



The Impact of Influencer Marketing on Building Customer Trust and Enhancing Loyalty in the Restaurant Industry

Hossam Hassan Fathy¹
Abd-Almonaim Aladaweiy²

Mohamed Abou Taleb Mohamed²
Mohammed Ezzat Hashad²

1 Hotel Management Department, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, 6th of October University, Egypt.

2 Hotel Management Department, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, University of Sadat City, Egypt.

ABSTRACT

This study explored how influencer marketing affects customer trust and loyalty toward restaurant brands, with a focus on customer trust as a mediating variable in this relationship. Using a descriptive-analytical method, data were gathered from 407 social media followers through structured questionnaires targeting restaurant customers who follow influencer-driven marketing campaigns. Data analysis was performed using WarpPLS software v. 8.0. The results show that influencer marketing significantly boosts both customer trust and loyalty toward brands. Additionally, customer trust strongly influences loyalty and serves as a mediator between influencer marketing and brand loyalty, underscoring its key role in turning social media followers into loyal customers. These findings reveal that influencer marketing goes beyond mere promotion, serving as a strategic tool for fostering trust-based, long-term customer relationships. Based on these insights, the study offers both theoretical and practical recommendations for restaurant managers and marketers aiming to improve the effectiveness of influencer marketing efforts.

Printed ISSN:
2537-0952

Online ISSN:
3062-5262

DOI:
10.21608/MFTH.202
5.462427

KEYWORDS

Influencer marketing, customer trust, customer loyalty, the restaurant sector, and digital marketing.

تأثير التسويق بالمؤثر على بناء ثقة العملاء وتعزيز ولائهم في قطاع المطاعم

محمد أبو طالب محمد²

محمد عزت حشاد²

حسام حسن فتحي¹

عبد المنعم العدوي²

1 قسم إدارة الفنادق، كلية السياحة والفنادق، جامعة 6 أكتوبر، مصر.

2 قسم إدارة الفنادق، كلية السياحة والفنادق، جامعة مدينة السادات، مصر.

الملخص

استكشفت هذه الدراسة كيف يؤثر التسويق بالمؤثر على ثقة العملاء وولائهم تجاه العلامات التجارية للمطاعم، مع التركيز على ثقة العملاء كمتغير وسيط في هذه العلاقة. وباستخدام أسلوب وصفي تحليلي، تم جمع البيانات من 407 متابع لمواقع التواصل الاجتماعي من خلال استبيانات مُنظمة تستهدف عملاء المطاعم الذين يتابعون الحملات التسويقية التي يقودها المؤثرون. تم إجراء تحليل البيانات باستخدام برنامج WarpPLS 8.0. تُظهر النتائج أن التسويق بالمؤثر يعزز بشكل كبير كل من ثقة العملاء وولائهم تجاه العلامة التجارية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تؤثر ثقة العملاء بشدة على ولائهم، وتلعب دوراً وسيطاً في العلاقة بين التسويق بالمؤثر والولاء للعلامة التجارية، مما يؤكد دورها الرئيسي في تحويل متابعي وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي إلى عملاء مخلصين. تكشف هذه النتائج أن التسويق بالمؤثر يتجاوز مجرد الترويج، حيث يعمل كأداة استراتيجية لتعزيز علاقات العملاء طويلة الأمد القائمة على الثقة. بناءً على هذه الرؤى، تقدم الدراسة توصيات نظرية وعملية لمديري المطاعم والمسوقين الذين يهدفون إلى تحسين فعالية جهود التسويق بالمؤثر.

الكلمات الدالة

التسويق بالمؤثر، ثقة العملاء، ولاء العملاء، قطاع المطاعم، التسويق الرقمي.

الترقيم الدولي الموحد
للطباعة:

2537-0952

الترقيم الدولي الموحد
الإلكتروني:

3062-5262

DOI:
10.21608/MFTH.202
5.462427

Introduction

A growing body of scientific research emphasizes that influencer marketing strategies are crucial for strengthening customer loyalty and building long-term brand relationships. Companies mainly use influencer marketing to increase brand awareness—the initial stage of brand equity and customer-based brand development (Bettle et al., 2023). However, beyond raising awareness, influencer-driven campaigns strategically aim to create positive brand associations, foster trust, and build emotional connections, which collectively reinforce customer loyalty (Platon & Orzan, 2015). Influencers serve as opinion leaders and brand advocates, promoting digital word-of-mouth (eWOM) and acting as intermediaries between brands and consumers. The rise of social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Facebook has increased their influence, especially in lifestyle sectors such as food and nutrition, where influencers often share recipes, dietary tips, and restaurant experiences that subtly influence consumer attitudes and purchasing intentions (Byrne, 2017; Valmohammadi et al., 2025).

One of the key advantages of influencer marketing is its relative affordability and measurable results compared to traditional advertising methods, such as television commercials, banner ads, and print media (Arora, 2019). Digital influencer campaigns enable brands to target niche audiences more precisely and interactively, making them especially effective for organizations aiming to maximize return on investment (Nafees et al., 2021). The strategy's success largely depends on the perceived authenticity and parasocial bonds influencers develop with their followers, which lead to deeper engagement and increased persuasion potential (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Evidence supports this; for example, in 2018, nearly 63% of global marketers worked with multiple influencers to boost product visibility and consumer engagement (Primasiwi, 2021).

Although influencer marketing is often seen as a modern digital innovation, its conceptual roots go back before the social media era. It developed from the longstanding tradition of word-of-mouth and celebrity endorsement but differs in its focus on perceived authenticity, accessibility, and relatability (Gross & von Wangenheim, 2018). Unlike traditional celebrities, social media influencers are usually ordinary individuals who have built credibility within specific niches. Their content showcases genuine experiences and personal opinions, fostering greater trust and engagement than scripted celebrity endorsements (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). As a result, this authenticity not only boosts engagement but also enhances brand trust—a key step toward consumer loyalty (Olasanmi, 2023).

Furthermore, the digital-native younger generation has played a crucial role in driving the rapid growth of influencer marketing. This demographic, deeply engaged with technology and social media platforms, prefers digital interactions and peer recommendations over traditional advertising methods (Abdullah,

2022). They share their daily lives and consumption experiences online, creating an environment where influencer endorsements naturally fit into their media habits (Jenidi, 2022). As a result, influencer marketing strongly aligns with their values of authenticity, transparency, and social connection, making it one of the most effective modern marketing tools (Duffek et al., 2025).

In the hospitality and restaurant industry, influencer marketing offers unique opportunities. Its affordability and high engagement potential make it especially beneficial for small and medium-sized restaurants with limited marketing budgets (Lee et al., 2021). By partnering with credible food influencers, restaurants can boost visibility, generate positive online word-of-mouth, and build trust through authentic storytelling and experiential content. These strategies not only attract initial customers but also foster long-term loyalty through emotional connection and perceived brand authenticity (Cheung et al., 2021).

Therefore, this study explores the role of influencer marketing in building trust and increasing customer loyalty in the restaurant industry. Specifically, it examines how influencers shape consumer perceptions, how influencer credibility and content quality foster behavioral loyalty, and how restaurants can strategically leverage influencer partnerships to boost customer engagement. In addition to empirical evidence, this research aims to offer practical insights and strategic recommendations for restaurant marketers navigating the changing digital marketing landscape.

Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

Influencer Marketing and Customer Trust

Trust is a fundamental element of lasting customer–brand relationships, serving as a vital factor in long-term loyalty and positive brand performance (Vrontis et al., 2021). In today’s digital world, influencer marketing has become a key method for brands to build and sustain consumer trust. Influencers act as credible communicators who connect brands with audiences by delivering authenticity, transparency, and relatability in their content (Hughes et al., 2019). Through consistent, genuine interaction, influencers build emotional bonds with their followers, enhancing trust not only in themselves but also in the brands they promote. This process boosts customers’ confidence in brand integrity and dependability, ultimately leading to better relationship quality and increased loyalty (Rahayu et al., 2024).

The rapid growth of social media platforms and the rise of digital influencers have significantly changed modern branding strategies (Belanche et al., 2021). Traditional advertising, once dominant in shaping brand identity, has increasingly been replaced by influencer-driven marketing that focuses on personal relationships and perceived authenticity (Sundermann & Raabe, 2019). In this new landscape, trust has become a key element of brand value creation. The trust influencers build with their followers acts as social currency, boosting brand credibility and increasing consumer engagement (Sashittal et al., 2022). Importantly, the size of an influencer’s follower base also affects how trustworthy and expert they seem. A large follower count is

often seen as a sign of credibility, which amplifies the influencer's persuasive power and helps shape positive attitudes toward the brand they endorse (Bu et al., 2022).

Additionally, influencer marketing's effectiveness in building brand trust comes from the perception that influencers share authentic, experience-based opinions rather than scripted corporate messages. Consumers tend to trust influencers' personal stories more, seeing them as genuine and relatable compared to traditional ads (Çelik, 2022). This authenticity creates psychological closeness, fostering brand trust and long-term loyalty. Past research also shows that influencer activities in marketing campaigns positively influence followers' trust in the brands being promoted (Nandagiri & Philip, 2018). The perceived credibility of influencers—based on qualities like expertise, attractiveness, and similarity to followers—encourages consumer engagement and strengthens brand trust (Almahdi, 2022).

However, research indicates that while both influencers and celebrities can boost brand credibility, consumers might still show greater trust in celebrity endorsements in certain situations (Hughes et al., 2019). This implies that the success of influencer marketing in building trust depends on factors like influencer credibility, authenticity, and how well they align with the brand's values (Baghel & Baghel, 2023). In the restaurant industry, where experiential quality and word-of-mouth are crucial, influencer credibility and transparency are key in influencing customers' trust and their future behavior (Kwon et al., 2021). Based on these insights, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: Influencer marketing positively influences customer trust.

Customer Trust and Loyalty towards the Brand

Customer trust is widely acknowledged as a crucial factor for brand success and long-term relationship sustainability (Cardoso et al., 2022). In modern marketing research, trust has been identified as a key driver of customer loyalty, as it fosters emotional attachment, satisfaction, and ongoing behavioral commitment toward the brand (Sürücü et al., 2019; Aldulaimi et al., 2025). In the restaurant industry, where customer experience and word-of-mouth are vital, trust serves as the foundation on which loyalty is built. A high level of consumer trust not only boosts relationship stability but also improves brand profitability and reputation over time (Smith, 2023). Effective marketing strategies—especially those utilizing influencer marketing—are essential in cultivating this trust, as they humanize brand interactions and establish authenticity through credible communication (Ozdemir et al., 2020). By leveraging influencers' perceived reliability and relatability, restaurants can strengthen customer engagement, build trust, and ultimately improve brand loyalty (Galdón et al., 2024).

Trust in a brand reflects a customer's confidence that the brand will consistently meet its promises and expectations. It embodies a sense of security in the consumer's relationship with the brand, based on perceptions of honesty, competence, and reliability (Kimaro, 2022). When customers see that a restaurant is dependable, transparent, and responsive, they are more likely to show loyalty behaviors like repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth (Kim et al., 2018). Additionally, creating a positive brand image—through steady service quality and clear communication—strengthens trust, which in turn boosts customer loyalty (Meeboonsalan & Chaveesuk, 2019).

Empirical evidence consistently shows a positive link between brand trust and customer loyalty. Research indicates that as customers' confidence in a brand grows, so does their likelihood to stay loyal and recommend the brand to others (Sharma & Jain, 2019; Sugiarti et al., 2023). Trust motivates customers to act supportively, such as repurchasing and advocating, which helps sustain brand value. Additionally, trust fosters emotional bonds and commitment, leading to increased brand engagement and loyalty (Phong et al., 2020). In the restaurant industry, where customer perceptions are influenced by both tangible experiences and emotional connection, maintaining trust is crucial for building lasting loyalty and differentiating from competitors. Based on these theoretical and empirical findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Customer trust positively impacts their loyalty toward restaurants.

Influencer Marketing and Customer Loyalty

Influencer marketing has developed as a natural extension of social media and communication theories emphasizing the role of opinion leaders in shaping consumer behavior (Vrontis et al., 2021). In the restaurant industry, influencers act as modern brand ambassadors who enhance brand identity through personalized recommendations, genuine reviews, and storytelling experiences. These efforts attract new customers while also strengthening loyalty among existing patrons (Suttle, 2015; Cabrero et al., 2023). Abidin (2016) explains that the rise of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram has created a new wave of influencers—individuals who gain credibility not through celebrity but through authenticity and relatability. Their ability to build trust-based relationships with followers sets them apart from traditional endorsers and boosts their influence on consumer attitudes and behaviors (Engel et al., 2024).

Influencer marketing acts as a strategic tool for reaching brand-building goals by increasing brand awareness, shaping a positive brand image, and boosting brand engagement—all of which lead to customer loyalty (Zahoor, 2017; Chaffey & Smith, 2022). Through regular content creation and engaging with audiences, influencers humanize brands and create emotional bonds that encourage repeat business. This two-way interaction fosters a sense of community and shared identity, closely aligning with the principles of relationship marketing and social influence theory. As Jun and Yi (2020) suggest, the mutual trust between influencers and followers plays a crucial role in perceived product quality, brand authenticity, and long-term consumer dedication.

Empirical evidence highlights that the success of influencer marketing mainly depends on the level of trust followers have in influencers' recommendations (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Trust acts as a key link between influencer credibility and customer loyalty—when followers see influencers as genuine, knowledgeable, and unbiased, they are more likely to accept brand messages and turn them into loyal purchasing behaviors. This is especially important in the restaurant industry, where customers often rely on social proof and online reviews to decide where to dine (Vlachos, 2021). However, choosing the wrong influencers or partnering with personalities that don't fit can damage brand credibility, leading to a loss of customer trust and weaker loyalty results (Alsharif et al., 2021).

In this context, influencer marketing proves to be an innovative and affordable strategy for building long-term customer relationships in the restaurant industry. By harnessing the persuasive influence of digital influencers, restaurants can foster stronger emotional connections, improve perceived value, and strengthen brand loyalty over time. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Influencer marketing positively influences customer loyalty.

The Mediating Role of Customer Trust

Trust plays a crucial role in building and maintaining strong relationships between brands and their target audiences (Silalahi et al., 2017). In the context of influencer marketing, customer trust acts as an important mechanism through which influencer activities lead to increased brand loyalty. When consumers see influencers as credible and authentic, the trust they have in these influencers often carries over to the brands being promoted (Ramadan et al., 2018). This transfer of trust deepens consumers' emotional connection and commitment to the brand, resulting in higher loyalty and repeat business (Abdullah et al., 2022).

Empirical evidence confirms that influencer marketing plays a significant role in shaping consumers' perceptions of brand credibility and trustworthiness (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Moodley & Ntobaki, 2024). Comparative studies indicate that brands endorsed by influencers tend to foster more positive consumer attitudes, higher perceived trust, and increased loyalty compared to brands that do not use influencer strategies. This relationship emphasizes the mediating effect of trust, as consumers' confidence in the influencer's integrity and expertise enhances trust in the endorsed brand, ultimately leading to greater customer loyalty (Stubb et al., 2019).

In the digital marketing landscape, trust represents a customer's willingness to rely on and re-engage with a brand based on positive expectations of its performance and authenticity. Unlike traditional advertising methods, influencer marketing creates a sense of relatability and personal connection, as consumers see influencers as peers rather than distant brand representatives (McKinney & Benson, 2013; Vrontis et al., 2021). This perceived authenticity boosts both brand trust and loyalty. Additionally, research shows a strong positive link between influencer qualities—such as credibility, attractiveness, and expertise—and the effectiveness of their marketing efforts on social media platforms (Guruge, 2018; AlFarraj et al., 2021). These elements work together to increase customer engagement, build trust in the brand, and promote long-term loyalty (Jun & Yi, 2020). Therefore, influencer marketing not only directly influences customer loyalty but also does so indirectly by establishing trust (Gökerik, 2024). The persuasive power and credibility of influencers cultivate customer trust in the brands they endorse, acting as a mediating factor that turns marketing communication into lasting customer loyalty. Accordingly, the study hypothesized that:

H4: Customer trust mediates the relationship between influencer marketing and customer loyalty.

The conceptual framework for this study is shown in Figure 1, which demonstrates the expected links among influencer marketing, customer trust, and customer loyalty.

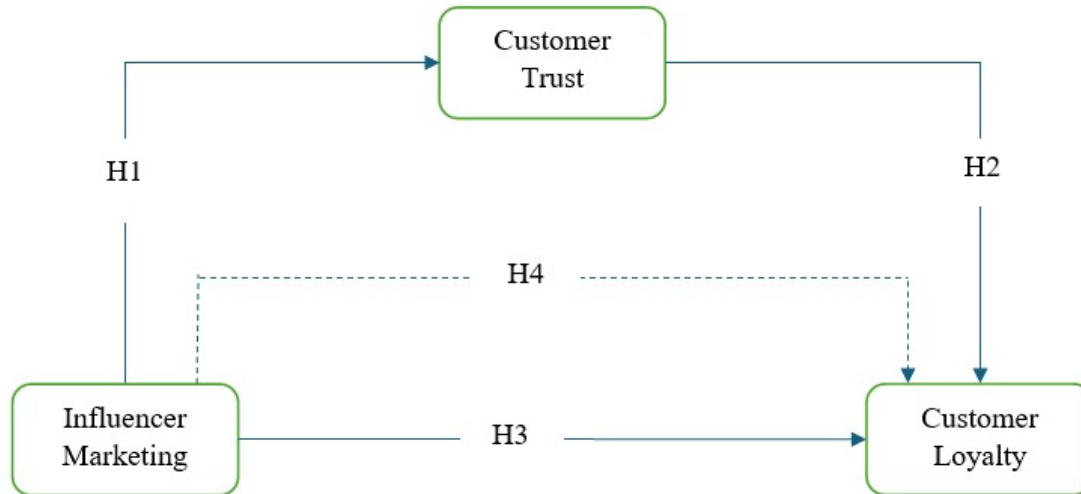


Figure (1): Conceptual framework of the study

Methodology

Data collection and sampling

This study examined the preferences and behaviors of restaurant customers in Egypt. The target population included all individuals who visit restaurants across the country. Acknowledging the challenge of collecting comprehensive data from the entire customer base, the study used a non-probability sampling method—snowball sampling. This approach involved sharing an online survey via social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook Messenger. Participants were encouraged to distribute the survey within their social networks, focusing on individuals who are actively engaged with food-related content and likely to follow food influencers. To prevent potential biases and maintain data quality, the study implemented a restriction of one submission per IP address.

Determining the optimal sample size was challenging due to a lack of official customer data for all restaurants in Egypt. To address this, the study used Cochran's (1963) sampling formula, resulting in a target sample size of 385 responses. Data collection was done through a self-administered online questionnaire distributed from June 2025 to October 2025. The survey achieved a high response rate, with 418 completed questionnaires. To ensure data quality and reliability, a rigorous cleaning process was carried out, which identified 11 responses, as potential outliers. The final analysis included 407 valid responses.

The study sample consisted of 407 participants, with a male majority (70.3%) and a 29.7% female minority. Regarding age distribution, most participants (49.9%) were in the 25-34 age group, followed by 35-44-year-olds at 24.6%. The study highlighted a firm reliance on food influencer recommendations among respondents. Notably, 60.7% indicated that they "sometimes" consider influencer suggestions when choosing restaurants. Additionally, a significant portion (50.6%) trusted food influencers when making dining decisions. Table 1 offers a detailed overview of the demographic and other relevant characteristics of the study participants.

Table 1. Participants' demographics (N=407)

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	286	70.3
	Female	121	29.7
Age	18-24	37	9.1
	25-34	203	49.9
	35-44	100	24.6
	45-54	29	7.1
	>55 years	38	9.3
Influencers recommendations	Never	77	18.9
	Sometimes	247	60.7
	Usually	71	17.4
	Always	12	3

Measures

Data for this study were collected through a self-administered questionnaire, a commonly used method in behavioral and marketing research for efficiently gathering responses from many participants (Hair et al., 2014). The questionnaire was divided into two main sections to ensure clarity and focus. The first section included 27 items designed to measure the study's three latent constructs: influencer marketing (IM), customer trust (CT), and customer loyalty (CL). All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The Likert scale was chosen for its effectiveness in capturing the strength of respondents' attitudes and perceptions (Joshi et al., 2015). The second section included five demographic and descriptive questions regarding respondents' gender, age, exposure to influencer recommendations, and the types of influencers they follow. This information was used to describe the sample characteristics and identify potential patterns in consumer behavior.

The construct of influencer marketing was measured using a 19-item scale adapted from Saoud (2023) and Yi (2023), both of whom validated these items in social media marketing contexts. Sample items include: *"I consider influencers more qualified than traditional celebrities"* and *"I trust influencers who have more followers."* These items were chosen to capture key aspects of influencer marketing effectiveness, including perceived credibility, expertise, and engagement—dimensions widely recognized as crucial factors in influencer impact (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Customer trust was assessed using a four-item scale developed by Bernarto et al. (2020). Example items include: *"I trust the restaurant brand"* and *"I think this restaurant delivers as promised."* This scale has been widely used in hospitality and service marketing research and effectively measures the cognitive and emotional components of consumer trust (Sürücü et al., 2019). Similarly, customer loyalty was measured using a four-item scale adapted from Li et al. (2015) and Bernarto et al. (2020). Representative items include: *"I intend to continue purchasing from this brand"* and *"I would recommend this restaurant to others."* These items align with prior studies that view loyalty as both behavioral intention and attitudinal commitment (Zikienė et al., 2024). All measurement scales used in this study were based on validated instruments from previous research to ensure validity and reliability. The complete list of measurement items and sources is provided in Appendix A.

Data analysis

To explore the complex relationships among latent variables, this study used partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). This method, as recommended by Hair et al. (2014), is especially suitable for studying complex models that include unobservable constructs and for testing hypothesized relationships among them. PLS-SEM, unlike covariance-based SEM, is more adaptable in handling diverse data types, such as non-normal distributions and smaller sample sizes, making it an appropriate choice for research in the tourism and hospitality field (Khairy et al., 2023; Eladawi et al., 2024; Abd El-majeed et al., 2025). The analysis was performed using WarpPLS software version 8.0, following the standard practices in this research area.

Results

Reliability and validity

To thoroughly evaluate the psychometric properties of the measurement model, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed. The results, shown in Table 2, strongly support the validity and reliability of all scales. Specifically, the CFA findings suggest (e.g., factor loadings, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and common method bias). These results collectively confirm that the scales effectively measure the underlying constructs of interest.

Factor loadings: All observed variables showed strong and significant loadings on their respective latent constructs, surpassing the recommended threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010). This reflects a strong connection between each observed variable and the underlying construct it was meant to measure. One item, "InM.7. I don't feel the influencer is credible if it turns out that their advertising purpose is linked to financial benefits," had a loading below 0.5 and was removed from the analysis.

Internal consistency reliability: composite reliability (CR) values for all constructs exceeded 0.7, indicating that the scales reliably measure the underlying latent constructs. Additionally, Cronbach's Alpha (CA) values for all constructs were above 0.7, further supporting internal consistency. These results show that the items within each scale effectively assess a common underlying dimension.

Convergent validity was evaluated by looking at the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct. Consistent with the criterion suggested by Hair et al. (2020), all AVE values were above 0.5, indicating that a large portion of variance in the items is due to the underlying construct rather than measurement error. This supports the scales' convergent validity, indicating they effectively measure the intended constructs.

Common method bias: To evaluate the potential impact of common method bias, variance inflation factors (VIFs) were calculated for all latent variables. Following the guideline recommended by Kock (2021), all VIF values were below 3, indicating that multicollinearity among the constructs was not a major concern. This finding suggests that the observed relationships between the constructs are not mainly influenced by shared method variance, reducing concerns about the possible effect of common method bias on the study's outcomes.

Table 2. Factor loadings, Cronbach alpha, CR, AVE, and VIF.

	Item Loading	CR	CA	AVE	VIF
Influencer Marketing (InM)	-	0.961	0.956	0.577	2.560

InM.1	0.722				
InM.2	0.629				
InM.3	0.798				
InM.4	0.777				
InM.5	0.735				
InM.6	0.653				
InM.8	0.710				
InM.9	0.781				
InM.10	0.816				
InM.11	0.779				
InM.12	0.843				
InM.13	0.838				
InM.14	0.837				
InM.15	0.772				
InM.16	0.683				
InM.17	0.797				
InM.18	0.738				
InM.19	0.719				
Customer Trust (CT)	-	0.948	0.927	0.821	2.856
CT.1	0.863				
CT.2	0.934				
CT.3	0.930				
CT.4	0.897				
Customer Loyalty (CL)	-	0.963	0.949	0.868	2.795
CL.1	0.940				
CL.2	0.948				
CL.3	0.920				
CL.4	0.918				

Table 3 shows the results of the discriminant validity test for the study's model. The correlation matrix indicates that the correlations between each pair of latent variables are below 1.00, showing that these constructs are separate and not overly correlated. This is important for establishing discriminant validity because it confirms that each construct clearly represents a specific underlying concept. Additionally, the diagonal values in the matrix are the square root of the AVE for each construct. According to the criteria set by Franke and Sarstedt (2019), discriminant validity is confirmed when the AVE of each construct is higher than its squared correlations with all other constructs. Examining Table 3 shows that this condition is satisfied for all constructs, further confirming the discriminant validity of the measurement model. Table 3 shows the results of the discriminant validity test for the study's model. The correlation matrix indicates that the correlations between each pair of latent variables are below 1.00, showing that these constructs are separate and not overly correlated. This is important for establishing discriminant validity because it confirms that each construct clearly represents a specific underlying concept. Additionally, the diagonal values in the matrix are the square root of the AVE for each construct. According to the criteria set by Franke and Sarstedt (2019), discriminant validity is confirmed when the AVE of each construct is higher than its squared correlations with all other constructs.

Examining Table 3 shows that this condition is satisfied for all constructs, further confirming the discriminant validity of the measurement model.

Table 3. Results of discriminant validity

	InM	CT	CL
Influencer Marketing (InM)	0.760	0.736	0.729
Customer Trust (CT)	0.736	0.906	0.762
Customer Loyalty (CL)	0.729	0.762	0.932

Table 4 displays the heterotrait-monotrait ratios (HTMTs) and their associated p-values used to evaluate discriminant validity within the study's model. A strong sign of discriminant validity is when HTMT values are below 0.90, with an optimal threshold of 0.85. Notably, all HTMT values in Table 4 are well under 0.90, with the highest being 0.811 between customer trust (CT) and customer loyalty (CL). This pattern strongly indicates that the constructs are clearly distinct from each other. Additionally, the table lists one-tailed p-values for each HTMT ratio. A significant difference from 1 is shown by a p-value below 0.05. In this case, all p-values are less than 0.001, confirming that the HTMT ratios are significantly different from 1. This further supports the discriminant validity of the constructs, offering solid evidence that they represent unique and separate phenomena within the research model (Kock, 2022). Table 4 displays the heterotrait-monotrait ratios (HTMTs) and their associated p-values used to evaluate discriminant validity within the study's model. A strong sign of discriminant validity is when HTMT values are below 0.90, with an optimal threshold of 0.85. Notably, all HTMT values in Table 4 are well under 0.90, with the highest being 0.811 between customer trust (CT) and customer loyalty (CL). This pattern strongly indicates that the constructs are clearly distinct from each other. Additionally, the table lists one-tailed p-values for each HTMT ratio. A significant difference from 1 is shown by a p-value below 0.05. In this case, all p-values are less than 0.001, confirming that the HTMT ratios are significantly different from 1. This further supports the discriminant validity of the constructs, offering solid evidence that they represent unique and separate phenomena within the research model (Kock, 2022).

Table 4. HTMT for validity

<i>HTMT ratios (good if < 0.90, best if < 0.85)</i>	InM	CT	CL
Influencer Marketing (InM)			
Customer Trust (CT)	0.782		
Customer Loyalty (CL)	0.764	0.811	
<i>P values (one-tailed) for HTMT ratios (good if < 0.05)</i>	InM	CT	CL
Influencer Marketing (InM)			
Customer Trust (CT)	<0.001		
Customer Loyalty (CL)	<0.001	<0.001	

Model fit metrics

An assessment of the research model's fit and quality was conducted using the data presented in Table 5. The evaluation followed the established criteria outlined by Kock (2022). The results show that the model has satisfactory fit indices, indicating it reasonably represents the hypothesized relationships between the constructs studied. Specifically, the model demonstrated {e.g., Average R-squared (ARS), Tenenhaus GoF (GoF), Average block VIF (AVIF)}. These findings suggest that the model provides a credible representation of the underlying theoretical framework.

Table 5. Model fit results

	Assessment	Criterion	Supported/Rejected
Average path coefficient (APC)	0.545, P<0.001	P<0.05	Supported
Average R-squared (ARS)	0.640, P<0.001	P<0.05	Supported
Average adjusted R-squared (AARS)	0.639, P<0.001	P<0.05	Supported
Average block VIF (AVIF)	3.247	acceptable if ≤ 5 , ideally ≤ 3.3	Supported
Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF)	2.737	acceptable if ≤ 5 , ideally ≤ 3.3	Supported
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)	0.695	small ≥ 0.1 , medium ≥ 0.25 , large ≥ 0.36	Supported
Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR)	1.000	acceptable if ≥ 0.7 , ideally = 1	Supported
R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)	1.000	acceptable if ≥ 0.9 , ideally = 1	Supported
Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)	1.000	acceptable if ≥ 0.7	Supported
Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)	1.000	acceptable if ≥ 0.7	Supported

Hypotheses testing results

Figure 2 and Table 6 show the strong positive relationships between the studied constructs. The evidence supports hypotheses 1 and 3, indicating that influencer marketing has a powerful positive effect on both customer trust ($\beta=0.78$, $p<0.01$) and customer loyalty ($\beta=0.46$, $p<0.01$). These results highlight the important role of influencer marketing in encouraging customer loyalty and developing trust in brands. Hypothesis 2 is also confirmed, as customer trust has a significant positive impact on customer loyalty ($\beta=0.40$, $p<0.01$). This emphasizes the essential role of trust in promoting customer loyalty in the restaurant industry.

Furthermore, the analysis showed that influencer marketing accounted for a significant portion of the variation in customer trust ($R^2=0.61$), highlighting its important role in building customer trust in brands. Similarly, the combined effect of influencer marketing and customer trust explained 66% of the variation in customer loyalty ($R^2=0.66$), indicating that these two factors are key drivers of customer loyalty in the hospitality industry.

To examine the mediating role of customer trust, a bootstrapping analysis was performed (Table 7). The results showed a significant indirect effect of influencer marketing on customer loyalty through customer trust ($\beta=0.31$, 95% confidence interval [LL=0.245, UL=0.379]). This finding, in line with the criteria outlined by

Preacher & Hayes (2008), strongly supports hypothesis 4. Therefore, it can be concluded that customer trust partially mediates the relationship between influencer marketing and customer loyalty, as both the direct and indirect effects on customer loyalty are significant and positive (Hair et al., 2017).

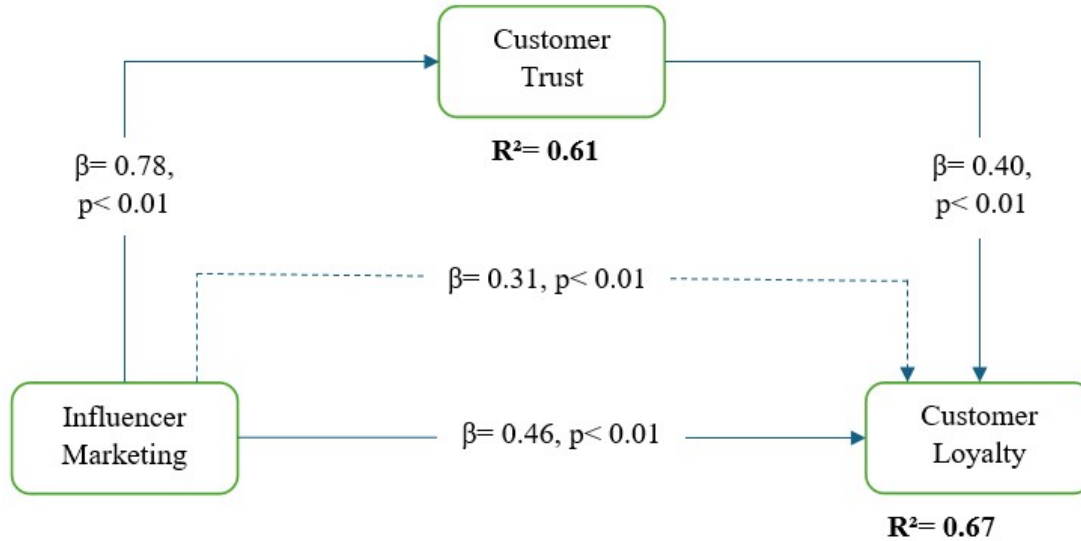


Figure 2: Study results

Table 5. Hypotheses tests results

Hypotheses	P. value	Path coefficient	Decision
H1. InM→ CT	P<0.01	0.46	Accepted
H2. CT→ CL	P<0.01	0.78	
H3. InM→ CL	P<0.01	0.40	
H4. InM→ CT→ CL	P<0.01	0.31	

Table 7. Mediation analysis results

H4	Path a InM→ CT	Path b CT →CL	Indirect Effect	SE	t-value	95% LL	95% UL	Decision
InM→ CT →CL	0.78	0.40	0.31	0.034	9.176	0.245	0.379	Mediation

Discussion

The primary goal of this study was to analyze how influencer marketing (InM) affects customer loyalty (CL) in the restaurant industry, with a focus on the mediating role of customer trust (CT). The findings support all hypothesized relationships (H1, H2, H3, and H4), showing that influencer marketing positively impacts both customer trust and loyalty, with trust acting as a crucial mediator between influencer marketing and loyalty. The subsequent discussion interprets these results considering existing research and theoretical frameworks.

Regarding the second hypothesis (H1), the study's findings confirm the positive impact of influencer marketing on customer trust, aligning with previous research

(Hughes et al., 2019; Vrontis et al., 2021; Çelik, 2022; Sashittal, 2022). Influencers help build trust by providing credible, experience-based endorsements that consumers see as genuine and unbiased. Compared to traditional promotional methods, content created by influencers is viewed as more authentic and personally relevant, increasing customers' confidence in the endorsed restaurant brand. Additionally, the influence of an influencer often depends on their perceived credibility and social reach (Bu et al., 2022). Influencers with larger follower counts are typically seen as more trustworthy and knowledgeable, which enhances their persuasive power. This transfer of credibility boosts consumer trust in the brand and helps establish long-lasting customer relationships. Therefore, influencer marketing acts as an effective trust-building tool by connecting brand communication with consumer perception (Duffek et al., 2025).

Regarding the third hypothesis (H2), the results also support the idea that customer trust has a positive direct impact on customer loyalty. This aligns with a substantial body of research that highlights trust as a key element of lasting customer-brand relationships (Sürücü et al., 2019; Sharma et al., 2019; Phong, 2020). In the restaurant industry, where service quality and customer experience are crucial, trust boosts customers' willingness to repurchase and recommend the brand. Trust lowers perceived risks and uncertainty, encouraging customers to stay engaged with the brand over the long term (Kim et al., 2018). When consumers believe a restaurant consistently meets its promises, that confidence turns into loyalty behaviors like repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth. Therefore, trust not only enhances relational commitment but also serves as an emotional foundation that promotes lasting brand loyalty (Aldulaimi et al., 2025).

Regarding the first hypothesis (H3), the findings show that influencer marketing has a significant and positive effect on customer loyalty toward restaurant brands. This aligns with previous research indicating that influencers play a key role in shaping consumer perceptions, attitudes, and purchasing decisions (Suttle, 2015; Abidin, 2016; Chaffey & Smith, 2022). In the restaurant industry, influencers act as digital opinion leaders who boost brand visibility and deepen emotional connections between consumers and brands. Their personalized recommendations and authentic storytelling encourage repeat visits and foster customer advocacy, leading to lasting loyalty (Alsharif et al., 2021). The results also support the idea that influencer-driven marketing is more compelling than traditional advertising because of its relatability and credibility. Consumers see influencers as trusted peers rather than distant brand representatives, which strengthens the psychological bond with the brand. This is especially true for restaurants, where customer choices often depend on social proof and experiential cues. Therefore, influencer marketing becomes a strategic tool for cultivating customer loyalty through emotional engagement and perceived authenticity (Bettle, 2023; Valmohammadi et al., 2025).

Regarding the fourth hypothesis (H4), the findings further indicate that customer trust mediates the relationship between influencer marketing and customer loyalty, emphasizing its crucial role in explaining how influencer efforts lead to loyal customer behavior. This mediation effect aligns with the claims of Ramadan et al. (2018), Stubb et al. (2019), and Jun (2020), who highlighted that trust acts as the psychological link connecting influencer credibility to consumer loyalty outcomes.

When influencers are seen as authentic and relatable, their endorsements build trust not only in themselves but also in the brands they endorse. This transfer of trust boosts customers' positive feelings and engagement with the brand, ultimately strengthening loyalty intentions (Olasanmi, 2023). Evidence shows that influencer marketing—unlike traditional advertising—fosters more meaningful and lasting brand-customer relationships by promoting affective trust (Stubb et al., 2019). Therefore, customer trust serves as a key mediator that turns influencer credibility into ongoing loyalty behaviors, reinforcing the strategic value of trustworthy influencer-brand partnerships in the restaurant industry (Aldulaimi et al., 2025).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study enhances the academic understanding of influencer marketing by explaining how digital influence mechanisms build customer trust and loyalty in the restaurant industry. It adds to the literature by showing that influencer marketing is not just a promotional tool but also a relationship-building process that nurtures lasting emotional bonds between consumers and brands. By exploring the links between influencer credibility, consumer trust, and loyalty outcomes, the study emphasizes that digital influence relies on authenticity, perceived expertise, and consistent engagement—key factors that are essential for developing long-term customer relationships. Additionally, the findings deepen current views on digital consumer behavior by highlighting the shift from transactional marketing to relationship-focused engagement online. The research demonstrates that influencer-driven interactions generate social and emotional value beyond simple brand awareness, shaping consumers' attitudes and long-term behavioral intentions. It also points out that loyalty in the digital space is not only about product satisfaction or brand image but also about the perceived sincerity and reliability of the influencer delivering the brand message. Finally, this research broadens the understanding of influencer marketing effectiveness by identifying trust as a key element that connects influencer activities to customer loyalty. It shows that the strength of influencer-brand-consumer relationships depends on sustained credibility and perceived authenticity, providing valuable insights into how social media ecosystems influence modern brand loyalty and consumer commitment, especially in service-based industries like restaurants.

The findings of this study also provide several practical insights for practitioners, especially restaurant marketers, brand managers, and digital marketing strategists aiming to boost customer trust and loyalty through influencer collaborations. First, the results emphasize the importance of carefully choosing influencers. Restaurant brands should focus on partnerships with influencers who demonstrate high levels of authenticity, credibility, and audience engagement, rather than just follower counts. The quality of the influencer–audience relationship—including perceived honesty and shared values—has more substantial effect on customer trust and loyalty than mere exposure. Therefore, micro- and mid-tier influencers, who often have closer connections with their followers, might be more effective at building trust and long-term brand loyalty. Second, marketers should create influencer campaigns that highlight transparency, storytelling, and experiential content. Influencers sharing personal experiences—such as visits to restaurants, food tastings, or behind-the-scenes looks—can humanize the brand and deepen emotional bonds with followers. Such

genuine stories improve perceived brand trustworthiness and encourage repeat visits. Third, since trust plays a key role in linking influencer marketing to customer loyalty, restaurant managers need to focus on trust-building strategies. These could include maintaining consistent product or service quality, promoting open communication, and engaging with customers after purchases. Encouraging influencers to emphasize these trust-related aspects can strengthen the positive impact of marketing efforts on customer loyalty. Finally, marketers should use data-driven metrics—such as engagement rates, sentiment analysis, and indicators of loyalty intention—to evaluate the long-term effects of influencer collaborations. This strategic approach helps ensure marketing efforts not only increase immediate visibility but also foster lasting customer relationships and profitability.

Limitations and Future Research

Although this study offers valuable theoretical and practical insights, it also has limitations that open up promising opportunities for further research. First, it used a cross-sectional survey design, which limits the ability to determine causality among the examined constructs. While the structural relationships among influencer marketing, customer trust, and customer loyalty were statistically significant, causal conclusions remain tentative. Future studies should consider longitudinal or experimental designs to verify the sequence of these relationships and observe how customer trust and loyalty develop over time in response to influencer campaigns. Second, the study relied on self-reported data gathered through a self-administered questionnaire, which may be affected by common method bias and social desirability bias. Respondents might have exaggerated their loyalty or trust to present themselves favorably regarding influencer-promoted brands. Future researchers can reduce these biases by incorporating data from multiple sources, such as behavioral metrics (e.g., repeat purchase rates, engagement analytics) or observational data from social media platforms. Lastly, although this study focused on customer trust as a mediating variable, other psychological mechanisms may also be important in explaining the influencer marketing–loyalty relationship. Future research could investigate additional mediators like perceived authenticity, brand engagement, or emotional attachment, as well as moderators such as influencer–follower similarity, content type, or cultural context. Exploring these variables would deepen the understanding of how various influencer traits and contextual factors influence consumer responses.

References

- Abd El-majeed, E. A. A., Hashad, M. E., Tahon, S. H. I., & Abdel Majeed, A. A. (2025). Does job insecurity lead to presenteeism in hospitality and tourism industry: The roles of workaholism and paternalistic leadership. *The International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Studies*, 9(1), 30-51.
- Abdullah, M., Khurshid, M., & Khan, M. H. (2022). Developing trust through social media influencers and halal tourism to impact the travel decision of travelers. *Journal of Islamic and Religious Studies*, 7(1), 49-69.
- Abidin, C. (2016). Visibility labour: Engaging with Influencers' fashion brands and #OOTD advertorial campaigns on Instagram. *Media International Australia*, 161(1), 86-100.

- Aldulaimi, S., Soni, S., Kampooowale, I., Krishnan, G., Ab Yajid, M. S., Khatibi, A., Minhas, D., & Khurana, M. (2025). Customer perceived ethicality and electronic word of mouth approach to customer loyalty: The mediating role of customer trust. *International Journal of Ethics and Systems*, 41(1), 258-278.
- AlFarraj, O., Alalwan, A. A., Obeidat, Z. M., Baabdullah, A., Aldmour, R., & Al-Haddad, S. (2021). Examining the impact of influencers' credibility dimensions: Attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise on the purchase intention in the aesthetic dermatology industry. *Review of International Business and Strategy*, 31(3), 355-374.
- Almahdi, M. H., Alsayed, N., & Alabbas, A. (2022). In influencers we trust? A model of trust transfer in social media influencer marketing. In *Future of organizations and work after the 4th industrial revolution: The role of artificial intelligence, big data, automation, and robotics* (pp. 159-173). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Alsharif, A. H., Salleh, N. Z. M., & Baharun, R. (2021). The impact of influencer marketing on brand loyalty: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Digital Marketing and Communication*, 15(3), 45-58.
- Arora, A., Bansal, S., Kandpal, C., Aswani, R., & Dwivedi, Y. (2019). Measuring social media influencer index-insights from Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 49, 86-101.
- Baghel, D., & Baghel, K. C. (2023). The role of influencer authenticity and brand trust in shaping consumer behavior: Strategies to engage Generation Z. *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 4(1), 1259-1271.
- Belanche, D., Casaló, L. V., Flavián, M., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2021). Understanding influencer marketing: The role of congruence between influencers, products and consumers. *Journal of Business Research*, 132, 186-195.
- Bernarto, I., Berlianto, M. P., Meilani, Y. F. C. P., Masman, R. R., & Suryawan, I. N. (2020). The influence of brand awareness, brand image, and brand trust on brand loyalty. *Jurnal Manajemen*, 24(3), 412-426.
- Bettle, T. (2023). Value creation through social media: How influencer marketing can affect brand attitude, perceived brand image, and overall brand equity of luxury brands. (Published Master thesis), The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. USA.
- Bu, Y., Parkinson, J., & Thaichon, P. (2022). Influencer marketing: Homophily, customer value co-creation behaviour and purchase intention. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 66, 1-17.
- Byrne, E., Kearney, J., & MacEvilly, C. (2017). The role of influencer marketing and social influencers in public health. *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*, 76(OCE3), E103.
- Cabrero, J. D. B., Castillo-Abdul, B., Talamás-Carvajal, J. A., & Romero-Rodríguez, L. M. (2023). Owned media, influencer marketing, and unofficial brand ambassadors: Differences between narratives, types of prescribers, and effects on interactions on Instagram. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10(1), 1-12.
- Cardoso, A., Gabriel, M., Figueiredo, J., Oliveira, I., Rêgo, R., Silva, R., Oliveira, M., & Meirinhos, G. (2022). Trust and loyalty in building the brand relationship

- with the customer: Empirical analysis in a retail chain in northern Brazil. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 8(3), 1-15.
- Çelik, Z. (2022). The moderating role of influencer attractiveness in the effect of brand love, brand trust, brand awareness and brand image on brand loyalty. *İstanbul Ticaret Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 21(43), 148-167.
- Chaffey, D., & Smith, P. R. (2022). *Digital marketing excellence: planning, optimizing and integrating online marketing*. Routledge.
- Cheung, M. L., Ting, H., Cheah, J. H., & Sharipudin, M. N. S. (2021). Examining the role of social media-based destination brand community in evoking tourists' emotions and intention to co-create and visit. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 30(1), 28-43.
- Cochran, W.G. (1963). *Sampling Techniques* (2nd ed.). New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 68, 1-7.
- Duffek, B., Eisingerich, A. B., Merlo, O., & Lee, G. (2025). Authenticity in influencer marketing: How can influencers and brands work together to build and maintain influencer authenticity?. *Journal of Marketing*, 89(5), 21-46.
- Eladawi, F. M. I., Elnaggar, M. K., Hashad, M. E., Awad, A. H. I., & Abd, A. A. E. K. G. (2024). Effect of green inclusive leadership on employees' green work engagement in hotels and travel agencies: The role of green intrinsic motivation. *Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites*, 54, 885-895.
- Engel, E., Gell, S., Heiss, R., & Karsay, K. (2024). Social media influencers and adolescents' health: A scoping review of the research field. *Social Science & Medicine*, 340, 1-14.
- Franke, G., & Sarstedt, M. (2019). Heuristics versus statistics in discriminant validity testing: A comparison of four procedures. *Internet Research*, 29(3), 430-447.
- Galdón, J. L., Gil Pechuán, I., AlFraihat, S. F. A., & Tarabieh, S. M. (2024). Effect of social media influencers on consumer brand engagement and its implications on business decision making. *El Profesional de la información (Online)*, 33(2), 1-25.
- Gökerik, M. (2024). Consumer cynicism in influencer marketing: An impact analysis on purchase intention and brand loyalty. *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 13(1), 404-421.
- Gross, J., & von Wangenheim, F. (2018). The Big Four of Influencer Marketing-A Typology of Influencers. *Marketing Review St. Gallen*, 35(2), 30-38.
- Guruge, M. C. (2018). Comparison between attributes related to celebrity endorsement and social media influencer marketing: A conceptual review. *Sri Lanka Journal of Marketing*, 4(1), 17-37.
- Hair Jr, J. F., Howard, M. C., & Nitzl, C. (2020). Assessing measurement model quality in PLS-SEM using confirmatory composite analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 109, 101-110.
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Balin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis*: Maxwell Macmillan International Editions.

- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., Sarstedt, M. (2014). A primer on partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Hair, Jr, J. F., Matthews, L. M., Matthews, R. L., & Sarstedt, M. (2017). PLS-SEM or CB-SEM: Updated guidelines on which method to use. *International Journal of Multivariate Data Analysis*, 1(2), 107-123.
- Hughes, C., Swaminathan, V., & Brooks, G. (2019). Driving brand engagement through online social influencers: An empirical investigation of sponsored blogging campaigns. *Journal of Marketing*, 83(5), 78-96.
- Joshi, A., Kale, S., Chandel, S., & Pal, D. K. (2015). Likert scale: Explored and explained. *British Journal of Applied Science & Technology*, 7(4), 396-403.
- Jun, S., & Yi, J. (2020). What makes followers loyal? The role of influencer interactivity in building influencer brand equity. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 29(6), 803-814.
- Khairy, H. A., Agina, M. F., Aliane, N., & Hashad, M. E. (2023). Internal branding in hotels: Interaction effects of employee engagement, workplace friendship, and organizational citizenship behavior. *Sustainability*, 15(5), 1-16.
- Kim, M. S., Shin, D. J., & Koo, D. W. (2018). The influence of perceived service fairness on brand trust, brand experience and brand citizenship behavior. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 30(7), 2603-2621.
- Kimaro, A. (2022). Assessing the impact of brand trust and brand image on consumer behavior during a time of crisis. (Published Master Thesis), Mälardalen University, Sweden.
- Kock, N. (2021). Common structural variation reduction in PLS-SEM: Replacement analytic composites and the one-fourth rule. *Data Analysis Perspectives Journal*, 2(5), 1-6.
- Kock, N. (2022). WarpPLS user manual: Version 8.0. *ScriptWarp Systems: Laredo, TX, USA*, 141, 47-60.
- Kwon, J. H., Jung, S. H., Choi, H. J., & Kim, J. (2021). Antecedent factors that affect restaurant brand trust and brand loyalty: Focusing on US and Korean consumers. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 30(7), 990-1015.
- Lee, P. Y., Koseoglu, M. A., Qi, L., Liu, E. C., & King, B. (2021). The sway of influencer marketing: Evidence from a restaurant group. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 98, 103022.
- Li, F., Xu, L., Li, T., & Zhou, N. (2015). Brand trust in a cross-cultural context: test for robustness of an alternative measurement model. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 24(5), 462-471.
- Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 19(1), 58-73.
- Mckinney, M., & Benson, A. (2013). The value of brand trust. *Journal of Brand Strategy*, 2(1), 76-86.
- Meeboonsalang, W., & Chaveesuk, S. (2019). An integrated model of customer loyalty in automobile insurance in Thailand. *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review*, 19(3), 203-216.

- Moodley, P., & Ntobaki, P. P. (2024). Exploring the dynamics of influencer marketing in shaping generation-Y consumers' brand perceptions and purchase intentions. *The Retail and Marketing Review*, 20(2), 87-104.
- Nafees, L., Cook, C. M., Nikolov, A. N., & Stoddard, J. E. (2021). Can social media influencer (SMI) power influence consumer brand attitudes? The mediating role of perceived SMI credibility. *Digital Business*, 1(2), 1-10.
- Nandagiri, V., & Philip, L. (2018). Impact of influencers from Instagram and YouTube on their followers. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Modern Education*, 4(1), 61-65.
- Olasanmi, O. O. (2023). Influencer marketing, customers' loyalty and purchase intention in Nigeria: Any linkage. *The Seybold Report*, 18(7), 1746-1755.
- Ozdemir, S., Zhang, S., Gupta, S., & Bebek, G. (2020). The effects of trust and peer influence on corporate brand—Consumer relationships and consumer loyalty. *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 791-805.
- Phong, L., Nga, T., Hanh, N., & Minh, N. (2020). Relationship between brand association and customer loyalty: The case of online retail industry. *Management Science Letters*, 10(7), 1543-1552.
- Platon, O. E., & Orzan, G. (2015). The role of online marketing communication through social media in supporting brand equity. (Published Doctoral thesis), The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania.
- Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. (2008). Asymptotic and resampling strategies for assessing and comparing indirect effects in simple and multiple mediator models. *Behavior Research Methods*, 40, 879–891.
- Rahayu, F., Siregar, R., Risde, K. R., Nurulita, D. A., Wijarnako, F. R., Wijarnako, K. F., & Ying, L. (2024). Building brand credibility to increase consumer purchase intention: The role of influencer emotional attachment. *Jurnal Manajemen Dan Pemasaran Jasa*, 17(2), 293-306.
- Ramadan, Z. B., Abosag, I., & Zabkar, V. (2018). All in the value: The impact of brand and social network relationships on the perceived value of customer endorsed Facebook advertising. *European Journal of Marketing*, 52(7/8), 1704-1726.
- Saoud, W. A. (2023). The effect of implementing influencer marketing on the customer purchase behaviour: Applied study on the beauty industry. *Arab Journal of Administration*, 46(2), 1- 17.
- Sashittal, H. C., Jassawalla, A. R., & Sachdeva, R. (2022). The influence of COVID-19 pandemic on consumer–brand relationships: Evidence of brand evangelism behaviors. *Journal of Brand Management*, 30(3), 245-260.
- Sharma, R., & Jain, V. (2019). CSR, trust, brand loyalty and brand equity: Empirical evidences from sportswear industry in the NCR region of India. *Metamorphosis*, 18(1), 57-67.
- Silalahi, J. M., Alfansi, L., & Wiardi, A. H. (2017). The role of brand trust in determining the relationship between brand affection and loyalty programs on customer loyalty. *AFEBI Management and Business Review*, 1(1), 12-28.
- Smith, H. (2023). Customer relationship management (CRM) strategies and their influence on brand loyalty. *Journal of Strategic Marketing Practice*, 1(1), 40-51.

- Stubb, C., Nyström, A. G., & Colliander, J. (2019). Influencer marketing: The impact of disclosing sponsorship compensation justification on sponsored content effectiveness. *Journal of Communication Management*, 23(2), 109-122.
- Sundermann, G., & Raabe, T. (2019). Strategic communication through social media influencers: Current state of research and desiderata. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 13(4), 278-300.
- Sürücü, Ö., Öztürk, Y., Okumus, F., & Bilgihan, A. (2019). Brand awareness, image, physical quality and employee behavior as building blocks of customer-based brand equity: Consequences in the hotel context. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 40, 114-124.
- Valmohammadi, C., Asayesh, F., Mehdikhani, R., & Taraz, R. (2025). Influencer marketing, EWOM, E-brand experience, and retail E-brand loyalty: Moderating influence of E-brand love. *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, 24(1), 66-92.
- Vlachos, I. (2021). Necessary and sufficient antecedents of customer loyalty to logistics service providers. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 36(5), 729-748.
- Vrontis, D., Makrides, A., Christofi, M., & Thrassou, A. (2021). Social media influencer marketing: A systematic review, integrative framework and future research agenda. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 45(4), 617-644.
- Yi, Y. X. (2023). Impact of influencer marketing on consumers' purchase intention. (Published Master Thesis), Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia.
- Zahoor, S. Z., & Qureshi, I. H. (2017). Social Media Marketing and Brand Equity: A Literature Review. *IUP Journal of Marketing Management*, 16(1), 1-47.
- Zikienė, K., Kyguolienė, A., & Kisieliauskas, J. (2024). The influence of creative and innovative loyalty programs' features on customers' attitudinal, conative, and behavioural loyalty. *Creativity Studies*, 17(1), 254-273.

Appendix (A)

Influencer Marketing (InM)	
InM.1	I prefer to follow influencers who understand the genuine needs and desires of consumers.
InM.2	I prefer to follow influencers who demonstrate social awareness and encourage interactive communication.
InM.3	I consider influencers to be qualified and credible.
InM.4	I prefer to follow influencers who specialize in their respective fields.
InM.5	It is preferable to follow influencers who possess sufficient expertise to address followers' inquiries effectively.
InM.6	I tend to trust influencers who have a larger follower base.
InM.7	I don't feel the influencer is credible if it turns out that their advertising purpose is linked to financial benefits
InM.8	I find the content shared by influencers more believable compared to that offered by traditional celebrities.
InM.9	I trust influencers more when they share personal experiences related to the products they promote.
InM.10	I perceive influencers as trustworthy sources of information.
InM.11	Influencers effectively explain the connection between their content and restaurant offerings.
InM.12	Influencers communicate information about restaurants in a clear and understandable manner.
InM.13	Influencers demonstrate a strong understanding of restaurant products and services.
InM.14	Engaging content, particularly videos and images, often influences my purchasing decisions.
InM.15	I prefer content that provides sufficient information concisely and efficiently.
InM.16	I am more attracted to influencers whose preferences and needs are in line with my preferences.
InM.17	I prefer to follow influencers who articulate their messages persuasively and effectively.
InM.18	I am more attracted to influencers who use entertaining methods to deliver their content.
InM.19	The physical appearance and characteristics of influencers often influence my perception of the products they promote.
Customer Trust (CT)	
CT.1	I trust the restaurant brand.
CT.2	I feel this restaurant can be trusted.
CT.3	I think this restaurant has given as promised.
CT.4	I feel this restaurant offers a safe product.
Customer Loyalty (CL)	
CL.1	I will state positive things about this restaurant brand to others.
CL.2	I would recommend this restaurant to others.
CL.3	I intend to keep on purchasing this brand.
CL.4	I am willing to rely on this brand in the future.