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INFLUENCER MARKETING AS A DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY:  
THE EFFECT OF MACRO AND MICRO INFLUENCERS ON PURCHASE  
INTENTION

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Influencer Marketing as a Digital Marketing Strategy: The Effect of Macro and  
Micro Influencers on Purchase Intention

Dijital Pazarlama Stratejisi ekseninde Influencer Marketing: Makro ve Mikro  
Influencer'ların Satın Alma Niyetine Etkisi

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## **ABSTRACT**

Integration of marketing and technology provided an opportunity for the emergence of new concepts. Influencer marketing has recently become one of these new concepts. In order to promote their products and services, businesses are increasingly partnering with social media influencers. Although there are many studies about influencer marketing, there is a lack of knowledge about different influencer types' effects on customers. Furthermore, studies about micro influencers, one of the influencer types, are very scarce and their theoretical base is comparatively underdeveloped. Therefore, this study aims to measure the effect of "micro and macro influencers" on parasocial relationship and source credibility to better understand their effects on purchase intention. Furthermore, Research aims to make assumptions according to the collected results about how the macro and micro influencers are perceived by the followers and which type of influencer is more effective in creating purchase intention. As a Questionnaire method, an online survey was conducted to collect data from different participants. A total of 262 data were obtained as a result of the questionnaire implementation. SPSS program was used to analyze the obtained data. Factor and regression analysis was implemented to data to evaluate the effectiveness of micro and macro influencers. Results are explained in the conclusion part of the study.

## ÖZET

Pazarlama ve teknolojinin entegrasyonu yeni kavramların ortaya çıkmasına olanak sağlamıştır. Influencer pazarlama, son zamanlarda bu yeni kavramlardan biri haline geldi. Şirketler, ürünlerini ve hizmetlerini tanıtmak için sosyal medya etkileyicileri ile giderek daha fazla işbirliği yapmaktadırlar. Etkileyici pazarlama geniş çapta çalışılmış olsa da, farklı etkileyici türlerinin müşteriler üzerindeki etkinliği konusunda hala sınırlı bir anlayış vardır. Ayrıca, influencer türlerinden biri olan mikro influencerlar ile ilgili araştırmalar oldukça azdır ve teorik temeli nispeten az gelişmiştir. Bu nedenle, bu araştırma, influencer türlerinin satın alma niyeti üzerindeki etkilerini daha iyi anlamak için mikro ve makro etkileyicilerin kaynak güvenilirliği ve parasosyal ilişki üzerindeki etkisini ölçmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, toplanan sonuçlara göre makro ve mikro influencerların takipçiler tarafından nasıl algılandığı ve satın alma niyeti oluşturmada hangi influencer türünün daha etkili olduğu konusunda varsayımlarda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Anket yöntemi olarak, farklı katılımcılardan veri toplamak için çevrimiçi anket yapılmıştır. Anket uygulaması sonucunda toplam 262 veri elde edilmiştir. Elde edilen verilerin analizinde SPSS programı kullanılmıştır. Mikro ve makro etkileyicilerin etkinliğini değerlendirmek için verilere faktör ve regresyon analizi uygulanmıştır. Elde edilen sonuçlar çalışmanın sonuç bölümünde açıklanmıştır.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

Billions of people today can collaborate through digital channels, and it's rapidly adopted. Social media turn into an integral part of people due to widespread usage. Also for businesses, it has become extremely important to catch up with business world trends and developments in terms of competitiveness. Social media, which has become an integral part of daily life, has transformed the traditional marketing field and created a significant leverage effect in offering new methods and opportunities for businesses to reach different target customers. Many marketers have argued the impact of different types of influencers. But there is a limited understanding about their effect on customers. In this study, the effect of influencer credibility and parasocial influence on followers' purchase intention was investigated. The study also investigated the effect of influencers' "trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness and similarity" on "source credibility" and "parasocial interaction". In the literature part of the study, the concept of social media marketing, influencer marketing, influencers (macro and micro) are discussed. In the theoretical background part of the study, the variables of the study are explained. These variables are "influencer credibility, parasocial interaction and purchase intention". Also, hypotheses are explained. In the other parts of the study, the methodology is explained and information about the hypotheses, sampling and data collection method of the research is explained. In the research result part, the findings and related analyzes are presented. In the conclusion section, conclusions have been developed based on the research conducted and findings discussed with relevant literature.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The simplest thing for marketers to do is to consider how many people an influencer can reach. They may believe that a larger audience is better, so it's only natural that they'd be interested in celebrities with millions of followers. However, a huge following does not automatically imply that the influencer has large effectiveness. Perhaps, it is ideal to concentrate on influencers with fewer followers. Many marketers have argued the impact of different types of influencers. Also, In terms of parasocial relationships, only a few studies have examined the effects of parasocial relationships between social media influencers and traditional celebrities. But no research yet investigated how parasocial relationships are effected by the numbers of followers. As a result, his research aims to make an evaluation and comparison between “micro and macro influencers” in aspect of “source credibility and “parasocial relations”, and as a result determine which type of influencer is more effective on creating “purchase intention”. The study also investigated the effect of macro and micro influencers' “trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness” and “similarity” on “source credibility” and “parasocial relationship “to determine how the macro and micro influencers are perceived by the followers.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **1.1 CONCEPT OF DIGITAL MARKETING**

Consumer behavior in post-industrial societies has completely changed in the last century with technological developments. As suggested by Kotler, it is now necessary to adapt to society and individuals in marketing strategies. The main reason for this situation, which is called the third wave in marketing is the consumer resistance against the traditional marketing approach. With the increasing competition in the market, businesses that want to maintain their existence have had to change their marketing perspective. Because the emergence and spread of the internet concept with technological advances have completely changed consumer behavior (Kotler et al., 2019). Businesses that had realized the innovations brought by the new process have made changes in their marketing and business development perspectives in order to reach the consumer with fast and correct methods. The concept of marketing briefly refers to all activities that will enable products and services to meet with potential customers. Therefore, the basis of marketing is the target audience that is the consumer group. In recent years, the marketing perspective has focused not only on consumers but also on creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offers that create value for the customer, stakeholders and society. In the globalizing world, thanks to the internet, all these developments are making the markets almost a single market. In addition, all these developments increase the emergence and development speed of the concept of “Digital Marketing”, which is a new perspective on marketing strategies (Bednall et al., 2008). The first opinions on digital marketing have been in the form of an online reflection of traditional marketing tools and strategies. However, the characteristics of the digitalized world and its convenience to marketing activities encourage the development of new channels, formats that cannot be considered offline. Thus, different from the traditional approach, digital marketing is a user-

centered, more measurable, interactive and universal new marketing perspective that combines personalization and mass distribution to achieve the market objective (Otero and Rolan, 2016). The concept of digital marketing includes all marketing activities that are carried out using electronic devices or the internet. Digital marketing covers all activities where digital channels such as paid advertising, social media, e-mail marketing and search engines are used to reach the consumers of the businesses in order to promote or sell their products or services. The act of utilizing the internet to advertise a product or service is known as digital marketing. Digital marketing, unlike conventional marketing, use internet platforms and techniques, allowing firms to track the effectiveness and success of their marketing operations (Kingsnorth, 2019). Promotion of services and products with the digital marketing approach developed for better management of relations with the consumer and it is carried out by different sources such as search engines, e-mail, websites, social media and mobile devices. Digital marketing is based mainly on applying all marketing techniques to digital channels (Kingsnorth, 2019).

## **1.2 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING**

Social media marketing aims to make the products or services of businesses more recognizable to consumers and persuade consumers to demand these products and services. Social media marketing; a form of marketing that is used by many marketing fields, including “online communities, social networks, blog marketing”, etc. (Neti, 2011).

Before getting into the concept of social media, it is necessary to look at the stage and the features of social media as an innovation brought by internet technologies. The main feature of the internet system infrastructure, which is called Web 1.0 and started to become widespread in the 1990s, is based on the creation of typical static content provided by the creator of a website. In this period, there is little customer engagement on the web pages that businesses have created and these sites offer

limited support to businesses in order to achieve simple, specific features. (Clow, 2016).

The capacity of people to produce and distribute information without requiring technical skills initiated a revolutionary period with the foundation of “Web 2.0”. As a result, users began to participate actively in the network and gain the ability to make any modifications to the messages they altered. So media started to shape outside the content and services released by one mainstream. (Haenlein and Kaplan, 2010). With the development of the internet, sites such as Facebook, YouTube and MySpace were introduced. Furthermore, as e-commerce grows in popularity, customers are becoming more aware of the concept of online purchase. As a result, media has become more customer-centric as the purchasing behavior is shaped by the two-way interactions on social media. (Clow, 2016)

The emergence of social media with the Internet continues to transform how businesses communicate and engage with consumers (Gwinner et al., 2010). It also facilitates communication from consumer to consumer, and fosters communication, particularly between people who don't know each other previously (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The shift from one-way communication to interactive two-way communication makes it easier for companies to collaborate closely with their consumers to develop effective partnerships, innovative business models and services.

Social media also includes company-sponsored discussion boards and chat rooms, a wide range of online word-of-mouth forums or service-rating websites and forums, blogs (sites that include digital audio, video, film or photography) and social networking websites including consumer-to-consumer email, consumer products. Social media includes generally online websites or applications that intend to encourage interactions, collaborations and information sharing. This media form has been growing exponentially and is taking the place of traditional media. It is adopted not only by those who use social networks but also by

commercial firms and government agencies (Kim and Ko, 2012). Social media provides marketers with an opportunity to strengthen existing relations with consumers and creates mutual communication environment.

Social media has become an integral part of consumers, and many social media users have started to check their posts every day. Consumers have a very short attention span on social media. Therefore, marketing professionals use influential marketing strategies to attract the right audience in a short period of time. Social media platforms have become environments where consumers can connect with each other and share their ideas, views and perspectives. Social media has become a channel of word of mouth communication and these interactions have begun to create a marketing value for brands (Saima and Khan, 2021).

Social media helps brands, celebrities or media companies establish a direct connection with their fans and provide information about themselves. Brands and celebrities use social media as a tool to develop their relationships with their followers and to identify with them. Like other non-professional creators, celebrities and brands regularly post a variety of content related to social media trends, general news and current information, thus aiming to create a sense of intimacy with the target audience. Thus, the social media strength of brands directly affects the success of an advertisement or campaign (Kupfer. at al., 2018). Private content created in relation to a product or campaign leads to a strengthening of social media power by promoting social media phenomena.

### **1.2.1 Comparison of Traditional and Social Media Marketing**

The rise of social media has contributed to the development of the creative side of consumers and has allowed consumers to share their opinions on social media. Consumers can become brands by their own efforts and cause another brand to rise or fall. Nowadays, in the internet environment, everybody can share their thoughts on any topic. Social media sites have become the most popular platforms for sharing

and dissemination. In other saying; today, power is on the consumer's side (Dyck, 2014).

Customers used to listen to content published in traditional media, including advertisements because they had no other choice. Social media has changed many aspects in this regard. Customers today have reached plenty of user-generated content that is more trustworthy and attractive to them than conventional advertising. The most attractive features of social media include: that people can reach the content voluntarily. Users decide to spend in their own way, whenever and wherever they want. (Kotler et al., 2019).

One of the most important features that distinguish social media from traditional media is that it enables two-way communications between influencer and follower. We can assume that that is the cornerstone of media change. In comparison to new media types, the most accepted argument is that; while traditional media is considered unilateral. Social media is reciprocal.

### **1.2.2. The Evolution of Social Media**

In 1990, the foundation of the concept of social media was laid with the introduction of "www" into our lives, which gives its name to the period we are living in and is known as the last point reached in communication today.

Social media is progressing with the increase in internet usage in today's conditions. It has become quite simple for people of all ages and all groups to reach social media. There are applications developed for mobile phones and tablets for this purpose. People may have quite different expectations from social media. While some choose to be active on social media in order not to stay behind the agenda, others can only use it to get information. Social media can also benefit people in making use of their free time. For example, they can make good friendships and

have fun. Today, many businesses actively benefit from the media. In this way, they can reach more people and can take measures to meet their wishes and opinions.

Social media is a virtual environment where users can create a partially or completely open profile, prepare a list of people or pages they are in contact with, share the list of pages and review other users' profiles and connections (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). Kaplan and Haenlein, on the other hand, defined social media in 2010 as a set of “internet-based applications” created by users, allowing content production and sharing and built on the foundations of Web 2.0.

Based on the aforementioned; social media is briefly the platforms that create opportunities for people that share the content they want online and get feedback. Thanks to social media, people have the opportunity to share their ideas and thoughts with many people. Social media platforms have applications where they can share photos and videos, and get place and location suggestions.

Websites developed on Web 2.0 technology that enables deep social engagement, community development, and collaborative projects are referred to as social media. While Web 2.0 defines by emphasizing its technological dimension; Social media defines it by emphasizing the social dimension and usage (Bruns & Bahnisch, 2009). Roberts and Kraynak (2008) define social media as collaborative, user-generated online content. Also, defines social media as highly measurable and accessible communication technologies that enable each person to easily influence others.

Social media consists of 5 basic features. We can list these features as follows (Mayfield, 2010):

- Engagement: Social media encourages participants and receives feedback from those who use it. Thus, the difference between social media participants and social media publishers is gradually disappearing.

- **Openness:** Most of the social media channels are open to all kinds of feedback and participation from people. These channels encourage social media users to vote on social media, comment on social media, and exchange information on social media. These channels although very rarely can block access and sharing of content.
- **Conversation:** While traditional media is only for broadcast, social media is for conversation.
- **Society:** Social media enables communities to form an effective and productive one. Communities can form clusters and communicate on any topic they want.
- **Connectivity:** Many social media applications make progress with their connectedness. It makes use of links from other websites, research, and connections with people.

## **Web 2.0**

The term Web 2.0 describes the combination of technologies and platforms that represent new advancements. The principles of Web 2.0 include using the web as an environment to run applications rather than operating systems, giving users control over their content, and using new methods to share content in a simpler way (Whittaker, 2009). The concept of Web 2.0 originated during a brainstorming conference at “MediaLive International”.

## **Web 3.0**

Web 3.0 is a term to describe the evolution of web usage and communication, which includes the transformation of the web into a database. Web 3.0 creates the evolution of the web into a database, providing access to content without multiple browser applications, consolidating artificial intelligence technologies, Semantic Web, Geospatial web or 3D web that collects location-based information. (Shivalingaiah and Naik, 2008).

According to “We Are Social Digital's 2021 report”, there are 5.22 billion mobile phone users and there are 4.66 billion internet users around the world and this constitutes 59% of the world's population. Again, according to the same report, there are 4.20 billion social media users, which is 53% of the population. Number of internet users increased between 2020 and 2021 by 316 million and active social media users increased by 490 million. For context, this means that social media users increased by % 11 in the previous 12 months (We Are Social Digital's, 2021). The world's online activities are dominated by social media. According to new data from GWI research, over 95 percent of the world's working-age internet users now use social networks and messaging services on a regular basis. Surprisingly, these findings reveal that the usage of social media channels like “Facebook” surpasses the usage of messaging platforms like “WhatsApp”. Approximately 83% of internet user aged “16-64” use search engines and web portals on a monthly basis, however, this statistic is approximate “10% points” under that of social networks rates (We Are Social Digital's, 2021).

### **Facebook**

Facebook is an online social sharing application, which is mostly used by young people to meet and communicate with new people (Ellison et al., 2006). Additionally, Facebook allows small business owners to expand their networks and share business information through blog posts, images and videos on the internet. According to the report of We Are Social 2021, Facebook has approximately 2.74 billion users and is the leader in terms of the number of users (We Are Social Digital's, 2021).

### **Instagram**

Instagram was established in 2010 by “Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger” to provide people to share photos with each other. According to the report of We Are

Social, Instagram, which has approximately 1.2 billion users, has almost an equal distribution of male and female users. It is observed that the usage rate of Instagram decreases as the age range increases. It is more common among young people compared to other social media platforms such as Facebook. The reason for that situation is the continuous development of Instagram and the use of Instagram is a little more widespread than other social media platforms.

Today, many businesses make huge profits owing to the advertisements published on Instagram. Especially celebrities and social media influencers used in these advertisements. If we analyze Instagram statistics in detail based on user data; According to Statista's July 2020, the number of monthly active users exceeded 1 billion in 2018 and the number of daily active users is now more than 500 million. Similarly, the number of people who use Instagram Stories every day has exceeded 500 million. According to the age distribution of Instagram users worldwide, 33.8% of its users are “25-34” old, and 29.3% are “18-24” year olds. Also, 63% of these users log into Instagram at least once a day. Users spend an average of 28 minutes a day on Instagram. The time spent on Instagram was expected to increase by only 1.5% in 2020. However, with the coronavirus outbreak, time spent on the platform is expected to increase by 14% this year and that means an average of 3 minutes more time spent per day per user.

## **YouTube**

YouTube was founded in 2005 and, thanks to its growing popularity, was acquired by “Google” for “\$1.65 billion” in 2006. YouTube is the most visited site according to ranking. It provides users with the ability to publish, view, and post videos about every content such as “video clips, television clips, music videos, video blogs, short original videos and educational videos”. Contents can easily be generated via YouTube. It is not necessary to be an expert in its field. Today, there are many YouTube channels and there are also a lot of people who subscribe to every YouTube channel. It is not necessary to subscribe to the channel to watch videos

on YouTube. “We Are Social 2021 report” has estimated that approximately 2.29 billion users on Youtube.

## **Twitter**

According to the statement on its webpage; “Twitter is a real-time information network that connects people to the latest stories, opinions and news they find different. Twitter's focus is on small information called “tweets”. Each Tweet contains 140 characters. Thanks to Twitter, it is possible to follow famous people or social media influencers and reply to their tweets. On Twitter, people can share their status instantly. In the “We Are Social report”, Twitter has published user rates.

## **1.3. CONCEPT OF THE INFLUENCER**

### **1.3.1 Influencers**

People have been influenced by other people from the beginning of history. There have always been leaders who guide and influence others in their decisions, thoughts and ideas, whether for political, religious or vital reasons (Zietek, 2016). Any effective phenomenon can form the basis of a marketing strategy. Although the concept of influencer marketing is a new term, Katz and Lazarsfeld defined these people as opinion leaders in 1944 (Zhu et al., 2016). In 1955, Katz and Lazarsfeld two-stage flow of communication was mentioned that media names and opinion leaders had a directive effect on individuals' behaviors such as consumption or voting (Zietek, 2016). Although the concept brings to mind people who have a great influence in the media and have a large number of followers on their social network accounts, the truth is that everyone can be influential on a small number of people in a particular field or industry. Therefore, any person who has the ability to generate a reaction can be qualified as an influencer. These opinion leaders have gained reputation and visibility in the networks thanks to their work and experience

on a specific issue. Influencers can influence the ideas and/or behaviors of the people who follow them, thanks to their reputation, knowledge and position (Jahnke, 2018). With the growth of social media, ordinary consumers have turned into a more powerful group. Thanks to the power of the internet, many of these e-influencers bring people who share the same interests and so they create a strong voice in the market (Booth and Matic, 2011). Brown and Hayes (2008), defined influencers as “a third party that has the power to significantly influence the purchasing decisions of customers, but is never responsible for it”. Influencer people who have created a large network of followers in social media and are considered reliable and has the power to influence people in this network has the ability to broadcast their content (text, audio, video, etc.) at a high and regular frequency. Social media provides everyone the opportunity to become people who can influence people. Some people take advantage of this opportunity to achieve a large audience of followers. To implement influencer marketing, brands often identify influencers who can influence their target audiences and decide which of these people at different levels will be most appropriate for their campaign. When making this decision, brands consider the number of followers of influencers. According to one assumption, the amount of followers indicates that influencers act as an opinion leaders and are able to attract the right audience (Utz, 2010).

### **1.3.2. Macro Influencers**

Macro influencers are people sought and idolized by their followers. They can be a public figure, a celebrity or a regular social media. Some celebrities can also be considered in the macro influencer category. A macro influencer with a larger audience can reach more people (Haapasalmi, 2017). People with 10 thousand to 1 million followers on social media platforms are defined as “macro-influencers” Mavrck (2016). Campbell and Farrell, on the other hand, considered macro influencers as those with 100,000-1 million followers. Macro influencers have strong associations with a particular brand segment such as fashion, lifestyle, and cosmetics or travel (Jahnke, 2018,). Macro influencers with the highest relevance

to the topic; consist of people such as administrators, bloggers or journalists (Gottbrecht, 2016). These individuals have a large base of followers. Therefore, the posts they share are spreading rapidly and their content is being displayed more. That makes too many people mention certain goods or services. According to Mavrck (2016), macro-influencers have moderate interaction rates with their followers and their engagement rates are between 5% and 25%.

### **1.3.3. Micro Influencers**

They usually stick to a field and form opinion leadership in that field and they have a follower base of 10,000 to 100,000. Micro-influencers are very effective at guiding and changing the behavior of followers and achieving the marketing goals of the business (Alahäivälä, 2019). Similarly, Campbell and Farrell, examined influencers in five groups; “nano (0-10,000 followers); micro (10,000-100,000 followers); macro (100,000-1 million followers); mega (1 million and above); including famous (1 million and more) influencers”. Unlike celebrity influencers, mega-influencers are people who have no celebrity status before they were on social media. While they are famous on the Internet, they are relatively unknown outside of their follower group (Campbell and Farrell, 2020). Micro phenomena are part of the close environment of individuals. For example; family, friends and colleagues, etc. Micro influencers are described as “individuals who have a direct influence on the behavior of the consumer”. The impact of a micro influencer is based on the personal nature of the phenomenon and the relationship with followers. This is the strongest influence one can have; because a recommendation from a close person is often considered the strongest influence on individuals' purchasing decisions (Haapasalmi, 2017). According to “Stackla's (2017) Consumer Content” report, on average, 60% of consumers trust the recommendations of their acquaintances.

Senft T., (2008) refers to the micro influencer as “micro celebrity”; He defines it as “a new style of online show that enables people to increase their popularity on the Web using technologies such as video, blogging and social media platforms”. According to Clarewells (2014), micro e-influencers; are people who use social

media platforms to build a fan base and gain followers outside of their circle of friends and acquaintances. Companies' select micro e-influencers who are famous in their field, pay them to recommend their goods or services in their personal accounts, and encourage their followers to take the buying action. In social media platforms, individuals interact by sharing information with each other, and as a part of this influential network, they also interact with micro influencers in two ways communication. Thanks to this interaction, knowledge and experiences spread on social media platforms and that creates knowledge sharing among customers. Messages written by micro influencers are forwarded to their followers in their social networks. These messages are then conveyed from their followers to their followers and transferred to consumers determined by the brand in a versatile and multi-stage manner (Brown & Fiorella, 2013). Micro influencers; specializing in their field, unlike traditional celebrities; are people who are perceived as knowledgeable, authentic, original, and a reliable source with the advice they give about goods and/or services (Brown & Fiorella, 2013). People who follow micro e-influencers usually have things in common (age, interests, gender, etc.). This allows brands to target their followers more precisely and to spread the brand message according to a specific target audience. The largest group of all e-influencers are micro influencers. They are also considered to be the most effective at gaining loyal followers. Because micro influencers have a small follower base, they can establish one-to-one contact with them. Thanks to this interaction, followers feel valued and tend to show more interest in the posts (Jahnke, 2018).

The Maine brand, which produces personal products using natural materials, can be shown as an example of working with micro e-influencers. As part of the campaign, the brand worked with micro e-influencers with 500 to 5,000 followers on Instagram to increase attention on social media platforms and reach a wider audience. These individuals participated in various activities to increase brand awareness and participation. As a result of this campaign; consumer engagement increased by 600% and 1000 micro e-influencers that were involved in the process received over 6,000 interactions (Gallegos, 2018).

#### **1.3.4. Micro vs. Macro Influencers**

Micro and macro influencers are two types of influencers. Macro influencers have a huge following and lack precise knowledge about their followers' qualities and behaviors. Micro-influencers, on the other hand, have fewer followers but have better communication with them and have a direct impact on the consumer's social life. Influencers, who have grown in popularity in recent years, have a considerable impact on consumer purchase decisions while also shouldering responsibility for those decisions. (Brown & Hayes, 2008).

Patel (2017) states that brands prefer to take advantage of micro influencers that can appeal to certain niches and market segments. Also states that the larger the number of followers cause to lower the participation. Those with 1,000 followers usually get 8% likes on their posts, while those with 10 million followers get 1.6%. The ideal spot for maximum engagement is to find an influencer with “10,000 to 100,000” followers (Patel, 2020). Similar results were found on the "2018 Global Micro E-Influencer Study" by Socialpubli (2018). According to the analysis results, in influencer campaigns on Instagram; it has been observed that while macro e-influencers have an interaction rate of 0.04, micro e-influencers have an interaction rate of 7.6% and create 7 times more interaction. As a result of this study, micro e-influencers are efficient at creating brand credibility and loyalty. 37.3% of micro-influencers recommend a brand, product or service to their followers once a day (46.6% once a week). Macro influencers have a larger follower base than micro influencers. Therefore, the posts they share spread rapidly and their content is more exposed on social media. This makes too many people talk about certain goods or services. According to Mavrck (2016), macro influencers have moderate engagement rates with their followers and engagement rates are between 5% and 25%. Although micro e-influencers have a high engagement rate, they can reach fewer people. While macro e-influencers can reach many people at the same time; In order to reach the same number of people, it is necessary to work with a large

number of micro e-influencers. Therefore, brands should consider targets of exposure, awareness, engagement, and conversion rate when designing campaigns around micro, macro or mega-influencers. In addition, the fact that micro e-influencers appeal to niche communities does not always mean higher engagement. In order to foster this niche community that is active and engaged, micro e-influencers need to work hard, not buy fake followers and produce exclusive content (Mediakix, 2017). Economically, micro influencers are more cost-effective than macro influencers (Gallegos, 2018). According to a report published by “Influence.co” (2018); micro influencers charge around \$93 to \$137 per post they publish on Instagram, while macro or mega influencers charge between \$133 and \$1,405 per post. Theocharis and Papaioannou examined consumer responses in influencer marketing in their study and they found that mega-influencers are considered the most attractive while macro-influencers are highly specialized, and micro-influencers are considered the most reliable and genuine.

According to Romero et al., (2011), the amount of followers of influencers indicates popularity. The number of followers indicates the size of the audience, and having a large number of followers encourages the transmission of information (Yoganarasimhan, 2012). Furthermore, research reveals that having a large number of Twitter followers, followers, and tweets correlates to a greater level of opinion leadership position (Feng, 2016). This could imply that a macro influencer has a higher rank than a micro influencer in terms of opinion leadership. Another study discovered that a macro influencer is unrelated to real impact. They say that having an engaged audience, one that retweets and mentions the user, gives the person more authority (Cha et al., 2010).

The impact of micro and macro influencers on perceived pricing, perceived quality, and brand trust on social media has yet to be investigated. According to Zeithaml (1988), perceived quality is defined as: “the consumer’s judgment about a product’s overall excellence or superiority”. She highlights that perceived quality differs from real quality. Because customers apply indirect methods for evaluating a brand.

Assuming that working with a macro influencer takes a larger budget than working with a micro influencer and perceived advertising budget may have an impact on perceived quality and pricing. Kirmani and Wright (1989) found a correlation between perceived advertising expenses and distinctive quality. High advertising expenditure reflects managerial confidence and product quality. The results of their six tests show that people's perceptions of advertising expenditures can lead to advertising expense inferences, which can affect quality predictions. As a result, the perceived cost of advertising serves as a quality indicator. This could imply that employing a macro influencer will provide the impression that the company has a higher quality than using a micro influencer. Furthermore, because of the greater costs, a large advertising budget could signify a higher product price. Influencers' impact on brand trust has also not been investigated. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) described brand trust as “the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function”. Based on personal experience, a person might provide a brand with a trusted image. That indicates that any direct (use, trials) or indirect (advertising, word of mouth, reputation) connection with the brand might influence brand trust (William et al., 1998). Brand trust can be built in four main ways, according to Doney and Cannon (1997). A transference process is one of the four processes that might be linked to influencer marketing. The extension of trust in a brand based on the description of its trustworthiness by a third party is known as transference. When people have a lot of faith in someone, a transference process occurs (Doney et al., 1998). Therefore, brands may employ influencers to improve visibility and trust without appearing to be trying to increase brand trust. As a result, influencers are considered to have an impact on consumer brand trust. According to Sztompka (1999), trustworthiness rises in situations of 'closeness, intimacy, and familiarity,' and declines in situations of larger distances. People generally trust their peers, yet they are distrustful towards advertisements. Because micro influencers are more like average consumers than macro influencers, it's feasible that a micro influencer's support of a brand will result in more brand trust than a large influencer's endorsement.

### **1.3.5. Role of Influencer Marketing**

Billions of people today are able to collaborate through digital channels, and it's rapidly adopted. Social media has to turn into an integral part of people due to widespread usage. Also for businesses, it has become extremely important to catch up with business world trends and developments in terms of competitiveness. Social media, which has become an integral part of life, has transformed the traditional marketing field and created a significant leverage effect in offering new methods and opportunities for businesses to reach different target customers. One of the notable methods of these is influencer marketing, where popular online personalities collaborate with businesses to promote and approve products to their users. (Veirman et al., 2017).

The rapid development of modern technologies and especially the internet with all its applications offers numerous new opportunities for both individuals and businesses. In particular, constantly renewed social media platforms and blogs allow people to be active and create content online (Ewers, 2017). Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram have become an integral part of customer communication for many businesses due to intense user movement, and more and more budgets are allocated to influencer marketing. (Riedl and Luckwald, 2019). Influencer marketing is a type of marketing that takes benefits of internet users who have a large following. That can influence consumers' attitudes and decision-making in favor of brands or ideas (Serra and Gretzel, 2020). According to Sánchez (2020), influencer marketing can be defined as influencer leaders (influencers), celebrities and non-celebrities who have a large following on social platforms, using their posts on these platforms to encourage positive attitudes and reactions among followers (consumers) toward brand interests.

Increased popularization of social media introduced new channels for businesses to interact with consumers more completely and naturally. Today, businesses understand that they need to use influencers on strategies to identify and reach their

target customers. The involvement of celebrities in marketing communication efforts, the marketing of a product or service through opinion leadership has been known for many years, but the inclusion of social media is a topic that should be taken as a new phenomenon. Advertisers often use celebrity endorsements to increase brand awareness. Because people trust the celebrities they admire and desire to be like them. For this reason, apart from celebrities such as movie stars and musicians, celebrities on social media begin to gain importance and the concept of e-influencer marketing emerges. Celebrities can create large audiences on social media. Influencers can have a similar effect on these audiences as celebrities do. For this reason, today, many brands want to work with influencers. (Sammis et al., 2016).

Influencer marketing, according to Brown and Hayes (2008), is the execution of plans and actions through individuals who have a significant impact on targeted customers. Accordingly, the message of a brand is transmitted to the consumers in a faster and more reliable fashion. Contrary to traditional marketing, for influencer marketing, customers are more active and energetic for the dissemination of the influential message. The problem of influencing has been discussed in the fields of marketing and communications for an extended amount of time. Theories of influencing have defined society as a group that can be guided by a limited number of people who are influential and able to disseminate information. In 1903, Trade prescribed two processes for the popularization of individual opinions: Impersonation and Influencing (Szcurski, 2017). Influencer marketing is based on the theory of influence and claims that a small percentage consisting of influential people can be effective in influencing large societies. Instead of marketing for a large group of consumers, Influencer marketing employs influential individuals to transfer the message of a brand to a broader market and influence their purchasing decisions. Although influencer marketing initially focused on offline opinion leaders such as journalists or industry analysts, it has replaced its focus with online opinion leaders with an improvement of digitalization and Web 2.0 (Braatz, 2017). The concept of Influence marketing has been improving with the growing

popularity of influencers. Influencer marketing is the use of social media influencers to spread a brand's message to a bigger audience. (Dziuban, 2016) Influencer marketing, according to Lim et al., 2017, is finding and targeting users who have an influence on potential purchasers. However, having the biggest number of followers does not imply having a great influence; influencer impact is determined by the influencer's relationship with his followers, as well as his followers' perceptions of his knowledge and trustworthiness. The rapid growth of social media platforms in the last decade has led to a decrease in the control of managers and marketers over brand management. Today, consumers have the opportunity to talk and exchange information with a large number of consumers through social media, so companies have begun to lose control of brand communication. Content creators have gained some of that control (Schäfer et al., 2012). Therefore, influencer marketing is considered to be a powerful method for reaching and interacting with target audiences and influencing purchase intentions. Today, as social media users increase, businesses are increasingly adopting more influencer marketing to promote their products. Generally, brands use these powerful people to close the gray area between companies and consumers and to transfer marketers' messages more efficiently and reliably. Brands are moving away from traditional marketing and focusing more on social media phenomena to support their products (De veirman et al., 2017). It also leads to higher message acceptance by consumers, due to their higher reliability and authenticity. Electronic word of mouth; means “positive or negative comments about a product or company offered on the internet for many individuals and institutions” (Gwinner et al., 2004). The widespread use of the internet, online shopping and social media has caused the concept of word of mouth to be called electronic word of mouth marketing.

The power dynamic between customers and firms has shifted dramatically due to social media, allowing peer referrals to play a larger role in purchasing decisions. According to a joint study by Twitter and Annalect, 56% of respondents said they trust recommendations from friends, while 49% said they trust influencers (Hurt, 2017). WOM refers to potential customers' favorable or negative comments from

current or former customers about a good or brand to a large number of individuals and institutions through the internet. As an extension of word of mouth, influencer marketing can act as a powerful driver for electronic word of mouth (Gustavsson et al., 2018). Influencer marketing is the digital equivalent of word of mouth marketing. In particular, electronic word of mouth marketing about the brand on social media platforms can be spread by people who have a desire to share information about brands with others on their social networks (Chu & Kim, 2011). Social media creates useful and new opportunities for electronic word of mouth (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Because positive or negative opinions of the most influential people about goods and services can spread more quickly due to their large social networks (Kim et al., 2014). Electronic word-of-mouth marketing has been used as an effective marketing method for a long time and is seen as a reliable source of information by consumers (Ko et al., 2010). As a result, electronic word of mouth marketing has been found an effective method on consumers' decision-making process, brand preference and purchase intention (Erkan and Evans, 2016; Giannakos et al., 2017). Electronic word of mouth is done by consumers who are voluntarily brand advocates by having positive experiences with certain brands (Evans et al., 2017). Therewithal, brands are able to spread their brand messages to large audiences through opinion leaders implementing influencer marketing.

Byrne et al., (2017) define influencer marketing as a type of marketing that focuses on using key leaders to forward a brand's message to the larger market. (Byrne et al., 2017). Influencer marketing is about demonstrating the authority, credibility and opinion leadership of the business in its industry. Sudha and Sheena (2017) define influencer marketing as the process of identifying and organizing individuals who have an impact on a specific target audience and making them intermediary to be part of a brand's increased reach, sales or engagement campaign. Narassiguin and Sargent (2019) define influencer marketing as a sub-field of marketing in which marketing activities are shaped around an influential person in social media.

### **1.3.6. Rise of Influencer Marketing**

Due to digitization and the accompanying rise of the internet in recent years, more people are using social media to communicate with each other (Tabellion and Esch, 2019). Social media users are expected to increase from more than 3.6 billion worldwide in 2020 to approximately 4.41 billion by 2025 (Clement, 2020). The increasing use of social media and the increase in information transmitted through social media platforms lead to high electronic word of mouth interest in consumer behavior.

With digitalization, social media has gained more importance day by day and has strategic importance in the marketing world. Influencer marketing has emerged as the usage of influencers who are effective in the digital environment in the marketing processes. And the consumption patterns of today's younger generation Z customers (those born in the late 1990s, that is, around 23 years old or younger today) are quite different from previous generations. Delivering a marketing message to them is very challenging for brands. Because the Z generation uses services such as Netflix instead of watching TV, listens to Spotify instead of the radio, and trusts Reddit instead of reading magazines. Due to these differences of young generations, appropriate marketing activities have started to develop to target them, especially on social media platforms such as “Instagram or TikTok”. In the United States, 60% of Instagram users are under the age of 34, while approximately 40% of “TikTok” users are young people aged “10-19”. In addition to “Instagram and TikTok”, platforms such as Twitch, whose number of users has been outstanding increasing in recent years. Therefore, a large social media industry has emerged in terms of the marketing world (Hainlein et al., 2020). More businesses are turning to influencer marketing methods instead of traditional advertising. According to Woods (2016), consumers are more likely to perceive and react positively to a sponsored post from a trusted friend or person. This is one of the important reasons that make phenomenon marketing attractive to consumers and brands. Therefore, to advertise their products and services on social media,

companies choose to partner with social media influencers who have large and engaged followers online. Because of the enormous impact that Influencers have had on their followers, they can directly convey their opinions and thoughts on all products and services from cosmetics to digital games, technology to food and drink.

To address the economic growth of influencer marketing; According to an analysis by Izea, influencer marketing costs have risen over the past five years and brands are willing to spend large accounts to promote their posts. The average cost of a sponsored photo on Instagram increased 44% between 2018 and 2019. The average cost was \$381 in 2015, compared to \$1,643 in 2019. The cost of sponsoring a Twitter post increased from \$34 in 2015 to \$422 in 2019. YouTube is the most expensive platform in analytics, and a sponsored video averaged \$6,700 in 2019 but that's a lot cheaper than in 2017 when it averaged close to \$8,000 (McCarthy, 2019). Italian multinational businesses investing in influencer marketing in 2019 spent an average of 120 thousand Euros on continuous campaigns, while 61 thousand Euros were allocated for one-time campaigns. In small and medium-sized businesses, these expenses average 61 thousand Euros for continuous campaigns and 30 thousand Euros for one-time initiatives (Coppola, 2020). Instagram's growing popularity for influencer campaigns is paralleled by the platform's strong user growth as marketers tend to move where their customers are (Enberg, 2018).

According to “MediaKix's 2019 Influencer Marketing survey”, 89% of marketers said the return on investment from influencer marketing was comparable or better than other channels, while two-thirds increased their influencer marketing budgets in 2019. According to the “State of Influencer Marketing Report”, conducted by “Launch Metrics” with the participation of more than 900 agencies, brands and influencers; 94% of respondents found influencer marketing effective in increasing sales. In addition, 42.9% of the participants think micro influencers as the most impressive type of influencer (Cohen, 2020). However, according to “the Social Intelligence Insights Report”, in which “NeoReach” analyzed more than 8,800

Youtube videos in the third quarter of 2020, total spending on YouTube sponsored videos was more than \$196 million during this period. The sectors that spend the most on advertising and sponsored posts on YouTube are technology, games, food and beverage. In addition, over 1.3 billion sponsored views were posted in the third quarter. This means 110 million sponsored views per week, 15 million views per day, 600 thousand per hour, 10 thousand per minute, and 170 views per second. Therefore, Youtube influencer marketing is an area that businesses should focus on (Geysler, 2021). Jumpshot data has found that for ads on YouTube, influencer marketing conversion rates (2.7%) are five times higher than traditional pre-roll and mid-roll ad conversion rates (0.5%). YouTube can be used specifically as a great platform for brands that want to tell longer stories with creativity that address specific niches of their followers. (Hoos, 2019).

According to the Influencer “Marketing Benchmarks Report by influencermarketinghub”;

- Influencer Marketing Industry will grow to nearly “\$13.8 Billion in 2021”
- More than “240” new “influencer marketing agencies” and “influencer marketing platforms” were established in 2020.
- In a survey implemented to the companies using Influencer Marketing; 90% of respondents stated that Influencer marketing is an effective form of marketing.

As a result, social media is gaining more and more importance as a new communication method in order to establish a strong relationship with consumers. A New strategy, called Influencer marketing, changes the marketing environment and offers new opportunities to marketing practitioners. Statistics show that 84% of marketing practitioners think that influencer marketing is an effective strategy and two-thirds think that effective influencer marketing strategies will increase product preference (Conick, 2018). By using this strategy effectively and maintaining a stable relationship with consumers, brands will also be able to reduce the costs of their marketing activities.

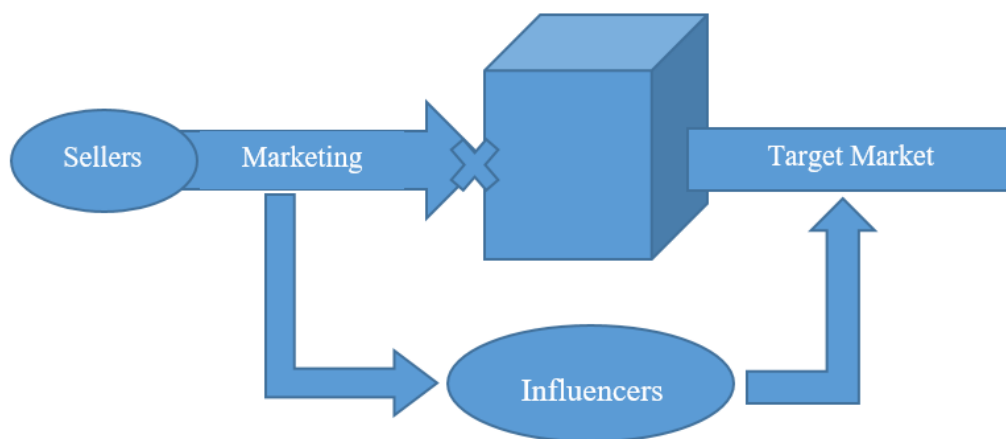
Influencer marketing is a highly dynamic and technology-oriented communication strategy. As technology continues to advance, Influencer marketing will continue to evolve with new applications. Existing social media influencers bring up many different applications in order to increase their awareness and to convey their brand messages effectively. It seems that phenomenon marketing will gradually increase its popularity among businesses and will be widely used in digital communication strategies.

### **1.3.7. The importance of Influencer Marketing**

Influencer marketing is a type of marketing focused on using key leaders to transmit the brand's message to the larger market. Businesses can use an influencer mainly for product placement, brand endorsements and content creation (Tapinfluence and Nielsen, 2016). The main benefits of influencer marketing are; attracting new customers, increasing repeat purchases, increasing customer loyalty and maximizing customer revenue (Talkwalker, 2018). Influencer marketing can lead to lower resistance of consumers or followers to information because influencers have higher originality and genuineness than traditional marketing (Claesson and Ljungberg, 2018). Influencers create a positive electronic word of mouth, add value to a product or brand, and be more trustworthy than traditional and well-known celebrities (Claesson and Ljungberg, 2018). According to the "Association of National Advertisers' 2018" survey; 86% of businesses use influencer marketing to enhance brand awareness, 69% to create and distribute content, 56% to improve brand perception, and 51% to increase purchasing. According to Woods (2016), promoted post from a reliable friend or relative is more likely to be perceived favorably by consumers. This is what makes influencer marketing attractive to consumers and brands. Influencers are able to convey their opinions about products and services directly to their followers' because of their strong relationship with followers.

The most important reason why influencer marketing is one of the most powerful techniques in the market is that it is guiding consumers who become desensitized between marketing messages. Today, many marketing messages are given through traditional media and the internet. Among these advertisements, consumers become desensitized to the marketed goods or services. Because the customer can't evaluate all his marketing messages and ultimately buy them. Most marketing messages hit the wall of desensitization due to desensitization effect as shown in Figure 1 below. However, the message given to the consumers through the e-influencers that they follow can reach the target audience or market successfully without hitting the wall of desensitization (Brown & Hayes, 2008).

**Figure 1.1** Wall of desensitization



**Source:** (Brown & Hayes, 2008)

Sammis and Pomponi (2016) listed the reasons why influencer marketing is so popular and powerful today as follows:

- Social media gives everyone the opportunity to become an influencer. This means that brands have a large pool of e-influencers to work with.
- There are many tools available today that help brands find and interact with influential people.
- Influencers can be found easily on any channel or platform.

- Consumers' trust in advertisements is decreasing day by day. Consumers do not particularly look at the advertisements that appear in many formats on the Internet. However, consumers trust their friends and the people around them in terms of product recommendations and purchasing decisions, and they consider people they know through social media as their friends.
- Influencer marketing, when well executed, has proven to be one of the most cost-effective and powerful tools among other marketing methods.

In a 2016 study with the “Tapinfluence marketing agency”, Nielsen found that Influence Marketing gives a “return on investment” 11 times higher than traditional digital marketing methods. In the same study, they found that the consumer exposed to influence Marketing purchases significantly more products or services each time they shop than the control group exposed to traditional online marketing. On the other hand, the more aggressive and intrusive the ads, the more insensitive online users become, ignoring or even blocking ads. According to a report from Adobe and Pagefair, ad-blocking software usage increased 40% in Q2 2015 and 48% in the US compared to the same period in 2014. This has resulted in more than 20 million lost revenue. However, Influencer marketing acts as a kind of antidote to ad-blocking software. Digital viewers can block and skip ads, but can not block content from people they follow on social media (Dahan, 2016).

In addition, Phung and Qin found that influencers have the most influence on consumers when it comes to seeking information and evaluating alternatives (Phung & Qin, 2018). Keller Fay Group, (2016) found that influencers make 22.2 times more “purchase statements” each week that include more product or service recommendations than the average consumer. Also, they found that 82% of consumers were more likely to follow an influencer's recommendation, compared to 73% for the average person, while they found that the influencer had more influence than the average person. Also, influencers are more instructive than the general population when recommending something about their proposals; 74% encourage to purchase something or trying compared to 66% of the general

population. An Influencer is perceived as more reliable, credible and knowledgeable, and they are more successful in explaining how a product or service works.

### **1.3.8 Studies about Influencer Marketing in Literature**

Biaudet (2017) researched why companies should use phenomenon marketing and the process of creating an effective marketing strategy on Instagram. Biaudet also explored how companies should strive to market their products and find the most relevant and profitable influencer for their product or service. In addition to her literature study, she obtained qualitative data by choosing a semi-structured interview model with the social media influencer marketing agency Monochrome. According to the research's findings, there are many strong arguments for why a company should use influencer marketing as a marketing tool. The Research was emphasized that the influencers recommending products are more reliable than other marketing methods and it is the most cost-effective online consumer acquisition method. Research shows that one-third of people exposed to influencer marketing has made a purchase (Biaudet, 2017). Another study on influencer marketing is the study conducted by Nandagiri and Philip (2018) to investigate social media influencer and their effects on their followers. An online questionnaire consisting of 20 questions was applied to 111 participants between the ages of 18-21, who followed the influencer on Youtube and Instagram. Interviews were also conducted with 3 influencers. According to the findings, social media users are constantly exposed to marketing by influencer. Since the content offered by phenomenon is more natural, detailed and unbiased, it is more preferred than advertisements. In order to increase the impact of the offered product on the consumer, it is important that the product is synchronized with the profile of the phenomenon. The reason for this is that phenomenon looks more professional in the subject that has mastered. It is found as a result of the research that the followers are more likely to be affected in the category of fashion, beauty and fitness products. At the same time, followers are more willing to buy the product displayed on a

phenomenon's page. It has been concluded that working with a phenomenon is positive and it has an impact on followers as fans see it as a reliable source and therefore they are willing to try the products (Nandagiri and Philip 2018).

Claesson & Ljungberg (2018) used a qualitative method by interviewing 10 Swedish female participants between the ages of 18 and 30 and analyzed the interviews by using content analysis. The study considers young consumers' perspectives. Considering the results of the research, it found that there are aspects that will affect the behavior of individuals in various ways. The study was concluded that the influencer influenced the participants in purchasing decisions. Participants are asked to question what a phenomenon is, and they say, "There are phenomena in different categories, and they're people who share their lives, inspire people and influence people."

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **2.1. SOURCE CREDIBILITY MODEL**

With the increase in digitalization, consumers make comments on products and services after purchasing, and these comments produce significant content and information about the product. With increasing information, understanding which information is more reliable is becoming more important for consumers. For businesses; keeping up with the changing technology, being more accessible to consumers with social media accounts and following the suggestions and requests of consumers is more important (Forsythe and Shi, 2003). The growing importance of accessing reliable information for consumers revives the reliability of sources who make comments about products and services or recommend them.

The use of famous people in marketing activities has been a topic that researchers have studied over the years. Some of these researchers have developed various models and theories about how famous people should be selected and used by brands. Source reliability studies date back to the 1930s with the concept of "prestige". The success of German propaganda in World War II attracted the attention of researchers and studies on source reliability began in this period (Eisend, 2004). In the 1940s and 1950s, psychologist "Carl Iver Hovland" and his colleagues worked at "Yale University on the Attitude Change and Communication Research Project". Researchers defined trust as an individuals' perception of persuasiveness about the information they are exposed to a company, brand or representatives of this brand (sales representative, celebrity, and supporter) are considered as sources (Eisend, 2004). Reliability is an intuitive fact that occurs between two parties (source and consumer).

Source credibility refers to the degree of effectiveness of a message from a source on its recipient (Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1990). This effect is evaluated in terms of gaining knowledge and adoption. Ohanian (1990) based upon Hovland's "Source Credibility Model" (1953) and McGuire's "Source Attractiveness Model" (1985) while evaluating the credibility of a source. The author uses these two models as a theoretical basis; evaluates the credibility of the source, expertise of the source and attractiveness of the source dimensions as an indicator of the credibility of the source and explains the source credibility within the framework of these three basic concepts. Hovland (1953) associates the credibility of a source with reliability and being an expert in the field. McGuire (1985) further, focused on resource attractiveness and argued that familiarity, likability, similarity and attraction factors are effective in the formation of attractiveness.

"Source Reliability Theory" explains how reliable the sender is perceived by the receiver (recipient) in the communication process (Riley, 1954). This theory assumes that when people buy a product or service, the degree of persuasion varies according to the credibility of the source recommending this product or service and they perform their purchasing behavior according to the reliability of the source. According to studies, consumers take into account the recommendations and suggestions of sources they find reliable in their purchasing decision. In this context, source reliability is frequently used in advertising, e-commerce, health, tourism and brand studies (Wong et al., 2019).

In the literature, the influence of celebrities is explained by Ohanian (1990) with the "Source Credibility Theory". Theory was first developed by Howland et al., (1953) and it is based on the fact that if source is expert and reliable, a message will affect the beliefs, ideas, behaviors and attitudes of the addressees. According to Ohanian, the character of the person making the communication has a very important effect on the persuasiveness of the message. This affects young people's purchase intention and behavior. A model developed in the field of social psychology states that the effectiveness of the transmitted message depends on the

attractiveness of the source (McGuire, 1985). On the other hand, Ohanian (1990) developed the source reliability scale based on these two theories in his study. Source (celebrity) reliability scale consists of three dimensions: trust, expertise, and attraction. According to the theory; the reliability of the source, influencer expertise in its field and attractiveness are factors that influence the purchasing behavior of young people.

Source credibility; means that the message source has the ability to produce accurate information, anxiety and motivation (Boerman et al., 2017). The source credibility model also explains whether consumers believe the source of information is reliable, expert, attractive, and perceive it as competent and reliable (Wang et al., 2017). Based on this explanation, the “source credibility model” expresses the whole of the positive characteristics that enable consumers to accept the correctness of the messages given by the brands. When consumers are exposed to the marketing campaigns of the celebrities they like, changes in their feelings and thoughts can be formed (McCormick, 2016). As a result of celebrity endorsement; consumers can produce emotions such as internalizations, para-social feelings, self-disclosure, and these emotions that cause word-of-mouth communication in their social environment (Ding and Qiu, 2017).

The concept of influencer reliability is based on Ohanian's (1990) source reliability model. Source Credibility is described in the literature as a concept used to determine the positive features that have an effect on the receiver's acceptance of the given message in a communication process. The concept of influencer credibility refers to a person's perception of the ideas and suggestions of influential people as believable, impartial and real. Consequently, the source credibility model consists of three dimensions: attractiveness, expertise, and credibility (Ohanian, 1990). The effectiveness of advertisement or idea is determined by the level of these three dimensions that influencer have (Rebelo, 2017). In recent years, especially in the studies conducted by social psychologists, it is known that people or sources with a high level of reliability are more important in terms of persuading customers

than those with low levels of reliability (cinka , 2017). Djafarova and Rushworth (2016), as a result of their research, argued that future research should focus on the source reliability of people who follow the phenomena on the Instagram platform (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2016). When the literature is examined, it is not possible to find much research directly on the effects of the reliability, expertise and attractiveness of Instagram influencer on purchase intention, brand attitude and electronic word of mouth marketing behavior. However, numerous research on the source reliability model adapted Ohanian (1990) model. Ohanian (1990) determined that the source reliability dimensions (credibility, expertise, and attractiveness) have an impact on purchase intention. He developed this model on his study for use of celebrity as a product advocate. After Ohanian, different studies investigated the effects of these dimensions on purchase intention. Wongweeranonchai and McClelland (2016) determined that the dimensions of expertise and attractiveness had an effect on purchase intention, while the dimension of reliability had no effect. There are also studies that determine that all three source reliability dimensions have an effect on purchase intention (Amos et al., 2008; Stanley et al., 2011; Carvalho, 2012; Pritzen, 2012; Chan et al., 2016; Rachbini, 2018; Khalid and Sidduk, 2018). Renton (2006) determined that the attractiveness and credibility of celebrities affect purchase intention. In addition, Renton determined that the trustworthiness dimension has the most effect on purchase intention. Different from the others, Tanjung and Hudrasyah (2016) investigated these dimensions in terms of famous and non-famous people, and as a result of the research, they determined that famous people were perceived as attractive, while non-famous people were perceived as trustworthy and expert. Similarly, Gaied and Rached (2010) investigated the effect of famous and non-famous people used in advertisements in their study in Tunisia and as a result of the research, non-celebrity people were found to be more reliable. Conversely, Aziz et al. (2013) determined that famous people are more trustworthy than non-celebrities and affect the purchase intention.

Smink (2013) investigated the relationship between message reliability and source reliability and determined that both affect purchase intention. Shelton and Chiliya (2014) investigated the use of video game characters as a famous brand supporters and determined that it affects purchase intention. Comparably, Samat et al. (2016), determined that celebrity credibility has an effect on consumers' online purchase intention. There are also studies in the literature investigating the effects of credibility, expertise, and attractiveness dimensions on attitudes towards advertising “Zhao, 2004; Van der Waldt et al., 2009; Samat et al., 2016”. Lord and Putrevi (2009) investigated the relationship between the dimensions of celebrity credibility (attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness) and consumer motivation. Ayodeji O and Jarrar (2018) determined that the thing that attracts the attention of the customer is the quality of the product rather than the celebrity.

#### **2.1.1. Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is the first of the source reliability dimensions, Ohanian (1990) defined the reliability dimension as the level of trust and acceptance for people who say positive statements about any product (Ohanian, 1990). According to another definition, credibility is the quality of honesty, dignity and credibility of the famous which is perceived by customers (Friedman et al., 1976). When consumers perceive a famous person as trustworthy, messages from that person about the product can shape consumers' attitudes (Amos et al., 2008).

#### **2.1.2. Expertise**

Expertise is determined as one of the source reliability dimensions, Studies have generally revealed that the perceived expertise of the persuasive source has a positive effect on attitude change. Evaluations of the expertise and reliability of the communicator are affected by many different factors. These factors are classified as education, profession and experience, fluency in speaking, speaking speed, citing the source as evidence, defending the position, sympathy for the source, and humor

(O'Keefe, 2002). Expertise is also expressed in terms such as authority, competence and expert. If the celebrity is perceived as an expert by consumers, they aren't required to be experts. (Erdogan, 1999). According to Ohanian (1991), the concept of reliability, which is expressed as the information that the advertiser has to support the claims in the advertisement, also depends on the perceptions of the target audience about that person and the brand. Therefore, even if they do not have expertise in the products they promote, they can remain persuasive.

### **2.1.3. Attractiveness**

Another factor that affects ad credibility is attractiveness. Physical attractiveness gives key clues to a person's initial judgment of another person. Many studies have also found that attractiveness has an effect on resource credibility. The physical attractiveness of a famous person in a commercial provides a positive impression on consumers (Apeyoje, 2013). The celebrities' attractiveness is the first thing to impact consumers, and then the celebrity's expertise makes influencing consumers (Eisend and Langner, 2010). The positive effects of physical attraction on thought change have been experimentally proven in communication and advertising research. Also, there are detailed studies on the attractiveness factor in the use of famous people. There are some studies that define resource credibility with the factors of expertise, attractiveness, power, and honesty. In these studies, the importance of the attractiveness of the source in developing a positive attitude towards the advertisement and product of the consumer was emphasized. (Simons et al., 1970).

## **2.2 PARASOCIAL INTERACTION**

Conceptually, "Parasocial interaction" was first used by Horton and Wohl in 1956 to describe how the media persona interacts with the viewers. Parasocial interaction is defined as the one-way and symbolic relationship that the audience develops with the media character. In this relationship, the individual believes that there is a face-

to-face communication between him and the media figures, and due to this illusion, he perceives the media figures as someone from his close circle. By integrating the character of the media figure with his own character, he pretends to have a personal conversation with the media character. Horton and Wohl (1956) stated this conversation exchange as parasocial interaction. Audiences develop their own unique history and shared common experiences with the media character in which they connect. As with interpersonal relations, these relationships are also influenced by character behaviors (Alperstein 1991). According to Ballantine and Martin (2005), conceptually, para-social relationships can be thought of as similar to an interpersonal social interaction or relationship, although it typically consists of a much weaker bond. Besides, this bond is symbolized by the everyday observer. Over time, the person who is described as an observer or fan starts to believe that he knows the character more intimately and understands influencer character and admires influencer values and motivations (Horton and Wohl, 1956). But at this point, the important thing is that this relationship remains one-sided. Horton and Wohl argue that because these kinds of relationships remain one-sided, intimacy cheating is established. The actor creates this illusion by pretending to be close friends with his co-stars. As a result, the audience watches the character, observes, learns, and thus becomes included in the group. Most para-social relationships are considered normal and healthy (Horton and Wohl 1956). With these deceptive relationships, viewers learn group interaction and socialism. It has been stated that lonely and isolated individuals are more prone to para-social relations than other individuals. According to Horton and Wohl, Para-social relationship that is qualified as normal and healthy is changed from normal and healthy to pathological when it does not meet the objective reality limits. In parasocial relations, individuals perceive their relationship with the media as real (Giles 2002).

According to Cohen (1999), parasocial interaction is the role relationship between the audience and the media character. In many studies, the characters with whom the target audience has a parasocial relationship are determined as the "favorite" character that the audience feels close to and loves the most (Rubin et al., 1985). In

their study, Tian and Hoffner (2010) revealed that the audience develops stronger parasocial relationships with characters they like than with characters they dislike or are emotionally unresponsive. Dibble and Rosaen (2011) state that the audience also interacts with characters they dislike, but these relationships involve less parasocial interaction compared to the characters they like. In recent years, Parasocial relations established with social media phenomena have also encouraged researchers to work in this direction. Rubin et al. (1985) conceptualized the parasocial relationship as "interpersonal participation of the media user". This participation can be characterized as seeking guidance from the media personality, seeing the media personality as a friend, dreaming of being a part of the social world of a popular program and wanting to meet media artists. Labrecque (2014), who conducted marketing research based on the para-social relationship established with social media characters, defines para-social relationship as an illusion experience of interacting with consumers (mediated representations or characters of celebrities) and having a mutual relationship (Lee & Watkins 2016). Research into some new practices on para-social relationships and environments where para-social relationships may exist (Ballantine and Martin 2005) found that the development of the para-social relationship was not limited to traditional mass media, but that online environments designed to bring the viewer closer to a brand or celebrities also facilitated para-social relationships. While the Internet differs from traditional para-social media such as television, in the fact that direct two-way communication between individuals is technically possible, consumer-brand interactions at these sites more closely reflect one-way conversations as in traditional media and there is no clue (unlike those working on brand names) to identify who is reacting to the brand name while maintaining the impression that the communication originated from the brand (Labrecque 2014).

The audience's curiosity in the lives of social media influencers is the primary motivator of parasocial interactions with them. According to Horton and Wohl (1956), the willingness of the audience to learn new details about a famous person is the most important factor of parasocial relationship. The accessible proof gives a

preface to accept that social media is much more successful from the viewpoint of creating parasocial interaction compared to other media such as television or newspapers (Labrecque 2014).

In their research of bloggers, Ballantine and Yeung (2015) have shown that the degree of reliability of blogs created by users is higher than blogs with advertising content. It is similar to parasocial relationship established between Youtuber and followers. In this context, it has been observed that as the number of advertisements increases, the parasocial relationship weakens and the trust in bloggers decreases, thus negatively affecting the brand attitude. Since the organic posts of bloggers are more reliable, it can be said that the attitude towards the brand is more positive. In addition, as a result of the study, they found that parasocial interaction created a significant positive difference in examining the reliability level and field of expertise of bloggers. Contrary to a blog created by brands for advertising purposes, it has been determined that an independent blogger's organic sharing without lying about a product by writing positive comments, and making parasocial relationship with followers by acting like a friend is increases influencer credibility. In this case, it has been determined that the brand messages given organically have a positive effect on brand attitude (Ballantine & Yeung, 2015). Ananda and Wandebori (2016) revealed that individuals follow YouTubers who are similar to them, establish parasocial interaction with these people, trust these people, and are influenced by these people's ideas about brands. Lee and Watkins (2016), on the other hand, found that unlike other studies, youtube vloggers were strikingly impressive in purchasing luxury consumer goods, emphasizing the effect of parasocial interaction and revealing that YouTubers are perceived as role models. (Lee & Watkins, 2016). In the same way, the general view of the studies is that the content created by YouTubers is considered more reliable compared to the advertisement videos presented with the use of celebrities, and it has a greater effect on purchasing behaviour (Kwakye, 2018).

## 2.3 PURCHASE INTENTION

Marketing scholars have examined the antecedents of purchase intention extensively in order to influence more consumers through various marketing methods. This variable is one of the most important aspects of marketing since it can be used to forecast sales statistics and as a framework for researching loyalty, repurchasing, and determining what encourages buyers to buy a product.

Dholakia et al. (2006) describe intention as a motive (in the sense of developing a conscious plan) to take a specific action, using Eagly and Chaiken (1993). Purchase intention, according to Spears and Singh (2004), Purchase intention, is "an individual's intentional plan to make an effort to purchase a brand." Customers' planning and conscious decision to acquire a product, service, or brand are all included in their description.

Influence marketing has a special importance in the consumer's purchasing decision process. In the current period when the digital economy is increasing its impact, it is seen that brands are in search of different methods that combine online and offline interaction to ensure customer participation. In this period, where traditional and digital are integrated, human touches are sought by brands. In this process, understanding why people buy and mapping and digital anthropology of individuals becomes extremely important. (Kotler et al. 2019). Purchasing intention is defined as a consumer's desire to purchase a product or service (Belch, 2004) and conscious planning about it (Spears and Singh, 2004). Purchase intention is also a component of consumers' cognitive behavior (why they intend to buy a particular product, service or brand) (Chai et al., 2010). The greater the willingness to purchase, the more consumer will be likely to end the purchase behavior (Gruber, 1970). In other words, purchase intention is an indicator of real purchasing behavior and is used to measure consumer behaviour (Kim et al., 2008). Therefore, the purpose of brand owners is to retain existing customers through famous people and to create purchase intention by attracting the attention of new customers (Ko et al., 2008). Purchasing

intention is affected by the features of the product and service, its price, and the performance of the famous person involved in the promotion. In short, consumers who intend to buy are positively affected by the celebrities they admire (Freeman and Chan, 2015).

The likelihood of consumers buying a product in the future is defined as purchase intention, which is closely tied to customer attitude and preference. Because of behavioral intention is based on attitude, and because of customer relationships and retention are based on attitude, purchase intention is predicted to have a significant link with attitude, and a person's behavior is influenced by intention (Alnsour et al., 2018).

Internet shopping is correlated to both purchase and product information search activities, according to Klopping and McKinney (2004). Online shopping provides you access to evaluations of product or service selections from many online stores worldwide. By expanding the availability of product information and feature comparisons, the internet lowers the cost of information search for potential customers (Alba et al., 1997). The intention of online purchase arises when clients want to participate in an online activity. Online transactions include information search, information transmission, and product purchasing (Pavlou, 2003). In terms of customers, online consumer behavior is divided into two categories: gathering product information and making purchases. The majority of studies on electronic commerce focus on purchase; nevertheless, online consumer behavior encompasses more than simply this stage. Consumers seek to learn as much as they can about a product before making a purchase. The flow of information from the seller to the consumer which occurs through the Website is referred to as information acquisition. To identify demands, collect data on product features and possible options and get enough ideas to make the best decisions, you'll need to conduct an online information search. (Pavlou and Fygenon, 2006).

Before making a buying decision, consumers make use of social media for recommendations (Hsu et al., 2013). Platforms such as Websites, forums, and social media sites, which are growing increasingly popular, enable consumers to discuss product and service ideas and assist purchase decisions.

Consumers buy products or services via the internet, which is known as online shopping. The terms Online-Shop, Internet-Shop, Web-Shop, and Online-Store are similar. An electronic commerce method between a business and a consumer or a business and a business is known as online shopping (Siegel et al., 2013).

## **2.4 HYPOTHESIS AND RESEARCH MODEL**

The use of famous people in marketing activities has been a topic that researchers have studied over the years. Some of these researchers have developed various models and theories about how famous people should be selected and used by brands. For the modeling of source reliability in this research, Hovland et al. (1953), McGuire (1985), Ohanian's (1990, 1991) models and theories were examined in terms of source reliability. As a result of searching and examining the literature on social media influencers and the use of celebrities as brand advocates in advertising/promotion areas, the following research model and hypotheses have been developed by adapting Ohanian's (1990) "source credibility model". The popularity level of individuals who are actively involved in social media platforms and are famous for the content they produce has been associated with the fact that they can be found reliable as a source (Jin and Phua, 2014).

The degree of popularity that can be observed with numerical data such as the number of followers (Utz, 2010), the number of likes and comments (Chung and Austria, 2017) lead the way for these individuals to be noticed by businesses and used as a resource. The basic approach here is that social media phenomena are not related to any product and that the content they share about themselves also receives high likes and comments, indicating their attractiveness (Jin and Phua, 2014).

Furthermore, perceiving a source as an expert plays an important role in creating and conveying an effective message. As a result of their study, Till and Busler (2000) observed that expertise has a positive effect on the attitude of individuals. Metzger et al., (2003); argue that in communication where a celebrity is perceived as an expert, consumers accept the advertising messages they are exposed to more easily. Source expertise can be critical even when other important factors are not affecting the credibility of the source. Ohanian (1990), in his study to measure the credibility of a source, concluded that source expertise, one of the dimensions that symbolize the credibility of celebrities, has an effect on purchase intention. Sources considered as experts tend to be more persuasive and have the power to motivate consumer purchase intention (Ohanian 1991). Brison et al. (2016) investigated the effect of messages posted on Twitter by expert and experienced athletes on the attitudes of consumers. As a result, they discovered expert athletes can affect the behavior of consumers.

Miller and Baseheart (1969) observed a positive relationship between the trustworthiness of the source and the rate of persuasion in communication. In this study, the famous name as an example of two different types of sources is used, they are a reliable source and an unreliable source. At the end of the study, it was seen that the messages from reliable source were more effective on the recipients and were more easily accepted by the recipients. It is argued that the credibility of a source also positively affects attitude change (McGinnies and Ward, 1980). It can be argued that resource reliability has a positive effect on purchase intention, considering that it can positively affect consumers' perception (Goldsmith et al., 2000), beliefs, opinions, attitudes and behaviors (Wang et al., 2017).

The majority of scholars came to the conclusion that there are three fundamental aspects of source credibility; “trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise”. But also, some studies argued that there are four dimensions of source source credibility. For example, based on Munnukka et al. (2016) about “Credibility of a peer endorser and advertising effectiveness”. The credibility of a source can be

measured in four ways: “Trustworthiness, expertise, similarity, and attractiveness”. Additionally, according to “Metzger et al. (2003)”, “Similarity” is seen as a significant factor in determining the reliability of a source.

As explained in the literature in my research, social media influencer which are in closer communication with their followers are used by brands in the promotion and advertisement of products and services instead of using celebrities such as singers and actors. Therefore, social media influencer fulfill the role of intermediary between brands and consumers. Based on trustworthiness, expertise, similarity and attractiveness dimensions, this study investigated effects of source reliability on purchase intention and compare them depending on the type of influencer: Micro–macro.

In this context, the following hypotheses have been developed in the study.

**H1:** There is a positive relationship between influencers' attractiveness, similarity, expertise, and trustworthiness to source credibility and this effect could have a different strength depending on the type of influencer: Micro–macro.

**H1a:** There is a positive relationship between influencers' attractiveness to source credibility.

**H1b:** There is a positive relationship between influencers' similarity to source credibility.

**H1c:** There is a positive relationship between influencers' expertise to source credibility.

**H1d:** There is a positive relationship between influencers' trustworthiness to source credibility.

In the research conducted by Ballantine and Yeung (2015) on bloggers, it has been revealed that the degree of reliability of the blogs created by the users is higher than the blogs with advertising content. In this context, it has been observed that as the number of advertisements increases, the parasocial relationship weakens and the

trust in bloggers decreases, thus negatively affecting the brand attitude. In addition, as a result of the research, it has been determined that parasocial interaction creates a significant positive difference in examining the reliability level and field of expertise of bloggers. It has been determined that unlike a blog created by brands for advertising purposes, an independent blogger's organic sharing without lying about a product has been found to increase influencer credibility. Also, they determined that the social relationship illusion which is a derivative of the parasocial relationship has been found to increase influencer credibility (Ballantine and Yeung, 2015).

Ananda and Wandebori (2016) revealed that individuals follow youtubers who are similar to them, establish parasocial interaction with these people, trust these people and are influenced by their ideas about brands. "The degree to which people who interact are similar in beliefs, education, social position, and the like," Eyal and Rubin (2003). Individuals who are similar have higher degrees of interpersonal attraction, trust, and understanding than those who are dissimilar (Ruef et al., 2004). Lee and Watkins (2016), on the other hand, found that unlike other studies, youtube vloggers were strikingly impressive in purchasing luxury consumer goods, emphasizing the effect of parasocial interaction and revealing that youtubers are perceived as role models. Because it needs a level of identification with the message source, similarity might be one of the factors of parasocial interaction. When a media consumer considers the media personality to be similar to themselves and others in their social network, parasocial interaction is more likely to happen. Similarly, Kim et al., (2014) found para-social relationships directly influence purchase intentions. Park and Lennon (2004) also found that para-social relationships positively influence purchases of celebrity endorsed product.

Duck and Barnes (1992) indicated that; similarity is an important fundamental to relationships and it is an important factor in influencing others. Also, they emphasized that similarity can also cause more positive interpersonal liking. Turner (1993) investigated "Interpersonal and Psychological Predictors of parasocial

Interaction” and they found that attitude homophily shows stronger correlations with parasocial interaction. Results of study also confirm the importance of social attraction in the development of parasocial relationships. According to Chung and Cho (2017) study; parasocial relationships play an essential role in shaping source trustworthiness perception among social media users. That is, when evaluating an endorser’s trustworthiness, consumers are influenced by the quality and depth of relationships they develop with the endorser. Also, Lou and Kim (2019) study explored that influencer expertise and perceived trustworthiness are important factors that are associated with PSR between influencers and adolescent followers. In this context, the following hypotheses have been developed in the study.

**H2:** There is a positive relationship between influencers' attractiveness, similarity, expertise, and trustworthiness to parasocial relationship and this effect could have a different strength depending on the type of influencer: Micro–macro.

**H2a:** There is a positive relationship between influencers’ attractiveness to parasocial relationship.

**H2b:** There is a positive relationship between influencers' similarity to parasocial relationships.

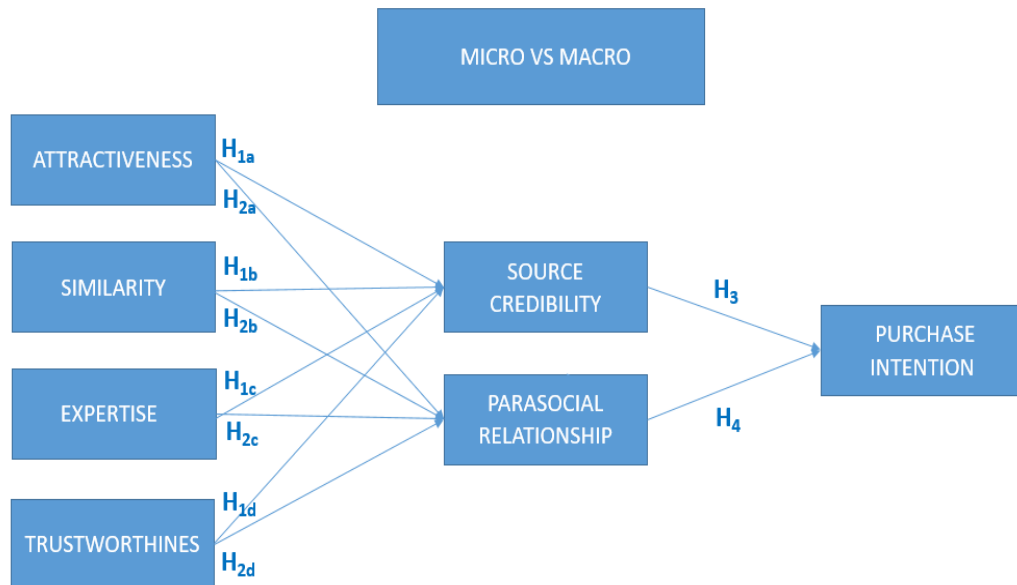
**H2c:** There is a positive relationship between influencers' expertise to parasocial relationship.

**H2d:** There is a positive relationship between influencers' trustworthiness to parasocial relationship.

**H3:** There is a positive relationship of source credibility to purchase intention and this effect could have a different strength depending on the type of influencer: Micro–macro

**H4:** There is a positive relationship of parasocial relationship to purchase intention and this effect could have a different strength depending on the type of influencer: Micro–macro.

**Figure 2. 1** Research Model



Based on the hypotheses created with the conceptual framework is presented in figure 1, attractiveness, similarity, expertise, and trustworthiness are considered to be involved in a model as key determinants of to source credibility and parasocial relationship .Source credibility and parasocial relationships are considered as a determinants of the purchase intention. This model strength can differentiates by type of influencer, micro and macro.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The aim of this research is to make an evaluation and comparison between micro and macro influencers in aspect of “source credibility and “parasocial relations”, and as a result determine and compare the impact of different influencer types on “purchase intention”.

#### **3.2. SAMPLE SELECTION AND DATA COLLECTION**

##### **3.2.1. Sample Selection**

The questionnaire was applied to the participants by the online survey method via Google Forms. Within the scope of the study, a “convenience sample method” was used to reach a diverse group of people from various backgrounds and demographics. A total of 303 people participated in the survey. 14 participant answered "no" to question "Do you use social media? ". 36 participant answered "no" to question "Are you following influencers?" . The questionnaire was not continued with those who answered "no" to these questions. As a result, a total of 262 findings were acquired after the survey's implementation.

##### **3.2.2. Data Collection**

The questionnaire was applied to the participants by the online survey method via Google Forms. Due to my thesis focuses on examining consumer behaviors on social media, data was collected via an online survey that was created on Google Forms to get as accurate results as possible. Within the scope of the study, a

“convenience sample method” was used to reach a diverse group of people from various backgrounds and demographics. The link to the online survey was distributed via social media pages.

### **3.3. QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN**

The questionnaire was applied to the participants by the online survey method via Google Forms. The questionnaire included two main parts. In the first part, there were questions about demographic variables and following influencer type. The questions in the second part were about the measuring expertise, attractiveness, similarity, trustworthiness, influencer credibility, parasocial relationship with influencer and purchase intention.

The participants were asked "Do you use social media? The questionnaire was not continued with those who answered "no" to this question. Also, the question "Are you following influencers?" were asked to participants and the questionnaire was not continued in those who answered "no" to this question. “5-point Likert scale” was used for the variables in the model. The participants' degree of agreement with the questionnaire items was measured by using “5-point Likert scale”. Questions were prepared according to the Likert scale as “1-Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Undecided, 4- Agree, 5-Strongly Disagree”.

### **3.4. MEASUREMENT OF DEPENDENT AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES**

Questionnaire includes literature-based measuring items. Depends on ‘Ohanian (1990) study, “semantic differential scale method” used to measure expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness (scale ranging from 1 to 5). All items were transformed into statements in order to questionnaire implementation. Similarity was measured with four items. Questionnaire items adapted from McCroskey et al. (1975) study. Depends on Dibble et al. (2016) study, four items used to measure parasocial

relationship with influencer that customers follow. Study of Gaziano and McGrath (1986) was adopted to assess source credibility of different type of influencers. Purchase intention was measured by 3 items of questionnaires in line with Sokolova and Kefi (2020) and Yo & Donthu (2001).

Each scale used in this study has been tested in a variety of studies and verified to be reliable measurements. Because the sample for this study includes Turkish respondents, the questionnaire was translated into Turkish. English version of measuring items of survey are presented in table 1 below.

**Table 3.1** Measurement of Independent and Dependent Variables

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Items Questioned</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>Expertise</b>	EXP1- The influencers I follow is an expert in the content she/he produce.	(Ohanian, R., 1990)
	EXP2- The influencer I follow is experienced in the content she/he produce.	
	EXP3- The influencers I follow is Skilled.	
	EXP4- The influencer I follow is knowledgeable in her/his field.	
<b>Trustworthiness</b>	TRU1- The influencer I follow is reliable.	
	TRU2- The influencer I follow is honest.	
	TRU3- The influencer I follow is sincere.	
	TRU4- The information provided by the influencer is trustworthy.	

<b>Attractiveness</b>	ATT1- The influencer I follow has style.	
	ATT2- The influencer I follow is beautiful.	
	ATT3- The influencer I follow is elegant.	
	ATT4- The content of the influencer's posts are attractive.	
<b>Similarity</b>	SIM1- The influencers I follow is similar to me.	(McCroskey et al.,1975)
	SIM2- The influencers I follow thinks like me	
	SIM3- The influencers I follow shares my values.	
	SIM4- Economic situation that influencers I follow is similar to mine.	
<b>Parasocial Relationship</b>	I would love to meet he/she in person.	(Dibble et al.,2016)
	The influencer I follow is like an old friend.	
	The influencer I follow is a natural, down-to-earth person.	
	The influencer I follow starts another social media channel, I will also follow.	
<b>Source Credibility</b>	The influencer I follow is competent in his/her field.	

	The influencer I follow is efficient in his/her job.	(Gaziano and McGrath, 1986)
	The influencer I follow cares about her/his followers.	
	The influencer I follow is trustworthy.	
<b>Purchase Intention</b>	I consider purchasing the products promoted by the influencer I follow.	(Sokolova and Kefi, 2020; Yoo, and Donthu, 2001)
	I would purchase the products promoted by the influencer in the future.	
	I would encourage people close to me to buy the products promoted by the influencer.	

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 4.1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Demographic responses of the participants regarding gender, age, marital status, education level, followed Influencer type, followed Influencer platform are presented below. Collected demographic responses are presented in frequency tables.

**Table 4.1** Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variables

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Gender	Male	81	30.9
	Female	181	69.1
Age	Under 25	37	14.1
	25-30	58	22.1
	31-36	78	29.8
	37-42	52	19.8
	Above 42	37	14.1
Marital Status	Married	158	60.3
	Single	104	39.7
Educational Level	Primary school	0	0.0
	Middle school	11	4.2
	High school	55	21.0
	Bachelor degree	121	46.2
	Master's degree	46	17.6
	PhD	29	11.1

All of the participants answered the question as either female or male. As presented in Table 1, 181 people (69.1%) of the survey participants are female and 81 people (30.9%) are male. The age of the respondents was mainly under 42 years covered 85, 8% of the respondents. It is seen that the respondents of survey are mainly young people. 37 people are under 25 age. 58 people are 25-30 age range. 78 people are 31-36 age range. 52 people are 37-42 age range and 37 people are above 42 age. As presented in Table 1, 104 people (39.7%) of the survey participants are single and 158 people (60.3 %) are married. The questionnaire contains six different educational level which are primary school, middle school, high school, bachelor degree, master's degree, PhD degree. All results are presented in Table 1 as, 11 people are middle school graduate, 55 people are high school graduate, 121 people have bachelor degree, 46 people have master's degree and 29 people have PhD degree.

**Table 4.2** Frequency Table of Followed Social Media Influencer by Follower Count

	N	%
<b>Macro</b>	148	56.5
<b>Micro</b>	114	43.5
<b>Total</b>	262	100.0

In order to evaluate following influencer type, participants answered the question of followed social media influencer by Follower Count. As I mentioned in the literature Influencers can be divided into micro and macro influencers. Influencer who has under 100000 followers considered as a micro influencer and influencers who has an above 100000 followers considered as a macro influencer. (Campbell and Farrell, 2020). As presented in Table 2, 148 respondent indicated Influencer type that they follow as macro influencer and 114 indicated Influencer type that they follow as micro influencer.

In order to evaluate social media platform of followed influencer, participants answered the question of social media platform of followed the social media influencer. 239 of the participants (91.2% of the sample) answered the question as Instagram. This indicates that Instagram is the main platform of the majority of the influencers that our survey participants follow.

#### **4.2. FACTOR ANALYSIS**

Factor analysis was used to determine whether the scales of attractiveness, similarity, expertise, trustworthiness, parasocial relationships, source credibility and purchase intention which were analyzed within the scope of the research, were compatible with the selected sample. The result of this that generates a common score can be used for a regression analysis. The factor analysis takes the highest common variance from all selected variables and gives a common score that can be used to test and confirm whether the hypotheses are supported or rejected (Kim et al., 1978).

Before implementation of factor analysis, “Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)” and “Bartlett's sphericity tests” was conducted to validate if the study’s collected data adequacy are suitable for factor analysis or not. KMO levels greater than 0.5 are considered acceptable, according to Kaiser (1974).

The main purpose of a “Cronbach's Alfa-test” is to observe whether survey items correctly describe the variables or not. This test determines the internal consistency of each independent variable whose values will affect the study's dependability. Values greater than 0.7 are acceptable, but the closer the test result is to 1 means the higher the reliability. (Bell, et al., 2019). “Cronbach's alpha coefficients” for all of the model's factors were confirmed to be more than 0.7. As a result, we can assume that reliability confirmed for collected data. Factor and reliability analysis were implemented to gathered data, and the results of the all tests are presented in the following pages.

#### 4.2.1. Factor and Reliability Analysis for Expertise

After using “Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin and Bartlett's test” for the factor the results are found to be adequate. The results were as following “KMO=0.825,  $\chi^2$  Bartlett test= 1367.989, df=6, p=0.000”. “Anti-image correlation diagonals” are all more than 0.50, indicating that all single items in the factor analysis are to be included. “Cronbach's alpha coefficients” result was found as 0.964. “Cronbach's alpha coefficients” were confirmed to be more than 0.7. As a result, we can assume that reliability confirmed for data. One factor was found it explained total variance of 90.384%. Cronbach's alpha, total variance and factor loadings value of each dimensions were presented on table 3 below.

**Table 4.3** Factor Analysis for Expertise

Factor Name	Factor Item	Factor Loading	% Variance	Cronbach's alpha
Expertise	EXP2	0.971	90.384	0.964
	EXP3	0.949		
	EXP4	0.948		
	EXP1	0.934		

#### 4.2.2. Factor and Reliability Analysis for Trustworthiness

After using “Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin and Bartlett's test” for the factor the results are found to be adequate. The results were as following “KMO=0.875,  $\chi^2$  Bartlett test= 1289.953, df=6, p=0.000”. “Anti-image correlation diagonals” are all more than 0.50, indicating that all items in the factor analysis are to be included. “Cronbach's alpha coefficients” result was found as 0.962. “Cronbach's alpha coefficients” were confirmed to be more than 0.7. As a result, we can assume that reliability confirmed. One factor was found, it explained total variance of 90.061%. All results of the factor analysis was presented on table below.

**Table 4.4** Factor Analysis for Trustworthiness

<b>Factor Name</b>	<b>Factor Item</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>% Variance</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
<b>Trustworthiness</b>	TRU4	0.965	90.061	0.962
	TRU1	0.955		
	TRU2	0.955		
	TRU3	0.920		

#### 4.2.3. Factor and Reliability Analysis for Similarity

After using “Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin and Bartlett's test” for the factor the results are found to be adequate. The results were as following “KMO=0.785,  $\chi^2$  Bartlett test=753.582, df=6, p=0.000.” “Anti-image correlation diagonals” are all more than 0.50, indicating that all items in the factor analysis are to be included.

“Cronbach's alpha coefficients” result was found as 0.902. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were confirmed to be more than 0.7. As a result, we can assume that reliability confirmed. One factor was found as a result of the analysis, it explained total variance of 77.677%. All results of the factor analysis was presented on table 5 below.

**Table 4.5** Factor Analysis for Similarity

<b>Factor Name</b>	<b>Factor Item</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>% Variance</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
<b>Similarity</b>	SIM1	0.919	77.677	0.902
	SIM2	0.913		
	SIM3	0.899		
	SIM4	0.788		

#### 4.2.4. Factor and Reliability Analysis for Attractiveness

After using “Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin and Bartlett's test” for the factor the results are found to be adequate. The results were as following “KMO=0.856,  $\chi^2$  Bartlett =1209.301, df=6, p=0.000”. “Anti-image correlation diagonals” are all more than 0.50, indicating that all items in the factor analysis are to be included.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients result was found as 0.956. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were confirmed to be more than 0.7. As a result, we can assume that reliability confirmed. One factor was found, it explained total variance of 88,381%. All results of the factor analysis was presented on table below.

**Table 4.6** Factor Analysis for Attractiveness

Factor Name	Factor Item	Factor Loading	% Variance	Cronbach's alpha
Attractiveness	ATT2	0.961	88.381	0.956
	ATT3	0.959		
	ATT4	0.930		
	ATT1	0.910		

#### 4.2.5. Factor and Reliability Analysis for Parasocial Relationships

After using “Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin and Bartlett's” test for the factor the results are found to be adequate. The results were as following “KMO=0.844,  $\chi^2$  Bartlett =662.924, df=6, p=0.000”. “Anti-image correlation diagonals” are all more than 0.50, indicating that all single items in the factor analysis are to be included.

“Cronbach's alpha coefficients” result was found as 0.904. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were confirmed to be more than 0.7. As a result, we can assume that reliability confirmed. One factor was found, it explained total variance of 77.792%. Cronbach's alpha, all results of the factor analysis was presented on table below.

**Table 4.7** Factor Analysis for Parasocial Relationships

<b>Factor Name</b>	<b>Factor Item</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>% Variance</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
<b>Parasocial Relationships</b>	PR1	0.908	77.792	0.904
	PR2	0.883		
	PR3	0.869		
	PR4	0.868		

#### **4.2.6. Factor and Reliability Analysis for Source Credibility**

After using “Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin and Bartlett's test” for the factor the results are found to be adequate. The results were as following “KMO=0.846,  $\chi^2$  Bartlett =1338.575, df=6, p=0.000”. “Anti-image correlation diagonals” are all more than 0.50, indicating that all items in the factor analysis are to be included.

“Cronbach's alpha coefficients” result was found as 0.963. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were confirmed to be more than 0.7. As a result, we can assume that reliability confirmed. One factor was found as a result of the analysis, it explained total variance of 89.931%. All results of the factor analysis was presented on table below.

**Table 4.8** Factor Analysis for Source Credibility

<b>Factor Name</b>	<b>Factor Item</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>% Variance</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
<b>Source Credibility</b>	SC2	0.971	89.931	0.963
	SC3	0.956		
	SC1	0.952		
	SC4	0.914		

#### 4.2.7. Factor and Reliability Analysis for Purchase Intention

After using “Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin and Bartlett's test” for the factor the results are found to be adequate. The results were as following “KMO=0.755,  $\chi^2$  Bartlett =800.220, df=6, p=0.000”. “Anti-image correlation diagonals” are all more than 0.50, indicating that all items in the factor analysis are to be included.

“Cronbach's alpha coefficients result” was found as 0.948. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were confirmed to be more than 0.7. As a result, we can assume that reliability confirmed. One factor was found as a result of the analysis, it explained total variance of 90.782 %. All results of the factor analysis was presented on table below.

**Table 4.9** Factor Analysis for Purchase Intention

<b>Factor Name</b>	<b>Factor Item</b>	<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>% Variance</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
<b>Purchase Intention</b>	PI2	0.966	90.782	0.948
	PI1	0.956		
	PI3	0.935		

#### 4.3. REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Linear regression analysis was used to test H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>3</sub>, H<sub>4</sub> hypotheses of thesis. Linear regression analysis defines the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Multiple regression analysis is used to analyze a connection between two or more independent variables and one dependent variable. Multiple regression analysis was performed to explore the relationship between attractiveness, similarity, trustworthiness and expertise towards parasocial relationships. Similarly, multiple regression analysis was performed to identify the

affect of attractiveness, similarity, trustworthiness and expertise towards Source credibility. Simple linear regression analysis was used to analyze a relationship between source credibility, parasocial relationship and purchase intention. In order to test the differential effect of macro and micro influencers, regression analysis was implemented for both macro and micro influencers and results were shared separately. All results obtained from analyzes are shown below tables.

#### 4.3.1. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of H<sub>1</sub>

As displayed Table 10, trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness of macro influencer has contribution on source credibility. Similarity can be considered insignificant factor. As a result of the regression analysis, there is no multicollinearity problem in the model because VIF values of the independent variables are less than 10. (Trustworthiness=7.484, Expertise=7.276, Attractiveness=4.771). “The overall explanatory strength of model” is 89.1% (R=0.944 R<sup>2</sup>=0,891 F=393.714). Macro influencer trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness were found to be positively related to source credibility.

**Table 4.10** Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of H1 for Macro Influencers

<b>Dependent variable: Source credibility</b>			
<b>Independent variables:</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Trustworthiness	0.462	6.154	0.000
Expertise	0.338	4.565	0.000
Attractiveness	0.176	4.825	0.004

As displayed Table 11 below, trustworthiness and attractiveness of macro influencer has contribution on source credibility. Similarity and expertise can be considered insignificant factors. There is no multicollinearity problem in the model because VIF values of the independent variables are less than 10. (Trustworthiness=5.497, Attractiveness=3.019). “The total explanatory strength of

model” is 78.5% (R=0.886 R<sup>2</sup>=0.785 F=202.051). Micro influencer trustworthiness and attractiveness were found to be positively related to source credibility.

**Table 4.11** Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of H1 for Micro Influencers

<b>Dependent variable:</b> Source credibility			
<b>Independent variables:</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Trustworthiness	0.583	6.154	0.000
Attractiveness	0.321	3.029	0.003

#### 4.3.2. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of H<sub>2</sub>

As displayed Table 12, trustworthiness, similarity, expertise and attractiveness of macro influencer has contribution on parasocial relationship. As a result of the regression analysis, there is no multicollinearity problem in the model because VIF values of the independent variables are less than 10. (Trustworthiness=8.499, Attractiveness=4.886, Expertise=7.277, Similarity=2.642). “The total explanatory strength of model” is 92.9% (R=0.929 R<sup>2</sup>=0.864 F=226.391). Macro influencer Trustworthiness, Expertise and Similarity were found to be positively related to parasocial relationships. Attractiveness were found to be negatively related to parasocial relationship.

**Table 4.12** Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of H2 for Macro Influencers

<b>Dependent variable:</b> Parasocial relationships			
<b>Independent variables:</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Trustworthiness	0.450	5.001	0.000
Expertise	0.309	3.715	0.000
Similarity	0.407	8.105	0.000
Attractiveness	-0.189	-2.764	0.004

As displayed Table 13 below, similarity and attractiveness of micro influencer has contribution on parasocial relationship. Trustworthiness and expertise can be considered insignificant factors. There is no multicollinearity problem in the model because VIF values of the independent variables are less than 10. (Attractiveness=2.312, Similarity=2.312). “The total explanatory strength of model” is 90.2% (R=0.902 R<sup>2</sup>=0.814 F=242.800). Micro influencer attractiveness and similarity were found to be positively related to parasocial relationship.

**Table 4.13** Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of H2 for Micro Influencers

<b>Dependent variable: Parasocial relationships</b>			
<b>Independent variables:</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Similarity	0.612	9.831	0.000
Attractiveness	0.346	5.564	0.000

### 4.3.3. Simple Linear Regression Analysis of H<sub>3</sub>

As a result of the simple linear regression analysis, there is no multicollinearity problem because VIF value of the independent variable is less than 10. (Source Credibility =1.000). “The total explanatory strength of model” is 82.6% (R=0.826 R<sup>2</sup>=0.683 F=314.343). Macro influencer source credibility were found to be positively related to purchase intention.

**Table 4.14** Simple Linear Regression Analysis of H3 for Macro Influencers

<b>Dependent variable: Purchase Intention</b>			
<b>Independent variable:</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Source credibility	0.826	17.730	0.000

As a result of the simple linear regression analysis, there is no multicollinearity problem because VIF value of the independent variable is less than 10. (Source Credibility =1,000). “The total explanatory strength of model” is 72.1% (R=0.721 R<sup>2</sup>=0.520 F=121.126). Micro influencer source credibility were found to be positively related to purchase intention.

**Table 4.15** Simple Linear Regression Analysis of H3 for Micro Influencers

<b>Dependent variable:</b> Purchase Intention			
<b>Independent variable:</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Source credibility	0.721	11.006	0.000

#### 4.3.4. Simple Linear Regression Analysis of H<sub>4</sub>

As a result of the simple linear regression analysis, there is no multicollinearity problem because VIF value of the independent variable is less than 10. (Parasocial Relationship =1,000). “The total explanatory strength of model” is of model is 78.6 % (R=0.786 R<sup>2</sup>=0.618 F=236.030). Parasocial relationship with macro influencer were found to be positively related to purchase intention.

**Table 4.16** Simple Linear Regression Analysis of H4 for Macro Influencers

<b>Dependent variable:</b> Purchase Intention			
<b>Independent variable:</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Parasocial relationship	0.786	15.363	0.000

As a result of the simple linear regression analysis, there is no multicollinearity problem because VIF value of the independent variable is less than 10. (Parasocial

Relationship =1.000). “The total explanatory strength of model” is 74.1 % (R=0.741 R<sup>2</sup>=0.548 F=136.057). Parasocial relationship with macro influencer were found to be positively related to purchase intention.

**Table 4.17** Simple Linear Regression Analysis of H4 for Micro Influencers

<b>Dependent variable: Purchase Intention</b>			
<b>Independent variable:</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Parasocial relationship	0.741	11.664	0.000

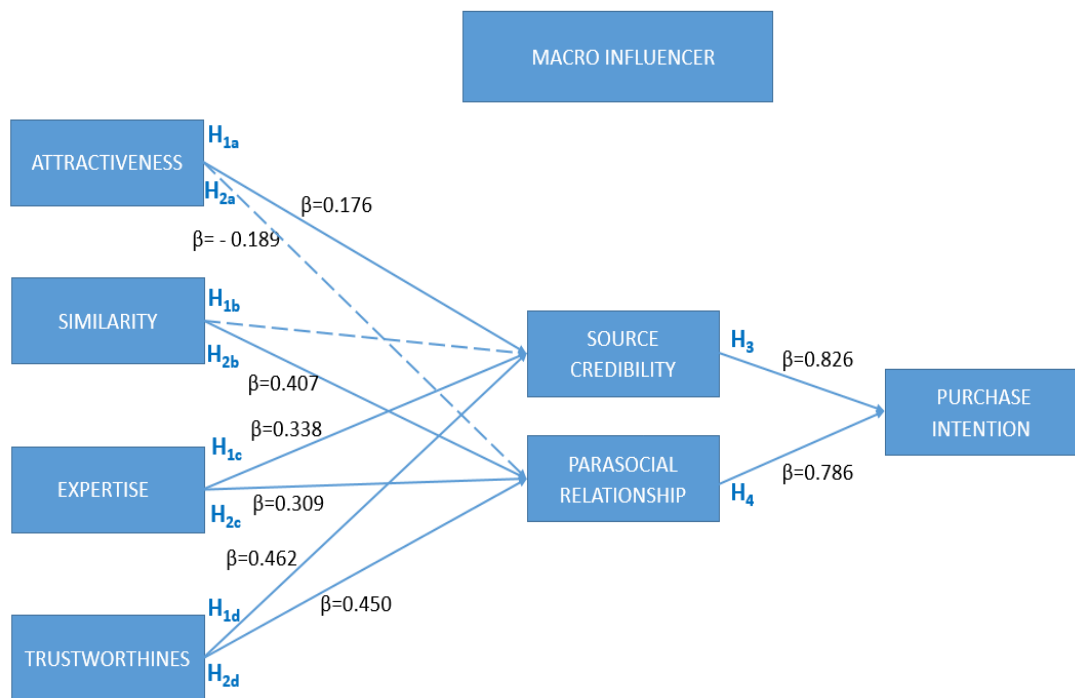
#### 4.4. SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESIS RESULTS

**Table 4.18** Summary of Hypotheses Results for Macro Influencers

<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>Results</b>
<b>H<sub>1a</sub></b> : Influencers' attractiveness positively affects source credibility.	Accepted
<b>H<sub>1b</sub></b> : Influencers' similarity positively affects source credibility.	Rejected
<b>H<sub>1c</sub></b> : Influencers' expertise positively affects source credibility.	Accepted
<b>H<sub>1d</sub></b> : Influencers' trustworthiness positively affects source credibility.	Accepted
<b>H<sub>2a</sub></b> : Influencers' attractiveness positively affects parasocial relationship.	Rejected
<b>H<sub>2b</sub></b> : Influencers' similarity positively affects parasocial relationships.	Accepted
<b>H<sub>2c</sub></b> : Influencers' expertise positively affects parasocial relationship.	Accepted

<b>H<sub>2d</sub></b> : Influencers' trustworthiness positively affects parasocial relationship.	Accepted
<b>H<sub>3</sub></b> : Source credibility positively affects purchase intention.	Accepted
<b>H<sub>4</sub></b> : Parasocial relationship positively affects purchase intention.	Accepted

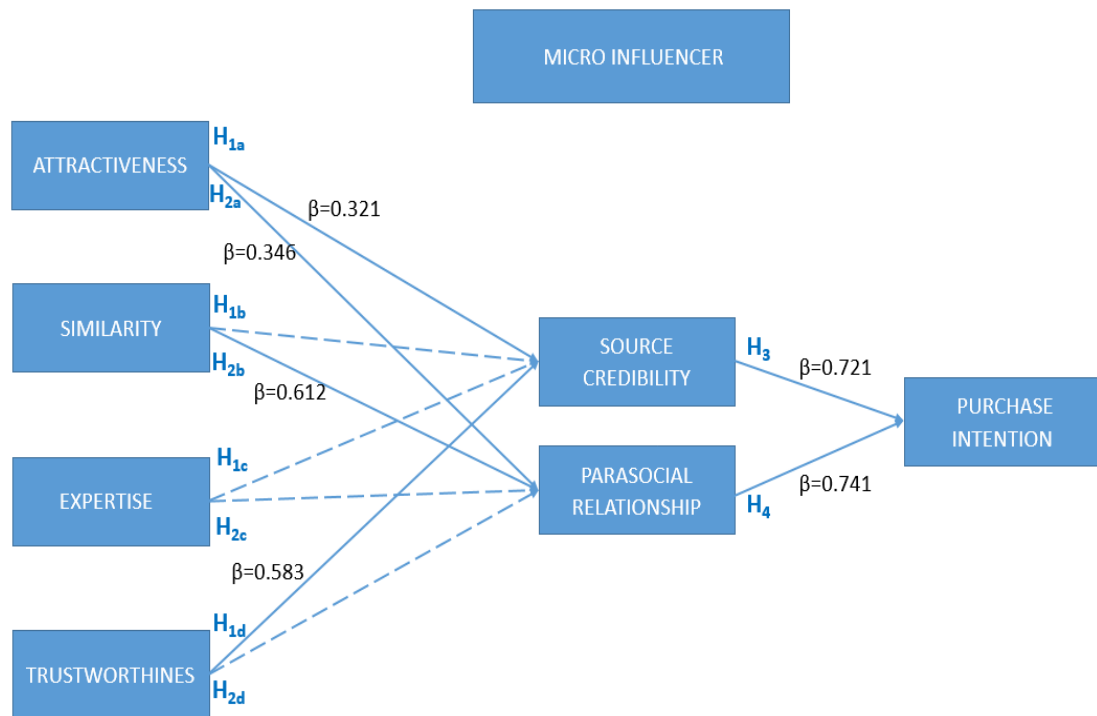
**Figure 4. 1** Regression Results of Hypotheses for Macro Influencers



**Table 4.19** Summary of Hypotheses Results for Micro Influencers

<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>Results</b>
<b>H<sub>1a</sub></b> : Influencers' attractiveness positively affects source credibility.	Accepted
<b>H<sub>1b</sub></b> : Influencers' similarity positively affects source credibility.	Rejected
<b>H<sub>1c</sub></b> : Influencers' expertise positively affects source credibility.	Rejected
<b>H<sub>1d</sub></b> : Influencers' trustworthiness positively affects source credibility.	Accepted
<b>H<sub>2a</sub></b> : Influencers' attractiveness positively affects parasocial relationship.	Accepted
<b>H<sub>2b</sub></b> : Influencers' similarity positively affects parasocial relationships.	Accepted
<b>H<sub>2c</sub></b> : Influencers' expertise positively affects parasocial relationship.	Rejected
<b>H<sub>2d</sub></b> : Influencers' trustworthiness positively affects parasocial relationship.	Rejected
<b>H<sub>3</sub></b> : Source credibility positively affects purchase intention.	Accepted
<b>H<sub>4</sub></b> : Parasocial relationship positively affects purchase intention.	Accepted

**Figure 4.2** Regression Results of Hypotheses for Micro Influencers



## CONCLUSION

Many marketers have argued the impact of different type of influencers. However, there is a lack of knowledge regarding their impact on customers. The aim of this research is to make an evaluation and comparison between micro and macro influencers in aspect of “source credibility and “parasocial relations”, and as a result determine and compare the impact of different influencer types on “purchase intention”. The study also investigated the effect of macro and micro influencers' trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness and similarity on source credibility and parasocial interaction. To explore the impact of both micro and macro influencers, online survey will conducted to collect data. As a result, a total of 262 findings were acquired. In order to evaluate following influencer type, participants answered the question of followed social media influencer by Follower Count. In this context, the effect of macro and micro influencers on source credibility and parasocial

relationship, and the effect of influencers type on purchase intention were analyzed by using IBM SPSS program for factor and regression analyses.

As a result of the correlation analysis conducted in the research to reveal the effect of expertise, similarity, trustworthiness and attractiveness dimensions on source credibility, it was found that trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness of macro influencer has positive contribution to creating source credibility. Trustworthiness with a  $\beta=0.462$  has the most positive impact on source credibility, followed by Expertise with a  $\beta=0.338$  and Attractiveness with a  $\beta=0.176$ . Similarity with macro influencer has not a significant effect on the perception of source credibility. In terms of micro-influencers, trustworthiness and attractiveness has positive contribution to creating source credibility but expertise and similarity has no meaningful impact on source credibility of micro-influencer. Trustworthiness was again found to be the strongest factor as found in macro influencers with  $\beta=0.583$ .

As a result of the correlation analysis conducted in the research to reveal the effect of expertise, similarity, trustworthiness and attractiveness dimensions on parasocial relationship. Macro influencer trustworthiness, expertise and similarity were found to be positively effective factors to create parasocial relationship with followers. A negative correlation was found between parasocial relationship and attractiveness. So we can assume attractiveness of macro influencer is negative factor to create parasocial relationship with followers. However, as a result of regression analysis of the parasocial effect of micro-influencers, it was found that attractiveness is an important factor in creating a parasocial relationship. Additionally, Similarity was found to be the strongest factor with  $\beta=0.612$ . Trustworthiness and expertise of micro influencer has not a significant effect on building parasocial relationship. As a result, it was determined that impact of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness factors of parasocial relationship in the model differentiate according to the influencer type. However, it was interesting to found that attractiveness has negative impact on parasocial relationship for macro influencer. The similarity factor was found to be effective for both influencer type. Since there is no study

investigating whether different influencer types have different effects on the parasocial relationship, it is thought that the results obtained from this research will contribute to the literature.

Other important findings of the research is that influencer credibility has a significant positive effect on purchase intention for both macro and micro influencer and it is also seen that parasocial relationship has a significant positive effect on purchase intention for both macro and micro influencer. According to result of regression analysis, results show that the H3 and H4 hypotheses of model are supported. These findings of research also supports other studies in the literature that have found that source reliability and parasocial relationship have a positive effect on purchase intention (Ohanian, 1990; Park and Lennon 2004; Kim et al., 2014). It is determined in this research that if macro and micro influencers is compared in terms of their effects on purchase intention, macro influencers affect on the purchase intention of customers more than micro influencers in terms of both source credibility and parasocial relationship. Macro influencer source credibility were found to be positively related to purchase intention with  $\beta=0.826$  and Macro influencer positively related to purchase intention with  $\beta=0.721$ . Parasocial relationship of macro influencer with a  $\beta=0.786$  has more positive impact on purchase intention than micro influencers ( $\beta=0.741$ ). These findings of research supports other studies that determined that macro influencers are more effective than micro influencers in terms of creating source credibility and purchase intention. Also, findings of research supports other studies that found macro-influencers are considered as an expert while micro-influencers are considered more reliable (Theocharis and Papaioannou, 2020). In addition, findings of research supports other studies that found Influencers' similarity positively affects parasocial relationships (Lee and Watkins, 2016; Ananda and Wandebori, 2016). Since there is no study investigating whether different types of influencers have a different effect on the parasocial relationship, the data obtained as a result of this research will contribute to the literature.

The findings of this study assist and advise researchers, managers and marketers in understanding the multidimensional effects of macro and micro influencers' source credibility and parasocial relationships on purchase intention. Our results also reveal that, marketers or managers should think carefully about the type of social media influencer they use to promote their brand. Managers should be concerned not only with practices of influencer types but also their ability to influence consumers. For example, they should consider influencer expertise, attractiveness, similarity and trustworthiness. They should be aware of that these abilities impact on customers can differentiate from macro to micro influencers.

When the research results are evaluated in general, it is an undeniable fact that the influencers have significant effects on consumers. Unlike other studies made on different influencers types, this research evaluated influencers within the context of reliability, attractiveness, similarity, expertise and parasocial relationships and source credibility. The fact that it is one of the first studies conducted in this context contributes to the originality of the research. The findings investigating the differences between influencers types have significant theoretical directions for future research on social media influencers, as study indicated that previous theories or findings in aspects of influencers type can not be generalisable, proving the need to test detailed new theories and models in this concept. Future research also may consider to investigate whether influencer types have an impact on product categories and market segments.

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## APPENDIX

### Yüksek Lisans Anketi-Sosyal Medya Influencerları

Değerli Katılımcı,

Bu anket çalışması İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Pazarlama Yüksek Lisans Bölümünde hazırlanan bir tez kapsamında gerçekleştirilmektedir. Bu ankete cevap vererek bilimsel bir çalışmaya katkıda bulunmanızı rica ediyoruz. Anket tahmini olarak 5 dakika sürecektir.

Bu ankete vereceğiniz cevaplar akademik açıdan çok değerli olacaktır. Anket için doğru veya yanlış bir cevap bulunmamaktadır. Bu nedenle soruları eksiksiz yanıtlamanızı rica ediyoruz. Paylaşacağınız bilgiler sadece akademik çalışma kapsamında kullanılacaktır. Başka bir kurum veya kuruluş ile hiçbir şekilde paylaşılmayacaktır. Anket ile ilgili tüm sorularınız ve netleşmesini istediğiniz noktalar için aşağıdaki mail adresinden benimle iletişime geçebilirsiniz.

Taner Türkmen

#### Sosyal Medya Influencer

Sosyal medya hesabı üzerinden kendisine veya reklam verene ait bir mal veya hizmetin satışını ya da kiralanmasını sağlamak, takipçilerini bilgilendirmek veya ikna etmek amacıyla pazarlama iletişimde bulunan kişi olarak ifade edilebilir.

Lütfen cinsiyetinizi belirtiniz.

- Kadın
- Erkek

Lütfen yaşınızı belirtiniz.

Yanıtınız

Lütfen medeni durumunuzu belirtiniz

- Evli
- Bekar

Lütfen eğitim durumunuzu belirtiniz.

- ilkokul
- Ortaokul
- Lise
- Üniversite
- Yüksek lisans
- Doktora

Sosyal medya kullanıyor musunuz?

- Evet
- Hayır

Takip ettiğiniz sosyal medya influencer'ı var mı?

- Evet
- Hayır



Takip ettiğiniz sosyal medya influencer'ın takipçi sayısı aşağıdakilerden hangisi aralığındadır?

- 100.000-10000000
- 10.00-100000

Takip ettiğiniz influencer hangi platformda paylaşım yapıyor?

- Youtube
- Instagram
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Twitch
- Tiktok
- Diğer:

Takip ettiğiniz sosyal medya hesabı hangi kategoride paylaşım yapıyor?

*Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.*

- Moda ve Giyim
- Oyun
- Yemek
- Makyaj ve güzellik
- Seyahat
- Müzik
- Sağlık
- Diğer: \_\_\_\_\_

Aşağıdaki soruları takip ettiğiniz sosyal medya Influencer'ı düşünerek size en yakın olacak şekilde cevaplayınız.

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Takip ettiğim influencer ürettiği içerik konusunda uzmandır.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer ürettiği içerikler konusunda tecrübelidir.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer yeteneklidir.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer alanında bilgilidir.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer güvenilirdir.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer dürüştür.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer samimidir.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

verdiği bilgiler inanılırdır.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer'ı kendime benzetirim.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer ile düşüncelerimiz benzerdir.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer benimle benzer değerleri paylaşır.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer ile ekonomik durumumuz benzerdir.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer stil sahibidir.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer hoş görünümlüdür.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer zarifdir.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Influencer'ın paylaşımlarının içeriğini çekicidir.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer ile şahsen tanışmak isterim.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer eski bir arkadaş nihidir	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Takip ettiğim influencer doğal ve alçakgönüllüdür.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer başka bir sosyal medya platformunda olursa, bu platformdaki paylaşımlarını da takip ederim.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer kendi alanında işin ehlidir.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer işinde verimlidir.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer takipçilerine önem verir.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer güvenilirdir	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer'ın tanıtımını yaptığı ürünleri satın almayı isterim.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takip ettiğim influencer'ın tanıtımını yaptığı ürünleri gelecekte satın alırım.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Yakınımdaki insanları influencer tarafından tanıtılan ürünleri satın almaya teşvik ederim.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### ETİK KURUL DEĞERLENDİRME SONUCU / RESULT OF EVALUATION BY THE ETHICS COMMITTEE

Covid-19 salgını nedeniyle İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu, 2019-2020 Bahar döneminde teslim edilecek lisansüstü tezlerin onay yetkisini ilgili etik kurul alt komitelerine devretmiştir. / Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, İstanbul Bilgi University Human Research Ethics Committee has transferred its approval authority to the Ethics Board Sub-Committees organized within each graduate program. Thus, the graduate theses to be submitted in the spring semester of 2019-2020 should/must get the approval of the Ethics Board Sub-Committee within their own graduate program.

#### ETİK KURUL ALT KOMİTESİ DEĞERLENDİRME SONUCU / ETHICS BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE EVALUATION RESULT

Bu bölüm lisansüstü tez araştırmaları için ilgili Etik Kurul alt komitesince doldurulacaktır. / This part to be completed by the Ethics Board sub-committee responsible for graduate dissertation studies.

Başvuru Sahibi / Applicant: Taner Türkmen

Proje Başlığı / Project Title: INFLUENCER MARKETING AS A DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY: THE EFFECT OF MACRO AND MICRO INFLUENCERS ON PURCHASE INTENTION

Değerlendirme Sonucu/ Result of Evaluation

1. Herhangi bir değişikliğe gerek yoktur. Veri toplama/uygulama başlatılabilir. / There is no need for revision. Data collection/application may commence : \_\_\_\_\_EVET\_\_\_\_\_

2. Ret / Application Rejected : \_\_\_\_\_

Reddin gerekçesi / Reason of Rejection : \_\_\_\_\_

Değerlendirme Tarihi / Date of Evaluation: 17 MART 2021

Unvanı, Adı, Soyadı / Title, Name, Surname:

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Esra Ankan

İmza / Signature:



Unvanı, Adı, Soyadı / Title, Name, Surname:

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Neşenur Altınığne Ekici

İmza / Signature:

