

## **The influence of demographic characteristics, psychographic traits, and social media influencers' popularity on consumer behaviour**

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### **Abstract**

Working with influencers may have a good effect on brand recognition, trust, and loyalty, all of which contribute to the formation of purchase intent among customers. This study attempted to examine the impact of the influencers' demographics, psychographics, and popularity signals on the food products consumers' behaviors. This study uses the descriptive analytical approach. The questionnaire is used as the main data collection tool. The population of this research consisted of consumers of food products in KSA. The target sample of this research is 444 participants. The findings of the study showed that the influencers' demographics, psychographics, and popularity signals have a moderate impact on the consumers' behaviors with regard to food products. The influencers' demographics have an effect on the consumers' behavior. Also, the influencers' psychographics have an effect on the consumers' behavior. Furthermore, the influencers' popularity signals have an effect on the consumers' behavior. It is shown that the influencers' number of shares, followers, likes, comments, and interactions respectively, affect the consumers' behavior. It is essential to hire genuine and trustworthy influencers in order to achieve positive online consumer purchasing intentions and make more sales as an organization. This research adds to the literature on marketing by exploring the impact of influencers' on consumer behavior in the food industry in Saudi Arabia which has not been explored before.

**Keywords:** Social media, Customer behavior, social media influencer, Influencer marketing, social media marketing, Influencer characteristic.

## تأثير الخصائص الديموغرافية والسمات النفسية وشعبية المؤثرين على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على سلوك المستهلك

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### المستخلص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فحص تأثير الخصائص الديموغرافية والنفسية وإشارات الشهرة للمؤثرين في وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على سلوكيات مستهلكي المنتجات الغذائية. تعتمد هذه الدراسة في منهجية بحثها على النهج الوصفي التحليلي حيث تم استخدام الاستبيان كأداة رئيسية لجمع البيانات. وكانت العينة المستهدفة لهذا البحث هي ٢٧٦ مشاركاً. وقد أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن الخصائص الديموغرافية والنفسية وإشارات الشهرة للمؤثرين لها تأثير معتدل على سلوكيات المستهلكين فيما يتعلق بالمنتجات الغذائية. أثبتت الدراسة أن الخصائص الديموغرافية للمؤثرين تؤثر بشكل كبير على سلوك المستهلكين. كما أن الخصائص النفسية للمؤثرين لها تأثير على سلوك المستهلكين. علاوة على ذلك، فإن إشارات الشهرة للمؤثرين لها تأثير على سلوك المستهلكين. وقد أفادت نتيجة هذه الدراسة بأن عدد المشاركات، المتابعين، الإعجابات، التعليقات، والتفاعلات للمؤثرين تؤثر على سلوك المستهلكين. تقترح هذه الدراسة ضرورة توظيف مؤثرين حقيقيين وموثوقين لتحقيق نوايا شراء إيجابية عبر الإنترنت وزيادة المبيعات. وتضيف هذه الدراسة إلى الأدبيات المتعلقة بالتسويق من خلال استكشاف تأثير المؤثرين على سلوك المستهلكين في صناعة الأغذية في المملكة العربية السعودية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، سلوك العملاء، المؤثرون على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، التسويق المؤثر، التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، سمعة المؤثر.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Introduction

In recent years, influencer marketing has become famous for helping businesses reach their target audience. Influencer marketing entails the collaboration of brands and influencers who market products and services online (Vrontis et al. 2021). Marketing has evolved from traditional marketing strategies such as cold calling, direct email, billboards, and print ads, to digital marketing strategies like influencer marketing and social media marketing among others (Grafström et al., 2018).

Influencer marketing has evolved as a new phenomenon compared to other marketing strategies. Its significant surge occurred in 2016, with companies using social media influencers, individuals who have amassed a significant following on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, as an effective marketing tool to reach their target audience (Vrontis et al., 2021). Recent studies show that influencer marketing influences consumer attitude toward the brand being promoted, increasing brand awareness and productivity, particularly among the target market. Influencers are moderators in this marketing strategy (Vrontis et al. 2021).

Influencer marketing is applied when companies target key individuals, named influencers, who align with the brand values and operate in favor of the companies to find potential customers (More & Lingam, 2019). Furthermore, influencers often contribute new information and have the ability to affect attitudes and behaviors of others, such as help potential customers make a purchase decision (Liu et al., 2015). An influencer must be trustful otherwise the brand risk to lose its credibility (Gerardo, 2017).

Influencers' demographics, psychographics, and popularity signals are critical factors influencing consumer behavior (Anjos et al., 2022; Coates et al., 2019; Reagan et al., 2020). It is reported that the influencer's educational level, age, and gender affect the consumers' behaviors (Hecht et al., 2020). Also, the consumers are affected by the influencer's lifestyle, values, and beliefs (Winkler et al., 2022). On the other hand, Halim et al (2020) and Isyanto et al (2020) concluded that influencers who have a large number of followers are more likely to persuade the consumers to purchase and motivate their followers to buy the goods and the services that they advertise.

Marketing influencers have prominent roles in consumers' behaviors, especially in the Food & Beverage (F & B) sector because this sector is a vital sector for all consumers of all kinds, ages, and levels (Anjos et al., 2022). Also, the F & B companies are in millions and multiple brands exist even for the same product. So, marketing in F & B is witnessing severe competition which calls for using all influential marketing means, especially marketing influencers (Coates et al., 2019; Reagan et al., 2020).

Influencers' emergence has revolutionized how brands in the food and beverage industry promote their products and services (Winzer et al., 2022). There are a lot of factors that need to be taken into consideration in order to create a successful marketing collaboration between the influencer and the business. Some people argue that a connection between the product and the influencer's brand is vital for a good partnership or that a good relationship between an influencer and its followers leads to higher authenticity (Halim et al., 2020). In contrast, others argue that the higher number of followers an influencer has, is important to create a better response from its followers (Winkler et al., 2022). Furthermore, an influencer with a higher number of followers might be considered more credible compared to influencers with a smaller number of followers.

Based on the above, it is shown that the influencers have a great impact on consumers attitudes as the consumers are affected by the demographics, lifestyles, values, and popularity signals of the influencers. Therefore, this study attempts to explore the influence of influencers' demographics, psychographics, and popularity signals on consumer behavior from the consumers' perspectives, especially the consumers of food products in KSA.

### 1.2 Research problem:

Numerous research studies have investigated the impact of social media influencers on consumer behaviour, including attitudes toward products (Pollack et al., 2021), purchase intentions (Winzer et al.,

2022), impulsive buying (Reagan et al., 2020), and brand engagement (Coates et al., 2019). However, there is still a gap in our knowledge about how social media influencers affect consumers in the F&B industry. While several reviews on customer engagement and social media influencer marketing (Anjos et al., 2022; Winzer et al., 2022) are available, additional research is required from a contextual perspective, especially given that few studies have investigated the impact of social media marketing on consumer behavior specific to the F&B industry. This study aims to fill this gap by focusing on Saudi consumers to detect their views of a point on the impacts of influencers on their attitudes while purchasing.

The findings of this study will be helpful to several stakeholders. To begin with, the study's results will help other researchers to gain deep insights into the impact of influencers' demographics, psychographics, and popularity signals on consumer behaviour. Future researchers will leverage this data as a literature review to shape their studies. As a result, this could contribute to the existing literature on the impact of influencers on consumer behaviour, bridging existing gaps.

Additionally, the findings of this study could be used to inform businesses' influencer marketing strategies and help them identify the most effective influencers to partner with. It could enable managers in the food and beverage industry to understand the significance of influencers' demographics, psychographics, and popularity signals on consumer behaviour. This could prompt them to implement an influencer marketing strategy in their marketing plan initiatives. Key players, mainly companies in the food and beverage industry, could use the study's findings to refine their existing marketing strategies. Finally, the results from this study could be used by other sectors to implement influencer marketing.

## **2. Theoretical background and previous studies**

### ***2.1 Theoretical background***

#### *Influencer Marketing*

Influencer marketing is "a type of marketing that focuses on using key leaders to drive a brand's message to the larger market" (Zak & Hasprova, 2020, 18) is only one description of influencer marketing. Like Masuda et al. (2022), I consider an influencer to be a powerful individual who has built a formidable personal brand. The authors note that these two definitions just scratch the surface of what is needed to characterize influencer marketing in the digital space. This research will describe influencer marketing as the practice of using an online personality with a sizable fan base to promote a product or service. Additionally, the individual is respected and relied upon, so firms use them to increase product and brand recognition (Leban & Voyer, 2020).

Influencer marketing is more effective than traditional advertising since it blends in with the rest of the platform's content, according to previous studies (Al-Emadi & Ben Yahia, 2020). Since the communication is more credible, the recipient is more likely to accept it (Changa et al., 2016). It is important to consider the fact that consumers have a choice in the influencers they follow, that they are open to being influenced by those influencers, and that they trust both the influencer and the influencer's perspective (Le, 2021). Chong (2020) notes that finding and selecting appropriate influencers remains a significant obstacle for marketers. When promoting a product or service, influencer marketing takes a more round-about approach by harnessing the potential of Word of Mouth (WOM) (Ooi et al., 2023).

Pardhan et al. (2023) have proven that the influencer benefits from an increase in their number of followers, since doing so makes them seem more popular. The same study also looked at how the ratio of followers to those followed by an influencer change in such a scenario. If the influencer has a large number of followers, this might be counterproductive.

The function of influencers in product promotion has also been the subject of numerous studies. Coates et al. (2019) found that more than a third of participants are motivated and receptive to advice about healthier meals and that half of the participants are motivated on occasion. Despite the fact that most of the influencers lack any training or certification in nutrition. This demonstrates that influential individuals may influence the opinions of others through the information they provide. Companies have caught on to the potential of leveraging influencers to reach their target population for the promotion of their brand and goods.

### *Influencers and Customers' Attitudes*

Expertise in a particular field, including healthy living, travel, cuisine, lifestyle, beauty, or fashion, is a common qualification for social media influencers (Huddes & Lou, 2023). In addition, due to their massive fan bases, social media influencers are frequently classified as "micro-celebrities" (Leung et al., 2022).

Consumers rely on ever-present information sources like Instagram to stay abreast of the latest news and offerings from the brands and manufacturers that pique their attention. Instagram, which lets its users take and edit photographs and videos, is the fastest-growing social media platform (Leban & Voyer, 2020). Furthermore, marketers often utilize it to sell their product since it has a greater degree of interaction than other SNs (Masuda et al., 2022). As it has been observed that after viewing a product, Instagram users tend to perform positive actions such as searching for information, following the brand account, or making a purchase of products (Zak & Hasprova, 2020), businesses take advantage of using Instagram when promoting their brands, products, or services. When it comes to influencer marketing, Instagram is a major player. According to research conducted by Ooi et al. (2023), nine out of 10 marketers favor using Instagram as a platform for their influencer marketing efforts.

Today's thought leaders tend to be influencers. Leaders have an impact on others around them, particularly on those who follow them (Hudders & Lou, 2023), and may even influence their decisions. These influential users serve as role models for the users who look up to them and take their advice. By developing a close relationship with their audience, influencers may earn their followers' respect and trust. They motivate them and introduce them to new companies and goods that, in turn, the followers may decide to buy or advocate for (Masuda et al., 2022). Human Brand Theory, which asserts that a human being may be transformed into a human brand—a persona that evokes an emotional response from its target market—provides more evidence for this idea (Pardhan et al., 2022).

With its rise in popularity as both a social network and a channel for conveying persuasive messages to organizations or agencies, influencer marketing has become a potent online weapon in consumer persuasion (Leung et al., 2022). Instagram is used by businesses as a marketing tool and channel to reach their intended audience with the support of influential users.

According to Le (2021), consumers may utilize social media to raise brand awareness, voice their preference for a certain brand, and shape the company's public perception. When it comes to making important life choices, users might look to the social impact provided by these platforms. Humans are naturally susceptible to social influence because of their tendency to trust the opinions of others around them. Chong's (2020) research shows the importance of both social impact and the impression of purchase intent in shaping customer behaviour. High-engagement posts, as measured by likes, comments, and shares, are more likely to elicit a favorable reaction from the audience in terms of their willingness to make a purchase.

Companies and brands should delimit their relationship with consumers by rethinking the paradigms of digital marketing with marketing and advertising professionals (Changa et al., 2016). Social influence is a complex source of information in which the opinions and behaviours of consumers have a significant impact. Within these social networks, opinion leaders develop, armed with special insights, authority, and commercial clout. Because of the specifics of the situation, they are in a position to affect people's choices and actions while making purchases.

### *Influencer Marketing and the Food & Beverage Industry*

The food industry is one of the world's oldest industries. Word of mouth has been an important part of the marketing mix for generations. The lack of other advertising channels was a major factor in this. In addition to being the most trusted method of advertising, word of mouth ranks highest among marketing techniques (Anjos et al., 2022).

Word of mouth used to be the sole form of advertising accessible to food businesses, but with the rise of the internet and social media, that has changed. In reality, it's only one of several channels that businesses utilize to communicate with their customers these days (Coates et al., 2019).

According to Reagan et al. (2020), a food influencer is any online content provider who focuses on food and has a sizable and/or dedicated social following. One of the oldest professions, including restaurants,

chefs, and grocery stores, is always developing. Humans have always taken care to nurture both their bodies and their spirits. A shared experience of a hearty dinner brimming with savory flavours and a warm, welcoming atmosphere will always serve as a unifying force (Pollack et al., 2021).

Inspirational purchasing ideas may be found on social media. Rather than following companies, social media users are now more likely to follow friends and celebrities. This makes it simple for them to see how contemporary ways of living evolve (McCarthy et al., 2022).

In other words, people aren't checking social media to learn about the latest brand promotions. Instead, they are using social media as a means of maintaining relationships and learning about other ways of living (Winzer et al., 2022).

Content producers are the lifeblood of influencer marketing in the food business. Marketers like collaborating with account managers who share their enthusiasm for food and photography (Anjos et al., 2022).

As long as artists are allowed to take risks and develop their ideas, organic efforts in tandem with influencers often provide the best results. As a consequence, brands' primary function is to inform their partners of the constraints placed on them by the brand's established cultural norms. Everything else is up to the author's imagination (Halim et al., 2020).

### ***Influencer's Demographics***

The purpose of collecting and analyzing data on a certain group of people is known as demographics (Jin et al., 2019). Gender, age, socioeconomic position, marital status, religious and racial identification are all examples of such factors. Governments and corporations, among others, may benefit much from demographic information. To increase sales, companies tailor their offerings to target demographics, and then attempt to communicate with those groups in the most engaging manner possible (Brown & Fiorella, 2013).

A market demography is a segment of the population that is statistically likely to purchase or utilize a company's product or service. Packaging, advertisements, product placement, public relations campaigns, and so on will all be designed with a particular target audience in mind (Kim & Kim, 2021).

Harrigan et al. (2021) reported that demographics are essential in marketing. Organizations' product and service portfolios are heavily influenced by market demography. According to Han et al. (2023), it might be difficult to narrow down potential customers by identifying all the relevant demographic information. It's important for businesses to differentiate between the people who purchase and utilize their products so that they can tailor their marketing strategies accordingly. Teenagers and preteens, despite their lack of disposable cash, may also be considered soft targets.

### ***Influencer's Psychographics***

The word psychographics comes from the field of marketing, and it describes research into consumers' characteristics including personality, values, attitudes, interests, and behaviours. Marketers utilize it to categorize customers into groups with similar traits, allowing them to better meet those customers' specific desires and requirements (Pick, 2020). Psychographics refers to the intangible characteristics of a person. Values, hobbies, and way of life all fall under this category. Marketers often make use of psychographic information to narrow their focus on potential consumers who have similar attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours (Brown & Fiorella, 2013).

While consumer psychographics may be a useful tool for marketers, it's crucial to keep in mind that not all customers are easily classified. There is always going to be some degree of crossover across groups, therefore it's best to focus on the individual rather than the collective when crafting your message (Jin et al., 2019).

According to Brown and Fiorella (2013), there are three primary categories of psychographics:

### ***1-Personality Psychographics***

Individuals may be categorised and studied using their personality features with the help of psychographics. Using this knowledge, marketers may tailor their approaches to reach certain demographics with effective messages (Jin et al., 2019).

### ***2-Values Psychographics***

Segmenting individuals according to their values and beliefs is a common application of values psychographics. Marketers may benefit from this knowledge by learning what drives customers and how their values shape their purchasing choices (Kim & Kim, 2021).

### ***3-Lifestyle Psychographics***

People may be broken down into several groups depending on their lifestyle and psychographics (Mabkhot et al., 2022).

### ***Influencer's Popularity Signals***

Users' interactions with the website's material published on social media platforms are examples of popularity signals (Han et al., 2023) or social signals. Search engines place more weight on a page with a high number of social signals, which include a high number of shares, likes, and overall social visibility. These actions are comparable to backlinks in that they are considered a sort of citation that helps a page's organic search ranking (Kim & Kim, 2021).

Growing social proof of worth and authority in the marketer's domain. If many people like and share a page, it must be legit and filled with useful or interesting information or media. Since search engines aren't always up to date with the lightning-fast trends that characterize the social media world, it's crucial to keep your finger on its pulse (Harrigan et al., 2021).

### ***Influencer Marketing in Saudi Arabia***

Saudi Arabia has paid a lot of attention to online influencers in the last several years. Credibility mediates the relationship between influencers and purchase intentions among Saudi consumers. According to research done in the Eastern Region of Saudi Arabia, credibility was shown to serve a mediating function between social media influencers and purchase intentions (Mabkhot et al., 2022).

In today's highly connected society, social media platforms have special importance as the most widely used means of global communication. It has simplified the process of communication between individuals and between companies and their target audiences. It is as effective in Saudi Arabia as it is everywhere else. Over 90% of Saudis are active on social media nowadays (GAS, 2020), making the country one of the most socially connected in the world.

Many different social media sites exist in Saudi Arabia; however, their user bases are quite different. Everyone has their favorite social media platform. Some Facebook users may not be interested in social media platforms like Twitter, Snapchat, or Instagram, and vice versa. There may also be persons who use more than five platforms or who rely only on WhatsApp (Mabkhot et al., 2022).

In Saudi Arabia, 17.9 million people use social media daily and spend an average of 3.5 hours each session. It has been shown that 59% of Saudi social media users spend more time per day researching companies through social media than the worldwide average of 2.45 hours per day. Top TikTok influencers in Bahrain, Oman, and Saudi Arabia kept their follower bases growing at an average pace of 65% between February 2020 and August 2020. During the Holy Month, people in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait spent an average of 77 minutes each day on Snapchat. In the last year, content consumption among Snapchat Discover users has surged by over 50% (GAS, 2020). Therefore, the Saudi market for Snapchat is significant. Some firms in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt are more focused on digital strategies as a consequence of lockdowns, according to a poll conducted in those countries (Radcliffe & Lam, 2018).

## **2.2 Previous Studies**

Several studies have investigated the influence of influencers on consumer behaviour. A recent study by Nieto et al (2023) aimed to determine the extent and nature of Mexican children's and adolescents' exposure to digital food and beverage marketing during recreational internet use. A crowdsourcing strategy was used to recruit 347 participants during the COVID-19 lockdown. Participants completed a survey and recorded 45 minutes. The findings showed that the Mexican children and adolescents were exposed to unhealthy digital food marketing. The Government should enforce evidence-based mandatory regulations on digital media.

Some studies have focused on the impact of influencers' demographics, such as age, gender, and ethnicity, on consumer behaviour. For instance, a study by Grafström et al (2018) found that Swedish consumers, particularly millennials, are influenced by influencer marketing. The authors identified several reasons, such as the influencer's alignment of promotions, level of credibility and trustworthiness of the messages, and the change in style. Another study by Rasmussen (2018) found that US consumers tend to follow influencers similar to them regarding demographics. Trustworthiness and credibility were also key factors influencing consumer perception of a brand being promoted by influencers. Lauri & Sreeramulu (2019) studied consumer buying behavior concerning personal care products. The study involved 172 participants from India. The findings showed that brand influencers influenced consumers' buying behaviour.

Kavaliauskienė & Margis (2019) analyzed the effect of influencers on consumer behaviour. The authors conducted a quantitative study investigating how influencers in Lithuania influenced consumers purchasing decisions. The research team interviewed 330 respondents on their perceptions of Coca-Cola products being influenced by popular influencers. The findings showed that influencers were crucial in influencing consumers' purchasing decisions.

Finally, de Castro et al (2021) stated that social media influencers influenced consumer behaviours in the food and beverage industry. The authors recognized that social media influencers played a vital role in influencing adolescents to purchase beverage products. The findings also revealed the type of influencers contributed to the attitudes and perceptions of the target consumers in the market.

The above literature shows the connection between social media influencer and consumers' attitudes and found that credibility plays a mediating role between social media influencers and consumers' attitudes. This is also true of influencers, who can affect customer purchase intentions. In this research, the link between consumers' attitudes and influencers' demographics, popularity signs, and psychographics are established. This study is applied among food products customers who use online platforms in KSA of Saudi Arabia.

Based on the above literature, the below hypotheses can be stated:

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between influencers' demographics and consumer behaviour.

H2: There is a statistically significant relationship between influencers' psychographics and consumer behaviour.

H3: There is a statistically significant relationship between influencers' popularity signals and consumer behaviour.

## **3.1. Research Design**

This study uses the descriptive analytical approach. Gathering information that can demonstrate what happened is the first step in descriptive research, which also entails arranging, tabulating, depicting, and describing the gathered data. Tables are commonplace to help illustrate findings and provide context for the reader. Descriptive statistics are useful for distilling meaning from enormous amounts of raw data that are inaccessible to the human mind. The present research used description as a tool to organize data into patterns that become apparent during analysis involving in-depth narrative descriptions of small numbers of instances.

### 3.2. Target Population and Sample Size

As stated earlier, the aim of this study is to investigate the impacts of influencers on consumer attitudes while purchasing. Therefore, the target sample of this study is the Saudi-based consumer who followed social media influencers.

Seeking to gather data from the entire population of Saudi Arabia would be impossible, so acquiring a sample from the population at large is thought to be an acceptable method for this study. Given this fact, a non-probability convenience sampling technique was employed to draw the study sample. Using this technique can help in obtaining an adequate sample size. Regarding the research topic, the larger the sample size, the more representative it is of society. An online survey was distributed through social media, and 374 were returned. However, 107 were omitted due to incomplete or not followers of social media influencers. Setting the sample size for this research at 276 was considered sufficient and is a similar sample size to those used in other similar studies.

### 3.3. Data Collection Instrument

A questionnaire was used as the primary method of data collection. The questionnaire items were written by the researcher after a thorough consideration of the available empirical data. The researcher chose to use a questionnaire since it is conducive to collecting data from a sizable sample and can be completed conveniently by participants (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). The questionnaire is used because it is easy to distribute and to get information for a large volume of participants (Sileyew, 2019).

In order to construct the questionnaire, the main items are taken from previous studies and the sections and items are written based on the research questions. Also, Secondary data sources are used such as published journal articles, books, and theses on the research topic. Below are the items of the questionnaire and the relevant references:

<b>1- Influencers' Demographics</b>	Halim et al (2020), Hecht et al (2020), Isyano et al (2020)
The age of the influencer affects my purchasing decision	
The gender of the influencer affects my decision to purchase the product	
The educational level of the influencer affects my purchasing decision	
The geographical location of the influencer affects my purchasing decision	
The marital status of the influencer affects my purchasing decision	Masuda et al (2022), Anjos et al (2022), Vrontis et al (2021)
<b>2- Influencers' Psychographics</b>	
The opinions of the influencers affect my decision to purchase the product	
I am affected by the lifestyle of the influencer who market the product	
The personal characteristics of the influencers affect my purchasing decision	
The interests and hobbies of the influencers affect my purchasing decision	
The values and principles of the influencers affect my purchasing decision	Winzer et al (2022) & Mc Carthy et al (2022)
<b>3- Influencers' Popularity Signals</b>	
I trust the influencers who have a large number of followers	
I am affected by the influencers who have a large number of likes.	
I feel excited by the influencers who have a large number of comments.	
I am affected by the influencers who have a large number of shares.	Batat (2019), Lee (2010), Halim et al (2022), Masuda et al (2022)
The volume of the interactions with the influencers affects my decision to purchase	
<b>4- Consumer Behavior</b>	
I most likely tend to purchase the product recommended by the influencers I follow	
I only depend on online influencers when I intend to purchase a product	
I purchase the products that are promoted by my favorite influencer	
I consider the products promoted by influencers to be better than others.	
I usually find that the influencers' reviews are right and real	

#### 3.3.1. Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire had two main sections. In the first section, participants were asked basic questions

about their sociodemographic characteristics (gender – age – job – education - income). The second section consisted of (4) sub-sections which are described as follows:

1. **Influencers' demographics:** this sub-section consisted of (5) items.
2. **Influencers' psychographics:** this sub-section consisted of (5) items.
3. **Popularity signals:** this sub-section consisted of (5) items.
4. **Consumer behaviour:** this sub-section consisted of (5) items.

The survey employed a five-point Likert scale, from which respondents could select "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," "disagree," or "strongly disagree." This scale is selected because it is more accurate and give a wide range of responses (Sidlecki, 2020). Items were written in English and Arabic and designed electronically through Google Forms. Participants were given the questionnaire to fill out at their leisure. The questionnaire was sent electronically through a link to the participants.

### 3.3.2. Validity and Reliability

The researcher ensured the questionnaire's face validity by checking that it accurately assessed the variables of interest. Some judges with expertise in the topic were given access to the questionnaire. The researcher revised the questionnaire and reworded the items that needed more clarity and relevance in light of the judges' suggestions and remarks. Below are some examples of the corrections made on the questionnaire:

- "I purchase the product based on the influencers" is changed to "I most likely tend to purchase the product recommended by the influencers I follow"
- "I am influenced by the gender of the influencer" is changed to "the gender of the influencer affects my decision to purchase the product".
- "I imitate the lifestyle of the influencer" is changed to "I am affected by the lifestyle of the influencer who market the product".

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was utilized to determine the level of reliability between questionnaire items in this study. According to Hair et al., )2006(a score > 0.70 indicates a good level of reliability, between 0.60 and 0.70 is acceptable so long as other indicators of validity are good, but the score should not fall below 0.70. Cronbach's Alpha Results for all the sections of the questionnaire are as shown in table 3.2 below:

**Table 3.2**

#### **Cronbach's Alpha Results**

Section	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient	Strength of Association
Influencers' demographics	0.744	Acceptable
Influencers' psychographics	0.812	Acceptable
Popularity signals	0.847	Acceptable
Consumer behaviour	0.789	Acceptable

### 3.5. Data Analysis

Choosing the appropriate statistical methods requires considering both the objectives of the study and the nature of the data being collected (Sileyew, 2019). In light of the present work's research question and theoretical framework, only appropriate data were employed. The mean, percentage, standard deviation, and rank of the scores were the primary measures of statistical significance considered in this study. Also, regression analysis is used to show the statistical relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable.

### 3.6 Ethical Considerations

In accordance with the recommendations set forth by Keskinbora (2019), it is imperative to accord a high degree of importance to ethical considerations during the process of preparing research. In particular, ethical practices were followed during the questionnaire stage and in all other steps of the research process. The participants were informed about the questionnaire and the research project in general, and their consent was obtained prior to their participation. No private or confidential information was requested, and the participants were assured that their privacy would be preserved. This ensured respect for the freedom of the participants and the protection of their information and privacy. Moreover, the contributions of the authors and other researchers to the study were duly acknowledged, thereby ensuring that this ethical aspect of the study was taken into account. In addition to the aforementioned, it was confirmed that the involvement of the participants was voluntary, and they were assured that the data would be collected for academic purposes only.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Responses Related to Participants' Demographics

This section presents the findings related to the participants' sociodemographic characteristics, which are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

The Respondents' Sociodemographic Characteristics

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	42	15.20%
Female	243	88.04%
<b>Total</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>100%</b>
Age	Frequency	Percentage
From 18 – 25 Years	66	23.90%
From 26 – 33 Years	117	42.39%
From 34 – 41 Years	70	25.36%
From 42 – 48 Years	15	5.40%
From 49 – 56 Years	8	2.89%
<b>Total</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>100%</b>
Job	Frequency	Percentage
Student	32	11.59%
Government	27	9.78%
Private sector	178	64.49%
Employer	32	11.59%
Other	7	2.53%
<b>Total</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>100%</b>
Education	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary	12	4.34%
Diploma	85	30.70%
Bachelor	117	42.39%
Master	36	13.04%
Doctoral	26	9.42%
<b>Total</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>100%</b>
Income	Frequency	Percentage
From 3000 – 5000 SAR	79	28.62%
From 6000 – 10000 SAR	125	45.28%
From 11000 – 15000 SAR	47	17.02%

Above 15000 SAR	25	9.05%
<b>Total</b>	276	100%

The above table shows the results related to the respondents' demographics. The findings show that the percentage of females (88.04%) is higher than the percentage of males (15.2%). Also, the findings show that most of the respondents are in the age category 26 – 33 years (42.39%), followed by those who are from 34-41 years (25.36%), then those who are from 18-25 years (23.9%), those who are from 42 – 48 years (5.4%), and those who are from 49 – 56 years (2.8%).

Regarding the *education* variable, most respondents held a bachelor's degree (64.4%), followed by those who hold a diploma degree (30.7%), then those who hold a master's degree (13.04%), those who hold a doctoral degree diploma (9.4%), and those who hold a secondary degree (4.3%).

As for the *job* variable, the percentage of those who work as students are (11.5%) of the whole respondents and those who work in the government represent (9.7%), those who work in the private sector is (64.4%), those who work as employers represent (11.5%), and those who work in other jobs represent (2.5%) of the entire respondents.

Regarding the *income* variable, the findings show that those who earn from 3000 – 5000 SAR are (28.6%), those who earn from 6000 – 10000 SAR are (46.9%), those who earn from 11000 – 15000 SAR are (17.02%), and those who earn above 15000 SAR (9.05%).

#### 4.2. Responses Related to Questionnaire Items

The findings related to the questionnaire items, which consisted of (4) sub-sections are presented below. The mean score, standard deviation, and order of items are shown for the items of each section.

##### 4.2.1. The Responses Related to Influencers' Demographics

Below are the responses of the participants to the items that examined the respondents' view of the influencers' demographics items in the questionnaire:

Table 4.2

Responses Related to Influencers' Demographics

S	Statements	Frequency					Mean	Standard Deviation	Order
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree			
1	The age of the influencer affects my purchasing decision	44	122	47	26	14	3.48	2.11	1
2	The gender of the influencer affects my decision to purchase the product	39	75	65	61	16	3.15	1.84	4
3	The educational level of the influencer affects my purchasing decision	35	101	62	42	14	3.28	1.98	3
4	The geographical location of the influencer affects my purchasing decision	51	89	65	40	12	3.41	2.09	2
5	The marital status of the influencer affects my purchasing decision	24	93	72	43	24	3.11	1.78	5
<b>Total Mean</b>		<b>3.29</b>							

The above table shows the participants' responses to the factors related to influencers' demographics that affect consumer behaviours. As shown in the table, the total mean for all the items of the section

is (3.29) which indicates that the participants moderately agree on these factors and perceive that these factors have a moderate impact on their consuming behaviour.

As shown in the findings in the above table, the influencers' demographics that affect the consumer's behaviours, ordered from the highest to the lowest mean, are as follows: "the age of the influencer affects my purchasing decision" (M=3.48), "the geographical location of the influencer affects my purchasing decision" (M=3.41), "the educational level of the influencer affects my purchasing decision" (M=3.28), "the gender of the influencer affects my decision to purchase the product" (M=3.15), and "the marital status of the influencer affects my purchasing decision" (M=3.11).

4.2.2. The Responses Related to Influencers' Psychographics

Below are the responses of the participants to the items that examined the respondents' view of the influencers' psychographics items in the questionnaire:

Table 4.3  
Responses Related to Influencers' Demographics

S	Statements	Frequency					Mean	Standard Deviation	Order
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree			
1	The opinions of the influencers affect my decision to purchase the product	41	116	54	30	14	3.44	2.19	2
2	I am affected by the lifestyle of the influencer who markets for the product	47	92	63	30	20	3.32	2.01	4
3	The personal characteristics of the influencers affects my purchasing decision	43	96	56	43	15	3.30	1.84	5
4	The interests and hobbies of the influencers affects my purchasing decision	55	95	54	32	17	3.41	2.04	3
5	The values and principles of the influencers affect my purchasing decision	57	105	47	33	15	3.52	2.23	1
<b>Total Mean</b>		<b>3.40</b>							

The above table shows the participant's responses to the factors related to influencers' psychographics that affect consumer behaviours. As shown in the table, the total mean for all the items of the section is (3.40) which indicates that the participants moderately agree on these factors and perceive that these factors have a moderate impact on their consuming behaviour.

As shown in the findings in the above table, the influencers' psychographics that affect the consumer's behaviours, ordered from the highest to the lowest mean, are as follows: "the values and principles of the influencers affect my purchasing decision" (M=3.52), "the opinions of the influencers affect my decision to purchase the product" (M=3.44), "the interests and hobbies of the influencers affects my purchasing decision" (M=3.41), "I am affected by the lifestyle of the influencer who market for the product" (M=3.32), and "the personal characteristics of the influencers affect my purchasing decision" (M=3.30).

4.2.3. The Responses Related to Influencers' Popularity Signals

Below are the responses of the participants to the items that examined the respondents' view of the influencers' popularity signals items in the questionnaire

Table 4.4  
Responses Related to Influencers' Popularity Signals

S	Statements	Frequency					Mean	Standard Deviation	Order	
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree				
1	I trust the influencers who have a large number of followers	40	102	57	39	21	3.34	1.81	2	
2	I am affected by the influencers who have a large number of likes.	56	66	76	38	21	3.30	1.79	3	
3	I feel excited by the influencers who have a large number of comments.	34	102	53	45	25	3.24	1.69	4	
4	I am affected by the influencers who have a large number of shares.	58	78	65	35	21	3.38	1.87	1	
5	The volume of the interactions with the influencers affects my decision to purchase	39	94	54	48	22	3.24	1.56	5	
Total Mean		3.30								

The above table shows the participants' responses to the factors related to influencers' popularity signals that affect consumer behaviours. As shown in the table, the total mean for all the items of the section is (3.30) which indicates that the participants moderately agree on these factors and perceive that these factors have a moderate impact on their consuming behaviour.

As shown in the findings in the above table, the influencers' popularity signals that affect the consumer's behaviours, ordered from the highest to the lowest mean, are as follows: "I am affected by the influencers who have a large number of shares" (M=3.38), "I trust the influencers who have a large number of followers" (M=3.34), "I am affected by the influencers who have a large number of likes" (M= 3.30), "I feel excited by the influencers who have a large number of comments" (M= 3.24), and "the volume of the interactions with the influencers affects my decision to purchase" (M=3.24).

#### 4.2.4. The Responses Related to Consumer Behaviour

Below are the responses of the participants to the items that examined the respondents' view of the consumer behaviour items in the questionnaire.

**Table 4.5**

*Responses Related to Influencers' Consumer Behaviour*

S	Statements	Frequency					Mean	Standard Deviation	Order	
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree				
1	I most likely tend to purchase the product recommended by the influencers I follow	33	130	50	26	17	3.44	2.07	1	
2	I only depend on online influencers when I intend to purchase a product	67	64	60	38	26	3.32	2.01	2	
3	I purchase the products that are promoted by my favorite influencer	33	116	49	38	19	3.31	1.88	4	
4	I consider the products promoted by influencers to be better than others.	57	75	69	26	28	3.32	1.91	3	
5	I usually find that the influencers' reviews are right and real	33	108	52	40	20	3.24	1.86	5	
Total Mean		3.33								

The above table shows the participants' responses to the factors related to consumer behaviour. As

shown in the table, the total mean for all the items of the section is (3.33) which indicates that the participants moderately agree on these factors and perceive that these factors have a moderate impact on their consuming behaviour.

As shown in the findings in the above table, the factors that affect the consumer's behaviours, ordered from the highest to the lowest mean, are as follows: "I most likely tend to purchase the product recommended by the influencers I follow" (M=3.44), "I only depend on online influencers when I intend to purchase a product" (3.32), "I consider the products promoted by influencers to be better than others" (M=3.32), "I purchase the products that are promoted by my favourite influencer" (M=3.31), and "I usually find that the influencers' reviews are right and real" (M=3.24).

**4.3. Hypothesis Testing**

Regression Analysis Regression analysis was used to understand and quantify the relationship between independent variables and consumer behaviour. The regression analysis is used to test the below hypotheses:

- H1: *There is a statistically significant relationship between influencers' demographics and consumer behaviour.*
- H2: *There is a statistically significant relationship between influencers' psychographics and consumer behaviour.*
- H3: *There is a statistically significant relationship between influencers' popularity signals and consumer behaviour.*

*Table 4.6*

*Multiple Regression Analysis for the Relationship between Independent Variables & Dependent Variables*

Independent Variables	Consumer' Behaviors					
	T	Beta	P-Value	(F)	(R)	(R <sup>2</sup> )
Influencers' demographics	8.417	0.76	0.00	107.263	0.532	0.247
Influencers' psychographics	5.321	0.69	0.00			
Influencers' popularity signals	3.658	0.70	0.00			

DF (n-1) – 262

Sig.  $\alpha 0.05 \leq$

T Table Value = 2.326

It is clear from the above table that the calculated T value for the research independent variables is (8.417), (5.321), and (3.658) respectively, which is greater than its table value (2.326) at ( $\alpha \leq .05$ ) and that P-Value is (0.000) which is less than the significance value, which means that there is a statistically significant effect of the independent variables on the dependent variables.

R2 indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be predicted by the independent variables. Since the value of R2 is (0.247), this means that approximately 25% of the variation in the output variable is explained by the input variables, meaning that approximately 25% of consumer behavior is explained by the influencers' demographics, psychographics, and popularity signals.

Based on the above findings confirm the three research hypotheses that there is a statistically significant relationship between influencers' demographics and consumer behaviour, there is a statistically significant relationship between influencers' psychographics and consumer behaviour, and that there is a statistically significant relationship between influencers' popularity signals and consumer behaviour.

**5. Discussion**

- H1: *There is a statistically significant relationship between influencers' demographics and consumer behaviour.*

Regarding the first hypothesis, the findings of the study showed that the influencers affect the consumer's behaviors when purchasing the food and beverage products. In general, the impact of the influencers on consumer's behaviors is confirmed by many previous studies such as Anjos et al (2021), Coates et al (2019), Hecht et al (2020) and Mc Carthy et al (2023).

The analysis of results shows that the influencer's' demographics affected the consumer's behaviors to a great extent. The age, location, education, and income are major factors that are reported in many studies (e.g., Chong, 2020, Halim et al., 2020) to be influential in persuading the consumers to purchase products. This finding is also supported by the finding of Masuda et al (2022) who concluded that the age and educational level of the consumers are important in motivating the consumers to be persuaded by the social media influencer.

*H2: There is a statistically significant relationship between influencers' psychographics and consumer behaviour.*

As for the second hypothesis, the analysis of results show that the influencer's psychographics affect consumer's behaviors as the consumers are greatly affected by the ideas, values, and attitudes of the influencers that they follow and they normally tend to purchase what the influencers recommend. These findings are in line with the findings of Isyanto et al (2020) and Kim & Kim (2021) who concluded that the character and values of the influencers considerably affect the consumer's behaviors.

Social media influencers' personalities are characterised by their accessibility and willingness to engage in dialogue with their fans. Interpersonal closeness was described by Smith et al. (2005) as the "affective ties," including intimacy and connectivity, that an individual experiences with another. In addition, Wang et al. (2012) proposed that individuals look to others—especially those they hold in highest regard—for ideas on what they should think about fashion, trends, and items. It follows that if customers feel more connected to SMIs, they will be more loyal to the brand. Customers that feel they have a voice in the company are more loyal overall. Users are able to readily locate, connect with, and communicate with one another through social media platforms. Social media users have come to anticipate a two-way dialogue with brands. Customers' affinity for social media influencers will strengthen as a result of the improved response. As a result, brand loyalty will rise as customers see more interaction between their favourite influencers on social media and themselves.

There is a significant correlation between consumer loyalty and the perceived trustworthiness of material provided by social media influencers. Several studies, like Chong and Halim et al. (2020), found that the legitimacy and information quality of material posted by social media influencers has a significant impact in influencing the attitude of followers towards the product and the brand marketed.

When determining whether or not a certain behaviour is acceptable in a given social setting, people often look to influential figures in their own social media networks as references (Martin & Bush, 2000). Kim and Kim (2021) came to a similar conclusion, observing that consumers show a strong desire to adopt the SMI's ways of thinking and doing business when they follow and observe a SMI with inspirational taste and ideas. Therefore, it is theorised that consumers would follow a SMI's lead to the extent that they are encouraged to consider the SMI's actions and preferences to be the norm. When fans are moved to purchase an item because of a recommendation from an influential person, this is an example of choice imitation.

*H3: There is a statistically significant relationship between influencers' popularity signals and consumer behaviour*

For the third hypothesis, the popularity of the social media influencers is shown to be influential on the consumer's behaviors. This is also supported by the findings of Han et al (2023) and Ooi et al (2023) who concluded that the influencers who have a large number of followers and a big traffic of interaction with huge likes and share are the main sources of persuasion to the followers to buy the products that they post. This is also affirmed by Pradhan et al (2023) who reported that the consumers are more likely now to refer to their preferred influencers on the social media before deciding to purchase any product.

The above finding corresponds with the findings of Hecht et al (2020) who reported that the influ-

encers who have a large number of shares, likes, comments, and interactions are mostly likely to affect their consumers. The influencers' prominence stems from the vast number of people who follow them online and on social media. Thus, it is time for academics and marketing professionals to have a deeper familiarity with influencer marketing on social media. SMMs may reach a wide variety of people via their networks. They have the ability to persuade their followers to purchase the products they endorse and even encourage them to engage in word-of-mouth marketing by sharing the content of their favourite SMIs across social media (Halim et al., 2020). By exhibiting their regular activities and providing product reviews, they may build trust with their audience. Improved client loyalty will lead to increased interest in the products or services advocated by the opinion leaders.

Most marketplaces are now full of brands. Brands that want to increase their visibility in the market must differentiate themselves from the competition. Customers must think a product is better than its competitors. Companies need to use persuasion to get customers to believe in their products (Isyanto et al., 2020).

According to Mc Carthy et al. (2023), a successful influencer marketing campaign may encourage customers to see making a purchase from your business as an opportunity they cannot pass up. Influencers may enhance brand visibility, brand loyalty, and conversions by capitalising on the trust and loyalty they have created with their followers and by transferring their established social proof. In the end, this is what will make or break your ability to affect shoppers' actions and choices.

Additionally, buyers are influenced to buy products based on the impressions they left on others. Individuals' desire to experience the same happy sentiments via consumption is influenced by the emotional appeal of a cosmetic product communicated by social media influencers or through their created communities on social media platforms (Han et al., 2023).

In addition, social media influencers affect customer behaviour through these channels (Kim & Kim, 2021). According to the data, people exhibit similar behaviours because of the shared ideas of communities in the comments. Thus, customers are more discerning as a result of community suggestions and less likely to buy items from unethical brands that include dangerous substances. Furthermore, customers are persuaded to consume comparable items based on communities' favourable remarks and their shared experiences in the hopes of receiving a similar and pleasant experience.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study attempted to examine the impact of the influencers' demographics, psychographics, and popularity signals on the food products consumers' behaviors. By applying the study on a sample of food products consumers in KSA using a questionnaire, data were collected and statistically analyzed. The findings of the study showed that the influencers' demographics, psychographics, and popularity signals have a moderate impact on the consumers' behaviors with regard to food products. The influencers' demographics have an effect on the consumers' behavior. It is shown that the influencers' age, location, educational level, gender, and marital status, respectively, affect the consumers' behavior.

Also, the influencers' psychographics have an effect on the consumers' behavior. It is shown that the influencers' values, opinions, interests and hobbies, lifestyle, and personal characteristics, respectively, affect the consumers' behavior. Furthermore, the influencers' popularity signals have an effect on the consumers' behavior. It is shown that the influencers' number of shares, followers, likes, comments, and interactions respectively, affect the consumers' behavior.

The results have both theoretical and practical implications for the management of digital marketing communication with SMIs.

The results of this research have important management implications, particularly for the managers of food product companies that are interested in learning more about how macro SMIs affect customers' decisions to buy their goods. This study aids these managers by delving into the customers' perspec-

tives to uncover the hidden meanings, motivations, and processes at play when SMIs exert their impact. Managers in the food sector should also bear in mind that customers' decisions to seek out food-related information or purchase food goods are influenced by influencers' demographics, psychographics, and popularity signals.

This research has important scientific implications for the recent marketing methods, especially in the food industry in Saudi Arabia. This study is a pioneer study to examine the influencers' impact on consumers' behavior in a vital industry which is the food industry that is full of competition and brands, and which requires non-traditional marketing techniques.

In light of marketing's rapid development in Saudi Arabia's Kingdom, understanding how social media influencers affect consumer loyalty and decision imitation is crucial. This study tested the effect of enhanced customer loyalty on the choice imitation of followers, shedding new insight on the aspects leading to the effectiveness of social media influencer marketing efforts.

## **7. Limitations and Scope for Future Research**

This study presented valuable findings with regard to the impact of influencers on consumers' behaviors. Still, future studies can discuss many other aspects of this research by using mixed methods to obtain quantitative and qualitative data. To ensure that all quantitative data can be supplemented with other qualitative data through other data collection methods such as interviews or focus groups. We suggest applying the model in two urban and rural consumers comparing the results can also be a useful approach. Also, we also recommend the inclusion of additional control variables such as demographics age, level of education to account for potential confounding factors. Finally, as the data of this study were collected using a cross-sectional research design, further longitudinal research is needed to examine our model to improve the generalizability of the findings.

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Biographical Statement	معلومات عن الباحثة
<p><b>Dr. Nada Saleh Alshamrani</b> an Assistant Professor of e-commerce in the Department of e-commerce, College of administrative and financial, Saudi Electronic University. received her PhD degree in information management. (2019) from Manchester metropolitan University. Her research interests include customer behaviour in e-commerce.</p>	<p>د. ندى صالح الشمrani، أستاذة التجارة الإلكترونية المساعد، في قسم التجارة الإلكترونية، بكلية العلوم الإدارية والمالية، في الجامعة السعودية الإلكترونية، (المملكة العربية السعودية)، حاصلة على درجة الدكتوراه في إدارة المعلومات، من جامعة مانشستر متروبوليتان عام 2019، تدور اهتماماتها البحثية حول قضايا سلوك المستهلك في التجارة الإلكترونية. Biographical Statement.</p>

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