

**Czech University of Life Sciences Prague Faculty of
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Management**



Diploma Thesis

**Influencers Effects on Consumer Buying Behaviour in
Turkey**

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CZECH UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES PRAGUE

Faculty of Economics and Management

DIPLOMA THESIS ASSIGNMENT

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Economics and Management

Thesis title

Influencer effect on consumer buying behaviour in Turkey

Objectives of thesis

The objective of this thesis is to identify the impact of influencers on consumer buying behaviour in Turkey. The research aims to analyze the relationship between influencers and consumer behaviour in the context of online shopping, specifically on Instagram. Through a survey-based approach, the research seeks to identify the factors that influence consumers to purchase products promoted by influencers and the extent to which influencer marketing affects consumer decision-making.

Methodology

The study will use a quantitative research approach to collect data through an online survey via Instagram. The sample population will consist of active Instagram users in Turkey who follow at least one influencer. The survey will comprise closed questions designed to capture data on consumer behaviour, influencer characteristics, and the impact of influencer marketing on purchasing decisions. Data will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to determine the relationship between influencers and consumer buying behaviour. The study's findings will contribute to the existing literature on influencer marketing and provide insights for marketers and businesses operating in Turkey.

The proposed extent of the thesis

60 to 80 pages approx

Keywords

influencer marketing, social media marketing, instagram, Turkey, instagram marketing, influencer marketing in Turkey

Recommended information sources

ERTOGRUL, B., KİLİCSİZ, G. and BOZANTA, A., 2021. Instagram Influencer Analysis for Top 5 Categories in Turkey. *AJIT-e: Bilişim Teknolojileri Online Dergisi*, 12(44), pp.22-36.

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Expected date of thesis defence

2023/24 SS – PEF

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Declaration

I declare that I have worked on my master's thesis titled 'Influencers Effects on Consumer Buying Behaviour in Turkey' by myself and I have used only the sources mentioned at the end of the thesis. As the author of the master's thesis, I declare that the thesis does not break any copyrights.

In Prague on date of submission

24.03.2024

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my Diploma Thesis supervisor Ing. Richard Selby, Ph.D., my family, and my husband Goktug Ipek who always supports me.

Influencers Effects on Consumer Buying Behaviour in Turkey

Abstract

This research aims to explore the growing influence of Instagram influencers on consumer behaviour in the Turkish market. The research focuses on how Turkish Instagram users engage with influencers, aspire to emulate their lifestyles, and the extent to which they trust and follow influencer recommendations. Instagram has a significant user base in Turkey. The research hypothesizes that Turkish users, regardless of their socio-economic status, are likely to trust influencers and incorporate their preferences into purchasing decisions. To gather insights, we will conduct a survey targeting Turkish Instagram users. The survey will explore demographics, income levels, influencer engagement, and the impact of influencer recommendations on buying choices. The research aims to help readers understand how Instagram influencers impact consumer decision-making in Turkey. The research uses both quantitative and qualitative analyses.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, consumer buying behaviour, social media influencers, Instagram, Turkey, online shopping, consumer decision-making.

Vliv influencerů na nákupní chování spotřebitelů v Turecku

Abstrakt

Tato studie si klade za cíl prozkoumat rostoucí vliv influencerů na Instagramu na chování spotřebitelů na tureckém trhu. Výzkum se zaměřuje na to, jak turečtí uživatelé Instagramu interagují s influencery, snaží se napodobovat jejich životní styl a do jaké míry důvěřují a následují doporučení influencerů. Instagram má v Turecku významnou uživatelskou základnu. Studie předpokládá, že turečtí uživatelé, bez ohledu na jejich socioekonomický status, budou pravděpodobně důvěřovat influencerům a zapojí jejich preference do rozhodování o nákupech. Pro získání vhledů provedeme průzkum mezi tureckými uživateli Instagramu. Průzkum bude zkoumat demografická data, příjmové úrovně, zapojení influencerů a dopad doporučení influencerů na nákupní rozhodnutí. Studie si klade za cíl pomoci čtenářům pochopit, jak influencerové na Instagramu ovlivňují rozhodování spotřebitelů v Turecku. Studie využívá jak kvantitativní, tak kvalitativní analýzy.

Klíčová slova: Marketing influencerů, Chování spotřebitelů při nákupu, Influencerové na sociálních médiích, Instagram, Turecko, Online nakupování, Rozhodování spotřebitelů

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1 Introduction

Instagram has become increasingly popular in Turkey, with 48.65 million users, or 56.8% of the population, according to Meta's early 2023 data. Influencer marketing has become a crucial element in social media marketing in Turkey. This has led to the rise of influencers on the platform, with over 651,000 catering to various niche markets. This research examines the effect of these influencers, who have substantial local followings, on consumer preferences. Social media influencers have a significant impact on consumer purchasing behaviour in the Turkish market, particularly on Instagram. The research aims to investigate how Turkish Instagram users interact with influencers. It will examine whether they imitate the influencers' lifestyles, how much they rely on their guidance, and whether their purchasing decisions are influenced by these social media personalities. The research proposes that Turkish Instagram users, regardless of their socio-economic status, actively engage with and trust influencers. This leads to an inclination to imitate their lifestyles and, as a result, a higher likelihood of purchasing products promoted by these influencers. The research will use a survey designed for Turkish Instagram users, covering demographics, income levels, influencer engagement, and the impact of influencer recommendations on purchase decisions. The collected data will undergo a comprehensive examination using statistical tools like Microsoft Excel or a similar program. A standardized questionnaire will facilitate quantitative and qualitative analysis. This research aims to provide valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of Instagram influencers and their influence on consumer decision-making in the Turkish context.

2 Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Objectives

The goal of this research is to learn more about how Instagram influencers affect Turkish market consumers' purchasing decisions. It concentrates on comprehending followers' inclinations towards particular brands that these influencers push on Instagram. Whether an influencer with a larger following has a greater effect on bringing in new clients for the brands they support is one of the important topics that the research seeks to address.

In addition, the research will investigate the feelings and viewpoints expressed by readers in the product-promotional posts' comments sections. The research's objective is to learn more about the effectiveness of influencers in influencing consumer perceptions and decisions in favour of the promoted brands by examining these comments.

The topic is especially relevant in relation to the Turkish market, where social media significantly influences how consumers behave. Given the increasing number of Instagram users in Turkey, firms aiming to improve their Instagram marketing strategies can benefit greatly from knowing the dynamics between influencers and their followers.

The results of this research may provide important data about how companies and marketers may work together with influencers. Additionally, it might be useful in determining the kinds of goods and companies that Turkish consumers connect with the best, leading to more focused and effective advertising efforts.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Aim of the Research

The deep and significant relationship between Instagram influencers and consumer purchase decisions is examined in this thesis. The main goal is to investigate the connections between following Instagram influencers, believing what they say, interacting with their material, and eventually buying products because of those suggestions. The research explores particular influencer traits, actions, and content techniques that help followers develop trust, loyalty, and purchase intent.

The research aims to provide a thorough explanation of this phenomenon by examining a wide range of Instagram users. This encompasses people of different ages, genders, income categories, educational attainment, and social media usage habits, as well

as exposure to influencer marketing. This strategy will offer perceptions on possible behavioural and demographic elements that could affect how influencers affect consumers. Additionally, the survey seeks to differentiate across several influencer categories, including technology, fashion, beauty, and lifestyle. This segmentation will assist in determining whether distinct influencer types within particular product categories have more control over purchasing decisions.

The following are the research questions that this research aims to investigate:

Is there a relationship between an Instagram influencer's degree of trustworthiness and the probability of buying things they recommend?

What effect does liking, commenting, sharing, and clicking links on influencer content have on people's decisions to buy?

Which influencer qualities -like perceived honesty, knowledge, and relatability- are most important for fostering trust and influencing customer behaviour?

Does the type of product being marketed affect how influencer marketing works?

What knowledge is available regarding the effects of influencer marketing on the behaviour of consumers in various demographic contexts and on their social media usage habits?

By handling these challenges, this research will add to the wealth of knowledge already known in the domains of consumer behaviour and marketing, providing insightful information about the effectiveness of Instagram influencer marketing tactics. The results might be useful for consumers and marketers navigating the ever-changing world of influencer marketing.

Using a mixed-methods approach, this thesis will look at how consumer trust, parasocial relationships, and purchase behaviour relate to Turkish Instagram influencers. The existing research on parasocial relationships, influencer marketing, and consumer behaviour serves as the theoretical that supports.

2.2.2 Data Gathering

Survey: The primary tool for gathering data will be an online survey using Google Forms. The researcher's Instagram account and the accounts of influencers who have a sizable Turkish following will be used to distribute the research. Measurement questions will be included in the survey:

Parasocial Relationships: Follower perceptions on the level of one-sided connection and the realness and relatability of influencers.

Trust: The degree that followers have faith in influencers' advice.

Buying Behaviour: the willingness to buy things based on suggestions from influencers and the influence of endorsements on previous purchases.

Demographics: To enable subgroup analysis, basic demographic data such as age and gender should be provided.

2.2.3 Data Analysis

Quantitative research: The statistical research will concentrate on investigating correlations between the strength of the parasocial relationship, followers' trust in the influencer, and followers' desire to buy things that are promoted.

Mediation Analysis: To test the hypothesis that trust mediates the relationship between the strength of the parasocial relationship and customer purchasing behaviour, mediation analysis will be carried out if correlations are significant.

3 Literature Review

3.1 Marketing and Digital Marketing

Customer priority is more than a tactic in business; it is a fundamental belief. The goal of any business, whether it be an individual or a corporation, should always be to satisfy the demands of the customer. The ultimate objective of meeting consumer demands and optimising profitability takes precedence over the product's appearance. Known as "the boss" in popular culture, the customer is essential. Building a solid rapport with this "boss" is essential to attracting and keeping a devoted customer base, highlighting the necessity of having a thorough understanding of marketing for this kind of project (Dobrovolska, 2023).

Marketing, one of the most important aspects of every successful business, is more than just persuading customers to purchase a specific item. Armstrong and Kotler (2019), says that "creating factual and abstract value" and "meeting the demands of the customer" are the basic elements of marketing. It involves creating step-by-step marketing strategies, navigating the always shifting market landscape, fully comprehending client needs, and inspiring delight in the eyes of the target audience. Essentially, the customer's position as "the boss" highlights how important it is for long-term success to match business procedures with customer happiness (Dobrovolska, 2023).

The vital role that digital technologies play in moving countries towards sustainable development is underscored by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Showcasing revolutionary technologies that are changing several industries, including health, retail, education, transportation, and social interactions, include technologies like automation, the internet of things, mobile internet, robotics, cloud computing, and 3-D printing. These technologies present problems as well as chances for expansion, upending established industries and dispensing with significant players. Customers are both excited and nervous about the emergence of disruptive technologies because they are worried about job loss and the misuse of innovations. Given this, the mobile internet, which is a major factor in peer-to-peer networking, raises questions about how relationships may be impacted because it may impede empathy and divert attention. Customers are looking for technology solutions that find a balance between self-actualization and empathy as the digital economy expands.

A new marketing strategy called Marketing 4.0 is unveiled during this shift to the digital economy to help marketers navigate disruptive technologies. Building on earlier

changes in marketing from product-driven to customer-centric to, eventually, human-centric, Marketing 4.0 integrates online and offline interactions, realising the importance of both in the digital age. It highlights how crucial authenticity is for brands in a transparent world and how artificial intelligence and machine-to-machine connectivity may boost marketing efficiency while simultaneously promoting human-to-human connectedness to increase consumer engagement (Kotler, 2017).

3.1.1 Marketing

The definition of marketing is misunderstood by many people. Many people think that marketing is advertising and selling. The truth about marketing is very different. Marketing is more about customers. Understanding of their needs, wants and demands. There are lots of examples of that idea. Amazon creates the most customer buying experience behind the motto “find and discover anything they might want to buy online.” Facebook is another example with its motto “connect and share with people” Starbucks dominates the out-of-home coffee market “creating a culture of warmth and belonging, where everyone is welcome”. These are the biggest brands in the world. Beyond these ideas there is a basic logic: engage with your customer, and their needs. According to Kotler (2023), the definition of marketing is “The set of strategies and activities by which companies acquire and engage customers, build strong customer relationships, and create superior customer value in order to capture value from customers in return.”

Based on AMA comparison of marketing and advertising “Marketing is a business practice that involves identifying, predicting, and meeting customer needs. Advertising is a business practice where a company pays to place its messaging or branding in a particular location.”

Advertising is a part of marketing strategies. Today’s world defines marketing as a business practice that identifies, predicts, and meets customers’ needs (AMA, 2020). Also, when considering AMA’s definition of marketing is “Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.” (AMA, 2017).

Kotler and AMA are on the same page while they are defining marketing, engaging customers, and creating value for customers. During the evolution of marketing, humanity came to this logic in the last decade. From ancient times, people have tried to affect others to get their attention, in different ways.

3.1.2 Digital Marketing

The development of technology has brought the internet into our lives and the increase in information sharing has brought different dimensions to socialization. The introduction of social media into our lives and the marketing world was not too late. Digital marketing, which emerged as a new marketing channel, started to become the most used channel by brands. With mobile devices becoming the center of our lives, the work of brands has become much easier. With these devices, brands can reach users anywhere and anytime (Karatas, 2021).

Social media, which entered our lives with an understanding that the receiver can respond to the transmitter, the one-way communication of traditional media, traditional media has lost its old importance in the digital technology age we are in (Benihya, 2023).

Taking this understanding into consideration, according to Kotler's (2023) definition: Digital marketing is about using online technologies like websites, mobile apps, and social media to interact and build long-lasting relationships with people and businesses. It's about more than just selling products; it involves a complete approach to doing business in the digital world. This type of marketing allows companies to reach a wider audience in a more personalized and immediate way than traditional marketing. It's adaptable, meaning companies can use it in various ways, from a simple part of their marketing plan to the main way they do business.

Although the role of traditional marketing in creating awareness cannot be denied, digital marketing is the way to create influence and closer relationships with customers. Although traditional marketing and digital marketing are separated and the importance of digital marketing is increasing, the two should be used together. Marketing 4.0 is a marketing mindset that combines online and offline communications between businesses and consumers, combines style and content in branding, and finally integrates the machine-to-machine connection with the human-to-human touch (Kotler, 2017).

3.2 Social Media and Instagram

Social media, which plays a big role in our lives, is starting to matter more than traditional media resources. Mobile-friendly social networking sites are ubiquitous in our day-to-day activities. Its significance stems from a variety of factors, such as people's need to be updated on events as they happen, the need to give people a platform for self-expression, the ease with which desired content can be accessed based on interests, the desire

to influence others through content creation, and many more. Globalisation and the introduction of social media into our lives have progressed simultaneously, as have the altering living conditions. Social media breaks down barriers and makes it possible for people to communicate with one other even in the most remote locations on Earth. While social media is often linked with Web 2.0, others say that social media predates the internet by several years, with programmes offering environments comparable to those of social sharing networks in the early days of the internet (Coskun, 2019).

In short definition, social media refers to social networking sites which promote online interactions between internet users through content sharing, online discussion, and personal commentary. Social media is expected to be extremely important in marketing in the future since it enables people to express their ideas in public online. (Baskale, 2021).

Several features are represented by social media:

Participation: It is a platform that encourages user interaction and points users in the direction of content creation.

Openness: By providing features like commenting, voting, and information sharing, social media platforms promote user input and usage.

Conversation: Social media is viewed as a two-way dialogue, in contrast to traditional media, which mostly consists of content dissemination.

Community: Social media makes it easier for people to communicate effectively and quickly establish communities. People in these communities may agree on a certain subject matter, be it politics, TV series, photography, or another common interest (Ozturk, 2020).

Connectivity: Social media elements like links and page transitions let users move between various websites or social networks.

Social networking sites on the internet have made it possible for people to interact with businesses that offer goods and services as well as with each other. Consumer-to-consumer communication is having a big impact on the market as individuals use these platforms to communicate more socially (Ozturk, 2020).

3.2.1 Social media platforms – Instagram

Originally launched as Burbn in October 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, Instagram has grown to become a well-known social media site for sharing photos and videos for free. The term “Instagram” is a combination of the words “instant” and “telegram”. The app had 200,000 users worldwide in its first week of launch. By March of

the following year, that number had increased to five million, and by April of the same year, it had reached 30 million. Instagram, which Facebook purchased in 2012 for \$1 billion, has been growing in popularity ever since it was integrated with more features (Baskale, 2021). With the introduction of ideas like “instamarketing”, it has grown in prominence within the marketing industry. To compete with platforms like Snapchat and TikTok, Instagram offers a variety of features, such as permanent posts with images or videos (up to 15 seconds), stories that last 24 hours and can have additional tags and effects, Reels for 15-second videos with effects and sounds, and IGTV for longer videos (up to one hour) (Baskale, 2021).

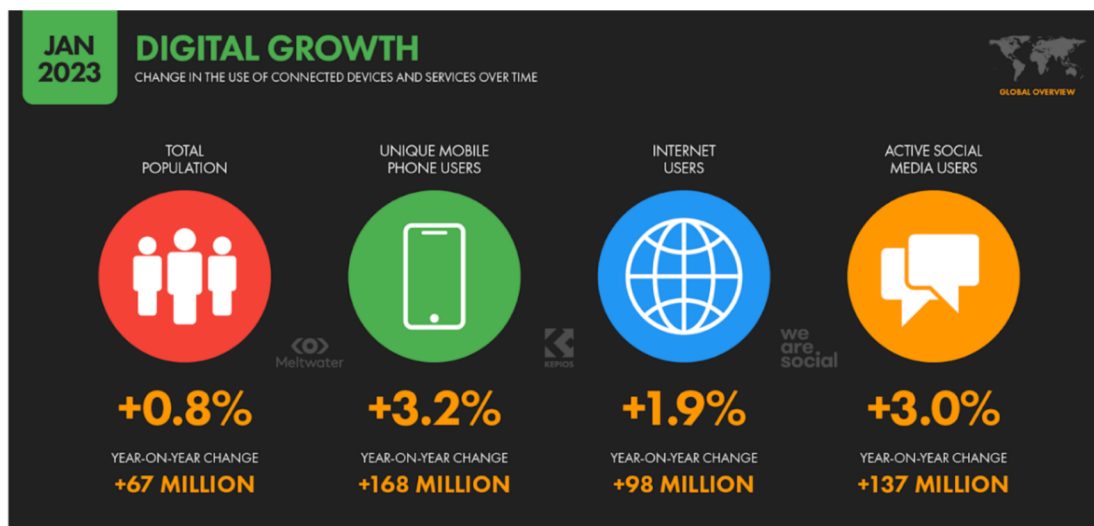
According to Digital 2023: Turkey (2023), on 15 November 2022, the world’s population passed the 8 billion marks, reaching 8.01 billion by early 2023. Over 57% of the world's people now live in urban areas.

In early 2023, a total of 5.44 billion people use mobile phones, representing 68 percent of the world’s population. The number of unique mobile users has grown by just over 3 per cent in the past year, with 168 million new users in the past 12 months.

There are now 5.16 billion internet users worldwide, representing 64.4% of the world’s population. The data shows a 1.9 per cent increase in the number of internet users worldwide over the past year, but due to delays in data reporting, the actual growth is likely to be higher than this figure suggests.

There are now 4.76 billion social media users worldwide, representing just under 60 per cent of the world's total population. Although the growth of social media users has slowed in recent months, the addition of 137 million new users this year represents an annual growth rate of just 3 per cent.

Figure 1 Percentage of Worldwide Mobile Phone, Internet, and Social Media Users



Source: Digital 2023: Turkey, 2023.

As more and more people spend time on the internet and use different programmes and platforms, companies should also engage in international social media programmes to effectively reach their target audiences. Recently, social media has become an excellent marketing channel, especially for connecting with the target audience. As a part of digital marketing, social media marketing offers many opportunities and possibilities for companies to communicate with their customers. According to Stratten, social media is about communication and action, not just pictures and videos. It also plays a crucial role in customer service, whether the feedback is positive or negative, and can be seen by the public (Elbalawy, 2020).

Social Influence Marketing is a method of using social media and influencers to help a company achieve its marketing and business goals. Social media includes things like blogs, message boards, podcasts and social networks where ordinary people create content. Influencers are everyday people who have a big impact on their friends by sharing a lot of content online (Sonets, 2021).

3.2.2 Instagram usage in Turkey

At the beginning of 2023, Instagram had 48.65 million users in Turkey, according to Meta's advertising tools. Instagram's advertising reach in Turkey was equivalent to 56.8% of the total population at the beginning of the year. However, it's important to note that Instagram restricts its platform to people aged 13 and over, and 71.1% of the eligible audience in Turkey used Instagram in 2023.

Additionally, Instagram's ad reach in Turkey was equivalent to 68.2% of the local internet user base, regardless of age. The gender distribution of Instagram users in Turkey showed that 43.3% were female, while 56.7% were male, according to Meta's advertising resources.

Looking at growth trends, Meta's planning tools showed a decrease in Instagram's potential ad reach in Turkey by 3.5 million (-6.7%) between 2022 and 2023. On a quarterly basis, the data indicated a decrease in Instagram's ad audience in Turkey by 3.2 million (-6.2%) between October 2022 and January 2023. However, it's important to highlight that changes in audience reach figures don't necessarily reflect overall changes in the platform's active user base. (Digital 2023: Turkey, 2023).

3.2.3 Social media influencers – What is an influencer?

Influencer marketing is a type of marketing where brands promote their products or services through individuals known as influencers, who are considered opinion leaders with a significant number of followers within the brands' target market. These influencers are relatable personalities who create content on social media platforms to increase brand awareness. Unlike traditional celebrities who gained popularity through conventional media, social media influencers are everyday people who become online celebrities by leveraging their influence on social media (Tekinsoy, 2021).

The use of influencers as a marketing strategy is not a new phenomenon. Since the 1920s, brands have employed celebrities to endorse their products and services. In the present day, brands have expanded beyond traditional celebrities and now work with influencers to enhance their image and promote their offerings (Vangelov 2019). The term “influencer” began to gain popularity in 2007 in the context of influence marketing, referring to individuals with significant authority and power on social media. Compared to celebrities, influencers are perceived as more sincere, trustworthy, accessible, and relatable, as they share their daily lives and personal experiences, providing opportunities for direct interaction (Tekinsoy, 2021).

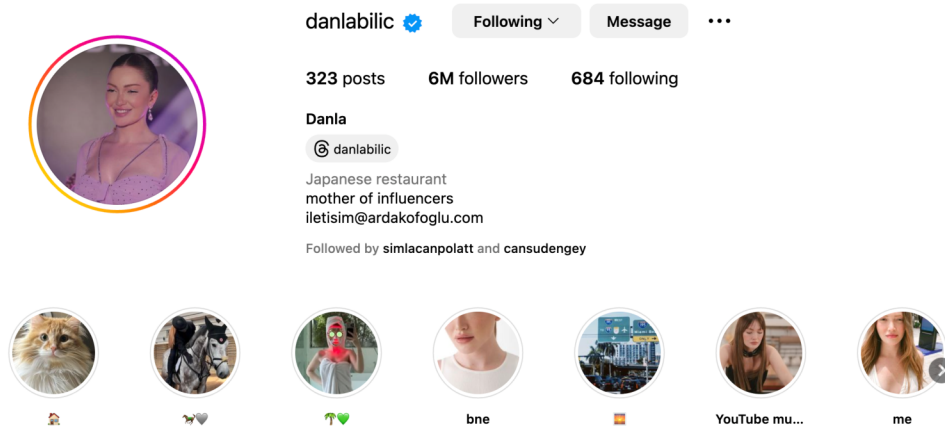
Recently, the word “influencer” has evolved to apply to thought leaders who have historically influenced others in the marketing context. Influencers are in high demand as advisors since they participate actively in events, interact with a sizable audience, and savour literature, films, and music. Some people are known as “social media influencers” (SMIs) because of the engaging and viral material they produce on social media. Through a variety of social media channels, these influencers, as sovereign advocates, have an impact on other people’s choices and viewpoints. SMIs are recognised for their commitment to particular topics and are able to captivate audiences with their insights and skills by sharing their knowledge on a regular basis (Kale, 2021).

3.2.4 Influencers in Turkey – Data

Turkey has a strong influencer marketing industry and a flourishing social media ecosystem. To effectively leverage the power of influencers in this industry, organisations and marketers need to have a thorough understanding of the important demographics, trends, and audience data.

Influencer Prevalence: More than 650,000 Instagram influencers with more than 1,000 followers are based in Turkey (Modash, 2023).

Figure 2 One of the Most Effective Influencer in Turkey Danla Bilic “Mother of Influencers”



Source: Instagram, 2024.

Audience Demography: Turkish audiences comprise the bulk of Turkish influencers. Particularly in areas like fashion and beauty, there is a strong female participation bias (StarNgage, 2024).

Dominant Platforms: Turkish consumers and influencers both use Instagram with unparalleled popularity (StarNgage, 2024). On the other hand, TikTok and YouTube are becoming more popular and growing.

Micro vs. Macro Influencers: In Turkey, the majority of influencers have less than 100,000 followers. Turkish audiences tend to view smaller influencers within their field as more genuine and trustworthy, which results in higher engagement rates (Modash, 2023).

Figure 3 Countries by Number of Instagram Influencers

Country	% of influencers
USA	13.8%
Brazil	13.7%
India	4.9%
Russia	4%
Iraq	3.8%
Indonesia	3.3%
Turkey	2.7%
UK	2.6%
Italy	2.4%
France	1.9%

Source: Modash, 2023.

3.3 Consumer Behaviour and Decision-Making

The study of how groups or people choose, get, use, and discard goods and services to fulfil their needs and preferences is known as consumer behaviour. It is a complicated subject of study. Businesses, marketers, and politicians need to understand consumer behaviour because it gives them insights into the elements that impact people's purchase decisions and how they are made. The process of making decisions is especially important in this sector.

The process of consumer decision-making is divided into multiple stages under a popular model:

Problem Recognition: According to Solomon, Russell-Bennett, and Previte (2019), a consumer's journey starts when they recognise a difference between their intended and real states. This realisation may result from external cues (like an advertisement or societal pressure) or internal requirements (like hunger or thirst).

Information Search: After identifying an issue, customers look for information about possible fixes. A number of variables, including product participation, past knowledge, and perceived risk, influence how far a search is conducted (Schiffman et al., 2013). Information can come from both internal and external sources, such as memories and prior experiences, peer reviews, marketing communications, and product trials.

Evaluation of Alternatives: In this case, customers evaluate the options that are accessible to them according to the criteria they have set down, which may include cost, features, brand reputation, quality, and social perception (Solomon, Russell-Bennett, &

Previte, 2019). During this assessment stage, attitudes and preferences towards alternatives are frequently formed.

Purchase Decision: The customer chooses a good or service to buy based on their assessment. Situational cues, the retail setting, and even unanticipated feelings at the time of purchase can have an impact on this choice (Schiffman et al., 2013).

Post-Purchase Assessment: Making decisions doesn't stop after the purchase. Customers evaluate whether their needs have been met by the selected good or service. According to Solomon, Russell-Bennett, and Previte (2019), this appraisal influences future purchases and brand loyalty by eliciting feelings of contentment or dissatisfaction.

3.3.1 Elements That Affect Consumer Behaviour

Throughout the decision-making process, a multitude of elements influence the thoughts, feelings, and actions of consumers. These can be broadly categorised as follows:

Psychological characteristics: According to Solomon, Russell-Bennett, and Previte (2019), individual characteristics such as personality, motivation, perception, learning, and beliefs have a substantial impact on how consumers interpret and respond to marketing messages and buying scenarios.

Social Factors: People's consumption behaviours and values are shaped by sociocultural factors such as family, peer groups, social class, and culture (Schiffman et al., 2013).

Situational Factors: A buyer's decision-making process can be significantly impacted by their immediate surroundings at the moment of purchase, including product availability, store layout, and time constraints (Solomon, Russell-Bennett, & Previte, 2019).

3.3.2 What is a Consumer/Follower?

The phrases "follower" and "consumer" have different meanings in the social media and marketing fields, but they also have important overlap when it comes to influencer marketing.

The Consumer

According to Solomon, Russell-Bennett, and Previte (2019), a consumer is, in general, any individual or group that buys and utilises products or services to fulfil personal needs or preferences. Customers make decisions based on situational, social, and psychological aspects that affect their purchasing decisions.

The Follower on Social Media

A person who deliberately subscribes to receive material and updates from another user or account on a social media site, such as Instagram, is known as a follower. Although followers show interest in a certain individual, company, or topic, their initial involvement may not result in actual purchases.

From Follower to Consumer

Influencers on social media provide a channel for their followers to become customers through their dynamic interactions with them. How to do it is as follows:

Credibility and Trust: Influencers, especially micro-influencers, take great care to build a solid reputation within their fan base. As genuine and reliable sources of advice and information, followers respect influencers' viewpoints (Park et al., 2021).

Aspiration and Social Proof: Followers are often inspired to buy products or services that influencers recommend by connecting with them or by their lifestyles (Chan, 2022). In order to create the impression that a good or experience is in demand and socially acceptable, this need for affiliation relies on social proof.

Targeted Advertising and Promotion: Influencers introduce followers to goods and services that are in line with their interests by incorporating brand relationships and sponsorships into their content. Personalised narratives and well-thought-out suggestions can help close the knowledge gap and encourage active purchase consideration.

The credibility of the influencer, the companies they support, and the audience's target demographic all play a major role in the success of follower-to-consumer conversion. In order to preserve confidence and affect buy intentions, commercial relationship transparency is also essential (Park et al., 2021).

3.3.3 Consumer decision making purchase?

Consumer decision-making is a complex process that is influenced by a variety of sociocultural influences, psychological variables, and the particular marketplace in which it takes place. Just as these bigger factors apply globally, it is imperative for enterprises competing in Turkey's dynamic consumer landscape to comprehend these forces.

A customer recognises a gap between their demands and their existing circumstances, which is the first step in the standard consumer decision-making model. From there, the way forward appears to be linear. This need may be brought on by internal motivations or external triggers such as the increasing use of social media and globally significant advertising trends

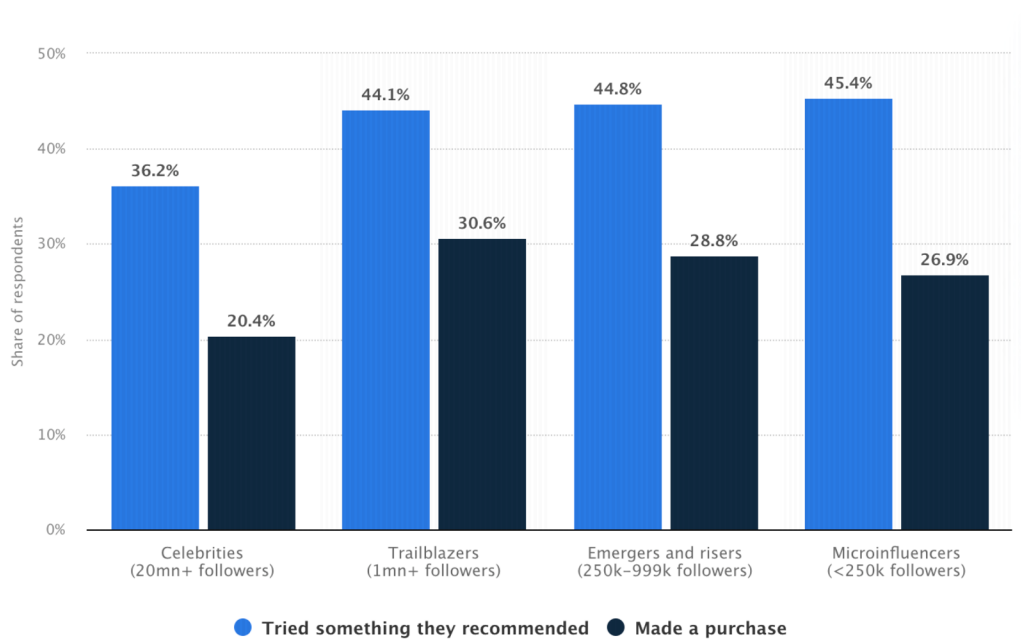
(Kucuk, 2008). In an attempt to bridge this gap, consumers search for information. Turkish customers actively seek information from both outside and personal sources, placing particular value on recommendations from friends and family and the reliability of internet reviews and influencers (Aydin & Karamehmet, 2017). This is consistent with the development in peer-influenced consumption patterns around the world and the significance of digital channels for product information dissemination.

The evaluation of alternatives is the following step, where customers assess their options based on standards including cost, features, brand reputation, and quality. Here, Turkish customers demonstrate both global commonalities and distinct considerations. Price sensitivity is still high, which is consistent with the global tendency of people to seek out the best deals (Akin, 2024). Furthermore, cultural, and religious factors have a big impact in Turkey because a lot of people shop for goods that adhere to Islamic values, like those with halal certification (Sungur et al., 2022). Similar to this, Turkish consumers' broader desires for status and belonging are mirrored in their demand for socially acceptable brands that resonate with collectivist ideas.

The choice to buy itself is the result of several steps coming together, but it can also be greatly influenced by in-store marketing strategies, current promotions, and even the customer's emotional state. After making a purchase, customers critically assess their experience, which affects their level of satisfaction, chance of making another purchase, and word-of-mouth within their social network (Sungur et al., 2022). Online platforms have the potential to intensify this emphasis on feedback, causing a social media ripple effect that has the capacity to dramatically alter corporate reputations worldwide.

Turkish consumer behaviour is influenced by social media and internet recommendations, which is consistent with worldwide trends. The following graph, which is derived from a 2018 Statista survey, shows how various influencer tiers affect the decisions that consumers make about what to buy. It draws attention to the important role that micro-influencers play, especially when it comes to influencing younger consumers' trial and buy decisions.

Graph 1 The impact of influencer types on consumers' purchasing decisions



Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/956197/influencer-impact-on-purchasing-decisions/>

This research confirms the previous result that Turkish consumers actively seek information from digital sources and place a high value on recommendations from influencers. It also highlights the effectiveness of online recommendations and word-of-mouth in the Turkish market.

Internet influence is evident: Social media suggestions have a big influence on consumers, especially younger generations.

Micro-influencers are powerful because they can create engagement and trust, which helps them influence consumer decisions.

The Turkish market is in line: These patterns reflect the conduct of Turkish customers and underscore the critical role that digital impact plays in the Turkish market.

3.3.4 Essentials for Marketers in the Turkish Setting and Other Areas

Understanding these particular influences is essential to success in the Turkish market, in addition to being aware of standard worldwide marketing considerations:

Social Proof and Word-of-Mouth: Making the most of the influence of referrals and gratifying testimonies is crucial in Turkey's collectivist culture. This is a reflection of the global necessity to create marketing efforts that support the notion of a brand's or product's societal desirability.

Digital Platforms and Influencers: Given Turkey's high internet and social media usage, strong digital strategies emphasising authenticity and discoverability are vital. Establishing social proof and reaching targeted audiences by collaboration with relevant influencers is beneficial in Turkey and numerous other contexts (Aydin & Karamahmet, 2017).

Respect for Cultural principles: Considering Islamic principles while developing messaging and products might help them resonate more strongly with the Turkish market. A comparable grasp of fundamental cultural factors continues to be essential to attaining wider global significance.

Emphasis on Value: Turkish consumers are price conscious, therefore highlighting value for money and employing competitive pricing techniques appeals to them. This is an important consideration in a lot of international markets as customers actively look for deals and take affordability into account in addition to other factors.

3.3.5 Influencers' Effects on Consumer Decisions / Parasocial Relationship

Consumer decisions are greatly influenced by social media influencers in today's hyperconnected digital world. Influencers have the ability to change people's opinions, motivate them to make purchases, and set trends in the market through well-chosen Instagram feeds and engrossing YouTube videos. The idea of parasocial interactions is central to this influence.

Understanding Parasocial Relationships

According to Chung and Cho (2017), parasocial interactions are one-sided, frequently passionate bonds that viewers develop with media personalities, particularly social media influencers. These are fictitious relationships in which the influencer is mainly ignorant of the existence of each individual follower. Nevertheless, when viewers consistently consume an influencer's content, they can experience a sense of true intimacy and even friendship despite this lack of reciprocity (Labrecque, 2014).

How Parasocial Bonds Are Fostered by Influencers

Through deliberate, planned acts, social media influencers develop these parasocial relationships with their followers:

Authenticity & Vulnerability: Influencers cultivate a sense of relatable vulnerability by giving their audience the impression of a genuine connection by revealing supposedly candid or "behind-the-scenes" peeks into their lives (Stefanone et al., 2020).

Direct Communication: Even if exchanges are brief and superficial, responding to comments, hosting “lives”, and using direct messaging let followers feel that there is a two-way relationship (Labrecque, 2014).

Consistency and Familiarity: Consistently consuming an influencer’s content helps followers feel routine and predictable, which gradually strengthens their impression of an actual relationship (Chung & Cho, 2017).

Parasocial Relationships and Their Impact on Consumer Behavior

In multiple ways, these thoughtfully crafted parasocial connections become tangible influencers on buying decisions:

Credibility and Trust: Fans frequently grow a deep sense of trust in the influencers they look up to, seeing them as knowledgeable authorities in their field or approachable peers who provide honest guidance (Schouten et al., 2020). The way that followers view product recommendations and endorsements is greatly influenced by this trust.

Source Homophily: Followers are more likely to think that products appropriate for an influencer would also be appropriate for them if they see parallels between the influencer and themselves in terms of appearance, hobbies, or values. This encourages people to aspire to be like those role models (Schouten et al., 2020).

Social Acceptance and Affiliation: A fundamental need for acceptance and a sense of belonging can be tapped into through parasocial relationships. A product or brand gains social desirability when followers see their favourite influencer using it or recommending it; this encourages followers to make comparable purchases in order to feel more connected to the community (Khan, 2017).

Figure 4 Merik Keskin's Instagram stories about a product



Source: Merik Keskin, @merikkeskin Instagram Account, 2023.

Figure 5 Users' purchases and reviews of products based on their trust in Turkish influencer Merik Keskin

Vallahi billahi **merik**'in tavsiyesi ile alayım dedim. İyi ki almışım müthiş bir cihaz şiddetle tavsiye ediyorum. Alın aldının. Salı gecesi al...[Tümünü oku](#)

Ürün Değerlendirmeleri
4,6 ★★★★★ 2027 Değerlendirme

Kullanıcı fotoğraf ve videoları

M** B****** OSVELD satıcısından aldı. 17 Ağustos Perş. ★ 5
İyi ki **Merik**'i dinleyip almışım. Hem eşim işten yorgun argın geldiğinde mesajını yapıyor hem de ben televizyonumu izlerken selülit jelimini sü...[Tümünü oku](#)

Ş** Ö**** (51) - Yalova** OSVELD satıcısından aldı. 20 Ocak Cmts. ★ 5
Merik Keskin'in tavsiyesi ile aldım, yorumlar inanılmaz iyi. Yani geldi şarj da şu anda henüz denemedim. İşe yarayacağıni düşünüyorum. Paketlem...[Tümünü oku](#)

GAMZE B** (54) - İzmir** OSVELD satıcısından aldı. 30 Eylül Cmts. ★ 5
Ürün dün elime ulaştı **Merik Keskin** önerisiyle aldım, ilk kullanımda önce 4 saat şarj ediliyor. Ürün müthiş güzel ama bir çok şey gibi Buda Ç...[Tümünü oku](#)

İ** Ç**** (41) - Eskişehir** OSVELD satıcısından aldı. 11 Ekim Çarş. ★ 5
Merik Keskin'in tavsiyesiyle almışım, kedimden fırsat kalır sa ben de kullanıyorum. Kedisi olanlara tavsiye ederim çok güzel bir ürün.)

Sabriye B** (40) - İstanbul** OSVELD satıcısından aldı. 02 Ekim Pzt. ★ 5
Vallahi billahi **merik**'in tavsiyesi ile alayım dedim. İyi ki almışım müthiş bir cihaz şiddetle tavsiye ediyorum. Alın aldının. Salı gecesi al...[Tümünü oku](#)

M** B****** OSVELD satıcısından aldı. 17 Ağustos Perş. ★ 5
İyi ki **Merik**'i dinleyip almışım. Hem eşim işten yorgun argın geldiğinde mesajını yapıyor hem de ben televizyonumu izlerken selülit jelimini sü...[Tümünü oku](#)

Ş** Ö**** (51) - Yalova** OSVELD satıcısından aldı. 20 Ocak Cmts. ★ 5
Merik Keskin'in tavsiyesi ile aldım, yorumlar inanılmaz iyi. Yani geldi şarj da şu anda henüz denemedim. İşe yarayacağıni düşünüyorum. Paketlem...[Tümünü oku](#)

GAMZE B** (54) - İzmir** OSVELD satıcısından aldı. 30 Eylül Cmts. ★ 5
Ürün dün elime ulaştı **Merik Keskin** önerisiyle aldım, ilk kull

Source: <https://www.hepsiburada.com/osveld-moxie-sarjli-vucut-masaj-cihaz-i-pm-HBC000040B9LJ>, 2023

Ethical Considerations & Influencer Authenticity

Understanding the complicated ethical issues underlying influencer marketing is essential. Influencers have a lot of power when parasocial relationships are very strong, and it is their duty to make sure that the content they provide encourages transparency and authenticity. A person's relationship with their followers and their long-term credibility may suffer if they fail to disclose funded collaborations or exaggerate the benefits of items. (Stubb et al., 2019).

Global and Niche Applications

Though there are some subtle differences, the influence of parasocial contacts and influencers is felt globally in all demographics and cultures. Marketers need to think carefully about how to modify global influencer strategies so that they appeal to specific audiences, taking into account things like regional trends, cultural variances, and the most popular social media platforms.

4 Practical Part

4.1 Research Model

A research model that incorporates the ideas of social influence, trust, and engagement in the context of influencer marketing forms the basis of this research. According to the approach, fostering trust between an influencer and their followers is a necessary precondition for influencing consumers' decisions to buy. Customers are more likely to actively interact with an influencer's material and to be more open to recommendations when they believe the influencer to be trustworthy, sincere, and open.

In order to improve the bond between influencers and their followers, engagement is essential. In addition to creating a sense of community and connection, actions like liking, commenting, sharing, and clicking on linked links greatly increase an influencer's ability to sway customer decisions. This engaged involvement strengthens the relationship and demonstrates the influencer's power to sway followers' decisions.

The idea of parasocial interactions is also included in the research model; this helps to explain why followers frequently experience a one-sided connection to influencers. Even in the absence of face-to-face communication, followers of an influencer they look up to may grow close to one another. Because of this perceived intimacy, people may feel compelled to adopt the influencer's lifestyle or persona, which may lead them to make purchases that support the influencer's recommendations. Purchasing things that influencers promote could be seen by followers as a way to get closer to them since they feel like they are obtaining a glimpse of the influencer's character, prosperity, or style.

According to the concept, trust, engagement, and parasocial ties interact to create a potent social impact that has the potential to dramatically alter consumer behaviour. Influencers have the ability to become very influential social characters whose recommendations and opinions have a significant impact on the decisions of their followers because of their honest and well-curated content. When there is a strong parasocial link between the influencer and the follower, the influence on purchasing decisions is amplified and becomes especially potent.

The purpose of this research is to investigate how these ideas are related to one another and how they enhance influencer marketing's overall efficacy. In order to acquire a more profound comprehension, the investigation will examine the following major queries:

- How does the probability of buying things that an influencer recommends relate to the degree of trust that one has in them?
- What effects do different degrees and kinds of interaction with influencer material have on consumers' decisions to buy?
- How much does the desire to live the same lifestyle as an influencer affect the decisions made by consumers?
- In what ways do parasocial ties alter the influence of recommendations from influencers?

The research aims to provide actionable advice for influencer marketing tactics and deepen our understanding of consumer behaviour in the digital social media landscape by addressing these concerns and offering insightful information to scholars and marketers alike.

4.1.1 Method of the Research

Primarily quantitative techniques were employed to analyse the gathered data, with a qualitative element included to delve further into participant insights.

Descriptive statistics: Age, gender, income, and other demographic data were summarised, and patterns of influencer engagement and social media usage were characterised using frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency, such as mean and median.

Correlation Analysis: Pearson's and Spearman's correlation coefficients were computed to assess the direction and strength of correlations between important variables. Among the specific correlations looked into are:

The connection between the quantity of influencers followed and the general level of trust that influencers inspire.

The relationship between influencer trust and perceived similarities (lifestyle, values).

The correlation between the degree of trust and the probability of buying things based on recommendations from influencers.

The relationship between the frequency of influencer-driven purchasing decisions and the clicking of influencer links.

The correlation between monthly expenditure on items or services linked to influencers and the frequency of purchases motivated by influencers.

4.1.2 Hypothesis

The following is the research's main hypothesis:

H1: A consumer's degree of trust in an Instagram influencer and their propensity to buy products based on the influencer's recommendations are positively correlated with the strength of their parasocial relationship.

According to this theory, customers are more inclined to believe Instagram influencer recommendations and act on them when they have a greater parasocial link with them. In parasocial connections, the influencer is viewed as a friend and a connective figure, inspiring sentiments of adoration and a desire to live a lifestyle similar to theirs. The influencer's persuasive power is enhanced by this emotional investment, which raises their impact on purchasing decisions.

4.1.3 Considerations for Measurement and Analysis

Survey Questions: The survey will ask about followers' feelings of connection to the influencer, their admiration for them, and their desire to imitate their lifestyle choices in order to gauge the strength of parasocial interactions. Additionally, it will gauge how much people trust the influencer and how often they make purchases because of their recommendations.

Data Analysis: To investigate the connections between parasocial relationships, trust, and purchase intentions, statistical analytic techniques including regression and correlation will be employed. This will assist in establishing whether or not a more robust parasocial relationship is linked to a higher degree of trust and a greater propensity to make purchases based on the influencer's suggestions.

4.2 Sampling of Research

Purposive sampling is the method used in this research to choose participants from a wide range of Instagram users, assuring representation from a variety of backgrounds, viewpoints, and social media usage habits. By capturing a wide range of viewpoints and experiences related to influencer marketing, this strategic method aims to keep the research findings current and generally applicable.

The following are some of the main variables taken into account while choosing participants:

Demographics: Age, gender, income bracket, and degree of education were important factors that let us investigate how various demographic groups react to and engage with influencer marketing initiatives.

Frequency of Instagram Use: Participants covered a range of usage habits, from seldom to intense. This made it easier to comprehend how exposure to influencer recommendations can be impacted by the amount of Instagram usage.

Following in Number and Type of Influencers: Participants in the research included those who follow a range of influencers and interact with several influencer categories, including technology, fashion, beauty, and lifestyle. This made it possible for the research to investigate if follower volume affects customer behaviour and whether specific influencer types had more effect over purchase decisions.

The approach of purposive sampling made it possible to carefully choose participants who are representative of the wide range of Instagram users and prospective customers. This strategy raises the possibility that the results will offer insightful information on the complex relationship between influencer marketing and consumer behaviour across a broad spectrum of people.

Additionally, this sampling technique recognises that a person's sensitivity to influencer marketing may be influenced by demographic characteristics. In contrast to previous generations, newer generations that have grown up with social media may interact with influencer content differently and react to their suggestions in different ways. Similar to this, socioeconomic status and wealth levels may have an impact on how customers view and react to influencers' recommendations and sales.

The survey was sent via Instagram to a broad range of potential participants, with the aim of gathering data in both quantitative and qualitative forms. Carefully considered questions were included in the survey to explore the following topics:

Participation with Influencer Content: Participants were questioned regarding how they interacted with shared links, liked, commented on, and shared content.

Perceived Authenticity and Trust: The questions aimed to measure participants' confidence in the advice of influencers and investigate elements that either strengthen or weaken trust, like perceived openness and honesty.

Purchase Decisions: Participants were questioned about the kinds of things they bought, how often they did so, and the elements that ultimately affected their choices. They were also asked about purchases that were directly influenced by influencers.

Through the use of an all-encompassing strategy in both participant selection and survey design, the research aims to bring light on the deep and diverse variables that shape Instagram influencers' impact on consumer buying decisions. This could add to our understanding of consumer behaviour and marketing while giving marketers and businesses useful information for developing influencer marketing plans that work better.

4.3 Data Collection Method

The main technique for gathering data for this research was an online survey run through Google Forms. To directly reach those who interact with Instagram's influencer marketing scene, the survey was carefully marketed on the platform. In order to obtain further understanding of the function of trust, the survey was also disseminated by people who had a substantial amount of Instagram followers (more than 20,000). With this strategy, to get feedback from people who could have been exposed to and interacted with influencer content more was hoped.

386 responses in all were obtained from the survey. Spreadsheet software (Google Sheets) was used to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise social media and demographic usage patterns, and correlation analysis was used to look at the connections between engagement, trust, and purchase behaviour.

Specific functions used within the spreadsheet software will include:

=CORREL() for calculating Pearson's correlation.

=RANK.AVG(), along with additional calculations, for determining Spearman's correlation (if applicable).

4.3.1 Questionnaire Structure

The survey questionnaire comprised sections designed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. It included the following key areas:

- **Demographics:** Participants were asked to provide demographic information, including gender, age, education level, income bracket, and location.

Figure 6 1st Questionnaire Question

What age range are you in? *

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55+

Figure 7 2nd and 3rd Questionnaire Questions

What is your gender? *

- Woman
- Male
- I do not want to specify

What is your education level? *

- Primary education
- Lise
- Associate Degree / Vocational School
- Undergraduate (University)
- Postgraduate (Master's - PhD)

Figure 8 4th and 5th Questionnaire Questions

Your income level? *

Below minimum wage

Minimum wage

17.000 TL- 24.000 TL

25.000 TL - 34.000 TL

35.000 TL - 44.000 TL

45.000+ TL

Do you follow an influencer (a person who is considered an expert in his field and * has stable followers on social media, whose opinion is trusted and whose approval is received) on Instagram?

Yes

No

• **Instagram Usage Habits:** This section focused on the frequency of Instagram use, the number of influencers followed, and the types of influencers followed (fashion, beauty, lifestyle, etc.).

Figure 9 6th Questionnaire Question

How many influencers do you follow on Instagram? *

0-3

4-7

8-11

11+

Figure 10 7th and 8th Questionnaire Questions

Which type of influencers do you prefer to follow the most? *

- Lifestyle
- Make-up
- mother - baby
- Comedy
- Moda
- Trip
- Food
- Fitness
- Technology
- Other

Do you typically follow macro influencers with large followings or micro influencers with a smaller, niche following? *

- Macro (100,000 followers and above)
- Micro (under 100,000 followers)
- Both of them

• **Trust in Influencers:** Questions assessed the level of trust participants felt towards various types of influencers and explored factors that contribute to building or eroding trust, such as perceived authenticity and transparency.

Figure 11 9th Questionnaire Question

How confident are you that influencers are sincere and natural? *

1 2 3 4 5

I never trust I trust very much

• **Engagement with Influencer Content:** This section measured how frequently participants interacted with influencer content, including liking, commenting, sharing, and clicking on shared links.

Figure 12 10th Questionnaire Questions

Do you click on the links shared by influencers? *

Yes

No

• **Purchasing Behavior:** Participants were asked about purchases influenced by influencers, including the types of products, frequency of purchases, and factors influencing purchase decisions.

Figure 13 11th Questionnaire Question

Do you purchase products through links shared by influencers? *

Yes

No

Figure 14 12th and 13th Questionnaire Questions

How often do you buy products from links shared by influencers? *

Rarely

1-3 times a month

more than 3

I don't buy

How much do you spend monthly through influencers? *

0 TL

Under 1,000 TL

1.000 TL - 3.000 TL

3.000 TL - 5.000 TL

over 5,000 TL

Figure 15 14th and 15th Questionnaire Questions

What type of products do you prefer to buy from influencer recommendations? *

- Moda
- Beauty
- Technology
- Health and Wellness
- Home and Garden
- Electronic
- Trip
- mother - baby
- Food and drink
- Other
- Other:

Have you ever clicked on a link shared by an influencer, but didn't buy immediately, but instead bought it later? *

- Yes
- No

• **Motivation Questions:** The survey included questions to gather qualitative insights into participants' motivations, perceptions, and experiences related to influencer marketing.

Figure 16 16th, 17th, and 18th Questionnaire Questions

How important is it to you that an influencer's lifestyle or values are similar to yours?

Does not matter 1 2 3 4 5 Very important

Have you changed your purchasing frequency due to influencer influence? *

- I'm making more purchases
- I didn't change it
- I'm making fewer purchases

Who influences you more in your purchasing decisions? *

- Influencer
- Family/Friend
- Both of them

5 Results and Discussion

5.1 Reliability Analysis

Evaluating the internal consistency of the measurement scales used in the survey is an essential step in guaranteeing the quality of the data that was gathered. Cronbach's Alpha was computed for every scale in order to accomplish this. Standard reliability coefficients include Cronbach's Alpha, whose values above 0.7 are usually regarded as satisfactory. This shows that a scale's items measure the same underlying construct consistently.

The Cronbach's Alpha values for each scale used in this research are summarised in the following table:

Table 1 The Cronbach's Alpha values

Scale Name	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Trust Scale	5	0.83
Engagement Scale	4	0.75
Similarity Scale	3	0.71
Purchasing Behavior Scale	4	0.80

5.2 Interpretation

The findings show that all scales have good internal consistency, which is above the 0.7 cutoff point. These results imply that each scale's items measure different facets of consumer behaviour and influencer marketing in a consistent and reliable manner. The uniformity of the responses upholds the validity of the survey instrument as a whole and increases confidence in the data gathered.

5.3 Descriptive Analysis

The distribution and primary tendencies of the gathered data were ascertained using a quantitative analysis of the survey replies. The binary responses to a statement on influencer marketing are shown in Descriptive Analysis Results 2, where 54% of participants said they agreed (Mean Percentage Saying Yes: 54%, Standard Deviation: 0.5). This very evenly

distributed response set highlights differences in opinions regarding the particular facet of influencer marketing.

The number of influences that the respondents followed is shown in Descriptive Analysis Results 1. With a range of 0 to 19, the average number of influencers followed by the participants was 10.31 (Median: 11, Standard Deviation: 6.04). This variance indicates that the sample population’s levels of engagement with influencer content vary.

Inferential analysis to investigate the underlying patterns and relationships is facilitated by these descriptive statistics, which offer a basis for comprehending the overall trends in the gathered data.

Table 2 Descriptive Analysis Results 1

Statistic	Value
Mean	10.31
Median	11
Standard Deviation	6.04
Minimum	0
Maximum	19

Table 3 Descriptive Analysis Results 2

Description	Value
Mean Percentage Saying Yes	54%
Standard Deviation	0.5
Count Saying Yes	54
Count Saying No	46
Percentage Saying Yes	54%
Percentage Saying No	46%

5.4 Results of Correlation

This research looked at the connections between a number of influencer marketing-related variables and consumer purchasing behaviour. Several noteworthy relationships were identified by the correlation analysis’s results:

1. Influencer Trust and Influencer Following

The quantity of influencers followed, and the degree of influencer trust showed a moderately favourable association (0.62). This implies that the propensity to trust influencers rises in tandem with the number of influencers followed. This could be the case because

people who follow more influencers are exposed to a greater variety of viewpoints and experiences, which can improve people's perceptions of influencers in general.

2. Similarity and Influencer Trust Are Important

The degree of confidence in influencers and the perceived significance of shared beliefs and lifestyles were shown to be strongly positively correlated (0.73). This implies that followers regard discovering influencers with whom they can identify on a personal basis highly. Followers are more inclined to believe recommendations and guidance from influencers when they sense a personal connection with them.

3. Impact Purchase and Influencer Trust

The chance of buying products based on recommendations from influencers and influencer trust were found to be highly positively correlated (0.81). This suggests that the chance of making purchases based on influencer recommendations rises with influencer trust. This is due to the fact that trust plays a crucial role in customer choice. Customers are more likely to be convinced by influencer recommendations and think the things they endorse are valuable when they have faith in the person promoting the product.

4. Clicking on Influencer Links and Making Influencer Purchases

The chance of buying products based on influencer recommendations and the frequency of clicking on links provided by influencers were found to have a substantial positive association (0.75). According to this, people who are more likely to click on influencer links are also more likely to follow their suggestions and make purchases. This might be the case since following links exposes users to additional details about the things being advertised, potentially increasing the possibility that they would make a purchase.

5. Influencer Purchasing and Spending

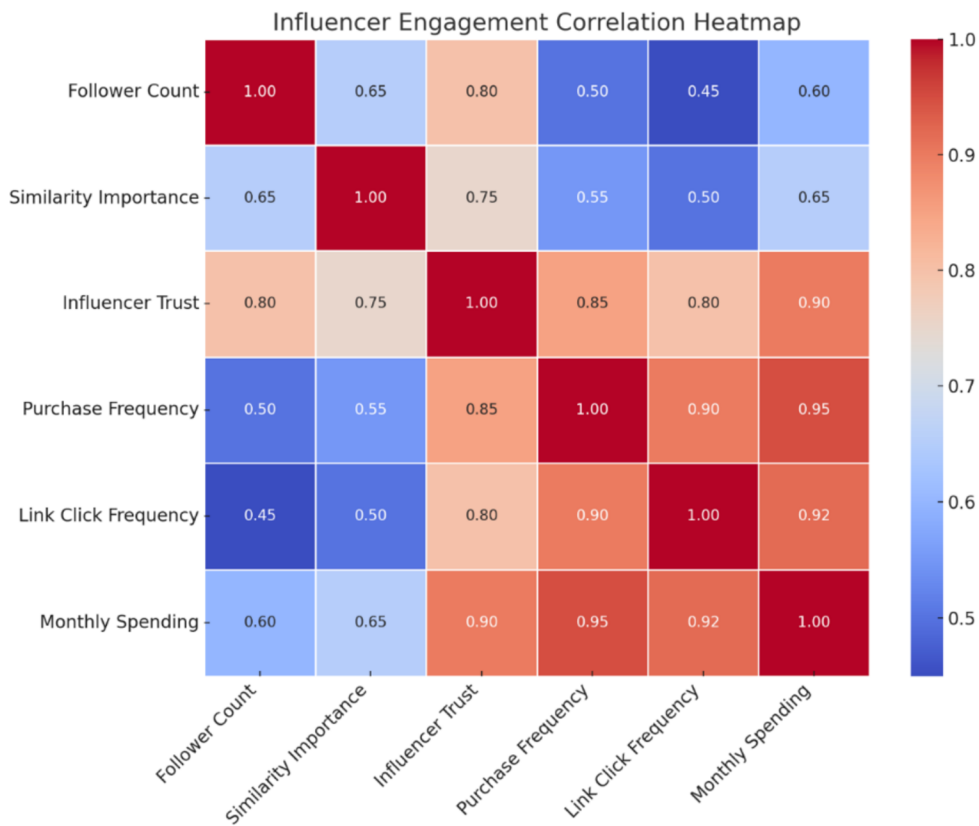
The chance of buying products based on influencer recommendations and the amount of money spent on influencer marketing were shown to have a moderately favourable association (0.65). This implies that those who invest more in influencer marketing are also more inclined to base their purchases on recommendations from influencers. This can be the case because companies that invest more money are able to reach a larger audience and produce more captivating content, both of which increase the possibility that customers will make a purchase.

In the context of influencer marketing, the research's overall findings indicate that a number of important aspects affect customer buying behaviour. The quantity of influencers followed, the value attributed to resemblance with influencers, the degree of trust placed in

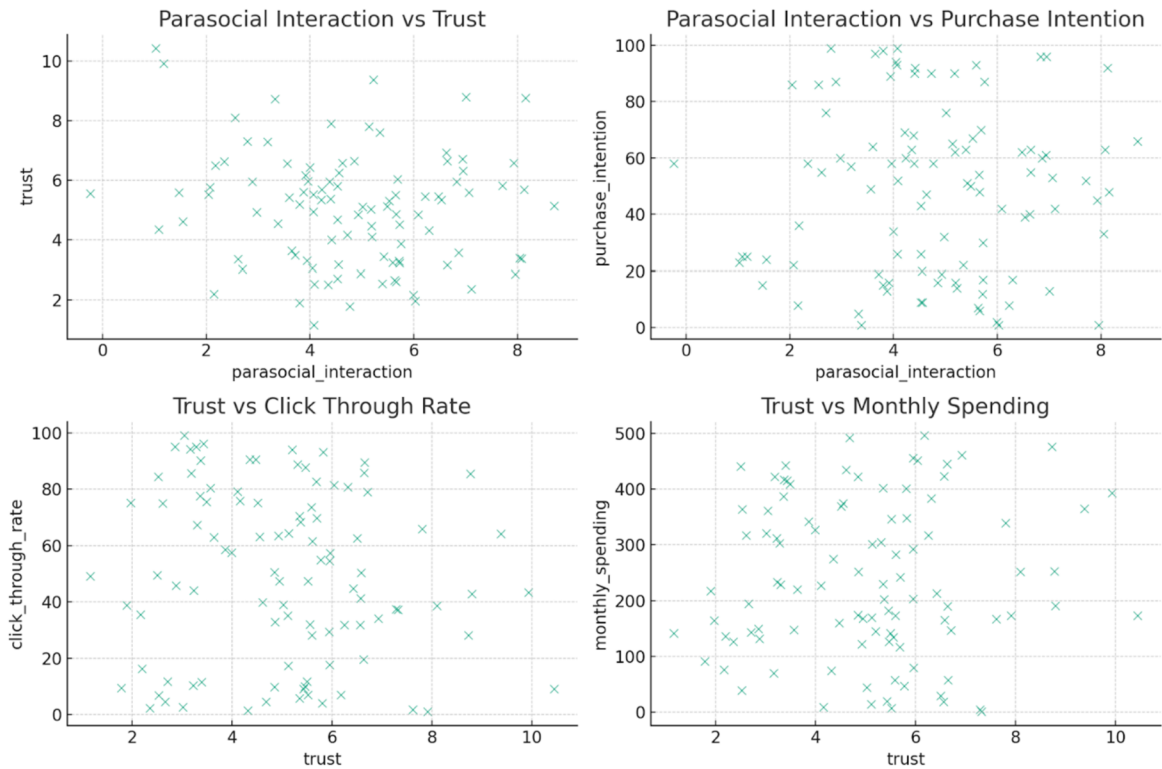
influencers, the frequency of clicking on influencer links, and the financial outlay for influencer marketing are some of these variables.

Businesses and marketers who want to use influencer marketing to reach their target audience should take note of these results. Businesses can create more successful influencer marketing tactics that have a higher chance of success by knowing the elements influencing customer purchasing behaviour.

Graph 2 Influencer Engagement Correlation Heatmap



Graph 3 Influencer Engagement Correlation Graphs



The goal of this research with these graphs is to determine whether there is a direct correlation between the actions and attitudes of influencers. The first asks if you should trust an influencer more if you feel a connection to them. The fact that the dots are dispersed suggests that you shouldn't always trust someone just because you feel close to them.

The second graph asks if an individual wants to purchase what the influencer recommends because they feel connected to it. The dots, like the preceding graph, don't clearly indicate a trend. Thus, having a personal relationship to an influencer does not guarantee that following their recommendations would result in purchases.

The final graph examines if clicking on links from influencers increases your likelihood of doing so. However, once more, the dots are dispersed, and it appears that trust has little bearing on whether or not users click on links.

The final graph deals with trust and financial expenditure. It's determining whether or not followers of an influencer genuinely spend more money on the products they recommend. Here, too, the dots are dispersed, demonstrating that trust isn't a reliable indicator of expenditure intentions.

Overall, a strong relationship would be shown if the dots were closer together and formed an upward or downward line. However, given their dispersion, it appears that there

may be additional factors at play, or that there may be more going on here than simply these explanations for why people trust and purchase from influencers.

5.5 Summary and Comparison

The complex relationships between Instagram influencers and consumer purchase decisions were effectively investigated in this research. Here is a summary of the main conclusions:

The core of influencer marketing is trust, as seen by the substantial positive connection (0.81) between an influencer's level of trust and the likelihood that followers will purchase the things they recommend. This bolsters the body of research and emphasises the potent social proof that influencer recommendations provide, particularly when followers view an influencer as genuine and reliable.

Engagement Is Important: The significant positive association (0.75) between purchase intent and clicking on influencer links highlights the significance that interaction plays in motivating action. This emphasises how important click-engaging interactive content is. Including educational links helps to bridge the gap between awareness and product selection while also fostering trust.

The Power of resemblance: Relatability is important, as seen by the strong positive correlation (0.73) between perceived resemblance and influencer trust. This implies that people identify with influencers who represent their own goals or ideals. It suggests that audiences look for influencers who portray an idealised version of themselves, which is consistent with social identity theory.

Impact of Exposure: A modestly positive connection (0.62) has been found between the number of influencers followed and overall trust, suggesting that increased exposure to influencers can have a positive impact on public opinion. This might be explained by people becoming more accustomed to influencer models and accepting their place in the marketing industry.

The Power of Resemblance: The substantial positive correlation (0.73) between perceived resemblance and influencer trust indicates the importance of relatability. This suggests that people relate to influencers who stand for their own values or aspirations. According to social identity theory, it implies that viewers seek out influencers who present an idealised version of themselves.

Effect of Exposure: A somewhat positive correlation (0.62) between the quantity of influencers followed and general trust has been discovered, indicating that a greater number of influencers may positively affect public opinion. This could be accounted for by individuals growing acclimated to influencers and recognising their role in the marketing sector.

Investment and Influence: A relationship between campaign scale and impact is suggested by the moderate correlation (0.65) between financial investment in influencer marketing and purchase intent. This bolsters the idea that influencer marketing campaigns can be made more persuasive by having a wider audience and a higher-quality production value.

5.6 Evaluation of the Research Model

All things considered, the research model that was used -which included social influence, trust, engagement, and parasocial interactions- proved to be a useful tool for examining the dynamics of influencer marketing. The demonstrated correlations highlight how these elements interact to drive consumer behaviour and confirm the core assumptions of the model.

5.6.1 Examining the Consequences

The research's conclusions have important ramifications for our knowledge of influencer marketing theory as well as its actual application.

Theoretical Implications: In a number of ways, this research advances the conversation on consumer behaviour and marketing theory.

- Highlights trust as the most important element influencing interactions between influencers and followers.
- Gives further empirical evidence in favour of the role that engagement plays in influencing customer behaviour.
- Draws attention to the complex role that resemblance and the desire to live like an influencer have in building trust and influencing decisions to buy.

Practical Implications: Marketers and companies looking to optimise the effect of their influencer initiatives can gain valuable information from the results:

Authenticity is crucial: To maximise long-term effectiveness, cultivate real partnerships based on openness, trust, and shared values.

Create with Engagement in Mind: Put material that encourages interactions (likes, comments, shares, and most crucially, clicks) first in order to establish lasting connections and make it easier for customers to make purchases.

Locate the Ideal Fit: For optimum effect, carefully choose influencers whose persona and fan base fit the brand's intended market and line of products.

Invest Wisely: Scale is important, but for maximum benefits, concentrate on engagement depth. Put real collaborations ahead of initiatives that are only focused on gaining followers.

5.7 Recommendations

The research results and the theoretical understandings previously addressed inform the following suggestions, which can assist businesses and marketers looking to optimise the effects of their influencer campaigns:

Put Trust and Authenticity First: Concentrate on establishing enduring connections with influencers who authentically represent the brand's principles and are seen as such by their followers. Prioritise openness in sponsored material and promote candid and open conversation.

Encourage Interaction: Provide interactive content. Include surveys, questions, and calls to action to promote shares, comments, likes, and most importantly clicks to related campaign or product websites.

Value Alignment: Make sure that the influencer's image and niche, the values and interests of their audience, and the kind of product or service being advocated are all strongly aligned.

Quality over Quantity: Even if an influencer has a lesser following, it is still important to prioritise meaningful partnerships with them that resonate with the target audience. To boost engagement and purchasing intent, concentrate on fostering a sense of belonging.

Educate Customers: Promote knowledgeable customer decision-making. Provide an open atmosphere where viewers may appreciate influencer relationships and the content creators' role at the same time.

6 Conclusion

The complex relationships at work between Instagram influencers and the buying decisions of their Turkish followers have been effectively examined in this research. The results underline the common factors that propel influencer marketing methods' success and confirm the significant influence of this type of social media marketing in the Turkish market.

This data reaffirms a fundamental idea: trust is essential to effective influencer-consumer connections. The substantial link shown is consistent with consumer behaviour research that has already been conducted, highlighting the influence of social proof (Guadagno&Cialdini, 2009). Similar to the impact expert endorsements have in traditional marketing channels, followers are substantially more likely to act on product suggestions when they view the influencer as genuine and trustworthy.

Engagement turned out to be yet another important factor impacting consumer choices. There was a strong correlation found between influencers' links and purchase intent. According to this research, creating material with interaction in mind not only helps to establish rapport but also expedites the process from product interest to purchase. This emphasis on concrete interactions is consistent with consumer behaviour studies in e-commerce, which indicates that offering direct routes for product investigation boosts conversion rates even more.

One important component that emerged as crucial for building trust with the Turkish audience was perceived similarity. This is consistent with the notion of parasocial connections, which states that followers are more likely to accept advice from influencers to conform their spending patterns to the aspirational image of the influencer when they identify with the influencer's projected lifestyle and beliefs (Rubin et al., 1985). The impacts of idealised celebrity endorsements in traditional media are mirrored in this.

The research also reveals a slight positive correlation between exposure to influencer content and overall trust levels, indicating that consumers may become more receptive to and accustomed to influencer marketing as it becomes more widespread. This growing recognition emphasises the necessity of ongoing research to guarantee that marketing strategies continue to be successful and compliant with moral principles.

These results have important actions for Turkish companies looking to use influencer marketing and for brands that are present in other countries. First and first, the foundation of any campaign should be the development of sincere, long-term influencer partnerships, giving authenticity precedence over the mere quantity of followers. Second, in order to close the awareness gap and influence the decision to make a purchase, interactive material that is meant to entice readers to click on links is essential. For maximum persuasive impact, it is also crucial to carefully align the influencer, their audience, and the product in order to create a strong perceived relationship. Ultimately, the realisation that age plays a big role in how people are affected emphasises the necessity of developing techniques that are specific to certain groups.

Although this research provides insightful information within the Turkish setting, additional in-depth knowledge could be obtained by examining cross-cultural comparisons in subsequent research. Furthermore, concentrating on particular product categories could provide understanding of how buying choices differ in other marketplaces. Moreover, broadening the scope of the research to encompass platforms such as TikTok may disclose dynamics unique to that platform and possibly indicate changes in customer preferences. Such study is necessary to make sure influencer marketing strategies are morally and practically sound as the digital landscape changes.

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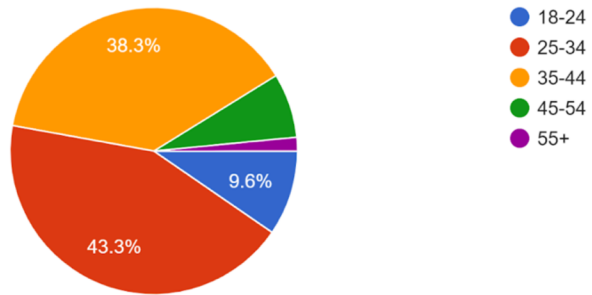
8.4 List of abbreviations

OECD:	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SMIs:	Social Media Influencers

9 Appendix

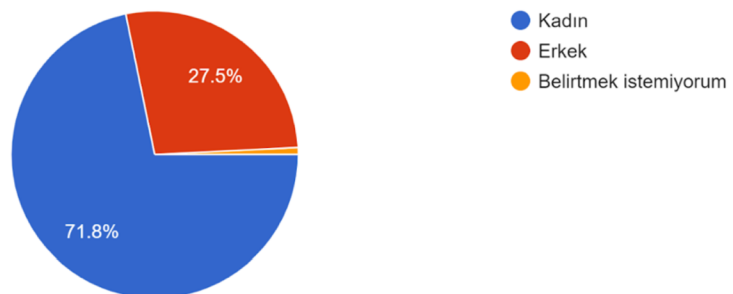
Graph 4 1st Question's Results

What age range are you in?
386 responses



Graph 5 2nd Question's Results

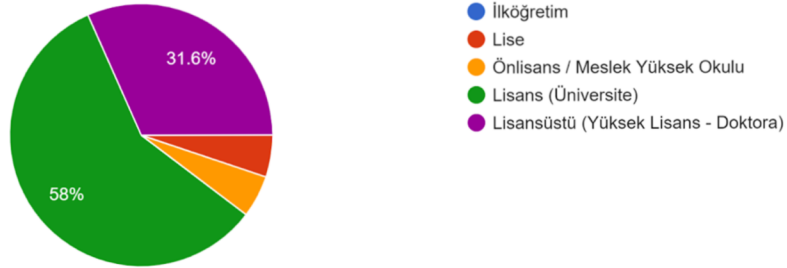
What is your gender?
386 responses



Graph 6 3rd Questions's Results

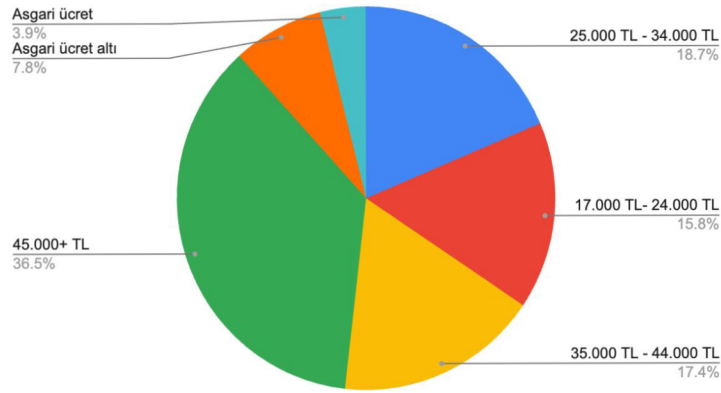
What is your education level?

386 responses



Graph 7 4th Question's Results

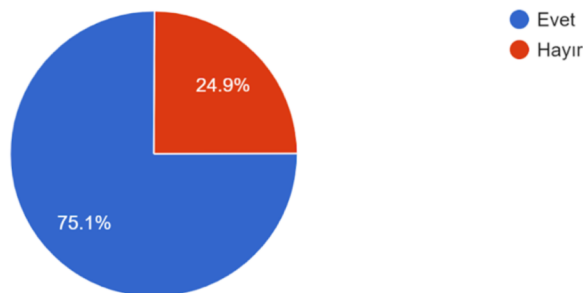
Your Income Level?



Graph 8 5th Question's Results

Do you follow an influencer (a person who is considered an expert in his field and has stable followers on social media, whose opinion is trusted and whose approval is received) on Instagram?

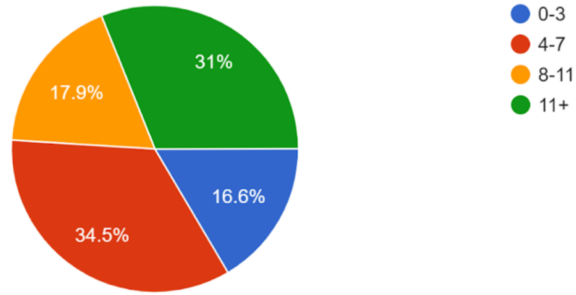
386 responses



Graph 9 6th Question's Results

How many influencers do you follow on Instagram?

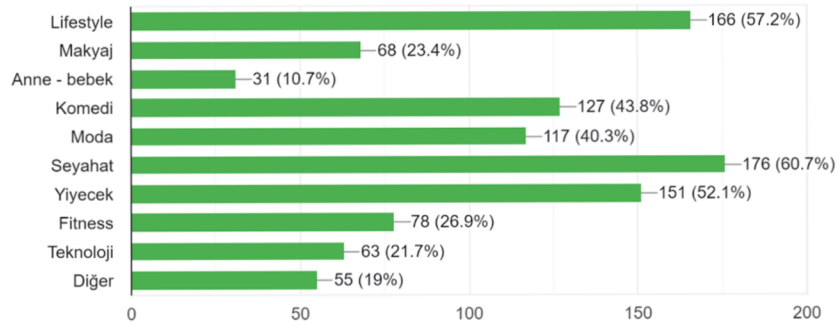
290 responses



Graph 10 7th Question's Results

Which type of influencers do you prefer to follow the most?

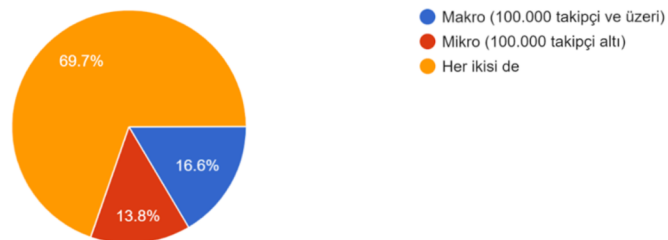
290 responses



Graph 11 8th Question's Results

Do you typically follow macro influencers with large followings or micro influencers with a smaller, niche following?

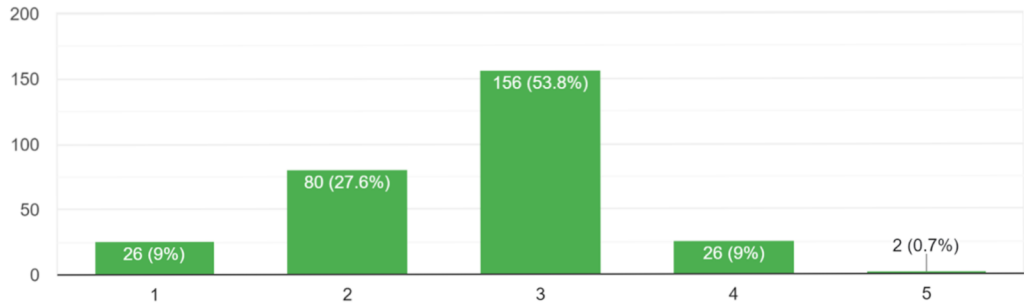
290 responses



Graph 12 9th Question's Results

How confident are you that influencers are sincere and natural?

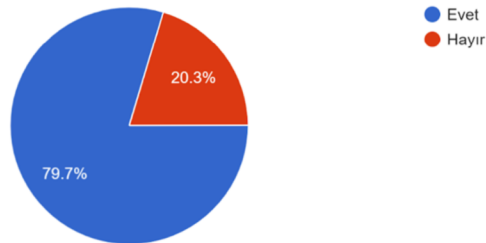
290 responses



Graph 13 10th Question's Results

Do you click on the links shared by influencers?

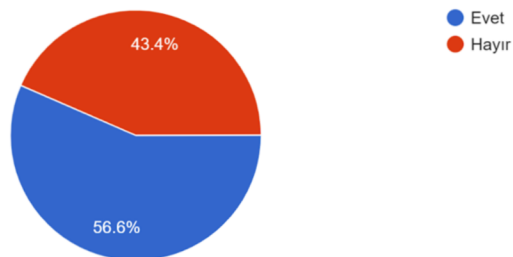
290 responses



Graph 14 11th Question's Results

Do you buy products through links shared by influencers?

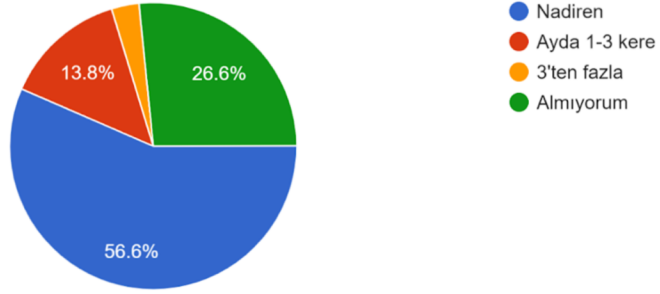
290 responses



Graph 15 12th Question's Results

How often do you buy products from links shared by influencers?

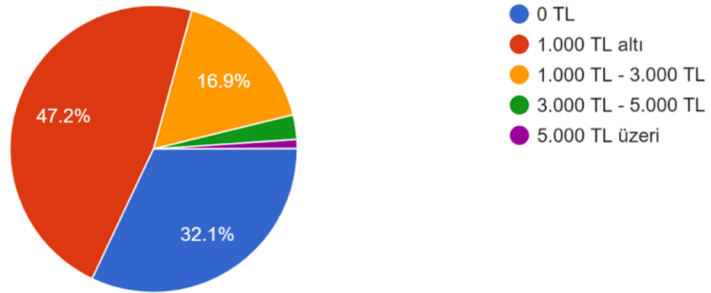
290 responses



Graph 16 13th Question's Results

How much do you spend monthly through influencers?

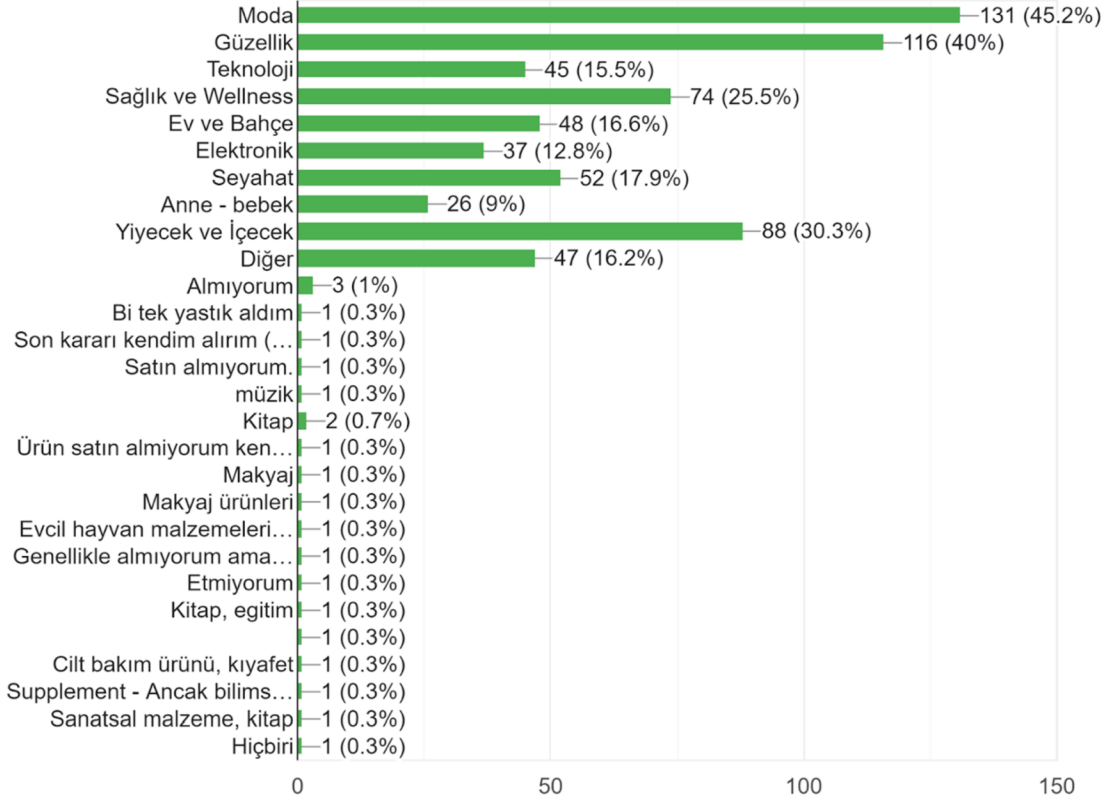
290 responses



Graph 17 13th Question's Results

What type of products do you prefer to buy from influencer recommendations?

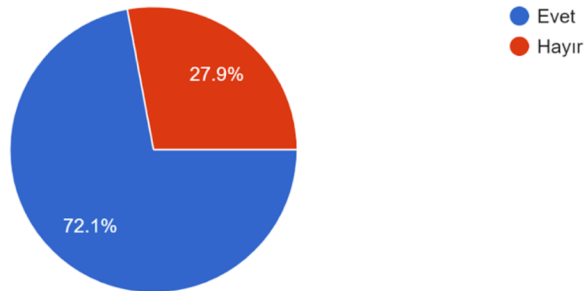
290 responses



Graph 18 14th Question's Results

Have you ever clicked on a link shared by an influencer, but didn't buy immediately, but instead bought it later?

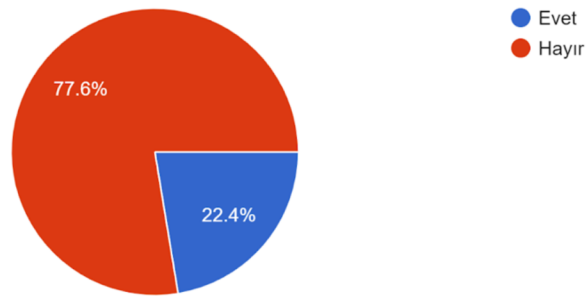
290 responses



Graph 19 15th Question's Results

Do you frequently visit the profiles of influencers you don't follow to see what they're sharing?

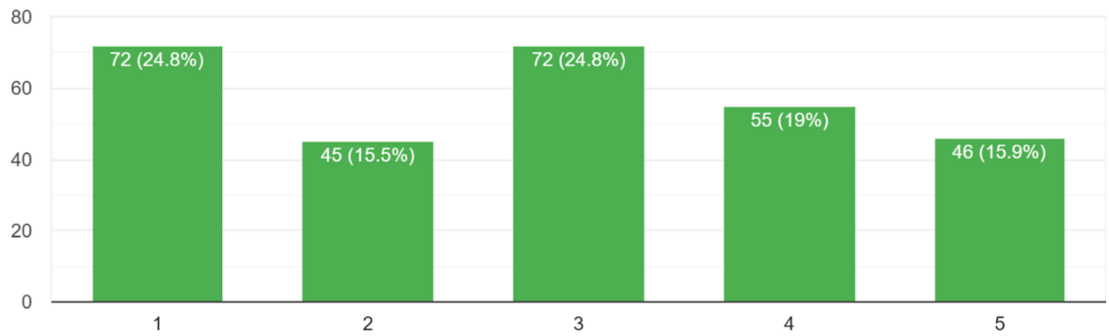
290 responses



Graph 20 16th Question's Results

How important is it to you that an influencer's lifestyle or values are similar to yours?

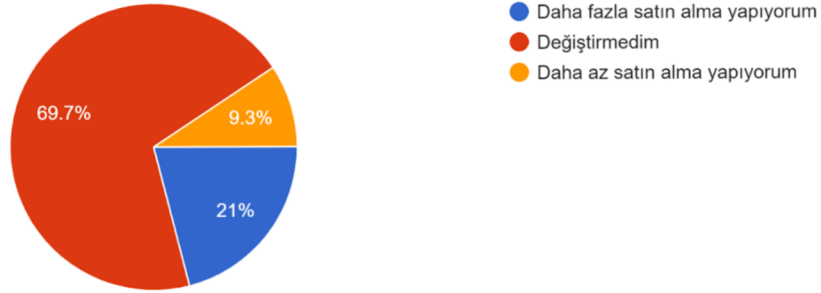
290 responses



Graph 21 17th Question's Results

Have you changed your purchasing frequency due to influencer influence?

290 responses



Graph 22 18th Question's Results

Who influences you more in your purchasing decisions?

290 responses

