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Original Article (Qualitative)

# Designing an influencer marketing model based on the consumer behavior of mountaineering product buyers with a data-driven approach

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## Abstract

The aim of the present study was to design an influencer marketing model based on the behavior of mountaineering product consumers with a data-based approach. The research method was qualitative and based on grounded theory. The statistical population included experts in the field of influencer marketing evaluation, faculty members, marketers, and manufacturers of mountaineering products. Sampling was purposefully conducted using the data saturation technique, and 12 people were selected for in-depth semi-structured interviews. Data analysis was conducted using the grounded theory method. The findings showed that 46 initial codes were extracted in the form of 15 main categories, which are: perceived credibility and expertise, value alignment, content quality and honesty, characteristics of the mountaineering community, nature of mountaineering products, advertising saturation in social networks, previous consumer experience, level of personal knowledge and expertise, perceived risk, mutual verification, direct communication and observation, use of established influencers, increase or decrease in trust in the influencer, change in attitude towards the brand, and decision to buy or not to buy. The results showed that the impact of influencers on consumer behavior is very deep and fundamental, depending on the characteristics of the target population such as children, adolescents, women and men. The findings can help brands and marketers to create more effective interaction with audiences and improve influencer-based marketing strategies by identifying effective criteria.

## Keywords:

Marketing,  
Influencers,  
Consumer  
Behavior,  
Mountaineering  
Products,  
Social Media,  
Brand Attitude

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## Extended Abstract

### Introduction

Today, social media is known as the turbulent helm of the Internet; media that are based on web technology and play a fundamental role in the world's media equations by virtual sociality (Karimi et al., 2025). Based on Matthews' theory (2012), in the article Guide to Identifying Influencer Goals, it has been determined that consumers trust third-party recommendations (influential person) on a blog or Instagram or all social networks more than their paying attention to a brand (Duh et al., 2021). Social media influencers can be connected as friends or consumers in order to achieve the marketing goals of a brand and, due to their reputation, they can bring together not only fans of their specific field of activity but also a wide network of followers in their virtual space and, by taking advantage of their influence, direct people to the website or product of the related brand and increase the volume of social media exposure and introduce and promote the company's product through their recommendation or story according to their experience with the product or the manufacturer (Masoumi et al., 2023).

On the other hand, sport has entered the field of economic science and art by introducing its new social values. The obvious and hidden attractions resulting from this development have aroused feelings and created certain tendencies among all societies towards sporting events (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2023). In order to effectively achieve global trade, sports and non-sports marketing organizations (including mountaineering disciplines) have greatly benefited from marketing opportunities such as sponsors of sports competitions, broadcasting rights and product endorsements by athletes and "social media influencers" in the field of marketing mix and consumer behavior (Alidoost Zoghi et al., 2021). When a product is noticed and supported by a famous sports star, effective conditions will be provided for persuading fans and others to buy that product through psychological connection with fans. In other words, a product based on the advertising or emphasis of a social media sports influencer will have two characteristics: uniqueness and value among his fans and followers in the online space. Accordingly, marketers and stores of sports products such as mountaineering products are seeking to improve marketing programs in order to increase sales of their products, control consumer behavior and have greater coordination between the consumer and the products produced by their brand, which is being formed and developed by influencers on social media (Khosravi et al., 2023). A review of research conducted in this field indicates that despite the increasing use of the effective capacities and capabilities of "social media influencer marketing on consumer behavior", there are no precise criteria for measuring this type of marketing, and due to the new emergence of this phenomenon in the field of sports products, especially mountaineering products, deep and extensive research has not been conducted (Anggraheni & Haryanto, 2023). Accordingly, the researcher aims to design and explain the influencer marketing evaluation model based on the consumer behavior of mountaineering product users, taking into account the aforementioned issues and based on issues such as the fundamental challenge of marketers and researchers in identifying influencer marketing criteria and indicators and the lack of specialized knowledge in this field, and the measurement and evaluation model for social media influencer marketing in the field of mountaineering and sports products using the data-based method to show what the influencer marketing evaluation model is based on the consumer behavior of mountaineering product users; and how the causal conditions, background conditions, intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences of the influencer marketing evaluation model based on the consumer behavior of mountaineering product users will be explained.

## **Theoretical Basis**

### **Influencer Marketing**

Influencer marketing is a marketing strategy in which businesses collaborate with influential people on social networks or other platforms to introduce and sell their products, services, or brands to the influencer's audience (emad et al., 2024). Influencer marketing is not limited to a specific medium or platform, but many people recognize and apply the concept more in the social media space (pick et al., 2021).

### **Consumer Behavior**

Consumer behavior refers to the actions of individuals or groups in acquiring, consuming, and disposing of economic goods and services, including the decision-making processes before and after these actions. Consumer behavior is the study of consumers and the processes they use to select, use (consume), and dispose of products and services, including consumers' emotional, mental, and behavioral responses. Consumer behavior includes ideas from several sciences, including psychology, biology, chemistry, and economics. Consumer behavior is the study of how individuals, groups, and organizations purchase, use, and consume ideas, goods, and services to satisfy needs and wants (Divandari et al., 2023).

Kamali et al. (2025) investigated "Factors Affecting Intention to Purchase FMCG from Online Retailers (Case Study: Kale Dairy Products)". This research was conducted using a descriptive-survey method and structural equation modeling. The results showed that situational variables such as system quality and product familiarity have a significant effect on perceived usefulness, but they had no effect on perceived hedonicity. It was also found that perceived usefulness and hedonicity mutually affect each other and both have a positive effect on consumers' purchase intention.

Abrood et al. (2024) investigated the "Effect of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Behavior with Respect to the Mediating Role of Brand Value". The descriptive-correlational research method and data analysis were conducted using path analysis. The results showed that social media marketing has an effect on consumer behavior. However, entertainment did not have a significant effect on brand awareness and image, and favorable information only had a positive effect on brand image. Also, word-of-mouth marketing had a significant effect on brand awareness and image. Finally, both brand awareness and image had a positive and significant effect on brand preference and brand loyalty.

### **Research Method**

The present study was qualitative and based on Grounded Theory. The statistical population included experts in the field of influencer marketing, faculty members, marketers, and manufacturers of mountaineering products. Twelve people were selected by purposive sampling and using the data saturation technique. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and continued until information saturation was reached.

Data analysis was conducted using the Strauss & Corbin (1998) method and three stages of open, axial, and selective coding. In open coding, interview phrases were transformed into abstract concepts; in axial coding, concepts similar to composition and components were formed; and in selective coding, final categories including causal, contextual, intervening factors, strategies, consequences, and central phenomenon were extracted.

To increase the validity of the research, criteria of validity, reliability, verifiability, and transferability were used. The opinions of professors and colleagues were considered in reviewing the codes and analyses, and all stages of the research were documented to provide verification and replication.

### **Findings**

The research shows that influencer marketing plays an important role in shaping consumer behavior of mountaineering products. The effect of this marketing depends on the influencer's credibility and expertise, value alignment, content quality, customer experience and knowledge, and risk perception. Effective engagement and the provision of authentic content increase trust, change brand attitudes, and purchase decisions. Strategies such as direct observation, verification, and leveraging established influencers enhance marketing effectiveness. This research provides a practical and theoretical framework for designing and evaluating influencer-based marketing.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The present study aimed to design an influencer marketing model based on the behavior of consumers of mountaineering products and was conducted with a grounded theory approach. The findings showed that in the field of specialized and high-risk products such as mountaineering equipment, the success of influencer marketing does not depend solely on their reputation or number of followers, but rather on the authenticity, honesty, and effectiveness of the content produced by the influencer. Experienced consumers make their purchase decisions based on their perception of the expertise and real credibility of influencers, and their trust in the experience and technical knowledge of these people plays a central role in the effectiveness of marketing messages.

Data analysis showed that the three main factors of "perceived credibility and expertise", "value alignment", and "content quality and honesty" have the greatest impact on consumer behavior. Consumers respond positively to marketing messages when the influencer has practical experience in mountaineering, provides expert and honest content, and their ethical values and lifestyle are consistent with their own. These findings are consistent with research by Anggraheni & Haryanto (2023), Yazdani Kachuei et al. (2022), and Masoumi et al. (2023), and confirm the importance of expert trust and value congruence in forming consumer loyalty and emotional attachment.

Contextual factors, including characteristics of the mountaineering community, the nature of products, and advertising saturation on social networks, as well as intervening conditions such as personal experience and knowledge, and perceived risk, play an important role in evaluating advertising messages. Consumers make their purchase decisions using strategies such as verification, comparison of different sources, and actual observation.

Finally, the final research model showed that the perception of authenticity and effectiveness of influencers' messages is affected by causal, contextual, and intervening factors, and by adopting specific strategies, it leads to outcomes such as increased or decreased trust, changed brand attitude, and purchase decision. These results are consistent with the findings of Emad et al. (2024) and Divandari et al. (2023) and show a new dimension of trust in influencers' experience and expertise in specialized sports markets.