

# The Impact of Influencer Expertise and Step-by-Step Guide on Purchase Intention of Skincare Consumers

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## ABSTRACT,

*In this new digital era, social media has become more and more part of people's lives, making it a great source of information that users consistently turn to. The influence of social media on skincare is growing constantly, therefore its impact needs to be understood. This study investigated the impact of influencer expertise and step-by-step guides on purchase intention in skincare. The research was conducted by distributing an online questionnaire that resulted in 112 respondents. The analysis showed a positive effect of influencer expertise on purchase intention, although only marginally significant, and no significant effect of the step-by-step guide on purchase intention. In conclusion, this study stresses the importance of further analysing the impact of influencer expertise and step-by-step guides on purchase intention.*

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## Keywords

*Online Purchase Intention, Expertise, User manual, Trust, Credibility, Perceived usability*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In this new digital era, social media has become more and more part of people's lives, making it into a great source of information that users consistently turn to. Due to the constant and easy access to information, individuals and organisations are subjected to an overwhelming stream of data and social media updates, which can become challenging to manage over time (Bădescu & Hrib, 2021). Since the influence of social media on skincare practices is growing constantly, its impact on consumers' choices and needs, has to be understood by both organisations and consumers.

When it comes to skincare products, some skin care routines have become popular with the help of social media, while the presence of professionals on social media is very small compared to the influencers that have no knowledge of skincare (Bressler & Zampella, 2020). The problem is that while some of the promoted routines benefited a lot of users, some are affecting a great number of users in negative ways due to the fact that some of the treatments are not backed by evidence, nor do they fully align with American Academy of Dermatology (Joshi et al., 2022). For example, some routines encourage consumers to make dietary changes, take supplements, and carry out self-made treatments, which can have a harmful effect on the body and skin (Joshi et al., 2022). Moreover, influencers and companies need to be aware that most users do not have the necessary knowledge about the effects of the products on their skin (Hassan et al., 2021). Therefore, they need to be mindful of the effect their content has on people.

### 1.1. Research Objective and Question

The purpose of this study is to aid skincare businesses in understanding the consumers' behaviour when searching for skincare products and routine, so that they can better market certain products to benefit their users' needs and bring positive impact. Consequently, this study aims to help mitigate the negative effects of misinformation by helping consumers find more personalised and high quality content.

This paper's objective will be reached by analysing influencers' specific characteristics and their content, to better understand their impact.

Thus, this analysis leads to two focused research questions:

1. How does the expertise of skincare influencers affect their followers' intentions to purchase skincare products?
2. Does the presence of a step-by-step guide in influencer content impact the purchase intentions of skincare consumers?

## 2. MAIN CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Current literature on the type of content influencers use on social media is divided in two: traditional marketing and storytelling marketing. Traditional marketing is focused on accessing or creating negative feelings of the consumer, and presenting the solution that will satisfy their need (Carvalho,

2023). Recent literature has uncovered the storytelling method, in which consumers can relate to the person telling the story and thus become more persuaded to buy the presented product (Carvalho, 2023).

### 2.1. Influencer Expertise and Purchase Intention

Storytelling marketing is done in social media with the use of influencer's content. Current literature has defined persuasion as the attempt to influence another person's actions (Funkhouser & Parker, 1999). In the case of influencers, their content aims to persuade consumers into purchasing a product. Moreover, the expertise of the source of information, has been associated with credibility (Viviani & Pasi, 2017). Therefore, when it comes to persuasion, the credibility of an influencer is impacting their level of influence (Kim & Kim, 2021).

By analysing the current literature on credibility, a need for further research on expertise of the source of information was found (Keshavarz, 2020). Hassan et al. (2021) have underlined the need to study different information source characteristics among which the source knowledge has been identified as a relevant characteristic to further research.

Additionally, a study conducted by Rizzo et al. (2024) discovered that perceived influencer expertise is an important factor in determining influencer's credibility, and consequently increasing the likelihood to follow and consider their advice.

The study conducted by Kim and Kim (2021) has also discovered a positive relationship between influencer expertise and follower trust, and a positive relationship between trust and purchase intention. This research takes into account only the role of trust in the social exchange between influencers and their followers, and thus proposes further research in the relationship between trust and persuasion of followers. Next to that, this study underlines the need for further research in multiple industries or topics.

*Hypothesis 1:* Skincare consumers who are exposed to influencers with expertise, show a significantly higher intention to purchase skincare products.

### 2.2. Step-by-Step Guide and Purchase Intention

Due to the popularity of social media, there are a lot of influencers that provide different information, therefore it is important for consumers to find the right influencer that can provide the relevant information for them (Joshi et al., 2022). Thus, further research in types of influencers and what information they can provide is needed (Farivar & Wang, 2021). Next to that, Gök et al. (2019) introduces step-by-step guides and user manuals as a communicative tool that improves performance of a product and decreases its misuse. Gök's study underlines the need for more research on the relationship between user manuals and other consumer marketing concepts, such as trust and behaviour intention.

Moreover, a study by Patterson (2012) discusses the effects of written communication through technology on observability,

flexibility and efficiency. The study presents recommendations that can improve the efficiency of information transfer through technology. The most relevant recommendation is to make information clear and accessible for all intended and unintended recipients. Therefore, the presence of a guide would increase the users' understanding of the product, and thus increase the likelihood of them purchasing the product.

In addition, Smart et al. (2001) analysed the customer perceived ease of use and frequency of usage of documentations. This research has brought up the need of research in documentation design and customer needs when it comes to documentation. Another study by Clarke and Carroll (1983) has analysed the implication of human factors when it comes to the helpfulness, and perceived ease of use of user manuals. The meaning of human factors in the study reflects the style of writing the user manual in order to be more easily understood and read. Their research has highlighted the need for further research on the relationship between other human factors and user manuals, such as whether a detailed guide would improve users' understanding of the content.

Although there is extensive research in useful tools for content marketing, the use of step-by-step guides and their effect on purchase intentions has not been studied.

*Hypothesis 2:* Skincare consumers who are exposed to content with detailed step-by-step guides, show a significantly higher intention to purchase skincare products.

### 2.3. Purchase Intention of Skincare Consumers

Past research has defined purchase intention as individual conscious action towards a brand (Spears & Singh, 2004). In addition, purchase intention is part of a whole decision process that encompasses five stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010, as cited in Johansen & Guldvik, 2017). Thus, a consumer would go through some of these stages before deciding to purchase a product. Another study conducted by Kian et. al. (2017) discusses the need for research on purchase intention in social media.

In the context of the decision making process, trust is a very important factor that influences purchase behaviour (Lin & Lu, 2010). Moreover, trust has a positive relationship with influencer expertise. However, whether there is a direct relationship between influencer expertise and purchase intention has not yet been studied. Additionally, even though purchase intention has been extensively studied in relation to different factors, there is still a need to analyse the relationship between purchase intention and presentation of information (Keshavarz, 2020).

### 2.4. Age, Gender and Occupation as Control Variables

To avoid the impact of third variables on this research and enhance the model's validity, three control variables were

selected. Chan-Olmsted et al. (2013) has found that younger people create and share content more frequently than other age groups. Therefore, it is relevant to consider the effect age may have on the analysis.

In addition, there has been found a difference between the female and male genders in their behaviours on social media (Chan-Olmsted et al., 2013). In the same study, it is said that women use social media for communication and entertainment, whereas men use it for "social compensation, learning, and social identification gratifications". Therefore, gender has been chosen as a control variable for this study.

Furthermore, another study conducted by Madden and Rainie (2003) has found that highly educated people are more likely to be very active on the internet, therefore occupation was chosen as the third control variable.

### 2.5. Conceptual Framework

This research will focus on analysing whether the level of expertise of an influencer and the presence of a step by step guide in their content can affect the purchase intention of the consumers. The purpose is to help businesses to create content that is better understood and absorbed by consumers and to choose the relevant outlet for their product.

The secondary research in the literature review (Appendix A) provided a foundation for the primary study that followed, which included a quantitative research technique.

The following figure (Figure 1) will present the relationships between the independent variable and the dependent variable, with the control variables.

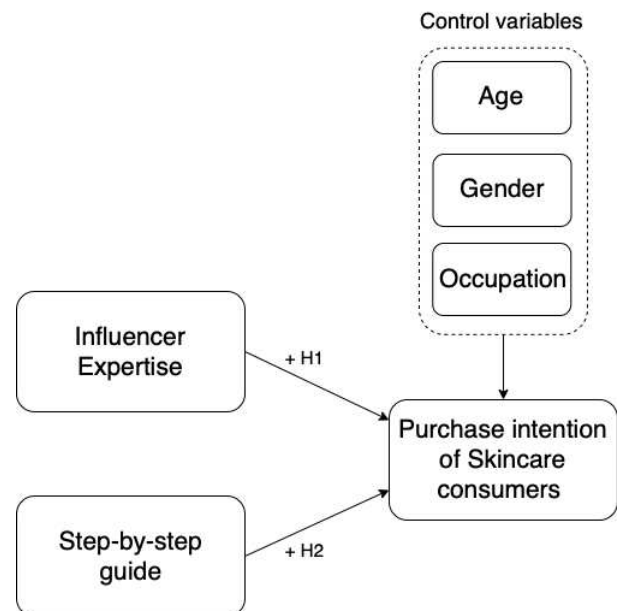


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Sample

For this study, a total of 112 participants responded to the online survey distributed online. The survey was written in the English

language, and it was distributed through Whatsapp groups and Instagram posts. In addition, in order to ensure the confidentiality of the answers, the surveys were completed anonymously, and consent was requested in the beginning of the questionnaire, thus all respondents who did not give consent or did not finish the survey, have been removed from the sample. Thus, the final sample size totaled 97 respondents.

### 3.2. Method

For this research a quantitative method was used and two hypotheses were tested: the presence of expertise, and the presence of a step-by-step guide in influencing the purchase intention of skincare products in consumers.

The design of this research is based on the 2x2 factorial design illustrated in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Research design**

	<i>With expertise</i>	<i>Without expertise</i>
<i>With Step-by-step guide</i>	Purchase intention <b>Ad 1</b>	Purchase intention <b>Ad 4</b>
<i>Without Step-by-step guide</i>	Purchase intention <b>Ad 3</b>	Purchase intention <b>Ad 2</b>

To evaluate the hypotheses, an online survey was used as the primary research methodology. This approach was chosen for its efficacy in facilitating access to a substantial sample size by spreading a survey link via digital channels. Since the aim of this research is to analyse the effect of the presence of expertise and step-by-step guide, the design chosen for this survey is between-subjects. This choice was made to avoid respondent fatigue, bias, and to ensure that the individual will respond according to the intended treatment. The survey questions are shown in Appendix D.

In the first part of the survey, the respondents were asked questions about their demographics, such as age, gender, and occupation.

Furthermore, the participants were asked to look at one ad then answer questions regarding the ad. The participants were asked the same questions for all ads in order to later compare the results. To ensure that the hypothesis is measured in an efficient way (Joshi et al., 2015), Likert Scale technique was used for the independent and dependent variables. The measurements are further aligned with studies done by Castillo et al. (2022) and Khan et al. (2020) to a 5 point Likert scale.

Finally, the last three questions of the survey were not part of the main research question, and were asked in an open-ended format, in order to allow the respondents to provide additional insights on the research topic (Hyman & Sierra, 2016). The participants shared their own criteria they consider for whether the influencer has credibility or not. As well as, the influence of step-by-step guides on adopting a new skincare routine, and whether they perceive celebrity influencers as more credible.

**Table 2. Operationalisation table**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>Item</i>
<i>IV1: Expertise</i>	5 point Likert Scale (Castillo et al., 2022)	6
<i>IV2: Step-by-Step Guide</i>	5 point Likert Scale (Khan et al., 2020)	4
<i>DV: Purchase intention of skincare consumers</i>	5 point Likert Scale (Castillo et al., 2022)	3
<i>CV: Age, Gender, Occupation</i>	Ordinal variables	3

### 3.3. Analysis

In order to analyse the responses, the data will be imported in RStudio. Firstly, to make sure that data is split by the different versions of the survey. This will later help in developing a descriptive analysis of the data for each of the versions. Secondly, to analyse the relationship between the studied variables, a correlation test, as well as a t-test will be conducted. Lastly, a regression analysis will be executed to show whether there is a significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables.

## 4. RESULTS

Once the data was imported in RStudio, the first step was to ensure that all the unnecessary columns were removed, and the incomplete responses were deleted.

### 4.1. Socio-demographic Profile

Furthermore, in Table 3, a socio-demographic profile containing the age, gender, and occupation was made. It can be seen that the majority of the respondents were in the age groups 18-24 and 25-34, representing the most active users of social media.

**Table 3. Socio-demographic profile (N=97)**

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<b>Age</b>		
<i>18-24</i>	49	51%
<i>25-34</i>	29	30%
<i>35-44</i>	12	12%
<i>45-54</i>	2	2%
<i>55 or older</i>	5	5%
<b>Gender</b>		
<i>Female</i>	70	72%
<i>Male</i>	27	28%

**Occupation**

<i>Student</i>	54	56%
<i>Professional</i>	43	44%

**4.1. Descriptive Statistics**

In Table 4 it is shown the descriptive statistics for each item of the independent variables and the dependent variable from all the versions of the survey combined. In the table below it can be seen that there is not a big difference between the items of influencer expertise variable, and the items of step-by-step guide variable. Whereas, for purchase intention, the values are approximately the same for the mean, and standard deviation ranges between 0.5 to 1.2.

**Table 4. Descriptive Statistics - all versions**

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Influencer Expertise</b>		
<i>IE_1</i>	2.64	1.101
<i>IE_2</i>	2.71	1.145
<i>IE_3</i>	2.35	1.071
<i>IE_4</i>	2.27	1.203
<i>IE_5</i>	2.18	1.146
<b>StepByStep Guide</b>		
<i>SG_1</i>	3.02	1.207
<i>SG_2</i>	2.44	1.127
<i>SG_3</i>	3.05	1.176
<i>SG_4</i>	3.70	1.129
<b>Purchase Intention</b>		
<i>PI_1</i>	2.35	1.100
<i>PI_2</i>	2.57	0.989
<i>PI_3</i>	2.25	1.041
<b>Age</b>	1.93	1.192
<b>Gender</b>	1.72	0.451
<b>Occupation</b>	1.58	0.626

In addition, in Table 9, in the Appendix B, the means are compiled for each item of the independent variables and the dependent variable from the individual version of the survey. It is important to note that for the versions of the survey with expertise, the average response was higher on perceived

expertise than the average response for the versions without expertise. Moreover, the versions of the survey which had the step-by-step guide, had a higher average response on the perceived usefulness than the versions without the guide. Therefore, the presence of the expertise and the guide were noted by the respondents and the answers were according to the intended exposure.

In addition, in Table 10, an overview of the scales of each item is represented.

**4.2. Correlation**

Furthermore, the correlation test was performed, and the results are shown in Table 8, Appendix B. One one hand, the analysis shows a high correlation between all the items of influencer expertise and all the items of purchase intention. Moreover, the analysis shows for step-by-step guide variable a high correlation only for the items 1, 2, and 3 and purchase intention. On the other hand, the correlation test shows no significant correlations between the control variables and purchase intention.

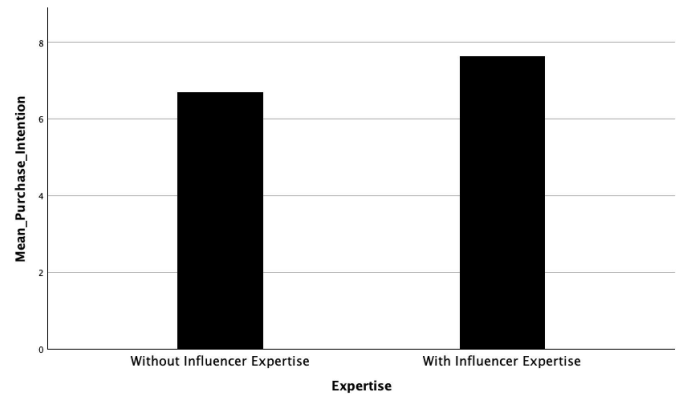
**4.3. T-Test**

For the t-test, the results in Table 5 indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between expertise and purchase intention, with a p-value of 0.058 and F of 3.681. However, for the step-by-step guide there is no statistically significant relationship, where the p-value is 0.497 and F is 0.465.

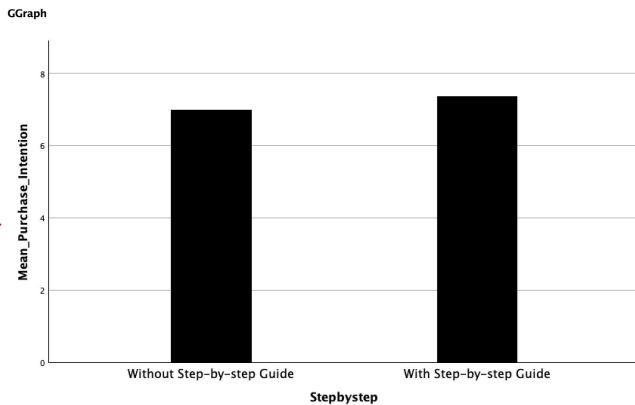
**Table 5. T-Test on Mean Purchase Intention**

	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance</i>
<i>Expertise</i>	3.681	0.058
<i>Step-by-step Guide</i>	0.465	0.497

Moreover, in Figure 2 and Figure 3 it is shown that the mean purchase intention is higher when there is expertise, than when there is no expertise, as well as when there is a step-by-step guide than when it is not.



**Figure 2. Mean Purchase intention when there is expertise and when there is no expertise**



**Figure 3. Mean Purchase intention when there is a step-by-step guide and when there is not**

#### 4.4. Hypothesis testing

In Table 6, the linear regression results are presented. Firstly, M1 represents the relationship between the control variables: age, gender, and occupation, and purchase intention. The control variables occupation: professional, age group 25-34, and age group 35-44 show a significance level of 5%.

Secondly, the M2 represents the results for the relationship between influencer expertise and purchase intention, and presence of a step-by-step guide and purchase intention.

##### 4.4.1. Hypothesis 1

The results in Table 6 show a  $\beta$  of 0.337 and a 10% significance level for influencer expertise. Additionally, in this model the age group 25-34 shows a significance level of 5%, with  $\beta$  of 0.791. Also, the age group 34-44 shows a significance of 5% with  $\beta$  of 1.067, and the occupation professional shows a significance of 5% with  $\beta$  of -0.769. Therefore, there is not enough statistical evidence to support the hypothesis.

##### 4.4.2. Hypothesis 2

For the relationship between the presence of a step by step guide and purchase intention, the independent variable has a  $\beta$  of 0.119. Moreover, the F-statistic is 1.347 on 9 and 87 degrees of freedom and p-value is 0.2251. Therefore, there is not enough statistical evidence to support the hypothesis.

**Table 6. Linear regression**

Variables	M1: CV	M2: IV + CV
<b>Intercept</b>	2.385 (0.144)***	2.143(0.201)***
<b>IV</b>		
<i>Influencer Expertise</i>		0.337 (0.189).

*Step-by-Step Guide* 0.127 (0.179)

#### CV

*AgeGroup: 25-34* 0.740 (0.324)\* 0.791 (0.323)\*

*AgeGroup: 35-44* 1.095 (0.423)\* 1.067 (0.420)\*

*AgeGroup: 45-54* 1.089 (0.854) 0.993(0.848)

*AgeGroup: 55 or older* 0.844 (0.514) 0.725 (0.513)

*Gender: Male* -0.102 (0.201) -0.133 (0.201)

*Occupation: Professional* -0.766 (0.328)\* -0.769 (0.328)\*

**Residual Standard Error** 0.8662 0.8584

**R-squared** 0.08576 0.1223

**F-statistic** 1.193 on 7 and 89 DF 1.347 on 9 and 87 DF

**P-value** 0.3153 0.2251

Significance codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

#### 4.5. Other Discoveries

Moreover, the respondents were asked three open-ended questions. Their responses have brought relevant insights that can have theoretical and practical implications. An overview of these responses can be seen in Table 13, Appendix D.

The first question addressed the criteria considered when deciding whether an influencer is a credible source of information, or not. The majority of the responses have noted a strong relationship between the expertise of the influencer and credibility. Additionally, the answers evidenced the importance of the professional background of the influencer and the research behind the product. Thus, followers are more likely to believe the influencer if he or she has a background in dermatology and if there is research that proves the effectiveness of the product.

Another important criteria is the personal experience of the product. Viewers are more inclined to trust an influencer who has had personal experience with the product.

The second question analysed the influence of step-by-step guides on willingness to try a new skincare routine or product. The answers were divided, with 50% saying that instructions of use help users incorporate the new product in their existing routine, or it helps them understand the product, and make sure that they do not harm their skin. The other 50% said that before and after pictures combined with a guide would motivate them to try the product. Therefore, users who know more about

skincare, need the guides in order to understand where the new product fits within their existing routine and how it can be combined with other products without harming the skin. Whereas, users who have less knowledge about skincare, need before and after pictures to understand how the product works, and a guide to help them reach their skin goal. However, the guide would not motivate them to buy the product, but they would be more interested in finding out more information about the product.

In the third question the respondents were asked whether they perceive a celebrity influencer as a credible source. The majority of the answers have revealed that celebrities are less trustworthy, because they have access to products and procedures that are not directly available to a person with average income. Therefore, it is less believable that they actually had any experience with the product.

#### **4.6. Summary of Findings**

The first step of the analysis was the descriptive statistics, where the items of each independent variable were calculated. The results showed a good consistency and reliability of the data. The second step was the correlation matrix, which showed a high correlation between influencer expertise and purchase intention, and a high correlation between items 1, 2, and 3 of step-by-step guide and purchase intention. Additionally, the t-test showed a statistically significant relationship between expertise and purchase intention, with a p-value of 0.058 and F of 3.681, and no statistically significant relation between step-by-step guide and purchase intention, with the p-value of 0.497 and F of 0.465.

For the final analysis linear regression was performed. The results showed a 10% significance level for the independent variable expertise, the F-statistic of 1.347 on 9 and 87 degrees of freedom, and p-value of 0.2251. Based on these results, the hypotheses were not supported.

Furthermore, additional insights were discovered. The respondents shared that expertise, professional background in skin care, research backed data about the product, and real personal experience with the product are relevant characteristics when considering the credibility of an influencer. Moreover, people consider instructional guides useful in understanding the product, and guiding them to the desired result. In addition, they tend to consider celebrity influencers less trustworthy.

### **5. DISCUSSION**

The goal of this study was to analyse the impact of influencer expertise and the presence of a step by step guide on purchase intention. Thus, the analysis has led to two focused research questions, resulting in two hypotheses.

The first hypothesis, "Skincare consumers who are exposed to influencers with expertise, show a significantly higher intention to purchase skincare products." showed significant results in the regression analysis, however influencer expertise cannot fully predict purchase intention. Nevertheless, the correlation matrix presented positive correlations between influencer expertise and

purchase intention, this means that when influencer expertise increases, purchase intention increases as well. Although the overall regression model did not show a statistical significance, the t-tests comparing mean of purchase intention between videos with and without expertise showed a statistically significant difference. Thus, participants exposed to videos with expertise demonstrated significantly higher purchase intentions compared to those without expertise.

The results from these tests prove an indirect relationship between influencer expertise and purchase intention. Moreover, the majority of the respondents have said that expertise is one of the factors that they consider when they determine the credibility of an influencer.

This could be explained by the study done by Kim and Kim (2021) that discovered a positive relationship between influencer expertise and follower trust, as well as a positive relationship between trust and purchase intention. Thus, this suggests that influencers with expertise could have a positive impact on purchase intention by building trust, alongside multiple variables or characteristics, such as the use of research backed data for the product, building personal relationships with the followers, and customer reviews.

The second hypothesis, "Skincare consumers who are exposed to content with detailed step-by-step guides, show a significantly higher intention to purchase skincare products." showed no significant results in the regression analysis, therefore the presence of a step-by-step guide does not predict purchase intention. However, the correlation matrix presented a positive relationship between the step-by-step guide and purchase intention, this means that when there is a step-by-step guide, purchase intention increases. Moreover, the t-tests did not show a statistically significant difference in mean of purchase intention between videos with and without a step-by-step guide. Nevertheless, in Figure 4, Appendix D it is shown a higher mean of purchase intention with a step-by-step guide than without.

The results from these tests prove that there is an indirect relationship as well between the step-by-step guide and purchase intention. Furthermore, the respondents have said that the instructions help them understand the product, and guides them towards achieving the result. However, the instructions do not increase the likelihood of them buying the product. This suggests that an instructional guide could have a positive influence on purchase intention, when it is combined with other variables, such as before and after pictures, facts about the product, and customer reviews.

The study has also shown that the control variables age and occupation have a significant effect on purchase intention. The age groups 25-34 and 35-44 have a positive effect on purchase intention, whereas the occupation professional has a negative effect on purchase intention. However, the correlation matrix has shown no correlation between the control variables and purchase intention.

#### **5.1. Conclusion**

The main question of this study was, "How does the expertise of skincare influencers and the presence of a step-by-step guide,

*affect their followers' intentions to purchase skincare products?''*. The results show that influencer expertise has a positive significant effect on purchase intention, however, it cannot fully predict purchase intention. When it comes to the presence of step-by-step guides in influencer's content, the analysis showed that its presence has no significant effect on purchase intention. However, the results suggest that there is an indirect relationship between influencer expertise and purchase intention, and an indirect relationship between step-by-step guides and purchase intention.

Thus, the discoveries have shown the importance of further analysing the impact of influencer marketing and step-by-step guides on purchase intention.

## 5.2. Implications

When considering the theoretical implications of this study, it can be recognised that it brings valuable insights into influencer marketing. Since previous studies have analysed different influencer characteristics in relation to purchase intention (Hassan et al., 2021), this study has attempted to fill in the gap. Additionally, there has been a lack of research in regards to influencer marketing and instructional guides in skincare (Kim & Kim, 2021), thus this study has aimed to shed some light on this matter.

Moreover, this paper has analysed the impact of instructional guides on purchase intention, and discovered thought-provoking insights that would suggest further research.

From the business perspective, the implications of this study aimed to bring an understanding about consumer's behaviour when searching for skincare products or routines. The discoveries confirm that influencer expertise and instructional guides aid in increasing purchase intention. However, not on their own, thus this research suggests that businesses should include in their current mix of marketing practices, customer reviews, as well as select influencers that have expertise in skincare and can offer valuable data about the product. Businesses can do further analysis on real purchase behaviours and discover which combination of variables or characteristics influences the purchases of their products.

## 5.3. Limitations and future research

There are some limitations in this study. Firstly, more than 70% of the respondents were women. Since the behaviours and reasons for which each gender chooses to use a social media application are different (Chan-Olmsted et al., 2013), the results of the survey cannot be generalised for all genders. The results mostly portray the women's patterns of behaviour and their preferences to skincare. Therefore, a similar study that analyses the behaviour of men and women in a more balanced sample, would make the study more valid and increase its applicability.

Secondly, due to the design choice of between-subjects, a large sample size is required. However, the sample size of this study is relatively small, and the majority of the respondents are people within the same network, which can be seen in the socio-demographic profile in Table 3. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge this limitation and to understand that the results of this study may not be generalisable.

Lastly, the results of this study can not be generalised for all industries. Therefore, a similar study for other topics or industries could be conducted.

The ads that were presented in the survey were sourced from one platform and thus not generalisable for all networking sites. Since all social media platforms offer a different customer experience (Voorveld et al., 2018), it would be interesting to have a similar study, where the respondents' behaviours on each social platform can be compared. An interesting direction for research is to create a study that would include before and after pictures of the product results, and afterwards present a guide that would explain the steps towards reaching those desired results. This combination can then be created according to each platform's format. Since Instagram is a photo sharing application (Hu et al., 2014), an example would be to make the combination as a picture and analyse the consumer behaviour in this format. Whereas, TikTok is a video sharing application (Shutsko, 2020), therefore the combination of variables can be presented as a video.

Consumers might require more than just expertise and instructional guides to buy a product. This study suggests that they might need more confirmation from different sources of information, and more time to decide whether they believe in the product (Lin & Lu, 2010). Thus, a more complex longitudinal study with a diverse sample would be needed to analyse a combination of variables in relationship with purchase intention.

In order to understand what drives purchase intention, another interesting study can be done on the effect of a combination of multiple variables on purchase intention. Such variables could be customer reviews, research backed data of the product, pre-established relationship with the followers, and documented experience with the product. This could create a stronger model, and increase the generalisability of the research.

Additionally, the discoveries suggest a further understanding of the relationship between influencer expertise and purchase intention, and step-by-step guide and purchase intention, a similar study to this one can be done. The proposed direction is to analyse the relationship between perceived expertise and purchase intention, and the relation between perceived usefulness of instructional guides and purchase intention.

## 6. AI DISCLAIMER

For the purpose of this paper, the author used ChatGPT in order to correct certain R code errors. After using this tool, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and took full responsibility for the content of the work. Additionally, ResearchRabbit.ai was used to search for extra literature, in the context of literature review, to better find related papers, and to broaden the research pool.

List of tools:

1. ChatGPT
2. ResearchRabbit.ai



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## 8. APPENDIX

### 8.1. Appendix A

**Table 7. Literature Matrix**

<i>Study</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>DV</i>	<i>Empirical Approach</i>	<i>Future research</i>
(Shafiq, 2011)	Customer knowledge, Celebrity endorsement, Product packaging, Perceived value	Purchase Intention	Survey	Need for further research on consumer knowledge, celebrity endorsement, product packaging, and perceived value with purchase intention
(Gök et al., 2019)	User Manual Quality, Perceived Product Quality	Customer Satisfaction	Interviews	UMQ with perceived value, behavioural intention and trust
(Akar & Nasır, 2015)	Consumer characteristics, Web site characteristics, Product characteristics, Merchant characteristics	Purchase intention	Systematic review	Impact of knowledge, message framing, involvement of consumer on PI
(Hassan et al., 2021)	Influencer knowledge, relatability, helpfulness, self-confidence, articulation, trustworthiness	Purchase intention	Survey	Study the relationship between different characteristics of influencer and PI
(Keshavarz, 2020c)	Source credibility, Message credibility, Media credibility	NO	Systematic review	Relationship between user decision-making and information source, credibility, presentation
(Kian et al., 2017)	Perceived ease of use, Social influences, Perceived usefulness, Perceived enjoyment, Trust, Demographics	Purchase intention	Survey	Insufficient research on PI in social media
(Clarke & Carroll, 1983)	User Manuals	Human factors, helpfulness, perceived ease of use	Experiment: taught a course using the user guide	Further research on human factors and user manual writing
(Smart et al., 2001)	User Manuals	Perceived ease of use, Frequency of use	Survey	Further research in documentation design and customer needs when it comes to documentation
(Farivar & Wang, 2021)	Influencer characteristics, Content characteristics, Consumer characteristics	Consumer intention	Systematic review	Future research in performance-driven angle, finding the right influencers, followers' well-being, and platform differences
(Patterson, 2012)	Recommendations about written communication optimisation	Observability, flexibility, and efficiency	Systematic review	Further research on methods of information optimisation, and making the message more easily digested
(Kim & Kim, 2021)	Source credibility: expertise and intention; Source attractiveness	Loyalty, Product attitude, Purchase Intention	Survey	Further research in a specific industry or topic. Also, research in the relationship between trust and persuasion.

(Funkhouser & Parker, 1999)	Persuasion	Marketing	Theory development	It is a general theory. Need for more theory testing and application development.
(Johansen & Guldvik, 2017)	Influencer marketing	Purchase Intention	Experiment	Need for a new, improved study, that takes into consideration other brands, topics, or influencer platforms.
(Rizzo et al., 2024)	Personological characteristics on the levels of Influencer Credibility	Consumer behaviour	Survey	Understanding the role of personality traits in social media interactions
(Lin & Lu, 2010)	Trust, corporate image, relationship marketing, word-of-mouth	Purchase intention	Survey	There needs to be a similar study on other industries, because it might not be generalisable

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## 8.2. Appendix B

**Table 8. Correlations table**

	Age	Gender	Occupation	IE1	IE2	IE3	IE4	IE5	SG1	SG2	SG3	SG4	PI1	PI2	PI3
Age	--														
Gender	0,079	--													
Occupation	.782**	0,132	--												
IE1	-.250*	0,047	-.344**	--											
IE2	-0,092	-0,056	-0,128	.619**	--										
IE3	-0,053	0,010	-0,165	.630**	.449**	--									
IE4	0,043	-0,092	-0,138	.380**	.397**	.476**	--								
IE5	0,025	0,176	-0,070	.530**	.547**	.467**	.396**	--							
SG1	-.245*	0,049	-.333**	.523**	.471**	.373**	.347**	.434**	--						
SG2	-0,053	0,143	-0,101	.483**	.415**	.422**	.319**	.536**	.560**	--					
SG3	-0,161	-0,051	-0,154	.489**	.475**	.267**	0,137	.434**	.447**	.478**	--				
SG4	-0,086	-0,063	-0,122	.315**	.352**	.200*	0,136	.234*	.501**	.318**	.498**	--			
PI1	0,019	0,073	-0,115	.544**	.478**	.443**	.448**	.612**	.450**	.571**	.389**	0,186	--		
PI2	0,026	-0,040	-0,080	.496**	.477**	.430**	.405**	.445**	.322**	.380**	.234*	0,125	.524**	--	
PI3	0,048	0,060	0,018	.342**	.366**	.295**	.321**	.400**	.369**	.447**	0,177	0,046	.497**	.631**	--

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 9. Descriptive statistics for each version of the survey (Mean)**

<i>Treatment Version</i>	<i>IE_1</i>	<i>IE_2</i>	<i>IE_3</i>	<i>IE_4</i>	<i>IE_5</i>	<i>SG_1</i>	<i>SG_2</i>	<i>SG_3</i>	<i>SG_4</i>	<i>PI_1</i>	<i>PI_2</i>	<i>PI_3</i>
1	2.91	3.13	2.52	2.87	2.43	3.4	2.83	3.13	3.83	2.52	2.78	2.35
2	2.13	2.29	2.08	1.83	1.92	2.63	2.08	2.88	3.29	2.04	2.29	1.96
3	2.85	2.92	2.42	2.08	2.12	2.88	2.27	2.88	3.65	2.31	2.85	2.46
4	2.67	2.50	2.38	2.33	2.25	3.21	2.63	3.33	4.04	2.54	2.33	2.21

### 8.2.1. Scales

**Table 10. Overview of scales for each item**

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*Item (Scale 1="Strongly disagree", to 5="Strongly agree")*

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<i>Influencer expertise</i>	I trust the advice given by this influencer
	I think the influencer has enough expertise in skincare
	I believe the influencer provides unbiased and honest advice
	The influencer uses scientific data or research to support their advice
	I am likely to continue following this influencer for skincare advice
<i>Step-by-Step Guide</i>	I found the instructions to use to be a valuable addition to the influencer...
	The guide motivated me to try the skincare routine or product immediately
	The guide made the skincare product appear more effective
	The instructions to use seem clear and easy to follow
<i>Purchase Intention</i>	I am likely to purchase the skincare product recommended by this influencer
	I feel confident about the effectiveness of the product
	I would recommend this product to others

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**8.3. Appendix C**  
 8.3.1. Group Statistics

**Table 11. Group statistics Expertise and Purchase Intention**

	<i>Expertise</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
<i>Mean_Purchase_Intention</i>	0	48	6.69	2.784	.402
	1	49	7.63	2.378	.340

**Table 12. Group statistics Step-by- step Guide and Purchase Intention**

	<i>Stepbystep</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
<i>Mean_Purchase_Intention</i>	0	50	6.98	2.699	.382
	1	47	7.36	2.540	.371

## 8.4. Appendix D

**Table 13. Other discoveries**

<i>Question</i>	<i>Percentage → Answer</i>
<i>What factors are most important to you when you determine the credibility of the influencer?</i>	<p><b>31%</b> → expertise/professional background in the field</p> <p><b>28%</b> → research backed data about the product, and it has to be presented truthfully in the add</p> <p><b>17%</b> → real experience/documentated with the product</p> <p><b>13%</b> → if it's a paid promotion, people tend not to trust the influencer</p>
<i>How do step-by-step guides influence your confidence in trying new skincare products or routines?</i>	<p><b>50%</b> → it helps them understand how to use the product, how to incorporate it in their routine, motivates them to find more information on the product</p> <p><b>50%</b> → it doesn't motivate them to try the product, they would need before and after pictures, and then a guide to follow</p>
<i>Do you perceive celebrity influencers as more credible when it comes to skincare advice? Why or why not?</i>	<p><b>18%</b> → celebrity influencers are more trustworthy</p> <p><b>82%</b> → they are less trustworthy/ credible. If the influencer is a niche influencer, with credentials and big following then they are trustworthy</p>



#### 8.4.1. Survey

My name is Cezara Smalbergher and I am a student conducting this study as part of my academic research. The survey will take about 7 minutes and focuses on your perceptions and intentions regarding skincare products.

Your responses are confidential and will be used solely for research purposes. Participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time.

By continuing, you confirm that you are at least 18 years old and consent to participate.

Thank you very much for your valuable contribution to my research.

I agree and am ready to proceed with the survey

I do not agree

What is your age?

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55 or older

What is your gender

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

Other

What is your occupation?

Student

Professional

Other

Do you use skincare products?

Yes

No

Where do you most often search for information about skincare products?

YouTube

TikTok

Instagram

Google

I do not search for it. I just buy it from the store.

Other

How often do you seek skincare advice from social media influencers?

Every time I buy a product

When I am not sure what to buy

I do not seek advice

Other

Please select the most appropriate answer for the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I trust the advice given by this influencer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think the influencer has enough expertise in skincare	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe the influencer provides unbiased and honest advice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The influencer uses scientific data or research to support their advice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am likely to continue following this influencer for skincare advice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please select the most appropriate answer for the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I found the instructions to use to be a valuable addition to the influencer's content	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The guide motivated me to try the skincare routine or product immediately	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The guide made the skincare product appear more effective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The instructions to use seem clear and easy to follow	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please select the most appropriate answer for the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I am likely to purchase the skincare product recommended by this influencer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel confident about the effectiveness of the product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would recommend this product to others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What factors are most important to you when you determine the credibility of the influencer?

How do step-by-step guides influence your confidence in trying new skincare products or routines?

Do you perceive celebrity influencers as more credible when it comes to skincare advice? Why or why not?