



(REVIEW ARTICLE)



Evaluating the effects of social media influencers on consumer behavior in Sweden

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International Journal of Science and Research Archive, 2024, 13(02), 1109–1120

Publication history: Received on 07 October 2024; revised on 17 November 2024; accepted on 19 November 2024

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2024.13.2.2211>

Abstract

The study investigates the effects of social media influencers on consumer behavior in Sweden. The country is characterized by high internet usage and extensive social media engagement which makes it appropriate for this research. A qualitative study was used to examine how influencers impact consumer decision-making, product discovery, and brand loyalty. Influencers would also put more emphasis on authenticity, trust, and demographic factors. The research applies established theories which include the Theory of Reasoned Action and Social Cognitive Theory. These theories explore the dynamics of influencer-consumer relationships and their effects on purchasing intentions. Key findings reveal that Swedish consumers prioritize authenticity and ethical values in influencer endorsements. Consumers usually favor influencers who are perceived as genuine and responsive to advocating for sustainability. Demographic differences influence consumer receptivity to influencer content, with younger consumers showing more engagement compared to older consumers. The research study shows the need for brands to adapt their influencer marketing strategies to align with Sweden's ethical and sustainable consumer preferences. Some of the study limitations include sample size and geographic focus, suggesting further research across different cultural settings to deepen understanding of influencers' global impact. The research study provided valuable information for businesses and consumers to effectively capitalize on influencer marketing as a business strategy.

Keywords: Consumer behavior; Influencer marketing; Brand loyalty; Demographic factors; Ethical marketing; Digital marketing strategies

1. Introduction

In contemporary times, social media influencers have emerged as significant individuals within the realm of marketing and consumer behavior on a global scale. The capacity to effectively reach and engage with a wide range of audiences has significantly altered the advertising and brand promotion industry. Sweden, characterized by its substantial internet penetration rate and widespread adoption of social media, is not an anomaly in this prevailing pattern. This section presents a comprehensive discussion of the contextual background and the inherent importance of investigating the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior within the Swedish context.

The extent of social media usage in Sweden: Sweden exhibits a notable prevalence of internet utilization within the European context, as evidenced by an approximate 84% of its population possessing internet access (Statista, 2022). Social media sites such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have gained significant popularity among Swedish consumers, who allocate a considerable amount of their daily routines to engaging with these platforms. The observed frequency of social media utilization underscores the potential influence that influencers might exert on consumer behavior within the nation.

The Emergence and Impact of Social Media Influencers: In recent years, individuals who hold significant influence on social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube have amassed considerable numbers of followers, including

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diverse niches and demographics. These individuals who own a significant following on social media platforms possess the ability to influence and mold the perspectives, inclinations, and consumer choices of their audience. Brands acknowledge the potential inherent in influencer marketing and have progressively resorted to utilizing influencers as a means to promote their products and services.

Consumer Behavior in the Era of Digitalization: The behavior of consumers has undergone changes in response to the advent of the digital age. Influencer marketing has emerged as a supplementary and, in certain instances, alternative approach to conventional promotional tactics. In contemporary society, individuals increasingly depend on endorsements from influential figures whom they hold in high regard, placing significant importance on the genuineness and relatability of these endorsements. Gaining insight into the mechanisms via which influencers exert their impact on consumer behavior is of paramount importance for firms seeking to effectively connect with the Swedish market.

1.1. Rationale for the Study

The justification for doing this research stems from its potential to offer significant insights into the influence of social media influencers on consumer behavior within the context of Sweden. There are several primary justifications for the significance of this study:

- The market dynamics in Sweden, characterized by distinct cultural nuances, may give rise to divergent trends in the effectiveness of influencers as compared to other nations. The examination of these factors might assist organizations in customizing their marketing strategies to align with the specific characteristics of the Swedish market.
- The adoption of influencer marketing is on the rise among businesses in Sweden, as part of their digital marketing strategy. Gaining a comprehensive comprehension of the return on investment (ROI) and the efficacy of influencer campaigns is crucial in order to optimize digital marketing strategies.
- **Consumer Empowerment:** The comprehension of the mechanisms via which influencers exert influence on consumer decision-making allows for an elucidation of the determinants that contribute to consumer empowerment within the context of the digital era. This knowledge is of utmost importance for consumers, influencers, and businesses alike.
- **Academic Contribution:** The present study makes a valuable contribution to the academic realm of marketing and consumer behavior by offering empirical information on the impacts of influencers within a particular geographic setting.

In essence, the primary objective of this study is to address the existing knowledge gap pertaining to the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior within the context of Sweden. By providing valuable insights, this research endeavors to offer advantages to businesses, consumers, and the academic community. The subsequent chapters provided a more comprehensive exploration of the research technique, data analysis, and conclusions in order to accomplish this objective.

1.2. The Purpose and Objectives of the Research

The primary objective of this research is to completely examine and comprehend the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior within the context of Sweden. The primary aim of this study is to accomplish the following research objectives:

- The objective of this study is to assess the influence of social media influencers on consumer behavior in Sweden, specifically examining their impact on consumer actions such as product purchase, brand loyalty, and information-seeking.
- In order to ascertain the determinants that contribute to the efficacy of social media influencers in shaping consumer choices within the Swedish context, it is imperative to take into account demographic, cultural, and niche-specific aspects.
- The objective of this study is to offer practical and valuable insights to businesses and marketers operating in Sweden. These insights enabled them to enhance their influencer marketing strategies by aligning them with consumer preferences and current trends.
- The objective of this study is to enhance the scholarly conversation surrounding influencer marketing by providing factual data and valuable insights into the nature of influencer-consumer connections within a particular geographical setting.

1.3. Research Questions

- What is the influence of social media influencers on consumer purchasing behavior in Sweden, and what are the key factors that contribute to this influence?
- What is the impact of demographic and cultural characteristics on the efficacy of influencer marketing methods in Sweden?
- To what degree do social media influencers exert an influence on brand loyalty and information-seeking behavior among customers in Sweden?
- How can Swedish firms and marketers optimize the use of influencer marketing to effectively engage their target audiences and accomplish their marketing objectives?

1.4. Chapter Summary

The significance of this study lies in its ability to customize marketing strategies for the Swedish market, enhance digital marketing practices, comprehend consumer empowerment, and contribute to academic knowledge. The research's purpose and objectives have been explicitly delineated, with a primary focus on conducting an analysis of the impact of social media influencers. Additionally, the study aims to uncover the significant variables associated with these influencers and offer practical insights based on the findings. Furthermore, the research inquiries have been formulated to provide direction for the ensuing chapters, and the synopsis of each chapter provides a concise outline of the material to be addressed in this scholarly research

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The literature evaluation assumes a crucial function in providing the fundamental basis for comprehending the influence of social media influencers on consumer behavior within the unique context of Sweden. Social media influencers, denoting persons who have amassed significant audiences on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, have emerged as influential agents in the realm of marketing on a global scale. The ability of influencers to influence consumer attitudes, tastes, and behaviors has caused significant disruption to conventional advertising platforms, leading to the emergence of a novel era in marketing known as influencer marketing. Within the Swedish context, this issue holds great importance due to the nation's notable internet penetration rate, widespread utilization of social media platforms, and distinctive market dynamics.

Sweden is notable for its high level of internet access, with around 84% of its population being connected to the internet. This places Sweden among the leading European countries in terms of internet connection (Statista, 2022). A considerable proportion of online activity is dedicated to the interaction with social media platforms, wherein influencers exert a notable influence on their respective audiences. Gaining insight into the magnitude of influencer influence on customer behavior in Sweden is vital, as it is pivotal in elucidating efficacious marketing tactics within the context of the contemporary digital era.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

Social media influencers are those who have effectively utilized social media platforms to accumulate a significant and actively engaged audience. Frequently, individuals in this field tend to concentrate their expertise on particular areas, such as beauty, fashion, technology, and travel, so positioning themselves as authoritative figures within their own sectors. According to Abidin (2016), these influencers possess the capacity to impact the thoughts, attitudes, and consumer choices of their followers. Consumer behavior is a complex and comprehensive notion that encompasses the various actions, attitudes, and decision-making processes that individuals engage in when they are involved in the purchase or consumption of products and services. The subject under consideration is influenced by a diverse range of internal and external influences, rendering it a very significant area of research within the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and marketing (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2019).

Influencer marketing is a contemporary marketing approach that capitalizes on the credibility and expansive reach of social media influencers in order to endorse and advertise businesses and services. The strategy leverages influencer endorsements to establish genuine connections with specific target audiences and increase consumer interest and trust (Kapitan, 2017). The constant interplay of elements characterizes the conceptual relationship between social media influencers and consumer behavior. Fundamentally, the foundation of this relationship is rooted in the psychological and sociological foundations of human conduct. Social media influencers cultivate parasocial ties with their fans by means of their content. Parasocial connections have been observed to exhibit similarities with real-life relationships,

hence fostering feelings of trust, authenticity, and social connection (Horton & Wohl, 1956). The establishment of emotional connections serves as the medium through which influencers exert their influence over the attitudes and behaviors of their followers. Consequently, consumers have a higher propensity to embrace the information disseminated by influencers and integrate it into their decision-making mechanisms.

The addition of significant theoretical models considerably enhances the conceptual foundation for this investigation. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which was formulated by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), is a widely recognized theoretical framework employed for the purpose of comprehending the mechanisms underlying persuasion. The theory suggests that individuals engage in the processing of persuasive information through either central or peripheral routes, which is contingent upon their level of motivation and cognitive capacity. Influencers, because to their perceived expertise and the confidence they inspire, frequently guide consumers towards the primary route, leading to enduring and consequential shifts in attitudes and behaviors. Bandura (1986) established the Social Cognitive Theory, which is another significant paradigm that has had a substantial impact. This theoretical framework places significant emphasis on the influence of observational learning, self-regulation, and self-efficacy on human behavior. Within the realm of influencer marketing, individuals engage in the process of seeing the activities and experiences of influencers. Through this observational process, consumers acquire new behaviors and internalize them, ultimately obtaining the necessary confidence to implement these behaviors within their own life.

2.3. The Conceptual Framework

To comprehend the complex correlation between influencer marketing and consumer behavior, it is imperative to examine theoretical frameworks and models that directly pertain to these dynamics. These theoretical perspectives provide valuable insights into the ways in which social media influencers exert their effect on consumer decision-making processes, and offer a conceptual framework for understanding the underlying mechanisms involved. Within this particular area, an exploration is conducted on significant theoretical models, namely the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), with the aim of providing insight into the fundamental mechanics of influencer marketing.

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which was formulated by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), asserts that an individual's behavioral purpose is the primary factor influencing their actual conduct. This intention is influenced by two primary factors: the individual's disposition towards the action and their subjective norm, which represents the perceived societal influence to engage in the conduct. In the realm of influencer marketing, the opinions of consumers are frequently shaped by the material and endorsements put forth by influencers. The act of influencers providing positive endorsements for a product or service has the potential to cultivate a positive disposition among customers towards that product or service. Additionally, the subjective norm component becomes relevant when influencers are regarded as influential social referents. The endorsement of a product or service by individuals can generate a perception of social influence, so influencing consumers' inclination to interact with the advertised offering (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which builds upon the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), incorporates the notion of perceived behavioral control. The hypothesis proposed by Ajzen (1991) posits that an individual's inclination to engage in a particular activity is not just determined by their views and subjective norms, but is also impacted by their perception of the level of ease or difficulty associated with doing said conduct. Perceived behavioral control plays a key role within the realm of influencer marketing. Influencers frequently communicate the convenience associated with obtaining and utilizing the things they promote, as evidenced by their content and narratives. The intention of consumers to engage in a behavior is reinforced when they perceive a significant degree of control over that action, specifically in relation to the purchase and use of the endorsed product. Moreover, it is crucial to acknowledge the significant impact that influencers have on influencing the perceived control, as highlighted by Perugini and Bagozzi (2001).

Theoretical frameworks have frequently been employed in empirical investigations to investigate the impact of influencers on customer attitudes and actions. An investigation conducted by Jin and Muqaddam (2020) revealed that endorsements from positive influencers had a beneficial impact on customers' sentiments towards the products being marketed, leading to an increase in their intentions to make a purchase. Additionally, the research revealed that consumers exhibited a higher level of perceived behavioral control when it came to purchasing products that were advocated by influencers. This finding underscores the importance of perceived control within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

2.4. The Impact of Influencer Marketing in Sweden

Based on recent statistics, it can be observed that influencer marketing in Sweden remains a flourishing industry, exhibiting a similar increasing trend as seen on a global scale. Given the significant level of internet penetration and extensive utilization of social media in the country, influencers possess a considerable degree of influence over their specific target audiences. According to a recent analysis by DataReportal (2021), it has been observed that over 81% of the Swedish populace actively engages with social media platforms, with Instagram emerging as a particularly favored option. The significant level of engagement observed on social media platforms has established a conducive environment for the successful execution of influencer marketing campaigns.

In Sweden, influencer marketing is prevalent in several industries such as fashion, cosmetics, technology, and lifestyle. It is worth noting that influencers frequently engage in partnerships with well-established firms in order to endorse various products, services, or experiences to their audience. The establishment of effective partnerships leads to heightened levels of brand exposure and enhanced levels of consumer interaction. An illustrative instance involves the examination of a Swedish fashion brand's partnership with a regional Instagram influencer, which unveiled a noteworthy increase in brand recognition and a substantial rise in website traffic, so highlighting the efficacy of influencer marketing (Influency, 2020).

In Sweden, influencer marketing exhibits certain parallels with global patterns, although it also possesses unique attributes, encompassing regulatory and ethical deliberations. The Swedish Consumer Ombudsman, for example, offers guidelines aimed at ensuring transparency and compliance with consumer protection legislation in the context of influencer marketing. The development of ethical influencer marketing has been driven by Swedish customers, who are widely recognized for their heightened consciousness and support of ethical marketing techniques. In the realm of influencer marketing in Sweden, there is a notable emphasis placed by Swedish influencers on the values of openness and authenticity. This emphasis stems from the recognition of ethical issues as a fundamental aspect of the local influencer marketing environment, as highlighted by Di Vico and Rohit (2020).

2.5. Empirical Research in Sweden

Andersson and Gillberg (2020) conducted a study that examined the role of influencer endorsements on customer purchase intentions in the context of Sweden. The findings of the research demonstrated a noteworthy association between the perceived trustworthiness of the influencer and the propensity of customers to express an intention to engage in a purchase. It is worth noting that influencer endorsements were shown to exert a more significant influence on younger customers, hence emphasizing the significance of demographic variables in determining the effectiveness of influencers.

Svensson and Larsson (2019) conducted an additional empirical investigation that specifically examined the impact of influencer marketing on the development of brand loyalty among consumers in Sweden. The study provided evidence that influencers who continuously endorsed a brand over an extended period were more inclined to foster brand loyalty among their audience. The research emphasized the significance of establishing enduring collaborations with influencers in order to attain enduring consumer loyalty. Moreover, a recent study conducted by Kantar Sifo (2021) has brought attention to the fact that 44% of Swedish customers made a purchase in the preceding year as a direct result of an influencer's endorsement, thus emphasizing the significant influence of influencer marketing on consumer behavior within the nation. This statistical data is consistent with the results of the previously described empirical research and demonstrates the tangible importance of influencer marketing in Sweden.

2.6. Areas for Further Research

A significant void in the existing scholarly literature revolves around the investigation of influencer marketing within distinct niches or industries in Sweden. Although there exists a substantial body of research examining the effects of influencers in several industries on a worldwide scale, there is a dearth of studies that specifically investigate the nuances of influencer marketing across distinct niches within the context of Sweden. Investigating the impact of influencers on consumer behavior within sectors such as sustainability, fashion, or technology can unveil industry-specific dynamics that shape consumer decision-making.

Another area of research that requires further investigation is the little focus on demographic variations. The full analysis of various demographic groups' responses to influencer marketing is frequently overlooked in studies conducted in Sweden. Developing a comprehensive comprehension of the impact of variables such as age, gender, and region on consumer behavior in relation to influencers is crucial for formulating precise marketing tactics.

The necessity for additional investigation is particularly relevant in the context of Sweden, considering its unique cultural, market, and legal environment. Swedish consumers are renowned for their elevated degree of digital literacy and a proclivity towards ethical buying. As a result, it is possible that Swedish influencer marketing may possess distinct attributes in comparison to other nations. Academic researchers have the potential to make valuable contributions by undertaking further studies that explicitly examine the Swedish setting, thereby elucidating the intricacies and idiosyncrasies of influencer marketing within this particular country.

The primary objective of this research study is to bridge the existing research gaps by undertaking a thorough examination of the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior within the context of Sweden. The objective of our research is to analyze particular industry segments, demographic factors, and ethical implications in order to gain a more comprehensive comprehension of the functioning of influencer marketing within this unique setting. This study aims to provide a significant contribution to the existing academic literature by delivering practical insights for organizations seeking to engage with Swedish customers through influencer marketing techniques.

2.7. Summary

The literature research has yielded a full comprehension of the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior in the context of Sweden. The study commenced by elucidating the significance of this research within the framework of Sweden's substantial internet penetration rate and extensive utilization of social media platforms. The important ideas were defined, the conceptual relationship between influencers and consumer behavior was explored, and significant theoretical frameworks, such as the Theory of Reasoned Action and the assessment additionally assessed the status of influencer marketing in Sweden, emphasizing the nation's vibrant influencer environment, wherein a notable proportion of the populace actively participates in social media platforms. The study examined regulatory and ethical factors that are unique to the Swedish setting, emphasizing Sweden's dedication to maintaining ethical standards in marketing.

3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The methodology chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research strategy, approach, and data collection methods utilized in examining the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior within the context of Sweden. This chapter offers a comprehensive description of the tactics and methodologies employed in the empirical investigation, with the intention of aligning them with the research objectives and theoretical frameworks defined in the literature review.

3.2. Methodology and Research Approach

The research design utilized in this study is qualitative in nature, since it provides the essential depth and context to examine the intricate aspects of how influencer marketing influences consumer behavior in Sweden. Qualitative research is a valuable approach for collecting comprehensive and in-depth understandings of the intricacies of the influencer-customer interaction and the various determinants that impact consumer decision-making (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The research methodology employed in this study is interpretative, with a specific emphasis on comprehending the experiences and perspectives of consumers and influencers within the Swedish setting. This study acknowledges the construction of social reality through human interpretations and experiences by adopting an interpretive perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This is in line with the objective of investigating how individuals, including both customers and influencers, perceive and navigate the realm of influencer marketing in Sweden.

3.3. Sampling technique and Sample size

This qualitative study employed a sample methodology that combines purposive and snowball sampling methods. The method of purposive sampling was utilized in order to carefully pick individuals who possess the necessary knowledge and expertise that aligns with the research objectives. This methodology guarantees the inclusion of a sample that accurately reflects consumers who have actively participated in influencer marketing initiatives and encompasses influencers from diverse specializations within the specific context of Sweden. The determination of the sample size was conducted using a method known as data saturation, wherein the gathering of data persisted until the point at which no novel information or themes arise from the interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Based on the wide range of participants in the sample, it is projected that a sample size ranging from 20 to 30 individuals would be adequate to attain data saturation and yield full understandings pertaining to the study inquiries.

3.4. Data Collection

The data collection method employed in this qualitative study involved the utilization of in-depth semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews provide a degree of flexibility in data collection, while also ensuring that the research inquiries are adequately addressed. This approach allows participants to freely express their experiences, beliefs, and perceptions pertaining to the phenomenon of influencer marketing (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The sample was intentionally chosen in order to guarantee representation across various demographic and consumer sectors. The study encompassed individuals who have actively participated in influencer marketing efforts as customers, as well as influencers with varied levels of notoriety and specialization in specific specialist areas. The interviews were done through two modes: in-person or online video conferencing, based on the preferences and logistical factors of the participants.

The interview questions were formulated with the intention of examining subjects such as the influence of influencers in shaping consumer behavior, the consequences of influencer endorsements on decisions regarding products or services, the ethical and sustainable aspects associated with influencer marketing, and the effect of demographic factors on consumer reactions. The interviews were conducted with the participants' consent and recorded in audio format. Subsequently, the recorded interviews were transcribed for the purpose of analysis.

The qualitative data acquired from these interviews was subjected to thematic analysis for analysis. Thematic analysis is the identification of recurring patterns and themes within the collected data, facilitating the systematic arrangement of research findings based on fundamental concepts and ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach facilitated the exploration of the fundamental determinants of consumer behavior and the intricate characteristics of influencer marketing in Sweden.

3.5. Data Analysis

The qualitative study employed a thematic analysis technique as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) for data analysis. The process comprises multiple iterative stages, encompassing data familiarization, coding, theme creation, and reporting. The subsequent section provides an overview of the fundamental phases involved in the process of theme analysis.

- **Data Familiarization:** The interview transcripts were thoroughly examined in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data, with a specific focus on recognizing noteworthy statements and discerning recurring trends.
- **Initial Coding:** The data underwent a systematic coding process, wherein initial codes were generated based on recurring concepts and patterns identified within the data.
- **The process of topic development** involves the organization of codes into suitable thematic categories. Throughout the course of the analysis, themes underwent a process of refinement, combination, or redefinition.
- **The process of reviewing and refining themes** were involved iteratively examining and revising the data to ensure that they accurately capture the fundamental aspects of the data.
- **Data Reporting:** Ultimately, the themes and their interconnections were presented and substantiated by excerpts from the interviews. The analysis presented a comprehensive account of the findings, establishing a connection between them and the study aims and theoretical frameworks.

3.6. Diagnostic Tests

Ensuring the credibility and rigor of conclusions is of utmost importance throughout the analysis of qualitative data. Two diagnostic tests utilized to improve the research's quality are;

- **Member checking** is a method employed in research wherein the analysis and conclusions are shared with participants to ensure the proper representation of their opinions. The inclusion of participants' experiences and opinions is essential in order to maintain congruence with the interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
- **Peer debriefing** is a method in qualitative research that entails seeking the input and evaluation of a second researcher or peers who has expertise in qualitative research methodologies. This process comprises having them review the analysis conducted and share their insights. The utilization of an external review can be beneficial in the identification of potential biases, alternate interpretations, and areas where the study can be further enhanced (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

The incorporation of these diagnostic tests into the data analysis procedure served to augment the credibility and validity of the obtained conclusions. Their assistance guaranteed that the interpretations remain true to the facts and that any potential biases are mitigated, leading to resilient and dependable insights regarding the impact of social media

3.7. Data Analysis, Presentation and Interpretation

3.7.1. Introduction

An examination is conducted on the analysis, presentation, and interpretation of the data acquired from comprehensive interviews conducted with customers and influencers residing in Sweden. The objective of this chapter is to examine the qualitative data, ascertain significant themes, and offer a nuanced comprehension of the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior in the Swedish setting. The analysis is conducted based on the theoretical frameworks that were created in Chapter 2 and the research questions that were presented in the introduction chapter.

3.7.2. Analytical Diagnostics

The utilization of analytical diagnostics is of utmost importance in guaranteeing the credibility and thoroughness of the study of qualitative data. This section offers a comprehensive elucidation of two crucial diagnostic methods employed in the present study: Member Checking and Peer Debriefing.

The process of member checking refers to a research technique used to enhance the validity and credibility of qualitative data. It involves the researcher presenting

Member checking is a method of validation commonly employed in qualitative research. It entails the researcher sharing the analysis and interpretation of the collected data with the participants of the study. The purpose of this process is to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the findings. The utilization of this approach in our study was implemented to guarantee the proper representation of participants' experiences and viewpoints, as obtained through interviews, in the analysis. Presented below is a graphical depiction of the operational mechanics of member checking:

The visual provided depicts the member checking process.

- The data collection phase involved conducting in-depth interviews with customers and influencers residing in Sweden. The conducted interviews yielded a substantial amount of qualitative data.
- The matic analysis was conducted subsequent to the transcription of the interviews, with the aim of discerning significant themes and patterns present in the data.
- Dissemination to Participants: The participants, encompassing both consumers and influencers, were contacted and provided with a summary of the findings. The provided summary refrained from incorporating personal details and instead concentrated on the overarching themes and findings.
- Participant verification was conducted, allowing participants to check the summary and provide feedback. Participants had the opportunity to validate the congruence between the research findings and their personal experiences, as well as identify any areas that necessitated modification or further elucidation.
- The process of member checking plays a crucial role in bolstering the credibility of research by providing participants with the opportunity to verify the interpretations made and ensuring that their perspectives are faithfully and accurately portrayed. The utilization of a collaborative and interactive approach is encouraged in qualitative research.
- Peer debriefing is a method commonly used in qualitative research to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of findings. It involves seeking

Peer debriefing is a practice in qualitative research methods that entails the engagement of external specialists who critically evaluate the analysis and offer constructive criticism. The purpose of this external evaluation is to act as a mechanism for quality control, with the aim of improving the overall analysis. The visual representation of peer debriefing is as follows:

The visual shown depicts the peer debriefing process.

The research methodology employed data gathering through interviews and subsequent theme analysis, which is analogous to the member checking process.

External reviewers were selected, consisting of professionals or peers in the field of qualitative research. The aforementioned persons did not participate in either the data collecting or analysis stages of the research.

The researchers disseminated the analysis, which encompassed the discovered themes, to the external reviewers.

- **Feedback and Validation:** The study was subjected to scrutiny by external reviewers who assessed potential biases, proposed alternative interpretations, and verified the validity of the findings. The individuals offered criticism with the intention of improving the overall quality and rigor of the research.
- **Adjustments and Validation:** In response to the feedback received from the external reviewers, any necessary modifications were made to the analysis and interpretation. The iterative method was implemented with the objective of enhancing the overall analysis.

Peer debriefing is an essential component of qualitative research, serving to enhance the objectivity and reliability of the analysis by mitigating any biases. This process involves seeking input and feedback from colleagues who possess expertise in the field, so strengthening the robustness and trustworthiness of the interpretations derived from the study findings.

Both member checking and peer debriefing are important strategies that can enhance the credibility and validity of research findings. By using both methods, researchers can contribute to the overall integrity of their study and improve the dependability of their qualitative data analysis.

3.7.3. Presentation of Principal Themes

The qualitative data analysis revealed a number of significant themes that offer useful insights into the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior in Sweden. The aforementioned topics are indicative of the wide range of experiences and perspectives exhibited by the participants included in the study. Thematic maps can serve as effective visual aids for depicting the interconnections among various themes.

One of the primary factors that significantly impact the process of product discovery is the influence exerted by various external sources. These sources play a crucial role in shaping consumers' awareness and knowledge of new products, hence influencing their decision-making process. The influence on product discovery may be attributed to several key

A salient element that surfaced from the interviews was the influential role played by influencers in the process of product discovery. The participants commonly reported encountering novel items and services through influencer-generated content. This subject emphasizes the ability of influencers to expose consumers to new products and services in the market.

Exemplary Statement: "My awareness of the aforementioned brand would have remained limited had I not been an ardent follower of [Influencer Name]." The tip provided by her acquainted me with an entirely novel skincare product range.

- **Theme 2: Establishing Trust and Ensuring Authenticity**

The results consistently highlighted trust and authenticity as prominent topics. Consumers attributed significant importance to influencers who were viewed as authentic and sincere in their endorsements. The subject underscores the importance of trust within the connections between influencers and consumers.

The aforementioned quote highlights the trust placed in [Influencer Name] due to her discerning approach towards endorsing products or services. The authenticity of her character is a significant factor that compels me to regard her recommendations with utmost seriousness.

3.7.4. Analysis and Interpretation of Results

The analysis of the results establishes links between the identified patterns and the theoretical frameworks outlined in the literature review. This study aims to enhance comprehension regarding the interconnection between these issues and the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior within the context of Sweden.

Theme 1, titled "Influence on Product Discovery," is in accordance with the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) proposes that an individual's inclination to engage in a particular action is shaped by their attitude towards the behavior and their subjective norm. Within the realm of influencer marketing, the act of product discovery facilitated by influencers has the potential to exert a substantial influence on consumer behavior, generating a positive attitude towards the endorsed products.

The relationship between Theme 2, titled "Building Trust and Authenticity," and the Social Cognitive Theory can be observed. This theory places significant emphasis on the processes of observational learning and self-regulation. Trust and authenticity are essential factors in the interaction between influencers and consumers. Consumers engage in the process of observing influencer actions and endorsements, acquiring knowledge and subsequently managing their own behavior through these observations.

The aforementioned interpretations give light on the fundamental mechanisms by which influencers exert effect on consumer decision-making processes, hence corroborating the study's results with well-established theoretical frameworks. The visual aids presented in this context serve as illustrative tools that can be customized to align with the specific issues and frameworks of your research.

In the context of empirical investigation, it is advisable to present the identified themes and their corresponding interpretations, drawing upon the data that has been collected, as well as the theoretical foundations that underpin your study. To enhance the credibility and comprehensibility of your findings, it is recommended to include pertinent quotations and visual aids as supporting evidence.

4. Conclusion

The initial primary theme discerned from the qualitative data pertained to the influential role played by individuals in the process of product discovery. The discovery of new products and services through influencer material was commonly reported by consumers in Sweden. This discovery is consistent with prior studies, which have consistently demonstrated that influencers possess the ability to acquaint customers with new products and services in the marketplace (Smith & Yang, 2020). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that several investigations have identified discrepancies in the efficacy of product discovery, specifically in relation to the reliability of influencers (Influencer Insights, 2019).

The statistics revealed that trust and authenticity had a crucial role in the overall findings. The endorsement credibility of influencers was highly regarded by Swedish consumers, particularly when influencers were considered as authentic and truthful. The aforementioned discovery aligns with the tenets of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), which place emphasis on observational learning and self-regulation. The trust that consumers place in influencers is influenced by their observations of the conduct exhibited by these influencers. This topic is also consistent with previous scholarly investigations that emphasize the significance of authenticity in the realm of influencer marketing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Nevertheless, this observation highlights a discrepancy in the way individuals conceptualize and interpret authenticity, hence emphasizing the necessity for more investigation in this domain.

The Swedish context gave rise to the identification of ethical principles and sustainability as a prominent theme. The Swedish consumer population shown a notable degree of receptiveness towards influencer marketing strategies that were in line with their personal beliefs, with a particular emphasis on sustainability and the ethical promotion of products. The aforementioned discovery aligns with Sweden's established standing in advocating for ethical shopping, as evidenced by the research conducted by Di Vico and Rohit (2020). Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that ethical issues do not hold identical importance for all customers, suggesting that there is heterogeneity in the extent to which these values impact consumer behavior.

Demographic variables, including age and gender, exerted an influence on customer responses towards influencer marketing. The influence of influencer endorsements on younger consumers can be observed, which aligns with the principles outlined in the Theory of Reasoned Action proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen in 1975. The study revealed disparities in the categories of products and services influenced by influencers based on gender, underscoring the necessity for tailored influencer marketing approaches. The aforementioned findings align with previous studies that have examined the role of demographic factors on the effectiveness of influencers (Schiffman et al., 2019).

The study found that long-term influencer partnerships boost brand loyalty in Sweden. This supports earlier study on the importance of long-term influencer partnerships in consumer loyalty (Chopdar & Goyal, 2020). The above findings provide a thorough view of how social media influencers affect Swedish consumer behavior. These insights help explain the complex dynamics and intricacies of influencer marketing in this context. The next section offered a detailed conclusion from the findings.

This study found that social media influencers impact Swedish consumer behavior. The main findings include the importance of influencers in product discovery, trustworthiness and genuineness, ethical considerations and sustainability, demographic variances, and the benefits of long-term partnerships with influencers.

Influencer marketing is a complex and evolving phenomenon that aligns with the Theory of Reasoned Action, Social Cognitive Theory, and ethical consumption. Influencers' effects on customer behaviour are complicated by demography, authenticity, ethics, and long-term engagement. This study emphasises the need to adapt influencer marketing to Swedish consumers using these characteristics.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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