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ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF COMMERCE

DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING MANAGEMENT

THE EFFECT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ATTRIBUTES ON CUSTOMER PURCHASE DECISIONS IN ADDIS ABABA: THE CASE OF ARADA HARD SELTZER DRINK

BY

HANNA TADESSE

ADVISOR

HAILEMARIAM KEBEDE (PhD)

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN THE PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN MARKETING MANAGEMENT

JUNE 2026

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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Statement of Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis entitled **"The Effect of Influencer Marketing Attributes on Customer Purchase Decisions in Addis Ababa: The Case of Arada Hard Seltzer Drink"** is my original work and it has been done through the guidance and support of my advisor Hailemariam Kebede (PhD). I can guarantee that the study has not been submitted to this or any other universities for consideration for a degree or postgraduate program.

Name: Hanna Tadesse

Signature: 

Date: June 23, 2026

Approval Sheet

This is to certify that the research entitled, **"The Effect of Influencer Marketing Attributes on Customer Purchase Decisions in Addis Ababa: The Case of Arada Hard Seltzer Drink"** was carried out by Hanna Tadesse under the supervision of Hailemariam Kebede (PhD) submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Marketing Management fulfills with the regulations of the University.

Approved by Board Examiners

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Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I'm deeply grateful for the grace, guidance and mercy of the Almighty God. Forever thankful for His blessings in the past, present and future of my life's journey.

To my advisor, Hailemariam Kebede (PhD): Thank you Dr. for your valuable advice and guidance.

To Thomas Lemma (PhD): Thank you so much Thom, for your time in mentoring me and regularly checking the status of this project regardless of your busy schedule. Your support really meant a lot to me.

I'm thankful to the officials of Komari Beverages, Ms. Wani Neku and Ms. Kalkidan Wondwossen, for their kind cooperation in delivering the necessary documents and information.

To my friends: I'm one of the luckiest human beings for having an amazing people around me, like you. You frequently asked me the status of this project and stretched a helping hand during the very demanding data collection period. Your encouragement had a significant impact on the success of this project.

To everyone, especially my LinkedIn connections, who took the time to respond and shared the survey link to help me reach the right audience, thank you! Without your participation, this project would have remained nothing more than an idea on paper.

To Saba Alebachew: You truly went the extra mile for the success of this paper. You were beside me and sometimes even ahead of me at every turn of this journey. Your support has been unmatched and you represent the true meaning of friendship. I am honored to have you by my side in this path we call life. We made it, friend! We finally made it!

Last, but most importantly, to the one who has always believed in me; yesterday, today and surely tomorrow. To the person who insisted me to chase my dreams and encouraged me to start this journey in the first place, my mother, W/ro Amognesh Adamu. Ema, this chapter has come to a successful end. Though I may not yet be halfway to the heights you imagine for me, I hope this milestone brings you joy.

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Abstract

This research examined the effect of influencer marketing attributes on customer purchase decisions within the context of the Ethiopian beverage industry. The study focused on Arada, a newly introduced hard seltzer product, and utilized the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) Model as the primary theoretical framework to map the consumer decision-making process and the Source Credibility Theory (SCT) to analyze the specific attributes of influencers that drive this process.

While the study targeted a calculated sample size of 384 respondents, the initial outreach got 292 responses. After filtering for geographic residency in Addis Ababa, active social media usage and a minimum age of 18, the study utilized a final valid sample of 281 respondents.

Adopting an explanatory research design and a quantitative methodology, the study utilized a structured survey questionnaire for data collection. A combination of purposive, convenience and snowball sampling methods were used to reach respondents. Trustworthiness, Relatability, Expertise and Attractiveness were treated as independent variables and Consumer Purchase Decision was taken as dependent variable.

The study used Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 26 to analyze the data through descriptive and inferential statistics. Validity and internal consistency of the research instrument was evaluated to ensure the reliability of the findings and the proposed hypotheses were tested by using multiple linear regression analysis.

The result demonstrated that the attributes of an influencer have a positive and statistically significant impact on the purchase decision of a customer.

Since Ethiopia banned the promotion of alcoholic beverages through traditional broadcast media (Proclamation No. 1112/2019), utilizing influencer marketing became an important alternative to increase the brand visibility of a product across the digital landscape. The study recommended that, to effectively operate in the current regulatory landscape, Komari Beverage shall continue its strategic collaboration with influencers by considering their expertise and trustworthiness rather than selecting influencers simply based on their large follower counts.

Key Words: Influencer Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Purchase Decision, Arada Hard Seltzer, Social Media Marketing

Chapter One - Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Brands heavily reply on promotion to communicate their value with their audience and to become visible in the market. For this, advertising has been the major element within this promotional mix. Because the digital landscape is transforming in a fast and dynamic way, the communication mechanism for companies to connect with their audiences is also changing. Modern Marketing can't escape this digital evolution.

Online media is now dominate the marketing space that increases activities in the social media marketing. Though the traditional marketing isn't fully disappeared, the global landscape shows a clear migration to the social media platforms. The universal availability of digital tools creates an environment for ease of service availability. Because of this, media like print, huge billboards and broadcast networks are considered as less efficient than the digital one especially to millennial and Gen Z community.

In this regards, influencer marketing emerges as a strategic alternative method for promotion. According to Morteo (2017), influencers are individuals with expert knowledge in specific topics who create original content and share honest opinion with an organic audience that willingly treats them as a trusted and credible reference.

Over the last 10 years, the influencer marketing industry is evolved from niche channel to the core element of modern marketing. Data from *the 2025 Influencer Marketing Benchmark Report* confirms that social media stands as the largest global advertising channel, with a global spending of $266.92 billion in total expenditures. Within this space, influencer marketing network is projected the global market size of $32.55 billion by 2025. In addition to this, 63.8% of brands intend to collaborate with influencers in 2025, with 47% of experts prioritizing long-term partnerships. These numbers show the growth of the sector and its status as the future of consumer engagement.

While global trends indicate a massive shift toward influencer-led digital strategies, the Ethiopian context presents a unique intersection of regulatory necessity and rapid digital adoption. This research specifically addresses the Ethiopian beverage industry, utilizing Arada Hard Seltzer as a focal point to examine how influencer attributes, (Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness and Relatability), serve as the primary drivers of consumer purchase decisions in a post-traditional-advertising landscape.

In Ethiopia, this shift is becoming visible lately across major industries including fintech, banking, real estate, travel and hospitality, fashion, ride-hailing platforms, and consumer beverages. This rising ecosystem particularly relates with the digital pioneers of Generation Y (Millennials) and tech-savvy Generation Z consumers. Because these demographics spend significant amount of their daily lives surfing through the internet, companies increasingly view these demographics as the primary target audience for digital advertising campaigns.

The rapid expansion of internet accessibility across Ethiopia has increased the country's social media user base. Based on the *Digital Ethiopia 2030 Strategy*, internet penetration has reached to 45% by 2025, accounting to roughly 58 million active users. This infrastructure growth is supported by mobile broadband coverage that has reached 98% in 2024, driving overall mobile penetration to 71% or 86.6 million users by March 2025. Because 24.2% of the national population lives in urban centers, it can be concluded that majority of activities related with internet are concentrated within major urban centers, particularly Addis Ababa.

Parallel report from *DataReportal* for Digital Ethiopia profile indicates that the total social media audience has reached to 8.30 million individuals. This number represents 6.2% of the entire population and marks a substantial growth of 1.3 million new users (17.7%) compared with the previous 2024. Within this digital environment, platform dynamics are shifting rapidly. TikTok has completely transformed user habits, securing the top spot as the country's most engaging application based on total time spent. Simultaneously, Instagram has established itself as the fastest-expanding network among the city youth with an audience of 1.25 million, while Facebook maintains its dominance as the largest and highly influential platform with a total reach of 8.30 million.

Coupled with government efforts to improve broadband connectivity and power supply (Digital Ethiopia, 2025), Komari Beverages' strategic shift toward digital platforms is considered as a highly appropriate one, especially knowing that 11.4% of the adult population (aged 18+) are active social media users.

In addition to the above points, Ethiopia banned all traditional media advertising for alcoholic drinks under Proclamation No. 1112/2019 since 2019. Because of these strict rules, Komari can't rely on television or billboards. Instead, the company must actively use social media channels and digital creators as this approach is no longer just some alternative mechanism for promotion but an essential step to stay visible in the market.

Within this challenging regulatory environment, Arada Hard Seltzer, as Ethiopia's first domestic hard seltzer brand, has emerged as a focal point for studying these digital shifts. Recognizing that traditional media is difficult to access due to Proclamation No. 1112/2019, the brand has adopted an influencer-driven, community-based strategy to promote its identity among Addis Ababa's urban youth. This study utilizes Arada Hard Seltzer as a primary case to analyze how influencer attributes (Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness and Relatability) function as the essential drivers of consumer purchase behavior when traditional advertising is prohibited.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In the competitive beverage industry of Ethiopia, companies are increasingly shifting from traditional advertising to digital strategies due to various reasons.

Ethiopian Beverage companies are moving from traditional advertising methods to the digital ones due to different reasons. In this competitive industry, the main reason of this shift is a legal ban which became operational since 2019. According to Proclamation No. 1112/2019, it's prohibited to promote any alcoholic beverages through TV, radio and billboards starting from 2019. The restriction is also applicable on any direct or indirect advertisement that connects a brand name, trademark, logo, emblem etc. or any other distinctive feature of an alcoholic product. In addition to this, a report by the World Health Organization (2021) indicates that governments shall tighten restrictions of alcohol advertising, especially traditional ones. Due to this, the beverage industry is shifting to the digital landscape. For a life style-oriented and youth-centric brand like Arada, considering the digital medium as a of promotional means is no more an option but a necessity.

The relatability and perceived authenticity of influencers make them more trusted than traditional media (Al-Mu'ani et al., 2023). While influencer marketing has emerged as an important tool to reach the urban youth of Addis Ababa on platforms like TikTok, Instagram and Facebook, the simple presence on these platforms does not guarantee marketing success and the collaboration alone does not ensure the desired consumer response. Knowing the suitable social media platform where perfect target audience is available is also important to its success. Furthermore, platform dynamics are shifting; while Instagram has traditionally been the hub for lifestyle branding, recent evidence suggests a growing consumer insensitivity toward its highly curated content (de Oliveira, 2025), whereas TikTok's spontaneous nature may offer higher perceived trustworthiness.

Aside from the industry leadership suggestion that *"Ethiopian culture highly values personal recommendations"* (Teshome, 2024) and the foundational work by Nega (2024) and Kedir (2024) on social media awareness and homophily in Ethiopia, there is a difficulty in finding empirical evidence regarding which specific influencer attributes *(Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness or Relatability)* actually drive the final purchase decision in the unique cultural and economic context of Ethiopia, under the constraints of Proclamation No. 1112/2019. Since most local studies focus on established beer brands, the specifics about influencer influence on the Arada Hard Seltzer drink purchase journey remain empirically unexplored.

This study tried to investigate the impact of social media influencer credibility, specifically expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness and relatability on the purchase decisions of Arada Seltzer among consumers in Addis Ababa. By doing so, it addressed the lack of empirical data currently available to Ethiopian marketing professionals who are navigating a post-traditional-advertising landscape.

1.3 Research Questions

1.3.1 Main Research Question

The main question of this research is to understand how influencer marketing attributes affect the purchase decision of Arada seltzer drink consumers who reside in Addis Ababa.

1.3.2 Sub Research Questions

Based on the main research question, this study investigated the following sub-research questions.

- Which specific influencer attribute (trustworthiness, relatability, expertise and attractiveness) most significantly influence the purchase decisions of Arada Hard Seltzer consumers in Addis Ababa?
- How do consumers in Addis Ababa perceive the authenticity of influencer endorsements and to what extent does this perception of *trust* versus *paid advertising* affect their final purchase decision?
- Which social media platforms, such as TikTok, Instagram and Facebook etc. utilized in Arada Seltzer's campaigns, are most effective in driving purchase decisions among consumers in Addis Ababa?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 General Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to assess the impact of influencer marketing attributes on the purchase decision of consumers of Arada hard seltzer drink, found in Addis Ababa.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives of the Study

- To examine how influencer attributes (trust, relatability, expertise and attractiveness) influence purchase decisions.
- To evaluate the extent to which perceived trust and authenticity in influencer endorsements affect consumer purchase decision.
- To identify which social media platforms used in Arada Seltzer's campaigns are most effective in driving purchase decisions.
- To analyze the overall effectiveness of influencer marketing in converting brand awareness into actual purchase behavior for a new product category in the Ethiopian context.

1.5 Significance of the Study

1.5.1 Practical Significance

- The study will provide empirical evidence on the relationship between influencer attributes, beverage marketing, and social media platforms. Specifically, it provided data-driven insights to Komari Beverages regarding the influencer attributes and social media platforms that yield the highest impact. This will enable the company to allocate its marketing budget more effectively and revise its selection process in an environment where traditional media advertising is legally restricted.
- The findings will assist the company in refining its promotional message. It will identify whether the urban youth in Addis Ababa respond better to *authentic* and *relatable* content or *highly polished and aspirational* influencer advertisements. This result will help the company to modify its creative direction to match the specific message that initiates Generation Y and Z demographics.
- It'll guide the company to determine which specific digital platforms (such as TikTok, Instagram and Facebook) are most influential in delivering promotional messages which can increase engagement and drive actual purchase.

1.5.2 Theoretical Significance

This research will play a significant role in contributing to the academic literature focusing on the newly emerging influencer marketing sector. In addition, it'll will also serve as a reference for future researchers who wish to study the digital consumer behavior.

1.6 Scope of the Study

Addis Ababa is the economic hub of the country and also has a high population with access to the digital world compared to those who live in other parts of Ethiopia. Accordingly, this study is delimited to the capital city. The research focuses on actual/potential consumers who lives in Addis Ababa and are active users of social media. Moreover, it's also limited to examine the impact four attributes of influencer marketing (Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness and Relatability) on the purchase decision of customers. Since the selected attributes won't be the only predictors for the purchase decision of the customer, the result may lack to show the impact of other attributes which have a role in the purchase decision of a customer.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

- Since this study is limited to the capital city Addis Ababa, the findings may not fully represent of consumers of Arada Hard Seltzer who are found in other regions of Ethiopia as attitudes & cultures differ from the capital city towards influencers and hard seltzer drink.
- The study utilized multi-channel and non-probability sampling due to time and budget restrictions. This may exclude certain demographic segments and could lead to sampling bias which potentially affecting the precision and inclusiveness of the results.
- Since the study relied on self-reported data from consumers, there is a high chance of response bias occurrence, which may affect the validity and reliability of the result.
- This research tried to provide a highlight of the current marketing environment. Given the rapidly evolving nature of social media trends and the digital landscape in Ethiopia, the effectiveness of specific influencers or platforms may change shortly after the study's completion.

1.8 Definition of Terms

1. Independent Variable: This refers to the variables that influence or cause changes in the dependent variable. In this specific study, the influencer marketing attributes, Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness and Relatability serve as the independent variables.
2. Dependent Variable: This is the variable that is being measured or affected by the independent variables. In this research, the customer purchase decision is the dependent variable, as it is the outcome influenced by the influencer marketing attributes.

1.9 Organization of the Research Report

This study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter establishes the foundation of the research. it includes the background of the study and a brief overview of Komari Beverages (Arada Seltzer). It further elaborates on the statement of the problem, research questions and the general and specific objectives. This chapter also discusses the significance, scope and limitations of the study, provides operational definitions of terms. Chapter two mainly deals with review of related literature, hypothesis of the study, which is derived from the literature and the conceptual framework that guides the study. The third chapter shows details about the methodology of this research. It covers the research paradigm, approach and design. It also defines the target population and explains the sampling design, including the sample size and procedure. Furthermore, it outlines the data collection instruments, data analysis methods and addresses validity, reliability, and ethical considerations. Under the fourth chapter, results are discussed. It presents the collected data through tables and charts, followed by an in-depth interpretation of the findings in relation to the research hypotheses. Key findings, conclusion, recommendation and suggestions for further study will be presented in the final chapter.

Chapter Two – Review of Related Literature

2.1 Theoretical Review of Related Literature

Studying about the behavior of a consumer behavior is important to understand how marketing activities are converted into actual purchase decisions. To examine the effect of influencer marketing attributes on the purchase decision of Arada Seltzer consumers in Addis Ababa, this research adopts the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) Model as the primary framework to map the consumer journey and uses the Source Credibility Theory (SCT) to analyze the specific elements of influencers that drive this process.

2.1.1 Concepts and Definitions of Consumer Behavior

Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019, defines consumer behavior as the study that processes when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy their needs and desires. It is an interdisciplinary framework that examines the *why* behind the purchase, viewing the consumer as a decision-maker influenced by internal psychological factors and external sociocultural environments.

Since the modern marketing landscape is expanding, this definition shall include the digital interactions and technological touchpoints that characterize the current consumer journey. Within this framework, the study identifies 4 core conceptual dimensions that define modern consumer behavior.

1. The decision-making process involves a multi-stage cycle of *need recognition*, *pre-purchase information search* and *evaluation of alternatives*. Under the digital contexts, this journey is characterized by a frequent fall of consumers between searching and evaluating before reaching to a final decision. Moreover, it's not simply the act of purchase but a multi-stage process involving *Input* (external influences), *Process* (internal psychological factors) and *Output* (purchase and post-purchase evaluation).
2. A main idea in modern consumer behavior is that people buy things based on how they see the world rather than facts. Schiffman and Wisenblit (2019) mention that a buyer's view of a brand depends heavily on how much they trust or like the person talking about it. This personal connection actually guides their plan to buy an item much more than the actual technical features of the product.
3. Consumer behavior is heavily influenced by *opinion leaders* and *reference groups*. In the digital age, social media influencers act as a main link which turn brand messages into

social stimuli that consumers process based on *trust* and *relatability*. (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019).

4. Consumer behavior now involves how individuals engage with social media networks and the contents of influencers. These online interactions build a more personalized and trust-based shopping experience compared to traditional broadcast media.

2.1.2 Consumer Motivation

Consumer motivation is defined as an *inner state of activation* that provides the energy needed to achieve a goal (Hoyer, MacInnis & Pieters, 2012). According to the MAO (Motivation, Ability and Opportunity) framework, when a consumer is motivated, they are significantly more likely to pay attention to the marketing stimuli, process information deeply and commit brand details to long-term memory (Hoyer et al., 2012). This research identifies key backgrounds that shows the strength of consumer motivation in a digital landscape.

1. **Personal Relevance**: When an offering is perceived as personally relevant, consumers feel the brand is *for them*, which increases the intensity of their involvement Hoyer et al. (2012)
2. **Perceived Risk**: Motivation is frequently activated by the need to reduce uncertainty. When consumers perceive a purchase as risky, socially, physically or financially, they are more motivated to seek out reliable information (Hoyer et al., 2012).
3. **Consistency with Self-Concept**: Consumers are motivated to process information that aligns with their internal view of themselves. The framework suggests that brand messages resonating with the consumer's *ideal self* are processed with greater cognitive effort Hoyer et al., (2012).

Furthermore, the study argues that for motivation to result in action, it must be supported by the consumer's *ability* (prior knowledge) and *opportunity* (situational factors). By utilizing relatable influencers, the research suggests that brands can bridge the gap between a consumer's motivation and their final purchase intention by making the product feel accessible and culturally relevant.

2.1.3 Consumer Perception and Attention

Before consumers can be motivated to purchase a product, they must first go through the stages of *exposure*, *attention* and *perception*. According to Hoyer, MacInnis, and Pieters (2012) defined perception as the process by which incoming stimuli are organized and interpreted to create a meaningful picture of the world. In the digital environment, this process is increasingly

competitive due to the high volume of marketing messages. Accordingly, the following three critical stages are identified in this journey.

1. **Exposure and Pre-attentive Processing**: Exposure occurs when a consumer comes into physical contact with a stimulus. Influencer marketing is uniquely effective because it places the brand within the consumer's natural social media feed, increasing the likelihood of exposure compared to traditional media which consumers often actively avoid through zipping (fast-forwarding commercials) or zapping (changing the channel) Hoyer et al., (2012).
2. **Selective Attention**: Because consumers can't process every stimulus, they practice selective attention, since attention become sharp when a stimulus is personally relevant or surprising. In this regard, attractiveness and creative visual storytelling are primary tools used by influencers to break through the confusion and capture the consumer's focal attention (Dheenadhayalan, 2025; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019).
3. **Perceptual Interpretation (The Halo Effect)**: Once attention is captured, the consumer will interpret the message. The positive perception of one trait, such as an influencer's physical attractiveness or lifestyle, is subconsciously extended to the product itself (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019).

2.1.4 Consumer Attitudes and Persuasion

An attitude is defined as a learned predisposition to behave in a consistently favorable or unfavorable way with respect to a given object (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). Since, attitudes are not inborn, they can be formed through a combination of direct experience, word-of-mouth and exposure to mediated communication. Attitude can be formed through two primary scholarly lenses.

1. **The Tri-component Attitude Model**: According to Schiffman and Wisenblit (2019), attitudes consist of three parts; the *Cognitive* (knowledge and perceptions), the *Affective* (emotions and feelings), and the *Conative* (likelihood of purchase). As per Schiffman and Wisenblit, influencers are uniquely effective because they address all three components simultaneously, providing product information (Cognitive), building an emotional bond through relatability (Affective), and offering a direct call to action (Conative).
2. **The Elaboration Likelihood Model:** This theory suggests that there are two routes to persuasion (Hoyer, MacInnis & Pieters, 2012). The *central route* involves high-effort

processing where the consumer focuses on the product's quality. The *peripheral route* involves low-effort processing where the consumer is persuaded by *cues* such as the influencer's *attractiveness* or *status.*

When a consumer feels a sense of social identification with an influencer, their resistance to persuasion decreases (Dheenadhayalan, 2025). As a result, successful attitude change happens when the influencer's *perceived authenticity* dominates the consumer's *natural doubt* toward traditional advertising, directing to a higher interest to purchase.

The effectiveness of influencer marketing basis in the fundamental principles of persuasion science. According to Stephens (2017), consumers often rely on *mental shortcuts* or *heuristics* when processing marketing messages, especially in environments saturated with information. Since social media influencers act as information bridge, their evaluations and recommendations can mitigate perceived social and functional risks. Moreover, their expertise and trustworthiness serve as mental shortcuts that bridge the gap between a consumer's initial purchase intention and the final decision.

2.1.5 Reference Groups and Social Influence

Mostly consumer decisions are heavily influenced by reference groups, to make a purchase decision. A reference group is defined as a person or group that serves as a point of comparison for an individual in the formation of either general or specific values, attitudes or behavior (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). Two reference groups specifically align with the purpose of this study; Opinion leaders and aspirational reference groups.

According to Schiffman and Wisenblit (2019), opinion leader is an individual who informally influences the actions or attitudes of others. Unlike traditional celebrities, opinion leaders are perceived as possessing specific expertise in a product category and are considered objective because they do not appear to represent a corporate interest directly. Whereas aspirational groups are those we admire and desire to match with them, which is different from associative groups, those we belong to. Hoyer, MacInnis, and Pieters (2012).

2.1.6 The Influence of Digital Culture and Social Media

The rise of online culture has completely changed how brands connect with consumers. In the modern business world, social media platforms are much more than basic tools for sending messages. Instead, they serve as a complex social space where the culture of a consumer is negotiated and redefined through real-time interaction (Hoyer, MacInnis & Pieters, 2012).

Dheenadhayalan (2025) explains that the digital world shows a major shift away from one-way commercials toward two-way interactions. Because of this, online users move from simply watching advertisements to interacting in an active space. Instead of just looking at brand messages, people take part directly by hitting like, sharing posts and leaving comments. This interactivity is what builds the *relatability* variable, as the influencer-consumer relationship is perceived as a two-way dialogue rather than a corporate broadcast. Same author argues that, the digital culture is also governed by algorithms that prioritize content based on relevance and engagement rather than chronicity (the quality of being long-lasting/continuous) Dheenadhayalan (2025). It also added that influencers who maintain high levels of attractiveness and creative visual storytelling are more likely to be favored by these algorithms, ensuring the brand message reaches the target audience's *For You* pages or feeds. Another important element stated by Schiffman and Wisenblit (2019) is viral marketing and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). The authors emphasize that the digital version of word-of-mouth is significantly more powerful due to its speed and reach, since the influencer's endorsement towards a product act as a *seed* for viral marketing, reducing the *perceived risk* of the new product for thousands of followers.

Table 1 Customer Trust in Advertising

No.	Form of Advertising	Consumer Trust in Advertising
1	Recommendations from people I know	84%
2	Branded Websites	69%
3	Consumer Opinions Posted Online	68%
4	Editorial Content (E.g. Newspaper Articles)	67%
5	Branded Sponsorships	61%
6	Offline Ads (Broadcast, Print, Outdoor)	Est. 59%
7	Signed up Emails	56%
8	Ads before Movies	56%
9	TV Program Product Placements	55%
10	Ads Online	49%

2.1.7 The Mechanism of Digital Influence

In the digital era, influence is no longer a static personality trait but a measurable outcome of specific strategic elements. According to Levin (2020), the effectiveness of an influencer campaign

is determined by the connection of three critical components; *Reach, Context and Relevance* & *Resonance and Trust*.

Reach refers to the potential audience size an influencer can command across digital platforms. While it provides the initial *exposure* identified in earlier frameworks (Hoyer et al., 2012), Levin (2020) argues that reach alone is a *vanity metric,* statistics like number of views followers, etc.

The second element, **Context and Relevance**, align with the *principle of liking* and *social identification.* Stephens, 2017 proposes that an influencer must have a logical connection to the product category. On the other hand, Levin (2020) states *Influence as function of relevance*. An influencer whose digital persona already incorporates with the promoted product, provides a credible context for the audience and thereby increases the consumer's *perceptual fit* and reducing skepticism.

Resonance and Trust are defined as the frequency and intensity of engagement between the influencer and their audience. Levin (2020) states that trust is the most valuable asset of influence. When an audience connects emotionally with the contents of an influencer, it automatically finds that person more trustable and relatable. This strong connection is what pushes a consumer from simply knowing a brand exists and moves them directly into planning a purchase.

2.1.8 The Process of Consumer Purchase Decision Making

Before assessing influencers' roles, it's important to understand the purchase decision-making process. Kotler and Keller (2012) grouped this journey into five distinct stages as *problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision* and *post-purchase behavior*. Studies suggest that influencer marketing become the most effective one during the second stage or when buyers are gathering information about the product or service they would like to acquire and at the fourth stage, where they evaluate their options. At those stages, consumers actively require external approvals and they look for relatable advice from their peers.

Kotler and Keller (2012) show that consumer behavior doesn't happen immediately from an advertisement instead it passes through a buyer's hidden thoughts and feelings. This research adopts this model by positioning the perceived attributes of social media influencers as the primary motivator that interact with the psychological and social characteristics of consumers in Addis Ababa. By understanding this interaction, the study seeks to explain the specific *purchase outputs,* such as brand choice and purchase timing regarding Arada Seltzer drink.

2.1.9 Source Credibility Theory

Schiffman and Wisenblit (2019) explain that, source credibility refers to the convincing impact of a communication source based on the receiver's perception of the source's *expertise*, *trustworthiness* and *objectivity*. In today's modern digital space, source credibility is often categorized into *formal* and *informal* sources. Social media influencers are considered as the informal sources and they're mostly taken as more trusted because they're seen as peers rather than direct profit-making entities. To truly change the mind of a consumer, influencers personal style must align with identity of the brand. This similarity is what makes a consumer willing to accept their recommendation.

Under Source Credibility theory framework, that the persuasive power of a message depends on the following 3 elements of the source. These are;

1. **Expertise**: This refers to the specialized knowledge, skills or experience that people think the influencer owns about specific topic (Kotler & Keller, 2012). This principle suggests that individuals are more likely to follow recommendations from people they consider as credible experts. In this study, it reflects how much the consumer believes the influencer knows about the current trends of the young generation and the quality of the beverage. When an influencer owns this trait, the consumer views as a trusted voice in the promoted product. Hence, this connection provides the theoretical foundation for the *Expertise* variable analyzed in the research model.
2. **Trustworthiness**: This element indicates the level of trust a consumer places in the integrity of an influencer (Kotler & Keller, 2012). It checks whether the audience considers the influencer as sincere or just a hired promoter.
3. **Likability (Attractiveness & Relatability)**: This factor includes the influencer's physical attractiveness, personality and perceived similarity to the target audience. Behavioral research shows that consumers are more easily influenced by people they like, admire or find similar to themselves. Stephens (2017) indicates that *physical attractiveness* and *perceived similarity* are the two biggest reasons of people liking influencers. Likability initiates the *matching effect*, where the positive feelings for the person are transferred to the product (Stephens, 2017).

2.1.10 The Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) Model

This study uses the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) model to assess the behavioral journey of Arada hard seltzer customers.

The EKB model fits for this study perfectly because it focuses on *information processing*, the stage where the perceived attributes of an influencer whether it's trustworthiness or expertise or attractiveness or relatability or all of them at once determine whether the marketing message is simply checked or actually accepted (Dheenadhayalan, 2025).

By mixing individual and environmental influences, the EKB model offers a clear, full picture of how social media content is translated into actual purchase decision in Addis Ababa. This framework connects with the traits of an influencer in three unique ways.

1. **Stimulus Exposure and Attention** - By using their *attractiveness* and visually engaging contents, influencers easily catch the *attention* requirement developed in the EKB framework.
2. **Information Search and Perceptual Reality** - When influencers show *expertise* by showing the unique benefits of the product, they provide the specific details to the demands of a consumer. The EKB model basis on this information for the consumer to progress towards the final purchase decision.
3. **Alternative Evaluation and Trust** - The EKB model proposes that consumers naturally evaluate options before deciding to spend money. Recent studies show that *trustworthiness* and *relatability* serve as powerful tools to lower critical purchase (Dheenadhayalan, 2025).

2.1.11 The Match-Up Hypothesis

The Match-Up Hypothesis serves as an important tool to check if the partnership between the brand and the influencer will actually succeed. Hoyer, MacInnis, and Pieters (2012) indicate that, the success of a marketing communication heavily relies on this hypothesis, which suggests that a *source* must be appropriate for the product category to convince the target audience. In addition to this, this theory proposes that the impact of a promotional message becomes more powerful when there is a *perceived fit* or *congruence* between the characteristics of the influencer and the features of the promoted product. Modern business studies (Dheenadhayalan, 2025) add that this similarity is not only aesthetic. It must also be practical as the influencer's persona has to match with the consumers expectations from that specific type of product. To elaborate this idea, when an influencer who represents a specific lifestyle such as the *urban sophistication* related directly with

the Arada brand, the fit reinforces the brand's positioning. In contrast, if the influencer's overall image doesn't match with the product, it can cause consumer skepticism, which may lead the partnership be considered as insincere or purely transactional. Because of this, the framework treats the *match-up* as a primary factor in moving a consumer from initial awareness stage to a positive acceptance of the product.

2.1.12 Parasocial Interaction (PSI) Theory

Parasocial Interaction (PSI) Theory explains the unique psychological bond that forms between social media users and digital creators. Álvarez-Monzoncillo (2023) points out that, modern influencer marketing functions through a *horizontal flow* of influence. Instead of acting like a distant or untouchable celebrity, the influencer comes across as an everyday peer or an online friend, unlike traditional celebrity endorsements. This relationship functions well to minimize the buyer's anxiety, where the influencer's opinion serves as a *social seal of approval*. Additionally, consumers face high social and functional risks when trying to consume new lifestyle products (Álvarez-Monzoncillo, 2023). By showing the product in a relatable and real-world context, the influencer minimizes the follower's vulnerability and psychological resistance.

2.1.13 The Conceptual Link between EKB Model and Influencer Marketing

The EKB model is added into this study is based on its ability to sort out the psychological and environmental factors that push people to consume. The conceptual link is developed upon 3 major pillars.

1. **The Information Processing Interface -** The EKB model suggests that *attention* and *acceptance* are the main entry points to any decision process. A physical attractiveness and relatable style of an influencer act as the primary filters to catch attention for the specific age group. The *product know-how* and *trustworthiness* determine whether the audience actually accepts of the brand message.
2. **The Stimulus-Need Catalyst -** Under the EKB framework, need recognition is defines as a state where a person recognizes a difference between ideal and actual situation. Influencers on social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram build this an ideal social state for their followers to see. By showing the brand as part of an ambitious lifestyle, the influencer activates the first stage of the EKB decision process. This process takes the consumer from passively scrolling through a feed to actively searching for a product.

3. **Environmental Influence and Social Conformity -** The EKB model is unique because it pays attention to *Environmental Influences* such as *social class* and *culture*. The influencer represents a specific social *reference group*; the consumer's desire to align with this group, as modeled by the EKB framework, acts as the final push from *purchase intention* to the *purchase decision* of the drink.

2.1.14 Concepts and Definitions of Influencer Marketing & Attributes

Influencer Marketing is the recently booming industry which become an impactful element of social media marketing. Its impact is undeniably seen in the marketing world. While it is a relatively recent phenomenon that historically lacked a single academic definition, it is conceptually defined as a process where brands utilize influencers described as *normal people* with significant social media followings, to drive a brand's message through digital platforms, noted by Johansen & Guldvik (2017). As per Costello and Yesiloglu (2024), it has been observed over time that electronic word of mouth, one sharing any brand or product-related information with others, has a positive impact on individuals' product awareness, consideration and buying behavior.

Unlike traditional opinion leaders, modern influencers are characterized by their ability to maintain ongoing communication from a consumer perspective to a mass audience of strangers via social media. Influencer Marketing Hub categorizes influencers into 4 groups; Mega, Macro, Micro and Nano, based on the size of their follower.

Table 2 Categorization of Influencers based on Follower Size

No.	Category	Follower Count	Characteristics	Engagement Rate	Brands who work with them
1	Mega Influencers	1M +	Celebrities or well-known public figures	Low to medium	Major global brands
2	Macro Influencers	100K – 1M	Established influencers with a broad reach	Medium	Large brands
3	Micro Influencers	10K – 100K	Niche influencers with a strong connection to their audience	High	SMBs
4	Nano Influencers	1K – 10K	Everyday individuals with a personal and highly engaged audience	Very high	Small businesses or local brands

On the other hand, Costello, J., & Yesiloglu, S. (Eds.) (2025) divided them as follows based on their characteristics.

Table 3 Categorization of Influencers based on Characteristics

No.	Profile Criteria	Origin of Influence	Main Source of Influence	No. of Followers	Engagement per Post	Example
1	Opinion Leader	Profession	Reputation	10K-1M	5-25%	• Activists • Analysis • Journalists
2	Expert	Profession	Observational Positives	10K-1M	5-25%	• CEOs • Insiders
3	Consumers	Profession	Experience	500-10K	25-50%	• Advocates • Employees • Fans
4	Social Media Luminary	Personal Interest	Content Quality	>1M	2-5%	• YouTubers • TikTokers
5	Celebrities	Personal Interest	Personality	>1M	2-5%	• Actors • Athletes
6	Trendsetter	Personal Interest	First-Hand Knowledge	10K-1M	5-25%	• Platform Specific Sensations
7	Blogger	Personal Interest	Unbiased Opinion	10K-1M	5-25%	• Blog Writers
8	Potential Influencer	Personal Interest	Trust	500-10K	25-50%	• Sharer (The one who shares/reposts

2.2 Empirical Review of Related Literature

Under this section, various researches which are related with the subject matter are discussed.

Empirical evidences regarding the direct impact of influencer marketing on purchase intentions remains debatable. A recent study by Al-Mu'ani et al., (2023) investigated the impact of social media influencer attributes on consumer behavior and found that both *trustworthiness* and *expertise* are significant predictors of purchase intention. Their research, which utilized a sample of 309 consumers, revealed that an influencer's *perceived honesty* and *domain-specific knowledge* directly enhance the consumer's attitude toward the brand, which in turn leads to a higher likelihood of purchase.

The above results fit with a local study done by Hailu (2023). Hailu's project investigated how the endorsements of celebrities affect the purchase intentions of Coca-Cola consumers. The researcher discovered that *trustworthiness* and *expertise* are the main forces of consumer intent. The study highlights that, in the local context the *fit* between the endorser's image and the brand is more

critical than simple physical attractiveness. Hailu (2023) also discovered a major issue regarding honesty. The researcher pointed out that a lot of consumers believe celebrities don't actually use the products they advertise in real life. Accordingly, the finding suggested that for emerging brands, the *perceived authenticity* of the messenger is becoming a decisive factor in converting brand recall into actual purchasing decisions among the city's youth.

According to the study by Migkos et al. (2025), about the multidimensional impact of influencer marketing on consumer behavior, though these strategies significantly enhance brand engagement and sales, their effectiveness is heavily dependent on *content authenticity* and *transparency*. Highlighted by the study, the influencer marketing is especially effective with female audiences, with 68% of women following influencers compared to 45% of men and that younger demographic groups are the most inclined to influencer utility in driving online shopping decisions.

The analysis among the *influencer*, the *message* and the *recipient* confirmed that purchase intention is driven by a complex synergy of factors rather than a single attribute, as per the study conducted by Daimi and Tolunay (2021). It found that the impact of influencer marketing is grouped into three critical dimensions; *influencer-related*, *content-related* and *follower-related* factors. While traditional source credibility (*expertise* and *trustworthiness*) remains foundational, it is the *entertainment value* and *informativeness* of the content that serve as the primary catalysts for reducing *perceived risk* among consumers. Moreover, Daimi and Tolunay (2021) has shown the significance of the *Match-Up Hypothesis*, showing that the effectiveness of a campaign is heavily dependent on the *fit* between the *influencer's persona* and the *product category*.

Besides, Maharani and Aruan (2025)'s study also strengthens Daimi and Tolunay (2021) research. Maharani and Aruan (2025) explored the psychological alignment between a follower's self-concept and an influencer's persona, which is claimed to be a strong driver for brand attraction, by investigating how *influencer credibility* and *self-congruence* (the degree of perceived similarity between the consumer and the influencer*)* drive purchase intentions within the beauty and personal care sectors, in Millennial and Gen Z social media users. The study demonstrated the significant impact of *self-influencer* congruence on *purchase intentions* both directly and through the mediation of *trust*. Furthermore, the study highlighted that these psychological connections are particularly effective when they encourage parasocial relationships, as consumers are more likely to adopt the recommendations of influencers who they perceive as extensions of their own

idealized selves. This identity-matching process is important for brands who are looking for to turn digital engagement into actual buying behavior among younger demography.

The transition from traditional media to interactive digital platforms has demanded a deeper understanding of how message characteristics interact with source to shape the choice of consumers. Thilina (2021) conducted a conceptual review of social influencer marketing dynamics, emphasizing that *influencer credibility* and the *information quality* of shared content are the twin pillars of purchase intention. The study highlighted that in an era of digital ad-blocking, consumers increasingly rely on influencers to act as information filters, where the perceived *usefulness* and *accuracy* of the content, significantly reduce the psychological barriers to purchase. Thilina (2021) also found that for high-involvement lifestyle products, the influencer's talent to share detailed, high-quality details serves as a main reason of *brand attitude*. It also proves that reach alone isn't enough without having depth of message quality. This relationship shows that followers don't simply view contents simply for fun. Instead, they consider the contents as a reliable source of information to make purchase decisions.

Using digital creators strategically does much more than just keep a brand active in the public eye. It also serves as a main tool for brand to direct the entry of new or competitive market segments. Belova (2023) studied the effectiveness of influencer marketing in expanding brands into fresh territories. The researcher identified the specific content and influencer trait that help consumer adoption in unfamiliar territories. To build a useful campaign guide, that study combined a survey of social media users with personal interviews of marketing experts.

The results proved that when a brand enters an unfamiliar market, giving creativity freedom to influencers to produce the brand message that matches with the local cultural tones, is the most important factor in building the initial trust. In addition, the study showed that the *relationship strength* between the influencer and their followers acts as a link for the brand. Due to this close relationship exists, the influencer's existing credibility is effectively transferred to the new product, thus it significantly lowers the consumer's fear of trying something new and increases the final purchase decision.

To achieve the objective of influencer-led promotional campaigns, companies must carefully choose the right social networks because different applications attract completely different crowds. A study by Tran Le My Hoa (2025) focused at this issue. The researcher compared how digital creators affect the shopping choices of young people across TikTok, Instagram and YouTube. The

study found out that, while Instagram remains a leader for *brand aesthetic* and *lifestyle* imagery, TikTok is more effective at driving *high-speed viral engagement* and *immediate urge* for purchase intentions among Gen Z., Tran Le My Hoa (2025) also stated that *authenticity* and *transparency* are perceived differently across platforms. People on TikTok value more *raw* and *unfiltered* videos than highly polished posts that are mostly found of Instagram. This suggests that for brands with trendy lifestyle products who targets the younger crowd, the platform's specific *content culture* is as important as the influencer's individual credibility. The study by Durmuş Şenyapar (2025) also strengthened the aforementioned points, by examining the effectiveness of influencer marketing across six major platforms; TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, X (Twitter), LinkedIn and YouTube. It demonstrated that campaign effectiveness is highly dependent on the strategic fit between influencer types and platform-specific audience cultures. Specifically, the research found that *TikTok* and *Instagram* are the most effective environments for driving high-engagement, short-form content, making them the best choice for viral campaigns and rapid audience growth in consumer goods sectors. A study by Costa (2019) also examined the impact of influencer marketing on consumer purchase intentions and brand attitude among young female adults, demonstrated that influencer content doesn't simply activate sales but fundamentally reshapes the consumer's *brand attitude*, their overall evaluation and emotional response to the product. It also shown that, high levels of *perceived authenticity* and *attractiveness* in a creator's post leads to a more favorable brand attitude, which in turn significantly increases the likelihood of purchase. Additionally, the research shows that these online connections work much better on entertainment-focused apps like TikTok and Instagram. Because these apps are highly visual and social, a brand easily fits right into a consumer's daily routine. This seamless mix changes a standard commercial message into trusted social endorsement. Oliveira (2025) also examined how much a social media influencers' trustworthiness affects the loyalty of a brand purchase intention by comparing Instagram against TikTok. The results show that both applications are effective for brand discovery. However, *TikTok* shows a superior capacity for immediate purchase intentions via its highly interactive & authentic videos. On the other hand, *Instagram* works better as a tool for keeping customers loyal over time. Its visual nature becomes perfect for sharing brand's long-term storytelling and aesthetic look.

This research highlights that influencer's trustworthiness and attractiveness are the most impactful tools across both platforms, noting that when consumers perceive an influencer as *credible*, their commitment to the brand extends beyond a single purchase, promoting a state of habitual loyalty. Local research conducted by Kedir (2024) has also shown that TikTok influencers play a key role in shaping final purchase decisions through the dimensions of *trustworthiness* and *attractiveness*. In a study of 519 Ethiopian consumers, Kedir (2024) explored the impact of TikTok influencer marketing on Ethiopian consumer purchase behavior and found that while *trustworthiness* and *expertise* are essential, the effect is significantly moderated by *homophily*. It demonstrated that when consumers perceive a high degree of similarity in style, values and hobbies with a TikTok creator, their likelihood of following a purchase recommendation increases significantly.

Another study which was conducted by Masuda et al. (2022) examined how attributes of influencer drive purchase intention. The research has shown *social attractiveness* and *attitude homophily* are the most powerful backgrounds of purchase intention. It also stated that the formation of a Parasocial Relationship (PSR) acts as a critical mediator, when followers feel a sense of *imaginary friendship* with a creator, their intention to buy recommended products increases noticeably, even when compared to the impact of perceived expertise. While physical attractiveness provides initial attention, it is the influencer's *trustworthiness* and the depth of the social bond that secure long-term brand advocacy and transactional commitment, stated by the study.

Biaudet (2017) investigated influencer marketing as a strategic tool, focusing on the process of creating digital campaigns and the unique value proposition of influencer-led communication. It revealed that the *built-in* level of trust between an influencer and their audience is a resource that brands can't copy through traditional media. According to Biaudet (2017), the effectiveness of this strategy is rooted in *authenticity*, where the influencer acts as a *cultural translator* for the brand.

Using the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM) to guide their work, Pan et al. (2025) conducted a study evaluating the success of influencer marketing. Through this project, the researchers marked a massive difference between how people feel about a brand (brand attitude and purchase intention) and what they actually do (actual sales behavior).

The analysis showed that for non-transactional outcomes, *post characteristics,* specifically *informational value* and *hedonic (entertainment) value* have the strongest influence on purchase intentions. On the other hand, for transactional outcomes, *influencer-related factors (e.g. the creator's communication style),* became the most significant drivers of actual sales. Furthermore,

Pan et al. (2025) highlight that *follower social identity* acts as the most powerful mediator for brand engagement, suggesting that the effectiveness of an influencer campaign is maximized when it successfully targets communities with a *strong shared identity*.

Opinion leaders and micro influencers are labelled under the various categories of influencers. Even though both are considered as influencers; their characteristics and origin of influence differ. While opinion leaders are experts' micro influencers are niche influencers with a strong connection to their audience based on personality and relatability. The study conducted by Pärlhem and Rutberg (2018) investigated the relative effectiveness and spread of these two primary influencer types. It found that there is no statistically significant difference in the *effectiveness* or *reach* between these two types when driving brand engagement. Even though, there isn't a significant difference on the category of influencers, this research highlights that lifestyle brands must focus on how an influencer tells the brand's story. The ability of influencers to naturally mix the product into their personal narrative is more important than any formal credentials, as consumers recently prefer authentic and humanized brand interactions over serious expert endorsements. Supporting the results of Pärlhem and Rutberg (2018), recent insights from Joshi et al. (2025) also suggest companies to partner with micro-influencers for lifestyle brands. These influencers succeed over traditional celebrities because they build much closer, trust-filled mental bonds with the people who follow them online.

Consumers react very differently when listening to an influencer's honest suggestion compared to a paid commercial. Grafström, Jakobsson, and Wiede (2018) looked at how influencer marketing shapes the attitudes of Millennials by using the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). The research shows that millennials often utilize the *peripheral route* of processing. Instead of studying technical details of the product, they focus much more on an influencer's attractive lifestyle and perceived honesty. If an influencer is considered as a *peer* rather than a *paid spokesperson*, the consumer develops a stronger and more positive attitude towards the brand, as *trust* acts as the main connector. It also proved that while social media allows for rapid reach, long-term *brand loyalty* can be achieved when the influencer consistently maintains high levels of *transparency* and *relatability*. This ensures that the promotional content is perceived as a genuine recommendation rather than a traditional advertisement. Ulfstedt (2025) recently studied how sponsored influencer content is viewed and how these perceptions shape *trust* and *final purchasing decisions*. It revealed that in 2025 consumers have developed a sophisticated *persuasion*

knowledge. They don't basically doubt *sponsored content* but rather evaluate its *perceived authenticity* based on the influencer's history of transparency. It also has shown that repeated exposure and the influencer's ability to maintain consistent personality are the biggest reasons people choose to purchase a product, regardless of brand partnerships. For lifestyle beverage categories, the study suggests that customer satisfaction with a purchase is directly related to the *honesty* of the initial promotion. This relationship shows that influencers who value long-term follower trust over short-term campaign gains are significantly more effective at bringing sustainable sales growth.

Even though the level of impact varies, the influencer's knowledge combines with message quality can convince the purchase intention of a consumers. Caio (2025) studied these dynamics inside the Portuguese cosmetics market. This research indicates that *content quality* and *content frequency* are vital factors of consumer behavior. It also found that high-quality, informative content like detailed tutorials, reduces *consumer uncertainty*. At the same time, high frequency of posts keeps the brand in the minds of the consumer which directly increasing purchase intentions. The study also demonstrated that, the combined effect of an influencer's *expertise* and consistent digital presence create a *regular engagement* cycle. Because of this habit, consumers are more likely to discover and purchase new brands through the creator's constant recommendations.

African researches highlight the growing dominance of digital creators in the beverage sector. Njeru (2026) studied what types of sodas Gen Z prefers in Kenya and discovered that a creator's relatability keeps customers loyal far better than a influencer's total follower count. This matches data from a Nigerian study by Okeniyi and Ighomereho (2025). Their study revealed that consumer engagement and authenticity are the major elements to drive purchase intention since it revealed that traditional credibility scores showed a less significant direct impact. A regional report by Wowzi (2025) identifies that 75% of East African youth have made a purchase based on an influencer's recommendation. Their data shows that the food and beverage industry stand out as one of the most impacted categories moved by these recommendations.

While global studies like Johansen & Guldvik (2017) emphasize the theoretical link between influencers and consumer attitude, localized research in Ethiopia provides practical evidence of social media's impact on brand building.

Local empirical evidence within the Ethiopian beverage sector highlights a significant shift toward interactive digital strategies following increased regulatory pressure on traditional media. Arega

(2023) investigated the brewery industry in Ethiopia and found that social media marketing efforts, specifically the dimensions of *interaction* and *entertainment*, have a deep and positive influence on customer brand preference. The study demonstrated that in a market where traditional advertising is restricted, the ability for a brand to facilitate *two-way conversation* and *opinion exchange* is the most critical driver of consumer choice. Furthermore, Arega (2023) noted that while *trendiness* and *customization* are influential, it is the electronic *word-of-mouth (WOM)* generated through these interactive digital experiences that effectively secures a competitive advantage and long-term brand affinity among Ethiopian consumers.

Though the number of researches which resemble either with the brand or with the topic are few, Worku's (2023) study can be considered as among those few. It has shown the relationship between *emotional branding* and *brand loyalty* within the Ethiopian beverage sector. The researcher found that *emotional branding strategies* have a positive and significant impact on loyalty for the Arada brand. Most importantly it identified that *customer satisfaction* plays a vital mediating role, serving as an essential link that converts an initial emotional connection into continuous brand preference. The study emphasizes that, for emerging beverage brands in the Addis Ababa market, creating a unique brand personality and emotional image is as important as product quality to build a loyal customer base. This strategy specifically works when these emotional traits match with the personal identities of the target audience.

Nega (2024) studied how social media content marketing changes public awareness for Arada and found a strong, positive link between content strategy and customer recognition. The study showed that regularly sharing core brand elements like the frequent posting of the Arada logo and the placement of visual storytelling is important to keep the brand fresh in the minds of consumers.

Also dimensions like *loyalty programs*, *interactivity* and *content enjoyability* emerged as the main elements of brand awareness. While global marketing models often emphasize *content relevance*, the Ethiopian consumer base for Arada responds more significantly to *enjoyability* and interacting with the brand online, the study demonstrated.

Local research focused on the competitive Ethiopian brewery sector further confirmed the importance of a strong digital presence to establish market presence. A study conducted by Seleshi (2021) explored the impact of *social media marketing* on the *brand awareness* of Kidame Beer and concluded that interactive digital dimensions, particularly *online communities* and *content accessibility*, are significant predictors of consumer brand recognition. According to this study,

while many local brands maintain social media accounts, the most successful ones are those that prioritize *credibility* and active *information sharing*, effectively converting digital impressions into stable brand recall.

In summary, by utilizing the above reviewed literatures, this study tried to explore the causal relationship between attributes of an influencer and the actual intent to purchase a localized lifestyle product like Arada Seltzer.

2.2.1 Hypothesis of the Study

Based on the above empirical review of literature, the study proposed the following hypothesis. The hypothesis presents the effect of influencer's attribute to purchase decision of a customer.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Influencer Trustworthiness has a significant positive effect on the purchase decisions for Arada Seltzer drink consumers in Addis Ababa.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Influencer Expertise (product know-how) has a significant positive effect on the purchase decisions for Arada Seltzer drink consumers in Addis Ababa.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Influencer Attractiveness has a significant positive effect on the purchase decisions for Arada Seltzer drink consumers in Addis Ababa.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Influencer relatability has a significant positive effect on the purchase decisions of Arada Seltzer consumers in Addis Ababa.

Table 4 Summary of Review Literature

No.	Author(s) & Year	Study Content/Focus	Variables Studied	Key Findings & Results
1	Al-Mu'ani et al. (2023)	Social Media Influencers	Trustworthiness, Expertise, Purchase Intention	Trust and expertise are significant predictors of intent.
2	Migkos et al. (2025)	Global Social Commerce	Authenticity, Transparency, Engagement, Sales	Authenticity is important; 68% of women vs 45% of men follow influencers.
3	Daimi & Tolunay (2021)	Tripartite Relationship	Source Credibility, Entertainment, Informativeness, Product Fit	Entertainment and content informativeness are primary catalysts for reducing risk.
4	Maharani & Aruan (2025)	Millennial/Gen. Z (Beauty/Personal Care)	Self-congruence, Credibility, Trust, Purchase Intent	Self-congruence and parasocial bonds drive brand affinity.
5	Thilina (2021)	Social Influencer Marketing	Influencer Credibility, Information Quality	Information Quality and Credibility are the "twin pillars" of purchase intention.
6	Belova (2023)	New Market Entry Strategy	Creative Autonomy, Relationship Strength, Trust	Creative autonomy allows influencers to adapt messages to local cultural tones.
7	Tran Le My Hoa (2025)	Platform Comparison	Authenticity, Transparency, Platform Culture	TikTok is best for impulse buys; Instagram is better for lifestyle aesthetics.
8	Masuda et al. (2022)	Interpersonal Persuasion	Social Attractiveness, Homophily, Parasocial Relationship (PSR)	Homophily and PSR are more powerful than expertise for purchase intent.
9	Biaudet (2017)	Strategic Communication	Trust, Authenticity, Management (4M's Framework)	Authenticity acts as a "cultural translator" that brands can't replicate.
10	Pan et al. (2025)	Global Meta-Analysis	Informational Value, Hedonic Value, Communication Style	Post value drives intent; communication style drives actual sales.
11	Durmuş Şenyapar (2025)	Platform cultures (6 types)	Audience Culture, Strategic Fit, Engagement	TikTok/Instagram are optimal for viral growth in consumer goods.
12	Pärlhem & Rutberg (2018)	Opinion Leaders vs. Micro-celebrities	Expertise, Relatability, Brand Engagement	No significant difference in reach; narrative integration is what matters.
13	Joshi et al. (2025)	Bibliometric Mapping	PSI, Authenticity, Sponsorship Transparency	Relatability gap allows micro-influencers to outperform celebrities.
14	Costa (2019)	Brand Attitude (Females)	Authenticity, Attractiveness, Brand Attitude	Influencers fundamentally reshape the emotional response to a brand.

No.	Author(s) & Year	Study Content/Focus	Variables Studied	Key Findings & Results
15	Grafström et al. (2018)	Millennial Attitudes	Lifestyle Appeal, Honesty, Transparency	Consumers use peripheral processing; lifestyle appeal beats technical details.
16	Caio (2025)	Makeup (Portugal)	Content Quality, Content Frequency, Expertise	Content Quality and frequency create a habitual cycle that accelerates intent.
17	Oliveira (2025)	Instagram vs. TikTok	Credibility, Trustworthiness, Attractiveness	TikTok drives immediate purchase; Instagram builds long-term loyalty.
18	Ulfstedt (2025)	Sponsored content	Persuasion Knowledge, Transparency, Authenticity	Transparency history is the strongest predictor of purchase motivation.
19	Njeru (2026)	Soft Drinks (Kenya)	Relatability, Reach, Brand Loyalty	Relatability is a better predictor of loyalty than total reach for Gen Z.
20	Okeniyi & Ighomereho (2025)	Nigerian/East Africa Consumers	Engagement, Authenticity, Purchase Intention	75% of East African youth buy based on influencer recommendations. Engagement and Authenticity are the primary drivers.
21	Wowzi (2025)	East African Youth	Consumer Purchase Behavior	75% of East African youth buy based on influencer recommendations.
22	Arega (2023)	Ethiopia Brewery Industry	Interaction, Entertainment, Brand Preference	Interaction and entertainment are the critical drivers of preference.
23	Hailu (2023)	Coca-Cola (Addis Ababa)	Trustworthiness, Expertise, Fit, Sincerity	Trust and Fit are important; traditional celebrities face a "sincerity gap."
24	Worku (2023)	Arada Beer (Ethiopia)	Emotional Branding, Satisfaction, Brand Loyalty	Emotional branding and satisfaction are essential for Arada's loyalty.
25	Nega (2024)	Arada Beer (Ethiopia)	Content Enjoyability, Interactivity, Awareness	Content enjoyability, interactivity and visual storytelling are the primary drivers for Arada’s brand awareness and top-of-mind recall.
26	Seleshi (2021)	Kidame Beer (Ethiopia)	Online Communities, Accessibility, Credibility	Online communities keep the brand top-of-mind in the local market.
27	Kedir (2024)	TikTok (Ethiopia)	Trustworthiness, Expertise, Attractiveness, Homophily	Perceived similarity in values/hobbies (homophily) moderates purchase behavior.

2.2.2 Research Gap

Even though, the various research papers provide strong foundation to understand what influencer marketing is, the reviewed studies show critical gaps that can be addressed by this study. These gaps are categorized under the following 4 major groups.

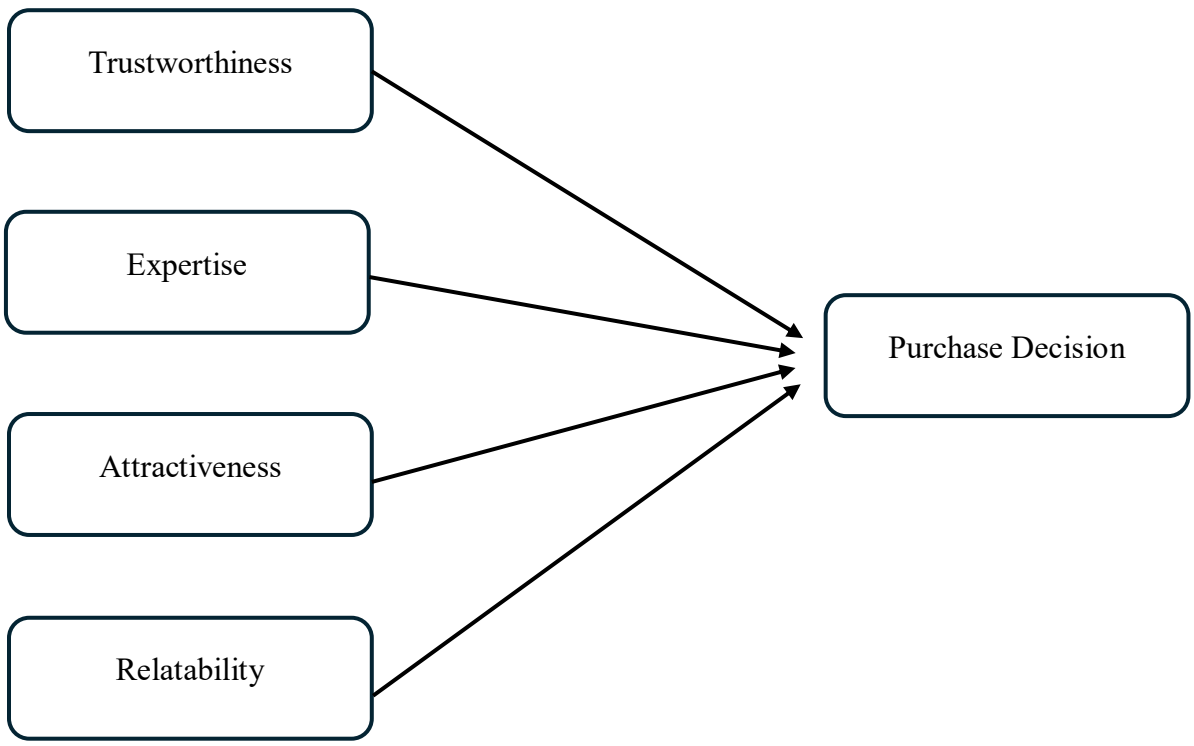
1. **Product Category Specificity Gap**: Reviewed beverage related studies focus on either brewery (beer) or soft drink sectors. (e.g., Arega 2023, Hailu, 2023 & Seleshi, 2021). There is a significant lack of empirical evidence regarding the *Hard Seltzer* category, a unique, lifestyle-oriented alcoholic drink in the Ethiopian beverage market. This study fills this gap by examining how influencer attributes affect purchase decisions for a product that positions itself as a modern, low-calorie social beverage.
2. **Sincerity and Relatability Gap**: Local research by Hailu (2023) highlighted a *sincerity gap* in traditional celebrity endorsements, where consumers doubted if celebrities actually used the products. Even though Kedir (2024) studied about TikTok influencers, there is a need to check how *Relatability* and *Social Attractiveness* act as a separate variable. This study addresses this issue by including items that measure lifestyle matching (R1) and social habit alignment (R4) directly among young people living in Addis Ababa.
3. **Regulatory Context & Information Dependency Gap**: The Ethiopian alcoholic beverage market operates under strict traditional media restrictions for alcohol advertising. This project identifies a specific situation where influencers serve not just entertain fans, but as the main and most trusted information source (T2) to get details about the product. It also investigates the degree to which this regulatory environment increases consumer dependency on influencer credibility.
4. **Technological & Platform-Specific Gap**: Recent global literature (e.g., Tran Le My Hoa, 2025) emphasizes that platform culture (TikTok vs. Instagram) dictates credibility. Most existing local research (e.g., Arega, 2023) groups all social media into a single dimension of *interaction*. This study provides a more analysis by focusing on the specific attributes (Trust, Expertise, Attractiveness and Relatability) that drive immediate *high-speed viral engagement* and purchase intent in the current 2025–2026 digital landscape.

2.3 Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study aimed to assess the impact of influencer marketing attributes on the purchase decision of Arada hard seltzer customers, in Addis Ababa. Based on related literatures, the conceptual framework of the study is constructed as follows.

As noted by Pandey and Pandey (2015), a research framework serves as a blueprint that specifies the variables to be measured and the nature of their associations. This framework consists four key influencer attributes as independent variables. These are *Trustworthiness*, *Expertise*, *Attractiveness* and *Relatability*. These traits act as external signal that influence *Customer Purchase Decision,* which is treated as dependent variable. By examining these specific connections, the study indicates which attribute holds the highest predictive power in the context of Arada Seltzer's urban consumer base in Addis Ababa.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework



Chapter Three - Research Methodology

3.1 Research Approach and Design

A research design is the framework or plan for a study that is used as a guide in collecting and analyzing the data (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). Since the core purpose of this research is to identify the link between influencer marketing attributes impact and the purchase decision of Arada seltzer drink consumers, who are found in Addis Ababa, it adopted an explanatory research design as studies that establish causal relationships between variables may be termed explanatory studies (Saunders et al., 2007). The study implemented a quantitative research methodology by using a survey questionnaire.

3.2 Sampling Design

3.2.1 Population of the Study and Sample Frame

This study took all potential and actual consumers of Arada Seltzer drink, who are above 18 years old, active users of social media and exposed to influencer marketing and who reside in Addis Ababa, as its target population.

3.2.2 Sampling Technique

Since, it's impossible to get the list of all consumers of Arada, it's not practical to use probability sampling. Thus, this research used non-probability sampling technique. In minimization of homogeneity bias, this study utilized a multi-channel sampling approach including purposive, convenience and snowball sampling methods.

To identify respondents, i.e. consumers in Addis Ababa who are exposed to social media, the study used purposive sampling. Convenience sampling utilized to ease availability of data instrument, like disseminating the questionnaire across various social media platforms. To increase the reach of the survey, the research implemented snowball sampling method. It's believed that, the combination of these techniques brought the required outcome.

3.2.3 Sample Size

Since the total population of social media users and potential Arada Seltzer consumers in Addis Ababa is unknown and considered infinite, the study utilized the Cochran (1977) formula to determine the sample size. This formula is mathematically described as follows.

$$\mathbf{n_0 = \frac{Z^2 * p * q}{e^2}}$$

Where;

n_0 = The target sample size

Z = The standard normal deviation at a 95% confidence level (1.96)

p = Percentage of population which is P = 0.5

q = The balance of the population proportion calculated as (1 - p)

e = The acceptable margin of error (0.05)

At a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the required sample size is calculated to be 384. By using the above formula for infinite population, it yields a scientifically representative sample size of exactly **384** respondents.

$$n_0 = \frac{(1.96)^2 * (0.5) * (0.5)}{(0.05)^2} = \frac{3.8416 * 0.25}{0.0025} = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025} = \mathbf{384.16}$$

3.2.4 Sampling Procedure

The planned 384 sample respondents were approached through the following various mechanisms.

1. The digital survey was shared across various social media platforms, which are neutral to the influencers of Arada seltzer.
2. At the end of the research instrument, respondents were requested to share the survey link to others believed to fall under the target population of this study.
3. The social media followers of Komari Beverages were also approached to fill the survey.

3.2.5 Sources of Data

The study mainly utilized primary data and it was collected through online distribution of questionnaire. Moreover, the officials of Komari Beverage were approached through interview questions to further elaborate and showcase the activities of the company on influencer marketing.

3.3 Data Collection Methodology

As surveys allow the collection of a large amount of data from a sizeable population in a highly economical way (Saunders et al., 2007), this study used structured survey questionnaire to collect data. Moreover, according to the framework established by Pandey and Pandey (2015), the study employed a systematic data collection methodology designed to gather primary data directly from the target population.

3.4 Data Collection Instrument

Primary data was collected by implementing a self-administered, structured, closed-ended, internet-mediated data collection instrument (Google Forms). The 5-item Likert scale

questionnaire was developed according to previous literatures, examined the items using a 5-point scale which ranges from 1-5, representing, *Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree,* respectively.

3.5 Data Analysis Methods

Standard descriptive analysis lays out the foundation for further inferential statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics was employed to describe the sample's characteristics and the relationship between phenomena. (Marczyk et al., 2005) In this phase, respondents were characterized and categorized based on their demographic variables and analysis was also made based on the social media usage and brand awareness of respondents.

The study utilized inferential statistics to test the research hypotheses. Before conducting multiple linear regression, the fundamental diagnostic analysis for regression assumption shall be performed, to confirm the validity of the multiple linear regression analysis. As Hair et al. (2019) emphasize, these tests are critical for ensuring that the regression coefficients provide unbiased and reliable estimates of the relationships between influencer attributes and consumer purchase decisions. Pearson Correlation Analysis was conducted to determine whether two or more variables are related or not. (Marczyk et al., 2005). To check the distribution of the data is normal or not, both visual and quantitative mechanisms were implemented, via histogram & kurtosis and skewness statistics. (Saunders et al., 2006). Multicollinearity test was conducted to detect whether independent variables are inter-correlated. Multicollinearity is formally diagnosed using a Tolerance threshold below 0.10 or a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value exceeding 5.0 or 10.0 (Hair et al., 2019). Moreover, Linearity and Homoscedasticity tests ensured that the variance of the error terms is constant across all levels of independent variables. These combined effects were examined by a scatterplot of the standardized residuals against the predicted values, which displayed a random, even distribution of points rather than a non-random or funnel shape to confirm that the final regression equations are accurate and stable (Saunders et al., 2006).

3.6 Model Selection and Specification

To examine how the attributes of an influencer marketing affect the purchase decision of Arada hard seltzer customer in Addis Ababa, a multiple linear regression model is specified as follows.

$$\mathbf{CPD} = \boldsymbol{\beta_0} + \boldsymbol{\beta_{1(T)}} + \boldsymbol{\beta_{2(E)}} + \boldsymbol{\beta_{3(A)}} + \boldsymbol{\beta_{4(R)}} + \boldsymbol{\varepsilon}$$

Where;

CPD	Consumer Purchase Decision (Dependent Variable)
β_0	Constant (Y-intercept), signifying the expected value of consumer purchase decisions when all influencer attributes are valued at zero.
β_1, β_2, β_3, β_4	Regression coefficients of each respective independent variable
T	Trustworthiness (Independent Variable)
E	Expertise (Independent Variable)
A	Attractiveness (Independent Variable)
R	Relatability (Independent Variable)
ε	Error term

3.7 Reliability and Validity

3.7.1 Reliability

Saunders et al. (2007) stated that the extent to which a data collection techniques or analysis procedures provide consistent findings is called reliability. Reliability fundamentally concerned with the strength of a questionnaire, specifically determining whether it'll produce consistent findings if executed at alternative times or by different researchers under equivalent conditions. To fulfill this methodological requirement, this study conducted an internal consistency test. Internal consistency involves correlating the responses to each individual question within the questionnaire with those to all other questions in the instrument, thereby measuring the stable consistency of responses across either the entire scale or localized subgroups. (Saunders et al., 2007). Internal consistency involves correlating the responses to each individual question within the questionnaire with those of all other questions in the instrument, thereby measuring the consistency of responses across either the entire scale or localized subscales (Saunders et al., 2007).

While a variety of procedures exist for calculating internal consistency, this study utilized Cronbach's alpha, which represents the most frequently used and universally accepted statistical diagnostic for multi-item Likert scales in business research (Saunders et al.,2007, Mitchell, 1996, Field, 2005). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient provides a metric ranging from 0 to 1 to evaluate the internal alignment of the questions assigned to each independent variable (*Expertise, Trustworthiness, Attractiveness and Relatability*) and the dependent variable (*Customer Purchase Decisions*). As per Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2019), the generally agreed-upon rule of

thumb for internal consistency is that a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of ≥0.70. This suggests that the items are sufficiently reliable and consistent in measuring the same construct. Accordingly, the internal consistency of this research instrument, measured using Cronbach's Alpha, is presented as follows.

Table 5 Cronbach Alpha Result

No.	Variable	Cronbach's alpha
1	Trustworthiness	0.830
2	Expertise	0.855
3	Attractiveness	0.896
4	Relatability	0.887
5	Consumer Purchase Decision	0.919

3.7.2 Validity

To affirm the academic credibility and empirical integrity, the research design addressed the core criteria of validity. According to Marczyk et al., (2005) validity refers to the conceptual and scientific soundness of a research study or investigation. Within quantitative research frameworks, the measurement of validity determines the operational extent to which the collected data accurately represents the empirical reality of the concepts under investigation (Saunders et al., 2007). To ensure the validity of the data collection instrument and approve its quality, a pre-validated research instrument was adapted and tailored for this purpose.

Rather than developing a survey from scratch, this study adopted a well-established, pre-validated instrument from various literatures to evaluate influencer attributes and customer purchase decisions. To guarantee these scales remain strong when transferred into the localized market context of Addis Ababa, content validity and face validity were executed. According to Saunders et al. (2007), content validity examines that the questions in a survey completely cover all the angles of the topic being investigated. Since this study used an adopted questionnaire, the main questions were already tested and proven to be balanced by the original researchers who developed them. To make sure these questions actually align with the unique lifestyle and beverage market here in Addis Ababa, the survey was adjusted and reviewed before distribution.

On the other hand, face validity was established to assess the viability, layout flow and readability of the instrument from the perspective of the actual target population (Saunders et al., 2007). Face validity was executed by conducting a localized pilot study with a small, representative subsample

of 20 of urban consumers who matched the study's exact inclusion criteria. This pre-test allowed for the identification and elimination of ambiguities, formatting discrepancies or potential response biases in the multi-item response scales before primary data collection started.

3.8 Research Ethics

Defined by Saunders et al. (2007), research ethics relates to questions about how we formulate and clarify our research topic, design our research, and gain access, collect data, process and store our data, analyze the data and write up our research findings in a moral and responsible way. Hence, this research provided complete and unbiased information to volunteer respondents filled the survey with their full consent. Moreover, it maintained the anonymity and confidentiality of respondents. The study was also conducted in compliance with ethical guidelines and procedures.

Chapter Four - Results and Discussion

This chapter examined the effect of influencer marketing attributes on the customer purchase decision through data analysis and interpretations. After data collection using structured research instrument, computation and analysis was performed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 software. The findings of the study will be presented as follows.

4.1 Response Rate

From the originally distributed targeted a calculated sample size of 384 respondents, the initial number of received feedback was 292 responses. However, due to the specificity of the target geographic location, the total number of valid respondents were declined. Hence, after filtering for geographic residency in Addis Ababa, active social media usage and a minimum age of 18, a total of 281 completed and valid questionnaires were obtained which represents a 73% response rate. According to academic standards (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003), a response rate above 70% is considered excellent for analysis and reporting in social science research.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Variables

The demographic profile of respondents was classified into three major categories; *general information, social media usage* and *brand awareness*. This analysis provided *age, gender, educational level, occupation, marital status* and *monthly net income* of respondents. Moreover, the social media usage and their awareness towards the Arada brand was also examined.

4.2.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

4.2.1.1 General Information

Table 6 Demographic Information of Respondents

No.	Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Age	18-24	20	7.1
		25-29	80	28.5
		30-34	64	22.8
		35-39	61	21.7
		≥ 40	56	19.9
Total			**281**	**100.0**
2	Gender	Male	218	77.6
		Female	63	22.4

		Total	**281**	**100.0**
3	Educational Background	Diploma/TVET	6	2.1
		Bachelor's Degree	119	42.3
		Master's Degree	143	50.9
		PhD	13	4.6
		Total	**281**	**100.0**
4	Occupation	Student	9	3.2
		Self-Employed	40	14.2
		Government	51	18.1
		Private/Non-Government	175	62.3
		Unemployed	6	2.1
		Total	**281**	**100.0**
5	Marital Status	Single	130	46.3
		In a Relationship/Engaged	29	10.3
		Married	120	42.7
		Divorced	2	0.7
		Total	**281**	**100.0**
6	Monthly Net Income	< 5,000	6	2.1
		5,001-10,000	10	3.6
		10,001-20,000	34	12.1
		20,001-40,000	71	25.3
		>40,000	160	56.9
		Total	**281**	**100.0**

According to Table 6, majority of the respondents fall within the younger age categories, with 28.5% aged between 25-29 and 22.8% aged 30-34. Together, over half of the participants (51.3%) are under the age of 35.

Regarding gender of respondents, out of the 281 respondents, the majority were male, accounting for 77.6%, while female respondents were 22.4%. This distribution indicates a high level of participation from male consumers in the study area.

From the above Table, it can be concluded that all respondents are educated, with the largest group being Master's Degree holders 50.9%, followed by those with a Bachelor's Degree 42.3%. A smaller segment of the sample consisted of PhD holders 4.6% and Diploma/TVET graduates 2.1%. There are no respondents from primary or secondary school educational background.

The largest portion of the sample is employed in the Private or Non-Government sector, representing 62.3% of the total respondents, followed by government employees with 18.1% and 14.2% self-employed. Students and unemployed individuals contributed a combined response of 5.3% of the sample.

Reviewing the marital status of respondents, the sample is characterized by a high proportion of Single individuals with 46.3% and Married individuals with 42.7%. Respondents who are in a relationship or engaged accounted for 10.3% while a very small percentage is identified as divorced with 0.7%.

56.9% respondents fall under upper-level income earners category with a monthly net income above 40,000 ETB. Additionally, 25.3% of respondents earn between 20,001 and 40,000 ETB. On the other hand, only 2.1% earns less than 5,000 ETB per month.

4.2.1.2 Social Media Usage

Table 7 Distribution of Social Media Platform Combinations of Respondents

No.	Social Media Platform	Frequency	Percent of Responses (%)	Percent of Cases (%)
1	TikTok	161	15.8	57.3
2	Facebook	152	14.9	54.1
3	Instagram	117	11.4	41.6
4	YouTube	187	18.3	66.5
5	Telegram	239	23.4	85.1
6	Twitter/X	66	6.5	23.5
7	Other	100	9.8	35.6
Total		**1,022**	**100.0**	**363.7**

To capture the complexity of the digital environment, the study analyzed the cross-platform usage habits of the respondents. This multiple-response data shows the highly connected digital base of consumers. As it can be referred from the above Table, majority of respondents are active users of Telegram (85.1%), followed by YouTube amounting to 66.5%. In the contrary, Twitter/X falls in the lowest place, being utilized by only 23.5% of the total participants. This clearly shows the

dominance of Telegram in the context of Addis Ababa, for daily communication with respect to work-related matters, accessing information through various channels and participating in social activities, to mention few. Since, respondents were permitted to select multiple social media platforms to reflect their digital habits, the total percentages of cases exceeded 100%.

Table 8 Social Media Usage Pattern Status of Respondents

No.	Name of Social Media Platform	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	TikTok	47	16.7
2	Facebook	36	12.8
3	Instagram	28	10
4	YouTube	39	13.9
5	Telegram	71	25.3
6	Twitter/X	15	5.3
7	LinkedIn	45	16.1
	Total	**281**	**100.0**

To identify the most effective channels for influencer engagement, the study assessed the primary social media platforms used by the participants. Table 8 shows that, Telegram emerged as the most widely used platform, accounting for 25.3% of the respondents, followed by TikTok 16.7%, LinkedIn 16.1%, YouTube 13.9% and Facebook 12.8%). Notably, Twitter/X has the lowest usage rate at 5.3%.

Table 9 The General Social Media Usage Profile

No.	Reason for Social Media Usage	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	To socialize with people	33	11.8
2	For recreation/fun	28	10
3	To stay updated with current affairs, events and news	166	59.1
4	To self-promote and network	39	14.1
5	To purchase goods and services/To ask recommendations	6	2.1
6	To follow celebrities, influencers, public figures	3	1.1
7	Learning	3	1.2
8	Work	2	0.8
9	Activism	1	0.4

No.	Reason for Social Media Usage	Frequency	Percent (%)
	Total	**281**	**100.0**
No.	**Social Media Engagement Frequency**	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
1	Multiple times a day	253	90
2	Once a day	21	7.5
3	A few times per week	4	1.4
4	Rarely	3	1.1
	Total	**281**	**100.0**
No.	**Interested by Influencer Recommendation/Promotion**	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
1	Yes	199	70.8
2	No	82	29.2
	Total	**281**	**100.0**

The primary reason for using social media is to stay updated with current affairs, events and news, mentioned by 59.1% of the respondents. Followed by self-promotion & networking by 14.1%, 11.8% of the respondents use social media for socializing with others. Other reasons, such as recreation, learning and purchasing goods, represent a smaller section of the primary usage reasons. Like their reasons, their usage frequency also differs. The majority of the participants are active social media users, with 90% checking their social media multiple times a day. An additional 7.5% engage with these platforms at least once daily, resulting in a total daily usage rate of 97.5%. 70.8% of the participants responded that they've a high level of openness to influencer-led contents. Meanwhile, 29.2% stated they weren't influenced by such promotions.

Table 10 Purchase Decision and Expenditure Behavior

No.	Purchase Information	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Yes, several times	76	27
2	Yes, Once or Twice	70	24.9
3	No, but I have considered	82	29.2
4	No, never	53	18.9
	Total	**281**	**100.0**
No.	**Spend Amount (ETB)**		
1	0 ETB/I haven't made a purchase.	115	40.9

No.	Purchase Information	Frequency	Percent (%)
2	< 1,000	68	24.2
3	1,001 - 3,000	62	22.1
4	3,001 - 7,000	21	7.5
5	> 7,000	15	5.3
	Total	**281**	**100.0**

81.1% of the participants purchased a product following a promotion/recommendation of an influencer, with 27% buying it several times and 24.9% purchasing once or twice. 29.2% of respondents indicated that while they have not yet purchased the product, they have considered doing so. Only 18.9% of the sample had never considered a purchase.

On the other side, the spending patterns varied significantly across the sample. While 40.9% of respondents didn't make a single purchase due to influencers recommendation, majority of the respondents (59.1%) invested varying amounts of money into a product. Specifically, 24.2% spent <1,000 ETB, while a considerable 33.6% of the total sample spent between 1,001 and over 7,000 ETB.

4.2.1.3 Brand Awareness

Table 11 Consumer Brand Recognition and Social Media Promotion Exposure

No.	Brand Awareness	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Yes	158	56.2
2	No	122	43.4
	Total	**281**	**100.0**
No.	**Promotion Awareness**	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
1	Yes	88	31.3
2	No	69	24.6
	Total	**157**	**55.9%**
No.	**Follow Arada on Socials**	**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
1	Yes	36	12.8
2	No	132	47
	Total	**168**	**59.8%**

As per the above Table, 56.2% of the respondents are aware of the Arada Seltzer brand, while 43.4% indicated a lack of prior knowledge. 31.3% of the participants were aware of specific promotional activities for Arada Seltzer while 24.6% responded no exposure to the brand's promotions. Even though these respondents have a good track record of social media exposure, they haven't watched the ad of Arada. The remaining portion of the sample represents those who lacked general brand awareness and thus weren't requested for further promotional recall.

To assess the level of direct engagement with the brand, respondents were asked if they follow the official Arada social media pages. Only 12.8% of the sample are followers of the brand's official social media pages while 47% indicated they don't follow the brand online. The remaining portion of the sample represents those who were not previously aware of the brand.

Table 12 Promotion Platform Awareness Status of Respondents

No.	Social Media Platform	Frequency	Percent of Responses (%)	Percent of Cases (%)
1	TikTok	42	30.2	43.8
2	Facebook	33	23.7	34.4
3	Instagram	41	29.5	42.7
4	YouTube	17	12.2	17.7
5	Telegram	5	3.6	5.2
6	Twitter/X	1	0.7	1.0
Total		**139**	**100.0**	**144.8**

As detailed in Table 12, TikTok and Instagram emerged as the leading platforms for single-source promotional recall. TikTok stands as a primary platform for a promotional recall, capturing the highest engagement with 43.8%, closely followed by Instagram with 42.7%, which demonstrated significant effectiveness of respondents in recalling the promotion. Since, participants were allowed to select more than one social media platforms to reflect their digital exposure, the total percentages of cases exceeded 100%.

4.3 Inferential Analysis of Variables

4.3.1 Correlation Analysis

To proceed to regression analysis, prior tests shall be performed. Accordingly, the study performed correlation analysis to examine the existence of relationship between influencer marketing

attributes and customer purchase decision. To determine the existence, network and strength of the relationship between the independent variables (Trustworthiness, Relatability, Expertise and Attractiveness) and the dependent variable (Purchase Decision), a Pearson Correlation analysis was conducted. As noted by Marczyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger (2005), this statistic is essential for determining the degree to which variables are related. The correlation coefficient is a numerical indicator that reflects the degree of linear relationship between two variables, ranging from -1.00 to +1.00. In the context of this study, a positive correlation (between 0 and +1) indicates a direct relationship where an increase in the perceived attribute of the influencer such as Trustworthiness or Relatability or Expertise or Attractiveness is associated with a corresponding increase in the respondent's Purchase Decision for Arada Seltzer. On the contrary, a negative correlation (between 0 and -1) would suggest that the variables move in opposite directions (Marczyk et al., 2005). The closer the coefficient is to +1.00, the stronger the positive association, providing evidence for the predictive power of influencer marketing on customer choice in the Addis Ababa market.

Table 13 Correlation Analysis Result

No.	Variables	Variables				
		T	**R**	**E**	**A**	**CPD**
1	Trustworthiness (T)	1				
2	Relatability (R)	0.617**	1			
3	Expertise (E)	0.644**	0.631**	1		
4	Attractiveness (A)	0.500**	0.530**	0.495**	1	
5	Customer Purchase Decision (CPD)	0.585**	0.607**	0.617**	0.561**	1
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

The results in Table 13 indicate that all independent variables, Trustworthiness, Relatability, Expertise and Attractiveness have a positive and statistically significant relationship with Customer Purchase Decision at the 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$). Specifically, Expertise (r =0.617) and Relatability (r =0.607) shown the strongest correlations. Following the guidelines of Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2019), coefficients exceeding 0.50 represent a strong association in social science research.

4.3.2 Diagnostic Analysis for Regression Assumption

4.3.2.1 Normality Test

4.3.2.1.1 Skewness and Kurtosis

Table 14 Skewness and Kurtosis Result

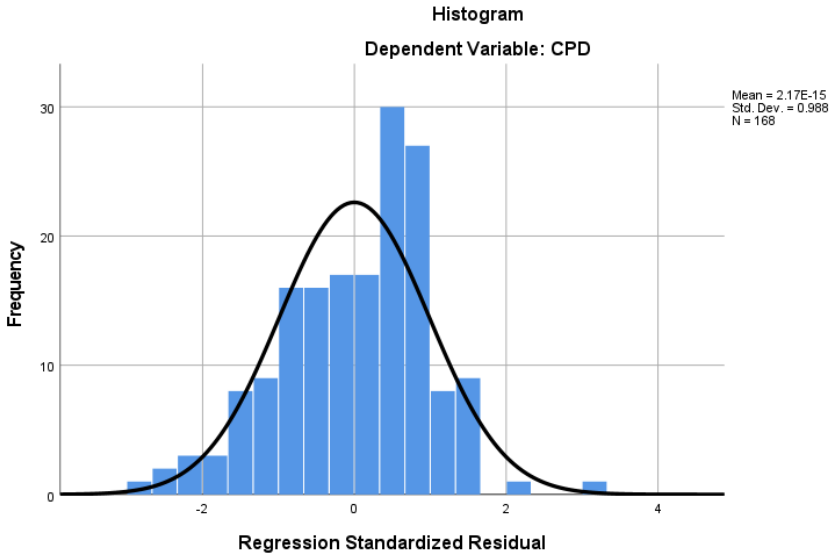
Variable	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
						Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
T	168	1.00	5.00	2.9548	0.84221	-0.305	0.187	0.046	0.373
R	168	1.00	5.00	2.8714	0.87938	-0.277	0.187	-0.391	0.373
E	168	1.00	5.00	2.8726	0.84327	-0.344	0.187	0.283	0.373
A	168	1.00	5.00	3.2607	0.79603	-0.480	0.187	1.150	0.373
CPD	168	1.00	5.00	2.5952	1.00489	-0.030	0.187	-0.698	0.373

The results in Table 14 indicate that all variables show a distribution consistent with the assumptions of normality required for parametric analysis. The mean scores range from 2.59 to 3.26, reflecting a diverse range of consumer perceptions. Following the guidelines of Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2019), the data is considered normally distributed as the skewness values ranging from -0.480 to -0.030 (Trustworthiness: -0.305, Relatability: -0.277, Expertise: -0.344 and Attractiveness: -0.480) and kurtosis values ranging from -0.698 to 1.150, (Trustworthiness: 0.046, Relatability: -0.391, Expertise: -0.283 and Attractiveness: 1.150), both fall within the acceptable range. This confirms that the data for the Arada Seltzer brand is sufficiently symmetrical and provides a foundation to conduct further inferential statistical tests to determine the drivers of buying behavior.

4.3.2.1.2 Histogram

Beside the mathematical indicators, normality was also assessed visually through the distribution of regression residuals. Figure 4 shows the histogram of the standardized residuals for the dependent variable, customer purchase decision. As it can be seen from the figure, there is no heavy skews to the left or right, visually confirming that the error terms are normally distributed.

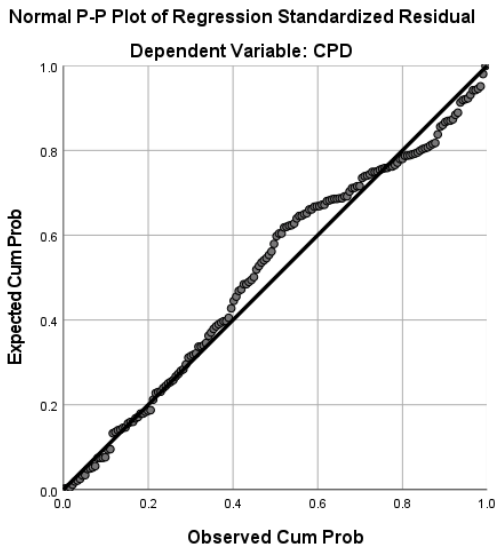
Figure 2 Histogram



4.3.2.1.3 The Normal P-Plot

The Normal P-Plot was generated to visually examine the normal distribution of error terms. According to Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2019), this tight alignment of the residuals to the diagonal line indicates that the distribution of errors is normal and that no significant deviations are present. As shown in figure 3, the plotted data points closely follow the straight diagonal line without significant deviation. Thus, this visual confirmation approves that the regression model for the Arada Seltzer brand is statistically sound, allowing for a valid interpretation of the relationships between the influencer marketing attributes and consumer purchase decisions.

Figure 3 Normal P-P Plot



4.3.2.2 Multicollinearity Test

Table 15 Multicollinearity Diagnostics Matrix

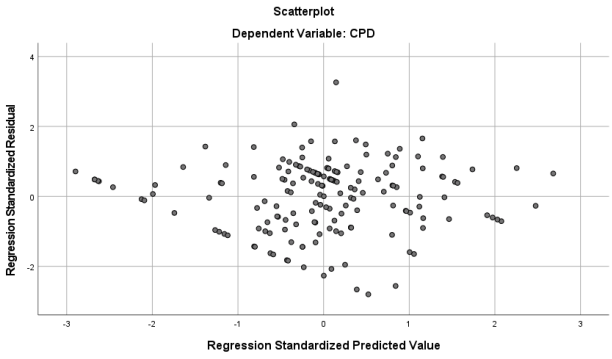
No.	Independent Variable	Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)
1	Trustworthiness	0.495	2.019
2	Relatability	0.493	2.029
3	Expertise	0.485	2.064
4	Attractiveness	0.655	1.528

The diagnostic test of multicollinearity was performed to evaluate the statistical independence and structural integrity of the independent variables within the regression model. As demonstrated in Table 15, the tolerance values of all independent variables fall between 0.485 and 0.655. Similarly, the VIF values of all independent variables range from 1.528 to 2.064. As per Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2019), multicollinearity is considered unacceptable if the tolerance values are below 0.10 and VIF exceeds 10. Accordingly, the result fulfilled the assumption of non-multicollinearity, i.e. tolerance is above 0.10 and VIF is below 10, showing no significant problem between independent variables.

4.3.2.3 Linearity and Homoscedasticity Test

The figure presented below shows a scatter plot of regression standardized residuals against predicted value. As it can be inferred from the diagram, the data points show a clear state of homoscedasticity, meaning the variance of the error terms is constant. Additionally, the residuals aren't distributed like curved or U-shape pattern. Given they're randomly scattered, it can be concluded that, both linearity and homoscedasticity assumptions are completely fulfilled. It allows to proceed to multiple linear regression analysis.

Figure 4 Scatter Plot of Regression Standardized Residuals Against Predicted Value



4.3.3 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

4.3.3.1 Regression Model Summary

To evaluate the influence of the four independent variables, Trustworthiness, Relatability, Expertise & Attractiveness on the Purchase Decision of Arada Hard Seltzer, a multiple linear regression analysis was performed. This statistical method was selected because, as defined by Marczyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger (2005), the primary purpose of regression is *prediction*, allowing for the estimation of a dependent variable based on the value of one or more independent variables. To ensure the integrity of the model, the rules of thumb established by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2019) were followed, particularly the assessment of multicollinearity using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to ensure that the influencer attributes were distinct and independent.

Table 16 Result of Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.721[a]	0.520	0.508	0.70491	1.885

As shown in the Model Summary Table, the multiple linear regression analysis produced a coefficient of correlation (R) of 0.721, suggesting a strong positive relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Besides, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was found to be 0.520. Following the interpretation of Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2007), this indicates that 52% of the variance in Customer Purchase Decisions for Arada Seltzer is explained by the influencers' Attractiveness, Expertise, Trustworthiness and Relatability. The remaining 48% is attributed to other factors not included in this study. The Adjusted R Square of 0.508 further confirms the strength of the model, providing a reliable basis for predicting consumer behavior in the Addis Ababa market.

4.3.3.2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The overall significance of the regression model is tested by ANOVA. According to Marczyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger (2005), the F-test in the ANOVA Table determines whether the combination of independent variables significantly predicts the dependent variable or not.

Table 17 ANOVA Table

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	87.642	4	21.910	**44.094**	**0.000[b]**
	Residual	80.995	163	0.497		
	Total	168.636	167			

As per Table 17, F-statistic is 44.094 with a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.001$). This result approved that the regression model is a statistically significant to forecast the purchase decision of Arada hard seltzer customers. According to Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2019), a significance level below 0.05 provides strong evidence that the model fit is better than what would be expected by chance alone. Therefore, the independent variables *Trustworthiness, Relatability, Expertise and Attractiveness* collectively have a significant impact on the buying behavior of consumers in Addis Ababa. This finding validates the use of the model for further analysis of the individual beta coefficients.

4.3.3.3 Analysis of Regression Coefficients

To identify the relative contribution of each influencer attribute to the customer purchase decision, the standardized Beta coefficients were analyzed. As stated by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2019), the standardized coefficient (Beta) allows for a direct comparison between predictors to determine which variable has the greatest impact on the dependent variable.

Table 18 Coefficient Table

No.	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-0.553	0.252		-2.194	0.030
2	Trustworthiness	0.202	0.092	0.169	2.196	0.029
3	Relatability	0.248	0.088	0.217	2.803	0.006
4	Expertise	0.304	0.093	0.255	3.267	0.001
5	Attractiveness	0.297	0.085	0.235	3.506	0.001

The results indicate that all 4 independent variables, Trustworthiness ($\beta=0.169$, $p=0.029$), Relatability ($\beta=0.217$, $p=0.006$), Expertise ($\beta=0.255$, $p=0.001$) and Attractiveness ($\beta=0.235$, $p=0.001$) are significant predictors of purchase intent at the 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$).

From the four variables, expertise has become the most influential attribute. Consumers of Arada who reside in Addis Ababa are mostly influenced by the product know-how of influencer. Attractiveness came the next variable which highlights the importance of visual appeal in the Ethiopian beverage industry. These findings align with the *prediction* objective of regression described by Marczyk, DeMatteo and Festinger (2005), providing a clear hierarchy of influencer traits that drive brand engagement for Arada Seltzer. Accordingly, all the proposed hypotheses are supported by the result.

4.3.3.4 Residuals Analysis

The analysis showed that the mean of the residuals is 0.000, indicating that the model is unbiased in its predictions of Customer Purchase Decisions. According to Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2019), most standardized residuals should fall between -2 and +2. Values exceeding ±3 are considered *outliers* (respondents whose answers are very different from the rest of the group). The minimum and maximum standardized residuals are -2.800 and 3.261 respectively. This indicates that a very small number of outliers are in the sample however, it won't ruin the overall result since the Mean is.000. Moreover, the data has been correctly standardized for the regression calculation since the Std. Predicted Value is (Mean=0.000, SD=1.000)

Table 19 Residuals Statistics Table

No.		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1	Predicted Value	0.4969	4.5383	2.5952	0.72443	168
2	Residual	-1.97403	2.29878	0.00000	0.69642	168
3	Std. Predicted Value	-2.897	2.682	0.000	1.000	168
4	Std. Residual	-2.800	3.261	0.000	0.988	168

4.4 Summary of Hypothesis Testing Result and Discussion

Under this topic, the result of the proposed hypothesizes will be discussed.

Table 20 Summary of Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Description	Result	Decision
Hypothesis 1	Influencer Trustworthiness has a significant and positive effect on the purchase decisions for Arada Seltzer drink consumers in Addis Ababa.	**Supported** Significant (P=0.029) Positive (β=0.169)	Hypothesis Accepted

Hypothesis 2	Influencer Expertise (product know-how) has a significant and positive effect on the purchase decisions for Arada Seltzer drink consumers in Addis Ababa.	**Supported** Significant (P=0.001) Positive (β=0.255)	Hypothesis Accepted
Hypothesis 3	Influencer Attractiveness has a significant and positive effect on the purchase decisions for Arada Seltzer drink consumers in Addis Ababa.	**Supported** Significant (P=0.001) Positive (β=0.235)	Hypothesis Accepted
Hypothesis 4	Influencer relatability has a significant and positive effect on the purchase decisions of Arada Seltzer consumers in Addis Ababa.	**Supported** Significant (P=0.006) Positive (β=0.217)	Hypothesis Accepted

Influencer Trustworthiness

Hypothesis 1 states that, influencer trustworthiness has a significant and positive effect on the purchase decisions for Arada Seltzer drink consumers in Addis Ababa. Based on the findings of the study, trustworthiness has a beta value of 0.169 and P value of 0.029, showing a positive correlation.

Discussion

As cited by Al-Mu'ani et al., (2023), the perceived honest of an influencer is taken as one of the vital elements which directly enhances the consumer's attitude toward the brand, which supports the results of this study. A strong positive correlation between trustworthiness and customer purchase decision indicates that consumers are more likely led to purchase a product when they find the influencer trustworthy.

Influencer Expertise (Product Know-How)

Hypothesis 2 proposes, influencer expertise has a significant and positive effect on the purchase decisions for Arada Seltzer drink consumers in Addis Ababa. According to the results of this study, expertise has a beta value of 0.255 and P value of 0.001, which shows a positive and highly statistically significant correlation with the purchase decision of a customer.

Discussion

A study by Caio (2025) indicated that, the influencer’s knowledge towards the brand coupled with the quality of the content information serve as a major component to drive purchase decision for new products. It strongly supported the hypothesis that, the expertise of an influencer makes

consumers to discover the important features of the product and consequently reach to a purchase decision.

Influencer Attractiveness

Hypothesis 3 proposes that, Influencer Attractiveness has a significant and positive effect on the purchase decisions for Arada Seltzer drink consumers in Addis Ababa. As per the findings of the study, attractiveness has a positive and highly statistically significant correlation with customer purchase decision with a beta value of 0.235 and P value of 0.001.

Discussion

This result confirmed a study by Masuda et al. (2022) that has shown attractiveness of an influencer is among the most powerful backgrounds for purchase intention. The finding revealed that, the attractiveness of an influencer will more likely lead consumers to purchase a product. It also affirmed that, for a life style and youth centric product like Arada, the attractiveness of an influencer is an key element.

Influencer Relatability

Based on the result showing a beta and P value of 0.217 and 0.006 respectively, hypothesis 4, which states that, Influencer relatability has a significant and positive effect on the purchase decisions of Arada Seltzer consumers in Addis Ababa, is accepted. The finding revealed that, relatability has a positive and statistically significant correlation with the customer purchase decision.

Discussion

Maharani and Aruan (2025) has demonstrated that perceived similarity with the influencer has a significant impact on purchase intentions of a consumer since the psychological alignment between a follower's self-concept and an influencer's persona is a strong driver for brand attraction. The finding supported the result of this research as customers become more interested to purchase a product when they easily relate the influencer with their lifestyle.

In conclusion, though all four hypotheses were accepted, the expertise of an influencer has the highest degree of impact (β=0.255) in the purchasing decision of customers, from the rest three attributes when it comes to the actual and potential customers of Arada Hard Seltzer. For the actual and potential consumers of Arada Hard Seltzer in Addis Ababa, product know-how and informational value carry the more weight, closely followed by attractiveness and relatability. Trustworthiness is still considered as the core element.

Chapter Five - Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

This chapter will present conclusion, recommendation and suggestions for further study based on the findings of the study.

5.1 Summary of Findings

Identified the following four major variables, the result of this research has shown that influencer marketing attributes can significantly forecast customer purchase decisions.

Through perceived honesty, trustworthiness can build the brand attitude. Whereas relatability has an impact on the younger generation (Generation Y or Millennial and Generation Z) for an identity matching. The product knowhow of an influencer gives necessary knowledge to a customer which minimizes the perceived risk of a new product, like Arada seltzer drink and the physical attractiveness of an influencer is also important to get the necessary attention within this crowded digital world. Together all these attributes serve as important drivers that lead consumers from initial interest to the final decision to purchase.

51.3% the respondents are below 35 years old and 56.9% the sample fall under upper-level income earners category, with a monthly earning of 40,000 birr and above, according to the result of the study. This data is important for Arada since this demography align with the brand for its promotional activities and also, it's an ideal customer base which shall be strongly considered for future digital marketing campaigns.

TikTok emerged as the most effective social media platform for generating speedy and viral engagement and for immediate purchase desire. Whereas Instagram was identified as an effective medium for a long-term brand storytelling and constant engagement.

Perceived similarity of an influencer drives more conversion than large number of followers, indicating that personal connection is an important tool for actual purchase decision. On the other hand, for the Arada Seltzer brand, the consumer's perception of an influencer's knowledge and their ability to relate to the audience are the most powerful elements of purchasing behavior.

These empirical results hold particular significance for Komari Beverages, given the constraints of Proclamation No. 1112/2019. With traditional media channels restricted for alcoholic products, the company's strategic transition to influencer marketing is supported by this study as a necessary and effective substitute to ensure market visibility and maintain competitiveness under current Ethiopian regulatory requirements.

5.2 Conclusion

It's concluded that, the expertise of an influencer has a significant impact which gives customers an adequate information for initial search about the product and guides all the way through the final purchase decision stage. It also shown that, the effective marketing results can be achieved through collaboration with influencers who own authenticity that can align with the brand's cultural alignment. Finally, Arada can operate in the restricted landscape and keep its strong competitor position in the Ethiopian beverage market by focusing on these attributes whenever the brand decides to collaborate with influencers.

5.3 Recommendations

Maintaining a continuous presence in the digital world isn't only important but becoming mandatory due to the strict ban of alcohol beverages advertisement via traditional broadcast media. Even though, the establishment of strategic collaboration with influencers isn't questionable, it has to be done in a careful way to achieve an intended purpose. In accordance with the results of the study that supported all the proposed hypotheses, the following points are recommended.

1. Komari Beverages shall carefully select and partner with influencers with high levels of expertise and trustworthiness, than simply collaborating based on large follower number.
2. Marketing activities shall focus on influencers who share perceived similarity with the target audience since relatability is a powerful tool than traditional celebrity endorsement, for conversion.
3. Arada hard seltzer shall continue using TikTok for energetic and viral campaigns and Instagram for lifestyle and high-quality storytelling promotion, which targeted an immediate engagement for the former one and long-term brand equity for the later.
4. Given that hard seltzer is a newer category in Ethiopia, influencer content should emphasize the *product know-how* to minimize the perceived social and functional risks for first-time buyers.
5. Since the term hard seltzer is new to the Ethiopian audience, most respondents refer it as a beer. Thus, Arada shall still aggressively work on showing the difference between hard Seltzer drink and other alcoholic beverages.
6. As more than half of the respondents fall under upper-level income earners category, with a monthly net income of more than 40,000 birr, the brand shall strongly perform various

marketing activity to attract and also retain this category under its customer base. In addition to this, the company shall also consider additional social media platforms like LinkedIn that can find this group of professionals abundantly.

7. Komari shall use aggressive and diversified promotional mechanisms to increase its visibility and attract more customers.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Since the geography of this study is limited to the capital city, expanding the study beyond Addis Ababa to other regional towns of the country may provide a more comprehensive view of the national beverage market. In addition to this, including variables which aren't covered in this research may show additional results that will help in providing new insights to this newly emerging sector, influencer marketing.

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Appendix

A. Research Questionnaire

Title: **The Effect of Influencer Marketing Attributes on Customer Purchase Decisions in Addis Ababa: The Case of Arada Hard Seltzer Drink**

Dear Esteemed Participant,

My name is **Hanna Tadesse.** I'm a final-year postgraduate student at **Addis Ababa University, School of Commerce**. Currently, I'm conducting this research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's Degree in Marketing Management.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to examine how social media influencers affect the purchase decisions regarding **Arada Hard Seltzer**. Your participation is entirely voluntary and your responses will be kept strictly confidential and used solely for academic purposes. As the success of this research highly depends on the quality of the data, I kindly request you to respond to all questions with high integrity and completeness.

As this survey is anonymous, you are not required to provide your name. It will take approximately **5-7 minutes** of your time.

For further information or clarifications, please feel free to reach out to me at hanafitad@gmail.com

Thank you in advance for your time and valuable contribution to this study!

Part I: Introduction

This research specifically focuses on the consumer behavior and influencer trends within the Addis Ababa market. I appreciate your understanding in helping me to maintain the geographic accuracy of the study.

Do you currently reside in Addis Ababa?

Yes (1) ☐ No (2) ☐

Part II: General Information (Demographics)

Please ✓ (tick) in the box provided to answer the following questions.

1. Age

   18-24 (1) ☐ 25-29 (2) ☐ 30-34 (3) ☐

   35-39 (4) ☐ ≥ 40 (5) ☐

2. Gender

   Male (1) ☐ Female (2) ☐

3. Educational Level

   Primary (1) ☐ Secondary (2) ☐ Diploma/TVET ☐

   (3) Bachelor's Degree (4) ☐ Master's Degree (5) ☐ PhD (6) ☐

4. Occupation

   Student (1) ☐ Self-Employed (2) ☐ Government (3) ☐

   Private/Non-Government (4) ☐ Unemployed (5) ☐

5. Marital Status

   Single (1) ☐ In a Relationship/Engaged (2) ☐

   Married (3) ☐ Divorced (4) ☐

   Widowed (5) ☐

6. Monthly (Net) Income (in ETB)

   < 5,000 (1) ☐ 5,001-10,000 (2) ☐

   10,001-20,000 (3) ☐ 20,001-40,000 (4) ☐ >40,000 (5) ☐

   (For students, please indicate your average monthly allowance or pocket money.)

Part II: Social Media Usage

1. Which social media platform do you use more often? (Multiple answers are allowed)

   TikTok(1) ☐ Facebook (2) ☐ Instagram (3) ☐

   YouTube (4) ☐ Telegram (5) ☐ Twitter/X (6) ☐

   Other (7) ☐

2. From the platforms selected above, which one do you use most frequently? (Please select only one)

   TikTok(1) ☐ Facebook (2) ☐ Instagram (3) ☐

   YouTube (4) ☐ Telegram (5) ☐ Twitter/X (6) ☐

   Other (7) ☐

3. What is your primary reason for using social media?

   To socialize with people (1) ☐

   For recreation/fun (2) ☐

   To stay updated with current affairs, events and news (3) ☐

   To self-promote and network (4) ☐

   To purchase goods and services/To ask recommendations (5) ☐

   To follow celebrities, influencers, public figures (6) ☐

   Other (7) ☐

4. How often do you use social media?

   Multiple times a day (1) ☐ Once a day (2) ☐

   A few times per week (3) ☐ Rarely (4) ☐

5. Have you ever become interested in a product after seeing an influencer's promotion/recommendation?

   Yes (1) ☐ No (2) ☐

6. Have you ever purchased a product or service you saw in influencer ads?

   Yes, several times (1) ☐ Yes, Once or Twice (2) ☐

   No, but I have considered (3) ☐ No, Never (4) ☐

7. If yes, on average, how much money do you spend per month on products or services discovered through influencer ads? (in ETB)

   0 ETB/ I haven't made a purchase. (1) ☐ < 1,000 (2) ☐

   1,001 - 3,000 (3) ☐ 3,001 - 7,000 (4) ☐ > 7,000 (5) ☐

Part III: Brand Awareness

1. Before today, were you aware of the brand "Arada Hard Seltzer/Adara drink"?

   Yes (1) ☐ No (2) ☐

2. Have you seen any social media promotions for Arada Hard Seltzer?

   Yes (1) ☐ No (2) ☐

3. If yes, which platform?

   TikTok(1) ☐ Facebook (2) ☐ Instagram (3) ☐

   YouTube (4) ☐ Telegram (5) ☐ Twitter/X (6) ☐

4. Do you follow the social media pages of Arada Seltzer/Komari beverages?

   Yes (1) ☐ No (2) ☐

Part IV: Influencer Marketing Attributes

Section A: Trustworthiness (Credibility)

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
T1	I believe local social media influencers are honest and sincere when they recommend Arada Seltzer.					
T2	Since alcohol ads are restricted on TV, Radio, Billboard etc., I rely on influencers as a primary and credible source of information about Arada Seltzer.					
T3	I consider the influencers who promote Arada Seltzer to be reliable sources of information.					
T4	Even when a post is a "Paid Partnership," I still feel the influencer's recommendation is genuine.					
T5	I trust an influencer more if they share their personal, unfiltered experience with Arada.					

Section B: Relatability

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
R1	I follow social media influencers whose lifestyle matches my own interests and values.					
R2	The influencers who promote Arada Seltzer are people who "think like me" when it comes to social entertainment.					
R3	The influencers who promote Arada Seltzer represent a social lifestyle that I personally identify with.					
R4	The way influencers consume Arada Seltzer at parties, cafes or lounges fits my social habits in Addis Ababa.					

R5	I feel a sense of similarity between my personality and the personality of the influencers who promote Arada.					

Section C: Expertise

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
E1	I believe the influencers who promote Arada Seltzer are knowledgeable about beverage and lifestyle trends.					
E2	The influencers I follow appear to have a great deal of experience in testing and reviewing products like Arada.					
E3	I consider the influencers who post about Arada Seltzer to be experts in identifying high-quality social experiences in Addis Ababa.					
E4	The information provided by influencers regarding the taste, ingredients or "vibe" of Arada Seltzer is competent and professional.					
E5	I value the opinion of these influencers on what is currently trendy in the beverage market.					

Section D: Attractiveness

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
A1	I find the influencers who promote Arada Seltzer to be physically appealing and elegant.					
A2	The influencers who post about Arada Seltzer have a classy and elegant image that fits the brand.					

A3	The visual quality of influencer's photo/video makes Arada Seltzer look more desirable.					
A4	I perceive the influencers promoting Arada Seltzer as sophisticated and trendy individuals.					
A5	The overall beauty and style of the influencer create a positive impression of the Arada brand for me.					

Part V: Consumer Purchase Decision

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
CPD1	I am more likely to buy Arada Seltzer after seeing it recommended by an influencer I follow.					
CPD2	I would recommend Arada Seltzer to my friends or family because of the positive image created by influencers.					
CPD3	Whenever I consider buying a seltzer or similar drink, Arada is my first choice due to influencer promotions.					
CPD4	I am willing to pay the current market price for Arada Seltzer because of the value influencers have associated with it.					
CPD5	I have actually purchased Arada Seltzer at least once because of a specific influencer's post or story.					

B. Questions for Komari Beverages

1. Could you describe the core marketing strategy implemented during the initial launch of Komari's operations?

2. How has your marketing strategy evolved since the launch and what does your current approach require?
3. What were the primary catalysts for any shifts in your strategy? Specifically, were these driven by internal "push" factors or external market "pull" factors?
4. When was influencer marketing first incorporated/introduced for the Arada brand?
5. Approximately what percentage of your total marketing budget is currently allocated to influencer partnerships?
6. What was the sales volume prior to the influencer campaign and how has it changed since? Have you observed a measurable impact on brand reach and market penetration?
7. Did the influencer promotion lead to any significant changes in production capacity requirements?
8. Have you encountered any specific challenges or limitations since integrating influencers into your promotional mix?
9. With how many numbers of influencers Komari Beverages has collaborated with in the past as well as those currently under contract?

C. Follow-Up Questions to Komari Beverage

1. You mentioned collaborating with 60–70 creators based on "cultural alignment" rather than traditional metrics. For the purpose of my academic study, would you consider these individuals as "micro-influencers" or "niche influencers," even if the partnership is organic rather than a paid transaction?
2. While Komari does not pay influencers to advocate for the brand, do these collaborations involve "in-kind" exchanges? For example, does Komari provide Arada products for events, exclusive access to brand experiences, or technical/creative support for co-branded content?
3. Since influencer-specific impact is not a primary tracked metric at Komari, how do you evaluate the success of these community-led engagements? In the absence of direct conversion data, do you rely on proxy data like "brand mentions" during major festivals or regional sales spikes following a creator's campaign?
4. The strategy has evolved from "awareness generation" to "shaping consumer behavior". Has this shift changed the type of creator you work with? Specifically, are you now prioritizing

creators who showcase "consumption occasions" (e.g., social gatherings, nightlife) to more directly influence the purchase intent of the urban audience?

5. Regarding high-visibility activations like the "1-Birr" face reveal campaign, did Komari find that this curiosity translated into lasting brand recall for Arada or was there a concern of "Vampire Creativity", where the hype surrounding the influencer's persona overshadowed the actual product attributes?
6. Your strategy focuses on "cultural relevance" and "urban lifestyle". From your perspective, do your collaborators drive sales more through "social signaling" (the consumer's desire to be seen with a trendy brand) or through the effective communication of Arada's "premium-quality" beverage features?
7. As Arada heavily utilizes digital platforms and short-form content, have you observed a measurable difference in how Gen Z versus Millennials respond to these collaborations? Does the "digital hype" translate into actual purchase behavior differently across these two age demographics?