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**CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND THE ROLE OF
INFLUENCER MARKETING ON PURCHASE
DECISIONS**

Master's thesis

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of information communication technologies in the last two decades set a new pace in the every aspect for our society including marketing. This advancement of the digital sphere moves along with strategic growth of marketing space. Traditional marketing strategies have been redefined to move along with digital innovation. Not too long-ago, marketing mainly consisted of newspaper ads, TV, and radio commercials. As information became more available with Internet access and as people started spending more time online, businesses world over are slowly coming to terms with the fact that the future lies in the digital age and the various platforms that come with it. The internet has become one of the easiest and cheapest ways to do business currently. This has been precipitated by various social media platforms such as Google search engines, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and many more. This is because the internet age has made the world become a global village, whereby, one can access information from any parts of the globe wherever they are. As information became more available with Internet access and as people started spending more time online, digital marketing assumed greater importance. Digital marketing is becoming a compelling need for both start-ups and giant corporations. More and more brands are using online media to promote their services by means of digital marketing as it not only enhances sales volumes but creates a unique opportunity for brands to personally engage with customers, which is not the case with traditional advertising.

Being online is great, but it comes with challenges. Unlike traditional advertising, the digital marketing landscape levels the playing field as everyone has the online opportunity. With this form of marketing, your competition is no longer local or isolated by region as you're suddenly competing with businesses halfway around the world and across the country through online media. Brands are faced with digital marketing competition given that their competitors are online as well. Instead of competing for billboard space or even air time on TV, they are competing for page space. Google, Facebook, Instagram, twitter and everywhere else their target market spends time online, sw is full of advertisements. Suddenly, brands are competing for attention not only with their competitors but with unrelated brands. To make profits, stand out and stay ahead, Marketers are tasked with developing a digital marketing strategy that is robust and keeps them ahead of their competitors. Digital marketing is all about creating a message that your target market will connect with and making sure it is served to them. To build a brand's perception and reach, the brand has

to build a digital marketing strategy that involves knowing where their target audience is, knowing when they are there and being there at that time. A rapidly growing branch of digital marketing that helps digital marketers achieve this is Influencer Marketing also known as influence marketing.

By the term “Influence”, one can already get an idea of what this form of marketing is about. According to Oleg Korneitchouck, director of marketing for SMARTSITES, Influencer marketing is a type of marketing that focuses on using key leaders to drive your brand’s message to the larger market. With this form of marketing, instead of marketing directly to a large group of consumers, brands inspire / hire / pay influencers to get out the word for them. In case of Influencer Marketing, the marketer doesn’t have to specifically identify target audience. All the marketer has to do is, identify the right influencer and have them do the job for them. According to an article by [Tapinfluence](#), conventional digital marketing no longer works as a huge 66 percent of customers are overwhelmed by too many online marketing messages, and 20 percent of consumers have the tendency of boycotting a brand because of excessive ads. Thus, instead of relying on conventional digital marketing, brands are investing more on influencer marketing to influence purchasing decisions as it appears to be a perfect cure for “ad fatigue” and, unlike traditional ad campaigns, delivers authenticity. This study aims to deliver constructive insights on this rapidly growing concept in the world of digital marketing communication, that is: Influencer Marketing. Majority of literature reviewed will be focused on what this concept is about and the role it plays on consumer purchase decisions.

Statement of the problem

As can be stated theoretically and on empirical investigations from other author’s, the role of influencers in digital marketing communication is widespread but is not backed by enough empirical evidence. This research will enable brands to identify right influencer motives, right influencers and type of endorsement to be used in various stages of consumer buying process. This research will reveal factors which affect consumer attitude and perception like experience, trustworthiness, and credibility to assess this form of marketing. An important area to be explored is the impact of sponsored content and their disclosures.

Object of the study: The role Influencer Marketing plays in consumer Purchase Decisions

Research question: **How can influencer marketing be used to influence consumer behaviour and drive purchase decisions?**

The subject of the study: Individuals who frequently use social media and actively follow at least one influencer, marketing professionals involved with creating digital marketing campaigns and influencers themselves

Main Aim: This study identifies influencer marketing as a stimulus to consumer purchase decision. Therefore finding factors that influence the perception of consumers towards an influencer and how these factors can be effectively be used to create favourable changes in consumer buying behaviour.

The objectives of the study:

1. To examine the conceptualization of the impact of product endorsements by social media influencers on consumers' buying decision.
2. To study the Impact of influencer marketing on brand awareness and brand recall.
3. To explore the role of influencer credibility, experience, and appearance on consumer purchase intent.
4. To examine consumer behaviour and the impact of Influence on purchasing decisions in Cameroon.

Research Method of the Study: This is a qualitative study and would be conducted as an exploratory survey with literature review

Methods of data collection: Systematic literature analysis and Survey,

Methods of data analysis: Statistical analysis of survey, content analysis of interviews

The practical inquiry of study: The research findings will contribute in providing brands and marketers with a checklist of various essential characteristics of influencers required by brands to create awareness and achieve the desired objectives in each stage of consumer buying behaviour model.

STRUCTURE OF THE WORK

The study is divided into 3 main chapters with conclusion and recommendation being included at the last chapter. The first chapter gives an overview of the work like background, objectives and methods. The second chapter has to do with review of literature on the subject in discussion; consumer behaviour and the role of influencer marketing on purchase decisions. Here there will be an in-depth presentation of the various aspects of influencer marketing and consumer behaviour. Also the research methodology, including quantitative research, the paths of data collection and the validity and reliability analysis of the research and its strength and weakness. The empirical part is exhibited which consists of the presentation of the results and analysis of them, the display of data. This chapter concludes with recommendations that can be made for the subject under review.

PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

- This study is important to all brands and businesses who should take advantage of the outcome because from it they would know how influencer marketing is when it comes to advertising.
- This thesis will also help top management in companies know the right influencers they can endorse to advertise their products.
- This study is most significant to businesses in Cameroon be they big or small. If they want to win more market shares and dominate competition then they should adopt influencer marketing.

I. LITERATURE ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR, INFLUENCER MARKETING AND PURCHASE DECISIONS

Introduction:

After looking at the background to this study consumer behaviour and the role of influencer marketing on purchase decisions – as well as the research questions and objectives amongst others, this second chapter dwells on reviewing existing literature on the topic under study. This review of literature is three-fold: the conceptual, empirical and theoretical review.

1.1. MARKETING IN THE DIGITAL ERA

According to Peter Drucker (1954) the basic function of marketing is to attract and return customers at a profit. Therefore businesses need to update their marketing skills each day to meet up with the innovations of the market place. The learning of this statement is on three fold. Firstly, it places marketing in a central role for business success since it is concern with the creation and retention of consumers. Secondly, it implies that the purpose of marketing is make profit from consumers. Thirdly, it is a reality of commercial life that is more expensive to attract new customers than to retain existing ones. It cost seven times as much to acquire a new customer as it cost to get a current customer to buy from a seller again.

The way people communicate with each other has typically changed since the advent of the internet (Mortoe, 2018). People from different parts of the world can exchange information, ideas, and opinions about almost every possible topic without the restrictions and boundaries that had previously existed (Schäfer & Taddicken, 2015). ICT gadgets like the mobile phone have moved from being entertainment objects to becoming advertisement platforms where people can attract customers towards a particular product or service. Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda, said during the Connect Africa Summit, October 29, 2007: “In 10 short years, what was once an object of luxury and privilege, the mobile phone, has become a basic necessity in Africa”. A necessity not just for households but an establishment upon which individuals are building brands. This shows how much evolution of ICT gadgets and the internet has changed marketing and advertising. The validity of this accession stems from online networking, which has changed how businesses speak with potential and existing customers.

The rapid evolution of information communication technologies in the last two decades set a new pace in the every aspect for our society including marketing. In today's world, the internet has opened the gateway of tremendous digital marketing opportunities for businesses. Hence bringing a new concept called digital marketing. The international telecommunication union in its 2021 report established that there are 4.9 billion internet users in the world. This means 63% of world's population is connected to the internet. A 17% increase from 2019. These figures show how much people are taking advantage of freedom to communicate. The exponential rise in internet use goes along with rapid rise in adoption of social media by internet users. This is because social media gives different possibilities for new marketing efforts where there is a more focused and targeted approach, through the segmentation of a specific audience which is expected to be interested in the product or service that is presented– hence digital marketing (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). By utilizing different channels of digital marketing, businesses will not only share their product and services online; additionally, they can gain clients for their business, entice them and can convert them to boost their return of investment (ROI). Therefore, internet has crushed down the dominance of traditional media (radio, television and print) in the marketing sphere. In the past people would depend just on airtime or print space to market or advertise their products. Consumers would have knowledge on products based on what was served at particular periods.

The introduction of internet has transformed the marketing environment from passive, low engaging to interactive, hyper-connected and proactive. (Aghaei et al, 2012). As internet keeps evolving every day, it is important to understand the various novelties that set in. These innovations shape the human society and set new basis in the life style of people. As people engage more, there are better updates and the web keeps growing. The development flows right in the marketing sphere where, internet has brought about a digital revolution in the creation and distribution of consumer-generated content through social media that can enable a greater media impact.(Berthon et al., 2012). Thereby setting the new connections between people, consumers, technology and brand through common networks created by dialogue (Armano, 2009). This development in the marketing sphere has crushed traditional advertising methods. Brands read these changes and look for new ways to communicate and promote their products. The flow of information and communication have significantly increased due to the Internet technologies. Hence, the way individuals keep themselves up-to-date with news and events has completely changed. Information is now on the finger tip of internet users. This means a key component for successful marketing in

present times is understanding consumer behaviour. This is because consumers have embraced utilizing the internet and online socializing tools (Vinerean, Cetina, Dumitrescu, and Tichindelean, 2013). Consumer purchase behaviour is influenced by having knowledge and being brand-oriented. Also, brand awareness is coupled with good brand perception and loyalty result in a stronger brand image in consumers' mind, which will influence the consumers positively and becomes part of their purchase behaviour (Malik et al., 2013). Consumer purchase behaviour is how individuals, organisations, and groups select, buy and make use of products, services, experiences or ideas to satisfy their needs and wants (RasoolMadni, 2014).

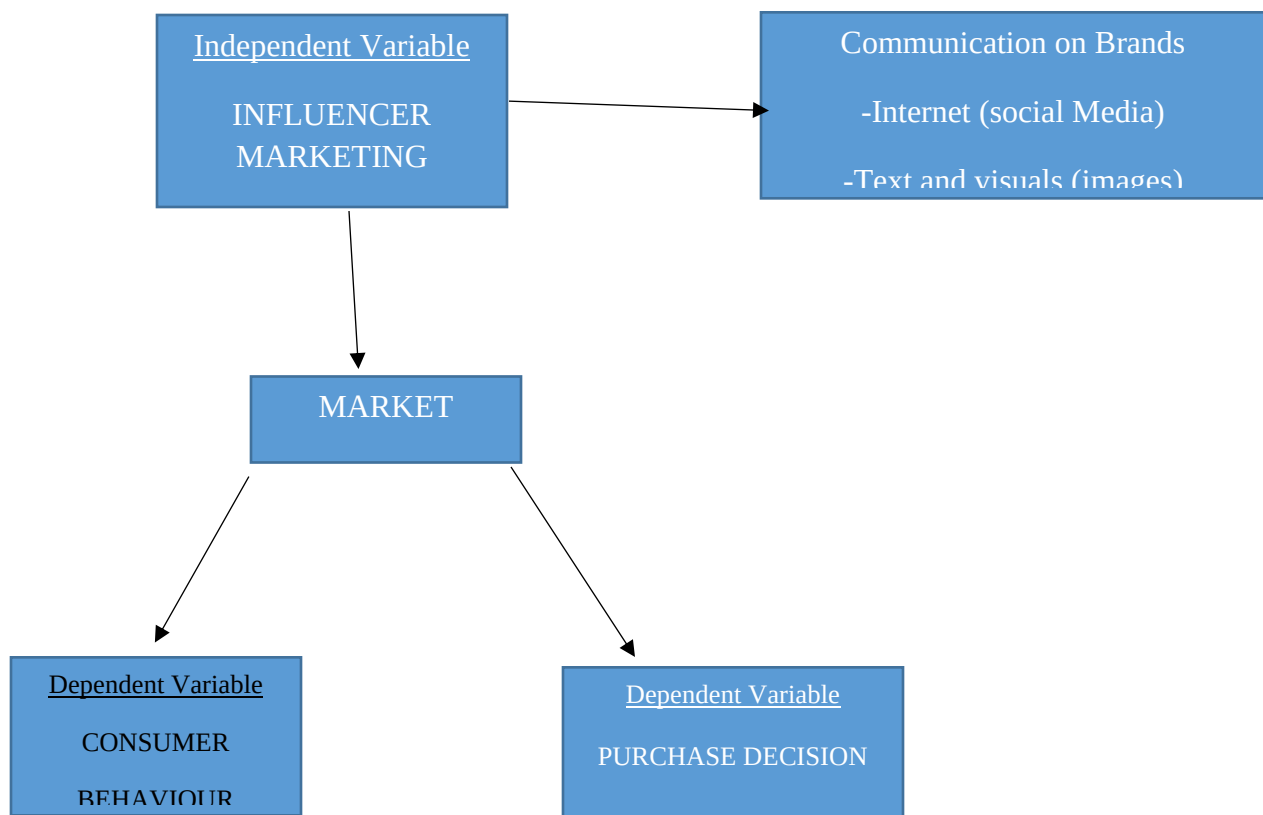
1.2 INFLUENCER MARKETING

Improved internet use through various options like: texts, videos, blogs, pictures and status updates on social networking sites (SNS) makes communication easy. Social media is rapidly becoming the most dominant form of interaction with various platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter winning in the market place of advertising (Nedra *et al.*, 2019; De Valck *et al.*, 2009). This enhanced form of communication gives the digital ecosystem better options on how marketers can engage customers. The new marketing format which is particularly online, consist of promoting brands to connect with potential customers using the platforms such as email, social media and web based advertising. The progress in the last decade has been exponential as marketers now understand the importance of using influencers to build authentic relationship with customers, (Chopra A., Avhad V., & Jaju S., 2021). The term influencer recently emerged in the marketing sphere. Connection between marketing and influencer creates the appellation – influencer marketing which is a tool used to communicate and to arouse public interest in a brand or product. Brown and Hayes (2008) state that influencer marketing is the ability of an external person to impact on the purchase choices of a consumer or a group of consumers. Businesses are interested in the value of advertising and the possibility they can place their products on multiple platforms in order to reach maximum persons Saxena & Khanna (2013). The goals in 2022 is not just reach these persons but transform them in to customers. That is why social media has established itself as a vital source for communicating marketing messages in the world. Marketers develop new practices by using popular figures on the web who can ram up figures for them. This explains the prominent position influencer marketing is having in the world of business. Wong (2014) defines influencer marketing as that form of marketing that involves activities aimed towards identifying and building

relationship with individuals who have the capability to influence over potential buyers. It involves producing content, that can go viral and achieve considerable marketing success, (Watts, Perretti & Frumin, 2007).

The very vast field of marketing, there are different types of influencers *classified according to their number of online followers*. Brown and Hayes (2008) further establish that Influencer marketing focuses on influencers who command a mass following on digital media to reach the intended target audience to promote a brand's message. This means an influencer can have the ability to transform a follower into a consumer. They should win consumer trust compared to other online sources (Conick, 2018). Influencer marketing comes as a lifesaver in an era where internet users try by all means to block online ads. As stated by Freberg et al., (2011), influencer marketing has emerged as a very reliable and trusted source of marketing where there are more engaging forms of non-intrusive interactions that are better than the traditional campaigns. To influence their online followers toward particular brands, marketers use interpersonal communication. They do so by using online influencers to create a two-way brand communication across online platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Marketers *equally use* influencers to engage with the consumer using a particular segmentation plan where they target specific persons and hit with their messages (Conick, 2018).

1.2.1 INFLUENCERS AND THEIR ROLE IN MARKETING



*Figure 1: The emergence of Influencers role in consumer behaviour and purchase decisions
(source: own source)*

According to blogger Claire Frébault (2021) Influencers are familiar with the social networks on which they are present and their respective communities. They are opinion leaders who over time, have fully understood what their subscribers like. This gives them the opportunity to grow their audience and create strong relationships with these communities. An opinion leader is someone who has mastered a specific market and has established trust within a community as an industry insider or decision-maker (Silva et al. 2019). Influencers have an audience or following that trust them as a source of information for their interests. That is why brands make them spokespersons (Schouten et al. 2020). Influencers on Instagram, Twitch or YouTube are an integral part of the lives of Internet users who follow them. These are seen as opinion leaders or pacesetters in every given community. The advantage they have is they can create global impact from a single location. Contrary to mainstream media personalities, online Influencers are people who operate on

numerous types of social media. They often engage simultaneously on few platforms, such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. In time they have professional and developed business models in forms of commercial bloggers (Abidin, 2016). The commercial bloggers are famous and capable of carving out a niche group of people to whom they can easily drive home a message (Marwick, 2013). Brands are looking for new ways to communicate and promote products and influencers are seen as one of the most effective persons for boosting brand awareness and sales. However, you wonder if influencers actually influence purchasing decisions. Influencers are carefully build a personality that the people can easily identify with based on characteristics of culture and lifestyle. They deliberately share information aimed at building a specific relationship with followers (Marwick, 2016). This relationship creates a virtual connection giving the illusion of having an actual face-to-face relationship between the follower and the influencer (Horton & Wohl, 1956). This virtual relationship sets mutual points in communication that can create the feeling of intimacy. It sets a bond as if it was a real life situation with interpersonal communication (Chen, 2014; Horton & Wohl, 1956). Influencers use a wide range of social media platforms to publish information and the latest promotions for online followers (Markethub, 2016). Influencers create sophisticated content to gain better exposure and be more competitive. They produce stories, videos and visual that are unique on the internet and most especially can go viral within a short space of time. According to Butler R., R., (2022) of the drum magazine, “Diversity in exposure is what makes content discovery so exciting and educational. It’s critical that we build algorithmic infrastructure that supports a range of viewpoints and content types to ensure that people don’t become pigeonholed into a specific set of genres.” This high traffic gives rise to cultural capital through high accumulation of numbers (McQuarie, Miller, and Phillips 2013). Different platforms have distinguished ways of posting, Kaplan and Haelein (2010). Some influencers are out to express an opinion, for example trip advisor. Others giving information on networking and running of campaigns (Twitter). For some it about sharing expertise on diverse topics (Wikipedia). While some use platforms to express their passion; they do so using personal blogs, Instagram and Facebook. (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

Influencer marketing is a performance based form of marketing where results are sometimes much better than traditional advertising Claire Frébault (2021). When influencers talk about particular products, their subscribers easily recognize their message as being sincere. This good understanding of their community and their ability to create relevant content play a major role in

the purchase decisions of followers. They can generate engagement in a well-crafted campaign whether it's discussions in comments, views on a video, or clicks to a website. Customers make a lot of enquiries from products before they buy. That is why influencers sometimes carry out research to know exactly what their followers require. Influencers are valuable assets for brands wishing to boost their sales. They master the codes of social networks and create compelling content. This therefore leads to increased positive sentiment around a brand.

Darby I., (2022) Brands need to take advantage of the influencer's connection with audiences. This is because through content creation these group of persons have emerged as some of the greatest content engines of the social media age. They have succeeded in pulling what was beforehand a concept for TV in to the internet. Human creativity stands out as the best marketing tool businesses can use to persuade customers. Influencers are creative and can engage these customers. As the audiences are exposed to social media content, their subconscious mind "picks things up" at an incredible pace and "feeds them right into the brain" (Sangers 2009). Examples to confirm aforementioned statement, the influencer marketing business was worth \$9.7bn in 2020 and is expected to grow to \$15bn by 2022, with almost half of marketers saying they're spending more than 20% of their budget on influencer content. Some have gone much further. Beauty brand Estée Lauder announced in August 2019 that it was allocating 75% of its marketing money spend to social media influencers and finding they investment "highly productive. Darby I., (2022). There is little or no doubt about the effectiveness of influencer marketing. In fact, it is, or will soon become, more effective than the traditional ways of marketing as Sangers (2009) explains that our exposure to vast traditional ads is like "being around a certain loud noise for a long period; eventually become desensitized to it". Because on social media, brands are placed "in a realistic dramatic setting in which the user is already emotionally involved," influencer marketing has and keeps attracting many manufacturers (Maslin 1982, cited in Choi, 2007). Turcotte (2005) also explains, in favor of influencer marketing efficiency, that the audiences are exposed to products in less distracted environments and become familiar with them over a longer period of time. As the audiences are involved into the social media content, their subconscious mind "picks things up" at an incredible pace and "feeds them right into the brain" (Sangers 2009).

1.2.2 CLASSIFICATION OF INFLUENCERS

According to digital marketing expert Sander R., (2022) to succeed in influencer marketing, you need the right combination of insightful strategy, good tools, and authentic engagement. Choosing the right influencer is not simply a matter of choosing the most popular person. The credibility of the influencer the strength of their relationship with their audience is also very important. When you choose the right influencers, you are able to engage an audience that is an “opt-in” network, which is more likely to take action. This is important for achieving both marketing goals and business objectives. Brands are making more than times what they spend on working with influencers, when they find the right ones to work with. (Walker-Ford M., 2020), managing Director at Red Website Design.

Table 1: There 5 major types of influencers and their role:

	Type of influencers	Number of Followers	Description
1	Mega-Influencers	More than a million	Mega-influencers are highly visible on social media due to their celebrity status. They’re very active on social platforms where their audience spends time, and they generate a ton of engagement. This is what makes them attractive to brands that want to leverage influencer marketing and what makes them incredibly expensive It is worth noting that mega-influencers rate of engagement may decrease as the influencer’s total follower count rises.
2	Macro-Influencers	500000 to 1 Million	Macro-influencer content is typically more professional-looking than what brands find with micro- or Nano-influencers. They may be celebrities, TV personalities, athletes, or thought leaders. Since they can leverage their reputation to gain followers on social media,

			brands can expect a high price tag though not as hefty as mega-influencers. Brands still get a large reach with this type of influencer but may not get the engagement rate they want. This is due to the follower to engagement ratio mentioned earlier.
3	Mid-Tier Influencers	50000 to 500000	They are very experienced in terms of creating content and are more connected to their audience who trust them. Mid-tier influencers may not have a celebrity status but they offer brands a wide reach and slightly more engagement than macro- or mega-influencers. Content is polished but not out-of-touch, lending authenticity and familiarity to each post.
4	Micro-Influencers	10000 to 50000	Content from micro-influencers is less polished but may feel more authentic than content from macro- or mega-influencers. This may influence the amount of success a brand experiences with influencer marketing, depending on business goals. They have a smaller reach but brands generally consider this group to be much more effective in terms of engagement and trust. Micro-influencers have an intimate connection with their followers and tend to be more niche-focused. Eighty-two percent of consumers are more likely to buy

			a product recommended by a micro-influencer.
5	Nano-Influencers	1000 to 10000	Nano-influencers are much more cost-effective than their higher-ups, so brands with limited resources may want to start at this level of influencer marketing. Some Nano-influencers don't even charge brands, as they are building their following and partnerships with brands. They have the smallest follower count and therefore offer brands a modest reach. However, what brands lose in reach they gain in engagement rates. Nano-influencers have the highest engagement rate of any influencer type, at 8.8 percent. Content is hyper-authentic and personalized for the audience, so brands working with this type of influencer can expect a different experience in this way.

Source: Sander R. (2022)

1.3 CONSUMER BASED INFLUENCER MARKETING

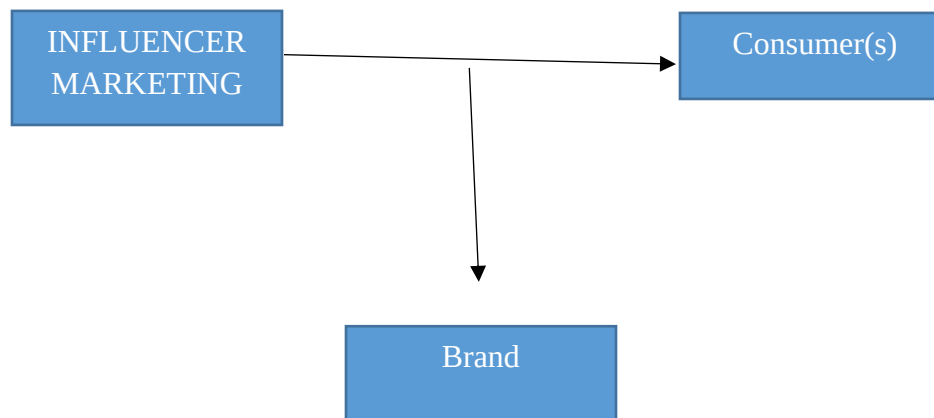


Figure 2: Consumer is the focus of influencer marketing

Influencers reach out to consumers through diverse campaigns every day. This is because through endorsement deals with brands they aim at transforming followers and fans into consumers. In the present study, reaching out to a consumer means influencers want first to attract their attention to a particular brand. Then change their perception on brand from just a viewer of and to a buyer of the brand. As seen infra various influencers have different target groups but the goal at the end of the day is create impact in their community. Here it will constitute a consumer base for a brand. Alander (2010) affirms customer base is a company's most valuable asset. Reason why it is necessary to sustain and grow the customer base for the future of the company. Davidson, Sweeney, and Stampel (1984) describe today's market place as the age of diversity. That is, customers demand different products and services in different quantities. Hence, it is important to segment every given market according to the characteristics they exhibit.

According to Brown and Fiorella (2013), the consumer should be at the centre of influencer marketing efforts and companies can build their profile through demographic and psychographic studies. This is because consumers purchase decisions are influenced by various types of influencer marketing strategies. And the effects of influencer marketing on consumers purchase decisions are some of the most important ones for marketers. The introduction of internet led to a massive shift from single-screen to multiple-screen. This has transformed the way people consume media information they receive from the media. As people adopt more and more this new source of infotainment, they get access to varying content from different creators. These creators are

persons they can easily trust and associate with because they can associate their lives. In the past television shows used product placement make known particular produce to consumers but now social media has is the order of the day. The gap between social media influencer and traditional celebrity has narrowed - Megan Savitt, vice-president of strategy at BEN. O'Halloran and Wagner (2001) likened marketing in the new era to that of a romantic relationship. They claim that in the past much information exists only on how to spark interesting conversations between the sexes. In recent times, marketing demands the same attention romantic life requires. You need to know the good, the bad, the not-so-profitable ones, the ones for one purchase and the ones for long term and identify the best approach in reaching out to them. Worthy of note is that long term customers are hardly ever passive. They are well informed and the seriousness of the perceived relationship at times determines the way they process the information and make the right buying decisions (Bruning, 2000). In this process they may further be transformed from just consumers to advertisers of the brand through their testimonials.

1.4 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Knowledge on consumer behaviour is the gateway to success in marketing. Brands need to work out this psychology in order to secure favourable goals of consumer satisfaction (Rani P., 2014). Consumer behavior is a combination of customer's buying awareness combined with external motivators that result in a change in the consumer's choices. According to (Kotler, 2001) consumer behavior is the actions and decision processes of people who purchase goods and services for personal consumption. It has to do with how customers; select, buy, use, and dispose ideas, goods, and services to satisfy their needs and wants. This refers to actions of the consumers in the marketplace and the underlying motives for those actions. The consumer as seen infra is the main actor in the market place. By predicting consumers' behavior, a business can understand consumers' needs, and can work on fulfilling the needs and meeting the expectations of their customers. This would eventually help businesses to maintain their prosperity and attain their long term goals.

In the world today, people are continuously scrolling on their mobile phones or engaging in search activities on their laptops. Human dynamics has a direct effect on the consumer behaviour for customer's choices will depend on aspects such as: personal income, demographics, social and cultural factors. Apart from these basic internal factors which are considered to be influential to

consumer's behavior, there are also a set of factors that are caused by the external circumstances in the environment surrounding the consumer. Factors like influencer marketing can tilt a consumer towards a particular brand. Society is shaped by information people gather from internet (social media). Social media has become a basic need as some people do not go a day without checking the various platforms to discover the latest stories. This therefore brings to fore the corroboration between consumer behavior and influencer marketing. For without doubt social media networks have become an important marketing platform today. Social media influencers can present a convincing outcome, both in the media and in consumer beliefs (Booth and Matic 2011). In a 2016 study, Hall J., investigated on how consumers will generally behave towards influencers. He established that Companies are heading to attract customers through influencers especially because of the ability to block ads. They want to be able to distribute without being blocked and reach the right audience. More and more we notice the influence of social media influencers in enhancing a company's reputation. This effective marketing trend is cost-effective and impacts generally on the behaviour of the consumer (Harrison 2017). The content of the influencer cannot be blocked and the best method of gaining customer trust is through whom the customers already believe. Creating such an intimate relationship between the customer and the influencer is almost impossible for the brand itself (Hall 2016). So they hire individuals who can shape the behaviour of the consumer is various aspects such as Furthermore, Mwangulu (2014) makes an effort to situate the changing demands in marketing forced by the competitive environment. Marketers now than ever before are deviating from transactional approaches to building long term profitable customer relationships. Also, they are no longer concerned in making profit from each sale rather interested in managing customer lifetime value as a means of realizing profits. No more reliance on one communication. Blend various tools together to deliver consistent brand image to customers upon every brand contact.

Table 2: TYPES OF CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Buying Behaviour	Characteristics
Habitual buying behaviour	Habitual purchases are characterized by the fact that the consumer has very little involvement in the product or brand category. These are low cost items that will not have a grave effect on the income of the consumer. For example checking on a cosmetic shop to get a particular lotion: People will get their preferred type of lotion. By doing this, they are exhibiting a habitual pattern, not necessarily brand loyalty.
Variety seeking behaviour	In this situation, a consumer purchases a different product not because they weren't satisfied with the previous one, but because they seek variety. Like when you are trying out new per of sneakers. It is an impulsive and non-conscious form of unplanned buying
Dissonance-reducing buying behaviour	The consumer is highly involved in the purchase process but has difficulties determining the differences between brands. 'Dissonance' can occur when the consumer worries that they will regret their choice. Here, they will purchase based on price and convenience, but after the purchase, they will seek confirmation that it is a right choice.
Complex buying behaviour	This type of behaviour is encountered when consumers are buying an expensive, infrequently bought product. They are highly involved in the purchase process and consumers' research before committing to a high-value investment. Examples of a complex buying behaviour: buying a house or a car

Source: Radu V. (2019) Consumer behavior in marketing – patterns, types, segmentation: Rani P., (2014) Factors influencing consumer behaviour

All in all, consumer behaviour goes with their buying habits Consumer buying habits are determined by looking their behavioural patterns. Every consumer has unique buying habits, while

buying behaviour patterns are collective and offer marketers a unique characterization. (Radu V., 2019). The way a customer chooses to purchase an item also says a lot about the type of customer he is. Gathering information about their behaviour patterns helps you identify new ways to make customers buy again, more often, and higher values. Customer behaviour patterns can be grouped into 4: Place of purchase, item purchased, Time and frequency of purchase and method of purchase.

Place of purchase: When a customer has the capability and the access to purchase the same products in different stores, they are not permanently loyal to any store, unless that's the only store they have access to. In the present study, consumers will buy get to a particular stored based on the recommendations of an influencers.

Items purchased: When looking at the shopping cart of most customers, one will notice that items of necessity surpass the luxury goods. The amount of each item purchased is influenced by the perishability of the item, the purchasing power of the buyer, unit of sale, price, number of consumers for whom the item is intended.

Time and frequency of purchase: Seasonal variations and regional differences should always be considered when looking at purchase patterns. So marketers have the responsibility to identify a customer's purchase pattern and match its service according to the time and frequency of purchases.

Method of purchase: In the present era customers have two options to purchase. Either they walk in to a store physically or send an online order

1.5 PURCHASE DECISION

A broad variety of efforts and theories have been advanced that attempt to describe the factors which influence the consumers and their behaviors when making purchasing decisions. The goal of the present investigation is to discover patterns of consumers' behaviour and their decision to buy or to ignore a product after getting messages from influencers (Matsatsinis, and Samaras, 2000). One very important point to note when it comes to consumer purchase decision is the way consumers develop, adapt and use decision-making strategies (Moon, 2004). The purchase

decisions of consumers could be defined as the “behaviour patterns of consumers, that precede, determine and follow on the decision process for the acquisition of need satisfying products, ideas or services” (Du Plessis et al., 1991). Consumer Purchase decision in contemporary studies looks more at the activities that will lead to purchase rather than the decision itself. The purchase process is the fourth stage of customer decision-making. It is the point which consumer wants to buy the product that will meet their needs after evaluating various available alternatives. In marketing, the consumer is seen as the decision maker thriving to fulfil his/her needs. The purchase decision of consumers is widely regarded in six different stages:

- Problem recognition
- Search for information
- Evaluation of alternatives
- Purchase decision
- Purchase
- outcome evaluation

(Liang and Lai, 2002, Rani P., 2014).

Firstly, a problem will be recognized which create a demand for products that can eliminate this problem. This problem comes from the humans have wants that they need to fulfil. For example, hunger creates the need for food. After this, information regarding the problem is gathered and alternatives are evaluated. Still with the example of the person who is hungry. He/she begins to seek information where they can get food. Sometimes it could be just the result of a craving. When an alternative has been chosen, .based on the recommendations of an influencer, the person could locate a restaurant or food delivery service in that area. The consumer will go on and execute the transaction and evaluate the outcome. According to Liang and Lai (2002) online transaction can occur only after the consumer has chosen a certain product. Purchase decisions have some factors that influence them such as, negative or positive comments from other customers that will influence a customer into buying a product. (Kotler & Keller, 2009), another factor that effect on the final purchase decision can be unexpected situations change in the customer’s personal economy for instance sudden job loss.

Many factors can influence consumer purchase decisions some factors come from features of the product itself (e.g., price, durability), while others are attributes of consumers themselves (e.g.,

goals, attitudes, discretionary income). Chintan (2012) found out that the service quality and brand image plays a very important role in purchasing decisions. Ahmad, and Ahmad, (2014) suggested that the dominant factors quality, price, promotions, and social factors reflects the latest buying behavior of people or not. His study reveals that social factors are the most dominating factors which determines the purchase behavior and basically reflects the societal image of the consumers. Ge, Brigden and Häubl (2015) withholds that, consumers often make choices in settings where some alternatives are known and additional alternatives can be unveiled through search. That is, when making a choice from a set of alternatives, the manner in which each of these was discovered should be irrelevant from a normative standpoint. Consumers must often decide between choosing among a set of previously discovered alternatives and searching to discover additional alternatives before making a choice.

1.6 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND PURCHASE DECISION

Consumer behaviour is not static, depending on the nature of products involved it undergoes changes over a period of time. It equally varies from consumer to consumer. Not all consumers behave in the same manner. Different consumers behave differently. The differences in consumer behavior are due to individual factors such as the nature of the consumers, lifestyle and culture. Consumer behaviour equally varies from region to region and country to county. The variation can be noticed across states, regions and countries. A positive consumer behavior leads to a purchase decision. A consumer may take the decision of buying a product on the basis of different buying motives. The purchase decision leads to higher demand, and the sales of the marketers increase. Therefore, marketers need to influence consumer behavior to increase their purchases. According to Rangaiah M. (2021) the factors that steer the wheels for consumer behavior could also be classified as reasons on which marketers determine who their target customers are, whether they shop each day or every so often and whether they research what they wish to buy or if they purchase on a whim.

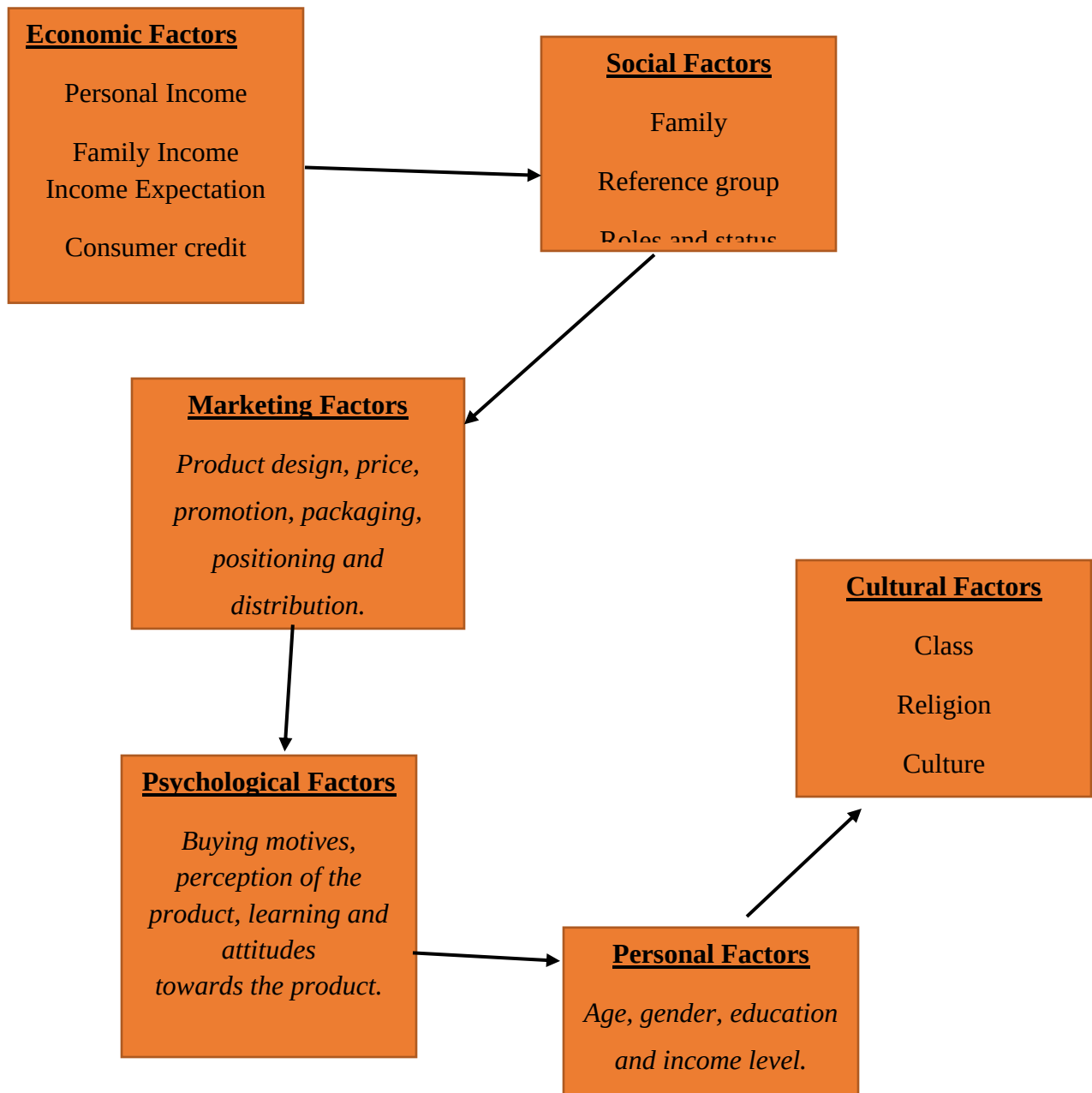


Figure 3: Factors influencing consumer behaviour; adapted from an
<https://www.analyticssteps.com>

Economic Factors

Consumer behaviour largely depends on a country's market or economic conditions. The more that a nation is prosperous and its economy stable, the larger will be the money supply of the

market and the consumer's purchasing power. A strong, healthy economy brings purchasing confidence while a weak economy reveals a strained market, marked by a weakened purchasing power and unemployment. The economic factors that spur purchasing decisions are:

Personal Income: Here, personal income is the criteria that dictate the level of money they will spend on buying goods or services. There are primarily two kinds of personal incomes that a consumer has namely disposable income and discretionary income. Disposable income refers to income that remains in the hand after removing all necessary payments such as taxes. The greater the disposable personal income the greater would be the expenditure on several products, and the same would be the case when it is the other way round. On the other hand, discretionary personal income would be the income that remains after managing all the basic life necessities. This income is also used when it comes to purchasing shopping goods, durables, luxury items, etc. An escalation in this income leads to an improvement in the standard of living which in turn leads to greater expenditure on shopping goods.

Family Income: This income is actually the sum total of the income of all our family members. This income also plays a considerable role in driving consumer behavior. The income that remains after meeting all the basic life necessities is what is then used for buying various goods, branded items, luxuries and durables.

Income Expectations: It's not just people's personal and family income that impacts their buying behavior. Their future income expectations also have a role to play. For instance, if someone expects his/her income to rise in the future, they would naturally spend a greater amount of money in purchasing items. And of course, in case their income drops in future, it would have a negative influence on their expenditure.

Consumer Credit: The credit facilities put at the request of consumers also impact their purchasing behavior. This credit is normally provided by sellers, either directly or indirectly via banks or financial institutions. If they have flexible credit terms their expenditure on items is likely to increase and in less flexible credit terms would result in less spending.

Savings: The savings generated from personal income also regulate the buying behavior of consumers. For instance, if someone makes the decision of saving more from his income for a

certain period of time, spending on goods and services would be lesser and for that period and if saving is less the expenditure on goods and services will increase.

Social Factors

Society is structured in a particular and this segmentation can influence purchasing decisions to some extent. People are constantly working on imitating other human beings, longing to fit in their surroundings. Some of the social factors that influence consumer behaviour include:

Family: Families have a considerable role to play in purchasing behavior. People tend to dislike certain products from childhood because family culture.

Reference Groups: Reference groups are basically groups of people with whom we associate ourselves. These include clubs, schools, professional or playgroups, churches, and even acquaintances or a group of friends, etc. The people in the reference groups normally have a common pattern of purchasing and an opinion leader who influences them in terms of their buying behavior.

Roles and status: We are all of course influenced by the role that we hold in society. The higher position we hold, the more our status affects what and how much we purchase. For instance, the CEO of a company and a normal employee would have a varied buying pattern.

Psychological Factors

Human psychology is an essential factor that influences consumer behaviour. These psychological factors driving the behavior of consumers are:

Motivation: This is a defining factor influencing a person's buying behavior. A popular motivation theory is Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs in which he developed a model that lays the foundation for 5 different levels of human needs where he lays the base with psychological needs and moves on to safety needs, social needs, esteem needs and finally heading to self-actualization needs. Amongst these requirements, people's basic requirements and security needs are generally put above all needs.

Perception: Perception is generally shaped when we gather information regarding a product and examine it to generate a relevant image regarding a certain brand. Whenever one sees an influencer doing a review, feedback or promotion regarding a product, it forms an image of that item. As a result, their perception plays an integral role in shaping consumer's purchasing decisions.

Learning: Every time people purchase a particular product they get a deeper knowledge about it through experience. This learning mainly depends their experience, knowledge, and skills. Learning can either be cognitive or conditional. While in cognitive learning, people use their knowledge for finding satisfaction and fulfilling needs with the item they purchase, conditional learning is where one gets constantly exposed to a situation, enabling he/she to respond towards it.

Attitudes and Beliefs: We've all got certain attitudes or beliefs that consciously or subconsciously prompt our purchasing decisions. For instance, while your friend who believes caffeine is adverse for one's health may prefer tea, you who believe that caffeine energizes us, may prefer coffee. Our attitude and what we believe influence our behavior towards a product and also play a key role in shaping the product's brand image. So understanding a consumer's attitude and belief becomes useful for marketers to design their marketing campaigns.

Personal Factors

Age is one of the primary factors that impact our preferences. The vibrant and flashy purchasing choices of a teenager would obviously differ from what an elderly person purchases. Meanwhile, we have middle-aged people who are naturally more focused on purchasing properties, houses, or vehicles.

Our income definitely impacts our purchasing behavior. The higher our income, the more purchasing power we hold and vice versa. Higher disposable income compels us to spend more on luxurious items while a lower or mediocre income makes us spend more on our basic needs like education, groceries, and clothing.

Our occupation largely steers our purchasing decision making. We all tend to purchase the items that are relevant or suitable for our profession. For instance, a businessman would have a different clothes purchasing pattern in comparison to an artist.

Our way of life is one of the most powerful influencers that controls our choices. Our lifestyle dominates our buying behavior quite significantly. Suppose we are on a diet then the products we purchase will also complement our diet, from food, weighing scale to using protein.

Cultural factors:

Humans have values and ideologies that are shaped by the values and ideologies of the society and or community they belong to. Behaviour are is consciously or subconsciously driven by culture in that:

Culture

Our cultural factors are basically basic requirements, values, wants behaviours, and preferences that are observed and absorbed by us from our close family members as well as other significant people around us.

Subculture

Amongst a cultural group, we have several subcultures. These groups share a common set of values and beliefs. They can consist of people from varied nationalities, religions, caste, and geographies. An entire customer segment is formed by this customer segment. Each society all over the globe is defined and known by some form of social class. This social class is determined collectively by our family backgrounds, occupation, education, and residence location. Our social class is another component holding the reins for consumer behaviour.

1.7 Theoretical Framework**1.7.1 COGNITIVE DESSONANCE (LEON FESTINGER 1962)**

An approach to understanding consumer behaviour and the role of influencer marketing on purchase decisions is to take the Cognitive dissonance perspective The theory of cognitive dissonance is one of the most significant and influential theories in the history of social psychology. Suffice it to mention that only five years after its introduction, Brehm and Cohen (1962, as cited in Bem, 1967) could review over fifty studies conducted within the framework the theory. It has found widespread applications in various fields of scientific investigation, including communication studies like Littlejohn & Foss (2005), and marketing for example Rice, (1997).The central proposition of Festinger's theory is that if a person holds two cognitions that are inconsistent with one another, he will experience the pressure of an aversive motivational state called cognitive dissonance, a pressure which he will seek to remove, among other ways, by altering one of the two dissonant cognitions (Bem, 1967). If an individual states a belief that is difficult to justify externally, that person will attempt to justify it internally by making his or her attitudes more consistent with the statement (Aronson, 2004, p. 164). The central point present

study is that consumers will tend to move for and buy particular products based on the media messages they receive from influencers concerning specific brands. The purchase decision of a consumer may change following a message from their favourite influencer. The dissonance theory predicts that we begin to believe our own lies; but only if there is not abundant external justification for making the statements that go against our original attitudes. This powerful form of permanent attitude change has been called the "saying is believing" paradigm. People will modify their attitudes towards a brand because influencers have succeeded in making them change their previous attitudes. Simply put, they are made to recognize that their own point is incorrect. That is why, attitudes towards various brands differ and only after the consumer has determined that the content and message of a particular advert can suitably meet their needs can they effectively change their original buying habits to suit their new choice.

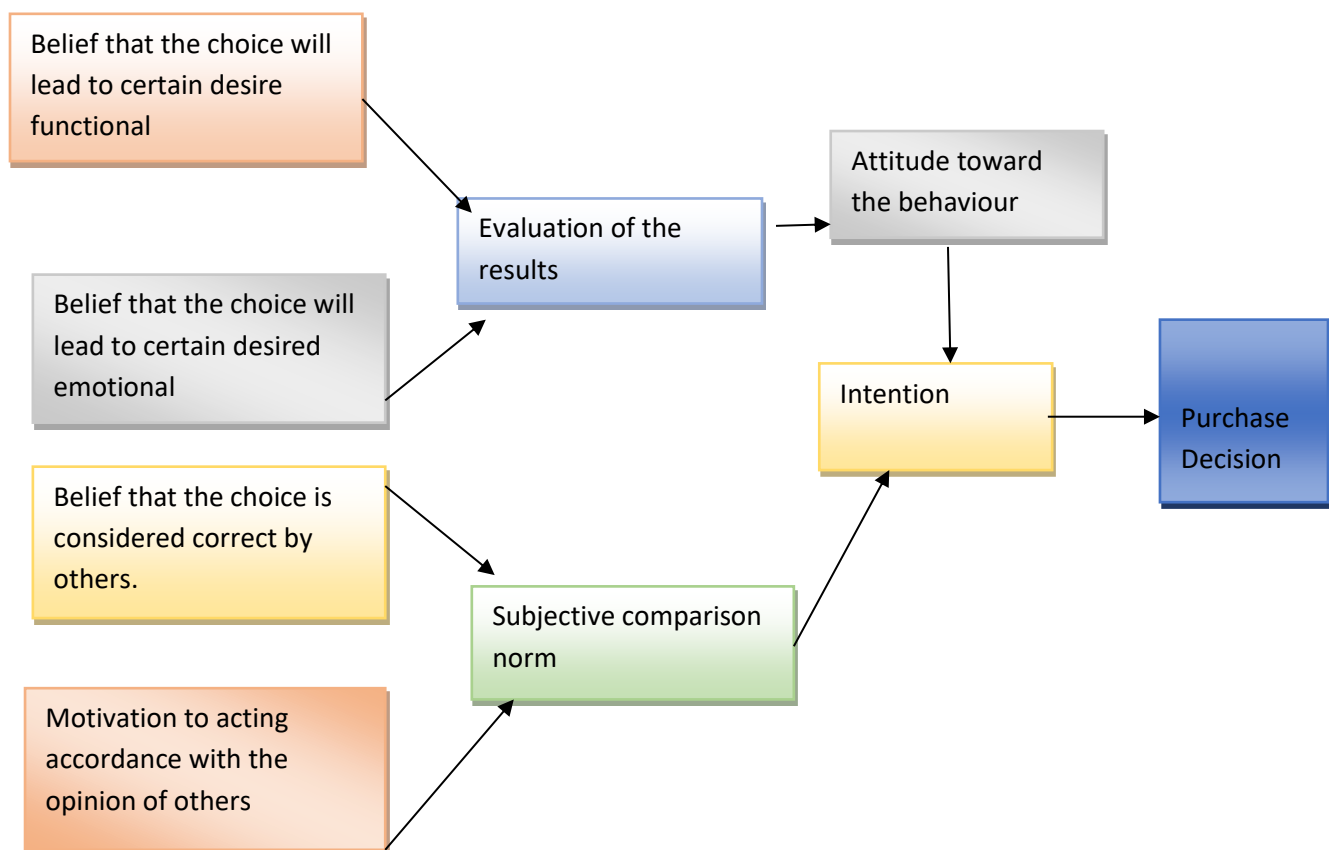
1.7.2 RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY

It is also known as choice theory or rational action theory. It is a framework for understanding and often formally modeling social and economic behavior. The basic premise of rational choice theory is that aggregate social behavior results from the behavior of individual actors, each of whom is making their individual decisions. The theory also focuses on the determinants of the individual choices. Rational choice theory then assumes that an individual has preference among the available choice alternatives that allow them to state which option they prefer. This theory is relevant to this study because the researcher aims to understand if influencer marketing will impact the purchase decisions of consumers. This because consumers are exposed to other marketing campaign used by brands. The purchase decision here is assumed to be complete (the person can always say which of two alternatives they consider preferable or that neither is preferred to the other) and transitive (if option A is preferred over option B and option B is preferred over option C, then A is preferred over C). The rational agent is assumed to take account of available information, probabilities of events, and potential costs and benefits in determining decisions, and to act consistently in choosing the self-determined best choice of action.

The theory comprises attitude components which, in the end, represent the basis of forming a decision; the researcher attempts to identify the attributes (Quality content, personality, credibility, trust etc.) that contributes in developing the consumer's purchase decision for a particular product.

This theory gives us a model contributing to a better understanding of the way consumers' purchase decision are formed and providing us, in an appropriate way, with the necessary means of researching and foreseeing the evolution of the consumers' behaviour. In order to understand the consumers' behaviour, it is necessary to determine their demands and desires regarding the influencer marketing strategy involved that will lead to eventual purchase, the expected emotional results, as well as the subjective standards consumers use to identify the tendency for a product or a service as against the others.

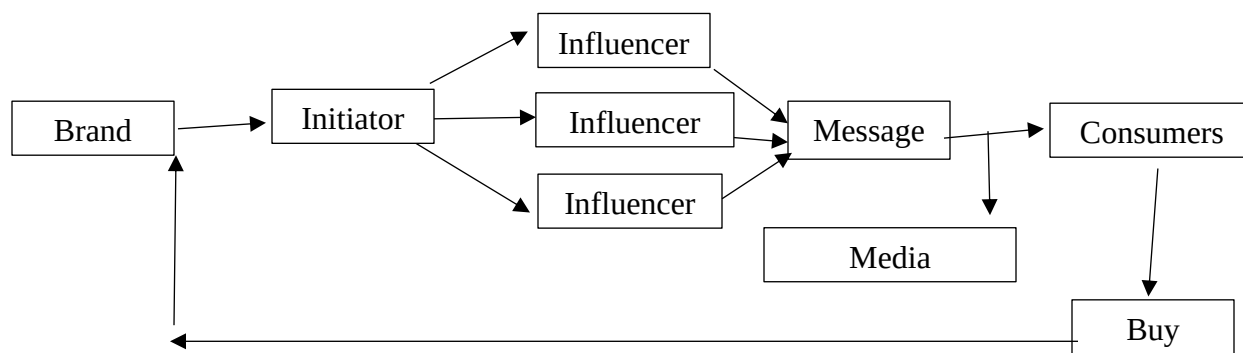
Figure3. Structural model of how purchase decisions are formed



Source: Developing Customer Insight: The Determination of Customer Preference, International Communication Research, www.icrsurvey.com

1.7.3 THE TWO STEP FLOW COMMUNICATION THEORY

In recent times a new crop of persons have emerged who interpret media messages to their followers using social media. These persons are called influencers and are capable of shaping the thoughts of their followers. Griswold S., (id) quotes John Stuart Mill and says: "The mass do not now take their opinions from dignitaries in Church or State, from ostensible leaders, or from books. Their thinking is done for them by men much like themselves, addressing or speaking in their name, on the spur of the moment...." Brands of understood the use of these new form of opinion leaders and are taking advantage of their expertise. Propounded in 1948 by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet: the Two-step flow theory revealed evidence suggesting that the flow of mass communication is less direct than previously supposed. Although the ability of mass media to reach a large audience, and in this case persuade individuals in one direction or another, these researchers published a review titled *People's Choice*. It opened people's understand on the dynamics of the media-audience relationship. The study suggested that communication from the mass media first reaches "opinion leaders" who filter the information they gather to their associates, with whom they are influential. Lazarsfeld *et al* suggested that "ideas often flow from radio and print to the opinion leaders and from them to the less active sections of the population." People tend to be much more affected in their decision making process by face to face encounters with influential peers than by the mass media (Lazarsfeld, Menzel, 1963). Therefore corroborating the 2 step flow with present study, consumer purchase decisions are shaped by brand influencers who have emerged as the top opinion leaders on social media. These persons could be celebrities or top individuals with large following. Mass number of persons log in on social media each day for diverse reasons. Some of these persons come to watch, read or listen from these opinion leaders who talk on diverse topics. So brands are the initiators who suggests buying a product or service. As an initiator they get to influencers whose point of view or advice will influence the buying decision. It may be a person with a huge reputation (singer, athlete, actor) but which people rely on for information. These persons reach consumers via social media. Consumers choose which product to buy based on the convincing campaign of the influencer. They are also the final consumers who are the focal point of the whole campaign.



1.7.4 Uses gratification Theory 1974: Blumler and Katz

A possible approach to understanding consumer behaviour and the role of influencer marketing on purchase decisions is to take the uses and gratification perspective. This approach assumes consumers to be active gratification seekers who interact with the media rather than become passive recipients of media content (Williams, Phillips, and Lum, 1997). Here the influencers use content in video, pictures and prose to send messages via the internet (social media) and the consumers are expected to purchase the products or services advertised and through evaluation after satisfaction from use they provide their gratification level. Their media use is considered a conscious effort to fulfil either cognitive or affective needs, or psychological motives, such as information learning, entertainment, personal identity, parasocial interaction, companionship and escape (Blumler, 1979; Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., and Gurevitch, M., 1974; Rubin, 1981, 1983).

The merit of the theory of uses and gratification is in explaining users continuing media exposure by answering the questions of why people choose to use particular media or types of content/messages, what satisfaction they expect and get, and to what uses they put the results of their attention to media (McGuire, 1974). It also helps explain varying viewing levels and viewing gratifications (Levy and Windahl, 1984). Palmgreen and Rayburn (1985) has related it to the expectancy-value approach which proposes that a particular kind of media content will have attributes which derives a negative or positive valuation for the audience. After the relevant attributes are identified, respondents can be asked how they value each attribute.

Finally, the uses and gratification theory explains how satisfied customers became after using the media. It states the part played by the media in relating people to their society. For this to happen,

it is necessary that the media and those who communicate through the media should set out to do certain things and audiences should approach the media in a compatible way. Here, the audiences seek only those things that will satisfy them. The specific things that will push them to purchasing a particular brand. With uses and gratification, people select what they want to read, watch or listen to while the different media are in constant competition to get the audience attention bring this to our study which shall examine how consumers will be attracted to a particular due to influencer marketing campaigns.

1.8 EMPIRICAL STUDIES

According Zak S., & Hasprova M., (2019), opinion leaders play a vital role in the purchasing decision making process of consumers. In the present study, the opinion leader is the influencer. Through their individual skills and talents, influencers directly impact on the purchase decision of consumers. Therefore, social media campaigns can easily hit targeted consumers for specific brands. In 2019 two Norwegian researchers provided valuable insight into influencer marketing by highlighting the importance of credibility in selection and collaboration with influencers. Bolstad and Høili established that utilizing firm advertisements on instagram could be a prevalent alternative for brands to precisely target their audience. They investigated on the problems marketers face while taking strategic marketing decisions on instagram. They used two recognized Norwegian Instagram influencers and discovered that influencer adverts are more effective than firm adverts on brand attitude, purchase intention, and word-of-mouth. This is as result of influencers' perceived source credibility, which is facilitated by trust and expertise being carefully crafted through interpersonal communication with followers over time. Also high levels of credibility has the ability to reduce consumer's attitude toward the advert and sustain the result of influencer adverts outperforming firm adverts.

The internet has totally transformed the way people operate in society. It has made marketing to be more efficient. Marketers are discovering more and more effective tools of doing business (Wen et al. 2014). This development has brought about new opportunities which give marketer advantages when setting out their operations. According to Levin A., (2020) companies and entire industries have changed the way they carryout marketing operations these days. Business have moved from having opening and closing hours to operating 24/7 reaching clients everywhere in the world. In the year 2015 more than 200 million internet users in the United States used the

internet to search for and buy products. Therefore companies should focus on online consumers purchase intentions and loyalty because the success of their online shopping experience depends on how much time a customer spends on their site. (Wen, Prybutok and Xu 2011). The purchase intentions of consumers towards a brand can easily be shaped by the amount of information an influencer gives and how this information reaches the consumers. People make use of social media platforms to get access to all kind of information. The perceived information credibility depends quality of the communication put forth by the influencer. A sponsored post by an influencer will entice more consumers because the information has value added (Cheung et al., 2012).

According to Wen et al. (2014) marketing in the digital age is cost effective new forms of production and purchasing cycles; costs associated low labour costs, store rental, as well as inventory maintenance. An influencer can entice people in to buying a product, they place orders and receive at their doors steps. According to Singh (2014), developments brought by influencer marketing are the part motivating factors that establish a great relationship between sellers, buyers and service providers. There have been major changes including improved communication, better customer satisfaction, and efficiency in delivery. Influencer marketing has a great meaning as an effective branding strategy and in their marketing efforts, companies increasingly abandon traditional celebrity endorsers in favour of social media influencers, such as vloggers and instafamous personalities (Jin, Muqaddam & Ryu. 2019).(Schouten, Janssen, Verspaget. 2019).

In this business age, influencer marketing presents a new type of third party endorsers called social media influencers. This shift in marketing communication, sets an efficient and valuable means for brands to reach and conquer consumers (De Veirman et al., 2017). This is the type of marketing that can establish a long-term relationship between customers and brands. These persons shape consumers attitude towards various brands through campaigns and content on blogs and tweets (Fregberg et al. 2011). The level at which people pickup information during the Arab spring made marketers to rethink on new methods of reaching consumers. This comes through getting persons with high number of followers online who regularly create and post pictures, videos and prose related to particular issues. These persons have risen to prominence because contrary to celebrity endorsers, they are cheaper. They are easily reached and affordable (Hall, 2015). These influencers become part of the brand and people see them as part of the company. Once a brand gets a social media influencer to talk about their product, people readily believe because they have a connection

with these persons. An influencer has the ability to get into the lives of consumers and give them expert advice on various topics in society.

In the era of digital real estate, social media has revolutionized the way people live and this has a huge impact on brands. Customers have to be involved in the very early stage of production as they have an opinion on each small detail which was not a case before social media. Mohammad R., (2019). Companies cannot ignore the negative comments made about their product. In looking at factors impacting consumer behavior with focus on buying process as a result of online review, Mohammad R., (2019) established that the online review and posted online information about any product affect the customer differently depending on the value and type of the product. Organizations now give importance to online review because they have a higher chance to control particular needs of their customers.

Purchase intentions of consumers can also be affected by various factors like listening, humour, and expertise of the influencer. In a 2012 study, Roussel M.A., reviewed factors that influence customer's buying intentions in a relational context in the financial services industry. Using a sample of 778 customers from 10 different financial institutes in Quebec, results obtained show that listening, expertise, humor and the similarity in terms of the preferred financial products of the advisor positively influence purchase intentions of customers. Roussel tested a total of 19 hypotheses that show significant results in terms of influence on purchase intention of customers.

In recent times, influencer marketing has become increasingly popular, representing a specific type of social media marketing. Zak S., & Hasprova M., (2019) show the position and roles of influencers as opinion leaders in the social media environment. Influencers promoting products and brands have become part of consumers' daily lives. One can find an advertising campaign with an influencer several times a day, especially on social networks. Any brand that wants to effectively promote their product is aware that influencers can have a very positive impact on their communication campaign. Using influencer marketing can bring many benefits to a brand, but most importantly, positively impact the sales of its products. Consumers, however, need not only be positively influenced, and companies that choose to implement this strategy should also be aware of the risks involved in working with influencers. After gathering data from 430 respondents, Zak S., & Hasprova M., (2019) discovered that sportsmen are most trusted influencers.

For a successful marketing campaign to take place, a quality product and a trusted influencer must combine. The fact that companies can hire an influencer in the promotion process does not automatically mean people's trust in the quality of the product. Zak S., & Hasprova M., (2019) established that a large proportion of consumers think that influencers agree to promote a product simply because they get paid for it. They expressed the view that only an attractive or successful personality is not enough, and the success of the product is primarily up to him.

The effectiveness of influencer marketing is seen when brand attitude directly impacts consumer purchase intentions. As the use of influencer marketing gains steam across the globe, expert influencers also gain prominence in society. They ensure that their followers get authentic updates about their products. This increases customer involvement and strengthens brand attitude. According to Trivedi and Sama (2020), brand attitude has a significant impact on online purchase intention. Consumers give more weight to an expert influencer's opinion compared to that of an attractive celebrity influencer. Trivedi and Sama (2020) investigated the comparative effect of an attractive celebrity influencer vis-à-vis, an expert influencer on consumers' choice of electronics products. They discovered that the impact of an expert influencer on brand attitude will differ from that of an attractive celebrity. The brand influencer can easily bring aspects like brand admiration which will naturally result to acceptance through online purchase intentions. Trivedi and Sama (2020) established brand attitude as an antecedent to a relatively new marketing variable, brand admiration (Aaker et al., 2012), making this a novel contribution. Many studies that dwell on the topic of marketing set brand attitude as a mediating variable (Mackenzie et al., (1986); Aaker et al., (2012); Lim et al. (2017); and Trivedi (2018)).

II- METHODOLOGY

Udo kelle states that in order to study a research object, some crucial methodological questions must be asked. Any serious methodological consideration in the framework of social science should regard the nature of the investigated phenomenon first, and thereafter address the question which method may be adequate to describe, explain or understand this phenomenon. It is regarded as the Practical methodology section because it provides the readers will find information about practical methodological decisions, This Chapter deals with the methods used in the Research Methodology to the definition of terms. The section constitutes of the philosophical worldview, Research Design, research site Population under study, sample size and sampling procedure, pretesting, data collection, code guide development and data entry and Cleaning, data collection instrument and methods, data analysis, study validity and concept explication. It illustrates the logical and systematic way in which research is carried out.

Cameroon was initially colonised by Germany. After the First World War, Germany lost her mandate over Cameroon. The latter was then shared between France and Britain. The French ruled the East while the English ruled the West. East Cameroon obtained her independence in January 1960 and became La République du Cameroun. In October 1961 the two territories came together as the Federal Republic of Cameroon, made up of the former La République and the former British Southern Cameroons which had obtained its own independence in February 1961 in a UN plebiscite. The country later became the United Republic of Cameroon in 1972 and in 1984, the Republic of Cameroon. Cameroon is situated in Central/West Africa north of the Equator. It is bounded to the north by Tchad, to the south by Gabon, to the south-west by Equatorial Guinea, to the west by Nigeria, and to the east by the Central African Republic and Congo. Cameroon has a surface area of about 475,442 km² and a population of about 20 386 799 persons according to the 2012 population census data. The country is divided into ten regions, North West, South West, Adamawa, Centre, Littoral, East, Far North, West, South and North, with the first two being Anglophone and the others Francophone. Yaounde in the Centre Region is the administrative capital of Cameroon and Douala in the Littoral Region its economic capital.

The study was carried out in Cameroon and precisely in urban settings with a high cognition of the subject in the study and internet use. The study was based on 276 internet users who specifically have advanced knowledge on consumer behaviour and the role of influencer marketing on purchase decisions.

Burns and Grove (2003) defined a research design as a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings. Similarly Parahoo (1997) described a research design as a plan that describes how, when and where data are to be collected and analysed. Furthermore Polit, Tatano, Hungler (2001) defined a research design as the researcher's overall guide for answering the research question or testing the research hypothesis. This researcher made use of Descriptive Design which permits the researcher to examine a particular situation and reveal the norm. This creates the possibility of predicting the results of situations under identical circumstances.

The research design of the study approached is quantitative. The method use for any scientific work involves its rules of interpretation and criteria for acceptable explanations as well as research designs, data collecting techniques and data processing routines that have been deduced from these rules and criteria. For any work to be scientifically valid it should be based on a strong scientific character of the researcher. It should be noted that for a research work to be scientific, it must make use of a well proven scientific theory to explain social phenomenon. A scientific theory used, must be one that has for a long time stood the test of misrepresentation or forgery. The main objective of the science is to develop satisfactory and convincing explanations to all what baffles us and that seems to require explanations POPPER K. (1969-1971). How to do research shows the importance for a researcher to be aware of a number of research methods available to comprehend how theories work, to acknowledge their merits and demerits so as to be able to select the methods most likely to satisfy the objectives of one's study. This explains why the survey method will be used in this study to better give an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study.

As per Krejcie and Morgan (1970) a sample frame of 20,000 people requires a representation of at least 250 respondents within its sample size. A target population is a population having the desired information. For the sake of balance, over 276 internet users were selected from the Littoral, South West, North West, West and Center Regions (English and French) which serve as the study area, will be interviewed.

The study makes use of both non-probability and probability sampling approaches. Under non-probability sampling the Purposive sampling technique was used. The Purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses (Dolores 2007).

Data for this study was collected from primary source. Primary source of data was collected with the use of questionnaires. These were questionnaires that the respondents filled at their convenience and submitted once complete. The data for this study was collected by means of distributing questionnaires to the members of the sample.

The data for the study was primary, collected using a multiple choice questionnaire containing open-ended and close-ended questions. The researcher made use of an assisted approach in the dissemination of questionnaires.

Data analysis as defined by Marshall and Rossman (1990) is the process of bringing order and meaning out of the bulk of collected data. The purpose of analysing data is to obtain usable information. Data analysis will describe and summarise data, identify relationships between variables, compare variables, identify the difference between variables, and forecast outcomes.

Before analysis, data was extracted, cleaned and keyed into Microsoft Excel sheets and SPSS v.21. Then, the data was edited to deal with any problems such as missing cases and outlier responses. This process was done appropriately to ensure that all the data was correct. Frequencies and proportions were carried out on the variables to obtain brief information on the survey outcome. After this, the researcher adopted a number of statistical methods such as frequency distribution, charts, mean (average), median (central item in a group), mode, standard deviation and cross-tabulation. Finally, after conducting the above processes, analysis was conducted by testing the proposed hypotheses using the appropriate statistical testing in order to determine accurately if the null hypotheses could be rejected in favour of the alternate hypotheses given a certain degree of confidence.

Research ethics play a key part in the requirements on daily work, the protection of dignity of subjects and the publication of the information in the research (Georgia Fouka & Marianna Mantzorou, 2011). Within this research the following ethical considerations were germane:

Informed consent was taken into consideration. The respondents knowingly, voluntarily, intelligently, and in a clear and manifest way, gave their consent. Respondents were asked by the researcher to participate in the collection of data and they concurred.

Likewise the principle of beneficence was respected. The research is of benefit to the respondents participating in the research. With consumer behaviour playing such a key role in the marketing milieu, a feedback from the internet users on how influencers impact their online purchase habits.

According to the principle of respect for anonymity and confidentiality, the identities of respondents were kept private so as to ensure confidentiality of their responses. Anonymity was protected by ensuring that the subject's identity could not be linked with personal responses.

Furthermore, in concurrence with the principle of respect for privacy, respondents were free to accept to fill the questionnaires at their convenience. They were also free to answer the questions they were comfortable with and eschew those they didn't feel comfortable answering.

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III - ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND THE ROLE OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON PURCHASE DECISIONS.

This chapter basically deals with the interpretation of data collected with the use of questionnaires from internet users in Cameroon. In this case a single-round small-scale survey was used (Kakooza, 2004). The current study provides a platform for which will help the marketers know more on the role of influencers on consumer behaviour. The investigated information data collected can be used to identify strengths and weaknesses and organize a road map to achieve success where lapses exist. This part of the study basically deals with the interpretation of data collected with the use of questionnaires administered by internet users. Data analyses involve the categorizing, ordering and manipulation of information to obtain answers to research questions. This process aims at reducing data to comprehensible and interpretable form.. According to Peter Drucker (1954) the basic function of marketing is to attract and return customers at a profit. Therefore businesses need to update their marketing skills each day to meet up with the innovations of the market place. The study is a means with an end of obtaining consumers opinion on influencer marketing, so as to improve the online marketing process. The results obtained from this study are analyzed and presented in different forms: frequencies and percentages. The interpretations are direct answers to the set objectives found in the statement of problem and previous literature. They move in line with the set theoretical framework, where all figures given from the analysis software are broken down in to understood language. According to blogger Claire Frébault (2021) Influencers are familiar with the social networks on which they are present and their respective communities. They are opinion leaders who over time, have fully understood what their subscribers like. This study gives insight into consumer behaviour and the role of influencer marketing on purchase decisions. The interpretations here are direct answers to the aim and research objectives set at that beginning of the study;

The main research question is: **How can influencer marketing be used to influence consumer behaviour and drive purchase decisions?**

Main Aim: This study identifies influencer marketing as a stimulus to consumer purchase decision. Therefore finding factors that influence the perception of consumers towards an influencer and how these factors can be effectively be used to create favourable changes in consumer buying behaviour.

The objectives of the study:

5. To examine the conceptualization of the impact of product endorsements by social media influencers on consumers' buying decision.
6. To study the Impact of influencer marketing on brand awareness and brand recall.
7. To explore the role of influencer credibility, experience, and appearance on consumer purchase intent.
8. To examine consumer behaviour and the impact of Influence on purchasing decisions in Cameroon.

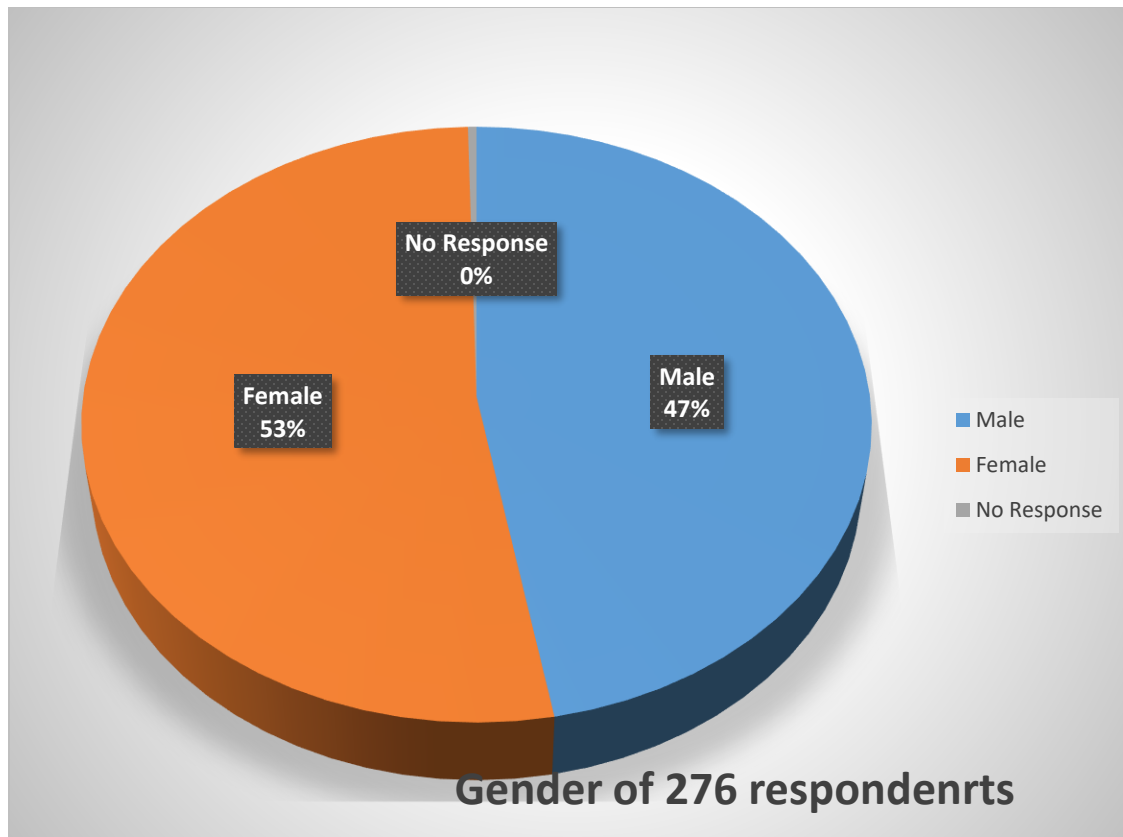
Presentation of Results

The variables used for the data analysis of the present study include; influencers marketing, consumers behavior and purchase decision. The data collected from respondents will provide reasons which will use these variables to establish a relationship between influencer marketing and consumer behaviour. To develop a contextual understanding of topic under study, the researcher administered questionnaires. There was a target of 300 questionnaires to be administered, 276 responded and 24 not administered giving a response rate of 92%.

Table 3: Data collection

Target number of Questionnaires for administration	Number administered	Number None-administered	Response rate (%)
300	276	24	92

After a systematic gathering and treatment of data, the first aspect to be analyzed is the demographics: The study had 276 respondents in total, 137 female, 138 male and 1 person did not indicate their gender.



Influencers are creative and can engage their customers in various ways. That is why the sample population for this study was centered on Cameroonian social media consumers with age 13 for youngest respondents. As the audiences are exposed to social media content, their subconscious mind “picks things up” at an incredible pace and “feeds them right into the brain” (Sangers 2009). From the 276 respondents, 225 are Cameroonians living in Cameroon while 46 are Cameroonians living out of Cameroon. To note that this study is centered on Cameroon as main population under study. Where it was also recorded that 156 (57.1%) of the population under study are aged between 23 to 33 years. 61 (22.3%) respondents have between 13 to 23 years of age. 41 (15%) of the population had between 33 to 43 years while 15(5.5%) of respondents had above 43 years. The researcher equally finds out the level of education the respondents. This is to ascertain the level of cognition of the population under study. It was recorded that 58.3 % of the population had a bachelor degree, 19.2% of respondents were in high school while 17.3% were Masters Degree holders. 4.4% are secondary school students while 0.4%(2 respondents) are Ph.D holders.

THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND THE ROLE OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON PURCHASE DECISIONS IN CAMEROON

ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE

To establish a theoretical analysis of consumer behaviour and the role of influencer marketing on purchase decisions, the researchers investigate on the social media use of the in the study where N=276 (N=total number of respondents). The present results are in line with the uses gratification theory stipulated supra.

Table4: Media Use

Question	Respond	
Are you an Active Internet User?	YES	261
	NO	11
What devices do you use to access the internet?	Mobile Phone	250
	Desktop	99
	Tablet	50
	Other devices	23
Do you actively use social media?	YES	258
	NO	16

Source: Filed work 2022

From the table above it is observed that 261 respondents (94.6%) of the population in the study are active internet users. Just 11 respondents say that they are not active internet users. These active users access internet through various devices such as: 90.6% of the population under review use mobile phones, 35.9% use desktop/computers, 18.11% use tablets while 8.3% use other devices. Corroborating with the uses and gratification theory, the present show that, consumers are active gratification seekers who interact with the media rather than become passive recipients of media content (Williams, Phillips, and Lum, 1997). It was observed that the 93.4% of respondents

actively use social media while just 16 persons do not actively use social media. These respondents who actively use social media through it various platforms as indicated on the table below:

Table 5: Social media use

Social Media site	Frequency of Respondents
Facebook	171
Instagram	112
YouTube	101
Twitter	92
Pinterest	31
Whatsapp	52
TikTok	25
Snapcaht	6
LinkedIn	6

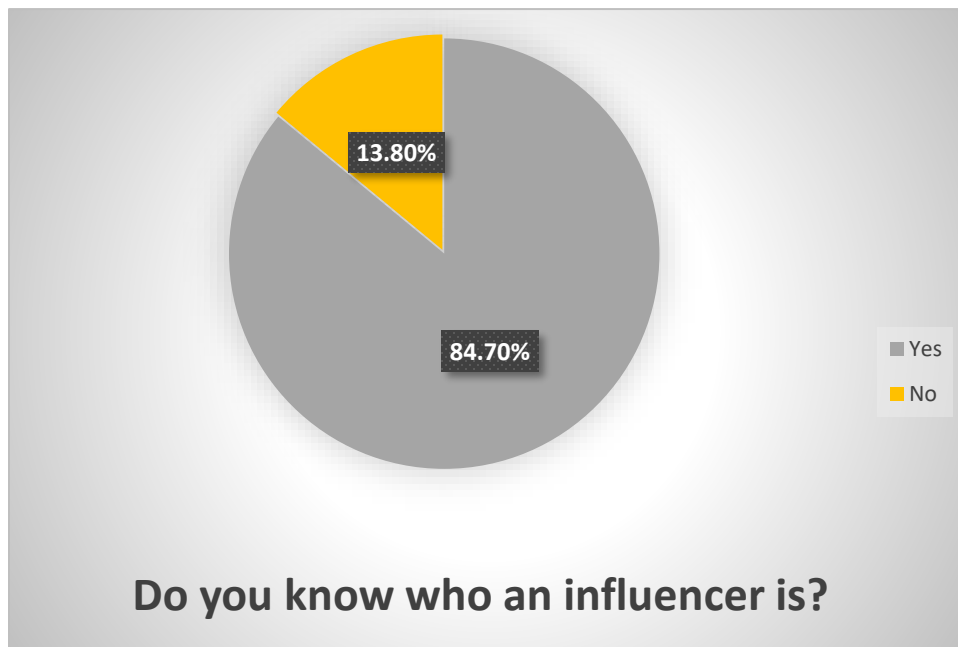
Source: Field work 2022

The table above shows that 61.9% of respondents are active on Facebook, 40.6% active on Instagram, 36.6% active on Youtube, 33.3% active on Twitter, 11.2% active on Pinterest, 18.9% active on Whatsapp, 9.05% active TikTok, 2.17% active on Snapchat and LinkedIn respectively. These figures shows one of the merit of theory of uses and gratification as internet users tend to the media that gives the most satisfaction (McGuire, 1974).

ESTABLISHING THE RAPPORT BETWEEN CONSUMERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

Influencers reach out to consumers through diverse campaigns every day. This is because through endorsement deals with brands they aim at transforming followers and fans in to consumers. In the present study, reaching out to a consumer means influencers want first to attract their attention to a particular brand then make them buy. As seen above 93.4% of respondents actively use social media through various platforms. There they come across various messages from different topics in the virtual and actual world. Social media consumers have particular sources that they go to get

information. That is why the researcher at this point investigates on the relationship between consumers and social media influencers.



The pie chart above represents consumers' knowledge about influencers. Present results show that 84.7% of social media consumers know who an influencer is while 13.8% have no knowledge about an influencer. These consumers also mentioned the various influencers for they follow on social media. The various influencers mentioned by consumers are: 59.7% of consumers in this study follow fashion influencers. 44.4% follow tech influences, 41.1% follow beauty influences, 37.5% follow travel influencers while an amalgamation of 21.8% follow other influencers such as motivational speakers. Preachers, Counsellors and coaches. This choice of the various type of influencers to follow determines the number of influencers consumers follow as seen in the table below:

It is observed that 39.9% of consumers follow 1 to 3 social media influencers, 28.4% consumers follow 3 to 6 influencers, 19.2% of consumers follow 6 to 9 influencers and 13.4% of consumers follow above 9 influencers on social media. Looking at the rational choice theory, many consumers will follow particular influencers because consumers they are exposed to the messages of these persons. That is why as the number of influencers increases, the number followers drop. People are exposed the various campaigns and will relate only to the once they are attracted to.

Table 6: Number of Influencers people follow on Social media

Number of influencers followed by consumers	Frequency	Percentage
1-3	102 resp.	39.1%
3-6	74 resp.	28.4%
6-9	50 resp.	19.2%
9-above	35 resp.	13.4%

Source: Field Word 2022

FACTORS THAT PUSH CONSUMERS TO FOLLOW SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

Consumers adopt new source of infotainment each day. They get access to varying content from different creators. The introduction of internet led to a massive shift from single-screen to multiple-screen which transformed the way people consume media information they receive from the media. According to Brown and Fiorella (2013), the consumer should be at the centre of influencer marketing efforts and companies can build their profile through demographic and psychographic studies. This is because consumers purchase decisions are influenced by various types of influencer marketing strategies. There are some pull factors that an influencer will need to apply in order to make consumer follow their content. Consumers in the present study outline some of the factors that make them follow particular influencers

Table7: Reasons why consumer follow particular influencers.

Factor	Agree	Disagree
I visit influencer social media accounts to discover new trends and brands	86.6%)	13.5%
Influencers are reliable sources of information	61.7%	38.4%
I will try a new product if an influencer recommends or reviews it	73.4%	26.5%
I trust sponsored product reviews	53.3%	46.7%
Influencers are experts in their respective fields thus my purchase decisions are based on their recommendations	53.7%	46.2%
Number of followers is an important factor for assessing credibility of influencers	78.4%	19.6%
Physical appearance of the influencer impacts my purchase intent	66.3%	33.6%

Source: Field Work 2022

The results from the table above are obtained after amalgamation of the level of agreement for each factor.

Where

Agree = Agree + Strongly Agree

Disagree = Disagree + Strongly Disagree

N=276 total respondents. Equally the number of No response has been excluded to keep the data from just the respondents who gave answers. It was observed that;

- 86.6% of consumers in the study agree that they visit influencers' social media accounts to discover new trends and brands. Therefore consumers consider social media influencers as

source for new trends and brands. This is because the proportion of consumers who disagree is relatively low at 13.5%.

- 61.7% of consumers in the current study consider social media influencers as reliable sources for information. In sharp contrast to the 38.4% who disagree. Just as the rational choice theory states, the more consumers are exposed to media they tend to agree to the information of the influencer.
- 73.4% of the population in the current study agree that they will try a new product if a social media influencer recommends or make a review about it. 26.5% disagree but it lower than number of persons who agree. Therefore social media influencers can spur consumers to buy new products..
- As per sponsored product reviews, 53.3% of persons in this study agree that they trust such review while 46.7% disagree. The close margins of the present results show that consumers are somewhat sceptical when it comes to paid reviews. Equally a 46 person did not provide answer to this question which was the highest for this section
- 53.7 % of respondents agree that influencers are experts in their respective fields thus their purchase decisions are based on their recommendations. Though 46.2% of respondents disagree, the current stands a direct answer to main research question in this study. This the population in this study agree that their purchase decisions are based on recommendation of influencers who they consider as experts in their respective fields. Social media influencers can present a convincing outcome, both in the media and in consumer beliefs (Booth and Matic 2011).
- The number of followers an influencer has is an important factor for assessing credibility of influencers. 78.4% of respondents agree to this assertion. 19.6% of respondents disagree to this assertion. Therefore the more followers an influencer has, the more credible people will trust their information.
- The physical appearance of a social media influencer can impact the purchase intention of a consumer. 66.3% of respondents in the study agree to that assertion. Which is a novelty discover by this researcher. In common parlance it is said that appearance in society matters. In this study it is observed that purchase intention of consumer can be affected by the physical appearance of the advertiser who is a social media influencer.

All in all, the present results show that the work of social media influencers can greatly affect consumer behaviour towards a product and by implication their purchase decision will equally be affected. The various factors observed give direct answers to the research question in this study. They equally stand as direct explanations to the objectives of this study.

To further assert the various variables in this study, the researchers investigate the suggestion that influencers have the best interest of their followers at heart. Here the respondents evaluate if the social media influencers want just their pay cut or are out for the good of their followers.

Table8: Influencers have the best interest of their followers at heart

Suggestion	Frequency	Percentage
It is partly true – They care about the money but also care about followers	160	59.7%
It is not true – They only care about how much they are paid	62	23.1%
It is not true – They just want engagement	23	8.6%
It is true – Whatever brands they influence for is what is good for their followers	23	8.6%

Source: field Work 2022

A consumer does not see a influencer just as a content creator or online personality. Some persons relate with these influencers like their close relatives. Therefore respondents say they see the job of an influencer as a business that involves people. That is why 59.7% of respondents state that influencers care about the money but also care about their followers. A further 23.1% of respondents state that influencers care only about money while doing their job. 8.6% of respondents suggest that influencers just want engagements and do not care about factors. Finally,

8.6% of respondents consider that whatever brands influencers talk about is good for their followers.

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

1. The Category of influencers consumers believe most

Consumer behaviour is not fixed, depending on the nature of products involved it undergoes changes over a period of time. It equally varies from consumer to consumer. Not all consumers behave in the same manner. Different consumers behave differently. In the present study, the researchers investigate how social media influencers can impact consumer behaviour. The table below shows the category of social media influences consumers believe most.

Table9: Category of influencers, consumers believe most

Suggestion	Percentage
Celebrity influencers: 5m+	22%
Micro influencers: 10k-50k Followers	20.7%
Nano influencers: 1k-10k Followers	16.7%
Macro influencers : 500k-1m Followers	14.6%
Midtier influencers: 50k-500k Followers	14.2%
Mega influencers : 1m-5m Followers	11.8%

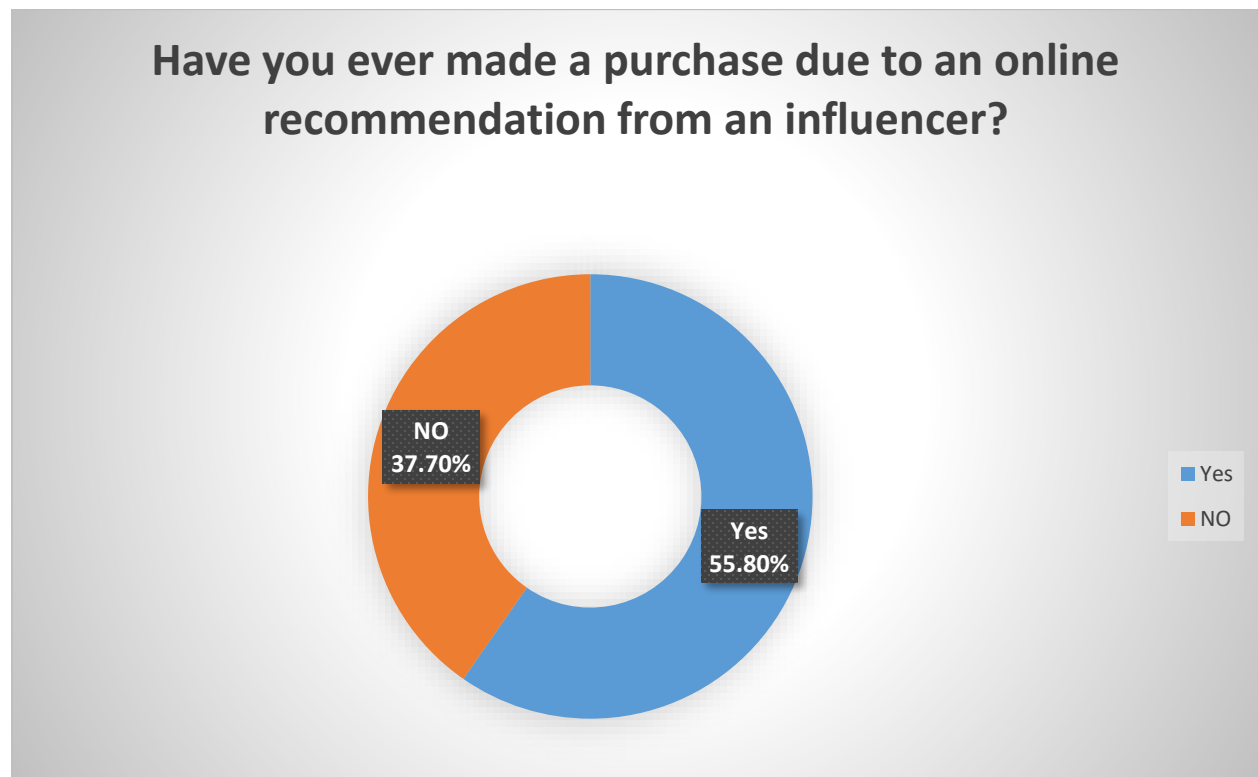
Source: Field Data 2022

As seen, 22% of respondents say they believe more in celebrity influencers (+5M followers) than other influencers. 20.7% believe in micro influencers (10k-50k Followers), Nano influencers (1k-10k Followers), have 16.7% of respondent who believe in them, Figures drop to 14.6% when it

gets to Macro influencers (500k-1m Followers) and Midtier influencers (50k-500k followers). 11.8% of population in the study follow and believe in Mega influencers (1Mfollowers)

2. Consumer agrees to buy a product due to online recommendation.

Because consumers believe in online influencers, they make purchase based on online recommendations. In the pie chart below, 55.8% of respondents agree have made a purchase based on recommendations from a social media influencer. 37.7 % of the said no to the suggestion.



3. Consumer switches brand after recommendation of an online influencer

The purchase decision of a consumer may change following a message from their favorite influencer. The dissonance theory predicts that we begin to believe in something if there is an external justification for making the statements that go against our original attitudes. People will modify their attitudes towards a brand because influencers have succeeded in making them change their previous attitudes. That is what the pie chart below illustrates where 43.9% of respondents agree upon recommendation from an online influencer, they switch from one brand to another.

Brand switch is not always an easy task. 56.1% of respondents said they have not been influenced to switch brand by an online influencer.



4. Reasons why online influencers influence consumers to switch from one brand to and other

These points are stipulated as direct statement from the respondents.

- Prestige. The thought of wanting to belong or look like the influencer. I think it's mostly about the thought of belonging to a person and a trend at a given time. I will want to wear what Kanye West wears because I highly relate to things he believes as such his recommendations come in high for me.
- The influencer drilled his followers on the authenticity and the originality and quality of the product
- The advert of the product by the influencer

- The new product delivered exactly what they influencer said it would
- The availability of the product and the quality of the product too
- It liked the commercial
- Positive comments for another product
- Personal research
- The information given by the influencer matched the expectations I had of the product
- Quality of the product recommended by the influencer.
- My personal decision
- I just needed the product
- Availability and affordability
- The likes of him using and wearing the other brand made me switch
- I wanted to keep patronizing my fave's brand Easy product identification
- Reviews of people who have use the product
- It was a brand I was looking forward to using
- I saw that the new product was more effective
- Low price of the new product and the quality
- Willing to try new things. Open to always ready to try new things
- Trend and/or uniqueness
- The influencer made me see the difference
- **Reasons why customers are not influence by online influencers to purchase particular products**

These points are stipulated as direct statement from the respondents

- Influencers have little to no effect on my purchasing power. Infact I follow them to be entertained and will never purchase a product just bc my fave influencer recommended
- I have never switched brands cuz if an influencer. Each person got his/her own taste and desires. Not everyone have the same product match
- I did not believe
- They didn't convince me enough
- I did not switch, the new product was not nice

- Didn't switch because the product was not as good as the influencer claimed it was
- There has been no switch in brand because the brand I use is ok for me
- Because it's didn't work out for me

CONCLUSION

This study sheds light on consumer behaviour and the role of influencer marketing on purchase decisions. The researcher established one main research question as guide to the study,

RQ: How can influencer marketing be used to influence consumer behaviour and drive purchase decisions?

Through this research question combines with the objectives of the study to serve as guide line for all the theoretical and empirical investigation.

The main objective of this study: To identify influencer marketing as a stimulus to consumer purchase decision. Also:

1. To examine the conceptualization of the impact of product endorsements by social media influencers on consumers' buying decision.
2. To study the Impact of influencer marketing on brand awareness and brand recall.
3. To explore the role of influencer credibility, experience, and appearance on consumer purchase intent.
4. To examine consumer behaviour and the impact of Influence on purchasing decisions in Cameroon.

In the establishment of the conceptual frame work under the literature review of this study, the researcher made the link between the various variables involved. A broad variety of efforts and theories have been advanced that attempt to describe the factors which influence the consumers and their behaviors when making purchasing decisions. Social media is rapidly becoming the most dominant form of interaction with various platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter winning in the market place of advertising (Nedra *et al.*, 2019; De Valck *et al.*, 2009). This enhanced form of

communication gives the digital ecosystem better options on how marketers can engage customers. According to blogger Claire Frébault (2021) Influencers are familiar with the social networks on which they are present and their respective communities. They are opinion leaders who over time, have fully understood what their subscribers like. This gives them the opportunity to grow their audience and create strong relationships with these communities. Based on this review of literature and establishment of theoretical review, the researcher established a questionnaire which was administered by internet users in Cameroon. To recall that the study area is Cameroon. With the data collected and interpreted, the following is conclusion for the study:

- ❖ The uses and gratification theory was established in the theoretical frame work was fully proven in the results. According to Williams, Phillips, and Lum, (1997), Consumers are active gratification seekers who interact with the media rather than become passive recipients of media content. That is why 94.6% of the population in the study are active internet users. These active users access internet through various devices such as: 90.6% on mobile phones, 35.9% use desktop/computers, 18.11% use tablets while 8.3% use other devices. It was observed that 93.4% of respondents actively use social media These respondents actively use social media through it various platforms like Facebook (61.9%), Instagram (40.6%), Youtube (36.6%), Twitter (33.3%), Pinterest (11.2%), Whatsapp (18.9%) and TikTok (9.05%), These figures shows one of the merit of theory of uses and gratification as internet users tend to the media that gives the most satisfaction (McGuire, 1974).
- ❖ A consumer does not see an influencer just as a content creator or online personality. Some persons relate with these influencers like their close relatives. Therefore respondents say they see the job of an influencer as a business that involves people. That is why 59.7% of respondents state that influencers care about the money but also care about their followers. A further 23.1% of respondents state that influencers care only about money while doing their job. 8.6% of respondents suggest that influencers just want engagements and do not care about factors. Finally, 8.6% of respondents consider that whatever brands influencers talk about is good for their followers.
- ❖ In Cameroon consumers know who an influencer is. 84.7% social media users said they know social media influencers and mentioned the various influencers for they follow on social media. The various influencers mentioned by consumers are: 59.7% of consumers

in this study follow fashion influencers. 44.4% follow tech influences, 41.1% follow beauty influences, 37.5% follow travel influencers while an amalgamation of 21.8% follow other influencers such as motivational speakers. Preachers, Counsellors and coaches. This choice of the various type of influencers to follow determines the number of influencers consumers follow as seen in the table below:

- ❖ It is observed that 39.9% of consumers follow 1 to 3 social media influencers, 28.4% consumers follow 3 to 6 influencers, 19.2% of consumers follow 6 to 9 influencers and 13.4% of consumers follow above 9 influencers on social media. Looking at the rational choice theory, many consumers will follow particular influencers because consumers they are exposed to the messages of these persons. That is why as the number of influencers increases, the number followers drop. People are exposed the various campaigns and will relate only to the once they are attracted to.

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND PURCHASE DECISIONS

A positive consumer behavior leads to a purchase decision. A consumer may take the decision of buying a product on the basis of different buying motives. The purchase decision leads to higher demand and the sales of the marketers increase. Therefore, marketers need to influence consumer behavior to increase their purchases. According to Rangaiah M. (2021) the factors that steer the wheels for consumer behavior could also be classified as reasons on which marketers determine who their target customers are, whether they shop each day or every so often and whether they research what they wish to buy or if they purchase at first sight. Consumers adopt new information source every day. They get access to different content from different creators. According to Brown and Fiorella (2013), the consumer should be at the centre of influencer marketing efforts and companies can build their profile through demographic and psychographic studies. So influencer online actions may cause consumers behaviour and purchase decisions `to till towards a particular product.

- Consumers consider social media influencers as source for new trends and brands. 86.6% of consumers in the study agree that they visit influencers' social media accounts to

discover new trends and brands. 61.7% of consumers in this study consider social media influencers as reliable sources for information

- Social media influencers can spur consumers to buy new products and even switch brands. 73.4% of the population in the current study agree that they will try a new product if a social media influencer recommends or make a review about it.
- 53.3% of persons in this study agree that they trust sponsored review while
- Respondents agree that influencers are experts in their respective fields thus their purchase decisions are based on their recommendations. 53.7% of the population in this study agree that their purchase decisions are based on recommendation of influencers who they consider as experts in their respective fields. Social media influencers can present a convincing outcome, both in the media and in consumer beliefs (Booth and Matic 2011).
- The number of followers an influencer has is an important factor for assessing credibility of influencers. 78.4% of respondents agree to this assertion.
- The physical appearance of a social media influencer can impact the purchase intention of a consumer. 66.3% of respondents in the study agree to that assertion. Which is a novelty discover by this researcher. In common parlance it is said that appearance in society matters. In this study it is observed that purchase intention of consumer can be affected by the physical appearance of the advertiser who is a social media influencer.
- Consumer behaviour is not fixed, depending on the nature of products involved it undergoes changes over a period of time. It equally varies from consumer to consumer. Not all consumers behave in the same manner. Different consumers behave differently. In the present study, the researchers observed that social media influencers can impact consumer behaviour. 22% of respondents say they believe more in celebrity influencers (+5M followers) than other influencers. 20.7% believe in micro influencers (10k-50k Followers), Nano influencers (1k-10k Followers), have 16.7% of respondent who believe in them, Figures drop to 14.6% when it gets to Macro influencers (500k-1m Followers) and Midtier influencers (50k-500k followers). 11.8% of population in the study follow and believe in Mega influencers (1Mfollowers)
- Consumer agrees to buy a product due to online recommendation. This is because consumers believe in online influencers, they make purchase based on online

recommendations. 55.8% of respondents agree have made a purchase based on recommendations from a social media influencer.

- Consumer accept that they will switch brand after recommendation of an online influencer. 43.9% of respondents agree that upon recommendation from an online influencer, they switch from one brand to another. Brand switch is not always an easy task. 56.1% of respondents said they have not been influenced to switch brand by an online influencer. The purchase decision of a consumer may change following a message from their favorite influencer. The dissonance theory predicts that we begin to believe in something if there is an external justification for making the statements that go against our original attitudes. People will modify their attitudes towards a brand because influencers have succeeded in making them change their previous attitudes.

RECCOMENDATIONS

- Influencers play a huge role in the life of internet users and should be considered when planning marketing activities in companies
- Management should carryout research on a particular influencer before handing over their product to them
- Influencer marketing is gaining grounds and if companies when to relate more with consumers then they should consider venturing in to such form of marketing.

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APPENDIX

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Greetings!

Please be informed that the researcher is conducting a study on “**Consumer Behavior and the Role of Influencer Marketing on Purchase Decisions**”. In Connection with this, the author has constructed a questionnaire to gather information for the study. Please note that your participation in the study by way of answering the questionnaire is pertinent. Without your participation, the study will not be complete as it should be. Kindly fill up the questionnaire with honesty. Be rest assured that the information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality. Thank you so much for your kind response to my request and if you are interested, I can provide you with the findings of the study.

Answer the following questions by putting a check Mark on the blank space before your choice.

1. Are you an active internet user?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
2. What devices do you use to access the internet?
 - A. Mobile phone
 - B. Tablet
 - C. Desktop
 - D. Others (Specify)
3. Do you actively use social media?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
4. Which Social media site are you active on? Select 1 or more
 - A. Twitter
 - B. Instagram
 - C. Facebook
 - D. Youtube
 - E. Pinterest
 - F. Other (specify)
5. Do you know who an influencer is?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Maybe

6. On average, how many social media influencers do you follow?

- A. 1-3
- B. 3-6
- C. 6-9
- D. 9 above

7. What can of influencers do you follow?

- A. Fashion
- B. Travel
- C. Tech
- D. Beauty
- E. Others (specify)

8. To what extend do you agree with the following statements

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I visit influencer social media accounts to discover new trends and brands				
Influencers are reliable sources of information				
I'm more likely to try a new brand if an influencer				

recommends or reviews it,				
I am less likely to trust a product review or recommendation if it is sponsored content (i.e. it is a paid advertisement				
Influencers are experts in their respective fields thus my purchase decisions are based on their recommendations				
Number of followers is an important factor for assessing credibility of influencers				
Physical appearance of the influencer impacts my purchase intent				

9. Evaluate the following statement “influencers have the best interest of their followers at heart” by choosing one of the following answers:

- A. It is not true – They only care about how much they are paid
- B. It is not true – They just want engagement
- C. It is partly true – They care about the money but also care about followers
- D. It is true – Whatever brands they influence for is what is good for their followers

10. What category of influencers are more believable to you?
- A. Nano influencers: 1k-10k Followers
 - B. Micro influencers: 10k-50k Followers
 - C. Midtier influencers: 50k-500k Followers
 - D. Macro influencers : 500k-1m Followers
 - E. Mega influencers : 1m-5m Followers
 - F. Celebrity influencers: 5m+
11. Have you ever made a purchase due to an online recommendation from an influencer?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
12. How many purchases have you made in the last year due to an online recommendation from an influencer?
- A. 1-5 purchases
 - B. 5-10 purchases
 - C. 10-15 purchases
 - D. 20 Above purchases
13. Has the recommendation from an influencer influenced you to switch from using one brand to another?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Not Entirely(I now use both the product from the influencer and what I originally was using)

Section B: Demographics

1. Where are you from?
 - A. I am a Cameroonian living in Cameroon
 - B. I am a Cameroonian living abroad
 - C. I am a foreigner living in Cameroon
2. What gender do you identify as?"
 - A. Male
 - B. Female
3. What is your age?"
 - A. 13-23 years old
 - B. 23-33 years old

- C. 33-43 years old
 - D. 43+
4. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?
- A. Secondary School
 - B. High School
 - C. Bachelor's Degree
 - D. Master's Degree
 - E. Ph.D. or higher