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Similarity, Familiarity, and Credibility in influencers and their impact on purchasing intention

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ABSTRACT

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Title	Similarity, Familiarity, and Credibility in influencers and their impact on purchasing intention
Tutor:	David Freud
Keywords:	Influencers, e-marketing, influencer marketing, trust, similarity, familiarity, credibility, purchase intention
Research question:	How do factors of trust – similarity, familiarity, and credibility – in influencers play a role in the purchasing intention of their followers?
Purpose:	The purpose of this study is to gain knowledge about how factors of trust – *similarity, familiarity, credibility* – in influencers have an impact on the purchasing intention. The authors of this study will try to find how the different factors impact trust in influencers and how it plays a role in the buying intention of their followers.
Method:	Quantitative research using both multiple and linear regression analysis.
Conclusion:	This study has found that there is a very strong relationship between the factors of trust – similarity and credibility – and purchasing intention but no relationship with familiarity. Within figure 2 it can be seen that H1 and H3 are confirmed, but H2 is rejected. This means that the more similar a person feels with the influencer the more trust they have to them, and the more credible the influencer is perceived the more trust they have towards them. As a consequence, the more trust someone has to the influencer the more they are willing to buy the recommended product by the influencer. Yet being familiar with an influencer doesn't necessarily mean it has a direct impact on purchasing intention.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The world today is leaning towards becoming more digitalized, meaning that even marketing departments are using digital platforms which include mainly internet through phones, display advertising, and other digital media (Sudha, M. & Sheena, K. 2017). While it is important to note that some authors believe that e-marketing or electronic marketing can take place solely on the internet, while others refer it to all electronic media (Bognar et al, 2019), therefore this paper focuses solely on the internet.

Globalization and new technologies have increased opportunities for businesses and also encourage competition (Tajuddin et al., 2017). Yet since the business environment has become more competitive, from the global point of view the entire world is now becoming a potential market to compete with (Bognar et al, 2019). Therefore e-marketing becomes a fundamental element of 21st-century marketing (Bognar et al, 2019) which also means communication techniques become an important part to achieve the best competitive advantage and continued operational effectiveness in the future (Dulewicz and Higgs, 2003; Gradzol et al., 2005).

As technology is rising, one of the most important fields of technology for companies' marketing mix is social media. That is because social media is increasing attention which needs to be explored (Konstantopoulou et al 2019). According to Bognar et al (2019), the use of conventional marketing to reach potential consumers cannot be compared to e-marketing today. As a consequence, marketers have moved their techniques by using celebrities as a way of increasing consciousness and perception of their brand, the same technique is used today but rather using influencers on social media. Influencers are those who due to their knowledge, skills, and character - but not position - can make an impact on attitudes of a certain group (Bognar et al, 2019). Therefore, this means that this is the way companies use influencers as a way of increasing consciousness and perception of their brand.

This study will investigate how consumers are influenced by the different factors of trust as; similarity, familiarity, and credibility in their purchasing intention. When there is a similarity between the consumer and the company, it is possible that the consumer gets influenced if it complies with marketing representatives. The consumers are more likely to get a memory from the brand when there is a similarity between the brand, ads, or products. (Hoyer., W. et al. 2012). Yet, similarity between two individuals will expose an individual to a greater interpersonal attraction (Martensen et al. 2018; Ruef et al., 2003), however similarity between an influencer and a follower on social media is different. Therefore, researchers have found that influencers who downplay their roles are seen as more ordinary and similar to themselves (Chapple and Cownie, 2017; Alexander et al. 2020),

When a consumer is familiar with the brand the consumer will perceive a lower level of risk with their purchasing decision. (Arnott., C & Wilson., D. 2007). The level of familiarity will give comfort towards the consumer making them more convincing (Martensen et al. 2018). Yet, familiarity in social media is more complex as the relationship is considered one-sided (Martensen et al. 2018; Hoffner, 2008). Nonetheless, familiarity is created when the influencer regularly posts private photos on social media creating a sense of intimacy and closeness with followers, especially if the follower has been following the influencer for a longer period of time (Martensen et al. 2018).

Consumers that gather and collect information are more likely to be influenced when the information is believable. In other words, the information needs to be credible in order to get sustenance from the consumers. The credibility of the company will influence the attitude of the consumer (Hoyer., D. et al. 2012). Yet, social media influencers have a more complex situation as they have to accomplish their own recognition by being authentic on social media (Jiang, 2018). Therefore, for influencers to be perceived as credible they have to work hard to be able to convince the followers that the product recommended was in fact made to improve the influencer's public image, communicate their genuine interest in the product, or convey their intention to help others (Jiang, 2018).

1.2.   Problematization

There are many studies conducted on trusting e-commerce and how that has an impact on the consumers purchasing intention, these studies (Farivar et al, 2017; Weisberg et al, 2011; Bianchi, and Andrews, 2012) investigate the risk the buyer is holding when purchasing online and therefore how trust in this context plays a vital role. There have also been studies (Martensen et al. 2018; Ki and Kim 2019: Maria Edström et al, 2010) on how influencers persuade their followers and the different ways they approach their followers. Other studies (Dreifaldt et al, 2019) investigates consumers' perception of similarity, familiarity, and credibility in how brand image could influence their purchasing intention. However, this study found that there is a gap in how *trust —similarity, familiarity, and credibility—* in influencers play a role in the purchasing intention of their followers.

There are few studies that have investigated the relationship between trusting influencers and purchase intention. This study aims to contribute new information to a previously unexplored area of research. However, the study will not be able to cover all aspects of trust in influencers and purchase intention, but only a few chosen aspects as there are several theories that can explain purchase intentions and trust. This study may serve as a foundation for further research of trust in influencers and purchasing intention.

1.3. Aim and purpose

The purpose of this study is to gain knowledge about how factors of trust - *similarity, familiarity, and credibility* - in influencers have an impact on the purchasing intention. This study will investigate how the different factors impact trust in influencers and how it plays a role in the buying intention of their followers. The purpose of this study is to contribute to new information to a previously unexplored area of research and serve as a foundation for further research of trust in influencers and purchasing intention.

1.4. Research question

How do factors of trust – similarity, familiarity, and credibility – in influencers play a role in the purchasing intention of their followers?

2. Literature Review

This section presents an overview of the subject, influencer marketing, and purchasing intention, as a basis of this research paper to clarify to the reader the prior knowledge needed.

2.1. Online Influencer Marketing

As this study investigates how trust in influencers play a role in the purchasing intention, it is therefore important to understand the influencer marketing as a phenomenon. According to Duncan Brown and Nick Hayes (2007), influencer marketing is a new marketing approach. Sudha and Sheena (2017) state that influencer marketing is a "process of identifying and activating individuals who have an influence over a specific target audience or medium, in order to be part of a brand's campaign towards increased reach, sales, or engagement". The authors of this study further state that influencer marketing could be seen as an extension of word-of-mouth but at a larger and focusing on a social context. This is also a way for companies to expand their audience and eventually turn them loyal through trust and authenticity, as there is a strong relationship between the influencers and their audience that is maintained by the influencers. This relationship comes from the influencer creating content that is desired by people, and the influencer's audience relates to, which in turn leads to the audience having "a certain level of trust in the influencer's opinion" (Sudha, M. & Sheena, K. 2017). Furthermore, in order for influencers to be more persuasive, they need to regularly make social media updates in their specialist areas (Chen Lou and Shupei Yuan, 2019). The authors explain that this is done when an influencer posts "information about product alternatives or other informative content" to their followers. Influencers tend to add some personal touch to their content to create an enjoyable experience for their followers (Chen Lou and Shupei Yuan, 2019).

Marketers for many years have used celebrities as a way to market and increase awareness of their brand and that is because people tend to have trust in those they admire (Bognar et al, 2019; Sudha et al, 2017). The concept influencer marketing has similar objectives, however instead of using TV/film stars or famous musicians they use celebrities from the world of social networks or social media influencers (Sammis, Lincoln, and Pomponi, 2015). Influencer within this context refers to people with certain influence over others (Bognar et al, 2019). According to the author, depending on the type of business the influencers work with, they profit mostly from Instagram and YouTube, however, influencers also use other platforms for advertisements such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Snapchat. Influencers, in an organizational setting that is based on their knowledge, skills, and character - but not position, influence on attitudes of their colleagues but it can also be the ones who make decisions within the organization (Bognar et al, 2019). In addition, according to Edström et al, (2010) the influencers today are becoming professional in addition to being aware of their role on social media, which is why they are offering services to companies.

Therefore, it is important for this study to understand that influencer marketing is becoming a "hot topic" and how to use it for promotion purposes (Sudha et al, 2017). Since people have more trust in those they admire more than any other brand promotion, it is highly important for a reassessment of brand strategy. That goes down for the reason that younger generations are more challenging as they are more demanding since most of them demand non-celebrity product promotion (ibid). Which brings it to the importance of companies' engagement with influencers, especially because influencers create trends which in turn could manipulate consumers purchasing intentions, this helps them attain a presence within the online community, which can be perceived to be more trustworthy and authentic (Dreifaldt, N., and Drennan, T. 2019). The reason behind that is that influencers have a certain influence over consumers (Dreifaldt et al, 2019; Bognar et al, 2019) which as a consequence could help consumers to reach a purchasing decision (Dreifaldt et al, 2019).

2.2.   Online Purchase intention

The definition of purchase intention is defined by Spears and Singh (2004) as a conscious plan by an individual to try and purchase a brand. Shah et al. (2012) describe the purchase intention regarding the purpose to purchase a specific brand as cognitive behavior.

Today, a new market place has been created online due to globalization and technological advances, and because of that consumers have the opportunity and option to purchase online (Safari et al., 2013). According to Dreifaldt and Drennan (2019), online purchase intention is defined as "the consumer's inclination to buy online". They explain that the buying behavior of consumers has changed because of the internet due to online transactions and that the way of purchasing online compared to the traditional way is different, with the reason that consumers are more concerned about the online store and its different elements. There is a certain level of risk when shopping online that is experienced by consumers, even though internet usage has increased frequently (Dreifaldt and Drennan, 2019).

When considering purchasing from an online vendor, consumers review and study the reputation of the seller (Wu, Huang, and Fu, 2011). The authors explain the negative outcome of online transactions is an individual belief for consumers in the way they perceive risk. When consumers choose to purchase online, it will lead to higher perceived risks as personal data and its privacy and security, and the lack of recognition of a vendor ad to the risk as they are not aware of how their data privacy is managed, which leads to additional mistrust (ibid). When an influencer is trusted, they can alter the purchasing decision of the consumers that follow them, and make them accept their recommendations (Konstantopoulou, Rizomyliotis, Konstantoulaki, & Badahdah, 2019).

3. Theoretical Framework

This section highlights the main theories that have an effect on purchasing intention as a basis of this research paper.

3.1. Trust

As this paper investigates how trust in influencers play a role in the purchasing intention, it is therefore important to understand trust as a phenomenon and how this is fundamental to this research paper. Trust can both be a threat but also a successful operation for e-marketing, it is therefore believed that trust is the most critical variable in developing and maintaining a well-functioned relationship (Bojang, 2017). Osburg., T., Heinecke., S., (2019) states in their book that studies indicate that there is a lack of trust between companies, media, governments, and people over the past years. The digitalization is considered as both the problem and the solution regarding creating a trust. But for a fact trust is required in order to create a relationship that is effective (Osburg., T., Heinecke., S., 2019). Trust has different definitions to it, one of them is defined by Mayer et al. (1995) as: "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a specific action significant to the trustor, regardless of the ability to monitor or control that other party". Another definition by Cummings and Bromiley (1996) is that when someone is honest, doesn't take advantage given the opportunity, and upholds commitment by effort, they are believed to be trusted by another individual.

However, lack of trust in the internet today is still one of the biggest concerns for internet consumers (Bojang, 2017). Bojang (2017) also defines trust as the willingness to take risks within a relationship. While Baiar (1994) defines trust as the "accepted vulnerability to another's possible but not expected ill will toward one". Bojang (2019) further elaborates that to accept trust as the three-place prediction (A trusts B with valued thing C), the author explains that trustor A needs a good judgment ability to realize how much caution to give since trustor B would have had unrestricted power over the entrusted value towards thing C. Meanwhile, the trustor needs to be cautious in case the trustee abuses the unrestricted power. The author further stated that from a psychological point of view focus will mostly be on interpersonal trust as it has an influence on personal development in people (ibid). The author states that people need to trust in order for them to develop in the best possible way (Bojang, 2019). However, in other studies, it is stated that everything relies on good communication, and when the communication is good the trust will be placed on the exchange naturally (Osburg., T., Heinecke., S., 2019). Trust includes the transmission of resources – physical, material, emotional or financial – without concrete or measurable obligation from the trustee (ibid). The authors further elaborate that the only way trust will grow is when the expected result perceives as valuable for the trustor.

According to Bojang (2017) in an online setting consumer trust can be associated with different stages of transaction which shape their purchasing decision, these stages are as follows; how much consumers want to purchase products online and how familiar they are with the vendor. This means that online shopping may require a great amount of trust as it is more complex than traditional shopping. That is because a seller's physical absence makes online transactions more vulnerable, in other words, internet users perceive a risk and an uncertainty when transacting with an unknown seller on a website (Lee, J et al. 2011). Although followers and influencers do not know each other on a personal level, the visual nature of social media today enables the followers to feel more connected with the influencers (Martensen et al. 2018). Consumers would more easily be persuaded if the source, this means that the influencers are seen to be trustworthy, reliable, honest, and sincere (Cheung et al., 2008; Chu and Kamal, 2008; Kiecker and Cowles, 2001). If the influencer's content in social media lacked a personal aspect, they are perceived untrustworthy (Martensen et al. 2018).

3.1.1.   The impact of trust on purchasing intention

Studies have discovered that trust is essential for consumer behavior towards online shopping (Buttner & Goritz, 2008). Researchers (Belanger, Hiller, & Smith, 2002) have considered that the e-business would attract more consumers if they increased the consumers' trust in their digital platform. The authors mean that here is a connection that trust is an element for continuous growth in the marketplace of the Internet. Gefen and Straub (2004) state that "research has shown that high levels of consumer trust encourage online purchase intentions, and help retain online consumers, while the lack of it is the main reason consumers do not shop online".

It has been stated that researchers (Jarvenpaa, Tractinsky, & Saarinen, 1999) for a long period have recommended that decreasing the risk of online shopping would upturn the possibility of purchase from a consumer. The researchers further express that previous studies have indicated that a perceived risk from the website has a negative influence on online shopping. Looking at more recent studies, it has been stated that the trustworthiness had a significant effect on the perceived risk on the intention of purchase (Buttner & Goritz, 2008).

According to Pavlou (2003), there is a distinction between trust and perceived risk, and that trust encompasses a positive attitude towards the object. The author also expresses that it is necessary to have a certain level of ambiguity in order to have trust. There are a lot of uncertainties in economic transactions, Pavlou (2003) states that either it could be an environmental or behavioral uncertainty. The authors Lee, Ang, & Dubelaar (2005) announce that the environmental uncertainties often are beyond the control of the involved parties, and the behavioral uncertainty is under the control of the involved parties, both of these uncertainties affect online shopping. Furthermore, the authors mean that the uncertainty that affects the buying behavior is the policies of the organization and that it could be

policies as money-back guarantees, privacy policies, etc. To offer these policies it would increase the certainty and a probability of an increased purchasing intention. (Lee, Ang, & Dubelaar, 2005).

When a consumer is taking any interest in the buying process of a product or intends to make a buying decision the trust concerning the thoughts, information, and reviews that often are shared on social media plays a big role (Silverman, B. et al. 2001). According to Silverman (2001), in the framework of the purchase intention trust is an important aspect. Consumers are being influenced on social media platforms which also influences consumer behavior (ibid). The author means that this is an aspect of why online users are trusting the reviews and information they are gathering from social media rather than promotions from companies. The main factor of changing consumer behavior throughout social media is trust (ibid).

Therefore, this study is investigating *How do factors of trust – similarity, familiarity, and credibility – in influencers play a role in the purchasing intention of their followers*? This study has found that there are numerous factors that may have an impact on trust; similarity, familiarity, and credibility. These factors will be presented and explained, but also explore how this as a consequence, influences the purchasing intention

3.2. Similarity

According to Martensen et al. (2018) similarity is recognized as the resemblance between a sender and a receiver. Meaning that individuals have similarities with each other are exposed to a greater interpersonal attraction, trust, and understanding rather than those who are seen dissimilar (Martensen et al. 2018; Ruef et al., 2003). The author further explains that in an offline setting, if the receiver feels that the sender is similar to themselves, they are more likely to be persuaded by the sender. It was concluded that the more similar one feels towards the influencer the more trust they have towards them. Some followers identify themselves to the influencer, some perceive to have many things in common with the influencer while others have the desire to be like the influencer (Hoffner and Buchanan 2005; Kamins et al. 1989; Gräve 2017).

Some consumers believe that they share some interests, values, or characteristics with an influencer, they are more likely to implement their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Cialdini 1993; Kelman 2006). According to Chapple and Cownie (2017) and Alexander et al. (2020), this is mostly achieved when the influencers present personal content on their social media platform, which makes their profile appear more 'ordinary', humanized, approachable, authentic and reliable. In other words, it means that influencers appear more similar to their followers when "downplaying" their status and show more of the ordinary aspects of their personal lives. Researchers (Djafarova and Rushworth 2017; Alexander et al. 2020) explain that influencers are like a long-distant friend to the follower as they are perceived as more relatable and approachable. That comes mostly as influencers address their followers in their posts

which could bring closeness (Erz and Christensen 2018; Gannon and Prothero 2018). Also, Schmidt 2007 and Alexander et al. 2020 state that the ability to comment on the influencer's posts strengthen the feeling of similarity between them and the influencer. Therefore, the following proposition is derived:

H1: Similarity with influencers has a positive relationship with purchasing intention.

3.3. Familiarity

How familiar one is to another depends on the knowledge of the source through exposure or past association (Martensen et al. 2018). This means that familiarity gives a level of comfort to the receiver towards the sender, as a consequence making the sender seem more persuasive (Martensen et al. 2018). Martensen et al. (2018) and Hoffner (2008) explain that when it comes to social media influencers the relationship between the follower and the influencer is considered as a one-sided relationship, however, the follower often feels like they know the influencer. Which as a consequence will lead to them accepting their input of correct product decisions, product use, and personal consumption (Russell and Puto, 1999; Martensen et al. 2018). This is created through the regular flow of private photos which creates a sense of intimacy and closeness with the follower, especially if the follower has been following the influencer for a longer period of time (Martensen et al. 2018). This means that if the follower is more familiar with the influencer it means it has a positive relationship with purchase intention (ibid).

Both Deatara et al. (2019) and Martensen et al. (2018) agree that if the follower is more familiar with the influencer then it has an impact on trust. Meaning if the consumer finds a familiarity between themselves, then they are more likely to have trust towards them, consequently have a positive relationship with purchasing intention. Researchers (Lee and Watkins 2016) showed that influencers have a positive effect on consumers' purchasing intention when promoting a brand in their posts. In an interview study by Chapple and Cownie (2017), consumers stated that they regularly follow influencers' product recommendations either by buying or further recommending them. Based here on it's proposed:

H2: Familiarity with influencers has a positive relationship with purchasing intention.

3.4. Credibility

Celebrities have gained their public recognition through their talent (Khamis, Ang, and Welling 2017) which has made them popular among marketers in promoting their brands, products, and services (Alexander et al. 2020). In other words, marketers try to trigger consumers' purchase intention by transferring images and characteristics of celebrities onto their brand (Atkin and Block 1983). Unlike those celebrities, social media influencers accomplish their own recognition by being authentic (Jiang, 2018) and in branding themselves as experts on social media platforms (Khamis, Ang, and Welling 2017). When a consumer is valuing the authenticity, it creates an optimistic attitude when the brand or the product is perceived as real, genuine, and true (Hoyer., D. et al. 2012). Furthermore, Hoyer (2012)

explains that authenticity creates a connection for the consumers' experiences based on what they have heard from others.

Deatara et al. (2019) explain that influencers are found to be credible and influential due to their life-style of vlogging and exposing their daily activities to their followers. By doing so it creates a connection, appreciation, and a special relationship to their followers. However, according to the authors, this only happens if the viewer has a positive perception of the influencer. Interviews with Instagram users (Djafarova and Rushworth 2017) suggest that influencers are perceived as more credible and relatable than traditional celebrities, therefore it is seen to have a significant impact on their followers' purchasing intention. Sen & Lerman (2007) support Deatara et al. (2019) study by stating that highly credible communicators are more persuasive than those who are considered of low credibility. In addition, other researchers (Deatara et al., 2019; Rossiter and Smidts, 2012; Bergkvist and Qiang Zhou, 2016) argue that followers do not have a positive perception of influencers since they are aware that celebrities get paid for their content.

In Jiang's (2018) study a highly credible influencer would lead to consumers believing that the product recommended was in fact made to improve the influencer's public image, communicate their genuine interest in the product, or convey their intention to help others. The author further states that consumers are less likely to resist a credible influencer than a less credible influencer. This means that a "credible celebrity has a positive effect on ad effectiveness, such as increasing consumers' attitudes towards the ad, towards the brand, and purchase intention" (Jiang, 2018). Based upon this it's proposed:

H3: Influencers' credibility has a positive relationship with consumers' purchasing intentions.

4. Conceptual Framework

Within this section, the main figure will be highlighted, it illustrates how this paper will be conducted.

Subsequent to the previous literature review this study has developed a conceptual framework that describes the research question. Figure 1 portrays what this study is investigating, and it was created in order to clarify the purpose of the research to the readers, and give guidance to a fundamental understanding of the research objective. Consequently, this paper will contribute to knowledge about how the followers of influencers are influenced by the different factors of trust and how it will affect their purchase intentions.
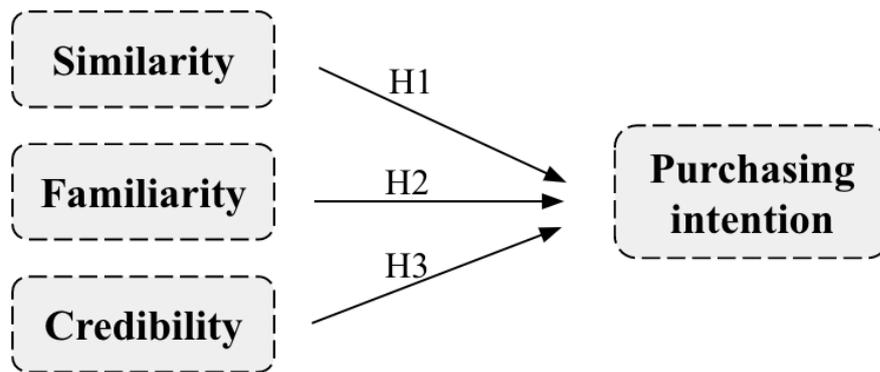

Figure 1: created by authors

Figure 1 can be explained in how consumer trust in influencers plays a role in purchasing intention, however, this study has found that there are a number of aspects that have an influence over trust. These factors are the similarity, familiarity, and credibility, these factors are examined through this study to research how it plays a role in the purchasing intention of the influencer's followers. These factors play an enormous role in the relationship between the sender and the perceiver, depending on how strong the connections are. Meaning that the stronger the connections are, the more truthful, honest and believed the sender is perceived. Therefore, there may be some connections between these factors and the purchasing intention, which this study is investigating.

5. Methodology

This section will focus on the process of this research paper, from the choice of method and data collection to the reliability and validity of the method chosen. The section will also present a methodological criticism as well as limitation.

5.1.   Research Method

This study is driven by a quantitative research method since it used a deductive approach while doing the research. A deductive approach is based on testing theories using models to explain, meaning that a "hypothesis is deduced from the theory and is tested" (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Since this study has a hypothesis it's trying to test, it therefore is applied to a qualitative research method. As this study is focused on the three factors of trust -similarity, familiarity, and credibility- a web survey is conducted since it is best fitted for this paper since it is based on questioning people of large scale on if they trust influencers. Because of resource limitations and to simplify the process this thesis will limit its findings to the Swedish market. The respondents will only be Swedish, and the questionnaire was developed considering Swedish consumers.

Choosing to conduct a quantitative online survey instead of a qualitative face-to-face interview, has its advantages and disadvantages. Bryman and Bell (2011) mention the advantages of an online survey, which includes, firstly, the appearance of the online survey tool which could welcome the respondent to the questionnaire. Secondly, it provides an easy alternative for filtering the questions, in a way that depending on the respondent's answer, the next question will be presented (Bryman and Bell, 2011). And lastly, the answers from the respondents can be programmed and downloaded into a database. In this thesis, based on the framework and previous literature, more general questions were developed and do not require follow up or in-depth questions. Unlike a qualitative where the questions are more in-depth, and the authors of the present study are able to add follow up questions and have a more personal approach. The questions of the survey were adopted from and adapted to different studies; this was done according to the different factors (see table A).

5.2.   Survey Approach

Through an online questionnaire, the data was gathered. The sampling unit of the study consists of consumers who make purchases based on influencer's recommendations. The questionnaire has a 7-point-Likert-scale, which according to Bryman and Bell (2011) the Likert-scale is seen to be reliable. Therefore, the range of responses was from "Completely disagree" to "completely agree". Bryman and Bell (2011) also state that it is of importance to make sure that the respondents are aware that their information will not be shown which could lead to identification. Therefore, the authors of this study informed the participants that the questionnaire will be anonymous and be treated with confidentiality. Nonetheless, the participants were also informed that the questionnaire will be held in English.

Since the study is a part of a larger study the questionnaire was created via Google's online survey tool. Hypothesis was created in relation to the different factors of trust. Therefore, according to the factors, the questionnaire was conducted. In regards to the data gathering, the authors of this study decided to use convenience sampling as the answers gathered will all be used. Bryman and Bell (2011) explain convenience sampling as "one that is simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility", meaning that there is no way to generalize the findings because it is not known what population the sample represents.

The participants of this study were individuals who are from 15 and above years old, and the participation is completely voluntary. The survey was conducted to test the hypothesis, to measure how similarity, familiarity, and credibility has an impact on purchasing intention. The survey included responses from both genders and from five age-groups: 15- 24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, and 40+. The survey had a cover letter explaining the purpose of the research and instructions on how to respond using the scale items. 86.8% of the study participants were female and the median age category was 25-29 years old, which is 42.5% of the data.

The questions were then sent out on platforms such as Facebook pages, Facebook Messenger, and LinkedIn. The questionnaires were available on each platform from 2020-05-04 until 2020-05-12. The respondents were asked to keep their favorite influencer in mind when answering the questions, that was done to ensure that they can answer the questions according to that and not generally. Within the questionnaire, they were presented by the question if they followed influencers, which would determine whether they would continue with the questionnaire or not. As the authors of the current study are mostly concerned with people who follow influencers, to see if similarity, familiarity, and credibility could have an impact on their purchase intention. The reason behind this was to eliminate as many errors as possible. Those who answered yes would continue with the questionnaire. The survey was divided into four different sections; similarity, familiarity, credibility and lastly purchasing intention. Where the purchasing intention is the independent variable where the authors of this study want to see how the dependent variable (similarity, familiarity, and credibility) has a relationship with the independent variable. Therefore, a set of four questions were asked in each of the dependent variables, while only one question was presented in the independent variable.

5.3.   Data collection and analysis

The data collection was carried out utilizing a quantitative survey with 167 respondents. Within the questionnaire there was a question regarding whether the respondents followed any influencer, this question was necessary since this study is only concerned with individuals who are following influencers. There were 29 of 167 respondents who did not follow an influencer, therefore they were excluded, leaving this paper with 137 respondents.

The 7-point-Likert-scale was entered in SPSS with 1 standing from "Completely disagree", 2 for "Disagree, 3 for "Somewhat disagree", 4 for "Neutral", 5 for "Somewhat agree", 6 for "Agree", and 7 for "Completely agree". According to Jullie Pallant (2001), this type of range of possible scores increases the statistical analysis. The four relationships between similarity, familiarity, and credibility and purchasing intention were therefore examined. To further ensure the validity of the study, a Spearman correlation was carried out, the step shows if there is a relationship between the variables. Therefore the values of the correlation fluctuated from negative one (-1), a perfect negative correlation, to positive one (+1), a perfect positive correlation. The next step was the standard multiple regression testing, this is used to compare the strength of the effect each independent variable has to the dependent variable. For the purpose of this study, the authors of the present study used the standard multiple regression analysis to predict H1, H2, and H3.

For the standard multiple regression analysis, the sample size must be able to give a generalization to the population, so that means it must have a good amount of cases and subjects (Jullie Pallant, 2001, p. 136-146). According to Tabachnick and Fidell's (1996, p.132) formula for size requirement: $N > 50 + 8m$ (m= number of independent variables), so in this case there are three independent variables, so $N > 50 + 8(3) = 74$ cases. Therefore, in this case, the survey had 137 responses from Sweden. In Table A, a detailed description is shown describing the different questions presented in the survey. The majority of the respondents were between the ages 25-29 (42.5%) followed by the ages 15-24 (32.9%), and the gender distribution of 88.8% females, 12% males, and leaving a 2% that do not want to specify.

Table A

Independent variable	Measurement	Studies
Demographic variables		
Gender	1. Male 2. Female 3. Do not want to specify	Ezgi Akar *and V. Aslihan Nasir (2015);* Dreifaldt et al, (2019)
Age	1. 15-24 2. 25-29 3. 30-34 4. 35-39 5. 40+	Chen Lou & Shupei Yuan (2019); Ezgi Akar *and V. Aslihan Nasir (2015);* Dreifaldt et al, (2019)
Internet usage	1. 1-5 years 2. 5-10 years 3. 10 + years	Ezgi Akar *and V. Aslihan Nasir (2015);* Dreifaldt et al, (2019)
Purchase experience	1. Daily 2. Weekly 3. Monthly 4. A few times a year	Ezgi Akar *and V. Aslihan Nasir (2015);* Dreifaldt et al, (2019)
Trust		
Similarity		Martensen et al. (2018); Ruef et al., (2003); Dreifaldt et al, (2019); Chen Lou & Shupei Yuan (2019); Kamran Siddiqui (2011)
I have a lot in common with the influencer I follow. Me and the influencer use the same product (we have the same taste in products). Me and the influencer have the same hobby/ies. Me and the influencer have the same style.	**7 Point Likert scale:** 1- Completely Disagree 2- Disagree 3-Somewhat disagree 4- Neutral 5- Somewhat Agree 6- Agree 7- Completely Agree	
Familiarity		Russell and Puto, (1999); Martensen et al. (2018); Deatara et al. (2019); Martensen et al. (2018); Dreifaldt et al, (2019)
I have followed the influencer for a long time. The influencers that I follow are personal on social media. I relate to the influencer on a personal level. I know what kind of person the influencer is.	**7 Point Likert scale:** 1- Completely Disagree 2- Disagree 3-Somewhat disagree 4- Neutral 5- Somewhat Agree 6- Agree 7- Completely Agree	
Credibility		Martensen et al. (2018); Chen

		Lou & Shupei Yuan (2019); Dreifaldt et al, (2019); Jiang, M. (2018); Deatara et al. (2019)
I perceive an honest influencer as credible. I perceive the influencer credible when their message in their post (on social media) is clear. I perceive the influencer as credible when they work with only one brand.	**7 Point Likert scale:** 1- Completely Disagree 2- Disagree 3-Somewhat disagree 4- Neutral 5- Somewhat Agree 6- Agree 7- Completely Agree	
Dependent variable		
Purchasing intention		Dreifaldt et al, (2019); Farivar et al, (2017); Weisberg et al, (2011); Bianchi, and Andrews, (2012)
I buy the product that are recommended by the influencer	**7 Point Likert scale:** 1- Completely Disagree 2- Disagree 3-Somewhat disagree 4- Neutral 5- Somewhat Agree 6- Agree 7- Completely Agree	

5.4.   Sample Reliability and Validity

As the questionnaire was developed, a pre-testing - or a pilot study, the questionnaire was also performed to ensure the questions were ready to be published in public. The point of conducting a pilot study is to ensure that the survey questions operate well and it has a role in ensuring that the research, as a whole, functions well (Bryman and Bell, 2011). There was feedback that was given on some questions that did not fit the questionnaire. An example of such, in similarity one question, was if the influencer was around the same age, the question had a yes-or-no scale to it, which was different from the rest that had the 7-point-Likert-scale, therefore that question was removed. Also, other questions within the questionnaire were not formulated in a way that the reader understood, therefore some adjustments were made to make the questions functional.

Björklund and Paulsson (2014) refer to reliability if future authors would get the same values when investigating the same subject. According to Bryman and Bell (2011) reliability concerns if the conclusions from the research are repeatable or not. In quantitative research, reliability is the issue regarding the connection. The reliability is also concerning the consistency of measures that often can be an issue in qualitative research. There are three common factors of reliability; stability, Internal reliability, and Inter-observer consistency. Stability concerns if the measurement is constant even if it is over a longer period of time, this will ensure that the results from the measurement will not fluctuate. In other words, there would be a small variation in the measurement. A key issue to reliability is the internal reliability. This concerns whether the indicators will make up to the scale/index or not. The inter-observer consistency is when there involves a subjective judgment to the activities, for example when translating data into categories. The level of the reliability in a research will also give an extent to the research that would have the same outcome if the investigation would be redone (Björklund & Paulsson, 2014).

Bryman and Bell (2011) state that in research, validity is the most important aspect. The validity that comes from the research is concerned with the truthfulness that comes from the conclusions. According to Björklund and Paulsson (2014), validity is the non-appearance of errors that can occur in the methodology or in the system. There are several ways of increasing the validity of a study, i.e. with interviews, surveys, target groups, etc. To secure the validity of the study, a pilot study was conducted following a Cronbach's Alpha test where the authors of this study tested the questionnaire. These validity checks include firstly that different measures were adopted and adapted from earlier studies which could provide acceptable reliability and validity to the questionnaire.

Table B: Cronbach's Alpha of Similarity.

Reliability statistics

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
Similarity	0.781	4
Familiarity	0.751	4
Credibility	0.625	4
Similarity, Familiarity, Credibility, and purchasing intention.	0.829	13

Since this study concerns scales, it is important to check if they are reliable. According to Jullie Pallant (2001), one of the most common indicators of scale's internal consistency is Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Scale's internal consistency refers to the degree to which the items that make up the scale are related to each other (Pallant, J., 2001 p. 85-88). Jullie Pallant (2001) indicates that ideally, Cronbach's Alpha value should be above 0.6. Therefore, in this study, according to the Cronbach's Alpha test was implemented and therefore the Purchasing intention with similarity, familiarity, and credibility has a good internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient reporting 0.829. (see table B).

Secondly, the authors of the present study used Cronbach's alpha test, where the calculation of the correlation by a variety between zero (0) and one (1). This means when the coefficient is closer to 0, it indicates that the variables are not related to each other, while a coefficient is closer to one (1) shows a perfect correlation (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Therefore, anything that is above 0.6 has acceptable reliability, yet the higher the better. While in the case of this paper, the Cronbach's alpha test reporting Similarity is 0.781, Familiarity is 0.751, and Credibility is 0.625 (table B). In this case, the reliability shows it is highly consistent. The importance of this reliability is that it shows us that the questionnaire can be used in another similar setting or different setting, which means that the higher the Cronbach's Alpha is the more reliable consequently leading to a better result. This table increases the reliability, credibility, and the authenticity of this data, but also determines whether to continue or move ahead with the data or not.

5.5. Limitations

The research question is a question that requires a large sample of people in order to write a better reliable thesis, and qualitative research was difficult to conduct as there is not much time to acquire respondents, also the authors of this study do not have the economic resources. Therefore, there were

not many aspects of trust in influencers and purchase intention that were discussed in this paper. Another limitation for qualitative research is the ongoing Covid-19 situation, which made that this option was not safe for both the authors of the present study and the respondents.

Because of resource limitations and to simplify the process this thesis will limit its findings to the Swedish market. The respondents will only be Swedish, and the survey was developed considering Swedish consumers. This means having our survey made in English would limit us to only those who speak English to be able to answer our survey. Yet, had the questionnaire been in Swedish it would create another limitation as translation must be done. Translation will create misinterpretation and therefore this will create another limitation.

Another limitation was that there were few studies that were made on this specific subject which made it more challenging to find information for this study to be more comparable. Since this study is investigating the factors of trust, figure 1 was created in a more simplistic way which did not include how these factors could have an impact on trust and consequently on purchasing intention. Therefore, the result may have a different outcome as the figure did not include trust.

According to Bryman & Bell (2011), one criticism of quantitative research is "*the reliance on instruments and procedures hinders the connection between research and everyday life*." The majority of the quantitative research is relying comprehensively as in this research on self-completion questionnaires. This means that the respondents of the survey need to have an essential awareness in order to be able to answer questions regarding the specific topic. In this case, the authors of this study designed the questionnaire so that the respondents had the ability to know if they had an awareness of the topic or not early in the questionnaire. In that way, the respondents had the ability to exit the questionnaire when not having any knowledge regarding the topic of this research.

Another criticism according to Bryman & Bell (2011) is "Quantitative researchers fail to distinguish people and social institutions from "the world of nature". Meaning that it is wrong to treat the social world as the natural world. The scientific method shall only be related and realistic on the focus of the research. With this said, this research is only covering up on the 137 respondents to the questionnaire and not all of the Swedish consumers.

6. Results and Analysis

The following section will present the results of the survey conducted by the authors of this study.

For this paper, a standard multiple regression analysis was implemented, which according to Pallant, J., (2001) is the most commonly used method. Multiple regression analysis is a technique that can be used to explore the relationship between one continuous dependent variable and a number of independent variables but also predicting the outcome (Jullie Pallant, 2001). It is based on correlations yet allows a more complicated exploration of the interrelationship between a set of variables (ibid). It checks how "each independent variable is evaluated in terms of its predictive power, over and above that offered by all the other independent variables" (Jullie Pallant, 2001).

6.1. Model Evaluation and statistical significance

Table 1: Model Summary

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate.
	0.644	0.415	0.392	1.329

The evaluation of the model was conducted, to do so it is needed to check the model summary table (Table 1) and determine the R^2 which tells how much of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the model (Jullie Pallant, 2001). Which in this case it is 0.415, this means that this model explains 41.5% of the variance in the perceived stress or gender, age, similarity, familiarity and credibility account for 41.5% of the variance in purchasing intention. Jullie Pallant (2001) suggests that for smaller samples to use the Adjusted R^2, which estimated the true population value. Therefore, it is shown that the Adjusted R^2 value is 0.392 (or 39.2%) which means that the model of this study explains 39.2% of the variance in the perceived stress.

Table 2: ANOVA

ANOVA

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig.
Regression	165.220	5	33.044	18.700	0.000
Residual	233.251	132	1.767		
Total	398.471	137			

Later, the estimation of the statistical significance of the result was performed to look at the regression analysis overall or the predictors as a set, which ANOVA table was used for. The ANOVA table tests

the null hypothesis, so multiple R in the population will equal to 0 (Jullie Pallant, 2001). Which in this case the statistical significance (sig. 0.000) which in other words means p<0.0005 (table 2). The overall regression model was significant, $F_{(5,132)}=18.700$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2=0.415$.

6.2.   Correlation

First, it is important to check for assumptions, using the multicollinearity, which tests if the independent variables are correlated (Jullie Pallant, 2001). In the correlation table (see table 4), it must be identified if there is some relationship between the independent and the dependent variables, if it is above 0.3 it's preferable (ibid). In this case Similarity with Purchase Intention is 0.587, Familiarity with Purchase Intention is 0.364, and lastly, Credibility with Purchase Intention is 0.447.

Later a "collinearity diagnostics" was performed, by using the *Tolerance* heading (Table 5). Tolerance is calculated 1-R2 for each variable, so according to Jullie Pallant (2001) if the value is low or near zero then it indicates that the multiple correlations with other variables are high, which suggests the possibility for multicollinearity. In this case, this is the value; Similarity is 0.769, Familiarity is 0.808, and Credibility is 0.775, which means that this study has not violated this assumption. (see table 5)

Table 3: Scatterplot
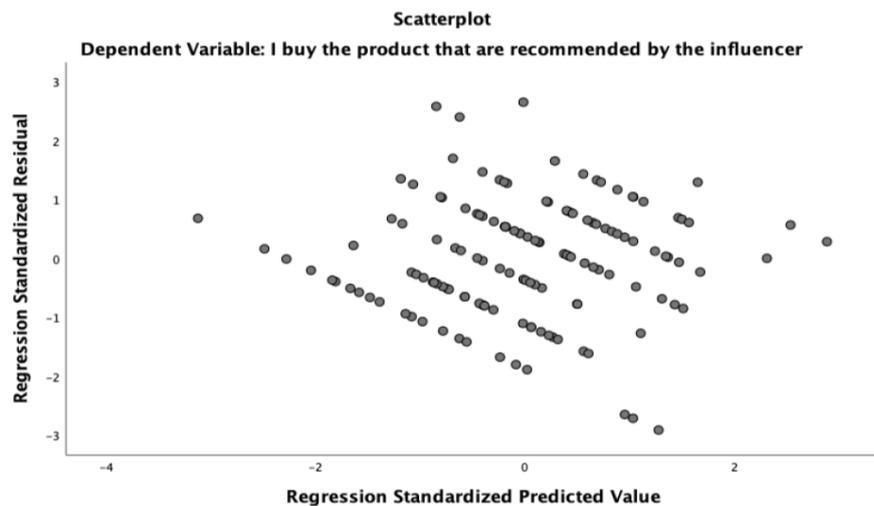
In determining the direction and the strength of the relationship between the concepts presented in the conceptual framework, a Spearman's correlation coefficient was adopted. Spearman's correlation coefficient evaluates how well the relationship between two variables can be described, in other words it is used to summarise the strength and direction of a relationship between these two variables. For the Pearson correlation, it can be reported between -1 and +1. Negative one (-1) means a perfect negative correlation, while Positive one (+1) means a perfect positive correlation (Pallant, J., 2001). So the -1 to +1 indicates that the value of one variable can be determined exactly by knowing the values on the other variable, yet a 0 indicates that there is no relationship between the variables (Pallant, J., 2001) therefore

a scatterplot will show the significance (see table 3). Which in this case it shows that there is a significant relevance between the variables.

Table 4: Spearman correlation coefficient of similarity, familiarity, credibility, and purchasing intention.

Correlations

		Purchasing intention	Percentage of variance
Gender	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.004 .480	0.0016% (0.000016)
Age	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.225 .004	5.0625% (0.050625)
Similarity	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.587** .000	34.5% (0.3445)
Familiarity	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.364** .000	13.3% (0.1325)
Credibility	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.447** .000	20% (0.1998)

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

Later, a linear regression analysis was performed to determine the direction of the relationship between each independent variable to the dependent variable. A correlation table was formed, correlation provides a table giving Pearson *r* correlation coefficients between the variables. The size of the Pearson correlation varies from -1.00 to +1.00. This indicates the strength of the relationship between the two variables, therefore a -1.00 means a perfect negative correlation, a +1.00 means a perfect positive correlation while 0 indicates no relationship, yet it's worth to note that the negative or positive sign does not indicate the strength, rather the direction (Pallant, J., 2001 p. 115-121). However, Jullie Pallant (2001) states that Cohen (1988) suggest some guidelines for interpretation of the Pearson r, suggesting:

r = .10 to .29 or *r* = -.10 to -.29	Small
r = .30 to .49 or *r* = -.30 to -.49	Medium
r = .50 to 1.0 or *r* = -.50 to -1.0	Large

The correlation coefficient between Similarity and Purchasing Intention is 0.587** (see table 4). This means that there is a positive relationship between the two variables. While on the other hand, the correlation coefficient between Familiarity and Purchasing Intention is 0.364**, which is less than the Similarity, yet it still has a positive relationship between the two variables. And lastly the correlation coefficient between Credibility and Purchasing Intention is 0.447**, which also means that there is a positive relationship between the two variables. Spearman's correlation coefficient shows us that the

Similarity has the highest connection to Purchasing Intention while familiarity has the lowest correlation. So, calculating the coefficient of determination is calculated by squaring the Pearson *r* value, this helps to determine the perceived value control. Perceived control helps to explain the percentage of the variance in the respondents' scores on the perceived stress scale (Pallant, J., 2001). In this case, it is shown that Gender of 0.0016%, age of 5.0625%, Similarity of 34.5%, Familiarity of 13.3%, and Credibility of 20% explains the variance in the respondents' scores on the perceived stress scale (see table 4).

On the other hand, when the p-value is less than 0.01, there is a very strong significant correlation between the variables. Meaning if the p-value is less than 0.01 then the null hypothesis is rejected. In the case of this study, all three correlations resulted in a p-value of $p < 0.001$ or 0.000 (see table 4). Since the case of this paper, there was evidence that was made using the 0.01 sig. level, and since the p-value is $p < .001$ or 0.000, it indicates that there is very strong evidence against the null hypothesis (H0). This concludes that there is enough evidence to suggest that the correlation observed exists in the population. Therefore, there is a very strong positive relationship between Similarity, Familiarity, and Credibility and Purchasing intention, meaning that the results are statistically significant and valid.

6.3. Coefficients

Table 5: Coefficients of similarity, familiarity, and credibility

Coefficients

Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance
Gender	0.032	0.448	0.655	0.888
Age	-0.101	-1.452	0.149	0.920
Similarity	0.447	5.850	0.000	0.758
Familiarity	0.104	1.346	0.181	0.739
Credibility	0.204	2.654	0.009	0.752

The control variables gender and age were included in the model (table 5), and it can be seen that age and gender are the two variables that have no relation to purchasing intention as age has a score of 0.149 and gender of 0.655. This shows that age and gender have no relation to the purchasing intention.

Later an evaluation was made on each of the independent variables, this is done to predict how each variable contributes to the dependent variable (Jullie Pallant, 2001, p. 136-146). This is done using the Coefficients table (table 5), under the label Beta under Standardized Coefficients, the Standardized Coefficients is used because the variables are being compared (ibid). According to Pallant, J., (2001)

Standardized means that these values for each of the different variables have been converted to the same scale that can be comparable. In this case, the interest is comparing the contribution of each independent variable, therefore Beta (B) values are used. Therefore, the biggest value is determined which in this case is Similarity with 0.447, this means that Similarity has the strongest unique contribution in explaining the dependent variable. The other variables such as the Familiarity Beta of 0.104 and Credibility Beta of 0.204, indicating that they made the least contribution (ibid).

Looking at the significant value, it tells us the statistically significant unique contribution of the equation. In this case, the p-value of Similarity is 0.000, Familiarity of 0.181, and Credibility of 0.009. The sig. value is less than 0.05 (p<0.05) then the values make a significant unique contribution to the prediction, which in this case Similarity and Credibility variables are making a significant unique contribution to the prediction since they have a sig. value of less than 0.005 (p<0.05) (see table 5). However, Familiarity having a p-value of 0.117 meaning that value does not make a significant unique contribution to the prediction. Yet, the most sig. of them is the Similarity which makes the highest significant unique contribution to the prediction. Therefore, this concludes that Similarity made a statistically significant contribution (Beta=0.447) and made the largest significant unique contribution (p<0.05).

Therefore, H1: Similarity with influencers has a positive relationship with purchasing intention can be explained that the relationship between the independent variable Similarity and the dependent variable purchasing intention was significant at p < 0.05 (0.000) with a b-value of 0.447. This indicates that if similarity increases by one unit the purchasing intention will increase with 0.447 units. Therefore, H1 is confirmed.

However, *H2: Familiarity with influencers has a positive relationship with purchasing intention* can be explained that the relationship between the independent variable Familiarity and the dependent variable purchasing intention was not significant at p > 0.05 (0.181). Therefore, H2 is rejected.

On the other hand, H3: Influencers' credibility has a positive relationship with consumers' purchasing intentions can be explained that the relationship between the independent variable Credibility and the dependent variable purchasing intention was significant at p < 0.05 (0.009) with a b-value of 0.204. This indicates that if similarity increases by one unit the purchasing intention will increase with 0.204 units. Therefore, H3 is confirmed.

6.4. Final conceptual model

To conclude, based on the final results it is therefore apparent that the conceptual model or figure will be finalized and presented based on the b-values, which were obtained from multiple regression analysis. By that, the numbers colored in grey are non-significant values.
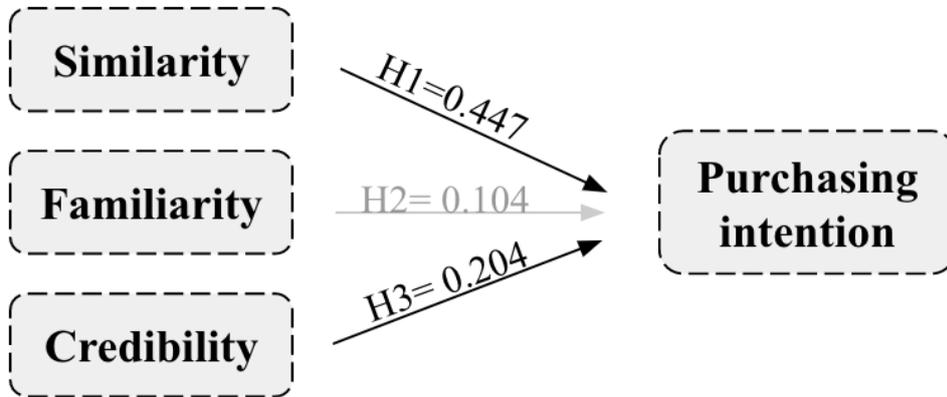

Figure 2: created by authors

7. Discussion

This section will include a discussion regarding the findings of the research paper. The data gathered from the survey will be discussed and connected to the theoretical framework presented earlier in the study.

7.1. Similarity

The interest in social media influencers has been growing rapidly, therefore there is a need to investigate the similarity aspect of trust in influencers to fully understand how this factor plays a role in the purchasing intention. The findings of this paper add to the literature on influencer marketing and similarity with influencers and have theoretical implications for researchers who wish to examine followers' trust in influencers and their purchasing intention.

Silverman (2001) states that the framework of the purchase intention trust is an important aspect. Trust in an online setting means that a person must trust an influencer without personal interactions, yet the visual nature of social media makes people feel more connected with the influencers (Martensen et al. 2018) and therefore can lead them to be seen as trustworthy, reliable, honest and sincere (Cheung et al., 2008; Chu and Kamal, 2008; Kiecker and Cowles, 2001). This means that influencers have to be more personal in their content to be perceived trustworthy (Martensen et al. 2018). Especially, when influencer address their followers in their posts which could bring closeness (Erz and Christensen 2018; Gannon and Prothero 2018). That is mostly achieved when followers have the ability to comment on the influencer's posts, which strengthen the feeling of similarity between them and the influencer (Schmidt 2007 and Alexander et al. 2020).

There are a number of studies that have explored how similarity with another person may lead to a stronger trust (Chapple and Cownie, 2017; Martensen et al. 2018; Alexander et al. 2020). That is because similarity with each other will expose an individual to a greater interpersonal attraction (Martensen et al. 2018; Ruef et al., 2003) however things may be different for influencers on social media. Other researchers however have found that often when influencers are downplaying their roles, they are seen more ordinary and similar to themselves (Chapple and Cownie, 2017; Alexander et al. 2020), therefore this leads to followers having trust towards them.

The proposed model (see figure 1) hypothesized and investigated the followers' trust in influencers' role in purchasing intention. This study supports these researchers (Martensen et al. 2018; Chapple and Cownie, 2017; Alexander et al. 2020; Chapple and Cownie, 2017; Alexander et al. 2020) regarding similarity leading to trust. Hypothesis 1 of this study was, therefore, *Similarity with influencers has a positive relationship with purchasing intention.* The findings of this study propose that feeling similar to the influencer, it could be having the same hobbies, and sharing the same makeup and/or style, can positively affect followers' trust in influencers, which in turn affects consumers purchasing intentions. The results of this study demonstrate that similarity between an influencer and follower has a positive

effect on their followers' trust in them, and consequently on purchase intentions. This is shown in table 4 where it demonstrates that there is a very strong positive relationship between similarity and purchasing intention.

7.2. Familiarity

There is also a need to investigate the familiarity aspect of trust in influencers in order to understand how this factor plays a role in purchasing intention. Familiarity comes from knowing the source through exposure or past association according to Martensen et al (2018). Martensen et al (2018) further explain that familiarity gives a level of comfort to the receiver towards the sender, which leads to the sender seeming more persuasive. Rusell and Puto (1999), and Martensen et al. (2018) states that if the follower is more familiar with the influencer, the relationship with purchase intention is positive.

Deatara et al. (2019), and Martensen et al. (2018) agree that trust is impacted by the follower feeling more familiar with the influencer. The familiarity of the follower to the influencer on social media is thought of as a one-sided relationship, with the follower often feeling like they know the influencer (Martensen et al., 2018: Hoffner, 2008). This feeling of familiarity is created through the flow of private photos uploaded by the influencer, which in turn leads to feeling intimacy and closeness with the influencer, which leads to the follower accepting the influencers input of correct product decision, products use, and personal consumption (Russell and Puto, 1999; Martensen et al. 2018). To explain further, Deatara et al. (2019), and Martensen et al. (2018) explains that when the consumer feels familiar to the influencer, it is expected that they have trust towards them, which will lead to a positive relationship with purchasing intention.

Hypothesis 2 of this study was *Familiarity with influencers has a positive relationship with purchasing intention.* In the questionnaire, the familiarity was measured by how long the respondents have followed the influencer, if the influencer they follow are personal on social media, if they relate to the influencer, and/or if the respondents know what kind of influencer the influencer is. Despite the fact that previous research shows that familiarity provided a positive relationship with purchasing intention, the result of this study shows that there is a negative relationship between Familiarity and purchasing intention, as the hypothesis was not supported. The findings of this study contradict previous research, which claims that familiarity could have an impact on purchasing intention. However, the negative relationship could have several reasons, one of which is that followers cannot see themselves as familiar to the influencer as the relationship between the two is only one-sided. Which makes it hard for the followers to feel familiar with the influencer. Another reason could be that feeling familiar with a person does not necessarily mean that there is a direct connection to trust, which consequently means that not having trust will have a negative influence on purchase intention.

7.3. Credibility

When the viewer has a positive perception regarding the influencer they follow, it creates a connection between them including appreciation and a special relationship (Deatara et al. (2019). This outcome from Deatara er al. (2019) is supported by Sen & Lerman (2007), meaning that when the communication is highly credible it becomes more persuasive instead of when the credibility is low. On the contrary, Deatara et al. (2019), Rossiter and Smidts (2012), and Bergkvist and Qiang Zhou (2016) states that that the followers of an influencer might have a negative perception because the followers are aware of the fact that the influencer is gaining an economical profit from their content.

In Jiang's (2018) study, the author states that an influencer that is highly credible will affect the consumer in believing that the recommended product was actually made for improving the public image of the influencer. Another outcome is that it will affect the genuine interest in the product or convey their intention to help others. Jiang (2018) supplementary states that the follower of an influencer is less likely to resist a credible influencer rather than an influencer that is not credible. Which in this case means that "credible celebrity has a positive effect on ad effectiveness, such as increasing consumers' attitudes towards the ad, towards the brand, and purchase intention". Jiang (2018) also states that there is a difference between celebrities and influencers. Celebrities are often getting fame and recognition in the entertainment world, but for an influencer to achieve that, it requires them to be more authentic within their content.

Hypothesis 3 in this study was "*Influencers' credibility has a positive relationship with consumers' purchasing intentions*". The credibility was measured in the questionnaire, as to how the respondents in the questionnaire perceive their favorite influencer, and if this has a positive impact on the purchasing intention from the follower. The findings of this study propose that perceiving the influencer as credible, whether it being by the influencer being honest, being clear their message in their post, working with only one brand, and/or when the influencer is gaining any economic profit, can positively affect followers' trust in influencers, which in turn affects consumers purchasing intentions. This result indicates that when a follower of an influencer perceives the influencer as highly credible, there will be a positive effect on the purchasing intention. Therefore, the results of this study demonstrate that the credibility of an influencer has a positive effect on their followers' trust in them, and consequently on purchase intentions. This is shown in table 4 where it demonstrates that there is a very strong positive relationship between credibility and purchasing intention.

8. Conclusion and further research

As social media influencers are getting more involved in marketing today, the more important it is to fully understand how these procedures are changing the world. As social media influencers are keeping themselves updated in the latest trends within their specialist areas, it is giving them the advantage in knowing what their followers want and are willing to purchase. This study suggested a theoretical model to understand the effect of similarity, familiarity, and credibility on purchasing intention. Influencer marketing is yet to evolve and there will be more questions to be examined regarding the ever-changing interaction between influencers and followers. The result of this study provides both conformations but also an addition to past research regarding how the different factors of trust – similarity, familiarity, and credibility – in influencers play a role in the purchasing intention of their followers. The findings of this paper add to the literature on influencer marketing and similarity, familiarity, and credibility with influencers and have theoretical implications for researchers who wish to examine followers' trust in influencers and their purchasing intention.

This study has found that there is a very strong relationship between the factors of trust – similarity and credibility – and purchasing intention but no relationship with familiarity. Within figure 2 it can be seen that H1 and H3 are confirmed, but H2 is rejected. This means that the more similar a person feels with the influencer the more trust they have to them, and the more credible the influencer is perceived the more trust they have towards them. As a consequence, the more trust someone has to the influencer the more they are willing to buy the recommended product by the influencer. Yet being familiar with an influencer doesn't necessarily mean it has a direct impact on purchasing intention.

However, it is important to note that this study did not take into account other factors such as communication, integration nor influencers' point of view. Therefore, further studies could investigate them with an expansion of the theoretical model and a larger respondent sample. Also, further studies could investigate how influencers deal with sponsored ads and how they reach out to their followers as being similar, familiar, and credible.

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10. Appendix

Table A

Independent variable	Measurement	Studies
Demographic variables		
Gender	4. Male 5. Female 6. Do not want to specify	Ezgi Akar *and V. Aslihan Nasir (2015);* Dreifaldt et al, (2019)
Age	6. 15-24 7. 25-29 8. 30-34 9. 35-39 10. 40+	Chen Lou & Shupei Yuan (2019); Ezgi Akar *and V. Aslihan Nasir (2015);* Dreifaldt et al, (2019)
Internet usage	4. 1-5 years 5. 5-10 years 6. 10 + years	Ezgi Akar *and V. Aslihan Nasir (2015);* Dreifaldt et al, (2019)
Purchase experience	5. Daily 6. Weekly 7. Monthly 8. A few times a year	Ezgi Akar *and V. Aslihan Nasir (2015);* Dreifaldt et al, (2019)
Trust		
Similarity		Martensen et al. (2018); Ruef et al., (2003); Dreifaldt et al, (2019); Chen Lou & Shupei Yuan (2019); Kamran Siddiqui (2011)
I have a lot in common with the influencer I follow. Me and the influencer use the same product (we have the same taste in products). Me and the influencer have the same hobby/ies. Me and the influencer have the same style.	**7 Point Likert scale:** 1- Completely Disagree 2- Disagree 3-Somewhat disagree 4- Neutral 5- Somewhat Agree 6- Agree 7- Completely Agree	
Familiarity		Russell and Puto, (1999); Martensen et al. (2018); Deatara et al. (2019); Martensen et al. (2018); Dreifaldt et al, (2019)
I have followed the influencer for a long time. The influencers that I follow are personal on social media. I relate to the influencer on a personal level. I know what kind of person the influencer is.	**7 Point Likert scale:** 1- Completely Disagree 2- Disagree 3-Somewhat disagree 4- Neutral 5- Somewhat Agree 6- Agree 7- Completely Agree	

Credibility			Martensen et al. (2018); Chen Lou & Shupei Yuan (2019); Dreifaldt et al, (2019); Jiang, M. (2018); Deatara et al. (2019)
I perceive an honest influencer as credible. I perceive the influencer credible when their message in their post (on social media) is clear. I perceive the influencer as credible when they work with only one brand.	**7 Point Likert scale:** 1- Completely Disagree 2- Disagree 3-Somewhat disagree 4- Neutral 5- Somewhat Agree 6- Agree 7- Completely Agree		
Dependent variable			
Purchasing intention			Dreifaldt et al, (2019); Farivar et al, (2017); Weisberg et al, (2011); Bianchi, and Andrews, (2012)
I buy the product that are recommended by the influencer	**7 Point Likert scale:** 1- Completely Disagree 2- Disagree 3-Somewhat disagree 4- Neutral 5- Somewhat Agree 6- Agree 7- Completely Agree		

Table B: Cronbach's Alpha of Similarity.

Reliability statistics

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
Similarity	0.781	4
Familiarity	0.751	4
Credibility	0.625	4
Similarity, Familiarity, Credibility, and purchasing intention.	0.829	13

Table 1: Model Summary

Model Summary

Model	*R*	*R Square*	*Adjusted R Square*	*Std. Error of the Estimate.*
	0.644	0.415	0.392	1.329

Table 2: ANOVA

ANOVA

Model	*Sum of squares*	*df*	*Mean squares*	*F*	*Sig.*
Regression	165.220	5	33.044	18.700	0.000
Residual	233.251	132	1.767		
Total	398.471	137			

Table 3: Scatterplot

Scatterplot
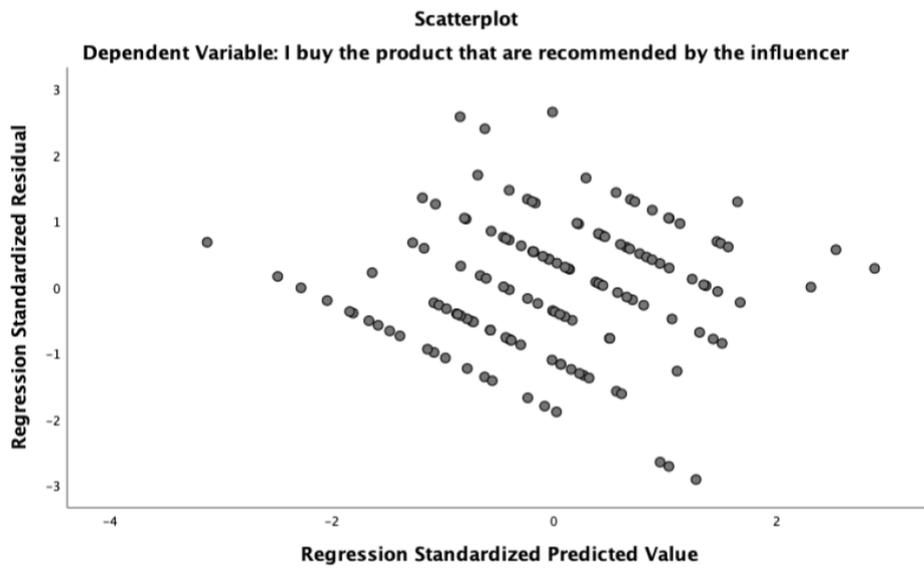Dependent Variable: I buy the product that are recommended by the influencer

Table 4: Spearman correlation coefficient of similarity, familiarity, credibility, and purchasing intention.

Correlations

		Purchasing intention	Percentage of variance
Gender	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.004 .480	0.0016% (0.000016)
Age	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.225 .004	5.0625% (0.050625)
Similarity	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.587** .000	34.5% (0.3445)
Familiarity	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.364** .000	13.3% (0.1325)
Credibility	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.447** .000	20% (0.1998)

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

Table 5: Coefficients of similarity, familiarity, and credibility

Coefficients

Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance
Gender	0.032	0.448	0.655	0.888
Age	-0.101	-1.452	0.149	0.920
Similarity	0.447	5.850	0.000	0.758
Familiarity	0.104	1.346	0.181	0.739
Credibility	0.204	2.654	0.009	0.752