

The Impact of Influencers Marketing on Consumer Purchasing Process Toward Food and Beverages Industry in Egypt

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Abstract :

This study explores the impact of influencer marketing on consumer purchasing decisions in the food and beverage sector in Egypt. With the rise of social media platforms, influencers have emerged as powerful voices capable of shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. This research focuses on four key dimensions of influencer marketing: influencer credibility, content quality, familiarity, and self-brand association. Drawing on source credibility theory, which emphasizes the importance of trust, expertise, and charisma in persuasive communication, the study adopts a quantitative approach using data collected from 214 Egyptian consumers through structured online surveys. The

results reveal that influencer credibility, familiarity, and self-brand connections have a statistically significant positive impact on consumer purchasing decisions. In contrast, content quality, while important, was found to have a relatively weaker effect. These findings highlight the importance of credibility, familiarity, and brand connection between influencer and audience in guiding consumer behavior. Furthermore, the study highlights the crucial role influencers play, particularly among younger digital natives, in shaping consumption trends and brand perceptions. The insights gleaned from this research provide valuable guidance for marketing professionals seeking to design effective influencer campaigns. Specifically, the findings indicate that selecting influencers who personally engage with their audience and possess high credibility is more effective than simply focusing on the aesthetic quality of the content.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, Purchase decision, source credibility theory, self-brand connection, food and beverage industry, Content quality.

الملخص:

ستكشف هذه الدراسة تأثير التسويق المؤثر على قرارات الشراء لدى المستهلكين في قطاع الأغذية والمشروبات في مصر. مع صعود منصات التواصل الاجتماعي، برز المؤثرون كأصوات قوية قادرة على تشكيل تصورات المستهلكين وسلوكياتهم. يركز هذا البحث على أربعة أبعاد رئيسية للتسويق المؤثر: مصداقية المؤثر، وجودة المحتوى، والألفة، وارتباط العلامة التجارية الذاتية. واستنادًا إلى نظرية مصداقية المصدر، التي تؤكد على أهمية الثقة والخبرة والكاريزما في التواصل الإقناعي، تتبنى

الدراسة نهجًا كميًا باستخدام بيانات جُمعت من ٢١٤ مستهلكًا مصريًا من خلال استطلاعات رأي منظمة عبر الإنترنت. تكشف النتائج أن مصداقية المؤثر، والألفة، وارتباط العلامة التجارية الذاتية لها تأثير إيجابي ذو دلالة إحصائية على قرارات الشراء لدى المستهلكين. في المقابل، وُجد أن جودة المحتوى، على الرغم من أهميتها، لها تأثير أضعف نسبيًا. تسلط هذه النتائج الضوء على أهمية المصداقية، والألفة، والعلاقة الوثيقة بين المؤثر والجمهور في توجيه سلوك المستهلك. علاوة على ذلك، تسلط الدراسة الضوء على الدور الحاسم الذي يلعبه المؤثرون، وخاصة بين الجيل الرقمي الأصغر سنًا، في تشكيل اتجاهات الاستهلاك وتصورات العلامة التجارية. تُقدم الرؤية المستفاد من هذا البحث إرشادات قيّمة لمحترفي التسويق الذين يسعون إلى تصميم حملات مؤثرة فعّالة. وتشير النتائج تحديدًا إلى أن اختيار المؤثرين الذين يتفاعلون شخصيًا مع جمهورهم ويتمتعون بمصداقية عالية يُعدّ أكثر فعالية من مجرد التركيز على الجودة الجمالية للمحتوى.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التسويق المؤثر، قرار الشراء، نظرية مصداقية المصدر، الارتباط بالعلامة التجارية الذاتية، صناعة الأغذية والمشروبات، جودة المحتوى.

1. Exploratory Study

Due to the increasing number of users of social media platforms, electronic applications, and influencer advertisements on these applications, the researcher conducted an exploratory study to identify the study's problem. Based on the interview conducted with both followers and one influencer. Eleven individuals, from group age from 17 to 58, participated in the conducted semi-structured interviews as part of a study investigating the impact of influential marketing on food and beverage consumer decisions in Egypt. These participants were

selected from diverse professional backgrounds and regions, with all having active social media accounts. To guarantee sample diversity, the sample included high school students, a data analyst, an assistant professor, a pharmacist, a banker, a university lecturer, and a teaching assistant. Moreover, the study included individuals from different governorates like Cairo, Mansoura, and Beni Suef, adding a diverse range of urban and regional perspectives. The purpose was to identify their opinions on the study variables and formulate the study's problem. results revealed the following: -

1.1. Primary Data

The results showed that 91% of participants (10 out of 11) follow food and beverage influencers, while only one individual (9%) doesn't follow them. When it came to trusting these influencers' recommendations, 64% (7 out of 11) confirmed their trust in these guidelines, while 36% (4 out of 11) were not convinced of their recommendations and don't pay attention to what they say. When asked about the factors that most influenced their purchasing decisions, 82% (9 out of 11) stated that quality of influencer's content was their top priority, while 9% (1 out of 11) were concerned about price, and another 9% (1 out of 11) preferred branding as a primary factor. The influencer studied has a strong online presence, boasting 173,000 followers on Instagram and approximately 117,000 followers on Facebook, in addition millions of views millions on videos on her both

platforms. While for the interview with the influencer Duaa, she only promotes places she's personally tried, often ordering under another name to ensure a more authentic experience.

1.2. Secondary data

Chen and colleagues (2024) show that 65% of customers' purchasing decisions are influenced by advertisements and promotions from trusted influencers. As many people consider influences to be trustworthy sources, they are often the first people they consider when making their decisions. This highlights the importance of trust and its role in consumer influence. The survey also showed that 78% of customers prefer to follow influencers who express their true opinions and personal beliefs when promoting products, which increases the impact of these influencer decisions on purchasing decisions. As interacting with influencers on various social media platforms increases the probability of a purchase by 28%.

Smith and Smith (2023) highlighted the significance of showcasing genuine content that reflects their actual product testing experiences. According to their findings, 60% of influencers think that sharing content based on their own experiences helps them draw in more followers and foster greater engagement. Additionally, they demonstrated that 75% of viewers are likely to make a purchase right away after viewing the influencer's content, which includes his own experiences with the product.

2. Introduction

Many new trends have emerged in marketing recently, with influencer marketing being one of the most important. Social media now plays a vital role in reaching, attracting, and persuading consumers, especially with the rise in online shopping. While brands can engage with consumers through these platforms, the real appeal lies in using social media influencers due to their ability to influence a large number of followers and convert them into buyers. This is driven by their large follower base and the public's preference for the opinion of regular individuals. In Egypt, especially in food and beverage sectors, influencers have become central to guiding consumer behaviour by sharing personal experiences and realistic product reviews. Consumers now rely more on the opinions and experiences of others than traditional ads. Unlike direct advertisements in TV or newspapers, influencer marketing is more natural and personal, making it feel like a recommendation from a friend. This builds credibility and encourages purchase decisions. (Booth&Matik,2011)

2.1. Research Problem and Questions

According to the Egypt Digital Statistics Report for 2025, the number of internet users reached 96.03 million. Facebook users reached 81.9 million, YouTube 52.7 million, and Instagram 20.8 million. This rise in usage has led to the emergence of

“influencers” who are now trusted to guide followers toward brand purchases. As their numbers and influence grow, more marketing budgets are allocated to them. However, this kind of marketing faces issues, especially concerning trust in influencers and their content.

Based on the survey and previous studies, which revealed a research gap in this field, this study aims to address the following questions:

What is the impact of the degree of trust in influencers on the purchasing decisions of consumers?

From this, the main question stems into a set of sub-questions:

- a. What is the impact of influencer credibility on consumer purchasing decision?
- b. What is the impact of influencer content quality on consumer purchasing decision?
- c. What is the impact of influencers familiarity on consumer purchasing decision?
- d. What is the impact of self-brand connection on consumer purchasing decision?

2.2. Study Objectives

The current study aims to identify and understand the impact of influencer marketing on consumer purchasing decision by:

2.2.1. Determining the impact of influencer credibility on consumer purchasing decision.

2.2.2. Determining the impact of influencer familiarity on consumer purchasing decision.

2.2.3. Determining the impact of self-brand connection on consumer purchasing decision.

2.2.4. Determining the impact of influencer content quality on consumer purchasing decision.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

2.3.1. Research model

The study model was prepared based on previous studies: (Heming, 2020), (Cheticuietal, 2020), (Alfarrajetal, 2021,) (Konstantopoulou,et.al, 2019,) and (Al-Darraj et al., 2020).

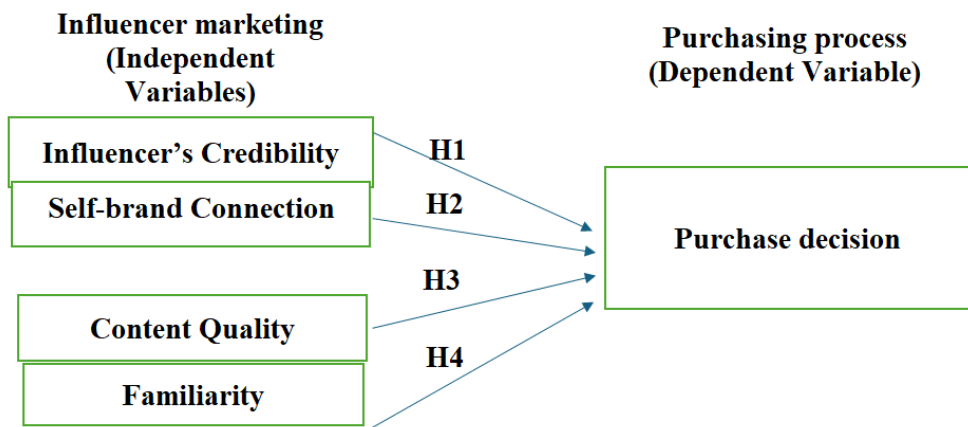


Figure 1: Conceptual model

2.4. Research hypothesis

H1: Influencers' credibility has a significant and positive relationship with consumers' purchasing decisions toward food and beverage brands in Egypt.

H2: Self-brand connection significantly and positively influences consumers' purchasing decisions toward food and beverage brands in Egypt.

H3: Content quality significantly and positively influences consumers' purchasing decisions toward food and beverage brands in Egypt.

H4: Familiarity significantly and positively influences consumers' purchasing decisions toward food and beverage brands in Egypt.

3. Literature Review (Operational studies)

3.1. Influencer Marketing and the Nature of Influencers

Influencer marketing is a form of word-of-mouth marketing conducted through various social media platforms by a group of celebrities. In this type of marketing, the messages intended for promotion and advertising are delivered by influencers to their followers via social networks. While this marketing approach is not new, bloggers used to promote products and services through their blogs. However, with the rise of social media, the impact and depth of these influencers have increased. It has also become easier to interact with any marketing content and respond to it

(Khamis, Ang, Welling, 2017). In today's world, many key marketing decision makers rely on influencers to help them make the right choices because it's becoming harder to find and directly target potential customers. That's why working with influencers who have already built a trusted following is seen as a smart solution for brands. (Yesiloglu & Costello (2020)

Influencers use a variety of channels, such as social media and traditional media, to connect with their audience. By collaborating with influencers, brands can communicate their messages more effectively and influence potential customers' purchasing decisions. This strategy works well because influencers are highly trusted by their audience, making their opinions more influential than traditional advertising.

3.2. Influencers classifications

Influencers are individuals who are valued for their social media posts and have garnered a large following. Influencers are classified according to multiple criteria. Kapitan's study, which categorized the number of their followers and circle of influence, into: (De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders, 2017; Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, and Freberg, 2011). They regularly share content and maintain prominent levels of engagement with their audience (More and Lingam, 2019; Tuten and Solomon, 2018).

Kapitan and Silvera (2016) classified types of influencers according to the number of their followers and viewing rate, their contributions. Influencers are people who provide content that helps them build a large number of followers on various social media platforms, and a general online presence. Naturally, marketers are always looking for successful influencers to collaborate with in implementing better and more successful influencer marketing campaigns; because the benefit of these campaigns for brands is very great, which can increase the spread of the brand, and enhance its image among the public. In addition, influencers have the ability to persuade and attract people towards your products/services and shape their purchasing decisions.

Influencers are classified according to multiple criteria. Kapitan's study classified the number of their followers and circle of influence into:(Silvera, 2016)

3.2.1. Nano Influencers

On social media, nano influencers are the best for brands they have a relatively small audience The business is small and the number of followers on Instagram or YouTube ranges from: 0K-10K (Agustian et al., 2023). Nano influencers represent a unique and increasingly important segment of influencer marketing, characterized by their relatively small but highly engaged follower base, followings across various social media platforms. Nano-influencers, who have smaller followings, build strong

relationships with their followers through their authentic content and genuine interaction (Daniel, 2020).

3.2.2. Micro-influencers

Micro-influencers, typically a moderate following of 10,000 to 100,000 people with a strong interest in specific topics, are particularly powerful in the marketing industry (Jordas, 2023). They create engaged and supportive communities around these topics, including accessible technology, crafts, and local or niche products, much like celebrities or adult influencers. They are highly successful influencers in reaching and influencing audiences in their niche because they exude authenticity and trust. In their niche, influencer content is highly influential and seen as more accurate and knowledgeable (Park et al., 2021).

3.2.3. Mid-influence influencers

Once influencers cross the 100,000 followers, they enter the mid-tier stage. At this stage, they will likely have a clearly defined niche and will be a voice of authority in their field. They will likely work as full-time influencers or content creators, and their content quality, campaign expertise, and payout rates will reflect this. This kind of follower's range between 100K-500K followers. (Kay et al., 2020).

3.2.4. Macro influencers

The Mega Influencer category covers 500,000 to 1 million followers, which represents a significant reach as such, these

influencers are considered big players when it comes to increasing brand awareness or changing perception on a larger scale—but this massive reach often comes at a price. Macro influencers can charge tens of thousands of dollars for a sponsored campaign on social media platforms (Daniel, 2020).

3.2.5. Mega Influencers

At the top end, Mega Macro influencers have amassed a massive following, which can be more than 1 million; they are multi-talented at this point: content creator, entrepreneur, author, designer, TV personality, etc (Kay et al., 2020). A Mega Macro influencer may have joined social media platforms as a celebrity or reached celebrity status on the app—but either way, their social influence is impressive and shouldn't be overlooked.

3.2.6. Bloggers

Blogger is the character who always tries to show her interest in something and tries to express her opinion on any topic (Mainolfi & Vergura, 2021; Savolainen, 2019). Usually, blogs of this type of deal with specific topics such as travel and fashion. Most often, we find that the blogger is the character who has turned his/her personal page into a blog with millions of people on it and can become an influencer because of the large number on her page. (Ozgen & Mahmodian, 2021).

3.2.7. Vloggers

Vlog is an abbreviation for (Video Blog), but the person who does all this in the form of a video is called a vlogger. In fact, the vlogger starts filming videos about a job, style, entertainment, etc. and finally publishes them on a social network. A vlogger is a person who films a video, then publishes it on a video site such as YouTube. - There are many types of "vlogs," according to the topic they cover. There are vlogs that talk about sports, beauty, cooking, and the most famous type, which is diary recording, where the person records his diary in a medium-length video that includes the most important events of his day. (Gholamhosseinzadeh, 2023).

3.2.8. Gaming influencers

Gaming influencers are online content creators—typically working primarily on one or more major social video platforms, such as YouTube —whose output in the video game space has earned them a large and loyal following. Like successful content creators and influencers in any industry, this makes the gaming influencer a powerful and valuable figure as a trend-setter and thought leader in the fast-moving and emotional video game industry (Church, 2022; Seering & Kairam, 2022). et al., 2022).

3.3. Dimensions of Influencers

In the field of social media influencers, a number of previous studies (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Molin & Nordgren, 2019; Lou & Kim, 2019; Yuan & Lou, 2020) used the credibility of social media influencers through a four-dimensional construct: expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity. Accordingly, the study will adopt the dimensions most relied upon by previous studies, represented by four dimensions to measure the credibility of social media influencers: expertise, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and similarity.

3.3.1. Credibility

Social media meets the information and entertainment needs of its users, as social media users create and publish content that includes their opinions about brands and products for other users. This content, known as user-generated content (UGC), has proven to be more widespread and effective than professional advertising (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). This has enabled some of these users to gain a large number of followers and the emergence of a relatively new form, which is social media influencers, who have become an important factor in customer decision-making (Pick, 2020).

Belch & Belch (2003; p168:169) defined the credibility of the source of the advertising message as when the recipient of the

message perceives that the source has knowledge, skill or experience and trusts this source to provide unbiased and objective information. When consumers encounter an advertising message for a brand, they evaluate the credibility of the source of this message based on the characteristics of the source, the quality of the source's argument, and the degree of compatibility of the source with the promoted product (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016).

3.3.1.1. Dimensions of influencer's credibility

The credibility of the influencer is a crucial factor in persuading the audience (Hovland et al., 1951). The "influencers" on social media are called "micro-advocates," and they play a role similar to that of the message source in the advertising persuasion process. According to Hovland's (1954) study, expertise and trustworthiness are key factors in determining the credibility of a source. Many previous studies have relied on trustworthiness and attractiveness to assess the reliability of a source's expertise (Ohanian, 1990; Lafferty et al., 2000). Other characteristics such as trustworthiness and likeability have been used to assess the credibility of a source in previous studies (Keller, 1998; Clow et al., 2006). Expertise is defined as the source's competence or qualifications to make such claims about a particular topic or issue, including the source's knowledge and abilities (McCroskey, 1966). Source trustworthiness involves the receiver's assessment of the source

as trustworthy, authentic, or loyal (Geffen, 1967). Similarly, the similarity between the sender and receiver indicates the dimension of credibility. In the field of social media influencers, several previous studies (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Molin & Nordgren, 2019; Lou & Kim, 2019; Yuan & Lou, 2020) used the credibility of social media influencers through a four-dimensional construct: expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity. Accordingly, the study will adopt the dimensions most relied upon by previous studies, represented by four dimensions to measure the credibility of social media influencers: expertise, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and similarity.

3.3.1.1.1. Influencer Trustworthiness

(Munnukka et al., 2016; Molin & Nordgren, 2019; Yuan & Lou, 2020; Schouten et al., 2020) agreed that trustworthiness in the influencer domain refers to the perception of the influencer as honest, sincere, or truthful in providing information; trustworthiness is negatively affected if customers find the source to benefit from recommending the product (Munnukka et al., 2016). It is the level of trust and acceptance of the influencer and the message by the follower, and trustworthiness has a positive effect on the effectiveness of the message (Rebelo, 2017).

3.3.1.1.2. Influencer Attractiveness

Source attractiveness can be classified into physical attractiveness and psychological attractiveness(Leggett, Koay et al.,2021; Ohanian,1990). Influencer attractiveness refers to the degree to which the influencer's features are motivating to follow (Wiedmann&Von mettenheim,2020). Packer et al. (1977) defined attractiveness as facial and physical beauty, as well as sensuality (Rogers, 1980). According to previous research in marketing and persuasion, appearance plays an important role in initial evaluation (Packer et al., 1977; Joseph, 1982; Uusitalo et al., 2016). Attractiveness also includes distinctive individuals, such as women who have been exposed to casting accidents, as they can motivate the community and keep people following them and believing their opinions about brands.

3.3.1.1.3. Influencer's Expertise

Influencer expertise is defined as the knowledge and skills that the influencer has about the products and their followers' search for them. It is also defined as the level of knowledge that customers who follow influencers see and the efficiency, they use to promote the products. (Liu,2022; Yuan &Lou,200). Expertise is defined as the extent to which an individual is familiar with a product (Hovland et al., 1953). Followers' listening skills are greatly influenced by the information shared by these influencers.

The recipient's behaviour is influenced by the level of competence of the source. People who have a relevant expert source are more likely to comply than those who have a less expert source (Ohanian, 1990).

3.3.1.1.4. Influencer's similarity

Belch& Belch (2003) see similarity as the convergence of needs, goals, interests, and lifestyles between the advertiser and the target audience. This similarity refers to the individual's perception of commonalities between him and the other. When followers perceive commonalities between them and the influencer, such as interests and values, they are more likely to adopt the beliefs and behaviours of this influencer (Schouten et al., 2020). When consumers perceive an influencer as relatable, it cultivates psychological closeness, increases trust, and makes the influencer's recommendations more convincing.

3.3.2. Self-brand connection

Self-brand connection refers to the extent to which a customer integrates a particular brand into his or her self-concept to represent a symbolic meaning of who he or she is and who he or she wants to be. It reflects the extent of cognitive and emotional connections between the customer and the brand that expresses his or her self-identity and desired self-images or self-

presentation to others (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Self-concept refers to an individual's opinions and feelings about himself or herself (Chand & Fei, 2021), i.e., the way customers think and feel about who and what they see themselves as (van der Westhuizen, 2018). Self-brand connection is a strong relationship between the customer and the brand that satisfies the customer's psychosocial needs, as these needs include helping him show his identity and improve his relationship with others with whom he wants to communicate (Moliner et al., 2018)

3.3.3. Content quality

Content quality depends on several factors, including beauty of the image, quality of writing, choice of language and appropriate visual style, and use of effective slogans. These factors combined greatly affect the success of the influencer and his ability to influence his followers (Casaló et al., 2020). Pappas et al. (2017) believe that quality is the basis of the persuasion process, as it includes aspects such as the comprehensiveness, diversity, strength, and impact of the content (Lu et al., 2013; Huffaker, 2010). Researchers confirm that content quality contributes to building a strong reputation for the influencer (Lil et al., 2014). Therefore, quality is key to the success of influencers, especially considering the millennial generation's interest in high-quality content.

3.3.4. Familiarity

Familiarity relates to understanding the current actions of other people or things and is specifically “a perception based on a specific activity based on prior experience or learning how to use the given interface”; that is, role clarity, ability, and motivation (Lingnick-Hall, Claycombe, & Enks 2000). Personal content shared by the influencer contributes to this sense of familiarity, leading followers to accept the influencer’s influence on their purchasing decisions (Russell and Buteau, 1999; Martinsen et al., 2018). Diatara et al. (2019) and Martinsen et al. (2018) explain that familiarity generates trust, which leads to a positive relationship with purchase intention.

3.4. Consumer Purchasing Process

The consumer purchasing process, also known as the consumer buying process, is widely studied in marketing literature to understand how people move from recognizing a need to considering experiences after making the purchase. In business and marketing studies, it is quite significant because it gives a guideline on how to influence the behavior of the consumer at various stages, commencing with the creation of awareness and building up towards the development of brand loyalty

3.4.1. Problem Recognition

This is the beginning process of the consumer buying, whereby the consumer identifies a discrepancy between the real and ideal state. The process of making a decision to purchase a product or service begins when there is a need or desire that the consumer seeks to satisfy. There are basic needs (hunger or thirst) and there are secondary needs such as social, emotional and moral needs. There are also needs that appear and are aroused through the elements of the marketing mix, especially digital advertising (Etzeletal, 2007: 93). According to Engel, Blackwell, and Kollat (1968), this problem-recognition stage is one in which the consumer initially detects a need or a problem. In this case, it may be triggered by internal stimuli, including feelings of hunger and personal want, or it may be caused by external stimuli, which could be an advertisement or other people's recommendations.

3.4.2. Information Search

Once a need has been identified, the second process that follows is information search. The decision to purchase products, especially high-priced ones such as shopping goods in general, requires consumers to collect information about their features, benefits, prices and who sells them. Various digital marketing channels have made it possible for consumers to access comprehensive and reliable information about

organizations, their products and prices easily, anytime and anywhere they want. Compared to traditional sales channels, consumers do not only rely on what the selling organization says about its brand, but they can also follow social media, which is considered a reliable source of information, to obtain opinions and information from a large number of people (Alijahwarietal, 2020:437).

3.4.3. Alternative Evaluation

The consumer then proceeds to the alternative evaluation stage, where he compares various available products or brands based on factors of interest that might include price, quality, features, and brand reputation (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). Based on this, the consumer weighs the options and reduces choices by considering both emotional and rational factors that are involved in the purchase decision. Kotler and Keller, 2016 add that for making this comparison, consumers will often form a set of evaluative criteria, which may be inspired by their personal preference, what others have to say, and the marketing messages.

3.4.4. Purchase Decision

For purchasing from virtual stores, there are many evaluation criteria, including the quality of the offers, their prices, and the brands displayed by the different stores (Mothers & Hawkins, 2013: 511). There are other criteria, such as the availability of products 24 hours a day, delivery time, response to solve the

problems facing the consumer in a timely manner, the extent to which the quality of the product matches his expectations before purchasing from the store, and the guarantees granted by the store to return the product if he is not satisfied with it (Muller et al., 2011: 13). When shopping through digital marketing channels compared to purchasing through traditional methods, the consumer often buys the product from stores that maximize the benefits he obtains and reduce the sacrifices and purchasing risks that the consumer is exposed to (Anil et al., 2018: 5).

3.4.5. Post-Purchase Behaviour

The last step, post-purchase behavior, is very important in terms of determining consumer satisfaction and long-term brand loyalty. In this context, Huang & Castronovo (2012) confirmed that the conversations and comments that consumers make through various digital marketing channels contribute to providing accurate information. Consumers currently rely entirely on the opinions they share with others through electronic word of mouth and e-mail messages (Khan & Iftikhar, 2017: 4). Electronic word of mouth is defined as the transfer of information between consumers through social networking sites to exchange experiences and reduce the risks that may occur to the consumer when purchasing products.

3.5. Source Credibility Theory

The main goal of any advertisement is to convince consumers or customers of the service or product, in a serious attempt to change or modify their attitudes towards certain products and brands. In this regard, the credibility of the advertisement plays an important role in convincing the targeted audience of the products of a particular company and the reasons for preferring it over its competitors. The Haveland model believes that the effectiveness of the message depends on the experience and credibility of the source. Haveland also believes that sources characterized by experience, trust, and credibility are convincing. A source with high experience and trust can change attitudes, unlike a source with less experience and credibility. Information provided by a reliable source (such as influencers on social media) can influence consumers' beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and behaviors. In addition, influencers who are viewed as experts are more convincing and able to influence purchasing intentions.

It can be said that Hovland and his colleagues have established the main pillars of the theory of source credibility, which is based on two main elements: -

1. Trustworthiness
2. Expertise.

As for trustworthiness, it is related to the degree of credibility of the source in all his words and actions, which is

precisely related to the communicator being characterized by honesty, sincerity and trustworthiness.

Expertise refers to the perceived competence of the source based on the audience's dealings with him, his previous positions, the audience's knowledge of him, their information about him, and their skills in refuting information. Expertise refers to the endorsers' experience and knowledge in a particular area of interest, and Trustworthiness relates to the endorser's honesty, integrity and credibility as perceived by the target audience.

3.6. Previous studies

According to **Kligowski (2023) study**, the most engaging and influential content is often behind the scenes, whether in companies, advertisements, or even with celebrities or video clips taken by employees during their work. This type of content encourages consumers to interact directly with the brand, through many ways such as asking questions to get instant answers and interacting with the brand.

Kuligowski, 2023 confirms this idea that they are active personalities on social media with many followers, which influences a part of the market. Through these definitions, it was found that the influencer has become a marketing activity where he plays the role of a mediator between the brand and the audience. Brands benefit from the presence of someone through

social media such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, and other various media, as influencers help potential consumers discover products, application methods, tricks and tips. The audience also loves influencers who share information and products with them, and accordingly, it can be said that the influencer has become an ambassador for brands and a spokesperson for them.

Chen (2022) study: The study aimed to study the relationship between the credibility of influencers on social media networks and their influence on followers in the tourism sector. The study found that influencer marketing enhances the promotion of tourist destinations by providing simple and information. Credibility positively affects followers' attitudes, leading to an increase in visits to tourist destinations. The study showed a significant increase in the return on investment for companies that used influencers compared to traditional marketing methods.

Aydin (2022) study: The study aimed to find out the extent to which the Covid pandemic affected the activity of influencers. The study found that due to quarantine and the increased time spent by followers on social media, the activity and numbers of influencers increased. However, some criteria should be considered, such as understanding the perceptions of influencers about the pandemic to avoid negative criticism, as it is not

preferable to promote entertainment products during the prevailing period of anxiety

Pick (2021) mentioned that the trustworthiness of an influencer plays an essential role in how people feel and are concerned about the ads and whether they are willing to buy the product being promoted and helps. If the influencer is seen as a trustworthy person, people will probably believe about his recommendations and will be influenced by his opinions.

The study by **Siti Liu (2021)** also adds that social media influencers are ordinary people who express themselves personally on more than one communication platform, and focus on specialized fields that interest them, such as technology, fashion, food, and fitness. They can build a relationship with the audience by sharing their daily lives, knowledge and information, and having conversations with others on social media to show themselves.

(Yuan & Lou, 2019; Kim & Lou, 2019) agreed that influencers are first and foremost content generators, digital content creators with expertise in a specific field such as (healthy living / travel / food / lifestyle / beauty / fashion) and have many loyal followers by regularly creating valuable content via one or more of their social media platforms, and thus they have become a marketing value that brands seek to benefit from. In comparison with traditional celebrities, influencers are “ordinary individuals” who specialize in specific fields. They become Internet celebrities

through creating content via social media (**Kim & Lou, 2019**) Celebrities can also gain influencer status, but after they become regular content creators, an influencer is a content creator with a celebrity status (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

According to **Sammis et al. (2015)**, influencer marketing combines content marketing and native advertising. This means that influencer content blends naturally into the platform it's shared on, making it feel like a normal part of what people are already watching or reading. In today's world, many key marketing decision makers rely on influencers to help them make the right choices because it's becoming harder to find and directly target potential customers. That's why working with influencers who have already built a trusted following is seen as a smart solution for brands. Influencers use a variety of channels, such as social media and traditional media, to connect with their audience. By collaborating with influencers, brands can communicate their messages more effectively and influence potential customers' purchasing decisions. This strategy works well because influencers are highly trusted by their audience, making their opinions more influential than traditional advertising. Also, he added that influencer marketing blends content marketing with native advertising, where influencer content seamlessly integrates with the platform on which it is posted, making it seem like a natural part of the audience's viewing or reading experience.

4. Methodology

4.1. Sample design

This study is based on the deductive research approach. This research includes a theoretical framework and hypotheses and testing them through data collection and analysis. This approach is ideal for analyzing the causal relationship between variables. A cross-sectional design was used to collect data at one point in time. This method is effective for analyzing the relationships between variables without the need for long-term observation. In addition, this research focused specifically on the causal relationships between influencer marketing (credibility, familiarity, self-brand connection, and content quality as an independent factor) and the purchase decision as a dependent factor in the food and beverages industry in Egypt. The simple sampling method was used, which is a probability method that ensures equal opportunities for selection for all individuals without bias. It helps reduce bias and improve sample representation.

4.2. Scale of measurement

All measures in the paper were adopted from previous research. The first element, credibility, was assessed using a 7-point Likert scale: by Martensen et al. (2018); Chen Lou & Shupe Yuan (2019); Dreifaltdt et al. (2019); Jiang, M. (2018); Deatara et al. (2019). While the familiarity was measured using a

7-point Likert scale by Russell and Puto (1999); Martensen et al. (2018); Deatara et al. (2019); Martensen et al. (2018); and Dreifaltdt et al. (2019). Additionally, the self-brand connection was measured by a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) by Jimenez-Castillo & Sanchez-Fernandez (2019). Lastly, the content quality was evaluated using a 7-point Likert scale by Wafaa Samea Abdel (2023). In contrast, the dependent variable, which is purchase decision, was assessed and measured using the 7-point Likert scale by Lou & Yuan (2019); De Veirman et al. (2017); Schivinski & Dabrowski (2016); Djafarova & Rushworth (2017).

5. Statistical Analysis Techniques

A set of statistical methods was used in alignment with the nature and objectives of the study. The research relied on descriptive statistics, such as the mean and standard deviation, to accurately analyse and describe the characteristics of the sample. In addition, Cronbach's Alpha was employed to measure the reliability and internal consistency of the data collection instruments. Correlation analysis was used to assess the strength and direction of the relationships between variables, while linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the impact of the independent variables (such as credibility, content quality, familiarity, and self-brand connection) on the dependent variable (purchase decision). Furthermore, the study applied Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to test the main

hypotheses and verify the validity of the proposed model. This was supported by a set of goodness-of-fit indicators, such as CFI (Comparative Fit Index), RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation), Chi-square/df, and GFI (Goodness of Fit Index), which were used to evaluate the statistical model's quality and its alignment with the actual data.

Table (1): Descriptive statistics for research constructs (n=214)

	Sample Size	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Familiarity	214	1	5	3.044	0.8512
I have followed the influencer for a long time	214	1	5	3.200	1.0250
The influencer I follow shares personal aspects of their daily routine on social media	214	1	5	3.250	1.1010
I relate to the influencer on a personal level	214	1	5	2.810	1.1640
I know what kind of person the influencer is	214	1	5	2.970	1.1680
Self-Brand Connection	214	1	5	2.970	1.0228
I often feel a personal connection between the brands suggested by the influencer that I follow and myself	214	1	5	3.000	1.1470
Part of me is defined by the brands suggested by the influencer that I follow	214	1	5	2.920	1.1740
I feel as I have a close personal connection with the brands suggested by the influencer that I follow	214	1	5	2.919	1.2060
There are links between the brands suggested by the influencer that I follow and how I view myself	214	1	5	3.040	1.1660
Content Quality	214	1	5	3.576	0.8394
I prefer to follow content that provides sufficient information in a shorter time	214	1	5	3.650	1.1310
I trust content that provides general advice and solutions to real problems facing consumers	214	1	5	3.580	1.0660

I prefer to follow content that is displayed through more than one application on social networks	214	1	5	3.410	1.0250
Attractive contents (video, image-based) usually generate a desire to buy	214	1	5	3.670	1.0560
The quality of the content provided affects my impression of the influencer	214	1	5	3.560	1.0590
The credibility of the information in the content affects my loyalty to the brand	214	1	5	3.580	1.0750
Purchasing Decisions	214	1	5	3.218	0.8705
I feel good about buying food and beverages recommended by the influencer I follow	214	1	5	3.260	1.0460
I often buy products from food and beverage brands recommended by the influencer	214	1	5	3.280	0.9950
I intend to purchase from this food and beverage brand again in the future	214	1	5	3.340	0.9830
I have purchased a product directly because an influencer suggested it	214	1	5	3.210	1.2200
I would consider buying a product that an influencer promotes, even if I hadn't heard of it before	214	1	5	3.010	1.2500
Influencer's Credibility	214	1	5	3.341	0.8656
I will recommend the food and beverage brands suggested by the influencer to others	214	1	5	3.440	0.9420
I am more likely to purchase a product when it is recommended by an influencer I follow	214	1	5	3.240	1.0720
I perceive an honest influencer as credible	214	1	5	3.160	0.9000
I perceive the influencer credible when their message in their post (on social media) is clear.	214	1	5	3.520	0.8970

5.1. Answering Hypothesis

5.1.1. Normality Test

The tests' results, shown in the following table, revealed that all study variables were not normally distributed because the significance value of those variables were below 0.05. However, since the valid collected sample is 214 responses hence, according to Sekaran (2003), a research study sample size which is above 30 to 50 respondents is capable of running parametric tests especially in multivariate research. Moreover, running a parametric test when the data variables are normally distributed can be violated if the study's sample size is large or moderate and results can still reflect precision and accuracy (Green and Salkind, 2005).

Table (2): normality tests

	Kolmogorov Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Familiarity	0.105	214	0.000	0.973	214	0.000
Self-Brand Connection	0.110	214	0.000	0.971	214	0.000
Content Quality	0.130	214	0.000	0.948	214	0.000
Purchasing Decisions	0.103	214	0.000	0.974	214	0.001
Influencer's Credibility	0.160	214	0.000	0.951	214	0.000

5.1.2. Regression Analysis

The model tackles the study of the relationship between the independent variables and the consumer's purchasing decisions as the dependent variable.

The following table shows that the value of the determination coefficient equals 0.712 which means that the variations in the explanatory variables explain only about 71.2% of the variations in the consumer's purchasing decisions.

Table (3): model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.844	0.712	0.707	0.4715

The significance of the previous test is less than the level of significance ($\alpha=0.05$) which indicates the significance of the estimated model (at least one of the regression coefficients is significant).

Table (4): ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	114.948	4	28.737	129.260	0.000
Residuals	46.465	209	0.222		
Total	161.413	213			

The analysis reveals that:

- The familiarity has a positive coefficient of 0.140, meaning that as the familiarity increases, purchasing decisions tend to increase. The effect is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.020, which is below the common threshold of 0.05. Moreover, the VIF for the familiarity is 2.488, indicating no major multicollinearity concerns.
- The self-brand connection has a positive coefficient of 0.169, meaning that as the self-brand connection increases, purchasing

decisions tend to increase. The effect is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.001, which is below the common threshold of 0.05. Moreover, the VIF for the self-brand connection is 2.355, indicating no major multicollinearity concerns.

- The content quality has a coefficient of 0.081, indicating a weak positive effect on purchasing decisions. However, the p-value is 0.112, which is above 0.05, meaning this variable is not statistically significant in explaining variations in purchasing decisions. Moreover, the VIF for the content quality is 1.743, which is low, confirming that it does not suffer from multicollinearity.

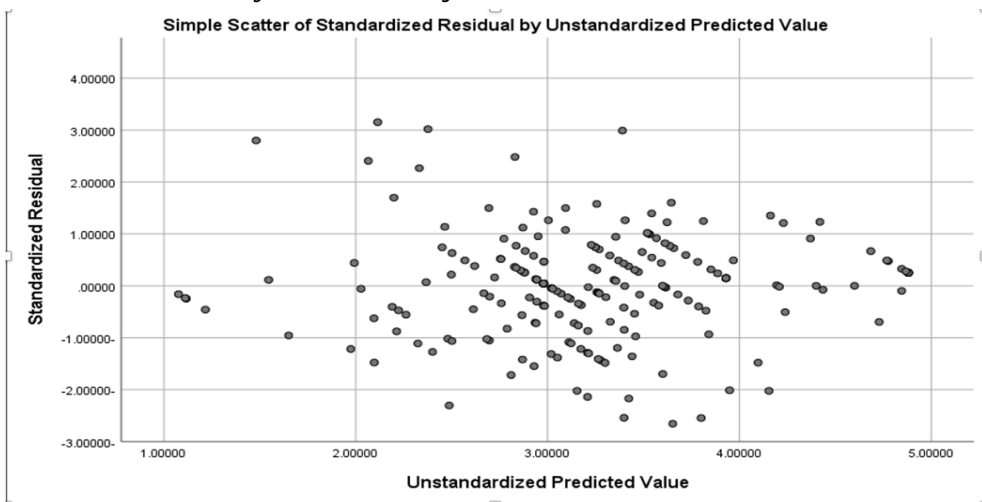
- The influencer's credibility has a positive coefficient of 0.562, meaning that as the influencer's credibility increases, purchasing decisions tend to increase. The effect is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.000, which is below the common threshold of 0.05. Moreover, the VIF for the influencer's credibility is 1.916, indicating no major multicollinearity concerns.

Table (5): parameter estimates

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
	Beta	Std. Error				
Constant	0.125	0.154		0.809	0.419	
Familiarity	0.140	0.060	0.137	2.341	0.020	2.488
Self-Brand Connection	0.169	0.048	0.198	3.476	0.001	2.355
Content Quality	0.081	0.051	0.078	1.594	0.112	1.743
Influencer's Credibility	0.562	0.052	0.558	10.872	0.000	1.916

Dependent Variable: Purchasing Decisions

Here, the scatter plot of standardized residuals against unstandardized predicted values shows a random distribution of points, with no clear pattern or systematic structure. This indicates that the linearity assumption of the regression model is satisfied. The absence of a distinct shape, such as a funnel or curve, suggests that the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable is adequately captured by a linear model. Additionally, the spread of residuals appears consistent across different predicted values, which suggests that heteroscedasticity is not a major concern.



Linearity plot

6. Results and Discussion

This study examines the impact of influencer marketing on purchasing decisions in the food and beverage sector in Egypt, highlighting the impact of influencer marketing (credibility, self-brand connection, content quality, and familiarity) on consumer purchases decisions. The hypotheses listed were tested using the regression analysis, p-values, coefficients, and variance inflation factors (VIFs) to examine their statistical significance and investigating the potential multicollinearity issues.

H1: Influencer credibility has a statistically significant and positive relationship with consumer purchasing decisions toward food and beverage brands in Egypt."

Hypothesis H1 is accepted, demonstrating that influencer credibility significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions. The positive coefficient of 0.562 and the p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) indicate a strong and statistically significant effect. The VIF value of 1.916 confirms the absence of multicollinearity issues. These findings are agreed with previous studies like (Casallo et al., 2020; Yuan and Lu, 2019), who proved that influencers who characterized by trust enhance consumer trust, increasing the likelihood of following their recommendations. This supports Beck's (2021) research, which highlights trust, expertise, and experience as key elements in influencing credibility that drives purchase decisions. Arguably,

this contradicts the findings of Wong, Chi, et al. (2017), who stated that consumers are less engaged by influencers who get financial compensation for promotions because at the end this reduces their perceived credibility.

H2: Self-brand connection significantly and positively influences consumers' purchasing decisions toward food and beverage brands in Egypt."

Hypothesis H2 is accepted, indicating that brand attachment plays a decisive and strong role in influencing purchase intentions. The positive coefficient of 0.169 and the p-value of 0.001 ($p < 0.05$) indicate a statistically significant effect. A variance-in-weighted index (VIF) of 2.355 also indicates the absence of multicollinearity. This is consistent with previous studies (Escalas and Pittman, 2003; van der Westhuizen, 201), which suggest that consumers are more attracted to brands that are highly consistent with their self-identity and personal values. Therefore, brands exploit their partnerships with influencers to strengthen their ties with the brand and ensure that their messages are consistent with the influencers' values and lifestyles.

H3: "Content quality significantly and positively influences consumers' purchasing decisions toward food and beverage brands in Egypt."

Hypothesis H3 was rejected, because the (positive probability coefficient) was 0.081 and the probability value was

0.112 ($p > 0.05$), which means that the quality of content has no statistically significant influence and role on purchasing decisions. Although the VIF value was 1.743, indicating that multicollinearity is not a problem, the lack of statistical significance indicates that content quality alone is not sufficient to drive purchases of consumers. This finding contrasts with previous studies (Casaló et al., 2020; Pappas et al., 2017), which argue that high-quality content increases consumer engagement and trust in the promoted product. However, it supports the conclusions of Gamage et al. (2022), which suggest that content quality must be paired with credibility and emotional connection to be effective. To sum up consumers are becoming more aware of paid advertisements, making them less influenced by aesthetically enhanced content alone. Instead, they give the priority to authenticity, influencer credibility, and brand connection over aesthetics or production value.

H4: "Familiarity significantly and positively influences consumers' purchasing decisions toward food and beverage brands in Egypt."

Hypothesis H4 accepted as it suggests that familiarity with influencers significantly affects consumers' purchasing decisions. The analysis presents a positive coefficient of 0.140 and a p-value of 0.020 ($p < 0.05$), confirming a statistically significant effect. The VIF value of 2.488 indicates no multicollinearity

concerns. This finding is match and agreed with Diatara et al. (2019) and Martinsen et al. (2018) studies, which stated that familiarity enrich trust, making consumers more likely to respond to influencer recommendations. Additionally, Russell and Buteau (1999) suggest that the more interactions with influencer content the high level of familiarity consumers will response to, ultimately leading to stronger consumer-influencer relationships and increased purchase likelihood.

In contrast, Gammage et al. (2022) claim that familiarity alone is not enough unless it is accompanied by other factors such as credibility-related factors such as expertise and trust, suggesting that if brands focus on long-term collaborations with influencers, they will achieve familiarity and build consistent trust with their audiences.

7. Limitations of the research

7.1. Scarcity of Research on the Impact of Influencers in the Food and Beverage Industry

Most of the research on influencer marketing focuses on sectors such as beauty and fashion, where consumer engagement is heavily dependent on visual appeal and accurate reviews. On the other hand, the food and beverage sector has not received the same amount of academic study, despite the noticeable increase in the role of influencers in this field. Social media, particularly Instagram, is widely used to promote beauty and fashion

products, while food and beverage content remains under-explored in terms of its impact on actual purchasing decisions.

7.2. Focus on dining experiences rather than product purchases

Recent studies on food and beverage influencers have mainly focused on the dining experience in restaurants. However, their impact on in-store food and beverage purchases remains insufficiently studied. Research have investigated how these influencers influence the public's perceptions of restaurants and eating habits, but there is insufficient analysis of their direct impact on consumers' choices when influencing consumers to make a purchase.

7.3. Cultural and Regional Differences in Influencer Marketing

The effects of influencer marketing vary depending on cultural and geographical contexts. Consumer trust in influencers depends on sociocultural factors, making it difficult to generalize the results of Western studies to Arab markets. The relationship between influencers and brands also varies according to the target market, as consumer preferences and patterns of digital interaction differ between different cultures. Therefore, understanding these differences is essential to developing effective influencer marketing strategies that are adapted to each cultural and regional context.

8. Conclusion

This study aimed to understand the impact of influencers in the food and beverage sector on consumer purchasing decisions in Egypt. By applying source credibility theory, the research demonstrated that influencer dimensions such as trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise play a significant role in shaping consumer behaviour, thus influencing purchasing decisions. The results indicate that Egyptian consumers engage significantly with food-related content published by influencers, and that this content influences their pre- and post-purchase choices. The study also reveals that influencer marketing in this sector has not been adequately studied, despite its significant impact. Finally, the study recommends that brands invest in building relationships with influencers who authentically connect with their audience and maintain their credibility to enhance marketing effectiveness and consumer satisfaction.

9. Future recommendations

There is a clear difference between the results of the exploratory study in the interviews, especially in the content quality section, and the results of the questionnaire, where when people were asked whether the quality of the influential content affected their purchase decision, the answers were that the quality of the content was one of the most important initial elements that matter to them, but the results of the questionnaire showed that the quality of

the content does not affect the purchase decision. It can be recommended that future research study this gap more accurately and deeply. It is possible, through conducting a study that combines qualitative and quantitative research, which will improve why people feel that the quality of the content is important, but this does not appear in their actual behaviour, and it can be applied to different categories of consumers and certain types of influencers. Additionally, the most important recommendations drawn from the study to fill research gaps and improve understanding of the impact of marketing influence on purchasing decisions in the food and beverage sector like **expand and understand the nature of influencers in sectors and fields other than cosmetics, beauty and fashion** by given that most previous research has focused primarily on the cosmetics sector, it is necessary to expand the scope of future studies to include the impact of influencer marketing in other sectors, such as food and beverage, electronics, fashion, and even daily consumer products. This will be making it easier to draw a clear picture of influencers roles in diverse markets. Additionally **making comparisons between different markets to understand the influence of cultural factors** because of cross-market comparisons to understand the impact of cultural factors, consumer behaviour is influenced by diverse cultural and geographic factors, calling for comparative studies to understand how culture impacts the effectiveness of influencer marketing. In Egypt, the impact of influencers on purchasing decisions attached

to their credibility and relationship with consumers, while in the Gulf countries, social factors such as status and luxury may play a significant role in influencing these decisions. Furthermore, influencer recommendations vary between Western and Arab countries, as some consumers in some countries may be more aware of paid promotional content than others. Finally **enhancing tools for measuring influencers' influence on Purchasing decisions** as for future research requires developing more accurate research tools to measure the actual influence of influencers on purchasing decisions, rather than relying solely on surveys and questionnaires, which may be influenced by personal biases or unrealistic expectations. This can be achieved by tracking direct sales data, analysing online search and purchase patterns following marketing campaigns, and using big data analytics techniques to understand changes in behaviour.

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