



# **Influencer Advertisement Impacts on Consumer's Preferences – A Finnish Per- spective**

Sunjey Kumar

Master's thesis

May 2024

School of Business

Master's Degree Programme in International Business Management

**Kumar, Sunjey**

### **Influencer Advertisement Impacts on Consumer Preferences – A Finnish Perspective**

Jyväskylä: Jamk University of Applied Sciences, May 2024, 51 pages.

Master's Degree Programme in International Business Management. Master's thesis.

Permission for open access publication: Yes

Language of publication: English

#### **Abstract**

The study investigated the impact of influencer advertising on consumer preferences in Finland, focusing on the evolving landscape of digital marketing. The task was to assess how influencers shape consumer behavior and decision-making processes within the Finnish market. The objectives included examining the credibility of influencers, engagement levels, alignment between influencers and consumers, and consumer preferences influenced by targeted marketing strategies.

A qualitative research method was employed, utilizing semi-structured interviews with Finnish consumers to collect comprehensive data. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify key patterns and themes from the interviews.

The results indicated that influencer credibility significantly enhanced brand recognition and trust among Finnish consumers. Detailed and authentic reviews provided by influencers were highly valued, fostering a sense of trustworthiness. High engagement levels, characterized by frequent and meaningful interactions, strengthened the connection between consumers and brands, thereby influencing purchasing decisions. Alignment between influencers and consumers in terms of lifestyle and values was crucial in establishing trust and relatability, making influencer endorsements more impactful. Consumer preferences were notably shaped by targeted marketing strategies such as exclusive deals and personalized content, which increased the perceived value and appeal of promoted brands.

In conclusion, understanding the factors that influence consumer behavior is essential for optimizing influencer marketing strategies. The study provided insights that can help marketers enhance their approaches and achieve higher returns on investment in the Finnish market. The findings emphasized the importance of credibility, engagement, alignment, and targeted marketing in shaping consumer preferences through influencer advertising.

#### **Keywords/tags (subjects)**

Influencer Advertisement, Consumer's Preferences, Consumer Behavior, Brand Loyalty, Brand perception, Marketing Strategies, Advertisement impact, Finnish consumers.

#### **Miscellaneous (Confidential information)**

Not Available

## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1	Motivation.....	4
1.2	Research Objectives .....	5
1.3	Research Questions.....	6
1.4	Significance of the Study .....	6
<b>2</b>	<b>Literature Review .....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1	Enhancing the Effectiveness of Influencer Marketing in Finland .....	8
2.2	Examining the Influence of Demographic Factors on Customer Decisions .....	10
2.3	Impact of Cultural and Social Factors on Finnish Consumers .....	12
2.4	Theoretical Framework .....	14
2.4.1	Social Influence Theory.....	14
2.4.2	Social Identity Theory .....	15
2.4.3	Elaboration Likelihood Model.....	16
2.5	Research Gap.....	17
<b>3</b>	<b>Research Methodology .....</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1	Research Approach .....	19
3.2	Research Design .....	19
3.3	Research Philosophy .....	20
3.4	Data Collection Method .....	21
3.5	Data Analysis .....	21
3.6	Thematic Analysis.....	22
3.7	Sampling Method .....	23
3.8	Sample Size.....	24
3.9	Ethical Consideration .....	24
<b>4</b>	<b>Results.....</b>	<b>25</b>
4.1	Influencer Credibility (Theme 1) .....	25
4.2	Engagement Level (Theme 2).....	27
4.3	Influencer-Consumer Alignment (Theme 3) .....	30
4.4	Consumer Preferences (Theme 4) .....	32
<b>5</b>	<b>Discussion.....</b>	<b>34</b>
5.1	Limitations.....	35
5.2	Research Implications .....	36
5.3	Recommendations .....	38

**6 Conclusion..... 39**  
**References..... 41**  
**Appendices ..... 50**  
    Appendix 1. Questionnaire .....50  
    Appendix 2. Participant’s Demographics ..... 51

# 1 Introduction

The utilization of influencer marketing has emerged as a vital tool for businesses seeking to distinguish themselves and establish meaningful connections with their target audience. The realm of digital marketing has experienced notable evolution in the past few years. Influencers wield considerable power in shaping consumer behavior and expenditure patterns owing to their extensive online followership (Wielki, 2020). In Finland, individuals are renowned for their cautious approach to making purchasing decisions, often relying on external validation to guide their choices. Given the significance of this consumer behavior pattern, it is essential for marketers to possess comprehensive insights into the intricacies of influencer marketing, particularly within the Finnish context. Indeed, influencer marketing is gaining increasing prominence among Finnish businesses (Yesiloglu & Costello, 2021). Consequently, numerous studies have been conducted to examine how this phenomenon influences consumer behavior in Finland. This inquiry is important to address, as influencer marketing has the potential to effectively convey messages that resonate with consumer expectations and align with Finnish cultural norms.

Recognizing the significance of influencer marketing in Finland is essential due to the distinct social media environment in the country. Platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube play a vital role in fostering connections, especially among the younger population (Pavelle & Wilkinson, 2020). Influential personalities utilize these platforms to exhibit their association with Finnish culture and society. However, determining whether the discussions initiated on these platforms result in tangible changes in behavior, such as voting patterns, presents a notable challenge. This challenge arises from the intricate nature of the Finnish market, which encompasses diverse cultural backgrounds. The present study aims to expand current knowledge by clarifying these processes and highlighting the importance of tailored strategies for influencer marketing in the Finnish setting. These insights are crucial for marketers aiming to achieve optimal returns on investment in the Finnish market. Furthermore, this research serves as a valuable tool for both public awareness and academic discourse, offering insights grounded in empirical evidence.

Influencer marketing has become more influential in shaping and altering human preferences and tastes in recent years. This marketing strategy has gained popularity among digital marketers, involving well-known individuals who have a large following that is exposed to various products and services. Despite its global reach, the Finnish market stands out due to its unique culture and

customer behavior patterns. Finland boasts a strong digital presence, with many people placing their trust in social media influencers (Chowdhury, 2020). The true potential of influencer marketing lies within a channel that is yet to be fully harnessed. However, due to the complex and ever-evolving nature of this sector, there is a lack of comprehensive data on how influencer marketing influences the participation of Finns in this sphere. This informational gap has brought to light the intricate nature of Finnish customers' emotions when they actively contribute to the development strategies of influencers. The primary challenge in addressing this issue lies in the insufficient proportion of available information, which impedes a thorough understanding of how influencer marketing significantly impacts consumer preferences in the Finnish market. Consequently, the lack of knowledge regarding consumer behavior and the way Finns engage with influencer-generated content poses a significant obstacle for Finnish marketers aiming to enhance their digital strategies (Javits, 2019). The growth of the influencer marketing industry has intensified, presenting a formidable challenge.

In the dynamic digital era it is essential to comprehend the perspectives and engagement patterns of Finnish consumers towards influencer content (Heinonen, 2021). When it comes to influencer marketing in Finland, several factors come into play, such as the genuineness of the influencer, the appropriateness of the content, and the congruence of the influencer's values with Finnish culture. The intricacy of the situation in Finland stems from the existence of varying opinions regarding the efficacy of influencer marketing among individuals of different ages and income levels (Honkanen, 2021). Moreover, when it comes to celebrity marketing, factors like age, gender, and financial status also play a role in shaping these opinions. Most of the research in this field tends to focus on markets that exhibit similarities, leaving a noticeable gap in studies that specifically address the unique aspects of Finnish culture.

## **1.1 Motivation**

Understanding how difficult and always-changing influencer advertising is essential for studying how it affects consumer choices, especially in Finland. The first is the meteoric rise of influencer marketing, which is now an essential part of almost all digital advertising (Burns, 2021). This phenomenon is particularly observable in Finland, a country distinguished by its high internet usage rates and active social media engagement. The distinctive interplay between consumers' trust in digital platforms and their avid interest in social media personalities makes the Finnish market an

ideal setting for examining the efficacy of influencer marketing (Heinonen, 2021). An alternative research methodology is required to account for Finland's distinct cultural and social intricacies. Consumer behavior in Finland is influenced by both global trends and traditional local values, such as trust, sincerity, and community orientation (De Mooij, 2019). Existing market data may not be directly applicable to the Finnish market due to cultural differences that could diminish the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Conducting research within Finland could provide culturally specific insights, enhancing the success of influencer marketing strategies targeted at Finnish consumers.

The swift expansion and intricate nature of influencer marketing necessitate immediate, contemporary research on prevailing strategies and consumer responses. The digital marketing environment is in a constant state of flux, with new trends, applications, and influential personalities continually emerging (Jover Rodríguez et al., 2022). This presents a challenge for marketers to remain current with ongoing developments. The study seeks to offer timely and valuable insights for both academic understanding and practical marketing applications. The researcher has investigated the impact of influencer marketing on Finnish consumers to obtain meaningful insights.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

The objective of this research is to evaluate the impact of influencer advertising on the consumer behavior of individuals residing in Finland.

- To assess the effectiveness of influencer advertising in Finland and its impact on consumer behavior, authenticity and trustworthiness of influencers are crucial.
- To examine demographic factors like age, gender, and economic circumstances as mediators of influencer advertising and how they affect consumer decisions.
- The objective is to explore how the cultural and social characteristics specific to Finnish society influence consumer responses to influencer advertisements.

### 1.3 Research Questions

The research questions of this study are as follows:

- What factors contribute to the effectiveness of influencer marketing in shaping consumer preferences in Finland, including the authenticity and credibility of influencer content?
- How do cultural and social factors specific to Finland influence consumer responses to influencer advertisements?
- What role do demographic variables, such as age, gender, and socio-economic status, play in moderating the relationship between influencer advertising and consumer preferences in Finland?

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

In both the academic and the real world, this work is vital to the area of influencer advertising in Finland. The study's significance is most pronounced within the context of Finland. As digital marketing grows, understanding how influencer advertisements change consumer's behavior is more critical than ever (Chopra et al., 2021). This study could fill a significant gap in people knowledge by giving specific information about how Finnish consumers react to influencer advertisement. This study contributes to a deeper comprehension of consumer behavior by integrating ethnic and social diversity into the foundational principles of influencer advertising. An academic lens is employed to analyze the problem at hand in this study. The research primarily centers on Finland, a market distinguished by its distinct culture and a substantial population of active online users (Koiranen et al., 2020). This information offers individuals a deeper understanding of the scenarios in which influencer advertising is successful. It can serve as a preliminary point for future research within similar or different contexts. Nonetheless, it is evident that conducting more thorough research that incorporates cultural values is essential. Additionally, this study establishes a precedent for future research methodologies by adopting a comprehensive approach that considers numerous factors influencing consumer behavior.

The study's findings offer potential benefits for marketers, executives, and professionals working in advertising in the Finnish market or comparable environments. By conducting empirical research on the factors that impact the trustworthiness and efficiency of influencer marketing, valuable insights have been obtained on the best strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of real-world advertising.

Specifically, the research provides recommendations on influencer selection, content development, and campaign oversight that are tailored to meet the preferences and requirements of Finnish consumers (Kämäräinen, 2022). As a result, businesses can enhance the allocation of their marketing resources, which may result in increased returns on investment in influencer marketing activities. A deep understanding of the mechanisms and evolving dynamics of influencer marketing is vital for crafting transparent and ethical advertising strategies, enabling stakeholders to align their efforts with changing consumer preferences. Increased awareness of the tactics employed by influencer marketers to shape consumer behaviors encourages a more discerning online consumer community (De Veirman et al., 2019). Moreover, the study highlights the necessity of integrating diverse national and ethnic considerations into marketing strategies, recognizing their significant influence on consumer behaviors and attitudes.

## **2 Literature Review**

The Finnish market has shown a growing fascination with influencer marketing in recent years. This chapter examines the theory and practical models that help us understand how influencer marketing works better. Researcher value truthfulness, demographics, and regional differences in choices and behaviors of Finnish consumers. This study aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of influencer marketing and its impact on the decision-making processes of Finnish consumers, building upon existing research in the field. While previous studies have examined various aspects of influencer marketing, this research seeks to delve deeper into the intricacies of this marketing strategy within the specific context of the Finnish market. By uncovering nuanced insights and detailing the specific mechanisms through which influencer marketing influences consumer behavior in Finland, this study aims to contribute to a more thorough understanding of the phenomenon.

### **2.1 Enhancing the Effectiveness of Influencer Marketing in Finland**

Influencer marketing is extensively utilized in numerous endeavors across the globe, and Finland is not an anomaly in this regard. Influencers must be adequately checked for legitimacy and honesty to affect buyer behavior and success. The objective of this section is to analyze the available literature pertaining to the importance of trustworthiness and sincerity in influencer marketing, with a particular emphasis on the context of Finland. The study by Bakar et al. (2020) shows how important it is to be accurate when consumers want to change how they see something. To the audience, genuineness means how true and honest the influencers seem. This is a big part of figuring out how they work. Jin & Phua's (2014) study articulates that sincerity is vital to getting consumers to interact with and want to buy products that influencers recommend. The research conducted by Luoma-aho and Vos (2018) revealed that Finnish consumers highly value the authenticity of marketing messages. According to Freberg et al. (2011), influencers who are capable of genuinely discussing their content are more likely to engage with Finnish audiences, leading to increased opportunities for future sales and favorable brand attitudes.

Choi & Rifon (2012) discussed that trustworthy influencers are well-known for being reliable and trustworthy. Hajjat et al. (2013) have found that trust drives brand loyalty and buying habits between consumers and brands. Trustworthiness is significant for influencer marketing because

credibility and building long-term relationships with followers are two of the most essential effects (De Veirman et al., 2017). Being trustworthy is what gives someone credibility. Luoma-aho & Vos (2018) say that Finnish consumers pay close attention to trust cues in content made by influencers. This is because Finns immensely trust the government and private businesses. Jin & Phua (2014) say that trustworthy peers can change how customers act in a good way. Influencers' image and truthfulness are affected by many things. Freberg et al. (2011) state that key aspect involves increasing accessibility to paid content. Heiskanen et al. (2019) made a significant finding indicating that Finnish individuals prefer transparent and honest advertisements. The study revealed that when influencers maintain honesty in disclosing their relationships, it not only demonstrates their accuracy but also enhances their trustworthiness. This, in turn, contributes to an increase in their overall level of trustworthiness. In addition, Brown & Reingen (1987) found that sincerity goes up when a company's views match an advocate. Finns are more inclined to trust influencers who offer assistance and services that align with their anticipated needs and values (Salo et al., 2016).

Hsu & Tseng (2017) emphasize the importance of engaging the public to establish trust and confidence. Liang and Chen (2020) examined the preferences of Finnish consumers towards influencers, highlighting the importance of influencers who demonstrate genuine concern for their audience's opinions and emotions. Kelman (1958) highlighted that two-way conversation makes it easier for an agent to change a customer's behavior by boosting earnestness and confidence. In influencer marketing, it is essential to be authentic and trustworthy, but it can be hard to keep these traits. As indicated by Luoma-aho & Vos (2018), the dubious acts of cheating and creating false interactions are on the surge and negatively affecting the worthiness and validity of a brand. According to Hajjat et al. (2013) Finnish consumers are distrustful of information coming from influencers and would rather areas of more reliable public domains seek the information. However, these challenges must be faced by formulating plans on how to service their peers with complete candor and speaking with them as open-minded individuals (De Veirman et al., 2017).

Moreover, the emergence of many influencer marketing platforms and start-ups amplifies the topic because sincerity and honesty are among the main target areas of these firms (Liang & Chen, 2020). Though these platforms spread the reach and viewers can get much influential individuals, but the serious issues of truthfulness and frankness which was quoted by Bakar et al. study (2020) are not yet solved. The idea of being more skeptical and cautious about paid content, as it is known to be

true by Heiskanen et al. (2019), is what defines the buying behavior of Finnish customers. They are always on the lookout for signs of lying or hidden deals. Hsu & Tseng (2017) emphasize the importance for marketers to exercise caution in the influencer selection process and verify their credibility to sustain customer trust. Hajjat et al. (2013) say that peers have recently become more critical of how customers think about businesses and what they buy. This is because digital sites are becoming more and more popular and bringing in more and more customers. Still, there have been calls for more honesty and openness in how influencers and companies work together since the pandemic has raised questions about influencer ethics and responsibility (Jin & Phua, 2014).

De Veirman et al. (2017) highlighted marketers want to make influencer marketing seem more accurate and reliable. This takes care of the issues that were brought up. Another option is working with micro-influencers with small but active followings (Freberg et al., 2011). A study by Brown & Reingen (1987) stated that micro-influencers are the best type of influencer for focused marketing in Finland because people trust them more than other types of influencers. Salo et al. (2016) also found that working with celebrities to make content makes audiences more engaged and authentic, rather than controlling the brand's message.

## **2.2 Examining the Influence of Demographic Factors on Customer Decisions**

It is becoming increasingly common for digital companies to use influencer marketing to connect with customers. It is crucial to know age, gender, and all the other socioeconomic status are social determinants that can substantially influence how good the strategies of influencer marketing can be. Demographic factors are discussed in the context of the Finnish market as a criterion of influencer marketing and the consequent impact on consumer decisions in this part of the literature review. Age being one of the decisive social indicators determines how sensible the influencer's marketing is. In the research done by the Pew Research Center in 2019, their main result was that this generation, especially the Millennials and Generation Z, are highly affected by the stuff that influencers talk about. An analysis conducted by Statista International GmbH (2020) presents the results which indicate that the digital age generation or Generation Z is more acquainted with online platforms and are inclined to absorb the information coming directly from trusted sources. Technology trends among Finns are absolutely high, so in influencer marketing, targeting shoppers of younger age is a very good idea (Statistics Finland, 2020). The study by Heiskanen et al. (2019) found that Millennials in Finland are open to help from people they trust. They do this because they

think influencers are trustworthy people who know a lot. Influencer relationships help Finnish businesses reach out to younger customers and raise awareness and interest in their brands simultaneously.

Gender significantly affects how customers decide what to buy when they use influencer marketing. AdvertiserWeek (2020) highlighted fashion, beauty, and lifestyle celebrity material get more female views than male viewers. The example of living material is a great one for this. In Finland, the difference between men and women can be seen in how people buy things. For example, women buy more than men in impact areas like health and beauty (Heiskanen et al., 2019). Marketers in Finland who want to reach women-run businesses can exploit this trend by working with well-known people and many fans. Cultural norms and gender roles can affect how people see the credibility and trustworthiness of influencers, which needs to be addressed (Bosson et al., 2019). Finns who want to reach more people should connect with leaders in various ways, including everyone. Rich people and people with high social rank are two important financial factors that affect how healthy influencer marketing works. According to a study by Gong et al. (2020), buyers from better socioeconomic groups are pickier when they look at material from influencers. They value sincerity and usefulness more than business content. Because Finland's economies are not very different, reaching out to people from all walks of life can increase connection and sales (OECD, 2020). Customers' readiness to listen to suggestions from influencers is also affected by the economy, which affects their spending power and the extra money they have available (Heiskanen et al., 2019). Therefore, when marketers in Finland develop influencer marketing plans, they must consider the different socioeconomic groups of the people they want to reach.

In addition, how people in Finland react to influencer marketing is affected by their age, gender, national norms, and social norms. The World Economic Forum (2020) stated that Finland will be a good place for influential people to participate. Feminism and technical skills are two things that Finland is known for around the world. In Finland, celebrity content is equal for men and women; both men and women take part in online groups and talks. On the other hand, differences between men and women in how influential people are a worldwide problem. Regarding influencer marketing, Bosson et al. (2019) articulated that companies can reach more people and fight against deeply ingrained gender stereotypes using a gender-neutral approach. This digital diversity and age-distinct traditional will inexorably be the basis of marketers' decisions to reach the preferred

consumers as well as to stay brand on top priority level. According to Statista's (2021) report, there is also a higher percentage of Millennials and Generation Z who navigate the web through different platforms are known for the material created by influencers, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok together. According to the Millennial's love of influencer culture that Pew Research Centre did in 2021, the millennial generation began to prefer influencer culture in various ways, and the growing impact of which that social media had on buying choices had. This is the reason why advertisers who intend to communicate with youthful Finns should target the influencing connections with the ones reverberating within the interests of the youths. This also involves the channel of the media to be threaded with the online lifestyle of the identified audiences.

The way celebrity advertisements are being perceived in Finland varies greatly regarding several social and economic surroundings. In Finland, people typically buy products from a small range of brands and when they hit on the big spending, this is done in a rather narrow way (OECD, 2021). When it comes to the things that can be bought and the amount of money that they are ready to spend on other things, relationships between income and the social status matter very much.

In Finland, the revelation of the celebrity advertisements differs deeply on the social and economic conditions. They are being seen in a different light by each individual, according to the relevant circumstances. In Finland, the consumers aim at selecting a brand from a small number and when they indulge in high spending, they tend to do that mostly in a narrow way (OECD, 2021). The more things that can be bought, and the higher being spending on other things, social status research strongly demonstrates the incomes are becoming quite related.

### **2.3 Impact of Cultural and Social Factors on Finnish Consumers**

Before designing culture-based influencer marketing advertising plans one should simply identify that your target group has certain cultural and social features. In this segment, I review on the former studies, which have shown that successful marketing to a Finnish audience is based on the fact that the Finnish are known for their intimate social and cultural surroundings. Cultural norms of Finns generally, to a great extent, determine how people react emotionally and behaviorally to influencer-sponsored marketing. Kuusela & Paul (2000) argue that is not only an inherent societal characteristic with additional features of toughness, patience, and persistence but it is also a fundamental feature of Finnish character. Heiskanen et al. (2019) say that customers in Finland

respect honesty and truthfulness. They want to form genuine relationships with businesses and well-known people. Finnish people are more likely to respond positively and actively to ads that use leaders who exude *sisu* and sincerity (Luoma-Aho & Vos, 2018). In addition, the intense feelings of equality and community among Finnish customers significantly affect how they react to influencer marketing. Hofstede Insights (2021) highlighted that in Finland, teamwork and building communities are more important than being an individual in a society that values self-expression and being unique. A study by Heiskanen et al. (2019) found that Finnish customers like celebrity ads promoting diversity, acceptance, and social responsibility.

Finnish consumers interact with influencers' content on a wide range of online groups and social media sites (Statista, 2021). Heiskanen et al. (2019) identified that Finnish consumers are tech-savvy people can tell the difference between accurate information and ads. This shows how important it is for celebrity ads to be truthful and transparent. Jin & Phua (2014) found that influencers in Finland are more reliable and trustworthy when they tell their fans about paid deals and try to build genuine relationships with them. Another thing that might affect how people feel about influencer ads is the Finnish idea of *Jantelagen*, sometimes called the "law of Jante." In the opinion of Kuusela & Paul (2000), *Jantelagen* it is required take a person away from the public manifestation of his wealth and social standing. Instead of it, it serves for the strengthening of class distinction, submission and conceit. As Heiskanen et al. (2019) show, the Finnish influencer ads that aim at building up images from daily honesty, realism, and relatability surpass those who predominantly focus on the theme of humongous wealth and money. Luoma-aho & Vos (2018) made an investigation of this phenomenon, and their conclusion was simple: Finnish consumers appreciate straightforward and not-too-flashy advertisement. Hence, it is imperative for companies to be respectful and not pushy when they communicate with the influencers as it can interfere for them to work better with the influencers.

Probably various aspects of the culture and of the ways people live affect the candidacy of influencer marketing in the eyes of the Finnish people. What mood the Finns get themselves in due to any media work done by an influencer presents to the nation how dedicated the country is to ecology and environmental awareness. Heiskanen al. (2019) elucidated about how celebrity endorsements for eco-friendly goods, good manners and environmentally helpful behaviors were embraced to be a fan favorite among the Finnish audience. Social responsibility and saving the planet is regarded as

significant beliefs by these individuals Companies in Finland can show their customers that they buy what stars define as Green or what stars do for environment (Salo et al., 2016). Firms could undoubtedly suggest that they possess a moral code, and they care for the society by promoting themselves as "good" brands. As far as the Finns goes their marketing platform is different as every Finnish consumer looks for something new and different. The study of Luoma-aho & Vos (2018) discovered that in Finland, such tags as exclusive, original, and straightforward were the most in vogue. Many people follow influencers who tell creative stories and offer new points of view. People in Finland are more likely to react to and connect with celebrity ads that are unusual, funny, and have a deep story (Jin & Phua, 2014). Heiskanen et al. (2019) argue that influencers in Finland can significantly impact companies by increasing brand trust and support through their content creation, which enables them to exhibit their individuality and sincerity.

Finland's culture focuses on simplicity and modesty, which affects customers' choices in influencer marketing. They would instead get information quickly and directly than through fancy language and lots of ads. Hisiskanen et al. (2019) say that expensive or flashy commercials are less likely to appeal to Finnish consumers than influencer ads that clearly state benefits, value propositions, and honest recommendations. Luoma-aho & Vos' (2018) study articulated businesses can build confidence and trust with Finnish viewers by being honest and open with influencers. This makes consumer feel better about the brand and more likely to buy it.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

Influencer marketing is a field that is constantly changing. In addition to multiple theory frameworks, there is more emphasis on consumer behavior, influencers' effects and the relation of influencers and companies. The literature review outlines three sets of critical schools of thought that essentially inform how intelligently. The Elaboration Likelihood Model, the Social Identity Theory, and the Social Influence Theory were exposed during the discussions.

### **2.4.1 Social Influence Theory**

Social Psychology provides a solid basis for the Social Impact Theory which states people's friends and family members' attitude and behaviors shape what they think, they feel and what they do eventually (Kelman, 1958). According to Social Affect Theory as Brown & Reingen (1987), deep-

rooted people have a stronger impact on other individuals' decisions and actions. It is the celebrity marketing leans on this thought most often. The thought that influencers are the trendsetters of certain areas and that they have social capital and power at their disposal to transform the way in which people think and act is known as the opinion leader concept. Marketing can be more understood through studying how influencers influence their supporters to do what they ask by also looking into how social influence works as well. The results can be changed by the businesses which can decide to have a different plan to make the event more spectacular. The Social Influence Theory covers several areas that let marketers make successful marketing campaigns, like the way that influencers exert their authority over their social environment. Whereof the concept discusses the necessity of reciprocity which is defined as when people should be thankful for those activities or acts done towards them (Cialdini, 1984). Part of the influencer marketing is because influencers can create the likelihood of their followers to interact with them, stay loyal to them and buy from them which they let them know relevant information, ideas, or deals offered by them (De Veirman et al., 2017).

#### **2.4.2 Social Identity Theory**

Social Identity Theory's contribution towards understanding influencer marketing can be in part achieved through another lens which social identity provides. As argued by Tajfel & Turner (1979), people's preference of the ones they got into one group with (in-group bias), and their prejudice against the others (out-group prejudice) have a root in the spheres of the self-concept changed by social group memberships. As argued by Hogg & Reid (2006), Social Identity Theory sheds light on the fact of how influencer identities impact the viewers' attitudes towards companies and their intention to purchase. This message gets converted into an influencer marketing language. As a result of the study involving the De Veirman group (2017), it is evident that those who share the same social circle of the influencer usually adopt the influencer's values and vouch for the products they recommend. Thus, it would be the case for marketers to utilize peoples' identity to deepen the process of influencer marketing. Such engagement engages a person knowingly or unconsciously according to their demographic and psychographic nuances to be able to do this. In addition, the Social Identity Theory contends that categorization of people by different groups with different believes and behaviors is a crucial factor in the way people think and behave. Tajfel & Turner (1979) noted that this kind of association with those who share the same interests, values, or relationships, helps to establish a common in-group. According to the research Hogg & Reid (2006), it found that

in the regard of influencer marketing, clients can perceive the influencers as envoys of groups or subcultures with which they identify with.

De Veirman et al. (2017) points out that this kind of identification acts the same way as subscribing does; it makes the person following the influencer more responsive to them by giving them a feeling of being among the influencer and their followers.

### **2.4.3 Elaboration Likelihood Model**

Among different theories that exist, Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) stands up as a complete one. As stated by Petty & Cacioppo (1986), this model explains how individuals and their opinions are changed and affected by strong arguments. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) declares that people can look at persuasive messages in two ways: Our approach can vary in focus depending on whether the goal is to be systematic or heuristic. This might depend on their heart's content and how wisely it puts it into writing. Gemma in Home on the Range. Concerning marketing through influencers, the ELM Model (ELM) provides a way to define individual people behavior in the consideration mode and the affective part of the process, how they feel about brands they follow. Jin & Phua (2014) mention that an average person will critical the information derived through a personality if it is of personal relevance, believed to be true and is actually known to be effective. This notion makes people have a different perception about the organization, or they are less likely to purchase again in future. De Veirman et al. (2017) indicate that because the authenticity of influencers' inauthentic content can be limited by superficial factors such as fame or beauty, this kind of content is not taking the deeper research as the other ones which did not affect how people think about the brand as much. If the marketers intend to package content with the best level of creativity and convincing devices they would have to apply both the inner and outer thinking map.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) displays how various factors have the capability to influence the way that individuals critically think and analyze the message of their desire. An old model by Petty & Cacioppo (1986) reveals that people who listen communication are more prone to the automatic processing type of thinking. If the things people hear about are somehow tied with some of our interests or aims in life, they are more likely to believe the word. Influence marketing to be efficient, one should expect to see a similarity with a potential influencer that can derive from everything, from the same opinion to personal passions the marketing anything with which people

can identify. It causes the audience to understand the complex reasoning behind growth and change in societal attitudes (Freberg et al., 2011).

## 2.5 Research Gap

A critical area of study that is hard to do is figuring out how successful influencer marketing efforts are. Even though studies have looked at how influencer marketing affects things like engagement measures, brand recognition, and buy intent, there are no commonly used measuring frameworks and techniques (Abidin, 2016). Freberg et al. (2011) highlighted that most of our current study is based on subjective or personal opinions that are not factual and cannot be used with a larger group of people. To correctly measure the impact of influencer marketing campaigns, more robust and more thorough methods like experimental designs, controlled field tests, and continuous studies must be used (De Veirman et al., 2017). Researchers can teach marketers much about using influencer marketing to get the most out of their money. The plausibility of this accomplishment is attributed to the availability of robust analysis frameworks and effective measuring instruments.

A few studies have observed at the problems with regulations and moral dilemmas that celebrity marketers face. Using followers in marketing campaigns raises ethical questions about truthfulness, openness, and exposure (Bragg et al., 2021). However, technology has enabled businesses to connect with and talk to their customers in new ways. Jin & Phua (2014) found that many influencers do not adequately reveal paid content, which could trick their fans and make them lose trust in the influencer. There are also legal questions and problems with following the rules because influencer marketing has grown faster than these frameworks have been created (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2016). Because of this, people need to look into the morality of influencer marketing immediately, as well as possible legal steps to protect customers and encourage honesty (De Veirman et al., 2017). By discussing and arguing important legal and ethical issues, academics can help set industry standards and rules for ethical influencer marketing.

Abudin (2016) briefly identified lack of understanding on the factors affecting customers' participation and buying choices. Reach, involvement, and the number of followers is common ways to judge the success of an influencer. People do not fully understand the differences between micro- and macro-influencers or how well different media types, like written pieces, photos, and videos, work (De Veirman et al., 2017). Trustworthiness, relatability, and sincerity affect thinking process

and actions of consumers (Jin & Phua, 2014). Finding influencers, making content, and marketing methods should all be investigated in more depth in future studies to help marketers improve these areas.

Luoma-aho & Vos (2018) identified that cultural differences in communication styles, social norms, and values can affect how people make decisions and act. However, most older studies were done in Western settings and did not examine the cultural differences and subtleties between non-Western markets (Bakar et al., 2020). Therefore, studies examining cultural differences are needed to determine how people think about influencer marketing and how businesses should change their methods (Heiskanen et al., 2019). Differences in culture help researchers learn more about how people around the world behave and create influencer marketing strategies that are sensitive to different cultures and work well. It is important to investigate these gaps in depth through both practical and theoretical study to improve knowledge, guide industry practices, and make influencer marketing work better. Filling in these gaps gives experts a better chance of helping marketers and customers come up with evidence-based techniques and ideas.

### **3 Research Methodology**

In this study, a qualitative research method has been employed to evaluate the impact of influencer advertising on Finnish consumers. The data collection methods utilized include semi-structured interviews and qualitative content analysis for in-depth data exploration. The study's approach aims to elicit insights into how individuals perceive and respond to influencer advertisements (Van Damgh & Van Reijmersdal, 2019). This has ultimately enabled executives to devise new strategies and generate innovative ideas regarding internet functionality and the interaction between people and businesses in the digital age.

Purposeful sampling is applied to ensure a diverse and representative sample of the Finnish consumer market (Adeoye, 2023). The flexibility of semi-structured interviews allows for a deeper exploration of participants' experiences and opinions, aligning the data collected with the research objectives (Mashuri et al., 2022). Thematic analysis is employed to identify and refine recurring themes, narratives, and patterns (Roberts et al., 2019). When well-organized and accurately implemented, this process enhances the reliability and precision of the findings through detailed topic elaboration, theme creation, and appropriate categorization.

To ensure credibility, various measures are taken to minimize bias and validate the results. This rigorous approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the impact of influencer advertising on consumer behavior in the Finnish market.

### **3.1 Research Approach**

The present qualitative study focuses on Finnish consumers and the ways in which influencer marketing has influenced their product choices. This research strategy provides an insightful examination of the intricate relationship between influencer marketing, consumers, and their social environment. A key component of this methodology involves pre-structured discussions (Mali et al., 2022), making interviews an essential first step for data collection. These interviews enable participants to articulate their perspectives on influencer marketing and express their views freely. This approach facilitates the synthesis of diverse reflections into a cohesive understanding.

The primary objective of the research is to identify the key features and drivers of influencer marketing, as well as the factors that influence consumer decisions. By engaging with participants on a personal level, researchers can gain a nuanced understanding of their viewpoints. While thematic analysis is predominantly used to interpret the data (Rutakumwa et al., 2020). This strategy, which involves systematically examining themes, patterns, and recurring statements in qualitative data, provides valuable insights into the behavior and priorities of the target population.

Maintaining confidentiality and obtaining informed consent are crucial ethical considerations in this research (Zakieva et al., 2019). Ensuring participants' privacy and respecting their anonymity throughout the study is paramount. By employing a rigorous data collection and analysis process, the research aims to produce accurate and credible findings.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The objective of this qualitative study, conducted in Finland, is to explore how influencer marketing impacts consumer decision-making regarding purchases. This research design was chosen to thoroughly examine the complex interactions between influencer marketing and consumer brand preferences. Data analysis will be conducted through several semi-structured interviews, providing a flexible tool for understanding psychological responses to influencer advertisements. These

interviews are particularly valuable for capturing authentic opinions and personal stories (Mashuri et al., 2022). Additionally, the study aims to identify the factors that motivate customers to purchase products, including the influence of celebrity endorsements. The sample selection process targets individuals and groups representative of Finnish consumers, a process known as sampling (Pirhonen et al., 2019). This strategy not only increases the volume of interview data but also incorporates diverse perspectives. Ethical considerations will be addressed at every stage of the study, from data collection to publication. Ensuring participant anonymity is crucial to protecting the rights of all involved and managing their information ethically.

### **3.3 Research Philosophy**

The study adopts a humanistic tradition, which underscores individuals' perspectives and their interpretations of their social environment. Interpretivism, central to this approach, directs attention to the subjective experiences of people, prompting an examination of diverse worldviews (Burn et al., 2022). The study aligns with the notion that reality is socially constructed, emphasizing the influence of societal contexts on individuals' perceptions and decision-making processes. Utilizing interpretivism and a qualitative research design, the study seeks to explore the impact of influencer marketing on consumer preferences in Finland (Kiviniitty, 2021). Acknowledging the significance of cultural norms, social influences, and personal experiences, the research aims to decipher the key factors influencing consumer decision-making and preferences (Ajmera & Jain, 2020). Embracing interpretivism as a guiding theory, the study employs ethnography to glean insights directly from individuals, illuminating their attitudes and feelings towards influencer advertisements. Central to this research approach is the recognition of the researcher's role as integral to the study. Both the researcher and participants engage in meaningful dialogue, facilitating mutual understanding and the exchange of perspectives. This dialogical approach fosters self-awareness among researchers, prompting reflection on personal biases that may shape their interpretation of evidence.

### **3.4 Data Collection Method**

The primary source of data for this research comprised semi-structured interviews. The decision to utilize this method stemmed from its ability to offer detailed insights into the influence of influencer marketing on the purchasing behaviors of Finnish customers. Semi-structured interviews strike a balance between structured and open-ended questioning, allowing participants to provide both planned and spontaneous responses, thus enriching the depth of information gathered (Portugal, 2013). A purposeful sampling approach guided the selection of interviewees, ensuring representation across relevant demographics. Interviews were conducted in person (Johnson et al., 2021). While interviews were partially planned, flexibility was maintained to tailor the discussions to each participant's background and perspectives, thereby ensuring the capture of diverse viewpoints. The interviews served two main objectives: firstly, to gauge the evolving interest in influencer marketing among consumers, and secondly, to explore their experiences with such marketing strategies. Key areas of inquiry included the level of trust placed in influencers, motivations for consuming influencer content, and the impact of influencer marketing on purchasing decisions. The researcher employed precision in questioning and utilized follow-up inquiries to elucidate responses and garner comprehensive insights from participants (Thompson et al., 2019). Ethical considerations, including obtaining participant consent, safeguarding privacy, and upholding research integrity, were meticulously addressed throughout the study process, ensuring adherence to ethical standards and protection of participants' rights.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Through a meticulous assessment and interpretation of the gathered data, the researcher derived conclusive insights from the participants' interviews. The findings from the interview data shed light on the factors influencing shifts in Finnish consumers' purchasing behaviors, particularly in relation to their engagement with influencer marketing. Thematic analysis served as the analytical framework, facilitating the identification of recurring themes, emerging trends, and significant patterns within the qualitative data (Herzog et al., 2019). Initially, interviews were transcribed to ensure accuracy and facilitate subsequent analysis. Utilizing thematic coding, the researcher discerned key themes, trends, and patterns inherent in the qualitative data (Herbdog et al., 2019). Textual transcripts were meticulously scrutinized to preserve essential information for further exploration. Following the coding process, data points were grouped based on their

interrelatedness and commonalities, enabling the identification of overarching trends. Individual data excerpts were then selected to exemplify each identified theme, providing concrete evidence to support the findings. The culmination of the analysis was presented in a narrative format, enriched with direct quotes capturing the perspectives and experiences of the participants, effectively conveying the story embedded within the data.

### **3.6 Thematic Analysis**

Caulfield (2022) explained that the utilization of thematic analysis as a qualitative research technique enables the identification, examination, and documentation of patterns (themes) present in data. This method proves especially advantageous when investigating intricate phenomena and gaining valuable insights into the perspectives, experiences, and social contexts of participants. Thematic analysis is widely recognized for its flexibility and accessibility, making it an ideal method for researchers with different levels of experience. It facilitates a thorough examination of qualitative data, offering extensive and detailed insights. However, it necessitates careful attention to prevent subjective biases, and researchers must be transparent about their coding and theme development processes to ensure credibility and trustworthiness.

In line with the research objective of uncovering elements within textual data through thematic analysis, the chosen analytical method will be the one described by (Clarke & Braun ,2016).

Hence, this research was conducted using thematic analysis as it presents a reliable and adaptable technique for analyzing qualitative data. This method allows for the detection and examination of recurring themes or patterns in the data, making it well-suited for investigating intricate human experiences and perceptions. Thematic analysis follows a structured process that involves becoming familiar with the data, creating initial codes, and then organizing these codes into coherent themes. Not only does this approach facilitate a profound understanding of the data, but it also helps in revealing subtle insights that might otherwise go unnoticed. Through the systematic coding and categorization of data into themes, thematic analysis aids in making sense of extensive qualitative information, ensuring a comprehensive and thorough analysis. Ultimately, this method enhances the quality and depth of research findings, proving to be highly effective for my study.

The table presents thematic codes reflecting influencer marketing effectiveness and consumer preferences. Themes include influencer credibility, engagement level, influencer-consumer alignment, and consumer preferences.

Table: Categorization of Influencer Impact Factors on Consumer Behavior

Code	Main Theme
Influencer's product category knowledge	Influencer Credibility
Trust in company supported by reliable influencers	Influencer Credibility
Confidence in brand aligned with influencer's values	Influencer Credibility
Interest in interactive material from influencers	Engagement Level
Frequency of influencer's postings	Engagement Level
Interest in company if influencers engage with followers	Engagement Level
Recognition of company backed by relatable influencers	Influencer-Consumer Alignment
Brand identification through real-world use of items	Influencer-Consumer Alignment
Confidence in brand aligned with influencer's values	Influencer-Consumer Alignment
Clear and extensive product background information	Consumer Preferences
Importance of targeted marketing (deals, discounts)	Consumer Preferences
Recognition of company backed by relatable influencers	Consumer Preferences

### 3.7 Sampling Method

In conducting this study in Jyväskylä, Finland, the researcher employed purposive sampling to recruit participants. The selection process was guided by specific criteria aligned with the study's objectives, ensuring representation from various demographic categories such as age, gender, and educational background (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Participants were personally invited by the researcher to partake in the research, with each individual approached individually to provide detailed information about the study's aims and their potential involvement (Belina, 2023). This personalized approach aimed to foster a sense of trust and engagement among participants, facilitating their willingness to contribute to the research endeavor (Jiang et al., 2023). Following their consent, participants were asked to respond to tailored question queries, allowing for a focused exploration of their perspectives and experiences related to influencer marketing (Campbell et al., 2020). This methodology enabled the researcher to capture a diverse range of viewpoints among the participant pool, enriching the depth and breadth of the study's findings.

### **3.8 Sample Size**

The data from twenty participants were gathered through semi-structured interviews utilizing focus group discussion techniques. The determination of the sample size was guided by qualitative research principles, specifically aiming to achieve data saturation and adequate depth of analysis to address the study's inquiries. As highlighted by Davidson et al. (2019), qualitative studies prioritize detailed insights over large sample sizes, allowing for a nuanced exploration of individual experiences within a specific context. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure diversity across demographic factors such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, education level, and residency, as recommended by Kalu (2019). This approach facilitated a comprehensive examination of Finnish consumers' preferences regarding celebrity endorsements and influencer marketing strategies.

### **3.9 Ethical Consideration**

A crucial aspect of research methodology includes the incorporation of ethical principles and standards to uphold the protection of participants' rights, welfare, and privacy. Before commencing data collection, all individuals will be briefed on the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and participant rights, with the intention of securing their consent (Naik et al., 2022). During the study, the participants were told that they had the right to discontinue participation or withdrawal at any moment without any implications. Confidentiality methods were used to protect the participants' privacy and private information (Grilo et al., 2019). Interview records and other information that could be used to find out who someone is were protected and kept safely. The collected data could only be seen by qualified members of the study team. Giving the participants fake names or IDs made it even harder to figure out who they were and what they had contributed. Also, attempts were made to make sure that the participants in the study did not experience any pain or danger while they were doing so (Main, 2019). In order to provide a platform for the participants to voice their concerns and seek clarification, the researchers encouraged open communication and welcomed questions. Furthermore, the study process underwent rigorous evaluation by the designated ethics group to ensure strict adherence to applicable laws and regulations.

## 4 Results

This section presents the findings and their implications derived from a qualitative thematic analysis. The study concentrates on four key dimensions: influencer credibility, level of engagement, influencer-consumer alignment, and consumer preferences. The primary objective of this research is to unravel the complexities inherent in influencer marketing dynamics. To elucidate these complexities, researchers engaged with consumer participants, aiming to explore the intricate ways in which influencers influence consumer behavior and perceptions online. The qualitative approach yielded detailed insights, providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between influencers and their target audiences. Consequently, this study offers valuable insights into effective strategies for influencers to promote their products. These findings hold significance for businesses seeking to enhance their digital marketing strategies through influencer partnerships, illuminating the dynamics of online interactions and influencer-driven consumer behaviors.

### 4.1 Influencer Credibility (Theme 1)

In the always-changing world of digital marketing, trustworthiness of influencers is vital for getting product information out to a lot of people. When influencers write honest, in-depth reviews, they help raise brand knowledge by a large amount. This method uses the fact that customers are more likely to trust information that is both complete and well-written to its advantage. This method not only makes the expert look smarter and more reliable, but it also gives clients faith that the advice is based on real-life experiences and not just a desire to make money. This approach changes the normal relationship between a customer and an influencer.

While conducting the interview, participants were asked question such as:

#### Interview 1:

- **Question:** *“How successful do you believe it is for influencers to give clear and extensive product background information in order to increase brand recognition?”*
- **Response:** *“I think it works great when leaders give detailed reviews of products. The information given makes it look like you have special knowledge about the company, so it is not just a sales pitch. People will remember the company better this way. Being honest when selling things or services*

*builds trust. You won't feel like you're being relentlessly targeted for business reasons. Instead, it will feel more like getting support and help from a reliable friend or family member. Getting more people to recognize your name is a win."*

By giving thorough and honest feedback, the influencer builds a connection with the audience that is more like that of a trusted doctor than a simple advertising tool. This change is imperative because it makes the relationship between the customer and the brand stronger, based on trust and dependability. As a result, influencer may help people have better and more remembered business experiences. When brands tell their target audience a story that shows how real and trustworthy the influencer is, that audience is more likely to remember and like the brand.

- **Question:** *"To what degree does an influencer's product category knowledge impact your opinion of the brand they promote?"*
- **Response:** *"When an influencer shows that they know a lot about a subject, it changes how I feel about the business that they promote. I believe the plan is more trustworthy since it seems to be built on real information rather than making money."*

In addition, working with experts to get specific information about a product fit with how buyers act now, since they are more likely to make smart purchases. People today are picky and look for a lot of information about a product online before they buy it. Influencers meet the need for expert knowledge, which raises the profile of a brand and its value in the market. This makes it easy for people to recognize the brand right away and builds trust and loyalty, which are all vital for the long-term success of a brand. In the world of digital marketing today, where customers are constantly being bombarded with ads, it is the job of a reliable influencer to present things in a way that interests and speaks to the target audience. Because of their image and wealth of knowledge, these leaders make it more likely that the marketing message will be understood and work. People's buying choices and brand loyalty are heavily influenced by the brands they trust, so it is significant to be honest when talking to them.

- **Question:** *"How likely are you to trust a company that is constantly supported by reliable influencers?"*

- **Response:** *“Seeing a lot of real influencers talk about a brand makes me trust that company more. It makes me think that the group is more than just a passing fad with a catchy commercial; it has real meaning that experts still believe in.”*

Influencers' names do a lot more than just raise knowledge of a brand; they have far-reaching effects. It has a big effect on how customers act and how much they participate. Influencers work better than other ways of advertising because of their name and skill. Influencers have a lot of power over customers when it comes to what they buy. In fields like health, fitness, and beauty, where customers find it hard to judge goods based on their own standards of value and performance, this has a big effect. Also, influencers that people trust help to lower the level of suspicion that people usually have about standard ads. Because they add a real and useful element to contacts with brands, trustworthy influencers make advertising messages look more real and less motivated by corporate greed. Now more than ever, this is imperative, especially since people are wary of obvious ads. When businesses work with reliable influencers, they may see long-term improvements in customer involvement and sales rates. Another benefit is that brand support and increased trust are both increased. These influencers are brand supporters because they talk about the product or service and connect with their audience in a real, relevant, and interesting way. So, for influencer marketing to work, the views and image of the influencers must match those of the company.

## 4.2 Engagement Level (Theme 2)

When it comes to influencer marketing, "Engagement Level" is the sum of all the contacts an influencer has with their audience, taking into account both how often and how well they connect. Brand marketing with a high level of involvement usually works better because the audience is genuinely interested and actively taking part. They do this because they properly pique the attention of the audience. To fully understand how influencers can help a brand grow by connecting with and building a strong relationship with their audience, you need to know a lot about the subject. A lot of things can be used to figure out how engaged someone is, such as how often, how significant, and how many exchanges (likes, comments, and shares) are available. The high amounts of participation show that getting people involved is more imperative than just giving them knowledge. The crowd looked like they were interested in what was being said. The ability of influencers to keep up high levels of engagement could be compared to a community built around the brands they

support. Regular and in-depth exchanges in this community help the company connect with potential customers in a deeper way. This kind of teamwork helps to raise the profile of both the business and the company's reputation. Active and positive customer participation shows that the company is valuable to the public.

While conducting the interview, participants were asked question such as:

### **Interview 1:**

- **Question:** *"How much would interactive material from influencers (such as Q&A sessions about items) pique your interest in a brand?"*
- **Response:** *"I did be interested in question-and-answer meetings with famous people, and I like content that lets me connect with it. The company seems more friendly and approachable. If I could really feel their drive to build relationships with their viewers that would be great."*

A company can get more online publicity by working with a celebrity who regularly posts interesting content about the company's products. The celebrity needs to have a big, interested crowd in order to host engaging content like live chats, Q & As, or lessons. Because each connection could reach more people than just the influencer's following, this is how it works. The reason for this is that the algorithms that decide what shows up in social media feeds favor posts that get a lot of response. Customers' actions and choices are affected by the amount of involvement they have. If people connect with the content that is shared, they are more likely to learn from it and like the goods that are being sold. On the other hand, this is especially true when leaders answer questions or comments, which makes the contact more personal. When customers have positive interactions like these, they are more likely to choose the suggested brand over competing brands. These interactions boost trust and change buyer tastes.

- **Question:** *"Would you be more interested in a company if influencers responded to followers' comments and debates on a regular basis?"*
- **Response:** *"Without a doubt, the experience would be more real if the leaders participated in the conversation and answered questions from the public. They are more than just a voice on TV, so they*

*seem like a significant part of the community. That would definitely keep me interested in the subject at hand.”*

Looking at the results of a poll on the effects of influencer marketing shows that participation is a strong indicator of marketing success. If people said they often connected with content made by influencers, they were more likely to know and remember brands that were pushed. This shows that content that is both interesting and gets people involved is more likely to have a lasting effect. Businesses might want to keep people who are involved because they bring many long-term rewards. First, they help the company keep customers who stick with it through good times and bad. People who follow an influencer will be more loyal to both them and the brands they push if their material is always interesting. High levels of interaction also give leaders and businesses constant feedback from customers, which lets them quickly change their methods to better meet the needs of each customer.

- **Question:** *“How essential is the frequency of an influencer’s postings on a business in keeping you interested in its products?”*
- **Response:** *“It is possible for me to remember the name if I regularly read posts from famous people. If it doesn’t happen often, I might not pay attention to it. Well-organized and useful posts get my attention and remind me of how much I loved the company when I was younger.”*

Additionally, it is essential to note that a lot of touch with an influencer makes their image and trustworthiness as a source of information stronger. Building trustworthiness is a self-reinforcing effect that may help a brand’s image over time. In today’s digital market, where people are wary of ads, it is vital to make sure that advertising messages get to a lot of people while still being trustworthy. Look at how much contact there is and come up with acceptable ways for businesses that want to use influencer marketing to do it. For companies, the best way to work together with influencers is to find ones with big fan bases who regularly interact with their followers. These leaders’ recommendations are more likely to make a big difference because they have a close relationship with their followers.

### 4.3 Influencer-Consumer Alignment (Theme 3)

The third theme is the idea of aligning influencers and consumers. In this case, an influencer's fans share the same beliefs, ways of life, and likes. This balance is essential because it shows how trustworthy the influencer's ideas are and how well they connect with the target audience. When a leader and their audience are on the same page, suggestions seem more real. This builds trust and has an effect on how customers act. When an advocate and a customer share many hobbies, attitudes, and habits, this is called convergence. Influencers can make their messages more appealing by showing how the goods they're promoting fit with the audience's goals and aims. For instance, an influencer who has a past of promoting eco-friendly goods and living a sustainable life would connect with their followers more deeply than one who does not. This link with the public is possible because they share the same hobbies and goals, which makes the reverberation stronger.

While conducting the interview, participants were asked question such as:

#### Interview 2:

- **Question:** *"How likely are you to recognise and remember a company if it is backed by influencers whose lives are similar to your own?"*
- **Reponse:** *"I think so. When an influential person who lives the same way as I do gives me a recommendation, I am more likely to remember and trust the company. It is like getting advice from someone who sees things from my point of view."*

The value of this consistency is shown by how customers feel about influencer marketing. When followers see influencers using or promoting things that they seem to really like or use, they trust and believe in the influencer more. Followers need to think that the company is honest if they want to turn people who are just looking into buying from them. Psychological similarity means that the audience is likely to agree with the influencer's opinion of a product's usefulness or importance if the influencer and their audience share similar views and ways of life. Customers' buying choices are greatly affected by how well leaders and customers get along. People are more likely to buy a product that an expert suggests if they think it will fit into their current pattern or meet a need that

is similar to their own. When a buyer knows that the product is being suggested by trustworthy and like-minded people, they are more likely to make a purchase.

- **Question:** *“How beneficial is it to increase brand identification when influencers utilize items in real-world settings that are relevant to your everyday life?”*
- **Response:** *“What an imperative effect! One way I can tell if an influencer’s product is right for me is by watching how they use it in their daily life. Aside from its academic worth, it also has meaning and use in the real world.”*

The study showed that aligning influencers with customers is significant for the success of influencer marketing. Most of the people who answered (in terms of faith and involvement) choose to connect with and follow leaders whose hobbies and lives are like their own. For instance, people were more likely to buy fitness-related items if they heard good things about them from fitness stars whose fans they followed. This is a great example of how alignment affects people’s choices about what to buy. Several people also said that when there is conflict, people start to doubt the influencer’s advice. This negativity could hurt the names of both the promoter and the company. This response makes it clear how vital it is to carefully choose leaders whose fans are like their target group in terms of demographics and psychology.

- **Question:** *“How does your alignment of values with the influencer effect your confidence in the brand endorsements they make?”*
- **Response:** *“This is something that I think is vital. If an advocate shares my beliefs, I trust that they will back a brand more. I like that the influencer seems to be making some of the decisions for me.”*

Connecting influencers with customers can lead to better customer engagement rates and more brand trust in the long run. Customers are more likely to stay with a company for a long time if they believe it knows their needs and wants by having ties to imperative people. Alignment also makes customers feel more linked to each other, which makes them enjoy and stay loyal to the business by giving them shared experiences based on shared values and habits. Businesses that want to get the most out of their influencer marketing must understand and take advantage of the link between influencers and buyers. Brands should do a lot of study to find influencers whose fans share the

same views, habits, and traits as their target market. Working with peers makes marketing efforts more effective by increasing visibility and personal interaction with marketing messages.

#### 4.4 Consumer Preferences (Theme 4)

Figuring out and guessing what the audience wants and needs could make ads a lot more effective. Influencer marketing, which is one of the best ways to market, depends a lot on what people want. This field investigates how well-known people can affect, influence, and reflect market decisions. When talking about goods and services, customer interests include all of them, along with the person's own likes, wants, and hopes. Lastly, these tastes affect what people buy at the store and are affected by many things, such as personal, social, economic, and cultural factors. In influencer marketing, consumer tastes are vital because they decide how well influencer recommendations work. When an influencer pushes things that change with their audience's tastes, those promotions are more likely to lead to sales.

While conducting the interview, participants were asked question such as:

##### Interview 2:

- **Question:** *"How imperative are targeted marketing by influencers (deals, discount coupons) in your choice to choose one company over another?"*
- **Response:** *"Some types of targeted marketing, like deals and prices pushed by influencers, might change what I buy. If I am still not sure which company to choose, an interesting deal might help me make up my mind. This makes it seem like there is less risk in picking a new name."*

Influencers are significant when it comes to creating or affecting people's choices. One way they do this is by showing their target group creative goods, ways of living, and trends. People are more likely to follow the advice of influential people whose fans respect and admire them. This effect is amplified when leaders use their platforms to talk about how useful and beneficial a product is, making people want it even more. If a famous beauty blogger talks about a new skin care product and uses it successfully, their fans are likely to want to try it too. This event not only changes how new goods are sold, but it also changes what a certain market value.

These people influence consumer choices, and the study results show how much. A lot of people who answered say that shopping tips from influential people have a big effect on their decisions. This is especially true when the suggestions are backed up by stories or reviews that show how useful the product is. People are more likely to buy something if well-known people use it and strongly suggest it. The poll results also showed that people like real content more than obvious ads. Customers like influencers more who only promote goods and services that they personally use and believe in, and who are honest about how their recommendations are paid for. Customers were mostly in favour of this choice. Because of the need for sincerity, both companies and individuals are rethinking their marketing strategies. They are focused on real events instead of fake references.

It is imperative to understand that trustworthy leaders have an impact on more than just customers' short-term decisions. They also affect their long-term behaviour and company loyalty. Significant people who regularly support causes that are like those of their following may find it easier to build long-term ties with those causes. The long-term potential of this match is to turn casual fans into loyal customers who trust the influencer's advice when they buy something. When businesses use influencer marketing, they should know what their customers want and give it to them. The key to this strategy is to find influencers whose followers are like the people the business wants to reach and whose posts will appeal to those people. By directly connecting product marketing with key leaders, businesses can learn about what customers want and even change trends. The information gathered from poll participants may also help businesses improve the ads they already run. Brands can learn a lot about their ideal customers and the best ways to promote themselves by looking at what customers say about influencer campaigns. This feedback loop is great for brands that are always looking for ways to make their products and marketing work better.

## 5 Discussion

The topic study was done using a qualitative main method, which showed how complicated influencer marketing is. This study showed how imperative it is for influencers' reputations, interaction levels, customer tastes, and the connection between influencers and consumers. The study results give us a better understanding of the methods leaders use to change public opinion and, by extension, customer behaviour, which in turn changes the success of advertising efforts. More and more, the trustworthiness of the influencer is being considered when judging the success of influencer marketing efforts. Bakar et al. (2020) did study that backs up this idea. According to the study, people are much more likely to buy something when they think leaders can be trusted. Jin & Phua (2014) stated that people are more likely to buy a brand if they believe the people who promote it. The research shows that trustworthy influencers raise brand awareness and build trust among customers by giving clear and thorough information about products.

It is vital to look at the amount of participation when judging how well influencer marketing works. This includes how many and how well leaders and their fans talk to each other. De Veirman et al. (2017) stated that higher involvement rates have a good effect on how customers feel about companies and how they react to pushed content. When customers get involved, they help get the word out about the business and become more loyal. Using material that speaks to the target group is a key part of making this happen. The results of this study back up the idea that was first put forward. The buyer will be more likely to trust the influencer's advice if their values are similar to those of the client. Luoma-aho & Vos (2018) found that people are more likely to trust influencer marketing if they think the influencer shares similar ideas and lives with them. Customers are more likely to act on and accept suggestions that are in line with what they already think and care about. The results of this study show that marketing efforts are better when influencers work together with the right partners.

Influencers have a big impact on the decisions that potential customers make about what to buy because they are trusted advisors and set trends. Salo et al. (2016) look into how influencers, social marketing, and customer behaviour are connected. Influencers' study on how effective viral marketing is depends on how well they can change their material to fit the changing tastes of their audience. Influencers can have a big effect on buyer habits and market trends, which can be good for the companies they promote as long as they know what customers want and can change their

minds. The data could give us a lot of ideas for how to make influencer marketing more effective. Businesses should focus on working with leaders who have a big following and a good image. One way to do this is to work with influential people whose values match those of the company and who are honest about the products they support.

Marketers should focus on getting more people to interact with influencer campaigns to get the most out of them. To be more specific, this means making material that is interesting, useful, and engaging, and then using data to improve how people engage users based on their comments. For businesses to effectively reach their intended audience, they need to carefully pick leaders whose main ideas and customer groups are like their own. Customers have more faith in the company because tips are more likely to match. Influencer ties help businesses stay ahead of trends and know what their target audience wants, which helps them come up with new products and adapt to changes in the market. With this method, businesses can see and change the likes of the people they want to reach. To be successful at influencer marketing, organisation need to have a plan that includes trust, involvement, unity, and knowing what their customers want. Using these tips could help businesses connect with their customers better and learn more about the market. In the competitive digital business, this will help growth and keep customers coming back.

## **5.1 Limitations**

Although this study provides a comprehensive view of influencer marketing, it has some drawbacks, which must be acknowledged to fully appreciate the results. It is essential for individuals to aware about these limitations consider for future research. Ajmera and Jain (2020) stated that different results might be found by looking at how sites like TikTok and YouTube work, where users' participation and content consumption are different. The study might have been mostly about Instagram celebrities from certain categories, like the beauty and entertainment industries. But the changes organisation see on these sites might help they see things in a new way.

The study's findings may be influenced by cultural and social variables. According to Ale-mayehu et al. (2021), the cultural norms and geographic settings of individuals can significantly impact the relationships between influencers and customers. This trait has the ability to have a big effect on how well celebrity marketing campaigns work. Because of differences in social media trust and consumer behaviour, Western and Eastern countries may have different consumer behaviour and the

effects of credible influencers. These changes have a big effect on how people act as customers. This means that the study's results might only be true in certain culture or social settings. The study is also flawed because it looks at the same people over time. Salo et al. (2016) discuss that influencer marketing is a field that is always changing because client tastes and trends can change at any time. Something that works and is popular today might not work or be popular tomorrow, and its benefits might not last as long or be as strong. Researchers must always be on the lookout for the newest developments in digital marketing and understand how these changes affect influencer marketing strategies because these trends are rapidly changing.

Most of the information used in the study came from people who self-reported their experiences in conversations and in-depth interviews. Adeoye (2023) stated that even though the method is well known and used, flaws like social desirability bias and mental recall problems can affect the findings. It is possible for people to respond not always with their own thoughts and actions, but with what they think other people want or what they think is socially accepted. This could cause wrong information to be gathered. It is vital to think about how social media algorithms affect the spread and interest of certain material, but this study might not investigate that. Because they are private, platform providers can change these formulas all the time. In turn, this means they may quickly change the scope and success of influencer campaigns (AdWeek, 2020). This feature comes as a complete surprise and could stop the steady growth of current celebrity marketing plans. On top of that, most of the study is centred on qualitative analysis. A small amount of numeric data backs up the huge amount of environmental information it gives. Quantitative data may add to and support the results of qualitative studies by giving a fuller picture of how well different influencer marketing strategies work with bigger groups of people (Adeoye, 2023). To apply the study's findings to a larger group of people, a full mathematical analysis is needed.

## **5.2 Research Implications**

This study on influencer marketing has big effects on how marketing tactics are thought about and used in real life. To get a full picture of the influencer environment and the things that affect business success, it may be helpful to investigate things like influencer image, connection with fans, customer-influencer fit, and consumer tastes. Researchers already know a lot about how digital marketing and influencers work, and this study adds to what they already know. This information

fills in the blanks about the complicated ways that influencers affect how customers feel about companies and what they buy. The research shows that trustworthiness (Cheung & Thadani, 2012), alignment (Boerman, 2020), and connection are three significant parts of influencer marketing. All these things add to and improve what we already know about social impact and how people buy things online.

This study has found several possible areas that need more research. One area of interest for researchers is looking into how the impact of influencers varies by culture. Because consumer culture affects how people see the credibility of influencers and how well marketing messages work, it would be interesting to investigate how influencer marketing works in different cultural settings. Because social media sites are getting more complicated all the time, it is also essential to study how influencer marketing strategies react to changes in algorithm and user behaviour. If more research is done along this line, theory models for celebrity marketing might become more useful. The results are useful for marketing because they help them choose influencers and learn more about the types of relationships they have. Companies that want to get influencers to push their goods should look for people who are competent and honest. This is because trustworthiness has a big effect on how influencers make decisions. Jin & Phua (2014) say that this method increases conversion rates by making customers trust the business more and getting them to connect with it more.

Based on the findings of this study, marketers would do well to come up with strategies that let leaders and the people they want to reach talk to each other. Some of these tactics are getting influential people to share inside information, holding live Q & As, and responding to comments. Long-term, these tactics may affect customer loyalty and support by making customers more involved and strengthening the bond between the business and its customers (Hajjat, Hamilton & Powell, 2013). The study also stresses how imperative it is for leaders to connect with their followers. Before deciding based only on demographics, brands should do a lot of study on possible influencers, looking at things like views and activities that the influencers share. It was found by Luomaho & Vos (2018) that recommendations are more credible and useful when they match the marketing message. Because of this, business interactions are more interesting and useful. Lawmakers, especially those who care about advertising norms and ethics, should give this study's results a lot of thought. People are calling for clear rules and guidelines to govern influencer marketing because influencers have such a big effect on what people buy. A big part of this is keeping customers safe

from fake ads (Choi & Rifon 2012). In addition, recommendations must be made in an open and honest way.

### 5.3 Recommendations

Several recommendations have been made for how to make influencer marketing work better based on the results of this study. These rules were put in place to help businesses understand influencer marketing, make their marketing better, and get the most out of their investment (ROI).

- When brands work with influencers, they should only work with people who have proven to be honest and trustworthy. Credibility has been shown to change how customers act, so businesses should look for leaders with a lot of followers and a real link to the people they want to reach (Jin & Phua, 2014). To make sure that the content is in line with the brand's core views, strict screening methods are needed. These include looking at past links and making sure the information is correct.
- De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders (2017) say that companies should push influencers to make material that is lively and interesting for their target audience. High involvement rates may be good for businesses that use this method. This kind of content can be found on social media sites like Facebook and Instagram in the form of contests, live Q&As, polls, and stories. Businesses that encourage people to get involved may get their marketing message seen by more people, which could make customers more loyal and make them think of the brand in a good way.
- Luoma-aho & Vos (2018) stated that looking at how popular someone is not enough to choose the right influencer. It also means figuring out how well the influencer's ideals and way of life match up with the people the group wants to reach. Companies should spend money on data and tools that help them connect influential people with the people they want to buy from them. These technologies and data should be used to look at many things, like hobbies, habits, and demographics. When an expert is consistent, their ideas are more likely to be taken seriously, and marketing campaigns work better.
- Data-driven tactics are needed to make influencer marketing work better. Cheung & Thadani (2012) discuss that businesses can use analytics software to find out how well their influencer marketing is working and to find out more about their customers' likes and dislikes. This information could help businesses improve their plan, talk to each other better, and make smarter choices about future partnerships.
- Advertising tactics that work better and are more realistic may come from having long-term relationships with vital people. Long-term partnerships, according to Hajjat, Hamilton & Powell (2013), help

influencers become more integrated into the company. This makes them better able to fully represent the role of brand advocates. One more benefit of these relationships is that the marketing themes are always the same, which helps customers trust the brand and remember it.

- It is vital to put ethics first and make sure they are at the centre of all influencer marketing plans. The reason for this is the growing power of social media ads. Choi & Rifon (2012) say that companies should follow all advertising rules and be honest about their influencer marketing efforts. To do this, customers must be given clear statements on paid content. This is the law and protects the consumer's trust in the advocate and the company.
- The digital marketing world is always changing because social media sites are always changing their formulas and features. This is especially true for ads on the internet. AdWeek's (2020) study stated that companies should make it a priority to learn about these changes so that they can adjust their plan. To reach this goal, it might be necessary to use more platforms or change the style of the content to match the needs of new algorithms. This makes sure that content from influencers stays noticeable and makes money.

## 6 Conclusion

The in-depth look at influencer marketing in this study shows how difficult the relationships are between influencers and their clients. The results of this study have made big changes to both the theory and practice of digital marketing. To learn more, these insights were gathered by looking at the most imperative factors of influencer trustworthiness, interaction levels, consumer tastes, and how well influencers and consumers match with each other. This study has constantly shown how significant it is for leaders to have good reputations. The effect that leaders have on customer activity is directly related to how much trust and confidence people have in them. How trustworthy an influencer's suggestions have a direct effect on their image. There is a higher rate of brand growth and more trust among customers in companies. This research shows how vital it is for businesses looking to build trust and confidence to work with leaders who have a big following, a good public image, and a history of working well with others.

A big part of how well celebrity marketing works is how much touch it gets. This study says that marketing messages are much more successful and reach more people when there is a real and changing connection between leaders and the people who follow them. A high rate of participation means that the information being given is making an effect on the people who are supposed to be affected by it. This serves two purposes: it makes the business more well-known and brings the

company and the customer closer together. Long-term success for a business depends on customers who are loyal to the brand and buy from them again and again. This bond can help with both of those things. One significant thing that makes influencer marketing work is the link between influencers and buyers. Advertisements are more credible and useful when the people who created them share the same views, hobbies, and ways of life as the people who see them. People are more likely to believe a promotional message when they are more involved with it. Companies should pick the right person by building a real connection with them based on shared ideals and a clear idea of who they want to reach. Obviously, facts alone are not enough to find the right agent.

Another significant thing I learned from this study is how vital it is to know what customers want and use social networks to get them to buy people products. Because they set trends, influencers have a big say in how their fans see their own worth and beauty. Companies that use this power well may be able to have a big effect on customer trends and habits in fast-paced fields like fashion, technology, and beauty. Influencer marketing works well because it improves how a brand is seen, leads to direct sales, and leaves a lasting impression on the market. Businesses that want to improve their influencer marketing could use this study's findings as a guide. There are several things that can be done to make influencer marketing work better. A big goal should be to find trustworthy leaders and get them involved in a big way. Other goals should include matching with consumer ideals and changing to meet new consumer tastes. Because digital platforms and customer habits are always changing, organisation need to keep researching and be able to change to new situations. Brands should be flexible and change their approach often to keep up with new technology, platform formulas, and what customers want.

When executed effectively, influencer marketing—an organized and comprehensive approach to contemporary marketing—has the potential to yield significant benefits. This strategy transcends mere trendiness. The findings of this study can assist businesses in enhancing their marketing strategies and maximizing the value of their relationships with influencers. The long-term success of companies will hinge on their ability to differentiate themselves from competitors and engage with customers, a necessity in nearly every industry due to the increasing saturation of the internet. The contributions of this study to the understanding of influencer marketing are valuable for both researchers and practitioners, offering insights into creating impactful and successful advertising campaigns.

## References

Adeoye, M. A. (2023). Review of sampling techniques for education. *ASEAN Journal for Science Education*, 2(2), 87-94.

AdWeek. (2020). *The State of Influencer Marketing 2020: Benchmark Report*. Retrieved 6 May 2024, from <https://www.adweek.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2020-Influencer-Benchmark-Report.pdf>

Ajmera, P. & Jain, V. (2020). A fuzzy interpretive structural modeling approach for evaluating the factors affecting lean implementation in Indian healthcare industry. *International Journal of Lean Six Sigma*, 11(2), 376-397.

Bakar, N., Kamarudin, N. B., & Ahmad, N. H. (2020). Authenticity of Celebrity Endorser and its Influence on Customer Purchase Intention in Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(5), 156–167.

Bakar, N., Kamarudin, N. B., & Ahmad, N. H. (2020). Authenticity of celebrity endorser and its influence on customer purchase intention in Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(5), 156–167.

Belina, A. (2023). Semi-structured interviewing as a tool for understanding informal civil society. *Voluntary Sector Review*, 14(2), 331-347.

Boerman, S. C. (2020). The effects of the standardized Instagram disclosure for micro- and meso-influencers on brand evaluation and purchase intention. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 103, 199-207.

Bosson, J. K., Vandello, J. A., & Buckner, C. E. (2019). The psychological implications of viewing authenticity through a gendered lens. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 83, 94–103.

Brag, G. (2019). *Predicting the future of influencer marketing: How public relations experts perceive and measure the impacts of influencer marketing in their organizations. A critical study reflecting the discussions and future thinking of this particular phenomenon* [Master's thesis, Stockholm University]. Retrieved from <https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-172674>

Brown, J. J., & Reingen, P. H. (1987). Social ties and word-of-mouth referral behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14(3), 350–362.

Burns, K. S. (2021). *The Science of Social Media Influencer Marketing. Research Perspectives on Social Media Influencers and Their Followers*, 7.

Burns, M., Bally, J., Burles, M., Holtslander, L., & Peacock, S. (2022). Constructivist grounded theory or interpretive phenomenology. Methodological choices within specific study contexts. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 21, 16094069221077758.

Caulfield, J. (2022, May 05). *How to Do Thematic Analysis | Guide & Examples*. Scribbr. Retrieved 14 May 2024, from <https://www.scribbr.co.uk/research-methods/thematic-analysis-explained/>

Clarke, V. & Braun, V. 2016. "Thematic analysis". In E. Lyons & A. Coyle, (Eds.), *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology* (2nd ed.) London. pp. 84-103

Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., ... & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of research in Nursing*, 25(8), 652-661.

Cheung, C.M.K., & Thadani, D.R. (2012). The impact of electronic word-of-mouth communication: A literature analysis and integrative model. *Decision Support Systems*, 54(1), 461-470.

Choi, S. M., & Rifon, N. J. (2012). Who is the celebrity in advertising? Understanding dimensions of celebrity images. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 45(1), 185–206.

Choi, S. M., & Rifon, N. J. (2012). Who is the celebrity in advertising? Understanding dimensions of celebrity images. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 45(1), 176-196.

Chopra, A., Avhad, V., & Jaju, A. S. (2021). Influencer marketing: An exploratory study to identify antecedents of consumer behavior of millennial. *Business Perspectives and Research*, 9(1), 77-91.

Chowdhury, R. (2020). *Branding in Social Media and the Impact of Social Media on Brand Image: Comparison Between Bangladesh and Finland*. [Master's Thesis, Centria University of Applied Sciences].

Davidson, E., Edwards, R., Jamieson, L., & Weller, S. (2019). Big data, qualitative style: a breadth-and-depth method for working with large amounts of secondary qualitative data. *Quality & quantity*, 53, 363-376.

De Mooij, M. (2019). *Consumer Behavior and Culture: Consequences for Global Marketing and Advertising*.

De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: the impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising*, 36(5), 798–828.

De Veirman, M., Hudders, L., & Nelson, M. R. (2019). What is Influencer Marketing and How Does it Target Children? A Review and Direction for Future Research. *Frontiers in psychology*, 10, 498106.

Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public Relations Review*, 37(1), 90–92.

Gong, T., Xu, W., & Liang, J. (2020). Authenticity and popularity: Differential effects of two types of social influence on young consumers' attitude towards and purchase intention of green products. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 254, 119906.

- Grilo, S. A., Catalozzi, M., Santelli, J. S., Yan, H., Song, X., Heitel, J., ... & Klein, J. D. (2019). Confidentiality discussions and private time with a health-care provider for youth, United States, 2016. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 64*(3), 311-318.
- Hajjat, F. M., Hamilton, R. W., & Powell, M. C. (2013). The role of social influence in consumer behavior: Marketing and psychology perspectives. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 23*(3), 416-427.
- Heinonen, N. (2021). *The impact of social media influencer marketing on purchasing decisions of millennials in Finland*. [Bachelor's Thesis, LAB University of Applied Sciences].
- Heiskanen, E., Haukijärvi, I., & Jyrämä, A. (2019). Finnish consumers' skepticism towards influencer marketing. *Journal of Promotion Management, 25*(1), 68–86.
- Hennink, M., & Kaiser, B. N. (2022). Sample sizes for saturation in qualitative research: A systematic review of empirical tests. *Social science & medicine, 292*, 114523.
- Herzog, C., Handke, C., & Hitters, E. (2019). Analyzing Talk and Text II: Thematic Analysis. In H. Van Den Bulck, M. Puppis, K. Donders, & L. Van Audenhove (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbok of Methods for Media Policy Research* (pp. 358-401). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hofstede Insights. (2021). Finland: A high score on individualism. Retrieved 21 March 2024, from <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country/finland/>
- Hogg, M. A., & Reid, S. A. (2006). Social identity, self-categorization, and the communication of group norms. *Communication Theory, 16*(1), 7–30.
- Honkanen, N. (2021). *Impact of Finnish and Swedish Instagram influencers on Finnish consumers*. [Bachelor's Thesis, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences].
- Hsu, C.-L., & Tseng, T.-H. (2017). How can social commerce constructs influence customer satisfaction? Social identification perspective. *Journal of Business Research, 71*, 80–86.

- Javits, O. (2019). *Social Media Influencers in Destination Marketing. A case study of Visit Tampere, Finland*. [Master's thesis, Tampere University].
- Jiang, X., Chiu, D. K., & Chan, C. T. (2023). Application of the AIDA Model in Social Media Promotion and Community Engagement for Small Cultural Organizations: A Case Study of the Choi Chang Sau Qin Society. In M. Dennis & J. Halbert (Eds.), *Community engagement in the online space* (pp. 48-70). IGI Global.
- Jin, S. A. A., & Phua, J. (2014). Following celebrities' tweets about brands: the impact of twitter-based electronic word-of-mouth on consumers' source credibility perception, buying intention, and social identification with celebrities. *Journal of Advertising*, 43(2), 181–195.
- Johnson, D. R., Scheitle, C. P., & Ecklund, E. H. (2021). Beyond the in-person interview? How interview quality varies across in-person, telephone, and Skype interviews. *Social science computer review*, 39(6), 1142-1158.
- Jover Rodríguez, J. (2022). *The Challenging Process of Measuring Influencer Marketing Performance*. [Master's Thesis, Lahti University of Technology]
- Kalu, M. E. (2019). Using emphasis-purposeful sampling-phenomenon of interest–context (EPPiC) framework to reflect on two qualitative research designs and questions: A reflective process. *The Qualitative Report*, 24(10), 2524-2535.
- Kämäräinen, I. (2022). *Optimized influencer selection for building a positive brand image-A study from Finnish consumer perspective*. [Master's thesis, Aalto University].
- Kelman, H. C. (1958). Compliance, identification, and internalization: Three processes of attitude change. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2(1), 51–60.
- Kiviniitty, I. (2021). *An interpretive study of female investing culture in Finland*. [Master's thesis, Aalto University].

Koiranen, I., Keipi, T., Koivula, A., & Räsänen, P. (2020). Changing patterns of social media use? A population-level study of Finland. *Universal Access in the Information Society*, 19, 603-617.

Kuusela, K., & Paul, P. (2000). Jantelagen and the Finnish identity. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 8(2), 175–188.

Liang, C., & Chen, H.T. (2020). How does social influence affect user-generated content engagement on social media platforms? *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 125–134.

Luoma-aho, V. & Vos, M. (2018). TrusMALit in Influencer Marketing: A Study among Finnish Consumers. *Journal of Influencer Marketing*, 5(1), 36–49.

Main, T. (2019). Some psychodynamics of large groups 1. In *The Large Group* (pp. 57-86). Routledge.

Mali, E., Paananen, T., Frank, L., & Makkonen, M. (2022). A Customer Perspective on Omnichannel Customer Journey and Channel Usage: A Qualitative Study. In *CEUR Workshop Proceedings. RWTH Aachen*.

Mashuri, S., Sarib, M., Rasak, A., Alhabsyi, F., & Syam, H. (2022). Semi-structured Interview: A methodological reflection on the development of a qualitative research instrument in educational studies. *Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 12(1), 22-29.

Naik, N., Hameed, B. M., Shetty, D. K., Swain, D., Shah, M., Paul, R., ... & Somani, B. K. (2022). Legal and ethical consideration in artificial intelligence in healthcare: who takes responsibility? *Frontiers in surgery*, 9, 266.

OECD. (2020). *Income Inequality (Indicator)*. Retrieved 22 March 2024, from <https://data.oecd.org/inequality/income-inequality.htm>

OECD. (2021). *Society at a Glance 2021: OECD Social Indicators*. Retrieved 22 March 2024, from <https://www.oecd.org/social/society-at-a-glance-19991290.htm>

Pavelle, S., & Wilkinson, C. (2020). Into the digital wild: Utilizing Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook for effective science and environmental communication. *Frontiers in Communication*, 5, 575122.

Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). Communication and persuasion: Central and peripheral routes to attitude change. *Springer Science & Business Media*.

Pew Research Center. (2019). *Mobile Connectivity in Emerging Economies*. Retrieved 22 March 2024, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2019/03/07/mobile-connectivity-in-emerging-economies/>

Pew Research Center. (2021). *Social Media Fact Sheet*. Retrieved 22 March 2024, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/>

Pirhonen, J., Lolich, L., Tuominen, K., Jolanki, O., & Timonen, V. (2020). “These devices have not been made for older people's needs”—Older adults' perceptions of digital technologies in Finland and Ireland. *Technology in Society*, 62, 101287.

Portigal, S. (2013). *Interviewing users: How to uncover compelling insights* (21st Ed., Illustrated) *Rosenfeld Media*.

Roberts, K., Dowell, A., & Nie, J. B. (2019). Attempting rigour and replicability in thematic analysis of qualitative research data; a case study of codebook development. *BMC medical research methodology*, 19, 1-8.

Rutakumwa, R., Mugisha, J. O., Bernays, S., Kabunga, E., Tumwekwase, G., Mbonye, M., & Seeley, J. (2020). Conducting in-depth interviews with and without voice recorders: a comparative analysis. *Qualitative Research*, 20(5), 565-581.

Salo, J., Arminen, I., & Pantzar, M. (2016). Responding to viral marketing: A longitudinal study of perceived motives to pass along content. *International Journal of Advertising*, 35(2), 335–349.

Salo, J., Arminen, I., & Pantzar, M. (2016). Responding to viral marketing: A longitudinal study of perceived motives to pass along content. *International Journal of Advertising*, 35(2), 335–349.

Statista. (2020). *Share of Daily Social Media Usage in Finland 2020, by Platform*. Retrieved 22 March 2024, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/954049/share-of-daily-social-media-usage-by-platform-in-finland/>

Statista. (2021). *Distribution Of Social Media Usage in Finland in 2021, By Platform*. Retrieved 22 March 2024, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/754047/social-media-usage-by-platform-in-finland/>

Stoffelen, A. (2019). Disentangling the tourism sector's fragmentation: A hands-on coding/post-coding guide for interview and policy document analysis in tourism. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 22(18), 2197-2210.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (pp. 33–47). Brooks/Cole Pub. Co.

Thompson, L. J., Glewen, K. L., Elmore, R. W., Rees, J., Pokal, S., & Hitt, B. D. (2019). Farmers as researchers: in-depth interviews to discern participant motivation and impact. *Agronomy Journal*, 111(6), 2670-2680.

Van Dam, S., & Van Reijmersdal, E. (2019). Insights in adolescents' advertising literacy, perceptions and responses regarding sponsored influencer videos and disclosures. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 13(2).

Wielki, J. (2020). Analysis of the role of digital influencers and their impact on the functioning of the contemporary on-line promotional system and its sustainable development. *Sustainability*, 12(17), 7138.

World Economic Forum. (2020). *Global Gender Gap Report 2020*. Retrieved 22 March 2024, from <https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality>

Yesiloglu, S., & Costello, J. (Eds.). (2021). *Influencer Marketing. Building Brand Communities and Engagement* (1st ed.). Routledge

Zakieva, R. R., Kolmakov, V. V., Pavlyuk, A. V., Ling, V. V., Medovnikova, D. V., & Azieva, R. H. (2019). The significance of studying legal protection of rights on innovative creations: The case of entrepreneurship education. *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education*, 22(3), 1-11.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Questionnaire

How successful do you believe it is for influencers to give clear and extensive product background information in order to increase brand recognition?

To what degree does an influencer's product category knowledge impact your opinion of the brand they promote?

How likely are you to trust a company that is constantly supported by reliable influencers?

How much would interactive material from influencers (such as Q&A sessions about items) pique your interest in a brand?

How essential is the frequency of an influencer's postings on a business in keeping you interested in its products?

Would you be more interested in a company if influencers responded to followers' comments and debates on a regular basis?

How likely are you to recognise and remember a company if it is backed by influencers whose lives are similar to your own?

How beneficial is it to increase brand identification when influencers utilise items in real-world settings that are relevant to your everyday life?

How does your alignment of values with the influencer effect your confidence in the brand endorsements they make?

How important are targeted marketing by influencers (deals, discount coupons) in your choice to choose one company over another?

## Appendix 2. Participant's Demographics

Participant ID	Age	Gender	Professional Level	Place of Residence
1	37	Male	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
2	40	Female	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
3	30	Female	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
4	25	Male	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
5	28	Male	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
6	36	Female	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
7	28	Female	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
8	32	Female	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
9	34	Female	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
10	28	Male	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
11	30	Female	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
12	27	Male	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
13	29	Female	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
14	32	Male	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
15	31	Female	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
16	33	Female	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
17	33	Male	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
18	37	Female	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
19	35	Female	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland
20	26	Male	Master Level Student	Jyvaskyla, Finland