



Erasmus School of Economics

MSc Marketing Thesis

*The Impact of Physical Attractiveness and
Communication Style on Brand Perception and
Purchase Intention with Type of Influencer as a
Moderator*

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the effect of influencers' physical attractiveness and communication styles on purchase intention and brand perception, with a moderating role of influencer type. A quantitative experimental method was employed, involving a survey of 258 consumers with diverse characteristics. The data collected was analyzed with a linear regression method.

The results revealed that an attractive influencer can lead to a significantly negative effect on brand perception when no interaction effects are tested; however, this effect is non-significant for purchase intention. Additionally, non-significant main effects were found for the communication style used by influencers or for the interaction effect of influencer type with the two independent variables tested. The individuals' level of education is highly influential in how consumers perceive a brand or the willingness to buy a product, with higher education levels leading to more negative effects on both dependent variables.

This research offers significant insights for both managers and academics in the online influencer marketing domain by explaining how influencers' physical attractiveness and communication style affect brand perception and purchase intentions, depending on whether the endorsement comes from micro, macro, or mega influencers. For further research, it is recommended to explore how other attributes affect consumer behavior and how these attributes interact, to gain a broader understanding and a more complete evaluation.

Contents

1. Introduction.....	5
2. Literature Review.....	9
2.1. Influencer Marketing.....	9
2.2. Influencer Attributes.....	10
2.2.1. Physical Attractiveness.....	10
2.2.2. Communication Style.....	12
2.2.3. Type of Influencer	15
3. Methodology	18
3.1. Data	18
3.2. Between-subjects design	22
3.3. Survey Design	24
4. Results.....	28
4.1. P-value.....	28
4.2. Descriptives.....	29
4.3. Hypothesis Testing	31
4.3.1. Regression Results	33
5. Results Discussion	39
5.1. Physical Attractiveness.....	39
5.1.1. The relevance of the type of product.....	39
5.1.2. Negative Halo Effects	41
5.2. Communication Style.....	42
5.2.1. The importance of the context.....	42
5.2.2. Brand Familiarity	43

5.3. Interaction effect Type of Influencer	44
5.4. Level of Education	45
6. Conclusion	47
References	49
Appendix	57
Appendix 1: Pre-test complete survey	57
Appendix 2: Main complete experiment	60

1. Introduction

Human activities, interactions and environments have been markedly altered by online behaviors. In this regard, social connections have shifted to the virtual sphere allowing individuals to establish connections across the world (Tiago et al., 2014). Since 2017, individuals spend more time in digital media than traditional media, influenced further by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. As of 2022, individuals in the United States spend an average of almost 8 hours (470 minutes) per day on digital media compared to nearly 5 hours (292 minutes) on traditional media. In the next years, the gap between both types of media is forecasted to increase (Statista, 2018). This trend makes companies to develop powerful digital marketing strategies in response.

In this context, social media has given rise to a new class of influential individuals referred to as social media influencers who significantly impact consumers and are increasingly integrated into brand communication strategies (Maden, 2018). Digital influencers are considered as earned media by companies, linking them closely to public relations and influencer marketing (Chaffey et al., 2016). Statistics from The latest Influencer Benchmark report for 2024 from the Influencer Marketing Hub (Geyser, 2022), based on insights from over 3,000 marketing agencies, brands, and professionals, highlight the rising value of social media influencers within the digital marketing landscape. According to the report, most respondents consider earned media value a reliable measure of ROI. Additionally, 60% of the respondents have the intention to increase their spending in influencer marketing, with 26% planning to allocate more than 40% of their budget to this form of marketing. Consequently, the size of the influencer marketing sector is estimated to attain \$24 billion, representing a 14% increase.

Since Influencer marketing has gain importance in shaping consumers' purchasing decisions, researchers have been prompted to understand its effects. For instance, research conducted by Booth et al. (2011) intended to identify how companies utilize social media influencers to optimize brand perception. The authors found positive significant results in the influencers' contributions in shaping how a brand is perceived and cultivating strong emotional connections when using storytelling to create engaging and detailed brand images. Emphasizing the understanding of the para-social dynamics between the influencer and their audience Masuda's et al. (2022) deepened into the impact of digital influencers by exploring how their attributes, such as physical and social attractiveness, as well as attitude homophily, drives purchase intentions. Nevertheless, I think it is

important to have a deeper focus on the implications of emphasizing physical attractiveness in influencer marketing campaigns. Furthermore, this discussion will allow to open the discussion about ethical concerns related to the use of physical attractiveness as a marketing tactic to shape consumer perceptions only based on physical appeal.

The impact of communication style and type of influencer on brand perception and purchase intention has limited research considerations so far. For instance, Uzunoğlu et al. (2014) only explored the relationship between communication strategies and engagement, focusing on how the different communication styles employed by influencers can shape consumer behavior. Conversely, Sinaga et al. (2022) assess how linguistic styles vary between individual or institutional social media influencers and only focus on supplying insights into the mechanism of influencer communication. Understanding how different communication styles impact consumer decision-making processes is equally vital. For instance, this will enable to explore whether informative communication empowers customers with informed choices and valuable insights or whether entertainment communication, including humor, storytelling, or any other form of engaging content, has a better influence on brand knowledge and customer decision-making.

Furthermore, companies may face challenges in selecting and recruiting the most suitable influencers for their marketing campaigns. Determining which type of influencer, whether micro, macro, or mega aligns best with the brand's objectives requires a special consideration in the marketing strategy. Each type of influencer has unique characteristics, and assessing these complexities is essential for testing the performance of influencer marketing in brand awareness and purchase intention. Lastly, Masuda et al. (2022) a major contributor to research on influencer attributes, also point out the limitation of his study due to the lack of detailed analysis into the subdivision of influencer types, impeding a comprehensive understanding of parasocial relationship formation and its impact on marketing effectiveness.

By addressing these factors and gaining a deeper understanding of the impact of physical attractiveness, communication style and type of influencer marketeers could acquire meaningful insights to improve their influencer marketing efforts and drive positive results. Therefore, this motivates this study to explore and assess the following questions:

How does Physical Attractiveness influence Brand Perception and Purchase Intention?

How does Communication Style influence Brand Perception and Purchase Intention?

How does influencer type moderate the relationship between physical attractiveness, communication style, brand perception, and purchase intention?

This study holds significant relevance for managerial applications as it offers important information on the identification and perception of three key influencer attributes. Managers will be able to understand how the Physical attractiveness, Communication Style, and their interaction with Type of Influencer impact on consumers behavior and which is the best way to use the right influencer marketing in successful advertising campaigns. These insights can guide businesses in the strategic selection of influencers that capture more attention, leveraging the right attributes to make their advertisements more engaging and memorable. This study will help managers to identify if the physical attractiveness of an influencer gains more focus among consumers and shape their buying behavior. Moreover, identifying if the communication style has an impact on consumers behavior will ensure that the brand's message is conveyed accurately and is aligned to their values.

Lastly, the results will give the managers a broader image of the mix of factors tested to optimize their marketing strategies to use them to have a higher return on their investment in marketing advertisements or campaigns. Therefore, an effective use of influencers can result in increased revenues through higher sales. Lastly, managers will gain important insights to distribute marketing budgets on influencers and campaigns based on these findings, enhancing the financial effectiveness of the company by reducing unnecessary spending.

This study also contributes to the existing academic framework on consumer behavior by examining whether influencer type such as micro, macro, or mega moderates the relationship between Brand Perception and Purchase Intention. This specific mix of factors hasn't been explored before, providing a new approach at how Influencer Types, Physical Attractiveness, and Communication Styles work together to influence consumer behavior. This research ambition is to close this gap by presenting concrete evidence and providing a clear understanding of the relationship among these variables. Moreover, this study provides an initial foundation for future research with the intention to explore deeper these elements and other attributes or characteristics that could have a better explanation of the complexities of consumer buying decision or behavior.

This research also explores how social media influencers affect consumers behaviors and their role in digital marketing. Additionally, it also will allow to create a critical thinking about ethical considerations regarding the use of physical attractiveness in advertising, encouraging a deeper discussion about societal standards and the implications for consumer well-being. Lastly, The scope of the experiment is broad, encompassing diverse demographics characteristics regarding different place of residence, age, gender, and education. This inclusive approach enables a thorough analysis of the factors being tested and offers a richer understanding of the impact of different characteristics within the groups.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Influencer Marketing

Companies are constantly seeking the most effective ways to connect with their customers through different communication channels. In recent years, strategic marketing has been giving more importance to social media which has progressively replaced the one-way communication of traditional media (Bruhn et al., 2012). As a result, digital technologies offer marketers tools to connect with customers more directly and efficiently manner, thus enhancing communication. The latest phenomena in social media marketing are “influencer Marketing” (Bakker, 2018) which has been defined by Leung et al. (2022) as a method in which a company strategically chooses and incentivizes online influencers to actively interact with their audience on social media platforms. Therefore, companies endorse their products and services by leveraging the appeal and glamour of digital influencer (Agustian et al., 2023). Similarly, firms utilize influencer’s assets such as followers, reputation, and content to advertise and connect with their target audience directly (Leung et al., 2022).

Some studies on this topic have shown that social media influencers effectively convey brand messages, enhancing consumer attraction to the brand, thereby influencing their purchase intentions (Patmawati et al., 2022). For instance, in the fashion sector, Gomes et al. (2022) investigated how social media influencers affect purchasing decisions and found that consumers are more likely to develop a purchase intention for recommended fashion items when they view the content from digital influencers as reliable, accurate, and engaging. Likewise, influencers are recognized as important players in shaping brand perception. By using storytelling, they create a more interesting and detailed image of the brand, developing strong emotional connections with their audiences (Booth et al., 2011).

These results indicate that Influencer marketing accomplishes the objective of effectively communicating and transmitting the brand message ultimately influencing customers' knowledge and behaviors. Bakker (2018) emphasizes that digital influencer marketing is recognized as a powerful tool for brands to navigate through the abundance of messages and create substantial connections with their target audiences.

2.2. Influencer Attributes

2.2.1. Physical Attractiveness

Social media influencer posts typically consist of videos or photos promoting brands, frequently showing themselves actively interacting with a product or service. Through these posts, consumers not only see the features or benefits of what the influencer is promoting but also see their physical appeal. When the influencer is perceived with an attractive physical appeal, people tend to interact more with them (Kim, 2022). Moreover, the influencer's attractiveness has a significant role shaping consumers' perceptions of a brand (Çelik, 2022) and also consumer behavior (Pereira et al., 2023).

Physical attractiveness has been defined in many ways over the past few decades. Elaine Walster et al. (1966) described physical attractiveness as the visual quality that individuals perceive when they interact with another person, without considering deeper personality characteristics or other non-physical attributes. In other words, Walster et al. (1966) referred to the assessment of tangibles traits such as facial features, body proportions, grooming, and overall appearance which causes a perceived level of desirability.

More recent definitions of physical attractiveness highlight the influence of cultural and social norms on beauty standards. This definition reflects cultural and social ideals, such as thinness, muscularity, fairness, and youthfulness (Rodgers et al., 2019). Despite the different perceptions of physical attractiveness in different cultures context and evolutionary factors, some beauty standards are widely recognized across societies (Gangestad et al., 2005). Being that said, physical attractiveness is generally defined as the perceived level of beauty based on an individual exterior appearance (Reis et al., 1980) built on physical traits that shape perceptions across cultures such as facial neoteny, or youthful features like big eyes and full lips, lighter skin, symmetry in facial and body (Jones, 1996).

In addition to visual characteristics, individuals often associate positive attributes like social skills, cognitive abilities, empathy, honesty, and emotional well-being with attractiveness (Sokolova et al., 2022). These attributes contribute to the concept of Social Attractiveness, which enhances engagement and influences the development of parasocial relationships (Masuda et al., 2022).

Within the field of social media influencers, various studies have repeatedly shown that attractive influencers have a considerable influence on how consumers perceive brands and make purchase decisions. Masuda et al. (2022) found a strong significant Impact of Physical Attractiveness in purchase decisions. Moreover, the author found that attractiveness improves how influencers are perceived in terms of expertise and credibility. Kim (2022) also demonstrated that external attractiveness in influencer positively affects how individuals interact with influencers and their attitudes toward endorsed products or brands. Similarly, Agam (2017), investigates how physical attractiveness influence consumer behavior towards online advertisement and found a notable effect on involvement. The research results highlight how beauty draws more attention and interest from consumers, thereby increasing the likelihood of interacting and purchasing a product.

More references about this relationship are shown in a study by Ao et al., (2023) where results indicates that influencers who align well with the products they endorse and are perceived as attractive are more effective in engaging consumers and driving purchase intent. This result aligns with Sugiyama's (2015) observation that attractive individuals generally receive more favorable attention and interaction. Hong et al. (2018) further support this demonstrating that messages from attractive individuals are more persuasive even when lacking social signs, indicating that attractiveness enhances message credibility, expertise, and persuasiveness. Therefore, it would be plausible to think that digital influencers that have an attractive physical appearance may have a greater impact on consumers' decisions.

Overall, it's clear from various studies that physically attractive influencers have a positive impact on brand marketing efforts. Despite this perception is considered superficial, their perceived attractiveness extends to their assumed expertise, making them seen as more knowledgeable and credible (Pereira et al., 2023). This phenomenon aligns with the "Halo Effect," described by Gangestad et al. (2005), in their paper "the Evolution of Human Physical Attractiveness". Those authors refer to this effect as the perception of physically attractive people as more competent, intelligent, and kind regardless of any direct evidence to support such assumptions. Moreover, they mention that this effect significantly shapes social dynamics, making attractive individuals more popular and successful. In that regard, Sugiyama (2015) also notes that influencers who have a more attractive physical appeal are the ones that usually get more likes and comments on their posts, showing that people often prefer attractive appearances, without paying attention to the

quality or honesty of the content. In consequence this concept could raise unethical concerns about fairness, leading to unfair biases that underestimate the value of real merit and abilities of influencers (Gangestad et al., 2005).

In order to explore more how the physical appeal influences customers behavior in their purchase decision and the mental impression about a Brand, the following hypothesis are introduced:

H1: Physical attractiveness of the social media influencer has a positive effect on Brand Perception

H2: Physical attractiveness of the social media influencer has a positive effect on brand Purchase Intention

2.2.2. Communication Style

Social media marketing seeks to build connections between the brand and the customer through effective communication. Influencers play an important role by authentically representing brands and transmitting their messages (Bakker, 2018). 90. Uzunoğlu et al. (2014) emphasize the significant role of influencers in brand communication via digital media, serving as opinion leaders and facilitating the circulation of brand messages to their followers. Assessing the success of communication in achieving brand goals is a challenge for every marketer. In that context, evaluating the effectiveness of influencer communication could be a challenge but can be facilitated through microblogging integration and focusing on creative campaigns. (Uzunoğlu et al., 2014).

Communication style is the unique way individuals convey and interpret messages using verbal, nonverbal, and paraverbal signs, which include a range of behaviors and techniques influenced by culture, personal experiences, and situational context (Giri, 2006). How people communicate also encompasses the regular vocabulary and language style that an individual used to convey their ideas and emotions, which include characteristics such as the emotional tone (Munaro et al., 2024).

A significant aspect of what makes us human is our distinct communication style that shape how we interact and connect with people and our self-identity (Giri, 2006). Moreover, In the field of digital marketing, the influencer's communication style is instrumental in shaping brand perception

and impacting consumer reactions (Munaro et al., 2024). In that regard, each influencer is distinguished in social media marketing by their different strategies and communication styles, having a different impact on customers and leveraging in different ways the brand perception and their buying desire.

Classifying communication styles can be approached in various ways, each with distinct criteria and methods. Abidin (2015) identifies four types of intimacies that influencers can cultivate with their followers: commercial, interactive, reciprocal, and disclosive. This classification highlights the relational aspects of influencer communication. Sinaga et al. (2022) differentiate between individual and institutional influencers, noting that individual influencers tend to use a more emotional language and visual complexity to engage their audience, stimulating familiarity and closeness through informal and persuasive linguistic structures. Conversely, institutional influencers prefer syntactic complexity and a more formal tone, focusing on content clarity and structured communication.

In a broader context, Norton et al. (1977) in the intent of explain how various communication styles impact interpersonal attraction, categorize these styles into nine types: "animated", "friendly", "dramatic", "contentious", "relaxed", "dominant", "attentive", "impression-leaving", and "open". Each communication style was defined by unique traits that illustrate the diverse ways individuals can interact verbally and non-verbally with others, showing how different styles can influence perception within social environment. For instance, the authors showed that an animated communication style has a positive effect and is effective in capturing audience's attention and maintaining them entertaining. Along with this, they stand that this communication style is characterized for showing enthusiasm and energy using expressive gestures and facial movements, making interactions memorable. Having an entertaining style can be seen as a powerful strategy that goes beyond just having fun since it connects emotionally showing enjoyable and satisfying moments (Vorderer, 2001). On top of that, people are more inclined to have a deep connection with content when they empathize with a character, experiencing joy at their successes (Vorderer, 2001), thus probably impacting their future behavior.

Furthermore, Munaro et al. (2024) introduced an analytical communication style which aims to provide detailed explanations and information while focusing on clarity and objectivity details. The author also mentions that this style is effective in a context where information is given and

where precision and depth are valued. Meaning that in a social media sphere, influencers that transmit the product message in an informative way are considered in that group (Munaro et al., 2024). In addition, the authors found that even though this style may generate a moderate level of engagement or interaction compared to an emotional approach, it is effective in creating loyal audiences that value high-quality content, making influencers a reliable source of information (Munaro et al., 2024).

All these insights give a clear and complete understanding of the different styles of communication. Each style highlights the different tactics that influencers use to relate with audiences but also the impact these styles have on building relationships and influencing consumer behavior. While some authors, such as Munaro et al. (2024), argue that an informative communication style is more valuable because it provides detailed explanations and objective information that engage audiences who appreciate high-quality content, other authors like Vorderer (2001) argue that an entertaining communication style captures more effectively attention and creates emotional engagement. Moreover, the same author provides evidence that the entertaining communication style has a more significant impact.

Overall, defending sincerity, realness, transparency, and genuineness, as well as consistency between their personal and professional values, are also important attributes to include in their communication (Balaban et al., 2022). Given this information, the communication style of influencers could be an essential attribute to include in an influencer marketing strategy. How influencers communicate and engage with their audience can significantly impact consumer behavior towards the brand.

In order to explore more influential impact of an entertaining way of communicating in relation to an informative communication style on purchase intention and brand perception, the following hypothesis are introduced:

H3: Entertaining Communication Style of the social media influencer has a more positive effect on Brand Perception compared to an Informative Communication Style.

H4: Entertaining Communication Style of the social media influencer has a more positive effect on Purchase Intention compared to an Informative Communication Style.

2.2.3. Type of Influencer

In today's digital landscape, influencers can be classified in various ways such as their number of followers, area of expertise, and income potential (Rahman, 2022). Gómez (2019) specifies three clusters to categorize influencers: Micro-influencers are digital creators with a modest but highly interactive audience, typically numbering up to 100,000 followers, and focus on specialized niche topics. Macro-Influencers, on the other hand, have follower counts in the range of 100 thousand to 1 million. They are known for being positioned as a bridge between micro and mega influencers and possessing the ability to have digital full-time professional content. Lastly, the author indicates that Mega-Influencers represent the elite category, including influencers with over one million followers. With a massive reach they often collaborate with brands to engage in large-scale awareness campaigns and are comparable to traditional celebrities (Gómez, 2019).

On the other hand, influencers are also categorized by their platform and content type. For instance, YouTubers influencer concentrate their content in a video format, vloggers provide personal video blogs, and Instafamous influencer uses Instagram platform to share their content (Gómez, 2019). However, the scope of this research will focus on the most commonly used categorization, which divides influencers into Micro, Macro, and Mega Influencers.

Different perspectives exist on the effect that influencer types have on brand metrics. Understanding the type of influencer is key to understand the impact on the creation of strong emotional connection between influencers and customers (Masuda et al., 2022). For instance, Wentin et al. (2024) points out that endorsements by micro-influencers tend to generate greater levels of favorable word-of-mouth among consumers characterized by a growth mindset in contrast to recommendations from mega-influencers. Similarly, the author notes that consumers tend to trust micro-influencers more because of their recognized genuine motivations.

On the contrary, Conde et al. (2023) identify that mega-influencers are perceived to have significantly higher levels of popularity and attributed opinion leadership compared to micro and macro-influencers. Despite this, they also note that micro-influencers can develop a stronger relationship contributing to their persuasive power and allowing them to compete with larger influencers. Furthermore, Marques et al. (2021) study on types of influencers confirm that celebrity influencer (mega-influencers) attracted more new followers to the brands but micro-influencers' post generated higher engagement in relation to likes, visits, and comments on the brand's social

media platforms. In essence, the followers size enhances assumed popularity and influential position, which in turn indirectly influences the intention to follow recommendations, though this effect is moderated by the emotional connection (Conde et al., 2023).

Conversely, Kim (2020) research, revealed that mega-influencers with millions of followers can significantly boost views for certain campaigns, however, is considered that they are not always the best choice for product advertisement. The author also argues that aligning their audience and style with the campaign's goals impact positively the influencer's effectiveness. On the other hand, she noticed that in some cases, micro or mega influencers, which have fewer number of followers, can encourage a better engagement because their audiences are usually targeted. Therefore, Kim (2020) also suggested that it is crucial to select influencers who align with the specific customer's demands, rather than choosing them solely based on their follower count.

For micro-influencers, their attractiveness and interaction with the product are vital in influencing how their audience reacts to their posts and shape their behavior in purchase consideration. On the other hand, only showing a product without using it doesn't have the same impact since it doesn't generate much interest or excitement (Hernández-Méndez et al., 2024). In that regard, Customer involvement is essential in influencer marketing and is valid for both mega and macro-influencers, but the impact is even more pronounced for macro-influencers (Borges-Tiago et al., 2023)

Incorporating the moderating effect of the type of influencer in this research will enable us to test whether there is any interaction between this variable, physical attractiveness, and communication style. Furthermore, while most studies concentrate on the power of influencers to attract customers to a brand, the curiosity of this paper extends beyond. Accordingly, the following two hypotheses are introduced:

H5: Type of influencer moderates the relationship of Physical attractiveness and Communication Style of the social media influencer on Brand Perception.

H6: Type of influencer moderates the relationship of Physical attractiveness and Communication Style of the social media influencer on purchase intention.

Figure 2.1 contemplates the Conceptual Model that gathers the six hypotheses presented. This model illustrates a comprehensive framework of the relationships between the two attributes being tested for this research, Physical Attractiveness and Communication Style, and their impact on Brand Perception and Purchase Intention. Moreover, the model also incorporates Type of Influencer as a moderator of these relationships. The examination of this model seeks to clarify how various influencer attributes impact consumer behavior and to offer valuable insights for developing influencer marketing strategies.

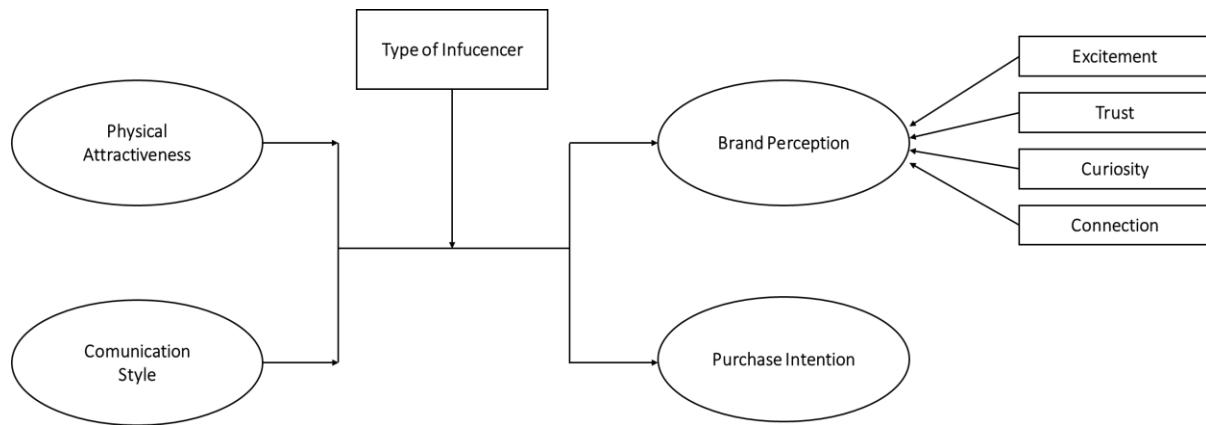


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Model Influencer Type as a Moderator in the Relationship Between Physical Attractiveness, Communication Style, Brand Perception and Purchase Intention

3. Methodology

The methodology section of this thesis serves as an important component in explaining the approach taken to respond the research questions outlined in the preceding chapters. This section offers a comprehensive overview of the research data, methodology, and survey design used.

3.1. Data

The hypotheses are tested, and the research question is addressed using two dependent variables, two independent variables, and one moderator. The dependent variable "Purchase Intention" is an interval continuous variable that assesses the respondent's influence on their choice to purchase a product (Ao et al., 2023). The variable is measured by a 5-point Likert scale range from "Very unlikely" to "Very likely", which are later transformed into a range from 1 to 5, respectively (Masuda et al., 2022).

The dependent variable "Brand Perception" is an interval continuous variable that assesses the respondent's degree of emotion towards the product shown in the scenario. In this research, we will define Brand Perception as the way that individuals interpret and understand a brand, representing consumer's different emotions associated with the brand (Booth et al., 2011) and will be measured by four emotions: Excitement, Trust, Curiosity, and Connection.

Excitement is recognized as a dynamic emotion that can elevate the holistic perception of a brand (Brakus et al., 2009). Furthermore, conveying positive emotions such as excitement is an important element in defining influencer marketing strategies, as it enhances engagement and generates interest in a brand among followers (Booth et al., 2011). Trust is recognized as a fundamental element that drives customer loyalty and, consequently, enhances the brand's overall performance. In that regard, when customers trust a brand, they perceive less risk (Chaudhuri et al., 2001). Therefore, trust is built on positive interactions with the brand and is essential for maintaining long-term customer relationships (Fournier, 1998).

In the same line, curiosity is recognized as a main driver for consumer engagement with a brand (Lee, 2024), thus it allowed consumers to learn and explore the brand, influencing how consumers engage and behave to new products and services (Plutchik, 2001). Lastly, connection referred to the creation of an emotional bond with a brand that often will have an impact creating and

maintaining long-term customer loyalty (Fournier, 1998). The connection to a brand could have a wider impact rather than their practical and tangible advantages of the product (Fournier, 1998). Therefore, the creation of this social bond is crucial for maintaining a positive brand perception (Plutchik, 2001).

In conclusion, the emotions used for this model can influence how brand is perceived. In that respect, influencers can shape that perception through emotional endorsements on social media, altering how audiences engage with brands (Booth et al., 2011), playing an important role impacting customers preferences and decisions (Plutchik, 2001).

To evaluate the four emotions (Excitement, Trust, Curiosity, and Connection), a 5-point Likert scale was employed, with responses ranging from “Not at all” to “Extremely” (Nicoara et al., 2023), which are later transformed into a range from 1 to 5, respectively. To create a unique variable that combined the four tested emotions, I referenced the study by Low et al. (2000), in which tested a conceptualization of brand associations using factor analysis to group variables under a common factor. Similarly, Masuda et al. (2022) aim to better understand the defining characteristics of the parasocial relationship (PSR) and used factor analysis to demonstrate that the loadings of the variables were strongly correlated with their respective constructs, confirming the robustness and validity of the measurement model. Combining both references, the four emotions were merged using factor analysis to refine the Brand Perception variable. After performing the factor analysis, the results showed variable loadings ranged from 0.751 to 0.889, indicating a strong correlation with the Brand Perception Construct as is showed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Component Matrix from the Factor Analysis of Brand Perception variable*

Emotions	Component **
Excitement	.851
Trust	.854
Curiosity	.751
Connection	.889

*Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

**1 component extracted.

Adapted source Elsa Carolina Baigorria Montalvo

On the other hand, Physical Attractiveness and Communication Style will serve as the Independent Variables. Furthermore, Influencer type will be evaluated as moderator of the interaction of the dependent and independent variables. The independent variables and the moderator variable are tested as dummy variables depending on the presence or absence of the specific characteristic. By testing these variables and their relationship, I aim to conduct a robust investigation into the dynamics of consumer behaviors and influencers' approaches. The Overview of all variables can be seen in Table 3.2.

Finally, four Control Variables are considered in this model. These four Control variables are related to participant characteristics (Mervis et al., 2004) such as gender, age, place of residence and level of education. The variable gender is categorized binarily as male and female. Age is categorized as a ratio: 18 to 25 years, 25 to 41 years, and 42 or more years. Lastly, place of residence is categorized nominally as Europe, South America, and Other. Level of education is classified ordinally as no education, high school diploma, bachelor's diploma, master's diploma, and doctorate. To enable its use as a control variable in the regression analysis, each category has been recoded as a dummy variable. In this context, the reference categories used in the regression are "18 to 25 years" for age, "Europe" for place of residence, "High School Diploma" for education level, and "Female" for gender.

In this model, control variables were included to guarantee the focus on the main variables without distractions (Ross, 1988). In other words, control variables help to prevent the rejection of the model by missing important factors and to allow to have valid results (Hünermund et al., 2020). Furthermore, the importance of having a fair comparison between different scenarios ensures that the differences in the results are solely due to the factors included, and not because of natural differences in individuals (Mervis et al., 2004).

Moreover, including these four control variables in this model will allow to increase the internal validity of the model and to prevent potential biases in the results (Ross, 1988). The objective of using accurate control variables is to find strong results that are more generalizable (Ross, 1988) and to prevent possible complication when interpreting the results (Hünermund et al., 2020).

Table 3.2: Overview of the variables incorporated into the model

Variable Type	Variable name	Options	Scale Type	Code
Dependent Variable	Purchase Intention	Very Unlikely	Likert Scale Continuous	1
		Somewhat unlikely		2
		Neither unlikely nor likely		3
		Somewhat likely		4
		Very Likely		5
Dependent Variable	Brand Perception Excitement Trust Curiosity Connection	Not at all	Likert Scale Continuous	1
		Slightly		2
		Moderate		3
		Very		4
		Excitement		5
Independent Variable	Physical Attractiveness	Attractive	Dummy	1
Independent Variable		Non-Attractive		0
Independent Variable	Communication Style	Entertaining	Dummy	1
Independent Variable		Informative		0
Moderator Variable	Type of Influencer	Micro/Macro Influencer	Dummy	1
		Mega Influencer (celebrity)		0
Control Variable	Age	18 - 25 years	Ratio	1
		25 - 41 years		2
		42 to more years		3
Control Variable	Level of Education	No education	Ordinal	1
		High School Diploma		2
		Bachelor's Diploma		3
		Master's Diploma		4
		Doctorate		5
Control Variable	Gender	Female	Dummy	1
		Male		0
Control Variable	Place of Residence	Europe	Nominal	1
		South America		2
		Other		3

3.2. Between-subjects design

With two independent variables and one moderator, each with two options, the study will adopt a 2x2x2 experimental design, resulting in eight possible scenarios. As this experiment has eight scenarios and to facilitate this research, a between-subjects experimental design will be used. This approach will limit the participants' exposure to a single condition, thereby reducing the risk of boredom that can occur to participants after interacting with multiple conditions over a long duration (Streff et al., 1988).

In the context of this experiment, a between-subjects design could be used to better represent real-world decisions and experiences of individuals since they are often facing only one specific situation (Fawcett, 2013). Furthermore, as the individuals will be exposed to only one scenario, this design effectively controls the possibility of individuals not being influenced by previous exposed conditions of beauty, communication style or type of influencer, ensuring that the responses in one treatment will not influence their responses in another (Streff et al., 1988). For instance, when individuals are exposed to different treatments the risk of carry-over effects could appear letting participants affect their responses due to learning from previous conditions (Fawcett, 2013).

Carry-over effects in this experiment could occur when participants' responses to subsequent treatments are persuaded by the experience in previous conditions complicating the interpretation of the results. (Streff et al., 1988). Therefore, using a between subject design in this experiment reduces the chances of having a comparison bias, as participants are not allowed to compare different treatments (Charness et al., 2012). Additionally, this design allows to reduce the risk of having perceived expectations from participants by attempting to guess the purpose of this experiment, meaning that after eight different scenarios, the manipulation could be noticed allowing participants to alter their behavior as well as their responses based on their assumptions. (Fawcett, 2013)

Moreover, considering the characteristics of this survey and aiming of obtaining findings that are as close as possible to real-world situations, using a single scenario enhances the external validity of this model (Charness et al., 2012). In real-life situations people don't have the opportunity to compare different situations (Streff et al., 1988) and in that regard, a between-subject design only

simulates one version of a specific situation that an individual could encounter in real life (Charness et al., 2012). For this experiment, the scenarios were created as a realistic setting (Streff et al., 1988) allowing to have the same advertisement and product but with different manipulations. This will make results to be more direct (Fawcett, 2013).

Despite the previous discussion, we are aware that each scenario will be presented to people in different groups that potentially could differ from each other due to the context or environment they are facing the manipulation and therefore, distinct answers could arise simply because individuals are different from each other (Streff et al., 1988). To address this concern, participants in this experiment are explicitly asked to base their responses solely on the highlighted details related to the variables that can be tested, refraining from incorporating personal or pre-existing opinions about the product.

One implication of using a between-subject design is that it necessitates an extended number of participants to identify differences, owing to the variability among respondents (Charness et al., 2012). Having a larger sample size improves the external validity and makes the overall model more representative of real-life situations (Charness et al., 2012). In contrast, having a small sample size could lead to have scenarios that are not equally balanced regarding some characteristics such as gender, age, or other demographic traits in this experiment (Streff et al., 1988).

For this research, 240 responses have been collected, with a minimum of 30 responses for each scenario. Participants were randomly exposed to a single scenario and subsequently required to answer two questions, one for brand perception and the other for purchase intention. In this experiment, randomization is essential to assure that the only difference in each scenario is the treatment being tested, assuring that differences in their answers are directly associated to the treatment (Charness et al., 2012). As well as having a large sample size, randomization balances the sample avoiding that participants with similar personal characteristics are faced to the same scenario, affecting the outcome (Streff et al., 1988). Lastly, dropouts will not be accounted for in the analysis. The Scenarios description that participants will be exposed are in Table 3.3.

In conclusion, for this research, a between-subject design offers a simple way to approach this experiment since each participant contributes to only one condition, attributing the variability in responses directly to the treatment rather than individual differences across periods (Streff et al.,

1988). Moreover, it is necessary to mention that previous experiments aiming to compare within-subject and between-subject designs have demonstrated that both methods can have comparable results under specific conditions (Charness et al., 2012).

Table 3.3: Description of the different scenarios presented

Scenario	Communication Style	Attractiveness	Influencer Type
1	Entertaining	Attractive	Micro/Macro
2	Entertaining	Non-Attractive	Micro/Macro
3	Entertaining	Attractive	Mega (Celebrity)
4	Entertaining	Non-Attractive	Mega (Celebrity)
5	Informative	Attractive	Micro/Macro
6	Informative	Non-Attractive	Micro/Macro
7	Informative	Attractive	Mega (Celebrity)
8	Informative	Non-Attractive	Mega (Celebrity)

3.3. Survey Design

The survey was elaborated to express a realistic scenario in which one influencer introduces a new burger in the market. The influencer possesses a combination of characteristics that wanted to be tested. The primary challenge was validating the concept of what the majority considers attractive and unattractive in physical appearance. Measuring physical attractiveness poses a subjective concept, making it difficult to establish a universal standard. Therefore, what one individual finds attractive, another might not, depending on various factors such as gender, age, cultural background, and personal experiences. For this study, I conducted a pre-test survey (Appendix 1) using subjective ratings to obtain direct input from participants, encompassing diverse groups from various countries, genders, and with differing tastes. Figure 3.1 includes the Description of the pre-test demographics

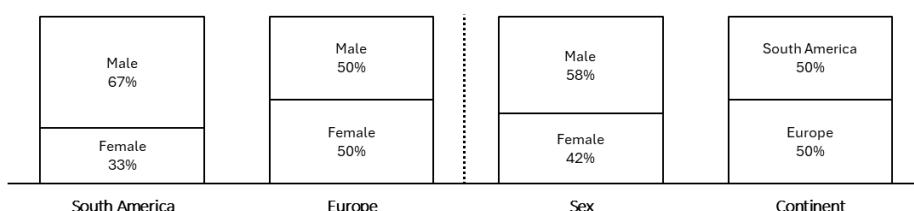


Figure 3.1: Description of the pre-test participants' demographics

Consequently, a selection of six women with varying physical attributes were presented to different individuals, while the context of the image remained consistent. Figure 3.2 shows an Example of one of the physical attractiveness questions presented. The physical attractiveness pre-test was sent to 12 individuals, each of whom were asked three questions to assess which of the women presented was considered most and least attractive. Firstly, the participants were asked to select all the options that they found attractive. Woman "E" was found attractive by 75% of the respondents, while women "A" and "C" were found attractive by 67% of the respondents. Different results were found for women "B", "F", and "D", who were found attractive by 17%, 8%, and 0% respectively.



Figure 3.2: Example of Physical Attractiveness pretest.

Secondly, participants were required to select all options they found unattractive. Consistent with previous results, women "D" and "F" were deemed unattractive by 83% of the respondents, while "B" was selected by 33%. Only 8% found woman "E" unattractive, and none of the participants deemed women "A" and "C" unattractive. Lastly, to determine which women's images to use for this experiment, a third question was conducted. Participants were asked to rank the six pictures from most to least attractive, with 1 indicating the most attractive and 6 the least. Woman "C" was ranked as the most attractive with 22 points. However, women "A" and "B" followed with 28 and 29 points, respectively, not far from the top position. Conversely, woman "F" was ranked as the

least attractive with 64 points, closely followed by woman "D" with 61 points, aligning with the outcomes of question 2.

As a result, woman "E" was selected as the most attractive as she was chosen by more people in question 1 and validated her preference in the ranking given in question 3. Lastly, the selection of which women would be included in the experiment as less attractive was between women "D" and "F", who had the same percentage of negative responses in question 2. Ultimately, woman "D" was selected to minimize bias regarding characteristics such as hair color, skin color, or some facial features related to race.

After selecting the two women's pictures in the physical attractiveness pre-test, the main experiment was constructed (Appendix 2). As mentioned, the survey started with a brief overview of the research's purpose and a question designed to obtain thoughtful responses from participants. Only participants who committed to it and completed the survey in its entirety were considered. Following this, one of the eight scenarios was presented, in which the independent variables, physical attractiveness and communication style, were shown by performing an experiment where participants were exposed to a random scenario involving a female influencer. As previously mentioned, a consensus on what the majority finds attractive or less attractive was established. Similarly, the type of influencer was specified in each scenario. An Example of how the scenario was presented in the final survey can be seen in Figure 3.3, where a physically attractive micro or macro influencer with an entertaining communication style introduced a new product to the market.

Afterward, the dependent variables, Purchase Intention and Brand Perception, were each assessed with one question for each variable following the scenario presentation. Participants were questioned, "How likely are you to purchase products advertised in the near future?" to measure Purchase Intention and were required to choose from a five-point Likert scale, with options ranging from "very unlikely" to "very likely" (Masuda et al., 2022). Participants was requested to evaluated Brand Perception variable by responding to the question "How does the influencer make you feel about the product being advertised?" with a five-point Likert scale from "not at all" to "extremely" (Nicoara et al., 2023) was used to rate each emotion presented (excitement, trust, curiosity, and connection).

Subsequently, demographic questions were asked to explore further into differences in people's behavior across different countries of residence, education levels, genders, and ages. Lastly, questions regarding personal social media usage and previous purchase behavior influenced by an influencer were included to complement the knowledge about the usage of social media of the participants.

It is relevant to note that the survey design process included iterative refinement through pilot testing. A select group of individuals participated in the pilot test, offering invaluable feedback on question clarity, relevance, and comprehensibility. Iterative adjustments were made based on pilot feedback to optimize the survey's efficacy and respondent experience.

*"Imagine scrolling through your Instagram feed when you come across an Instagram story from a **micro-influencer, that despite having less than 200,000 followers**, has built a dedicated following through their authentic approach and accessible personality. This influencer is also **known for their gorgeous physical appeal (take as reference image shown below)**. The influencer is introducing a new burger product with **excitement and humor** in their communication style while she is tasting it:*

"🍔🍔 Craving an exceptional taste experience that's out of this world? Brace yourself because you are about to blow your taste senses away! Get ready to try this new mouthwatering premium burger and crispy fries, which have reached an iconic status! And our sauces? They taste like happiness, guaranteeing a unique burst of flavor with every bite. Call your burger squad and prepare yourself for a taste adventure that will captivate you until the very end! 🍔🍔 #BurgerLover #FlavorSpectacle #SauceSuperstars."



Figure 3.3: Example of one scenario: physically attractive micro or macro influencer with an entertaining communication style

4. Results

For this research, data was collected from the experiment previously described during a one-month period. The data was gathered from people of different countries, ages, genders, and education levels. No limitations were set for the target audience. In total, the experiment reached 420 individuals, but only 258 responses were considered valid for this research. Invalid responses were due to incomplete surveys and a lack of commitment to providing thoughtful answers. Answers were recorded to perform the linear regressions needed and dummy variables for the independent variables were also included, indicating the inclusion or exclusion of one of the influencer characteristics measured in this research for each scenario.

4.1. P-value

For this research, a p-value of 0.1 will be used to determine statistical significance. This decision is driven by the exploratory nature of the study, which aims to identify potential relationships and trends rather than confirm definitive effects (Thisted, 1998). Therefore, using a higher p-value threshold than the commonly used ($p=0.05$) increases the chances of detecting significant relationships that otherwise could be missed (Lakens, 2021). This approach minimizes the risk of Type II errors (false negatives), especially given our relatively small sample sizes per scenario (Thiese et al., 2016), and provides valuable insights for future research, thereby making meaningful contributions to the growing knowledge in this field.

Many authors debate the appropriate p-value threshold for statistical significance in research. The p-value represents the likelihood of rejecting the null hypothesis (H_0), which states that there is no distinction between the two groups concerning a specific variable (Thiese et al., 2016). Although a p-value of 0.05 is the most commonly used threshold, Thisted (1998) states that despite the effect observed is small it can still provide convincing proof of an existing effect. This author also discusses in a 2016 study that the p-value threshold was not only meant to be a unique value for determine significance in research, and using a higher p-value might also give substantial results for smaller studies. Moreover, Lakens (2021) supports using a threshold greater than 0.05 without implying a non-effect and arguing that it is useful in exploratory research to detect potential trends.

4.2. Descriptives

For this research, data was collected from over 400 respondents, with 240 valid responses. The experiment was openly circulated and Table 4.1 details the Distribution of valid response. Female respondents predominated, representing 66% of the participants, while males made up 34%. Most respondents were aged between 25-41 years, representing 69% of the sample. This was followed by respondents aged 42 years or older, with a participation of 20%, and respondents aged between 18-25 years, with 12%. Regarding education, 47% of the respondents possessed a Master's Diploma, 46% had a Bachelor's Diploma, 6% had a High School Diploma, and 1% held a Doctorate. The majority of respondents resided in South America representing 63% of the surveys validly responded, leaving 26% from Europe and 11% from other continents.

Furthermore, each participant each participant was assigned to one of eight randomly assigned scenarios, with each scenario receiving valid responses from approximately 30 to 34 respondents. A female majority was present in all cases, ranging from 56% to 74%. The age distribution consistently showed the majority of respondents in the 25-41 years range as well as geographical distribution where most respondents resided in South America. Additionally, the educational level of the participants was diverse, with a significant proportion holding a Bachelor's or Master's Diploma across all scenarios with 46% and 47%, respectively.

Likewise, Descriptive statistics in Table 4.2, such as mean and standard deviation, provide valuable insights from respondent answers regarding Purchase Intention and Brand Perception. Scores for the Purchase Intention variable ranged from 1 to 5, with the average score being 3.03, indicating that in average the respondents are slightly incline to a positive willingness to buy the product advertised. However, the standard deviation of 1.101 indicates a level of variability of the respondent answers, meaning that while many responses are around the mean, there is still a significant spread in the data. This variability reveals that the sample have a diverse variety in their behaviors.

The Brand Perception variable that was obtained using factor analysis contains a minimum score that is approximately -1.75, and a maximum score that is approximately 2.68. The mean value of this variable is zero since the factor scores are standardized. In addition, the standard deviation is

Table 4.1: Distribution of respondent's demographics per Scenario

		Attractive Entertaining Micro influencer	Non-Attractive Entertaining Micro influencer	Attractive Entertaining Mega influencer	Non-Attractive Entertaining Mega influencer	Attractive Informative Micro influencer	Non-Attractive Informative Micro influencer	Attractive Informative Mega influencer	Non-Attractive Informative Mega influencer	Total
# Surveys		34	30	33	32	31	34	31	33	258
		13%	12%	13%	12%	12%	13%	12%	13%	
Gender	Female	56%	73%	73%	69%	61%	74%	58%	67%	66%
	Male	44%	27%	27%	31%	39%	26%	42%	33%	34%
Age	18-25 years	9%	20%	18%	3%	10%	15%	16%	3%	12%
	25-41 years	71%	57%	67%	81%	74%	71%	71%	58%	69%
	+42 year	21%	23%	15%	16%	16%	15%	13%	39%	20%
Education	High School Diploma	6%	20%	6%	0%	0%	9%	6%	0%	6%
	Bachelor's Diploma	65%	43%	33%	34%	39%	53%	52%	48%	46%
	Master's Diploma	29%	37%	61%	66%	61%	38%	35%	48%	47%
	Doctorate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%	3%	1%
Place of Residence	Europe	18%	27%	39%	28%	32%	32%	26%	9%	26%
	South America	76%	67%	52%	59%	45%	62%	61%	79%	63%
	Other	6%	7%	9%	13%	23%	6%	13%	12%	11%

1 as expected, indicating a moderate spread around the mean and implying that the factor scores have a normal distribution with these standardized parameters.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics Purchase Intention and Brand Perception

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Purchase Intention	258	1	5	3.03	1.101
Brand Perception	258	-1.75	2.68	0	1.000
Valid N (listwise)	258				

Adapted source Elsa Carolina Baigorria Montalvo

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

A linear regression was performed to test the hypothesis to explore the relationships between the variables involved and understand how physical attractiveness and the communication style of an influencer impact brand perception and individuals' behaviors towards the intention to purchase a product. Moreover, a moderate effect of the type of influencer will be included to examine how this variable affects the previously mentioned relationships. Finally, the model also incorporates the four control variables described earlier. The linear regression equations used in the analysis, along with the results, are presented below:

The first equation examines if the social media influencer's physical attractiveness (H1) and an entertaining communication style compared to an informative communication style (H3) positively influence brand perception:

$$\text{BrandPerception} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{PhysicalAttractiveness}) + \beta_2 (\text{CommunicationStyle}) + \sum_{i=1}^n \alpha_i (\text{ControlVariables})_i + \epsilon$$

The second equation examines if the physical attractiveness of a social media influencer (H2) and an entertaining communication style compared to an informative communication style (H4) positively influence purchase intention:

$$\text{PurchaseIntention} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{PhysicalAttractiveness}) + \beta_2 (\text{CommunicationStyle}) + \sum_{i=1}^n \alpha_i (\text{ControlVariables})_i + \epsilon$$

The third equation examines if the influencer type moderates the relationship between the influencer's physical attractiveness and communication style on brand perception (H5):

$$\begin{aligned} \text{BrandPerception} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{PhysicalAttractiveness}) + \beta_2 (\text{CommunicationStyle}) + \beta_3 \\ & (\text{TypeOfInfluencer}) + \beta_4 (\text{PhysicalAttractiveness} \times \text{TypeOfInfluencer}) + \beta_5 \\ & (\text{CommunicationStyle} \times \text{TypeOfInfluencer}) + \sum_{i=1}^n \alpha_i (\text{ControlVariables})_i + \epsilon \end{aligned}$$

Lastly, the fourth equation examines if the influencer type moderates the relationship between the influencer's physical attractiveness and communication style on purchase intention (H6)

$$\begin{aligned} \text{PurchaseIntention} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{PhysicalAttractiveness} + \beta_2 (\text{CommunicationStyle}) + \beta_3 \\ & (\text{TypeOfInfluencer}) + \beta_4 (\text{PhysicalAttractiveness} \times \text{TypeOfInfluencer}) + \beta_5 \\ & (\text{CommunicationStyle} \times \text{TypeOfInfluencer}) + \sum_{i=1}^n \alpha_i (\text{ControlVariables})_i + \epsilon \end{aligned}$$

First, the four linear regressions were conducted without control variables, but a poor model fit was found. The findings indicate a negative and significant effect ($p < 0.1$), contrary to expectations, in the interaction between influencer type and physical attractiveness in brand perception. In contrast, physical attractiveness does not have a significant impact on purchase intention nor their interactive effect with type of influencer ($p > 0.1$). Moreover, communication style does not have a significant effect on either brand perception or purchase intention variables.

Regardless of these effects, the R-squared results indicate that the models did not explain any variance in either of the dependent variables, suggesting a poor-fit for these models. indicating a probable need for significant improvement. This R square Results that are presented in Table 4.3 does not present major predictive power and may suggest that the model is probably missing other important variables or control variables could help differentiate the impact of the independent variables while holding other factors constant (Mervis et al., 2004).

Table 4.3: Results of linear regression model fit statistics without control variables

	Model	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error
Brand Perception	Main Effect	0.033	0.025	0.9872
	Interaction Effect	0.058	0.039	0.9801
Purchase Intention	Main Effect	0.004	-0.004	1.103
	Interaction Effect	0.025	0.006	1.098

Adapted source Elsa Carolina Baigorria Montalvo

4.3.1. Regression Results

This part delves into how Physical Attractiveness and Communication Style affect Brand Perception and Purchase Intention, including the moderating influence of Type of Influencer, incorporating demographic control variables defined for this model such as age, level of education, gender, and place of residence to help to have a better understanding of this research.

Table 4.4 encompasses the Linear Regression results for the Brand Perception dependent variable. The R-squared value of 0.122 shows that the model accounts for 12.2% of the variance in Brand Perception., suggesting a moderate fit. The Interaction Effect model has a slightly higher R-squared value of 12.9%, showing that with the inclusion of the moderator, the model explains 12.9% of the variance in brand perception.

The Physical Attractiveness (Hypothesis 1) variable showed a negative significant effect ($p=0.004$) in Brand Perception with a standardized value of -0.176, contradicting the initial hypothesis of a positive effect of Physical Attractiveness on Brand perception. The outcome obtained indicate that an attractive physical appeal has a significant negative impact on how individuals perceive a brand. For Communication Style variable (Hypothesis 3), the results revealed a slightly negative effect on Brand Perception with a standardized value of -0.004, though this effect is non-significant ($p > 0.1$). This result suggests that an entertaining communication style compared to an informative communication style does not significantly influence more consumer perception of a brand.

The moderator effect of Type of influencer (Hypothesis 5) indicated that the main effect of Physical Attractiveness remains negative with a standardized value of -0.166, but it becomes non-significant ($p > 0.1$). Moreover, the main effect of Communication Style on Brand Perception, also

remain negative with a value of -0.046 and non-significant ($p>0.1$). The result of the interaction effect of Influencer Type and Physical Attractiveness is also negative (-0.107), but interaction effect of Type of Influencer and Communication Style is positive (0.057), contrary to the main effect. However, both results are non-significant ($p>0.1$), suggesting that the attractive physical appeal of a Micro/Macro influencer does not significantly influence brand perception. Similarly, when a Micro/Macro influencer uses an entertaining communication style compared to an informative communication style, it does not impact more on how consumers perceive the brand.

Table 4.5 presents the Linear Regression results for the Purchase Intention variable. The R-squared value for the model predicting Purchase Intention is 5.9%. In the same line as the Brand Perception model, the R-squared value with interaction effects is higher at 6.9%, indicating that this model has a slightly better fit.

The result for Physical Attractiveness (Hypotheses 2) on Purchase Intention showed a negative effect with a standardized value of -0.58, but don't have a significant effect ($p > 0.1$). This result suggests that an attractive physical appeal has a negative impact on the decision of purchasing a product; however, the effect is non-significant. The results for Communication Style (Hypothesis 4) showed a slightly negative effect on Purchase Intention with a standardized value of -0.006, but also is non-significant ($p > 0.1$). This result suggests that an entertaining communication style compared to an informative communication style does not significantly impact more in consumers' purchase intention.

Lastly, the moderator effect of type of influencer on Purchase Intention (Hypothesis 6) results indicated that Physical Attractiveness' main effect changed its direction, shifting from a negative value in the no interaction effect test to a positive value of 0.04 when interaction effect is test, as was proposed in the hypothesis. Nevertheless, this effect is non-significant ($p>0.1$). The main effect results for Communication Style are still negative with a value of -0.019 and non-significant ($p>0.1$). The result of the interaction effect of Type of Influencer and Physical Attractiveness is negative (-0.171), and the interaction effect of Type of Influencer and Communication Style is positive (0.029), both contrary to the main effect. However, both of these results are non-significant ($p>0.1$), indicating that a Micro/Macro-influencer's attractive physical appeal or their use of an entertaining communication compared to an informative communication style does not significantly impact more consumers' purchase decisions.

In this model, the control variables were included to control differences in perceptions and intentions of individuals toward Influencer Attractiveness and Communication style, as well as the moderator effect of Type of influencer (Ross, 1988). The age control variable does not have significant results, indicating that the age differences do not alter the consumers' brand perception or their likelihood to buy. Same results are shown for the gender and place of residence control variables with non-significant effect, evidencing that neither being female or male and cultural difference influence how individuals react to the attractiveness or communication style of influencer when they a product is advertised. However, Education level does show a negative significant effect in all levels of education for Brand Perception, conveying that the higher level of education an individual possesses, the lower impact has the influencers in shaping consumers view of a brand. On other hand, significant negative results for Purchase Intention are shown as well for Bachelor and Master Diploma holders but non-significant results for Doctorates when comparing to High School Diploma owner.

In conclusion, adding demographic control variables like gender, age, level and place of residence education allow the model to significantly enhanced its ability to explain the variations in Brand Perception and gain a clear understanding of the variable's effects. Notably, an attractive physical appeal compared to a non-attractive one had a significant negative main effect on Brand Perception, but this effect was mitigated when the moderator effect of Type of Influencer effect is tested. Therefore, when the model considers how Physical Attractiveness interacts with the type of influencer, the effect becomes less clear and non-significant. An Entertaining Communication Style vs an Informative one showed non-significant effect on either Brand Perception or Purchase Intention, suggesting that an entertaining communication approach by influencers compared to an informative communication style may not be a decisive factor in shaping consumer perception towards a brand or their purchase decisions. Lastly, the level of education control variable leads to lower Brand Perception and Purchase Intention. This underscores that the higher level of education individuals achieves, the less they drive their decisions or behaviors based on the physical appeal or a communication style in influencer marketing. Table 4.6 show a summary of the Hypothesis tested and if they were supported or not.

Table 4.4: Linear regression results for the relationship between Physical Attractiveness and Communication Style with Brand Perception

Variables	Group Score	
	No Interaction Effect	Interaction Effect
Physical Attractiveness	-0.18*** (0.12)	-0.12 (0.17)
Communication Style	-0.00 (0.12)	-0.05 (0.17)
Type of Influencer		0.06 (0.21)
Attractiveness_TypeInfluencer		-0.11 (0.25)
CommStyle_TypeInfluencer		0.08 (0.25)
PR_SouthAmerica_Dummy	0.08 (0.16)	0.08 (0.16)
PR_Other_Dummy	0.01 (0.22)	0.02 (0.22)
Age_25to41_Dummy	-0.08 (0.21)	-0.08 (0.21)
Age_42orMore_Dummy	-0.11 (0.25)	-0.11 (0.25)
Ed_Bachelor_Dummy	-0.42*** (0.28)	-0.39*** (0.29)
Ed_Master_Dummy	-0.54*** (0.29)	-0.49*** (0.30)
Ed_Doctorate_Dummy	-0.14** (0.63)	-0.13* (0.64)
Gender_Dummy	-0.06 (0.13)	-0.061 (0.128)
R-Squared	1.22	1.29

*Note. Standard errors are in parenthesis; Standardized coefficient values are presented; *p-value<0.1, **p-value<0.05, ***p-value<0.01*

Reference Independent Variables: Physical Attractiveness: Attractive; Communication Style: Entertaining

Reference Moderator Variable: Type of Influencer: Micro/Mega Influencer

References Control Variables: Place of residence: Europe; Age: 18 to 25 years; Level of Education: High School Diploma; Female: 1

Adapted source Elsa Carolina Baigorria Montalvo, 2024

Table 4.5: Linear regression results for the relationship between Physical Attractiveness and Communication Style with Purchase Intention

Variables	Group Score	
	No Interaction Effect	Interaction Effect
Physical Attractiveness	-0.06 (0.14)	0.04 (0.20)
Communication Style	-0.01 (0.14)	-0.02 (0.20)
Type of Influencer		0.11 (0.24)
Attractiveness_TypeInfluencer		-0.17 (0.28)
CommStyle_TypeInfluencer		0.03 (0.28)
PR_SouthAmerica_Dummy	0.09 (0.18)	0.10 (0.18)
PR_Other_Dummy	0.01 (0.25)	0.02 (0.25)
Age_25to41_Dummy	0.03 (0.24)	0.04 (0.24)
Age_42orMore_Dummy	-0.04 (0.28)	-0.03 (0.29)
Ed_Bachelor_Dummy	-0.33** (0.32)	-0.29** (0.33)
Ed_Master_Dummy	-0.44*** (0.33)	-0.39** (0.34)
Ed_Doctorate_Dummy	-0.11 (0.72)	-0.10 (0.73)
Gender_Dummy	-0.03 (0.15)	-0.05 (0.15)
R-Squared	0.06	0.07

*Note. Standard errors are in parenthesis; Standardized coefficient values are presented; *p-value< 0.1, **p-value< 0.05, ***p-value< 0.01*

Reference Independent Variables: Physical Attractiveness: Attractive; Communication Style: Entertaining

Reference Moderator Variable: Type of Influencer: Micro/Mega Influencer

References Control Variables: Place of residence: Europe; Age: 18 to 25 years; Level of Education: High School Diploma; Female: 1

Adapted source Elsa Carolina Baigorria Montalvo, 2024

Table 4.6: Hypothesis Support Table

	Hypothesis	Supported
H1	Physical attractiveness of the social media influencer has a positive effect on Brand Perception	Yes
H2	Physical attractiveness of the social media influencer has a positive effect on brand Purchase Intention	No
H3	Entertaining Communication Style of the social media influencer has a more positive effect on Brand Perception compared to an Informative Communication Style.	No
H4	Entertaining Communication Style of the social media influencer has a more positive effect on Purchase Intention compared to an Informative Communication Style.	No
H5	Type of influencer moderates the relationship of Physical attractiveness and Communication Style of the social media influencer on Brand Perception.	No
H6	Type of influencer moderates the relationship of Physical attractiveness and Communication Style of the social media influencer on purchase intention.	No

5. Results Discussion

5.1. Physical Attractiveness

The unexpected finding, when Hypothesis 1 was tested, of having a negative impact of an attractive physical appeal in brand perception is complex. Moreover, results for Hypothesis 2 challenge the assumption that mere attractiveness of digital influencers automatically leads to higher purchase intentions showing no direct relationship and non-significant effects on consumers' purchase intentions (Kim et al., 2023).

Similarly to this research, Hermanda et al. (2019) found non-significant direct relationship between social media influencers and purchase intention. Although these results may oppose the initial hypotheses of this research, different reasons could explain these findings. In this section we will thoroughly explore why this physical attractiveness have a significant negative main effect when this attribute is only considered in the impact on brand perception.

5.1.1. The relevance of the type of product

As it was described in a previous chapter, for this research an experiment was performed showing the participants a social media advertisement where an influencer was promoting and introducing a new product to the market. An important consideration needed in the creation of these scenarios was to have different scenarios in which the only difference between them was only due to the manipulations. This guarantee that variability in answers were only explained by those differences. Additionally, the between-subject design chosen for this intervention implied that each participant will only be exposed to one scenario, which indicated a complexity in the scenarios development to avoid the presence of biases in the participants.

Since the scope of the survey was to capture responses of individual from different genders, levels of education, ages and places of residence, the complexity of the survey creation was to select a product that could have the same appeal to the participants. For instance, selecting a specific product that could be more attractive or used for women such as beauty products, could led to incurring in preferences bias in women and not in men towards the product. In the same line, the same bias would have appeared if technological products were shown, creating a bias in terms of

brand preference and perceptions influenced by their education levels and economic situation. In that regard, a food product was selected for this experiment taking into account that it could be considered as more universally appealing, regardless of the varying characteristics of the participants in this survey. Therefore, the negative effect of an attractive physical appeal obtained in this model could be attributed to the selection of the product, suggesting that the significance of an influencer's physical appeal will depend on the context (Margom et al., 2023).

The impact of attractiveness varies across different sectors; nevertheless, some researchers have identified that this characteristic is more effective with fashion and beauty products where visual appeal is associated with the product's appeal. (Pereira et al., 2023). Margom et al. (2023) paper which investigate the effect of Physical Attractiveness of Influencers on Consumer Behavior, found that while being attractive is considered beneficial for products related to beauty and fashion, this attribute is perceived as less relevant for products not directly associated with appearance categories, like the one presented in the experiment. Moreover, Vrontis et al. (2021) complement the previous findings identifying that additional to the product characteristics, the consumer characteristics such as lifestyle, cultural background, online experience, and sensitivity to price, not considered in this analysis, may affect how well influencer marketing strategies work.

Therefore, the negative impact found in this research could be attributed to the selection of the product advertised in the experiment, meaning that dynamic between an influencer and the type of product endorsed highlights the importance of appropriately selecting influencers for specific market segments, especially if the selection is based on physical appeal (Pereira et al., 2023). Furthermore, influencers who are recognized by individuals as authorities in their respective fields build strong trust digitally among their followers, thus acting as significant shapers of consumer behavior (Pereira et al., 2023). Including the type of product as a moderator in future research is recommended to gain a clearer comprehension of the effect of attractive physical appeal on brand perception, purchase intention, and overall consumer behavior. Furthermore, this approach could reveal important insights into how consumers respond differently across various contexts, thereby allowing marketers to tailor their strategies more effectively for different types of products based on influencer characteristics.

5.1.2. Negative Halo Effects

The concept of Halo Effect is defined as the subconscious modification of assessments about a person's specific traits based on a general impression or overall evaluation of them (Nisbett et al., 1977). In marketing, this effect can significantly impact brand perception and customer behavior (Diza, 2018), leading individuals to make biased decisions that can result in unfair behavior (Nisbett et al., 1977). Moreover, psychological mechanism arises when we like someone, and we tend to see them as more attractive. Conversely, if we have a negative perception of them, we may view them as less attractive (Nisbett et al., 1977).

Nisbett et al., (1977) discuss how negative perceptions can lead to self-doubt and reduced confidence, which can negatively impact behavior and performance, introducing the implications of a Negative Halo Effect. The author mentions that attractive individuals might evoke jealousy or resentment, particularly if their appeal feels forced or manipulative, generating more emotional and cognitive biases and leading to a negative impact of the brand promoted (Nisbett et al., 1977). In the same line, Hariningsih et al. (2024) acknowledge that advertisements with a lot of attention on an influencer's appeal can distract consumers from the real features or usefulness of the product. This can make consumers perceive the marketing efforts as superficial, leading to a reduction of brand trust, thus causing a negative halo effect.

Authenticity and spontaneity are key factors to build trust among followers (Bakker, 2018); Therefore, a negative halo effect for an influencer is the perceived Inauthenticity. The perceived inauthenticity happened when consumers consider endorsements from highly attractive influencers not authentic, believing that their motivation is merely monetary rather than the true preference for the product (Ágústsson, 2019). These reactions lead to a form of skepticism that can reduce trust in the brand (Diza, 2018). In that context, when consumers notice a gap between the product endorsed by an influencer and their own personal reality, they experience a cognitive dissonance, which is a psychological discomfort that can discourage individuals from making a purchase because they present inconsistency sentiments (Ágústsson, 2019).

Lastly, a perceived misalignment with the brand values is also considered as a negative Halo Effect that influence in Brand Perception. According to Diza (2018) If an influencer's positive attributes as its physical attractiveness do not align with the values or identity of the brand it can lead consumer to confusion sentiments that weaken the brand's hiding the true characteristics of the

product. This interpretation considers the importance, as well, of having a good match with the product and the influencer as discussed at the beginning of this chapter. In conclusion, Attractiveness of an influencer or endorser who does not match the product's values and identity (Diza, 2018) incurs in negative halo effects that lately impact negative in the perception of the brand.

To avoid negative Halo Effects, marketers should consider a broader range of influencer characteristics to ensure they align closely with brand values. Future research should focus on identifying which traits are most appreciated in influencer marketing, considering different products, contexts, and demographic characteristics. This approach will help marketers tailor their strategies more effectively and build stronger, more authentic connections with their target audience. Finally, emphasizing authenticity and spontaneity in endorsements can also help reduce negative perceptions.

5.2. Communication Style

5.2.1. The importance of the context

The communication style of an influencer that wants to influence consumer behavior often depends on the context and is usually moderated by other factors (Barcelos et al., 2019). As consequence of not considering those contextual factors, the direct influence of communication style on consumers behaviors might not be significant (Barcelos et al., 2019). To be more precise, although informal styles are often considered relevant and are commonly presumed to be more effective, their impact and significance can fluctuate depending on consumer expectations and the context of the communication (Gretry et al., 2017).

Additionally, Gretry et al. (2017) performed an experiment focusing primarily on social media interactions and found a significant moderator effect when the communication is present as two-way communication and when the platform allows interaction. In the contrary, the authors found that in situations where the communication is less interactive or personal, the style used by influencers does not matter much. Congruently, Balaban et al. (2022) discusses that having an appropriate context and a good interaction with followers are key to cultivating strong relationships. Lastly, according to Gretry et al. (2017) scenarios that al related to low-involvement

products or highly transactional interactions, as the one presented in this research, may not have a significant effect of the communication style in consumer behavior.

Therefore, the performance of the communications style relies on the context where the advertisement is been performed. For instance, an informative communication style with an analytical approach, is particularly effective for content that requires detailed explanations and precise information like tutorial videos, reviews, and educational content where the audience expects informational quality over emotional or entertainment value (Munaro et al., 2024)

Future research should explore how different communication styles perform across various contexts, product types, and levels of consumer involvement to provide more nuanced insights into effective influencer marketing strategies.

5.2.2. Brand Familiarity

In addition, another important factor to be considered that affects when trying to shape consumers behaviors is the familiarity with the brand. Without this relationship, the main effect of communication style alone might not be significant (Gretry, 2017). In that regard, communication style is aligned with what the audience already knows or expects, having an important impact on the effectiveness of individual's engagement (Gretry et al., 2017).

Moreover, in influencer marketing, the style selected to communicate a message should be tailored based on the brand's familiarity distinguishing it for each target audience (Gretry et al., 2017). For example, Gretry et al. 2017, points out that for existing customers, using an informal style works best to deepen relationships with customers. Therefore, segmenting consumer markets enables the creation of communication strategies that are more customized. (Walsh et al., 2001). For example, an informative approach is more effective to value-oriented consumers who appreciate detailed and rational information, conversely, an entertaining approach with messages that resonate with consumers feelings and experiences are more valued to emotionally consumers (Walsh et al., 2001).

Finally, it is relevant to acknowledge that for limitation in resources, the experiment was created as a survey type with a scenario where the communication style was differentiated by the way the advertisement was written. While usually the differences between a communication style or an informative style are better distinguished, including tone voices and analyzing overall

characteristics while listening the advertisement could capture better the differences in the communication style. For further investigations, a deeper analysis that includes moderators related to context and brand familiarity are recommended as well as an experiment where participants could perceive the differences in communication style by listening and seeing the advertisement promoted.

5.3. Interaction effect Type of Influencer

After analyzing the main effects of the Physical Attractiveness and Communication Style in a simpler model, a moderator effect of Type of Influencer for both independent variables were tested. As it was outlined in the prior chapter, the main effect of physical attractiveness in this more complete model losses significance ($p>0.1$), while the communication style main effect maintains non-significant. Also, the interaction effect for both variables presents non-significant effects, meaning that the Type of Influencer does not moderate the relationship between the predictor and outcome variables

The change of significance in the Physical Attractiveness variable in a sophisticated model, as the one introducing interaction effects that highlight the complexity of the relationships between variables, reveals that the sole impacts of each factor separately fail to capture the complete dynamics of the model (Rosnow et al., 1989). In other words, the impact of attractiveness in a simpler model seems more significant than it is and when a more sophisticated look is incorporated, the results weaken. Rosnow et al. (1989) explained that when an interaction term is added, it changes how the overall variability in the data is divided among the different factors. The author also added in his explanation that in simpler models without the interaction term, the variability might be mostly attributed to the main effects; however, when the interaction term is added it take some of this variability that can be non-significant if does not explain a large enough portion of the variability, even if the main effects were significant in the simpler model. For this analysis, the effect of attractiveness is diluted when considered additional factors in a more elaborate model.

Moreover, the interaction effect results were non-significant, indicating that the Type of Influencer does not alter the impact on the level of influence of Physical Attractiveness and Communication

Style in Brand Perception and Purchase Intention. In other words, the influence of Physical Attractiveness and Communication Style on Brand Perception and Purchase Intention is consistent across all levels of Type of Influencer, meaning that the independent variables operate independently, and the main effects provide an adequate explanation without needing to consider how factors interact with other variables (Rosnow et al., 1989).

Lastly, the statistical power, which refers to the ability of detecting interaction effects in this model could not be strong enough, meaning that even if there is a real interaction effect, this model is able to recognize it (Land, 1981). In that context, the sample size used to detect the moderator role of Type of Influencer could also be a reason of the non-significant results, considering that the sample size sensitivity is often higher for interaction effect detection rather than main effects (Rosnow et al., 1989). Moreover, Land (1981) points out that when the model has a high variability, the challenge of differentiating between random variations and actual interaction effects is higher. The variability in this experiment is attributed to the type of design used, in this case a between subjects, since participants can introduce additional noise into the data.

Therefore, it is important to take into account for these types of studies, where resources are limited with small sample size, that there is a probability of not detecting the interaction effect even if it actually exists. (Rosnow et al., 1989). This means that the statistical power is not enough to detect the interaction effects rather than proving that no do not exist (Land, 1981). For that reason, Land (1981) cautions against interpreting non-significant interaction effects as proof of the absence of interaction. For future research that aims to identify an Influencer Type moderator effect, will be better to account for larger sample size due to the variability of answers that could be obtained when a between subject's design is being employed Land (1981).

5.4. Level of Education

The results obtained in this model show a significant effect in the level of education that is affecting consumers purchase intention and brand perception. Moreover, the higher the education level achieved, the more negative is the impact. For instance, the coefficient for participants who have achieved a bachelor diploma is -0.292, implying a smaller impact compared to individuals who have master diploma who got a coefficient of -0.394. This effect can be explained by the acknowledge that higher education led to more sophisticated and critical behaviors, creating a

barrier in the way consumer behaves (Reid, 2014). Moreover, some studies as the one conducted by Croes et al. (2021) found that educational background significantly affects the motivation behind following social media Influencers. The negative effect that the level of education shows could be addressed for many reasons.

The ability to create a critical evaluation on social media influencer in individuals with high education is a motive that can be related to these results. This evaluation increased the awareness of credibility of highly educated individuals by making rigorous judgements based on the reliability and trustworthiness of influencers' content, leading them to have a depth evaluation before making their purchase decision (Croes et al., 2021). Furthermore, individuals with higher education are less likely to buy products bases only on the product popularity (Khan et al., 2021). In relation to that, quality, usefulness, and expertise of the product are characteristics that matter more to highly educated consumers than only considering the product's trend (Khan et al., 2021).

Skepticism in highly educated consumers also impacts on consumer behavior when talking about influencer marketing. The skeptical attitude that arises in individuals with higher education makes them to carefully examine the content made by influencers, which impacts the probability of being convinced, thus affecting their purchase intentions (Croes et al., 2021). In the same way, when individual possess a higher level of education, but don't share the same values with the influencer's endorsement, decreases the interaction with the influencers content and subsequently the probability of been influence in their purchase intention, specifically in the products being endorse (Croes et al., 2021)

6. Conclusion

This research provides significant understanding of the complex dynamics of influencer marketing, especially regarding the roles of physical attractiveness and communication style, as well as the moderating role of influencer type in shaping brand perception and willingness to purchase. Therefore, the results obtained will be an important contribution taking into account that the selection of the right influencer is crucial for success (Agustian et al., 2023).

Opposed to the initial hypothesis, this study reveals that an attractive influencer can have a significant negatively direct effect on brand perception when interaction effects are not considered. Two conclusions can be drawn from this result: the type of product matters, and attractiveness can lead to a negative halo effect. Having an attractive physical appeal does not always positively impact consumer behavior, as might be expected. Influencer characteristics such as physical appeal could be considered beneficial for specific types of products, like beauty and fashion, but are not advantageous for products unrelated to this category, such as the one in this research.

Moreover, a negative halo effect can arise when consumers perceived that the influencer appeal is forced, and distract the attention from the product's actual features, leading to a reduction of brand trust, thus brand perception. Congruently, when consumers identify influencers as not authentic, make them believe that their endorsements could be motivated by monetary gains rather than a real preference, leading as well to a negative brand perception. Future research should consider the relevance of the product type when evaluating the impact of influencer characteristic, moreover, examining the context and authenticity of endorsements will provide deeper insights into the effective use of influencer marketing strategies and prevent negative halo effects.

It has been seen that the performance of communication style relies on the interaction with context and platform used. Moreover, brand familiarity also plays a crucial role aligning with audience expectations that enhance engagement. Future studies should explore interactive elements and real-life scenarios to better understand communication style impacts. Future research should consider context and brand familiarity variables and utilize experiments where participants can listen and experience the different communication styles characteristics for more accurate results.

The small sample size of the study might have restricted the capacity to identify interaction effects in complex models. Future research should use larger samples to better explore these potential moderator effects. Moreover, the study reveals that higher levels of education are associated with reduced purchase intentions and brand perception among consumers, with more educated individuals being more critical of influencers. For example, those with bachelor's degrees are less negatively impacted than those with master's degrees. Educated consumers tend to question the credibility and reliability of influencers, valuing quality, and expertise over popularity. This skepticism and potential mismatch in values with influencers make it less likely for highly educated individuals to be influenced.

Finally, some limitations have been identified. The sample size for this research, due to limited resources, led to a lack of power when trying to detect interaction effects accurately. Moreover, the research only considered some influencer characteristics, focusing on physical attractiveness and communication style, omitting other significant attributes that could provide a better understanding and explanation of consumer behaviors. Lastly, it could be interesting for future research to compare these results to panel data regarding past purchases to validate consistency. These findings provide a nuanced understanding for managers and academics regarding influencer marketing and how the physical appeal and communications style of a micro/macro or mega influencer affect consumer behavior.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Pre-test complete survey

1. Introduction

In this brief survey, you'll find five questions designed to explore more into physical attractiveness as part of my Thesis for Marketing Master's program at Erasmus University Rotterdam.

It's important to note that there are no right or wrong answers; each response contributes to our understanding of the complex nature of beauty. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used solely for research purposes.

Please answer each question thoughtfully and honestly, reflecting on your personal beliefs. Thank you for your participation.

2. Pre-test questions

- Please select from the images provided which ones you find physically attractive. You may choose more than one. (multiple choice)



b. Please select from the images provided which ones you don't find physically attractive. You may choose more than one. (multiple choice)



c. Please rank the pictures shown below, placing the most attractive at the top and the least attractive at the bottom.



3. demographics questions

a. Gender

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to say.

b. Where is your current place of residence?

- South America
- Europe
- Other

Appendix 2: Main complete experiment

1. Introduction

Dear participant

Welcome to this survey designed for **the Marketing Master thesis at Erasmus University Rotterdam**. Your participation is valuable as we attempt to gain insights and understand how specific characteristics of influencer marketing impact consumer behaviors.

In this survey you will be presented with a **single scenario** illustrating an interaction between an influencer and a brand. The scenario has been created to **capture realistic answers from the participants**. Following the scenario presented, you'll be asked two questions. Additionally, demographic, and general questions will be included at the end to further enrich our research findings.

Thank you for your participation!

2. Commitment

Your **thoughtful responses** will not only contribute to the development of this specific research but also to a broader academic understanding of influencer marketing dynamics. **Please take your time to carefully read the scenario and answer the question solely based on the highlighted details. Please retain from incorporating your personal or pre-existing opinion about the product into your responses.**

Do you commit to providing thoughtful answers to the questions in this survey?

- I can't promise either way.
- Yes, I will.
- No, I will not.

3. Scenarios (randomly assigned one)

Scenario 1: Entertaining / Attractive / Micro or Macro Influencer

Imagine scrolling through your Instagram feed when you come across an Instagram story from a **micro-influencer, that despite having less than 200,000 followers**, has built a dedicated following through their authentic approach and accessible personality. This influencer is also **known for their gorgeous physical appeal (take as reference image shown below)**. The influencer is introducing a new burger product with **excitement and humor in their communication style** while she is tasting it:

“🍔😋 Craving an exceptional taste experience that's out of this world? Brace yourself because you are about to blow your taste senses away!

Get ready to try this new mouthwatering premium burger and crispy fries, which have reached an iconic status! And our sauces? They taste like happiness, guaranteeing a unique burst of flavor with every bite.

Call your burger squad and prepare yourself for a taste adventure that will captivate you until the very end!
🍔😍 #BurgerLover #FlavorSpectacle #SauceSuperstars”



After watching the Instagram story:

1. How likely are you to purchase the products advertised in the near future?
1=Very unlikely; 2=Somewhat unlikely; 3=Neither likely nor unlikely; 4=somewhat likely; 5=very likely
2. How does the influencer make you feel about the product being advertised? Please rank the emotions based using a Likert scale.

1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Moderately; 4 = Very; 5 = Extremely

- Excitement
- Trust
- Curiosity
- Connection

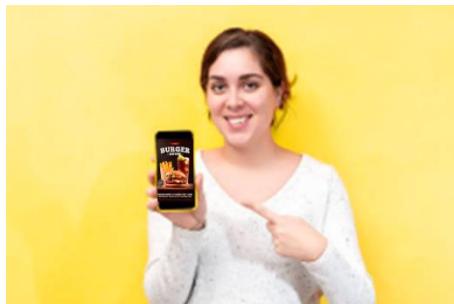
Scenario 2: Entertaining / Non-Attractive / Micro or Macro Influencer

Imagine scrolling through your Instagram feed when you come across an Instagram story from a **micro-influencer, that despite having less than 200,000 followers**, has built a dedicated following through their authentic approach and accessible personality. This influencer **does not have an attractive physical appearance** indicating that may lack of appealing characteristics such as facial features, body proportions, and overall look (**take as reference image shown below**). The influencer is introducing a new burger product with **excitement and humor in their communication style** while she is tasting it:

“🍔😋 Craving an exceptional taste experience that's out of this world? Brace yourself because you are about to blow your taste senses away!

Get ready to try this new mouthwatering premium burger and crispy fries, which have reached an iconic status! And our sauces? They taste like happiness, guaranteeing a unique burst of flavor with every bite.

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1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Moderately; 4 = Very; 5 = Extremely

- Excitement
- Trust
- Curiosity
- Connection

Scenario 3: Entertaining / Attractive / Mega Influencer

Imagine scrolling through your Instagram feed when you come across an Instagram story from a **mega-influencer, with over a million followers**, this influencer is a well-known celebrity. This influencer is also **known for their gorgeous physical appeal (take as reference image shown below)**. The influencer is introducing a new burger product with **excitement and humor in their communication style** while she is tasting it:

“  Craving an exceptional taste experience that's out of this world? Brace yourself because you are about to blow your taste senses away!

Get ready to try this new mouthwatering premium burger and crispy fries, which have reached an iconic status! And our sauces? They taste like happiness, guaranteeing a unique burst of flavor with every bite.

Call your burger squad and prepare yourself for a taste adventure that will captivate you until the very end!
  #BurgerLover #FlavorSpectacle #SauceSuperstars”



After watching the Instagram story:

1. How likely are you to purchase the products advertised in the near future?
1=Very unlikely; 2=Somewhat unlikely; 3=Neither likely nor unlikely; 4=somewhat likely; 5=very likely
2. How does the influencer make you feel about the product being advertised? Please rank the emotions based using a Likert scale.
1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Moderately; 4 = Very; 5 = Extremely
 - Excitement
 - Trust
 - Curiosity
 - Connection

Scenario 4: Entertaining / Non-Attractive / Mega Influencer

Imagine scrolling through your Instagram feed when you come across an Instagram story from a **mega-influencer, with over a million followers**, this influencer is a well-known celebrity. This influencer **does not have an attractive physical appearance** indicating that may lack of appealing characteristics such as facial features, body proportions, and overall look (**take as reference image shown below**). The influencer is introducing a new burger product with **excitement and humor in their communication style** while she is tasting it:

“🍔😋 Craving an exceptional taste experience that's out of this world? Brace yourself because you are about to blow your taste senses away!

Get ready to try this new mouthwatering premium burger and crispy fries, which have reached an iconic status! And our sauces? They taste like happiness, guaranteeing a unique burst of flavor with every bite.

Call your burger squad and prepare yourself for a taste adventure that will captivate you until the very end!
🍔😊 #BurgerLover #FlavorSpectacle #SauceSuperstars”



After watching the Instagram story:

1. How likely are you to purchase the products advertised in the near future?
1=Very unlikely; 2=Somewhat unlikely; 3=Neither likely nor unlikely; 4=somewhat likely; 5=very likely
2. How does the influencer make you feel about the product being advertised? Please rank the emotions based using a Likert scale.

1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Moderately; 4 = Very; 5 = Extremely

- Excitement
- Trust
- Curiosity
- Connection

Scenario 5: Informative / Attractive / Micro or Macro Influencer

Imagine scrolling through your Instagram feed when you come across an Instagram story from a **micro-influencer, that despite having less than 200,000 followers**, has built a dedicated following through their authentic approach and accessible personality. This influencer is also **known for their gorgeous physical appeal (take as reference image shown below)**. The influencer is introducing a new burger product **presenting detailed information, being impartial and straightforward**, while she is tasting it:

“Are you seeking a unique experience? Don’t miss these new burgers with premium beef served on a toasted brioche bun alongside crispy, golden fries. Accompanied by our signature sauces, to add an extra layer of flavor. Do not miss the opportunity of trying this burger, made with premium ingredients to guarantee satisfaction.”



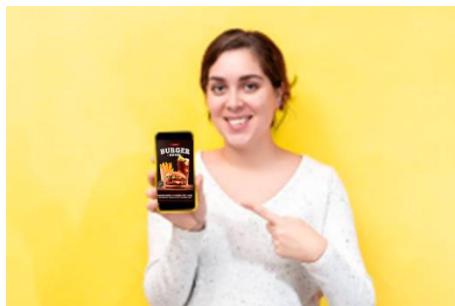
After watching the Instagram story:

1. How likely are you to purchase the products advertised in the near future?
1=Very unlikely; 2=Somewhat unlikely; 3=Neither likely nor unlikely; 4=somewhat likely; 5=very likely
2. How does the influencer make you feel about the product being advertised? Please rank the emotions based using a Likert scale.
1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Moderately; 4 = Very; 5 = Extremely
 - Excitement
 - Trust
 - Curiosity
 - Connection

Scenario 6: Informative / Non-Attractive / Micro or Macro Influencer

Imagine scrolling through your Instagram feed when you come across an Instagram story from a **micro-influencer, that despite having less than 200,000 followers**, has built a dedicated following through their authentic approach and accessible personality. This influencer **does not have an attractive physical appearance** indicating that may lack of appealing characteristics such as facial features, body proportions, and overall look (**take as reference image shown below**). The influencer is introducing a new burger product with **presenting detailed information, being impartial and straightforward**, while she is tasting it:

“Are you seeking a unique experience? Don’t miss these new burgers with premium beef served on a toasted brioche bun alongside crispy, golden fries. Accompanied by our signature sauces, to add an extra layer of flavor. Do not miss the opportunity of trying this burger, made with premium ingredients to guarantee satisfaction.”



After watching the Instagram story:

1. How likely are you to purchase the products advertised in the near future?
1=Very unlikely; 2=Somewhat unlikely; 3=Neither likely nor unlikely; 4=somewhat likely; 5=very likely

2. How does the influencer make you feel about the product being advertised? Please rank the emotions based using a Likert scale.

1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Moderately; 4 = Very; 5 = Extremely

- Excitement
- Trust
- Curiosity
- Connection

Scenario 7: Informative / Attractive / Mega Influencer

Imagine scrolling through your Instagram feed when you come across an Instagram story from a **mega-influencer, with over a million followers**, this influencer is a well-known celebrity. This influencer is also **known for their gorgeous physical appeal (take as reference image shown below)**. The influencer is introducing a new burger product with **presenting detailed information, being impartial and straightforward**, while she is tasting it:

“Are you seeking a unique experience? Don’t miss these new burgers with premium beef served on a toasted brioche bun alongside crispy, golden fries. Accompanied by our signature sauces, to add an extra layer of flavor. Do not miss the opportunity of trying this burger, made with premium ingredients to guarantee satisfaction.”



After watching the Instagram story:

1. How likely are you to purchase the products advertised in the near future?
1=Very unlikely; 2=Somewhat unlikely; 3=Neither likely nor unlikely; 4=somewhat likely; 5=very likely
2. How does the influencer make you feel about the product being advertised? Please rank the emotions based using a Likert scale.
1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Moderately; 4 = Very; 5 = Extremely
 - Excitement
 - Trust
 - Curiosity
 - Connection

Scenario 8: Informative / Non-Attractive / Mega Influencer

Imagine scrolling through your Instagram feed when you come across an Instagram story from a **mega-influencer, with over a million followers**, this influencer is a well-known celebrity. This influencer **does not have an attractive physical appearance** indicating that may lack of appealing characteristics such as facial features, body proportions, and overall look (**take as reference image shown below**). The influencer is introducing a new burger product with **presenting detailed information, being impartial and straightforward**, while she is tasting it:

“Are you seeking a unique experience? Don’t miss these new burgers with premium beef served on a toasted brioche bun alongside crispy, golden fries. Accompanied by our signature sauces, to add an extra layer of flavor. Do not miss the opportunity of trying this burger, made with premium ingredients to guarantee satisfaction.”



After watching the Instagram story:

1. How likely are you to purchase the products advertised in the near future?
1=Very unlikely; 2=Somewhat unlikely; 3=Neither likely nor unlikely; 4=somewhat likely; 5=very likely
2. How does the influencer make you feel about the product being advertised? Please rank the emotions based using a Likert scale.
1 = Not at all; 2 = Slightly; 3 = Moderately; 4 = Very; 5 = Extremely
 - Excitement
 - Trust
 - Curiosity
 - Connection

4. Demographic and general questions

1. Where is your current place of residence?

- a. Europe
- b. South America
- c. Other

2. Gender

- a. Female
- b. Male
- c. Other

3. Age

- a. 18-25 years
- b. 26-41 years
- c. 42 years or older

4. Level of education

- a. No education
- b. High School diploma
- c. Bachelor's diploma
- d. Master's diploma
- e. Doctorate

5. Which social media platforms do you use regularly? (select all that apply)

- a. Facebook
- b. Instagram
- c. TikTok

6. How many hours do you typically spend on social media platforms per day?

- a. 5 hours or less
- b. 6-8 hours
- c. 9 hours or more

7. On a scale of 1 to 9, please indicate your likelihood to follow each type of influencer for product recommendations:

- a. Micro/macro-influencer (with fewer than 200,000 followers)
- b. Mega-influencer (with over a million followers)

8. Have you ever made a direct purchase of a product or service through a social media platform?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Taking into account your most recent purchase through a social media platform influenced by a Social Media Influencer

(only if question 8 was answer “yes”)

9. On a scale of 1 to 9, please rate the following influencer characteristics based on how they influenced your last purchase through a social media platform, with 9 indicating a significant influence and 1 indicating little to no influence.

- a. Attractive physical appeal
- b. Entertaining communication style
- c. Informative communication style

(only if question 8 was answer “yes”)

10. On a scale of 1 to 9, please rate the following emotions based on how the influencer made you feel when advertising the product or service you last purchase through a social media platform, with 9 indicating a most intense emotion and 1 indicating no emotion.

- a. Excitement
- b. Reliability
- c. Security
- d. Trust