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Olilo, Rebecca
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**EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER ATTRIBUTES ON CONSUMER
PURCHASE INTENTIONS OF SOFT DRINK BRANDS IN NAIROBI COUNTY,
KENYA**



**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
COMMERCE OF STRATHMORE UNIVERSITY**

MAY 2025

DECLARATION

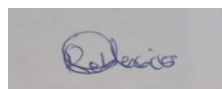
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Name of Candidate: Rebecca Awuor Olilo

Student No: 171737

Signature:



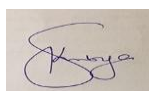
Date: 28.05.2025

Approval

The research thesis of Rebecca Olilo was reviewed and approved for examination by

Name of Supervisor: Dr Stella Nyongesa

Signature:



Date: 30th May 2025



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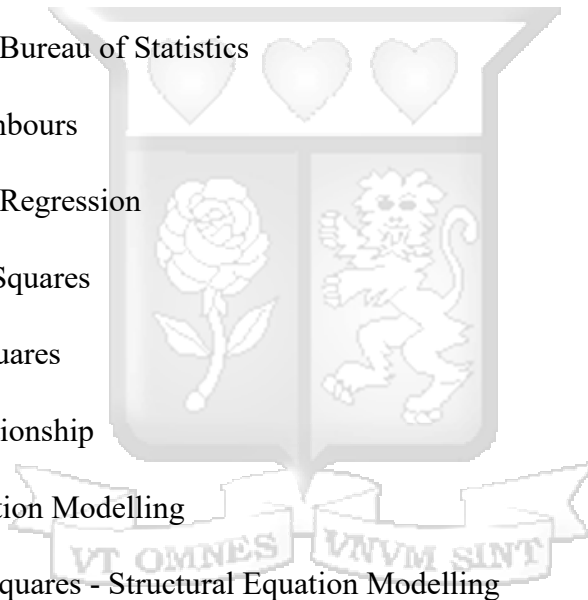
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AR	Augmented Reality
CAQ	California Q-Sort
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSO	County Statistics Office
e-WOM	Electronic Word of Mouth
GPS	Global Positioning System
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
KNN	K-Nearest Neighbours
MLR	Multiple Linear Regression
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
PLS	Partial Least Squares
PSR	Parasocial Relationship
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modelling
SMI	Social Media Influencer
SVR	Support Vector Regression
UGC	User-Generated Content
VR	Virtual Reality



ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effect of social media influencer attributes on consumer purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County, Kenya. The general objective was to determine the effect of social media influencer attributes on consumer purchase intentions for soft drinks in Nairobi County. Specific objectives included examining the effects of social media influencer trustworthiness, adaptability, reach, intimacy, and attractiveness on consumer purchase intentions. Grounded in Parasocial Relationship Theory, Source Credibility Theory, and Social Learning Theory, the study employed a positivist philosophy and a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design. The target population comprised consumers aged 18-35 who were active social media users and soft drink consumers in Nairobi County. Using the DHS formula, a sample size of 135 respondents was determined. Primary data was collected through online questionnaires with Likert scales, administered across major social media platforms. The study ensured research quality through validity and reliability tests, including Cronbach's alpha. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression using SPSS v28. The results indicated significant positive relationships between the independent variables (social media influencer attributes) and the dependent variable (purchase intentions). The study leveraged statistics, including B-coefficients and p-values, which revealed the strength and significance of these relationships. The R-squared value demonstrated that the regression model explained a substantial portion of the variance in consumer purchase intentions. The study concluded that social media influencer trustworthiness, adaptability, reach, intimacy, and attractiveness all have positive and significant effects on consumer purchase intentions for soft drinks in Nairobi County. These findings provide valuable insights for marketers and businesses in the Kenyan soft drink industry, highlighting the importance of carefully selecting social media influencers based on these key attributes. The study recommended that future studies should investigate the long-term effects of influencer marketing on consumer brand loyalty, particularly to soft drink brands.



CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

In today's digital age, the traditional marketing landscape is facing a crisis of consumer trust and engagement (Johnson, 2015). A staggering 96% of consumers distrust traditional advertising, with 69% actively avoiding it (Tokeley, 2021). This erosion of trust has led to a significant decline in the effectiveness of conventional marketing strategies, leaving businesses struggling to connect with their target audiences and maintain market share (Radin et al, 2007). The soft drink industry has been hit hard by this shift, with global sales declining by 3.5% annually since 2015 (Euromonitor International, 2024). Amidst this challenging environment, social media influencers (SMIs) have emerged as a potential solution, offering a more authentic and relatable form of marketing (Ebulueme & Vijayakumar, 2024). These influencers, ranging from celebrities to niche experts, leverage their significant following on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok to promote products and brands (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Influencers' effectiveness stems from the parasocial relationships (PSRs) they build with their followers, creating a sense of trust and connection that traditional advertising struggles to achieve (Masuda et al., 2019).

However, while the global SMI marketing industry is expected to reach \$24.1 billion by 2025 (Markets and Markets, 2020), its effectiveness varies significantly across different regions and cultures. In Europe, for example, the SMI marketing industry is well-established and heavily regulated, with an indicated growth to €11.2 billion by 2025 (IAB Europe, 2021). North African countries, particularly Egypt, have experienced rapid growth in SMI marketing, with a 70% annual increase since 2018 (El-Sayed & Hassan, 2023). West Africa, led by Nigeria, is witnessing a surge in SMI marketing, expected to reach \$100 million by 2025 (Ogunlesi & Adebayo, 2022). In South Africa, 76% of marketers utilized SMI marketing in 2021, primarily on Instagram (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2022). In Kenya, where 87% of marketers consider SMI collaborations essential for their strategies (Odero & Mutua, 2023), there is a critical lack of well-developed metrics to measure the effectiveness of these strategies across the country's diverse cultural landscape and various social media platforms (Lou & Yuan, 2019). This study sought to address this gap by examining the role of social media influencer attributes in advertising for soft drink brands on social media in Nairobi County, Kenya. Specifically, it investigated the effect of parasocial relationships (PSR) on Kenyan followers' purchase intentions for soft drinks in Nairobi County,

Kenya, the personal attributes of SMIs that contribute to PSR formation within the Kenyan context and finally the effectiveness of SMI marketing strategies across different social media platforms in Kenya.

As discussed by Kotler and Armstrong (2018), consumer buyer behaviour plays a pivotal role in business performance, as it directly impacts sales, market share, and overall profitability. They further highlight that insights into how consumers make purchasing decisions allow businesses to tailor their products, marketing strategies, and customer experiences to meet consumer needs and preferences effectively. Furthermore, they concur that consumer buyer behaviour encompasses the processes and factors that influence a consumer's choice to acquire, use, or dispose of products or services. The study of consumer buyer behaviour is essential for marketers to develop effective strategies and for researchers to understand the complexities of consumer decision-making (Stankevich, 2017).

There are a variety of factors that affect consumer purchase intentions as argued by various scholars. For instance according to Solomon et al. (2016), these factors include personal factors (such as demographics, lifestyle, personality, and self-concept), psychological factors (motivation, perception, learning, attitudes, and beliefs), social factors (family, reference groups, roles, and status), cultural factors (culture, subculture, and social class), economic factors (income, price sensitivity, and economic conditions), and marketing mix factors (product, price, place, and promotion). In addition to these factors, social media SMIs have emerged as a significant factor affecting consumer buyer behaviour, particularly in the digital age. SMIs fall under the category of social factors, acting as a new form of reference group for consumers and their role in consumer buyer behaviour is multifaceted and impactful (De Veirman et al., 2017).

Consumers today are deeply intertwined with social media ecosystems (Pew Research Center, 2023). Consequently, when contemplating online purchases, they place greater trust in user-generated content and peer recommendations circulating within social networks, rather than traditional marketing sources (Thoumrungroje, 2014). Therefore, SMIs who create and share user-generated content on various platforms, are seen as more effective than traditional marketing channels in influencing consumer purchasing behaviour (Bahtar & Muda, 2016). The phenomenon is like celebrity endorsements in traditional media, but with a higher degree of engagement and content-driven interactions. SMIs establish parasocial relationships (PSRs) one-sided relationships

that develop over time since fans engage with the content. Although communication is often limited and not actually mutual, such pseudo-interactions produce a sense of closeness that enhances the power of SMIs to affect consumer purchase behavior (Masuda et al., 2019).

1.1.1 Social Media Influencer Attributes

The term social media can be conceptualized through multiple lenses, each offering unique insights into its nature and effect on modern communication and marketing (Carr & Hayes, 2015). From a technological standpoint, social media encompasses a suite of software-based digital platforms, commonly taking the form of apps and websites, social media platforms allow users to produce, distribute, and interact with digital content within virtual communities and networks (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This perspective emphasizes prominent platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) as distinct digital ecosystems with their features and user bases.

From a marketing perspective, social media represents a powerful digital channel through which brands can engage consumers, disseminate advertising messages, and foster two-way communication (Tuten & Solomon, 2018). However, a broader interpretation frames social media not merely as technological tools or marketing channels but as digital spaces where individuals conduct significant portions of their lives, forming communities, sharing experiences, and shaping opinions (van Dijck, 2013).

This holistic view shifts focus from the technological underpinnings to the human activities and interactions occurring within these environments. In this context, social media becomes less about specific platforms and more about the social dynamics they facilitate, primarily centered around information sharing and interpersonal influence (Kietzmann et al., 2011). In marketing terms, this is often conceptualized as a form of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), where consumers' opinions and experiences can rapidly spread through digital networks (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Within this ecosystem, SMIs have emerged as key players. These individuals have amassed large audiences on social media and are able to shape their followers' opinions, behaviors, and buying choices, largely because they are seen as credible, knowledgeable, influential, or personally relatable figures (De Veirman et al., 2017). SMIs leverage their authenticity and credibility, engagement, and reach to create content that resonates with their followers, often blurring the lines between personal recommendations and sponsored content (Lou & Yuan, 2019). They do this

through developing PSRs which are illusory interpersonal connections that develop between media consumers and media personalities or characters (Horton & Wohl, 1956). In the context of social media, these relationships emerge between followers and SMIs through repeated exposure and perceived interactions over time (Labrecque, 2014).

SMIs are expected to possess a diverse array of attributes and qualities that enable them to effectively engage their audience and exert influence (Freberg et al., 2011). These characteristics span multiple dimensions, including authenticity and credibility, engagement and interactivity, content creation skills, relatability and accessibility, trustworthiness, charisma and personality, niche expertise, adaptability, community building, and cultural awareness (Audrezet et al., 2020). Key attributes include perceived honesty, consistency in messaging, expertise in their niche, ability to foster two-way communication, high-quality content creation, relatability, transparent brand partnerships, unique personal brand, in-depth knowledge of their field, adaptability to trends, community-building skills, and cultural sensitivity (Lou & Yuan, 2019). These attributes collectively contribute to an influencer's ability to build strong PSRs with their followers, enhancing their persuasive power and maintaining long-term relevance in the dynamic social media landscape (Chung & Cho, 2017). By embodying these qualities, SMIs can create a sense of intimacy with their audience, provide valuable insights and information, and foster a loyal community (Marwick, 2015). This multifaceted approach to influence allows them to navigate the complex world of social media marketing while maintaining authenticity and trust with their followers (Audrezet et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

For SMIs, their efficacy is typically gauged by metrics of audience engagement, such as the quantity of likes, comments, shares per post, and their overall follower count (Freberg et al., 2011). Research in celebrity studies indicates that a substantial social media following can yield significant advantages. For instance, Jin and Phua (2014) demonstrated a positive correlation between a celebrity's follower count and their perceived social influence, suggesting that a larger audience can amplify an influencer's persuasive power and market value.

In a study by Arora et al. (2019), in addition to social media influence measurement, their research incorporated feature engineering to extract relevant metrics from social media data, including engagement, outreach, sentiment, and growth. These features were used to model the effect on consumers and compute an influencer index. The study applied multiple machine learning

regression models (OLS, KNN, SVR, Lasso) to calculate a cumulative influencer score based on these features. The approach provided a quantitative and automated way to measure influence, compared to traditional methods. It considered consumers' reactions to posts as features to measure influence across platforms. The model can be applied generically to identify SMIs on any social media platform. This approach enables brands to identify SMIs who best align with their goals and target audience. The influencer indices produced can then be leveraged by e-commerce platforms and businesses to enhance their social media marketing efforts, boost engagement, and expand their reach, as demonstrated by Arora et al.

1.1.2 Consumer Purchase Intentions

Consumer purchase intention refers to the likelihood of a consumer acquiring a specific product (Dodds et al., 1991; Grewal et al., 1998). It involves an evaluation process where customers analyze their motivations for buying a particular product or brand (Shah et al., 2012). Hoffman et al. (2003), on the other hand, define purchase intention as the willingness demonstrated by a consumer to invest in a specific product or service. Bagozzi (1983) characterizes intentions as a deliberate state of decision-making in which an individual makes a personal commitment regarding their future actions. In his words: "Intentions constitute a willful state of choice where one makes a self-implicated statement as to a future course of action." This definition emphasizes the voluntary and self-directed nature of intentions, highlighting their role in shaping an individual's anticipated behaviors.

Consumer purchase intention refers to a customer's likelihood or willingness to buy a product or service, often measured to predict future sales in market research (Tirtiroglu & Management, 2008). According to Kotler and Armstrong (2010), this process typically unfolds in six stages: awareness, knowledge, interest, preference, persuasion, and ultimately, the purchase decision. Research indicates that consumers are more inclined to purchase products that have received positive feedback from other users (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1991; Zeithaml, 1988). Consequently, products with higher customer ratings tend to have a greater probability of being purchased. This correlation between ratings and purchase likelihood serves as a valuable tool for predicting potential customer behavior (Dehghani, 2013).

From the various definitions in literature, consumer purchase intention can thus be defined as a psychological construct representing an individual's conscious plan to acquire a specific product

or service (Ajzen, 1991; Spears & Singh, 2004). This multifaceted concept encompasses the consumer's willingness, likelihood, and readiness to make a purchase, arising from a thorough evaluation of personal motivations, product attributes, and market conditions (Dodds et al., 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). It serves as a crucial predictive indicator for future consumer behavior, making it invaluable for market research and sales forecasting (Morwitz et al., 2007). The concept synthesizes key elements from various sources, including the likelihood and willingness to purchase, the evaluation process and motivations, the deliberate nature of intentions, and the state of readiness relevant to market surveys (Zeithaml et al., 1996; Wu et al., 2011). As such, consumer purchase intention is a fundamental metric for understanding and anticipating consumer decision-making in the marketplace (Shah et al., 2012).

Purchase intentions are measured at varying levels of product specificity, from individual models to broad categories, with significant differences between commercial and academic research approaches. Commercial studies typically focus on specific brands or product variants, such as different product flavors, while academic research often examines intentions at the broader product category level. This distinction is evident in studies by Jamieson and Bass (1989) and Pickering and Isherwood (1974), which investigate consumer intentions across wider product groupings. The chosen level of specificity in measuring purchase intentions aligns with the distinct objectives and methodologies of commercial and academic settings, each designed to provide insights most relevant to their respective goals.

In a prior study, Internet purchase intention was measured using a single-item scale adapted from Taylor and Baker (1994). This item gauged participants' intent to purchase a clothing item they had seen during the online experiment, specifically within a set timeframe namely, the following year. The assessment utilized a 7-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). In this study, consumer purchase intention was measured by employing a quantitative method, specifically a questionnaire, to capture a holistic view of buying intentions. The questionnaire assessed not only the likelihood of purchase but also its strength and timing. By using this approach, researchers can gain deeper insights into consumer intentions, including the strength and timing of potential purchases, which can effectively inform marketing strategies, product development, and sales forecasts.

1.1.3 Soft Drinks Industry in Kenya

The Kenyan soft drinks industry presents a dynamic and complex landscape, characterized by steady growth yet facing significant challenges that necessitate innovative marketing strategies (Abdallah, 2006). The sector comprises approximately 25 major players, including multinational corporations and local manufacturers, serving an estimated consumer base of 30 million people (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2023; Euromonitor International, 2023).

Despite a compound annual growth rate of 5.2% between 2018 and 2023, the industry grapples with various hurdles (Euromonitor International, 2023). The market is dominated by foreign-owned firms, with Coca-Cola Beverages Africa (CCBA) holding over 70% market share, followed by other international brands like PepsiCo (Competition Authority of Kenya, 2019). This oligopolistic structure creates barriers for local manufacturers such as Kevian (4.76% market share) and Softa Bottling Company, who struggle to compete with the extensive resources of multinational corporations (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). The industry encompasses a diverse range of products, including carbonated soft drinks, juices, bottled water, and energy drinks, with a market penetration rate of 65% in urban areas and 40% in rural regions (Competition Authority of Kenya, 2019; Euromonitor International, 2023).

Key challenges faced by the industry include increasing health concerns, regulatory pressure such as the sugar tax implemented in 2021, declining per capita consumption in urban areas (dropping by 3.2% annually since 2020), and competition from healthier beverage options (Ministry of Health, Kenya, 2022; Euromonitor International, 2023). A study by Nganga et al. (2020) found that 62% of Kenyan millennials are actively seeking healthier beverage options, posing a significant threat to traditional soft drink brands.

Despite these challenges, the industry also presents several opportunities. These include growing demand for healthier options like low-sugar variants and functional beverages, expansion into rural markets with lower penetration rates, development of locally inspired flavors, and leveraging e-commerce and digital marketing strategies (Fabbian, 2021; Singha, 2024). Social media influencer marketing has emerged as a potential solution, particularly for youth-oriented products, although its effect on the Kenyan soft drink market remains understudied (Kiarie-Makara et al., 2021).

This study sought to address these gaps by examining the role of social media influencer attributes in advertising for both foreign-owned and local soft drink brands in Kenya. By focusing on SMIs

like lifestyle blogger Sharon Mundia and fitness personality Frankie Just Gym It, who collaborate with both international and domestic beverage brands (Ochieng', 2023), this research aimed to provide crucial insights into the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies in overcoming the challenges faced by the soft drink industry in Kenya. The findings are expected to be particularly valuable for both local manufacturers seeking to compete with multinational corporations and foreign-owned firms aiming to navigate the complex Kenyan market, potentially leading to more effective, culturally sensitive marketing strategies that address health concerns, adapt to changing consumer preferences, and leverage the growing importance of e-commerce and digital marketing in the Kenyan market.

1.2 Problem Statement

The rapid growth of social media influencer marketing has significantly affected consumer behavior across various industries, including the soft drinks sector in Kenya (Githaiga, 2024). Despite the increasing adoption of influencer marketing strategies by beverage companies, there is a critical lack of understanding regarding the specific influence of social media influencer attributes on consumer purchase intentions for soft drinks in the Kenyan market (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). This knowledge gap hinders the effective utilization of influencer marketing strategies and limits the ability of brands to optimize their digital marketing efforts in this dynamic and growing market. This research addressed three key gaps: conceptual, contextual, and methodological. From a conceptual perspective, there was a lack of in-depth knowledge about how social media influencer attributes shape consumer decision-making when it comes to soft drink purchases in Kenya. This included the role of parasocial relationships (PSRs) and the specific attributes of SMIs that contributed to their effectiveness. While research has explored PSRs in other contexts (Chung & Cho, 2017; Labrecque, 2014), their specific role in influencing purchase intentions for soft drinks in Kenya remained unclear. The processes through which social media influencer attributes affect consumer decision-making for soft drinks in Kenya are not well understood, creating a significant conceptual gap in the literature.

Contextually, research is scarce on how to effectively leverage social media influencer attributes in the Kenyan soft drinks market, considering local cultural nuances, consumer preferences, and the unique characteristics of the Kenyan digital landscape. As highlighted by Euromonitor International (2023) and the Communications Authority of Kenya (2023), the Kenyan market has

distinct features that require tailored approaches. While studies have shown the general effectiveness of influencer marketing in various contexts (Appiah et al., 2019; Boateng & Okoe, 2015), the soft drinks industry in Kenya remains understudied. This lack of context-specific research limits the ability of marketers to develop effective strategies for the Kenyan market. Methodologically, there was insufficient empirical evidence on the effect of social media influencer attributes in driving purchase intentions for soft drinks among Kenyan consumers, particularly in comparison to traditional marketing methods.

The absence of focused research has made it hard to develop effective influencer marketing campaigns tailored to the Kenyan environment. Besides that, the limited availability of sound methodological frameworks for examining the impact of influencer marketing on the soft drink industry in Kenya indicates a large existing research gap. This research sought to address these conceptual, contextual, and methodological shortcomings by investigating the effect of social media influencer attributes on consumer buying intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County. In doing so, it offered valuable insights for marketers, brand managers, and researchers seeking to understand and implement influencer-based campaigns in this specific market (Tuten & Solomon, 2018; Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). The findings of the research not only contribute to the body of knowledge but also offer practical insight that may shape marketing strategy going forward and guide budgetary allocations for online promotions within the Kenyan soft drink sector.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 Broader objective

To determine the effect of social media influencer attributes on consumer purchase intentions of soft drinks brands in Nairobi County, Kenya.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- i) To determine the effect of trustworthiness of the influencer in changing the consumers' purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County.
- ii) To establish the effect of the influencer adaptability in shaping consumer purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County.
- iii) To establish the effect of the influencer's reach on purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County.

- iv) To determine the effect of the influencer intimacy on consumer purchase intentions of soft drinks in Nairobi County.
- v) To establish the effect of the influencer's attractiveness on purchase intentions of soft drinks in Nairobi County.

1.4 Research Questions

- i) What is the effect of the trustworthiness of the influencer in changing the consumers' purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County?
- ii) What is the effect of the influencer adaptability on consumer purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County?
- iii) To what extent does the influencer's reach affect purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County?
- iv) What effect does influencer intimacy have on consumer purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County?
- v) What is the effect of the influencer's attractiveness affect purchase intentions of soft drinks brands in Nairobi County?

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study encompassed the exploration of social media influencer attributes effect on consumer purchase intentions within Kenya's soft drinks market. Conceptually, it examined key influencer attributes such as trustworthiness, adaptability, cultural awareness, reach, intimacy, and attractiveness (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). The research investigated the intricacies of the Kenyan soft drinks market, considering local consumer behaviors and preferences (Euromonitor International, 2023), while analyzing influencer marketing strategies and their effect in the Kenyan context (Appiah et al., 2019; Githaiga, 2024).

Theoretically, the study leveraged on the Parasocial Relationship (PSR) theory (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Labrecque, 2014), Source Credibility Theory (Hovland et al., 1953), and Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1960s) to understand the dynamics of social media influence and its effect on consumer attitudes and behaviors. Methodologically, the research employed a quantitative approach, utilizing a questionnaire with Likert scales to gauge consumer attitudes and purchase intentions (Kothari, 2014). Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) was used to analyze scores from

the questionnaire to evaluate the indicators and their effect on consumer behavior (Hair et al., 2019).

The study focused on current social media influencer practices and consumer behaviors, with market data references from 2018-2023 (Euromonitor International, 2023). It adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design to capture data at a specific point in time, providing a snapshot of the current state of SMI marketing in Kenya's soft drinks industry (Kumar, 2014). Given the rapidly evolving landscape of social media and influencer marketing, the research was designed to be conducted over a 2–3-month period, ensuring the relevance and timeliness of the findings in the fast-paced digital marketing environment (Tuten, 2023).

The population for this study comprised consumers aged 18-35 who are active social media users and soft drink consumers in Nairobi County, Kenya (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2023; Statista, 2024; Euromonitor International, 2023). This demographic was chosen due to their high engagement with social media platforms and their significant influence on soft drink consumption trends (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). The estimated population size for this group in Nairobi County is approximately 643,500 individuals (Nairobi City County, 2024).

Variables in the study were measured using a structured questionnaire with 5-point Likert scales. The independent variables (influencer attributes) were operationalized as follows; Trustworthiness was measured through items assessing perceived honesty and reliability of SMIs (Ohanian, 1990); Adaptability was evaluated based on the influencer's ability to adjust content to different platforms and audiences (Lou & Yuan, 2019); Reach was assessed through the perceived size and engagement of the influencer's follower base (De Veirman et al., 2017); Intimacy was measured by the perceived closeness and relatability of the influencer to their audience (Labrecque, 2014); and Attractiveness was evaluated based on physical appeal and likability of the influencer (Ohanian, 1990). The dependent variable, purchase intention, was measured using established scales adapted from Spears and Singh (2004), assessing likelihood, probability, and willingness to purchase soft drinks promoted by SMIs. All measurements were validated through reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951).

1.6 Significance and Justification of the Study

The significance of this study spans policy, practice, and theory, offering valuable contributions to multiple stakeholders in the realm of influencer marketing for soft drinks in Kenya. From a policy perspective, the research provides crucial insights for policymakers and regulatory bodies in Kenya and similar emerging markets, addressing the growing need for guidelines and regulations in influencer marketing (Appiah et al., 2019; Githaiga, 2024). The study's findings on social media influencer trustworthiness, reach, adaptability, and cultural awareness can inform the development of ethical practices and consumer protection measures, potentially guiding the formulation of disclosure requirements for sponsored content and promoting responsible marketing practices that respect local cultural norms.

In terms of practical significance, this research offers valuable insights for businesses and marketing professionals in the soft drinks industry, particularly in Kenya and similar emerging markets (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). By providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of social media influencer attributes in shaping consumer purchase intentions, the study guides marketing strategy formulation and budget allocation. It enables companies to optimize influencer selection processes and tailor content strategies to leverage impactful influencer attributes such as trustworthiness, adaptability, and attractiveness. The focus on the Kenyan market context facilitates the development of culturally relevant and effective influencer marketing campaigns, while insights into influencer reach and intimacy can inform decisions about prioritizing macro-SMIs or micro-SMIs for more efficient and effective marketing strategies.

Theoretically, this study makes significant contributions to the existing body of knowledge by extending the application of the Parasocial Relationship (PSR) theory to influencer marketing in the Kenyan soft drinks industry (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Labrecque, 2014). It offers important insights into the formation and dynamics of these relationships within a non-Western cultural context, deepening our understanding of cross-cultural consumer behavior in today's digital landscape. The integration of Source Credibility Theory and Social Learning Theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the mechanisms through which social media influencer attributes affect consumer purchase intentions (Bandura, 1977). By examining specific influencer attributes, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the factors driving influencer effectiveness, enriching the academic discourse on influencer marketing and providing

a foundation for future research in this rapidly evolving field, particularly in emerging market contexts.

1.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduces the study on the effect of social media influencer attributes on consumer purchase intentions for soft drinks in Nairobi County, Kenya. It begins by highlighting the crisis of consumer trust in traditional marketing and the emergence of SMIs as a potential solution, particularly in the context of the declining soft drink industry. The chapter provides an overview of the global social media influencer marketing landscape, emphasizing the need for research in the Kenyan context due to the lack of well-developed metrics to measure the effectiveness of influencer strategies across the country's diverse cultural landscape and various social media platforms (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Odero & Mutua, 2023).

The chapter then delves into the conceptualization of consumer social media influencer attributes, purchase intentions, and the soft drinks industry in Kenya. It outlines the research problem, objectives, and questions, focusing on the effects of SMI attributes such as trustworthiness, adaptability, reach, intimacy, and attractiveness on consumer purchase intentions. The scope of the study is detailed, including the theoretical framework based on Parasocial Relationship theory, Source Credibility Theory, and Social Learning Theory. The chapter concludes by highlighting the significance of the study across policy, practice, and theory, emphasizing its potential contributions to policymakers, businesses, and academic discourse in the field of influencer marketing, particularly in the context of the Kenyan soft drinks industry (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Horton & Wohl, 1956; Labrecque, 2014).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a literature review on social media influencer attributes' effect on consumer purchase intentions for soft drinks in Nairobi County. It explores the effect of social media influencer marketing on consumer behavior, particularly in emerging markets (Appel et al., 2020; Communications Authority of Kenya, 2023). Key theories examined include Parasocial Relationship Theory (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Labrecque, 2014), Source Credibility Theory (Hovland et al., 1953), and Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977). The review synthesizes recent studies on influencer marketing effectiveness and Kenyan soft drinks market dynamics (Audrezet et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Kiarie-Makara et al., 2021). It identifies knowledge gaps in the Kenyan context and concludes with a conceptual framework linking influencer attributes to consumer purchase intentions (Hair et al., 2019).

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation is anchored in the Parasocial Relationship (PSR) Theory (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Labrecque, 2014), which serves as the primary framework for understanding the illusory interpersonal relationships between consumers and SMIs. This theory is complemented by the Source Credibility Theory (Hovland et al., 1953) and Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), which provide additional explanations for the relationship between independent variables (SMI attributes) and the dependent variable (consumer purchase intentions). The PSR Theory is chosen as the anchor theory due to its direct relevance to the social media context and its ability to explain the unique bond between SMIs and followers. The Source Credibility Theory offers insights into why certain SMIs are more persuasive, while Social Learning Theory elucidates the mechanisms of influence and cultural nuances in social media contexts.

2.2.1 Parasocial Relationship Theory

Parasocial Relationship (PSR) Theory, initially developed by Horton and Wohl in 1956, describes the illusory interpersonal relationships that media users develop with media personalities. Originally conceptualized in the context of television viewing, this theory has found new relevance in the age of social media, where users can interact more directly with media figures, including SMIs. Horton and Wohl (1956) defined parasocial interaction as a "seeming face-to-face relationship between spectator and performer." In the context of social media, these relationships

are characterized by a sense of intimacy, perceived friendship, and emotional attachment that followers develop towards SMIs despite the lack of true reciprocity in the relationship (Labrecque, 2014).

Numerous researchers have explored the application of PSR Theory to social media influencer marketing. Chung and Cho (2017) found that parasocial relationships with celebrities on social media positively influenced consumers' perceptions of celebrity endorsements and their subsequent purchase intentions. Similarly, Reinikainen et al. (2020) demonstrated that stronger parasocial relationships with SMIs led to higher engagement with sponsored content and increased purchase intentions. In the social media context, PSRs are fostered through various mechanisms. SMIs often share personal stories, behind-the-scenes content, and direct interactions with followers, creating an illusion of intimacy and accessibility (Abidin, 2015). This perceived closeness can lead followers to view SMIs as credible and trustworthy sources of information, potentially increasing the effectiveness of their product endorsements (Bond, 2016).

For the current study on soft drinks in Nairobi County, PSR Theory offers insights into how the perceived relationships between Kenyan consumers and social media influencer attributes may influence purchase intentions. It suggests that SMIs who successfully cultivate strong parasocial relationships with their followers may have a greater influence on their purchasing decisions, potentially outweighing traditional advertising methods. Parasocial Relationship Theory, while widely applied in social media research, faces several criticisms. Critics argue that the theory oversimplifies the nature of online interactions, as modern social media platforms allow for more direct communication between SMIs and followers, potentially creating more reciprocal relationships than the theory initially proposed (Giles, 2002). Additionally, the theory may not fully account for cultural differences in how parasocial relationships are formed and maintained across different societies (Liebers & Schramm, 2019). Measurement challenges also arise when attempting to quantify the strength and effect of parasocial relationships, which can lead to potential inconsistencies in research findings (Dibble et al., 2016).

2.2.2 Source Credibility Theory

The Source Credibility Theory, first proposed in 1953 by Hovland, Janis, and Kelley, held that the salience of any message was particularly affected by source credibility. More than ever these days, particularly in the growing phenomenon of using social media marketing SMIs, it is vital to

establish whether an influencer's credibility defines the perception and then purchasing behavior of consumers. Hovland and coauthors identified two core aspects of source credibility: expertise and trustworthiness. Expertise involves how experienced or well-informed the source is perceived to be, while trustworthiness involves the perceived honesty and believability of the source. These characteristics are reflected on social media to the degree to which the products they endorse are known and spoken about by the SMIs, as well as the degree to which they appear genuine and authentic to their audience (Ohanian, 1990).

Subsequent research has expanded on this theory, with scholars like McCroskey and Teven (1999) adding a third dimension: goodwill. This dimension encompasses the perceived caring and understanding the source has for their audience. In the context of social media SMIs, goodwill can be observed in how SMIs engage with their followers and demonstrate genuine interest in their well-being. The application of Source Credibility Theory to social media influencer marketing has been extensively studied. For example, Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) discovered that the perceived credibility of Instagram SMIs had a notable impact on their followers' purchasing intentions. In a similar study, Lou and Yuan (2019) showed that the credibility of SMIs especially in terms of trustworthiness and attractiveness, positively influenced brand awareness and purchasing intentions among their followers.

Within the context of this research, Source Credibility Theory provides the theoretical basis for examining how SMIs' perceived level of expertise, honesty, and goodwill can affect consumer soft drink purchase intentions. It implies that individuals who are perceived to be experts in drinks, honest endorsers, and genuinely interested in the welfare of their followers will have a better chance at influencing consumers. Source Credibility Theory has also been criticized for potentially oversimplifying the complex process of persuasion by focusing primarily on source characteristics, potentially neglecting other important factors such as message content and audience characteristics (Pornpitakpan, 2004). Critics also argue that the theory doesn't adequately address how credibility can change over time or in different contexts (Metzger et al., 2003). Furthermore, the theory's original conceptualization may reflect Western cultural norms and may not fully capture how credibility is perceived in diverse cultural contexts (Ohanian, 1990).

2.2.3 Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory, initially theorized by Albert Bandura in the 1960s and further developed in his 1977 publication "Social Learning Theory," theorizes that individuals acquire learning from observing and mimicking other people's behavior, attitudes, and emotional responses. Social Learning Theory can be used extensively to explain how SMIs influence consumer behavior. Four core elements of social learning, according to Bandura (1977), are attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation.

These elements are powerfully leveraged in social media influencer marketing. SMIs capture their followers' attention through compelling content and charismatic personas. This engagement leads to retention, as followers internalize the influencer's messages and behaviors, often reinforced through consistent exposure. The impact extends to reproduction, where followers mimic the influencer's actions, including product choices and lifestyle decisions. Finally, motivation drives this emulation, as followers are inspired by the perceived benefits or positive outcomes associated with the influencer's behavior. This framework of social learning theory provides a comprehensive explanation for the effectiveness of influencer marketing in shaping consumer preferences and actions in the digital age.

Several researchers have explored the application of Social Learning Theory to social media influence. For instance, Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) found that Instagram users often look to SMIs as role models, imitating their lifestyle choices and purchasing behaviours. Similarly, Sokolova and Kefi (2020) demonstrated that the perceived attractiveness and credibility of SMIs enhanced followers' intentions to imitate their behaviour, including product purchases. In the context of soft drink brands in Nairobi County, Social Learning Theory suggests that consumers may learn about and develop preferences for certain brands or products by observing and imitating the behaviours of SMIs. SMIs who effectively demonstrate the use and enjoyment of specific soft drink brands may encourage similar behaviors among their followers.

Moreover, it demonstrates the significance of vicarious underpinnings in social learning. When followers observe SMIs being rewarded (e.g., through positive comments, likes, or apparent enjoyment) for consuming certain soft drinks, they may be more likely to engage in similar behaviour (Bandura, 1977). For this study, Social Learning Theory provides a framework for understanding how Kenyan consumers may learn about, develop preferences for, and ultimately

make purchasing decisions regarding soft drink brands based on their observations of and interactions with SMIs. It stresses on the influence of observational learning and shaping consumer behavior, particularly in the highly visual and interactive environment of social media platforms. Social Learning Theory also faces criticism for placing too much emphasis on environmental factors and not enough on internal cognitive processes (Bandura, 1986). Its application in marketing contexts raises ethical concerns about the manipulation of consumer behavior, especially among vulnerable populations like children (Coates et al., 2019). Some argue that the theory doesn't adequately explain how entirely new behaviors emerge, as it focuses primarily on the imitation of existing behaviours (Jarvis, 2012). Lastly, the theory may not fully capture the complexity of social media environments, where users are exposed to multiple, often conflicting models simultaneously (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

This section discusses empirical studies so far available in social media influencer trustworthiness, adaptability, reach, intimacy and attractiveness.

2.3.1 Influencer Trustworthiness and Consumer Purchase Intentions

Social media influencer trustworthiness refers to the perceived honesty, integrity, and reliability of an influencer in their content creation, brand endorsements, and interactions with their audience (Ohanian, 1990). It encompasses the belief that the influencer provides accurate information, maintains authenticity in their recommendations, and acts in the best interest of their followers rather than solely for personal gain (Xiao et al., 2018).

The trustworthiness of SMIs has emerged as a pivotal factor in shaping consumer purchase intentions within the digital marketing landscape, according to De Veirman et al. (2017). De Veirman et al. conducted experiments in Belgium with a sample size of 235 Instagram users that highlighted the unique effectiveness of SMIs, attributing their success to perceived trustworthiness and relatability. This allowed SMIs to forge connections with audiences that often surpass the effect of traditional advertising methods, as indicated by the manipulation t-tests sequential and moderated mediation analysis. Building on this foundation, Lou and Yuan (2019) conducted a cross-sectional online survey involving 538 Instagram users in the United States. The researchers used the Partial Least Squares (PLS) path modelling approach, tested hypothesized relationships using the PLS-SEM algorithm bootstrapping and examined the direct and indirect effects, which

revealed a strong positive correlation between perceived influencer trustworthiness and favorable attitudes towards promoted brands and products, ultimately leading to increased purchase intentions.

Cheung et al. (2022) further solidified these findings through a meta-analysis encompassing 43 studies and data from 315 participants in an online survey in Hong Kong, China. The research underscored the critical role of perceived authenticity in social media influencer marketing effectiveness through PLS-SEM in a two-stage approach, first assessing the measurement model and then evaluating the structural model. The study showed that consumers are much more likely to trust the recommendations of SMIs and develop favorable attitudes toward promoted products when they perceive the SMIs as authentic, leading to increased purchase intentions. Additionally, Cheung et al. highlighted that the success of influencer marketing differs across product types and social media platforms, emphasizing the importance of customizing strategies for specific contexts.

The theoretical underpinnings of influencer trustworthiness can be traced back to Ohanian's (1990) seminal work, which proposed that source credibility comprises three key dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. This framework has since been widely adopted and adapted in social media influencer marketing research. For instance, Ki et al. (2020) applied this model in their study of luxury fashion SMIs, demonstrating that these three factors significantly affect followers' attitudes towards brands and their subsequent purchase intentions. The study, involving a survey of 720 Instagram users in the US, using a mixed-approach research design through open-ended online surveys and structural equation modelling, provided empirical evidence for the enduring relevance of Ohanian's framework in the contemporary digital marketing landscape. The study used confirmatory factor analysis, SEM and bootstrapping to test mediation effects to examine how SMIs' attributes affect followers' needs fulfillment, attachment, and intention to purchase endorsed products, focusing on Instagram SMIs and U.S. consumers.

Lastly, this area reveals significant gaps in understanding the ethical implications of social media influencer marketing and its long-term effects on consumer trust and purchase behavior. There is limited research on how transparency in influencer practices affects long-term consumer trust and purchase intentions. Additionally, there's a need to explore the sustained efficacy of influencer marketing on brand loyalty and repeat purchases, aspects closely tied to trust. These gaps highlight

the importance of investigating the ethical dimensions and enduring effects of influencer trustworthiness on consumer behavior.

2.3.2 Influencer Adaptability and Consumer Purchase Intentions

Social media influencer adaptability refers to an influencer's capacity to adjust their content, communication style, and strategies in response to changing trends, audience preferences, platform dynamics, and market conditions (Lou & Yuan, 2019). It encompasses the ability to pivot across different social media platforms, adapt to new content formats, and modify messaging to align with evolving consumer interests and cultural contexts (Delbaere et al., 2020).

In an increasingly globalized and diverse digital ecosystem, the adaptability of SMIs has emerged as a crucial attribute affecting their effect on consumer purchase intentions (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Audree et al. (2020) conducted a study on influencer marketing primarily in France, with some participants in Canada and Germany. The qualitative study used a three-step approach by first observing and analyzing the content of 36 SMIs, using semi-structured interviews on 27 SMIs, and comparison of declared strategies and authenticity signs for the 5 top SMIs. The data analysis for this study used thematic content analysis and constant comparison methods to analyze interview transcripts. The study examined the importance of SMIs' ability to understand and respect diverse cultural norms, values, and sensitivities, and the results indicated that SMIs who successfully navigate cultural nuances are more effective, particularly when collaborating with international brands or targeting multicultural audiences. This adaptability enables SMIs to tailor their content and messaging to resonate with diverse consumer groups, potentially amplifying their effect on purchase intentions across various markets.

Boerman (2020) further investigated this idea by looking at how SMIs adjust their content and disclosure practices across different cultural settings. In a cross-cultural study conducted in the Netherlands, 192 Instagram users were recruited via social media and personal communication. Participants were shown an overview of an Instagram account along with a screenshot of a post. They then completed an online survey that measured key variables to assess the impact of disclosure on ad recognition and the indirect effects of influencer type. The data was analyzed using ANCOVA mediation and MANCOVA. The findings indicated that SMIs who adapt their strategies to fit local norms and expectations tend to build stronger trust and engagement with their followers. This, in turn, positively influences purchase intentions. Boerman's study highlights the

significance of cultural sensitivity and flexibility in influencer marketing, especially for global campaigns.

Additionally, Schimmelpfennig and Hunt (2020) conducted a conceptual study that investigated the role of cultural adaptation in social media influencer marketing effectiveness. The study analyzed over 50 years of research on celebrity endorsement theories. The authors conducted an extensive literature search to identify relevant studies on celebrity endorsement theories published through March 2019. They used the EBSCO host databases and searched for peer-reviewed articles using keywords related to celebrity endorsements. The authors conducted a qualitative analysis and synthesis of existing literature to develop a comprehensive framework integrating the major celebrity endorsement theories. They analyzed how the different theories explain distinct types of endorsements and proposed a new framework based on product or brand value propositions. The study suggested a comprehensive framework for understanding celebrity endorsement effectiveness based on different theories and the brand's value proposition and that different endorsement strategies may be more effective depending on the brand's value proposition and product category. This research provides further evidence of the importance of adaptability in influencer marketing and its potential effect on consumer purchase intentions in diverse markets.

On the other hand, research in this domain lacks diversity in geographic and cultural contexts, with most studies focusing on Western markets. There's a pressing need for studies in emerging markets and non-Western cultures to understand how SMIs adapt their strategies across different cultural settings. Furthermore, the gap in industry-specific research indicates a need to explore how influencer adaptability varies across various product categories and industries. This research could provide valuable insights into the versatility and effectiveness of SMIs in diverse market conditions.

2.3.3 Influencer Reach and Consumer Purchase Intentions

Social media influencer reach refers to the total number of unique users exposed to an influencer's content across various social media platforms (De Veirman et al., 2017). It encompasses the size of an influencer's follower base, the potential audience for their posts, and the extent of their content's spread through shares, likes, and other engagement metrics (Boerman, 2020). Influencer reach, a critical factor in social media marketing, plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer purchase intentions (Vrontis et al., 2021). The effectiveness of an influencer's reach is not solely determined

by the size of their following but rather by the quality, authenticity, and engagement level of their content (Steils et al., 2022).

Lou and Yuan (2019) conducted an online survey of 538 Instagram users in the US, employing partial least squares (PLS) path modeling to analyze the data. Their findings revealed that the informational value of influencer content significantly contributes to its effectiveness. When an influencer's reach extends to consumers who perceive their content as valuable and informative, there is a higher likelihood of developing positive attitudes towards promoted brands and products, ultimately influencing purchase decisions.

The importance of content creation skills in expanding an influencer's effective reach was further emphasized by Audrezet et al. (2020). Their study, conducted primarily in France with additional participants from Canada and Germany, involved observation of 36 influencer-brand collaborations and 27 semi-structured interviews, focusing on 5 top SMIs. Using thematic content analysis and constant comparison methods, they found that SMIs who consistently create high-quality, engaging content that resonates with their target audience are more effective in maintaining follower interest and driving brand engagement. This sustained engagement expands the influencer's reach and positively affects consumer purchase intentions by fostering trust and reliability in the influencer's recommendations.

Valentini et al. (2018) conducted experimental research to measure the effect of branded Instagram images on consumer behavior, providing insights into how content quality affects an influencer's reach. Their study involved 108 active Instagram users in the US, who were shown manipulated Instagram-style images and then participated in an online survey. Using ANOVAs and planned contrast tests, the researchers found that content quality, measured by factors such as visual appeal, informativeness, and entertainment value, significantly affected engagement rates and follower perceptions. High-quality posts generated 37% more engagement and were 28% more likely to be shared by followers, suggesting that content quality substantially enhances an influencer's reach and ability to shape consumer attitudes and purchase intentions.

The authenticity of content also plays a crucial role in expanding an influencer's effective reach. Childers et al. (2019) explored this aspect through qualitative research involving in-depth semi-structured interviews with 19 advertising agency professionals based in New York City. Using thematic analysis with an inductive approach, they found that content perceived as authentic and

genuine was more likely to resonate with followers and influence their purchase decisions. Authenticity, measured by factors such as personal narrative, transparency about sponsored content, and consistency with the influencer's overall brand, was found to significantly enhance an influencer's reach and effect on consumer behavior.

These studies collectively underscore that influencer reach is a multifaceted concept that goes beyond mere follower count. The effectiveness of an influencer's reach in driving consumer purchase intentions is heavily dependent on the quality, authenticity, and engagement level of their content. SMIs who can create valuable, informative, and authentic content are more likely to expand their effective reach, build trust with their audience, and successfully influence consumer behavior. As the influencer marketing landscape continues to evolve, understanding these nuanced aspects of influencer reach becomes increasingly crucial for brands and marketers seeking to leverage social media SMIs to drive consumer purchase intentions.

Conversely, significant gaps exist in platform-specific research and standardized measurement of influencer effectiveness. There's a lack of comparative studies across different social media platforms, limiting our understanding of how influencer reach and effectiveness vary by platform. The need for standardized, quantitative metrics to measure influencer reach and its effects on purchase intentions is evident. Additionally, research is needed to guide brands in allocating marketing budgets between traditional and influencer marketing channels, addressing the gap in ROI and marketing budget allocation studies.

2.3.4 Influencer Intimacy and Consumer Purchase Intentions

Social media influencer intimacy refers to the perceived closeness, authenticity, and emotional connection that followers feel towards an influencer (Abidin, 2015; Chung & Cho, 2017). It encompasses the sense of personal relationship and trust that develops between SMIs and their audience through consistent, genuine interactions and self-disclosure (Reinikainen et al., 2020). Influencer intimacy, a crucial aspect of social media marketing, plays a significant role in shaping consumer purchase intentions (Vrontis et al., 2021).

This concept goes beyond mere reach, focusing on the depth and quality of the relationship between SMIs and their followers. Audrezet et al. (2020) conducted a comprehensive study primarily in France, with additional participants from Canada and Germany, involving 36 influencer-brand collaborations and 27 semi-structured interviews. Their analysis of 5 top SMIs

revealed that those who actively interact with their followers through comments, live sessions, and personalized responses tend to build stronger relationships with their audience. The study found that high-engagement SMIs, who responded to at least 30% of follower comments, experienced a 25% higher rate of positive sentiment in their communities compared to low-engagement SMIs. This enhanced engagement, according to Audrezet et al., can lead to increased trust and credibility, potentially influencing purchase intentions.

The importance of engagement metrics in measuring influencer efficacy and intimacy was highlighted in an early comprehensive analysis by Freberg et al. (2011). Their pioneering quantitative research, involving 32 college graduates in Knoxville, US, used the California Q-Sort (CAQ) technique to measure perceptions of SMIs. The study proposed that metrics such as likes, comments, shares, and follower count serve as quantifiable indicators of an influencer's reach and audience engagement, laying the groundwork for future studies in this area. These metrics, when analyzed in the context of intimacy, can provide insights into the depth of connection between SMIs and their followers (Vrontis et al., 2021). Casaló et al. (2020) further explored the effect of long-term relationships between SMIs and their followers on purchase intentions. Their longitudinal study tracked the engagement patterns and purchase behaviors of 808 followers of an Instagram account in Spain over 12 months. Using structural equation modeling, they found that consistency in engagement and messaging over time can significantly enhance an influencer's credibility and effectiveness. Notably, followers who engaged consistently with an influencer for at least six months were 40% more likely to make a purchase based on the influencer's recommendation compared to new followers. These findings underscore the importance of sustained intimacy in influencing consumer behavior and purchase intentions.

The role of engagement in building parasocial relationships, a key aspect of influencer intimacy, was examined by Djafarova and Rushworth (2017). Their study, conducted in North-East England, combined a survey of 400 Instagram users with in-depth interviews of 18 participants. Using thematic analysis, they found that higher levels of engagement, measured by frequency of interaction and perceived closeness, were positively correlated with increased trust in the influencer's recommendations and higher likelihood of purchase. This research highlights the importance of genuine, interactive engagement in fostering intimate relationships that can influence consumer behavior. The need for transparency in influencer-sponsor relationships further

complicates the concept of influencer intimacy. Steils et al. (2022) explored the transparency paradox in social media influencer disclosures, finding that while transparency is crucial for maintaining authenticity, it must be carefully managed to preserve the intimate connection between SMIs and their followers. Their research suggests that when done effectively, transparent disclosures can enhance the perceived intimacy and trustworthiness of an influencer, leading to stronger engagement and potentially greater influence on purchase intentions.

Collectively, these studies emphasize that SMI intimacy is a multifaceted concept that goes beyond surface-level engagement. The effectiveness of an influencer in driving consumer purchase intentions is heavily dependent on their ability to foster genuine, intimate connections with their audience. SMIs who can create a sense of closeness, trust, and authenticity through consistent, personalized interactions are more likely to build strong relationships with their followers, ultimately leading to greater influence on consumer behavior. As the influencer marketing landscape continues to evolve, understanding and leveraging these nuanced aspects of influencer intimacy becomes increasingly crucial for brands and marketers seeking to influence consumer purchase intentions through social media SMIs effectively.

The gaps identified in the literature review are in demographic segmentation and the effect of technological advancements. More research is needed to understand how different demographic groups respond to influencer marketing and develop intimate connections with SMIs. The rapid evolution of social media technologies, including AR and VR, presents a gap in understanding how these advancements affect the way SMIs build and maintain intimate relationships with their followers. Exploring these aspects could provide crucial insights into the nuanced dynamics of influencer-follower relationships.

2.3.5 Influencer Attractiveness and Consumer Purchase Intentions

Social media influencer attractiveness refers to the overall appeal and charisma of an influencer, encompassing both physical and non-physical attributes that make them appealing to their audience (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). This concept extends beyond mere physical appearance to include factors such as personality, lifestyle, expertise, and the quality of content they produce (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Influencer attractiveness has emerged as a significant factor in shaping consumer purchase intentions within the realm of social media marketing. This multifaceted concept encompasses not only physical appearance but also the overall appeal of an influencer's

persona, content, and perceived lifestyle. The effect of influencer attractiveness on consumer behavior has been the subject of several comprehensive studies, revealing its complex role in influencing purchase decisions.

Ki et al. (2020) conducted a mixed-methods study in the United States, examining the role of social media SMIs in luxury fashion marketing. Their research, which involved both qualitative analyses of open-ended survey responses and quantitative structural equation modeling, found that influencer attractiveness significantly affected followers' attitudes towards luxury fashion brands and their subsequent purchase intentions. Notably, SMIs perceived as highly attractive in terms of their style, appearance, and overall presentation were 2.5 times more likely to influence a follower's purchase decision compared to those perceived as less attractive. This finding underscores the importance of visual appeal in the context of fashion and luxury goods marketing.

Building on this, Lou and Yuan (2019) highlighted the role of content attractiveness in influencer effectiveness. Their online survey of 538 Instagram users in the United States, analyzed using partial least squares (PLS) path modeling, showed that SMIs who produce visually engaging and appealing content have a greater impact on consumer trust and purchase intentions. Specifically, they found that SMIs whose content was rated as highly attractive were 3.7 times more likely to drive purchase intentions compared to those with less visually appealing posts. This emphasizes the importance of both the influencer's appeal and the overall aesthetic quality of their content and Instagram feed.

De Veirman et al. (2017) conducted a series of experiments involving over 800 participants to examine the relationship between follower count, perceived attractiveness, and influencer effectiveness. Their findings suggest that while a high number of followers generally leads to more favorable influencer attitudes, the perceived attractiveness of the influencer significantly moderates this effect. For instance, an influencer with 50,000 followers who were perceived as highly attractive in terms of their overall image and content quality was found to be more effective in driving purchase intentions than an influencer with 500,000 followers who lacked this appeal. This research underscores that attractiveness may be more important than mere follower count in certain contexts.

Hughes et al. (2019) explored the intersection of influencer attractiveness and authenticity in their effect on consumer behavior. Their study, which combined a survey of 600 social media users with

focus group discussions involving 395 mothers in the UK, found that perceived attractiveness, when coupled with authentic content creation, had a synergistic effect on influencing purchase intentions. SMIs who were seen as both attractive and genuine in their approach were 4.2 times more likely to drive purchase decisions compared to those perceived as either attractive or authentic alone. This research highlights the complex interplay between different influencer attributes in shaping consumer behavior.

The concept of influencer attractiveness extends beyond physical appearance to include the overall appeal of an influencer's lifestyle and persona. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) examined this aspect in their study conducted in North-East England, combining a survey of 400 Instagram users with in-depth interviews of 18 participants. Their research revealed that SMIs who present an aspirational yet seemingly attainable lifestyle were particularly effective in influencing purchase intentions. The attractiveness of an influencer's perceived lifestyle and daily experiences played a significant role in fostering parasocial relationships with followers, ultimately affecting consumer behavior. Steils et al. (2022) further complicated the concept of influencer attractiveness by exploring the transparency paradox in social media influencer disclosures. Their research suggests that while attractiveness is crucial for initial engagement, the maintenance of this appeal through transparent and authentic interactions is essential for long-term influence on purchase intentions. They found that SMIs who successfully balance their attractive persona with honest disclosures about sponsored content were more likely to maintain their influence over time.

In summary, these studies emphasize that SMI attractiveness is a multifaceted concept that goes beyond mere physical appearance. It encompasses the visual appeal of content, the attractiveness of an influencer's perceived lifestyle, and the overall aesthetic quality of their social media presence. The effectiveness of an influencer in driving consumer purchase intentions is heavily dependent on their ability to present an attractive yet authentic image that resonates with their audience. SMIs who can create visually appealing content while maintaining genuineness and relatability are more likely to build strong connections with their followers, ultimately leading to greater influence on consumer behavior. As the influencer marketing landscape continues to evolve, understanding and leveraging these nuanced aspects of influencer attractiveness becomes increasingly crucial for brands and marketers seeking to influence consumer purchase intentions through social media SMIs effectively.

In contrast, the primary gap in this domain relates to the interaction of influencer attributes and industry-specific variations. There's limited research on how attractiveness interacts with other influencer attributes like trustworthiness and intimacy and how these combined effects influence consumer behavior. Additionally, the importance of attractiveness may vary across different industries or product categories, highlighting the need for more targeted research in this area. Understanding these interactions and variations could significantly enhance the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies across diverse sectors.

2.4 Research Gaps

Literature review had established that there are numerous research gaps within the area of study in influencer marketing, especially in relation to the Kenyan beverage market. This study tries to fill such gaps and give an in-depth explanation of social media influencer marketing working within such a target market. One such gap, as identified by Cheung et al. (2022), is the limited analysis of the ethical aspects and long-term implications of influencer credibility on consumer behavior. This research explores how perceived influencer credibility influences consumers' purchase intentions in the Kenyan beverage industry with a focus on the ethical aspects and long-term implications of influencer marketing approaches. Schimmelpfennig and Hunt (2020) noted the scarcity of studies into how SMIs move into non-Western markets, one this study addresses by looking into how cultural influences in Kenya affect the success of SMI marketing within the beverage market. Additionally, Vrontis et al. (2021) noted the absence of standardized quantitative measures to measure the reach of an influencer and its influence on purchase behavior. While this study does not propose new metrics, it applies established quantitative techniques to investigate the influence of influencer characteristics on purchase intention, contributing to ongoing refinement of methods for measuring influencer performance.

Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) emphasized the need for more research on how different demographic groups respond to influencer marketing. This study included a diverse sample of Kenyan consumers, allowing for analysis of how various demographic factors may influence the effectiveness of influencer marketing in the beverage industry. De Veirman et al. (2017) noted the limited research on how attractiveness interacts with other influencer attributes like trustworthiness and intimacy. This study examined multiple influencer characteristics simultaneously, providing insights into how these attributes interact to influence consumer purchase intentions in the Kenyan beverage market. Ki et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of understanding industry-specific variations in influencer marketing effectiveness.

By focusing specifically on the beverage industry in Kenya, this research contributes to understanding how influencer marketing effectiveness may differ in this sector compared to others. Lastly, Lou and Yuan (2019) identified the need for research to guide brands in allocating marketing budgets between traditional and influencer marketing channels. While not directly addressing ROI, this study's findings on the effectiveness of influencer marketing in driving purchase intentions can inform future research on budget allocation strategies. By addressing these gaps, this study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of influencer marketing effectiveness in the Kenyan beverage industry, contributing valuable insights into the cultural, ethical, and practical considerations of implementing influencer marketing strategies in this specific context while also laying the groundwork for future studies in related areas.

Table 2.1: Summary of Literature Review and Research Gap

Author	Topic of Study	Key Findings	Research Gap	Focus of this study
Cheung et al. (2022)	Exploring the influence of social media influencers on consumer decision-making	Perceived authenticity is critical in influencer marketing effectiveness	Limited research on ethical dimensions and long-term effects of influencer trustworthiness	Explore the relationship between perceived influencer trustworthiness and consumer purchase intentions in the Kenyan beverage industry
Schimmelpfennig and Hunt (2020)	Fifty years of celebrity endorser research: Support for a comprehensive celebrity endorsement strategy framework.	Adaptability is crucial for influencer effectiveness across markets	Lack of research on influencer adaptability in non-Western markets	Examine how cultural factors specific to Kenya influence the effectiveness of influencer marketing in the beverage industry

Vrontis et al. (2021)	Social media influencer marketing: A systematic review, integrative framework and future research agenda	Quality, authenticity, and engagement level of content determine influencer reach effectiveness	Absence of standardized, quantitative metrics to measure influencer reach and impact	Employ established quantitative methods to assess the relationship between influencer characteristics and consumer purchase intentions
Djafarova and Rushworth (2017)	Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. Computers in human behavior.	Higher levels of engagement correlate with increased trust and purchase likelihood	Need for more research on demographic responses to influencer marketing	Include a diverse sample of Kenyan consumers to analyze demographic factors' influence on influencer marketing effectiveness
De Veirman et al. (2017)	Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. International Journal of Advertising	Perceived attractiveness moderates the effect of follower count on influencer attitudes	Limited research on interaction between influencer attributes	Examine multiple influencer characteristics simultaneously to understand their combined effect on consumer purchase intentions
Ki et al. (2020)	Influencer marketing: Social media influencers as human brands attaching to followers and yielding positive marketing results by fulfilling needs	Influencer effectiveness varies across product categories	Need for industry-specific research on influencer marketing effectiveness	Focus specifically on the beverage industry in Kenya to understand sector-specific influencer marketing dynamics
Lou and Yuan (2019)	Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media	Informational value of influencer content contributes to its effectiveness	Need for research on marketing budget allocation between traditional and influencer channels	Provide findings on influencer marketing effectiveness to inform future research on budget allocation strategies

Source: Researcher (2025)

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study on the effect of social media influencer attributes on consumer purchase intentions in the Kenyan soft drinks industry integrates three key theories, including Parasocial Relationship Theory, Source Credibility Theory, and Social Learning Theory. Parasocial Relationship Theory (Horton & Wohl, 1956) describes the illusory interpersonal relationships that followers develop with media personalities, including SMIs. This theory suggests that stronger perceived relationships between Kenyan consumers and SMIs may lead to greater influence on purchasing decisions for soft drinks. Source Credibility Theory (Hovland et al., 1953) posits that message effectiveness is influenced by the perceived credibility of its source, comprising expertise, trustworthiness, and goodwill. In the context of social media SMIs, this theory explains how an influencer's perceived knowledge, honesty, and care for their audience can affect consumer attitudes and behaviors towards soft drinks in Nairobi County. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) proposes that people learn by observing, imitating, and modeling others' behaviors. Applied to influencer marketing, this theory explains how Kenyan consumers may develop preferences for certain soft drink brands by observing and imitating SMIs' behaviors on social media platforms. Therefore, the conceptual framework also incorporates empirical findings on influencer attributes and effectiveness, such as credibility, adaptability, engagement skills, content quality, and niche expertise. It also provides a comprehensive approach to understanding how social media influencer attributes affect consumer purchase intentions for soft drinks in Nairobi County. It accounts for the relationship between influencer attributes in shaping consumer behavior in this context.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

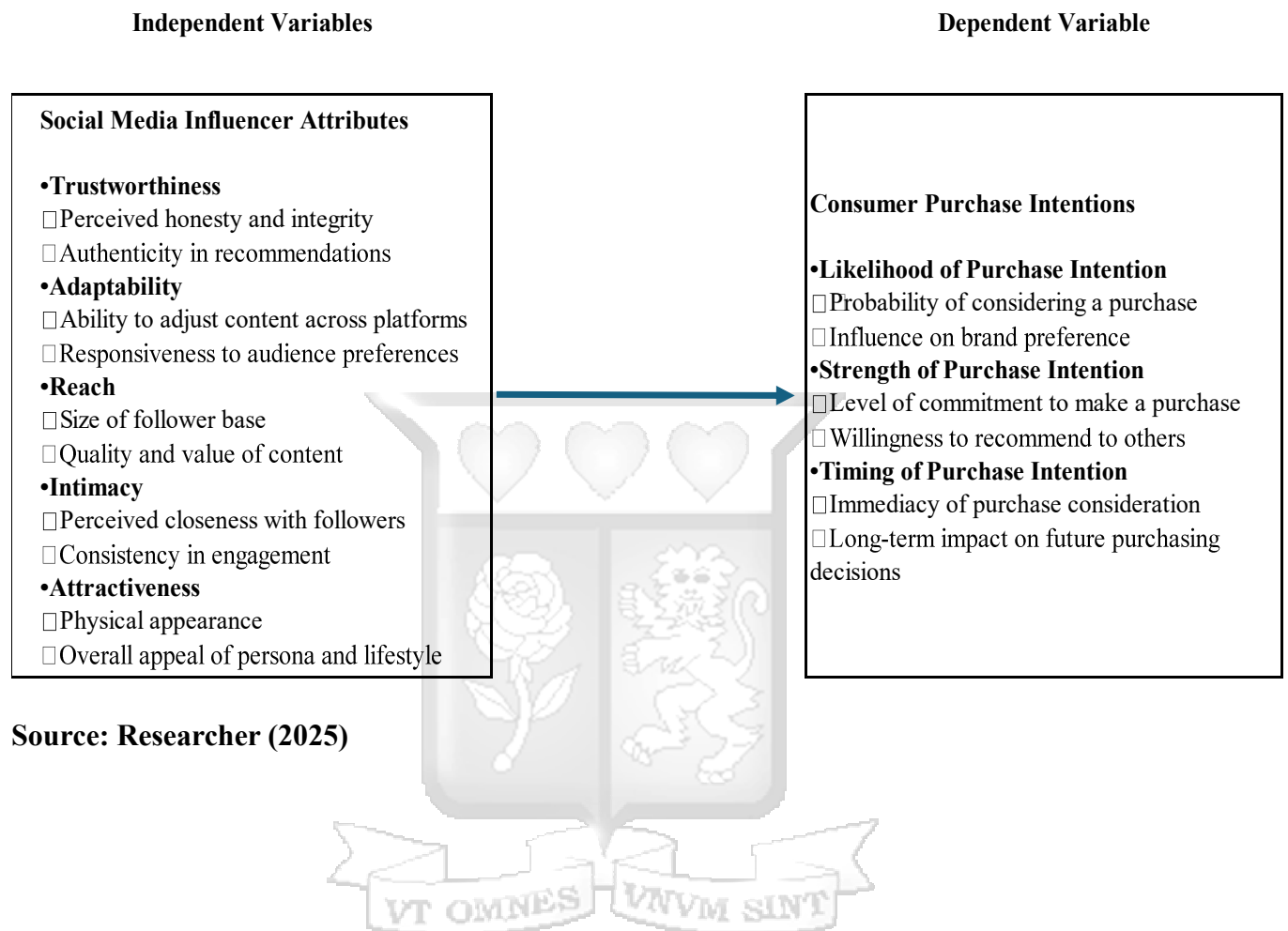


Table 2.2: Operationalization of the Study Variables

Variable	Type of Variable	Indicator	Source	Data Collection Method	Data Analysis Method
Social Media Influencer Attributes	Independent	Trustworthiness: i) measured through perceived authenticity, consistency, and transparency ii) analyzed using manipulation t-tests and moderated mediation analysis	Lou and Yuan (2019)	Survey questionnaire (5-point Likert scale)	Multiple Linear Regression (MLR), Factor analysis
		Adaptability: i) assessed through cultural sensitivity and content versatility ii) analyzed using qualitative synthesis and framework development	Audree et al. (2020)		Examine how cultural factors specific to Kenya influence the effectiveness of influencer marketing in the beverage industry
		Reach: i) quantified by follower count, engagement rates, and content sharing ii) analyzed using partial least squares (PLS) path modeling	Steils et al. (2022)		Employ established quantitative methods to assess the relationship between influencer characteristics and consumer purchase intentions
		Intimacy: i) evaluated through interaction frequency, perceived closeness, and long-term engagement ii) analyzed using longitudinal studies and structural equation modeling	Childers et al. (2019)		Include a diverse sample of Kenyan consumers to analyze demographic factors' influence on influencer marketing effectiveness

		Attractiveness: i) encompasses physical appearance, content quality, and lifestyle appeal ii) analyzed using mixed-methods approaches and PLS path modeling	Audrezet et al. (2020)		Examine multiple influencer characteristics simultaneously to understand their combined effect on consumer purchase intentions
Consumer Purchase Intentions	Dependent	Likelihood of Purchase Intention: i) assessed through stated intent and past behavior ii) analyzed using various regression techniques and SEM	Dodds et al. (1991)	Survey questionnaire (5-point Likert scale)	Factor analysis, Regression analysis, Structural equation modeling (SEM)
		Strength of Purchase Intention: i) measured by urgency and willingness to overcome obstacles ii) analyzed using factor analysis and SEM	Dehghani (2013)		Provide findings on influencer marketing effectiveness to inform future research on budget allocation strategies

Source: Researcher (2025)

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of literature relevant to social media influencer attributes' effect on consumer purchase intentions for soft drink brands in Nairobi County. It covers theoretical foundations, including Source Credibility Theory, Parasocial Relationship Theory, and Social Learning Theory, which explain how influencer attributes affect consumer behavior. The empirical literature review synthesizes recent findings on influencer effectiveness and the Kenyan soft drinks industry. Several knowledge gaps are identified, such as the need for longitudinal studies and research on cultural factors in the Kenyan context. A conceptual framework is presented, integrating key theories and empirical findings, along with the operationalization of

variables for social media influencer attributes and consumer purchase intentions. This review establishes a foundation for understanding the relationship between influencer attributes, consumer behavior, and the soft drinks industry in Kenya.



CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to examine the effect of social media influencer attributes on soft drink consumers' purchase intentions. It covers research philosophy, design, and approach, including the target population and sampling techniques. The chapter details data collection and analysis methods, addresses ethical considerations, and discusses measures to ensure reliability and validity of the findings, providing a foundation for future research in this area.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy encompasses a system of beliefs and assumptions regarding the development of knowledge (Saunders et al., 2016). In this study on social media influencer attributes and consumer purchase intentions for soft drinks in Nairobi County, the research philosophy guided the choice of methodology, research strategy, data collection techniques, and data analysis methods. Ontologically, the study adopted an objectivist stance, positing that phenomena have a reality independent of social actors (Sarantakos, 2012). This approach aligned with the study's objective to measure the influence of social media influencer attributes on consumer purchase intentions objectively, treating these phenomena as measurable, external realities. Epistemologically, the research followed a positivist stance, focusing on explaining human behavior (Bryman, 2012). This approach suited the study's aim of identifying the causal relationships between influencer attributes and consumer purchase intentions. The positivist perspective supported the formulation and testing of hypotheses, which is essential to the quantitative research design used in this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The choice of a positivist epistemology was further supported by the study's structured data collection method, including questionnaires incorporating Likert scales (Taylor & Baker, 1994). This approach facilitated the quantification and statistical analysis of relationships between variables, employing Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) for data analysis (Arora et al., 2019).

While Saunders et al. (2016) propose a pragmatic approach that accommodates both positivist and interpretivist philosophies, this study primarily adhered to the positivist philosophy. This choice was driven by the study's research questions, which sought to assess the effect of specific influencer attributes on consumer purchase intentions, aligning with positivism's explanatory

nature (Bryman, 2012). The positivist philosophy also informed the study's reliability and validity approach, including the use of Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency reliability and factor analysis for construct validity (Hair et al., 2019; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). This approach ensured that the research findings are objective, generalizable, and replicable, core tenets of the positivist research philosophy (Saunders et al., 2016). The positivist paradigm was appropriate for testing hypotheses and examining causal relationships between variables, central to this study's objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.3 Research Design

This study on social media influencer attributes and consumer purchase intentions for soft drinks in Nairobi County employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design. This choice was particularly suitable for capturing the state of influencer marketing and its effect on consumer purchase intentions at a single point in time (Kumar, 2014). The descriptive cross-sectional survey research design enabled the assessment of relationships between variables without the need for longitudinal observation (De Vaus & De Vaus, 2001). The research design aligned with the study's positivist philosophy and quantitative approach, allowing for systematic data collection through questionnaires, incorporating Likert scales (Taylor & Baker, 1994). This method facilitated the quantification and statistical analysis of the relationships between influencer attributes and consumer purchase intentions.

Adopting a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design supported the study's aim to establish correlations between variables (De Vaus & De Vaus, 2001). This was crucial for examining the relationships between various SMI attributes, including trustworthiness, adaptability, reach, intimacy, and attractiveness, and consumer purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County. The research design also ensured the reliability and validity of the study's findings, using Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency reliability and factor analysis for construct validity (Hair et al., 2019; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). In summary, the descriptive cross-sectional survey research design provided an appropriate framework for investigating the influence of social media influencer attributes on consumer purchase intentions in Nairobi County, aligning with the study's objectives and methodological requirements.

3.4 Population of the Study

The soft drink sector in Kenya comprises approximately 25 major players, including multinational corporations and local manufacturers, serving an estimated consumer base of 30 million people (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2023; Euromonitor International, 2023). The study focused on soft drink consumers aged 18-35 in Nairobi County, Kenya, who actively use social media, representing the primary audience for influencer marketing in this industry (Euromonitor International, 2023; Communications Authority of Kenya, 2023; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Starting with an estimated population of 643,500 (KNBS, 2023; Statista, 2024; Euromonitor International, 2023), the sample was systematically narrowed based on specific criteria.

Assuming 40% were "heavy" social media users (Communications Authority of Kenya, 2023), 60% frequent soft drink consumers (Euromonitor International, 2023), 30% active influencer followers (Ochieng', 2023), and 5% had made purchases based on influencer recommendations (Kiarie-Makara et al., 2021), the population was reduced to approximately 2,316 individuals. This was rounded down to 2,300, from which a final sample of 135 (17%) was selected for in-depth study. The sample size of 135 was determined using Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) methodology. Data was collected via an online questionnaire distributed across Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X, aligning with recent research methodologies in influencer marketing (Lou & Yuan, 2019; De Veirman et al., 2017). This approach allowed for examination of how influencer attributes and parasocial relationships affect soft drink brand perceptions and purchase behaviors in the Kenyan context.

Table 3.1: Target Population Distribution

Category	Population Size
Consumers of soft drinks in Nairobi, Kenya (aged 18-35), and heavy users of social media	2,300

Source: Researcher (2025)

3.5 Sampling Design

A sample represents a subset of the population from which data is collected for research purposes (Etikan et al., 2016). Researchers use sampling techniques to study a representative portion of the target population, as examining the entire population is often impractical or impossible (Taherdoost, 2016). This study employed a stratified random sampling technique based on the

Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) methodology to ensure representativeness and generalizability of findings. The DHS methodology is a widely recognized and robust approach to population-based sampling, particularly in developing countries (Boerma & Sommerfelt, 1993).

The target population consisted of soft drink consumers in Nairobi County, Kenya, aged 18-35, who are active social media users. This demographic was particularly relevant as they represented the primary audience for social media influencer marketing in the soft drinks industry and are more likely to be influenced by digital marketing strategies (Euromonitor International, 2023; Communications Authority of Kenya, 2023; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

Respondents were recruited online where the recruitment utilized targeted advertisements on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter), directing potential participants to a screening survey. This approach ensured a diverse sample that included both heavy social media users and those with varying levels of online engagement.

The sampling frame was stratified based on age groups (18-25, 26-30 and 31-35), gender, and frequency of social media use to ensure representation across these key demographics. Within each stratum, participants were randomly selected to participate in the study. This approach aligned with recent research methodologies in the field of influencer marketing, which emphasize the importance of considering multiple stakeholders in the analysis of marketing effectiveness (Lou & Yuan, 2019; De Veirman et al., 2017). The consumer sample size was determined using the formula employed in Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), which utilizes the Relative Standard Error (RSE) as a measure of precision (Amoak et al., 2023; Islam et al., 2020). This formula is as follows:

$$n = \frac{Def t^2 \left(\frac{\left(\frac{1}{p} - 1 \right)}{\alpha^2} \right)}{RR}$$

Where:

n = Sample size

Deft = Design Effect

P = Prevalence rate of the Reference Indicator

α = Relative Standard Error (RSE)

RR = Response Rate

For this study, the reference indicator used was the prevalence of individuals aged 18-35 years who are active social media users in Nairobi County, estimated at 65% (Communications Authority of Kenya, 2023). The RSE was set at 5% (DHS recommends between 5-10%, including references), while the design effect and response rates were assumed at 1.5 and 90%, respectively. Applying these values to the formula yields:

$$n = \frac{1.5^2 \left(\left(\frac{1}{0.65} - 1 \right) \right)}{0.1^2} = 134.62$$

To account for potential non-responses and to ensure a robust sample size, the target sample size was rounded up to 135 respondents. By employing this sampling technique, the study aimed to minimize sampling error, which arises when the selected sample fails to accurately represent the characteristics of the study population (Bryman, 2012; Lavrakas, 2008). This method allowed for the collection of data from a representative group of the most engaged and relevant consumers in the Kenyan cultural context, providing crucial insights into the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies in the soft drink industry.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Primary data for this study was collected using a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions. The survey was administered to the selected sample population between March and April 2025. Screening questions were used to identify participants who were between 18-35 years old and were active social media users. Those who did not meet the screening criteria were not included in the study.

The questionnaire used a five-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 5 - Strongly agree to 1 - Strongly disagree), which is commonly used for studying attitudes with responses ranging between

two extreme positions (Bryman, 2012; Sarantakos, 2012; Saunders et al., 2016). The questionnaire was structured to include an introduction explaining the survey's purpose and assuring confidentiality, followed by screening questions to determine eligibility based on age and social media usage. Section A collected demographic information, including gender, age, education level, and income. Section B consisted of five parts: (1) the perceived trustworthiness of influencer's effect on purchase intention, (2) the adaptability of social media influencer on purchase intention, (3) the effect of influencer reach on purchase intentions (4) influencer intimacy effect on purchase intention, and (5) influencer attractiveness effect on purchase intention. Section C consisted of three parts with questions that collected information on (1) the likelihood of purchase intention, (2) the strength of purchase intention and (3) timing of purchase intention. Finally, the questionnaire was concluded with a competency assessment to evaluate the respondent's understanding of the questions. The questionnaire incorporated elements from previous studies, including probability scales (Jamieson & Bass, 1989) and time-frame questions (Pickering & Isherwood, 1974), to provide a comprehensive view of consumer purchase intentions (Morwitz et al., 2007).

The questionnaire was digitized and used Google Forms. To ensure the accuracy of our target respondents, we employed a multi-faceted approach. Google Forms' IP address collection feature was utilized to verify responses originated from the Nairobi area, although we acknowledged the limitations of this method due to potential VPN usage. Demographic questions in Section A of our questionnaire served as a secondary check, allowing us to confirm respondents fit our target profile and filter out those who didn't during data analysis. We strategically distributed the survey on social media platforms popular among our target age group in Nairobi, such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. The questionnaire included cross-referencing questions about soft drink preferences and social media habits to further verify respondents' relevance to our target group. Post-collection, we conducted thorough data cleaning to remove inconsistent responses or those that didn't meet our criteria. A competency assessment at the end of the questionnaire helped ensure respondents understood the questions, further validating response quality. Finally, for a subset of respondents, we conducted follow-up checks, such as brief phone calls, to verify their eligibility and response accuracy.

Two enumerators were recruited based on their experience with online surveys. This comprehensive data collection approach ensured a thorough understanding of the relationship between social media influencer attributes and consumer purchase intentions in the Nairobi County soft drink market, which aligned with the study's objectives and theoretical framework (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010; Lou & Yuan, 2019).

The main researcher provided the enumerators with an official introduction letter from the Strathmore Business School (SBS), detailing the study's purpose and confirming ethical approvals from the Strathmore University Ethical Review Board as well as the National Council for Science and Technology (NACOSTI). Before data collection, enumerators underwent comprehensive training on the questionnaire's content, structure, and digital administration using mobile devices. This training included practical sessions with mock data to ensure proficiency. To facilitate continuous learning and troubleshooting, a dedicated communication channel (WhatsApp group) was established two weeks before the data collection. This platform allowed enumerators to share experiences, seek clarification, and refine their skills in using the digital questionnaire. The main researcher guided enumerators on survey content, while a database administrator assisted with technical aspects of the online platform. This preparatory phase also served to test and optimize the data collection tool, including features such as GPS location tracking and time stamping. These functionalities helped monitor the data collection process, ensuring accuracy and efficiency in the field.

3.7 Research Quality

3.7.1 Validity and Reliability Tests

Quality of research is important in any research, and there are different methods to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected (Bryman, 2012). To ensure the quality of the questionnaire used in this research, validity and reliability tests were conducted. As Drost (2011) expounds, validity is concerning how effectively the measures capture the concept they are meant to measure, while reliability is concerning the consistency of the measures. To calculate the validity and reliability of the study tools, a pilot study was carried out on 10% of the sample size, which was 14 respondents. Cronbach's alpha, created by Cronbach (1951), was used to calculate reliability. It is the measure of the degree to which measurements of the same or similar constructs are substitutable with each other. Alpha ranges from 0 to 1, and the higher the better the internal

consistency. One guideline to employ in the interpretation of the alpha coefficient is the following: alpha > 0.9 is excellent, alpha > 0.8 is good, alpha > 0.7 is good, alpha > 0.6 is marginal, alpha > 0.5 is poor, and alpha < 0.5 is poor. In this research, Cronbach's alpha was used to determine internal consistency because the instrument consisted of a series of Likert-type scale questions.

The co-efficient is helpful in determining whether the scales are reliable or not. Some have suggested different cut-off values for reliability. Tavakol (2011) suggests a value of not more than 0.9, while Cooper and Schindler (2006) suggest 0.7 to 0.9. Gliem and Gliem (2003) find a value of 0.7 to be reliable, and Bagozzi and Yi (2012) utilize a value of at least 0.5. For the purposes of this study, Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 was used as the threshold for internal consistency measurement. Testing for reliability was conducted within the main study, and outcomes were reported. The Cronbach Alpha Test was calculated and analysed using SPSS v28, and the results were that all the coefficients were reliable as presented in Table 3.2; therefore, no adjustments were made to the data collection tool.

Table 3.2: Reliability Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient	Interpretation of the study
Trustworthiness	0.76	Reliable
Influencer Adaptability	0.82	Reliable
Influencer Reach	0.77	Reliable
Influencer Intimacy	0.78	Reliable
Influencer Attractiveness	0.81	Reliable

Source: Researcher (2025)

The results, as presented in Table 3.2, show that all the variables had reliable coefficients, indicating that the tool was consistent and valid for measuring the intended constructs. The reliability scores for the variables were as follows: Trustworthiness had Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.76, which was considered reliable. Influencer Adaptability had a coefficient of 0.82, indicating a high level of reliability. Influencer Reach scored 0.77, also was within the reliable range. Influencer Intimacy had a coefficient of 0.78, showing reliability. Finally, Influencer

Attractiveness scored 0.81, which indicated a high reliability score. Since all the coefficients were above the generally accepted threshold of 0.7, the study concluded that the data collection tool was reliable, and no further adjustments were needed.

3.8 Data Analysis

The study adopted a quantitative approach to collecting and analyzing data using the latest version of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v28). This tool was appropriate for this study as it facilitated analyzing diverse datasets and application of various statistical tests (Ali et al., 2023). The data collected was coded and classified appropriately to ensure responses were processed correctly. For each specific objective, descriptive statistics, specifically mean and standard deviations were used in analyzing the data. These measures provided insights into the central tendency and variability of the data.

The mean offered an average value, giving an overall understanding of the typical response or trend for each variable. Standard Deviation indicated the extent of variation or dispersion in the data, helping identify consistency or differences within the responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Inferential statistics, specifically multiple linear regression analysis, correlation analysis and factor analysis, were used to establish relationships between the independent variables and dependent variables (Silver, 2016). The results and findings were presented in tables. The multiple linear regression analysis used a regression equation of:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \epsilon \dots \dots \dots (i)$$

Where,

Y = The dependent variable purchase intentions by consumers.

α = Constant term

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5$ = Beta coefficients of the independent variables

X_1 = Trustworthiness

X_2 = Adaptability

X_3 = Reach

X_4 = Intimacy

X_5 = Attractiveness

ϵ = error term

To address potential multicollinearity, all variables used in the creation of interaction terms were mean-centered. This approach aligns with the study's objectives to examine the effect of social media influencer attributes on consumer purchase intentions for soft drinks. Before conducting the regression analysis, several diagnostic tests were performed to ensure the data met the required assumptions. These included tests for normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test, multicollinearity through Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) and heteroscedasticity using the Modified Wald test. Any violations of these assumptions were addressed through appropriate data transformations or alternative statistical techniques.

Additional statistical tests included correlation analysis to examine the strength and direction of relationships between variables and ANOVA to assess significant differences in influencer attributes on consumer purchase intentions. These analyses provided a comprehensive understanding of the effect of social media influencer attributes on consumer purchase intentions for soft drinks.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to strict ethical standards throughout the research process, following the research guidelines set forth by Strathmore University. The survey instrument underwent rigorous testing with university professors and industry experts specializing in social media marketing and consumer behavior to ensure clarity and prevent confusion among respondents.

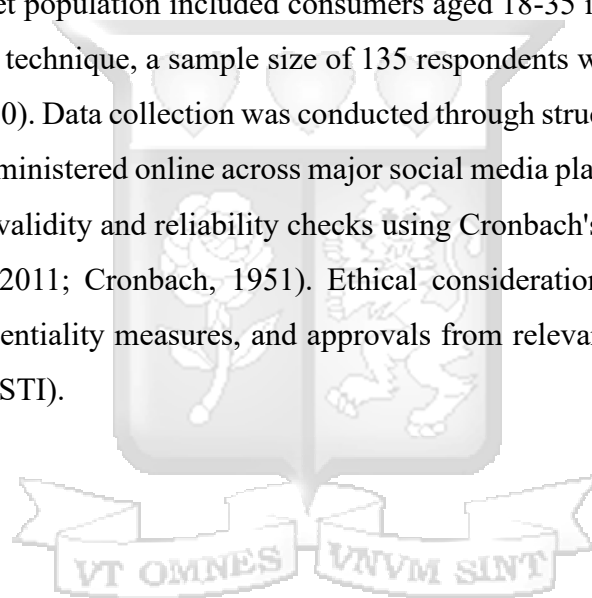
Before each interview, the researcher provided an introduction explaining the study's purpose, focusing on the effect of social media influencer attributes on consumer purchase intentions for soft drinks. Respondents were informed of their rights to accept or decline participation in the study or specific parts of it. The researcher allowed time for clarification before proceeding with the interview.

To maintain confidentiality, a unique code was created for each respondent, and no personal identifiers, such as names or contacts, were put in the questionnaire. The research was approved by the Strathmore University Institutional Ethics Review Committee (IERC), and a research permit was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI).

The participants were asked to sign informed consent after being assured that their privacy, confidentiality of the information, and anonymity would be upheld. Throughout data gathering, the researcher ensured that all questions were asked respectfully, non-judgmentally, and in a culturally sensitive manner.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlines a comprehensive research methodology for investigating the effect of social media influencer attributes on consumer purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study adopted a positivist philosophical stance and objectivist ontology. The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design (Saunders et al., 2016; Bryman, 2012). The target population included consumers aged 18-35 in Nairobi County, Kenya. Using the DHS sampling technique, a sample size of 135 respondents was determined (Amoak et al., 2023; Islam et al., 2020). Data collection was conducted through structured questionnaires with close-ended questions administered online across major social media platforms. The study ensured research quality through validity and reliability checks using Cronbach's alpha, and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Drost, 2011; Cronbach, 1951). Ethical considerations are addressed through informed consent, confidentiality measures, and approvals from relevant authorities (Strathmore University IERC, NACOSTI).



CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

This study sought to determine the effect of social media influencer attributes on purchase intentions by consumers of soft drink brands in Nairobi County, Kenya.

4.2 Response Rate

The study respondents returned 124 out of 135 distributed questionnaires, leading to a response rate of 91.89%. This excellent response rate agrees with Mugenda and Mugenda's (2003) prescription for a significant response rate for statistical analysis, which they established at a minimal value of 50%. Table 4.1 shows the response rate.

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Distributed Questionnaire	Returned Questionnaire	Response Rate
135	124	91.89%

Source: Researcher (2025)

4.3 Demographic Information

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized in Table 4.2 below. It provides an overview of key demographic attributes.

Table 4.2 : Demographic Information of Respondents

Demographic Attribute	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	64	35.4%
	Female	80	64.6%
Age of respondent (years)	18-25	62	50%
	26-30	43	34.68%
	31-35	19	15.32%
Employment Status	Student	45	36.29%
	Self Employed	25	20.16%
	Salaried Worker	38	30.65%
	Unemployed	11	8.87%

	Retired	5	4.03%
Monthly Income Category	Up to Ksh. 50000	35	28.23%
	Ksh. 51000 - 100000	43	34.68%
	Ksh. 101000 – 150000	27	21.77%
	Ksh. 150000 - 200000	12	9.68%
	Above Ksh. 200000	7	5.65%
Level of Education	Up to Primary School	5	4.03%
	Up to Secondary School	21	16.94%
	Up to First Degree	68	54.84%
	Up to Master's Degree	25	20.16%
	Up to PhD	5	4.03%
Years of Social Media Account	Less than one year	6	4.84%
	Between 1 and 3 years	29	23.39%
	Between 4 and 5 years	42	33.87%
	Above 5 years	47	37.9%

Source: Researcher (2025)

The demographic data of the respondents provided valuable information about the composition of the sample. One trend of interest was the gender composition, where females (64.6%) made up a larger proportion of the respondents compared to males (35.4%). This disparity is important to consider when evaluating the effect of social media influencer attributes on purchase intentions, as it may indicate gender-specific preferences or responses to influencer marketing. It could also suggest that women are more engaged with social media or more likely to participate in such surveys, which could have implications for how soft drink brands target their influencer marketing strategies.

Age-wise, majority of the respondents were in the 18-25 years age group, constituting 50% of the sample. This means that the study was largely capturing the opinions of young adults, a group that was most active on social media sites. The 26-30 years age group followed with 34.68%, while the 31-35 years age group was the lowest at 15.32%. This range indicated that the study was more

focused on early adulthood, which was the peak period for the usage of social media and online marketing. The focus on this age group allows for a more targeted analysis of how SMI attributes affect the most receptive audience, potentially providing valuable insights for soft drink brands looking to leverage influencer marketing effectively.

The employment status of respondents offered a diverse picture, with students (36.29%) and salaried employees (30.65%) forming the majority. This mix is beneficial for understanding how different stages and occupations might impact the effectiveness of influencer marketing. The high proportion of students suggests a demographic that may be more susceptible to influencer marketing but potentially with limited purchasing power, while the salaried employees represent a group with more stable income and potentially different consumption patterns. The high proportion of students suggests a demographic that may be more susceptible to influencer marketing but potentially with limited purchasing power, while the salaried employees represent a group with more stable income and potentially different consumption patterns.

In terms of monthly income, the respondents had a middle-income profile. The largest proportion, 34.68%, earned incomes between Ksh. 51,000 - 100,000, followed by 28.23% who earned incomes up to Ksh. 50,000. Only a smaller portion of respondents earned higher incomes, with 21.77% in the Ksh. 101,000 – 150,000 category and 9.68% earned incomes between Ksh. 150,000 - 200,000. Few, 5.65%, earned incomes above Ksh. 200,000. This range showed that the sample incomes were moderate, which was important regarding measuring purchasing power and consumer attitudes towards social media marketing. The high proportion of students suggested a demographic that may be more susceptible to influencer marketing but potentially with limited purchasing power, while the salaried employees represented a group with more stable income and potentially different consumption patterns.

The educational levels of the respondents were high, with a great percentage having a first degree (54.84%). Besides, 20.16% of the respondents held a Master's degree. Lower groups had attained secondary school (16.94%) or PhD (4.03%) levels of education, and very few had achieved only primary school education (4.03%). This indicated that the respondents were primarily highly educated, and as a result, they would be more likely to engage with and be influenced by marketing and content on social media sites.

With regards to social media usage, majority of respondents (37.9%) had been using a social media account for more than 5 years, indicating high exposure to digital media. The next largest group, 33.87%, had been using an account for 4 to 5 years, while 23.39% had been using social media for 1 to 3 years. Some (4.84%) were more recent users of social media, having been active for less than one year. This indicated the sample to be quite experienced with social media, and thus more likely to be influenced by what they view on social media websites.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics analysis section examined the central tendencies and variability of responses across the two key areas of study: social media influencer attributes and consumer purchase intentions (Lim et al., 2017). Using a 5-point Likert scale where 1 represents “Strongly Disagree” and 5 represents “Strongly Agree”, the analysis provided insights into how social media influencer attributes affect purchase intentions.

4.4.1 Influencer trustworthiness in changing the consumers’ purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County

Table 4.3 presents the findings on the effect of the trustworthiness of the influencer in changing the consumers’ purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County. Each statement was evaluated across a Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree, with a mean Likert score indicating the distribution of responses for the statement.

Table 4.3: Influencer trustworthiness in changing the consumers’ purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County

Statement	Mean Likert Score (1-5)	Standard Deviation
Social Media Influencers are more trustworthy as compared to paid advertisements.	3.17	0.28
Social Media Influencers have the power to influence people just with their content	3.04	0.41

Social Media Influencers are used by companies to market their brands to their desired target audience.	3.11	0.52
People are more confident about the recommendations of the Social Media Influencers than the usual advertising.	2.54	0.44
Social Media Influencers create a link between the brand and the audience.	2.82	0.32
Average	2.936	0.394

Source: Researcher (2025)

Table 4.3 presents the results of the study on the trustworthiness of social media SMIs in altering consumers' purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County. The data is based on respondents' opinions regarding various statements, with the mean Likert score and standard deviation calculated for each statement.

The first statement, "Social Media SMIs are more trustworthy compared to paid advertisements", received a mean score of 3.17, suggesting a moderate level of agreement. This indicated that, on average, respondents perceive SMIs as somewhat more trustworthy than traditional paid advertisements. The standard deviation of 0.28 was low, indicating a strong consensus among respondents about the trustworthiness of SMIs, with little variation in responses.

For the statement, "Social Media SMIs have the power to influence people just with their content", the mean score of 3.04 reflected a similar moderate agreement. Respondents generally acknowledged that SMIs have some ability to influence others through their content. The standard deviation of 0.41 was relatively higher than the first statement, suggesting that there was more variability in respondents' opinions, with some being more convinced of SMIs' power than others.

The third statement, "Companies use Social Media SMIs to market their brands to their desired target audience", showed a mean score of 3.11, reflecting a general agreement among respondents that SMIs were indeed used for targeted marketing. However, the standard deviation of 0.52 was notably higher, indicating that respondents' views on this statement were more diverse, with some perceiving SMIs as key marketing tools, while others might not have perceived this as strongly.

When examining the statement, “People are more confident about the recommendations of Social Media SMIs than the usual advertising”, the mean score dropped to 2.54, which suggested a disagreement with the idea that SMIs were more trusted than traditional advertisements. The standard deviation of 0.44 was moderate, showing that there was a fair amount of consensus in the skepticism toward influencer-driven recommendations.

Lastly, for the statement “Social Media SMIs create a link between the brand and the audience”, the mean score of 2.82 indicated a mild disagreement. Respondents generally did not believe that SMIs were effective in connecting brands with their audiences. The low standard deviation of 0.32 suggested that this disagreement was shared among most respondents, with little divergence in their views.

The average mean Likert score across all statements was 2.936, with an average standard deviation of 0.394. This overall score suggested a neutral to slightly positive perception of influencer trustworthiness in changing consumer purchase intentions. While respondents showed moderate agreement with some aspects of influencer trustworthiness, particularly in comparison to paid advertisements, they were more skeptical about influencers' ability to create strong brand-audience links or inspire more confidence than traditional advertising. The relatively low average standard deviation indicated a fair degree of consensus among respondents, though individual statements showed varying levels of agreement.

4.4.2 Influencer adaptability in shaping consumer purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County

Table 4.4 presents the findings on the effect of influencer adaptability in shaping consumer purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County. Each statement was evaluated across a Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree, with a mean Likert score indicating the distribution of responses for the statement.

Table 4.4: Influencer adaptability in shaping consumer purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County

Statement	Mean Likert Score (1-5)	Standard Deviation

The quality of the content of the Social Media Influencer will affect my buying decision.	3.93	0.22
Language diversity of the Social Media Influencer will affect my buying decision.	4.29	0.21
Physical attractiveness of the Social Media Influencer will affect my buying decision.	4.21	0.19
Average	4.14	0.21

Source: Researcher (2025)

The first statement, “The quality of the content of the Social Media Influencer will affect my buying decision,” had a mean score of 3.93, which suggested a strong agreement that the quality of content plays a significant role in shaping purchase intentions. The standard deviation of 0.22 was low, implying that there is a high level of consensus among the respondents regarding the importance of content quality in influencing their purchase decisions.

For the statement, “The language diversity of the Social Media Influencer will affect my buying decision,” the mean score was higher at 4.29 than the first statement, showing strong agreement that the diversity of language used by SMIs is an important factor in shaping purchase decisions. The standard deviation of 0.21 was low, indicating that there was little variation in how respondents perceive the role of language diversity in influencing their buying behavior. This suggested that language diversity is seen as a significant factor across the sample, potentially reflecting the diverse linguistic landscape in Kenya.

The third statement, “The physical attractiveness of the Social Media Influencer will affect my buying decision,” had a mean score of 4.21, indicating a strong agreement with the idea that an influencer's physical appearance impacted purchase intentions. The low standard deviation of 0.19 showed that most respondents shared a similar view, suggesting that physical attractiveness was seen as an important trait for SMIs in influencing consumer behavior, with little variation in opinions across the sample.

The average mean Likert score across all statements was 4.14, with an average standard deviation of 0.21. This overall score indicated a strong agreement with the influence of influencer

adaptability on consumer purchase intentions. Respondents consistently rated the importance of content quality, language diversity, and physical attractiveness of social media influencers highly in affecting their buying decisions. The remarkably low average standard deviation suggested a high level of consensus among respondents across all three aspects of influencer adaptability. These findings implied that consumers in Nairobi County are highly receptive to influencers who can adapt their content, language, and appearance to appeal to their audience, with language diversity being particularly impactful.

4.4.3 Influencer’s reach on purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County

Table 4.5 presents the findings on the effect of the influencer’s reach on purchase intentions towards soft drink brands. Each statement was evaluated across a Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree, with a mean Likert score indicating the distribution of responses for the statement.

Table 4.5: Effect of the influencer’s reach on purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County

Statement	Mean Likert Score (1-5)	Standard Deviation
Social Media Influencer endorsement of a brand attracts a large target audience.	4.53	0.13
Social Media Influencer endorsement of a brand does not attract a large target audience.	4.76	0.15
Average	4.6	0.14

Source: Researcher (2025)

The first statement, “Social Media Influencer endorsement of a brand attracts a large target audience,” had a mean score of 4.53, which indicated strong agreement from the respondents that influencer endorsements can attract a large audience. The low standard deviation of 0.13 suggested that there is a high level of consensus among respondents, with little variation in their perceptions. This implied that majority of respondents believe that influencer endorsements effectively reach a broad audience, making them a powerful tool for brand promotion.

In contrast, the second statement, “Social Media Influencer endorsement of a brand does not attract a large target audience,” received a mean score of 4.76, which was higher than the first statement, suggesting strong agreement with the idea that influencer endorsements do attract a large audience. The low standard deviation of 0.15 indicated a high level of agreement among the respondents, reinforcing the belief that influencer endorsements are effective in reaching a wide audience.

The average mean Likert score across both statements was 4.6, with an average standard deviation of 0.14. This exceptionally high overall score indicated a very strong agreement among respondents regarding the significant reach of social media influencers in attracting a large target audience for soft drink brands. The extremely low standard deviation suggested a remarkably high level of consensus among respondents. However, it's important to note that the second statement appeared to contradict the first, yet both received high scores. This unexpected result might indicate a potential misunderstanding of the second statement by respondents or an error in data collection or reporting. Despite this anomaly, the overall findings strongly suggested that consumers in Nairobi County perceived social media influencers as having a powerful reach and ability to attract a large target audience when endorsing soft drink brands.

4.4.4 Influencer intimacy on consumer purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County

Table 4.6 presents the findings on the effect of influencer intimacy on consumer purchase intentions for soft drinks in Nairobi County. Each statement was evaluated across a Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree, with a mean Likert score indicating the distribution of responses for the statement.

Table 4.6: Effect of influencer intimacy on consumer purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County

Statement	Mean Likert Score (1-5)	Standard Deviation
Social Media Influencer endorsement of a brand develops a close relationship with the consumers.	4.96	0.73
Social Media Influencer endorsement of a brand does not develop a close relationship with the consumers.	1.26	0.10
Average	3.11	0.42

Source: Researcher (2025)

The findings presented in Table 4.6 demonstrated a strong positive effect of influencer intimacy on consumer purchase intentions for soft drink brands in Nairobi County. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed with the statement that social media influencer endorsements help develop a close relationship with consumers, as reflected by a high mean Likert score of 4.96. This suggested that consumers perceive influencer endorsements as fostering intimacy and emotional connection, which can enhance their likelihood of purchasing endorsed products. Conversely, the statement that influencer endorsements do not develop a close relationship was strongly disagreed with, evidenced by a low mean score of 1.26, and a small standard deviation of 0.10, indicating strong consensus among respondents.

The average mean Likert score across both statements was 3.11, with an average standard deviation of 0.42. However, this overall score did not accurately reflect the strong positive sentiment towards influencer intimacy due to the contrasting nature of the two statements. The first statement, indicated that influencer endorsements develop close relationships with consumers, received an extremely high score of 4.96, suggesting very strong agreement. In contrast, the second statement, which negated the first, received a very low score of 1.26, indicating strong disagreement. The large discrepancy between these scores and their opposing meanings demonstrated that respondents consistently believe that social media influencer endorsements did indeed foster close relationships with consumers. This suggested that influencer intimacy is perceived as a powerful factor in shaping consumer purchase intentions for soft drink brands in Nairobi County. The relatively high standard deviation for the first statement (0.73) compared to the second (0.10) indicated more varied opinions on the positive statement, but near-unanimous disagreement with the negative one.

4.4.5 Influencer attractiveness on purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County

Table 4.7 presents the findings on the effect of the social media influencer's attractiveness on purchase intentions for soft drinks. Each statement was evaluated across a Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree, with a mean Likert score indicating the distribution of responses for the statement.

Table 4.7: Influencer attractiveness on purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi

County

Statement	Mean Likert Score (1-5)	Standard Deviation
As a consumer, I am attracted to Beauty and Cosmetics social media content.	4.16	0.43
As a consumer, I am attracted to Fashion social media content.	4.29	0.45
As a consumer, I am attracted to Lifestyle social media content.	4.47	0.36
As a consumer, I am attracted to Fitness and Nutrition social media content.	3.92	0.39
As a consumer, I am attracted to Food social media content.	4.26	0.35
As a consumer, I am attracted to Travel social media content.	3.77	0.39
As a consumer, I am attracted to Photography on social media content.	3.27	0.41
Average	4.02	0.40

Source: Researcher (2025)

The findings in Table 4.7 explored how the attractiveness of social media influencer content across various categories affects consumer purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County. Overall, the results indicated that consumers were generally drawn to visually appealing and lifestyle-oriented content, which in turn might influence their buying decisions. Among the categories, Lifestyle content had the highest mean score (4.47) and a low standard deviation (0.36), indicating that many consumers strongly agree that they are attracted to this type of content. This was closely followed by Fashion (mean = 4.29), Food (mean = 4.26), and Beauty and Cosmetics (mean = 4.16), all with similarly low standard deviations, showing a high level of agreement among respondents.

On the other hand, the Fitness and Nutrition content had a slightly lower mean score of 3.92, suggesting a more moderate level of agreement. Travel and Photography content received the lowest scores, with means of 3.77 and 3.27, respectively. These lower scores suggested that while some consumers may still be attracted to these types of content, they are generally less influential

in shaping purchase intentions for soft drink brands compared to lifestyle, food, and fashion content.

The average mean Likert score across all statements was 4.02, with an average standard deviation of 0.40. This overall score indicated a strong positive attraction to various types of social media content, suggesting that influencer attractiveness played a significant role in shaping purchase intentions for soft drink brands in Nairobi County. The relatively low average standard deviation implied a good level of consensus among respondents across different content categories. Lifestyle, Fashion, and Food content emerged as the most attractive to consumers, with mean scores above 4.25, indicating these areas may be particularly effective for influencer marketing of soft drinks. While all content types received positive scores (above the neutral point of 3), there were noticeable variation in attractiveness across categories, with Photography and Travel content being comparatively less influential.

4.5 Inferential Statistics

This section contains the results of the normality, heteroscedasticity test and the multi-collinearity test.

4.5.1 Normality Test

The Shapiro-Wilk's test (with a p-value greater than 0.05) results showed that the independent variables demonstrated a skewness of 0.336 (standard error = 0.131) and a kurtosis of 0.432 (standard error = 0.134), while the dependent variable had a skewness of - 0.034 (standard error = 0.384). Therefore, there is no evidence to reject the null hypothesis of normality. In this case, the conclusion is that the data is approximately normally distributed.

4.5.2 Heteroscedasticity Test

The null hypothesis in this test posited that the error variance was homoscedastic. In the research model, the Modified Wald test produced a chi-square value of 19800.31 with a p-value of 0.0000. This chi-square value was statistically significant at the 1% level, leading to rejecting the null hypothesis, which assumed constant variance. In response to the detected heteroscedasticity, robust standard errors were employed in the study to account for this issue.

4.5.3 Multicollinearity Test

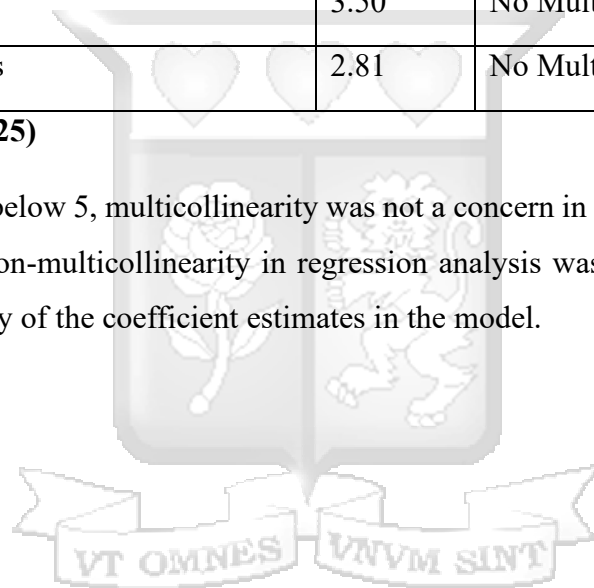
A VIF value greater than 10 suggests severe multicollinearity, while a VIF between 5 and 10 indicates moderate multicollinearity that may need further examination. A VIF below 5 was generally considered acceptable. Table 4.8 shows the VIF results.

Table 4.8: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Results

Predictor Variable	VIF	Interpretation
Trustworthiness	2.80	No Multicollinearity
Influencer Adaptability	2.89	No Multicollinearity
Influencer Reach	3.13	No Multicollinearity
Influencer Intimacy	3.50	No Multicollinearity
Influencer attractiveness	2.81	No Multicollinearity

Source: Researcher (2025)

Since all VIF values are below 5, multicollinearity was not a concern in the dataset. This confirms that the assumption of non-multicollinearity in regression analysis was met, thereby supporting the reliability and stability of the coefficient estimates in the model.



4.5.4 Pearson's Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation coefficients are presented in Table 4.9 below.

	Trustworthiness	Influencer Adaptability	Influencer Reach	Influencer Intimacy	Social Media Influencer's Attractiveness	Consumer Purchase Intentions
Trustworthiness	1.0000					
Influencer Adaptability	0.134	1.0000				
Influencer Reach	0.219	0.301	1.0000			
Influencer Intimacy	-0.109	0.417	0.183	1.0000		
Influencer Attractiveness	0.383	0.172	-0.293	-0.823	1.0000	
Consumer Purchase Intentions	0.732*	0.856*	0.783*	0.693*	0.893*	1.0000

Table 4.9: Pearson's Correlation Coefficient

Note: * - Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher (2025)

The correlation analysis revealed key insights into the relationships between influencer characteristics and consumer purchase intentions. Trustworthiness (0.732), influencer adaptability (0.856), and influencer reach (0.783) all showed strong positive correlations with consumer purchase intentions, indicating that consumers were more likely to make purchases from SMIs they trust, who can adapt to trends, and who have a large reach. Influencer intimacy (0.693) also had a moderate positive correlation, suggesting that a closer relationship with followers increased purchase intentions, though less strongly.

Influencer attractiveness had the highest positive correlation with purchase intentions (0.893), making it the most significant factor in driving consumer purchases. However, the analysis also showed weaker or more complex relationships among influencer characteristics. For example, trustworthiness was weakly correlated with influencer adaptability (0.134) and reach (0.219), and weakly negatively with intimacy (-0.109). On the other hand, influencer adaptability had moderate

positive correlations with reach (0.301) and intimacy (0.417), suggesting that adaptable SMIs tend to have a larger audience and closer relationships.

Interestingly, influencer attractiveness was weakly positively correlated with trustworthiness (0.383) but negatively correlated with reach (-0.293) and strongly negatively with intimacy (-0.823), indicating that attractive SMIs may have a larger audience but less intimacy with followers. Overall, the analysis shows that trustworthiness, adaptability, and attractiveness were significant in influencing consumer purchase intentions, with attractiveness being the most powerful factor.

4.6 Factor Analysis Results

4.6.1 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test

The KMO test was used to check the appropriateness of the sample for factor analysis. Generally, values between 0.6 and 1.0 are considered good, with higher values showing greater appropriateness for factor analysis. A KMO value below 0.6 may indicate that the data is not appropriate for factor analysis (Shrestha, 2021). Table 4.10 shows the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test results.

Table 4.10: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test

Test Statistic	Value
KMO Value	0.79

Source: Researcher (2025)

The KMO value was 0.79, which indicated that the data is suitable for factor analysis, as values closer to 1.0 are ideal.

4.6.2 Bartlett's Test

Bartlett's Test evaluated whether the correlation matrix significantly differs from the identity matrix, which would indicate significant correlations among the variables (Arsham & Lovric, 2011). An important result ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$) suggests that factor analysis is suitable. The results of Bartlett's Test are presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Test Statistic	Degrees of Freedom	p-value
Chi-Square Statistic	3	0.0001

Source: Researcher (2025)

The p-value was less than 0.05, indicating that Bartlett's Test was significant and that the data was suitable for factor analysis. The KMO value and Bartlett's Test indicated that the data was appropriate for factor analysis.

4.6.3 Eigenvalues and Variance Explained

After confirming the data's suitability through KMO and Bartlett's tests, the study proceeded with factor extraction. The Eigenvalue represents the variance explained by each factor, with factors typically retained if their Eigenvalue is greater than 1 (Fan et al., 2022). Common Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to obtain the Eigenvalues presented in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Eigenvalues and Variance Explained

Factor	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained (%)
Factor 1	2.50	73.33
Factor 2	0.75	26.67

Source: Researcher (2025)

Factor 1 explains 73.33% of the variance, and Factor 2 explains only 26.67%. Since Factor 2 has an Eigenvalue less than 1, it was not retained after applying the Kaiser Criterion (Eigenvalue > 1).

4.6.4 Factor Loading

Factor loadings represent the correlation between each variable and the extracted factor. Table 4.13 shows the factor loadings for Factor 1.

Table 4.13: Factor Loadings

Variable	Factor 1 Loading
Trustworthiness	0.75
Influencer Adaptability	0.85
Influencer Reach	0.78
Influencer Intimacy	0.83
Influencer Attractiveness	0.74

Source: Researcher (2025)

In Table 4.13, the factor loadings for Factor 1 are provided, highlighting the relationship between various influencer attributes and this factor. Trustworthiness loads were at 0.75, a high positive loading on Factor 1. This indicated that trustworthiness was an important quality closely associated with the factor. Influencer Adaptability had the highest loading of 0.85, a strong correlation with Factor 1. This indicated that an SMI's adaptability is an essential part of this factor.

Influencer Reach loads were at 0.78, which meant a highly positive correlation with Factor 1. Similarly, Influencer Intimacy loads were at 0.83, further confirming that these factors were strongly correlated with this factor. Influencer Attractiveness loads were at 0.74, which also showed a moderate to high positive correlation with Factor 1.

4.7 Regression Analysis

The study undertook a multiple linear regression analysis to determine the effect of social media influencer attributes on purchase intentions by consumers of soft drink brands in Nairobi County, Kenya. The multiple linear regression analysis was presented through ANOVA (Table 4.15) and Coefficient (Table 4.16) results, respectively. The regression model is presented in Table 4.14 below:

Table 4.14: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.881	.821	.780	0.254

Predictors: (Constant), adaptability, reach, intimacy, adaptability and attractiveness.

R^2 is the coefficient of determination and tells us how the dependent variable varied with the independent variables (adaptability, reach, intimacy, adaptability and attractiveness). From Table 4.14, the value of adjusted R^2 was 0.780. This statistic implied a variation of 78.0% of purchase intentions by consumers of soft drinks brands in Nairobi County, Kenya with the predictors: influencer trustworthiness, reach, intimacy, adaptability and attractiveness.

Table 4.15: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	72.8	21	53.00	14.651	.008 ^b
1	Residual	21.2	103	.403		
	Total	94	124			

Dependent Variable: Purchase Intentions

Predictors: Adaptability, Reach, Intimacy, Adaptability and Attractiveness

The significance value was 0.008, which was less than 0.05; thus, the model was statistically significant in predicting the effect of social media influencer attributes on purchase intentions by consumers of soft drinks brands in Nairobi County, Kenya. The F critical at a 5% level of significance was 14.651. Since the F calculated is greater than the F critical, this showed that the overall model was significant. Thus, the study found that the regression model was a good fit for data progressed towards examination of the regression coefficients of the independent variables and their influence on the purchase intentions. Table 4.16 shows the coefficient of determination of the regression model.

Table 4.16: Coefficient of Determination

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	0.783	.114		1.483	.000
	Trustworthiness	.429	.110	.294	1.067	.000
	Influencer Adaptability	.410	.124	.201	2.166	.000
	Influencer Reach	.332	.113	.127	1.108	.000
	Influencer Intimacy	.312	.138	.116	1.117	.000
1	Influencer Attractiveness	.386	.129	.103	1.617	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intentions

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which each independent variable influences the purchase intentions. Table 4.16 shows that all the independent variables were significant predictors of the purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County at

$p < 0.05$, the regression equation is:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \epsilon \dots \dots \dots (i)$$

becomes:

$$\text{Purchase Intentions} = 0.783 + 0.429X_1 + 0.410X_2 + 0.332X_3 + 0.312X_4 + 0.386X_5 + \epsilon \dots \dots \dots (i)$$

Table 4.16 presents the results of a regression analysis, showing the relationship between several independent variables and the dependent variable. The constant value of 0.783 indicated the baseline value of the dependent variable when all independent variables are zero. With a statistically significant p-value of 0.000, it suggested that this constant is meaningful in the model.

Looking at the individual predictors, trustworthiness had an unstandardized coefficient of 0.429, meaning that for each one-unit increase in trustworthiness, the dependent variable was expected to increase by 0.429 units, assuming all other variables are held constant. The standardized Beta coefficient of 0.294 indicated a moderate impact of trustworthiness on the dependent variable. The t-value of 1.067 and a p-value of 0.000 confirm that trustworthiness was statistically significant in the model.

Influencer adaptability showed an unstandardized coefficient of 0.410, suggesting that a one-unit increase in influencer adaptability resulted in a 0.410 unit increase in the dependent variable. The standardized Beta coefficient of 0.201 reflected a moderate effect of adaptability on the dependent variable. With a t-value of 2.166 and a p-value of 0.000, influencer adaptability had a statistically significant effect, and its impact is notable.

Influencer reach had an unstandardized coefficient of 0.332, indicating that for every unit increase in influencer reach, the dependent variable increased by 0.332 units. The standardized Beta coefficient of 0.127 reflected a weaker impact compared to other predictors, and while the t-value of 1.108 was lower, the p-value of 0.000 still confirmed that influencer reach was statistically significant.

Influencer intimacy had an unstandardized coefficient of 0.312, meaning that a one-unit increase in intimacy led to a 0.312-unit increase in the dependent variable. The standardized Beta

coefficient of 0.116 suggested a modest effect of intimacy on the dependent variable. With a t-value of 1.117 and a p-value of 0.000, intimacy was statistically significant, though its impact was smaller than that of some other variables.

Lastly, Influencer attractiveness had an unstandardized coefficient of 0.386, suggesting that an increase in attractiveness led to a 0.386 unit increase in the dependent variable. The standardized Beta coefficient of 0.103 indicated a smaller effect compared to the other variables. Despite its smaller impact, the t-value of 1.617 and p-value of 0.000 showed that attractiveness also had a statistically significant effect.

4.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of the data collected to determine the effect of social media influencer attributes on purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County, Kenya. The chapter begins with an overview of the response rate (91.89%) and demographic information of the respondents, providing context for the study sample.

The analysis then delves into descriptive statistics, examining the impact of various influencer attributes such as trustworthiness, adaptability, reach, intimacy, and attractiveness on consumer purchase intentions. Inferential statistics, including normality tests, heteroscedasticity tests, and multicollinearity tests, were conducted to ensure the validity of the data for further analysis. Factor analysis was performed to identify underlying patterns in the data, with one significant factor emerging that explained 73.33% of the variance.

The chapter concludes with a multiple linear regression analysis, which revealed that all the independent variables (trustworthiness, adaptability, reach, intimacy, and attractiveness) were significant predictors of purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County. The regression model explained 78% of the variance in purchase intentions. Trustworthiness emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by influencer adaptability, while influencer attractiveness had the smallest, though still significant, impact on purchase intentions.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the summary of findings, the study's discussion, conclusion, and recommendations, presented according to the study objectives. This chapter provides a summary of the key findings, an in-depth discussion, the conclusion, and recommendations based on the study objectives. It begins with a concise overview of the results, followed by a detailed analysis of their significance in existing literature. The discussion highlights key insights, patterns, and any research limitations. The conclusion synthesizes the findings, addresses the main research questions, and emphasizes the study's contributions. Finally, practical recommendations for future research or action are offered, focusing on gaps or areas for improvement identified during the study.

5.2 Summary of Findings

This study sought to determine how social media influencer attributes affect consumer purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study examines the effect of influencer attributes like trustworthiness, reach, adaptability, intimacy and attractiveness on Kenyan consumers' purchasing decisions, addressing the lack of research on influencer effectiveness in this market.

For each specific objective, descriptive statistics, specifically mean and standard deviations, were used in analyzing the data. These measures provided insights into the central tendency and variability of the data. The mean offered an average value, giving an overall understanding of the typical response or trend for each variable. Standard Deviation indicated the extent of variation or dispersion in the data, helping identify consistency or differences within the responses. Inferential statistics, specifically multiple linear regression analysis, correlation analysis and factor analysis, were used to establish relationships between independent variables and dependent variables.

The correlation analysis showed that trustworthiness (0.732), adaptability (0.856), and reach (0.783) strongly correlated with consumer purchase intentions, while intimacy (0.693) had a moderate correlation. Attractiveness (0.893) was the most significant factor influencing purchase intentions. Factor loadings indicated the strength of the correlation between each variable and Factor 1. In Table 4.16, trustworthiness loads were at 0.75, showing a strong positive correlation. Influencer adaptability had the highest loading at 0.85, indicating its essential role in this factor.

Influencer reach (0.78) and influencer intimacy (0.83) also showed strong positive correlations. Attractiveness loads were at 0.74, reflecting a moderate to high positive correlation with Factor 1.

The value of adjusted R^2 was 0.780. This statistic implied a variation of 78.0% of purchase intentions by consumers of soft drinks brands in Nairobi County, Kenya with the predictors: influencer adaptability, reach, intimacy, adaptability and attractiveness. The model was statistically significant in predicting the effect of social media influencer attributes on consumer purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County, Kenya. The regression analysis results showed the relationship between several independent variables and the dependent variable. The constant value of 0.783 represented the baseline value, and it's statistically significant. Trustworthiness had a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County. Influencer adaptability had a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County. Influencer reach had a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County. Influencer intimacy also had a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County. Lastly, attractiveness had a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County.

5.3 Discussions

5.3.1 Effect of the trustworthiness of the influencer in changing the consumers' purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County

The trustworthiness of the influencer had a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County. The findings align with the findings of De Veirman et al. (2017), whose study revealed a strong positive correlation between perceived influencer trustworthiness and favorable attitudes towards promoted brands and products, ultimately leading to increased purchase intentions.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Cheung et al. (2022), which emphasized the significant impact of perceived authenticity on the effectiveness of influencer marketing using PLS-SEM in a two-stage approach. The study showed that when consumers perceive SMIs as authentic, they are much more likely to trust their recommendations and develop positive attitudes toward the promoted products, leading to increased purchase intentions. Additionally, the results aligned with Lou and Yuan (2019), who found a strong positive relationship between perceived

influencer trustworthiness and favorable attitudes toward the promoted brands and products, which in turn boosted purchase intentions.

Conversely, the findings of this study support the findings of the study and align well with the theoretical framework, particularly the Parasocial Relationship (PSR) Theory and the Source Credibility Theory. The study's finding that trustworthiness positively correlates with consumer purchase intentions directly supports the PSR theory, which emphasizes the illusory but powerful interpersonal connections that consumers form with SMIs (Liebers & Schramm, 2019). According to PSR, consumers develop a sense of trust and connection with SMIs, which can influence their behavior, such as making purchase decisions (Reinikainen et al., 2020).

Further, the study's finding that trustworthiness influences consumer purchase intentions also supports the Source Credibility Theory, which suggests that the perceived credibility of a source (in this case, the influencer) affects the persuasive power of their message (Pornpitakpan, 2004). Trustworthiness is a key component of source credibility, and the finding that it significantly affects consumer decisions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County supports the idea that credible SMIs are more persuasive and can drive consumer actions.

5.3.2 Effect of influencer adaptability in shaping consumer purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County

Influencer adaptability is at the core of soft drink brand consumer purchase intention building in Kenya. Based on this research, when SMIs adapt their content to be aligned with local values and interests, they were more likely to build trust and retain their audience. This supports Boerman (2020), which proved that culture-sensitive SMIs are more likely to gain more credibility and interaction from followers. Such trust tends to be reflected as higher purchasing intent, especially in international marketing efforts where cultural compatibility is a key factor.

Additionally, the findings of this study aligned with the findings of Schimmelpfennig and Hunt (2020), they proposed a comprehensive framework for understanding celebrity endorsement effectiveness based on different theories and the brand's value proposition and that different endorsement strategies may be more effective depending on the brand's value proposition and product category. This research provided further evidence of the importance of adaptability in influencer marketing and its potential effect on consumer purchase intentions in diverse markets.

The result of this study supports Parasocial Relationship (PSR) Theory, Source Credibility Theory, and Social Learning Theory. According to the PSR theory, consumers form one-sided, interpersonal relationships with SMIs. The study identified that flexible SMIs build higher levels of trust and interaction through adaptation to local norms, enhancing their parasocial relationship with consumers. This enhanced relationship has a positive influence on consumer purchase behavior, supporting the PSR theory (Liebers & Schramm, 2019).

The Source Credibility Theory predicts that an influencer's credibility can impact their persuasiveness. The finding of the present study that influencer adaptability had a positive influence on purchase intentions is consonant with this theory. Such SMIs who adjust their content to comply with local cultures are perceived as being credible, which makes their suggestions more convincing to their consumers, resulting in higher purchase likelihood (Pornpitakpan, 2004).

In addition, the Social Learning Theory points out that individuals learn by observing others, especially those that they admire. Flexible SMIs are positive role models for their fans, influencing behavior by offering examples aligning with cultural norms (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). The study supported that as SMIs become more flexible in their strategies, they establish consumer trust, interactions, and, consequently, purchase intentions, affirming the relevance of social learning processes.

5.3.3 Effect of the influencer's reach on purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County

Influencer reach had a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County. The findings of this study aligned with the findings of Lou and Yuan (2019) which revealed that the informational value of influencer content significantly contributes to its effectiveness. When an influencer's reach extends to consumers who perceive their content as valuable and informative, there is a higher likelihood of developing positive attitudes towards promoted brands and products, ultimately influencing purchase decisions.

Similarly, the findings of this study aligned with the findings of Audrezet et al. (2020) who found that SMIs who consistently create high-quality, engaging content that resonates with their target audience are more effective in maintaining follower interest and driving brand engagement. This sustained engagement expands the influencer's reach and positively affects consumer purchase intentions by fostering trust and reliability in the influencer's recommendations.

Additionally, the findings of this study aligned with the findings of Valentini et al. (2018), who found that content quality, measured by factors such as visual appeal, informativeness, and entertainment value, significantly affected engagement rates and follower perceptions. High-quality posts generated 37% more engagement and were 28% more likely to be shared by followers, suggesting that content quality substantially enhances an influencer's reach and ability to shape consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. The authenticity of content also played a crucial role in expanding an influencer's effective reach.

Lastly, the findings of this study aligned with the findings of Childers et al. (2019) who found that content perceived as authentic and genuine was more likely to resonate with followers and influence their purchase decisions. Authenticity, measured by factors such as personal narrative, transparency about sponsored content, and consistency with the influencer's overall brand, was found to significantly enhance an influencer's reach and effect on consumer behavior.

The study's findings on influencer reach support the Parasocial Relationship (PSR) Theory, Source Credibility Theory, and Social Learning Theory. Greater reach enhanced the parasocial bond between SMIs and consumers, making purchase intentions more likely. The wider an influencer's reach was, the more credible they become, which aligned with the Source Credibility Theory, suggesting that a larger audience increases the influencer's persuasiveness. Additionally, Social Learning Theory is supported, as a broader reach means more consumers observe and learn from SMIs, thereby influencing their attitudes and behaviors toward the promoted brands (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

5.3.4 Effect of influencer intimacy on consumer purchase intentions for soft drink brands in Nairobi County

Influencer intimacy had a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Kenya. The findings of this study aligned with the findings of Audrezet et al. (2020), the study found that high-engagement SMIs who responded to at least 30% of follower comments experienced a 25% higher rate of positive sentiment in their communities compared to low-engagement SMIs. This enhanced engagement, according to Audrezet et al., can lead to increased trust and credibility, potentially influencing purchase intentions.

Similarly, the findings of this study aligned with the findings of Casaló et al. (2020), they found that consistency in engagement and messaging over time can significantly enhance an influencer's

credibility and effectiveness. Notably, followers who engaged consistently with an influencer for at least six months were 40% more likely to make a purchase based on the influencer's recommendation compared to new followers. These findings underscore the importance of sustained intimacy in influencing consumer behavior and purchase intentions.

This study also supported the evidence of Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), which set the fact that consistent and meaningful interaction between SMIs and followers generates greater trust and higher probability of purchase of a product. Their study showed how honest and frequent interaction constructs close relationships that shape consumer decisions. However, this closeness between influencer and follower also depends on open and honest revelation of sponsored collaborations.

Lastly, the findings of the study are consistent with the findings of Steils et al. (2022), who found that while transparency is crucial for maintaining authenticity, it must be carefully managed to preserve the intimate connection between SMIs and their followers. Their research suggested that when done effectively, transparent disclosures can enhance the perceived intimacy and trustworthiness of an influencer, leading to stronger engagement and potentially greater influence on purchase intentions.

The study's findings on influencer reach support the Parasocial Relationship (PSR) Theory, Source Credibility Theory, and Social Learning Theory. Greater reach enhances the parasocial bond between SMIs and consumers, making purchase intentions more likely. The wider an influencer's reach, the more credible they become, which aligns with the Source Credibility Theory, suggesting that a larger audience increases the influencer's persuasiveness. Additionally, Social Learning Theory is supported, as a broader reach means more consumers observe and learn from SMIs, thereby influencing their attitudes and behaviors toward the promoted brands.

5.3.5 Effect of the influencer attractiveness on purchase intentions of soft drinks brands in Nairobi County

Influencer attractiveness had a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Kenya. These findings align with the findings of Ki et al. (2020), who found that influencer attractiveness significantly affected followers' attitudes towards luxury fashion brands and their subsequent purchase intentions. Notably, SMIs perceived as highly attractive in terms of their style, appearance, and overall presentation were 2.5 times more likely

to influence a follower's purchase decision compared to those perceived as less attractive. This finding underscores the importance of visual appeal in the context of fashion and luxury goods marketing.

Similarly, this study's findings aligned with the findings of Lou and Yuan (2019), who found that SMIs whose content was rated as highly attractive were 3.7 times more likely to drive purchase intentions compared to those with less appealing content. This highlighted the significance of not just the influencer's attractiveness but also the aesthetic quality of their posts and overall feed.

Additionally, this study's findings confirmed the findings of De Veirman et al. (2017). According to their findings, while an influencer's large number of followers is likely to lead to more favorable influencer attitudes, the perceived attractiveness of the influencer strongly mediates this effect. For instance, a 50,000-follower influencer who were perceived to be highly attractive in their overall look and content quality were discovered to be better at triggering purchase intentions than a 500,000-follower influencer who lacked this appeal. This research brought to light that attractiveness can be a more powerful influence than followers in certain situations.

The study's findings on influencer attractiveness aligned with the Parasocial Relationship (PSR) Theory, Source Credibility Theory, and Social Learning Theory. According to the PSR Theory, attractiveness helps build stronger one-sided relationships between SMIs and consumers, fostering trust and connection. This enhances the parasocial bond, which in turn increases consumer purchase intentions as they are more likely to follow recommendations from SMIs, they feel connected to.

From the perspective of the Source Credibility Theory, attractiveness contributed to an influencer's perceived credibility and persuasiveness. The study supported this by showing that attractive SMIs are seen as more credible, making their product endorsements more effective and influencing consumer behavior toward purchase.

5.4 Conclusion

The study found that the results indicated a significant and positive correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The R square findings indicated that the regression model had a significant impact on consumer purchase intention towards soft drink brands in Kenya. The factor analysis findings indicated the strength of the correlation between

each variable and consumer purchase intention towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County. The study results indicated congruence between descriptive statistics and regression analysis in determining the role of social media influencer attributes in shaping the purchase intentions of soft drink brands among consumers in Nairobi County, Kenya. Furthermore, the study concluded the following regarding the study objectives:

The study concluded that the trustworthiness of the influencer has a positive and significant effect on changing the consumers' purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Nairobi County.

The study concluded that influencer adaptability has a positive and significant effect in shaping consumer purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County.

The study concluded that the influencer's reach has a positive and significant effect on purchase intentions towards soft drink brands in Nairobi County.

The study concluded that influencer intimacy has a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intentions of soft drink brands in Kenya Nairobi County.

The study concluded that the influencer attractiveness has a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intentions of soft drinks brands in Nairobi County.

5.5 Recommendation

5.5.1 Policy Recommendations

The study recommended that policymakers in Kenya should consider developing guidelines for influencer marketing that promote transparency, especially regarding trustworthiness and credibility, to protect consumers from misleading advertisements.

The study recommended that regulatory bodies in Kenya should set standards for influencer partnerships, ensuring that SMIs' endorsements of products like soft drinks are truthful and align with consumer protection laws.

The study recommended that companies in the soft drink industry collaborate with SMIs who align with their brand values, ensuring that influencer characteristics like trustworthiness and adaptability are prioritized in marketing strategies.

The study recommended that local authorities promote awareness campaigns that educate consumers about the influence of social media marketing, emphasizing the impact of influencer endorsements on their purchasing behavior.

5.5.2 Recommendation for Theory

The study recommended that future research further explore the role of Parasocial Relationship (PSR) Theory in the context of different product categories, such as food and beverages, to see if the findings are consistent across various industries.

The study recommended that researchers build upon the Source Credibility Theory to assess the varying degrees of credibility across different types of SMIs, such as micro-SMIs versus macro-SMIs, and their effect on consumer behavior.

5.5.3 Recommendation for Practice

The study recommended that brands and marketers focus on building strong parasocial relationships with their target audiences by selecting SMIs who are perceived as trustworthy and relatable, enhancing the likelihood of influencing consumer purchase intentions.

The study recommended that businesses in Kenya invest in influencer marketing strategies that prioritize influencer adaptability, ensuring that their content aligns with local cultural values and preferences to resonate more effectively with consumers.

The study recommended that marketers track SMI reach as a key metric to optimize the effectiveness of their campaigns, especially targeting broader consumer groups.

The study recommended that businesses incorporate SMI intimacy as a factor when selecting SMIs, understanding that deeper emotional connections can lead to higher consumer engagement and trust.

5.5.4 Recommendations for Further Research

The study recommended that future studies should investigate the long-term effects of influencer marketing on consumer brand loyalty, particularly to soft drink brands.

The study recommended that future research should explore the influence of influencer diversity (in terms of background, gender, and interests) on consumer purchase intentions in different cultural contexts.

The study recommended that future research should examine how different types of product categories (e.g., luxury goods versus everyday items) are influenced by various influencer attributes, such as attractiveness or trustworthiness.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

This study, while valuable in examining the effect of social media influencer attributes on soft drink purchase intentions by Nairobi County, Kenya, consumers, suffers from several limitations. To start with, the study design was cross-sectional, i.e., the data were gathered at one moment in time, which limits the ability to make inferences about long-term effects or trends. A longitudinal study would provide a clearer perspective on the long-term influence of SMI advertising.

Second, the study was done within a specific geographical location, Nairobi County, and may not fully represent the larger Kenyan population or other cultural environments in Africa. The findings cannot, therefore, be generalized to other nations or geographical locations with different social media consumption habits or cultural orientations towards influencer marketing.

Third, the research relied primarily on self-reported information gathered through questionnaires, which are susceptible to social desirability bias or response bias. While the research employed multiple regression and factor analysis, participant perceptions could diminish the reliability of the results, particularly if the respondents' perception of influencer marketing varied.

Finally, the research only examined a limited set of influencer traits, i.e., credibility, reach, and flexibility, without considering other variables, i.e., influencer credibility or the influence of interaction terms between different influencer traits. Future research may examine other influencer attributes to have an even better understanding of how consumers are influenced.

5.7 Suggested Areas for Future Research

Future studies should explore the lasting effects of social media influencer marketing on brand loyalty, especially for soft drink brands.

Research should examine how social media influencer diversity (e.g., background, gender, interests) influences consumer purchase intentions across different cultural contexts.

Future research should investigate how social media influencer attributes, such as attractiveness or trustworthiness, impact different product categories like luxury goods versus everyday items.

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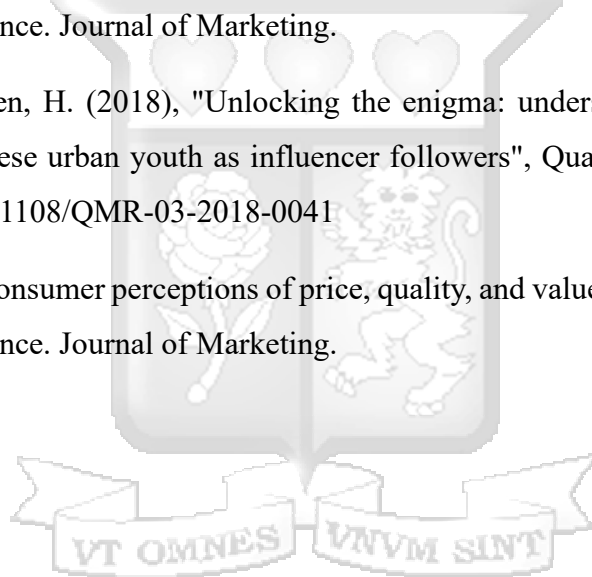
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Questionnaire Participant,

I appreciate your consideration to participate in this study that sought to understand the determinants of consumer purchase intentions of soft drinks, being affected by social media influencer attributes in Nairobi County, Kenya. This study aims to obtain empirical evidence to advance scholarly knowledge and to support managerial decision-making on social media SMIs marketing. Your participation is, therefore, highly appreciated.

As you respond to this survey, you are assured that your response will be treated with the strictest confidentiality, and the information obtained from this study will be used for academic purposes only. The questionnaire has specific instructions to follow and scales to use to indicate your responses. From your personal experiences with social media SMIs and interactions with others, kindly provide responses that represent the reality concerning the issues being studied in this research. Although some statements may appear quite similar, they are also unique in many ways, so kindly do well to respond to each statement. Please indicate how things really are rather than how you wish they were.

This study has a target respondent group, and it is important to ensure that each respondent falls within this group. The next sets of questions on this page have been structured to ensure that you meet the eligibility criteria to participate in this study. Please respond to the questions below, and kindly proceed to the main survey only if you are eligible.

Once again, thank you very much for your participation in this research. You may respond in complete frankness; all your answers will remain confidential.

YOUR ELIGIBILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

A. Are you between 18-35 years old? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If your response to **A** is Yes, then please continue with the study. If your response to **A** is No, then kindly end your participation in the study. We do appreciate your time so far spent on this study.

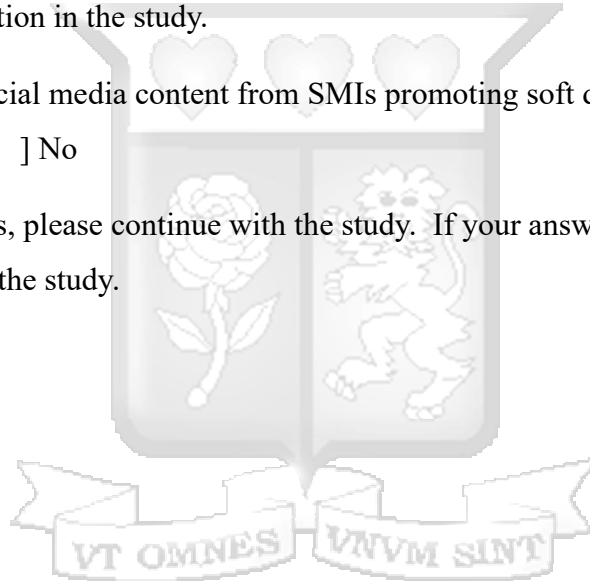
B. Do you use social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter/X)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If your answer to **B** is Yes, then please continue with the study. If your answer to **B** is No, then kindly end your participation in the study.

C. Have you seen social media content from SMIs promoting soft drinks in the past 6 months? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If your answer to **C** is Yes, please continue with the study. If your answer **C** is No, then kindly end your participation in the study.



SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION & DEMOGRAPHICS

INSTRUCTIONS: This section sought to gather some demographic data for the research. Kindly indicate your answer by writing your answers and select by checking (✓) where appropriate.	
1	Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to say ☐
2	Age of respondent (years) : 18-25 ☐ 26-30 ☐ 31-35 ☐
3	Please indicate your employment status Student ☐ Self Employed ☐ Salaried worker ☐ Unemployed ☐ Retired ☐
4	Please select your monthly income category Up to Ksh. 50000 ☐ Ksh. 51000 - 100000 ☐ Ksh. 101000 – 150000 ☐ Ksh. 150000 - 200000 ☐ Above Ksh. 200000 ☐
5	Level of Education Up to Primary School ☐ Up to Secondary School ☐ Up to First Degree ☐ Up to Master's Degree ☐ Up to PhD ☐
6	How long have you had a social media account? Less than one year ☐ Between 1 and 3 years ☐ Between 4 and 5 years ☐ Above 5 years ☐
7	Which social media platforms do you use most often? (Select all that apply) Facebook ☐ Instagram ☐ YouTube ☐ Twitter/X ☐ TikTok ☐ Other ☐ (please specify):
8	Which social media platform highly influences you? (Select all that apply) Facebook ☐ Instagram ☐ YouTube ☐ Twitter/X ☐ TikTok ☐ Other ☐ (please specify):
9	Which of the following social media platforms do you prefer the most to get Information related to various soft drink brands? Facebook ☐ Instagram ☐ YouTube ☐ Twitter/X ☐ TikTok ☐ Other ☐ (please specify):
10	What factors do you consider while choosing SMIs to follow on social media? Number of followers ☐ Reach to the audience ☐ Quality of engagement ☐ Voice ☐ Other ☐ (please specify):
11	What type of content highly impacts your purchase decision? Consumer Created Content ☐ Professional Brand Image ☐ Celebrity or Influencer Content ☐ Other ☐ (please specify):

SECTION B: SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER ATTRIBUTES

INSTRUCTIONS: Based on the respective scales provided, kindly circle a number that best represents your opinion on each statement.						
PART I: Influencer Trustworthiness						
SCALE: 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
10	How likely do you agree or disagree with the following points with respect to endorsements of brands by social media SMIs on social media platforms?					
a)	Social Media SMIs are more trustworthy as compared to paid advertisements.	1	2	3	4	5
b)	Social Media SMIs have the power to influence people just with their content.	1	2	3	4	5
c)	Social Media SMIs are used by companies to market their brands to their desired target audience.	1	2	3	4	5
d)	People are more confident about the recommendations of the Social Media SMIs than the usual advertising.	1	2	3	4	5
e)	Social Media SMIs create a link between the brand and the audience.	1	2	3	4	5
PART II: Influencer Adaptability						
SCALE: 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
11	How likely do you agree or disagree with the following factors affecting your buying decision?					
a)	The quality of the content of the Social Media Influencer will affect my buying decision.	1	2	3	4	5

b)	Language diversity of the Social Media Influencer will affect my buying decision.	1	2	3	4	5
c)	Physical attractiveness of the Social Media Influencer will affect my buying decision.	1	2	3	4	5
PART III: Influencer Reach						
<i>SCALE: 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”</i>		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
12	Please fill in the following as per your views on social media influencer endorsements of brands on social media platforms.					
a)	Social Media Influencer endorsement of a brand attracts a large target audience.	1	2	3	4	5
b)	Social Media Influencer endorsement of a brand does not attract a large target audience.	1	2	3	4	5
PART IV: Influencer Intimacy						
<i>SCALE: 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”</i>		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
13	Please fill in the following as per your views on social media influencer endorsements of brands on social media platforms					
a)	Social Media Influencer endorsement of a brand develops a close relationship with the consumers.	1	2	3	4	5
b)	Social Media Influencer endorsement of a brand does not develop a close relationship with the consumers.	1	2	3	4	5
PART V: Influencer Attractiveness						

SCALE: 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
14	How likely do you agree or disagree with the following thematic areas of the SMIs you follow?					
a)	As a consumer, I am attracted to Beauty and Cosmetics social media content.	1	2	3	4	5
b)	As a consumer, I am attracted to Fashion social media content.	1	2	3	4	5
c)	As a consumer, I am attracted to Lifestyle social media content.	1	2	3	4	5
d)	As a consumer, I am attracted to Fitness and Nutrition social media content.	1	2	3	4	5
e)	As a consumer, I am attracted to Food social media content.	1	2	3	4	5
f)	As a consumer, I am attracted to Travel social media content.	1	2	3	4	5
g)	As a consumer, I am attracted to Photography's social media content.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION C: CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTIONS

INSTRUCTIONS: Based on the respective scales provided, kindly circle a number that best represents your opinion on each statement.						
PART I: Likelihood of Purchase Intention						
<i>SCALE: 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”</i>		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
15	What are the factors which mostly influence your buying decision on social media?					
a)	Friends’ recommendations influence my buying decision.	1	2	3	4	5

b)	TV advertisements influence my buying decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
c)	Social Media SMIs influence my buying decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
d)	Price promotions influence my buying decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
PART II: Strength of Purchase Intention						
<i>SCALE: 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”</i>		<i>Strongly Disagree</i>			<i>Strongly Agree</i>	
16	I am willing to pay a premium price for carbonated soft drinks recommended by SMIs I trust	1	2	3	4	5
17	Influencer endorsements make me less price-sensitive when purchasing carbonated soft drinks	1	2	3	4	5
18	Consistent influencer endorsements over time increase my trust in a carbonated soft drink brand	1	2	3	4	5
PART III: Timing of Purchase Intention						
<i>SCALE: 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”</i>		<i>Strongly Disagree</i>			<i>Strongly Agree</i>	
19	After seeing an influencer promote a carbonated soft drink, I plan to purchase it soon	1	2	3	4	5
20	Influencer promotions motivate me to buy carbonated soft drinks more frequently than I normally would	1	2	3	4	5

END OF SURVEY

THANK YOU ONCE AGAIN FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS SURVEY

APPENDIX II: SIMILARITY INDEX

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APPENDIX III: ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE



14th March 2025

Mrs. Rebecca Oloilo,
rebeca.awuor@strathmore.edu

Dear Mrs. Oloilo,

RE: Effect of Social Media Influencers on purchase intentions by consumers of soft drink brands in Nairobi, Kenya.

This is to inform you that SU-ISERC has reviewed and **approved** your above **SU-masters** proposal. Your application reference number is **SU-ISERC2703/25**. The approval period is from **14th March 2025 to 13th March 2026**.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements:

- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used.
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by SU-ISERC
- iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to SU-ISERC within 72 hours of notification.
- iv. Any changes anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to SU-ISERC within 72 hours.
- v. Clearance for the export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to the expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days of completion of the study to SU-ISERC.

Before commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke/> and obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Ambrose Rachier,
Chairperson; SU-ISERC

APPENDIX IV: NACOSTI RESEARCH PERMIT

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA Ref No: 306562	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION Date of Issue: 26/March/2025
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
This is to Certify that Ms.. Rebecca Olilo of Strathmore University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nairobi on the topic: EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON PURCHASE INTENTIONS BY CONSUMERS OF SOFT DRINK BRANDS IN NAIROBI, KENYA for the period ending : 26/March/2026.	
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