



## Research Exposé:

# Number of followers: how does it affect digital influencers' impact on impulsive purchasing behavior?

An intercultural investigation

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## **Abstract**

Influencer marketing is becoming a more and more popular marketing tool among businesses. The number and variety of digital influencers are constantly increasing. Diversity is observed in the areas of expertise, the number of followers and the products endorsed. Some influencers initially gained popularity online, whereas others first developed their image and reputation offline. While online shopping is constantly acquiring popularity worldwide, digital influencers became an ossified part of it, particularly social commerce. Simultaneously with the development of social commerce, the role of impulsive buying behavior in the customer journey has significantly increased. Digital influencers are empowered to motivate that behavior through para-social interaction and being perceived as a credible source of information online. This study will explore the link between the number of followers and the influence of digital influencers on impulsive purchasing behavior in social commerce. The study will be conducted in a form of an online questionnaire. It will include 18-30 years old Instagram users from Belarus and Italy, which will allow the identification of cultural differences. Practitioners and academics will benefit from the study's results through a more comprehensive knowledge of the social media influencer and impulsive purchasing behavior phenomena.

*Keywords:* influencer marketing, para-social interaction, source credibility, number of followers, impulsive purchasing behavior, social commerce, Instagram

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## List of Abbreviations

|            |                         |
|------------|-------------------------|
| DI         | Digital Influencer      |
| PSI        | Para-social Interaction |
| S-commerce | Social Commerce         |
| SMI        | Social Media Influencer |
| SNS        | Social Networking Sites |

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## 1. Introduction

The global social commerce (s-commerce) market is constantly growing for more than a decade since its establishment. In 2021 the size of the market reached USD 584.91 billion and is expected to grow up to USD 727.63 billion in 2022. The compound annual growth rate of the s-commerce market during 2022-2030 is expected to be 30.8%, hence the market is supposed to reach the value of USD 6.2 trillion by 2030 (Grand view research, 2020).

It has been proved that digital influencers (DI) have conspicuous impacts on customers in s-commerce (Wang & Huang, 2022). The popularity and importance of influencer marketing are growing parallel with the s-commerce market's development. Partnership with influencers has become a prevalent marketing tool used by s-commerce companies and offline businesses (Harrigan et al., 2021). There is a tendency among companies to abandon conventional advertising techniques and instead put focus on social media influencers (SMI) because they endorse brands' products and services to their followers, who are simultaneously a targeting audience of the enterprises (Abidin, 2016). Thus, DI is a significant intermediary between companies and potential customers since they can impact trends, lifestyles, and even the ideas of their followers (Berne-Manero, 2020).

The increasing popularity of the s-commerce market and the role that digital influencers play in it explains the recent mounting interest of researchers and practitioners both in the market itself and the SMI, as well as in their connection with impulsive purchasing behavior. Even though the topic was widely researched the resulting scholarly work remains incomplete, contradictional, and limited (Vrontis et al., 2021), which leaves room for future research.

Impulsive purchasing is the most common buying behavior (Hausman, 2000). According to Saleh (2017), 84% of all shoppers have experienced impulsive purchases meaning that they obtained goods unplanned, and around 40% of all online consumption has been done impulsively.

Researchers found that DI have a positive impact on impulsive purchasing behavior (Hashem T., 2021) primarily due to the perceived credibility they have among their followers (Al-Emadi & Yahia, 2020; Munnukka et al., 2019; Reinikainen et al., 2020; Sakib et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020) and the illusory friendship they build as a result of para-social

interaction (Hu et al., 2020). In its' turn, credibility is principally based on trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise (Breves et al., 2019; Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Schouten et al., 2020). An additional stimulator of impulsive purchasing behavior is the desire of the followers to mimic favorite influencers, which also builds the people's stickiness to the DI (Hu et al., 2020). Scholars discovered that online peers positively impact impulsive purchasing behavior as well (Hu et al., 2019).

Peers can be considered as small influencers. While it was found that both have an impact on impulsive purchasing behavior in s-commerce, the degree of equivalence of it was not examined in the existing literature. Academics and practitioners require a deeper investigation of the SMI phenomenon to obtain profound knowledge of it (Vrontis et al., 2021). Researchers mentioned that differences between SMI types should be studied as well as the variety in followers' replies caused by a distinction between SMI and the reasons for those effects (Al-Emadi & Yahia, 2020; Boerman, 2020; De Veirman et al., 2017; Voorveld, 2019; Xiao et al., 2018). Likewise, existing literature shows a lack of cross-cultural comparison on this topic (Bashar A. et al., 2022) due to the limited geography of the existing research (Vrontis et al., 2021). Most of the research on influencer marketing was focused on American and Chinese markets or did not specify the origins of the participants (Vrontis et al., 2021).

Abdelsalam et al. (2020) highlighted the essence of examining the reasons and motives of online impulsive purchasing behavior. In general, current research has a lack of studies on actual impulsive purchasing behavior in s-commerce. Most of the work focuses on impulsive purchase intention (Hu et al., 2019). The research of impulsive purchasing behavior in s-commerce is mostly conducted for the Asian market, notably China (Abdelsalam et al., 2020). Even though researchers found that culture has an effect on purchasing behavior (Pookulangara & Koesler, 2011), a variety of the cultures studied is missing. Furthermore, a comparison of developed and emerging countries is not present, while valuable insights can be found there (Vrontis et al., 2021).

Both academics and practitioners will be able to benefit from the insights of the current study. Intended contributions to the literature include deeper knowledge of the SMI phenomenon and testing the existing theories on the cultures that have not been used before. Practitioners will benefit from a more comprehensive knowledge of the influencer types and

their effect on the consumers' impulsive behavior while choosing an opinion leader for the partnership.

The current research aims to assess the effects of the number of followers on digital influencers' impact on impulsive purchasing behavior in social commerce.

Since it was found that the perceived credibility of the influencers and the para-social interaction (PSI) they build with their followers have a compelling positive effect on purchase intention (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019) and impulsive buying (Xiang et al., 2016, Hu et al., 2019) in s-commerce, source credibility theory (Ohanian, 1990) and PSI theory (Horton & Wohl, 1956) are used as a theoretical basis of the research.

The following chapters will go into detail about the content of the study. Upcoming chapters will illustrate the research's theoretical framing by providing explanations of the main concepts and theories. Further literature overview will be given, and based on these two chapters research model will be developed, and hypotheses regarding the model will be formulated. The methodology section will describe the research design, application domain, target sample, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures. The expected contributions of the study will be briefly explained following up the chapter overview and work plan for the upcoming months and the list of references used to create the theoretical support for the study.

## **2. Theoretical Framing**

This research will analyze the linkage between the number of followers and the influencing power of SMI on impulsive purchasing behavior in s-commerce. Hence it is worth it to first properly define the terms of s-commerce, impulsive purchasing behavior, and its patterns in an online context, explain who digital influencers are and how they can be classified based on the number of followers they have. Secondly, this information needs to be connected to the theories of para-social interaction and source credibility. In this Chapter, the definitions of the terms mentioned above will be given and the theories that will be useful for future research will be explained as well.

### **2.1 Impulsive purchasing behavior in an online context**

Online shopping is a trendy pastime rapidly increasing its popularity globally (Erjavec & Manfreda, 2021; Shao et al., 2022, Gulfranz et al., 2022). According to Coppola (2021),



worldwide e-commerce sales are expected to rise by 22,43% by the end of 2022 compared to 2021. Due to the wideness of the market online impulse buying will regularly take place on it (Wu et al., 2020). Empirical evidence of this assumption can be found in the literature: Johnson (2021) gives the example of the UK, whose inhabitants spend around 1 billion pounds on impulsive purchases monthly and 78% of the adults experience this type of shopping; Carter (2018) states that 80% of adult Americans have made impulsive purchases; Chan et al., (2017) concluded that up to 40% of global online acquisitions are impulsive. These also prove the importance of impulsive buying behavior to the global economy (Badgaiyan et al., 2016).

Commonly, impulsive purchases are the ones which has not been planned in advance and for which a person did not have any intention or urge for a long time, the purchases which have not been contemplated properly (Zafar et al., 2021). By impulsive buying behavior researchers most often refer to the sudden and quick purchasing behavior which is not accompanied by a thoughtful, deliberate assessment of substitute options as well as no or little value is given to the induced consequences (Sharma et al., 2010). Hence impulsive purchasing behavior is oftentimes classified as an irrational type of behavior (Chung et al., 2017).

Stern (1962) identified 4 types of impulsive buying: pure, reminder, suggestion, and planned impulsive buying. The first one – pure impulsive buying – is motivated by initial excitement caused by the new product. The second one – reminder impulsive buying – can be observed when a person accidentally sees a product or any type of advertising for it and it reminds him about the potential need to obtain the product. Suggestion impulsive buying occurs after a consumer met a touch point of a product and it stimulates the need for the product even if no previous knowledge of the item existed in the person's mind. And the last one – planned impulsive buying – takes place when a consumer identifies a need in advance and is waiting for special offers or promotions to purchase a good (Abdelsalam et al., 2020; Stern, 1962).

Therefore, to be classified as impulsive, a buying decision should correspond to all of the following aspects: it is "spontaneous and unplanned"; the buyers do not give much thought to how their choices will affect them in the future; and "the purchasing decision is triggered by some irresistible and difficult-to-control dispositional, situational or sociodemographic temptations" (Gulfranz et al., 2022). In their study Gulfranz et al. (2022)

stated that by creating a need for gratification and a strong emotional connection, these temptations may lead to an urgent need to buy a product now, at the current moment.

With the development of e-commerce, the number of impulsive purchases increased due to the ease of access to the marketplace itself and the broader range of products in particular, along with the simplification of transaction procedures (Hu et al., 2019), and the elimination of the obstacle of the working hours (Chan et al., 2017). Despite that, some researchers showed concerns about this facilitation saying that a lack of social contexts such as communication with assistants and companions, may lead to a decrease in impulsive buying (Madhavaram & Laverie, 2004). The solution to these possible sales losses has become s-commerce which stimulated the growth of impulsive buying tendency thanks to its four crucial characteristics: interactivity, collaboration, community, and social aspects (Abdelsalam et al., 2020). There is a variety of definitions of s-commerce, to summarize, this term is used to describe the execution of e-commerce operations with the assistance of social media and Web 2.0 technologies (Hajli et al., 2017).

Plenty of special s-commerce platforms have been developed, and social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and others have been smoothly transformed into s-commerce websites. Users of SNS are exposed to a plethora of data from businesses, the media, friends, celebrities, and experts, which triggers them to make impulsive purchases (Huang, 2016). In these conditions, impulsive purchasing is inevitable, which explains why most of the purchases in s-commerce are considered impulsive (Abdelsalam et al., 2020).

The following categories of factors were identified among the ones influencing impulsive purchasing behavior in an online context, specifically in s-commerce: website-related factors, situational or social factors, marketing factors, and consumer/individual characteristics (Abdelsalam et al., 2020). Additionally, it was indicated that marketing through influencers significantly impacts people's impulsive behavior toward buying products recommended by influencers. This is due to a number of factors, the most significant of which is the person's connection to a particular digital influencer and not others, as well as the fact that the influencer is a consumer and, as a result, viewed as a provider of a more honest review of the product and brand than traditional advertising channels (Hashem, 2021).

Researchers do not give any evaluation of impulsive buying as a positive or negative phenomenon. However, as an increasing tendency, impulsive buying negatively impacts sustainable business practices because it causes people to buy products they do not really need and then discard them, which also stimulates the growth of environmental waste (Gulfraz et al., 2022).

## **2.2 Digital influencers and their classification**

Businesses' social network presence has recently become an essential component of their marketing plans. Companies are promoted not only via professionally branded posts and fan pages but also through User Generated Content, which refers to the content created by regular website users, including their reviews and opinions about particular products (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). This type of content has been proven to be the most effective one in advertising (Welbourne & Grant, 2016; Aral et al., 2013; Lipizzi et al., 2015). Thus, businesses and customers collaborate to share information about products (Merz et al., 2018; Shi et al., 2016), thereby transferring the traditional word-of-mouth phenomenon into the online context and creating electronic word-of-mouth (Kapoor et al., 2018).

In the literature the most active creators of the content are addressed by a variety of terms which are: bloggers (Zhang et al., 2017), opinion leaders (Kuksov & Liao, 2019; Lin et al., 2018; Bamaka et al., 2019), opinion leaders in virtual communities (Charest & Bouffard, 2015; Li et al., 2013; Wei & Lu, 2013), market mavens (Harrigan et al., 2021), online celebrities (Khamis et al., 2017), social media influencers (Audrezet et al., 2018), and celebrities online (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Thus, a digital influencer (DI) is a person whose account on a SNS has a consistent and sizeable number of followers (Yi et al., 2017; Harrigan et al., 2021) and who has a significant impact on the followers' attitudes and behaviors (Godey et al., 2016). The number of followers impacts the DI popularity (De Veirman et al., 2017). Likewise, the number of followers and likes can represent the attitude of the public toward the influencer (Yi et al., 2017).

Influencers can be found on every topic on all the existing SNS; such branches include fashion, healthy lifestyle, sport and training, beauty, traveling, etc. (Raggatt et al., 2018; Klassen et al., 2018). Most influencers are millennials; however, people of all ages are present among bloggers. Furthermore, DI is not necessarily human beings. There are some representatives of pets, and AI-generated accounts (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

The appearance of digital influencers encouraged the development of influencer marketing. Companies of different business sectors started to use influencers to reach target audiences and promote their products; after some time, this tool proved its efficiency (Harrigan et al., 2021). However, diversity of the influencers types creates an additional issue of choosing a right person for the partnership as it is not always clear which influencer suits the company better and will reach the customers in the most efficient way (De Veirman et al., 2017).

Owing to influencers' ability to engage with a large number of followers, influencer marketing is one of the fastest-growing marketing approaches and an important subfield of marketing research (Boerman, 2020) since customers are more likely to trust an influencer than a traditional marketing campaign (Evans et al., 2017). Influencer marketing has a noticeable impact on consumers' decision-making process. Influencers can persuade customers to buy particular goods by advertising them on their social media pages (Bakker, 2018).

Based on the number of followers, perceived authenticity, accessibility, expertise and cultural capital Campbell & Farrell (2020) divided digital influencers into 5 categories: celebrity influencers, mega-influencers, macro-influencers, micro-influencers, and nano-influencers.

Celebrity influencers have over 1 million followers. They first became popular offline and gained followers on SNS due to their name and image, which now are used to support their main professional activities such as being an actress, singer, professional football player, etc. (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). This type of influencer usually partners with brands related to their profession, which allows celebrity influencers to have a high level of perceived expertise. Celebrity influencers ask companies for high fees despite of low level of brand engagement stimulated by the posts of these influencers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

Other types of influencers mainly gained their popularity in social media. Researchers identify them as "ordinary" (Al-Emadi & Ben Yahia, 2020) or non-traditional celebrities (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Mega-influencers have over 1 million followers, they are perceived to have a very high level of expertise but are often not known and popular besides their fan base. Mega-influencers frequently tie their brands with paid agreements more closely than celebrity influencers do (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

Macro-influencers have from 100 000 to 1 million followers, and micro-influencers gained 10 000 – 100 000 followers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Boerman (2020) combines these two types into meso-influencers. It is the largest group of influencers and they are considered to be full-time, professional influencers who created the realm of "web celebrities" (Boerman, 2020). The fans of these opinion leaders usually share the same geographical location and culture (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

Nano-influencers have the smallest number of followers among the others – up to 10 000 (Campbell & Farrell, 2020), they are "normal" people (Boerman, 2020), who are only starting in their influence careers, and their supporters are primary friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. As nano-influencers are aimed to create their brands in social media and are not well familiar with the industry yet, they are more open to unpaid partnerships with brands in exchange for networking opportunities. Nano-influencers frequently have the best engagement rates of all influencer types due to the advantages of personal accessibility and the high perceived authenticity they provide to their followers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

While Boerman (2020) divides influencers into 93 groups ("micro-, meso-, and macro-influencers"), he does not take into consideration whether a person gained popularity directly in social media or before. Therefore in future research classification of Campbell & Farrell (2020) and Boerman (2020) will be combined. The following categories of influencers will be used: celebrity influencers, mega-influencers, meso-influencers, and nano-influencers.

### **2.3 Para-social interaction in social commerce**

Initially, the theory of para-social interaction (PSI) describes the relationships arising between a viewer and a performer (Horton & Wohl, 1956) when a spectator experience an illusory feeling of intimacy, similar to the one arising in genuine interpersonal connections (Dibble et al., 2016). While exploring communication between a TV performer and a viewer Hartmann & Goldhoorn (2011) stated that "verbal and bodily addressing", for instance simulation of eye contact and gestures towards the audience, cause subconscious involvement of the viewer in the interaction and gives an illusion of exposure to traditional communication.

In s-commerce PSI is defined as virtual relationships between digital influencers and their followers arising online (Cohen et al., 2018). PSI is considered to be opposed to social interaction because it is a one-sided communication, where SMI build an online relationship

with their audience through active interaction (Kassing et al., 2010). The performer may have an impact on such a relationship even if they are ignorant of it owing to the self-establishment of this type of relationship (Kelman, 1958). Followers themselves develop PSI based on the content posted by an online celebrity or by other followers of the same page (Kim & Kim, 2017).

However, in modern social media platforms for instance Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, the relationship between an influencer and users are not unidirectional, since followers can like, comment, and discuss the content between themselves as well as with the digital influencer. Even though it is not possible for bloggers to reply to every follower because of the big number of them (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Hence, PSI in s-commerce cannot be viewed as truly bidimensional communication and the friendship between an influencer and a follower is more illusory than real which corresponds to the original definition of PSI (Lee & Watkins, 2016).

When it comes to influencer marketing, SMI should be able to win over their followers' trust to be able to have an influence on them (Lou & Yuan, 2019), and it is possible thanks to the PSI. According to Lou & Yuan (2019), consumers perceive an influencer's viewpoint to be nearly as trustworthy as the one offered by a close friend. Customers occasionally recall particular products solely because they have seen influencers advertising them and can more quickly link to that product (Johnstone & Lindh, 2017).

PSI in s-commerce claimed a high interest of the researchers. For example, Kim et al. (2015) discovered a positive correlation between using SNS and developing para-social relationships with celebrities. Further, a positive link between PSI and purchase intention was found by Hwang & Zhang (2018), they named empathy and the low self-esteem of the followers as influencing factors for this correlation. Sokolova & Kefi (2019) proved a positive impact of PSI on purchase intention and noticed that the younger the generation of followers, the more they tend to form a kind of addiction to the influencers' content rather than an illusory friendship with the opinion leader. Furthermore, Xiang et al. (2016) showed that PSI has a positive impact on impulsive purchasing behavior in s-commerce.

## **2.4 Source Credibility**

The term source credibility usually refers to "a communicator's positive characteristics that affect the receiver's acceptance of a message" (Ohanian, 1990). The credibility of a

digital influencer is perceived to be one of the major factors influencing purchasing decisions in s-commerce (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). On Instagram and Facebook, for example, SMI who gained their popularity initially in social media – "ordinary" celebrities – tend to add more credibility to the products they endorse in comparison with traditional celebrities who add a symbolic image to the promoted goods (Al-Emadi & Ben Yahia, 2020).

Source credibility theory is frequently used to justify the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement. Given that influencers in influencer marketing play the same roles as celebrities in brand endorsements, the efficacy of their endorsements is significantly influenced by the legitimacy of such endorsements (Lou & Kim, 2019). Source credibility theory states that consumers are more likely to be persuaded if the information is presented to them by a highly credible source (Ohanian, 1990).

Originally source credibility was developed as a bi-dimensional concept that included expertise and trustworthiness (Hovland et al., 1953). Hovland et al. (1953) interpreted expertise as "the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions", and trustworthiness as "the degree of confidence in the communicator's intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid". McGuire (1985) and Ohanian (1990) further presented source attractiveness as a third dimension, referring to a source's perceived physical beauty and desirability.

In contrast to traditional celebrities, the expertise of digital influencers does not always connect to their profession; it is more linked to their experience and the topic of their social media page (Al-Emadi & Ben Yahia, 2020). For instance, a blogger not necessarily needs to be a professional makeup artist to promote make-up products. Likewise, not only professional chefs recommend recipes or restaurants.

Nevertheless, the audience still considers opinion leaders as experts in the areas they endorse (Al-Emadi & Ben Yahia, 2020). This is consistent with earlier studies that found that it does not play a significant role in whether an endorser claims to be an expert or not. Instead, whether or not customers view them as experts is important (Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian, 1990).

Lou & Yuan (2019) stated that trust driven by a particular situation in which an influencer was involved to the perception of this influencer as an expert in that specific field. Additionally, a partnership with a brand that fits the influencer's topic and image has a

positive impact on the brand's perceived credibility and on the customers' attitude toward the brand (Breves et al., 2019).

According to Djafarova & Rushworth (2017), female users purchasing behavior tend to be more affected by celebrity endorsement, and non-traditional celebrities have a higher level of credibility than traditional ones.

### **3. Literature Review**

A total of 79 papers have been analyzed to develop this research. Studies and articles for the literature review have been selected with the help of the following databases: Publish or Perish, Google Scholar, ACM Digital Library, JSTOR, Web of Science, Emerald Insight, and Elsevier. Keywords such as social commerce, impulsive purchasing behavior, influencer marketing, para-social interaction, and credibility have been used to retrieve the appropriate literature. Some papers have been retrieved inside the primary papers in their sources. Furthermore, documents that were not journaled papers, reliable statistical sources, or conference papers were excluded from the research.



**Table 1***Literature Review*

| Reference   | SJR       | Main findings   |
|---|-----------|---|
| <p>Al-Emadi, F. A., &amp; Ben Yahia, I. (2020). <b>Ordinary celebrities related criteria to harvest fame and influence on social media.</b> <i>Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing</i>, 14(2), 195–213.<br/> <a href="https://doi.org/10.1108/jrim-02-2018-0031">https://doi.org/10.1108/jrim-02-2018-0031</a></p>   | 1.56 (Q1) | <p>While focusing on ordinary celebrities, it was found that the credibility of the opinion leader is the major factor influencing followers on social media. There is no necessity for the influencer to have professional experience or to have a respected position offline to gain trust from the audience, the expertise is measured by the blogger's experience related to the endorsed product. Withal fans anticipate truthful reviews from the influencers after they experienced the product. Findings also show that achieving opinion leadership on social media needs a benevolent mindset of the influencer as well as the personality of the digital influencer is important for followers. The results show that video and audio communication between an influencer and followers is preferred over textual one, along with the quality of the images and videos must be high.</p> |
| <p>Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C., &amp; Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2020). <b>Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and consequences of opinion leadership.</b> <i>Journal of Business Research</i>, 117(117), 510–519.<br/> <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.005">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.005</a></p>   | 2.32 (Q1) | <p>Pivotal factors for the person to be seen as an opinion leader on social networking websites are originality and uniqueness. Consumer behavior toward the fashion industry (intention to follow fashion advice posted) and the influencer (intention to engage in the account and suggest it) is influenced by opinion leadership. The influence of opinion leadership on the intention to follow published advice is reinforced by the perception that the account fits the customer's personality.</p>   |
| <p>De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., &amp; Hudders, L. (2017). <b>Marketing through Instagram influencers: the impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude.</b> <i>International Journal of Advertising</i>, 36(5), 798–828.<br/> <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035">https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035</a></p> | 1.74 (Q1) | <p>Popularity is influenced by a user's number of followers. A high number of followers results in higher likeability of the influencer partially because of the higher popularity, however, if influencers follow a low number of accounts themselves it can have a negative effect on the popular influencers' likeability. Additionally, partnering with influencers that have large followings may not be the best marketing strategy for promoting diverse items because it reduces the brand's perceived uniqueness and, as a result, brand attitudes.</p>  |
| <p>Djafarova, E., &amp; Rushworth, C. (2017). <b>Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female</b></p>  | 2.17 (Q1) | <p>Young female users' purchase decisions are influenced by celebrities on Instagram. Non-traditional digital influencers have more influence since participants view them as more credible and can relate to them more than to</p>   |

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|---|--------------|--|
| users. <i>Computers in Human Behavior</i> , 68(1), 1–7.<br><a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.009">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.009</a>  |              | traditional celebrities.   |
| Djafarova, E., & Trofimenko, O. (2018). <b>"Instafamous" – Credibility and self-presentation of micro-celebrities on Social Media.</b> <i>Information, Communication &amp; Society</i> , 22(10), 1–15.<br><a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2018.1438491">https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2018.1438491</a>                         | 1.97<br>(Q1) | The research explores the connections between source credibility, self-presentation, and consumer attitudes toward micro-celebrity endorsements. Micro-celebrities are perceived as a credible source of information however at the beginning of Instagram's popularity the level of credibility was higher while now the trust has diminished due to the dissemination of advertisement posts in social networks.   |
| Hu, X., Chen, X., & Davison, R. M. (2019). <b>Social Support, Source Credibility, Social Influence, and Impulsive Purchase Behavior in Social Commerce.</b> <i>International Journal of Electronic Commerce</i> , 23(3), 297–327. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/10864415.2019.1619905">https://doi.org/10.1080/10864415.2019.1619905</a> | 1.72<br>(Q1) | Peers have a positive impact on impulsive purchasing behavior in social commerce due to their expertise and trustworthiness, which is related to social influence. Information exchange and social support affect social influence among consumers. Individuals alter buying plans after considering suggestions and comments from peers. Furthermore, the behavior of the individual is based on what is considered normal by others. Impulsive buying behavior is considerably influenced by an individual's innate personal impulsiveness.  |
| Huang, L.-T. (2016). <b>Flow and social capital theory in online impulse buying.</b> <i>Journal of Business Research</i> , 69(6), 2277–2283. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.12.042">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.12.042</a>  | 2.32<br>(Q1) | Peers on social networking websites have a positive impact on the urge to buy impulsively and consequently on impulsive buying behavior.   |
| Kay, S., Mulcahy, R., & Parkinson, J. (2020). <b>When less is more: the impact of macro and micro social media influencers' disclosure.</b> <i>Journal of Marketing Management</i> , 36(3-4), 1–31.<br><a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257x.2020.1718740">https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257x.2020.1718740</a>                            | 1.24<br>(Q1) | The research explores how disclosure of advertising sponsorship made by influencer affect consumers' appraisal of the product and the difference between micro- and macro-influencers in these terms. Followers of micro-influencers show more detailed knowledge of the product. Consumers following the influencer who discloses perceive the endorsed product as more attractive. Along with the purchase intentions level of the followers of micro-influencers are higher than the ones of macro-influencers followers in the condition when micro-influencers reveal their sponsors while macro-influencers do not do it. Disclosure of the post's sponsorship has a positive impact on purchase intentions. |
| Kim, M., & Kim, J. (2020). <b>How does a celebrity make fans happy? Interaction between celebrities and fans in the social media context.</b> <i>Computers in Human Behavior</i> , 111, 106419.   | 2.17<br>(Q1) | Based on PSI theory it has been found that language similarity, interest similarity, and interaction frequency have a significant positive influence on the self-congruity of the follower and online friendship between influencers and their audience. Additionally, the findings show strong connections  |

|   |                      |   |
|---|----------------------|---|
| <p><a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106419">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106419</a></p>  |                      | <p>between self-congruity, friendship, life quality, well-being, commitment, and loyalty.</p>   |
| <p>Lou, C., &amp; Kim, H. K. (2019). <b>Fancying the New Rich and Famous? Explicating the Roles of Influencer Content, Credibility, and Parental Mediation in Adolescents' Para-social Relationship, Materialism, and Purchase Intentions.</b> <i>Frontiers in Psychology, 10</i>.<br/> <a href="https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02567">https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02567</a></p> | <p>0.87<br/>(Q1)</p> | <p>The entertainment value of influencer-generated content, an influencer's expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and followers' perceptions of their favorite influencers as being similar to them are all positively correlated with the PSI between adolescent followers and their favorite influencers, which is then linked to adolescent materialistic views and purchase intentions.</p> |
| <p>Sokolova, K., &amp; Kefi, H. (2019). <b>Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and para-social interaction influence purchase intentions.</b> <i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 53(1)</i>, 101742<br/> <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.011">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.011</a></p>            | <p>2.26<br/>(Q1)</p> | <p>The credibility of the digital influencers and the PSI they build with their followers have a positive effect on purchase intention. The similarity of beliefs, education, and social status is positively linked to PSI, while physical attractiveness either does not affect PSI or has a negative correlation.</p>  |
| <p>Xiang, L., Zheng, X., Lee, M. K. O., &amp; Zhao, D. (2016). <b>Exploring consumers' impulse buying behavior on social commerce platform: The role of para-social interaction.</b> <i>International Journal of Information Management, 36(3)</i>, 333–347.<br/> <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2015.11.002">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2015.11.002</a></p>         | <p>4.58<br/>(Q1)</p> | <p>Impulsive purchase tendencies are influenced by PSI, along with social-relevant elements of social commerce platforms (similarity, likability, and expertise) influence PSI. Perceived usefulness and PSI both have a big impact on perceived enjoyment. Additionally, customers' perceived enjoyment and impulse buying tendencies have a big impact on their urge to buy impulsively</p>         |

Source: own elaboration

## **4. Research Model and Hypotheses**

In this Chapter hypotheses for the research will be developed, and the research model will be presented.

### **4.1 The impact of para-social interaction on impulsive purchasing behavior**

Modern social media tools significantly facilitate communication between digital influencers and their followers, boosting PSI's creation. Image-sharing platforms, for instance, Instagram, make the formation of these relationships even easier due to the influence on the visual perception of the opinion leader and the promoted product by the consumer. Thus, the environment of s-commerce platforms enhances users' PSI interactions with other users, particularly with celebrities and bloggers (Xiang et al., 2016).

According to Horton & Wohl (1956), individuals involved in PSI relationships may demonstrate their allegiance through a variety of actions, and their actions may be affected. These users might, for instance, buy things others have recommended.

Xiang et al. (2016) are one of the first researchers who examined the effect of PSI on impulsive purchasing behavior in s-commerce. The study was done on the example of the image-sharing s-commerce platform Mogujie and has found a positive correlation between PSI and impulsive purchasing behavior.

Sokolova & Kefi (2019) stated the positive influence of PSI on purchase intentions in s-commerce. Moreover, it was found that attitude homophily is positively related to the PSI (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019), where attitude homophily is the extent to which individuals tend to connect with others who share similar interests (Aral & Walker, 2014). Having an impact on PSI and source credibility homophily demonstrates the significance of value sharing in persuasion (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). The work of Lee & Watkins (2016) supported the ideas of Sokolova & Kefi (2019) concerning the positive effect of PSI on purchase intentions which is driven by the attitude homophily, the research was conducted in the field of luxury fashion endorsement.

While examining PSI in the social media context Kim & Kim (2020) have identified two main attributes of social media tools – "structures and situations", these tools are accordingly influencing two main directions of PSI – self-congruity and friendship between digital influencers and their followers. By structures researchers referred to the similarity in

personality and language; situations were measured by interaction frequency and self-disclosure.

Self-congruity was defined by Kim & Kim (2020) as similarity in "values, beliefs or personality". Koo et al. (2014) found that consumers generally rate an online store higher if it closer resembles their true selves. Multiple studies have found that audiences build more powerful PSI with opinion leaders who are perceived as being similar to them (e.g. Tian & Hoffner, 2010; Bond, 2018).

Previous research found that individuals who share similar hobbies and subjects may feel more connected to one another (Al-Natour et al., 2011). Additionally, Bond (2018) discovered a positive correlation between perceived similarity with the influencer and strength of PSI. Chen et al. (2019) found a positive effect of the similarity on the trust in the person who recommends the product, and as a consequence, on the urge to buy impulsively. In s-commerce prevail number of the product recommendations is given by digital influencers.

The similarity in language does not necessarily refer to the fact of communicating in the same language but is more based on similar communication styles, and usage of the same phrases and words. This type of language similarity encourages the creation of a stronger connection between an influencer and his or her audience (Zappavigna, 2015).

Considering the original purpose of Instagram – sharing pictures with friends – and the abovementioned findings, the following hypotheses were suggested:

**H<sub>1</sub>: *Language similarity has a positive impact on impulsive purchasing behavior.***

**H<sub>2</sub>: *Interest similarity has a positive impact on impulsive purchasing behavior.***

**H<sub>3</sub>: *Self-congruity positively impacts impulsive purchasing behavior.***

Social media users have more opportunities to give people their personal information when they engage with others more frequently. The frequency of contact facilitates the development of friendships (Fehr, 1996). Hence, real or illusory friendships between digital influencers and their followers may be developed on the ground of more regular periodic communication and self-disclosure (Kim & Kim, 2020). The audience develops a high level

of intimacy with a celebrity after frequent exposure, especially if the celebrity uses direct modes of speech and a personal communication style (Chung & Cho, 2017).

Bond (2018) examined the relation between regular media exposure and PSI, as a result, a positive correlation between them was discovered. Furthermore, frequent communication assists in strengthening the picture of sharing the same values and views with the blogger in the audience's minds (Ljepava et al., 2013). More frequent communication allows the audience to collect more data about an influencer, and, as a consequence, increases the level of familiarity with the endorser; which in its' turn produces the sensation of understanding a celebrity's ideals and motivations (Chung & Cho, 2017). Thus, having an impact on the PSI quality, interaction frequency might influence on the impulsive purchasing behavior. The following hypothesis was suggested:

***H4: Interaction frequency between the follower and the content of a digital influencer has a positive impact on impulsive purchasing behavior.***

Self-disclosure refers to the act of sharing personal information with the audience. According to the literature on interpersonal communication, self-disclosure is crucial to the growth of connections with others and essential to like them since people have a tendency to like those who open up to them about their personal lives (Collins & Miller, 1994; Greene et al., 2006; Taylor et al., 1981; Chung & Cho, 2017). Horton & Wohl (1956) found that celebrities who communicate with the audience "personally and privately" can establish PSI easily since they are more inclined to anticipate a reaction.

Ljepava et al. (2013) stated that regular sharing of personal interests, backgrounds, goals, beliefs, and thoughts between social media users leads to intimacy between them and as a consequence to a high level of self-congruency and friendship. Further Chung & Cho (2017) concluded that self-disclosure is crucial for creating para-social connections. What is in line with the findings of Kim & Song (2016) who stated that if the followers perceive a celebrity as a one having the high level of self-disclosure it enhances PSI.

Kim & Kim (2020) examined the effect of self-disclosure and interaction frequency on friendship and self-congruity between digital influencers and their followers and concluded a positive correlation. Such s-commerce tools as "like" and "share" buttons, the possibility to leave comments facilitate the feeling of communication with real friends among the users of the platforms (Zhang & Luo, 2016). As a result, s-commerce platform features

play a comprehensive role in mediating the development of users' perceptions of friendship in the virtual world (Rapp et al., 2013).

As PSI is considered an illusory friendship between the performer and the spectator (Kim & Kim, 2017) the following hypotheses were formulated:

**H<sub>5</sub>: *Self-disclosure of the digital influencer has a positive impact on impulsive purchasing behavior in social commerce.***

**H<sub>6</sub>: *Followers' perception of friendship with a digital influencer has a positive impact on impulsive purchasing behavior.***

#### **4.2 The impact of source credibility on impulsive purchasing behavior**

According to Sokolova & Kefi (2019), source credibility not only positively influences purchase intentions in s-commerce but also has a stronger effect among other factors, for instance, than PSI. It is worth noticing that the latter result represents the general opinion of the sample, when it comes to the division by generation source credibility is slightly more valid for the older generation. Nevertheless, it significantly affects the younger generation as well.

Further Hu et al. (2019) found a positive correlation between trustworthiness and expertise, which are the key components of source credibility (Hovland et al., 1953), and impulsive purchasing behavior in s-commerce through normative social influence. While Lou & Kim (2019) showed a positive influence of the digital influencers' expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness on the PSI and through it on the purchase intentions, researchers highlighted the significance of the influencer's attractiveness.

**H<sub>7</sub>: *Perceived expertise of a digital influencer has a positive impact on impulsive purchasing behavior.***

**H<sub>8</sub>: *Perceived trustworthiness of a digital influencer has a positive impact on impulsive purchasing behavior.***

**H<sub>9</sub>: *The attractiveness of a digital influencer has a positive impact on impulsive purchasing behavior in social commerce.***

### **4.3 Number of followers of digital influencers in social commerce**

Digital influencers vary not only in the topics they devote their pages on social media to but also in the number of followers they managed to attract. The number of followers is the most popular measure of the digital influencer's online network size and popularity (De Veirman et al., 2017). According to Djafarova & Rushworth (2017) number of followers may define influencers' credibility and make them be perceived as "Instafamous", which means popular on Instagram. These results are in line with Berne-Manero & Marzo-Navarro (2020b) findings, which state that in contrast to influencers with fewer followers, those with a large number of followers can be seen as more credible and knowledgeable endorsers. Thus, positive attitudes toward influencers may increase accordingly with the rise of the size of the follower base (De Veirman et al., 2017).

It was found that digital influencers have more persuading power than traditional ones due to easier accessibility and higher authenticity (Wiley, 2014). As it was shown by Djafarova & Rushworth (2017) s-commerce users consider all celebrities as credible sources of online information but consider the viewpoints of lesser-known "Instafamous" and blogger-type celebrities above those of more well-known traditional celebrities in general. In most cases, traditional celebrities, who gain offline popularity, have more followers on Instagram than digital influencers, who initially are ordinary people seeking popularity and acceptance (Al-Emadi & Ben Yahia, 2020). However, there are cases when "ordinary" bloggers obtain more followers than traditional celebrities.

A higher number of followers on the influencers' page is connected with the higher desire of the social media users to become friends with the blogger online (Jin & Phua, 2014). Hence, followers see macro influencers as being more approachable and socially desirable, which facilitates the process of evoking positive feelings in consumers and increases a brand's popularity (Berne-Manero & Marzo-Navarro, 2020b). Influencers with a high number of followers managed to achieve a higher product involvement than the less popular ones, consequently, the number of followers has a positive impact on buying intentions. Furthermore, s-commerce users gave a higher rate of trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise to the influencers with a higher number of followers (Jin & Phua, 2014).



Harrigan et al. (2021) found that market mavens, who are the influencers actively collecting and sharing information with others, have more followers than non-mavens. This type of influencer has one of the most significant effects on their followers due to their expertise in several fields. Additionally, the audience views typically market mavens as very credible sources of information. Therefore, it was hypothesized that the number of followers a digital influencer has can be a moderator for this research:

**H<sub>10</sub> – H<sub>18</sub>: *Number of followers moderates the relation of language similarity, interest similarity, self-congruity, interaction frequency, self-disclosure, friendship, expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness and impulsive purchasing behavior.***

#### **4.4 Culture and impulsive purchasing behavior**

Culture can be defined as "a set of meanings shared by people in a given place and time" (Triandis, 1989), also culture is psychological since, which establishes a system of norms for how people perceive, judge, interact, and act (Shavitt & Barnes, 2020).

People's shopping behavior is affected by culture, for instance, Zulauf & Wagner (2021) found that culture influence hedonic shopping. Ürkmez & Wagner (2020) stated that results of the retail therapy phenomenon are diverse between US and Europe-based studies, which proves the role of culture in the consumers' behavior.

Culture determines users' perception of influencer marketing in s-commerce (Wang & Sun, 2010). Accordingly, Shavitt & Barnes (2020) stated that the attitudes and views of customers are significantly influenced by their cultural background, which in turn affects how they respond to and understand advertising messages and, consequently, their purchasing behavior. Additionally, culture affects the way consumers adjust their behavior and adapt to different crises, for instance pandemic (Zulauf et al., 2021).

Individual attitudes and behaviors are conceptually connected to the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede (2001), among them are power distance, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, and long-term orientation versus short-term orientation. Mert et al. (2021) examined the difference between Turkish and Swedish consumers' impulsive purchasing behavior in s-commerce and identified significant differences. Researchers explained their findings using Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions. Hence, considering culture as a moderator for this research can

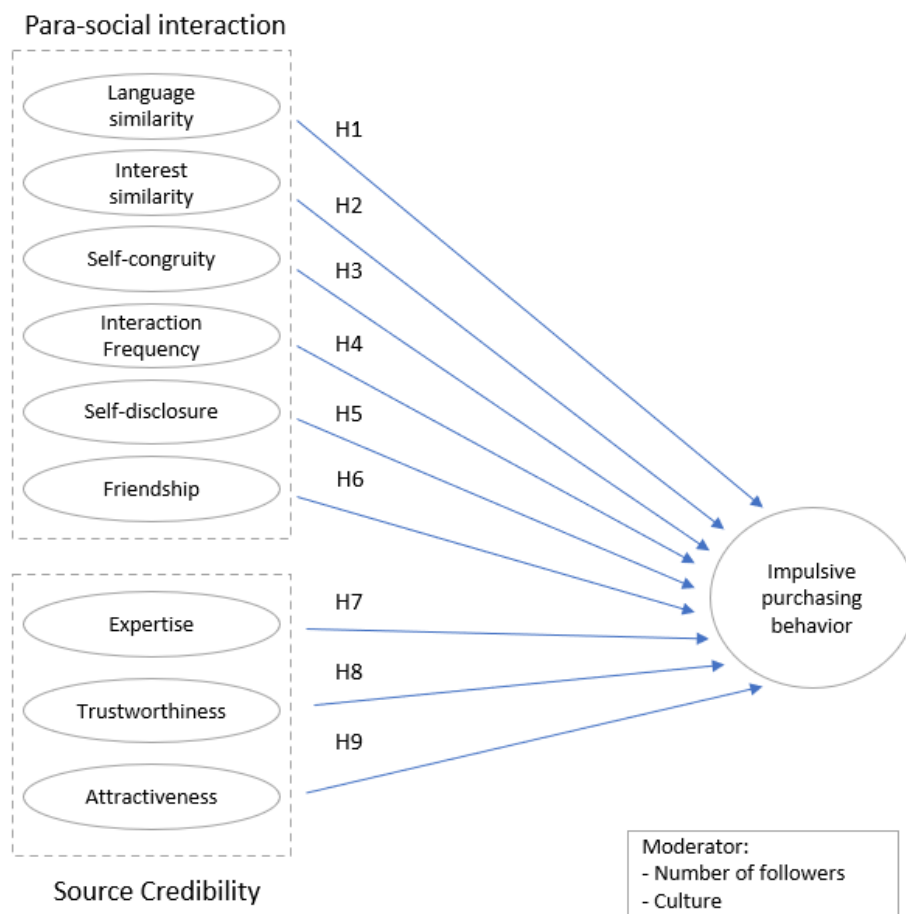
bring meaningful insights and will help to see the phenomenon of impulsive purchasing behavior in s-commerce from different perspectives.

**H<sub>19</sub> – H<sub>27</sub>: Culture moderates the relation of language similarity, interest similarity, self-congruity, interaction frequency, self-disclosure, friendship, expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and impulsive purchasing behavior.**

#### 4.5 Research Model

Building on the above-developed hypotheses the following research model was created:

**Figure 1** *Research Model*



*Source: own elaboration*

## **5. Methodology**

The following Chapter will give an overview of the research design and application domain applicable to this study, then the target sample selected for the research will be described, and the procedures of data collection and data analysis will be explained.

### **5.1 Research Design and Application Domain**

This research is designed based on the quantitative approach. The chosen methodology will help to measure the impact of digital influencers on the impulsive purchasing behavior of their followers in s-commerce and make general conclusions for a large part of the population. Moreover, the quantitative approach will help to understand the significance of some particular constructs in the general phenomenon of influence on individuals' behavior.

Instagram has around two billion active users and it is the fourth most popular social media in the world (Dixon, 2022). Furthermore, it is the most popular platform for influencer marketing worldwide (Statista, 2022). Users' sense of vision is affected by image and video content-sharing's original purpose, making them vulnerable to visual stimuli and stimulating impulsive purchases (Xiang et al., 2016). Therefore, social commerce on Instagram is a suitable application domain for this study.

### **5.2 Sample Description**

Existing literature is missing deeper research on s-commerce in developed and emerging countries and comparison of them (Vrontis et al., 2021). According to Vrontis et al. (2021), influencer marketing in Italy took the attention of researchers once, while Belarus was not investigated. These countries are contrasting in cultural (based on Hofstede's (2001) model) and economical aspects. Furthermore, Instagram has an increasing popularity in targeted countries. Therefore, the target sample of the study is composed of Italian and Belarussian Instagram users, who are using the platform at least once per month and who are following at least one Influencer. The research is aimed to reach 50/50 gender representation, the targeted age of the participants is 18-30 years old.

### 5.3 Data Collection and Data Analysis

This study will be conducted in a form of a self-administered online survey in order to reach more respondents of the targeted sample and facilitate the process of participation in the research for them.

The online questionnaire will be designed and created with the software SphinxDeclic. Before the survey is distributed, a trial will be carried out to detect any potential weaknesses, assess the length, and assure understandability. Once all the necessary adjustments are made and the trial is proven to be successful, the link to the questionnaire will be spread via SNS such as Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp. Primarily personal connections of the researcher will be used, afterwards Facebook groups dedicated to the general research spreading and to the different Instagram influencers will be used. Additionally, followers of some Belarussian and Italian Digital Influencers will be contacted via Instagram. Moreover, the snowball sampling technique will be employed, which entails sharing a link to the online survey and distributing it by the respondents when they complete their responses.

The questionnaire will be divided into 10 sections each of which aims to analyze a particular construct of the research model, while the questionnaire's items will be adapted from the previous studies (Table 2). All constructs will be measured on a 7-point Likert-scale anchored by "1 - strongly disagree" and "7 - strongly agree" (Kim & Kim, 2020). The survey will start with general questions about gender, age, nationality, and Instagram usage to check if the respondents are a part of the targeted sample and possibly find correlations with the constructs of the survey. To test common-method bias the unrelated construct "Sustainable Orientation" will be included in the questionnaire. The survey will be anonymous, and it will require a maximum of 10 minutes to fulfill. Furthermore, the questionnaire will be translated into Russian and Italian by native speakers to avoid language barriers and possible misinterpretations. The aim of the study will be briefly outlined at the beginning of the survey in order to attract participation.

Structural Equation Model (SEM) and Partial Least Squares (PLS) estimations will be used for data analysis. SEM is a group of statistical techniques used to quantify and examine correlations between variables that can be observed and predicted while accounting for measurement errors (Beran et al., 2010).

**Table 2***Research Constructs and Items*

| <b>Construct</b>             | <b>#</b> | <b>Item</b>   | <b>Reference</b> |
|------------------------------|----------|---|------------------|
| <b>Language similarity</b>   | 1        | My favorite influencer uses a similar communication style (language, phrases, terms, etc.) with me on the social networking pages.    | Kim & Kim, 2020  |
|                              | 2        | My favorite influencer communicates in a way similar to how I talk with my friends on the social networking pages.                    |                  |
|                              | 3        | There is no big difference between the communication styles used by me and my favorite influencer on the social networking pages.     |                  |
|                              | 4        | I like the communication style used by my favorite influencer on the social networking pages.   |                  |
| <b>Interest similarity</b>   | 1        | I am interested in what my favorite influencer talks about on the social networking pages.  |                  |
|                              | 2        | My favorite influencer shares similar interests as I do while communicating on the social networking pages.                           |                  |
|                              | 3        | I like the content of messages posted by my favorite influencer on the social networking pages.                                       |                  |
| <b>Self-congruity</b>        | 1        | I perceive that I share the same personality traits with my favorite influencer.  |                  |
|                              | 2        | My favorite influencer is a reflection of how I see myself.   |                  |
|                              | 3        | The image of my favorite influencer is consistent with my self-identity.  |                  |
|                              | 4        | People who like my favorite influencer are very similar to me.  |                  |
|                              | 5        | My favorite influencer is a reflection of who I am.   |                  |
| <b>Interaction frequency</b> | 1        | How often do you view the messages (e.g., text, picture, or video) posted by your favorite influencer on the social networking pages? |                  |
|                              | 2        | How often do you click “like” for the messages posted by your favorite influencer on the social networking pages?                     |                  |
|                              | 3        | How often do you comment on the messages posted by your favorite influencer on the social networking pages?                           |                  |
|                              | 4        | How often do you share the messages posted by your favorite influencer on the social networking pages?                                |                  |
| <b>Self-disclosure</b>       | 1        | My favorite influencer openly (voluntary) shares personal facts with followers on the social networking pages.                        |                  |
|                              | 2        | My favorite influencer is open about his or her feelings to followers on the social networking pages.                                 |                  |

|                                      |   |   |                    |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|--------------------|
|                                      | 3 | My favorite influencer is quite open about his/herself to followers on the social networking pages.               |                    |
|                                      | 4 | My favorite influencer reveals a lot of facts about his/herself on the social networking pages.                   |                    |
|                                      | 5 | My favorite influencer says much about his/herself on the social networking pages.                                |                    |
| <b>Friendship</b>                    | 1 | The interaction between my favorite influencer and me on the social networking pages is close.                    |                    |
|                                      | 2 | I experience intimacy with my favorite influencer when I interact with him or her on the social networking pages. |                    |
|                                      | 3 | Interacting with my favorite influencer on the social networking pages seems like talking with one of my friends. |                    |
|                                      | 4 | I think of my favorite influencer as one of my friends in real life.  |                    |
|                                      | 5 | I want to give something back to my favorite influencer in real life.   |                    |
|                                      | 6 | I would like to share my true thoughts and feelings with my favorite influencer.                                  |                    |
| <b>Expertise</b>                     | 1 | I feel he/she knows a lot   |                    |
|                                      | 2 | I feel he/she is competent to make assertions about things that he/she is good at                                 |                    |
|                                      | 3 | I consider he/she as an expert on his/her area  |                    |
|                                      | 4 | I consider he/she sufficiently experienced to make assertions about his/her area                                  |                    |
| <b>Trustworthiness</b>               | 1 | I feel he/she is honest   | Lou & Kim,<br>2019 |
|                                      | 2 | I consider he/she trustworthy   |                    |
|                                      | 3 | I feel he/she I truthful  |                    |
|                                      | 4 | I consider he/she sincere   |                    |
| <b>Attractiveness</b>                | 1 | He/she is very attractive   |                    |
|                                      | 2 | He/she is very stylish  |                    |
|                                      | 3 | He/she is good looking  |                    |
|                                      | 4 | He/she is sexy  |                    |
| <b>Impulsive purchasing behavior</b> | 1 | I bought items I had not planned to purchase on Instagram after using Instagram.                                  | Hu et al.,<br>2019 |
|                                      | 2 | During exploring Instagram, I felt a sudden urge to buy something and I bought it                                 |                    |
|                                      | 3 | When/after using Instagram, my purchase was spontaneous.  |                    |
|                                      | 4 | When/after using Instagram, my purchase was unplanned   |                    |

Source: own elaboration

## **6. Expected Contributions**

In this Chapter the expected contributions of the study will be discussed, which will explain primary reasons for this research to be conducted. The contributions will be described from the academic point of view, based on previous studies, and from businesses and society perspectives.

### **6.1 Scholarly Contributions**

By examining the combined impacts of the influencers' perceived credibility and PSI (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019) on the impulsive purchase behavior of users of social media platforms, this study contributes to the current body of information on influencer marketing. Moreover, this research concentrates on the particular constructs of PSI and Source Credibility rather than on the concepts in general, which will allow us to gather more valuable insights and add to the PSI (Horton & Wohl, 1956) and Source Credibility (Ohanian, 1990) theories. The latter theories initially were created for offline communication, while this research will contribute to the online implication of the concepts.

Current research will contribute to the academic field by filling the gaps identified in the introduction. In particular, this research will examine the differences between types of influencers, which have not been done before in the context of online impulsive buying (Al-Emadi & Yahia, 2020; Boerman, 2020; De Veirman et al., 2017; Voorveld, 2019; Xiao et al., 2018), and will contribute to the s-commerce literature by providing a better understanding of the phenomena of SMI (Vrontis et al., 2021) and impulsive buying (Abdelsalam et al., 2020). Additionally, this research will help to expand the geography of the existing studies not only by studying previously non-explored cultures and providing cross-cultural comparisons (Bashar A. et al., 2022) but also by comparing developed and emerging countries (Vrontis et al., 2021).

### **6.2 Implications for Business and Society**

Influencers marketing involves two business parties: enterprises and influencers. Since the partnership with influencers has become a widespread marketing tool over the last decade, this research will allow businesses to understand collaboration with which type of influencers would potentially be more beneficial. Additionally, practitioners will understand which construct to assess in a more careful way if the company aims to increase impulsive

purchases due to partnerships with digital influencers. Another kind of practitioner – digital influencers will also benefit from the results of the research. Thus, opinion leaders will be able to identify potential weaknesses in their interaction with followers depending on their number, afterwards test findings for the particular page and improve the relationships. Hence the findings of the study will assist digital influencers in increasing effectiveness of their social media blogs.

Policymakers of social commerce platforms could use the research while deciding on the availability of various platform features to accounts with different number of followers. The study also creates a more comprehensive awareness of impulsive purchasing behavior, which could stimulate followers to be more conscious when they consume influencers' content daily.

## **7. Chapters Overview**

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8. Contributions

8.1 Scholarly Contributions

8.2 Implications for Business and Society

9. Discussion and Limitations

References



## 8. Work Plan

**Table 3**

*Work Plan*

| Task                     | September |    |    |    |    | October |    |    |    |    | November |    |    |    |    | December |    |    |   | January |   |  |
|--------------------------|-----------|----|----|----|----|---------|----|----|----|----|----------|----|----|----|----|----------|----|----|---|---------|---|--|
|                          | 35        | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40      | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45       | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50       | 51 | 52 | 1 | 2       | 3 |  |
| Research proposal        |           |    |    |    |    |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |   |         |   |  |
| Literature review        |           |    |    |    |    |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |   |         |   |  |
| Introduction             |           |    |    |    |    |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |   |         |   |  |
| Theoretical framework    |           |    |    |    |    |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |   |         |   |  |
| Research model           |           |    |    |    |    |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |   |         |   |  |
| Methodology              |           |    |    |    |    |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |   |         |   |  |
| Exposé submission        |           |    |    |    |    |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |   |         |   |  |
| Questionnaire design     |           |    |    |    |    |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |   |         |   |  |
| Testing period           |           |    |    |    |    |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |   |         |   |  |
| Questionnaire adjustment |           |    |    |    |    |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |   |         |   |  |
| Data collection          |           |    |    |    |    |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |   |         |   |  |
| Data analysis            |           |    |    |    |    |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |   |         |   |  |
| Results and conclusions  |           |    |    |    |    |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |   |         |   |  |
| Final check              |           |    |    |    |    |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |   |         |   |  |
| Thesis submission        |           |    |    |    |    |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |   |         |   |  |
| Thesis defense           |           |    |    |    |    |         |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |    |    |          |    |    |   |         |   |  |

*Source: own elaboration*

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