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## **RESEARCH ON THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON CUSTOMER TRUST AND PURCHASE INTENT IN E-COMMERCE**

### **Abstract**

Influencer marketing has become one of the most popular and effective forms of online promotion in the digital era. Brands collaborate with social media influencers to endorse products and shape consumer perceptions. Influencer marketing in e-commerce is a powerful strategy that allows brands to influence consumer behavior by leveraging the trust and audience of social media figures. Research shows that while macro-influencers provide a wide reach, micro- and nano-influencers generate higher follower engagement and trust, generating stronger purchase intentions per follower. Statistical indicators, including engagement levels and conversion rates, confirm that small-scale influencers deliver relatively high results in consumer trust and sales conversions.

The presented article provides a coherent commentary on the implementation of an optimized influencer marketing strategy for e-business entities that balances broad reach with authenticity.

**Keywords:** influencer, marketing, customer, trust, commerce, media, strategy

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### **Introduction**

Influencer marketing has become one of the most popular and effective forms of online promotion in the digital era. Brands partner with social media influencers – individuals who have amassed dedicated followings – to endorse products and shape consumer perceptions. The appeal of this strategy lies in the personal connection influencers have with their audience; consumers often trust influencers' recommendations more than traditional advertisements or branded content (Dopson, 2024). Notably, 63% of shoppers say they are more likely to buy a product if it is recommended by a social media influencer they trust (Traackr, 2024). This trust factor is particularly crucial in e-commerce, where customers cannot physically inspect products and rely on information and reviews. Influencer endorsements serve as a form of social proof, reducing uncertainty and building confidence in purchase decisions. As a result, influencer marketing has seen exponential growth, with the global industry valued at roughly \$24 billion by

2024 (Dopson, 2024) and more than half of brands – especially online retailers – incorporating influencers into their marketing strategies (Dopson, 2024).

At the same time, academic research has begun to shed light on *how* influencer marketing influences consumer attitudes and intentions. In particular, consumer trust has been identified as a key mediator between influencer content and purchase behavior. For instance, Ashraf et al. (2023) found that social media influencers can inspire consumers' purchase decisions by cultivating parasocial relationships – a sense of friendship or trust from repeated interactions – which in turn strengthens consumers' trust in the influencer. Influencer *credibility* has been shown to play a crucial role: a credible influencer (one perceived as knowledgeable and honest) significantly enhances consumer trust and purchase intentions, especially on e-commerce platforms (Chen et al., 2024). In light of these insights, understanding the impact of different types of influencers is important for both theory and practice. By analyzing statistical

data and findings from recent studies, we aim to provide a nuanced understanding of which types of influencer partnerships are most effective for online businesses, and why.

**Macro-Influencers.** Macro-influencers are social media figures with a very large follower count, typically in the range of hundreds of thousands to around one million followers (or more) on a given platform (Dopson, 2024). This category may include minor celebrities, well-known bloggers, or industry experts who have risen to prominence. Due to their extensive reach, macro-influencers can expose a product or brand to a broad audience almost instantly, making them attractive for campaigns aiming to maximize visibility. In fact, a majority of marketing professionals cite macro-influencers as their top choice for campaigns – one survey found that 81% of marketers consider macro-influencers ideal partners for brand collaborations (Dopson, 2024).

Despite their large audiences, macro-influencers tend to have lower engagement rates compared to influencers with smaller followings. Engagement rate – the percentage of an influencer’s followers who actively interact with their content (likes, comments, shares) – generally *decreases* as follower count increases (HypeAuditor, 2024). For example, influencers with over a million followers (often termed “mega-influencers”) see average engagement rates around or below 1% of their audience (HypeAuditor, 2024). This lower engagement can be attributed to a more diffuse audience and a less personal connection between the influencer and individual followers.

From a trust perspective, macro-influencers occupy a dual position. On one hand, their fame or expertise can lend credibility to endorsements; a well-known figure often carries an aura of authority or status that can positively affect consumer perceptions of a brand. On the other hand, consumers may also be more skeptical of macro-influencers, assuming that many of their posts are sponsored and that they are paid handsomely for promotions. The personal, authentic touch can be diluted at this level of influence. A recent study on Instagram influencers observed that audience attitudes toward macro-influencers were somewhat

paradoxical in relation to sponsorship disclosures (Perez Breton Borbón, 2024). Specifically, when a macro-influencer’s post was explicitly marked as sponsored, audiences actually responded with more positive attitudes toward the influencer compared to an identical post without sponsorship disclosure (Perez Breton Borbón, 2024). This suggests that followers *expect* macro-influencers to do paid promotions and appreciate transparency, which can maintain or even enhance trust for large influencers.

**Micro-Influencers.** Micro-influencers are individuals with moderately sized but substantial followings, often defined roughly between 10,000 and 100,000 followers on a platform (Dopson, 2024). Unlike macro-influencers, micro-influencers tend to cultivate niche audiences centered around particular interests or communities, such as fitness enthusiasts, tech gadget lovers, or eco-conscious shoppers. Because of their smaller scale, micro-influencers can maintain more direct interaction with followers, often responding to comments and engaging in dialogues, which strengthens community bonds. Their content is perceived as more relatable and less corporate; indeed, micro-influencers’ posts and recommendations often feel like advice from a friend rather than advertising (Stroud, 2024).

Statistically, micro-influencers boast significantly higher engagement rates than macro-influencers. Studies and industry data indicate that as follower count decreases into the tens of thousands, engagement from the audience tends to rise. Micro-level creators frequently achieve engagement rates in the ballpark of 2–3%, which is considerably above the sub-1% rates typical for the biggest influencers (Stroud, 2024). One analysis found that micro-influencers’ engagement can be up to 60% higher than that of macro-influencers on platforms like Instagram (Stroud, 2024).

The trust that micro-influencers generate with their audience is also notably strong. According to a report highlighted by The Drum, 82% of consumers are more likely to act on a recommendation from a micro-influencer than from a larger influencer (Stroud, 2024). Consumers often feel that micro-influencers

“get them” and represent their interests, making any product endorsements by these influencers carry considerable weight.

As a result, micro-influencers can be very effective at driving purchase intentions and actual purchases among their followers. For instance, one campaign observed about a 20% conversion rate from micro-influencer posts – roughly 7% higher than that from a macro-influencer’s posts in the same campaign (Social Cat, 2023).

Research underscores the importance of authenticity: an experimental study found that when a micro-influencer’s post was not marked

as sponsored, it received significantly more positive audience attitudes than when the same post included a sponsorship label (Perez Breton Borbón, 2024). This implies that followers respond best to what they perceive as the influencer’s genuine opinions.

**Results.** The comparative analysis of influencer types reveals distinct strengths and weaknesses for macro, micro, and nano influencers in influencing customer trust and purchase intention. Table 1 summarizes key differences among the three categories based on follower size, typical engagement rates, and observed effects on consumer behavior:

**Table 1.**

**Comparison of influencer tiers: reach, engagement, and consumer trust indicators**

Influencer tier	Typical follower count (approx.)	Average engagement rate	Characteristics & impact on consumers
<b>Macro</b>	~500,000 to 1+ million (Dopson, 2024)	~1% (low) (HypeAuditor, 2024)	Huge reach for brand exposure; lower personal interaction. Credibility can stem from status/expertise, but perceived as less relatable. Trust level: <i>Moderate</i> (followers expect paid ads, so transparency is important).
<b>Micro</b>	~10,000 to 100,000 (Dopson, 2024)	~2–3% (medium-high) (Stroud, 2024)	Niche audience with shared interests; high engagement and loyalty. Seen as authentic and “one of us,” yielding strong trust. Often drive higher conversion per follower (e.g., 7% higher than macro) (Social Cat, 2023).
<b>Nano</b>	a few hundred to ~10,000 (Dopson, 2024)	~5% (highest) (HypeAuditor, 2024)	Very small, tight-knit audience; feels like peer recommendations. Highest trust and engagement, though reach is limited. Ideal for word-of-mouth buzz and targeted marketing.

**Sources:** Engagement rate trends from HypeAuditor (2024) and industry reports (Stroud, 2024); conversion example from campaign data (Social Cat, 2023).

As shown in the Table 1, macro-influencers provide the benefit of scale: they can disseminate a marketing message to an enormous audience, which is valuable for awareness campaigns. However, the percentage of their audience that actively trusts or engages with their content is relatively small. In contrast, micro- and nano-influencers engage a much larger proportion of their followers and tend to cultivate a deeper sense of trust. Data from an influencer marketing analytics firm underscores that influencers with fewer than 5,000 followers have the highest engagement rates (around 2.5% on average), and engagement steadily drops as

follower counts rise into the hundreds of thousands (HypeAuditor, 2024). In practical terms, a micro-influencer with 50,000 followers might get more comments and interaction on a post than a celebrity with 5 million followers, because the micro-influencer’s followers feel a closer connection and interest.

These engagement dynamics also translate into differences in how effectively each influencer tier can drive purchase decisions. Micro- and nano-influencers, despite their smaller reach, often punch above their weight in terms of conversion and sales impact. Earlier, we noted a case where micro-influencer content

achieved a roughly 20% conversion rate of viewers into customers, outperforming macro-influencer content (which was around 13% conversion) in the same campaign (Social Cat, 2023). Likewise, the high trust in micro/nano influencers is reflected in consumer surveys: an overwhelming majority of respondents indicated they would act on micro-influencer suggestions (Stroud, 2024). Meanwhile, macro-influencers cannot match those per-follower conversion rates, but they might still generate a larger absolute number of conversions when their immense audience size is factored in.

From the perspective of customer trust, the comparative findings highlight that trust is generally *easier to build and maintain* with smaller-scale influencers. Micro and nano influencers operate almost like extended friends/family networks, where trust is inherent and continually reinforced by direct communication. Macro influencers operate more like broadcast media personalities, where trust must be earned through consistent authenticity and expertise, and can be more fragile or conditional. This does not mean macro-influencers lack influence on purchase intention—far from it. They often have a halo effect on brand credibility (e.g., a product endorsed by a famous macro-influencer might gain a prestige or trendiness that influences not only their followers but also media coverage and secondary audiences). However, the path from a macro-influencer's endorsement to a follower's purchase is typically more complex, filtered through a degree of skepticism.

**Conclusion.** This study highlights that influencer marketing's impact on customer trust and purchase intention in e-commerce is significantly mediated by the type of influencer deployed. Macro-, micro-, and nano-influencers each bring distinct value propositions to a marketing campaign. Macro-influencers offer unparalleled reach and can rapidly amplify brand messaging across a vast audience, yet they often struggle to engage individuals on a deep level. Micro- and nano-influencers, in contrast, foster closer relationships and higher trust with their followers, translating into higher engagement and, per capita, a stronger influence on purchase decisions. The comparative analysis

backed by statistical data confirms that smaller influencers tend to yield higher engagement rates and can drive meaningful sales through authentic endorsements, even though their total audience size is limited.

For e-commerce businesses, these findings carry important implications. A strategic approach to influencer marketing should align the influencer type with the campaign's goals and the nature of the target audience. If a brand is launching a product that requires building trust – for example, a new tech gadget that consumers might be skeptical about – collaborating with micro-influencers who have established credibility in relevant communities could be more effective at converting hesitant consumers. On the other hand, to create broad awareness of a fashion line across demographics, a macro-influencer or celebrity may achieve the necessary exposure. In many cases, a combination will yield the best results: macro-influencers to “cast the net wide” and micro/nano-influencers to “bring the message home” with authenticity among specific consumer segments.

A key insight is that *consumer trust* is the currency of effective influencer marketing. Regardless of influencer size, campaigns that successfully build and maintain trust are more likely to convert followers into customers. This means that authenticity and credibility should be prioritized. Influencers need to be honest and transparent with their audiences to sustain trust. As recent research suggests, influencers who openly disclose their partnerships and provide genuine, evidence-backed opinions can enhance their credibility and thus have a greater impact on purchase intention. Marketers should encourage content that includes personal stories, demonstrations, and user testimonials facilitated by the influencer, as these tactics reinforce the trustworthiness of the recommendation.

In conclusion, influencer marketing in e-commerce is most potent when the influencer's trust with followers is aligned with the brand's message. Micro and nano influencers emerge as powerful agents for trust-building and targeted persuasion, whereas macro influencers serve as influential megaphones for reach. E-commerce firms are advised to leverage the strengths of



each influencer tier strategically: using big names for awareness and leveraging a network of smaller influencers for engagement and trust amplification. By doing so, businesses can optimize both consumer trust and purchase intention, driving not only immediate sales but also long-term brand loyalty.

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### INFLUENSER MARKETİNQİNİN E-TİCARƏTDƏ MÜŞTƏRİ ETİBARINA VƏ SATIN ALMA NİYYƏTİNƏ TƏSİRİNİN ARAŞDIRILMASI

#### Xülasə

İnfluenser marketinqi rəqəmsal dövrdə onlayn tanıtımın populyar və effektiv formalarından birinə çevrildi. Brendlər məhsulları dəstəkləmək və istehlakçı qavrayışlarını formalaşdırmaq üçün sosial media influenserləri ilə əməkdaşlıq edir. Elektron ticarətdə influenser marketinqi brendlərə sosial media simalarının etibarından və auditoriyasından yararlanaraq istehlakçı davranışına təsir etməyə imkan verən güclü bir strategiyadır. Araşdırmalar göstərir ki, makro-influenserlər geniş əhatə imkanı versələr də, mikro və nano-influenserlər daha yüksək izləyici fəallığı və etimad yaradaraq, izləyici başına daha güclü satınalma niyyətləri formalaşdırırlar. Statistik göstəricilər, o cümlədən iştirak səviyyələri və konversiya göstəriciləri, kiçik miqyaslı influenserlərin istehlakçı etimadı və satış çevrilmələrində nisbətən yüksək nəticələr verdiyini təsdiqləyir.

Təqdim olunan məqələdə elektron biznes subyektlərinə, geniş əhatəni autentikliklə tarazlayan optimallaşdırılmış influenser marketinqi strategiyasının tətbiqi məsələləri əlaqəli şəkildə şərh olunur.

**Açar sözlər:** *influenser, marketinq, müştəri, etimad, ticarət, media, strategiya*

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**ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ВЛИЯНИЯ МАРКЕТИНГА ВЛИЯНИЯ НА ДОВЕРИЕ  
КЛИЕНТОВ И НАМЕРЕНИЕ СОВЕРШЕНИЯ ПОКУПОК В ЭЛЕКТРОННОЙ  
ТОРГОВЛЕ**

**Резюме**

Маркетинг влияния стал одной из самых популярных и эффективных форм онлайн-продвижения в цифровую эпоху. Бренды сотрудничают с влиятельными лицами в социальных сетях, чтобы рекламировать свою продукцию и формировать восприятие потребителей. Маркетинг влияния в электронной коммерции — это мощная стратегия, которая позволяет брендам использовать доверие и аудиторию персонажей социальных сетей для влияния на поведение потребителей. Исследования показывают, что в то время как макроинфлюенсеры обеспечивают широкий охват, микро- и наноинфлюенсеры генерируют более высокую вовлеченность и доверие подписчиков, формируя более сильные намерения совершить покупку в расчете на одного подписчика. Статистические показатели, включая уровни вовлеченности и коэффициенты конверсии, подтверждают, что небольшие влиятельные лица демонстрируют относительно высокие результаты в плане доверия потребителей и конверсии продаж.

В представленной статье обсуждается применение оптимизированной стратегии маркетинга влияния, которая сочетает в себе широкий охват и аутентичность для субъектов электронного бизнеса.

**Ключевые слова:** инфлюенсер, маркетинг, клиент, доверие, коммерция, медиа, стратегия