Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

Faculty of Economics and Management

Department of Management

Master's Thesis

Impact of Influencer Marketing on Consumer Behaviour

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CZECH UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES PRAGUE

Faculty of Economics and Management

DIPLOMA THESIS ASSIGNMENT

Simon Robert

Economics and Management

Thesis title

Impact of Influencer Marketing on Consumer behavior

Objectives of thesis

The aim of the thesis is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of influencer marketing, and how it impacts consumer behaviour. Based on the given results, it will provide suggestions and recommendations to maximize its impact.

Methodology

Concepts such as influencer marketing, consumer behavior, and their relations, will be explained throughout the literature review (academic articles and books). The practical part will focus on: analyzing consumers' behaviors when faced with influencer marketing through a questionnaire survey. Then, interviews with a brand owner, a consumer, and an influencer will be conducted to have a qualitative analysis.

Suggestions will be made based on surveys and interview results.

The proposed extent of the thesis

Approx 60-80 pages

Keywords

Influencer, marketing, consumer, customer, impact, social networks

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Recommended information sources

KOTLER, P. *Marketing 3.0.* ISBN 978-0470598825.

Leung, F.F., Gu, F.F. & Palmatier, R.W. (2022), Online influencer marketing. J. of the Acad. Mark. Sci. 50, 226–251. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-021-00829-4

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Upadhyay, Y., Paul, J. and Baber, R., 2022. Effect of online social media marketing efforts on customer response. Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 21(3), pp.554-571.

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Declaration

I declare that I have worked on my master's thesis titled "Impact of Influencer Marketing on Consumer Behaviour" 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 31.03.2023 _____

Impact of Influencer Marketing on Consumer Behaviour

Abstract

The aim of the thesis is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of influencer marketing, and how it impacts consumer behaviour. Based on the given results, it will provide suggestions and recommendations to maximize its impact. In the master's thesis, the author tests a series of hypotheses mainly related to influencer marketing seeking to shed brighter light on differences in attitudes caused by fundamental characteristics of people, such as gender and age.

For the methodology of the work, the author relies mostly on quantitative methods that are represented by hypothesis testing conducted based on the data collected with the help of a questionnaire with 100 participants. Effectively, the author collects responses with the help of Google Forms platform and tests hypotheses using SPSS application.

After conducting his analysis, the author is able to say that his findings are somewhat similar to other relevant articles and research published by academists and agencies, where they conclude that age is in fact a significant factor creating differences in the way how people view influencers and influencer marketing in general, as well as social media platforms. Yet, the author suggests that gender, compared to age, is not such an important factor as the hypothesis testing revealed it.

Keywords: influencer, marketing, consumer, customer, impact, social networks

Vliv Influencer marketingu na chování spotřebitelů

Abstrakt

Cílem práce je identifikovat silné a slabé stránky influencer marketingu a jeho dopad na chování spotřebitelů. Na základě daných výsledků poskytne návrhy a doporučení k maximalizaci jeho dopadu. V diplomové práci autor testuje řadu hypotéz týkajících se zejména influencer marketingu, které se snaží vrhnout jasnější světlo na rozdíly v postojích způsobené základními charakteristikami lidí, jako je pohlaví a věk.

Pro metodiku práce se autor opírá převážně o kvantitativní metody, které jsou reprezentovány testováním hypotéz prováděným na základě údajů shromážděných pomocí dotazníku se 100 účastníky. Efektivně autor shromažďuje odpovědi pomocí platformy Google Forms a testuje hypotézy pomocí aplikace SPSS.

Po provedení své analýzy je autor schopen říci, že jeho zjištění jsou poněkud podobná jiným relevantním článkům a výzkumům publikovaným akademiky a agenturami, kde dochází k závěru, že věk je ve skutečnosti významným faktorem vytvářejícím rozdíly ve způsobu, jakým lidé vnímají ovlivňující a ovlivňující marketing obecně, stejně jako platformy sociálních médií. Přesto autor naznačuje, že pohlaví ve srovnání s věkem není tak důležitým faktorem, jak to odhalilo testování hypotéz.

Klíčová slova: influencer, marketing, spotřebitel, zákazník, dopad, sociální sítě

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SPSS	Software Package for Social Sciences
TV	Television
ROI	Return on Investment.
IGC	Influencer-generated Content
UTM	Urchin Tracking Module
URL	Universal Referral Link
NBC	National Broadcasting Company
US	United States of America
SMI	Social Media Influencers
PR	Public Relations
GAFAM	Big Five
EKM	Engel Kollat Blackwell Model
UGC	User-Generated Content

1 Introduction

Brands can no longer afford not to be on social media. Not only do they have to be there, but they should also establish themselves and promote their products because digital marketing is efficient (De Vries & Carlson, 2014). Recently, a new type of marketing campaign emerged within the social media area: Influencer marketing. It is a type of marketing used by brands. The process is to collaborate with social media influencers to drive awareness around the brand and push their audience on a purchase (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Social media influencers (SMIs) are a new type of celebrity. In marketing, endorsers, publish content such as tweets, videos, blogs, and posts on social media to entertain and develop their audience (Freberg, Graham & McGaughey, 2011). Influencers can have an audience on different social media channels such as YouTube, TikTok, or Instagram. They have a certain influence on their audience and followers (Agrawal, 2016). The idea behind influencer marketing is that the audience of influencers trusts them enough to follow their recommendations. Hence, they would be more likely to make a purchase based on them.

The ancient history of influencer marketing would be celebrity endorsements. Only celebrities such as athletes or actors could work with brands and give away their image. With the emergence of social media, a new type of celebrity emerged. Social media influencers with a large community evolved into real-life superstars. Thanks to their way of distributing content, social media influencers were immediately much closer to their communities than the usual celebrities. Brands quickly understood the opportunities it could bring and jumped on the occasion to promote their products and services through them, hoping to influence the purchasing decision process of their audience.

The market quickly became crowded. They were more products to sell than influencers to promote them. As a result, marketers shifted their focus to micro-influencers (with a smaller audience) or even classic consumers (user-generated content). But, new social media are being built every year and the recent rise of TikTok changed the market. New influencers emerged and a new cycle was created.

The influencer marketing global market is growing at an extremely quick pace. According to a study conducted by (Statista, 2023), it grew from 1.7 billion dollars in 2016 to 16.4 billion dollars in 2022. It has been multiplied by 9.7 in only six years.

Figure 1, influencer marketing market size from 2016 to 2022
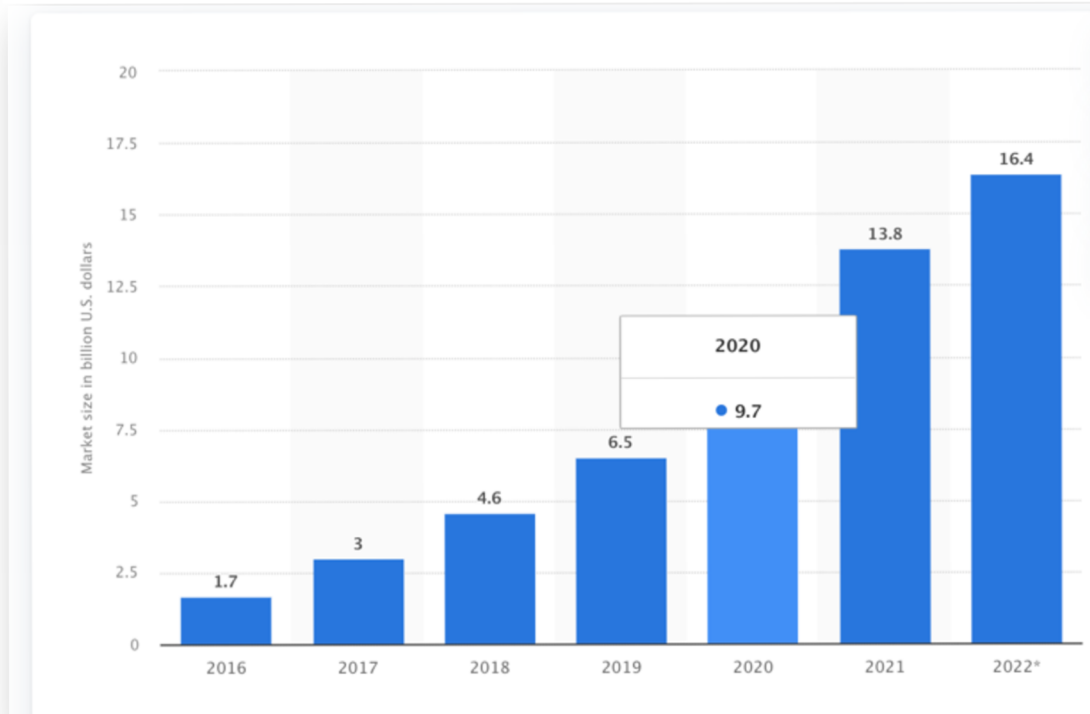
Source: Statista, 2022

Another study published by (Statista, 2023) showcased that 69.7% of U.S. marketers working in companies larger than 100 employees projected to use influencers for marketing purposes in 2021. That number is expected to go as high as 86% in 2025.

Figure 2, influencer marketing usage rate in the United States from 2020 to 2025 (projection)
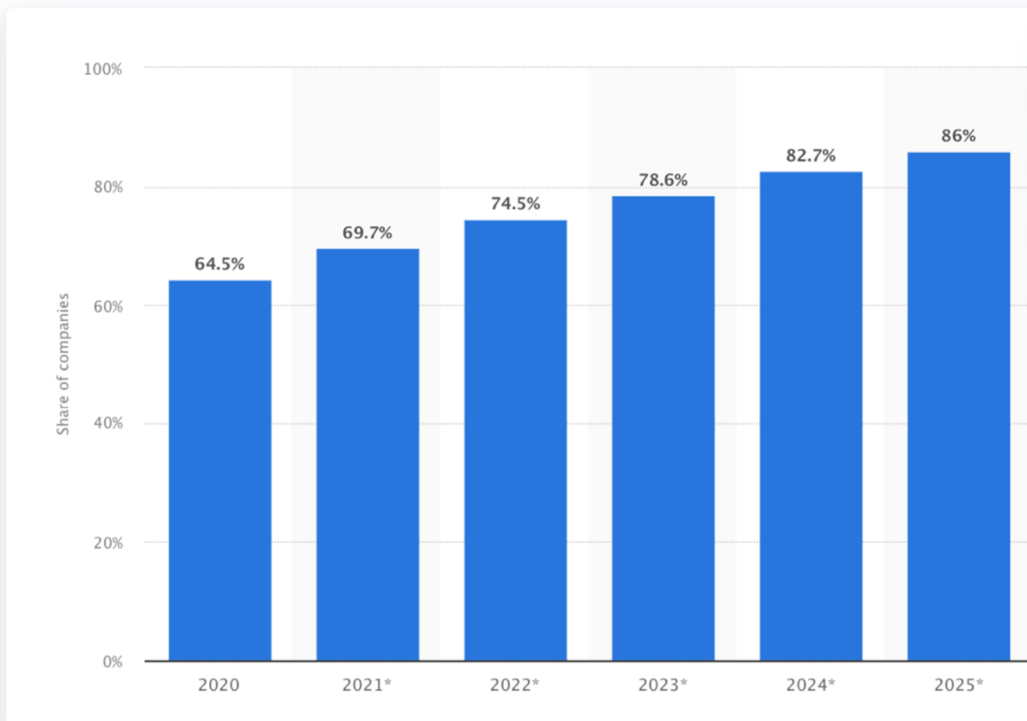
Source: Statista, 2023

In the past, marketers were struggling to measure the impact of influencer marketing on their sales. Today, marketers have new tools at their disposal that allow them to obtain better attribution parameters and a global view of where the sales are coming from.

Individuals are faced every day with actions and decisions they have to make when purchasing products or services. Consumers go through different phases, such as awareness of the product or brand, the purchase in itself, and the post-purchase experience. The better a brand understands consumers' behaviour, the better its targeting is in terms of the marketing message they want to share (Hyo, J. C., Yan, R., & Eckman, M., 2014). And the more it resonates with the consumer, hears ends up in better brand recognition and more revenue. This is why influencer marketing has the potential to impact consumer behaviour. It can help brands build brand awareness and reputation. But instead of building it by themselves only (which can take decades), they choose a shortcut and build it through someone else, an influencer (Ferina, N., Sri, G., & Putu, L, 2021).

2 Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Objectives

The aim of the thesis is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of influencer marketing and how it impacts consumer behaviour. Based on the given results, it will provide suggestions and recommendations to maximize its impact.

Consumer attention is being sought after from everywhere: television, in the streets, streaming services, and socmediadias. Consumers have less and less patience for the wrong content, and marketing has become more competitive. In a society where attention has become expensive, the study's main goal is to understand the current impact influencer marketing has on consumer behaviour.

The research objectives could be presented as follows:
- Assess the importance of influence marketing on consumer behaviour.
- Assess the challenges arising in the influencer marketing industry and their effect on consumer behaviour.
- Assess how brands could improve their influence marketing strategy to take its impact on consumer behaviour to a greater extent.

In addition to the series of research objectives, the author also provides a series of hypotheses that will be tested using techniques of statistical inference described in the chapter about the methodology of the master's thesis. Below, the author presents the list of those hypotheses.

1. Following social media influencers and gender are related.
2. There is a difference in the frequency of engaging with influencer content according to gender.
3. There is a difference in attitude towards influencer endorsements according to gender.

4. There is a difference in willingness to purchase products after influencer endorsement according to gender.

5. There is a difference in willingness to purchase products after the influencer's endorsement according to age.

6. Decisions on not purchasing a product because of influencer dishonesty and gender are related.

7. Decisions on not purchasing a product because of an influencer's dishonesty and age are related.

8. There is a difference in being prompt to unfollow influencers because of promotion according to gender.

9. There is a difference in being prompt to unfollow influencers because of promotion according to age.

10. There is a difference in the personal evaluation of the likelihood of continuing to follow influencers after discovering suspected dishonesty in advertising according to gender.

11. There is a difference in the evaluation of attitudes towards influencer endorsements according to following social media.

12. There is a difference in the evaluation of growing scepticism over time towards influencer endorsement according to gender.

13. Following social media influencers and age are related.

2.2 Methodology

Applying the right methodology method is crucial for a well-developed thesis. The methodology section shows the different steps and data collection methods that will be used to achieve a comprehensive answer to the research questions and objectives. To achieve this purpose, both a quantitative and qualitative analysis will be used. To determine the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour, former findings, and studies on the matter will be used.

One of the most fundamental steps needed to ensure that the goals of the diploma thesis will be met is the collection of relevant data, which will be analyzed with the help of

statistical inference and notably SPSS application. A survey is sent to a sample of relevant consumers, which will ultimately help to understand how influencer marketing impacts their behaviour and what is their attitude towards it. To extract more qualitative information, the author also conducts a series of semi-structured interviews with three people representing each target group – consumers, influencers and brand owners. The author's analysis, due to the incredibly large size of the population of consumers, is considered to be an illustrative one, which is primarily focused on the computation of t-tests and Chi tests. Formulas for independent t-tests and Chi-square tests are presented below, according to Casella (2021).

$$T\ value = \frac{(\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2)}{\sqrt{\frac{S_p^2}{n_1} + \frac{S_p^2}{n_2}}} \qquad (1)$$

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i} \qquad (2)$$

The author considers the level of significance equal to 5% as a basis for the hypothesis testing.

3 Literature Review

3.1 Overview of influencer marketing

3.1.1 From street to digital marketing

The landscape of marketing and advertising as a whole has evolved greatly since the twentieth century. In its early days and before television even existed, advertising was made in the streets. The usual way of marketing products was to promote them using a billboard. Then, the press and the radio came out and marketers shifted part of their focus and advertising budget to the newspapers and broadcasting. It changed things significantly as marketers were now able to connect with a much wider audience at scale. When television reached most households in the 1960s, marketers were able to advertise products and services in a way that had never been done. Using videos, images, concepts, and people, enabled marketers to pass a very specific message to an audience composed of millions of consumers.

While doing so, marketers realized that they could market their products through people whom audiences already trusted. The researcher is referring to celebrity endorsement. Celebrities are people who are known by a large audience, usually due to the particularity of their job (actors, singers). Celebrities hold a particular place within the consumer's mind. They often see celebrities as examples. They trust their judgment and find them credible. Past researches commonly refer to three source characteristics impacting audiences and their behaviour: trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise/credibility (Amos, Clinton, Holmes & Strutton, 2018).

It is why marketers sought to "intrude into consumer's consciousness and to deliver particular image-laden messages" (O'Mhaony, 1997). To do that, they endorse celebrities with products and services. A celebrity endorsement happens when a celebrity agrees to support, publicly, a product or a service in an advertisement campaign (Erdogan, 1999). The easiest way to showcase a celebrity endorsement marketing campaign is to incorporate products and services within movies and other forms of media to build a hybrid message

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(Balasubramanian, S. K., 1994). A hybrid message is described as paid means to promote a product or service and therefore influence an audience. These types of marketing campaigns usually have a non-commercial character. Audiences can receive the marketing message in a way that they don't know it is an actual commercial campaign. This is where marketers started to understand who to connect with in an over-marketized audience. Different kinds of hybrid messages exist but the study mentions masked-spokesperson messages. Within this category, we can find masked celebrity messages.

A great example of it would be in 1988 when the famous baseball player Mickey Mantle vouched for an arthritis drug during an NBC TV show he was invited in. Another example of hidden messages would be product placements in movies. When watching television, consumers started to get used to an advertisement. But when they were going for a movie, they were not expecting advertisements and product placements inside of it. It took audiences by surprise and had a greater impact on their product perception and overall behaviour (Goodman-Malamuth, 1985). The study mentions actor Marlon Brando telling another actor: "have some milk Duds. They're good for you" in the movie "The Formula".

Then, with the spread of the world wide web, people changed how they consumed content. A study conducted by Statista in 2023 compared the time spent per day with digital versus traditional media in the United States. In 2017, Americans were spending 374 minutes per day on traditional media and 353 minutes on digital media. In 2018, Americans were spending more time on digital than on traditional media. In 2022, Americans spent 489 minutes per day on digital media and 297 minutes on traditional media. And the average time spent per day on digital media is expected to be almost two times the one spent on traditional media in 2023.

Figure 3, time spent per day with digital versus traditional media in the USA (2011-2023)
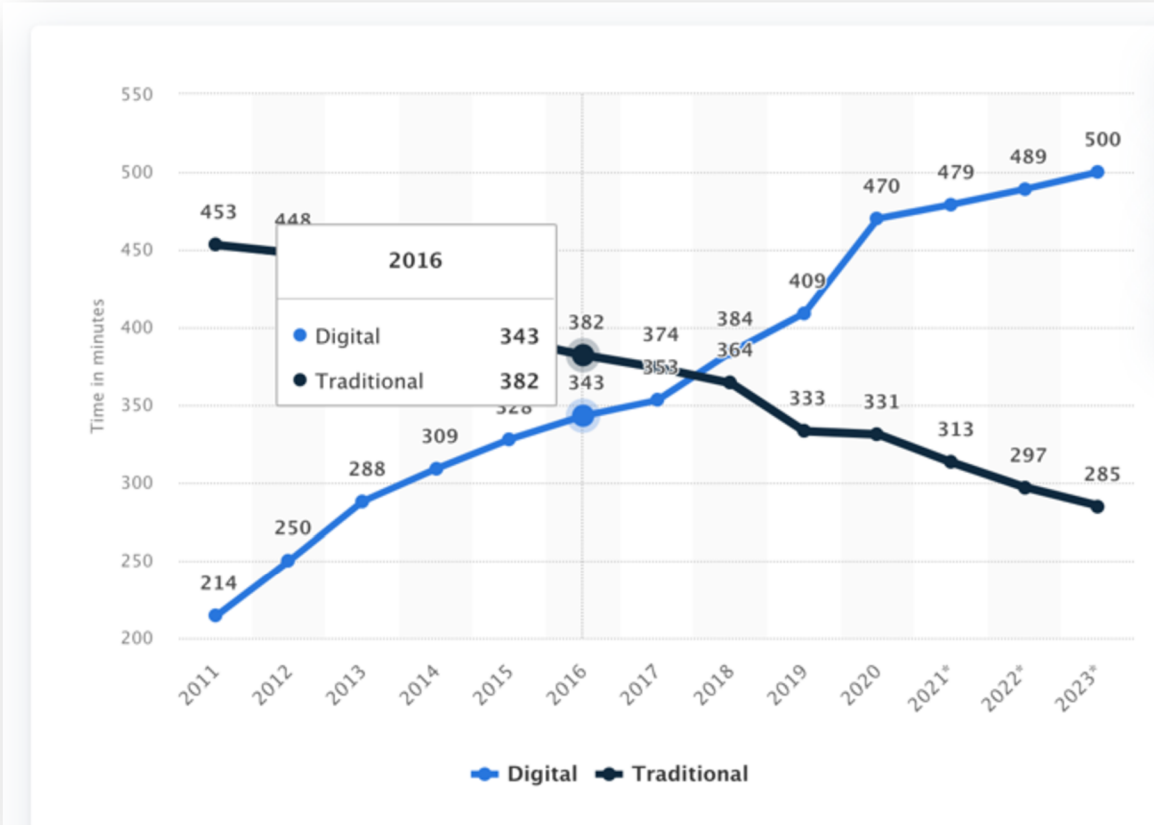
Source: Statista, 2023

Another study conducted by Statista (2022) showed that younger audiences such as millennials tend to spend less and less time watching TV compared to the older generation. In 2021 people aged from 25 to 34 years old spent an average of 2.16 hours per day watching TV. On the other hand, individuals aged 55 to 64 years old spent on average 3.33 hours watching TV.

Figure 4, average daily time spent watching TV per capita in the US by age category (2009-2021)

Characteristic	15 to 19 years	20 to 24 years	25 to 34 years	35 to 44 years	45 to 54 years	55 to 64 years	65 to 74 years	75 years and older	Total
2021	1.96	2.02	2.16	2.09	2.55	3.33	4.3	4.8	2.86
2019	2.04	2.22	1.99	2.03	2.44	3.24	4.48	4.77	2.81
2018	2.23	2.01	2.03	2.12	2.56	3.36	4.34	4.78	2.84
2017	2.05	1.94	2.01	2.09	2.64	3.23	4.19	4.62	2.77
2016	1.94	2.12	1.95	2.07	2.66	3.26	4.1	4.33	2.73
2015	2.4	2.12	2.15	2.09	2.58	3.23	4.03	4.48	2.78
2014	2.42	2.47	2.06	2.16	2.68	3.25	4.03	4.52	2.82
2013	2.17	2.18	2.14	2.24	2.66	3.24	4.1	4.16	2.77
2012	2.29	2.35	2.32	2.3	2.69	3.26	4.02	4.25	2.83
2011	2.17	2.24	2.09	2.22	2.71	3.2	3.97	4.42	2.75
2010	2.31	2.31	2.18	2.23	2.63	3.03	3.84	4.43	2.73
2009	2.32	2.45	2.38	2.36	2.68	3.23	3.76	4.42	2.82

Showing entries 1 to 12 (12 entries in total)

Source: Statista, 2022

One thing is for sure: marketers who do not consider digital media as a strong marketing channel will be left behind and are already. Lots of brands missed the digital wave and went bankrupt because of it. We can mention the brand Camaïeu. Camaïeu is a French household brand born in the 80s that recently filed for bankruptcy. The brand did not see the changes that social media and the new ways of consuming did to the fashion industry. They lacked behind in terms of content, and digital marketing, and the brand got outdated. Their distribution channels remained the same as they used to with a low presence online and lots of shops around the country. The group was 2600 employees and adapting to new standards was been too hard for the brand. So, in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world,

the brand saw a 95% decrease in its sales. They had 900 shops and most of their revenue came from those shops.

However, other brands did see the digital wave coming and went all in on it. In this context, advertisers started to shift their marketing budgets toward digital advertising. With digital marketing, marketers can get closer to their audience than ever before. A study defines digital marketing as: "the application of digital media, data and technology integrated with traditional communications to achieve marketing objectives". They also add that it has a pillar of 5Ds: digital devices, digital platforms, digital media, digital data, and digital technology (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

The study also distinguishes three different media channels within digital marketing which are paid, owned, and earned media. Paid media refer to any marketing that involves the payment of advertising service to a media: Meta, Google, TV, or any other media service. Various factors can set the payment up such as a click, a view, or a sale. Owned media refer to media that brands and businesses control and operate. It can be their Instagram or TikTok account but also their email list. Finally, it mentions earned media. Earned media can be described as the booster factor of digital marketing efforts such as PR, blogs, word of mouth, and influencer marketing.

3.1.2 Definition of influencer marketing

Social media in the common language often refers to social network sites. They developed mainly during the twenty-first century. Instagram, Facebook, or TikTok can be mentioned. They can be defined as services available on the web in which people can build a profile within a system. They can also share that profile with others to connect. Finally, they can go through their lists of connections and others' (Ellison, 2007).

E-commerce grew extremely fast at the same time. In 2014, retail e-commerce sales worldwide accounted for 1.3 trillion US dollars. In 2021, it was 5.7 trillion US dollars (Statista, 2022). That growth has been sustained by giant e-retailers such as Amazon and Alibaba. The same research mentions that Alibaba accounts for 700 billion U.S. dollars in e-commerce sales in 2022.

However, these giant e-commerce platforms focus on having a large catalog of products available at the lowest price possible (*The Everything Store: Jeff Bezos and the Age of Amazon*, 2013). They are marketplaces. Hence, their focus is not on influencer marketing.

Influencer marketing is a type of marketing used by e-commerce brands. These are the ones the researcher will focus on, in the thesis. Brands such as SHEIN, Manscaped, or Boohoo can be mentioned. They have their brand, they sell their products and they have different consumer personas that they know well. Hence, they do influencer marketing to promote their products. SHEIN is widely known for its influencer marketing campaigns on the YouTube platform. They ship tons of products to video creators and influencers, who then try them on a long-form video and push their audience on a purchase thanks to a discount code. SHEIN is extremely successful, and its estimated sales grew from 600 million U.S dollars in 2016 to a whopping 15.7 billion U.S dollars in 2021 (Statista, 2023).

Influencer marketing is quite a new study field. Most research conducted in the past was done on endorsements of celebrities more than on social media influencers themselves. Endorsing celebrities with the product for advertisement purposes has already proven to be effective (O'Mahony, 1997). Influencer marketing is a new study field because it is a new industry. It is often compared to another study which is word-of-mouth marketing (Kotler, 2016).

Consumers are now actively searching for recommendations, reviews, and other forms of social proof, online before making a purchase (Gopinath, 2014). An easy way to show that phenomenon is with the example of Amazon. Most people who search for a product go to the review section. That review is filled with people who read the book previously. Hence the consumer is now able to make a better decision on his purchase. Indeed, the data available is larger. Previously in a bookstore, the consumer had access to the opinion of an employee in the shop or a friend's recommendation. Now the consumer has access to thousand opinions in a matter of seconds. In that sense, it has been studied that better reviews results in higher revenue (Chevalier, 2006).

Getting the consumer's attention has become extremely difficult. They are constantly solicited: streaming services, music, social media, and television. Traditional advertising is not enough to stand out. Hence marketers now use influencers to promote their products, build brand awareness and impact the consumer's behaviour (Brown & Hayes, 2008). The main purpose of influencer marketing is "to promote products or increase brand awareness through content spread by social media users who are considered to be influential" (Carter, 2016).

In that sense, marketers pay influencers to promote a product on social media. It can take the form of posts or videos displayed on different social media platforms. In exchange for that promotion, influencers receive a different kind of compensation. It ranges from a gift of a particular product to a large sum of money. The compensation often depends on how large the influencer's audience is and how big of an impact they have on it.

How do marketers decide which influencers to work with? Following my interviews with experts (see later), the hardest part in influencer marketing is mostly choosing who to work with. To assess that matter, platforms such as Kolsquare or Augure were developed. These platforms rank influencers by expertise and follower size.

3.1.3 Characteristics of influencer marketing

Influencers' audiences exist in social media. It can be YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, or even Twitter. They have a certain number of "followers" who are interested in what they are doing. That audience is marketable because followers know and often trust the influencer's opinion. Social media influencers have an advantage that celebrities do not have. They are often already specialized in one area, and their followers follow them thanks to it (Hall 2016).

During this thesis, the researcher will focus on purpose on analyzing a certain type of influencers. As mentioned previously, different kinds of people could influence audiences. But the researcher will focus only on social media influencers (SMIs). Social media enabled non-celebrities to develop an audience online. That includes feelings, families, and, most of the time, the most intimate part of their life. Audiences feel close to these SMIs. At the same

time, celebrities can have a following large count of persons. They were never that close to their audience. Most of the time, they would rather hide their private life rather than expose them. That changed with social media influencers. And the power it brought to consumer intentions started to be limitless. To mention a few of them: Mr Beast (YouTube), Kylie Jenner (Instagram), Charlie d'Amelo (TikTok), and Matthieu Steffani (Spotify).

Endorsements with celebrities are usually done with any kind of product or service. The key differentiator element of SMIs is that they are already specialized and usually have expertise in a specific subject. Hence, SMIs are seen as more credible than celebrities on certain topics and when promoting certain products. This means audiences also have higher trust in them (Hall, 2016). What marketers are looking for in today's world is to sharpen their targeting to have a higher ROI on their marketing campaigns. The problem with celebrity endorsements is that it usually is very expensive. Yes, audiences of celebrities are quite large and we'll see throughout the research that it does add credibility to the brand. But, who's better at promoting a product than someone who's been building an audience in this exact field? A past study on Twitter's influencers identified three types of influencers: primary, contextual, and low influencers (Himelboim, 2019).

The type of content produced by social media influencers depends largely on the kind of platform their audience lies in. With that being said, a vast majority of influencers are producing audio, video, or photographic content. Influencers gained popularity by sharing content mostly on themselves: daily activities, ups and downs, projects, and friends' and families' dramas. Everything that can bring their audience closer to them.

The target audience: a study conducted **by Statista in 2022** showed that in the US, 42% of women were following at least one influencer on a social media channel. For men, that number was 36%. Women tend to follow more influencers than men.

Figure 5, share of the US social media user following influencers in 2022 by gender

Men 36%

Women 42%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50%
Share of respondents
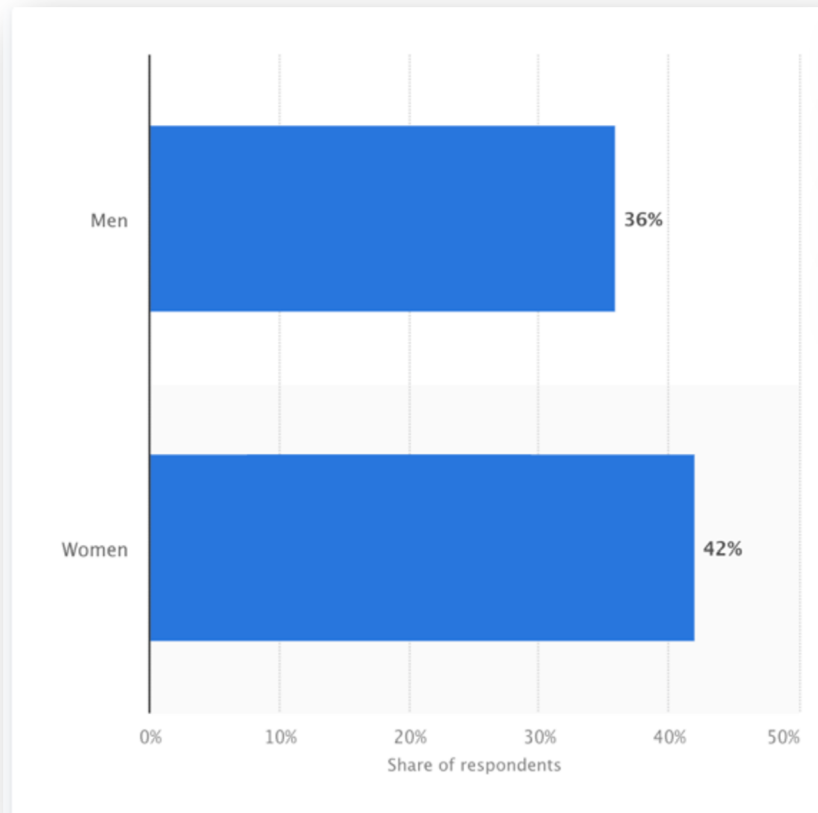
Source: Statista, 2023

3.2 Theoretical foundations of consumer behaviour

3.2.1 Definition of consumer behaviour

A consumer has been defined as an individual who can purchase to provide for certain needs (Nicosia, 1996). Previously, researchers provided a rather short definition of what consumer behaviour is: the research of how a consumer decides to make a purchase. Modern research and definitions entitled a new way of looking at consumer behaviour. A way in which a consumer purchasing decision process has to be revealed in its full scope. Hence, consumer behavior is a particular process that we, as consumers, go through when we make a purchasing decision. It gathers all the activities involved in the purchasing decision process: before, during the consumption, and after that (Kardes, 2014).

It is a complex field, that gathers different disciplines such as economics and psychology. An understanding of consumer behaviour is extremely important for marketers. The better they know how their target consumer makes their purchasing decisions, the better the message and the greater the revenue. It has to be said that in the past, marketers could deploy their full budgets on TV and expect to reach a maximum of persons for a high ROI. Today's world is very different. GAFAM emerged and amassed tons of data on their users. That data has been used by marketers to sharpen their messages, audiences, and targeting. It resulted in higher ROI with their marketing campaigns. But the competition also got harsh. Now marketers need to reinvent themselves. They want to diversify their acquisition channels.

Consumers have desires for products and services. However, they have limited resources. It is called their purchasing power and its limits are related to the amount of money they earn through salaries, bonuses, or any other activities. These limits force consumers to choose between different alternatives that the market presents them (Haghpour, Sahabeh, Halvari, 2022).

3.2.2   Models and theories of consumer behaviour

What every marketer in the world wishes is to make consumers realize they have a need for the product they are selling.

What every marketer in the world wishes is to make consumers realize they need the product they are selling.

The Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow): The psychologist Abraham Maslow developed a concept: "*The Hierarchy of Needs*", in 1943, which helps understand consumer behaviour. In his theory, Maslow describes 5 layers of human needs: physiological (breathing, food, or water), safety (health, property), love and belonging (friendship, family), esteem (confidence, respect), and self-actualization (creativity, problem-solving). Marketers can use it to understand better how their product can serve the consumer's needs and how to promote it within their marketing campaigns.

A Study researched the application of the hierarchy of needs and its impact on consumers' purchase intention for electric vehicles (Chen & al., 2021). Data were collected among 550 Chinese citizens. What came out of the study is that the first criterion pushing consumers to purchase such vehicle was their environmental concern. Social influence and self-esteem were the last. Knowing such information, Chinese marketers can adapt their marketing campaigns. By doing so, they can emphasize their messages on how relevant electric vehicles are to protecting the environment.

The researcher can also mention supplement companies who tend to make the most out of basic needs in marketing campaigns. We can mention Obvi. Obvi is a supplement company selling online. Most of their products are based on collagen. The company is heavily investing in digital marketing. They market their collagen product as a product that can reduce hair loss, joint, and muscle pain, and burn fat.

Figure 6, Obvi marketing campaign

Source: Facebook Ads Library, 2022

The Howard Sheth model of consumer behaviour: The Howard Sheth model of consumer behaviour was developed in *"The Theory of Buyer behaviour" (1969)*. This model outlines three steps in the decision-making process when it comes to consumer behaviour. The extensive problem-solving, the limited problem-solving, and the routinized response behaviour. Howard and Sheth show that this process is influenced by variables, which they call inputs and outputs. These inputs are categorized: as significative (quality, price), symbolic (distinctiveness, availability), and social (family, references). These inputs will then go through a path: the perceptual constructs and the learning constructs. In that process, the consumers will assess the market to try and understand the best choices available. Then, it will come to an outcome which could be the purchase. The Howard Sheth model is a crucial model of consumer behaviour, and marketers still use it to better understand which marketing campaign they should use at which stage of the consumer buying journey.

Figure 7, the Howard Sheth model
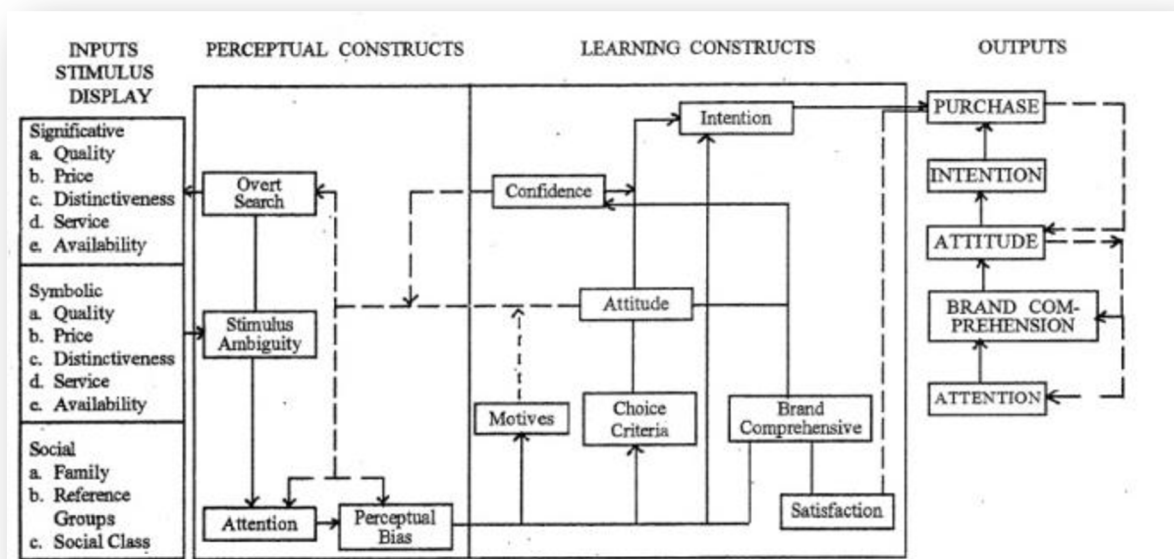
Source: Howard, 1969

The Black Box model is another reputable source for consumer behaviour analysis. Its main take is that the consumer is exposed to external stimuli such as marketing messages.

However, consumers have pre-existent beliefs based on their culture and social factors. When receiving the external stimuli, consumers go through an analysis of both the external stimuli and their internal beliefs. Then, they make a decision.

Figure 8, Black Box Model
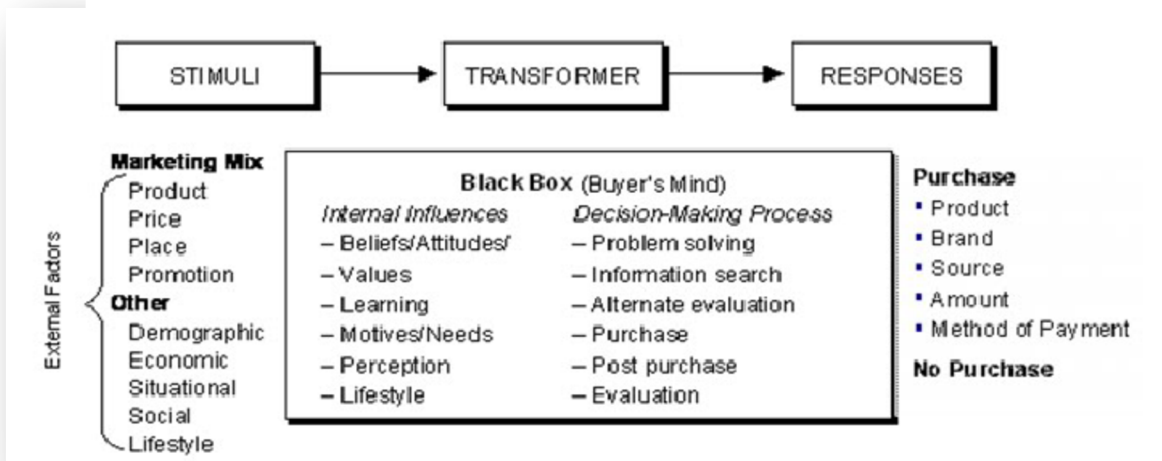
Source: Kotler, 2004

The Engel-Kollat-Blackwell model describes the consumer behaviour process as a five steps process. The consumer goes through all these steps when making a purchase, and it helped marketers reshape their marketing strategies at each of them. The model describes the steps as awareness, information processing, evaluation, purchasing decision, and outcome analysis.

All these models can be studied and applied when it comes to the impact influencer marketing has on consumer behaviour. Indeed, influencer marketing is an effective way to build awareness (EKB model), reinforce the stimuli (Black Box model), or create a strong input (Howard-Sheth model).

3.3   Impact of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour

3.3.1   The Parasocial Relationship and Parasocial Interaction

To make the bridge between theories of consumer behaviour and the impact of influencer marketing, we should also mention the study of Horton & Whol on parasocial relationships (1956). Consumers are audiences for different media channels distributing content. We can mention television, online platforms, or social media. Consumers create a sort of "friendship" with them: TV show personalities, social media influencers, or actors. This friendship is a one-way street because the other side does not know the consumer. It is a fictive relationship. Social media brought the concept to a greater extent because consumers can now interact with these media personalities (messaging, liking, commenting). Consumers often see the same personalities again and again based on their content preferences. The authors named this a parasocial relationship. It is a parasocial interaction developed in a greater and more repetitive way. In that sense, it has been shown that parasocial relationships between social media influencers and their followers have a positive impact on their follower's intention to purchase (Lee & Watkins, 2016).

To illustrate the parasocial relationship, we can mention singers or actors. When they appear in public places, their fans are so emotional that they often start crying or shouting. That kind of emotional receptiveness is one-sided only. The star does not know them personally and does not feel attached to them as much as they are to them.

3.3.2   Theory of persuasion

What causes exactly that impact consumer behaviour? Herbert Kelman, in his "Theory Of persuasion" (1958), mentions that in order for speakers to have influence and persuade, they need a mix of three characteristics: authority, credibility and social attractiveness. Credibility is the one linking them all. When it comes to the impact of influencers on purchase decisions, the influencer's credibility is the main determinant. (O'Mahony & Meenaghan, 1988).

Credibility is even more powerful for the purchase decision than the actual parasocial relationship (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020). It reinforces the idea that influencers' endorsements are effective, considering the credibility they often have. Even though the product advertised must match their lifestyle and personality, in that sense, studies demonstrate that credibility, added by social media influencers, has a direct impact on how consumers perceive and act on brands (Nafees & al. 2021).

There have been numerous brands founded by influencers. Some of them are not experiencing the success they thought they had. Others are extremely prolific. One that we can mention is Jones Road Beauty. The brand was founded by Bobbi Brown. She is a make-up influencer with over 700k followers on Instagram. The brand is on the path to hitting $100M in revenue online in 2023. One thing that sets the brand apart from other cosmetics brands is that Bobbi brown expertise in her field is extremely high.

One of the most quoted research on influencer marketing is the one from Lou & Yuan, "How to message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media" (2019). In the study, the authors develop a new model to understand the impact of social media influencers on consumers. They call it the social media influencer model. The research wants to know the extent of the value influencers bring to advertising and how credible they are. The results of the study show that "the informative value of influencer-generated content, influencer's trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity to the followers positively affect followers' trust in influencers' branded posts, which subsequently influence brand awareness and purchase intentions. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed."

Figure 9, influencer marketing: effect of message value and credibility
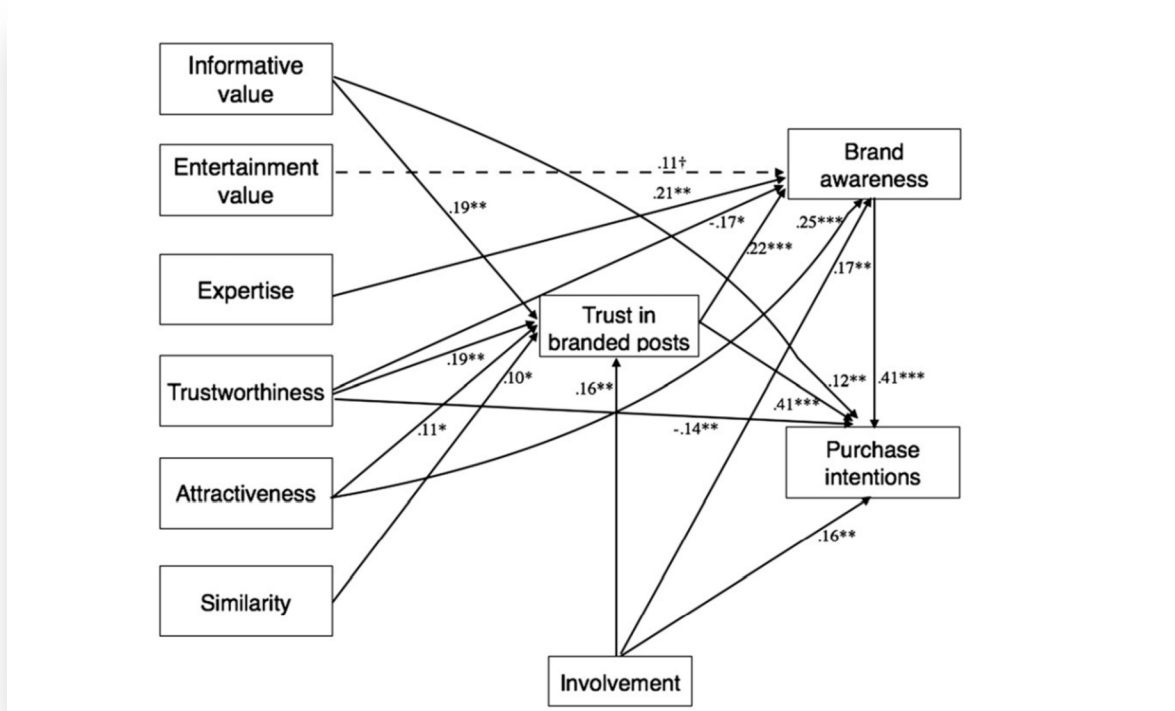
Source: Lou, 2019

In Figure 9, it is possible to see connections between different phenomena related primarily to marketing and the extent to which one is dependent on the other, according to Lou (2019).

3.4 Impact of influencer type on consumer behaviour

There are different types of influencers. They are classified based on the size of their audience: micro and macro influencers. Micro-influencers are often experts in their domain, with a number of followers that lies within the five to six-digit range. Macro-influencers, on the other hand, are in the seven-digit range number of followers. Macro-influencers often have a lower engagement rate than micro-influencers, but they do have a bigger audience. Their credibility is high thanks to their domain expertise. Their limited number of followers allows them to have stronger social media engagement (number of likes, comments, and messages per follower). In that sense, micro-influencers can connect with their audience and develop parasocial relationships. Studies show that the impact of micro-influencers on

consumer behaviour and purchase intentions is bigger than macro influencers (Park, Lee, Xions & Septianto, Seo, 2021).

The best way to describe them would be to give an example. Matthew likes cooking; he posts daily on social media and has 12K followers on Instagram. Andrea is an Instagram social media influencer, she has 500K followers and she recently went on a reality TV show. Matthew would be a micro-influencer and Andrea would be a macro-influencer. Now it does not mean that one has a greater impact on consumer behaviour than the other. But it does mean that Matthew has a smaller audience. However, as mentioned before, what matters in influence are characteristics such as credibility, trustworthiness, or homophily. Matthew could have a high engagement rate if he is credible in the cooking industry. And because he has a small number of followers, he could also have a high-quality relationship with his audience. Past studies showed that an audience exposed to a micro-influencer product placement which was disclosing the partnership had a higher level of purchase intention than a macro-influencer who was not disclosing it (Kay, Mulcahy & Parkinson, 2020).

3.5   Effect of content on consumer behaviour

No matter the format, brands should seek influencers who publish authentic content (Kapitan, van Esch, Soma & Kietzmann, 2022). However, past studies demonstrated that verbal content had a stronger impact on the consumer intention to purchase than visual content (Kim, 2008). In that sense, the researcher will mention user-generated content (UGC). User-generated content is usually posted on social media. They can come from anonymous users of a service or product. They can also come from influencers. When that happens, they are called influencer-generated content (IGC). They tend to take the form of a video in which people relate their experiences. They have a significant impact on purchasing intention and consumer behaviour (Luca, 2015).

Still, the kind of content influencers is publishing matters when it comes to consumer behaviour. However, it is much more related to the type of platform where the content is being published. Indeed, YouTube is a video platform focused on longer content than

TikTok. On YouTube, the average time of a video is 11.7 minutes (Statista, 2018). In contrast, TikTok's maximum video length is 10 minutes.

These specifics of each platform are important to consider for marketers. Indeed, a product might be better presented within a long-form video on YouTube than a too-short video on TikTok. That could apply to products that need to be explained. For example, we could mention a do-it-yourself plant that you can grow by yourself at home. This kind of product would be better explained in long-form content on YouTube. Influencers can then explain how to make it grow over time and take care of it. In comparison, a cosmetic product from a skin-care brand is easy to explain and demonstrate the benefits within a short content.

3.6 Effectiveness of marketing campaign

3.6.1 Essence

A purchase intention happens when a consumer is planning on purchasing a product knowingly from a brand (**Spears and Singh, 2004**). Also, previous studies deep-dived into which characteristics of social media influencers are pushing consumers to purchase. What was described is that originality, homophily, and expertise had the biggest impact on advertising trust from influencers. And it is this advertising trust that is enhancing consumers' purchase intention (**Li & Peng, 2021**). We can also mention how original the influencers are, the number of followers they have, and how remarkable they are, which account for the effectiveness of the influencer marketing campaign (**Leung, 2022**). This study also showed that the content should be both pleasant and informative to have a significant impact on consumers' purchase intention.

Now, when launching an influencer marketing campaign, what kind of results on investment should marketers expect? A recent study gathered data from marketers to understand influencers' marketing effectiveness. The study showed that 94% of marketers who did influencer marketing campaigns were successful with them. When asked about the ROI of such campaigns, marketers said it could go as high as 11 (**Ahmad 2018**).

After almost a decade of development in the influencer marketing market, it is to be said that both brands and influencers have experienced some misconduct. First, consumers got tired of seeing influencers promoting products everywhere on social media and hiding the fact that it was a paid partnership. A past study showed that mentioning the paid compensation on an influencer post improved the advertised message's credibility and effectiveness **(Stubb, Nyström & Colliander, 2019)**. Hence marketers must understand that not mentioning the paid partnership is counterproductive. It does not result in a hidden message that would have more impact on their campaign. The damage could be important for the brand's reputation and could also impact sales. Fake followers can also be mentioned. Few studies have been done on the matter. What can be said is that influencers have been buying fake followers to grow their audience artificially. As a result, marketers who were launching marketing campaigns with these influencers were expecting results. However, because of the part of fake followers in the audience, the results could never deliver.

Today's consumer world should learn towards a more sustainable way of shopping, to preserve our planet. The truth is the main objective of marketing, and influencer marketing is to push consumers to purchase the advertised good or service. Younger consumers such as Gen Z (born in the early 2000s) are more responsible shoppers. They fear brands that want to control influencers for the sole purpose of selling. And when that happens, they avoid both, introducing the concept of influencer avoidance **(Pradhan, 2023)**. If marketers want to keep using influencer marketing as effectively as it was, they should take the new generation's point of view into account.

3.6.2 Measurement

The source of this content is to be taken in the expert interviews the researcher conducted. They can be found later on in the research, during the practical part.

After launching the influencer marketing campaigns, marketers need to have an overview of their results. They need to measure it to get an appreciation of their ROI on the campaign. It's also crucial to understand if influencer marketing work for their brand or not. Lastly, they must measure effectively which influencer brings a higher ROI.

With that being said, they are three ways a marketer can use to measure its influencer marketing campaigns effectiveness effectively. First, marketers can send a dedicated discount code to the influencer. For example, the YouTube influencer Chyna Solder has done videos in collaboration with the e-retailer SHEIN. In her videos, she gives a 15% discount code. Thanks to it, her audience can have a 15% discount on their orders. Then, SHEIN marketers can track on their backend which orders were made using that specific discount. Hence, they can compare which influencer brought the highest number of orders and revenue.

Another way for marketers would be to send a post-purchase survey. In the survey, marketers often ask questions such as "what led you to purchase today?". If and when consumers answer "influencer", it can show a tab with all the current collaborations the brand is doing. When the consumer clicks on a name then attributes the sale to an influencer.

Lastly, marketers can send specific links with specific UTMs that link with a specific influencer campaign. UTM or Urchin Tracking Module is information that is added to any URL to track where the traffic of a website is coming from. By adding the name of the influencer on the UTM, marketers can track the exact influencer that pushed the consumer to click on the product's link.

What came out of the interview is that most marketers use all tracking techniques combined to get the most out of their attribution. It then leads to a sharper decision when it comes to choosing which influencer to work with.

4 Practical Part

4.1 Concept

Given the framework of the author's research and the current scope of methodology available, as well as techniques mastered by the author, he decided to focus on hypothesis testing as a main tool for the identification of main tendencies associated with consumption and influencer marketing. For this purpose, the author created a list of hypotheses already mentioned in the methodology of the work, which was primarily based on the relevant theoretical background discussed in the previous chapters and the author's assumptions based on the history of observing influencers and consumerism associated with the phenomenon.

Those hypotheses are mainly tested in accordance with the fundamentals of hypothesis testing, which was conducted based on formulas (1) and (2) from the methodology of the work, where either of the tests (Chi-Square test and t-test) are selected based on the type of data involved with a hypothesis. Evidently, testing was inevitably exercised based on existing data and for this purpose, the author incorporated a questionnaire, which was eventually able to help the author to capture 100 responses, thus creating a sample of one hundred observations each representing responses recorded by a given person.

Despite the fact that hypothesis testing and sampling are in general pretty common techniques, the author fully took into consideration the limitations of this research and the general limitations of using a questionnaire as the main tool for collecting data. Effectively, it is pretty complicated and challenging to capture a sample that will be representative of a given population. Furthermore, in the context of this research, the population was enormous, reflecting all consumers with access to the Internet, so the author believes that the collected sample is not representative since demographics did not perfectly represent the actual situation, as well as geography and the minimum sample size was not fully aligned with the actual situation. In contrast to all those limitations, it was still possible for the author to continue with his research under the condition that his analysis would be illustrative and it

would help to shed a brighter light on differences in consumption of people, and it would also build a foundation for the future scientific work delivered by the author.

For extracting more qualitative data, the author also implements a series of semi-structured interviews with participants from three different categories – a consumer, an influencer and a brand owner.

4.2 Data

Finally, it was wise to proceed to the specification of data used by the author in his analysis and to the description of variables incorporated into the survey. Evidently, one of the most significant limitations of the questionnaire as a tool for gathering data was the problem that responses generated by people do not often reflect the profound feelings of participants. On the other hand, questionnaires provide an excellent foundation for hypothesis testing. Therefore, the author decided to incorporate a series of questions that will help to split the original sample into smaller categories, such as gender, age categories, and people following social media influencers and not.

In addition to those categories, the author asked a series of questions mainly related to the attitude that people have towards different aspects of marketing and personal consumption. The full transcript of the questionnaire is available in the appendix of the dataset alongside distributions of answers for each question, where questions alongside answering options were specified. Ultimately, the total number of variables (questions) that were included in the questionnaire is equal to 19, which offered the author a perfect opportunity to cover all planned hypotheses and also extract valuable insights into the way how different people feel about influencers and social media marketing as a whole. In the next chapter, the author proceeded to the description of people who were engaged in the participation in the analysis.

4.3 Participants

Of course, given the main leitmotif of the work, it was quite essential to understand that the phenomenon of influencers and movements that they create are inevitably associated

with the Internet. Therefore, it was wise to say that the author considers just people using the Internet as the population and this population was surely enough an enormous one, which boils to the fact that the analysis itself was an illustrative one. Consequently, it is wise to say that the author was engaging mainly acquaintances and friends from both France and the Czech Republic – two countries, which were associated with the author's personal life and career.

The questionnaire was distributed with the help of social media platforms and messengers, such as Facebook, Instagram and Telegram, where the third one proved itself to be the most effective. The platform, which hosted all questions created by the author and enabled participants to register their attitudes and answers was Google Forms, which is a very common platform for similar kinds of research. Consequently, the author was able to reach the planned boundary of 100 observations within 25 days – on the 17th of February with the starting date of research on the 23rd of January. In Table 1, a brief overview of the part of the dataset that was eventually created is presented. The author, as he already mentioned in his methodology, relied on the SPSS software for the hypothesis testing.

Source: own processing

Table 1, part of the collected dataset

	Doyoufollowanysocialmediainfluencers	Whatsyourgender	Howoldareyou	Howoftendoyouengagewithinfluencercontentonsocialmedia
1	Yes	Male	1	4
2	No	Female	2	1
3	Yes	Female	1	1
4	No	Male	2	1
5	No	Male	2	1
6	Yes	Female	2	4
7	Yes	Female	1	2
8	No	Male	2	1
9	Yes	Female	2	3
10	Yes	Female	1	4
11	Yes	Female	2	3

In addition to all that, for the series of semi-structured interviews, the author engages three different participants, where the first person is an ordinary consumer actively using the Internet, the second person is an influencer actively utilizing social media, and the third one is an owner of a small clothing brand located in Prague, the Czech Republic.

4.4 Hypotheses

Clearly, the author had already specified the series of hypotheses that were to be tested in the practical part of the work and would also be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. At the same time, it was important to explain the selection of hypotheses and the assumptions that the author had in relation to them. The author would consequently, step by step, explain the choice of each hypothesis from the methodology of this diploma thesis.

The first hypothesis that was tested in the practical part was related to two variables – following social media influencers and gender. The author's assumption was that women were more prone to following social media influencers, and this assumption was underpinned by reports mentioned in the theoretical part of the work, where for the case of the US, the share of women using social media was slightly higher. Consequently, the author believed that two variables would be related, and this relatedness would be justified by existing differences between genders. Additionally, it is needed to be said that the author incorporated another hypothesis, which was tested in the end (under the number 13) and that one was related to age and following social media influencers.

The second hypothesis was related to two variables: frequency of engaging with influencer content and gender, where the idea of the hypothesis was quite the same as with the first one. Yet, this hypothesis involved a slightly different testing procedure, so it would help the author to analyze the same phenomenon through a different lens.

For the third hypothesis, the author incorporated two variables again, where the first variable was related to having a particular feeling towards an influencer's endorsements and gender. The author suggested that women might be more prone to having a particular feeling towards promotion made by influencers due to their higher engagement with social media,

which was also expected to be concluded. The fourth hypothesis was related to gender and purchases caused by an influencer's endorsement. The author groups two hypotheses in the same paragraph because they are partially related and justified by the author's belief that women are more prone to be affected by influencers' suggestions.

The fifth hypothesis offered a slightly different overview, where the attitude towards purchasing caused by an influencer's endorsement was expected to be highly related to age. The author believed that even for older people who use the Internet, the attitude towards purchases caused by influencer endorsement was quite likely to be negative.

The sixth hypothesis was about the relation between the decision not to purchase a product because of suspicion of the ingenuity of the influencer and gender, where the author believes that male participants are more likely to overlook the honesty of influencers. The seventh hypothesis replaced the gender variable by age, where the idea of the author was that older participants are also less likely to be caring much about the honesty of influencers advertising something.

Eighth and ninth hypotheses were associated with the variable of unfollowing influencers because of promotion. For the eighth hypothesis, the second variable for which the relation with unfollowing was tested was gender, where the author believed that women are generally more prone to unfollow somebody that they do not like, while for the ninth hypothesis, the author associated the aforementioned key variable with the variable of age, where younger participants would not be so sensitive towards issues caused by influencers, so they were not expected to unfollow somebody due to the fact that they come across advertisements on the Internet more often, while older participants could be more sensitive towards the issue.

The tenth hypothesis was related to the fact of continuing to follow influencers after discovering that they do not honestly believe in the product that they advertise and the relation of the mentioned variable to the variable of gender. The author suggested that women would be more critical and they would get rid of the influencer causing negative

emotions and disturbance, shifting to other, more pleasant personas. At the same time, male participants would be less likely to do so.

The eleventh hypothesis of the author was: following social media and having a particular feeling towards an influencer's endorsement are related. The author believes that users of the Internet who do not really follow social media would have a more critical and negative opinion about influencer marketing in general.

Finally, the author believed that two variables: having a feeling of growing scepticism towards influencer endorsement over time and gender, were to be categorized as related. The author underpinned the presence of the hypothesis with the assumption that men are generally more prone to scepticism in general (Ratna, 2020), especially when it comes to relatively new and dubious practices, such as influencer marketing, which certainly is a phenomenon not introduced a long ago.

Eventually, in the next chapter of the thesis, the author gradually tested each hypothesis according to the relevant procedure, but before doing so, he presented an overview of responses for each question compiled in bar charts generated in SPSS for hypotheses that involve two categorical variables.

4.5 Testing

Before processing the hypothesis testing and showing the results of each hypothesis tested, it was wise to suggest that the author had recorded some of the answers (Likert scale ones) into a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 shows the lowest level of response to 5, which indicated the highest level of response. The author started with the first hypothesis, where social media and gender were analyzed. In Figure 10, the author presents bar charts for the hypothesis.

Figure 10, bar chart for the first hypothesis
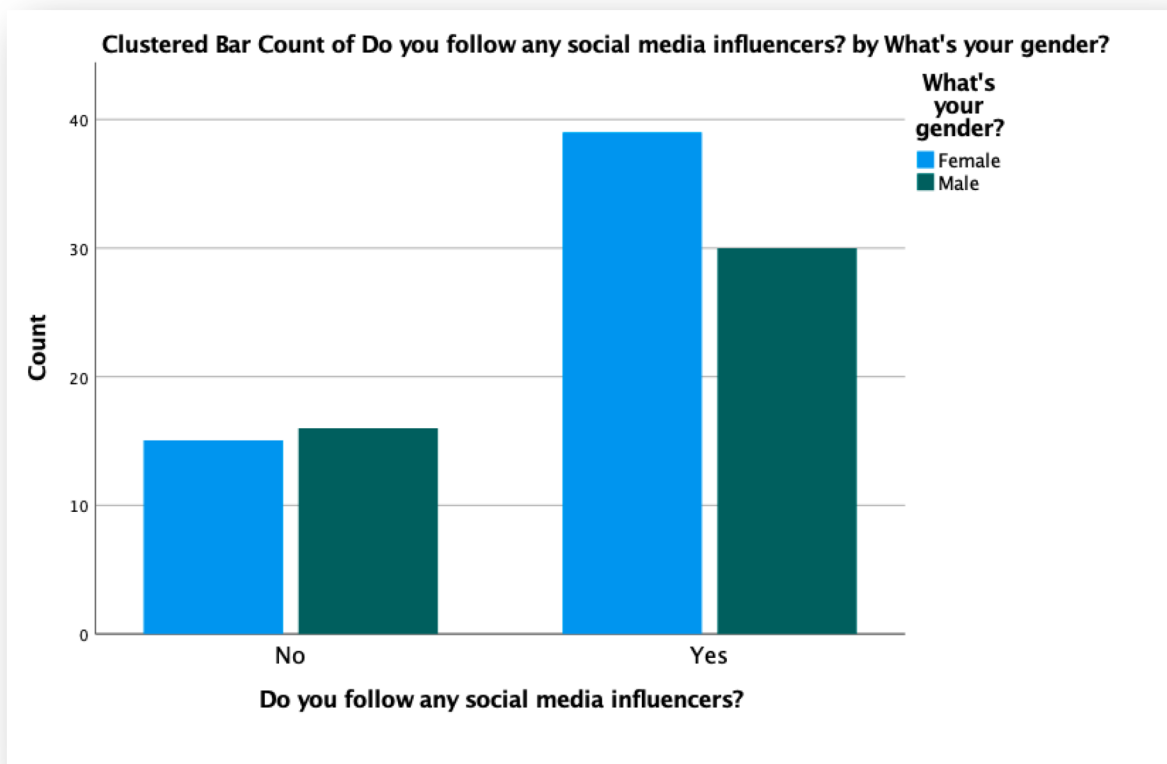
Source: own processing

Based on the bar chart from Figure 10 for the first hypothesis, which involved two variables – following social media influencers and gender, it is wise to say that the overwhelming share of participants indeed did follow influencers and seemingly, gender did not seem to be a factor that created significant differences in tendencies related to either

following or not following influencers, which was somewhat different from what had been assumed by the author. However, before drawing any insights, it was fundamental to test the hypothesis first. For the test of this hypothesis, the author used the application whose name had already been mentioned numerous times earlier (SPSS) and used the Chi-square testing procedure needed for two categorical variables. In Table 2, the author shows the output according to which the test was done.

Table 2, output from SPSS for the first hypothesis

Do you follow any social media influencers? * What's your gender? Crosstabulation

Count

		What's your gender?		Total
		Female	Male	
Do you follow any social media influencers?	No	15	16	31
	Yes	39	30	69
Total		54	46	100

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.570[a]	1	.450		
Continuity Correction[b]	.289	1	.591		
Likelihood Ratio	.569	1	.451		
Fisher's Exact Test				.518	.295
N of Valid Cases	100				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 14.26.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Source: own processing

The author followed an ordinary sequence of hypothesis testing, which involved the creation of the null hypothesis and an alternative. The steps are described as follows:

- Ho: Following social media influencers and gender are not related

- Ha: Following social media influencers and gender are related
- 0.450 > 0.05 => Ho was not rejected. Ha is assumed.

The author suggested that there is insufficient evidence to support the claim that gender is an important factor that can create differences in tendencies related to following social media influencers. Then, the author proceeded to the second hypothesis, where the frequency of engaging with influencer content and gender were analyzed. For this hypothesis, the author used the first formula from the work's methodology, and the author previously had recoded the variable of frequency so that a t-test could be conducted. In Table 3, the author presents the parameters for the testing procedure.

Table 3, output from SPSS for the second hypothesis

Group Statistics

	What's your gender?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How often do you engage with influencer content on social media?	Male	46	2.48	1.169	.172
	Female	54	2.72	1.188	.162

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
How often do you engage with influencer content on social media?	Equal variances assumed	.000	.984	−1.031	98	.153	.305	−.244	.237	−.714	.226
	Equal variances not assumed			−1.032	95.962	.152	.305	−.244	.236	−.713	.225

Source: own processing

- Ho: There is no difference in the frequency of engaging with influencers' content according to gender.
- Ha: There is a difference in the frequency of engaging with influencer content according to gender.
- Variances are equal (0.984 > 0.05)
- 0.305 > 0.05 => Ho about no difference was not rejected.

Effectively, it could be said that the frequency of engaging with influencers' content differed between men and women, according to averages for frequencies, so there was not

enough evidence to support the author's claim about different frequencies of engaging for men and women. The author proceeded to the third hypothesis by once again implementing the technique of t-tests. The third hypothesis involves the variable of gender and having a particular feeling towards influencer endorsement. The result of the hypothesis testing is presented in Table 4.

Table 4, output from SPSS for the third hypothesis

Group Statistics

	What's your gender?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How do you feel about influencer endorsements in general?	Male	46	2.78	1.009	.149
	Female	54	3.19	.892	.121

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
						Significance				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
How do you feel about influencer endorsements in general?	Equal variances assumed	1.584	.211	−2.118	98	.018	.037	−.403	.190	−.780	−.025
	Equal variances not assumed			−2.097	90.704	.019	.039	−.403	.192	−.784	−.021

Source: own processing

- Ho: There is no difference in attitude towards influencer endorsements according to gender.
- Ha: There is a difference in attitude towards influencer endorsements according to gender.
- Variances are equal (0.211 > 0.05)
- 0.037 < 0.05 => Ho about no difference was rejected. Consequently, the author suggested that there was a difference in the attitude towards influencer endorsements according to gender, with better feelings identified among women (3.19 for women compared to 2.78 for men).

Based on the results of the hypothesis testing, the author assumed that the difference in the average evaluation of one's attitude towards influencer endorsements is high enough to suggest that gender is a significant factor when it comes to influencing the attitude towards endorsements of influencers. For the fourth hypothesis, the author tested if there were any differences in the average perception or attitude towards purchasing caused by an influencer's endorsement according to gender. The result is presented in Table 5.

Table 5, output from SPSS for the fourth hypothesis

Group Statistics

	What's your gender?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How likely are you to purchase a product recommended by an influencer you follow on social media?	Male	46	2.48	1.049	.155
	Female	54	2.87	1.010	.137

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
						Significance				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
How likely are you to purchase a product recommended by an influencer you follow on social media?	Equal variances assumed	.600	.440	−1.901	98	.030	.060	−.392	.206	−.801	.017
	Equal variances not assumed			−1.895	94.261	.031	.061	−.392	.207	−.803	.019

Source: own processing

- Ho: There is no difference in willingness to purchase products after an influencer's endorsement according to gender.
- Ha: There is a difference in willingness to purchase products after an influencer's endorsement according to gender.
- Variances are equal (0.44 > 0.05)
- 0.06 > 0.05 => Ho about no difference was not rejected. It is possible to say that despite the average difference in the evaluation (2.87 for women and 2.48 for men), this difference was not statistically high enough to believe that there are differences in attitude towards the phenomenon according to gender.

For the fifth hypothesis, the author replaced the gender variable from the previous hypothesis testing with the age variable. The author used the same hypothesis testing technique (t-test) and proceeded to the evaluation of the results in Table 6 presented on the next page of the diploma thesis.

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Table 6, output from SPSS for the fifth hypothesis

Group Statistics

	How old are you?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How likely are you to purchase a product recommended by an influencer you follow on social media?	Young	80	2.85	.969	.108
	Mature	20	2.05	1.099	.246

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
						Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
How likely are you to purchase a product recommended by an influencer you follow on social media?	Equal variances assumed	1.359	.247	3.214	98	<.001	.002	.800	.249	.306	1.294
	Equal variances not assumed			2.979	26.861	.003	.006	.800	.269	.249	1.351

Source: own processing

- Ho: There is no difference in willingness to purchase products after an influencer's endorsement according to age.
- Ha: There is a difference in willingness to purchase products after an influencer's endorsement according to age.
- Variances are equal (0.247 > 0.05)
- 0.002 < 0.05 => Ho about no difference was rejected. It is possible to say that compared to the previous hypothesis, where gender was selected as a factor for separating responses, age is, in fact a significant factor. Younger participants (2.85) are more likely to purchase goods recommended by influencers compared to older participants (2.05), and according to the hypothesis testing, it can be said with a certain degree of confidence that this difference is significant.

The sixth hypothesis was related to the decision not to buy a product upon suspecting that an influencer was not honest in his promotion and also to gender, where the author believed that men would be less sensitive so such issues. First, it was essential to take a look at the overview of responses, which is presented in Figure 11.

Figure 11, bar chart for the sixth hypothesis

Clustered Bar Count of Have you ever decided not to purchase a product because you suspected the influencer's endorsement was not genuine? by What's your gender?
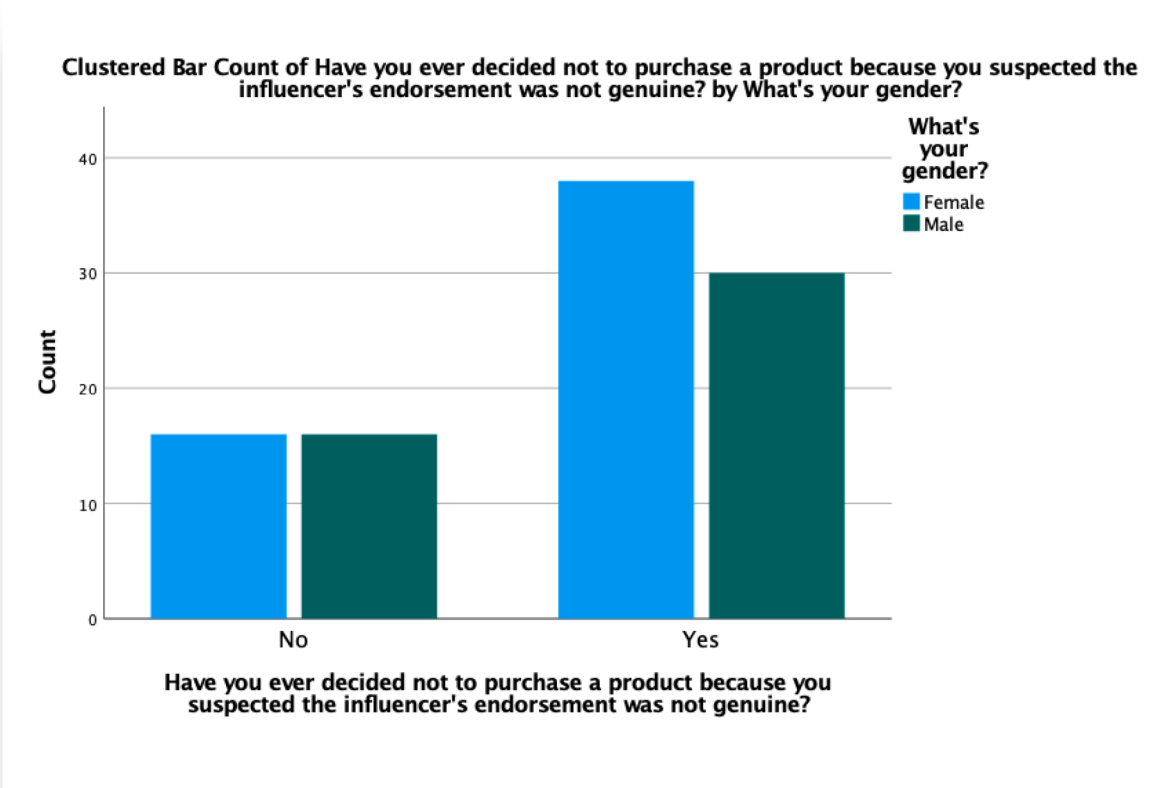
Source: own processing

Undoubtedly, the share of people who have at one point decided not to buy something because of doubts about the honesty of influencers was surprisingly high, which suggested that the majority of people who participated in the study were rather sensitive towards the issue. Effectively, it was visible that the share of women not deciding to buy something was slightly higher than for men with the same attitude. Then, the author returned to the Chi-square technique in order to test the hypothesis based on the results in Table 7.

Table 7, output from SPSS for the sixth hypothesis

Have you ever decided not to purchase a product because you suspected the influencer's endorsement was not genuine? * What's your gender? Crosstabulation

Count

| | | What's your gender? | | Total |
		Female	Male	
Have you ever decided not to purchase a product because you suspected the influencer's endorsement was not genuine?	No	16	16	32
	Yes	38	30	68
Total		54	46	100

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.303[a]	1	.582		
Continuity Correction[b]	.113	1	.737		
Likelihood Ratio	.303	1	.582		
Fisher's Exact Test				.669	.368
N of Valid Cases	100				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 14.72.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Source: own processing

- Ho: deciding on not purchasing a good because of an influencer's dishonesty and gender are not related

- Ha: deciding on not to purchase a good because of an influencer's dishonesty and gender are related

- $0.582 > 0.05$ => Ho was not rejected. Ha is assumed. Consequently, it was possible to suggest that gender was not statistically related to the other variable due to the absence of differences between them. Therefore, both genders are likely to have the same attitude towards the issue since the null was not rejected.

Hypothesis number seven was a hypothesis where the idea was quite similar to the one, which had already been tested and explained, but the variable of gender was once again replaced with the variable of age. Therefore, the same testing technique was applied, where the overview of responses was analyzed in the first place, and then the interpretation of the testing related to the particular case was made by the author. The bar chart for the question is presented in Figure 12.

Figure 12, bar chart for the seventh hypothesis
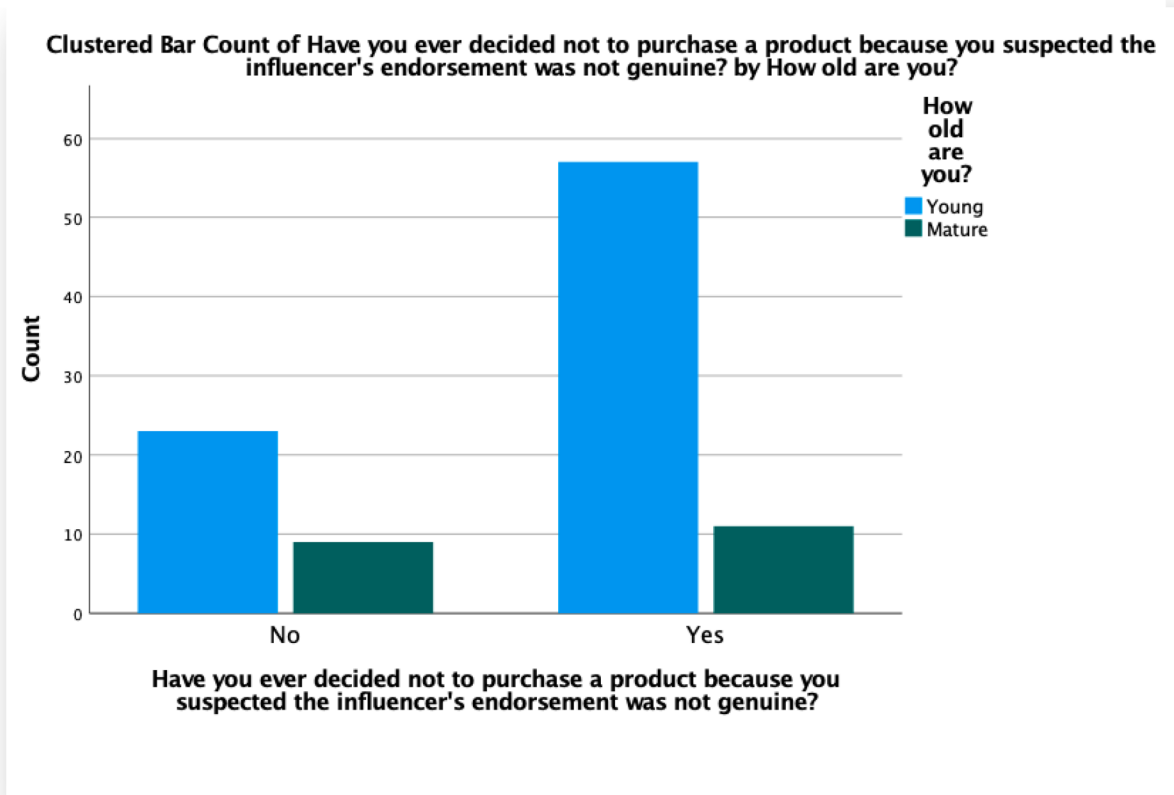
Source: own processing

Based on the bar charts for the seventh hypothesis, it was pretty evident that age was a significant factor that creates differences in the fact of either deciding on buying something or not buying, with a higher share being identified for younger participants, which might be justified by the fact that younger participants were expected to be highly more active in the domain of social media compared to older participants. Nevertheless, the author proceeded

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to the hypothesis testing to identify if those differences were sufficient enough to claim that there was a statistical relationship between the two variables in Table 8.

Table 8, output from SPSS for the seventh hypothesis

Have you ever decided not to purchase a product because you suspected the influencer's endorsement was not genuine? * How old are you? Crosstabulation

Count

		How old are you?		Total
		Young	Mature	
Have you ever decided not to purchase a product because you suspected the influencer's endorsement was not genuine?	No	23	9	32
	Yes	57	11	68
Total		80	20	100

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.942[a]	1	.163		
Continuity Correction[b]	1.267	1	.260		
Likelihood Ratio	1.865	1	.172		
Fisher's Exact Test				.186	.131
N of Valid Cases	100				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.40.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Source: own processing

- Ho: deciding on not purchasing a good because of the influencer's dishonesty and age are not related
- Ha: deciding on not purchasing a good because of an influencer's dishonesty and age are related

- 0.163 > 0.05 => Ho was not rejected. Ha is assumed. Despite the visual difference indicated in Figure 12, there was not enough evidence to support the author's claim about differences caused by age in the decision of either purchasing or not purchasing goods because of suspected dishonesty from influencers.

The eighth and ninth hypotheses were associated with the variable of being prompt to unfollow influencers because of promotion, while in the first place, the author was interested in identifying if gender was a significant factor creating differences in the personal evaluation of being prone to the phenomenon. For these two hypotheses, the author used t-tests again, with the results for the hypothesis testing associated with gender being presented in Table 9.

Table 9, output from SPSS for the eighth hypothesis

Group Statistics

	What's your gender?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Have you ever unfollowed an influencer because of the amount of promotional content they were posting?	Male	46	2.20	.749	.110
	Female	54	2.15	.763	.104

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
						Significance				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Have you ever unfollowed an influencer because of the amount of promotional content they were posting?	Equal variances assumed	.000	.985	.313	98	.377	.755	.048	.152	−.254	.349
	Equal variances not assumed			.314	96.003	.377	.755	.048	.152	−.253	.348

Source: own processing

- Ho: There is no difference in being prompted to unfollow influencers because of promotion according to gender.
- Ha: There is a difference in being prompt to unfollow influencers because of promotion according to gender.
- Variances are equal (0.985 > 0.05)
- 0.755 > 0.05 => Ho about no difference was not rejected, and based on the analysis, it could be said that different genders have a different attitudes towards unfollowing

influencers because of promotion as the difference between averages (2.2 for men and 2.15) was not statistically big enough to claim the difference between genders.

Then, the author continued to the ninth hypothesis, where the variable of gender was replaced with age, which was expected to provide a higher difference in attitudes. The results generated from SPSS are presented in Table 10.

Table 10, output from SPSS for the ninth hypothesis

Group Statistics

	How old are you?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Have you ever unfollowed an influencer because of the amount of promotional content they were posting?	Young	80	2.19	.695	.078
	Mature	20	2.10	.968	.216

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
						Significance				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Have you ever unfollowed an influencer because of the amount of promotional content they were posting?	Equal variances assumed	12.369	<.001	.463	98	.322	.644	.087	.189	−.287	.462
	Equal variances not assumed			.380	24.121	.353	.707	.087	.230	−.387	.562

Source: own processing

- Ho: There is no difference in being prompt to unfollow influencers because of promotion according to age.
- Ha: There is a difference in being prompt to unfollow influencers because of promotion according to age.
- Variances are not equal ($0.001 < 0.05$)
- $0.664 > 0.05$ => Ho about no difference was not rejected and based on the analysis, it could be said that age is not a significant factor that would make one particular people to being more prone to unfollow somebody because of frequent promotions or posts associated with advertising. Evidently, there was a slight difference in the personal evaluation (2.19 for younger participants compared to 2.10 for older ones), but this difference could not be categorized as a significant one, so it is expected that age is also not a significant factor when it comes to the issue.

The tenth hypothesis was about continuing to follow influencers even despite discovering that they do not honestly appreciate the product that they had been advertising and the relation of this variable to the variable of gender. The author once again used a t-test due to the fact that the first variable involved a scale-like type of answers, which were initially recorded on a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 is the highest level of response and 1 is the lowest one. In Table 11, the author presents the results from the SPSS.

Table 11, output from SPSS for the tenth hypothesis

Group Statistics

	What's your gender?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How likely are you to continue following an influencer if you discover they have endorsed a product they do not use or believe in?	Male	46	2.26	1.124	.166
	Female	54	2.20	1.188	.162

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
						Significance				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
How likely are you to continue following an influencer if you discover they have endorsed a product they do not use or believe in?	Equal variances assumed	.394	.532	.246	98	.403	.806	.057	.233	-.404	.519
	Equal variances not assumed			.247	96.886	.403	.805	.057	.232	-.402	.517

Source: own processing

- Ho: There is no difference in the personal evaluation of the likelihood to continue to follow influencers after discovering suspected dishonesty in advertising according to gender
- Ha: There is a difference in the personal evaluation of the likelihood to continue to follow influencers after discovering suspected dishonesty in advertising according to gender
- Variances are equal (0.532 > 0.05)
- 0.806 > 0.05 => Ho about no difference was not rejected, and based on the analysis, it could be said that both genders' evaluation of the issue was somewhat identical and even despite minor differences in the personal evaluation (0.06 points), it could not be said that age is a significant factor when it comes to the question.

Hypothesis number 11 involved two variables, where the first one is categorical – following social media and the second one was represented by a scale – having a particular feeling towards influencer endorsement, where 5 represented the best attitude and 1 represented the worst. The author then proceeded to the hypothesis testing according to the t-test technique, with the result shown in Table 12.

Table 12, output from SPSS for the eleventh hypothesis

Group Statistics

	Do you follow any social media influencers?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How do you feel about influencer endorsements in general?	Yes	69	3.25	.847	.102
	No	31	2.45	.995	.179

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
						Significance				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
How do you feel about influencer endorsements in general?	Equal variances assumed	1.728	.192	4.107	98	<.001	<.001	.795	.194	.411	1.179
	Equal variances not assumed			3.864	50.386	<.001	<.001	.795	.206	.382	1.208

Source: own processing

- Ho: There is no difference in the evaluation of attitudes towards influencer endorsements according to the status of social media
- Ha: There is a difference in the evaluation of attitudes towards influencer endorsements according to the status of social media
- Variances are equal (0.192 > 0.05)
- 0.001 < 0.05 => Ho about no difference was rejected. Clearly, the factual difference identified after comparing means (3.25 for people following social media influencers and 2.45 for people not following influencers) was high enough to suggest that the attitude of people who follow social media towards influencer endorsements was higher than for those who had not been following any social media.

Hypothesis number twelve was the one where the evaluation of one's growing scepticism towards an influencer's endorsement over time was analyzed alongside the variable of gender. The author proceeded to the hypothesis testing in Table 13.

Table 13, output from SPSS for the twelfth hypothesis

Group Statistics

	What's your gender?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Have you become more or less skeptical of influencer endorsements over time?	Male	46	3.89	.971	.143
	Female	54	3.94	.878	.119

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
						Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
Have you become more or less skeptical of influencer endorsements over time?	Equal variances assumed	.638	.426	-.287	98	.387	.774	-.053	.185	-.420	.314
	Equal variances not assumed			-.285	91.704	.388	.776	-.053	.186	-.424	.317

Source: own processing

- Ho: There is no difference in the evaluation of growing scepticism over time towards influencer endorsement according to gender.

- Ha: There is a difference in the evaluation of growing scepticism over time towards influencer endorsement according to gender.

- Variances are equal (0.426 > 0.05)

- 0.774 > 0.05 => Ho about no difference was not rejected. Effectively, the author did not register significance in the mean evaluation of scepticism towards influencer endorsement according to gender – the factual difference was not high enough to consider that different genders might have either more or less degree of scepticism towards endorsement. Based on the average values, it could be said that both genders were actually prone to having a relatively high degree of scepticism, which is higher than the level of 3, which was the neutrality point.

Finally, the very last hypothesis that was tested in the author's practical part concerned two variables again, where the first variable was following social media and the second one was age. The author proceeded to the overview of responses in Figure 13.

Figure 13, bar chart for the thirteenth hypothesis
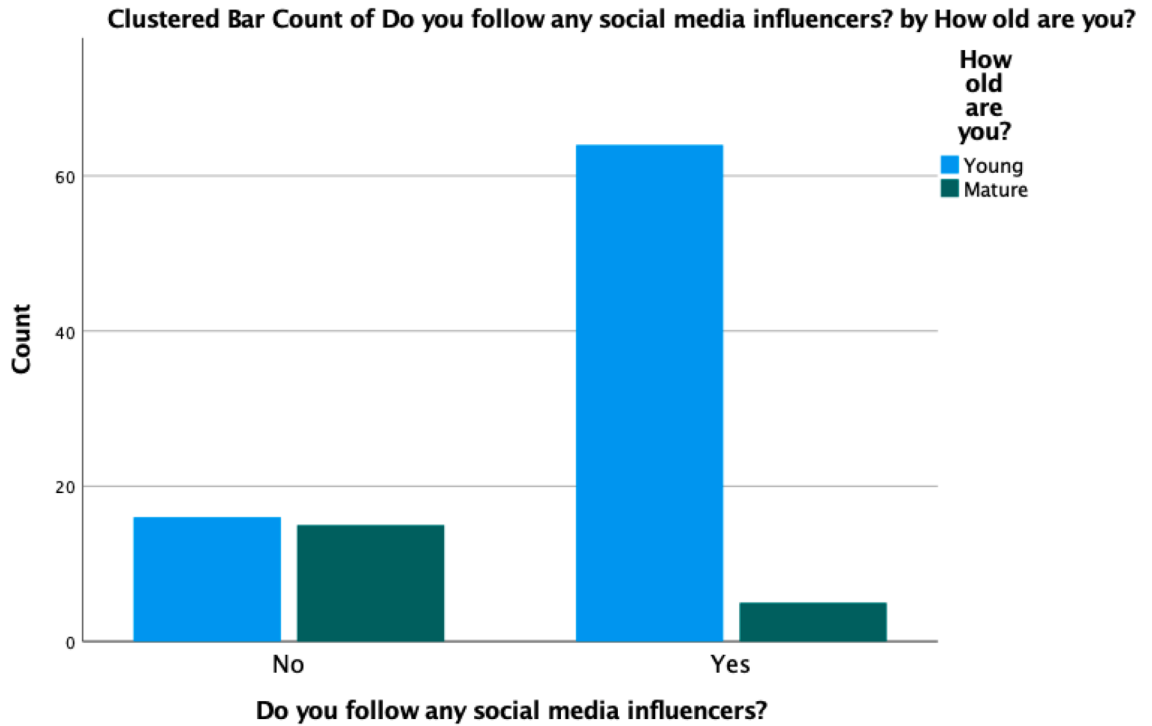
Source: own processing

Based on the overview, it was pretty evident that the difference in shares was pretty enormous between young and older participants of the questionnaire. The author then proceeded to the hypothesis testing based on the parameters for testing generated and indicated in Table 14.

Table 14, output from SPSS for the thirteenth hypothesis

Do you follow any social media influencers? * How old are you? Crosstabulation

Count

		How old are you?		
		Young	Mature	Total
Do you follow any social media influencers?	No	16	15	31
	Yes	64	5	69
Total		80	20	100

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.627[a]	1	<.001		
Continuity Correction[b]	20.129	1	<.001		
Likelihood Ratio	21.262	1	<.001		
Fisher's Exact Test				<.001	<.001
N of Valid Cases	100				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.20.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Source: own processing

- Ho: following social media influencers and age are not related

- Ha: following social media influencers and age are related

- 0.001 < 0.05 => Ho was rejected. Ha was assumed. Clearly, based on the conclusion from the hypothesis testing, the author could suggest that there is enough evidence to support the claim that age is a significant factor influencing the variable of following social media.

After concluding and testing all hypotheses, the author proceeded to the results and discussion section of the diploma thesis, where the author summarized his findings,

compared them with the findings of relevant researchers, and also interpreted the results and suspected particular tendencies behind each hypothesis testing and the output of the testing.

4.6 Semi-Structured Interviews

Before proceeding to the results and discussion chapter, the author also conducted three semi-structured interviews with a person representing the consumer group, a person representing the influencer group and a person representing the brand owner group. All interviews were conducted via Google Meet and were done in English. All three participants live in the Czech Republic. The full transcript of the interviews is available in the appendix of the diploma thesis. In Table 15, the author presents a summary of the most important insights from those interviews as well as a comparison of responses to the same questions.

Table 15, an overview of semi-structured interviews

Question	Consumer	Influencer	Brand Owner
Name	Robert	Diana	Azat
Age	35 years old	26 years old	23 years old
Active in social media	From 2009-2010, started with Facebook	From 2007, has 20,000 on Instagram in 2023	From the beginning of the 2010s
Origin of acquiring information about products	Internet and TV	Influencer reviews	Visiting stores and checking them
Attitude towards influencers	Sceptical	Positive	Positive
Buying after seeing something used by an influencer	Does not think it ever played a huge role	Happened frequently	Happened from time to time
Agreement with "the scale of influencer market will get bigger."	Agrees, but to some extent feels sceptical about it	Agrees but is afraid of the government pressure	Sceptical, thinks that it can be replaced by something else

Source: own processing

5 Results and Discussion

5.1 Summary and Comparison

Before proceeding to the interpretation of the results, the author believes that it is downright essential to provide a summary of the results of the hypothesis testing. For this purpose, the author presents the list of hypotheses and the eventual result of the testing in Table 16.

Table 16, a summary of the practical part

#	Hypothesis	Result
1	Following social media influencers and gender are related.	Not related.
2	There is a difference in the frequency of engaging with influencer content according to gender.	No difference.
3	There is a difference in attitude towards influencer endorsements according to gender.	There is a statistical difference.
4	There is a difference in willingness to purchase products after an influencer's endorsement according to gender.	No difference.
5	There is a difference in willingness to purchase products after an influencer's endorsement according to age	There is a statistical difference.
6	Decisions on not purchasing a product because of an influencer's dishonesty and gender are related.	Not related.
7	Decisions on not purchasing a product because of an influencer's dishonesty and age are related.	Not related.
8	There is a difference in being prompt to unfollow influencers because of promotion according to gender.	No difference.
9	There is a difference in being prompt to unfollow influencers because of promotion according to age	No difference.

10	There is a difference in the personal evaluation of the likelihood of continuing to follow influencers after discovering suspected dishonesty in advertising according to gender.	No difference.
11	There is a difference in the evaluation of attitudes towards influencer endorsements according to following social media	There is a statistical difference.
12	There is a difference in the evaluation of growing scepticism over time towards influencer endorsement according to gender	No difference.
13	Following social media influencers and age are related	Variables are related.

Source: own processing

Surely, when taking a look at the list of hypotheses and the effective outcome of each hypothesis testing, it becomes obvious that the author was somewhat right with particular hypotheses, which were not rejected. The author will gradually assess each hypothesis which had not been rejected and compare his findings with the findings of other authors while he will also quickly reflect on other hypotheses.

First, starting with the hypothesis about an attitude towards influencer endorsement and promotion exercised by influencers in general. According to the result of the hypothesis testing, this average evaluation is different for men and women, and the extent to which there is a difference is statistically significant. Indeed, women have a more positive attitude towards promotion exercised by influencers, while men have a more negative attitude (the evaluation is lower than the neutral point, which was coded in 3). The author believes that due to the fact that women follow social media slightly more, this eventually results in the fact that they are less sensitive to negative feelings towards influencer endorsements and promotion. A study by Hudders (2022), in fact, revealed a similar tendency. According to his study, the original assumption was that there would be a difference in the effect of endorsement, as well as attitude towards this endorsement, depending on the gender of an influencer. However, the author suggested that this is not true, whilst this is true in relation to the attitude of consumers, where gender is an essential factor that, to some extent, influences the way how consumers perceive influencer endorsement. Clearly, when comparing the results of the two studies, it becomes pretty apparent that the author of the

thesis somewhat coincides with Hundders (2022), and he suggests that gender is an important factor that defines an attitude towards influencer promotion. Also, another study, this time by Gupta (2022), can explain the tendency identified by the author through a different lens. Traditionally, women are more prone to follow influencers whose content is much stronger associated with product placement and endorsement, such as the beauty segment, so this is a way of explaining why women have a better attitude in general towards endorsement.

When it comes to the second hypothesis that was revealed not to be fully rejected, the author suggests that age is a crucial factor that defines people's willingness to purchase goods advertised by influencers, with younger participants being more likely to purchase goods promoted by influencers. Surely, one of the ways of explaining this phenomenon is the fact that older participants are generally less prone to the usage of social media and following influencers on social media. At the same time, even for those participants who are older and follow influencers, their willingness to buy something advertised by influencers is lower. Therefore, the author believes that age remains a crucial factor that defines differences between different people when it comes to willingness to buy something recently seen in the hands of one's favourite supervisor. Al-Shehri (2021) is also of the opinion that age is an essential factor that is almost certainly likely to affect consumer behaviour in relation not just towards goods advertised and promoted by influencers but also towards digital marketing, as older people are more accustomed to buying goods based on reviews and personal verification of them, which is partially associated with a higher degree of scepticism. The author is of the same opinion, and he believes that willingness to buy is highly effective by age and not by gender.

Then, when it comes to the hypothesis about the evaluation of one's attitude towards influencers in general and following social media platforms or not, it is wise to say that people who use social media are prone to having a better attitude towards influencer marketing, which is not at all surprising. The author believes that the phenomenon is not surprising due to 2 reasons: first, people who constantly observe a phenomenon might at one point at the time decide to buy something, and based on the positive experience with the product, their attitude might be more positive; second, the author suggests that people not

using social media might not be using them for the very reason of having either contempt or prejudice towards influencers and practices exercised on those platforms. Clearly, the phenomenon of social media has grown so much power that it is quite rare to encounter a person who would not have any social media account or influencers, especially when talking about younger generations. The author's findings are quite similar to the findings of Youn (2020).

Finally, the last hypothesis that was tested by the author was related to age and the following social media influencers, where effectively, younger participants are significantly more willing to follow social media influencers, which is revealed by the author's hypothesis testing. Clearly, the main explanation lies in the fact that people are quite sceptical of new movements that have not really existed before, so it is not surprising that for a lot of people from the older generation, the phenomenon of social media influencers is considered to be an alien one. However, it is also wise to say that there are people from older generations who equally follow influencers, but their share is significantly lower when compared to those who do not do it. The author's findings are similar to Al-Shehri (2021).

Finally, before proceeding to the conclusion of the diploma thesis, it is wise to say that for the overwhelming majority of hypotheses and especially for those related to practices with social media and influencers, gender was not categorized as an essential factor that, to some extent influences people's behaviour in relation to influencers and influencer marketing. The author's suggestions and findings of the questionnaire analysis are also, to some extent, underpinned by deeper conversations that the author had with three participants of the series of semi-structured interviews. The author believes that the reason is that all social media platforms and influencer markets, in general, are segmented into smaller niches or domains, where people are given an equal choice to select and watch what they like. Thus, women usually follow what is interesting to them, while men follow other domains and specializations. For this purpose, it is wise to say that there are generally no differences between genders in almost every aspect when talking about the general phenomenon of influencer marketing, while there might be some differences when focusing on particular segments, platforms or niches.

5.2 Recommendations

For the main recommendation, the author suggests expanding the framework of the given research by trying to narrow down segments that will be analyzed, such as, for instance, exploring the perception of endorsements on Facebook, Instagram or any other platform specifically. In addition to that, the author believes that the same can be done in relation to particular segments of influencer movements, such as selecting a particular niche or domain, such as, for instance, the beauty or travelling segment.

In addition to that, the author believes that reducing the population and focusing on a particular case, such as the population of students of a given university or country, would be a good idea that will help to create a more representative sample and therefore reach better results that can effectively contribute to the current scientific framework published on the very subject of influencer marketing and consumer behaviour attributed with the aforementioned phenomenon.

As for the recommendation to companies, influencers and consumers, the author believes that it is wise to stress out the importance of the influencer marketing for small companies, such as the one of the interviewed persons. Effectively, the author recommends small brands just starting their journey in the business world to consider the option of cooperating with influencers since it offers them a perfect marketing option with just little expenses considering the idea of cooperating with small and mid-scale bloggers. At the same time, the author suggests that brand owners should meticulously plan their marketing strategy and the cooperation with influencer by analyzing a given blogger's audience. Thus, he or she has to make sure that the product offered by him does correspond with the interest of the audience of a given influencer.

6 Conclusion

The author's goal was to analyze the current scientific framework related to influencer marketing and promotion exercised by influencers, as well as the consumer behaviour associated with those endorsements. For the purpose of better describing existing differences and tendencies, the author decided to incorporate a series of relevant hypotheses that were all tested according to fundamental rules of statistical inference.

Effectively, the author, after testing all thirteen hypotheses, comes to the conclusion that gender is not such a fundamental factor that can create differences in the way how people consume particular goods promoted by influencers or how they generally view those influencers, while age remains to be a crucial factor that clearly creates differences between consumers' perception of influencer marketing.

The limitation of the master's thesis and the methodology selected by the author was a relatively enormous population size, which covered all consumers who use the Internet. For this purpose, all findings that were made by the author bear the nature of illustrative ones, as well as the study itself. For the recommendation, the author suggests narrowing down the target population of further research and focusing on particular domains, such as influencer or social media specializations such as travelling or beauty. In addition to that recommendation, the author also suggests that further research can focus on particular platforms and describe the main tendencies exercised there, such as Facebook and Instagram or even Tiktok, which recently became one of the world's leading social media platforms. The author believes that the domain analyzed by him hides a lot of valuable insights upon discovering and properly describing which the theory of consumer behaviour can be significantly improved and reworked since all societies are slowly being changed under the force of digitalization and the ongoing information revolution that changes the way how interpersonal relations work.

For the final recommendation, the author suggests that small brands should seriously consider the option of cooperating with influencers since it offers them a perfect start in terms of the resource efficiency and the ratio of expenses to output. At the same time, brands

should dedicate a fair amount of time to planning of their marketing strategy since it is downright essential to analyze if a given influencer's audience will be interested in a given product at all. Also, it would be wise to generally understand if the influencer of owner's interest has a tendency of integrating too many paid promotion since it might negatively influence the feedback of his or her audience and consequently, lead to lower sales than expected for a particular product.

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8 Appendix

8.1 List of Questions

1. *Do you follow any social media influencers?*

   a) Yes

   b) No

2. *What's your gender?*

   a) Male

   b) Female

   c) Other

3. *How old are you?*

   a) Under 18 (recoded into 1)

   b) 18-25 (recoded into 1)

   c) 26-35 (recoded into 1)

   d) 36-50 (recoded into 2)

   e) 50+ (recoded into 2)

4. *How do you typically discover new products or brands?*

   a) Social media ads

   b) Influencer endorsements

   c) Word of mouth from friends or family

   d) Online reviews

   e) Traditional advertising (TV, radio, print)

   f) Other

5. *How often do you engage with influencer content on social media?*

   a) Daily (recoded into 4)

   b) Few times a week (recoded into 3)

   c) Few times a month (recoded into 2)

   d) Rarely (recoded into 1)

6. *How do you feel about influencer endorsements in general?*

   a) Very positive (recoded into 5)

   b) Somewhat positive (recoded into 4)

c) Neutral (recoded into 3)

d) Somewhat negative (recoded into 2)

e) Very negative (recoded into 1)

7. *How likely are you to purchase a product recommended by an influencer you follow on social media?*

a) Very likely (recoded into 5)

b) Somewhat likely (recoded into 4)

c) Neutral (recoded into 3)

d) Somewhat unlikely (recoded into 2)

e) Very unlikely (recoded into 1)

8. *How does seeing influencers use a product impact your decision to buy?*

a) It makes me aware of a product I wasn't previously familiar with

b) It helps me research and compare different options

c) It creates a desire for the product

d) It reassures me about the quality of the product

e) It helps me to justify the purchase to myself or others

f) It does not have any impact on my decision to buy

9. *How important is it for you to share similar values and interests with an influencer before considering purchasing a product they endorse?*

a) Very important (recoded into 5)

b) Somewhat important (recoded into 4)

c) Neutral (recoded into 3)

d) Somewhat unimportant (recoded into 2)

e) Not important at all (recoded into 1)

10. *How much do you rely on the expertise of an influencer before considering purchasing a product they endorse?*

a) Very much (recoded into 5)

b) Somewhat (recoded into 4)

c) Neutral (recoded into 3)

d) Not much (recoded into 2)

e) Not at all (recoded into 1)

11. *How likely are you to continue following an influencer if you discovered that he or she has endorsed a product they do not use or believe in?*

a) Very unlikely (recoded into 1)

b) Somewhat unlikely (recoded into 2)

c) Neutral (recoded into 3)

d) Somewhat likely (recoded into 4)

e) Very likely (recoded into 5)

12. *If you heard an influencer you follow has fake followers, would it affect your trust in the influencer or their endorsements?*

a) It would significantly affect my trust

b) It would somewhat affect my trust

c) It would not affect my trust

13. *Have you ever decided not to purchase a product because you suspected an influencer's endorsement was not being genuine?*

a) Yes

b) No

14. *Have you become more skeptical of influencer's endorsements over time?*

a) Much more skeptical (recoded into 1)

b) Somewhat more skeptical (recoded into 2)

c) No change (recoded into 3)

d) Somewhat less skeptical (recoded into 4)

e) Much less skeptical (recoded into 5)

15. *Which factors have influenced your level of skepticism towards influencer endorsements?*

a) The number of endorsements I see on social media

b) The perceived authenticity of the influencer

c) The nature of the product being endorsed

d) The perceived honesty of the influencer

e) The perceived quality of the product

f) Other

16. *Has your purchasing behavior been affected by your skepticism towards influencer endorsements?*

a) I am less likely to purchase produces endorsed by influencers

b) My purchasing behavior has not been affected

c) Other

17. Have you ever unfollowed an influencer because of the amount of promotions they were posting?

    a) Yes, frequently (recoded into 3)

    b) Yes, occasionally (recoded into 2)

    c) No, not really (recoded into 1)

18. How do you perceive influencer marketing in terms of ethical concerns?

    a) Very ethical (recoded into 5)

    b) Somewhat ethical (recoded into 4)

    c) Neutral (recoded into 3)

    d) Somewhat unethical (recoded into 2)

    e) Very unethical (recoded into 1)

19. How do you feel about influencer marketing campaigns that use creative or unique approaches to stand out from other content on social media?

    a) Very positive (recoded into 5)

    b) Somewhat positive (recoded into 4)

    c) Neutral (recoded into 3)

    d) Somewhat negative (recoded into 2)

    e) Very negative (recoded into 1)

8.2 Responses each individual question

Figure 15, first question

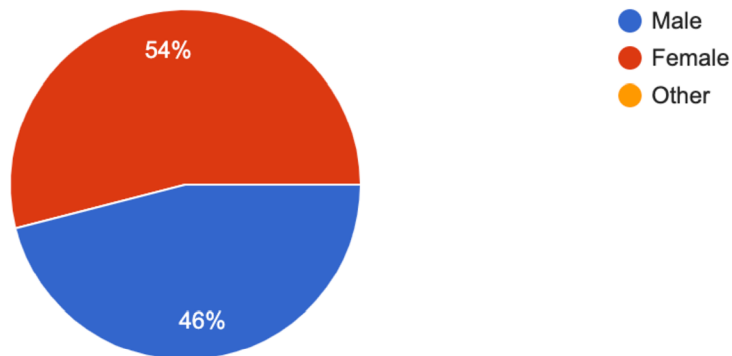
Do you follow any social media influencers?

100 responses

- Yes
- No

30%

70%
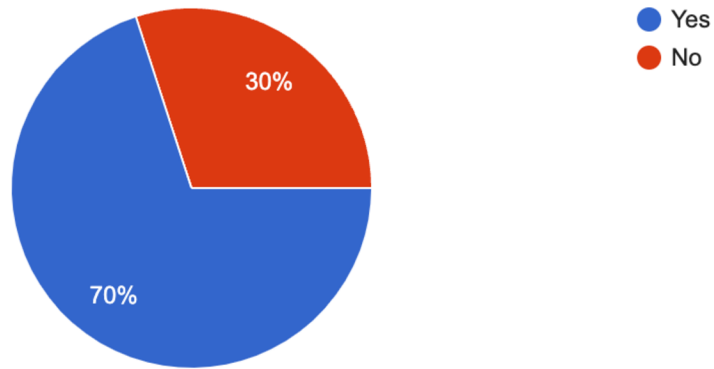
Source: own processing

Figure 14, second question

What's your gender?

100 responses

- Male
- Female
- Other

54%

46%

Source: own processing

Figure 17, third question

How old are you?

100 responses

Legend:
- Under 18
- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-50
- 50+

Pie chart values: 66%, 12%, 14%

Figure 16, fourth question

How do you typically discover new products or brands? (select all that apply)   Copy

100 responses

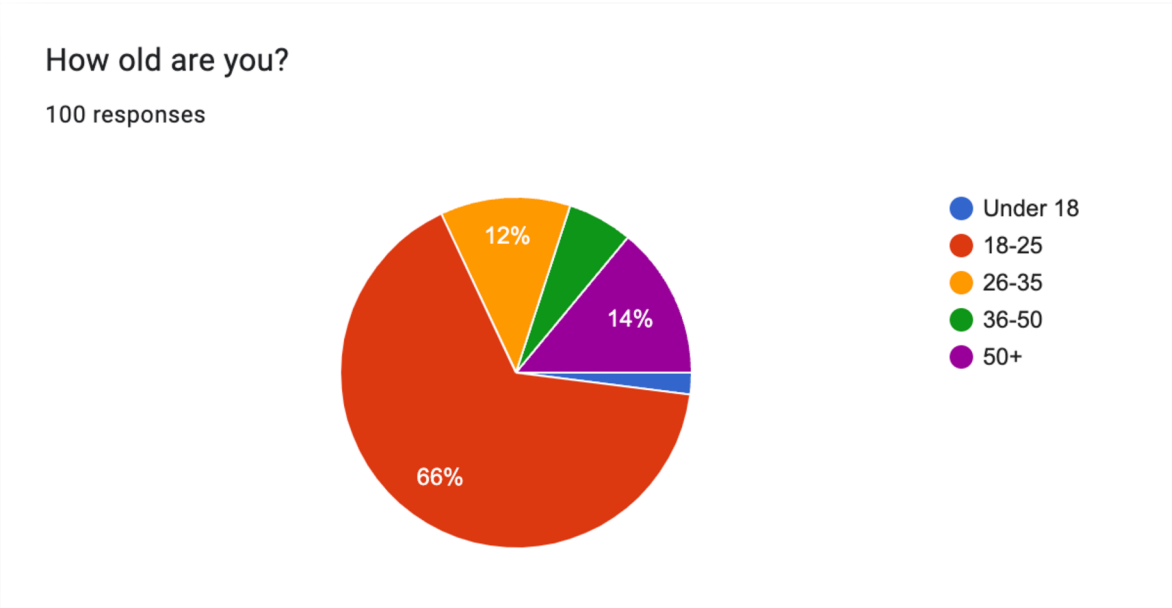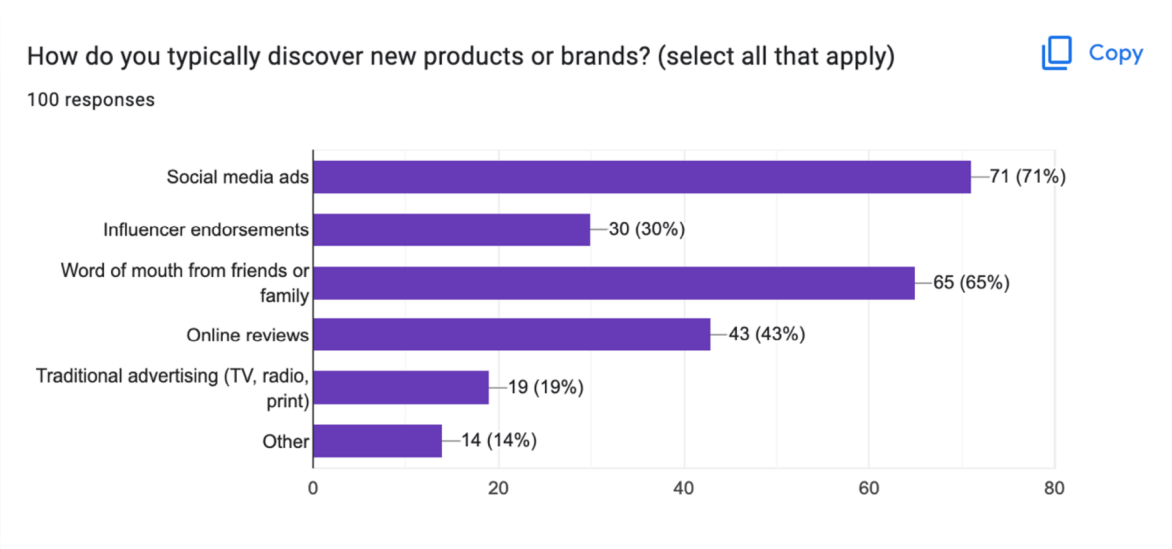| Category	Count (Percent)
Social media ads	71 (71%)
Influencer endorsements	30 (30%)
Word of mouth from friends or family	65 (65%)
Online reviews	43 (43%)
Traditional advertising (TV, radio, print)	19 (19%)
Other	14 (14%)

Source: own processing

Figure 19, fifth question

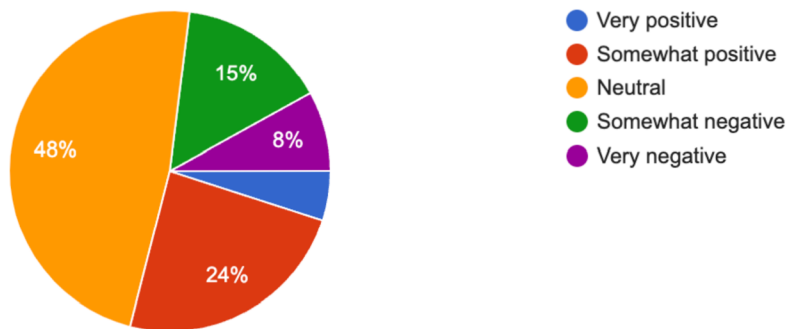How often do you engage with influencer content on social media?

100 responses

- Daily
- Few times a week
- Few times a month
- Rarely

15%
25%
29%
31%
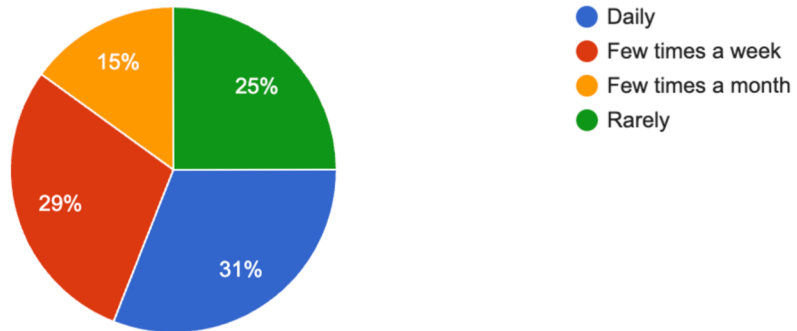
Source: own processing

Figure 18, sixth question

How do you feel about influencer endorsements in general?

100 responses

- Very positive
- Somewhat positive
- Neutral
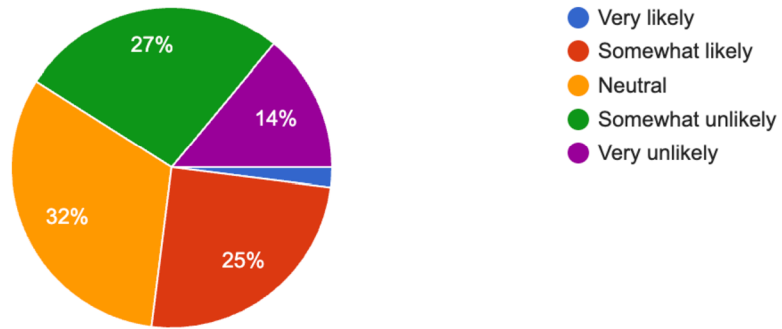- Somewhat negative
- Very negative

48%
15%
8%
24%

Source: own processing

Figure 21, seventh question

How likely are you to purchase a product recommended by an influencer you follow on social media?

100 responses

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Neutral
- Somewhat unlikely
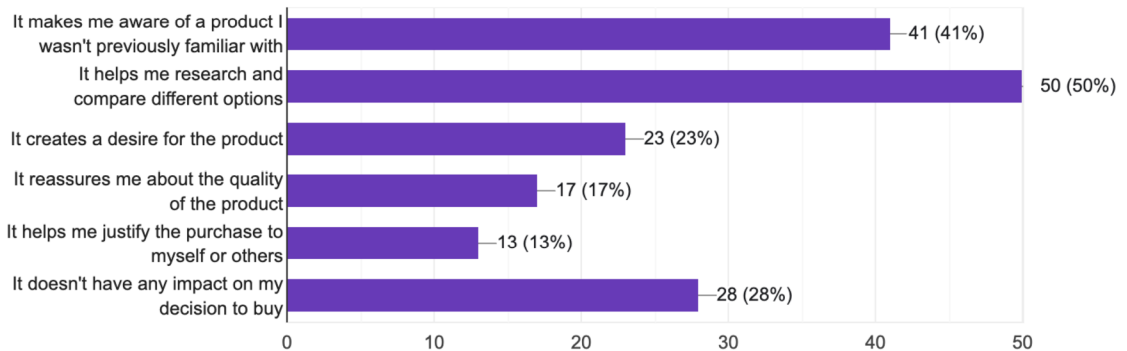- Very unlikely

27%
14%
32%
25%

Source: own processing

Figure 20, eighth question

How does seeing influencers use a product impact your decision to buy? Please select all that apply based on your personal experience.

100 responses

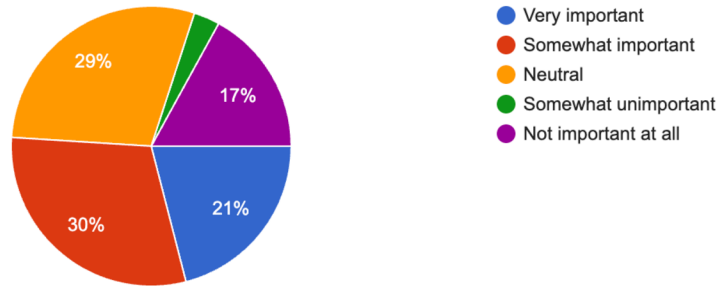|	
It makes me aware of a product I wasn't previously familiar with	41 (41%)
It helps me research and compare different options	50 (50%)
It creates a desire for the product	23 (23%)
It reassures me about the quality of the product	17 (17%)
It helps me justify the purchase to myself or others	13 (13%)
It doesn't have any impact on my decision to buy	28 (28%)

Source: own processing

Figure 23, ninth question

How important is it for you to share similar values and interests with an influencer before considering purchasing a product they endorse?

100 responses

Copy

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Neutral
- Somewhat unimportant
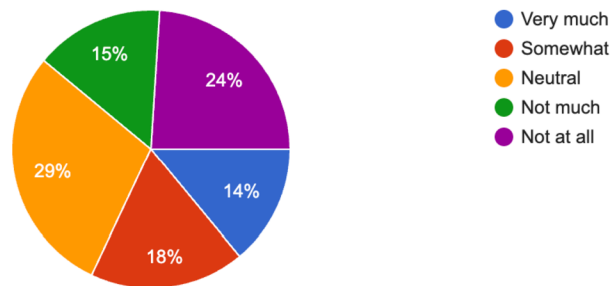- Not important at all

29%
17%
21%
30%

Source: own processing

Figure 22, tenth question

How much do you rely on the expertise of an influencer before considering purchasing a product they endorse?

100 responses

Copy

- Very much
- Somewhat
- Neutral
- Not much
- Not at all

15%
24%
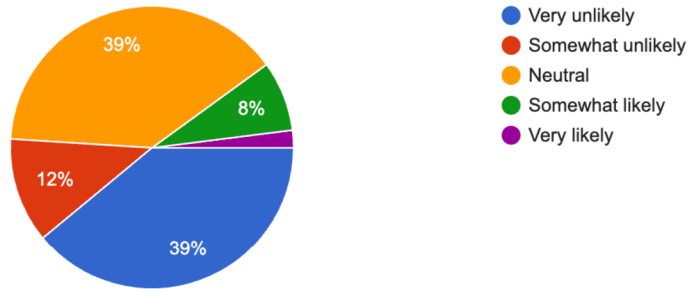29%
14%
18%

Source: own processing

Figure 25, eleventh question

How likely are you to continue following an influencer if you discover they have endorsed a product they do not use or believe in?

100 responses

Copy

- Very unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Neutral
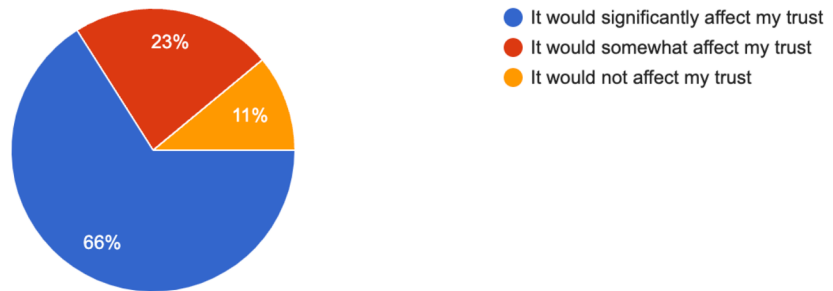- Somewhat likely
- Very likely

39%
8%
12%
39%

Source: own processing

Figure 24, twelfth question

If you heard an influencer you follow has fake followers, would it affect your trust in the influencer or their endorsements?

100 responses

Copy

- It would significantly affect my trust
- It would somewhat affect my trust
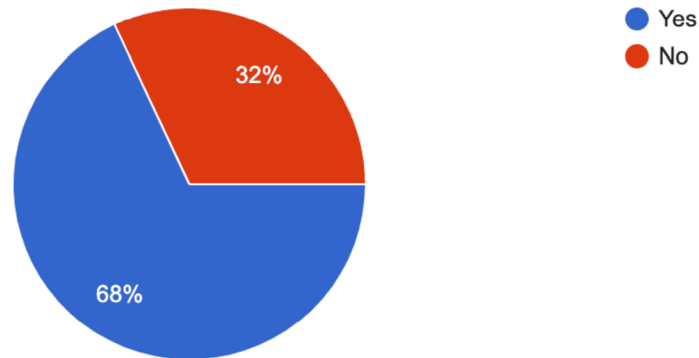- It would not affect my trust

23%
11%
66%

Source: own processing

Figure 27, thirteenth question

Have you ever decided not to purchase a product because you suspected the influencer's endorsement was not genuine?

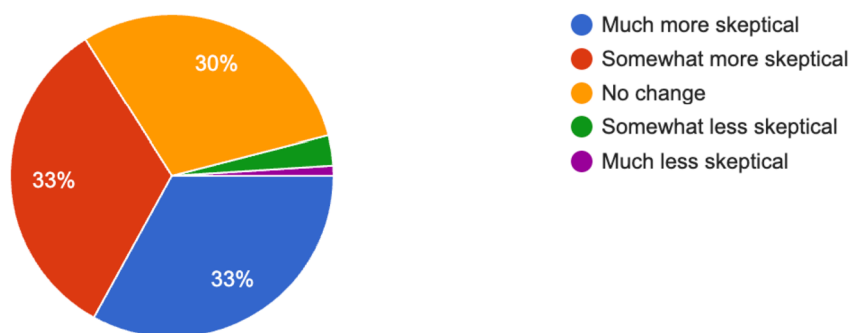100 responses

- Yes
- No

32%

68%

Source: own processing

Figure 26, fourteenth question
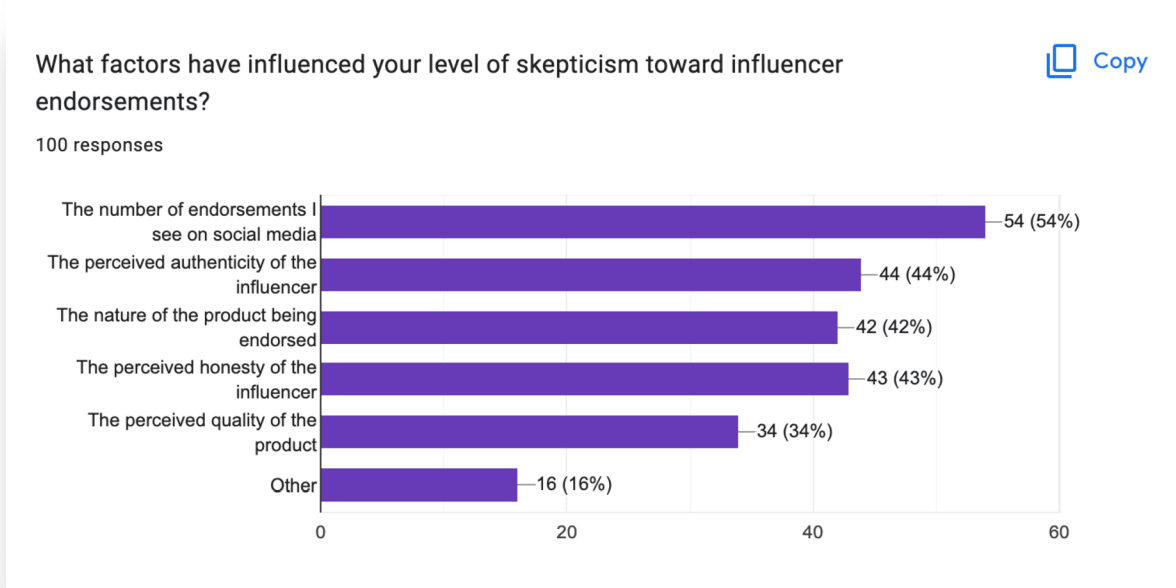
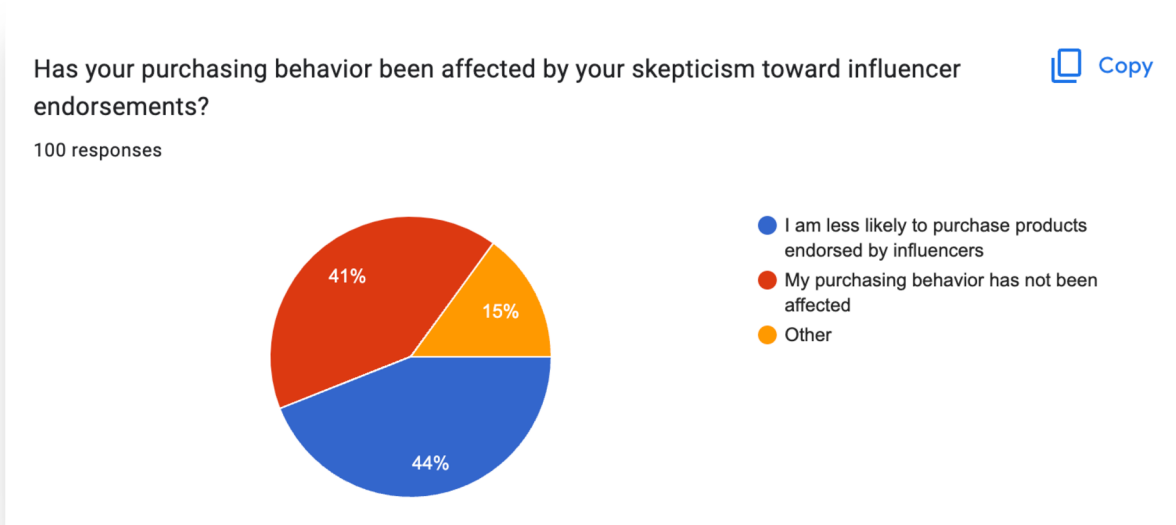Have you become more or less skeptical of influencer endorsements over time?

100 responses

- Much more skeptical
- Somewhat more skeptical
- No change
- Somewhat less skeptical
- Much less skeptical

30%

33%

33%

Source: own processing

Figure 28, fifteenth question

What factors have influenced your level of skepticism toward influencer endorsements?

100 responses

Factor	Value
The number of endorsements I see on social media	54 (54%)
The perceived authenticity of the influencer	44 (44%)
The nature of the product being endorsed	42 (42%)
The perceived honesty of the influencer	43 (43%)
The perceived quality of the product	34 (34%)
Other	16 (16%)

Source: own processing

Figure 29, sixteenth question

Has your purchasing behavior been affected by your skepticism toward influencer endorsements?

100 responses

- I am less likely to purchase products endorsed by influencers — 44%
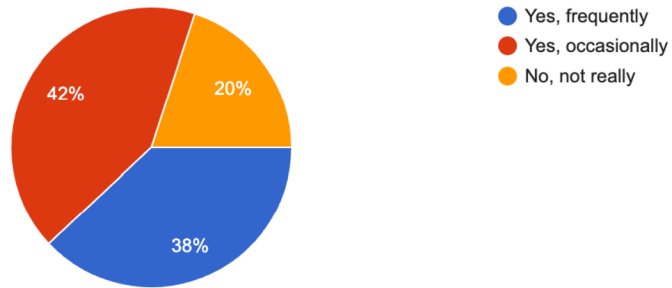- My purchasing behavior has not been affected — 41%
- Other — 15%

Source: own processing

Figure 30, seventeenth question

Have you ever unfollowed an influencer because of the amount of promotional content they were posting?
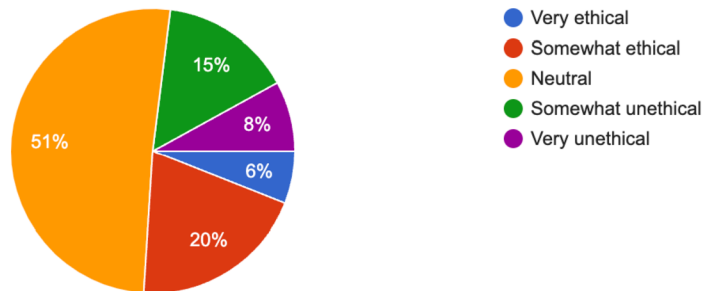
100 responses

Copy

- Yes, frequently
- Yes, occasionally
- No, not really

42% 20% 38%

Source: own processing

Figure 31, eighteenth question

How do you perceive influencer marketing in terms of ethical concerns?

100 responses
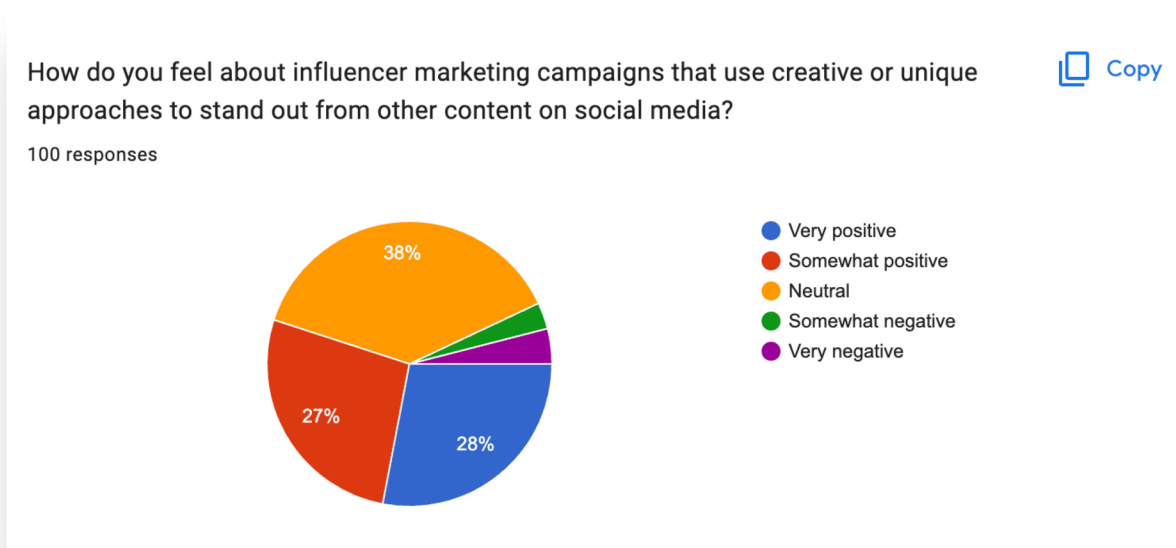
Copy

- Very ethical
- Somewhat ethical
- Neutral
- Somewhat unethical
- Very unethical

15% 8% 6% 51% 20%

Source: own processing

Figure 32, nineteenth question

How do you feel about influencer marketing campaigns that use creative or unique approaches to stand out from other content on social media?

100 responses

- Very positive
- Somewhat positive
- Neutral
- Somewhat negative
- Very negative

Source: own processing

8.3   List of Questions

8.3.1   Consumer

1. What is your name?
   - My name is Robert.

2. How old are you?
   - I am 35 years old.

3. What was the first time that you opened a social media account for yourself?
   - It happened in 2009 or 2010 I think and it was Facebook.

4. Do you like the direction that the whole social media movement is currently taking?
   - I think that digitalization is in fact a good thing, but I think that we start to pay too much attention to influencers.

5. How do you usually get to buy something? Do you use references or rely on any kind of adverts?
   - I usually rely on different adverts – on the Internet and also on the TV; both are fine with me, but I always make sure to double check with the help of reviews.

6. What is your attitude towards adverts made by influencers?

- Depends on influencers, if we think of prominent actors and people as influencers, I would probably put my attention to a given product. However, if a given influencer that is famous by pure coincidence with a fanbase of teenagers, I do not think that such a product would strike me as trustworthy.

7. Do you think that those endorsements are effective?
   - To some extent, yes. I believe that they are quite effective for audiences who watch influencers and I think that this is probably the only application of those endorsements – to persuade one's loyal audience to blindly follow his or her idol.

8. Have you ever bought anything after noticing a given product used by an influencer or celebrity?
   - I cannot recall but I would not put so much emphasis on the fact that it was used by an influencer. I would rather say that I just noticed a good product thanks to this endorsement, but I was not specifically buying it just because of him or her.

9. Do you think that the scale of influencer marketing will get bigger?
   - If nothing changes in the way how social media and influencers are being treated from the part of the government, I think that we will live in the world run by influencers. In other words, I believe that I will keep on growing.

8.3.2 Influencer

1. What is your name?
   - My name is Diana.

2. How old are you?
   - I am 26 years old.

3. How many followers that you have? When did you start?
   - More than 20,000 on Instagram. I started in 2014.

4. What was the first time that you opened a social media account for yourself?
   - In 2007 and it was a Russian social media account on something quite similar to Facebook. Then I started to work on my small Youtube channel and then relocated my hobby to Instagram which I still use as the main platform.

5. Do you like the direction that the whole social media movement is currently taking?
   - Yes, absolutely, because it offers creative people an awesome platform to be heard and also to be financially independent.

6. How do you usually get to buy something? Do you use references or rely on any kind of adverts?
   - I rely on video reviews of various influencers and I also scroll the Internet and from time to time check online adverts and Google suggestions.

7. What is your attitude towards adverts made by influencers?
   - Given the fact that I do it myself, I would probably say that I have a good attitude but only under the condition that influencers are sincere and they do not advertise anything illegal or some kind of scam.

8. Have you ever been criticized by your audience for advertising something?
   - Not really because I have a loyal fanbase consisting mostly of teenage girls and young adult women as well, who had been with me for quite a long time. I think that reputation plays a huge role in this question.

9. Do you think that those endorsements are effective?
   - Depends on the audience. For my audience, yes. Once again, it is mostly a question of fanbase's loyalty. If they are loyal to you and you had established a good reputation, the effectiveness is slightly higher.

10. Have you ever bought anything after noticing a given product used by an influencer or celebrity?
    - Yes and I think that many people bought goods after my advice.

11. Do you think that the scale of influencer marketing will get bigger?
    - I hope so, but I feel the current tendency with potential block of TikTok and restriction of Instagram in Russia to be rather concerning. Apart from it, I think that this is an inevitable natural phenomenon.

8.3.3 Brand Owner

1. What is your name?
   - My name is Azat.

2. How old are you?
   - I am 23 years old.

3. How many followers for your brand you have? When did you start to produce clothing?
   - I started a year ago and we already have more than 5,000 followers on the special Instagram account dedicated to the brand.

4. What was the first time that you opened a social media account for yourself?

   - It happened approximately in the beginning of the 10s.

5. Do you like the direction that the whole social media movement is currently taking?

   - Yes.

6. Do you find the presence of influencers to be positive on small brands like yours?

   - Yes, because thanks to influencers, brands like us are able to quickly gain brand awareness and attention of other people, which is more costly when it comes to relying on traditional advertising.

7. How do you usually get to buy something? Do you use references or rely on any kind of adverts?

   - I prefer to physically browse different stores in the search of a good that can attract me with its traits and characteristics.

8. What is your attitude towards adverts made by influencers?

   - Depends on adverts. Also, depends on frequency of adverts – I think that influencers should not exploit their audiences by constantly generating bits of paid promotion.

9. Has your brand already cooperated with influencers?

   - Yes, it gave the brand the first push that helped us to gain some followers and also attract the first purchasers.

10. Do you think that those endorsements are effective?

    - Given that we are local Czech brand, yes. I do not think that it would be so effective given that we mostly cooperated with relatively small-mid scale influencers. To get bigger, we have to focus on more influential ones which could become rather costly.

11. Have you ever bought anything after noticing a given product used by an influencer or celebrity?

    - Yes, I think so.

12. Do you think that the scale of influencer marketing will get bigger?

    - I think that it will get bigger but to some extent until it gets replaced with something more innovative and progressive, as it usually happens.