HOW ARE INSTAGRAM INFLUENCERS PERCEIVED BY DIFFERENT GENERATIONS?

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted in order to contribute to the field by revealing the basic components used in promotional product placement practices by influencers who have accounts in various categories on Instagram, and reveal the reasons and components of influencer following behaviours of consumers from different generations. In the scope of the research, it was analysed whether there is a significant difference between the socio-demographic variables of consumers and their follow-up behaviours in the course of influencer marketing activities on social media.

Two data collection tools on 1536 participants were used in the study. Attendees are determined by the convenience sampling method among Instagram users following at least one influencer. The data collection tools used in this study are the "Personal Information Form" and the "Social Media Influencer Behavior Questionnaire" prepared by the researchers. It's been found that the reasons for following an influencer varies according to the socio-demographic characteristics of people and influencers are more effective on younger generations and people with low education and low income level. In addition, it's seen that men have more tendency to believe in influencers and they follow more influencers than women do.

Keywords: Instagram Influencer, Personal Branding, Influencer Marketing, Social Media, Influencer Following Behaviors, Generations

JEL Codes: M31, M37

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INSTAGRAM FENOMENLERİNİN FARKLI KUŞAKLARCA ALGILANIŞLARI

ÖZ

Bu araştırma, Instagram'da farklı kategorilerde hesapları bulunan fenomenlerin ürün yerleştirme uygulamalarında kullandıkları temel bileşenleri, Instagram özelinde ortaya koyarak alan literatürüne katkı sağlamak ve nüfuz pazarlaması uygulamalarına ilişkin farklı kuşaklardan tüketicilerin yaklaşımları ile fenomen takip davranışları arasındaki ilişkiyi ortaya çıkarmak amacıyla yapılmıştır. Araştırma dahilinde, sosyal medyada nüfuz pazarlaması faaliyetleri gerçekleşirken, tüketicilere ait demografik değişkenler ile takip davranışları arasında anlamlı bir fark bulunup bulunmadığı analiz edilmiştir.

Araştırmada kolayda örnekleme yöntemiyle belirlenen ve Instagram üzerinde en az bir fenomen hesabını takip eden 1536 katılımcı üzerinde iki veri toplama aracı kullanılmıştır. Bunlar sırasıyla, araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanan Kişisel Bilgiler Formu ve Sosyal Medya Fenomeni Takip Davranışları Anketidir. Araştırma, ilişkisel tarama modeline uygun olarak yapılmış ve veriler, bilgisayar ortamında ve SPSS istatistik programı kullanılarak çözümlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Nüfuz Pazarlaması, Sosyal Medya Fenomeni, Fenomen Takip Davranışları, Instagram Fenomeni, Kişi Markası, Kuşaklar.

JEL Kodu: M31, M37

INTRODUCTION

In today's world where communication technologies have been completely restructured, social media tools and platforms have been widely used by consumers of all age groups, in theory and practice (Coşkunkurt, 2013). It is an indisputable fact that the past decade has witnessed a sharp increase in the use and popularity of social media. Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter appear to be increasingly embedded in the structures, forms and processes of daily communication (Van Dijck 2013).

The use of social media is very important because it has the power to influence society and mass behavior at a high rate. One of its biggest advantages is that the feedback speed is very fast. While social media becomes one of the most important marketing tools thanks to technological development, it brings businesses, consumption groups and consumers together. With the use of social media, businesses can reach more consumers at a lower cost compared to traditional marketing or traditional mass media (Holt, 2016).

It is a surprising fact that in just the time it takes to read this sentence, more than 500,000 videos will have been watched on YouTube worldwide (Cohen, 2018). Statistics show that there is a steady decline in TV viewership, while at the same time the viewership of YouTube and other social media channels is increasing worldwide (O'Neil-Hart & Blumenstein, 2016). This change in the entertainment world and the loss of influence of traditional media oblige marketers all over the world to turn to the right channels. As more people turn to peer approval and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) marketing, customers are beginning to demand authentic opinions and reviews, and there is a need to find a more effective alternative to traditional advertising.

Today, marketers struggle to be heard in the crowd and gain a few seconds to catch the attention of consumers, allocating more budget to detailed and elaborate advertising campaigns (Holt, 2016). However, it is also a fact that overloading advertising messages makes consumers sceptical. Consumers are now spending more money to avoid ads, turning to special services (Netflix, Spotify) and using various programs that block ads (ad blockers). Despite this complex environment, the only thing that has a great impact on consumer purchasing behaviour is a word or recommendation they can hear from a reliable source.

It is no longer sufficient for a company that wants to promote its product or service on social media just to use its own professional profile or web page. A product's or service's being shared and recommended by social media influencers provides a much greater interaction. In this way, the firm can access larger networks in very specific niches and more importantly, many customers do not perceive it as advertising. Some "followers" do not even realize that this is pure marketing, and think that a social media influencer they follow and trust is only recommending a product they use or a service they receive.

Instagram is a mobile photography app founded by Systrom and Krieger in 2010 and acquired by Facebook for a billion dollars in 2012. It was reported to be "the fastest growing media among mobile application users" in 2013 (Abidin, 2015). In 2016, it provided $ 1.53 billion in advertising revenue, which corresponds to 8.4% of Facebook's global advertising revenues. In the "Digital in 2019" report published jointly by We Are Social and Hootsuite on January 31, the total number of Instagram users was shown as 894 million. According to the same report, one-third of Instagram users are between the ages of 18-34. For this reason, Instagram usage is quite high, especially among young adults, compared to other social media platforms. More than 95 million photos and videos are posted on Instagram every day (Brooke, 2017). While users generally write about highlights of their personal lives, influencers mainly post about sports equipment, fashion, fitness, beauty and consumer electronics (Braatz, 2017)

Influence marketing, a type of marketing practice based on the theory of influence, is defined by Brown and Hayes (2008: 13) as "the third party that significantly shapes the customer's purchasing decision". The theory of influence is based on the assumption that individuals who are characterized by others as influential and trustworthy can be successful in persuading a community. From this point of view, influence marketing can be defined as a type of marketing in which influential people are used to ensure that a brand can convey its message to the larger market and positively affect the purchasing decisions of individuals (Woods, 2016: 32).

Recommendations given by influential people in digital channels help their followers to search, buy and use the product (Braatz, 2017:11). This is due to the fact that consumers trust the posts of influential people. Looking at the results of the study named "Global Trust in Advertising Survey" conducted by Nielsen in 2015; consumers perceive advertising practices using influencer marketing as the third most reliable type of advertising, and 66% of survey respondents trust product reviews written online by third parties.

In the light of all this information, it has become a necessity to accept the fact that the understanding of advertising and marketing has changed almost completely and shifted to digital platforms. The relations of commercial institutions with their customers have started to run digitally with the increase in the use of technology, internet and new communication technologies. All these developments have made it a necessity for brands to use social media to reach their customers. At this stage, native ads and social media influence marketing have become one of the most preferred marketing activities thanks to their features such as being less costly and easier to reach the target audience. In this system, which allows instant measurement of customer reactions, it has become possible to make instant determinations according to customer requests and needs.

Consumers generally tend to find their friends and people they like and follow on social media more reliable than from distant sources (Nielsen, 2013). Social media influencers play a major role in influencing consumers at this point. Many studies have been conducted to investigate the effects and

perceived reliability of influencers on consumers, and a large literature has been published on "source effects" (Janis & Hovland, 1959) (Ohanian, 1990). Since consumers perceive content produced by influencers to be more reliable than content provided by sellers (Jonas, 2010), it can be said that advertisements that are seen to be recommended by an influencer have a great influence on determining purchase intention (Waldt, Loggerenberg, & Wehmeyer, 2009). Additionally, Lecinski (2011) stated that 70% of purchasing decisions are made during online searches, especially when recommended on social media. (Lecinski, 2011) Fleishman-Hillard and Harris (2012) revealed that 89% of consumers buy products over the Internet.

Research in the field shows that the way consumers interact with brands has completely changed with the emergence of social media. Consumers are accustomed to receiving information from individuals with a high follow-up rate, often referred to as inflencers (Liu, Chou, & Liao, 2015). Therefore, Liu et al. (2015) stated that the ability to identify the right influencer is important for companies, as with the use of social media platforms, advertising messages can spread more quickly and be better promoted to large audiences with the recommendations of influencers. Therefore, it is crucial for marketers to understand that if they use social media platforms and influencers effectively, their marketing campaigns can attract more consumers and increase conversion rates.

With this research, it is aimed to observe the relation between demographic variables and influencer following behaviors of consumers towards influence marketing activities on social media. In this research, answers to the following questions were sought within the framework of the general purpose of "examining consumer follow-up behaviors against product placement practices by Instagram influencers":

1. How are the consumer reactions and behaviors towards the product placement practices of Instagram influencers?

2. Do consumer reactions and behaviors towards Instagram influencers' product placement practices differ according to consumers' characteristics?

It is expected that the findings to be obtained as a result of this study will reveal the relationship between the advertisement and the followers by examining the native advertisement contents created by the influencers on Instagram from the consumer perspective. Discovering the perceptions of product placement practices created by Instagram influencers by different generations will contribute to the marketing studies to be made with the influence marketing method and will guide the influencers working in the field. Thus, advertising companies will have the opportunity to reach more people and introduce themselves by following methods suitable for the age group and social media behaviors of their target audiences. Necessary clues will be given for companies to convey their messages to the right consumer group and to make the right use of their advertising budgets.

2. METHOD

In the research, the relational screening model was used, since it is aimed to comparatively and relationally examine the attitudes and views of Instagram users towards advertisements made by influencers and containing product placement, according to various variables.

The universe of the research consists of all users who have an account on Instagram and follow at least one influencer. The sample consists of users who follow the influencers on Instagram and are determined by the convenience sampling method. The demographic characteristics of the followers that make up the sample are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N=1536)

Variable	Group	*n*	*%*
Gender	Female	1031	67,1
	Male	505	32,9
Age	24 years and below (Z Gen.)	330	21,5
	25-41 (Y Gen.)	525	34,2
	42-56 (X Gen.)	436	28,4
	57 years and above (Baby Boomers Gen.)	245	16,0
Graduation	Primary	23	1,5
	High School	230	15,0
	Vocational School	166	10,8
	Undergraduate	805	52,4
	Graduate	312	20,3
Income status	0 TL-1.000 TL	185	12,0
	1.001 TL -5.000 TL	526	34,2
	5.001 TL -10.000 TL	536	34,9
	10.001 TL and more	289	18,8

Of the 1536 Instagram users who follow influencers, 67.1% of the participants are female and 32.9% are male. The mean age of the participants was calculated as 39.70±15.02, and the largest age group was those aged between 25-41 (Generation Y) with 34.2%. Considering the graduation status of the participants, it is seen that the largest group is undergraduate graduates with 52.4% and the smallest group is primary school graduates with 1.5%. Finally, it was determined that the monthly incomes of the participants were mainly between 1.000-5.000 TL (34.2%) and 5.001-10.000 TL (34.9%).

2.1 Data Collection

A questionnaire consisting of two parts was used to collect the quantitative data of the study. These are the Personal Information Form and Social Media Influencer Following Behaviours Questionnaire, respectively.

In the Personal Information Form developed by the researcher to determine the demographic/personal characteristics of the influencer followers participating in the research, there are four questions regarding the general demographic characteristics of the followers (gender, age, education and monthly income).

The Social Media Influencer Following Behaviors Questionnaire was prepared by the researchers to determine the participants' status of following influencers, their reasons, and their level of awareness of the content produced by the influencer and their levels of orientation towards purchasing behavior. In the survey consisting of six questions, the participants were asked about the number of influencers they follow, the brand(s) advertised by the influencers they follow, hearing about a brand from the influencer for the first time, searching for a service/product after hearing it from an influencer, purchasing a service/product after hearing it from an influencer and their reasons for following influencers.

2.3 Findings Related to Social Media Phenomenon Tracking Behaviors Questionnaire

The findings of the Social Media Influencer Following Behaviors Questionnaire, prepared by the researchers to determine the participants' status of following influencers, their reasons, and their level of awareness towards the content produced by the influencer and their tendency to purchase behavior, are presented in this section.

Table 2. Distribution of the Number of Influencers Followed by the Participants

Number of influencers followed	n	%
0-3 influencers	639	41,6
4-10 influencers	502	32,7
10-50 influencers	314	20,4
51 and above influencers	81	5,3
Total	1536	100,0

Most of the participants reported that they followed 0-3 instagram influencers with 41.6%, 4-10 with 32.7%, and 10-50 with 20.4%. Only 5.3% of the participants reported that they followed 51 or more Instagram influencers.

Table 3. Distribution of the Brand Approved or Advertised by the Influencers Followed by the Participants

Is there a brand?	*n*	*%*
Yes	1092	71,1
No	176	11,5
I don't know	268	17,4
Total	1536	100,0

71.1% of the participants reported that there are brands and products that are approved or advertised by the influencers they follow, while 11.5% said there are not. It was observed that the remaining 17.4% of the participants were not aware if the influencers were promoting their products.

Table 4. Distribution of Learning a brand from the Influencer for the first time

Hearing the brand for the first time	*n*	*%*
Yes	1128	73,4
No	316	20,6
I don't know	92	6,0
Total	1536	100,0

About three-quarters of the participants (73.4%) stated that they learned from a phenomenon that they followed a product they had not heard of before.

Table 5. Distribution of Participants in Researching a Product/Service Influenced by the post of the Influencer

Researching the product/service	*n*	*%*
Yes	1056	68,8
No	445	29,0
I don't know	35	2,3
Total	1536	100,0

68.8% of the participants stated that they researched a product/service, after learning about it from the influencer they followed, while 29.0% stated that they did not.

Table 6. Distribution of Participants in Buying the product/service influenced by the post of the influencer

Buying the product/service	n	%
Yes	771	50,2
No	704	45,8
I don't know	61	4,0
Total	1536	100,0

When purchasing behaviors were examined, it was seen that nearly half of the participants (50.2%) bought a product/service, influenced by the post of the influencer they followed, while 45.8% did not.

Table 7. Distribution of Reasons for Following the Influencers

Reasons for following the influencer	n	%	All included %
Being handsome or beautiful	368	12,1	25,8
It keeps me informed about new products and services	702	23,1	49,3
Distribution of promotions with discount coupons and sweepstakes	317	10,4	22,3
Sharing useful information	659	21,7	46,3
Being sincere and reliable	486	16,0	34,1
S/he is answering my comments and questions	169	5,6	11,9
Being an expert in the field	337	11,1	23,7
Total	3038	100,0	213,3

The participants were told that they could mark more than one option, and they were asked why they followed the influencers they followed. Accordingly, the most important reason for following was determined as "It keeps me informed about new products and services" with 23.1%. Other important reasons following this statement are "Sharing useful information" with 21.7% and "Being sincere and reliable" with 16.0%. It is seen that the reason that the participants give the least importance to is "S/he is answering my comments and questions" with 5.6%. From this point of view, it has been seen that the followers do not care about being in contact with the influencer, instead they prefer to get the maximum benefit from him/her. It has been determined that they follow the influencers in order to be informed about new products and services.

According to the personal (demographic) characteristics of the participants, the Chi-Square test was used to examine whether there were significant differences between the consumer reactions and behaviors of Instagram influencers to product placement applications, and Cramer's V value was calculated to determine the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable in case of a

significant relationship (difference). Depending on the degree of freedom, the effect was evaluated as follows (Morgan, Barett, Leech, & Gloeckner, 2011).

Table 8. Chi-Square Test for Comparing the Number of Influencers Followed by Participants according to Personal Characteristics

Degree of Freedom	Effect (Cramer's V)		
	Small	Moderate	Large
1	.10	.30	.50
2	.07	.21	.35
3	.06	.17	.29
4	.05	.15	.25
5 and above	.04	.13	.22

Variable	n	Number of Influencers				χ^2	p (Cramer's V)
		0-3	4-10	11-50	51 +		
Gender							
Female	1031	472	330	188	41	31,08	0,000***(0,142)
Male	505	167	172	126	40		
Total	1536	639	502	314	81		
Age							
24 and below (Z Gen.)	330	60	87	129	54	279,77	0,000***(0,246)
25-41 (Y Gen.)	525	198	197	110	20		
42-56 (X Gen.)	436	232	144	56	4		
57 and over (Baby Boomers Gen.)	245	149	74	19	3		
Total	1536	639	502	314	81		
Graduation							
Primary	23	5	9	7	2	115,61	0,000***(0,158)
High School	230	63	57	76	34		
Vocational School	166	55	65	35	11		
Undergraduate	805	350	289	144	22		
Graduate	312	166	82	52	12		
Total	1536	639	502	314	81		
Income							
0 TL-1.000 TL	185	47	43	61	34	119,96	0,000***(0,161)
1.001 TL -5.000 TL	526	241	160	95	30		
5.001 TL -10.000 TL	536	227	185	112	12		
10.001 TL and more	289	124	114	46	5		
Total	1536	639	502	314	81		
***$p<.001$							

The number of influencers followed by male and female participants differs significantly (X^2=31,08; sd=3; $p<.001$). It was found that women followed 0-3 and 4-10 influencers more than male participants, and male participants followed 51 and more influencers more than female participants. It

is seen that the effect of gender on the number of influencers followed is significant and 'moderate' (Cramer's V=0.142).

The number of influencers followed by the participants differs significantly depending on age (X2=279.77; sd=9; p<.001). Participants aged 24 and under (Generation Z) and aged 25-41 (Generation Y) follow 11-50 and 51 and above influencers more than older age groups. The effect of age on the number of influencers followed was significant and 'large' (Cramer's V=0.246).

Primary school, high school and associate degree graduates have a higher rate of following 51 or more influencers than undergraduate and graduate participants (X^2=115,61; sd=12; p<.001 It is seen that the effect of education on the number of influencers followed is significant and 'large' (Cramer's V=0.158).

Depending on the income level of the participants, the number of influencers they follow differs significantly (X2=119.96; sd=9; p<.001). In terms of ratio, it is seen that 3 groups with an income of 1.001 and above mostly follow the 0-3 influencers, while the participants with an income of 0-1.000 TL and 1.001-5.000 TL follow 51 and above influencers more than the others. The effect of income on the number of influencers followed is significant and 'large' (Cramer's V=0.161).

Table 9. Chi-Square Test for Having a Brand Advertised by the Influencer Followed by the Participants According to their Personal Characteristics

Variable	n	Is there a brand advertised in the post of the Influencer			χ^2	p (Cramer's V)
		Yes	No	I don't know		
Gender						
Female	1031	726	121	184	0,70	0,705
Male	505	366	55	84		
Total	1536	1092	176	268		
Age						
24 and below (Z Gen.)	330	303	8	19	247,35	0,000***(0,284)
25-41 (Y Gen.)	525	431	38	56		
42-56 (X Gen.)	436	261	66	109		
57 and above (Baby Boomers Gen.)	245	97	64	84		
Total	1536	1092	176	268		
Graduation						
Primary	23	18	3	2	26,80	0,001**(0,093)
High School	230	181	24	25		
Vocational School	166	132	13	21		
Undergraduate	805	566	93	146		
Graduate	312	195	43	74		
Total	1536	1092	176	268		
Income						
0 TL-1.000 TL	185	157	11	17	25,73	0,000***(0,092)
1.001 TL -5.000 TL	526	370	72	84		

5.001 TL -10.000 TL	536	366	57	113		
10.001 TL and more	289	199	36	54		
Total	1536	1092	176	268		
**p<.01, ***p<.001*						

Depending on the age, the status of being a brand that the participants approve or advertise on the account of the influencer they follow differs (X2=247.35; sd=6; p<.001). Participants aged 24 and under (Generation Z) and aged 25-41 (Generation Y) have a higher rate of seeing a brand that is approved/advertised on the account of the influencer they follow. It is seen that the effect of age on the brand status that the followed influencer approves or advertises on his account is significant and 'large' (Cramer's V=0.248).

Depending on the graduation (education) status of the participants, the status of seeing the brand that is approved or advertised on the account of the influencer they follow differs (X2=26.80; sd=8; p=.001). The rate of seeing a brand on the account of the influencer is higher for primary, high school and vocational school graduates. It is seen that the effect of is significant and 'moderate' (Cramer's V=0.093).

Depending on the income status of the participants, the status of seeing a brand that is approved or advertised in the account of the influencer they follow differs (X2=25.73; sd=6; p<.001). In terms of percentage, the rate is higher with 0-1001 TL group than the other three income groups. It is seen that the effect is significant and 'moderate' (Cramer's V=0.092).

Table 10. Chi-Square Test Showing the Participants Learning About a Brand or Product for the First Time from an Influencer

Variable	n	Learning a brand / product for the first time			χ²	p (Cramer's V)
		Yes	No	I don't know		
Gender						
Female	1031	761	210	60	0,28	0,870
Male	505	367	106	32		
Ttotal	1536	1128	316	92		
Age						
24 years and below (Z Gen.)	330	299	22	9	163,21	0,000***(0,230)
25-41 (Y Gen.)	525	431	71	23		
42-56 (X Gen)	436	273	124	39		
57 years and above (Baby Boom. Gen.)	245	125	99	21		
Total	1536	1128	316	92		
Graduation						
Primary	23	17	4	2	25,71	0,001**(0,091)
High School	230	191	27	12		

Vocational School	166	132	27	7		
Undergraduate	805	581	172	52		
Graduate	312	207	86	19		
Total	1536	1128	316	92		
Income						
0 TL-1.000 TL	185	154	19	12	19,16	0,004**(0,079)
1.001 TL -5.000 TL	526	396	99	31		
5.001 TL -10.000 TL	536	377	127	32		
10.001 TL and more	289	201	71	17		
Total	1536	1128	316	92		
**p<.01, ***p<.001						

Participants aged 24 and under (Generation Z) and age group 25-41 (Generation Y) have a higher rate of learning about a brand or product for the first time from an influencer they have never heard of before. (X^2=163,21; sd=6; p<.001) It is seen that the effect of age on Learning a brand/product from an influencer for the first time is significant and 'big' (Cramer's V=0.230).

Depending on the graduation (education) status of the participants, the situation of learning about a brand/product for the first time from an influencer differs (X2=25.71; sd=8; p=.001). Compared to other graduate groups, the rate of postgraduate graduates is lower. It is seen that the effect of the education is significant and 'moderate' (Cramer's V=0.091).

According to the residual analysis, the rate of learning about a product/brand for the first time from an influencer differs (X^2=19,16; sd=6; p=.004). Participants with an income of 0-1,001 TL has a higher rate than the participants with 5.001-10.000 TL and 10.001 and above income. It is seen that the effect of income is significant and 'moderate' (Cramer's V=0.079).

Table 11. Chi-Square Test for Researching a Brand's Product/Service Influenced by the Influencer's Post

Variable	n	Researching a product/service			χ^2	p (Cramer's V)
		Yes	No	I don2t know		
Gender						
Female	1031	717	297	17	5,76	0,056
Male	505	339	148	18		
Total	1536	1056	445	35		
Age						
24 years and below (Z Gen.)	330	285	41	4	139,46	0,000***(0,213)
25-41 (Y Gen.)	525	402	115	8		
42-56 (X Gen.)	436	254	168	14		
57 years and above (B.B. Gen.)	245	115	121	9		

Total	1536	1056	445	35		
Graduation						
Primary	23	18	5	0	25,26	0,001**(0,091)
High School	230	182	45	3		
Vocational School	166	121	45	0		
Undergraduate	805	538	242	25		
Graduate	312	197	108	7		
Total	1536	1056	445	35		
Income						
	185	146	36	3	14,39	0,026*(0,068)
0 TL-1.000 TL	526	351	166	9		
1.001 TL -5.000 TL	536	366	158	12		
5.001 TL -10.000 TL	289	193	85	11		
10.001 TL and more	1536	1056	445	35		

Participants aged 24 and under (Generation Z) and aged 25-41 (Generation Y) had a higher rate of researching a brand's product/service, being influenced by the post of the influencer, than other participants (X^2=163,21; sd=6; p<.001). It is seen that the effect of age is significant and 'big' (Cramer's V=0.213).

Depending on the graduation (education) status of the participants, researching a brand's product/service after learning it from an influencer differs. (X2=25.26; sd=8; p=.001). According to the residual analysis, the rate is higher among the primary, high school and vocational school graduates than the undergraduate and graduate graduates. The effect is found to be significant and 'moderate' (Cramer's V=0.091).

Depending on the income status of the participants, a significant difference has been found (X2=14.39; sd=6; p=.026). Participants with an income of 0-1,001 TL were affected by the posts of the influencer more, than all other participants with a higher income. It is seen that the effect of income on the researching status of a brand's product/service, after learning it from the influencer is significant and 'moderate' (Cramer's V=0.213).

Table 12. Chi-Square Test for the Purchasing Status of Participants Being Influenced by an Influencer

Variable	n	Purchasing the product/service			χ^2	p (Cramer's V)
		Yes	No	I don't know		
Gender						
Female	1031	497	486	48	7,34	0,026*(0,069)
Male	505	274	218	13		
Total	1536	771	704	61		
Age						
24 years and below (Z Gen.)	330	247	74	9	156,91	0,000***(0,226)
25-41 (Y Gen.)	525	288	216	21		

42-56 (X Gen.)	436	164	255	17		
57 years and above (B.B Gen.)	245	72	159	14		
Total	1536	771	704	61		
Graduation						
Primary	23	15	7	1	66,62	0,000***(0,147)
High School	230	165	58	7		
Vocational School	166	91	71	4		
Undergraduate	805	377	391	37		
Graduate	312	123	177	12		
Total	1536	771	704	61		
Income						
0TL-1.000 TL	185	121	60	4	36,72	0,000***(0,109)
1.001TL -5.000 TL	526	261	235	30		
5.001TL-10.000 TL	536	258	269	9		
10.001TL and more	289	131	140	18		
Total	1536	771	704	61		
*p<.05, ***p<.001						

Depending on whether the participants are male or female, the situation of purchasing a product/service of a brand differs by being affected by the social media post of the influencer (X2=7.34; sd=2; p=.026). Male participants were affected more, and their rate of purchasing a brand's product/service is higher than female participants. It is seen that the effect of gender on the purchasing status of a brand's product/service, being influenced by the social media post of the influencer, is significant and 'small' (Cramer's V=0.069).

Depending on the age of the participants, the purchasing status of a brand's product/service differs by being affected by the social media post of the influencer (X2=156.91; sd=6; p<.001). Participants aged 24 and under (Generation Z) and aged 25-41 (Generation Y) were affected more, and the rate of purchasing a brand's product/service is higher than other participants. It is seen that the effect of age on the purchasing status of a brand's product/service, is significant and 'big' (Cramer's V=0.226).

Depending on the graduation (education) status of the participants, the purchasing status of a brand's product/service differs by being affected by the post of the influencer (X2=66.62; sd=8; p<.001). The rate of purchasing a brand's product/service, is higher for primary, high school and vocational school graduates than for undergraduate and graduate graduates. It is seen that the effect of education on the purchasing status of a brand's product/service, is significant and 'large' (Cramer's V=0.147).

Depending on the income status of the participants, the purchasing status of a brand's product/service differs by being affected by the social media post of the influencer (X2=36.72; sd=6;

p<.001). According to the residual analysis, the rate of purchasing a product/service belonging to a brand by being affected by the post of the influencer is higher than all other participants with a higher income. It is seen that the effect of income on the purchasing status of a brand's product/service, is significant and 'moderate' (Cramer's V=0.109).

Table 13. Chi-Square Test for Participants' Reasons for Following the Influencer

Variable	n	Reasons for following an Influencer							χ²	p (Cramer's V)
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Gender										
Female	1031	190	373	28	281	97	3	59	55,40	0,000***(0,190)
Male	505	176	139	11	122	26	2	29		
Total	1536	366	512	39	403	123	5	88		
Age										
24 years and below (Z Gen.)	330	164	95	10	29	25	0	7	250,14	0,000***(0,233)
25-41 (Y Gen.)	525	120	183	22	140	39	4	17		
42-56 (X Gen.)	436	60	134	6	154	34	1	47		
57 years and above (B.B. Gen.)	245	22	100	1	80	25	0	17		
Total	1536	366	512	39	403	123	5	88		
Graduation										
Primary	23	8	11	0	2	1	0	1	147,70	0,000***(0,156)
High School	230	107	71	10	28	8	0	6		
Vocational School	166	49	63	7	25	13	0	9		
Undergraduate	805	164	261	16	229	78	4	53		
Graduate	312	38	106	6	119	23	1	19		
Total	1536	366	512	39	403	123	5	88		
Income										
0TL-1.000 TL	185	92	36	7	28	18	0	4	133,30	0,000***(0,170)
1.001TL -5.000 TL	526	139	168	22	124	40	3	30		
5.001TL-10.000 TL	536	95	186	9	164	49	1	32		
10.001TL and more	289	40	122	1	87	16	1	22		
Total	1536	366	512	39	403	123	5	88		
***p<.001										
Reasons for following the Influencer										
Being beautiful/handsome										
Informing me about new products/services										
Distribution of promotions with discount coupons and sweepstakes										
Sharing useful information										
Being sincere and reliable										
Responding to my comments and questions										
Being an expert in the subject										

As can be seen in Table 13, the reasons for following the phenomenon differ depending on all personal characteristics of the participants (gender, age, graduation and income).

The reasons for following the influencer differ depending on the gender of the participants (X2=55.40; sd=6; p<.001). Male participants have a higher following rate than female participants for the influencer being beautiful/handsome. It is seen that the effect of gender on the reasons for following the influencer is significant and 'moderate' (Cramer's V=0.190).

The reasons for following the influencer differ depending on the age of the participants (X2=250.14; sd=18; p<.001). According to the residual analysis; The follow-up rates of the participants aged 24 and under (Generation Z) and 25-41 (Generation Y) for the influencer's being beautiful/handsome are higher than other participants. Participants aged 25-41, 42-56 and 57 and above follow the influencers since they inform about new products and services and share useful information more than younger participants (Generation Z). The effect of age on participants' reasons for following the influencers seems to be significant and 'large' (Cramer's V=0.233).

The reasons for following the influencer differ depending on the graduation (education) status of the participants (X2=147.70; sd=24; p<.001). According to the analysis, a) primary school, high school and vocational school graduates' follow-up rates for the influencer's being beautiful/handsome is higher than undergraduate and graduate graduates. And undergraduate and graduate participants' rates of following the influencer as they share useful information and being sincere and reliable are higher than those with high school and vocational school graduates. It is seen that the effect of age on why participants follow the influencer is significant and 'moderate' (Cramer's V=0.156).

The reasons for following the influencer differ depending on the income level of the participants (X2=133.30; sd=18; p<.001). According to the residual analysis participants with an income of 0-1.001 TL had a higher follow-up rate when they find the influencer beautiful or handsome. The effect of income on participants' reasons for following the influencer appears to be significant and 'moderate' (Cramer's V=0.170).

RESULTS

Most of the participants reported that they followed 0-3 influencers with 41.6%, 4-10 with 32.7%, and 10-50 with 20.4%. And, 5.3% of the participants reported that they followed 51 or more influencers. Based on this data, it was seen that more than half of the participants followed 4 or more influencers and it can be said that influencer follow-up has started to become widespread in our country.

71.1% of the participants reported that the influencers they follow approve or advertise a brand or product in their accounts while 11.5% of the participants said there is no promotion. It was observed that the remaining 17.4% of the participants were not aware if the influencers were promoting any products. The fact that a large percentage of participants' being aware of the advertisements indicates

that the awareness of advertisement is high among Instagram users and that they know that the promotions they watch are of an advertisement nature rather than a recommendation.

About three-quarters of the participants (73.4%) stated that they learned about a product that they hadn't heard of before from an influencer for the first time. Parallel to this, when the reasons for following the influencers are examined, it is found that the highest rate is "to be aware of new products and services".

68.8% of the participants stated that they researched a product/service, after being influenced by the post of the influencer they followed, while 29.0% stated that they did not. It is seen that Instagram users do not decide to buy a product by adhering to the advice of the influencer to a large extent, but also research the same product from other sources. This can be considered as an indication that the influencer's promotion is not sufficient, or that his/her credibility is low.

When purchasing behaviors were examined, it was seen that nearly half of the participants (50.2%) bought a product/service, influenced by the sharing of the influencer they followed, while 45.8% did not. The effectiveness of influencer posts over purchasing behavior was found to be quite high.

The participants were told that they could mark more than one option, and they were asked why they followed the influencers. As a result, the most important reason for following an influencer was found to be "It keeps me informed about new products and services" with 23.1%. Other important reasons following this statement are "Sharing useful information" with 21.7% and "Being sincere and reliable" with 16.0%. It is seen that the reason that the participants give the least importance to is "answering my comments and questions" with 5.6%. From this point of view, it has been seen that the followers do not care about being in contact with the influencer, instead they prefer to get the maximum benefit from them. It has been determined that they follow the influencer in order to be informed.

All four personal characteristics of the participants (gender, age, graduation, income) were associated with the number of influencers they followed. According to this;

It was found that women followed 0-3 and 4-10 influencers more than male participants, while male participants followed 51 and above influencers more than female participants. So, it was seen that men have more tendency for following influencers than women.

Participants aged 24 and under (Generation Z) and aged 25-41 (Generation Y) follow 11-50 and 51 and above influencers more than older age groups. The fact that young people use computers, mobile phones and social media more than older age groups is thought to be effective.

Primary, high school and vocational school graduates have a higher rate of following 51 or more influencers than undergraduate and graduate participants. In other words, as the level of education increases, the number of followed influencer decreases. It is likely that Instagram users with a high level

of education are more selective about following influencers, and that they can look at the posts from a different perspective.

It is seen that 3 groups with an income of 1.001 TL and more mostly follow 0-3 influencers while the participants with an income of 0-1.000 TL and 1.001-5.000 TL follow 51 or more influencers more than the others. The participants' with low income levels follow many influencers is meaningful when examined together with other results. Most of the participants whose income is 1000 TL or less are Generation Z and they are students. As the amount of income increases, the problem of finding time to spend on social media begins and people cannot find time to spend on social media with their increasing responsibilities.

Participants aged 24 and under (Generation Z) and aged 25-41 (Generation Y) have a higher rate of seeing a brand that is approved/advertised on the influencer's account they follow. It can be said that the advertising awareness levels of the participants in these age groups are high.

The rate of seeing a brand that is approved/advertised on the influencer's account is higher with primary, high school and vocational school graduates. It is thought that this result should be associated with the fact that the number of followed influencers is higher in these groups.

In terms of percentage, the rate of seeing a brand approved/advertised by the influencers they follow in their accounts is higher than the other three income groups. The high rate here is due to the fact that the participants in this group follow more influencers than the participants in other groups.

Participants aged 24 and under (Generation Z) and age group 25-41 (Generation Y) have a higher rate of learning about a new product/brand from an influencer they follow. It should be normal for young followers to have a higher rate of learning from influencers compared to older and more experienced followers.

Graduate school graduates have a lower rate of learning about a product/service for the first time from an influencer. This result is not surprising as the rate of reading and research increases in parallel with the education level.

Participants aged 24 and under (Generation Z) and aged 25-41 (Generation Y) had a higher rate of researching a brand's product/service, after it is approved/advertised by the influencer. From this finding, it can be concluded that young consumers are more willing to try new products.

The rate of researching an advertised brand's product/service, is higher among primary, high school and vocational school graduates than those with undergraduate and graduate degrees. Based on this finding, it can be said that as the education level increases, the desire to research new products decreases. The reason for this may be that consumers with a high level of education have a high level of awareness of new products or that there is little trust in the approval of an influencer, so there is no need for research.

Participants with an income of 0-1,001 TL have a tendency to be influenced from influencers more than other groups, and their rate of researching a brand's product/service is higher than all other participants with a higher income. This finding was also confirmed by the age variable. Considering that most of the young consumers are still students, it is a fact that they belong to the low-income or family-financed group.

Depending on all personal characteristics of the participants (gender, age, graduation and income), the situation of purchasing a brand's product / service differs by being influenced by the posts of the influencers.

Male participants were affected more from influencer posts, and the rate of their purchasing a brand's product/service is higher than female participants. From this point of view, we can say that women are more skeptical of influencer posts than men and that purchasing process is more difficult with them.

Participants aged 24 and under (Generation Z) and aged 25-41 (Generation Y) were affected more from influencers, and the rate of their purchasing a brand's product/service is higher than other participants. The behavior of purchasing a promoted product occurs more easily in young consumers. We can say that the Z and Y generation consumers are more open to trying new products due to their age groups and their openness to innovation.

The rate of purchasing a brand's product/service, influenced by the post of the influencer, is higher for primary, high school and vocational school graduates than for undergraduate and graduate graduates. As mentioned before, with the increase in education level, the skepticism increases and purchasing behavior is affected from this.

Participants with an income of 0-1,001 TL were influenced more from the influencer posts, and the rate of their purchasing a brand's product/service is higher than all other participants with a higher income.

The reasons for following in influencer differ depending on all personal characteristics of the participants (gender, age, graduation and income).

Male participants follow an influencer more when the influencer is beautiful or handsome. Considering that there are many influencers on Instagram (most of which are women) who try to attract followers by using their physical beauty, it is an expected result that male followers follow them for this reason.

Participants aged 24 and under (Generation Z) and aged 25-41 (Generation Y) have a higher following rate than all other participants for the physical beauty of the influencer. It is not surprising that such a result emerged for the ages when libido and physical beauty came to the fore. Participants aged 25-41(Generation Y), 42-56 (Generation X) and 57 and over (Baby Boomers) have a higher follow-up rate than participants aged 24 and under (Generation Z) for the influencers' giving information about

new products and services and sharing useful information. As the age gets older, the reasons for following the influencer become more logical, and having benefit comes to the fore rather than the visual aspects.

The follow-up rates of the primary, high school and vocational school graduates were higher, for the physical beauty of the influencer. On the other hand, the follow-up rates of the undergraduate and graduate graduates are higher than the primary, high school and vocational school graduates due to the fact that they share useful information and are sincere and reliable.

Participants with an income of 0-1,001 TL had a higher follow-up rate than other participants due to the fact that the influencer was beautiful/handsome; Participants with an income of 0-1,001 TL have a lower follow-up rate for the influencer's sharing useful information. From this point of view, the expectations of young participants who are students are different from the expectations of the participants with high income level.

Considering how often consumers encounter influence marketing in their field, it can be said to be a very successful and popular form of promotion. The fact that people follow the lives of influencers through social media has made influence marketing seem like a natural part of life rather than advertising. However, this method is one that needs to be worked on and should not be done randomly. Different consumer segments respond differently to the types of influencers that the brand or firm chooses to be involved in. The success of influence marketing is to choose the right influencer according to the target audience. Big international brands generally prefer strong names from the world of celebrities in order to represent luxury and exclusivity and to stay away from the ordinary. However, this method is often not usable for small and newly launched brands due to high costs. For this reason, it is important to determine the target audience of the product and to choose a micro influencer that is considered reliable in its field, even if it is not well known by the public. A more direct and strong bridge can be developed between the brand and the customer, as micro-influencers talk about or show the benefits of the product and introduce it to their followers in a natural and sincere way.

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