

BAB V

PENUTUP

5.1. Kesimpulan

Berikut merupakan hasil dari penelitian yang dilakukan, disimpulkan bahwa:

- 1) Keterlibatan emosional berdampak pada terbentuknya pengaruh yang dipersepsikan.
- 2) Nilai informasi yang dirasakan berdampak pada terbentuknya pengaruh yang dipersepsikan.
- 3) Pengaruh yang dipersepsikan berdampak pada terbentuknya komunikasi WOM (*word-of-mouth*) yang positif.
- 4) Pengaruh yang dipersepsikan berdampak pada terbentuknya niat membeli produk yang direkomendasikan.
- 5) Komunikasi WOM yang positif berdampak pada terbentuknya niat membeli produk yang direkomendasikan.
- 6) Komunikasi WOM yang positif memediasi pengaruh antara pengaruh yang dipersepsikan terhadap niat membeli produk yang direkomendasikan.

5.2. Implikasi Manajerial

Dalam konteks penelitian ini implikasi manajerial penelitian dapat menerapkan strategi pemasaran dengan memanfaatkan *social media influencer*. Di mana manajer dapat mempertimbangkan untuk menggunakan *social media influencer* dalam kampanye pemasaran produknya. Melibatkan *influencer* yang relevan dengan target pasar dapat membantu meningkatkan kesadaran, minat, dan niat pembelian konsumen terhadap produk. Namun, penting untuk manajer melakukan penelitian dan analisis yang cermat dalam memilih *social media influencer* agar dapat sesuai dengan merek atau produk yang ingin dipasarkan. Memahami *audience* (konsumen), nilai merek, tujuan pemasaran dapat membantu dalam mengidentifikasi *influencer* yang memiliki keterlibatan yang kuat dan sesuai dengan produk, sehingga dapat mempengaruhi *audience* yang relevan. Berikut beberapa implikasi manajerial penelitian yaitu:

- 1) Membangun keterlibatan emosional melalui konten yang relevan dan menarik

Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa keterlibatan emosional memainkan peran penting dalam pengaruh *social media influencer* terhadap niat perilaku produk. Oleh karena itu, manajer dapat fokus pada menciptakan konten yang relevan, autentik, dan

menarik yang dapat membangkitkan emosi positif pada *audience*. Hal ini dapat mencakup cerita pengguna, testimoni, atau pengalaman langsung dengan produk.

2) Meningkatkan nilai informasi yang disampaikan oleh *social media influencer*

Penting bagi manajer untuk memastikan bahwa informasi yang disampaikan oleh *social media influencer* mengenai produk akurat dan jelas pada nilai atau pesan yang ingin disampaikan, serta bermanfaat bagi konsumen. Manajer dapat bekerjasama dengan *influencer* untuk memberikan konten informatif, ulasan yang objektif, dan rekomendasi yang dapat dipercaya.

3) Memahami dan mempengaruhi persepsi pengikut terhadap *influencer* dan merek

Pengaruh *social media influencer* dapat dipengaruhi oleh persepsi yang dimiliki oleh pengikut terhadap kredibilitas, keahlian, dan kepercayaan terhadap *influencer*. Manajer dapat melakukan penelitian lebih lanjut untuk memahami bagaimana pengikut mempersepsikan *influencer* tertentu dan merek yang direkomendasikan oleh *influencer* tersebut. Dengan memahami persepsi ini, manajer merancang strategi yang tepat untuk mempengaruhi persepsi pengikut dengan cara yang positif seperti melibatkan *influencer* dalam kegiatan yang relevan dengan merek atau produk.

4) Mendorong komunikasi *word-of-mouth* (WOM) yang positif

Pengaruh *social media influencer* juga dapat mempengaruhi komunikasi *word-of-mouth* (WOM) yang positif. Manajer dapat memanfaatkan pengaruh ini dengan mengembangkan strategi yang merangsang atau mendorong pengikut untuk berbagi pengalaman positif yang dialami dengan produk kepada orang lain. Misalnya, dengan mengadakan kontes atau kampanye yang mengajak pengikut untuk berbagi pengalaman yang dirasakan dengan menggunakan *hashtag* untuk berbagi pengalaman yang dimiliki atau mencantumkan teman dalam komentar.

5) Meningkatkan niat pembelian produk yang direkomendasikan

Salah satu tujuan utama dari menggunakan *social media influencer* adalah untuk meningkatkan niat pembelian konsumen terhadap produk yang direkomendasikan oleh *influencer*. Manajer perlu memperhatikan faktor-faktor yang dapat mempengaruhi niat pembelian ini, seperti kepercayaan terhadap *influencer*, kualitas produk, nilai atau pesan yang disampaikan *influencer*, kecocokan merek dengan nilai, preferensi konsumen, serta kemudahan aksesibilitas produk. Dengan memahami faktor-faktor ini, manajer dapat merancang strategi pemasaran yang efektif untuk meningkatkan niat pembelian dan konversi konsumen menjadi pelanggan setia.

5.3. Keterbatasan Penelitian

Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti menyadari adanya beberapa keterbatasan yang perlu diperhatikan yaitu :

1) Nilai *Outer loading* dibawah 0,7

Secara umum, nilai *outer loading* yang baik adalah 0,7 atau lebih, di mana hal ini terlihat dan dibaca dalam alat analisis yang digunakan penulis yaitu SmartPLS. Apabila nilai *outer loading* dibawah 0,7, maka pada tampilan *software* SmartPLS akan berwarna merah. Dalam penelitian ini, terdapat satu indikator yaitu C1 pada variabel pengaruh yang dipersepsikan yang memiliki nilai 0,588. Nilai ini berada dibawah standar yang ditetapkan. Meskipun demikian, berdasarkan teori yang dikemukakan oleh Ghazali & Latan (2015), nilai diatas 0,5 masih dianggap cukup untuk memenuhi syarat *convergent validity*. Oleh karena itu, dapat disimpulkan bahwa semua indikator dalam penelitian memenuhi konvergensi *validity* yang berarti indikator-indikator tersebut dapat digunakan secara valid untuk memprediksi dan mengukur variabel yang diteliti.

2) Objek penelitian yang beragam

Penelitian ini melibatkan berbagai *influencer* yang berbeda-beda, sehingga tidak spesifik pada satu individu. Hal ini dapat menjadi keterbatasan dalam menggeneralisasi temuan penelitian secara khusus pada satu *influencer* atau satu kelompok pengikut *influencer* tertentu. Meskipun demikian, dengan mempertimbangkan variasi *influencer* yang diikutsertakan, penelitian ini dapat memberikan pemahaman yang lebih luas mengenai pengaruh *social media influencer* produk Somethinc terhadap produknya secara umum.

5.4. Saran untuk Penelitian Selanjutnya

Berdasarkan keterbatasan penelitian diatas berikut saran untuk penelitian selanjutnya yaitu meliputi:

- 1) Berdasarkan penelitian yang dilakukan, penelitian selanjutnya dapat memperbaiki indikator kuesioner dan meningkatkan jumlah individu yang melakukan *face validity* agar nilai *outer loading* yang diperoleh dapat mencapai nilai 0,7 atau lebih, sehingga dapat mengurangi nilai-nilai dibawah 0,7. Dengan demikian, penelitian selanjutnya dapat memastikan bahwa semua indikator memiliki kontribusi yang lebih kuat dan valid terhadap variabel yang diteliti.

2) Selain itu, penelitian selanjutnya dapat melibatkan pengikut *influencer* secara lebih spesifik. Misalnya, fokus pada satu *influencer* yang memiliki basis pengikut yang besar dan teridentifikasi dengan jelas. Dengan demikian, penelitian dapat menggali lebih dalam mengenai pengaruh spesifik dari *influencer* tersebut terhadap pengikutnya, dan menggeneralisasikan temuan dengan lebih akurat dalam konteks yang lebih terbatas.



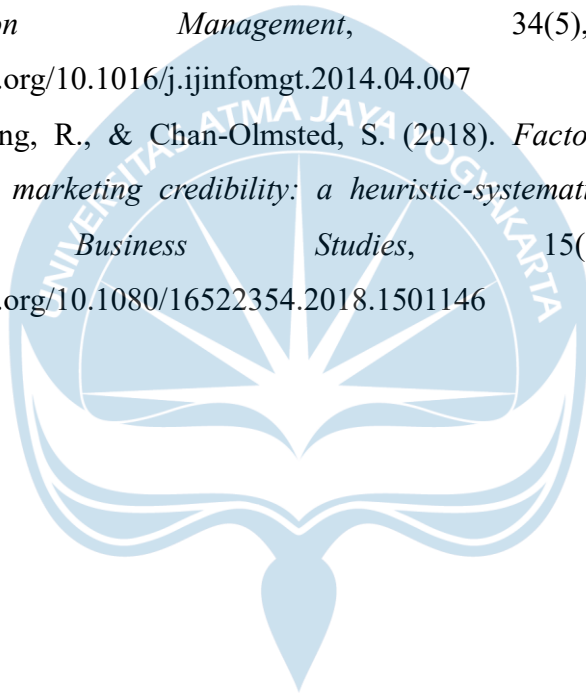
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LAMPIRAN

Lampiran 1 *Face Validity*

Nama :

Juniarty (190324973)

Catatan: *Influencer* Produk *Somethinc* → Korea Reomit (Jang Hansol), NCT, Tasya Farasyah, Han So Hee, Lifni Sanders, Syahrini.

<i>Profiling & Filter</i>	(v)	
	Ya	Tidak
1. Apakah anda pernah membeli produk <i>Somethinc</i> ?		
2. Apakah anda merupakan <i>follower/ subscriber</i> salah satu sosial media <i>influencer</i> produk <i>Somethinc</i> (Korea Reomit/ Jang Hansol , NCT, Tasya Farasyah, Han So Hee, Lifni Sanders, Syahrini)?		
3. Apakah anda mengetahui produk <i>Somethinc</i> dari <i>influencer</i> produk <i>Somethinc</i> yang anda ikuti (Korea Reomit/ Jang Hansol , NCT, Tasya Farasyah, Han So Hee, Lifni Sanders, Syahrini)?		

Catatan :

1. *Influencer* Produk *Somethinc* → Korea Reomit (Jang Hansol), NCT, Tasya Farasyah, Han So Hee, Lifni Sanders, Syahrini.

2. **Keterangan :**

- STS = Sangat Tidak Setuju
- TS = Tidak Setuju
- N = Netral
- S = Setuju
- SS = Sangat Setuju

Indikator (v)	(v)				
	STS	TS	N	S	SS
Hubungan Emosional					
1. Saya merasa terhubung secara emosional dengan <i>influencer</i> produk <i>Somethinc</i> yang saya ikuti.					
2. Saya merasa memiliki ikatan dengan <i>influencer</i> produk <i>Somethinc</i> yang saya ikuti.					
3. Saya sangat terikat dengan <i>influencer</i> produk <i>Somethinc</i> yang saya ikuti.					

4. <i>Influencer</i> produk <i>Somethinc</i> yang saya ikuti spesial bagi saya.					
5. Saya menantikan konten <i>influencer</i> produk <i>Somethinc</i> yang saya ikuti (ketika mereka tidak mengunggah konten atau saya tidak dapat melihat postingan mereka).					
Nilai Informasi yang Dirasakan					
1. Saya mengetahui informasi tentang produk <i>Somethinc</i> melalui konten yang dibagikan oleh <i>influencer</i> produk <i>Somethinc</i> .					
2. Saya memperoleh informasi baru tentang produk <i>Somethinc</i> melalui <i>influencer</i> produk <i>Somethinc</i> yang saya ikuti.					
3. Saya mendapatkan informasi yang menarik tentang produk <i>Somethinc</i> melalui <i>influencer</i> produk <i>Somethinc</i> yang saya ikuti.					
4. Informasi yang diberikan oleh <i>influencer</i> produk <i>Somethinc</i> mengenai produk <i>Somethinc</i> berguna bagi saya.					
5. Informasi strategis tentang produk <i>Somethinc</i> yang dibagikan oleh <i>influencer</i> produk <i>Somethinc</i> yang saya ikuti menciptakan keunggulan kompetitif.					
Pengaruh yang Persepsikan					
1. Persepsi saya tentang produk <i>Somethinc</i> sering berubah ketika saya menerima informasi dari <i>influencer</i> produk <i>Somethinc</i> yang saya ikuti.					
2. Saya menghargai pendapat <i>influencer</i> produk <i>Somethinc</i> yang saya ikuti tentang produk <i>Somethinc</i> , karena saya beranggapan mereka adalah seseorang yang dekat dan saya percayai					
3. Jika saya memiliki sedikit pengalaman terhadap produk <i>Somethinc</i> , saya sering mencari informasi dari <i>influencer</i> produk <i>Somethinc</i> yang saya ikuti.					
4. Menurut saya produk <i>Somethinc</i> yang direkomendasikan oleh <i>influencer</i> produk <i>Somethinc</i> yang saya ikuti berguna untuk saya.					
Komunikasi Word-of-Mouth (WOM) yang Positif					
1. Saya cenderung merekomendasikan produk <i>Somethinc</i> yang disarankan oleh <i>influencer</i> produk <i>Somethinc</i> yang saya ikuti kepada orang lain.					

2. Saya cenderung mendorong teman dan kerabat untuk membeli produk Somethinc yang direkomendasikan oleh <i>influncer</i> produk Somthinc yang saya ikuti.					
3. Saya cenderung mengatakan hal-hal positif tentang produk Somethinc, yang direkomendasikan oleh <i>influncer</i> produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti kepada orang lain.					
Niat Membeli Merek yang Direkomendasikan					
1. Saya akan membeli produk Somethinc berdasarkan saran yang diberikan oleh <i>influncer</i> produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti.					
2. Saya akan mengikuti menggunakan produk Somethinc berdasarkan rekomendasi dari <i>influncer</i> produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti.					
3. Di masa depan, saya akan membeli produk Somethinc berdasarkan rekomendasi oleh <i>influncer</i> produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti.					
4. Saya akan merasa nyaman mengambil tindakan berdasarkan informasi merek mengenai produk Somethinc yang diberikan oleh <i>influncer</i> produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti.					

Lampiran 2 Kuesioner Daring (Google Form)

Pertanyaan Jawaban 218 Setelan

SOMETHINC

Bagian 1 dari 5

Pengaruh *Influencer* Produk Somethinc terhadap Niat Perilaku Pembelian Produk Somethinc

Halo!

Perkenalkan saya Juniarty, mahasiswa dari Prodi Manajemen, Fakultas Bisnis dan Ekonomi (FBE), Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta. Saat ini saya sedang menempuh tugas akhir dan melakukan penelitian mengenai "**Pengaruh *Influencer* Produk Somethinc terhadap Niat Perilaku Pembelian Produk Somethinc**".

Saya berharap kesediaan Anda dalam membantu mengisi kuesioner ini. Semua data yang diberikan akan dijaga kerahasiaannya dan hanya digunakan untuk kepentingan penelitian.

Saya ucapkan terima kasih atas bantuan dan perhatian Anda 🙏🌸

Setelah bagian 1 Lanjutkan ke bagian berikut

Bagian 2 dari 5

Kategori Responden

Sebagai bagian dari kuesioner ini saya meminta kesediaan responden untuk memberikan pernyataan "Ya", sebagai filter untuk memastikan kecocokan responden sesuai untuk penelitian yang saya lakukan.

Saya berharap Anda dapat menjawab dengan jujur dan sesuai dengan kondisi saat ini untuk memastikan hasil penelitian akurat dan bermanfaat untuk kedepan. Jawaban Anda akan sangat membantu penelitian saya.

Berikut 3 pernyataan untuk memastikan bahwa Anda memenuhi kriteria responden untuk penelitian yang sedang saya lakukan:

1. Saya pernah membeli produk *Something*.
2. Saya merupakan *follower/ subscriber* salah satu sosial media *influencer* produk *Something*.
3. Saya mengetahui produk *Something* dari *influencer* produk *Something* yang saya ikuti.

Catatan :

Kata "*Influencer* produk *Something*" dapat diganti dengan salah satu *influencer* berikut ini - Korea Reomit (Jang Hansol) ,NCT, Tasya Farasya, Han So Hee, Lifi Sanders (Livjunkie), dan Syahrini.



Ya

Tidak

Setelah bagian 2 Lanjutkan ke bagian berikut

Bagian 3 dari 5

Data Diri

Saya membutuhkan dua informasi data diri dari responden untuk mengisi kuesioner ini. Berikut dua informasi yang diperlukan:

Jenis Kelamin *

- Laki-laki
 Perempuan

Berapa anggaran yang Anda alokasikan setiap bulan untuk berbelanja produk *skincare*? *

- < Rp 500.000
 Rp 500.000 – Rp 1.000.000
 > Rp 1.000.000

Setelah bagian 3 Lanjutkan ke bagian berikut

Bagian 4 dari 5

Kuesioner

Saya mengucapkan terima kasih atas partisipasi Anda dalam penelitian ini. Terdapat 21 pertanyaan dalam kuesioner ini. Saya memohon kesediaannya untuk meluangkan waktu sejenak menjawab pertanyaan-pertanyaan di bawah ini dengan jujur dan sesuai kondisi Anda saat ini. Saat menjawab kuesioner ini tidak perlu merasa khawatir memperoleh pandangan yang beragam. Jawaban Anda sangat berharga bagi saya dan hasil penelitian ini dapat memberikan kontribusi yang signifikan dalam meningkatkan pemahaman tentang topik yang diteliti. Terima kasih banyak atas bantuannya. 🙏

Terdapat nilai 1-5 dalam kuesioner ini, berikut keterangannya:

- 1 = sangat tidak setuju
2 = tidak setuju
3 = netral
4 = setuju
5 = sangat setuju

Catatan : Kata "*Influencer produk Somethinc*" dapat diganti dengan salah satu *influencer* berikut ini = **Korea Reomit (Jang Hansol) , NCT, Tasya Farasya, Han So Hee, Lifni Sanders (Livjunkie), dan Syahrini.**

1. Saya merasa terhubung secara emosional dengan *influencer produk Somethinc* yang saya ikuti *

- Sangat tidak setuju 1 2 3 4 5 Sangat Setuju
-

2. Saya merasa memiliki ikatan dengan *influencer* produk **Somehinc** yang saya ikuti. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Sangat tidak setuju	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sangat Setuju

⋮

3. Saya sangat terikat dengan *influencer* produk **Somehinc** yang saya ikuti. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Sangat tidak setuju	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sangat setuju

4. *Influencer* produk **Somehinc** yang saya ikuti spesial bagi saya. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Sangat tidak setuju	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sangat setuju

5. Saya menantikan konten *influencer* produk **Somehinc** yang saya ikuti (ketika mereka tidak mengunggah konten atau saya tidak dapat melihat *posting-an* mereka). *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Sangat tidak setuju	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sangat setuju

⋮

6. Saya mengetahui informasi tentang produk **Somehinc** melalui konten yang dibagikan oleh *influencer* produk **Somehinc**. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Sangat tidak setuju	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sangat setuju

7. Saya memperoleh informasi baru tentang produk **Somehinc** melalui *influencer* produk **Somehinc** yang saya ikuti. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Sangat tidak setuju	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sangat setuju

8. Saya mendapatkan informasi yang menarik tentang produk Somethinc melalui *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti. *

Sangat tidak setuju 1 2 3 4 5 Sangat setuju

9. Informasi yang diberikan oleh *influencer* produk Somethinc mengenai produk Somethinc berguna bagi saya. *

Sangat tidak setuju 1 2 3 4 5 Sangat setuju

10. Informasi strategis tentang produk Somethinc yang dibagikan oleh *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti menciptakan keunggulan kompetitif. *

Sangat tidak setuju 1 2 3 4 5 Sangat setuju

11. Persepsi saya tentang produk Somethinc sering berubah, ketika saya menerima informasi dari *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti. *

Sangat tidak setuju 1 2 3 4 5 Sangat setuju

12. Saya menghargai pendapat *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti tentang produk Somethinc, karena saya beranggapan mereka adalah seseorang yang dekat dan saya percaya. *

Sangat tidak setuju 1 2 3 4 5 Sangat setuju

13. Jika saya memiliki sedikit pengalaman terhadap produk Somethinc, saya sering mencari informasi dari *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti. *

Sangat tidak setuju 1 2 3 4 5 Sangat setuju

14. Menurut saya produk Somethinc yang direkomendasikan oleh *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti berguna untuk saya. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Sangat tidak setuju	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sangat setuju

15. Saya cenderung merekomendasikan produk Somethinc yang disarankan oleh *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti kepada orang lain. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Sangat tidak setuju	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sangat setuju

16. Saya cenderung mendorong teman dan kerabat untuk membeli produk Somethinc yang direkomendasikan oleh *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Sangat tidak setuju	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sangat setuju

17. Saya cenderung mengatakan hal-hal positif tentang produk Somethinc, yang direkomendasikan oleh *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti kepada orang lain. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Sangat tidak setuju	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sangat setuju

18. Saya akan membeli produk Somethinc berdasarkan saran yang diberikan oleh *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Sangat tidak setuju	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sangat setuju

19. Saya akan mengikuti menggunakan produk Somethinc berdasarkan rekomendasi dari *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Sangat tidak setuju	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sangat setuju

20. Di masa depan, saya akan membeli produk Somethinc berdasarkan rekomendasi oleh *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti. *

Sangat tidak setuju 1 2 3 4 5 Sangat setuju

21. Saya akan merasa nyaman mengambil tindakan berdasarkan informasi merek mengenai produk Somethinc yang diberikan oleh *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti. *

Sangat tidak setuju 1 2 3 4 5 Sangat setuju

Setelah bagian 4 Lanjutkan ke bagian berikut

Bagian 5 dari 5

Terima Kasih

Terima kasih banyak atas kesediaan Anda untuk meluangkan waktu dan memberikan jawaban dalam kuesioner ini. Jawaban Anda sangat berharga bagi penelitian saya. Semoga hasil penelitian ini dapat memberikan manfaat bagi pengembangan ilmu pengetahuan.

11. Persepsi saya tentang produk Somethinc sering berubah, ketika saya menerima informasi dari *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti. *

Sangat tidak setuju 1 2 3 4 5 Sangat setuju

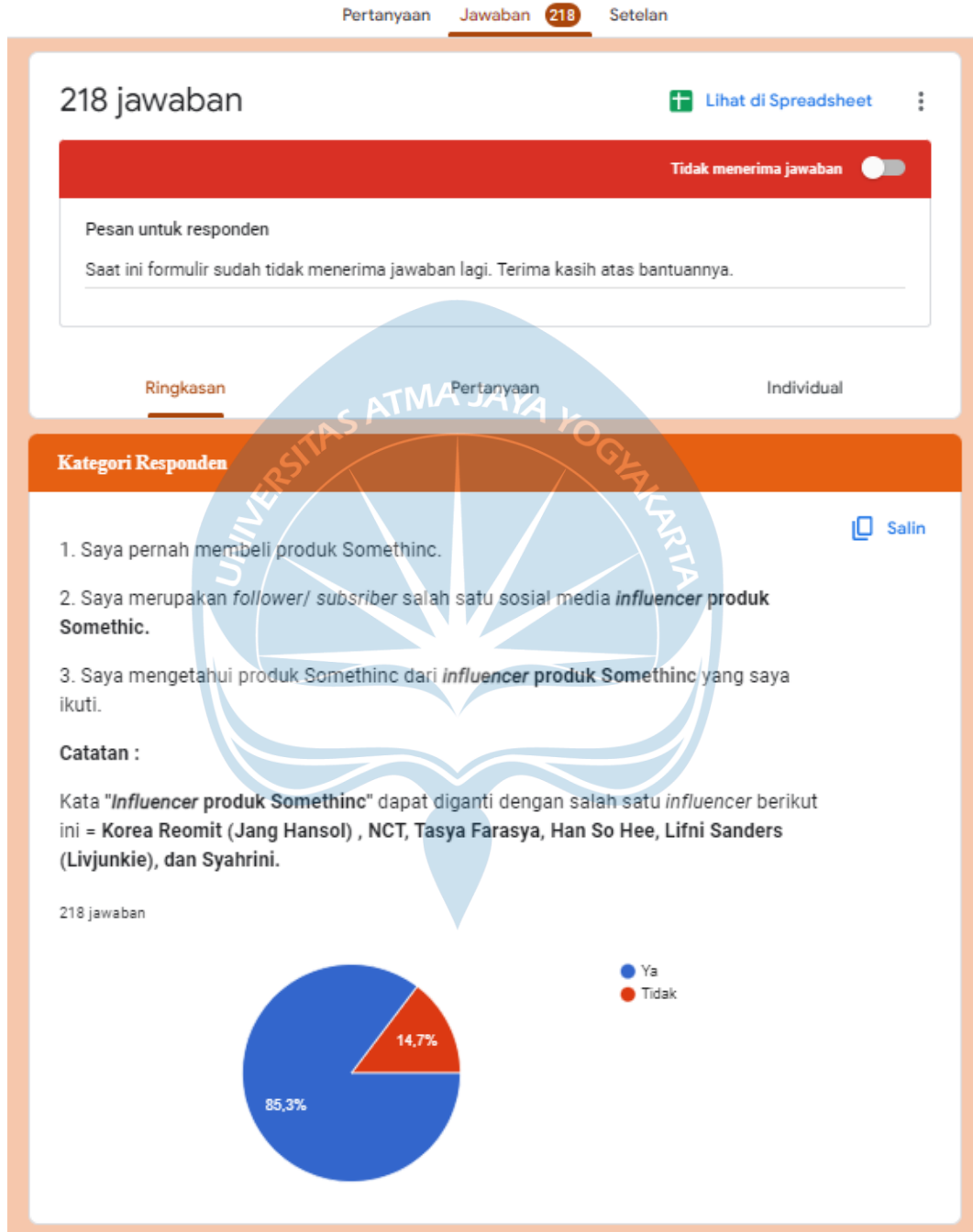
12. Saya menghargai pendapat *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti tentang produk Somethinc, karena saya beranggapan mereka adalah seseorang yang dekat dan saya percayai. *

Sangat tidak setuju 1 2 3 4 5 Sangat setuju

13. Jika saya memiliki sedikit pengalaman terhadap produk Somethinc, saya sering mencari informasi dari *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti. *

Sangat tidak setuju 1 2 3 4 5 Sangat setuju

Lampiran 3 Hasil Kuesioner (Google Form)

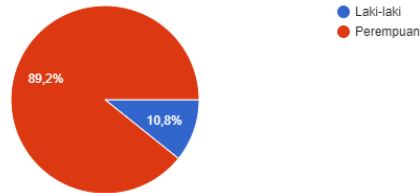


Data Diri

Jenis Kelamin

186 jawaban

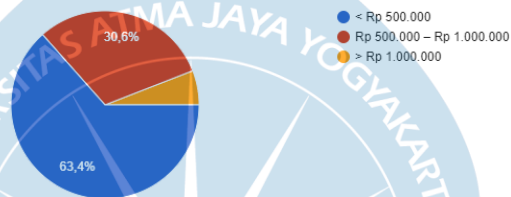
[Salin](#)



Berapa anggaran yang Anda alokasikan setiap bulan untuk berbelanja produk *skincare*?

186 jawaban

[Salin](#)

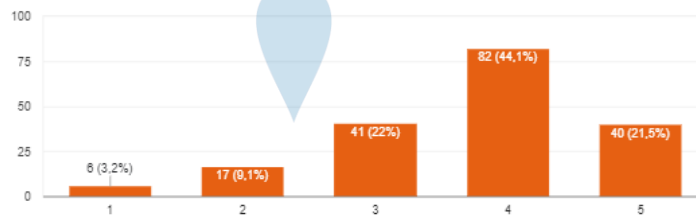


Kuesioner

1. Saya merasa terhubung secara emosional dengan *influencer* produk *Somethinc* yang saya ikuti

186 jawaban

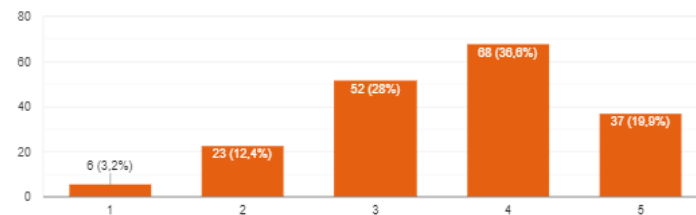
[Salin](#)

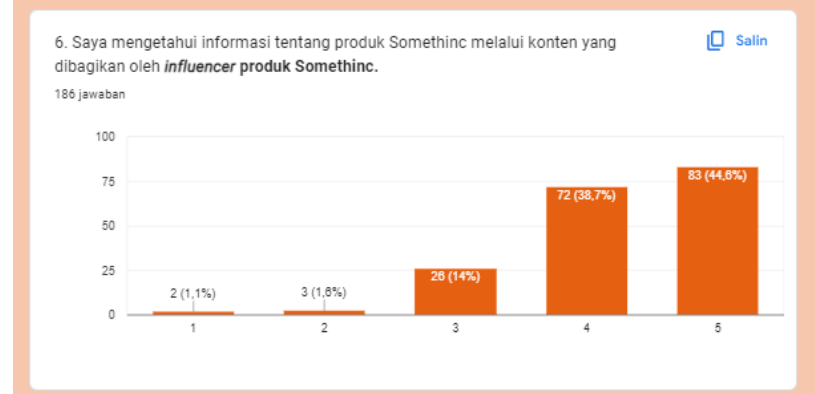
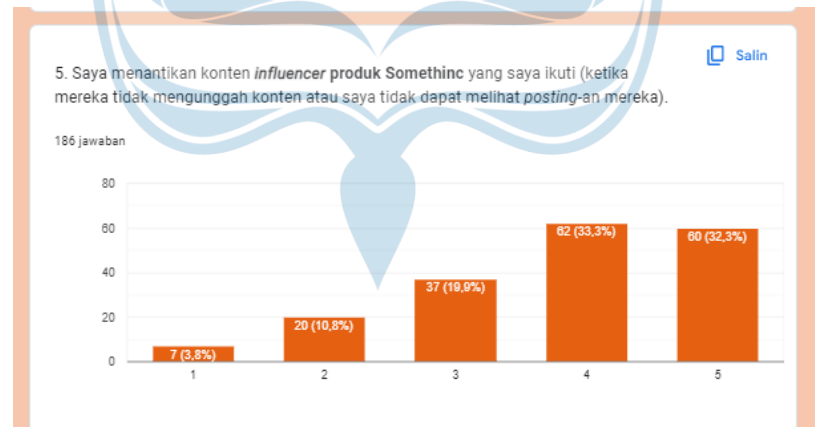
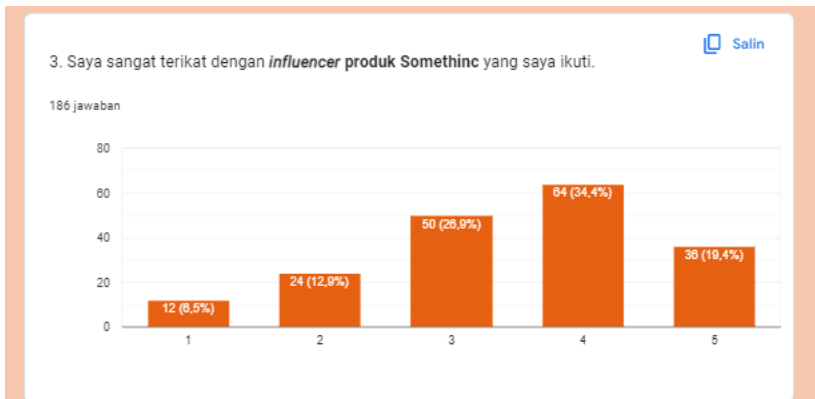


2. Saya merasa memiliki ikatan dengan *influencer* produk *Somethinc* yang saya ikuti.

186 jawaban

[Salin](#)

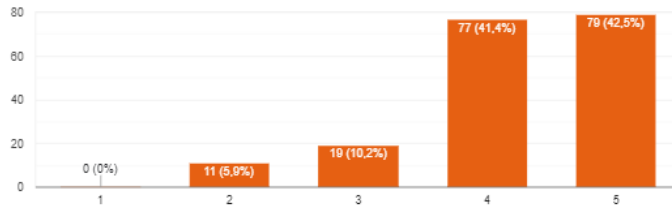




7. Saya memperoleh informasi baru tentang produk Somethinc melalui *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti.

Salin

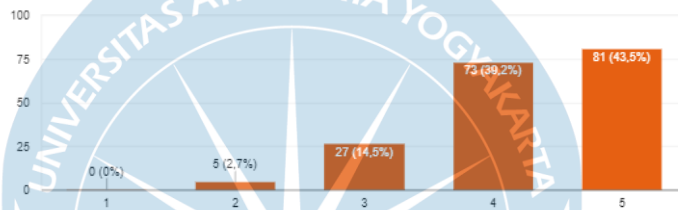
186 jawaban



8. Saya mendapatkan informasi yang menarik tentang produk Somethinc melalui *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti.

Salin

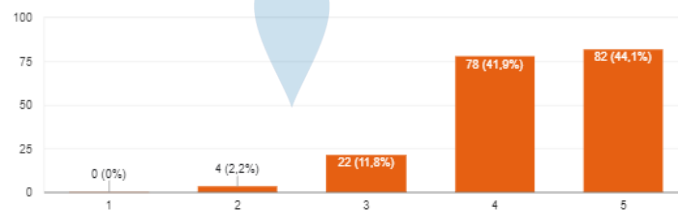
186 jawaban



9. Informasi yang diberikan oleh *influencer* produk Somethinc mengenai produk Somethinc berguna bagi saya.

Salin

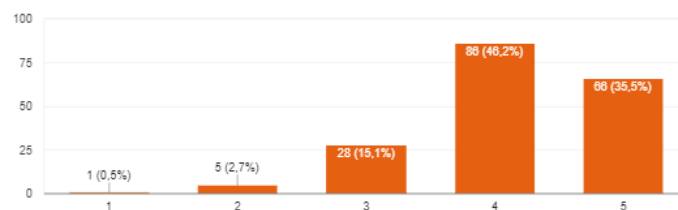
186 jawaban



10. Informasi strategis tentang produk Somethinc yang dibagikan oleh *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti menciptakan keunggulan kompetitif.

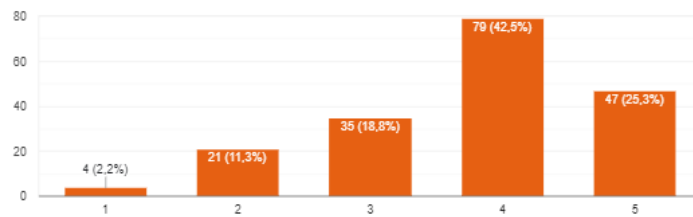
Salin

186 jawaban



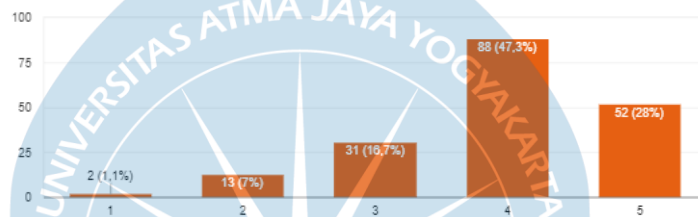
11. Persepsi saya tentang produk Somethinc sering berubah, ketika saya menerima informasi dari **influencer produk Somethinc** yang saya ikuti. [Salin](#)

186 jawaban



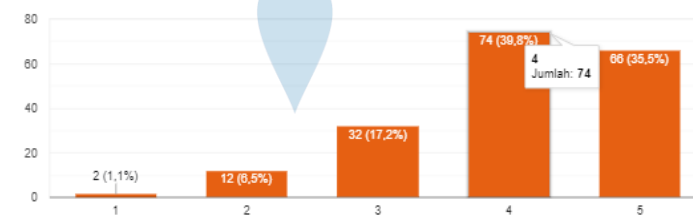
12. Saya menghargai pendapat **influencer produk Somethinc** yang saya ikuti tentang produk Somethinc, karena saya beranggapan mereka adalah seseorang yang dekat dan saya percaya. [Salin](#)

186 jawaban



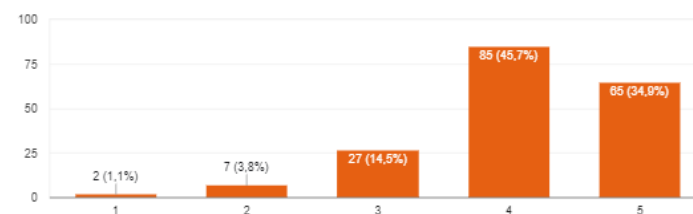
13. Jika saya memiliki sedikit pengalaman terhadap produk Somethinc, saya sering mencari informasi dari **influencer produk Somethinc** yang saya ikuti. [Salin](#)

186 jawaban



14. Menurut saya produk Somethinc yang direkomendasikan oleh **influencer produk Somethinc** yang saya ikuti berguna untuk saya. [Salin](#)

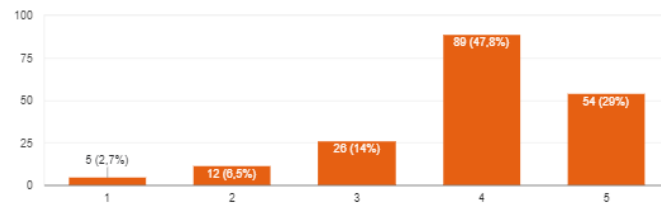
186 jawaban



15. Saya cenderung merekomendasikan produk Somethinc yang disarankan oleh *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti kepada orang lain.

Salin

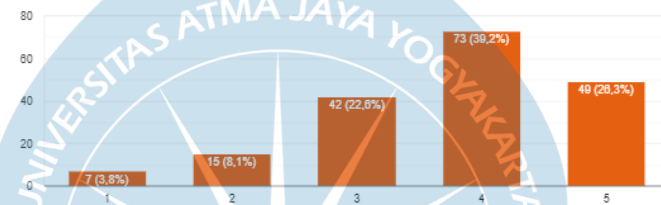
186 jawaban



16. Saya cenderung mendorong teman dan kerabat untuk membeli produk Somethinc yang direkomendasikan oleh *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti.

Salin

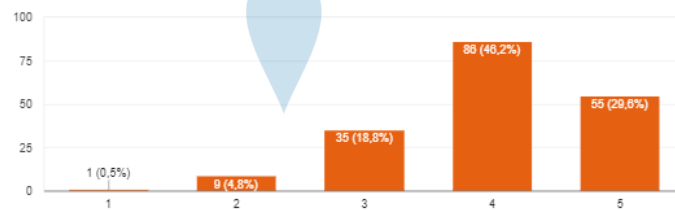
186 jawaban



17. Saya cenderung mengatakan hal-hal positif tentang produk Somethinc, yang direkomendasikan oleh *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti kepada orang lain.

Salin

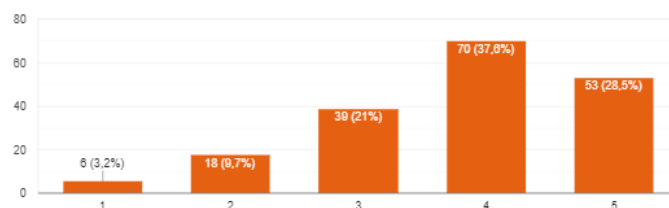
186 jawaban

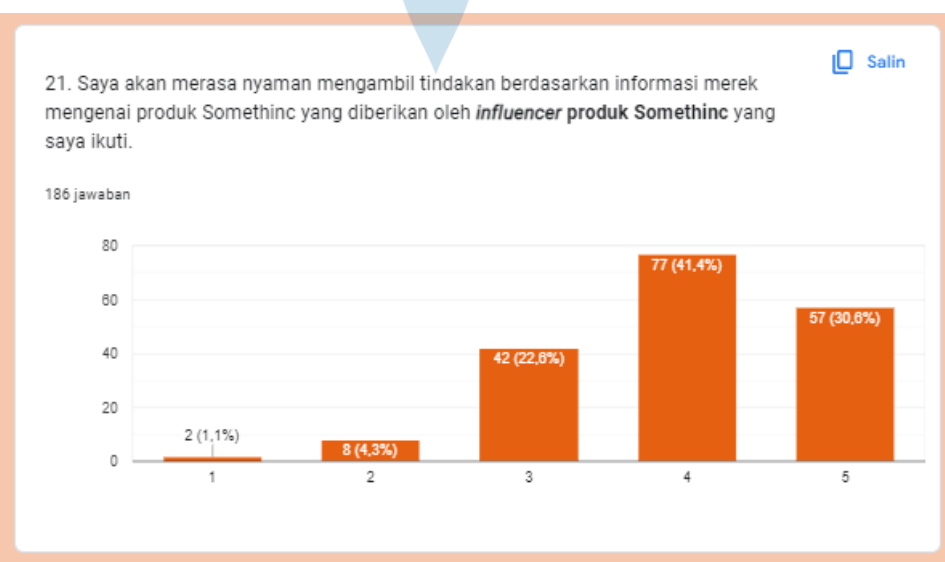
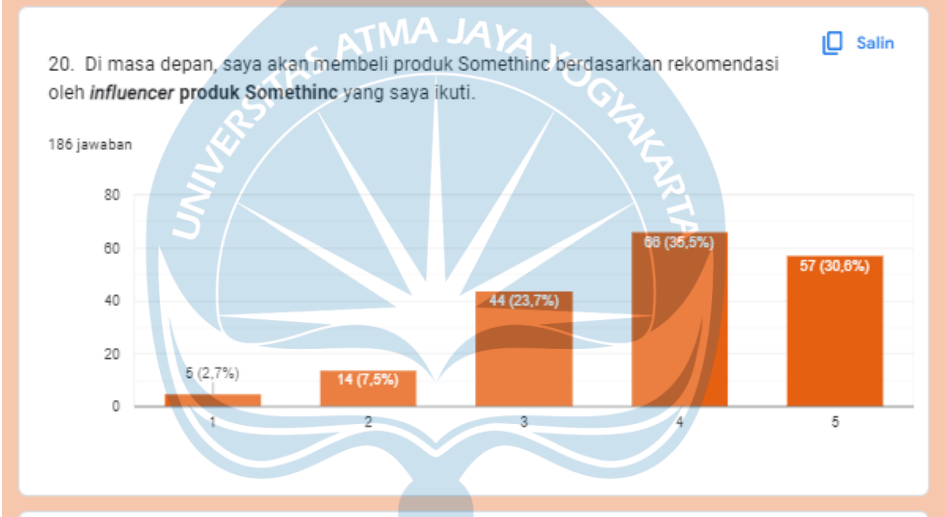
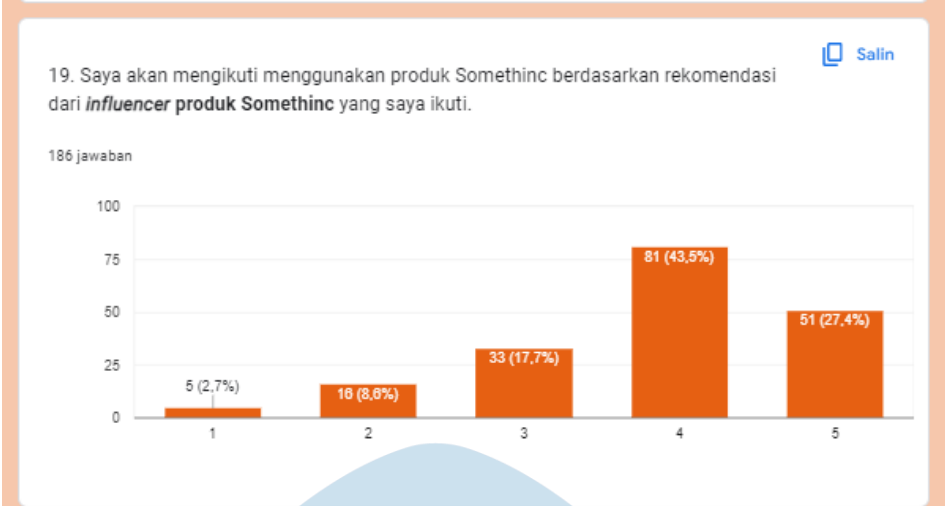


18. Saya akan membeli produk Somethinc berdasarkan saran yang diberikan oleh *influencer* produk Somethinc yang saya ikuti.

Salin

186 jawaban





Terima Kasih

Lampiran 4 Hasil Kuesioner (Microsoft Excel)

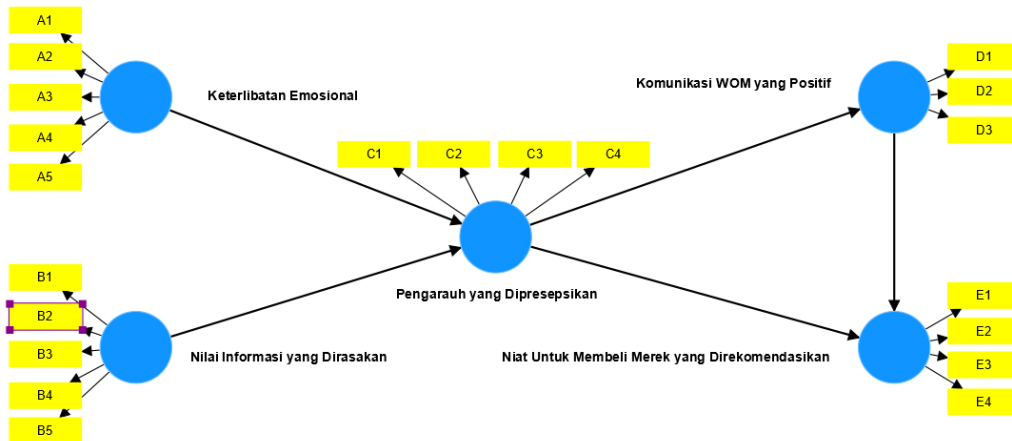
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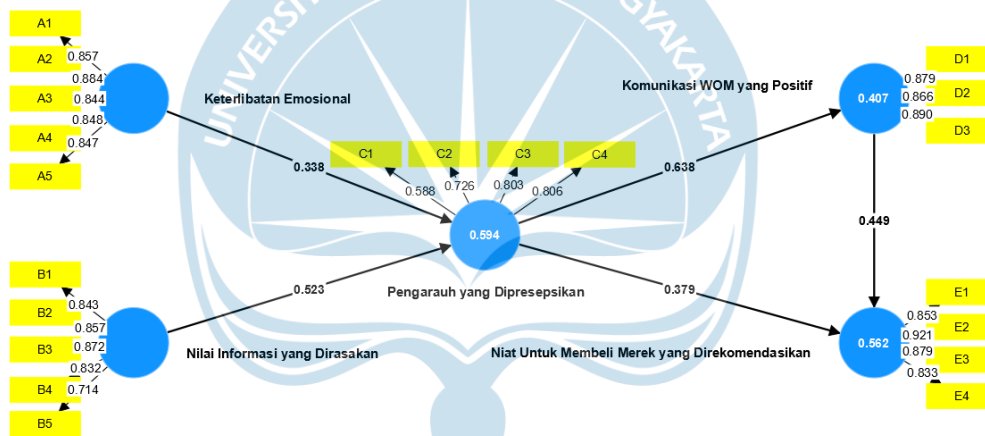
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Lampiran 5 Hasil Olah Data (SmartPLS)



Inner model: Path coefficients
 Constructs: R-square
 Outer model: Outer weights / loadings
 Highlight paths: off



Outer loadings - Matrix

	Keterlibatan Emosional	Komunikasi WOM yang Positif	Niat Untuk Membeli Merek yang Direkomendasikan	Nilai Informasi yang Dirasakan	Pengaruh yang Dipresepsikan
A1	0.857				
A2	0.884				
A3	0.844				
A4	0.848				
A5	0.847				
B1				0.843	
B2				0.857	
B3				0.872	
B4				0.832	
B5				0.714	
C1			0.588		
C2			0.726		
C3			0.803		
C4			0.806		
D1		0.879			
D2		0.866			
D3		0.890			
E1			0.853		
E2			0.921		
E3			0.879		
E4			0.833		

Outer loadings - List

	Outer loadings
A1 <- Keterlibatan Emosional	0.857
A2 <- Keterlibatan Emosional	0.884
A3 <- Keterlibatan Emosional	0.844
A4 <- Keterlibatan Emosional	0.848
A5 <- Keterlibatan Emosional	0.847
B1 <- Nilai Informasi yang Dirasakan	0.843
B2 <- Nilai Informasi yang Dirasakan	0.857
B3 <- Nilai Informasi yang Dirasakan	0.872
B4 <- Nilai Informasi yang Dirasakan	0.832
B5 <- Nilai Informasi yang Dirasakan	0.714
C1 <- Pengaruh yang Dipresepsikan	0.588
C2 <- Pengaruh yang Dipresepsikan	0.726
C3 <- Pengaruh yang Dipresepsikan	0.803
C4 <- Pengaruh yang Dipresepsikan	0.806
D1 <- Komunikasi WOM yang Positif	0.879
D2 <- Komunikasi WOM yang Positif	0.866
D3 <- Komunikasi WOM yang Positif	0.890
E1 <- Niat Untuk Membeli Merek yang Direkomendasikan	0.853
E2 <- Niat Untuk Membeli Merek yang Direkomendasikan	0.921
E3 <- Niat Untuk Membeli Merek yang Direkomendasikan	0.879
E4 <- Niat Untuk Membeli Merek yang Direkomendasikan	0.833

R-square - Overview

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Komunikasi WOM yang Positif	0.407	0.403
Niat Untuk Membeli Merek yang Direkomendasikan	0.562	0.556
Pengaruh yang Dipresepsikan	0.594	0.588

Construct reliability and validity - Overview Zoom (80%)

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Keterlibatan Emosional	0.909	0.913	0.932	0.733
Komunikasi WOM yang Positif	0.853	0.861	0.910	0.772
Niat Untuk Membeli Merek yang Direkomendasikan	0.895	0.898	0.927	0.761
Nilai Informasi yang Dirasakan	0.881	0.882	0.914	0.681
Pengaruh yang Dipresepsikan	0.713	0.729	0.823	0.542

Discriminant validity - Cross loadings

Zoom (70%) Copy to Excel Copy to R

	Keterlibatan Emosional	Komunikasi WOM yang Positif	Niat Untuk Membeli Merek yang Direkomendasikan	Nilai Informasi yang Disajikan	Pengaruh yang Dipresesikan
A1	0.857	0.495	0.545	0.579	0.668
A2	0.884	0.462	0.588	0.562	0.577
A3	0.844	0.465	0.580	0.469	0.513
A4	0.846	0.433	0.480	0.410	0.472
A5	0.847	0.499	0.517	0.588	0.569
B1	0.440	0.469	0.457	0.843	0.668
B2	0.475	0.462	0.512	0.857	0.538
B3	0.468	0.507	0.454	0.872	0.591
B4	0.506	0.421	0.467	0.832	0.620
B5	0.503	0.559	0.591	0.714	0.596
C1	0.341	0.370	0.414	0.400	0.588
C2	0.538	0.525	0.506	0.499	0.726
C3	0.454	0.450	0.487	0.628	0.803
C4	0.534	0.517	0.542	0.572	0.806
D1	0.462	0.879	0.573	0.494	0.574
D2	0.465	0.866	0.559	0.473	0.452
D3	0.522	0.896	0.677	0.573	0.606
E1	0.510	0.556	0.853	0.497	0.620
E2	0.559	0.658	0.921	0.534	0.616
E3	0.500	0.584	0.879	0.480	0.510
E4	0.511	0.605	0.833	0.586	0.568

Path coefficients - Mean, STDEV, T values, p values

Zoom (70%) Copy to Excel Copy to R

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Keterlibatan Emosional → Pengaruh yang Dipresesikan	0.338	0.345	0.067	5.037	0.000
Komunikasi WOM yang Positif → Niat Untuk Membeli Merek yang Direkomendasikan	0.419	0.447	0.091	4.913	0.000
Nilai Informasi yang Disajikan → Pengaruh yang Dipresesikan	0.523	0.524	0.061	8.603	0.000
Pengaruh yang Dipresesikan → Komunikasi WOM yang Positif	0.636	0.642	0.051	12.623	0.000
Pengaruh yang Dipresesikan → Niat Untuk Membeli Merek yang Direkomendasikan	0.379	0.383	0.053	4.056	0.000

Specific indirect effects - Mean, STDEV, T values, p values

Zoom (65%) Copy to Excel Copy to R

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Keterlibatan Emosional → Pengaruh yang Dipresesikan → Komunikasi WOM yang Positif	0.210	0.223	0.046	4.461	0.000
Keterlibatan Emosional → Pengaruh yang Dipresesikan → Komunikasi WOM yang Positif → Niat Untuk Membeli Merek yang Direkomendasikan	0.097	0.098	0.030	3.216	0.001
Pengaruh yang Dipresesikan → Komunikasi WOM yang Positif → Niat Untuk Membeli Merek yang Direkomendasikan	0.285	0.287	0.064	4.501	0.000
Nilai Informasi yang Disajikan → Pengaruh yang Dipresesikan → Niat Untuk Membeli Merek yang Direkomendasikan	0.180	0.201	0.065	3.000	0.000
Nilai Informasi yang Disajikan → Pengaruh yang Dipresesikan → Komunikasi WOM yang Positif	0.380	0.38	0.047	7.997	0.000
Nilai Informasi yang Disajikan → Pengaruh yang Dipresesikan → Komunikasi WOM yang Positif → Niat Untuk Membeli Merek yang Direkomendasikan	0.151	0.160	0.037	4.027	0.000
Keterlibatan Emosional → Pengaruh yang Dipresesikan → Niat Untuk Membeli Merek yang Direkomendasikan	0.128	0.131	0.042	3.096	0.002

Lampiran 6 Jurnal Acuan

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How social media influencers affect behavioural intentions towards recommended brands: the role of emotional attachment and information value

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ABSTRACT

Despite the current relevance of social media influencers in brand communication strategies, questions remain about the factors that determine their influential power and how this power affects follower behaviour. This research examines the role of emotional attachment and perceived information value in the process of influence that can lead followers to manifest behavioural intentions toward the brands endorsed by influencers. The results show that both factors act as determinants of followers' perceived influence, which in turn predicts followers' positive word-of-mouth (WOM) about recommended brands and purchase intention. In fact, perceived influence plays a mediating role in these relationships. Positive WOM and purchase intention are also significantly related. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the nature and effects of the persuasive power of social media influencers. Key implications for researchers and practitioners are discussed.

ARTICLE HISTORY



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KEYWORDS

Social media influencers;
emotional attachment;
information value; word-of-mouth; purchase intention

Introduction

Social networking sites continue to grow as primary sources of online information search and interaction for individuals. Accordingly, companies have been forced to get involved in a variety of interactive practices related to brand electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), such as online brand communities, influencer marketing, blogging, and vlogging (e.g. Childers et al., 2019; Kapoor et al., 2018; Ladhari et al., 2020). These common ways in which consumers interact with brands have raised the interest of marketing researchers and practitioners over the social media platforms (see Alalwan et al., 2016, for a review). Specifically, the role of social media influencers as a promotional tool in the process of consumer decision making is the matter of recent studies (e.g. Casaló et al., 2018; Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019; Ki & Kim, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). But despite the recent and significant growth of brand spending on social media influencers, doubts about their effectiveness have also been raised, which motivates the need to develop a better understanding of the drivers of influencer marketing success (Hughes et al., 2019).

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Although the literature highlights the role of source characteristics in influencer marketing (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), recent research has evolved to explore the importance of influencer-generated content-related cues to predict online opinion leadership (e.g. Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Ki & Kim, 2019; Lin et al., 2018). These contents can attract followers' attention as they encompass both functional (i.e. branded product features) and personal (i.e. influencer's experience using the product) information (Ki & Kim, 2019). The interest on how followers value influencers' contents has also increased because recent studies question whether influencers' characteristics can in fact persuade followers. For example, influencers have been recognized as relevant online opinion leaders due to their perceived level of credibility (e.g. Childers et al., 2019; Magno, 2017; Xiao et al., 2018). However, although some studies find that influencers' credibility can boost followers' purchase intention (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), others show that one or several credibility factors (i.e. expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness) do not predict this outcome (Hughes et al., 2019; Lim et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Van Esch et al., 2018) or are not significantly related to engagement (Hughes et al., 2019) or advertising effectiveness (Gong & Li, 2017). This is not surprising since source attributes such as credibility or similarity generally tend to have weak effects on the source's ability to persuade individuals (Wilson & Sherrell, 1993). In contrast, the resulting utility from the experience, knowledge and resources that the influencers share could be a decisive factor to capture the attention and persuade followers. This utility can be defined in terms of perceived interest, usefulness, novelty or quality of the influencers' contents (e.g. Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Romero et al., 2011; Xiao et al., 2018), that is, the perceived value of the information they transmit (Lee et al., 2014). Individuals' perception of a high information value from influencers would be critical to brand endorsement, as the information that individuals acquire from interpersonal sources has a higher impact on consumer decision-making compared with traditional advertising techniques (De Veirman et al., 2017; Fransen et al., 2015).

On the other hand, the development of emotional connections to influencers can also be relevant in persuading followers (Ladhari et al., 2020). A priori, not only the sense of more accessibility and psychological proximity to influencers that social media facilitates, but also the sense of intimacy that followers may feel to influencers makes people build an emotional connection with or engage in strong feelings toward them (Abidin, 2015; Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2016). Indeed, Kowalczyk and Pounders (2016) demonstrated the effect of emotional attachment to celebrities on behaviour in the context of social media. Van Eldik et al. (2019) also claimed that the connection to the audience is a critical success factor for social media influencers. Emotional attachment has also been discussed with respect to credibility, concluding that followers value an affective link with the influencer more than the credibility that they perceive (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Actually, perceived credibility is built from the creation of affective and relational bonds with the influencer (Reinikainen et al., 2020). Accordingly, emotional attachment should play an important role in explaining the persuasive power of influencers on their following (Cha et al., 2010; Yang & Sia, 2018).

In this study, we focus on examining whether the emotional attachment to influencers and the perceived information value of their messages are related to the influence perceived by followers. Also, we explore how this potential power may impact followers' behavioural intentions toward the brands recommended by influencers. To date, little research has been conducted on how this influential power can shape follower behaviour

(e.g. Casaló et al., 2018; Kapitan & Silvera, 2016; Liu et al., 2015; Magno, 2017). This is critical to assess influencer marketing effectiveness, especially since the observable metrics of the influencers' actions are flawed proxies for perceived influence (e.g. Kwak et al., 2010; Tufekci, 2014). Recent research has proposed conceptual models that explain the effect of influencers on variables such as materialism (Lou & Kim, 2019), trustworthiness (Su et al., 2020) or brand recall (Boerman, 2020), and their influence on behavioural outcomes such as eWOM (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019), purchase intention (e.g. Lou & Kim, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Su et al., 2020), social media engagement (Hughes et al., 2019), and online behavioural intentions (Boerman, 2020). The concept of WOM has been widely analysed in virtual environments in terms of eWOM (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019) or social media WOM (Ki & Kim, 2019). However, few studies have explored how influencers' persuasive power can boost positive WOM communications, conceived as recommendations to other people, relatives and friends through any media (e.g. Casaló et al., 2018). In this study, we suggest that perceived influence predicts followers' positive WOM communication about the brands recommended by influencers and the intention to purchase these brands. We also posit that positive WOM is related to purchase intention.

The conceptual model proposed in this paper was empirically tested in a sample of 280 followers. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using structural equation modelling. The results of this research contribute to the literature on influencer marketing and also provide managerial implications for practitioners. First, this study demonstrates that emotional bonds lead to an increase in the influencer's power on followers. They will also need valuable information to be persuaded and to internalise influencers' messages. In this process, our findings show that emotional attachment to influencers has a stronger effect than information value on perceived influence. Second, this research evidences that the persuasive power of these online opinion leaders positively affects followers' positive WOM communications and increases their intention to purchase recommended brands by influencers. Interestingly, the results confirm the mediating role of perceived influence on the relationship between emotional attachment and perceived information value, and the behavioural outcomes. Hence, firms can use the potential of social media influencers to establish more effective brand communications according to their ability to provide valuable information, create emotional bonds with their followers, and influence their behavioural intentions.

Theoretical background

Influencers and opinion leadership

Social media influencers are ordinary people who have knowledge in some specific areas and become online celebrities as content creators with a social media following (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Indeed, they are referred to as internet microcelebrities, famous to a niche group of people, who show their personal lives and lifestyles through textual and visual narrations and endorse brands to their following for a fee (Abidin, 2015; 2016; Freberg et al., 2011). The origin of the term 'influencer' is based on the traditional concept of opinion leaders but applied to digital environments, where some individuals acquire an important level of public influence to their set of personal connections (Casaló et al., 2018). In addition to this interconnectedness with their audience, another characteristic of

influencers is their interest for gaining recognition and prestige by creating and posting contents in social media, sometimes as hobbyists and other times as real professionals (Abidin, 2016; Pedroni, 2016).

Despite their recognition as online opinion leaders in the literature, the study of social media influencers as a marketing tool related to opinion leadership and opinion seeking is an under-researched area (for exceptions, see, e.g. Casalo et al., 2018; De Veirman et al., 2017; Ki & Kim, 2019; Magno, 2017). In practice, companies increasingly incorporate influencers in their eWOM strategy to endorse their brands, which has changed the interaction between firms and potential consumers in online platforms. An interesting advantage for firms is that the potential influential power of influencers is assumed to be independent of the digital platform/s they use or the consumption context (e.g. Abidin, 2015; Kapitan & Silvera, 2016). In addition, followers perceive social media influencers as a more credible source of information than traditional celebrities, and they identify more with and liken themselves more to these online celebrities (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Jin et al., 2019; Schouten et al., 2019). In fact, some companies recruit them as brand ambassadors (Duffy, 2016; Scott, 2015). Consistent with two-step flow communication theory (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955), social media influencers mediate messages because they elaborate on the information they receive and distribute it to other people via eWOM (Magno, 2017). Accordingly, it can be seen as an opportunity for companies to use these online opinion leaders in their marketing strategies for successfully spreading brand-related information through eWOM.

The process of influence

An explanation of how followers may adopt opinions and behaviours derived from social media influencers' action can be found in the social influence theory. In this regard, this study draws on the seminal work of Kelman (1961), as well as that of Kapitan and Silvera (2016), to suggest that both cognitive and emotional processing are key to understanding the influential power of social media influencers on their followers. In essence, Kelman (1961) suggested that individuals can change their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours induced by influencing agents through psychological processes. Social influence theory describes that the processes of social influence correspond to patterns of internal responses (i.e. thoughts and feelings) in which the individuals engage as they accept the influence. In particular, emotional attachment and perceived information value fit within Kelman's theoretical perspective about the identification and internalisation processes (Kelman, 1958; 1961).

On the one hand, identification occurs when an individual accepts influence from another person to establish or maintain a satisfying self-defining relationship to the other (Kelman, 2006). In our context, individuals tend to notice and imitate influencers' beliefs and behaviours because these are associated with a satisfying self-defining relationship. The relationship is self-established and the object of identification (i.e. the influencer) may be completely unaware of this process (Kelman, 1958). Identification moves beyond merely feeling attraction toward influencers; it is an affection-related, emotional process strongly linked to the interaction (Kelman, 1958; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Specifically, a strong emotional connection formed with an influencer builds a close, intimate and satisfying relationship, which may result in empathically reacting in terms of the influencer's expectations or feelings and even in emulating his/her personality and behaviours

(Boon & Lomore, 2001; Thomson, 2006; Tolbert & Drogos, 2019). Therefore, the emotional attachment that is generated from interactions can be regarded as a source of influence on followers through the identification process.

As to follower-influencer emotional attachment, we refer to the emotional bonding followers feel toward the influencers that they follow. Emotional attachment is typically defined as an emotion-laden target-specific bond between a person and a specific object (e.g. influencer), so that stronger attachments are related to stronger feelings of connection and affection (Thomson et al., 2005). These feelings derive from the sense of accessibility and psychological proximity to influencers that individuals perceive (Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2016).

Consistent with the traditional concept of human brand (Thomson, 2006), an influencer is the subject of marketing communication efforts because he or she creates a 'persona' that triggers positive emotional responses in audiences through their ability to symbolize the lifestyle aspirations of followers and to embody highly self-relevant meanings (Rindova et al., 2006). In particular, followers develop true and intense feelings of affection for the influencers when they feel that influencers share personal information or secrets and/or similarities (i.e. demographic and psychographic characteristics) with them. This is reinforced by the frequency and duration of online encounters, the level of interaction of the influencers with the followers (e.g. likes, comments, shares), and the recall of these exchanges and experiences (Ladhari et al., 2020; Schouten et al., 2019). These conditions can activate the identification mechanism by which followers seek to feel like they have a real, reciprocal relationship with the influencer or to establish a relationship based on modelling where the follower desires to be like, act like, or to actually be the influencer (Kelman, 2006; Lim et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

On the other hand, internalisation occurs when an individual accepts influence from another to maintain the congruence of actions and beliefs with his or her own value system (Kelman, 2006). Followers will deeply process the influencer message because his or her statements are valuable and congruent with their own values and beliefs. This process implies that individuals adopt the content of the induced behaviour inherent to the message (e.g. to follow the recommendation of an expert) as they find it useful to solve a problem, congenial to their own orientations, or coherent with their own value system (Kelman, 1958; 1961). According to Li (2011), the internalisation process is equivalent to informational influence, which occurs when people accept information from others as trustworthy evidence of reality and change their behaviour based on this information. This trustworthiness of the source information is related to the perception of the quality of the communication by the audience (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). The informational influence also occurs when users perceive information as enhancing their knowledge above that of reference groups (Kelman, 1961; Hsu & Lu, 2004). Thus, in our context, the informative value of influencer-generated content would positively affect followers' perceived trust in influencers' branded content and also their behavioural intentions (Lou & Yuan, 2019). That is, followers are likely to accept and internalise messages if they perceive these contents as valuable.

With these antecedents, this study assumes that the role of social media influencers as online opinion leaders for brand communication through eWOM depends on meeting followers' emotional and information needs through the processes of influence. Understanding perceived influence as the tendency to accept information from



Figure 1. Conceptual model.

Note: H6 hypothesises indirect effects of perceived influence.

an individual and consider it to be true (Shen et al., 2010), we suggest that the effective influence of social media influencers depends on (1) the emotional attachment that followers feel with their followed social media influencers and (2) the perceived value of the information (e.g. usefulness, quality, interest) transmitted by social media influencers. Additionally, we assert that followers manifest the acceptance of influence when they express or adopt the induced opinions/behaviours intrinsic to the social media influencers' brand messages. In this case, we focus on two behavioural outcomes: (1) positive WOM communication about recommended brands (i.e. interpersonal communication behaviour between a communicator, who is extremely likely to recommend the brand, and a receiver); and (2) the intention to purchase these brands. We also claim that perceived influence is a generic mechanism that make it possible to translate followers' perceptions and emotions toward influencers into behavioural outcomes. In this regard, we assume that if followers perceive that the information obtained from influencers can reduce uncertainties and assist decision-making and, consequently, they accept it, they would be likely to adopt the content of the induced behaviour inherent to the influencers' brand-related messages. Finally, we also examine the relationship between the examined behavioural manifestations. The conceptual model is depicted in Figure 1.

Research hypotheses

Effects of emotional attachment and perceived information value on perceived influence

Online environments encourage the development of an emotional attachment between the influencers and their followers. According to Wang et al. (2015), influencers can elicit positive emotional responses from others, satisfying their audience's need for fantasy, identification, status, affiliation, and attachment. For example, as Kowalczyk and Pounders (2016) argued in the case of celebrities using social media, the consistent access to information that they post makes individuals feel closer to them, and at times, relate to them more. Accordingly, as influencers are believed to be more accessible, intimate and easy to relate to than celebrities (Abidin, 2016; De Veirman et al., 2017), a more intense emotional attachment can be expected in the case of social media influencers and their following. In general, if followers feel that they maintain a satisfying self-defining relationship with the influencer based on

factors that intensify affective bonds and strengthen ties such as attitudinal similarity and like-mindedness or other psychological or demographic characteristics (Ladhari et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2018), they should more readily accept the influencer's opinions and values proposed (Hsu et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2015). Hence, we posit that when social media influencers become inherently important to the followers, that is, they understand and sense the social media influencer deeply and continuously, followers will form a strong emotional attachment. This feeling of connectedness may thus enhance the persuasive power of influencers. Therefore:

H1: Followers who have a higher emotional attachment to social media influencers will perceive higher influence from them.

The concept of information value applied to the context of digital environments is rooted in the original notion of 'perceived value'. This concept has emerged as a key construct to understand consumer behaviour (Gallarza et al., 2011), and reflects the multiple dimensions or value sources (utilitarian and/or hedonic) that an individual perceives in a consumption experience. Among the utilitarian and functional value dimensions, Lee et al. (2014) identify the concept of information value on the basis of the popular value multidimensional scale by Sweeney and Soutar (2001), and its component of performance/quality. Thus, information value can be defined as the followers' sense of expectation to obtain experience, knowledge, information or resources shared by social media influencers (Lee et al., 2014). In previous studies in virtual environments, terms such as 'purposive value' (Dholakia et al., 2004), 'pragmatic experience' (Nambisan & Nambisan, 2008), 'information satisfaction' (Hsu et al., 2014), 'informational value' (Lou & Yuan, 2019), or 'information value' (Lahuerta-Otero & Cordero-Gutiérrez, 2016; Phua et al., 2020; Wan et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2015) have been used to explain users' perception of acquiring knowledge, experience and service from others in online platforms. All these works have shown the utilitarian nature of the concept of information value, and some of them have emphasised characteristics such as usefulness (Lee et al., 2014), quality and credibility (Cheung et al., 2008; Matute et al., 2016), and even quantity (Matute et al., 2016) as factors that make users perceive the information provided as something valuable. In particular, social media influencers are perceived as authentic and/or expert because of their valuable opinions and recommendations (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). They have the ability to provide current and advanced information to others (Hsu & Tsou, 2011). This resulting utility can be employed by followers to gain knowledge, innovative information, and interesting news (Lee et al., 2014). Followers can also mediate messages and affect communities in the digital environment through the dissemination of those messages and the generation of a viral effect (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). When there is a high perceived quality or strength of the argument in the influencer's message, followers should more readily believe and internalise the message (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016), that is, they should be willing to cognitively engage with the message content and, in turn, to accept the influencer's opinions. Drawing on this reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed:

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H2: Followers who perceive higher information value from social media influencers will perceive higher influence from them.

Effect of perceived influence on positive WOM communication and intention to purchase recommended brands

An increasing number of studies suggest that the influence that online opinion leaders can exert on individuals and members of virtual communities may have a significant impact on their attitudes and behaviours (e.g. Kapitan & Silvera, 2016; Liu et al., 2015; Magno, 2017; Uzunoğlu & Kıp, 2014). Specifically, previous works have demonstrated the potential of influencers in developing marketing strategies, generating ultimately positive WOM communications (Casaló et al., 2018) and purchase intention (Jin et al., 2019; Wang & Yu, 2017; Wu & Lee, 2012). As argued, followers consider virtual environments and online opinion leaders as reliable sources for guiding personal actions such as obtaining buying-related information (e.g. Cosenza et al., 2015; Hsiao et al., 2013). This dependency link can be understood from a social exchange perspective since followers may reciprocate positive thoughts, feelings and behaviours toward the recommended brands when they received a benefit from the relationship with the brand endorser (e.g. to acquire knowledge about a product) (Hollebeek, 2011). Rather than passively receiving and processing messages, individuals may follow influencers' brand recommendations by engaging in reciprocal behaviours such as positive WOM or showing their intention to purchase, which can be considered as manifestations of influence (Hollebeek, 2011; Zhao et al., 2018). Accordingly, the greater the perceived persuasive power of the social media influencers, the greater will be the follower's intention to spread positive WOM and to purchase the recommended brands. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H3: Followers who perceive a higher influence from social media influencers will have a greater intention to spread positive WOM about the brands they recommend.

H4: Followers who perceive a higher influence from social media influencers will have a greater intention to purchase the brands they recommend.

Effect of positive WOM communication on purchase intention of recommended brands

The concept of WOM is attitudinal in nature and includes emotional and psychological aspects related to the individual's desire to recommend an object (e.g. brand, product) to others (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Srivastava & Kaul, 2016). While research on the impact of WOM transmission on the senders of this WOM is scarce (Chen & Gao, 2019), the studies on this topic generally claim that WOM affects communicators' behaviour (e.g. Helm, 2003). For instance, Gamefeld et al. (2011) demonstrated that articulating WOM has a positive effect on senders' attitudinal and behavioural loyalty. Also, drawing on the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005), which states that a person's attitudes have causal priority over his/her behaviours, Srivastava and Kaul (2016) empirically

showed that attitudinal intentions, like recommending a retailer to others, positively affect behavioural intentions, that is, choosing the retailer in future. In virtual environments, some studies have also demonstrated the effects of consumers' online WOM activities on their own feelings, attitudes and behaviours toward brands (Chawdhary & Dall'Olmo Riley, 2015; Chen & Gao, 2019). For example, in the context of Facebook fanpages, Hutter et al. (2013) found that users' WOM activity has a positive effect on their own purchase intentions.

Following this line of reasoning, we assume a positive relationship between followers' positive WOM communication and brand purchase intention. When followers accept the influence from influencers and, therefore, believe their recommendations to be trustworthy and valuable, they will readily react by actively showing and convincing others of the potential value of the endorsed product or service (e.g. showing a relative the branded content and positively talking about it). Since they have articulated the recommendation, it is reasonable to believe that this positive WOM will reinforce followers' own cognitive and affective state toward the object of recommendation. This may have a potential effect on their willingness to act toward the brand and, thus, may form an intention to purchase the endorsed product or service. Formally stated:

H5: Followers who are likely to spread positive WOM about brands recommended by influencers will have a greater intention to purchase these brands.

Combining the expected effects of perceived information value and emotional attachment on perceived influence and the potential impact of these effects on positive WOM and intention to purchase, one can assume that perceived influence appears to play a mediating role in the relationships between the antecedents and the follower's intentional behaviours. Indeed, influencers can induce changes in followers' behaviour when followers are susceptible to their influence as a result of engaging in positive interactions by sharing both functional and personal content that attracts public attention and building an intimate and emotional connection (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Ki & Kim, 2019); only influencers who have a high value and efficiency, i.e. that are ascribed more opinion leadership, could increase the message's impact on followers (De Veirman et al., 2017; Ladhari et al., 2020). Thus, it can be proposed that perceived influence serves as the underlying mechanism which explains the relationships between emotional attachment and perceived information value on the outcomes of WOM and purchase intention:

H6: Emotional attachment and perceived information value will increase perceived influence, which consequently leads to higher positive WOM communication and intention to purchase recommended brands.

Methodology

Sample and procedure

The empirical study was conducted in Spain through an online survey. This context was considered to be particularly suitable for this research since 6 out of 10 Spanish users

show affinity with influencers and a significant number of them highly appreciate their association with products and brands (IAB Spain, 2017). Moreover, there is an increasing use of influencers by digital marketing professionals in Spain in the search for brand awareness and engagement (IAB Spain, 2017).

A non-probabilistic convenience sampling technique was used to recruit participants with a minimum age of 18 who were active followers of social media influencers that make brand recommendations. This sampling procedure was considered appropriate for the data collection process (e.g. Alalwan et al., 2016; Al-Debei et al., 2015), taking into account that the large size and widespread distribution of the population (i.e. individuals who are over 18 years old and are active followers of influencers who recommend brands) makes it difficult to reach the target sample using a probability method (Alalwan et al., 2016; Bhattacharjee, 2012). Also, a non-probability sample is deemed more fitting when the purpose is to test theoretical assumptions (Hulland et al., 2017), which is the aim of our study. Indeed, previous studies on followers' perception and behaviour that apply multivariate techniques, as in this case, have used a convenience sampling for data collection (e.g. Casaló et al., 2018; Magno, 2017; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Torres et al., 2019). This method has been also considered to be useful and suitable for multivariate data analysis purposes (Al-Debei et al., 2015), as is our case.

The survey was conducted through an online questionnaire which was posted on social network platforms. Participation was anonymous and voluntary to avoid social desirability bias. In line with previous studies (e.g. De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008), we asked participants to share the post, that includes the URL to the questionnaire, with their contacts, aiming at creating a snowball effect. Initial instructions were provided for respondents, including a clear definition of social media influencers and an indication to answer the questions with regard to the influencers that they frequently follow. A final sample of 280 respondents was obtained after excluding 22 invalid questionnaires. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the participants. Gender and age rates were similar to recent data provided by the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB Spain, 2019), which helps to control the potential effect of selection bias. Respondents were mainly women (64.64%) between 18 and 38 years old (91.43%).

Table 1. Sample description (N = 280).

	N	%
Gender		
Female	181	64.64
Male	99	35.36
Age		
18-24	196	70.0
25-31	46	16.43
32-38	14	5.0
39-45	8	2.86
>45	16	5.71
Education level		
High school or less	66	23.57
Technical college	19	6.79
University	195	69.64
Occupation		
Student	195	69.64
Employee	59	21.07
Self-employed	15	5.36
Unemployed/homemaker/retired	11	3.93

69.64% of the sample has a university-level education. According to Armstrong and Overton (1977) suggestions, this research adopted the time trend extrapolation approach in order to avoid the non-response bias. Thus, independent T-tests were conducted to compare early and late respondents on key variables. The results revealed an absence of non-response bias since there were no statistically significant differences for any variable.

Measures

Multi-item scales from previous studies were adapted to the current research context to measure the constructs of the proposed conceptual model. Thus, emotional attachment was assessed using a scale based on the instruments developed by Hammitt et al. (2009), Jun et al. (2016), and Thomson et al. (2005), and perceived information value was measured through the adapted scales from Lee et al. (2014) and Wang and Lin (2011). The scales of Bansal and Voyer (2000) and Wang et al. (2015) were used as a basis to develop a measurement scale for the concept of perceived influence of social media influencers. Finally, positive WOM communication was measured adapting the scales proposed by Brügger et al. (2011) and Zeithaml et al. (1996), and the intention to purchase recommended brands was assessed based on the scales proposed by Cosenza et al. (2015) and Magno (2017). A seven-point Likert scale from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (7) was used for all items.

Results

Measurement model evaluation

Structural equation modelling was applied to analyse the data through LISREL 8.8 software (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the reliability and validity of the measurement model before the structural model was tested. After finalizing the item selection process through this technique, a solution consisting of 16 items was retained from an original 21-item pool (see scales in Table 2). All the model fitness indices were within recommended thresholds. χ^2 ($df = 94$, $p = 0.00$) was equal to 251.01, and the χ^2/df ratio had a value of 2.67, which is below the recommended value of 3.0 for model parsimony (Kline, 2016); the comparative fit index (CFI) value of 0.98 was over the suggested threshold of 0.95, and the non-normed fit index (NNFI) was 0.98, above the recommended cut-off of 0.95 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.074, less than the limit of 0.08 (MacCallum et al., 1996). The standardized square root mean residual (SRMR) value of 0.035 was under the limit of 0.07 (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012).

Evidence of internal consistency for the five constructs of the model is provided by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). The estimates for each construct exceeded the suggested cut-offs of 0.70 for coefficient alpha (Nunnally, 1978) and 0.70 for composite reliability (Churchill, 1979). Standardized loadings of the constructs and the average variance extracted (AVE) were used to test convergent validity. The estimated factor loadings of each indicator were positive and significant (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988) and were greater than the established cut-off point of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). The AVE for the model's constructs was

Table 2. Confirmatory factor analysis and scale reliability.

Variables and items	Completely standardised loading	t-value	Reliability
<i>Emotional attachment</i>			
1. I feel emotionally connected to the influencers that I follow.	0.84	16.98	Cronbach's alpha = 0.93 CR = 0.93 AVE = 0.72
2. I feel a bond with the influencers that I follow.	0.90	19.13	
3. I am very attached to the influencers that I follow.	0.90	19.18	
4. The influencers that I follow are special for me.	0.88	18.32	
5. I miss the influencers that I follow when they do not post an entry or I cannot view their posts.	0.75	14.38	
<i>Perceived information value</i>			
1. I accumulate knowledge through the information shared by the influencers that I follow.	0.87	17.96	Cronbach's alpha = 0.91 CR = 0.92 AVE = 0.73
2. I acquire novel information through the influencers that I follow.	0.80	15.87	
3. I get interesting information through the influencers that I follow.	0.86	17.71	
4. The information provided by the influencers that I follow is useful to me.	0.88	18.28	
* Strategic information shared by the influencers that I follow creates competitive advantage.			
<i>Perceived influence</i>			
1. My perceptions often change when I receive information from the influencers that I follow.	0.79	14.96	Cronbach's alpha = 0.78 CR = 0.78 AVE = 0.64
2. I value the opinion of the influencers that I follow as if they were someone close whom I trust.	0.81	15.46	
* If I have little experience with a brand, I often search for related information from the influencers that I follow.			
* The influencers that I follow suggest helpful products or brands to me.			
<i>Positive WOM communication</i>			
1. I am likely to recommend the brands suggested by the influencers that I follow to other people.	0.95	22.94	Cronbach's alpha = 0.95 CR = 0.95 AVE = 0.91
2. I am likely to encourage friends and relatives to buy the brands recommended by the influencers that I follow.	0.96	21.19	
* I am likely to say positive things about the brands recommended by the influencers that I follow to other people.			
<i>Intention to purchase recommended brands</i>			
1. I would purchase a brand based on the advice I am given by the influencers that I follow.	0.92	20.01	Cronbach's alpha = 0.92 CR = 0.92 AVE = 0.81
2. I would follow brands recommendations from the influencers that I follow.	0.85	17.39	
3. In the future, I will purchase the products of brands recommended by the influencers that I follow.	0.91	19.65	
* I would feel comfortable acting upon the brand information given to me by the influencers that I follow.			

Note: Items indicated by (*) were dropped from the final analysis after scale purification through CFA.

greater than 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 2 presents all of the aforementioned indicators. Discriminant validity was assessed by using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) between the latent variables (Henseler et al., 2015). As shown in Table 3, the HTMT values were below the recommended threshold of 0.85 (Kline, 2011), thus discriminant validity can be regarded as established.

The use of self-reported data in survey research can lead to common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To prevent potential common method bias at the research design stage, we carefully designed the questionnaire and properly ordered the questions by dispersing similar items throughout the questionnaire separated by unrelated items

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT).

	1	2	3	4
1. Emotional attachment				
2. Perceived information value	0.57			
3. Perceived influence	0.78	0.73		
4. Positive WOM communication	0.60	0.47	0.79	
5. Intention to purchase recommended brands	0.65	0.46	0.78	0.81

(MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012). We examined common method bias by using the single common method factor approach discussed in Podsakoff et al. (2003). A single-factor solution indicated a significantly poorer fit with the data as compared to the fitness of the five-factor measurement model proposed in this study (1996.26 $\Delta\chi^2$ increase with additional 10 df, $p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.84; NNFI = 0.81; RMSEA = 0.27; SRMR = 0.12). This result indicates that our findings are less likely to be affected by common method bias. As stated earlier, we also guaranteed the anonymity of participants to reduce socially desirable responding.

Hypothesis testing

The hypothesized relationships that the conceptual framework posits were estimated by using structural equation analysis. The goodness-of-fit statistics indicated the appropriateness of the model for the given dataset ($\chi^2 = 264.12$, $df = 98$; CFI = 0.98; NNFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.074; SRMR = 0.042). Figure 2 shows the results of the hypothesis test, path coefficients, and R^2 . The model accounts for a significant portion of the variance of dependent variables, specifically, 69%, 57%, and 71% of the variance in perceived influence, positive WOM communication and intention to purchase endorsed brands respectively. The results indicated that the relationship between emotional attachment and perceived influence was positive and significant ($\gamma = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. As predicted in Hypothesis 2, the results showed that perceived information value was positively related to perceived influence ($\gamma = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$). Comparing both results, emotional attachment has the most significant effect on perceived influence, with a coefficient higher than perceived information value. Hypothesis 3, which posited

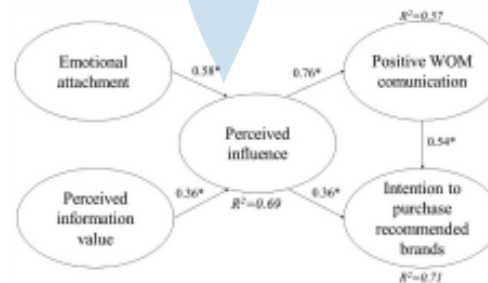


Figure 2. Hypothesis testing results.

Table 4. Indirect effects.

Indirect effect path	Estimated indirect effect	t value
Emotional attachment → Perceived influence → WOM	0.44	8.48
Emotional attachment → Perceived influence → Intention to purchase	0.44	8.45
Perceived information value → Perceived influence → WOM	0.27	5.92
Perceived information value → Perceived influence → Intention to purchase	0.28	5.91

the relationship between perceived influence and positive WOM communication, was also validated ($\beta = 0.76$, $p < 0.001$). Hypothesis 4 was also supported since we found a positive and significant effect of perceived influence on intention to purchase recommended brands ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$). These results show that perceived influence has a greater significant effect on positive WOM communication, with a coefficient much higher than intention to purchase recommended brands. Finally, positive WOM communication was positively related to intention to purchase recommended brands ($\beta = 0.54$, $p < 0.001$), in support of Hypothesis 5.

Observing these results, emotional attachment and perceived information value may have indirect effects on the two main outcomes of WOM and intention to purchase, mediated by perceived influence, as suggested in Hypothesis 6. Therefore, these potentially mediated relationships were examined. Since there is no direct link between both antecedents and the dependent variables, indirect effects will be equal to total effects. As Table 4 shows, all indirect effects were significant ($p < 0.001$). These results confirm the mediating role that perceived influence plays in associating emotional attachment and perceived information value with the behavioural intentions.

Discussion

While there is an increasing interest in examining the role that social media influencers play as an eWOM tool for brands, there is still a need to better understand the processes of influence that lead followers to accept and adopt influencers' induced opinions and behaviours inherent to their brand messages. The findings of this study can provide useful insights to the ongoing discussion on the role of social media influencers as opinion leaders and the factors that help increase their influence on their following. The study also sheds light on the effects of their persuasive power on follower behaviour and thus how brands can take advantage of using influencer marketing to promote their product and service offers.

Theoretical contributions

The study contributes to the research on social media influencers in several ways. Overall, the research is one of the first attempts that provides some empirical evidence on the role that two overlooked factors (i.e. emotional attachment and perceived information value) play in contributing to the followers' perception of the influence of influencers. The study describes underlying mechanisms that explain the effects of influencer marketing on potential consumers. In particular, the results confirm the relevance of meeting both followers' emotional and information expectations in the processes of influence. The emotional attachment to influencers and the perceived information value from their

messages act as significant factors that activate persuasion processes which, in turn, help develop behavioural intentions.

These results are consistent with and extend previous literature suggesting the essential role of the source and message characteristics in the process of influence (Ki & Kim, 2019; Lin et al., 2018; Lou & Yuan, 2019). The direct connections between emotional attachment and perceived information value with perceived influence reveal that followers must be not only cognitively (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016) but also emotionally engaged with influencers to accept their influence. Prior research highlights that the sense of intimacy that followers feel towards influencers can build a potential bond with them (Abidin, 2015; Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2016). The finding regarding the relationship between emotional attachment and perceived influence shows that a strong bond can increase the influencer's power on followers and reinforces the growing recognition of emotional characteristics to understand how people react to influencer marketing (e.g. Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019; Ladhari et al., 2020; Yang & Sia, 2018). Such is its scope that, according to our results, emotional attachment to influencers has a stronger effect than perceived information value on perceived influence. This is consistent with and adds support to the relevance of this factor in explaining influencers' power in a broad sense. For instance, Ladhari et al. (2020) report that strong emotional bonds with vloggers are positively associated with perceived popularity. Thus, the finding provides a better understanding of influencers' opinion leadership on followers, extending prior research on its antecedents, which has mainly focused on the account and generated content characteristics or the perceived popularity (e.g. Casaló et al., 2018; De Veirman et al., 2017; Ki & Kim, 2019). In this sense, emotional cues should be considered in influencer marketing research when studying followers' desire to mimic influencers from the identification process perspective.

Although influencers' experience and knowledge are important cues to stimulate consumer behaviour (Bao & Chang, 2014; Hughes et al., 2019; Ki & Kim, 2019), it seems that followers will also need valuable information (e.g. useful, novel, interesting) to be persuaded and to internalise their messages. Previous studies have emphasised that influencers generate value when they disseminate persuasive messages to their followers that contain useful information for them (Lahuerta-Otero & Cordero-Gutiérrez, 2016; Lou & Yuan, 2019). The findings from this study contribute to this body of literature by showing that perceived information value increases the persuasive power of social media influencers on followers. The results indicate that perceived information value is a significant characteristic of the influencer's message as it leads to increase perceived influence which, in turn, may shape how followers react to specific branded posts. Consequently, this research extends previous studies that have analysed the concept of information value in virtual communities (e.g. Dholakia et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2014) and blogs (Hsu et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2015) to the context of influencer marketing. Specifically, this result contributes to the understanding of the relevance of perceived information value in this domain by adding evidence to other studies that demonstrate that the informative value of influencer-generated content positively affects followers' trust in influencers' branded posts (Lou & Yuan, 2019), or that consumers do not show a significant difference in perceived information value if the source type is a celebrity or not (Phua et al., 2020). In sum, these findings add to the literature on social media influencers by confirming that followers and influencers are involved in an exchange

relationship where influencers meet followers' emotional and information needs; influencers expect to gain loyal followers that adopt induced opinions and behaviours.

The study also reports the indirect effects of emotional attachment and perceived information value on intentional behaviours (i.e. positive WOM communication and intention to purchase recommended brands) through perceived influence. This finding adds evidence to prior research which underscores the key role of opinion leadership in influencer marketing (e.g. Casaló et al., 2018; Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019; Lin et al., 2018). Opinion leadership and its mediating role are not always evident in the case of social media influencers, as shown in previous studies (e.g. De Veirman et al., 2017; Kay et al., 2020). For instance, De Veirman et al. (2017) did not find a significant indirect effect of the number of followers on likeability via ascribed opinion leadership. By demonstrating the mediating effect of perceived influence in our model, our research contributes more insights on the way in and the conditions under which influencers exert their power on their following. In this sense, we show that the activation of persuasion is a critical underlying mechanism that explains the effects of emotional attachment and perceived information value on followers' reactions, specifically on the adoption of induced behaviours; that is, a follower who feels that he/she has an emotional bond with an influencer and perceives that the influencer provides valuable information content may develop behaviours that have a beneficial impact on the influencer and the recommended brands, as long as the influencer is being perceived as an influential source.

Despite social media influencers being increasingly used by brands in their eWOM strategy, there is scarce research evidence on their effectiveness in achieving followers' behavioural outcomes towards the endorsed brands. Another issue that is worth addressing is the need for valid and reliable results about users' perceptions, attitudes and behaviours toward social media marketing activities (Alalwan et al., 2017). This research attempts to narrow these gaps by examining the relationship between followers' perceived influence over the influencers and behavioural intentions toward endorsed brands. Unlike other studies using observable metrics of the influencers' activities (e.g. Bao & Chang, 2014; Zhang et al., 2017), this research considers self-reported measures to assess followers' perceptions, which can be a valuable, complementary way to measure the degree of influential power of influencers together with observable metrics. Our findings suggest that social media influencers can be considered as really being influential, and more importantly that their influential power may positively enhance followers' behavioural intentions. In this regard, perceived influence serves to increase the followers' intention to recommend the endorsed brand to others, and also their purchase intention, benefiting the influencers' interests. This study adds to the existing literature demonstrating the relationship between perceived influence and positive WOM communication in the context of online branding through social media influencers. Findings show that perceived influence has a greater significant effect on positive WOM communication, with a coefficient much higher than intention to purchase recommended brands. Thus, followers are likely to recommend the endorsed brands to third parties (e.g. friends, relatives) or even encourage them to buy these brands due to the influencers' persuasive power. This result reinforces the idea highlighted in prior research that WOM is a significant behavioural outcome derived from the activity of influencers (e.g. Chapple & Cownie, 2017). For instance, Casaló et al. (2018) demonstrated that opinion leadership

has a positive effect on users' intention to recommend an Instagram account to friends and relatives. This research thus extends work on the effect of influencer marketing on followers' WOM behaviour and adds to previous research that has exclusively focused on eWOM about sponsored posts published by influencers (e.g. Hughes et al., 2019).

On the other hand, the result regarding the significant effect of perceived influence on purchase intention is consistent with the recent research findings of Casaló et al. (2018), Lou and Yuan (2019) and Sokolova and Kefi (2020), which also confirm the influence of influencer marketing on intention to purchase the recommended products or to follow the influencer's advice. Interestingly, the results show the effectiveness of the model antecedents in predicting the proposed outcomes since the model explains a substantial part of their variance. Behavioural manifestations of influence are rarely examined in empirical research on social media influencers. This study confirms that followers who have the intention to spread positive WOM communication about the brands recommended by influencers are likely to have the intention to purchase these brands. The result extends to the context of influencer marketing the role of WOM as an antecedent of purchase intention underscored in other settings (e.g. Hutter et al., 2013; Srivastava & Kaul, 2016). In sum, this study advances prior research by enabling a better understanding of how the process of influence works in influencer marketing and also by providing evidence about the effectiveness of influencers in shaping followers' behaviour.

Practical implications

From a practical perspective, this study shows the potential of social media influencers to establish more effective brand communication, which raises the possibility of selecting this tool for social media campaigns. First, this study supports the investment in social media influencers for brand strategies based on their ability to create emotion-laden bonds with their followers. This research demonstrates that the allure of influencers also relies on the way they emotionally engage with their followers, and that emotional attachment is an important factor that explains influencers' persuasive effect on followers. According to our findings, beyond selecting influencers from their number of followers or other observable metrics (e.g. number of likes, posting comments) (see Arora et al., 2019), brands should also consider choosing influencers who have the ability to or have developed a strong emotional attachment with their followers. Consequently, if brand managers wish to develop a partnership with an influencer, the existence of emotional bonds with his/her followers is an important characteristic they should look for. Thus, it is essential for brand managers to understand that influencers can activate emotions and create bonds with their followers, and this emotional link can be very useful to develop successful online marketing strategies.

In addition, managers should be aware of the potential that influencers who transmit valuable information have in developing promotional actions. They should ensure that the influencers who endorse their brands usually provide value to followers through useful, novel, and/or interesting contents. Thus, companies that are interested in identifying, evaluating and selecting particular influencers for brand promotion purposes (i.e. trial campaigns, generating positive WOM) should examine the extent to which their posts are informative, since our results demonstrate that influencers who fulfil this requirement can be a powerful channel for spreading brand information that enhances the induced

behaviour inherent to the message (e.g. brand purchase). This could help brands implement potentially more effective influencer marketing campaigns.

Furthermore, this research highlights the capacity of social media influencers to influence followers' behavioural intentions. In this sense, the results show the influencers' brand prescribing power and their effectiveness as an online communication tool for companies, validating their impact on generating positive WOM communication and intention to purchase endorsed brands. This finding shows how the influencers' prescribing power works, demonstrating that companies should consider investing in influencer marketing as an effective communication tool. Thus, the ability of influencer marketing to spread positive WOM about brands and increase purchase intention could increase the performance results of companies in terms of sales and market share. Ultimately, companies may benefit from social media influencers to enhance the attractiveness of their online campaigns and the return on investment in social media (Shiau et al., 2018).

Limitations and future research

The following limitations of the study should be addressed by future research. First, this research used a convenience sampling procedure in view of the large size and widespread nature of the population but satisfying gender and age quota requirements. Future research should use a randomized sampling procedure to generalize our results. Second, the data in this study were cross-sectional, so further research is needed to analyse followers' perceptions and behaviour over time through longitudinal data and cross-lagged analysis. Third, although this study considers that the influential power is independent of the digital platform/s used by influencers (Abidin, 2015; Kapitan & Silvera, 2016), further research can explore this issue to more firmly investigate if followers' attitude and behaviour can be different depending on the social network (Casaló et al., 2018). Fourth, as this study does not distinguish between types of influencers based on the number of followers, future research might examine the proposed relationships considering recent categorisations of influencers based on the number of followers (Kay et al., 2020; Ladhari et al., 2020) or industry (e.g. fashion, beauty, entertainment) (Torres et al., 2019). Fifth, further research is necessary to examine if followers react and behave differently depending on the social media platform that they use to follow influencers (Casaló et al., 2018). Sixth, different follower personalities and characteristics may have affected the results, for example, those related to age or educational level. Therefore, future studies might help us understand how personal characteristics may affect followers' perceptions and behaviours in their interaction with social media influencers.

Finally, although intentions are the main antecedents of behaviours, future research should analyse the influence of social media influencers on actual behaviours (Casaló et al., 2018). Furthermore, other emotional and information antecedents of perceived influence could be examined, for example, empathy, exchange outcome satisfaction, attitudinal/behavioural loyalty (e.g. Hsu et al., 2014), positive/negative valence WOM (e.g. Wang & Yu, 2017), or content-user fit (Zhang et al., 2017).

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