a demographic variable. Instead of categorizing consumers as single or married, Schiffman and Wisenblit expanded the marital status. They created the terms "bachelorhood" for single men or women, "honeymooners" for young and newly married couples, "parenthood" for families with at least one child, "post-parenthood" for couples with no children living at home, and "dissolution" for families with one surviving spouse (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015, pp.269-272). Consumers might have varied incentives for purchasing intentions at each level of these statuses.

Another element of demographic variables is education. Consumers are classified as high school graduates, university graduates, or higher programs based on their educational level (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015, p.278).

Another demographic factor that determines social position is income. But income and wealth are not the same things; wealth is savings, while income is the power to spend more (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015, p.279). Therefore, the categorization of populations is typically based on a family's financial level. Businesses and social media influencers find this strategy handy since people in different economic backgrounds have significantly diverse purchasing habits. For example, consumers in lower-income groups are more likely to be influenced by excellent value. However, those with more disposable income are willing to spend more on high-quality products.

3.2.2. Geographic Factors

Consumers are usually influenced by their environment; they exhibit similar consumption patterns if they have the same religion, socioeconomic status, and lifestyle (Tekvar, 2016, p.1602). They even wear attire that is similar to the environment where they live. Therefore, geodemographic consumption behavior categorizes consumers who live in the same neighborhood and have identical demographic habits (Tekvar, 2016).

3.2.3. Psychographic Factors

The psychological aspect simply challenges the cognitive and rationalist perceptions of consumer behavior since all consumers experience different emotions and desires in their everyday lives that influence their purchasing behavior.

Consumers' decisions are generally influenced by their level of engagement. According to the involvement theory, consumer behavior is based on their interests, risk realization, and value realization, such as brand attachment or signification (Massoud, 2021). Consumers typically buy a product when they volunteer for the process in the high involvement choice process. The phases of the consuming process are generally awareness, information search, attitude, trial, and after purchase. When there is little input, the consuming process is cognitive yet automatic, with the steps being awareness, trial, attitude, and after purchase (Massoud, 2021). One of the most significant factors for social media sharing is consumer agreement that they would buy a product that has been promoted by other consumers such as social media influencers (Massoud, 2021). They even do not consider the requirement and make the final decision faster, which is also contrary to cognitive behavior.

3.2.4. Behavioral

Behavior or an attitude is defined as a person's positive or negative evaluations of a subject, object, action, or situation and their feelings towards them (Evans et al., 2017). Studies on social media and users' attitudes have found a relationship. It has been found that students using social media have a positive attitude towards these platforms and can be used as an education-indexed tool (Evans et al., 2017). However, there are also arguments that this attitude may differ with the level of education. For example, in the study conducted with students at secondary and high school levels, The attitudes of children studying in secondary school towards social media are more optimistic, which is interpreted as the desire to compensate for the curiosity and exploration of that period with social media platforms. In addition, social media also has positive effects on self-efficacy, belonging, and self-esteem (Evans et al., 2017).

Men have a more positive attitude towards social media use than women. In addition, depending on the duration of using this media, the positive and negative aspects of the attitude can be consistent. As the history of existence in social media goes back, the positive side of the attitude increases accordingly. This situation can also be read as an effort to suppress the objections from the inner voice of the user who has become addicted to social media platforms with a positive attribution.

Social media is seen as a tool to change attitudes, not only in the personal sense but also in the eyes of the brands. For example, clicking on an advertisement on social media can change

consumers' attitudes towards marketing (Jung et al., 2021). In this context, social media can develop strategies for convincing consumers, making them acquire certain attitudes, and directing them to desired behaviors. It has been seen that social media influencers have been used for this purpose recently. Therefore, we can say that continuing to follow the influencer and that each new blog, photo, and video sharing of these people is viewed and shared by millions in a short time reveals the impression that users have a positive attitude towards these social media influencers (Dolega et al., 2021).

3.3. The Role of Influencers Affecting Consumer Behavior

The influence of the Internet and social media platforms is a highly distinct and contemporary type of marketing. Social media influencers' efforts enable businesses to access a broad audience already dedicated and convinced. The influencer, through media exposure, plays a crucial part in a brand's marketing strategy. Furthermore, it impacts consumer behavior by its power of influence and has an authenticity and trust impact to which social media users are sensitive (Mat, 2019).

Since their beginning, social media platforms have played a significant part in the communication strategy of countless businesses. A substantial critical factor reflects their strength, and the impact ads and collaborations may have on social media users' purchasing decisions: This is known as social shopping, or how to use informal groups to connect with the consumer and inspire them to buy. This purchasing behavior is affected by emotions, recommendations, or reactions expressed on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media platforms. The initial steps in social purchasing may be traced to discussion forums and customer reviews. Social media platforms relate to communities, exchanges, and sharing. The significance of social media influencers in customer decision-making is highly significant; social media platforms allow them to share experiences and information and communicate with others who have similar reviews (Antunes, 2022).

Consequently, there are so many different strategies that influencers can affect consumers' decision-making behavior process. Of course, there is no correct answer to influencing a community if we keep moralities out of the picture; that is why the strategies and techniques on how to affect the consumer's purchasing behavior are constantly changing (Kotler, 2020). However, according to Philip Kotler's (marketing professor) different interviews, at least we can

observe three others but very common prevalent steps/strategies that all social media influencers base their impact on:

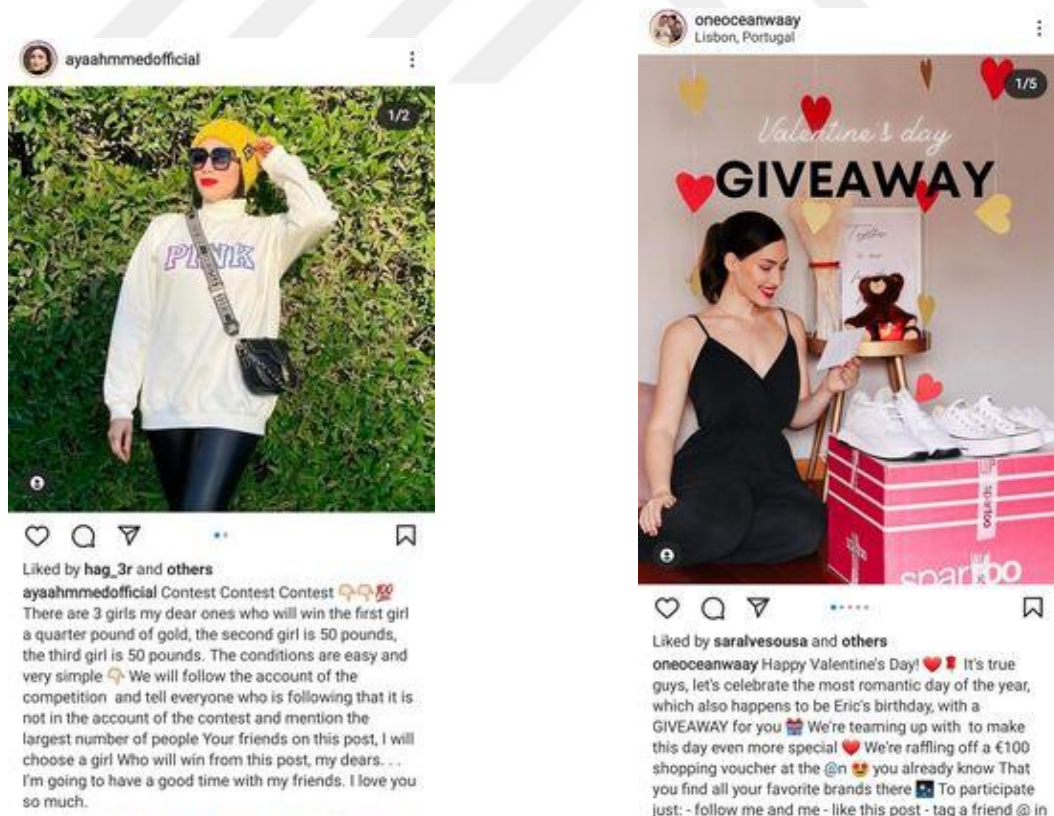
Build Brand Awareness by developing storytelling and presentation skills, so social media influencers can know how to build a strong relationship with their followers/audience and tell the brand's story (Andreani et al., 2021). This step will make the advertisement for this product/service more credible and authentic because influencers will have the chance to promote the brand with their strategy, tone, and language as they see fit. For example, an influencer on Instagram will often share a post with a relatable caption or with their own experience about the product/service, automatically attracting the consumer's attention. The same strategy Molka Missaoui, the Tunisian fashion and lifestyle YouTuber with 184K Instagram followers, did on her Instagram story. Before posting the advertised photos with the products, she told a story to her followers about cow placenta extract and how our ancestors used it back in the days to strengthen and prevent hair loss. So that storytelling strategy will touch the audience's feelings, especially those who always want natural products. Then, after hours she represented the solution, a product with all the old recipes in one (@molkamissaoui).

Figure 6. Instagram photo Build brand awareness example (Adapted from @molkamissaoui)



Produce the Engagement Strategy by the influencers to affect consumer behavior. There are many ways that influencers allow their followers to engage in a campaign, such as attending video views, creating an Instagram live with the brand, and encouraging participation in a giveaway (Tafesse et al., 2021). “Like, share, comment and subscribe” are things that became the commonly expected behavior that helps spread the word and influence the consumer’s buying decision behavior. For example, making a giveaway is the pulse of every social media influencer; it keeps the followers constantly engaging and coming for more. For instance, every giveaway has conditions to follow if the audience wants to win the product. For example, mention as many friends as one can in the comments of the giveaway post. This will engage the followers and new followers and keep waiting for the winner on a live stream or a story (@ayaahmedofficial and @oneoceanwaay).

Figure 7. Instagram photos engagement strategy example (Adapted from @ayaahmedofficial and @oneoceanwaay)



Create an Action Plan because consumers are more likely to trust other people's advice than average everyday brands' ads default (Immanue et al., 2021). For example, influencers share their experience and benefit after sharing a post, story, or video on social media; it creates an emotional response from the influencer's audience and makes consumers more likely to have something new. Consequently, Lady Samara, the full-time Instagram influencer with 700K followers, practices the same strategy in her brand collaborations (@lady.samara). She states in her stories every time that any new collaboration with any skincare brand needs to be contacted before at least six months so she can find volunteers from her followers to try out the product for free and see the results. Then, if the product succeeds in her followers' expectations, she will only then continue the collaboration. This strategy may seem long for some brands. Still, in the long term, this influencer engaged her audience with the collaboration and the giveaway in front of the others on live Instagram stories. It proved that her followers trust her reviews as she is the ambassador of many brands (@lady.samara).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the overarching methodology of the study, including research philosophy, approach, purpose, and strategy. Next, the methods through which the study was conducted are explained, covering the data collection. Lastly, the analysis and trustworthiness of the data are addressed.

Research Philosophy

The research philosophy is addressed by the authors' awareness of their research assumptions and beliefs, which is an essential part of the research methodology. Identifying the research philosophy serves as the foundation for developing the research strategy. In other words, it outlines how the writers intend to evaluate and gather data (Williams, 2021). Braa and Vidgen (1999) established a study methodology based on three epistemological perspectives: positivism, interpretivism, and intervention. According to them, a positivistic approach seeks to anticipate results, an interpretive approach seeks to comprehend a phenomenon, and an interventional approach aims to create a change. When choosing between methodologies, it is critical to keep the research question and study's objective in mind.

The current study is based on the interpretive approach, which seeks to comprehend phenomena or an event from the perspective of a person (Sindhu, 2020). According to the

interpretive method, people generate diverse interpretations of the same phenomenon; hence reality is subjective. The interpretive approach's ontological belief is relativism, which refers to the concept that "reality is subjective and varies from person to person" (Sindhu, 2020). Meanwhile, interpretive epistemology is based on real-world phenomena and claims that the world does not exist independently from knowledge (Sindhu, 2020). Techniques such as open-ended interviews, focus groups, surveys, and in-depth research are used in the interpretive method. In contrast to positivist theories, which are directed toward quantitative data research, this approach is directed to generating qualitative data research (Junjie, 2021).

As the following study is directed towards exploring the relationship-building process within social media influencers and the impact on their followers, the interpretive perspective with ontological belief was deemed to be the most relevant philosophy concerning the purpose of this study. This study acknowledges that responses from participants (social media influencers) might differ and cannot be evaluated with the same criteria as for a positivist study. Interpretivist research aims to obtain information about an individual's viewpoints, actions, difficulties, and how to manage them (Sindhu, 2020). Therefore, it will help gain insights into the relationship-building dimensions of social media influencers and their impact on their followers; at the same time, it will also discover what methods brands utilize when implementing collaborations with these influencers.

Research Approach

Three concepts may explain the research approach: deductive, inductive, and abductive. Deductive research is a study built on theoretical results and then tested empirically. An inductive research approach is used when a study uses observations to develop theory and general patterns (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The process begins with an observation or description and progresses to an explanation. An inductive approach has been proven to be more suitable in management research, particularly when evaluating qualitative data (Sætre et al., 2021). However, the abductive research approach has developed as it aims to solve the flaws of the deductive and inductive procedures (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Rather than going from one direction to another, i.e., from theory to data or vice versa, abduction moves back and forth between data and theory (Sætre et al., 2021).

In this study, an inductive research approach will be implemented as it aims, by interviewing different social media influencers, to explore how these influencers build relationships with their followers (potential consumers) and impact their decision-making process. The written literature review has touched upon relationship building as a part of the overall influencer marketing process. However, information on how social media influencers do relationship-building has not been discussed in greater detail. Therefore, by utilizing the inductive approach, this research intends to develop and add to the existing theory about the phenomena of social media influencers' relationship-building activities with followers.

Research Purpose

When doing social research, several purposes aim to expand a field of knowledge in different ways. According to Babbie (2013), the three most popular purposes of social research are exploration, description, and explanation. Exploratory studies usually are accomplished when a researcher becomes interested in a new topic (Babbie, 2013). On the other hand, descriptive studies observe events and circumstances. They then offer thorough descriptions of what was observed (Babbie, 2013) to give extended descriptions of cultural behavior, artifacts, and knowledge (Klapwijk, 2011). Explanatory studies seek to comprehend why a phenomenon occurred and the factors that generate this occurrence (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls & Ormston, 2014).

This study is conducted with an explorative purpose as it seeks to investigate an area within influencer marketing. The aim is to extend the understanding of what is currently known about 'how' social media influencers build relationships with their followers and impact their decision-making. Now, the studies which exist on relationship building with influencers are few. Furthermore, the existing ones have generally not specified whether they have conducted their study with the followers or the businesses. Our study would therefore be able to extend the base of current information about these influencers within social media platforms and their extended impact on the consumer/follower. It will hopefully open doors for further research in relationship building with influencers.

Research Method

The methodology used to conduct research is critical in determining what sort of findings the study will finally reveal. There are two types of research methods: quantitative and qualitative. Both are employed to describe, comprehend, and explain social reality, but the way they utilize

theory distinguishes them. Quantitative research is often conducted deductively, with theory serving as the foundation for developing one or more hypotheses, which are subsequently tested. Meanwhile, qualitative research methods frequently include inductive thinking, and thus "a social phenomenon is studied to identify empirical patterns that might operate as the foundation of a hypothesis" (Adenola, 2019). Qualitative research involves gaining insights from fewer people and using less standardized questions, allowing respondents to select where the conversation goes while remaining within the scope of the research topic (Adenola, 2019). Participant observations, qualitative interviews, focus groups, and visual data are some of the most popular methods for collecting qualitative data (Klapwijk, 2011).

The qualitative research method was adopted for this study. This is because the question under investigation in this study wishes to gain a deeper understanding of 'how' social media influencers, within their limitations, engage in the decision-making process of consumers/followers. Therefore, the richness of the data produced with the qualitative research method is preferred. Furthermore, this type of research is generally utilized to explore complex human issues (Naeem et al., 2021). The qualitative approach will describe social media influencers' methods of building relationships with consumers/followers. It will also enable these influencers to expand upon topics they saw as necessary concerning their impact on decision-making. This made it possible to identify some underlying dimensions they consider when choosing how to build this process. This type of information would be difficult to gather through a quantitative lens, as participants would have provided short answers.

Data Collection

The primary data for this study was gathered through online video interviews (stretching thirty to fifty minutes in length) and questionnaires with 12 social media influencers in total from Tunisia who conduct Influencer Marketing. Online interviews were chosen as the primary data collection method mainly because, traditionally this form of the interview has been claimed to give "a stronger basis for the establishment of a good rapport between the researcher and the participant" (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 182). However, due to time constraints, five interviews were conducted via an online questionnaire. Although differences exist between the two modes of interviews, conducting interviews via an online questionnaire has certain advantages. Ritchie et al. (2014) mention that it is beneficial and advantageous when researchers are under budget and time

constraints and when the sample under investigation is scattered, busy, or prefers online modes of communication. To get the information needed to answer the overarching research question, “How do social media influencers impact future consumers?” detailed descriptions of social media influencers' relationship-building activities with their followers and business collaborations are required.

Interviews with influencers on their communication strategy and relationship building with their followers were used to acquire primary data. We could have a detailed understanding of how influencers function and their strategy to succeed in their work. The first interviews were conducted through Zoom meetings to reach influencers who were not physically present. The second interviews were done by sending the interview question guidance to the other influencers for them to answer since they are extremely swamped and prefer to respond this way. Appendixes 1, 2, and 3 include the interview guidance in three different languages (English, French, and Arabic); since the influencers are from Tunisia, the official language to communicate would preferably be Arabic or French. Secondary data was gathered, after the interviews, by doing thematic research analysis on the influencers' profiles and Instagram accounts to corroborate what was discussed in the interviews and triangulate the data.

- **Participant Criteria**

Specific requirements had to be met in finding a sample representative of the population that the study intends to investigate. As a start, the interviewed influencers are from Tunisia. Since several research studies in different countries have emphasized the concept of influencer marketing, it explains the importance of this phenomenon both on an organizational and individual level. Tunisia was selected as a typical example of an emerging economy (Othmani, 2021; Akrouf et al., 2022; Sghaier et al., 2021).

Ecommerce is a trend that continues to grow in Tunisia. Moreover, more digital networks are being installed right throughout the country. Because of this, Tunisians are doing more and more online shopping. Also, Tunisian customers have grown more demanding when making purchases: they seek meaningful information on the things they want to buy, their availability, the brand, and the value for money (Ben Cheikh et al., 2021). Before purchasing, they will also evaluate the quality of items to rival products. They cherish having a wide range of options. Brand

image has become critical in product positioning and consumer reassurance. WOF from a consumer's relatives and friends dramatically influences the purchase choice. Thus, public opinion can decide a company's sales and market position (Ben Cheikh et al., 2021).

Then, as the study intends to focus on social media influencers and the relationship between their followers and the businesses, the number of followers on their social media accounts was considered the different content they share. Especially when there are five different types of influencers to choose from (Sanders, 2022):

- Mega-influencers with more than a million followers (celebrities)
- Macro-influencers with 500K to 1 million followers
- Mid-tier influencers with 50K to 500K followers
- Micro-influencers with 10K to 50K followers
- Nano-influencers with 1K to 10K followers

The identification process started with choosing a platform for influencers actively doing Influencer Marketing. In the end, Instagram was selected because it is widely used by companies engaging in Influencer Marketing and allows them to search for influencers and follow hashtags (Fredriksson, 2019).

- **Selection of Respondents**

Bryman and Bell (2015) suggest choosing goal-oriented respondents who can best answer the research's aim. The study's time constraints determined the size of the sample and the influencers selected for the interviews. According to Guest and Dewe (1991), it is impossible to determine how many respondents to interview to get the definitive conclusion and strike a compromise between too tight selection and theoretical saturation. As a result, we decided that twelve interviews would suffice to address the study's goal. The information gathered is relevant and might be used in other research and coherencies (Jacobsen, 2002). In addition, the selected influencers have a diverse range of followers and shared content, which should give us a more comprehensive picture of how influencers work and connect with people from all over the world.

All influencers were approached by email and private messaging on Instagram and Facebook since they are active on these sites. The following is a list of the interviewed influencers.

The table includes usernames, follower numbers, and other information about the Instagram accounts.

Table 5. *Summary of Presentation of The Interviewee*

Influencer	User Name	Followers	General Information
Amin Sahraoui	amin sahraoui	43.2K	Discover and explore,
Khoubaib Ben Ziou	khoubaib.bz	13.3K	Photography and adventure
Ons Hammemi	ONS	567K	Beauty and vintage style
Wissal Rhimi	Wissal Rhimi	64.5K	Lifestyle and mom life
Moufida Mahjoubi	Moufida Mahjoubi	20.8K	Fashion, makeup and lifestyle
Ameni Mzoughi	Amani_mzg	32.3K	Modest fashion and style
Sonya Mbarek	Sony	18.7K	Fashion, beauty and lifestyle
Farah Rezek	Faraah_rzz	106K	Fashion and travel
Sarra Mahdeoui	Sarra Deniz	6.2K	Lifestyle and adventure
Rawdha Ayedi	rawdhaayadi	7.6K	Beauty and travel
Sarah Magroun	sarra_magroun	43.9K	Health and beauty
Yesmine Mellouli	Yesmine_mellouli	12.7K	Lifestyle

An interview guide was produced before the interviews, which was taken from a study by Fredriksson (2019), Supervisor at Halmstad University about “Influencers and followers - partners in crime? A study of influencers’ usage of a marketing communication strategy to build a relationship with their followers” (see appendix 1,2 and 3). The issues are grouped in the theoretical framework after the several previously explored sections. The interviews began with background information questions and progressed to marketing communication plan questions before concluding with questions on the selected relationship marketing model. The purpose of

the background questions was to gather basic information and build trust and a more relaxed atmosphere between the interviewer and the interviewees (David & Sutton, 2016). The questions regarding the critical issues are about the study's main topics, followed by suggestions to clarify the information gathered (David & Sutton, 2016). The goal of this arrangement was to have a natural flow and smooth transitions between interviewees. To improve dependability, the interview questions were organized so that all interviews had the same base and could be used in future research on the same subject (David & Sutton, 2016). The interview questions were a combination of standardized and unstandardized to elicit open and thorough responses. This, according to David and Sutton (2016), leads to more validity and is appropriate for a qualitative interview approach. The interview guide's unstandardized and unstructured questions encourage more personal responses and allow individual reflections (Patel & Davidson, 2014; David & Sutton, 2016).

The zoom interviews were video-recorded so the writer could listen back and ensure nothing was missed. The questions were written down to ensure that they were given consistently to the respondents. To prevent the difficulties that might arise in qualitative research, interviewer context and content context, the interviewer was cautious not to depart from the interview guide so that the views or perceptions did not impact the respondents (Jacobsen, 2002). However, there was a follow-up on some of the questions with suggestions, as mentioned, to deepen the replies.

Data Analysis

This research will be applying thematic analysis, mainly Braun and Clarke's reflective thematic analysis (2019). Thematic analysis is a common approach for evaluating data in many disciplines and fields. It may be applied in various ways to a wide range of data sets to address multiple research questions. It is one of a group of strategies aimed at detecting patterned meaning in data collection.

Reflexive thematic analysis, in particular, is helpful in this research because it is conceptually flexible, allowing it to be employed within many frameworks to address a wide range of questions (Braun and Clarke, 2019).

The following phases will be covered in the analysis for this study using thematic analysis. Although these phases are sequential, each builds on the prior one, and analysis is often a recursive process, with movement back and forth between them. These are not inflexible rules to be

followed, but rather a set of conceptual and practice-oriented 'tools' that guide the analysis to support a rigorous data interrogation and engagement (Braun and Clarke, 2019 and Lester, 2020).

Familiarization with the data | This step entails reading and re-reading the data to get absorbed and thoroughly acquainted with its substance.

Coding | This step entails creating concise labels (codes!) that indicate crucial data properties that may be useful to solve the research question. It involves coding the whole dataset and then combining all the codes and pertinent data extracts for further stages of analysis.

Generating initial themes | This step entails reviewing the codes and collected data to uncover important larger meaning patterns (potential themes). It then entails gathering data related to each possible topic to work with the data and assess the feasibility of each candidate theme.

Reviewing themes | In this step, the candidate themes are compared to the dataset to ensure that they tell a compelling story about the data and answer the research question. Themes are often developed at this phase, including splitting, combining, or discarding them. Our thematic analysis method defines themes as a pattern of ordinary meaning anchored by a fundamental notion or idea.

Defining and naming themes | This step entails establishing a comprehensive study of each theme, identifying each theme's scope and emphasis, and determining each theme's story. It also entails selecting an informative name for each subject.

Writing up | In this last phase, you will weave together the analytic narrative and data extracts and contextualize the analysis in connection to previous literature.

Research Trustworthiness

The extent to which empirical data is considered to reflect the research purpose's and objectives' true aim is called validity (Babbie, 2013). It is seen to be more critical in interpretive studies than in positivist studies because it generates qualitative data that is both rich and subjective. Faulty techniques, poor samples, and erroneous or misleading measurements are among the problems that might undermine validity (Collis & Hussey, 2014). To avoid these issues, the data collection, which took the form of interviews, was designed in line with the norms given by the literature about data collecting in qualitative research. The sample was per the criteria

established for our social media influencers to pick notable members of the population who might give rich information on the study issue.

In qualitative research, transferability refers to the results' generalizability. It demonstrates to readers that the research findings may be applied to many situations and places. The use of tiny and unrepresentative samples may raise transferability concerns. For example, if the study is based on a single case study, then the theory or conclusions cannot be extrapolated to the population (Adenola, 2019). Twelve social media influencers with multiple different contents are included in this research. In-depth knowledge from the interviews was obtained to make proposals that may be extended to various influencers. This report also includes a complete overview of the approaches and tactics that these influencers may use to create connections with their followers. It provides a foundation for the reader to decide on transferability. Some brands who use influencer marketing may see similarities in their scenario, while others may determine whether to use comparable approaches.

All interviews were conducted in the respondents' native languages to ensure that they could express themselves and that communication was simplified. This was done to ensure that no information was lost or omitted during translation. Because both interviewees spoke Arabic and French fluently, this was made feasible.

FINDINGS

This chapter will present the empirical findings of this research. The following themes have been identified from the in-depth interviews with the influencers using the qualitative thematic analysis method by Braun and Clarke (2019):

Background information on relationship building:

The background questions collected basic information and created the trust and more relaxed energy between the interviewers and the respondent. Also, to understand more about the type of influencer and influence the interviewees share on their online platforms.

Marketing communication strategy:

This theme demonstrates several aspects of communication. Segmentation, positioning, and configuration are essential since they have been studied extensively in prior studies.

Relationship marketing:

This is a comprehension model that can aid in the interpretation and comprehension of the influencers' operating process. It might be used for the relationship between an influencer and their followers. This aspect exists to strengthen the relationship and increase client loyalty. Therefore, the connection generates a sense of belonging for the customer, either to the company or an influencer's network.

These themes are also analyzed in light of the literature and the research questions.

ANALYSIS

This chapter will present the empirical findings of this research. The following elements have been identified from the in-depth interviews with the influencers using the qualitative analysis method: background information on relationship building, marketing communication strategy, and relationship marketing faced by social media influencers. These sections are also analyzed in light of the literature and the research questions.

- **Background information on relationship building**

When discussing being a social media influencer as a full-time job, all of the interviewed influencers clarified that it is just a part-time job; some even called it a hobby. However, for some of them, the opportunity to have a solid voice for influence in the community made them open their businesses; for example, ONS, became an entrepreneur and now launched her clothing line brand (annou) beside her podcast (onsomnia).

They all consider themselves lifestyle influencers with different content about travel, photography, fashion, and make-up, so anything or any daily topic can touch their followers and be of interest.

“It has to be daily; it is one of the golden rules..minimum one to two posts per day and minimum of five to ten stories per day..” *-Amine Sahraoui-*

They believe that stories are an excellent way to demonstrate their true life "behind the scenes," which is why they upload stories regularly. Instagram is a fun platform to work on and a simple method to generate content. Influencers believe that when they share photos, it is crucial

that the photographs are consistent with their feed and that the words in the description and the hashtags have some form of significance that adds value to the followers. That is why for them to exist, they need to be present and updated every day. Sharing a post/story on Instagram is delicate because, on a first basis, it needs to have good quality and be attractive to the followers, from the colours and background to the way you dress and posture. On the second one, timing and the added value of the post/story will be considered.

“It is not mandatory to show the sponsored products or posts. It has to be natural...”

-Wissal Krimi-

Making a sponsored post or Instagram story about a product or service can be a sensitive topic for all parties. For the brand, of course, it will be better if their name as a sponsor for the product is written in the descriptions. Still, mainly for the followers -as they are the potential consumers and the targeted group- it will probably make them question the honesty of the influencers, as many of them mentioned in the interviews. For example, for the influencer, it will not change anything if it was said as sponsored or not; at the end of the day, they will get paid by the brand, and they will share and talk about the product in their feeds but as they mentioned the results sometimes can be a little different from a non-sponsored post/story. Subsequently, when sharing a sponsored post/story, influencers get a clear campaign brief before working with any brand about the main points of their deliverables. However, they are responsible for the artistic direction of their posts/stories. As they mentioned in the interviews, they brainstorm the idea, finalize it, film, and edit their content, and draft every caption. Few brands request to verify the content in advance to ensure it works according to the brief and brand values.

- **Marketing communication strategy**

“Instagram insights give an overall idea about my audience (age, location, gender), and I have an idea about their lifestyle, preferences, and interests, according to our daily interactions”

-Moufida Mahjoubi-

Most influencers said that their followers are females, mostly between 18-35. They are mainly from their city (where they live). A few followers live overseas, especially those with similar lifestyles and communities. The interviewed influencers' target group mainly were females.

Still, more than that, they wanted to have an account that encourages people to be themselves and get inspiration which is something that all ages and genders should take part in.

Some of the interviewed influencers consider demographics the most critical category, according to demographics discussed by Solomon et al. (2013), since they mostly want to reach females. They say they need to know their followers' age, gender, ethnicity, and education, if necessary, to create the right shared content and collaborations for them. Interestingly, almost all influencers agree that the best way to segment the market as an influencer is not by demographics but by psychological factors such as attitude, lifestyle, and self-image. In their experience, because people like to follow persons they can relate to or who is an ideal image of themselves, none of the influencers are actively doing this. When first asked whom they target, all influencers said gender or age at the beginning. Though, this changed when the different categories of segmentation were mentioned. When they learned how to segment the market, they all agreed that the one segmentation they used might not be the optimum for an influencer.

ONS, in case, said that she wants to encourage people to be themselves with her Instagram feed and loves being vocal about women and youth issues.

“I am a fashion and beauty influencer, and I love being vocal about women and youth issues (one of the reasons why I launched my podcast)” - Ons -

This could be a subconscious segmentation, or it is the actual segment she is working towards. This is something that can interpret that she is also segmenting by psychographic factors since she is targeting self-image and attitudes.

Why none of the influencers are actively targeted by the psychographic segmentation could be because of a lack of knowledge, time, or engagement. Because in another case, Amine and Khoubaib considered geographic segmentation (follower's location such as city and country) the most critical category. They mentioned that since they are primarily based in Dubai and Turkey, they must give relevant collaborations and products to their followers. For example, Amine says that all his brand collaborations must be high quality and sophisticated because this is the community in Dubai that considers location important since companies there, for example, are prioritizing that when choosing collaborating influencers, so relevant content/product is the keyword.

“I live in France, but I still get collaborations from Tunisian brands since they manage online businesses and ship worldwide. So, for me, distance is one ticket away”

-Moufida Mahjoubi-

Also, Moufida mentions that when segmenting by demographics, as Solomon et al. (2013) discussed, geographics is nothing she considers since Instagram and online shops (as her own) are online. She implies that most of the businesses she works with have well-established internet-based online shops with sales opportunities throughout the country and even outside of Tunisia. This is a significant difference that can be interpreted because of personality differences.

“I am not just an influencer, but also a freelance photographer, and work with different media channels”

-Khoubaib.bz-

Each participant in this study has a job outside of being an influencer. Hence, they can have other time-consuming projects that affect their work as influencers. The number of followers is another factor that must be taken into consideration. A full-time influencer with, for example, more than 500K followers might have a more well-created and in-depth segmentation plan of its focus.

According to the content studied, I believe that all the influencers are succeeding with their intended positionings (Fuchs & Diamantopoulos, 2010). Their content shows what they seek to mediate. Therefore, their accurate positioning conforms with what Fuchs and Diamantopoulos recommend (2010). The fact that all influencers are succeeding with their positioning might be because Instagram is an excellent platform that allows influencers to mediate whom they want to be effortless. Their followers have chosen to follow them, and influencers could quickly share photos with descriptions and hashtags to introduce themselves and create interaction. It is simpler for influencers to flourish than for a brand that may struggle with more traditional marketing and positioning strategies. It is challenging to analyze perceived positioning because this study does not examine the customers' points of view.

Today's followers actively seek out influencers, implying that influencers employ a pull strategy when connecting on Instagram. However, Finne and Strandvik (2012) agree that influencers recognize that their followers are not as passive as the push/pull strategy assumes. In this research, the interviewed influencers detect an active response from their community, with

followers wanting to talk to them, ask questions and interact. This might be because all influencers appear to have a solid relationship with their followers.

When asked about describing their platform's theme, most of the interviewed influencers' answers were "adventure," "fashion," and lifestyle, which corresponds more to brand concept platforms. However, some other answers were different, like Ons's when she claimed her theme to be "vintage," which is reflected in pictures and corresponds with a creative platform. Also, others like Wissal said mom life, which can be recognized by her posts and stories. (Fill & Turnbull, 2016) Suppose we only interpret the interviews with the influencers and investigate what factors could be the reason for this difference. In that case, it could be because of the disparity in the number of followers and their behavior. However, I do not think this could be the only reason since we do not see why the number of followers would be a contributing factor to this difference in platforms. I believe that some influencers prioritize a creative platform since they are more concerned that their feed visually looks good over the alternative platforms. This proves what they said at the beginning: image is everything in their line of business. Considering their profiles to be platforms, all influencers are working with participation platforms because brands use them to become a part of their followers' daily lives on social media. Because influencers actively participate in Instagram activities, they naturally create participation platforms for others who follow them. Unlike the creative and brand platforms, this is something they have no control over and can only be manipulated to their benefit. They may determine what to mediate using their creative and brand platform, which can provide a comprehensive picture of the influencers' profiles when paired with the positionings.

According to the configuration frequency outlined by Fill and Turnbull (2016), influencers understand how frequently they must publish and distinguish between sponsored and non-sponsored posts to keep their followers pleased. Almost all of the questioned influencers also understand how often and what to share, which might be due to the fact seeing themselves as an influencer for a longer time than the others or because they have more followers. This indicates more excellent expertise working on Instagram and a larger audience, making it simpler to observe reactions.

In terms of the configuration orientation highlighted by Fill and Turnbull (2016), all of the questioned influencers' communication is horizontal rather than unidirectional because all

influencers state that their followers frequently comment on photos and send personal DMs or messages. In this study, the influencers believe their followers appreciate their relationship and value when they communicate with the followers. This demonstrates that influencers' connection with their followers is horizontal since they do not see themselves to be at a higher level above them. Influencers with a more significant number of followers may have more vertical contact with their following due to their "fame."

In the communication configuration mentioned by Fill and Turnbull, I feel that businesses are hiring influencers as an indirect content approach (2016). Companies use influencers to modify or influence people's views toward their products. When an influencer presents products with many followers who match the profiles of the products, they may easily persuade customers to modify their view of a brand or a product. When working with businesses, influencers affect people's opinions about brands or products in all scenarios in this study. If businesses did not intend to change their customers' beliefs, maybe more traditional marketing would have sufficed, and direct marketing would have sufficed if the consumers were already clients of the firm.

- **Relationship marketing model**

The completed questionnaire found several similarities but, at the same time, differences among the social media influencers. In general, we can observe that all influencers are conscious of their marketing relationships with their followers and employ various techniques to keep them loyal such as being active every day and making them feel related to the shared content. We notice a lot of consistency in the responses regarding relationship marketing; they all agree that it is critical to examine each collaboration and ensure that the content matches their profiles to develop confidence. As mentioned before, the influencers only write and share posts as they see fit to their personality. They also value responding to comments and messages to build relationships with their followers and demonstrate empathy. For example, Amine and Sarra mentioned that until now, they tried to respond to every single message and comment even by an emoji to make their followers feel like they are not just a number on their profile but also their opinions matter too. Since none of the influencers displays strong beliefs on social media, they are cautious with their followers shared. However, they recognize the need for common beliefs to keep the audience loyal.

According to Zebardast Gashti and Chirani (2017), the message's seller, in this case, the social media influencers, delivers promises that the followers receive. These promises might be about a constant stream of shared posts/stories, a consistent method of presenting oneself or communicating with their audience. The communication from the influencers allows them to win the confidence of their followers and fulfil their promises (Zebardast Gashti & Chirani, 2017). Bonding is crucial to all influencers; they all use interactions to strengthen the relationship, as they all admitted. We observe that a strong relationship between an influencer and their followers corresponds to a high level of trust.

According to some of the questioned influencers, some of them, such as Sarra M. and Farah, focus on responding to comments and messages. However, Moufida and Sarra work a lot with video recording called "Reel" to bring followers into their daily lives. Reels take more time to create than uploading a photo in an Instagram story/post. Some of these influencers may utilize them more than others since they have more time to spend on their private Instagram posts/stories than others who have more collaborations to work with. Ons, on the other hand, strives to promote bonding by including questions in her stories for her followers to answer and interact with them.

The formal and informal communication between influencers and their followers in the relationship marketing model (Zebardast Gashti & Chirani, 2017; Morgan & Hunt, 1994) is relevant to the configuration modality Fill and Turnbull (2016). The interviewed influencers put a lot of effort into maintaining a healthy balance in their feeds for their followers to satisfy other aspects of the relationship model. This aspect is more critical to some influencers like Ons since she is one of many interviewed influencers who receives more requests for sponsorship and collaborations. For example, some influencers receive a lot of presents from firms who want to cooperate with them but are concerned that they will diverge from their image if they share posts/stories about everything. However, others have fewer collaborations and are more concerned with expressing gratitude to the brands for the gifts. This is something that can be observed as differences across the interviewed influencers. Even some influencers said that they had to decline some brand requests to maintain a healthy mix of formal and informal communication.

Shared values are most likely the aspect that influencers reflect the least on. Preferences such as behavior, aspirations, and policies are essential for a long-term business relationship, but

they are sometimes overlooked. (Zebardast Gashti & Chirani, 2017; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Hütten, Salge, Niemand, & Siems, 2018). This might be because influencers do not have the same level of understanding of the lives of their followers as followers have of them. They can only go by likes and comments and have no idea what values are essential to the opposing party. Even if they don't know much about their followers' values, they all believe empathy is crucial to sharing and strive to perceive the issue through their followers' eyes (Zebardast Gashti & Chirani, 2017; Hütten, Salge, Niemand, & Siems, 2018). They consider what their followers encounter from them through posts/stories and interactions, ensuring that the message is being understood. This is regarded as an attempt to comprehend the other party's requirement (Zebardast Gashti & Chirani, 2017; Hütten, Salge, Niemand & Siems, 2018). These influencers are concerned with responding to comments and messages, referring to the mutual relationship in which one person receives attention from the other (Hütten, Salge, Niemand, & Siems, 2018). They will get greater devotion and attention if they keep communicating with their followers.

CONCLUSION

With the emergence of influencer marketing, nearly every company identified the potential growth of their brand awareness among consumers. It began to recognize the importance of collaborating with social media influencers to achieve the goal of creating a need/desire among consumers for their product.

Relationship marketing and marketing communication strategies have varied effects on one another. In this study, some aspects of each theory appear to be related when studying the relationship between a social media influencer and their followers. Patterns in the study reveal that various aspects of the marketing communication approach can influence their connection. However, conclusions may be formed that it is only the acts of the communication strategy that impact the connection and not the other way around. We can observe from the empirical study that the interaction between influencers and their followers is a crucial aspect of an influencer's job. This relationship is being developed through both formal and informal communication on Instagram.

Communication is essential for developing trust and connection. According to the study, by segmenting a target group like themselves, social media influencers may form closer ties with their followers. All these influencers in this research are intentionally pursuing females, some of

whom are their age since they know what they are looking for. The influencers understand what their followers are seeking and what they want to gain from the interaction. They can more easily target this group because they know its demands. According to the respondents in this study, the best method to segment the market as an influencer is to target psychological characteristics such as self-image and attitudes. Gender and age are not the only things to consider, as they all mentioned. Social media influencers understand how to arrange their profiles to reach people with similar self-images and attitudes and form strong bonds with them because they have a better chance of success if they take the time to consider who their target audience is and how to segment the market.

Even though social media celebrities have more followers than the micro/macro influencer, an average person would be influenced by the second one instead of the celebrity because they will find them closer to them according to lifestyle and attitude. Micro/macro-influencers are more likely to be trusted because in this kind of influencer marketing, the number of followers is not as significant as the honest interactions these influencers make with their followers.

In this study, the influencers have connected their platforms with their positionings to produce successful marketing communication strategies supporting good relationship building. As an influencer, there is evidence that it is possible to have a variety of platforms, including creativity, brand concept, and involvement, while being consistent. When viewing an Instagram profile for the first time, positioning may be one of the first things a person notices and considers. The study's influencers expect that if a person has the same values as them, that person will become a loyal follower, but at the same time, they acknowledge that they will lose many a part of other followers, that is why they prefer to be neutral about some of their values.

It is critical for the influencers in this research to maintain a healthy balance of informal and formal posts/stories, efficient and straightforward private posts, and collaborations. The frequency of the postings might be interpreted as a promise made to the viewers about how frequently the influencer would publish. The consistent frequency of engagement between influencer and follower leads to increased trust. By responding to comments and messages, influencers demonstrate empathy for their followers and indicators of viewing things from their point of view, which leads to trust on the part of the audience.

When examining configuration as a communication factor, content strategy is an essential aspect discussed in this study. According to the empirical data, influencers employ an indirect content approach when connecting with their audience. This is not a factor related to the connection between these parties but rather to the relationship between the influencers and the brands that collaborate with them. However, this is not a topic covered in this paper. The indirect technique appears to have little effect on the business connection between influencers and their followers.

According to the collected data and analysis of the interviews, using influencer marketing means implementing both brand awareness and increasing sales. However, instead of influencers setting these broad targets as their two most important goals, it will be more effective to kick off their strategy by honing in on the brand's needs. Perhaps they want to increase their customer base in a younger demographic, or they want to expand into a new user group with a new product or even want to skip trends and utilize influencers to talk about their brand values. Therefore, for influencers to help the brand, they can reach very specific audiences; instead of the brand relying on thousands of followers, influencers will help them ensure a very targeted audience who is likely to be interested in their product reads engages with their content. Also, influencers' content features a conversational tone and personal narrative, which helps differentiate these posts from the type of features-driven ones a brand might do for the same product on their feed.

These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how influencers execute a marketing communication strategy on Instagram to form relationships with their target audience to influence their decision-making process. Several aspects of marketing communication strategy are aligned with developing a relationship between an influencer and their followers. They may establish a devoted audience and a strong relationship by developing and changing their marketing communication plan to match the needs of their targeted audience. As a result, the targeted group is more likely to participate in what the influencers support. Both sides rely on one another to build a long-term and trustworthy relationship that will benefit all parties.

This research's contribution might be helpful to not just for influencers but also for businesses who use influencers as a marketing strategy. Because influencer marketing is a new phenomenon and there is a gap in finding detailed information or specific new data; therefore, there is a need for more research on the issue in combination with relationship marketing. This study provides a better understanding of how influencers use their communication approach to

form connections and impact the decision behavior of a customer. The interviews reveal which characteristics are most important to influencers and how they view their followers as partners in a relationship.

The study also has a reasonably high external validity since the respondents are relevant to participate in this research and an excellent match to answer the questions produced to fulfil the objective of this thesis. If a study has high internal validity, it suggests that your findings accurately mirror reality and that what you wrote is an accurate depiction of what was discovered. To achieve high internal validity in our theoretical framework, we selected a variety of sources that complement one another to back our study. To guarantee internal validity in our empirical analysis, the interviews were videotaped, allowing us to go back and listen over them afterward to verify we did not miss anything. We also wanted to double-check the outcomes of our interviews with the influencers' feedbacks. This provided us with several data sources that corroborated what we uncovered in our empirical investigation.

Brands should keep in mind that building buying intent is difficult. Before purchasing a product, people examine a variety of factors. Sometimes an ad motivates a person, and other times it is a need. Because social and emotional values are linked to purchase behavior, Brands should sell items by establishing emotional and social bonds through a social media influencer. The selection of an influencer is critical; the target audience should be described precisely, and then an influencer should be chosen accordingly.

A range of studies should be conducted with various products and specific brands to obtain more credible results

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The main aim of the study was to assess the impact of social media influencers on the consumers' decision-making purchasing process. Regarding this, the study has conducted qualitative research, through zoom interviews and questionnaires with different influencers; then analysed it and reached into conclusion. Based on this, the following recommendations were forwarded, addressing mainly future research:

- Since the internet and social media platforms are constantly updating; as technology

is, more case studies might be included in future studies to strengthen the validity and see if the results vary.

- Other factors that can be interesting to study are comparing the relationship building between different influencers, micro and macro, to compare if the impact on their followers is to be recognized or not.

- Also, in this study, we mostly interviewed Tunisian social media influencers, so another study could be done with more variety of different nationalities.

- When building a marketing communication strategy, The functioning of social media influencers on other platforms, such as YouTube, Facebook, or even TikTok, might well be analyzed as well, as there could be differences in how influencers operate on these platforms.

- Since the study only focused on influencers and their point of view, both businesses and followers/consumers are participants in this form of marketing; their insights are equally worth investigating.

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Https 6: <https://www.instagram.com/ayaahmmedofficial/>

Https 7: <https://www.instagram.com/lady.samara/>

Https 8: <https://www.instagram.com/sahraouiamin/>

Https 9: <https://www.instagram.com/khoubaib.bz/>

Https 10: <https://www.instagram.com/onshm/>

Https 11: https://www.instagram.com/wissal_wakar_hamdi/

Https 12: https://www.instagram.com/mou_fi_da/

Https 13: https://www.instagram.com/amani_mzg/

Https 14: https://www.instagram.com/sonya_mbarekk/

Https 15: https://www.instagram.com/faraah_rzz/

Https 16: <https://www.instagram.com/sarra.mehd/>

Https 17: <https://www.instagram.com/rawdhaayadi/>

Https 18: https://www.instagram.com/sarra_magroun/

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Interview guide English

Background information about the SM influencers

1. Are you a full-time influencer or do you have another profession?
2. What kind of influencer are you? What is mainly your content about?

3. For how long have you considered yourself as an influencer?
4. How often do you make posts?
5. How often do you publish Instagram stories?
6. What is the most important thing to think about when sharing a post on Instagram?
7. What is the most important thing to think about when sharing an Instagram story?
8. How often do you make sponsored posts?
9. How often do you do “sponsored” Instagram posts/stories?
10. When making a sponsored post or Instagram story, do you decide by yourself what to post and write or do the company behind the sponsorship have a lot of influence on it?

Marketing Communication Strategy

11. What do you know about your followers? For example, age, gender, location, lifestyle, etc.
12. Who are you targeting with your Instagram posts/stories? What do you base your main target group on?
13. Which of the following categories regarding segmentation do you consider the most important as an influencer?
 - Demographics: age, gender, ethnicity, education, and line of work
 - Geographic: consumers’ location such as city and country
 - Psychographic: consumers’ lifestyles, self-image, attitudes, etc.
 - Behavioral: how often and how the consumer uses the company’s product, does the consumer have high brand-loyalty? What is it that the segment likes about the thing you’re selling?
14. Is positioning an expression you’re familiar with since before?

In this report, positioning is defined as an expression that describes how the customers in your target audience perceive and manage you and your Instagram content in their minds.

15. How do you position yourself as an influencer? Do you think you managed to mediate that to your followers? Do you think your followers perceive you like you intended to mediate it?
16. What kind of response do you usually receive from your followers from sponsored posts/stories?
17. What kind of response do you usually receive from a non-sponsored post/story?
18. How do you work with the response you get from your followers? Do you adapt your posts/stories to meet the request of the targeted group?
19. If you had to put a word on your social media feed that described it, like a theme, what would that be?
20. How do you work with formal and informal communication on your feed? How do you combine the mix of personal and sponsored posts/stories?
21. When doing a sponsored post/story, how do they differ from your personal posts/stories? How do you change your language in the captions?

Relationship marketing

22. How do you experience the trust between you and your followers? How important is this part for you and your work?
23. How do you define the loyalty between you and your followers? What do you do to keep your followers loyal?
24. How do you think the relationship between you and your followers is affected if you share the same values or not? Do you think this matter to get loyal followers?
25. Do you consider it important to show empathy and care from you to your followers and from your followers to you in return in different situations?
26. How much do you interact with your followers e.g., by answering comments and messages from followers? Do you think that the followers consider it enough or do you think they want more attention in return?

27. What do you do to strengthen the relationship with your followers?

28. Is there anything else you want to add?

Appendix 2 : Interview guide French

Informations générales sur les influenceurs du social media

1. Êtes-vous un influenceur à temps plein ou avez-vous un autre métier ?
2. Quel genre d'influenceur êtes-vous ? De quoi parle principalement votre contenu ?
3. Depuis combien de temps vous considérez-vous comme un influenceur ?
4. À quelle fréquence publiez-vous des messages ?
5. À quelle fréquence publiez-vous des histoires Instagram ?
6. Quelle est la chose la plus importante à laquelle penser lorsque vous partagez une publication sur Instagram ?
7. Quelle est la chose la plus importante à laquelle penser lorsque vous partagez une histoire Instagram ?
8. À quelle fréquence publiez-vous des messages sponsorisés ?
9. À quelle fréquence faites-vous des publications/histoires Instagram « sponsorisées » ?
10. Lorsque vous créez une publication sponsorisée ou une histoire Instagram, décidez-vous vous-même quoi publier et écrire ou est-ce que l'entreprise derrière le parrainage a beaucoup d'influence dessus ?

Stratégie de communication marketing

11. Que savez-vous de vos abonnés ? Par exemple, l'âge, le sexe, le lieu, le mode de vie, etc.
12. Qui ciblez-vous avec vos publications/stories Instagram ? Sur quoi basez-vous votre groupe cible principal ?

13. Laquelle des catégories suivantes concernant la segmentation considérez-vous comme la plus importante en tant qu'influenceur ?

- Données démographiques : âge, sexe, origine ethnique, éducation et secteur d'activité

-Géographique : emplacement des consommateurs, comme la ville et le pays

-Psychographique : modes de vie des consommateurs, image de soi, attitudes, etc.

-Comportemental : à quelle fréquence et comment le consommateur utilise-t-il le produit de l'entreprise ? Le consommateur est-il très fidèle à la marque ? Qu'est-ce que le segment aime dans ce que vous vendez ?

14. Est-ce que le positionnement est une expression que vous connaissez depuis longtemps ?

Dans ce rapport, le positionnement est défini comme une expression qui décrit comment les clients de votre public cible vous perçoivent et vous gèrent, vous et votre contenu Instagram, dans leur esprit.

15. Comment vous positionnez-vous en tant qu'influenceur ? Pensez-vous que vous avez réussi à transmettre cela à vos abonnés ? Pensez-vous que vos abonnés vous perçoivent comme si vous aviez l'intention de le médiatiser ?

16. Quel type de réponse recevez-vous habituellement de la part de vos abonnés à partir de publications/histoires sponsorisées ?

17. Quel type de réponse recevez-vous habituellement d'une publication/histoire non sponsorisée ?

18. Comment travaillez-vous avec la réponse que vous obtenez de vos abonnés ? Adaptez-vous vos publications/histoires pour répondre à la demande du groupe ciblé ?

19. Si vous deviez mettre un mot sur votre flux de médias sociaux qui le décrivait, comme un thème, quel serait-il ?

20. Comment travaillez-vous avec la communication formelle et informelle sur votre flux ? Comment combinez-vous le mélange de publications/histoires personnelles et sponsorisées ?

21. Lorsque vous publiez une publication/histoire sponsorisée, en quoi diffèrent-elles de vos publications/histoires personnelles ? Comment changer de langue dans les sous-titres ?

Marketing relationnelle

22. Comment vivez-vous la confiance entre vous et vos abonnés ? Quelle est l'importance de cette partie pour vous et votre travail ?

23. Comment définissez-vous la loyauté entre vous et vos abonnés ? Que faites-vous pour fidéliser vos followers ?

24. Comment pensez-vous que la relation entre vous et vos abonnés est affectée si vous partagez ou non les mêmes valeurs ? Pensez-vous que cela est important pour fidéliser vos abonnés ?

25. Considérez-vous qu'il soit important de faire preuve d'empathie et d'attention de votre part envers vos abonnés et de vos abonnés envers vous en retour dans différentes situations ?

26. Dans quelle mesure interagissez-vous avec vos abonnés, par exemple en répondant aux commentaires et aux messages des abonnés ? Pensez-vous que les abonnés le considèrent comme suffisant ou pensez-vous qu'ils veulent plus d'attention en retour ?

27. Que faites-vous pour renforcer la relation avec vos abonnés ?

28. Souhaitez-vous ajouter autre chose ?

Appendix 3: Interview guide Arabic

معلومات أساسية عن المؤثرين على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي

1. هل أنت مؤثر متفرغ أم لديك مهنة أخرى؟
2. أي نوع من المؤثرين أنت؟ ما هو المحتوى الخاص بك بشكل أساسي؟
3. منذ متى وأنت تعتبر نفسك مؤثرًا؟
4. كم مرة تقوم بعمل مشاركات؟
5. كم مرة تنشر قصص انستغرام؟
6. ما هو أهم شيء يجب التفكير فيه عند مشاركة منشور على الانستغرام؟

7. ما هو أهم شيء يجب التفكير فيه عند مشاركة قصة على الانستغرام؟
8. كم مرة تقوم بعمل مشاركات دعائية؟
9. كم مرة تقوم بنشر منشورات / قصص "برعاية" على الانستغرام؟
10. عند إنشاء منشور برعاية أو قصة على الانستغرام، هل تقرر بنفسك ما تنشره وتكتبه أم أن الشركة التي تقف وراء الرعاية لها تأثير كبير عليها؟

استراتيجية الاتصال التسويقي

11. ماذا تعرف عن متابعيك؟ على سبيل المثال، العمر والجنس والموقع ونمط الحياة وما إلى ذلك
12. من الذي تستهدفه بمشاركاتك / قصصك على الانستغرام؟ على ماذا تبني مجموعتك المستهدفة الرئيسية؟
13. أي من الفئات التالية بخصوص التجزئة تعتبرها الأكثر أهمية كمؤثر؟
- التركيبة السكانية: العمر والجنس والعرق والتعليم وخط العمل
- الموقع الجغرافي: موقع المستهلكين مثل المدينة والبلد
- صورة نفسية: أنماط حياة المستهلكين، الصورة الذاتية، المواقف، إلخ
- السلوك: كم مرة وكيف يستخدم المستهلك منتج الشركة، هل يتمتع المستهلك بمستوى عالٍ من الولاء للعلامة التجارية؟ ما الذي يعجب القطاع في الشيء الذي تبيعه؟
14. هل وضع تعبير مألوف لك من قبل؟
- في هذا التقرير، يتم تعريف تحديد المواقع على أنه تعبير يصف كيف ينظر العملاء في جمهورك المستهدف إليك ويديرون محتوى الانستغرام الخاص بك في أذهانهم
15. كيف تضع نفسك كمؤثر؟ هل تعتقد أنك تمكنت من التوسط في ذلك لمتابعيك؟ هل تعتقد أن متابعيك يرون أنك تنوي التوسط في الأمر؟
16. ما نوع الرد الذي تتلقاه عادةً من متابعيك من المشاركات / القصص التي ترعاها؟
17. ما نوع الرد الذي تتلقاه عادةً من منشور / قصة غير مدعومة؟
18. كيف تتعامل مع الاستجابة التي تحصل عليها من متابعيك؟ هل تقوم بتكليف منشوراتك / قصصك لتلبي طلب المجموعة المستهدفة؟

19. إذا كان عليك وضع كلمة على موجز وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي الخاص بك تصفها، مثل موضوع، فماذا سيكون؟
20. كيف تعمل مع التواصل الرسمي وغير الرسمي في بطاقاتك؟ كيف تجمع بين مزيج المنشورات / القصص الشخصية والمدعومة؟
21. عند عمل منشور / قصة برعاية، كيف تختلف عن منشوراتك / قصصك الشخصية؟ كيف تغير لغتك في التسميات التوضيحية؟

علاقة التسويق

22. كيف تختبر الثقة بينك وبين متابعيك؟ ما مدى أهمية هذا الجزء بالنسبة لك وعملك؟
23. كيف تحدد الولاء بينك وبين متابعيك؟ ماذا تفعل لتحافظ على ولاء متابعيك؟
24. كيف تعتقد أن العلاقة بينك وبين متابعيك تتأثر إذا كنت تشارك نفس القيم أم لا؟ هل تعتقد أن هذا مهم للحصول على متابعين مخلصين؟
25. هل تعتبر أنه من المهم إظهار التعاطف والاهتمام منك لمتابعيك ومن متابعيك لك في المقابل في مواقف مختلفة؟
26. ما مدى تفاعلك مع متابعيك، على سبيل المثال، من خلال الرد على التعليقات والرسائل من المتابعين؟ هل تعتقد أن المتابعين يعتبرونها كافية أم تعتقد أنهم يريدون المزيد من الاهتمام في المقابل؟
27. ماذا تفعل لتقوية العلاقة مع أتباعك؟
28. هل هناك أي شيء آخر تريد إضافته؟