

INFLUENCER MARKETING ON TIKTOK AND INSTAGRAM: CONSUMER
ENGAGEMENT AND MOTIVATIONS WITH PLATFORMS,
INFLUENCERS, AND BRAND-RELATED CONTENT

by

MORGAN D. WROBLEWSKI

JAMESON L. HAYES, COMMITTEE CHAIR
LANCE T. KINNEY, COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR
SHAHEEN KANTHAWALA

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, influencer marketing has emerged as a dominant force in the realm of digital advertising (Taylor, 2020), particularly on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. This thesis delves into the multifaceted landscape of influencer marketing, focusing specifically on its role within these two prominent social media platforms. By examining the motivations driving various stakeholders – from social media users to influencers and brands – this research aims to shed light on the underlying dynamics shaping influencer marketing effectiveness.

The findings of this thesis contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the effectiveness and success of influencer marketing campaigns on Instagram and TikTok. By identifying the drivers behind user engagement, influencer partnerships, and brand collaborations, this research provides valuable insights for marketers seeking to navigate and optimize their strategies in the ever-evolving landscape of social media marketing. Ultimately, this study aims to inform best practices and foster innovation in the field of influencer marketing, with implications for both theory and practice.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to Dr. Lance Kinney, who was the first to show me my passion for research.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

α	The Greek Letter Alpha
β	The Greek Letter Beta

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INTRODUCTION

Individuals who have a large following on social media platforms are referred to as influencers. De Veirman et al. (2017) describe influencers as key figures in marketing who can shape audience behavior and attitudes towards products due to their credibility, attractiveness, and ability to communicate persuasively (De Veirman et al., 2017). Influencers are not limited to celebrities; they can be everyday people who have built a substantial following and trust within specific communities (De Veirman et al., 2017). Influencers have changed the way brands and industry professionals think about marketing and advertising products.

Because of the growing use of influencer marketing, brands are using influencers to promote their content and products. Brands either use in-house PR or an advertising/PR agency to find and create these connections amongst the brand and the influencers. According to Sprout Social (2023), influencer marketing ad spend worldwide is projected to reach \$30.81 billion in 2023 and this spending is expected to increase to \$47.80 billion by 2027 (Sprout Social, 2023). In 2019, \$2.42 billion was allocated to influencer marketing from different brands in the United States, whereas in 2023, this number jumped to \$6.16 billion being allocated to influencer marketing (Oberlo, 2023). As influencers are continuing to rise in the media world, it is important for academic research to build a better understanding of what this means in the advertising, marketing, and public relations industries. Academia stands to benefit significantly from increased research into influencer marketing, as this burgeoning field has become a cornerstone of modern advertising and consumer behavior. By delving deeper into influencer marketing, academia can offer invaluable insights into its effectiveness, ethical implications, and

long-term impact on consumer behavior. Influencer marketing is a rare case of research that pertains to academic interest and industry needs/developments that are needed urgently (Taylor, 2020). Therefore, fostering more research in academia on influencer marketing is essential to foster informed decision-making and ensure the integrity of digital marketing practices in the years ahead.

Previous research has analyzed how message value and credibility affect consumer trust (Lou & Yuan, 2019), how brands have utilized influencers (Woods, 2016), influencers components in marketing (Campbell & Farrall, 2020), and the effects on influencer marketing on consumers purchase intentions (Saima & Khan 2020). Previous research has not analyzed how platform motivations, influencer engagement motivations, and brand-related content motivations contribute to the overarching question that persists within influencer marketing: What motivates users to engage in influencer marketing relationship and how do those relationships impact advertising outcomes? It is important to understand platform motivations, influencer engagement motivations, and brand-related motivations and how these motivations interact to inform research on how and why consumers engage with influencer marketing. It is also important to understand how these motivations influence the user relationship with influencers to drive advertising outcomes such as purchase intention and sharing intention.

Previous research has not specifically discussed perceived consumer relationships with influencers. There has been research that has analyzed the role of source credibility in parasocial relationships (Yuan & Lou 2020), how interpersonal attraction enhances parasocial relationships (Su et al. 2021), and how strong a parasocial relationship can be with an influencer (Bond, 2016). These are of use in the influencer marketing to parasocial relationship connection, however, this research analyzes parasocial relationship on a deeper scale.

Further, previous research has not focused on TikTok and Instagram as key platforms. Some chose to analyze influencer marketing on Facebook (Arora et al., 2019), Twitter (Wibisono et al., 2021), and YouTube (Acikgoz & Burnaz, 2021). As TikTok and Instagram continue to grow, these platforms will continue to be booming hubs for social media influencers and consumers. Previous research has analyzed TikTok and Instagram in other ways. Past research has analyzed how sponsorship disclosure (Lee & Kim, 2020), impulse buying (Koay et al., 2021), and celebrity type (Jin & Ryu, 2021) affects influencer marketing on Instagram and TikTok. However, previous research has not gone into depth on how separate motivations enhance influencer marketing. This research is filling the gaps between the various components while also analyzing the process it takes a consumer to act on the behavioral outcomes rather than the aftereffects of influencer marketing.

This study seeks to fill the gap between the social media platforms that are utilized in influencer marketing and the consumer motivations influencing consumer-influencer relationships and, subsequently, behavioral and attitudinal outcomes. This is evaluated in this research through the motivations that individuals have consuming influencer marketing content. Specifically, different motivations in young adults for platform use, influencer following, and brand-related content are explored for their impact on consumer-influencer relationships. No research to date has examined differential motives for consumers to engage in influencer marketing on TikTok versus Instagram and how those differences impact perceived relationships with influencers and, subsequently, advertising outcomes.

This research chose to study Instagram and TikTok to understand the connection between social media platforms, influencer engagement, and brand-related content because they are driving forces in the digital world. However, it is important to understand that these two

platforms are used differently by consumers. This is later investigated in this study. The differences between consumer usage on Instagram and TikTok is what allows for a better understanding of consumer motivations on social media platforms. Instagram and TikTok have different features and designs to accommodate for users and this is how influencer marketing differentiates on each platform.

This research contributes to our understanding of consumer-influencer relationships by examining how motivations for engaging with brand-related content, influencers, and the influencer marketing platform intertwine to impact perceived consumer-influencer relationships and, in turn, influencer marketing outcomes on TikTok and Instagram. This thesis includes an extensive literature review on topics of platform use motivations, influencer engagement motivations, and brand-related motivations. Employing an online survey of young adult consumers, relationships were assessed and juxtaposed across two primary influencer marketing platforms: TikTok and Instagram. Each section informs and builds understanding on influencer marketing throughout each chapter. This thesis will proceed as follows: Chapter 2 is literature review, Chapter 3 will review theory, Chapter 4 will share the research questions and hypothesis for this research, Chapter 5 will explain this research's methodology, Chapter 6 will share the analytics and results, and Chapter 7 will share the discussion. The references and appendix with additional information will follow after the discussion.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, influencer marketing and social media have become increasingly influential, particularly among young adults (Kim & Kim, 2022). Influencers significantly shape purchasing decisions and motivations, making it crucial to understand this dynamic (Karayanni & Koutsogiannopoulou, 2024). Existing literature highlights the profound impact of influencers on young adults' buying behaviors, emphasizing the need to delve deeper into the motivations behind these behaviors (Lajnef, 2023). Social media platforms are pivotal in this relationship, serving as the initial touchpoint where influencers engage with their audience (Joshi et al., 2023; Santos & Goncalves, 2021). Understanding the interplay of these motivations is essential, as it affects the efficacy of influencer relationships on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Starting in this introductory section, it is important to note how consumer motivations to engage with three key components of influencer communication impact each of these motivational areas—platform use motivations, influencer engagement motivations, and brand-related content motivations—impact consumers' relationships with influencers and the outcomes of influencer marketing.

Platform use motivations refer to why consumers are drawn to social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok in the first place, including the desire for entertainment, information, and social interaction. The literature suggests that these platforms' ability to provide visually engaging, easily consumable content makes them ideal for influencer marketing (Montag et al., 2021; Masciantonio et al., 2021). When users are motivated by the unique features of these platforms, such as short-form videos on TikTok or visually appealing posts on Instagram, they

are more likely to engage deeply with influencers who utilize these features effectively (Trunfio & Rossi, 2021; Joshi et al., 2023).

Influencer engagement motivations revolve around why consumers follow and interact with influencers. These include seeking authenticity, relatability, and a sense of community (Zniva et al., 2023). Studies show that influencers who successfully engage with their audience by being authentic and relatable can significantly enhance their credibility and influence (Liu & Zheng, 2024; Zniva et al., 2023). The stronger the engagement, the more likely consumers are to be influenced in their purchasing decisions (Chen et al., 2022; Horváth & Fedorko, 2022).

Brand-related content motivations focus on why consumers pay attention to the brands and products that influencers promote. Motivations in this area include the brand usage and likeability (Kwon et al., 2014) and the overall aesthetic of the product or brand (Li & Xie, 2020). Research indicates that when consumers engage with brand-related content that aligns with their interests and values, it can lead to a higher engagement and a stronger purchase intention (Kautish et al., 2014). This highlights the importance of brands creating content that resonates with their consumers.

Understanding how these motivations intertwine is particularly crucial on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, where the visual and interactive nature of content can significantly amplify the impact of influencer marketing. These platforms offer unique features that enhance engagement and foster a sense of community, making them ideal for influencer-consumer interactions. Research has shown that the integration of visual storytelling and interactive elements on these platforms can lead to higher engagement rates and more effective marketing outcomes (Giombi et al., 2022).

By exploring existing literature and analyzing these motivational factors, we can better understand how they collectively influence the relationships between influencers and their followers. This understanding is vital for developing effective marketing strategies that leverage the power of social media platforms to enhance influencer outcomes. The following literature review covers past research in consumer engagement with platform use motivations, influencer engagement motivations, brand-related motivations, and the perceived influencer relationship from consumers.

Platform Use Motivations

Previous research has found various motivations for why individuals use social media. It is important to understand the motivations that were previously found because social media includes a multitude of sources of online information that are created, circulated and used by consumers to educate one another about products, services, and brands available in the marketplace (Murugesan, 2007). Influencer advertising is a type of advertising and, as such, can be intrusive and not well-received if its presence or the content does not align well with the consumer's motivation for using the social media platform in general. Therefore, it is important to understand consumers' general motivations for using the platforms being employed by influencers if we are to understand how best to build consumer-influencer relationships on the platforms.

Wang (2015) found that SNS use for its social function seems more attractive to individuals who are more sociable, have positive attitudes toward SNSs, high levels of motivation for social interaction and high levels of Internet self-efficacy. This is important for our research to understand what motivations are most common amongst consumers for using social media. Lin and Lu (2011) conducted a study on why people use social media networking

sites and found that enjoyment is the most important factor affecting the behavior of SNS users (Lin & Lu, 2019). This aligns with the idea that social media users enjoy connecting and sharing with close friends. Enjoyment is a reoccurring motivation that will continue to be discussed throughout this research. This also translates to the enjoyment factor that individuals find when engaging with social media influencers. Lu and Lin (2019) found that the enjoyment factor was the most powerful factor in the study. The other aspect that was found within this research is that the amount of positive feedback from other social media users boosted the enjoyment and usefulness of social media for users (Lin & Lu, 2019). This research allows us to understand that individuals enjoy building relationships on social media and enjoy the positive feedback they receive when using social media. This previous research allows our current study to understand what these factors mean and how they can be applied to influencer marketing.

Self-identify and exploration is one of the factors that motivate individuals to use and continue to use social media platforms (Jarmen et al., 2021). Further, the popularity of social media has meant it is now considered habitual among many, even being used as a form of escapism from everyday life (Jarmen et al., 2021). Some individuals use social media to escape what is happening in their everyday life and to feel relief from the unpleasantness of their reality.

Studies have shown that gratifications received are good predictors of media use and recurring media use (Kaye and Johnson, 2002; Palmgreen and Rayburn, 1979). The gratifications that individuals receive from using social media platforms is another factor that motivates social media use.

Understanding Consumer Use of Instagram and TikTok

Although there are many platforms for users to choose from and consumer content from, Instagram and TikTok continue to be the most popular platforms used by influencers as well as the most popular platform that users use to seek influencers (Al-Zoubi, 2022). Past research has found various understandings of why people use Instagram and TikTok, which will be reviewed here.

Instagram and TikTok are highly effective platforms for influencer marketing, underlined by several compelling statistics. On Instagram, 90% of users follow a business profile, indicating a high level of engagement with brands (Embed Social, 2024). Additionally, 80% of marketers plan to use Instagram for influencer marketing in 2024, showcasing the platform's strong influence and reach (Sprout Social, 2024). TikTok also plays a significant role, with 61% of marketers leveraging it for influencer campaigns (Sprout Social, 2024). Both platforms are among the top three social media platforms for influencer marketing, reflecting their popularity and effectiveness in connecting brands with audiences (Sprout Social, 2024). These statistics highlight why Instagram and TikTok are essential for businesses looking to maximize their influencer marketing efforts.

TikTok and Instagram are considered the best social media apps due to their high user engagement, innovative content formats, and effectiveness in marketing. TikTok users spend more time per session on the app than any other platform, leading to higher engagement rates (Glewee, 2023). Instagram boasts that 90% of its users follow business profiles, highlighting its significant engagement potential for brands (Oberlo, 2024). Both platforms are highly effective for influencer marketing, with 80% of marketers preferring Instagram and 68.8% planning to use TikTok in 2024 (Oberlo, 2024) (HubSpot, 2024). TikTok's short-form video content and

Instagram's diverse content options, including Stories and Reels, cater to various marketing strategies and user preferences (Glewee, 2023). Additionally, both platforms offer high return on investment (ROI), with Instagram tying for the highest ROI and TikTok rapidly catching up due to its innovative ad formats (HubSpot, 2024) (Glewee, 2023). The cultural impact and trendsetting capabilities of these platforms further solidify their positions as the top choices for both personal use and business marketing (HubSpot, 2024) (Glewee, 2023).

People use Instagram and TikTok differently due to the distinct features and cultural contexts of each platform. Instagram is primarily used for visual storytelling and brand building, offering polished, curated content through photos and videos, including Stories and IGTV. It serves as a digital portfolio for influencers, artists, and businesses, fostering deeper community engagement through direct messages, comments, and interactive Stories (HubSpot, 2024). In contrast, TikTok thrives on short-form, spontaneous, and often viral video content driven by trends and challenges. Its algorithm promotes content virality, allowing users to reach wide audiences quickly, even with minimal followers initially. TikTok's extensive creative tools, including filters, effects, and a vast music library, enable users to produce highly engaging and innovative content (Glewee, 2023). These differences highlight how Instagram is used for more polished, aesthetic-focused content and brand engagement, while TikTok emphasizes creative, trend-driven, and spontaneous videos (HubSpot, 2024) (Glewee, 2023).

Instagram Motivations:

Instagram is an online, mobile phone photo-sharing, video-sharing, and social network service that enables its users to take pictures and videos, and then share them on other platforms (Frommer, 2010). There are currently over 2.35 billion monthly active Instagram users (Demand Sage, 2023). Instagram has continued to be a growing and evolving platform for social media

users. Instagram has been around much longer than TikTok but has turned into a very popular space for influencers to promote products. Brands are utilizing Instagram Reels and Instagram Stories for influencers to promote products and services. Since Instagram was first started in 2010, the platform has grown in new ways but ultimately has kept the same general idea. Influencers are able to post and share content within their profiles, engage with their followers, and build themselves as brands. Instagram is continuing to grow and will continue to be a hotspot for influencer marketing which is why it is a resourceful social media platform for this study. Instagram will continue to be an important social media platform for influencer marketing, so this research examines Instagram to better understand the relationship between consumers and influencers.

The motivation of surveillance/knowledge of others were analyzed by Alhabash and Ma (2017) and Sheldon and Bryant (2016). Within Alhabash and Mengyan Ma's study, they found that surveillance was the strongest motivation for Instagram usage. This could be keeping up with friends and family or brands, influencers, etc. Sheldon and Bryant (2016) found four solid motivations for why Instagram users use the app. These four motivations include surveillance/knowledge of others, documentation, coolness, and creativity. Out of the four motives, surveillance/knowledge about others was the most influential reason behind Instagram use. This finding confirms that many individuals use social media forums to keep updated on or gain knowledge on what others are doing. These other people could be friends, family or even strangers (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016).

Convenience was found by Alhabash and Ma (2017) to be a motivation for individuals to use Instagram. Convenience in the study was defined as “easy to use and convenient”. Convenience was found to be the second most important motivation in Alhabash and Ma’s (2017) study.

Medium appeal was found by Alhabash and Ma (2017) to be a motivation for individuals to use Instagram compared to other social media platforms. Medium appeal was defined as “individual’s attitudes towards the medium and how long they spend daily on the medium” in the study. Medium appeal in Alhabash and Ma’s (2017) study was found to be the third most important motivations for using Instagram.

Passing time was found by Alhabash and Ma (2017) to be an important motivation for individuals to use Instagram. Passing time in the study was defined as, “it helps pass the time and it relaxes me”.

Self-expression was found by Alhabash and Ma (2017) to be an important motivation for individuals to use Instagram. It was defined as, “to show personality and to tell others about oneself”. Self-expression was also analyzed by Saletti et al. (2022). Self-expression was defined as, “users view Instagram as a means of self-expression, where a picture, usually accompanied by a caption or a text that describes the moment in esthetic, artistic, or poetic terms, captures a special moment that they wish could last forever,” (Saletti et al., 2022).

Self-documentation was found by Alhabash and Ma (2017) to be an important motivation for individuals to use Instagram. It was defined as, “to record what happens in life, to record what one has learned and to record where one has been”. Saletti et al. (2022) analyzed documentation as an important motivation for Instagram usage and it was defined as, “Posting stories and posts is a way of documenting one’s experiences and creating long-lasting memories that are easy to access and share,” (Saletti et al., 2022).

Social interaction was found by Alhabash and Ma (2017) to be an important motivation for individuals to use Instagram. Social interaction was defined as, “connecting with people who share similar values, connecting with people who are similar, and meeting new people”.

Information sharing was found by Alhabash and Ma (2017) to be an important motivation for individuals to use Instagram. Information sharing was defined as, “sharing information that is useful to people and present information on interests”.

Entertainment was found by Alhabash and Ma (2017) to be an important motivation for individuals to use Instagram. It was defined as, “enjoyable and entertaining”. Saletti analyzed entertainment as an important motivation for Instagram usage as well. In Saletti et al. (2022), entertainment was defined as, “Participants describe that when they have some time between tasks, they scroll on Instagram to see the content of their interest, such as their favorite artist or influencer, sports, books, food, exercise routines, beauty, fashion, or activism,” (Saletti et al., 2022).

Sheldon and Bryant (2016) found that Instagram users place less emphasis on connecting with other people and more on personal identity and self-promotion, in addition to other motives, including surveillance and knowledge gathering about others, documentation of life events and general coolness, which includes self-promotion and displaying creativity such as photography skills.

Curiosity was defined as “a not-so-healthy curiosity to check what friends, acquaintances, and influencers post or upload to their stories to keep track of what other people are doing and compared to others,” (Saletti et al., 2022). It was found to be an important motivation for Instagram usage to check up on other people’s content.

Following trends was found to be an important motivation for Instagram usage (Saletti et al., 2022). It was defined as, “Includes references that being on Instagram is imperative because otherwise, they will miss out since everybody is there and people their age use it.” It was found that following trends is an important motivation for Instagram usage because users do not want to miss out on the latest trends and information.

Coping with emotions was defined as, “They acknowledged that using Instagram distracts from uncomfortable emotions such as boredom, sadness, and rage. Some mentioned that they used Instagram to escape reality, as a reassuring mechanism, procrastinate tedious tasks, or vent their emotions,” (Saletti et al., 2022). Instagram users acknowledged that using Instagram distracts from uncomfortable emotions such as boredom, sadness, and rage. This motivation also emphasized the ideas of escaping from reality, venting emotions, and procrastinating from tasks.

These motivations observed in consumer usage of Instagram suggest that influencer advertising is most effective when these motivations are present. When consumers engage with influencers based on surveillance/knowledge gathering of others (Alhabash & Ma, 2017;

Sheldon & Bryant, 2016), convenience (Alhabash & Ma, 2017), medium appeal (Alhabash & Ma, 2017), passing time (Alhabash & Ma, 2017), self-expression (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Saletti et al., 2022), self-documentation (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Saletti et al., 2022), social interaction (Alhabash & Ma, 2017), information sharing (Alhabash & Ma, 2017), entertainment (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Saletti et al., 2022), personal identity (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016), self-promotion (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016), curiosity (Saletti et al., 2022), following trends (Saletti et al., 2022) and coping with emotions (Saletti et al., 2022), consumers are more likely to use Instagram as well as be influenced from influencer advertising. Similarly, these motivations play a role in strengthening the consumer-influencer relationships. When consumers perceive the motivations are there when they use Instagram within influencer content, they are more likely to engage with the content as well as the influencer which leads to a deeper relationship with the influencer over time. Understanding and catering to these motivations on Instagram optimizes influencer advertising efforts as well as contributes to the development of the consumer-influencer relationship (Joshi et al., 2023). Integrating these insights can lead to more effective marketing strategies in the influencer marketing industry on Instagram as well as a better understanding of Instagram influencer advertising strategies in the academic world (Joshi et al., 2023).

TikTok Motivations:

TikTok is based on creating short videos and distributing them to other users. This social network was launched in September 2016 (Fratila, 2021). TikTok has over 1.677 billion users globally out of which 1.1 billion are its monthly active users as of 2023 (Demand Sage, 2023). This number has grown tremendously since the release of the app in 2016. Because of the growing number of users on TikTok and how users have stayed from beyond the initial hype of the app, past research has analyzed the motives behind why people use TikTok. TikTok has

continued to grow in popularity, especially in the realm of influencer marketing. According to data from the TikTok for Business Portal (2021), TikTok ranks number one in advertising equity worldwide, where 92% of users express having acted after seeing an ad-inviting users to interact with brands. Digital influencers are ordinary people who influence many of their followers and generally have some expertise in a specific area (Shamim & Islam, 2022), such as nutrition, beauty, and fashion. TikTok is the most common application for young adults and eager consumers to turn to. This is where more individuals are being captivated into influencer marketing specific to their interests. This information is why academia and the industry will greatly benefit from this research on influencer marketing. TikTok is creating a new meaning for advertising and this research builds a better understanding on how connections build between social media platforms, influencers, and brands.

Those who create content on TikTok do it for reasons related to satisfying the need for expression (Omar & Dequan, 2020). This need for expression is defined as “Content creators take part in specific techniques to show themselves, draw in people’s attention and cultivate supportive connections.” In the TikTok context, self-expression involves using videos to express about oneself or impress the audience with his/her talents. Omar and Dequan’s (2020) research found that self-expression was a significant predictor to TikTok producing behavior and creating content. The motivation to produce TikTok videos is derived from the motivation of needing to express oneself. Chiang and Hsiao (2016) found that the self-expression motive for the use of video sharing applications has significant effect on users’ sharing behavior. Chiang and Hsiao’s (2016) research was used to guide Omar and Dequan’s (2020) research to better understand the need to express oneself on video sharing applications, such as TikTok. Chiang and Hsiao’s research found that self-expression was a significant motivation for sharing behavior on video

sharing applications. Fratila (2021) found that those who create content on TikTok do it for reasons related to satisfying the need for expression. The research found that this need for expression is related to escaping reality and interacting with other people. This need for self-expression that is used as a motivation in multiple studies is probably because social media users who share content want to interact and establish relationships with others (Park et al., 2011).

In a study conducted in June 2020 by Statista, the most common motivation for why people use TikTok was identified as entertainment. In research done by Fratila (2021), showed that most users have chosen TikTok for the entertainment aspect of funny videos (Fratila, 2021). A recent paper by Bossen and Kottasz (2020) provided insight that, in particular, gratification of entertainment/affective needs was the most relevant driver to understand a range of behaviors on TikTok, including passive consumption of content, but also creating content and interacting with others. Bossen and Kottasz (2020) particularly summarized that TikTok participation was motivated by needs to expand an individual's social network, seek fame, and express oneself creatively. These findings connect the two motivations of entertainment and satisfying the need for expression.

Other reasons identified by the research are occupying free time, expressing ideas, identifying new ideas, following famous people, learning new things, distributing personal own videos or increasing popularity (Fratila, 2021). Although Fratila's (2021) research did not specifically discuss each motivation, the motivations all have one thing in common. This is that two categories of TikTok users were found to be those who publicly share content and those who remain anonymous and track activity of others.

Recent work by Omar and Dequan (2020) applies that uses and gratifications theory to TikTok motives, especially the need for escapism predicted TikTok content consumption. Escapism is the most common motivation for media use examined in past research since it denotes “pleasurable, fun, and enjoyable” experience with the media (Korgaonkar & Wolin, 199). As a popular platform for joyful and fun activities like lip-syncing and memes, the need for escapism is associated with TikTok use. Omar and Dequan (2020) found that one of the motivations for social media users consume or watch TikTok is escapism. The study also found that the motivation of escapism leads to consuming and participating behavior on TikTok.

These motivations observed in consumer usage of TikTok suggest that influencer advertising is most effective when these motivations are present. When consumers engage with influencers based on the motivations of self-expression (Omar & Dequan, 2020; Chiang & Hsiao, 2016), entertainment (Fratila, 2021; Statista, 2020; Bossen & Kottasz, 2020), occupying free time (Fratila, 2021), expressing ideas (Fratila, 2021), identifying new ideas (Fratila, 2021), following famous people (Fratila, 2021), learning new things (Fratila, 2021), distributing personal videos (Fratila, 2021), increasing popularity (Fratila, 2021), and escapism (Omar & Dequan, 2020), consumers are more likely to use TikTok as well as be influenced by influencer advertising. Further, these motivations help to reinforce consumer-influencer relationships. When consumers recognize these motivations in influencer content on TikTok, they are more inclined to interact with both the content and the influencer, which allows for a stronger relationship to be created over time. By understanding and analyzing these motivations on TikTok, influencer advertising efforts are enhanced and in turn, allow for the growth of consumer-influencer relationships (Joshi et al., 2023). Integrating these insights can lead to more effective marketing strategies in the influencer marketing industry on TikTok as well as a better

understanding of TikTok influencer advertising strategies in the academic world (Joshi et al., 2023).

We have learned that TikTok and Instagram can be used to various ways and why individuals use TikTok and Instagram. We have seen how users use TikTok for entertainment purposes, creating and sharing content, and passive consumption of content. We have seen how users use Instagram for convenience, surveillance, passing time, self-expression, self-documentation, social interaction, and information sharing. These two platforms have different reasons as to why their users utilize the platform; however, they ultimately share the same end goal which is sharing and consuming content.

Influencer Engagement Motivations

It's important to understand why people engage with influencers and how those motivations impact the strength of consumer-influencer relationship. Influencer engagement motivations are the key aspect to this research to understand how and why social media users use applications like Instagram and TikTok and what the outcome of the engagement is.

Past research has studied young adults' motivations for following social influencers and their relationship to identifying with influencers and buying behaviors (Croes & Bartels, 2020). Croes & Bartels (2020) research analyzed six motivations for following social media influencers that consist of namely information sharing, information seeking, cool and new trend, relaxing entertainment, companionship, and boredom/habitual pass time. Within this, the findings of this research revealed that more highly educated young adults are more likely to follow influencers to satisfy their need for practical information and to pass time (Croes & Bartels, 2020). Based on Croes & Bartels analyses, it was found that for all six motivations, identification with a social

influencer plays an important role in explaining their online behavior toward that social influencer.

Namely information sharing was found by Croes & Bartels (2020) to be an important motivation for influencer engagement. Namely information sharing was defined as, “sharing gathered information, sharing interests with others, and sharing information that other individuals may be interested in.” The research found that namely information sharing was a significant motivation for social identification related to online advertisement clicking as well as a significant motivation for following social media influencers. Morton’s study found that most participants mentioned that one of the reasons for following influencers is because they share information about relevant and interesting topics, such as new fashion trends, new products in the marketplace, recommendations of products and places, and useful ideas for their daily lives (eg. makeup tutorials, fashion tips, etc.; Morton, 2020). All participants in Morton’s study reported admiring some aspect of the influencers they follow and most of them suggested that it is important for influencers to share content that can make a positive impact on society. Morton’s study found that most participants mentioned that one of the reasons for following influencers is because they share information about relevant and interesting topics, such as new fashion trends, new products in the marketplace, recommendations of products and places, and useful ideas for their daily lives (eg. makeup tutorials, fashion tips, etc.; Morton, 2020). All participants in Morton’s study reported admiring some aspect of the influencers they follow and most of them suggested that it is important for influencers to share content that can make a positive impact on society.

Information seeking was found by Croes & Bartels (2020) to be an important motivation for influencer engagement. Information seeking was defined as, “searching for new information and

learning new things.” The research found that information seeking was a significant motivation for social identification related to online advertisement clicking as well as a significant motivation for following social media influencers.

Morton’s study found that participants like to follow influencers who create content that is inspiring and motivating with respect to some aspect of their lives and that participants began to follow some influencers because their friends, family or other acquaintances who followed those influencers would talk about their content, so they wanted to be part of those conversations too (Morton, 2020). Other respondents in Morton’s study (2020) explained that they found, followed, and interacted with influencers based on inspiration, entertainment, communication, information, and surveillance.

Cool and new trends was found by Croes & Bartels (2020) to be an important motivation for influencer engagement. Cool and new trends was defined as, “everyone is doing something that a large number of individuals find cool and use these trends to create a group or community.” It was found that cool and new trends was a significant motivation for social identification for online advertisement clicking. The motivation also had an indirect relationship with buying behavior in this research.

Relaxing entertainment was found by Croes & Bartels (2020) to be an important motivation for influencer engagement. Relaxing entertainment was defined as, “enjoyment, relaxation, escapism from daily tasks, and disconnecting from an environment.” Relaxing entertainment was found to be one of the most important motivations for following influencers in this research.

Companionship was found by Croes & Bartels (2020) to be an important motivation for influencer engagement. Companionship was defined as, “not having to be alone, to have someone to talk to, and so individuals do not feel lonely.” This motivation of companionship was

found to be a significant motivation in following social media influencers and online advertisement clicking in this research.

Boredom and habitual pass time was found by Croes & Bartels (2020) to be an important motivation for influencer engagement. This motivation was defined as, “there is nothing better to do and passing time.” Boredom and passing time were found to be one of the most significant motivations for following and engaging in social media influencers in this research.

Sokolova and Kefi (2020) have analyzed how the credibility of the influencer, parasocial interaction, social and physical attractiveness and similar attitudes are related and affect the purchase intention. To more simplify the terms of how users and followers of social media influencers follow and purchase, attributes such as attractiveness, trustworthiness, and credibility have been used to analyzed purchase intention and following patterns (Fink et al., 2004) and how TikTok users categorize their favorite influencers. Fink et al. (2004) found that attractiveness, trustworthiness, and credibility were significant factors in following patterns and purchase intentions.

Lee et al. (2021) found that consumers follow influencers because they are genuine, open, and relatable (Lee et al., 2021). Previous literature suggests that SMIs consciously manage an authentic persona to be perceived as close friends whom consumers can relate to and identify with (Audrezet et al., 2020). Indeed, parasocial interaction or the illusion of interpersonal relationship is a key strength of SMIs and influencer marketing (Gong & Li, 2017; Shan et al., 2020). Lee et al. (2022) findings further demonstrate that such feelings of closeness may gratify consumers’ desire for social interaction and sense of community and follow previous findings

regarding social interpersonal needs as a driver for following celebrities on social media (Kim et al., 2019) as well as more general Instagram usage (Lee et al., 2015).

Regarding the relationship with consumer behavior variables, authenticity was the strongest predictor for trust towards SMIs' brand-related posts (Lee et. al., 2021). Its impact on perceived trust is consistent with findings that illustrate consumers not only feel more similar to SMIs, but also trust them more compared to traditional celebrities (Schouten et al., 2020). Although authenticity was not directly associated with purchase frequency, data indicated that the positive effect on trust spills over to purchase behavior, underscoring the importance of trust-management in SMI marketing (Lee, et al., 2021). Findings by Lou and Kim (2019) substantiate this observation illustrating that parasocial relationships with a SMI are positively associated with young followers' materialistic values. Moreover, given that materialistic consumers are more likely to fancy and worship SMIs to satisfy psychological inadequacies, they are more likely to exhibit more positive perceptions towards their content, including greater trust towards their brand-related posts, and purchase their brand recommendations more frequently (Lee et. al., 2021).

Understanding consumer-influencer relationships involves analyzing why people engage with influencers and how motivations shape interactions. Research identifies motivations for following influencers, including seeking information, trend-following, and entertainment (Croes & Bartels, 2021; Valsesia et al., 2020). Highly educated individuals often seek practical information and pastime activities through influencer content. Influencer credibility, attractiveness, and trustworthiness significantly influence purchase intentions and follower decisions. Authenticity fosters parasocial relationships, fulfilling social needs and driving trust in

influencer brand-related posts, indirectly influencing purchase behavior. Followers appreciate influencers who share relevant information, inspire, and positively impact society, driven by peer influence and content inspiration. The multifaceted nature of influencer-consumer relationships emphasizes the role of authenticity and trust in driving consumer behavior. Understanding these dynamics aids in comprehending the motivations behind social media engagement with influencers and its impact on consumer behavior.

Brand-Related Motivations

Understanding brand-related motivations is crucial for this study as it sheds light on the dynamics of consumer-brand interactions. By examining the reasons behind why consumers engage with brands, we can uncover the underlying motivations that drive these interactions. This insight is essential for comprehending how consumers perceive, connect with, and remain loyal to brands. It also helps in identifying the strategies that brands can employ to enhance their appeal and foster deeper, more meaningful relationships with their audience. Ultimately, grasping these motivations provides valuable knowledge for developing effective marketing strategies and improving brand-consumer engagement.

Brand content is transmitted in SNSs at a much faster rate and to a much larger and more responsive audience than most traditional media, but at a much lower cost (Qualman et al., 2013). Digital marketers in the corporate world are increasingly incorporating SNSs as a part of their online brand strategy by raising brand awareness, driving engagement, and increasing conversions for their brands and products. As brands are becoming increasingly aware of the desire for advertising on SNSs, their use of influencers is continuing to rise. With this new way of brands advertising, social media will continue to change.

This study aims to examine whether the gratifications of using social media significantly differ between Instagram and TikTok and how these two social media platforms engage with content and consumers. As social media influencers are continuing to enter the brand community in various ways on social media, influencers and brands are benefiting from each other. The brand content is found on the brand social media channels. Brands are beginning to utilize social media to connect with their target audience.

Many studies reveal that when consumers are highly engaged with a social media platform, they can be more responsive to brand advertisements (Bronner & Neijens, 2006, Coulter, 1998, Cunningham et al., 2006, Wang, 2006). Strong and relevant content of the brand posts generate favorable cognitive responses regarding posts, which ultimately leads to positive attitude toward posts and influences purchasing decision on the basis of information gathered from the posts (Akar & Topçu, 2011, Miller & Lammas, 2010). Compared to traditional views of brand-consumer engagement, online brand interactions are viewed as consisting of greater cognitive processing, heightened relevance and emotional experiences (Mollen & Wilson, 2010), and greater advertising effectiveness (Calder et al., 2009). If the brand has a certain aesthetic to the social media or website, users are more likely to interact directly with the brand and repost the content onto their own social media (Li & Xie, 2020). Driven by the growth of online media, consumers are increasingly seeking, even expecting, a more involved role in the consumption process (Calder & Malthouse, 2005). Findings from Qin (2020) show that brand-consumer interactions, both content-consumption and content-contribution intentions, can be fostered by certain motives of using social media: information-seeking and self-identity. Sook Kwon, Kim, Sung, and Yun Yoo (2014) found that 'brand usage and likeability' motivation predicts brand

identification, relationship continuance and recommendation intentions between consumers and brands.

The social media technology has been successful in enabling brands to be popular with, and among, active social media users through higher levels of customer-brand interaction by the dynamic marketing agencies (Gensler et al., 2013). Such interactive communications can act as mechanisms for value co-creation and for allowing possibilities such as improved brand meaning (Gensler et al., 2013, Hatch & Schultz, 2010) and collaborative product innovation opportunities (Kozinets et al., 2010; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Sawhney et al., 2005), thereby enhancing consumer's perception and online engagement with social media.

Enjoyment was found by Yesiloglu et al. (2021) to be a significant motivation for consumers to contribute to brand-related posts from brands as well as influencers. According to this research, consumers who are driven by enjoyment are more likely to engage with brand-related content. This supports the work of Shao (2009), who noted the activity of contributing to content on UGC sites is often driven by the desire for social connections. Social interaction was also found by McKenna and Bargh (1999) and Popp et al. (2016) in the context of virtual brand community motivations.

Favorable brand content generates positive cognitive responses and influences purchasing decisions. Online brand interactions involve heightened cognitive processing, relevance, and emotional experiences, enhancing advertising effectiveness. Consumers seek more active roles in the consumption process facilitated by brand social media. Interactive communications within the brand-related content foster value co-creation, brand meaning, and collaborative innovation opportunities. Companies allocate budgets towards influencer marketing, leveraging influencers as mediators between brands and followers. Understanding the dynamics between influencers

and followers is critical for brands, highlighting the significance of influencer marketing strategies in contemporary brand promotion.

Perceived Influencer Relationship

Now that this literature review has reviewed all previous literature on platform use motivations, influencer engagement motivations and brand-related motivations, it is now time to understand how perceived influencer relationships are connected. By understanding the motivations for each sector that we have established, understanding perceived influencer relationships is how this study will come together. The motivations are analyzed to provide a better understanding of how perceived influencer relationships are developed.

Parasocial relationship theory is when a one-sided relationship is formed, where one person extends emotional energy, interest and time with the other person when the other person is unaware that the other exists (Horton & Wohl, 1956). This usually is found in the celebrities and is now being seen among influencers. Parasocial relationships refer to media-enabled connections between users and media personalities/celebrities (Rubin & Step, 2000). Parasocial relationship theory with influencers explains how social media users on TikTok and Instagram interact, connect, and build a relationship with influencers (Yang & Ha, 2021). This relationship builds into what Instagram and TikTok users believe is a close friendship. Because social media connects people in a way that it hasn't before, these perceived close friendships are what builds the concepts in parasocial relationship theory.

In influencer marketing literature, several research streams are devoted to investigating the relationships between influencers and their followers (Bu et al., 2022, Vrontis et al., 2021). Studies have shown several important influencer characteristics that can increase positive

consumer engagement outcomes, examples include attractiveness (Masuda et al., 2022), credibility (Kim & Kim, 2021), and homophily (Bu et al., 2022). Scholars have found several psychological responses of followers, such as parasocial relationships (Bi and Zhang, 2023), sense of belonging (Farivar et al., 2022), and emotional attachment (Sanchez-Fernandez & Jimenez-Castillo, 2021). These psychological responses will be discussed later in the theory section; however, it is important to understand throughout the process of identifying how perceived influencer relationships are developed.

The nature of influencer content in terms of originality, uniqueness (Casaló et al., 2020), entertainment, informativeness (Acikgoz and Burnaz, 2021), or advertisement recognition (Belanche et al., 2021) can influence followers' behavioral outcomes. Originality (Casalo et al., 2020) was defined as the originality of the content posted by an influencer and subsequently, uniqueness (Casalo et al., 2020) was defined as the uniqueness of the content posted by an influencer. These two motivations were found by Casalo et al. (2020) to be significant motivations for engaging with influencers. Acikgoz and Burnaz (2021) found that entertainment and informativeness were significant motivations for influencer engagement. Belanche et al. (2021) found that advertisement recognition is a significant motivation for following influencers and the behavioral outcomes that follow.

Perceived attractiveness can be defined as the positive evaluation of an entity's specific characteristics (Praxmarer, 2011). It can explain how a relationship is initially established and developed and can predict consumer behaviors (Elbedweihy et al., 2016; Harris, 2003) within influencer marketing. Praxmarer (2011) defined influencer attractiveness as, "the favorable evaluation of the influencer's identity by followers and extend the relationship between attractiveness and identification to the context of influencer marketing." Praxmarer (2011) found

that the more attractive an influencer is, the stronger the following identification with an influencer is. Attractiveness plays a large role in how consumers find and choose which influencer to stay connected with.

Social media platforms provide influencers the opportunity to initiate somewhat two-way communication with followers—meaning influencers can also engage in replying and interacting with their followers (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011; Tsai & Men, 2013). This is why the relationship that influencers have with consumers and social media users is crucial to their development and growth as an influencer and provides a way for the perceived influencer relationship to take place. The two-way communication relationship development is largely important within this aspect. Social media influencers become spokespersons for the brands they represent (Freberg et al., 2011) and are an effective tool in brand endorsements, brand awareness, and brand marketing. Marketing research has discussed the role of attachment between consumers and human brands (Thomson, 2006; Moulard et al., 2015). Previous research has found that social relationships are valued based on the degree of closeness between the person and their cognitive representation of self. Despite significant work in the area of influencer characteristics and source effects, little attention has been given to the influencer – consumer relationship (Choi & Rifon, 2012). As the importance and use of social media platforms continue to grow, so does the need for better understanding of the influencer and social media user/consumer’s relationship within social media platforms needs to grow. That is what this area of this study looks to understand.

CHAPTER 3 – THEORY

This study seeks to better understand how consumer motivations for using popular influencer advertising platforms and engaging with influencers and brand-related content impact perceived influencer relationships and, subsequently, influencer advertising outcomes. Given their popularity in influencer advertising, these relationships will be examined and compared across Instagram and TikTok in order to delineate practical insights into best practices for each through a conceptual lens integrating uses and gratifications with parasocial relationship theory. Figure 1 depicts the proposed model.

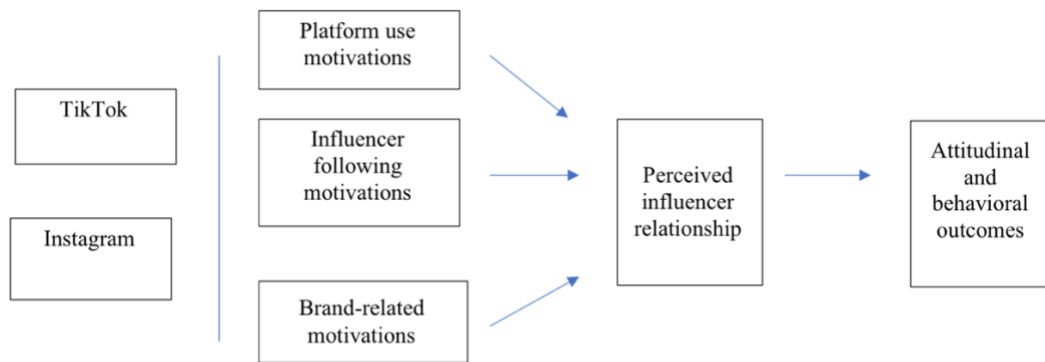


Figure 1

Recall that platform use motivations, influencer following motivations, and brand-related motivations, vary from Instagram to TikTok.

Since social media users have different motives for using the different social media platforms, their involvement in influencer following will vary because some influencers may only be active on one of the platforms, the influencer could only have large following on one of the platforms,

the influencer could post different content on each social media platform (Lou et al., 2022). Different motivations for using TikTok and Instagram such as social connectedness (Pertegal et al., 2019), establishing new relationships (Peretegal et al., 2019), enjoyment (Lin and Lu, 2019), self-expression (Alhabash and Ma, 2017) and others allow the platform motivations to be analyzed in this theory section. The motivations such as information seeking (Croes and Bartels, 2020), trustworthiness (Ohanian, 1990), Authenticity (Lee et al., 2022), and other motivations allow the influencer engagement motivations to be analyzed in this theory section. The motivations for engaging with brand-related content such as aesthetic (Li and Xie, 2020), communication (Yesiloglu, 2021), brand usage and likeability (Kwon et al., 2014), and other motivations allow for the brand-related motivations to be analyzed in this theory section. These different motivations for platform use motivations between TikTok and Instagram allow us to understand how each platform has different motivations for influencer engagements and brand-related content engagements. By understanding how these three sectors of motivations differ, we are able to better understand the difference between consumer's perceived influencer relationships on TikTok and Instagram. When being able to understand how these two platforms have a difference in perceived influencer relationships, it allows this study to better understand the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes that each platform possesses.

The uses and gratifications (U&G) perspective and the parasocial relationship theory (PRT) will be used in this study to understand the motivations behind consuming social media influencer content and the perceived influencer relationship from the social media users to the social media influencers. U&G perspective has been used in various advertising and marketing research to understand the gratifications of individuals from consuming social media influencer content (e.g. Kujur & Singh, 2020). This is relevant to understand the way social media users use

the platforms and what gratifications they receive when they use the platforms, engage with the content, and follow influencers. PRT is used in this study because of the popularity amongst other celebrity and influencer research. PRT is how social media users perceive their relationship to be with influencers. This is seen when individuals believe they are close friends with a social media influencer that they have never met. This is relevant to this study because of how the perceived influencer relationships from social media users are continuing to grow, especially with how these platforms of TikTok and Instagram are constantly growing and evolving, and we are seeing more influencers than ever. These theories will both be integrated into this current study to better understand influencer marketing and advertising on TikTok and Instagram.

Uses and Gratifications in Influencer Marketing

U&G is commonly used in research regarding social media (Rrustemi et al., 2021), influencer marketing (Lou et al., 2022), social media engagement (Saleem & Iglesias, 2019), and consumer-brand relationships (Qin, 2020). The uses and gratifications perspective is based on the premise that people actively use media to satisfy their particular individual needs (Katz et al., 1973; Wu et al. 2010). Originally developed to understand why people use mass media, it has since been applied to many contemporary media channels, including social media platforms like, Facebook (Raacke & Bonds-Racke, 2008), YouTube (Khan, 2017), Instagram (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016), and Snapchat (Phua et al., 2017). Applying the uses and gratifications perspective to new social media platforms led to the addition of new gratifications that explain people's social media use (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). This research proposal is investigating if these gratifications can be applied to social media influencers as an extension. The gratifications that will be particularly analyzed within this research are the motivations of personal identity,

information sharing, cool and new trends, entertainment, companionship, boredom/habitual pass time, attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, authenticity, transparency, homophily, sense of belonging, emotional attachment, originality, credible source, close friends/intimacy, and knowledge seeking. These follow closely among the other elements of this research.

Past U&G Applications and Findings of Social Media in General

Uses and gratifications perspective has often been used in the past to understand the uses of social media by users and the gratifications that the users receive when they use social media. Earlier research has applied U&G in scenarios of traditional media use such as motives for television viewing (Persegani et al., 2002) and radio listening (Mendelsohn, 1964) and now U&G has been applied more widely to new media like Facebook (Upadhyaya, 2018) and Instagram (Eunji & Jung-ah, 2015). Applying the U&G to new social media platforms led to the addition of new gratifications that explain people's social media use (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Through the application of U&G in the context of online brand communities, authors have shown that consuming entertaining content is an important factor for social media use (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). The entertainment value of a social media platform can be an important factor impacting why consumers engage with social media platforms (Dholakia et al., 2004; Lin & Lu, 2011; Park et al., 2009).

Motivations for social media use include gaining a sense of belonging, connecting with friends, family and society, seeking support, and substituting real-life partnership (Muntinga et al., 2011). Users find the internet a comfortable place to reveal their feelings, share views and experiences, and to let their family and friends know about their latest information (Leung, 2009). Internet users expressed that through social media content and social media platform

usage, they have the opportunity to be recognized, publicize their expertise, learn more of the world, socialize with friends and be entertained (Leung, 2009). Using social media platforms was found to involve motivations such as gaining peer support, meeting interesting people, belonging to a community and staying in touch with friends (Park et al., 2009). The general use of social media can be described as finding a community, sharing information with friends and family or socializing with friends. These past research findings on the uses and gratifications perspective have been applied to social media usage to better understand motivations found within social media engagement. These factors are also important when applying and understanding the uses and gratifications of social media.

Past U&G Applications and Findings of TikTok and Instagram

Although U&G has been typically applied to the study of mass media innovations, the perspective provides a user-level view of mass media use (Stafford et al., 2004). This user-level approach seems to be particularly well suited for understanding the specific reasons that bring users to certain media such as TikTok. The application of U&G has evolved in communication studies examining numerous types of new media including user generated media (Omar & Dequan, 2020). Meng and Leung (2021) reported that Chinese adults used TikTok for escapism and relationship building/maintenance, but these participants also reported that TikTok met their entertainment, fashion, making money, and information seeking needs. The factor of escapism is a very large and notable factor that is seen throughout the uses and gratification for social media in general but specifically TikTok as well. Entertainment, relationship building/maintenance, and information seeking needs were identified as being met by TikTok in several studies (Lu et al.,

2020; Meng & Leung, 2021; Omar & Dequan, 2020). This study shows that these factors also contribute to the uses and gratifications of using TikTok through the findings of the research.

Instagram has different but similar themes behind the uses and gratifications for using the social media platform. While TikTok is more used as an entertainment platform, we can see more user participation on Instagram. This means that more users actively post on the social media platform. Apodaca (2017) used a life position scale to measure Instagram motivations. This study found that there was a relationship between uses and gratifications of Instagram users and the presentation of true-self and that each motive derived had a relationship with life satisfaction. The finding suggests that those with higher life satisfaction are more comfortable posting their authentic, true selves on Instagram (Apodaca, 2017). The motives behind using Instagram were as follows: interact with friends and family, learn new information, entertain myself, escape from everyday problems, feel a sense of belonging, communicate with distant friends, relax, talk to someone when there's no one else to talk with, be understood, get away from family and others, feel important, and learn new things. Gender was the strongest predictor of the amount of time spent on Instagram, explaining a 5% variance, followed by surveillance, the creativity motive, and life satisfaction (Apodaca, 2017). The coolness motive was the most significant predictor of the amount of time spent editing photos before posting them on (Apodaca, 2013). These uses and gratifications for Instagram and TikTok help this research understand the applications of the perspective for social media usage.

U&G is applied through this study's model by examining the motivations behind using social media platforms, specifically on Instagram and TikTok. This approach delves into the various reasons individuals engage with social media, such as high internet self-efficacy, maintaining contact with friends and family/social connectedness, establishing new

relationships/friendships, self-expression, self-documentation, social interaction, information seeking, surveillance/knowledge gathering of others, documentation of life events, general coolness, escape awkward situations, self-promotion, escapism, learning new things, affective needs, seeking entertainment, reveal feelings, share views and experiences, publicize expertise, socializing, making money, or information seeking. Understanding these motivations for using each platform, Instagram and TikTok, might impact the consumer relationship with the influencers (Liu et al., 2022).

By understanding how and why consumers use social media, specifically Instagram and TikTok, it allowed this study to understand how the motivations of each social media platform usage impact the motivations of consumer engagement with social media influencers. It is important to understand the differences and similarities between each social media platform, Instagram and TikTok, to understand if the influencer engagement is similar or different on the two platforms (Pourazad et al., 2023). It may mean that consumers receive more gratifications from using one platform versus the other (Bossen & Kottasz, 2020).

By analyzing the motivations for consumers using Instagram and TikTok, it allows us to understand how these motivations work together to influence overall social media usage as well as build consumer-influencer relationships. Instagram and TikTok provide consumers with different individual needs and influence how consumers engage with influencers and influencer content. Research by Sheldon and Bryant (2016) and Phua et al. (2017) supports the notion that Instagram users are motivated by self-expression and social interaction, whereas Bossen and Kottasz (2020) highlight the entertainment and fame-seeking motivations prevalent among TikTok users.

The difference in the motivations for why consumers use Instagram and TikTok is what drives the importance of platform-specific content with influencer marketing and what drives the consumer to influencer relationship (Haenlein et al., 2020). By understanding these motivations, the study aims to uncover the specific gratifications users obtain from their social media interactions, providing a nuanced insight into how and why people utilize these digital platforms in their daily lives as well as interact and engage with social media influencers.

Past U&G Applications and Findings of Influencers

There have been limited studies on the uses and gratification on influencers in the past, however, as this is an emerging topic and research area, there have been studies that have shown the new research path. Prior research suggests a positive relationship between gratifications and purchase intentions. Findings show that social motives and customer need positively influence user satisfaction (Cheung & Lee, 2009). Past research has shown social interaction significantly predicts people's intent of use and purchase (Stafford & Stafford, 2001). These findings show how influencers can positively affect social media users. Many young adults view social influencers' social media accounts as catalogs with images representing a lifestyle they dream of having (Chae, 2018; Marwick, 2015). This thought process amongst social media users creates the appeal of following, interacting and engaging with social media influencers and the gratifications that are received throughout the process of engagement. It is probable that young adults follow social media influencers to seek information, because many influencers present themselves as experts in a particular domain (Chae, 2018).

In addition, previous research shows that people often follow celebrities and social influencers to gain knowledge and expertise about a specific product or service (Djafarova &

Rushworth, 2017). Social influencers are characterized as charismatic experts, which explains why young adults see social influencers as opinion leaders (Lin et al., 2018); young consumers look for influencers who can provide practical information relevant to their lives (Chae, 2018). These are examples of the gratifications that users receive when engaging with social media influencers.

Social media users are able to gain information from social media influencers that they see as reliable, trustworthy and credible sources. Lee et al. (2022) found that consumers follow influencers because they are genuine, open, and relatable. This previous literature suggests that SMIs consciously manage an authentic persona to be perceived as close friends whom consumers can relate to, identify and connect with (Audrezet et al., 2020; Marwick, 2013). Croes and Bartels (2021) found that the U&G motivations entertainment, and escape from daily life appear to manifest in the motive relaxing entertainment within their study. Croes and Bartels (2021) concluded that the entertainment and escape from daily life motivations, could be combined with peace, relax, and shut down the outside world, could suggest escapism when following social media influencers.

U&G is applied through this study's model by examining the motivations behind influencer engagement on TikTok and Instagram. This approach investigates why individuals follow, interact with, and are influenced by content creators on these popular social media platforms. The motivations for influencer engagement include namely information sharing, information seeking, cool and new trends, relaxing entertainment, companionship, boredom/habitual pass time, attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, authenticity, transparency, homophily, sense of belonging, emotional attachment, originality, credible source and close friends/intimacy. These influencer engagement motivations influence the perceived consumer-

influencer relationships by establishing the motivations and analyzing the gratifications that consumers receive when engaging with influencers (Florenthal, 2019). The understanding and analyzing these motivations show how consumer behavior is intertwined with influencer engagement.

When influencers share information (Croes & Bartels, 2020), they are perceived as an expert (Ohanian, 1990) to consumers which enhances credibility (Mackenzie & Lutz, 1989) and fosters trust (Ohanian, 1990) to consumers. The informational role that influencers play to consumers builds influencers as reliable sources and further develops the consumer-influencer relationship (Janssen et al., 2021). This is similar to the information seeking motivations. As consumers engage with influencers to seek information (Meng & Leung, 2021) and knowledge, consumers perceive influencers as trustworthy (Ohanian, 1990) and credible sources (Mackenzie & Lutz, 1989) which furthers builds the consumer-influencer relationship (Farrell et al., 2022).

Influencers who introduce or discuss cool and new trends (Croes & Bartels, 2020) are often seen as original (Casalo et al., 2020) and authentic (Lee et al., 2021) to consumers. Consumers are more likely to follow and engage with these influencers which helps to build the consumer-influencer relationship (Farrell et al., 2022). Unique and original (Casalo et al., 2020) content sets influencers apart of other influencers which creates certain influencers to be more appealing and credible (Mackenzie & Lutz, 1989) to consumers. This originality aspect influences the perceived consumer-influencer relationship (Joshi et al., 2023). Similarly, the idea that influencers are a credible source (Mackenzie & Lutz, 1989) for information solidifies the influence of the consumer-influencer relationship (Joshi et al., 2023).

Influencer content that provides a sense of entertainment (Croes & Bartels, 2020) allows consumers to relax which creates a sense of belonging (Farivar et al., 2022) as well as an

emotional attachment (Sanchez-Fernandez & Jimenez-Castillo, 2021). Influencers who create a community, consumers are more likely to feel this sense of belonging (Farivar et al., 2022). Further, consumers develop the emotional attachment motivation (Sanchez-Fernandez & Jimenez-Castillo, 2021) as influencers share personal stories. These elements of sense of belonging (Farivar et al., 2022) and emotional attachment (Sanchez-Fernandez & Jimenez-Castillo, 2021) allow for the perceived consumer-influencer relationship to be influenced (Janssen et al., 2021; Joshi et al., 2023).

When influencers create a sense of companionship (Croes & Bartels, 2020) and close friend connection (Russel & Stern, 2006) with consumers, a sense of belonging (Farivar et al., 2022) is created amongst consumers that further develops emotional attachment to the influencer from consumers (Sanchez-Fernandez & Jimenez-Castillo, 2021). Because of this emotional attachment, the consumer-influencer relationship develops (Joshi et al., 2023).

Influencers who provide engaging content help to alleviate boredom (Croes & Bartels, 2020). This feeling of habitual pass time (Croes & Bartels, 2020) from consumers strengthens the perceived consumer-influencer relationship by making the influencers content a part of the consumer's daily routine (Joshi et al., 2023; Croes & Bartels, 2020).

Physical attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990) can enhance an influencer's appeal to consumers by being perceived as an authentic (Lee et al., 2021) and trustworthy (Ohanian, 1990) source that further develops the consumer-influencer relationships (Joshi et al., 2023). Furthermore, influencers who are perceived as trustworthy (Ohanian, 1990) are likely to be seen as credible sources which strengthens the consumer-influencer relationship (Janssen et al., 2022).

Demonstrated knowledge and skill, specifically an expertise (Ohanian, 1990) in a specific area, builds influencer credibility (Mackensize & Lutz, 1989) to consumers and in turn, builds the trust (Ohanian, 1990) that consumers feel towards influencers (Joshi et al., 2023).

When influencers are open about partnerships and sponsorships (Bu et al., 2022), it builds the transparency (Wojdynski et al., 2018) aspect that consumers are more inclined to engage with and build a perceived relationship with (Joshi et al., 2023). Similarly, when consumers perceive influencers to be similar to them (homophily), it reinforces the relatability aspect that influences the perceived consumer-influencer relationship (Bu et al., 2022; Joshi et al., 2023; Janssen et al., 2022).

By analyzing these engagement motivations, the study aims to reveal the specific gratifications users derive from following influencers, offering a deeper understanding of the role influencers play in shaping online behaviors and trends. U&G is applied through this study's model by examining the motivations behind influencer engagement on TikTok and Instagram. This approach investigates why individuals follow, interact with, and are influenced by content creators on these popular social media platforms. These engagement motivations enhance U&G and the perceived consumer-influencer relationship.

Past U&G Applications and Findings of Brands and Brand-Related Content

Findings from Qin (2020) show that brand–consumer interactions, both content-consumption and content-contribution intentions, can be fostered by certain motives of using social media: information-seeking and self-identity. The study also suggested that content-consumption behavior has significant associations with consumers' positive attitudes toward the brand's social media pages, while content-contribution behavior does not show significant

effects (Qin, 2020). Between the brand content and the brand's established community on social media platforms, social media users are able to establish a community within the brand's social media. The online community serves individuals' communal goals, such as information exchanges and the attainment of positive, collective experiences as a result of social exchanges (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002). Brand-related content and brands as a whole establish a uses and gratifications system through their content and engagement amongst social media users. In the context of social media, Muntinga et al. (2011) proposed that brand-related media consumption includes watching brand-related content, viewing product ratings, following brand's forums, playing branded content and so forth. These users are able to interact directly with the brand in these ways and receive the gratifications from the interactions.

An important motivation that was found by Li and Xie (2019) to be a factor in brand-related content engagement was the overall aesthetic of the brand. If the brand has a certain aesthetic to the social media or website, users are more likely to interact directly with the brand and repost the content onto their own social media (Li & Xie, 2019). This is seen especially if a social media influencer is featured or if an influencer reposts the brand's content. Sook Kwon, Kim, Sung, and Yun Yoo (2014) found that 'brand usage and likeability' motivation predicts brand identification, relationship continuance and recommendation intentions between consumers and brands. Sook Kwon, Kim, Sung, and Yun Yoo (2014) defined brand usage/likeability as "because I currently use the brands, because I like the brands, because I aspire to buy or own from the brand." Within Sook Kwon et al. (2014) research, it was also found that a critical component of consumer-brand relationship building, social interaction must align with consumer motivations. Yesiloglu et al. (2021) found that enjoyment and communication were significant motives for individuals to contribute to brand-related posts from

brands as well as other people on social media platforms. Yesiloglu et al. (2021) also found that the motives that influence consumption of brand-related posts from brands are enjoyment and information-seeking motives. The study from Yesiloglu et al. (2021) concluded that consumers tend to seek information more frequently from brands than other people.

U&G is applied through this study's model by examining the motivations behind brand-related content engagement on TikTok and Instagram. This approach explores why individuals interact with and respond to branded content on these platforms, considering various user motivations such as attitudes toward marketing with social media (Akar & Topco, 2011), aesthetic (Li & Xie, 2020), brand usage/likeability (Kwon et al., 2014), brand enjoyment (Yesiloglu et al., 2021), communication (Yesiloglu et al., 2021), and information seeking (Yesiloglu et al., 2021). Understanding these motivations for engaging with brand-related content might impact the perceived consumer-influencer relationship (Wei, 2020).

Because of the personalized and relatable nature of influencer content, consumers have positive attitudes toward social media marketing (Akar & Topco, 2011). Influencer marketing has become a more authentic and engaging way to reach consumers compared to traditional advertising channels (De Veirman et al., 2017). These positive attitudes toward social media marketing enhances trust toward influencers and brand-related content (De Veirman et al., 2017). This builds the perceived consumer- influencer relationship by building trust within brands and influencer marketing (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Brands that have an aesthetic appeal to their content can enhance overall consumer experience (Li & Xie, 2020). The visual engagement of attractive content builds a stronger emotional connection with consumers to brand-related content, therefore, influencing the perceived consumer-influencer relationship (De Veirman et al., 2017).

Influencers who showcase their use of particular brands and create brand related content, impact consumers likeability of those brands (Kwon et al., 2014). When consumers see influencers promote certain brands on Instagram and TikTok, it can lead to increased brand usage among consumers which fosters the relationship between consumers, influencers, brands, and brand-related content (Kwon et al., 2014).

When consumers use products promoted by influencers using brand-related content, it can impact the consumer satisfaction (Belanche et al., 2021). Because of this shared brand experience, consumers are more likely to associate positive feelings, such as enjoyment (Yesiloglu et al., 2021), with the brand and brand-related content which strengthens the perceived relationship (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Effective communications by influencers to consumers about brand-related content creates a more personal relationship between influencers and consumers (Yesiloglu et al., 2021).

Consumers often utilize influencer's brand-related content to seek information (Yesiloglu et al., 2021). This could be various topics such as product reviews, lifestyle tips, or day-to-day news. Consumers who seek and find information on brand-related content are more likely to develop the perceived consumer-influencer relationship (Lou & Yuan, 2019)

By analyzing these motivations, the study uncovers the specific gratifications users gain from engaging with brand-related content, providing insights into how brands can effectively leverage TikTok and Instagram to connect with consumers and build the perceived consumer-influencer relationship.

Parasocial Relationship Theory

Parasocial relationships are developed through exposure and repeated interaction (Rubin and McHugh, 1987), perceived similarity and relatability (Giles, 2002), social media usage (Ballantine and Martin, 2005), and emotional engagement (Tian and Hoffner, 2010).

Understanding these mechanisms helps explain why and how parasocial relationships are developed. Rubin and McHugh's (1987) research found that repeated exposure to television personalities fosters the development of parasocial relationships through increased familiarity and perceived intimacy. Giles' (2020) research found the importance of perceived similarity and relatability in forming parasocial bonds, noting that viewers are more likely to develop these relationships with personas they see as similar to themselves. Ballantine and Martin's (2005) research found that social media platforms facilitate the formation of parasocial relationships by enabling direct interaction and engagement with media personas. Tian and Hoffner's (2010) research found that viewers' emotional responses to characters can influence the strength and nature of these bonds.

Parasocial relationship theory suggests that regular users of media personalities begin to perceive the social media influencers as if they were in genuine relationships or friendships (Giles, 2002). This theory revolves around the notion that users believe that these social media influencers are their close friends (Giles, 2002). Because users are interacting with an online social media personality, users and followers of a social media influencers think that they know the influencer personally (Giles, 2002). Parasocial relationships (PSRs) are false social relationships that may develop with an audience for any media character (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Usually, these users and followers think about a specific social media influencer when making purchase decisions (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). This is due to the fact that users and followers think

of influencers as their friend and that they have a genuine connection with the influencer (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Therefore, the study of parasocial relationships can help to explain purchase intention in Generation Z (current young adults) (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Flecha-Ortiz et al., 2023). Users and followers perceive influencers as close friends and refer to their videos when debating on buying products (Delbaere et al., 2020). Authors of previous studies in this field concur that content posted by influencers can trigger changes in consumers' perceptions and behavior towards influencers as well as their endorsing brands (Casaló et al., 2020, Ki and Kim, 2019). Influencers achieve this through a multifaceted approach that includes cultivating authenticity and relatability, leveraging social proof and influence derived from their follower base, and crafting engaging narratives that resonate with their audience (Casaló et al., 2020, Ki and Kim, 2019). By fostering a sense of community and embodying aspirational lifestyles, influencers not only shape consumer perceptions but also influence purchasing decisions by providing educational and informative content (Casaló et al., 2020, Ki and Kim, 2019). These findings showcase the strategic importance of influencer marketing, and the ability to authentically connect with audiences and strategically endorse brands plays a role in driving consumer trust and loyalty.

For this research specifically, the study will examine how social media users perceive to be friends with their favorite influencer on TikTok. This study will investigate the perceived connection and relationship with young adults and their favorite influencer on TikTok. More specifically, within this research, the connection with parasocial relationships and the motivations behind brand-related content, influencer following, and platform use will be examined to tie in this connection with the perceived relationship and the attitudinal behavior outcomes.

Motivations for platform use, influencer engagement, and brand-related content engagement significantly influence the perceived relationship in parasocial relationships (Freberg et al., 2011). Individuals using platforms for entertainment and escapism are more likely to form parasocial relationships due to the significant time they spend engaging with media personas, using the content to escape from daily routines or stress and feel a sense of belonging (Fratila, 2021; Croes & Bartels, 2020; Farivar et al., 2022; Rubin & McHugh, 1987). Users seeking social interaction often turn to platforms to feel connected to influencers and their communities, enhancing the sense of a personal relationship and emotional attachment (Sanchez-Fernandez & Jimenez-Castillo, 2021; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2011). Influencers who share authentic, relatable content foster stronger parasocial relationships as audiences perceive them as trustworthy friends or advisors (Ohanian, 1990; Audrezet et al., 2020). Active engagement through comments, live streams, and direct messages further enhances the perceived reciprocity of the relationship, making it feel more like a two-way interaction (Labrecque, 2014). When influencers endorse brands or products, followers who trust and admire them are more likely to accept these recommendations, feeling as though a friend is offering advice and refer to the influencer as a close friend and credible source (Mackenzie & Lutz, 1989; Russel & Stern, 2006; Lou & Yuan, 2019). When influencers share documentation of what is occurring in their lives, followers feel as though they are transparent and original (Wojdyski et al., 2018; Casalo et al., 2020). Additionally, followers who engage with brand-related content that aligns with their values and emotions feel a stronger bond with the influencer, as it reflects shared interests and beliefs (Bu et al., 2022; Jin et al., 2019). These factors all contribute to the strength and depth of parasocial relationships, making these connections feel more personal and emotionally significant (Rubin & Perse, 1987).

Parasocial Relations & Advertising

Parasocial relationships are often considered as one-sided or non-reciprocal between the two involved parties, with one (the audience) knowing more about and being more involved with the other (TV and radio personalities) (Horton & Wohl, 1956). However, recent research has also challenged this notion by describing the intimate relation between influencers and followers as “perceived interconnectedness,” which is differentiated from the unidirectional parasocial relation concept that was coined in the era of TV and radio (Abidin 2015). Parasocial relationship theory is often attached to celebrity figures, TV stars, and now more recently influencers. Generally, advertising as seen how individuals think of and interact with these influencers. That is why influencers and celebrities have continued to grow as brand endorsers. These relationships that are perceived through these individuals have set a foundation for a new era in advertising and marketing allowing this new way of product selling to develop.

Historically, PRT primarily applied to celebrities and TV stars, but it now extends to influencers who utilize the digital space and create a social media presence to cultivate trust and authenticity with audiences (Laken, 2009). Celebrities were the first public figures that revolutionized advertising and marketing strategies to target consumers (Moraes et al., 2019). The celebrity’s ability to influence consumer perceptions and behaviors is seen in the perceived authenticity and intimacy of their relationships with followers (Lee & Eastin, 2021). Chung & Cho (2017) found that social media exchanges with celebrities have a significant impact on celebrity endorsement, and that the exchanges have different implications depending on whether its effect is mediated or non-mediated by self-disclosure and parasocial relationships. They found a direct relationship between social media interactions and parasocial relationships (Chung & Cho, 2017). One factor that was a driving force in these findings was the intimate connection

style that consumers found on social media with celebrities fostered the parasocial relationship (Chung & Cho, 2017).

We have seen a shift from traditional advertising methods of using celebrities to now utilizing influencer-driven marketing methods (Gupta & Harris, 2010). This shift has changed how brands and influencers engage with their target audiences, tapping into the influencer's ability to connect the brands and consumers with genuine and relatable content (De Veirman et al., 2017). Within this shift, the influence of influencers and celebrities as brand endorsers showcases a change in consumer behavior and advertising practices (Abidin, 2016). Brands now recognize the value in utilizing influencer marketing by leveraging the influencer's personal connections to enhance brand visibility and cater to consumer's personal and individual needs (Jin et al., 2020). This approach facilitates more meaningful interactions with consumers, drives engagement for the brand and influencer, and influences consumer purchasing decisions in ways that traditional advertising methods struggled to achieve (Lin et al., 2018). Findings from Lou (2021) revealed that followers tend to trust their favorite influencers and believe their sharing to be genuine, including both organic sharing and sponsored posts. Followers largely believe in the kind intent of the influencers' sharing and acknowledge the value of those posts despite the fact that they are being sponsored (Lou, 2021). Lou's (2021) findings also showed that followers often internalize influencers' sponsorship deals as inspirational fulfillments and celebrate influencers' success and having a parasocial relationship with the influencer reemphasized this idea.

The evolution of parasocial relationships from one-sided connections to perceived interconnectedness from digital influencers created the shift in advertising and consumer engagement that we see today (Kim & Ko, 2012). Influencers, through authentic storytelling and

relatable content, lead in a new era where personal influence and digital connectivity redefine how effectively advertising works and how consumers relate to brands (De Veirman et al., 2017).

Relationships with Influencers

Past research claims that repeated exposure to a social media personality is an essential factor in the formation of parasocial relationships (Chung et al., 2017). After repeated exposure to an influencer, followers/viewers perceive the influencer as a trustworthy or credible resource for purchase information (Lee & Watkins, 2016; Colliander & Dahlen, 2011). Lou and Yuan (2019) noted a positive relationship between parasocial relationships and followers' interests in influencer-promoted products. Past research has found that parasocial relationships are more likely than ever to be seen within social media influencers (Yuan & Lou, 2020). Influencers are influential to social media users and are able to influence them on purchase decision, lifestyle choices, and even can go as far as personality and behavior. Parasocial relationships partly explain influencers' persuasion power over followers regarding endorsement effectiveness (Hwang et al., 2018). The effectiveness of influencer marketing is seen when influencers have the ability to post about a product and the product is immediately sold out. Social media facilitate users to engage in interactions with their favorite media personalities (e.g., liking, commenting on, or sharing their posts) and also enable these media personalities to disclose their life episodes to followers or personally reply to followers' comments, which contributes to greater intimacy and enhanced reciprocity as perceived by the followers (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011; Tsai & Men, 2013; Yuan & Lou, 2020). Because of the information that is shared by influencers online, the social media users that follow and keep up with the influencers perceive the relationship as

intimate and consider them to be friends due to the personal information that influencer post about online.

When it comes to the interaction between influencers and followers, influencers not only regularly interact with followers and generate useful content appealing to followers but also engage followers in the co-creation of their content or strategies (Abidin, 2015). The engagement that influencers show to their followers only reemphasizes the idea of the relationship that is perceived through the users. Through cumulative interactions and/or the process of content co-creation, followers can often develop enduring attachment to influencers (Abidin, 2015; Bond, 2016; Chen, 2016; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Yuan & Lou, 2020). With these factors all intertwined, it is very easy for social media users to create the perceived relationship and genuinely believe that they are friends.

In Aw and Chuah (2021) research, the applicability of influence theory (Scheer & Stern, 1992) to digital marketing context was extended to explore the dynamic interactions between social media influencers and consumers. The findings in Aw and Chuah (2021) research found that the greater the extent to which a consumer perceives social media influencer's social media content as visually attractive, displaying a sense of prestige, and exhibiting expertise, the more likely it is that a parasocial relationship will be established. The findings in Aw and Chuah's (2021) research also expands upon Aw and Labrecque (2020) and Chung and Cho (2017) by identifying the intensity of social media motivations that develop parasocial relationships.

Yuan and Lou (2020) found that followers are more likely to form stronger parasocial relationships with influencers who they consider attractive and similar to themselves, and the parasocial relationship in turn leads to greater interest in the products promoted by the influencers in brand-related content. Yuan and Lou's (2020) research echoes Lou and Kim's

(2019) findings, that parasocial relationships between adolescent followers and influencers mediate the relationship between influencer attractiveness and homophily motivations and adolescents' materialistic views and purchase intentions. The findings from Yuan and Lou's (2020) research and Lou and Kim's (2019) research, collectively showcase and highlight the mediating role of parasocial relationships with influencers on advertising outcomes and consumer behavior.

Findings from Leite and Baptista (2022) research highlight that the sense of parasocial relationships with an endorsing social media influencer may have a more substantial effect on consumers' intentions to purchase the products of an endorsed brand. Leite and Baptista's (2022) research also found that parasocial relationships are an indispensable factor linking the relationship between ISD and purchase intentions that can play a vital role in the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Leite and Baptista's (2022) research similarly found that parasocial relationships enable a valuable trust-transfer process that can mitigate consumers' perceptions of uncertainty with respect to brand-related content and, in turn, enhances consumers' purchase intentions.

Overall, parasocial relationships play a large role in this research on influencer marketing. By analyzing past research on influencer relationships, we can see how these relationships affect consumer's perception and interpretation to influencer content which ultimately drives influencer advertising and influencing consumer behavior. This study strives to better understand the role parasocial relationships play in consumer's buying behaviors and attitudes by understanding and analyzing how parasocial relationships between consumers and influencers operate to impact advertising and influencer outcomes.

Integrating U&G and Parasocial Relationship Theory in Influencer Marketing

U&G and PRT have worked together in various previous research studies to understand and try to explain how influencers are growing and how social media users are connecting with them. Because of the previous research examined, we are able to understand a glimpse into the reasons behind the uses of social media and the gratifications that social media users receive when using social media. We are also able to look at the perceived relationship that social media users have with social media influencers through parasocial relationship theory.

We have examined how U&G focuses on why and how people actively use social media, specifically Instagram and TikTok, to satisfy individual needs as well as what these needs are when engaging with influencers and brand-related content. We have also examined how PRT explains the one-sided perceived relationships that consumers develop with influencers and the ways that the perceived influencer relationship strengthens based on different motivations. When U&G and PRT are combined in this study, it offers a framework for understanding influencer advertising and the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes.

U&G and PRT are integrated in this study to better understand influencer advertising as well as the behavioral and attitudinal outcomes of influencer advertising. This is by applying U&G and PRT together to further grasp the idea of the proposed model (Figure 1). Referring back to Figure 1, U&G and PRT applications are essential to the model and the process of understanding the behavioral and attitudinal outcomes of influencer advertising. Through this theory section, we have learned that consumers who feel a strong parasocial connection with influencers are more likely to trust brand-related content which leads to higher inclination of purchase intentions and sharing intentions. Understanding the specific gratifications that consumers seek helps to

guide the research in the understanding of the parasocial relationships and influencer advertising outcomes.

The combination of U&G and PRT provides a process for understanding the motivations for social media usage, influencer engagement, and brand-related content engagement. By applying U&G and PRT, this research is able to understand and analyze how the motivations for using TikTok and Instagram, the motivations for engaging with influencers, and the motivations for engaging with brand-related content work independently and dependently to impact the perceived consumer-influencer relationship and the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. Therefore, the proposed model, U&G, and PRT, make way to understanding influencer advertising and the behavioral and attitudinal outcomes that follow with it to offer insights.

CHAPTER 4 – RESEARCH QUESTIONS & HYPOTHESIS

Because of the wide variety of uses this research has proposed regarding the motivations of influencer and consumer use of TikTok and Instagram, this research aims to find and narrow down previous findings to ultimately curate a list of consistent motivations. Throughout this paper we have found various motivations such as escapism (Jarmen et al., 2021), exploration of self and identity (Jarmen et al., 2021), general gratifications (Kaye & Johnson, 2002; Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979), convenience, medium appeal, passing time, self-expression, self-documentation, social interaction, and information sharing (Alhabash & Ma, 2017), to satisfying the need for expression (Omar & Dequan, 2020), occupying free time, expressing ideas, identifying new ideas, following famous people, learning new things, distributing their own videos or increasing popularity (Fratila, 2021), and more. These motivations are scattered and differentiating. While each person may have a different motivation for using TikTok and/or Instagram, this research aims to find a solid answer within influencer marketing and general social media motivations. With this information, the following research question is proposed.

RQ1: What motivations for influencer and consumer use of (a) TikTok, (b) Instagram?

While we have discussed different uses for consumers and their motivations for using social media platforms, we have also discussed the motivations for consumers to engage with influencers on TikTok and Instagram. The motivations for consumers to engage with influencers on TikTok versus Instagram vary. The purpose of this research is to understand these motivations for engaging with influencers on TikTok and Instagram considering how this research area is sparse. With this information, the following research question is proposed.

RQ2: What are the motivations for consumer engagement with influencers on (a) TikTok, (b) Instagram?

Consumers have been known to engage with brand-related content on TikTok and Instagram. This engagement and the why behind it has not been fully explored. The goal of this research is to better understand what the motivations are that consumers have when deciding to engage with brand-related content. With this information, the following research question is proposed.

RQ3: What are the motivations for consumer engagement with brand-related content on (a) TikTok, (b) Instagram?

With the combined research questions proposed, the final research question has been developed. This is the overarching key to the research to understand how the motivations for different areas such as social media use, influencer engagement, and brand-related content engagement, have come into play when social media users curate a perceived relationship with a social media influencer. The key to fully understanding how this perceived relationship develops, is understanding how it might be different on TikTok and Instagram. The two social media

platforms have different engagement motivations and different uses motivations. These two factors along with the previous factors mentioned, allow for differentiating perceived relationship to form. Based on the platform use motivations, influencer engagement motivations, and brand-related content engagement, these factors work together to aid in how these perceived relationships develop. With this information, the following research question is proposed.

RQ4: How do consumers perceive influencer relationships differently on TikTok versus Instagram based on (a) platform use motivations, (b) influencer engagement motivations, and (c) motivations for brand-related content engagement?

Because of how strong perceived influencer relationships have continued to become, this area of study allows us to explore the impact influencer marketing has on advertising and marketing outcomes. It has been proven that when an influencer posts about a certain product or service, their followers on the social media platform will sell it out extremely quickly. Because of this information, we believe that there is a connection between the perceived influencer relationship that positively and strongly impacts advertising outcomes. With this information, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: Strength of perceived influencer relationships will positively impact advertising outcomes.

CHAPTER 5 – METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample collected during this survey was from 18–34-year-old young adults. The age range was selected to accommodate to young adults who use social media. This sample is appropriate because of the increasing number of young adults who use social media and follow influencers. Over 60% of young adults in the U.S. use social media every day (Statista, 2024) and over 70% of young adults in the U.S. follow influencers (Pew Research Center, 2022). This sample was collected through a survey via Qualtrics.

Sample Characteristics

To measure TikTok and Instagram thoroughly, two surveys were distributed on Prolific. There were a total of 147 respondents. There were a total of 70 (n=70) responses recorded from the TikTok survey, and 77 (n=77) responses recorded from the Instagram survey. All respondents use TikTok or Instagram once per week.

The TikTok survey reported that 61.9% of respondents were Caucasian, 14.29% of respondents were African American, 7.14% were Hispanic 9.52% were Asian, 1.19% were Asian-American, 5.95% were other.

The TikTok survey reported that 45.24% were male, 52.38% were female, and 2.38% were non-binary/third gender. The average age for the TikTok survey was 28 years old. 14.29% of respondents reported living in the Midwest, 25% reported living in the Northeast, 14.29% reported living in the West, 38.1% reported living in the Southeast, and 8.33% reported living in the Southwest. 22.62% of respondents reported being married, 1.19% reported being divorced,

and 76.19% reported being single, never married. 54.76% of respondents reported being employed full time, 17.86% reported being employed part time, 9.52% reported being unemployed and looking for work, 1.19% reported being unemployed and not looking for work, and 16.67% reported being a student. 7.14% reported their total household income as less than \$20,999 per year, 8.33% reported \$21,000-\$34,999 a year, 15.48% reported \$35,000-\$49,999 a year, 16.67% reported \$50,000-\$74,999 a year, 17.86% reported \$75,000-\$99,999 a year, 26.19% reported more than \$100,000, 3.57% reported to prefer not to say, and 4.76% reported as a student. 10.71% of respondents reported having a high school or equivalent education status, 26.19% reported having some college education, 8.33% reported having an associate degree, 40.48% reported having a bachelor's degree, 10.71% reported having a master's degree, 2.38% reported having a doctorate degree, and 1.19% reported having a professional degree.

The Instagram survey reported that 57% of respondents were Caucasian, 19% were African American, 5% were Hispanic, 14% were Asian, 4% were Asian-American, and 2% were other. 41% were male and 58% were female, and 1% were non-binary/third gender. The average age for the Instagram survey was 30 years old. 11% of respondents reported living in the Midwest, 26% reported living in the Northeast, 27% reported living in the West, 30% reported living in the Southeast, and 6% reported living in the Southwest. 32% reported being married, 1% reported being widowed, 1% reported being divorced, and 65% reported being single, never married. 52% of respondents reported being employed full time, 21% reported being employed part time, 6% reported being unemployed looking for work, 1% reported being unemployed and not looking for work, and 19% reported being a student. 14% of respondents reported their household income as less than \$20,999 a year, 10% reported \$21,000-\$34,999 a year, 2% reported \$35,000-\$49,999 a year, 20% reported \$50,000-\$74,999 a year, 15% reported \$75,000-

\$99,999 a year, 30% reported more than \$100,000 a year, and 7% reported to prefer not to say. 6% of respondents reported having a high school or equivalent education level, 25% reported having some college education, 12% reported having an associate degree, 41% reported having a bachelor's degree, 11% reported having a master's degree, 1% reported having a doctorate degree, and 4% reported having a professional degree.

Procedure

An online questionnaire created using Qualtrics was posted to a Prolific research participation pool. IRB approval was obtained for this study. [Prolific](#) is a research company that pays respondents to participate in surveys. For this research, Prolific will be used to examine young adults. Participants will be sent the survey if they fall in the 18-34-year-old range and actively follow influencers. Respondents will be compensated \$1.00 for participating. At the beginning of the questionnaire, participants were first asked to select only one SNS from a drop-down list (including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat) that they most frequently used for following brands, and to answer all subsequent questions based on their use of this one specific SNS. By doing this, we ensured that the SNS chosen by each participant was the one that they most frequently used for acquiring brand-related information and content and participating in brand-related communities. Respondents then go through various questions regarding their social media usage. The next section includes questions that target their personal motivations for how and why they use social media and then proceeds into a section on why and how they specifically using Instagram and TikTok. The respondents then answer a series of questions on the motivations for why they follow social media influencers. This section also includes questions that pertain to the perceived influencer relationship that respondents may feel.

Respondents then answer a series of questions on their motivations for and why they engage with brand-related content on social media. Lastly, respondents go through a series of demographic questions to better understand the background of the respondents

Measures

To measure platform motivations, a high internet self-efficacy scale from Liang et al. (2011) is adapted to understand the confidence level of users on the platforms of TikTok and Instagram. Maintaining contact with friends and family/social connectedness and establishing new relationship/friendships are scale items that are adapted from Pertegal et al. (2019). Enjoyment is measured using an adapted three-item enjoyment scale from Lin & Lu (2019). Convenience, medium appeal, passing time, self-expression, self-documentation, social interaction, and information sharing are measured using the scale items adapted from Alhabash and Ma (2017). Surveillance/knowledge gathering of others, documentation of life events, general coolness, and creativity are measured using the adapted scales from Sheldon and Bryant (2016). Escape awkward situations and self-promotion are measured through the adapted scales from Huang and Su (2018). Satisfying the need for expression is measured through a two items scale adapted from Omar & Dequan (2020). Escapism, expressing ideas/self-expression, following famous people, and learning new things are measured through scales adapted from Fratila (2021). Passing time is measured through a five item-scale adapted from Steoeckl et al. (2007). Creating content is measured through a one item scale adapted from Bossen and Kottasz (2020). Self-expression is measured through a three-item scale adapted from Chiang and Hsiao (2016). Reveal feelings, share views and experiences, and publicizing expertise are scales adapted from Lenug (2009). Socializing is a five-item scale adapted from Park et al. (2009) to

understand how social media users use social media to socialize with others. Making money and information seeking are scales adapted from Meng and Leung (2021).

To measure influencer following engagement motivations, namely information sharing, information seeking, keeping up with cool and new trends, relaxing entertainment, companionship, and boredom/habitual pass time are measured using scales adapted from Croes and Bartels (2020). Attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise are measured using scales adapted from Ohanian (1990). Genuine, open, relatable, feeling of closeness, and authenticity are measured using scales adapted from Lee et al. (2021). Transparency is measured through a two-item scale adapted from Woidynski et al. (2018). To measure attractiveness, a three-item scale adapted from Masuda et al. (2022) is used. Credibility is measured through a one-item scale adapted from Kim and Kim (2021). Homophily is measured using a four-item scale adapted from Bu et al. (2022). Sense of belonging is measured using a five-item scale adapted from Farivar et al. (2022). Emotional attachment to influencers is measured using a five-item scale adapted from Sanchez-Fernandez and Jimenez-Castillo (2021). Uniqueness and Originality are scales adapted from Cascalo et al. (2020). Credible source is measured using a three-item scale adapted from Mackenzie and Lutz (1989). Close friends and the intimacy level are measured using a five-item scale adapted from Russel and Stern (2006).

To measure brand-related content engagement motivations, overall attitudes towards marketing with social media is measured using a seven-item scale adapted from Akar and Topco (2011). The aesthetic of the brand content is measured using a four-item scale adapted from Li and Xie (2020). Brand usage/likeability is measured using a three-item scale adapted from Kwon et al. (2014). Enjoyment, communication and information seeking are measured from scales adapted from Yesiloglu et al. (2021).

To measure perceived influencer relationship, consumer-influencer congruence is measured using a four-item scale adapted from Belanche et al. (2021). Social identity is measured using a four-item scale adapted from Dholakia et al. (2004). Advertisement recognition is measured using a three-item scale adapted from De Veirman and Hudders (2020). Influencer satisfaction is measured using a three-item scale adapted from Hess and Story (2005). Influencer trust is measured using a six-item scale adapted from Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman (2001).

To measure attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, purchase intention is measured using a three-item scale adapted from Geden and Straub (2004). Sharing intention is measured using a four-item scale adapted from Sohn (2009).

All scales are on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. All measures with their items and original sources can be found in Table 1 which can be found in the Appendix.

CHAPTER 6 – ANALYSIS & RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Within the descriptive statistics, the means and standard deviations for all of the variables in this study are provided. The statistics are shown as computed variables, allowing for each scale and measure to be shown. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics in full.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-Efficacy	146	5.1233	1.01370
Connectedness	146	4.7260	1.38944
Establish Relationship	146	3.2877	1.74621
Enjoyment	146	4.4863	.74394
Convenience	146	5.2671	1.07023
Passing Time	146	4.8858	1.14433
Expression	146	3.4726	1.65340
Documentation	146	3.5548	1.59802
Social Interaction	146	4.0320	1.68987
Information	146	4.7671	1.25235
Surveillance	146	4.1663	1.40031
Life Events	146	3.2352	1.40792
Coolness	146	3.3151	1.41514
Creativity	146	2.4954	1.23935
Escape	146	2.3048	1.48484
Promotion	146	3.4538	1.38247
Self-Expression	146	4.2945	1.43919
Escapism	146	3.5849	1.37426
Expressing	146	3.9041	1.21246
Learning	146	4.9566	1.31555

Affective Needs	146	5.1689	1.32945
Passing Time	146	3.9486	1.10832
Self-Expressing	146	2.4680	1.50838
Reveal Feelings	146	3.4635	1.57634
Share Views	146	2.9155	1.55896
Expertise	146	2.9110	1.59275
Socializing	146	3.1616	1.32401
Make Money	146	4.3493	1.74135
Info Seeking	146	3.7352	1.54172
Name Sharing	146	3.6872	1.52186
Information Sharing	146	3.1849	1.59310
Entertainment	146	4.7620	1.17456
Companionship	146	3.4178	1.60115
Boredom	146	4.3082	1.50202
Attractiveness	146	3.9795	1.55235
Trustworthiness	146	4.5562	1.45999
Expert	146	4.5164	1.65671
Authenticity	146	4.7546	1.26691
Transparency	146	5.0890	1.47003
Attractive	146	4.2842	1.42443
Homophily	146	4.0616	1.45465
Sense of Belonging	146	3.9685	1.34927
Emotional Attachment	146	3.4671	1.47331
Unique	146	3.8790	1.40872
Originality	146	4.2957	1.38309
Credible Source	146	4.6164	1.42089
Close Friends	146	4.0973	1.29960
Attitude Towards Marketing	146	4.6468	1.16665
Aesthetic	146	4.4726	1.26529
Brand Usage	146	4.3881	1.52578
Brand Enjoyment	146	4.4749	1.45946
Communication	146	4.0457	1.59579
Information Seeking	146	4.2997	1.37922
Congruence	146	4.6438	1.30114
Social Identity	146	3.9760	1.46961
Ad Recognition	146	3.7169	1.40951
Influencer Satisfaction	146	4.6986	1.19471
Influencer Trust	146	4.6084	1.30716
Purchase Intention	146	4.2763	1.48368
Sharing Intention	146	4.0051	1.47639

Enjoyment	146	5.2226	1.30652
Pass Time	146	5.0959	1.31610
Self-Expression	146	4.0434	1.41164
Learning	146	5.0548	1.51444
Entertain	146	4.9315	1.43087
Passing Time	146	3.5594	1.34986
Name Sharing	146	3.7432	1.77068
Entertainment	146	4.9315	1.43087
Influencer Relationship	146	4.5779	1.18687

The Cronbach's alpha for all factor scales were satisfactory at .71 or better. For platform motivations, enjoyment, convenience, information, creativity, self-expression, and expressing where all removed due to unreliability. These scales fell below the 0.71 reliability measure so they could not be used and were removed. The passing time scale was two items correlated to reflect the unreliability with a three-item scale. Expressing was a three-item scale to reflect the unreliability of a four-item scale. Learning was a two-item scale to reflect the unreliability of a three-item scale. The passing measure was a three-item scale to reflect the unreliability of a four-item scale. RQ1 was answered and showed that consumer engagement motivations for TikTok and Instagram differ.

RQ1: How do consumer motivations for using Instagram and TikTok differ?

Platform motivations were analyzed using independent samples t-tests. Results indicated that statistically significant consumer motivations for using Instagram and TikTok differences were present: documentation (TikTok: M = 2.96, Instagram: M = 4.08), social interaction (TikTok: M = 3.72, Instagram: M = 4.30), surveillance (TikTok: M = 3.46, Instagram: M =

4.7978), life events (TikTok: $M = 2.7754$, Instagram: $M = 3.6472$), and expertise (TikTok: $M = 2.5411$, Instagram: $M = 3.2424$).

There is no significant difference in self-efficacy between TikTok ($M = 5.09$) and Instagram ($M = 5.14$) users ($t(144) = -0.266$, $p = 0.791$). There is no significant difference in connectedness between TikTok ($M = 4.61$) and Instagram ($M = 4.83$) users ($t(144) = -0.966$, $p = 0.336$). There is a marginally significant difference in the intention to establish relationships between TikTok ($M = 3.00$) and Instagram ($M = 3.54$) users ($t(144) = -1.901$, $p = 0.059$). There is a significant difference in documentation behavior between TikTok ($M = 2.96$) and Instagram ($M = 4.08$) users ($t(144) = -4.524$, $p < 0.001$), with TikTok users showing lower levels of documentation. There is a significant difference in social interaction between TikTok ($M = 3.72$) and Instagram ($M = 4.31$) users ($t(144) = -2.105$, $p = 0.037$), with TikTok users reporting lower levels of social interaction. There is a significant difference in surveillance behavior between TikTok ($M = 3.46$) and Instagram ($M = 4.79$) users ($t(144) = -6.530$, $p < 0.001$), with TikTok users engaging in higher levels of surveillance. There is a significant difference in sharing life events between TikTok ($M = 2.77$) and Instagram ($M = 3.64$) users ($t(144) = -3.916$, $p < 0.001$), with TikTok users reporting lower levels of sharing life events. There is no significant difference in perceived coolness between TikTok ($M = 3.09$) and Instagram ($M = 3.51$) users ($t(144) = -1.769$, $p = 0.079$). There is no significant difference in escape behavior between TikTok ($M = 2.14$) and Instagram ($M = 2.44$) users ($t(144) = -1.234$, $p = 0.219$). There is no significant difference in fulfilling affective needs between TikTok ($M = 5.14$) and Instagram ($M = 5.19$) users ($t(144) = -0.247$, $p = 0.805$). There is a significant difference in revealing feelings between TikTok ($M = 3.03$) and Instagram ($M = 3.84$) users ($t(144) = -3.217$, $p = 0.002$), with TikTok users revealing feelings to a lesser extent. There is no significant difference in sharing views

between TikTok (M= 2.87) and Instagram (M= 2.94) users ($t(144) = -0.265, p = 0.791$). There is a significant difference in demonstrating expertise between TikTok (M= 2.54) and Instagram (M= 3.24) users ($t(144) = -2.714, p = 0.007$), with TikTok users demonstrating expertise to a lesser extent. There is no significant difference in the motivation to make money between TikTok (M= 4.47) and Instagram (M= 4.23) users ($t(144) = 0.846, p = 0.399$). There is no significant difference in information seeking behavior between TikTok (M= 3.93) and Instagram (M= 3.55) users ($t(144) = 1.469, p = 0.144$). There are significant differences between TikTok and Instagram users in terms of documentation behavior, social interaction, surveillance behavior, sharing life events, revealing feelings, and demonstrating expertise, with TikTok users generally engaging less in these behaviors compared to Instagram users. However, there are no significant differences in connectedness, perceived coolness, escape behavior, fulfilling affective needs, sharing views, motivation to make money, or information-seeking behavior between users of the two platforms.

Table 3

t-test Results Comparing Platform Motivations on TikTok and Instagram

	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Self-Efficacy	.109	.742	-.266	144	.791	-.04484	.16858	-.37806	.28837
			-.265	140.446	.791	-.04484	.16904	-.37903	.28934
Connectedness	.391	.533	-.966	144	.336	-.22247	.23038	-.67784	.23289
			-.965	141.956	.336	-.22247	.23050	-.67813	.23319
Establish Relationship	.484	.488	-	144	.059	-.54545	.28689	-	.02161
			1.901					1.11252	
			-	138.681	.061	-.54545	.28826	-	.02449
			1.892					1.11540	

Documentation	.005	.944	-	144	.000	-1.12523	.24874	-	-
			4.524					1.61687	.63358
			-	142.016	.000	-1.12523	.24884	-	-
			4.522					1.61714	.63332
Social Interaction	.624	.431	-	144	.037	-.58272	.27688	-	-
			2.105					1.12999	.03546
			-	139.992	.038	-.58272	.27778	-	-
			2.098					1.13190	.03354
Surveillance	2.587	.110	-	144	.000	-1.33608	.20460	-	-
			6.530					1.74049	.93166
			-	137.830	.000	-1.33608	.20575	-	-
			6.494					1.74292	.92923
Life Events	.132	.716	-	144	.000	-.87182	.22265	-	-
			3.916					1.31190	.43175
			-	140.090	.000	-.87182	.22335	-	-
			3.903					1.31339	.43026
Coolness	7.611	.007	-	144	.079	-.41191	.23289	-.87223	.04840
			1.769						
			-	131.184	.083	-.41191	.23553	-.87784	.05401
			1.749						
Escape	.022	.881	-	144	.219	-.30312	.24570	-.78877	.18252
			1.234						
			-	141.920	.220	-.30312	.24584	-.78911	.18286
			1.233						
Affective Needs	.293	.589	-.247	144	.805	-.05471	.22110	-.49173	.38231
			-.246	139.333	.806	-.05471	.22199	-.49361	.38420
Reveal Feelings	.399	.529	-	144	.002	-.81467	.25328	-	-
			3.217					1.31529	.31405
			-	141.791	.002	-.81467	.25348	-	-
			3.214					1.31575	.31359
Share Views	.776	.380	-.265	144	.791	-.06882	.25926	-.58128	.44363
			-.267	143.932	.790	-.06882	.25800	-.57878	.44113
Expertise	1.045	.308	-	144	.007	-.70136	.25842	-	-
			2.714					1.21214	.19058
			-	143.763	.007	-.70136	.25743	-	-
			2.725					1.21019	.19253
Make Money	.944	.333	.846	144	.399	.24449	.28895	-.32663	.81562
			.841	137.246	.402	.24449	.29074	-.33042	.81941
Info Seeking	5.829	.017	1.469	144	.144	.37393	.25456	-.12922	.87708
			1.489	141.229	.139	.37393	.25110	-.12248	.87033

RQ2: What are the motivations for consumer engagement with influencers on (a) TikTok and (b) Instagram?

Influencer engagement motivations were analyzed using independent samples t-tests. Results indicated that statistically significant consumer motivations for engaging with influencers on Instagram and TikTok differences were present: namely information sharing (TikTok: M = 3.2101, Instagram: M = 4.2208), entertainment (TikTok: M = 5.2367, Instagram M = 4.6580), attractiveness (TikTok: M = 3.8319, Instagram: M = 4.1117), transparency (TikTok: M = 5.217, Instagram: M = 4.9740), homophily (TikTok: M = 3.8043, Instagram: M = 4.2922), and sense of belonging (TikTok: M = 3.9159, Instagram: M = 4.4319).

There is a significant difference in the motivation for name sharing between TikTok (M= 3.21) and Instagram (M= 4.22) users ($t(144) = -3.581, p < 0.001$), with TikTok users showing lower levels compared to Instagram users. There is a significant difference in the motivation for entertainment between TikTok (M= 5.23) and Instagram (M= 4.65) users ($t(144) = 2.483, p = 0.007$), with Instagram users reporting higher levels compared to TikTok users. There is a significant difference in the motivation for companionship between TikTok (M= 3.69) and Instagram (M= 3.17) users ($t(144) = 1.970, p = 0.025$), with Instagram users reporting higher levels compared to TikTok users. There is no significant difference in the motivation for attractiveness between TikTok (M= 3.83) and Instagram (M= 4.11) users ($t(144) = -1.088, p = 0.139$). There is a significant difference in the motivation for trustworthiness between TikTok (M= 4.27) and Instagram (M= 4.81) users ($t(144) = -2.230, p = 0.014$), with TikTok users showing lower levels compared to Instagram users. There is a significant difference in the motivation for expertise between TikTok (M= 4.14) and Instagram (M= 4.85) users ($t(144) = -$

2.616, $p = 0.005$), with TikTok users showing lower levels compared to Instagram users. There is a significant difference in the motivation for authenticity between TikTok ($M = 4.49$) and Instagram ($M = 4.98$) users ($t(144) = -2.402$, $p = 0.009$), with TikTok users showing lower levels compared to Instagram users. There is no significant difference in the motivation for transparency between TikTok ($M = 5.21$) and Instagram ($M = 4.97$) users ($t(144) = 0.999$, $p = 0.322$). There is a significant difference in the motivation for homophily between TikTok ($M = 3.80$) and Instagram ($M = 4.29$) users ($t(144) = -2.045$, $p = 0.022$), with TikTok users showing lower levels compared to Instagram users. There is no significant difference in the motivation for sense of belonging between TikTok ($M = 3.91$) and Instagram ($M = 4.01$) users ($t(144) = -0.444$, $p = 0.329$). There is no significant difference in the motivation for emotional attachment between TikTok ($M = 3.43$) and Instagram ($M = 3.49$) users ($t(144) = -0.273$, $p = 0.785$). There is no significant difference in the motivation for originality between TikTok ($M = 4.32$) and Instagram ($M = 4.26$) users ($t(144) = 0.271$, $p = 0.788$). There is a significant difference in the motivation for considering a source credible between TikTok ($M = 4.31$) and Instagram ($M = 4.88$) users ($t(144) = -2.477$, $p = 0.008$), with TikTok users showing lower levels compared to Instagram users. There is no significant difference in the motivation for close friends between TikTok ($M = 4.01$) and Instagram ($M = 4.17$) users ($t(144) = -0.753$, $p = 0.228$). There is no significant difference in the motivation for information sharing between TikTok ($M = 3.03$) and Instagram ($M = 3.31$) users ($t(144) = -1.068$, $p = 0.288$). There are significant differences in motivations for name sharing, entertainment, companionship, trustworthiness, expertise, authenticity, homophily, and credibility between TikTok and Instagram users, with TikTok users generally showing lower levels in these areas compared to Instagram users. However, there are no significant differences

in motivations for attractiveness, transparency, sense of belonging, emotional attachment, originality, close friends, and information sharing between users of the two platforms.

Table 4
t-test Results Comparing Influencer Motivations on TikTok and Instagram

	F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
Name Sharing	1.851	.176	-3.581	144	.000	.000	-1.01063	.28225	-1.56851	-.45275
			-3.562	138.147	.000	.001	-1.01063	.28374	-1.57168	-.44959
Entertainment	.925	.338	2.483	144	.007	.014	.57871	.23308	.11800	1.03941
			2.492	143.734	.007	.014	.57871	.23222	.11971	1.03771
Companionship	11.584	.001	1.970	144	.025	.051	.51766	.26283	-.00184	1.03716
			1.998	140.832	.024	.048	.51766	.25912	.00539	1.02994
Attractiveness	.383	.537	-1.088	144	.139	.278	-.27980	.25717	-.78812	.22851
			-1.087	141.872	.139	.279	-.27980	.25734	-.78852	.22891
Trustworthiness	1.256	.264	-2.230	144	.014	.027	-.53243	.23878	-1.00439	-.06047
			-2.212	135.381	.014	.029	-.53243	.24067	-1.00839	-.05647
Expert	5.864	.017	-2.616	144	.005	.010	-.70442	.26926	-1.23664	-.17221
			-2.585	130.290	.005	.011	-.70442	.27250	-1.24352	-.16533
Authenticity	.944	.333	-2.402	144	.009	.018	-.49642	.20664	-.90487	-.08798
			-2.378	132.410	.009	.019	-.49642	.20879	-.90942	-.08342
Transparency	.037	.847	.999	144	.160	.320	.24337	.24369	-.23830	.72504
			.995	139.353	.161	.322	.24337	.24467	-.24037	.72710
Homophily	.195	.660	-2.045	144	.021	.043	-.48786	.23853	-.95934	-.01638
			-2.034	138.021	.022	.044	-.48786	.23983	-.96208	-.01364
Sense of Belonging	.184	.669	-.444	144	.329	.658	-.09964	.22429	-.54297	.34368
			-.443	139.388	.329	.659	-.09964	.22518	-.54485	.34557
Emotional Attachment	.682	.410	-.273	144	.393	.785	-.06682	.24501	-.55111	.41747
			-.274	143.699	.392	.785	-.06682	.24414	-.54939	.41576
Originality	.886	.348	.271	144	.393	.787	.06227	.23001	-.39237	.51690

			.269	137.920	.394	.788	.06227	.23129	-.39506	.51959
Credible Source	1.199	.275	-2.477	144	.007	.014	-.57344	.23148	-1.03097	-.11591
			-2.454	133.393	.008	.015	-.57344	.23370	-1.03567	-.11120
Close Friends	.678	.411	-.753	144	.226	.453	-.16243	.21576	-.58889	.26403
			-.747	135.434	.228	.456	-.16243	.21746	-.59248	.26762
Information	.215	.644	-1.068	144	.144	.287	-.28195	.26396	-.80369	.23979
Sharing			-1.068	141.953	.144	.288	-.28195	.26410	-.80403	.24013

RQ3: What are the motivations for consumer engagement with brand-related content on (a) TikTok, (b) Instagram?

All scales proved to be reliable. Brand motivations were analyzed using RQ3: What are the motivations for consumer engagement with brand-related content on (a) TikTok, (b) Instagram? Independent samples t-tests indicated that there are no statistically significant consumer engagement motivations with brands on TikTok versus Instagram. For brand motivations, no scales were removed.

There is no significant difference in attitude towards marketing between TikTok (M= 4.60) and Instagram (M= 4.68) users ($t(144) = -0.372, p = 0.355$). There is no significant difference in aesthetic preferences towards brand-related content between TikTok (M= 4.38) and Instagram (M= 4.55) users ($t(144) = -0.799, p = 0.213$). There is a significant difference in brand usage engagement between TikTok (M= 4.09) and Instagram (M= 4.64) users ($t(144) = -2.215, p = 0.014$), with TikTok users showing lower levels compared to Instagram users. There is no significant difference in brand enjoyment between TikTok (M= 4.40) and Instagram (M= 4.53) users ($t(144) = -0.540, p = 0.295$). There is no significant difference in communication engagement with brand-related content between TikTok (M= 4.05) and Instagram (M= 4.03) users ($t(144) = 0.053, p = 0.479$). There is a significant difference in information-seeking behavior regarding brand-related content between TikTok (M= 4.05) and Instagram (M= 4.51)

users ($t(144) = -2.057, p = 0.021$), with TikTok users showing lower levels compared to Instagram users. There are significant differences between TikTok and Instagram users in brand usage engagement and information-seeking behavior, with TikTok users showing lower levels in both areas. However, there are no significant differences in attitudes towards marketing, aesthetic preferences towards brand-related content, brand enjoyment, or communication engagement with brand-related content between users of the two platforms.

Table 5
t-test Results Comparing Brand-Related Content Motivations on TikTok and Instagram

	F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
Attitude Towards Marketing	.365	.547	-.372	144	.355	.710	-.07219	.19397	-.45560	.31121
			-.374	143.891	.355	.709	-.07219	.19309	-.45385	.30946
Aesthetic	.888	.348	-.799	144	.213	.425	-.16789	.21001	-.58299	.24721
			-.794	136.400	.214	.429	-.16789	.21148	-.58610	.25032
Brand Usage	.276	.600	-2.215	144	.014	.028	-.55273	.24959	-1.04607	-.05940
			-2.208	140.410	.014	.029	-.55273	.25028	-1.04753	-.05794
Brand Enjoyment	.273	.602	-.540	144	.295	.590	-.13100	.24253	-.61037	.34837
			-.539	140.746	.295	.591	-.13100	.24309	-.61157	.34957
Communication	.617	.433	.053	144	.479	.957	.01418	.26545	-.51050	.53886
			.053	141.484	.479	.958	.01418	.26578	-.51124	.53960
Information Seeking	.410	.523	-2.057	144	.021	.041	-.46513	.22613	-.91209	-.01817
			-2.056	142.035	.021	.042	-.46513	.22622	-.91232	-.01794

RQ4: How do consumers perceive influencer relationships differently on TikTok versus Instagram based on (a) platform use motivations, (b) influencer engagement motivations, and (c) motivations for brand-related content engagement?

H1: Strength of perceived influencer relationships will positively impact advertising outcomes.

To answer RQ4 and to test H1, hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted with mean-centered variables to avoid potential high multicollinearity. The relationship between purchase intention ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 1.48$) and influencer relationship ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 1.19$) was analyzed, with the influencer relationship as the dependent variable. The influencer relationship strength was computed as a composite of brand satisfaction and brand trust (Delgado-Balleste & Munuera-Aleman, 2001; Hess & Story, 2005). Multiple regression analysis showed a significant positive correlation between influencer relationship and purchase intention ($\beta = .827$, $t(144) = 17.627$, $p < .001$). The results indicated a positive correlation ($r = .827$), and both variables were significant predictors ($p < .001$). The model summary showed $R^2 = .683$, indicating that 68.3% of the variance in the influencer relationship is explained by purchase intention. The ANOVA results were $SS = 218.105$, $df = 1$, $MS = 218.105$, $F(1, 144) = 310.695$, $p < .001$, with a standardized coefficient β of $.827$ ($t(144) = 17.627$, $p < .001$).

The relationship between sharing intention ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 1.48$) and influencer relationship ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 1.19$) was examined, with sharing intention as the dependent variable. Multiple regression analysis showed a significant positive correlation between influencer relationship and sharing intention ($\beta = .613$, $t(144) = 9.305$, $p < .001$). The analysis showed a positive correlation ($r = .613$), and both variables were significant predictors ($p <$

.001). The model summary indicated that $R^2 = .375$, meaning 37.5% of the variance in sharing intention is explained by the influencer relationship. A one-way ANOVA was performed to compare the effect of influencer relationship on sharing intention. The one-way ANOVA revealed that there was a statistically significant positive relationship in influencer relationship between sharing intention and purchase intention ($SS = 118.675$, $F(1, 144) = 86.578$, $df = 1$, $\beta = .613$, $t(144) = 9.305$, $p < .001$). These findings demonstrate significant positive relationships between both purchase intention and sharing intention with the influencer relationship.

Platform Motivations Coefficients:

The dependent variable is influencer relationship. Self-efficacy is negative (-0.197), suggesting that higher levels of self-efficacy are associated with lower values of the dependent variable. It is not statistically significant ($p=.257$). Connectedness is positive (0.278), indicating that higher levels of connectedness are associated with higher values of the dependent variable. It is statistically significant ($p=0.016$). Affective needs, make money, and documentation have positive coefficients, suggesting that higher levels of these factors are associated with higher values of the dependent variable. None of these coefficients are statistically significant at conventional levels ($p > 0.05$). Social Interaction and surveillance also have positive coefficients, indicating that higher levels of social interaction and surveillance are associated with higher values of the dependent variable. Both coefficients are statistically significant ($p = 0.031$ and $p=0.043$).

Table 6
Platform Motivations Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	β			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	1.693	.689		2.456	.017		
Self-Efficacy	-.197	.172	-.165	-1.142	.257	.440	2.273
Connectedness	.278	.112	.326	2.476	.016	.532	1.881
Affective Needs	.095	.095	.103	1.003	.319	.867	1.154
Make Money	.040	.084	.056	.479	.633	.672	1.487
Documentation	-.155	.150	-.196	-1.032	.305	.255	3.922
Social Interaction	.272	.123	.374	2.206	.031	.321	3.114
Surveillance	.299	.145	.297	2.066	.043	.445	2.246

Trustworthiness (p=.361), expert (p=.531), authenticity (p=.151), transparency (p=.277), originality (p=.967), name sharing (p=.998), attractiveness (p=.623), homophily (p=.559), credible source (p=.902), and sense of belonging (p= .511) are not statistically significant.

Trustworthiness, expert, authenticity, transparency, attractiveness, sense of belonging, and close friends suggest that higher values of these variables are associated with higher values of the dependent variable. Originality, name sharing, homophily, and credible source suggest that higher values of these variables are associated with lower values of the dependent variable.

Table 7
Influencer Motivations Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	.765	.589		1.299	.198		
Entertain	.081	.094	.100	.868	.388	.575	1.738
Trustworthiness	.163	.177	.185	.920	.361	.188	5.321
Expert	.073	.116	.089	.629	.531	.378	2.645
Authenticity	.335	.231	.321	1.453	.151	.156	6.413
Transparency	.159	.145	.191	1.098	.277	.252	3.969
Originality	-.005	.123	-.006	-.041	.967	.402	2.490
Name Sharing	.000	.093	.000	-.002	.998	.468	2.138
Attractiveness	.038	.076	.049	.494	.623	.768	1.302
Homophily	-.080	.136	-.093	-.587	.559	.304	3.294
Sense of Belonging	-.115	.174	-.127	-.662	.511	.205	4.875
Credible Source	-.021	.170	-.023	-.124	.902	.226	4.424
Close Friends	.167	.180	.171	.927	.357	.224	4.474

Brand Motivations Coefficients:

The dependent variable is the influencer relationship. Brand Usage has the highest unstandardized coefficient (0.399), indicating a positive relationship with the dependent variable. It is statistically significant ($p=.005$). Attitude towards marketing ($p=.723$), aesthetic ($p=.935$), brand enjoyment ($p=.977$), communication ($p=.869$), and information seeking ($p=.253$) do not have statistically significant effects on the dependent variable. Brand usage is the most important

predictor of the dependent variable, with a significant positive effect. The other variables do not show significant effects on the dependent variable.

Table 8
Brand Motivations coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	2.004	.506		3.958	.000		
Attitude Towards Marketing	.049	.137	.050	.356	.723	.428	2.338
Aesthetic	-.014	.167	-.014	-.082	.935	.302	3.311
Brand Usage	.399	.139	.497	2.866	.005	.282	3.543
Brand Enjoyment	.004	.143	.005	.029	.977	.281	3.564
Communication	-.020	.123	-.027	-.165	.869	.310	3.229
Information Seeking	.155	.134	.178	1.153	.253	.354	2.822

A generalized linear model was conducted to analyze the variables. The dependent variable is influencer relationship. The platform variable has a negative coefficient (-2.615), indicating that as the platform changes, there is a decrease in the value of the dependent variable. It is statistically significant ($p = .000$). Connectedness, Social Interaction, Surveillance, and Brand Usage have positive coefficients, but none of them are statistically significant at the conventional threshold of 0.05 (p -values are greater than 0.05). There are several interaction terms between the independent variables, but none of them seem to be statistically significant (all p -values are greater than 0.05). In this model, the platform variable appears to be the most influential predictor of the dependent variable. However, the other variables and interaction terms do not show significant effects. Connectedness and brand usage were statistically

significant (p=.006). Social interaction and brand usage were statistically significant (p=.002).

Therefore, hypothesis 1 is partially supported.

Table 9
Generalized linear models, regression analysis

Parameter	B	Std. Error	95% Wald Confidence Interval		Hypothesis Test		
			Lower	Upper	Wald Chi-Square	df	Sig.
(Intercept)	2.546	.8138	.951	4.141	9.791	1	.002
Platform	-	.7432	-4.072	-1.159	12.382	1	.000
	2.615						
Connectedness	.190	.1857	-.174	.554	1.049	1	.306
Social Interaction	.097	.2166	-.327	.522	.202	1	.653
Surveillance	.292	.2910	-.278	.863	1.008	1	.315
Brand Usage	.154	.2294	-.295	.604	.453	1	.501
Platform * Connectedness	.115	.1622	-.203	.433	.505	1	.477
Platform * Social Interaction	.144	.1370	-.124	.413	1.111	1	.292
Platform * Surveillance	.233	.1750	-.110	.576	1.769	1	.184
Platform * Brand Usage	.074	.1281	-.177	.325	.335	1	.563
Connectedness * Social Interaction	.024	.0472	-.068	.117	.265	1	.606
Connectedness * Surveillance	.022	.0623	-.100	.144	.127	1	.722
Connectedness * Brand Usage	-.097	.0462	-.187	-.006	4.393	1	.036
Social Interaction * Surveillance	-.153	.0558	-.263	-.044	7.557	1	.006
Social Interaction * Brand Usage	.116	.0381	.041	.190	9.233	1	.002
Surveillance * Brand Usage	.031	.0529	-.072	.135	.351	1	.553
(Scale)	.837 ^a	.0979	.665	1.053			

CHAPTER 7 – DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to investigate consumer's engagement and relationship with social media influencers by understanding the different social media platform motivations, influencer engagement motivations and brand-related motivations on TikTok and Instagram. Findings found that platform motivations, influencer motivations, and brand-related motivations positively affect the perceived influencer relationship. Some of the motivations are positively affected by the strength of the perceived consumer to influencer relationship. Other motivations are negatively affected by the strength of the perceived consumer-to-influencer relationship. We found that if brand usage is high, then the perceived influencer relationship is stronger. The specifics of the research are provided in detail below.

Platform motivations were found to be statistically significant for consumer motivations on TikTok and Instagram, with notable differences observed between the two. This suggests that consumers use these platforms for distinct purposes, influenced by the unique experiences each platform offers. Given that TikTok and Instagram cater to different consumer needs and behaviors, these findings are particularly relevant for influencer marketing. This thesis, which focuses on influencer relationships, suggests that marketers should tailor their strategies based on the specific motivations driving platform usage. Existing research in influencer advertising and marketing supports this approach, indicating that customized strategies can enhance engagement and effectiveness across different social media channels.

Consumer motivations were found to differ only with certain measures. Instagram was found to be used more for documentation, social interactions, surveillance, life events and expertise. For influencer marketing, this means that consumers are looking for documentation of others' life events and to observe what influencers life events are. Consumers are also searching for social interactions with influencers on Instagram. Consumers are wanting to use Instagram for surveillance purposes that could translate into surveilling influencers. Within Alhabash and Mengyan Ma's study, they found that surveillance was the strongest motivation for Instagram usage. This could be keeping up with friends and family or brands, influencers, etc. Sheldon and Bryant (2016) found that Instagram users place more emphasis on connecting with other people, including surveillance and knowledge gathering about others. Consumers are also turning to Instagram to find expertise in certain topics, which means that they search for specific influencers with a certain expertise. TikTok was found to be used more for information seeking. This could mean that consumers are using TikTok influencers for specific information seeking. For example, consumers searching on TikTok to find an influencer that has certain information available on their profile. The other measures were similar in statistics and mean and showed that consumers use TikTok and Instagram for similar reasons. This could be because the platforms can be used in similar ways at time. Although they have different uses, they ultimately are social media platforms that can provide similar gratifications.

This could explain the similar statistics between some of the motivations such as self-efficacy, connectedness, coolness, escapism, affective needs, sharing views, making money, and information seeking. These motivations could be statistically similar because of the general overall use of social media being similar amongst platforms. These findings are aligned with Sheldon and Bryant (2016) which found that Instagram users motivations were found to be

documentation, life events, and surveillance. TikTok findings are aligned with Fratila (2021) which found that identifying new ideas and learning new things, which are similar to information seeking. Based on these motivations, this information tells us that consumers on TikTok and Instagram are searching for influencers that they feel connected to, can be a form of escape, and can find information from. Consumers have high self-efficacy while using Instagram and TikTok to find influencers that they want to connect with. The motivations for consumers to use Instagram and TikTok allow us to understand what draws them to influencers and influencer marketing in general. This area of this research answers some of the limitations found in Jin et al. (2019) because it was applied as a cross-platform comparison for what each social media platform offers and how users use the two platforms differently or similarly for influencer marketing.

Influencer engagement motivations were found to be statistically significant for consumer motivations using TikTok and Instagram were observed to be different. On Instagram, consumers motivations for engaging with influencers were found to be statistically significant in information sharing, attractiveness, homophily, and sense of belonging. This could be because Instagram has a more community feel to the platform. Instagram also has many tools built into the platform to build a community. On TikTok, consumer motivations for engaging with influencers were found to be statistically significant in entertainment, transparency and sense of belonging. This could be because TikTok is seen as more of an entertainment platform than Instagram. TikTok also allows for influencers to be more authentic with their following than on Instagram. This is because TikTok is seen more as a platform to show the behind the scenes of an influencer's life. The motivations of emotional attachment, originality, and close friends could be explained to be statistically similar because of the emotional values that these motivations

carry. Consumers could be able to separate the emotional motivations between the platform motivations. These findings are aligned with Phua et al. (2017) which found that many of the motivations that were used in this study, are supported by the motivations for influencer engagement from consumers on SNSs. These findings also align with the urgent need for more research on influencer marketing that stresses the importance of academic research and industry needs/developments for how influencer marketing is continuously growing (Taylor, 2020). This study has provided insights into influencer marketing and how it is a continuous need in research. The findings of authenticity are supported by Audrezet (2020) findings that highlight how an authentic persona as more closely aligned with having a close friend connection between consumers and influencers.

These findings from this research on TikTok and Instagram allow us to better understand influencer marketing in an academic and industry way. These findings tell us that consumers are looking for different types of influencer marketing content and style on TikTok and Instagram. This allows us in the influencer marketing industry to better understand how consumers choose influencers to follow and engage with. Previous research has shown us how consumers engage with authentic (Audrezet, 2020), similar (Ladhari et al., 2020), attractive (Praxmarer, 2011), trustworthy (Colliander & Dahlen, 2011), and other characteristics of influencers. This research found some of these characteristics to be true and for others to not have much of an impact in consumer's motivations.

Brand-related engagement motivations were found to be statistically significant for consumers motivations using TikTok and Instagram were observed to be similar. Within brand-related engagement motivations, the motivations were observed to be within the same significance. Motivations for TikTok and Instagram for consumers engagement with brand-

related content do not differ. This could be because brand could be seen as a brand throughout both platforms and all influencers. This could also be because brands content tends to be similar throughout different platforms and influencer campaigns. These findings are aligned with other research that Yesiloglu et al. (2021) found that enjoyment and communication were significant motives for individuals to contribute to brand-related posts from brands as well as other people on social media platforms. Findings from Kwon et al. (2014) found that ‘brand usage and likeability’ motivation predicts brand identification, relationship continuance and recommendation intentions between consumers and brands which aligns with the brand-related engagement motivations as well as RQ4. Brand usage was found to be a high motivation among engagement with brand-related content as well as a high motivation for sharing intention and purchase intention.

Brand-related content engagement findings in this research tells us about more information on how consumers engage with influencer marketing. Because influencers collaborate with brands that align with them, consumers are more inclined to have motivations based on the influencer engagement as well as the brand content. These findings for brand-related content engagement tells that brand-related content produced by an influencer is more appealing to a consumer if they also use the brand. These findings are also supported by Kwon et al. (2014). The findings of this study suggest that influencers producing brand-related content can positively affect followers trust in the influencer and the brand. These findings are supported by Lou & Yuan (2019) who found that the informative value of brand-related content can positively impact followers trust in branded posts (Lou & Yuan. 2019). From these findings, co-branding with influencers and influencer networks can be successful for brand-related content. For example, a travel influencer collaborating with a luggage brand. This could be the way to tie

in connections to consumers that are not being reached. Our findings contribute to the existing literature on influencer advertising and influencer marketing, offering theoretical insights for researchers studying influencer marketing on social media. Additionally, these findings provide valuable information for brands and consumers on effective influencer marketing practices and strategies. Based on these findings, this research can and should be used by academic and industry professionals for customer retention with brands and influencers. Influencers could be a great way to build customer retention with brands by building on the gratifications that users receive when engaging with influencers.

Findings did not illuminate any interactions between platform motivations, influencer engagement motivations and brand-related motivations within these platforms and the influencer relationship perceived. A positive, statistically significant interaction between platform motivations, influencer engagement motivations and brand-related motivations was found to be dependent on brand usage. As for the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, no interaction between the motivations and the perceived influencer relationship was observed. This could suggest that in instances where consumers purchase products based on social media influencers, that other motivations are present. This is supported by research from De Veriman et al. (2017) that explored how consumers can engage with influencers based on aspirations or social motivations. It could also be explained through the need for consumption or wanting a certain social identity which was found by Lee and Watkins (2016) to be true. This could be because the influencer could impact consumers more than the platform or brand motivations. This is supported by De Veirman et al. (2017) where it was found that the perceived personal connection from consumers to influencers was found to drive high trust, engagement, and purchasing intentions. This could extend parasocial relationship theory in the context of social media

influencers, as the uses and gratifications perspective are potentially more affected by platform and brand engagement motivations. Previous findings suggest that when consumers are highly engaged with a social media platform, they can be more responsive to brand advertisements (Bronner & Neijens, 2006, Coulter, 1998, Cunningham et al., 2006, Wang, 2006) which seemed to be partially supported in this research.

Theoretical & Practical Implications

Present findings contribute to the literature on influencer marketing. Existing research has focused on the gratifications of using social media platforms and the engagement motivations found within social media (Phua et al., 2017). Thus, it is critical to understanding previously unconsidered factors that could impact influencer marketing; consumer-influencer relationship between the consumer and the influencer being advertised and the platform context where the content is being produced. Our work adds to the growing body of work on this topic.

The findings of this study lend several contributions to the theoretical literature for parasocial relationship theory and the uses and gratifications perspective. From a parasocial relationship theory point of view, consumers are building connections with influencers. We found that the strength of the relationship between the consumer and the influencer depends on the motivations for engagement. We contributed to the overall understanding of how consumers are engaging with influencers on TikTok and Instagram. When looking at the uses and gratifications perspective, consumers are using and receiving gratifications from engaging with influencers and brand on social media. We found that the strength of the relationship between consumers and influencers depends on the strength of the motivations.

The findings in this study have provided consumers, advertisers, and influencers with several insights. Consumers have a better understanding on how social media platforms, influencers and brand-related content impacts their behavior. We are able to see how consumers engage and interact with social media platforms, influencers, and brand-related content. Consumers can see how their online behavior impacts a chain of events that ultimately leads them to the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, such as sharing intention and purchase intention, that were found in this study. Consumers are provided with information that shows how the motivations, engagement, social media platforms, influencers, and brand-related content all work together.

The findings in this study also provide advertisers with insights that allow them to better understand how consumers operate in the digital space. This study's findings allow advertisers to understand what makes consumers act on the purchase intention and sharing intention when they engage with social media and influencers. Advertisers are able to understand the ways consumers operate when engaging with influencers and how the connection between consumers and influencers strengthens and weakens in the process. These findings allow advertisers to understand what strengthens the relationship between consumers and influencers and how influencer advertisements could be constructed to successfully target consumers. Advertisers are able to understand the different motivations and engagement behaviors of consumers when they use social media platforms. These motivations allow advertisers to successfully appeal to consumers.

The findings in this study also allow influencers to better understand how they can successfully target consumers. With the constant need to provide consumers with new thoughts and ideas, the findings in this study provide influencers with motivations, engagement, purchase

intention and sharing intention behaviors. Influencers are able to understand how consumers navigate and engage with social media platforms, influencers and brand-related content to act on the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes that are shown in this study. Through these different motivations that were analyzed in this study, information is provided to influencers to create content that targets consumer's motivations and engagement behavior.

Limitations

As with any study, this study has limitations. First, the study only looked at consumer engagement with platform motivations, influencer motivations, and brand-related motivations on TikTok and Instagram. While these two platforms are currently the largest platforms for influencer marketing, other social media platforms can be impacted by influencer marketing. This research studied users of only Instagram and TikTok and did not analyze any other social media platform. Future research should look into different social media platforms that may affect consumer view and engagement on influencer marketing.

A potential limitation of the study includes the type of content that the influencer produces. Although respondents were asked to label what type of content they enjoy seeing, an in-depth analysis of specific content and how it affects engagement was not analyzed. Future research could explore the different types of content that may or may not impact consumer behavioral and attitudinal intentions regarding influencer engagement motivations on social media platforms.

Since this study was conducted via survey, survey responses were fewer than anticipated. Meaning that some motivations could be significant that were not found. Future research could complete a similar study on a larger group to be able to illuminate some reasons as to why we are seeing the results we have in this study.

Another potential limitation is that the survey was not a random sample, and it was only conducted in the United States. This was not a random sample because respondents completed the survey based on personal interests in influencer marketing and social media. Because the survey was only distributed in the United States, there could be cultural differences that allow for varied responses that could not be picked up in this research. These factors could account for generalizability amongst the study. Future research could complete and distribute a similar survey to a random sample across the globe.

Despite these limitations, this study provides insights into how consumers engage with influencers on TikTok and Instagram and how platform motivations, influencer motivation, and brand-related motivations impact consumers behavioral and attitudinal intentions. These insights are valuable to future academic research, consumers, advertisers, and influencers.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Major factor scales

Platform Motivations		
Factors	Items	Source
High internet self-efficacy ($\alpha = .913$)	I feel confident using Instagram/TikTok I feel confident clicking a hyperlink to connect to another website I feel confident downloading pictures or videos from Instagram/TikTok I feel confident searching on Instagram/TikTok I feel confident printing out content from Instagram/TikTok I feel confident copying text on Instagram/TikTok I feel confident bookmarking a page on Instagram/TikTok I feel confident setting a nickname for myself on Instagram/TikTok I feel confident reading others' messaging on Instagram/TikTok I feel confident providing information or answering questions from others on Instagram/TikTok I feel confident buying products on Instagram/TikTok I feel confident playing video games on Instagram/TikTok I feel confident talking to others on Instagram/TikTok I feel confident reading content on Instagram/TikTok	Liang et al., 2011

	I feel confident searching for information on Instagram/TikTok I feel confident providing information to others on Instagram/TikTok	
Maintaining contact with friends and family/social connectedness ($\alpha = .840$)	I use Instagram/TikTok to not feel disengaged from the world I use Instagram/TikTok to feel connected with people I use Instagram/TikTok to feel socially integrated	Pertegal et al., 2019
Establishing new relationships/friendships ($\alpha = .933$)	I use Instagram/TikTok to make new friends I use Instagram/TikTok to extend my circle of friends I use Instagram/TikTok to meet new people	Pertegal et al., 2019
Self-expression ($\alpha = .886$)	I use Instagram/TikTok to show my personality I use Instagram/TikTok to tell others about myself	Alhabash & Ma, 2017
Self-documentation ($\alpha = .813$)	I use Instagram/TikTok to record what I do in life I use Instagram/TikTok to record what I have learned I use Instagram/TikTok to record where I have been	Alhabash & Ma, 2017
Social interaction ($\alpha = .898$)	I use Instagram/TikTok to connect with people who are similar to me I use Instagram/TikTok to connect with people who share some of my values I use Instagram/TikTok to meet new people	Alhabash and Ma, 2017
Information sharing ($\alpha = .885$)	I use Instagram/TikTok to share information I use Instagram/TikTok to share information useful to people I use Instagram/TikTok to present information on my interests	Alhabash and Ma, 2017
Surveillance/Knowledge gathering about others ($\alpha = .860$)	I use Instagram/TikTok to interact with my friends I use Instagram/TikTok to see “visual status updates” of my friends I use Instagram/TikTok because it is fun I use Instagram/TikTok	Sheldon & Bryant, 2016

	to follow my friends I use Instagram/TikTok to see what other people share I use Instagram/TikTok to “like” my followers’ photos I use Instagram/TikTok to creep through other people’s posts	
Documentation of life events ($\alpha = .865$)	I use Instagram/TikTok to depict my life through photos I use Instagram/TikTok to remember special events I use Instagram/TikTok to share my life with other people I use Instagram/TikTok to document the world around me I use Instagram/TikTok to commemorate an event I use Instagram/TikTok to remember something important	Sheldon & Bryant, 2016
General coolness ($\alpha = .757$)	I use Instagram/TikTok to become popular I use Instagram/TikTok because it is cool I use Instagram/TikTok to self-promote I use Instagram/TikTok to provide “visual status updates” for my friends	Sheldon & Bryant, 2016
Escape awkward situations ($\alpha = .862$)	I use Instagram/TikTok to pretend to be busy I use Instagram/TikTok when I’m in traffic	Huang & Su, 2018
Self-promotion ($\alpha = .717$)	I use Instagram/TikTok to show off I use Instagram/TikTok to self-promote myself I use Instagram/TikTok to become popular I use Instagram/TikTok to gain attention from followers	Huang & Su, 2018
Escapism ($\alpha = .761$)	Instagram/TikTok helps me escape from problems I use Instagram/TikTok to relax I use Instagram/TikTok to achieve peace and satisfy the need for aesthetics I use Instagram/TikTok to fill my free time I use Instagram/TikTok to regulate my emotions	Fratila, 2021
Learning new things ($\alpha = .829$)	I use Instagram/TikTok to find practical guidelines and suggestions when I need	Fratila, 2021

	<p>someone's opinion and when I have to make a decision</p> <p>I use Instagram/TikTok to satisfy my interests, hobbies, and/or curiosity</p> <p>Instagram/TikTok helps me with my education</p> <p>After gaining knowledge through Instagram/TikTok, I feel calm and peaceful</p>	
Affective needs/Entertainment and fun ($\alpha = .814$)	<p>I use Instagram/TikTok because it is entertaining</p> <p>I use Instagram/TikTok because it is funny</p> <p>I use Instagram/TikTok because it is exciting</p>	Park et al., 2009
Self-expression ($\alpha = .904$)	<p>I like to tell others about myself on Instagram/TikTok</p> <p>I tend to provide personal information about myself on Instagram/TikTok</p> <p>I try to well describe my personality to others on Instagram/TikTok</p>	Chiang & Hsiao, 2016
Reveal feelings ($\alpha = .778$)	<p>I use Instagram/TikTok to voice out discontent</p> <p>I use Instagram/TikTok to get anger off my chest</p> <p>I use Instagram/TikTok to talk of something unfair</p>	Leung, 2009
Share views and experiences ($\alpha = .848$)	<p>I use Instagram/TikTok to share my interests, views, thoughts and experiences</p> <p>I use Instagram/TikTok to understand myself and others</p> <p>I use Instagram/TikTok to get involved with what's going on with other people</p>	Leung, 2009
Publicize their expertise ($\alpha = .846$)	<p>I use Instagram/TikTok to promote or publicize my expertise</p> <p>I use Instagram/TikTok to establish my personal identity</p> <p>I use Instagram/TikTok to gain respect and support</p>	Leung, 2009
Socializing ($\alpha = .752$)	<p>I use Instagram/TikTok to get peer support from others</p> <p>I use Instagram/TikTok to meet interesting people</p> <p>I use Instagram/TikTok to feel like I belong to a community</p> <p>I use Instagram/TikTok to talk about something with others</p>	Park et al., 2009

	I use Instagram/TikTok to stay in touch with people I know	
Making money ($\alpha = .846$)	I use Instagram/TikTok because I can earn money by live stream broadcast I use Instagram/TikTok because I can earn money by promoting products	Meng & Leung, 2021
Information seeking ($\alpha = .894$)	I use Instagram/TikTok to find out what happened recently I use Instagram/TikTok to look for information like news I use Instagram/TikTok to look for interesting information	Meng & Leung, 2021

Influencer Engagement Motivations

Factors	Items	Source
	I follow my favorite influencer ...	
Namely information sharing ($\alpha = .839$)	To share gather information To share information about my interests with others To share information obtained that may be of interest to others	Croes & Bartels, 2020
Information seeking ($\alpha = .712$)	To search for information To learn something new	Croes & Bartels, 2020
Cool and new trends ($\alpha = .720$)	Because everyone does it Because it's cool To join a group	Croes & Bartels, 2020
Relaxing entertainment ($\alpha = .819$)	Because I enjoy it Because it helps me relax So that I can forget about school, work, or other things So that I can disconnect from my environment for a moment	Croes & Bartels, 2020
Companionship ($\alpha = .845$)	So that I don't have to be alone Because sometimes there is no one else to talk to Because it makes me feel less lonely	Croes & Bartels, 2020

Boredom/habitual pass time ($\alpha = .751$)	I follow my favorite influencer ... Out of habit Because sometimes I have nothing better to do For passing time, especially when I'm bored	Croes & Bartels, 2020
Attractiveness ($\alpha = .893$)	My favorite influencer is ... Attractive Classy Beautiful/Handsome Sexy Elegant	Ohanian, 1990
Trustworthiness ($\alpha = .908$)	My favorite influencer is ... Dependable Honest Reliable Sincere Trustworthy	Ohanian, 1990
Expertise ($\alpha = .959$)	My favorite influencer is ... An expert Experienced Knowledgeable Qualified Skilled	Ohanian, 1990
Authenticity ($\alpha = .871$)	I follow my favorite influencer ... Because they are genuine Because they are down to earth Because they are open with their followers Because they are likeable Because they are engaging Because they are relatable	Lee et al., 2021
Transparency ($\alpha = .806$)	I follow my favorite influencer because they are transparent I follow my favorite influencer because they are transparent with advertising	Wojdyski et al., 2018
Attractiveness ($\alpha = .785$)	I think this influencer is handsome/pretty This influencer is somewhat attractive I have a better relationship with this influencer than other influencers I find this influencer very attractive physically	Masuda et al., 2022

Homophily ($\alpha = .867$)	My favorite influencer thinks like me My favorite influencer behaves like me My favorite influencer is similar to me My favorite influencer is like me	Bu et al. 2022
Sense of belonging ($\alpha = .810$)	I feel a strong sense of belonging to this influencer account I have complete trust of others in this influencer account I enjoy being a follower of this influencer account I am very committed to this influencer account Overall, this influencer account has a high level of morale	Farivar et al., 2022
Emotional attachment ($\alpha = .905$)	I feel emotionally connected to the influencers that I follow I feel a bond with the influencers that I follow I am very attached to the influencers that I follow The influencers that I follow are special for me I miss the influencers that I follow when they do not post an entry, or I cannot view their posts	Sanchez-Fernandez & Jimenez-Castillo, 2021
Originality ($\alpha = .900$)	Posts from this influencer are original Posts from this influencer are unusual Posts from this influencer are novel Posts from this influencer are innovative Posts from this influencer are sophisticated Posts from this influencer are creative	Casalo et al., 2020
Credible source ($\alpha = .841$)	My favorite influencer is convincing My favorite influencer is believable My favorite influencer is unbiased	Mackenzie & Lutz, 1989
Close friends/intimacy ($\alpha = .799$)	I think my favorite influencer is like an old friend My favorite influencer seems to understand things I want to know I would like to meet my favorite influencer in person I like to compare my ideas to what my favorite influencer says When I watch my favorite influencer content, I feel as if I am a part of the group	Russel & Stern, 2006

Brand Related Motivations

Factors	Items	Source
Attitudes toward marketing with social media ($\alpha = .859$)	I engage with brand related content because ... It is necessary for companies to use social media sites such as _ for the purposes of marketing It is a good idea to market with applications such as _, generally known as social media I think that companies should take part in social networking sites such as _ I like marketing with applications such as _ generally known a social media I find it useful to market with applications such as _, generally known as social media I believe that marketing with applications such as _, will be amusing It is necessary for companies to use video sharing sites like _ for purposes of marketing	Akar and Topco, 2011
Aesthetic ($\alpha = .793$)	I engage with brand related content because of the ... Colorfulness The presence of human face and emotional state Image source Image quality	Li & Xie, 2020
Brand usage/Likeability ($\alpha = .866$)	I engage with brand related content ... Because I currently use the brands Because I like this brand Because I aspire to buy or own the brand	Kwon et al., 2014
Brand Enjoyment ($\alpha = .826$)	I engage with brand related content because ... It is enjoyable I have fun when I read other people's brand/product-related posts It makes me happy	Yesiloglu et al., 2021
Communication ($\alpha = .879$)	I engage with brand related content because ... It enables me to communicate with others It enables me to communicate with my friends I feel like I belong to a community when I contribute to the post It enables me to communicate with my family	Yesiloglu et al., 2021

Information seeking ($\alpha = .762$)	I engage with brand related content because ... I need information before making my purchase decision I want to update my knowledge about the product/brand I want to get a new idea/inspiration about a product/brand I want to receive information about brands/products in general	Yesiloglu et al., 2021
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Perceived Influencer Relationship

Factors	Items	Source
Consumer-Influencer Congruence ($\alpha = .822$)	My favorite influencer is a good match with me The compatibility between me and my favorite influencer is high The alignment between me and my favorite influencer is high My favorite influencer and I have a high fit	Belanche et al., 2021
Social identity ($\alpha = .885$)	I am attached to my favorite influencer I have strong feelings of belongingness to my favorite influencer I am a valuable member of my favorite influencer's followers I am an important member of my favorite influencer's followers	Dholakia et al., 2004
Advertisement recognition ($\alpha = .769$)	The Instagram post of the influencer is commercial The Instagram post of the influencer contains advertising The Instagram post of the influencer is advertising	De Veirman & Hudders, 2020
Brand satisfaction ($\alpha = .740$)	I feel I know what to expect from my favorite influencer. I am usually (feel that I would be) satisfied with my favorite influencer's products. I am usually (feel that I would be) satisfied with my experience with my favorite influencer.	Hess & Story, 2005
Brand trust		

($\alpha = .915$)

I trust my favorite influencer to offer me new products that I may need.
I trust my favorite influencer is interested in my satisfaction as a consumer.
My favorite influencer values me as a consumer of its products.
I trust my favorite influencer to offer me recommendations and advice on how to make the most of its product.
My favorite influencer offers me products with a constant level of quality.
I trust that my favorite influencer will help me solve any problem I could have with the product.

Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2001

Attitudinal & Behavioral Outcomes

Factors	Items	Source
Purchase intention ($\alpha = .867$)	I am very likely to buy the product from _ I would consider buying the products from _ in the future I intend to buy the products from _	Gefen & Straub, 2004
Sharing Intention ($\alpha = .860$)	I am interested in sharing posts from _ I am interested in sharing my experience with _ my followers I am willing to spread word of mouth about _ through a social media post I am willing to share _ on social media	Sohn, 2009
