



## On the Rise of Social Media Influencer Marketing: A Systematic Literature Review and Future Research Agenda

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### Abstract

The study aimed to explore the definitions and principles of social media influencers (SMIs) and investigate their role as a marketing strategy. A systematic literature review was conducted using databases such as EBSCOhost, ScienceDirect, and Emerald, resulting in 89 peer-reviewed articles from 2007 to 2023. The findings revealed various definitions of SMIs, highlighting their role as marketing communication tools to influence consumer purchase intention. SMIs were described as individuals with a large fan base, attracting a significant following and becoming advisors to their followers. The study also identified a growing trend of businesses using influencers in their communication strategies. Additionally, the elements of influencer brand-fit, engagement, attractiveness, expertise, and perceived credibility were found to impact consumer purchase intention. Overall, the research provides valuable insights into the field of influencer marketing and its effects.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION



Social media's rapid rise has made user-generated, shared, and consumed content omnipresent (Ho & Ito, 2019). This altered communication (Melumad et al., 2019). Peer-to-peer social media dialogue has propagated crucial information, according to Peng et al. (2018). Customers accept social media group content without checking (Shareef et al., 2020). Social media facilitates customer-business communication (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). Online forums enhance users' product and service opinions, influencing public opinion. This makes traditional advertising ineffective.

Social media converts customers become brand champions (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). SMIs may attract big crowds, dedicated fans, and authority. Due to the Internet's speed and breadth, certain content providers have massive readership. Influencer marketing helps many (Makrides et al., 2020). Chiara Ferragni established The Blond Salad in 2009 for fun. She has 20 million Instagram followers, a profitable shoe company that has expanded into garments and accessories, and worldwide affiliations (Walsh & O'Connor, 2019). Offering free items or payment to SMIs who promote their business has worked for several companies. "Influencer marketing" is popular now.

SMIs and their followers co-create brand images on social media by fostering favourable customer reactions to firms' interests (Martínez-López et al., 2020a). Influencers boost brand acceptability. Influencer marketing isn't new. Opinion leaders impact customer

behaviour through word-of-mouth (Godey et al., 2016) due to their superior position, social status, attractiveness, or expertise (Lin et al., 2018). Opinion leaders' popularity, attractiveness, and expertise cause this (Hou et al., 2019).

Social media makes celebrity endorsements more accessible and enticing (Appel et al., 2020). Nearly half of internet users follow an influencer on social media and take their advice, according to research (Digital Marketing Institute, 2019; Young, 2010). 40% of Instagram/YouTube shoppers buy stuff. Influencer recommendations affected 19% of US buyers in 2018 (Audrezet & Charry, 2019; Zheng et al., 2023). SMIs are needed since customers seldom interact with businesses on social media (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016). (Guan & Li, 2021).

SMIs have become an important marketing tool, motivating further research (De Jans et al. (2018), Hughes et al. (2019), and Torres et al. (2019)) and business press attention (Audrezet & Charry, 2019). SMIs are social media influencers. Scholars and professionals value this topic. Thus, academic research and industry utilisation of this phenomenon require further understanding. The following features inspired this comprehensive assessment of social media influencer marketing studies. First, SMI research is untested. This is true despite studies indicating that influencer traits like trustworthiness, attractiveness, and talent and processes like endorser-brand fit, desire to emulate, and emotional connection affect consumer outcome determinants. Trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise impact engagement, brand attitude, and buy intention.

Marketers lack strategic and intellectual knowledge of this new tool (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Vrontis et al., 2021). Second, SMI-related research is increasing rapidly, with scholars from various fields participating. This scattered information needs organisation to grow. An integrated marketing strategy that synthesises existing research across disciplines, addresses influencing variables on customer attitudes and behaviours, and finds underlying components would assist marketing.

This technique would examine how various factors affect customer attitudes and behaviours and their underlying causes. Thirdly, influencer marketing (IM) is becoming a major social media paradigm, thus academics is debating it (Appel et al., 2020; Ge & Gretzel, 2018; Lou et al., 2023). Thus, it is crucial and beneficial to analyse reliable study results published in recognised academic publications following rigorous peer review.

The review focuses on the following research questions:

- a. How is SMI defined?
- b. What are the current trends in SMI?
- c. What are the elements of SMI?

This paper follows the research questions. This review's methodology and study selection are detailed next. Based on the literature review articles, the results and research questions were provided. Conclusions and future research were presented.

## **2. METHODS**

This study aims to present a high-quality synthesis and organisation of the SMI literature (wang & Chugh, 2014), provide academics and practitioners with an integrated framework of the current information (Mihalache & Mihalache, 2016), and identify research gaps and future research. A systematic literature review was chosen to meet these aims (Hao et al., 2019; Mishra et al., 2021). The study employed a domain-based method like Paul and Criado (2020) and Tranfield et al. (2003). 's suggestions.

The investigation searched three prominent electronic databases for pertinent research papers: EBSCOhost business source ultimate, Science Direct, and Emerald. These databases were chosen because to their large coverage and application in cutting-edge systematic reviews (Christofi et al., 2017; 2019; Leonidou, 2020). Since marketing systematic reviews often include English-language academic articles, the search was limited to them. This inquiry excluded novels, book chapters, conference papers, editorials, and

other non-refereed works. Christofi et al. (2017) and Rimkute et al. (2016) analysed consumer behaviour.

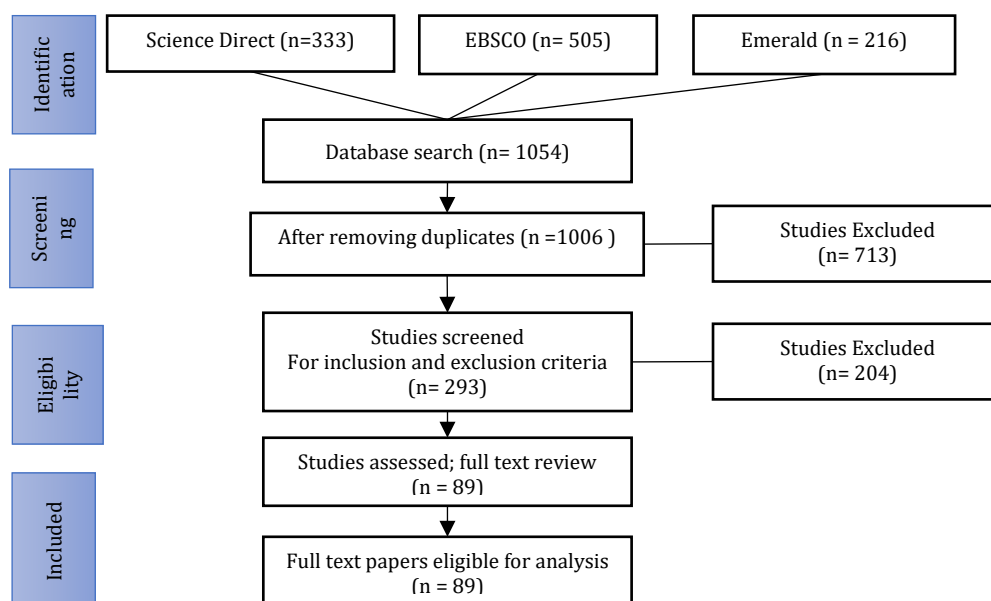
Due to strict requirements, peer-reviewed journal publications have a lot of weight (Mihalache & Mihalache, 2016). According to Furrer et al. (2008), peer-reviewed academic articles provide new research routes for theoretical and empirical problems. This impacts the study. No systematic synthesis of celebrity endorsement literature has been done (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016). A scoping search of directly linked articles found a pattern of phrase repetition in SMI-related academic literature. This determined appropriate search keywords.

For such complete literature reviews, the article's title, subject, and abstract were searched (Pisani et al., 2017). EBSCOhost business source produced 505 results, Science Direct 333, and Emerald 216 at this preliminary stage. Three databases yielded 1,054 results. After removing duplicates, 1006 manuscripts were screened to remove 713 non-academic or peer-reviewed papers, leaving 293 articles. Table 1's inclusion and exclusion criteria deleted these 204 articles. Human assessment of titles and abstracts found 89 journal articles redundant or duplicated. The study selected 89 items from the SMI library's all-accessible collection.

**Table 1.** Inclusion Criteria and Exclusion Criteria

<b>Inclusion criteria:</b>	
	The research work is related to social media influencer marketing
	The publication includes state of the art on social media influencer marketing
	Research papers are published from 2007 to 2023
	The research papers are written in English.
	The research papers have been published after being submitted to a peer review process.
	The research follows the appropriate structure of a research according to the research method
<b>Exclusion criteria:</b>	
	The research work is not related to social media influencer marketing
	The publication does not include the state-of-the-art social media influencer marketing
	Research papers not published from 2007 to 2023
	Research papers not written in English
	Research papers not peer-reviewed.
	The publications that don't follow the appropriate structure of research according to the research method

Source: Data Processed (2023)



**Figure 1.** PRISMA Flow: Data Extraction Procedure  
Source: Data Processed (2023)

After selecting papers, the researcher reviewed them all to find relevant material (Danese et al., 2018). A data extraction form was built to repeatably and understandably gather and summarise each article's primary content. Author(s), citations, year of publication, journal title, study field, paper type (theoretical, empirical, or review), research technique (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed), social media platform, major results, and future research plan. The data extraction form provides coding categories for descriptive and thematic region analysis. The data extraction form categorised reviews into descriptive and thematic analysis.

### **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Since this field is still young (Hu et al., 2020), our systematic review's oldest publication was published in 2007. 8% of the articles analysed were from 2007-2015. Knowledge progresses slowly. SMI articles have increased during the past four years. In 2018, ten papers were published, in 2019, seventeen, in 2020, thirty-five, and in 2021-2023, twenty (20). This increase in academic attention has coincided with IM's growing popularity in practice and the media.

94% (n=84) of the 89 evaluated papers included empirical research, whereas 6% (n=5) included theoretical components. This suggests that current IM research lacks conceptual contributions (integrated views, new theories, and propositional inventories) necessary for knowledge generation (MacInnis, 2011). Thus, future research on this area should focus on theoretical expansion. 81% (n = 68) of empirical studies utilised quantitative research methods, 16% (n = 14) used qualitative methods, and 2% (n = 2) used both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative investigations focus more on current theories than new ones. Qualitative empirical studies are crucial to field growth and comprehending the phenomena of interest.

Within the scope of this study, the majority of papers were in marketing (n = 50; 56%) and (n = 24; 27 %) pertain to the topic of information management. Only 17% are published in journals in the disciplines of general science and medicine. Management, Ethics, Gender, and Social Responsibility (n = 12; 13.5%), Social Sciences (n = 1; 1.1%), Sector Studies (n = 1; 1.1%), and Psychology (n = 1; 1.1%). The field lends itself readily to other academic fields. After doing more research, the researcher discovered that the aforementioned types of studies are published in a variety of academic publications.

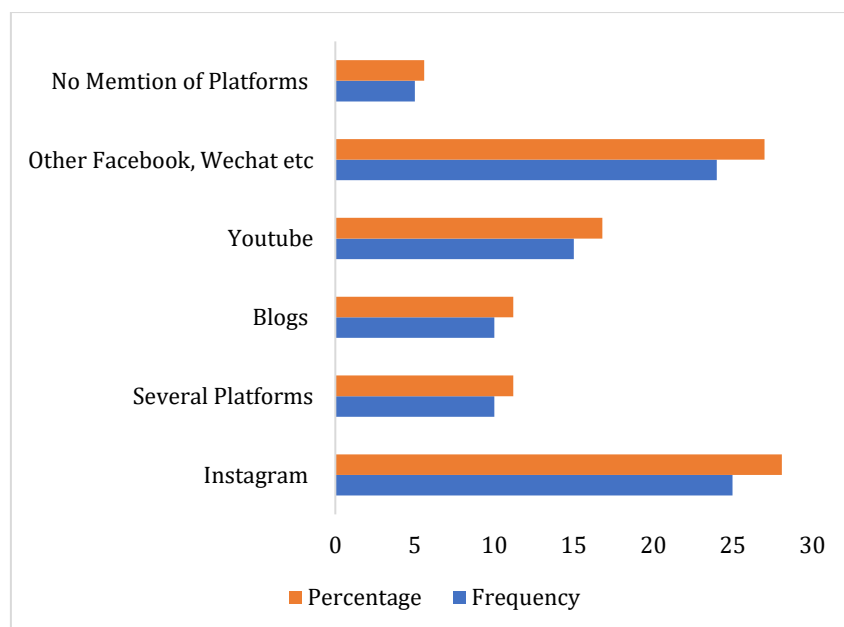
The journal with the largest concentration of publications on this subject is Computers in Human Behaviour (n = 17) among the several journals that have published articles on the topic. This is followed by the Psychology & Marketing (n = 6), Journal of Marketing Management (n = 6), and International Journal of Information Management (n = 6). Each publication published two of the four articles: the Journal of Marketing, the Journal of Interactive Marketing, and the International Journal of Advertising. Each of the following publications published one article: "Journal of Consumer Research," "Journal of Advertising," and "Business Horizons." The remaining articles analyzed included a single article each.

#### **a. Citation analysis**

Scopus was utilized to gather data on article citations for the study, and this information was then used to evaluate the significance of prior research, displays the 25 articles with the most citation 83 percent of all references to the 89 publications came from just 10 sites. Out of the total of articles analysed Watts and Dodds (2007) in the journal of consumer research was cited 2705, De Veirman et al. (2017) in international journal of advertising cited 2425, In computers in human behaviour; Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) was cited 1747 and Xiong et al. (2018) cited 87, In journal of business research; Lee and Watkins (2016) was cited 1009, Casaló et al. (2018) was cited 991, Thakur et al. (2016) cited 195 and Audrezet et al. (2018) cited 27, Lin et al. (2018) in Business horizon was cited

417, Vrontis et al. (2021) in the Journal of Consumer Research was cited 397, In Journal of marketing ;Hinz et al. (2011) was cited 916,Hughes et al. (2019) was cited 537and Kupfer et al. (2018) cited 122, Uzunoğlu and Kip (2014) in the international journal of information management was cited 943, McQuarrie et al. (2013) in journal of consumer research cited 700, Kapitan and Silvera (2016) in marketing letters was cited 411,Lu et al. (2014) in computers in human behaviour was cited 256, Hwang and Jeong (2016) was cited 291, Colliander and Erlandsson (2015) in Journal of marketing communications was cited 177, Jin et al. (2019) in Marketing Intelligence & Planning was cited 782, in the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services; Sokolova and Kefi (2020) was cited 1062 and Ge and Gretzel (2018) cited 275, De Jans et al. (2018) in journal of advertising was cited 207, Xiao et al. (2018) in Journal of Media and Business Studies cited 481. These works are a clear reflection of the interdisciplinary character of the subject being researched due to their incorporation of a wide range of academic disciplines.

According to the findings of our study, 28.1% (n = 25) of the 25 distinct social media sites evaluated focused on Instagram. This should not be surprising considering that Instagram is currently the most popular and influential platform for influencer marketing (Breves et al., 2019a; Reinikainen et al., 2020). The next is (11.2%, n = 10) shows research on various platforms and blogs (11.2%, n = 10), YouTube was the second-most-studied platform (16.8%, n = 15). Other websites, like Facebook, Sina Weibo, Twitter, and WeChat, have garnered a lesser proportion of attention (27 percent, n equals 24). As a result of utilizing a more general approach, five of the studies (5.6% of the total) did not give detailed information on the social media sites utilized. Even though Instagram is the most strategically important platform for influencer marketing activities, more research into other social media networks is required to provide a comprehensive knowledge of how consumers and influencers engage on each platform. Figure 2 depicts the social media platforms studied.



**Figure 2.** Social Media Platforms Studied  
Source: Data Processed (2023)

The study conducted a comprehensive review of existing research on Social Media Influencers (SMIs). The main objective was to identify the dominant research topics present in the reviewed papers. Instead of using a predefined coding scheme, the researchers employed an inductive technique to categorize the information, allowing data-driven patterns to emerge. This approach provided flexibility to adapt to the constantly changing nature of the field (Cooke et al., 2019; Yang & Gabriellsson, 2018).

The investigation look for recurring themes and modify them. This method led to the development of five main study themes : (1) source attributes and customer outcomes; (2) psychologically related motivating factors and consumer outcomes; (3) content attributes and consumer outcomes; (4) sponsorship disclosure and consumer outcomes; and (5) strategic assessment of SMIs. The results are highlighted in Table 1 contains the identified research topics, the number of articles associated with each subject, and a rating of the themes' relative importance in light of our inquiry. It is important to remember that several publications explored a wide variety of subjects and, as a result, were cataloged under several distinct divisions. As a consequence, we modified the citations to give additional credibility to certain sections of the study. For instance, if an item may be filed under two distinct categories, each of those categories will have a citation weight of 0.50.

**Table 2.** Themes in the scholarly work that has been reviewed

<b>Research themes</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>Adjusted No. of Articles</b>	<b>Weight (%)</b>
Source attributes and consumer Outcomes	Al-Emadi and Yahia (2020); Balabanis and Chatzopoulou (2019); Breves et al. (2019); Campbell and Farrell (2020); De Veirman et al. (2017a); Djafarova and Rushworth (2017); Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019); Fink et al. (2020); Hill et al. (2017); Hughes et al. (2019);	30.5	34%
Psychological-related motivating factors and consumer outcomes	Al-Emadi and Yahia (2020); Balabanis and Chatzopoulou (2019); Breves et al. (2019);Zheng et al. (2023);Casaló et al. (2018);Colliander and Erlandsson (2015);Folkvord et al. (2019);Jin et al. (2019);Jin and Ryu (2020);Kapitan and Silvera (2016);Ki and Kim (2019); Ki et al. (2020); Kim and Kim (2021); Abdou et al. (2020); (Ladhari et al., 2020); Lee and Kim (2020); Magno and Cassia (2018)	19.5	22%
Content attributes and consumer outcomes	Al-Emadi and Yahia (2020); Aleti et al. (2018); Audrezet and Charry (2019); Argyris et al. (2020); Balabanis and Chatzopoulou (2019); Casaló et al. (2018); De Veirman et al. (2017); Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019); Fink et al. (2020); Hill et al. (2017); Hughes et al. (2019)	16	18%
Sponsorship disclosure and consumer outcome	Audrezet and Charry (2019);Boerman and Van Reijmersdal (2020);Colliander and Erlandsson (2015);De Jans et al. (2018);De Jans and Hudders (2020);De Veirman and Hudders (2020);Hwang and Jeong (2016);Kay et al. (2020);Kim and Kim (2021);Tandon et al. (2018);Stubb and Colliander (2019);van Reijmersdal et al. (2020)	13	15%
Strategic assessment of SMIs as a Marketing Tool	Appel et al. (2020); Erz et al. (2018); Ge and Gretzel (2018); Hinz et al. (2011); Lanz et al. (2019); Lin et al. (2018);	10	11%

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McQuarrie et al. (2013); Singh (2021);  
Voorveld (2019); Watts and Dodds  
(2007);Vrontis et al. (2021)

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Source: Data Processed (2023)

### **Source attributes and consumer outcomes**

The effect of SMI features on user outcomes has been the major focus of research conducted so far. Academics are mostly in agreement that the validity of IM is a crucial contributor to the field's general effectiveness in social contexts. It has been shown that the trustworthiness of an influencer may improve a consumer's purchase intent for up to four years after the first exposure (Al-Emadi & Yahia, 2020; Fink et al., 2020; Munnukka et al., 2019; Reinikainen et al., 2020; Sakib et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Using the source credibility model, social media studies Breves et al. (2019a); Elmira Djafarova and Chloe Rushworth (2017); Schouten et al. (2020) have often defined influencer credibility as consisting of trustworthiness, attractiveness, and knowledge (Ohanian, 1990). These qualities are known as the three pillars of an influencer's credibility. In contrast, a recent study Xiao et al. (2018) investigated the factors that contribute to the trustworthiness of a source while addressing SMIs

Trustworthiness, argument quality, social impact, and problem engagement (how relevant the issue is to the consumer's interests) were shown to be crucial factors. Alternatively, Xiao et al. (2018) did another research to investigate the factors that contribute to the credibility of sources in the context of SMIs. People's impressions of a person's credibility are influenced by a range of factors, including honesty, argument quality, social impact, and issue engagement (relevance of the problem to consumer interests). Comparable research studied how various brands connect. According to the results of separate research done by Uzunoğlu and Kip (2014), purchasers are more likely to believe recommendations from influencers who have tried the items themselves

According to the study, the attractiveness of an influencer rises with age, and this attraction is not necessarily connected to the influencer's physical appearance. Not a collection of traits, but rather the mix of possessing knowledge and social approbation. In addition, the study has shown that the influencer's beauty, which is not necessarily tied to her or his physical appearance but rather encompasses familiarity and likeability, is a vital component in affecting the reactions of customers. These reactions include customers' views regarding the affirmation and brand, in addition to their purchase intentions (Torres et al., 2019). It was also believed that the popularity of a product had a bigger impact on a customer's likelihood to acquire an experienced product than a search product (Hill et al., 2017). According to a study conducted by De Veirman et al. (2017a), the perceived degree of popularity of a person is closely proportional to that person's level of likeability. It was also believed that popularity had a greater effect on people's decisions to acquire and experience things as opposed to search for goods (Hill et al., 2017).

However, if the product being advertised has an unusual appearance, a large portion of the intended audience may form negative opinions about the brand being talked about (De Veirman et al., 2017a). When it comes to the selling of consumer gadgets, a talented influencer may in nearly every aspect surpass a beautiful face (Trivedi & Sama, 2020). Moreover, the seeming resemblance is a crucial reason for the effectiveness of influencer endorsements, especially in terms of the kind of product being sold (Schouten et al., 2020). The data indicate a definite pattern, which is that various conditions and types of commodities need the use of different sorts of effects.

However, relatively few studies have compared the impact of recommendations from influencers to that of conventional celebrity endorsements. Consumers are more likely to make purchases and have positive attitudes toward endorsed brands when these individuals are vocal advocates for them (Elmira Djafarova & Chloe Rushworth, 2017; Jin et al., 2019). Those endorsed by influential individuals are viewed as more credible, trustworthy, and likeable, and have a stronger social presence. When recommended

products have outspoken supporters, consumers are more likely to make purchases and have favorable sentiments (Elmira Djafarova & Chloe Rushworth, 2017; Jin et al., 2019; Schouten et al., 2020). However, this could lead to stronger feelings of envy for SMIs than for mainstream celebrities (Jin et al., 2019).

### **Psychological-Related Motivating Factors and Consumer Outcomes**

Second, the systematic review focuses on key characteristics associated with the deeper psychological processes that consumers undergo when exposed to SMIs, as well as how these aspects affect the emotions and actions of customers. SMIs may generate an emotional reaction from their followers when they meet their demands for motivation (in the form of inspiration), relatedness (by displaying likeability and enjoyment), and competence (Ki et al., 2020). (by choosing and arranging valuable objects) According to the results of research on beauty vloggers, an emotional connection to a vlogger, as well as three aspects of homophily (i.e., attitude, values, and appearance), seem to affect the vlogger's perceived popularity, which has a substantial impact on the purchase of items (Ladhari et al., 2020).

Research on beauty vloggers Ladhari et al. (2020) found that viewers' emotional connection to the vlogger, as well as three aspects of homophily (attitude, values, and appearance), strongly influenced their chance of buying the vlogger's suggested product. In addition, the researchers discovered that viewers' homophily with the vlogger had a substantial impact on their chance of buying the product. Hu et al. (2020) used a psychological approach to illustrate the importance of wishful identification and para-social interaction (PSI) with the SMI in the growth of followers' adherence to the influencer. Wishful identification is the desire to be or act like another person, and para-social interaction (PSI) is an imaginary relationship. Sokolova and Kefi (2020) performed a study on the beneficial associations between social media influencers (SMIs) and persuasive social media signals.

When influencers flood the feeds of their followers with commercial content, consumers unfollow such influencers (Dzhafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). An increasing corpus of research focuses on the precise technical characteristics of postings that contribute to endorsements' efficacy. This study is in addition to the information supplied by influencers about the more general characteristics of effective content. For instance, Jin et al. (2019) highlighted customers' negative reactions to influencers' product-only posts. They suggested that such messages imply obvious financial motivations on the part of the influencer and are thus seen as invasive. The unfavorable reactions of customers to influencers' product-only posts were also brought to their notice. PSI, on the other hand, functions as an intermediary between photos of influencers using their goods and a heightened impression of a company's legitimacy (Jin et al., 2019). As Jin and Ryu (2020) discovered, there is a correlation between feeling envious and wanting to purchase the products that SMIs are wearing, and this correlation is strengthened when consumers, especially males exposed to influencers of the same sexual orientation, view influencers' self-promoting selfies or photographs shot by others.

Although these interactions are governed by the campaign advertising target (awareness versus trial) and the kind of social media platform, postings with high hedonic value content and campaign gifts increase social media engagement (i.e., comments) (Hughes et al., 2019). (blog vs. Facebook). To persuade readers to click over to related material, blog posts must have a high hedonic value, raise awareness, and provide freebies.

Customers are more likely to participate in a blog community if the experience has a high hedonic value, awareness campaigns are conducted, and campaign prizes are offered. Customers are also more inclined to participate if campaign prizes are offered. Conversely, Facebook posts with high hedonic content benefit from partnerships with trial programs, but campaign freebies that may force customers to abandon Facebook are bad (Hughes et al., 2019). According to a study conducted by Lu et al. (2014), buyers are more likely to purchase after reading an article promoting a sponsored recommendation if the promoted



product is both a search good and a well-known brand. Additionally, if the post is written entertainingly, buyers are more likely to make a purchase.

### **Content Attributes and Consumer Outcomes**

The third key emphasis of the study is on the nature and quality of influencer content as well as the consequences of such content. Consumers have a favorable image of a social media influencer (SMI) as a taste and opinion leader when the content they receive from the influencer is aesthetically appealing, exhibits prestige and expertise, and encourages participation (Ki et al., 2020). In addition, they exhibit positive behavioral outcomes, such as word-of-mouth marketing and the intent to make a purchase, as a direct result of their desire to imitate the influencer (Ki & Y. K. Kim, 2019). According to research, influencers whose content is visually similar to that of their audience may increase the number of interactions they get from their audience by striking a visual chord with their followers (Argyris et al., 2020). Original and distinctive material, according to Casaló et al. (2018), increases the possibility that consumers would engage with the influencer, embrace the advice they have provided, and recommend the influencer. Due to the high amount of brand control over the influencer's message and the significant focus on commercialism in the post, the credibility of the post, the interest in the post, and the propensity to look for more relevant information are all diminished (Martínez-López et al., 2020).

It has also been shown that a source's trustworthiness reduces when it places a heavy focus on business considerations. According to De Veirman and Hudders (2020), declaring a sponsorship may have a detrimental impact on brand attitude because it raises consumers' understanding of marketing, which increases consumers' distrust of commercials and diminishes the trustworthiness of the influencer. This is because after learning about the sponsorship, consumers are more alert to commercials. According to van Reijmersdal et al. (2020), the existence of sponsored material before a video's launch leaves viewers with a negative image of the company, the video, and the influencer.

Further, Tandon et al. (2018) findings helped unify the results of prior research on disclosure, even if they had previously reached divergent conclusions. They argued that consumers' trust in the influencer's expertise would increase when disclosures were processed automatically, leading to positive effects on persuasion outcomes (such as sharing the post and following the advice), but that this trust would be diminished or even reversed when consumers deliberated on the disclosure. Extending this line of investigation Stubb and Colliander (2019) discovered that declaring that the content is not sponsored, sometimes known as a "impartiality dis-closure," increased the credibility of both the source and the message. This was determined to be true when the researchers reported that the content had no sponsors. However, brand attitude and purchase intent decline when visitors are sent to a product page that emphasizes selling the reviewed items rather than a homepage. This is because buyers begin to question the legitimacy of the offering when they discover that the evaluated products are the primary emphasis of the website. In other words, De Jans and Hudders (2020) show that being exposed to the disclosure of no commercial interest (saying that the material is freely created and provides an unbiased evaluation of a product) reduces mistrust towards marketing. Specifically, they discovered that participants' suspicion decreased when they were informed that the content was freely created. According to study results, different sponsorship disclosure strategies have diverse impacts on client reactions (Colliander & Erlandsson, 2015; Hwang & Jeong, 2016; Stubb & Colliander, 2019).

### **Sponsorship disclosure and consumer outcomes**

The fourth area of research focuses on how the disclosure of sponsorship agreements influences audience reactions to social media influencer marketing. Making advertising more visible will likely have the single most significant consequence of making it simpler for consumers to identify commercials (Boerman, 2020; De Jans et al., 2018; De Jans & Hudders, 2020; Kim & Kim, 2021). On the other hand, previous studies revealed

contradictory findings about client behavior. Several further research has had positive results. Disclosure of sponsorship results in a range of positive consequences, including higher purchase propensity, brand memory, and brand (Boerman, 2020; De Jans & Hudders, 2020; Kay et al., 2020).

### **Strategic Assessment of SMI as a Marketing Tool**

This investigation concludes with a focus on the strategic usage of SMIs in advertising. Marketing strategies used by micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMBs) have been explored by industry experts. As an example, Ge and Gretzel (2018) investigated the usage of emojis by SMIs to encourage user behavior. This was done with the intent of encouraging people to take action. Erz et al. (2018) examined the Instagram hashtagging patterns of consumers and concluded that SMIs are mostly driven by the desire to enhance one's self-presentation. Other researchers have offered advice about the development and maintenance of robust internet connections. For instance, Lin et al. (2018) presented a five-step approach for using SMIs to promote both hedonistic and utilitarian items and services. The strategy consists of the following steps: planning (determining the campaign's objectives), recognition (identifying relevant SMIs), alignment (aligning SMIs with the promoted products or services), motivation (rewarding SMIs in a manner consistent with their social role), and coordination (ensuring that all of the aforementioned steps are executed) (negotiating, monitoring and supporting the influence of SMIs).

### **Theory (Theoretical Extensions)**

According to our research, a variety of theoretical frameworks have been used in the study of SMIs. This category includes frameworks such as the theory of reasoned action, the theory of social exchange, the theory of two-step information flow, and the concept of the megaphone effect. Numerous scholars, using a vast array of theoretical views, have studied and sought to understand the problem (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020; Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Ki & Y. K. Kim, 2019). On the other hand, research often lacks a solid theoretical basis. The social comparison theory, the attribution theory, the source credibility theory, and the persuasive knowledge model are the four most often used theories.

### **Future Research Agenda**

Even though our extensive study has shed light on several areas of social media influencer marketing, we have a limited understanding of which sorts of influencers are advantageous in which settings and for which objectives. Depending on factors such as the kind of influencer, the brand or product being recommended, and the social media platform, influencer marketing (IM) may relate to a wide range of ongoing and ever-changing activities. Due to the expanding commercial implications and external validity, it is necessary to do more studies into the potentially crucial links that drive these complex phenomena. This study examines theory, context, and methodology to identify areas where prior scholarship has been lacking and to highlight significant issues that must be addressed in future research. Using the same methods as previous systematic reviews, this research examines theory, context, and methodology (Christofi et al., 2017; Hao et al., 2019; Paul & Criado, 2020)

Future research should investigate other constructs that may have a significant impact on persuasion outcomes, such as reciprocity, the influencer's knowledge contribution (Xiong et al., 2018), reputation (Thakur et al., 2016), kindness, sensitivity, authenticity, accessibility, intimacy, humour, and cultural capital. All of these are examples of factors that might influence the results of persuasion. In addition to engagement, brand attitude, and buyer intention, researchers may investigate brand equity (Finn et al., 2020), brand memory (Trivedi & Sama, 2020), and brand loyalty (Casaló et al., 2018) in the future. Utilizing criteria such as sales and return on investment, it would be useful to do further study on the benefits of influencer marketing on the financial health of organizations

(Hughes et al., 2019). It would be fascinating to analyze the impact of influencer marketing on the financial performance of businesses using a wide range of metrics, such as sales and return on investment, as a follow-up. In the future, it would be intriguing to examine this topic (Hughes et al., 2019). A substantial quantity of academic research must be conducted on the effect of such initiatives on commercial outcomes for several different sorts of prominent social media users.

By adapting pre-existing theories and results from similar research fields, such as celebrity endorsements and opinion leadership, a persuasive and well-reasoned case may be made for the introduction of new theoretical methodologies that are fit for the social media domain. These new techniques would be appropriate for usage in social media. This is consistent with prior studies' conclusions. Martinez acknowledged the inherent limitations of the research by relying on already approved commercial endorsement literature standards. Despite substantial studies on the effect of celebrity endorsements as a marketing communication approach Kay et al. (2020) and Ladhari et al. (2020) suggested that the findings and theories may not be relevant to small and medium-sized businesses (SMIs). One potential explanation for this is that SMIs may be classified in several ways, based on criteria such as the amount of attention they get from their followers (i.e., celebrity).

This may be because there are several classes of SMIs based on the number of followers they have, each with its distinct features (such as celebrity influencers, mega-influencers, macro-influencers, micro-influencers, and nano-influencers) (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Experts in the area have emphasized the need of determining whether or not there are significant differences in outcomes between the various types of SMI. There is an urgent need for more research on the attractiveness of virtual influencers and the potential limits of their effectiveness (Appel et al., 2020). In addition, research must be performed to identify whether real-world and online factors have equivalent causes and effects on SMI, and if not, the reasons for this discrepancy must be identified. The conclusions of this kind of research are quite valuable to marketing professionals

### **Theory Implications**

This study provides a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of SMI research, influencing future research. This study maps existing research from a multidisciplinary perspective, organises the various sub-areas identified within this research stream, and provides fresh and expanded insights, all of which enhance our understanding of the issue. This study maps transdisciplinary research.

Second, this study uses a thorough scientific evaluation to establish a multidimensional framework for social media influencer marketing's efficacy. Distributed scholarly works form this structure. The proposed framework contains primary outcome antecedents, mediators, moderators, and contextual factors. This helps explain SMI formation and influencer endorsement effects on consumers. The concept helps explain how influencer endorsements affect consumer outcomes. Integration leads to unique understandings that can guide future study, hence this topic needs more investigation.

Thirdly, this report shows that SMI research is growing. Thus, our work contributes to SMI research by providing a robust data base. The study concludes that various research questions warrant additional exploration. To strengthen theoretical foundations and development, contextualise understandings, and improve methodological rigour, we emphasise possible study issues. These hypotheses might form the basis for future research, which would advance this topic and marketing in general.

### **Practical implications**

Not only is this study noteworthy from a theoretical sense, but it also has several important ramifications for real-world situations. We provide a platform for marketers to appreciate the complexities of IM in social media contexts by doing a research synthesis and then presenting our results. Moreover, our comprehensive methodology not only supports

marketing professionals in taking a more holistic approach to employing SMIs to their advantage but also in building persuasive IM campaigns and maximizing the influencers' marketing impact. This is accomplished by encouraging marketing professionals to adopt a more comprehensive strategy for exploiting SMIs to their advantage. When using a strategy that depends on influencer endorsements, it is glaringly obvious that picking the most effective influencer for a certain audience is of the highest significance. Find a young person with a positive reputation, who is physically attractive, and who has the same fundamental beliefs, values, and language as the individuals you want to influence. Therefore, it is crucial to have a comprehensive awareness of the topics an influencer tweets about, as well as the influencer's audience and the relationship between the influencer and the audience (De Veirman et al., 2017; Munnukka et al., 2019; Reinikainen et al., 2020).

Because customers have gotten jaded by constant marketing messages and the emergence of "influencers" who advocate products and services for a fee, SMIs are no longer effective as promotional tools (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Disclosures of sponsorship may have unanticipated effects on the image and attitude of a brand's influencer, but they aid readers in recognizing sponsored marketing when it is offered to them. Over time, consumers may appreciate this transparency, resulting in less opposition from those customers. Customers abhor the feeling of being cheated out of their money. Because of this, companies must aim for advertising that is both ethical and successful; for example, indicating that the ideas expressed in a sponsored article are genuine may assist to mitigate the negative effects on source trust and message attitudes (Hwang & Jeong, 2016).

In addition, marketers must carefully assess the kind of compensation supplied to influencers, since there is evidence that revealing material rewards leads to fewer favourable attitudes about a brand than reporting monetary pay (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020). Because the inclusion of influencers has the potential to dilute a brand's meaning and create a diversion from the company's goals, marketing managers must set clear limits and ensure they do not lose sight of the brand's central viewpoint. This study's findings should convince marketers that taking a formulaic strategy to cooperate with influencers is not the way to go if they want to achieve the desired results with their customers. Due to the exponential increase of social media influencers (SMIs), businesses can no longer afford to exclude this kind of material when designing online advertising and marketing strategies. Our theoretical synthesis is offered with the intention that it will be useful in the creation of IM campaigns that contribute to the consumer behavior outcomes anticipated as a result of this research.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, SMIs have turned into a marketing tool with exponential growth that marketers cannot ignore when establishing online advertising and communication plans. It is believed that the study will persuade marketers to analyze cooperation with an influencer more comprehensively and not adopt a one-size-fits-all strategy. This is because a one-size-fits-all strategy cannot provide the intended customer results.

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