
THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCER'S PERCEIVED
CHARACTERISTICS ON CONSUMER PURCHASE BEHAVIOR ⁵

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effects of the influencers' perceived characteristics (informativeness, perceived ease of use, and admiration) on purchase intention and purchase behavior. The main population of this research is people who use social media and follow at least one influencer. IBM SPSS 20 and SmartPLS 3.3.3 package programs were used in the analysis. In the study, confirmatory factor analysis and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis were performed to test the relationships in the proposed research model, respectively. As a result of the structural equation modeling analysis, it was found that informativeness, perceived ease of use, and admiration have significant and positive direct effects on purchase intention. In addition, informativeness, perceived ease of use, and admiration have significant and positive indirect effects on purchase behavior. The main contribution of this study to the literature is not only to explain the effects of informativeness, perceived ease of use, and admiration on purchase intention but also to comprehensively reveal the effects of these variables on both purchase intention and purchase behavior by considering them together in the context of influencer marketing.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Social Media, Informativeness, Perceived Ease of Use, Admiration, Purchase Intention, Purchase Behavior

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INFLUENCER’LARIN ALGILANAN ÖZELLİKLERİNİN TÜKETİCİ SATIN ALMA DAVRANIŐI ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ

ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Influencer’ların algılanan özelliklerinin (bilgilendirme, algılanan kullanım kolaylığı ve hayranlık) satın alma niyeti ve satın alma davranışı üzerindeki etkilerini arařtırmaktır. Bu çalışmanın anakütlesi, sosyal medya kullanan ve en az bir influencer takip eden kişilerdir. Analizler IBM SPSS 20 ve SmartPLS 3.3.3 paket programları aracılığıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmada, önerilen araştırma modelindeki ilişkileri test etmek için sırasıyla doğrulayıcı faktör analizi ve yapısal eşitlik modellemesi (YEM) analizi yapılmıştır. Yapısal eşitlik modellemesi analizi sonucunda bilgilendirme, algılanan kullanım kolaylığı ve hayranlığın satın alma niyeti üzerinde pozitif ve anlamlı doğrudan etkileri olduğu bulunmuştur. Ayrıca bilgilendirme, algılanan kullanım kolaylığı ve hayranlığın satın alma davranışı üzerinde pozitif ve anlamlı dolaylı etkileri vardır. Bu çalışmanın literatüre yapmış olduğu temel katkı, bilgilendirme, algılanan kullanım kolaylığı ve hayranlığın satın alma niyeti üzerindeki etkilerini açıklamak, aynı zamanda bu değişkenlerin etkileyici pazarlama bağlamında hem satın alma niyeti hem de satın alma davranışı üzerindeki etkilerini birlikte ele alarak kapsamlı bir şekilde ortaya koymaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etkileyici Pazarlama, Sosyal Medya, Bilgilendirme, Algılanan Kullanım Kolaylığı, Hayranlık, Satın Alma Niyeti, Satın Alma Davranışı

1. Introduction

Marketing can be defined as the process of creating value for consumers, building strong relationships with the consumer, for companies to provide value from consumers (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018). Marketing can be treated as a living organism that is evolving over time and adapts with technological developments. The business and marketing world significantly changed since the first internet website was released in 1991 at CERN. Approximately three billion people around the world regularly use the internet in order to have fun, expand their networks, and reach new products. The wide use of the internet changed the behaviors of the consumers and companies towards companies and consumers, respectively (Chaffey and Chadwick, 2015).

The changes in consumer behaviors lead to new marketing strategies such as digital marketing, social media marketing, and influencer marketing. Today, we consider the concept of digital marketing as a roof of the modern marketing world. Recently, the studies have focused on developing digital marketing strategies and making these strategies more effective. Wymer (2011) examines the social media marketing campaigns and presents a model for improving the social marketing strategic planning. Güçdemir (2017) presents the benefits of social media marketing on brands. Bil and Özkaya (2021) briefly present the effects of the data collected by social media on marketing research.

Companies organize the process of content production by themselves or influencers, especially the consumer-centered. The brands in social media need to consider the content they produce in the process of producing content at the point of encouraging viral dissemination. The most important factor is the possible need for the content to meet the needs of the target audience, as well as support the images of the people who are intended to spread the content (Yeygel Çakır, 2020). After companies realize that social media marketing is starting to lose effectiveness on the consumer, they find a new strategy that makes people closer to their products and services through influencers (Deepak, 2020). Today, digital influence is the hottest subject in social media. Digital influence is defined as “the ability to cause effect, change behavior, and drive measurable outcomes online” (Kostic et al., 2018). In this context, a new branch of digital marketing emerges, influencer marketing, which is more powerful than social media marketing. Companies increasingly make use of the influencers as their brand influencers. In addition, companies target the right audience and promote their products and services effectively. The duty of the enterprises is to be included in these platforms by preparing informative, entertaining, and reliable content that includes the information sought about the product and brand (İnal et al., 2020). In addition, according to research by Statista (2021), influencer marketing market value became twice as valuable from 2019 to 2021. This particular market has grown from \$6.5 billion to \$13.8 billion in just three years.

When the influencer marketing literature is examined, it is seen that influencers play an important role in promoting products and services, and choosing the right influencers is of great importance (Bakker, 2018; Lin et al., 2018; Yesiloglu and Costello, 2020; Zak and Hasprova, 2020). According to Lin et al. (2018) “online opinion leaders should be used to promote the experiential (hedonic) and functional (utilitarian) value of products and services over different online forums.” Moreover, literature studies have shown that the positive relations between informativeness, perceived ease of use, admiration, and purchase intention (Freeman and Chen, 2015; Lee and Hong, 2016; Kian et al., 2017; Lou and Yuan, 2019; Hanjaya et al., 2019; Dwidienawati et al., 2020). The most important contribution of this study to the literature is to reveal whether the purchase intention advance to the purchase behavior. However, the number of studies that deal with these variables in the context of influencer marketing is very few. Moreover, we aim to show the effects of informativeness, perceived ease of use, and admiration variables on purchase intention and purchase behavior by considering them in influencer marketing and Turkish social media users.

This study consists of eight parts. In the introduction section, general information about the study is given. Secondly, the influencer marketing concept is discussed. Thirdly, the variables in the research model are defined. The fourth section examined the literature on the relationship between influencers’ perceived characteristics (informativeness, perceived ease of use, admiration) and purchase intention and purchase behavior, and research hypotheses were developed. In the fifth section, the research method is expounded. Thereafter, the research data is analyzed with confirmatory factor analysis and the structural equation modeling analysis in the sixth section. In the next section, the discussion and conclusion are presented. The contributions of the study are emphasized by comparing with the literature and presenting suggestions for researchers and practical life-oriented perspectives. The last section presents the theoretical and managerial implications and limitations.

2. Influencer Marketing

The constant development of technology and social media platforms direct the companies to adapt to the changing and growing needs of the audience. Therefore, the companies use one of the fundamental principles of information dissemination in social media, which is word of mouth (WOM) from person to person. Businesses make agreements with popular social media users, called influencers, to introduce and commercialize their products on social media (Topalova, 2021). In other words, according to the definition made by the American Marketing Association, “influencer marketing focuses on leveraging individuals who have influence over potential buyers and orienting marketing activities around these individuals to drive a brand message to the larger market” (AMA, 2021). According to Lou and Yuan (2019), “influencer marketing is defined as a strategy that utilizes the personal influence of important opinion leaders to increase consumers’ brand

awareness and purchase intention.” There is a rising concept due to the increasing usage of social media users that is influencer marketing.

Influencer marketing concerns marketing products and services to the people who have an influence over what others buy. The reason for marketing impact is originated from the individual's expertise, reputation, or popularity. Influencer marketing has common with word-of-mouth marketing; however, there is a slight difference, such as influencer marketing does not depend on strict suggestions (Marketing School, 2020).

The main characters of influencer marketing are the influencers. Deepak (2020) defines influencers as “people who cover certain topics (bloggers, athletes, celebrities, etc.) and genuine in doing so tend to have quite a few followers, readers, and fans.” Influencers have different ways of reaching their followers. As a result of the different ways of reaching their followers, there are many types of influencers defined in the literature, such as opinion leaders, experts, social media luminaries, celebrities, trendsetters, bloggers, vloggers, and so on (Morteo, 2018). The differences between these types arise from the origin of influence, the main source of influence, the number of followers, the engagement per post, the platforms. In this study, we mainly focus on the influencers on the social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, Youtube, etc. Thus, the influencers are named with respect to the platform they use. For example,

Bloggers: The people who use a blog to publish content regularly.

Vloggers: The people who do what the bloggers do in the form of videos.

Instagramer: The people who have many followers on Instagram and share photographs.

The influencers are also classified concerning the number of followers. *Mega influencers*, i.e., social superstars, are the people who have more than a million followers. *Macro influencers* are followed by 100.000- 1.000.000 subscribers, and *micro-influencers* have 1000 to 100.000 followers. *Nano influencers* are appealed to less than 1000 followers (Vyatkina, 2020).

Influencer marketing is one of the most popular and efficient social media marketing techniques. By cooperating with internet celebrities, businesses can reach a massive audience and promote their products and services to potential consumers. Apart from increasing brand awareness, cooperation with influencers can also increase revenues for all types of companies. According to Statista's research, in 2021, nearly 3.7 billion U.S. dollars were predicted to be spent on influencer marketing in the USA. This situation would point out an increase of 33 percent compared to 2020, with further growth expected in the future (Statista, 2021).

According to Statista (2021), Instagram is the most popular social media platform for influencer marketing. Content creators adopt the Instagram application for its various features. Noticing that Instagram also has an inherent shopping tab, it is not surprising that marketers aim to boost influencer endorsement on Instagram in the future. In addition, TikTok has also become increasingly relevant due to its massive reach, especially among Gen Z internet users.

The effect of the influencers on the creation of consumer purchase intention is impressive and remarkable (Adnan et al., 2017). An increasing number of social media users make this type of marketing more popular. If the companies know how to decide the right influencer, they can successfully organize their campaigns and run the promotions. Vyatkina (2020) concludes that influencer marketing has impacted many numbers of brands. Moreover, it is shown that the usage of influencers provides a great reach of a brand due to the already built connection and trust between the influencers and their followers. It is also concluded that influencer marketing is more advantageous than a typical digital marketing campaign. Wielki (2020) results that influencer marketing has a great impact on the promotional activities in the promotion ecosystem. In addition to this, it is stated that the influencers successfully transfer the information about a specific product or service, and they increase brand awareness. Jarrar et al. (2020) state that influencer marketing is very effective on immediate sales.

3. Definition of Variables

This section presents the basic theories associated with the research topic and the definition of dependent and independent variables used in the research model. The relationships between dependent and independent variables are briefly explained according to the literature. This study can be associated with two main theories, namely Technology Acceptance Model and Planned Behavior Theory. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was proposed by Davis (1989) and the acceptance of technology by the user; it is a model that argues that it may occur depending on the variables (1) Perceived Benefit and (2) Perceived Ease of Use. In our study, the perceived ease of use variable is added to the research model. Planned Behavior Theory (TPB) (Ajzen, 1988; 1991) tries to predict the intention of people to perform a behavior. In addition, according to Ajzen (2015), the intention is the most important factor for predicting behavior. In this context, the effect of purchase intention on purchasing behavior is also examined in the study.

3.1. Informativeness: The adapted definition of informativeness to influencer marketing is the amount and richness of the information provided by the influencer, containing information about a company and its products and services (Richard, 2005). The type and quality of the information provided by a website or influencer are important (Pearson, 2012). McKinney et al. (2002) state the three key factors of the useful information as being valuable, informative, and helpful in their web

satisfaction model. It means that an influencer's information should be realistic and reliable for the audience.

3.2. Perceived Ease of Use: Davis (1989) defines the perceived ease of use as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort." Nunkoo et al. (2013) present a positive relationship between perceived ease of use and purchase intention. Hanjaya et al. (2019) claim ease of use is predicted to bring a certain connection to a consumer's repurchase intention. Consumer's perceived ease of use is not only about the use of the technology. It also covers the capability of the identification of the best product or service by comparing its advantages and disadvantages (Kian, 2017). In our study, we consider the effects of making it easier for customers to search and buy products through influencer posts on the purchase intention.

3.3. Admiration: Schindler et al. (2013) define admiration as "positive emotions in response to an outstanding person or object." Promoted or recommended product by someone that the consumer admires and trusts causes the consumer to intend to buy although the consumer does not physically need it. Therefore, brands choose famous people as advertisement faces in order to establish a longtime bond between the product or brand and the consumer (Dwivedi and Johnson, 2013).

3.4. Purchase Intention: Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) define purchase intention as the objective intention of consumers toward a product or service. Lu (2014) proposes the definition of purchase intention as "purchase intention is a consumers' willingness to buy a given product at a specific time or in a specific situation." According to Spears and Singh (2004), purchase intention refers to the intention of consumers to deliberately plan or endeavor to buy products of a brand.

3.5. Purchase Behavior: Consumer purchase behavior is a decision process about buying and using a product or service. Consumers decide their needs or wants; then, they start to research about the product or the services that meet their needs or wants (Anjana, 2018). With the development of the consumer behavior models, consumer behavior took place in marketing in the middle of the 60's (Parameshwaran, 2010). Purchase behavior can be defined as "a process, which through inputs and their use though process and actions lead to the satisfaction of needs and wants" (Enis, 1974).

4. Research Model and Hypotheses Development

In this research, influencers' perceived characteristics (informativeness, perceived ease of use, admiration) are associated with purchase intention and purchase behavior. Research hypotheses are presented with regard to the relationship between influencers' perceived characteristics and purchase intention and purchase behavior in the four subtitles below.

4.1. Informativeness and Purchase Intention

Informativeness is crucial in online shopping since eWOM is a good source of information. Influencer reviews may be evaluated as eWOM because the influencers share their experiences and thoughts about the product or service. Luo (2002) states that the time consumption for specific information needed by the consumer reduces if the recommendation agents, the influencers, in this case, provide useful information. Therefore, it helps to increase purchase intention. The study by Lee and Hong (2016) proved the positive role of informativeness on customers' reactions to social media advertisements and, therefore, their intention to purchase the products presented in social media advertisements. Lou and Yuan (2019) determined that the informative value of the content created by the influencer positively affects consumers' purchase intention. Dwidienawati et al. (2020) state that informativeness has an impact on purchase intention, especially for luxury products. In our study, we investigate how the informativeness of an influencer influences the purchase intention of a consumer.

H₁: Informativeness has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention.

H₅: Informativeness has a positive and significant indirect effect on purchase behavior through purchase intention.

4.2. Perceived Ease of Use and Purchase Intention

Sin et al. (2012) investigate young Malaysian consumers and their purchase intention in social media websites. The study also reveals that the perceived ease of use has a positive impact on the purchase intention. Kian et al. (2017) statistically analyze the factors affecting the purchase intention in social media websites. They present a multiple linear regression model containing some factors. Moreover, there is a significant effect of perceived ease of use on purchase intention. Moslehpour et al. (2018) state that conducted with Taiwanese consumers, perceived ease of use was found to be the variable with the strongest positive effect on purchase intention. The study by Hanjaya et al. (2019), which investigated the effect of various factors on purchase intention, determined that ease of use in Singapore affected online purchase intention. In this context, we investigate the effect of perceived ease of use on purchase intention from the point of influencers' characteristics.

H₂: Perceived ease of use has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention.

H₆: Perceived ease of use has a positive and significant indirect effect on purchase behavior through purchase intention.

4.3. Admiration and Purchase Intention

The consumption of a consumer trying to connect with an influencer admired is affected by the influencers' promoted products. As a result, consumers tend to purchase those products (Kadioğlu, 2013). Since people trust those they admire

more than any other brand promotion, it is highly important for a reassessment of brand strategy (Dreifaldt and Drennan, 2019). This admiration can also have an impact on purchase intention. According to Freeman and Chen (2015), the consumers intending to purchase a product that admires influencers' are influenced positively. According to the literature, it is observed that admiration has positive effects on purchase intention (Trivedi and Sama, 2020; Çolakoğlu and Köleoğlu, 2020; Gupta et al., 2021). In this context, we investigate the effect of admiration on purchase intention in the view of influencers' characteristics.

H₃: Admiration has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention.

H₇: Admiration has a positive and significant indirect effect on purchase behavior through purchase intention.

4.4. Purchase Intention and Purchase Behavior

Fishbein and Arjen (1975) and Ghosh (1990) say that purchase intention is one of the key factors for consumers while their intention turns to the buying behavior. The greater the consumer's desire to purchase, the greater intention to terminate the purchase behavior (Gruber, 1970). Therefore, the purchase intention is considered when there is a study about the consumer's purchase behavior. Researchers generally use purchase intention as a dependent variable in their studies (Musharraf and Tahir, 2013). Butt (2016), in his study, concludes that the purchase intention and consumer perception directly impact consumer purchase behavior. Various studies in the literature (Ayo et al., 2016; Zarei et al., 2019) also indicate that purchase intention affects purchase behavior. In this context, we investigate the effect of purchase intention on purchase behavior by considering the influencers' characteristics.

H₄: Purchase intention has a positive and significant effect on purchase behavior.

The research model shown in Figure 1 is developed:

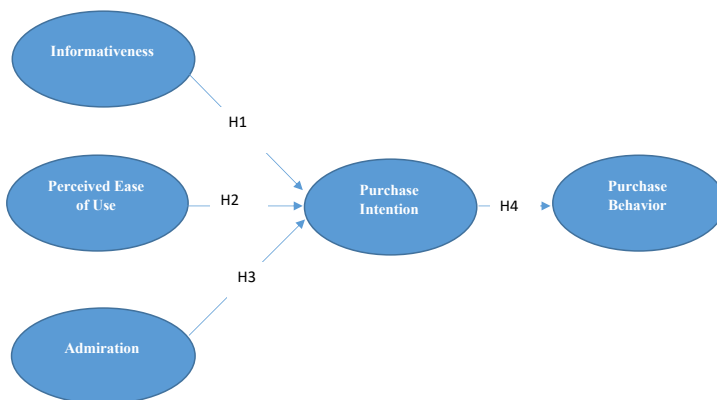


Figure 1. Research Model

In the light of the literature review carried out within the context of the study, in the research model developed, the effects of influencers' perceived characteristics, which are considered as informativeness, perceived ease of use, and admiration on purchase intention and purchase behavior, are examined.

5. Methodology

This research mainly investigates the effects of the influencers' perceived characteristics on consumer purchase intention and purchase behavior. The main population of this research is people who use social media and follow at least one influencer. Within the scope of the study, in order to represent this population in the best way and to describe certain characteristics of the population, quantitative research techniques were used in our study, and a survey was applied as a data collection tool. Since the sample on which the data will consist of people using social media and following at least one influencer, the sample was chosen according to the convenience sampling method, one of the non-random sampling techniques. The questionnaire forms contain two parts as categorical questions and questions presented as Likert scale. The scales used to evaluate the perceived characteristics of influencers, consumer purchase intention, and purchase behavior are widely accepted in the literature. The questionnaire items were scored on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The scale includes 21 items in total in these scales created by considering the literature.

The scale in the study was generated by doing a detailed literature review associated with influencers' perceived characteristics (informativeness, perceived ease of use, admiration), purchase intention, and purchase behavior based on the studies conducted by Putrevu and Lord (1994), Zeithaml et al. (1996), Martin and Bush (2000), Gefen et al. (2003), Yuan and Jang (2008), Schindler (2014), Dao et al. (2014), Baldus et al. (2015). In this context, the "Informativeness" scale with five items developed by Dao et al. (2014) and Baldus et al. (2015); "Perceived Ease of Use" scale with four items developed by Gefen et al. (2003), "Admiration" scale with six items developed by Schindler (2014); "Purchase Intention" scale with three items developed by Putrevu and Lord (1994) and Yuan and Jang (2008); "Purchase Behavior" scale with three items developed by Putrevu and Lord (1994) and Zeithaml et al. (1996).

An online survey technique was used to collect data in order to test the research model and hypothesis of the study. Before the data collection, the pilot test was run with 30 participants to test the understandability of the items in the survey and detect possible deficiencies. As a consequence of the pilot study, the questionnaire application continued without deleting any item from the questionnaire form. The pilot and main surveys were conducted between 01 April - 01 June 2021. 403 questionnaires were reached, and 403 useable questionnaires were included in the analysis. IBM SPSS 20 and SmartPLS 3.3.3 package programs were used in the analysis. In the study, confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation

modeling (SEM) analysis were performed to test the relationships in the proposed research model, respectively.

6. Analysis Results

6.1. Findings Regarding Participants

Data on the demographic characteristics of the respondent participating in the study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>		
Gender	Female	224	55.6	2825 TRY and below	116	28.8	
				2826-3500 TRY	49	12.2	
	Male	179	44.4	Average Monthly Income	3501-5000 TRY	101	25.1
				5001-8000 TRY	90	22.3	
				8001-10000 TRY	15	3.7	
	Total	403	100		10001 TRY and above	32	7.9
				Total	403	100.0	
Age	18-25	148	36.7	Elementary	4	1.0	
	26-33	160	39.7	High School	70	17.4	
	34-41	60	14.9	Education Level	Associate Degree	25	6.2
	42-49	23	5.7	Bachelor Degree	188	46.7	
	50 and older	12	3.0	Postgraduate	116	28.8	
	Total	403	100	Total	403	100	

According to the data on the demographic characteristics of the respondent participating in the study, the results show that 224 (55.6%) of the participants were female and 179 (44.4%) were male. Looking at their age breakdown, it is seen that 160 (47.8%) participants are accumulated in the 26-33 age range, followed by 148 (36.7%) participants in the 18-25 age range. When the education level of the participants is examined, it is seen that 46.7% have bachelor's degrees and

28.8% are postgraduate. When the average monthly income of the participants is examined, it is seen that 116 (28.8%) participants 2825 TRY and below, followed by 101 (25.1%) participants 3501-5000 TRY.

Data on the social media platforms used by participants in the study are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Social media usage habits

<i>Social Media Platforms Used by Participants</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>How many influencers do you follow on social media?</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Instagram</i>	354	87,8			
<i>Twitter</i>	234	58	1-3	187	46.4
<i>Facebook</i>	185	45.9	4-6	83	20.6
<i>Youtube</i>	307	76.1	7-9	39	9.7
<i>Others</i>	19	4.7	10+	94	23.3

As seen in Table 2, 354 (87.8%) of the participants use Instagram, 307 (76.1%) of the participants use Youtube, 234 (58%) of the participants use Twitter, followed by 185 (45.9%) use Facebook. In addition, 4.7 percent of the participants stated that they also use other social media applications such as Tiktok and Clubhouse. Of the participants, 187 (46.4%) follow 1-3 between influencers, followed by 94 (23.3) follow 10 and above influencers. Furthermore, 53.3% of respondents stated that they had purchased a product recommended by an influencer before.

6.2. Measurement Model

The confirmatory analysis is done before starting to analyze the research model. Factor loadings as ≥ 0.70 , Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability coefficients as ≥ 0.70 , and also AVE value as ≥ 0.50 were expected (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2006; Hair et al., 2014). The results of the constructs within the context of the research for internal consistency reliability and convergent validity are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Measurement Model Estimates

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Factor Loadings</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>
<i>Informativeness</i>	INF1	0.922	0.942	0.956	0.813
	INF2	0.923			
	INF3	0.887			
	INF4	0.862			
	INF5	0.913			
<i>Perceived Ease of Use</i>	PEOU1	0.915	0.945	0.961	0.859
	PEOU2	0.930			
	PEOU3	0.951			
	PEOU4	0.912			
<i>Admiration</i>	ADM1	0.823	0.893	0.918	0.650
	ADM2	0.756			
	ADM3	0.737			
	ADM4	0.841			
	ADM5	0.854			
	ADM6	0.820			
<i>Purchase Intention</i>	PINT1	0.960	0.954	0.970	0.916
	PINT2	0.957			
	PINT3	0.955			
<i>Purchase Behavior</i>	PBEH1	0.956	0.921	0.950	0.864
	PBEH2	0.928			
	PBEH3	0.904			

It can be seen that the internal consistency reliability of the constructs was demonstrated since the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients range between 0.893 and 0.954, and the C.R. coefficients are between 0.918 and 0.970. Table 3 clearly states that convergent validity was shown since the factor loadings were between 0.737 and 0.960, and the AVE values were between 0.650 and 0.916. It is observed that union validity is provided. Briefly, the observed variables explain the scale to which they belong sufficiently and consistently.

The criterion proposed by Fornell & Larcker (1981) and Henseler et al. (2015), i.e., the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), were considered in order to determine the discriminant validity. Following Fornell & Larcker's (1981) criteria, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted values of the constructs in the research should be bigger than the correlations between the construct in the research. Therefore, Table 4 reveals the analysis results in accordance with Fornell & Larcker's (1981) criteria.

Table 4. Fornell & Larcker's Criteria

	1	2	3	4	5
1-Admiration	0.806				
2-Informativeness	0.639	0.902			
3-Perceived Ease of Use	0.610	0.787	0.927		
4-Purchase Behavior	0.703	0.684	0.686	0.930	
5-Purchase Intention	0.619	0.787	0.765	0.773	0.957

Note: The correlation matrix between scales is given on the right side of the table. The diagonal elements of the correlation matrix show the square root of the AVE (bold values), and the non-diagonal elements show the correlation values between the scales.

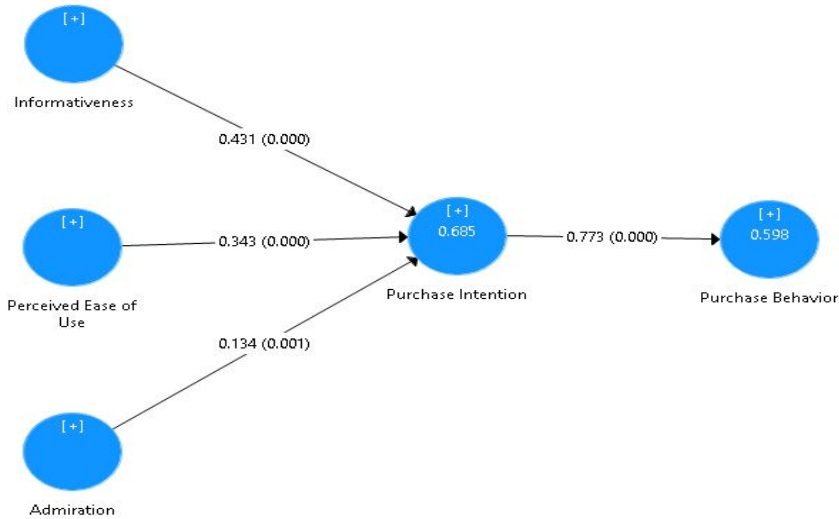
When the values in the table are examined, it is seen that the average explained variance value of each structure is higher than its correlation with other structures. According to Henseler et al.'s (2015) criteria, HTMT explains the ratio of the average of the correlations of items of all variables in the research to the geometric means of the correlations of items of the same variable. The authors stated that the value of HTMT should be below 0.90, but it should be less than 0.85 as the content for the concepts are different from each other. HTMT values are gathered in Table 5.

Table 5. HTMT Criteria

	1	2	3	4	5
1-Admiration					
2-Informativeness	0.676				
3-Perceived Ease of Use	0.644	0.833			
4-Purchase Behavior	0.771	0.730	0.731		
5-Purchase Intention	0.653	0.826	0.803	0.819	

It is seen in Table 5 that HTMT values were less than the threshold value. Therefore, based on the results in Table 4 and Table 5, it can be said that the discriminant validity was determined.

6.3. Structural Equation Modeling Analysis Results



The SEM developed to test the hypotheses of the study is presented in Figure.

Figure 2. Structural Model

The PLS-SEM was used to investigate the research model, and the data were analyzed using SmartPLS 3.3.3 package program. The R^2 , f^2 , Q^2 , and VIF values of the research results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Research Model Coefficients (Total Effects)

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>VIF</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>f²</i>	<i>Q²</i>
<i>Admiration->Purchase Intention</i>	1.781		0.032	
<i>Informativeness->Purchase Intention</i>	2.944	0.685	0.201	0.622
<i>Perceived Ease of Use->Purchase Intention</i>	2.771		0.135	
<i>Purchase Intention->Purchase Behavior</i>	1.000	0.598	1.489	0.509

According to VIF values, they are less than five, so there was no collinearity among the constructs (Hair et al., 2014).

It was found that the purchase intention was 68.5%, and purchase behavior was 59.8% by considering the R^2 values of the model in Table 6; that is, these results show the explanatory rate of the model. For the effect size coefficient (f^2), ≥ 0.02 was considered as low, ≥ 0.15 as medium, and ≥ 0.35 as high (Cohen, 1988). Sarstedt et al. (2017) also expressed that there was an effect in cases where the coefficient was less than 0.02. When the effect size coefficient (f^2) was examined, it was obtained that admiration had a low effect on the purchase

intention (0.03), perceived ease of use had a low effect on the purchase intention (0.13), informativeness had a medium effect on the purchase intention, and purchase intention had a high effect on the purchase behavior (1.48).

When the calculated estimating power coefficients of the endogenous variables (Q^2) are higher than 0, it demonstrates that the research model has an estimating power for the endogenous variables (Hair et al., 2014). It can be stated that the proposed model has the estimating power for purchase intention and purchase behavior. Since the Q^2 values in Table 6 are higher than 0,

Table 7 shows the results of SEM analysis.

Table 7. The Results of Hypothesis Testing and Structural Relationships (Direct Effects)

	<i>Standardize β</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>t Statistic</i>	<i>p Values</i>
<i>Admiration->Purchase Intention</i>	0.134	0.043	3.722	0.001
<i>Informativeness->Purchase Intention</i>	0.431	0.068	6.480	0.000
<i>Perceived Ease of Use->Purchase Intention</i>	0.343	0.052	6.781	0.000
<i>Purchase Intention->Purchase Behavior</i>	0.773	0.056	0.936	0.000

When the analysis results in Table 7 are examined, it was determined that admiration has positive and significant effects on purchase intention (= 0.134; $p < 0.05$); informativeness on purchase intention (= 0.431; $p < 0.05$); perceived ease of use on purchase intention (= 0.343; $p < 0.05$); and purchase intention on purchase behavior (= 0.773; $p < 0.05$). Consequently, the hypotheses numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the research were accepted.

6.3.1. Test of Indirect Effect by the Structural Equation Model

Table 8 shows the results of indirect effects.

Table 8. The Results of Hypothesis Testing and Structural Relationships (Indirect Effects)

	<i>Standardize β</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>t Statistic</i>	<i>p Values</i>
<i>Informativeness->Purchase Intention->Purchase Behavior</i>	0.334	0.046	7.323	0.000
<i>Perceived Ease of Use->Purchase Intention->Purchase Behavior</i>	0.265	0.043	6.130	0.000
<i>Admiration->Purchase Intention->Purchase Behavior</i>	0.104	0.033	3.148	0.002

It is seen that informativeness ($\beta=0.334$; $p<0.05$) indirectly affects purchase behavior through the purchase intention, according to Table 8. It is observed that the perceived ease of use ($\beta=0.265$; $p<0.05$) indirectly affects purchase behavior through the purchase intention. In addition, it is observed that admiration ($\beta=0.104$; $p<0.05$) indirectly affects purchase behavior through the purchase intention. As a result of the findings, hypotheses 5, 6, and 7 were accepted.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

In today's world, there has been a rapid increase in the use of social media, which has developed with the spread of the internet. The prevalence of social media has made influencer marketing through social media channels one of the most popular marketing communication methods for businesses that advertise both in Turkey and worldwide, and influencer marketing has become a new communication paradigm. With the new trends that technology and the internet have brought to our lives, social media has become an effective area where influencers promote their products or services for large or small businesses.

The opportunities created by influencer marketing for businesses have made this subject academically interesting. However, the number of studies on the subject is still few. In this context, this study aimed to contribute to the literature by examining the effects of the perceived characteristics of influencers on purchase intention and purchase behavior. After the literature review, a research model was created within the scope of the predicted relations and tested with structural equation modeling.

When the data on the social media usage of the participants are examined; The most frequently used social media application by the participants was Instagram, followed by Youtube. While 46.4% of the participants follow 1 to 3 influencers, 23.3% follow 10 and above influencers. While a certain part of the participants follows a small number of influencers, a certain part of the participants follows a large number of influencers. This situation may vary according to both the social media platforms used and the attitude towards influencers.

The research model was determined to be valid and reliable with the confirmatory factor analysis performed before the research model was tested. Then, the structural equation model was applied to determine the relationships in the research model. According to the results of the analysis conducted within the research framework, it has been determined that informativeness has a significant and positive effect on purchase intention. Our findings coincide with the results of similar studies in the literature (Lee and Hong, 2016; Alalwan, 2018; Lou and Yuan, 2019; Halim et al., 2020; Cahyani and Artanti, 2020; Sicilia et al., 2020).

On the other hand, it can be stated that perceived ease of use has a significant and positive effect on purchase intention. This statement is supported by the results of similar studies in the literature (Cho and Sagynov, 2015; Kian et al.,

2017; Moslehpour et al., 2018; Hanjaya et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2021). Another important finding of the study is that admiration has a significant and positive effect on purchase intention. Again, this result is similar to many research results in the literature (Freeman and Chan, 2015; Trivedi and Sama, 2019; olakođlu and Koleođlu, 2020; Gupta et al., 2021).

Another important finding obtained from the analysis results conducted within the scope of the research is the significant and positive effect of purchase intention on marketing purchase behavior. The results of similar studies in the literature also support this finding (Ayo et al., 2016; Chaudhary and Bisai, 2018; Zarei et al., 2019; Bhatti and Rehman, 2020).

According to the results of the analysis made within the framework of the research, it has been determined that informativeness has a significant and positive indirect effect on purchase behavior. When the literature is examined, there are studies showing that informativeness has direct and indirect effects on purchase behavior (Yang et al., 2017; Mostafa and Metawie, 2020; Xu et al., 2021). Another finding that emerged as a result of the analysis is that perceived ease of use indirectly affects purchase behavior. The results of similar studies in the literature also support this finding (AlSaleh, 2017; Syakir and Setiyanto, 2019). In addition, the admiration variable also has an indirect effect on purchase behavior. These findings coincide with the results of similar studies in the literature (Mariska et al., 2018; Trivedi and Sama, 2020).

In summary, it has been determined that Influencers' informative sharing about products and services, the ease of use they provide, and consumers' admiration for influencers have significant and positive effects on consumers' purchase intention and purchase behavior.

8. Theoretical and Managerial Implications and Limitations

This study contributes theoretically in many ways. First of all, this study contributes to understanding the consumer attitudes in Turkey towards influencer marketing, which is more preferred in connection with the increasing use of social media. There are several studies investigating the impact of influencer marketing on several aspects of consumer behavior from our perspective (Godey et al. 2016; Evans et al., 2017; Lim et al., 2017; Lou and Yuan 2019; Saima and Khan, 2020; Trivedi and Sama, 2020; Lin et al., 2021; Belanche et al., 2021). As the use of influencer marketing gets momentum around the world, this study confirms the role of influencers' perceived characteristics in purchase intention and purchase behavior, which is an important contribution to the current understanding of influencer marketing.

This study emphasizes that brands should work with influencers while carrying out their marketing activities from a practical standpoint. Choosing a social media influencer who can engage the target audience with attractive content is an

important task for business professionals. According to SEM analysis, the most effective effect size on purchase intention is information. Therefore, marketers must choose a social media influencer who can effectively and accurately inform consumers about their products and services and influence their purchase intentions.

This present study has limitations. Although we believe that the factors we identified in this study help us better understand the effects of influencer marketing on purchase intention and purchase behavior, it can be accepted that other relevant factors not included in the research model may also affect the process. The use of convenience sampling technique in this study to reach the general population of the research may adversely affect the generalizability of the research. In addition, a similar study can be carried out within the framework of a single social media application.

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