

**SOCIAL NETWORK INFLUENCERS:
THE IMPACT TOWARDS ONLINE APPAREL RETAILERS ON
INSTAGRAM**



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THE IMPACT TOWARDS ONLINE APPAREL RETAILERS ON
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ABSTRACT

The popularity of Instagram platform has been increased among Thai people in these days. Its purpose has been covered not only for social interaction purpose but also extended to e-commerce space. Therefore, the purpose of this paper aims to study the impact of social influencers towards online buying decision of women apparel in Instagram by analyzing from information from females who are active Instagram users. Chi-square analysis of 91 females has revealed that there are the different between macro and micro influencers on females purchasing decision. However, both types of influencers are likely to help female customers reduce perceived risk and create more trustiness towards online brands. At the same time, sponsorship doesn't have the significant effect towards female purchasing decision. Surprisingly, the younger females are likely to be less active with influencers' page. These findings have later contributed to provide valuable insight for small e-commerce retailers with discovering practical implications to engage with their consumers effectively.

KEY WORDS: Social Influencers/ Micro-Influencer/ Small E-Commerce/ Instagram

43 pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In later days, the objective of the use of the internet has evolved and expanded into a user platform called social media. The Instagram application is the social media platform that has been available on the mobile platform since 2010. It has gained the popularity over time as its outstanding features are photos and video- oriented. It also allows integrative and participative engagement among users. Not surprisingly, it is trendy among Thai users since they are likely to be attracted by photos and video contents. At the same time, the platform is very friendly and free for anyone to make use of it not only for entertainment but also for education, new ideas and especially online shopping in this context. Unlike in the past, it is evident that Instagram is not only the place for promotion and advertising products or services anymore but also considered as a new place for buyers and sellers to communicate with each other and commit the transaction. Therefore, there is a sprout of uses on Instagram not only as the social interaction purpose but also the e-commerce channel.

For online e-commerce strategy to win the crowd, it requires multiple uses of online techniques. Influencer strategy is one of the most popular for small e-commerce brand on Instagram. Brands leverage the social platform and influencers to create a new customer experience for users where the users are willing to participate and trust. These days, since the power of brand and products advocacy, has been spread by the use of the online platform, electronic Word of mouth (eWOM) plays the essential role determining a set of consumer's choices and creditability. Duan et al. gave the meaning of online reviews as a critical form of eWOM that is the information posted by existing consumers about products or services consumed on e-commerce or third-party websites (as cited in Zhu, Yin, and He, 2017, p.1).

Moreover, There're some other consumers rely heavily on online/peer reviews rather than brand communication itself such as advertisements on traditional media in making their purchasing decisions. To give the specific example, Online retailers such

as Amazon allow plenty of consumer reviews for books, electronics, and other products carried on the sites (Zhu, Yin, and He, 2017). With this, it has incurred some individuals or group of people conducting the activities in which they can influence others in a certain way, for example, buying behavior and lifestyle. The empowerment has fallen mostly into influencers where they are also the previous consumers at a time. This group of influencers later have an impact on other consumers as a trendsetter and opinion leader in different degree regarding their popularity in the market. Especially in online platforms, they allow people to share opinion and knowledge with others on the particular topic.

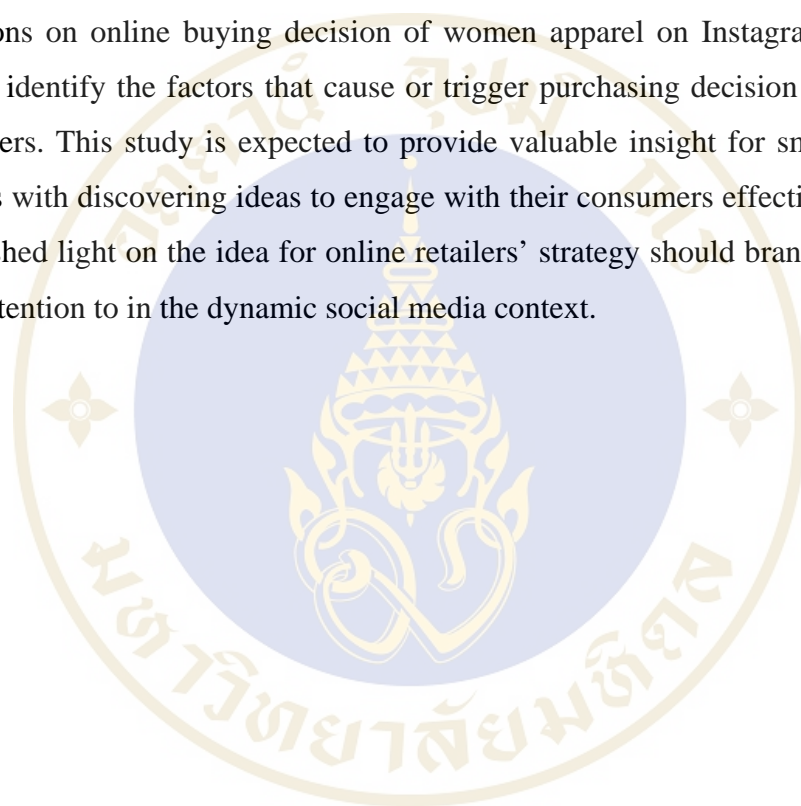
Online fashion market currently has become highly competitive and dynamic. It is necessary for Individual brands to continually refresh their marketing strategies to stay visible and connected with its potential customers. The power of the customer's side, especially the impact of influencers is enormous in playing the vital role in determining online marketing success for brands. Internet forum information and user reviews are expected to have a more significant influence on consumer behavior than marketer-generated contents because they are more credible. The sources that perceived to be more authentic can lead to higher level of persuasiveness. According to the survey of GlobalwebIndex August 2018, fashion influencer is the third most popular, while food and beauty are the top scorings that people followed online.

According to data from Hootsuite and Wearesocial in January 2018, there are 57 Million of people in Thailand using internet out of 69 million people or accounted for 82% penetration which is more than average of the global. To go further, 51 million people, or 74% penetration, are active social media users. It grew by 11% from January 2017. Surprisingly, Thailand is ranked number 4 among the world's highest amount of time on social media, with the average user in the country spending almost 3 hours 10 minutes on social media every day. It has given the strong signal of the online shopping market. Potentially, Active users are using Instagram as the third ranking of the social network, led by Facebook and Youtube, respectively. 13 million people are monthly active Instagram users, or 19% penetration and 60% of total active Instagram users are female. Unlike Facebook, the number of males is more than female. Thailand consumers' behavior is in support of the growth of Instagram utilization.

In a business context, with the overwhelming utilization of social media of both brands and consumers, information is more transparent and perfect. Internet accessibility

and device have become the sole prerequisite these days. The power of information shared lies among brands and consumers. Customers these days are more empowered and active than ever. They are connected with extensive information and choices. Online word of mouth (eWOM) has allowed people to become aware of the ongoing trends. Online first-hand review and feedbacks have spread quickly. The rise of User-generated content (UGC) has emerged and become so popular that has a high impact on brand advocacy and decision process of consumers.

Therefore, this paper aims to consider the impact of influencers in various conditions on online buying decision of women apparel on Instagram. Moreover, it aims to identify the factors that cause or trigger purchasing decision and behavior of consumers. This study is expected to provide valuable insight for small e-commerce retailers with discovering ideas to engage with their consumers effectively. The result would shed light on the idea for online retailers' strategy should brand aware and pay close attention to in the dynamic social media context.



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

As the paper aims to identify the various aspect of Influencer implication to benefit the brand, it could be referred from the previous studies regarding online buying decision of female consumers of small fashion brands in Instagram.

2.1 Influencer Definition

Many synonyms can refer to the same meaning as Influencer namely influential, opinion leader, and endorser. Primarily, we might call it a fashion leader in this context. Zanette, Brito, and Coutinho (2013) mentioned the definition as “Influentials are individuals whose opinions and behaviors affect other people’s choices, and online influentials include bloggers.”(p.1). Bloggers tend to assembly followers around their personas, being considered opinion leaders, hubs or influentials who communicate in their online spaces (Kerr, Mortimer, Dickinson, and Waller, 2009). These impactful influencers are likely to be asked for advice and quickly to be trusted by their followers.

Regarding the social media context, it enables those influencers to commit online activities while other followers are keeping eyes on. For the extreme case, influencers assume the role as influential bloggers and celebrities since the online platform today made it easier for individuals to expose to the public. With that, Unger/Kolo asserted that they could be perceived as trendsetters of the new style: they are quickly absorbed and adapt to new trends (as cited in Cao, Meister, and Klante, 2014, p.2). In the fashion world, trendsetters are likely to be fast or very first group to use. They are embedded with strong passion in fashion field relative to others (Loureiro, Costa, and Panchapakesan, 2017).

By the way, there is the recent study regarding the new definition of "micro-influencer." A study by Dr. Jonah Berger, author of *Contagious*, and the Keller Fay Group defined micro-influencer as “Individuals who work in their category or are truly

knowledgeable, passionate and authentic and are seen as a trusted source when it comes to recommendations for what to buy." These influencers will have their page, blog or channel that open to the public. The online platform has allowed unlimited access to people. They will pursue their activities online and seek social acknowledgment considered as expertise in the areas. There was another recent exploratory study from Zietek (2016) concluded that micro influencers were the kind of influencers that tend to have high authenticity; they are experts in a particular area and are not motivated by monetary reasons. However, if influencers are paid to advertise the brand, it could be argued that the credibility of the information is depended on the right intention of influencers. For example, the exploratory study regarding 'Cosmetics,' the cosmetic bloggers rejected the way they were paid for reviewing products because they believe it would positively affect their reliability as cosmetics experts. Naturally, from previous studies, they commonly inferred that level of authenticity of influencer lies mostly on the outstanding expertise of the person. It always is assumed that micro-influencers would have specific knowledge more than celebrities.

H1: Micro-influencers can trigger purchase decision better than macro-influencers or celebrities.

H2: online younger consumers will be more involved than older consumers in Fashion apparel.

2.2 Social Value/ Influence That Affects Behavior

Clothing can fulfill many functions not only functional use such as protection or warmth but also individual status, image and lifestyle (e.g., professional, sexy, casual) (O'cass, 2000). Many research papers heavily emphasized Social interaction and value that drive specific behavior to fashion products. Buunk and Gibbons (2007) put the remark on peers' response that influence and help validate opinions (as cited in McCormick and Livett, 2012, p.24).

In fashion apparel context, choosing the products take high involvement and sometimes need for the second opinion. O'cass (2004) asserted that "High involvement with a product can increase consumer confidence, thus boosting the decision-making process" (as cited in McCormick and Livett, 2012, p.24). Besides the second opinion,

persons might wear fashionable things to illustrate their social status or how they would like to be perceived, to be outstanding from or even to impress other people. Therefore, social values are linked between personal needs and what others say and reflect the need for belonging and social acceptance. This strengthens the finding of Loureiro, Costa, and Panchapakesan which concluded that social influence was more essential than personal purpose in augmenting the demand to use fashion products. This reveals the importance of other people's opinions, i.e., close friends (Loureiro, Costa, and Panchapakesan, 2017). Understanding how target consumers make judgments about fashion items is essential for apparel retailers in improving strategy to drive consumers towards buying decision psychologically.

2.3 Social Comparison Theory

In the 1950s, the psychologist Leon Festinger regarded Social comparison theory as the desire to compare oneself to others, for example; personal attitudes, tastes, and beliefs (as cited in Loureiro, Costa, and Panchapakesan, 2017). In apparel context, it can be referred to how they evaluate own fashion style and look with people in their communities. Once social media allowed people to compare themselves to others, it is likely that they would compare themselves with peers and influencers in online communities. Unlimited online communities make this happen to millions of people. This theory is applied mainly in the case of lavish consumption. In this context, it could imply on the of luxury fashion items. In the end, social influencers are compared and evaluated by fashion consumers and are likely to influence them to dress similarly to fashion leaders (Loureiro, Costa, and Panchapakesan, 2017). Therefore, it is common that people would follow the lifestyle they like with others that they think the style is favorable.

2.4 Word of Mouth and Sponsorship Effect

In the fashion business, word of mouth would primarily be not the only style but also includes almost everything pertaining to customer journey such as the products quality, price, service, etc. As Brickart and Schindler (2001) assert that "Even though individuals on the online forum may not have some things in common, they are similar

in term of the consumers who used the products or services. Any discussion or reviews that they pose can be more or less reflected some useful information on products” (p.33). Also, they stated that e-WOM (electronic Word of Mouth) is the way people exchange information on products before they have arrived the retail doors.

Previously, traditional word-of-mouth is the one-way directional flow of information, however, electronic or internet word-of-mouth information enables information to disperse among several consumers. (Song, Hwang, Kim and Kwak, 2012). Brickart and Schindler (2001) included that those internet forums can create a sense of "empathy" among readers. While others provided such experiences and opinions regarding products performance, for example, these people are in the sense of "performing" for other members interested in the same issues. Empathy, hence, indirectly affect consumers behavior of products benefits being enjoyed by other consumers. It would generate and strengthen greater persuasion. Further, Eisenburg and Lennon (1983) emphasized gender analysis. From an exploratory survey, women are more sensitive to empathy than men (as cited in Brickart and Schindler, 2001, p.36). Therefore, women are expected to be more convinced by peers or influencers especially in the world of the apparel business. As a result, if sources of information that are considered credible, relevant and empathetic for consumers' point of view, they appear to have a positive impact on word-of-mouth behavior which could trigger and affect a purchasing decision. Once it came into context of fashion business, Internet word-of-mouth marketing relating with fashions is illustrated by various activities and can be defined as the situation that consumers are exchanging the real experiences, recommendation or fashion information on fashion products by utilizing, for instance, photos, videos, texts and chats through online networks (Song, Hwang, Kim and Kwak, 2012). Granovetter (1974) is well known for studying career changes to demonstrate "The Strength of Weak Ties" effect. The theory highlights the function of weak ties or the benefit of an unfamiliar relationship. Granovetter's investigation showed that job seekers acquire more useful information about work from unexpected people, for example, a recent unexpected re-acquaintance with someone from high school rather than through a close friend. (as cited in Takahashi and Inamizu, 2014, p.68) When applied to eWOM, reviews or experiences shared by others in the social network allow consumers to gain the beneficial information and hence develop the additional knowledge about the fashion apparel topic or style they are interested in. Since fashion depends

mostly on changing trends, fashion apparel business also utilizes social communication. It is likely that the small retailers these days also leverage the spread of product information from fashion leaders or influencers to a follower group. As argued from the study of above, the result of the reliability of information from influencers can be varied depending on whether it is real reviews or paid-based reviews. The research from Liljander, Gummerus, and Söderlund (2014) founded that it would have resulted in the negative effect on the brand if consumers suspected that the reviews are sponsored. As it is the subset of eWOM, influencers could be some of the essential factors that brands should delicately implement in the fashion industry. In order to extend the idea of previous analysis of word of mouth, social media such as Facebook and Instagram allowed intensively greater eWOM implication. Hill et al. (2006) stated that Customer advocacy is the impact of good consumers experience in influencing others to purchase a particular product or service. Fullerton (2003) added, "it is often encouraged by a loyal customer to friends or relatives." (as cited in Hamzelu, Gohary, Ghafoori and Hanzaee, 2016, p.285). Fullerton has shown that there was the strong relationship between customer advocacy and loyalty. This kind of behavior indicated the ultimate value to marketers. As customers not only repurchase the products or services but also promote it by offering to others (as cited in Hamzelu, Gohary, Ghafoori and Hanzaee, 2016, p.285).

The finding above could be applied for online influencers that used the products or services, repurchased and finally recommended to others via the online channel. The implication would impact to the maximum if others found out it came from the real experience of the influencers.

H3: Monetary incentive in reviewing has no adverse effect on both apparel influencer and brand that the influencer did a review

2.5 Personal Involvement

Personal involvement is essential in determining how customers select and finally purchase a particular product. Many studies (eg., Sharīf, and Cantril, 1947; Day, 1970; Zaichkowsky, 1985) claimed similar meaning of personal involvement. It is defined as a process involves people's attitudes, level of interest, basic needs and values in particular relevant object. Generally, Involvement is a process that covers pre-purchase

activities including information search, evaluation of alternatives and ends with purchasing decision (O’Cass, 2000). According to Table 2.1, Vaughn (1980, 1986) at FCB advertising agency summarized a cross grid of purchasing decision and involvement that can identify consumer behavior and psychological decision-making process.

The four states developed by FCB are as follows:

1. High involvement products with rational thinking purchase.

Individual looks for information first and assesses her feeling before purchasing the product; a house, car, and clothes.

2. High involvement products with emotional purchase.

Individual assesses her feeling first and then gather the information before purchasing the product; jewelry, cosmetics, and fashion

3. Low involvement products with rational thinking purchase.

Individual purchases the product and then collects the information and finally assesses the feeling about it; food items and daily needs.

4. Low involvement products with emotional purchase.

Individual assesses her feelings and then collects information before he purchases the product; cigarette and soft drinks.

Table 2.1 Rational/emotional purchasing decision and low/high involvement

	Thinking	Feeling
High involvement	1. Informative (thinker) Carhouse–furnishing–new products	2. Affective (feeler) Jewelry–cosmetics–fashion apparel–motorcycles
Low involvement	3. Habit formation (doer) Food–household items	4. Self-satisfaction (reactor) Cigarettes–liquor–candy

Vaughn (1980, 1986) and later Buck et al. (2004) concluded that consumers tend to spend more time with the products that were highly based on emotion than rational thinking, and based on high level of needs and interests than low ones. At the same time, different levels of cognitive and effective as well as high and low involvement will lead to different information searching and processing, and purchasing decisions about products at the end (Hamzeli, Gohary, Ghafoori and Hanzae, 2016).

As can be inferred from the above discussion, involvement is essential for fashion apparel as it regards a lifestyle and symbolic consumption for consumers. It also reflects high and emotional involvement which affects time to spend on information engagement of the products and eventually the buying decision (O’Cass, 2000).

2.6 Perceived Risk from Buying Online

Besides the products perspective, the online service fulfillment is somehow expected by consumers. Online customer experience is depended on customers' belief and its assessment of online activities. It showed how a person feels towards the specific activity after experiencing it emotionally which it considers as a key factor in defining a person's satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Harridge, 2006). The whole process of creating different customer experiences depends greatly on sellers’ action in which it implies familiarity and risk. Therefore; trust in the online context is a feeling that consumer felt confident and secured towards the online transactions with the seller (Sahney, Ghosh and Shrivastava, 2013).

In these days, the successful business is not solely relying on marketing mix including products, price, promotion, and place. However, the happy customers would drive the successful business. In an online shopping context, one of the critical factors that involve good customer experience is the ability to create a sense of trust. For an e-commerce business, Ganesan (1994) clarified two parameters that affected the level of trust; First, the trust in seller’s product, service, and expertise. Secondly, the trust in seller’s good intention (as cited in Sahney, Ghosh, and Shrivastava, 2013, p.281). Therefore, it can be inferred that there's risk from products itself; for example, the unexpected fragrance of perfume bought online creating customer disappointment, and risk from sellers’ intention; for example, the late shipping and fraud. Bhatnagar et al. (2000) supported that the tendency of online buying reduces with rises in product risk (as cited in Park and Jun 2013, p.536). Generally, there are several types of risk. Financial risk can be referred to the situations of financial damaged, such as the suspicious charge and fraud. The social risk may incur through buying products that are suspected to be fake items. Performance risk involves a product does not function properly. Some products and services may not meet the expected timeline or may incur time waste in

queuing or waiting. Psychological risk, linked to social risk, may be caused by using outdated stuff. Physical risks from purchase might involve unsafe product which causes physical harm to the customers (Harridge, 2006).

H4: Micro-Influencer helps female customers reduces perceived risk/ create more trust towards online retailer before they make a purchase decision in apparel business than celebrity.

2.7 Purchase Decision-Making Process

As the internet allows information to flow easier from sellers to buyers and even buyers to buyers which in turn influences the purchase decision. During the purchase decision process, Engel et al. (1990) mentioned that consumers would go through five stages: needs recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behavior (as cited in Cao, Meister, and Klante, 2014, p.80). At each stage, a specific requirement needed to be fulfilled in order to move on to the next stages. In this context, social influence from friends and influencers is expected to play an essential role during the pre-purchase and purchase stage.

After exposed to several studies and researches from above, this paper objective is to investigate the exploratory study about the impact of influencer on the apparel purchase process of Thai women for small e-commerce retailers on the Instagram platform. Some retailers have also owned offline stores, but in this context, it would focus mainly on online retails in which influencers could somehow affect consumer's purchasing decision. The following methodology is developed to identify the objective.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to understand and explore more on women user behaviors on Instagram, the research method that will be conducted to supporting the hypotheses is quantitative research. The reason that quantitative methodology has been applied is that the hypotheses can be justified by the extent a number of the people shopping on Instagram. The research will be executed with Thai women using Instagram like a channel to purchase fashion outfits online. The scope of the survey will be mainly focused on the hypotheses set up and test whether how much is it valid. Moreover, the survey will shed light on other aspects of behavior interpreted from the survey in order to guide the essential factors that could benefit the small e-commerce brand's strategy regarding women apparel business. In this study, it would mainly focus on apparel business on Instagram in effect of women users only which are accounted for the majority that involves in the transactions on Instagram.

Since Influencer strategy has entirely sometimes been used in later years, this paper seeks to explore the effect of influencer towards brand's benefits. Influencers could be one of the other forms of e-WOM and reviews in an online platform. However, the influencer has more power than an average person in the online world. That is the exciting part that triggers the question to be explored that impact of such influential people towards brands they use. It is subjected to a wide range of application which might not be raised within the scope of the study, for example, the effect of influencer photos posted by the brand itself. In this context, Influencer would be determined as the individual page on Instagram. These influencers would pursue their activities on Instagram and receive the attention of some user groups on the platform. Since the scope of study would be focusing on the impact of influencer towards women purchasing decision solely on the outfit, the question will be specifically asked the women users to imagine their most favorite influencer that has had an impact on their decision in purchasing outfits on Instagram. It could be anyone in which the account has existed

on Instagram. Sometimes, those influencers also own their brand online as well. This is obvious that many brands on Instagram repost the influencer's review photos or used their presenter to promote the store. All of these mentioned have been expected and aware in the scope of the study.

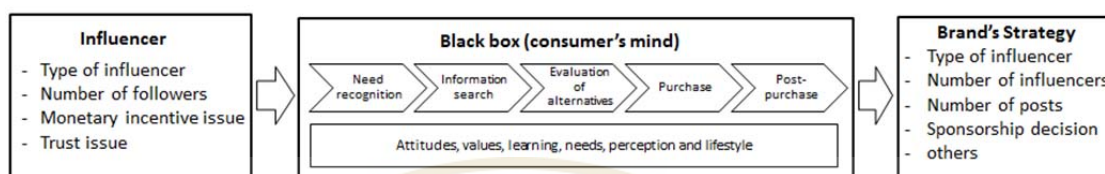


Figure 3.1 Scope of an exploratory research study of the effect of influencer

The research mainly focuses on different perspectives of influencers that will be tested whether how they have affected the behavior of the women users in a decision-making process, in the pre-purchase phase and purchase phase. Furthermore, the set of comprehensive questions will be asked to synthesize in-depth factors regarding influencer's strategy as the brand's strategy of small e-commerce stores. For example, would the numbers of influencers that brand uses benefit brand image in term of credibility and authenticity? According to the figure 3.1, it is the summary of the scope of an exploratory research study of the effect of influencer. Expectedly, altogether impacts would be analyzed to support the online brand's benefits and strategy.

According to the survey questions, there would be the scanning questions in order to filter out the people that are out of scope. In order to ensure the quality of the survey results, some questions were asked before the insightful questions, for example;

1. What is your gender?
2. How often do you use the Instagram per day?

In this paper's context, it is aimed to analyze the behavior of females that expectedly are the "regular Instagram users," otherwise the research outcomes would likely to lower the accuracy.

Besides, many survey questions are associated in order to identify the relationship and understand the behavior in depth, for example, to identify the purchasing decision in response to the interaction with the different type of influencers. In order to identify the difference in pattern between or among the groups, Chi-square has been applied

and identified the p-value. Further, the result of the survey data will be thoroughly analyzed for the key takeaways.

In summary, only quantitative survey targeted female users on Instagram will be executed in order to understand the effect of influencer towards their buying process on apparel products. The research questions have been set up in accordance with hypotheses tested.



CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The data were collected from 110 persons from an online survey. However, the qualified data was reduced to 91 respondents because some wouldn't stay within the scope of the study and hence could create an error. The screening questions were to ensure whether they were females who regularly spent time on Instagram not less than 15 minutes per day. From survey result, 14 females who have played Instagram less than 15 minutes and one male were excluded. Moreover, four females mentioned that they did not have their favorite influencer regarding apparel aspect. They will also be excluded from the analysis.

All in all, 91 females who spent more than 15 minutes on Instagram per day and were able to name the influencer's page would become the refined data that could be used for further analysis. The interesting thing was that some females gave the name of the brand as their most favorite influencers instead of as a person. It can be implied that users have perceived the brand as the influencer because that particular brand also posts the reviewed many photos of that influencer as if it were her page.

4.1 H1: Micro-Influencers Can Trigger Purchase Decision Better Than Macro-Influencers Or Celebrities.

According to the survey form, the question was asked to fill out the name page of influencer whom they have been actively followed the most regarding the outfit review perspective. The number of followers of the influencer was also asked to identify the impact of popularity. Since many recent studies mentioned that micro-influencers have the more significant impact on consumers' purchasing decision and behavior. The studies had shown that most of the time celebrity underperform – especially when it was revealed that he/she had no direct experiences with the products (Ace Metrix, 2013). It could mean that the audiences do not believe that the influencer or celebrity genuinely

like or trust in the products themselves. He or she is just paid or asked from brand to do so. This could probably create a neutral to a negative effect on consumers' attitude towards both brand and influencer. Therefore, the hypothesis was aimed to test the weather it could also apply to influencer in online apparel business as well.

The hypothesis tries to test the power of micro-influencers of the online apparel business. Naturally, since it is assumed that even though there are overwhelming numbers of followers on macro-influencers, micro-influencers will have a more significant impact on female purchasing process on apparel than macro-influencers.

Based on survey's result, The definition of micro-influencers is the person who has a number the followers not more than 100,000 People while most of the micro-influencers, celebrities, and superstars, possess the followers more than 100,000 people up until the million, for instance, Chomismaterialgirl, Toey Jarinporn, and Bella Campen. However, some are overlapping between the groups due to the personal popularity; for example, it could be possible that some net idols gain more than 1,000,000 followers. Therefore, to identify the effect of influencer towards apparel purchase of females on Instagram, the influencer data will be separated into two segments based on the number of followers – the influencers who have the number of followers not more than 100,000 persons – micro-influencers and more than 100,000 persons – macro-influencers.

The overall result is quite as expected that micro-influencers are likely to have more influencing power on the purchase decision of female users. However, the majority of the females are not affected by influencers since 42.9% of the sample group purchased less than 10% after they have seen the reviews from influencers. Nonetheless, the difference in buying decision pattern is pretty apparent.

According to the hypothesis, the first thing to prove is “are we confident that there is the difference between micro and macro-influencers?” To put it another way, purchase decision of the group of females who prefer micro influencers is significantly different from the ones that prefer macro-influencers. In order to test this, the Chi-square method is applied. The p-value result is 0.03576 or 3.6%. The result is significant at $p < 0.05$. It is interpreted that it is 96.4% confident that there is a difference between the groups. However, the 3.6% p-value here probably resulted from the errors of the sample group in which many females regardless of whom they have preferred tended to go for the buying decision “less than 10%”.

Table 4.1 Buying decision level between 2 groups of females who prefer a different type of influencer

Type of influencers	Buying decision level after females saw the reviews of influencer						
	less than 10%	10%	30%	50%	70%	90%	Grand Total
Micro-influencer (n = 55)	32.7%	12.7%	23.6%	25.5%	1.8%	3.6%	100.0%
Macro-influencer (n = 36)	58.3%	16.7%	19.4%	2.8%	2.8%	0.0%	100.0%
Grand Total (n = 91)	42.9%	14.3%	22.0%	16.5%	2.2%	2.2%	

According to the table 4.1, it illustrates buying decision level between 2 groups of females who prefer micro-influencer and macro-influencer once they saw their reviews on Instagram. (for example, 10 time reviews cause 5 time purchases = 50%)

To identify the nature of difference, apparently, the majority of both groups chose the lowest level of buying decision after they saw the reviews of influencer which was “less than 10%” – almost half of the scores are geared towards “less than 10%” or 42.9% in aggregate. However, it is relatively even lower for a macro group than the micro group - the macro-influencer group is 58.3% versus 32.7 of the micro-influencers group. Further, the scores on other decision levels from 10% and above are significantly higher in micro-influencer than that of the macro-influencer group. The second best of each group behaved differently. 25.5% of the micro-influencers group made 50% actual purchase once they saw the influencer's reviews, while only 19.4% of the macro-influencer group made only 30% actual purchase once they saw the reviews.

In conclusion, there're some different patterns of purchasing decision between females who have preferred micro and macro influencers. It is likely that micro-influencers can trigger more purchase decision of females who preferred them than the macro-influencers group. The possible reasons could be the level of intimacy in term of peer-to-peer comparison. According to Social comparison theory, Festinger concluded that people tended to compare or assess oneself to other whom they were similar, for example, peers and someone who is in the same context (as cited in Loureiro, Costa, and Panchapakesan, 2017). It is possible that females who have preferred micro-influencers compare themselves in term of how they want to look like with their influencers who

also have something in common, for example, the lifestyle and level of freedom since micro-influencers may not that popular. Unlike macro-influencers, for example, the celebrities and superstars, there is a lower level of similarity compared to micro-influencers which might not affect the engagement level of outfit decision as micro-influencers. At the same time, micro-influencers may develop a variety of new fashion styles that have never been existed before and become acceptable from many small groups of people.

4.2 H2: Online Younger Consumers Will Be More Involved Than Older Consumers In Fashion Apparel On Instagram.

In this study, the focus would be highlighted in 2 age groups which are 15 – 30 (generation Z and early Y) and 31 – 45 (a generation later Y and X). These two groups are assumed to have different overall behavior including influencer engagement towards online purchasing decision process on Instagram, due to the level of digital adaptation, personal background, lifestyle, etc. In order to benefit brands' strategy on customer's segmentation, therefore, analyzing the difference between these two age groups will understand more on customers' insight regarding their shopping behavior on Instagram.

Overall outcome from the survey indicates that there are many aspects that both customer groups make the same pattern in term of level of involvement on Instagram. However, there are some interesting perspectives in which it differs between these two age groups. Primarily, there is the difference in how these two groups engage with their influencers.

Firstly, to see whether these two age groups possess a difference in behavior, the table 4.2 below illustrates the summary of the degree of difference in Instagram behavior between 2 age ranges of females by using p-value. The behavior of female Instagram users is divided into three categories - Instagram playing behavior, engagement on Influencer or influencer's page and purchase decision. However, many of the p-value scores shown that there was no significant difference between the groups since the number of p-values is more than 0.05.

Table 4.2 P-value result of the overall behavior of female users on Instagram

	P-value	Level of Difference
Instagram playing behavior		
1. Most habits that each age group do for online shopping	0.719	No
Engagement with Influencer		
2. The time that each age group spent on Instagram per day	0.252	No
3. The frequency that each age group visit this influencer's page	0.029	Yes
4. Numbers of active influencer' pages "liked" so far? (actively interested)	0.045	Yes
Purchase decision		
5. The frequency that each age group made an actual purchase from small apparel stores in IG in 1 month	0.478	No
6. The frequency that each age group bought an outfit in 1 month by seeing the reviews of a group of people they have followed on IG	0.663	No

To summarize from table 4.2, there are five behaviors namely number 1., 2, 5. and 6. that p-values are more than 0.05 – there is no significant difference among the age range, while there are two behaviors namely number 3. And 4. that show the significant difference.

Table 4.3 Behaviors that haven't triggered the difference between age groups

Behaviors that <i>haven't</i> triggered the difference between age groups	Females' age range	
	15-30 (n = 53)	31-45 (n = 38)
1. Most habits that each age group does for online shopping		
I just randomly surf on the IG feed and click through the item that is interesting	67.9%	65.8%
I always get into the store pages followed to look for new stuff	16.0%	26.3%
I always catch up outfit reviews from someone I have followed on IG	7.6%	2.6%

Table 4.3 Behaviors that haven't triggered the difference between age groups (cont.)

Behaviors that <i>haven't</i> triggered the difference between age groups	Females' age range	
	15-30 (n = 53)	31-45 (n = 38)
I always search into the hashtag of what I am looking for	3.8%	5.3%
I always click on the brands' story	3.8%	0.00%
	100.00%	100.00%
2. The time that each age group spent on Instagram per day		
15 minute - 2 hours	60.4%	57.9%
>2 - 4 hours	24.5%	28.9%
>4 - 6 hours	9.4%	7.9%
> 6 hours	5.7%	5.3%
	100.0%	100.0%
5. The frequency each age group made an actual purchase from small apparel stores in IG in 1 month		
None	28.3%	26.3%
1 time	32.1%	31.6%
2 times	24.5%	34.2%
3 times	5.7%	7.9%
4 times	3.8%	0.0%
> 4 times	5.7%	0.0%
	100.0%	100.0%
6. The frequency that each age group bought an outfit in 1 month by seeing the reviews of a group of people they have followed on IG		
None	37.7%	36.8%
1 time	28.3%	31.6%
2 times	24.5%	31.6%
3 times	1.9%	0.0%
4 times	3.8%	0.0%
> 4 times	3.8%	0.0%
	100.0%	100.0%

Table 4.3 shows behaviors that haven't triggered the difference between age groups. The pattern of behavior is quite similar among these two groups. According to the data, it can be concluded as follows; Referred to 1. Most habits that each age group does for online shopping, the data shown that the pattern is likely to be the same between age groups. Both groups tend to randomly surf Instagram's feed and click through the items once they are interesting, etc. Naturally, more than half of the females of the total sample group tend to surf unintentionally on Instagram more than anything. From number 2. More than half of the females in both age groups are likely to spend time on Instagram around 15 minutes to 2 hours. From number 5. Most of both age groups made an actual purchase on Instagram once a month followed by two times a month. From number 6. It is interesting that most females in both age groups have not purchased in 1 month after they saw the reviews of their favorite influential groups. It could be inferred that there might be something else that also triggered the purchase decision other than influencers.

Table 4.4 Behaviors that triggered the difference between age groups

Factors that <i>triggered</i> the difference between age groups	Females' age range	
	15-30 (n = 53)	31-45 (n = 38)
3. The frequency that each age group visit this influencer's page		
Every day	11.3%	34.2%
Every 2- 4 days	37.7%	39.5%
Every 4 - 6 days	18.9%	7.9%
> 6 days	32.1%	18.4%
	100.0%	100.0%
4. Numbers of active influencer' pages "liked" so far (actively interested)		
1 - 3 pages	54.7%	57.9%
4 - 6 pages	24.5%	28.9%
7 - 10 pages	1.9%	10.5%
> 10 pages	18.9%	2.6%
	100.0%	100.0%

According to the table 4.4, Since p-values are less than 0.05 for these two topics, there is the significant difference in pattern between the age group of 15 - 30 and 31 - 45. From number 3. The frequency that each age group visits this influencer's page, the majority of both age groups visit every 2 – 4 days. However, the younger group is likely to visit influencers' page less often than older group since the second biggest proportion of younger group gears towards “more than six days”. At the same time, there is only 11.3% that visit the influencer's page every day. In contrast to the older group, the second most significant proportion which is 34.2% visits the influencer's page most often or every day.

From number 4. Numbers of active influencer' pages “liked” so far? (actively interested), more than half of both age groups have many active influencers of 1 – 3 pages, followed by 4 – 6 pages. However, younger age group is likely to actively follow a more significant number of influencer's pages, since 18.9% of the younger group actively follow more than ten influencers' page, while only 2.6% for the older group.

All in all, it can be interpreted that most of the behaviors on Instagram between 2 age groups of female users are likely to be the same in many aspects, except for 2 behaviors - The frequency that each age group visit this influencer's page, and numbers of active influencer' pages “liked” so far (actively interested). Even though younger people aged 15 - 30 tends to follow more on influencers' page actively, they are not likely to visit those pages as much as an older group of users. The possible explanation could be that younger people may have other online activities to engage; for example, other social platforms, games or chat application. Therefore, they tend to spend less time on their active influencers' page in which they are actively following.

4.3 H3: Monetary Incentive In Reviewing Has No Adverse Effect On Both Apparel Influencer And Brand That The Influencer Did A Review

As some of the influencers become popular and hence gain attention from brands, many brands may consider them as one of marketing strategy to promote or boost sales. Besides organic reviews from influencers, sometimes they are asked to review the brand's outfits in exchange for incentives. It could be monetary or non-monetary incentives. For example, they got paid for a review or get the brand's stuff for free. In

the past, brands have to pay to advertise products for both advertising channel (airing and publishing) and presenter; however, social media like Instagram enables the free channel to brand directly connect with users.

Further, instead of paying high for celebrities or presenters, brands can choose other influencers that have high potential to expose to target customers with less and targeted spending. Therefore, it is the opportunity for any “popular users” to become influencers and get sponsored by brands. User-generated content becomes popular at this age.

In the context of apparel shopping, the most buying decision is assumed to be impulsive. It is expected to be opposed to the research from Liljander, Gummerus, and Söderlund (2014) who concluded that it would have resulted in the adverse effect on the brand if consumers suspected that the reviews are sponsored. Even though fashion apparel is referred to as the high involvement and emotional concern, it takes a relatively shorter time than other products in the same criteria. Unlike cosmetic business, buying decision of apparel is expected to require a shorter time to consider and evaluate in the pre-purchasing stage, for example, cosmetics would be concerned about the ingredient and quality issues while cosmetic influencer has to take higher effort to make the review convincing. In contrary, fashion outfits could be easily judged from the influencers’ reviewed photos without trying to explain the quality of the products. Therefore, the apparel business could trigger relatively more on an impulse purchase, and hence consumers would concern less on the product reviews by influencers regardless of brands’ sponsorship. Hence, the hypothesis of the non-negative effect of influencer sponsorship was developed.

The overall result is quite as expected since the majority of females do not mind about outfit sponsoring; hence there is no impact on purchasing decision. However, the minority who suspects about the quality of the outfit should not be taken for granted.

Number of females who recognize whether their influencer get sponsored by brand

■ Not sure ■ I don't know ■ I know

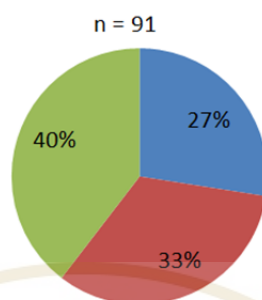


Figure 4.1 Females recognition on brand sponsor on influencer

First of all, female Instagram users were asked whether they could identify if the brand sponsored the post from the influencer. According to figure 4.1, the result has shown that 40% of females know whether the reviews are sponsored by a brand, followed by 33% not sure and 27% do not know. However, it is expected that females who know that the reviews are sponsored would react or think indifferently from females who are not sure and don't know if the brand gives a sponsorship. Because in apparel and fashion business, it has been already assumed that the females' perception of the reviews would be considered indifferent regardless of sponsorship.

Table 4.5 Opinion/behavior towards influencer by different groups of females

Opinion/behavior of females towards influencer	Influencer sponsorship acknowledgment of female users		
	Not sure (n = 25)	I do not know (n = 30)	I know (n = 36)
I do not mind. No impact on my purchasing decision	40%	67%	64%
I think influencer chose to wear only what she liked	24%	20%	19%
I think she only does the reviews for her own brand (she also has the brand)	20%	3%	8%
I was wondering whether the outfit is really good	16%	10%	8%
	100%	100%	100%

As the chi-square statistic is 6.9592; The p-value is .324634 or 32.46%. Therefore, the result is not significant at $p < 0.05$. This implies that regardless of the influencer sponsorship acknowledgment of females, the behavior and perception of each female group towards purchase decision is likely to be the same. According to table 4.5, the majority of each group do not mind whether the influencers get sponsored from brands and hence no impact on purchasing decision, followed by 2nd and 3rd biggest groups concerning about other topics, for instances, the believe that influencers usually choose to wear what she likes and the believe that influencer has owned her brand. It can imply that the second and third groups have still possessed the positive attitudes toward the brand, respectively. The minority of every group said they were wondering whether the outfit is really good. It is apparent that in the online outfit and fashion apparel business, females do not mind whether the review is genuine or forced-to-do. The possible explanation could be that the impression of outfit depends on the how it is looked and perceived on influencer and the rest is not a concern. It is a high involvement and emotional benefit, but the benefit is perceived at a glance from the review. By the way, the minority of those who are mind whether the outfit is really good should also be aware of the brand's perspectives. Especially, for females who don't know and not sure whether the brand is sponsored due to a high percentage (10% and 16%, respectively). It could be implied that once they detected if there is sponsorship, it would probably draw the negative effect of branding as the "surprise" for customers. If the minority does care and suspect on the quality of apparel, there is still a price to pay in reputation and credibility that has to be weighed against the benefits. Therefore, the brand should be aware of that as well.

4.4 H4: Micro-Influencer Helps Female Customers Reduce Perceived Risk and Create More Trust Towards Online Retailer Before They Make a Purchase Decision in Apparel Business Than Macro-Influencer

The assumption is set on a belief that if the influencer would increase the positive effect on the brand they review. Online business enables the convenience and free channel for consumers these days, however, it might create the uncertainty on trust

and creditability of the brand since there is no physical presence. Reputation on word of mouth is also very crucial for a brand to thrive the success in the digital world.

The overall result is still a blurred line whether micro-influencer does help female customers reduce perceived risk/ create more trust towards online retailer before they make a purchase decision in apparel business than macro-influencer. However, the scores given by the females are getting better once numbers of influencers have increased.

Table 4.6 The effect of influencers towards the creditability of brand

	Most of the time, influencer made me feel more confident and trusted in that brand she is wearing					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Fair	Agree	Strongly agree	
Females who prefer Micro-influencers (n = 55)	0.0%	1.8%	45.5%	45.5%	7.3%	100.0%
Females who prefer Macro-influencers (n = 36)	0.0%	2.8%	58.3%	33.3%	5.6%	100.0%
Grand Total (n = 91)	0.0%	2.2%	50.5%	40.7%	6.6%	

The survey question asked about the positive effect of influencer towards the creditability and trust in the brand of the outfit she is wearing. The chi-square statistic is 1.6886. The p-value is .639462 or 63.94%. The result is not significant at $p < .05$. The result shows the indifference between micro and macro-influencer about the positive attitude of trust towards the brand she is wearing. According to the table 4.6, it looks like the majority of female customers in both groups feel “fair” or 50.5% in aggregate regarding the positive effect of influencers towards brand trust. Nonetheless, it is followed by “Agree” or 40.7% in total and “strongly agree” or 6.6% in total, respectively. By the way, it cannot conclude that influencers made female Instagram users feel more confident and trusted in brands that influencers are reviewing.

Table 4.7 The effect of the number of influencers towards the creditability of brand

	I will be willing to engage with the brand if many influencers are reviewing its items of this brand					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Fair	Agree	Strongly agree	
Females who prefer Micro-influencers (n = 55)	0.0%	1.8%	27.3%	60.0%	10.9%	100.0%
Females who prefer Macro-influencers (n = 36)	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	55.6%	11.1%	100.0%
Grand Total (n = 91)	0.0%	1.1%	29.7%	58.2%	11.0%	

In term of brand perspective, female users were asked about whether “the number of influencers” that brand used affects the willingness to engage with the brand. The chi-square statistic is 0.9985. The p-Value is 0.910023. The result is not significant at $p < 0.05$. The result also shows the indifference between females who prefer micro and macro-influencer. According to the table 4.7 below, the majority of female customers in both groups feel that they “Agree” on the power of the numbers of influencers or reviews that brand uses or 58.2% in aggregate, followed by “fair” and “strongly agree” or 29.7% in aggregate, respectively. Compared to the previous question concerning the brand trust issue from influencers’ reviews, the number of influencers has a more positive effect on brand and willingness to engage and imply the customers' trust toward the brand.

All in all, influencers give the positive impact on the brand as it creates more trust and reduces perceived risk on apparel brands on Instagram before they make a purchase decision, especially when there are many reviews from many influencers. However, the pattern of this both group of females who prefer a different type of influencers has no significant difference. Nonetheless, the result of both table 4.6 and 4.7 shown that females who preferred micro-influencers gave the better scores than those who preferred macro-influencers.

As mentioned before, even though fashion apparel business depends mostly on impulse purchase – customers are not likely to take time to consider whether the quality is okay as long as it was eventually a good review from influencers, influencers' review benefits brand in term of creditability and authenticity compared to unsourced reviews that brand post itself. For example, the review photos of the unknown model in China.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

1. H1: It is likely that micro-influencer would trigger purchase decision than macro-influencers. Since there are increasing numbers of social platforms available for users, there are the developing of numbers of micro-influencers and hence enables a variety of small influencers. Therefore, it is likely that these small influencers would do the reviews even more than macro-influencers. Alternatively, these micro-influencers can influence the new style of clothing fashion to people in Thailand.

2. H2: It cannot conclude that the younger age group of female customers has more level of involvement in online fashion business than older. Since many factors have indicated that there has been no difference in behavior pattern among these two groups. However, some of the factors indicated that there had been the difference in pattern between younger and older age group. Even though younger females tend to have a higher number of active influencers compared to the older group, the younger group is likely to be less active with influencers' page.

3. H3: Most females customers do not care whether the brand sponsors the influencers or not. It has not affected their buying decision. It is predicted that fashion clothing business regards impulse purchase in which the customers have exposed the unplanned buying decision once they surfed on Instagram with no determined purpose. On the other hands, there are still some groups of customers that suspect the brand quality. The brand also has to be mindful of those sensitive customers in which it might affect brand's creditability.

4. H4: Both Macro and Micro influencers are likely to help female customers reduce perceived risk and create more trustiness towards online brands before they made a purchase decision on Instagram, especially once the numbers of influencers reviewing the brand increased.

5.2 Recommendation

As the objective of this paper aims to advise the influencer marketing strategy towards small e-commerce brand on Instagram since it is the opportunity for small apparel brands to do more on advertising or create online awareness and exposure to female users.

Influencer marketing is likely to be a form of subconscious marketing. By using influencers, consumers are unconsciously penetrated by brands' contents. At the same time, brands are also able to affect consumers' awareness and interests without them even being aware of it. This is the case only when the influencer sponsorship is unknown to customers. Especially in the fashion business, the use of influencers is likely to benefit brands since it engages most on the emotional side and negative effect from sponsoring is also low. Unlike advertising, Influencer marketing has provided even more authentic and practical application of the products. Let's imagine when someone reviewing dress in their office and during the way back home makes you feel like you have a real recommendation from a friend.

Micro-Influencer can do better in term of trigger purchase decision of female users on Instagram. It is actually in line with the nature of small e-commerce brands since they start with the small budget on marketing. There is another reason why brands should pay attention to micro-influencers these days. From the fact that Instagram algorithm has been changed to favor quality content, Snap's CEO Chris Gonzalez believed that posts or reviews from "micro-influencers" would raise more visibility to the persons targeted. As we can see, photos from friends and family members are often prioritized by any social platforms. Even though micro-influencers have fewer followers than celebrities, engaging them in advertising and promotion of online stores can be more profitable in term of return on investment. Trust and close relationship with the audiences become essential for customers' buying decisions.

Meanwhile, micro-influencer tends to possess the expertise in a specific area that drives authenticity. It is not only for small online e-commerce stores, but big companies have also put their strategy toward micro-influencers. Especially for an Instagram platform, it is the free place available for influencers to meet many brands' target customers. In the best case, dealing with influencers may not cost the brand a price that is why it probably the opportunity that brands can take advantages of either.

During the decision-making process of female customers on Instagram, it is likely that Need Recognition stage and Information search stage are blurred and almost combined into one stage. Most females regardless of age are not visited influencers' page directly, especially for younger people, even though younger people are likely to follow many influencers' page on Instagram. Most of the time, female users usually choose to surf Instagram without the intention to buy, followed by getting into the store pages that they like to check out whether there is exciting stuff. With this, the recommendation for the brand is divided into two categories.

Table 5.1 The recommendation for particular e-commerce who targets a different group of females' age

The brand that targets youths	The brand that targets adults
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a certain number of influencers • Make sure influencer reviewed photos are regularly on their feed • Pose reviews from influencers on brand's page • Pose reviews from customers on brand's page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pose reviews from customers on brand's page • Influencers are optional

The recommendation is specifically to brands which focus on different target audiences according to the age difference. Referred to the survey, lower age group of female users is likely to follow more influencers than an older group. However, the younger group is not likely to actively follow those influencers compared to the older group. In this way, brands which target younger people should use specifically the number of influencers that are considered famous for the target group. However, a brand must make sure that the reviews of influencers pop up on targets' feed since this younger group is not likely to stalk into influencers' page. However, it is not necessary that influencers post the photos themselves. It could be the reviewed photos of influencers that post by brand. To put in another way, brands should pose the reviews of influencers or even their customers on their page to maximize the visibility to target audiences. In contrary, instead of using influencers, brands which target the older group of female customers may decide to only pose the reviews from their customers on the brand's page. According

to the result, older females are not likely to follow many influencers. Therefore, they should explore other options instead of using influencers in the case of expense incurred.

As the result of brand sponsorship indicated that there was a less negative impact on apparel purchase decision of female shoppers; therefore, brands do not have to put much concern on customer-perceived sponsorship issue but instead focus on creditability on online service, for example, delivery timeliness promotion and after-sale support. On the other sides, it also implies that the budget spent on influencer campaigns should be lower as well. At the same time, as some females from the survey result also mentioned that they believed that influencer chose to wear only what she liked, it is a crucial consideration in picking up the right influencers since they would be promoting your brand. Just like brand ambassadors and presenters, the way the micro-influencers portray themselves will say something about the brand. As a result, it is going to define brand perception and positioning in customers' mind.

Nonetheless, since there is the minority of female customers has concerned and suspected about the products' quality, it is high time to access and review brand's positioning regarding brand image and quality of products sold. If the brand is possessing middle to low-quality perception, influencers' sponsorship should be delicately implemented. Customers may suspect the intention to use influencers in order to exaggerate the quality of products or outfits. Transparency is also considered by a small group of customers that would eventually refer to brand trust as well. Furthermore, since the Instagram platform provides features that allow customers to compare products and expose to many brands at fingertips, it is possible that the pre-purchase stage is extended. As a result, customers may be more elaborate in choosing the fashion clothing.

According to the creditability result, the impact of influencers on the brand's trust is related to the more significant numbers of influencers that brand uses regardless of the type of influencers. As mentioned, the recommendation would be trying to utilize micro-influencers due to cost-effectiveness, the authenticity, and close relationship benefits. By the way, micro-influencers also include peers, friends, potential ones that brand can associate with or even the customers who have already purchased the products. Even though these people tend to have a low number of followers, the brand is likely to benefit from free of charge and creditability boost due to reviews from many people. However, there is some small apparel e-commerce brand can have free reviews from

celebrities without sponsoring them as monetary compensation. For example, the brand has given away the free products to celebrities. It happened that one of the celebrities like brand's products after trial; as a result, they used it and reviewed it for the brand. It depends on how the brand can leverage the environment to maximize marketing objective with effective cost, for example, traffic boosting to the Instagram page or to create more visibility and awareness in the platform. However, trust also means the authenticity that customers do not feel that they are bombarded with too many contents. Brands should focus on sincerity, long-term relationships, and the right influencer partners. Anyways, both macro and micro influencers help boost the brand's credibility. However, while macro-influencers can approach a wide range of people, micro-influencers comes with the expected lower marketing cost per head and hence able to approach many influencers. As a result, it would increase the level of trust towards the brand.

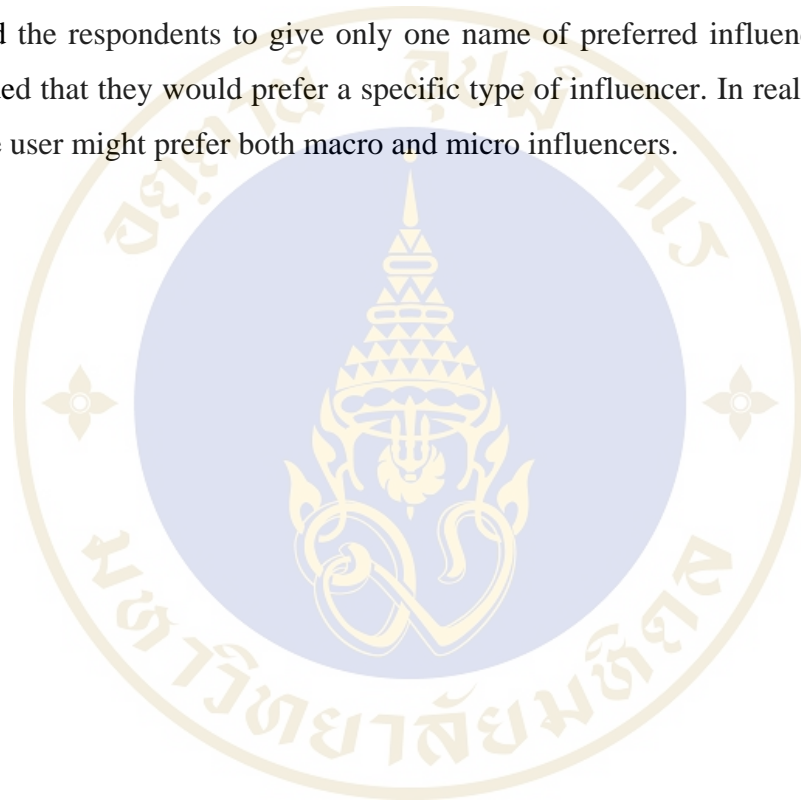
In conclusion, the influencer strategy is one of the marketing strategies that can benefit the brand, influencer, and even the customers in a certain way. However, it requires a different strategy for each application. At the same time, the right balance between cost and benefit should be aware, for instance, the numbers of influencers used for the campaign and numbers of post per days. By the way, micro-influencers are currently in the spotlighted since they allow many small e-commerce brands to easily increase visibility in the online space, especially on the Instagram platform. Moreover, the influencer sponsorship is not the issue that affects the customers' perception in the apparel business. The more reviews from many influencers, the better the customers would trust on brand and products. By the way, it also depends on the personal networking and power as well whether brands can leverage the organic influencers' reviews without paying for micro-influencers.

For further research recommendation, analyzing digital marketing insight on both influencer and brand perspectives is suggested. For example, the number of reaches, number of similar and conversion rate. At the same time, the interview approach would enable more details on the behavior of all parties involved on Instagram. Implementing all approach combined, it would provide the insightful information even to benefit small e-commerce brand's strategy formulation.

5.3 Limitation

According to quantitative research methodology, the results do not provide the insightful motive and valid reasons of target group surveyed. The study has required more about the sub-conscious and emotional factors of the female users on experienced on Instagram. Questions could cause deviation since many people did not become aware of them. Even though if they were, they might not want to admit the truth.

Further, as the study defined micro and macro influencer by numbers of followers, there is a blurred line between these two groups. Moreover, as the survey required the respondents to give only one name of preferred influencer, it cannot be concluded that they would prefer a specific type of influencer. In reality, it is possible that one user might prefer both macro and micro influencers.



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Appendix A: Questions

Instruction

1. Please answer all questions
2. Definition of “Social Media Influencer” : it simply means the social media person who is outstanding in term of a particular aspect. Normally, he/she gains attention from many people in social media platform (Instagram in this context). The relationship with the influencer could be friend, peers or someone you may know. Or the blogger, net idol or celebrity. These influencers may receive attention from brands or advertising agencies as well.

Section 1: Screening

- Q1. What is your gender?
- Male
 - Female
 - Other
- Q2. What is your age range?
- Below 15
 - 16-20
 - 21-25
 - 26-30
 - 31-35
 - 36-40
 - 41-45
 - 46-50
 - Above 50
- Q3. How many hours do you spend on IG per day?
- Less than a 15 minutes
 - More than 15 mins – 2 hours
 - More than 2 – 4 hours
 - More than 4 hours

Section 2: Instagram user behavior

- Q4. How often do you make an actual purchase from small apparel stores in IG?
- Once a month
 - 3 times a month
 - More than 4 times a month
 - twice a month
 - 4 times a month
 - None in a month
- Q5. Please choose one of the habits do you normally do for online shopping?
- I just randomly surf on the IG feed and click through the item that is interesting
 - I always get into the store pages I have already followed to look for new stuff
 - I always catch up outfit reviews from someone I have followed on IG (Influencers)
 - I always search into the hashtag of what I'm looking for
 - I always click on the brands' story
 - Other (please specify).....
- Q6.1 On IG, “who” is the most influencing group of people that make you want to buy outfits on IG?
- Friends (including peers, colleagues, someone you know)
 - Fashion bloggers
 - Someone I don't know personally, but she is always wearing outfits I like (e.g., Net idol, influencer)
 - Presenter/Celebrities/superstars
 - Others (please specify).....
- Q6.2 (Continue from Q9.) How often do you buy an outfit by seeing the group of people in Q9. on IG wearing it?
- Once a month
 - 3 times a month
 - More than 4 times a month
 - twice a month
 - 4 times a month
 - None in a month
- Q7. How many active influencers pages do you “Like” so far? (the influencers that you are actively interested)
- 1 to 3
 - 7 to 10
 - 4 to 6
 - More than 10

Section 3: Your favorite IG influencer

Just think about one of your favorite apparel influencers and then answer the questions.

Q8. Can you give 1 example of page name of your most favorite apparel influencer?

(It could be anyone that you have kept an eye on and had an impact on your apparel preference, need, and style.)

.....

Q9. How often do you visit her page?

- Everyday
- Every 2 - 4 days
- Every 4 - 6days
- More than 6 days

Q10. How many followers does she have?

- 0 – 1,000
- 1,001 – 10,000
- 10,001 – 50,000
- 50,001 – 100,000
- 100,001 – 500,000
- 500,001 – 1,000,000
- More than 1,000,000

Q11. What do you like about her? (you can choose more than one)

- Good looking face
- Good looking personality/attitude
- Good body/shape
- Dressing style
- Lifestyle
- Nice photo shooting style
- Caption
- Others (please specify).....

Q12.1. Do you know that sometimes your favorite influencer gets paid or get stuff for free in order to advertise a particular brand?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Q12.2. What do you think about that?

- I do not mind. No impact on my purchasing decision
- I think influencer chose to wear only what she liked
- I think she only does the reviews for her own brand (she also owns her brand)
- I was wondering whether the outfit is really good
- Others, please specify.....

Q13. How often do you buy the outfit that you saw from influencer review?

- o 90% on average I bought the outfits
- o 70% on average I bought the outfits
- o 50% on average I bought the outfits
- o 30% on average I bought the outfits
- o 10% on average I bought the outfits
- o Less than 10% I bought the outfits

Section 4: Effects of influencer

Questions	Rating				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Fair	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Q14. Most of the time, influencer makes me feel more confident and trust in that brand she is wearing					
Q15. I will be willing to engage with the brand if many influencers are reviewing its items of this brand					
Q16. I always take time to compare what I like before I decide to buy clothing from IG					
Q17. If I buy the item and I feel satisfied, I will be likely to recommend this influencer to others					
Q18. If I buy the item and I feel satisfied, I will be likely to recommend this brand to others					

Section 5: Demographic

Q19. What is your marital status?

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Domestic Partnership
- Widowed

Q20. What is your highest level of education?

- Elementary/Middle school
- High school
- Associate/ Technical degree
- Bachelor degree
- Master degree
- Doctoral degree
- Others, please specify.....

Q21. What is your income level?

- Less than 10,000
- 10,001 – 20,000
- 20,001 – 50,000
- 50,001 – 100,000
- 100,001 – 150,000
- 150,001 – 200,000
- More than 200,000