Consumers' Perceptions of the Concept of Beauty in Social Media and Influencer Marketing

Master Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the Degree

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AFFIDAVIT

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ABSTRACT

In the digitalized world, like everything, industries are changing and developing, and also new concepts are emerging. For instance, the marketing concept dates back to old times, and for a while, a new term, digital marketing, has arisen in people's life, which continues to change and evolve constantly. Meanwhile, beauty is a concept which steadily evolves since the beginning of history, which is why beauty is one of the most prominent living practices in society. For this reason, both constantly changing and evolving concepts, this master thesis investigates the evolution of beauty perception and, correspondingly, the place of beauty in social media and influencer marketing, which has an impact on customer engagement and purchase intention. Beauty occurs in social media and influencer marketing; thus, the study aims to explore the consumer's perception of beauty and their attitude and behavior toward using beauty standards in today's marketing. To achieve this goal, qualitative research is conducted. In-depth interviews are done with eleven participants. During the interview, it was mainly asked about their beauty perception, social media consumption, and consumer behavior related to purchase intention towards products that beautiful influencers or celebrities on social media advertise. Hence it is assessed whether beauty perception plays a role in customer engagement and purchase intention and whether social media marketing influences today's beauty perception. In this study, the concept of beauty is obtained from different perspectives, and also given detailed information about the evolution of beauty since ancient times in the literature review to highlight the place of beauty in people's lives. Moreover, brief information about digital marketing is given in the literature review. Many studies have already been conducted and published about beauty and marketing concepts. However, thanks to the literature, the connection between marketing and beauty can be perceived clearly to assess customer engagement and purchase intention. This research paper will be helpful for marketers who aim to identify the usage of beauty in social media platforms, whether it increases sales or brand engagement. Also, this investigation will be convenient for recognizing customer segmentation better, which provides to take efficient action by marketers.

Keywords: social media marketing, influencer marketing, beauty concept, customer engagement, customer purchase intention, digital marketing.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B.C. – Before Christ

BMI – Body Mass Index

DM – Digital Marketing

EU – European Union

HL – Head Length

MM – Millimeter

TH – Top of the Head

US – United States

1 INTRODUCTION

Beauty is not an accurately defined and fixed concept. It has been redefined by philosophers, psychologists, and scientists over and over since the beginning of history, and an accurate definition is not founded. The concept of beauty changes constantly; for this reason, the phenomenon of beauty has become one of the most prominent living practices in society (Sisti et al., 2021). To understand the concept of beauty better, the phenomenon must be examined from different perspectives, such as philosophical, biological, psychological, and physical. Thus, it can be realized how broad the concept is and cannot be defined in one aspect (Sisti et al., 2021). Furthermore, beauty has a long history, which dates back to ancient times, and relatedly different beauty standards occurred over time. For example, while the ideal beauty of a woman was described as being fat, having a large stomach, large thighs, and big breasts in the Paleolithic period, it was the opposite in the Victorian era (Dixson & Dixson, 2011). Being fragile, weak, and delicate were the indicators of beauty standards for women in the Victorian era (Gorham, 2013). Therefore, today's beauty standards are different, too, and will continue to change. When different perspectives of beauty and the evolution of beauty standards are considered, the impacts of beauty on society are worth to be examined to understand the place of beauty in people's lives. These standards, which were settled in people's minds, affect people's characteristics, decisions, and consumer behaviors. Not only do beauty standards impact people's preferences, decisions, or behaviors, but it also affects people's mental or physical health (Uhlmann et al., 2018). That is why beauty has had an important place since the beginning of history, and external factors are affecting the changes in beauty and, correspondingly, the place, the attitude, and the perception of beauty in people's lives. For instance, media plays an essential role in determining beauty standards that standardize beauty concepts, and the consequences of these standards on people are related to people's perceptions and attitudes toward beauty ideals (Laughter et al., 2023).

With the development and change in societal life, new industries, such as advertising and marketing concepts, emerged where the concept of beauty takes an important place. The marketing industry has changed, renewed, and generated new concepts. A new world called the digital era has been established, and consequently, a new marketing concept has arisen, digital marketing (Makrides et al., 2020). Thanks to highly fast-developed technology, innovations and developments in digital marketing have accelerated. Therefore, sub-marketing types such as social media, influencer, or search engine

marketing emerged under the digital marketing heading (Krishen et al., 2021). The beauty concept is used and integrated into social media and inlfuencer marketing; as a matter of fact, the concept of beauty started to be redefined according to the implemented marketing strategies and advertising, where the mass media plays an important role.

Due to this reason, it is decided to investigate the development of beauty over time and the place of beauty in marketing. Because beauty occurs in an important place throughout history in society, the usage of beauty in marketing is highly active; exploring consumer behavior toward today's beauty standard through social media and influencer marketing channels will be helpful for the literature. Particularly, almost newly emerged marketing approaches, which are social media marketing and influencer marketing, are prevalent in the digitalized era where beauty occupies a prominent place. In terms of measuring and evaluating customer engagement and purchase intention, understanding the impacts of beauty usage in digital marketing strategies is vital for brands who want to increase sales and brand awareness, and loyalty (Yesiloglu & Costello, 2020).

Briefly, beauty and marketing are both evolving concepts, so the interaction of each other and, in parallel with the impact of using beauty in marketing on consumer behavior will be a beneficial research topic for marketers who want to identify better their target groups' wants, needs, or preferences. This study will answer consumers' expectations, attitudes, and behaviors when they are exposed to beauty in marketing strategies; thus, marketers will be able to take relevant action which satisfies both consumers' and brands' expectations, such as earning high sales and creating customer engagement.

This master thesis focuses on the development of beauty standards in history and, as a consequence of this development, aims to clarify the relationship between beauty and digital marketing strategies and corresponding consumer behavior. To realize this objective, the researcher needs to find answers to these questions.

The research questions are as follows:

1) To what extent does beauty perception play a role in customer engagement and purchase intention?
2) To what extent does social media marketing influence the beauty perception of today?

In order to understand the importance of these research questions, the literature review will straightforwardly investigate the concept of beauty and digital marketing. The concept will be through different aspects, such as from philosophical, biological, bio-psychological, sociological, and physical perspectives, respectively be examined (Sisti et al., 2021). In pursuing different aspects of beauty, the development of beauty in history and today's beauty ideal settled in consumers' minds have coverage in the literature review. Furthermore, the influence of fairy tales and toys like Barbie on beauty perception is discussed. The concept of beauty chapter ends by mentioning the concept of cosmetics, which is highly related to the beauty concept since the beginning of ancient times (Oumeish, 2001). Following that, this research will touch upon social media and influencer marketing, which significantly impact consumer behavior (Vrontis et al., 2021). Lastly, the place of beauty concept in social media and advertisements is touched on in this literature which is the most related part of the research questions. The literature debates the concept of beauty, digital marketing, and the combination of beauty and digital marketing. This study has continued looking for answers to the research questions to make up a shortage about the impact of beauty standards usage in social media and influencer marketing on customer purchase intention and engagement. For this reason, semi-structured interviews are conducted with interviewees by the researcher following a qualitative approach in this research, and according to the interviewees' answers, data analysis is made. Finally, in the discussion chapter, the categories in the tables, which were created according to interviewees' answers, are examined, and as a result of the results, the findings are shared. In the conclusion of this research paper, theoretical and practical implications are given and mentioned future research about this topic which could not be added to this paper. Additionally, the limitations of this study are stated to inform and warn the readers about the potential weaknesses while the researcher conducted the study.

The efficient and prominent beauty phenomenon manifests itself in many areas of life. Throughout history, the beauty concept has been used for different purposes. The concept of beauty both determines the ideal beauty and also is affected by other indicators such as social structure changes, technological developments, or marketing strategies. Due to this reason, this research paper will be a torch for marketers regarding providing clear implications about the positive and negative effects of social media and influencer marketing on adopted beauty standards, depending upon customer purchase intention and engagement.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Beauty

2.1.1 Beauty

The definition of beauty in the dictionary is "the quality of being pleasing, especially to look at, or someone or something that gives great pleasure, especially when you look at it" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). As an adjective purpose of usage, the definition of beauty is "an attractive quality that gives pleasure to those who experience it or think about it or a person who has this attractive quality" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023).

Beauty is a concept that has yet to be defined precisely. Beauty is an abstract and un-measurable concept that has not only changed over time but is also perceived differently from person to person. The definition of beauty has always been debated; therefore, more than one definition is needed to explain the concept of beauty (Sisti et al., 2021). Everyone has their own ideas and definitions when it comes to the concept of beauty. Everything can be described as beautiful such as a beautiful woman, a painting, a song, a belief, or a behavior. The concept of beauty is a complicated and deep phenomenon (Sarwer et al., 2003). Due to this reason, the concept will be addressed from different perspectives. These different perspectives can be listed mainly as the philosophical per-spectives, the bio-physiological perspective, individuals' perceptions of beauty, the facial beauty perspective, and the beauty of the body perspective (Sisti et al., 2021). Especially the physical beauty standards will take up more place during the examination of per-spectives because nowadays, in the 21st century, the concept of beauty takes an im-portant place in humans' life more concretely, and it affects marketing and the business world through customer needs and preferences edgeways. Marketers, who are aware of the impact of the beauty concept on customer purchase intentions, determine their strat-egies regarding beauty standards. That is why the concept of beauty will be examined from different perspectives to understand the importance of beauty in the human mind and in parallel with the decision-making processes of marketers.

Beauty has been a fundamental subject and has been discussed since ancient Greek, Hellenistic, and medieval philosophers' time. Plato, Kant, Aristotle, Schiller, and Hegel are only a few representatives for the thinkers of beauty (Sartwell & Crispin, 2022). The-philosophical study of beauty also framed the "aesthetics" during the 18th and 19th cen-turies, which became a prominent matter. However, in the 20th century, the mainstream of philosophical beauty topic has decreased. Nevertheless, it is still a debated topic in

terms of questioning whether it is a subjective or objective concept. While beauty has been examined from a philosophical perspective, it can be grouped under certain conceptions (Sartwell & Crispin, 2022). From the perspective of classical conceptions, Aristotle claimed that "The chief forms of beauty are order and symmetry and definiteness, which the mathematical sciences demonstrate in a special degree" (Sartwell & Crispin, 2022, The Classical Conception, para. 2). Aquinas claims that there are three requirements of beauty: "Firstly, integrity or perfection—for if something is impaired, it is ugly. Then there is due proportion or consonance. And also clarity: whence things that are brightly colored are called beautiful" (Summa Theologica I, 39,8). From the perspective of the Idealist conception, beauty is defined in the *Symposium* by Plato as an "aspiration for perfect unity" (Sartwell & Crispin, 2022, The Idealist Concept, para. 1). Schiller and Hegel have similarly defined that "aesthetic or the experience of art and beauty… [is] a primary bridge between the material and the spiritual" (Sartwell & Crispin, 2022, The Idealist Conception, para. 16). Further, Hegel wrote about beauty, "The philosophical Concept of the beautiful, …, must contain, reconciled within itself, both the extremes which have been mentioned [the ideal and the empirical] because it unites metaphysical universality with real particularity"(Sartwell & Crispin, 2022, The Idealist Concpetion, para. 22). In this variety of perspectives, from Plato to Aquinas, from Aquinas to Hegel, beauty has carried various meanings in philosophical perspectives. Many philosophers have been interested in the concept of beauty and have written about it throughout history. It is a topic that cannot be summarized easily in terms of philosophical aspects. Deep books about the meaning of beauty were written by famous philosophers such as Aristotle, Plato, and Kant. Regarding the philosophical perspective of beauty, the most general conclusion is that philosophers first started to describe the concept of beauty, and according to them, the definition of beauty was always different from each other, and the concept of beauty symbolizes not only something tangible or, in other words physical. It is clarified as an idea instead of a physical beauty. That is why in terms of the philosophers' perspective, beauty cannot be examined as unidimensional because the definition of the concept is variable according to different philosophers.

In terms of biological aspects, *the beauty perception by the human mind* and the relationship between beauty and the brain is a mysterious and universal subject. The nature of humans is centered on being attractive and desirable because the human body is shaped to find and match with the other attractive body (Yarosh, 2019). The basic human instinct and goal of every species on the earth are to be able to survive and to reproduce to continue the generation. Regarding evolutionary biology, some phenotypes, which

means being attractive and perceived as good-looking, enhance the chance of repro-duction, referring to finding other 'some' phenotypes (Yarosh, 2019). During mate choice, fertility dominance and future parental behaviors are the primary indicators, and as a result, attractiveness and appearance are a big part of this pairing process (Eşel et al., 2017). The father of biology and evolution, Charles Darwin, clarifies the concept of sexual selection in his book 'Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex.' *Sexual selection* can be defined briefly as "competition over mates," a unifying aspect of all species (Andersson & Iwasa, 1996, p. 53). In theory, sexual selection is challenging for males regarding access to females. The principle in animals, which is also valid for humans, is that the male has two options to attract the female. The first option is owning powerful weapons, such as a giant horn or sharp tooth, to win the fight against competitors. The second option is being beautiful and having distinctive features, such as a lion's mane or peacock feather, which show high-quality genes (Eşel et al., 2017). The perception of beauty improved according to the second option of sexual selection because the species' perceived beauty or attractiveness gives three messages to the opposite sex. First, 'I am healthy, which means my genes are good'; second, 'The osteogeny or testosterone level in my body is high' and third, 'I am a good candidate to be a good mother or father to our child.' Human beauty standards are based on evolution, and a human close to these standards maximizes its chance for reproduction (Eşel et al., 2017). In biology, men and women have different approaches regarding the success of reproduction. The prefer-ence for mate selection is based on the idea that "males with large ornaments enjoy higher mating success through attracting females" (Andersson & Iwasa, 1996, p. 54). It is questioned that the reason for females' choice during their mates' selection is up to the male's costly ornament. The first reason for this is "females with a strong mate pref-erence for the trait will have sons with higher mating success, which helps spread their choice genes through their sons" (Anderson & Iwasa, 1996, p. 55), and the second rea-son is "the male trait indicates high heritable viability, which is inherited by the offspring of choose females" (Anderson & Iwasa, 1996, p. 55). A woman's instinct is to choose one male with the best genes to obtain the healthiest children, and from the man's side, it is choosing more than one good-looking woman to spread its genes to reproduce as much as possible. These approaches create competition and determine the 'value' of the human, which is named beauty or attractiveness in biology (Yarosh, 2019).

In other respects, the function of the brain plays an intensive role in terms of the bio-psychology of beauty. In the neuroscience of facial recognition, beauty is assessed ac-cording to the facial recognition process in the brain. In brain activity research, it has been revealed that some regions in the brain are related to the brain's reward system,

and when a person is exposed to an attractive face, this part of the brain is activated (Eşel et al., 2017). The orbitofrontal cortex is the name of the area that is responsible for determining and assessing all the experiences about beauty. The orbitofrontal cortex is the main area that automatically evaluates whether the face is beautiful. According to the response of this area in the brain, a human can select its potential mate (Eşel et al., 2017).

Apart from the evolutionary and bio-psychology aspects, beauty has perceived in the human mind in different dimensions in terms of socially, affecting people's opinions about others. In the human mind, in both women and men, beauty is coded in the simplest form as 'power,' and it substantially impacts increasing human satisfaction or happiness level indirectly (Sisti et al., 2021). Some studies that have been conducted at the University of Illinois, the University of Minnesota, and the University of Wisconsin by psychologists and economists have shown that people who are better-looking are gaining more success both in the marriage and labor market. Good-looking people have a higher chance of earning more money, and as a result, their happiness level is higher than others. Beauty perception affects changes and even manipulates the personal judgment of people (Sisti et al., 2021). The research has mounted an argument that the physical appearance of a person makes this person's identity more accessible and presumable in social communication. The argument is tested on sixty-half female and half-male students at the University of Minnesota. There are three envelopes which include unattractive, average-looking, and good-looking individuals' photos and a respondent group. Based on the study, people who are good-looking are perceived as more favorable by a respondent group (Dion et al., 1972). For example, when the control group sees the photos of these three categories, they assume that good-looking people have happy marriages, successful and prestigious careers, a satisfied and social lifestyle, and they tend to be better parents. Moreover, good-looking people are perceived as more interesting and have better human traits than unattractive, average-looking individuals. This study shows that the appearance and characteristics of people have a positive association with the human mind (Dion et al., 1972). Additional to this inference, emotional expression is also related to beauty perception. Based on a study that has been done at the University of Illinois at Chicago, a single person whose emotional expressions change from sad to happy or vice versa affects the perception of beauty in the human mind (Mueser et al., 1984). For the research, fifteen young white females were chosen as the control group, and five photos of each were taken. The poses of the females included happy, neutral, and sad facial expressions in the photographer's direction. A 10-point Likert scale is applied to forty-five female and twelve male participants. As a

result of these respondents, multiple regression occurred, and according to the regression, there is a relation between the attractiveness level of people and their pleasant facial expressions. A happy facial expression is perceived as more attractive (Mueser et al., 1984). In conclusion, beauty and attractiveness are critical aspects of continuing reproduction while selecting the proper mate, and the decision mechanism is the brain influenced by beauty. This relationship is like a vicious cycle that explains the biological facet of beauty and beauty perception of the brain. For marketers who want to create brand awareness will be helpful to consider these physiological and biological layers because, in the end, consumer behaviors are reshaped according to these decisive factors, and marketers can create their customer segmentation regarding their consumer behaviors. Due to this reason, the concept of beauty as a physiological and biological dimension has to be understood and studied well.

Following these different perspectives about beauty, physical beauty is another aspect that has to be stated. There are two main types of beauty that come to prominence. These are named facial beauty and ideal body beauty. There was a relativistic belief about *facial beauty*: "Beauty is the eye of the beholder" (Laeng et al., 2013, p. 1). This belief has changed with a universalistic belief that "beauty reflects features that are shared cross-culturally and appear early in development" (Laeng et al., 2013, p. 1). However, studies have shown that biological and evolutionary factors play a huge role in deciding whether a person is beautiful.

Although culture and biology are indicators in determining attractiveness level, preferences are shaped before the culture, and preferences are related to biology regarding mate selection (Rhodos, 2006). Livings select their partners according to the attractiveness and facial beauty level of the opposite sex because, according to the function of the brain, if a person is exposed to an attractive face, the reward centers are activated in the brain, which provides to activate the sexual behaviors (Rhodos, 2006). Moreover, the face is the first component that attracts attention when looking at a person. The face gives many clues about the person's personality and identity. That is why facial beauty constitutes an essential part of evaluating the whole beauty level (Caki & Solmaz, 2013). Facial beauty is measured mainly in symmetry, averageness, and sexual dimorphism criteria. Averageness and facial beauty have a positive correlation. If a face is getting closer to averageness, the beauty perception of this face increases. Two study groups tested the argument (Hicks & Thomas, 2020). First, researchers have created a composite face using many people's faces, and this composite face and one face belonging to only one person have been shown to the observers. Observers selected the composite

face as attractive (Hicks & Thomas, 2020). In the second research group study, the research was implemented to a specific ethnicity group covering both males and females. The result was again similar for Caucasian male and female faces. Then this group created a composite face from Japanese faces and showed both Japanese composite faces and a one Caucasian face to Japanese and Caucasians (Hicks & Thomas, 2020). Both nationalities selected the Japanese face, the composite face, as an attractive face that is closest to averageness. According to these studies, if a face is close to being average measurements, other factors such as different ethnicities or gender are not influential in terms of the facial beauty decision of people. That is why it can be claimed that averageness is counted as cross-cultural and the first principle in terms of deciding facial beauty (Hicks & Thomas, 2020). The second principle symmetry, is a debatable concept because the body of symmetry and facial symmetry have different perceptions of the human mind. Although it is claimed that people perceive symmetrical bodies as attractive, this is not a fully valid principle for facial beauty (Rhodos, 2006). While there is a positive relation between attractiveness and symmetry, the averageness of symmetry, or in other words, the balance of symmetry, has an essential role. According to the golden ratio, which is a mathematical ratio as representative of perfect harmony, the ratio between the organs on the face is described as "the height of the upper to the lower lip height is 1:1.6, the distance between the superior edge of the upper lip to the subnasale point is 18–20 mm, and the distance between the inferior edge of the lower lip to the chin is 36–40 mm" (Sisti et al., 2021, p. 2168). Although the golden ratio is a specific measurement of facial beauty, it changes from culture to culture, region to region, and ethnicity to ethnicity. For example, the suitable ratio for African faces is 1:1, and the attractiveness and facial beauty perception are different from other regions (Sisti et al., 2021). Based on the literature, it can be said that symmetry is important and inconsistent in terms of cultures, but harmony and balance are also inevasible for facial beauty considered to the symmetrical criteria. The other principle is sexual dimorphism, which is related to the size and shape of the organs on the face, and plays a significant role in mate selection, reproduction, and possible parenting behaviors (Laeng et al., 2013). The ratio of testosterone and estrogen hormones are the distinctive factors in the male and female body for the facial attractiveness. In the female body, "fat is deposited in the upper cheek, lips, breasts, and hips" (Hicks & Thomas, 2020, p. 4). The attractive feminine face is defined as"…prominent eyes, high cheekbones, proportional nose, full lips, and relatively small chin" (Hicks & Thomas, 2020, p. 4). On the other hand, the attractive male face is defined as "hick hair, heavy brows, thin lips, and squared jawline with a strong chin" (Hicks & Thomas, 2020, p. 4). The facial proportions increase masculinity, and these facial features influence females. These differences between male and female faces determine

mate selection related to reproduction willingness and instinct. Thus the third principle, sexual dimorphism, is active while indicating facial beauty, which is the significant determinant of mate selection. Taking into account all of these about facial beauty, that is claimed that, in the business world and marketing industry, facial beauty takes an important place. Marketers make the decisions for marketing strategies and advertisements in the light of these measurements lead, and the faces of the brands are generally chosen as regards these facial beauty standards. Hence facial beauty has to be comprehended well by marketers.

Body beauty, the other component of the physical beauty perspective, follows facial beauty. Although the body is a combination of bone, flesh, and blood, the representative of the body is more complex than this explanation. The body is a tool, perceived as a 'physic object,' and the implementations and functions of the body are complicated in terms of social interactions and physical attractiveness (Aglioti et al., 2012). The beauty of the body has a similar perspective to the facial beauty perspective. Symmetry also applies to the beauty of the body. The study at Uppsala University showed that about animals show that the chance of success in finding a mate is higher, which has higher symmetry levels compared to lower symmetry levels. It is known that a higher ornament level is essential during mate selection in animals; all the same, in this study, it is claimed that fluctuating asymmetry affects the size of ornaments negatively (Moller, 1992). This negative relationship affects the male quality negatively. It means bilateral symmetry is helpful for the success of reproduction. This study shows that visual symmetry is also non-negligible in humans for selecting a potential mate (Moller, 1992). Apart from the importance of symmetry, ideal body proportion has been a crucial matter for the body of beauty since ancient Greek times. Many artists used the Greek beauty ideal in their works because the Greek beauty ideal determined the quality of beauty. Besides Greek ideal was used in clothing design because that ideal reflected the ideal female body beauty (Creekmore & Pedersen, 1979). Additionally, to the importance of the Greek ideal, many attempts have been made to reach the perfect body ratio, and a head length (HL) system has been formed. Head length is "starting from the top of the head (TH) to shoulder line, and pit of the neck is 4/3 HL, to the bust line is 2HL, to the waist and elbows line, is 8/3 HL, to hipline and wrist is 15/4 HL, to knees line is 89/16 HL, to ankles is 15/2 HL, and to balls of feet is 15/2 HL" (Sisti et al., 2021, p. 2168). Since ancient times these ratios have been reliable and used to understand the beauty of body level. On the other hand, Leonardo Da Vinci displayed his drawing 'The Vitruvian Man' 500 years ago to show the ideal human-body ratio, which was going to be an important discovery for human anatomy and proportions in the future (Sisti et al., 2021).
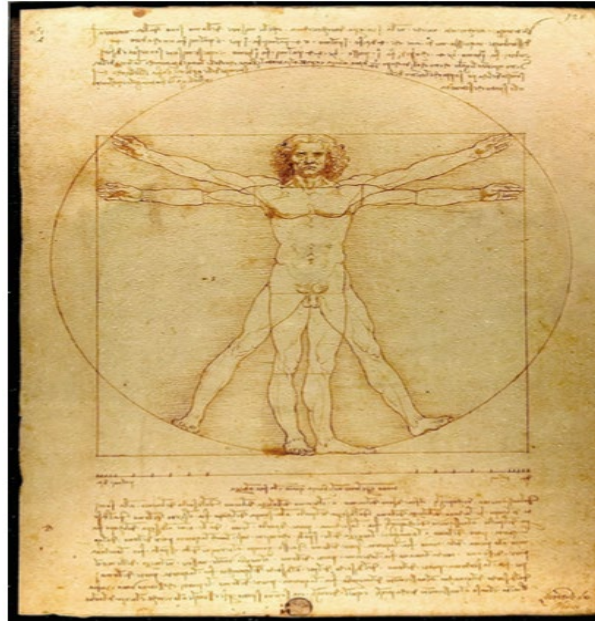
Figure 1. The Vitruvian Man by Leonardo Da Vinci (Sisti et al., 2021)

The other important aspect of the beauty of the body is body size and shape. Based on several studies, body mass index (BMI) in female bodies has to be ideally 18-19 kg/ m2 and plays an intensive role in attractiveness and mate selection (Tovee et al., 1999). For example, a study was conducted at Newcastle University about the importance of female body mass index. Ten women images with five different body mass indexes each are shown to forty male participants and asked to vote for them between 0 to 9, which is least attractive to most attractive, respectively. The results from the participants show the relationship between attractiveness and body mass index. The results proved that body mass index is a very distinctive factor for choosing the best and healthy fertility partner because, according to scientific results, if a female's body mass index is close to nineteen, this person's mortality rate is the lowest. As a result, she has the highest health results affecting fertility. (Tovee et al., 1999). Unlike the female body, the ideal male body is heavier, and the body mass index is 26 kg/ m2. Although it seems like an overweight in the female body mass index, it is the healthiest and best in the male body. Because muscle rate and being bigger compared to the female body are also included while calculating the ideal body mass (Crossley et al., 2012) in addition to these super important factors which determine the ideal body beauty, there are other features that are essential. These are the gluteal region, the thigh width, and the length of the leg (Sisti et al., 2021). All in all, from a body beauty perspective, these features are decisive principles in human beauty that also impact marketers' strategies.

All these perspectives about the concept of beauty are convenient for understanding the importance and place of beauty in all living creatures. The running of the world, both for human and animal reproduction, is affected by beauty standards. For this reason, interpreting the different perspectives of beauty was essential to the marketer's advantage.

2.1.2 Changing Beauty Standards Throughout History

The phenomenon of beauty is not a fixed concept. Throughout history, it has changed, evolved, and renewed according to the conditions of the period, and this change is still ongoing today. Humanity is affected by the changing beauty standards and has taken a stand in compliance with continuous changes. The marketing industry has realized the impact of beauty on human psychology and consumer behaviors and started to use the concept of beauty as a weapon to increase their profits and be the market leader. Before thoroughly examining the relationship between beauty and marketers' attitudes, the history of beauty will be analyzed in depth. Thus it will be clarified that the importance of beauty has gone a long way back, and how many times, the concept has changed until today by different cultures and civilizations. It will be testified that the beauty ideals will improve, deteriorate, be stable, and go back to the old standards and change again by the time of progress. Because of many external factors, the standards and perceptions of beauty will always acquire different dimensions. Even sometimes, it has been proved that during history, the perception of beauty by society contradicts itself or its previous beauty ideals. By the end of the day, one thing will be accurate, which is, although it will be seen that the perception of beauty differs from culture to culture, there is one common sense everywhere: beauty is a common concern for everyone in the world, and that is why it is one of the most advantageous factors in the business and marketing world.

The history of beauty dates back to before Christ. The first example of beauty is the 'Venus of Willendorf' figurine made in the Paleolithic period, between 23,000- 25,000 B.C. It is the oldest female representation which is 11 centimeters high (Dixson & Dixson, 2011). The Venus of Willendorf is a masterpiece that hints about the Era. The name 'Venus' refers to the concept of beauty because the name Venus comes from the Roman goddess, the face of beauty and love (Seshadri, 2012). Although the belief that the Venus figurines are about feminine beauty, there are some ideas in the literature by anthropologists and archeologists. These opinions about the sculpture's symbolism can be listed as an actual woman figure, ideal female beauty, fertility, and ancestors' images (Dixson & Dixson, 2011). The anatomy of the Venus of Willendorf can be interpreted as a fat

woman who has a large stomach, large thighs, big breasts, and a detailed carved upfront pubic region. The other parts of her body are not carved, including the face of the sculpture. The shape of the sculpture symbolizes fertility and nurture (Seshadri, 2012). There is no accurate evidence of the meaning of the sculpture. However, according to the literature, this figurine symbolizes the ideal and attractive woman's body in the Paleolithic Era in terms of supporting fertility and having good parental behaviors, which supports the human instinct regarding reproduction.

Figure 2. Venus of Willendorf (artincontext, 2023)

In area of Ancient Egypt, which is one of the oldest civilizations, the beauty standards can be interpreted from the paintings and sculptures. Based on these historical findings, the ideal woman was defined first as slim. The Egyptian women were presented as elegant who had narrow shoulders and hips (Dimitrov et al., 2023). Besides, women with high waists and long necks were considered beautiful. In contrast to the Venus of Willendorf sculpture, Egyptian women did not have curves because being slender was desired in ancient Egypt, and small breasts were preferred. The beautiful skin was described as pale skin shining like gold (Watterson, 2013). Additionally, the level of beauty was measured by having dark black hair. As seen in the paintings of this period, women wore heavy wigs, which increased their attractiveness because wigs symbolized eroticism (Watterson, 2013). Moreover, makeup was strikingly common in ancient Egypt for men and women. Eye painting was popular with using kohl to make either green or dark eyeliners because having a dramatic look was the other standard that increased the beauty level (Hardy, 2007). During ancient Greece, the concept of beauty had changed again compared to the ancient Egypt period. In ancient Greeks, the importance and dominance of male beauty and symmetry were more than female beauty and symmetry

standards. While males had been sculpted as muscular, the female had been carved with long and wavy hair (Dimitrov et al., 2023). From the sculptures, it can be understood that the beauty standards of the males were presented with broad shoulders and chiseled faces, and the female's beauty standards were presented as curvy bodies and large breasts, which is a sign of the given importance of fertility and reproduction in that era again. In the Medieval ages, between the 13th and 14th centuries, the standards of beauty were changed again. A woman with blond hair was considered attractive. Women were dying their hair if it was not blond to be able to be a part of society. Besides, a pale skin tone was preferred because it showed belonging to a high social class. A woman with dark skin above pale skin was seen as a person with low moral merits (Caballero-Navas, 2008). In the medieval era, the perception of beauty was very different, especially compared to the ancient Greek era. This era was the time of rising and spreading of 'Christianism,' which claimed that the Earth and Religion are different concepts. As a result of this idea, everything that belonged to the earth had a negative consequence, including the human body. According to them, the human body promotes humanity's secularism instinctively, because the nature of the body is always improving (Tazegül, 2019). That is why the human body was perceived as a source of sin. There were many things that were banned by the Church. For example, changing the natural body was against God, so caring for the body's beauty was not perceived as a good thing because the belief was that the Devil made it. Thus physical training to have an athletic body was prohibited, which was the opposite of ancient Greek mentality (Tazegül, 2019). Additional to this mindset, being impressed by a woman's body was the biggest fear which encouraged humanity to sin based on the Church's mentality. To prevent it, the Church tried to control the woman's attractiveness. The dresses which were representing the idea of Christianism became ideal (Tazegül, 2019). Besides Church disapproved of makeup, color, or hairstyle because the belief was, changing the face's natural appearance is being against God, and it is a behavior of trying to challenge God and its decisions. If a woman was not obeying the Church's rules and trying to make herself more beautiful, this woman was labeled as a woman with Lucifer (Tazegül, 2019). A woman had to be decent and modest. In the literature, it becomes obvious that the ideal women's body underwent a change profoundly in the Medieval ages and was determined by the conditions of the era strictly. Because religion and the Church were dominant in that era, and the beauty standards were set according to them. In the Renaissance, between the 14th and 16th centuries, the changing beauty standards found a new place in literature which was the opposite of the medieval age. First, the intellectual artists of this period refused the beauty standards that the church said. For example, the painter Jan Gossaert painted Christ with an athletic body shape. Giovanni Batista did his painting 'The Martyrdom of

Saint Sebastian' with blond hair and white skin tones. Mona Lisa, the most famous work of art by Leonardo da Vinci, was painted with dark hair, white skin, and a sophisticated black dress, symbolizing the beauty standards of the era (Karampetsos et al., 2021). In contrast to the Medieval ages, makeup, hairstyle, and cosmetics became inevitable for women because they determined their social level. Besides, the skin was an indicator that was the mirror of the social class. Women with white skin were desired and attractive (Tazegül, 2019). Additionally, to this, the ideal body was defined as "These were three white (skin, hands, teeth), three red (lips, cheeks, nails), and three blacks (eyes, eyelashes, eyebrows)" (Tazegül, 2019, p. 390). Regarding the ideal body shape in the Renaissance, women with small and round breasts were considered attractive. For example, in France, upper-class women started to find wet nurses for their children, not to suckle their babies because they were afraid of the growth of their breasts. (Lim et al.,2006). All in all, beauty was an important concept in Renaissance in terms of determining social status and moral character. Because the opposite of the medieval era, being ugly became the symbol of evil (Tazagül, 2019). Through Victorian England, in the 18th century, the beauty standards were modified as the opposite of the Renaissance era. In the Victorian era, patriarchal ideology was dominant, like in the medieval era. The only aim of women was to be a wife of someone and satisfy their husbands. Unmarried women were seen as miserable. The idealized woman was the woman who was delicate and fragile because being feminine was the expected characteristic of an attractive woman (Ioannou & Kyriakidou, 2014). That is why the Victorian era can be named the Era of eroticism. If a woman would like to get married and continue to be a man's wife, she had to be good at being attractive and domestic (Gorham, 2013). She had to satisfy her husband in terms of attractiveness and raise her children and take care of the home. Besides, based on historical literature, in the Victorian era, makeup was not allowed, and women with makeup were seen as either theater actresses or women of easy virtue. The woman's duty in life was to be a good mother and wife. Simplicity, purity, and fragility were indicators of beauty standards. However, women had to be suitable for the beauty standards (Gorham, 2013). They would do everything to find a husband, not to be called a spinster or not to be seen as worthless, so the way of achieving this goal was to be beautiful. Under these circumstances, there was a dilemma, such as a woman who is modest but sexy, an attractive but housewife who is serving her husband like a slave, enticing but innocent. Thus, women found a different but dark way. The Victorian Era was the time of the deadly disease tuberculosis, which had been seen in Europe and killed one out of every five people. As a consequence of tuberculosis disease, people affected by this disease have symptoms such as losing weight, being very tired, and

weak and having high fever (Fogel, 2015). The high fever was creating rosy cheeks naturally in the patients. These symptoms created the desired outlook that women could obtain only without makeup and also resembled the noble and wealthy women's appearance, which was close to the beauty standards of the time. That is why women are not allowed to have makeup wanted to get caught by this disease to be seen as beautiful and attractive (Roberts, 1970). On the other hand, in the 19th century, the symbol of the beauty of the era became the hourglass body shape, which is why the corset was used in extreme versions to influence men. Women were trying to make their waistlines as thin as possible and taking advantage of the tightest corsets because the hourglass shape was the desired body shape by men (Lim, 2006). Although wearing that much tight corset were causing health problems, women did not stop to wear them, and corsets became an ordinary accessory for female silhouette (Lim, 2006).
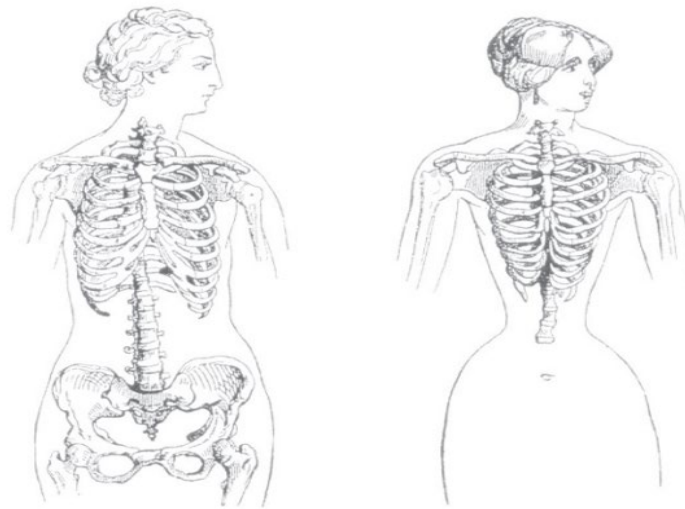
Figure 3. Illustration of a woman's skeleton, uncorseted and corseted, from Witkowshy, Tetoniana, 1898, after von Soemmering, 1793. Source: Steele V, The corset: a cultural history, London , New Haven , 2001. (Lim et al., 2006, p. 5)

The 20th century covers many changes in history regarding determining beauty standards. The reason for this was the rapidly changing technology and innovations affected the standards of several changes. For example, the roaring twenties in the 1920s, the golden age of Hollywood, which covering1930-1950s, the swinging 1960s, the 1980s, which is called the supermodels' times, and the 1990s. For example, in the 1920s, the perception of beauty was similar to the Victorian era. The status and success of the woman were related to her attractiveness level (Lamkin, 2015). During these times, the main aim was finding a husband and being a wife of someone, and it was up to the beauty level of the woman. Beauty was counted as a responsibility for women. The ideal

body shape was defined as being slim, having long legs, and having an hourglass body shape. Women with big noses or small breasts did not meet beauty standards. Corset was still famous because fleshy bodies were definitely unwanted (Lamkin, 2015). Between the 1960s and 1980, the idealized woman's body changed and became as extremely thin. It was a new trend because of the media and magazines. Models in the magazine *Playboy* played an efficient role which was encouraging to have a "tubular body shape" (Owen & Laurel-Seller, 2006 p. 979). The era's name became 'the Playboy beauty standards' (Owen & Laurel-Seller, 2006). Besides, the health professions supported this idea, emphasizing on television the dangerous consequences of being overweight. People following these magazines, media, and models aimed to be seen as extremely thin. However, this mentality caused many health issues, such as anorexia, fertility issues, and psychological side effects (Owen & Laurel-Seller, 2006).

According to the literature, beauty standards have been changing since ancient times constantly and continue to change. There are driving forces in these changes, such as societal hierarchy, religion, social changes, economic situations, and technological improvements. The literature was review yielded some interesting findings. Although there are several distinguishing factors regarding beauty standards in different centuries and in different cultures, one aspect is common for all. It is the making of beauty through the female body. All the comparisons, idealizations, measurements, or decisions are related to woman's beauty and aesthetics. Beauty is an abstract concept when it has examined from different perspectives. However, if it is investigated in the physical dimension, the concept of beauty becomes concrete through the female body. Thus, it can be argued that beauty and women have positively correlated throughout history. That is why the different eras are defined above through the desired or ideal woman body standards. At this rate, it is not a coincidence that marketers aim for beauty on the basis of woman's bodies and faces, and people are exposed to advertisements often via woman's appearance. Beyond doubt, it can be claimed that most influencers are women in influencer marketing, which is not unexpected.

2.1.3   Today's Beauty Ideal

In todays digitalized world, as many concepts have changed. Likewise, the ideal of beauty has also undergone a change since beauty has been perceived as showing the societal standards of people. Many factors create new standards of beauty standards.

Apart from the biological and psychological aspects, cultural differences and their reflections, environmental differences, social media, advertisements, and mass media come first in all of these. People are standardizing their beauty level according to the measurements that these tools have determined and introduced (Laughter et al., 2023).

As stated in the literature, today's beauty standards will be addressed in two dimensions. First, the facial beauty standards that change from culture to culture will be examined. Second, the common body standards, in which Western culture has a considerable share in the standardized body shape, will be examined. Figuring out the ideal beauty standards of today will be helpful for the following chapters regarding the relationship between marketing and consumer behaviors.

Facial beauty is the marker of attractiveness. Although it differs from culture to culture, it still includes the same four indicators explained in the general facial beauty standards section. These are symmetry, averageness, youthfulness, and sexual dimorphism. The validity of having a symmetrical face and being close to the averageness of facial standards are the same, indicating facial attractiveness since ancient times (Hicks & Thomas, 2020). In terms of youthfulness, having large eyes and a small nose are accepted as attractive, which is the baby's and young children's facial characteristics because the neonatal characteristics arouse a positive feeling in people's minds, such as open-mindedness or exuberance. While they are aging, humans start to have descended brows, and the volume of the cheeks decreases. These changes cause tired and sad facial expression, which is not counted as beautiful (Hicks & Thomas, 2020). That is why it can be claimed that today plastic surgery rates have increased sharply. In terms of the sexual dimorphism aspect, which is adjusted with the level of hormones such as estrogen for women and testosterone for men, the features are defined for both females and males. For males, "square jaws, deep-set eyes, thin lips, heavy brows, and prominent chins are desirable" (Cerrati & Thomas, 2017, p. 2). "A thin jaw, small chin, large widely spaced eyes, small nose, high cheekbones, and plump lips" are attractive for females (Cerrati & Thomas, 2017, p. 2). When facial beauty is examined in terms of cultural aspects today, studies showed that "the width of the malar region and the distance between the lateral canthi were the least variables, the intercanthal distance was variable" (Hicks & Thomas, 2020, p. 4). The other study, which was done in the Middle East, Europe, Africa, and Asia, showed that the "greatest differences among different ethnic groups were seen in the measurements of the orbital region" (Hicks & Thomas, 2020, p. 5). For example, today, the facial beauty standards in Asian culture is described a human who has "an oval face, large eyes, and smooth jawlines" (Laughter et al., 2023, p. 5). According to

Caucasian standards, "having round eyes, small noses, and high cheekbones" are desirable (Laughter et al., 2023, p. 5). American, African, and Hispanic facial beauty standards are less accurate in the literature because they consist of multiple ethnicities, which is why the beauty standards are generally determined based on the body shape in these cultures (Laughter et al., 2023). Furthermore, nowadays, the decision of the ideal body shape depends on the mass media. Especially the social media and advertisements that people are exposed to with good or bad grace are presiders of determining the ideal body. The inevitable 'media' also causes dissatisfaction with the body, and people try to be seen as monotypes. Today, generally, being thin and having muscles are the decisive factors of body beauty (Fioravanti et al., 2022). When the beauty standards in terms of the body are examined under cultural aspects, it has been seen that Western body standards play a considerable role in the world's ideal body shape (Uhlmann et al., 2018). According to the Western argument, being thin brings physical and mental health. Nevertheless, this idea also caused some sicknesses, such as eating disorders, anorexia, and bulimia (Uhlmann et al., 2018). Recent studies claimed that only being thin is not attractive if a person is not athletic or fit. Thus, being thin and fit in Western culture is desirable (Uhlmann et al., 2018). The ideal body type is delineated as a woman who has smaller hips, a skinny waist, and small breasts, according to Victoria's Secret models. On the other hand, in the African American culture, a woman with large hips is attractive because they associate being thin with sickness or poor health conditions (Laughter et al., 2023).

In conclusion, it is known that beauty correlates with positive characteristics, which is why beauty is an important phenomenon in every culture. Since ancient times beauty standards have been discussed, but s definite answer to the question of what beauty is was not obtained. Although there is more than one ideal beauty concept because of the effect of social media and cultural difference awareness, it is likely that today's accepted beauty standards will also change in the future.

2.1.4   The Influence of Fairy Tales and Toys on Beauty Perception

As it has discussed in the literature, today, the impact of mass media is huge while adopting the changing beauty ideals. Mass media affects peoples' self-image, and the perception of beauty and consumer behavior is reshaped according to this stream (Mills et al., 2017). However, people have not been exposed only the social media and have their idealization of beauty under the effect of social media. The critical role of beauty in life is enjoined to the human as a child through the fairy tales that adults tell. It has been revealed how fairytales engrain the idea of the importance of beauty in studies (Neikirk, 2009). In the meantime, it should have been taken no notice that although fairytales date back to the past, today, marketers and producers are making commercial films that are based on the fairytales such as Cinderella or Snow White, and they are working up and abusing people's feelings and behaviors (Wittver, 2016). The other effect, which is strongly related to children's beauty perception development, is toys. For example, the image of the doll 'Barbie' in children's minds and how it shapes the idea of beauty is a debated topic (Dittmar et al., 2006). For these reasons, going deep into the effects of fairytales told, and the doll Barbie is essential to understanding both the importance given to beauty by societies and what is implanted in children's minds, which will affect their psychology and values throughout their lives.

The history of fairy tales dated to the 18th and 19th centuries when they started to be written. These fairy tales aimed to teach young girls to be attractive, domesticated, and respectful because the main goal was finding marriage partners. These fairy tales symbolized the desired gendered value since the concept of beauty and femininity has been one of the most controversial phenomena throughout history, which determines women's social status (Baker-Sperry & Grauerholz, 2003). Children's fairy tales generally comprise implicit and explicit messages, which are about the positive correlation between good ending stories and beautiful and handsome main characters. The fairy tales emphasize feminine beauty and the rewards of this beauty. For example, beauty is generally awarded in Grimm Brothers' fairy tales because goodness and beauty are correlated. The bad characteristics were always related to ugliness, and good characteristics were with beauty (Baker-Sperry & Grauerholz, 2003). One example of this argument is counted as "A widow had two daughters, one who was beautiful and industrious, the other ugly and lazy" (Grimm & Grimm, 1992, p. 96). When the most famous fairy tales such as Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast, Sleeping Beauty and Snow White are examined, there is one common point for all of them. The main female characters are charming, kindhearted, and oppressed by bad, old, and ugly women characters. Nevertheless,

at the end of the story, these beautiful and kind girls are rewarded with finding the love of their lives, and these lovers are handsome princes. The beautiful young girls, who have been exposed cruelty and evilness of ugly women, are waiting to be saved by the handsome prince. The ends are always, 'and they lived happily ever after' because all the cruelty suffered by the beautiful girl was rewarded by marriage to a handsome man (Baker-Sperry & Grauerholz, 2003). For example, in Cinderella, the main character is described as a beautiful girl who is warm-hearted and hard worker. She is tortured by her stepmother and stepsisters, who are illustrated as ugly, lazy, and malevolent. The sisters' aim is to be able to be the wife of the prince, and they compete with each other (Neikirk, 2009). On the other hand, Cinderella is just waiting for a moment to change her destiny, and at the end of the story, she finds love, a prince with braveness and handsomeness attributions. The prince prefers her instead of stepsisters, and they live happily ever after (Neikirk, 2009). This fairytale represents those times' mentality and is a good example in terms of the wedding to the importance of beauty to children.

Eventually, that is clear that children raised with these stories are putting the beauty concept in the first place in their lives because they associate the concept of beauty with success and happiness. It is not a coincidence that these fairytales were written in the Victorian era when the aim was to raise domesticated and fragile, beautiful women to find a husband. In all stories with happy endings, the highlighted features of the leading woman character are her beauty and related to her beauty her warmhearted characteristics. However, readers can hardly ever face a woman who is viable or exists in society with a distinctive feature other than her beauty, and the main goal is making a successful marriage because, according to the fairytales, the formula of happiness is marriage. Although many fairy tales date back to the past and changed a lot today, the main ones, such as Snow White or Cinderella, are still protecting their original forms, which are creating beauty and finding a partner are inevitable concepts and goals in life idea. The reason for this can be explained by the impact of beauty on society is still very strong. Although new ideas emerged, such as feminism or independent working 'woman,' compared to the Victorian era when these fairytales were written, the concept of beauty did not lose its power in societies because of marketers and social media. Oppositely the prevalence of the need for beauty is increasing.

Another aspect of the beauty perception in children's minds is the doll Barbie, the most famous doll since it was launched on the market in 1959, was created by Ruth Handler. It attracted both children and adults at the same time regarding its influential beauty level (Magro, 1997). Although Barbie has marketed to children as a toy, it also made a splash

in the grown-ups' worlds because it became the universally desired female representation and an iconic figure (Wright, 2003). The main reason for this can be explained biologically. In the literature, the research has compared primitive and derived anatomical changes. The desirable results are long legs, long necks, plantar foot flexion, square shoulders, angled teeth, longer shin, strong chin, large eyes, and knock-kneed (Magro, 1997). When Barbie's physical characteristics are measured, it has seen that it has a dome-shaped cranium, high forehead, oval-shaped face, large eyes, straight teeth, orthognathic chin, long neck, square shoulders, short torso, v-shaped torso, which means a slim waistline, short palm, straight fingers, long legs and plantar foot flexion which are identical with the derived anatomical changes traits (Magro, 1997). Even the distance between nose and mouth is adjusted due to the expected beauty level, which the distance is shorter even with the averageness of facial beauty. All the parts of Barbie's body are exaggerated positively to catch the most attractive appearance, which is not close to reality.

Moreover, Barbie is designed very well-groomed. It always has full of make-up, including red lipstick and marked eyebrows. The apparel of the doll Barbie represents the latest fashion, and Barbie seems ultra-feminine (Gaudio, 2011). All these features cause people to wonder why Barbie does not appeal only to children but also to adults. The reason is that the doll Barbie assumes the role of the perfect female body with the highest femininity and attractiveness level. There is a notable thing here which is nowadays, if someone names anybody 'Barbie,' it is either a compliment or an insult. It is a compliment because Barbie addresses femininity, attractiveness, and beauty. It is used as an insult because people today try too much to seem like a Barbie, a monotype that kills society's diversity and mental health, especially children's body esteem (Gaudio, 2011). Apart from the adults' world, the internalized being skinny ideal has many consequences on society through young girls' affected psychology. Children are exposed to these beauty ideals at an early age. All over the world, especially in Western countries, young girls experience having a Barbie easily. However, the issue is, as mentioned above, that the body measurements of Barbie are exaggerated and do not reflect reality. The most attentive example of this argument is "Barbie has a 5-inch bust, a 13/4 waist, and 83/16 inch hips, which in adult women would translate to a 39- inch bust, an 18-inch waist, and 33-inch hips" (Rice et al., 2016, p. 142). "Barbie's body proportions, as a cultural icon of female beauty, have received much criticism, and empirical studies confirm that her body proportions are unrealistic, unattainable, and unhealthy" (Dittmar et al., 2006, p. 284).

Because, according to scientists, these measurements do not apply to a real woman's body. As a result of this inconsistency, children or young girls between 3 to 8 years old start to have body dissatisfaction or body esteem issues because whatever they do, they cannot look like a Barbie doll. For example, in the studies, it has been observed that girls between 3.5 to 5.5 years old have more positive feelings toward thin dolls than fat dolls (Rice et al., 2016). Following that, it has been surmised that the willingness to be skinny for young girls who are 5 or 6 years old emerges and develops fast. In the literature, it has been stated that "body image is highly salient also for preadolescent children's self-concept, particularly for girls and sociocultural icons, such as Barbie dolls, are important because they can be aspirational role models for young children or even imaginary companions" (Dittmar et al., 2006, p. 284). Additional to these effects, one remarkable aspect is that this kind of beauty idea often emerges in young girls' minds but not in young boys. The reason is that parents or society engrains young girls' ideal body shape towards dolls, consciously or not (Rice et al., 2016). While young boys play with a truck, young girls are exposed to the ideal beauty levels via plastic dolls at an early age. The Disney princesses, Barbie and Bratz dolls, are examples of these toys that cause young girls body dissatisfaction and psychological issues (Rice et al., 2016).

All in all, toys such as Barbie, characters such as Disney princesses, or fairy tales impact children's imaginary world and shape and determine their attitudes and values toward life. It is scientifically known that the fastest learning period of a human is when she or he is a child. Regarding this fact, children, especially young girls, who are raised with these things, quickly become a gear of the system. Concepts such as beauty, femininity, or attractiveness are becoming the inseparable whole of their lives. Starting from this point of view, regarding the literature, the beauty ideal, including facial and body beauty, chills humans to the bond when they were children. Moreover, not only does it affect people's preferences, decisions, or behaviors, but it can also cause psychological or unwanted health issues, such as eating disorders or body dissatisfaction diseases, such as anorexia or bulimia. That is why the production of these toys or marketing of them have to be custody because the advertisements or the face of the brands or social media influencers are chosen according to beauty standards and named as beautiful, like 'Barbie' and people who had already exposed playing Barbie or listening fairytales in their childhood and during their young adult days who started to follow these advertisements or influencers are being in greater danger in terms of an obsession of beauty.

2.1.5   Selling Beauty: Cosmetics

As the previous section have demonstrated, the meaning of beauty has been one of the most debatable topics since the beginning of humanity. As mentioned before, many different perspectives describe beauty. Nonetheless, in this study, the matter at hand is physical beauty. That is why the previous parts of this thesis have examined the history of physical beauty since ancient times. It should also be noted that beauty standards have been conventionally stated through the female body. Based on all this, the section will be about cosmetic products.

Since very early ages, cosmetics have become the most active complementary of beauty in terms of the feature of serving beauty. "Through the centuries, cosmetics have developed and have been influenced by different ethnic traditions" (Oumeish, 2001, p. 375). Under these conditions, analyzing cosmetics throughout history, which dates back to ancient times, the applications of cosmetics, and the place of cosmetics in today in the market will be fundamental due to interpreting and understanding the relationship between beauty and cosmetics. Cosmetic is a convenient tool for interpreting history and cultures. For instance, the word 'Komes' is a Greek word, and the meaning of the word is harmony. It can be considered "being close to the perfection of human beings" (Oumeish, 2001, p. 375). "Over time, the meaning changed into masking, concealing, covering up, and camouflaging" (Oumeish, 2001, p. 375). For this reason, history researchers and archeologists can make some social, cultural, or religious estimations about the period thanks to the usage of cosmetics since primitive man (Oumeish, 2001). To analyze better, the timeline of cosmetics is grouped in this literature as Ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Ancient Greeks, Eastern civilizations such as China and India, Western cultures such as North and South America, African culture, Rome, Medieval times, Renaissance, Victorian era, 19th century, and 20th century. Besides, cosmetics are examined under the beauty concept because it has comprehensive coverage and is one of the pervasive preparation products in the business and marketing industry, a related concept of beauty (Rinaldi, 2008).

Cosmetics are defined as "… represent a global industry with their main markets to be found in the European Union (EU), the United States (US) and Japan with a value of 34.3, 25.7 and 11.9 billion euros respectively, in 2004, according to data compiled by COLIPA, i.e., the European Cosmetic, Toiletry and Perfumery Association" (Salvador & Chisvert, 2018, p. 3). Cosmetic products can be categorized as "creams, face masks, tinted bases, makeup powders, toilet soaps or deodorants soaps, perfumes, bath, and shower preparations, depilatories, deodorants and anti-per spirants, hair care products,

shaving products, make up and removing makeup products, products intended for application to the lips, products for the care of the teeth and the mouth, products for nail care and makeup, products for external intimate hygiene, sunbathing products, whitening skin products, and anti-wrinkle products" (Salvador & Chisvert, 2018, p. 5 & 6).

In conclusion, regarding this definition and categorization, there are many cosmetic product categories that are produced to fulfil consumers' needs, wants, and preferences. It appeals to everyone, which is why cosmetics include various categories. There are different purposes for cosmetic product usage, such as beauty-related cosmetic usage, hygienic-related cosmetic usage, and health-oriented cosmetic usage. All these purposes create a target group that includes everyone. On this occasion, it is expected that the increase in cosmetic product sales in the market compared to other product lines. For this reason, cosmetic products can highly make ground in the industry, and consumers' preferences or necessities encourage companies and marketers to focus on more production and marketing.

The brief timeline of cosmetics dates back to the very early centuries. Cosmetics usage was first started by Egyptians in 3,000 B.C. In ancient Egypt, it was easy for them to reach natural resources because they were living in a valley (Parish & Crissey, 1988). For Egyptians, the most important thing was the eyes because, according to their belief, it was the reflection of whether a person was good or bad. That is why they were using kohl, or crushed plant stems, to obtain eye shadow (Hunt et al., 2011). For dying their hair, fingernails, and lips, they used henna which was obtained from a tree found in North Africa (Parish & Crissey, 1988). Additionally, skincare was essential for Egyptians. The best indicator was that Egyptians implemented "the mixture of incense cake, wax, freshly squeezed olive oil, and cypress, folded into fresh milk and applied to the face for six days" (Parish & Crissey, 1988, p. 1). This implementation was for preventing aging or wrinkles. It is known that Egyptians have been famous for their cosmetic skills throughout history, and they played a part in spreading the usage of cosmetics to the world (Hunt et al., 2011). The Mesopotamian civilizations, such as Assyria, Babylonia, and Persians, 2000 B.C., developed and used cosmetic products. Mesopotamian lands were affluent and well-traded areas, especially for cultivating spices and herbs used to produce cosmetics (Sungur et al., 2018). One of the Mesopotamian civilizations, Hebrews, traded with Egyptians in cosmetics and fragrances, and they brought these products to their lands. The usage of cosmetics was a common thing for Hebrew women (Hunt et al., 2011). Because it was a necessity in Hebrews that the wife be attractive. Using rouge and white powders were standard. That is why "women painted their lips with red ochre,

oxide of iron with various oils, and they colored their nails with ash and beeswax mixtures" (Parish & Crissey, 1988, p. 2). In the east, the Indian civilization, when it was 500 B.C., also used many natural resources to produce cosmetics, such as incense or sandalwood. In China, another important Eastern civilization, women cared for themselves and used chamomile or rice to prevent wrinkles. On the other hand, in the west of the world, in North America and South America, locals were painting their faces with natural resources, which is believed to be a cosmetic attempt. In African culture, painting the body and face on special occasions also took part (Sungur et al., 2018). In ancient Greek, the purpose of the usage of cosmetics was different compared to the Egyptian mentality. Instead of increasing women's attractiveness, grooming, medical treatments, and religious purposes were in the frame. The main reason for this was Greek men did not want that the appearance of their wives is being charming, and they found cosmetic products increased seductiveness (Hunt et al., 2011). Although cosmetic applications were not popular in ancient Greek, Greek people successfully traded cosmetic products cross-country because they made the packages desirable and appealing to customers (Stewart, 2017). Apart from beauty-based cosmetic usage, almond oil, and rose oil are used for medical treatments. The purpose of Almond oil usage was to make the skin soft and also used for skin disease treatments. Rose oil, which was used for cosmetic products such as eye makeup or perfumes, was also used as an anti-inflammatory (Stewart, 2017). Contrary to ancient Greek culture, eye makeup was common for Roman women in ancient Rome and was obtained from saffron or wood ash. Powdered chalk or white lead were applied to their face because it was used for the purpose of lightening the skin. Besides, conditioning creams for their hair were also widespread. Body, skin, and hair beauty were important and applicable for both genders (Hunt et al., 2011). Following this period, in the Mediaeval times, the church generally forbade the usage of cosmetic products, which is why, except for the production of hand lotions and perfumes, no progress was recorded (Parish & Crissey, 1988). During the Renaissance era, cosmetics gained an important value in society compared to medieval times. For example, pale skin and red cheeks became popular, which is why the demand for powder and red ochre production increased. Additionally, olive oil was a very accessible resource for the cosmetic purpose of usages in Renaissance times, and many products were obtained from olive oil (Hunt et al., 2011). Because of the French and American Revolutions and also the industrial revolutions, the role of cosmetics changed in the Victorian era. The extravagance appearances are defined as unwanted and old fashioned. The over usage and spending on cosmetic products declined sharply (Hunt et al., 2011). In the following century, rouge and powder usage increased, but not for young and unmarried girls because

the mentality about beauty was that natural appearance was attractive. In contrast, cosmetic products were highly demandable by married women in this century. For example, women who applied makeup tools such as rouge or mascara on their faces were counted as desirable. The reason for this mentality was the huge impact of theater on society. (Parish & Crissey, 1988). Around the 1900s, many cosmetic brands were launched to the market, such as L'Oréal or Maybelline, and as a result, heavy eyeliner and super-defined eyebrows became popular. During the popularization of cosmetics, the mass media, such as radio, newspapers, films, magazines, and commercial films, played an important role and increased competitiveness in the cosmetic industry. The twentieth century became the century of cosmetics in terms of excessive consumption. As a result, new brands emerged, making the cosmetic market more competitive (Hunt et al., 2011). In conclusion, when the brief timeline of cosmetics is examined, it is clear that the cosmetic concept makes ground in the history of every civilization, and it is broadly related beauty concept. It is expected and understandable that cosmetics, which were in such demand even in ancient times, become even more popular these days when the industry world is breaking new ground. Therefore, questioning the place of cosmetics and trends of it in today's business and marketing world will be reasonable in terms of interpreting consumers' behaviors and their purchase intentions, and it will also help to figure out branding strategies.

"The Global Beauty Market has grown by 4.5% a year on average (CAGR), with annual growth rates ranging from around 3% to 5.5%" (Lopaciuk & Loboda, 2013, p. 1080). Skincare, haircare, makeup, fragrances, and toiletries are the five main complementary segments in the market that fulfill the needs and preferences of customers. Globally, the most significant market share belongs to "North America, Latin America, Asia-Pacific, and Western Europe" (Lopaciuk & Loboda, 2013, p. 1080). The global industry leader is L'Oréal regarding sales and profit results, with a 16.8% market share. With a 10.9% market share, Estee Lauder Company is second, and with a 9.3% market share, Procter & Gamble Company is third. Revlon, with 7.1%, and Avon, with 4.7% market shares, follow them, and cosmetic sector has an undeniably important place compared to other sectors (Kumar, 2005). This is because the level of welfare has increased globally; as a result, consumer demands increased. Thanks to this enhancement, the cosmetic industry gained value in the global market, and consequently, the market competition increased. To catch the customer's attention, brands started to examine consumer behaviors and purchase intention and lead accordingly (Sungur et al., 2018). For instance, when the total cosmetic sales are compared between 1998 and 2010, it is seen that the sales more than doubled in 2010. In terms of product categories, in the 21st century,

skincare takes the lead; after the haircare segment comes, color cosmetic follows the haircare segment. The popularity of skincare products all over the world varies reasons because of the cultural differences of customers. For example, in Asian countries, pale skin fulfils the beauty ideal, so face-whitening products are in high demand (Lopaciuk & Loboda, 2013). In developed countries, the elderly population is high, who are Baby-boomers and they have a strong economic power. That is why their purchasing power meets buying aging products easily, which are the most demanded cosmetic products in this area. In Latin America, people are often exposed to the sun, so sun creams and anti-blemish products for skin are demanded. These different cultural and geographical reasons and consumers' behaviors show that the sales of products are need-based and change according to the situation to situation. There is not only one dimension or indicator of the customer purchase decision (Lopaciuk & Loboda, 2013). Moreover, it should be mentioned that, like many other sectors, the cosmetic industry faces several issues, but also, thanks to many innovations today, the cosmetic industry has widened its power in the retail trade industry. These difficulties can be listed as "safety concerns, environmental issues, natural ingredients issues, animal testing, economic impact, and issues in marketing and distribution channels" (Kumar, 2005, p. 1267 & 1268). On the other hand, thanks to technological improvements, the cosmetic industry also benefits from the advantages of high sales results. The best example is technological improvements that increase the interaction between the brand and the customer (Lopaciuk & Loboda, 2013). Today is the digital era, and interactive marketing is the best channel to grab customer attention, enabling a bond between the customer and cosmetic brands easily and quickly. Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, or blogs that provide advice about beauty to the customer with one click simplifies the brands' and marketers' job. Besides, online sales via the Internet are very comprehensive in the cosmetic industry, which again opens new doors and channels to marketers (Lopaciuk & Loboda, 2013).

In brief, cosmetics is a broad topic related to the beauty concept. Because the concept occupies an important place in the marketing industry, cosmetics have extensive coverage in this highly competitive industry. Additionally, to this fact, which has been ongoing for years, marketing strategies have acquired a new dimension due to the developed world, and marketers have started implementing these developments in their advertisements. The main aim of marketers is to open new and diverse communication channels to increase interactivity with consumers and consequently reach more consumers. In conjunction with the aim, the digital marketing era started, and correspondingly social media marketing accelerated. As a result, a new marketing sub-branch, Influencer marketing, has arisen (Bakker, 2018). Influencer marketing is highly related to cosmetics and

beauty because nearly all the influencers are making their advertisements towards cosmetic products, which brands and marketers are making money on. It can be said that there is a chain, and all these steps are interconnected with each other this chain. All in all, it seems that the concept of beauty will not be erased from memories as long as the world continues to exist. Furthermore, cosmetic products, which have been feeding the concept of beauty since ancient times, will continue to shape the marketing world.

2.2   Overview of Digital Marketing

The highly fast-developed technology, especially the spread of the internet, dominated everyone's life and caused great changes in consumers' lifestyles, behaviors, and expectations following these marketing industries and strategies. Internet and smartphones became indispensable components of consumers, which changed companies' marketing, advertising, and branding strategies and reshaped the relationship between companies and consumers (Makrides et al., 2020). "Advertising through digital channels—known as Digital Marketing—is recognized for its transformative impact on companies and for its immense effect on brand–consumer relationships, as it enables interactions with customers at any time and in any place" (Makrides et al., 2019, p. 1). "Digital marketing (DM) conceptualizes marketing on electronic platforms through the use of any type of technological device" (Krishen et al., 2021, p. 183). Digital marketing became the determinative factor of global marketing. "DM sites based on retail platforms (e.g., Alibaba, Amazon Marketplace, iTunes, eBay, Flipkart, Booking.com, Expedia) and social media marketing communities (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.) both augment and replace conventional marketing methods" (Krishen et al., 2021, p. 183).

Consequently, digital marketing seems an effective marketing strategy, and it is a comprehensive concept. Social media marketing and, depending on it, influencer marketing is the sub-branch of digital marketing worth examining. This section of the literature review will be given general information about social media marketing and influencer marketing due by relating the beauty concept and marketing during the data analysis section. Besides, it will be touched briefly on the social media platform Instagram. Finally, the impact of these marketing strategies on customer purchase intention and customer engagement will be explained.

2.2.1   Social Media Marketing

The meaning of social media is coming from: media represents "the advertising and communication of ideas," social represents "the interaction of individuals within in a group or community," and the combination of social media is "communication/publication platforms which are generated and sustained by the interpersonal interaction of individuals through the specific medium or tool" (Durgam, 2018, p. 2). The social media era dates back to the beginning of the 2000s. It first started with LinkedIn in 2004, Facebook followed it in 2005, YouTube took third place, and lastly, in 2006, Twitter became part of the competition. After four years, in 2010, Instagram got evolved to this fury. In less than ten years, the number of social media users reached billions all over the world (Pradiptarini, 2011). According to the 2019 data, 7.7 billion people were living in the world, and 2.4 billion of them were Facebook users, which has the highest number of users on social media platforms (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). *Social media* is an online-based concept that changed the market dynamics by increasing competition between companies and recognizing the customers and their demands. Social media changed customers' habits in terms of "assessing, choosing, and buying goods and services" (Alves et al., 2016, p. 1029). That is why new marketing strategies emerged, which is named social media marketing. This marketing concept can be described as "the use of social media channels to promote a company and its products" (Arsath, 2018, p.153). Companies, whether it is big companies such as Starbucks, Coca-Cola, McDonald's, or a small, local ice cream shop, benefit from social media marketing. The main reason for this is that it provides accessibility. Social media marketing is a strategic method "to establish the company's influence, reputation and brand with communities of potential customers, readers or supporters" (Durgam, 2018, p. 3). It provides "selling more products and services, reduction in overall marketing expenses, rise in search engine rankings, building new business partnerships, increasing subscribers, and generating exposure to businesses" (Durgam, 2018, p. 4 & 5). Besides, social media marketing creates a bond between the brand and customer towards customers' feelings, for example, through the like numbers on the photos that are shared on social media (Dwivedi, et al., 2015). Furthermore, social media marketing effectiveness includes four aspects. These are "the quality of content, creating a trustworthy environment with the customer, providing involvement and integrating with other social media platforms" (Pradiptarini, 2011, p. 5). Moreover, it should have been noticed that the target market also impacts the effectiveness of social media because marketers have to recognize and make a proper segmentation to correctly measure the effectiveness of campaigns. Baby boomers, Generation Y and Generation X, are the main target groups in social media marketing (Pradptarini, 2011).

There are some brand examples that used social media marketing effectively. These brands can be listed as "Absolut Vodka, BMW, Dunkin Donuts, and General Motors" (Durgam, 2018, p. 5). For instance, BMW used Facebook. A Rampenfest page was created for fans by BMW marketers, and on Facebook, the 1-Series Road Trip advertisement was launched (Durgam, 2018). That is only one example that creates brand awareness and loyalty that social media marketing enables. Companies need to use social media marketing because of five main reasons. The first reason is the size of the platform. For example, each second, approximately 70-100 tweets are tweeted, or when it is accepted that a user has approximately one hundred twenty friends on Facebook, the speed of shared items is indisputable, creating social networking (Durgam, 2018). The second one is transparency because all the actions taken on social media are based on proof. The third reason is being reachable, which provides global success. The fourth reason is that it increases website traffics, which is the electronic way of word of mouth effect in marketing. The last and one of the most reasons is branding which is super important for businesses (Durgam, 2018).

Although social media marketing seems like an effective marketing strategy, it has both advantages and disadvantages for consumers and companies. The advantages of social media marketing are that it is cheap and fast in enhancing reach. Moreover, social media marketing enables consumers to obtain unlimited information which consumers can easily access the information. So this is increasing the customer service that the brand provides to consumers (Arsath, 2018). The other advantage is that through social media marketing, brands and companies increase the interaction with consumers, and the interactivity between customers and brands enhances. Besides, social media marketing makes determining the targeted market more straightforward and more accurate for brands (Arsath, 2018). On the other hand, social media marketing has some disadvantages and challenges. First, although social media marketing builds a two-way commitment between the customer and the company/brand, it is intensive in terms of time. Second, it can cause some privacy or security issues. Furthermore, lastly, negative feedback from consumers on social media platforms can cause to affect the brand's image and sales, creating negative marketing campaigns (Arsath, 2018).

Overall, social media marketing is an efficient marketing strategy for both consumers and companies. However, unlike other strategies, this relatively new marketing strategy faces some challenges and causes some unwanted situations too. By the end of the day,

brands and companies, who want to get a voice, have to follow the social media market-ing trends well to avoid the disadvantages of social media marketing and implement these strategies in their company according to their profits.

2.2.2   Influencer Marketing

Today's one of the most effective marketing strategies, influencer marketing, still passes for a new approach, which is why it is better to examine roughly. First, the dictionary meaning of the word 'influence' is stated as "the power to affect how someone thinks or behaves, or how something develops" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). 'Influencer' is ex-plained in the dictionary as "someone who affects or changes the way that other people behave" or "a person who is paid by a company to show and describe its products and services on social media, encouraging other people to buy them" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). Following these lexical meanings, the new approach 'Social Influence Marketing' is described as "a technique that employs social media (content created by everyday people using highly accessible and scalable technologies such as blogs, message boards, podcasts, microblogs, bookmarks, social networks, communities, wikis, and vlogs) and social influencers (everyday people who have an outsized influence on their peers by virtue of how much content they share online) to achieve an organization's marketing and business needs" (Singh & Diamond, 2012, p. 19). Nowadays, influencer marketing is a non-negligible part of digital marketing. It has been proved that the brands that benefit from influencer marketing strategies have remarkable success in the market in earning high profits. For instance, 86% of brand marketers have benefited from influ-encer marketing, and 92% of them accepted that they found it impactful, according to an industry report which was published in 2017 (Ki et al., 2020). Besides, it has proved that contents that influencer marketers generate have 6.9 times more success and effect than content in studio shot ones. Thanks to the success of influencer marketing in the busi-ness world, 42% of marketers stated that they will always follow the influencer marketing strategies on their own accounts (Ki et al., 2020). In 2019, the market size of influencer marketing reached 148 million, and "the number is expected to exceed US $ 373 million by 2027" (Ki et al., 2020, p. 1 & 2). Thanks to the digital revolution, companies and brands serve consumers with one click away. Life is becoming fast and virtually based, and marketers are benefiting from this change, such as using influencer marketing strategies. The first reason influencer marketing is popular and common nowadays is that markets have a challenge: Customers are skipping advertisements or using ad-blockers on online channels such as Instagram, YouTube, or Facebook (Chopra et al., 2021). To prevent

the negative impacts of these attitudes by customers, marketers started to work with influencers because customers who are exposed to the advertisement by the loved influencer do not skip it, which distribution is the target of brands. The engagement of influencers and consumers obviates this challenge and canalizes the marketers to influencer marketing more (Chopra et al., 2021). Secondly, brands who are aware of the creating stories provide customer engagement with the brand because of the emotional feelings power, front the influencer marketing because influencers are establishing an emotional bond with the customers (Chopra et al., 2021). Influencers seem like 'ordinary, everyday people' who are close to society, strengthening customer relationships that are called authentic. Influencers can be anyone, such as a blogger, a photographer, or an organizer, which makes them familiar to customers and creates a trustworthy environment (Chopra et al., 2021). The other question of influencer marketing that has to be indicated is why these influencers are not celebrities. The reason is answered as follows: Social media celebrities, called "Insta-famous" or influencers, become famous just because of their presence, unlike traditional celebrities acting, singing, or doing sports skills (Jin et al., 2019, p. 3). Marketers have been using celebrities for decades because those days it was beneficial and a valuable tactic for them but with the rise of social media, influencer endorsement has gained importance among customers (Vrontis et al., 2021). Traditional celebrities such as Hollywood stars are mostly the face of advertisement campaigns because it is part of the making advertisement of their job, which is not very reassuring or influential in customers' minds. For example, the reason for advertising a brand's product can be sponsorship contracts that were signed, and the traditional celebrities have to discharge it. This decreases the trust in the celebrity and hence the customer engagement with the brand (Jin et al., 2019). On the contrary, influencers generally start their famous career with reality shows which makes a connection with customers, and they are recognized as more authentic compared to traditional celebrities. Customers find them more real and close and tend to imitate them easily. Because according to the consumer's psychology, traditional celebrities who became famous because of doing something is less reachable and more like a dream, but influencers, who represent the public persona, come to these days naturally, and this is a more accessible dream which can come true. There is a perception of 'more like us' towards influencers, and the brands that they suggest are preferable during customer's purchase decision process (Jin et al., 2019). Some statistics reveal that 50% of internet users follow influencer accounts and trust their recommendations. As if that were not enough, 40% of these followers are buying the products that these influencers suggested. It has been seen in these statistics that in 2018 in the United States, 19% of the society made their

purchase decisions under the leadership of influencers. That is why it is not a coincidence again, based on the statistics, that 86% of marketers started to benefit from influencer marketing in 2018. Because influencer marketing affects consumer behaviors deeply, marketers are taking action in parallel (Vrontis et al., 2021). Furthermore, targeting the customer segment is the key for marketers. Social media consumption has a huge impact, especially on Generation Z. Everything has changed 180 degrees in their generation. For example, instead of watching television, they watch Netflix or Amazon Prime, or contrary to listening to music from the radio, they prefer to listen to Spotify. This huge lifestyle change opened the eyes of marketers and directed them to make social media campaigns through mobile advertising through the applications Instagram and TikTok. The usage of these social media accounts, especially by Generation Z, such as Instagram and Tiktok, caused to derive the concept of influencers and influencer marketing (Haenlein et al., 2020). There are many reasons that Instagram and TikTok are chosen in influencer marketing as tools, and the social media phenomena are mainly advertising the products on these platforms but not on other social media platforms, such as Facebook or Twitter. The first reason is related to generational differences. According to the results, the social media platforms Facebook and Twitter are for people in their 40s, Instagram is attractive for people in their 30s, and TikTok users are in their 20s. Marketers, who are generally targeting Generation Z in terms of their purchase intentions, prefer to make influencer marketing campaigns via Instagram and TikTok (Haenlein et al., 2020). The second reason is the different purposes of social media usage. For example, a shared post on Facebook is not interesting because the aim of Facebook is to find old friends and stay in contact with them. Like Facebook, Twitter is also not preferable regarding influencer marketing purposes because it is a text-based application that is not suitable for the content format. On the other hand, entertainment-based social media applications such as Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok are highly used in influencer marketing, which appeal to Generation Z (Haenlein et al., 2020). In addition to deciding the right social media platform for influencer marketing, choosing the most suitable influencer is also critical in creating brand awareness and customer engagement with the brand. First, the target group has to be determined very well, and the influencer has to be chosen according to taking consideration of the target group (Biaudet, 2017). Second, the chosen influencer has to be related to the product or service that she will recommend. Third, the influencer must successfully produce content, such as shared stories, videos, or photos. It is also essential to interact with the followers with like, click and share dimensions. Moreover, an influencer has to involve five main things, which are "relevance, engagement, frequency, reach, and authenticity" (Biaudet, 2017, p.19). There is a case study which was conducted at the Annenberg School for Communication,

University of Pennsylvania, by Emily Hund. According to the study, there are three very effective influencers: Aimee Song, Chiara Ferragni, and Kristina Bazan. The study tries to find an answer to the reason for these influencers' famousness. These three very famous influencers come from different cultures, and they have different ethnic backgrounds (Hund, 2017). Even their editing technique, poses, and captions are all different from each other. However, these three women have the same attitude: globalization. They are all traveling all over the world and have a luxurious lifestyle. They all represent youth, femininity, and trim, but they are not bringing their nationality, ethnic or cultural differences to the forefront. Although there are other factors that affect their popularity, this is an essential step that influencers should pay attention to (Hund, 2017). Influencer marketing is a sensitive topic, and it has to be managed very well because although on paper, it has many benefits to brands, if it is not used correctly, it can be the own enemy of the brand. For example, the brand Gucci benefited from the influencer marketing strategy while the brand was launching its fragrance Gucci Bloom to the market. The brand "Gucci collaborated with 23 artists on Instagram to create highly creative content of the artistic interpretation of the floral universe around the fragrance" (Haenlein et al., 2020, p. 6). As a result of this campaign, 135 pieces of new content emerged, and the brand reached 750,000 followers. In literature, there is still no specific parameter for the success of influencer marketing. Still, it can be measured via the per like, comments, or shares, in other words, the amount of interaction between the followers and influencer because customer engagement is essential, which is why cost per engagement is the main criteria. (Biaudet, 2017). On the contrary, an insufficiently managed influencer marketing campaign can be given as an example: the pharmaceutical company that worked with influencer Kim Kardashian who had to advertise the pregnancy sickness drug Diclegis. After the Food and Drug Administration examined the advertised product by influencer Kim Kardashian, they found many side effects of the drug. Kim Kardashian had to remove the posts which had negative consequences for the brand image. These two examples show the massive effect of influencer marketing on society, both positively and negatively. Today the impact of social media on communities is undeniable, and it can create both fantastic and catastrophic results. This is why before taking action, considering all the possible options and outcomes of influencer marketing will be lifesaving for brands, marketers, and customers (Haenlein et al., 2020).

As technology advances and discoveries are made, the impact of social media will not lose its power on consumers. A wide-spreading influencer marketing, the subclass of digital marketing, does not look like it will come out of people's life quickly, and it seems it will be permanent. That is why brands and companies, which always focus on their

target groups to indicate consumers' needs, wants, or preferences, have to collaborate with influencers and follow the latest trends due to benefiting from the electronic word-of-mouth effect (Yesiloglu & Costello, 2020). Brands that follow these strategies can positively affect the purchase intention and customer engagement with the brand because, in influencer marketing, there are three steps to reach this aim (Yesiloglu & Costello, 2020). First, influencers try to reach the highest number of followers because brands prefer highly followed influencers. Second, influencers increase the product knowledge of their followers with their content creations, increasing consumers' brand awareness. Lastly, influencers try to convince consumers to purchase with their content or promotions. Thus, brands can both create brand awareness and brand loyalty with the customers and increase sales and profits thanks to influencer marketing (Yesiloglu & Costello, 2020). In addition to this strategy, particularly, it is known that influencers are mostly advertising cosmetic products, and these products are highly related to the beauty industry, which is why understanding the importance and place of influencer marketing for brands is essential and will be an enlightening explanation for the following chapters.

2.2.3   The Address of Influencer Marketing: Instagram

Instagram is a social media platform that takes a significant place in social media and influencer marketing. Especially influencer marketing campaigns are promoted through the Instagram channel to consumers by influencers and celebrities. For this reason, to understand better the platform where social media and influencer marketing are occurring, the features of Instagram will be defined in this section. Moreover, the relationship between the concept of beauty and social media platforms such as Instagram will be discussed in this section of the literature review.

In short terms, the photo-sharing social media application Instagram was founded in 2010 by Mike Krieger and Kevin Systrom. It is a free application for everyone who has a smartphone. It enables users to share the taken photos or videos, apply filters to these photos and videos, and communicate with friends, families, acquaintances, and even foreigners. The account can be visible to everyone or a private account; it is all up to the user's preference (Chen, 2017). If users want to post a photo, Instagram lets them share it on Facebook or Twitter. Besides, although Instagram is compatible with smartphones, the app allows it to be visible on PC. Like, share, and comments are the main characteristics of Instagram, affecting the whole world. To make these movements, users do not need to know each other; all these movements are one click far away for all users (Chen,

2017). Statistically, there will be 1.21 billion active monthly users in 2021, which is 28% of the world. It is expected that in 2025 active Instagram users monthly, which is 31.2% of the world. Regarding social media popularity, it ranks fourth, and Facebook obtains leadership (Dixon, 2023). India has the largest number of Instagram users, with 230 million subscribers worldwide, and the United States follows it as second with 160 million subscribers. The average spending time on Instagram of a person is around 5 hours. Christina Ronaldo, who has the highest number of followers on Instagram, which is 504.37 million followers, earns 985,000 dollars per post. On the other hand, the world's most-liked photo is an egg that exceeds 55 million likes (Dixon, 2023). These are the primary and highlighted information about one of the most impactful tools in the world, but the social media application Instagram is much more the case. It is not only an application that is used for entertainment purposes. It is a persuasive tool for marketers, especially nowadays; everything quickly becomes viral in a second. Instagram provides to increase the interaction between users (Soegoto & Utomo, 2019). Notably, it provides customers to share their experiences on social medias and also everyone can make their own advertisements or sales via Instagram. Everyone is famous, a celebrity or ordinary people can do it because there is no limitation. So brands who take advantage of this use Instagram as online marketing and sales tool. Besides sharing and communication features of the app, the exploring and shopping parts of Instagram are the distinctive features that are very useful for brand collaborators, and they generally use social media influencers. This opens a road to influencer marketing, today's newest and trendiest concept (Soegoto & Utomo, 2019).

In conclusion, not only for fulfilling customer engagement purposes or increasing consumers' purchase intentions but also to satisfy many feelings of people, such as beauty confidence, the platform Instagram is a social media platform that should be examined. Since ancient times the concept of beauty has evolved, and humanity has cared about the concept considerably, as stated in previous chapters. Today, through the rise of the social media channel Instagram, consumers are determining, evaluating, emulating, appreciating, or humiliating their and others' beauty standards according to the intended use. Because of this reason, Instagram is a globally critical social media platform across the board. It is highly related to today's beauty perception and ideal in addition to the contributions to the marketing dimension of the platform.

2.2.4 The Impact of Social Media and Influencer Marketing on Customer Purchase Intention and Customer Engagement

According to 2020 data, there are 4.6 billion internet users worldwide. These users spend six hours forty-four minutes of their day on the internet, and two hours twenty-four minutes of this internet-based time spending belongs to social media usage. The excessive number of internet users and the time that these users spend on the internet encouraged brands, and as a result, marketers and advertisers canalized social media. Brands that followed traditional advertising tactics until the rise of social media have adapted the traditional strategies to social media channels. It is a sort of integration of classical advertising strategies and newly extended social media marketing (Erdoğan & Özcan, 2020). "Social media platforms represent a new place where people, organizations, and even governments can commercially, socially, politically, and educationally interact with each other and exchange information, thoughts, products, and services" (Alalwan, 2018, p. 65). Therefore, companies and brands take advantage of these platforms to attract customers and create brand awareness by promoting their products and conducting their campaigns through social media platforms. There are six factors which are indicating consumer purchase intention that social media provides to customers. These are performance expectancy, hedonic motivation, interactivity, perceived relevance, habit, and being informative. Of all these factors, interactivity has the highest share regarding affecting the purchase intention of consumers because interactivity has the power to trigger the other two factors, which are performance expectancy and hedonic motivation, and also strengthens customer engagement. Interactive communication provides two-way communication, which increases the consumer's contentedness about the product and brand because this enables consumers the possibility to give feedback and makes them more visible and active in the transaction (Alalwan, 2018). Because of the usage of these social media platforms, the influencer marketing concept has arisen and made a splash in the business world regarding the benefits that it contributes. The influences are suggesting the products of certain brands via social media, and the followers who emulate these influencers' lifestyles are listening to their advice and purchasing the promoted brands' products. Studies on consumers showed that people see the influencers as their role models, and doing something similar such as using the same product with them, enhances consumer satisfaction levels. This is a physiological self-concept that impacts consumer behavior, creating the purchase intention and positive brand connection (Hermanda et al., 2019). Influencers are not only promoting a product, but they also evaluate the product. In fact, if they see there is a problem with

the product, they criticize the product and brands as well. This is one of the most distinctive features of an influencer. Just because they have a contract with the brand, they are not hiding the product's side effects; oppositely, they share their own experiences transparently. This attitude of influencers creates a trustworthy environment which has a massive impact on consumers' purchase intention. Additionally, giving some discounts on some products or drawings make the influencer unique for customers and more interesting their promoted products (Erdoğan & Özcan, 2020). Moreover, influencers' credibility also plays an active role in consumers' purchase intention. "Trustworthiness showed a significant effect on influencer's credibility and consumers' purchase intention" (Khan & Khan, 2020, p. 13). Information quality and the entertainment value that the influencer provides to the followers affect credibility. The expertise or likability of an influencer affects neither positively nor negatively the credibility and hence, the consumer's purchase intention. In all these aspects, which determine credibility, trustworthiness takes the lead regarding the purchase intention (Khan & Khan, 2020). In addition, influencer marketing helps to increase the 'word of mouth' effect, which is one of the most valuable strategies in marketing. Consumers can express their opinion online, both positive and negative, as they wish. There is no limitation, and this creates an online spirit among consumers, empowering their purchase intention (Erdoğan & Özcan, 2020).

In conclusion, the main aim of the brands is to obtain profits, and making lots of sales makes reals this aim. That is why understanding the purchase intention of consumers is significantly related to their beauty perceptions. If marketers know the factors that increase consumers' purchase intentions, they can follow a path according to these indicators, which will bring brand success. Based on the literature, it has been seen that the most distinguished trait of influencer marketing is providing interactive commutation between the brand and consumer via influencers and social media platforms such as Instagram. That two-sided communication is reliable because influencers have trustworthy characteristics while promoting the product of the agreed brand. So, social media marketing and influencer marketing mostly positively affect consumer purchase intention.

"Within interactive, dynamic business environments, customer engagement represents a strategic imperative for generating enhanced corporate performance, including sales growth, superior competitive advantage, and profitability" (Brodie et al., 2011, p. 252). The word engagement is used in many interdisciplinary fields, for example, in psychology, sociology, political science, or organizational behavior. The concept of 'engagement' is addressed in the business and marketing dimension when completed with the term' customer.' The concept of customer engagement has a non-negligible role in viral

marketing activities, enabling suggestions for brand development (Brodie et al., 2011). Customer engagement constitutes trust and commitment, creating positive feelings and customer satisfaction. A customer who has high trust in the brand becomes more engaged with the brand. Commitments show the tendency of consumers' long-term relationships with the brand. "When consumers enjoy emotionally bonding relationships with firms, they become engaged, and satisfaction and positive emotions are the two main drivers creating customer engagement in social media" (de Oliveira Santini et al., 2020, p. 1214). Following this, the customer engagement concept started to be popular in 2010, a period of rapid technological changes. Because of the unpreventable speed of changing communication channels through the rise of social media platforms, brands found a new way to maintain an emotional relationship with customers, which is called customer engagement. The customer engagement concept is not only related to the purchase process of consumers; it also covers the post-purchase period. Besides, it is considered that the concept of 'engagement' is more than purchasing; it is more about the brand (Vivek et al., 2012). That is why companies and brands, which want to be differentiated and create a highly competitive advantage in the market, focus on customer relationships more and budget for investments highly in customer management (Verhoef et al., 2010). For example, digital marketing investments, including social media marketing in the United States in 2018, were $108 billion. With the rapid development of the digital marketing industry, in 2020, the investment also increased to $150 billion. According to the research, it has been revealed that nine out of ten important businesses are investing at least 11% of their total marketing budgets in social media platforms because they are aware of the potential return of this investment, and it will be advantageous for them in the long term. 49%of the world is using social media platforms, which means 3.8 billion users can be seen as potential engaged customers. Social media usage also provides customers with being connected with the brand emotional and sustainable way (de Oliveira Santini et al., 2020). The sub-branch of digital marketing, Influencer marketing, greatly impacts customer engagement and brand loyalty. Especially for millennials and Generation Z, who are using social media the most, the effect of influencer marketing in terms of brand loyalty is undeniable. The admiration of the influencers by millennials causes the existence of brand awareness and, as a result, loyalty (Trivedi & Sama, 2019).

In sum, all these efforts by brands are to be able to differentiate in the market and to own a high market share. Therefore, it can be said that the main aim of brands is earning high profits and creating customer engagement and brand loyalty, which are the key factors of making real of this target. Nowadays, because of the rapid changes in technology, the

path that brands follow in the business world to reach this goal is benefiting from influencer marketing and social media marketing, in general, through digital marketing. That is why integrating consumer behavior with the impact of influencer marketing and social media marketing is urgent. Above all, categorizing and interpreting consumer behavior is critical to brands' long-term success. Today, the fastest way to communicate with customers and understand their needs, preferences, and desires is owing to digital marketing, so marketers are discovering and interpreting consumer behaviors and developing their strategies with the help of social media and influencer marketing.

2.3   Beauty in Social Media and Advertisements

Beauty is a subjective concept that can be counted as one of the wide-open-to-abuse tools for brands. A person can be convinced that s/he is beautiful or ugly by other people's appreciation, expression, or rules, especially with advertisements' widespread impact and social media's rise. For example, according to the statistics, the number of social media users will be 4.89 billion in 2023, which is more than half of the population of the world (Dixon, 2023). On another note, everyone is exposed to at least 2000 daily ads. To exemplify, an average adult is exposed to television commercials for roughly one and a half years of his/her life willingly or with reluctance (Scott et al., 2017). Along with this reality, as mentioned in previous chapters, beauty ideals are determined mainly according to social media beauty standards and corresponding advertisements because many people are following this trend and trying to comply with these standards. This chapter will investigate the place of beauty in advertising and social media to discover the development of beauty perception and the recent effects, such as advertisements and social media, on beauty evolution.

2.3.1   Social Media Beauty Standards

In the 21st century, called the information age or the digital era, the mainstream media has many impacts on consumers' beauty perceptions and ideals, especially among women. In particular, the social media application Instagram comes into prominence here. If well-meaning, the platform establishes beauty regulations through influencers and celebrities, and Instagram users yield them. The definition of beauty today has a thin and fit body. Influencers and celebrities are generally making their shares via their body image (Baker et al., 2019). In fact, there are many applications for everyone used for

editing and Photoshop purposes. The aim of using these Photoshop applications is to be seen as these influencers and to be suitable for the unwritten social media rules. These photo editing apps generally include making yourself thinner, making your skin smoother, having whiter teeth, having a sharper jaw, and so on, which standardizes everyone's appearance (Britt, 2015). Moreover, according to research, in the United States, over 90% of college women have body dissatisfaction problems due to the beauty ideal of Instagram, which is a dangerous thing in terms of causing many health issues such as eating disorders, bulimia, anorexia, or on the contrary, obesity. Besides, it can also damage people's mental health and cause low self-esteem issues or depression. Instagram is causing these things not only by following the influencers feature and also by providing users to receive feedback from other people, which is not based on any realities, through the liking and commenting feature of the application. This feedback puts pressure on people, and they start to evaluate themselves as objects, creating a self-objectification issue (Baker et al., 2019). For example, one research investigated the relationship between Instagram usage and female students' body image. The research has been conducted on twenty-seven female university students from different nationalities. Participants had to post their best photos at a certain time, and all did it after some editing sessions. Additionally, these participants asked their friends for advice before posting their photos. After posting according to the like numbers, they noted their satisfaction levels and feelings. They all noted that wearing much makeup and being thin and fit are the indicators of beauty standards. When they looked at other participants' photos, some said they wanted to seem like another participant. Participants found another participant suitable according to the beauty ideals who have high like numbers. The remarkable thing about this research was the comparison way of all participants. Everybody has tried their best, but they constantly compare themselves with others (Baker et al., 2019). On the other hand, self-presentation finds a prominent place itself in the beauty concept through social media. Because of the popularity and power of social media, women shape their appearances according to mass media beauty standards which increases the self-monitoring among women. This is not a surprising reality because the literature says that the social media platform YouTube has many popular beauty channels related to cosmetic products, and these products are advertised as providing imperfection. For example, Michelle Phan has more than 5 million followers on YouTube, and around 4,300 people watch her daily. The number of views by followers also encourages these influencers to share more (Britt, 2015).

In conclusion, today's beauty standards are determined by social media, especially Instagram is very efficient and recommends being thin and well-kept all the time. Marketers

and brands are commonly behind these unwritten rules of beauty standards on social media platforms. The sub-message given by social media channels to consumers is following these platforms and trying to be suitable with these standards, which marketers and brands set for their own sake. As stated above, the concept of beauty in social media platforms created causes some issues in consumers' lives. However, from the brands' and marketers' perspectives, the usage of beauty perception on social media platforms is conspicuously profitable in this highly digitalized world, and it seems that for a long time, beauty standards will be determined by social media and will impact consumer behaviors.

2.3.2 Beauty in Advertisings

Since early times, the media has addressed the feelings and thoughts of consumers. Especially advertisements direct consumers in their purchasing decisions. People do not only learn from advertisements what they have to buy and also learn how to look. That is why the 'models,' used in the advertisements as a symbol of beauty, influence consumers' desired outer view. This is providing to brands reach their aim to increase brand awareness and purchase intention (Ülker et al., 2018). As stated in the previous chapters, beauty perception is typically related to the woman in the literature, and this factuality is also valid in advertisements. A woman is the centre of the idea of beauty, and the advertisements, which are aware of this, have not allowed for ugly, fat, duck-legged, plump, not slim-waisted models in their commercials. 75% of the female models in advertisements have thin bodies and beautiful faces. On the contrary, 75% of male models are counted as usual regarding physical body beauty standards, which proves that the beauty product commercial films or the face of these products are primarily women. Furthermore, until a short time, women's beauty standards in advertisements were being young, skinny, with smooth skin, and white teeth. Especially the ideal beauty for a woman is youthfulness and skinny (Ülker et al., 2018). For example, aging is an unwanted situation for many women, and they are trying to prevent this natural problem with skin creams (Searing & Zeilig, 2017). Skin beauty has been accepted as a considerable part of facial beauty since ancient times, which is why many cosmetic industry brands use this necessity to their advantage. Facial moistures and antiaging creams are the commonly used products of brands, and even in train stations or airports, there are big screens that make the advertisement of these products via woman's beauty (Searing & Zeilig, 2017). Brands know the adverse effects of aging on women's social life, which make them invisible due to the belief that aging is decreasing the sexuality of the woman.

Brands that are aware of this weakness cooperate with marketers who are shooting advertisements according to this (Searing & Zeilig, 2017). Nevertheless, the idealized female image in advertising is a very debatable topic nowadays. The spark of these debates started with the 'Dove' commercial in 2004. The brand made a campaign with the slogan 'Campaign for Real Beauty,' which represents 'everyday women.' (Pounders, 2018). Before this commercial, the brand Dove conducted research, and it concluded that 98% of women do not like themselves. The brand's target group has been mainly women, and the aim was to change the beauty perception in consumers' minds because nearly all cosmetic brands highlight the importance of smooth and moist skin, and models are chosen skinny. Despite that, Dove stated in commercial films that being different is beautiful, and the brand offers different products compared to competitors in the market (Ülker et al., 2018). Unlike its competitors, the brand Dove has prioritized consumers' feelings instead of the beauty ideals that the media usually shapes. This brought success to the brand, but unfortunately, many brands that tried to follow these trends have failed. That is why, even today, many advertisements include mostly slim or smooth skin female models. However, there are attempts by some countries which are trying to decrease the standardization of women's beauty in terms of shape, size, and ethnicity. For instance, in Spain, Italy, and Israel, too much thin models are eliminated during the casting process (Pounders, 2018). Besides, countries aware of the negative impact of advertising perception on consumers' mental and physical health started to take action, such as implementing some governmental policies. In France, the policy which is implemented in 2017 is that models have to bring doctor certificates if they want to be part of the commercials. The certificate, which is approved by a doctor, has to prove the physical health of the model regarding body mass ratio. Moreover, France took this situation seriously, and now it is forbidden to manipulate the model's body size and shape in advertisements with the help of the 'retouched photography' concept. The 'body positivity' idea also appeared in the United States using 'unretouched' models in the campaigns. As well as these new policies, the plus-size model popularity started in some countries. Like the cosmetic brand, Revlon contracted with plus-size model Ashley Graham, and the world's famous fashion magazine Vogue gave a place to her (Pounders, 2018). On the other hand, diversity in advertising carries risks for brands and advertisers. For example, the presence of oversize models can cause to decrease in the value of the brand because brands should represent health as well, and obesity is definitely not a supporter of health concerns. While advertisers are trying to increase diversity to appeal to everyone, this attempt can have harmful consequences, too, for them and the brand. So advertisers are in a challenging situation and which is why the ideal women's beauty in advertisements is today between a rock and a hard place (Pounders, 2018).

The long and the short of it, it can be said that advertisers mostly do the campaigns through the ideal woman's body because, since ancient times, a woman's body has symbolized the concept of beauty. That is why advertising strategies are also changing with the changing beauty standards. Because the skinny body is desired today, advertisers are following this desire to increase consumers' purchase intentions. Nevertheless, thanks to the rise of social media, women make their voices heard and play an active role in advertisers' decisions about campaigns. Although many brands and advertisers follow the traditional strategy, which is using skinny models with smooth and unwrinkled faces, many advertisers are conscious of the high competition and the power of social media in the market among brands. In conclusion, advertisers have to listen to the demands of consumers, which they want to see diverse models, and advertisers have to apply this demand to their campaigns carefully.

2.3.3   Stereotyping Beauty

"Stereotypes are generalizations about the personal attributes or characteristics of a group of people. Societal stereotypes exist about a broad range of social groups and can vary by context or situation" (Rosenthal & Overstreet, 2016, p. 225). Stereotypes are created because of economic, social, or political situations. "Stereotyping is a cognitive process in that it involves associating a characteristic with a group, but it can also involve, lead to, or serve to justify an affective reaction toward people from other groups" (Rosenthal & Overstreet, 2016, p. 225). Besides, the media has a huge impact on promoting stereotypes, and stereotyping has a remarkable social influence. Moreover, stereotypes can cause negative consequences on different groups in society, such as mental health issues. Stereotyping starts and occurs in families, friendship groups, schools, or organizations, and the mass media empowers the stereotyping and its results (Rosenthal & Overstreet, 2016).

Beauty is a concept that is widely stereotyped in societies. For example, the first typical stereotype about beauty is 'Beauty is good. 'There is no evidence for this fact, but when it is examined, many behaviors affirm this assertion. When the behaviors of children are observed, it is seen that children are attributing positive social behaviors to children who are perceived as beautiful. From one side to the other, children are indicated, based on their appearance, as unattractive children with negative social behaviors (Ramsey & Langlois, 2002). There is a study conducted by Dion in 1973 about 3 to 6-year-old children's reactions toward attractiveness. Children tend to be friends with attractive children

because, according to their belief, they are not mischievous or do not shout, fight or hit. Following this belief, children believe that unattractive children are dangerous and that they can hurt or hit them. Moreover, attractive children are generally perceived as smarter, and their emotional intelligence level is high regarding social life success, which is quite the opposite of unreactive children's perceived way (Ramsey & Langlois, 2002). This stereotyping starts when people are infants. The biological explanation of this is that babies when they are within the first 3 to 6 months of life, signalize visual preferences for people who have attractive faces. After six months, they start to categorize faces as attractive and unattractive. The real stereotyping starts when the baby reaches one-year-old and prefers to play with an attractive female. During toddlerhood, children start to adult-like stereotypes which are mentioned above, choosing a friend according to attractiveness level. This stereotyping evolves and improves with time, and children reach the 'Beauty is a good' stereotype (Ramsey & Langlois, 2002). All in all, it can be said that this type of beauty stereotyping is not a strange thing for people. Nearly everyone has been exposed to these kinds of behaviors in their life. At every stage of life, this kind of beauty stereotyping shows itself because attributing positive characteristics to attractiveness level starts when people are children and continues for the rest of their lives. It is not a coincidence that this way of stereotyping is occurring in professional life between genders and affecting people's opinions about others. The other way of stereotyping beauty is that an 'attractive person is successful' idea. According to the research Andreoni and Petrie conducted in 2008, people are inclined to think that attractive people are contributing more things to life and earning more money than unattractive people. This means that attractive people are perceived as more cooperative in business life. Because of this stereotype, beautiful people gain 12% more compared to unattractive people (Andreoni & Petrie, 2008). A sociological and physiological experiment also showed that "beauty carries a premium" (Andreoni & Petrie, 2008, p. 76). For instance, based on the experiment, people work more cooperatively with attractive partners in prisoner's dilemma games. Attractive or, in other words, beautiful people have behaved differently and are treated and perceived as more favorable. The other stereotype is about gender and beauty. Because the concept of beauty is more related to women and also because, according to the stereotyping of the 'working woman,' woman is more helpful and cooperative than man, as a result of this stereotyping, women can benefit from this stereotyping in business life by earning 7% more than men (Andreoni & Petrie, 2008).

In short, it is clear that stereotyping starts in babyhood and continues for a lifetime. Stereotyping appears in many areas of life, especially regarding appearance and beauty concepts. Every human in their life judges, appreciates, behaves privileged, or blames other people according to the stereotype in their mind. Beauty is one of the most significant parts of creating these stereotypes, and stereotyping of beauty is also used in advertisements and social media marketing. For example, it is not an accident that the influencers in social media come to the forefront with their attractiveness level or authenticity. Brands who know the stereotype's impact on consumer psychology benefit from it and choose attractive influencers to represent their product. Attractive influencers or influencers who share attractive content draw attention on social media (Kim & Park, 2023). As mentioned above, attractive people have more tendency to make more money than unattractive people. This is also valid in the influencer marketing industry because it is the same principle. Attractiveness creates stereotypes in the human mind and affects people's preferences and purchase decisions because it increases persuasion (Kim & Park, 2023). In sum, it can be argued that consumers will be more willing to make a purchase thanks to the guidance of an attractive influencer and the attractive content which they produce.

3   METHODOLOGY

3.1   The Purpose of this Research

This study aims to explore the development of beauty concepts in history and, as a result of this evolution, measure the effects of beauty perception on the marketing industry and consumer behavior. It will be assessed whether the perception of beauty plays a role in today's marketing, such as social media and influencer marketing strategies, and, consequently, consumers' purchase intention and customer engagement. Briefly, this study is looking for a response to the relationship between people's social media usage and consumer behavior in light of their beauty perception.

3.2   Research Design

This research paper has decided to collect qualitative data to explore different perspectives on beauty and consumption. Qualitative research focuses on "how people or groups of people can have different ways of looking at reality," and with the help of the qualitative approach, the development of beauty perception and its relationship with marketing is identified and processed (Hancock et al., 2009, p. 6). "Recognition and analysis of different perspectives" is the fundamental benefit of qualitative approach characteristics provided to this study (Flick, 2014, p. 14). The primary purpose of choosing the qualitative approach in this paper is to discuss the answers with attention to detail and to better clarify the individuals' attitudes towards beauty and marketing. Collecting qualitative data not only enabled detailed answers but also provided a profound observation of the interviewee's mimics, tones, and body language. Reaching out to these observations was helpful in comparing and analyzing different perspectives on beauty perception and consumer behavior. Moreover, the research topic is considered subjective, as indicated in the literature review section. Qualitative research generally focuses on "experiences of people or data which cannot be adequately expressed numerically" (Hancock et al., 2009, p. 6). That is why this study is suitable for investigation in identifying people's opinions, experiences, and tendencies regarding beauty and consumer behavior with words instead of numbers or statistics. Additionally, doing in-depth analysis with different people who are from different generations and backgrounds and have different lifestyles and perspectives provided to gain deeper insight into consumers' beauty perceptions. Through other methods, such as surveys, it was not feasible to discover and question

consumers' beauty standards and their reflections on marketing related to their customer engagement and purchase intention in a detailed way.

For all these reasons above, it was decided to conduct in-depth interviews, which is a primary data source that provides first handed information to the researcher to analyze better European perceptions, preferences, and attitudes about today's beauty standards and relatively their consumer behavior under the impact of today's marketing strategies. Semi-structured interviews, which allow one to gain personal and social views, were used for this research (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Thanks to the nature of semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions were asked of the interviewees, and the researcher tried to encourage them to share their experiences and perspective (Dearnley, 2005).Subsequently, content data analysis is used in this study to categorize and analyze all the data obtained from interviews (Forman & Damschroder, 2007). In-depth interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees. These interviews were conducted with eleven participants with different perceptions about beauty and different priorities, characteristics, experiences, and approaches as a consumer. During the interviewee's selection process, one of their distinguishing factors was their age groups to identify different generations' social media consumption and beauty perception. The age differences start from Baby Boomers Generation and continue to Gen Z. Besides, all interviewees have different professions, such as being students, engineers, interns, and managers, which increases the variety of perspectives because of different lifestyles, income levels, or priorities. The researcher's tone was kept neutral, and during the whole interview session, it was avoided commenting prior to interview answers to not influence interviewees. The comfort and safety of interviewees were cared for, which is why it has been reminded several times that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Additionally, withdrawal or skipping unwanted questions were entitled.

3.2.1   Interviews

During the in-depth interviews, open-ended questions are asked of interviewees. All process was conducted in English, recorded through an audio recorder, and later transcribed in a software. The eleven interviewees are both males and females who are all chosen purposely only from European countries to eliminate external factors such as regional beauty perception differences. The age differences change between 16-58 years old. The duration of the interviews lasted approximately 35 minutes. Nine in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face in Vienna, but two were online because of the

researcher's and interviewees' territorial differences. The process of interview is described as follows:

After determining possible interviewees who are considered helpful and suitable for the investigation of the research process, they were contacted and offered an interview with them. According to their answers, a certain day, time, and place were determined mutually. Before starting to interview, interviewees were informed about the process and purpose of this study and asked whether they had consent to do this interview. All of them gave their permission for the interview. Following that, some personal questions were asked. These questions include the interviewee's age, gender, nationality, occupancy, profession, marital status, highest completed education, and current responsibilities. After completing this part, the main questions were asked, divided into three main sections. The first section includes beauty perception questions, the second section is about social media usage, and the last part is about the impact of beauty in social media usage on consumer behavior.

There are forty-six questions, and some of them, which are particularly important for answering the research questions, are as follows:

How do you define the concept of beauty?

Which one is more important for you? Body beauty or facial beauty? Why?

How much time do you spend in front of the mirror?

How do you feel while looking at yourself in the mirror?

What are today's beauty standards for you? Do you try to be suitable with these standards? Why?

How often do you use social media platforms?

For which purpose do you use social media platforms?

What is your favorite social media platform, and why?

What do you think about the danger of social media usage?

What do you think about how social media impacts the mental health or eating disorder of users?

How much do you spend on beauty products?

What are the most essential cosmetic products that you have and why?

Do you follow influencers? Why?

How often do you buy the products that influencers suggested?

Why do you buy them?

How do you feel when you see perfect influencers with many filters?

How do you define your self-confidence level related to beauty and social media?

What do you think about the place of beauty in social media and advertising?

Do you believe that the usage of beauty in social media platforms encourages people to buy products?

What do you think about customer engagement and influencer marketing?

How do you evaluate the impact of beautiful influencers on customer purchase intention?

3.2.2   Sample Characteristics

This study investigates different perspectives of beauty perceptions and evolution of beauty, and in parallel, looks for an answer to the relationship between today's beauty standards and customer purchase intention and engagement, which today's marketing strategies direct. The participants are chosen by some criteria suitably by the researcher to conduct detailed and objective research and to be able to answer the research questions properly. First, the names of the participants are not playing a role in this research. Beauty is a subjective and sensitive topic, and some people are unwilling to share their honest opinions about it when their identities are outed. For this reason, starting with the interviews, it is promised by the researcher that the identities will be kept in anonymity. The letters represent the names of eleven participants, which are from A to K. To compare the perspectives deeper and to see the evolution of beauty in time and regarding this, their beauty products purchase intentions better, interviews with different generation groups were required. That is why the age categorization is as follows: 3 participants who are respectively 16, 17, and 19 years old, 2 participants who are in their early 20s and 2 participants who are in their late 20s, 2 participants who are in their early 30s, 1 participant who is in his mid-40s and 1 participant who is in his late 50s. The participants are five females and six males who have different European nationalities. The majority of them are single. There are two married and one engaged. Knowing the profession and education level of participants is required to analyze interviewees' different lifestyles, priorities, and income levels.

The following table will provide a summary of the participants' general characteristics.

#	Name	Gender	Age	Nationality	Marital Status	Profession	Highest Education
1	A	Female	16	Austrian	Single	Student	Middle School
2	B	Male	17	Austrian	Single	Student	Middle School
3	C	Male	19	Spanish	Single	Tennis Player	High School
4	D	Female	23	Italian	Single	Student/Intern	Bachelor
5	E	Female	24	Italian	Single	Student/Intern	Bachelor
6	F	Male	26	Austrian	Engaged	Student/Manager	Master
7	G	Male	28	Hungarian	Single	Entrepreneur	Master
8	H	Female	31	German	Single	Sales Manager	Master
9	I	Female	33	Portuguese	Single	Student	Bachelor
10	J	Male	43	Italian	Married	Engineer	Master
11	K	Male	58	Austrian	Married	Engineer	Technical Collage

Table 1 The list of people who participated in the interview

Person A is 16 years old, Austrian, and her residency is in Vienna. She is a student in the high school who explains her current responsibilities as completing school, helping her family at home, and taking care of her cats.

Person B is a 17 years old male who is also Austrian and living in Vienna. He is a student as well in the high school. His current responsibilities are his family, his friends, and his school. He adds, "Nothing bigger than that."

Person C is a 19-year-old tennis player. He is from Spain but lives in Vienna. He graduated from high school and continues his career as a tennis player. His current responsibility is joining tennis tournaments and working as a coach.

Person D is a 23 years old Italian who is living in Austria. She is a Master's student, and she is doing her Internship. She defines her responsibilities as supporting her office in the organization of the annual assembly of the organization and writing her Master thesis.

Person E is a 24 years old Italian living in Vienna as a student and intern. Her current responsibility is working in a corporation full-time and completing her Master's thesis.

Person F is a 26 years old Austrian currently residing in Vienna. He is engaged. He is a student and a full-time employee in a sports transmission company. His current responsibilities are completing his studies, writing his thesis, and fulfilling his job duties.

Person G is a 28 years old entrepreneur from Hungary and lives in Vienna. His general view about his current responsibilities is his startup. He has two startups, and he is responsible for the marketing and communication aspects of these startups and also for building these startups, which means doing research and customer persona. Besides, he is learning German and writing his thesis, and he adds to his current responsibilities, "I am also a student, so I need to learn and study every day."

Person H is 31 years old, German, and lives in Vienna. She works as a B2B sales in manager with sustainability research. She is responsible for sales and applications at her job. Besides, she highlights that she is a certified yoga teacher.

Person I is 33 years old. She is from Portugal and lives in Vienna as a master's student. She is trying to finish her master's thesis and, besides that looking for a job.

Person J is a 43-year-old Italian. He is living in England, Royal Leamington Spa, with her wife. He is an engineer in a multinational company. He mentions that he has a master's degree in electronics and telecommunication. According to him, he is responsible for leading a team in his company.

Person K is a 58-year-old Austrian. He is living in Mexico with his wife. He is an Engineer. He defines his responsibilities as caring for his family, sons, and business.

4 DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter of the thesis will analyze the answers of eleven interviewees who played critical roles in investigating the research questions. Briefly, it has been compared the participants' beauty definition and standards, social media usage attitudes, customer purchase intention, and customer engagement related to their perception of beauty through social media. Therefore, the eleven tables will analyze participants' beauty perception and consumer behavior, who are all European and from different age generations.

Person	Definition of Beauty
A	Beauty is a subjective concept that evokes positive feelings.
B	Everybody has different perspectives on beauty, and it cannot be generalized. Beauty is defined as something the most attractive.
C	Everybody has different perspectives on beauty, Internal factors such as inside beauty define it.
D	Beauty is a subjective and personal concept that evokes positive feelings.
E	Beauty is a subjective and personal concept that depends on external factors such as fashion. The concept can be determined and changed by other people.
F	Beauty is a subjective concept that both external and internal factors define it.
G	Beauty is a symmetry that evokes positive feelings.
H	Beauty is a perception. It is a subjective and personal concept that evokes positive feelings.
I	Beauty is an indescribable concept. External factors determine the concept.
J	Beauty evokes positive feelings.
K	Beauty is not an easily reachable concept that depends on people's financial situation.

Table 2 Definiton of Beauty

The definition of beauty differs for all participants, whom all approached the concept from their perspectives. According to the participant's description of the concept, the common sense is that beauty is subjective. Five participants mentioned the word subjective while defining the concept of beauty, and two indicated that it was not a generalized or describable concept. According to their answers, beauty depends on internal, external, or both factors. Furthermore, five participants related the concept of beauty with positive feelings. Unlike similar definitions, Person G described beauty as symmetry, while Person K correlated the concept of beauty with people's financial situation; according to him, beauty is not an easily reachable concept, and being beautiful is expensive, and Person E argued that concept is determined and changed by other people.

Person	Today's Beauty Standards
A	Body beauty: skinny, white girl
B	Body beauty: muscular, skinny, curvy and health is important
C	Facial beauty: clear skin
D	Facial and body beauty: not too much make up- well fitted dress, athletic
E	Facial and body beauty: natural makeup and thick eyebrows- not skinny not chubby, athletic body
F	Body beauty: height, being tall and in shape and health is important
G	Body beauty: muscular, lean, athletic
H	Facial and body beauty: clear skin, big eyes- curvy and tanned
I	Internal beauty is important
J	Body beauty: well fitted dress /fashion
K	Health is important

Table 3 Today's Beauty Standards

When today's beauty standards are asked of all participants, for four participants, body beauty; for one participant, facial beauty; and for three participants, both body and facial beauty are essential. Person I thinks inner beauty is important, and the participant did not indicate the standards. For Person K's beauty standards, health is the indicator. A beautiful body is related customarily to being muscular, skinny, and athletic. Clear skin is a factor that determines facial beauty according to Person C and H, and natural makeup is preferred in today's facial beauty standards for Person D and E. Moreover, Person F highlighted that body beauty is based on the basis of height, especially in the man beauty standards, and Person H claims that big eyes are determinant for today's facial beauty standards.

Person	Social Media Usage	Usage Purposes
A	High Consumption	Following events and people
B	High Consumption	Communication, entertainment, following news
C	High Consumption	Communication, entertainment, research, following sports
D	High Consumption	Following news and events
E	Medium Consumption	Entertainment, communication
F	High Consumption	Entertainment, following people
G	Conscious Consumption	Communication, following people
H	Medium Consumption	Communication, following events, professional
I	High Consumption	Following people, communication, learning, entertainment
J	High Consumption	Communication, entertainment, professional
K	Low Consumption	Information

Table 4 Social Media Usage of Participants' and Their Usage Purposes

Table 4 shows both the social media usage durations of participants and the purpose of usage. According to the answers, the majority of the participants are using social media platforms highly. Only Person K mentioned that he is using these platforms at a minimum level. Person E and H are using the platforms immediately. Person H claimed that he is a conscious social media consumer. When the objective of social media usage is asked of the participants, the answers are for communication, entertainment, following people, events, or news purposes. Person H and J added that they also use social media for professional purposes.

Person	Favorite Social Media Platform	Reasons
A	Pinterest	Inspiring, creative, easy, safe
B	Instagram	Connection with friends, photo-video sharing ,following other people
C	Instagram	Complete platform in terms of features
D	Instagram	Following beautiful contents
E	TikTok	Entertainment, information
F	Twitter	Complete platform in terms of features and fast
G	Instagram	Evokes positive feelings
H	WhatsApp	Communication
I	Instagram	Just favorite
J	WhatsApp	Communication
K	Twitter	Information

Table 5 Favorite Social Media Platforms with Reasons

It is displayed the favorite social media platforms of participants in Table 5. Instagram is the most popular answer, and five out of eleven participant choices was the social media platform Instagram. Person C and F described Instagram as a complete platform that provides every feature a user needs, which is why it is their favorite social media platform. TikTok is only person E's favorite platform; according to her, the platform simultaneously provides entertainment and information. For Person H and J, WhatsApp is favored because of the communication features of the platform, and for Person F and K, Twitter is important due to providing information. Person A indicated that Pinterest is the favorite platform in terms of its inspiring, creative, easy, and safe characteristics.

Person	Essential Beauty Products	Product Types	Spending
A	Hygiene and Facial Beauty Products	Moisturizer, sun cream, shower & hair care products, nail products	Decent amount monthly
B	Hygiene Products	Shampoo, tooth paste, deodorant, conditioner, moisturizer	20-30 euro monthly
C	Hygiene and Facial Beauty Products	Deodorant, shaving kit, perfume	50 euro monthly
D	Facial Beauty Products	Face detergent, face cream	5-10 euro weekly
E	Facial Beauty Products	Makeup	10 euro weekly
F	Hygiene and Facial Beauty Products	Tooth brush, deodorant, perfume, shaving kit	20-30 euro monthly
G	Hygiene and Facial Beauty Products	Body lotion, perfume, shaving kit	At least 300-300 euro monthly

H	Hygiene and Facial Beauty Products	Deodorant, tooth-paste, shower gel, night and day cream, sun cream, concealer	50 euro every three months
I	Facial Beauty Products	Concealer, Blush	Not known
J	Hygiene Prod-ucts	Aftershave lotion	5-10 euro monthly
K	-	-	No usage

Table 6 Essential Beauty Products and Spendings

In Table 6, there are three categories that are essential beauty products for participants, these product types, and their average spending for these products. Person K mentioned that he is not using beauty products. On the other hand, both hygiene and facial beauty products are essential for five participants. For Person B and J, only hygiene products, and for Person B and E, only facial beauty products are essential. The budget of partic-ipants for beauty products changes between 0 to 300 euros. Person A and I did not indicate the amount of spending.

Person	Following Influenc-ers	Following Purposes	Buying Promoted Products
A	A couple	To follow their lifestyles	Rare
B	Some	To get useful infor-mation, follow their life-styles, gain different viewpoints	Never
C	A lot	To follow their lifestyles	Not much
D	A few	To follow their lifestyles	Never
E	A few	To follow authentic and trustworthy ones, but	Rare

		not many because many are superficial	
F	A lot	Entertainment	Sometimes
G	A lot	To get useful information, role model, inspiration	One time experience
H	Not	Time-wasting	Rare
I	A lot	To get inspired	One time experience
J	Not	-	Never
K	Not	-	Never

Table 7 Following Influencers and Customer Purchase Intention About the Products that Influencers Advertise

The majority of the participants indicated that they are either not or just a few of influencers they are following. On the other hand, Person F, G, and I follow lots of influencers. The standard answer to following purposes is 'to follow their lifestyles.' While Person H was finding influencers following a time-wasting thing, Person G said that he gets valuable information and is inspired by them. Person E highlighted that she follows authentic and trustworthy ones, but the number of influencers following is not many because she finds many of them superficial. When the customer purchase intention because of the promoted products by Influencers is asked, most of the participants indicated that they never buy or rarely they do. Only Person F buys the promoted products sometimes.

Person	Self-confidence Level	Characteristics
A	Medium	Neutral
B	Low	Caring standards
C	High	Caring people's opinion
D	Medium	-
E	Medium	Not caring

F	High	Not caring but get inspired
G	Medium-high	Caring Standards
H	High	Not caring standards
I	-	Caring standards and comparison
J	High	Not caring
K	High	Not caring

Table 8 Self-confidence Level Related to Beauty Standards and Social Media

Table 8 shows the self-confidence level of participants. Only Person B has low self-confidence, and Person G thinks he has a middle-high self-confidence level. Five of eleven participants claimed that they have high self-confidence. Furthermore, the participants who claimed that they have high self-confidence also do not care about the beauty standards in social media, except Person C, who cares about people's opinions about beauty. Person B who has low self-confidence, says he cares about the standards. Although Person I did not indicate her level, she mentioned that she cares about beauty standards and also it causes comparison. Person F who has high confidence level, says that beauty standards in social media inspire him.

Person	Does Beauty in Social Media Encourage People to Buy Products?	Why Do Beautiful Influencers Effect Customer Purchase Intention?
A	Yes	Beauty has a positive impact on purchase intention
B	Yes	Beauty has a positive impact on purchase intention, increases attention
C	Yes	Beauty has a positive impact on purchase intention, to seem like that
D	Yes	Beauty has a positive impact on purchase intention

E	Yes	Beauty has a positive impact on purchase intention, increases awareness, product observation opportunity
F	Yes	Beauty has a positive impact on purchase intention, to seen like that
G	Yes	To seem like that
H	Yes	To seem like that
I	Yes	Beauty has a positive impact on purchase intention.
J	Yes	Beauty has a positive impact on purchase intention
K	Yes	To seen like that

Table 9 Relationship between Beauty in Social Media and Customer Purchase Intention

All the participants think that beauty in social media encourages customers to buy products. The reason that beautiful influencers affect customer purchase intention, mainly according to participants, is because beauty has a positive impact on consumers, and people want to look like beautiful influencers that they follow and idolize.

Person	Customer Engagement and Influencer Marketing	Why?
A	High Correlation	Suitability between the influencer and brand impacts customer engagement.
B	High Correlation	Influencer marketing widens consumer segments and increases purchase intention.
C	High Correlation	Characteristics and famousness of the influencer impact customer engagement.

D	High Correlation	Influencer marketing widens consumer segments, and the trustworthy attitude of influencers increases customer engagement.
E	High Correlation	When influencers become role models, it increases customer engagement.
F	High Correlation	The desire to be seen as an influencer increases the engagement.
G	High Correlation	-
H	High Correlation	Trustworthy attitude of influencers increases customer engagement.
I	High Correlation	The desire to be seen as an influencer increases the engagement.
J	High Correlation	The desire to be seen as an influencer increases the engagement.
K	High Correlation	-

Table 10 Customer Engagement and Influencer Marketing Relationship

Table 10 shows that all participants think that influencer marketing affects customer engagement, and there is a high correlation between them. Person B and D claimed that influencer marketing widens consumer segments and increases purchase intentions. Persons C, D, E, and H mentioned that the characteristics of influencers increase customer engagement. Moreover, Persons F, I, and J think consumers want to seem like influencers, which is why this desire increases customer engagement.

Person	Place of Beauty in Social Media	Why?
A	Important role	Consumers think that they will be seen like these beautiful influencers, and this increases customer purchase intention.

B	Important role	Consumers think that they will be seen like these beautiful influencers, and this increases customer purchase intention.
C	Important role	Everybody is using social media, and it is an easy advertisement platform.
D	Important role	Consumers think that they will be seen like these beautiful influencers, and this increases customer purchase intention.
E	Important role	Beauty evokes positive feelings in consumers, and they think that they will be seen like these beautiful influencers, and this increases customer purchase intention.
F	Important role	Everybody aims to present their best version, and marketing on social media is doing the same thing via influencers by providing a beautiful image.
G	Important role	Beautiful influencers catch customer attention which increases customer engagement with the brand.
H	Important role	Beauty concept on social media increases the self-comparison of consumers with beautiful influencers and customer purchase intention.
I	Important role	-
J	Important role	Beautiful influencers catch customer attention, increasing the product's word-of-mouth effect.
K	Important role	Everybody is using social media.

Table 11 Place of Beauty in Social Media

All participants think that beauty is playing an important role in social media. Person C and K say that 'Everybody is using social media,' which is an easy way to advertise. Besides, Person G and J highlighted that beautiful influencers catch customer attention, increasing purchase intention. Person A, B, D, and E believe that consumers will take beautiful influencers as an example and want to seem like them; that is why using beauty in social media through influencers will increase the purchase intention. Furthermore, person E thinks that seeing beauty in social media evokes positive feelings in people, which has an impact on the enhancement of customer purchase intention.

Person	Danger of Social Media
A	Addiction, digital living, comparison , self-esteem problems
B	Addiction, digital living, negative impact on children, self-doubting
C	Fraud, addiction, mental health disorders, pressure
D	Distortion, spread of misinformation, monotype, self-doubting, limited
E	Self-doubting, fraud, online violence, mental health disorders, spread of misinformation, negative content sharing
F	Fraud, addiction, unrealistic view of life, wasting time
G	Addiction, wasting time, mental health disorders
H	Addiction, online violence, bullying, addiction, distortion, isolation, self-esteem problems
I	Monotype, mental disorders, self-esteem problems, creating expectations
J	Negative impact on children, data storage, self-esteem problems, decrease ability of thinking and putting efforts
K	No privacy, not having a healthy life style, digital living, excessive usage

Table 12 The Danger of Social Media

Table 12 displays participants' opinions about the danger of social media usage. The most common answer of participants is addiction, self-esteem problems, and distortion of information. Persons C, E, G, and I claimed that social media usage also causes mental disorder issues. Person J said it decreases the ability to think and put effort into learning/researching something. Person K thinks that because of social media, people's privacy falls. Person F and H found using social media usage as a wasting time. Moreover, person H discussed the online violence that social media platforms cause.

5   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After categorizing the data collected and analyzing the interviewees' responses according to these categories, the results can be obtained; correspondingly, the research questions will find answers. The tables are about interviewees' beauty perceptions and opinions, social media consumption, relationship with beauty products, and consumer behavior. As a result of the combination of the answers of all interviewee's responses in tables, a table that answers the research questions, in brief, will be presented.

First, as stated in the literature review, beauty is an abstract concept that cannot be defined precisely and is also perceived differently from person to person (Sisti et al., 2021). According to the interviewee's answers, beauty is a subjective concept and cannot be generalized. All the participants interpreted the definition of beauty based on their perceptions, feelings, and expectations. When today's beauty standards are wanted to be measured, the answers of the participants were generally about body beauty, facial beauty, or both of them. Only Person K and I explained today's beauty standards with different indicators, unlike ideal bodies or facial beauty. Especially interviewees, who are all European in this study, touched upon the body beauty ideals a lot which was mentioned in the literature review as body beauty is standardized by European cultures and takes an important place in Western culture (Laughter et al., 2023). According to their answers, the standardized body beauty can be explained as being muscular, skinny, and fit based on the European ideal of body beauty; in the literature, it was found that being thin and athletic is the influential factors of body beauty (Fioravanti et al., 2022). Following their opinions and standards, in Table 6, interviewees' essential beauty products preferences and their average purchase of these products are given, which is necessary to understand the official place of beauty and cosmetic products in interviewees' lives. By their answers, cosmetic products are categorized as hygiene or facial beauty products, and hygiene products are the most mentioned category by the participants. The average answer about beauty product spending is around 30 euros monthly, showing that participants allocate a decent amount for beauty products in their daily lives. Following the beauty perception of interviewees, the self-confidence level of interviewees related to beauty standards and social media is measured in Table 8. The interviewees' answers were distributed from low to high levels, but the majority indicated they had high self-confidence. There is no accurate correlation between the responses of caring or not caring about beauty standards or people's opinions about beauty with the confidence level of participants. Some interviewees claimed they have a high self-confidence level

and do not care about the beauty standards; some claimed they have medium or high confidence levels but care about the standards.

After analyzing the common sense of interviewees' beauty perceptions, their social media usage was measured. Only Person K, counted as Baby Boomer from the generation scale, said his consumption level is low. Except for him, all of them admitted that their consumption is medium or high. Additional to communication and entertainment purposes of usage, the most popular answer is 'following people or events,' which appeals to the primary social media and influencer marketing objectives and strategies. Although the consumption of social media platforms is high, the interviewees are aware of the danger of social media, which is displayed in Table 12. The standard answer as a negative side effect of social media usage is addiction, which is supported by the interviewees' responses about social media consumption duration in Table 4. As they claimed that addiction is a possible side effect of social media usage, it has been seen that seven out of eleven interviewees' consumption are high. On the other hand, Person K, who is 58 years old, said that he has low consumption and finds using social media unhealthy because he said the digital living of people increased, which prevents privacy. The other standard answer about the danger of social media is creating self-esteem problems which displayed interviewees' self-confidence level related to beauty and social media platforms in Table 8. Besides, it harms children's psychology according to responses of Persons B and J, which was touched upon in the literature review that girls between 3 to 8 years old already have body dissatisfaction issues because of Barbie, which has perfect bodies (Rice et al., 2016). Correspondingly, because of social media marketing and Influencers who have perfect bodies prevalences, the negative impact on children, who are exposed to social media, enhances. Furthermore, Person C, E, G, and I mentioned mental health disorders because of social media, which was also discussed in the literature review, as beauty standards in social media cause physical and mental health issues such as bulimia (Uhlmann et al., 2018). On the other hand, in Table 5, the interviewees' favorite social media platform and their reason were investigated. Consequently, Instagram took the first place based on the interviewee's preferences. In the literature review chapter, it was stated that the address of Influencer Marketing is Instagram, so in light of the interviewees' answers, Instagram is the most popular and efficient platform. Table 7 is vital to answer the research questions because it summarizes participants' attitudes about the concept of following influencers on social media platforms and regarding purchase intention about the products these influencers promote. Based on the answers of the interviewees, the prevalence of following influencers changes from person to person, but the following purpose is common, which is 'following influencer's

lifestyles and getting inspiration. Person E mentioned that the authenticity and trustworthiness of influencers are essential, which was stated in the literature review that influencers create an emotional bond with customers and strengthen customer relationships because of influencers' authentic characteristics (Chopra et al., 2021). Furthermore, only Person F admitted that he tends to buy promoted products by influencers. However, the rest of the interviewee's attitude was negative toward purchasing products because of influencers. It is seen that people who do not follow influencers are not buying the products for sure, and people who are either a lot or a few have at least a tendency to buy or experience buying. In contrast, although interviewees mentioned that they mostly do not buy the products that influencers advertised, in Table 9, all the interviewees believed that beauty in social media encourages people to buy products. They claimed that beauty has a positive impact on purchase intention and increases customer attention and brand awareness. The interviewees' perspectives mostly are if the influencer on social media is beautiful, customers will seem like these beautiful influencers and will buy the products that these beautiful influencers advertised. . Moreover, in Table 10, it is proven that there is a high correlation between customer engagement and influencer marketing according to the participants' points of view. Influencer marketing increases engagement because of the characteristics of the influencer, such as authenticity or trustworthiness features that engage consumers with the brand. Besides, the willingness of consumers who want to look like beautiful influencers cause to increase engagement. Additionally, according to interviewees, consumers idolize influencers and tend to engage with the brand that the influencer advertised easily. In Table 11, clearly, all the interviewees admitted that beauty has an important role in social media. Their arguments are that beauty in social media increases the self-comparison with the influencers, catches customer attention, increases the word-of-mouth effect, and evokes positive feelings, which all cause the enhancement of customer purchase intention and engagement. Furthermore, some interviewees indicated that today everybody has a relationship with social media, and somehow everybody is exposed to social media, which is a straightforward advertising and marketing channel. Based on their perspective, consumers who use social media platforms and are exposed to beautiful influencers will be impacted, and this will increase their purchase intention and engagement.

The findings from these results can be listed as follows:

- Beauty is a subjective concept, and everyone's definition of beauty is different than each other.
- Beauty standards are not perpetual, and it changes from person to person.
- Social media consumption is generally high; even people are from different generations.
- The common purpose of social media usage is communication, entertainment, and following people's lifestyles.
- Instagram is the most preferred social media platform.
- Everyone is aware of the danger of social media, but it also has a high consumption rate by people.
- Addiction, self-esteem problems, and mental health disorders, distortion of information are the major issues that social media causes.
- Beauty product, especially hygiene product usage, is essential for people, and they allocate decent money for monthly purchases.
- Influencer following concept varies from person to person, but for Generation Z, it is a more familiar concept, while it is not common for older generations.
- Buying an advertised product by influencers is not very popular. However, people who do not follow influencers do not buy the advertised products by influencers, but people who follow either a lot or a few have at least a tendency to buy or experience buying.
- There is no correlation between people's self-confidence level and caring/not caring beauty standards in social media.
- Using beauty in social media encourages people to make purchases.
- Beautiful influencers have an impact on customer purchase intention because customers want to seem like these influencers: beautiful.
- Influencer marketing increases customer engagement.
- Beauty plays an important role in social media marketing because of the positive feelings that beauty evokes and fans the flame of the feeling of comparison by consumers with beautiful influencers. Due to the usage of beauty in social media and influencer marketing, customer purchase intention, customer engagement, brand awareness, and customer attention increase.

This research paper investigates the evolution of beauty, consumers' perception of beauty, and their attitudes and behaviors toward using beauty standards in today's marketing strategies. The following research questions are asked to clarify this investigation.

Question 1: To what extent does beauty perception play a role in customer engagement and purchase intention?
Question 2: To what extent does social media marketing influence the beauty perception of today?

According to the findings provided by the interviewee's answers, the first research questions can be answered as beauty perception plays an important role in customer engagement and purchase intention. A combination of interviewees' perspectives is that beauty evokes positive consumer feelings and encourages them to buy or engage with the product. Also, according to interviewees, using beauty in marketing increases brand awareness and gets the customer's attention. Besides, based on their perspectives, people want to seem beautiful, and those exposed to beautiful influencers' product advertisements tend to buy their products because consumers believe they will look like these beautiful influencers if they purchase the products they advertised. Furthermore, some interviewees admitted that they get inspired by beautiful influencers, which increases their engagement. The second research question can be answered as social media marketing highly influences the beauty perception of today. As indicated by the interviewees, beauty is a changing concept, and today's beauty standards are being thin, muscular, athletic, and having clear skin, which all the influencers or celebrities on social media are suitable these standards. According to their perspective, today's beauty ideals are given to people via social media marketing. Additionally, the arguments that interviewees presented about the danger of social media, it has been revealed that social media marketing determines children's beauty perception and affects them mentally negatively or occurs self-esteem issues in everyone. All in all, social media marketing substantially impacts today's beauty perception, both positively and negatively.

6   GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1   Theorotical and Practical Implications

In light of this research paper's findings, thanks to the contributions of the interviewees, it has been observed that the general perception of the concept of beauty, consumer's social media usage and points of view about social media, their consumer behavior related to their beauty perception in social media have emerged. Briefly, beauty is a subjective concept; the definition and standards of beauty constantly change from person to person. Consumers mainly consider cosmetic products as hygiene products and are willing to spend money on these hygiene products. Furthermore, nowadays, social media platforms are playing a significant role in people's lives. Although everyone is from different European cultures, at different ages, and has different backgrounds and lifestyles, everybody is actively using social media for communication, entertainment, or following people or news. On the other hand, social media has many side effects on people both physical and mentally health. People are aware of today's life conditions, which is the technology era, but also cannot give up on being a user and follower of social media platforms. Moreover, influencers in social media are followed by people with different purposes or intensities, but everyone is aware of the concept of influencer and influencer marketing. However, most people are not willing to buy the products that influencers advertise, but they think influencer marketing positively impacts people's purchase intention and customer engagement. According to the research findings, these are the general inferences about the perception of beauty, social media, and the relationship between social media and influencer marketing of consumers under the effect of beauty standards.

As stated before, this paper investigates the development of beauty and, correspondingly, the consumer's perception of beauty and behavior toward using beauty standards in today's digital marketing strategies. According to the data analysis, many findings are obtained, and it has been proven that beauty perception plays an important role in consumer behavior. It has been releaved that the concept of beauty, used in social media and influencer marketing, affects consumers' purchase intention and customer engagement. Using beautiful influencers in social media, for example, increases brand awareness and engagement, which also increases customer purchase intention which fulfils the desire of marketers and correspondingly, the brands and companies aim. In addition to this fact that was analyzed in the research, it has been seen that social media marketing also influences today's beauty standards. Beauty ideals are given to consumers via

social media with influencers' appearances and advertising. Consumers who are following these influencers or even exposed to them on social media somehow reshape their beauty standards based on their beauty level. The interviewees showed that beauty, digital marketing, and consumer behavior have a relationship that is like a vicious cycle. Beauty in digital marketing, such as social media or influencer marketing, affects consumer behavior. The more beautiful influencer or celebrity in social media, which advertises the product, increases sales and loyalty because of the impact on consumers' desire to look like these beautiful influencers. From the consumers' perspectives, the product that the beautiful influencer is using and suggesting correlates with the product's success in terms of selling. In addition to the beauty level of the influencers, the characteristics such as trustworthiness and authenticity of the influencers play a critical role in consumers' purchase intention and engagement with the brand and product. Moreover, social media marketing determines the beauty standards unwritten way because followers of influencers or celebrities on social media find something beautiful, which is imposed by influencers. If social media trends are becoming curvy, a curvy woman is considered beautiful. If being skinny is a trend in social media, everyone wants to be skinny. For example, Kim Kardashian is an example, according to one interviewee. When she became famous and an influencer, everybody wanted to look like her, having a super thin waist, big breasts, and hips. It was a trend that affected many industries, such as cosmetics, fashion, and surgery. Nevertheless, because of the nature of beauty, it is a constantly changing concept; as many interviewees have mentioned, being skinny and athletic are the new trends and standards. These changing beauty standards affect customer engagement and purchase intention as well. To gain more profits, companies/brands have the tendency to make advertising in the light of these standards, or sometimes they are the ones who determine the standards and affect consumer behaviors to their own advantage. Influencer and relatable influencer marketing on social media platforms are good channels for catching customer attention and affecting them.

To conclude, the concept of beauty has changed because of many factors, such as sociological, psychological, biological, or cultural, since the beginning of history, and it will continue to change. Today, social media and influencer marketing are one of those factors which determine beauty standards, and these standards are also determining the consumer behaviors such as customer purchase intention or engagement. Brands aware of this fact can use it for their benefit and consequently catch customer attention and increase brand awareness and brand loyalty. A brand, for example, the cosmetic brand L'Oréal, has to focus on what is a trend and considered attractive according to social media standards and has to choose the brand's faces who will advertise the brands'

products according to the beauty standards in social media to gain more sales and strengthen the customer engagement with the brand.

6.2 Future Research

There are a few recommendations for future researchers who want to investigate this topic. First, the age scale of the interviewees can be widened, which provides different points of view who are from different generations; in other words, people who are older and are exposed to different beauty standards and their development because of the changes in life and also people who are not born in the digital era. Thus, it can be analyzed both the consumer behavior of interviewees and their perception of beauty, which is related to social media exposure better. Secondly, this study was conducted for eleven people, and the number of participants can be increased to obtain more perceptions and consumer behavior attitudes such as purchase intention or customer engagement. Third, in this study, only European people are chosen as interviewees to decrease the cultural differences, but researchers can implement this research for more specific areas. Because in this study, the regional differences were considered, but doing the interviews only with Europeans caused not focus on differences in cultural perception and consumer behaviors. Lastly, this research can be conducted both qualitative and quantitative. For instance, a survey can also be conducted to understand consumers' preferences, needs, and opinions. Benefiting from both research methods will provide gain deeper insight from the consumers' perspective.

6.3 Limitations

During the research of this thesis, many limitations have arisen. The first limitation the researcher faced was in the data collection process because the selected interviewees had to be from different age groups to compare the social media usage frequency and related to their consumer behaviors. Besides, all interviewees must be European and speak English to eliminate the regional and cultural beauty perception differences. Young and adult generations were willing to be the participants, but the old generation generally wanted to be excluded from this research. That is why the researcher faced many limitations in finding the interviewees, and most participants were in their 20s. This research includes only one person who is 43 years old and one person who is 58 years old, so this study could not investigate the 60-plus age group's beauty perception and social media usage. Secondly, the interviews had to last 40 minutes with each participant to

understand their perception of beauty better and to measure their consumer behavior. However, some participants were answering the questions shorter than expected or not answering the asked questions, or giving irrelevant information, which was making harder the data analyzing process for evaluating their perspectives and behaviors. Moreover, the interviewees' answers were personal, and sometimes they were not suitable for categorization, which could decrease the objectivity of the research. The other limitation was the limited time during the study. Eleven interviewees were chosen to conduct interviews, but the concept of beauty and marketing are very broad topics, which is why obtaining more perspectives from different people who are of different ages and have different backgrounds and lifestyles would open to the researcher new doors. Besides, the interviewing process was highly time-consuming for the researcher. All in all, the researcher faced some limitations during the data collection process, which decreased the potential of the research.

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8 APPENDICES

Personality questions

- How old are you?
- What is your gender?
- Where are you from?
- Where do you live?
- What is your current profession?
- What is your marital status?
- What is the highest education that you completed?
- Please give me a general view of your current responsibilities.

Beauty Questions

1. How do you define the concept of beauty?

2. Why do you think that beauty is important in life?

3. What do you think about the relationship between perception of beauty and culture?

4. Which one is more important for you? Body beauty or facial beauty? Why?

5. How much time do you spend in front of the mirror?

6. How do you feel while looking at yourself in the mirror?

7. What do you think about evaluating or judging people according to their appearance?

8. Have you ever thought about how often you criticize people based on their appearance and the reason for doing this?

9. What do you think about stereotyping in beauty?

10. What are your stereotypes about beauty?

11. What are today's beauty standards for you? Do you try to be suitable with these standards? Why?

12. When you were a child, did your parents tell you fairy tales? If yes, what was your perception of these stories?

13. When you were a child, had you have Barbie? If yes, what did you think, and how did you feel about the appearance of Barbie?

Social Media Questions

14. How often do you use social media platforms?

15. For which purpose do you use social media platforms?

16. If you have to sort the social media usage purpose from most to least important, how would you do it, and according to which criteria do you make your sorting? The categories are: communication- online purchase- to find a job- to share photos/videos - entertainment (such as watching YouTube videos)

17. What do you like in social media most and why?

18. What do you dislike about social media and why?

19. What is your favorite social media platform, and why?

20. How do you find the difficulty level of social media usage?

21. Give me a daily example of your social media usage.

22. How do you present yourself on social media platforms?

23. How many selfies do you take per day?

24. How many of them do you share on social media?

25. If you have Instagram, how many followers do you have?

26. Are the number of followers important to you? Does it mean something to you? Why?

27. What does it mean for you 'like/comment/share on social media platforms?

28. How much do you care about the number of likes you get? Why do you care about it?

29. What is the content of your shares?

30. Do you make Photoshop for your photos before sharing them? If your answer is yes, what kind of Photoshop are they?

31. When do you think that children can start to use social media?

32. What do you think about the danger of social media usage?

33. Give me three examples of the possible side effects of social media.

34. What do you think about how social media impacts the mental health or eating disorder of users?

35. How much do you spend on beauty products?

The impact of beauty in social media usage on consumer Behavior Questions

36. What are the most essential cosmetic products that you have and why?

37. Do you follow influencers? Why?

38. How often do you buy the products that influencers suggested?

39. Why do you buy them?

40. How do you feel when you see perfect influencers with many filters?

41. How do you define your self-confidence level related to beauty and social media?

42. What do you think about the social media marketing?

43. What do you think about the place of beauty in social media and advertising?

44. Do you believe that the usage of beauty in social media platforms encourages people to buy products?

45. What do you think about customer engagement and influencer marketing?

46. How do you evaluate the impact of beautiful influencers on customer purchase intention?