



**SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS AND PURCHASE INTENTION FOR MOTOR
VEHICLES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

By

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**A research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Management in Strategic Marketing (MMSM)**

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ABSTRACT

The effect of social media influencers on purchase intention for motor vehicles in South Africa.

The motor-vehicle industry is one of the largest sectors in South Africa and the most dominant in the manufacturing industry. In 2022, the sector's contribution accounted for 4.9% to the gross domestic product (GDP) making it a very consistent player in manufacturing. This industry is dominated by familiar and legacy brands such as Toyota, Volkswagen, BMW, Ford, Suzuki, and Renault to mention a few. The sector has recently seen new entrants namely Chinese and Korean brands enter the market and challenging the traditional players.

This has prompted marketing practitioners to employ new innovative strategies such as using Social Media Influencers to shape consumer perception about their brands. Social Media Influencers are individuals who position themselves as experts in a particular field and they share their product knowledge with their online audience on social media channels. Therefore, the research study investigated the effects of Social Media Influencers particularly their expertise, credibility, trustworthiness, popularity, likability, and attractiveness on purchase intention for motor-vehicles in South Africa.

The researcher followed a descriptive research design, where a research survey was randomly distributed to over 1000 post graduate students and working professionals. The findings revealed that a Social Media Influencer's expertise, trustworthiness, and likability significantly affect consumer purchase intention when shopping for motor vehicles. Three of the six proposed hypotheses were supported by the research results.

The study makes a significant contribution to academic literature as it shows the important role played by Social Media Influencers and how Motor-vehicle companies can partner with them to promote the brands and improve loyalty.

DECLARATION

I, Evans Muzi Mlimi declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management (MMSM) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

EVANS MUZI MLIMI

Signed at Sandton, South Africa

DEDICATION

I dedicate this Master's degree to my mother Mavis Masinga, my four-sisters, my partner Nthabiseng Tlaka and our late son Rorisang Nkosingiphile Mlimi. Your unwavering support during this process became a great pillar of strength for me and much needed inspiration.

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1 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This is the first chapter of the research report. It highlights the background and purpose of the research study, it introduces the research problem and sub-problems, it also touches on the significance of the study and also defines important terms/words for the study.

1.2 Background and purpose of the study

The aim of the research study was to investigate the effect of Social Media Influencers and Purchase intention for Motor vehicles in South Africa.

The emergence of social media networks has led to the development of a new marketing approach known as influencer marketing. This strategy has become a vital component of marketing communication because it enables brands to increase their awareness and exposure by partnering with individuals who have a significant online following (Belanche, Casaló, Flavián & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2021).

Pittman and Abell (2021) highlight that influencer marketing has become an essential pillar of digital marketing strategies, providing brands with a powerful way to connect with consumers who often disregard traditional advertising. By partnering with influencers, companies can tap into a dedicated audience that values authentic voices. Belanche et al. (2021) define these influencers as the new gatekeepers in the digital realm, rising to prominence alongside the explosion of social media. They have successfully carved out their identities as experts across diverse fields—from automotive and beauty to fashion, fitness, food, and lifestyle—by creating engaging, self-produced content (Nugroho, Rahayu & Hapsari, 2022). Given this dynamic, brands are seizing the opportunity to collaborate with social media influencers who boast significant followings, allowing them not only to promote their products effectively but also to reshape consumer perceptions. This strategy empowers companies to extend their online reach and significantly enhance brand awareness. In fact, Singh, Crisafulli, Quamina and Xue (2020) affirm that social media influencers have a remarkably positive impact on elevating a company's visibility

and recognition in the digital marketplace. Embracing influencer partnerships could be the key to unlocking a brand's full potential.

The trend of brands collaborating with social media influencers is on the rise and is becoming a common marketing practice. However, Fernandes, Nettleship, and Pinto (2022) argue that as social media influencers gain popularity, there is an increasing need for academic research to better understand their role as one of the challenges marketers faces is selecting the right social media influencer for a specific campaign. Additionally, Singh et al. (2020) found that there is a lack of academic research focused on understanding the significance and impact of social media influencers.

1.3 Context of the study

Social media influencers are increasingly becoming common in social media platforms, and they have caught the eye of marketers, as content providers or bloggers, they have managed to acquire a large audience of thousands or even in some cases millions of followers through platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and Facebook, such that they can push communication to influence a large amount of people with their messaging. (Gräve, 2019) In 2022, the global investment in influencer marketing reached a staggering \$15 billion as more brands rose to the occasion and collaborated with social media influencers to reach their target markets. (Masuda, Han & Lee, 2022) Therefore, this new phenomenon has caught the attention of marketing practitioners and academic scholars especially in the South African market to adopt influencer marketing because of the critical role influencers play in the consumer decision-making process. Although social media influencers have been studied globally, there is very few academic research that speaks about their influence in the local South African market, therefore this study will investigate the effect of social media influencers on purchase intention in the South African context. Social media influencers are ordinary individuals who are not as well-known like traditional celebrities, but they are able to gain popularity on social media platforms through interacting with followers by posting images and video content which may resonate with their audience.

1.4 Theory section

Influencer marketing is new and popular form of marketing. It is a type of marketing that focuses particularly on using bloggers or individuals known as Social Media Influencers, to promote brands on social media channels. Therefore, Influencer marketing has become an integral part of the marketing communications mix. Furthermore, Influencer marketing is among the concept of interest in social media marketing as most organizations that advertise on digital platforms must have a strategy and using Social Media Influencers as part of a communication tactic proves to be beneficial for firms. (Dwidienawati et al., 2020)

Lou & Kim (2019) note that influencer marketing is closely related to using celebrity endorsements in traditional marketing, with the exception that the social media advertising is more content driven. While Shan, Chen & Lin (2020) indicates that consumers perceive a social media influencer's image as desirable and resounding, indicating that some consumers wish to be like their favorite influencer and tend to improve their self-image by making use of the product or service endorsed by the influencer.

In other words, social media influencers have positioned themselves as online third-party brand endorsers whereby they push brand communication through their social media accounts, in return this prompts marketing practitioners to partner with these third-party endorsers in order to create awareness online and generate brand interest. Shan et al. (2020) mentions that, recently it has become a common trend for marketing practitioners to make use of influencer endorsements to amplify brand content. Recently more and more brands have started to adopt the usage of social media influencers to amplify brand content through key opinion leaders. Furthermore, Shan et al. (2020) concedes to the fact that an in-depth analysis into consumer perceptions plus the role of influencer endorsement is significant for today's Chief Marketing Officers.

Nugroho Rahayu & Hapsari (2022) mentions that social media influencers have received popularity by positioning themselves as experts on social media platforms while Zhou, Blazquez, McCormick & Barnes (2021) mentions that their popularity causes firms to Leverage in strategic marketing campaigns because they believe they can benefit from Social Media Influencer's capabilities such as social networking, ability to influence, creativity and their relationship development skills. However, the current custom of influencer marketing through endorsements on social media has come with significant

challenges for consumers in differentiating paid brand endorsements from electronic word-of-mouth or subjective product reviews. (Shan et al., 2020) Therefore, this study intends to contribute to academic literature by exploring the role played by social media influencers and how they can assist companies to promote their products and services on social media channels.

1.5 Problem statement

The role of Social Media Influencers on Purchase intention for Motor vehicles in South Africa.

The effect of Social Media Influencers on purchase intention has created a gap in academic research which needs to be addressed as despite their significance and popularity, academic research has been at most silent on the implications of their role especially with shaping consumer perceptions and attitudes, as well as the factors behind their impact. (Nafees, Cook, Nikolov & Stoddard, 2021) Social Media Influencers have become more prevalent, and most brands are using them to push marketing content on digital platforms to raise awareness, promote a brand's product & services and communicate brand stories. This study follows the call of previous research practitioners and therefore, attempts to provide clear perspective of what drives the success of Social Media Influencers on purchase intention. The usage of social media influencers is significant within marketing and more brands are using this channel to meet their strategic objectives. In recent years, the role of Social Media Influencers is becoming more common such that more brands tend to use influencers in order to shape consumer attitudes and perceptions towards a company's products and services. Nafees et al. (2021) explain that Influencer marketing is becoming more common and that its market size has increased significantly in the last three years from \$3 billion to \$9.7 billion within the three-year period alone. This study will be focused on answering the main research question of understanding the role they play on consumer purchase intention. Wang & Lee (2021) mentions that previous academic research has mostly demonstrated that using the right Social Media Influencer can be challenging as various types of influencers produce varying marketing results, and therefore there is not much academic research which has been conducted to understand the differences in consumer responses to traditional celebrity versus a social media influencer content. There is also limited scholarly research examining

the relationship between Social Media Influencers and performance (Dwidienawati et al., 2020) and Wu, Nambisan, Xiao & Xie (2021) states that the evolution of social media has given rise to Social Media Influencers or bloggers who aim to shape the purchasing behaviours of their target audience or followers. However, only a handful of research studies have explored the effect of Social Media Influencers to consumer's buying behaviour.

1.5.1 Main Problem:

The effect of Social Media Influencers and Purchase intention for Motor vehicles in South Africa. (Nafees et al., 2021)

Brooks, Drenten, & Piskorski (2021) mentions that the digital age has given rise and opened new streams for ordinary individuals to acquire media attention, which can be interpreted into promotional ventures. These individuals also known as Social Media Influencers obtain celebrity status on social media by having a large following therefore, their status can be used within the field of advertising through content sharing and promoting brand communication. While Traditional celebrities acquired their celebrity status through traditional intermediaries such as fashion, sport, radio, arts, music, and movies. Hermanda, Sumarwan & Tinaprillia (2019) states that Social Media influencers are individuals who are active on social media channels, these individuals use their social media platform to drive brand engagement through content sharing with their followers on a topic of interest such as fashion, sports, cars and to provide new information and often shape consumer perceptions. Furthermore, some social media influencers consume products and services according to their lifestyle ,preference and then share online reviews on their social media channels. Therefore, an influencer can assess a product that consumers would admire, in turn encouraging them to purchase it. Social media has created endless opportunities for individuals to leverage their own resources in order to engage with brands and become “bloggers or Influencers”, this allows influencers to shape the purchasing behaviours of their followers. (Wu et al., 2021) while Dwidienawati et al. (2020) stated that Influencers can also be regarded as early innovators and to some extend adopters who come across new trends before anyone else and uses that to create content that regularly catches the attention of social media.

To better understand the role of Social Media Influencers on purchase intention, we will conduct a study in the motor vehicle industry within South Africa. The study conceptualizes a process which we term influencer-attributes. Influencer-attributes refers to the six constructs which we will use for the different hypothesis we seek to test. The Influencers-attributes which the researcher will examine are **expertise, credibility, trustworthiness, popularity, likeability and attractiveness**. We therefore hypothesise that by examining influencer-attributes, the researcher will be able to understand the contribution made by Social Media Influencers on purchase intention.

Sub Problems

1.5.2 Sub-problem 1

To explore the relationship between social media influencers' expertise and Purchase intention for motor vehicles in South Africa

Lou & Kim (2019) mentions that expertise shows the level to which an influencer was viewed to be a source of useful information. Furthermore, that Influencer's expertise can be derived from the quality of information they share on social media channels. Therefore, some consumers are more likely to engage with the content shared on social media based on perceived influencer's expertise which might play a role on consumer purchase intention.

1.5.3 Sub-problem 2:

To examine the relationship between Social Media Influencers' credibility and Purchase intention for motor vehicles in South Africa.

Reinikainen, Munnukka, Maity & Luoma-aho (2020) state that some of the elements which determines the effectiveness of a Social Media influencer's messaging is the perceived credibility of the influencer. Furthermore, credibility plays a role in the message acceptance by the audience.

1.5.4 Sub-problem 3:

To evaluate the relationship between Social Media Influencers' trustworthiness and Purchase intention for motor vehicles in South Africa.

Vrontis et al. (2020)) found in their study that trustworthiness, quality of messaging, social media influence and relevance of content to consumer interests are driving factors in the evaluation of trustworthiness. Subsequently some researchers have explored the interactive communication process of firms through Social Media Influencers and discovered that influencers' ability to impact on consumer's attitudes, perceptions, and purchase behaviours is mainly attributed to trustworthiness.

1.5.5 Sub-problem 4:

To explore the relationship between Social Media Influencers' popularity and Purchase intention for motor vehicles in South Africa.

Pittman & Abell (2021) stated that Social Media Influencers are at times viewed by popularity metrics like the number of people following them on a social media platform and the level of engagement (number of likes, comments, mentions and new followers). Furthermore, that well known influencers such as Kim Kardashian and Selena Gomez with many followers in the millions on Social Media channels, tend to charge hundreds of thousands of dollars for a single promoted post (Taylor, 2019)

1.5.6 Sub-problem 5:

To examine the relationship between Social Media Influencers' Likability and Purchase intention for motor vehicles in South Africa.

According to Castillo-Abdul, Pérez-Escoda, and Núñez-Barriopedro (2022), branded content holds significant potential for enhancing a brand's likability. However, the effectiveness of this content in capturing consumers' attention and interest can fluctuate based on the specific social media platform employed. Emphasizing the right platform can be crucial for brands aiming to maximize their impact and engagement with audiences.

1.5.7 Sub-problem 6:

To Measure the relationship between Social Media Influencers' Attractiveness and Purchase intention for motor vehicles in South Africa.

Masuda et al. 2022) mentioned that research has revealed that social attractiveness in terms context of influencers should be separate from physical attributes. There are three characteristics namely: authority, credibility and attractiveness of a Social Media Influencer which are considered fundamental in the theory of persuasion.

1.6 Significance of the study

The significance of social media influencers has become a more common topic than ever before, and Marketing practitioners and academics are seeking to understand the benefits of using Social Media Influencers. According to Dinh, Wang & Lee (2023) social media influencers are a new form of gatekeepers online who have a following on social media channels, and some are perceived as opinion leaders and considered to significantly affect their followers' attitudes and behaviours, even though the disruption of influencers content sharing on social media platforms is an emerging phenomenon, the studies examining their scale of influence on shaping buying behaviour is still limited. Therefore, this study's findings will provide more insights to the academic literature by shedding light on the effect of social media influencers on consumer' purchase intentions.

1.7 Academic gap

The emergence of the digital age has significantly transformed the customer landscape, introducing new layers of complexity that require careful consideration; by using social media marketing, companies can effectively achieve their marketing objectives in a cost-efficient way. In the wake of a decline in traditional communication channels, it is more important for companies to implement advanced digital marketing strategies to not only sustain but also enhance their market share. The rise of numerous influential online personalities providing purchasing-related information in various consumption areas such as cars, food, lifestyle, beauty, fitness, and travel has led to the development of a more advanced online oriented decision-making process. This phenomenon is acknowledged in research as social media influencers, known for their proficiency in online channels.

According to Claeys, Charry, & Tessitore (2024) social media influencers are perceived credible than that posted by brands, consumers therefore tend to trust the influencers more when considering their alternative buying options. Their intention to buy may also be affected by the attributes of influencers through their perceived credibility. Social media influencer marketing has become a widespread strategy for companies to target younger consumer groups and improve their brand reputation. As a result, influencers' branded content is found to establish a more authentic and direct connection with potential customers than the content created by companies themselves. However, the rise of social media influencers has opened a significant gap in academic understanding, leaving marketers striving to understand the impact these individuals have on the consumer decision-making process. As influencers increasingly shape consumer choices, it is essential understand their significance in today's marketplace.

The study seeks to contribute existing gap in understanding the role played by social media influencers in three significant ways; by firstly testing specific attributes of social media influencers with regards to online content that allow them to effectively engage both consumers and their followers. Secondly, we examine whether the opinions of social media influencers play a critical role consumers purchase intention. This will assist marketing practitioners, to partner with influencers who demonstrate opinion leadership, depending on their objectives—whether that involves promoting a new branded product through influencers' posts or embedding a corporate message within the influencers' content.

1.8 Conceptual definition of terms

Influencer Marketing

According to Ki & Kim (2019) Influencer marketing has become an increasingly prominent strategy that leverages the reach and credibility of key social media influencers to promote and endorse products and services offered by various brands. This approach is receiving significant attention from both academic circles and the business community, underscoring its potential to effectively engage and connect with target audiences.

Social Media Influencers

Social media influencers are independent 3rd party brand endorsers who have a huge following on social media channels. By unveiling the nuances of their personal journeys—sharing vibrant stories, heartfelt experiences, and authentic opinions—they create a captivating tapestry of connection through eye-catching images, engaging videos, and thought-provoking texts, all peppered with relevant hashtags. Their strategic location check-ins add an extra layer of excitement, sparking curiosity and inviting their followers to join in on the adventure, ultimately creating a rich, interactive experience that resonates deeply with their audience. (Najib et al., 2019)

Purchase intention.

Chairunnisa, Widiartanto & Pradhanawati (2023) defines purchase intention as the extent to which a consumer is willing to purchase a particular product or service. Purchase intention also known as buyer intent, is a powerful indicator of a customer's readiness to purchase a product or service within a specified timeframe. By understanding the motivations behind a customer's intent to purchase, businesses can effectively tailor their marketing strategies to engage online customers and drive conversions.

Consumers

Consumers are individuals or groups who actively engage in purchasing and utilizing products and services for their personal enjoyment and benefit, rather than for resale. As the ultimate end-users in the sales process, consumers play a crucial role in driving demand and shaping the marketplace. Their choices not only reflect personal preferences but also influence trends and innovation in the industry. (Sumup, 2020)

1.9 Contribution of the study

The study's results will significantly contribute to the existing literature by identifying key characteristics of social media influencers that shape consumer perceptions, this research not only highlights the role of influencers but also underscores their impact on audience engagement and decision-making. Furthermore, the study will provide valuable insights into the role of social media influencers and how brands can effectively utilize them to promote and endorse their products and services.

The findings offer a new academic perspective on understanding social media influencers, revealing that attributes such as expertise, trustworthiness, and likability influence purchase intentions. This information will help motor vehicle brands select influencers who can drive increased sales and enhance brand awareness, ultimately achieving their desired outcomes. Additionally, the findings may assist marketing managers in sourcing social media influencers who are knowledgeable, skilled, qualified, honest, reliable, and possess a positive brand image

1.10 Delimitations of Study

The study had a few limitations, as the research was only conducted in the motor-vehicle industry in South Africa only. The following were the limitations observed.

- The study was limited to South African residents only.
- Participation was limited to people who followed social media influencers.
- The 3rd factor was that participation was limited to people who own or intend on owning a motor vehicle in South Africa.
- The results of the research study were not compared against other similar studies from different industries.

2 CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the proposed theory and addresses the main research problem using a funnel approach. It begins with the introduction, discussion on the motor-vehicle industry, then discusses conceptual modelling and hypothesis development, and later on, the conclusion.

2.1 Introduction

The rise and popularity of social media marketing has made corporate brands to use online bloggers or content creators also known as Social Media Influencers, who endorse a brand and plays a role on their followers' perceptions with their content sharing. Social Media Influencers have also advanced the adoption of influencer marketing around the world and business reports reveal that many international companies are aiming to spend more on influencer marketing in the next years. (Singh et al., 2020)

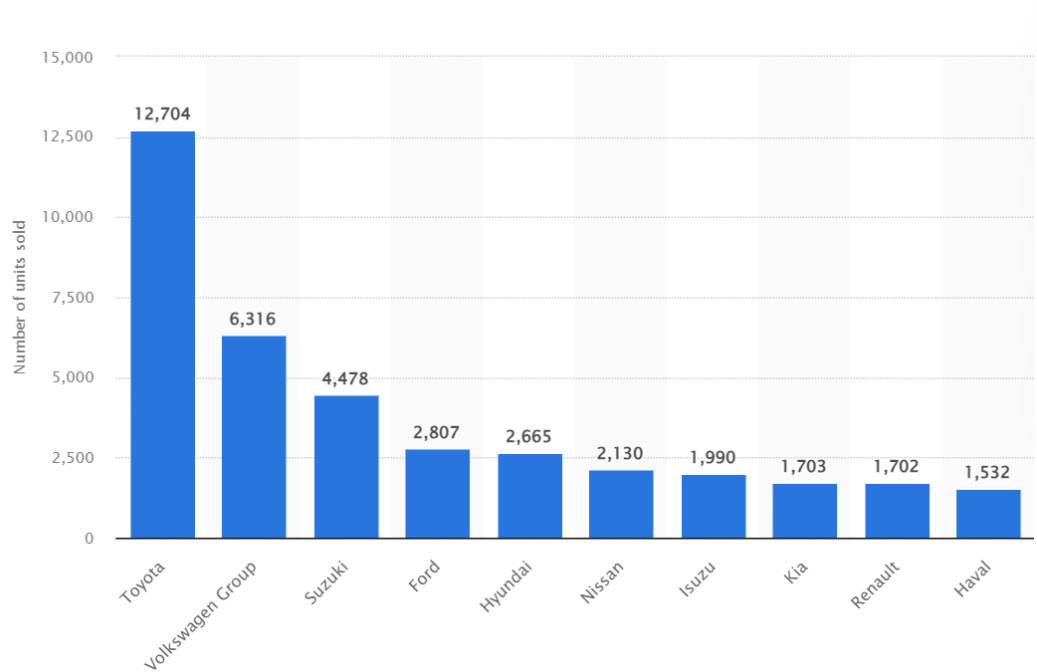
Lu, Chang & Chang (2014) mentions that previous research shows that recommendations from Social Media Influencers improves consumer and brand engagement especially when influencers share an appealing content story to consumers. Furthermore, some studies have suggested a positive impact of Social Media Influencers' role on consumers' perception, therefore implies that brands realise a positive return on investment when using influencer marketing. Pittman & Abell (2021) in their academic research discovered that more companies are increasingly making use of social media influencers for their digital marketing campaigns. While Wu et al. (2021) states that social media has given rise to Social Media Influencers or bloggers who influences the purchasing and post purchase behaviours of their followers. It is imperative to note that only a handful of studies has made a deep-dived study on how social media influencers, and consumers, are actively engaging on content sharing. Therefore, this study is grounded on the theory of persuasion, Masuda et al. (2022) introduced the ***theory of persuasion*** in their study of the "Impacts of influencer attributes on purchase intentions", the authors noted that the theory of persuasion can be applied to the study of social media influencers, when looking at followers' characterization of the influencer (e.g. credibility or expertise) influence their behavioural intentions such as purchase. Consumers will purchase more when they view a social media influencer as trustworthy. Campbell (1995) states that a key assumption of

persuasion theory is that consumers make assessments about the motives of the content creators who delivering the persuasive message. Singh et al. (2020) mentions when using the persuasion theory in their study, they were able to identify the shortcomings associated with Social Media Influencers, which included the conclusion of manipulative content, which may negatively influence consumer's trustworthiness on the influencer. Therefore, in their study they were able to recommend that when working with influencers, companies should aim to lessen manipulative content by communicating the values-driven motives behind the Brand-Social Media Influencer partnership. This study will examine the role played by Influencer's attributes such as *Expertise, Credibility, Trustworthiness, Likeability, Popularity and attractiveness* on consumer purchase intention when shopping for motor vehicles in South Africa

2.2 The Motor Vehicle Industry

The motor-vehicle industry or popularly known as the automotive sector, is one of the largest sectors in South Africa and the most dominant in the manufacturing industry. In 2022, the sector contributed accounted for 4.9% to the gross domestic product (GDP) making it a very consistent player in the manufacturing industry. (trade.gov, 2024) In 2021, about seven Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM's) invested a significant amount of R8.8 billion rands to their plants in order to increase their manufacturing capacity and stimulate growth, therefore the industry represents a significant part of the economy and directly impacts skills development, technology, and innovation. (trade.gov, 2024) The below table shows the top selling motor vehicle brands in South Africa in August 2023, by number of vehicles sold:

Figure 1: Motor vehicle sales



Source: (statista.com, 2023)

2.3 Marketing

The concept of highlighting the history of marketing is imperative for the development of marketing theory, in which marketing theory is necessary for the continuation of marketing management as a social science. Science constantly progresses as theoretical developments improve with time, adding to the body of historical thought whereby when the thought–theory cycle continues to advance, the development of social science of marketing continues to improve. (Shaw, 2011)

Bala & Verma (2018) mentions that Marketing is a constantly changing, transforming and dynamic management process. The role of marketing itself has evolved significantly over time due to different factors such as increasing unemployment rate, inflation, global economic recessions, wars and terrorisms in some parts of the world, fading industries and companies and the impact of technological changes in some markets. Furthermore, the constant development of the internet has pushed marketing practitioners to take into account these changes when embarking on their marketing strategy so that they remain relevant with the new marketing trends. Webster (2005) states that Marketing is a management principle which emerged in the early 1950s and have been further evolving

as a practice for many years, its mainly a form of support for the sales function. Furthermore, mentions that this transition was based on significant developments: the first was the paradigm of the marketing concept as a management principle prioritising customer centricity, and the second transition was the integration of behavioural science and quantitative methods into the marketing discipline. Jones & Shaw (2018) mentions that Marketing management process entailed the conceptualisation of general marketing principles, sales plans, marketing process, product supervision and sales research.

2.4 Consumer behaviour

Panwar, Anand, Ali, & Singal (2019) defines **Consumer behaviour** as the behaviour that consumers exhibit when they are in the realise a need/ problem recognition and embark on information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase and post purchase. The study of consumers shows how people make spending decisions based on available resources such as effort, money and time on consuming respective products and services. While Mothersbaugh & Hawkins (2015) state that consumer behaviour is the study of ordinary people, brands, or even firms together with the processes involved when selecting, securing, utilizing, and cat-out of products, services, to satisfy needs and wants. The below is a diagram which shows the Internal & External factors on consumer behavior.

External factors on consumer behavior

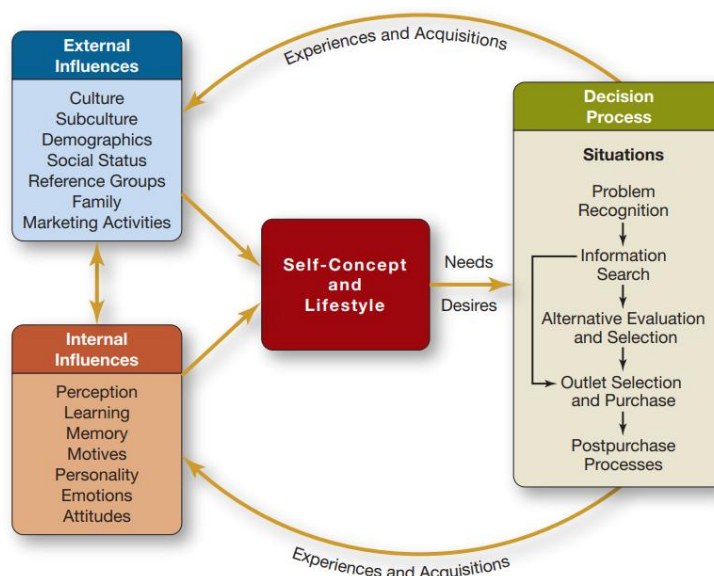
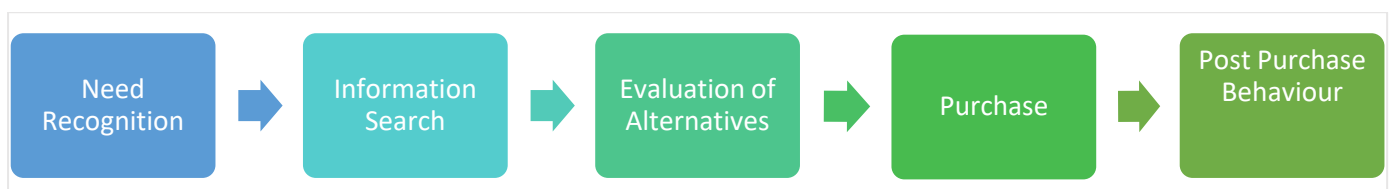


Figure 2: Consumer Behaviour Model. (Mothersbaugh & Hawkins, 2015)

Awang et al. (2021) indicated “S-O-R theory” in their study of Social Media Influencers and mentioned that the theory has three factors such as Stimulus (which relates to cognitive), organism (which relates to effect) and response (which relates action) in consumer behaviour. The theory makes an assumption that environmental factors make use of internal state stimuli, which makes way to the optimal stimulus-response. Peng & Kim (2014) states that consumers who are interested in the influencer are expected to pay attention to the influencer’s shared content. Goi, Kalidas, & Zeeshan (2014) states that Social Media Influencers appear to manipulate consumers to participate in online promotional activities and this strategy often leads to shaping consumer perceptions and intentions, as it causes consumers to easily trigger memories that would encourage better exposure as the Social Media Influencer.

Nguyen, de Leeuw, & Dullaert (2018) states that consumer behavior takes into consideration the various stages the consumer decision-making process including problem. The stages include, problem recognition, information search, evaluation, purchase and post purchase behavior. Consumer perceptions are constantly changing, Mothersbaugh & Hawkins (2015) mention that Marketing managers are facing a challenging task as the factors that influences, and form consumer behaviour are constantly evolving with the time. The below diagram illustrates the various steps in which a consumer goes decision making process in order to purchase a product or service.

Figure 3: Consumer Behaviour steps



2.4.1 Need Recognition

In the need recognition stage, the consumer first realises the need for something. Therefore, marketers aim in a contrast between consumers' current status and their preferred status. This mismatch will highlight a need for the consumer and make consumers detect and buy a product or service. (Mothersbaugh & Hawkins, 2015)

2.4.2 Information Search

The **information search** is the second step in the decision-making process whereby the consumer embarks on gathering information through various platforms, this search is influenced by both internal and external factors as per the figure 2.3 diagram above. Consumers will search for information on physical platforms, online channels or through friends and family members. (Martins, Costa, Oliveira, Gonçalves, & Branco, 2019)

2.4.3 Evaluation of Alternatives

At this step, consumers would have developed criteria for what they require in a product or service. They begin to compare the different choices they have at their disposal; these alternatives or different choices are influenced by pricing, perceived product benefits and or product availability. (Martins et al., 2019)

2.4.4 Purchase Intention

According to Wu, Yeh, & Hsiao (2011) Purchase intention is the possibility a consumer will intend to buy a certain product in the future. Furthermore, Previous studies have showed that an increase in purchase intention most likely play a positive role in the likelihood that a consumer will make a purchase. Purchase intention, therefore, can be defined as a person's conscious plan to make an effort to buy a particular product. Purchase intention reveals the prospects that consumers may aim or be prepared to buy a particular brand in the future. Previous research has revealed that if consumers experience a positive purchase intention process, then a positive brand engagement will follow after the purchase. (Martins et al., 2018) while Mabkhot et al. (2022) observed that social media influencers positively affect purchase intentions among their followers. Therefore, Influencers are significant as they can share insight on how to encourage followers to buy the products they advertise for brands. Majeed, Owusu-Ansah & Ashmond (2021) stated that Purchase intention is a buying behaviour with a combination of consumers' interests and possibility of buying the product, on Facebook or Instagram, there is an more information shared such as reviews and responses through social media influencers that enables people to gain trust which then creates the willingness to buy a brands' product. Therefore, online social networking sites can influence the usefulness of online stimuli.

2.4.5 Purchase

Erkan & Evans (2018) described four contributing elements that could affect consumers' purchase intentions: information quality, Information credibility, usefulness, and information adoption. Once the consumer has collected all the data about the product which may also include including feedback from previous customers, therefore we should expect that the consumer will arrive the decision to make the actual purchase. (Stakenvich, 2017) while Pinto & Paramita (2021) observed that influencers can significantly affect purchase intention as they give endorsements and write good reviews for brand, this in turn can improve product sales.

2.4.6 Post Purchase behavior.

The post purchase behavior refers to the behavior that occurs to the consumer after they have made the sale. This behavior can be positive or negative. Therefore, Consumers consider whether the purchase was worth it, or not, also they consider whether they will recommend the product to friends or family members, and most importantly if they would the same product again. De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders (2017) state that social media influencers has a strong effect on the decision-making than traditional marketing efforts. Furthermore, consumers have always valued other people's opinions about products or services, however, the popularity and convenience of social media has increased the effects of peer recommendations, as it enables customers to share their real-time opinions and product experiences through reviews on online social networking sites.

2.5 Digital Marketing

Langan, Cowley, and Nguyen (2019), defines digital marketing, as the usage of digital technologies to form a combined, targeted, persuasive and measurable communication which assist in the acquisition and retention of consumers while building lasting relationships with them online. Furthermore, Digital marketing involves the usage of mobile-phones, personal tablets and computers to access consumers through digital platforms; this also includes digital media which may be defined as organic (non-paid media), and paid media (Lovett & Staelin, 2016). Chaffey (2013) notes that the use of digital innovation paves a way for marketing initiatives aimed at improving customer

knowledge by matching their needs. This has made large corporates to realise the significance of digital innovation. It is significant to also note that Digital marketing is an affordable and has a good commercial impact on brands. This study will also highlight the significance of knowing the type of social media platforms a brand's target market is likely to use as that can be a contributing factor in guaranteeing that online marketing will be successful.

2.6 Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Search engine optimization can be described as the process of improving the quality and quantity of a company's website traffic from search engines. SEO targets unpaid traffic which is better known as natural traffic instead of paid traffic. Poturak, Kečo & Tutnić (2022) mention that SEO refers to the method of optimizing websites for search engines such as Apple safari, google, Bing, yahoo, Microsoft edge and the market leader is Google search. While Schultheiß & Lewandowski (2022) define SEO as the practise of optimizing website pages in a such a way that makes them stand out in the organic search results". Consumers using a search engine such as google come across the option of selecting natural or paid links. Most of the natural links are categorized according to their relevance pertaining to the initial search, but paid links are allocated to different advertising firms through a competitive bid process. This comes as a result that most consumers choose to trust natural links more, and therefore marketers often try to increase their company's visibility in natural search by buying key words that a consumer is likely to use during their search. (Berman & Katona, 2013). Therefore, Search Engine Optimisation is an imperative digital marketing platform, which has promoted many businesses from small to big in various fields to tap in to SEO as part of their digital marketing strategies due to its cost-effectiveness and quick customer reach. (Thoti & Vyshnavi, 2019) Therefore; Search engine marketing platforms are utilised to create various campaigns and advertisements for searches. The Google company processes over 3.5 billion searches every day globally which makes up for a market share of almost 75%, this has prompted marketers to aspire to have their companies appear at the top of Google search results. (Poturak et al., 2022) While, Berman & Katona (2013) mentions that search engine acts as a middleman between customers and websites. The objective is to provide customers with links to the most significant-quality websites on the organic or natural site while maximising profit

through the auctioning of paid links. In the ranking of most websites, the search engine arranges each website platform based on its estimated quality by utilizing information collected from the Internet using behavioural algorithms.

2.7 Email Marketing

Yang, Min, & Garza-Baker (2019) mentions that email marketing is an integral part of customer relationship management, Companies looking at building closer customer relationships have implemented email marketing as a significant communication medium or platform. Zhang, Kumar & Cosguner (2017) mention that Email marketing is a popular and commonly used marketing tactic by both business-to-customer and business-to-business companies. A study conducted by Ascend2 (2016) reveals that 52% of Business to Customer and Business to business companies use email technology as part of their marketing strategies while Chaffery (2018) mentions that almost 49% of emails are opened on a mobile device, with the likelihood of this number increasing in the near future.

Zhang et al (2017) notes that email marketing is very popular because emails make it possible for marketers to send direct messages to their customers at low cost when compared to other forms of targeted marketing tactics. Email messaging also needs little preparation and implementation. Furthermore, previous studies have shown that an email marketing campaign targeting at least 50,000 consumers requires about five to six hours to prepare and execute, and therefore companies are likely to receive quick responses, and this create a further opportunity for interactive communication with consumers.

2.8 Social Media

Hermenda et al. (2019) states that social media is an online communication platform which made a huge impact to society and the world of marketing, the platform prompted companies to broaden their marketing communication. Therefore, social media refers to the different online channels and communities such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter & YouTube that encourage social interaction where consumers can watch product reviews, share their experience and observations through likes and comments (Schroeder, 2017). While Majeed et al. (2021) state that social media offers imperative opportunities for firms

to engage consumers individually and therefore, social media is an interactive platform which enables firms to reach their target audience on a daily basis.

Social media has become an essential aspect of daily lives, in the year 2020, it was recorded that around 3.6 billion people were actively using social media globally, this number is expected to significantly reach 4.41 billion users by 2025. (Fernandes, Nettleship, & Pinto, 2022). Furthermore, it is important to note that average time spent on social media channels got to 144 minutes per day (Statista, 2020). Social media is one of the most effective channels for marketers to promote their brands and interact with consumers. Furthermore, marketers utilize social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube to mention a few in order to build brand awareness and increase brand loyalty (Yang & Louisa 2021) while, Radwan et al (2021) mentions that social media has significantly defined the way in which people interact with one another, resulting in new opportunities and challenges for marketing managers. Therefore, social media can be classified as a growing marketing communication hub for brands, marketing agencies, companies and customers. Furthermore, social media is an integral digital platform for brands and marketers to reach their consumers. Fulcher, Dunbar, Orlando, Woodruff & Santarossa (2020) state that online networking sites are based social services that allow individuals to create a public or semi-public profile, whereby individual users can share a common connection, view and communicate with their connections by sharing content on the pages. Furthermore, Social Media Networks allow individual users to search for content of interest using hashtags that function as a description for individual visual content such as images or video.

2.8.1 Facebook

Social media is fast growing and becoming more common in households. This phenomenon has given way to social media channels such as Facebook. According to Hayes, van Stolk-Cooke & Muench (2015) Facebook is probably the most well-known social networking site in the world. Facebook is commonly used across the world by different social groups, as long as they have a legit e-mail address any person can create and maintain their own Facebook page (Cain, 2008). While Beyens, Frison & Eggermont (2015) mentions that a research report released in America noted that Facebook is the most popular and commonly used social media channel within young adults. Hayes et al.

(2015) observed that since the month of June 2014, there were almost 900 million active daily Facebook users. Rainie, Smith, & Duggan (2013) mentions that this numbers of users continue to grow and that more users are spending an increased amount of time on the site per day. While, In South Africa, Facebook is the most popular, dominant and common social media networking site with an average of 22-million South African users having been present on the platform at any given week. This high usage number is driven by the aggressive push of Facebook's free Basics programme, which makes it easier for any individual user with a tablet or smartphone, even with a no internet data bundles, to access the platform. (Ornico & Worldwide Worx, 2022)

2.8.2 *Twitter*

Maclean, Jones, Carin-Levy & Hunter (2013) mention that social media networking is part of everyday life, and its usage helps with re-shaping ideas of online target audience. Elfanagely, Atsawarungrangkit & Moss (2021) mentions that Twitter is a very common social media networking site with a monthly estimate of 300 million users. In the Twitter Platform, Users engage by following other users and sending posts, which are known as tweets. However, these tweets are only limited to 280 characters and other users can react by either "liking" or "retweeting," by sharing another user's tweet. Furthermore, Tweets which are messages which shared on the platform by users. Theses tweets often include hashtags, or phrases that are preceded by a hashtag (#) thus expanding the network even more as any tweets containing the identical hashtag are automatically linked, this makes the Twitter platform to be very influential because of its reach, and effectiveness.

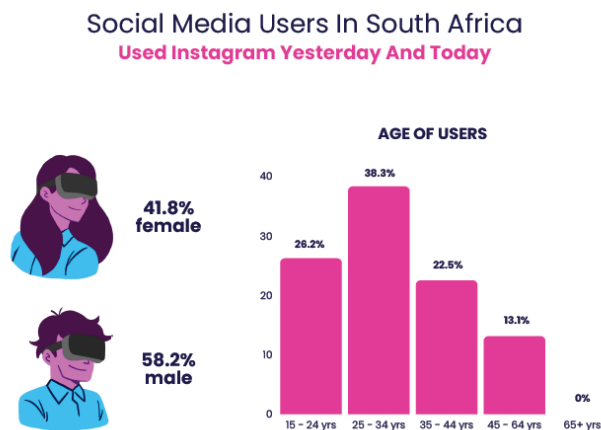
2.8.3 *Instagram*

According to Park & Namkung (2022) Instagram is an image-based platform which permits users to easily get information through the sharing of images and few seconds videos. Boerman & Müller (2022) mentions that Instagram is currently the most popular social media channel for influencer marketing. Since October 2020, the Instagram social channel had one-billion active users, and this figure was expected to grow to nearly 1.2 billion people using Instagram by 2023. Given Instagram's high usage engagement rate and its visual based culture, 71% of globally known brands use this platform in their advertisement programs. (Park & Namkung, 2022) In South Africa, Instagram has almost one and a half

million daily active users and the platform continues to grow. Most of the daily users are within the of below 35 years, this presents the platform to more suited toward this particular audience. (Ornico & Worldwide Worx, 2022)

The below shows the demographics of Instagram users in terms of age and gender.

Figure 4: social media users



(Ornico & Worldwide Worx, 2022)

2.8.4 YouTube

YouTube is a significant social media platform for social media influencers to build up their brands, partner with companies to promote products on their channels, and influence consumers in the buying decision process. Duffett, Petroşanu, Negricea & Edu (2019) state that YouTube is the 2nd largest social media channel, the 3rd frequently visited site; and the largest video content sharing platform and creation channel in the world. The Social networking site is free, and users can upload video content, view and share a comment. Furthermore, YouTube has a 1.5 billion monthly users whereby two-thirds of the frequent users are between the ages of 18–44, Furthermore, almost 500 hours of video content are uploaded every minute; with 1 billion hours of video content are viewed on a daily basis, Febriyantoro (2020) mentions that this makes YouTube to be the most popular social media channel. YouTube Marketing has become an integral marketing platform, among organizations, and Febriyantoro (2020) mentions that almost 80% of marketers hold the view that YouTube is a marketing channel through useful online digital video. In South Africa, YouTube continues to reach more people through video sharing although

some consumers still see the platform as a general streaming option for a lot of South Africans.

2.9 Social Media Influencers

Social media influencers by nature are different from the popular belief, they are not just about dance trends on platforms such as TikTok or glitzy experiences spread over Facebook for just looks. They are however a new third-party brand endorsers who have built a great following online through the sharing of content and found engaging ways to interact with their audiences on trendy topics. According to a study conducted by Ogilvy SA, there are over 50 million social media influencers around the globe of which an estimate of at least two million of them uses content creation as their primary source of income. The rest of them (the 48 million) are considered non-experts but they are generating content and rising to make stronger impression in the industry. (Ogilvy SA, 2024) Social media influencers have gained significant popularity as brands endorsers. It is important to note that their attributes such as credibility can be affected by the way they appear, however there is not much academic literature which have applied appearance stereotypes to Social Media Influencer's perceived attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise, especially when their appearance is unorthodox. (Fernandes et al., 2022) Social Media Influencers are normal individuals who have a large following (or fans) on social media channels, these individuals create content for their followers. Furthermore, Social Media Influencers use their platforms to drive discussions on various topics and provide news to their followers. Social Media Influencers have been an integral part of marketing strategies for a long some time and firms use them to drive brand awareness and persuade potential customers. (Mabkhot et al., 2022)

Khan, Riaz, Ahmed, & Idrees (2022) state that Social Media Influencers have become one of the most significant segments for marketing practitioners because of their persuasive tactic on Social Media platforms as they update their target audience (followers) with new trends and products ranging from sports, music, automotive, fashion, travel to mention a few and they at times promote companies' offerings to influence purchase intention in what is known as sponsored content. Munoz (2023) observed that influencers have become an integral channel for companies and brands to interact with their audience and push brand communication, this has positioned social media influencers to be a dominant player in

shaping consumer perceptions towards specific brands. Additionally, some companies tend to use upcoming social media influencers with a less following also known as micro-influencers who have a smaller yet more engaged online community with a specialized following in niche topics such as the motor vehicle industry. This strategy resulted in more genuine, reliable and engaging content, as the desired target audiences found micro-influencers to be more authentic and trustworthy in nature.

2.9.1 Video Content

Video content marketing can be described as the use of video content to promote a product, or service. Social media giants such as TikTok have implemented short typer videos for marketing communications as this content type is perceived to be persuasive. Social media influencers have tapped into using live or recorded short videos for content creation as its more appealing to consumers and it is the most dominating content type as it delivers more information in less time. So, leveraging all video features on multiple social media platforms improves reach. Munoz (2023) state that most social media influencers use video content sharing to communicate to review specific products and share their own personal view on them. This is the commonly used tool by influencers, as platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels continued to gain momentum.

Figure 5: influencer post



Source: Instagram, 2024

The above post on figure 2.9 shows a social media influencer car review on Instagram, social media influencers are individuals who have an impressive following on social media channels and share content with their audience on topics such as cars, fashion, food, and travel to mention a few. Social Media influencers have therefore positioned themselves as experts in online advertising. Mabkhot et al. (2022) mentions that an influencer is an individual who consistently engage with their followers on a regular basis in order to build their profile. Therefore, this makes influencing consumer perceptions through video easier than ever before because companies will be able to attract more potential customers through Social Media Influencers.

2.9.2 *Sonic Influence*

Sonic influence refers to the use of sound to express your brand. The sound audio brand logos, jingles, seconds of recognisable soundbites can lead consumers to remember certain brand experiences. Therefore, the growth of audio communication which rose to the front during the global COVID19 lockdowns has revealed an increased interest in this type of content creation positioning sonic branding as a significant and important social media influencer strategy. (Ogilvy SA, 2024)

Social media influencers using sonic content creation have made it easier for companies to partake into the audio space through setting an original and authentic sound identity, to initiate a connection platform with consumers, and generating interest by creating assets that touches consumer emotions. These soundbites are used on podcasts, radio adverts and other relevant customer touchpoints. (Ogilvy SA, 2024)

2.9.3 *Social media influencers vs Traditional marketing*

The growth of social media influencers allows companies to broaden their participation on social media platforms, which has an impact on the upward trend of promoting a brand on social media networks. This makes more companies to adopt a adopt the trend of using social media influences in marketing their products online. Nafees et al. (2021) mentions that Influencer marketing is significantly inexpensive when compared to the cost of traditional marketing such as television adverts, outdoor, banner ads, newspaper, and magazine ads, Furthermore, that academic research has shown that the supposed

usefulness, potent intent, and the derived consumer emotions, all affect consumer behaviour and perception toward the featured brand. Najib et al. (2019) notes that the past few years saw an incredible evolution of the digital world with some of the developments coming from social media furthermore mentions that these developments in the digital world drove the new ways of communication between brands and consumers and more frequently companies made use of a social media influencers to promote their product or service. Radwan, Mousa, Mohamed & Youssef (2021) stated that there are three stages of influencer marketing, and they entail: firstly, **raising brand awareness** within the followers, secondly **raising brand awareness within the target consumers**, and lastly **shaping Social Media influencers into brand advocates**.

2.10 Parasocial relationships

Aw & Chuah (2021) defines Parasocial relationships as a connection that occurs when one individual relates to another person they do not know personally. Parasocial relationships arise when ordinary consumers are repeatedly exposed to a social media influencer's content online and over-time develop a sense of perceived friendship, as they identify with the influencer through online platforms. Parasocial relationships came to light as a result of academics trying to share more light on the experience of a face-to-face communication which television, radio or movie target audience may have with media personalities, furthermore, these relationships are imaginary relationships with media personalities that commence with spending time with the media personality through media consumption and that are characterised by perceived engagement with the media personality and knowing them well. In other words, consumers, and social media influencers parasocial relationship is characterized by the frequency of contact, as consumers get more exposed to influencer who post content more often and soon develop an imaginary relationship as the content consumption becomes a significant part of the audience's (consumer) life. Chung & Cho (2017) explain that Parasocial relationships are the consumer and celebrity type of relationships established though social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter), this relationship is however an intimate relationship between the audience and a social media influencer as the individual is repeatedly exposed to the influencer's content online, and develops a sense of intimacy, perceived friendship with the social media influencer.

2.10.1 *Parasocial interaction and relationships on social media*

Social media influencers have managed to achieve significant status as bloggers or brand endorsers by establishing very important yet strong parasocial relationships with their target audience. Breves et al. (2021) mentions that Parasocial interaction typically takes place with most of media personalities such as celebrities, social media influencers, actors and politicians and this interaction is referred to as imaginary interaction that lack a sense of mutuality between individual consumers and social media influencers. Therefore, Parasocial Interaction describes a mediated, one-sided aspect of social engagement between the social media user and the social media influencer. This may occur when a social media influencer shares a video review of a product with their followers on social media.

2.10.2 *Advertising disclosures and persuasion knowledge*

Breves et al. (2021) argues that long-term followers of a social media influencers typically reach stage in the relationship where display high- degree of trust. Therefore, it is worth mentioning that followers which exhibit higher levels with the parasocial relationship are less aware of the persuasive influencer communication and at the same time are less judgemental of social media posts that mentions respective brand services or products.

2.11 Hypothesis development

Influencer marketing is gaining increasing attention from both advertisers and researchers. This strategy utilizes endorsements, and product mentions from individuals who have a large following and are regarded as experts in their fields. As a result, influencer marketing allows businesses to collaborate with these influential individuals to enhance brand visibility. Companies often approach influencers to create social media content that promotes their products or services. Since people tend to follow individuals they trust on social media, seeing someone they admire endorsing a business can create a sense of trust. This trust factor can significantly boost conversion rates for the promoted products or services. Jin & Phua (2014) defines influencer marketing as the process of creating a connection between influential figures known as social media influencers and prospective buyers through various social media platforms. Social Media Influencers have a

significantly larger follower community compared to the average social media user, which allows them to effectively share brand content or messages online which makes them more effective in promoting information about new or forthcoming products, utilizing different social media platforms to connect with their audience. With the growth of social media, the number of Social Media Influencers is also increasing, and they are becoming increasingly more popular among social media users. According to Mabkhot et al. (2022), social media influencers can reach a vast online audience due to their established credibility and expertise in the motor vehicle industry. Notably, these followers are acquired directly, without any institutional mediation typical of sectors such as entertainment or sports. (McQuarrie, Miller & Phillips, 2013)

As product endorsers, social media influencers connect with their followers more than traditional celebrities.

Social media influencers versus traditional celebrities

A growing number of researchers have delved into the influence of branded content produced by social media influencers, recognizing it as a distinctive form of advertising that is particularly effective in the realm of brand endorsements. This marketing strategy leverages the star power of high-profile personalities—commonly referred to as influencers—who have cultivated a significant level of recognition in various industries and possess the ability to shape and alter consumer perceptions effectively. A social media influencer, often called a content creator, is typically an everyday individual who has gained credibility and established a strong personal brand within a specific niche on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok. These influencers amass large and dedicated followings, allowing them to disseminate information widely and engage with their audience on a personal level. Their ability to persuade and drive engagement stems from their authentic communication style and genuine connection with their followers. By sharing relatable content and personal experiences, influencers can effectively promote products or services, making their endorsements feel more trustworthy and appealing to consumers. (Ki, Park & Kim, 2022)

While traditional celebrities on the other hand capture public attention and admiration through their extraordinary talents and remarkable achievements in the fields of sports and entertainment. Their skills not only entertain but also inspire millions, elevating them to

iconic status in the eyes of fans worldwide. (Zhu, Kim & Choi, 2022) Celebrities have indeed consistently proven to be highly effective spokespeople in traditional advertising, thanks to their substantial influence. This power extends seamlessly into social media, where their huge following amplify their reach (Boerman, 2020). Research has demonstrated that celebrities as product endorsers can yield remarkable results, and their impact can be understood through two key frameworks: the identification process and the source credibility model. The identification process occurs when consumers perceive that products endorsed by celebrities can enhance their own attractiveness or elevate their self-image (Jin & Phua, 2014). Furthermore, the source credibility model highlights the role of a celebrity's physical attractiveness, which drives this process as consumers yearn to emulate their idols by leveraging these insights, brands can connect with audiences on a deeper level, fostering a sense of aspiration and affinity that leads to greater consumer loyalty and engagement. Social media influencers on the other hand engage with their followers through consistent interactions, fostering a sense of authenticity and relatability that traditional celebrities often lack. This genuine connection allows influencers to resonate more deeply with their audience, making their impact more significant and lasting. In their study, Zhu et al. (2021) discovered that consumers tend to see social media influencers as independent from traditional marketing system. This unique perception arises because people regard influencers as relatable and more like everyday individuals on social media platforms. As a result, the messages conveyed by these influencers are often interpreted as genuine and trustworthy, enhancing their credibility and connection with the audience. The study highlights the growing influence of personal branding in the digital age, where authenticity plays a crucial role in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviours. Moreover, social media influencers' posts often carry more weight than those of traditional celebrities. According to Grave (2017), posts from influencers generate higher click intentions compared to native advertisements featuring traditional celebrities on social media platforms. This discrepancy may stem from consumers' tendency to identify more closely with social media influencers, feeling a stronger connection due to their relatability and approachability. Influencers are also perceived as having expertise in specific areas, bolstered by their targeted social media content. As a result of these qualities, consumers tend to trust influencers more than celebrities, highlighting the added value of utilizing influencers in marketing strategies over traditional celebrities.

2.11.1 The relationship between social media influencers' perceived expertise and Purchase intention.

Dwidienawati et al. (2020) describes a Social Media Influencer as an Individual portrays a combination of desirable attributes which may be personal attributes like enthusiasm, credibility, expertise, and popularity. Furthermore, an Influencer is on the frontline of the latest social trends. Hughes et al. (2019) notes that social media influencers' expertise and post content play a big role in driving consumer brand-engagement on social media platforms. While in a sponsored content, most consumers will go with brands which are endorsed by an influencer with expertise because they perceive the message as more persuasive and credible. According to Lou & Kim (2019) expertise shows the level to which an influencer was viewed to be a source of useful information. Furthermore, that Influencer's expertise can be derived from the quality of information they share on social media channels. Therefore, some consumers are more likely to engage with the content shared on social media based on perceived influencer's expertise which might play a role on consumer purchase intention. while Masuda et al. (2022) observed that social media influencers' perceived expertise appears to describe the credibility of traditional influencers. Perceived expertise and genuineness go together with trustworthiness in predicting positive outcomes when embarking on social media marketing. Therefore, some consumers are more likely to engage with the content shared on social media based on the perceived influencer's expertise which might play a role on the consumer purchase intention. The following Hypothesis is therefore proposed for the first sub-problem:

H₁: Social Media Influencer's perceived expertise significantly affects purchase intention.

Alkan & Ulas (2023) mentions that expertise and honesty are effective in influencing consumer perceptions. Furthermore, Influencers' perceived level of expertise can impact purchase intention for two reasons. Firstly, consumer's expert an influencer to have a certain level of experience with the brand and is also expected to be a valuable source of knowledge about the brand. (Weissmuller et al., 2020)

2.11.2 The relationship between Social Media Influencers' credibility and Purchase intention.

According to Kanwar & Huang (2022) Social media influencers are a present-day group of free-thinking individuals who shape consumer perception with through content through posts and reviews on social media channels. Therefore, consumers perceive influencers as trustworthy more than other traditional celebrities, this shift has inspired influencers to also contribute to the consumer decision making process. Mabkhot et al. (2022) mentions that Credibility is a key determining factor to Social Media Influencers' success as an Influencer should first build good online relationships with their target audience (followers) as credibility can influence consumers' purchase intention both positively and negatively. However, the authors also acknowledge that there is limited research when it comes to the credibility of Social Media Influencers' content and the paid posts they use to generate interest from customers and to persuade them to buy the product or service they are promoting. Saima & Khan (2021) mentions that the purchase intention of consumers is significantly affected by a social media influencer's trustworthiness and credibility. therefore, the below hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Social Media Influencer's credibility significantly affects Purchase intention.

Reinikainen, Munnukka, Maity & Luoma-aho (2020) state that some of the elements which determines the effectiveness of a Social Media influencer's messaging is the perceived credibility of the influencer and that credibility plays a role in the message acceptance by the audience. While Kanwar & Huang (2022) mentions that consumers trust influencers more than other online media personalities, which makes influencer marketing to be more engaging than traditional social media ads like web-based banners. Most Social media influencers are taking extra precaution when selecting brand to collaborate with, and at times deliberately select to promote to work with companies that are consistent with their personal brands in order to maintain their trustworthiness in the eyes of the consumer. (Reinikainen et al., 2021)

2.11.3 The relationship between Social Media Influencers' trustworthiness and Purchase intention.

Nafees et al. (2021) states that social media influencers perceived trustworthiness can be defined as the level of confidence in the influencer's intent to share content in order to shape consumer perceptions while Vrontis et al. (2020) found in their study that trustworthiness, quality of messaging, social media influence and relevance of content to consumer interests are driving factors in the evaluation of trustworthiness. Subsequently some researchers have explored the interactive communication process of firms through Social Media Influencers and discovered that influencers' ability to impact on consumer's attitudes, perceptions, and purchase behaviours is mainly attributed to trustworthiness.

H₃: Social Media Influencer's trustworthiness significantly affects purchase intention.

Trust also refers to the level of preparedness by consumers to be vulnerable to the actions of social media influencers, as they expect them to share honest and reliable product or service-related information on their posts online. Therefore, trustworthiness is perceived as significant and a catalyst for initiating relationships with customers online and ensuring that the relationship grows overtime which can end up leading to brand loyalty. (Trianasari, Fitriani & Rachmawati, 2023).

2.11.4 The relationship between Social Media Influencers' popularity and Purchase intention.

Social Media Influencers are people who obtain their popularity through the sharing of content on various social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter and TikTok to mention a few. Furthermore, Social Media Influencers place an emphasis on a particular field, such as the automotive industry, fashion, healthy lifestyle, travel, food and usually interested in their online personas and lifestyles rather than their discipline of knowledge. In other words, they promote brands which are related to their own lifestyles and interests. (Alotaibi et al., 2019)

Kanwar & Huang (2022) state that the increasing reliance on social media for consuming information has given rise for Social Media Influencers to become famous online with their

knowledge and expertise on common topics. This growing trend has prompted companies to start partnering with well know social media influencers as they believe that most consumers prefer products and services endorsed by an influencer, and therefore using influencers for brand communicating has proven to be an effective and profitable marketing channel.

H₄: Social Media Influencer's popularity significantly affects purchase intention.

Pittman & Abell (2021) stated that Social Media Influencers are at times viewed by popularity metrics like the number of followers on a social media platform and number of likes or followers. Furthermore, that well known influencers such as Kim Kardashian and Selena Gomez with many followers in the millions on Social Media channels, tend to charge hundreds of thousands of dollars for a single promoted post (Taylor, 2019)

2.11.5 The relationship between Social Media Influencers' Likability and Purchase intention

Wu et al. (2021) states that Social Media Influencers tend to combine their talent and likable personalities with their impressive social media community of followers on different social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok. While, Castillo-Abdul, Pérez-Escoda, & Núñez-Barriopedro (2022) noted that branded content is at most expected to improve a brand's likability, though capturing consumer's attention and interest which could vary based on the type of social media platform being used.

Therefore, the below hypothesis is proposed:

H₅: Social Media Influencer's likability significantly affects purchase intention.

Consumers are more likely to form pseudo-social relationships (also known as PSR) with social media Influencers. This behaviour is almost the same to the way that some consumers develop intimate feelings toward certain media personalities after repeated exposure. (Masuda et al., 2022)

2.11.6 The relationship between Social Media Influencers' Attractiveness and Purchase intention.

Khan et al. (2022) mentions that a social media influencer who is who is physically, and good looking tends to communicate the brand's message effectively. Awang et al. (2021) mentions that attractiveness is an important attribute in determining a Social Influencer's effectiveness towards the attitude and purchase intention and that previous academic research has revealed that physically attractive influencers are able to effectively facilitate attitudinal change. The attractiveness aspect of an influencer is not only limited to physical attractiveness related to their appearance and class, but also encompasses their other attributes like familiarity, and likeability. Kanwar & Huang (2022) state that using influential individuals such as social media influencers to attract potential customers can increase the likelihood of customer involvement and offer value to marketing practitioners. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₆: Social Media Influencer's attractiveness significantly affects purchase intention.

Figure 6: Conceptual model

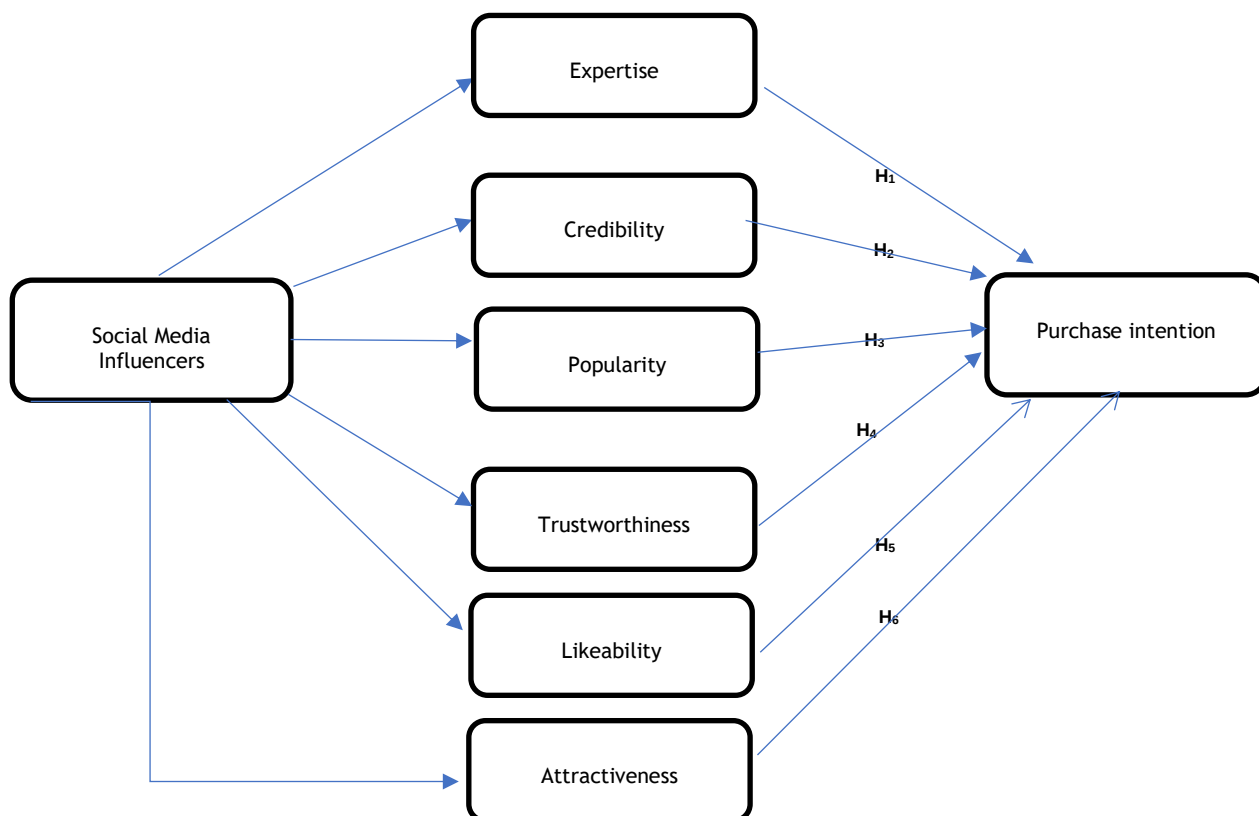


Figure 6: conceptual model

Social Media Influencers also known as content creators or bloggers have a solid number of followers on Social Networking Sites. These individuals create and share engaging content with their followers, at times they even share insight into their own lives, independent opinions and experiences. De Veirman et al. (2017) mention that companies are increasingly involving Social Media Influencers on various campaigns as they hope to use them to endorse their products, with the hope that company's brand will improve among followers. Furthermore, some companies hold the view that influencers are easily accessible than traditional celebrities. Therefore, this study will test Social Media Influencer's attributes such as **expertise, credibility, popularity, trustworthiness, likeability and attractiveness** to determine the role they play on consumer purchase intention for motor vehicles in South Africa.

2.12 Conclusion of Literature Review

Influencer marketing is an integral part of social media marketing, which takes place when brands make use of social media influencers to promote their brand on marketing objectives such as brand awareness, product endorsement, and consumer brand engagement on their personal social media pages (Lou and Yuan, 2019).

Given the general rise of social media around the world, Social Media Influencers have become more common among brand managers, companies are now relying on influencers to promote/drive brand campaigns on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter. (Grave, 2019) while Mabkhot et al. (2022) states that Social Media Influencers are individuals who have a strong presence on social media platforms. These individuals use their power on social media to influence their followers' purchasing decisions, making them to be one of the most powerful marketing channels. Furthermore, Social Media Influencers are becoming more significant within marketing and given the competition companies face, marketing practitioners have to constantly find new ways to stand out and show their appeal to prospective customers, and this include partnering with the right Social Media Influencers who have considerably large followings on various social media platforms. However, Kanwar & Huang (2022) states that Influencer marketing has to be further academic researched to get an in-depth understanding on how social media influencers make connections with their target audience and how they manage to influence consumer purchase intentions within the digital community. Boerman

& Müller (2022) state that Influencer marketing is receiving great acceptance as a significant social media advertising strategy mostly because it can reach a variety of audiences with personal, relevant, credible, and engaging content.

The current literature shows that by partnering with the right Social Media Influencers on various marketing campaigns, allow brands leverage to stand out and reach a diverse target group through Social Media Influencers. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to academic literature on the relationship between social media influencer's expertise, credibility, popularity, trustworthiness, likeability, attractiveness and customer's purchase intention for motor vehicles in South Africa. According to Boerman & Müller (2022) influencer marketing is receiving significance as a social media marketing strategy however the authors observed that it is not clear on whether Social Media users can recognize and understand this type of marketing. Therefore, this study will test Social Media Influencer's attributes such as ***expertise, credibility, popularity, trustworthiness, likeability, and attractiveness*** to determine the role they play on consumer purchase intention for motor vehicles in South Africa.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discussed the research methodology, research design, population, sample. Measuring instrument and the results of the pilot study. The research methodology applied in this study is also discussed in detail. This section addresses specific objectives regarding the research paradigm, design, population and sample. The research instrument which was used to collect information is discussed together with the procedure followed for data analysis and interpretation.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will go into detail by highlighting the research strategy and approach adopted for whole research study. The focus of research methodology revolves around the research problem to be investigated, the geographic area, the size of the population and sample. This chapter will further highlight how the data will be analysed and tested for validity and reliability of the study.

The purpose of conducting research is to test theories, provide new insights and contribute new knowledge to academic literature. Research focuses on the research problem, objectives, and questions which the researcher seeks to solve. Furthermore, it makes use of, scientific and statistical methods to provide answers to problems and to accept and/or reject certain theories.

3.2 Research Methodology

Research methodology aims to provide a solution to a research problem. It is therefore a process of clarifying how research is conducted as it influences what a researcher can conclude about a research study. Rajasekar et al. (2006) mentions that research methodology is an insightful and analytical search for new and useful information on a specific research problem. It is therefore a quest to finding solutions to problems that can contribute to academic literature. Furthermore, research methods indicate the instruments which a researcher uses to conduct research. The method can vary from either quantitative, qualitative or a mixed approach.

Qualitative data is non-numerical and focuses on establishing patterns. Quantitative research techniques explore numerical data and make use of statistical tools for data analysis. This allows the researcher to examine the relationship between variables, and the data collected can be interpreted through graphs, charts, and tables. (Creswell, 2018) A quantitative research approach was adopted for this study as the researcher tested the relationship between the six variables. The data was collected through a questionnaire which was created on the qualtrics software and later shared with participants online via email and through social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

3.3 Research design

Research design refers to the structure of the selected research methods and techniques which will be used to conduct a study. The design allows researchers to select appropriate research methods for the research study. Novosel (2022) mentions that research design is the way which highlights how the research study is planned to be conducted, and that the research design will determine the approach which researchers will use to investigate the research problem and tests the hypotheses. The research design selected must be an appropriate technique for answering the research study. According to Creswell (2018), research design refers to the type of approaches or strategies within qualitative, quantitative or a mixed research approach which maps out a particular direction for the techniques in a research study. This research study will follow the quantitative technique approach as the study seeks to answer a research problem by, testing the hypotheses, determining the relationship between variables and analyse the data to meaningful information. Babbie (2010) states that Quantitative research methods looks at logical, numerical, and statistical analysis of data collected research questionnaires, by manipulating secondary data using calculation techniques. Furthermore, Quantitative research techniques aims on collecting numerical data to provide clarification to a research problem. Therefore, quantitative research methods focus on a set research problem which is either proposed or previously developed, which leads to hypotheses that are measure quantitatively and thoroughly analysed. (Swanson & Holton, 2005)

Quantitative research method can be defined as the process of collecting and analysing numerical data to examine patterns and averages, most importantly be able to test hypothesis, and be able interpret the results (Bhandari, 2021) While Swanson & Holton

(2005) notes that it is advantageous to use quantitative research methods as it provides the researcher with an insightful understanding of a specific group or sample.

The advantages of using the quantitative approach:

- Convenient
- Less time consuming
- Can use a large sample size.
- Fewer variables involved.

3.4 Population and sampling

3.4.1 *Population*

A population can be defined as the data set on the respective study. It can vary from a group of individuals, objects, events, firms. A population can be used to reach conclusions. According to Cooper & Schindler (2014) a researcher should identify his/her desired target population for the research project and from that be able to determine whether a sample is to be drawn from the population. For this study, South African citizens who own or intend on owning a motor vehicle brand were identified as the target population. Qualifying questions were included in the questionnaire to ensure that the respondents are part of the intended population.

3.4.2 *Sample and Sampling method*

A sample refers to group of people which is selected or chosen from a large number of people (population). Cooper & Schindler (2014) state that a sample explores a part of the desired target population. When a sample is chosen, the researcher must determine the number of people to participate in the study. Morgan-Richards et al. (2017) state that Sampling is imperative when conducting a research study as it is not always possible to gather data from every person within the specified population. Therefore, a researcher can aim to estimate the outcomes about the broader population based on data received from a sample. According to Turner (2020) sampling approaches are classified in two categories namely, probability sampling and non-probability sampling methods.

For this study, the researcher elected to make use probability sampling. Probability sampling is a common research methodology that allows researchers to draw meaningful insights from a population by selecting a sample through random selection methods. This approach guarantees that every individual within the population has a fair chance of being included, thereby ensuring the sample accurately reflects the diverse characteristics of the larger group. Techniques such as simple random sampling, stratified sampling, and cluster sampling not only enhance the credibility of the study but also significantly reduce the risk of bias. By utilizing probability sampling, researchers can confidently generalize their findings, leading to more valid and impactful conclusions. This method is essential for anyone seeking to make informed decisions based on reliable data. (Cooper & Schindler, 2014)

The sample selected was South Africans who follow social media influencers and own or intend on owning a motor-vehicle brand. The sample was derived from Wits postgraduate students and working professionals between the ages of 18-55 who own or intend on owning a motor-vehicle brand. According to Turner (2020), probability sampling is a technique that entails choosing a significant part (sample) from an existing population, this technique is used so that the sample is a true reflection of the target population.

Table 3.1 Profile of respondents

Description of respondents	Number to be sampled
Postgraduate students and working professionals	500

The research survey was distributed to wits postgraduate students through the student email portal and link was also shared on social media channels namely, Facebook and LinkedIn for working professionals. The researcher collected a total of 352 responses in total from all the channels used.

3.5 Measuring instruments

A measurement instrument in research is an important tool used to collect data on specific variables. This encompasses a range of resources, including survey questionnaires,

interview protocols, observation checklists, and standardized tests. These instruments play a crucial role in accurately assessing and understanding the intricate aspects of research subjects or phenomena, ultimately leading to more reliable and impactful findings. The measurement instrument was therefore carefully developed through a thorough review of the literature relevant to the variables being examined. In this study, the researcher chose to deploy a fully structured measurement instrument in the form of a questionnaire, ensuring both accuracy and reliability in the data collection process.

Survey questionnaires are a powerful method widely employed in research, particularly in quantitative studies, due to their effectiveness in gathering actionable insights. As highlighted by Cooper and Schindler (2014), survey research not only facilitates the collection of crucial information but also empowers researchers to deeply understand the perspectives of their target audience. According to Cooper & Schindler (2014) a survey is a measurement instrument which is utilized in research to collect data during a study.

Therefore, the primary tool which was employed for data collection was an online questionnaire, carefully designed on qualtrics, which an online survey tool that enables researchers to design and distribute surveys, gather responses, and conduct comprehensive data analysis, all within a single platform. This integrated approach enhances efficiency and fosters informed decision-making based on collected insights. The researcher opted to use both closed ended questions, which had qualifying questions. Turner (2020) states that qualifying questions otherwise known as screening questions should be asked first in survey research to identify respondents who not fit the research criteria, these respondents are then disqualified automatically. For this study, the researcher had three qualifying questions that were used as part of screening. The below were the questions asked:

Table 3.2: Qualifying questions

Question	Options	Outcome
Do you reside in South Africa?	Yes/No	If the respondents selected a "No" then they were dropped from participating further
Do you follow social media influencers?	Yes/No	

A structured questionnaire was sent to participants through the wits email portal and a link was also posted on Social Media platforms namely Facebook and LinkedIn. In the

questionnaire, a 5-point Likert scale was used for measurement on all the variable questions, with 1 representing strongly disagree and a 5 representing strongly agree as the scale anchors (Trianasari et al., 2023) Furthermore, one of the advantage of using a Likert scale is that it uses a comprehensive technique of gathering data and makes it easier for the researcher to analyse, interpret and understand the information collected.

The research constructs evaluated are shown on the below table:

Table 3.3: Qualifying questions

Constructs	Source	Items
Expertise	Singh et al., 2020	5 Likert-scale
Credibility	Lou & Kim, 2019	5 Likert-scale
Trustworthiness	Nurhandayani, 2019	5 Likert-scale
Popularity	Saima & Khan, 2021	5 Likert-scale
Likability	Masuda et al., 2022	5 Likert-scale
Attractiveness	Pinto & Paramita, 2021	5 Likert-scale

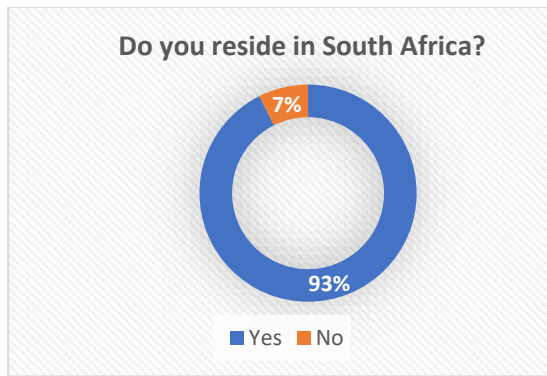
3.6 Pilot study

Before conducting research, it is essential to first commission a pilot study to test the validity of the proposed study. Cooper & Schindler (2014) mentions that the data gathering phase of a study should first begin with pilot testing. However, some researchers may skip pilot testing phase if they make the project time frame more concentrated. The researcher chose to conduct a pilot study to test validity and reliability of the research instrument which was an online questionnaire. The pilot questionnaire was distributed to 50 participants. The researcher chose to use a descriptive correlational design to further describe the variables and the relationships that occur naturally among them. The study followed a quantitative research approach and data was collected from Male and Female respondents who own or intend on owning a motor vehicle in South Africa.

3.6.1 Results of the pilot study

a) Geographic location

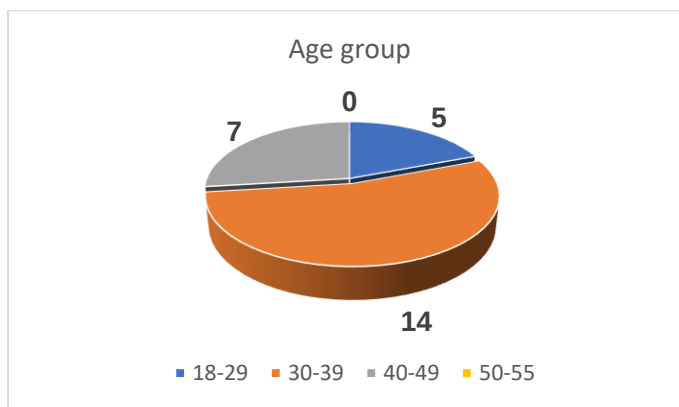
Figure 7: Location



- This question was completed by 27 respondents, of which 25 responded that they live in South Africa while only 2 mentions to not be living in South Africa.

b) Age group

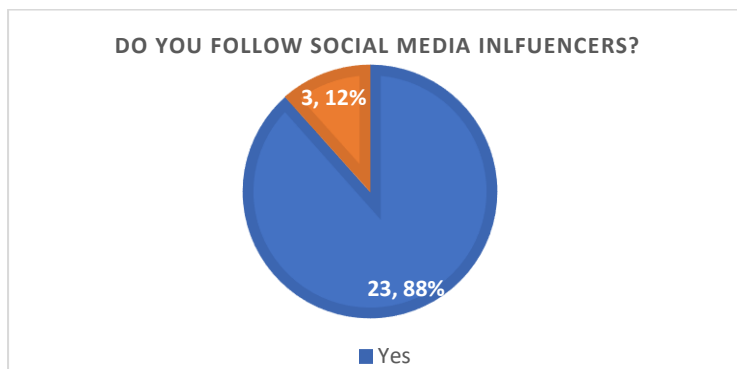
Figure 8: Age group



-26 respondents completed this question, of those that completed, 14 were between the ages of (30-39), 7 fell under the age group (40-49) while only 5 were between (18-29) and there was no respondent between (50-55) that completed this question.

c) Social Media Influencers qualifying question.

Figure 9 : qualifying question



-26 respondents completed this section, in which 23 people (about 88%) mentioned that they followed social media influencers while only 3 (12%) people mentioned that they do not follow social media influencers. These (3) people were then automatically disqualified from completing the rest of the questionnaire.

d) Reliability of the pilot study

The Cronbach's Alpha method was put in use to assess the reliability of the pilot study by testing the Cronbach alpha for each hypothesis. The below were the results for reliability:

H1 Social Media Influencer's expertise significantly affects purchase intention.

Table: 3.4 : Reliability measurement for expertise

Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
EXP1	4.48	5.962	0.906	0.854	0.947
EXP2	4.33	6.133	0.890	0.816	0.958
EXP3	4.05	6.348	0.950	0.905	0.917

H2: Social Media Influencer's credibility significantly affects Purchase intention.

Table: 3.5: Reliability measurement for credibility

Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
CRE1	5.71	7.914	0.747	0.663	0.759
CRE2	5.19	5.662	0.742	0.705	0.712
CRE3	5.52	6.762	0.669	0.470	0.751
CRE4	5.43	6.457	0.514	0.270	0.841

H3: Social Media Influencer's trustworthiness significantly affects purchase intention.

Table 3.6 Reliability measurement for trustworthiness

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
TRU1	6.95	12.348	0.894	0.833	0.958
TRU2	7.00	12.600	0.908	0.858	0.954
TRU3	6.81	11.762	0.925	0.879	0.949
TRU4	6.95	12.448	0.921	0.885	0.950

H₄: Social Media Influencer's popularity significantly affects purchase intention.

Table 3.7 Reliability measurement for popularity

Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
POP1	5.10	4.890	0.611	0.526	0.703
POP2	5.14	5.029	0.562	0.445	0.722
POP3	4.62	3.248	0.523	0.337	0.776
POP4	4.71	3.514	0.714	0.527	0.606

H₅: Social Media Influencer's likability significantly affects purchase intention.

Table 3.8 Reliability measurement for likability

Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
LIK1	6.67	8.233	0.843	0.797	0.928
LIK2	6.62	8.448	0.943	0.907	0.898
LIK3	6.19	7.662	0.884	0.833	0.917
LIK4	6.52	9.462	0.793	0.642	0.944

H₆: Social Media Influencer's attractiveness significantly affects purchase intention.

Table 3.9 Reliability measurement for attractiveness.

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
ATT1	6.14	6.129	0.721	0.575	0.763
ATT2	6.43	6.757	0.654	0.517	0.797
ATT3	6.05	5.448	0.635	0.427	0.804
ATT4	5.95	5.348	0.678	0.463	0.780

The researcher noted that all the values exceeded the minimum acceptable value of 0.7, which means that the reliability measurement for all the items proved to be well excellent with the lowest being at 0.759, this implies that the constructs in the pilot study were reliable and could be adapted to the main study. The pilot study was conducted to thoroughly test and refine the research method, including the questionnaire and data collection procedures, before embarking on a full-scale study. This strategy ensured that the main research would be both more efficient and reliable, allowing the researcher to avoid potential challenges such as unclear questions, recruitment difficulties, and the use of inappropriate statistical analysis methods. The researcher only made minimal changes to the research instrument as the results of the pilot study proved to be valid and reliable.

3.7 Procedure for data collection

The researcher elected to write the questionnaire in English since it's the common medium of communication in South Africa which many people can relate to. Therefore, participation was made to be voluntary, and respondents were properly informed of their anonymity to study (see Appendix A).

A questionnaire was created on Qualtrics, which is an online system that has an excellent reputation for surveys. All respondents were sent the questionnaire through an online link from the Qualtrics online system which contained the invitation to participate on the study. The research instrument used was an online questionnaire generated on Qualtrics and distributed to respondents. The participation to the study was voluntary and kept anonymous. Each participant received an information sheet (letter attached as an appendix) which informed that their participation was anonymous, confidential and that the data collected was for study purposes only and will not be shared with any 3rd party.

3.8 Data analysis and interpretation

Data analysis refers to the process of analysing data to meaningful information. The researcher will collect all the data, process and explore the data using statistical software's to gain insights that can contribute to academic literature. The SPSS statistical software was put into use to analyse the results. Furthermore, this software has received acceptance and has become common within academic and corporate sectors. (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

3.9 Limitations of the study

Cooper & Schindler (2014) mentions that a researcher can only include only a limited number of measurement questions in a research survey. The pilot study had relatively small sample size as the aim was to determine the reliability of the selected research instrument.

The pilot study had the below limitations to it.

- **Location:** The study was limited to South African residents who either owned or intended on owning a motor vehicle.
- **Relevance:** The researcher limited the study to South Africa and only respondents that follow Social Media Influencer could answer the survey.
- The findings of the study might not represent all respondents from other geographical areas as the data will be collected around Johannesburg area.
- Another limitation of the pilot study was that the data was collected online which could have prevented some respondents from participating in the pilot study.

3.10 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability ensure that the research is accurate, consistent and produces results which can interpreted to meaningful information.

Validity

Validity in research is crucial; it determines how well a method measures what it's meant to assess. This fundamental quality ensures that the results are not only accurate but also trustworthy. By upholding validity, researchers can effectively eliminate bias, preserve the integrity of their work, and deliver reliable data that can withstand scrutiny. Prioritizing validity is essential for producing impactful and credible research outcomes. Andrade (2018) states that validity refers to how accurate a research method measures what it is intended to measure during a research study. In other words, are we truly evaluating the right things? Let's ensure our measurements align with our goals for maximum effectiveness. In this study, we rigorously evaluated validity by employing both convergent and discriminant validity methods, ensuring a comprehensive and reliable assessment, this has been discussed in greater detail in the presentation of results in chapter 4.

Reliability

Reliability in research can be described as the level of consistency that is achieved throughout the research study. Reliability for the pilot study was evaluated by examining the Cronbach's alpha coefficients which resulted in social media influencer's expertise

achieving a Cronbach alpha value of 0.959, social media influencer's credibility is 0.814, and social media influencer's trustworthiness achieved a Cronbach alpha of 0.759. the researcher also noted that social media influencer's popularity achieved a Cronbach alpha of 0.964, while social media likability= 0.941 and social media influencer's attractiveness achieved a Cronbach alpha value of 0.830. Therefore, the variables proved to be consistently reliable in the pilot study as they exceeded the minimum acceptable value of 0.70, as recommended by Bonett & Wright (2015) for this reason the variables were not changed in final study as they proved reliable.

3.11 Ethical considerations

Participants were informed about the purpose of the study. A consent letter was shared, and they were given the option to participate or not.

Cooper & Schindler (2014) mentions that Ethics are standard practice and standards of research behaviour that should provide moral framework about our attitude and relationships with others. Therefore, ethics in research terms is meant assure participants that they will not be harmed because of the consequences from research activities.

Furthermore, when collecting data through a focus group, interview, observation, or survey questionnaire, the researcher must acknowledge that the respondent has rights that needs to be protected. The research instrument should be designed in such a way that the respondent does not have discomfort, pain, embarrassment, or loss of privacy during the research process.

The researcher ensured that the respondents' rights were protected by ensuring that he:

- Obtained consent.
- Explained research benefits and the protection of the respondent's rights.
- Participation was voluntary and anonymous.
- The data collected was not shared with any 3rd party but only used for the purposes of the study.

Chapter 4 Presentation of Results

4 INTRODUCTION

The following chapter gives an in-depth presentation of the outcome of the research results received from the research study. The data was collected, cleaned, and analysed through the recommended SPSS Amos software, by following the research methodology discussed in the previous chapter.

4.1 Descriptive profile of respondents

The researcher made use of a descriptive correlational design to give a description of the variables and the relationships that with purchase intention. The research study followed a quantitative gathering of information, and data was collected using this technique. The data was collected through an online questionnaire which was created through a secure platform called qualtrics and validated to collect data from participants of ages ranging from 18-55, both male and female living in South Africa. The questionnaire was distributed in different ways, firstly for wits students, an email was sent with the questionnaire link and information sheet using the wits student portal and secondly the link containing the questionnaire was posted through LinkedIn and Facebook. The researcher requested also shared the questionnaire link with colleagues in the automotive industry and requested them to also share it with other colleagues within the automotive space.

4.1.1 *LinkedIn & Facebook*

LinkedIn is a professional social media platform that works through websites and mobile apps. The platform is more formal and is used for networking and career development. The researcher posted a link for the online questionnaire and managed to receive around 558 impressions with a period of month.

4.1.2 Qualifying questions

The researcher had to ensure that only specific respondents that follow social media influencers responded to the questionnaire, therefore two qualifying questions were introduced in the survey.

a) Do you reside in South Africa?

This question was added to de limit the study to only South African residents. The researcher aim was to shorten the scope to one country to make the study more focused. 98% of the responses received were from participants that resided in South Africa. Those that selected a “No” were automatically stopped from answering further on the questionnaire.

b) Do you follow Social Media Influencers

The purpose of this question was to allow participants that only follow social media influencers to proceed with answering the questionnaire as this will ensure that the researcher receives good quality responses from the relevant target audience. Cleave (2022) states that it is important to make use of qualifying questions to make certain that only the appropriate participants complete the survey. This can be achieved by qualifying or eliminating participants from completing the questionnaire when they complete the qualifying question. The online questionnaire was sent to wits postgraduate students and colleagues through an email. The questionnaire link was also shared on LinkedIn and Facebook. The link was shared with more than one-thousand participants, of which the researcher received 347 responses of participants that tried to complete the questionnaire.

4.2 Respondent's consent

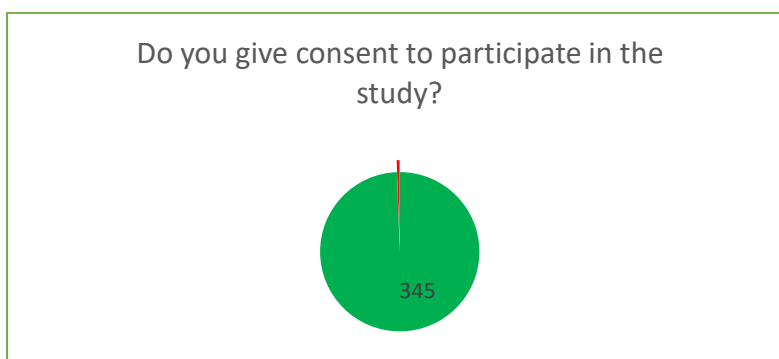
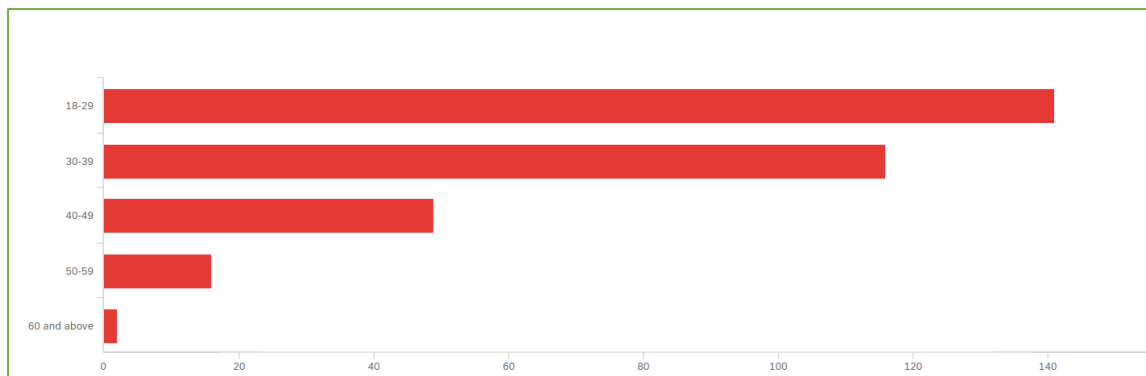


Figure 10: Consent

This question was answered by 347 participants of which 345 gave their consent to proceed with the study and only 2 answered “No” and they were automatically dropped from proceeding with the study. This implies that the participants that continued with answering the questionnaire gave their consent to participate in the study.

4.2.1 Respondents' age group

Figure 11: Age group



141 respondents that answered the question were between the ages of 18-29 while almost 117 respondents were between the ages of 30-39, while 51 people were between the ages of 40-49 and only 16 respondents that answered the questionnaire were between the ages of 50-59, and 2 respondents were of the ages of 60 and above. These results shows that the people that follow social media influencers the most are between 18-39 years old. Motor-vehicle brands that wish to target these age group can consider using social media influencers as they will be able to get maximum reach for this audience.

4.2.2 Respondents' profession

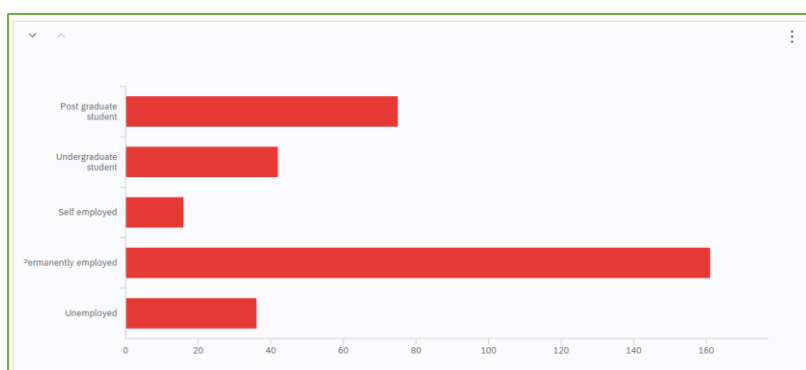


Figure 12: Occupation

- most of the respondents (160) are permanently employed while,
- 75 of the respondents were post graduate students, and (42) undergraduate students, (37) unemployed and around (16) of the respondents were self-employed.

In conclusion, the researcher deliberately elected to specify the demographic characteristics of the respondents based on the qualifying questions asked, to ensure that the questionnaire was answered by individuals who followed social media influencers and owned or intended to own a motor vehicle in South Africa. Furthermore, by selecting people who follow social media influencers gave the researcher confidence that the responses are more relevant as they coming from people who follow influencers on a day-to-day basis. This research provided valuable insights into how social media affects purchasing decisions, lifestyle choices, and perceptions of motor vehicle brands promoted by influencers.

4.3 Structural Equation Modelling

For this study, the researcher chose to use the SEM model which stands for **Structural Equation Modelling**, this model was applied through the SPSS Amos software to investigate the path relationship six independent variables against the dependent variable. During the process, the measurement elected model considered all the constructs such as: expertise, credibility, trustworthiness, popularity, likeability, and attractiveness. The outcome of reliability, validity and model fit of the measurement instrument are thoroughly analysed. As shown on the below table, the outcome of values was within the acceptable figure. Furthermore, the reliability and validity are explained in the next section while the SEM results are discussed toward the end of the chapter. These results are presented in table 4.1

Table 4.1: Accuracy analysis table

Research Constructs Mean		Descriptive Statistics				Cronbach's Test		C.R. Value	AVE Value	Factor Loading
		Mean Value		Standard Deviation		Item - total	α value			
EXP	EXP_1_1	2.933	2.860	1.263	1.241	0.863	0.940	0.941	0.894	0.903
	EXP_2_1	2.951		1.251		0.880				0.928
	EXP_3_1	2.896		1.284		0.878				0.905
	EXP_4_1	2.663		1.167		0.814				0.838
CRE	CRE_1_1	3.613	3.618	0.951	0.930	0.675	0.824	0.834	0.737	0.721
	CRE_2_1	3.509		0.945		0.769				0.879
	CRE_3_1	3.460		0.964		0.686				0.852
	CRE_4_1	3.890		0.861		0.473				0.496
POP	POP_1_1	4.252	4.163	0.714	0.779	0.676	0.800	0.831	0.812	0.693
	POP_2_1	4.074		0.843		0.676				0.976
TRUST	TRUST_1_1	3.626	3.696	0.956	0.861	0.691	0.880	0.887	0.813	0.776
	TRUST_2_1	3.693		0.870		0.801				0.853
	TRUST_3_1	3.804		0.769		0.779				0.842
	TRUST_4_1	3.663		0.848		0.712				0.781
LIKE	LIKE_1_1	3.988	3.949	0.753	0.756	0.675	0.822	0.830	0.678	0.775
	LIKE_2_1	3.933		0.810		0.745				0.837
	LIKE_3_1	3.902		0.803		0.644				0.733
	LIKE_4_1	3.975		0.657		0.532				0.608
ATT	ATT_1_1	4.104	4.028	0.584	0.652	0.628	0.714	0.730	0.527	0.821
	ATT_2_1	4.080		0.648		0.457				0.519
	ATT_3_1	4.037		0.656		0.544				0.679
	ATT_4_1	3.890		0.720		0.403				0.499
PUR	PUR_1_1	3.521	2.955	1.014	1.099	0.630	0.892	0.894	0.790	0.657
	PUR_2_1	3.153		1.136		0.742				0.779
	PUR_3_1	2.773		1.090		0.822				0.886
	PUR_4_1	2.509		1.130		0.763				0.845
	PUR_5_1	2.816		1.123		0.726				0.781

EXP-Expertise, CRE-Credibility, POP-Popularity, TRUST-Trustworthiness, LIKE-Likeability, ATT-Attractiveness & PUR-Purchase Intention

Most of the variables displayed a much high factor loading onto the constructs except for two questions that had the lowest factor loading of 0.496 and while the highest factor loading is 0.976.

4.3.1 Testing for Reliability

Cooper & Schindler (2014) mentions that reliability of a research study refers to the accuracy and clearness of a measurement technique. Furthermore, reliability refers to the measure to which the research results are proven to be trustworthy and reliable over time even when using various samples, techniques, and researchers. For this study, the

researcher selected to use the Cronbach's alpha method, item to total values, Composite Reliability to check, verify and test the measurement instruments for reliability.

a) Cronbach alpha (α)

Birren (2007) defines Cronbach alpha as one of the preferred methods of testing for reliability in a quantitative study by comparing the degree of shared variance between entries forming part of the instrument to the amount of the total variance. While Bonett & Wright (2015) state that Cronbach's alpha reliability test method is regarded as the most commonly used reliability techniques within research as this method describes the accuracy or authenticity of the amount of measurements where the measurements may represent questionnaire items. The researcher chose to use the Cronbach alpha method to access the internal reliability of the variables in the measurement scale.

The below is the Cronbach alpha formula.

$$\alpha = \frac{N * \bar{c}}{\bar{v} + (N - 1) * \bar{c}}$$

Source: (Bonett & Wright, 2015)

N = number of items

$\bar{c}$ = mean covariance between items.

$\bar{v}$ = mean item variance.

As shown on table 4.1, the Cronbach Alpha values per construct were recorded as follows: Expertise = 0.940, Credibility = 0.824, Popularity = 0.800, Trustworthiness = 0.880, Likeability = 0.822, Attractiveness = 0.714, and purchase intention = 0.892. Therefore, this means that the variables proved to be once again consistently reliable as they exceeded the threshold value of 0.70, which is recommended by Bonett & Wright (2015) this also proves that research instrument used was reliable in measuring the variables consistently.

b) Composite Reliability

Netemeyer (2003) mentions that composite reliability is another method which is commonly used to measure consistency in scale items similar to Cronbach's alpha. The Composite reliability method was used to evaluate the reliability of the variables and the following analysis was noted Expertise = 0.941, Credibility = 0.834, Popularity = 0.831, Trustworthiness = 0.887, Likeability = 0.830, Attractiveness = 0.730 and purchase intention=0.894. The values for the constructs met the minimum value (0.70) and thus proving to be reliable. (Ahmad, Albarrak, Akhtar, & Akram, 2023)

Table 4.2

Standardised regression Estimates (all variables and instruments included)							
			Estimate	Composite reliability (CR)			
				$(\sum \lambda_i)^2$	summation of error terms		$CR\eta=(\sum \lambda_i)^2/[(\sum \lambda_i)^2+(\sum \epsilon_i)]$
				ϵ_i	$\sum \epsilon_i$	CR	
EXP	<---	EXP_1_1	0.903	12.773	0.185	0.802	0.941
	<---	EXP_2_1	0.928		0.139		
	<---	EXP_3_1	0.905		0.181		
	<---	EXP_4_1	0.838		0.298		
CRE	<---	CRE_1_1	0.721	8.691	0.480	1.736	0.834
	<---	CRE_2_1	0.879		0.227		
	<---	CRE_3_1	0.852		0.274		
	<---	CRE_4_1	0.496		0.754		
POP	<---	POP_1_1	0.693	2.786	0.520	0.567	0.831
	<---	POP_2_1	0.976		0.047		
TRUST	<---	TRUST_1_1	0.776	10.576	0.398	1.351	0.887
	<---	TRUST_2_1	0.853		0.272		
	<---	TRUST_3_1	0.842		0.291		
	<---	TRUST_4_1	0.781		0.390		
LIKE	<---	LIKE_1_1	0.775	8.720	0.399	1.792	0.830
	<---	LIKE_2_1	0.837		0.299		
	<---	LIKE_3_1	0.733		0.463		
	<---	LIKE_4_1	0.608		0.630		
ATT	<---	ATT_1_1	0.821	6.340	0.326	2.347	0.730
	<---	ATT_2_1	0.519		0.731		
	<---	ATT_3_1	0.679		0.539		
	<---	ATT_4_1	0.499		0.751		
PUR	<---	PUR_1_1	0.657	15.587	0.568	1.853	0.894
	<---	PUR_2_1	0.779		0.393		
	<---	PUR_3_1	0.886		0.215		
	<---	PUR_4_1	0.845		0.286		
	<---	PUR_5_1	0.781		0.390		

EXP-Expertise, CRE-Credibility, POP-Popularity, TRUST-Trustworthiness, LIKE-Likeability, ATT-Attractiveness & PUR-Purchase Intention

4.3.2 Testing for Validity

According to Patino & Ferreira (2018), Validity includes two forms, internal and external validity. Internal validity can be defined as the degree and accuracy to which the research results represent the target population. Andrade (2018) mentions that Internal validity explores the quality of the study design and how the study was conducted and analysed answer the research problem.

a) Convergent Validity

Convergent validity refers to how well a test measures if the variables were related. Convergent validity can be described as the degree to which a measure relates to other measures in the study. (Cheah, Sarstedt, Ringle, Ramayah & Ting, 2018)

Abma, Rovers, & van der Wees (2016) mentions that Convergent validity is normally accepted if more than 75 % of hypotheses are correct, or if the factor loading instrument measuring the same variable is greater than 0.50. On this research study the lowest

standard factor loading is greater than 0.5 which implies that the study has met the minimum required for convergent validity as per factor loading column on Table 4.1 above. This implies that the respective constructs for this study converged well and are therefore valid.

b) Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is shown through measures of variables that theoretically should not be related to each other are somehow related. Therefore, to test for discriminant validity, the inter-construct correlation matrix, the average Value Extracted (AVE) and Shared Value (SV) were assessed and the below are the results:

Table 4.3 Inter-Construct Correlation Matrix

Inter-Correlations Matrix							
	EXP	CRE	POP	TRUST	LIKE	ATT	PUR
EXP	1						
CRE	.598**	1					
POP	.506**	.616**	1				
TRUST	.378**	.580**	.455**	1			
LIKE	.103	.291**	.235**	.504**	1		
ATT	.307**	.413**	.601**	.439**	.339**	1	
PUR	.145*	.146*	-.041	.245**	.347**	-.032	1

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

EXP-Expertise, CRE-Credibility, POP-Popularity, TRUST-Trustworthiness, LIKE-Likeability, ATT-Attractiveness & PUR-Purchase Intention

The above table 4.3 shows a correlation matrix, which is showing correlation coefficients between the constructs. Each cell in the table shows the correlation between two variables. A correlation matrix is used to summarize data, as an input into a more advanced analysis, and as a diagnostic for advanced analyses. The results on table 4.3 indicate that 0.616 proves to be the highest correlation. According to Cooper & Schindler (2014) the inter-factor correlation values for all variables should be below threshold of 1.0. This means that there was an acceptable discriminant validity within the measurement scales as all variables were lower than 1.0, This results proves that the existence of discriminant validity.

c) Average Value Extracted (AVE)

Average value extracted (AVE) refers to the amount of variance that is captured by a variable with regards to the amount of variance due to the measurement error. Furthermore, the AVE greater than 0.50 shows that the validity of the construct and the individual variables is high (Hair et al., 2014)

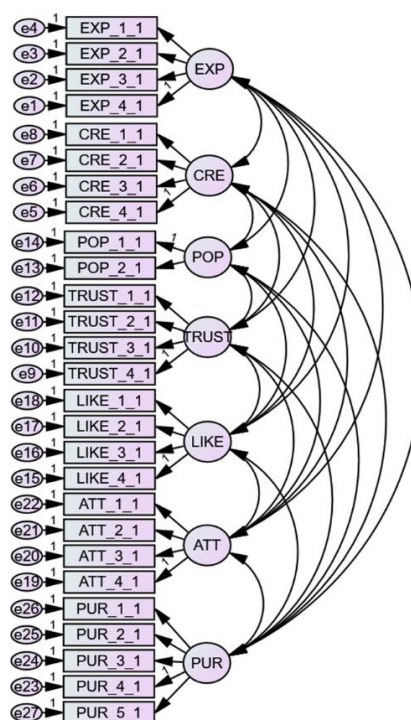
4.4 Model and Model Fit Assessment: CFA

The research study followed a two-step approach, the CFA which stands for the Confirmatory-Factor-Analysis and the SEM which stands for Structural-Equation-Modelling (explained above on 4.3). The CFA method is. CFA is common technique used to determine how carefully chosen variables represent the constructs. (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2014)

4.4.1 Model fit assessment.

In order to conduct the measurement model as required, the CFA method was conducted through the SPSS AMOS software. The model is shown on the below figure:

Figure 13: CFA Model



EXP-Expertise, CRE-Credibility, POP-Popularity, TRUST-Trustworthiness, LIKE-Likeability, ATT-Attractiveness & PUR-Purchase Intention

The CFA model above contains with it latent variables as shown in the round shape, as well as noted variables which are illustrated in the above rectangular shapes on the figure.

While the errors are shown in round shapes. The relationship between the variables is shown by the arrows.

4.5 Model Fit Assessment result.

The measurement model contained all the variables: Social Media Influencer's expertise towards purchase intention, Social Media Influencer's credibility towards purchase intention, Social Media Influencer's trustworthiness towards purchase intention, Social Media Influencer's popularity towards purchase intention, Social Media Influencer's likability towards purchase intention and Social Media Influencer's attractiveness towards purchase intention. The model produced as required good-fit indices; the Chi-square (χ^2/df) = 1.930, the criteria for a significant and acceptable model fit should be less than 3. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) is 0.901, which fall within the acceptable threshold of 0.9 or greater (Hooper, Coughlan & Mullen, 2008). The Normed Fit Index (NFI) is 0.905 which is within the acceptable threshold of 0.900 or greater. (Hooper et al., 2008). The Relative fit index (RFI) = 0.936 which is within the acceptable threshold of 0.900 or greater. The Incremental Fit Index (IFI) = 0.957 which is within the acceptable threshold of 0.900 or greater. The Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) is 0.949 which is within the acceptable range of 0.900 or greater while the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.955 which is also within the acceptable threshold of 0.900 or greater and the Root mean square error of approximation = 0.043 which is within the acceptable threshold of less than 0.08. The below table shows the summary of model fit indices.

Table 4.4: CFA Model Fit

Model Fit Index	Acceptable Threshold	Outcome	Acceptable/Unacceptable
CMIN/DF	<3	1.930	Acceptable
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	>0,900	0.901	Acceptable
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	>0,900	0.905	Acceptable
Relative Fit Index (RFI)	>0,900	0.936	Acceptable
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	>0,900	0.957	Acceptable
Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)	>0,900	0.949	Acceptable
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	>0,900	0.955	Acceptable
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	< 0.08	0.043	Acceptable

In conclusion, the above-mentioned fit-indices, reliability and validity measures proves that the proposed model of study is appropriate for the collected data.

4.6 The Structural model and Analysis of Paths

The below table shows the selected fit indexes from the CFA output, the structural model estimation was conducted through the SPSS Amos software. The CFA results suggest the measurement model provides a reasonably good fit, as the Chi-square (χ^2/df)=1.075 which is within the acceptable threshold of less than 3 (Hair et al., 2014) the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)= 0.901 which falls within the acceptable threshold of greater than 0.900, while the Normed Fit Index (NFI) =0.904 which is acceptable as Hair et al. (2014) mentioned that the acceptable range is greater than 0.900. The relative Fit Index (RFI) = 0.935 which is acceptable as it falls within the acceptable threshold of greater than 0.900 (Hair et al., 2014) The Incremental Fit Index (IFI) =0.964 which is acceptable as it falls within the acceptable threshold of greater than 0.900 (Hooper et al., 2008) the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)= 0.957 which is acceptable as it falls within the acceptable threshold of greater than 0.900 (Hooper et al., 2008) the Comparative Fit Index (CFI)= 0.961 which is acceptable as it falls within the acceptable ranger of greater than 0.900 (Hooper et al., 2008) and the Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is also accepted at an outcome of 0.042 which falls within the acceptable range of less than 0.08. (Hair et al., 2014) Overall, the structural model had a good fit with the fit indices better than the recommended threshold. The outcome is shown in the below table.

Table 4.5: Model Fit (Structural)

Model Fit Index	Acceptable threshold	Outcome	Acceptable/ Unacceptable
CMIN/DF	Less than 3	1.075	Acceptable
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	Greater than 0,900	0.901	Acceptable
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	Greater than 0,900	0.904	Acceptable
Relative Fit Index (RFI)	Greater than 0,900	0.935	Acceptable
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	Greater than 0,900	0.964	Acceptable
Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)	Greater than 0,900	0.957	Acceptable
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	Greater than 0,900	0.961	Acceptable
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	Less than 0.08	0.042	Acceptable

The goodness of fit results refers to the statistical analysis that evaluates how well a model aligns with a set of observed data. It illustrates the extent to which the model's predicted

values correspond to actual data points. A strong fit indicates that the model effectively represents the observed data, enhancing our understanding of the underlying patterns. The results demonstrate a robust fit, with all fit indices exceeding the recommended cut-off values. This compelling evidence strongly supports the notion that the proposed model is not only relevant but also finely tuned to the collected data, proving its reliability and significance

4.7 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is shown on the below table. The results in P-value shows the significance of the hypothesis. 0.05 and 0.01 confidence levels indicate that the hypothesis is significant and should be accepted.

Table 4.6 (Hypothesis results)

Hypothesis	Hypothesized relationship			Estimate	P-value	Outcome
H1	EXP	--->	PUR	0.311	***	Supported and significant
H2	CRE	--->	PUR	-0.151	0.099	Not Significant
H3	TRUST	--->	PUR	0.677	***	Supported and significant
H4	POP	--->	PUR	0.062	0.186	Not Significant
H5	LIKE	--->	PUR	1.227	***	Supported and significant
H6	ATT	--->	PUR	16.991	0.193	Not Significant

Notes: (ns) is not significant at *** p<0.1) ; **p<0.05; *p<0.1)

4.7.1 *H₁: Social Media Influencer's expertise significantly affects purchase intention.*

The coefficient estimate for H1 is 0.311 which indicates a significant relationship between social media expertise and purchase intention. This implies that consumers consider the knowledge and skills of a social media influencer when shopping for a motor vehicle in South Africa. Coutinho, Dias & Pereira (2023) mentions that Social Media Influencer's expertise can significantly influence purchase intention as some consumers expect an influencer to possess certain level of experience and knowledge with the product. Furthermore, Social Media Influencers are typically well known within social media platforms and when they endorse a brand within their expertise, consumers are to trust Influencers review of motor vehicle which is likely to increase purchase intention.

Dinh et al. (2023) discovered in their study of social media influencers that influencers' expertise increases followers' purchase intention because Social Media Influencers are considered to qualified and knowledgeable in their specific fields. While Lou & Yuan (2019) discovered that consumers perceive Social Media Influencers as trustworthy source of information because of their expertise in the endorsed brand, this makes this segment of consumers to be more likely to purchase brands endorsed by influencers.

4.7.2 H2: Social Media Influencer's credibility significantly affects Purchase intention.

The coefficient estimate for this hypothesis is -0.151 which implies that it is not significant. The researcher discovered that credibility does not affect consumer purchase intention when shopping for a motor vehicle in South Africa. The result of this study further signifies that consumers less likely consider a social media influencer's credibility when shopping for a vehicle. South African consumers do not consider an influencer's credibility does not affect purchase intention; this implies that an influencer's expertise is more important to south African consumers instead of credibility. Coutinho et al. (2023) discovered in their study of Social Media Influencers that they are accepted by consumers because of the perceived trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. The influence of social media influencers' credibility on consumers' purchase intentions can yield significant benefits for a variety of stakeholders. For marketers, gaining a deep understanding of the key attributes that define influencer credibility is essential. This knowledge empowers them to craft more effective strategies that resonate with their target audience and ultimately boost sales. although though the initial hypothesis did not hold, it remains vital for social media influencers to enhance their qualities—such as expertise, brand image, and trustworthiness—to be recognized as credible figures. In the South African market, consumers place a premium on attributes like trustworthiness, expertise, and likability when evaluating influencers. Conversely, corporations and brands prioritize overall credibility as the most critical factor when choosing to collaborate with social media influencers. By addressing these differing priorities, marketers can forge more meaningful connections with both consumers and influencers.

4.7.3 H₃: Social Media Influencer's trustworthiness significantly affects purchase intention.

The research results reveal that the coefficient estimate for this hypothesis is 0.677 which is significant and supported. This implies that Social Media Influencers' trustworthiness significantly influence purchase intention. Coutinho et al. (2023) stated that trustworthiness can affect purchase intention as consumers value the information provided by Social Media Influencers. In this instance, consumers perceive Social Media Influencers' trustworthiness as honest, sincere and truthful when posting about motor vehicles on social media. Alkan & Ulas (2023) mentions in their study of social media influencers that before the introduction of digital technology, consumers relied on the experience of family members and friends when they wanted to purchase a product or service however since the introduction of social media, consumers now heavily rely on Social Media Influencers based on their product knowledge and brand reviews. Consumers who pay attention to the experiences of Social Media Influencers end up displaying a level of trust to them as they perceive influencers to be transparent with their product experience. This further suggests that a Social Media Influencer effects the consumer behaviour process during the partnership with a brand.

The researcher observed based on the results that it can be concluded that the main point of the relationship between a Social Media influencer and their followers is centred on trust. Alkan & Ulas (2023) note that this level of trust is not based on face-to-face, but rather it's an online social bond that becomes apparent when the Social Media Influencer share their product or brand reviews, and ideas based on the relationship with their social media followers. This suggests that this Social Media Influencers are able to establish a strong bond with consumers through their online platforms. Influencers expressing their positive or negative opinions about a brand or product, positively affects the trust towards the influencers. In this context, in line with the findings obtained in the study conducted by Braatz (2017), it was concluded that influencers expressing their positive and negative opinions about a product, increased the trust of the participants towards the influencers.

4.7.4 H₄: Social Media Influencer's popularity significantly affects purchase intention.

The researcher also observed that the coefficient estimate for this hypothesis is 0.062, which implies that the hypothesis is not supported by the results. This suggests that Social Media Influencers' popularity does not affect consumer purchase intention. Social Media Influencer's popularity is not perceived as important by consumers and therefore does not affect purchase intention. This implies that the variable is less important for consumers when engaging with a Social Media Influencers. South African consumers do not follow social media influencers because of their popularity but rather their knowledge, expertise and trustworthiness. Singh et al. (2020) discovered in their study of social media influencers that at times consumers can view social media influencers to act on the interests of a company instead of consumers and thus consumers do not rely on a social media influencer's popularity.

4.7.5 H₅: Social Media Influencer's likability significantly affects purchase intention.

According to Khan, Alhathal, Alam & Minhaj (2023) a Social Media Influencer's likability can determine the attractive factors that influence consumers to shop online, and those factors can help marketers formulate their strategies toward online buying behaviour, respectively [58]. This likability can impact a consumer's mental state when it comes to making purchases via the internet. The coefficient estimate for this hypothesis is 1.227 which is significant and supported. This implies that most consumers in South Africa considers Social Media Influencers' likeability, and this is more likely to affect purchase intention. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted as the results show that Social Media Influencer's likability significantly affects purchase intention.

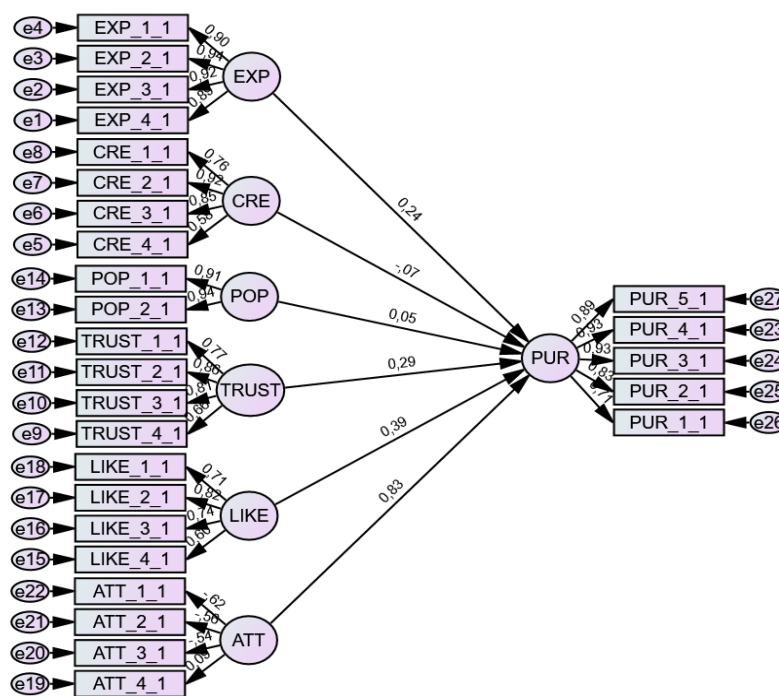
4.7.6 H₆: Social Media Influencer's attractiveness significantly affects purchase intention.

Coutinho et al. (2023) describes attractiveness as the level to which a Social Media Influencer's face is admirable to observe and that they have good physical qualities. Syed & Zaidi (2023) mentions that some consumers are more likely to relate Social Media

Influencers who share similar interests and values. However, in this, the researcher observed that a Social Media Influencers' attractiveness does not affect purchase intention. The coefficient estimate is 16.991 shows that the hypothesis is not supported in this regard. This implies that South African consumers tend to focus beyond the physical features of a Social Media Influencer, and that their attitudes and perceptions are not influenced by how good looking an influencer is. Physical beauty does not play a role in south African consumer's purchase intention as these consumers are more interested on what an influencer can share based on their knowledge, skills, experience, and expertise instead of their physical appearance. Therefore, this hypothesis is not supported and rejected.

4.8 SEM Results

Figure 14: SEM results



EXP-Expertise, CRE-Credibility, POP-Popularity, TRUST-Trustworthiness, LIKE-Likeability, ATT-Attractiveness & PUR-Purchase Intention

Result of Structural Equation Model (SEM) Testing

Figure 14 shows the results of the Structural Model Equation testing, the results show the indication and the normal direct impact through the standardised path coefficients.

Harrison & Friston (2007) defines SEM as a statistical method which is used to test hypotheses regarding the relationship that occurs between variables. The SEM model is one of the commonly used methodologies in the quantitative research because it has the potential for addressing practical research questions, and there is numerous available software's that can be used for the structural equation modelling. (Kaplan, 2001) The Structural Equation Modelling is used as part of a confirmatory process in research (Mowahed et al., 2020) Structural equation modelling method is a reliable research technique that is used very often in academic research. This model allows researchers to test a previously developed complex models aiming to understand the relationship between variables. The purpose of this model was to evaluate the relationship that exists between variables. Furthermore, this method is a mix of the factor analysis and regression analysis methods thus making this model a catalyst in understanding complex relationships that are represented by latent variables. This model can also be used to explore and correct measurement errors (Mowahed, Song, Xinrong, & Changgen, 2020)

The results of the Structural Equation Modelling testing, showing the directional relationship between the variables namely, expertise, credibility, trustworthiness, popularity, likability and attractiveness. Plus, the scale of the direct impact through the standardised path coefficients.

4.9 Conclusion

The researcher has observed that brands are commonly promoting their businesses through social media platforms. This has given rise to Social Media Influencers to partner with brands on advertising and communication of new products to the market. Social media Influencers have proven to be a catalyst in the consumer decision making process because of the paradigm shift from traditional celebrities to Social Media Influencers. The researcher also noted that Social Media Influencer's expertise, trustworthiness and likeability play a significant role on purchase intention in South Africa. Lim, Radzol, Cheah,

& Wang (2017) investigated the impact of social media influences on purchased intention, in their study, it was discovered that content from social media influencers who were not viewed to be significantly experienced and skilled about a product had no significant influence on purchase intentions. Shan et al. (2020) discovered in their study that most firms have seen the benefit of partnering with Social Media Influencers to advertise their brands on social media platforms. Furthermore, that this is increasingly becoming a significant trend as most marketers have adopted this strategy for promoting their brands. The research results from previous studies on social media influencers suggests that consumers perceive Social Media Influencers as more trustworthy when compared to traditional celebrities. Hu & Yao (2022) mentions that the increasing trend of using Social Media Influencers for brand communication has seen a rise in more creative and innovative marketing content in consumer brand engagement as Social Media Influencers have become an integral source of information for consumers.

5 CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results presented in the previous chapter (chapter 4) against the proposed research hypotheses and conceptual framework of the study which was discussed in great length in chapter 2 (Literature review), the demographics are not discussed as they are not significant for this study. The study focused on the effects of Social Media Influencers on purchase intention for motor vehicles in South Africa.

5.2 Discussion of the main research problem

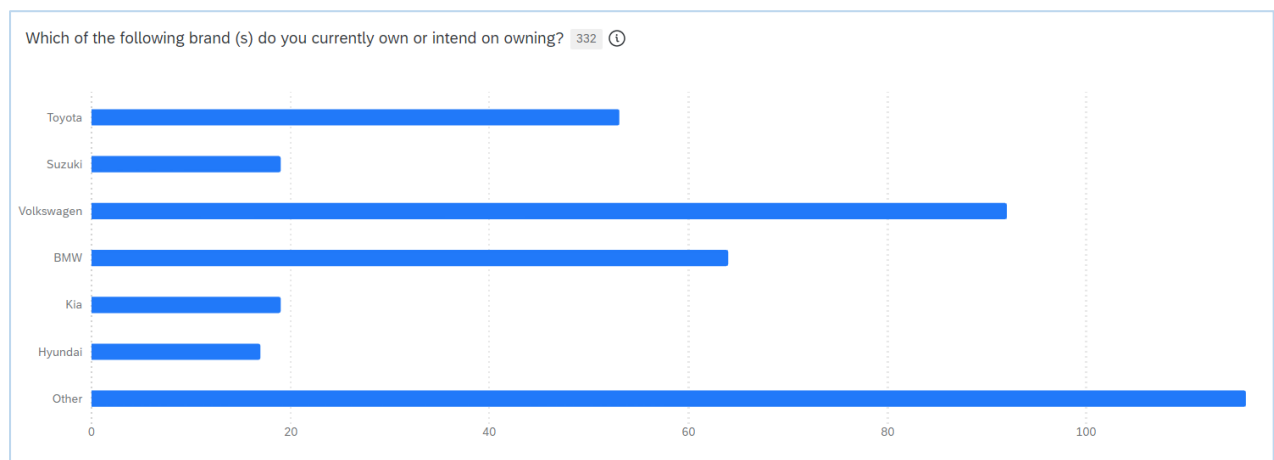
The main research problem was ***to investigate the effect Social Media Influencers and Purchase Intention on motor vehicles in South Africa.*** The motor vehicle industry in South Africa is very competitive with old, proven and trusted brands such as Toyota, Volkswagen, Suzuki to mention a few. The South African motor-vehicle industry accounted for 4.9% to the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022, thus making it the largest manufacturing segment within the South African economy, as a result, the industry created a 21.7% of value-added products and services(value-chain) within the manufacturing sector, which places the automotive sector key role player in the Country's economy. (trade.gov, 2024) South Africa's motor vehicle production is the largest in the continent and it accounts for 0.65% to the global vehicle production market share and is ranked 22nd in the world (trade.gov, 2024) The future growth plans for the motor-vehicle industry is focused on gearing the country to start producing atleast 1% of the global vehicle production or 1.4 million vehicles per year by 2035. (trade.gov, 2024) Over the years, there has been more players in the motor vehicle industry including Korean brands entering the industry with new and cost-effective products. With the rise and popularity of Social Media Influencers, motor-vehicle companies also tapped in the new phenomenon and started partnering with influencers to market their products on social media channels. Social media Influencers unlike traditional celebrities represents third party content creators that rose to the spotlight based on the content or their opinions on products and services which they share with their online followers. According to Copuš & Čarnogurský (2017) companies are constantly searching for new alternatives for communicating more efficiently as it is

becoming more demanding to attract the new customers in a highly competitive environment. Furthermore, consumer behaviour used to be influenced traditionally by culture, family and friends however with the rise of social media, consumers are now being influenced more by online trends and this has prompted markets to use less of traditional media (print, billboard advertising, TV and Radio.) The rise of social media gave way to influencers marketing. Influencer marketing is when a brand partners with a social media influencer unlike traditional celebrities to promote its products and services. Liu & Zheng (2024) state that the partnerships between companies and social media influencers is growing rapidly and becoming more popular. Furthermore, a growing number of consumers depend on social media Influencer's product content when making decisions because consumers trust the influencer's expertise and brand knowledge. Motor vehicle companies in South Africa are no different as they also partner with social media influencers to promote their brands.

5.2.1 *Qualifying Questions*

a) **Vehicle brand selection**

Figure 15: Motor vehicles



For this study, the researcher chose to use qualifying questions in order to better understand the sample and their behaviour on motor vehicles in South Africa. The researcher asked the below question to understand which motor vehicle brand is more popular. Volkswagen, BMW and Toyota score high among participants proving to be more popular within consumers while the highest selection was for other brands not mentioned

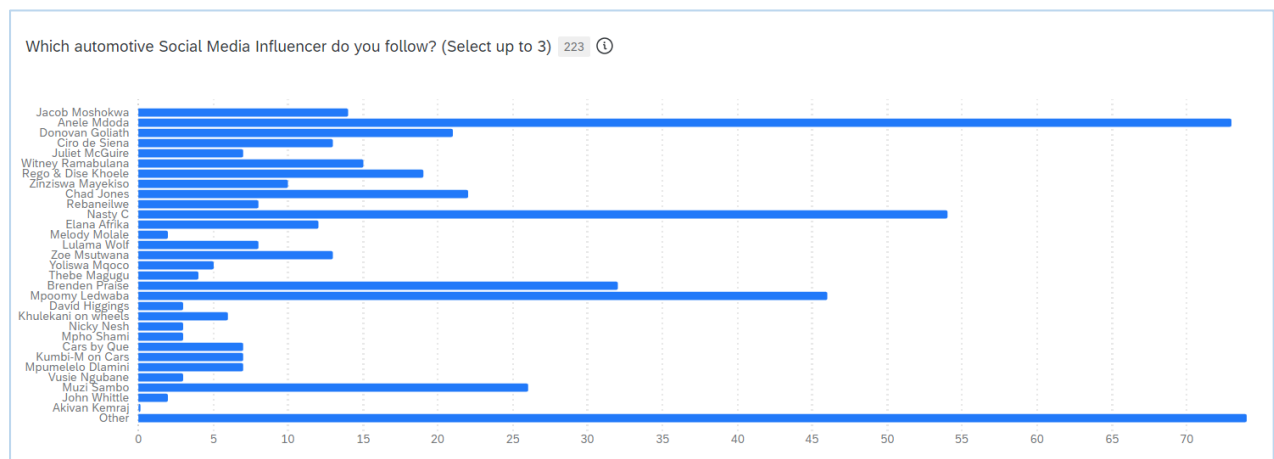
on multiple choice selection. Volkswagen proved to be the more popular brand among the participants as shown on the above figure 15.

b) Social Media Influencer selection

The researcher also included a question to determine which social media influencers are more popular among the participants. The Top Social Media Influencers are:

- Anele Mdoda
- Nasty C
- Mpoomy Ledwaba
- Brenden Praise
- Muzi Sambo
- Chad Jones
- Donovan Goliath

Figure 16: Social Media Influencers



-the above results shows motor vehicle brands as to which Social Media Influencers are more popular than others, this can help marketers to select the relevant Social Media Influencers for their respective campaigns with the aim of reaching more quality consumers and in-turn influencer their purchase intention.

5.3 Hypothesis Testing

Table 5: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Hypothesized relationship			Estimate	P-value	Outcome
H1	EXP	--->	PUR	0.311	***	Supported and significant
H2	CRE	--->	PUR	-0.151	0.099	Not Significant
H3	TRUST	--->	PUR	0.677	***	Supported and significant
H4	POP	--->	PUR	0.062	0.186	Not Significant
H5	LIKE	--->	PUR	1.227	***	Supported and significant
H6	ATT	--->	PUR	16.991	0.193	Not Significant

5.3.1 *H₁: Social Media Influencer's expertise significantly affects purchase intention.*

The standardised coefficient for the relationship between Social Media Influencer's expertise and purchase intention is 0.311, which is significant and supported. This shows that there is a relationship between a Social Media Influencer's expertise and consumer purchase intention. This proves that consumers consider the expertise of a Social Media Influencer to be vital when they review a motor vehicle. Liu & Zheng (2024) discovered in their study of Social Media Influencers that more consumers depend on the content of Social Media Influencers during the consumer decision making process because they perceive Influencers to be highly knowledgeable on brands. Furthermore, Social media influencers do well in showing their expertise by creating valuable content on social media to educate and engage with their audience. Therefore, the result of the study proves that

Social Media Influencers' expertise significantly affects purchase intention when consumers are shopping for motor vehicles in South Africa.

5.3.2 H2: Social Media Influencer's credibility significantly affects Purchase intention.

The coefficient estimate for this hypothesis is -0.151 which implies that it is not significant. The researcher discovered that credibility does not affect consumer purchase intention when shopping for a motor vehicle in South Africa. South African consumers do not consider on whether the Social Media Influencer is making a good impression as that is least important during the consumer decision making process, in fact consumer consider skills, expertise and trustworthiness to be more valuable in following a Social Media Influencer. This implies that Social Media Influencers should not rely on credibility when targeting consumers with car reviews as it will not lead to purchase intention. Therefore, according to results of the research study, Social Media Influencers' credibility does not affect purchase intention in South Africa.

5.3.3 H3: Social Media Influencer's trustworthiness significantly affects purchase intention.

The research results reveal that the coefficient estimate for this hypothesis is 0.677 which is significant and supported. Masuda et al (2022) mentions that consumers form a bond Social Media Influencers through trustworthiness and expertise. Trustworthiness can be defined as the level in which consumers perceive an influencers message to be valid. Coutinho et al. (2023) discovered in the study: "*credibility of social media influencers: Impact on purchase intention*" that a Social Media Influencer's perceived trustworthiness significantly affect purchase intention as consumers perceive them to be honest, sincere and truthful on their online product endorsements. This study shows that trustworthiness can be a determinant of consume purchase intention as consumers will follow a Social Media Influencers once they perceive the message to be honest, sincere, and truthful.

5.3.4 H₄: Social Media Influencer's popularity significantly affects purchase intention.

The researcher also observed that the coefficient estimate for this hypothesis is 0.062, which implies that the hypothesis is not supported by the results. Therefore, this hypothesis is rejected as it shows that South African consumers are not persuaded by a Social Media Influencers' popularity, in fact popularity is least significant when following influencers. The fact that some Social Media Influencers are more admired and followed by many people does not grant them the keys to unlock consumer purchase intention. This shows that South African consumers apply a degree of education that searches for more impactful qualities in a Social Media Influencer when shopping for motor vehicles in South Africa.

5.3.5 H₅: Social Media Influencer's likability significantly affects purchase intention.

The coefficient estimate for this hypothesis is 1.227 which is significant and supported. South African consumers will consider a Social Media Influencer who is pleasant, friendly and appealing. This hypothesis is accepted and shows that an Influencer's personality is imperative in building relationships with followers online. Khan et al. (2023) mentions that Social Media Influencers build a brand image over time, which can be defined as a consumer's perception and impression of a Social Media Influencer which is formed through the product messaging, they share on social media channels. Furthermore, it was discovered that the stronger the Social Media Influencer's likability or brand image, the stronger the consumer's perception which can significantly help brands to build strong relationships with consumers through Social Media Influencers.

Therefore, a Social Media Influencer's likability can positively influence consumers towards purchasing a motor vehicle brand which is endorsed by them. Khan et al. (2023) mentions that likability has a positive impact on trustworthiness, which means that consumers will trust a Social Media Influencer based on their charm, personality, and friendliness and these will more likely influence purchase intention. Therefore, consumers who realize the need to buy a motor vehicle, they will begin the search for information among social media influencers' blogs or pages before making a purchase decision. Therefore, the results have

proved the hypothesis correct, that Social Media Influencer's likability influences consumer purchase intention.

5.3.6 *H₆: Social Media Influencer's attractiveness significantly affects purchase intention.*

The coefficient estimate is 16.991 shows that the hypothesis is not supported in this regard. According to Khan et al. (2023) attractiveness can be described as showing the physical characteristics of social media influencers for them to be noticed, liked and received by the target consumers. However, South African consumers have showed in this study that they do not consider physical beauty of a Social Media Influencer at all, as the results of this research do not support the hypothesis.

5.4 Recommendations

The perceived expertise of social media influencers plays an important role in shaping consumers' purchase intentions for two main reasons. First, consumers are more likely to trust influencers who demonstrate specific experience with a product or possess general expertise in that area such as an influencer who exhibits more knowledge about cars. This trust can significantly bolster their confidence in their purchasing decisions. Secondly, influencers viewed as credible sources of knowledge can have a significant impact on the decision-making process for consumers as the perceived expertise of influencers also determines the value and reliability of the information they provide, making it a crucial factor for purchase intention. Consumers are increasingly sceptical towards content created solely by brands, opting instead to seek insights from social media platforms. These platforms facilitate access to opinions not only from friends but also from individuals perceived as knowledgeable about specific brands. Social media influencers often achieve recognition by specializing in certain domains. Boerman (2020) points out that this specialization enhances the credibility of influencers; when they engage in partnerships with brands that align with their areas of expertise, consumers are more inclined to accept and trust their recommendations. additionally, if influencers effectively demonstrate their

expertise through their profiles or relevant content, it is more likely to enhance consumers' purchase intentions.

This study enhances the existing body of literature by clarifying the impact of influencers on their followers' purchase intentions as it sheds light on the role played by social media influencers' attributes such as expertise, trustworthiness and likability on purchase intention. Social media influencers have positioned themselves as gatekeepers in online channels and they are becoming a more credible and reliable source of information on different topics. Therefore motor-vehicle brands in South Africa must include influencer marketing in their communication strategy to be able to penetrate the market and reach more consumers online. Additionally, the research provides valuable insights for marketers looking to select the right influencers to promote their products and brands. It's essential for brands to partner with authentic influencers who possess genuine expertise in the automotive field. By doing so, they can ensure that product reviews are both credible and trustworthy, ultimately enhancing their brand's reputation and driving sales.

5.5 Conclusion

Social media is a powerful tool and can have an influence on the changes in social habits among consumers. More recently companies are tapping in even more at using social media platforms to promote their brands. The rise of social media influencers has played a significant role in such that most companies are using them to endorse their brands. Traditionally marketing agencies would use celebrities as brand ambassadors to promote their brands. However, the general rise of influencers who at most are not well-known celebrities but rather have a large following on social media sites has impacted the way brands use "people" to endorse a product. Social Media Influencers rose to light by creating authentic, non-professional and yet engaging content which they share regularly on social media channels to engage with their followers, this makes them unique when compared to traditional celebrities who may became popular by excelling in various social fields such as music, sports, arts, politics and business. Masuda et al. (2022) mentions that social media influencers have in recent years attracted great attention from various brands, as both potential marketing channels and as social relationship assets with whom brands can collaborate with in order to reach their target audience. The study showed that Social Media Influencers have gained popularity and are increasingly becoming more

common in the marketing of motor vehicles. More and more Motor vehicle brands are increasingly using Social Media Influencers to promote their vehicles on social media networks. Khan et al. (2023) mentions that social media influencers frequently post more product information to consumers than companies do and that they manage to shape consumer perception overtime through a trust, therefore, Social Media Influencers can help motor vehicle companies build a solid online reputation as they are able to influence consumer purchase intention. Previous literature has shown that more companies are adopting influencer marketing as part of their overall marketing strategy as the rise of social media networks has made traditional media such as Television, Radio, Newspapers and Magazines to be ineffective as most consumers consumer product information online. (Khan et al, 2023) The study showed that Social Media Influencer's expertise, trustworthiness and likability are instrumental in consumer purchase intention and influencers who possess these qualities are more likely to influence the consumer decision-making process. This means that an increasing number of consumers are buying motor vehicle products based on recommendations by Social Media Influencers. Therefore, Social Media Influencers have become an integral part of marketing as they established themselves as a credible source of information online and are to be ignore by chief marketing officers. Khan et al. (2023) argues discovered that Social Media Influencers who have a strong brand image based on expertise and trustworthiness are in a better position to influencer consumer purchase intention as they have already established a trust relationship on social media.

6 CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 highlights the conclusion and provides recommendations for Social Media Influencers on purchase intention within the motor vehicle industry and how markets can partner with Social Media Influencers to leverage on their online following. Social Media Influencers are the new source of information for motor-vehicle product review as discovered in this study. Social media influencers, they have managed to shape how customers think, consume information, and behave during the consumer decision making process. This has caused influencers to be recognised by motor-vehicle companies when launching new products or sustaining an existing product line.

6.2 Implications of the Study

Influencer marketing is one of the latest yet effective digital marketing tactics which has shaped the way motor-vehicle brands communicate with their customers, this study aimed to investigate the effect of Social Media Influencers on purchase intention and the researcher discovered that expertise, trustworthiness, and likability significantly affected consumer purchase intention, as consumers rely more on social media influencers for vehicle information. Masuda et al. (2022) mentions that Social Media Influencers have received significant attention in the marketing space and more companies are adapting their marketing strategies to include influencer marketing. Social Media Influencers better known as bloggers are 3rd party endorsers who promotes products and service online. They are part of the Social Media phenomenon that has changed the way marketers promote their products. These content creators are a voice that cannot be ignored as they proven to be more relevant than traditional celebrities. Social Media Influencer are people or individuals who have built a social media community of followers, they use their expertise to review brands online and help consumers formulate an opinion (both positive and negative) about a brand. They have become the new gatekeepers of information

through online channels, and more companies have realised their place in the market and started to use them in promoting their brands.

This study's findings will contribute to the already existing academic literature on the effects of Social Media Influencers on purchase intention in South Africa. The researcher did a deep dive on influencers by examining six attributes or variables namely:

- Expertise
- Credibility
- Trustworthiness
- Popularity
- Likability and
- Attractiveness

The research results showed that South African consumers consider a Social Media Influencer's **expertise**, **trustworthiness**, and **likability** and these three attributes affect purchase intention. However, **credibility**, **popularity** and an influencer's **attractiveness** do not affect purchase intention. These findings bring a different viewpoint for companies and Social Media Influencer's who are building their brand image online to consider consumer perceptions when posting content on social media. Furthermore, this study will provide more insights for motor vehicle brands and marketing practitioners who wants to use Social Media Influencers in their marketing strategies as the findings will help them gain more knowledge on how to better use influencers to promote their brands. Likewise, Social Media Influencers can use these findings to gain more knowledge into how their followers consume their content and how they maximise on their stronger attributes such as expertise, trustworthiness, and likability to build a strong brand image and noteworthy online audience. The researcher further noted in this study that a Social Media Influencer's **expertise** portrays him or her as very knowledgeable and skilled with motor vehicles, and that once they have managed to build a solid relationship with their followers online, they are then perceived as **trustworthy**, implies that a consumer views their messaging as truthful and similarly with **likability**, consumers are able how appealing an Influencers is based on their physical appearance and coolness. (Chandra & Indrawati, 2023) Furthermore, the partnerships between brands and Social Media Influencers play a significant role on improving purchase intention as consumers can drive consumer and brand engagement through their online messaging.

6.3 Specific strategies for South African automotive brands.

6.3.1 *Selecting the right influencer*

South African motor-brands should consider partnering with social media influencers who are knowledgeable and well informed about cars, influencers who align with the brand image and are able to reach the desired target audience. Additionally, marketers should also prioritise social media influencers who create content that is authentic, engaging and original and a person who resonate for specific LSM group they want to target in a particular campaign.

6.3.2 *Original content creation*

Original content is all about crafting unique and original material that showcases your creativity, rather than simply rehashing or sharing someone else's work. Whether it's written, visual, or in video format, producing your own content allows you to express your ideas authentically and engage your audience with fresh perspectives. Embrace the opportunity to stand out and make your mark with content that is distinctly yours. Marketers should also collaborate with social media influencers to create authentic content which highlights their personal experience with the car, prioritising unique selling features of the car and benefits in a relatable way that aligns with the objective's car-brand and its customer profile.

6.3.3 *Lifestyle Videos*

Marketing practitioners should offer social media influencers exclusive access to new car models prior to their official launch. This strategy will enable influencers to produce unique content featuring the new vehicle, which generates anticipation and encourages potential customers to schedule test drives. Influencers should spend adequate time with the new car, creating videos that highlight its performance, handling, and design elements in various driving conditions, both over short and long distances. If the car is designed for families, it's important to illustrate how it can accommodate family trips, demonstrating its spaciousness for both large and small families. Additionally, content should showcase how the car can be tailored to fit a consumer's daily lifestyle and routine.

6.4 Limitations and Future research

The study has revealed that Social Media Influencers have a great impact on consumer purchase intention once a consumer views an influencer as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and likable. This is a new paradigm shift from consumers relying on traditional gatekeepers such as family, friends, and colleagues to now relying on new 3rd party endorsers/influencers. The rise of the internet has caused a shift in the consumer-decision making process indeed, as followers who are deeply exposed to Social Media Influencer's are more likely to be easily persuaded by influencers when shopping for a motor vehicle. This study sought to understand the role of social media influencers by examining six attributes namely, expertise, credibility, trustworthiness, popularity, likability, and attractiveness. The findings will contribute to already existing literature by shedding more light on the role of influencers on purchase intention.

In this study, which was carried out to reveal the relationship between social media influencers' attributes and purchase intention within motor vehicles, the research limitations are described below:

- It was limited to consumers who actively follow social media influencers
- It was also limited to consumers who own/intend to own a motor vehicle in the near future.
- it was limited to South Africa and only the motor vehicle industry.

Future studies can perhaps investigate the role of social media influencers in the fashion industry which can shed more light on influencer credibility and reveal more insight into parasocial relationships that exist between influencers and their followers. There's also a possibility that more of the hypothesis could have been accepted if the research was carried out in a different industry such as fashion and travel as those are more common industries versus the motor vehicle sector. Furthermore, future research can also investigate the role gender (male vs female) in influencer marketing.

6.5 Conclusion

Consistent with already existing research, an observation to this study is that expertise, trustworthiness, and likability are perceived as significant quality-attributes for social media influencers' effect on purchase intention. Social Media Influencers can help brands build long lasting relationships with customers online by, since influencers are in control of the communication. This research results have demonstrated that social media influencers can positively affect consumer purchase intention. Once they have shown their expertise on a motor vehicle brand, they are able to establish trust with their online community, which in turn helps them to be liked by the consumers. The researcher also noted that social media influencers are increasingly becoming more popular in marketing and represent a growing number of consumers online as the new gate keepers. This implies that marketing managers should work with a social media influencer who can provide his or her online audience with skilled, knowledgeable, dependable, and engaging content in order to shape consumer perception on motor vehicle brand. Singh et. al (2020) discovered in their research of social media influencers that companies are increasingly becoming more dependent on social media influencers to improve their brand image and shape consumer perceptions.

Marketing communication through social media influencers is widely recognized as an effective strategy for shaping consumer behaviour. A growing number of firms have integrated influencer marketing into their digital marketing frameworks. Jung and Im (2021) assert that existing literature suggests that the favourable characteristics of social media influencers significantly enhance their capacity to engage large followings by fostering feelings of empathy and immersion. This emotional connection can lead to a positive shift in consumers' attitudes toward products. Typically, influencer marketing manifests as sponsored posts, whereby companies provide compensation to influencers in exchange for their authentic opinions on products disseminated through their personal social media platforms. However, empirical research has revealed that certain sponsored posts may be interpreted as conventional advertisements. Although some marketers contend that these sponsored recommendations serve as valuable information sources for consumers, their overall efficacy appears to be met with scepticism among certain segments of the audience. (Jung and Im, 2021)

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8 APPENDIXES

8.1 Appendix I: Questionnaire & Consent form



My name is Evans Mlimi; I am a Master of Management student in the field of Strategic Marketing at the Wits Business School in Johannesburg. As a requirement of my academic studies, I must undertake a research project, and my area of research is investigating the **Effects of social media influencers on purchase intention for motor vehicles in South Africa.**

Therefore, you are invited to participate in this research study. The information required from this questionnaire will be used solely for academic purposes. This activity will take you approximately 8-12 minutes to complete. This is an anonymous study and your participation in the survey is strictly confidential. The survey does not ask for any identifiable personal information as anonymity and confidentiality are crucial. Participation is entirely voluntary therefore by proceeding to completing the survey will be considered as consent to participate. There are no costs for participating and no incentives will be given to participants. This evaluation is subjective therefore there is no wrong nor right answer.

You may withdraw from this study at any stage or not answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. In addition, your participation involves no risk, no disadvantage, penalties if you do not choose to participate or withdraw from the study.

Should you have any additional questions or any concerns you are more than welcome to contact me or my supervisor **Dr. Y.K. Saini** to provide any assistance. The study will be

written up as a research report, which will be available online through the university library website.

The link to the survey is found below:

If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-medical), telephone +27(0) 117171408, e-mail hrecnon medical@wits.ac.za

Thank you for your time.

Questionnaire link: https://wits.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cYNLWid6KUyNrfM

1. Please note, by completing and submitting this questionnaire you consent to contribute to the study. By clicking “I grant consent” below, you consent to the following:
 - I am older than 18 years
 - I wish to participate in this research study
 - I have read and understood the information sheet
 - I understand my identity will remain anonymous
 - I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary

 - Yes, I consent
 - No
2. Do you reside in South Africa?
 - Yes
 - No
3. What is your occupation?
 - Post graduate student.
 - Undergraduate student
 - Self-employed.
 - Permanently employed.
 - Unemployed
4. What is your age group?
 - 18-29
 - 20-39
 - 40-49
 - 50-59
 - 60 and above
5. Do you own or intend on owning a one of the following brands?

- Toyota
- Suzuki
- Volkswagen
- BMW
- Kia
- Hyundai
- Other

6. Social media influencers also known as content creators are individuals who create online content using their knowledge, skills, and creativity, to influence their online followers. The growing social media trend has shaped the way for social media influencers who became famous online with their knowledge and expertise on different topics like motor vehicles, food, fashion, travel, music, and a lot more. therefore, Social media influencers may have an impact on purchase intention, because an influencer's product knowledge is intended to have a favourable impact on the audience's perception of the company's brand image.

In South Africa, Motor Vehicle brands make use of popular Social Media Influencers such as Jacob Moshokoa, Anele Mdoda and Donovan Goliath to promote their vehicle brands in order to shape consumer purchase intentions.

Do you follow Social Media Influencers?

- Yes
- No (*should a respondent select "NO", then they will be dropped out of the study*)

7. Which automotive Social Media Influencer do you follow? (select a maximum of 3)
- Jacob Moshokwa
 - Anele Mdoda
 - Donovan Goliath

- Ciro de Siena
- Juliet McGuire
- Witney Ramabulana
- Rego & Dise Khoele
- Zinziswa Mayekiso
- Chad Jones
- Rebaneilwe
- Nasty C
- Elana Afrika
- Melody Molale
- Lulama Wolf
- Zoe Msutwana
- Yoliswa Mqoco
- Thebe Magugu
- Brenden Praise
- Mpoomy Ledwaba
- David Higgings
- Khulekani on wheels
- Nicky Nesh
- Mpho Shami
- Cars by Que
- Kumbi-M on Cars
- Mpumelelo Dlamini
- Vusie Ngubane
- Muzi Sambo
- John Whittle
- Akivan Kemraj
- Other

8. The below contains a list of questions to measure a Social Media Influencer's perceived expertise. Please provide an honest answer, kindly note that there is no right or wrong answer. (Singh et al., 2020)

H₁: Social Media Influencer's perceived expertise significantly affects purchase intention

8.1 I follow an influencer because I consider him/her to be experienced on motor vehicles?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

8.2 I follow an influencer because I consider him/her to be knowledgeable on motor vehicles?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

8.3 I follow an influencer because I consider him/her to be skilled on motor vehicles?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

8.4 I follow an influencer because I consider him/her to be qualified on motor vehicles?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

9. The below contains a list of questions to measure a Social Media Influencer's credibility. Please provide an honest answer, kindly note that there is no right or wrong answer. (Lou & Kim, 2019)

9.1 This influencer knows the product being reviewed.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

9.2 This influencer provides reliable information on motor vehicles?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

9.3 This influencer provides accurate information on motor vehicles.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

9.4 The Influencer is an expert in making a good impression

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

10. The below contains a list of questions to measure a Social Media Influencer's popularity. Please provide an honest answer, kindly note that there is no right or wrong answer. (Nurhandayani, 2019)

H₃: Social Media Influencer's popularity significantly affects purchase intention

10.1 I feel that a Social Media Influencer is well-known

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree.

10.2 I feel that a Social Media Influencer has more followers on their page.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree.

10.3 I feel that a Social Media Influencer endorses reputable car brands.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree.

10.4 I feel that a Social Media Influencer is able to shape my perceptions about cars.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

11. The below contains a list of questions to measure a Social Media Influencer's trustworthiness. Please provide an honest answer, kindly note that there is no right or wrong answer. (Saima & Khan, 2021)

H₄: Social Media Influencer's trustworthiness significantly affects purchase intention.

11.1 I feel that a Social Media Influencer is Sincere.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree.

11.2 I feel that a Social Media Influencer is trustworthy.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree.

11.3 I feel that a Social Media Influencer is legit.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree.

11.4 I feel that a Social Media Influencer is honest.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree

- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree.

12. The below contains a list of questions to measure a Social Media Influencer's Likeability. Please provide an honest answer, kindly note that there is no right or wrong answer. (Masuda et al., 2022)

H₅: Social Media Influencer's likeability significantly affects purchase intention.

11.1 I feel that a Social Media influencer is friendly.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree.

11.2 I feel that a Social Media influencer is warm.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree.

11.3 I feel that a Social Media influencer is approachable.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

- Strongly disagree.

11.4 I feel that a Social Media influencer is appealing.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree.

13. The below contains a list of questions to measure a Social Media Influencer's Attractiveness. Please provide an honest answer, kindly note that there is no right or wrong answer. (Pinto & Paramita, 2021)

H₅: Social Media Influencer's attractiveness significantly affects purchase intention.

12.1 This Social Media Influencer has good Personality.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree.

12.2 This Social Media Influencer has persuasive communication skills.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree.

12.3 A Social Media Influencer has good intellectual abilities.

- Strongly Agree

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree.

12.4 This Social Media Influencer has an attractive physical appearance.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree.

14. **The below contains a list of questions to measure a Social Media Influencer's role on purchase intention. Please provide an honest answer, kindly note that there is no right or wrong answer. (Nurhandayani, 2019)**

H₆: Social Media Influencer's attractiveness significantly affects purchase intention.

14.1 Motor vehicles endorsed by Social Media Influencer draw my attention.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree.

14.2 Motor vehicles endorsed by Social Media Influencers influence my buying decisions?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

14.3 If my favourite influencer endorses a motor vehicle brand, I will buy it.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree.

14.4 I buy a motor vehicle brand that is endorsed by my favourite influencer.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree.

14.5 I feel happy in buying a product endorsed by a famous influencer.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree.

Thank you for your participation!!!

8.2 Appendix II: Cronbach Coefficient Alpha's

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	
0.940	N of Items 4

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
EXP_1_1	2.93	1.263	163
EXP_2_1	2.95	1.251	163
EXP_3_1	2.90	1.284	163
EXP_4_1	2.66	1.167	163

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
EXP_1_1	8.51	11.844	0.863	0.920
EXP_2_1	8.49	11.807	0.880	0.915
EXP_3_1	8.55	11.607	0.878	0.916
EXP_4_1	8.78	12.790	0.814	0.936

--

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.824	4

Item statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
CRE_1_1	3.61	0.951	163
CRE_2_1	3.51	0.945	163
CRE_3_1	3.46	0.964	163
CRE_4_1	3.89	0.861	163

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
CRE_1_1	10.86	5.233	0.675	0.765
CRE_2_1	10.96	4.949	0.769	0.720
CRE_3_1	11.01	5.148	0.686	0.760
CRE_4_1	10.58	6.294	0.473	0.850

--

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.800	2

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
POP_1_1	4.25	0.714	163
POP_2_1	4.07	0.843	163

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
POP_1_1	4.07	0.711	0.676	
POP_2_1	4.25	0.510	0.676	

--

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.880	4

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
TRUST_1_1	3.63	0.956	163
TRUST_2_1	3.69	0.870	163
TRUST_3_1	3.80	0.769	163
TRUST_4_1	3.66	0.848	163

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
TRUST_1_1	11.16	4.925	0.691	0.871
TRUST_2_1	11.09	4.924	0.801	0.822
TRUST_3_1	10.98	5.401	0.779	0.836
TRUST_4_1	11.12	5.281	0.712	0.857

--

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.822	4

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
LIKE_1_1	3.99	0.753	163
LIKE_2_1	3.93	0.810	163
LIKE_3_1	3.90	0.803	163
LIKE_4_1	3.98	0.657	163

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted

LIKE_1_1	11.81	3.525	0.675	0.763
LIKE_2_1	11.87	3.192	0.745	0.727
LIKE_3_1	11.90	3.440	0.644	0.778
LIKE_4_1	11.82	4.147	0.532	0.824

--

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.714	4

Item-Total Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
ATT_1_1	4.10	0.584	163
ATT_2_1	4.08	0.648	163
ATT_3_1	4.04	0.656	163
ATT_4_1	3.89	0.720	163

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
ATT_1_1	12.01	2.241	0.628	0.584
ATT_2_1	12.03	2.351	0.457	0.677
ATT_3_1	12.07	2.192	0.544	0.625
ATT_4_1	12.22	2.284	0.403	0.718

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items

0.892	5
-------	---

Item-Total Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PUR_1_1	3.52	1.014	163
PUR_2_1	3.15	1.136	163
PUR_3_1	2.77	1.090	163
PUR_4_1	2.51	1.130	163
PUR_5_1	2.82	1.123	163

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PUR_1_1	11.25	15.115	0.630	0.891
PUR_2_1	11.62	13.608	0.742	0.867
PUR_3_1	12.00	13.370	0.822	0.849
PUR_4_1	12.26	13.504	0.763	0.862
PUR_5_1	11.96	13.794	0.726	0.871

8.3 Appendix III: P-Values

Regression Weights: (Group number 1- default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
EXP_4_1	<---	EXP	1				
EXP_3_1	<---	EXP	1.189	0.078	15.211	***	
EXP_2_1	<---	EXP	1.188	0.075	15.888	***	
EXP_1_1	<---	EXP	1.166	0.077	15.135	***	
CRE_4_1	<---	CRE	1				
CRE_3_1	<---	CRE	1.924	0.3	6.423	***	
CRE_2_1	<---	CRE	1.947	0.3	6.483	***	
CRE_1_1	<---	CRE	1.606	0.268	5.992	***	
TRUST_4_1	<---	TRUST	1				
TRUST_3_1	<---	TRUST	0.977	0.086	11.412	***	
TRUST_2_1	<---	TRUST	1.121	0.097	11.592	***	
TRUST_1_1	<---	TRUST	1.121	0.108	10.364	***	
POP_2_1	<---	POP	1.662	0.37	4.489	***	
POP_1_1	<---	POP	1				
LIKE_4_1	<---	LIKE	1				
LIKE_3_1	<---	LIKE	1.474	0.204	7.215	***	
LIKE_2_1	<---	LIKE	1.698	0.218	7.787	***	
LIKE_1_1	<---	LIKE	1.464	0.196	7.48	***	

ATT_4_1	<---	ATT	1			
ATT_3_1	<---	ATT	1.24	0.227	5.467	***
ATT_2_1	<---	ATT	0.934	0.198	4.717	***
ATT_1_1	<---	ATT	1.333	0.231	5.782	***
PUR_4_1	<---	PUR	1			
PUR_3_1	<---	PUR	1.011	0.072	13.987	***
PUR_2_1	<---	PUR	0.927	0.08	11.579	***
PUR_1_1	<---	PUR	0.697	0.076	9.143	***
PUR_5_1	<---	PUR	0.919	0.079	11.635	***

Variances: (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
EXP	0.95	0.146	6.515	***	
CRE	0.181	0.057	3.205	0.001	
TRUST	0.436	0.076	5.731	***	
POP	0.244	0.07	3.491	***	
LIKE	0.158	0.04	4.003	***	
ATT	0.128	0.042	3.065	0.002	
PUR	0.906	0.14	6.489	***	
e1	0.403	0.052	7.804	***	
e2	0.296	0.045	6.638	***	
e3	0.216	0.037	5.773	***	
e4	0.294	0.044	6.714	***	
e5	0.555	0.064	8.658	***	
e6	0.252	0.042	5.971	***	
e7	0.201	0.039	5.198	***	
e8	0.432	0.055	7.838	***	
e9	0.279	0.037	7.457	***	
e10	0.171	0.026	6.576	***	
e11	0.205	0.032	6.328	***	
e12	0.362	0.048	7.51	***	
e13	0.033	0.14	0.239	0.811	
e14	0.264	0.058	4.519	***	
e15	0.271	0.033	8.157	***	
e16	0.297	0.041	7.29	***	

e17	0.195	0.035	5.545	***
e18	0.225	0.033	6.747	***
e19	0.387	0.047	8.299	***
e20	0.23	0.033	7.077	***
e21	0.305	0.037	8.22	***
e22	0.111	0.024	4.563	***
e23	0.362	0.054	6.739	***
e24	0.255	0.044	5.746	***
e25	0.505	0.066	7.635	***
e26	0.582	0.07	8.339	***
e27	0.489	0.064	7.611	***

Covariances: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
EXP	<-->	CRE	0.259	0.057	4.563	***	
EXP	<-->	TRUST	0.223	0.06	3.688	***	
EXP	<-->	POP	0.021	0.04	0.532	0.595	
EXP	<-->	LIKE	0.047	0.035	1.353	0.176	
EXP	<-->	ATT	0.02	0.032	0.638	0.524	
EXP	<-->	PUR	0.434	0.091	4.785	***	
CRE	<-->	TRUST	0.17	0.039	4.39	***	
CRE	<-->	POP	0.037	0.021	1.817	0.069	
CRE	<-->	LIKE	0.056	0.019	2.978	0.003	
CRE	<-->	ATT	0.035	0.016	2.134	0.033	
CRE	<-->	PUR	0.163	0.045	3.616	***	
TRUST	<-->	POP	0.028	0.029	0.975	0.33	
TRUST	<-->	LIKE	0.151	0.032	4.668	***	
TRUST	<-->	ATT	0.123	0.031	3.927	***	
TRUST	<-->	PUR	0.262	0.062	4.224	***	
POP	<-->	LIKE	0.046	0.021	2.234	0.025	
POP	<-->	ATT	0.052	0.021	2.423	0.015	
POP	<-->	PUR	0.11	0.047	2.342	0.019	
LIKE	<-->	ATT	0.09	0.023	3.983	***	
LIKE	<-->	PUR	0.091	0.036	2.501	0.012	
ATT	<-->	PUR	0.091	0.036	2.565	0.01	

Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate
EXP_1_1	<---	EXP	0.903
EXP_2_1	<---	EXP	0.928
EXP_3_1	<---	EXP	0.905
EXP_4_1	<---	EXP	0.838
CRE_1_1	<---	CRE	0.721
CRE_2_1	<---	CRE	0.879
CRE_3_1	<---	CRE	0.852
CRE_4_1	<---	CRE	0.496
POP_1_1	<---	POP	0.693
POP_2_1	<---	POP	0.976
TRUST_1_1	<---	TRUST	0.776
TRUST_2_1	<---	TRUST	0.853
TRUST_3_1	<---	TRUST	0.842
TRUST_4_1	<---	TRUST	0.781
LIKE_1_1	<---	LIKE	0.775
LIKE_2_1	<---	LIKE	0.837
LIKE_3_1	<---	LIKE	0.733
LIKE_4_1	<---	LIKE	0.608
ATT_1_1	<---	ATT	0.821
ATT_2_1	<---	ATT	0.519
ATT_3_1	<---	ATT	0.679
ATT_4_1	<---	ATT	0.499
PUR_1_1	<---	PUR	0.657

PUR_2_1	<---	PUR	0.779
PUR_3_1	<---	PUR	0.886
PUR_4_1	<---	PUR	0.845
PUR_5_1	<---	PUR	0.781

Correlations: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate
EXP	<-->	CRE	0.625
EXP	<-->	TRUST	0.346
EXP	<-->	POP	0.044
EXP	<-->	LIKE	0.121
EXP	<-->	ATT	0.059
EXP	<-->	PUR	0.467
CRE	<-->	TRUST	0.604
CRE	<-->	POP	0.178
CRE	<-->	LIKE	0.332
CRE	<-->	ATT	0.229
CRE	<-->	PUR	0.402
TRUST	<-->	POP	0.085
TRUST	<-->	LIKE	0.577
TRUST	<-->	ATT	0.52
TRUST	<-->	PUR	0.416
POP	<-->	LIKE	0.235
POP	<-->	ATT	0.292
POP	<-->	PUR	0.235
LIKE	<-->	ATT	0.632
LIKE	<-->	PUR	0.239
ATT	<-->	PUR	0.267

8.4 Ethics certificate

Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg



Wits Business School Ethics Committee

Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

Ethics Clearance Certificate

Ethics protocol number: WBS/SM1297893/929

This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (below).

This certificate is only valid if permission has been granted by the Registrar's Office of Wits University.

Project title	Social media influencers and purchase intention for motor vehicles in South Africa
Investigator / Researcher	Mr Evans Mlimi
Nature of Project	MM (Strategic Marketing)
Decision of the Committee	Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality.
Issue Date of Certificate	2023-07-28
Expiry date	Date of submission of the project / research report
Chairperson	Dr Pius Oba  +27 11 717 3976 +27 82 733 6587 pius.oba@wits.ac.za 

Declaration by Researcher

One copy must be signed by the Researcher and returned to the Chairperson of the Wits Business School Ethics Committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Mimi Evans VWPXI
9BA6F65C4682D27E

Signature

28/07/2023

Date:

8.5 Turn it Report

Match Overview			×
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