

Sarkis, Nada; Maalouf, Nada Jabbour Al; Lakiss, Ramy El

Article

Examining influencer marketing: the roles of para-social relationships, unpaid collaborations, and trustworthiness in shaping consumer buying behavior

Cogent Business & Management

Provided in Cooperation with:

Taylor & Francis Group

Suggested Citation: Sarkis, Nada; Maalouf, Nada Jabbour Al; Lakiss, Ramy El (2024) : Examining influencer marketing: the roles of para-social relationships, unpaid collaborations, and trustworthiness in shaping consumer buying behavior, Cogent Business & Management, ISSN 2331-1975, Taylor & Francis, Abingdon, Vol. 11, Iss. 1, pp. 1-16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2419501>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/326643>

Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

Terms of use:

Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.

You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.

If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Examining influencer marketing: the roles of para-social relationships, unpaid collaborations, and trustworthiness in shaping consumer buying behavior

Nada Sarkis, Nada Jabbour Al Maalouf & Ramy El Lakiss

To cite this article: Nada Sarkis, Nada Jabbour Al Maalouf & Ramy El Lakiss (2024) Examining influencer marketing: the roles of para-social relationships, unpaid collaborations, and trustworthiness in shaping consumer buying behavior, Cogent Business & Management, 11:1, 2419501, DOI: [10.1080/23311975.2024.2419501](https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2419501)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2419501>



© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



[View supplementary material](#)



Published online: 30 Oct 2024.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



Article views: 5952



[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)



Citing articles: 4 [View citing articles](#)

Examining influencer marketing: the roles of para-social relationships, unpaid collaborations, and trustworthiness in shaping consumer buying behavior

Nada Sarkis , Nada Jabbour Al Maalouf  and Ramy El Lakiss

Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK), Kaslik, Lebanon

ABSTRACT

The marketing landscape has intensely changed with the rise of digital platforms and social media. Social media influencer marketing was found by many previous studies to be a significant factor in shaping consumer buying behavior. This explanatory study investigates the impact of influencer marketing including para-social relationships, unpaid collaborations, and influencer trustworthiness on Lebanese consumers buying behavior. A quantitative analysis was employed using data collected through a questionnaire from a sample of 250 respondents. The findings revealed that para-social relationships and unpaid collaborations have a positive impact on Lebanese consumer buying behavior. The study contributes significantly by providing insights into the Lebanese market. By applying the Stimulus-Organism-Response Theory and Social Learning Theory, the study enriches the theoretical understanding of influencer marketing. Practically, it offers actionable strategies for marketers, emphasizing the importance of influencer marketing in driving consumer buying behavior in Lebanon.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 29 July 2024
Revised 19 September 2024
Accepted 16 October 2024

KEYWORDS

Influencer marketing;
buying behavior;
trustworthiness;
para-social relationships;
unpaid collaborations

SUBJECTS

Business, Management
and Accounting;
Marketing; Internet /
Digital Marketing /
e-Marketing

Introduction

In recent years, marketing has transformed significantly due to the escalation of digital platforms and the emergence of social media. This led to the growing impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior which has been studied by many authors (Bognar et al., 2019; Černikovaitė, 2019; Chan, 2022; Chopra et al., 2021; Hapsari et al., 2024; Khan & Phung, 2021; Rachmad, 2024; Ramya et al., 2024; Saldanha et al., 2024; Varghese & Agrawal, 2021; Verplancke & Gelati, 2022; Vidani & Das, 2021; Ye et al., 2021). Influencers, who are individuals with a significant online presence and the ability to sway opinions, have become key players in the marketing ecosystem. Their capability to connect with followers has made influencer marketing an influential tool for brands aiming to enhance their visibility, and engagement, and ultimately, drive sales (Yesiloglu & Costello, 2020). The main goal of every business is reaching new consumers and increasing the consumer base to achieve sustainable profits (O'brien, 2024). Advancements in technology and new media have spurred a fundamental shift in how companies operate, engage with customers, and market their offerings (Sayudin et al., 2023).

Based on the significance of influencer marketing, the problem of this study lies in the gap in the literature regarding how influencer characteristics, such as influencer trustworthiness, parasocial relationships, and unpaid collaborations, impact the buying behavior of consumers specifically in the context of Lebanon. Thus, the purpose is to address this gap. The findings of this research not only contribute to the academic literature surrounding influencer marketing but also provide actionable insights for marketers aiming to enhance their campaigns. By delving into the factors that influence consumer behavior, the study serves as an important resource for businesses striving to navigate the multifaceted landscape of digital marketing. Ultimately, the implication of this study lies in its potential to enlighten strategic

CONTACT Nada Jabbour Al Maalouf  nada.almaalouf@usek.edu.lb  Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK), Kaslik, Lebanon

© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

decision-making, enabling marketers to leverage influencers effectively and establish a more profound connection with their target audience.

The main research query is as follows: *How does influencer marketing impact consumer buying behavior in Lebanon?* The sub-questions are as follows: (1) How do para-social relationships with influencers impact consumer buying behavior in Lebanon? (2) How do unpaid collaborations with influencers impact consumer buying behavior in Lebanon? (3) How does influencer trustworthiness impact consumer buying behavior in Lebanon?

Literature review

Social media marketing

Social media marketing (SMM) is a type of digital marketing that uses social media platforms to build a brand, upsurge awareness, and generate sales (Moedeen et al., 2024). This type of marketing leverages the power of social networks to achieve marketing and branding goals by engaging with a target audience (Smith & Anderson, 2018) and creating content that users will share with their social networks. SMM encompasses a range of activities, including content creation, advertising, community management, and social listening, to create content tailored to the context of each social platform to boost user engagement and interaction (Tuten, 2023). SMM is often more cost-effective compared to traditional advertising methods, providing higher returns on investment (Duffett, 2015). Additionally, social media analytics tools offer significant insights into customer behavior, helping brands refine their strategies (He et al., 2013).

Effective social media marketing strategies involve several key components. Creating a content strategy that comprises a mix of promotional and engaging content tailored to the target audience is crucial (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Selecting the exact platforms based on where the target audience is most active ensures effective reach and engagement (Alalwan et al., 2017). Maintaining a consistent posting schedule helps keep the audience engaged and builds a loyal following (Abd Rahim & Aziz, 2023; Kumar et al., 2016). Furthermore, monitoring social media conversations and analyzing engagement metrics through social listening and analytics is essential for understanding customer needs and measuring campaign effectiveness (Fan & Gordon, 2014).

Despite its benefits, social media marketing presents challenges. The rapidly altering social media landscape requires marketers to stay updated with platform algorithms and trends. The high level of competition on social media platforms makes capturing and retaining audience attention challenging. Additionally, ensuring consistent and authentic engagement without appearing overly promotional is a significant hurdle for marketers (Desai & Vidyapeeth, 2019; Hayes, 2023).

Influencer marketing

Influencer marketing is an approach that leverages endorsements and product placements from individuals who possess substantial influence within a specific niche (Ozuem & Willis, 2022). These influencers impact the buying behavior of their followers due to their established relationships with their viewers (Crisafulli et al., 2022). Influencers are segmented into categories depending on their follower count and impact. Mega-influencers, often celebrities, have over 1,000,000 followers. Macro-influencers have between 100,000 to 1,000,000 followers, while micro-influencers, with 10,000 to 100,000 followers, are known for their high engagement rates. Nano-influencers have fewer than 10,000 followers and are often highly trusted within their niche (Tafesse & Wood, 2021).

The benefits of influencer marketing are many. Influencers are seen as more authentic and trustworthy relative to traditional marketing, making their endorsements highly effective (Audrezet et al., 2020). They also extend a brand's reach by tapping into its established follower base, allowing brands to connect with audiences they might not otherwise reach. Furthermore, this type of marketing allows for more precise targeting of specific demographics, enhancing the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. Influencer-generated content typically achieves higher engagement rates compared to brand-generated content, adding another layer of value to influencer collaborations (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Successful influencer marketing strategies involve several key components. Identifying the right influencers is critical, and tools like BuzzSumo and Upfluence can aid in finding influencers who align with a brand's target audience (Glucksman, 2017). Setting clear objectives and defining key performance indicators are essential for measuring the success of influencer campaigns (Haenlein et al., 2020). Collaborative planning ensures that both the brand and the influencer are aligned on content guidelines and posting schedules (Childers et al., 2019). Finally, allowing influencers creative freedom to deliver the brand message in their unique style enhances the authenticity and effectiveness of the campaign (De Veirman et al., 2017).

Despite its many advantages, influencer marketing also presents challenges (Zhou et al., 2021). The potential for influencers to lose credibility due to perceived inauthenticity or oversaturation with sponsored content is a significant concern (Cartwright et al., 2022). Additionally, the lack of standardized metrics for evaluating influencer performance can complicate the assessment of campaign effectiveness (Santiago & Castelo, 2020). Brands must navigate these challenges carefully to maximize the reimbursements of influencer marketing.

Consumer buying behavior

Comprehending the behavior of consumers is an asset as it helps understand how people feel toward products and brands, and the influence of peer groups, family, and salespeople (Verplancke & Gelati, 2022). Consumer buying behavior is a dynamic process impacted by a range of factors. Psychological factors such as motivation, perception, and attitudes shape how individuals perceive and respond to products and brands (Solomon, 2020). Social influences from family, friends, and social networks play a vital role in decision-making, as consumers often seek approval and guidance from their peers (Singh & Singh, 2021). Cultural factors, including values, norms, and traditions, further impact consumer preferences and purchasing habits, reflecting the diversity in consumer behavior across different cultural contexts (De Mooij, 2021). Personal factors such as age, lifestyle, and economic status also contribute significantly to buying decisions, influencing the types of products consumers choose and how they allocate their resources (Kotler & Armstrong, 2022).

Businesses need to understand consumer buying behavior to create marketing strategies and enhance customer satisfaction (Khan et al., 2022; Rane et al., 2023). By gaining insights into what drives consumer choices, companies can adapt their offerings to better meet the needs and wants of their target market. This knowledge not only provides a competitive advantage by anticipating market trends and consumer preferences but also facilitates product innovation and strategic positioning in the marketplace. Through market research, consumer segmentation, behavioral analytics, and customer journey mapping, businesses can uncover important insights that inform decision-making and drive sustainable growth in a rapidly evolving market landscape (Rosário & Raimundo, 2021).

Theoretical framework

Stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory

SOR theory provides a theoretical framework for interpreting consumer buying behavior, while being based on the external stimuli that drive the state of internal organisms and trigger the behavioral response from the consumer (Patmawati & Miswanto, 2022). The theory consists of stimulus (S), organism (O), and response (R) which determine the outcome of an event. Stimulus is defined as something influencing the individual and is the main external force affecting the mental state which is the organism of an individual that in turn influences the response (Lin et al., 2022). SOR is employed in this study to explain the buying behavior of consumers and the internal psychological changes caused by external factors and the environment. Different studies (Armawan & Sudarmiatin, 2022; Chan et al., 2024; Hussain et al., 2023; Koay et al., 2021; Patmawati & Miswanto, 2022; Prasetio et al., 2022; Safeer, 2024; Seçilmiş et al., 2022; Vonoga, 2021) linked the SOR theory to social media influencers.

Social learning theory (SLT)

SLT provides a structure that helps identify the role of people in influencing consumer buying behavior. Social learning is an important psychological factor in social networking environments where consumers have access to other people's reviews and social experiences by communicating with streamers (Li & Hua, 2021). SLT was used in several studies (Chan, 2022; Chia et al., 2021; Le & Hancer, 2021; Yang et al., 2024) to examine the influence of influencers on consumer behavior and will be used here to provide a better comprehension of influencers' marketing impact and consumer's buying behavior.

Hypotheses development

Many studies tackled influencer marketing and consumer behavior in different contexts (Antunes, 2022; Gayathri & Anwar, 2021; Horváth & Fedorko, 2023; Huynh, 2020; Kamaldeep, 2021; Khan & Phung, 2021; Mishra & Ashfaq, 2023; Mittal, 2023; Nurhandayani et al., 2019; Pangarkar & Rathee, 2023; Pop et al., 2022; Radwan et al., 2021; Serman & Sims, 2020; Suri et al., 2023; Tuomivaara, 2023). Based on these studies, this study tends to examine the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behavior in the context of Lebanon. To discuss influencer marketing impact, para-social relationships, unpaid collaborations, and influencer trustworthiness were considered.

Para-social relationships and consumer buying behavior

Para-social relationships are defined as a one-sided psychological linking of individuals with influencers through virtual media (Horton & Wohl, 1956). The audience creates an interpersonal relationship with their preferred influencer, who they think is talking to them, leading to the feeling of attachment as a friend, family, or even lover (Hung et al., 2011). Para-social relationships consist of cognition, emotion, and behavior, which stimulate an emotional connection, and affect buying behavior (Huang & Qiao, 2022). Consumers appear to trust reviewers they have built personal relations with, and they rely on their reviews and feedback which affects their buying behavior (Penttinen et al., 2022). Research suggests that parasocial relationships enhance viewer attachment and trust towards influencers, which can positively influence purchase intentions (Audrezet et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Further, different studies (Armawan & Sudarmiatin, 2022; Chan et al., 2024; Hussain et al., 2023; Koay et al., 2021; Patmawati & Miswanto, 2022; Prasetyo et al., 2022; Safeer, 2024; Seçilmiş et al., 2022; Vonoga, 2021) linked the SOR theory to social media influencers; however, Burnasheva and Suh (2022) used the SOR theory to measure the strength of the parasocial relationship in moderating influencers' endorsers' trustworthiness. They found that influencer endorser trustworthiness was stronger for the para-social relationships group which means that influencer para-social relationships impact buying intention. Thus, the SOR theory is used in this study to interpret the influencer marketing impact (S-stimuli) on consumers' perception and beliefs developing para-social relationships with these influencers (O-organism), affecting their buying behavior (R-response). As a result, the first hypothesis is as follows:

H₁: Para-social relationship has a positive impact on Lebanese consumer buying behavior.

Unpaid collaborations and consumer buying behavior

Consumers perceive unpaid collaborations as more genuine and less driven by financial incentives, thereby enhancing brand authenticity perceptions (De Veirman et al., 2017). There are very few previous studies discussing unpaid collaboration and its effect on consumer buying behavior. Hahl (2023) discussed the perception of incredibility in influencers' paid SMM collaborations. Asante et al. (2022) confirmed the psychological engagement as an Organism (O) in the SOR theory that mediates organic marketing practices, stimuli (S), on consumer behavior response (R). The authors highlighted the significance of organic marketing practices and driving consumer buying behaviors. Thus, the SOR theory was used to interpret the effect of unpaid collaborations (S-stimuli) on consumers' perception and

beliefs (O-organism), affecting their buying behavior (R-response). As a result, the second hypothesis is as follows:

H₂: Unpaid collaborations have a positive impact on Lebanese consumer buying behavior.

Influencer's trustworthiness and consumer buying behavior

Only a few studies discussed the factors such as trustworthiness and expertise are perceived as important elements of an influencer's credibility and thus can impact the buying decisions of consumers (Abdullah et al., 2020; Balaban & Mustăţea, 2019; Masuda et al., 2022; Weismueller et al., 2020). Baig and Shahzad (2022) conducted a study based on the SLT to examine the efficacy of influencers while concentrating on source credibility considering trustworthiness and expertise. The authors found that trustworthiness has a significant effect on buying behavior. Thus, the SLT is adequate to study influencer trustworthiness as a factor influencing Lebanese buying behavior, and the hypothesis is as follows:

H₃: Influencer trustworthiness has a positive impact on Lebanese consumer buying behavior.

Figure 1 shows the variables of the study and the relationships between them. Para-social relationships, unpaid collaboration, and influencer trustworthiness are the independent variables and buying behavior is the dependent variable.

Method

The research design is explanatory and quantitative. A positivism philosophy and a deductive approach were considered. A questionnaire was designed as a research strategy and inspired by questions developed by Baranow (2019). Ethical approval was obtained from the research committee of the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK). A Likert scale of 5 main agreement scales is used to measure the variables. The structured questionnaire was administrated through Google Forms. The questionnaire includes Likert scale questions to test the impact of para-social relationships, unpaid collaboration, and influencer trustworthiness on the buying behavior of consumers. The population is Lebanese consumers which is approximately 5,219,044 in 2024. Before filling out the questionnaire, written informed consent was obtained from the participants and their involvement in this research was voluntary. As per Qualtrics, for a population of approximately 5,219,044, a sample size of around 267 would be appropriate for a 94% confidence level with a 6% margin of error. Therefore, a snowball sampling approach was used and the obtained sample was 250 participants which is close to the appropriate sample size. It is important to note that ethical considerations were maintained throughout data collection and the responses of the participants remained confidential and were only used for research purposes.

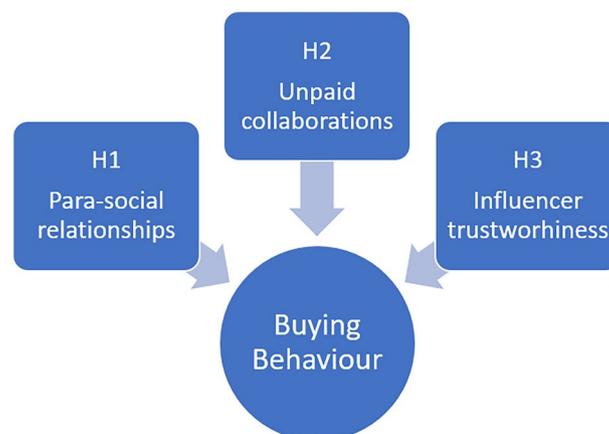


Figure 1. Research model.

Cross-sectional data was analyzed using SPSS where descriptive analysis, Exploratory Factor Analysis, reliability test, and regression analysis were employed.

Results and discussion

Sample profile

The findings show that female participants are higher with 58% compared to 42% of males. This gender distribution reflects a slightly higher representation of females.

Concerning their ages, 72% are between 18 and 25 years old, 26% are between 25 and 35 years old, and 2% are between 35 and 45 years old. The predominance of younger participants (18-25 years) suggests that the findings may be more applicable to this age group, which could influence consumer behavior differently compared to older age groups.

Concerning their educational background, 52% hold a master's degree, 44% hold a bachelor's degree, and 2% hold Ph.D. degrees. The high level of educational attainment among respondents might affect their perceptions and behaviors differently from those with less formal education.

Regarding their monthly household income, 42% earn between \$500 and \$1000, 24% of contestants earn less than 500\$, 18% earn between \$1000 and \$1500, and 16% earn more than \$1500. Income distribution indicates a diverse economic background among participants, though a significant portion earns within a lower to middle-income bracket, which might influence their purchasing decisions and priorities.

When asked about the time spent on social media per day, 36% mentioned that they spend more than 9 hours, 34% spend between 6-9 hours, 20% spend between 3-6 hours, and 10% spend between 1-3 hours. The high engagement with social media among the majority of respondents suggests that digital influence is a significant factor in their consumer behavior.

Exploratory factor analysis

KMO and Bartlett's test

Table 1 shows the KMO test attained a value of 0.800. This means that factor analysis is acceptable for the data set and indicates a modest level of sampling, adequacy, typical, and common. On the other hand, a p-value less than 0.05 indicates significance for the board let the test of sphericity. The number of variables investigated for each factor is sufficient, and the correlation matrix among these variables significantly deviates from an identity matrix. Therefore, exploratory factor analysis can be conducted.

Total Variance Explained—Principal component analysis (PCA)

Eigenvalue represents the total and initial amount of variation that a particular main component can account for. Each subsequent starting from the first component is obtained from partitioning out the preceding component. As a result, the first component accounts for the greatest variance, while the final accounts for the least. The Rotation Sums Squared Loadings section is the most important as it contains the components that can be reduced to factors. As shown in Table 2, and based on the Exploratory Factor analysis, 4 components or factors have been saved, having an Eigenvalue of 1, and account for 73.7% of the model. This means the 20 initial components have been reduced to the four underlying factors.

Rotated component matrix

The factor loadings (Pearson correlation coefficients) in the Rotated Component Matrix show the connection between the factors or components that underlie the variables and the variables themselves.

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's test.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy		0.800
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approx. chi-square	4759.845
	Df	190
	Sig.	.000

Table 2. Total variance explained.

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction sums of squared loadings			Rotation sums of squared loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.383	26.913	26.913	5.383	26.913	26.913	4.402	22.010	22.010
2	3.845	19.223	46.136	3.845	19.223	46.136	3.917	19.585	41.594
3	3.268	16.340	62.476	3.268	16.340	62.476	3.451	17.253	58.847
4	2.252	11.262	73.738	2.252	11.262	73.738	2.978	14.891	73.738
5	.733	3.667	77.405						
6	.644	3.218	80.623						
7	.602	3.012	83.635						
8	.524	2.622	86.257						
9	.441	2.204	88.461						
10	.390	1.952	90.413						
11	.375	1.876	92.289						
12	.342	1.711	94.000						
13	.292	1.460	95.460						
14	.269	1.343	96.803						
15	.237	1.184	97.987						
16	.170	.852	98.839						
17	.112	.561	99.400						
18	.091	.457	99.857						
19	.020	.101	99.958						
20	.008	.042	100.000						

Variables linked to factors that have a value greater than 0.40 are often kept (Henson & Roberts, 2006). From this angle, the Rotated Component Matrix in Table 3 shows variables that measure each component underpinning each theoretical dimension represented in the conceptual model.

This analysis reveals four key components related to influencer interactions and their impact on consumer behavior. The first component, para-social relationship (PR), highlights how followers feel a personal connection, engagement, inspiration, and significant influence from influencers. The second, unpaid collaborations (UC), underscores the perceived authenticity and trustworthiness of unpaid endorsements. The third component, influencer trustworthiness (IT), focuses on the perceived honesty, genuine use of products, and alignment of influencers' recommendations with their values. Lastly, the fourth component, Buying Behavior (BB), indicates the role of influencers in raising product awareness, providing options, and positively influencing purchase decisions.

Reliability test

Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the reliability and as shown in Table 4, it is 0.83 which is greater than 0.7. This means that the data is dependable and suitable.

Validation of the hypotheses

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to understand how the different independent variables (Para-social Relationship, Unpaid Collaboration, and Influencer Trustworthiness) collectively influence the single dependent variable (Lebanese consumers buying behavior).

Model summary test

According to Table 5, R is 0.789, indicating a strong correlation. Also, the R² shows that the independent variables explain 62.2% of the variability of consumer buying behavior.

ANOVA test

Table 6 shows that the para-social relationships, unpaid collaboration, and influencer trustworthiness statistically significantly predict the buying behavior, $F(3, 246) = 135.146, p < .0005$.

Coefficients test

Table 7 includes the coefficients, measures of the variability or error of each estimate, and test statistics.

Table 3. Rotated component matrix.

Components		1	2	3	4
PR	I feel a personal connection to the influencers I follow.	0.878			
	I feel engaged with the influencers I follow by regularly liking, commenting on, and sharing their content.	0.954			
	I feel that the success of the influencers I follow is important to me.	0.938			
	I feel inspired by the lifestyle of the influencers I follow to make changes in my own life.	0.937			
	I feel that my attitudes and perceptions towards products or services are significantly influenced by influencers' opinions.	0.977			
UC	I think unpaid collaborations provide more authentic and honest reviews than paid promotions.		0.908		
	I feel more trust towards product recommendations from unpaid collaborations.		0.947		
	I prefer to follow influencers who mainly engage in unpaid collaborations.		0.890		
	I feel more positive about both the influencer and the product when the collaboration is unpaid.		0.922		
	I am more likely to purchase a product recommended through an unpaid collaboration than through a paid endorsement.		0.879		
IT	I trust that influencers share honest views and opinions about the products they promote.			0.853	
	I believe that influencers genuinely like and use the products they endorse.			0.856	
	I think that the influencers I follow prioritize their audience's interests when recommending products or services.			0.889	
	I feel that the content shared by influencers is consistent with their stated values and beliefs.			0.721	
	I am more likely to follow product recommendations from influencers who I feel engage genuinely with their followers.			0.843	
BB	I think that influencers play a significant role in making me aware of products I need or might need.				0.692
	I trust influencers to provide me with a variety of options and honest appraisals of alternatives.				0.797
	I feel more confident in my purchase decisions when they are influenced by trusted influencers.				0.735
	I often feel the need to share my satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a product on social media after a purchase.				0.804
	I feel that my overall decision-making process is positively influenced by following certain influencers.				0.762

Table 4. Reliability statistics.

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
0.835	20

Table 5. Model summary.

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics			Change statistics		
					R square change	F change	df1	Model	df2	Sig. F change
	.789 ^a	.622	.618	.59135	.622	135.146	3	1	246	.000

^aPredictors: (constant), para-social relationship, unpaid collaboration, and influencer trustworthiness.

^bDependent variable: buying behavior.

Table 6. ANOVA test.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	141.780	3	47.260	135.146	.000 ^b
Residual	86.025	246	.350		
Total	227.805	249			

^aDependent variable: TBB.

^bPredictors: (constant), para-social relationship, unpaid collaboration, and influencer trustworthiness.

According to [Table 7](#), para-social relationships and unpaid collaboration have a $p < 0.05$, statistically significant. As for influencer trustworthiness, it has a p -value of $0.848 > 0.05$.

Table 7. Coefficient.

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig	95.0% confidence interval for B	
	B	Std. error	Beta			Lower bound	Upper bound
(Constant)	1.376	.178		7.732	.000	.183	.985
TIT	-.007	.038	-.008	-.192	.848	-.082	.068
TPR	.153	.064	.150	2.388	.018	.027	.280
TUC	.738	.070	.667	10.619	.000	.601	.875

^aDependent variable: TBB.

Table 8. Hypotheses testing results and alignment with previous studies.

Hypothesis	Result	Findings	Comparison with previous studies
H ₁	Supported	Para-social relationship positively affects consumer buying behavior ($\beta=0.150$, $t=2.388$, $p<0.05$).	Supported by various studies (Armawan & Sudarmiatin, 2022; Audrezet et al., 2020; Chan et al., 2024; Huang & Qiao, 2022; Hussain et al., 2023; Koay et al., 2021; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Patmawati & Miswanto, 2022; Penttinen et al., 2022; Prasetyo et al., 2022; Safeer, 2024; Seçilmiş et al., 2022; Vonoga, 2021) that show para-social relationships enhance viewer attachment and trust towards influencers, positively influencing purchase intentions.
H ₂	Supported	Unpaid collaboration positively affects consumer buying behavior ($\beta=0.667$, $t=10.619$, $p<0.05$).	Supported by studies (Asante et al., 2022; De Veirman et al., 2017; Hahl, 2023) indicating unpaid collaborations are perceived as more genuine, enhancing brand authenticity perceptions and driving consumer engagement behaviors.
H ₃	Neither supported nor refuted.	No significant evidence of the positive effect of influencer trustworthiness on consumer buying behavior ($\beta=-0.008$, $t=-0.192$, $p=0.848>0.05$).	Contradicts some studies (Abdullah et al., 2020; Baig & Shahzad, 2022; Balaban & Mustătea, 2019; Masuda et al., 2022; Weismueller et al., 2020) which found trustworthiness significantly impacts consumer buying behavior.

Discussion

Table 8 shows the hypotheses testing results and alignment with previous studies that were used to develop the hypotheses.

The first hypothesis posits that a para-social relationship has a positive significant impact on Lebanese consumer buying behavior. This finding is supported by the findings of this study, which show that para-social relationships positively affect consumer buying behavior ($\beta=0.150$, $t=2.388$, $p<0.05$). These findings align with various previous studies (Armawan & Sudarmiatin, 2022; Audrezet et al., 2020; Chan et al., 2024; Huang & Qiao, 2022; Hussain et al., 2023; Koay et al., 2021; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Patmawati & Miswanto, 2022; Penttinen et al., 2022; Prasetyo et al., 2022; Safeer, 2024; Seçilmiş et al., 2022; Vonoga, 2021) that demonstrate para-social relationships enhance viewer attachment and trust towards influencers, thereby positively influencing purchase behavior.

The second hypothesis asserts that unpaid collaborations have a positive significant impact on Lebanese consumer buying behavior. This hypothesis is supported; thus, unpaid collaborations positively impact consumer buying behavior ($\beta=0.667$, $t=10.619$, $p<0.05$). This finding is in line with the findings of Asante et al. (2022), De Veirman et al. (2017), and Hahl (2023) who suggest unpaid collaborations are perceived as more genuine, enhancing brand authenticity perceptions and driving consumer engagement behaviors.

The third hypothesis proposes that influencer trustworthiness has a positive significant impact on Lebanese consumer buying behavior. However, this hypothesis is neither supported nor refuted by the findings of this study, which show no significant evidence of the positive effect of influencer trustworthiness on consumer buying behavior ($\beta = -0.008$, $t = -0.192$, $p=0.848>0.05$). This finding contradicts some previous studies (Abdullah et al., 2020; Baig & Shahzad, 2022; Balaban & Mustătea, 2019; Masuda et al., 2022; Weismueller et al., 2020), which found that trustworthiness significantly impacts consumer buying behavior. This divergence might be due to the unique social, cultural, a economic context of Lebanon; especially since Lebanon has recently faced severe economic and political instability (Al Maalouf et al., 2023; Al Maalouf & Al Baradhi, 2024; Yacoub & Al Maalouf, 2023). In such a crisis, consumers prioritize factors such as price sensitivity, perceived value, or immediate needs over the trustworthiness of an influencer. This could overshadow the role of trustworthiness in shaping consumer behavior.

In addition, due to the growing saturation of influencers across various platforms, consumers may have become more skeptical or desensitized to influencer endorsements, thereby diluting the impact of trustworthiness. Furthermore, the rise of micro-influencers, whose appeal lies in perceived authenticity and relatability rather than trustworthiness alone, could suggest that other dimensions of influencer characteristics; such as likeability or perceived expertise, play a more critical role in consumer decisions.

Conclusion

Theoretical implications

This study aims to investigate a contemporary, significant topic revolutionizing global society. As mentioned in the theoretical background, SOR theory provides a theoretical framework for interpreting consumer buying behavior while being based on the external stimuli that drive the state of internal organisms and trigger the behavioral response from the consumer. It was applied to analyze and interpret the entire process of para-social relationships and unpaid collaborations by studying the effect of social media influencers' marketing and unpaid collaborations (S-stimuli) on consumers' perception and beliefs developing para-social relationships with these influencers (O-organism), affecting their buying behavior (R-response). The findings revealed that para-social relationships and unpaid collaborations do have a significant positive impact on Lebanese consumer buying behavior, supporting the SOR theory. Also, SLT provided a structure that helps identify the role of peers and experts that influence consumer buying behavior and was applied to study influencer trustworthiness as a factor influencing the Lebanese buying behavior, and social media followers of these influencers. The findings could not reveal whether there is an impact of trustworthiness on consumer behavior.

Practical implications

In today's interconnected business environment, influencer marketing is a must for marketers. It should be integrated with the company's overall marketing plan to reach a wider audience, better understand the demands of the target market, and increase consumer engagement. However, to give consumers, the information they require, marketers should also entice their clients to visit their company's social media pages. Therefore, when developing their social media network policy, marketers ought to keep several suggestions in mind. They should establish quantifiable objectives, such as increasing traffic, drawing in new clients, enhancing consumer service, and engaging consumers. For example, a fashion brand might aim for a 30% increase in traffic through targeted influencer collaborations. Choosing influencers who align with the brand's identity is crucial; for instance, a health and wellness brand should partner with fitness influencers whose values reflect those of the brand. Moreover, to make the business easier for consumers to identify and recognize, marketers should align the influencer's pages with the company's corporate identity. For instance, if a company emphasizes sustainability, influencer content should highlight eco-friendly aspects of the product. Case studies like Daniel Wellington's successful use of fashion influencers and Glossier's engagement with beauty influencers illustrate how effective these strategies can be. These brands achieved significant results by ensuring content consistency and leveraging influencer authenticity. Additionally, monitoring campaign performance and adjusting strategies based on analytics can optimize results. For example, if certain content formats or influencer types perform well, marketers should scale these successful elements. By following these recommendations, marketers can effectively integrate influencer marketing into their strategies, enhancing consumer engagement and achieving their marketing goals.

Limitations and future research

While this study offers valuable insights into the influence of para-social relationships, unpaid collaborations, and influencer trustworthiness on Lebanese consumer buying behavior, the scope is limited to the unique cultural and economic landscape of Lebanon. The country's ongoing political

instability and economic crisis may have shaped consumer priorities differently compared to more stable markets. For instance, the positive impact of para-social relationships and unpaid collaborations found in this study might be more pronounced in Lebanon due to heightened consumer preference for perceived authenticity and value during economic hardship. In contrast, in more stable economies, factors such as influencer trustworthiness or brand loyalty might play a more significant role, as indicated by previous studies. Consequently, the results should be interpreted with caution when generalizing to other contexts. Future research could investigate how these factors perform in different cultural or economic environments to provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior across various settings. Also, due to the Lebanese economic crisis which has destabilized the country since 2019, and the impact of external forces that are impacting the Lebanese market environment, it is advised to carry out the same study once the circumstances in Lebanon have stabilized. Moreover, future research could compare Lebanese consumers with those from different cultural or economic backgrounds to provide broader insights into how influencer marketing operates in various contexts.

Also, since the results of hypothesis three were insignificant, future research could explore whether other influencer traits, such as expertise or attractiveness, exert a stronger influence on consumer behavior in the Lebanese market. Additionally, examining the impact of contextual factors, such as consumer demographics, product type, or economic conditions, may provide more nuanced insights into how and when trustworthiness matters most. Furthermore, future research could also investigate the role of different types of influencers on consumer trust and engagement. Moreover, future research could explore additional factors that might influence consumer behavior, such as cultural values, psychological traits, or media consumption habits.

Finally, future research could dig deeper into the potential impact of content quality by examining how the authenticity, creativity, and relevance of influencer content affect consumer engagement and purchasing decisions. Incorporating factors like content quality could further differentiate between influencers' effectiveness across various product categories or industries. Additional investigation can be carried out on this topic, particularly because it's a current issue that's always evolving.

Contributions

The study contributes significantly by providing insights into the Lebanese market, confirming that para-social relationships and unpaid collaborations positively influence consumer buying behavior. It challenges the assumption that influencer trustworthiness alone impacts purchasing decisions, suggesting other factors may be more influential. By applying the SOR model and SLT, the study enriches the theoretical understanding of influencer marketing. Practically, it offers actionable strategies for marketers, emphasizing the importance of emotional connections and perceived authenticity in driving consumer behavior in Lebanon.

Author's contributions

The specific contributions of each author are as follows:

Conceptualization: Nada Sarkis, Nada Jabbour Al Maalouf, and Rami El Lakiss

Methodology: Nada Sarkis, Nada Jabbour Al Maalouf, and Rami El Lakiss

Formal Analysis: Rami El Lakiss

Investigation: Nada Sarkis, Nada Jabbour Al Maalouf, and Rami El Lakiss

Resources: Nada Sarkis, Nada Jabbour Al Maalouf, and Rami El Lakiss

Data Curation: Nada Sarkis, Nada Jabbour Al Maalouf, and Rami El Lakiss

Writing—Original Draft Preparation: Nada Sarkis and Rami El Lakiss

Writing—Review & Editing: Nada Sarkis and Nada Jabbour Al Maalouf

Visualization: Nada Sarkis, Nada Jabbour Al Maalouf, and Rami El Lakiss

Supervision: Nada Sarkis and Nada Jabbour Al Maalouf

Project Administration: Nada Sarkis and Nada Jabbour Al Maalouf

Disclosure statement

There are no relevant financial or non-financial competing interests to report.

Funding

No funding was provided.

About the authors

Nada Sarkis holds a Ph.D. in Marketing and is an Associate Professor at the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK) Business School with a rich history of contributing to the higher education industry with a proven track record of leadership in various program settings and service environments. She possesses a diverse skill set, including expertise in Marketing, Strategic Management, and Communication Strategies. She contributed to academic literature through a variety of publications on marketing communication, consumer behavior, corporate social responsibility, leadership, human resource strategies, and the impact of AI and business analytics on organizational success and decision-making.

Nada Jabbour Al Maalouf holds a Ph.D. in Business Administration and is an Assistant Professor of Finance at the School of Business, Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK). Her research interests encompass a broad range of business topics, including sustainability in industries, financial literacy, the interrelatedness of macroeconomic variables, the role of AI and digital technologies in enhancing customer experience and decision-making, corporate social responsibility, leadership, and factors influencing consumer behavior.

Ramy El Lakiss is a Social Media Manager at Kizmet Media. He holds a BA in Cinema and Television and an MBA in Marketing from the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK). His work explores the influence of marketing on consumer behavior. Ramy has produced a documentary selected for FICNOVA and completed a research paper on the impact of influencer marketing on Lebanese consumers.

ORCID

Nada Sarkis  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3397-1201>

Nada Jabbour Al Maalouf  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3289-1349>

Data availability statement

Data collected from the questionnaire cannot be shared for ethical, privacy, or security concerns. The responses remain confidential and were used only for research purposes as per the informed consent in the questionnaire.

References

- Abd Rahim, I. R., & Aziz, N. A. A. (2023). *Use of Social Media for Advertising and Its Effectiveness* [Paper presentation]. International Conference on Communication and Media 2022 (i-COME 2022, August) (pp. 205–215). Atlantis Press. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-098-5_19
- Abdullah, T., Deraman, S. N. S., Zainuddin, S. A., Azmi, N. F., Abdullah, S. S., Anuar, N. I. M., ... Hasan, H. (2020). Impact of social media influencer on instagram user purchase intention towards the fashion products: The perspectives of UMK Pengkalan Chepa Campus Students. *European Journal of Molecular & Clinical Medicine*, 7(8), 2589–2598.
- Al Maalouf, N. J., & Al Baradhi, R. (2024). The impact of the economic crisis on the educational sector in Lebanon in terms of student enrollment, quality of education, and teachers' motivation. *Migration Letters*, 21(4), 1561–1570.
- Maalouf, N. J. A., Rizk, N., Ramadan, M., Baydoun, H., Zakhem, N. B., Elia, J., Daouk, A., Sawaya, C., & Boutros, F. (2023). The effect of human resource management practices on employee retention in private universities in Lebanon. *International Journal of Professional Business Review*, 8(9), e03556–e03556. <https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i9.3556>
- Alalwan, A. A., Rana, N. P., Dwivedi, Y. K., & Algharabat, R. (2017). Social media in marketing: A review and analysis of the existing literature. *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(7), 1177–1190. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2017.05.008>
- Alipour, S. M., Ghaffari, M., & Zare, H. (2024). Influencer marketing research: a systematic literature review to identify influencer marketing threats. *Management Review Quarterly*, 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-024-00412-5>
- Antunes, A. C. (2022). The role of social media influencers on the consumer decision-making process. In *Research Anthology on Social Media Advertising and Building Consumer Relationships* (pp. 1420–1436). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-6287-4.ch076>

- Armawan, I., & Sudarmiatin, A. H. (2022). The application SOR theory in social media marketing and brand of purchase intention in Indonesia: Systematic literature review. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(10), 2656–2670.
- Asante, I. O., Jiang, Y., Luo, X., & Ankrah Twumasi, M. (2022). The organic marketing Nexus: the effect of unpaid marketing practices on consumer engagement. *Sustainability*, 15(1), 148. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15010148>
- Audrezet, A., De Kerviler, G., & Moulard, J. G. (2020). Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation. *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 557–569. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.008>
- Baig, F., & Shahzad, S. U. (2022). *Impact Of Social Media Influencer's Credibility Dimensions On Consumer Behavior: An Empirical Study related to Influencer Marketing on Pakistan's Fashion Industry*.
- Balaban, D., & Mustăţea, M. (2019). Users' perspective on the credibility of social media influencers in Romania and Germany. *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations*, 21(1), 31–46. <https://doi.org/10.21018/rjcp.2019.1.269>
- Baranow, R. (2019). The impact of influencer marketing in the fitness industry on consumers' trust.
- Bognar, Z. B., Puljic, N. P., & Kadezabek, D. (2019). Impact of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour. *Economic and Social Development: Book of Proceedings*, 301–309.
- Burnasheva, R., & Suh, Y. G. (2022). The moderating role of parasocial relationships in the associations between celebrity endorser's credibility and emotion-based responses. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 28(4), 343–359. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2020.1862894>
- Cartwright, S., Liu, H., & Davies, I. A. (2022). Influencer marketing within business-to-business organisations. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 106, 338–350. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2022.09.007>
- Černikovaitė, M. (2019). *The impact of Influencer marketing on consumer buying behavior in social networks* [Paper presentation]. In International Scientific Conference, May. Dostupno na: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333067175_The_impact_of_influencer_marketing_on_consumer_buying_behavior_in_social_networks. <https://doi.org/10.3846/cibmee.2019.082>
- Chan, F. (2022). A study of social media influencers and impact on consumer buying behaviour in the United Kingdom. *International Journal of Business & Management Studies*, 3(7), 2694–1449.
- Chan, P. V., Wong, C. H., Moosa, V., & Hossain, S. F. A. (2024). Linking brand awareness, influencers, and impulse buying via SOR theory: A conceptual paper. In *Islamic Finance: New Trends in Law and Regulation* (pp. 283–297). Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-48770-5_23
- Chia, K. C., Hsu, C. C., Lin, L. T., & Tseng, H. H. (2021). The identification of ideal social media influencers: Integrating the social capital, social exchange, and social learning theories. *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, 22(1), 4–21.
- Childers, C. C., Lemon, L. L., & Hoy, M. G. (2019). # Sponsored# Ad: Agency perspective on influencer marketing campaigns. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 40(3), 258–274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2018.1521113>
- Chopra, A., Avhad, V., & Jaju, A. S. (2021). Influencer marketing: An exploratory study to identify antecedents of consumer behavior of millennial. *Business Perspectives and Research*, 9(1), 77–91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2278533720923486>
- Crisafulli, B., Quamina, L. T., & Singh, J. (2022). Competence is power: How digital influencers impact buying decisions in B2B markets. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 104, 384–399. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2022.05.006>
- De Mooij, M. (2021). *Global marketing and advertising: Understanding cultural paradoxes*.
- De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising*, 36(5), 798–828. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035>
- Desai, D. M. & Vidyapeeth, V. (2019). Digital marketing: A review. *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development*, 196–200. <https://doi.org/10.31142/ijtsrd23100>
- Duffett, R. G. (2015). Facebook advertising's influence on intention-to-purchase and purchase amongst Millennials. *Internet Research*, 25(4), 498–526. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-01-2014-0020>
- Fan, W., & Gordon, M. D. (2014). The power of social media analytics. *Communications of the ACM*, 57(6), 74–81. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2602574>
- Gayathri, A., & Anwar, H. (2021). Consumers' perception of the credibility of social media influencers and its impact on purchase intention. *Adalya*, 8, 1–8.
- Glucksman, M. (2017). The rise of social media influencer marketing on lifestyle branding: A case study of Lucie Fink. *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, 8(2), 77–87.
- Haenlein, M., Anadol, E., Farnsworth, T., Hugo, H., Hunichen, J., & Welte, D. (2020). Navigating the new era of influencer marketing: How to be successful on Instagram, TikTok, & Co. *California Management Review*, 63(1), 5–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0008125620958166>
- Hahl, S. (2023). *Perception of uncredibility in influencers' paid social media marketing collaborations* [Master's thesis].
- Hapsari, A. Y., Sukandi, P., Dalimunthe, G. P., Lisdayanti, A., Sumadhinata, Y. E., & Nilasari, I. (2024). The impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior: A comparative analysis of generation Z and millennials life style. *International Journal of Humanities Education and Social Sciences*, 3(5), 2559–2563. <https://doi.org/10.55227/ijhess.v3i5.988>
- Hayes, A. (2023). Social media marketing (SMM): What it is, how it works, pros and cons. *Preuzeto*, 1, 2023.
- He, W., Zha, S., & Li, L. (2013). Social media competitive analysis and text mining: A case study in the pizza industry. *International Journal of Information Management*, 33(3), 464–472. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2013.01.001>
- Henson, R. K., & Roberts, J. K. (2006). Use of exploratory factor analysis in published research: Common errors and some comment on improved practice. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 66(3), 393–416. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164405282485>

- Hollebeek, L. D., Glynn, M. S., & Brodie, R. J. (2014). Consumer brand engagement in social media: Conceptualization, scale development and validation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28(2), 149–165. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.002>
- Horton, D., & Wohl, R. R. (1956). Mass communication and para-social interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance. *Psychiatry*, 19(3), 215–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049>
- Horváth, J., & Fedorko, R. (2023, April). The impact of influencers on consumers' purchasing decisions when shopping online. In *Digital Marketing & eCommerce Conference* (pp. 216–223). Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-31836-8_23
- Huang, C., & Qiao, F. (2022, December). Silver influencers on the rise: How source influences and parasocial interaction affect consumer purchase intention. In *2022 6th International Seminar on Education, Management and Social Sciences (ISEMSS 2022)* (pp.745–754). Atlantis Press. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-31-2_89
- Hung, K., Chan, K. W., & Caleb, H. T. (2011). Assessing celebrity endorsement effects in China: A consumer-celebrity relational approach. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 51(4), 608–623. <https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-51-4-608-623>
- Hussain, A., Hooi Ting, D., Zaib Abbasi, A., & Rehman, U. (2023). Integrating the SOR model to examine purchase intention based on Instagram sponsored advertising. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 29(1), 77–105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2022.2108185>
- Huynh, V. (2020). *The role of social media influencers in the consumer decision-making process*.
- Kamaldeep, S. (2021). Influencer marketing from a consumer perspective: how attitude, trust, and word of mouth affect buying behavior. *European Integration Studies*, 15(1), 231–241. <https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.eis.1.15.28803>
- Khan, F. R., & Phung, S. P. (2021). Social media influencers and its impacts on consumer behavior: Malaysia. *Annals of the Romanian Society for Cell Biology*, 25(4), 6276–6285.
- Khan, R. U., Salamzadeh, Y., Iqbal, Q., & Yang, S. (2022). The impact of customer relationship management and company reputation on customer loyalty: The mediating role of customer satisfaction. *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, 21(1), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332667.2020.1840904>
- Koay, K. Y., Teoh, C. W., & Soh, P. C. (2021). Instagram influencer marketing: Perceived social media marketing activities and online impulse buying. *First Monday*, 26(9). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v26i9.11598>
- Kotler, P., & Armstrong, G. (2022). *Principles of Marketing* (19th ed.). Pearson.
- Kumar, A., Bezawada, R., Rishika, R., Janakiraman, R., & Kannan, P. K. (2016). From social to sale: The effects of firm-generated content in social media on customer behavior. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(1), 7–25. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.14.0249>
- Le, L. H., & Hancer, M. (2021). Using social learning theory in examining YouTube viewers' desire to imitate travel vloggers. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 12(3), 512–532. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTT-08-2020-0200>
- Li, M., & Hua, Y. (2021). Integrating social presence with social learning to promote purchase intention: Based on social cognitive theory. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 810181. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.810181>
- Lin, S. C., Tseng, H. T., Shirazi, F., Hajli, N., & Tsai, P. T. (2022). Exploring factors influencing impulse buying in live streaming shopping: a stimulus-organism-response (SOR) perspective. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 35(6), 1383–1403. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-12-2021-0903>
- Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 19(1), 58–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501>
- Masuda, H., Han, S. H., & Lee, J. (2022). Impacts of influencer attributes on purchase intentions in social media influencer marketing: Mediating roles of characterizations. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 174, 121246. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2021.121246>
- Mishra, S., & Ashfaq, R. (2023). Influencer impact: Examining the effect of influencers on consumer behavior and purchase. *Journal of Production, Operations Management and Economics*, 1(35), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.55529/jpome.35.1.18>
- Mittal, I. (2023). Effect of social media influencers on buying behavior of consumers and impact on their decision. *Social Science Journal for Advanced Research*, 3(3), 32–38.
- Moedeen, S., Aw, E. C. X., Alryalat, M., Wei-Han Tan, G., Cham, T. H., Ooi, K. B., & Dwivedi, Y. K. (2024). Social media marketing in the digital age: Empower consumers to win big? *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 36(1), 66–84. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-09-2022-0784>
- Nurhandayani, A., Syarief, R., & Najib, M. (2019). The impact of social media influencer and brand images to purchase intention. *Jurnal Aplikasi Manajemen*, 17(4), 650–661.
- O'Brien, J. (2024). *Category management in purchasing: A strategic approach to maximize business profitability*. Kogan Page Publishers.
- Ozuem, W., & Willis, M. (2022). Influencer marketing. *Digital Marketing Strategies for Value Co-creation: Models and Approaches for Online Brand Communities* (pp. 209–242). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94444-5_10
- Pangarkar, A., & Rathee, S. (2023). The role of conspicuity: Impact of social influencers on purchase decisions of luxury consumers. *International Journal of Advertising*, 42(7), 1150–1177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2022.2084265>
- Patmawati, D., & Miswanto, M. (2022). The effect of social media influencers on purchase intention: The role brand awareness as a mediator. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Business Management*, 1(2), 170–183. <https://doi.org/10.54099/ijebm.v1i2.374>
- Penttinen, V., Ciuchita, R., & Čaić, M. (2022). YouTube it before you buy it: The role of parasocial interaction in consumer-to-consumer video reviews. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 57(4), 561–582. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094968221102825>

- Pop, R. A., Săplăcan, Z., Dabija, D. C., & Alt, M. A. (2022). The impact of social media influencers on travel decisions: The role of trust in consumer decision journey. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 25(5), 823–843. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2021.1895729>
- Prasetio, A., Rahman, D., Sary, F., Pasaribu, R., & Sutjipto, M. (2022). The role of Instagram social media marketing activities and brand equity towards airlines customer response. *International Journal of Data and Network Science*, 6(4), 1195–1200. <https://doi.org/10.5267/j.jidns.2022.6.014>
- Rachmad, Y. E. (2024). *The Future of Influencer Marketing: Evolution of Consumer Behavior in the Digital World*. PT. Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia.
- Radwan, A. F., Mousa, S. A., Mohamed, M., & Youssef, E. Y. M. (2021). Impact of social media influencer marketing on youth purchase intentions in UAE. *Media Watch*, 12(3), 422–439. https://doi.org/10.15655/mw_2021_v12i3_165405
- Ramya, J., Mukherjee, R., Abhishek, P. F., & Fernandes, D. (2024). Influencer marketing: evaluating the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior. *Migration Letters*, 21(56), 1535–1546.
- Rane, N. L., Achari, A., & Choudhary, S. P. (2023). Enhancing customer loyalty through quality of service: Effective strategies to improve customer satisfaction, experience, relationship, and engagement. *International Research Journal of Modernization in Engineering Technology and Science*, 5(5), 427–452.
- Rosário, A., & Raimundo, R. (2021). Consumer marketing strategy and E-commerce in the last decade: A literature review. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research*, 16(7), 3003–3024. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jtaer16070164>
- Safeer, A. A. (2024). Harnessing the power of brand social media marketing on consumer online impulse buying intentions: A stimulus-organism-response framework. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 33(5), 533–544. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-07-2023-4619>
- Saldanha, N., Mulye, R., & Japutra, A. (2024). How do consumers interact with social media influencers in extraordinary times? *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 18(3), 333–348. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-02-2023-0062>
- Santiago, J. K., & Castelo, I. M. (2020). Digital influencers: An exploratory study of influencer marketing campaign process on instagram. *Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management (OJAKM)*, 8(2), 31–52. [https://doi.org/10.36965/OJAKM.2020.8\(2\)31-52](https://doi.org/10.36965/OJAKM.2020.8(2)31-52)
- Sayudin, S., Kartono, K., & Curatman, A. (2023). Increasing business effectiveness through the implementation of an integrated digital marketing strategy. *Journal of World Science*, 2(11), 1908–1913. <https://doi.org/10.58344/jws.v2i11.478>
- Seçilmiş, C., Özdemir, C., & Kılıç, İ. (2022). How travel influencers affect visit intention? The roles of cognitive response, trust, COVID-19 fear and confidence in vaccine. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 25(17), 2789–2804. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2021.1994528>
- Serman, Z., & Sims, J. (2020). *How social media influencers affect consumers purchase habit?* [Paper presentation].
- Singh, I., & Singh, S. (2021). The hype machine: How social media disrupts our elections, our economy and our health-and how we must adapt. *Business and Society Review*, 126(1), 101–104. <https://doi.org/10.1111/basr.12225>
- Smith, A., & Anderson, M. (2018). *Social media use in 2018*.
- Solomon, M. R. (2020). *Consumer behavior: Buying, having, and being*. Pearson.
- Suri, A., Huang, B., & Sénécal, S. (2023). This product seems better now: How social media influencers' opinions impact consumers' post-failure responses. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 27(3), 297–323. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10864415.2023.2226898>
- Tafesse, W., & Wood, B. P. (2021). Followers' engagement with instagram influencers: The role of influencers' content and engagement strategy. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 58, 102303. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102303>
- Tuomivaara, J. (2023). *How Do Influencers Impact Young Women's Consumer Purchase Decision-Making?*
- Tuten, T. L. (2023). *Social media marketing* (4th ed.). Sage Publications Limited.
- Varghese, S., & Agrawal, M. (2021). Impact of social media on consumer buying behavior. *Saudi Journal of Business and Management Studies*, 6(3), 51–55. <https://doi.org/10.36348/sjbms.2021.v06i03.001>
- Verplancke, J., & Gelati, N. (2022). *The effect of influencer marketing on the buying behavior of young consumers: A study of how the purchase intention of young consumers is affected by brands within the fashion and beauty industries*.
- Vidani, J., & Das, S. G. (2021). A review on evolution of social media influencer marketing: reflection on consumer behaviour and consumer's decision-making process. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(9), 314–327.
- Vonoga, A. (2021). Trends of consumer purchases via social media according to the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model. *Journal of Regional Economic and Social Development*, 1(13), 111–121. <https://doi.org/10.17770/jresd2021vol1.13.6712>
- Weismueller, J., Harrigan, P., Wang, S., & Soutar, G. N. (2020). Influencer endorsements: How advertising disclosure and source credibility affect consumer purchase intention on social media. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 28(4), 160–170. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ausmj.2020.03.002>
- Yacoub, L., & Al Maalouf, N. J. (2023). Resilience amidst lebanese crisis: Analyzing human resource practices. *Migration Letters*, 20(8), 554–572.
- Yang, K., Menchaca, E., & Esquivel Lizarraga, B. (2024). *Unraveling the Role of Social Media Influencers' Characteristics in Increasing Consumer CSR Engagement: A Perspective from Social Learning Theory* [Paper presentation].

- Ye, G., Hudders, L., De Jans, S., & De Veirman, M. (2021). The value of influencer marketing for business: A bibliometric analysis and managerial implications. *Journal of Advertising*, 50(2), 160–178. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2020.1857888>
- Yesiloglu, S., & Costello, J. (2020). Influencer marketing. *Building Brand Communities and Engagement* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429322501>
- Zhou, S., Blazquez, M., McCormick, H., & Barnes, L. (2021). How social media influencers' narrative strategies benefit cultivating influencer marketing: Tackling issues of cultural barriers, commercialised content, and sponsorship disclosure. *Journal of Business Research*, 134, 122–142. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.05.011>