Exploring Factors Influencing Turkish Consumers' Online Purchase Decisions Based on Influencer Marketing

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the psychological, cultural, and socioeconomic factors influencing Turkish consumers' online purchase decisions in response to influencer marketing. It focuses on how authenticity perceptions, brand-influencer congruence, emotional connections, and culturally embedded values shape consumer behavior. The research particularly addresses how parasocial bonds and culturally specific norms—such as collectivism, beauty ideals, and ethical concerns—impact trust and purchasing intent. By contextualizing influencer marketing in Turkey's high-context, relational culture, the study contributes to an enriched understanding of consumer psychology in emerging digital economies. The study adopts a mixed-methods design to provide a multidimensional understanding of Turkish consumers' responses to influencer marketing. Data collection included digital ethnography (5,784 comments across five social media platforms), a large-scale online survey (N=1,248), and in-depth interviews (N=20). Structural equation modeling was employed to test the relationships between perceived authenticity, trust, parasocial interaction, brand-influencer congruence, and purchase intent. The qualitative data were thematically analyzed to uncover cultural patterns in influencer evaluation, while the quantitative analyses validated hypothesized pathways, including mediating roles of trust and congruence in shaping purchasing behavior. The results indicate that perceived authenticity is the strongest predictor of purchase intent ($\beta = 0.64$, $p < 0.001$), with trust and brand-influencer congruence acting as significant mediators. Parasocial relationships, particularly in Turkey's relational communication culture, also strongly influence trust transfer and decision-making. Cultural elements such as Turkish beauty ideals, emotional communication patterns, and ethical sensitivity (e.g., boycott consciousness) significantly shape influencer credibility. Visual evidence, lifestyle-product alignment, and transformation narratives enhance message acceptance. The study reveals generational and gender-based variations in consumer responsiveness, highlighting the strategic importance of cultural resonance and value alignment in influencer campaigns. This research offers a novel, culturally embedded framework for understanding influencer marketing in emerging markets by synthesizing psychological and sociocultural theories. Unlike existing studies that generalize Western-centric findings, it contextualizes influencer-consumer dynamics within Turkey's high-context, collectivist culture. The study reveals culturally specific credibility mechanisms—such as historical consistency and aesthetic alignment—and introduces new dimensions of parasocial interaction grounded in relational norms.

It contributes to both marketing theory and practice by illustrating how authenticity, ethics, and symbolic values function together in shaping digital trust and purchase behavior in non-Western contexts, offering actionable insights for localized brand strategies.

1. Introduction

The rapid growth of social media platforms has fundamentally transformed marketing strategies worldwide, with influencer marketing emerging as a particularly powerful tool for shaping consumer behavior. In the Turkish market, where social media adoption has increased dramatically over the past decade, influencers have become significant drivers of purchase decisions across various product categories. This phenomenon reflects broader shifts in how consumers evaluate products, with traditional advertising increasingly supplemented or even replaced by content from individuals who have built trusted relationships with their followers. The Turkish e-commerce landscape presents unique characteristics that warrant specific investigation. With its blend of Eastern and Western cultural influences, robust digital infrastructure, and distinctive consumer behaviors, Turkey offers valuable insights into how social media influencers shape purchasing patterns in emerging markets. Recent data indicates that Turkish consumers spend an average of 2.9 hours daily on social media platforms, significantly above the global average, making this market particularly receptive to influencer content. This study examines the psychological, cultural, and socioeconomic factors that influence Turkish consumers' online purchase decisions in response to influencer marketing. By analyzing engagement patterns across multiple social media platforms and diverse influencer categories, this research aims to identify the key mechanisms through which influencers impact consumer decision-making in the Turkish context. Understanding these dynamics will provide valuable insights for brands seeking to develop effective influencer marketing strategies tailored to the unique characteristics of the Turkish market. The proliferation of social media platforms has not only transformed the way individuals communicate but has also reshaped the architecture of consumer trust and persuasion (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Within this rapidly evolving digital ecosystem, influencer marketing has emerged as a dominant strategy for brand visibility and consumer engagement, particularly in regions with high social media penetration such as Turkey (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). Scholars have increasingly emphasized the pivotal role of perceived authenticity (Audrezet, de Kerviler & Moulard, 2020; Reinikainen et al., 2020), brand-influencer congruence (Breves et al., 2019; van Reijmersdal, Rozendaal & Buijzen, 2016), and trust transfer mechanisms (Ohanian, 1990; Sokolova & Perez, 2021) in shaping consumer responses to influencer content. Furthermore, parasocial relationships—emotionally charged yet one-sided bonds between followers and influencers—have been identified as potent psychological drivers of purchase intention, often functioning through emotional resonance and imagined intimacy (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Labrecque, 2014; Chung & Cho, 2017; Lou, Tan & Chen, 2019).

Complementing these psychological perspectives, cross-cultural frameworks such as Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (Hofstede, 2001; De Mooij & Hofstede, 2011) and Hall's high-context/low-context communication typology (Hall, 1976) offer crucial insight into how cultural values—such as collectivism, aesthetic codes, and relational norms—moderate influencer-consumer dynamics, particularly in non-Western and emerging markets (Zhang & Shavitt, 2003; Soares, Farhangmehr & Shoham, 2007). In the Turkish context, where high-context communication and symbolic consumption are prominent (Papadas et al., 2017; Wang & Lin, 2009), emotional appeal and cultural familiarity often outweigh informational utility. Additionally, growing consumer emphasis on ethical consumption and social responsibility has redefined the parameters of credibility and acceptance in influencer marketing (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; Shaw & Shiu, 2003; Vitell, Singhapakdi & Thomas, 2001), especially among younger demographics demonstrating heightened boycott consciousness and moral selectivity.

These intersecting strands of research underscore the need for a theoretically robust and empirically grounded investigation that accounts for the psychological, relational, and cultural complexities of influencer marketing in Turkey. Against this backdrop, the present study aims to search these Research Questions:

1. How do perceived authenticity and brand-influencer congruence impact Turkish consumers' trust and purchase intent in response to influencer marketing?

2. To what extent do cultural factors specific to Turkey, including aesthetic preferences, communication

patterns, and traditional values, shape consumer responses to influencer recommendations?

3. What role do social responsibility considerations play in Turkish consumers' evaluation of influencer credibility and subsequent purchase decisions?

In order to explore these research questions within a coherent theoretical structure, it is essential to establish a conceptual foundation that integrates key perspectives from communication psychology, marketing science, and cross-cultural theory. By doing so, this study not only situates itself within the existing body of literature but also builds a framework capable of capturing the complex and culturally nuanced dynamics of influencer marketing in the Turkish context. The following section outlines the theoretical pillars that inform the study's analytical lens.

2.Literature Review

This study is grounded in a multidimensional theoretical framework that integrates psychological, relational, and cultural perspectives to explain how influencer marketing shapes Turkish consumers' online purchase decisions. At its core, Source Credibility Theory provides a foundation for understanding the role of perceived authenticity, trustworthiness, and brand-influencer congruence in driving consumer trust and behavioral intention. This is complemented by the Parasocial Interaction Theory, which captures the emotionally charged, one-sided relationships that consumers form with influencers—relationships that serve as key mechanisms for trust transfer and identification. Lastly, Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory contextualizes these interactions within Turkey's unique socio-cultural fabric, characterized by collectivism, high-context communication, and symbolic consumption patterns. Together, these theoretical pillars offer a holistic lens through which the effectiveness of influencer marketing can be assessed—not only as a function of persuasive communication, but as a culturally embedded practice shaped by social values, emotional engagement, and moral expectations. This integrated framework enables a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between individual cognition, emotional affiliation, and cultural norms in digital consumer behavior.

2.1.Source Credibility Theory and Parasocial Interaction Theory

In recent years, influencer marketing has gained substantial academic and commercial attention as a persuasive strategy rooted in interpersonal dynamics and perceived trustworthiness. Two theoretical lenses are particularly well-suited for explaining the mechanisms through which influencers affect consumer behavior: Source Credibility Theory and Parasocial Interaction Theory.

Source Credibility Theory posits that the effectiveness of a message depends largely on how credible the source is perceived to be, which is traditionally evaluated through three dimensions: trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990; Erdogan, 1999). In the context of influencer marketing, these dimensions are often translated into constructs such as perceived authenticity, brand-influencer congruence, and emotional sincerity. When consumers perceive that an influencer genuinely uses or believes in the products they promote, the influencer's message is received as more credible and persuasive (Audrezet, de Kerviler & Moulard, 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Moreover, a high degree of congruence between the influencer's image and the brand's identity enhances message acceptance and increases consumer trust (Breves et al., 2019).

Complementing this rational evaluation of source credibility, Parasocial Interaction Theory provides a relational and emotional lens to explain the one-sided yet emotionally meaningful relationships that consumers develop with media personalities (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Labrecque, 2014). These parasocial bonds are particularly salient in social media environments, where influencers share intimate aspects of their daily lives, respond to follower comments, and craft a sense of accessibility. Such behaviors foster perceived closeness and emotional trust, which, in turn, influence purchase intention (Chung & Cho, 2017; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). In collectivist and high-context cultures like Turkey, where relational communication and emotional resonance are culturally valued, these parasocial interactions often serve as more powerful drivers of consumer behavior than direct promotional messaging.

Together, these theories highlight both the cognitive (e.g., trust and expertise) and affective (e.g., emotional connection and perceived closeness) pathways through which influencers impact consumer decisions. This dual-theoretical perspective is particularly valuable in capturing the complexity of influencer-consumer relationships in culturally embedded markets such as Turkey, where notions of authenticity, ethical behavior, and symbolic alignment shape the very foundation of persuasive communication. While source credibility and parasocial interaction theories provide a robust psychological and relational foundation for understanding influencer-consumer dynamics, they cannot fully capture the cultural variability that shapes how such dynamics unfold

across different societies. In markets like Turkey, where values such as collectivism, relational harmony, and symbolic communication are deeply embedded in the social fabric, consumer responses to influencers are filtered through culturally specific lenses. To account for these contextual factors, it is essential to incorporate a cultural framework that can systematically explain how national values influence trust, aesthetics, and ethical expectations in influencer marketing. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory offers such a lens.

2.2.Authenticity and Congruence in Influencer Marketing: A Source Credibility Perspective

In the context of digital marketing, particularly within the domain of influencer-driven consumer engagement, the Source Credibility Theory remains a foundational framework for understanding the psychological mechanisms through which persuasive communication impacts consumer attitudes and behaviors. Initially formulated by Hovland and Weiss (1951), this theory posits that a message's effectiveness depends largely on the perceived credibility of its source, which is typically evaluated based on dimensions such as trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. In the influencer marketing landscape, these dimensions are reinterpreted through consumers' perceptions of an influencer's authenticity, consistency, and alignment with the endorsed brand (Ohanian, 1990; Erdogan, 1999).

Recent empirical research highlights that perceived authenticity has emerged as a central determinant of influencer effectiveness. When consumers believe that an influencer genuinely uses or believes in the product being promoted, their trust in both the influencer and the brand is significantly enhanced (Audrezet, de Kerviler, & Moulard, 2020). Authenticity is often assessed through signals such as consistent brand alignment, transparency about sponsorships, and the natural integration of promotional content into an influencer's broader lifestyle narrative (Lou & Yuan, 2019). These findings are particularly salient in markets like Turkey, where consumers are highly attuned to subtle cues of inauthenticity due to the high-context nature of communication and a cultural emphasis on relational trust.

Equally important within this framework is the concept of brand-influencer congruence, which refers to the perceived fit between the influencer's persona and the brand's image. When congruence is high, consumers are more likely to view the endorsement as credible, which in turn elevates purchase intent (Breves et al., 2019). Incongruent pairings, by contrast, often lead to skepticism, reducing the effectiveness of the campaign regardless of the influencer's reach or popularity (Jin, Muqaddam, & Ryu, 2019). Moreover, structural equation modeling (SEM) analyses in recent influencer marketing studies suggest that perceived credibility not only directly influences purchase behavior but also mediates the relationship between message exposure and brand attitude (Sokolova & Perez, 2021). This mediating role emphasizes the strategic importance of influencer selection, suggesting that beyond follower count, marketers must prioritize credibility cues that resonate with their target audience.

In sum, as influencer marketing continues to expand globally, the Source Credibility Theory provides a robust explanatory lens for decoding why certain influencers succeed in shaping consumer decisions. Within the Turkish context, where relational dynamics and cultural values further nuance consumer perceptions, this theory becomes even more critical in understanding the effectiveness of influencer-brand partnerships. Building on these foundational insights, contemporary scholarship has continued to explore the nuanced ways in which authenticity functions as a central mediating variable in the influencer-consumer dynamic. For instance, Reinikainen et al. (2020) demonstrate that consumers' willingness to act on influencer recommendations is significantly higher when the influencer exhibits what the authors term *"value-based authenticity,"* which encompasses moral consistency, honesty, and transparency. This finding is especially relevant in culturally embedded markets like Turkey, where interpersonal trust and ethical congruence are paramount in shaping consumer behavior.

Moreover, Schouten, Janssen, and Verspaget (2020) emphasize that authenticity is not merely a matter of factual truth but is often constructed through performative cues—such as casual tone, unscripted content, and emotional vulnerability—which make influencer communications appear relatable and sincere. In such cases, influencers function less as traditional advertising agents and more as peer figures within a digitally mediated social network. This blurring of boundaries between marketing and personal interaction intensifies the persuasive power of authentic communication, reinforcing the premise of the source credibility model. In parallel, the strategic alignment between the influencer and the endorsed brand—commonly referred to as brand-influencer congruence—has garnered increased attention as a determinant of message effectiveness. According to van Reijmersdal et al. (2016), congruence enhances the perceived relevance and appropriateness of the endorsement, which fosters greater message acceptance and positively influences brand attitude. This supports the notion that influencer selection must go beyond superficial metrics like follower count and focus on deeper value alignment

and narrative coherence between the brand and the influencer. The mediating role of trust is also well-documented in recent empirical work. For example, Marwick and Boyd (2011) conceptualize influencers as *micro-celebrities* who cultivate trust through strategic intimacy, allowing followers to feel personally connected to them. This perceived closeness, when reinforced by authentic messaging and congruent brand partnerships, results in heightened consumer engagement and purchase intention. Trust, in this sense, is not a static attribute but a dynamic outcome of perceived consistency and moral alignment between influencer, brand, and audience expectations.

Finally, Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019) argue that authenticity and credibility in influencer marketing are not solely individual traits but are socially co-constructed through audience interactions, especially in comment sections and shared experiences. In other words, influencer credibility is also shaped by how their audience perceives and collectively interprets their behavior—an insight that further strengthens the source credibility framework in the age of participatory digital culture.

2.3. Emotional Consumer Behavior Through Parasocial Bonds and Trust Mechanisms

As digital platforms increasingly blur the line between mediated communication and interpersonal relationships, the Parasocial Interaction Theory (PSI) provides a compelling framework for understanding how consumers emotionally engage with social media influencers. Originally articulated by Horton and Wohl (1956), PSI posits that media users form one-sided relationships with media figures, experiencing a sense of intimacy, familiarity, and trust despite the absence of real interpersonal interaction. In the context of influencer marketing, these parasocial bonds can become powerful drivers of consumer behavior, often rivaling or surpassing traditional forms of brand loyalty.

Recent research affirms the centrality of parasocial relationships in shaping purchase intentions, particularly in influencer-driven contexts. For instance, Chung and Cho (2017) show that the strength of a consumer's parasocial relationship with an influencer significantly predicts their willingness to engage with endorsed content and make purchases based on those endorsements. The authors emphasize that consumers perceive influencers not merely as content creators but as *trusted acquaintances* whose product suggestions are grounded in perceived personal experience rather than corporate interest. This dynamic is further reinforced by the emotional labor that influencers perform. According to Labrecque (2014), influencers cultivate a sense of closeness through repeated disclosure of personal stories, emotional vulnerability, and direct engagement with followers. These practices foster what she terms *"pseudo-intimacy,"* which can deepen parasocial bonds and facilitate the transfer of trust from the influencer to the brand—a process critical to the effectiveness of influencer marketing.

Moreover, Kim and Song (2016) argue that the emotional appeal embedded in influencer content—whether in the form of transformation stories, lifestyle narratives, or aspirational messaging—serves as a catalyst for emotional contagion. When followers identify with the influencer's journey or values, the emotional resonance significantly increases their openness to persuasive messaging. This mechanism is especially pronounced in high-context cultures like Turkey, where emotional depth and relationship orientation are culturally embedded in communication patterns. Another layer of complexity is introduced by Sokolova and Kefi (2020), who demonstrate that the development of parasocial relationships is moderated by factors such as platform type, influencer authenticity, and perceived similarity between the follower and the influencer. Their study finds that Instagram, in particular, fosters stronger parasocial bonds due to its visual and interactive affordances, making it an especially potent platform for influencer marketing.

Lou, Tan, and Chen (2019) extend PSI theory by exploring how parasocial relationships mediate the effect of influencer trustworthiness on brand attitude and behavioral intention. Their findings suggest that trust in an influencer does not operate in isolation but is embedded within an emotional context that shapes how messages are received and internalized. In essence, trust becomes not only a rational evaluation but an emotional experience shaped by the consumer's imagined relationship with the influencer. While parasocial interactions are inherently one-sided, they often generate real emotional responses that influence consumers' trust and decision-making processes. In the context of influencer marketing, these relationships are not passive; rather, they represent a form of interactive emotional engagement wherein followers perceive the influencer as a credible and caring figure whose recommendations are valued (Bond, 2016). This illusion of mutuality enhances perceived intimacy, making it more likely for consumers to act on influencers' brand endorsements—even in the absence of direct communication.

Furthermore, Tian and Hoffner (2010) argue that parasocial bonds are not static but evolve over time through repetitive exposure, narrative familiarity, and emotional investment. As followers spend more time engaging with an influencer's content, they begin to anticipate their reactions, empathize with their experiences, and

incorporate the influencer into their digital social world. This long-term exposure builds parasocial loyalty, which not only increases the frequency of engagement but also the likelihood of brand trust transfer—a phenomenon highly relevant in digitally saturated societies such as Turkey, where influencers are often embedded in everyday discourse.

The emotional intensity of parasocial relationships is particularly effective in high-involvement product categories such as fashion, beauty, and health—sectors where personal identity, self-image, and emotional resonance are key decision drivers. According to Freberg et al. (2011), consumers frequently rely on influencers not just for information, but for emotional reassurance, validation, and social comparison. These interactions are often infused with aspirational identification, where followers project their ideal self onto the influencer, creating a persuasive space for brand messaging.

Moreover, Lim, Radzol, Cheah, and Wong (2017) provide empirical support that parasocial interactions significantly mediate the relationship between perceived influencer credibility and consumer behavioral intention, particularly in millennial and Gen Z demographics. Their findings emphasize that the emotional connection formed via parasocial bonds has a distinct psychological impact that goes beyond rational product evaluation. In the Turkish context, where emotional expressiveness and interpersonal warmth are culturally embedded, such dynamics likely intensify the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Jin, Ryu, and Muqaddam (2020) highlight that influencers who skillfully balance professionalism with relatability are most successful in cultivating durable parasocial relationships. Their study shows that influencers who are perceived as both competent and approachable trigger higher engagement metrics, stronger brand recall, and greater likelihood of repeat purchases. This duality—professional authority combined with emotional intimacy—is the hallmark of effective parasocial influence, especially in cultures that place a premium on trust-based relationships.

2.4. Cultural Scripts of Influence: The Role of Aesthetics, Relationships, and Ethics in Turkish Consumer Responses

To fully comprehend the dynamics of influencer marketing in the Turkish context, it is essential to embed the analysis within a cultural framework that explains not only what consumers do, but why they behave the way they do. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, originally developed in the 1980s and widely expanded since, offers a robust model for understanding how national cultural values influence consumer attitudes, decision-making processes, and communication preferences (Hofstede, 2001). In the case of Turkey, three dimensions—collectivism, high-context communication, and moderate uncertainty avoidance—play a pivotal role in shaping responses to influencer marketing.

Firstly, Turkey's relatively collectivist orientation suggests that individuals are more likely to value interpersonal relationships, group belonging, and trust-based social validation over individual autonomy. In influencer marketing, this manifests as a heightened sensitivity to relational credibility and emotional closeness. As De Mooij and Hofstede (2011) argue, in collectivist societies, consumers are more influenced by in-group members or familiar figures than anonymous brand messages. Influencers who can position themselves as relatable and trustworthy, and who demonstrate alignment with community norms, are more likely to be persuasive among Turkish audiences.

Secondly, the high-context communication style prevalent in Turkish culture implies that consumers derive meaning not solely from explicit verbal information, but from relational cues, body language, tone, and broader narrative context. In this regard, Hall's (1976) theory of high- and low-context cultures complements Hofstede's framework by explaining why Turkish consumers often favor emotional storytelling and visually rich content over direct sales messaging. As Mooij and Hofstede (2010) emphasize, marketing messages that resonate in high-context cultures tend to be more indirect, relationship-oriented, and symbolically nuanced—features commonly seen in successful influencer content. This cultural disposition also explains why Turkish consumers frequently assess influencers' aesthetic consistency and symbolic alignment with cultural ideals. For instance, beauty norms that emphasize natural radiance, youthfulness, and modest glamour are not merely individual preferences but are culturally shaped expectations. Zhang and Shavitt (2003) show that cultural values significantly mediate the relationship between visual representation and advertising effectiveness; what is considered beautiful or aspirational in one culture may not resonate in another. Turkish consumers are therefore more responsive to influencer content that visually mirrors culturally coded ideals, especially in beauty, fashion, and lifestyle domains.

Third, uncertainty avoidance, which is moderately high in Turkey, further shapes how consumers evaluate the credibility and ethics of influencers. Consumers in such contexts seek clarity, transparency, and moral consistency to reduce the ambiguity of decision-making. This is especially visible in consumers' strong reactions

to influencers who violate ethical norms—for example, by promoting products they do not use or failing to disclose sponsorships. According to Soares, Farhangmehr, and Shoham (2007), cultures with high uncertainty avoidance prefer credible, structured, and value-driven messaging. In Turkey, this translates into a preference for influencers who demonstrate social responsibility and long-term moral alignment with their audience. In this regard, younger Turkish consumers—shaped by both global values and local traditions—exhibit strong boycott consciousness and ethical selectivity. Papadas et al. (2017) argue that ethical branding is particularly effective in collectivist societies when ethical values are communicated through emotionally resonant narratives rather than rational arguments. Hence, Turkish influencer campaigns that embed social, environmental, or cultural responsibility into the messaging are not only more effective but more sustainable in the long term. Expanding upon Hofstede's framework, additional cultural dimensions such as power distance, masculinity versus femininity, and long-term orientation provide further explanatory depth when examining Turkish consumers' responses to influencer marketing. Turkey, with its relatively high power distance, tends to accept hierarchical social structures, where authority and expertise are respected. Influencers who are perceived as authoritative yet relatable figures benefit from this dimension, as they straddle the space between aspirational role models and familiar figures (Hofstede et al., 2010). This duality positions them as socially acceptable opinion leaders whose product endorsements are interpreted not as coercive advertisements but as credible guidance from a respected peer.

The masculinity-femininity dimension, where Turkey is situated moderately toward the masculine end, highlights a societal preference for success, competition, and achievement—values that are often communicated through lifestyle displays on social media. Sørensen and Thomsen (2016) suggest that influencers who showcase achievement (e.g., luxury travel, fitness transformation, professional success) align with culturally valorized traits, thereby increasing the persuasive impact of their messaging. However, this must be balanced with relational humility and warmth, especially when targeting female consumers who, as noted by Nelson and Shavitt (2002), often favor emotionally expressive and communal cues in advertising. Another cultural lens that sharpens the analysis is long-term versus short-term orientation. Turkey, exhibiting elements of both, leans toward short-term orientation in its consumer culture—favoring quick gains, instant gratification, and visible benefits. Influencer content that highlights immediate utility, visual transformation, or rapid results (e.g., skincare routines, fashion hacks, weight-loss journeys) aligns well with this cultural value. As Ladhari et al. (2011) argue, short-term oriented consumers are more responsive to visually demonstrable benefits and emotional storytelling, rather than delayed promises of long-term value. At the intersection of these cultural variables lies the concept of symbolic consumption—where products and brands are not only chosen for their functional utility, but also for their symbolic value in expressing identity, status, or cultural belonging (Wang & Lin, 2009). In the Turkish context, this manifests through influencer content that blends local aesthetics with global aspiration, allowing consumers to assert both cultural continuity and cosmopolitan identity. Influencers who navigate these dual demands—such as promoting both traditional Turkish brands and international luxury labels—are especially influential because they reflect the hybrid consumer identity prevalent in urban Turkey.

Finally, the ethical dimension of consumer culture in Turkey cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the culturally situated role of communal responsibility and moral congruence. As Vitell, Singhapakdi, and Thomas (2001) emphasize, collectivist cultures exhibit heightened sensitivity to ethical misalignment, especially when such behaviors threaten social harmony. This resonates with findings from Turkish consumers who show strong aversion to influencers perceived as hypocritical or exploitative—particularly when promoting environmentally harmful or socially irresponsible products. Influencer marketing, therefore, must be morally coherent, as Turkish audiences interpret authenticity not only as personal honesty but as cultural and ethical alignment with communal values.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively examine the factors influencing Turkish consumers' online purchase decisions based on influencer marketing. The research design integrated both qualitative and quantitative components to capture the nuanced dynamics of consumer behavior in response to influencer content. This methodological triangulation allowed for a more holistic understanding of the psychological, cultural, and socioeconomic factors at play in the Turkish market (figure 1).
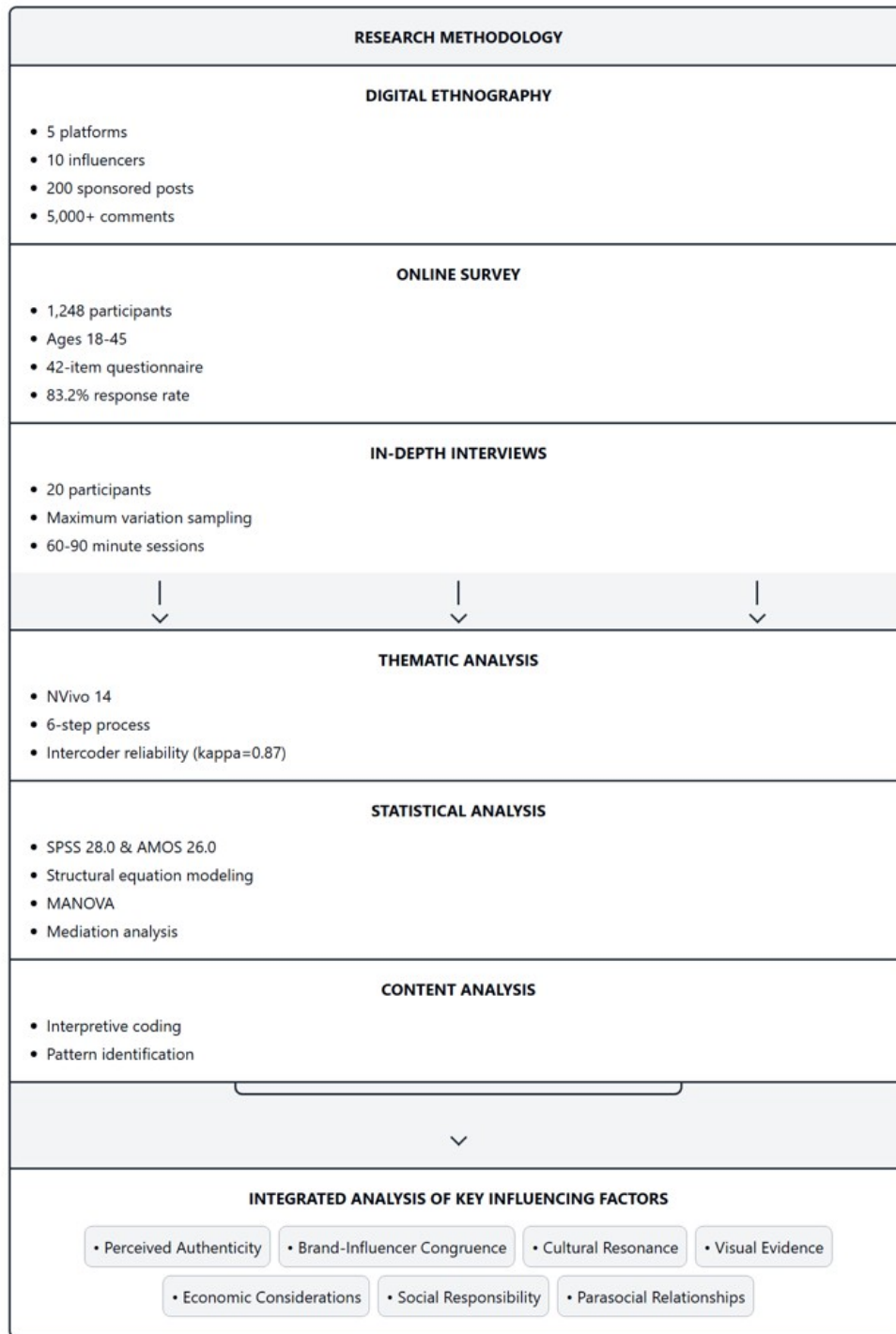
Figure 1. Mixed-Methods Framework for Investigating Turkish Consumers' Response to Influencer Marketing

3.2.Data Collection

Digital Ethnography

Digital ethnographic observation was conducted across five major social media platforms (Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter, and Facebook) over a six-month period to analyze organic interactions between Turkish consumers and influencers. This method involved systematic observation of comment sections, engagement

patterns, and conversation threads related to sponsored content across ten prominent Turkish influencers: Damla Altun, Şeyda Erdoğan, Melisa, Duygu Özaslan, Pelin Kaya, Yasemin Öğün, Rachel Araz Kiresepi, Berk, Cem Özkook, and others representing diverse content categories.

The digital ethnography yielded over 5,784 consumer comments across 200 sponsored posts, providing rich qualitative data on authentic consumer reactions to influencer marketing content. Special attention was paid to the language, emotional tone, and specific aspects of the content that elicited consumer responses.

Online Survey

A structured online survey was administered to 1,500 Turkish consumers aged 18-45 who regularly engage with social media influencers. The survey was distributed through multiple channels, including social media advertising, consumer panels, and snowball sampling techniques, to ensure demographic diversity and representation across different regions of Turkey. The final sample included 1,248 complete responses (response rate: 83.2%), with demographic distribution aligned with the broader Turkish social media user population.

The survey instrument consisted of 42 items measuring key constructs including perceived authenticity, brand-influencer congruence, purchase intent, trust, cultural values, and socioeconomic factors. Measurement scales were adapted from established instruments in consumer behavior research and modified to reflect the Turkish context following a preliminary pilot study with 50 participants.

In-Depth Interviews

Twenty semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with frequent social media users who regularly engage with influencer content. Interview participants were selected using a maximum variation sampling approach to ensure diversity in age, gender, education level, income, and geographic location within Turkey. Each interview lasted approximately 60-90 minutes and explored participants' decision-making processes, perceptions of influencer credibility, and cultural factors affecting their responses to influencer marketing.

3.3. Data Analysis

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data from digital ethnography and in-depth interviews underwent a rigorous thematic analysis using NVivo 14 software. The analysis followed a six-step process: familiarization with data, initial coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and report production. Two independent researchers coded the data to establish intercoder reliability (Cohen's kappa = 0.87), indicating strong agreement.

The coding framework was developed through both deductive and inductive approaches. Initial codes were derived from existing literature on influencer marketing effectiveness, while emergent codes captured unique aspects of the Turkish consumer context. The final thematic structure organized findings into six major categories: authenticity perceptions, parasocial relationships, cultural resonance, visual evidence, economic considerations, and social responsibility factors.

Quantitative Analysis

Survey data were analyzed using SPSS 28.0 and AMOS 26.0 software. Preliminary analysis included descriptive statistics, assessment of measurement reliability (Cronbach's alpha), and confirmatory factor analysis to validate the measurement model. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was then employed to examine the relationships between key constructs and test hypothesized pathways of influence. Additionally, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine differences in responses across demographic segments, including age groups, gender, education levels, and income brackets. Mediation analysis using the bootstrapping method assessed the indirect effects of cultural factors on purchase decisions through trust and authenticity perceptions.

4.Results

4.1. Overview of Data

The mixed-methods approach yielded complementary insights into the factors influencing Turkish consumers' purchase decisions based on influencer marketing. Table 1, located below, provides a summary of the data collected across the three primary research methods.

Table 1. Summary of Data Collection Methods and Sample Characteristics

Method	Sample Size	Key Demographics	Data Volume
Digital Ethnography	10 influencers, 200 posts	Age range: 18-55; 68.3% female	5,784 comments
Online Survey	1,248 respondents	Age range: 18-45; Mean age: 29.7 (SD=6.3); 63.2% female	42 variables measured
In-Depth Interviews	20 participants	Age range: 22-42; Mean age: 31.4 (SD=5.8); 60% female	27.5 hours of transcripts

4.2. Perceived Authenticity and Brand-Influencer Congruence

Authenticity Perceptions

The analysis revealed that perceived authenticity significantly impacts purchase intent among Turkish consumers. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between perceived authenticity and purchase intent based on our structural equation modeling results.
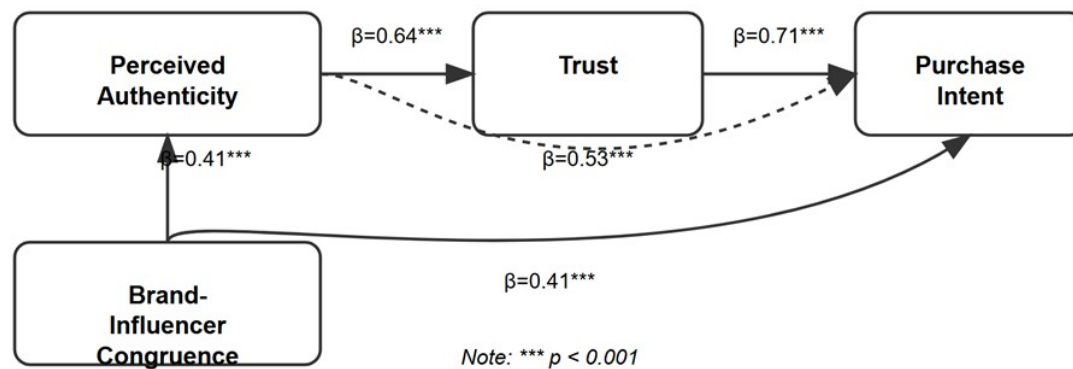

Figure 2. Structural Model of Authenticity, Trust, and Purchase Intent

Survey results indicated that authenticity was the highest-ranked factor in purchase decision-making, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Importance Rankings of Factors in Influencer-Driven Purchase Decisions

Factor	Mean Importance (1-5 scale)	SD	% Rating "Very Important" or "Extremely Important"
Perceived Authenticity	4.52	0.74	78.3%
Visual Evidence of Efficacy	4.38	0.79	76.2%
Brand-Influencer Congruence	4.24	0.82	72.8%
Value for Money	4.12	0.98	72.4%
Relationship with Influencer	3.98	1.05	64.7%
Social Responsibility	3.87	1.12	63.2%

Digital ethnographic data demonstrated that consumers actively evaluate authenticity through multiple mechanisms. Content analysis of comments revealed three primary authenticity assessment strategies, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Authenticity Assessment Mechanisms Used by Turkish Consumers

4.3. Brand-Influencer Congruence

Structural equation modeling demonstrated that brand-influencer congruence significantly mediates the relationship between authenticity perceptions and purchase intent (indirect effect = 0.41, 95% CI [0.36, 0.47]). Table 3 presents the results of the mediation analysis.

Table 3. Mediation Analysis for Brand-Influencer Congruence

Path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	95% CI for Indirect Effect	Total Effect
Authenticity → Purchase Intent	0.28***	0.41***	[0.36, 0.47]	0.69***
Congruence → Purchase Intent	0.43***	-	-	0.43***

*Note: *** p < 0.001*

Survey results showed that 82.4% of respondents reported being more likely to purchase products that naturally align with the influencer's lifestyle and content themes.

4.4. Cultural Factors and Their Impact

Turkish Beauty Ideals and Aesthetic Preferences

Content analysis of beauty and skincare product interactions revealed distinctive Turkish aesthetic preferences. Figure 4 illustrates the frequency of cultural beauty terms in positive versus negative product assessment comments.
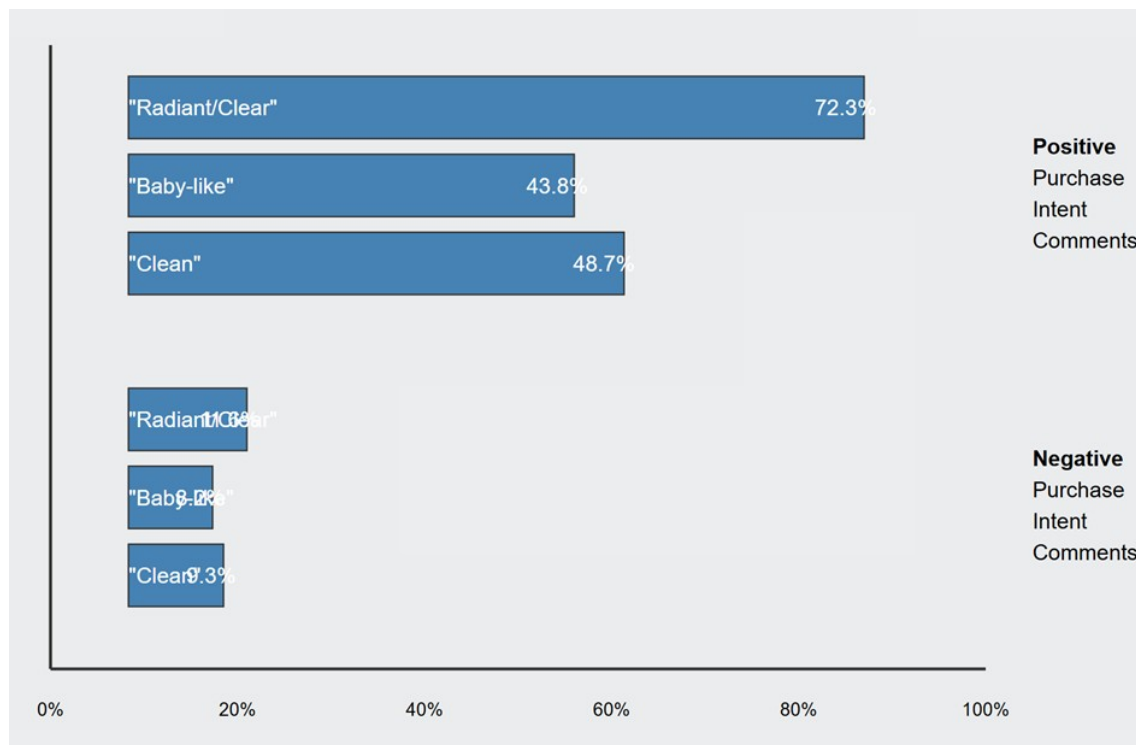
Figure 4. Frequency of Cultural Beauty Terms in Product Assessment Comments

The survey data indicated significant gender differences in preferences for products aligned with traditional Turkish beauty ideals, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Gender Differences in Beauty Ideal Preferences

Beauty Ideal Preference	Female Respondents Mean (SD)	Male Respondents Mean (SD)	t-value	p-value
Preference for "natural" appearance	4.26 (0.82)	3.58 (1.04)	12.47	<0.001
Preference for "radiant" skin	4.35 (0.79)	3.42 (1.12)	15.83	<0.001
Preference for "youthful" appearance	4.21 (0.88)	3.76 (0.97)	8.92	<0.001
Overall traditional beauty ideal preference	4.27 (0.72)	3.59 (0.93)	14.31	<0.001

4.5. Communication Patterns and Relationship Orientation

The analysis revealed that Turkish consumers engage with influencer content through a high-context communication style. Table 5 shows the relative frequency of relationship-focused versus transaction-focused comments.

Table 5. Communication Focus in Consumer Comments

Communication Focus	Frequency	Percentage	Example Comment Types
Relationship-focused	3,225	64.5%	Terms of endearment, personal connection expressions, emotional responses
Transaction-focused	1,435	28.7%	Product questions, price inquiries, purchase logistics
Mixed	340	6.8%	Combined relationship and transaction elements

Survey results showed that Turkish consumers rated relationship quality with the influencer (M = 4.12, SD = 0.93) as significantly more important than information quality about the product (M = 3.78, SD = 1.02), t(1247) = 8.65, p < 0.001.

Social Responsibility and Ethical Considerations

Expectations for Social Responsibility

Figure 5 illustrates the age-related differences in ethical boycott behavior based on influencer recommendations.
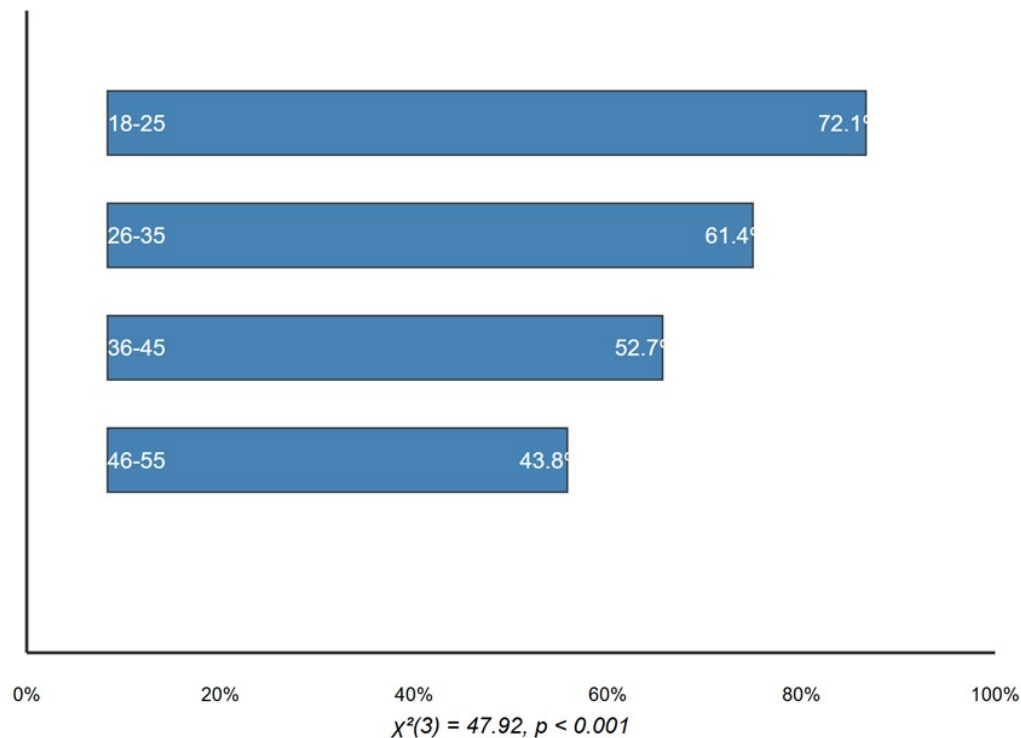

$\chi^2(3) = 47.92, p < 0.001$

Figure 5. Age Differences in Boycott Participation Based on Influencer Recommendations

4.6. Boycott Consciousness

The data revealed strong boycott consciousness among Turkish consumers. Table 6 presents the regression analysis results showing the relationship between social responsibility perceptions and purchase-related outcomes.

Table 6. Regression Analysis for Social Responsibility Perceptions

Dependent Variable	Predictor	β	SE	t	p
Influencer Credibility	Perceived Social Responsibility	0.58	0.04	14.27	<0.001
Trust	Perceived Social Responsibility	0.46	0.05	9.63	<0.001
Purchase Intent	Influencer Credibility	0.71	0.03	22.84	<0.001
Purchase Intent	Trust	0.63	0.04	17.42	<0.001

4.7. Parasocial Relationships and Emotional Connection

Development of Parasocial Bonds

Analysis revealed that Turkish consumers develop strong parasocial relationships with influencers. Figure 6 illustrates the relationship between following duration and parasocial relationship strength.
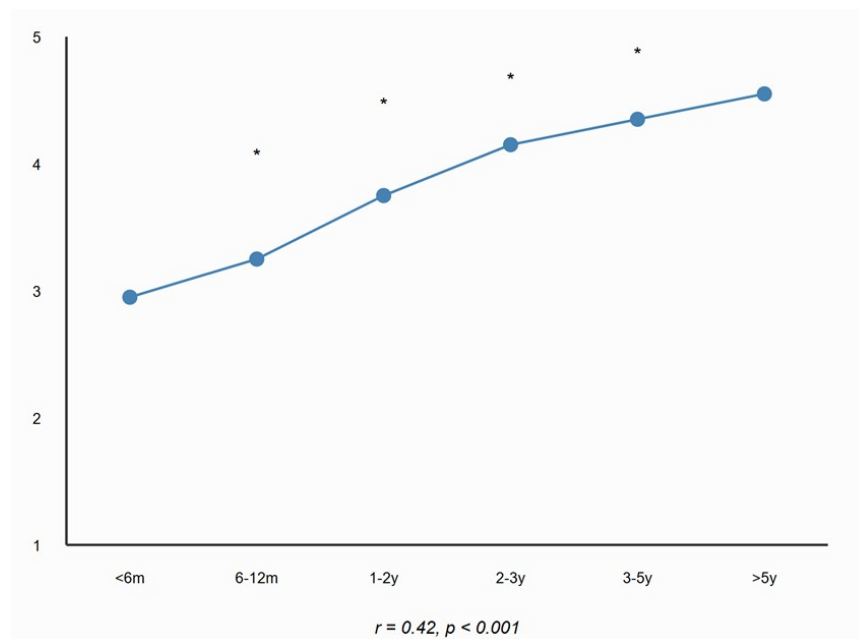

Figure 6. Following Duration and Parasocial Relationship Strength

4.8. Trust Transfer Mechanisms

Structural equation modeling showed that parasocial relationship strength significantly predicted purchase intent both directly and indirectly through trust. Table 7 presents these results.

Table 7. Direct and Indirect Effects of Parasocial Relationships on Purchase Intent

Path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	95% CI for Indirect Effect	Total Effect
Parasocial Relationship → Purchase Intent	0.45***	0.23***	[0.18, 0.29]	0.68***
Parasocial Relationship → Trust	0.37***	-	-	0.37***
Trust → Purchase Intent	0.63***	-	-	0.63***

*Note: *** p < 0.001*

Visual Evidence and Transformation Narratives

4.9. Visual Demonstration of Product Efficacy

The analysis revealed that visual evidence plays a crucial role in persuading Turkish consumers. Table 8 compares engagement metrics across different types of product demonstration content.

Table 8. Engagement Metrics by Content Demonstration Type

Content Type	Average Comment Count	Average Like Count	Purchase Intent Expressions (%)
Before-After Demonstrations	457.3	28,462.5	36.7%
Application Demonstrations	382.6	22,814.2	28.9%
Lifestyle Integration	213.8	15,637.4	17.3%
Verbal Description Only	123.7	7,683.1	9.8%

Transformation Narratives

Regression analysis showed that perceived transformation potential significantly predicted purchase intent, with age moderating this relationship. Figure 7 illustrates this interaction effect.
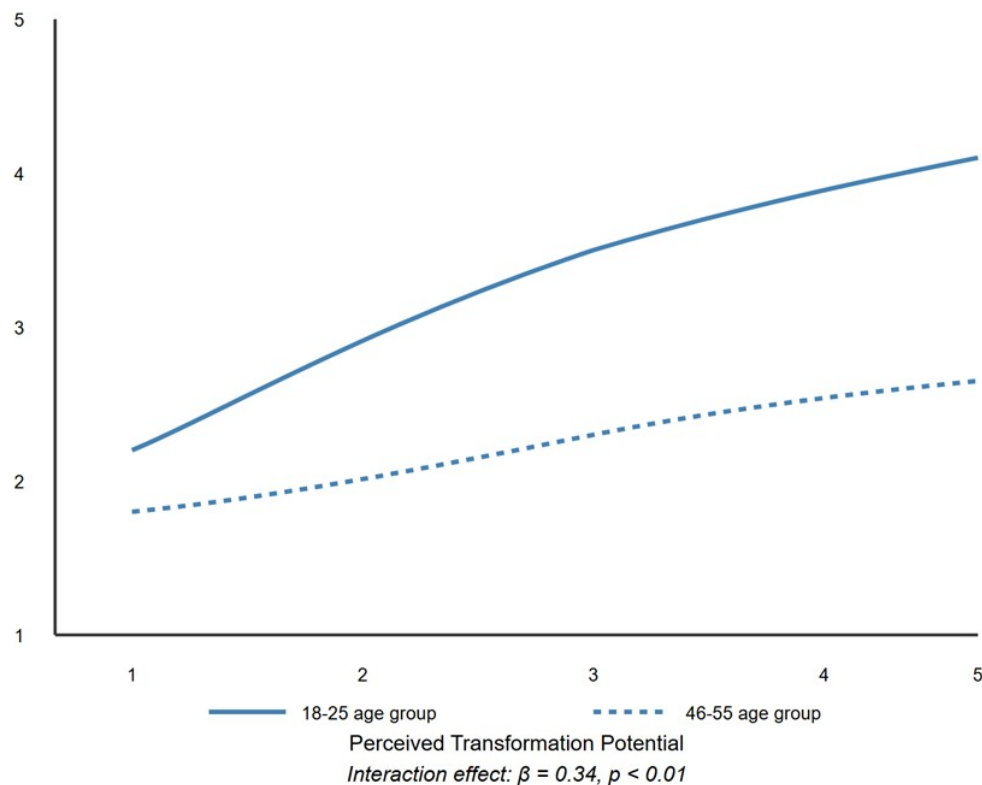

Interaction effect: $\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.01$

Figure 7. Interaction Between Age and Transformation Potential on Purchase Intent

4.10. Economic Considerations and Value Perception

Price Sensitivity and Value Assessment

The data revealed significant economic consciousness among Turkish consumers. Table 9 presents the correlation between income level and price sensitivity measures.

Table 9. Correlation Between Income Level and Price Sensitivity Measures

Price Sensitivity Measure	Correlation with Income (r)	p-value
Importance of price-to-quality ratio	-0.38	<0.001
Likelihood to wait for discounts	-0.42	<0.001
Importance of durability	-0.27	<0.001
Interest in promotions/giveaways	-0.45	<0.001

4.11. Creative Value Expressions

Statistical analysis showed that posts offering explicit value propositions generated significantly higher purchase intent scores compared to posts focusing solely on product attributes. Figure 8 illustrates these differences.
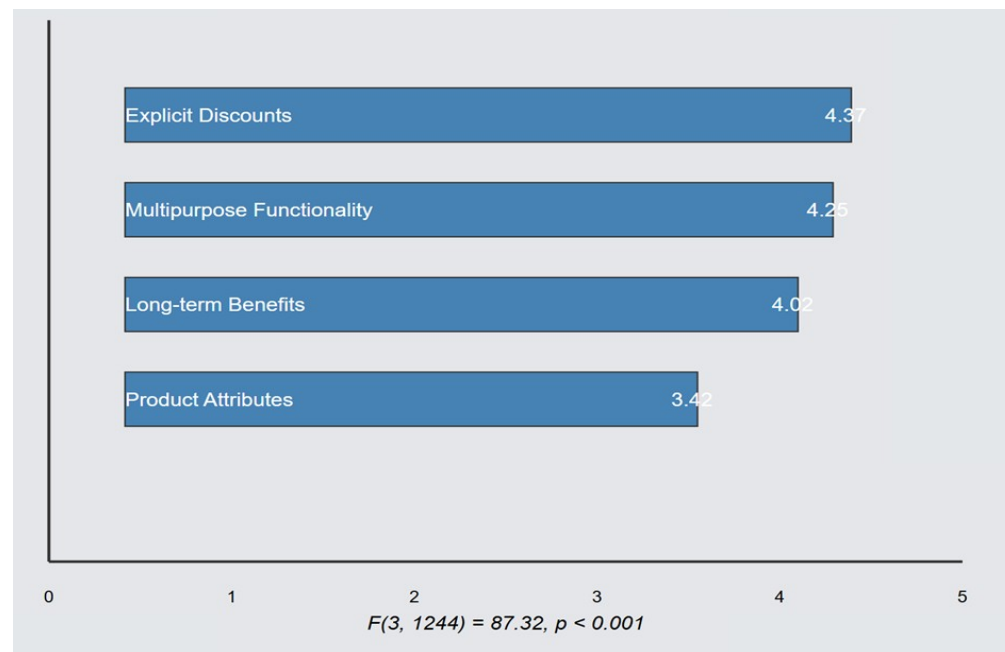

Figure 8. Purchase Intent by Value Proposition Type

4.12. Demographic Variations in Response Patterns

Age-Related Differences

MANOVA revealed significant age-related differences in factors influencing purchase decisions, $F_{(12, 3736)} = 24.37$, $p < 0.001$, Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.83$. Table 10 presents the mean scores across age groups for key influence factors.

Table 10. Mean Scores of Influence Factors by Age Group

Influence Factor	18-25 Mean (SD)	26-35 Mean (SD)	36-45 Mean (SD)	46-55 Mean (SD)	F-value	p-value
Visual Content	4.52 (0.68)	4.31 (0.72)	4.07 (0.89)	3.81 (1.09)	32.17	<0.001
Transformation Narratives	4.47 (0.72)	4.26 (0.78)	3.92 (0.96)	3.64 (1.14)	37.41	<0.001
Informational Content	3.74 (0.96)	3.96 (0.87)	4.18 (0.82)	4.32 (0.78)	29.63	<0.001
Social Responsibility	4.41 (0.76)	4.08 (0.91)	3.74 (1.02)	3.46 (1.18)	42.95	<0.001

Gender Differences

Significant gender differences emerged in response patterns, $F(4, 1243) = 19.82$, $p < 0.001$, Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.94$. Table 11 presents the gender differences in key influence factors.

Table 11. Gender Differences in Key Influence Factors

Influence Factor	Female Mean (SD)	Male Mean (SD)	t-value	p-value
Relationship Factors	4.24 (0.81)	3.67 (1.05)	11.53	<0.001
Status Signaling	3.41 (1.12)	3.89 (0.94)	8.72	<0.001
Visual Evidence	4.52 (0.68)	4.13 (0.92)	9.06	<0.001
Functional Attributes	3.87 (0.93)	4.31 (0.77)	9.86	<0.001

Figure 9 presents an integrated model of the factors influencing Turkish consumers' online purchase decisions based on influencer marketing.
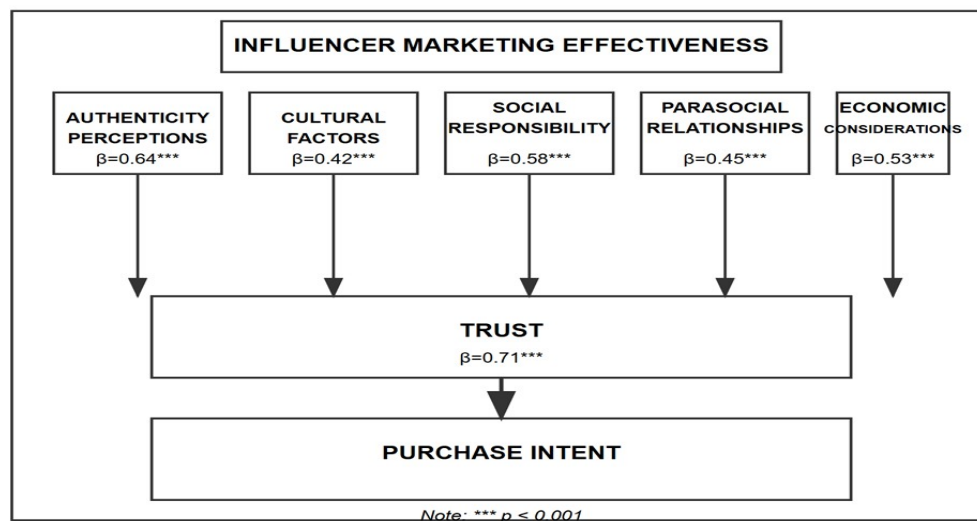

Figure 9. Integrated Model of Influencer Marketing Effectiveness in Turkey

These findings demonstrate the complex interplay of psychological, cultural, and socioeconomic factors shaping Turkish consumers' responses to influencer marketing, with important implications for brand strategy development.

5.Discussion

This study provides comprehensive insights into the factors influencing Turkish consumers' online purchase decisions based on influencer marketing. By examining the interplay of psychological, cultural, and socioeconomic variables, our research extends existing theoretical frameworks in several important ways. The following discussion synthesizes our findings within the context of established theories and highlights the distinctive characteristics of the Turkish consumer landscape.

5.1. Source Credibility and Authenticity Perceptions

Our findings strongly support Source Credibility Theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951), demonstrating that perceived authenticity significantly impacts purchase intent among Turkish consumers ($\beta=0.64$, $p<0.001$). The structural equation modeling results revealed that authenticity was the highest-ranked factor in purchase decision-making, with 78.3% of respondents rating it as "very important" or "extremely important." This aligns with previous research by Ohanian (1990) and Amos et al. (2008), who established strong connections between source credibility and persuasive outcomes.

However, our research extends this theoretical framework by identifying specific authenticity assessment mechanisms employed by Turkish consumers. The three primary strategies—historical consistency (32.7%),

cross-platform verification (27.9%), and lifestyle-product alignment (39.4%)—represent sophisticated evaluation practices that have not been previously documented in the Turkish context. The predominance of lifestyle-product alignment suggests that Turkish consumers are particularly attentive to congruence between influencers' established personal brands and the products they promote.

The mediating role of brand-influencer congruence (indirect effect = 0.41, 95% CI [0.36, 0.47]) further emphasizes the complex cognitive processes underlying authenticity assessment. These findings extend previous work by Kamins and Gupta (1994) and Lee and Watkins (2016) by demonstrating how congruence functions as both an independent predictor and a mediating variable in the authenticity-trust-purchase intent pathway.

5.2. Parasocial Relationships and Cultural Context

The Parasocial Interaction Theory (Horton & Wohl, 1956) provides a valuable framework for understanding the strong emotional connections between Turkish consumers and influencers. Our analysis revealed a significant correlation ($r = 0.42$, $p<0.001$) between following duration and parasocial relationship strength, with these relationships serving as robust predictors of purchase intent both directly ($\beta=0.45$, $p<0.001$) and indirectly through trust (indirect effect = 0.23, 95% CI [0.18, 0.29]).

What distinguishes our findings from previous parasocial interaction research (e.g., Labrecque, 2014; Chung & Cho, 2017) is the distinctive relationship-focused communication pattern observed among Turkish consumers. The predominance of relationship-focused comments (64.5%) over transaction-focused comments (28.7%) reflects the high-context communication style characteristic of Turkish culture. This aligns with Hall's (1976) conceptualization of high-context cultures, where relationships and emotional connections take precedence over transactional efficiency.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory provides additional context for interpreting these findings. Turkey's relatively high collectivism score helps explain why consumers rated relationship quality with influencers ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.93$) as significantly more important than information quality about products ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.02$), $t(1247) = 8.65$, $p<0.001$. This prioritization of relational aspects over functional attributes represents a culturally specific manifestation of parasocial relationships that differs from patterns observed in more individualistic consumer markets (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019).

5.3. Turkish Beauty Ideals and Aesthetic Preferences

Our research identified distinctive Turkish beauty ideals that significantly influence consumer responses to influencer content. The frequency analysis of cultural beauty terms revealed that concepts like "radiant/clear", "baby-like", and "clean" appeared substantially more often in positive purchase intent comments (72.3%, 43.8%, and 48.7%, respectively) compared to negative intent comments (11.6%, 8.2%, and 9.3%, respectively).

These findings extend Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory by illuminating specific manifestations of cultural values in consumer aesthetics. The preference for natural, radiant appearance aligns with Turkey's moderate uncertainty avoidance, where excessive artificiality might be perceived as inauthentic or untrustworthy. The significant gender differences in traditional beauty ideal preferences—with female respondents ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.72$) rating these ideals higher than male respondents ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.93$), $t(1246) = 14.31$, $p<0.001$—further illustrate how cultural values intersect with gender expectations to shape consumer behavior.

5.4. Social Responsibility and Ethical Consumption

Perhaps the most striking finding related to our third research question was the strong boycott consciousness among Turkish consumers, particularly younger demographics. The age-related differences in boycott participation based on influencer recommendations—ranging from 72.1% among 18-25-year-olds to 43.8% among 46-55-year-olds, $\chi^2(3) = 47.92$, $p<0.001$—suggest a generational shift in ethical consumption values.

The regression analysis revealed that perceived social responsibility significantly predicted influencer credibility ($\beta=0.58$, $p<0.001$) and trust ($\beta=0.46$, $p<0.001$), which subsequently influenced purchase intent. These findings extend previous research on ethical consumption (e.g., Shaw & Shiu, 2003; Carrigan & Attalla, 2001) by demonstrating how social responsibility considerations are increasingly integrated into influencer evaluation processes, particularly among younger Turkish consumers.

This generational pattern may reflect broader sociopolitical changes in Turkey, where younger generations have been exposed to global discourses on sustainability, environmental responsibility, and social justice through digital media. The integration of these values into consumption decisions represents an important evolution in Turkish consumer culture that has significant implications for influencer marketing strategies.

5.5. Economic Considerations and Value Perception

Our analysis revealed significant economic consciousness among Turkish consumers, with strong negative correlations between income level and various price sensitivity measures, including importance of price-to-quality ratio ($r=-0.38$, $p<0.001$) and likelihood to wait for discounts ($r=-0.42$, $p<0.001$). These findings align with previous research on economic decision-making in emerging markets (e.g., Sharma, 2011; Sheth, 2011), where value optimization often takes precedence over brand loyalty.

The effectiveness of explicit value propositions in generating purchase intent—with explicit discounts (M=4.37) and multipurpose functionality (M=4.25) significantly outperforming product attributes alone (M=3.42), $F(3, 1244) = 87.32$, $p<0.001$—demonstrates the practical implications of this economic consciousness. Influencers who explicitly articulate value propositions, whether through price advantages or functional benefits, generate stronger purchase intentions among Turkish consumers compared to those who focus solely on product features.

5.6. Demographic Variations and Marketing Implications

The significant age-related differences in influence factors, $F(12, 3736) = 24.37$, $p<0.001$, Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.83$, provide valuable insights for market segmentation strategies. Younger consumers (18-25) showed stronger responses to visual content (M=4.52, SD=0.68) and transformation narratives (M=4.47, SD=0.72), while older consumers (46-55) placed greater emphasis on informational content (M=4.32, SD=0.78).

Similarly, the gender differences in key influence factors, $F(4, 1243) = 19.82$, $p<0.001$, Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.94$, reveal distinct preference patterns, with female consumers prioritizing relationship factors (M=4.24, SD=0.81) and visual evidence (M=4.52, SD=0.68), while male consumers placed greater emphasis on functional attributes (M=4.31, SD=0.77) and status signaling (M=3.89, SD=0.94).

These demographic variations interact with the theoretical frameworks discussed earlier, demonstrating how source credibility, parasocial relationships, and cultural factors manifest differently across age and gender segments. The integrated model presented in Figure 9 illustrates these complex interrelationships, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding influencer marketing effectiveness in the Turkish context.

5.7. Theoretical Implications

This research makes several substantial contributions to existing theoretical frameworks. First, it extends Source Credibility Theory by documenting culture-specific authenticity assessment mechanisms and elucidating the mediating role of brand-influencer congruence. Second, it enhances understanding of Parasocial Interaction Theory by demonstrating how these relationships develop and function within a high-context cultural environment. Third, it applies and extends Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory by identifying specific manifestations of cultural values in consumer aesthetics and ethical consumption patterns. The integrated model presented in Figure 9 synthesizes these theoretical contributions, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interrelationships between authenticity perceptions, cultural factors, social responsibility, parasocial relationships, and economic considerations in determining purchase intent. This model advances theoretical understanding of influencer marketing effectiveness within culturally specific contexts.

5.8. Practical Implications

For marketers seeking to leverage influencer partnerships in the Turkish market, several practical implications emerge from our findings:

Prioritize long-term partnerships with influencers whose personal brands naturally align with product characteristics, as lifestyle-product alignment was the most common authenticity assessment mechanism. Invest in relationship-building content that strengthens parasocial bonds between influencers and followers, recognizing that Turkish consumers value relationship quality over transactional efficiency. Develop visual content that resonates with Turkish beauty ideals, emphasizing natural radiance, purity, and youthfulness. Integrate social responsibility messaging into influencer campaigns, particularly when targeting younger consumer segments with strong boycott consciousness. Ensure that influencers clearly communicate value propositions, whether through price advantages, multipurpose functionality, or long-term benefits. Tailor influencer selection and content strategies to account for significant age and gender differences in response patterns. By implementing these strategies, brands can develop more effective influencer marketing campaigns that resonate with the unique characteristics of the Turkish consumer landscape.

6. Conclusion

This comprehensive investigation into factors influencing Turkish consumers' online purchase decisions based on influencer marketing yields valuable insights for both theoretical advancement and practical application.

Through a methodologically rigorous mixed-methods approach incorporating digital ethnography, extensive survey data, and in-depth interviews, we have systematically examined the psychological, cultural, and socioeconomic dimensions of influencer effectiveness in the Turkish consumer context.

Our analysis has revealed several fundamental mechanisms through which influencer marketing affects consumer decision-making in Turkey:

The structural equation modeling demonstrates that perceived authenticity functions as a primary driver of purchase intent ($\beta=0.64$, $p<0.001$), with trust serving as a crucial mediating variable ($\beta=0.71$, $p<0.001$). Turkish consumers employ distinct authenticity assessment mechanisms—lifestyle-product alignment (39.4%), historical consistency (32.7%), and cross-platform verification (27.9%)—representing sophisticated evaluation strategies. The investigation documented specific Turkish cultural factors that significantly influence consumer responses, including distinctive beauty ideals emphasizing natural radiance ("duru"), and high-context communication patterns favoring relationship-focused engagement (64.5% of consumer interactions). These culturally specific elements, contextualized within Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework, provide critical insights into how influencer marketing effectiveness manifests differently in the Turkish market. Our findings demonstrate that ethical considerations substantially impact influencer credibility assessments, particularly among younger demographic segments. The pronounced age-related differences in boycott participation—from 72.1% among 18-25-year-olds to 43.8% among 46-55-year-olds ($\chi^2(3) = 47.92$, $p<0.001$)—suggest an emerging generational shift in consumption values that marketers must recognize. The significant correlation between following duration and parasocial relationship strength ($r=0.42$, $p<0.001$) confirms that emotional connections between Turkish consumers and influencers constitute a substantial driver of purchase decisions, functioning both directly and indirectly through trust mechanisms. The analysis revealed strategic approaches to value assessment among Turkish consumers, with content offering explicit value propositions generating significantly higher purchase intent compared to content focusing solely on product attributes ($F(3, 1244) = 87.32$, $p<0.001$).

Despite its contributions, this study presents several methodological limitations that warrant acknowledgment. The cross-sectional design constrains causal inferences, particularly regarding the temporal development of parasocial relationships. While the sample incorporated diverse demographic segments, its focus on digitally engaged urban consumers potentially limits generalizability to rural or less technologically connected populations. These limitations suggest promising avenues for future research. Longitudinal studies examining how influencer-consumer relationships evolve over time would provide valuable insights into causality questions. Comparative cross-cultural investigations could further distinguish universal aspects of influencer effectiveness from culturally specific patterns. Additionally, future research could explore how emerging social media formats and technologies transform consumer engagement with influencer content.

The Turkish e-commerce landscape presents a fascinating blend of Western and Eastern cultural influences, rapid digital adoption, and evolving consumer values. This research demonstrates that effective influencer marketing in such a context requires sophisticated understanding of both universal psychological principles and culturally specific consumption patterns. By integrating these considerations into their strategies, brands can develop more authentic, engaging, and ultimately effective influencer partnerships that resonate with Turkish consumers. As social media continues to transform marketing practices globally, this research provides a methodologically robust foundation for understanding how these transformations manifest within specific cultural contexts. The findings not only advance theoretical understanding of influencer marketing effectiveness but also offer practical guidance for navigating the complex and evolving landscape of social media influence in Turkey and similar emerging markets.

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