

**T.C.
ISTANBUL GEDİK UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**



**SOCIAL NETWORKS, PARASOCIAL INTERACTIONS AND
INFLUENCER MARKETING: ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT ON
CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND BEHAVIOUR**

MASTER THESIS

Christiane Myriam Rachel OUEDRAOGO

Business Management Department

Business Administration Master in English Program

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Thesis Advisor: Assist. Prof. Dr Metin TOPTAŞ

Istanbul 2025



T.C.
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DECLARATION

I, Christiane Myriam Rachel OUEDRAOGO declare that this thesis, titled " Social networks, parasocial interactions and influencer marketing: analysis of the impact on consumer perception and behaviour" represents my work which has been done after registration for the MBA program (or Master of Business Administration as appropriate) at Istanbul Gedik University and has not been previously included in a thesis or dissertation submitted to this or any other institution for a degree, diploma, or other qualifications (28/02/2025).

Christiane Myriam Rachel OUEDRAOGO

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to GOD, whose guidance and wisdom have been my strength. To my parents, for their unwavering love, support, and sacrifices, without which this journey would not have been possible. To everyone who has stood by me and supported me along the way – your encouragement.



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This achievement is not mine alone—it belongs to all of you who stood by me, lifted me up, and believed in me every step of the way. I couldn't have done it without you, and I am forever grateful.

PREFACE

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February 2025

Christiane Myriam Rachel OUEDRAOGO

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ABBREVIATIONS

AGFI	: Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index
CFI	: Comparative Fit Index
CMIN/df	: Chi-square Minimum Discrepancy divided by Degrees of Freedom
GFI	: Goodness-of-Fit Index
PSI	: ParaSocial Interaction
RMSEA	: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
ROI	: Return on Investment
TLI	: Tucker-Lewis Index

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SOCIAL NETWORKS, PARASOCIAL INTERACTIONS AND INFLUENCER MARKETING: ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT ON CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND BEHAVIOUR

ABSTRACT

In an era where social media is a major part of communication and consumption practices, influencer marketing is now an important way for brands to connect with people in a real way. This study looks at how the relationship between influencers and their followers shape consumers' perceptions and influence their recommendation intentions through factors as self disclosure, parasocial interactions and attitude towards the brand. For this research, a survey composed of 32 questions was used to test the different hypotheses. This survey was published on different platforms on social networks, collecting 325 responses. Before testing the proposed hypothesis with the Structural model, the data were analysed with confirmatory factor analyses. The results reveal that trust is one of the key factor which can shaping the behaviour of the users. This trustworthiness is built with social media interaction, self disclosure and parasocial interaction which permit to influencer to be authentic and get high credibility from users. Social media have a positive impact on parasocial interaction which himself depends of three (3) factors. These factors are friendship, understanding and identification and they all have positive impact on trustworthiness. It also found that self disclosure plays an essential role in connection made through social media interaction and each of the factor that affect parasocial interaction. Additionally, research shows how source of trustworthiness, attitude toward the influencer and intention to recommend are related. The practical implications of this research are numerous for companies looking to improve their influencer marketing strategy. By understanding the dynamics of parasocial relationships, brands can better choose the influencers they collaborate with. It is essential to favor those who manage to establish sincere and authentic connections with their audience. Finally, this study enriches the literature by having a significant contribution because it shows how parasocial relationships influence consumer recommendation. The effect of other factors such as credibility, as well as marketing, provides us with valuable information and has allowed us to enrich our understanding of the social dynamics of the digital age. With this mode constantly evolving, this study opens up new avenues for future research on the evolution of this phenomenon over time.

Keywords: *Parasocial relation, social network, influencer marketing, influencers, credibility, authenticity, self disclosure, consumer behavior*

SOSYAL AĞLAR, PARASOSYAL ETKİLEŞİMLER VE ETKİLEYİCİ PAZARLAMA: TÜKETİCİ ALGISI VE DAVRANIŞI ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİLERİN ANALİZİ

ÖZET

Sosyal medyanın iletişim ve tüketim pratiklerinin önemli bir parçası olduğu bir çağda, influencer pazarlaması artık markaların insanlarla gerçek bir şekilde bağlantı kurmasının önemli bir yoludur. Bu çalışma, influencer'lar ve takipçileri arasındaki ilişkinin tüketicilerin algılarını nasıl şekillendirdiğini ve kendini ifşa etme, parasosyal etkileşimler ve markaya karşı tutum gibi faktörler aracılığıyla tavsiye niyetlerini nasıl etkilediğini incelemektedir. Bu araştırma için, farklı hipotezleri test etmek amacıyla 32 sorudan oluşan bir anket kullanılmıştır. Bu anket sosyal ağlardaki farklı platformlarda yayınlanmış ve 325 yanıt toplanmıştır. Önerilen hipotezleri Yapısal model ile test etmeden önce, veriler doğrulayıcı faktör analizleri ile analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, güvenin kullanıcıların davranışlarını şekillendirebilecek kilit faktörlerden biri olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bu güvenilirlik, sosyal medya etkileşimi, kendini ifşa etme ve parasosyal etkileşim ile inşa edilmekte, bu da etkileyicinin otantik olmasına ve kullanıcılardan yüksek güvenilirlik elde etmesine izin vermektedir. Sosyal medya, kendisi de üç (3) faktöre bağlı olan parasosyal etkileşim üzerinde olumlu bir etkiye sahiptir. Bu faktörler arkadaşlık, anlayış ve özdeşleşmedir ve hepsi de güvenilirlik üzerinde olumlu bir etkiye sahiptir. Ayrıca, sosyal medya etkileşimi ve parasosyal etkileşimi etkileyen faktörlerin her biri aracılığıyla kurulan bağlantıda kendini ifşa etmenin önemli bir rol oynadığı ve önemli bir rol oynadığı bulunmuştur. Ayrıca, araştırma güvenilirlik kaynağı, etkileyiciye yönelik tutum ve tavsiye etme niyetinin nasıl ilişkili olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu araştırmanın, influencer pazarlama stratejilerini geliştirmek isteyen şirketler için çok sayıda pratik çıkarımı bulunmaktadır. Markalar, parasosyal ilişkilerin dinamiklerini anlayarak işbirliği yapacakları influencer'ları daha iyi seçebilir. Kitleleriyle samimi ve özgün bağlar kurmayı başaranları tercih etmek çok önemlidir. Son olarak bu çalışma, parasosyal ilişkilerin tüketici tavsiyesini nasıl etkilediğini göstermesi bakımından önemli bir katkı sağlayarak literatürü zenginleştirmektedir. Pazarlamanın yanı sıra güvenilirlik gibi diğer faktörlerin etkisi de bize değerli bilgiler sunmakta ve dijital çağın sosyal dinamiklerine ilişkin anlayışımızı zenginleştirmemizi sağlamaktadır. Bu mod sürekli gelişirken, bu çalışma, bu fenomenin zaman içindeki evrimine ilişkin gelecekteki araştırmalar için yeni yollar açmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Parasosyal ilişki, sosyal ağ, influencer pazarlama, influencerlar, güvenilirlik, özgünlük, kendini ifşa etme, tüketici davranışı*

1. INTRODUCTION

The rise of influencers on social media has spawned a new approach to marketing called influencer marketing. It consists of paying an influencer to promote their image or services on social networks in order to reach their target. The idea of such interactions is based on the idea of parasocial interactions introduced by Horton and Wahl (1956), describing a one-sided relationship where an individual (the follower) develops an intense emotional bond with another party (the influencer) who is unaware of their existence. Although these interactions have mostly been studied in the context of television and celebrities, they have gained relevance with the advent of social media, contributing to the evolution of influencer marketing.(Horton & Wohl, 1956).

Social media has changed the way people talk to each other and find information. Since they first existed in the early 2000s, sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube have changed a lot the way we discuss, share things and buy. Thanks to these sites, you can show, see and share products very quickly. It also helps businesses sell more easily.

One very important thing today is what we call parasocial interactions. This is an idea presented by Horton and Wahl in 1956. It talks about a one-way relationship, where someone feels close to a famous person, even if that person doesn't talk to them. Influencers are people who have a large following on social networks. They are very well known for what they do, and they often manage to make others think or act in a certain way.

Influencer marketing, which relies on these one-way relationships, is now a popular method for brands to connect and engage with their audiences truly and effectively. According to Khamis, Ang, and Welling (2017), influencers can create interesting and trustworthy content. This really resonates with their followers. Influencers often make their followers trust them more by making them feel truly connected and authentic.

The effect of one-sided relationships and social media stars on how people see and act is a new field of study. A lot of research shows that social media stars can influence people's opinions and actions on the items they endorse. How influencer marketing works really depends on a few things, like how much people trust the influencer, whether the content they post is relevant, and how good the fake friendship vibe is. Here's the scoop, ladies: Djafarova and Rushworth in 2017 pointed out that people understand how influencers sell products and might not trust the hype if it seems fake or just a sales pitch.

This study aims to understand how social media interaction through parasocial interaction and influencer marketing can affect the recommendation intentions of users. With the analysis of factors such as self-disclosure, friendship, understanding, trustworthiness, and attitude to recommend, the goal of this study is to discover all the mechanisms which can have an effect on the recommendation behavior of users. Parasocial interaction between influencers and their followers is crucial for the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Consumers' brand attitudes and recommendation intentions are shaped by this interaction. However, the precise nature of these connections requires further analysis. Previous research by Du (2023) and Ermeç (2022) has shown the value of this interaction in the process of shaping consumer behaviors and attitudes. The presence of parasocial interactions would also increase the intention to recommend (Du, Rui, and Yu, 2023). However, several explorations need to be made on the dynamics of this relationship and its importance on influencer marketing.

1.1 Past research and Research Gaps

It is important to explore previous academic work in order to have a solid foundation for this study. Two areas were explored: influencer marketing and parasocial interactions. These explorations provided valuable insights into media influence, influencer behavior, and online influencer effectiveness.

This section is divided into two parts and focuses on influencer marketing, engagement metrics, and the role influencers play in shaping consumer perception. On the other hand, the second part focuses on parasocial interactions by exploring how unidirectional emotional connections are made with influencers.

1.1.1 Influencer marketing

Influencer marketing has become an important topic of research nowadays because of its influence and the way it shapes consumer perceptions in several contexts.

Demirel (2020) investigated the influence of influencer marketing on platforms such as Instagram and Youtube on quality, exclusivity and wealth. Influencers play an important role in judging consumers' social and personal values, driven by things like modeling and fashion, but not necessarily the value of the products. On the other hand, Demirel draws attention to the limited impact of influencers due to the digital nature of the platforms.

Lytanir (2020) examined the perception of influencers and influencer marketing among Turkish high school students. Despite their lack of trust (18%), 34% said they were influenced by them when shopping. This shows that the credibility and expertise of influencers have an impact on consumer decisions.

Chloé (2020), in other research, studies the effect of collaborations with influencers on platforms such as Instagram on brand image, influencer attitude and purchase intent. The results show that collaborations with influencers are very effective for poorly recognized or perceived brands and give a better perception of the brand.

Doyle (2020) seeks to understand why consumers trust influencers' advice for their purchases by examining factors such as social relationships, self-identification, and clarity of communication styles. Doyle in his study finds that the ability of influencers to entertain and meet social needs strengthens consumer loyalty and purchase intent. At the same time, Elisa (2021) and Chevalier (2021) explore the challenges brands face during influencer collaborations. Elisa offers crisis management solutions in the event that collaboration turns out to be negative, while Chevalier studies how brands can have a positive impact on increasing their visibility and conversion by collaborating with smaller influencers.

Ghawi (2021), studies broader trends focusing on the role of influencers in the consumer decision-making process and brand perception. It shows that consumers know the difference between the image of the brand and that of the

influencer. This means that the influencer's involvement in the scandals has little effect on them.

Fardoussa (2022) is inspired by this observation and demonstrates through the analysis of more than 100 studies that influencers have a significant impact on customer loyalty and brand trust. However, this effectiveness is not universal and varies according to multiple factors.

In addition, Moosa (2023) concludes that influencers increase consumer loyalty and promotion through its study on the impact of influencer marketing on brand image and trust in Iraq.

To conclude, Bolly (2023) focuses on the luxury sector by examining the impact of transparency in paid partnerships in this sector. She finds that sponsored disclosures reduce desire and engagement.

1.1.2 Parasocial relationship

Parasocial relationships are the connections felt between listeners and characters on television or the internet, even if they don't know each other in real life. Arda (2006) explained that these bonds are created when the character is funny, kind, or strong. Often these relationships can annoy us as when we don't like a character or when he disappoints us.

Later, Louise (2021) made a comparison between human and virtual influencers. She has found that humans seem more real, but notes that virtual influencers are good at telling stories or getting messages across. Brands appreciate it a lot, especially when it comes to telling stories about important topics.

McGladdery (2021) explains that this type of relationship is not necessarily bad. Many feel reassured when they follow influencers, especially when they feel alone. It's a positive thing as long as it remains balanced.

Reynolds (2022) studied the cause of this feeling of closeness to influencers. He noticed that the more the audience recognizes itself in them, the more likely they are to follow them.

In addition, Thelwal and colleagues (2022) studied what influencers on Youtube do to create this sense of closeness. They use a natural tone or talk about

their personal experiences, which makes viewers feel like they're really chatting with them.

Finally, Senli (2022) demonstrated that virtual influencers on tiktok can influence young people to make purchases without thinking. The higher the credibility of the influencer, the more likely people are to buy what they show even if they hadn't planned to do so.

All of these studies help us better understand how influencers impact the way we think, like, or buy things. It shows the important role of influencers in our choices despite the fact that we don't know them in real life. These relationships that we create with them are often very strong, whether they are real or virtual.

However, these relationships are also complex. They can be positive or negative. As social media and marketing evolve, it becomes increasingly important to understand how these links work.

1.2 Aims of the Research

The objective of this study is that people are influenced to make purchases through social networks thanks to the links they create with influencers and the advertisements made by them. The study examines how these three elements work and what drives consumers to love a brand, trust a product, or want to buy it.

This research has several key objectives :

- Understanding the association between the level of social media interaction and parasocial relationship
- Understanding the link between self disclosure and parasocial interaction
- To analyze the effect of self-disclosure on trustworthiness of influencer
- To explore in detail the dynamics between parasocial interactions and trustworthiness of influencer
- To understand how trustworthiness can influence attitude towards the influencer
- How attitude toward the influencer can have an effect on intention to recommend the content of the influencer

All of these objectives aim to deepen our understanding of the mechanisms that shape recommendation behavior under the influence of influencer marketing and to draw useful lessons for brand strategies.

1.3 Importance of Research

This research makes an important contribution to our understanding of social media interactions, parasocial relationships, and influencer marketing. By examining the complex links between these aspects, it offers enriching perspectives that improve our theoretical and practical knowledge of these phenomena. While the literature already shows that social media interactions can influence consumers' perceptions and behaviors (Horton & Wahl, 1956; Rubin & McHugh, 1987), this study goes further by exploring the role of parasocial relationships and self-disclosure as mediators and moderators of these interactions. Notably, the results indicate that social media interactions are well correlated with parasocial relationships, and that self-disclosure acts as a key mediator in this relationship. This study shows that people feel closer to the influencer when they share personal things such as their tastes or feelings (Jourard, 1971). Even if they don't really know each other, it's as if a friendship is created. These relationships, called parasocial, make messages stronger and more credible.

The researchers found that these links impact people's interactions with social media posts. For example, if a person feels a connection with an influencer, they will more easily believe their advice. This confirms what theories say about relationships between several things (Baron & Kenny, 1986): a relationship can become stronger or weaker depending on other elements around it.

The researchers also found that these connections change the way people respond to social media posts. For example, if someone feels connected to an influencer, they will more easily believe their advice. This confirms what theories say about relationships between several things (Baron & Kenny, 1986): a relationship can become stronger or weaker depending on other elements around it.

In addition, the study explains that a follower will be willing to recommend an influencer's advice to others and around them if they think they are reliable.

This is what theories about consumer behavior say (Ajzen, 1991): when you like a brand or a person, you want to talk about it around you.

Thus, the influencer manages to create a stronger relationship with his followers when he manages to adapt his messages according to what people like. It's as if the influencer speaks directly to each follower by telling them exactly what they want to hear. This makes the influencer more credible and makes their audience more attentive to what they are saying.

Finally, influencers and marketers must keep in mind the ethical issues of influencer marketing, such as transparency of partnerships, protection of personal data, and the impact of influencers on consumer behavior. By adopting an ethical approach, they can strengthen consumer trust and improve the credibility of campaigns.

In summary, this research contributes significantly to the literature and offers practical avenues for optimizing influencer marketing campaigns. The results obtained allow marketers and influencers to design more relevant and effective strategies. By combining ethics and a deep understanding of social media dynamics, they can build a relationship of trust with the public, thus reinforcing the impact of their marketing actions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definition of Influencer Marketing

Traditional marketing, especially advertising in its most classic form, has lost its dominance. Brands are now adopting hybrid strategies to reach various targets at different stages of the buying journey, from inspiration to purchase action (GALLIC Claire, 2020). In today's world, where everything happens online, one of the most effective methods to improve advertising and online marketing efforts is to practice "influencer marketing". Companies do this in an authentic way by relying on influencers who have established their credibility and have higher number of followers (Thakur, 2023).

Influencer marketing also is a strategy focused on engaging key executives to promote a brand message in the marketplace (Bathelot, 2023). This approach aims to increase brand awareness, reach a wider audience, and reach clear objectives such as brand awareness, engagement, and conversion rates (Jean-Jacques Lambin, 2016). Bruno Mignot explores, in his book "Influencer Marketing" (Mignot, 2017), the conceptual foundations of influencer marketing, providing an in-depth perspective on its transformation (Mignot, 2017). Another perspective is provided by Brian Solis, who emphasizes the importance of collaborating with influential people to build authentic partnerships (Chopat, 2020). Thus, the selection of influencers must be strategic and aligned with the desired objectives of the brand (Gallic, 2020).

In summary, influencer marketing encompasses all actions aimed at capitalizing on the influence of key figures to strengthen the presence and perception of a brand on social networks and beyond (Bathelot, 2023).

2.1.1 Types and characteristics of influencers

The phenomenon of influencers has attracted the interest of several authors, and there are many definitions of what an influencer is in the literature. According to the International Advertising Bureau (2018), influencers are those who are considered to have the capacity to create engagement, maintain conversations, and/or

sell products/services to a target audience. They can be celebrities or microtargeted “peers” of professionals or non-professionals. De Veirman and colleagues (2017) define influencers as those who express their opinion about a product, service, or brand to a high number of people who follow them on social media platforms.

According to Campbell and Grimm (2019), a person who is paid to post content on social media is considered an influencer. These authors note that influencers receive two types of compensation: cash or free products (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). According to the Association of National Advertisers (2018), influencers are on different social networks such as Instagram and tiktok and have the ability to post at any time.

Conti and colleagues (2022) define influencers as content authors who have developed their own name both online and offline, and who have the ability to influence individuals’ purchasing choices. Arsenyan and Mirowska (2021) describe influencers as social media users who create their own content to become known and to influence a lot of persons

Finally, according to Khamis and colleagues (2017), influencers are experts in personal branding, who develop a unique and visible public image through their online presence. Some authors, such as Fueyo C. and Decaudin, as well as Rouissi in his study conducted in Morocco, have defined categories of influencers based on the number of followers since the development of social networks. However, a study by Launchmetrics classified according to the audience of each influencer, including nano-influencers, micro-influencers, mid-level influencers, macroinfluencers and mega-influencers. It should be noted that this categorization based on the number of followers may vary from one social network to another.

2.1.1.1 Nano-influencers

Nano-influencers are influencers followed by a small audience, the majority of whose followers are friends or acquaintances (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). They have fewer than 10,000 followers and have high engagement rates of up to 5% (Solomon, 2023). Their thought can affect other people and sound honest, especially when accompanied by recommendations from other consultants (Imane Haji, 2021). They establish intimacy with their followers, which allows them to build an authentic community (Claire, 2023). The content created by nano-influencers is often referred

to as user-generated content (UGC), including blog posts, social media posts, reviews published on product recommendation platforms or a brand's website, etc. This type of content is of great importance to consumers (Lailier, 2022).

Compared to celebrity influencers, nano-influencers are more effective (Enberg, 2021). Their followers perceive them as more authentic and normal individuals, which makes it easier to identify with them. Nano-influencers are very close to the people who follow them, a bit like friends. People trust them and follow their purchasing advice because of this proximity (Campbell and Farrell, 2020). Their advertising messages are better understood and appreciated because they like the same things as their followers (Cooley and Parks-Yancy, 2019).

Additionally, influencers often agree to talk about products without compensation in exchange for free product or mentions on social media (Campbell and Farrell, 2020). Finally, brands like to work with them because it is a simple, effective, and inexpensive way to advertise (Boerman, 2020).

2.1.1.2 Micro-influencers

Micro-influencers are those who have between 10,000 and 100,000 followers on their social networks. They account for 47.5% of all influencers (Dopson, 2022). What makes them special is that they are very genuine and honest with their followers, which means that they are often closer to their community (Chevalier M., 2021). Compared to macro-influencers or celebrities, microinfluencers stand out for their number of followers and their proximity to their community. They generally have a high engagement rate, which means that their followers react more to their posts via likes, shares or comments (C, 2023).

Micro-influencers often specialize in a specific field like sports, fashion, beauty, cooking, travel, etc. They inspire, inform or entertain their audience by sharing their passion, advice, opinions and experiences (Gounon, 2023). Marketers prefer to collaborate with micro-influencers because of their higher engagement rate, reaching up to 7% (Geysler, 2023). About 77% of them believe that microinfluencers are the ideal influencers (Dopson, 2022). They are perceived as more trustworthy and authentic than celebrities or macro-influencers, who may seem too far removed from consumers' daily lives (Julia, 2023). In addition, they have a more targeted and

qualified community, often in line with brands' targets, which allows them to have a significant impact on specific market segments or niches (Sahmanovic, 2021).

Compared to macro-influencers or celebrities, who require large budgets to promote a product or service, micro-influencers are more affordable. They are generally more flexible and willing to negotiate. For example, influencers with fewer than 100,000 followers receive an average of \$137 to \$258 for each Instagram post, while an influencer with more than 100,000 followers receives approximately \$400 for each post (Barker, 2017).

2.1.1.3 Mid-level influencers

Mid-level influencers represent 26.8% of influencers and have between 100,000 and 500,000 followers (Dopson, 2022). Although they appeal to a broader audience, their audience is highly segmented and the content they produce is always focused on specific topics. Unlike influencers with a broader community, who have followers with varied interests, these influencers have a loyal and segmented community based on the topics they regularly cover. For example, if they specialize in nutrition and fitness, they represent industry brands well (Romero, 2022). They often favor collaborations that align with their personal brand, even going so far as to refuse them so as not to compromise their authority and credibility (Antonetti, 2021). Small and medium-sized businesses can still benefit from these collaborations with this kind of influencers (SOVIA, 2020).

Due to the increase in their number of followers, these influencers have less time to devote

Because they have more followers now, they have less time to spend with their audience and can thus lose proximity to their audience, in favor of notoriety. However, this growing notoriety values their work, opening up multiple opportunities for them (Chevalier M., 2020). In addition, having fewer followers, they have less impact than macro or mega influencers. To develop their different profiles, mid-level influencers accept the majority of collaborations offered to them. This can sometimes be a source of annoyance because they may end up doing a bad collaboration with your brand and end up working with a competitor (Romero, 2022). This category has a low engagement rate, on average 1.81% (Chevalier M., 2021).

2.1.1.4 Macro-influencers

With an audience of between 500,000 and 1,000,000 followers, brands most often sponsor macro-influencers' posts compared to small influencers (Decaudin, 2017). Therefore, their compensation of up to \$25,000 per company share makes them much less affordable financially (Schiffelholz, 2020). Macro-influencers have a loyal fan base and a strong online presence (Thomas, 2023). They diversify their content, covering several topics that match their personal interests or areas of expertise. In addition, they have a consistent style and a well-maintained image on social media (Bour, 2023). Their popularity on social media allows them to quickly reach millions of people with their posts (Bhasurasen, 2024).

Macro-influencers are often highly credible and have a lot of trust from their followers. Their recommendations or promotions on a product or service can really affect what their followers choose to buy . They are known for their ability to produce authentic and captivating content (Virfollet, 2018). Despite this, macro-influencers have a relatively low engagement rate, generally around 2% (Geysler, 2023). However, due to their notoriety and the diversity of their audience, they manage to generate quite significant engagement (Team, 2019).

2.1.1.5 Mega-influencers

To conclude, mega-influencers, also known as celebrities, represent on average only 0.98% of users with more than one million followers (DegrauX, 2022). With a very heterogeneous audience, it may be less wise to work with them for a targeted campaign. Their ability to respond to all of their subscribers is limited, which creates a certain distance in their relationships with their audience (Chevalier M., 2021). However, the high number of interactions per publication justifies the high cost of their salary, which can go to \$100,000 per promotion (Schiffelholz, 2020).

Ultimately, the importance of micro-influencers is increasingly recognized, as mega-influencers, with their millions of followers, were previously the most sought after by a large part of the influencer marketing industry. However, there is a more engaged audience and lower costs among micro-influencers, which favors their preference among marketers. Thus, 44% of them prefer to work with

microinfluencers, and 56% of investments in this sector are focused on micro-influencers (Rodrigue, 2023).

Table 2.1: Summary of Influencer Characteristics

Influencer Type	Number of subscribers	Engagement rate
Nano-influencer	>5k	5%
Micro-influencer	5k to 100 k	7%
Mid-level influencer	100K to 500K	1.81%
Macro-influencer	500K-1M	2%
Mega-influencer	<1 MILLION	0.98%

Source: Campbell & Farrell,(2020); Dopson, (2022); Geysler,(2023); Decaudin, (2017); DegrauX, (2022)

2.1.2 Key concepts related to influencer marketing

Since the 1960s, many authors have criticized influencer marketing by highlighting how marketing changes consumers' decision-making processes. Some focus on the impact it can have on behaviors and choices and others are based on influence and are aimed at decision-makers who want to change their energies in this area. Thus, to set up an influencer marketing strategy, it is essential to define your objectives, identify the most suitable influencers and write relevant content (N'Goala, 2022; Fauran, 2017 ; Bruno, 2017 ; Leuenberger, 2022).

2.1.2.1 Identify influencers

According to Kotler and Keller, influencer marketing is a way of using popular person to recommend a product or service. These influencers have a large audience and their recommendations can have a large impact on consumers' purchasing behavior. With this in mind, it is crucial to identify the right influencers for an influencer marketing promotion. It is important to choose influencers who share the brand's values and who have a relevant audience in relation to your objectives. This identification can be done using social media analytics tools such as content analysis, social media research and the use of algorithms; taking into account the number of followers, engagement and relevance of the influencer's content (Kotler & Keller, 2016 ; Brown & Hayes, 2008 ; Gupta, 2020).

Brands use content analysis tools to identify influencers based on the topics covered in their written work. This method is based on the analysis of content that users share on social networks. The author of the "Big Book of Digital Marketing"

advocates this method, he emphasizes its effectiveness. Content analysis makes it easier to identify influencers associated with the brand's principles and interests (Debure, 2021).

Advanced search services provided by social media apps to identify relevant influencers. Search criteria include audience, engagement level, and topic niche. This approach, also recommended in the “Digital Marketing Ledger,” offers brands the ability to find influencers based on specific objectives (Asselin, 2020).

The use of sophisticated algorithms allows for the analysis of online behavior and the identification of potential influencers. This method has been explored in studies such as “Social Media Influencer Detection” and relies on large-scale data analysis to identify behavioral patterns, allowing brands to automatically identify the influencers they will be able to identify. This provides a sophisticated and accurate approach to influencer selection (Deturck, Nouvel, Patel, & Segond, 2022).

2.1.2.2 Relationship with influencers

The way brands and influencers work together is an important part of influencer marketing. Influencer marketing is more than just promoting products. According to Brown and Hayes, it is a plan to build long-term relationships with key influencers. These relationships are based on mutual trust and an understanding of the needs and values of both parties. The goal is to create lasting partnerships that benefit both the brand and the influencer. Therefore it's essential to involve influencers at the beginning the promotion design process to build a relationship of commitment, trust and collaboration with them. This relationship can take the form of a long-term partnership or a one-off paid collaboration (Brown and Hayes, 2007; Hennig-Thurau, et al., 2010; Gupta & Al, 2019).

2.1.2.3 Authenticity and transparency

Authenticity and transparency are important principles in influencer marketing. Influencers should promote products and services they actually use and be transparent about their relationships with brands.

Subscribers are currently looking not only for advice, but also for inspiring and entertaining content. Before making a purchase, consumers conduct online research to gather more information, reduce uncertainty and increase brand trust.

That is why brands want to work with influencers to successfully connect with the community and build strong relationships. Recommendations from Internet users influence consumer decisions. It's essential that the influencer's worldview matches with the brand's job area, and that the person has strong knowledge in it. The community aims for constructive and valid criticism, seeks the truth and wants good information that influencers can provide (Karakaya, F, Barnes and N, 2010; Degen, 2020; Larceneux, 2007; Degen, 2020).

2.1.2.4 Evaluation of professional behavior

Measuring the ROI of social media activities has become a significant challenge for marketers in the last years. In fact, it is one of the biggest challenges for brands that use influencer marketing. Performance indicators can be analyzed according to three objectives: awareness, engagement, and word-of-mouth. Depending on the objectives set, several metrics can help to study the performance of different types of social media. These indicators allow brands to choose the influencers that best fit their objectives, rather than relying solely on the size of the community. Brands must choose their influencers carefully. Indeed, their impact can depend partly on the number of subscribers and possibly the field of activity, but also on other criteria such as the adequacy of this community with the target (Stelzner.M, 2017; Linqia, 2018 ;Hoffman, D, Fodor, & M., 2010 ;Trivedi, J, Sama, & R., 2020).

2.1.3 Influencer marketing brand strategies based on parasocial interactions

2.1.3.1 Selection and partnership with influencers

Companies navigate a wide range of influencers to find the one that best fits their marketing goals. For example, influencers with a large following can help increase brand recognition, launch new products, and drive sales by reaching a large audience (D. Belanche, 2021). To do this, it is essential for companies to clearly define their goals before choosing an influencer. It is not enough to focus solely on statistics. First, brands must select influencers whose image matches the brand's image and who share its values, as consumers place a high value on consistency on the relationship of the brand and the influencer (Belanche, Arino, Flavian, & Sanchez, 2020). In addition, brands must carefully consider the content created by

the influencer, their editorial line, and their relationship with their community. It's necessary that the influencer shares the brand's ideas to avoid a loss of credibility and attract potential customers. Influencer marketing allows businesses to target their audience more effectively. Different audience segments can be easily identified and analyzed based on their characteristics and behaviors, as well as those of the influencer (Wu, 2016). Additionally, choosing the right people can have a significant impact on sales, referrals, and the reach of the message conveyed. The basic alignment between the influencer and their world and the recommended products allows consumers to perceive coherence, making the posts more natural (Harris, 2017).

The method of creating and presenting products also plays a crucial role in branding. Collaboration can take different forms, whether through an explicit partnership where the brand creates a video with the influencer, an affiliate or promotional code, or sending samples (paid or not) with a request for the influencer's opinion on the products (Wu, 2016). Snowy & Al, (2017) and Jin & Muqaddam, (2019) argue that consumers react negatively to explicitly sponsored content because they feel manipulated, as well as to ads that are too direct or intrusive. Authentic content, in harmony with the influencer and their world, is better perceived by subscribers because it is less obvious in its desire to convince (Cowley & Barron, 2008). Similarly, the way a product placement is designed and presented can influence branding.

On Instagram, influencer marketing uses five common pricing models (Ahmad, 2018):

- Compensation per published content: the influencer is compensated for creating and publishing content on the product, in the form of a photo or video.
- Free products or services: In exchange for their promotion, influencers may receive free products or trips rather than compensation.
- Engagement-based pricing: The influencer's payment depends on the engagement generated by their content, for example the number of shares and likes.

- Click-based pricing: influencer receives compensation when customers react to the content they have published by clicking on it.

2.1.3.2 Creating authentic and engaging content

In advertising, authenticity is becoming increasingly important. Psychologists say authenticity means being honest and real about who you really are (Morhart, & al 2015). In the context of social interactions, Goffman (Goffman, 1959) describes them as the authentic expression of personality, behavior, and beliefs, whether in public or private. However, in advertising being authentic means something a little different. It is the ability of an advertisement to present an illusion of everyday reality combined with the consumption context (Stern, 1994). Similarly, Miller (2015) defines it like the degree to which buyers believe that the advertisement portrays the brand in a way similar to reality.

Studies show that when an advertisement is true, people like the brand and the ad more (Miller, 2015). Schallehn, Burmann, and Riley found that if people find the ad sincere, they trust the brand more and like the ad (Schallehn, Burmann, and Riley, 2014). Miller also found that if the ad is true, people like the brand more (Miller, 2015). Several studies also show that if an ad is true, people think the products are better and reliable. They are more willing to buy and listen to the ad (Napoli, Dickinson, Beverland, and Farrelly, 2014). In addition, Pöyry, Pelkonen, Naumanen, and Laaksonen say that when a social media star is true, their fans like them more (Pöyry E., Pelkonen, Naumanen, and Laaksonen, 2019).

Customer engagement has become a crucial concept in the digital age, requiring in-depth understanding and integration into brand strategy. Hollebeek, Brodie, Illic, and Juric (2011) define it as a psychological state resulting from interactions and co-creation between the customer and a central entity such as a brand. With a plethora of offerings and it's eqsy to find and use many products and services online, customers are becoming increasingly demanding. One of the keys to customer retention is creating the optimal conditions to strengthen customer engagement (Granger, 2020). Social media can help brands by facilitating communication and providing access to online content, thereby engaging and retaining customers by connecting organizations with consumers (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilic, 2011).

An engaged customer has a relationship with the brand, regularly consumes its products and recommends them to friends and family and on social media, becoming a true brand ambassador. They may even participate in brand events and actively share their feedback with the company concerned. This engagement is gradually built through different interactions, called touchpoints, between the company and its buyers or customers (Granger, 2020). When customers are interested in the brand, it can help to sell more, spend less, attract new customers, work better with the brand, and make more money (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilic, 2011).

2.1.3.3 Activation of parasocial interaction through specific campaigns

Indeed, marketers have a variety of options for collaborating with influencers, from simply sharing content to hosting live events. However, choosing the right influencer and establishing a partnership is only part of the process. Brands also need to determine the type of campaign they want to develop. Here are some examples of different types of campaigns:

- **Contests, Events and Giveaways**

In his study, Vancottem (2021) highlights that setting up this type of campaign is perhaps the easiest. It is also the most popular due to the many benefits it offers to both the brand and the influencer. Basically, the brand gives to influencer a service or a product to organize competition, event, or giveaway to engage their audience. This type of collaboration is beneficial for both parties, as participating in these contests usually involves actions such as commenting, sharing, following, or tagging someone. Therefore, not only does a new potential audience discover the brand, but they also discover the influencer. Furthermore, even those who do not win the contest may be inclined to purchase the service or product, which can increase the brand's sales. However, there are also risks associated with this strategy, including the risk that individuals will only follow the brand and influencer for the contest, and lose interest once it is over. Additionally, the issue of bots and fake accounts raises concerns about fraud. Despite this, implementing this strategy can increase brand recognition and generate increased activity on social media platforms, including an increase in followers and potential leads.

- **Acquisitions**

In influencer marketing, a common practice is for an influencer or even a celebrity to take over a brand's social media platforms for a set period of time, a strategy known as cross-promotion (Vancottem, 2021). This collaboration usually lasts a day or a few hours, although for special events the duration can be extended.

Although this approach requires mutual trust, as the brand must share sensitive information with the influencer, the benefits are numerous. Indeed, this practice humanizes the brand, attracts a new audience, boosts its recognition, stimulates engagement on social networks and generates growth opportunities.

- **Affiliate Marketing**

Affiliate marketing is a method where people can earn money in helping a brand to sell their products

For brands with limited financial resources but looking to collaborate with multiple influencers, affiliate marketing offers a viable solution. In this approach, influencers shows the brand's products or services on their social media platforms, and they get pay for each purchase made through their unique link (Engaio, nd). The effectiveness of this type of campaign can be easily measured using personalized links. By compensating influencers based on the sales generated, brands can maximize their profitability. Typically, affiliate marketing includes special offers or discounts that influencers can share with their audience (Izea., 2019).

Benefits of this strategy include increased brand visibility, increased website traffic, better engagement rates, and increased conversion rates (Izea., 2019).

- **Sponsored Content**

The most common campaign for brands working with influencers is sponsored content, which includes sponsored posts and blogs. In this type of campaign, influencers create content that promotes the product or brand, with the brand's endorsement. This content often features the influencer using the product or talking positively about it. To ensure transparency, the brand provides guidelines, goals, and themes that the influencer must adhere to. An effective complement to sponsored content is to give the influencer a promo code to share with their audience, which can drive sales (Vancottem, 2021).

As with any influencer marketing campaign, sponsored content helps increase brand awareness and build trust with new audiences, including influencers' followers. This results in higher engagement rates, increased lead acquisition, and higher conversion rates. Additionally, sponsored content is a cost-effective strategy because it can be tailored to different channels, such as different social media platforms (Izea., 2019).

- **Unboxing and Reviews**

This section focuses on the product unboxing process and the accompanying reviews. To implement this specific type of marketing campaign, the brand must either send their product to the influencer or allow the influencer to experience their service firsthand. Once this step is completed, the influencer has the option to unbox the product in front of their audience or provide their review in a written article (such as a blog or Instagram) or video (such as on YouTube) (Vancottem, 2021).

By using this strategy, influencers can take their audience on the same journey that they went through. After hearing what the influencer thinks or feels about the product or service, viewers can feel inspired to try it for themselves (Vancottem, 2021).

- **Brand Ambassadors**

Another effective strategy is to establish a long-term partnership with influencers through brand ambassador campaigns. These ambassadors become the face of the brand and regularly promote it on their platforms. This concept is similar to traditional campaigns where celebrities act as brand spokespeople. By using brand ambassadors, companies can launch new products, increase awareness, and reach new audiences. Consumers tend to trust brand ambassadors more than traditional advertising because they perceive them as more relevant and authentic, as mentioned earlier (Vancottem, 2021).

During their tenure as brand ambassadors, influencers must actively support the brand, ensuring that it leaves a lasting impression on its audience (Engaio, nd). For example, L'Oréal has recruited a group of British influencers to serve as brand ambassadors in the UK.

- **Product placement**

Product placement is a marketing strategy that involves intentionally integrating commercial content into non-commercial materials. This approach, long used by entertainment industries such as television and film, aims to reach consumers in a subtle but effective way (Williams, Petrosky, Hernandez, & Page Jr, 2011). Historically, the first product placement in a film in Europe dates back to 1896. Today, this practice is widespread in various media such as television shows, video games, films, series, novels, music videos, magazines, plays, radio, and the Internet (Bressoud & Lehu, 2008).

The goals of product placement are multiple. First, advertisers seek to gain visibility, attention, and interest among the target audience. They carefully select media to maximize their impact. Second, they aim to increase brand awareness, as high awareness is often associated with higher purchase intent. To achieve this, the product must be memorable and easy to remember. Third, product placement aims to enhance customer recall and memory. A well-executed showcasing a product in a story or video can make people like it more, but if it is perceived as a blatant attempt to sell, it can also create negative attitudes among viewers. Finally, advertisers hope to influence brand perceptions and purchase intentions among the general public (Williams, Petrosky, Hernandez, & Page Jr, 2011).

There are three main product placement strategies. The first is implicit placement, where the brand is passively present but not explicitly mentioned. The second is integrated placement, where the brand is clearly integrated into the content and plays an active role. This approach is often considered more effective. Finally, the third strategy is non-integrated placement, where the brand or product is explicitly mentioned but does not appear in the content of the program itself (Williams, Petrosky, Hernandez, & Page Jr, 2011).

In conclusion, working with influencers offers brands many opportunities to authentically connect with consumers. It is necessary for brands to understand the main strategies for collaborating with influencers due to their effectiveness and ease of implementation. With creativity, the possibilities for collaborating with influencers are vast, offering brands a valuable way to reach their target audience in an organic and authentic way (Vancottem, 2021).

2.1.4 Influence strategies

2.1.4.1 Building an authentic relationship with the audience

Authenticity, widely studied by various authors, plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of commercial messages (Coco & Eckert, 2020). Wellman et al. (2020) by a qualitative study, revealed that some consumers criticized some influencers for trying to sell services or product by their posts, which indicated a lack of transparency. Despite the potential risks of dissatisfaction from companies, influencers must preserve their authenticity as much as possible with their followers (Wellman, Stoldt, Tully, & Ekdale, 2020).

Authenticity can be defined as the act of being true (Moulard, Garrity, & Rice, 2015). An individual is authentic when they are sincere, unique, and true to themselves (Molleda, 2010). Influencers strive to remain true to themselves while presenting a transparent image to their followers by sharing their lives and creating content that is aligned with their personal interests (Chae, 2010). From an ethical perspective, authenticity also governs influencer marketing; encouraging influencers to only collaborate with companies that share their values (Abidin & Ots, 2016). A study conducted by Ouahi & Meriem (2020) found that 43% of respondents considered authenticity to be the main source of credibility for an influencer.

According to a study by Audrezet et al. (2020), influencers use two ways to show that they are authentic: passionate and transparent authenticity. Passionate authenticity means that they only talk about brands that align with their interests and passions, brands that they love. Transparent authenticity is when they are honest about the terms of their partnership with brands and honestly say how they feel (Audrezet, de Kerviler and Guidry Moulard, 2020). These strategies show that influencers are aware that partnerships allow them to grow personally, especially if they really appreciate the brand (Lee, 2020).

Transparency and honesty about financial relationships is seen as a way to show that they are genuine.

Authenticity also affects the credibility of the source (Pöyry E., Pelkonen, Naumanen, & Laaksonen, 2019). An influencer will be considered more credible if he or she is perceived as authentic (Wellman, Stoldt, Tully, & Ekdale, 2020).

In conclusion, the search for authenticity is crucial for influencers because it improves the perception of the message, perceived quality, and stimulates purchase intention among their audience. According to Audrezet et al. (2020), influencers' messages combine objective information about the brand and the product with an emotional dimension (Audrezet, de Kerviler, & Guidry Moulard, 2020).

2.1.4.2 Use engagement and interaction techniques

Engagement is a crucial element that distinguishes an individual as an influencer. An influencer's ability to sustain their career in the long term largely depends on the dedication and involvement of their followers. The link with an influencer or brand and their followers or customers is defined as engagement (Schuiling & Lambert, 2019). This connection is manifested in the participation, impact, proximity, and communication that followers or customers feel. Interaction can take different forms, such as responding to a story, leaving a comment, or making a purchase (Forrester, 2021).

Social media engagement can be measured using tools such as Facebook and Instagram likes. It is fostered by active participation, including commenting and sharing posts. Additionally, sharing everyday experiences reinforces the feeling of closeness, which is crucial for cultivating engagement (Kaplan, 2011).

However, it can be difficult to gauge engagement levels because many followers remain inactive. Nielsen's 90-9-1 model suggests that 90% of followers are passive observers, 9% are occasional contributors, and only 1% are active individuals who interact regularly (Nielsen, 2006). The use of certain emoticons or words encourages people to like and comment on posts and also helps to get more reactions (Jaakonmäki, Müller and Brocke, 2017). In addition, using beautiful images, writing interesting or prublier texts at the right time can also help to capture attention better.

2.1.4.3 Interating Parasocial Interaction into content creation

Nowadays, when making videos, influencers have to use parasocial interactions. This creates a closeness with their followers. A parasocial relationship is a one-sided relationship where a person feels close to an influencer while the influencer does not know them (Horton and Wohl, 1956). Brands use this link to make their message stronger. These relationships are even more important on social

media. Influencers have the ability to interact with their community through comments, messages, or stories. Followers feel close as if they know the influencer (Rubin & McHugh, 1987). When an influencer creates that connection, they can make people like a product more. This bond can be strengthened through the sharing of personal things. Followers feel like the relationship is more real when the influencer talks about their life, feelings, or experiences.

Trust is also essential because if an influencer is perceived as sincere and trustworthy, people will listen to them (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). When followers trust an influencer, they take into consideration what they say and recommend what they show. Brands can tailor their messaging to better speak to everyone because individuals are different. The reaction to an influencer can be affected by several factors (age, culture, culture, culture Finally, ethics is a very important value. Influencers need to be transparent and give their actual reviews when they get paid to talk about a product. They must have respect for the privacy of others and be aware of their impact on their audience. They can create better relationships and gain the trust of their followers by being honest and responsible.

In summary, parasocial relationships are very essential in marketing. Brands can make their campaigns more effective with their understanding of the importance of this connection. Influencers should not neglect the sincerity they have towards their followers in any way because this is what encourages positive behaviors and earns their trust.

- **Définition de l'interaction parasociale**

In 1956, Horton and Wohl first talked about a new type of relationship called parasocial interaction (PSI). It is when an individual has a sense of closeness to a celebrity or influencer they see on television or on the internet, even if that celebrity doesn't really know them (Lim & Kim, 2011). C'est comme avoir l'impression d'être ami avec quelqu'un qu'on suit à travers un écran. In this initial conception, the audience consists of consumers of media such as television and radio, while media personalities encompass various figures such as anchors, actors, and even celebrities (Ballantine & Martin, 2005). By observing these media figures in different situations and sharing experiences with them, viewers develop a sense of familiarity with these personalities, sometimes perceiving them as close as friends. In effect, a form of

artificial proximity is constructed between the audience and the media “personae,” a term denoting a category of people existing primarily through the media (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Parasocial interaction therefore represents an “interpersonal relationship perceived by the public,” even if the connection with the media personality is in reality distant and one-sided (Perse & Rubin, 1990).

In his 1979 work, Levy argued that parasocial interaction goes beyond simply interpreting and evaluating a media personality's actions or gestures: it also involves "acting or reacting in accordance with the meanings attributed to them" (Levy, 1979). Parasocial interactions are manifested in the audience's emotional reactions, such as feelings of embarrassment, pain, joy, or pride in response to events in the characters' lives (McCourt & Fitzpatrick, 2001). Levy's study found that people in a parasocial relationship with a news anchor expressed pleasure at hearing their favorite anchor's voice at home, felt a sense of emptiness in their absence, and regretted their mistakes (Levy, 1979).

In summary, parasocial interactions refer to one-way contact, often facilitated by modern technologies such as iPhones and Blackberries (Avaux, 2024). This phenomenon occurs when individuals develop an attachment to media personalities they have never met (Nospensées, 2022). The relationship between an influencer and their community is a telling example (PINIER, 2022). However, it's essential to note that this connection can sometimes be negative, leading to rejection or aversion towards the media personality in question (Nospensées, 2022). For fans, the influencer can become an inaccessible celebrity (BrutMedia, 2022). Although these relationships are not considered “real,” they create the illusion of an authentic relationship, leading the user to act as if they took part in a conventional social interaction (Horton and Wohl, 1956). Influencers' audiences develop a sense of intimacy that mirrors and replicates real-life social interactions, a feeling that is heightened when personal information about these celebrities is available (PINIER, 2022). Interestingly, parasocial relationships existed even before the era of mass media, where individuals established connections with political figures, deities, or even spirits (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

2.1.5 Theories and explanatory models of parasocial interaction

Parasocial interaction is a phenomenon where individuals « form one-sided relationships with media figures such as celebrities, news anchors, or fictional characters ». This behavior has been studied in the field of communication because of its implications on media consumption and audience behavior. Several theories and models have been developed to better understand this phenomenon.

Uses and gratifications theory is central to understanding parasocial interaction. According to this theory, individuals choose media based on their personal needs, including the desire for social interaction and enjoyment. They engage in different media activities to satisfy these needs, which exposes them to different media models.

Social learning theory, developed by Albert Bandura, explains how individuals adopt new behaviors by mimicking the actions of role models with whom they identify. Consumers choose media personalities with whom they share values and commonalities, which helps them feel closer to these people and see themselves in them.

Uncertainty reduction theory, proposed by Berger and Calabrese, argues that people try to find new information when they feel unsure about something, there by fostering the development of relationships and building trust in media personalities. Individuals use parasocial interaction as a way to mitigate their own uncertainty, turning to different media channels to observe their preferred personalities.

2.1.6 Factors influencing parasocial interaction

2.1.6.1 Perceived similarity between influencer and audience

In general, the characteristics of mediated personalities have a significant impact on the intensity of parasocial relationships, as they influence individuals' perceptions of these personalities. These characteristics, which promote the strengthening of parasocial ties, are largely shaped by the spectators themselves. Indeed, each spectator interprets and values the characteristics of a mediated personality differently, depending on their own goals, desires, and preferences, which can lead to the predominance of certain attributions in a mediated personality (Liebers & Schramm, 2019).

According to a study by Rarity and colleagues (2022), it was found that people who like a particular media personality often exhibit similar personality traits. The authors put forward two possible explanations for this phenomenon: either the viewer is naturally attracted to media personalities who share similarities with them, or they consciously adjust certain aspects of their personality to align with their idols. Despite these explanations, the existing literature manages to identify specific characteristics that tend to strengthen parasocial relationships (Rarity, Leitao, & Rutchick, 2022).

The intensity of parasocial relationships can be enhanced by a variety of factors, including the physical attractiveness of the media personality, perceived similarity to the media personality, and the presence of humor. Research by Klimmt, Hartmann, and Schramm (2006) has shown that parasocial relationships can be reinforced by several elements. The influencer's behavior and physique, such as beauty and pleasant locution, can make them feel closer to him (Hartmann and Goldhoorn, 2011). These details may seem insignificant but they make the experience more real, suggesting that these attributes can help create special relationships.

2.1.6.2 Affinity and identification with the influencer

In the media world, identification and parasocial interaction are two similar but different ideas. Identification is when an individual recognizes themselves in a character in a movie or on the internet. Even though they are very different, it can feel like they feel similar (Cohen, 2001).

Through studies, researchers have discovered that this identification can lead us to have a different view of ourselves or our way of acting. For example, the fact that we think we look like someone can lead us to behave like them and give us more confidence. The more we identify with someone, the more likely we are to be influenced by them in everyday life (Klimmt, Hartmann and Schramm, 2006).

In addition, identifying with people on the media can help people who experience a sense of solitude. It makes them feel like they have some kind of bond or friendship with someone they look at often. Through the understanding of these ideas, researchers can better understand how the media influence the actions and thoughts of the public (Rubin and Perse, 1987).

2.1.6.3 Celebrity and social status of the influencer

By sharing photos, videos or messages, people show on social networks what they are or would like to be. To show a certain image of themselves, they carefully choose what they want to show about their lives. They are very impressed by comparing themselves to others and what they share. This comparison allows them to determine their level of popularity compared to others. Social identity refers to an individual's perception of belonging to a social group, influenced by factors such as origin, education, occupation, and gender (Goffman, 1959).

Some groups of people are seen as more important or respected than others, leading to a social hierarchy. People with high social status are generally respected and admired by other members of society (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

In influencer marketing, social identity plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining followers. Influencers highlight attractive aspects of their lives and construct a carefully crafted social identity to shape how other users perceive them on social media. By highlighting their network, lifestyle, or achievements, influencers aim to attract a large audience and build their social status within the virtual community (Abidin & Ots, 2016).

- **Following influencers who have a comparable social status: proximity**

When engaging in social comparison, individuals tend to seek out information that confirms their own beliefs rather than challenges them. They view this confirming information as more informative and convincing. This process, called self-verification, allows individuals to reinforce their own beliefs and values by validating them (Swann W. B., 1983).

To facilitate this comparison with others, individuals prefer to interact with people who share similar characteristics. When there is similarity, the outcome of social comparison becomes more evident, whether it is determining whether they have accomplished enough or whether they have the right opinions. By surrounding themselves with a compatible social environment, individuals are more likely to be complacent (Reis & Shaver, 1988).

Intimacy plays a crucial role in helping people to feel sure about who they are. It's defined as the revelation of the inner self and the sharing of true thoughts and feelings with another. This ability to truly see oneself and validate one's own

existence fosters a sense of intimacy that strengthens self-perception and encourages the pursuit of self-verification (Abidin, 2020).

In social media, influencers who show fun parts of their lives are becoming more popular. For example, 16-year-old Charli D'Amelio became the first person on TikTok to amass over 100 million followers. Her videos showcasing everyday activities have resonated with young social media users. The key to her fame is her ability to present an ordinary, authentic, and relatable life that her audience can easily relate to. By using the process of social comparison, followers are more likely to perceive their experiences in her content, which strengthens their self-image and creates a sense of intimacy (Festinger, 1954).

- **Following influencers with higher social status: admiration**

Engaging in social comparison is a way for individuals to maintain a positive self-image. When they adopt an upward comparison perspective, they measure themselves against individuals they perceive as superior. This comparison allows them to view themselves as part of a superior social group. By identifying and connecting with these individuals, they seek to establish psychological proximity. This upward comparison process can enhance their self-perception and expectations for future self-improvement. Admiration plays an important role in this process, as it involves a sense of satisfaction with the accomplishments or qualities of the person being admired. This admiration is closely linked to the goal of personal growth, as individuals seek to internalize and emulate an ideal role model (Festinger, 1954).

Admiration is when you like someone and would like to be like them. This happens on social media when an follower follows an influencer, celebrity, wealthy person, or expert (Chung & Cho, 2017). This person wanting to look like this influencer can try to have his lifestyle or become better. It is in this sense that they may want to buy the same items as them. It can be helpful to like what the influencer recommends, buy what they show, and even keep following them for a long time (Chung & Cho, 2017).

2.1.6.4 Influencer trust and credibility

To convince someone, trust is important. Miller and Baseheart (1969) have shown that when there is a sense of trust between an influencer and his audience, their opinion is taken into consideration and they are likely to listen and believe what

they say. But she considers it unreliable; its message will have less effect (Miller and Baseheart, 1969). This is why reference is made to the credibility of the source in research. This is defined as the extent to which someone can be trusted (O'Mahony & Meenaghan, 1997). Sternthal, Dholakia and Leavitt (1978) in turn explain that people place their trust in a person they consider to be highly credible.

Nowadays, with the emergence of influencers, it is important to know and know who is trustworthy or untrustworthy (Sternthal, Dholakia and Leavitt, 1978). Erdogan (1999) defines trust in terms of the endorser's honesty, integrity, and credibility, three factors that are useful measures for evaluating celebrities and comparing them to social influencers (Erdogan, 1999).

When it comes to celebrity endorsements, brands place a high value on selecting endorsers with honesty and credibility. These qualities are crucial because an untrustworthy celebrity makes the message they convey untrustworthy (Erdogan, 1999). This same principle applies to social influencers. Brands frequently work with popular social influencers the promotion of their products or services on various platforms, establishing relationships similar to those between celebrities and brands. Social media serves to people to talk and share messages to each other. Trust plays a important role in this process, influencing attitude formation when an endorser attempts to convey a persuasive message. Trust and uncertainty are closely related. According to Frederiksen and Heinskau (2016), individuals weigh the pros and cons of trusting someone. In the context of social media, when consumers choose to be a follower of a social influencer online, they are voluntarily listening to and valuing the influencer's opinions as an act of trust and goodwill.

2.1.7 Consequences of parasocial interaction on consumer behavior

2.1.7.1 Recommendation, intention and behavior

Consumer behavior and recommendation intent are important for understanding consumer reaction to social media influencers. In this part, we talk about what researchers say about this consumer behavior and whether or not they follow the advice of influencers.

Influencer recommendations can really make followers want to buy a product. Lou and Yuan (2019) explain that by talking about a product, the influencer can

make the brand known, give it a good image, which will make people want to buy it. By sharing their opinions, influencers are perceived as more credible and sincere. And this trust grows when followers feel close to the influencer.

Several factors can influence my recommendation behavior of subscribers. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) believe that influencers should be honest and trustworthy and that they should be interested in their audience. By talking about their passions and what interests them, they lead followers to be more connected to them, making it easier for them to follow their advice.

Parasocial interactions are one-way relationships, as Horton and Wohl (1956) explain, which means that the subscriber has the impression of knowing the influencer even without ever having met him. Chung and Cho (2017) shows that if a follower has a feeling of closeness with an influencer, they are more likely to recommend me to those around them.

The purchasing behavior of subscribers can also have an impact on the image they have of the influencer. According to Ohanian (1991), in the case where the influencer has a good image and is perceived as someone competent, his subscribers will trust him more and will be more tempted to buy what he recommends.

The quality of the parasocial relationship can be a factor that can impact what people buy. Tal-Or and Cohen (2010) showed that the closer a follower feels, the more likely they are to buy what that influencer recommends. Having things in common with the influencer or feeling empathy reinforces this closeness.

Recommendation is when an influencer recommends to his entourage to follow his favorite influencer when he needs advice for a purchase or a product. This recommendation is based on the credibility and trust of the influencer. The stronger the parasocial relationship, the more the subscriber will recommend the influencer because he or she is perceived by him or her as a reliable and sincere source of information.

In conclusion, the intention to recommend a product or service and the purchasing behavior of consumers depend on several factors. The credibility of the influencer, the relevance of their content and the quality of the parasocial relationship they have with their audience and the image they convey to them are included in these factors. Influencer recommendations can have a big impact on followers'

buying decisions when proximity and credibility are strengthened. To succeed in marketing campaigns, it is important for brands to understand this dynamic.

2.1.7.2 Brand loyalty and commitment

Loyalty is when a person buys a product, service, or brand multiple times to show their commitment to what they prefer (Chen, Huang, Wang, & Chen, 2020). Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) explain brand loyalty by considering both the purchase action and the feeling towards the brand. Behavioral loyalty reflects consumers' attitudes toward a specific brand, which are manifested in repeat purchases and continued intention to purchase from that brand, illustrating long-term commitment. On the other hand, attitudinal loyalty is characterized by a deep emotional connection and strong attachment to the brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Back & Parks, 2003).

Brand loyalty increases consumers' propensity to choose a given brand on a regular basis, even in the presence of competing brands with superior characteristics (Shariff, Setyawati, & Anindita H, 2012). Studies have also shown a positive link between brand loyalty and purchase intention (Aziz & Ahmed, 2021). Although some research has not reached a definitive conclusion on the relationship between social media use and emotional attachment to brand loyalty (Imtiaz & Nasim, 2022), others have confirmed the significant impact of brand relationship quality on brand loyalty (Kressmann et al., 2006; Francisco-Maffezzoli, Semprebon, & Prado, 2014). Brand loyalty also acts as a mediator in various contexts, influencing brand attitudes, association, and purchase intention (Tunjungsari, Syahrivar, & Chairy, 2020; Wong, Kwok, & Lau, 2015; Chi, Yeh, & Yang, 2009).

Brand commitment is a concept defined by Sprott et al. (2009), which refers to how individuals integrate brands into their personal identities. This connection with the brand influences consumers' attitudes and behaviors, including their trust, commitment, and purchase decisions (Tsai & Men, 2013). Social media provides an environment conducive to parasocial interaction, thereby enhancing consumers' engagement with brands (Rubin & Perse, 1987; Ballantine & Martin, 2005). People give their attention when they think influencers are trustworthy and credible (Tsai & Men, 2013; Hwang and Zhang, 2018).

In summary, on social media, brand loyalty and engagement are very important because of how they influence people's choice and loyalty for a brand. For effective strategies, understanding these concepts is essential to maintaining customer engagement and loyalty on social media.

2.2 The Relationship between Influencer Marketing and Parasocial Interactions With Influencers

Parasocial relationships have an important role in influencer marketing. Rubin and McHugh (1987) have proven that the way people think and act can be changed by these connections. The stronger the relationships between users and influencers, the more they trust them, which is likely to lead them to buy products or recommend.

Lou and Yuan (2019) found that these links drive users and be more engaged with the influencer's content. Those who feel really close share and interact with the influencer's content, which positively impacts marketing campaigns. Influencers are perceived as more credible because users see them as friends or mentors.

There is a complex connection between parasocial interactions and influencer marketing. Altman and Taylor (1973) explained that when influencers reveal themselves or share personal things, it makes these relationships stronger because it creates a stronger bond and a climate of trust with its followers. For influencer marketing to be effective, this link is essential.

In addition, these relationships are strengthened by the frequency and quality of interactions on social networks. Metzger and Flanagin (2013) showed that the more users interact with influencers, the stronger relationships are formed with them.

Brands need to understand these interactions. They are very important and crucial for the success of a marketing campaign. By encouraging influencers to share authentic content and engage with their followers, brands can strengthen these connections and increase the impact of their campaigns.

Finally, the choice of the influencer is very important for a brand. Influencers with strong connections with their audiences are more likely to succeed in their influencer marketing campaigns. Thus, brand must take into account all these factors before falling the influencer with whom they want to collaborate.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Hypothesis and model

This study examines how parasocial relationships (feeling close to an influencer) and influencer marketing affect what people think and how they act, for example by buying products.

Key variables

3.1.1 Exogenous variables

The independent variables in this study are parasocial relationships, attitude towards the influencer, parasocial relationships and self-disclosure. Parasocial relationships measure the closeness between participants and influencers using variables such as friendship, understanding/identification. Reliability at the source is used to analyze my credibility and trust in influencers. The attitude towards the influencer is used to evaluate the beliefs and feelings of the participants towards the influencer but also if his recommendations are useful and relevant. Finally, self-disclosure studies the intensity with which influencers reveal themselves on social networks by assessing the degree of authenticity and transparency in their exchanges.

3.1.2 Indigenous variable

Consumer intent and recommending behavior are the variables that this study seeks to understand. According to Lou and Yuan (2019), consumers' purchasing choices are influenced by influencers' recommendations. This research attempts to find the reasons why consumers recommend their influencers by studying the interactions between them and their influencers. This part of the study attempts to understand how consumers' purchase decisions and recommendation intentions are influenced by parasocial interactions and trust in influencers.

The search model is shown in Figure 3.1.

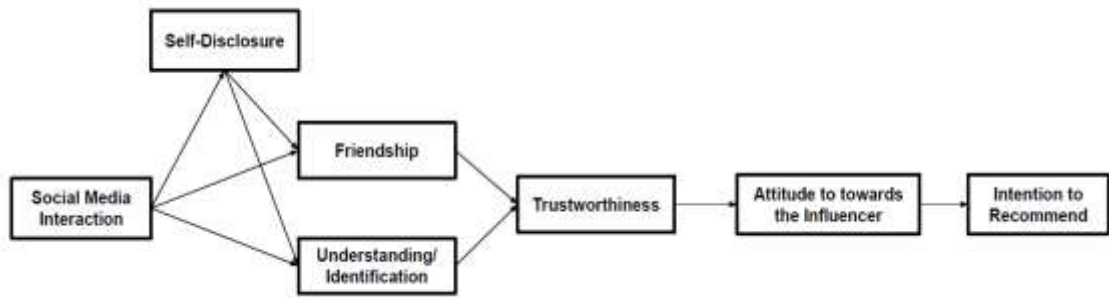


Figure 3.1: Research Model

The hypotheses of the research are as follows:

- H₁: Social media interaction positively affects self-disclosure.
- H₂: Social media interaction positively affects friendship.
- H₃: Social media interaction positively affects understanding/identification.
- H₄: Self-disclosure positively affects friendship.
- H₅: Self-disclosure positively affects understanding/identification.
- H₆: Friendship positively affects trustworthiness.
- H₇: Understanding/identification positively affects trustworthiness.
- H₈: Trustworthiness positively affects attitude towards the influencer.
- H₉: Attitude towards the influencer positively affects the intention to recommend.
- H₁₀: Self-disclosure mediates the relationship between social media interaction and friendship.
- H₁₁: Self-disclosure mediates the relationship between social media interaction and understanding identification.
- H₁₂: Self-disclosure mediates the relationship between social media interaction and trustworthiness.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

Online survey were used as data collection method in this study. This method will collect data from a large sample of participants, providing a representative

picture of consumers' opinions and behaviors regarding influencer marketing and parasocial interactions. The population of the study includes social media users older than 18 years old. With a convenience sampling method participants were asked to answer a series of structured questions regarding their parasocial interactions, perceptions of influencer marketing, and purchasing habits.

As per sample size, 325 individuals participated in the survey.

We developed a questionnaire composed of thirty-two (32) questions to enable us to test the hypotheses that we formulated within the theoretical framework of our study. The structure of our questionnaire, the origin (authors) of the questions and questions items are as follows.

3.2.1 Demographic questions

Demographic questions are essential in any market research, including those focused on social media influence. They collect basic information about respondents, such as age, gender, education level, and income. This data is essential for segmenting the sample and analyzing results according to different population groups. For example, Dolores, Feijoo, and Sadaba's (2023) study of teens' perceptions of social media influencers used demographic questions to understand how different age groups perceive these influencers. Similarly, Kim and Kim (2022) examined how happy people feel and how responsible they think they are in society, using demographic data to segment their results and identify significant differences between groups.

Scale items:

1. What is your gender?

(Select one: Female; Male)

2. What is your age?

(Select one: 18-25; 26-35; 36-50; 51 and above)

3. Where do you live?

4. What is your current employment status

(Select one: Employed; Self-Employed; Student; Housewife; Retired; Unemployed)

5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

(Select one: Primary school; Secondary school; Undergraduate: College/University; Graduate: Master's/ Ph.D.)

6. What is your total yearly income level?

(Select one: Low; Lower-Middle; Upper-Middle; High)

3.2.2 Social media interactions

Social media interactions are an important part of studying parasocial relationships with influencers. Two key questions were used to count how often people talk or interact with their favorite influencer on social media. Participants were asked how often they comment, share, or like their favorite influencer's posts. Previously used by , we wanted to know on which social network subscribers interact the most with their favorite influencers.(Chung & Cho, 2017)

Scale items

1. I interact with my favorite influencer on :

Choose one : Twitter, Youtube, Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook)

2. How often do you interact with your favorite influencer on social media ?

Choose one: 1 to 5, Never(1), Very frequently (5)

3.2.3 Familiarity with influencer marketing

This scale uses two, five point likert-type items to find out users' content preferences and assesses their level of knowledge of influencer-sponsored content.

These items are designed to measure users' content preferences and their level of awareness of influencer-sponsored content. Participants thus indicate their degree of familiarity with sponsored content on social media. The first question allowed us to better target our sample by asking non-involved people to leave the questionnaire, while the second question aimed to identify the sample's preferred types of content.

Scale items:

1. How familiar are you with sponsored content created by influencers on social media?

Choose one: Not familiar (1); Somewhat familiar (2); Very familiar (3).

NOTE: Participants who think they are not familiar enough with influencers' sponsored content (option 1), will be directed to leave the survey.

2. Please mention the type of content you are most interested in on social media?

Choose one or more: Fashion, beauty, home and decoration, food and cooking, fitness and exercising, healthy nutrition, spiritual and personal development, automobiles, travel, gaming, music, business and economy, technology, art and design, professional sports, education and learning, agriculture, pet or plant care, other

3.2.4 Self-disclosure

This scale uses three , five point likert-type items measure subscriber's perceptions of the authenticity and transparency of the influencers they follow by measuring the extent to which they share their personal lives and feelings and the extent to which they perceive them to be honest It check how much influencers talk about their life and feelings , and how honest people think they are . Inspired by the work of Chung and Cho (2017), Wheelless and Grotz (1977), and Laurenceau, Barrett, and Pietromonaco (1998), this variable provides insight into how self-disclosure helps strengthen parasocial relationships and influence followers' perceptions of influencers.

Scale items:

1. My favorite influencer reveals himself/herself.

Choose one : 1 to 5, Strongly disagree(1), Strongly agree (5)

2. My favorite influencer shares him/her personal feelings with his/her fans.

Choose one : 1 to 5, Strongly disagree(1), Strongly agree (5)

3. My favorite influencer is honest about his/her feelings or opinions.

Choose one : 1 to 5, Strongly disagree(1), Strongly agree (5)

3.2.5 Parasocial relationship

Parasocial interaction describes a one-way relationship between an audience and a media personality in which the audience feels a personal connection despite the absence of any real mutual interaction. Two dimensions were used to measure this variable: understanding/identification, where the audience sees themselves in the influencer and friendship, which reflects feelings of closeness and camaraderie. Building on the work of Chung and Cho (2017), Rubin and Perse (1987), Tal-Or and Cohen (2010), Horton and Wohl (1956), Auter and Palmgreen (2000), Rubin, Perse, and Powell (1985), and Ohanian (1991), this variable provides insight into how parasocial interactions influence consumers' perceptions and behaviors toward influencers.

3.2.5.1 Friendship

This scale uses three, five point likert-type items to assess the parasocial relationship between followers and influencers and measure the feeling of closeness, the desire to communicate and the perception of a potential friendship, which can influence the commitment and loyalty of followers towards the influencer. Drawing from the work of Horton and Wohl (1956), Rubin, Perse, and Powell (1985), Auter and Palmgreen (2000), and more recently Chung and Cho (2017), this variable explores how users come to feel a sense of emotional closeness and familiarity with the influencer much like a one-sided friendship. As influencers share personal stories, behind-the-scenes moments, or interactive content, followers may begin to feel genuinely connected, as if they've built a bond over time, even without real-life interaction.

Scale items:

1. My favorite influencer makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with a friend.

Choose one : 1 to 5, Strongly disagree(1), Strongly agree (5)

2. I would like to have a friendly chat with my favorite influencer.

Choose one: Yes or No

3. If my favorite influencer were not a celebrity, we would have been good friends.

Choose one : 1 to 5, Strongly disagree(1), Strongly agree (5)

3.2.5.2 Understanding/ identification

This scale uses six, five point likert-type items to see the degree of identification and emotional connection followers have with their favourite influencer. Drawing on insights from Chung and Cho (2017), Rubin and Perse (1987), and Tal-Or and Cohen (2010), this variable captures how users come to feel that the influencer genuinely understands them not only through emotional resonance, but also through content that reflects their own values or experiences. They measure perceived understanding/identification, empathy and similarity between followers and influencers.

Scale items:

1. I think i understand my favorite influencer quite well.

Choose one : 1 to 5, Strongly disagree(1), Strongly agree (5)

2. When my favorite influencer behaves a certain way, I know the reasons for his/her behavior

Choose one : 1 to 5, Strongly disagree(1), Strongly agree (5)

3. I can feel my favorite influencer's emotions in certain situations

Choose one : 1 to 5, Strongly disagree(1), Strongly agree (5)

4. My favorite influencer seems to understand the kinds of things i want to know.

Choose one : 1 to 5, Strongly disagree(1), Strongly agree (5)

5. My favorite influencer reminds me on myself

Choose one : 1 to 5, Strongly disagree(1), Strongly agree (5)

6. I can identify with my favorite influencer

Choose one : 1 to 5, Strongly disagree(1), Strongly agree (5)

3.2.6 Source trustworthiness

This scale uses five, five point bipolar semantic scale items to measure followers' perceptions of the credibility and reliability of their favourite influencer.

Inspired by insights from Chung and Cho (2017), Rubin and Perse (1987), and Ohanian (1991), this variable reflects the degree to which users perceive the influencer as honest, sincere, and dependable. When influencers consistently communicate in ways that feel authentic and aligned with their values, audiences are more likely to trust them. This sense of trust doesn't just shape how messages are received — it also plays a key role in whether users are open to recommendations and willing to act on them

Scale items

1. My favorite influencer is

Choose one: 1 to 5 insincere (1)/ sincere (5)

2. My favorite influencer is

Choose one: 1 to 5 undependable (1) /dependable (5)

3. My favorite influencer is

Choose one: 1 to 5 dishonest (1) /honest (5)

4. My favorite influencer is

Choose one: 1 to 5 unreliable (1) / reliable (5)

5. My favorite influencer is

Choose one: 1 to 5 untrustworthy (1)/trustworthy (5)

3.2.7 Attitude towards the influencer

The “attitude toward the influencer” variable uses three five-point Likert scale items to measure a social media user's belief that the influencer considers their taskrelated needs to help them make a purchase decision. Building on the work of Gupta, Yadav, and Varadarajan (2009), this variable assesses the extent to which users perceive that the influencer facilitates their decision-making process by providing relevant and useful information, which may influence their attitude and behavior toward the influencer.

Scale items :

1. My favorite influencer really wants to help his/her followers choose the right products

Choose one: 1 to 5, Strongly disagree (1), Strongly agree (5)

2. The intention of my favorite influencer is to assist his/her followers as much as possible

Choose one : 1 to 5, Strongly disagree(1), Strongly agree (5)

3. My favorite influencer is doing what he/she can to help his/her followers make a good purchase

Choose one. 1 to 5, Strongly disagree(1), Strongly agree (5)

3.2.8 Intention to recommend

This scale uses three, five point Likert-type items statements that are measure a social media user's expressed likelihood of suggesting to others a particular influencer .In the studies by Maxham and Netemeyer (2002a, 2002b, 2003) the scale was called word-of-mouth.

Scale items

1. How likely are you to spread positive word of mouth about your favorite influencer?

Choose one : 1 to 5, highly unlikely(1), highly likely (5)

2. I would recommend my favorite influencer for choosing the right products to my friends.

Choose one: 1 to 5, Strongly disagree (1), Strongly agree (5)

3. If my friends were looking to purchase a revelant product, I would tell them to have a look at my favorite influencer's content.

Choose one: 1 to 5, Strongly disagree (1), Strongly agree (5)

3.3 Data analysis methods

This research aims to provide insight into how social media interactions and influencer marketing impact consumer behavior. Age, gender, frequencies, and percentages were used to explain and describe.

Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, frequencies, and distributions will be included. Finally, Structural Equation Modeling - Partial Least

Squares Method was used to test the hypotheses with the AMOS 21 statistical package.

3.4 Limitation

When conducting a study, it is important to recognize certain limitations that can affect the results. A sample that is not diverse enough or too little bit skew the results, as well as the way the questions are asked or understood, can have an impact on candidates' answers. The tools used for data collection must be reliable or the results may be incorrect.

In this study, the echantillon may not be representative enough of the target population and in the event that the participants have prejudices related to their way of seeing things; this could also have an impact. The collection methods are also checked so that they play their roles correctly.

Some data such as cultural or personal characteristics cannot be fully verified and can therefore influence the results. Knowledge of all these limitations helps to understand the weaknesses of the study and propose a future direction to better understand the subject.

3.5 Ethical considerations

To conduct a study and ensure that the results will be honest, it is important to follow ethical rules. For this study, several precautions were taken to respect the rights of the participants and ensure the validity of the study.

Participants were assured that their answers would be private and would not be shared without their permission, as well as their personal information that was not requested.

Ethical considerations were at the heart of this study to ensure that social media and influencer marketing research was conducted responsibly and respectfully of participants. Informed consent, confidentiality, data protection, and transparency were priorities, strengthening participant trust and the reliability of the results for future research.

The survey questions were approved by the Istanbul Gedik University Ethics Committee. Please see Appendix 2.



4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

4.1.1 The gender distribution of the survey's target population

This table shows the breakdown of a group of 263 people by gender, with 142 men (54%) and 121 women (46%). While the numbers reveal a slight male majority, the difference isn't large, so the gender distribution appears fairly balanced overall. However, to fully understand the data, it would be valuable to look deeper into the specific context of the survey, the meaning of the second column, and any other factors that might have impacted these results. A more detailed exploration of these aspects could provide clearer insights and help draw more accurate conclusions from the data.

Table 4.1: Distribution of target population by gender

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Female	121	46,0
	Male	142	54,0
	Total	263	100,0

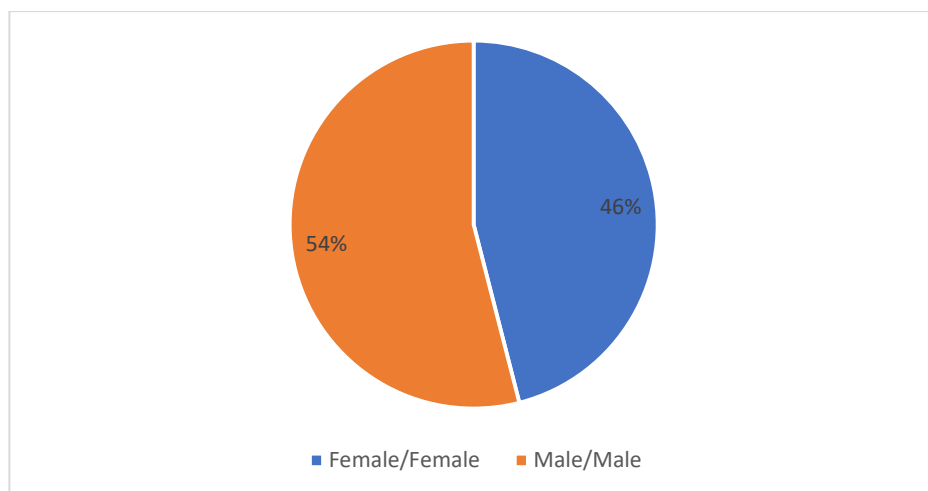


Figure 4.1: Distribution of Target Population by Gender

4.1.2 The age of the population studied

The majority of participants in our study are aged 18-25, representing 64.12% of the total sample. Older age groups are significantly less represented, with a very small proportion of people aged 51 and over (0.38%). This suggests that the data primarily reflect the views and behaviours of younger adults, particularly those aged 18-25, who are often the most active on media and social networks.

Table 4.2: Distribution According to the Age of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	18-25	169	64,3
	26-35	86	32,7
	36-50	7	2,7
	51 and above	1	,4
	Total	263	100,0

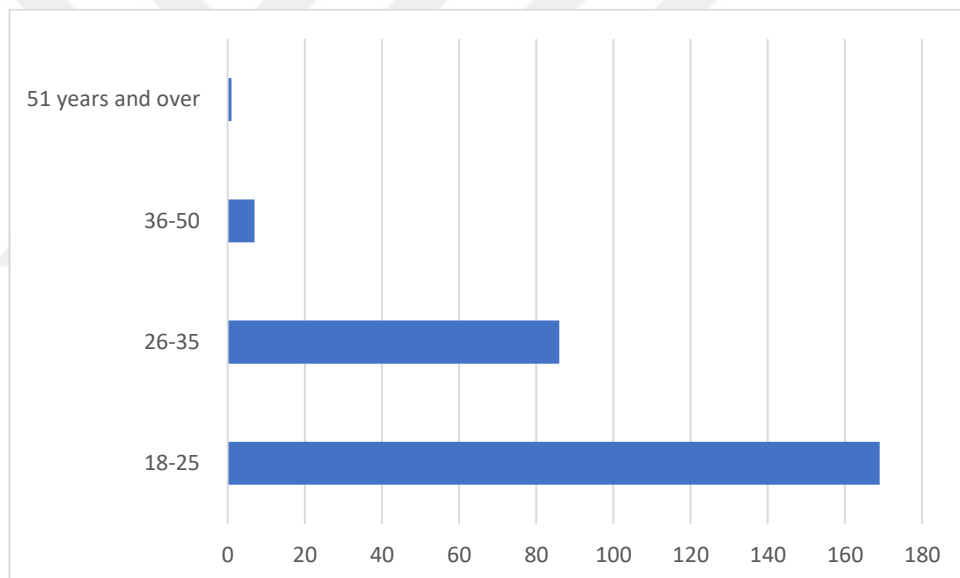


Figure 4.2: Distribution According to the Age of the Respondents

4.1.3 Distribution by country of residence of the respondent

The majority of our study participants reside in Burkina Faso, representing 71.76% of the total sample. Other countries are represented by smaller proportions, with 10.31% for “other countries” and relatively minor contributions from Canada (3.05%), France (4.96%), Morocco (2.29%), and Turkey (7.63%). These results indicate that the data collected are primarily focused on residents of Burkina Faso.

Table 4.3: Distribution According to the Country of Residence of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
valid	Other countries	27	10.26
	Burkina Faso	189	71.86
	Canada	8	3.04
	France	13	4.94
	Morocco	6	2.28
	Türkiye	20	7.62
	Total	263	100.00

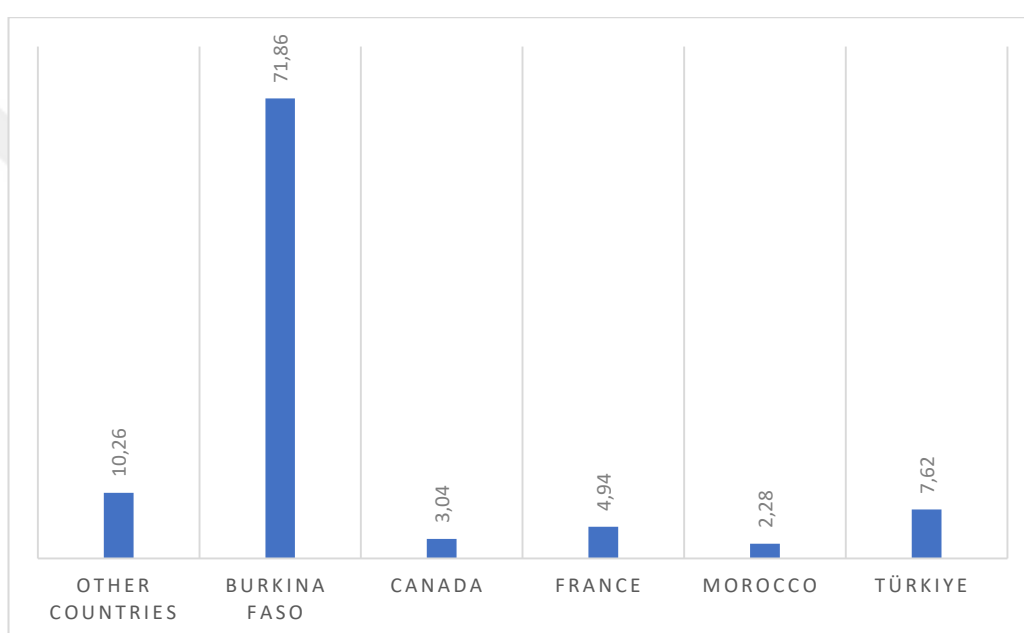


Figure 4.3: Distribution According to the Country of Residence of the Respondents

4.1.4 Distribution according to professional situation

The majority of respondents are students, indicating that our study population is mainly composed of young people in university education. Employees constitute the second largest group. Other professional categories, such as the self-employed and the unemployed are less represented in this sample.

Table 4.4: Distribution According to the Professional Situation of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
valid	Employee	63	23.95
	Student	159	60.45
	Housewife	1	0.38
	Independent	26	9.89
	Unemployed	14	5.33
	Total	263	100.00

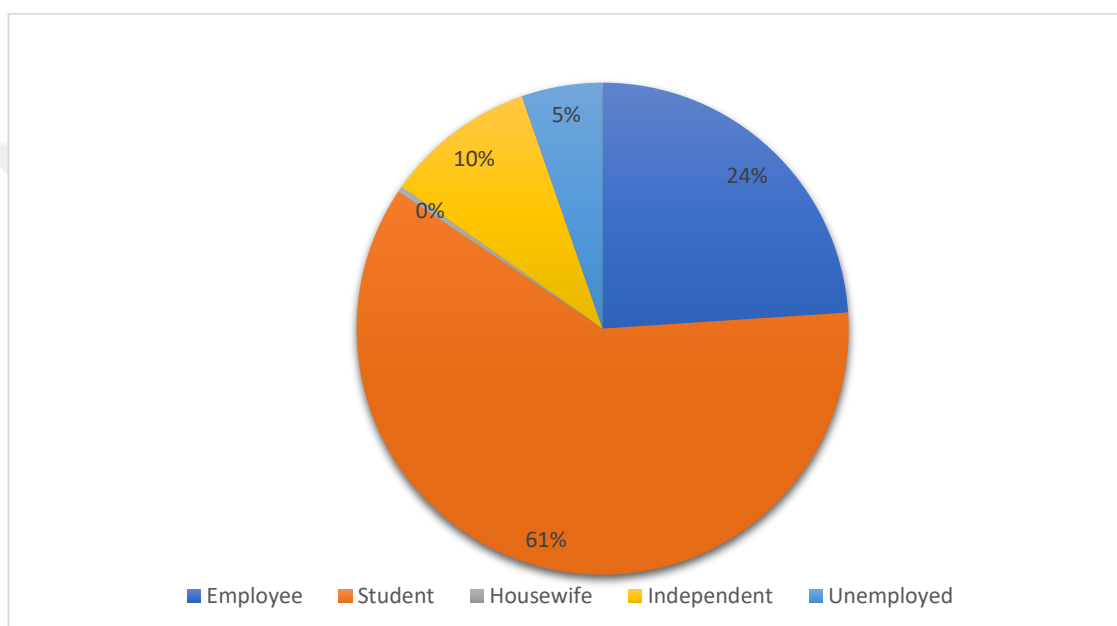


Figure 4.4: Distribution According to the Professional Situation of Respondents

4.1.5 The distribution of the levels of education of the population studied

A significant majority of participants (92.75%) have a college diploma or higher, which demonstrates that the sample is mainly composed of people with a high level of education. Secondary and primary education levels are poorly represented.

Table 4.5: Distribution According to the Level of Education of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
valid	College/University	130	49.42
	Graduate: Master / Ph.D.	114	43.34
	College	7	2.66
	Student	11	4.18
	Primary school	1	0.38
	Total	263	100.00

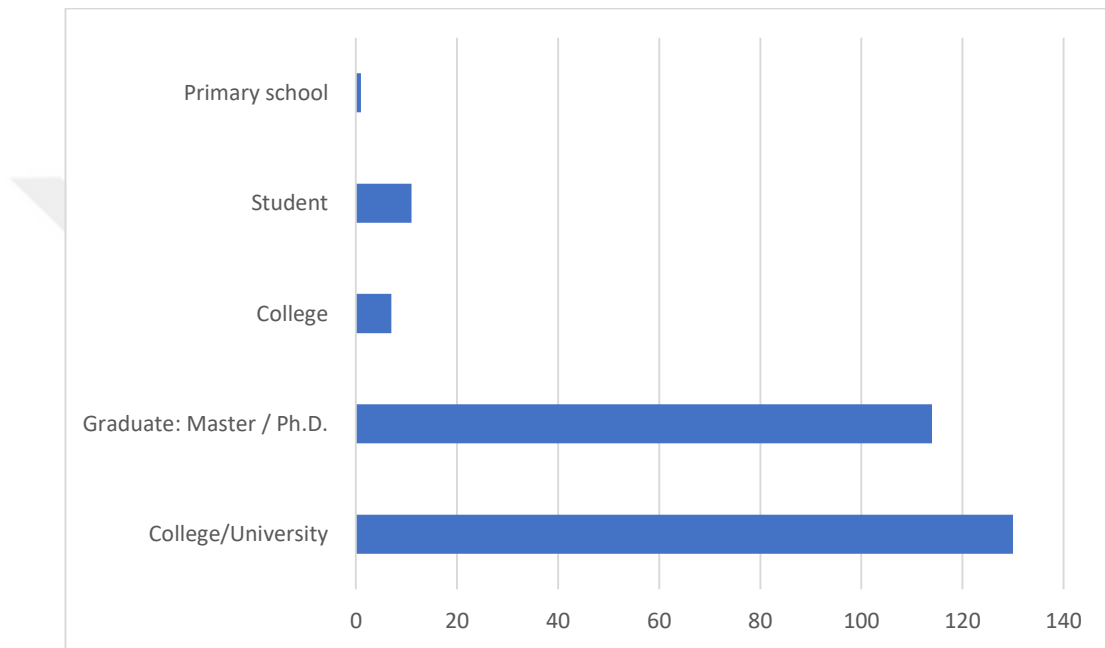


Figure 4.5: Distribution According to the level of Education of the Respondents

4.1.6 Distribution according to the annual income of the respondents

The reveals that the large part of respondents fall into the low to lower middle income categories, representing over 80% of the sample. This distribution may reflect the economic diversity of the participants, with a predominance of individuals with modest incomes. Higher incomes are fewer in number, which may simply indicate a balanced but diverse sample by income.

Table 4.6: Distribution According to the Annual Income of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
valid	Down	116	44.10
	Lower middle	105	39.92
	Upper middle	41	15.58
	High	1	0.38
	Total	263	100.00

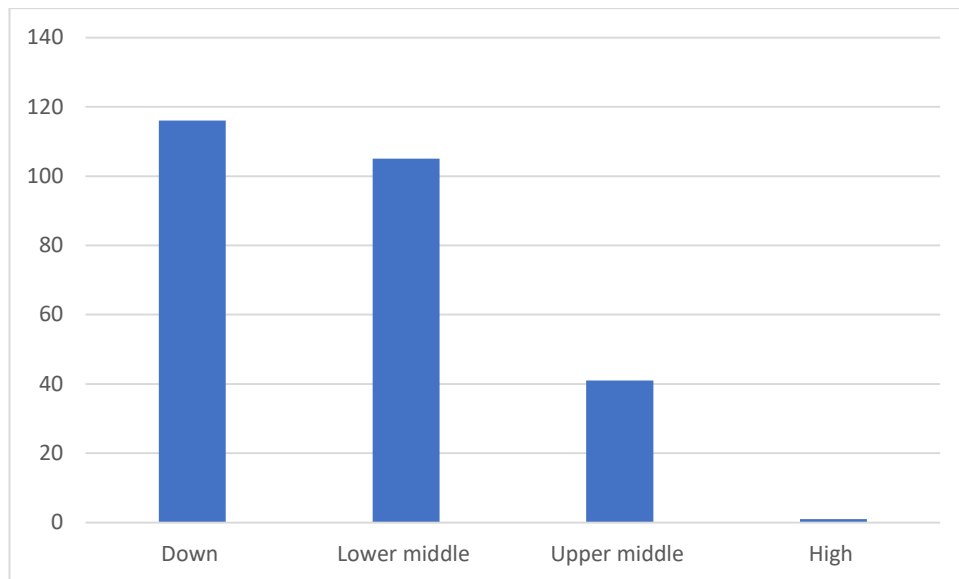


Figure 4.6: Distribution According to Annual Income of Respondents

4.1.7 Respondents' choice of media through which they interact with their influencer

Data on the media respondents use to interact with their influencers reveals interesting trends in user preferences and behaviors. Snapchat, used by 60.5% of respondents, is the most popular platform, attracting nearly half of participants with its temporary content and creative filters.

This shows that the social network effective in targeting young people who interact dynamically is snapchat.

Tiktok is used by 49.4% of respondents. It represents a key platform for creative and viral campaigns due to its ability to create popular trends. To have a chance of attracting the attention of the evolving audience, it is important to include tiktok in your marketing strategy.

Instagram is used by 38.5% of respondents. It is also important because of its interesting stories and attractive images, which allows brands that want to create campaigns with quite impactful visuals to work with influencers.

Although it is the most well-known, it is not the most used by our sample (33.5%), which shows that people might prefer newer platforms

With 24.3% usage, YouTube remains important for video content, providing a key channel for longer or educational formats. Finally, Twitter, used by only 11.8%

of respondents, appears less popular, indicating a general preference for visual and more interactive platforms.

Next, the data shows that Snapchat and Instagram are particularly effective for user engagement, while TikTok offers significant opportunities for innovative and viral campaigns. Facebook and YouTube, while less dominant in this sample, remain important channels for more established strategies. Less popular platforms like Twitter may require specific approaches tailored to their respective niches.

Table 4.7: Social Media used for Interaction with Influencers

		Frequency	Percent
valid	Facebook	89	33.5
	Instagram	100	38.4
	Snapchat	158	60.5
	Tiktok	129	49.4
	Twitter	31	11.8
	Youtube	63	24.3

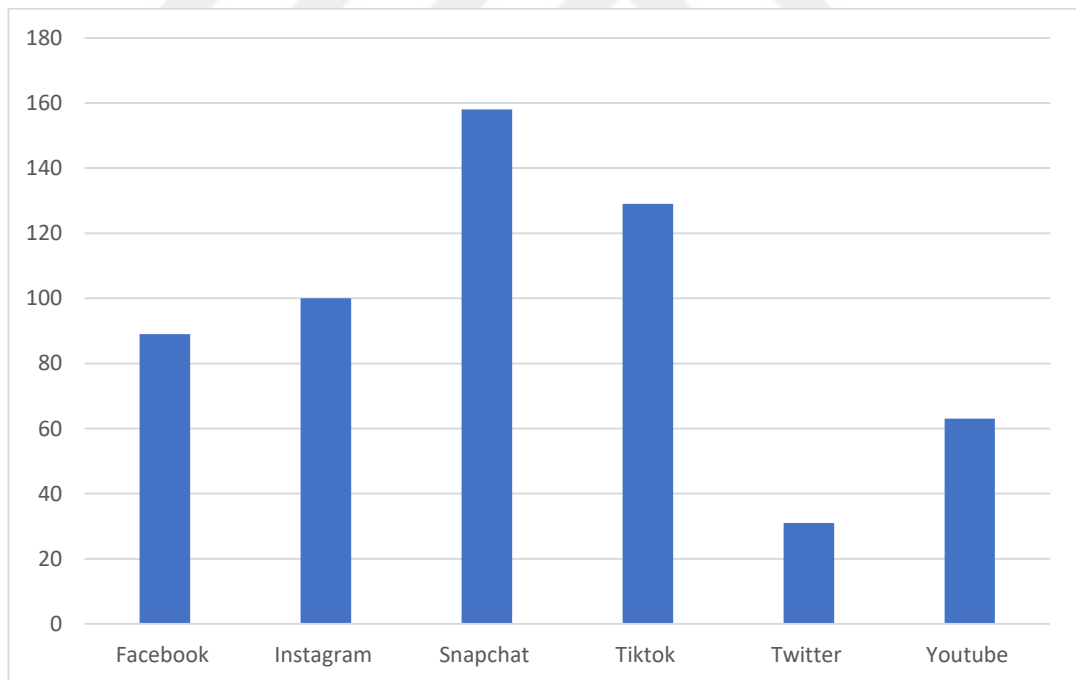


Figure 4.7: Social Media Used for Interaction with Influencers

4.1.8 Frequency of interactions with influencer on social media

The table illustrates the frequency of interaction between respondents and influencers, ranked on a scale from 1 (lowest interaction) to 5 (highest interaction). The majority of respondents reported low to moderate engagement levels, with 74

participants at level 1, 72 at level 2, and 73 at level 3. These numbers indicate that most interactions fall within the lower to middle range of the scale.

In contrast, higher levels of interaction are less common, as only 29 respondents reported level 4 interactions, and just 15 indicated the highest level of interaction at level 5. This suggests that while influencers reach a broad audience, more frequent and meaningful interactions are relatively rare. These findings highlight varying degrees of engagement, potentially reflecting differences in audience interest or how actively respondents engage with influencer content.

Table 4.8: Frequency of Interaction with Influencers on Social Networks

		Frequency	Percent
valid	1	74	28.13
	2	72	27.38
	3	73	27.75
	4	29	11.03
	5	15	5.70
	Total	263	100.00

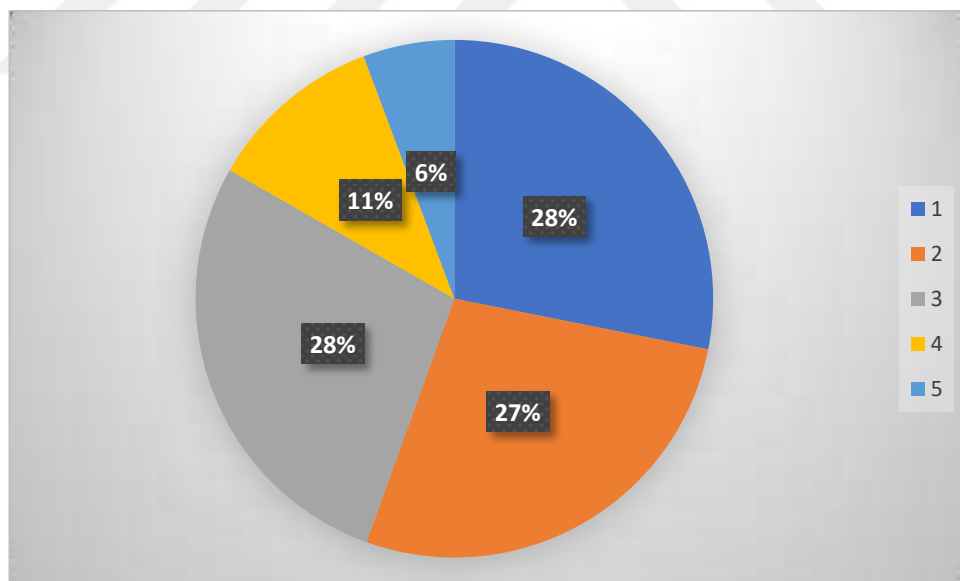


Figure 4.8: Frequency of Interaction with Influencers on Social Networks

4.1.9 Familiarity with content creating on social media

Most of respondents (61.8%) consider themselves “somewhat familiar” with sponsored content created by influencers on social media. This suggests that a large number of users have a basic understanding or moderate exposure to this type of content, but are not fully immersed or expert in the field.

Respondents who are “very familiar” represent approximately 19.1% of the sample, indicating that a significant minority of users have a deep understanding of and perhaps a strong interest in influencer-sponsored content.

Finally, nearly 19.1% of respondents are not at all familiar with sponsored content, which could suggest that a portion of the audience is not exposed to this type of marketing or does not pay attention to it. This group was asked to leave the survey, as their lack of familiarity would make their responses less relevant to the study's objectives.

The data reveals that familiarity with influencer-sponsored content varies among social media users, with the majority having moderate exposure.

Table 4.9: Familiarity with Content Creating on Social Media

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Not familiar	62	19.1
	Very familiar	62	19.1
	Somewhat familiar	201	61.8
	Total	325	100,0

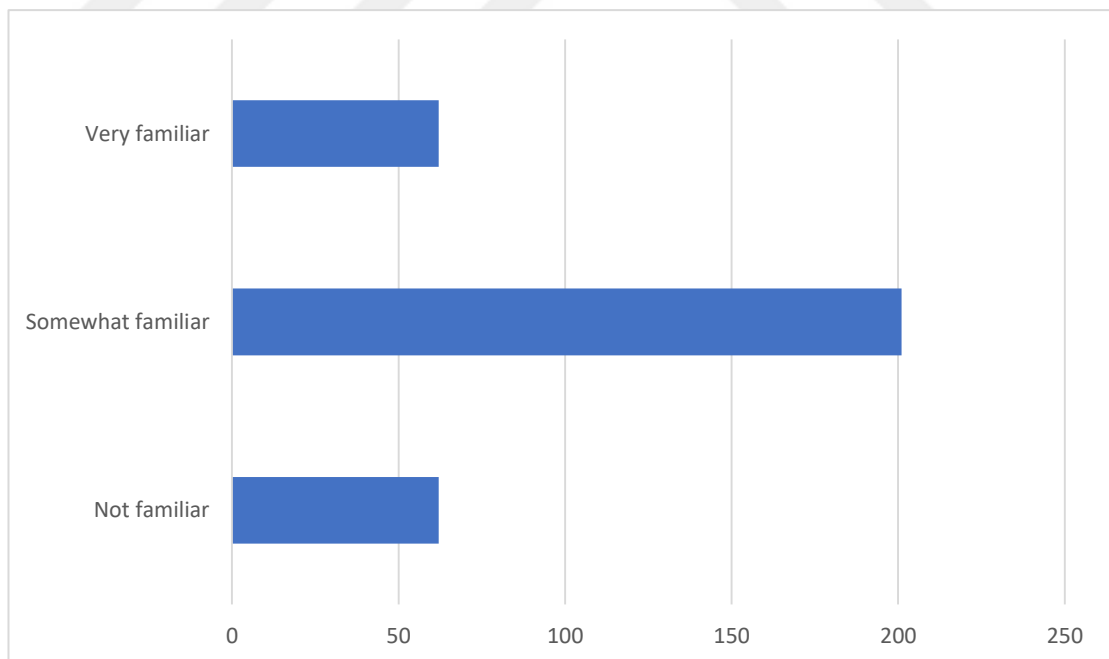


Figure 4.9: Familiarity with Content Creating on Social Media

4.1.10 Social networking interests of the study population

As this is a multiple-response question, we can see that respondents are interested in several types of content on social networks. Topics like food and cooking, fashion, business and economy, travel, and technology emerged as the most popular. This suggests a strong focus on areas related to everyday living, personal growth, and innovation.

In contrast, interests such as agriculture, pet or plant care, and art and design (were less frequently highlighted, indicating their narrower appeal. These variations in interest reflect the diverse preferences of the respondents while showcasing a clear inclination toward practical and aspirational themes.

Table 4.10: Social Networking Interests of the Study Population

	Frequency
Fashion	110
Beauty	79
Home and decoration	96
Food and cooking	150
Fitness and exercising	73
Healthy nutrition	77
Spiritual and personal development	92
Automobiles	73
Travel	107
Gaming	64
Business and economy	109
Technology	102
Art and design	60
Professional sports	62
Education and learning	101
Agriculture	37
Pet or plant care	20
other	23

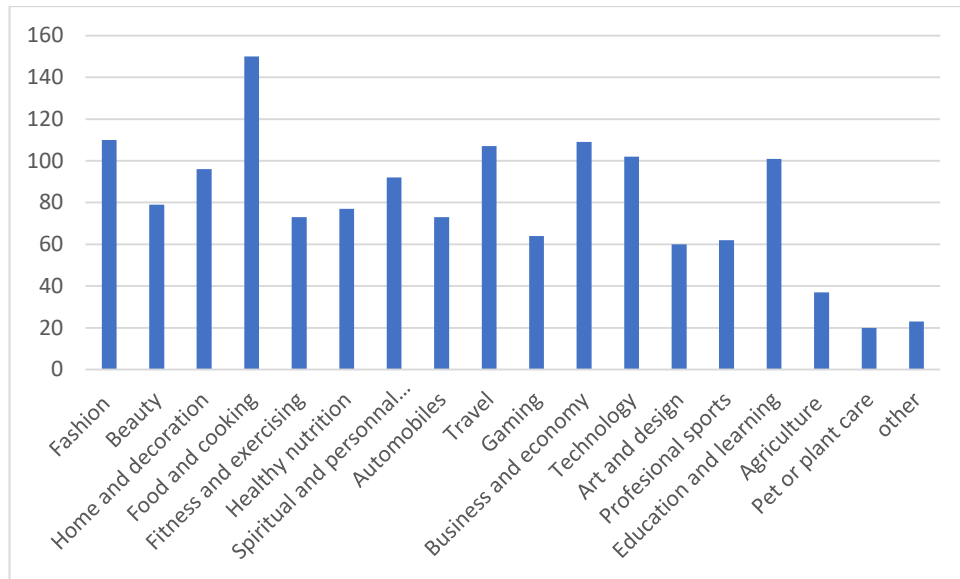


Figure 4.10: Social Networking Interests of the Study Population

4.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for the Scales Used in the Study

4.2.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for the Self-Disclosure Scale

The Self-Disclosure scale has a unidimensional structure with three items. The model representation of the confirmatory factor analysis conducted to assess the validity of the scale is presented in Figure 4.11.

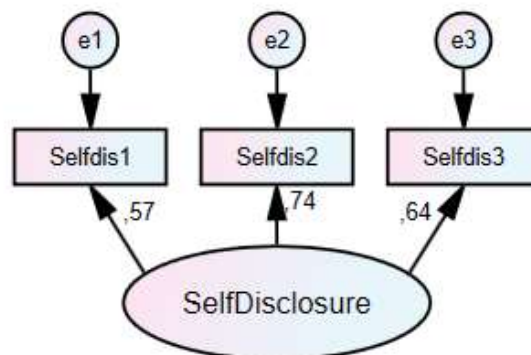


Figure 4.11: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model for the Self-Disclosure Scale

The threshold values to be considered for model fit indices after conducting confirmatory factor analysis are presented in Table 4.10. According to these criteria, a CMIN/df ratio below 5 (Kelloway, 1998), an RMSEA value of 0.08 or lower (Brown & Cudeck, 1993), GFI and AGFI values of 0.85 or higher (Hu & Bentler,

1999), and TLI and CFI values of 0.90 or higher (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) indicate that the model is acceptable.

Table 4.11: Model Fit Indices for the Self-Disclosure Scale

Indices	Threshold Values	Model Fit Indices Values
CMIN		0,430
df		1
CMIN/df	< 5,00	0,430
RMSEA	≤ 0,08	0,000
GFI	≥ 0,85	0,999
AGFI	≥ 0,85	0,993
TLI	≥ 0,90	1,000
CFI	≥ 0,90	1,000

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis conducted for the Self-Disclosure Scale showed that the model fit indices were met, confirming that the obtained results validate the model as valid and reliable.

Table 4.12: Standardized Regression Coefficients for the Self-Disclosure Scale

	B	SE	β	P value
Selfdis1←SelfDisclosure	1,000		0,573	
Selfdis2←SelfDisclosure	1,245	0,178	0,739	<0,001
Selfdis3←SelfDisclosure	1,000		0,642	

The standardized regression coefficients for the measurement model of the Self-Disclosure Scale range from 0.573 to 0.739, with the significance level for each item being below 0.001 ($p < 0.001$). These results indicate that the scale is valid and reliable.

4.2.2 Confirmatory factor analysis results for the friendship scale

The friendship scale measures the feeling of friendship with the influencer through three questions. The model used to ensure the proper operation of the scale is shown in Figure 4.12.

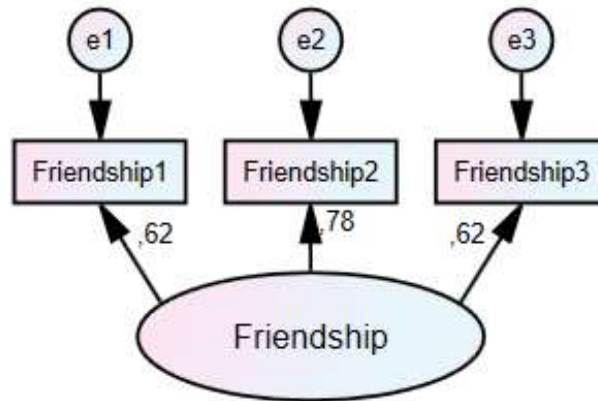


Figure 4.12: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model for the Friendship Scale

The threshold values to be considered for model fit indices after conducting confirmatory factor analysis are presented in Table 4.13. According to these criteria, a CMIN/df ratio below 5 (Kelloway, 1998), an RMSEA value of 0.08 or lower (Brown & Cudeck, 1993), GFI and AGFI values of 0.85 or higher (Hu & Bentler, 1999), and TLI and CFI values of 0.90 or higher (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) indicate that the model is acceptable.

Table 4.13: Model Fit Indices for the Friendship Scale

Indices	Threshold Values	Model Fit Indices Values
CMIN		2,775
df		1
CMIN/df	< 5,00	2,775
RMSEA	≤ 0,08	0,080
GFI	≥ 0,85	0,993
AGFI	≥ 0,85	0,958
TLI	≥ 0,90	0,964
CFI	≥ 0,90	0,988

At the end of the analysis, the results show that the friendship scale works well and prove that the model is reliable and valid.

Table 4.14: Standardized Regression Coefficients for the Friendship Scale

	B	SE	β	P value
Friendship1←Friendship	1,000		0,618	
Friendship2←Friendship	1,379	0,182	0,784	<0,001
Friendship3←Friendship	1,000		0,617	

The scale is reliable and valid because the normalized regression coefficients for the Friendship Scale measurement model range from 0.617 to 0.784 with a significance level for each question of less than 0.001 ($p < 0.001$)

4.2.3 Confirmatory factor analysis results for the understanding/identification scale heading

The understanding/Identification Scale has a one-dimensional structure with six items. The model representation of the confirmatory factor analysis performed to assess the validity of the scale is shown in Figure 4.13.

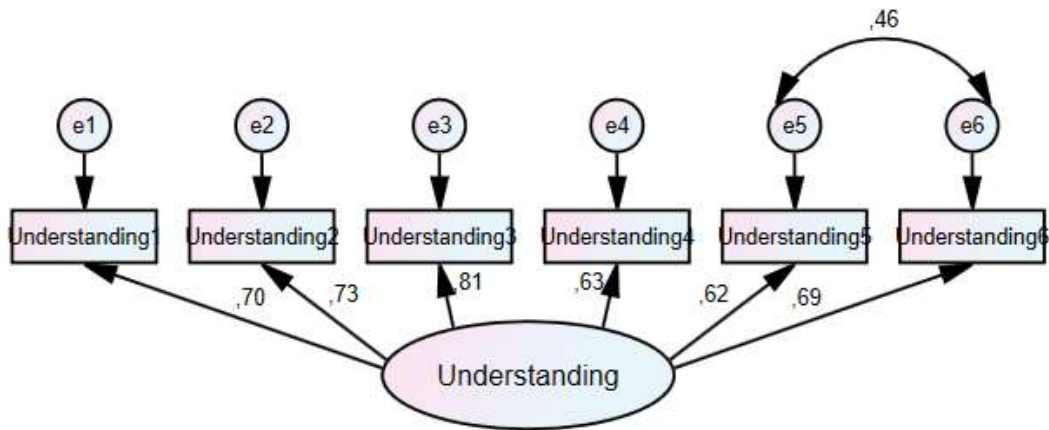


Figure 4.13: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model for the Understanding/identification Scale

After carrying out a confirmatory factor analysis, the cut-off values to be taken into account for the model fit indices are presented in the table below. Based on these criteria, an RMSEA value of 0.8 or less (Brown and Cudeck, 1993), a CMIN/df ratio of less than 5 (Kelloway, 1998), TLI and CFI values of 0.90 or greater (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), GFI and PFGA values of 0.85 indicate that the model is acceptable.

Table 4.15: Model Fit Indices for the Understanding/ identification Scale

Indices	Threshold Values	Model Fit Indices Values (Before Modification)	Model Fit Indices Values (After Modification)
CMIN		77,496	27,247
df		10	8
CMIN/df	< 5,00	7,750	3,406
RMSEA	≤ 0,08	0,161	0,080
GFI	≥ 0,85	0,905	0,967
AGFI	≥ 0,85	0,801	0,913
TLI	≥ 0,90	0,847	0,945
CFI	≥ 0,90	0,898	0,971

As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis conducted for the Understanding Scale, five indices were below the threshold values. After a

modification was made, the model fit indices were met, confirming that the obtained results validate the model as valid and reliable.

Table 4.16: Standardized Regression Coefficients for the Understanding/identification Scale

	B	SE	β	P value
Understanding/identification1←Understanding /identification	1,000		0,702	
Understanding/identification2←Understanding /identification	1,117	0,109	0,725	<0,001
Understanding/identification3←Understanding /identification	1,233	0,113	0,814	<0,001
Understanding/identification4←Understanding /identification	0,966	0,105	0,634	<0,001
Understanding/identification5←Understanding /identification	0,972	0,109	0,623	<0,001
Understanding/identification6←Understanding /identification	1,087	0,110	0,686	<0,001

The standardized regression coefficients for the measurement model of the Understanding/identification Scale range from 0.623 to 0.814, with the significance level for each item being below 0.001 ($p < 0.001$). These results indicate that the scale is valid and reliable.

4.2.4 Confirmatory factor analysis results for the source trustworthiness scale

The Source Trustworthiness scale has a unidimensional structure with six items. The model representation of the confirmatory factor analysis conducted to assess the validity of the scale is presented in Figure 4.14.

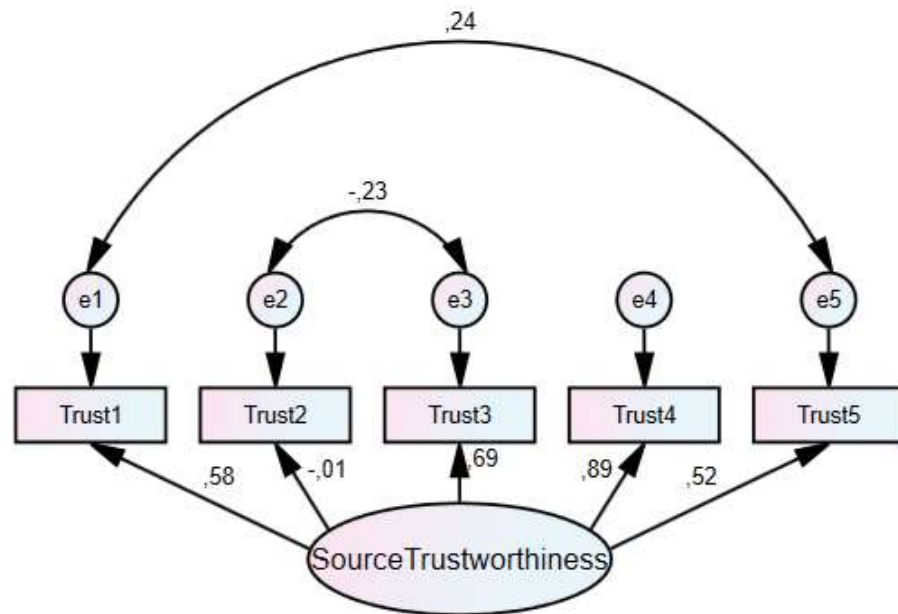


Figure 4.14: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model for the Source Trustworthiness Scale

The threshold values to be considered for model fit indices after conducting confirmatory factor analysis are presented in Table 4.17. According to these criteria, a CMIN/df ratio below 5 (Kelloway, 1998), an RMSEA value of 0.08 or lower (Brown & Cudeck, 1993), GFI and AGFI values of 0.85 or higher (Hu & Bentler, 1999), and TLI and CFI values of 0.90 or higher (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) indicate that the model is acceptable.

Table 4.17: Model Fit Indices for the Source Trustworthiness Scale

Indices	Threshold Values	Model Fit Indices Values (Before Modification)	Model Fit Indices Values (After Modification)
CMIN		36,857	10,765
df		5	3
CMIN/df	< 5,00	7,371	3,588
RMSEA	≤ 0,08	0,156	0,078
GFI	≥ 0,85	0,941	0,984
AGFI	≥ 0,85	0,823	0,921
TLI	≥ 0,90	0,794	0,916
CFI	≥ 0,90	0,897	0,975

As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis conducted for the Source Trustworthiness Scale, five indices were below the threshold values. After a modification was made, the model fit indices were met, confirming that the obtained results validate the model as valid and reliable.

Table 4.18: Standardized Regression Coefficients for the Source Trustworthiness Scale

	B	SE	β	P değeri
SourceTrust1←SourceTrustworthiness	1,000		0,580	
SourceTrust2←SourceTrustworthiness	1,213	0,162	0,014	<0,001
SourceTrust3←SourceTrustworthiness	1,533	0,188	0,691	<0,001
SourceTrust4←SourceTrustworthiness	1,747	0,225	0,886	<0,001
SourceTrust5←SourceTrustworthiness	0,934	0,121	0,517	<0,001

The standardized regression coefficients for the measurement model of the Source Trustworthiness Scale range from 0.014 to 0.886, with the significance level for each item being below 0.001 ($p < 0.001$). These results indicate that the scale is valid and reliable.

4.2.5 Confirmatory factor analysis results for the intention to recommend scale

The Intention to recommend scale has a unidimensional structure with three items. The model representation of the confirmatory factor analysis conducted to assess the validity of the scale is presented in Figure 4.15.

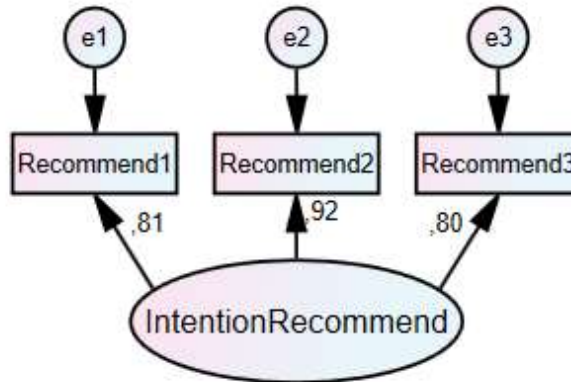


Figure 4.15: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model for the Intention to Recommend Scale

The threshold values to be considered for model fit indices after conducting confirmatory factor analysis are presented in Table 4.19. According to these criteria, a CMIN/df ratio below 5 (Kelloway, 1998), an RMSEA value of 0.08 or lower (Brown & Cudeck, 1993), GFI and AGFI values of 0.85 or higher (Hu & Bentler, 1999), and TLI and CFI values of 0.90 or higher (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) indicate that the model is acceptable.

Table 4.19: Model Fit Indices for the Intention to Recommend Scale

Indices	Threshold Values	Model Fit Indices Values
CMIN		1,216
df		1
CMIN/df	< 5,00	1,216
RMSEA	$\leq 0,08$	0,029
GFI	$\geq 0,85$	0,997
AGFI	$\geq 0,85$	0,982
TLI	$\geq 0,90$	0,998
CFI	$\geq 0,90$	0,999

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis conducted for the Intention to Recommend Scale showed that the model fit indices were met, confirming that the obtained results validate the model as valid and reliable.

Table 4.20: Standardized Regression Coefficients for the Intention to Recommend Scale

	B	SE	β	P değeri
Intention1←IntentionRecommend	1,000		0,809	
Intention2←IntentionRecommend	1,162	0,065	0,922	<0,001
Intention3←IntentionRecommend	1,000		0,796	

The standardized regression coefficients for the measurement model of the Intention to Recommend Scale range from 0.796 to 0.922, with the significance level for each item being below 0.001 ($p < 0.001$). These results indicate that the scale is valid and reliable.

4.3 Structural Model Testing

The structural equation modeling path diagram for the research model is shown in Figure 4.16. Standardized regression coefficients are displayed on the one-way arrows representing the relationships between the model variables.

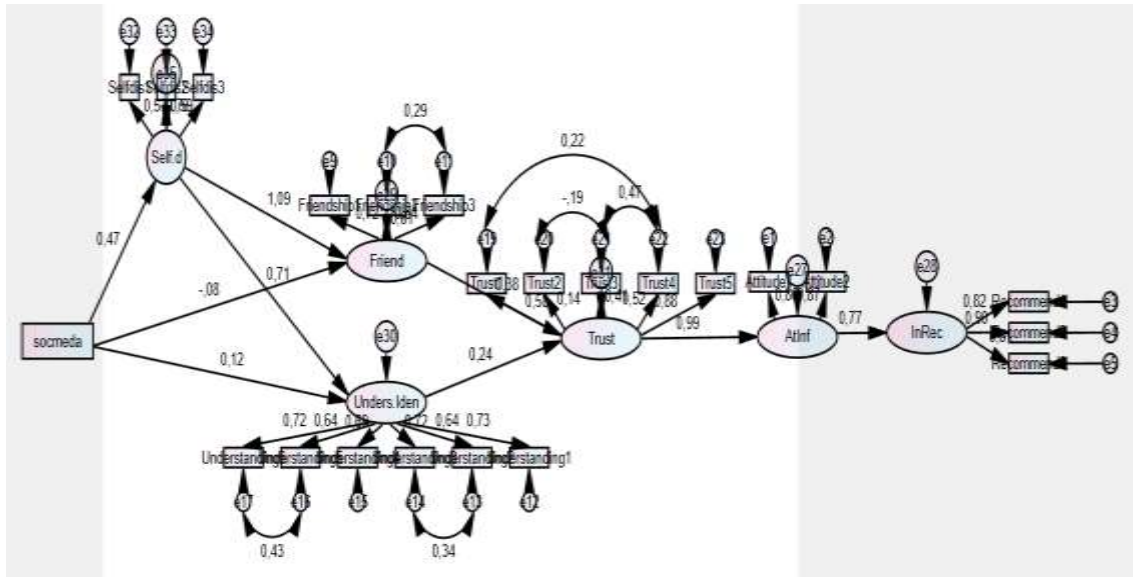


Figure 4.16: Research Model and Path Values

In order to test and evaluate the proposed hypotheses, it is first necessary to examine the fit index values of the research model. As a result of the SEM analysis conducted on the dataset formed by the participants, three modifications were identified and applied, as shown in the figure. The model fit index values before and after the modifications are presented in Table 4.21.

Table 4.21: Model Fit Indices for the Research Mode

Indices	Threshold Values	Model Fit Indices Values (Before Modification)	Model Fit Indices Values (After Modification)
CMIN		665,656	474,549
df		222	216
CMIN/df	< 5,00	2,998	2,197
RMSEA	≤ 0,08	0,087	0,068
GFI	≥ 0,85	0,811	0,860
AGFI	≥ 0,85	0,765	0,821
TLI	≥ 0,90	0,835	0,901
CFI	≥ 0,90	0,855	0,915

When examining the fit index values of the research model, the theoretically proposed research model aligns with the data. After the modifications, the model fit values fall within the required range for analysis.

To test the hypotheses developed in the study, the unstandardized regression coefficients (estimated values), standard error, t value, standardized regression coefficients, and significance levels for the relationships between the variables are presented in Table 4.22.

Table 4.22: Standardized Regression Coefficients for the Research Model

Path	B	SE	β	P value
Self-Disclosure ← Social Media Interaction	0,287	0,050	0,466	<0,001
Friendship ← Social Media Interaction	-0,064	0,054	-0,085	0,238
Understanding/Identification ← Social Media Interaction	0,080	0,046	0,116	0,080
Friendship ← Self-Disclosure	1,339	0,164	1,091	<0,001
Understanding/Identification ← Self-Disclosure	0,800	0,116	0,713	<0,001
Trustworthiness ← Friendship	0,257	0,089	0,377	<0,001
Trustworthiness ← Understanding/Identification	0,182	0,093	0,245	<0,001
Attitude to towards the Influencer ← Trustworthiness	1,573	0,164	0,993	<0,001
Intention to Recommend ← Attitude to towards the Influencer	0,702	0,059	0,772	<0,001

The results of the standardized regression coefficients in the research model provide valuable insights. Hypothesis H1, which suggests that social media interaction positively affects self-disclosure, is accepted, as the relationship is strong ($\beta = 0.466$) and highly significant ($p < 0.001$). However, H2, proposing that social media interaction positively affects friendship, is rejected because the effect is weak ($\beta = -0.085$) and not statistically significant ($p = 0.238$). Similarly, H3, which posits that social media interaction positively affects understanding/identification, is also rejected due to its weak effect ($\beta = 0.116$) and non-significant p-value ($p = 0.080$).

On the other hand, H4, which suggests that self-disclosure positively affects friendship, is accepted with a strong effect ($\beta = 1.091$) and a highly significant p-value ($p < 0.001$). Likewise, H5, proposing that self-disclosure positively affects understanding/identification, is also accepted ($\beta = 0.713$, $p < 0.001$).

Hypothesis H6, which states that friendship positively affects trustworthiness, is supported by a moderate effect ($\beta = 0.377$) and a significant p-value ($p < 0.001$). Similarly, H7, which suggests that understanding/identification positively affects trustworthiness, is accepted ($\beta = 0.245$, $p < 0.001$).

H8, proposing that trustworthiness positively affects attitude towards the influencer, is strongly supported ($\beta = 0.993$, $p < 0.001$). Finally, H9, which states that attitude towards the influencer positively affects the intention to recommend, is

accepted, as it shows a strong positive effect ($\beta = 0.772$) with a highly significant p-value ($p < 0.001$).

Overall, self-disclosure plays a crucial role in shaping friendship and understanding/identification, while trustworthiness and attitude towards the influencer emerge as key drivers of recommendation intentions.

4.3.1 Results of hierarchical regression analysis for identifying the mediating role of the self-disclosure in the effect of social media interaction on friendship

A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to identify the mediating role of self-disclosure in the effect of social media interaction on friendship.

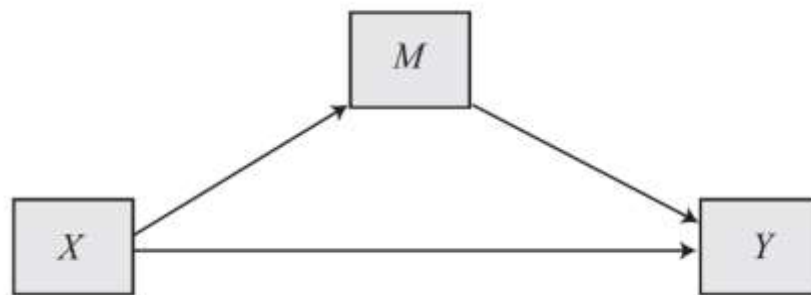


Figure 4.17: The Mediating Role of the Self-Disclosure in the Effect of Social Media Interaction on Friendship (Model 4, Baron ve Kenny (1986))

The results of the analysis are presented in the table below.

Table 4.23: The Mediating Role of the Self-Disclosure in the Effect of Social Media Interaction on Friendship

Hypothesis	Phases	β	SH	F	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	R ²
H ₈	1 SMI>SD	0,324	0,045	50,15	7,082	0,000	0,234	0,414	0,161
	2 SMI>F	0,331	0,051	42,15	6,493	0,000	0,230	0,431	0,139
	3 SMI>F	0,118	0,045	101,0	2,627	0,009	0,029	0,207	0,437
	SD>F	0,655	0,055	101,0	11,74	0,000	0,545	0,765	0,437
Mediation Effect		Effect		BootSH		BootLLCI		BootULCI	
		0,212		0,036		0,146		0,289	
SMI: Social Media Interaction; SD: Self-Disclosure; F: Friendship									

The results confirm the mediation effect of self-disclosure in the relationship between social media interaction and friendship, supporting hypothesis H₁₀. In the first phase, social media interaction has a strong positive effect on self-disclosure ($\beta = 0.324$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that increased interaction on social media leads to greater self-disclosure. In the second phase, social media interaction directly affects

friendship ($\beta = 0.331, p = 0.000$), suggesting that individuals who engage more in social media interactions tend to form stronger friendships. In the third phase, when both social media interaction and self-disclosure are included in the model, the direct effect of social media interaction on friendship decreases ($\beta = 0.118, p = 0.009$), while self-disclosure has a strong positive effect on friendship ($\beta = 0.655, p = 0.000$). This reduction in the direct effect of social media interaction, combined with the significant impact of self-disclosure, suggests a mediation effect. Additionally, the mediation effect analysis supports this finding, as the bootstrapped confidence interval for the indirect effect (BootLLCI = 0.146, BootULCI = 0.289) does not include zero. This provides statistical evidence that self-disclosure partially mediates the relationship between social media interaction and friendship. Overall, the findings indicate that while social media interaction directly contributes to friendship formation, a significant portion of this effect occurs through increased self-disclosure, emphasizing the role of personal sharing in developing social bonds.

4.3.2 Results of hierarchical regression analysis for identifying the mediating role of the self-disclosure in the effect of social media interaction on understanding/identification

A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to identify the mediating role of self-disclosure in the effect of social media interaction on understanding/identification. The results of the analysis are presented in the table below.

Table 4.24: The Mediating Role of the Self-Disclosure in the Effect of Social Media Interaction on Understanding/Identification

Hypothesis	Phases	β	SH	F	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	R ²
H ₉	1 SMI>SD	0,324	0,045	50,15	7,082	0,000	0,234	0,414	0,161
	2 SMI>U	0,323	0,043	54,66	7,393	0,000	0,237	0,409	0,173
	3 SMI>U	0,171	0,041	77,28	4,107	0,001	0,089	0,253	0,372
	SD>U	0,468	0,051	77,28	9,097	0,000	0,367	0,570	0,372
Mediation Effect		Effect		BootSH		BootLLCI		BootULCI	
		0,152		0,028		0,100		0,211	
SMI: Social Media Interaction; SD: Self-Disclosure; U: Understanding/identification									

The results confirm the mediating role of self-disclosure in the relationship between social media interaction and understanding/identification, supporting hypothesis H₁₁. In the first phase, social media interaction has a strong positive effect on self-disclosure ($\beta = 0.324, p = 0.000$), indicating that individuals who engage

more in social media interactions tend to disclose more about themselves. In the second phase, social media interaction directly influences understanding/identification ($\beta = 0.323$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that social media interactions contribute to individuals' ability to understand others. In the third phase, when both social media interaction and self-disclosure are included in the model, the direct effect of social media interaction on understanding/identification slightly decreases ($\beta = 0.171$, $p = 0.001$), while self-disclosure has a significant positive effect on understanding/identification ($\beta = 0.468$, $p = 0.000$). This decrease in the direct effect of social media interaction, combined with the strong impact of self-disclosure, suggests a mediation effect. Furthermore, the mediation analysis supports this conclusion, as the bootstrapped confidence interval for the indirect effect (BootLLCI = 0.100, BootULCI = 0.211) does not include zero. These findings provide statistical evidence that self-disclosure partially mediates the relationship between social media interaction and understanding/identification. Overall, while social media interaction directly enhances understanding/identification, a significant part of this effect occurs through increased self-disclosure, highlighting the importance of sharing personal experiences in fostering better understanding/identification between individuals.

4.3.3 Results of hierarchical regression analysis for identifying the mediating role of the self-disclosure in the effect of social media interaction on trustworthiness

A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to identify the mediating role of self-disclosure in the effect of social media interaction on trustworthiness. The results of the analysis are presented in the table below.

Table 4.25: The Mediating Role of the Self-Disclosure in the Effect of Social Media Interaction on Trustworthiness

Hypothesis	Phases	β	SH	F	T	p	LLCI	ULCI	R ²	
H ₁₀	1 SMI>SD	0,324	0,045	50,15	7,082	0,000	0,234	0,414	0,161	
	2 SMI>T	0,139	0,039	12,28	3,505	0,000	0,060	0,217	0,045	
	3 SMI>T	-0,01	0,037	51,24	-0,03	0,976	-0,07	0,072	0,282	
	SD>T	0,431	0,046	51,24	9,28	0,000	0,340	0,523	0,282	
Mediation Effect		Effect	BootSH	BootLLCI	BootULCI					
		0,140	0,024	0,093	0,189					
SMI: Social Media Interaction; SD: Self-Disclosure; T: Trustworthiness										

The analysis results indicate that self-disclosure fully mediates the relationship between social media interaction and trustworthiness, supporting hypothesis H₁₂. In the first phase, social media interaction significantly influences self-disclosure ($\beta = 0.324$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that individuals who engage more in social media tend to disclose more about themselves. In the second phase, social media interaction has a positive and significant direct effect on trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.139$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that higher engagement in social media enhances perceptions of trustworthiness. However, in the third phase, when self-disclosure is included in the model, the direct effect of social media interaction on trustworthiness becomes non-significant ($\beta = -0.01$, $p = 0.976$), while self-disclosure has a strong and significant effect on trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.431$, $p = 0.000$). This indicates a full mediation effect, meaning that social media interaction affects trustworthiness entirely through self-disclosure. The mediation effect is further confirmed by the bootstrapped confidence interval (BootLLCI = 0.093, BootULCI = 0.189), which does not include zero. Since the direct effect of social media interaction on trustworthiness disappears when self-disclosure is added, it suggests that trustworthiness is not directly influenced by social media interaction but rather through increased self-disclosure. This supports the notion that individuals who interact more on social media are perceived as more trustworthy only if they engage in self-disclosure. Therefore, H₁₂ is accepted, and self-disclosure plays a full mediating role in the relationship between social media interaction and trustworthiness.

5. CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

The report's last section explores the results, make recommendations and inference from the information found. The literature review highlighted the crucial role that parasocial relationships play in shaping how influencers are perceived, strengthening their credibility, and ultimately influencing consumer intent to recommend. Additionally, authenticity and transparency emerged as fundamental factors in building and maintaining trust between influencers and their audience. Another key takeaway was the significance of self-disclosure and online engagement in fostering deeper connections between consumers and influencers.

To explore these dynamics, the study relied on a well-structured research model and tested several hypotheses to better understand the link between social interactions, parasocial bonds, and consumer attitudes toward influencers, as well as their intention to recommend them. Data collected from 325 participants were analyzed using advanced statistical tools, including regression models and mediation analyses, to ensure robust findings.

The results shows that social media interactions have many positives impact respectly on friendship with influencer, understanding/identification of influencer and source of trustworthiness. First , the analysis of the perception of friendship between influencer and his audience ($\beta = 0.899$; $p < 0.001$) suggest that the more consumers engage with influencers online, the stronger their sense of familiarity and connection, reinforcing the idea that frequent digital interactions can create an illusion of closeness. Second , the findings showing that that regular exposure to an influencer's content allows consumers to feel like they know them better, strengthening their emotional connection and trust($\beta = 0.870$; $p < 0.001$).

However, contrary to expectations, the direct impact of perceived friendship ($\beta = -0.130$; $p = 0.229$) and understanding/identification ($\beta = 0.041$; $p = 0.659$) on consumer attitudes toward influencers was not statistically significant. On the other

hand, trust in an influencer had a strong and positive effect on consumer attitudes ($\beta = 0.998$; $p < 0.001$), which in turn significantly influenced recommendation intentions ($\beta = 0.769$; $p < 0.001$). These findings highlight that while social interactions nurture feelings of closeness, trust remains the determining factor in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors.

Additionally, the study confirmed that self-disclosure plays a crucial mediating role, reinforcing the idea that influencers who openly share aspects of their lives are more likely to build meaningful and lasting bonds with their audience.

In conclusion, based on the analysis results hypothesis assessed as follow

Table 5.1: Research Hypothesis Results

Hypothesis	Support/Uns.
H ₁ : Social media interaction positively affects self-disclosure.	Supported
H ₂ : Social media interaction positively affects friendship.	Unsupported
H ₃ : Social media interaction positively affects understanding/identification.	Unsupported
H ₄ : Self-disclosure positively affects friendship.	Supported
H ₅ : Self-disclosure positively affects understanding/identification.	Supported
H ₆ : Friendship positively affects trustworthiness.	Supported
H ₇ : Understanding/identification positively affects trustworthiness.	Supported
H ₈ : Trustworthiness positively affects attitude towards the influencer.	Supported
H ₉ : Attitude towards the influencer positively affects the intention to recommend.	Supported
H ₁₀ : Self-disclosure mediates the relationship between social media interaction and friendship.	Supported
H ₁₁ : Self-disclosure mediates the relationship between social media interaction and understanding/identification.	Supported
H ₁₂ : Self-disclosure mediates the relationship between social media interaction and trustworthiness.	Supported

Out of the 12 hypotheses defined within the scope of the research, 10 were accepted, and 2 were rejected.

5.2 Discussion

This study sheds light on the intricate connections between social media interactions, parasocial relationships, and influencer marketing. The findings indicate that while engaging with influencers online can foster a sense of closeness and familiarity, trust remains the most influential factor in shaping consumer attitudes and recommendations. In other words, influencers can endear themselves to their

audience just by talking about it or interacting with them. It is important that they are perceived as true and honest. This is confirmed by other studies that have shown that people trust those they consider sincere or close. However, this study also shows that these feelings of friendship or closeness are not enough for people to have a good opinion of him.

Another point addressed in this study is the role of self-disclosure in the creation of links. According to Jourard (1971), when a person reveals certain personal aspects of his or her life, it helps to strengthen trust and a sense of closeness. Sharing their lives makes them more sincere in the eyes of people and they trust them more. Pöyry et al. (2019) showed that being true has a lot of impact on people's idea of influencers. But this raises a question about the degree of self-disclosure that the influencer must have towards his community, how much does the influencer have to reveal personal things to be credible? as explained by Abidin and Ots (2016).

This study also shows the importance of trust in the influencer in the process of recommending or purchasing a product or service. This idea had been known for a long time and had already been mentioned by Hovland and Weiss (1951). Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) also noted that trust is an important factor in getting consumers to follow recommendations. They would be more sincere than those who only want to sell. It is with this in mind that Audrezet et al. (2020) observed that influencers who want to appear more authentic only work with brands that align with their morals.

In addition, this study shows that social networks are an excellent platform for the creation of links between influencers and subscribers, even if this is not always the case. Some have a sense of closeness while others just stare without attaching themselves. This shows that other factors such as culture or personality can have an impact on these relationships. From our time, with virtual influencers (created by AI) we can wonder if such links can be created with characters that are not real.

Finally, this study shows that to succeed in an influencer marketing campaign, influencers must have several qualities such as being trustworthy, sincere or transparent. It also gives ideas to brands and influencers to better connect with

their audience. With the constant change in social networks, it is important to continue to do research to always be informed of new developments.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, it offers useful tips to help marketers, influencers and researchers. These tips can help them do their jobs better, speak better to their audiences, and build strong, trusting bonds with the people who follow them.

5.3.1 Recommendations for marketers

To improve their campaigns and better optimize consumers' intent to recommend, marketers could adopt these recommendations:

- **Prioritize Authenticity Over Popularity** Instead of focusing on influencers with massive followings, brands should partner with those who are perceived as genuine and relatable. Building campaigns around authenticity fosters deeper engagement and consumer loyalty.
- **Encourage Transparency and Storytelling:** Marketers should encourage content that blends brand messaging with real-life experiences, making promotional content feel more organic rather than forced.
- **Build Long-Term Collaborations** Sustainable brand-influencer partnerships enhance credibility and consistency

5.3.2 Recommendations for influencers

For influencers, being authentic and transparent is critical. Audiences are drawn to influencers who present themselves honestly, as it fosters deeper parasocial relationships and strengthens credibility. Consistent interaction with followers is also important for maintaining trust and continuing to build these relationships. By sharing personal, relatable experiences, influencers can help their audience feel more connected and engaged.

Moreover, influencers should ensure they provide reliable and accurate information. When followers see influencers as credible sources, they are more likely

to develop positive attitudes towards them, which can also influence their purchasing decisions and loyalty.

5.3.3 Recommendations for researchers

For researchers, it is important to study the long-term effects of parasocial relationships. It is true that this study shows the links between influencers and their followers, but it is also important to know the duration of these links over time.

It would also be interesting to study the impact of cultural variations on the perception of influencers. Depending on the country and culture, people are likely to easily trust influencers or not. It is therefore important to study how trust and credibility change with the habits and traditions of each region.

Finally, it would be a major asset to explore the rise of AI-generated influencers. Nowadays, it is important to understand if connections can be made with AI-generated influencers as if they were real humans. Researchers can explore interactions and perceptions of digital influencers.

The recommendations of this study are intended to improve influencer marketing and practices but also to guide future research. By applying these tips, influencers and brands can improve their communication with their audience and gain trust and create stronger connections.

5.3.4 Future research direction

For future research, researchers can use the results of this study to better understand how relationships work on social media. It would also be interesting for them to study the impact of new technologies and also relevant issues such as privacy protection. Through the exploration of its different topics, it will allow brands to create better marketing strategies in an ever-changing world.

It would also be interesting to see the evolution over time of the links between influencers and subscribers addressed in this study. Studies conducted over time would make it possible to evaluate consumer loyalty to the influencer.

This study touches on trust and self-disclosure, but future research could include psychological factors such as personality traits, vulnerability to influence, and cognitive biases. By examining how different types of consumers react to

influencer marketing, brands could develop more precise segmentation strategies to target specific audience groups.

Not all influencers have the same impact. Future studies should differentiate between nano-, micro-, macro-, and mega-influencers to understand their varying effects. Research could explore why micro-influencers tend to have higher engagement rates and how different types of influencers serve distinct marketing purposes.

As new platforms like TikTok, BeReal, and even metaverse spaces continue to grow, research should examine how influencer marketing strategies evolve in these new environments. Do parasocial relationships form differently in video-heavy spaces compared to text-based or interactive platforms?

By tackling these underexplored areas, future studies could offer a more well-rounded understanding of influencer marketing, helping brands, influencers, and policymakers navigate the complexities of engagement in the digital era.

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APPENDIX

Appendix1: Survey form

26/02/2025 21:41 "Réseaux sociaux, interactions parasociales et marketing d'influence : enquête sur l'impact sur la perception et le comporte...

"Réseaux sociaux, interactions parasociales et marketing d'influence : enquête sur l'impact sur la perception et le comportement des consommateurs".

"Social networks, parasocial interactions and influence marketing: a survey of the impact on consumer perception and behaviour".

Bienvenue !

Votre participation est essentielle pour nous aider à comprendre comment les influenceurs influencent les décisions d'achat et le comportement en ligne.

L'enquête se compose de plusieurs sections, chacune conçue pour recueillir des informations spécifiques sur vos habitudes, vos perceptions et vos opinions sur les influenceurs des médias sociaux. Veuillez répondre honnêtement à chaque question.

Vos réponses resteront strictement confidentielles et ne seront utilisées qu'à des fins de recherche académique.

Merci de votre participation !

Welcome!

Your participation is essential to help us understand how influencers affect purchasing decisions and online behaviour.

The survey consists of several sections, each designed to gather specific information about your habits, perceptions and opinions on social media influencers. Please answer each question honestly.

Your answers will remain strictly confidential and will be used for academic research purposes only.

Thank you for taking part!

* Indique une question obligatoire

Sans titre

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/19mGjyVfNtICBvZldkbqcS9QIBfTathB_MPxyjk_jg/edit

1/10

1. Êtes-vous familier avec le contenu sponsorisé créé par des influenceurs sur les médias sociaux ?/How familiar are you with sponsored content created by influencers on social media? *

Une seule réponse possible.

- Pas familier (e) /Not familiar .(Vous pouvez quitter l'enquete /you can leave the survey)
- Un peu familier(e) / Somewhat familiar
- Très familier(e) / Very familiar

Section sans titre

2. Quel est votre genre?/ What is your gender? *

Une seule réponse possible.

- Mâle/ Male
- Femelle/ Female

3. Quel est votre âge?/ What is your age? *

Une seule réponse possible.

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-50
- 51 et plus / 51 and above

4. Où habitez-vous ? / Where do you live? *

5. Quelle est votre situation professionnelle actuelle ?/ What is your current employment status? *

Une seule réponse possible.

- Employé(e)/ Employed
- Indépendants/ Self-Employed
- Etudiant/ Student
- Femme au foyer / Housewife
- Retraité(e) / Retired
- Sans emploi/ Unemployed

6. Quel est le niveau d'étude le plus élevé que vous ayez atteint ?/ What is the highest level of education you have completed? *

Une seule réponse possible.

- École primaire/ Primary school
- L'école secondaire / Secondary school
- Premier cycle / Undergraduate
- Collège/Université; College/University
- Diplômé : Master/ doctorat; Graduate: Master's/ Ph.D.

7. Quel est votre niveau de revenu annuel total ?/ What is your total yearly income level? *

Une seule réponse possible.

- Faible/ Low
- Moyen inférieur/ Lower-Middle
- Moyen supérieure/ Upper-Middle
- Élevé/High

Interactions avec les médias sociaux/ Social Media Interactions

Divulgateion de soi/ Self disclosure

Relation parasociale / Parasocial relationship

8. J'intéragis avec mon influenceur(se) préféré(e) sur : / I interact with my favorite influencer on : *

Plusieurs réponses possibles.

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Tiktok
- Youtube
- Instagram
- Snapchat

9. Veuillez indiquer le type de contenu qui vous intéresse le plus sur les médias sociaux ? / Please mention the type of content you are most interested in on social media? *

Plusieurs réponses possibles.

- La mode / Fashion
- La beauté / Beauty
- Maison et décoration / Home and decoration
- Nourriture et cuisine / Food and cooking
- Fitness et exercice physique / Fitness and exercising
- Santé et nutrition / Healthy nutrition
- Développement spirituel et personnel / Spiritual and personal development
- Automobiles
- Voyage / Travel
- Jeu / Gaming
- Entreprises et économie / Business and economy
- Technologie / Technology
- Art and design
- Sport professionnel / Professional sport
- Éducation et apprentissage / Education and Learning
- Agriculture
- Soins aux animaux ou aux plantes / Pet or plant care
- Autre : _____

10. À quelle fréquence interagissez-vous avec votre influenceur(se) préféré(e) sur les médias sociaux ? / How often do you interact with your favorite influencer on social media ? *

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Jam Fréquemment/ Frequently

11. Mon influenceur(se) préféré(e) se dévoile. / My favorite influencer reveals himself/herself. *

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Pas Tout à fait d'accord / Strongly agree

12. Mon influenceur(se) préféré(e) partage ses sentiments personnels avec ses fans. / My favorite influencer shares him/her personal feelings with his/her fans. *

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Pas Tout à fait d'accord / Strongly agree

13. Mon influenceur(se) préféré(e) est honnête sur ses sentiments ou ses opinions. / My favorite influencer is honest about his/her feelings or opinions. *

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Pas Tout à fait d'accord/ Strongly agree

14. Mon influenceur (se) préféré (e) me met à l'aise, comme si j'étais avec un ami./ *
My favorite influencer makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with a friend.

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Pas Tout à fait d'accord/ Strongly agree

15. J'aimerais avoir une discussion amicale avec mon influenceur (se) préféré(e). *
/I would like to have a friendly chat with my favorite influencer.

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Pas Tout à fait d'accord/Strongly agree

16. Si mon influenceur(se) préféré (e) n'était pas une célébrité, nous serions de *
bons amis./ If my favorite influencer were not a celebrity, we would have been
goods friends.

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Pas Tout à fait d'accord/ Strongly agree

Compréhension/ identification ; Understanding/ Identification

17. Je crois que je comprends assez bien mon influenceur(se) préféré(e)./ I think I *
understand my favorite influencer quite well.

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Pas Tout à fait d'accord /Strongly agree

18. Lorsque mon influenceur(se) préféré(e) se comporte d'une certaine manière, je *
connais les raisons de son comportement. / When my favorite influencer
behaves a certain way, I know the reasons for his/her behavior.

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Pas Tout à fait d'accord/ Strongly agree

19. Je peux ressentir les émotions de mon influenceur (se) préféré (e) dans *
certaines situations. / I can feel my favorite influencer's emotions in certain
situations

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Pas Tout à fait d'accord / Strongly agree

20. Mon influenceur(se) préféré (e) semble comprendre le genre de choses que *
je veux savoir. / My favorite influencer seems to understand the kinds of things i
want to know.

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Pas Tout à fait d'accord/ Strongly agree

21. Mon influenceur(se) préféré(e) me rappelle à moi-même / My favorite *
influencer reminds me on myself

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Pas Tout à fait d'accord/ Strongly agree

22. Je peux m'identifier à mon influenceur (se) préféré(e) / I can identify with my favorite influencer *

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Pas Tout à fait d'accord / Strongly agree

Fiabilité de la source / Source trustworthiness

Attitude à l'égard de l'influenceur / Attitude toward the influencer

Intention de recommander / Intention to recommend

23. Mon influenceur(se) préféré(e) est / My favorite influencer is *

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Peu Sincère / Sincere

24. Mon influenceur(se) préféré(e) est / My favorite influencer is *

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Indé Dépendante / Dependable

25. Mon influenceur(se) préféré(e) est / My favorite influencer is *

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Mall Honnête / Honest

26. Mon influenceur(se) préféré(e) est /My favorite influencer is *

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Pas Digne de confiance / Trustworthy

27. Mon influenceur préféré veut vraiment que je choisisse les bons produits (ou m'aide à avoir les bonnes informations) / My favorite influencer really wants me to choose the right products (or help me to have the right information). *

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Pas Tout à fait d'accord / Strongly agree

28. L'intention de mon influenceur(se) préféré(e) est de m'aider à obtenir les bonnes informations autant que possible. / The intention of my favorite influencer is to assist me with right information as much as possible. *

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Pas Tout à fait d'accord / Strongly agree

29. Mon influenceur(se) préféré(e) fait ce qu'il/elle peut pour m'aider à faire un bon achat (ou pour avoir des informations précieuses). / My favorite influencer is doing what he/she can help me make a good purchase (or to have valuable information). *

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Pas Tout à fait d'accord / Strongly agree

30. Quelle est la probabilité que vous fassiez du bouche-à-oreille positif à propos de votre influenceur(se) préféré(e) ?/ How likely are you to spread positive word of mouth about your favorite influencer ? *

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Très Très probable /Highly likely

31. Je recommanderais à mes amis mon influenceur(se) préféré(e) choisir le bon produit (ou pour avoir les bonnes informations)./I would recommend my favorite influencer for choosing the right product (or for having the right information)to my friends. *

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Pas Tout à fait d'accord / Strongly agree

32. Si mes amis cherchent à acheter un produit révélateur (ou à obtenir des informations pertinentes), je leur dirais de jeter un coup d'œil au contenu de mon influenceur (se) préféré(e). / If my friends were looking to purchase a revealing product(or to have some relevant information), I would tell them to have a look at my favorite influencer's content. *

Une seule réponse possible.

1 2 3 4 5

Pas Tout à fait d'accord / Strongly agree

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