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The effect of social media influencers on customer decisions for purchasing

A survey study on a sample of CMA CGM employees in Jeddah.

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تأثير مؤثري مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي على قرارات العملاء للشراء

دراسة تطبيقية على عينة من موظفين شركة سي ام أي سي جي ام بجدة

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The effect of social media influencers on customer decisions for purchasing

Introduction:

In the past ten years, brand marketers have grown interested in social media influencers. Nowadays, consumers have shifted from relying solely on traditional media platforms like television and radio to using various forms of media (Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram, etc.).

In today's fast-paced environment, social media shapes customers' potential. The increasing use of social media scales up the prominence of a social media influencer in customers' decision-making process. Nowadays, everyone is adopting Social Media influencers to make their brand or services visible, and companies create strategies after they analyze and understand the target influencer's demands. Nevertheless, As the popularity grows, it becomes more challenging for businesses to distinguish authentic influencers with a significant following. An influencer impacts consumers' attitudes and behaviors by providing accurate information, endorsing a product that resonates with the consumer, and motivating them to make a purchase. The content created by influencers is observed as more authentic, sincere, and straight to the point.

Considering what was considered, this study aims to monitor the influence of social media influencers on customer purchasing decisions based on various factors for a sample of CMA CGM (Shipping line company) employees.

The Problem of the Study:

In the last decade, the rise of social media influencers has dramatically transformed the brand marketing landscape. Consumers have shifted away from traditional media outlets like television and radio, increasingly turning to platforms like Snapchat, TikTok, and Instagram for product information and purchasing cues. This shift has amplified the role of social media influencers in shaping consumer behavior, making them central to the decision-making process of modern consumers. Influencers offer brands a unique avenue to reach their target audiences through engaging, authentic, and persuasive content. As a result, the interest in influencer marketing among brand marketers has surged, with companies eagerly integrating influencer partnerships into their marketing strategies to enhance brand visibility and customer engagement.

The evolving digital environment necessitates a deeper understanding of how social media influencers affect purchasing decisions, particularly among consumer segments. While the general impact of influencers on consumer behavior is widely recognized, there needs to be a significant gap in understanding their specific influence on employees within a corporate context. This study addresses this gap by focusing on the CMA CGM company employees and examining how social media influencers shape their purchasing decisions. Employees, as a diverse and substantial demographic characterized by varying factors such as gender, age, and income level, represent an important group whose behavior can provide valuable insights into broader consumer trends.

Moreover, the study acknowledges the challenges businesses face in identifying authentic influencers who can genuinely connect with their audience amidst the growing number of self-proclaimed influencers with varying degrees of credibility and engagement. As influencers continue to shape consumer attitudes and behaviors by providing genuine endorsements and relatable content, their impact on purchasing decisions becomes more pronounced. This study aims to explore these dynamics by monitoring the influence of social media influencers on customer purchasing decisions among CMA CGM employees, thereby illuminating the complex interplay between influencer content, consumer perception, and purchasing behavior.

In conclusion, this research seeks to fill a crucial gap in understanding how social media influencers affect the purchasing decisions of company employees, offering insights that can enhance marketing strategies and contribute to the effective utilization of influencer partnerships in reaching and converting this key demographic.

The importance of studying:

The study of the effect of social media influencers on customer purchasing decisions, specifically through a survey of CMA CGM employees in Jeddah, holds both significant scientific and practical value. This research delves into a vital component of contemporary marketing strategy: the role of social media influencers in shaping consumer behavior. In the digital age, influencers have emerged as powerful agents in the consumer decision-making process, leveraging their online presence to sway purchasing choices. By examining how these influencers affect customer decisions, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of consumer behavior in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

In summary, this research on the effect of social media influences on customer purchasing decisions provides both academic insights and practical solutions. It addresses a critical aspect of modern marketing, contributing to the scientific understanding of consumer behavior while offering brands actionable strategies to leverage influencer marketing effectively. The study's findings are expected to impact ongoing research and practical marketing applications, bridging the gap between academic knowledge and real-world marketing practice.

Scientific Importance of the Study:

- **Highlighting the Role of Social Media Influencers:** This study highlights the significance of social media influencers in affecting consumer purchasing decisions, providing insights into how influencers can drive consumer behavior.
- **Contributing to Understanding Consumer Behavior:** - The research may help us understand the impacts of influencer marketing on consumer buying patterns and preferences.
- **Bridging Research Gaps:** Focusing on the impact of social media influencers, this study addresses a critical gap in marketing research, especially in developing digital marketing strategies.
- **Facilitating Continuous Scientific Inquiry:** The findings will foster ongoing research in digital marketing, consumer psychology, and influencer marketing, creating a foundation for future studies.
- **Transferring Knowledge:** - This study aids in disseminating previous research findings on the topic, enhancing the academic discourse around the effectiveness of influencer marketing.

Practical Importance of the Study:

- **Awareness for brands:** The study aims to raise brands' awareness of the strategic importance of social media influencers in enhancing customer engagement and driving sales.
- **Providing a Strategic Framework:** The research offers a scientific framework for companies to understand the variables and dimensions related to influencer marketing, consumer behavior, and purchase decisions, aiding in the development of effective marketing strategies.
- **Formulating Recommendations:** The study will conclude with actionable recommendations and proposals that businesses can implement to maximize the impact of social media influencers on their customer base, ultimately driving better marketing outcomes and higher sales conversions.

Objective of the study:

This study may aim to investigate and elucidate the influence of social media influencers on the purchasing decisions of employees at CMA CGM, considering various demographic factors such as gender, age, and income level. By focusing on this specific segment, the research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how influencer marketing shapes consumer behavior within a business context. The study seeks to understand the methods through which influencers impact employees' attitudes and buying choices, offering insights that can inform and refine marketing strategies to effectively engage this demographic. Furthermore, the research may seek to bridge existing gaps in knowledge regarding the role of social media influencers in modern marketing, contributing to both academic discourse and practical applications by enhancing the effectiveness of influencer-driven campaigns in driving consumer engagement and sales conversions.

Research Questions:

According to the perspective, the research problem revolved around raising the main question of the study, and during this, we will address some of the sub-questions of the study:

1. How do social media influencers impact customer purchase decisions among CMA CGM employees?

Sub-Questions:

- **1.1:** What specific aspects of social media influencers (e.g., personality, expertise, follower count) most significantly affect the purchase decisions of CMA CGM employees?
- **1.2:** How do CMA CGM employees perceive the trustworthiness and reliability of product recommendations made by social media influencers?
- **1.3:** What role do social media influencers play in introducing new brands or products to CMA CGM employees?

2. How do demographic factors such as age, gender, and income level moderate the impact of social media influencers on purchasing decisions among CMA CGM employees?

Sub-Questions:

- **2.1:** How do the purchasing behaviors of CMA CGM employees differ across age groups when influenced by social media influencers?
- **2.2:** What differences exist between male and female CMA CGM employees in their responsiveness to social media influencer marketing?
- **2.3:** How does the level of disposable income affect the extent to which social media influencers influence CMA CGM employees?

3. How do social media influencers impact customer loyalty to brands among CMA CGM employees?

Sub-Questions:

- **3.1:** In what ways do social media influencers contribute to long-term brand loyalty among CMA CGM employees?
- **3.2:** How do CMA CGM employees' perceptions of social media influencers influence their relationship with brands?
- **3.3:** What role do influencers play in reinforcing brand loyalty to CMA CGM employees?

4. How do specific social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat) influence CMA CGM employees' purchasing decisions?

Sub-Questions:

- **4.1:** Which social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, YouTube) do CMA CGM employees primarily use to follow influencers?
 - **4.2:** How does the type of content (videos, posts, stories) on different platforms influence purchasing decisions?
 - **4.3:** How does the platform used by an influencer impact the effectiveness of their marketing on CMA CGM employees?
- 5. What are the ethical considerations and potential negative impacts of social media influencer marketing on customer purchasing decisions among CMA CGM employees?**

Sub-Questions:

- **5.1:** How do CMA CGM employees perceive the transparency of social media influencers in disclosing sponsored content or advertisements?
- **5.2:** What potential negative impacts, such as misinformation or over-commercialization, do CMA CGM employees associate with influencer marketing?
- **5.3:** How do ethical concerns regarding social media influencer practices affect the trust and purchase intentions of CMA CGM employees?

Research Hypotheses:

Based on the context and problem statement provided, here are the research hypotheses for the case study focusing on the influence of social media influencers on the purchasing decisions of CMA CGM employees: The following hypotheses are proposed to investigate this relationship:

Hypothesis 1: Social Media Influencer Impact on Purchase Decisions:

1.1 There is no significant relationship between social media influencers and the purchase decisions of CMA CGM employees.

1.2 Social media influencers significantly impact the purchase decisions of CMA CGM employees, influencing their buying behavior and brand choices.

Hypothesis 2: Demographic Factors of Influencer Impact:

- 2.1 Demographic factors such as age, gender, and income level do not moderate the influence of social media influencers on purchasing decisions among CMA CGM employees.
- 2.2 Demographic factors such as age, gender, and income level moderate the influence of social media influencers, affecting the extent and manner in which CMA CGM employees are influenced in their purchasing decisions.

Hypothesis 3: Influencer Effect on Customer Loyalty:

- 3.1 Social media influencers do not significantly contribute to long-term brand loyalty among CMA CGM employees.
- 3.2 Social media influencers play a significant role in fostering long-term brand loyalty among CMA CGM employees, enhancing their attachment to brands endorsed by influencers.

Hypothesis 4: Ethical Considerations and Negative Impacts:

- 4.1 Ethical concerns and potential negative impacts of influencer marketing do not affect the purchasing decisions of CMA CGM employees.
- 4.2 Ethical concerns and negative impacts significantly influence the trust and purchase intentions of CMA CGM employees regarding products endorsed by social media influencers.

Hypothesis 5: Influence of Mawthoog licensed on Purchasing Intentions:

- 5.1 A Mawthoog licensed does not significantly influence the purchasing intentions of CMA CGM employees in Jeddah regarding products endorsed by social media influencers.
- 5.2 A Mawthoog licensed significantly enhances the purchasing intentions of CMA CGM employees in Jeddah for products endorsed by social media influencers, as they are perceived to be more credible and trustworthy.

These hypotheses aim to test various relationships and effects related to social media influencers' influence on the purchasing decisions of CMA CGM employees. They provide a framework for exploring how influencer marketing strategies can be optimized and adapted to engage this demographic within a corporate setting effectively. In addition, the hypothesis will allow us to examine whether the Mawthoog licensed makes a tangible difference in how CMA CGM employees respond to influencer endorsements.

Previous Studies:

Several studies have explored the impact of social media influencers on customer behavior, providing valuable insights into this dynamic area of marketing research.

1- A Study by Luay Al-Muania, Muneer Alrwashdehb, Hussam Alic, and Khaled Tawfiq Al-Assafd, "The effect of social media influencers on purchase intention: Examining the mediating role of brand attitude. Volume 11, 2023

This study aimed to understand the expansion of social media platforms that led to the rise of "influencer marketing" as a prominent brand strategy. Understanding the factors contributing to influencers' effectiveness is crucial for marketers and researchers. While numerous studies have explored the appeal of "traditional" celebrities, it is losing in the digital age, with brands now favoring social media influencers. This study investigates the impact of social media influencers' trustworthiness, expertise, and information quality on consumer purchase intentions, emphasizing the mediating role of brand attitudes. Data were collected from 309 respondents through convenience sampling in 2023 and analyzed using SPSS and AMOS software. The findings indicate that all influencer attributes significantly influence brand attitude and purchase intention, with brand attitude partially mediating these relationships.

2- A Study by Ronn Alexis V. Castillo, Czarina Zoy C. Jaramillo, and Leonard S. Sy, "The Effectiveness of Social Media Influencers in the Cosmetic and Skincare Industry to the Purchase Intention of the Generation Z Filipinos" Volume 12, 2022.

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of social media influencers in the cosmetics and skincare industry by conducting a quantitative analysis using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The research focused on the Filipino market, particularly Generation Z consumers, and examined four main factors: Trust, Perceived Credibility, Perceived Image, and Brand Attitude. The study highlighted social media influencers' emerging and rapidly evolving role in the Philippines, a previously underexplored context. The findings revealed a significant relationship and positive correlation between these factors and the purchase intentions of Filipino consumers. This research underscores the vital role of social media influencers in marketing and advertising efforts within the cosmetics and skincare industry in the Philippines, contributing to a better understanding of how these influencers impact consumer behavior.

3- A Study by Noémie Gelati and Jade Verplancke,” The effect of influencer marketing on the buying behavior of young consumers” Volume 83, 2022.

A study of how the purchase intention of young consumers is affected by brands within the fashion and beauty industries. This study aimed to investigate how companies in the beauty and fashion industry leverage influencers and social media to affect consumer behavior, focusing on adolescents and young adults. The method used is qualitative research that included interviews with three fashion and beauty influencers, two industry brands, and seven followers. The triangulation of data from these perspectives ensured more reliable findings. Finally, they found that brands influence over young consumers via social networks and influencers. Consumers form connections with influencers, leading to increased trust and purchasing behavior.

4- A Study by Caroline P. M. Lee, “The Role of Digital and Social Media Marketing in Consumer Behavior,” Journal of Interactive Marketing, Volume 51, 2020.

This study investigates the impact of digital and social media marketing, focusing on the role of social media influencers in shaping consumer behavior. The researchers employed a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and interviews, with a sample of 500 consumers. The findings reveal that influencers significantly affect brand perception and purchase decisions, with credibility and relatability being key factors in their effectiveness. The study underscores the importance of selecting influencers who align with the brand's values and target audience.

5- A Study by Suna Laursen and Vibeke Friis, “Consumer Responses to Influencer Marketing: The Role of Influencer Type, Brand Type, and Influencer-Brand Fit,” International Journal of Research in Marketing, Volume 36, 2019.

This research examines consumer responses to influencer marketing, focusing on the roles of influencer type, brand type, and influencer-brand fit. The researchers conducted an experimental study with 450 participants. Results show that influencer and brand type (luxury vs. mass-market) significantly impact consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, with influencer-brand fit enhancing the effectiveness of marketing promotions.

6- A Study by Elmira Djafarova and Chloe Rushworth (2017), Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. Volume 68, 2017.

The study examines the influence of Instagram on source credibility, consumer buying intention, and social identification among different types of celebrities, focusing specifically on young women, who comprise most of Instagram's user base. Conducted in the UK, the researchers employed qualitative methods, including interviews with a sample of young women aged 18-30. The findings revealed that influencers significantly impact purchase decisions, particularly when perceived as relatable and authentic. The study highlighted those non-traditional celebrities, such as bloggers and YouTube personalities, are often more influential than traditional celebrities due to their perceived credibility and relatability.

7- A Study by Morgan Glucksman (2017), "The rise of social media influencer marketing on lifestyle branding: Volume 8, 2017

The case study analyzed the impact of social media influencer Lucie Fink on lifestyle branding and consumer engagement. The study employed two types of analysis, including pentadic analysis and content analysis. Findings highlighted that active engagement and authenticity are key drivers of influencer effectiveness. This qualitative study determined that the success of social media influencers hinges not merely on their number of followers but on their capacity to influence followers by demonstrating authenticity, confidence, and engaging interaction. These qualities help establish a strong connection between the followers and the brand.

Comment on previous studies:

The studies cited collectively underscore the profound impact of social media influences on consumer behavior across diverse industries and demographics. They highlight a change in basic assumptions from traditional celebrity endorsements to influencer marketing in leveraging digital platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Key themes emerge, such as the importance of influencer credibility, authenticity, and relatability in shaping consumer trust and purchase intentions. Moreover, these studies emphasize the strategic role of influencers in enhancing brand perception, driving engagement, and fostering loyalty among target audiences. Collectively, they contribute valuable insights into the evolving landscape of digital marketing, providing a robust foundation for understanding the dynamics and effectiveness of influencer-driven campaigns in contemporary consumer culture.

These studies collectively highlight social media influencers' significant role in shaping consumer behavior. Influencers are critical in modern marketing strategies because they establish trust, enhance brand perception and influence purchase intentions.

What distinguishes this study from previous studies:

This study distinguishes from previous research by focusing specifically on the impact of social media influencers on the purchasing decisions of CMA CGM employees in Jeddah. This demographic has yet to be explored in existing literature. Prior studies have examined consumer behavior in general or specific consumer segments like Generation Z or young adults, your study targets employees within a business context. This unique focus allows for a nuanced understanding of how influencer marketing strategies can influence purchasing decisions within a professional setting, considering factors such as demographic diversity and occupational influence. By bridging this gap in research, this study contributes insights that can inform more tailored and effective influencer marketing strategies for businesses targeting corporate employees.

The Theoretical framework of the study:

Social media:

Social media platforms have revolutionized communication, enabling real-time interaction and content sharing across global virtual communities. They function as powerful tools for distributing user-generated content, fostering communication, and facilitating networking. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media encompasses a range of web-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, allowing the creation and exchange of user-generated content. This digital environment has reshaped the ways individuals and brands communicate, making it crucial for businesses to engage effectively on these platforms.

Platforms like Snapchat, TikTok, and Instagram exemplify the dynamic nature of social media. Snapchat is known for its ephemeral content, fostering a sense of immediacy and intimacy among users. TikTok's algorithm-driven feed and short-form video content have become a hotspot for viral trends and influencer marketing, particularly among younger audiences. With its visually driven format, Instagram has become a staple for influencer collaborations and brand promotion through features like stories, posts, and live sessions. These platforms provide a space for content consumption and enable active participation, allowing users to comment, share, and co-create content, thereby blurring the lines between producers and consumers.

Social Media Influencers:

Social media influencers play a pivotal role in shaping the perceptions and behaviors of their audiences. They have built substantial followings on social media platforms due to their expertise, charisma, or content-creating abilities. (Freberg et al 2011) noted that influencers leverage their established credibility to affect the attitudes and behaviors of their followers, often driving consumer engagement and brand loyalty. Their influence stems from their ability to create authentic connections with their audience, which traditional advertising often needs to improve.

Influencers are categorized based on their follower count and niche areas, ranging from macro-influencers with millions of followers to micro-influencers who, despite having smaller audiences, often enjoy higher engagement rates due to their perceived authenticity and close relationships with their followers. Their content spans various formats, including sponsored posts, reviews, tutorials, and live streams, which can significantly impact followers' purchase intentions and brand perceptions. Influencers' effectiveness lies in their ability to humanize brands, making them more relatable and trustworthy in the eyes of consumers.

Types of Social Media Influencers:

- **Mega-Influencers:** Defined by their vast followings, usually over a million. They are often celebrities with broad appeal but less personal engagement with their audience.
- **Macro-Influencers:** Typically have between 100,000 to one million followers. They maintain a balance between reach and engagement and are often seen as rising stars or well-known figures in their specific area.
- **Micro-Influencers:** These have 1,000 to 100,000 followers. They are known for their strong engagement rates within specific areas and offer more targeted and authentic connections with their audience.
- **Nano-Influencers:** Possess fewer than 1,000 followers but maintain highly engaged and personal connections. It is ideal for hyper-local or niche campaigns.
- **Content Creators:** These professionals focus on producing high-quality, creative content. Their influence lies in their ability to craft compelling visuals and narratives across various platforms.

Advantages of Social Media Influencers:

- **Enhanced Engagement:** Influencers drive significant engagement through relatable and appealing content.
- **Targeted Marketing:** Ability to target specific demographics effectively by leveraging niche influencers.
- **Authenticity and Trust:** Their perceived authenticity fosters trust and credibility, making endorsements more persuasive.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** Often more affordable than traditional advertising, especially with micro and nano-influencers.
- **Creative Collaboration:** Influencers contribute unique creative insights that enhance the appeal of marketing campaigns.

Disadvantages of Social Media Influencers:

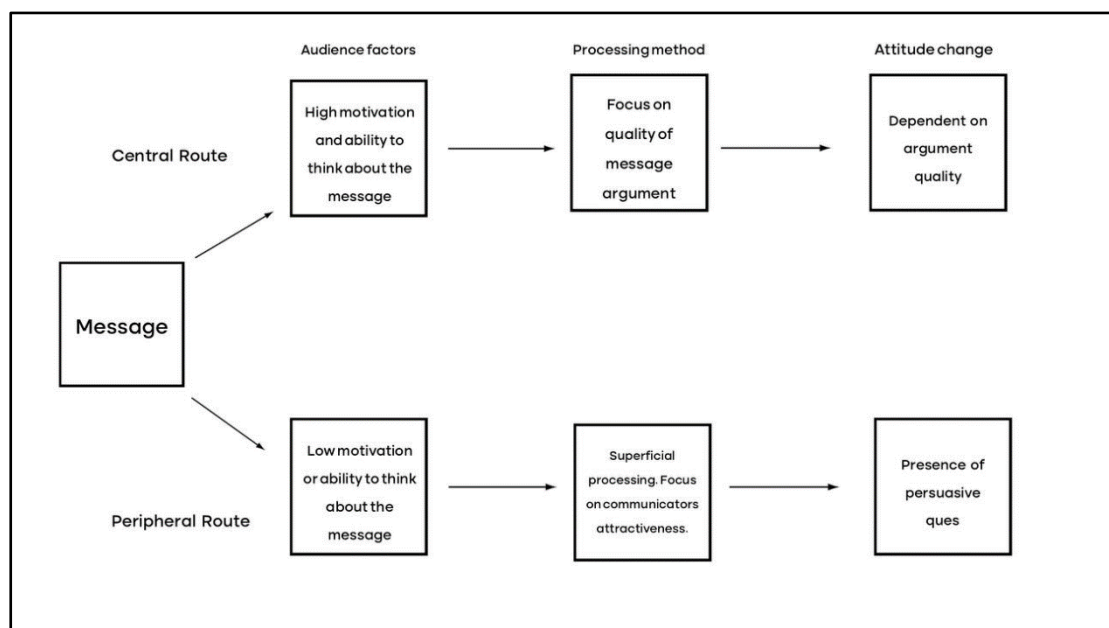
- **Lack of Control:** Brands may struggle to control the content and messaging.
- **Variable Quality and Consistency:** Content quality can vary, affecting the campaign's effectiveness.
- **Risk of Negative Publicity:** Influencer actions can negatively impact the brand.
- **Challenges in Measurement:** Tracking influencer campaigns' return on investment ROI and effectiveness can be complex.
- **Follower Fraud and Fake Engagement:** Risk of inflated follower counts or fake engagement metrics.
- **Dependence on Algorithm Changes:** Algorithm changes on platforms can affect the visibility and effectiveness of influencer content.

Social Influence Theory:

The theory of social influence suggests that individuals can be influenced by the opinions, behaviors, and actions of others, thus impacting their behavioral patterns and attitudes. Within the sphere of social media, individuals with substantial followings wield significant influence, utilizing their perceived expertise and status to shape the beliefs and behaviors of their audience. This theory emphasizes the ability of these influencers to impact consumer decisions through setting trends, endorsing products, or advocating for certain lifestyles. As postulated by the theory of social influence, the adherence to societal norms elucidates the reasons behind individuals' adoption of behaviors endorsed by influencers as they seek validation and social acceptance within their online communities.

The Role of Influencers in Consumer Decision-Making:

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), developed by Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo in 1986, is a dual-process theory describing how people process persuasive information affects consumer decision-making, according to ELM, there are two routes to persuasion: the central route, where individuals carefully evaluate the message content, and the peripheral route, where individuals are influenced by external cues such as the attractiveness or credibility of the source. Each route differs based on the individual's level of involvement and cognitive processing effort. Influencers can affect their audience through both routes, depending on the type of content and the engagement level of their followers. When influencers provide detailed product reviews or in-depth tutorials, followers may engage in the central route, critically evaluating the information before making a purchase decision. Conversely, followers may rely on the peripheral route when influencers leverage their charisma or perceived expertise, making decisions based on the influencer's credibility or attractiveness rather than the message content itself.



The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

The **central route** of the Elaboration Likelihood Model involves extensive cognitive processing and is activated when individuals are highly motivated and involved in the topic at hand. Under this route, individuals diligently scrutinize and evaluate the content of the message, focusing on the logical arguments and the quality of the information presented. Persuasion through the central route is primarily influenced by the strength and coherence of these arguments, as well as the relevance of the information to the individual's existing beliefs or attitudes. Consequently, attitude changes resulting from this pathway are typically more robust and enduring, demonstrating greater resistance to counter-persuasion. Because they are founded on thorough cognitive engagement and the critical assessment of evidence, these changes are also more predictive of future behavior, reflecting a deeper and more stable shift in the individual's perspective.

The **peripheral route** of the Elaboration Likelihood Model involves minimal cognitive processing and is activated when individuals have low involvement or motivation regarding the topic. Instead of scrutinizing the content of the message, individuals relying on this route are more influenced by superficial cues. These include the attractiveness or credibility of the source, emotional appeals, or the sheer number of arguments presented rather than their quality. Persuasion through the peripheral route leverages factors like celebrity endorsements, emotional resonance, social proof, and other heuristic shortcuts. As a result, attitude changes from this route are typically more transient and less stable, showing a higher susceptibility to alteration over time. This instability stems from the fact that such changes are founded on superficial processing rather than a thorough and critical evaluation of the message.

Application of ELM to Social Media:

This study examines the impact of social media influencers on the purchasing decisions of employees at CMA CGM. Applying the Elaboration Likelihood Model to this context provides insights into how these influencers persuade their audience, highlighting the different mechanisms through which they can influence consumer behavior.

1. Central Route in Influencer Marketing:

- **High Involvement Content:** When influencers provide detailed, informative content about products—such as in-depth reviews, tutorials, or comparative analyses—they engage followers through the central route. Employees at CMA CGM who are highly involved and interested in specific product categories may process this information deeply, leading to well-informed and enduring changes in attitudes and purchase decisions.
- **Product Expertise:** Influencers perceived as experts or authorities in their field can affect attitudes and behaviors through well-reasoned arguments and detailed information, appealing to employees who seek reliable and substantive information.

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2. **Peripheral Route in Influencer Marketing:**

- **Low Involvement Content:** Influencers often rely on visual appeal, emotional storytelling, or charisma to influence purchasing decisions. For employees with lower involvement or less interest in deeply analyzing the content, peripheral cues like the influencer's popularity, attractiveness, or the frequency of product mentions can drive their decision-making process.
- **Social Proof:** Influencers frequently use the peripheral route by showcasing social proof, such as the number of followers or endorsements, to sway employees who may rely on these cues for decision-making. This is particularly effective when employees are casually browsing or less motivated to engage deeply with the content.

3. **Mixed Influence:**

- **Combination of Routes:** In many cases, influencers can combine routes. For instance, they might initially attract attention through peripheral cues (like a compelling thumbnail or a catchy title) and then engage their audience with substantive content, facilitating both immediate and lasting influence on purchasing decisions.
- **Segmentation:** By understanding whether CMA CGM employees are more likely to be influenced via the central or peripheral route, brands can tailor their influencer marketing strategies. Employees with different levels of involvement or motivation may require different types of content and engagement tactics to be effectively influenced.

4. **Audience Segmentation:**

- **Demographic Variations:** The ELM framework helps understand how different demographic factors (age, gender, income) moderate the influence of social media influencers. For instance, younger employees may be more influenced by peripheral cues like social proof or influencer charisma. Older employees require more detailed and reasoned content to change their attitudes.

5. **Ethical Considerations:**

- **Transparency and Trust:** The model also underscores the importance of ethical considerations, such as transparency in sponsorship disclosures. Influencers who are transparent about their affiliations may build trust through the central route. At the same time, those who rely on superficial endorsements without disclosure may eventually lose credibility, affecting their influence through the peripheral route.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how social media influencers can affect the purchasing decisions of CMA CGM employees. By distinguishing between the central and peripheral routes of persuasion, the model elucidates how different types of influencer content and engagement strategies can cater to varying levels of audience involvement and motivation. This understanding is crucial for developing effective influencer marketing strategies that resonate with employees, considering their unique characteristics and preferences.

Influencer Characteristics and Their Impact:

Social media influencers wield significant influence over consumer attitudes and behaviors through their unique characteristics, which include authenticity, relatability, and expertise.

Authenticity plays a crucial role as it establishes a genuine connection between influencers and their audience. When influencers are perceived as authentic—sincere and transparent in their interactions and endorsements—they build trust, which is essential for influencing consumer decisions. This trust is particularly vital in the context of my case study involving CMA CGM employees, as they are likely to value sincerity and credibility in the influencers they follow.

Relatability is another key characteristic that enhances an influencer's impact. Relatable influencers resonate more deeply with their audience, creating a sense of connection and understanding. This connection fosters engagement and makes their endorsements more persuasive. In the corporate setting of CMA CGM, where employees may seek guidance on professional and personal purchases, relatable influencers can influence decision-making by aligning their recommendations with the employees' aspirations and values.

Expertise is also critical in influencing consumer behavior through influencer marketing. Influencers who demonstrate expertise and deep knowledge in specific areas (technology, fashion, or business solutions) are perceived as credible sources of information. Their recommendations carry weight because followers trust their expertise. Influencers with industry-specific knowledge and insights can significantly impact their choices by providing valuable information and guidance for CMA CGM employees making purchasing decisions related to their professional roles.

Authenticity, relatability, and expertise empower social media influencers to shape consumer attitudes and behaviors effectively. Understanding how these characteristics influence consumer decisions is crucial for optimizing influencer marketing strategies, particularly in corporate contexts like CMA CGM, where trustworthiness, personal connection, and expert advice influence employees' purchasing choices.

Mechanisms of Influencer Impact:

Social media influencers play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior through various mechanisms, including content creation, interaction, and engagement. These mechanisms collectively contribute to the influencers' ability to sway their audience's perceptions, attitudes, and purchasing decisions.

Content creation: Social media influencers wield substantial power through their ability to create compelling content, which plays a pivotal role in influencing consumer behavior. This content spans a variety of formats, including posts, videos, stories, and live streams. The visual appeal of high-quality images and videos grabs attention and vividly showcases the product's features, making it more attractive to potential buyers. Influencers often leverage their personal experiences to craft authentic narratives that resonate deeply with their audience, building trust and credibility. For instance, sharing a personal success story with a skincare product can make recommendations more persuasive. Furthermore, detailed reviews and tutorials provide valuable information that helps followers make informed decisions, especially when dealing with complex products requiring demonstration or explanation. Consistency in content creation ensures that influencers maintain a constant presence in the daily lives of their audience, reinforcing brand recall and fostering a stronger connection with the product. This consistent visibility keeps the influencer's endorsements in mind, gradually shaping consumer preferences and purchase intentions.

Interaction: Interaction is a critical mechanism through which influencers build a sense of community and personal connection with their followers. This engagement includes responding to comments, hosting live sessions, conducting Q&A events, and creating interactive polls or challenges. Two-way communication through comments and messages establishes a dialogue, making followers feel heard and valued. Real-time engagement, mainly through live sessions and Q&A events, fosters a more intimate connection by allowing immediate interaction and feedback. This immediate responsiveness can effectively address followers' concerns, clarify doubts, and strengthen their trust in the influencer's recommendations. Moreover, community-building initiatives such as interactive polls and challenges engage the audience and create a collective experience that enhances the influencer's credibility. Personalization of content and responses, tailored to followers' specific needs and preferences, further enhances this connection. By making followers feel uniquely catered to, influencers increase the relevance and impact of their endorsements.

Engagement: Engagement, measured by likes, shares, comments, and other forms of digital interaction, reflects the degree of influence an influencer exerts over their audience and significantly amplifies the impact of their content. High engagement levels serve as social proof, signaling that the influencer's content is valued and respected by their community, attracting new followers and bolstering the perceived credibility of their recommendations. Additionally, social media algorithms often prioritize highly engaged content, promoting it prominently on feeds and explore pages. This algorithmic boost enhances the visibility of the influencer's content, driving greater consumer attention and action. The viral nature of engaging content also plays a crucial role; content that resonates with the audience is more likely to be shared widely, extending its reach beyond the influencer's immediate circle of followers. Lastly, engagement provides a valuable feedback loop, offering insights into what types of content are most effective. Influencers can refine their content strategies by analyzing likes, shares, and comments to meet their audience's preferences better, thus continuously enhancing their influence.

Consumer Perception and Purchase Intentions:

Influencers play a pivotal role in shaping consumer perceptions and purchase intentions through their status as opinions in the social media. Their perceived expertise and relatability are key factors that influence how consumers perceive brands and products. influencers act as trusted advisors whose recommendations carry significant weight in decision-making processes. Employees may rely on influencers who demonstrate deep knowledge and understanding of relevant industry trends or products, enhancing their credibility as sources of reliable information.

The credibility of influencers is crucial in influencing consumer attitudes towards brands. When influencers are perceived as credible and trustworthy, their endorsements are more likely to shape positive brand attitudes among consumers. Positive brand attitudes cultivated through influencer endorsements increase interest and intent to purchase the endorsed products, as employees perceive them as aligned with their professional needs and aspirations.

In summary, influencers influence consumer perceptions and purchase intentions by leveraging their expertise, relatability, and credibility. They serve as trusted guides who provide valuable insights and recommendations. By understanding and harnessing these dynamics, brands can optimize their influencer marketing strategies to engage and convert their target audience effectively.

Regulatory and Ethical Considerations:

As social media influencers' influence grows, so do concerns regarding transparency and ethical practices. Regulatory bodies have increasingly emphasized the need for clear disclosure of sponsored content to ensure that consumers are aware of the commercial nature of influencer endorsements. Ethical considerations also extend to the authenticity of influencer claims and the potential for misleading information. Addressing these issues is critical for maintaining consumer trust and fostering a responsible influencer marketing network.

The theoretical framework integrates concepts of social media dynamics, the role of influencers, brand loyalty, and demographic influences to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media influencers affect consumer purchasing decisions. By leveraging these theories, this study aims to explore the unique impact of social media influencers on the purchasing behaviors of CMA CGM employees in Jeddah, contributing to both academic discourse and practical marketing strategies.

Mawthoog license:

The Mawthoog license, implemented by the General Commission for Audiovisual Media (CAM CGM) in Saudi Arabia, is a regulatory measure designed to oversee and authorize social media influencers to engage in advertising activities. This license is crucial for ensuring that influencers adhere to ethical and legal standards in their promotional content, thereby protecting consumer interests and maintaining the integrity of digital marketing practices. In this study on CMA CGM employees in Jeddah, the Mawthoog license provides a framework for evaluating how regulatory compliance influences the effectiveness and credibility of influencer marketing within the company. The Mawthoog license serves as a quality assurance mechanism, indicating that the influencer adheres to regulatory guidelines and ethical advertising practices, which aligns with the company's commitment to responsible and transparent marketing strategies.

Impact on Consumer Trust and Engagement:

The Mawthoog license also plays a critical role in fostering consumer trust and engagement. Influencers who possess this license are perceived as more credible and reliable, as they are held to stringent standards of authenticity and transparency in their promotional activities. For CMA CGM employees, knowing that influencers are Mawthoog-licensed can enhance their confidence in the information and recommendations provided. This trust is pivotal in shaping positive consumer perceptions and driving engagement with the brand, ultimately influencing purchasing decisions in a way that aligns with the company's ethical standards.

Brand Loyalty:

Brand loyalty is a crucial outcome of effective influencer marketing. It is characterized by a consumer's consistent preference for a particular brand over others, driven by positive associations, satisfaction, and trust. (Ou and Verhoef , 2017) define brand loyalty as a consumer's willingness to repurchase a brand's products despite potential issues or external influences such as competitors' offerings. Influencers contribute to building brand loyalty by providing credible recommendations and creating engaging, relatable content that resonates with their followers. This relationship often leads to increased consumer attachment to the brand, translating into repeated purchases and advocacy.

Influencers reinforce brand loyalty by continuously interacting with their audience, addressing queries, and providing personalized experiences. This ongoing engagement fosters a sense of community around the brand, encouraging repeat purchases and long-term brand commitment.

Integrating the concept of the Mawthoog license into discussions on brand loyalty can significantly enhance a brand's credibility and ethical standing. Compliance with local regulations, such as acquiring the Mawthoog license, ensures that influencer endorsements adhere to ethical standards and legal requirements. This adherence cultivates a sense of trust and reliability, which is essential for fostering long-term loyalty among employees. By aligning marketing practices with regulatory expectations, brands can reinforce their commitment to integrity and ethical conduct, thereby strengthening the loyalty and engagement of their workforce.

Demographic Factor:

Demographic factors play a significant role in moderating the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior. Characteristics such as age, gender, income, education, occupation, and ethnicity influence how different audiences perceive and respond to influencer content (Kotler & Keller, 2016). These factors determine the relevance and resonance of the influencer's message with specific audience segments, impacting their purchasing decisions and brand loyalty.

For instance, younger demographics, particularly Generation Z, favor platforms like TikTok and Instagram and are more influenced by peers and social media trends. In contrast, older consumers might prioritize credibility and expertise, leading them to trust influencers with established reputations and professional backgrounds. Income levels also affect purchasing power and brand preferences, with higher-income individuals potentially gravitating towards luxury brands promoted by influencers, while lower-income segments may be more price-sensitive.

Understanding these demographic nuances allows brands to tailor their influencer marketing strategies to effectively target and engage different consumer groups, optimizing their reach and impact.

Research methodology.

The study's theoretical framework was constructed using both descriptive and analytical approaches, drawing insights from various sources such as books, scientific journals, and publications by reputable entities (CMA CGM Company). These resources were instrumental in elucidating the key concepts and components under investigation. Additionally, a comprehensive review of scholarly articles and prior studies was conducted to delineate the search variables.

Stratified random sampling is the best method for your survey as it ensures that all relevant demographic groups (sex, age, and income levels) are proportionally represented. This will provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media affects customer decisions and loyalty within the company, considering the influence of demographic factors.

The advantage of use this method:

- Representation: Ensures your sample accurately reflects the demographics of the company.
- Reliability: Reduces sampling bias and increases the reliability of your findings.
- Comparison: Allows for meaningful comparisons across different demographic groups to understand the impact of social media on purchasing decisions and loyalty.

Study tools:

In the practical phase of the research, an analytical statistical method was employed, utilizing a stratified random sample to distribute study questionnaires. Subsequently, the collected data will be analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to evaluate the available data and assess the study's hypotheses.

Steps to Implement Stratified Random Sampling:

1. Identify Strata:
 - Sex: Male, Female
 - Age: Grouped into relevant brackets, e.g., 25-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45, 46-59.
 - Income Levels: Average, High.
2. Determine Proportions:
 - Establish the proportion of each demographic group within the company's employee population. This can be done through preliminary demographic data collection or HR records.
3. Divide the Population:
 - Segment the employee population into the identified strata based on sex, age and income level.
4. Random Sampling Within Strata:
 - Within each stratum, randomly select employees to ensure each subgroup is adequately represented in your sample.

Research limitation:

The limits of the study:

Spatial boundaries:

- 1- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- 2- Makkah Al-Mukaromah Governorate.
- 3- City Jeddah.

Time limits: 2024 AD.

Human Limits: Employees of the CMA CGM Company.

Research Structure:

We will cover the following four chapters in this study:

Chapter One: The study's overall framework and previous studies.

Chapter Two: The Theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter Three: The field surveys and hypotheses analysis.

Chapter Four: The results and recommendations, followed by a list of references and research publications.

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