



The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Customers' Purchasing Intention in the Cosmetics Industry

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Affidavit

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Abstract

Social media has become an inescapable medium in people's lives nowadays, and has a pervasive impact on them. Due to the characteristics of these networks, such as their interactivity, creativity, virality, content sharing, and community building abilities, various new opportunities have opened up for brands to promote their products and services, which is a part of social media marketing. Additionally, channels such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter make it easier for companies to meet their target audiences, and acquire new customers. Furthermore, numerous businesses collaborate with influencers, in order to advertise their products through these creators, who tend to have a large follower base, and are perceived as trustworthy by their followers. Additionally, social media opens up new ways for consumers to gather information about certain products they would like to purchase, as many users participate in giving online reviews, influencing consumer opinions. The cosmetics industry has evolved into an enormous market and is widely represented on social media platforms.

This research investigates the impact of social media on customers' purchasing intention in the cosmetics industry, with a focus on influencer marketing and online reviews. Furthermore, this study aims to ascertain, which of the two constructs, influencer marketing or online reviews, has a greater influence on the buying behavior. In order to explore these effects, the researcher has chosen a quantitative method and has conducted a survey. The questionnaire reached a total of one hundred twenty-six participants, acquired by convenience sampling, who answered questions about their personal connection to social media, influencer marketing, online reviews, as well as their purchasing decisions. The hypotheses were analysed by performing a Spearman Correlation and an analysis of variance on the empirical data derived from the survey. The obtained results show that social media influencer marketing and online reviews have a significant impact on the participants' buying behavior. The findings also revealed that online reviews have a greater influence on the purchasing decision, than influencer marketing. All of these results are related to cosmetic products.

Table of Contents

AFFIDAVIT	2
ABSTRACT	3
1 INTRODUCTION	6
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2.1 SOCIAL MEDIA	9
2.1.1 <i>Facebook</i>	10
2.1.2 <i>Instagram</i>	11
2.1.3 <i>Twitter</i>	13
2.2 TRADITIONAL FORMS OF MARKETING.....	15
2.3 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING	15
2.3.1 <i>Electronic Word-of-Mouth</i>	20
2.3.2 <i>Social Media Influencer Marketing</i>	21
2.4 CONSUMER BEHAVIOR	23
2.4.1 <i>Consumer Decision Making Process</i>	24
2.5 COSMETICS INDUSTRY	25
3 METHODOLOGY	26
3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN	26
3.2 SURVEY DEVELOPMENT	28
3.3 DATA COLLECTION	30
3.4 HYPOTHESES	31
4 RESULTS	32
4.1 SAMPLE DESCRIPTION	32
4.2 DESCRIPTIVES OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE	34
4.3 DESCRIPTIVES EWOM.....	35
4.4 DESCRIPTIVES OF INFLUENCER MARKETING.....	39
4.5 HYPOTHESES TESTING.....	41
4.5.1 <i>Hypothesis 1</i>	41
4.5.2 <i>Hypothesis 2</i>	42
4.5.3 <i>Hypothesis 3</i>	43
5 CONCLUSION	45

5.1	LIMITATIONS	47
5.2	FUTURE RESEARCH.....	48
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	49
	APPENDICES	61
	APPENDIX A.....	61
	APPENDIX B.....	62

1 Introduction

Throughout the past decade, the World Wide Web has experienced an extensive expansion of user-driven web technologies, called social media, and lead to the creation of online communities, enhanced discussions, and opinion-sharing, as well as user generated content (Voramontri & Klieb, 2019). This development caused the enormous popularity of social networking platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, which have a cumulative total of more than 4 billion monthly active users (Tankovska, 2021; Statista, 2021b; Statista, 2021f). These channels give individuals the opportunity to connect and network with a multitude of users around the world, and discover, produce, as well as share pictures, ideas, and news about themselves, relevant topics, problems, or products (Voramontri & Klieb, 2019). Contents on social media circulate at a fast pace with a wide reach (Simić et al., 2019). This viral quality forms the ideal condition for marketers to promote their brands, as well as its products and services, to several dynamic communities and gives them the opportunity to reach a much larger audience than would be possible through traditional marketing channels (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Businesses increasingly start to include social media in their marketing strategies, giving them multiple benefits, such as generating awareness, increasing their reach, improving customer relationships, community- and reputation-management, monitoring, and referral marketing (Simić et al., 2019).

The rise of social media has initiated new ways for people to search for and receive information about different products and services that are of interest to them (Powers et al., 2012). Additionally, it gives consumers the opportunity to bond with brands more strongly and to exchange information with other shoppers about them in a simple and fast way (Powers et al., 2012). Several users participate in giving online reviews about products and services that they have purchased and tried out (Talavera, 2015). This, in turn, strongly influences consumer opinions and also empowers users on social media, as they are the ones to lead online conversations about brands and their products and services, shaping their image (Smith, 2009; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Therefore, online reviews, which are also known as electronic word-of-mouth

(eWOM), plays an important role nowadays in the online space, and acts as a potential marketing strategy (Talavera, 2015).

Another important strategy for businesses to promote their items is influencer marketing (Jin et al., 2019). Influencers are referred to users on social networks who have a large follower base and are perceived as trusting personalities in a specific area, such as fashion, beauty, travel, gaming, or health and fitness (De Veirman et al., 2016). In addition to online reviews, influencer marketing also falls under the category eWOM (De Veirman et al., 2016). Due to influencers' virality, wide reach, and strong impact, several businesses decide to partner up with highly influential creators who fit into the scheme of their brand and have a sizable network of followers, which contains their target audiences, to promote their products and services (Statista, 2019; De Veirman et al., 2016). Companies enter these collaborations with the aim to improve their brand awareness, conversions, as well as engagement, to strengthen their brand image (Statista, 2019). The more popular these influencers are, the more a company can take advantage of the effect of eWOM on a large scale (Talavera, 2015).

In 2018, the global cosmetics market was worth approximately 507.8 billion U.S. dollars, and is expected to steadily grow over the upcoming years (Statista, 2020). Cosmetics play a major role in society, and due to technological advancements, the beauty formulas are steadily improving, giving individuals the opportunity to upgrade or change their physical appearance (Binwani & Ho, 2019). Cosmetic brands have been made aware of the potential of social media, and increasingly start to display their products on these platforms (Binwani & Ho, 2019). Prior research has revealed that a presence on social networks improves brand awareness, and produces positive WOM (Barreda et al., 2015). Aspects such as artificial intelligence, visuals, and the communication on social media platforms play a big role in the cosmetics market, and have reshaped the industry, as they increase brand awareness, incorporate low marketing costs, and also allow companies to target more refined segments (Mwaisaka, 2017; Binwani & Ho, 2019). Cosmetics brands are strongly represented on social media platforms for various reasons, one of them being the great communication between the brand and its consumers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Through social media, companies have the opportunity to find out about their customers' opinions on their products and services, and therefore gain the ability to improve their business and relationships in multiple ways (De Veirman et al., 2016; Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

This thesis is designed to identify the impact of influencer marketing and eWOM on customers' purchasing decision in the cosmetics industry. The corresponding research questions this study pursues to answer are as follows:

- *What impact does social media marketing have on customers' purchasing intentions in the cosmetics industry?*
- *How do online reviews affect customers' purchasing intentions in the cosmetics industry?*
- *How does influencer marketing impact customers' purchasing intentions in the cosmetics industry?*

This study aims to further close the knowledge gap that exists within the social media field, and discover the impact of social media marketing, or more precisely eWOM and influencer marketing, on customers' purchasing decisions in the cosmetics industry. Findings of this research will contribute to expand existing literature by advancing the understanding of the Cosmetics Industry, Social Media Influencer Marketing, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, and customers' decision-making-processes. Furthermore, it will identify whether influencer marketing or eWOM has a greater impact, and which social media platform has the greater influence on customers when it comes to purchasing cosmetics products.

This research paper is divided into four sections. The following part will concern the literature review, which discusses the current knowledge of topics such as Social Media and the respective platforms that are relevant in this study, Traditional Forms of Marketing, Social Media Marketing, eWOM, Influencer Marketing, Consumer Behavior, and the Cosmetics Industry. Next, the methodology of this thesis will be discussed, followed by the results section, where the researcher analyzes the collected data. Finally, this thesis will end with a conclusion and evaluate the relevance of this work.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Social Media

This research paper is going to have a specific focus on the influence of social media on customers' purchasing intentions, therefore a thorough investigation of the term social media is of essence. According to the official Cambridge Business English Dictionary (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021b), the term social media is defined as "forms of media that allow people to communicate and share information using the internet or mobile phones". Some of the most used networks include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, Snapchat, and TikTok, this paper however only focuses on the channels: Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter (Statista, 2021e). This internet communication tool has revolutionized customers' daily lives and how business is conducted (Dollarhide & Drury, 2021). The majority of social networks embrace opinions, interactions and participation, which is why they have features that allow members to like, comment, and share posts that are of interest to them (Venkateswaran et al., 2019). Additionally, those social networks give users the opportunity to stay connected and up to date with their families, friends, acquaintances, and other people who they share interests with, to meet and interact with new people, to give instant feedback to other participants' content, or to express themselves in a creative way (Aras & Çolaklar, 2015; Ben-Shaul & Reichel, 2018; Harvey, 2014). Social networks can be accessed for entertainment, private matters, or work-related purposes, however most of them aim to create online communities through incorporating both (Harvey, 2014). Social media is a two-way street and the place for users and businesses to promote their brands, organize events, communicate their opinions, and to engage in campaigns or other activities (Iblasi et al., 2016). Due to the global rise of technology, far-reaching communication and feedback/opinion-sharing between users became effortless and the aspect of interactivity has taken on great importance (Harvey, 2014). The emergence of social media has created multiple new possibilities for media consumption, enabling individuals to gain information from numerous different platforms, forums or users and to exchange opinions about the knowledge gained (Harvey, 2014). Social media has built a potential market which displays impressions about companies, making it

easier for them to build their reputation, image, brand, and credibility (Venkateswaran et al., 2019).

However, there is also a lot of criticism on this new form of media, such as the rapid spread of rumors (Gao, 2020). There is an enormous number of users who use social media on a daily basis, who read news on social media, as well as the related posts and opinions of others, allowing misinformation to spread across the globe in a very short time (Gao, 2020). Additionally, there are also privacy issues that users have to deal with, such as identity theft and the undesired data usage of consumers by companies who would like to advertise their products and services (Gao, 2020).

2.1.1 Facebook

The first social network this research paper will investigate is Facebook, which was founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes (Agnew & Sindhav, 2009). The platform's initial purpose was to enhance networking among Harvard students; however, it did not take the creators long to understand the potential of their service, therefore they made it public in 2006 (Tankovska, 2021). With an unbeatable number of 2.8 billion monthly active users, Facebook represents the largest social medium in the world (Tankovska, 2021). Over the years, Facebook acquired several companies, including Instagram and WhatsApp, accounting for a cumulative total of 3.3 billion users (Tankovska, 2021). The social medium enables consumers to create a profile and afterwards share personal information, images, videos and life updates with other users that they follow (Agnew & Sindhav, 2009). Facebook vastly relies on interactions between users, which is why they provide several features for their members to interact through likes, comments or shares, including stories, livestreams, private messages, group chats, and a news feed (Facebook, 2021e).

The social networking service is a popular tool for marketers to advertise their products and services (Agnew & Sindhav, 2009). Due to the user data, it stores, Facebook has the ability to allocate targeted advertising space effectively to brands (Tankovska, 2021). Facebook promotes personalized advertisements, as they aid brands to connect with a greater audience around the globe (Facebook, 2021e).

Beyond 10 million marketers operate with Facebook's personalized ad tools and according to Tankovska (2021), the social network's advertising business is anticipated to expand enormously (Facebook, 2021e). Users have the option to uncover new businesses and products that are of interest to them, as Facebook constructed tools that personalize a user's experience on their platform, based on pages that they and their friends like, profile information, sites visited, activities with businesses, location, and activities on other websites (Facebook, 2021a). The social platform provides several options for companies that aid them to become more successful and grow, including free tools to reach business objectives, a personalized plan to market on their channel, as well as virtual seminars to improve a firm's performance (Facebook, 2021c). Similar to Instagram, Facebook also established a shop within their platform, where brands have the option to display their products and communicate their brand identity (Facebook, 2021d). Moreover, the social networking service supplies companies with an appointment tool that they can set up on their business profile, which simplifies the booking process for consumers and allows brands to send confirmations and reminders to their customers (Facebook, 2021d). Facebook offers several analytical tools and metrics for businesses to track their performance and thus improve it, including the reach, engagement, impressions, referral traffic, page likes and follow, video retention and engagement, click-through rates, cost-per-click and cost-per-action, as well as ad frequency (Facebook, 2016).

2.1.2 Instagram

With its platform consisting of more than one billion monthly active users, Instagram represents one of the most popular social networking services and is based on visual aesthetics and the sharing of photos and videos, making it an appropriate platform to promote beauty products and luxury brands (Facebook, 2021b; Statista, 2021f; Jin et al., 2019). The famous communication tool launched in October 2010, was created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, and as of 2012, Instagram is owned by Facebook (Hartmans, 2020). Through the use of photos and videos, users get to share their lifestyle and interests, with their family, friends, acquaintances, and strangers (Al-Kandari et al., 2016). In contrast to Facebook, Instagram offers its users the option to set up either a public profile, where all users can access the account and

interact with the content posted, or a private one, where a request must be made to the account owner to follow them and see their feed (Al-Kandari et al., 2016).

The social medium offers multiple different features to its users in order to enhance engagements and interactions between them, which also aids members to express themselves and connect with others (Facebook, 2021b). The first aspect is “Stories”, which are posts (images or videos) that are presented in a slideshow, last for 24 hours only, and can be accessed on the home feed (Facebook, 2021b). This type of content is customizable and involves elements, such as filters, texts, music, polls and quizzes, animated stickers, and GIFs (Facebook, 2021b). As Instagram is a social platform, it also provides room for feedback and reactions from other users, in order to enhance interactions (Facebook, 2021b). Another feature is “Reels”, which are multi-clip videos of up to 30 seconds that engage users to be creative with, for instance, AR filters, music, and audio (Facebook, 2021b). These videos can then be uploaded on a user’s personal account and story or sent to others via private message (Facebook, 2021b). “Direct messages” are a further addition that the channel provides, which gives participants the option to text, video call, or share content with each other via a private or a group chat (Facebook, 2021b). As the videos on Instagram usually have a time limit of one minute, the platform offers a further feature, called “IGTV”, where users can create and share long-form videos (Facebook, 2021b). They are personalized to the interests of every user, which simplifies the discovery process of new compelling creators (Facebook, 2021b). Furthermore, the social networking service provides the function “Search & Explore”, where it suggests users different posts from other creators that might be of interest for them (Facebook, 2021b). Lastly, Instagram offers a “Shopping” function for their users, where they can directly make purchases from different brands, without leaving the platform (Facebook, 2021b). In order for consumers to find out more about a product, the social channel has also introduced “product tags”, showing the prices and brand of the items (Facebook, 2021f). Additionally, the platform has integrated a shopping destination within the app, which allows consumers to discover new brands and products, that are represented on this network (Facebook, 2021f). Instagram also features a “product detailed page” where all information regarding specific items is listed (Facebook,

2021f). Furthermore, it also makes a collection of all posts on Instagram that have ever included a selected item, allowing consumers to see the products in different situations and on different people to get a better understanding of them (Facebook, 2021f).

Instagram is a popular marketing tool for brands and entities, as it has the potential to reach audiences on a large scale (Jin et al., 2019). The social platform offers companies the opportunity to run paid advertisements, which can take various forms, such as “stories ads”, “photo ads”, “video ads”, “collection ads”, “carousel ads”, or “ads in explore” (Facebook, 2021f). Within the past years, the platform experienced a rise in beauty influencers, using their reach to share personal experiences, give advice, and market products, and brands (Jin et al., 2019). These types of creators are extremely successful when it comes to spreading messages, and inventing new trends (Jin et al., 2019). Many companies have recognized the great potential of increasing sales and have partnered with influencers that fit their brand image, while additionally increasing their brand’s awareness and reach (Jin et al., 2019).

In order for businesses to maximize their success rate, Instagram offers insights, regarding people, advertisements, and industries (Facebook, 2021f). In addition, it provides a wide range of analytical tools for brands to analyze and further improve their performance, as well as to gain insights into their audience and strategy (Facebook, 2021f). These metrics give companies a better understanding of their reach, impressions, likes, profile visits, interactions, and popular posts, helping them to analyze and strengthen their business, as well as brand image (Facebook, 2021f).

2.1.3 Twitter

The third platform this research paper takes into consideration is called Twitter. This social network allows users to interact with each other and share links, as well as posts of up to 140 characters, which are referred to as “tweets”, with the aim of making a positive impact on society (Reiff, 2020). The channel was founded in 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Biz Stone, Evan Williams, and Noah Glass, and as of 2020, it has reached more than 200 million monthly active users (Statista, 2021b). The social

networking service aims to create a safe space and facilitate healthy discussions on relevant and timely topics between people around the world, thus creating online communities and shaping the way individuals interact in modern times (Twitter, 2021a; Walck, 2013). In order to enhance conversations, users can follow each other and therefore be kept up to date about discussions, interests and opinions, to eventually react to others' tweets again (Maclean et al., 2013; Twitter, 2021a). This social medium is fixated on exchanging information and opinions about relevant topics than creatively sharing a lifestyle, as it is the case for other social networks (Darling et al., 2013). Similar to Instagram, there are also influencers and so-called alpha users on Twitter who can reach a large audience and thus further increase engagement and interaction, as well as the dissemination of information (Maclean et al., 2013). An immensely prominent feature that Twitter offers is "retweets", which allows members to repeat and spread the statements of others and additionally react to them (Twitter, 2021a). Users can respond to each other in the comment section of a tweet by using the "@"-sign, which enables and encourages public dialogues between users (Darling et al., 2013; Twitter, 2021a). The microblogging service is relevant for advertisers, as the identification of new trends and interesting topics is easily visible (Lambrecht et al., 2018). Marketers have the possibility to place targeted ad campaigns, which helps them achieve their marketing goals, such as increased brand awareness or conversion (Lambrecht et al., 2018). Additionally, Twitter provides tools for businesses to analyze their performance in terms of impressions, cost-per-click results, and engagements, which helps them with the optimization of their ad campaigns (Twitter, 2021a). With the help of Twitter's Tweet- and Video Activity Dashboards, the social platform supplies companies with statistics and metrics of their posts, regarding numbers of retweets, likes, and replies, retention, as well as view- and completion rates (Twitter, 2021b). In addition to this, Twitter also provides data-driven insights on their paid advertisement campaigns, as well as conversion tracking (Twitter, 2021b). Moreover, the microblogging service connects brands with influencers that are of interest to their target audience, which has numerous benefits, such as improved brand awareness (Twitter, 2021a).

Social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter come with various positive aspects for users and also companies, however, the negative sides must not be forgotten. According to Denti et al. (2012), a multitude of users get easily addicted to social media platforms and increasingly have to deal with a loss of productivity. Furthermore, various consumers are exposed to cyber mobbing and encounter privacy issues, such as identity thefts and the use of their personal information by advertising companies (Denti et al., 2012).

2.2 Traditional Forms of Marketing

Traditional Marketing includes all types of offline marketing, such as print, direct sales, broadcast, or mail (Das & Lall, 2016). These classic methods have a powerful presence within the population and a high reach, as they also address audiences that do not have a great affinity for the internet (Todor, 2016). The downside about this practice, is that the placement is invariable, meaning that marketers pay for an advertisement at a specific location or section, but the numerous people who are exposed to it might not even be part of the company's target group, leading to a high scatter loss (Todor, 2016). Online advertisements, on the other hand, give businesses the option to be displayed on particular pages or for specific groups of recipients, making it easier for brands to market their products and services to their previously defined target audience (Das & Lall, 2016). As pointed out by Das & Lall (2016), the aim of marketing is not only to sell products, but also to acquire customers and further build and maintain relationships with them. Traditional marketing channels, however, tend to be a one-way street, as the communication between businesses and customers is rather one-sided and gives little room for consumers to engage or to express their opinions (Iblasi et al., 2016).

2.3 Social Media Marketing

The global rise of technology has led many companies to shift their focus towards incorporating social media into their marketing strategy, and consequently

reducing the use of traditional marketing (Sharma & Kalra, 2020). Social Media Marketing is defined as “methods for advertising products, services, or brands using the internet, by attracting the interest of groups of people who discuss them, make suggestions about them, etc. online”, according to the Cambridge English Business Dictionary (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021c). The goal behind most social media marketing strategies is to get consumers to share companies’ posts and therefore amplify brand exposure and expand customer reach (Simić et al., 2019). Social media platforms have transformed into a powerful marketing tool and provide numerous benefits for business purposes (Iblasi et al., 2016). However, there are vast differences between the various social networks and for this reason organizations need to decide on which platforms are the most effective for them in terms of target audience, available resources, and objectives (Iblasi et al., 2016). As of 2020, more than 3.6 billion people worldwide are using social media and this number is predicted to grow to approximately 4.1 billion by the year 2025 (Statista, 2021c). Due to this enormous userbase, Social Media Marketing gained popularity among advertisers, as they are now able to spread their messages to billions of people within seconds (Statista, 2021a). According to Statista (2021a), Facebook seems to be the most famous platform among advertisers, with a number of 2.8 billion monthly active users. Other platforms, however, such as Instagram, Twitter, and Youtube, are on the rise, with 1 billion, 200 million, and 2 billion monthly active users respectively, seeking recognition from consumers and marketers, and challenging Facebook (Statista, 2021f; Statista, 2021b). Statista (2021a) claims that many brands already started to diminish their marketing activity on Facebook, as some of the newer players gain dynamic.

Furthermore, Social media platforms are an efficient and low-cost way for brands to showcase and advertise their products and services or to expand their marketing campaign (Iblasi et al., 2016; Dwivedi et al., 2020; Sharma & Kalra, 2020). The creation of an account is usually free, and businesses can then post as much information, or as many pictures, and videos of their products as they desire (Sharma & Kalra, 2020). Compared to traditional marketing, paid promotions on these networks are very cost efficient, and give brands the advantage to increase their conversion rates (Shamsudeen Ibrahim & Ganeshbabu, 2018; Vestola & Vennström,

2019). Moreover, businesses are more prominent to identify a significant return on investment and, therefore greater financial flexibility when it comes to further business expenses (Shamsudeen Ibrahim & Ganeshbabu, 2018; Vestola & Vennström, 2019).

As a marketer, being active on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, is important, as it enhances brand recognition (Iblasi et al., 2016). One of the many benefits of this is the reduced customer acquisition costs, which is usually a big financial obstacle for companies (Harding, 2015). Besides, increased brand awareness also leads to strengthened customer loyalty (Harding, 2015). According to Iblasi et al. (2016) it is crucial for businesses to retain their costumers, as it leads to repeated customer activity.

Social Media connects a brand with current, potential, and previous customers and each post published, creates an option for companies to convert shoppers (Iblasi et al., 2016; Venkateswaran et al., 2019). The interaction between businesses and consumers leads to multiple reactions from both sides, which could then result in increased click-through rates (Iblasi et al., 2016). Another reason as for why the presence of a brand on social networks leads to greater conversion rates, is the aspect of humanization (Silvia, 2019). Due to the fact that businesses interact with their target audience, they seem more personable and according to Iblasi (2016), buyers prefer to invest in people rather than the facade of a firm. Moreover, a large follower base on social media channels aids to make a brand seem more trustworthy, as well as more credible, since there is a social proof, and this can significantly boost conversion rates (Silvia, 2019). Equally important, social networks are exceptionally effective when it comes to establishing and fostering brand authority, as businesses get to create an impression of their brand in consumers' minds by designing compelling content and having an active as well as engaging online presence on different networks (Venkateswaran et al., 2019). Many users post their opinions and recommendations of products and services on social networks, from which companies benefit immensely, as numerous other consumers then learn of their brand and potentially want to follow them for further updates (Iblasi et al., 2016; Silvia, 2019). As explained by Iblasi et al. (2016), businesses have a more authentic and

authoritative presence if a greater audience talks about them, or if they interact with their consumers regularly. Social Media Influencer Marketing is also a famous method brands utilize, in order to increase their brand authority, but also to boost their reach, provide value to wide-reaching audiences, and to build trust, awareness, and long-term partnerships (Venkateswaran et al., 2019).

Social Media is considered an excellent marketing tool for businesses to receive instant product- and brand-related reactions, opinions, comments, and criticism from existing and prospective customers (Iblasi et al., 2016). Organizations nowadays place great importance on Social Customer Relationship Management (Social CRM), which refers to an extension of traditional CRM systems to customers on social networking platforms (Kubina & Lendel, 2015). This creates a supplementary communication channel between companies and customers and offers the opportunity for alternative sales strategies (Kubina & Lendel, 2015; Iblasi et al., 2016). Social CRM aids organizations to design a user-specific advertising offer, which is a great concept to increase a brand's reach (Greve, 2020). While utilizing social media platforms as a communication channel, businesses can interact with a wide range of customers, which is a suitable strategy for brands to introduce a product and its attributes to a desired target audience and make them publicly visible (Iblasi et al., 2016; Venkateswaran et al., 2019). Social Media Marketing enables companies to obtain direct feedback from consumers, regarding their brand, products, and services, which helps them with the identification of problems or complaints, and in turn they can make more valuable adjustments, based on user requests, criticism, and suggestions, accelerating the innovation and development of future products (Venkateswaran et al., 2019). By being able to respond directly to consumer feedback on social networks, it is easier for companies to improve their customer service and rebuild lost trust (Greve, 2020; Iblasi et al., 2016). Moreover, the social CRM tool has the function to present targeted advertisements to several consumers of the respective platform, who have previously shown interest in similar products or services (Iblasi et al., 2016).

Based on the ideas of Malthouse et al. (2013), companies should make an effort to form connections and relationships with their audience, as this leads to richer and more personalized customer experiences. As social networks are communication

platforms, there is a lot of room for interactions among users and brands, which aids businesses to publicly show how good their customer service is (Iblasi et al., 2016). To illustrate, if a customer criticizes a product or a service on a social platform like Instagram or Twitter, the company has the chance to publicly apologize for their mishap and find a way to compensate for the damage or discontent, which in turn shows that there are people behind the brand who care about their consumers' well-being (Iblasi et al., 2016).

Equally important, social networks provide tools for businesses that help with the filtering and analysis of information to improve their marketing intelligence (Groothuis & Effing, 2020). This way, brands can enhance their understanding of their competitive position and social listening tools supply them with information regarding customer interests and behaviors (Groothuis & Effing, 2020; Venkateswaran et al., 2019). Social listening tools present insights into users' perceptions of brands by monitoring their comments and it also has the ability to identify the sort of content that is of most interest for a company's audience (Venkateswaran et al., 2019). Through this knowledge, companies are able to produce more content that appeals to their consumers (Groothuis & Effing, 2020).

Despite the fact that the positive aspects of social media marketing predominate, there are also disadvantages for companies. One prominent factor is the negative word of mouth that brands are exposed to by users who have had poor experiences with their products, or simply want to harm them (Venkateswaran et al., 2019). These statements have the ability to spread quickly and in large quantity, go viral, and can drastically damage a company's brand image (Venkateswaran et al., 2019). As social media is a highly interactive platform, brands continuously have to post engaging content and reply to comments and questions, which tends to be time intensive (Simić et al., 2019). Information regarding the products and services have to be shared continuously and brands have to repeat their content over and over in various forms, as social media posts are not visible indefinitely, due to newer posts gaining popularity, thus pushing older ones into the background (Simić et al., 2019). Marketing products and services on social networks might lead to trust, privacy and security concerns, especially when it comes to transactional issues (Hoffmann et al.,

1999). According to Ratnasingham (1998), transactional privacy issues, such as uncertainties regarding credit card fraud, are a valid reason why customers do not complete a purchase.

2.3.1 Electronic Word-of-Mouth

The emergence of social media and its rising popularity have influenced consumers' buying behavior, as they do not depend on company disclosed information anymore, but rather seek additional and credible knowledge from consumers, who already have experience with the marketed product or service (Cox et al., 2009). For this reason, consumers increasingly turn to social media in order to read about other users' experiences, recommendations and opinions, therefore automatically seeking electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Jalilvand et al., 2011). Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) defined eWOM as "any positive or negative statements made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet". Businesses attempt to produce eWOM that compliments themselves and their products, which is why they increasingly turn to social media influencer marketing, strengthening their brand image positively, creating awareness, and boosting website traffic as well as sales (Jin et al., 2019). Brands seek to form close relationships with their consumers in order to build a sturdy and trusting foundation, which is essential for them to increase customer loyalty (Fung So et al., 2018). Shoppers who are loyal to a brand tend to be less inclined to believe negative eWOM and more willing to spread positive statements online (Fung So et al., 2018). According to Jalilvand et al. (2011), eWOM is a powerful tool to convince other consumers to buy a product and later recommend it to others. First-time users have no incentive to falsify positive reviews, since they would not profit from this action, therefore generating a high level of trust, which reduces the perceived risk of purchase, and increases consumer intent to buy (Jalilvand et al., 2011; Yang et al., 2016). EWOM messages have the ability to spread rapidly and reach a wide range of consumers, making it an influential tool for established and new brands (Simpson & Siguaw, 2008).

Despite the fact that eWOM is a helpful tool for marketers to promote their products and services, it also has negative sides that affect brands. Studies have shown that consumers who have had negative encounters with a product are more likely to write detailed reviews than those who have had positive experiences (ReviewTrackers, 2020). For this reason, negatively rated comments can catch on more quickly and a company's products can unjustly influence the opinion of others negatively, resulting in fewer products being sold/purchased and the brand's image becoming worse (Nadarajan et al., 2017).

Previous research has already placed a focus on online reviews in relation to purchase intention, however, the linkage of this to cosmetic products and the comparison to influencer marketing in terms of the impact on the purchasing decision is still lacking, which is why this study will investigate the said relationships (Jain et al., 2018).

2.3.2 Social Media Influencer Marketing

Social media influencer marketing is a subcategory of online marketing and refers to a mixture of old and modern marketing tools, combining the concept of celebrity endorsement with social networking services (Jin et al., 2019). De Veirman et al. (2016), defines influencers as “people who built a large network of followers, and are regarded as trusted tastemakers in one or several niches”. Global influencer marketing was estimated to be worth \$6.5 billion in 2019, with the market size doubling to \$13.8 billion in the subsequent three years (Statista, 2021g). Brands increasingly discovered the importance of this new type of marketing, and quickly started to partner up with famous online personalities fitting their target audience to promote their products and services, as well as to spread their messages (Saima & Khan, 2020). The content shared by these creators is called sponsored post or branded placement (Statista, 2019). A major difficulty for companies is the identification of fitting influencers, whose followers reflect the company's target audience, and ultimately convincing them to promote their product effectively to their audience (Wong, 2016). Among the factors that help companies detect suitable influencers is the number of their followers, which reflects their reach and popularity, meaning an

increased potential to successfully communicate messages through eWOM (De Veirman et al., 2016). Additionally, characteristics such as likeability, level of trust, passion, engagement, and authenticity are also of great importance to brands (De Veirman et al., 2016).

In order to be effective and successful, companies have to make sure that the influencer fits their brand image (Statista, 2019). Consumers tend to respond better to opinions, information and recommendations from people they know than to companies that only reveal facts that market their product in the best way (Shim, 2012). Many users who follow influencers on social media networks, like Instagram, trust them almost as much as they would a friend (Shim, 2012). A vast number of companies have realized the potential of cooperating with influential people, in order to build a better brand image, strengthen brand recall, increase exposure and traffic, gain the trust of their customers, and thus increase sales conversion, as well as brand loyalty (Shim, 2012; Jin et al., 2019). As pointed out by Statista (2019), most reasons, influencers are represented on social networks, such as Instagram, Youtube, and Facebook. Businesses use influential creators for many reasons, some of them include the creation and promotion of content or the market launch of products (Shim, 2012). According to Statista (2019), discount codes and coupon codes are the most common ads on Instagram, promoted by influencers.

As mentioned above, influencer marketing comes with several benefits that are relevant for businesses. Firstly, it assists companies with reaching a relevant audience, building trust, credibility, and broadening their reach (Jin et al., 2019). Additionally, it is a very cost-efficient and rather inexpensive marketing method for brands, compared to others, making it even more desirable, especially for new businesses with a limited budget (Shim, 2012; Silvia, 2019). Influencers are usually considered experts in their field and are aware of ongoing trends on social media, building a valuable foundation, as they have the ability to come up with suitable and creative ideas for content creation and product promotions (De Veirman et al., 2016).

Working with the wrong influencers can severely damage a company's reputation, and mistakes on their part can lead to major financial losses (Saima &

Khan, 2020). If the selected influencer does not post the right content to appeal to their audience, and the brand message is not conveyed in a credible manner, it will result in a poor brand image for the particular business being promoted, and the money invested is in vain (Silvia, 2019).

A growing body of literature has already investigated the impact that influencer marketing has on consumers in the beauty industry (Finisterra do Paço & Oliveira, 2017). However, there has been little discussion on which eWOM strategy has the greater impact on the customer purchasing decision in the cosmetics industry. The two strategies that are being discussed in this paper are influencer marketing and online reviews. Because of the complex nature of these events, this study will focus on the aforementioned comparison to contribute to the existing literature.

2.4 Consumer Behavior

Due to the emergence of the world wide web and social media, it is easier for consumers to access large quantities of information, influencing them to make better purchasing decisions (Aksoy & Cooil, 2006). Social media is crammed with reviews, opinions, and recommendations from consumers, offering shoppers the opportunity to read honest testimonials about products and influencing the stages of customers' purchasing decision processes (Smith, 2009). As pointed out by Jepsen (2007), the more time users spend on the internet, the more they will utilize it for information search about products, as well as for decision making purposes regarding purchases. Social media aids consumers in learning about new products and brands that are of interest to them, effecting their buying behavior positively (Powers et al., 2012). As social networks form online communities, connect individuals with similar interests, and foster interactions between them, consumers increasingly exchange product related information and opinions, helping them make better buying decisions (Ashman et al., 2015).

2.4.1 Consumer Decision Making Process

Due to the digitalization and new marketing strategies, like Influencer Marketing, which transformed customers' purchasing decision, the information search for products and services has changed and therefore made it easier to connect brands with consumers (Rehmani, & Ishfaq Khan, 2011). For this reason, businesses have to understand the needs and wants of individuals, as well as the new technologies and strategies in order to be profitable (Engel et al., 1968). Brands are increasingly focusing on their Customer Relationship Management (CRM) in order to connect with their customers and build trust (Engel et al., 1968). With the purpose of advancing the understanding of pre- and post- purchase decision making, Engel et al. (1968) created a model about the consumer decision process, consisting of 5 stages: Need Recognition, Information Search, Evaluation of Alternatives, Purchase Decision, and Post-Purchase.

1. Need Recognition: Within the first stage, a consumer recognizes a certain need, hoping to satisfy this (Engel et al., 1968). This need appears by reason of stimuli, the Internal Stimuli, which considers feelings such as hunger or sleepiness, and the External Stimuli, which is a reaction to the surrounding world, where for instance an individual spotted a product in the media and feels the need to possess it (Engel et al., 1968).

2. Information Search: As soon as the need gets strong enough, the consumer starts looking for information about the item and the brand, to ensure making the right decision (Engel et al., 1968). For this reason, there are two different information sources available: The "Internal Information Source", which is for example based on the individual's personal experience with a product and tends to be the most reliable, and the "External Information Source", including recommendations from friends, family, acquaintances, influencers, advertisements, and public media sources (Engel et al., 1968). Social media is a new medium to simplify the information search for consumers, therefore this study will mainly focus on the influences of these networks.

3. Evaluation of Alternatives: At this stage, the consumer has gained sufficient knowledge about the product or service and tries to understand which

decision would be the most satisfactory based on various criteria, such as price, performance or quality (Engel et al., 1968).

4. Purchase Decision: The consumer has now made a decision regarding the brand, however there are other factors of influence present, one of which is the "social environment", where the consumer presents his preference to, for example, a friend who argues for a different brand (Engel et al., 1968). The consumer's decision could therefore change again. Another influencing aspect would be the "Considered Risk", where the consumer experiences doubts concerning the quality of the item, and therefore turns to a competitor to reduce risk (Engel et al., 1968). Finally, the third aspect is "Factors Related to the Situation", which, for instance, concerns the availability of the desired product or a malfunction of the payment method (Engel et al., 1968). In this case, the consumer will switch to a competitor (Engel et al., 1968).

5. Post-Purchase: The post-purchase phase is crucial, as it determines whether the user will remain loyal to the brand or switch to a competitor, and whether the item will be recommended to others or not (Engel et al., 1968). If the product/service was found to be satisfactory and met the expectations, the customer will most likely repurchase from the brand (Engel et al., 1968). By advancing technical elements, the customer service, or consumer's experience while shopping can be enhanced and therefore satisfied (Engel et al., 1968).

2.5 Cosmetics Industry

For the purpose of this thesis, the researcher defined the cosmetics industry to include the following categories: skincare, haircare, make-up, fragrances, and hygiene products. As of 2018, the global cosmetics market was estimated to be worth 507.8 billion U.S. dollars, and is expected to grow to a value of 758.4 billion U.S. dollars in the subsequent seven years (Statista, 2020). The market is experiencing a steady growth and increased by 5.5 percent between the years 2017 and 2018 (Ridder, 2020). With a share of 39 percent, skincare appears to be the most prominent category in this market, followed by haircare and make-up, accounting for 21 and 19 percent respectively (Ridder, 2020). Skincare products are highly requested nowadays, and experienced a shift in demand, as these products do not only target higher age groups,

but also younger ones who have the goal of slowing down signs of aging (Mwaisaka, 2017). According to Ridder (2020), the cosmetics scene is dominated by only a few multi-national corporations, such as L'Oréal, Shiseido Company, Procter & Gamble Co., Unilever, The Estee Lauder Companies, and Lancôme. With a revenue of approximately 31.2 billion U.S. dollars in 2018, L'Oréal was the global number one beauty manufacturer and remains market leader to date (Ridder, 2020). In the course of the past years, a tremendous increase in disposable income spending on cosmetic products has been noted, specifically in the United States, which represents the largest cosmetic market on a global basis (Statista, 2021h). The cosmetics industry has derived strong benefits from the rise of social media, which is why beauty brands increasingly turn to digital media, in order to raise their visibility and credibility, as well as to boost their sales (Ridder, 2020). Platforms, such as Instagram, strongly influence the large audiences that are represented on these networks and contribute to the heightened demand in beauty products (Ridder, 2020). Brands increasingly partner up with influencers, paying them to promote their products, create tutorials to demonstrate usage and potential, and gain trust from consumers, in order to drive more traffic to their websites (Ridder, 2020). According to Ridder (2020), these influential creators account for most cosmetics-related conversations on social media platforms, such as Instagram and Youtube. For these reasons, this paper will focus only on the cosmetics industry in a social media environment, investigating the impact of social media marketing on a customer's purchasing decision.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

As stated by Yin (2008) research design is "the logical sequence that connect the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions". In order to collect primary data, there are three distinct methods that can be utilized, to obtain the desired input: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Whereas quantitative methods include online

surveys, surveys by post, and experiments, qualitative methods make use of the grounded and narrative theory, ethnographies, case studies, in-depth interviews and focus groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The researcher is supposed to select their research design based on three different elements: the nature of the research problem, the personal experience of the author, as well as the study's audience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The qualitative research design on the other hand turns its attention to open-ended questions, knowledge statements, and is based on first-hand experiences, which is why the sample size here tends to be rather small, however focused, so that it is less time consuming (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The mixed methods research design aims to combine elements of both of the previously mentioned approaches, qualitative and quantitative, so that a study's conclusion can be widened and supported, and that the research problem can be better illustrated (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The quantitative approach uses postpositive statements to generate knowledge and conducts statistical, numerical, or mathematical analysis of data through surveys or experiments. Afterwards, it explains a phenomenon or generalizes the data across a group, since it aims to draw conclusions on findings of how many people act, think or feel the same way. These projects commonly involve larger sample sizes (Babbie, 2010; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For this study, the quantitative research design was chosen as a primary data collection tool, as the researcher seeks to understand the extent to which influencer marketing and online reviews affect a customer's purchase decision, therefore an empirical analysis of survey data with a greater sample size is the most appropriate and will be put to use. The purpose of this survey is to gather information from a sample of people, through the use of questions. The survey-research offers many ways to collect data, to recruit participants, and to use methods of instrumentation (Ponto, 2015). According to Fowler (2013), there are four different forms of surveys: telephone, web, pen and pencil, and street-surveys, which can be performed in a telephone-, person-, or self-administered way. In this case, the researcher chose to make a web survey in a self-administered way. In order

to create a valuable survey, the researcher has to visualize and understand what he is looking for, what he wants to achieve and ask, and who he wants to canvass (Fowler, 2013). If this is not the case, it reduces the response rates, and the study will end up being less significant (Fowler, 2013). The sample size must be chosen, which is also very important, especially for larger populations, as the researcher has to consider non-responders or improper answers (Jones et al. 2013). Therefore, if the size is not substantial, the statistics might not be as relevant anymore (Jones et al. 2013). For this reason, the researcher aimed to gather one hundred participants with approximately ninety valid responses. An online survey, as will be used in this case, has many advantages: due to the growing interconnectedness, it is fairly simple to find respondents, especially for larger sample sizes, and the data can be collected with ease (Jones et al. 2013). Additionally, the costs to conduct the survey are very low, it provides anonymity, it is very easy to handle the data, and there is a lower possibility for data errors (Jones et al. 2013). Since online surveys are very convenient, it also increases response rates and provides design-flexibility (Sincero, 2012).

3.2 Survey Development

In order to answer the study's research questions, and to support or reject the corresponding hypotheses, a web survey has been conducted. The survey has a total amount of 29 questions, alternating between open-ended and closed-ended questions, and include three fields that allow the participants to express additional comments and opinions. The questionnaire was divided into 5 parts: Demographic Questions, Social Media Usage, Online Reviews, Influencer Marketing, and Purchasing Intention.

The first part examined the demographic data of the participants, including questions regarding their age group, gender, and country of residence. This helps the researcher discover relevant information about different target audiences.

The second section concerns the participants' social media usage, and encompasses three questions. The first question investigates whether the recipients make use of social media or not. Furthermore, the next corresponding question asks participants which social media platforms they engage with: "Instagram", "Facebook",

“Twitter”, or “Other”. Lastly, the questionnaire asks about the number of hours spent on social networks on average per day, with the answer options, “Less than 1 hour”, “1-3 hours”, “3-5 hours”, and “more than 7 hours”.

Section number three includes multiple questions regarding online reviews on social media platforms with respect to cosmetic products. Three of them provide two possible answer options, “Yes” and “No”, asking the participants to state whether they buy cosmetics products, look at online reviews before their purchases, and contribute to giving product reviews or feedback on social media. Furthermore, various statements had to be answered regarding the credibility and influence of online reviews, and social media on the participants’ cosmetic product purchasing behavior. Participants were asked to state their agreement level of statements, including “I buy cosmetic products based on the reviews”, “I trust online reviews”, “Social media influences me to try new cosmetic products via reviews”, and “Comments from social media can change my attitude about a cosmetic product”. Finally, the third part also includes two open-ended questions for additional comments, opinions, and experiences of the recipients, that are related to this topic.

The fourth part focuses on influencer marketing on social media related to cosmetic products. The researcher aimed to gather information about the participants’ engagement with, and perception of, influencers who promote cosmetic products, and how this impacts their purchasing decision, encompassing statements such as, “I trust the recommendation I obtain from influencers regarding cosmetic products”, “Information about cosmetic products have a higher credibility if they come from an influencer on social media than from different channels”, and “I have bought cosmetic products recommended to me by an influencer”. In the end, the recipients have the option to leave further comments about their experiences and opinions.

The last section contains two statements and one comment field. Participants were asked whether they use social media in their decision process when buying cosmetic products, and which platform influences them the most when purchasing these items.

In order to evaluate the recipients' viewpoints to the statements introduced in the section two, three, four, and five, a 5-point Likert scale was employed, which was separated into: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree or 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Quite Often, and 5 = Very Often. Moreover, single choice as well as multiple-choice questions were put to use, and the researcher included multiple comment fields at the end of each section, in order to receive more detailed answers, and to provide the opportunity to explain further motivation of the respondent's decision making. The exact questions asked in the survey and answer options can be found in Appendix A.

3.3 Data Collection

In order to collect the data needed, the researcher conducted a self-administered questionnaire, which has been designed on the web application "SoSci Survey", as it does not have any limitations regarding the number of questions or respondents. The corresponding sampling method was non-probability testing, namely convenience sampling. There are many arguments in favor of this method, such as the rapid speed of the data collection, the low cost, simple assembly of respondents, as well as the accessibility (Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012). However, the sampling method is not representative when it comes to extrapolating the results to a larger population, due to the absence of subgroups in the respondent pool, in contrast to the target population (Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012). The survey was only available to internet users, as the link was distributed through social media platforms, such as Instagram and Snapchat, and was also directly shared with friends and relatives of the researcher. According to Roddis et al. (2019), there is a greater chance of getting high quality answers through online surveys than through other means. In order to provide a certain level of validity and reliability, the researcher conducted a pilot test with ten friends and acquaintances before the launch of the actual survey. The feedback given was very positive, the language was claimed to be clear, and the length was said to be appropriate. The researcher's goal was to reach one hundred participants with a minimum of ninety complete responses within a time frame of two weeks. The study of Voramontri & Klieb (2019) used a sample size of one hundred fifty, which is why this research adapted this magnitude

of respondents, in order to stimulate further research. Mainly individuals between the ages of eighteen to thirty were targeted, as this group tends to use social networking platforms the most. All of those surveyed have been informed that their responses will stay anonymous, solely be used for this study, and will not be shared with any other third party.

3.4 Hypotheses

Finally, the researcher defined three relevant hypotheses, which are stated below:

H1: Online reviews have a significant impact on customers' purchasing intentions in the cosmetics industry.

According to Jain et al. (2018), positive and negative online reviews are correlated with a customer's purchasing decision. The relationship between those variables in relation to the cosmetics industry have not been thoroughly researched yet. For this reason the researcher aims to give more insight into this matter.

H2: Influencer Marketing has a significant impact on customers' purchasing intentions in the cosmetics industry.

Prior research has shown that there is a correlation between influencer marketing and a customer's purchasing decision, the linkage to the cosmetics industry, however, has not yet been studied far enough (Finisterra do Paço & Oliveira, 2017). Therefore, the researcher investigates the relationship between the said variables in relation to the cosmetics industry.

H3: Online reviews have a greater influence on customers' purchasing intentions than influencer marketing in the cosmetics industry.

Several studies have already investigated the impact of influencer marketing and online reviews on the purchasing intention, however, it would be interesting to know which of these variables has a greater influence on consumer buying behavior in relation to the cosmetics industry (De Veirman et al., 2016; Jalilvand et al., 2011).

Consequently, the researcher chose to explore these correlations and gain further knowledge on this topic.

These hypotheses are visually demonstrated in the model below, as you can see in Figure 1.

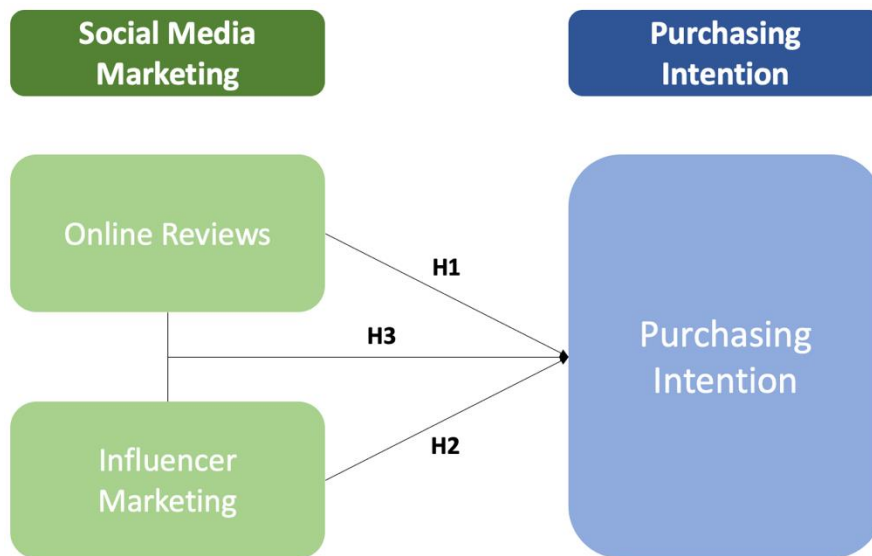


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

4 Results

4.1 Sample Description

The first question of this research paper's survey was regarding the participants' gender. The majority of the recipients were female with a percentage of 69.0, while only thirty-seven out of the one hundred twenty-six individuals stated to be male, which is a percentage of 29.4. The remaining 1.6 percent can be attributed to the answer option "Other". The data regarding the gender distribution can be found in Table 1.

	Frequency	Percent

Female	87	69.0%
Male	37	29.4%
Other	2	1.6%
Total	126	100.00%

Table 1. Table, Frequency Gender

Figure 2. illustrates the number of participants who fall into the predefined age groups. As can be seen in the clustered bar chart below (Figure 2), the age group “18 to 29 years old” is the most extensive one, with a percentage of 82.5, which is due to the convenience sampling used for the collection of recipients for the survey. Four out of the one hundred twenty-six individuals belong to the age groups “younger than 18 years old” and “65 years or older”, with a value of two, or 1.6 percent. Seven (5.6 percent) participants belong to the category “50 to 64 years old”, while the remaining eleven (8.7 percent) are aged between thirty and forty-nine.

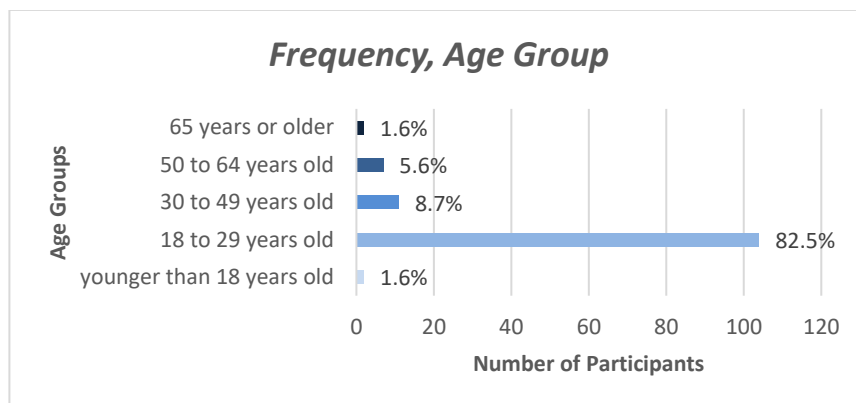


Figure 2. Clustered Bar, Frequency Age Group

The survey participants originate from almost all parts of the world, such as Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, United States, and United Kingdom. The majority, however, came from Austria and Germany with a percentage of 61.9 and 21.4 respectively.

Since the demographics discussed above show an imbalance in terms of frequency in gender, age group, and country of residence, the following results cannot be extrapolated to a larger population, but merely provide a basis for further research. Additional charts regarding recipients' gender and country of residence can be found in Appendix B.

4.2 Descriptives of Social Media Usage

Popularity and Influence of Social Networking Platforms

Figure 3 refers to the survey question "Which social media platforms do you use?", where participants could choose multiple answers. With a percentage of 95.2, Instagram appears to be the most popular platform, followed by Facebook with a usage rate of 68.3 percent (see Figure 3). Twitter is the least employed channel out of the three mentioned, as only twenty-nine recipients reported using this application. These results refute previous results reported by Statista (2021i), which stated that Facebook is the most used platform and serves as market leader as of 2021, followed by Instagram and then Twitter. The researcher suspects that these differences are due to the chosen sampling method, since most of the participants belong to the same age group and environment. The category "Other" (49.2 percent), which could represent any social media platform that has not yet been mentioned, was chosen by almost half of the participants, and can therefore not be omitted. This was also noted in the subsequent comments section of the survey, where several participants stated that they spend a large portion of their time on platforms such as YouTube, Snapchat and LinkedIn. Towards the end of the survey, participants were asked which social media platform influenced them the most to buy cosmetic products. Instagram was the most influential social media channel, reaching a percentage of 79.4. Only three respondents chose Facebook for this question (2.4 percent), and not a single participant indicated Twitter (0.0 percent) as an influential medium. The remaining 18.3 percent chose the answer option "Other", stating in the comment field below that YouTube, as well as Snapchat, have a great influence on their purchasing behavior in regard to cosmetics products. See Appendix B for a clustered bar chart illustrating the results for the most influential platform for purchasing cosmetic products.

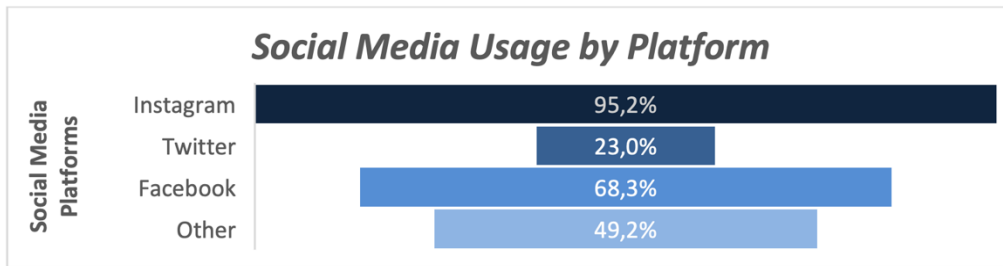


Figure 3. Funnel, Social Media Usage by Platform

Average Time Spent on Social Networks per Day

The survey results also provided further information on the average time participants spend on social networks per day. The majority of those surveyed (46.0 percent) spend one to three hours a day on social media platforms, with another third devoting three to five hours of their day to these channels. Twenty of the respondents (15.9 percent) indicated a time span of less than one hour and the remaining six (4.8 percent) reported spending more than seven hours of their day on social networks. See Appendix B for the bar chart displaying the results of the average time spent on social networks per day.

4.3 Descriptives eWOM

Frequency of Consulting Online Reviews Before Purchasing of Cosmetic Products

Figure 4 indicates the responses of the survey question “How often do you look at online reviews before purchasing a cosmetic product?”. The results are highly balanced, as shown by the respective mean of 3.15. Eighteen of the one hundred twenty-six respondents indicated that they do not look at online reviews before purchasing a cosmetic product, while twenty-two do so very often. The results show that the participants are rather neutral towards consulting online reviews before purchasing cosmetic products and on average only tend to do so occasionally.



Figure 4. Frequency Search for Online Reviews Before Purchasing Cosmetic Products

Actions Related to Online Reviews and Cosmetic Products

Out of all respondents, 79.4 percent usually buy cosmetic products, 66.7 percent look at online reviews before purchasing cosmetic products, and only 21.4 percent indicated that they participate in giving product reviews on social media platforms. This could result in the assumption that mostly a certain type of person writes online reviews on social media, which can be tied to the findings of ReviewTracker (2020), who claimed that people are more likely to participate in giving online reviews when they are highly unsatisfied with a product. This could mean that online reviews regarding certain products could be biased if mainly negatively valanced comments are displayed and written (ReviewTracker, 2020). A table with all related responses can be found in Appendix B.

Impact of Online Reviews on Social Media on Purchasing Decision in Regard to Cosmetic Products

Figure 5 visualizes respondents' answers to seven questions related to the construct of online reviews and their influence on the participants' cosmetics purchasing decision. The first question relates to the extent to which participants trust online reviews, and has a mean value of 3.26, indicating that most people feel neutral

towards them, which does not indicate a high level of trustworthiness. The second question asks to what extent the participants agree with the statement “I buy cosmetic products based on reviews”, and has a mean value of 3.40. The majority of respondents (53.2 percent) agreed or even strongly agreed with this, and 27.8 percent were neutral about it. The following question asks if the likelihood of purchasing a product increases based on the recommendation of friends. The mean of 4.07, which indicates the highest value within this group of questions, shows that this statement was positively supported by most of the participants and that they mainly answered with the options "agree" and "strongly agree". The reason why the researcher theorized that this is the highest mean beforehand is, because of the phrase “by my friends”, which could suggest that reviews made by close acquaintances have a higher trustworthiness and credibility than reviews made by, for example, influencers or other online users. The responses of the additional comment field at the end of this survey section support the researcher’s theory. The fourth question, whether social media influenced participants to purchase new cosmetic products through reviews, resulted in a mean score of 3.16. The researcher assumes that the reason for this value not being too high is based on the fact that the other questions also generated rather moderate mean scores, which demonstrates that the respondent pool presumably does not have much confidence in reviews and does not necessarily use them, especially not for new products. Even though online reviews do not automatically influence them to try new products, the mean answer for the statement “Comments from social media can change my attitude about a cosmetic product” is higher (3.40). This is another reason to infer that using online reviews for products that the participants would like to buy, might be a safety measure for them to read through before a purchase is made, however, not for exploring new products. This presumption was also reinforced by the additional comment field for further ideas, opinions and statements of the participants, where multiple respondents claimed to use online reviews as a last step to make sure that the product delivers what it promises. Consequently, there is a certain level of trust, and people indicate that their attitudes change as a result of online reviews, but the trust does not necessarily reach a level where they would unjustifiably believe a stranger’s opinion. A vast amount of respondent stated in an open-comment field that they sometimes ignore negative

reviews, because they would like to form their own opinion on the product of interest. They think that some products have dissimilar effects on different individuals and also tastes diverge between people, or when the evaluations of other users did not seem accurate, or they have tried the items before and liked it. The last two questions of this group, also represented in Figure 5 below, are strongly connected and specifically target online reviews that are negatively valanced. Interesting to note is that the statement "I would buy a cosmetic product despite negative reviews" is skewed to the left and has a mean of 2.60, indicating that the majority of participants (strongly) disagreed or felt neutral about this statement. Surprisingly, however, many people felt very positive about the statement after asking the respondents, whether they decided against buying a cosmetic product because of negative online reviews, with a mean score of 3.49. The researcher asked these questions to ensure that those surveyed answered truthfully, and in order to see whether the responses of the first statement align with the ones of the second, giving it more reliability. In Figure 4 the alignment of the responses to the two questions are clearly visible, demonstrating that negative reviews do have an impact on customers' purchasing decision in the cosmetics industry. However, one of the questions above suggests that reviews from friends have a greater influence than those found online. Lastly, the results also propose that negative online reviews have a more considerable influence on the participants' purchasing decision, than neutrally valanced or even positive ones.

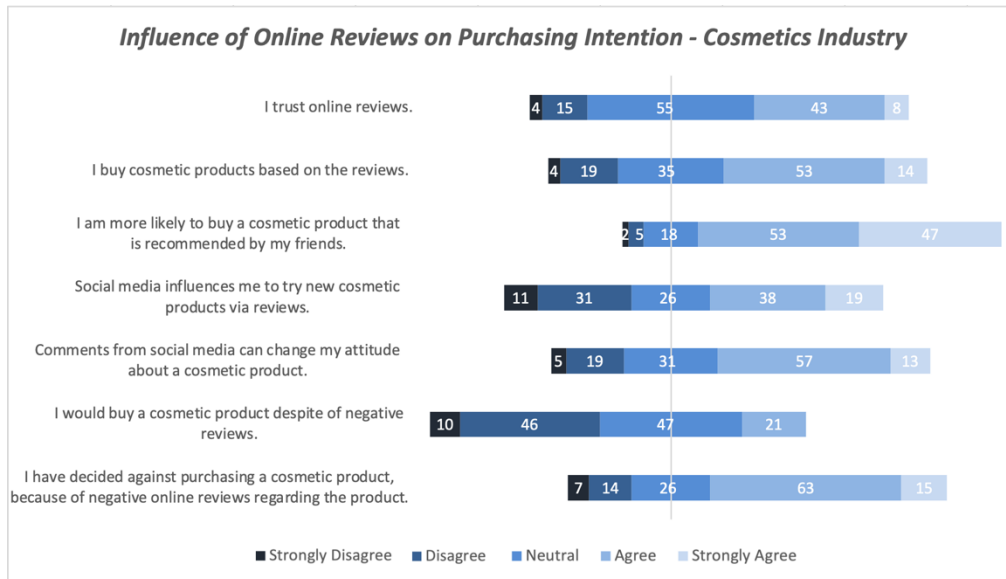


Figure 5. Likert-Plot, Influence of Online Reviews on Purchasing Intention in the Cosmetics Industry

4.4 Descriptives of Influencer Marketing

Impact of Influencer Marketing on Purchasing Decision in Regard to Cosmetic Products

Prior research has shown that influencer marketing has a high credibility, as well as a great influence on customers' purchasing decision (Saima & Khan, 2020). For this reason, it is confounding to see the survey results in Figure 6. The first question displayed in the chart below regards the credibility of influencers on social media with respect to cosmetic products. The statement has a mean value of 2.72, indicating that information about cosmetic products coming from an influential creator does not have a higher reliability than different channels. Fifty-seven participants (strongly) disagreed with this question, while only thirty-nine reacted positively towards it. The second statement asked whether the respondents trust the recommendation they obtain from influencers regarding cosmetic products, which resulted in a rather neutral response rate and has a mean value of 3.25. Multiple participants stated their opinions towards these statements in the additional comment field at the end of this survey section, saying that it is difficult for them to trust an influencers integrity as they make a living from sponsorship, and affiliate links related to cosmetics, resulting

in less trust and credibility. Others have indicated that they perceive the influencers they follow as highly trustworthy and have built a connection with them, which is why they believe their recommendations. The fact that the survey results on these questions do not point directly in one direction may have to do with the convenience sampling that has been put to use.

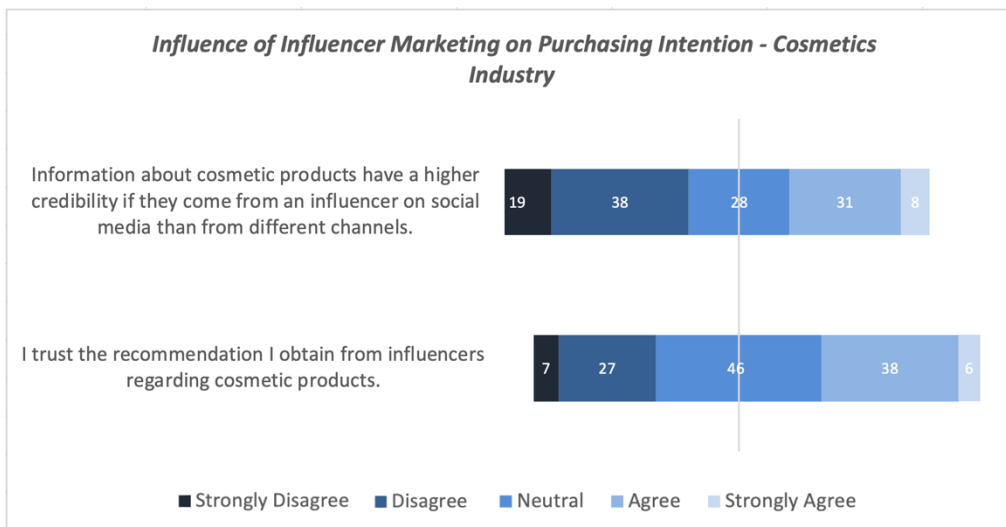


Figure 6. Likert-Plot, Influence of Influencer Marketing on Purchasing Intention in the Cosmetics Industry

Actions Related to Influencer Marketing and Cosmetic Products

Further survey questions have given a greater insight into the participants' actions related to influencer marketing. The results have shown that eighty respondents (63.5 percent) out of one hundred twenty-four, follow at least one influencer and out of those, seventy-eight search for product reviews from influential creators on social media. 50.8 percent of those surveyed have bought cosmetic products recommended to them by an influencer, while 48.4 percent have not, showing that influencer marketing has a moderate influence on the participants' purchasing decision. The last question in this survey section ties in with the foregoing one, and asked the participants who responded positively to the previous statement, how often they purchase cosmetic products, endorsed by an influencer. Two of the respondents stated that they do so very often, fourteen answered with "Quite Often",

thirty-four with “Sometimes” and thirty-six with “Rarely”. The statement has a mean value of 2.79, indicating a moderate frequency of cosmetic products bought, recommended by an influencer. These results might have been impacted by convenience sampling method, and therefore suggest a different impact than they might have had in a more representative sample. The corresponding table can be found in Appendix B.

4.5 Hypotheses Testing

In order to gather reliable data, the researcher made sure to prevent respondent bias in the survey and checked for limitations, such as the sample size, level of English, misleading wording, and representiveness in terms of country of residence. Regarding the validity of the study, the researcher based the hypotheses on prior research, and investigated previous results concerning the influence of online reviews and influencer marketing on the purchasing intention. This aids in lowering the chances of encountering a type 1 or type 2 error. Additionally, a pilot test was conducted to remove the possibility of misleading or noncomprehensive survey questions. This study is relevant, as it places the constructs in the context of the cosmetics industry. After collecting the data of the survey, the output was transferred into the software package SPSS, in order to test the relationship between online reviews and influencer marketing on purchasing intention. The first two hypotheses were tested by conducting a Spearman correlation, while the third one was analyzed by applying an ANOVA test.

4.5.1 Hypothesis 1

H1: Online reviews have a significant impact on customers’ purchasing intentions in the cosmetics industry.

After collecting all the data, an analysis of the output was done, in order to test for the distribution, by visually inspecting the data on a scatter plot, as well as the value of the skewness. This test showed that the data is not normally distributed, therefore a Spearman Correlation was conducted, in order to investigate the first hypothesis, regarding the constructs online reviews and purchasing intention. A two

tailed test was administered, as the researcher is interested in whether the direction of the outcome is positive or negative. As shown in Table 2, the correlation coefficient valued at 0.377 shows that there is a low positive correlation between online reviews and the purchasing intention. Additionally, the significance value is less than 0.001, which is lower than 0.05, and for this reason, the researcher accepts the alternative hypothesis.

Spearman's rho		Online Reviews	Purchasing Intention - Online Reviews
Online Reviews	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.377**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	126	125
Purchasing Intention - Online Reviews	Correlation Coefficient	.377**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	125	125

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2. Spearman's rho for Online Reviews and Purchasing Intention

4.5.2 Hypothesis 2

H2: Influencer Marketing has a significant impact on customers' purchasing intentions in the cosmetics industry.

Similarly, to the first hypothesis, the output of the second hypothesis was analyzed by looking at the corresponding scatter plot and skewness of the data, in order to investigate the overall distribution. Therefore, depicting that the output is not normally distributed, which is why a Spearman correlation would be most appropriate. This test has been conducted, in order to accept or reject the second null hypothesis, regarding the constructs of influencer marketing and purchasing intention. Table 3 visualizes the output of the statistical test, showing that the correlation coefficient of the two variables is 0.361, which represents a moderate positive correlation. Also, as the significance value is lower than 0.05 ($p < 0.001$), there is a significant relationship between influencer marketing and purchasing intention in the cosmetics industry. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (H2) can be accepted, which means that influencer marketing does in fact have an impact on customer's purchasing intention within the cosmetics industry. It is also important to mention, that the survey question regarding influencer marketing incorporates the construct of

trust, which therefore links trust and purchasing intention. On that account, it can be said that the factor of trust influences these findings. Gaining an understanding of the relationship between influencer marketing, trust, and the purchasing intention incorporate various managerial implications, which will further be discussed down below in the section titled conclusion.

Spearman's rho		Influencer Marketing	Purchasing Intention - Influencer Marketing
Influencer Marketing	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.361**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	124	86
Purchasing Intention - Influencer Marketing	Correlation Coefficient	.361**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	86	87

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3. Spearman's rho for Influencer Marketing and Purchasing Intention

4.5.3 Hypothesis 3

H3: Online reviews have a greater influence on customers' purchasing intentions than influencer marketing in the cosmetics industry.

Table 4 below displays the mean, standard deviation, F-value, and P-value of the respective independent variables. The questions regarding online reviews and influencer marketing, have been measured on a 5-point Likert scale in which "1" represents "strongly disagree" and "5" represents "strongly agree". In order to test which of the constructs, influencer marketing or online reviews, has a greater influence on buying behavior, an analysis of variance was conducted. It can therefore be said that a higher mean value correlates to a greater purchasing intention, as participants show a higher level of agreement with the questions. Influencer marketing has a mean of 3.30 (<.001), while online reviews have a mean of 3.64 (<.001), therefore it can be said that online reviews have a greater impact on purchasing intention than influencer marketing. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis (H3) can be accepted.

ANOVA	Mean	SD	F	P-Value
Influencer Marketing	3,30	0,928	5,42	<.001
Online Reviews	3,64	0,7508	6,714	<.001

Table 4. Results ANOVA

Conceptual Model Discussion

The conceptual model used for this research provides a substantial basis for the concepts of online reviews' and influencer marketing's impact on purchasing intention. This study provides further evidence that influencer marketing and online reviews have a positive impact on a customer's buying behavior. This is in good agreement with Jepsen (2007) and Powers et al. (2012), who pointed out that time spent on social networks highly correlates with a consumer's information search regarding products of interest, therefore influencing their decision making process. This research found that more than half of the ones surveyed purchase cosmetic products based on the recommendation of an influencer and also tried new products because of these promotions. Based on the findings of this study, it can be assumed that online reviews tend to influence a customer's decision making process, especially when it comes to negatively valanced product reviews. However, there are many aspects in which this model could be further expanded on. Some examples include external variables that could influence the purchasing intention of consumers. According to previous research done by (Ventre & Kolbe, 2020), the perceived usefulness and trust of online reviews are moderating variables, which directly impact purchasing intention. These variables were, for example, not considered (Ventre & Kolbe, 2020). Another influencing factor of online reviews is the person who wrote the review and their level of expertise (von Helversen et al., 2018). Furthermore, this conceptual model is not platform specific, and various research has demonstrated that the platform influences the perception of the review (Cheng & Ho, 2015). Similarly, to online reviews, there are various extraneous variables that could have an impact in costumers' purchasing intention, such as popularity of the influencer, the platform used, and the credibility. The model has to be adjusted for further research,

as it does not go in depth enough with the topic, as there are various limitations present, which can be found in the limitation section. In conclusion, there are various external factors that influence eWOM and the correlation it has with the purchasing intention, which provide potential future adaptations to this model. However, as a basic overview of the general concepts, this model is adequate.

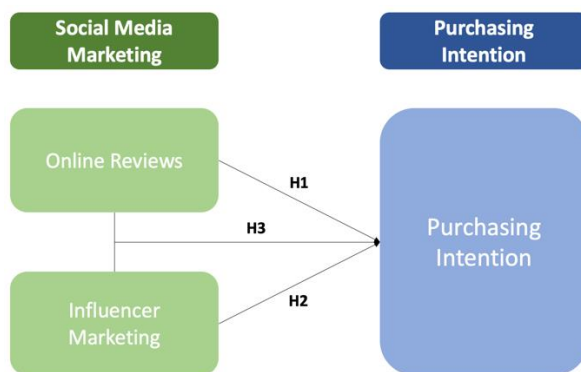


Figure 7. Conceptual Model

5 Conclusion

This research aimed to identify the impact of social media marketing on customers' purchasing intention in the cosmetics industry. First, the literature review introduced and explained important terms and topics related to the constructs of this study. This allowed the researcher to gain a greater insight into the subject matter, in order to better understand the interrelationships of the variables. Furthermore, a survey was launched, which reached one hundred twenty-six participants. The survey was split into four sections: Demographics, Social Media Usage, Online Reviews, Influencer Marketing, and Purchasing Intention, asking the respondents about their personal attitudes and buying behavior in regard to these segments. With the help of this questionnaire, the researcher sought to gain further insight into what impact influencer marketing and online reviews have on consumers' buying behavior in the cosmetics industry, and also which of the aforementioned strategies have a greater influence on the purchasing intention. As the sample size and method are not fully representative, and therefore cannot be extrapolated to a larger population, this

study serves as a foundation upon which further research should be built. Additionally, it aims to support marketers' understanding of consumers' perceptions and usage of social media and eWOM, with regards to the cosmetics industry.

The second research question of this study “How do online reviews affect customers' purchasing intentions in the cosmetics industry?”, can be answered with the use of the survey results. These show that the majority of the respondents buy cosmetic products based on reviews, and that these also have the power to influence their attitudes on certain cosmetic products. Several participants reported using online reviews as a safety measure to read through before actually making a purchase, implying that there is some level of trust towards online reviews. Furthermore, it can be concluded that negative online reviews have a greater influence on consumers' purchasing behavior than positively or neutrally valanced ones. The third research question “How does influencer marketing impact customers' purchasing intentions in the cosmetics industry?”, can also be answered with the use of the questionnaire. According to the responses of survey participants, influencers do not seem to be as credible and reliable as previous research has shown, which in turn could be due to the sampling method the researcher applied. Multiple respondents, however, gave a reason for these opinions, namely that they are never sure whether an influencer really appreciates, and consequently recommends, the products they market, because of their quality and effectiveness, or only because they are paid by big brands to do so. In conclusion, it can be said that although there are various potential improvements for further research, this paper does show that there is a significant correlation between influencer marketing and purchasing intention. The first research question, “What impact does social media marketing have on customers' purchasing intentions in the cosmetics industry?”, was answered by hypotheses one and two. The researcher found out that there is a significant relationship between influencer marketing and online reviews on purchasing intention, with online reviews having a greater impact on the buying behavior than influencer marketing, meaning that H3 got accepted. Finally, it was found that Instagram seems to be the most influential platform in terms of cosmetic product purchases, followed by Facebook.

The results of this research can also be related to the study of Młodkowska (2019). In her study, the author suggests that influencer marketing is an effective tool for brands to impact consumers' buying behavior positively, therefore increasing sales and spreading positive WOM (Młodkowska, 2019). Findings from Vimaladevi and Dhanabhakaym (2012) have shown that online reviews have a causal relationship with consumers' purchasing behavior and also strongly influence the choice of products purchased, which strongly confirms/emphasizes the results of this study.

5.1 Limitations

As this research paper was written for the purpose of a bachelor's thesis, it is limited in scope and also encounters some limitations. The first limitation the researcher would like to address is the sample size, which was relatively small, making it less extrapolatable to a bigger population. A larger respondents pool would make it easier to obtain results that can be generalized to the general public, and would also increase reliability. Depending on the participants' level of English, the phrasing of the survey questions could have been perceived as confusing or misleading, which would represent a further limitation. Due to the size of the sample and the fact that not all of those surveyed answered each question, no clear conclusion could be made. Additionally, the survey was mainly answered by individuals from Austria and Germany, which is why the results cannot be applied to other regions of the world, due to, for instance, cultural differences. The researcher chose convenience sampling as a method to gather the survey participants, indicating a higher probability of over- or under-representation of the public. This imposes another reason why the survey results cannot be generalized and exhibits a lower reliability. Furthermore, there is a high possibility that the respondents did not take the survey seriously, got wearied after some time or did not understand the scale, which could lead to falsified results due to, for instance, dishonest answering of the questions, causing the results to be steered in a false direction. Moreover, the survey has been conducted at a single point in time, which means that the changes in the population cannot be taken into account. It would be more effective to launch the survey multiple times at different time instances in order to obtain more exact results and to be able to take changes into

account. Therefore, this study should be seen as a basis on which further research can be built.

5.2 Future Research

As mentioned above, this study contains some limitations that open possibilities for future studies. The impact of influencer marketing and online reviews on customers' purchasing decision has already been researched to a certain extent, however, not which of these eWOM strategies exert a greater influence on the dependent variable "purchasing decision". Further research could pick up on this topic and increase the respondents pool, focus more on a global representation, and conduct multiple surveys at different point in time, which would lead to more reliably and generalizable results that can be applied to a larger population. The influence of these factors on the purchasing behavior could also be investigated on a country basis and subsequently be compared with each other. Further analysis could also focus on different age groups, as the participants in this research mainly represented the range "eighteen to twenty-nine years old". Another possible contribution to the literature, that would be of great importance to marketers, focuses on how to entice older people to engage with more platforms. This would have a significant impact, as the number of people using social media steadily decreases with age (Statista, 2021d).

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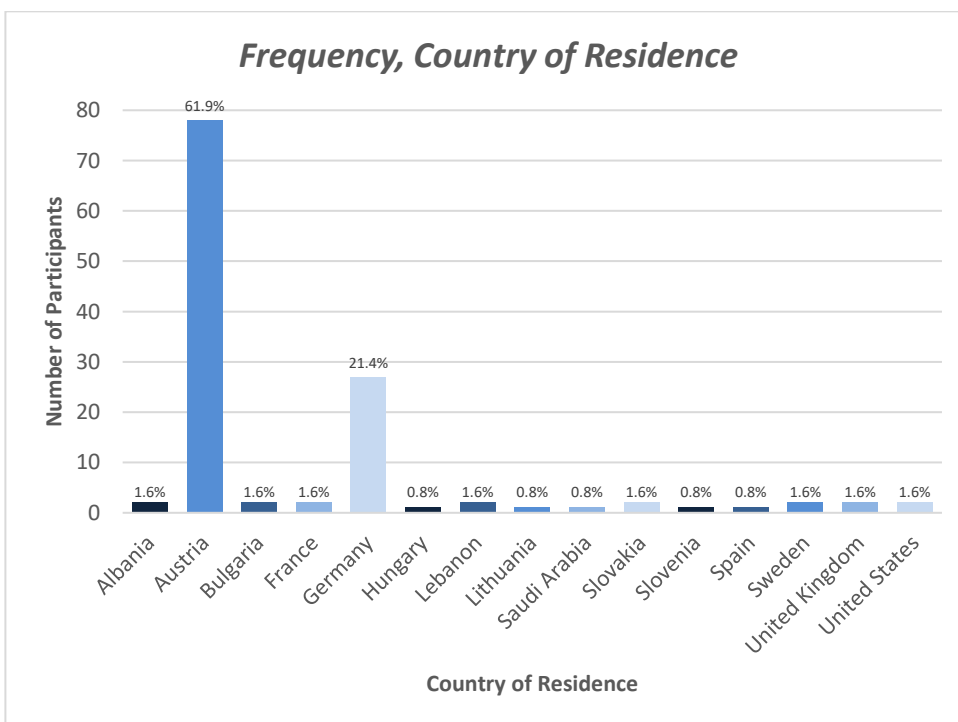
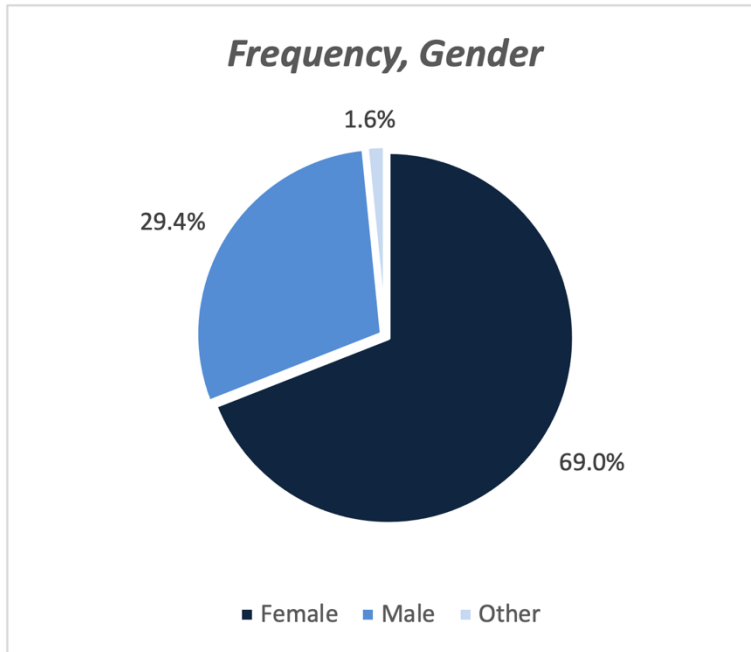
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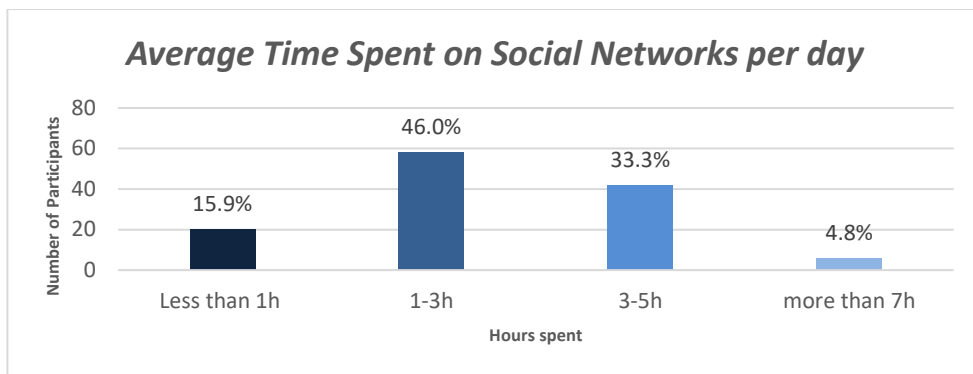
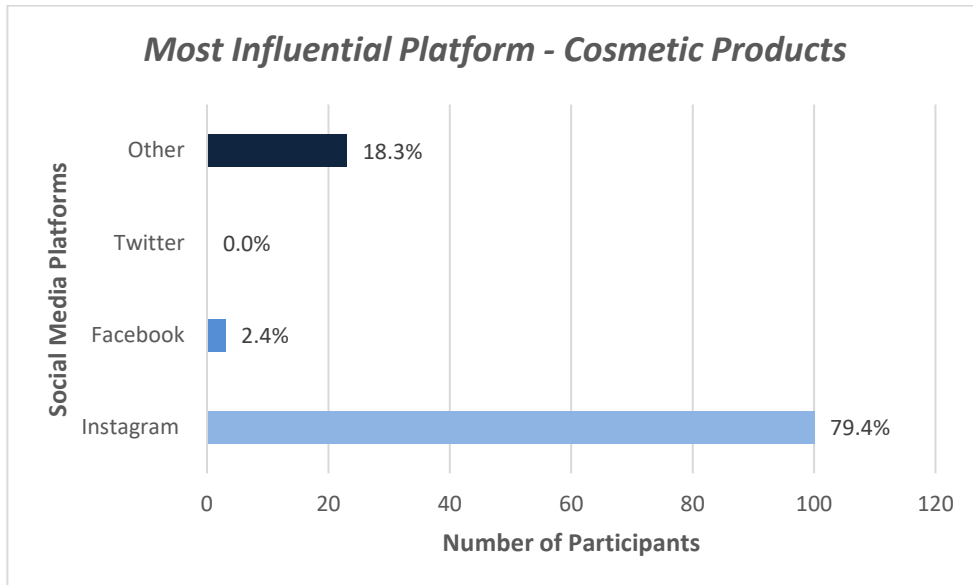
Appendices

Appendix A

No	Variable	Stats/Values	Freqs (% of Valid)	Valid	Missing
1	Please state your gender.	Female Male	87 (69.0%) 37 (29.4%)	126 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
2	Please state your age group.	younger than 18 years old 18 to 29 years old 30 to 49 years old 50 to 64 years old 65 years or older	2 (1.6%) 104 (82.5%) 11 (8.7%) 7 (5.6%) 2 (1.6%)	126 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
3	Please state your country of residence.	Albania Austria Bulgaria France Germany Hungary Lebanon Lithuania Saudi Arabia Slovakia Slovenia Spain Sweden United Kingdom United States	2 (1.6%) 78 (61.9%) 2 (1.6%) 2 (1.6%) 27 (21.4%) 1 (0.8%) 2 (1.6%) 1 (0.8%) 1 (0.8%) 2 (1.6%) 1 (0.8%) 1 (0.8%) 2 (1.6%) 2 (1.6%) 2 (1.6%)	126 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
4	Do you use social media	Yes No	124 (98.4%) 2 (1.6%)	126 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
5	Which social media platforms do you use?	Instagram Twitter Facebook Other	120 (95.2%) 29 (23.0%) 86 (68.3%) 62 (49.2%)	126 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
6	Which social media platforms do you use? (Instagram)	Yes No	120 (95.2%) 6 (4.8%)	126 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
7	Which social media platforms do you use? (Twitter)	Yes No	29 (23.00%) 97 (77.0%)	126 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
8	Which social media platforms do you use? (Facebook)	Yes No	86 (68.3%) 40 (31.7%)	126 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
9	Which social media platforms do you use? (Other)	Yes No	62 (49.2%) 64 (50.8%)	126 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
10	How many hours do you spend on social networks on average per day?	Less than 1h 1-3h 3-5h more than 7h	20 (15.9%) 58 (46.0%) 42 (33.3%) 6 (4.8%)	126 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
11	Do you usually buy cosmetic products?	Yes No	100 (79.4%) 25 (19.8%)	125 (99.2%)	1 (0.8%)
12	Do you look at online reviews before purchasing a cosmetic product?	Yes No	84 (66.7%) 42 (33.3%)	126 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
13	How often do you look at online reviews before purchasing a cosmetic product?	Never Rarely Sometimes Quite Often Very often	18 (14.30%) 22 (17.5%) 31 (24.6%) 33 (26.2%) 22 (17.5%)	126 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
14	Do you participate in giving product reviews or feedback on social media?	Yes No	27 (21.4%) 98 (77.8%)	125 (99.2%)	1 (0.8%)
15	I am more likely to buy a cosmetic product that is recommended by my friends.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	2 (1.6%) 5 (4.0%) 18 (14.3%) 53 (42.1%) 47 (37.3%)	125 (99.2%)	1 (0.8%)
16	I buy cosmetic products based on the reviews.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	4 (3.2%) 19 (15.1%) 35 (27.8%) 53 (42.1%) 14 (11.1%)	125 (99.2%)	1 (0.8%)
17	I trust online reviews.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	4 (3.2%) 15 (11.9%) 55 (42.7%) 43 (34.1%) 8 (6.3%)	125 (99.2%)	1 (0.8%)
18	Social media influences me to try new cosmetic products via reviews.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	11 (8.7%) 31 (24.6%) 26 (20.6%) 38 (30.2%) 19 (15.1%)	125 (99.2%)	1 (0.8%)
19	Comments from social media can change my attitude about a cosmetic product.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	5 (4.0%) 19 (15.1%) 31 (24.6%) 57 (45.2%) 13 (10.3%)	125 (99.2%)	1 (0.8%)
20	I have decided against purchasing a cosmetic product, because of negative online reviews regarding the product.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	7 (5.6%) 14 (11.1%) 26 (20.6%) 63 (50.0%) 15 (11.9%)	125 (99.2%)	1 (0.8%)
21	I would buy a cosmetic product despite of negative reviews.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	10 (7.9%) 46 (36.5%) 47 (37.3%) 21 (16.7%) 0 (0.0%)	124 (98.4%)	2 (1.6%)
23	Do you follow at least one influencer that promotes cosmetic products on social media?	Yes No	80 (63.5%) 44 (34.9%)	124 (98.4%)	2 (1.6%)
24	I trust the recommendation I obtain from influencers regarding cosmetic products.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	7 (5.6%) 27 (21.4%) 46 (36.5%) 38 (30.2%) 6 (4.8%)	124 (98.4%)	2 (1.6%)
25	Information about cosmetic products have a higher credibility if they come from an influencer on social media than from different channels.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	19 (15.1%) 38 (30.2%) 28 (22.2%) 31 (24.6%) 8 (6.3%)	124 (98.4%)	2 (1.6%)
26	I search for reviews from influencers on social media.	Yes No	78 (62.9%) 46 (37.1%)	124 (98.4%)	2 (1.6%)
27	I have bought cosmetic products recommended to me by an influencer.	Yes No	64 (50.8%) 61 (48.4%)	125 (99.2%)	1 (0.8%)
28	If so, how often do you buy cosmetic products recommended by an influencer?	Never Rarely Sometimes Quite Often Very often	0 (0.0%) 36 (28.6%) 34 (27.0%) 14 (11.1%) 2 (1.6%)	86 (68.3%)	40 (31.7%)
30	I use social media in my decision making process, when buying cosmetic products.	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	16 (12.7%) 26 (20.6%) 42 (33.3%) 36 (28.6%) 6 (4.8%)	126 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)
31	The following platform influences me the most to purchase cosmetic products.	Instagram Facebook Twitter Other	100 (79.4%) 3 (2.4%) 0 (0.0%) 23 (18.3%)	126 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)

Appendix B





Attitudes	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
<i>Do you usually buy cosmetic products?</i>	100	79.4%	25	19.8%
<i>Do you look at online reviews before purchasing a cosmetic product?</i>	84	66.7%	42	33.3%
<i>Do you participate in giving product reviews or feedback on social media?</i>	27	21.4%	98	77.8%

	Stats/Value	Frequency	Percent
Do you follow at least one influencer that promotes	Yes	80	63.5%
	No	44	34.9%
I search for reviews from influencers on social media.	Yes	78	62.9%
	No	46	37.1%
I have bought cosmetic products recommended to me by an influencer.	Yes	64	50.8%
	No	61	48.4%
If so, how often do you buy cosmetic products recommended by an influencer?	Never	0	0.0%
	Rarely	36	28.6%
	Sometimes	34	27.0%
	Quite Often	14	11.1%
	Very often	2	1.6%