The Impact of Instagram Influencers on Consumer Purchasing Intention

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ABSTRACT

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Title: The Impact of Instagram Influencers on Consumer Purchasing Intention

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Keywords: Influencers, Online purchasing intention, Instagram, Online influencer marketing, Trust, eWOM, Generation Z

Research question: What are the impacts of Instagram influencers on online consumer purchasing intentions?

Purpose: The primary purpose of this research is to investigate how social media influencers, otherwise dubbed as “Instgrammers,” particularly impact the online purchasing intentions of buyers and understand the role of Instagram influencers in the different online purchasing trends in organizations that rely on these individuals for their marketing activities in e-commerce.

Method: Qualitative research using focus group method for data collection and analysis.

Conclusion: Instagram influencers of all types have a noteworthy influence on the different online consumer purchasing intentions on the platform, where several factors determine the scope of their impact. Trust is considered one of the most significant ones. It is perspicuous that trust in Instagram influencers is intertwined with three aspects: the emotional feelings of the users in regard to the person, the social responsibility of the influencer toward the society, and the influencer fan base. Most users consider electronic word-of-mouth very effective, as it makes a difference in their pre-purchasing stage. The research resulted in a clear distinction between two types of eWOM, one being negative and the other being positive.
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Chapter I: Introduction

1.1 Background

Purchasing intentions have been defined by several different authors who have explored the concepts of marketing. According to (Morwitz, 2012) this concept refers to the willingness of the buyers to purchase any products or services offered in the market. The marketers within different industries significantly rely on this concept of purchasing intention as a metric that informs their sales within a given department (Morwitz, 2012).

Several factors influence consumer purchasing intentions. Foremost, the amount of pre-purchase support available to the consumers has a positive impact on the purchasing intentions (Landon, Jr., 1974). The various consumers need constant support throughout the purchasing process to help them fully understand and appreciate their decision to make purchases. Other vital aspects that inform positive consumer purchasing intentions include the different corporate social responsibility acts that give back to society and the environment (Grimmer & Bingham, 2013).

While consumer purchasing intention is a general concept, online consumer purchasing intentions refer to the willingness of the buyers to make purchases within the online environment, otherwise, e-commerce (Lee et al., 2011). Several factors will influence online purchasing intentions as well. The online consumer reviews available on these E-commerce platforms affect the consumers to make purchases. E-commerce organizations have also adopted the concept of adding reviews to their advertisements to enhance sales through inciting positive consumer purchasing intentions (Lee et al., 2011). The level of trust that consumers associate with an e-commerce platform also enhances positive consumer purchasing intentions. Trustworthy E-commerce platforms play a crucial role in ensuring the performance of E-commerce organizations. Finally, the concept of technology plays a massive role in influencing online consumer purchasing intentions. Consumers find it much easier to navigate easily organized and simple websites and social channels i.e. social media, which positively influences their online purchasing decisions (Sharma & Lijuan, 2015).

Social media is a broad concept that means a variety of different things to different persons as to what it means and what it does (Carri & Hayes, 2015; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kim & Kim, 2019). A good definition of what social media is “Social media are Internet-based channels that allow users to interact opportunistically and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with
others” (Carri & Hayes, 2015). This definition determines a few key concepts that address the idea of social media. First, it resides within the internet, and the users need to access the internet to enjoy the same experience. Also, it is evident that these platforms derive value from user-generated content, which is shared on the basis of interaction between all these different users.

There are several social media platforms amongst which Instagram lies, a platform used by millions of people of all ages (Carri & Hayes, 2015). Today’s world is significantly influenced by the emergence of Instagram, which is a company owned by another social media company known as Meta. Instagram is a viral social media platform used by 26% of the entire adult population that operated within the internet in 2014 and rose to 53% in 2015 with about 49% of the whole user population using the platform on a daily basis (Pew Research, 2015). Figure 2 below shows the number of people who use Instagram as a social media platform (Statista, 2021). From the graph, 1.386 billion people used the platform as of July 2021; this shows that a significant population uses Instagram as a social media platform. However, the population of users on Instagram has continued to balloon overtime at an increasing trend over the years between 2013 and 2021, making it a lucrative social media platform, as shown in Figure 1 below. Social media platforms like Instagram have entirely revolutionized the socio-economic environment and it has helped users interact with one another and generate related content that plays a crucial role in the engagements on these platforms (Hajli, 2014).

![Instagram users](source: Company Data)

**Figure 1:** Growth of Instagram users from the 1st quarter of 2013 to the 3rd quarter of 2021. (Instagram Revenue and Usage Statistics (2021), 2021)
As a social media platform, Instagram plays a critical role within the social environment of its different users who operate on a regular basis on the platform (Instagram Revenue and Usage Statistics (2021), 2021). First, it offers a source of entertainment to the different users who appreciate going through other users’ content on the platform. Besides providing entertainment and leisure, this platform also enables the different users to have parallel real-time communication. This communication helps in relaying information between individuals (Mattern, 2017).

The growth of Instagram came alongside an increase of influence through people or parties known as Instagram influencers (de Veirman et al., 2017). These individuals or parties are out to steer the users towards the use or consumption of given products by endorsing these products or promoting them alongside their art and other aspects explored on social media. These Instagram influencers are likable because their huge following determines their popularity within the platform (de Veirman et al., 2017). Instagram influencers provide a valuable platform for different organizations to engage with their followers (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). At the same time, the follower count strongly correlates to these companies’ engagement with their followers and target markets (Tafesse & Wood, 2021).
1.2 Problematization

Several authors have researched and discussed the concept of Instagram marketing (Lee & Kim, 2020; Muñoz & Towner, 2017). Some authors have focused on the concept of Instagram content sharing and the protection of intellectual property such as pictures and video content using copyrights (Bosher & Yeşiloğlu, 2018). Others have discussed the topic related to body image and what is regarded as the perfect self-influenced by Instagram (Pepin & Endresz, 2015). Instagram has also been evaluated in terms of healthcare products marketed on the platform, and the general idea of physical health has been conveyed before. Equally, other scholars such as Moon, Chadee, & Tikoo, (2008) have studied the impacts of culture, prices, and product types on the influence of online consumer purchasing intentions. They have found that the price is not the main factor determining consumer purchasing intention. Culture and product type significantly affect online consumer purchasing intentions as well.

On the other hand, Chen et al. (2010) discusses how website attributes have significant impacts on consumers' online purchasing intentions. The authors address aspects such as the ease of use and practicality that define these websites' performance. Information is lacking in the thought process that goes on in the mind of the consumer right before they decide to purchase a product from Instagram. There is a lot of information regarding how the different Instagram influencers play a part in the online consumer purchasing intentions of the different buyers who make purchases on Instagram. This study contributes to how Instagram marketing and influencers impact the consumers’ beliefs, attitudes, and purchasing intentions.

1.3 Aim and purpose

The primary purpose of this research is to investigate how influencers, otherwise dubbed as “Instgrammers,” particularly impact the online purchasing intentions of buyers and understand the role of Instagram influencers in the different online purchasing trends in organizations that rely on these individuals for their marketing activities in e-commerce.

1.4 Research question

What are the impacts of Instagram influencers on online consumer purchasing intentions?
Chapter II: Literature Review

2.1 Online Purchasing intention

Purchasing intentions, refer to the willingness of an individual to buy any products that are offered for sale (Morwitz, 2012). Van der Heijden et al. (2003) explore the different factors influencing consumers’ purchasing intentions to purchase online stores. These authors suggest that trust and technology play crucial roles in enhancing consumer purchasing intentions for the market targeted online.

The different aspects of the trust determine whether the other consumers will purchase the products that they influence to buy. According to van der Heijden, (2003), easy-to-use technology alongside trustworthy influencers plays an important role in enhancing the purchasing intentions of these different products. Like other business aspects, purchasing has been revolutionized by the concept of technology to provide a specific subset known as online purchasing intention. Online purchasing intention stands out as a subset of purchasing intention. This is specific to the online business environment, otherwise known as E-commerce.

The concept of online purchasing intentions can be studied from different perspectives, one being the gender perspective. According to Chiu et al., (2005), the male and females online purchasing intentions are impacted by different factors. The research conducted by the authors studies the online purchasing intentions from four main perspectives: personal innovativeness, perception of usefulness, ease of use, and personal awareness of security. The researcher argues that online purchasing intentions are equally influenced by attitudes whereby males are more inclined towards security while females are more interested in the ease of use. Both the males and females are attracted strongly towards the perceived usefulness and innovation of E-commerce platforms (Lin et al., 2018). Ranganathan and Jha (2007) equally argue the concept of online consumer purchasing intentions from four perspectives. According to these authors, a positive past shopping experience enhances. Also, promote the position that negative individual concerns can have deleterious impacts on online purchasing intentions. Good quality websites and high self-efficacy during the shopping experience can equally positively influence the online purchasing intention of the different consumers.

In another study by Hausman and Siekpe (2009), the interface of a website also plays a very crucial role
in determining consumer purchasing intentions. These authors explore several different website elements that define whether a website is appealing to the target consumer or not. Many consumers feel attracted to websites that they find appealing as well as easy to navigate and get things across. Hasanov & Khalid (2015) strengthens that argument by explaining that a good website interface that is constantly updated plays a very crucial role in positively influencing consumer purchasing intentions.

Another significant aspect of online purchasing intentions is the consumer rating of the different products and services offered (Kostyk et al., 2017). The authors further suggest that these ratings play vital roles in informing consumer purchasing intentions. Positive (high) ratings depict quality services or goods that are purchased by these different consumers. On the other hand, negative (low) ratings indicate dismal performance. Individuals often watch out for what other consumers have to say regarding these products before making their decisions, thereby influencing online purchasing intentions (Obiedat, 2013).

2.2 Influencer marketing

The influencers are individuals or groups of individuals with a large audience on social media platforms like Instagram (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). These influencers are involved in different content creations, and they apply varied strategies to drive traffic and increase their following. This gives rise to the concept of followers who also influence different followers on Instagram (Młodkowska, 2019). These different individuals are mainly known as influencers because they are meant to steer their audiences towards a particular direction of belief regarding purchases or any other concept that is of great significance. In most cases, these influencers are paid to do what they do, and the people or organizations that pay them benefit from getting the attention of their target audiences (Fainmesser & Galeotti, 2021).

The type of user engagement that is generated by the different influencer product endorsements plays a crucial role in determining the consumer purchasing intentions (Silva et al., 2019). These different Instagram influencers endorse products in different ways that spur different reactions and forms of engagement within the platform. In many instances, the presentation or format of engagement these Instagram influencers generate while endorsing products can directly impact the performance of the commodity in question (Santiago & Castelo, 2020). The influencer promotional strategies influence the users to go ahead and look up the different commodities that are endorsed. These users do not lose interest in the content provided by the other influencers because of their inclusion of any promotional materials on the same. Low turnouts have been experienced in cases where the different users are less interested in the promoted product (Belanche et al., 2020).
Instagram or other social media influencers are required to label their user-generated content as to whether it is marketing material or not (Naderer et al., 2021). According to the author, the labeling of the different promoted marketing user-generated content does not significantly affect how the various individuals interact with the influencers on Instagram. This disclosure also plays a significant role in assisting the different users in noticing and recognizing any content meant for marketing or promotion purposes. In some instances, the disclosure of the different brands that come up increases the ability of these consumers to recall the brands and associate the same with the user-generated content, which in turn enhances the product’s performance (Boerman, 2020).

2.3 Trust

Trust works together with commitment to build lasting relationships, according to Mukherjee and Nath (2007). Trust and commitment replace the physical interaction within the online environment. The trust-based theory suggests that being genuine and providing impartial information as a marketer in an online environment builds trust that leads to the creation of lasting relationships with the different consumers (Urban, 1998). This theory is essential within the online E-commerce environment where the different marketers aim towards evoking positive consumer purchasing intentions.

The research from Grewal and Stephen (2019) also presents a very compelling argument regarding the concept of mobile intervention of trust. According to this research, it is clear that most of the E-commerce platforms labeled their user-generated content depending on what it was posted from. The same study shows that consumer purchasing intention is positively impacted when the users find out that the positive comments were posted from others using mobile devices. Individuals have a high element of trust in other consumers post regarding the same product in question. Therefore, labeling the different consumer reviews depending on what they were posted helps build a vital element of trust, which significantly influences consumers’ purchasing intentions (Grewal & Stephen, 2019).

Another important point that comes up with trust is the concept of trust in bloggers (Vehbi & Gorgulu, 2019 ). From the research conducted by Hsu et al. (2013), it is clear that the different consumers’ trust in their bloggers strongly impacts how they make purchases. It affects their attitudes towards given products that are sold to them online. The element of trust plays a significant role in enhancing consumer purchasing intentions by defining the different essential aspects that determine how these different consumers react. This presents the trust that the different online influencers use to make potential consumers exhibit specific desirable purchasing decisions and their purchasing intentions (Hsu et al., 2013).
2.4 Word of Mouth and Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

The concept of consumer purchasing intentions has been explored by several different authors from a variety of perspectives including consumer reviews (Lee et al., 2011). The authors suggest that online reviews coming from other consumers, more than online advertisements, are very influential in enhancing the purchasing intentions of different individuals. This points out the benefit of the influence of other people in the effect of purchasing intentions of the various consumers who make purchases online (Kostyk et al., 2017).

Prendergast et al. (2010) introduce a new aspect of the concept of word-of-mouth in marketing. According to these authors, the different physical stores had strong purchasing intentions on the market populations through word of mouth. However, these markets were all moving online, and so was the influence. Their article presents a very logical standpoint of an online approach to word of mouth, which uses several different online platforms, including Instagram, to persuade consumers to buy different products.

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is a variant of word of mouth from the electronic or online perspective. eWOM is essential in online consumer purchasing intentions, which informs most buyer decisions in E-commerce. eWOM is associated with trust among the consumers, provided that the information distributed is of good quality (Zhao et al., 2020). Another significant impact of eWOM is initiating an interpersonal relationship between consumers that benefit business organizations. Consumers manage to market the products that can only be felt, such as services, by communicating the nature of their experience with the organization (Litvin et al., 2008).

Consumer-consumer interpersonal interactions are more influential and persuasive, making this a practical approach towards the concept of online purchasing intentions (Litvin et al., 2008). Therefore, in instances where the consumers relay positive information, they can instigate positive online consumer purchasing intentions (Durmaz & Yüksel, 2017). Electronic word of mouth has a positive impact on the different purchasing intentions of consumers (Sari & Yulianti, 2019). Instagram has extensively leveraged eWOM to market fashion products and other products that are currently evolving fast with technology itself (Sari & Yulianti, 2019).
Chapter III: Conceptual Framework

This study is based around a conceptual framework that associates Instagram influencer marketing to consumer purchasing intention through two variables: electronic word of mouth and trust. To evoke a positive consumer purchasing intention, an organization needs to exude trustworthiness through its chosen influencers. These organizations should also develop a continuous channel of positive WOM. Trustworthy Instagram influencers who can also influence positive eWOM are essential for the achievement of positive consumer purchasing intention.

Figure 3: Conceptual framework for Instagram Influencer marketing. (Source: Authors)
Chapter IV: Methodology

This section outlines the different processes that have been applied in the actualization of this study. The study applies proper scientific research techniques that are dedicated to a quality and reliable study process.

4.1 Research Approach

This research study employs a deductive approach. The study started by reviewing different concepts to develop a prediction. This research attempts to develop an association between the two aspects of trust and Electronic Word of mouth to explain the level of impact that Instagram influencers have on the different consumers and users of the platform, especially those within generation Z. Furthermore, empirical data were gathered to examine the study hypothesis (Saunders et al., 2019).

The research study utilizes the mono-qualitative methodology to outline the subject's different aspects as it only uses qualitative data collected mainly through focus interviews with some Instagram users (Saunders et al., 2019). The focus group discussion methodology is commonly used to gain a greater understanding of social issues. The method aims to obtain data from a purposely chosen group of individuals rather than a statistical sample of a more comprehensive population (Nyumba et al., 2018). It could be further stated that the research focuses on the feelings and opinions of the participants within the focus group discussions. There is no complex statistical manipulation in the analysis at this stage in trying to get as much information as possible from the participants.

In terms of time, this study operates from a cross-sectional perspective only once (Saunders et al., 2019). This is because the participants in the study volunteer data only once, and they are not followed up and down to volunteer data. The data collected once is used as the basis for making definitive conclusions.

4.2 Research Context

Instagram was chosen for the evaluation of online consumer purchasing intentions. The platform was favorable in a variety of ways that defined its validity as the social media of choice. Instagram is considered as one of the largest social networks in regard to the amount of people using it as it has 1.386 billion users. (Statista, 2021). Furthermore, Instagram operates an algorithm that enables it to match individuals to the content they would love to explore (Constine, 2018). This is done based on several criterias that influence the interaction between the different users on the platform. First, the users will
view posts based on their interests on the given topics of discussion derived from machine learning and data collected from the individual. This follows the different frequently visited sites and ideas appreciated by the different individuals and directs relevant posts regarding the same to the user (Mattern, 2017). Also, the platform utilizes the concept of time to show them the most recent posts that are relevant (Constine, 2018). In many cases, the users of Instagram visit the platform for the newest trends and current information in the different fields, making it even much easier to access the same. Finally, the relationship of two or more individuals can define the content that they are seeing. For instance, most of the posts people are exposed to on Instagram always comprise most of the content created by the different people they are following on Instagram (Lopez, 2017).

A few other methods of determining what an individual user can see depend on the frequency with which a particular user uses the program (Constine, 2018). Each time, the platform will always present the user with the latest feeds since they were last active on the platform. Following many people always also enhances the number of people or content that a user can experience, just as experienced in the section discussing relationships above. Finally, the duration that an individual spends on Instagram determines the posts they will see. An individual who takes a lot of time on the platform will always be able to see most of the posts, even deep within the platform (Constine, 2018).

### 4.3 Participants

The focus group interviews mainly targeted the participants within generation Z. This generation is strongly characterized by activities and behaviors that are essential to this study with respect to Instagram. Generation Z refers to people who were born between 1997-2010 (Dimock, 2019). They have replaced the millennials within the institutions of higher learning and are characterized by a variety of aspects that define their personality (Shatto & Kelly 2016). Generation Z consists of a wide variety of people born at a time when the internet and social media had a strong foothold within society. This generation has a very different view of life and embraces aspects such as entrepreneurship rather than formal employment. Most of them are influential, loyal, and open-minded (Elaina, 2017).

Generation Z main concerns are racial discrimination and unemployment. Also, they view themselves from the “we” perspective, always doing certain things like groups and striving to please others (Elainia, 2017). This makes these users the most dominant portion of Instagram users all over the entire population of Instagram users globally (Arda, 2019). Most of this generation's activities take place within this platform so much that it influences their lifestyles. Both their social and economic lives are strongly impacted by Instagram so much that it forms a part of who they are and defines most aspects of their
lives (Vitelar, 2013). Most marketers who use Instagram as the social media platform for marketing the different products constantly exclusively target consumers within this age bracket (Arda, 2019). This is because most of the individuals within generation Z find marketing done over Instagram very credible.

4.4 Data Collection

This stage is very significant in this process as it provides the raw facts used in deriving the study's conclusion. This data collection stage determines the reliability and validity of the information that is obtained from the study. The data collection process of this study is highlighted below:

4.4.1 Secondary Data

The study utilized secondary data from other sources in the background of the study. This data was collected from the Instagram company website as well as other reliable sources such as Statista, EbscoHost, and Scopus which are dedicated to the collection and analysis of essential data. These sources were verifiable and adequately cited within the information presented within the study. The information was also current regarding the different aspects of the study. This data collected was crucial in laying the basic understanding of how Instagram operates and how it influences the different users to react within the market environment.

4.4.2 Primary Data

This study was mainly based on primary data, which was collected from focus group interview discussions. Focus groups were a much better fit for this research due to the nature of the study, as the aim is to delve into the experience and sentiments of the various consumers regarding consumer purchasing intentions over Instagram as a social media platform. Using different methods such as surveys or one-to-one interviews would not be advantageous (Nyumba et al, 2018).

The primary sampling strategy that was used in this research was convenience sampling. Convenience sampling strategy plays a crucial role in ensuring that the participants who took part were relevant to the study. As a student with limited budget resources, this sampling strategy was convenient in getting the necessary and appropriate data without having to experience prohibitive costs. Also, this strategy was essential for the time that was available for the data collection process. Other sampling strategies such as snowballing and quota sampling would be very tedious and engaging in the study, which would require more time and resources (Saunders et al., 2019).
4.5 Focus Group

The study involved two main focus groups. The choice of only two focus groups was based on various reasons, principally because many researches support conducting at a minimum of two focus groups for each demographic characteristic in order to get a broader knowledge of the subject and sufficiently capture differences of conceptual codes (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Barbour, 2007; Knodel, 1993). Moreover, a study by Hennink, Kaiser & Weber (2019) regarding estimating the sample size of focus groups revealed that the first focus group interview would generate 60% of new codes with an obvious decline after that. The second focus group codes develop only 12% of new code. Only eight codes would be developed from the third to the sixth focus group, with very few codes per group. The decline remained despite the order in which focus groups were conducted. The researchers noticed this point while conducting and coding the second focus group interview, where the amount of data gathered was much less than the first focus group interview.

The focus groups were chosen based on including both genders males and females. All the participants involved within these groups were of the age of generation Z. The number of participants within each focus group discussion was six to seven which was reasonable enough alongside the fact that it was large enough to reduce the chances of error that might arise from misrepresentation or inaccurate generalization. This would also give a higher confidence interval in the data collection from the participants. All of the participants were also of the consenting age. They were issued with consent forms where they would sign that they were aware of the data collection purpose and allow their data to be used for educational purposes anonymously.

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The first focus group discussion had five females and two male participants. The first focus group discussion was undertaken over Zoom conference discussions. The duration of this focus group amounted to approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes.

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The second focus group discussion consisted of six males participants, and it was conducted face to face within the university. The duration of this focus group amounted to about 1 hour. The outcomes of these discussions for both groups were transcribed down carefully with the permission of the participants.

4.6 Data Analysis

The data collected from the participants of the focus group discussions were presented in the form of transcribed text. These transcriptions were analyzed to identify the main aspects or outcomes within the different questions. The data were categorized into different themes within the research. The two principal codes used in the study were related to electronic word of mouth and the concept of trust. The primary approach towards this scientific analysis was structural coding, where the different codes that were predetermined based on the conceptual framework were identified within the data transcripts and used for analyses. This gave a clear illustration of the different aspects discussed within the study (Saunders et al., 2019).
The two focus group discussions were analyzed alongside one another while arranged according to a protocol to identify the recurring aspects within the various focus group interview transcriptions from the study. These repeating patterns were used as the primary outcomes of the research to form the main ideas that came up during the study activity. This qualitative data appropriately captured the feelings, sentiments, and experiences of the different participants within the focus group discussions.

As for the secondary data, this data was provided from dedicated academic and peer-reviewed work that formed an essential part of the literature of this research thesis. Most of these sources were current and written by some of the most reputable scholars within the designated fields of study. Moreover, Proper citation and referencing were provided from the different sources used in compiling the different sections.

4.7 Research Validity

This research was a great representation of the different views of the targeted population regarding consumer purchasing intentions for multiple reasons. Firstly, the participant base used for the data collection was relevant to the study. Furthermore, the data collection approach, since primary data were gathered with a sufficient number of samples using a focus group interview. Focus groups are valuable in these types of research as they encourage rich discussion and provide a more profound understanding of the different consumer's interactions. Moreover, Serviceable academic sources such as journals and peer-reviewed documents were used to compile the research study’s different sections, which informed the logical flow and the reasoning behind the various arguments. This study also strictly adhered to the onion research model provided by Saunders et al. (2019). This model provided a precise scientific approach to the whole design of the study.

4.8 Research Reliability

The study portrayed reliability in multiple ways that ensured the practicality of the outcomes from the study. First, there was a word-for-word transcription of the responses acquired from the interviews during the data collection, which reduced any chances of misinterpretation of the data while at the same time enhancing the consistency of the same data (Wengraf, 2001). The different sources of information collected from various academic databases formed an indispensable part of the study. These sources were consistently cited and referenced, making it more manageable to follow up on all the individual sources for verification purposes.
4.9 Limitations

The main limitation of this study was that not all of the Generation Z population fulfill the research consensus age limit, as a great percentage of this generation is still under the age of 18, which means that a part of the studied generation still does not fully understand their actions. Also, it limited the type of samples that the researchers could select. Another significant challenge that this research study suffered from was the use of convenience sampling instead of other sampling methods. Convenience sampling only works with the data resources and available participants, leaving room for the possibility for errors to occur during the data collection process.
Chapter V: Empirical Findings

This research study consisted mainly of primary qualitative data that was collected from a total of thirteen participants through focus group interviews. These interviews mainly consisted of representation from both genders in terms of the distribution of participants within the study. This is because the aspect of gender was crucial for the study's outcome as Instagram is used differently by both of them. The participants within the study were old enough to make significant deliberations regarding the topic of interest. The outcome from the focus group discussions was organized and analyzed using defined codes which included: time and reason for signing up to Instagram, perception of Instagram Influencers, trust in Instagram influencers, and electronic word of mouth.

5.1 Time and Reason for Joining Instagram

Most of the participants had been using Instagram for an extended period dating back between six and ten years ago. According to participant A, "I cannot even remember when I signed up. I think it was about seven-eight years ago." and another participant B also claims that, "I am signed up as well on Instagram. I think it's been between eight to ten years ago" Participant M also argued that, "I signed up in 2013. And I was one of those who did not want to put their picture on Instagram. So I just put pictures of food and, you know, beautiful sceneries that I thought I took good pictures of at the time. If you look back now, it's just like a picture of a plate of pasta or like an ice cream cone or something. And I'm like, What was I thinking? But, yeah, that's when I signed up."

Other participants C, D, E, F, G and L also had signed in to the platform in the same period between 2012 and 2015 when Instagram was a trend back then, as they mentioned in the two focus group interviews.

In terms of the reason for joining the platform, various reasons were presented by the participants. Many of them stated that they joined and started using it because of peer pressure from seeing their friends using it, such as Participant H "I think it was just like that, because my friends got it." In the same way, participant M argues that “I guess I would say I personally signed up to join everyone else since everyone was just joining the app at the time and posting pictures. So, I wanted maybe to feel included. So yeah, that could be my first reason."
Participant B also agreed that they joined because of group pressure, just as well as participants C and D, who argue that, "Now say I signed up because it was just like a trend back then," and "It was like a trend and a new platform. So, it was interesting to see what's going on"

This data indicates that many of the participants were influenced by their friends and people around them to make the decisions to join the social media platform and take part in the same. Other motives for joining the platform included participants J and G, who started using the platform because of its outstanding features, as postulated in their response. "Yeah, for me, it's the same. It was just for uploading nice pictures and, you know, feeling like you have a thing, like, taking pictures and being a photographer in general. And the filters were also nice. So I'm a tech guy, I really like new tech, new apps and stuff like this." participant J. Additional reasons were mentioned by the participants, for instance, searching for an alternative to Facebook as the platform became less attractive for the younger generation due to the amount of information on the platform and considering many parents joining Facebook at that time as noted by participants I and G.

5.2 Users Perception of Instagram Influencers

There was a difference in views between the participants regarding the definition of an influencer, as opinions varied between whom they considered to be an influencer on Instagram and how the same people impact their purchasing intention. According to some participants, the influencers are people who share their interests or hobbies and show them different aspects of the different products. Participant J argues that: "An influencer, for me, is somebody that is interested, let's say in the same trends, or like in the same things that I'm interested in, like, for example, if I follow like, football player, of course, it's somebody that I watch. So I want to see what they do on like, everyday basis, see their stories get closer to them." Equally, G stated that "It can be a person that's interested in a certain hobby that I like, and I might see a story or a picture of them doing something we share interest in."

Participants A, C, D, and M had a different perspective and described an influencer as someone who has a sort of power or influence over others where this power can influence the behavior and people's purchasing intention "I think you should be classified as an influencer if you have
an impact."; according to participant D, he goes on and gives an example about influencer promo codes "if they make a promo with brands like Nike, for example. And you see maybe thousands of followers buying that with his promo, like with this promo code, then he has impacted a lot of people."

Other participants had a distinct view regarding the identification of an influencer. In their perspective, it is all about that person's backstory, "It is about the story behind the influencer, that maybe they come from nothing and they rise like a star. And then people take that as motivation and confidence." participant E. Similarly, according to participant M, the influencers appeal to them because of their genuine emotions and lifestyles, "I'm gonna give you an example of someone who does it in a subtle way and doesn't bother me. For example, Amr Maskoun if you know him, this guy is chill. He's okay. He makes comedy content. He also tries to encourage people; I don't watch his story every day. But whenever I watch it, I see some content that says, don't just think that all of this came from nothing. And I've had my own troubles. He says it in a calm way, without making a huge deal out of it. But also reminding you that he's also a human, that kind of way is okay for me."

On the other hand, some participants argued that lately, these emotions had been fabricated for commercialized emotional appeal among the different users and to follow the trend to attract new followers, "I feel like in the past couple of years it's been a trend that a lot of influencers are taking the opposite approach where they show themselves vulnerable, upset, or they talk about their mental illness. And I think those, like in the beginning, those people that started giving that kind of feedback to their audience were really attractive to me, let's say because they talked about stuff that other celebrities and influencers don't mention" according to participant G. Participant H agreed upon the idea of the fabrication of emotions by influencers, "I think for me, it's a lot of fakeness but in a very subtle way. Because the problem I have with Instagram influencers is that they do this thing where it's the same as when you said before about mental wellness and stuff. A lot of people started doing that because that was a trend. So, every time something comes up like when this video of the turtle with a plastic straw and its nose popped up, and everyone bought metal straws and everyone marketed metal straws because then the trend was like plastic is evil now..."
Despite the difference in the opinion concerning the definition of influencers among the participants, most of them follow influencers on Instagram platform, and the reasons for following those influencers differ greatly where some of them follow these influencers just because they are well-known celebrities while others follow them just learn new skills or try new cooking recipes.

5.3 Trust and Instagram Influencers

Trust in influencers was a crucial point during the two focus group interviews and a central factor in determining and influencing the purchasing intention of the different participants. However, some participants expressed that they blindly trust the influencers they follow, and those influencers can directly impact their purchasing intention for instance, according to M "The first one would be that the influencer that I'm following is someone I really, really like so whatever they say it's facts.". Equally, participant D stated that he usually does not follow many Instagram influencers, but he indeed trusts the one he follows.

The reason for trusting those Instagram influencers varies among the participants. For example, according to participant M, most of the influencers that they followed were because of their factual information alongside truthful reviews, as depicted in the response "If have tried some of the products that they have advertised for before, and it was really good so I would think that whatever they promote for later is going to be of the same quality, let's say. So I trust them by the fact that I have tried stuff that they promoted". Other participants follow and trust influencers for other reasons, including their fanbase and the influence from their social support groups such as colleagues and family. Moreover, the way the different influencers carry themselves out also plays a massive role in their influence alongside similarity in character as postulated by participant G, "I have trust issues in general. So, I can't say that I have any kind of influencer that I trust completely. But of course, if I like them, like for instance, with Rasha Rizk it's just this bond, I feel like an entire generation is obsessed with her. So of course, if she posts stuff about her life, I will be more invested in it than other things and trust that she's giving an honest opinion, just that she's saying whatever she thinks for real. ." this participant goes on saying "I just want to add that if Rasha Rizk were to do any kind of promotion I would buy the stuff"."
On the contrary, participants E, I, and H stated that they do not trust any influencer on Instagram as they are only on the platform just to enhance consumer online Purchase Intention to buy more products. According to participant I "Yeah, I have trust issues with influencers or celebrities. I think they don't do everything by heart. They sell stuff just because they have to, or they want to, I just don't trust them.". Similarly, participant C emphasizes the idea that it is all related to the financial gain "I would say yeah, of course, because sometimes it's all about the money they can promote bad products. Maybe I order something big just because I like the influencers. Then I get my product and it's maybe gone bad after two weeks."

According to most participants, the lack of trust of Instagram influencers is due to several causes, such as the different promotional activities that are undertaken by these influencers on the platform. As shown in the data, Influencers' credibility decreases notably when they promote products outside their area of interest or recommend a certain product that can affect in a negative way on the users "It shows that they don't even care about their fan base if they are promoting something that can harm their own followers." participant B.

5.4 Electronic Word of Mouth and Instagram Influencers

The concept of electronic word of mouth is equally profound in the different user's purchase intentions. Most of the participants in the two interviews expressed that they consider eWOM as a reliable source of information, and they accentuated that they are highly responsive to the online review and consumers' comments regarding a product or service during the pre-purchasing stage "Yeah, the first thing I check is the reviews. If the product I am interested in, after checking the description and everything, I will go to the reviews, and if it has more than a few percent of negative reviews, I will not buy it." participant K.

However, opinions varied between the participants in regard to the electronic word of mouth that spread from Instagram influencers where some of them contend that Instagram influencers review about a product they are willing to buy directly influence their purchasing intention, according to participant J "I would say yes, it does have an impact. It can be a positive one or a negative one, at the end of the day it is a review, I'm watching a review and so it does have an impact on me.".
Participant D had a similar view; He stated that the influencers he follows opinions matter, and it helps them gauge the value they are getting for their money. "As I mentioned before, I am very picky with who I follow, but when it comes to the one I am following, I would say their reviews play a big role in my purchase decision."

When asked for the reasons behind that, he continued "Because I trust them already, and I know they will not disappoint me." In addition to that, participant M stated that it all depends on the product those influencers are reviewing or recommending where if the product is interesting and this influencer is using it on a regular basis, she will mostly buy it. Participants L and G stated that Instagram influencers' opinion and recommendation does not fully influence their purchasing intention, but they would still consider it before making any decision "It is a part of my review that I do on certain products. So, their opinion is just a percentage of what I have been reading and what I have seen online." participant L.

Contrastingly, some participants disagree with the position. They illustrated that Instagram influencers do not impact their purchasing intentions due to the fact that those influencers cannot be trusted to do truthful reviews about specific products for instance, in participant H's opinion, it is just an advertising method used by the companies to sell their products "If I see anything on my feed, like the more influencers I see recommending something, and especially if it's an ad, then I'm more prone to not buy it. So I put it on my mental don't buy list. It's just another form of Ad, and they get paid to promote this." Participant C argues that there is the issue of bias as some influencer may review a product or services of their own "Also, there could be bias involved as well. Because one thing I thought about is Conor Mcgregor and proper whiskey which is his own brand. Obviously Conor is going to say it's the best whiskey out there, but I know people who have tried it and also people who have reviewed it and many say it is not all that."
Chapter VI: Analysis

Consumer purchasing intention is a very crucial aspect in making sales within any industry, and so is the same within Instagram. This research study set out to investigate the effects of influencer marketing on consumer purchasing intention according to time and reason for joining Instagram, user perception of Instagram influencers, trust, and Instagram influencers, as well as the concept of electronic word of mouth. The consumer purchasing intentions strongly relies on the interactions between the marketers and the target audience.

6.1 Time and Reason for Joining Instagram

It is clear that most of the participants have been using Instagram over a long period of time ranging between 6 and 10 years. However, it is also worthwhile to note that the amount of time that is spent by each individual on the platform varies from one individual to the next depending on their other life commitments such as work and hobbies according to the participants. While some participants were unable to accurately gauge the time when they joined Instagram, others were able to remember using some of the most outstanding events that took place in their lives almost around the same time.

Most of the users joined Instagram depending on various reasons, mainly because of how they felt. For instance, participant G explains that it was easy to appreciate being able to add filters and using other editing features that Instagram had especially when it was uncommon to do so as someone who isn't a professional photographer or editor. “A friend of mine, and she, like, took a picture of us and uploaded it. And she did one of these effects things that Instagram had, and I thought the picture looked way better. So I'm like, yeah, I want to be able to do the same with my pictures.” participant G.

The first category of participants are those who were influenced by their friends and through the concept of word of mouth, Litvin et al (2008) suggests that electronic word of mouth heavily relies on how individuals feel. The participants were able to see what the platform could do through their social pressure and they got influenced to join. There is also another group that found the platform as the new trend and did not want to be in a position where they could be perceived as less trendy in relation to their peers. Most of the participants joined the platform as part of a trend that is continuing. These different trends are spread by friends and family, these are people who the users trusted according to the position of Mattern (2017). Finally, there was
the last category that comprised the least number of participants, these are those who signed up because of their technical capabilities. This last group signed up because of the techy features that come with the platform such as the filters that help them become better photographers. Participant J goes on to describe “I remember when I downloaded it. It was fall. So the first picture I took was like, in our old street. It was like, split in the middle with like two rows of trees. So, the leaves were like on the ground. And it was so colorful. And I thought, oh my god, I'm a photographer.”.

Equally, taking a closer look from another perspective, this last group is attracted to applications and always wants to try out the latest which comes across as peer pressure just as the second category. All these falls within the concept of consumer-consumer persuasion as stated by Litvin et al. (2008).

From this part of the analysis, it is clear that no user out of the two focus groups joined Instagram with the main intention of making a purchase; they instead joined as a means to socialize with friends as described by participant A and C. A smaller population of the users set out to join the platform because of its technological features such as participant G who describes the reason behind joining the platform due to the unique features. Many of the users joined the platform under peer influence. This shows the first step in understanding how Instagram influences the consumers purchasing intention, all the participants joined with the main aim of socialization or enjoying the features of the platform, rather than making any purchases. Firstly, the features of the application attracted them onto the platform. Some small but important tools such as being able to use filters and other effects influenced them to join. This, incorporated with the social aspect of the application, has helped to sustain the user’s interest over a long period within the platform as explained by participants.

6.2 User Perception of Instagram Influencers

Tafesse and Wood (2021) define influencers as individuals who are paid to incite consumers in a particular direction of consumption. These influencers take advantage of their positions and their following to make sales for significant organizations. Instagram influencers are the main drivers of traffic within the platforms. Therefore, they are the biggest contributors to the influence of Instagram user purchasing intentions. The perception of these Instagram influencers in the users’ eyes is essential to their purchasing intentions.
According to the participants, most of them regard influencers as people who have dedicated themselves to the creation of content in certain aspects of life or of their own lives. This is further illustrated by an example of a participant “I think it's related to the content that they post as well. That's what draws you to them.” participant K. These participants argue that it is important for these influencers to show ingenuity and believe in what it is that they are influencing people to use rather than just doing the same for marketing purposes. “Yeah, I have trust issues with influencers or celebrities. I think they don't do everything by heart. They sell stuff just because they have to, or they want to, I just don't trust them.” participant I.

This content created by these influencers should drive a larger audience and lots of viewing time in order to gain legitimacy, according to most participants, while others find relatively smaller crowds plausible enough. “For instance, one of the people that I used to look at what they post and like and sort of follow them all the time is a girl that does her own hair dye at home, which is a big hobby of mine and she wasn't actually a celebrity, she was just really good and she didn't have that many followers.” participant G.

According to Tafesse and Wood (2021), most influencers are equally identified by their large audiences and followings, and these are what make them attractive to the organizations that are seeking influencer marketing services. Most of the participants argue that legitimate influencers are always followed by a lot of people who find what they talk about sensible. Some participants also suggested that other people choose to become influencers in order to evade real jobs, in an attempt to elaborate on the illegitimacy that presents itself within some Instagram influencers. “These ones for me are people who don't want to get a real job and people who will do anything for money.” participant L.

Some participants find these Instagram influencers very useful while offering discounts and offers through aspects such as promotional codes for them to get the products at reduced prices. This shows a positive user purchasing intention as influenced by the influencers. “Yeah, like if they make a promo with brands like Nike, for example. And you see maybe thousands buying that with his promo, like with this promo code, then he has impacted a lot of people, then he can be classified as an influencer or she.” participant D.
Another significant aspect that stood out in how these users viewed the influencers was their backstory. Many participants had genuine backstories. The genuine backstories are captivating to the empathetic users and those who can relate to the same feelings and emotions. “But whenever I watch it, I see some content that says, don’t just think that all of this came from nothing. And I’ve had my own troubles. He says it in a calm way, without making a huge deal out of it. But also reminding you that he’s also a human, that kind of way is okay for me.” participant M. On the other hand, some Instagram influencers manipulated their backstories in order to fit the circumstances. These are ideas that turned off users “So every time something comes up, like when this video of the turtle with a plastic straw in its nose popped up, and everyone bought metal straws and everyone marketed metal straws because then the trend was like “plastic is evil now. Yeah, buy this straw”” participant H.

Therefore, ingenuity is significant for any individual Instagram influencer because it significantly impacts the user perception of these influencers. Most users have turned away with scripted and fake acts of kindness or vulnerability that call for pity. Therefore, ingenuity is a very essential aspect for influencers within Instagram as a social media platform. This is because it is normal for influencers to use their following to promote products, according to Fainmesser and Galeotti (2021). Being that it is what they do to earn a living, they cannot stop selling. However, it should be done in a transparent manner that does not mislead anyone into believing otherwise.

6.3 Trust and Instagram Influencers

Trust is considered a central element for business in the online environment, especially with the absence of physical interaction between consumers and marketers (Mukherjee & Nath, 2007). Gaining the trust of the different users and consumers lead to improving their purchase intentions toward a certain product. Nevertheless, as it shows in the study findings, the level of trust of Instagram influencers counters among the different users where some users completely trust those influencers, "Of course, I trust the influencers that I follow.” participant B. While others expressed their lack of trust in these influences, "I follow them because I like how they play football or soccer. I don't trust them." participant I. This trustworthy concept is greatly hinged on a number of reasons, such as the size of the brand they are promoting or their fanbase on the platform where a large number of followers increase the credibility of the influencers.
According to participant C, "I think there's a difference if you choose Ronaldo because he's the biggest one. He doesn't need a lot of money or to lie."

However, there were other reasons for determining if the influencer is trustworthy or not, the product that those influencers review to the public what they are recommending. The products that these influencers sell need to be of outstanding quality and should meet the specifics that the influencers suggest or advise the consumers. According to participant M, the first product purchased based on word of mouth created by an Instagram influencer is the cornerstone in the relationship. Other users share the same views, like J and D, who explained that the product's performance is the basis for determining the reliability of this person, where a bad experience can lead to unfollowing the influencer from the platform. "Yeah, the first one is just a gamble. And then after that, my trust is built up." participant M.

In addition, Instagram influencers should pay great attention to the type of items they promote on the platform. The products that may cause significant financial harm, such as cryptocurrency or NFT, or products that can harm the different users, are considered unethical and may shake the trust between the users and the marketer, as shown in the study "I wouldn't like to see any of the influencers I follow post about anything having to do with money, like crypto, NFTs, casino, and betting. Because people can lose a lot of money without the right knowledge" participant C.

Gaining the trust of the different users is crucial in order to have and maintain a successful relationship for business (Urban, 1998). Influencers need to clearly point out their intentions while handling the different elements of their work. They can achieve the same by being honest and not trying to deceive people into buying products and offering honest reviews. The data from the study shows that trustworthy influencer emphatically impacts users' perspectives toward a particular product "I will most likely trust it. But if they say it's good, then I will most likely check it." B, which eventually led to a positive purchase intention of the different consumers (Hsu et al., 2013).

6.4 Electronic Word of Mouth and Instagram Influencers

The concept of electronic word of mouth is equally indispensable in considering the factors that influence user purchase intentions (Zhao et al., 2020). Electronic word of mouth has been significantly peddled by Instagram influencers regarding a variety of products (Sari & Yulianti, 2019). The Instagram influencers
have been necessary perpetrators of the same information because they operate within the online environment, which is favorable for electronic word of mouth where they take an approach that is more geared towards getting more people to buy a product or creating awareness of a bad product. For instance, according to participant B, he is interested in computer games and techy gadgets therefore, he always looks out for reveals and unboxings done by Instagram influencers in which he rates these products depending on what influencers say about these products.

However, as noted earlier in the research, a notable number of users take into consideration the electronic words of mouth that spread from influencers while searching a product, and those influencers’ opinions matter and have to some extent, impact on them in the pre-purchasing stage. "When it comes to the one I am following, I would say their reviews play a big role in my purchase decision." participant D, this is due to the trust built between the consumer and the influencer, where consumers that trust their influencers are more likely to believe what they say and can add value in the different purchasing stages (Sari & Yulianti, 2019).

Instagram influencers who lie and spread false information about products are likely to lose the trust of their audiences. When abused or used deceptively of the concept of Ewom, it could disadvantage the consumers who can be very disappointed and reconsider their relationship with this person, "When ordering a product based on what they said and you are really excited to get it, and then it comes, and you're like, okay, this is not what I was expecting, you know, that would make me lose my trust in them I would say." participant K.

Influencers should be mindful, especially if the person is not an authority figure in that product niche, while simultaneously, the recommended product is accompanied by a promotional tag that reveals that this person is paid for advertising. Most users get aware when they see the promotion tag over a post on the platform and sometimes prejudge the influencer or their marketing content (Fainmesser & Galeotti, 2021). The issue of Instagram-sponsored posts over non-related products was evident in the finding. When asking the different participants what may negatively affect influencer credibility while searching for products, many users emphasize that promoting nonrelative products to the influencer is one of the causes that may impact their purchase intention.
6.5 Final Conceptual Model

This study was initially based around a conceptual framework that associates Instagram influencer marketing to consumer purchasing intention through two variables: electronic word of mouth and trust, which was created mainly in order to answer the research questions. However, following the analysis, it is evident that consumer purchasing intention is impacted by more factors, such as, the emotion of the user, influencer fanbase, negative eWOM, Influencer social responsibility and a wider definition of influencers.

Figure 6: Revised framework for Instagram Influencers marketing. (Source: Own Elaboration)
Chapter VII: Conclusion and Recommendations

Consumer purchasing intention is a crucial aspect that most marketers and product designers look out for to help drive up their sales. The consumer purchasing intention concept has been significantly important for the marketing activities that have taken place within the different business environments over a longer period of time. However, given the dynamic market environment, several changes have made people purchase over social media platforms like Instagram. The platform is an attractive place for businesses and corporations to market their products and services due to the massive number of users. As presented in the study, most of the users have been on Instagram for an extended period, and they have a great realization of the different marketing activities that take place on the platform.

The promotion of the different products on Instagram occurs mainly through influencer marketing, particularly Instagram influencers. The standard definition of Instagram influencers should be viewed from a broader perspective as those influencers' classification differs widely among the different consumers. As shown in the research, some users consider people who share the same interest as an influencer, while others believe that people with a massive audience like celebrities can be defined as influencers. Yet, these influencers are the vehicles within Instagram that companies use to persuade consumers to purchase their commodities, as they are the leading players within the same platform.

Instagram influencers of all types have a noteworthy influence on the different online consumer purchasing intentions on the platform, where several factors determine the scope of their impact. Trust is considered one of the most significant ones. From the research, it is perspicuous that trust in Instagram influencers is intertwined with three aspects: the emotional feelings of the users in regards to the person, the social responsibility of the influencer toward the society, and the influencer fan base. These elements combined play a vital role in consumer evaluation of Instagram Influencers' recommendations and their marketing activities about a product or service on the platform. Most users consider eWOM very effective, as it makes a difference in their pre-purchasing stage. The research resulted in a clear distinction between two types of eWOM, one being negative and the other being positive. The spread of positive eWOM through trustworthy Instagram influencers is notably considerable from consumers' point of view and impacts their opinions regarding a product or service on Instagram. However, misusing the concept of eWOM through promoting a product or a service that could directly or indirectly cause emotional and financial damage can lead to the influencer losing their trustworthiness, consequently, enhancing consumer purchasing intentions through them.
From the research study, a few recommendations are apparent:

- It is essential to hire genuine and trustworthy Instagram influencers in order to achieve positive online consumer purchasing intentions and make more sales as an organization.

- It is also crucial to collaborate only with influencers who are total experts in their niche.

- It is necessary for Influencers to carefully examine the product before promoting and avoiding products that are harmful or cause significant financial loss.

- It is essential to brand promotional content to maintain transparency and avoid the negativity that arises from the poor perception of the different consumers on promotional messages hidden within certain messages or harmful effects.

- It is crucial to practice transparent product promotion online that does not hyperbolize a product which inflates the consumer expectation only to disappoint their intentions.

**Discussion and Future Research**

This research was exploratory on the concept of consumers’ purchasing intentions from the perspective of Instagram. However, there are several other platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Pinterest, and YouTube that users might find useful or attractive to use. It would be essential to establish whether the outcomes of this study apply to all these social media platforms, or it is just specific to Instagram. Nevertheless, this study was conducted in Sweden and dealt with participants who lived there as well, so it’s crucial to outline that for further studies, this might not be applicable in each and every different culture where beliefs, attitudes, and consumption ways could differ.

Another vital factor to consider is that this research has been built by employing the opinions of students regarding online purchasing intentions. Therefore, further studies could use opinions of a larger scale of various professions regarding the same area of research where income status could be higher than what students can spend on. Hence, it could affect their way of thinking and priorities. Meanwhile, other factors could contribute new information regarding the same research issue, such as the level of communication between users of Instagram and influencers they follow and investigate influencers’ points of view using a larger scale of participants. Finally, this research took into account aspects such as electronic word of mouth and trust.
Chapter VIII: Bibliography


Vitelar, Alexandra. (2013) Like Me: Generation Z and the Use of Social Media for Personal Branding - *Management Dynamics in the Knowledge Economy 7*(2), 257-268, from DOI: 10.25019/MDKE/7.2.07


Appendix 1

Interview Protocol Questions

This interview data collection is meant for academic purposes only. Any information acquired during this process shall be stored confidentially and only released with prior written permission from the participant. The data collected within this study will be used to determine the online purchase intentions of the consumers who use Instagram. This research study is meant to tap into the experience, feelings, beliefs, and attitudes of generation Z concerning online purchase intentions. Participant information is anonymized in order to protect their opinions as well as their personal information. Participation in this interview should be undertaken on a voluntary basis without any coercion or intimidation.

Interview Questions

1. Have you signed up to Instagram? If yes, for how long?
2. What would you say was the key motivation behind you signing up to the platform?
3. What identifies an influencer for you?
4. By any chance have you heard about Instagram influencers?
5. What do you think about these Instagram influencers?
6. Do you follow any Instagram influencers currently? If yes, how many do you follow?
7. Why are you following those Instagram influencers?
8. Do you trust the influencers you are following on Instagram? If yes, what makes you trust them?
9. Have you ever made any purchases based on what you saw from an Instagram influencer?
10. What was the role played by an Instagram influencer in your purchase?
11. How responsive do you consider yourself to eWOM? (online reviews, recommendations)
12. Does the online influencer review or recommendations have an impact on your purchasing? If yes, how? If not, why?
13. What makes influencers lose their credibility in your opinion?

This is the end of the interview-Thank You for Your Participation!
Appendix 2

1st Focus-Group Interview Transcript
Total Participant: 6
Moderator 1: Las Amin
Moderator 2: Saad Hussein

Moderator 1: We discussed briefly what we will do before sitting down. Anyways, We're doing this research to investigate how social media influencers, otherwise dubbed as “Instagrammers,” particularly impact the online purchasing intentions of buyers and understand the role of Instagram influencers in the different online purchasing trends in organizations that rely on these individuals for their marketing activities in e-commerce.

Moderator 1: So we're doing this focus-group interview, to get your opinions and thoughts. So, we are going to ask a question and you guys are going to answer it and we will have a discussion. Also, if you didn’t hear the question or or if you need some clarification then please feel free to say that.

Moderator 1: So let’s start off. First participants, what is your gender? A: I am male

Moderator 1: and how old are you A: I am 19 years old

Moderator 1: Okay, and next participant, what is your gender? B: I am male

Moderator 1: And how old are you? B: 19

Moderator 1: And you, third one? C: I’m a male and 22 years old

D: Male, 18 years old

E: Male, 18 years old

F: Male, 18 years old

Moderator 1: Let’s start with the first question, have you signed up to Instagram, if yes for how long? A: Yeah, I have. And I can't even remember when I signed up. I think it was about seven-eight years ago

B: I am signed up as well on Instagram. I think it's been between eight to ten years now.
C: Yeah, I am also signed up. Probably around eight years ago. D: Yeah, I'm also signed up. I signed up maybe six years ago.
E: I'm also signed up. I signed up to Instagram about five years ago.
F: Yeah, I'm also signed up on Instagram. I must have been twelve, so say six years ago.

Moderator 2: What would you say was the key motivation behind you signing up to the platform? The question is for everyone by the way
A: It’s just because my friends had it, so basically no other reason. basically.

Moderator 2: no other reason?
B: Group pressure
C: I signed up because it was just like a trend back then.

Moderator 2: yeah?
C:Yeah, it was fairly new and it seemed like everyone posted on the application.

Moderator 2 : Did you see it as a way for you to like to communicate with friends? C: Yeah, pretty much..
D: It was like a trend and a new platform. So it was interesting to see what's going on
E: I signed up because of my friends that told me about it.

Moderator 2: So your friend had the application and informed you about it? E: Yes.
F: Same reason.

Moderator 2: Same reason that it was because of a friend? F: yeah

Moderator 2: The third question, what identifies an influencer for you, like what is influence? Also, as I said, everyone can answer.
C: I think it's someone who has a saying, like a fan base and if they post something that fans will support and listen to. So they have, what can you call it? Like a sense of power? Moderator 2: So in your opinion, the power of their influence depends on the followers.

C: Not followers on the application in literal terms.. but how can I say for you to understand..

Moderator 2: You can say in your language if you want to.
C: Loyal followers, like if you tell them this is my brand, you should go check it out. They do check it out, not just following just because. Like supporting their cause I think. You can sometimes see someone who has a million followers but only like 1000 likes on their pictures.

Moderator 2 : Like how would you then identify the perfect influencer in your opinion? That suits your interests , and you know that this person is influential.
Moderator 1: Is it how he dresses or is it that this person has the same interests? C: It could be sports gaming or a Youtuber that I watch

Moderator 2: So it depends? C: Yeah, I would say so.

Moderator 2: What about the other? Do you have any opinion on this? D: I think you should be classified as an influencer if they impact.

Moderator 2: Impact?

D: Yeah, like, if they do a promotion with brands like Nike, for example. And you see maybe 5,6 or 7 thousands buying that with his promo, like with this specific promo code, Then he has impacted a lot of people, and I would say that he can be classified as an influencer or she.

A: And I would say the same thing. You can follow and see sponsorship from brands. The following doesn't necessarily have to be that big you can have, let's say, 5000 followers.

Moderator 2: Yeah?

A: You can have a lower amount of followers and still influence people, let's say different types of styles. clothing styles for example

Moderator 2: Yeah?

A: Also, if you take Kylie Jenner, for example, She posted a bikini picture during the election where she said go vote now.

Moderator 2: yeah?

A: And then after that, the government or whatever you call it got like 20 million votes after that 24 hours. So she is an influencer.

Moderator 2: She is?

A: Yeah, she had an impact.

Moderator 2: Any other opinion?

E: I think it's about the story behind the influencer, that maybe they come from nothing and they rise like a star. And then people take that as motivation and confidence.

Moderator 2: But can you give an example like an influence really like? E: I don’t know, Mike Tyson.

Moderator 2: Mike Tyson, alright.

Moderator 2: Okay, the fourth question. By any chance have you ever heard about Instagram influencers? A: Yeah.
F: Yeah, of course.
C: There's plenty, plenty of them.
B: Especially nowadays, with social media growing everyday.
Moderator 2: So there’s many many of them ?
B: Too many.
C: I think Instagram is the most common place for influencers. It's not like Twitter or Facebook.
Moderator 2: Why would you say that?
C: I think that this is just the most popular social media. And I think it's easier for someone to post a picture.
E: Yes, I would have to agree with what he said.
Moderator 2: So you think that Instagram is the best platform for influencers? C: Yes.
E: I think that's like a common goal for people, when someone joins Instagram nowadays they just want to be an influencer.
D: Yeah. I think Instagram is like the easiest way of communicating with your fans or your fan base. Like it's easier to communicate with your fans and reach out to the people who follow you then say Twitter, or TikTok or Facebook.
Moderator 2: But why would you say Instagram is the best in that regard?
D: Because you put it on a picture and you have a caption, so it's easiest for followers to collect information.
F: They can see your lifestyle.
Moderator 2: Yeah.
C: Yeah, it's not like Twitter just that someone posts a tweet, you can see the product and you can get a video or something on Instagram.
Moderator 2: Do you feel more connected to that platform? C: yeah, yeah exactly
E: They also have the stories, the feed were you can easy promote, you don't have to scroll Moderator2 : Yeah ?
E: What is it called? Instagram stories?
A: Yeah, the story.
Moderator 2: What do you think about those influencers? Instagram influencer, particularly?
B: For me it depends, I don't follow any influencer, it has to be someone that I can like, somewhat resistant to it, or look up to get motivated. So I'm very picky in that regard with what I choose to follow. Moderator 2: But let's say when you see a picture of an Influencer or his profile What do you
think about it?
B: I don't think anything in particular just like oh, it is just another influencer
D: I see many of the Instagram influencers, just doing it to get money or something like that. Normally I follow or if they're connected to a sport or something that interests me such as gaming or the crypto and NFT space.
C: Can you repeat the question, please.
Moderator 2: What do you think about this Instagram influencer? Like when you see them on the platform what is your opinion about them?
C: I think they're just like, they don't really care, they just want to earn, it is all about the money.
Moderator: why?
A: I'd say because of the sponsorships. C: Yeah, yeah.
A: Yeah was like the key thing for them. They constantly seek out sponsorships and it doesn't matter if they're Swedish influencers, American or French ones for that matter, it's the same goal for everyone Yeah.
Moderator 2: Do you follow an Instagram influencer currently? C: Yes
E: A few D
E: Yes
Moderator 2: How many do you follow? Like approximately? B: I would say 20 maybe
Moderator 2: 20?
B: Yeah, but then it's like it's not influencers, but it's more like brands that can be like, for example, 433 is like a football site. Post everything is none more like a specific person. It can be. Yeah, besides brands, like how can I say it's
Moderator 1: Popular that has influence?
B: Yeah, it's like a browse they put everything about, it could be a sport, they put it together So I don’t have to visit every player or team. It could, you can see it's more like a newspaper. More like to get the information.
Moderator 2: But let's say like a person not like a newspaper. Why are you following this person? B: It could be someone you like, it could be someone who inspires you
Moderator 2: Like give you inspiration?
B: Yeah, if you like the gym, if you like bodybuilding, maybe follow a bodybuilder so you can learn
from them. Or like as a football player, it can also be gaming, you maybe want to improve your game knowledge or skills, etc.

Moderator 2: Question number seven, why are you following those Instagram influencers? Like what is the motivation behind it?
F: depends on the influence
Moderator 1: Can you give an example?
F: I follow football players just because they play in Chelsea and that’s just because they are my favorite team, And if it would be a gamer, I just follow them because I like the game.
Moderator 2: So it depends on the interest? F: Yeah
C: Yeah, yeah, it could be like it's game-related. There are many streams players, but you follow the ones you find funny, maybe everyone is not. Sometimes you might not have the same humor. But there are a few. You might laugh extra so you follow them.
Moderator 2: So there is not like a single reason for following them?
C: No, it is more like what they do, their work. If they like their work most i am likely to follow them.
Moderator 2: Any other ideas from the other participants?
D: What was the question?
Moderator 2: Why are you following those Instagram influencers?
D: I mean, just like you said before, it can inspire you and me for example, I'm interested in gym
Moderator 2: yeah?
D: Yeah. And I follow people that like gyms and that inspires me and benefits me
Moderator 2: In which way do they benefit you?
D: inspires me to go to the gym
A: They can help you with the exercises as well D: Exactly, i can learn from them.
Moderator 2: Okay, question number eight. Do you trust the influencer? You're following on Instagram? Are you trusting them? When you see this influencer on the platform?
C: Trust in which way?
Moderator 1: Are you sceptical to what they’re yeah, what message, or what they're promoting? E: Overall?
Moderator 1: overall, yeah.
C: I would d say yeah, of course, because sometimes it's all about the money they can promote bad products. Maybe I order something big just because I like the influencers. Then I get my product and it’s maybe gone bad after two weeks.
Moderator 2: So in that way you’re not putting any trust in them, but do you trust them less or not?
C: I would have to check out the product because I know they’re promoting earning money to do so. So I will not say 100% trust the person because every product they sell is always promoted. So you can't know for sure if it's a good product until you try or maybe read reviews or something like that. Moderator 2: Any other ideas from others? Like do you trust the Instagram influence you have on the platform?
D: I don’t follow a lot of influencers but when I do I am trusting
them Moderator : Trusting them
D: Because you want to follow reliable influencers like for example let's say Cristiano Ronaldo like he does major promos, But when you do it's like for a brand like Nike
Moderator 2: Yeah
B: Yeah, but then again he has done some questionable promos, like Chinese shampoo products but mostly I won't buy it just because Ronaldo is doing a promo, But for the most part, of course I trust the influencers that I follow .
C: But I think there’s a difference if you choose Ronaldo because he's the biggest one. He doesn't need a lot of money, or to lie and mostly he promotes his own products. But if you think about it, if you were an influencer and someone pays you like a million just to post a picture, would you think about it twice?
D: Well that's what I'm saying. It's like it's got to be a reliable source. And like if I liked the product, Maybe I’ll buy it
E: I won’t trust any Instagram influencer if I know they are getting money for promoting stuff and they mostly care about themselves. With no honest review to be fair.
Moderator 2: Yeah it isn’t so trustworthy, okay that leads to the next question. Have you ever made a purchase based on what you saw from an Instagram influencer?
C: Yes
B: I can’t remember, most
likely A: What was the question?
Moderator 2: Have you ever made any purchase based on what you saw from an Instagram influencer? B: Actually, yes I have
Moderator 2: You have?
B: I bought merch, I wanted to support the person
: Can you repeat the question?
Moderator 1: Have you ever made any purchase based on what you saw from an Instagram
Influencer? E: No
F: No
D: It could be like, if a person promotes a cryptocurrency, Like when Elon Musk tweeted that Dogecoin is going to the moon. So I think he influenced a lot of people including me to buy it.
Moderator 2: Okay, what was the role played by an Instagram influencer in your purchase? For example when you made that crypto purchase. What role did that person play in your purchase?
D: It was money involved B: For your own benefit?
D: Yeah, he is a big personality within social media so there are a lot of people that would buy it also.
Moderator 2: Lets go back to Instagram,
B: I can give you an example, like you'D buy Ronaldo shirts, why is that? D: Because I like Ronaldo I guess
Moderator 2: Any other motivation? That might come from an influencer? For example, when you purchased that product, what did that Influencer do for you to purchase that product?
B: I I think if the influencer has benefited you in any way, you might think, Oh, why not? I've benefited from him. So let's support him. Maybe it's artists like Travis Scott, who has many fans that buy his merchandise. A lot of dollars. Maybe because they appreciate his music. So that's a way for them to give back. I think that's the most logical reason.
Moderator 2: Question number 11. How responsive do you consider yourself to online reviews or recommendations in general? Like do you see online reviews on instagram as recommendations? How responsive are you to that?
D: Yea I mean in general that's the way it works, for example I can google will I die if I eat this bla bla bla. So if it says no from multiple sources or reviews then I trust that.
Moderator 2: Let’s say you want to buy Nike items. Do you check the reviews from other customers? Do you trust them?
D: I trust them sometimes
C: If they have many reviews, I always read the reviews. If they only have three or four reviews and all of them rate the product high then it would reduce the level of trust I have.
Moderator 2: Why?
C: Because in my opinion, three or four isn’t enough. I need a lot of reviews to trust something.
B: It could easily just be themselves reviewing their own product. But, what I do is say if it is electronics, I watch YouTube reviews but if its clothes then it doesn’t matter. I don’t really buy expensive clothes so I don’t care.

Moderator 2: Okay, question number 12. Does the online influencer review or recommendation have an impact on your purchasing? Like you mentioned, you think about a product and you go to YouTube to see someone reviewing it.

B: Yeah. So I play computer games. If I want to buy a keyboard or a headset, then I go and look up reviews. There is always someone talking about the product. Like if it’s good, if it’s bad and if it’s worth the price. If I think it’s worth buying then I proceed to buy it. I wouldn’t buy it if it had bad reviews.

Moderator 2: So let’s say if an online influencer on Instagram goes and says ’x’ product is good. Does it impact you? Or say he says it’s bad don’t buy it. Do you trust that and don’t buy it without researching it? B: If they say it’s bad?

Moderator 2: Yeah

B: Then yeah, I will most likely trust it. But if they say it’s good then I will most likely still check it up.

Moderator 2: What about the rest?

C: Also, there could be bias involved as well. Because one thing I thought about is Conor McGregor and proper whiskey. Which is his own brand. Obviously Conor is going to say it’s the best whiskey out there. But I know people who have tried it and also people who have reviewed it and many say it is not all that. D: As I mentioned before I am very picky with who I follow, but when it come to the one i am following i would say their reviews play a role in my purchase decision

Moderator 2: Why does it play a role in your purchase, you think?

D: I would say because I trust them already and I know they won’t disappoint me.

Moderator 2: Last question, what makes influencers lose their credibility in your opinion? Like what can they do to make you say I don’t trust him/her anymore?

D: Take Bianca Ingrosso for example. She made a Christmas calendar and each day or door contains a product from her makeup company. The thing was that the items were only samples or nothing of high value. I read about it in the news, people paid a high amount over 1200kr. The items were like for one time use so I think in that type of a situation it makes you lose credibility in my eyes.

B: Can you repeat the question?

Moderator 1: What makes influencers lose credibility in your opinion?

C: Most of the time influencers just get paid to showcase items on their Instagram.

Moderator 2: Yea, let’s say that an Instagram influencer posts something like an advertisement, paid
advertisement. Does it make them lose credibility in your eyes?

A: Yeah it becomes a bit sketchy
Moderator 2: Because they get paid?

A: Mostly, I see something being shown on Instagram meaning I get the Information there and then I go look at the product by myself. I look into it at trustpilot and see how many reviews it has.

Moderator 2: Let’s say that you have an online influencer on Instagram right, and you trust this person or at least to some extent. What would make you lose that trust?

B: I mean for me, I always check the Instagram comments, I trust the comments almost more than the person to some extent. For me to lose trust would depend on what he is doing. Like what is he promoting? Like if it is an online casino then it would make me lose respect and trust. It has nothing to do with them. C: Like, they are only doing the promotion for money and it is something that can harm people.

B: It shows that they don’t even care about their fanbase. Because if they are promoting something that can harm their own followers then it says something about his or her character.

Moderator 2: Let’s go back to Ronaldo, and you said you trusted him right? D: Yes, because he’s Cristiano Ronaldo

Moderator 2: Okay, so if he promotes shampoo as we discussed, which is completely not related to his profession as a football player. Would you trust his promotion and endorsement of the product?

D: I mean, I wouldn’t buy it personally but at the same time I think a lot of people would. I think you can see that it’s just for the money. Let’s say the singer/rapper Post Malone. He promoted a restaurant in a city. He liked the food and thought it was good so something like that would make want to try that restaurant.

Moderator 1: What if you went there and you didn’t like the food? D: Everybody is entitled to their own opinion I guess

B: I agree with that.

Moderator 2: Let’s say you bought a product. You bought it because an influencer promoted it and said it’s a great product. Then when you get it, it doesn’t meet your expectations. Like for example the product is huge in size which didn’t seem like the case in the pictures. Like the total opposite of what the influencer said. What would you do?

E: I would return it and leave a bad review. I would go out of my way to tell people to not buy the product. The influencer is obviously lying about the product.

Moderator 2: Any other opinion?

Moderator 2: Would you keep following this influencer?
E: I guess it would depend on who the influencer is. If I really liked the person and liked what kind of content this person puts out then I would still follow but that wouldn’t mean I would support him if they would promote something. Because now I have tried it and it didn’t work out.

F: For me, it depends on what they’re promoting. Like for me, something important is if it’s a big brand compared to a smaller brand. I would be more sketched out if it was the smaller brand the influencer was promoting.

Moderator 2: Why?

F: I mean the obvious reason is because I probably never heard of the company. It feels like a certainty that he got paid to do this promotion. Especially if it isn’t something that resonates with him or his lifestyle. I personally wouldn’t buy anything just like that anyways. I need a product, such as a perfume. So say when Chris Hemsworth made advertisements about Hugo Boss perfumes. Then I would check it out, like I would go to the nearest perfume store and look if it’s any good. The advertisement definitely catches my attention at least

D: If you take Post Malone again for example, He promoted an NFT that he bought. Which is something very different from what he does

Moderator 2: Yeah, he makes music

D: Yes, so when he promotes a NFT, It’s like something he believes in so I guess it justifies it in some way? I mean there is still a need for me to be careful but i feel if he believes in it why shouldn’t i? Even though it’s not something he does for a living, it doesn’t really represent his lifestyle and what he does. Moderator 1: Don’t you think what business he has promoting this thing? Especially if he’s not so knowledgeable within this field?

D: I mean, he bought 2 NFTs from a company called Bored Ape club and he wants to see them grow. That’s why I guess he publicly said he bought it.

Moderator 2: So as I can see you get influenced by Post Malone, you search about what he posts about. B: I think he’s only doing it for money, so it’s bullshit

C: I wouldn’t like to see any of the influencers I follow post about anything having to do with money, like crypto, NFTs, casino and betting. Because people can lose a lot of money without the right knowledge.

A: I have to agree.

Moderator 1: Any other thoughts?

Moderator 2: Okay so this is the end of the interview, thank you for your participation.
Appendix 3

2nd Focus-Group Interview Transcript
Total participants: 7
Moderator: Nour Kellawi

Moderator: Hello everyone!

Moderator: So I have sent the purpose of our paper in the Zoom chat, if you want to check it and know what it is about. However, We're doing this research to investigate how social media influencers, otherwise dubbed as “Instagrammers,” particularly impact the online purchasing intentions of buyers and understand the role of Instagram influencers in the different online purchasing trends in organizations that rely on these individuals for their marketing activities in e-commerce. Equally, the study aims to investigate the relationship between online consumer purchasing intentions and Instagram influencers and to establish their impacts on the consumers who experience their influence.

Moderator: So we're doing this focus-group interview, to get your opinions and thoughts. So, I'm going to ask a question and you guys are going to answer it and we will have a discussion. Alright, so the first question, I'm going to send it in the Zoom chat so you can read it as well.

Moderator: Have you signed up to Instagram? If yes, for how long?

G: Yeah. I mean, I can start. Yeah, of course. I have Instagram and I've had it for nine years. Moderator: Okay, next.

H: I think I've had it for nine years too. I just searched. I: I have to see.

J: I also have Instagram and I've had it for like 9 or 10 years. So like, since the beginning. When it came out. I downloaded it and I have had this since.


Moderator: So it was nine years for you

Moderator: Okay.


J: Yeah.


J: I remember when I downloaded it. It was fall. So the first picture I took was like, in our old street. It was like, split in the middle with like two rows of trees. So, the leaves were like on the ground. And it was so colorful. And I thought, oh my god, I'm a photographer. So I'm getting this nice. Nice picture. And I remember like back then the pictures were square. Like you couldn't upload like a rectangular picture.

G: Yeah, yeah. And the effects are so charming. Like, oh my god, I could do this. Moderator: Okay. Who’s left?

L: I think I've had this account for six years. But I had another one before that for another two years. Yeah, I think so.

Moderator: So eight years in total. L: Yeah.

Moderator: So it's almost like everyone had around the same time. G: When it was hip.

M: I signed up in 2013. And I was one of those who didn't want to put their picture on Instagram. So I just put pictures of food and you know, beautiful sceneries that I thought I took good pictures of at the time. If you look back now, it's just like a picture of a plate of pasta or like an ice cream cone or something. And I'm like, What was I thinking? But, yeah, that's when I signed up.

Moderator: Okay. So I have sent the second question in the Zoom chat.
Moderator: What would you say was the key motivation behind you signing up to the platform? G: I don't remember why.

H: I think it was just like that, because my friends got it. And then me and my friends had Facebook first. But then Instagram was just so much nicer, because then you can like archive stuff. So it was more like for photos than just writing messages into nowhere and then disappearing.

G: I think it was around the time that everyone's parents started signing up for Facebook. That we switched to Instagram.

I: Yeah, there was too much information on Facebook. So it was just a kind of picture on Instagram. G: Yeah exactly.

Moderator: So you just thought that this could be more like your generation than Facebook?

G: Yeah, I mean for me, I remember that I saw someone using it. A friend of mine, and she, like, took a picture of us and uploaded it. And she did one of these effects things that Instagram had, and I thought the picture looked way better. So I'm like, Yeah, I want to be able to do the same with my pictures. And then it became about, yeah, too much information on Facebook. It's nicer if you have a more controlled platform, where it's not, not all of your information is out there. Just upload pictures and stuff.

Moderator: Okay, so you mean it was pictures,

mainly All participants: Yeah, yeah. Yeah..

J: Yeah, for me, it's the same. It was just for uploading nice pictures and, you know, feeling like you have a thing, like, taking pictures and being a photographer in general. And the filters were also nice. So I'm a tech guy, I really like new tech, new apps and stuff like this. So like, when I joined, it was mainly because of the things that I read, though, this new social media platform is getting super popular, everybody's getting it, blah, blah. And I remember like, back then, there were no stories there were no, like, all the functions that we have now it was barely like, any functions at all other than, you know, uploading the picture and editing it with a couple of filters. And that's it. So like, the main purpose was, yeah, to upload nice pictures and to have them like, all in one place. You know, Facebook back then was getting super messy. And I remember those games and quizzes like find out who did whatever.

M: I was never very obsessed with the app. And I'm still not very obsessed with it. But I check it
every once in a while, because it's sort of a necessity these days.

I: Yeah, I also joined because I followed my idols of sports players. Uploading stuff. They didn’t use Facebook to do that.

G: Yes. Celebrities usually post on Instagram more than Facebook.

M: I guess I would say I personally signed up to join everyone else, since everyone was just joining the app at the time and posting pictures. So I wanted maybe to feel included. So yeah, that could be my first reason.

Moderator: What identifies an influencer for you?

J: I can start with that question. An influencer, for me, is somebody that is interested, let's say in the same trends, or like in the same things that I'm interested in, like, for example, if I follow like, football player, of course, it's somebody that I watch. So I want to see what they do on like, everyday basis, see, their stories get closer to them, I guess, you know, on a, on a different level, like it wasn't like this before. I mean, now influencers are all about selling things and like, showing us new products or products they think are amazing, even though they are getting paid to say so. So for me, again, an influencer is somebody that shares the same interests as I do, and talks about the things that I'm interested in, that's why I follow them to see what's new, what they are up to, and so on and so forth.

G: It doesn't have to be a celebrity. For me. It can be a person that's interested in a certain hobby that I like, and I might see a story or a picture of them doing something we share interest in. For instance, one of the people that I used to look at what they post and like and sort of follow them all the time is a girl that does her own hair dye at home, which is a big hobby of mine and she wasn't actually a celebrity, she was just really good and she didn't have that many followers. But for me, I'm not really someone that follows a lot of influencers. For instance, on my account on Instagram, I only have people that I know, personally, and the cast from Friends. That's it, the people that I follow. But I mean, if it's something that I'm interested in, right now, I would look at other people's posts, or maybe a hashtag, and see who has the most followers and see what they do and how they do it. For instance, with the Friends’ cast, if I see them purchasing something that I would like or I want to have at home, I know that if I go to a store and see something similar to it, I might want to buy it. So yeah, in that sense, they've influenced my sort of style or sense of what I like and what I don't like, just by owning it, just because I like them for other reasons. And for me, that's what having an influence over someone is like, even if maybe, individually, I wouldn't choose this without this kind of information. I wouldn't purchase this item. But because I know for instance, Jennifer Aniston owns it now I want it. So that's influencing, having this kind of
power over an individual.

M: I can say an influencer for me is someone who's able to convince me with something, let's say I haven't considered before, or I was having a hard time accepting it. I like listening to people or watching people on Snapchat who talk about psychological diseases, let's say for example, psychological conditions, or social issues. And then they go on and on and explain why certain behaviors happen and why people behave a certain way. And it makes me understand people more from a perspective that I never considered before. And another thing is, an influencer is someone who shares the same interests, but also has something to add up to it. So I like watching them. For example, I like watching people who record their travels. Like whenever someone is visiting a different country, and they show the architecture in such a country, for example, or nature, or whatever, historical spots, I like watching those, and it makes me want to visit that country. So that's kind of an influence for me.

I: Yeah. I also feel the marketing part is very important. Like the celebrities who do marketing or promote for a brand or products and stuff like that. I see it everywhere. So that's the biggest influence of influencers today.

H: Yeah, like for me, I guess an influencer would be someone who spends a lot of time on social media, and who really engages with their audience in a way that you're either conveying a certain message or like a hobby or something.

G: Yeah, definitely for me it's that. They spend shitloads of time on social media to the point that I think a lot of people are actually attached to these influencers that are not even influencing in a certain way or on a certain topic or something very, very obvious, like Tiktokers, for instance. They're not doing anything particular. But a lot of people are attached to certain people just because they're funny, or they're attractive or something like that.

K: I think it's related to the content that they post as well. That's what draws you to them.

G: Yeah exactly.

L: I just want to say that for me at least, the meaning of the word changes, like I agree with everything that has been said so far, especially when it comes to following people with interests and hobbies similar to yours. But I have an issue with the people who self-identify as influencers. Like my opinion completely changes. These ones for me are people who don't want to get a real job and people who will do anything for money. That's all.
Moderator: Is this your definition of influencers?

L: This is my definition of the people who self identify as influencers.

J: It could be anyone. It's not necessarily somebody that is all about, like fashion or New Tech Trends. It could be , for example, like Elon Musk is my biggest influencer. I have watched all of his videos everywhere. Like for me, he's a huge influence for me.

L: No, but that's what I mean. It's different.

H: I think I know what you’re trying to say. Since the lines between YouTubers or Twitch streamers or influencers are very, like, diffused in modern days.

L: Yes, exactly. It's one thing to influence people and another to be an influencer. Meaning compared to actually influencing people.

H: I think if we have a stereotypical Instagram influencer, like the Kardashians would probably be it. They post about so many things in their life, and it's not really aimed at anything. Yeah, they engage such a big audience, and they can use it to sell things. I think in terms of like the typical influencer, probably one of the Kardashians.

Moderator: So does the number of followers an influencer has play a role for you to actually follow them or even consider them as influencers? Do you consider influencers in terms of how many followers they have?

L: Not for me.

K: For me, I wouldn’t say. Number I don't mind, it doesn't matter.

Moderator: By any chance have you heard about Instagram influencers?

J: The people I follow on Instagram are like the people I follow on other social media platforms to be honest, even like YouTubers that I follow, I follow them also on Instagram because you know, it gives you a different perspective from for example YouTube like if they upload a video about a product on YouTube which is like 15 or 18 minutes long they describe every single feature. On Instagram they upload a different type of content regarding that product for example, if it's a phone they upload pictures taken with that phone so you can see the quality instead of seeing it in a video so for example this guy
when a new phone comes out what he does is, he does a blind test on Instagram which he uploads the same picture taken from two different phones and you choose which one you like more. And then in the video, four or five days after that he uploads this test on the story, he uploads a video on YouTube and he's like “okay, so when I did the blind test on Instagram people chose like the other phone” for example another phone he he reviewed so it's just like a different perspective I guess.

I: Yeah, you can be both a YouTuber and influencer for me. The two things don't have to collide; it can just be the adoption of which platform you're using.

J: Yeah exactly.

G: I mean, for me, I follow anyone that I think is funny. That's the only people or the kind of influencers I follow on Instagram. I don't really have anyone that's like a lifestyle influencer or anything like that. I do check out like the explore function, of course, and I see some influencers doing other things. But it's usually not very, like the things I get hung up on. The people that I get hung up on are people that have a knack for, maybe some sorts of comedy, or, you know, these funny bits or pranks or stuff like that. That's my kind of influencers.

I: To be honest, no, I don't, I don't see or understand the differences. For instance, if we talk about a celebrity, can it be an Instagram influencer and celebrity, at the same time? I don't see the differences. You know what I mean? Because there's not a clear distinction between what some Instagram influencers do and just celebrities doing ads and stuff like that.

G: I mean, because a lot of influencers are not celebrities.

I: Exactly. That's the point. That's the point. That can be anyone. G: Yeah exactly.

Moderator: What do you think about these Instagram influencers?

M: The first thing that comes to mind is that they're always positive, and they're always excited. They at least show that they're very excited and positive and want you to try out this new thing that they're trying to promote. They always try to show happy energy and like, rarely show any sad moments. That's the first thing that comes to my mind.
I: Exactly. I feel it's too much. Most of the time. Like too much information, too much selling, too much marketizing stuff. I get bored easily.

M: Yeah, sometimes it can be like that. You'd be in a bad mood. And these people are happy.
I: It's like, they try to show the best ever time, everything.

G: You feel like, are they living in a different play? Or are they on a different planet than I
am? J: Definitely.

G: I agree with participant M 100% and participant I as well that they’re too much sometimes, but I feel like in the past couple of years it's been a trend that a lot of influencers are taking the opposite approach where they show themselves vulnerable, upset, or they talk about their mental illness. And I think those, like in the beginning, those people that started doing that kind of feedback to their audience were really attractive to me, let's say because they talked about stuff that other celebrities and influencers don't mention like their bad days, or whether they have a sickness or a mental illness or something like that. But then it became really commercialized in the sense that everyone wants to come off as “ah, they have a vision, they're really innovative in the way they influence their audience”. So it became more dull, it's like everything else. They're just selling you something, an emotion that you don't really believe.

M: I was just gonna say like, at one point, it became the opposite. Like, you'd see someone crying a lot on Instagram. And I'm like, I'm not here to watch this. I'm sorry to say this.

I: Too much that's what I mean!

M: I'm gonna give you an example of someone who does it in a subtle way and doesn't bother me. For example, Amr Maskoun if you know him this guy is chill. He's okay. He makes comedy content. He also tries to encourage people, I don't watch his story every day. But whenever I watch it, I see some content that says, don't just think that all of this came from nothing. And I've had my own troubles. He says it in a calm way, without making a huge deal out of it. But also reminding you that he's also a human, that kind of way is okay for me. But crying and like making yourself feel like victimizing yourself, that I'm not there to watch, honestly.

J: You know, the biggest thing that makes me lose interest in an influencer is when they upload a picture and they be like “Sorry, guys. I didn't upload a lot today. It's because blah, blah.” Okay. I mean, I don't expect you to be on the plattform every single day.
G: I feel like a lot of celebrities did the opposite. Or, instead of servicing themselves and their career, they sort of destroyed themselves when they went on social media. Like a lot of them just post the wrong content to the point like you have respect for them in the beginning, but then when you get to know them on a personal level, you'll be like, it's better that you'll be the silent type man, just shh!

J: Yes exactly.

H: I think for me, it's a lot of fakeness but in a very subtle way. Because the problem I have with Instagram influencers is that they do this thing where it's the same as when you said before about mental wellness and stuff. A lot of people started doing that because that was a trend. So every time something comes up, like when this video of the turtle with a plastic straw in its nose popped up, and everyone bought metal straws and everyone marketed metal straws because then the trend was like “plastic is evil now. Yeah, buy this straw”.

J: I agree.

H: Yeah. Seems like a lot of buzzwords like vegan and GMO free. I don't know what else is free. And it's just that you can't escape these buzzwords. So everyone just does the same. And it's just very fake in a way.

G: Yeah, exactly. It's like, you know, helping on someone else's pain. So the turtle suffered. But everyone is taking advantage of the situation, you know, either to promote something, or to push an agenda. I mean, technically, this agenda was for good. But there's so many examples where it's the opposite situation where someone just takes a picture and uses it to promote something else. And it's not necessarily a good cause. I mean, in this instance, it was, but so many other situations where like, they just take advantage of whatever story is being promoted, for instance, like when there's a terrorist attack somewhere, it's always been used to alter immigration laws just sort of spread more hatred, the racist people become even more racist and so on. So it's like this sort of influencer that they just pick on whatever is trendy right now. Those are not really convincing, let's say.

Moderator: Do you follow any Instagram influencers currently? If yes, how many do you follow?

G: Yeah, I'm just looking. I'm not following any influencers per say. I'm following celebrities. And those celebrities don't really use their page to promote anything or influence in any way. They don't show their lifestyle or anything.

Moderator: So you only have celebrities and you don't consider them as influencers?
G: No, yeah, exactly. Because they don't post like their day to day life. They don't try to influence their audience into doing the same as they're doing or buying stuff. So I guess they're just celebrities, they're not really influencers.

J: I do and I would say some people that I follow are influencers but I don't follow them for being influencers I'm just like, maybe interested in what topics they talk about or what topics they are interested in. The people I follow just to know their opinion on a specific product, I would say maybe, I'm following like 370 So maybe five to ten people out of 370 are people that I follow for influence on purchase habits.

G: I follow those accounts that post a lot of funny clips and memes.

J: The types of posts I see and scroll through very quickly are like meme pages that are posting stuff to promote a product I know, like, this thing is shit. Don't even come close to it. So I just keep scrolling. But, actually people that upload on a regular basis on a certain topic, a tech guy lets say that's always uploading new things or, even I have designers, product designers, you know, everything from furniture to anything, it could be anything. So just product designers, I follow a lot of those. And I'm really interested in their content. I actually look very thoroughly on every single post they upload, but meme pages that are uploading ads on their feed, I just scroll past them real quick. And I lose interest in pages that upload a lot of those types of things. Like Worldstar, for example, is a page I have been following for a long time because they upload everything, from celebrity news to funny clips and then in the middle of all that you see an ad for something very weird. And I'm like, not this again. So yeah, people that I actually follow because I want their opinion, yeah, for sure I look, I look very thoroughly at everything they post.

K: For me, I don't know exactly how many I follow, but let's say six to seven people, including celebrities that are promoting their business, for example. I follow them to maybe purchase some of the things that are promoting. And also influencers, for example, for lifestyle and stuff.

M: I have input as well. I tried to count. And I think I follow about three to four influencers in addition to Rasha Rizk, and Tarek Alarabi Tourgane, my childhood singers, so I'm not sure if they can be counted as influencers. But the three to four that I follow one of them likes to cook so he uploads cooking videos and such and he uploads stories on a regular basis. So sometimes I see kitchen utensils that I might be interested in and then I'll go and buy them. It doesn't directly promote it, but I see something and I like it so I end up buying it later. The other person advertises skin products or jewelry that I like so I look it up later as well, thanks to their ad. Third Person, yeah, he just gives a happy vibe so I don't have a reason
for following him. But the singers that I was talking about also promote their concerts. Of course, it's outside Sweden and I have no way to go there, but if I had, I would definitely buy tickets and go.

G: I just want to add that if Rasha Rizk were to do any kind of promotion I would buy the stuff.

Moderator: So you're saying that the only thing that prevents you from actually doing a purchase through their accounts is that you're not going to be able to have the service they're promoting?

M: Yeah exactly.


I: I follow one influencer, that talks about foodstuff commercials and cooking, which I like. So they influence me to do some things that I haven't done before. It's not about the purchase part. It's about how to do things. The rest are celebrities I follow like 50 to 100 and they do also have an influence so it depends if we can call them influencers or not, but I follow like 50 celebrities, as well.

H: I don't follow any influencers. Zero for me.

Moderator: If you don't have any influencers that you follow. Do you have a reason for that? Or it just happened to be like that?

H: Because I just , and this is gonna sound so bad, I don't care enough for other people to follow them and see what they do.

L: I have the same issue with the definition. So as far as it’s about people who are saying blah, blah I think I follow one, but that's only because I used to watch her videos back in 2010 or 2012, where the UK YouTubers were big. So I followed her on Instagram, but I have other people who don't identify as influencers they don't promote actually, but they get to show me new books, which is my thing. So these people actually affect me.

Moderator: Why are you following those Instagram influencers?

L: Because I'm interested in very specific things, and they get to show me new things about these interests. So yeah.

Moderator: Do you trust the influencers you are following on Instagram? If yes, what makes you trust them?
M: So I have two reasons. The first one would be that the influencer that I'm following is someone I really, really like so whatever they say it's facts. I don't even question it. I trust them blindly. And that's one reason. The other reason is, if I have tried some of the products that they have advertised for before, and it was really good so I would think that whatever they promote for later is going to be of the same quality, let's say. So I trust them by the fact that I have tried stuff that they promoted.

Moderator: So you mean, you trust them after you have already made, let's say, a previous purchase? M: Yeah, the first one is just a gamble. And then after that, my trust is built up.

G: I mean, for me, I don't really. I have trust issues in general. So I can't say that I have any kind of influencer that I trust completely. But of course if I like them, like for instance, with Rasha Rizk it's just this bond, I feel like an entire generation is obsessed with her. So of course if she posts stuff about her life, I will be more invested in it than other things and trust that she's giving an honest opinion, just that she's saying whatever she thinks for real. But when it comes to other influencers, I think it's more about how they conduct themselves. So if I follow them, it means that I have sort of watched a couple of videos about this influencer. And throughout these videos, I've judged them to be like, kind of real person, someone that is down to earth, let's say, likes to engage their audience with who they really are. Somewhat not shallow. So for instance, I'm into hair and makeup and whatever, like those things, but a lot of the influencers that I see on Instagram, I'm not invested in following them. Because it's usually that and they show me to be like, really, that there's no brains behind this. So they would sell a stupid item, or sell something that's just not for me, I wouldn't judge as a good purchase, let's say so I wouldn't follow them. So if it's someone that I follow, it's usually I've judged their character to be similar to mine.

J: For me, yes and no, at the same time. Because again, the people I follow to seek opinions are people that I trust. I have either seen their reviews of the things that I have bought and I could kind of understand or see what they're talking about. For example, if they are talking about tech products, that's all I talk about, and they're reviewing a phone that I have, and I can kind of understand what they're saying and how they are promoting it. And like, what's the pros? What's the cons blah, blah, blah? Yeah, of course, then I trust them. But like, again, with those meme pages that post things or promote things I have zero trust in those. I see right through it, I can tell that it's a bad product or not necessarily a bad product but it's not something that I would change my purchasing intention in that regard.

I: Yeah, I have trust issues with influencers or celebrities. I think they don't do everything by heart. They sell stuff just because they have to, or they want to, I just don't trust them.
Moderator: Even the ones that you’re following?

I: Yes. That's correct. I follow them because I like how they play football or soccer. I don't trust them.

H: I really agree with that. I don't follow anyone like any influencer because I know that me being there could not matter less for them. I'm just another number in their follower accounts. Yeah. Like nothing they do will cater towards me specifically, it is just like a very one way communication with influencers.

M: Think about it this way. Like, if you're following an artist, for example, and you like this person's art, and then they put it up for sale. Would you want to buy it because you really like it? Yeah, that is something I'm willing to buy because it's so easy to see it for yourself, especially if it's someone who records the way they draw, like their pieces as well. So that's something that's very hard to be fooled by and you can definitely purchase it and keep it to yourself, especially knowing the fact that the artist is not going to make so many copies of the same piece. So you know that it's sort of special and unique in its own way as well. If I like something, it is so easy to be fooled.

L: I'm with you.

I: In that part I am with you as well, if you follow this type of influencers? Yeah.

J: Yeah, definitely I agree with you, regarding the 3d printing that I was talking about I follow some designers, you know, you can find millions and millions of 3d designs online that you can print but some of those that I follow, specifically on Instagram, actually they hang out on Instagram a lot those 3d designers, and some of their things that they create, they sell the right to print or they sell you the file and it doesn't cost a lot like it's five to ten dollars. And in that regard if it's something extremely premium or something very specific to one thing, yeah, of course. I mean, I have bought a couple of premium designs, designs that you don't find for free online. And I kind of appreciate the design, that's why I pay for it. It's something special, it's something that they actually have done and I have a connection between me and this person. It's not like other influencers, you know, they market products that are already out there and you can just go buy. It's different in that regard, I guess.

M: I'm just gonna tell you, if I had more money, I would have definitely bought much more on Instagram.

G: It's not about the fact that I don't follow trends, I love knowing about what's trendy or what's not. But for me, I like knowing what's trendy, but it doesn't necessarily mean that I will follow that trend. So I'll pick and choose. And with purchasing habits, it's more like I feel like I'm a bit too realistic. Like, do I
really need this? Is this worthy? And in the process of analyzing this product, I realize I'm just being fooled and I'm being used and so I'll be like I'm not buying it.

J: I think we're all like smart buyers in this group.
L: Not me! If I see something on Instagram, I know that I might want it whether it’s good or not. I booked a ticket in the winter of 2020 for a concert in February 2022. It's in a whole different city, a whole different country. I don't know if I'm going to be there but I already have the ticket. I trust the ones who promote their own work and their own hobbies, not the ones who promote other kinds of products. But yeah, these ones when you can see that they're really into what they're doing. I just, I'm gonna buy everything they promote.

Moderator: Have you ever made any purchases based on what you saw from an Instagram influencer?

I: I bought something from Zlatan once. He promoted his own perfume and I wanted to feel like him so I didn't buy it because it was the best perfume in the market or something, I just wanted to feel like him so that's a part of the influence they have.

H: I haven't bought anything.

Moderator: What was the role played by an Instagram influencer in your purchase?

M: I'm thinking of merch. For example, if I see this influencer, wearing the clothes that I like, then that encourages me more to buy it. Because I can tell how it's going to look on someone instead of just looking at a picture of the clothes itself lying on a bed or a surface so that would encourage me. Same thing when someone is applying a skin product, for example, like say, a BB cream or a sunscreen and you see how it's being applied on the skin and that encourages me more to buy it than to just see the product and the color on the hand.

K: Yeah, I agree with that. It's more like, how it looks, how the product looks and if you see someone wearing it, or posting about it and you actually connect with that person, or maybe they have the same physique as you and you think, Oh, it will look good on me as well. That's why you're buying mostly. Actually, them wearing it and posting it. That’s what influences you most.

G: For me, the things I usually buy online, even if it's not promoted through influencers that I follow, maybe I came upon it accidentally, when I see how it's being used. It's usually weird tools or something that you wouldn't find in a normal store. For example a kit for cleaning a laptop or stuff like that. So when I see it being used, I feel like oh, I need that I don't have that. Yeah, so definitely them
trying it and showing me how it works or how it looks, and so on. Of course, their post is what gets me interested, but the reason why I made the purchase, is the fact that I've seen the product in action, how it works and what it does and me deciding oh I need this, this works for me. So, yeah, it's basically them explaining what it will do for me or what kind of service I'll be getting by purchasing this.

J: It depends. It's two types, I would say. Like, the first type is actually showing me a new product that I didn't even know existed before and that, you know, starts the motion of me doing my research and I be like oh my God this thing exists so I go and do research to see what other options there are. Whenever I buy something I do a lot of research on it. I always check the cheapest option, the most expensive option, what are the differences? Why is this more expensive? And so on. The other type is further review of something that I already know exists and I already know that I want to buy, it just adds another layer of review that I maybe wouldn't see in other blogs for example, review blogs. There are review blogs for everything nowadays, especially for tech products, where it's just a kind of standardized layout, bullet points with pros and cons blah, blah, blah. But those influencers give you a different aspect of how the form feels in the hand, you know, the edges are not rounded that's therefore may be more hard to hold, blah, blah, blah. So it's just another layer of review that I kind of seek from those influencers I would say.

L: I can just add that for me it's extremely simple, it's just the way it is presented. For example, the one thing that always gets me when I see on Instagram is books, but I will already know about the writer whether I like them or not or the artist. But if I say two book influencers, one having a picture on a white desk and that's all and then another one that has put in effort and has a whole scenery, blah, blah, blah related to the book, this will get me. So it's just the way it's presented.

H: Since I haven't bought anything so no role played for me. If I see a good deal on Italian cheese, I will get the Italian cheese. Those are my interests.

Moderator: How responsive do you consider yourself to eWOM? (online reviews, recommendations)

M: I am. I am a responsive person. For example, if I'm going to buy, again, skin products, usually from Kronans Apotek or Apotek Hjärtat, I'll open the product, I'll read the reviews. If I find, let's say, two or three good reviews, I'll be excited for it, but if I find this one bad review, then that deal is cancelled most of the time. When it comes to skin products, that's important for me. But if it's something that's about my interests, let's say there's this anime figure that I really like, I don't even think about reviews, I would just buy it because I like it. It's stuff that you wear and you put on your body where quality matters.
G: I am extremely responsive. If I see that a lot of people have written that this product is bad no matter how good it looks, I will not buy it. I will seek someone out to show me how bad it was because they've already purchased it maybe, but I will not go through the trouble of proving what I read is right, no. But for instance, it's about the percentage, if it's 100 people that have purchased this, and 85 of them say it's bad and 15 say “it's good, I've enjoyed it” then definitely I know that it's true, it's probably bad. If it's 50-50, I wouldn't risk it either. If half of them said it's bad, I'll be like, then it's a questionable product. So I'm extremely responsive to reviews in general. I usually go to reviews specifically to see what other people thought of the thing they bought.

I: That's the first thing I do.

K: Yeah, exactly.

I: So bad reviews the deal is off. Yeah, no matter how much I like the product, if reviews are bad I am not gonna buy it. Simple as that.

J: To answer the question, yes, I am very responsive to reviews and I think that comes down to the country we live in (meaning Sweden). I mean, if you browse a Swedish website, actually, you see a lot of reviews and Swedish people in particular, they put a lot of time and effort to actually review a product that they have purchased. I see that a lot on Swedish websites, especially gaming related products like Prisjakt for example. It's not just to compare prices for me, I actually read their reviews because they are extremely thorough and some of them give a really positive review and then at the end, they write this extreme specific little thing that actually, you know, hits the spot for me, you know, so I don’t buy it.

Even the negative ones, I actually when I buy things on Amazon, the first thing I do is I click on negative reviews and I read the things that people are saying and sometimes I see a trend and I be like oh okay so it's actually bad in that respect, but like everything else works, you know? So, I have actually bought a couple of things that had really bad reviews, but it does the job. So in general 90% of the time yeah, I depend on the reviews. So like, I'm extremely dependent on the reviews online, not just on purchasing things, but even going to places I always google the place that I'm gonna go to, before I go to.

K: I'll say the same. Yeah, the first thing I check is the reviews. If the product I'm interested in, after checking the description and everything, I'll go to the reviews and if it has more than few
percent of negative reviews I won’t buy it.

H: I'm also very responsive to reviews when it comes to computers or anything I'm going to use for a longer time. But for things such as movies and restaurants, I'm not as responsive because that's for such a limited amount of time so if it is bad then it's not going to affect me for like, weeks whether like a bad computer would affect me for a long time.

L: I don't know. I think it depends if it's something that's going to affect me or my health or anything, obviously, I am gonna consider the reviews. But if it's like I said the things I get are very specific so if it is a bad book or bad art or something I don't care I will still get it. I don't care about the reviews if It's nothing that's going to affect me.

Moderator: Does the online influencer review or recommendations have an impact on your purchasing? If yes, how? If not, why?

L : It's a part of my review that I do on certain products. So, their opinion is just a percentage of what I have been reading and what I have seen online. So it's not that if they say “oh so good a product” I go get it directly, it's just their opinion add to my review of the research that I've been doing regarding the product.

G: I agree with you. I treat them like any other normal human being so the fact that they're influencers or not, does not matter. They’re consumers that have tried this product and they're giving me their opinion so if a lot of people agree on the same thing, I'll be like, yeah, this affects my opinion. It's like any other people, I would go on a review platform and see what other people think about this specific product that the influencer has been talking about. So it doesn't add any extra points for me if it came from an influencer.

M: I'm thinking about it. For me it depends on what they're reviewing. If it's something that I haven't known about and picked up my interest, then yes, the review might have an effect on me because they're bringing out something new or something that I haven't seen before. Same thing if it's just something like a pink hoodie, for example, okay, they're reviewing it, I want the hoodie, I like it, okay I'll just get it. So it depends on what sort of product they're reviewing, but I don't know if it's going to influence me specifically if it wasn't something that I have an interest in already. For example, there's this guy Ahmad AlZamel the one who cooks so he has started his own sort of business or he's related to some sort of business anyways, he has been promoting those ice cubes silicone containers and he has been using them for so long that I actually started considering buying them. Like, I have no use for it but just because he uses so many cool things, I just want to buy it. And that's my point, I have no use
for ice cubes, I'm not a fan of drinks and I don't drink anything while I'm eating. But I just want to buy them because he uses them on a regular basis. You know?

I: In general, no, I don't. The answer is no. I don't trust influencers because they're selling something if you don't read the reviews, people's opinions and stuff like that, it's then just one person influencing you to buy something. So I don't trust that person, but the few ones that are doing it because they're not trying to sell something for you then I'm gonna consider it, but in general the answer is no.

K: To answer the question in general I would say no, I consider them as any other normal person. Like, I don't think they would have a huge impact on me.

H: For me, I don't follow any influencers, but if I see anything on my feed, like the more influencers I see recommending something, and especially if it's an ad, then I'm more prone to not buy it. So I put it on my mental don't buy list. It's just another form of an ad and they get paid to promote this. They really want the exposure so the product doesn't speak for itself, most likely.

J: Now that I reread the question, I would say yes, it does have an impact. It can be a positive one or a negative one, at the end of the day it is a review. I'm watching a review and so it does have an impact on me.

M: So I can also add that for me, it matters most when it's continuous exposure, like this person who's reviewing this item has to have shown that they're using it on different occasions or on multiple occasions for me to start considering it. For example, a guy advertising for a perfume that I have no clue how this perfume smells, they may explain what it smells like, but if I see them using this perfume on a regular basis and showing how much they like it then I will definitely consider buying that perfume.

Moderator: What makes influencers lose their credibility in your opinion? J: When I see the paid promotion tag.

L: Exactly.

G: I would say the paid promotion tag and the fact that they have a lot of followers. It just doesn't sit right with me, I know that it might not be the case. It just makes me uneasy.

I: I don't buy anything online. If I want something, I just get it.
M: For me, if they are trying to sell something that I know that's not good or that has a low quality, then I would start losing my trust in them. Or if I actually buy something from them, maybe on two attempts and the thing that I have bought is not of the same quality or expectations as what they have promoted for.

That's how I would lose my trust in them, but not because they're getting paid promotions. Honestly, I don't care about that. Sometimes it can be a collaboration between two good things. So why not? Think of this, if it's let's say a famous restaurant doing a collaboration or an ad with a meat producing company, both of them are famous but they're doing a collaboration together and you get the best of both.

K: For me, I would say for them to not reach my expectations I would agree with participant M and what she said. For example, when ordering a product based on what they said and you are really excited to get it and then it comes and you're like, okay, this is not what I was expecting, you know, that would make me lose my trust in them I would say.

H: I'd say if they promote something that they aren't supposed to use or it's not their area. Like if I watch a cooking show and they start promoting some VPN service I'm like, What's the point? What would this do to me?

M: Yeah, I agree with that.

L: Yeah for me, it is not just the fact if I see paid partnerships, but how often I see them. If their whole career is based on paid partnerships then I don't know, there's no actual talent, no actual interests so why would I be interested in what they're promoting? But I'm interested in influencers who promote their own thing and you can see that they're interested in it. Then they make you interested.

Moderator: Okay, I'm done. I want to thank you, everyone.