

The Effects of Micro-influencers on Customer Purchase Intention towards Fashion Products on Instagram



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Abstract

The main purpose of this research paper is to analyze the effect of social media micro influencer shared content on consumers' purchase intention towards fashion products on Instagram. To analyze this effect, relationship among trustworthiness, expertise, likability, similarity and familiarity of the micro influencers with purchase intention of consumers have been selected as variables in this paper based on source credibility and source attractiveness models. The formulated hypotheses have been tested using obtained cross sectional survey from 218 respondents who follow social media micro Influencers on Instagram. Regression analyses have been made using STATA to find whether there exists positive relationship among variables. As a result of this study, it has been found that expertise, likability, similarity and familiarity of social media micro influencers have a positive impact on consumers' purchase intentions. However, no statistically significant relationship between trustworthiness of micro influencers and consumer purchase intentions has been found in this study.

Keywords: influencer marketing, social media influencers, social media micro influencers, Instagram, fashion products, trustworthiness, expertise, likability, similarity, familiarity, purchase intention

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

Social media is part of daily routine of people, as it is offering a variety of tools to access extensive information from around the world, stay connected to other people, and share one's own thoughts and updates (Pentina et al., 2018). People are, mainly, using social media platforms to interact with their friends, be aware of updates happening all around the world (Pentina et al., 2018). Consumers use those digital platforms to look for product reviews and recommendations while searching for any item that they are willing to purchase (Bianchi et al., 2017). Social media platforms are one of the primary channels for marketers to build communication and interaction with customers, as increasing number of social media network users impacted marketing strategies and methods (Bianchi et al., 2017). Also, as online advertising field evolves persistently, the strategies used for applying social media advertising keeps changing as the use of social media keeps widely spreading and disseminating (Zhang and Mao, 2016). Few years earlier, it was a common marketing strategy for firms to use social status and popularity of celebrities to advertise their brands; so, exponential growth in number of social media users caused an increase in social recognition of influencers (Xu (Rinka) and Pratt, 2018). This process brought to emergence of the phenomena known as opinion leaders (influencers), who are social media users building their audience by posting interesting and engaging content (Freberg et al., 2011). Ability to reach out a considerable amount of target market fast and cost-efficiently makes influencer marketing progressively a more attractive promotional instrument for firms (Phua et al., 2017). Therefore, firms started to turn to social media influencers including vloggers and "Instafamous" people, to promote their brands and spread the promotional messages (Marwick, 2015). Mainly, people who

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are considered as social media influencers, use their personal social media profiles and to create content around various topics (Loeper et al., 2014). In other words, social media influencers are defined as individuals who have built considerable number of followers in social media platforms, and are able to influence perceptions of different types group of people, as well as considered trusted by their followers (Sudha and Sheena, 2017). Social media influencers have the ability to affect the user willingness to purchase a certain product by making it more attractive through sharing their experience of using and benefiting from the product translated in very native and easy to understand content on their social media profiles (Munukka et al., 2016). On one hand, the influencers can leverage the power of influencing customers in terms of their behaviors, views, thoughts related to promoted products through providing positive reviews and feedbacks via various social media platforms (Uzunoglu and Klip, 2014). On the other hand, users who wanted to acquire information about any given product, considered influencers as a main trusted source of information (Wang et al., 2012). As a result, vast majority of social media users who converted into customers stated to acquire product information from the influencers rather than from companies (De Veirman et al., 2017). Thus, influencer marketing plays a crucial role for marketers (Jin et al., 2019).

As experts address to social media micro and macro influencers which are considered to be closer and trusted for consumers and have more customer engagement rates regardless of having less amount of followers comparing to well-known celebrities, it becomes essential and necessary to accept and apply this new type of marketing activities and the importance of this kind of current social media opinion leaders for companies and brands. Although the influencer marketing is an attractive channel for firms to translate their messages to target audience, the major difficulty in fully adopting this tool is the lack of understanding on how to measure the return on ads expenses

(Headly, 2015 cited at Jargalsaikhan and Anastasija Korotina, 2016). Nevertheless, as firms understand the fast growth pace of number of social media platform users, they focus on deploying more numbers of resources and expert knowledge in order to utilize it as a marketing instrument. According to a recent survey, senior managers had stated that one fifth of firms' marketing expenses is allocated for social media campaigns, and it is planned that this figure could rise up to seventy percent in upcoming years (CMO Survey, 2018). Among the social media campaigns, the influencer marketing is assumed by marketing professionals as one the most efficient tool to reach out the target audience. Additionally, another latest survey has demonstrated that almost ninety percent of survey participants who are marketing professionals had a belief that social media platform influencers can play, significantly, a positive role on how customers approach to a brand (Warthor, 2018). According to empirical data, product recommendations through social media platforms influencers are more successful in terms of receiving higher amount trust rate in comparison to the recommendations given by families or friends (Sekhon et al., 2016).

1.2 Research Problem

Analyzing and defining the effects of influencer marketing reflect the major challenges in this field (Voorveld, 2019). The field of influencer marketing has received huge attention from scholars during recent years. For instance, some research papers such as Loy and Yuan (2019), Johansen and Guldvik (2017), Kim and Kim (2020) analyzed the field of social media influencer marketing and their impact over consumer purchase intentions. Based on the number of followers that social media influencers gather on social media networks, they are divided in two categories including micro-influencers and macro-influencers by Bijen (2017). The author mentioned that individuals who gathered 10 000 and 100 000 followers, are considered to be classified as social

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media micro influencers, on the contrary, the influencers with number of followers more than 100 000 are defined as macro influencers. In addition, in their research, Bijen (2017) has pointed out that micro-influencers are considered to have more positive impact over the purchase intention of buyers and brand trust compared to social media macro influencers. Even though there has been some researches as mentioned above on the role of social media influencers over customer purchase behavior and intention, there is a critical lack of studies which directly analyzed the effectiveness of micro-influencers in major social media platforms including Instagram in the context of its impact over consumer purchase intention towards fashion products. As the fashion industry is consistently changing with new trends and products made daily, attracting loyal consumers and meeting their preferences are vital for success of brands (Sedeke and Arora, 2013). As a cost-efficient form of distributing online media, influencers dedicate their time to research for high-quality information such as products and new trends to make a blog post fruitful to attract the greatest audience possible. Thus, this research tries to develop a better understanding about the effect of micro-influencers on customer purchase intention. The research is eager to develop value for the academicians, practitioners and for policy makers in the following ways:

- For academicians: it is going to fill the gap in the existing literature about the effect of social media micro influencers over customer purchase intention, and it will allow other scholars to conduct further researches within the field of influencer marketing
- For practitioners: it will help marketing professionals in deciding their influencer marketing strategies for companies
- For policy makers: it will help policy makers to see how consumers are effected with the influencer marketing, and it help them to implement right policy options for protecting consumer rights

To conclude, the principal problem, in the existing literature, is the lack of information about the impact of influencer marketing on customer purchase intention towards fashion products on Instagram in Azerbaijan.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

The purpose of this paper is to analyze how micro-influencers on Instagram influence customer buying intention in fashion products. Thus, the objective of the current paper is to investigate which factors related to social media micro-influencers positively influence to the purchase intentions of consumers to demonstrate the insights for business and companies when they are deciding on their influencer marketing strategies. In addition, to the author's best of knowledge, this study is the first of its kind which analyzes the purchase intentions of consumers affected by ads by micro-influencers in the fashion industry on Instagram in Azerbaijan. The paper includes one main and two sub-research questions. The research question are formulated as follows:

Major research question:

How does micro influencer promotional marketing campaigns affect purchase intentions of consumers on Instagram in the fashion industry?

Minor Research Questions:

RQ1: How does trustworthiness of micro-influencers on Instagram influence consumers' intention to buy on Instagram in the fashion industry?

RQ2: How does sponsored content shared by micro influencers affect to the purchase intention of consumers towards fashion products on Instagram due to the expertise of the influencers?

R3: How does likability of micro influencers impact consumers' purchase intentions in the context of product recommendations towards fashion items on Instagram?

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R4: How does similarity of micro influencers in the context of content shared by them have an impact on the purchase intentions of consumers towards fashion items on Instagram?

R5: How does familiarity of micro influencers affect consumer purchase intentions through fashion product endorsements on Instagram?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Influencer Marketing

Digital marketing is a marketing communication channel which mainly focuses on using web platforms and online devices including personal computers, laptops, smartphones and other kind of online media platforms to promote various kinds of products and services. As it advanced within the years of from 1990 till 2000s, it hugely influenced the common practices of using technology for marketing purposes of businesses and companies (Nurfadila and Riyanto, 2020).

Today, social media networks are used by billions of people and have become an integral part of life. Considering the enormous potential audience that spends many hours on social media, it is obvious that marketers accepted social media platforms as a marketing channel (Gil, et al., 20). Although there has been some research on how consumers engage banner advertisements on social media platforms, quite a few studies have been conducted to identify their effectiveness on product sales. Also, as more people turn to blogs for exploring information, recommendations, and reviews about products, companies are choosing microblogging platforms to engage and communicate with their customers faster (Kumar and Gupta, 2016). Nowadays, firms are in huge competition of affection buying behavior of online customers in digital world while marketing of any product or service. It is worthwhile to note that social media networking

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platforms are considered as an effective tool in online marketing since they allow businesses to actively engage with users and to promote the products to targeted audience (Nurfadila and Riyanto, 2020). One of the social media marketing strategies is influencer marketing which includes product promotion and placement activities from influencers, and people who possess allegedly advanced level of knowledge or social impact in their related fields (Nurfadila and Riyanto, 2020). The concept of influencer marketing could be described as an activity of defining individuals who have a certain level of impact over a particular targeted group of people in order to contribute any given company's marketing campaign for increasing number of sales, degree of engagement, and volume of reach. It could be claimed that the very foundation of influencer marketing is about the long-term established connection between an influencer and her or his followers. Thus, this interconnected relationship happening on social media platforms, being web-based software applications on various types of electronic WOM (word-of-mouth) forums including social media networking sites and blogs (Kudeshia and Kumar, 2017).

Influencer marketing is originated from the concept of WOM (word-of-mouth) marketing, through concentrating on social context in a more professional way. This way of marketing strategy, namely, relationship building with consumers, considered to be successful and helpful for companies which are trying to increase their number of customers and make them loyal clients through establishing of trust and authenticity (Nurfadila and Riyanto, 2020). It was also found that more than seventy percent of marketers believe that the customers acquired as a result of influencer marketing have better quality in terms of buy in larger amount as well as traffic when comparing to other sources of channels (Nurfadila and Riyanto, 2020). The researchers also pointed out that approximately ninety percent of survey participants revealed that return on investment

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from influencer marketing is considered to be comparable or even demonstrates better results in comparison to other types of marketing channels (Nurfadila and Riyanto, 2020).

According to statistics, the industry of influencer marketing has grown exponentially over the last decade and one of the well-known social media platforms which is Instagram is known to be the most demanded channel (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019). It is worthwhile to note that while the size of influencer marketing was only valued at \$1.7B in 2016, the size is estimated to be grown as much as approximately \$13.8B, and the global value of influencer marketing is expected to increase and to be \$16.4B in 2022 (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2021).

The concept of “influencer” is new both for companies all around the world, and Azerbaijani market as well. Though the population of Azerbaijan is approximately ten million, the number of people who have direct access to the internet is around eight million (Mammadli, 2021). The proportion of social media usage of people living in Azerbaijan is more than forty percent of overall population, and about half of people who have access to the internet (Mammadli, 2021). Regardless of the fact that according to Google search, Instagram stands in the third place, considering the number of active users, which is around 2.9 million, it the most popular social media platform in Azerbaijan (Wearesocial, 2020). It is critical to note that existing literature lacks information about the research of effectiveness of influencer marketing in Azerbaijani market.

The effectiveness of practicing influencer marketing on buyer purchase behavior has been defined, poorly, in the existing literature. The effectiveness of online advertising has been an important topic for years (Liu-Thompkins, 2019). The online advertising is considered as effective as long as it makes positive business returns, and the magnitude of the return differs considerably by product classification, ad pattern, and customer segment (Lui-Thompkins, 2019). It is important to mention that influencers actively

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participate in niche consumer segments which includes variety of categories including fashion and beauty products, traveling activities, or food (De Veirman et al., 2017). Hereby, influencers are trusted by their loyal followers and they have unique and individual experience about the products or services they display or mention on their social media accounts (Mathew, 2018). Moreover, as social media influencers are in capable of conveying communications with special small targeted groups of people, they are considered to be able of playing an essential role in increasing product engagement rates and brand loyalty (Solis, 2016). Thus, customers perceive social media influencers as a neutral third party that evaluates any given product. In addition, it is important to mention that any message shared on social media platforms by social media influencers could be echoed by their followers via re-posting the original post. Namely, this process of social interchange between influencers and their followers is what makes social media influencers so powerful since the sharing stimulates eWOM through social media platforms and could possibly gather more numbers of consumers engaged to endorse of a company or a product (Hoyer, 2012).

Furthermore, with respect to the effectiveness WOM on advertisements within the influencer marketing, it has been studied that word-of-mouth and other types of similar sources which are the result of interpersonal process considered to have more significant impact on major customer decisions in comparison with conventional advertising (Goldsmith and Clark, 2008). In another research, it has been found out that consumer generated positive word-of-mouth on social networking sites have a considerable amount of impact over customers' attitude and willingness to buy (Kudeshia and Kumar, 2017). Besides, empirical studies have demonstrated that electronic word-of-mouth influences to the purchase intentions of consumers (Sandes and Urdan, 2013; Park and Lee, 2008).

Company sponsored posts on social media platforms by influencers are considered to be electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) information (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2014). The concept of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) can be described as any feedback or recommendation which is either positive or negative claimed by former, current or potential consumers of any given product, service or company, that is publicly accessible for almost everyone through the internet (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). The definition of eWOM derives from the original definition of word-of-mouth that has been describe by Arndt (1967) as “oral, person to person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the received perceives as non-commercial, concerning a brand, a product, or a service. It is important to mention that in the original definition of WOM, the author stressed out that the person who is disseminating word-of-mouth is considered as not dependent on of the company or any business entity (Arndt, 1967). Therefore, WOM is an informal way of communication, and it is perceived to be more credible when comparing any commercial content.

2.2 Types of Social Media Influencers

Although the concept of “social media influencer” emerged during recent years, there are various types of them such as mega, macro, micro and nano, mainly, based on the number of their followers which have been defined by scholars in the existing literature. For example, social media influencers having more than one million subscribers are called as mega influencers and they have great affection over consumers’ behavior (Britt et al., 2020). Another type of social media influencers is called as macro influencers and those influencers have around between 100 000 and 1 000 000 followers. (Joosten, 2021). Also, micro influencers have been defined as influencer having between 10 000 and 100 000 followers, and are considered as more persuasive (Jiwoon et al., 2021).

Additionally, it should also be noted that, although they are not so popular, there is a type of nano influencers, which have followers less than a thousand (Rafki et al., 2022).

It should be noted that the concept of micro-influencer has recently emerged in the existing literature. Different studies referred micro influencers as social media influencers who have certain amounts of followers, usually, limited (Abdin, 2016; Bijen, 2017; Zietec, 2016). In terms of business language, the concept is being utilized to be able to differ social medial influencers which accumulated huge numbers of followers from the social media influencers who do not possess that much number of followers but have more engaged audience and these influencers are quite prominent among the public which they are engaged in (Main, 2017; Binker, 2018). So, ordinary people on social media platforms, for example, on Instagram, who accumulated followers, approximately, up to 35 000, are considered to become “Instagram famous”, and they are thought to have the chance of accessing to an audience which is similar to media’s celebrities (Khamis et al., 2016). One previously done research also demonstrates that bloggers who possessed fewer number of viewers are thought to be the most powerful ones which have highest impact because of their appropriate content, and detailed product recommendations (Booth and Matic, 2010). Also, according to statistics, mentioned by Dinesh (2017) in his article that user engagement is significantly higher on social media influencers which fewer number of followers.

However, it should be noted that the real volume of the two parties differ to a certain extent across countries, so that on the one hand, some claim micro-influencers are individuals who only accumulated less than one thousand followers, on the other hand, majority claim that their reach is mainly between five thousand and one hundred thousand followers (Solis, 2016). Nevertheless, macro-influencers usually are considered to have more than one hundred thousand followers which results in greater reach, and one study

has pointed out that macro-influencers are thought to be more favorable as they are also considered to be more famous (De Veirman et al., 2017). However, regardless of above-mentioned data about the volume of number of followers that social media micro-influencers have, there is no common consent about it in the existing literature, and differing claims are made by various scholars. According to Forbes (2017), several experts agree that social media influencers who have followers between 1 000 and 100 000 are categorized as micro-influencers. Whereas in another research Pierucci (2017) mentioned this numbers to be between 40 000 and 100 000. Besides, in the existing literature it has also been considered as social media influencers having followers between 10 000 and 100 000 are referred as micro-influencers (Westwood, 2018). Thus, as there is no common agreement in the existing literature about the right definition of micro-influencers in terms of their volume of audience, for the purposes of this research, social media influencers on Instagram who already accumulated followers between 10 000 and 100 000 will be referred as micro-influencers. Also, considering above mentioned facts about the persuasive role of social media micro influencers, and their huge importance over consumer purchase intentions, they have been chosen as a focus of this research.

It is also crucial to demonstrate the difference between the roles of social media influencers with traditional celebrity endorsements in influencer marketing. Advertising through bloggers has seen an increase, recently which is another form of online advertising which will be analyzed in this paper. As blogging offers a mutually interactive platform that creates a sense of friendliness and affinity, it is considered to be more effective online advertising (Kumar and Gupta, 2016). Companies are practicing microblogging for social network marketing which helps them to build social media users or potential consumers and in addition, through this way firms can influence buyers'

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purchase decision (Kumar and Gupta, 2016). Micro-influencers are not as prominent as celebrities, but they have enthusiastic followers which are, generally, more targeted and usually, this kind of influencers are more trusted than traditional celebrities; therefore, influencer marketing has seen huge attention from brands (Gil et al., 2020). In addition, as influencers engage in warmer and more personal narration, it was demonstrated to be more effective in customer engagement (Chang et al., 2019). Although influencer marketing is a unique social media marketing strategy, academic research is scarce. In this matter, it is essential to note that as, today, ordinary individuals have the power to acquire and influence a considerable amount of potential group of people, the fame and prominence are not, anymore, lie under the privileges of conventional gatekeepers including celebrities, film producers, journal editors and others (Khamis et al, 2017). On the contrast, this might, potentially, result in breakdown in the credibility of conventional celebrities.

According to a survey conducted by Jatto (2014) about the significance of celebrity endorsements on social media platforms, has concluded that only less than half of the participants agreed with the idea that the recommendations given by celebrities on social media platforms are believable. Also, another important point of the previously mentioned research is that more than fifty percent of the participants of the survey reported that they are either natural or do not consider the product endorsements to be authentic when promoted by celebrities, and, in addition, more than half of the respondents mentioned that they have never purchased a product only just because they have been exposed to a celebrity endorsement related to the product (Jatto, 2014). On the contrary, some scholarly articles demonstrate that social media micro influencers are considered as trustworthy and possess positive perception linked to them by consumers (Liu et al., 2015; Jargalsaikhan and Korotina, 2016). In this matter, it should be noted that one research

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has pointed out that consumers do not consider influencers sharing sponsored content by companies in which they are paid as something negative when endorsing any product or service (Lu et al., 2014). In his research, the author further mentions that when influencers state on their posts in one way or another that they are being sponsored by firms for sharing product reviews, customers perceive social media influencers not attempting to cheat on them, instead as trustworthy and reliable. Thus, therefore, it is the reason why when consumers see product endorsements by social medial influencers, they do not feel annoyed. Lu et al (2014) finalizes the research by mentioning that when consumers believe in the authenticity of product reviews it is going to influence, positively, to their purchase intentions about the related product.

Moreover, the perception of source credibility in terms of effectiveness of advertisements by the influencers on social media platforms also plays an important role. It is plausible that it has a convincing impact and affects the effectiveness of product promotion (Sternthal et al., 1978). Nevertheless, one research has concluded that there is an insignificant relationship between the credibility of the influencers and purchase intention of consumers and attitude towards brands (Lim et al., 2017). In this matter, it is necessary to note that above-mentioned study revealed the result through the social media influencers whom have insufficient amount of level of advanced knowledge related to the recommended product or service. Thus, the social media influencers that are endorsing products or services which are not included in their respective field of expertise could, implicitly, damage the customers' accepted understanding of the source, and, hereby, eventually, result in negative influence in willingness to buy (Lim et al., 2017). However, the bonded relationship between social media influencers and their followers are based upon reliability and trust, and this is what makes companies willing to cooperate with the influencers, as they are able to conduct more authentic stories about any given

product or service (Dhanesh and Duthler, 2019). Several researches indicate that social media influencers are considered to be more trusted, reliable, and possessing more expert knowledge in comparison with conventional celebrity endorsements (Jin et al., 2019; Lim et al., 2017). The above-mentioned finding has also been supported by Metzfer et al. (2003) that adequate level of expertise of knowledge and trust are expected to result in higher approval of information that featured by the endorsers. Nevertheless, these outcomes of endorsers' credibility are contradicting with the findings of another research which is investigating influencers, generally (Goldsmith et al., 2000). In this matter, it is worthwhile to mention that buyers who have received recommendations of influencers demonstrate a more positive indicator related to brand attitude and sense more powerful social belonging with the social media influencer compared to consumers that have seen celebrity endorsements (Jin et al., 2019). For the purpose of this study, the role of micro-influencers on Instagram in customer purchase intention the fashion industry will be analyzed.

2.3 Major platforms used by Social Media Influencers

There are various digital platforms in which social media influencers operate. Nurfadila and Riyanto (2020) divided them into five parts as being the most relevant platforms for influencer marketing. The authors, firstly, mentioned Instagram, and they claimed that using Instagram influencer could be effective and affordable way of marketing since consumers are more likely to buy products or services when it is endorsed by their trusted influencers (Nurfadila and Riyanto, 2020). Another platform mentioned by the authors is YouTube videos, as for example, YouTubers share plenty of videos in various contents including fashion and beauty tips, and people watching them inspire to try out their tips, and purchase the products used by the influencers. Facebook

is also one of the major social media platforms for influencers. Nurfadila and Riyanto (2020) mentioned that brands are looking for Facebook influencers which have certain amount of follower base appropriate to their target audience, and they ask the influencer to endorse their brand and products. Blogs have become famous since 2011 in the context of fashion items, and it, mainly, covers the reviews of dresses and collections (Nurfadila and Riyanto, 2020). Finally, the authors offer Twitter, Pinterest and LinkedIn as other digital platforms for influencer to operate and endorse products.

As for the purposes include defining the effectiveness of influencer marketing in social media platforms, it is important to describe why Instagram has been chosen for this study. Instagram is one of the major social networking platforms, and influencers thrive on that platform. It is worthwhile to mention that the number of monthly active users of the platform was nearly two billion in 2021 (Statista, 2022). Arguably, this platform has a huge potential as a marketing tool since it is in position of facilitating cooperation between social media influencers and companies through displaying goods and services, and encouraging the followers. Besides, according to statistics, in every given industry, four of them out of five utilize Instagram for their social media influencer campaigns (Schomer, 2019). Instagram is considered as a social media platform which is mainly focused on visual esthetics and images that are filtered, that makes it an appropriate ecosystem for showcasing products, spreading body pictures and encouraging lavish lifestyles and well-known luxury brands (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017). Also, this social media networking sites and apps creates an environment which gives a chance for its users to collect followers, link with various brands and organizations, and facilitates virtual social interconnections among the consumers (Blight et al., 2017). The use of influencer marketing has significant positive results for companies in terms of minimizing costs and increasing customer engagement on social media platforms (Schomer, 2019).

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Additionally, while referring to influencers operating on social media platforms, it is paramount to be able to grasp the sense of Instagram since many brands are inclined to look for this social networking site for strategic digital marketing purposes while addressing to influencers (Schomer, 2019). The social media platform creates an opportunity for users to share posts on their personal accounts, follow other people's profiles and to be able to check out their Instagram feed for recent photos and videos shared by users that they are following. In addition, this social network platform has launched Instagram stories, and through this functionality users are able to share images or visual content which are only available for viewers for 24 hours (Instagram Press, 2016). It is important to note that, according to statistics, an average Instagram user who is under the age of 25 use the platform 32 mins per day while users being more than 25 years old spends approximately 24 mins per day on the app (Instagram Press, 2017). Thus, it could be claimed that Instagram is considered to be important social media platform for the daily life of its users. Conventionally, Instagram has been used by people for, mainly, sharing posts of their interesting pictures (Chua & Chang, 2016; Nik Hashim et al, 2019). Nevertheless, recently, major social media platforms, in particular, Instagram has turned into a virtual place in which it has been used by business entities as a tool to promote their services and products. The reason of this is that it has been mentioned in the existing literature that photos and videos are considered to more attractive and grab more attention of the users (Hanson, 2018; Hashim et al, 2020). What is more, companies are also actively using Instagram, as the figures demonstrate that there are roundly more than 25 million profiles on the app which have been registered as a business profile (Instagram Business, 2019). With its aesthetic appearance and visual effects, Instagram makes easier for its users to interact with customers. Besides, based on recent survey, it has been revealed that about sixty percent of participants used Instagram for a new

product discovery (Instagram Business, 2019). Taking into consideration above mentioned facts about the role of Instagram in people's, in other words, consumers' daily life, which is the one of the most highly influential social media platforms, this platform has been chosen for the purposes of this research by the author.

2.4 Usage of Influencer Marketing in Fashion Industry

The fashion industry is considered to have an important role in the society, in today's modern world (Major & Steele, 2018). Various changes including the style and mode of dressing within the fashion industry is changing day by day, and these changes have caused grabbing attraction of people. Fashion industry, mainly, tries to focus on meeting customer demand through creating innovative and modern styles. In the last few years, the fashion industry has obtained enormous amount of growth of attention in social media platforms, and as a result, plenty of social media platform users developed huge interests towards fashion events (Nurfadila and Riyanto, 2020). In addition, as fashion industry is one of industries which is a good fit for influencer marketing, suggests various options for influencers and brands to collaborate (Sudha and Sheena, 2017). The authors mention in their research paper that many companies working within fashion industry accept and value that the influencers have, indeed, significant impact over reaching out targeted groups of people, and they have also admitted that this is an efficient way of marketing (Sudha and Sheena, 2017). The authors further mention that fashion models has significant contribution over increasing following in social media platforms, and also, fashion designers encourage people who looking forward to fashion events and trends through using Instagram. Moreover, Instagram users who are inclined to catch up with fashion in different ways follow like-minded influencers whose number is increasing, exponentially (Nurfadila and Riyanto, 2020). Thus, it is important to note that the fashion industry uses social media platforms in order to impact the purchasing intention of and

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buying decision processes of consumers. It has been reported in one research that several brands are using various strategies to grab attention of youth and provide value for money (Kilian, Hennigs and Langner, 2012). The authors mentioned that one of those main strategies is to deploy social media influencer marketing to be able to influence over consumers' buying behavior and purchase intentions.

Moreover, while it has been pointed out that influencers within the social media platforms have considerable amount of impact over affecting the purchasing intentions of women within fashion industries (Sudha and Sheena, 2017). Social media platforms have a significant influence on brand attitude and perceptions in the fashion and accessories industries (Helal, Ozuem and Lancaster, 2018). It has been found that as the companies invest more in social media influencer marketing, they are more likely to influence purchase intention of their customers (Kim and Ko, 2012). Besides, it is essential to mention that as social media is considered as a bridge between consumers and fashion industry, and plays a major role on impacting purchase intention and buying decision of users, the role of social media cannot be underrated (Salman and Ashiq, 2015). An important statistics mentioned in a research paper by Klaer (2019) demonstrated that more than seventy percent of users within fashion brands promoting luxury products have applied influencer marketing strategies. Meanwhile, another important point to mention is that one of the major social media platforms which is Instagram, allows companies and brads to obtain consumer feedback, review and experiences with their provided products or services. Nevertheless, it has been mentioned in the existing literature that, regardless of significant importance of influencer marketing, some brands are still struggling to deploy social media influencer marketing strategies within the fashion industry (Lim et al., 2017).

Considering above mentioned facts and previous studies in the field of fashion industry, and the undeniable important role of influencer marketing, the fashion industry and fashion products have been chosen for the purposes of this research paper.

2.5 Consumer Purchase Intention

Purchase intention has been defined as the probability of purchasing a product or service by an individual (Vineyard, 2014). It has been defined that consumer purchase intention as the chance of buying a product in the long run (Goyal, 2014). Intention to buy is considered as one of the cognitive actions of consumers while they are intending to make a purchase decision (Hosein, 2012). Firstly, individuals are going to accumulate information based on their past experience, recommendations from their surroundings, and preferences, after this, they are going to look through possible alternative options, and, eventually, they will make buying decision (Chi et al., 2011). Previously conducted research have demonstrated that social media influencers have a positive impact on consumers' purchasing intention (McCormick, 2016; Lisichkova and Othman, 2017). Nevertheless, it has also been displayed in the existing literature that there is no positive relationship between influencer marketing and the purchase intention of consumers in the context of blogs (Johansen and Guldvik, 2017). Besides, various studies demonstrated that purchase intention is a true sign of purchasing action, and therefore, it is being used to measure the behaviors of consumers (Kim et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2015). This idea has been supported in another research that the purchasing intention of consumers have a significant influence over their buying behavior (Lisichkova and Othman, 2017). In addition, businesses have also accepted the importance of purchase intention of consumers as it assists them in increasing sales and maximizing company profits (Hosein, 2012).

2.6 The Effect of Social Media Micro-Influencers on Consumer Purchase Intention

In their research, conducted by Hermanda et al. (2019), the authors attempted to find out the relationship between social media influencers and their influence on the willingness of purchase decisions, brand image and self-concept of consumers of cosmetic products. The findings of the authors demonstrate different results. Namely, it has been found that the relationship between social media influencers' impact over consumers' willingness to buy is significantly negative meaning that it does not affect their purchase intention. However, it has also been revealed that social media influencers positively impacted the brand image and self-concept variables (Hermanda et al., 2019). Moreover, other findings of the research include that, the brand image has considerably impact over the purchase intention. As a result, it can be claimed that social media influencers have positive indirect influence over the buying decision of consumers.

Furthermore, while measuring the effectiveness of influencer marketing, it should be noted that affecting variables whose influence are not possible to be observed directly are difficult to measure (Shumacker and Lomax, 2010). During the review of literature on the effectiveness of influencer marketing for companies, it has been found out that there are some main different variables such as purchase intention of buyers, brand attitude, credibility of the source of advertisement, e-WOM (electronic-word-of-mouth), attitude towards ads that play a significant role (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017; Cheikh et al., 2021). Attitude has been defined as general assessment of self-expression regarding any given situation, item, individual or action of the state of likeability (Schwarz, 2006). Besides, people's attitude also reflects the assessment of anything which is based on the range of associations that are connected to it (Hoyer, 2012). Namely, it is the result of the process that people have certain attitudes for different brands, product types, advertisements and other individuals. It is essential to mention that within the literature

research of attitude, attitude by consumers towards brands is considered to be the most focused research topic (Hoyer, 2012). What is more, through identifying the effectiveness of influencer marketing is to define the concept of purchase intention. Thus, in this research, purchase intention, in other words, willingness of buyers to purchase any given product, is described as the how likely or the probability of any individual that is going to buy a product or service (Phelps and Hoy, 1996). With regard to the relationship between purchase intention and brand attitude, it is plausible that there is a vast majority of existing literature demonstrating existence of significant relationship between two (Lutz et al., 1983; Phelps and Hoy, 1996). It is important to emphasize that brand attitude is considered to be one of the key indicators of purchase intention (Abzari et al., 2014; Wu and Wang, 2011). Various research conducted by scholars have demonstrated that the content and product recommendations which have been featured by influencers on social media platforms, have resulted in positive reactions by consumers with regard to willingness to buy and brand attitude as well (Hsu et al., 2013; Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017; Colliander and Marder, 2018).

Arguably, some of the most key features of social media influencers are based on the highly trustworthy and authentic recommendations and WOM (word-of-mouth) which frequently are continuously integrated into the shared posts by the social network influencers (Themba and Mulala, 2013). Besides, social media influencers are more authentic than experts or celebrities since the users think that they share more genuine content and “practitioners often distinguish between micro (i.e., low but relevant reach) and macro influencers (more than 100,000 followers and an established personality and content)” (Domingues and Eva, 2018). A recent empirical research conducted by Ben Cheikh et al, (2021) has demonstrated that influencer generated eWOM, authenticity and trust of micro-influencers play a crucial role in the purchase intentions of consumers on

Instagram. Thus, in the following sections below, each of above-mentioned factors about the role of social media influencers in influencer marketing and consumers purchase intentions are going to be elaborated.

In this research paper two approaches including source credibility model and source attractiveness model are going to be applied for formulating conceptual framework which reflected the research targets of this paper. These source models are used to in identifying the effectiveness of social media influencers in influencing consumers purchase intention toward a fashion product. Through using source credibility model, the effectiveness of product endorsers can be identified (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Taghipoorreynh & de Run, 2016). Perceived expertise and trustworthiness are considered to be the two key indicators of source credibility model (Hovland et al., 1953). Then, a new indicator of source credibility model has been offered in the literature which is source likability or attractiveness (McGuire, 1985). Source attractiveness model mentions about several features of endorser's physical appearance including similarity, likability, and familiarity in influencing to the receivers of information (McGuire, 1985 and Ohanian R., 1990). It should also be noted that attractiveness alone is not just dependent on physical attractiveness, it is necessary to consider other factors such as daily life, abilities, creativity, and personal characteristics of endorsers (Erdogan, 1999). Thus, those mentioned two models are critical to understand the influence of product recommendations over user behavior. It is important to mention that these source models have been used in previous researches on the matter of conventional media platforms, and claimed that these determinant have a positive impact over consumers' purchase intentions (Kumar, 2011; La Ferle & Choi, 2005; Wang et al., 2017; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). It is important to note that source credibility and source attractiveness models are mostly used by scholars in the literature to define the influencing power of endorsers

(Evans and Clark, 2012; McGuire, 1985). In this matter, it is proposed in this research paper that above mentioned factors are going to have a positive impact to the purchase intentions of consumers in the field of influencer marketing.

2.6.1 The effect of Trustworthiness of Social Media Micro - influencers on the Customer Purchase intention

The concept of trust has been defined as the desire of one to be undefended to the actions of another based on assumption that the other one will demonstrate a specific action significant to the trustor, regardless of the fact the availability of controlling that other one (Mayer et al., 1995). It is plausible that this definition of trust is also applicable to the influence of social media influencers, today. In her article, Bruns (2018) also mentioned that it is paramount for social media influencers to be considered as trustworthy by consumers when they are promoting any product or brand. Bruns-Sidduqi intention to buy model suggests that it is necessary for influencers to obtain trust of consumers in order to be able to influencer their purchase intentions (Bruns, 2018). The concept of credibility which involves different points of view, has significant impact over the willingness of buying decision of a consumer. It is plausible that from the credibility of origin, the effectiveness of any given information can be identified. Therefore, it is essential for the purposes of this research paper to define which factors play important role in credibility of any given source of information, and, in the meantime, Ohanian (1991) mentioned three different elements about it in his "The Model of Source Credibility". According to this model, the first element is trustworthiness. So, based on his model, trustworthiness is described as the level of confidence in the origin's intention to convey valid and reliable assertions. In this matter, it is important to mention that it has been pointed out in one research that users who admit people that are alike to them to be more trustworthy (Uzunoğlu and Kip, 2014). Arguably, above mentioned fact could explain the

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reason why social media influencers are, mainly, successful when promoting products, since they are being considered as closer by buyers in comparison with the traditional celebrities and macro-influencers for product endorsements, and as a result the influencers are perceived by consumers to be more trusted (Jin, Muqaddam and Ryu, 2019). However, if the audience finds out that intention of given information is not related to just personal experience and recommendation, and instead there other motives, they might resist convincing intent of information and do not trust the source credibility of the message (Lu et al., 2014). Thus, the author describes positive user attitudes for sponsored endorsements as a propensity to trust the source with respect to a specific sponsored endorsement in a particular occasion-frame (Lu et al., 2014). Within the fashion industry on the web, trust and reputation are considered to have an impact on consumer compliance. Trust and perceived value by consumers towards suppliers within the virtual apparel transactions are considered to be essential in purchasing intentions (Escobar-Rodriguez and Bonson-Fernandez, 2016). So, in another research conducted by Chen et al (2015), it has been demonstrated that social media influencer endorsements are highly linked with a tendency to trust, and buyer trust has considerable impact on purchasing intentions of consumers on Instagram.

In addition, it has been pointed out in one research that while establishing a credible and reliable online source, trustworthiness is considered to be one of the most essential factors, and at the same time, it resulted in a positive change tending to increase the credibility of the influencers (Xiao, Wang and Chan-Olmsted, 2018). Nevertheless, it should be noted that the previous research has been conducted on the social media platform, YouTube, therefore, the outcome of the research may vary across other social media platforms including Instagram. On this matter, another study conducted in Ireland demonstrated that social media influencers are thought to be trusted the most by female

consumers when the influencers have fewer numbers of followers and are alike to the buyers (Baker, 2018). Nevertheless, it has been found out in the existing literature that there is also contradicting outcomes related to the previously mentioned research in which Chatzigeorgiou (2017) stated in his paper that how trusted social media influencers perceived by consumers are based on the number of followers they have accumulated. It is obvious that these mentioned studies create contradictions in the current literature, therefore, one of the aims of this research is to fill the gap, and find out the how trustworthiness and credibility of social media micro influencers on Instagram affect to the buying intentions of the consumers on Instagram in Azerbaijan.

H1: There exists a positive relationship between trustworthiness of social media micro influencers and purchase intentions of consumers on Instagram towards fashion products.

2.6.2. The effect of Expertise of Social Media Micro - influencers on the Customer Purchase intention

The expertise of product endorsers are linked to their level of knowledge, abilities and practices (Lis and Bettina, 2013; Teng et al., 2014). In other words, the ability of social media influencers to generate convincing and detailed information since the commence of communication with the buyer to develop friendly relationship with them is, usually, called as expertise (Nejad, et al., 2014). When social media influencers are actively in communication with their followers within social networking sites through demonstrating the signs of personal and professional experiences, and knowledge which ensured social media influencer to show expertise, it makes the followers and consumers to feel more trustworthy to them (Uzunoğlu and Kip, 2014; Kapitan and Silvera, 2015). One of the elements of credibility based on Ohanian (1991) model of source of credibility is the degree of expertise of the source. In the field of advertising, when the endorser of

the advertisement is considered as an expert in the related area, it positively affects to the credibility (Ohanian, 1991). For instance, it has been demonstrated in one research that the level of expertise is key element for credibility of social media health influencers (Raafat, 2018). Ohanian (1991) also mentioned that purchase intention of consumers is associated with their perceived level of expertise of endorsers. Nevertheless, it has also been pointed out in the literature that trustworthiness is considered to be the most essential element in assessing credibility of information source in electronic word-of-mouth and quite more critical than level of expertise (Reichelt, Sievert and Jacob, 2014; Baker, 2018). However, another research has found out that the level of expertise of social media influencers did not positively influence to the credibility of the users in the endorsed content (Lou and Youn, 2019). So, according to the authors, the social media influencers already possess certain level of expertise in the eyes of their followers, therefore, it is not going to positively affect to the credibility of their sponsored content. Regardless of the results of the previous studies, there are other studies which proved the positive role of expertise of social media influencers over consumer purchase intention. For instance, according to Valck (2013), the level of expertise of social media influencers is paramount in influencing consumers' intention to buy. Besides, it has been demonstrated in the recent literature that social media influencer is an individual who obtains certain level of knowledge in various product categories (Kapitan & Silvera, 2015), which improves the ability of social media influencers further in impacting consumers (Burgess, 2017). These results have also been supported in previously conducted researches, for example, Magnini (2008) empirically proved in her study that the effectiveness of social media influencer in affecting purchase intention of buyers could be driven by their level of expertise. As a result, the higher the level of expertise of social

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media influencers, the higher the chance that their recommendations are seen as reliable by consumers and influence their purchase intentions (Lis and Bettina, 2013).

In a recent study, authors researched the effects of attitudes to fashion influencers (FIs) on brand attitude and customer purchase behavior (Chetioui et al., 2020). In their methodology, authors offer conceptual model which integrates the theory of planned behavior and theoretical results of already existing literature. Chetioui, Benlafqih, and Lebdaoui (2020) found out that fashion influencers have a positive impact on brand attitude and customer purchase behavior. The authors also defined factors positively affecting attitudes towards fashion influencers which are “perceived credibility, trust, perceived behavioral control, perceived subjective norms, perceived expertise and perceived congruence” (Chetioui et al., 2020). Thus, their study, mainly, covered customer perceptions but they did not include factors directly controlled by influencers such as leadership style or emotional tie. In another study, authors examined how the use of Instagram beauty influencers in advertising impacts growth of competitiveness for small- or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Konstantopoulou et al., 2019). They have found that when a product is promoted by an Instagram beauty influencer, it increases purchase intention and awareness (Konstantopoulou et al., 2019). Their study shares a common point with previously mentioned research that expertise of influencers plays an essential role in the impact to customers.

H2: There exists a positive relationship between expertise of social media micro influencers and purchase intentions of consumers on Instagram towards fashion products.

2.6.3. The effect of Similarity of Social Media Micro - influencers on the Customer Purchase intention

Besides, perceived attractiveness is considered to be another important factor for the credibility of the source according the Ohanian (1991) model. The author mentioned this element is mainly about identifying how physically attractive is the source. It has been demonstrated that physical attractiveness is an essential factor for the influencers (Lou and Yuan, 2019). Three factors including similarity, likability, and familiarity related to the attractiveness of social media influencers are going to be analyzed in this research paper. Firstly, similarity is about a sign of likeness between the opinions of information sender and receiver (McGuire, 1985; Muda et al., 2014). Similarity is the degree of people having similar personal interests and attitudes, demographics, daily life styles, and also “like me” trend has been observed when individuals are in frequent touch with other who are resembling them (De Bruyn and Lilien, 2008; Fanoberova and Kuczkowska, 2016). Besides, content creation creates a chance for social media influencers to share more personalized and creative posts through adding personal value, and colors which in turn results in their followers understanding their personal lives better (Li et al., 2014 and Forbes, 2016). Thus, personalized content shared by social media influencers works as a persuasive tool for buyers who rely on endorsements shared by influencers that possess same attitudes, thoughts, and interests with them (Kapitan and Silvera, 2015). So, in order to ensure that consumer are able to relate themselves towards shared content, it is necessary for the influencers to personalize the content provided to them by companies (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). Furthermore, it is important to note that when a person communicates with another one who shares similar and close interests and opinions, the purchase intention is going to be more likely impacted in comparison with a person who shares absolutely distinct thoughts (Li et al., 2014). Also, it has been

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demonstrated in different studies that when buyers feel that they share similar life styles and social statuses with their beloved social media influencers, they are more likely to use and buy the same products that the influencers use (Nejad, et al., 2014; Kapitan and Silvera, 2015).

H3: There exists a positive relationship between similarity of social media micro influencers and purchase intentions of consumers on Instagram towards fashion products.

2.6.4. The effect of Likability of Social Media Micro - influencers on the Customer Purchase intention

Likability has been defined as the affection of message receiver towards the sender's physical look, personal characteristics, and personality (McGuire, 1985; Teng et al., 2014). In case, people have affection towards a social media influencer, they just follow her as they are following their close fashionable friend which means that when the social media influencer whom they follow have a new interest towards any given brand, it will also influence to their interest towards that brand, positively (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011). Therefore, the more the source of message is likeable, the more effective it will be as likability is inclined to generate more attention and information resemblance (Fanoberova and Kuczkowska, 2016). Moreover, in the past and recent literature, it has been demonstrated that social media influencer with favorable and attractive appearance and characteristics influence the attitude of buyers, positively, which in turn also impacts to their purchasing intentions (Till and Busler, 2000; Lim, Cheah, and Wong, 2017). Consumers are not likely to believe in any product recommendations and buy any products or services which have been endorsed by a social media influencer who is not in their favour, on the contrary, they are going to tend to accept the products or services recommended by their favorite and likable social media influencers (Li, Lee, and Lien,

2014; Kapitan and Silvera, 2015). Also, Chatzigeorgiou (2017) mentioned in his research that the likability, more clearly, attractive looking individuals, positively affected to the credibility of the influencers, which in turn, it has a positive impact over the purchase intention of consumers as well. In addition, in the context of gender difference, it has been mentioned in various studies that women are in position of being impacted the most, they prefer to look like their favorite people on social media platforms through using and buying the services and products used and endorsed by the social media influencers (Wilcox, K. and Stephen, A., 2013; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

H4: There exists a positive relationship between likability of social media micro influencers and purchase intentions of consumers on Instagram towards fashion products.

2.6.5. The effect of Familiarity of Social Media Micro - influencers on the Customer Purchase intention

The concept of familiarity for the purposes of this research, has been defined as the knowledge possessed by the product or service endorser (McGuire, 1985). In other words, familiarity is also being referred as the level of comfort between information sender and information receiver (Kiecker & Cowles, 2001). Familiarity is also described as assumed likeness as the degree of knowledge possessed by an endorser which can also be obtained via exposure (Carvalho, 2012). As there is a less chance of making wrong decision, consumers are supposed to believe and trust to the information sources which they are familiar with and have an established bond (Lee and Yurchisin, 2011). This concept is also applicable in the context of online purchasing, it has been demonstrated in some researches that familiarity have positive impact on online trust, as a result, it is more likely that consumers buy online from retailers that they are familiar with (Zhang and Ghorbani, 2004; Fanoberova and Kuczkowska, 2016). Besides, individuals are inclined

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to believe and admit familiar sources of messages and information quicker than the sources which are not familiar to them, in addition, they are also inclined to assess familiar messages more positively (Žvinytė, 2017). It has been proved in one research that when buyers are attempting to make buying decisions, the factor of familiarity is, usually, playing a significant role in influencing their ultimate purchase intentions and decisions (Doyle, Pentecost, and Funk, 2014). Furthermore, assurance provided by other parties is considered to be one of main causes why consumers take into account online product or service reviews from the sources which are familiar to them before buying a product or service.

H5: There exists a positive relationship between familiarity of social media micro influencers and purchase intentions of consumers on Instagram towards fashion products.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of influencer marketing on one of the most major social media platforms on customer engagement and purchase decision has been reviewed in the existing literature. It has been demonstrated that customer engagement on social media advertising has a positive role in purchases. Also, it has been reviewed that even though influencer marketing has recently seen growth in digital marketing, it positively affects customer engagement and purchase intentions. It has been realized that measuring the purchase intentions of consumers is an effective way of understanding the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Social media influencers play a positive role on purchase intention and brand awareness. However, existing literature does not clearly show the effectiveness of influencer marketing through micro-influencers on major social media platforms including Instagram on customer purchase intention in the fashion industry. Different influential characteristics of social media influencers including

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trustworthiness, expertise, likability, similarity and familiarity has been defined as independent variables and purchase intentions of consumers as dependent variable within the scope of this research.

2.7 Conceptual framework

Based on the source credibility and source attractiveness model and considering dependent and independent variables within the scope of this research, following conceptual framework have been formed:

Independent variables

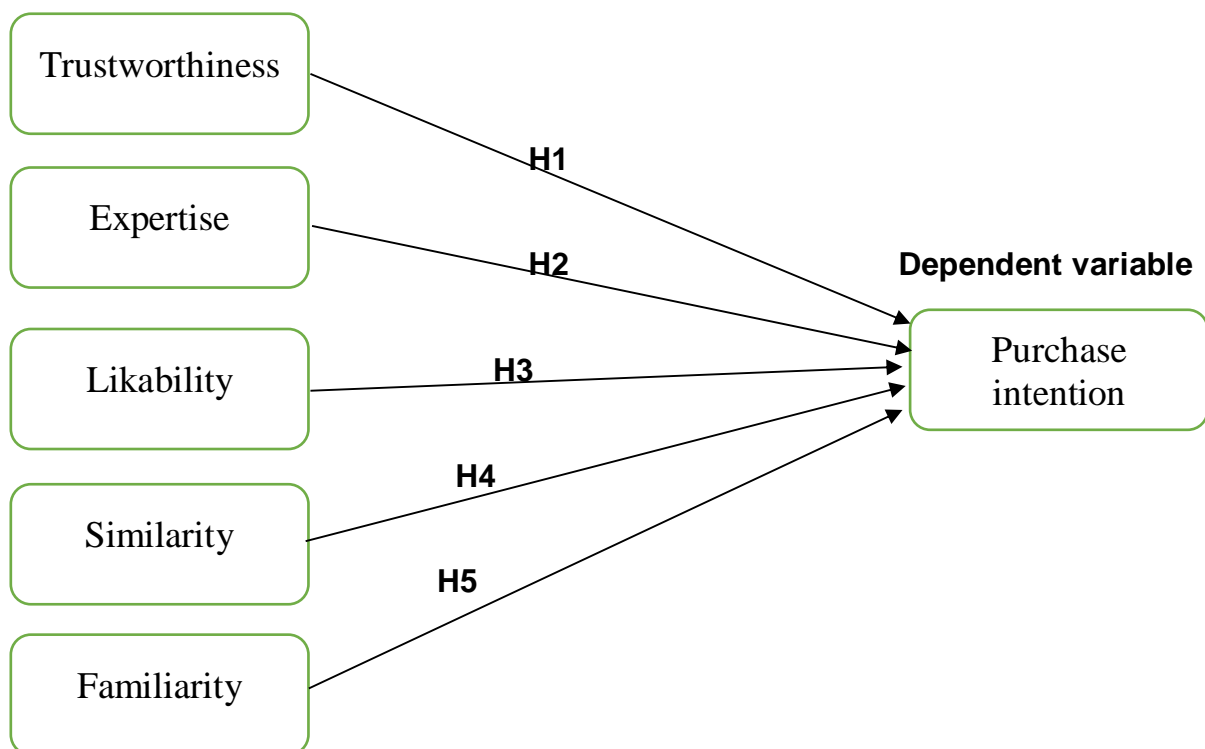


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. Research Methodology

To examine the influence of social media micro influencers on consumer purchase intention, a cross-sectional survey method is going to be used to test the research model. This method has been commonly practiced in the previous research as well within the

scope of online behavior (Koay, et al., 2021). The research strategy, data collection and measurement methods are defined in the following sections.

3.1 The Research Strategy and Data Collection

There are, mainly, two types of research methods including quantitative and qualitative. Considering the nature of this research paper, the research objectives, and the previously studied researches focusing on social media influencers quantitative research method has been chosen. For instance, in the research papers of Booth and Matic (2011) and Libânio and Amaral, (2017), it has been mentioned that research which is, essentially, focusing on relating social media influencers, brands are, generally, quantitative research methods. Quantitative data will be used in this study to analyze the effects product recommendations by micro-influencer over consumers' purchase intention in fashion industry on Instagram. Since quantitative research methods create a chance to provide an example of views of a greater population from gathered data of a small group, this research strategy best fits to the purpose of the present study. The scope of this research only includes one major social media network site, known as Instagram, and limited to the fashion products and Azerbaijan.

The target respondents of this study are active users Instagram, and are impacted by posts which shared on the newsfeed. Due to lack of sampling frame, non-probability (judgment sampling) methodology will be used. This sampling method is used as a relevant model in some studies including buzz and network marketing, opinion leaders and WOM (Jeong and Koo, 2015). Thus, purposive sampling methodology is used as it allows researchers to choose specific group of people from a population, purposefully (Oliver, 2014). Hence, it is important for the purposes of this research paper, as the scope of the study is related with particular group of people who are interested in fashion industry and are aware of the concept of social media micro influencers. As of December

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2021, more than 2 billion people are the active users of Instagram (Statista, 2022) and therefore, this platform selected as a main platform for micro-influencer adds in the present study. This study is targeting people living in Azerbaijan and is planned to be conducted as country-specific experiment. It should also be noted that, according to statistics, as of 2020, there was approximately 4.14 million people actively using social media platforms in Azerbaijan (Statista, 2021). In addition, based on statistics, number of active users of Instagram in 2020 in Azerbaijan was around 2.95 million (Statista, 2021). In business related research papers, survey method is commonly used in order to be able to test developed hypotheses about the nature of terms and their connection with a certain group of population (Oliver, 2014). Thus, a link of an online questionnaire has been posted on author's social media platform profiles including Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn newsfeed and is expected to be disseminated widely by friends. In addition, the author of the current paper also approached to social media micro influencers actively operating on Instagram to share the link of online questionnaire with their audience. This way of disseminating the survey allowed the author to be able to gather data from right set of individuals. It is also important to note that the survey did not ask the respondents to share their identity as it was confidential.

Furthermore, all prospective participants will be informed beforehand that the study is on a voluntary basis and the data provided by them will be kept confidential. To maintain a sufficient level of confidence and validity in this experiment, a sample size of 200 individuals is targeted among social media users who at least follows one social media micro-influencer interested in the fashion industry. Based on GreatBrook (n.d) 200 participants in academic research is sufficient in order to reach effective and valid survey results. The participants of the online questionnaire are expected to be in the age ranging from 17 to 60. Also, they are going to be from different outlooks, backgrounds,

occupations and all of these could be potential variables which affect their purchasing intention. In addition to primary data, which is the online questionnaire, secondary data will also be used in this research. Secondary data will be collected from different websites and previously conducted studies.

3.2 Scales of Measurement

To decrease the number of incomplete and invalid questionnaires and to increase the engagement level of respondents, mainly multiple-choice questions will be used. Likert scale which is 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree will be used in this study to assess the items. These five points Likert scale will allow the researcher to measure all variables and the persuasive characteristics of social media micro influencers with regard to their source attractiveness and source credibility (Spry et al., 2009). The survey will mainly cover two areas, namely, characteristics of micro-influencers and purchase intentions of consumers. Furthermore, it is important to note that a pre-test had been conducted before sharing the actual questionnaire link. Respondents had been asked to assess the comprehensibility of wording, note any unclear words in order to avoid ambiguities and interaction errors. Thus, firstly, it was planned to have five questions per each variable to assess their effects; however, after the pre-test, it has been realized that some questions are similar, and wording is not clear, therefore, the number of questions and the content of questions had been adjusted accordingly.

3.3 The Design of the Questionnaire

The first part of questionnaire two demographic questions asking respondents to mention their age and gender. Also, to ensure that respondents match with the purposes of this research a filter question asks whether they follow social media micro influencer on Instagram or not. In order to test the hypotheses and answer the research questions, a questionnaire has been formulated while taking into consideration the factors including,

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purchasing intention of consumers, trustworthiness, expertise, familiarity, similarity, and likability of social media micro influencers. On this matter, it should be noted that the questions in the questionnaire have been made based on the previously done studies. As formulated by Ohanian (1990), trust and expertise are two indicators of source credibility. Based on previous research done by Goldsmith (2000), two questions for trustworthiness and five questions for expertise have been formulated. To measure source credibility, two items including “trustworthy”, “believable” have been selected to assess trustworthiness and two items including “experience”, “expert”, for measuring expertise of the influencers. Besides, in order to measure source attractiveness of the influencers, similarity, familiarity, and likability variables will be evaluated. Forehand and Deshpande (2001) defined one item to measure individuals likability which is “likeable”, and this item is used to evaluate the likability of social media micro influencers in this research. Whittler, E, and Dimeo (1991) defined two scaled items including overall lifestyle”, “appearance” to define similarity of people with others, and those items have been used in the questionnaire of current paper to measure similarity of social media micro influencers. Finally, two scaled items such as “familiar”, “follow” have been used by, firstly, Kent and Allen (1994) to identify the familiarity of people, and those items also used in this questionnaire. In addition, to measure the dependent variable, which is purchase intention of consumers, one item which is “willing”, has been adapted from previously done research (Siti Nor and Nurita Juhdi, 2008).

Overall, 13 questions were asked and all of them were closed since this type of questions allow more effective analyzing options while using a quantitative research method. With regard to the questions which are closed, 11 of them were scaled questions, using Likert scale, and other three questions were multiple-choice. The questions which are multiple choice have been designed based on previously conducted researches in the

existing literature (Siti Nor and Nurita Juhdi, 2008). In any case, at the top of the questionnaire, the concept of social media micro influencer has been explained in order to ensure that the respondents understand the term.

4. Data analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to show the relationship between variables based on the collected primary data. In addition, analysis of data is expected to provide some patterns and trends about insights of fashion social micro media influencers on Instagram. STATA program was used to handle and analyze the data. Regression analyze has been conducted to find out if there is a significant relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Also, correlation analysis between independent variables will be made in order to test multicollinearity problem.

4.1 Reliability Analysis

In order to evaluate the degree of consistency and stability of the collected data, Cronbach's alpha test has been used. It should be noted that when Cronbach's alpha is more than 0.7, the data will be considered a valid and acceptable (Hair et al., 2003). On the contrary, if results of reliability tests demonstrate figures less than 0.6, then it is going to be considered as poor.

It is possible to see from the Table 1 below that Cronbach's alpha for each independent variable is greater than 0.7, and it demonstrates all independent variables including trustworthiness, expertise, likability, similarity and familiarity which affect to the purchase intention of consumers towards fashion products on Instagram are consistent and valid. Also, the figures for the dependent variable shows that the data collected is consistent and reliable.

Table 1: Reliability tests

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Variables	Respondents	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Trustworthiness	217	2	0.754
Expertise	217	2	0.762
Likability	217	1	0.784
Similarity	217	2	0.764
Familiarity	217	2	0.743
Purchase intention	217	1	0.769

It is critical to note that the correlation analysis has been made between independent and dependent variables. So, the results of correlation analysis demonstrates that the level of correlation between independent variables is not higher than acceptable level, therefore, it can be claimed that there is no multicollinearity problem in the regression model of this research. The Table 2 below represent the figures of correlation matrix, and as it is visible, no strict correlation between the independent variables has been observed. Consequentially, it is possible to claim that there is no biases in this regression analysis.

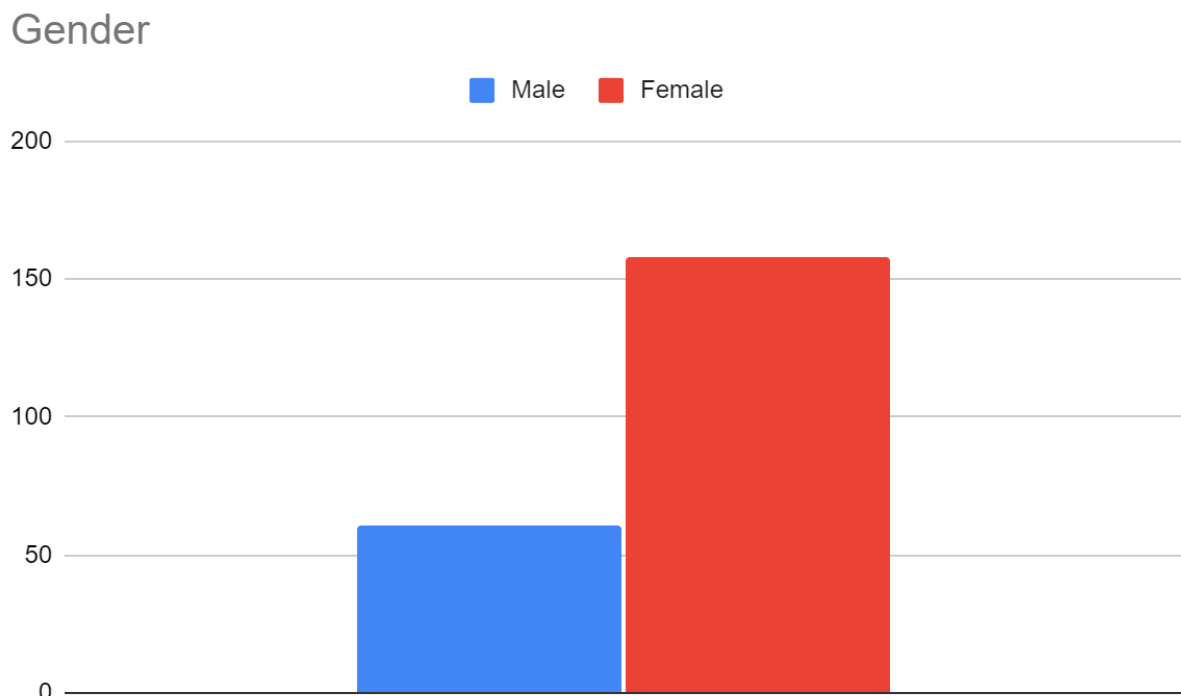
Table 2: Correlation Matrix

	T1	T2	E1	E2	L1	S1	S2	F1	F2	PI1
T1	1.0000									
T2	0.4796	1.0000								
E1	0.4107	0.1828	1.0000							
E2	0.2986	0.2307	0.5106	1.0000						
L1	-0.0011	-0.0196	0.1237	-0.0513	1.0000					
S1	0.3645	0.2741	0.4070	0.4626	0.0009	1.0000				
S2	0.1616	0.0747	0.1638	0.1475	0.1520	0.3074	1.0000			
F1	0.1837	0.1141	0.4007	0.2428	0.0818	0.5827	0.3692	1.0000		
F2	0.4547	0.3256	0.5464	0.4165	0.0944	0.3777	0.1766	0.3204	1.0000	
PI1	0.3837	0.2320	0.6233	0.5564	0.1511	0.5497	0.3307	0.4964	0.5797	1.0000

4.2 Descriptive analysis

In this section, personal data of the respondents is going to be demonstrated. Firstly, it is possible to see the demographic aspects of data. As displayed in the Figure 2 below, population of participants divided by gender can be seen. It is plausible that the majority of the survey participants are female. The number of observations for this gender has been recorded 158 times which makes approximately 72.1% of overall sample size. Also, it is possible to see that the number of male members of respondents is 61 which makes 27.9% of whole population of this survey. As our research was not intended to target any specific age group, there was no any filtering process based on age during data analysis.

Figure 2: Column Chart

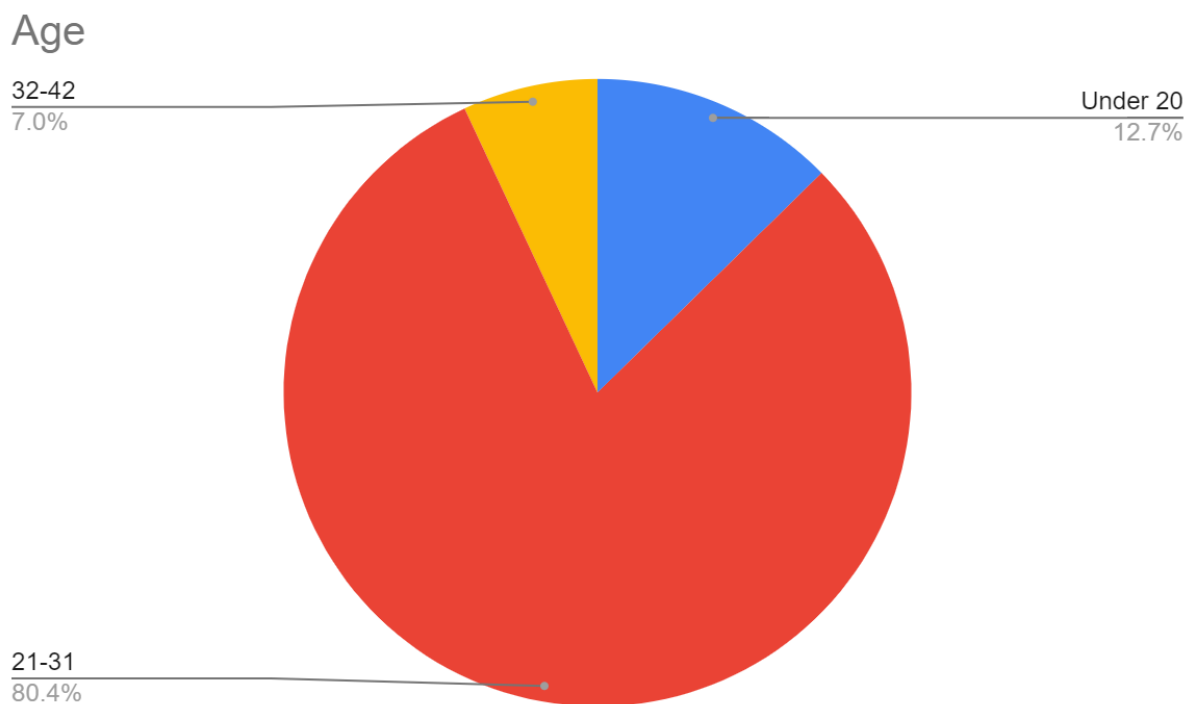


In addition, different age groups participated in the survey is visible in the below Pie chart. As mentioned earlier, no specific age group has been selected for this paper;

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however, it is possible to see that the vast majority of respondents are ranged from 21-31 years old. The number of observations for this age group was 127 times which is 80.4% of overall sample size. On contrary, only 20 participants were aged under 20 which makes 12.7%. Also, only 11 observations have been recorded for the age group of 32-42 which is the 7% of the whole sample size. As the data was collected within the most appropriate channels which are the audiences of social media micro influencers on Instagram, it is quite normal not have any recorded observations for the age groups who are older than 43 years old.

Figure 3: Pie Chart



4.3 Quantitative Data Analysis for Variables

In this section regression analysis has been applied in order to check whether there is a significant positive relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables. It should be noted as it was mentioned earlier besides the dependent variable,

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one independent variable which is “similarity”, couple of scaled items have been used to measure all other independent variables. All of scaled items have been defined as following for the analysis procedure:

- T1 and T2 for measuring “trustworthiness”
- E1 and E2 for measuring “expertise”
- L1 for measuring “likability”
- S1 and S2 for measuring “similarity”
- F1 and F2 for measuring “familiarity”
- PI1 for measuring “purchase intention”

The following regression model has been established:

$$PI1 = \alpha + \beta_1(T1) + \beta_2(T2) + \beta_3(E1) + \beta_4(E2) + \beta_5(L1) + \beta_6(S1) + \beta_7(S2) + \beta_8(F1) + \beta_9(F2)$$

In the first table the relationship between trustworthiness of social media micro influencers and purchase intention of consumers has been tested. Based on the results of regression analyses, overall significance level between those variables is low due to the R-squared value which is approximately 0.15. It means that only 0.19% of changes in the dependent variable can be explained by this independent variable, which in this case is trustworthiness. Also, the significance of T1 which was classified as “trustworthy” is low due to high p-value which is higher than the accepted level of p-value of 0.05. It means that first hypothesis tests relationship of independent variable, Trust with dependent variable which is the purchase intention and thus, there is no significant relationship between those variables, based on the results of regression analyze.

Table 3: Regression Analysis

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Source	SS	df	MS			
Model	43.7761307	2	21.8880654	Number of obs =	218	
Residual	247.604603	215	1.15164932	F(2, 215) =	19.01	
				Prob > F =	0.0000	
				R-squared =	0.1502	
				Adj R-squared =	0.1423	
				Root MSE =	1.0731	
Total	291.380734	217	1.34276836			

PI 1	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
T1	.4904855	.0993073	4.94	0.000	.2947449	.686226
T2	.0700824	.0806	0.87	0.386	-.0887849	.2289497
cons	1.422278	.2952453	4.82	0.000	.8403319	2.004224

In the Table 4, relationship between expertise of social media micro influencers and purchase intention of consumers has been tested. According to the results of the regression analyses between these variables, there is a significant relationship between these variables due to low p-value of 0.000 which is lower the accepted level of p-value of 0.05. Also, the values for t-critical are 7.91 and 5.55 for each question defining the “expertise” which both are higher than 1.96, which also shows the significance of the relationship. It is worthwhile to note that in order to prove there exists a significant relationship between variables, value of T-statistics should be greater than the accepted level of 1.96 (Wong, 2013). Thus, it can be said that there is a statistically, significant relationship between expertise of social media micro influencers and purchase intention of consumers. It should also be noted that R-squared in this research is treated as secondary of importance, since the purpose of this research is to show how each independent variable correlates with the dependent variable. So, the second hypothesis is supported.

Table 4: Regression Analysis

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Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs = 218		
Model	135.568502	2	67.7842512	F(2, 215) =	93.53	
Residual	155.812232	215	.724708054	Prob > F =	0.0000	
Total	291.380734	217	1.34276836	R-squared =	0.4653	
				Adj R-squared =	0.4603	
				Root MSE =	.8513	

PI 1	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
E1	.5784918	.0731265	7.91	0.000	.4343551	.7226284
E2	.2866086	.0516095	5.55	0.000	.1848832	.3883341
cons	.2711315	.2258171	1.20	0.231	-.1739674	.7162304

Table 5 below demonstrates the results of the regression analyze of third independent variable with the dependent variable. Thus, the relationship between similarity of social media micro influencers and purchase intentions of consumers has been examined. In this case, it can also be claimed that there is a significant relationship between those variables, as p-value is lower than accepted level and t-value is higher than the accepted level. So, it is possible to see from the table below that as p-value is 0.000 and 0.003, and t-statistics is 8.44 and 3.05, accordingly, for the first and second questions defining the similarity of social media micro influencers. Thus, it can be claimed that there is, statistically, significant relationship between those variables.

Table 5: Regression Analysis

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs = 218		
Model	96.4483456	2	48.2241728	F(2, 215) =	53.19	
Residual	194.932388	215	.906662272	Prob > F =	0.0000	
Total	291.380734	217	1.34276836	R-squared =	0.3310	
				Adj R-squared =	0.3248	
				Root MSE =	.95219	

PI 1	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
S1	.478459	.0566926	8.44	0.000	.3667145	.5902035
S2	.178228	.0584928	3.05	0.003	.0629353	.2935207
cons	1.179735	.218417	5.40	0.000	.749222	1.610247

In next table, fourth hypothesis has been tested through evaluating the relationship between the likability of social media micro influencers and consumers' purchase

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intentions. Based on the results of the regression analyze, it can been that there is a significant relationship between those variables, as the p-value is 0.000 which is lower the accepted level of 0.1. Besides, t-critical is 5.37 which is also higher than the, generally, accepted level of 2, and these results supports the fourth hypothesis in this research that the likability of social media influencers positively impacts consumers purchase intentions.

Table 6: Regression Analysis

Source	SS	df	MS			
Model	34.3663076	1	34.3663076	Number of obs =	218	
Residual	257.014426	216	1.1898816	F(1, 216) =	28.88	
Total	291.380734	217	1.34276836	Prob > F =	0.0000	
				R-squared =	0.1179	
				Adj R-squared =	0.1139	
				Root MSE =	1.0908	

PI 1	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
L1	.3565852	.0663512	5.37	0.000	.2258065	.4873639
cons	1.901052	.2457288	7.74	0.000	1.416719	2.385386

Finally, Table 7 displays the applied regression test of familiarity of social media micro influencers with the purchase intention of consumers. From the results, it can be suggested that these two variable have significant relationship since p value is 0.000 and t-values are greater than 2.

Table 7: Regression Analysis

Source	SS	df	MS			
Model	129.26786	2	64.6339302	Number of obs =	218	
Residual	162.112874	215	.754013366	F(2, 215) =	85.72	
Total	291.380734	217	1.34276836	Prob > F =	0.0000	
				R-squared =	0.4436	
				Adj R-squared =	0.4385	
				Root MSE =	.86834	

PI 1	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
F1	.3637599	.0564181	6.45	0.000	.2525564	.4749634
F2	.5724591	.0655759	8.73	0.000	.4432051	.7017131
cons	-.0059483	.2505843	-0.02	0.981	-.4998648	.4879683

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After regression analysis of scaled items of each independent variable with dependent variable separately, according to the correlation matrix, the independent variables that show lowest degree of correlation between them have been chosen to make their regression analysis altogether with the dependent variable in order to see whether there is a significant relationship between them or not. Thus, “E1”, “S2”, “L1”, and “F2” demonstrated lowest degree of correlation between them, and therefore, following another regression model has been formulated:

$$PI1 = \alpha + \beta_1 (E1) + \beta_2 (S2) + \beta_3 (L1) + \beta_4 (F2)$$

Below Table 8, it is possible to see that there is statistically positive relationship between all independent variables and dependent variable, as P-value for all scaled items are lower than the accepted level of 0.05 and the all values for t-critical are higher than 1.96.

Table 8: Regression Analysis

Source	SS	df	MS			
Model	154.256175	4	38.5640438	Number of obs =	218	
Residual	137.124559	213	.643777272	F(4, 213) =	59.90	
Total	291.380734	217	1.34276836	Prob > F =	0.0000	
				R-squared =	0.5294	
				Adj R-squared =	0.5206	
				Root MSE =	.80236	

PI 1	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
E1	.4905381	.0720605	6.81	0.000	.3484951	.6325811
S2	.1941152	.047997	4.04	0.000	.0995053	.2887251
L1	.1468759	.0511845	2.87	0.005	.0459828	.247769
F2	.3663986	.0692191	5.29	0.000	.2299565	.5028407
cons	-.9831693	.2812389	-3.50	0.001	-1.537537	-.4288014

5. Findings and Discussion

In this section, major findings of this study will be analyzed. Firstly, as a result of cross tabulation analysis of gender as significant value for gender is 0.812 which is

greater than 0.05 and that indicates that there is no significant relationship between the genders of consumers and purchase intention. It should also be noted that this result has been supported by the study of Ohanian (1991) that there does not exist statistically significant relationship between individuals' gender and their purchase intention.

One of the major findings of this paper is that the expertise of social media micro influencers positively impacts the purchase intentions of consumers on Instagram towards fashion products. As the results of regression analyze demonstrated that T-critical is greater than 1.96, and p-value is less than 0.05, there is a strong relationship between those variables. It means that as consumers in Azerbaijan consider social media micro influencers expert on their field, and knowledgeable in the products that they endorse, it has been statistically, proved that it is going to positively impact their purchase intentions related with endorsed fashion products. It is important to note that this result has been supported by the studies of Adnan et al (2017) that expertise has a significant influencer over consumers purchase intention. Also, it has been proved that individuals' intention to buy is more likely to be influenced by a person who is considered as expert by consumers within that field (Fileri et al., 2018). The expertise of the influencers has proved to be one of the significant variables alongside with the attractiveness to have positive relationship over purchase intention of target groups as demonstrated in the studies of Nik Hashim et al (2019) and Omar et al (2020).

Another important finding of the paper is that likeability of the social media micro influencers significantly, influences buyers' purchase intention. As it was visible from the Table 3, P-value is quite lower than the accepted level of 0.05 and T-value is higher than 1.96 which statistically proves existence of positive relationship between the variables. More clearly, this research demonstrates that likable social media micro influencers have

a positive impact on the purchase intention of Instagram users in Azerbaijan. This result has also been proved in the previous studies of Lim et al (2017) that individuals which have pleasant appearances and likable characteristics positively influence to the consumers perceptions and attitudes towards those influencers, and their purchase intentions as well.

The relationship between the similarity of social media micro influencers on Instagram and purchase intention of consumers has been found to be significantly positive in this study. As mentioned earlier, p-values of questions related to similarity are lower than 0.05, and T-statistics are greater than 1.96, so, those figures proves the positive relationship between independent and dependent variable. More clearly, it has been realized as a result of data analyses that consumers who found the influencers similar to them on overall lifestyle and on appearance, are significantly influenced on their purchase intentions of fashion products recommended by those social media micro influencers. Meanwhile, it is crucial to note that this result is consistent with the past researches of Khan et al (2012) that similarity is a strong contributor and statistically relevant and significant variable to explain the purchase intentions of consumers. Also, recent researches implemented by Chun et al (2018) and Zainab et al (2020) came to the same result. Another study conducted by Li et al (2014) also demonstrated that being in communication with someone who are sharing similar lifestyles can impact their purchase intentions.

The next major finding of this study is that familiarity characteristics of the influencers also positively influences purchase intentions of consumers on Instagram. It should be noted that comparing to other independent variables, familiarity has stronger positive relationship with figures of p-value equal to 0.000 and T-critical to 6.45 and 8.73,

accordingly for the first and second questions for evaluating the variable. It can be interpreted that consumers who are familiar with social media micro influencers and usually follow what they share on Instagram are significantly influenced by them in their purchase intentions towards fashion items. This result has also been observed in the research conducted by Adnan et al (2017) that there exists a positive relationship between the familiarity of influences and consumers purchase intention. This explains that an easily recognized social media micro influencer on Instagram can influence purchase intention of the consumers through endorsing fashion products. Besides, it was found out in one past study that purchase intention of individuals statistically, significantly impacted by the factor of familiarity (Dursun et al., 2011). Additionally, another recent study also showed the same results that familiarity positively influences consumers' purchase intention towards endorsed products by the influencers (Martensen et al., 2018).

Finally, it is critical to note that through our data analysis it has not been found out that there is a positive relationship between trustworthiness of social media micro influencers and purchase intention of consumers in our findings. P value of the second question for defining the trustworthiness of the influencers is higher than the accepted level, and T-critical is also lower than 1.96, so that it is sign of statistically insignificant relationship between the dependent and independent variables. It means that trustworthiness of social media micro influencers on Instagram does not affect the purchase intention of consumers towards the fashion items endorsed. This result, indeed, is consistent with the outcomes of the research conducted by Raintung et al (2016) that there exists no significant relationship between perceived trust of influencers and buyers purchase intention. Also, Wu and Lee (2012) proved in their study that any degree of trustworthiness does not influence to the purchase intentions of individuals, and the

authors mentioned that consumers are, mainly, taking expertise as an important factor when searching for product or service reviews.

As a result of regression analyses of specific scaled items of each independent variable with the dependent variable, it has been found that there is significantly positive relationship among expertise, similarity, likability, and familiarity of social media micro influencers and purchase intentions of consumers. Thus, social media micro influencers who are considered as an expert within their field, and are likable, and are similar on appearance for their followers, and as well as their posts usually followed by the consumers positively influence consumers' purchase intentions.

5.1 Implications for Academicians

Even though influencer marketing has emerged recently, it grabbed huge attention of scholars, and plenty of studies have been conducted within this field. However, it should be noted that in previous researches, the scholars, mainly, focused on the effect of social media influencers, in general, not any specific type of influencers. Various studies have been conducted to see how influencer marketing affects customers' behavior including their decision making and purchase intention as well. They mainly implemented researches using some mediating variables, such as credibility, or customers' attitude towards the influencers. More clearly, scholars measured the effectiveness of influencer marketing through referring to moderating variables, so they have not focused on direct effects of the influencers' characteristics. Therefore, there exists some gaps in the existing literature about defining and measuring the characteristics of social media micro influencers directly affecting to customers' intention to buy. Through focusing, specially, on the direct effect of social media micro influencers over consumer purchase intention, this paper contributes various insights to the field of influencer marketing research for academicians. Our main object was to analyze the

whether there is a positive relationship between trustworthiness, expertise, similarity, likability and familiarity of social media micro influencers on Instagram and purchase intention of consumers towards fashion products. The results of this research show that there is no significant relationship between trustworthiness of the influencers and customers' intention buy. Academicians can further research about what makes individuals to consider social media micro influencer trusted, and how these mediating factors affect their purchase intentions. Besides, other valuable findings of this research paper include that some characteristics of social media micro influencers such as expertise, similarity, likeability and familiarity positively impact consumers' purchase intention, directly, without the role of any control or mediating variables.

5.2 Implications for Practitioners

As the aim of this study was to find the impact of product endorsements by micro-influencers on customer purchase behavior, it has useful managerial implications for companies. It has been already a few years that the influencer marketing emerged, and regardless of that, today, more and more companies are turning to social media influencers to endorse their products. The findings will assist businesses, in particularly, in fashion industry, to decide the efficient influencer marketing strategy while choosing to promote their products through micro-influencers on one of the major social networking sites, namely, Instagram. This in turn, will enable businesses to increase their sales and return on investment on digital marketing expenses.

As a result of in depth-analysis and review of existing literature, it is obvious that companies realize the undeniable significant role of influencer marketing within the business world. The results of this research offers valuable insights about the characteristics of social media micro influencers which directly influence consumers' purchase intention, and considering the fact that purchase intention of an individual is a

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direct indicator of her purchase decision, companies can benefit from the outcomes of this paper to a great extent. One of the major finding of this paper is that expertise of social media micro influencers has direct positive impact on consumers purchase intention. This proof allows marketing practitioners to look for the influencers who are expert in their field, in our case, in fashion products and obtains enough knowledge about the endorsed products. Through meeting these conditions, businesses can benefit from their influencer marketing strategies due to the findings of our paper. In addition, another valuable finding of the paper is about the positive role of likability of social media micro influencers over consumers' purchase intentions. So, when choosing an influencer for product endorsement, firms should look for influencers who are considered likable by their followers, and in this way, they can achieve successful marketing campaigns. Also, according to the results of this research, if companies choose the social media micro influencers who are similar to their followers in terms of, on overall lifestyle and appearance for promoting their products, they are likely to have positive impact on consumers purchase intention which would result in positive numbers on sales. Finally, this paper found out that social media micro influencers who are easily recognizable by their followers and whose posts are usually followed, have positive impact on consumers' purchase intention, therefore, marketers should take into those facts while deciding on their influencer marketing strategies. Furthermore, as this study aimed to explain the effects of micro influencer driven marketing campaigns on consumers' purchase intention, the results of the paper contributes a lot to the better understanding of policy makers on effective ads regulations. Arguably, there is lack of standardized rules and laws, and control measures for regulating the influencer marketing activities on social media platforms. However, as a result of this paper, policy makers can understand how content shared by micro influencers on Instagram, affect the consumers perceptions, and

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they can prepare certain regulations, accordingly, in order to protect the consumer rights the best.

5.3 Research Limitations

In this research, the effect of the main characteristics of social media micro influencers including trustworthiness, expertise, likability, similarity, and familiarity on consumer purchase intentions towards fashion products on Instagram have been analyzed. We used source credibility and source attractiveness models which have been used over within the existing literature, in order to gain direct insights about the influential characteristics of the influencers. Obviously, there exists other important variables regarding the influencers which can directly impact the effectiveness of influencer marketing, in the context of its influence on purchase intention of consumers. For example, it can be examined to see how perceived authenticity of the influencers affect attitudes of consumers towards them, and this in turn how impacts their purchase intentions. Besides, it is critical to note that as this research is conducted in Azerbaijan, the author faced with serious lack of existence literature and information related influencer marketing. Hence, another limitation of research was lack of company information with regard to measurements about the effectiveness of social media influencer usage. This would have provided the author with better insights about the influential characteristics of influencers over consumers. In addition, as mentioned earlier, although this study did not target any specific age group, the vast majority of survey respondents, namely, 80% of overall sample size were people aged from 21 to 31. This limits the results of the research, mainly, applicable for the mentioned age group.

5.4 Recommendations and Conclusion

This research has analyzed the effect of influencer marketing on consumer purchase intention. Especially, the focus of research paper is social media micro

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influencers (as defined above having number of followers between 10K and 100K), and Instagram which is one of the major social media platforms. However, it is recommended that scholars can further research about the comparison of effects of social media micro influencers with other types of influencer including mega, macro or nano influencers as defined earlier in the paper. In this way, it would possible to see what factors affect most the influential power of the influencers. In addition, the scope of this paper was only limited to Instagram; however, other major social media platforms including YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter can be further examined to see the differences between influential characteristics of social media influencers specific to the social media platform.

In conclusion, this study has examined the influential characteristics of social media micro influencers including their trustworthiness, expertise, likability, similarity and familiarity over consumer purchase intention on Instagram towards fashion products. This research paper obtained highly valuable results, and it is expected that it will help other scholars to further research about the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Besides, the results of the paper will be highly beneficial for marketing practitioners to apply in their strategies, and as well as for policy makers in preparing right policies and regulations within the field of influencer driven marketing ads.

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7. Appendices

7.1 Survey Questionnaire

Questionnaire

The purpose of this research paper is to find out the following question (Bu tədqiqat işinin məqsədi aşağıdakı suala cavab tapmaqdır):

How does influencer marketing affect purchase intentions of consumers in the fashion industry in Azerbaijan? (İnfluencer marketing Azərbaycanda moda sahəsində istehlakçıların satın alma niyyətlərinə necə təsir edir?)

Note: In this survey, social media micro influencers refers to the influencers who have followers between 10 000 and 100 000 on Instagram. (Qeyd: Bu sorğuda sosial media mikro influencerlər İnstagramda 10 000 ilə 100 000 arasında izləyicisi olan influencerlərə aiddir.)

Note: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statements in the following.

1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree.

Questions below are to measure Trustworthiness of Social Media Micro Influencers (Aşağıdakı suallar sosial medya mikro influencerlərin güvənilirliyini ölçmək üçündür)

1. The social media micro influencer on Instagram, in my opinion, is trustworthy. (İnstagramda olan sosial medya mikro influencer, fikrimcə etimadlıdır) (1 to 5)

2. The social media micro influencer on Instagram, in my opinion, is believable. (İnstagramda olan sosial medya mikro influencer, fikrimcə inanılırdır) (1 to 5)

Questions below are to measure Expertise of Social Media Micro Influencers (Aşağıdakı suallar sosial medya mikro influencerlərin biliklərini ölçmək üçündür)

1. The social media micro influencer on Instagram, in my opinion, possesses knowledge about the fashion product that is endorsed. (İnstagramda olan sosial medya mikro influencer, fikrimcə məsləhət gördüyü moda məhsulu haqqında biliyə malikdir) (1 to 5)

2. The social media micro influencer on Instagram, in my opinion, is considered as expert in the area of using fashion product that is endorsed. (İnstagramda olan sosial medya mikro influencer, fikrimcə məsləhət gördüyü moda məhsulunun istifadəsi sahəsində ekspertdir) (1 to 5)

Question below is to measure Likeability of Social Media Micro Influencers (Aşağıdakı suallar sosial medya mikro influensərlərin xoşagəlimliliklərin ölçmək üçündür)

2. The social media micro influencer on Instagram, in my opinion, is a likeable human. (İnstagramda olan sosial medya mikro influensərlər, fikrimcə sevimli insandır) (1 to 5)

Questions below are to measure Similarity of Social Media Micro Influencers (Aşağıdakı suallar sosial medya mikro influensərlərin bənzərliklərini ölçmək üçündür)

1. On overall lifestyle, the social media micro influencer is similar to me. (Ümumi həyat tərzində, sosial medya mikro influensərlər mənə oxşardır) (1 to 5)

2. On appearance, social media micro influencer is similar to me. (Görünüş baxımından sosial medya mikro influensərlər mənə oxşardır) (1 to 5)

Questions below are to measure Familiarity of Social Media Micro Influencers (Aşağıdakı suallar sosial medya mikro influensərlərin tanışlığını ölçmək üçündür)

1. I am familiar with social media micro influencers on Instagram. (İnstagramda olan sosial medya mikro influensərlər ilə tanışam) (1 to 5)

2. I usually follow what the social media micro influencers share on Instagram. (İnstagramda olan sosial medya mikro influensərlərin paylaşımını, adətən, izləyirəm) (1 to 5)

Question below is to measure Purchase Intention of consumers (Aşağıdakı suallar istehlakçıların satın alma niyyətlərini ölçmək üçündür)

1. I am willing to purchase the fashion products endorsed by social media micro influencers on Instagram. (İnstagramda olan sosial medya mikro influensərlər tərəfindən məsləhət olunan moda məhsullarını almağa hazırım)