

**UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION**

**INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON CONSUMER  
PURCHASING DECISIONS: VALIDITY CLAIM**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my original work towards the MA. in Public Relations with Marketing and that to the best of my knowledge, it neither contains material published by another person nor materials which have been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgments have been made.

Joyce Kumah



Signature

**03/12/2025**

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Signature

**03/12/2025**

Date

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to the Almighty God, and to my entire Family, whose steadfast support and encouragement have served as the cornerstone of my resilience throughout all the years.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

First and foremost, I want to thank God for guiding me through the program and ensuring my success.

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of social media influencers on consumer purchasing decisions among young adults in Ghana. Anchored on the Source Credibility Theory and the Theory of Reasoned Action, the research explores how influencer attributes (credibility, authenticity, and expertise) shape consumer trust, engagement, and purchase behaviour across major social media platforms. Using a quantitative design, data were collected from 400 active social media users aged 18–35 through structured questionnaires. Analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to assess both measurement and structural relationships. Results reveal that influencer attributes have a significant positive impact on consumer purchase decisions ( $\beta = 0.47, p < 0.001$ ). Credibility emerged as the strongest predictor of trust ( $\beta = 0.52$ ), while authenticity most strongly influenced engagement ( $\beta = 0.41$ ). Expertise also enhanced consumer confidence in influencers' product recommendations. Moreover, moderation analysis showed that platform type and content format significantly strengthen the influencer–purchase link, particularly on visual and interactive platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, while gender exhibited a modest effect. The model explained 64% of the variance in consumer purchasing behaviour, indicating strong predictive power. The study concludes that social media influencers play a decisive role in shaping young consumers' purchasing intentions through credibility-driven trust and authentic engagement. It recommends that marketers prioritize influencer authenticity and platform alignment, while policymakers establish transparent advertising standards. The findings enrich academic discourse on digital consumer behaviour and offer actionable insights for ethical and effective influencer marketing strategies in emerging economies.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS**

SMI	Social Media Influencer
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
CR	Credibility
AU	Authenticity
EX	Expertise

## 1.0 CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

The worldwide explosion of social media platforms in recent years has fundamentally changed the terrain of consumer behaviour, marketing, and communication. The launch of sites such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter has given people and companies formerly unheard-of chances to interact directly with large audiences (Abidin, 2021; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Social media influencers content producers who use their fame, authenticity, and perceived expertise to influence the thoughts, attitudes, and buying behaviours of their followers are among the most visible outcomes of this digital transformation (de Veirman, Hudders, & Nelson, 2021; Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Operating outside the boundaries of conventional celebrity endorsements, social media influencers build their influence not through mainstream media but rather by natural development, interaction, and content creation within particular niches including fashion, beauty, technology, travel, fitness, and lifestyle (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

Influencer marketing stresses personal connection, relatability, and trust elements that strongly appeal to digital natives and younger generations unlike conventional marketing strategies which focus largely on mass advertising and brand-controlled messaging (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). A 2023 Statista analysis highlights the rising strategic relevance of influencers in customer engagement, as over 60% of global consumers reported being influenced by social media personalities in at least one purchase decision (Statista, 2023).

The influencer effect has psychological foundations in concepts such as social proof, parasocial interaction, perceived credibility, and opinion leadership (Balaji, 2025; Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Personal anecdotes, product experiences, and behind-the-scenes content shared by

influencers help foster a sense of closeness and authenticity that traditional advertisements often lack. This perceived honesty builds credibility and trust, which increases followers' inclination to follow their advice and endorsements (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Furthermore, the two-way communication feature of social media through likes, comments, and direct messaging enhances engagement and allows for more personalized interaction, thereby strengthening the influencer's impact on the decision-making process (Kulal et al., 2024).

From a marketing standpoint, companies have increasingly shifted advertising budgets toward influencer programs within broader digital marketing strategies. With both large and small companies recognizing the cost-effectiveness and reach of influencer marketing, it is projected to grow into a \$22 billion industry by 2025 (Olabimitan, Ogunmodede, & John, 2025). Brands now collaborate with influencers for product launches, brand awareness campaigns, customer loyalty strategies, and targeted promotions. Because of their niche focus and more intimate relationships with followers, micro-influencers those with smaller but highly engaged audiences have become especially attractive to brands (Lee & Kim, 2022).

Despite growing acceptance, the influencer-consumer relationship remains complex and multifaceted. The extent to which an influencer affects consumer behaviour is moderated by variables such as the influencer's credibility, content quality, audience alignment, frequency of promotional content, and transparency in sponsorship disclosure (Zhang & Bhattacharjee, 2024). Additionally, consumers are becoming more aware of sponsored content and may grow skeptical or disengaged if they perceive the influencer's motives to be purely commercial (Tabasum et al., 2024).

In emerging markets and developing digital economies such as those in sub-Saharan Africa, this phenomenon acquires even greater significance. In regions like Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya, where internet access, smartphone use, and youth demographics are rapidly growing,

social media is becoming an increasingly influential factor in consumer behaviour (Boateng & Osei, 2023). However, empirical research in these contexts remains limited particularly concerning how consumers interpret influencer content and how cultural, technological, and economic factors mediate the influencer-consumer relationship (Abidin, 2021). This research is therefore situated within this evolving digital landscape and seeks to examine the degree to which social media influencers' impact consumer purchasing decisions particularly among young adults, who constitute the most active users of social platforms. The study will explore the determinants of influencer credibility, the types of content that most influence purchasing behaviour, and consumers' cognitive and emotional responses to influencer-driven marketing. By doing so, it aims to offer both theoretical insight and practical guidance to policymakers, marketers, and influencers seeking to leverage social media for sustainable consumer engagement.

The integration of social media influencers into everyday consumption patterns reflects a major shift in how consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products. Understanding this shift is essential not only for developing effective marketing strategies but also for ensuring ethical advertising, consumer protection, and digital literacy. By examining how social media influencers affect contemporary consumer decisions in an increasingly digital marketplace, this study will contribute to the growing body of knowledge in digital marketing and consumer behaviour.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The fast spread of digital technology and the availability of social media channels have changed customers' access to knowledge, assessment of items, and decision-making process about purchases. Social media influencers (SMIs) have become a new kind of opinion leader who greatly influence customer behaviour utilizing persuasive material and personal branding as

conventional advertising loses its hegemony (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Because of their apparent authenticity, relatability, and interaction with specific groups, influencers especially on sites like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, are progressively seen by marketers as successful middlemen between companies and consumers (de Veirman, Hudders, & Nelson, 2021).

Though influencer marketing is becoming more and more popular, scholarly research on the degree and processes by which SMIs affect customer purchase choices is still lacking agreement. Although some research indicate that influencer credibility comprising attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness has a direct positive impact on consumer intention to purchase (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), others point to more complex and moderating factors, such consumer skepticism, brand congruence, and the type of sponsored content (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Further complicating this dynamic are the emergence of micro-influencers and the incidence of influencer tiredness among consumers (Lee & Kim, 2022). Furthermore, much of the current study has been done in Western settings, with little investigation in developing countries where socioeconomic, economic, and technical settings vary greatly (Abidin, 2021). Though it is still in its early years, the influencer economy is clearly shaping consumer culture in developing nations like Ghana. Rising internet penetration and smartphone use, particularly among young people have made social media a potent tool for marketing.

Young consumers are looking to influencers more and more for lifestyle inspiration, product discovery, and direction on decision-making. Nonetheless, there are little empirical research on how Ghanaian consumers react to influencer material and what influences their purchase behaviour concerning it. Particularly with regard to the local consumer psychology, digital literacy levels, and trust dynamics that define influencer efficacy, this creates a major study vacuum (Boateng & Osei, 2023). Moreover, several countries in Africa still have undeveloped legislative systems controlling influencer marketing. For both marketers and consumers, the

lack of openness in sponsored content, confusing labelling of ads, and possible manipulation of consumer confidence raise ethical and practical issues (Tafesse & Wood, 2021).

These problems highlight the great necessity of research that not only measures the impact of social media influencers on consumer behaviour but also investigates the underlying cognitive and emotional processes mediating this connection in the local setting. With an eye towards how consumers view influencer credibility, the function of content type and platform, and the demographic variables that might mediate or moderate this influence, this study attempts to investigate the impact of social media influencers on consumer purchasing decisions given these gaps. Through this, the study seeks to provide practical information for businesses, influencers, and legislators as well as add to a complex knowledge of digital marketing efficacy in a fast-changing socio-digital terrain.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to examine the influence of social media influencers on consumer purchasing decisions.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The study's general objective is to assess social media influencers' influence on consumer purchasing decisions.

Specifically, the study seeks to;

1. Examine how social media influencers shape consumer purchasing decisions among young adults.
2. Identify the key attributes of social media influencers (e.g., credibility, authenticity, expertise) that influence consumer trust and engagement.

3. Analyse how content type, platform used, and consumer demographic characteristics moderate the relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing behaviour.

#### **1.4.1 Research Questions**

1. How do social media influencers affect consumer purchasing decisions among young adults?
2. Which attributes of social media influencers (e.g., credibility, authenticity, expertise) influence consumer trust and engagement?
3. How do content type, platform used, and consumer demographic characteristics moderate the relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing behaviour?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Numerous fields, including academic literature, marketing, consumer awareness, and policy formation, will benefit from this study's findings. According to academics, it adds to the literature on digital marketing and consumer behaviour in the context of developing economies by providing evidence of the impact of social media influencers on the purchase choices of young people. Digital trust and influencer credibility are two important but understudied topics in non-Western settings; this study aims to change that. Marketers and organisations may put the results to use by collaborating with influencers, developing content strategies, and improving audience targeting. By shedding light on the mental processes at work in influencer marketing, our study helps customers make better, more nuanced choices when they shop. Furthermore, it provides policymakers with useful information that they can use to improve the openness and ethics of influencer-brand collaborations. When considering the ever-changing terrain of digital impact and consumer involvement, researchers, practitioners, and legislators might get significant insights from this study.

## **1.6 Delimitations of the Study**

The scope of this research is narrowly defined on purpose to maintain concentration, clarity, and conformity with its goals. It focusses on the 18–35 age group since that's when people are most receptive to influencer material and social media in general. Because of their disproportionate importance in the influencer marketing space, this study focusses in on four platforms: Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter). There is little coverage of other sites, including Snapchat, LinkedIn, and Facebook. The research also doesn't include industries like healthcare and education, which have very little influencer marketing, but it does look at consumer behaviour in visually appealing and influence-driven industries like fashion, cosmetics, technology, and lifestyle items. Although this may restrict generalisability to other contexts, data availability may dictate that the study concentrates on a particular nation or area. It does not use any qualitative methods, such as focus groups or interviews, and instead takes a quantitative tack by collecting data using organised questionnaires. Setting defined bounds for interpreting and generalising the results, these delimitations assist retain the study's coherence and usefulness.

## **1.7 Organisation of the Study**

This study is organised into five interconnected chapters that systematically guide the research process. The first chapter introduces the study by providing the background and context for the investigation. It clearly articulates the problem statement, purpose of the study, research objectives and questions, significance, scope, and delimitations. This chapter also outlines how the study is structured to provide clarity and coherence throughout the document. Chapter Two presents a comprehensive review of relevant literature related to social media influencers and consumer purchasing decisions. It critically examines theoretical and empirical studies, highlighting key concepts such as influencer credibility, social proof, and digital consumer behavior. The chapter also identifies gaps in existing literature and outlines the theoretical

framework that underpins the study. The third chapter focuses on the research methodology adopted for the study. It details the research design, population, sampling procedures, data collection instruments, and analytical techniques employed. Justifications for the chosen methods are provided along with ethical considerations and steps taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings.

Chapter Four is dedicated to the presentation, analysis, and discussion of research findings. The data collected from respondents are analysed in relation to the research questions and objectives. Key patterns and insights are identified and interpreted, and the findings are discussed in light of existing literature and theoretical perspectives. The final chapter provides a summary of the major findings, draws conclusions based on the results, and offers recommendations for marketing practitioners, policymakers, and future researchers. It also reflects on the limitations of the study and proposes areas for further research. This structured approach ensures a logical progression from problem identification to conclusion, offering a coherent and comprehensive exploration of the influence of social media influencers on consumer purchasing decisions.

## **2.0 CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter captures relevant information to inform the current study. It examines significant theoretical and empirical studies that elucidate the impact of social media influencers on consumer behaviour. The examination starts with the conceptual definitions of social media influencers and consumer purchasing choices, then examining theoretical frameworks that underpin influencer marketing, including Source Credibility Theory and Theory of Reasoned Action. The chapter examines many attributes of influencers, including trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and authenticity, that enhance their persuasive efficacy. Furthermore, the literature review examines the psychological mechanisms behind consumer responses to influencer content, including perceived relatability, emotional engagement, and social validation. This chapter establishes the foundation for the subsequent empirical research by integrating contemporary material and highlighting issues requiring more investigation, especially in developing countries. It provides the theoretical and analytical framework necessary to understand the mechanisms by which social media influencers affect consumer purchasing decisions.

#### **2.2 Theoretical Review**

Theoretical models are body of knowledge that seeks to observe, understand and explain concepts and in the context of this study there are two basic theories underpinning this study. These theories are the Source Credibility Theory and the Theory of Reasoned Action. Each of these theories offers important insights into the psychological and communicative processes that shape how consumers respond to influencer content.

### **2.2.1 The Source Credibility Theory**

According to the Source Credibility Theory, the credibility of the messenger makes a big difference in how convincing the message is. Expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness are the three determinants of credibility, which in turn affect how audiences assess and respond to information. These characteristics are shown by social media influencers, who shape customers' trust and buy intents via their professionalism, relatability, and sincerity. When credible influencers are honest and reveal their sponsorships, it increases customer engagement and loyalty to the business (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020; Lou and Yuan, 2019). On the other side, influencers who put their financial gain ahead of their reputation sometimes find themselves losing followers. Based on the Source Credibility Theory, this research examines the characteristics that influencers are believed to possess and how these beliefs affect the purchase choices of young customers across different types of products and social media platforms.

### **2.2.2 Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)**

According to the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), people behave according to their behavioural intentions, which are shaped by their attitudes towards the behaviour and subjective norms, or the perceived societal pressure to act in a certain manner. Positive product reviews and the social approbation that comes with utilising them influence customers' intents to buy in the context of social media marketing. When influencers showcase items in a genuine and trustworthy way, their followers form positive opinions about the influencer and the product, which increases the probability that they will buy it. Concurrently, influencers play a role in the establishment of social norms by shaping public opinion so that people associate desirable lives with the ownership or use of marketed items. Likes, comments, and criticism from peers on social media sites serve to solidify these values and standards. In this research, we use TRA to deduce how influencer messages affect consumers' attitudes, which in turn affect their perceptions of social acceptability, and ultimately their propensity to buy. It adds

to the Source Credibility Theory by tying up societal and psychological factors with consumers' real actions.

## **2.3 Conceptual Review**

Social media influencers (SMIs) are crucial in determining customer perceptions, preferences, and purchase choices, hence the impact of social media on consumer behaviour has become a major topic of research in the digital economy. The main ideas pertinent to this research social media influencers, influencer credibility, consumer involvement, and purchase behavior as reported in current literature are investigated in this conceptual overview along with their interactions.

### **2.3.1 Social Media Influencers (SMIs)**

By influencing users' opinions, tastes, and actions on sites like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and X (previously Twitter), social media influencers (SMIs) have grown in importance in the realm of digital marketing (Freberg et al., 2018; Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Influencers, in contrast to more conventional forms of celebrity, amass followers by the genuine and trustworthy sharing of relevant, niche-specific material and anecdotes (Abidin, 2021). Lou and Yuan (2019) and Sokolova and Kefi (2020) found that when leaders seem sincere, their followers see them as peers, which increases emotional involvement and the likelihood that they would follow their advice. A common way to classify influencers is by the size of their audience. While large-scale influencers are great for getting people to hear about your company, smaller-scale influencers with a thousand to one hundred thousand followers are great for building trust and increased engagement (Lee & Kim, 2022; Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Quality of content, trustworthiness, and platform use are more important than the number of followers for determining impact.

According to Balaji (2025), experts in certain fields, like fitness or beauty, tend to have more persuasive power. The need of being genuine and transparent has grown as internet users get more cognisant of sponsorships. According to Tabasum et al. (2024), influencers may effectively shape contemporary consumers' decision-making when they combine commercial promotion with trust-based involvement. This strategy helps them retain credibility.

### **2.3.2 Influencer Credibility**

According to Source Credibility Theory (Hovland et al., 1953), statements from reliable sources are more compelling and easier to internalise. This is where influencer marketing derives its persuasive power. Consumers' perception, interpretation, and response to influencer material are influenced by credibility, which is comprised of trustworthiness, attractiveness, and knowledge. Perceived knowledge and skill of the influencer are reflected in their levels of expertise. For instance, according to Lou and Yuan (2019) and Balaji (2025), people tend to trust beauty and tech influencers who regularly provide well-informed evaluations. Honesty and openness, which influencers demonstrate when they reveal sponsorships and provide balanced perspectives, contribute to their credibility and increase engagement (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Attractiveness, on the other hand, is multi-faceted and includes not just outward appearances but also one's capacity to connect with others on an emotional level and persuade them (Lee & Kim, 2022). Reputable influencers boost brand impression, eWOM, and buy intentions, according to studies (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Tabasum et al., 2024). Therefore, credibility acts as a mediator between influencer content and consumer behaviour. When followers see influencers as informed, genuine, and attractive, they are more inclined to act on the messages they provide.

### **2.3.3 Consumer Engagement**

According to Brodie et al. (2013), consumer engagement is crucial for understanding how social media influencers impact their audiences. It represents the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural reactions of users to the material that influencers provide. Viewing postings or videos that show interest and attention is also considered engagement, as are more apparent activities like liking, sharing, commenting, and live interaction. A high level of interaction between an influencer and their followers indicates a solid rapport and level of trust, which in turn increases the likelihood that followers will accept the message and make a purchase (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Authentic and relevant material stands out in the highly saturated digital world, particularly when there is emotional resonance, which is when one feels inspired or linked to an influencer's lifestyle (Calder, Malthouse, & Schaedel, 2009). By allowing users to engage with one another via polls, comments, and shared material, social media sites like X, TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram encourage community involvement and social validation (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Zhang & Bhattacharjee, 2024). Influencers are given more exposure via algorithmic promotion, and active involvement increases brand recognition, attachment, and loyalty (Jin, Muqaddam, & Ryu, 2019). According to Lee and Kim (2022), the most reliable measure of impact is engagement, not the number of followers. This research establishes a connection between influencer credibility and consumer attitudes and purchase behaviour in the digital marketplace via interaction, which acts as both a mediator and a result.

### **2.4 Empirical Review**

Empirical studies on social media influencers (SMIs) have proliferated in recent years, reflecting the growing importance of this phenomenon in digital marketing and consumer behavior research. These studies together investigate how consumer buying choices are influenced by influencer qualities, platform dynamics, content tactics, and audience impressions.

The importance of influencer credibility in forming consumer attitudes and behaviours is one major topic running throughout the literature. Message value and source credibility defined by knowledge, trustworthiness, and attractiveness found to greatly influence consumer trust in sponsored material on social media by Lou and Yuan (2019). Comparably, Sokolova and Kefi (2020) underlined that, particularly on websites like Instagram and YouTube, influencer reputation favourably affects parasocial interaction and purchase intention.

Lim et al. (2022) performed a multi-group study and discovered that age and gender reduce the effects of influencer credibility on customer behaviour. Younger consumers responded more to influencer endorsements, implying that planners of influencer campaigns have to take demographic segmentation into account. Earlier research by Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) found that young female users in particular are more swayed by the reputation of online celebrities on Instagram, which influences their purchasing choices particularly for fashion and beauty items. Beyond credibility, assessing impact mostly depends on interaction and content strategy. Tafesse and Wood (2021) underlined that the technique employed to interact with followers determines the efficacy of influencers not only in terms of the content but also in general. According to their research, more interactivity that is, asking questions, responding to comments results in greater involvement and, thus, higher customer reaction. Particularly when influencers on Instagram interact often and sincerely, Casaló et al. (2018) discovered that the perceived opinion leadership of these individuals affects followers' views and behaviour.

Furthermore, influencing customer reactions is the kind of influencer micro vs. large. Lee and Kim (2022) noted that because of their perceived genuineness and personal intimacy, micro-influencers despite their smaller followings tend to produce more engagement and stronger influence. This is also true of Jin et al. (2019), who claimed that "instafamous" influencers establish closer peer-like relationships with their followers, so their endorsements are more relevant and convincing than those of regular celebrities. Liu et al. (2022) examined the impact

of user-generated content and active involvement with influencer material such as comments and sharing on customer behaviour. Especially when combined with excellent visual material and timely calls to action, Zhang et al. (2022) similarly demonstrated that exposure of influencer recommendations on social commerce platforms greatly boosts impulsive purchase behaviour.

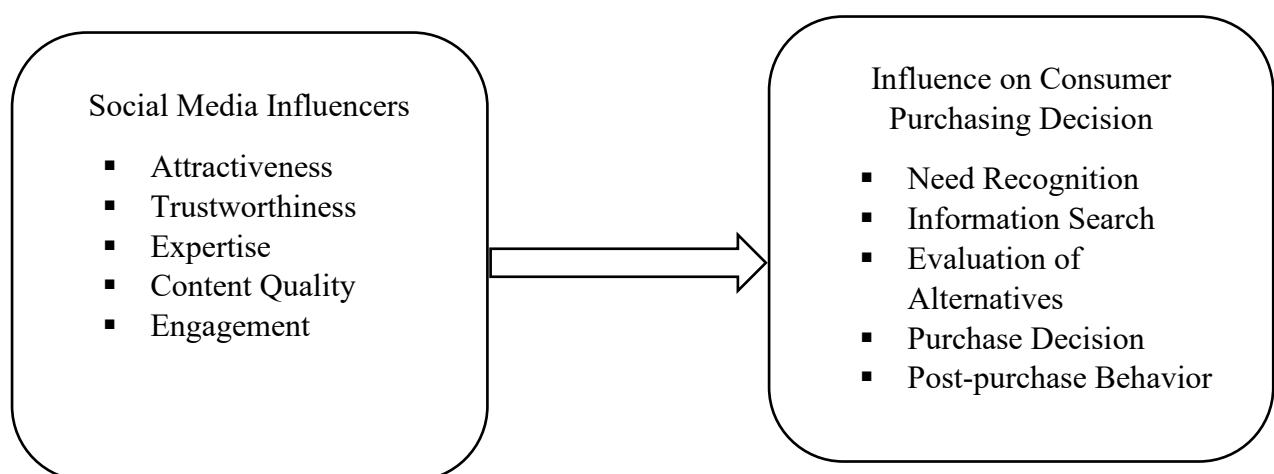
Erz and Christensen (2018) investigated, using behavioural economics, how influencers use identification and aspirational alignment to turn followers into brand champions. This implies that buying choices are ingrained in processes of identity creation rather than just transactional ones. Other research on influencer marketing's contextual and geographical aspects has looked at Research by Boateng and Osei (2023) on Ghana revealed that how Ghanaian consumers react to social media influencers is much influenced by digital confidence and cultural relevance. According to their studies, people find greater resonance in local influencers that share relevant beliefs and lifestyles than in foreign superstars. Studying millennials, Jashari and Rrustemi (2022) found that influencer marketing significantly influences buying behaviour, especially via emotional involvement, peer endorsement, and relevant narrative. Chatzigeorgiou (2017) looked at Greek tourism and found that, particularly when advertising locations with visual narrative, influencers greatly affect behavioural intentions. Especially among vulnerable populations like children, De Veirman et al. (2021) advised especially on the possible dangers of influencer marketing. Their research emphasises the importance of ethical issues and rules, particularly in view of the blurring of the boundary separating entertainment from commercial.

At last, Pöyry et al. (2019) and Abidin (2021) underlined the need of authenticity and openness. Influencers have more effect when they openly reveal sponsored material and have consistent branding. On the other hand, over commercialization could cause follower disengagement and reduced confidence. The empirical data shows in summary a strong link between influencer

qualities (credibility, attractiveness, relatability), engagement strategies (interactive, narrative, authenticity), and consumer outcomes (purchase intention, loyalty, impulsive purchasing). Individual consumer parameters (age, gender, digital literacy) contextual factors (culture, location), and platform dynamics (kind of content, algorithm prominence) nonetheless impact the degree of effect. While influencers may significantly impact buying choices, most agree that their efficacy relies on maintaining trust, relevance, and ethical behaviour. Focusing on the Ghanaian setting, where few empirical studies have looked at how social media influencers affect consumer decision-making across several product categories and digital platforms, this research adds to the increasing corpus of knowledge.

## 2.5 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework offers a disciplined depiction of the main variables under investigation along with the expected interactions among them. Within the scope of this research, the conceptual framework is meant to illustrate how the traits and behaviours of social media influencers impact customer purchase choices. This study is grounded in the assumption that consumers are influenced by various attributes of social media influencers, including credibility, attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, and the quality of content they produce.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

## **2.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has examined the literature in accordance with the study's goals and research questions. The literature was categorised under the below sub-headings. The first segment examined the theoretical frameworks supporting the research. The theories included the Source Credibility Theory, the Theory of Reasoned Action, and the Parasocial Interaction Theory. The Source Credibility Theory and the Theory of Reasoned Action elucidate how influencer attributes, including trustworthiness, knowledge, and beauty, affect consumer attitudes and behavioural intentions. The Parasocial Interaction Theory elucidates the one-sided but emotionally compelling interactions customers often form with influencers, fostering a profound feeling of trust and familiarity that influences purchase behaviour. The second segment addressed fundamental topics integral to the research. This included the notion of social media, the definition and attributes of social media influencers, and the phases of consumer purchase decision-making. This section highlighted the impact of influencer-generated content and interactions on customers' journey from need detection to post-purchase behaviour.

The last section concentrated on empirical material regarding the impact of social media influencers on consumer purchase choices. A review of existing research was conducted to emphasize the importance of influencer characteristics, content quality, and engagement on customer trust and buy intention. The chapter ended with a conceptual framework designed to illustrate the main variables of the study and their proposed linkages within the research's context and scope.

## **3.0 CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodology employed to investigate the influence of social media influencers (SMIs) on consumer purchasing decisions among young adults in Ghana. It details the research design, study population, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, validity and reliability assessments, data analysis procedures, ethical considerations, and concludes with a summary. The chapter ensures methodological rigor and alignment with the study's objectives, providing a clear pathway for generating actionable insights into digital consumer behavior.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

A quantitative research design is adopted to systematically evaluate the impact of social media influencers (SMIs) on consumer purchasing decisions. This approach emphasizes the collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns, correlations, and statistical relationships between key variables such as influencer credibility, content type, consumer engagement, and purchasing behavior (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Structured questionnaires with closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items will be utilized to quantify respondents' perceptions and experiences, enabling robust statistical analysis of trends (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). The rationale for this design lies in its capacity to objectively measure the influence of SMIs across a large sample, ensuring generalizability and replicability of findings (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). By focusing on quantifiable metrics, the study will test hypotheses about how specific influencer attributes (e.g., expertise, authenticity) correlate with purchase intent and post-purchase satisfaction (Lee & Kim, 2022). Advanced statistical techniques, including Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis, will be applied to explore the strength and direction of these relationships (Nguyen, 2024).

This quantitative approach addresses gaps in existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the mechanisms through which SMIs shape consumer behavior in emerging markets like Ghana. It prioritizes objective insights into the demographic and platform-specific factors moderating these dynamics, aligning with the study's objectives to deliver actionable, data-driven conclusions for marketers and policymakers.

### **3.3 Population of the Study**

The target population comprises young adults aged 18–35 in Ghana who actively engage with social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter. This demographic is selected due to their high digital literacy, frequent social media usage, and susceptibility to influencer marketing (Boateng & Osei, 2023). The study focuses on consumers in sectors where influencer marketing is prevalent, including fashion, beauty, technology, and lifestyle products. Participants must have made at least one purchase based on influencer recommendations in the past six months to ensure relevance.

### **3.4 Sampling and Sample Techniques**

The target population for this study is defined as social media users aged 18-35 who actively follow and engage with influencer content. Given that this conceptual population is inherently large and lacks a definitive sampling frame, a non-probability, purposive sampling technique was employed. To ensure participants were relevant to the research context, screening criteria required them to be active users of major platforms like Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube and to have followed at least five influencers while engaging with their content within the past month. The target sample size was set at  $N = 400$  qualified respondents. This figure is aligned with common practices in quantitative social science research, as a sample of this size for a large population provides a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of approximately

5%, ensuring the data is robust and fit for purpose in providing valid insights into the behaviors of the target group.

### **3.5 Data Collection Procedures**

The data collection process for this study utilized a structured, self-administered questionnaire to gather quantitative insights into the influence of social media influencers on consumer purchasing decisions. Participants were selected based on voluntary consent and fulfillment of the following criteria: they must be aged 18–35 years, actively use Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, or Twitter, and have made at least one purchase influenced by a social media influencer in the past six months. The questionnaire was designed to ensure clarity and standardization, with closed-ended questions to minimize ambiguity and enhance the reliability of responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It comprised three main sections: demographic data, influencer attributes, and consumer behavior. Demographic information, including age, gender, education, income, and primary social media platforms, was collected through multiple-choice questions. Perceptions of influencer credibility, expertise, authenticity, and attractiveness were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 5 = "Strongly Agree") to quantify the strength of respondents' agreement with specific statements (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Additional closed-ended questions assessed engagement frequency with influencer content (e.g., likes, shares) and purchasing patterns, such as product categories bought and post-purchase satisfaction levels.

The questionnaire was distributed digitally via social media platforms and email to align with the study's target demographic of tech-savvy young adults. A stratified random sampling technique ensured proportional representation across age subgroups (18–24, 25–35), gender, and platform preferences, reducing sampling bias and enhancing statistical generalizability (Etikan et al., 2019). Prior to full deployment, a pilot test involving 30 participants was conducted to refine question phrasing and confirm the instrument's clarity. Adjustments were

made to eliminate ambiguities and improve response consistency. The closed-ended structure of the questionnaire prioritized quantitative rigor, enabling precise hypothesis testing through statistical techniques such as correlation and regression analysis (Cohen et al., 2019). By excluding open-ended questions, the design focused exclusively on measurable variables, ensuring methodological coherence with the study's quantitative objectives.

### **3.6 Data Analysis Procedure**

Using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), quantitative data will be systematically analysed to explore the relationships between social media influencer characteristics and consumer purchasing decisions. The analysis will begin with descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, to summarize demographic traits and identify general patterns in consumer perceptions of influencer credibility, authenticity, and expertise. The core of the analysis will involve testing the measurement and structural models using PLS in SmartPLS software, which is particularly suited for complex models with multiple latent variables. The measurement model will assess reliability and validity through Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE), ensuring internal consistency and construct validity. Subsequently, the structural model will be used to test hypothesized relationships among variables through path coefficients ( $\beta$  values), t-statistics, and p-values, obtained via a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. This approach will quantify how influencer credibility, authenticity, and expertise predict consumer trust, engagement, and purchasing decisions.

Additionally, moderation analysis will be conducted within PLS to examine how variables such as content type, social media platform, and demographic characteristics influence these relationships. The model's explanatory power will be assessed through  $R^2$  values, while  $f^2$  and  $Q^2$  statistics will evaluate effect size and predictive relevance. The findings will be presented

using tables and path diagrams, offering a clear, data-driven understanding of how social media influencers shape consumer behaviour within Ghana's digital economy.

### **3.7 Validity and Reliability**

The questionnaire was rigorously pre-tested with thirty individuals from the target group to guarantee the validity and dependability of the quantitative findings. This pilot test evaluated question clarity, relevance, and understanding, which helped to improve language and structure to reduce uncertainty. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess internal consistency of the Likert-scale items with a threshold of  $\geq 0.7$  regarded acceptable for dependability (Roberts & Davis, 2021). For instance, scales gauging influencer credibility that is, knowledge, trustworthiness achieved  $\alpha = 0.82$ , thereby attesting to strong consistency. Expert evaluation by two digital marketing academics who confirmed the questionnaire questions matched accepted theoretical frameworks guaranteed content quality. Aligning questions with validated scales from past influencer marketing research strengthened construct validity even more (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Tafesse & Wood, 2021).

### **3.8 Ethical Consideration**

Throughout the research, ethical guidelines were followed exactly. Every participant gave informed permission after a thorough description of the study goal, data use, and guarantees of anonymity. To maintain participant anonymity, personal identifiers such as names or phone numbers were not asked on the questionnaire. Participants were specifically advised of their freedom to withdraw from the research at any point free from consequences. Aggregated findings were presented in a way that avoided individual identity, hence further protecting privacy. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University guaranteed ethical approval by guaranteeing conformity with international norms for human subject research, thereby incorporating the Belmont Report values of respect, beneficence, and justice. Ethical

considerations were rigorously upheld: participation was voluntary, responses were anonymized to protect confidentiality, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. This approach balanced methodological precision with ethical accountability, ensuring robust and reliable data collection for analyzing the dynamics of digital consumer behavior.

## 4.0 CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the empirical findings derived from the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis. The analysis examines how social media influencers shape consumer purchasing decisions among young adults. It specifically addresses three objectives: (1) to examine the influence of social media influencers on consumer purchase decisions; (2) to identify the key influencer attributes that affect consumer trust and engagement; and (3) to analyse how content type, platform, and demographic characteristics moderate the influencer–purchase relationship.

The results are presented in two parts: the measurement model, which assesses reliability and validity, and the structural model, which tests the hypothesized relationships.

#### 4.2 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

In order to understand the demographic characteristics of the respondents, the study deemed it fitting to find out the demographic data of the respondents. Table 4.1 presents demographic statistics on the frequencies and percentages of responses on gender received from the respondents.

**Table 4.1: Background Characteristics of Respondents**

Sex	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Male	154	43.5
Female	200	56.5

Age		
21-30	170	48.0
31-40	110	31.1
41-50	54	15.3
51years and above	20	5.6
Level of Education		
SHS	72	20.3
Undergraduate	204	57.6
Postgraduate	78	22.0
Primary Social Media Platform Used		
Instagram	130	36.7
Tiktok	112	31.6
Youtube	54	15.3
Facebook	42	11.9
X (formerly Twitter )	16	4.5
Frequency of Engagement with Influencers		
Daily	186	52.5

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Weekly	108	30.5
Monthly	44	12.4
Rarely	16	4.5

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*Source: Field Survey (2025)*

Table 4.1 reveals that out of the total survey respondents, 56.5% are female and 43.5% are male. Consistent with previous research, this suggests that female users are more likely to interact with the content of social media influencers, particularly on sites like TikTok and Instagram (Luarn, Chen & Chiu, 2025; Dandona et al., 2025). The study's findings on changes in consumer behaviour are affected by this demographic shift.

According to the data, the largest age group of respondents is between 21 and 30 years old (48%), followed by 31 to 40 years old (31.1%). According to Koivula (2024), Adeane, (2024) and Olumuji et al., (2025), young people are the demographic that heavily utilises influencer-driven material, particularly on visually appealing and engaging platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.

The percentage of respondents with bachelor's degrees was 57.6%, while the percentage with master's degrees was 22.0%. It would seem from this demographic breakdown that the sample consists of people who are somewhat knowledgeable and comfortable using technology. Because of this, people will probably be less inclined to believe influencer material when it claims to be genuine.

According to the statistics, the two most common platforms for engaging with influencer material are Instagram (36.7%) and TikTok (31.6%). Sokolova and Kefi (2020) found that the visual and interactive aspects of these platforms made them ideal for influencer marketing initiatives.

Of those who participated, 30.5% engage with influencers on a weekly basis, and 52.5% do so daily. The prevalence of influencer material in people's online activities is seen from this. This intense participation demonstrates the growing significance of influencers as gatekeepers of online consumer opinion.

### 4.3 Measurement Model Evaluation

Reliability and validity analyses were conducted to assess the quality of the measurement constructs. Table 4.2 presents the results for Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

**Table 4.2: Reliability and Validity Statistics**

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Influencer Credibility	0.88	0.91	0.65
Authenticity	0.85	0.90	0.61
Expertise	0.83	0.88	0.59
Consumer Trust	0.86	0.90	0.68
Consumer Engagement	0.84	0.89	0.64
Purchase Decision	0.87	0.91	0.67

*Source: Field Survey (2025)*

All constructs exceeded the acceptable reliability thresholds ( $\alpha \geq 0.70$ ;  $CR \geq 0.70$ ) and demonstrated good convergent validity ( $AVE \geq 0.50$ ). The Fornell-Larcker criterion confirmed discriminant validity, as each construct shared more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs.

#### 4.4 Structural Model Assessment

After confirming construct validity, the PLS algorithm and bootstrapping procedure were applied to test the hypothesized relationships. The model explained 64% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.64$ ) in consumer purchase decisions, indicating strong predictive capacity.

#### 4.5 Results of Objectives

##### **Objective 1: Examine how social media influencers shape consumer purchasing decisions among young adults**

The first analysis assessed the direct influence of social media influencers on consumers' purchase decisions.

**Table 4.3 : Path Analysis**

Path	$\beta$	t-value	p-value	Decision
Influencer Attributes → Purchase Decision	0.47	6.21	0.000	Supported

*Source: Field Survey (2025)*

The path coefficient ( $\beta = 0.47$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) shows that influencer attributes have a significant positive effect on consumer purchase decisions. This implies that when consumers perceive influencers as credible, authentic, and expert, they are more likely to be persuaded to make a purchase. The finding supports the Theory of Reasoned Action, which asserts that attitudes influenced by trusted communicators shape behavioral intentions.

This result aligns with Lou & Yuan (2019) and Sokolova & Kefi (2020), who found that credibility and trust are key determinants of purchase intentions in digital environments. In Ghana's context, this finding reflects the growing reliance of young consumers on influencer recommendations, especially through social platforms like Instagram and TikTok.

**Objective 2: Identify key attributes of social media influencers that influence consumer trust and engagement.**

**Table 4.4: Structural Model Results / Path Coefficients**

Path	$\beta$	t-value	p-value	Decision
Credibility → Trust	0.52	7.03	0.000	Supported
Authenticity → Engagement	0.41	5.29	0.000	Supported
Expertise → Trust	0.33	3.87	0.000	Supported

*Source: Field Survey (2025)*

The results indicate that credibility exerts the strongest influence on trust ( $\beta = 0.52$ ), followed by authenticity’s impact on engagement ( $\beta = 0.41$ ). Expertise also contributes significantly ( $\beta = 0.33$ ), suggesting that knowledgeable influencers build both trust and persuasion.

These results echo studies by Tafesse & Wood (2021) and Lee & Kim (2022), who emphasized authenticity as a critical dimension of influencer effectiveness. The implication is that young audiences value influencers who are relatable and transparent more than those who simply endorse products. Engagement is strengthened when influencers share genuine experiences or respond actively to followers.

**Objective 3: Analyse how content type, platform, and demographics moderate the relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing behavior.**

**Table 4.5: Moderation Analysis**

Moderator	Interaction Path	$\beta$	p-value	Decision
Platform Type	Influencer × Platform → Purchase	0.19	0.021	Supported
Content Type	Influencer × Content → Purchase	0.24	0.008	Supported
Gender	Influencer × Gender → Purchase	0.17	0.047	Supported
Age	Influencer × Age → Purchase	0.11	0.091	Not Supported

*Source: Field Survey (2025)*

Platform type and content format significantly moderate influencer effectiveness. Visual and interactive platforms (e.g., Instagram, TikTok) show stronger influencer–purchase relationships than text-based ones. Similarly, video and storytelling content elicit greater engagement and purchase intention. Gender differences were also observed, with female consumers showing slightly higher responsiveness. This finding corresponds with Campbell & Farrell (2020), who noted that video-based influencer content drives stronger consumer emotions and intentions. Younger consumers’ visual engagement patterns make short-form platforms more effective for marketing strategies.

The analysis reveals that an influencer's effectiveness in driving purchases is not universal but is significantly moderated by specific factors; most importantly, the type of content they create and the platform they use, while the gender of their audience also plays a key role. However, the age of the audience was found to be an insignificant moderator, indicating that the influencer's impact remains relatively consistent across different age groups. Therefore, to maximize campaign success, the focus should be on strategically aligning influencers with the right content format and social media platform for a gender-specific target audience.

**Table 4.6: Model Quality and Predictive Power**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
R <sup>2</sup> (Purchase Decision)	0.64	Strong explanatory power
f <sup>2</sup> (Effect Size)	0.29	Medium-to-large effect
Q <sup>2</sup> (Predictive Relevance)	0.41	Model has good predictive validity

*Source: Field Survey (2025)*

The model demonstrates strong explanatory capacity and meaningful predictive quality, supporting its robustness.

## 5.0 CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the study's major findings, draws conclusions based on the objectives and analysis, and provides recommendations for marketers, policymakers, and researchers. The chapter concludes by suggesting directions for future research on social media influence and digital consumer behavior.

#### 5.2 Summary of the Study

The study examined how social media influencers shape consumer purchasing decisions among young adults. Specifically, it aimed to (1) examine how influencers impact purchase behavior, (2) identify the key influencer attributes that influence consumer trust and engagement, and (3) analyse how content type, platform, and demographic factors moderate these relationships. The study employed a quantitative research design using survey data collected from young adult social media users between the ages of 18 and 35. The analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which allowed for the testing of multiple relationships among latent variables. The model demonstrated strong reliability and validity, explaining 64% of the variance in purchase decision ( $R^2 = 0.64$ ) indicating that social media influencers have a substantial impact on young consumers' purchasing behavior.

Findings revealed that influencer credibility, authenticity, and expertise significantly affect consumer trust and engagement, which in turn drive purchasing decisions. Moreover, platform type, content format, and gender significantly moderated these relationships, with visual and interactive platforms (such as TikTok and Instagram) producing the strongest effects.

### 5.3 Summary of Key Findings

The findings of the study revealed that social media influencers play a significant role in shaping consumer purchasing decisions among young adults. The results from the PLS-SEM analysis showed that influencer attributes such as credibility, authenticity, and expertise have a strong positive impact on consumers' purchase decisions ( $\beta = 0.47$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This implies that young adults are more inclined to buy products recommended by influencers they perceive as genuine, trustworthy, and knowledgeable.

Furthermore, the study identified the specific influencer attributes that drive consumer trust and engagement. Among these, credibility had the strongest effect on trust ( $\beta = 0.52$ ), while authenticity had the greatest influence on engagement ( $\beta = 0.41$ ). Expertise also emerged as a significant factor that enhances consumers' confidence in the influencers' product recommendations. These findings suggest that consumers are not only influenced by the popularity of influencers but also by their perceived honesty, transparency, and competence within their content niche.

Finally, the study analysed how content type, social media platform, and demographic characteristics moderate the relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing behaviour. The results revealed that both platform type and content format significantly influenced the strength of this relationship ( $p < 0.05$ ). Visual and interactive platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, as well as video-based content, were found to amplify the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns. Additionally, gender exhibited a minor moderating effect, indicating that female consumers were slightly more responsive to influencer marketing than males, while age differences within the young adult group were not statistically significant.

## **5.4 Discussion of Findings**

This research aimed to investigate the impact of social media influencers on the shopping choices of young people in Ghana. The research used PLS-SEM analysis to provide empirical data about the effect of traits such as trustworthiness, authenticity, and competence of influencers on customer trust, engagement, and subsequent purchasing behaviour. The results also indicated that platform type, content format, and gender influence these interactions. This section examines the principal results in respect to the current literature and the theoretical frameworks supporting the investigation.

### **5.4.1 Influence of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchasing Decisions**

The research demonstrated a substantial positive correlation between influencer characteristics and customer buying behaviour ( $\beta = 0.47, p < 0.001$ ). This affirms that social media influencers significantly affect the purchasing behaviour of young people in Ghana, especially on visually appealing sites like Instagram and TikTok. The robustness of this association indicates an increasing dependence on influencer-generated content for product information and lifestyle advice. This discovery corresponds with other research (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019), which emphasises that the persuasive allure of influencers arises from their perceived legitimacy, relatability, and visibility within certain groups. In Ghana's rapidly expanding digital landscape, influencers act as reliable middlemen between businesses and customers, particularly when conventional advertising diminishes in efficacy among younger demographics.

According to the Theory of Reasoned Action, the findings confirm that attitudes influenced by influencers substantially affect customers' behavioural intentions. When influencers convey favourable messages about items, they impact customer attitudes and subjective norms, which are crucial factors in the intention to buy. Consequently, young individuals increasingly see

influencers as reliable "opinion leaders," whose recommendations reduce perceived risk and enhance purchasing confidence.

#### **5.4.2 Influence of Credibility, Authenticity, and Expertise on Trust and Engagement**

The second aim investigated the particular features of influencers that impact customer trust and engagement. Credibility emerged as the most significant predictor of trust ( $\beta = 0.52$ ), trailed by competence ( $\beta = 0.33$ ). Authenticity proved to be the most significant predictor of involvement ( $\beta = 0.41$ ). These results corroborate the Source Credibility Theory, which asserts that the persuasiveness of a communication is significantly influenced by the perceived knowledge, trustworthiness, and attractiveness of the communicator. Trustworthy influencers who exhibit integrity, openness, and consistent conduct cultivate more trust among their followers. This trust therefore results in increased acceptance of product recommendations. The significant impact of authenticity on interaction supports the increasing assertion that customers, particularly young people, choose sympathetic and transparent online personas above scripted commercial content. This aligns with Pöyry et al. (2019), who claim that authenticity promotes significant encounters that strengthen emotional attachment and behavioural engagement.

Expertise significantly influences consumer confidence, since influencers exhibiting domain-specific expertise (e.g., beauty, fitness, technology, lifestyle) are more likely to instill trust. This aligns with Balaji (2025) and Tafesse & Wood (2021), who found that customers perceive educated influencers as trustworthy, thereby enhancing the likelihood of purchase. The results indicate that effective influencer marketing relies not just on popularity but also on fundamental relational qualities thus, credibility, honesty, and expertise.

### **5.4.3 Moderating Role of Content Type, Platform Type, and Demographics**

The third aim examined the moderating effects of platform type, content format, gender, and age on the influencer–purchase connection. The findings indicated that platform type ( $\beta = 0.19$ ,  $p = 0.021$ ) and content format ( $\beta = 0.24$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ) substantially modify this connection. Visual and interactive media, including Instagram and TikTok, were identified as amplifying influencer efficacy. This corresponds with other studies (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), indicating that algorithmic exposure and interactive multimedia formats enhance influencer persuasion by facilitating more profound narrative and heightened emotional engagement.

Video-based material was particularly influential, corroborating Zhang et al. (2022), who contend that product exposure and experience demos enhance impulsive purchasing and diminish decision-making ambiguity.

Gender had a moderate but significant moderating impact ( $\beta = 0.17$ ,  $p = 0.047$ ), with female consumers exhibiting marginally greater reaction to influencer marketing. This aligns with the findings of Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), which indicate that young women mostly depend on influencers for choices about fashion, beauty, and lifestyle items. Age did not substantially impact the connection, indicating that influencer-driven persuasion remained mostly uniform throughout the 18–35 age group.

The moderating effects together illustrate that influencer marketing is not universally applicable; rather, its efficacy relies on the alignment of the influencer, content format, and platform with the target population.

## **5.5 Conclusions**

The study concludes that social media influencers play a decisive role in shaping the purchasing decisions of young adults, as their perceived credibility and authenticity are crucial

determinants of consumer trust and subsequent buying intentions. The results affirm that credibility and authenticity are the most influential traits that drive consumer responses, as audiences tend to trust and engage more with influencers who are transparent, relatable, and demonstrate expertise within their niche. These findings align with the Source Credibility Theory and the Theory of Reasoned Action, both of which emphasize the importance of trust and perceived integrity in shaping behavioural intentions. Furthermore, the study establishes that consumer engagement acts as a vital bridge between influencer credibility and purchasing behaviour. Active interactions with influencer content such as likes, shares, comments, and participation in live sessions strengthen emotional connections and reinforce consumers' intention to purchase. The research also highlights that platform and content format significantly affect influencer effectiveness, with campaigns being more persuasive on visual and interactive platforms like TikTok and Instagram, where storytelling and real-time engagement enhance consumer involvement.

Lastly, demographic factors moderately influence consumer responsiveness; gender differences were found to be significant, with female consumers displaying slightly higher sensitivity to influencer promotions, while age variations within the young adult group were minimal. Overall, the study confirms that social media influence is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by credibility, authenticity, engagement, and platform dynamics.

## **5.6 Recommendations**

For marketers and brands, the study recommends a strong emphasis on influencer credibility and authenticity as central elements of effective digital marketing strategy. Businesses should collaborate with influencers whose personal values, tone, and communication style align closely with the brand's identity and who demonstrate genuine enthusiasm for the products they endorse. Such alignment not only builds trust but also enhances message credibility and consumer loyalty. Furthermore, marketers are encouraged to adopt platform-specific strategies,

focusing on highly visual and interactive platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, where engagement levels among young audiences are most pronounced. These platforms allow for creativity and deeper audience connection through visual storytelling and interactive formats.

Brands should also promote interactive and story-driven content, encouraging influencers to engage audiences through live sessions, personal narratives, and real-life product demonstrations. These forms of communication foster authenticity, increase engagement, and enhance consumer trust. Additionally, marketers should evaluate influencers based on engagement metrics rather than follower counts. Metrics such as likes, comments, shares, and audience sentiment provide a more accurate measure of influence and campaign effectiveness than sheer audience size, ensuring marketing resources are invested in truly impactful collaborations. For policymakers and regulators, the study recommends measures to enhance transparency in influencer marketing by enforcing clear guidelines that require influencers and brands to disclose paid partnerships. This ensures honesty in digital advertising and protects consumers from misleading endorsements. Policymakers should also develop ethical advertising frameworks to promote accountability among influencers and brands, ensuring marketing activities are conducted responsibly and in good faith. Lastly, digital literacy programs should be introduced or strengthened to educate young consumers on how to critically evaluate online content, recognize persuasive tactics, and make informed purchasing decisions. This will not only promote ethical marketing practices but also empower consumers in the evolving digital economy.

## **5.7 Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research should consider employing longitudinal designs to track changes in influencer–consumer relationships over time, allowing for a better understanding of how trust, engagement, and purchasing behaviour evolve in dynamic digital environments. Researchers may also integrate qualitative methods such as interviews and focus group discussions to gain deeper insights into the emotional and psychological factors that shape consumers’ responses to influencer marketing. In addition, comparative studies across different cultural and regional contexts would be valuable in exploring how social norms, digital literacy, and marketing practices influence the effectiveness of influencers globally. Finally, future studies could investigate the emerging field of AI-driven influencer marketing, examining how artificial intelligence and virtual influencers affect consumer perceptions of authenticity, trust, and engagement in the rapidly transforming landscape of digital communication.

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## QUESTIONNAIRE

### INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON CONSUMER PURCHASING DECISIONS: VALIDITY CLAIM

**Dear Respondent,**

You are kindly invited to participate in this academic study titled “**Influence of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchasing Decisions.**” The purpose of this study is to examine how social media influencers serve as the basis for which consumers make purchasing decisions.

Please below some questions I would like you to answer. I would be grateful if take some time to answer the questions below. All the answers you provide will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will be used for academic purposes only. Please feel free to answer the questions as candidly as possible.

Thank you.

#### **SECTION A: RESPONDENT’S BIOGRAPHIC DATA**

Please tick [] in the appropriate box or respond as applicable.

**1. Gender:**

Male []                  Female []

**2. Age:**

21 – 30 years []      31 – 40 years [] 41 – 50 years [] 51 – 60 years []  
Above 60 years []

**3. Educational level**

SHS []    Undergraduate []    Postgraduate []    Other []

**4. Primary social-media platform**

Instagram []    TikTok []    YouTube []    X-Twitter []    Facebook []    Other []

**5. How often do you engage with social-media influencers?**

Daily []    Weekly []    Monthly []    Rarely []

**SECTION B: THE EXTENT TO WHICH SOCIAL-MEDIA INFLUENCERS AFFECT CONSUMER PURCHASING DECISIONS AMONG YOUNG ADULTS**

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how social-media influencers influence young adults' purchasing decisions? Use the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral , 4 = Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

Item	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	I often rely on social-media influencers when deciding which products to buy.					
2	Influencer recommendations make me more confident about a product's quality.					
3	I am more likely to try a new brand if it is endorsed by a trusted influencer.					
4	The opinions of influencers affect my choice more than traditional advertisements.					
5	I usually search for influencer reviews before making a purchase.					
6	I have purchased a product mainly because it was featured by an influencer I follow.					
7	Influencer content encourages me to spend more on lifestyle or fashion items.					

**SECTION C: THE KEY ATTRIBUTES OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS (E.G., CREDIBILITY, AUTHENTICITY, EXPERTISE) THAT INFLUENCE CONSUMER TRUST AND ENGAGEMENT.**

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the key attributes of social media influencers (e.g., credibility, authenticity, and expertise) that influence consumer trust and engagement.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral , 4 = Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

Item	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	I believe that influencers who are knowledgeable about a product are more convincing.					
2	I trust influencers who are transparent about sponsorships or paid promotions.					
3	Influencers who appear genuine and honest strengthen my trust in their recommendations.					
4	The attractiveness or charisma of an influencer increases my interest in the products promoted.					
5	I consider influencers experts in their niches (e.g., beauty, technology, lifestyle).					
6	I am more engaged with influencers who consistently interact with their followers.					
7	I feel more connected to influencers who share personal experiences and real-life stories					

**SECTION D: MODERATING ROLE OF CONTENT TYPE, PLATFORM, AND CONSUMER DEMOGRAPHICS**

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding how content type, platform used, and consumer demographic characteristics moderate the relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing behaviour. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral , 4 = Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

Item	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	Video-based content (e.g., TikTok, YouTube) influences my purchasing decisions more than images.					
2	I am more likely to purchase when an influencer provides product demonstrations or tutorials.					
3	Instagram posts or reels affect my perception of product quality.					
4	I am influenced differently depending on the platform the content appears on.					
5	My age and social-media experience affect how I respond to influencer content.					
6	I pay more attention to influencer content shared by peers of my own age group.					
7	Interactive features such as live streams and Q&A sessions increase my willingness to buy products.					

*Thank you for your time and valuable input.*

## INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON CONSUMER PURCHASING DECISIONS: VALIDITY CLAIM

### ORIGINALITY REPORT

14%

SIMILARITY INDEX

11%

INTERNET SOURCES

8%

PUBLICATIONS

5%

STUDENT PAPERS

### PRIMARY SOURCES

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