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Perceptions, Trust and Action: The Role of Demographics in Shaping Influencer Impact

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Abstract:

Research Question: How do demographic characteristics shape audience perceptions, trust levels, and behaviour regarding influencers? **Motivation:** Although the role of influencers in shaping consumer behaviour has been widely studied, there has been little research into how specific demographic groups differently perceive the credibility and influence of influencers. In accordance with that, this research is motivated by the need to examine how demographic differences shape audience perception and trust in influencers. It aims to provide explanation why the same influencer can have different degrees of influence on different demographic segments of the audience, which can contribute to more precise targeting and optimization of marketing strategies. **Idea:** Research hypotheses assume that gender, age, place of residence, level of education and work status of consumers significantly influence their following of influencers, the level of trust in influencers and their behavioural intentions. The independent variables are demographic characteristics, and the dependent variables: following, trust and behavioural change. **Data:** The research was conducted by surveying a sample of 317 respondents in the Republic of Serbia during May 2023. The questionnaire was distributed via the Internet and social networks, by using a snowball sampling technique. **Tools:** The questionnaire consisted of five sections: the first section related to demographic characteristics of respondents; the second related to general social media consumption; the third related to respondents' attitudes towards influencer following; the fourth related to respondents' trust in influencers and the fifth related to respondents' behavioural change. **Findings:** female gender and generational affiliation were found to be significant predictors of following influencers. Female gender, lower age and the place of residence were found to be significant predictors of higher trust in influencers. Female gender and generational belonging were significant predictors of higher degree of behavioural change under the impact of influencers' activities on social media. **Contribution:** The findings of this paper contribute to the current literature related to influencer marketing and behaviour on social media, by investigating factors which motivate social media users to follow influencers.

Keywords: influencers, social media, user attitudes, user trust, behavioural change

JEL classification: M31, L82, D12

1. Introduction

Social networks have become increasingly popular communication channel among people from different demographic groups. With the growth of global connectivity due to technological progress and digitalization of communication, social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and YouTube are being used as crucial sources of pre-purchase information about products and services, as well as the platform for making online purchase (Mawad & Freiha, 2024). Accordingly, social media influencers are considered to be a highly important segment of social marketing strategy due to their ability to build personal connections with different audiences, thus driving higher engagement and trust than traditional advertising (Kim & Kim, 2021; Pavlovic, 2024). Influencer communication has been proved effective in shaping consumer decision-making, as, through their recommendations and shared experiences, influencers affect consumer attitudes, behavioural engagement, purchase intentions and actual purchase behaviour (Hugh Wilkie et al., 2022; Pan et al., 2025; Jamil et al., 2024).

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According to Zhang and Choi (2022), social media influencers can be defined as “individuals who are able to keep in touch with social media users and promote commodities to the targeted consumers”. Their ability to capture the attention of an audience and promote certain products or styles can influence the way in which consumers perceive brands and what they consider fashionable (Serman & Sims, 2020). By sharing positive recommendations and encouraging consumer engagement, influencers tend to foster affection and loyalty towards the brands they endorse (Chan, 2022). The credibility of influencers, which is based on their perceived expertise and image can significantly shape influencer-follower relationship (Randers et al., 2023), build trust in influencers (Hudders & Lou, 2022; Yang, 2024) and increase purchase intentions (Zhao et al., 2024). The concept of trust is considered to be especially important since the effectiveness of influencer marketing largely depends on it (Chopra, Avhad, & Jaju, 2020; Migkos, Giannakopoulos, & Sakas, 2025).

Numerous research aiming to examine the mechanisms of impact on perception and behaviour of different consumer groups have been conducted (Krstic, Reljic, & Filipovic, 2019; Kolovic, Vlastelica, & Krstic, 2023). Along with the growing importance of influencers in marketing practice, the volume of literature on this topic has been also growing (Spurl-Wang, Krause & Henkel, 2025). Many of studies focus on characteristics possessed by influencers that enable effective influence, whereas fewer have examined the factors that motivate social media users to follow influencers (Rajput & Gandhi, 2024). In accordance with that, the objective of the research is to gain a deeper understanding of whether consumers of certain gender, age, education, place of residence and employment status are more trustful towards influencers and, thus, more easily influenced upon. The findings of this paper can contribute to the improvement of strategic campaign planning, allowing managers to more effectively identify and engage influencers in accordance with the demographic characteristics of the target audience.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

A large number of studies have indicated that gender has an impact on how social media users perceive influencers, follow them and how much they trust their messages (e.g., Alkan & Ulas, 2023; Apostol, 2023; Kim, Ko, & Choi, 2024; Durmishi & Durmishi, 2024; Migkos et al., 2025). In the research of Mawad, & Freiha (2024), it was found that male and female consumers' behavioural intentions related to influencers are motivated by different factors. In a study conducted by Migkos, Giannakopoulos and Sakas (2025), it was found that women are more likely than men to follow influencers, positively react to their posts and make purchases based on their recommendations. Ooi et al. (2023) found out that male respondents were more likely to express favorable attitudes towards the product or service recommended by the influencer they consider credible. In one of the more recent studies, it was determined that influencers influence women more in the context of trust and emotional value, while they influence men's purchase intentions more (Zhou, 2025). However, there are also studies whose results did not show significant differences between genders with respect to levels of trust in social media influencers (e.g., Berry, 2024). In spite of such findings, it is rational to assume that there are differences between women and men regarding influencer following, trust they attach to them and the influence they have on their behaviour, because consumers of different genders often differ in interests, patterns of using social networks and ways of making consumer decisions. In accordance with that, the following is proposed:

H1: Consumers' gender is a significant predictor of influencer following, having trust in influencers and behavioural change.

Taking into account that younger consumers are more intensive users of social media than older generations, research results in this area indicate the existence of differences between members of different age groups when it comes to following, reactions and attitudes towards influencers (e.g., Mawad, & Freiha, 2024; Bratina & Faganel, 2024; Durmishi & Durmishi, 2024; Angmo & Mahajan, 2024). As determined by Wu (2024), age category is an important predictor of making a purchase decision under the influence of an influencer and purchasing a product after being presented by an influencer. A study conducted by Migkos et al. (2025) indicates that younger social media users (up to 34 years old) showed greater trust and engagement with content posted by influencers, while both trust and engagement dropped significantly in the case of users aged 45 and older. In the research of Berry (2024), it was found that age category was a significant predictor of trusting social media influencers, whereas individuals ranging from 24 to 34 years old were found to be more distrustful in comparison with other age groups. Bratina and Faganel (2024) examined whether there were differences between members of generations X and Z regarding the formation of attitudes towards promoted products and purchase intentions under the impact of influencers. They found that there was an influence on both generations, but it was more evident in the case of Generation Z. Cabeza-Ramirez et al. (2022) confirmed that members of Generation X and Y differ in relation to social media usage and credibility they attach to messages of influencers. On the basis of these findings, the following is assumed:

H2: Consumers' age represents significant predictor of influencer following, having trust in influencers and behavioural change.

Some studies confirmed that type of residence, particularly urban versus rural settings and regional cultural contexts, significantly predicts the patterns of internet and social media usage (Liu, Zheng & Quian, 2023). By conducting meta-analysis of previous studies Han and Balabanis (2024) noticed that geographical context plays an important role in studying the impact of social media influencers on attitudinal outcomes of their followers. In the research conducted by Wu (2024), consumers' geographic location (urban, suburban and rural) appeared to be a predictor of online purchasing behaviour. Zhou (2025) found that influencers have a greater influence on the trust of social media users from rural areas, and a greater influence on the purchase intentions of users from urban areas. The findings of Berry (2024) indicated that, despite certain variations in answers of consumers from different regions, there was no statistically significant relation between place of residence and respondents' level of trust towards influencers on social media. Similarly, there were no significant differences found between the attitudes of respondents living in cities, smaller towns and rural areas in the research conducted by Ilieva et al. (2024). Comparing answers of respondents from urban and rural areas, Szakal et al. (2024) found no important variations in relation to the impact of influencers on making purchasing decisions. Although the findings in this area are rather opposed, it can be assumed that certain differences might arise as a consequence of differences related to social media usage patterns depending on consumers' residential characteristics. Therefore, it is proposed that:

H3: Consumers' place of residence represents a significant predictor of influencer following, having trust in influencers and behavioural change.

Education level can be a relevant factor when it comes to attitudes and buying behaviour of social media users towards influencers (Chan, 2022). In one of the studies, it was determined that respondents with a higher degree of education (postgraduate studies) value the authenticity of influencers more and express a greater tendency to believe in the promotional messages they send, as well as that they agreed in large numbers that such advertising messages encourage purchases (Migkos et al., 2025). Differences regarding the existence of purchase intentions resulting from trust in influencers in relation to the level of education were also determined in the research conducted by Alkan and Ulas (2023) and Berry (2024). It was established that, with the increase in the level of education, trust in influencers also increases, and therefore also the intention to purchase. Such differences exist between undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as between graduate and PhD students (Alkan & Ulas, 2023). Similarly, Berry (2024) showed that respondents with graduate education expressed greater trust in influencers compared to those with completed college or undergraduate education. On the other hand, Ilieva et al. (2024) found out that more educated individuals were more skeptical of influencers' claims and endorsements in relation to respondents with lower educational levels. On the basis of findings which identified certain differences between educational groups, the following is hypothesized:

H4: Consumers' education level represents a significant predictor of influencer following, having trust in influencers and behavioural change.

Certain sources, such as Alkan and Ulas (2023) underscore the significant role that employment status plays in shaping individuals' interactions with, trust in social media influencers, and behavioural intentions. Employment status affects the use of social media and the reactions to messages that are placed within the framework of social media marketing. In a study conducted by Migkos et al. (2025), it was determined that students and part-time employees spend more time on consuming content on social media and are therefore more inclined to follow influencers and express greater trust in the messages they post. On the other hand, individuals who were currently or permanently unemployed individuals are less likely to follow influencers and engage with their content. Based on these findings, it can be assumed that the status of employment might predict the tendency to follow various content on social media, so the following hypothesis is developed:

H5: Consumers' employment status represents significant predictor of influencer following, having trust in influencers and behavioural change.

3. Methodology

The research was conducted by surveying a sample of 317 respondents in the Republic of Serbia during May 2023. The questionnaire was distributed via the Internet and social networks to authors' contacts, by using a snowball sampling technique. The questionnaire consisted of five sections. The first section contained

questions related to demographic characteristics. This section contained questions with multiple answers, with the possibility of single choice. The second section contained questions related to general social media consumption, whereas the third was related to respondents' attitudes towards influencer following. A majority of questions in these two sections contained multiple choice questions, and respondents were able to choose more than one option to answer. The fourth section was related to respondents' trust in influencers and contained nine items (Chen et al., 2024; Adaba, Frimpong, & Mwainyekule, 2025) which were evaluated on a 5-level Likert scale (ranging from 1- Complete disagreement to 5 - Complete agreement). The final segment contained five common types of behavioural change which can be stimulated by influencers on social media and respondents' task was to select all which applied in their cases.

For the purpose of data analysis, descriptive statistical methods and methods for modelling the relationship between outcomes (influencer following, score of trust in influencers, change in behaviour of respondents instigated by influencers) and potential predictors were used. All potential predictors of the outcomes mentioned were included in the multiple regression models. Data analysis was processed in the IBM SPSS Statistics 22 software package and the R software environment.

3.1 Sample

The total sample included 317 respondents, among whom there were 74% female and 26% male respondents. The average respondents' age was 39.8. Respondents who participated in the research most often belonged to generation Y (65.0%). In relation to the place of residence, the largest number of respondents resided in the capital city (78.2%). Regarding the level of education, more than half of respondents had completed higher education, i.e., college/university (52.4%). Also, respondents who participated in the research were employed in the largest number of cases (83.9%). The demographic structure of the sample is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Structure of the sample according to demographic characteristics

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	235	74.1
Male	82	25.9
Age (generations)	Frequency	Percent
Generation Z	39	12.3
Generation Y	206	65.0
Generation X	55	17.4
Baby Boomers	17	5.4
Place of residence	Frequency	Percent
Rural area	19	6.0
Town (< 50.000)	37	11.7
City (> 50.000)	13	4.1
Capital city	248	78.2
Education	Frequency	Percent
High school	92	29.0
College/university	166	52.4
Master	53	16.7
PhD	6	1.9
Employment status	Frequency	Percent
Employed	266	83.9
Unemployed	17	5.4
Retired	12	3.8
Student	22	6.9

4. Results and Discussion

As regards social media which respondents use, YouTube dominated (94.3%), followed by Instagram (81.7%), Facebook (72.6%), TikTok (24.9%) and others. More than half of the respondents (56.5%) used social networks less than 2.5 hours on a daily basis, whereas 30.9% used them for more than 2.5 hours. A lower percentage used social networks few times per week (10.1%) and once a week or less (2.5%). As the most common reasons for using social media, respondents indicated: entertainment (91.5%), informing (90.9%), connecting with family and friends (74.8%), online purchasing (60.6%), following trends (53.9%) and publishing personal content (36.3%).

Among respondents who reported following influencers, about three quarters consumed the content influencers present on social media on social networks occasionally (74.1%), whereas 11.4% on a daily basis. As regards the areas of influencers' interests, those that they were mostly interested in, the results were: travel and leisure (64.7%), health and fitness (58.0%), gastronomy (53.5%), life and business coaching (51.5%), beauty and fashion (48.0%) and gaming (3.8%). Additionally, 75.4% of the respondents stated that they followed influencers in other areas, more special to their personal interests. Asked about characteristics of a good influencer, respondents in the largest number of cases chose creativity and originality (96.2%), humour and amusing presentation (92.7%) and experience/expertise in a respective area (91.38%). Formal education related to the area, physical appearance and attractiveness, and offline popularity and recognition, seemed to be less important.

As regards respondents' activities in the relation with influencer(s) they followed, for the majority of respondents it was only reading/watching the content they published without any interaction (93.2%). Only 4.0% reported practicing commenting and participating in influencers' activations, whereas 2.8% reported sharing content posted by influencers on their profiles. Furthermore, about 70.0% of respondents agreed that influencers represent role models for some people, even though 39.4% of them did not observe influencers as their role models.

By analyzing the answers to questions in the section related to respondents' trust in influencers and their recommendations, it was generally noted that the majority of them did not consider influencer recommendations more credible than conventional advertising. Also, the majority did not agree at all (41.7%) that influencers only promote products with which they are personally satisfied with. On the other hand, the majority (34.7%) agreed that influencers draw their attention to certain products, stimulate interest in those products (33.9%), and encourage the search for additional information about those products (36.5%). Just under a third of respondents strongly disagreed that influencer recommendations encourage them to make a purchase, although a quarter agreed. Slightly more than half of the sample did not agree at all that content created by influencers encourages them to share it further. Most of them also did not agree that the recommendations given by influencers reduce the risk of making the wrong choice when buying a product. Finally, the majority agreed somewhat and completely (29.2% and 27.7%, respectively) that they believe that influencers exclusively recommend those products for which they were sponsored in some way. The mean values of the trust indicators ranged from 1.70 to 3.04, suggesting generally low to moderate levels of trust in influencers among respondents and indicating a rather cautious attitude towards influencer credibility and limited behavioral engagement based on influencer recommendations (Table 2).

Table 2: Trust in influencers and their recommendations

Items	1 n (%)	2 n (%)	3 n (%)	4 n (%)	5 n (%)	Mean values
I trust influencer recommendations more than classic advertising.	87 (32.1%)	44 (16.2%)	56 (20.7%)	76 (28.0%)	8 (2.0%)	2.17
I believe that influencers only promote products/services that they are personally satisfied with.	113 (41.7%)	51 (18.8%)	37 (13.7%)	55 (20.3%)	15 (5.5%)	1.96
Influencers' recommendations bring new products/services to my attention.	53 (19.6%)	36 (13.3%)	45 (16.6%)	94 (34.7%)	43 (15.9%)	2.68
Influencers' recommendations stimulate my interest in products/services.	65 (24.0%)	39 (14.4%)	54 (19.9%)	92 (33.9%)	21 (7.7%)	2.45

Items	1 n (%)	2 n (%)	3 n (%)	4 n (%)	5 n (%)	Mean values
Influencers' recommendations encourage me to learn more about products/services.	56 (20.7%)	39 (14.4%)	45 (16.6%)	99 (36.5%)	32 (11.8%)	2.60
Influencers' recommendations encourage me to consider buying a product/service.	84 (31.0%)	50 (18.5%)	62 (22.9%)	68 (25.1%)	7 (2.6%)	2.13
Influencers' recommendations encourage me to further share content about a product/service.	140 (51.7%)	48 (17.7%)	37 (13.7%)	38 (14.0%)	8 (3.0%)	1.70
Influencer recommendations reduce the risk of making the wrong purchase decision.	119 (43.9%)	60 (22.1%)	59 (21.8%)	26 (9.6%)	7 (2.6%)	1.75
I believe that influencers only recommend brands that sponsor them, regardless of their experience with products/services.	22 (8.1%)	35 (12.9%)	60 (22.1%)	79 (29.2%)	75 (27.7%)	3.04

The results for the last segment, related to the aspects of behavioural change under the impact of influencers' recommendations, indicated that 42.6% of respondents visited an event/location they had not been to before, 37.3% tried new product/service, 34.0% started new activity/adopted new habit, 33.6% switched to another brand and 29.3% become more engaged with the recommended brand.

4.1 Predictors of influencer following

Potential predictors of influencer following (observed as an outcome) were included in the multiple logistic regression model. The model contained five predictors, which were compared on 317 subjects (of which 271 had an outcome of interest). The whole model (with all predictors) was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) and Nagelkerke R^2 was 0.12. Multicollinearity diagnostics ($VIF < 2$, tolerance > 0.5) confirmed the absence of collinearity issues. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Multiple regression results for the outcome "influencer following"

Independent variable	B	P	OR	95% confidence interval	
				lower limit	upper limit
Gender (female vs. male)	0.894	0.011	2.25	1.23	4.87
Generation					
Z	2.085	0.014	8.05	1.54	42.14
Y	1.016	0.004	2.76	1.39	5.49
X + Baby Boomers	reference category				
Place of residence (capital city vs other)	0.394	0.300	1.48	0.70	3.12
Education level	-0.033	0.896	0.97	0.59	1.59
Employment status (employed vs other)	0.590	0.236	1.80	0.68	4.78

In the multiple logistic regression model, statistically significant predictors of following influencers were female gender and generational affiliation. The results for Female gender ($B=0.894$; $p=0.011$), whose odds ratio was $OR=2.25$, indicate that women had a 2.2 times higher probability of following influencers, while controlling for all other factors in the model. The results for the variable Generation [Generation Z ($B=2.085$; $p=0.014$) and Generation Y ($B=1.016$; $p=0.004$)] in relation to Generation X + Baby Boomers as a reference category, whose odds ratio was 8.05 and 2.76 respectively, showed that respondents belonging to Generation Z were over 8 times and Generation Y almost 3 times more likely to follow influencers compared to Generation X + Baby Boomers as the reference category, were controlling all other factors in the model. These two generational groups were selected as the reference category because they represent the oldest age cohorts in the sample and were expected to demonstrate the lowest level of engagement with social media influencers, thus providing a logical baseline for comparison with younger generations.

In the continuation of the analysis, the intention was to determine which demographic characteristics are predictors of following influencers in several interest areas. In relation to the score of following influencers, respondents in the sample who followed influencers, most often followed them in four different areas of interest

(19.9%). A slightly smaller percentage (18.5%) followed only influencers in one area. After them, the most numerous were those who followed influencers in five interest areas (17.3%), three (15.9%), six (14.0%), two (12.9%) and seven (1.5%) interest areas. The multiple ordinal logistic regression model contained five predictors, which were compared to 271 respondents. The whole model (with all predictors) was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), with Nagelkerke pseudo R^2 being 0.12. There was no significant multicollinearity between the predictors (Table 4).

Table 4: Multiple ordinal regression results for outcome “influencer following score”

Independent variable	B	p	OR	95% confidence interval	
				lower limit	upper limit
Gender (female vs male)	1.33	<0.001	3.78	2.20	6.49
Generation					
Z	0.80	0.059	2.23	0.97	5.16
Y	0.67	0.018	1.95	1.12	3.40
X + Baby Boomers	reference category				
Place of residence (capital city vs other)	-0.04	0.878	0.96	0.57	1.62
Education level	-0.29	0.084	0.75	0.54	1.04
Employment status (employed vs other)	0.76	0.029	2.14	1.08	4.25

In the multivariate ordinal logistic regression model, statistically significant predictors of a higher degree of following influencers were female gender (OR=3.78; $p < 0.001$), generation Y vs X + Baby Boomers as a reference category (OR=1.95; $p = 0.018$) and employed respondents compared to others (OR=2.14; $p = 0.029$).

4.2 Predictors of having trust in influencers

The score of trust in influencers was obtained by adding up the scores on the items from Table 2. A reverse score was collected for the last item. The arithmetic mean of the trust score towards influencers was 22.9 (95% CI 21.9-23.8). The results of multivariate linear regression with influencer trust score as dependent variable are shown in Table 5. The model contained five predictors, which were compared to 271 respondents. The whole model (with all predictors) was statistically significant ($p = 0.003$) and R^2 was 0.07. No significant multicollinearity between the predictors was identified ($VIF < 2$, tolerance > 0.5). Statistically significant predictors of higher trust scores in influencers were: female gender ($B = 3.174$; $p = 0.007$), lower age ($B = -0.136$; $p = 0.007$) and the place of residence (other vs capital city) ($B = 2.477$; $p = 0.039$).

Table 5: Multiple regression results for the outcome “trust in influencers” of respondents who follow influencers

Independent variable	B	beta	P
Gender (female vs male)	3.174	0.166	0.007
Age (years)	-0.136	-0.168	0.007
Place of residence (capital city vs other)	2.477	0.124	0.039
Education level	0.168	0.014	0.818
Employment status (employed vs other)	1.793	0.081	0.200

4.3 Predictors of behavioural change

In relation to the influence on behaviour, among respondents who followed influencers, most often an influence appeared only in one behavioural category (19.2%), namely: visiting an event/location, starting new activity/adopting new habit, trying new product/service, switching to another brand and engagement with the brand. Slightly fewer (18.5%) reported an influence in two behavioural categories, whereas lower percentage reported an influence in three, four and all five behavioural categories (12.2%, 8.1% and 10.3% respectively). On the other hand, up to 31.7% of respondents reported no influence in any of the categories.

The multiple ordinal regression model included potential predictors of the degree of respondents' behavioural change. The model contained five predictors, which were compared to 271 respondents. The whole model (with all predictors) was statistically significant ($p=0.015$) and Nagelkerke pseudo R^2 was 0.06, without significant multicollinearity between the predictors. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Multiple ordinal regression results for the outcome "behavioural change"

Independent variable	B	p	OR	95% confidence interval	
				Lower limit	Upper limit
Gender (female vs male)	0.59	0.030	1.80	1.06	3.08
Generation					
Z	0.89	0.039	2.43	1.04	5.64
Y	0.62	0.032	1.86	1.05	3.27
X + Baby Boomers	reference category				
Place of residence (capital city vs other)	0.22	0.410	1.25	0.73	2.15
Education level	0.20	0.244	1.22	0.88	1.69
Employment status (employed vs other)	-0.13	0.719	0.88	0.45	1.74

In the multivariate ordinal logistic regression model, statistically significant predictors of higher degree of behavioural change under the impact of influencers' activities on social media were: female gender (OR=1.80; $p=0.030$) and belonging to Generation Z (OR=2.43; $p=0.039$) and Y (OR=1.86; $p=0.032$) vs belonging to Generation X + Baby Boomers as a reference category.

4.4. Discussion

On the basis of the presented results, it can be observed that female respondents appeared to have higher probability for influencer following than men and tended to follow influencers in a larger number of areas of interest in comparison with male respondents, which is aligned with the findings of Migkos et al. (2025). Women also appeared to have had greater probability for behavioural change under the influence of influencers in relation to men. This finding opposes those of Zhou (2025), which emphasized that influencers had greater impact on purchase intentions on male consumers. Additionally, as was previously pointed by Zhou (2025), women in the sample demonstrated higher trust in recommendations of influencers. Respondents' age also appeared to be an important predictor of influencer following. As expected, respondents belonging to Generation Z and Generation Y were more likely to follow influencers compared to respondents belonging to Generation X and Baby Boomers. Also, younger respondents demonstrated higher trust in influencers' recommendations. Respondents belonging to Generation Y, compared to older generations, had higher probability of following influencers in multiple areas of interest. Finally, respondents belonging to Generation Z and Y, compared to other generations demonstrated higher probability of behavioural change under the impact of influencers. Differences between generational cohorts were also identified in previous literature, such as Cabeza-Ramirez et al. (2022) and Bratina and Faganel (2024).

Respondents' type of residence was found to be a predictor of having trust in influencers, considering that respondents from the capital city demonstrated higher trust in influencers than respondents from smaller cities and rural areas. Such findings are opposite to Zhou (2025) who found that influencers have a greater influence on the trust of social media users from rural areas. By confirming the previously identified difference according to the employment status (e.g., Alkan & Ulas, 2023; Migkos et al., 2025), it was found that employed respondents, compared to other work status categories, had higher probability to follow influencers in multiple areas. Based on the results, it turned out that the level of education is the only demographic category that is not a significant predictor of the investigated variables.

Conclusion

This research provides a contribution to the literature dedicated to the understanding of the role of demographic factors, particularly gender, age, place of residence and employment status, in shaping the perception and trust that social network users have towards influencers and behavioural outcomes encouraged by their recommendations. Additionally, the paper offers empirical insight into influencer following patterns, illuminating how demographic characteristics influence users' digital behaviour. The practical contribution of the research is reflected in the possibility of applying the findings when creating digital marketing strategies, especially when choosing influencers who will be engaged in promotional campaigns. The results can help brands tailor influencer marketing strategies based on demographic segmentation, recognizing that age, gender, and employment status, aiming to significantly affect trust and engagement. Additionally, the findings might be useful for strategic planners and marketing managers, enabling them to make more precise selection of influencers and optimization of the media mix, based on perceptions, trust and demographic differences in audience reactions. Also, marketing managers, based on the analysis of the target groups for the products/services they are promoting, can decide which target groups will be addressed by engaging influencers, and which by other channels from the media mix.

The research has certain limitations. Among the main limitations of the study are the limited scope of the sample, which may not fully reflect the wider population of social media users, as well as the reliance on self-reported data, which may be subject to bias. The sample of respondents was convenient, which also may lead to the limited possibility of generalization of the obtained results. Also, the research was time-limited, therefore, did not take into account dynamic changes in the digital environment and trends on social networks. To address these limitations, future research should aim to include a more diverse and representative sample, potentially across multiple countries or social media platforms, to enable cross-cultural comparisons and broader generalization of findings. Employing longitudinal research designs could help capture the evolving nature of influencer–follower relationships and shifting trends in digital behaviour. Additionally, incorporating mixed methods and exploring additional psychological or contextual factors, could provide deeper insights into trust formation and behavioural responses to influencer recommendations.

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