Research Article

Trust in social media influencers and purchase intention: An empirical analysis

Zeynep Alkan [1*]
 0000-0001-9020-1014

Sevilay Ulas [2]
 0000-0002-0137-1263

[1] Near East University, CYPRUS
[2] Cankaya University, Ankara, TURKEY
[*] Corresponding author: zeynep.alkan@neu.edu.tr

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Influencers have entered our lives as a new communication tool with the developments in social media. The aim of the study is to reveal the relationship between the trust in the influence and the purchase intention in the influencer communication process. An online questionnaire was applied between 21-28 May 2020 to the students who were studying at the Near East University in the spring term of 2019-2020 and followed an influencer. It was found that influencers expressing opinions increased the trust towards them and that there is a positive correlation between trust in the influencer and purchasing intention. It was found that there were no significant difference between genders in terms of trust in influencer and purchase intentions of the participants following the influencer were moderate. There was no significant difference between the time spent on social media and the purchase intention however, significant differences were found between trust in influencer and education and monthly income. The subject being up-to-date and limited number of studies in the field can be considered as the originality of this study. Since it was implemented in the first period of the pandemic, the study sheds light to this process. The purchasing and trust scale has been adapted and developed for influencers. In this case, it is among the features of the study. **Keywords:** influencer, influencer communication, trust and influencer, purchase intention and influencer

INTRODUCTION

In the periods when social media were not so active, individuals displayed their purchasing behavior by relying on the experiences of their families and their environment in the processes of product and brand service (Bakshy et. al., 2011; Lee et al., 2014; Szczurski, 2017). Nowadays, it can be stated that this situation has changed with the influencers, which is a result of developments in social media. Individuals who are active in social media applications place influencers in the position of their family and friends. In this context, individuals who listen to the experiences and directions of the influencers have a sense of trust in them. The main factors that increase this trust is that the influencers are transparent in their product and brand experiences, and they indicate all positive and negative features, creating a bond with their followers as a result (Alikilic & Ozkan, 2018). Brands that realize this influencing effect tend to cooperate with influencers and wants to direct the target audience to their own products. It has been observed that the communication process carried out with influencer is more effective. At this point, influencers are presenting the products as a part of their own life, this can be proof that the communication process is driven by the influencer (Coskun, 2018).

The aim of this study is to explain the concept of influencer and influencer communication, and to reveal the relationship between the trust in influencer and the purchase intention. The subject being up to date, the

limited number of the studies on the field in question and the fact that this study is aimed at the trust towards the influence can be accepted as the importance of the study, especially as it is mentioned under the heading of influencer communication. In this context, it is thought that the study will contribute to the literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept and Scope of Influencer

When we look at the origin of the word Influencer, which is one of the many concepts that came into our lives with social media, it is seen that it derives from the word "influence". Brown and Hayes (2008) refers to the word influence as, changing the flow of events in a different direction. In this context, Influence can be a movement to affect other people's attitudes and approaches towards a subject. Cambridge Dictionary (2020) defines influencer as the person who influences or changes the actions of other individuals. In social media platforms, influencers with more followers are considered to be stronger. Therefore, they must be constantly active in order to maintain their existence and recognition (Ecmercer, 2015).

As Moscovici and Persomaz (1980) mentioned in their study, influencers create the desired content in line with the direction and demands of the followers, where they can access and relate. As a result, this helps the influencers to build relationship with their followers. Therefore, they are people who know very well what their followers expect, and they act accordingly. In addition, linking the product or brand to a story during promotion helps to provide or improve the relationship between the influencer and followers. This results in an increase of trust towards the influencers, making the followers perceive them as close and reliable individual. Therefore, as a result of integrating the product or brand into their own daily lives, influencers have the status of purchasers in the eyes of their followers (Barker, 2016; Boerman et al., 2017; Lueck, 2012; Messiaen, 2017).

One of the main reasons that increases the popularity of the influencers is due to the fact that their followers identify with them. In other words, interacting with a person who is interested in or likes the same things as themselves has effects that will cause changes in people's thinking and behavior styles (Li, et. al., 2014). Accordingly, İnfluencers become individuals who play a key role when people buy a product with the content they have produced on social media and while they guide the followers and inform them about the product (Bor & Erten, 2019). According to Bor and Erten, the background areas of the influencer are categorized as "twitter phenomenon, blogger, vlogger, instablogger and youtuber" as shown in **Figure 1** (2019).
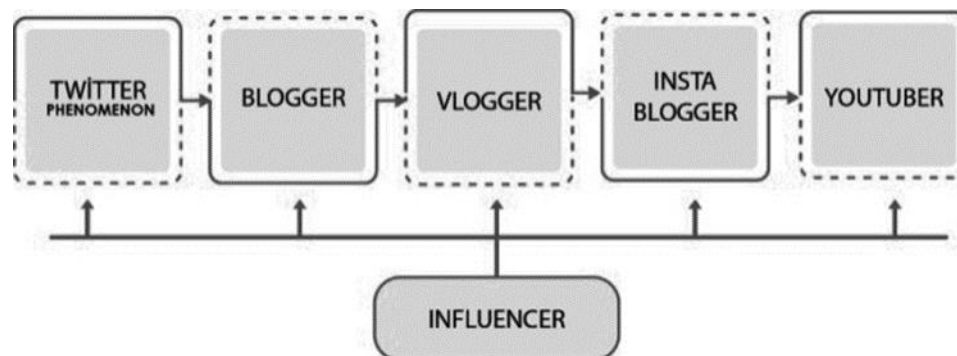

Figure 1. Influencer background field
Source: (Bor & Erten, 2019)

Twitter Phenomenon: Twitter is a platform where people can share their thoughts through limited words and make the tweet they share instantly come to the fore in the country and even the world. Those who use this situation effectively are likely to drag millions after them (Coskun, 2018).

Blogger: Bloggers are people who can produce their own experiences and content. They may cover many topics such as personal experiences, education, news, politics, daily experiences, technology and corporate aspects (Bor & Erten, 2019; Caliskan & Mencik; Chen et al., 2014).

Vlogger: Vlogs are a field where individuals convey the information they have acquired through their own experiences through video (Inanc & Cesur, 2018).

Instablogger: Instagram continues to exist in our lives today as one of the most used photo and video applications. The fact that individuals use Instagram excessively, makes it one of the most effective platforms for influencers (Salomon, 2013).

YouTuber: YouTube ranks as one of the most influential platforms today. When influencers produces content on YouTube, this provides a serious increase in the number of views and an increase in their subscribers every day. In this case, the rate of video views, may show us that it is in an effective way of communication (Bor & Erten, 2019).

Classifications of Influencers

When looked in the relevant literature for the classification of influencer, influencers are divided into three categories as "micro, macro and mega". In this context, the relevant classification is given below.

Mikro Influencerlar: Brown and Fiorella (2013) describes micro influencers as people who have a strong influence on their social media followers and are strong in terms of communication and interaction. Therefore, there is a certain audience that follows them, and the influencer is aware of which brand and product is the most appealing to them.

Makro Influencerlar: The cooperation of Macro Influencers can be at a point that can be expressed as nearly unlimited. Sharing content for advertising every day leaves a suspicious foresight in followers, also causing them to question (Bor & Erten, 2019).

Mega Influencerlar: They are influencers that have a million and over followers, with the highest range in the Influencer category. Their influencing effect is driven by their reputation. Brands also tend to belong to this class on their own (CreatorDen, 2018).

Brand Communication and Influencers

Through social media applications influencers collaborate with brands to inform their followers about their own experiences about the product and the brand and guide them to purchase. In this context, according to the data of The State of Influencer Marketing 2017, it is stated that one of the important factors 89% of brands choosing influencer collaborations in their marketing processes in 2016 is because these individuals create natural content. In the same research, 77% of the brands stated that they benefit from influencers because they want to increase the interaction rates towards the brand in the marketing process and 56 % of the brands stated that they used influencer collaborations to attract followers to their websites or social media profiles (Linqia, 2017).

In short, when looking at the data on purchasing and to use influencers as a communication tool, it is stated that brands increase their budgets for influencers every year and earn between 5.20 - 6.50 ($) for each $ 1 ($) spent (Mediakix, 2019; Santora, 2020). In the light of these data, it can be said that the reason why brands transfer more resources to collaboration with influencers is that their sales are affected positively. In other words, in brand-influencer collaboration, it is understood that the resources transferred by brands increase with the increase in purchasing. Influencer communication is a way of communication activity that can be seen in social media environments. Influencer communication ensures that influencers are at the forefront in the communication process and interact with their followers. In the communication process where influencers are at the forefront, brands can reach the attitudes of the target audience towards their products in a shorter and easier way. Therefore, this enables the brands to draw a path by considering the feedbacks in product planning. As a result of brand-influencer collaborations, the influencers are able to share their experiences about the collaborated brand or product to their followers using their own styles. In this context, the influencer becomes the communication tool within the process (Bor & Erten, 2019).

As mentioned in the study of Ulas and Alkan (2020) on influencer campaign and advertising processes, the path followed for the influencer and brand collaboration process is expressed. Within the scope of their study the collaboration of "Duygu Özaslan X Bobbi Brown" was observed (Ozaslan, 2017). It is seen that the influencer is used as a communication element by the brand at the point where the campaign is designed, the content of the messages is produced, and the product is announced. Influencers conveying messages in

accordance with their unique style, appreciation of the content produced by their followers, their content being shared and commented repeatedly creates a link between the brand and the target audience. As it can be understood from the process carried out, brands use influencer and influencer communication to convey their messages to their target audience. In this context, the visuals presented by the influencer on her YouTube channel for the campaign is given in **Figure 2**.
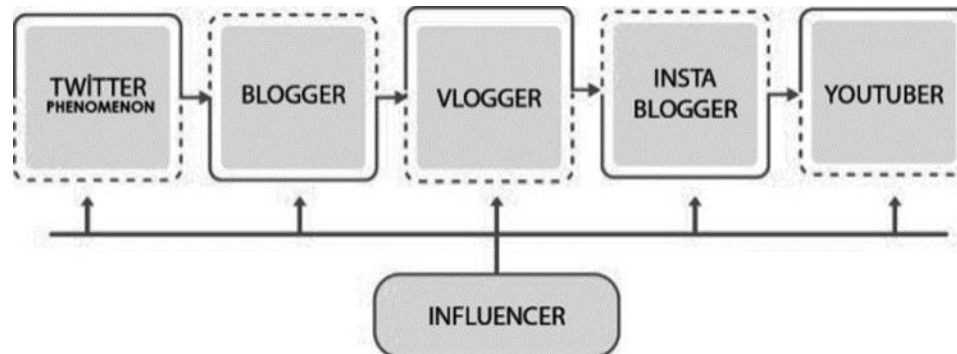

Figure 2. Duygu Ozaslan X Bobbi Brown collaboration process
Source: (Ozaslan, 2017)

Within the scope of brand collaborations, it can be stated that influencers have turned into a communication tool that creates and directs the content, uses its own style and shapes this whole process from their own profile.

The Relationship between Purchase Intention and Influencers

The state of evaluating a probability towards which brand and product an individual will turn to is called purchase intention (Nasermoadeli et al., 2013). In this context, purchase intention is the process experienced between the purchasing state of the product or brand service that an individual request in line with the emerging need and the moment he / she exhibits the purchasing behaviour. When the influencer introduces a product that can attract the needs and interest of the audience that follows him or her, the intention of the follower may arise to buy the product and this intention can turn into the purchasing behaviour (Moe, 2003). In this regard, Veissi (2017) concluded that social media users benefit from the views and thoughts of influencers before purchasing products and brand services. In the study conducted by Gashi (2017) it was stated that the influencers have an important effect at every point of the purchasing process of individuals. In the study by Einarsdottir (2017), it was concluded that when it comes to the use of influencers instead of celebrities, the purchasing tendencies for the products and services promoted are higher. According to the study of Nadezhda and Zeina (2017), it has been demonstrated that influencers' perceived originality, reliability, legitimacy as well as their expertise and honesty are effective in influencing online purchases of their followers. As mentioned in the study of Ulaş and Alkan (2020) on the effects between purchasing and influencer, although there are many examples in the world, a makeup brand "Bobbi Brown" and Influencer Duygu Özaslan has signed a collaboration for the first time in Turkey. During the campaign process by the brand and the influencer a new collection emerged with the name Duygu Özaslan X Bobbi Brown, which consisted of 2 sets of make up with the motto of "make-up set in 5 minutes". With the release of the collection, it was stated that the sets were sold out in a very short time like half an hour when the collection was put on Pre-order (Magforher, 2017).

This case can be an example of how an influencer effects the prurchasing process during a collaboration with a brand. Another concept included in the scope of the study is trust and trust in the influencer. It can be said that the main point of the relationship between an influencer and their followers is trust. Although this type of trust is not created face-to-face, a social bond emerges when then influencer presents interests, ideas and choices based on the relationship with its follower (Kim & Tran 2013; Shi et al., 2013). With this social bond, influencers can establish a strong and long-term relationship with their followers and remain in interaction. Therefore, the followers rely on the more accurate recommendations of influencers (Bakshy et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2014; Szczurski, 2017).

According to the data obtained from the research conducted by Annelec on Twitter, it was concluded that 56% of the followers trust their friends, while 49% of them trust influencers (Swant, 2016). A study conducted by CITE Research, most of the individuals who participated in the survey around the world stated that the presentation style which the influencer promotes the brand or product by adapting it to daily life and the originality and authenticity of the content is perceived more reliable and trustworthy by the followers (as cited in, Daimi, 2019). In the study of Einarsdottir (2017) on this subject, it was stated that influencers are a role model that their followers and they are seen as friends. In this context, as a result of the Berger and Keller Fault Group (2016) research, it is concluded that influencers are perceived as more reliable, credible and knowledgeable. In addition, 82% of the participants stated that they are likely to follow the recommendations of the influencers (As cited in, Johansen & Guldvik, 2017). According to the findings of another related study, Isosuo (2016) stated that influencers are seen as peers or friends by their followers, while social media becomes a tool that brings these friends together. In this context, it can be said that individuals who attach importance to the thoughts of the influencers, can be seriously directed by the influencer to purchase what is presented. In addition, because the influencers share their daily lives with their followers on social media, even when they are promoting products and services it may not be perceived as an advertisement. This is because the influencer integrates the brand or product to their daily lives where this is seen more natural and reliable by the followers.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study is to reveal the relationship between the trust in the influence and the purchase intention in the influencer communication process. Within the scope of the study, an online questionnaire was applied to the students who were studying at the Near East University in the spring term of 2019-2020 and followed an influencer. In this context, quantitative research method was applied in the study. Quantitative research is a method which is based on "numerical" data. Statistical data collection tools such as questionnaires and measurement tools are included in this research method. This study, which runs within the plan created during the research process, seeks answers the hypotheses created in line with the subject to provide scientific support (Akarsu & Akarsu 2019; Kurt, 2013). In this study, correlational research design is used. The correlational research design is used to reveal the relationships between variables using correlational statistics. In other words, it can be said that it searches for a cause-effect relationship between two variables (Balci, 2015). In line with the study, the relational research design was chosen due to the correlation between the research questions. In this context correlational research design was chosen in the study to reveal the relationships between the variables.

The hypotheses created within the scope of the study titled "Trust in Social Media Influencers and Purchase Intention: An Empirical Analysis" are stated below.

H1: There is a meaningful and positive relationship between trust in influencer and purchase in influencer collaborations.

H2: Influencers expressing their positive or negative opinions about a brand or product, positively affects the trust towards the influencers.

H3: There is a significant difference between purchase intention stemming from trust in influencers and demographic characteristics.

H3a: There is a significant difference between purchase intention stemming from trust in influencers and gender.

H3b: There is a significant difference between purchase intention stemming from trust in influencers and monthly income.

H3c: There is a significant difference between purchase intention stemming from trust in influencers and education status.

H4: There is a significant difference between the time spent on social media and purchasing.

H4a: Participants who follow influencers have high purchasing intentions.

Data Collection Tool

In the study titled "Trust in Social Media Influencers and Purchase Intention: An Empirical Analysis" quantitative research method was used. Accordingly, a questionnaire form was created to be used in the study. In this context, demographic information is included in the first part of the questionnaire form. In the second part of the questionnaire form propositions about purchasing were adapted towards influencers within the scope of the study by using the questions and scales in Kutukoglu's master thesis called "*The role of social media in the purchase decision process: An application in Giresun province*" in 2019. No questions were removed from the purchasing scale used by Kutukoglu (2019). But, the word "Social Media" used in the questions in the original scale was adapted as "Influencer" within the scope of the study. The questionnaire used in the research is a five-point Likert type scale. Accordingly, the reliability and factor analysis of the adapted scale were also researched.

The propositions regarding the trust in influence in the third part of the questionnaire was adapted to this study by using the scale from the doctoral thesis called "Examination of Customer Attribution Tendencies in the Automotive Sector from the Brand Trust and Customer Satisfaction Perspective" by Bahar (2019). No questions were removed from the brand trust scale used by Bahar (2019). But, the word "Brand" used in the questions in the original scale was adapted as "Influencer" within the framework of the study. The questionnaire used in the research is a five-point Likert type scale. Accordingly, the reliability and factor analysis of the adapted scale were also researched. The purchasing and trust scale has been adapted and developed for influencers.

Research Universe and Sample

The universe of the research consists of those who follow influencers. The non-probabilistic sampling was used in the study. According to this sampling method the selection of the individuals for the research within the frame the study, is left to the researcher (Iscil, 1973; as cited in, Balci, 2015). The sample of this study consists of students who follow influencers in the spring semester of the Near East University 2019-2020 academic year. The question form created was applied with the online questionnaire method.

Limitations of the Study

In this study, which was carried out to reveal the relationship between trust in influencer and purchase intention in influencer communication, the research limitations are described below.

The research is limited to influencer following 271 students, studying at The Near East University in the Republic of Northern Cyprus in the spring semester of the 2019-2020 academic year.

There is no limitation for any influencer classification and influencer category in the study.

FINDINGS

Findings regarding the validity of the scales used in the study are given in the tables below.

The Cronbach's alpha value obtained from the reliability analysis on the scale of trust in influence and purchase intention used in the study is .942. This value indicates that the scale is highly reliable in terms of the number of questions. The findings are included in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Findings regarding the general reliability coefficient of trust in influencers and buying intention scale

N	Cronbach's alpha	N of items
271	.942	56

The Cronbach's alpha value obtained from the reliability analysis performed on the trust scale used in the research is .946. The Cronbach's alpha value on the purchase intention scale is 970. For this reason, it can be said that the reliability level of the two scales is high. Descriptive findings regarding the research are given below. The findings are included in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Findings regarding the reliability coefficient of trust and purchase intention scales

	N	Cronbach's alpha	N of items
Trust Scale	271	.946	12
Purchasing scale	271	.970	32

Demographic information about gender, age, income level and education level were included in the study.

Of the participants, 64.6 % (175) were females and 35.4% (96) were males. The findings are included in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Distribution of the participants by the gender variable

Gender	Freq.	Percent (%)
Female	175	64.6
Male	96	35.4

93.7% (254) of the participants were between the ages of 18-28, 4.4% (12) were between the ages of 29-39, and 1.8% (5) were between the ages of 40-50. The findings are included in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Distribution of the participants by the age variable

Age	Freq.	Percent (%)
Between 18-28	254	93.7
Between 29-39	12	4.4
Between 40-50	5	1.8

In the study 77.9 % (211) of the participants were undergraduate students, 15.1 % (41) were postgraduate students, and 7.0 % (19) were PhD students. The findings are included in **Table 5**.

Table 5. Distribution of the participants according to their education status

Education status	Freq.	Percent (%)
Undergraduate	211	77.9
Postgraduate	41	15.1
Ph.D.	19	7.0

Monthly income of the participants (in Turkish Liras - TL) are as follows: 45.4% (123) are less than 2000TL, 40.2 % (109) are between 2001TL and 4000TL, 11.1% (30) are between 4001TL and 6000TL, and 3.3% (9) are more than 6000TL. At the time of the study, 1USD was 7.09TL, and minimum wage was 3323TL. The findings are included in **Table 6**.

Table 6. Distribution of the participants by the income variable

Monthly income	Freq.	Percent (%)
2001TL-4000TL	109	40.2
2000TL and below	123	45.4
4001TL-6000TL	30	11.1
6001TL and above	9	3.3

5.5% (15) of the participants are married and 94.5% (256) are single. Findings regarding the hypothesis of the study are given below (See **Table 7**).

Table 7. The distribution regarding the marital status of the participants

Marital Status	Freq.	Percent (%)
Married	15	5.5
Single	256	94.5

Within the scope of the research, T-Test and Anova tests were applied to the data obtained to reveal differences between the variables. Correlation and regression tests were also used to reveal the relationships specified in the hypothesis.

H1: There is a meaningful and positive relationship between trust in influencer and purchase in influencer collaborations.

According to the data in **Table 8**, there is a significant relationship between the trust in the influencer and purchase intention ($p < 0.01$). There is a strong positive correlation between trust and purchase intention (r = 0.87). Accordingly, as the sense of trust towards influencers increases, the purchase intention increases. Therefore, according to the results in the table, H1 is accepted because the p value is less than 0.01 (See **Table 8**).

Table 8. The correlation analysis for the relationship between trust in influencer and purchase intention

Variables		Trust	Purchase
Trust	r	-	.876**
	p		0.000
	N		271
Purchase	r	.876**	
	p	0.000	-
	N	271	

Participants' trust in influencers explains 76% of their brand purchase intention decisions (R2 = 0.767). In this context, it can be said that the trust in influencers has an important effect on the purchase intention process (See **Table 9**).

Table 9. Regression analysis for the disclosure of the purchase intention based on the trust in influencers

Variables	B	Standard Error	T	P	R^2	R
Trust purchase	.200	.108	1.848	.000	.767	.876

H2: Influencers expressing their positive or negative opinions about a brand or product, positively affects the trust towards the influencers.

As seen in the table above, approximately 70% of the participants stated that the positive opinions of the influencers about the brand or the product positively affects the trust in the influencer. It can be said that the average score (= 3.8524) supports this finding. Accordingly, it can be stated that the positive or negative opinions of the influencers towards the product or brand positively affect the trust towards them. In this context, H2 was accepted according to the scores in the **Table 10**.

Table 10. Frequency analysis regarding influencers' positive or negative opinions about the brand or product to positively affect the trust in influencers

	Freq.	Percent (%)	$\bar{X}$
Strongly disagree	14	5.2	
Disagree	23	8.5	
Uncertain	44	16.2	3.8524
Agree	98	36.2	
Strongly Agree	92	33.9	

H3: There is a significant difference between purchase intention stemming from trust in influencers and demographic characteristics.

H3a: There is a significant difference between purchase intention stemming from trust in influencers and gender.

When **Table 11** is examined, trust in influencers and purchase intention did not show a statistically significant difference according to gender variable (p>, 0.05). Accordingly, the trust and purchase intentions of men and women towards influencers are similar. Therefore, according to the results in the table, H3a was rejected because the p value was greater than 0.005.

Table 11. A t-test analysis to compare the scores of intention to purchase due to the trust in influencers by gender variable

Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	t	P
Female	175	3.3173	.79780	.380	.790
Male	96	3.2789	.79076	.381	

H3b: There is a significant difference between purchase intention stemming from trust in influencers and monthly income.

A statistically significant difference was found between trust in influencers and purchase intention according to the monthly income variable (F = 7.426, p <0.05) Accordingly, trust in influence and purchase intention is not said to be similar, based on monthly income. Considering the average scores, the highest trust and purchase intention is in the group with 2001TL-4000TL (= 3.5204) income. It was determined that the lowest trust and purchase intention was seen in the group with an income of 2000TL and below (= 3.0874). In this context, H3b is accepted as the p value is less than 0.05. A post hoc test was conducted to determine in which groups the differences exists. In this context, as a result of paired comparisons, it was observed that

there was a significant difference between the group with an income of 2000 TL and below and the group with an income between 2001TL-4000TL (See **Table 12**).

Table 12. T-test comparison of average point of purchase intention based on the trust towards influencers according to monthly income variable

Monthly income	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	F	P
2000 TL and below	1123	3.0574	.76030	7.426	.000
Between 2001-4000 TL	1109	3.5204	.74170		
Between 4001-6000 TL	330	3.4396	.79439		
6001 TL and above	9	3.2049	1.09777		

H3c: There is a significant difference between purchase intention stemming from trust in influencers and education status.

A statistically significant difference was found between the participants' trust in influencers and purchase intentions and education variable (F = 7.426, p <0.05). Considering the average score, it can be stated that as the education level increased, the trust towards influencers and purchase intention increased. PhD students ($\bar{X}$= 3,8520) compared to postgraduate students, ($\bar{X}$= 3,6570) has shown higher levels purchase intentions due to their trust towards influencers. In addition, Post graduate students ($\bar{X}$= 3,6570) compared to undergraduate students ($\bar{X}$= 3,1691) has shown higher levels purchase intentions due to their trust towards influencers. *According to the results H3c has been accepted.* A post hoc test was conducted to understand the differences between the groups, and it was found that there was a significant difference between the three groups (See **Table 13**).

Table 13. Anova test for comparison of average purchase intention scores based on the trust towards influencers regarding the education income variable

Education	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	F	P
Undergraduate	211	3.1691	.80178	12.510	.000
Postgraduate	41	3.6570	.65228		
Ph.D	19	3.8520	.49606		

H4: There is a significant difference between the time spent on social media and purchasing.

Within the scope of the research, there is no statistically significant difference between the time spent on social media and the purchase (p> 0.05). Accordingly, it can be said that purchasing is at a similar level according to the times spent on social media. *Therefore, according to the results in the table above. H4 was rejected because the p value was greater than 0.05* (See **Table 14**).

Table 14. Anova test for the comparison of time spent on social media and the average purchase intention scores

Time	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	F	P
Less then an hour	15	2.8146	.97360	2.305	.077
Between 1-3 hours	128	3.3699	.67150		
Between 4-6 hours	94	3.2560	.86288		
7 or more hours	34	3.2996	.90372		

H4a: Participants who follow influencers have high purchasing intentions.

Looking at table above, it is seen that the purchasing scores ($\bar{X}$= 3,2908) of the participants who follow the influencers are at an average level. Therefore, the hypothesis predicting that the "Participants who follow influencers have high purchasing intentions" is rejected (See **Table 15**).

Table 15. A frequency analysis regarding the purchasing intention of the participants following the influencers

	N	Minimum	Maximum	$\bar{X}$	Sd
Purchase int.	271	1.00	5.00	3.2908	.79594

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

With the development of internet-based applications, it is seen that influencers showing their presence in social media environments, have become a new communication element. In this direction, it is aimed to reveal the relationship between trust in influencer communication and the purchase intention in this study entitled "The relationship between trust on influencers and purchase intention: An empirical analysis".

According to H1: There is a meaningful and positive relationship between trust in influencer and purchase in influencer collaborations. Considering the literature, as a result of the study conducted by Sertoglu et al. (2014), the reliability of the influencers and purchase intention were examined, and a positive relationship was observed. In a study by Toksari and Murutsoy (2019), it was determined that the recommendations given by influencers about a product in the purchasing decision process of an individual, positively affects their purchasing decision. In addition, it is seen that the discount coupon shared by the influencers has a positive effect on purchasing, and it is stated that sharing photos about the products in their own accounts creates a desire to buy the product. On the contrary, in the study of Braatz (2017), there were no result found that trust increases the purchasing intention. In this context, when looked at the literature we can see that there are studies in the literature that supports the hypothesis, as well as studies that do not.

According to H2: Influencers expressing their positive or negative opinions about a brand or product, positively affects the trust towards the influencers. In this context, in line with the findings obtained in the study conducted by Braatz (2017), it was concluded that influencers expressing their positive and negative opinions about a product, increased the trust of the participants towards the influencers.

A complete statement could not be found due to the acceptance and rejection situations that emerged in the sub-dimensions of H3 which predicted significant differences between purchase intention stemming from trust in influencers and demographic characteristics. In this direction, if we need to examine these sub-dimensions one by one, H3a which predicted that "there is a significant difference between purchase intention stemming from trust in influencers and gender" was rejected. There was no significant difference found between the purchase intention stemming from the trust in influencers and gender. Accordingly, when the literature is examined, the findings of the study differed according to the results of the studies in the literature. For example, in Mat's (2019) study, females showed more purchase intention compared to males in cross-gender purchase intention.

According to H3b: There is a significant difference between purchase intention stemming from trust in influencers and monthly income. In this context, it has been determined that this difference is between people with monthly income of 2001TL-4000TL and 2000TL and less. According to this difference, the highest trust and purchase intention was found in the group with 2001TL-4000TL income. It is seen that the lowest trust and purchase intention is in the group with an income of 2000TL and below. However, in the study conducted by Cetin and Ozic (2020), no significant relationship was found between income level and purchasing through influencers. In this case, different from the information obtained from the literature, there are differences between income levels in this study.

According to H3c: There is a significant difference between purchase intention stemming from trust in influencers and education status. According to this difference, it has been observed that PhD students trust towards influencers is higher than graduate students and as a result they exhibit more purchase intentions. According to the difference between postgraduate and undergraduate students, the postgraduate students showed a higher level of trust in influencers and purchasing intention. In other words, as the level of education increases, the trust in the influence and the purchase intention due to this trust increases. Considering the literature, the education levels of the participants were examined at different levels. In this context, in the study of Cetin and Ozic (2020), no significant relationship was found between the educational status and purchasing products in line with the influencer recommendations. In line with the study conducted by Kiran et al. (2019), it was concluded that participants in "high school and below" were more likely to trust influencers than those who are in "undergraduate and above." At this point, it can be said that the related studies results differ in the literature.

According to H4a: Participants who follow influencers have high purchasing intentions However, in the study the purchase intention of the participants following the influencers was not found at a high level. It was observed that the participants who followed the Influencer exhibited moderate purchase intentions. Accordingly, within the scope of the study conducted by Gorgulu and Farajova (2017), it was concluded that the participants did not examine the influencer content during the purchasing process, although they followed the influencer. Also, the level of intention to purchase the product introduced by the influencer in the last 1 year was quite low.

As a result, a significant and positive relationship was found between the trust towards influencers and purchase intention, which is the main purpose of the study. In terms of trust in influencers, it has been observed that whether the influencer expresses a positive or negative opinion about a product increases the trust towards the influencer. No significant difference was found between the genders in terms of purchase intention stemming from the trust towards the influencers. A significant difference was found between purchase intention and monthly income stemming from the trust towards the influencers. According to this difference, people with income levels between 2001TL and 4000TL showed the highest levels of trust and purchase intention. A significant difference was found between the purchase intention and education level due to the trust in influencers. According to this difference, it was seen that as the level of education increased, the trust towards the influencers and purchase intentions increased. In addition, no significant difference was found between the time spent on social media and the purchase intention. It can be said that individuals display similar degrees of purchase intention despite spending different periods of time on social media. Finally, it was determined that the purchase intentions of the participants following the influencers were at a medium level.

It is recommended to conduct studies on intergenerational social media and influencer following practices, which are not included in this study.

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