

**THE EFFECT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON CONSUMERS' PURCHASING
INTENTIONS IN THE CAPRICORN DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY: THE
GENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

by

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DECLARATION

I, Raphela Maite Violet at this moment declare that the work presented in this dissertation titled "**THE EFFECT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON CONSUMERS' PURCHASING INTENTIONS IN THE CAPRICORN DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY: THE GENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**" is my original work and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification. It is conducted under the guidance of Dr. R Masocha, and I have adhered to the academic integrity standards set by the University of Limpopo. This dissertation is my independent work, and any contributions from other individuals have been duly acknowledged.

Surname and initials: Raphela Maite Violet

Date: 06 November 2024

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raphela MV". The signature is written in a cursive style with a clear 'R' and 'M'.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to assess the impact of influencer marketing on the purchasing intentions of consumers from Generations X, Y, and Z within the municipality of the Capricorn district. Specific objectives were: (1) to explore the purchasing behaviour of consumers across these generational cohorts, (2) to examine the extent to which influencer attributes influence the purchasing intentions of these consumers, and (3) to determine whether the generational cohort moderates the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer purchasing intentions.

A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was used, using self-administered questionnaires to collect data from a sample of 300 participants within the Capricorn district. The sample included respondents from Generations X, Y, and Z, with quota sampling used to ensure representativeness. Descriptive statistics were calculated using SPSS, while SmartPLS version 4.0 was applied to analyse relationships among study variables. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire items assessed using the Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM).

According to the findings of the study, it was revealed that a significant positive relationship between influencer marketing and consumer purchasing intentions. Furthermore, generational cohorts were found to moderate this relationship, highlighting the varying effects of influencer marketing across different age groups. The study concluded by recommending that companies further explore factors related to influencer marketing to uncover distinctive insights into evolving strategies in generational cohorts. One important tactic to increase the efficacy of influencer marketing was to customize marketing initiatives to cater to the requirements and tastes of different consumer categories.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Consumer buying intention, Generations X, Y and Z.

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CHAPTER 1: GENERAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Social media networks are now a fundamental aspect of contemporary life, with numerous users around the globe. This widespread adoption has made it one of the most crucial technological advances of the 21st century. As a result, marketers increasingly view the surge in the usage of the Internet and social networks as a valuable opportunity to engage with consumers who are becoming more resistant to traditional advertising methods (Conick, 2018). Historically, marketers partnered with influencers, often celebrities, to endorse products in advertisements (Gretzel, 2018). However, in recent years, influencer marketing has emerged as a dominant trend in advertising, marketing, and communication strategies (Glucksman, 2017). This tactic leverages the influence of prominent individuals or organizations on social networks to promote products and services (Bu, Parkinson & Thaichon, 2022).

Businesses employ influencer marketing for various purposes, including promoting new or existing products and enhancing their brand reputation. This strategy is driven by the fact that consumers are often more inclined to engage with products that are endorsed and reviewed by influencers than those promoted through traditional sponsored advertisements (Saima & Mohammed, 2020). The changing nature of consumer buying behaviour significantly impacts purchase intentions, shaping how individuals search for and decide on what to buy (Jarrar, Awobamise, & Aderibigbe, 2020). Purchasing intention is a cognitive process that influences a consumer's decision to buy a product. In this context, the perception of a customer of a product or its source of information plays a critical role in shaping his intention to make a purchase (Brimah, Olanipekun, Olorunlambe, & Salawu, 2020).

The use of influencers offers distinct benefits to consumers, as they are perceived as more trustworthy compared to traditional celebrity endorsements (Lim, Radzol, Cheah & Wong, 2017). In fact, advertisements that transparently disclose sponsorships can significantly influence a brand's authenticity and appeal, shaping how consumers perceive the brand (Kay, Mulcahy, & Parkinson, 2020). Research indicates that 58% of Generation Z and 48% of millennials in the United States have made purchases

based on celebrity recommendations (Taylor, 2020). The growing influence of social networks, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, has further heightened young consumers' interest in influencer activities (Taylor, 2020).

As younger audiences increasingly rely on vast social networks to seek product information, companies are presented with opportunities to engage these consumers on a mass scale (Stubb, Nyström, & Colliander, 2019). Integrating branded content into social media provides an effective way to communicate with younger generations, who are often difficult to reach through traditional media (Feng, Chen, & Kong, 2020). Marketers are progressively using mobile and social ICT networks to promote brands among youth, as content centred on trends and entertainment is particularly effective in encouraging interaction and word-of-mouth sharing within close-knit social groups (Duffett, 2017).

Reports from the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) (IAB 2019a, 2019b) indicate that young adults in New York rely on product encounters through influencers, which can stimulate their buying intentions. Social media influencers often integrate product reviews into personal content, making these endorsements relatable and trustworthy (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020). In South Africa, prominent influencers with a large following also showcase their glamorous lifestyle, positioning social networks as a strategic platform for brand collaboration (Iqan, 2019). Followers often aspire to emulate the lifestyles of these influencers, further improving the impact of influencer marketing. For example, Zeren and Kapukaya (2021) found that student purchase intentions are significantly influenced by celebrity endorsements.

Marketing recognises credibility as a factor in influencer marketing that plays a major role in sending a persuasive message to customers (Isyanto, Sapitri, & Sinaga, 2020). Customers perceive a credible influencer as an individual who is honest, honest, and unbiased. This key is vital in selecting the right influencers to follow (Chetioui, Benlafqih & Lebdaoui, 2019). The similarity between an influencer and the audience is also a key aspect in influencer marketing that is based on factors such as shared values or interests, gender, and origin (Naderer, Matthes & Schäfer, 2021). Customers adopt the behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs of influencers they believe share similar interests, values, or characteristics (Schouten, Janssen & Verspaget, 2020).

Customer brand engagement is defined as a strategy in influencer marketing that involves sponsored blogging that influencers use to engage with customers. Customers engage by exhibiting emotional, cognitive, and behavioral activities (Hughes, Swaminathan, & Brooks, 2020). Customers indirectly engage by referring to others, conversing about products and services, and providing feedback to businesses (Pansari & Kumar 2017). Marketers use the opportunity provided by social media to engage consumers with their brands and build relationships with them, which ultimately improve brand sales (Delbaere, Michael & Phillips, 2020).

Most people in Generations X and Y are progressing with technological developments and are rapidly adapting to them (Muslim, Harun, and Ismael Othman, 2020). Generation Z is more receptive to social networks and prefers to engage with other customers. This makes them more brand conscious (Thomas, Kavya & Monica, 2018). Millennials and Gen Z spend a significant amount of time online, Gen Z being the most frequent user. Consequently, Gen Z is more likely to make a purchase (Wansi, 2020). This study focuses on Generations X, Y and Z due to their different needs. They are classified according to their birth years: Generation X includes individuals born between 1965 and 1979, and Generation Y (Millennials) includes those born between 1980 and 1996 (Kau, 2022). Generation Z refers to individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (Kyrousi, Tzoumaka, & Leivadi, 2022).

The study aims to fill an existing research gap on the effect of influencer marketing on Generation Z purchase intentions by expanding the available limited literature. It also explores the impact of influencer marketing on the purchasing intentions of Generations X and Y, an area that has not been previously investigated.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The application of influencer marketing as an approach to penetrate the market remains a relatively new discipline but is a crucial component in the future marketing communications with Generations Y and Z (Liu, 2020). However, influencer marketing risks becoming inauthentic to consumers due to the prevalence of sponsored content (Thakker & Pabalkar, 2021). In South Africa, the exponential growth in online activities, particularly in 2020 when COVID-19 was prevalent, has enhanced the adoption of influencer marketing strategies (Malinga, 2020). According to Deshnie Govender, a South African influencer and digital marketing expert, the influencer landscape has

changed from Instagram to platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and podcasts (Malinga, 2021).

Given Generation Z's continuous demand for innovation and change, companies may face challenges in effectively marketing to this cohort (Priporasa, Stylos, & Fotiadi, 2017). Although Generation X represents a smaller consumer base compared to Millennials, it has greater purchasing power (McGann, 2021). Despite the significant presence of Millennials in the online consumer market, many customers remain reluctant to make online purchases due to the perceived risks associated with online transactions, compared to traditional shopping experiences (Dachyar & Banjarnahor, 2017).

This underscores the importance of understanding the distinct needs and behaviours of Generations X, Y, and Z. Consequently, it is essential to examine the critical factors in influencer marketing and their impact on the purchasing intentions of consumers from these generational cohorts. The problem lies in the lack of understanding of the business and marketers of how influencer marketing influences the purchasing intentions of consumers of Generations X, Y and Z.

1.3. AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aims to determine whether influencer marketing significantly impacts consumers' purchasing intention among Generations X, Y, and Z consumers in the municipality of the Capricorn district.

1.4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are the following.

Evaluate the buying behaviour of consumers from Generations X, Y, and Z.

Determine to what extent the influencer attributes affect the purchasing intentions of customers of Generations X, Y, and Z.

Establish whether the generational cohort moderates the effect of influencer marketing on customer purchasing intentions.

1.5. RESEARCH HYPOTHES

The hypotheses of the study are presented in this document.

H1: Influencer marketing positively influences consumers' purchasing intentions.

H1a: Influencer credibility positively influences the purchasing intentions of Generations X, Y, and Z consumers.

H1b: Customer brand engagement positively influences the purchasing intentions of Generation X, Y, and Z consumers.

H1c: Influencer similarity with the customer positively influences the purchasing intentions of Generation X, Y and Z consumers.

H2: Generation cohort moderates the relationship between influencer marketing and consumers' purchasing intentions.

1.6. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.6.1. Influencer marketing

Influencer marketing is described as a marketing tactic that endorses products or grows fame through content creation by influencers; this can include active social media users who are influential (Vodák, Novysedlák, akanová & Pekár, 2019). This simply means that marketers endorse individuals who can influence the buying behaviour of customers, these individuals immensely partake in social media activities. The influencer engages with the audience to develop a viable relationship that forms trust. When customers have developed a sense of trust, the opinions of their influencers become more valuable.

1.6.2. Purchasing intention

Purchasing intention is defined as a procedure that customers undertake in making plans to buy a product/service that has been advertised to them. It is also identified as a variable for measuring the effectiveness of an advertisement that assists in forming a strategy to encourage customers to repurchase (Lee, Lee & Yang, 2017). The purchasing intention of customers refers to the willingness of a customer to acquire a specific product/service is driven by their attitude toward that specific product or brand.

1.6.3. Influencer credibility

Source credibility is described as an attribute that affects how an individual perceives the speaker (Xiao, Wang & Chan-Olmsted, 2018). The credibility of the source of information is a crucial factor in persuading the audience (Lou & Yuan, 2019). This implies that a credible influencer is identified by trust, authenticity, and reliability.

1.6.4. Brand engagement

Brand engagement involves the participation of customers in brand interactions. It is also clarified that engaged customers have low price sensitivity and are less likely to switch brands and promote products/services for brands (Rather, Tehseen & Parrey, 2018). Brand engagement is a concept that anticipates an improvement in the power of consumer behaviour effects such as brand loyalty (Algharabat, Rana, Nripendra, Dwivedi, Alawan, & Qasem, 2018). Customers engage with their influencers through sharing experiences and opinions on certain products; these can also allow influencers to build relationships with customers.

1.6.5. Generation X

Generation X is described as a cohort of individuals born between 1965 and 1981 (Van Hyatt, 2021). These individuals are between the ages of 41 and 57.

1.6.6. Generation Y

Generation Y is described as millennial individuals born between the years 1982 and 1995 and make up 21-26% of the global population (Thangavel, Pathak & Chandra, 2021). These individuals are between the ages of 27 and 42.

1.6.7. Generation Z-

Generation Z is comprised of individuals born between the years 1996 and 2010/12 and makes up more than 27% of the global population (Thangavel, Pathak & Chandra, 2021). These individuals are between the ages of 26 and 18. Despite the generation Z, including ages as lower as 10 years, the author included individuals who are of the age of consent.

1.7. LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of the literature consists of the theoretical literature and the empirical review.

1.7.1 Theoretical literature review

1.7.1.1 The theory of social learning

The second theory underpinning the proposed study is the theory of social learning developed by Bandura & Walters (1963). The theory ascertains roles played by peers, professionals, and other people who affect the behaviour of consumers (King & Multon, 1996; Martin & Bush, 2000). Bandura (1963) argues that the social learning system allows consumers to observe behavior and develop thoughts about specific behaviours that affect their future actions. Businesses employ influencers with the expectation that interactions between influencers and customers motivate customers to adopt their behaviour (Glucksman, 2017).

1.7.1.2 Generation cohort theory

The generation cohort theory developed by Mannheim (1927) underpins the study and states that individuals within the same age group with a mutual location in the historical and social process develop similar characteristics due to their similar experiences. Strauss & Howe (1991) made generation cohort theory prevalent by proposing that social cycles reiterate every four generations, which are classified as cohorts. The generation cohort theory also suggests that the division of generational divisions is based on the ages of the populaces. Studies on generation cohort theory have discovered significant variances in the behaviour of different generations (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021).

Generation X South Africans were born between 1965 and 1975 amid apartheid, and this generation experienced economic and social instability (Duh & Struwig, 2015). Individuals belonging to generation X tend to be sceptical, pragmatic, and avoid risks. This highly educated generational cohort was born before digital advancements and only adopted them at a later stage in their lives (Calvo-Porrall & Pesqueira-Sanchez, 2019). For example, people from Generation X prefer to send emails and texts rather than having personal interaction with others (Hill, 2017).

Generation Y, also known as millennials, has significant purchasing power and is resistant to traditional media. They are enthused by visual content presented on social media such as vlogs (Kadekova & Holieninová, 2018). Generation Y is a cohort born between 1977 and 1994; this generation was born in the post-apartheid era, which

provided them with adequate employment, education, and wealth opportunities (Duh & Struwig, 2015).

Generation Z people came into the digital world and have a high online presence. This creative and innovative generational cohort differs significantly from other generations (Reijonen, 2019). These individuals are more receptive to advertisements that communicate with them through the use of music, celebrities, and humour (Sishi, 2017). These technologically savvy consumers are least loyal to brands, thus propelling firms to develop tactics that meet their needs (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021).

1.7.2 Empirical literature review

1.7.2.1 Influencer marketing and purchasing intentions

Purchasing intention is known as a key factor that drives consumers to acquire a product or service. When followers establish trust with influencers, they are more likely to engage in recommendations and comments on social networks. This interaction between consumers about products can influence purchase decisions (Khodabande & Lindh, 2021). Research by Lindh and Lisichkova (2017) and Im and Choi (2018) has shown that influencer marketing is a powerful tool in shaping customers' purchase intentions on on-line platforms. Customers may not be able to test out products or services before they can make a decision to purchase, therefore influencers play an important role in ensuring that the customers know what to expect when buying the products. Based on this understanding, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: Influencer marketing positively influences customers' purchase intentions.

1.7.2.2 Credibility and purchasing intentions

Influencers are often recognised for the authenticity they convey on social networks (Jiang, 2018). According to Karouw, Worang and Pandowo (2019), influencers build credibility through the exposure of their private lives to their followers, which fosters a bond between the influencer and their audience. This connection improves your ability to influence consumer behavior. Furthermore, it has been observed that influencers with high credibility are more persuasive than those with low credibility. Jiang (2018) further concludes that highly credible influencers have a positive impact on the effectiveness of advertisements, including an increase in purchase intention. On the basis of this understanding, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1a: Influencer credibility positively influences customers' purchase intentions.

1.7.2.3 Customer brand engagement and purchasing intention

Businesses are increasingly engaging with customers to foster connections that benefit both parties. Marketers predominantly use platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to facilitate this engagement, making customer engagement a critical aspect of marketing strategies. Krcova, Yaman, and Köse (2018) concluded that increased brand engagement leads to greater online purchase intention. Furthermore, the connection between customers and influencers significantly impacts customer purchase decisions and can further strengthen the relationship between the customer and the brand (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1b: Customer brand engagement positively influences customers' purchase intentions.

1.7.2.4 Similarity and purchase intention

According to Martensen, Brockenhuus-Schack & Lauritsen (2018) similarity is defined as the likeness between a source and a receiver. Attractiveness in influencer marketing is a vital factor that easily fosters the similarity between the source and the audience (Bakker, 2018). Research conducted by (Al-Darraji, Al Mansour & Rezai, 2020) states customers can relate more to influencers when they display their ordinary lives, and the more similarity there is between an influencer and a customer the more, they are eager to buy products endorsed by the influencer. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1c: Influencer similarity with the customer positively influences the purchasing intention of the customers.

1.7.2.5 Generation cohort moderates influencer marketing and consumers' purchasing intention

It is a common assumption that older generations are inactive on social media. However, research has shown that people from Generation X predominantly use social media platforms, such as YouTube and Facebook, to seek information about products and follow influential figures (Tabor, 2019). Generation Y (millennials) tends to search for product information online to enhance their shopping experiences. They are

inclined to purchase products that help them express their individuality and often emulate the styles of the generations they identify with, which can influence their buying decisions (Rahmah & Ren, 2019). Millennials are characterised as frequent and impulsive buyers (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). Their active participation in social media content leads to increased sales for companies that engage with them. A company's presence in the online community has been shown to stimulate a 37% increase in online purchases and a 9% increase in offline purchases among this demographic (Prasad & Garg, 2019).

In contrast, Generation Z consumers have been born into a digital landscape and a social media environment, unlike previous generations, who had to adapt over time. This generation tends to have shorter attention spans, making them less engaged in lengthy advertisements (Dogra, 2019). Generation Z appears to be more receptive to influencer marketing compared to earlier generations, as they place a high value on authentic content (Reijonen, 2019). These individuals typically conduct extensive online research before making purchasing decisions, often consulting multiple influencers to mitigate post-purchase dissatisfaction (Reijonen, 2019). Based upon this, it is proposed that:

H2: The generation group moderates the relationship between influence marketing and the purchase intention of the customers.

The following conceptual model depicts the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer purchase intention.

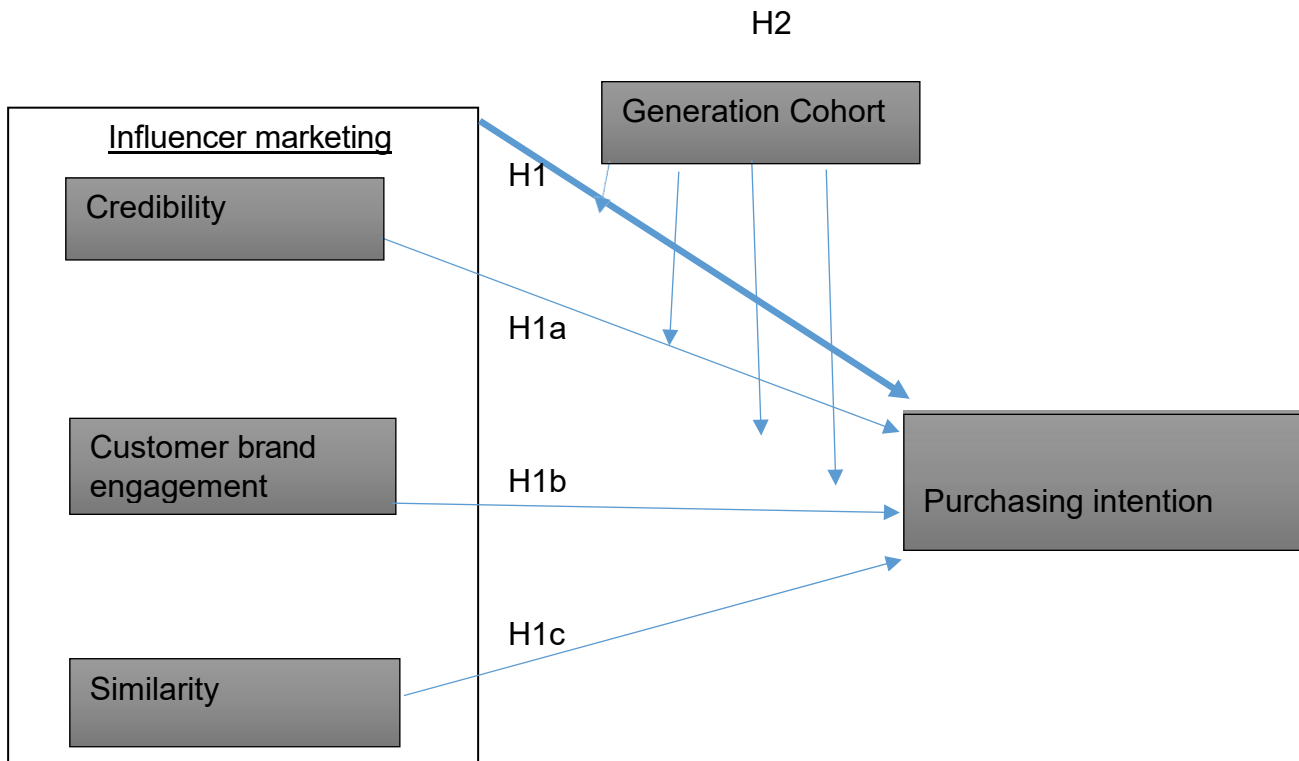


Figure 1: Conceptual model of the study

Source: Own author’s conception, 2024

1.8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 Study area

The study was carried out in South Africa, Limpopo Province. Target customers are located within the Capricorn district municipality. This location was selected for ease of access to customers. This not only produced convenience but variation as well.

1.8.2 Research design

There are two primary forms of research designs: qualitative and quantitative research approaches. For this study, the quantitative methodology was employed. This approach utilised standardised questionnaires to collect numerical data. It was chosen due to its ability to control variables and the environment (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018) and is considered reliable. A quantitative research design can take the form of

descriptive, experimental, or causal designs. In this study, a descriptive design was utilised to examine the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer purchasing intentions.

1.8.3 Population of the study

The study targeted a population consisting of social media active customers who are categorised according to their age groups, accordingly Generation X, Y and Z. There is no defined population of customers in the research area.

1.8.4 Sampling

Sampling methods consist of nonprobability and probability sampling. The non-probability method was used in this study to sample the data collected. The nonprobability method is a less objective sampling technique whereby the researcher selects the participants to partake in the study (Stratton, 2021). The method does not involve random selection; therefore, the population does not have an equivalent chance of being selected. The method was used because the sample selection of the sample is based on accessibility (Etikan, Alkassim & Abubakar, 2015) and both time effectiveness and convenience were created. The quota sampling derived from non-probability was used. This method was used because it is cost-effective, quick, and simple (Hossan, Dato' Mansor & Jaharuddin, 2021).

1.8.5 Data collection instruments

Data collection methods consisted of the primary data which refers to first-hand data collected by an individual through interviews, surveys, or experiments and the secondary data which refers to the usage of data collected by another researcher previously through journals (Glen, 2015). The study included primary data collected from self-administered questionnaires and secondary data acquired from research that is relevant to the study. Questionnaires were used to collect relevant data. The survey assumed the cross-sectional method, which made it easier to compare the variables involved in the study simultaneously. The study comprised three sections: **Section A** focused on demographic information, **Section B** addressed components of influencer marketing, and **Section C** explored customer purchase intentions. The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', and from 'significant increase' to 'significant decline'. To obtain a broader and more

diverse response rate, a combination of online surveys and in-person polling was used.

A link to the survey was distributed among the researcher's connections, who were encouraged to refer additional participants to complete the online form. The survey link was also publicly shared on social media platforms, including WhatsApp, TikTok, and Facebook, taking advantage of the online presence of the respondents. This approach effectively saved time and reduced costs. Furthermore, additional participants were directly approached in public areas such as shopping centres and malls. The questionnaires were also distributed to students at the local university, where they were required to complete the forms immediately. These methodologies ensured that the target audience was effectively reached.

1.8.6 Data analysis methods

The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics, with the information coded and presented in graphs, charts, and tables. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to tabulate and analyse the data. Descriptive statistics facilitated the representation of the data in a comprehensible way and helped identify patterns from the summarised results (Conner & Johnson, 2017). Summary statistics were utilised to condense large datasets, focusing on key interpretations. Measures such as mean and standard deviation were used to interpret the data effectively (Mishra, Pandey, Singh, Gupta, Sahu & Keshr, 2019).

Regression analysis was conducted to examine the data, which serves as a statistical test that describes and measures the relationships between the variables within the study (Kumari & Yadav, 2019). This analysis was instrumental in determining the relationship between influencer marketing and customer buying intentions. Additionally, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to explore the relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing intentions, as well as to assess the moderation effects of generational cohorts. SEM is a statistical technique designed to analyse relationships among multiple variables by specifying a theoretical model that delineates the causal connections between them. Integrates the strengths of factor analysis, regression analysis, and path analysis, enabling the testing of complex theories and hypotheses (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2019). In SEM, a model is constructed by defining latent variables (unobservable constructs) and their relationships with observed variables (measured variables). The model is then

estimated using maximum likelihood estimation, with the goodness of fit evaluated through various fit indices (Liu, Chen, & Fang, 2020).

1.8.7 Reliability and Validity

Data obtained from questionnaires were measured for reliability. Reliability refers to the stability of the results when a study is replicated multiple times, while validity refers to the precision of a procedure to measure what it is intended to measure (Cypress, 2017). The Cronbach's alpha test was used to assess the reliability of the study, measuring the strength of consistency between its elements. The relationship between elements was determined using this test (Jain & Angural, 2017). The Cronbach coefficient (α) was used to calculate the coefficients of the items (Taber, 2018). An acceptable Cronbach alpha is generally considered to have a threshold of 0.70 (Griethuijsen et al., 2014).

The validity of the construct was evaluated using correlation analysis, face validity, and factor analysis. Correlation analysis was used to establish the association between independent and dependent variables (Senthilnathan, 2019). Construct validity focuses on ensuring that the measurement technique aligns with the construct that the study aims to measure (Middleton, 2019). Face validity evaluates the suitability and relevance of the instrument with respect to the study objectives (Daud, Khidzir, Ismail, & Abdullah, 2018). Factor analysis, a multivariate technique, involves identifying factors related to variables by grouping associated variables within the same factor (Shrestha, 2021).

1.9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1.9.1 Permission to carry out the study

To ensure that the researcher collects the data ethically, an ethical clearance application was sent to the Turfloop Research and Ethics Committee (TREC) of the University of Limpopo. Ethics clearance was recovered to obtain permission to collect data from the respondents.

1.9.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Data collected from the respondents were handled in a private manner, including personal information. The information collected is not to be exposed to irrelevant people. The research strictly included confidentiality, and the respondents were entitled to deny exposure of information that signals an invasion of privacy. The identity of the participants was not revealed in any part of the study.

1.9.3 Respect

The respondents completed the questionnaires with respect and professionalism. During the data collection process, diversity was embraced and every individual was treated with respect and dignity. The questionnaire excluded the use of discriminatory language.

1.9.4 Informed consent and voluntary participation

Participants were thoroughly informed of the motive of the research and allowed to understand the implications of participating; respondents were enlightened on any discrepancies they may spot regarding the research before they can give any form of response. Respondents also received a consent form that was signed before the questionnaires were answered. The respondents individually decided whether or not they wanted to be involved in the research process.

1.9.5 Psychological risks

To avoid psychological risks, eligible participants were not coerced into participating in the study. Negative emotional experiences such as anxiety, despair, guilt, shock loss of self-esteem, and altered behaviour are among these risks. The study has also avoided the use of hypnosis and deception to encourage participation. Individuals were also briefed on the nature of the study prior to participation. The questionnaire was developed in a way that makes it easy for the participants to understand, ensuring that psychological harm is averted.

1.10 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study could potentially widen the current knowledge about influencer marketing, since it focuses on understanding the behaviours of the three different generations, namely Gen X, Y and Z. Students and researchers may benefit from the results of the study and may even support the research. The study provided an outlook on the reception of influencers by Generation X, which has never been discovered by

researchers. The study aims to create a clearer interpretation of the reception of influencer marketing from individuals born in different eras possessing different characteristics, behaviours, and values, which could ultimately cause a change in buying behaviour. The study is crucial in the sense that it can help marketers improve their influencer marketing tactics. The perception of the firm was developed to better understand the needs and behaviours of generation X, Y, and Z. The study can also help businesses strengthen their brands through online communities. The relationship between companies and customers was strengthened by including influencers. The study could give companies an idea on how to employ the right influencers to improve marketing performance. The study investigates how influencer marketing impacts customer purchase intention; therefore, it could potentially help businesses consider adopting the influencer marketing strategy or not.

1.11. OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH CHAPTERS

CHAPTER 1: GENERAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

Provides an overview of the research study, including the research objectives.

Background information on the topic

Statement of the problem and its context

Research gaps and research hypotheses.

The applied research methodology, ethical considerations, and the significance of the study.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF INFLUENCER MARKETING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Provides an extensive review of relevant theoretical concepts related to the research topic.

Does an analysis of existing research in the field of influencer marketing?

CHAPTER 3: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS ON THE EFFECT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING

Provides a review of relevant empirical studies related to the research topic.

Outlines research findings related to the study.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Description of the research design and methods used to collect data

Explanation of the sampling strategy and sample size

Discussion of data collection instruments and procedures

Description of data analysis methods

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Provides a presentation and analysis of the data collected.

Results of statistical tests or other data analysis techniques

Brief discussion of findings

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Interpretation of results in relation to the research hypotheses and objectives

Recommendations for future research or practical applications

Conclusions drawn from the study.

1.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the study that includes an introduction, the background, its significance, the problem statement, its objectives and aims, the hypotheses, and the review of the literature of the variables. This chapter concludes by describing the research in terms of the chapters included in the study.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF INFLUENCER MARKETING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the concept of influencer marketing, encompassing its definition, key attributes of influencers, and the opportunities and challenges associated with it, particularly from a South African perspective. Furthermore, the chapter presents a theoretical framework for purchasing intention, including its definition, the underlying theories, and the components related to the concept. Additionally, it offers an overview of Generations X, Y and Z, highlighting aspects relevant to these generations within the South African context.

2.2 THE CONCEPT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING

According to Keller (2009), marketing is a process of identifying and meeting the needs of customers at a profit. It was also defined by (Kotler, 1967) as the process of analysing, organising, planning, and controlling a firm's resources to satisfy the needs and wants of customers. The appearance of social media has yet given marketers an opportunity for individuals to engage with others through the creation, publishing, and sharing of content containing interests that attract them; it has since impacted the nature of message dissemination (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009).

However, the definition of influencer marketing is not yet concrete in the academic community (Johansen & Guldvik, 2017). Influencer marketing is a vital new marketing tactic for the most important new approach to marketing in a decade for experts at the leading peak of purchasing decision-making (Smith & Jones, 2023).

Rathod & Patel (2021) further defined influencers as individuals capable of affecting the purchasing decisions of consumers. Byrne, Kearney & MacEivill (2017) describe it as a form of marketing that assimilates a brand's message through the use of important leaders to reach a large market. Influencer marketing had already risen in the early 2000s and highlighted the expansion of the vitality of opinion leaders from the perspective of word-of-mouth (Zietek, 2016). For example, there is a better chance for businesses to get the attention of consumers through celebrity advertisements, since the attachment between the celebrity and the product increases the reliability and worthiness according to customers (Younus, Rasheed, & Zia, 2015).

Influencer marketing is also defined as a marketing communication tactic whereby influencers promote what brands offer on their social media pages (Belanche, Casalo, Flavi & Ibanez-Sanchez, 2021), and it is arguably a better appeal to customers than traditional, celebrity-endorsed mass media advertisements. These influencers signify a new classification of opinion leaders; they can assume the role of both celebrities and friends (Evans, Phua, Lim, & Jun 2017). Influencer marketing involves third-party endorsers who shape the attitudes of customers through activities such as blogs and tweets. It includes the regular creation of videos, posting pictures, and updating viewers on topics they are interested in (Saima and Khan, 2020). Influencers possess similar characteristics to traditional opinion leaders, such as being influential and valued among their followers, being open to comments, and integrating the role of a discussion leader (Laurell, 2014).

Chae (2018) gives another perspective on influencer marketing and states that microcelebrities is an innovative word derived from the word celebrity to classify influencers on social networks. Furthermore, Sudha and Sheena (2017) propose that influencer marketing is based on influencing the audience's buying decision through the use of knowledgeable influencers that create an impression of expertise that attracts customers to emulate them. Accessibility distinguishes a celebrity from an influencer since the audience relates more to influencers who display their personal lives. Followers are more likely to consider the opinions of an influencer if a personal relationship has been established between them (ernikovait, 2019). Sammis, Lincoln, and Pomponi (2016) view influencer marketing as the art and science of engaging individuals who have influence in the online environment to share brand messages with audiences through sponsored content, while Hurt (2017) considers it a form of word-of-mouth marketing tactic.

2.3 INFLUENCER ATTRIBUTES

Research conducted by Keller Fay Group and Berger (2016) revealed that influencers serve as a reliable and credible channel with a significant impact on consumer behaviour. Influencers are defined as active content creators on social media platforms (Tuten & Solomon, 2013).

In the current landscape, it is possible for any individual to become an influencer based on their follower count and the ability to engage consumers effectively (Teo de Wen, 2019). Influencers are often at the forefront of social trends, as they tend to adopt and identify new trends before others, creatively revitalising and disseminating them across social media channels.

In addition, they can act as innovators, generating new ideas, content, or concepts that frequently capture the attention of the social media audience (Dwidienawati, Tjahjana, Abdinagoro, Gandasari, & Munawaroh, 2020). Influencers typically have a substantial following, allowing them to reach a broad audience effectively. By sharing their thoughts and feelings within their social media communities, influencers can significantly shape consumer perspectives. Those with a large following and high levels of interaction can provide firms with an impactful influence (Aslan & Ünlü, 2016). According to Monge, Elorriaga and Olabbari (2020), experts reveal that the main attributes of the source contributing to the success of an influencer include:

2.3.1 Trustworthiness

This refers to a relationship between marketers and customers have implied values and prior behaviors inform that and is a set of behaviours expected from the trustor by the trustee (Sekhon, Ennew, Kharouf, & Devlin, 2014). It is also defined as the honesty, believability, and integrity of the individual who endorses a product or service (Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022). This trustworthiness develops when followers perceive influencers as reliable, reliable, sound, and honest (Aggad, Ahmad & Kamarudin, 2020).

2.3.2 Expertise

Expertise is defined as the degree to which a person is regarded as an experienced, knowledgeable, qualified, and reliable source (Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022). Credibility is a construct of numerous dimensions related to one's ability (expertise); Dwivedi, Nayeem & Murshed, 2018). An influencer is perceived as having expertise in a specific area by followers due to skillfulness, proficiency, and adequate knowledge (Schouten, Janssen & Verspaget, 2020). By expertise, highly credible sources are likely to prompt the belief that their message is viable (Masuda, Han & Lee, 2022); therefore, lack of expertise can decrease the perceived credibility of influencer (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

2.3.3 Attractiveness

Zhang, Zhang & Li (2021) demonstrated that attractiveness is related to how sources are perceived and involve social values. From the perspective of effective marketing, source attractiveness is built on similarity, familiarity, and likeability (Chekima, Chekima & Adis, 2020). Familiarity is a level of comfort provided by the sender (influencer) to the receiver (customer) (Martensen, Brockenhuus-Schack & Lauritsen, 2018). Karouw, Worang, & Pandowo (2019) and Martensen, Brockenhuus-Schack, and Lauritsen (2018) further agree that familiarity with the influencer builds trust.

Consumers with similar interests, characteristics, and values to influencers tend to adopt and execute their attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs (Al-Darraj, Al-Mansour & Rezai, 2020). Understanding how the creation of relationships between influencers and consumers an important concept in social media is because consumers have psychological and emotional bonds with human brands, including autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Thomson, 2006). Influencers that have likable content are more appealing to their followers compared to those who are not appealing (Ilicic & Webster, 2016). Likeability refers to the affection shown to someone due to one's physical appearance or behaviour (Yang, Zhang & Liu, 2021).

2.3.4 Fit (match-up)

Initially, fit was described as a match-up between the attractiveness of the endorser and the product (Kamins 1990) and was later defined as the congruency between the personality of the brand and the endorser (Mishra, Roy & Bailey 2015). Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget (2020) further elaborated that fit may even be of utmost importance for influencer endorsement than traditional celebrity endorsements. The congruency between the influencer and the brand is needed to enhance the communication of the endorsement medium (Freberg, Graham & Freberg, 2021). Endorsing an influencer who does not fit with the brand could result in disbelief from customers; the higher degree of congruency results in a higher level of belief (Teo de wen, 2019).

2.4 THE CHALLENGES OF INFLUENCER MARKETING

2.4.1 Rate of return

Return on investment (ROI) is defined as the value derived from the investment of time, money, and effort (Gilfoil & Jobs, 2012). A study conducted in India highlights the

challenge of accurately calculating ROI and tracking the number of consumers who make purchases after interacting with an influencer. Despite the significant growth of influencer marketing, there is still insufficient understanding of its marketing value, particularly in terms of assessing its credibility and effectiveness in influencing advertisements, products, and purchase intentions, as evidenced in the cosmetic industry in Malaysia (Chekima, Chekima, & Adis, 2020).

2.4.2 Fake followers

Fake followers have been identified as a major challenge involved in influencer marketing, while sponsored content hinders the effect of influencers; these challenges affect the authenticity of both the brand and the influencer (Thakker and Pabalkar, 2021). A large number of followings and likes to result in a mass audience, these are major metrics for brands to identify appropriate influencers for sponsorship. The downside of this is illegal activities such as the buying of fake followers through bots and click farms to increase their influencer status (De Veirman, Hudders, & Nelson). This may lead to the withdrawal of brand sponsorship and negative attitudes towards followings (De Veirman, 2017).

2.4.3 Disclosure of sponsorship

The impact of influencer marketing is lessened when an influencer sponsors multiple brands. Regulatory issues related to disclosure requirements also affect influencer effectiveness (Taylor, 2020). Sponsored content is often criticised by consumers as they feel deceived into watching or reading an advertisement rather than noncommercial media content (Han, Drumwright, & Goo, 2018). When consumers are aware of sponsored posts from influencers, distrust will be induced, subsequently damaging the intention to engage with the brand (Boerman, Willemsen & Van Der Aa, 2017).

2.4.4 Differentiation

Among others, challenges such as differentiation, managing expectations, and recompensing (management of rewards) affect the implementation of influencer marketing. The management of rewards poses a challenge due to the lack of practice and knowledge of the prices charged by influencers. Due to the rise in influencers, differentiation is expected from original campaigns while maintaining relevance

Santiago and Castelo, 2020). Trends that followers pursue may end up becoming oversaturated, eventually dying out (Myyrä, 2020).

2.4.5 Finding the right influencers

Selecting the right influencer to campaign a product/service is a challenge for numerous firms and agencies (Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). Brands find it difficult to find the right influencers to reach their target market, making it the greatest challenge in influencer marketing (Zietek, 2016). Marketers should not only focus on the alignment of the brand and the influencer, but also the social media platform where the interaction takes place (Virtanen, Bjork, & Sjostrom, 2019).

2.5 OPPORTUNITIES OF INFLUENCERMARKETING

2.5.1 Credibility

Influencer marketing found a great platform to expand and connect with consumers after the introduction of social networks in the mid-2000s and has since flourished in popularity (Thakker & Pabalkar, 2021). Customers can conveniently get a glimpse of the lifestyle, opinions, and interests of other customers and influencers (Santiago & Castelo, 2020). Digital influencers present on social networks are considered more powerful and credible than traditional celebrities, thus presenting a great opportunity as a marketing tool (Santiago & Castelo, 2020). Influencer review is considered credible due to authenticity and easy access (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

2.5.2 Influence on buying behaviour

The ability of influencers to shape the buying behaviour, attitudes, and perceptions of their followers has led brand managers to place considerable value on their role (Uzunolu & Kip, 2014). In modern society, influencers, including bloggers, celebrities, journalists, and brand advocates, significantly influence consumer buying decisions based on their personal opinions, expertise, and social status (Sudha & Sheena, 2017). Brands compensate influencers to affect consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions, with the effectiveness of an advertisement largely dependent on consumers' perceptions of it (Wilson & Sherrell, 1993). Furthermore, social networks play a crucial role in the consumer decision-making process (Elena, 2016).

2.5.3 Relationship building

Social networks serve as a platform for establishing relationships with customers through influencers to create a positive brand image Chu and Kim (2011), thus abolishing time and space barriers (Uzunolu & Kip, 2014). Brands have always focused on the needs and wants of customers. Influencers that are endorsed by these brands build their image, thus growing direct relationships with target customers (Booth & Matic, 2011).

Although brands do not have direct control over online interactions, the effect of the influencer and the trust consumers have for these individuals is instilled in the brand through the two-way conversation that is established for the product via social media platforms (Booth & Matic, 2011).

2.6 INFLUENCER MARKETING IN SOUTH AFRICA

The influencer marketing strategy in South Africa has been in force for the past several years, some of which were not as successful as others. It has shown growth in niche influencers, local celebrities, entertainers, and various online personalities (Fourie, 2020). According to statistics, Instagram is the fastest social media platform with 133% (from 1.1 million to 2.68 million) of subscribers. This reveals that businesses can use Instagram to reach a large audience (Goldstuck & Wronski, 2016). The South African Social Media Landscape 2016 report determined that 42% of popular brands in South Africa use Instagram to market their products and 53% of South African brands plan to merge with influencers (Goldstuck & Wronski, 2016).

In South Africa, Instagram is widely used by individuals to showcase their lifestyles, and the rapid increase in user numbers and business engagement has contributed to what is referred to as the "Instagram Economy" (Eltringham, 2018). Local influencers collaborate with brands to gain visibility, similar to celebrities like AKA and Bonang, unlocking commercial potential (Jerslev & Mortensen, 2016). Many influencers invest significant effort in crafting aesthetically pleasing content that elevates their status, positioning themselves as celebrities, and attracting high-end brands (Iqani, 2019).

Most influencers in South Africa belong to the nano-influencer category, characterised by a following of 1,000 to 4,999. The country currently hosts 138,470 nano-influencers on Instagram and 59,107 on Twitter.

While South African brands have traditionally relied on well-known celebrities for endorsements, research shows that nano-influencers achieve higher engagement rates. Despite their smaller followings, nano-influencers are perceived as more trustworthy (McCarthy, 2019).

According to the 2016 South African Social Media Landscape report, Instagram emerged as the platform with the highest number of first-time brand users and has been the fastest growing social media platform in recent years (Goldstuck & Wronski, 2016). Furthermore, 71% of South African brands view social media platforms as an essential part of their marketing strategies, with 53% developing strategies specifically targeting influencer marketing. Furthermore, 94% of South African consumers report that they are more likely to trust word of mouth (WOM) recommendations from family and friends compared to other forms of advertising (van Scheers & Prinsloo, 2014). This underscores the growing influence of social media and nano influencers in shaping consumer trust and engagement in South Africa.

2.7 CONCEPTUALISATION OF PURCHASING INTENTION

The intention to act on behaviour is shaped by two primary factors: the individual's attitude toward the behaviour, which refers to their positive or negative evaluation of it, and subjective norms, which denote the perceived social pressure to either engage in or avoid the behaviour (La Barbera & Ajzen, 2020). Consumer intentions are widely regarded as a key predictor of actual behaviour (Pena-Garca, Gil-Saura, Rodriguez-Orejuela & Siqueira-Junior, 2020). Consumer intention is also described as the likelihood or propensity of consumers to perform actions related to purchasing, typically measured by the probability of making a purchase (Takaya, 2016).

The process of making a purchasing decision is complex and is influenced by various behavioural, perceptual, and attitudinal factors (Mirabi, Akbariyeh, & Tahmasebifard, 2015). Attitudes are stable evaluations, feelings, and tendencies directed toward objects, individuals, or ideas (Wijayaningtyas & Nainggolan, 2020). The decision to purchase is often viewed as a response to a problem, with consumers undergoing a process of gathering, evaluating and processing information before choosing the best option (Ram & Manoj, 2014).

According to Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard & Hogg (2020) consumer behaviour is known as the dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behaviour and environment, where the individual is both a creator and a product of the marketplace.

Both internal motivations, such as personal preferences, and external motivations, such as social influences, play a significant role in this process (Gogoi, 2013).

According to Mirabi, Akbariyeh and Tahmasebifard (2015), purchase intention can be described as an impulse to buy a product within a specific purchase context. Shah et al. (2012) similarly defined purchase intention as a decision-making process driven by the customer's motive for purchasing a specific product.

Further studies, such as those of Duran, Rusu, and Cano (2020), explain that purchase intention is the probability that consumers will buy a product or service, emphasising that external factors influencing consumers' perceptions can drive the decision. Bagozzi and Burnkrant (1979) referred to purchase intention as the subjective propensity of consumers to buy products or services, a conscious effort influenced by the impression a brand has made. Spears and Singh (2004) added that purchase intention reflects the extent to which a product or service meets consumer expectations.

In the context of online shopping, Dachyar and Banjarnahor (2017) defined purchase intention as the consumer's intention to engage in an exchange on e-Commerce platforms, including sharing information and conducting business transactions. Kim, Ferrin, and Rao (2008) further suggested that the link between behavioral intentions and actual behavior is particularly significant in online shopping, where purchase intentions can predict actual purchasing behavior.

For this study, purchasing intention refers to the customer's intention to buy a product or service, influenced by external factors such as social influence, brand perception, and marketing efforts.

2.7.1 Components of Purchasing Intention

Several researchers recognise that cognitive and affective states affect purchase behaviour. This recognition denotes that consumers are both rational and emotional. The cognitive-affective model of buying intentions best illustrates this notion, whereby

the cognitive response and affective response affect the will to buy (Li, Zhang & Zhao, 2022).

Furthermore, the cognition–affect–conation model by Lavidge and Steiner (1961) demonstrates the three main stages of a consumer’s buying process namely, cognitive (thinking), affective (feeling) and conative (doing). The cognitive stage occurs when the customer recognises and gathers the knowledge related to a brand, the affective stage involves the development of negative or positive thoughts regarding a brand, and the conative stage is when the feelings of a consumer are converted into actions (Han & Choi, 2019).

2.7.1.1 Cognitive

The cognitive component is most often associated with knowledge which is picked up from TV, friends, co-workers, and other media platforms. This knowledge, coupled with any prior experiences, can be applied to evaluating future purchases (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 1993). Websites that consist of a high level of active control can lead to cognitive involvement, thus resulting in higher purchase intention (Jiang, Chan, Tan & Chua, 2010). The cognitive response is associated with the perceived quality of the product or service that is being offered (Kumar, Lee & Kim, 2009). People with a high need for cognition were found to be more likely to respond to an advertisement that contains valuable information compared to those with a low need for cognition (Spielmann, 2014).

2.7.1.2 Affective

The affective component can influence the process of processing information and storing it in memory (virik, 2021). This component is based on the similarity of consumers to the product or service being offered (Kumar, Lee & Kim, 2009). The affective reaction includes moods, feelings, emotions, and evaluations Gutierrez and Seva, 2016).

The affective component is measured through the usage of the PANAS (The Positive Affect a Negative Affect Schedule), which was created by Watson, Clark & Tellegen (1988). The scale is created by a two-factor model (positive and negative emotions) that contains 20 emotions to which the respondents express sensational intensity. (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). It is proposed that the effect of the affective

component is almost double the impact of cognitive involvement (Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999). Affective and cognitive factors may also be affected by distinctive differences among consumers, consequently affecting their buying behaviour despite this proposal it has been stated that not only cognitive and affective components influence consumers (Kumar, Lee & Kim, 2009).

2.7.1.3 Conative

According to virik (2021), the conative component emphasises behavioural intentions. Comprehensively, it can be stated that product behaviour varies, on the other hand, Brengman (2002) believes that the conative component is one-dimensional and brings bipolar results. Conation may indicate an actual selection or purchase activity, and to link conation to particular ads, the self-reported intention is utilised to measure consumer behaviour towards the brand. The loyalty dimension model and concluded that to identify conative loyalty researchers need to assess consumer beliefs, feelings, and intentions within the traditional consumer attitude structure (Sharawneh, 2020).

2.7.2 Antecedents of purchase intention

2.7.2.1 Perceived Risk

Customers develop service or product expectations according to their prior experiences, word of mouth, and advertisements, the quality of services or products is used to assess and compare the perceived and the expected services (Zhang & Yu, 2020). Perceived risk represents the uncertainty consumers have about the loss or gain they might experience in a particular transaction (Murray, 1991). Perceived product and service risk has an impact on the trust that consumers have, thus affecting their purchasing behaviour (Zhang & Yu, 2020).

2.7.2.2 Perceived value

Badie (2014) defines value as the customer's overall evaluation of the net value of a service, which is determined by the perceived benefits of the service and the costs incurred to use it (Nazemi & Saadatyar, 2013). Researchers widely recognise perceived value as a crucial factor in marketing. Gaining insight into consumer perceptions of perceived value can help companies refine their market strategies and offer improved products or services (Naami, Rahimi & Ghandvar, 2017).

Perceived value plays a significant role in influencing purchase intention. This suggests that as perceived value increases, so does the likelihood of purchasing

(Naami et al., 2017). Rasoolimanesh, Dahalan and Jaafar (2016) further describe perceived value as the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product or service, based on the balance between what is received and what is given. Moreover, perceived value encompasses factors such as financial costs, quality, and social-psychological considerations when evaluating a product or service (Kuo, Wu, & Deng, 2009).

2.7.2.3 Perceived quality

Stiawan & Jatra (2022) denotes that perceived quality is a pre-and post-purchase construct and that prior experience relating to the product is not required to assess quality. Consumers develop perceptions regarding the superiority of the product since it ensures durability, reliability, and sustainability.

Product quality directly influences purchase intention, perceptions about the product quality, and price before purchasing the product; therefore, the higher the quality of product or service the higher the intention to purchase (Saleem, Ghafar, Ibrahim, Yousuf, Ahmed & Ahmad, 2015).

2.7.3 The decision-making process

The consumer decision-making process (CDM) involves a process whereby consumers recognise needs and evaluate the optional products/services at their disposal to satisfy those needs (Potgieter, Weise, & Strasheim 2013:12). Varied models that elaborate the decision-making process were developed and improved to better understand the process (Vasquaes et al., 2014:68). The study focuses on the most recent model, known as the Engel, Kollat, & Blackwell (EKB). The Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (EKB) was developed in the 1960s and proposed five stages involved in the decision-making process. The five stages include need recognition information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and post-purchase evaluation (Ashman, Solomon, & Wolny 2015:128).

2.7.3.1 The traditional decision-making model

The traditional model of the consumer decision-making process involves five steps that consumers go through when purchasing a product or service. A marketer must understand these steps to properly move the consumer to the purchase process. The product communicates effectively to consumers and closes the sale.



Figure 2: The traditional decision-making process.

Source: Schiffman & Kanuk (2010:36)

These are five stages in the consumer decision process which can be influenced by various internal and external forces such as personality, family, reference groups, demographic factors, etc. (Shen, 2022).

Need recognition

Marketers form an imbalance using advertisements and sales promotions. Marketers attempt to determine the unfulfilled needs of the consumers, thus the advertisement of products that could satisfy those needs. The needs of consumers can also be triggered by the effort of these marketers to assist in recognising their need/problem (Stankevich, 2017). Furthermore, the need or problem is influenced by internal or external stimuli. Factors such values, attitudes, and response personalities are classified as internal stimuli while social class and peers are classified as external stimuli (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel 2011:143).

Information search

When customers recognise a problem, they will seek useful information regarding it. Information can be searched internally or externally. Consumers will look for past experience information on products; if the internal search fails, customers tend to seek external information from sources such as mass media, friends, and marketers. The option of seeking information externally depends on the comparison between expected benefits and expected costs (Shen, 2022).

Perceived risk determines the extent of information searched and is defined as the scope of loss should a bad decision be made (Musasa, 2020). Solomon, Bennet, and Previte (2013:267) classified risks into five categories namely, functional, physical, social, psychological, social, and financial risks. Consumers spend a considerable

amount of time and effort looking for brand information to avoid such risks (Musasa, 2020).

Evaluation of Alternatives

This stage of the consumer decision-making process involves the exploration of several options that could meet the needs of consumers. Consumers carefully consider the consequences that could arise from their decision (Kozio-Nadolna & Beyer, 2021). Furthermore, consumers make the final decision based on important attributes such as price, brand, and quality (Stankevich, 2017).

Purchase

At this stage, the consumer has completed the information search and evaluation process. This is the most crucial part of the decision-making process; the consumer decides to make a final purchase or has thoroughly evaluated alternative products / services and has reached a conclusion.

Post-purchase behaviour

After the process of purchasing a product or service, satisfaction can occur and be stored in memory (Shen, 2022). The decision made is then evaluated to determine whether the customer need that was initially identified has been met decision (Kozio-Nadolna & Beyer, 2021). This stage has the potential to affect the future decision-making process depending on the level of satisfaction of consumers with the product/service.

Furthermore, Perrey and Spillecke (2011) pointed out that opinions from peers, friends, and family are regarded as one of the important factors that may affect the post-purchase outcome. The notion is further expanded by Trehan and Trehan (2011) that the opinions of peers on the evaluation of products may impact the level of satisfaction irrespective of their level of objectivity.

2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The theoretical framework for this study is based on three key theories: the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Theory of Social Learning (TSL), and the Generation Cohort Theory. These theories provide a robust foundation for understanding consumer behaviour, the influence of external factors, and generational differences in purchasing intentions, especially in the context of influencer marketing.

2.8.1 Theory of Reasoned Action

Currently, consumers are targeted at a mass rate by the media and alter the way they think through emotions, needs, wants, and demands (Thapa, 2011). Similar to the description of purchase intention, several authors have provided various explanations regarding the antecedents, factors, and dimensionality which can affect purchase intention. Therefore, it is still unclear whether the purchase intention is a multidimensional construct (Schutte, 2019).

Fishbein and Ajzen (1977) established the Theory of Reasoned Action and the Theory of Planned Behaviour that were derived from models under the name expectancy-value models. Attitudes, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural are functions of behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs and of their evaluation, respectively: outcome evaluation, motivation to comply, and perceived power. In order to determine the estimation of the determinants of intention, every major belief should be multiplied by its evaluation, and the products should be added.

According to (Ajzen, 1991) the human behaviour is determined using the intention and perceived behavioural control. Intentions have been discovered to be affected by attitudes towards behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived control over behaviour. The model developed by Ajzen (1991), the subjective norm is meant to justify the social pressure consumers get to perform or not perform a certain action. The subjective norm may influence the decision to perform or not perform regardless of the attitude of the consumer towards the behaviour (Jain & Khan, 2017).

According to Diallo (2012), purchase intention is measured through the usage of four indicators, the plan to buy, being in possession of the budgeted money to buy, and having the tendency to buy. Consumers' stated purchase intentions are one the crucial inputs that marketers use to determine future sales and how their marketing actions affect the buying behaviour of consumers (Jamieson & Bass, 1989).

The behaviour intention relies on the probability that a customer will perform a particular behaviour. Meeting and satisfying customers' expectations and needs is the simplest marketing strategy to lure customers to buy a product and increase sales

profits. The expectations of customers are not solely dependent on prior experiences, but also on current product evaluation and experience (Pang, Tan, & Lau, 2021).

According to (Li & Hua, 2022) in a social interaction environment, one crucial aspect in social psychology is social learning, learning from experience and actions of others. They share shopping and product experiences, the learning behaviour from this environment may positively affect the attitude of consumers subsequently influencing their purchase intentions (Lorenzo, Kawalek & Ramdani, 2012).

Fishbein and Ajzen (1977) further proposed that the key aspects for predicting consumer behaviour are attitudes, assessments, and internal factors that ultimately result in purchase intent. A study conducted by Nor and Pearson (2008) states that subjective norms from family, friends, and colleagues affect the buying behaviour of customers. The literature also suggests that if their peers favor a particular purchase, the intention to buy will be greater.

2.8.2 Theory of Social Learning

This theory is based on the notion that people learn from networking with others in a social environment. Interestingly, by observing certain behaviour, people develop similar behaviour. After observation of this behaviour, individuals tend to adapt and mimic that behaviour particularly if their observation experience was positive. Imitation is defined as the actual reproduction of observed behaviour (Bandura, 1977).

The Social Learning Theory (Bandura & Walters, 1963) has been included in academic studies (Bush et al., 1999) and relies on the acquisition of new behaviour through observing other people (Bandura, 1971), in this case influencers. Social learning theory is the most prominent theory involving learning and development. It has been identified as a channel between behaviourist learning theories and cognitive learning since it consists of memory, attention, and motivation (Muro & Jeffrey, 2008).

Bandura (1977) then realised that direct reinforcement does not account for all forms of learning, hence the establishment of a social element that suggests that individuals learn new information and behaviour through watching other people. In 1961 and 1963, Albert Bandura conducted a series of experiments to investigate whether social behaviours can be acquired through observation and imitation. The investigation

consisted of a demonstration of a model punching a doll to test if the child would emulate the behaviour of the doll,

The social learning theory can clarify other complex behaviours, but it insufficiently describes the development of feelings and thoughts. As a result, Bandura altered the theory and renamed it to Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) in 1986. Bandura officially developed the social learning theory in 1977 which later evolved into the social cognitive theory which stipulates that learning occurs in a social framework with an ever-changing and mutual interaction between the individual, environment, and behaviour.

2.8.2.1 Model of social learning

Albert Bandura (1977) supports the behaviourist learning theories of operant and classical conditioning; furthermore, he describes social learning as the “mediating processes that occur between stimuli and responses” and behaviour that is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning”.

Behaviourist Model (only study observable / external behaviour)



Figure 3: The behaviourist model

Source: (Bandura, 1977)

Mediational processes

Bandura (1977) considers people as information processors that are active, furthermore are vigilant of the behaviour they exhibit and its outcomes. Consequently,

cognitive processes are responsible for observational learning. These mental factors act as a mediator in the learning process to establish whether a new reaction is acquired.

There are four mediational processes proposed by Bandura:

Attention: To what extent do we notice certain behaviour, the observer must grab the attention of the observer so that the behaviour can be imitated.

Retention: This refers to the ability to remember a particular behaviour when noticed, thus it is critical to maintain a memory of a behaviour to be imitated.

Reproduction: This refers to the ability to perform the behaviour presented. Barriers such as physical abilities can prevent us from imitating certain behaviours.

Motivation: This refers to the willingness to perform such behaviour. The observer compares the perceived rewards against the perceived costs; should the perceived rewards outweigh the perceived costs then the observer is likely to imitate the behaviour.

2.8.2.2 Observational Learning

The Bobo doll experiment created by Bandura (1961) demonstrates that children behave in certain ways due to their observation of their environment. It was then discovered that children tend to imitate people they share similarities with. Furthermore, it was also discovered that the child considers the consequences of the behavior of other people before adopting the behavior. This behaviour is labeled as vicarious reinforcement. Identification is a term used in the social learning theory, and it occurs when an individual adopts the observed values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour of people they identify with.

Moreover, Bandura established the following three basic models of observational learning.

A live model involves an actual person performing or exhibiting a behaviour.

A verbal instructional model-The model describes and explains a certain behaviour.

A symbolic model- This model includes real or fictional individuals exhibiting behaviours in films, books, television programs, or online media.

Consumer purchasing intentions are shaped by their perceptions, needs, and attitudes toward a product or brand (Chakraborty, 2019). A positive brand image plays a pivotal role in increasing a business's credibility, which in turn enhances consumers' purchase intentions (Chakraborty, 2019). In particular, while both positive and negative reviews influence consumer behaviour, negative reviews often have a stronger impact, significantly influencing purchasing decisions (Von Helversen, Abramczuk, Kope & Nielek, 2018). In making these decisions, consumers allocate available resources, such as time, money and effort, to pursue desired products, often influenced by various forms of persuasion (Subawa, Widhiasthini, Pika, Suryawati, & Astawa, 2020).

2.8.3 Generation cohort theory

The Generation Cohort Theory aims to categorise individuals based on their birth years and shared generational experiences. Strauss and Howe expanded on this theory in 1997, identifying Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z. This theory suggests that individuals within a generation typically share values, beliefs, attitudes, and ideas. This theory is essential for marketers to understand generational motivations, as each cohort has distinct values and goals. Generational cohorts experience social changes during their formative years, leading to a collective memory or shared generational consciousness. Marketers use this theory to effectively target consumers.

Originally introduced by Karl Mannheim in 1952, Generation Cohort Theory is based on three main categories: location, actuality, and units. Location refers to the time and place at which a generation is born, influencing their experiences and perspectives. The reality focuses on how a generation responds to social changes and shaping their personalities. Units refer to subgroups within a generational cohort who react to social changes differently. Mannheim explains that these categories influence the mental frameworks that shape generational attitudes and behaviours. Generation entelechy illustrates how generational experiences form a unique worldview, which can be unconscious or conscious.

For this study, understanding generational distinctions is essential for analysing purchasing behaviours, particularly regarding how external factors like social media and influencer marketing impact the decision-making processes of different generational cohorts.

2.9 AN OVERVIEW OF GENERATIONS X, Y, AND Z

2.9.1 Generation X

Generation X individuals grew up in an era that was not dominated by technology; the group was then impelled to gain digital skills as it became more imperative Sabina (Lissitsa & Kol, 2021). These individuals are easily affected by the opinions of other people (Dabija, Bejan, & Tipi, 2018), making social networks a credible platform for learning about the experiences of other consumers (Chawdhary & Dall'Olmo, 2015). Since consumers greatly consider the opinions shared by other individuals than advertisements, therefore, negative opinions can influence the reputation of a company (Zhang, Omran & Cobanoglu, 2017). This cohort can adjust to changing situations since they have experienced many things. In addition, they are still responsible for being the primary caregivers of their families, making them consumers with significant purchasing power (Tangpattanakit & Touchakorn, 2022).

This group believes that satisfactory purchase is not based solely on the product but also on the service that affects their decision making (Patsaranat Ruaytanasombat, 2015). Unlike recent generations, Generation Xers are less accustomed to the modern innovations promoted by businesses as they are not a necessary portion of their lives which may affect their participation on social networks or the actual utilization of such gadgets (Dabija, Bejan, & Tipi, 2018). Generation X individuals are conscious of the costs, the value of information and the technology involved; they want a thorough explanation of the item they want to purchase.

They are a great market for companies since they usually purchase for their families (Gok, 2020). The X generation has the fear of accessing things they are not familiar with on the Internet, thus instilling fear of innovative technology (Aureejo, Ghumro & Soomro, 2020). Businesses must operate efficiently to compete in today's global marketplace. In the current market, processes that were applied during the early years of traditionalists or Baby Boomers will not be effective (Dewanti & Indrajit, 2018). Businesses are then prompted to have ideas that look into the future, while this generation adjusts to these changes.

2.9.2 Generation Y

The current consumer market is largely influenced by Generation Y (also known as the millennial generation), who are increasingly becoming more consumptive and prone to following trends and being impacted by others (Indah & Suryadinatha, 2019). This generation, known for its technological savviness, can quickly communicate and access information, making them responsive to digital platforms (Rony, 2019). The distinct consumer behaviour of different generations can significantly impact business strategies and market trends (Effendi, Najib & Kirbrandoko, 2019).

Millennials, in particular, frequently use digital platforms to share experiences and guide each other in making informed purchasing decisions (Lian & Dyem, 2020). Moreover, Generation Y's influence extends beyond their own purchases, as they often sway the spending habits of their parents, making them a valuable demographic due to their purchasing power and growing population (Nikhashemi, 2017). Although price plays a key role in their purchasing decisions, often more so than brand loyalty (Dulay, Liban, Rustia, Tayag & Castaño, 2022), millennials are also known for exploring new options and trends. Compared to previous generations, millennials are more likely to have completed formal education, particularly matriculation, aligning with the modern knowledge-based economy (Brosdahl & Carpenter, 2011). They tend to spend more on lifestyle products, making them a crucial target for marketers, especially those that take advantage of digital platforms and influencer marketing strategies.

2.9.3 Generation Z

Generation Z, often referred to as **iGen**, is distinguished by their familiarity with the Internet and the significant influence of high-end devices such as iPhones, iPads, and personal computers (Nguyen et al., 2021). Known for its ability to find information, Generation Z navigates the digital landscape more intelligently and quickly than previous generations (Nadlifatin et al., 2020). The smartphone serves as a primary tool for this cohort, facilitating their integration with the Internet and improving their online experiences (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015).

In their quest for identity, Generation Z is particularly susceptible to environmental influences, provocations, and persuasions, which shape their attitudes and behaviours (Subawa et al., 2020). Growing up in a nontraditional social structure, they embrace

diversity in all its forms, including cultural differences, sexual orientations, and social and economic backgrounds (Artemova, 2018). Characterised by enthusiasm, intelligence, and openness, Generation Z advocates for ethical principles and demonstrates advanced technological skills (Vieira et al., 2020).

This generation excels at sharing information across various communication devices, fostering sustainable communication patterns (Wijaya et al., 2020). They have undergone significant behavioral and value adjustments due to environmental influences, which have molded their consumer habits (Pham et al., 2021). However, their advanced motor skills are accompanied by a tendency for boredom and impatience, largely attributable to their constant access to information on the Internet (Yaman & akin, 2021).

In addition, Generation Z places considerable importance on the emotions, thoughts, and experiences of influencers they follow, significantly impacting their purchasing attitudes toward products and services (Yaman & akin, 2021). Often dubbed the '**New Silent Zone**', this generation maintains a significant presence in virtual environments, reflecting their preference for digital interactions over traditional forms of communication (Krk & Köyüstü, 2018).

2.9.4 Generations X, Y and Z in South Africa

Douglas Coupland published *Generation X* in 1991, during a time when South Africa was undergoing significant political and social transformations. The previous years had been marked by political unrest, the threat of civil war, and violent clashes between the apartheid state's security forces and protestors opposing the regime. The government's racist policies controlled an economy on the brink of collapse, strained by the immense costs of a divided society and the absence of a robust middle class. Nelson Mandela was released in 1989, while Coupland was actively preparing for the adoption of a new constitution and the country's first democratic elections in 1994.

The youth of South Africa in the late 1980s and early 1990s faced a reality filled with anger and hardship, yet they did not experience what is termed 'historical underdosing'. This concept refers to the belief that history has come to a standstill and that current institutions are corrupt and exhausted (O'Toole, 1939). For many young people in South Africa during the 1980s, childhood and adolescence were overshadowed by political conflicts and unrest (Dawes & Donald, 1994). The search

for a distinct Generation X identity appeared futile, leading to a lack of public awareness in South Africa compared to western societies.

Although the term Generation X has been utilised in marketing research as a demographic factor, it is rarely mentioned in scholarly articles. This generation yearns for financial stability, burdened as they are by student loans and a shifting job market. A generation ago, small pleasures were valued and materialism was less prevalent; today, 64% of Generation X individuals prioritise material possessions (Smith, 2019).

In South Africa, Generation Y, often referred to as the millennial generation, constitutes a substantial demographic group, particularly among the black population. Despite the significant influence of this cohort, experts vary in their definitions of its specific start and end dates. Bevan-Dye, Dhurup, and Surujal (2009) suggested that Baby Boomers were born between 1946 and 1964, while Generation X encompasses those born from 1965 to 1979 (Schiffman, Kanuk, and Wisenblit, 2010). This classification implies that Generation Y begins in 1980.

According to data from Statistics South Africa (2008), individuals aged 15 to 29, classified as Generation Y, totalled 14,303,800, making up 29% of the nation's population. Within this group, black Generation Y individuals numbered 11,865,800, representing 83% of South Africa's Generation Y and 24% of the total population.

Generation Y is notable for being the first cohort to grow up in the post-apartheid era. Before South Africa's democratic transition in 1994, the education system was racially segregated, limiting opportunities for non-white populations. Generation Y members had the privilege of attending multiracial educational institutions, which fostered exposure to a mix of Western and traditional ideologies. This exposure has allowed them to navigate diverse cultural landscapes and harness greater opportunities in education, careers, and wealth creation, as exemplified by figures such as Patrice Motsepe, South Africa's first billionaire (Bevan-Dye, Garnett, and de Klerk, 2012).

In contrast, Generation Z, estimated to comprise 1.9 billion individuals worldwide, primarily resides in developing countries and is characterised by those born in the mid to late 1990s (Duffett, 2017). In South Africa, a significant proportion of the population is young, with approximately 40% of individuals under the age of 20 (Statistics SA, 2012). This group is often referred to as the 'born frees', as most were not alive during key historical events, including the end of apartheid, the release of Nelson Mandela

from prison in 1990, the signing of the peace agreement in 1991, or the first democratic elections in 1994 (Duffett, 2017). This generational divide highlights the unique experiences and socioeconomic contexts that shape the attitudes and behaviours of South Africa's youth today.

2.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter provided a comprehensive discussion of the theoretical literature relevant to the study. It examined the significant attributes of influencers and outlined the challenges businesses face when implementing influencer marketing, as well as the opportunities this strategy presents. Additionally, the concept of purchasing intention was explored in detail, along with the buying behaviours of Generations X, Y, and Z. The next chapter will focus on the empirical literature, primarily examining the relationship between the study variables.

CHAPTER 3: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS ON THE EFFECT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter offered a theoretical review of the research, while this section focuses on an empirical review of the literature. It provides an overview of the relationship between influencer marketing and purchase intention, in addition to its empirical findings. The development of the hypotheses is also addressed. This study examines three independent variables: credibility, customer brand engagement, and similarity (influencer marketing), with purchasing intention as the dependent variable. In addition, the study incorporates a moderating variable, generation cohorts.

3.2 HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

According to Kim and Kim (2021), competition in the social media environment is gradually rising, influencer marketing is changing into long-term relationships between firms and influencers. Marketers have realised the importance of merging their marketing messages into influencer narratives for an extended period of time to achieve better engagement with followers. This demonstrates that influencer marketing is a multifaceted relationship marketing that involves influencer-consumer, influencer-brand, and brand-consumer relationships. Therefore, it is crucial to exploit the building blocks of the influencer-follower relationship, such as the credibility of the influencer, the engagement of the customer's brand, and the similarity between the influencer and the follower. These building blocks of influencer marketing help determine the generational perspective of the relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing intention in digital marketing.

Since influencer marketing is continuously growing online, challenges such as trust and adequate supervision should be addressed to achieve effectiveness (Lee, Koseoglu, Qi, Liu & King, 2021). The interaction between the influencer and the follower relies on the exchange of resources that result in equal rewards. The influencer uploads content that resonates with the followers, thus resulting in many views and likes, which is a reflection of the value of the reward. The mutual reinforcement between the influencer and followers will be sustained to meet the balance of exchange (Freberg, Graham McGaughey & Freberg, 2021)

A study carried out by Leal, Hor-Meyll, and de Paula Pessoa (2014) established that members of society regard opinion leaders as individuals that tend to provide high quality offerings, furthermore bloggers have also been perceived as successful when they provide high quality publications (Mendola,2014). Numerous publications on social media accounts have been revealed to be positively associated with rewarding and pleasurable experiences (Barta, Belanche, Fernandez, & Flavian, 2023).

When the audience views numerous account posts, they become less bored and enjoy fresh and better experiences. Furthermore, these frequent account posts instil involvement in the audience, thus attracting more viewers and generating positive feelings that affect their buying behavior (Casal’o, Flavi & Guinalu, Ekinci, 2017). The following section provides an in-depth explanation of the relationship between influencer marketing along with its factors and purchasing intentions as referred to in **Figure 4** below.

H2

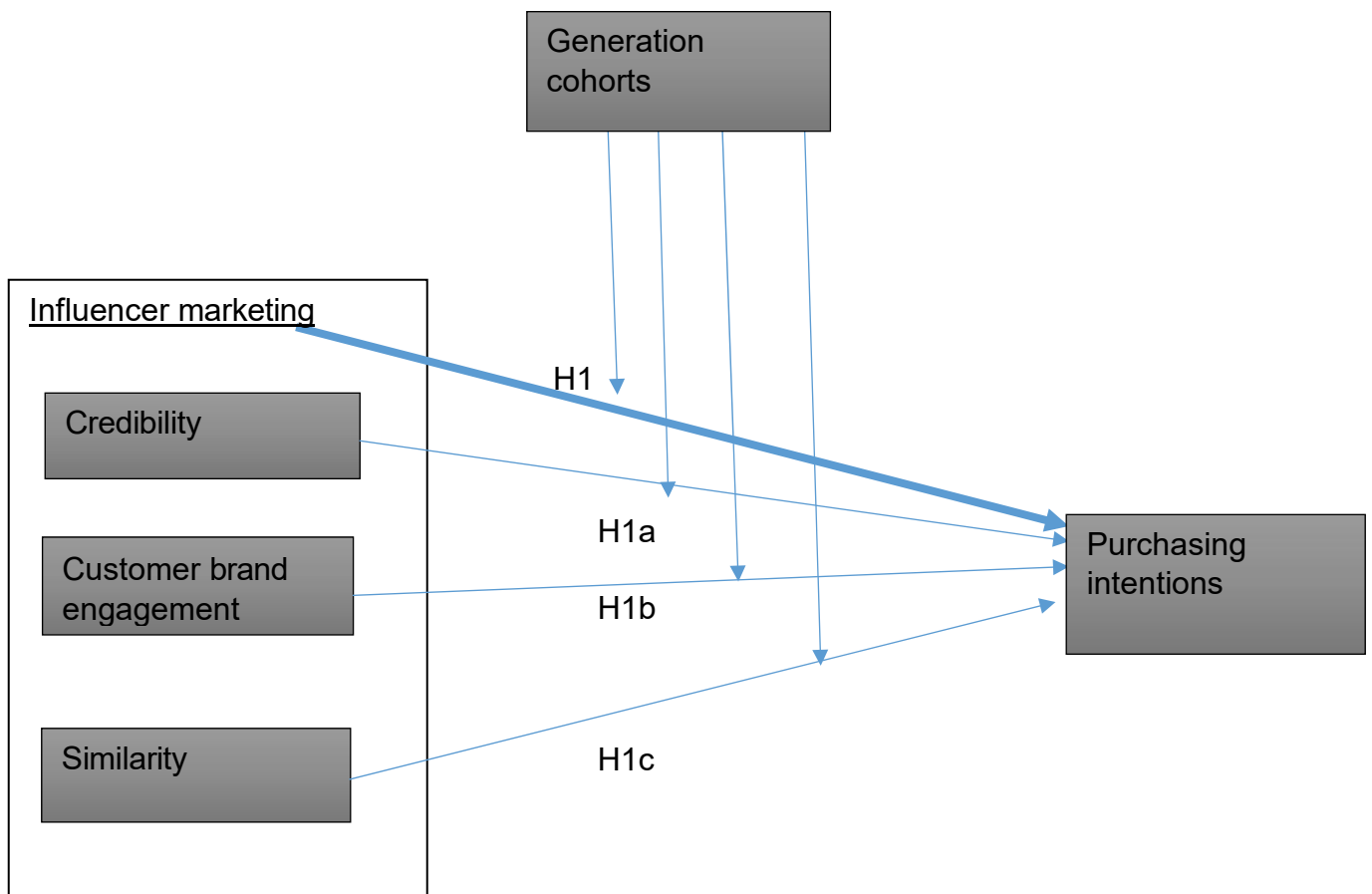


Figure 4: Illustration of the relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing intentions and the moderating effect of Generation cohorts.

3.2.1 Influencer marketing and purchasing intentions

Social media influencers have expanded their reputation through establishing themselves as experts in social media communities whereby content on subjects such as fashion, fitness, and food are shared by influencers and in turn the following grows (Nugroho, Rahayu & Hapsari, 2022). Influencers and celebrities are differentiated by the channel through which they communicate (Barker, 2018). Celebrities use traditional channels such as television and radio, while influencers use platforms such as YouTube and Instagram. Celebrities are followed for their talent in music or acting, whereas influencers are followed for their relatable content. Initially, influencers develop a connection by interacting with the online community, therefore creating a buzz around the brand they are advertising (Geppert, 2019). A strong connection between influencers and customers has been established through social media environments, for example, TikTok. Vloggers have become the safest option for obtaining information and can display credibility and attractiveness through the introduction of novel ideas, therefore, they have significant authority over the behaviour of consumers (Cleveland & Bartikowski, 2018).

Isyanto, Sapitri, and Sinaga (2020) investigated the effect of micro-influencer marketing and brand image on buying intentions for Focalluer cosmetic products, the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between micro-influencer marketing and purchase intention for Focalluer products. Masuda, Han, and Lee (2022) tested a model relating to the persuasion theory and established that consumer trust in influencer expertise has a strong influence on the purchase intentions of customers.

Trust, a quality of influencers, and the value of entertainment significantly affects credibility in influencing buying intentions. Thus, the buying intentions of customers are influenced by the credibility and influencer trust (Saima & Khan, 2020). Influencers view a message as interesting and easy to remember by customers, thus increasing their level of demand (Novitasari, 2022). In this sense, nfluencer marketing significantly

and positively affects the buying intentions of customers, as the right influencers are required to result in such outcomes (Novitasari, 2022).

A study by Dwidienawati, Tjahjana, Abdinagoro, and Gandasari (2020) examined the influence of customer and influencer reviews on purchase intentions. The findings revealed that influencer reviews positively affected purchase intentions, whereas customer reviews did not. This suggests that customer buying behavior in collectivist cultures, such as India, is significantly influenced by social groups. Customers are particularly susceptible to social influences from their peers on clothing brands, a phenomenon arising from their socialization process. Consequently, marketers are using social media influencers to influence consumer behavior (Shravya, 2022). On the basis of these insights, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Influencer marketing positively influences consumers' purchasing intentions.

3.2.2 Credibility and purchasing intentions

The source credibility theory denotes that people tend to demonstrate behavioural compliance and are persuaded by a message when the source is perceived as credible (Jung, Sharma & Mattila, 2022). Scholars have expanded efforts to the notion of credibility to paradigms such as source credibility and message credibility. In an online setting, source credibility refers to reviewers, while message credibility refers to the content of online consumer reviews (Kima & Song, 2020).

The credibility of the product offering creates a perception in the mind of the audience. Credibility can be affected by multiple factors, mainly the reputation of the business and the advertisement messenger. When the advertisement is credible and there is a level of trust between the messenger and the audience, the purchase decision of the customer can be influenced. An advertisement becomes trustworthy when it is presented by an individual who has used the product before or has adequate information about it (Ngo, Le, Nguyen, Le, Ngo & Nguyen, 2022).

Common dimensions relating to perceived credibility include trustworthiness and expertise. Trustworthiness focuses on the honesty, fairness, and sincerity of the information provided by the source, while expertise focuses on how knowledgeable the source is. Generally, digital celebrities inclusive of vloggers are perceived as more credible than conventional celebrities (Rahmi, Sekarasih & Sjabadhyni, 2017).

Recent empirical research by Kim and Kim (2021) emphasised that the credibility of an influencer is mainly based on its level of expertise and authenticity. A recent study by Shamim and Islam (2022) highlighted that the credibility of the message that is being delivered determines the level of trust toward influencers. A previous study by Hsu, Chuan-chuan Lin and Chiang (2014) has indicated that trust is positively affected by the quality of the website and, on the other hand, purchasing intention is positively affected by the quality of the company website. Furthermore, the easy accessibility to the website information and relevant information positively influences the buying intentions of the customers.

Perceived credibility has been revealed to be a determinant of the subsequent actions of customers and can produce positive results, such as increased purchase intentions by customers (Nguyen, Nguyen & Luu, 2022). Furthermore, Sokolova and Kefi (2020) conducted a study focusing on fashion influencers on Instagram and YouTube and determined that there is a strong relationship with the intention to purchase derived from their promotions. Shamim and Islam (2022) further indicated that consumers have confidence in online opinion leaders and credibility has a strong positive effect on persuasion. Masuda et al. (2021), who conducted a survey on Korean consumers, established that consumers who are exposed to advertisements sponsored by influencers developed a stronger urge to buy, accentuated by the parasocial relationships they generate. When communication progressively becomes reliable, customers become convinced, while lack of credibility reduces persuasiveness (Abraham, Floreto, Pagkalinawan, & Etrata, 2022). The study conducted by Nguyen, Nguyen, and Luu (2022) that investigates the relationship between influencer marketing and purchase intention: Focusing on Vietnamese Gen z consumers also demonstrates that the credibility of perceived influencers positively impacts consumer purchasing intentions. On this backdrop, it is hypothesized that

H1a: Influencer credibility positively influences consumers' purchasing intentions.

3.2.3 Customer brand engagement and purchasing intentions.

An engaged customer can be recognised as both a participant and a recipient of a business's communication efforts (Liu, Liu, Lee & Chen, 2019). Furthermore, research has shown that engaged customers tend to exhibit repetitive buying behaviour

(Pansari & Kumar, 2017). The level of customer engagement can influence purchasing decisions and shape their experiences during brand interactions (Khan, 2022). When customers become active on social media to gather new information, interact, have fun, and share opinions with other users, these engaged individuals are likely to develop a stronger positive or negative perception of the brand (Khan, 2022).

It is highly unlikely that customers will be fascinated by the offering of a brand with which they have a low level of engagement, while customers with a higher level of engagement display more interest (Thakur, 2019). Higher levels of engagement between customers and the brand(influencer) can yield stronger relationships with a brand. The escalated level of engagement is the result of the customer's commitment to maintain the established relationship with that brand (Khan, 2022).

Ngo and Mai (2017) investigated the impact of social network advertising on customers' purchase intentions and discovered that the variable of social interaction had a substantial effect on customer online purchases.

Yang and He (2011) further concluded that the number of buying choices of customers is influenced by user interactions, resulting in a higher purchase value for customers and a decrease in their overall costs in making the purchase.

It is also perceived that consumer brand engagement is positively and directly associated with brand relationships and the intention to buy at particular times (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013). Marketing strategies intended to cause an increase in brand engagement tend to increase customer brand loyalty (Hollebeek, 2011). A brand engagement that is stronger leads to strong relationships in the form of offers such as discounts and allowances, which in turn results in prospective purchase intention of the brand (Algesheimer, Borle, Dholakia & Singh, 2010).

Social interactions among influencers and customers can influence the purchase intention of Generation Z. Customers tend to use Tik Tok to provide each other with product recommendations and decisions (Ngo et al., 2022). For example, social media users can read through the comment section for product opinions and can also ask questions to other individuals who have used a product they are interested in. The metrics of social media pages are crucial to consumers; this indicates that a social media page that has a large number of likes, comments and followers can catch the interest of customers (Ngo et al., 2022).

These metrics of advertising engagement help develop consumer trust. Engagement metrics can improve through the establishment of long-term marketing strategies and persuading social media users to interact with eye-catching content videos that resonate with target customers and prevailing trends (Ngo et al., 2022). Customers who are literate enough to research online can discern the costs and benefits of any specific item by reviewing information that can affect brand engagement and influence purchase intention or the other way around (Abrar, 2018). Fun and rewarding business campaigns increase engagement between the brand and the customers. This will eventually lead to improved relationships, trust and a positive effect on purchase intention (Erdomuş & Tatar, 2015). Hence, the following hypothesis is postulated:

H1b: Customer brand engagement positively influences consumers' purchasing intentions.

3.2.4 Similarity and purchasing intentions

Influencers often greet in their posts, which grants their followers a sense of closeness, therefore making followers see influencers as their peers, thus creating some sense of identification. Interacting and commenting on posts also improves the feeling of similarity between the influencer and the customer (Nugroho et al., 2022). Identification is a result of actual and perceived similarity and is described as the extent to which an individual feels equivalent to another individual, additionally, wishful identification can be described as the desire to be like another individual. Identification is greatly determined by perceived similarity (Nugroho et al., 2022).

Similarity can lessen the ambiguity of a relationship between the influencer and the customer, thus stimulating a positive reaction in the form of a positive attitude (Hu, Min, Han & Liu, 2020). According to Le, Alang, and Tran (2021), attitude is considered a reliable factor and was shown to have a positive impact on consumer buying intentions. A study by Abdullah, Deraman, Zainuddin, Azmi, Abdullah, Anuar, Mohamad, Zulkiffli, Hashim, Abdullah, Rasdi, and Hasan (2020) showed that there is an association between the similarity of social media influencers and the purchase intention of Instagram users towards fashion apparel in the fashion industry.

Scholars often use similarity and homophily interchangeably; homophily is primarily used in communication research and has been recently established in marketing research on virtual and social settings (Ladhari, Massa & Skandrani, 2020). It is

defined as the similarity between two individuals that network based on belief, education, and social status. Homophily can also improve perceived information quality and community commitment. Furthermore, the similarity between the source of information and the receiver can be used to promote interpersonal relationships, achieve connections, and interactive behaviour (Bu, Parkinson & Thaichon, 2022). Likeability is thus created, which increases the likelihood of influencing consumer behavior by creating the impression that comparable followers are inherently nice, courteous, and amiable (Teng & Tsai, 2020).

Research has also shown that homophily can have an impact on the willingness to seek opinions and communicate with other people online setting (Ladhari et al., 2020). It may inspire the establishment of interpersonal relations with influencers, information seeking, and the interchanging of information. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1c: Influencer similarity with the customer positively influences the purchasing intentions of consumers.

3.2.5 The moderating effect of generation groups X, Y and Z

Generational experts Howe and Strauss (1991) argued that generations are significantly shaped by the historical period in which they live. They suggest that individuals who share the same time and space in history develop a collective identity. However, the literature reveals inconsistencies in defining generational boundaries. Given the importance of consumer generations as a moderating variable in marketing research (Khan, 2022), this study will adopt the following generational classifications: (i) Generation X, born 1965–1980; (ii) Generation Y, born 1981–2000; and (iii) Generation Z, born after 2000. Furthermore, certain traits are believed to impact the buying power of different generational cohorts (Parment, 2011), indicating that examining the buying behavior of these cohorts could yield valuable insights (Arachchi & Mendis, 2021). However, McKindle and Wolfinger (2010) note that the commonalities among contemporary generations have altered traditional global, cultural, and socioeconomic boundaries. Furthermore, globalization, facilitated by modern technologies, has led to similarities among youth in Australia, the US, the UK, Germany, and Japan. These young people are influenced by comparable events, trends, and developments; they are avid users of social networks and online

technologies and generally possess higher levels of formal education compared to previous generations (Dhanapal, Vashu & Subramaniam, 2015).

Consumers in different stages of life exhibit unique behavioral, cognitive, and psychological traits that significantly influence their brand perceptions and responses to marketing strategies (Khan, 2022). For example, elderly consumers tend to favor schema-based or heuristic processing methods, making them less inclined to search for new information. Compared to younger generations, older adults demonstrate a higher degree of emotional control and maturity (Khan, 2022).

Generation X consumers typically do not base their purchasing decisions on the social status associated with the products. Instead, they prioritise rational decision-making over emotional factors and are known for their loyalty to retailers (Adiba, 2019). Their buying decisions are primarily influenced by their closest social circles, with less impact from the broader social environment. Furthermore, Generation X places significant importance on product quality and brand reputation (Ordun, 2015). This cohort is characterised by profitability and a measured approach to evaluating marketing efforts, often expressing a preference for straightforward advertising that aligns with their realistic expectations (Setiasih & Soemartono, 2017). Research by Hernandez, Jimenez, and Martin (2011) found that socioeconomic factors such as age, gender, and income have limited influence on the online shopping behaviors of experienced e-shoppers.

In contrast, **Generation Y** (millennials) exhibits distinct behavioral tendencies, marked by a strong brand consciousness (Han & Kim, 2020). This characteristic prompts marketers to understand their attitudes and develop innovative strategies to engage this lucrative consumer segment (Arachchi & Mendis, 2021). Millennials are known for their active engagement with brands, fostering long-term relationships within social media communities (Rissanen & Luoma-Aho, 2016). As a significant portion of online purchasers, Generation Y heavily influences online shopping behavior (Setiasih & Soemartono, 2017). Their buying decisions are often swayed by social media activity, with virtual friends' opinions carrying more weight than those of their real-life friends (Ordun, 2015).

Generation Y relies on the Internet as a vital source of information, showcasing a segmented audience that traditional communication methods struggle to reach (Pea-

Garca, van der Woude, & Rodriguez-Orejuela, 2022). On the contrary, Generation X is characterised as practical, skeptical and insecure, leading them to seek information through alternative means to make informed purchasing decisions (Pea-Garca, van der Woude, & Rodriguez-Orejuela, 2022).

Compared to other generations, Generation Y enjoys spending money and frequently visits multiple stores before making a purchase. This cohort shows high brand awareness but low brand loyalty, making it challenging for brands to cultivate long-term commitment, as millennials are often influenced by the latest trends rather than the uniqueness of the brand (Setiasih & Soemartono, 2017). They are influenced by the personality, value, and convenience of the brand, paying close attention to fashion trends while also seeking quality and social status. Building relationships with businesses is not a priority for this generation, as their product choices are primarily driven by emotional factors (Parment, 2013).

During the initial wave of **Covid-19** in Italy, both Generation Y and Generation Z focused on downloading applications for physical activities, mobile gaming, and streaming online services for leisure, while Generation X prioritised video conferencing tools such as Skype, WhatsApp, and Zoom (Taha et al., 2021). Generation Z's substantial online presence facilitates easy access to product information, significantly shaping their online buying behaviour. A growing sense of belonging, commitment, and distinct consumption habits further differentiate this group from other generational cohorts (Derbani, Adawiyah, & Wulandari, 2022).

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: The generational cohort moderates the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer purchasing intentions.

3.3 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter emphasises the empirical literature relevant to the study. It discusses the development of the hypotheses and presents a conceptual framework that illustrates the relationships between influencer marketing, consumers' purchasing intentions, and generational cohorts. Additionally, the literature supporting the hypotheses is elaborated upon. The next chapter will outline the research methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The prior chapter provided an overview of the literature on the relationship between consumer purchasing intentions and influencer marketing, including the moderating role of generational cohorts. This chapter describes the research techniques employed in the study. Research methodology is a critical component of a dissertation and ensures that tools, procedures, and underlying philosophy are applied consistently. Here, the researcher explores the research design and sampling techniques used. The researcher also elaborates on the methods and instruments for data collection, as well as the analysis techniques used to interpret the gathered data. Additionally, the researcher discusses the measures taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. Ethical considerations were also addressed during the data collection process involving the respondents.

4.2 STUDY AREA

The study area is the geographic location to which the study is confined, and the data and its analysis are limited to a specified area. Data and analysis of this study were confined to South Africa, in Limpopo province. The targeted respondents are located within the Capricorn District Municipality spaces. This area is easily accessible to the researcher and due to the vastness of the area, a variation of respondents is reached.

4.3 PARADIGM RESEARCH

The research paradigm refers to the underlying philosophical and theoretical assumptions that guide the research process. According to Smith (2017), a paradigm is a fundamental framework that outlines the way researchers think about a problem, design their study, and analyse their data. The positivist paradigm, which is often considered the traditional approach, assumes that the world is objective and can be studied using scientific methods. Positivist researchers aim to discover objective laws and patterns that govern the behaviour of individuals and phenomena. They rely on empirical data and statistical analysis to test hypotheses and develop theories.

In contrast, the constructivist paradigm, which is also known as the interpretive or qualitative approach, emphasises the importance of subjective experiences and meanings. Constructivist researchers believe that reality is socially constructed, and that knowledge is shaped by individual perspectives and cultural contexts. They use methods such as interviewing the respondents, observing their behaviour, as well as using focus groups to gather rich and nuanced data, which is then analysed through interpretive techniques. This approach is particularly useful for understanding complex social phenomena, such as human behaviour, culture, and identity (Creswell & Miller, 2019).

A more modern approach that incorporates aspects of constructivism and positivism is the critical paradigm. Critical scholars acknowledge that our experiences and interpretations are shaped by social structures and power dynamics. Their aim is to reveal the latent power structures and societal disparities that shape our perception of reality. To empower marginalised groups and advance social change, critical researchers employ techniques such as critical discourse analysis, participatory action research, and emancipatory research (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2018). In general, the research question, the theoretical framework and the methodology that the researcher selects all influence the choice of research paradigm.

In this study, the positivist approach was implemented as this paradigm relies heavily on quantifiable data and seeks to establish cause-and-effect relationships. The author was able to measure the impact of influencer marketing using numerical data which makes it easier to establish the relationships between influencer marketing, consumers' purchasing intentions as well as generation cohorts.

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

This section of the research methodology outlines the design adopted by the study. Research studies usually consist of two research methods, particularly quantitative and qualitative. In some cases, research approaches can be integrated in a study, and it is commonly known as the mixed-method approach. Babbie (2010) denoted that the quantitative method highlights objective measurements, the inference being that the measurements being used are consistent. This method numerically analyses the data collected through surveys, polls, questionnaires, or through the manipulation of statistical data that existed previously by the utilisation of computational methods. The quantitative research approach is focused on the collection of numerical data and reaching a general conclusion among a group of individuals to describe a particular phenomenon. In contrast, the qualitative research approach prioritises subjectivity in the meaning, behaviour, and context of the research participants. Hence, the main objective of qualitative research is to determine whether the perspectives of the participants were sufficiently represented in the research process and authenticity of the conclusions made from the data collected and whether the outcomes are logical in the sense that they match the data and social context from which they were derived (Yadav, 2022).

This quantitative research approach was selected for this study as it provides the author with ease of control over the variables involved and the environment. This method also provides reliability in the statistical measures used to assess the relationship between influencer marketing and consumer purchasing intentions. The quantitative research approach can assume the descriptive, experimental, or causal design, this study used the descriptive research design to investigate the relationship between the variables stated.

4.5 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

A study population is a group of people who are being investigated and conclusions drawn. A thorough characterization of the study population helps to ensure the validity of the research findings (Eldredge, Weagel & Kroth, 2014). As a result, a population is defined using inclusion and exclusion criteria (Banerjee & Chaudhury, 2010). This study targeted a demographic of active social media users. The respondents are divided into three age groups: Generations X, Y, and Z. The research region lacks a

defined consumer or responder population frame.

4.6 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

This section of the study methodology describes the procedures used to collect primary data. The two basic types of sampling procedures are probability sampling and nonprobability sampling (Elfil & Negida, 2017; Shorten & Moorley, 2014). This study employed the nonprobability approach to sample the data obtained.

4.6.1 The non-probability sampling method

The nonprobability sampling technique tends to focus on smaller samples. General inferences cannot be made concerning the wider population (Yin, 2003). This method involves random selection from which statistical inferences about the whole group can be made (McCombes, 2019). Random selection aids in balancing the impact of recognized factors and unidentified factors. This results in observations that are impartial, thus qualifying it to be a representative of a population (Shagofah, Omid and Jawad, 2022).

4.6.1.1 Quota sampling

Quota sampling is a useful sampling technique derived from non-probability where researchers ensure that specific subgroups within a population are represented according to predetermined quotas (Santos & de Lima, 2020). This method is particularly advantageous in social research where it is crucial to reflect the diversity of the population without the constraints of random sampling (Brown & Green, 2021). For instance, a study focusing on consumer preferences may set quotas based on demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and income level to ensure that insights from various segments are included (Yang & Banamah, 2014).

The study adopted this technique by using generations(age) as a characteristic. This allowed for the efficient collection of data while ensuring that specific demographic subgroups are adequately represented (Brown & Green, 2021). This technique also assisted in gathering data with time and resource efficiency (Santos & de Lima, 2020).

4.7 DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

This section of the research methodology outlines the methods used to collect the primary data. The data collection methods consisted of the primary data, which refers to first-hand data gathered by an individual through interviews, surveys, surveys or experiments, and the secondary, data, which refers to the use of data collected by another researcher previously through journals (Glen, 2015).

This technique was selected as it provides low cost of administration; it is more relevant to a large sample as well (Kothari, 2004). The questionnaire was used to collect the relevant data. A questionnaire consists of a planned series of questions designed to gather information. A questionnaire should have a definite purpose that is associated with the objectives of the study (Bolarinwa, 2015). The survey assumed the cross-sectional technique, and the variables involved in the study were easier to compare simultaneously.

The questionnaire is divided into three sections: **Section A** is focused on the demographic information of the participants and their social media activities; Section B consists of components involved in influencer marketing and Section C consists of the purchasing intentions of the participants. The questionnaire includes a five-point Likert scale that ranges from 'strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) and from

'highly unlikely (1) to highly likely (5). This method makes it easier for the author to quickly get responses from the participants and to analyse the data collected. **Section B** which involves influencer marketing is divided into three subheadings name: Credibility, Customer brand engagement, and similarity. The section has a total of 18 items, while **Section C** which focuses on purchasing intentions has 4 items.

Data were collected online due to their convenience and rapidity. Data were also collected in person, resulting in wide and varied responses. A Google form was created in a manner that the participants would understand, and a link was distributed to social media platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, and Facebook. Additionally, the survey was also distributed to the local University of Limpopo students taking into consideration the inclusion of the generations involved (Generation X, Y and Z). The survey is distributed on these platforms, since the target population actively uses social media. This method of obtaining data from individuals is cost- and time-effective. The intended audience was reached effectively, and Generations X, Y, and Z's buying behaviours were measured equally and effectively.

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS

This section of the research methodology outlines the methods used to analyse the primary data. The methodical process of examining, purifying, converting, and modelling data to obtain important insights and useful information is known as data analysis. According to Kelleyher, Brian, and Aoife (2015), data analysis involves using a variety of approaches and techniques to interpret and make sense of raw data sets. By doing so, researchers and analysts can find patterns, trends, relationships, and correlations in the data that can help them make decisions, identify areas for improvement, and understand complex phenomena at a deeper level (Cresswell, Plano, & Vicki, 2018).

4.8.1 Descriptive statistics

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 29 was used tabulate and analyse data collected. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the collected data and present them in the form of tables and graphs. The method was chosen as it is

significant in the interpretation of quantitative research, and it is easy to summarise the data. Summary statistics was used to summarise a set of results and merely interpret large data. Features such as mean and standard deviation were used to interpret the data (Mishra, Pandey, Singh, Gupta, Sahu & Keshr, 2019).

4.8.2 Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Smart-PLS version 4.0 was used to investigate the link between observable variables and their latent constructs. Smart-PLS version 4.0 is a sophisticated software tool that may be used to perform partial least squares (PLS) analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM). It is widely utilised in many fields, including the social sciences, business, marketing, and management, where researchers must investigate complex relationships between several factors. According to Ringle, Christian, Wende, Sven, and Becker (2015), Smart-PLS has an easy user interface that allows researchers to build complicated models and effectively test hypotheses. Users can evaluate the structural model, establish the validity of their measurement models, and investigate relationships between latent constructs.

The programme is a useful resource for researchers trying to understand the complex interactions between variables in their data because it offers a variety of statistical techniques and algorithms (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). Significant applications of SEM include path analysis, covariance structure, regression models, second-order factor analysis, and confirmation factor analysis, correlation structure models and models (Hair, Hult, Ringle, Sarstedt, Danks, & Ray 2021). Furthermore, the investigation of the linear correlations between manifest variables and latent constructs is made possible by SEM. For relationships between unobserved variables, it can also generate easily understandable parameter estimates. Generally speaking, SEM facilitates the testing of several associations concurrently in a single model with distinct relationships as opposed to analyzing each relationship separately. Per Ali, Rasoolimanesh, and Cobanoglu (2019), PLS comprises a two-step process that involves the assessment of the outer measurement model and the inner structural model.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a widely used data analysis technique in market research that enables the verification of causal relationships between variables (Hair et al. 2021). SEM allows researchers to visualise the relationships between variables

and prioritise resources to better serve customers (Cheah, Thurasamy, Memon, Chuah & Ting, 2020). The ability to incorporate latent variables, which are difficult to measure, makes SEM particularly useful for addressing complex business research problems (Ahmad, Zulkurnain, & Khairushalimi, 2016). An SEM model consists of two sub models: While the inner model outlines the connections between independent and dependent latent variables, the outer model explains the interconnections between latent variables and their observable indicators (Wong, 2016).). In SEM, variables can be exogenous or endogenous. Exogenous variables do not have incoming paths, while endogenous variables have at least one path that leads to them, representing the effects of other variables (Sarstedt & Cheah, 2019). The following are different approaches to SEM.

4.8.2.1 Different Approaches to SEM

There are several approaches to structural equation modeling (SEM). The most widely used approach is covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM), which can be performed using software packages such as AMOS, EQS, LISREL, and MPlus (Memon, Ramayah, Cheah, Ting, Chuah, & Cham, 2021). Another approach is partial least squares (PLS), which focuses on analyzing variance and can be performed using software packages such as PLS-Graph, VisualPLS, SmartPLS, and WarpPLS (Memon, Jun, Ting & Francis, 2018). Additionally, PLS can be used with the PLS module in the statistical software package R. Ringle, Sarstedt, Mitchell, and Gudergan (2020) propose a third approach, component-based SEM, known as Generalised Structured Component Analysis (GSCA), which can be implemented using software packages such as Visual GSCA or online applications such as GeSCA (Ringle et al., 2020). Another method for performing SEM is Non-linear Universal Structural Relational Modeling (NEUSREL), which uses NEUSREL's Causal Analytics software (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Gudergan, 2017). These approaches are discussed in more detail below.

CB-SEM

Configural Bentler-SEM (CB-SEM) has been a popular data analysis method in the social sciences for several years, particularly for testing and rejecting theories through hypothesis testing. This approach is most effective when the sample size is large, the data is normally distributed, and the model is accurately specified (Shiau, Sarstedt &

Hair, 2019). In the process of transforming a theory into a structural equation model, relevant variables are selected and connected to form a logical framework (Sarstedt, Hair Jr, Nitzl, Ringle & Howard, 2020; Khoi & Tuan, 2018). However, in practice, it can be challenging to find a data set that meets these requirements (Shiau et al., 2019). In addition, research objectives may be exploratory, where little is known about the relationships between variables. In such cases, partial least squares (PLS) may be a more suitable alternative.

PLS-SEM

Partial least squares (PLS) is a soft predictive model for structural equation modeling (SEM) that does not assume a specific distribution of data (Cheah et al., 2021). As a result, PLS-SEM is a suitable alternative to Common Factor-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) in situations where: sample size is small; limited theory is available for applications; high priority is placed on prediction accuracy; and uncertainty exists regarding accurate model specification. However, it is important to note that PLS-SEM is not suitable for all types of statistical analysis (Hair et al., 2017). Furthermore, marketers should be aware of the limitations of PLS-SEM, including the need for high-quality structural path coefficients when the sample size is small (Hair et al., 2017).

When modelling undirected correlations, it is essential to handle multicollinearity effectively, as failure to do so can result in the failure to model undirected correlations (Latan, 2018). Furthermore, incomplete consistency in latent variable assessments can lead to biased component estimates (Hwang, Choi, & Shin, 2020). Large mean square errors can also occur in estimating path coefficient loads and loads (Hair,

Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2017). Despite these drawbacks, PLS is helpful for SEM in real-world research projects, especially when the data distribution is skewed and there are few respondents, like in surveys of global CEOs or female executives (Latan, 2018). Many industries have adopted PLS-SEM, including behavioural sciences, marketing, administration, management information systems, and corporate planning (Henseler, 2017).

GSCA & Other Approaches

When using general measures for model fitting or dealing with nonlinear latent variables, Generalised Structural Component Analysis (GSCA) can be a more effective approach for running structural equation models (SEMs) compared to Partial Least Squares (PLS) (Hwang et al., 2020). However, due to the relatively new nature of GSCA and other SEM approaches such as NEUSREL, the available literature is limited. As a result, business researchers and managers may struggle to find sufficient examples to demonstrate how these new approaches can be applied in various business research scenarios (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2017; Latan et al., 2017). This study opted for PLS-SEM due to its advantages in terms of reduced sample size requirements, ease of testing moderating and mediating relationships, and its ability to handle formative indicators.

4.8.2.2 Partial Least Square (PLS)

PLS is a procedure that has two steps as recommended by Henseler, Ringle, and Sinkovics (2019), the steps include evaluating the outer measurement model as well as the inner structural model. This procedure is further discussed in the following.

Evaluation of Outer-Structural Model

The external measurement model aims to assess the validity, internal consistency, and reliability of both observable and unobservable variables measured by a questionnaire (Ringle, Da Silva & Bido, 2015). Validity is evaluated through convergent and discriminant validity, while consistency is determined through reliability tests. By analysing the standardised external influences on observed variables, researchers can compare an individual's variance to an unobserved variable (Ryoo, Park, Kim, & Ryoo, 2020). A score of 0.7 or higher is generally considered acceptable for observed variables, while scores below 0.7 are discouraged (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler, Hubona, & Ray, 2017). The average variance extracted (AVE) should be computed in order to assess the convergent validity of a latent construct (Hubona & Ray, 2017; Latan et al., 2017). The AVE should be greater than 0.5 for all structures, indicating that latent constructs account for at least 50% of the variance in observed variables (Hubona & Ray, 2017).

Discriminant validity

In the route model, each manifest variable exhibits distinct characteristics compared to other constructs when its cross-load value in the latent variable is higher than that in all other constructs (Purwanto, Asbari, Santoso, Haque, & Nurjaya, 2020). To assess discriminant validity, researchers employ cross-loadings and the Fornell and Larcker criterion (Hair Jr., 2020). According to the proposed standard, a construct should not have the same variance as any other construct above its average variance extracted (AVE) value (Cepeda et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2017). Furthermore, Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommend that the square root of AVE for each latent variable should be greater than its correlations with other constructs (Purwanto et al., 2020).

Evaluation of the Inner Structural Model

After verifying the validity and reliability of the measurement models, the next step is to assess the structural model. This evaluation involves examining the Common Method Bias (CMB), R², Q² and path coefficients (Hair et al., 2019). Since the data was self-reported, it is crucial to investigate the possibility of CMB. A comprehensive collinearity test can be used to detect CMB by examining variance inflation factors (VIFs) (Hair Jr., 2020). If the VIFs exceed 3.3, it indicates collinearity in the model, which may be contaminated by CMB (Henseler et al., 2015). On the contrary, a CMB-free model can be assumed if the VIFs are equal to or less than 3.3.

Measurement of the Value of R²

The coefficient of determination in a structural model, also known as R², is a measure of the total variation explained in the endogenous construct, serving as an indicator of predictability (Cheah et al., 2020). According to Henseler et al. (2015) and Hair et al. (2017), an R² value of 0.75 is considered substantial, an R² value of 0.50 is moderate, and an R² value of 0.26 is poor.

Estimation of Path Coefficients (b) and T-statistics

The path coefficients in PLS and the standardised path coefficients in regression analysis are similar (Lajuni et al., 2020). The b-value (β) represents the expected change in the dependent construct for a one-unit change in the independent construct(s) (Nasidi et al., 2021). When calculating the b-values of each pathway in a hypothetical model, larger values indicate a greater substantial effect on the

endogenous latent constructs (Latan et al., 2017). However, the significance of the b-value must be tested using the t-statistic test (Hair, 2015) after the calculations are made. The bootstrapping method was used to assess the significance of the hypothesis and generate significance levels for the standardised coefficients (Sarstedt & Cheah, 2019). Acceptable T scores for a two-tailed test are 1.65 for a 10% significance level, 1.96 for a 5% significance level, and 2.58 for a 1% significance level. The standard beta values were calculated later to determine whether to accept or reject the hypothesis. Larger standard beta values may indicate a larger effect of the endogenous latent variable (Hair et al., 2017; Akter et al., 2017).

Measurement of the effect size (2)

Impact size (f^2) measures the strength of each exogenous latent variable's influence on an endogenous latent variable (Anjani, 2021). The effect size indicates whether one construct significantly affects another and how the R² value changes when a construct is removed from the path model (Fatoki, 2019). According to Hair et al. (2019), specific values of the effect size can be interpreted as follows: values less than 0.02 indicate no effect, values between 0.02 and 0.15 suggest a minor effect, values between 0.15 and 0.35 indicate a medium effect, and values greater than 0.35 indicate a large effect (Hair et al., 2019). Furthermore, Yahaya-Nasidi (2021) notes that effect size values less than 0.02 suggest no significant influence.

Predictive Relevance of the Model (Q2)

The quality of the PLS path model was evaluated using cross-validated redundancy, a method that involves using blindfolded approaches to compute Q² statistics (Shanmugapriya, Mehta & Saxena, 2022). According to the conceptual model, the endogenous latent constructs should be predicted by the model, which is guided by Q² criteria (Norizan, Arham & Ibrahim, 2021). For a given endogenous latent construct in the SEM, it is necessary that the measured Q² values exceed zero (Hussain et al., 2018).

The goodness of fit test

The Goodness-of-fit (GOF) measure is a global fit statistic that assesses the overall quality of a model. It is calculated as the geometric mean of the extracted average variance (AVE) for endogenous variables and the mean R-squared value (Hair Jr.,

2015). The GOF test is used to determine whether empirical data are adequately captured by the model, providing a measure of how well the model fits the observed data (Shanmugapriya et al., 2022).

The GOF value ranges from 0 to 1, with values of 0.10 (small), 0.25 (medium), and 0.36 (large) indicating increasing levels of global validation of the model (Fatoki, 2019). Calculating the GOF involves averaging AVEs, multiplying by the squared value of R, and then taking the square root of the result (Hair Jr., 2015).

Estimated Model Fit

The estimated model (Purwanto et al., 2020) is a structural model that considers the overall impact of variables and the model architecture (Hair, 2015). It is a more limited version of the Fit scale. The fit of the model is evaluated using the standardised mean square residual (SRMR) (Shanmugapriya et al., 2022), which measures the average difference between observed and predicted values. SRMR scores range from 0 to 1, with scores below 0.05 (Purwanto et al., 2020) indicating a well-fitting model.

The data collected was tabulated and analysed using version 29 of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The data stored on the Google form application was transferred or, rather, coded into the computer system. SPSS is a software program that analyses scientific data related to social sciences. This program consists of models that are both simple and complex, and it is mostly used for surveys, data mining, and so forth. It was originally launched in 1968 by SPSS Inc. and was acquired by IBM (International Business Machines Corporation) in 2009 (William, 2022). It creates convenience through automated outputs such as data cleansing, organising, and construction of graphs and other outputs.

4.9 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

4.9.1 Reliability

Reliability is defined as the degree to which the results obtained by a measurement and procedure can be replicated (Bolarinwa, 2015). There are three aspects of reliability, namely, internal consistency (homogeneity), stability, and equivalence.

Homogeneity involves the assessment of internal consistency using the item-to-total correlation, split-half reliability, Kuder-Richardson coefficient, and Cronbach's α . Split-

half reliability is the result of halving the results of a test or instrument. The Kuder-Richardson reliability test focuses on determining the average of all the possible split-half combinations, and a correlation of 0 to 1 is generated. The Cronbach's α result ranges from 0 to 1. A reliability test score of 0.7 or higher is acceptable (Heale and Twycross, 2015). Stability uses a test-retest and parallel or alternate form testing. This test is given to previous participants multiple times under similar conditions. A statistical comparison of the tests is made every time the test is conducted. Stability is recognised for having a high correlation between the scores each time the participant completes the test. A coefficient of less than 0.3 is deemed weak, while a coefficient of greater than 0.5 is deemed strong (Heale and Twycross, 2015). Equivalence is investigated through inter-rater reliability. This test involves the qualitative determination of whether two observers agree (Cole, 2024).

The data obtained from the questionnaires was reliably measured and to do so, Cronbach's alpha test was used to test the reliability of a study, and this refers to the measurement of the strength of the consistency of a study. The relationship between the items was determined using the Cronbach alpha test (Jain and Angural, 2017).

Composite reliability test was also used to measure the reliability of the items. Composite reliability is a measure used in psychometrics and structural equation modelling to assess the consistency of a set of indicators or items that measure a latent construct. It provides an estimate of the reliability of a measurement model, indicating how well the items represent the underlying construct. Composite reliability is particularly useful as it is based on the actual factor structure of the measure, offering a more nuanced understanding of reliability than traditional Cronbach's alpha (Hair, Howard, Nitzl, 2020).

4.9.2 Validity

The concept of validity was formulated by Kelly (1927), who stated that a test is valid if it measures what it is supposed to measure. Several varieties of validity include face validity, construct validity, content validity, and criterion validity. These validities categorised into two extensive components, which are internal and external validities (Oluwatayo, 2012).

Internal validity has more to do with determining how accurately the measures of the study quantify what it was intended to measure, while external validity determines how

accurately the measures of the study sample describe the reference population from which the study sample was drawn (Wong, Ong & Kuek, 2012). The study focused on the validity of the construct.

4.9.2.1 Construct validity

Constructs are complex concepts that are made up of simpler concepts and have a subjective component. Construct validity is defined as an assessment of the variables involved in a study to determine whether they behave in a way that supports the theory of the research. This test is done by comparing the quality of two similar tests to see how the two measures correlate (Heath, 2023).

Construct validity may be used to assess a new measure or theory (Heath, 2023). The correlation analysis established the association between the independent variable and the dependent variable (Senthilnathan, 2019). The study ascertained the construct validity through correlation analysis, face validity, and factor analysis.

Correlation analysis

Correlation is a statistical measure that describes the direction and strength of the relationship between two variables (Cheusheva, 2023). The numerical measure of the degree of association between the variables is known as the correlation coefficient and is represented by (r). The value of the coefficient lies between -1 and 1 and indicates the strength and the direction of the linear relationship between variables (Cheusheva, 2023). The value of the coefficient (r) indicates the following:

- A coefficient of 1 indicates a perfect positive relationship (as one variable increases, the other variable increases proportionally).
- A coefficient of -1 means a perfect negative relationship (an increase in one variable results in a proportional decrease in the other variable).
- A coefficient of 0 means that there is no relationship between two variables

Face validity

Face validity tests whether the test seems to measure what it is supposed to measure (McLeod, 2023). Tests that appear clear to other individuals are said to have a high face validity, and tests that have an unclear purpose are said to have a low face validity (Nevo, 1985). In other words, face validity is defined as the subjective assessment of

the author of the presentation and relevance of the instrument that was used to measure whether items appear to be relevant, clear, reasonable, and unambiguous (Oluwatayo, 2012).

Convergent validity

A crucial element of construct validity, convergent validity assesses whether several indicators of the same construct have a strong correlation with one another, guaranteeing that they accurately convey the intended idea (Hair et al., 2019). When indicators of a construct have a high Composite Reliability (CR) over 0.7 and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) above 0.5, indicating significant shared variance among items, this validity is shown (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Discriminant validity

On the other hand, discriminant validity evaluates whether constructs are different from one another. A conventional method for this validation is the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which was put out by Fornell and Larcker in 1981. It compares each construct's square root of AVE to its correlations with other constructs. This comparison aids in verifying that each component explains the variance of its indicators more well than it correlates with other constructs (Henseler et al., 2015).

Fornell-Larcker Criterion

The Fornell-Larcker Criterion, proposed by Fornell and Larcker in 1981, is a standard for confirming discriminant validity in structural equation modeling (SEM). However, it has limitations in certain contexts, and newer methods like the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio have been proposed to enhance accuracy.

The study validated the items by using construct validity (convergent validity and the discriminant validity and Fornell-Larcker Criterion). This is to ensure that the indicators are reflective of the constructs. Furthermore, these methods assisted with ensuring that the constructs are not similar which prevents overlapping.

Factor analysis

Factor analysis is a statistical method involving multiple variables, used by researchers to identify which variables within a set create logical subsets that are largely independent from one another. This method is especially useful for pinpointing the

factors that influence the variable by merging associated variables within the same factor (Shrestha, 2021). Factor analysis is significant in descriptive statistics and social science. It primarily focuses on product management, business marketing, psychometrics, machine learning, and finance (Shrestha, 2021)

Factor analysis can also be described as a study of unobserved variables, which are also known as latent variables and are combined with observed variables to have an effect on outcomes (Masterclass, 2022). Unobserved variables are studied to determine whether there could be similar factors behind observed outputs in a set of data. From a layman's perspective, statisticians want to determine whether a certain factor produces common results throughout a population (Masterclass, 2022). Two statistical factors are involved in factor analysis and are described below:

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

Regarding the EFA, the author works on a set of data without predetermined notions about its factor structure. The researcher hopes to isolate the factors that affect the observed data by identifying latent factors and recording them in a chart along with the variance among the observed variables (Masterclass, 2022). This simply means that the EFA helps the researcher understand how the different variables in a set of data are related to each other through the identification of latent factors that underlie them (Arteaga, 2023).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

The CFA utilises structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the hypotheses of a study by making a comparison of the hypotheses and observed data. The structural equations are then revised to better represent practical or real-world data. This makes the CFA similar to the least-squares estimation, but the CFA is able to recognise minor errors in the measurements when investigating a large number of variables (Masterclass, 2022). The latent variable measurement models aim to determine the nature and number of factors that account for the variation and covariation among a group of indicators (test items) (Brown & Moore, 2013).

The study employed both EFA and CFA as it provides a comprehensive approach to measurement development, validation, and theory testing. The adoption of these two

techniques ensures that the findings are credible and also strengthens the validity and reliability of measurement instruments (Wang & Wang, 2012).

4.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Several ethical repercussions were taken into consideration, and to overcome such, the ethical clearance certificate (Annexure 3) was requested from the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) at the University of Limpopo. Subsequent to the approval from the committee, the collection of data follows. Participants receive a survey accompanied by the permission letter from the TREC and the consent form. The study included individuals from Generations X, Y, and Z around the Capricorn District, therefore, the permission letter was provided to them. Below are some of the ethical considerations.

4.10.1 Confidentiality and anonymity of participation

To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, the personal information of the participants, such as their names and home addresses, is not required in the survey. Adequate information is also provided for participants to review before filling in the questionnaire.

4.10.2 Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation

Informed consent is also attached to the questionnaire, which is a layout of what it means for the participants to participate in the survey and grants them the freedom to voluntarily participate in the study. Participants are not pressured to participate in the study with the promise of financial incentives. Participants were also not forced to participate in the research.

4.10.3 Respect and dignity and risk and harm

The human dignity and personal integrity of the participants were respected. The safety and well-being of the respondents were taken into consideration, which means that the participants were not exposed to any kind of harm or risks that might affect them physically, socially, psychologically, and legally.

4.9.3.1 Physical risks

Participants were not exposed to physical risks such as fatigue, pain, and discomfort. Participants were provided with the consent form to know the expectations of participants who are willing to fill in the questionnaire. Participants also had the option of participating in the research or not.

4.10.3.2 Social/economic risks

Participants were not subjected to embarrassment, loss of respect for others, or negative changes that could affect the participant's relationship with other individuals. Participants were also not exposed to economic risks such as loss of income due to taking part in the study.

4.10.3.3 Psychological risks

The participant did not experience negative emotional states such as, worry, anxiety, depression and loss of self-esteem. Psychological risks such as deception, hypnosis, and mental stresses were also avoided.

4.10.3.4 Legal risks

The subjects were not susceptible to research methods that would result in criminal liability. The content and activities of the study excluded any violation of any laws. To evade the above-mentioned risks; Participants consented to participate in their own free will, the questionnaire did not include information that may trigger any risks, and the participants were allowed to withdraw in the middle of finishing the survey should they feel uncomfortable completing it.

4.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter examined important aspects of the research methodology involved in the study. This chapter explained the study area, research design, study population, and ethical considerations. Additionally, the data collection and analysis methods measuring instruments and the data collection procedure to follow were also highlighted. The following chapter presents the results of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results of the study on the relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing intentions: the generational perspective. This chapter presents the response rate and discusses the demographic variables of the respondents. Descriptive statistics and structural equation modelling (SEM) will be discussed. Detailed inferential results are also provided. While SEM tests the model and hypotheses, descriptive statistics reveal the personalities of the respondents. In addition, frequency tables and graphs present the findings of respondents' demographic attributes as percentages. The means and standard deviation of descriptive statistics, along with graphical summaries, are used to offer respondents' scores on the variables under study.

5.2 RESPONSE RATE

Table 5.1 presents the response rate of the survey. A total of 510 questionnaires were supplied to respondents across the Capricorn district, and 300 questionnaires were returned. The response rate was 58.8%. The questionnaires were divided into three categories according to the age/generations of the respondents, which was Generation X, Y, and Z. Each of the generations provided 100 responses, which sum up to 300 responses.

Table 5.1: The rate of response by the number of surveys sent out, returned, and percentage

Respondents	No. of surveys sent out	No. of surveys returned	Percentage
Consumers belonging to Generations X, Y and Z	510	300	58.8%

5.3 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

This section of the study focuses on the demographic data collected from the 300 respondents, particularly their ages (generations), gender, and educational qualifications. The study also collected data on social media activities such as their frequented social media platforms and the kind of influencers they follow.

5.3.1 Generations/Age

Table 5.2 below shows the frequencies and percentages of respondents or the generations to which they belong. The results indicate that out of 300 respondents, 33.33% belong to Generation Z, 33.33% belong to Generation Y, and 33.33% belong to Generation X.

Table 5.2: Generations/Age by frequencies and percentage

Generations	Frequencies	Percentage
GENERATION Z (18-24 years)	100	33.33
GENERATION Y (25-40 years)	100	33.33
GENERATION X (41-56 years)	100	33.33
TOTAL	300	100.0

5.3.2 Gender of participants

Figure 5 indicates the gender of the respondents. The results show that out of 300 respondents, 54% were women and 46% of respondents were men.

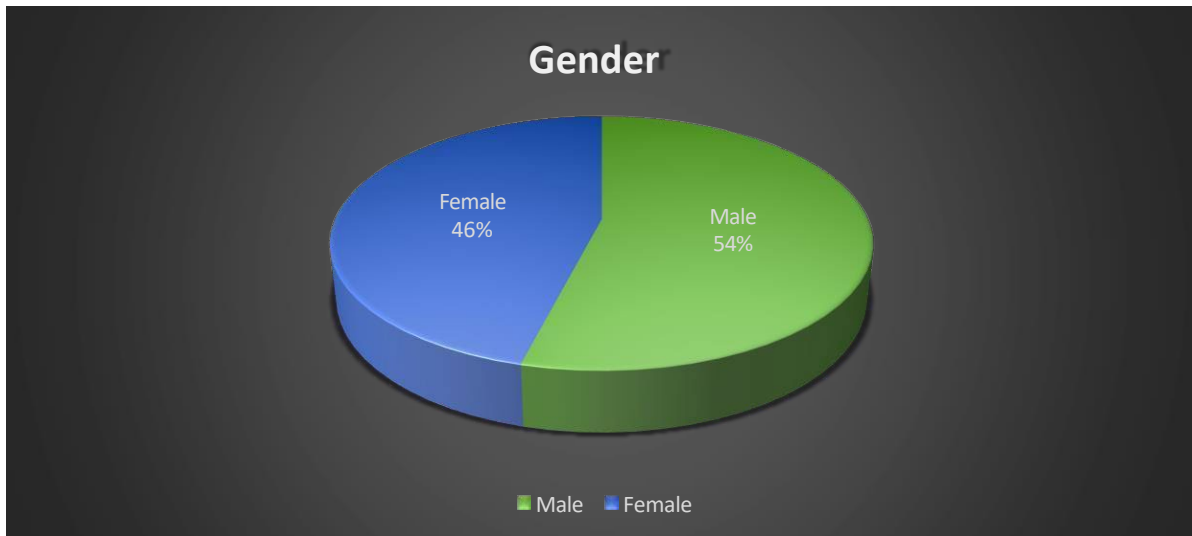


Figure 5: Gender of participants

5.3.3 Educational qualifications

Figure 6 shows the educational qualifications of the respondents. The results indicate that out of 300 respondents, 33% have a pre-matric qualification, 19.67% have a matric qualification and 65% have a post-matric qualification. Thus, the results indicate that the majority of the respondents in the study area have a post-matric qualification.

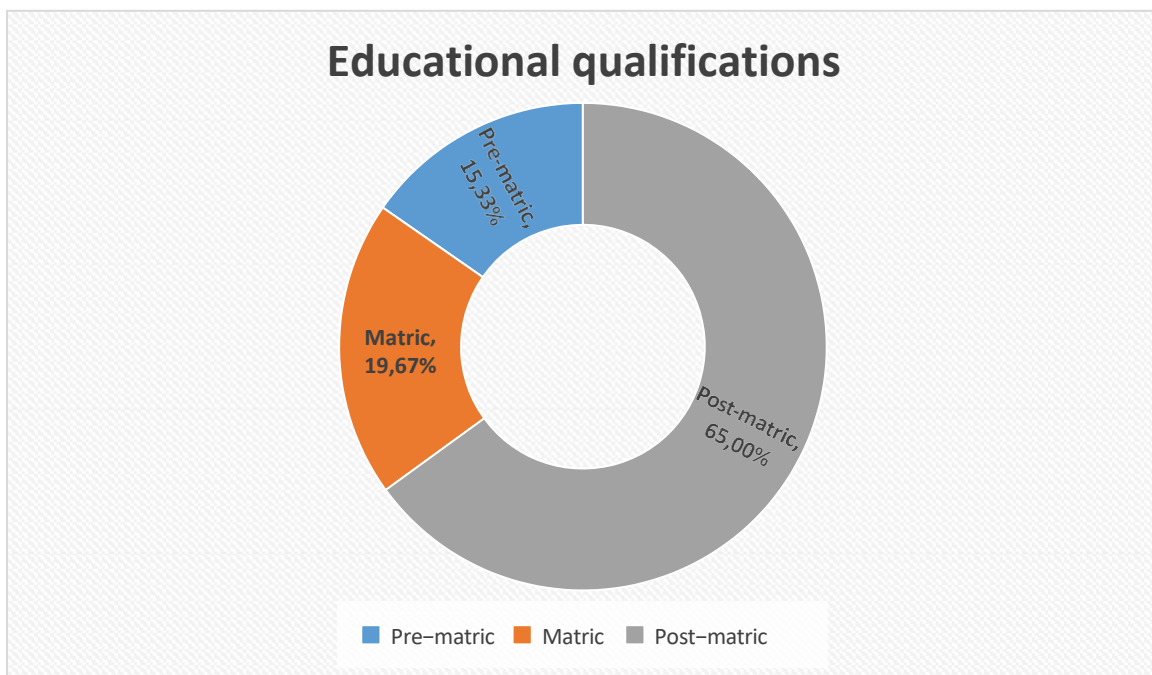


Figure 6: Qualifications of the respondents

5.3.4 Type of influencers the respondents follow

Figure 7 indicates the type of influencers the respondents follow the most. The results show that out of 300 respondents, 8% follow nano influencers, 11% follow micro influencers, 32% follow macro influencers, and 49% follow celebrities. The results show that most of the respondents in the study area follow celebrities on social networks.

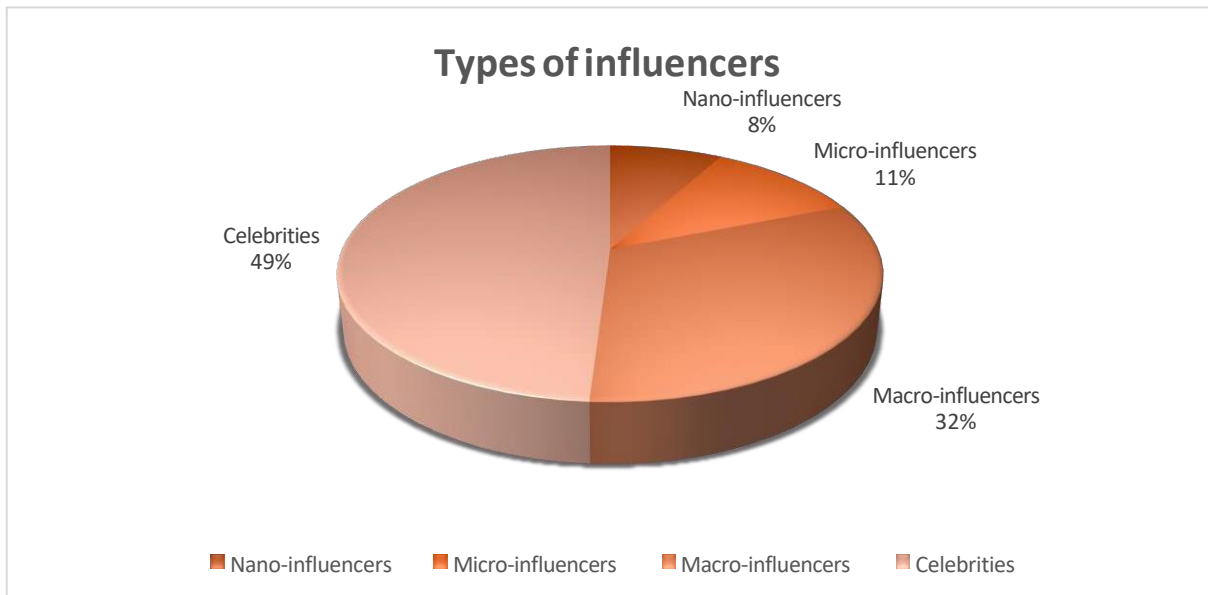


Figure 7: Type of influencers

5.3.5 Social media platforms

Figure 8 illustrates the platforms of social media most commonly used by respondents. The data reveal that 25% of the respondents used Facebook, 24% used Instagram, 16% used Twitter, 6.67% used YouTube, 27% used TikTok, and 1.33% used other platforms not mentioned. This highlights that most respondents in the study area, 27%, primarily used TikTok.

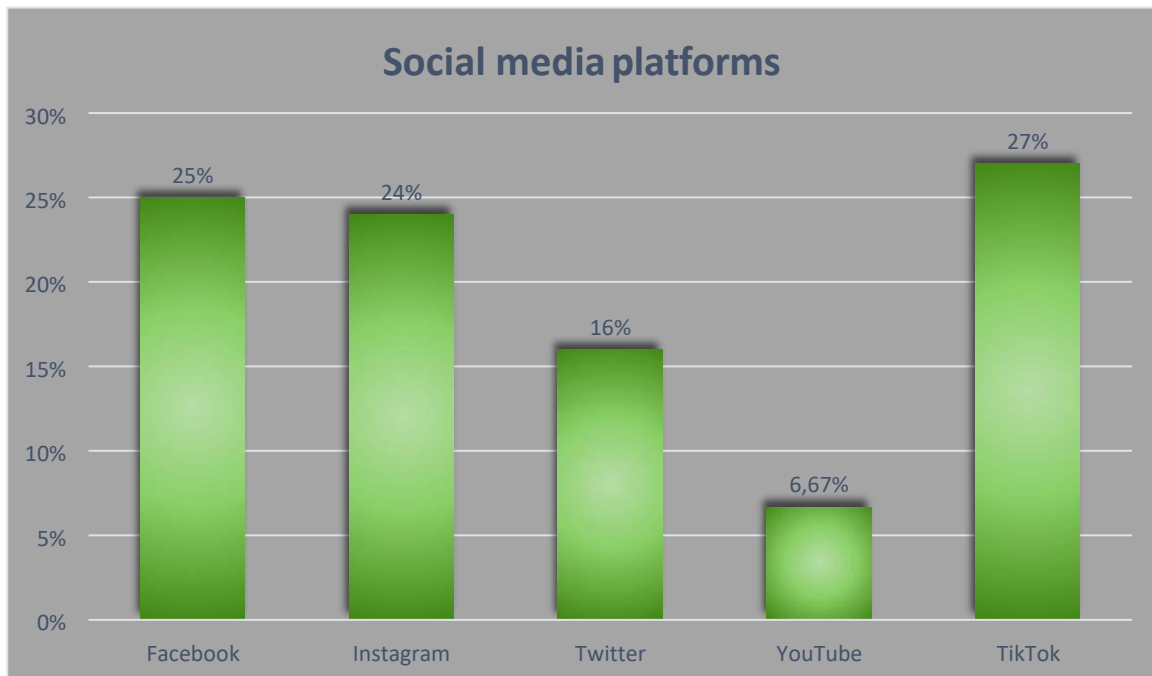


Figure 8 :Social media platforms

5.3.6 Social media usage

Table 5.3 presents the frequencies and percentages of social media use among customers. The results indicate that, of the 300 respondents, 66.7% used social media daily, 27.3% used it 4-6 times a week, 5.0% used it 2-3 times a week and 1.00% used it once a week. This demonstrates that the majority of the respondents in the study area used social networks daily.

Table 5.3: Social Media Usage by Frequency and Percentage

Social media usage	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	200	66.7
4-6 times a week	82	27.3
2-3 times a week	15	5.0
Once a week	3	1.0
TOTAL	300	100

5.4 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND NORMALITY ASSESSMENT RESULTS

5.4.1 Descriptive statistics, skewness, and kurtosis

Descriptive statistics provide a summary of the sample that is being investigated without making any inferences based on probability theory. Descriptive statistics provides a summarised generalisation of the data through tools such as frequency tables and percentages, as well as other measures of central tendency, such as the mean (Kaliyadan & Kulkarni, 2019). Table 4 below shows the minimum mean result of 3.947 for CH2 and a maximum mean value of 4.650 for CBE1. The standard deviation results show a minimum of 0.576 for PI3 and a maximum standard deviation of 0.993 for CH1. Testing for normality is essential in numerous statistical methods. Violation of this assumption could lead to unreliable or invalid interpretations and inferences. Therefore, it is imperative that the distribution of the data is analysed before the appropriate statistical test is chosen (Matore & Khairani, 2020). The normal distribution consists of two components, namely, skewness and kurtosis. Skewness refers to the status of the mode, median, and mean of the data relative to each other. When the data are distributed in such a manner that the mean is positioned in the middle, it indicates that there is no skewness. When the mean is not positioned in the middle of the data distribution, it indicates that the distribution is non-symmetric or rather it is a skewed distribution (Demir, 2022). Kurtosis, conversely, means the extent to which the data move away from the mean or how close they are to the mean (Baykul & Güzeller, 2013). Griffin & Steinbrecher (2013) emphasize that the acceptable values of skewness fall between -3 and $+3$, and kurtosis is appropriate in a range of -10 to $+10$ when using SEM. Table 4 shows that the data is normally distributed as the values do not go below or above the recommended threshold. The next discussion will be based on the properties of SmartPLS-SEM version

Table 5.4: Normality Tests Descriptive Statistics

ITEM	MEAN	STD DEVIATION	SKEWNESS	KURTOSIS
CH1	4.227	0.993	-1.170	0.339
CH2	3,947	0.952	-1.109	0.914
CH3	4,510	0.734	-1.646	2.920
CH4	4.073	0.933	-1.240	1.421
CH5	4.530	0.667	-1.852	5.533
CD1	4.647	0.624	-2.397	4.00
CD2	4.113	0.877	-1.180	1.321
CD3	4.487	0.696	-1.897	5.906
CD4	4.423	0.677	-1.538	4.523
CD5	3.983	0.883	-0.996	0.698
CD6	4.290	0.740	-1.369	3.196
CD7	4.370	0.749	-1.637	4.198
CD8	4.540	0.619	-1.261	1.711
CD9	4.487	0.646	-1.483	3.873
CBE1	4.650	0.655	-2.223	5.846
CBE2	4.510	0.672	-1.435	2.292
CBE3	4.453	0.737	-1.706	3.993
CBE4	4.483	0.677	-1.667	4.704
CBE5	4.313	0.773	-1.482	3.347
SM1	4.560	0.776	0.776	3.133
SM2	4.067	0.930	0.930	1.438
SM3	4.543	0.709	0.709	3.764
SM4	4.197	0.813	0.813	1.156
SM5	4.130	0.854	0.854	1.443
SM6	3.980	0.929	0.989	1.241
PI1	4.197	0.899	-1.400	2.005
PI2	4.347	0.628	-1.076	3.425
PI3	4.577	0.576	-1.412	3.934
PI4	4.343	0.669	-1.406	4.583

5.4.2 Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test

A technique to determine whether two random samples are derived from the same distribution is known as the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. When the distributions of the two samples match, the test is valid. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was performed in this study to determine whether the data were normal. In order to determine whether a set of data is well modelled by a normal distribution, A normality test is done and also aids in estimating the probability of a random variable underlying the set of data being normally distributed (Hanusz & Tarasiska, 2015). The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test is normally used when the sample size is greater than or equal to 50. This test states that when the $P > 0.05$, the null hypothesis is not rejected and the data is said to be normally distributed (Mishra, Pandey, Singh, Gupta, Sahu & Keshri, 2019).

Table 5.5 indicates that CD, CBE, SM, GC, and PI are tested for normality. The normality analysis for CD by Kolmogorov-Smirnov is 0.165 and significant at 0.000, CBE is 0.192 and significant at 0.000, SM is 0.116 significant at 0.000, GC is 0.126 significant at 0.000 and PI is 0.154 is significant at 0.001. The results reveal that these constructs are fit for testing by the SmartPLS software since the normality distribution is supported.

Table 5.5: Normality analysis for Influencer marketing (CD, CBE, SM), Generation cohort, and Purchasing intentions.

Name of constructs	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	
	Statistic	Sig.
CD	0.165	0.000
CBE	0.192	0.000
SM	0.116	0.000
GC	0.126	0.000
PI	0.154	0.001

*Note: Credibility (CD), customer brand engagement (CBE), similarity (SM), purchasing intention (PI), and generational cohort (GC).

5.5 PARTIAL LEAST SQUARE STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING (PLS-

SEM)

The partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) is used in this study to analyse the relationships between variables and test theoretical models. PLS SEM is a powerful technique that allows researchers to simultaneously analyse complex relationships. According to Wold (1975), PLS-SEM uses a combination of regression and principal component analysis to assess the relationships between latent variables and their measured indicators. The Reflective Measurement Model

5.5.1 Reflective measurement model

A reflective model occurs when the indicators of a construct are caused by that construct. Matthews, Hair, & Matthews (2018) further state that when indicators are highly correlated and interchangeable, they are reflective, and their reliability and validity should be thoroughly investigated. Examination of the indicator loadings, Internal Consistency, Convergent Validity, and Discriminant Validity is one of the criteria for evaluating the reflection measurement. These factors are discussed in **Table 5.6** below:

Table 5.6: Reflective measurement

Construct	Item code	Outer loadings	Outer weights	CA	CR	AVE
<i>Credibility (CD)</i>				0.932	0.891	0.506
	CD 1	0.765	0.197			
	CD 2	0.837	0.182			
	CD 3	0.855	0.187			
<i>Customer brand engagement (CBE)</i>				CA	CR	AVE
				0.824	0.946	0.786
	CBE1	0.887	0.283			
	CBE2	0.932	0.264			
	CBE4	0.893	0.284			
<i>Similarity (SM)</i>				CA	CR	AVE
				0.845	0.825	0.545
	SM1	0.830	0.218			
	SM2	0.803	0.220			
	SM3	0.750	0.217			
	SM4	0.751	0.215			
<i>Purchasing intention (PI)</i>				CA	CR	AVE
				0.867	0.870	0.628

	PI1	0.898	0.178			
	PI2	0.723	0.188			
	PI3	0.780	0.179			
	PI4	0.758	0.186			
Generational cohort (GC)				CA	CR	AVE
				0.923	0.890	0.710
	GC1	0.840	0.254			
	GC2	0.790	0.147			
	GC3	0.810	0.210			
	GC4	0.789	0.189			

*Note: Credibility (CD), customer brand engagement (CBE), similarity (SM), purchasing intention (PI), and generational cohort (GC) and Cronbach's alpha (CA), Composite reliability (CR), Extracted Average Variance (AVE).

5.5.2 Indicator loadings

According to Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, and Ringle (2019), examining the indicator loadings is the first stage in the assessment of a reflective measurement model. They further claim that loadings above 0.708 are recommended, as they suggest that the construct explains more than 50% of the indicator variance and thus provides acceptable item reliability (Hair et al., 2019). **Table 5.6** shows that all item loadings of all constructs are greater than 0.708. This means that all construct loadings should be retained as they explain more than 50% of the variance of the indicators and thus provide item reliability.

5.5.3 Internal consistency

Using Jöreskog's (1971) composite reliability, the second step involves evaluating internal consistency. Internal consistency is often assessed using correlations between different items on the same test or the same subscale on a larger test. According to Viladrich, Angulo-Brunet, and Doval (2017), it determines whether a set of items designed to measure the same general construct produce comparable results.

In most cases, higher values indicate a higher level of reliability. Reliability scores between 0.60 and 0.70 are considered acceptable, but scores between 0.70 and 0.90

are considered fair or good. Scores of 0.95 and above present a challenge as they indicate item redundancy and reduce construct validity. The other reliability metric is Cronbach's Alpha, which should be at least 0.7. The composite reliability values in **Table 5.6** above are greater than 0.70 but less than 0.95, indicating good construct reliability. Additionally, over 0.7, Cronbach's alpha values show satisfactory construct reliability.

5.5.4 Convergent validity

The convergence validity of each construct measure is discussed in the third step of evaluating the reflective measurement model. The degree to which a construct converges to explain the variance of its elements is called convergent validity. The mean extracted variance (AVE) for all items on each construct is the matrix used to assess the convergent validity of a construct. If the acceptable AVE is 0.50 or more, the construct represents at least 50% of the variance of its elements (Hair et al., 2019). As in **Table 5.6** above, all constructs in this research achieved an AVE greater than 0.50, indicating reasonable convergent validity.

5.5.5 Discriminant validity

This part focuses on the discriminant validity. Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which a construct or measure is distinct from other constructs or measures that it is not supposed to be related to (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). In other words, discriminant validity is concerned with ensuring that a particular construct or measure is not measuring something other than what it is intended to measure (Bollen & Long, 1993).

5.5.5.1 Fornell-Larcker criterion

Discriminant validity is assessed as the fourth step in evaluating a reflective measurement scale, which examines how distinctly a construct differs empirically from other constructs in the structural model. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), this can be done by comparing the average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct to the squared correlations (indicating shared variance) between that construct and all other constructs in the model. It is essential that no construct has shared variance that exceeds its AVE.

In Table 5.6, the square root of the extracted AVE is shown in bold and italicized along the diagonal, while the correlations between constructs are presented in the other cells. Furthermore, as shown in Table 7, the square root of the AVE is greater

than the correlations among the latent variables. Both of these criteria indicate sufficient discriminant validity. Collectively, these assessments demonstrate that the measurement model is effective.

Table 5.7: Fornell-Larcker criterion

CONSTRUCT	CD	CBE	SM	GC	PI
CR	0.887				
CBE	0.655	0.810			
SM	0.368	0.571	0.711		
GC	0.446	0.517	0.614	0.738	
PI	0.497	0.641	0.579	0.681	0.792

*Note: Credibility (CD), customer brand engagement (CBE), similarity (SM), purchasing intention (PI), and generational cohort (GC).

5.5.5.2 HTMT (heterotrait–monotrait ratio).

Another method to calculate the discriminant validity is the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT), which is a contemporary conventional metric. As a statistical test, it can test the null hypothesis ($H_0: HTMT < 1$) vs ($H_A: HTMT \geq 1$) (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015) with HTMT a 95% confidence interval with a value of 1 (i.e YES) has no discriminatory power. Based on **Table 5.8**, from the value of HTMT the construction was tested and indicated that it meets the analysis criteria of being below 1. It can then be concluded that according to the HTMT values shown in **Table 5.8** below, there is no correlation between the measures of unrelated constructs.

Table 5.8: HTMT (heterotrait–monotrait ratio)

CONSTRUCTS	CD	CBE	SM	GC	PI
CD					
CBE	<i>0.552</i>				
SM	0.581	<i>0.763</i>			
GC	0.567	0.688	<i>0.875</i>		
PI	0.450	0.653	0.759	<i>0.778</i>	<i>0.838</i>

5.6 STRUCTURAL MODEL

A structural model is a statistical technique that represents complex relationships between variables in a system using a series of equations (Kline, 2011). This part of the study will use structural equation modelling to explain the relationship between influence marketing, consumer purchasing intentions, and the generation cohort.

5.6.1 Common method bias (CMB)

Common method bias (CMB) occurs when changes in replies are brought on by the instrument rather than the respondents' true predispositions, which the instrument seeks to elucidate (Hair, Page, & Brunsveld, 2019). In other words, you are analysing variances because the instrument introduces bias. Consequently, the results are contaminated by the noise of biased instruments (Kock, 2015). CMB could pose a threat, as biases from systematic errors can affect the results (Hair, 2021). The complete collinearity test based on variance inflation factors (VIFs) was used to assess both vertical and lateral collinearity (Jordan & Troth, 2020). If VIF has a value greater than 3.3, this indicates that the model may be contaminated with CMB (Hair et al., 2019). The VIF values for this research study are 1.45 (CD), 1.59 (CBE), 1.40 (SM), 1.11 (GC), and 1.23 (PI). The VIF values of the model constructs are less than 3.3. This means that this study is free from CMB.

5.6.2 R Square (R²)

R squared is a statistical measure that represents the proportion of variance for a dependent variable (Hair et al., 2018). While the correlation explains the strength of the relationship between an independent and dependent variable, R^2 explains the amount of variance in the second variable. The R^2 shows the proportion of variation in the dependent variable(s) that is explained by one or more predictor variables. According to Hair et al. (2019), R^2 of 0.75, 0.50 and 0.25 can be considered significant, moderate, and weak accordingly. Table 5.9 below shows that in this study, the R^2 values obtained reveal significant and moderate R^2 values.

Table 5.9: R-squared results of the R-squared results of the statistical measure.

Construct	R²	Comment
CD	0.654	Moderate
CBE	0.763	Significant
SM	0.607	Moderate
GC	0.564	Moderate
PI	0.702	Moderate
Average of R² = 0.686		

*Note: Credibility (CD), customer brand engagement (CBE), similarity (SM), purchasing intention (PI), and generational cohort (GC).

5.6.3 Path Coefficients and T-Statistics

To test whether the hypothesis is accepted or not, the bootstrapping method was used to generate the significance levels of the standardised coefficients (Hair et al., 2019). The acceptable T-statistics for a two-tailed test are 1.65 for a 10% significance level, 1.96 for a 5% significance level, and 2.58 for a 1% significance level. The higher the standard Beta value, the larger the effect of the endogenous latent variable. Table 10 below shows the effect of the path coefficient and the T-statistics.

According to **Table 5.10**, hypothesis one (H1a) proposes that CD and PI are significantly positively related. The results (SB=0.31; T=7.263; P<0.05) show that there is a significant positive relationship between CD and PI. Hypothesis one is accepted. Then H1b= Hypothesis two proposes that CBE and PI are significantly positively related. The results $\beta=0.69$; T= 12.114 P<0.05) indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between CBE and PI. Hypothesis two is accepted. H1c= Hypothesis three proposes that SM and PI are significantly positively related. The results (SB=0.23; T= 2.920; P<0.05) show that there is a significant positive relationship between SM and PI.

Table 5.10: Path coefficient and T-statistics

Hypothesis	Standard Beta (β)	T-statistics	P-value	Decision
CD \rightarrow PI	0.31	7.263	0.001	Accepted
CBE \rightarrow PI	0.69	12.114	0.000	Accepted
SM \rightarrow PI	0.23	2.920	0.002	Accepted

Table 5.11 below shows the T statistics and path coefficient of the moderating relationship between GC, CD and PI. H2a=Hypothesis proposes that GC moderates the relationship between CD and PI and the results (SB=-0.541; T=7.152, P<0.05) show that GC moderates the relationship. The hypothesis (H2a) is accepted. H2b= Hypothesis proposes that GC moderates the relationship between CBE and PI and the results (SB=-0.710; T=6.871, P<0.05) show that GC moderates the relationship. Hypothesis (H2b) is accepted. H2c= Hypothesis proposes that GC moderates the relationship between SM and PI and the results (SB=-0.651; T=8.789, P<0.05) show that GC moderates the relationship. The hypothesis (H2c) is accepted. The next discussion will be based on the goodness-of-fit test.

Table 5.11: Path coefficient and T-statistics

Hypothesis	Standard Beta	T-statistics	p-value	Decision
GC*CD \rightarrow PI	0.541	7.152	0.001	Accepted
GC*CBE \rightarrow PI	0.710	6.871	0.000	Accepted

GC*SM\otimesPI	0.651	8.789	0.003	Accepted
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5.6.4 Goodness of Fit Test

The goodness/goodness-of-fit (GOF) test is used to determine whether the empirical data is adequately captured by the model. GOF is defined as the global fit measure; it is the geometric mean of both the extracted average variances and the average R-square (R^2) of the endogenous variables (Hair, 2019). The GOF has values from 0 to 1. Hair et al. (2020) postulate that the GOF values of 0.10 (small), 0.25 (medium), and 0.36 (large) provide global validation of the model demonstrate. The GOF is calculated by averaging the AVEs and multiplying by the R value and then obtaining the square root value. Therefore, the average AVE is 0.636 and the average $R^2 = 0.686$, the GOF value is 0.66. It can be concluded that the empirical data fit the model satisfactorily and have significant predictive power.

5.6.5 Predictive Relevance of the Model (Q^2)

The predictive relevance of the model is a recommended supplementary assessment test (Hair et al., 2017). This study used Q^2 to evaluate the predictive model. The model is predictive when the Q^2 value is greater than zero (Hair et al., 2018). The Q^2 values of this model is 0.467; are greater than 0 and therefore suggest that the model has reasonable predictive power.

5.6.6 The Effect Size (f^2)

The effect size (f^2) shows the magnitude of the effect of each exogenous latent construct on the endogenous latent construct (Hair et al., 2018). The effect size shows whether one construct has a substantial impact on another construct and how removing a construct from the path model changes the value of R (Hair et al., 2018). In the guidelines for evaluating f^2 , Hair et al. (2019) point out that these values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects of an exogenous latent variable on an endogenous latent variable, respectively. In addition, effect size values less than 0.02 indicate no effect is present. The effect size values of this model are $CD=0.309$; $CBE=0.248$; $SM=0.299$, $GC=0.265$ and $PI = 0.37$. These values show a moderate effect on endogenous variables.

5.6.7 Estimated Model Fit

The estimated and saturated model assesses the correlation between all constructs. The estimated model is a model based on an overall effects scheme and takes into account the model structure (Hair Jr et al., 2021). Therefore, it is a more restricted version of the measure of fit. The fit of the model is measured using the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR), which shows the average of the standardised residuals between the observed and hypothesized matrices '(Hair et al., 2019). The SRMR values vary from zero to one, with values smaller than 0.05 obtained by well-fitting models. A better fit is indicated by a lower SRMR. The SRMR value of the study, which is 0.033, indicates that the model fits the data well.

5.7 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Table 5.12 indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between credibility (CD) and purchasing intention (PI), there is also a significant positive relationship between customer brand engagement (CBE) and purchasing intention (PI), and there is a significant positive relationship between similarity (SM) and purchasing intention (PI). It can then be concluded that credibility, customer brand engagement, and similarity, which are all factors involved in influencer marketing, have a significant effect on consumers' purchasing intentions.

Furthermore, it has been established that the generational cohort (GC) moderates the relationship between credibility (CD) and purchasing intention (PI), the generational cohort (GC) moderates the relationship between the engagement of the customer brand (CBE) and purchasing intention (PI), and the generational cohort (GC) moderates the relationship between similarity (SM) and purchasing intention (PI). This indicates that generation cohorts have a moderating effect on the relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing intentions.

Table 5.12: Research hypotheses

Hypothesis	Results
H1a There is a significant positive relationship between credibility (CD) and purchase intention (PI).	Accepted
H1b There is a significant positive relationship between customer brand engagement (CBE) and purchasing intention (PI).	Accepted

H1c	There is a significant positive relationship between similarity (SM) and purchasing intention (PI).	Accepted
H2a	Generational cohort (GC) moderates the relationship between credibility (CD) and purchasing intention (PI)	Accepted
H2b	Generational cohort (GC) moderates the relationship between customer brand engagement (CBE) and purchasing intention (PI).	Accepted
H2c	Generational cohort (GC) moderates the relationship between similarity (SM) and purchasing intention (PI).	Accepted

5.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter discussed data analysis, testing hypotheses, and disclosing results. First, the chapter reveals the response rate and is 58.8% of the total number of questionnaires distributed. Second, the study further revealed the results of normality from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilkins test. These tests ensure that a data set is well-modelled by a normal distribution and to compute how likely it is for a random variable underlying the data set to be normally distributed. Third, the chapter discussed the demographic information of the participants and made inference based on findings. Then the chapter later revealed the descriptive statistics results of each construct of the study. The results show that all have an acceptable means and standard deviation, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was satisfactory. Moreover, SmartPLS version 4.0 was used to analyse the data. Firstly, reflective measures were analysed to measure reliability and validity. The findings indicate satisfactory reliability and validity of the study construct. A structural model was analysed using common method bias, R2 squared, path coefficients and T-statistics, goodness-of-fit test, predictive relevance of model, the effect size and estimated model fit. All structural model analysis provided satisfactory results as required by each test requirement. Finally, the chapter also revealed the direct effect of moderating the variable GC on the IM-PI nexus. Furthermore, the study reveals that the relationship between IM and PI is moderated by GC. The next chapter will focus on the summaries, conclusions, recommendations of the study, and future research suggestions.

CHAPTER 6: STUDY FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the data collected during the study. This section serves as the conclusion of the study, discussing how the findings address the research objectives and hypotheses, and how they align with the existing literature on the topic. Additionally, the chapter offers suggestions for practical applications and future academic pursuits based on the study's findings. It also considers the study's limitations and identifies areas for further research.

6.2 INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings of this research support previous research findings in studies that are closely related to this study. A study by Khamis, Ang, Welling, and Cadiz (2017) found that influencer marketing can enhance consumers' trust in a brand and increase their purchase intentions. A study conducted by Li and Peng (2021) shows that influencers' source characteristics stimulate consumers' positive attitudes, in turn, affect consumers' purchase intention. Other studies concluded that influencer credibility is associated with consumer purchasing intentions when divided into generations Y and Z (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020). Lou and Kim (2019) further demonstrated that, in terms of the effectiveness of social media influencer marketing, Parasocial relationships were influenced by similarities with influencers among others. The study also highlighted the importance of the authenticity and credibility of the influencer in affecting consumer behaviour. The following section will discuss the conclusions of the study based on the objectives outlined for the study.

This part of this chapter gives an in-depth discussion of data results in relation to the concepts of influencer credibility, customer brand engagement, and similarity and its effect on purchasing intentions. Furthermore, the moderation effect of generation cohorts on the relationship between influencer marketing and consumers' purchasing intentions was also discussed. The above concepts were used to formulate the hypotheses outlined below.

H1: Influencer marketing positively influence consumer' purchasing intention.

H1a: Influencer credibility positively influences the purchasing intentions of consumers of consumers in Generation X, Y, and Z.

H1b: Customer brand engagement positively influences the purchasing intention of Generations X, Y and Z consumers.

H1c: Influencer similarity with the customer positively influences the purchasing intentions of Generation X, Y, and Z consumers.

H2: The generation cohort moderates the relationship between influencer marketing and consumers' purchasing intentions.

6.2.1 Influencer marketing and customers' purchasing intentions

This study proposed that influencer marketing positively influences customer buying intentions, which resulted in the main hypothesis(H1). The variable of influencer marketing was represented by three factors, namely influencer credibility, customer brand engagement, and similarity. These concepts were then used to produce the hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H1c. The results in the previous chapter indicate that these hypotheses were all accepted; the following section discusses how this conclusion was attained.

6.2.1.1 Influencer credibility and customers' purchasing intentions

The results of this study showed that the credibility of the influencer positively influences the buying intentions of customers of Generation X, Y, and Z. It can then be concluded that credible influencers are more likely to convince consumers to buy products they present and follow their content. The study by Kim and Moffett (2018) explored the role of influencer credibility in shaping purchase intentions across generational cohorts. The study revealed that Generation X consumers are more influenced by influencers with a strong reputation and expertise in their respective fields. Generation Y consumers value influencers that are seen as trustworthy, reliable, and genuine in their recommendations. Generation Z consumers are attracted to influencers who are perceived as honest, transparent, and relatable.

Yang and Brown (2018) examined the impact of influencer credibility on customer attitudes and purchase intentions. Research found that influencer credibility significantly influences purchase intentions across different age groups, and consumers of Generation X, Y and Z consumers responding positively to credible influencers who are seen as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and authentic. In conclusion,

firms need to deploy more influencers who are credible to drive sales. Overall, the evidence suggests that influencer credibility plays a crucial role in shaping customers' purchase intentions across generational cohorts, emphasising the importance of establishing trust and authenticity in influencer marketing strategies to effectively engage with consumers of all ages. It is also safe to assume that influencer marketing can be considered by firms to drive sales, since they use credible influencers.

Trustworthiness

Most respondents strongly agreed that trustworthiness is an important factor of credibility, and almost none strongly disagreed. This is a clear indication that an influencer who is deemed as trustworthy is more likely to believe their opinions and recommendations. An influencer who is consistent, reliable, and honest will be seen as credible. A study by (Kotler et al., 2009) agrees that trust is a crucial factor in influencer marketing, as consumers are more likely to engage with an influencer they trust. Bhattacharjee Kishore & Rajeev (2018) further added that influencers who are perceived as trustworthy are more likely to drive conversions and increase brand loyalty.

Familiarity

Most of the respondents agree that being familiar with influencers is important. The results of this study indicate that seeing an influencer that customers are familiar with creates a sense of trust, thus making them credible in the eyes of the audience. Familiarity is an important factor in influencer marketing, as it can help establish a connection between the consumer and the influencer. Myers (2021) argues that familiarity gives no gauge of valence, and consumers may be aware of a celebrity or influencer based on controversial things they say or do. Myers (2021) further indicated that more familiar influencers had more followers and lower engagement, while more likeable influencers had fewer followers, but higher engagement. Al-Darraji, Al Mansour, and Reza (2020) then added by saying that even though previous research shows that familiarity provided a positive relationship with purchasing intention, the result of their study shows that there is a negative relationship between familiarity and purchasing intention.

Attractiveness

Most respondents regard attractiveness as a factor of credibility. In particular, attractiveness is not considered the most important factor compared to other factors in the study, but physical attractiveness can play a role in influencing credibility perceptions. A likeable and attractive influencer may be more relatable and engaging, which can improve their credibility. Kim & Lee (2018) determined that attractiveness is indeed a key factor in influencer marketing, as it determines whether an influencer can capture the attention of their audience. Influencers who are perceived as attractive are more likely to increase brand awareness and drive engagement (Kim & Lee, 2019).

Expertise

Most respondents strongly agree that an influencer with expertise is credible and almost none disagree. When an influencer has genuine expertise in his or her niche, it increases his credibility. Audiences are more likely to trust advice from someone who has hands-on experience or formal training. Most customers denote knowledgeability as an important factor in determining the credibility of an influencer based on the data collected. An influencer with extensive knowledge in their area of expertise is more credible because he or she demonstrates a deep understanding of the subject matter. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) agree with the study's findings that expertise is a critical factor in influencer marketing, as it helps establish credibility and authority. Tuten & Solomon (2015) also agree and postulate that influencers who demonstrate expertise in their field are more likely to drive conversions and increase brand loyalty.

Number of followers

A large following can indicate that an influencer has built trust with their audience and has a level of influence. Thus, earning the influencer credibility. A study by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) indicates that the number of followers an influencer has can be a key factor in influencer marketing, as it can indicate their reach and influence. Influencers with a larger number of followers are more likely to drive conversions and increase brand awareness (Saviano et al., 2018).

The reputation of the influencer.

An influencer's reputation is built over time through his online presence, interactions with followers, and content quality. This is a strong indication that a positive reputation

can improve credibility. Kotler et al. (2009) agree that reputation is a critical factor in influencer marketing, as it can influence consumer perceptions of the brand and the influencer. It is agreeable that influencers with a positive reputation are more likely to drive conversions and increase brand loyalty (Bhattacharjee et al., 2018).

Authenticity

Authenticity is crucial to building trust with an audience. When an influencer is genuine, transparent and true to himself, they become more credible. This finding is supported by a study by Hennig-Thurau, Henning-Voskamp, and Wiertz (2013) that shows that authenticity is a key factor in influencer marketing, as it helps build trust and credibility with consumers.

Transparency

Most of the respondents agree that transparency determines the credibility of an influencer. Transparency is essential to maintain credibility. This means that credible influencers are clear about sponsored content, disclose affiliations, and provide accurate information to maintain trust with their audience. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) consider transparency to be also an essential factor in influencer marketing, as it helps to establish trust and credibility with consumers. Tuten and Solomon (2015) additionally indicated that influencers who are transparent about their affiliations and relationships with brands are more likely to drive conversions and increase brand loyalty, thus increasing their credibility.

6.2.1.2 Customer brand engagement and customer purchasing intentions.

The results of this study show that the engagement of the customer brand positively influences the purchase intention of Generation X, Y, and Z consumers. This means that Generations X, Y, and Z are receptive to the brand engagement efforts that usually resonate with their interests and values. Furthermore, this means that these generations view customer brand engagement as a way of connecting with the brand, thus increasing their loyalty to the brand.

According to Hutter, Hautzand and Dennhardt (2018) investigated the impact of customer brand engagement on purchase intentions across generational cohorts. The study revealed that Generation X consumers are more influenced by brand engagement activities that evoke nostalgia, heritage, and tradition. Generation Y

consumers prioritise brand engagement initiatives that promote community, social responsibility, and sustainability. Generation Z consumers are drawn to brands that offer immersive, interactive experiences, and meaningful connections.

A study by Javed, Jumani, and Ikram (2020) explored the role of customer brand engagement in shaping purchase intentions among different age groups. Research found that customer engagement with brands positively influences purchase intentions among Generation X, Y, and Z consumers, with higher levels of engagement leading to increased willingness to purchase and recommend the brand.

Experiences Shared

When influencers share their personal experiences with a product, service, or brand, it is generally perceived as engaging. Influencers often use this as a form of social proof, as audiences are more likely to trust recommendations from people who have first-hand experience with the product or service. A study by Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) found that consumers are more likely to engage with brands when they see influencers expressing their opinions about products or services. This indicates that the views and opinions of influencers can significantly enhance customer engagement with brands.

Views and opinions

Customers value the views and opinions of influencers. Influencers often share their honest opinions about products, services, or brands. These opinions seem to be a valuable form of engagement, as they can influence audience purchasing decisions and shape public perception.

Sharing, commenting and reacting on posts

Consumers prefer to interact with influencers by sharing, commenting, and reacting. When an influencer shares content from another brand or creator, it can be considered engagement. This means it is vital for the influencers to engage through sharing posts, reading comments and reactions from the audience, and is especially true if the shared content is relevant to their audience and encourages further discussion or interaction. According to a report by Influencer Marketing Hub, engagement metrics

such as likes, comments, and shares are crucial for measuring the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns" (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2020). This highlights the importance of these activities in gauging the engagement of the customer brand with influencers.

Interactive Videos

Most customers prefer to participate in the videos posted by the influencer. Interactive video content: Interactive videos, such as live streams, Questions & Answers sessions, or polls, require audience participation and encourage engagement. These formats can help build a sense of connection between the influencer and his audience, thus leading to an increase in followers. A study by Wibbitz found that interactive video content can increase viewer engagement by 20-40% (Wibbitz, 2020). This suggests that interactive video content does foster engagement with influencers in the customer brand, thus supporting the findings of the study.

Competitions and prizes

Most consumers appreciate entering competitions and winning prizes. Contests and giveaways: Running contests or giveaways appears to be a successful strategy for influencers to communicate with their audience and drive participation. These efforts serve to increase brand visibility, drive website traffic, and generate leads. According to Thompson (2019), 71% of consumers are more inclined to engage with a business that offers a promotion or incentive. Contests and prize giveaways can be viewed as a technique to stimulate interaction between the brand and the customer with influencers.

6.2.1.3 Similarity and customer purchasing intentions.

The results of the collected data indicated that the similarity between influencers and customers positively influenced the purchase intentions of customers among Generation X, Y, and Z consumers. This finding supported the hypothesis that customers prefer influencers who share similar interests, lifestyles, and demographics. Once customers identified an influencer on these levels, they developed a sense of trust, which led to a positive response to the influencer's product recommendations.

Lu, Qu, and Lu (2018) examined the impact of influencer-customer similarity on purchase intentions across generational cohorts. Their study revealed that Generation

X consumers were more likely to engage with influencers who shared common characteristics, experiences, or beliefs, as this nurtured a sense of connection and trust. Generation Y consumers were attracted to influencers who mirrored their aspirations, values, and lifestyle choices, leading to greater alignment with the brand. Generation Z consumers valued the authenticity and diversity of influencers, preferring influencers who were inclusive, genuine, and relatable.

Similarly, Park, Park, and Baek (2019) explored the influence of influencer-customer similarity on customer attitudes and purchase intentions. Their research found that the perceived similarity between influencers and customers positively impacted purchase intentions across different age groups, with Generation X, Y, and Z consumers responding favourably to influencers who were perceived similar in terms of identity, interests, and values.

Having a lot in common

The data collected indicated that most of the respondents think it is important to have a lot in common with the influencers. This means that when an individual shares common experiences, interests, or backgrounds with an influencer, it can create a sense of connection and make them more relatable. This can lead to greater trust and engagement.

Chaudhuri et al. (2020) found that consumers who perceive a higher level of similarity between themselves and an influencer are more likely to engage with the influencer's content and make a purchase.

Same hobbies

Most of the respondents would like to share the same hobbies with the influencers, while almost a quarter disagree. This shows that participating in similar hobbies or activities can indicate that an individual is like-minded and has similar passions, which can foster a connection with the influencer. Kim et al. (2019) agree with the findings of the study that consumers who share similar interests with influencers are more likely to trust the influencer's opinions and recommendations, resulting in increased purchasing intentions.

Similar products/ services

Most respondents agree that sharing the same taste in products and services with the influencer indicates similarity. When an individual uses or recommends the same products or services as an influencer, it suggests that they have similar preferences and values, which can build trust and credibility. Gao, Li & Zhang, JJ (2018)

found that consumers who have the same taste in products or services as influencers are more likely to be lured to buy what the influencers buy.

Same style

Having the same style as the influencers appears to indicate similarity. When individuals dress, present themselves, or express themselves in a similar way to an influencer, they create a sense of familiarity and shared aesthetic. A study by Kapoor, Tripathi, and Misra (2020) found that consumers who perceive an influencer's style as similar to their own are more likely to engage with the influencer's content and make a purchase.

The same personal lifestyle

Having the same personal lifestyle, most generations prefer influencers with whom they share the same personal lifestyle. The lifestyle, habits or daily routine of the audience are similar to those of an influencer, creates a sense of relatability and makes them more accessible to the audience.

Kahn, Szulanski, & Umanath (2019) discovered that consumers who perceive an influencer's lifestyle as similar to their own are more likely to trust the influencer's opinions and recommendations, leading to increased purchase intentions. This strongly indicates that the studies support the finding that similarity with influencers increases buying intentions. Another study by (Kim et al., 2019) found that Gen Y consumers are more influenced by influencers who share similar personal lifestyles, while Gen X consumers are more influenced by influencers who share similar tastes in products/services

The same beliefs and values

When a follower who shares the same values, ethics, or beliefs as an influencer creates a strong emotional connection and increases trust. Lee et al. (2019) found that

consumers who share similar values and beliefs with an influencer are more likely to engage with the influencer's content and make a purchase. Despite this being the case, this is a generalised notion. When considering the different generation cohorts, other discoveries were made. For instance, a study by Hagan, Felps, & Smith (2020) found that younger generations (Gen Z) are more likely to be influenced by influencers who share similar values and beliefs, while older generations (Gen X) are more influenced by influencers who share similar hobbies and interests.

6.2.2 Moderation effect of generation cohorts

The previous chapter conducted a moderation analysis to assess the moderating role of generation cohorts in the relationship between influencer marketing and purchase intention. The results indicate that generation cohorts moderate the relationship between influencer marketing and purchase intention. This means that the direct effect of this is significant.

However, the strength and nature of this relationship can vary according to the behaviours of generations X, Y, and Z. A study by Gupta et al. (2019) investigated the role of the generation cohort in shaping the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies. The study revealed that Generation X consumers may respond more favourably to influencer content that emphasises product benefits, features, and usage scenarios, while Generation Y consumers may be more interested in influencer narratives that highlight personal experiences, testimonials, and recommendations. Generation Z consumers, being digital natives, may engage more with influencer content that is interactive, authentic and visually appealing (Gupta, Lhulane & Dube, 2019). Furthermore, Kim and Johnson (2018) examined how the generation cohort moderates the impact of influencer marketing on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. Research found that although influencer marketing can have a positive impact on purchase intentions in all age groups, the effectiveness of influencer campaigns can vary depending on the level of engagement, credibility, and relevance of influencers to the target audience.

One study by Kaplan et al. (2018) found that younger generations (i.e. Gen Z and Millennials) are more likely to be influenced by social media influencers when making purchasing decisions, while older generations (i.e. Gen X and Baby Boomers) are more likely to be influenced by traditional advertising methods. Another study by Jalali,

Al-Shammari, & Al-Shammari (2019) found that Generation Y (born between 1981 and 1996) is more responsive to influencer marketing due to their high level of exposure to social media and their reliance on online recommendations when making purchasing decisions. However, a study by Kim, Lee & Kim (2020) found that older generations (i.e. Baby Boomers and Gen X) are not as influenced by social media influencers and, instead, are more likely to trust traditional sources of information such as word-of-mouth recommendations and product reviews. Kwon, Lee & Lee (2020) further denoted that Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) is highly susceptible to influencer marketing due to their high level of trust in on-line sources and their desire for authenticity.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS ON RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aimed to find out whether influencer marketing significantly impacts purchasing intentions amongst Generations X, Y, and Z consumers in the Capricorn district municipality. Data were collected using a standardised questionnaire from consumers belonging to generations X, Y, and Z. The participants were people who use social networks. The study used quota sampling, therefore the respondents included 100 people in each generation, which adds up to 300 respondents. The following are the objectives that the study aimed to achieve:

Objective 1: *To evaluate the buying behaviour of Generations X, Y, and Z consumers.*

The first objective was to evaluate the buying behaviour of Generations X, Y, and Z consumers. The study revealed that Generation X spend less time on social media compared to Generation Y and Z. This means that it requires more effort to grab the attention of generation Xers through influencer marketing. Generation Z was also found to be more frequent on social networks and tend to follow numerous popular influencers. In contrast, Generation Z shows a strong inclination toward digital engagement and instant gratification, favouring influencers that align with their values. Generation Z would consider following an influencer who engages through sharing experiences, opinions, and commenting on posts. This builds a sense of trust and encourages Generation Z to trust the product recommendations of their influencers.

A study by Hajli, Sims, Zadeh, and Richard (2017) found that Generation X consumers rely more on social media for product research and information gathering, while Generation Y consumers are more likely to make purchases directly through social

media platforms. Generation Z consumers, on the other hand, value the recommendations of social media influencers and peer reviews in their purchase decisions. Mena, Lucas, and Monroy (2015) explored the influence of social media on the buying behaviour of different generations and found that Generation X consumers are more cautious and sceptical about social media advertising compared to Generation Y and Z consumers. Generation Y consumers, who grew up with social networks, are more receptive to personalised advertising and interactive content, while Generation Z consumers are highly influenced by influencers on social networks and user-generated content.

These generational differences highlight the need for companies to adopt tailored marketing strategies that resonate with each group's unique preferences and values. Understanding these behaviours can help brands better target their messaging, foster loyalty, and ultimately drive sales. For marketers, using social media platforms to engage with Gen Z and focusing on authenticity and corporate social responsibility can enhance brand appeal. For Generation X, highlighting product quality and reliability in marketing messages could improve brand loyalty.

Objective 2: *To determine the extent to which influencer attributes affect the buying intentions of Generations X, Y, and Z consumers*

The second objective was to determine the extent to which influencer attributes affect customers' purchasing intentions of Generations X, Y, and Z. The findings indicate that while the three generations are influenced by various influencer attributes, such as credibility, attractiveness, and authenticity, there are distinct differences in the weight and impact of these attributes across each generation.

Generation Y (Millennials) appeared to place the highest value on the credibility and relatability of influencers when making purchasing decisions, often prioritising authenticity over sheer promotional content. On the contrary, Generation Z showed a preference for influencers who present relatable lifestyles and aesthetics, focusing heavily on visual appeal and engagement on social media platforms. Meanwhile, Generation X demonstrated a more traditional approach, where brand image and professionalism (i.e., the reputation of the influencer) from influencers influenced their purchasing intentions more significantly.

Bhattacharjee, Perols, and Sanford (2018) examined the impact of influencer attributes on customers' purchasing intentions across different age groups. The study found that Generation X consumers are more influenced by influencers who demonstrate expertise and credibility in their respective fields. Generation Y consumers, on the other hand, are more influenced by influencers who are perceived as authentic and relatable. Generation Z consumers value influencers who are seen as trustworthy and have a strong social media presence. This study revealed that Generation X actually leaned more on the expertise and credibility of influencers. Subsequently, Generations Y and Z leaned more on the similarities between them and the influencers.

These insights have important implications for marketers and brands looking to tailor their influencer partnerships. To effectively engage with Generation Y, brands should prioritise authenticity by collaborating with relatable influencers that embody genuine values. For targeting Generation Z, visual and experiential content that resonates emotionally will be key. Brands who want to connect with Generation X should choose influencers who reflect brand credibility and professionalism.

Objective 3: *To establish whether the generational cohort moderates the effect of influencer marketing on customers' purchasing intentions.*

The last objective was to establish whether the generational cohort moderates the effect of influencer marketing on customer purchasing intentions. The findings indicate that different generational cohorts exhibit varying levels of susceptibility to influencer marketing, with Generations Y and Z showing a stronger positive correlation between influencer endorsements and their purchasing intentions compared to Generation X. However, this does not conclude that Generation X is not receptive to influencer marketing. As indicated before, Generation X does have a positive view of influencer marketing.

Laronde, Manning, and Jacobsen (2018) explored how generational cohorts moderate the effects of different types of influencers on purchasing intentions. The study revealed that Generation X consumers are more influenced by macro influencers and celebrities due to their perceived credibility and expertise. Generation Y consumers are more influenced by micro influencers who are seen as genuine and relatable. Generation Z consumers are most responsive to nanoinfluencers who have a smaller, more niche audience.

Tiggemann and Slater (2023) went on to add that Generations Y and Z are noted for valuing authenticity and relatability in influencers, which increases their likelihood of responding positively to influencer campaigns. On the contrary, older generations can prioritise established credibility over perceived authenticity, thus affecting their purchasing intentions differently (Smith et al., 2023).

This study showed that most Generation X respondents follow macro influencers and celebrities due to their experience working with brands. It has also been revealed that most Generation Y and Z respondents follow macro influencers, as they are more similar to them, which encourages them to trust their product opinions. These results suggest that marketers should tailor their influencer marketing strategies according to the specific characteristics and preferences of each generational cohort. For younger consumers, the use of social media influencers that align with their values and lifestyles may significantly improve engagement and conversion rates. As the landscape of influencer marketing continues to evolve, understanding the dynamics of generational cohorts will be crucial for businesses aiming to connect authentically with their audiences and increase consumers' purchasing intentions.

Therefore, the impact of generational cohorts on the connection between influencer marketing and customers' buying intentions was highlighted. It emphasised the need to tailor influencer approaches to the tastes, principles, and actions of various generational groups to improve effectiveness and stimulate purchases. Companies looking to implement influencer marketing needed to grasp their target market's behaviour and how influencers could craft content that resonated with them to boost their willingness to buy.

It was concluded that the similarity between influencers and customers played a vital role in influencing purchase intentions across different age groups. This stressed the importance of aligning influencer collaborations with the ideals, lifestyles, and identities of specific consumer groups to improve engagement and drive sales. The literature review section also explored the purchasing behaviours of Generations X, Y, and Z about influencers and social media, uncovering key distinctions between the groups and their responses to influencer marketing. These results underscored the need to understand consumer behaviour when designing marketing strategies.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides practical and academic recommendations. Practical recommendations are aimed at SMEs and how they can use influencer marketing to improve consumers' purchasing intentions within Generations X, Y, and Z customers. The academic recommendations are aimed at scholars in the marketing field on which areas need more investigation.

6.4.1 Practical recommendations

Businesses operating in South Africa can take advantage of the findings of such studies to develop targeted influencer campaigns that resonate with the values, preferences, and behaviours of specific generational segments within the diverse consumer population (McKinsey & Company, 2018; Deloitte, 2020). By tailoring influencer content to align with the demographics and psychographics of various age groups, companies can improve brand engagement, build customer loyalty, and drive sales (De Vrie & Carlson, 2017).

Investing in long-term relationships with influencers who have a genuine connection with their audience and can effectively communicate brand messages can further strengthen the impact of influencer marketing campaigns in reaching and influencing consumers in South Africa (Nielsen, 2019).

In addition, the South African government plays a vital role in supporting and regulating the influencer marketing industry to ensure authenticity, transparency and ethical practices in influencer collaborations (SAARF, 2019; SANCU, 2020). By establishing guidelines and regulations that promote fair competition, consumer protection, and responsible influencer participation, the government can protect consumer interests and maintain the integrity of the marketing ecosystem (South African Competition Commission, 2020; SAIAA, 2019).

In conclusion, synchronised efforts from businesses and the government can unlock the full potential of influencer marketing in South Africa, driving economic growth, improving consumer welfare, and fostering a vibrant and ethical digital marketing environment. By aligning strategies, practices, and policies with the unique characteristics and preferences of different generation cohorts, stakeholders can harness the power of influencer marketing to achieve sustainable business success and social impact in the dynamic South African marketplace.

6.4.2 Academic recommendations

To improve understanding of the dynamics of influencer marketing, future research efforts in this area should consider conducting longitudinal studies to track changes in consumer behaviour over time and understand deeper the evolving landscape of influencer marketing across different generational segments (Akaka & Sisodia, 2017). By scrutinising trends and patterns over an extended period, researchers can uncover valuable insights into how the effectiveness of influencer marketing tactics may vary across different generations in the dynamic South African market.

Furthermore, future studies should also focus on exploring the role of cultural, social, and economic factors in shaping the relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing behaviour within different age groups (Cervantes & Martinez-Lopez, 2017). Understanding how cultural norms, social influences, and economic conditions affect the effectiveness of influencer campaigns can provide an understanding of South African context of consumer behaviour. By delving deeper into these factors, researchers can uncover unique insights into the changing aspects of influencer marketing strategies across generational cohorts and tailor marketing efforts to understand the needs of consumers and the preferences of diverse consumer segments (Das & Shahinpoor, 2019).

6.5 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

Understanding how different generations respond to influencer content and the factors that influence their purchasing decisions can help marketers tailor their campaigns to better engage and connect with diverse consumer segments in the South African market.

Furthermore, the study can shed light on the evolving dynamics of influencer marketing in the digital age and its implications for businesses operating in South Africa. By uncovering trends and patterns in consumer behaviour related to influencer campaigns, the research can offer practical guidance to companies seeking to leverage influencers as key drivers of their marketing efforts. The insights of this study can inform strategic decision making, resource allocation, and campaign optimization to maximise the impact of influencer collaborations in reaching and persuading target audiences in different age groups.

Furthermore, the study can contribute to the development of a more nuanced understanding of the role of generational cohorts in shaping consumer preferences, attitudes, and behaviours in response to influencer marketing. By identifying the unique characteristics and preferences of each generation, research can facilitate the design of customised marketing strategies that resonate with the values and expectations of various age groups in South Africa. The findings of this study can inform businesses, marketers, and policymakers on how to effectively engage with consumers through influencer campaigns and optimise their marketing efforts to drive brand awareness, loyalty, and sales in a competitive marketplace.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study used quota sampling, with 100 respondents from each generation, but was limited to the Capricorn district in Limpopo province. As a result, general conclusions cannot be drawn from the findings in one area. The review of the literature highlighted demographic factors, including location, that significantly influence consumer behaviour, with buying habits that can vary between those of big cities and small towns. Some participants in public spaces were unavailable due to other commitments, and some found the questionnaire too long. Additionally, the lack of geographical diversity was a limitation, as many respondents were located near each other. Some participants completed the survey online and shared it with others, potentially creating bias if the respondents were related or close.

6.7 AREA FOR FURTHER STUDY

Future research could investigate the varying impacts of different categories of influencers (macro, micro, and nano influencers) on generational cohorts in the South African market. Understanding how credibility, trustworthiness, and relatability influence consumer behaviour between different age groups could yield valuable insights for optimising influencer marketing strategies. Additionally, exploring the significance of popular social media platforms within various generations and how their functionalities shape consumer perceptions of influencer content could improve comprehension. Subsequent studies can explore the interaction between influencer marketing and alternative channels, such as traditional advertising, public relations, and celebrity endorsements, to identify synergies or conflicts within integrated marketing campaigns. Conducting longitudinal research to monitor changes in consumer attitudes towards influencer marketing could provide illumination on the

changing dynamics between influencers, brands, and consumers. Addressing these research voids could offer practical guidance for marketers and policymakers aiming to maximise influencer marketing effectiveness across different generational segments in South Africa.

6.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this section, the chapter discussed how research results align with the study's objectives and hypotheses, as well as the practical and academic impacts. It also addressed the constraints of the study and potential avenues for further research. The study effectively met its objectives by examining the purchasing behavior of consumers of Generations X, Y and Z, evaluating the influence of influencer attributes on their purchasing decisions, and investigating whether generational cohorts influence the impact of influencer marketing on buying intentions. The results revealed distinct behavioural patterns and preferences among these generational groups, affecting how they perceive influencers and product recommendations. This directly tackled the research problem of businesses and marketers lacking insight into the effects of influencer marketing on these generations' purchasing decisions, thus offering valuable intelligence to enhance marketing strategies. The analysis of the findings encompassed the primary hypotheses concerning influencer marketing and purchase intentions: credibility, customer brand engagement, and similarity. All three hypotheses were confirmed, demonstrating that influencer marketing has a positive effect on purchasing intentions. Furthermore, the chapter detailed practical implications for companies and policymakers and discussed academic contributions for researchers. It also addressed the limitations of the study and proposed directions for future research to explore areas not covered in the current study.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE 1: QUESTIONNAIRE (In ENGLISH)

My name is Maite Violet Raphela, a master’s student from the University of Limpopo (contact details, 0760726742). I am conducting a business research project on the effect of influencer marketing strategy on customers’ purchase intention. This questionnaire was established for academic purposes. Please, note that your participation is voluntary, and confidentiality will be sustained. You will not be required to disclose your name. It will take you approximately 3 minutes to complete this survey.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

In this section, the researcher would like to learn a little more about you and your social media activities. Cross (x) in the relevant block.

1. What is your gender?	Female		Male
-------------------------	--------	--	------

2. Which generation belong to?	Gen Z (18-24 years)		Gen Y (25-40 years)		Gen X (41-56 years)
--------------------------------	------------------------	--	------------------------	--	------------------------

3. What is your ethnicity?	African		Indian/Asian		White		Coloured		Other(specify)
----------------------------	---------	--	--------------	--	-------	--	----------	--	----------------------------------

4. What is your highest qualification?	Please mark in the relevant box
Matric qualification	
Bachelors’ Degree	
Diploma	

Honours' qualification	
Masters' qualification	
Doctorate qualification	
Other (specify)

5. What social media platform are you mostly on?	Please mark in the relevant box
Facebook	
Instagram	
Twitter	
YouTube	
Tik-Tok	
Other(specify)	

6. What type of influencer(s) do you mostly follow?	Please mark in the relevant box.
Nano-influencers(1000-10 000 followers)	
Micro-influencers(10 000-100 000 followers)	
Macro-influencers(100 000-1million followers)	
Celebrities(over 1 million followers)	

7. How often do you use social networks?	Please mark in the relevant box
Daily	

4-6 times a week	
2-3 times a week	
Once a week	

SECTION B: INFLUENCER MARKETING

This section aims to investigate the main components of influencer marketing. Mark (x) in the relevant box..

Credibility

8. What determines the credibility of an influencer?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. A trustworthy influencer.					
2. An attractive influencer.					
3. An influencer with expertise.					
4. Knowledgeability					
5. Number of followers					
6. Familiarity					
7. The reputation of the influencer					
8. Authenticity					
9. Transparency					

Customer brand engagement

9. Is brand engagement with influencers vital?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. It is important that an influencer shares experiences.					
2. The views and opinions of the influencer matter.					
3. Sharing, commenting and reacting on posts					
4. Interactive video content					
5. Competitions and prize giveaways					

Similarity

10. Is similarity with influencers important?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Having a lot in common with the influencer is important.					
2. Sharing the same hobbies as the influencer is important.					
3. Sharing the same taste in products with the influencer is vital.					

4. Having the same style as the influencer is vital.					
5. Having the same personal lifestyle as influencers is important					
6. Sharing the same values and beliefs as influencers					

SECTION C: PURCHASING INTENTION

This section aims to investigate the extent to which you intend to purchase products/services. Mark (x) in the relevant box

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Would you intend to buy a product recommended by an influencer?					
2. Would you intend to buy products reviewed by other customers?					
3. Would you like to buy products recommended by family/friends?					
4. Would you like information on-line prior to making a purchase?					

ANNEXURE 2: QUESTIONNAIRE (In SEPEDI)

Leina la ka ke Maite Violet Raphela, moithuti wa Masters go tswa Yunibesithing ya Limpopo (Dinomoro tsa mogala, 0760726742). Ke dira porojeke ya dinyakisiso tsa kgwebo mabapi le ditlamorago tse leano la go bapatsa ka tusumetso le nago le tsona go maikemisetso a bareki go reka. Lenaneo la dipotsiso le diretswe merero ya thuto. Ka kgopelo hlokomela gore go tsea karolo ga gao ke ka boithatelo gomme go tla ba le poloko ya sephiri. O ka se ke wa gapeletswa go utolla leina la gago. Go tla go tsea metsotso e 3(meraro) go tlatsa tlhahlobo ye.

KAROLO A: TSEBISHO YA DIPALO-PALO

Karolong ye, Monyakishishi o nyaka go tseba ka wena le mediro ya gago ya social networks. Ka kgopelo, thala (x) go sekgoba sa tshwanelo.

1. Bong ba gago ke bo bofe?	Mosadi		Monna	
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2. O wela go leloko lefe?	Gen Z (mengwaga ye 9-24)		Gen Y (mengwaga ye 25-40)		Gen X (mengwaga ye 41-56)	
---------------------------	-----------------------------	--	------------------------------	--	------------------------------	--

3. Morafe, wa gago ke ofe?	Moafrika		Moindia/Asia		Mmala o mosweu		Mocoloured		O mongwe(hlalosa)
----------------------------	----------	--	--------------	--	----------------------	--	------------	--	--

4. Thoto ya gago ya godimo ke efe?	Ka kgopelo, thala go sekgoba sa tshwanelo.
Matric qualification	
Bachelors' Degree	
Diploma	
Honours' qualification	
Masters' qualification	
Yengwe (hlalosa)

5. Ke social media efe ye o le go go yona nako ye ntshi?	Ka kgopelo, thala go sekgoba sa tshwanelo.
Facebook	
Instagram	
Twitter	
YouTube	
Tik-Tok	
Yengwe(hlalosa)	

6. Ke mohuta ofe wa ditutuetsi o di latelago gantshi?	Ka kgopelo, thala go sekgoba sa tshwanelo.
Nano-influencers (balatedi ba 1000-10 000)	
Micro-influencers (balatedi ba 10 000-100 000)	
Macro-influencers (balatedi ba 100 000 -1million)	
Celebrities (balatedi ba go feta 1 million)	

7. O shomisha social media ga kae?	Ka kgopelo, thala go sekgoba sa tshwanelo.
Letsatsi le letsatsi	
Ga 4-6 ka beke	
Ga 2-3 ka beke	
Gatee ka beke	

KAROLO B: DIPAPATSO TXA TUTUETSO

Karolo ye leka go nyakishisha ka dikarolo tse bohlokwa tsa papatso ya tutuetso. Ka kgopelo, thala (x) go sekgoba sa tshwanelo.

Botshephegi

8. Ke eng seo se lemoshang ka go botshephegi bamotutuetsi?

	Dumela Ka maatla	Dumela	Ga o tsee lehlakore	Ganetsa	Ganetsa ka maatla
1. Motutuetsi wa go botega.					
2. Motutuetsi wa go kgahlisha.					
3. Motutuetsi wa go ba le tsebo.					
4. Tsebo ya motutuetsi					
5. Palo ya balatedi,					
6. Tlwaelano,					
7. Botumo ba influencer					
8. Bonnete					

Tshomishano magareng ga bareki

9. Tshomishano magareng ga bareki ba batutuetsi e bohlokwa?

	Dumela ka maatla	Dumela	Ga o tsee lehlakore	Ganetsa	Ganetsa ka maatla
1. Go bohlokwa gore motutuetsi a phatlalatse phihlelo ya gage					
2. Dipono le dikgopolo tsa motutuetsi di bohlokwa					
3. Go abelana, go swaya diphošo le go arabela diposo					
4. Diteng tša bidio tša tirišano					
5. Diphadiano le di-giveaway ta meputso					

Go swana

10. Go bohlokwa go swana le batutuetsi?

	Dumela ka maatla	Dumela	Ga o tsee lehlakore	Ganetsa	Ganetsa ka maatla
1. Go ba le dilo tse dintshi tsa go swana le motutuetsi gobohlokwa					

2. Go ba le ditlosa- bodutu tsa go swana le motutuetsi go bohlokwa					
3. Go ba le tatso ya go swana le ya motutuetsi go bohlokwa.					
4. Go ba le mokgwa wa go swana le wa motutuetsi go bohlokwa					
5. Go ba le mokgwa wa bophelo wa motho ka noi wo o swanago le wa bahlohleletši go bohlokwa					
6. Go abelana ditekanyeto le ditumelo te di swanago le ta bahlohleleti					

KAROLO C: BOIKEMISETSE BA THEKO

Karolo ye e nyakishisha boikemisetso ba gago ba go reka ditsweletswa goba ditirelo. Ka kgopelo, thala(x) go sekgoba sa tshwanelo.

12. Boemo ba boikemisetso ba gago ba go reka bo ama jwang ke papatso ya tutuetso?

	Oketsega ka maatla	Oketsaga	Ga e fetoge	Fokotsega	Fokotsega ka maatla
1. O ka ikemisetse go amogela keletso ya					

go reka go tswa go motutuetsi?					
2. O ikemisetsa go amogela dipono tsa bareki ba bangwe?					
3. O ikemisetsa go amogela keletso go tswa go ba lapa goba bagwera?					
4. O ka nyaka boitsebiso Inthaneteng pele oka reka?					

ANNEXURE 3: CONSENT FORM



Research title: The effect of influencer marketing on consumer purchasing intentions in the municipality of the Capricorn District: The Generational Perspective

Researcher: Maite VioletRaphela

I, _____ hereby voluntarily agree to participate in the following project: "Influencer marketing and consumer purchasing intentions: The Generational Perspective in Limpopo Province".

I understand that:

1. My responses will be treated with confidentiality and only used for the purpose of the investigation.
2. No harm will be posed to me.
3. The aim of the research project has been explained to me.
4. I do not have to answer any question that I do not wish to answer for any reason.
5. Access to the records related to my participation in the study will be restricted to persons directly involved in the investigation.
6. Any questions I may have about the research or related topics will be answered by the researcher.
7. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and I can withdraw my participation at any stage.
8. I understood the information regarding my participation in the study and agree to participate.

Signature of the interviewee
witness

Signature of the

Signature of the interviewer

Signed at _____ on this; _____ day of _____ 20_____

ANNEXURE 4: EDITORIAL LETTER



Raphela M.V
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Researcheditors882@gmail.com

karabokonyani@gmail.com

08 October 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This editing certificate serves to certify that this Academic research (Dissertation) was professionally edited for Ms. Maite Violet Raphela, Student no: 201731575. Thus, this document is meant to acknowledge that I, Mrs.

K.L Malatji and Dr. E.J Malatji, professional Editors under a registered company, Rightmove Multimedia, have meticulously edited the academic work of Ms. Raphela M.V from the University of Limpopo.

The evidence of the editorial work done on the document can be forwarded to you should you wish to see it.

Title of the dissertation: **"THE EFFECT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON CONSUMERS' PURCHASING INTENTIONS IN THE CAPRICORN DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY: THE GENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE"**.

I trust you will find the editing quality in order. Sincerely,

Mrs. K. L Malatji & Dr. E.J Malatji

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