



**CONSUMERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS HEALTH AND
WELLNESS: EXPLORING MOTIVATIONS, BARRIERS,
AND THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS**

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Thesis for the Master's Program in Business Administration

Graduate School

Izmir University of Economics

Izmir

2024

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A Master's Thesis

Submitted to

the Graduate School of Izmir University of Economics

the Department of Business Administration

Izmir

2024

ETHICAL DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have conducted my work in accordance with academic rules and ethical behaviour at every stage from the planning of the thesis to its defence. I confirm that I have cited all ideas, information and findings that are not specific to my study, as required by the code of ethical behaviour, and that all statements not cited are my own.

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ABSTRACT

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May, 2024

Consumers' interest in and willingness to adopt health and wellness behavior has been gaining importance in today's marketing world. In this regard, social media and social media influencers who share content about health and wellness have a considerable effect on consumers' behaviors. To explore consumers' existing motivations and barriers towards health and wellness behavior, alongside how consumers' health and wellness behaviors are shaped by social media and social media influencers, semi-structured in-depth interviews with 16 consumers in Izmir in the fall of 2022 were conducted. Findings reveal that motivations and barriers for consumers' health and wellness behavior group under two themes: social factors and personal factors. The themes related to the positive impact of social media and social media influencers on consumers' health and wellness behaviors encompass informativeness, encouragement, affordability, and practicality. The themes related to the negative

impact of social media and social media influencers on consumers' health and wellness behaviors encompass physical injury and obsession.

Keywords: Health, Wellness, Motivations, Barriers, Consumer Behavior, Social Media Influencers.



ÖZET

TÜKETİCİLERİN SAĞLIK VE ZİNDELİĞE YÖNELİK TUTUMLARI: MOTİVASYONLARIN, ENGELLERİN VE SOSYAL MEDYA ETKİLEYİCİLERİNİN ETKİSİNİN İNCELENMESİ

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Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Zeynep Özdamar Ertekin

Mayıs, 2024

Tüketicilerin sağlık ve zindelik konularına ilgisi ve bu alanlardaki davranışları benimseme isteği günümüz pazarlama dünyasında giderek artan bir öneme sahiptir. Ayrıca, sağlık ve zindelik konusunda içerik paylaşan sosyal medya etkileyicileri ve sosyal medyanın bu alanda tüketicilerin davranışları üzerinde etkisi de son derece önemlidir. Tüketicilerin mevcut sağlık ve zindelik davranışlarına yönelik motivasyonlarını ve engellerini keşfetmek, aynı zamanda tüketicilerin sağlık ve zindelik davranışlarının sosyal medya ve sosyal medya etkileyicileri tarafından nasıl şekillendiğini incelemek amacıyla, 2022 sonbaharında İzmir'de 16 tüketici ile yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşmeler gerçekleştirmiştir. Bulgular, tüketicilerin sağlık ve zindelik davranışlarına yönelik motivasyon ve engellerin iki kapsayıcı tema altında toplandığını ortaya koymaktadır: sosyal faktörler ve kişisel faktörler. Sosyal medyanın ve sosyal medya etkileyicilerinin tüketicilerin sağlık ve zindelik davranışları üzerindeki olumlu etkisine ilişkin temalar bilgilendiricilik, teşvik, satın alınabilirlik ve

pratikliđi kapsarken, sosyal medyanın ve sosyal medya etkileyicilerinin tüketicilerin sađlık ve zindelik davranışları üzerindeki olumsuz etkisine ilişkin temalar fiziksel yaralanma ve takıntıyı kapsamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sađlık, Zindelik, Motivasyonlar, Engeller, Tüketici Davranışı, Sosyal Medya Etkileyicileri.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am honored and delighted to extend my gratitude to my thesis advisor, Associate Professor Zeynep Özdamar Ertekin for generously and constantly shared all her knowledge and experience with me, patiently explaining and guiding research principles throughout my postgraduate course and thesis process.

I would also like to express my heartfelt appreciation to Associate Professor Metehan Feridun Sorkun for his guidance, contributions, and unwavering support at every stage of my master's program and thesis process, providing assistance with his wealth of knowledge and expertise, never hesitating to offer his patience.

I am grateful for the valuable support of my esteemed mentors, Prof. Dr. Gülem Atabay, Prof. Dr. Şükrü Özen, Prof. Dr. Tuğba Tuğrul, Dr. Ayşe Karaçizmeli, and Dr. Ela Burcu Üçel, whose knowledge and experiences I benefited from throughout my postgraduate program, and who have been supporting me on the path toward a successful and well-rounded academic career.

I am deeply grateful to my precious family, who have always stood by me, offering their unwavering support throughout all the challenging times.

It is with great honor and happiness that I extend my heartfelt thanks to each and every one of them.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Healthy eating and exercise have a significant and vital impact on human life. According to Conner et al. (2002), healthy eating entails choosing a low-fat, high-fibre, fruit and vegetable-rich diet. Regular exercise positively affects health and wellbeing and is crucial for preventing cardiovascular disorders, according to Zunft et al. (1999). Maintaining a healthy body weight and preventing obesity-related disorders like cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and Type 2 diabetes require both physical activity and a nutritious diet (World Health Organization, 2015). According to studies on mental health, taking part can help people feel stronger, manage their depression, or become happier (Teychenne et al., 2010), have more energy and experience less stress (Laverie, 1998), and have better physical and psychological health (Bezner et al., 1999; Thogersen-Ntoumani and Fox, 2005; Dugdill and Stratton, 2007; Department of Health, 2011; WHO, 2017a; WHO, 2017b).

In addition, there has been increased consumer interest and focus on health and wellness especially in recent years. According to a 2021 NielsenIQ report, health and wellness are "the single most powerful consumer force" (The Guardian, 2023). Some of the reasons behind this interest is due to changes in lifestyle, whereas others are due to happenings in our macro environment such as the pandemic and environmental and economic crisis. The pandemic, according to McKinsey's (2022), hastened the trend toward consumers eating fresher, healthier food. Additionally, at least 70% of respondents across all markets in McKinsey's online consumer study said they wanted to be healthier. For instance, during the pandemic, more than half of the French consumers polled reduced the amount of "unhealthy" items in their diet (McKinsey's and Company, 2022). With the effect of covid 19, people are focusing on living their lives in a better, balanced and more meaningful way, in order to avoid physical and mental diseases such as obesity, depression, anxiety, and psychological distress. McKinsey's survey on consumer behavior after the Covid-19 pandemic revealed that the crisis has significantly influenced consumer perceptions regarding product safety, environmental concerns, and healthy living. In point of fact, 70% of respondents expressed their intention to enhance their immune systems by increasing physical activity and adopting healthier eating habits (Just Food, 2020). According to Nielsen Health and Wellness Report (2017), a number of factors, including the information boom and a growth in self-care to counteract rising health care expenses, have brought

health and wellness to the fore in recent years. These negative developments have affected people globally in recent years and led to increase in interest to improve the quality of their own life and health and to take care of their physical and mental health. In fact, there are different reasons for the motivation sources of the increasing consumers to adopt a healthy lifestyle. People's motivations for engaging in actions that promote health can differ significantly from one another, according to the Organismic Integration Theory (Van Scheppingen et al., 2014). Consumers are adopting a healthy lifestyle, such as eating healthy, doing exercise, paying attention to skin care and physical appearance, doing yoga and meditation with different motivations. However, there are also barriers that restrict their health and wellness behaviors. Economic crisis, rising inflation, psychological, physical and external factors create barriers towards consumers' health and wellness behaviors. Language barriers, prioritizing work over physical activity to support the family, cultural barriers regarding serving and eating traditional food, varying perceptions of a healthy body weight, and fear of racial harassment or abuse when exercising are all obstacles to leading a healthy lifestyle (Patel, 2017). Although, there has been an increasing trend recently, there are still situations where many consumers cannot maintain a healthy lifestyle due to these barriers.

In addition, with the rapid progress of the internet and digitalization, people's ways of obtaining information about health and wellness and implications on consumption behaviors have changed. Digital technologies, the Internet, and mobile devices are completely altering the infrastructure and culture of medicine (Miah and Rich, 2008). Given the more extensive health and wellness goals of today, the majority of consumers are more interested in avoiding the doctor's office than they are in arranging their next physical, according to Nielsen Health and Wellness Report (2017). There are digital tools that can control and improve their health, even without going to doctor's appointments. That's because they have all the tools they need to monitor, maintain and improve their health on their own. Nowadays, especially the young generation (the Z generation), as well as other age groups are learning about health and wellness information and getting advice on healthy foods, diets, stress reduction issues, meditation and fitness through social media platforms. All demographic groups are adopting these technologies, whether they are used on desktop computers or mobile devices, and they are increasingly using these social media platforms for health-related issues (Korda and Itani, 2013). Social media can successfully promote behavior

change and health improvement, according to studies (Webb et al., 2010). In this sense, social media has become the apparent platform where people seek a healthy lifestyle; started buying products with wellness content and focus on enhancing their mental and physical health and quality of life. According to one survey, 34% of online health information seekers used social media to find health and wellness-related information, while Wikipedia and online discussion forums and message boards were considered to be the most significant personal resources for adults (Elkin, 2008). According to the research conducted by Cavusoglu and Demirbag-Kaplan (2017) on Instagram, digital discourse of health is clustered around four F's, namely, food, fitness, fashion and feelings (Cavusoglu and Demirbag-Kaplan, 2017). The categorized food and fitness cluster includes healthy foods, physical activity contents and products for being physically healthy, while the fashion and feeling cluster includes contents and products that affect mental health, and thus it has been associated with the commodification of health.

In addition, the concept of commodification of health has been utilised by many companies in the health and wellness sector in recent years. With wellness and health becoming a popular trend, the global health and wellness market is flourishing day by day, and it is offering many wellness products and services for being healthy to consumers and regulate their products accordingly. In accordance with their own health and wellness policies, over 98% of responding companies reformulated at least a portion of their product portfolio, according to the Deloitte Health & Wellness Progress Report (2018). Due to the widespread issue of overweight and obesity in several countries such as the US, UK, Germany, and the Czech Republic, as highlighted by Marek (2004), Lean (2005), and Nepho (2005), there is increasing scientific interest in healthy eating, driven by the associated health risks. In line with this process, the sectors are growing to a significant extent. According to Gurău and Ranchhod (2005), the market for organic products is expanding globally at the moment. Due to the proven adverse impacts of chemical substances on health, there is a growing focus on organic products, promoting a lifestyle centered around organic living, as noted by Schifferstein and Oude Ophuis (1998) and Verhoef (2005).

With the increasing interest in healthy lifestyle in social media, and thus expanding the product portfolio of companies in the developing health and wellness sector according to this trend, the delivery and promotion of these products to consumers on social media has also become widespread. Therefore, social media has a significant

role in affecting consumer behaviors in the context of health. Consumers' access to health and wellness information and products can be provided through social media platforms. Hence, many brands cooperate with social media influencers to create their marketing strategies on wellness and health products and services. With this cooperation social media influencers promote many products such as healthy and organic foods, fitness and, sleep products to be physically healthy and mentally healthy. They also, promote many wellness products for appearance, self care and mindfulness. Influencer advertising is quickly becoming popular among health and wellness marketers. In general, influencers disseminate their healthy lifestyle practices and wellness recommendations to individuals through narratives on their social media platforms. In this regard, influencers' narratives exert a significant influence on consumers' beliefs, behavioral and attitudinal intentions. Additionally, in the realm of social media, influencers have the power to inspire and motivate consumers through narrative transportation and parasocial interactions theory.

Although, the health and wellness behaviors are very important and vital for consumers and narrative structure is a key aspect of influencers' content strategy, little is known about the role and impact of influencers' health and wellness narratives on consumers' health and wellness behaviors. In recent literature, Zou (2021) and Kim (2022) have shown that the coverage of narratives of influencers different health topics (women's health OB/GYN diseases and risks related to pregnancy and childcare, prescription drugs etc.). Zou (2021) examine the how health influencers in China communicate with their followers and Kim (2022) examine how patient influencers' illness disclosure narrative impairs persuasion knowledge through transportation experience and parasocial interaction.

Previous studies have addressed consumers' motivations and barriers to health and wellness behaviors. However, this study sheds light on the literature on how social media influencers, who disseminate health and wellness content, facilitate and complicate consumers' motivations and barriers through narrative transportation and parasocial interaction theory.

Therefore, the research aim is firstly investigate consumers' present motivations and hindrances pertaining to their health and wellness behavior. Secondly, the aim of this study examine how social media influencers facilitate and complicate consumers' motivations and barriers through narrative transportation and parasocial interaction

theory. This analysis can be conducted within the frameworks of narrative transportation theory and parasocial interaction relationships.

In light of this, stakeholders in the wellness marketing field and policymakers can derive meaningful insights regarding the aspects that social media influencers ought to prioritize when guiding their endeavors in promoting healthy lifestyles.

In this regard, the following sections provide background information on the main topics, covering the meaning and historical development of the concept and applications of wellness, the progress of social media influencers and influencer marketing, the theory of narrative transportation and the theory of parasocial interaction.

1.1. Background Information on the Main Concepts

1.2. Development of the Wellness Concept and Practice

The concept of wellness is perceived as a dynamic and ongoing journey that aligns with the various developmental stages of individuals and their fulfillment of specific tasks associated with each stage. It is not a fixed or stagnant condition, but rather an ongoing and evolving process that individuals can actively engage in. Wellness, as emphasized by Bruhn and John (1977, p.209), entails striving for the integration of physical, mental, social, and environmental well-being to the fullest extent possible. Wellness has become a movement and an idea in the USA in 1980. Wellness has many different meanings and practices, and this movement dates back to much earlier times. The fundamental origins of the wellness movement as it is known in the United States today date back to between 3,000 and 1,500 BCE in India (SRI International, 2010). The concept of wellness is conceptualized and interpreted by focusing on health, which is formed by the combination of mind, body and spirit.

The first wellness practice was realized with Ayurveda, whose origin is based on the Indian subcontinent. In order to prevent diseases and to balance the body, mind and spirit, this practice is carried out with meditation, yoga and diets. Traditional Chinese Medicine, which emerged at the same time as Ayurveda, is one of the first wellness practices, and aims to be healthy in a holistic sense with Acupuncture and herbal medicines. In addition, ancient Greece and ancient Rome also established various wellness practices and health systems by associating avoidance of diseases with environmental factors. Roman self-care focused on relaxing techniques, and the Romans were well-known for their baths, which they utilized for both relaxation and sanitation (Cartwright, 2013).

In the 1980s, Halbert Dunn was considered as the father of the modern wellness movement in the USA. Dunn (1961) claimed that a person's health was determined by a combination of their environment and their particular health state. There have been many new models and developments based on Dunn's explanations for wellness and the model he offers. The first wellness center in the world, the first on-campus university wellness center, and the National Wellness Institute were all created by John Travis, Don Ardell, and Bill Hettler (SRI International, 2010).

In addition, wellness was split into two perspectives when the black feminist Audre Lorde published an essay in the late eighties. Much of the wellness counseling literature has broadly separated self-care from self-preservation (Gamby et al., 2021). Audre Lorde is of the opinion that wellness is self-preservation, while other theorists argue that wellness is a self-improvement movement. Some criticisms have come with the understanding of self-improvement. Upper classes, high-income people go to yoga and spa and think the wellness movement as practices for self-improvement, and with this, some criticism has arisen. If wellness is primarily for self-improvement, then wellness activities are limited to a society's "elite" (Gamby et al., 2021). For those who are in line with this view, wellness has been seen as an act of self-preservation in every society.

Towards the end of the 20th century, wellness programs, especially spa and fitness, have grown very rapidly but the wellness market has not been fully formed. In the 21st century wellness has become a global movement and industry. It includes many categories such as fitness, nutrition, foods, beverages, sleep, diets, travel, and appearance. Under the name of self-improvement, the wellness sector has many products and services. Today, the concept of wellness has become a necessary concept in the lives of consumers, which includes many services and products purchased and consumed, in order to be better in all respects by giving importance to their own care and improvement.

1.3. Social Media Influencers and Influencer Marketing

The Internet has created great innovations in the field of consumer behavior and marketing, as well as affecting every field with periodic changes until today, depending on technological developments. In the early 90's, while the Internet had a one-way communication and information acquisition for consumers, with the beginning of 2000's, a dynamic and mutual communication and information acquisition was provided for consumers. Web 2.0, in contrast to Web 1.0, which

involved a one-way flow of information to users, allowed users to connect and contribute content (Leung, 2022). Along with this, the first bloggers have emerged by finding the opportunity to express themselves and their thoughts and by sharing content. Bloggers are actually evolving into social media influencers with the development of technology and the internet. The history of social media influencers started with the development and rise of the internet in the mid-1990s. In the early 2000s, this process started when ordinary people attracted the attention of people with their extraordinary blogs and gained followers, and they were referred to as non-famous 'mommy bloggers'. Heather Armstrong started blogging in 2001 as the best-known mommy blogger. She started to impress many people with the content they wrote, and by increasing her followers, she started to provide additional income to her family from her blogs.

Later, from these blog contents, people interested in fashion started to influence many people by sharing fashion-related content in their blogs in the mid-2000s. Famous brands have collaborated with these bloggers as brand ambassadors in the promotion of their products. Cartier hired Craig to host an event to launch their new bag line, representing the first time Cartier had hired a social media influencer (SMI) as a brand ambassador (Lieber, 2014, p.2). In 2005, with the emergence and expansion of social media platforms and the increase in the use of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, bloggers had the opportunity to interact more with their followers. With the change of content, bloggers have replaced their long posts with shorter content and visual content. Users favored visual content posted on social media platforms over lengthy essays found on blogs (Bailey, 2018). When Twitter became a social media platform in 2005, bloggers and celebrities turned to this platform and gained many followers, they are the people with the most followers as Twitter users since 2009. With the emergence of Youtube as a new platform in 2005, people were in close interaction and contact with the audience through video. Vlogging started and became a platform where many people followed and subscribed in the role of influencer. Then, the vloggers who shot traveling, dancing, make-up content, cosmetics content gained many followers and became influential people. Many individuals on YouTube create vlogs, and a significant number of them have gained a substantial following, with some vloggers amassing over 100 million subscribers. These vloggers post videos showcasing products they use or discussing their daily lives, leading to increased

viewership from both their subscribers and anonymous viewers. As a result, these vloggers are often labeled as YouTube celebrities (Lee et al., 2016, p.5753).

With the rapid rise of bloggers / vloggers their' followers, brands made advertising agreements with them for their own products, thus a new movement started replacing traditional marketing and advertising. Herein, after the web 3.0 era of the Internet, marketing and advertising gained a great dimension. With the increase in the use of social media platforms and applications, many bloggers and vloggers have become influential people with high followers, and the concept of influencers has literally emerged. When regular people become popular on social media and have thousands of followers, that is what Marwick refers to as micro-famousness (Tokgöz, 2017). Influencers have become increasingly valuable to advertisers due to their ability to communicate directly with their target audience, seamlessly integrating brand and product recommendations into engaging and pertinent content (Veirman et al., 2019). Thus the new concept of influencer marketing has emerged. Influencer marketing refers to the strategic practice of remunerating individuals for endorsing a particular product or service through various social media platforms (Campbell et al.,2020). "Influencer marketing" refers to advertisers reaching agreements with influencers in exchange for payment, free items, or invitations to special events (De Veirman et al., 2017). Influencers started to promote the products of brands on social media platforms. Social media influencers create content endorsing specific companies on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook, aiming to cultivate a loyal following and enhance brand visibility (Enke et al., 2019). With the paid advertising feature of Instagram for product and service promotion, influencers have started to earn money from this platform by sharing their favorite products in cooperation with brands. Instagram influencer marketing is carried out by anyone with a sizable Instagram following and the ability to influence their followers' purchasing decisions (Barker, 2016).

With the development of digital social media environments, the Tiktok platform has been introduced, influencers today create more interaction with this platform and have a more comfortable connection with their followers. To promote brand-related videos, businesses are encouraged to start hashtag challenges with other influencers (Yulun and Yue, 2021). Companies of many brands are in contact with influencers, and on these platforms, sponsored content and influencers cooperate as a new marketing strategy. Companies of many brands are in contact with influencers, and on these

platforms, sponsored content and influencers cooperate as a new marketing strategy. Marketers are showing a growing interest in integrating social media influencers (SMIs) into their electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) marketing strategies. This is because the qualities and skills of SMIs make them highly effective brand advocates and spokespersons for companies (Zou, 2021, p.1). Along with influencer marketing, the consumer behavior is also changing in this sense. Consumers have begun to trust more in the product experience views of influencers, rather than traditional marketing promotions, and they have begun to be more interested in the products promoted by influencers. Consumers are becoming increasingly skeptical of firms' direct marketing and are less likely to trust traditional advertising (Gerdeman, 2019). Another important reason why companies and brands start implementing influencer marketing strategy for product awareness and promotion is it being much cheaper than celebrity endorsement strategy and traditional marketing tools in reaching large audiences much more easily. Shortened economic cycles have caused many firms to become more cost conscious with regard to their marketing expenditures. Firms typically find online influencer marketing (OIM) more affordable, especially when they deal with microinfluencers, rather than paying high rates to hire well-known celebrity endorsers (Leung, 2022). Today, almost every brand promotes products through influencers and implements this marketing strategy. In 2020, influencer marketing emerged as a \$10 billion industry, gaining significant importance for numerous businesses, especially those engaged in business-to-consumer operations (Haenlein, 2020). By 2022, it is anticipated that influencer marketing would receive \$15 billion in global investments (Business Insider Intelligence, 2019). It provides a marketing strategy for products and services in each different category, from influencers with low followers to influencers with very high followers.

Moreover, the digital framework of social media platforms enables influencer marketing, social media influencers afford consumers the opportunity to express their thoughts and emotions through the medium of stories and posts (encompassing textual and visual information). These narratives, which encapsulate the perspectives and sentiments of social media influencers, assume a crucial role in influencer marketing, as they form the foundation for content strategies. These narratives exert a significant influence on consumers' beliefs, behavioral and attitudinal intentions, as well as their inferences concerning a particular product or service. Narratives are closely linked to the objectives that social media influencers aim to achieve in their quest to influence

consumers, while concurrently fostering a connection between consumers and the social media influencers' personas portrayed in these narratives. Narrative advertising, also known as story advertising, is described as advertising that is made up of narratives with a discernible storyline that includes the main character(s), goal(s), action(s), and outcome(s) (Chang 2013; Escalas 2007).

Within the domain of social media platforms, the narratives disseminated by social media influencers through stories and posts, in conjunction with the parasocial interaction relationship forged with their personas within these narratives, possess the capacity to inspire and motivate consumers, thereby impacting their purchase intentions, comprehension of persuasion, beliefs, and attitudes pertaining to a given product or service. Consequently, the subsequent section elucidates the significance and historical underpinnings of the concepts of narrative transportation and parasocial relationships.

1.4. Narrative Transportation and Parasocial Interaction

Narrative transportation is the extent to which an individual experiences a state of complete immersion in a narrative, as described by Escalas (2004a). It arises when consumers perceive a strong personal connection to the story, leading them to become deeply engaged and involved in the narrative (Green and Brock, 2000; Escalas, 2004a). Narrative transportation theory can be applied to the story and posts shared by social media influencers, where consumers tend to immerse themselves in the stories and posts of social media influencers. For analyzing brand storytelling by social media influencers (SMIs), the narrative transportation theory (Green & Brock, 2000) provides a valuable theoretical perspective. It has been used to explain the persuading effects of (advertising) stories on consumers (Gerrig, 1999; Green, 2008; Wang and Calder, 2006) and has found several applications in advertising research (for a review, see van Laer et al., 2014). The persuasive power of narrative can alter an individual's views and attitudes (Green and Brock, 2000). It has effects of persuasion, belief, behavior, and attitude on audiences who immersed in the story.

Moreover, as individuals are immersed in the narrative world, they develop profound emotional connections with the characters and establish a sense of attachment towards media personalities. Consequently, these characters significantly influence the viewers' experience of transportation into the story (Green & Brock, 2000). The emotional bond that forms between individuals and media characters is commonly known as parasocial interaction (PSI). Parasocial interaction (PSI) refers to the degree

to which a media user considers a media persona as an intimate social companion when describing the relationship between a media persona and a media user (Horton and Wohl, 1956).

Consequently, individuals who adopt a salubrious way of life may experience a deep engagement with the narratives presented by social media influencers who disseminate health and wellness-related content. The parasocial relationship formed through this immersive narrative may exert a substantial impact on their health and wellness behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs. In the literature review section, an in-depth examination of the effects of narrative transportation theory and parasocial relationships on consumers' health and wellness behaviors was conducted.

The following section provides a comprehensive review of the existing literature regarding the motivations and factors that initiate consumers' health and wellness behavior, as well as the barriers and factors that prohibit consumers' health and wellness behaviors during this process. Additionally, the review encompasses the literature concerning the reasons for consumers seeking health and wellness information from digital platforms and social media, along with the approaches social media influencers' communication regarding health and wellness behaviors to consumers. Lastly, drawing on the theoretical frameworks of narrative transport and parasocial theory, the following section also provides an overview of the studies exploring the relationship between social media influencers and consumers regarding health and wellness issues.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Motivations and Factors that Initiate Consumers' Health and Wellness Behavior

Good nourishment is essential for people of all ages to be healthy (Blotnicky et al., 2015). Engaging in regular physical activity and exercise can greatly enhance both physical health and psychological well-being, as supported by Teixeira and colleagues in 2012. People's healthy living goals have played a significant role in their lives for many years. Motivation is a crucial aspect in sustaining exercise, which is linked to positive health outcomes (Teixeira et al., 2012). People have different motivations to eat healthy, do exercise, do yoga and meditate, and these motivations are substantial in ensuring that people adapt to a healthy lifestyle and hence increase their quality of life. These motivations may differ according to demographic characteristics such as gender and age. As the age scale increases, health problems increase, or in order to live longer and a higher quality life, older age group can find a source of motivation to improve mental and physical health, while the motivation of the younger age group can be physical attractiveness and social confirmity. Many older persons are driven to exercise in order to maintain their health and fitness levels, according to studies that have looked at the variables that inspire older adults to exercise (Kirkby et al, 1999; Kolt et al., 2004).

In previous literature studies, motivations were examined as intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Intrinsic motivation is defined as doing an activity because of its inherent satisfactions. When a person is intrinsically driven, they feel excitement, pride in themselves, and delight from using their skills (Teixeira et al., 2012). Extrinsic incentives, on the other hand, result in external rewards or punishment, such as other people's acceptance or disapproval, whereas intrinsic motives lead to rewards that are internal to the individual, such as improving health (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Ryan and Deci, 2000). Exercise that is done for enjoyment is connected with intrinsic motivation in terms of exercise and physical activity. Exercise that is done for external incentives, such as getting a slimmer body or being acknowledged as an exerciser by one's friends, is known as extrinsic motivation (Ryan et al., 2009). There are three main reasons for eating well, which are related to self-image (for example, wanting to look attractive), health (such as improving overall well-being and preventing diseases), and social influences (such as feeling pressured by others to eat healthily). These motives can be

sorted into either intrinsic or extrinsic categories (Satia et al., 2001). In the internal motivations of exercise and healthy nutrition, individuals feel better and become more self-satisfied individuals. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation, there are external motives, and rewards such as appearing attractive to the external environment and being perceived as a healthy eating person or a sportive person, obtaining an approval from the external environment. Self-determination theory suggests that when it comes to exercise, intrinsic motivations are associated with positive outcomes such as enhanced physical self-esteem and reduced social physique anxiety. Conversely, extrinsic motivations tend to correlate with higher levels of negative affect in non-clinical groups, as observed by Staples et al. (2022). In previous literature studies, physical appearance, mental and physical health, and social factors effect are the main motivation sources of individuals with motivation such as healthy eating and exercising.

In the Table 1. below, previous literature studies that investigated the main motivations of individuals for healthy eating and exercise and associated them with intrinsic or extrinsic motivations are reviewed.

Table 1. Studies Investigating the Motivations and Factors that Initiate Consumers' Health and Wellness Behavior

Title	Author	Publication year	Source	Topic Of Research	Research Design	Results
Identifying appropriate motivations to encourage people to adopt healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviours	Nadine Henley And Robert J. Donovan	2002	Journal of Research for Consumers	Exploring people's motivations for adopting healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviours.	Qualitative research	The most salient positive motivations were self approval, raising self esteem, and sensory gratification.

Table 1 (Continued). Studies Investigating the Motivations and Factors that Initiate Consumers' Health and Wellness Behavior

Title	Author	Publication year	Source	Topic Of Research	Research Design	Results
Young adult males' motivators and perceived barriers towards eating healthily and being active: A qualitative study	Ashton, et al.	2015	International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity	Identifying young men's perceived motivators and barriers in adopting healthy eating and physical activity behaviours .	Qualitative design using a focus group methodology.	Motivators for healthy eating grouped into four themes. Key motivators for physical activity were: physical appearance, social inclusion, physical and mental health and improvements for sport or performance .
College students' motivation for physical activity: Differentiating men's and women's motives for sport participation and exercise	Kilpatrick, et al.	2005	Journal of American college health	Aim was to expand the analysis of sports involvement and exercise drive using an intricate scale of physical activity motivation among college students.	Data collected from survey.	The findings show that participants favored intrinsic motives like enjoyment and challenge for sports, whereas exercise motivations were more extrinsic, focusing on appearance, weight, and stress management .

Table 1 (Continued). Studies Investigating the Motivations and Factors that Initiate Consumers' Health and Wellness Behavior

Title	Author	Publication year	Source	Topic Of Research	Research Design	Results
Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations as moderators of the association between exercise frequency and exercise behavior	Staples, et al.	2022	Eating and Weight Disorders- Studies on Anorexia, Bulimia and Obesity	The study investigated how exercise frequency and motivations relate to healthy and maladaptive exercise among university students, a population at risk for disordered eating and maladaptive exercise.	This study involved a secondary analysis of cross-sectional data from 699 participants at a large Southeastern university through an online Qualtrics survey.	Individuals with higher intrinsic motivation reported more healthy exercise compared to those with lower intrinsic motivation.
Determinants of healthy eating: A cross-national study on motives and barriers	Michaelidou, et al.	2012	International Journal of Consumer Studies	The study explores how motives and barriers affect healthy eating intentions and behaviors across different countries, also considering body shape.	Data were collected from the UK and the Czech Republic via a self-completion questionnaire.	Intrinsic motives are the strongest predictor of intention to eat healthy for both Czech and UK respondents.

Henley and Donovan (2002), examine people's motivations for adopting healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviours. A qualitative research design was conducted to determine the main motivators for eating healthy foods and taking up physical activity, and to ascertain what people said had influenced them in the past.

Results showed that self approval, or feeling better about oneself and rising self esteem, and sensory pleasure, or feeling better overall and improving mood, were the two most prominent positive motivations. According to the findings of this study, the primary source of motivation is internal motivation, and it is critical for people to be satisfied within themselves. Ashton et al.'s (2015) research, investigates young men's perceived motivators and barriers in adopting healthy eating and physical activity behaviours. In the study, a qualitative design was applied using focus group methodology to explore young men's perceived motivators and barriers to healthy behaviours. As a result of this study, motivators for healthy eating were classified into four categories: physical health, sport or performance, physical and social influences, and physical and social influences, while key motivators for physical activity were: physical appearance, social inclusion, physical and mental health, and improvements for sport or performance. As consequently, people were driven for good diet and physical activity both externally and internally.

Kilpatrick, et al. (2010) aimed to extend the comparison of sport participation and exercise motivation through the use of a highly differentiated scale of physical activity motivation within a college sample. A quantitative research design was conducted, involving a survey. In conclusion, individuals were more likely to identify intrinsic motivations for participating in sport, such as enjoyment and challenge, whereas extrinsic motivations for exercising were more focused on appearance, weight, and stress management. Staples, et al. (2022) examined the relationships between exercise frequency and exercise motivations as they related to healthy and maladaptive exercise among university students, an at-risk population for the development of disordered eating and maladaptive exercise. The study used Self-Determination Theory. A qualitative survey was conducted. Individuals with higher intrinsic motivation reported more healthful exercise than those with lower intrinsic drive. Furthermore, the data suggested that diminishing extrinsic motivation and enhancing intrinsic motivation may be essential goals for preventing obsessive exercise behavior. In their research, Michaelidou, et al. (2012) investigate the impact of motives and barriers on healthy eating intention and behaviour. Study applied a cross-national research design. In conclusion, intrinsic motives are the strongest predictor of intention to eat healthy for both Czech and UK respondents. Intention to eat healthy is thus determined by intrinsic motives including 'feeling better' and 'staying healthy', which have been highlighted

as the most important motives to eat healthy for UK and Czech respondents respectively.

According to these previous literatures, with regards to eating healthy and regular exercise, intrinsic motivations (feeling better, staying healthy, enjoyment, challenge, self approval, raising self esteem and improving mood etc.) are a more considerable motivation resource than extrinsic motivations in maintaining a healthy lifestyle (physical appearance and weight etc.).

2.2. Barriers and Factors that Prohibit Consumers' Health and Wellness Behavior

There are incentives and motivating factors in the behaviors, thoughts, and feelings of people to lead a healthy life. However, although most people have awareness of healthy living, desires for healthy eating, physical activities, purchasing and consuming organic products, it is still seen that this situation cannot develop. Despite the industry's expansion, physical inactivity remains a major concern in society today, with participation levels remaining largely stagnant (Sallis et al., 2016). Long-term success of lifestyle change and physical activity increase techniques has been insufficient (Zunft et al., 1999). There are reasons and factors why people do not perform health and wellness behaviours or do not maintain health and wellness behaviours. People who perceive higher hurdles to healthy eating are more likely to report eating less healthfully. Perceived barriers to healthy eating represent a significant individual-level influence (Pinho et al., 2018). Previous literature studies have addressed the barriers to healthy living that consumers face and the factors that limit consumers. Factors hindering consumers were examined in separate categories in previous studies. Consumers' barriers of healthy lifestyle elements such as healthy eating, physical activity, skin care products, organic and healthy foods are different. Primarily, in healthy eating, there are many obstacles faced by consumers that lead to not eating healthy. Similar to the intrinsic and extrinsic categorisation of motivations, there is a distinction between external and internal barriers. Previous studies have classified the barriers that prohibit consumers as physical or external and internal. Physical (external) and psychological (internal) barriers are separated into two groups (Kaerney and McElhone, 1999). Physical hurdles include things like time constraints, lack of availability, and expensive pricing, whereas psychological barriers include things like eating habits and willpower (Lappalaine et al., 1998; Conner and Norman, 2005). According to studies, time restrictions, taste preferences, and financial concerns are the most prominent obstacles to healthy eating (Pinho et al., 2018). However, in

prior research, barriers vary according to countries and demographic variables; while in some studies physical barriers are less important and psychological barriers are more important, other studies have shown that physical barriers are the most challenging factor for consumers.

Additionally, McKinsey's (2022) analysis claims that customers are dissatisfied because food manufacturers and retailers aren't keeping up with their demand for conscious eating. Consumers' desire for healthy eating has increased, but it is still seen that healthy food options are few and not developed enough in markets, restaurants and places that serve food. In addition, another hindering factor is the uncertainty of how consumers should start eating healthy foods and not knowing how and what to consumer in order to have a healthy diet. It could be due to a lack of understanding or information, as well as a general lack of enthusiasm in changing one's diet (Kearney and McElhone, 1999). Almost half of customers report to have trouble comprehending what they need to do when making health and sustainability decisions (McKinsey & Company, 2022).

Additionally, one of the most important obstacles is the difficulty of accessing healthy food in terms of cost, and also the increasing economic crisis and inflation in recent years has prevented consumers from eating healthy. Inflation is raging right now. The US inflation rate in June 2022 was 9.1%, which was the highest level since 1981 (McKinsey & Company, 2022). Notably, extant scholarly investigations have underscored the prominence of financial obstacles concerning the adoption of healthy dietary practices (Lappalainen et al., 1998; Garcia and Mann, 2003; McEachern et al., 2005; Jun et al., 2016). Among the psychological barriers, there are situations such as consumers having difficulty in changing their eating habits, trust problems, and others' disapproval of healthy eating recommendations. The individual's self-efficacy and intents to undertake a health behavior change are increased and maintained when this challenge is highlighted and participants are given a variety of tools to overcome potential barriers and break old habits (Parkinson, et al., 2017). Intrinsic barriers have a great impact on consumers' healthy eating, exercise or any wellness behaviour. Individuals have internal barriers such as lack of motivation or lack of self-efficacy. Moreover, in previous literature, it was stated that the factor that prevents consumers from doing physical activity differs in terms of genders and social class. If wellness is primarily for self-improvement, then wellness activities are limited to a society's "elite" (Gamby et al., 2021). Respondents from deprived areas also noted that there was

a divide between the social classes, “Them” being those individuals who categorized as posh, wealthy, fit and skinny are the type of people who go the gym, “Us” are the normal people, the average person, the overweight and older individual (Williams-Burnett, 2014, p. 334). In these studies, it has been stated that it affects the process of adapting and providing a healthy life according to socio-economic level and differences between social classes and is a limiting factor. In addition, there are factors that prevent exercise that differ between the sexes. Men had fewer difficulties and believed that employment and age were the biggest impediments, whereas females had more barriers such as family commitments, the expense, and someone to exercise with (Williams-Burnett, 2014; Sport Wales, 2017).

Consequently, there are many barriers that consumers face in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. As individuals' health and wellness motivations are categorised as intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, there is also a distinction in barriers.

In the table below, previous studies have examined the reasons why individuals do not maintain health and wellness behaviours.

Table 2. Studies Investigating the Barriers and Factors that Prohibit Consumers’ Health and Wellness Behavior

Title	Author	Publication year	Source	Topic Of Research	Research Design	Results
Perceived barriers in trying to eat healthier – results of a pan-EU consumer attitudinal survey	Kearney and McElhone	1999	British Journal of Nutrition	Determine the main perceived barriers in trying to eat a healthy diet.	Approximately 1000 adults from 15 EU member states completed a face-to-face interview-assisted questionnaire in a quota-controlled, cross-sectional study.	Determine the main perceived barriers in trying to eat a healthy diet.

Table 2 (Continued). Studies Investigating the Barriers and Factors that Prohibit Consumers' Health and Wellness Behavior

Title	Author	Publication year	Source	Topic Of Research	Research Design	Results
Exploring the relationship between perceived barriers to healthy eating and dietary behaviours in European adults	Pinho, et al.	2018	European Journal of Nutrition	Examining how perceived barriers to healthy eating relate to various dietary behaviors in adults across urban areas in five European countries.	A survey was conducted in five urban regions across Europe.	Several associations were discovered between barriers to healthy eating and food consumption, with self-reported lack of willpower being the most common.
Getting healthy: The perceived influence of social media on young adult health behaviors	Vaterlaus, et al.	2015	Computers in Human Behavior	The goal was to vividly describe young adults' experiences with social media and health behaviors, aiming to spark more research interest in the field.	In-depth semi-structured interviews were included within the study.	Young adults perceived that technology could be both a barrier and a motivator for exercise.
Determinants of healthy eating: A cross-national study on motives and barriers	Michaelidou, et al.	2012	International Journal of Consumer Studies	Investigates how motives and barriers affect healthy eating intentions and behaviors.	Data were gathered from convenience samples, using a self-completion questionnaire.	External factors are actually insignificant in adopting a healthy diet.

Table 2 (Continued). Studies Investigating the Barriers and Factors that Prohibit Consumers' Health and Wellness Behavior

Title	Author	Publication year	Source	Topic Of Research	Research Design	Results
Perceived benefits and barriers to physical activity in a nationally representative sample in the European Union	Zunft, et al.	1999	Public Health Nutrition	Examine barriers to physical activity from all EU member states, and having a measure of prevailing levels of activity, inactivity and self-reported body weight and body shape.	Cross-sectional survey using an interview-assisted face-to-face questionnaire.	Respondents often cite 'not sporty' or 'too old' as excuses to avoid increasing their activity levels.

In their study, Zunft et al. (1999) examine the attitudes of consumers, in particular their perceived benefits and barriers to physical activity from all EU member states. The research consisted of a cross-sectional survey with an interview-assisted face-to-face questionnaire. The most significant barrier identified in the participants was a lack of time away from work and working conditions, and excuses that may be identified as psychological barriers were suggested. Work or study responsibilities (28%) and the interviewees' belief that they are not 'the sporty type' (25%), are the most significant impediments to increasing physical activity. Many respondents cite 'not a sporty type' or 'too elderly' as a barrier to increasing their levels of activity and use this statement as an excuse not to raise their levels of activity. In Kearney and McElhone (1999) study, aim was to determine the main perceived barriers that people have in trying to eat a healthy diet in the 15 member states of the European Union. In this study, a cross-sectional survey was conducted in which 1000 persons (15 years and older) from each member state were selected using quota control, and they were asked to complete a face-to-face interview-assisted questionnaire. According to the findings of this study, the most often reported perceived barriers to healthy eating were time and taste. Time-

related issues were more relevant for younger responders and those with a greater degree of education, who appear to perceive healthy eating as compromising flavor. In their study, Michaelidou et al. (1999) investigate the impact of motives and barriers to healthy eating on individuals' healthy eating intention and behaviour. A self-completion questionnaire was used in this study, and data were collected from convenience samples in two big metropolitan centers in the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom. It's interesting to note that research has shown that although viewed as impeding intention to eat healthfully, external factors like time and expense seem insignificant when it comes to adopting a healthy diet. On the other hand, psychological obstacles like willpower and eating patterns have a detrimental impact on the intention to eat healthily. In Vaterlaus, et al. (2015) study, aim was to give voice and provide a rich description of young adults' lived experience with the phenomenon, and to generate further research interest on social media and health behaviors. In-depth semi-structured interviews used in this study. According to the findings of this study, young adults' desire to exercise increased as a result of following physical activity content on social media, but social media content also took up their time and discouraged them from engaging in physical activity in this sense. Technology was seen by young adults as having the potential to both hinder and motivate physical activity. In Pinho et al. (2018) study aimed to address this gap by focusing on the association between perceived barriers to healthy eating and different types of dietary behaviours among adults within urban regions in five different European countries. A survey was conducted in five urban areas across Europe for this study. In conclusion, multiple relationships were discovered between perceived barriers to healthy eating and food consumption, the most common of which was self-reported lack of will power. 'Lack of willpower,' 'time restrictions,' and 'taste preferences' were also consistently associated with consumption, according to participants.

In broad terms, the prevailing external barriers identified in the existing literature pertain to time constraints, work-related conditions, and taste preferences, whereas internal barriers primarily revolve around reluctance and justifications.

In the following section, gives a comprehensive examination of literature on the motivations behind consumers seeking health and wellness information from digital platforms. Additionally, the definitions of health and wellness within the purview of digital platforms, and the range of health and wellness behaviors adopted by consumers in this context. Through an examination of these pertinent literature studies,

obtained valuable insights and a comprehensive foundation regarding the manner in how consumers are influenced by social media and social media influencers in the domain of health and wellness, which aligns with the present research objectives.

2.3. Digital Health and Wellness

The search for being healthy and the process of acquiring health information have been provided by digital means with the evolution of the internet over the years, and a digital health concept has emerged in this sense. Digital health is defined as “the use of information and communications technologies to improve human health, healthcare services, and wellness for individuals and across populations” (Kostkova, 2015 p.i). With the advancement of the internet, people acquire health information from various digital platforms, on topics such as being healthy, information about any disease, and health services. Especially with the emergence of social media platforms in the mid-2000s and within the framework of a reciprocal communication, people were able to provide an opportunity to exchange information about health. With the rise of social media platforms and the expansion of online communities, individuals gained the ability to exchange their experiences, insights, and emotions regarding health, both in a general sense and related to specific illnesses. This enabled them to explore alternative approaches and provide guidance to others facing similar circumstances (Walstrom, 2000; Pitts, 2004).

Being healthy generally incorporated topics such as getting a health service, having disabilities and/or chronic diseases or various acute diseases in the old literature. However, under the new health and wellness concept, the scope has changed in recent years. Meaning of being healthy has gained a new perspective in digital platforms. The Global Wellness Institute, a non-profit organization, defines wellness as “the active pursuit of activities, choices, and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health” (2018, p. iii). People do not only perceive health as avoiding these chronic or acute diseases, but also holistically, consider it as keeping their body fit, feeling better and happy mentally, conducting physical activities, consuming healthy foods and drinks, and adopting a healthy lifestyle. Thus, health has gained a new broader meaning. In this sense, people on online platforms have started to seek consumption with the desire to ensure their own health and to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

The majority of consumers worldwide are making an effort to take control of their health (Nielsen, 2015). In online platforms, consumers want to improve their own health with fitness, consuming natural and organic foods, and living in accordance

with a healthy lifestyle. According to the World Advertising Research Center (2020), rising consumer interest in health and wellness is fueling the development of new product categories that provide healthier options such as gluten-free or paleo diets, as well as chemical-free beauty and household items. The health and wellness trend is advancing rapidly in this sense and has gained a great momentum. With the increase in the health and wellness trend, consumers on digital platforms shape their healthy lifestyles, behaviors and attitudes accordingly in order to be healthy in a holistic sense and to lead a quality life.

Cavusoglu and Demirbag-Kaplan (2017) highlight how consumers increasingly rely on the internet to shape their understanding of well-being, leading to the commodification of the term 'health and wellness.' Companies capitalize on this trend by marketing products that appeal to consumers' innate desire for good health and a reduced doctor visits (Cavusoglu and Demirbag-Kaplan, 2017). Consumers, instead of visiting hospitals or doctors to get various health care and services, they want to experience a healthier life by getting information about health and wellness from online sources.

Consequently, the topic attracts attention in academia as well. Below are some examples of studies that examine digital health and wellness (see Table 3). The tabulated literature review encompasses investigations conducted in preceding years, as well as during the COVID-19 era, exploring the rationales behind consumers seeking health and wellness information from social media platforms. Additionally, the review incorporates studies elucidating the prevailing health and wellness behaviors. By synthesizing these diverse studies, a more comprehensive understanding of consumers' perceptions regarding health and wellness behaviors on social media can be attained.

Table 3. Studies Investigating Digital Health and Wellness

Title	Author	Publication year	Source	Topic Of Research	Research Design	Results
Harnessing social media for health promotion and behavior change	Holly Korda and Zena Itani	2013	Health Promotion Practice	Examine what types of social media are currently employed for health promotion and education, which features of social media affect health knowledge, behaviors, and outcomes.	Review of academic, peer-reviewed studies, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses.	Social media has been advanced as a relatively inexpensive way to deliver health promotion messaging. Social media has proven potential for health promotion and behavior change.
Fitter with twitter: Understanding personal health and fitness activity in social media	Rannie Teodoro and Mor Naaman	2013	Seventh International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media	Examine how and why users leverage outward facing social media to promote ongoing health behaviors.	A qualitative analysis of Twitter posts, as well as an extensive set of interviews.	Twitter activities support users in sustaining their health-related habits over time and are utilized by observers for their own weight maintenance.
Social media use informing behaviours related to physical activity, diet and quality of life during COVID-19: A mixed methods study	Goodyear et al.	2021	BMC Public Health	The study fills gaps in the literature by quantitatively measuring self-reported changes in social media use and health behaviors.	Quantitative data from an online survey informed qualitative data collection through focus groups.	Study participants noted that social media helped them self-manage physical activity, diet, and quality of life.

Table 3 (Continued). Studies Investigating Digital Health and Wellness

Title	Author	Publication year	Source	Topic Of Research	Research Design	Results
Health commodified, health communified: Navigating digital consumptionscapes of well-being	Lena Cavusoglu and Melike Demirbag-Kaplan	2017	European Journal of Marketing	The meanings of health as constructed by healthy lay people particularly using social media.	A qualitative inquiry on textual and visual data generated by ordinary individuals on Instagram.	Digital discourse of health is clustered around four F's: food, fitness, fashion and feelings.

Korda and Itani (2013) study aims to examine what types of social media are currently employed for health promotion and education, which features of social media affect health knowledge, behaviors, and outcomes. They use behavioral change theory and techniques. Theories of behavioral change have been crucial in creating effective online health promotion initiatives. They did a broad environmental scan and evaluations of the evidence, which included a search and review of academic, peer-reviewed studies, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses, to find out how these new communication techniques can be employed most successfully for behavior modification and health promotion. Therefore, their findings demonstrate that social media has advanced as a relatively affordable method of disseminating health promotion messaging. Social media has a track record of influencing behavior change and health promotion. Social media-based health promotion initiatives may inspire users to create and distribute content. Social media tools such as Twitter, Twitter-specific applications, Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Youtube.com, health-related channels are used for health promotion. In addition, Teodoro and Naaman (2013) research, examine how and why users leverage outward facing social media to promote ongoing health behaviors. A qualitative research was carried out on Twitter as a social media platform. They performed a qualitative analysis of Twitter posts, as well as an extensive set of interviews with experienced users who post messages on Twitter about exercise, diet, and weight loss activities. They use Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change (TTM) and techniques. They consequently discovered that using Twitter for online activities helps individuals maintain real health-related activities over time and is in fact used by spectators to support their own weight maintenance

activity. It is becoming increasingly important to investigate the possibilities of social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Google+ as a tool for the promotion of healthy lifestyles and behavioral maintenance given the expanding participation in these platforms. Goodyear et al. (2021) study aims to study aims to explore how social media use informed physical activity and diet-related behaviours, and self-perceived Quality of Life (QoL) during COVID-19, and assessed the contextual factors that drive social media use for health-related behaviour change in diverse groups. They used both a quantitative analysis of online surveys that assessed social media use in relation to physical activity levels, diet quality and QoL, and qualitative analysis of focus groups to comprehend the contextual elements that influence social media use for health-related behavioral change. The evidence indicates that participants were critical social media users who were able to use social media to promote their health and well-being. Social media aided in the self-management of physical activity, nutrition, and QoL behaviors by providing access to information to inform workouts and dietary quality, as well as possibilities for connection with peers, family members, and within social groupings. According to Cavusoglu and Demirbag-Kaplan's (2017) research, healthy lay people who wish to demonstrate their physical improvement, receive praise and acknowledgment for their bodies, and solicit assistance from followers in order to become more inspired and motivated. They use a qualitative inquiry on textual and visual data generated by ordinary individuals on Instagram, to investigate how healthy lay people construct alternative meanings of health. They contributed theoretically to consumers' perspectives on health by addressing the lay theory of health. In conclusion, their research shows that digital health discourse centres around four F's: food, fitness, fashion, and feelings.

Consequently, within the spectrum of factors motivating consumers to seek health and wellness information and guidance via social media platforms, it becomes apparent that these platforms serve as a facilitator for obtaining health and wellness-related knowledge. Moreover, social media channels offer a cost-effective avenue for the widespread distribution of health and wellness information and recommended practices. Additionally, these platforms empower consumers to sustain their health and wellness behaviors through engagement in online activities.

Given the growing tendency among consumers to obtain health and wellness information and adopt respective practices from social media platforms, there has been a parallel rise in academic studies investigating the communication styles employed

by social media influencers to propagate healthy lifestyles and behaviors to their audience. The ensuing section of this paper entails an in-depth analysis of the literature pertaining to how social media influencers engage with consumers on various social media platforms within the context of health and wellness. Furthermore, this section aims to ascertain the prevalent thematic areas that these influencers typically emphasize in their messages directed towards consumers.

2.4. The Approaches of Social Media Influencers' in Communicating Health and Wellness Behaviors to Consumers

With the digitalizing age, people, especially the younger generation, spend most of their time on online platforms, and they tend to access health-related information, behaviors and content they want to learn from online platforms. According to international research, children and adolescents are more likely to obtain and engage with health information online via popular social networking websites (Pilgrim and Bohnet-Joschko, 2019). Additionally, studies (Korda and Itani, 2013; Teodoro and Naaman, 2013; Goodyear et al., 2021) illustrate that individuals actively engage with social media platforms when seeking information regarding health and wellness. This is primarily due to the convenience and accessibility of health-related content on these platforms, which assists consumers in adopting and maintaining healthy practices such as proper nutrition, regular exercise, and engagement in other health-related activities. With the developing common interest of consumers with online relations, each consumer's search for a quality life and the increase in consumption demand in line with being healthy, the content of influencers who share a healthy lifestyle on social media platforms related to health and wellness has become quite widespread. Social media influencers share ideal and fit body, daily work out, skin care products, and nutrition routines with consumers to provide a healthy appearance. With the health and wellness-related information and experiences shared by influencers, consumers also have strong trust and interest. According to Albalawi and Sixsmith (2017), health influencers have an irreplaceable role in health communication and education. Especially in recent years, ideal body, face, appearance and ideal beauty understanding has become very important for everyone on social media platforms, and people follow these contents quite a lot. In terms of ideal healthy and fit appearance, which is included in the concept of health and wellness, many brands cooperate with influencers and influencers promote many products. Acting as brand ambassadors, advertisers, and collaboration partners, influencers endorse the opportunity to attain the desired

physical appearance, mental well-being, and contentment by engaging in selective consumption of dietary supplements and athletic wear. (Pilgrim and Bohnet-Joschko, 2019). By sharing content such as sportswear, organic and natural food products, daily mindfulness practices, herbal treatments, fitness, yoga and meditation, they encourage consumers to have a healthy body and mind. The establishment of a link between outward beauty and state of well-being, and hence mental health, is a direct result of influencers' health communication (Pilgrim & Bohnet-Joschko, 2019). In this process, they encourage being healthy by using these products in the minds of consumers by stating that they provide a healthy lifestyle with these products and by promoting the products. According to Pilgrim and Bohnet-Joschko (2019), the messages suggest that achieving an ideal body image is only possible by following the provided advice, which heavily emphasizes the consumption of the recommended products. In this sense, consumers' interest in the promotions of being healthy shared by social media influencers is increasing and their purchasing behavior is also affected.

In light of the considerable emphasis placed by consumers on matters encompassing health and wellness, the subsequent Table 4. undertakes an examination of prior scholarly inquiries. The primary objective of this literature review is to facilitate a extensive comprehension of how influencers effectively promote health and wellness themes on a broad scale, and furthermore, how they specifically address themes related to healthy eating and exercise. Additionally, the literature review aims to identify and analyze the distinct communication characteristics employed by influencers when disseminating information pertaining to these topics.

Table 4. Studies Investigating the Approaches of Social Media Influencers' in Communicating Health and Wellness Behaviors to Consumers

Title	Author	Publication year	Source	Topic Of Research	Research Design	Results
Selling health and happiness how influencers communicate on instagram about dieting and exercise	Pilgrim et al.	2019	BMC Public Health	Improved insight into health-related communication by influencers on social networks.	Utilized a non-experimental cross-sectional design and a mixed methods approach.	Influencers build trust and rapport with followers through body-focused visuals and targeted communication.

Table 4 (Continued). Studies Investigating the Approaches of Social Media Influencers' in Communicating Health and Wellness Behaviors to Consumers

Title	Author	Publication year	Source	Topic Of Research	Research Design	Results
Representations of health and wellness on instagram: An analysis of 285,000 Posts	Hunter Priniski et al.	2020	University of California, Los Angeles	Exploring how health and wellness are portrayed by a prevalent type of Instagram influencer, Health Influencers.	Qualitative analysis of themes linked to hashtags commonly used by health influencers.	Health Influencers often focus on themes: Cosmetics/Appearance, Self-promotion, Fitness, and General Wellness.
Understanding wellness for young adults through instagram influencers' content	Gina Gerstenecker	2021	PhD Thesis. University of Missouri — Columbia	Explore how wellness influencers present their lifestyles and how young adults define wellness through influencers' content.	Analyzed 15 wellness-lifestyle Instagram influencers to study their self-presentation through textual and photographic content.	Influencers portrayed happiness and urged their followers to seek it.
Communication of nutrition information by influencers on social media: A scoping review	Rogers et al.	2022	Health Promotion Journal of Australia	Review aimed to explore how social media influencers communicate nutrition information and the factors affecting message popularity.	Nine databases were searched in the past 5 years (2016-2021).	Eleven studies revealed five themes: promoting dietary change, specific content delivery styles, an appealing individual, language features, and establishing audience connection.

Table 4 (Continued). Studies Investigating the Approaches of Social Media Influencers' in Communicating Health and Wellness Behaviors to Consumers

Title	Author	Publication year	Source	Topic Of Research	Research Design	Results
Nutrition-related information on instagram: A content analysis of posts by popular Australian accounts	Denniss et al.	2023	Nutrients	This study aimed to analyze nutrition-related posts on popular Australian Instagram accounts.	Qualitative analysis of text data from Australian Instagram posts.	Identified themes: recipes, food practices, body goals, food literacy, and cooking at home.

Gerstenecker (2018) examines how wellness influencers self-present themselves and their lifestyles to their audience. Also the study sets out to understand how 18-24-year-old young adults define wellness by studying wellness influencers' content streams. Influencers were examined according to Goffman theory of self presentation. Study conducted a content analysis on 15 wellness-lifestyle Instagram influencers, to determine how wellness influencers self-present themselves, research analyzed both textual and photographic content of instagram influencers. As a result, the study discovered that influencers not only showed themselves as happy, but also encouraged their followers to find happiness in their own daily lives, whether it was by standing up for themselves or making oneself dessert. To feel good from the inside out, young adults should prioritize holistic health by understanding the needs of their mind, body, and spirit. They desire to feel healthy and wellbeing because those things make them happy.

Pilgrim and Bohnet-Joschko (2019) study aims examine to contribute to a better understanding of the health-related communication characteristics of influencers in social networks. In this study they used a non-experimental cross-sectional research design. They applied a mixed methods approach, and used quantitative content analysis as well as summarising qualitative content analysis. Theory of behavioral change was used as a theoretical framework. As a result, by creating body-shape focused visual content and targeted communication strategies, influencers earn the trust and goodwill of their followers. They recognize and describe diet and exercise as aspects that must be regulated in order to achieve bodily perfection. Influencers promote a simplified approach of enhancing one's looks as the key to happiness by

eating dietary supplements and wearing tight-fitting branded sportswear. Moreover, Priniski et al. (2020) study aims examine the content of one of the most common types of Instagram Influencers, Health Influencers, and how health and wellness are represented. In this study they conducted a qualitative assessment of the thematic content associated with hashtags Health Influencers most commonly use. According to research findings, messages delivered by Health Influencers frequently connect to four themes: Cosmetics and Appearance, Self-promotion, Fitness, and General Wellness used by Health Influencers.

Rogers et al. (2022) study sought to investigate the methods utilized by social media influencers (SMIs) in conveying nutritional information, as well as the factors contributing to the attractiveness and engagement levels of these messages. The research employed a scoping review approach. Five themes were found that enabled social media influencers to deliver popular messages. These were, (i) promoting dietary change, (ii) certain modes/styles of content delivery, (iii) an attractive individual, (iv) language features and (v) appearing connected to the audience (Rogers et al., 2022, p.652). As a result, in order to ensure that their nutrition messages are well-received by social media users, SMI is cautious about the content and communication methods they use. In Denniss et al. (2023) research aims examine the content of nutrition-related posts from popular Australian Instagram accounts. The study utilized qualitative content analysis to examine textual content from Instagram posts in Australia. The analysis adhered to the guidelines established by Elo et al. to enhance the credibility of qualitative content analysis investigations. Based on research findings, there is a notable interest in recipes and practical guidance regarding nutrition and food preparation among Instagram users. Additionally, content centered around weight loss and the pursuit of desired physical appearances enjoys considerable popularity. Furthermore, it is common to observe the inclusion of promotional practices for supplements, food products, and online programs within nutrition-related posts on Instagram.

Consequently, in the context of thematic content, influencers provide a holistic portrayal of health. In their endeavors to motivate consumers, they expound upon the notion that cultivating a desirable physique and ideal physical appearance contribute to psychological well-being and contentment. Furthermore, to encourage consumers, social media influencers assert that engagement in wellness practices is conducive to a sense of happiness. In addition, among the communication strategies of influencers

while encouraging consumers, encourages them by instilling the perception of their attractiveness, speaking style, and ideal body perceptions formed in recent years. Consumers' adoption of a healthy lifestyle, as well as their perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs towards it, can be greatly influenced by social media influencers. Understanding the underlying causes and consequences of this phenomenon is crucial. In the context of narrative transportation and parasocial interaction, the communication and effects of influencers on specific health issues have been examined in the literature. In the following section, these studies are carefully reviewed and analyzed to gain a deeper understanding and provide insights into one of the research questions: 'How the parasocial interaction and narrative transportation between consumers and social media influencers have an impact on consumers intention to have a healthy lifestyle?'

2.5. Impact of Narrative Transportation and Parasocial Interaction Relationships on Consumers' Health and Wellness Behaviors

Narrative transportation has been a focus in health communication research, revealing that the use of narrative evidence, such as testimonials, can be more impactful than didactic evidence. Unlike didactic evidence, which may come across as a warning that threatens individuals' freedom and autonomy, narrative evidence engages audiences by immersing them in a story, mentally simulating real-world scenarios. This immersive experience can reduce resistance to the message. Additionally, transportation has been found that viewing cancer tales on TV increased the audience's acceptance of depicted cancer beliefs and promoted changes in their health-related attitudes, knowledge, and actions (Murphy et al., 2011). In line with the studies related to this theory in the literature, changes can occur in healthy lifestyle behaviors and attitudes such as healthy eating, exercise, yoga, meditation, from the stories and posts of influencers in consumers who are interested in healthy living.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the sense of inclusion and profound engagement experienced by consumers in narratives concerning health and wellness behaviors of personal relevance possesses the potential to establish an emotional affinity with the narrator. This phenomenon might lead individuals to experience a sense of proximity and develop an amicable connection through parasocial interaction, subsequently exerting an influence on their health and wellness behaviors. The effects of parasocial interaction on consumers within digital platforms, particularly in relation to purchasing behavior, brand loyalty, and brand image, have been extensively studied in the

academic literature (Biçim, 2019; Liu et al., 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Lin et al., 2021). Although there is not much in-depth study in the field of health and wellness, studies related to certain health and wellness behaviors in previous literature studies are examined in Table 5.

Table 5 provides a distinct analysis of prior research endeavors that have delved into the impacts of both narrative transportation theory and parasocial interaction concerning consumers' behaviors associated with health and well-being.

Table 5. Studies Investigating the Impact of Narrative Transportation and Parasocial Interaction Relationships on Consumers' Health and Wellness Behaviors

Title	Author	Publication year	Source	Topic Of Research	Research Design	Results
What do social media influencers say about health? A theory driven content analysis of top ten health influencers' posts on Sina Weibo	Zou, et al.	2021	Journal of Health Communication	Explores how health influencers in China communicate with their followers.	Analyzed top ten health influencers' Sina Weibo posts using the Extended Parallel Processing Model (EPPM) and transportation theory.	Influencers predominantly focused on women's health (OB/GYN diseases, pregnancy risks, childcare) and beauty/skincare (highlighting risks and benefits).
Patient influencers' promotion of prescription drugs on Instagram: Effects of illness disclosure on persuasion knowledge through NTT	Kim	2022	International Journal of Advertising	Studied how patient influencers' disclosure of illness in sponsored prescription drug ads.	The study used attention-checking questions in the form of instructional manipulation checks (IMCs).	The results show how NTT drives eWOM and influences real-life behavioral intentions, especially in public health.

Table 5 (Continued). Studies Investigating the Impact of Narrative Transportation and Parasocial Interaction Relationships on Consumers' Health and Wellness Behaviors

Title	Author	Publication year	Source	Topic Of Research	Research Design	Results
Does parasocial interaction with weight loss vloggers affect compliance? The role of vlogger characteristics, consumer readiness, and health consciousness	Sakib et al.	2020	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	Examines how nutritionist video bloggers (vloggers) impact consumer compliance intentions for healthy, weight-loss diets using parasocial interaction (PSI) and social comparison theory.	In SMART PLS 3.0, the proposed structural and measurement models underwent testing and validation using the PLS-SEM approach.	The results indicate higher viewer engagement and PSI with the weight loss vlogger when perceived credibility and visual attractiveness are higher.
Home-based workouts in the era of COVID-19 pandemic: The influence of fitness youTubers' attributes on intentions to exercise	Kim et al.	2023	Internet Research	This study aims to examine how fitness YouTuber traits affect viewers' psychological engagement and behaviors.	The study model underwent empirical development and testing via online survey using structural equation modeling (SEM).	This study discovered that parasocial connections (PSRs) with social media figures drive ongoing exercise intentions.

Zou et al. (2021) examines the relationship between top health influencers' communication strategies and followers' endorsement behaviors. Study used Narrative Transportation Theory. Content analysis of the top ten health influencers' posts was conducted. According to the findings, health influencers on Sina Weibo place a strong emphasis on female subscribers and issues of interest to women. Kim (2022) examines how patient influencers' illness disclosure in their sponsored posts of prescription drug ads predicts individuals' persuasion knowledge and behavioral intentions. Study investigated the research in the context of Narrative Transportation and Parasocial Interaction and applied a one-factor between-subjects design experiment. Results

showed that influencers' illness disclosure narratives had an impact on real-life and online behavioral intention as well as persuasive knowledge.

Sakib et al. (2020) examines factors that boost customer compliance intentions toward health-related behavioral changes (for example, weight loss through a healthy diet). The results show that parasocial interaction (PSI) can be developed by YouTube weight loss vloggers to affect their audience's compliance intentions to practice healthy behaviors. Kim et al. (2023) examines the function of social media personas in relation to exercise intention. The goal of this study was to look into the structural relationships between the following fitness YouTuber attributes: wishful identification (WI), physical outcome expectations (POEs), perceived similarity (PS), parasocial relationships (PSRs), perceived physical attractiveness (PPA), perceived social attractiveness (PSA), perceived similarity (PS), and continuous intention to work out with fitness YouTubers (CIWFY). Viewers of fitness-related YouTube channels were used as the unit of analysis. The results show that parasocial relationships (PSRs) influenced by perceived social attractiveness (PSA), perceived physical attractiveness (PPA), perceived similarity (PS). According to the study's findings, viewers formed parasocial relationships (PSRs) with fitness YouTubers in a similar way to as they did with other mass media personalities. The present investigation illustrated that the persistence of individuals' intention to engage in exercise alongside social media personalities is influenced by parasocial relationships (PSRs). The findings suggest that individuals aspiring to encourage continued physical activity and fitness content creators on platforms such as YouTube should take into account the self-perceptions of their audience. They should endeavor to establish parasocial connections to effectively engage viewers and maintain their interest in their content.

In summary, the synthesis of prior scholarly research indicates that both narrative transport theory and parasocial interaction possess the capacity to influence consumers' health and wellness behaviors, as well as fostering the formation of behavioral intentions.

2.6. The Gap in the Literature

Previous research examined how health and wellness themes clustered in social media platforms and show that the social media enables individuals to obtain health-related information. It helps and promotes health activities (Korda and Itani, 2013; Cavusoglu and Demirbag-Kaplan, 2017; Teodoro and Naaman, 2013). Furthermore, previous studies examined social media influencers' communication strategies and thematic

contents on health and wellness topics (Denniss et al., 2023; Gerstenecker, 2021; Pilgrim et al., 2020; Priniski et al., 2019; Rogers et al., 2022).

Furthermore, in the narrative transportation theory, previous literature shows that health influencers have an effect on individuals' behavioral intentions, and persuasion information. Health influencers encourage behavioral intentions in public health, moreover individuals attach importance to health influencers in the field of women's health and diseases, beauty and skin care (Kim, 2022; Zou, et al, 2021). Besides, parasocial interaction has the potential to affect customers' health and wellness behaviors (Kim et al., 2023; Sakib et al., 2022).

Prior research has focused on examining the factors that drive and hinder individuals' engagement in health and wellness activities, yet this investigation contributes to the scholarly discourse by exploring the role of social media influencers in both facilitating and complicating consumers' motivations and barriers. This is achieved through an examination of narrative transportation and the application of parasocial interaction theory.

2.7. Research Aim

Consumers' interest in and willingness to adopt a health and wellness behavior has an increasing importance in today's marketing world. In addition, social media influencers who share content about health and wellness are a very considerable figure for consumers' behaviors in this domain. However, just as there are motivations in the adoption and maintenance of consumers' health and wellness behavior, there are barriers factors that prohibit consumers' health and wellness behaviors in this process. Therefore, this study aims to identify consumers' existing motivations and barriers towards their health and wellness behavior, alongside investigating how consumers' health and wellness behaviors are shaped by social media and social media influencers. By employing narrative transportation theory and parasocial interaction contexts, this research offers both practical and theoretical implications for marketers, social media influencers and consumers and provides suggestions for guiding consumers' health and wellness behaviors.

2.8. Research Questions

The research questions are:

- 1) What are the motivations that drive consumers' health and wellness behaviors?
- 2) What are the barriers and conflicts that prohibit consumers' health and wellness behaviors?

3) How social media and social media influencers shape consumer's intentions toward healthy lifestyle?

4) How the parasocial interaction and narrative transportation between consumers and social media influencers have an impact on consumers' health and wellness behavior?



CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The research employed a qualitative research design owing to its capacity to facilitate an in-depth understanding of consumer behavior within the domain of health and wellness. This approach was suitable for gaining deeper insights aligned with the research objectives and inquiries. The methodology encompassed various stages including data collection, purposeful sampling that targeted individuals adhering to healthy lifestyles, and a qualitative research analysis characterized by the utilization of a coding table method. This method entailed the systematic examination of textual and auditory data derived from in-depth consumer interviews, which were conducted during the data analysis phase.

3.1. Qualitative Research Design

The research applied a qualitative design as a way to better understand and explore the motivations and barriers of consumers' health and wellness behaviors. Qualitative researchers depend on a variety of qualitative methodologies to investigate people's behaviors, attitudes, and experiences in the context of their lives (Thorogood and Green, 2013). Qualitative approaches are useful in the exploration of change or conflict (Malagon-Maldonado, 2014, p.121). Thus, the research adopted a qualitative approach to gain deeper understanding on practices, thoughts and feelings of consumers who are interested in healthy lifestyles, how they are influenced by social media and social media influencers and whether parasocial interaction between consumers and social media influencers has an impact on their behavior and attitudes in their narrative transportation experience.

To examine the relationship of consumers with social media influencers in context of health and wellness, the motivations that drive them to adopt health and wellness practices, and barriers, conflicts, and factors that prohibit consumers' health and wellness practices and adoption, the data was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews. Qualitative measurement methods like detailed observations or interviews enable researchers to uncover the values and viewpoints of subjects in ways that are often unattainable through purely quantitative approaches (Goodwin et al., 1984, p. 380). With semi-structured in-depth interviews, open-ended questions allowed consumers to better express motivations and barriers to healthy lifestyles. Also, in the quantitative research method approach, it will be restricted to express how

consumers' narrative transportation experience, their behaviors and attitudes are shaped through social media and influencers.

In previous literature studies, motivation and barriers of consumers were examined and it was seen that both quantitative and qualitative research approaches were applied (e.g, Henley et al., 2005; Enjezab et al., 2012; Michaelidou, et al., 2012; Ashton et al., 2015; Vaterlaus, et al., 2015; Pinho, et al., 2018). Therefore, unlike quantitative research, and in parallel with qualitative literature studies, qualitative research design was used to extract the uncovered motivation and barrier insights from consumers.

3.2. Data Collection and Sampling

Purposive sampling was employed with the aim of enhancing the study's methodological rigor, as well as augmenting the dependability of both the gathered data and ensuing outcomes. Consumers who are interested in a healthy lifestyle, share health and wellness practices on their social media accounts, and follow at least one social media influencer were interviewed. Participants were selected from consumers living in Izmir, the third biggest city in Turkey. The reason why Izmir is preferred is convenience, as the researcher is in Izmir she can reach the participants more easily. Participants in the study were aged between 21-40 year-old. A total of 16 adults, 4 male and 12 female, participated in the study. The two most important criteria in determining the participants are related and positive attitudes, behaviors and awareness of health and wellness; and following and sharing on social media platforms regarding these issues. Interviews were conducted with participants with different demographic characteristics (gender, age, and job) taking into account these two criteria. Table 1 includes the demographic characteristics of the participants and the duration of the in-depth interviews.

Table 6. Details of the Participants and Interviews

Participants	Gender	Age	Occupation	Duration	Place
H.G.	Female	25	Master's degree student	42 minutes	Face to face meeting
E.Ö.	Female	25	Slipper manufacturer	28 minutes	Face to face meeting

Table 6 (Continued). Details of the Participants and Interviews

Participants	Gender	Age	Occupation	Duration	Place
Y.G.	Female	32	Personal trainer	39 minutes	Face to face meeting
A.A.	Female	39	Academician	35 minutes	Face to face meeting
R.A.	Female	28	Nutritionist	66 minutes	Online
F.G.	Female	23	University student	45 minutes	Online
B.T.D.	Female	30	Nutritionist	34 minutes	Face to face meeting
F.T.	Female	40	Faculty secretary	34 minutes	Face to face meeting
M.Ö.	Female	24	University student	45 minutes	Online
E.Y.	Female	24	Nail artist	37 minutes	Face to face meeting
B.T.	Female	23	Master's degree student	30 minutes	Face to face meeting
B.N.	Male	25	University student	30 minutes	Face to face meeting
O.K.	Male	31	Master's degree student	31 minutes	Face to face meeting
A.Y.	Male	22	University student	32 minutes	Face to face meeting
M.Y.	Male	21	University student	31 minutes	Face to face meeting
L.Ç.	Female	35	Academician	64 minutes	Online

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in fall 2022, in Izmir, Turkey. Four of the interviews were online and the remaining twelve were face to face. Before the interview, the purpose of the study, the reason for doing the research, the time required for the interview and the information about the format were explained to the participants verbally and in writing by the researcher. It was stated that during the interviews a video or audio recording will be made for the statements to be recorded, the statements of the participants will be used for research purposes, the participants will be kept anonymous, pseudonyms will be used to protect their identities, and all recordings will be kept offline, and the consent of the participants was obtained.

The semi-structured in-depth interview consists of 17 questions. The interview questions are listed in Table 7. The semi-structured in-depth interview consisted of four parts. In the first part of the interview, the participants were asked to explain their demographic information. In the second part, information on how their interest in healthy lifestyle started, their motivation and the factors that accelerated and triggered their motivation for a healthy lifestyle were asked. Third part included participants' relationships with social media platforms: the applications they use, the social media platforms, the names of the social media influencers they follow and the health and wellness content they share were asked. They were asked to explain how they benefit from social media and social media influencers, and how their behaviors, attitudes, and persuasion were affected. Their emotional commitment to and knowledge of social media influencers was explored. Fourth part consists of the conflicts, barriers, and factors that prohibit healthy lifestyle intentions and behaviors and how the role of social media and social media influencers in this process.

Table 7. Interview Guideline

1	What do you do to have a healthy lifestyle? (Healthy eating, exercise, sleep, skin care, meditation, yoga, etc.)
2	When and how did your interest in healthy living begin?
3	What are the factors that trigger your adoption of a healthy lifestyle? What are the factors that accelerate this process and motivate you in this sense?
4	How are you influenced by your environment in terms of healthy living? (Family, friends, work environment, etc.)
5	Do you use any apps or social media platforms for a healthy lifestyle? Can you name them.
6	What do you share about your health and wellness behaviors on social media?
7	Are there any influencers you follow on social media related to your interest in healthy living? Can you name them?
8	How are you influenced from social media and social media influencers? (Both positive and negative impacts) Can you think of an example that has had an impact on you? (If any, what are the effects of social media and influencers on your healthy diet? If yes, what are the effects of social media and influencers on your exercise routine?)
9	Have there been changes in your health and wellness behaviors or attitudes with the content, stories shared by social media influencers? Can you give examples?
10	Do you buy a products or services promoted by social media or influencers to improve your health? If yes, how did these products or services affect you?

Table 7 (Continued). Interview Guideline

11	Do you identify with the social media influencers you follow? (Are you more influenced by health and wellness content shared by famous people or people who you identify with?)
12	How are you affected by the comments and criticisms you get to the health and wellness practices and content you share on social media?
13	Are there any obstacles in achieving a healthy life? Do you have problems with continuity and sustainability? (E.g. lack of time, financial cost, self-sufficiency, inability to access the product, etc.)
14	Have the current inflation and economic crisis affected your behavior towards a healthy lifestyle?
15	Do you describe these obstacles that affect your healthy life as permanent obstacles? Or do you qualify them as temporary?
16	Do social media and influencers help you with these obstacles and offer solutions? (Or are the social media and influencers an obstacle for you? E.g. wasting your time, etc.)
17	What were you doing about healthy lifestyle before social media? What has changed in a positive/negative way with social media and influencers?

3.3. Data Analysis

In qualitative research, understanding participants' statements, validating their insights, observed results, and process accuracy is crucial, which is achieved through inferences and analysis. McCracken (1988) and Spiggle (1994) shed light on the realization steps of this whole process. There are some steps in order for the data extraction and analysis to be carried out appropriately by the researcher, and these successive processes enable the researcher to reach a conclusion.

These steps encompass categorization, abstraction, comparison, dimensionalization, integration, iteration, and refutation. Further, they are not stages in the research process but are operations that researchers use in the various stages of analysis (cf. McCracken's description [1988] of analysis-described as a set of sequential stages). Through these operations researchers organize data, extract meaning, arrive at conclusions, and generate or confirm conceptual schemes and theories that describe the data (Spiggle, 1994, p.493).

First of all, categorization involves the act of classifying or assigning labels to units of information. Within qualitative research, data categorization takes place as part of the coding procedure (Spiggle, 1994). Categorization involves naming, or giving labels to, instances of the phenomenon found in the data (cf. McCracken's term, observation

[1988], pp. 43-44). The succeeding process, abstraction, extends upon categorization. It goes beyond categorization by consolidating extensively substantiated categories into elevated conceptual constructs (Spiggle, 1994). Thirdly, the operation of comparison delves into discrepancies and resemblances among occurrences encompassed within the presently gathered data, thereby offering insights for the acquisition of supplementary data (Spiggle, 1994). As the fourth operation, dimensionalization involves identifying properties of categories and constructs (Strauss 1987, pp. 14- 16; Strauss and Corbin 1990, pp. 69-72). Fifthly, integration requires the mapping of relationships between conceptual elements (Spiggle, 1994, p.495). The sixth step, iteration, encompasses progressing through the phases of data collection and analysis in a manner where prior procedures mold the ensuing ones. Ultimately, the process of refutation entails a purposeful exposure of one's emerging conclusions—be it categories, constructs, propositions, or conceptual frameworks—to empirical examination (Spiggle, 1994).

The initial phase of constructing interpretation involves employing codes to highlight occurrences (such as words, phrases, intricate behavioral sequences, or significances) that manifest consistently across participants, even if the cultural significance of this repetition remains incompletely comprehended (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994). In order to carry out the steps specified by Spiggle (1994) and Arnould and Wallendorf (1994), the data were coded and divided into main categories, themes, sub-categories and example quotes. First of all, the audio or video recordings of the participants in the data analysis process were transcribed. Transcripts of the audio or video recordings with each participants were written respectively in chronological order. After all transcripts were completed, the participants' statements were read in detail from beginning to end. The semi-structured in-depth interviews were examined under four main headings and the research questions aimed to explore four main topics. The four main headings encompass inquiries related to consumers' motivations, barriers, the impact of social media and influencers, and lastly, questions grounded in parasocial interaction and narrative transportation theories. Based on the answers given by consumers from the in-depth interview questions in Table 7. above, the most repeated and remarkable words were identified and main categories of coding table were created in line with these most repeated and remarkable words. The main category titles were delineated into three categories. Furthermore, sub-categories were determined by the topics and keywords that the participants most emphasized while answering the in-

depth interview questions. Table 8. contains example quotes, sub-categories, and main categories.

The concept of emergent design constitutes a significant element within numerous qualitative research endeavors and, to some extent, within select mixed methods and quantitative studies as well. It encompasses the evolution of research inquiries and the formulation of determinations regarding data compilation and interpretation throughout the entirety of the investigation, driven by the insights gained during the course of the inquiry itself (Hammersley, 2022). Therefore, as part of the emergent design, the findings were constantly refined to ensure the reliability and integrity of the research. The main categories, themes, sub-categories and example quotes in the code table were given their final shapes.

Table 8. Coding Table

Main category	Themes	Sub-categories	Example quotes
Motivations and factors that initiate consumers' health and wellness behavior	Social Factors	Family	The most important thing is that a person turns to sports, especially if there is an encouraging factor in the family, it can be very important. That's why I got this habit from my father first, because my father is a person who is very active, he encouraged me a lot in my sports life. (A.Y.)

Table 8 (Continued). Coding Table

Main category	Themes	Sub-categories	Example quotes
Motivations and factors that initiate consumers' health and wellness behavior	Social Factors	Friends	I'm talking to my friend. Are you doing any sports today? She says 'No, I'm lazy, I can't.' To motivate her... for example, I tag Ecem on instagram, I keep it at the bottom, it goes to most of them. She also does it the next day for me. She says, you're not doing it today, now I'm doing it for you. (M.Ö.)
		Social Media Followers	Do you know what motivates me, to take a photo of myself in the mirror in sports clothes and share it on Instagram. Because people write really nice comments, share fire emoji. (L.Ç.)
	Personal Factors	Health Consciousness (Physical and Mental Health)	I had a health problem. I had anemia. I was in the hospital for a while. I became more focused on healthy lifestyle. When a person has a health problem they pay more attention to heal and get better. (F.T.)

Table 8 (Continued). Coding Table

Main category	Themes	Sub-categories	Example quotes
<p>Motivations and factors that initiate consumers' health and wellness behavior</p>	<p>Personal Factors</p>	<p>Physical concerns</p>	<p>As my physical appearance improved, I wanted to do more sports because my self-confidence increased when I looked at myself in the mirror. This becomes an extra source of motivation. (B.N.)</p>
		<p>Conformity</p>	<p>I share these when I like or feel comfortable with the new eating style of popular culture. Most of the society does this type of sports, eats this type of breakfast, eats this way. So you're saying that's the right thing. (E.Ö.)</p>
<p>Barriers and factors that prohibit consumers' health and wellness behaviors</p>	<p>Social Factors</p>	<p>Family</p>	<p>I want zucchini and I'm going to make something with zucchini. My mother cooked rice and other dishes. It is very difficult to say no. When I don't eat, this time my mother says that you haven't eaten, etc. I'm trying to eat not to offend or upset my mother. (E.Y.)</p>

Table 8 (Continued). Coding Table

Main category	Themes	Sub-categories	Example quotes
Barriers and factors that prohibit consumers' health and wellness behaviors	Social Factors	Friends	I've had fights with my boyfriend very often because of this problem, such as he wants to eat hamburgers. The problems are very serious. (E.Ö.)
	Personal factors	Lack of motivation	I mean, there are times when I can't find motivation. There are times when I don't want to get up from my seat at that moment. (B.T.)
		Economic constraint	When it comes to maintaining a healthy diet, allocating a significant budget can be challenging, causing some difficulty for me. (F.G.)
		Lack of time	I am already working and now I am trying to both go to school and work together. And I do this on days when I don't have school. Because of my job, I can't spare much time for sports. (M.Y.)
		Excuses	Of course there are excuses, your energy is low, you say you are sick, you believe yourself or work is very busy. (L.Ç.)

Table 8 (Continued). Coding Table

Main category	Themes	Sub-categories	Example quotes
Barriers and factors that prohibit consumers' health and wellness behaviors	Accessibility	Affordability	Economic crisis directly affects my healthy lifestyle. While last year I could buy organic eggs for much less, now I buy them for very high prices. This automatically prevents me from healthy eating. (A.Y.)
		Availability	When I want to eat at school, I can't find many healthy alternatives. Likewise, outside. In fact, when you want to eat vegan like this, there are not many alternatives. (A.A.)
Effect of Social Media and Social Media Influencers on consumer's health and wellness behaviors	Positive consequences & implications	Informativeness	I've learned that, protein helps to build muscles but carbohydrates have a great importance in their development so I need to buy carbohydrates too, I learned this from influencers like this. (E.Ö.)

Table 8 (Continued). Coding Table

Main category	Themes	Sub-categories	Example quotes
Effect of Social Media and Social Media Influencers on consumer's health and wellness behaviors	Positive consequences & implications	Encouragement	One day when I don't want to do sports at all, I follow Buse Kondakçı. When I turned on youtube and watched her, I forcibly lifted myself up and did sports. Watching her motivated me to get up and do sports. (E.Ö.)
		Affordability	Whether it's about discount coupons or the discounts on the pages social media influencers offer, I sometimes buy everything available cheaper and get more discounted. (A.Y.)
		Practicality	No one helps you in gyms, but you can think of influencers as an online personal trainer, I use them like that. (E.Y.)

Table 8 (Continued). Coding Table

Main category	Themes	Sub-categories	Example quotes
Effect of Social Media and Social Media Influencers on consumer's health and wellness behaviors	Negative consequences & implications	Physical injury	I haven't been exercising for a long time. Then, when I suddenly did sports online with a heavy training, I had a cramp in my leg and I had a hard time walking for a week or so, I suffered. I mean, he shared his normal routine and I said I would do it too, but I couldn't, so that's why I haven't done sports for a long time. (B.T.)
		Obsession	I realized that I wasn't feeling well after being exposed to so much social media. Because I started to think and things like am I failing? Am I doing it wrong? Am I missing out? (F.T.)

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The findings are grouped into three main themes, encompassing the motivations and factors that consumers' health and wellness behaviors, the barriers and factors influencing consumers' health and wellness behaviors, and the positive and negative consequences of social media and influencers on consumer health behaviors.

4.1. Motivations and Factors that Initiate Consumers' Health and Wellness Behavior

According to the findings motivations to adopt a healthy lifestyle and the factors that motivate consumers' health and wellness behaviors are grouped under two main themes: 1) Social Factors; 2) Personal Factors.

4.1.1. Social Factors

In the research findings, it has been seen that family, friends and social media followers as a social factor both create barriers and are an remarkable factor for consumers to adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle. The impact of social influences on health behaviors and outcomes is significant, encompassing the provision of social support, adherence to societal norms, and exposure to health-related information during interpersonal engagements (Smith & Christakis, 2008). Collective, rather than individual, interventions become important when health outcomes in an individual depend not only on that person's own biology and activities, but also on the biology and actions of people around him/her (Smith and Christakis, 2008).

4.1.1.1. Family

As it is seen as an encouraging factor for consumers to adopt a healthy lifestyle, it has been seen that social influences provide a motivation for health and wellness behaviors. The role of family members can create barriers to consumers' healthy lifestyles, as well as promote and improve consumers' health and wellness behaviors. Previous literature studies on public health emphasize the importance of the influence of family members. In cases where an individual's health outcomes are influenced not only by their own biology and behavior but also by those of the people around them, interventions need to target the collective rather than just the individual (Smith and Christakis, 2008). Likewise, qualitative research into the impact of social relationships on weight-management practices has highlighted the challenges perceived from unsupportive family members, hindering individuals' efforts to adopt healthy behaviors like nutritious eating (Sallis et al., 1987; Fleury, 1993; Kelsey et al., 1997).

One participant stated that his wife also does sports, eats healthy and adopts this healthy lifestyle, and explains that they motivate each other mutually. In the family, if the spouse or family members adopt an unhealthy lifestyle, it can lead to a loss of motivation or to adopt an unhealthy lifestyle by being exposed to them. In addition, the fact that family members encourage their children to begin healthy lifestyle and that parents are seen as a role model provides motivation for the participants.

“It was my mother who impressed me the most when I saw the change in my mother. Even my mom, I mean, if she did it this way, which I'm much younger than her. So that's right, I'll do it too.” (M.Ö.)

Additionally, in Table 8, it has been mentioned that having a parent in the family who encourages the initiation of sports at a young age plays a significant role. In this sense, the family factor is observed to provide crucial motivation both in the initiation of a healthy lifestyle and in maintaining it. As a result, it has been seen that by adopting health and wellness behaviors in families, these behaviors can spread and create mutual motivation. In this sense, the family has a very strong influence.

4.1.1.2. Friends

In the research findings, it was found that the participants were strongly influenced and motivated by their friends to start and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Individuals have an increasing tendency to show similar behaviors themselves by being influenced by friends who have a healthy lifestyle. They may take each other as role models especially in having healthy lifestyles, due to reasons such as spending a lot of time with their friends, being exposed to each other, or the relationship bond established between them. According to qualitative studies, teenagers seek to blend in with their peers and prefer to endorse the behaviors that their peers model. As a result, teenagers who have inactive friends are less likely to participate in physical activity, whereas those who participate in sports and physical activities often have more active friends (Allison et al. 2005; Coleman et al. 2008).

The friend factor can both have a negative effect and is a very powerful factor in encouraging and motivating individuals to lead a healthy lifestyle. In this study, it was observed that there was a significant influence among the motivation factors of the participants.

“In this regard, my boyfriend is my biggest guide. Because he also likes to do sports and tries to eat as healthy as possible.” (B.T.)

It was observed that the participants who said that they were motivated and encouraged by their friends were in similar age groups. It is not certain whether this situation is the same in other age groups, but in the previous literature study, it was stated that their friendships had a significant effect especially on adolescents. According to Rosenrauch et al. (2017) findings, adolescents may respond more quickly to directly observed healthy eating behaviors in their friends than to more broad encouragements to eat healthy meals or avoid junk foods.

According to the findings in this research, behavior in encouraging and increasing healthy eating and sports can be increased by establishing strategies and policies related to friendships for adolescents and adults.

4.1.1.3. Social Media Followers

In previous literature studies, it has been observed that the motivations of consumers to adopt a healthy lifestyle, especially healthy eating and doing sports are enjoyment, greater physical self-worth, decreased social physique anxiety, enhancing health, preventing disease, and looking attractive (Satia et al., 2001; Teixeira et al., 2012; Staples et al. 2022). Social media, with its digital infrastructure, provides consumers with the opportunity to present health and wellness behaviors. Social media networking gives people access to a virtual community where they can receive support, find solutions to certain health-related issues, and share their success stories, inspiring others to pursue comparable objectives (De la Pea and Quintanilla, 2015).

Unlike the motivations in previous literature studies, in this study, the comments and interactions that consumers receive from their followers such as their friends, family, acquaintances or strangers by sharing their health and wellness behaviors on their social media accounts are seen as motivating them.

“Any kind of criticism made for me or positive comments made by people who have never known me affects me better, because at least I think that they are seen, perceived and commented on by people. In fact, with criticism I am even more motivated.” (A.K.)

“And when I get a lot of likes, you have a tendency to go to sports the next day.” (O.K.)

In the prior literature studies, it was not mentioned that social media followers have an impact on being a prominent motivation, but with the digitalizing age, the interactions consumers receive from social media followers are an effective source of motivation for them to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

4.1.2. Personal Factors

In this study, it was found that three personal-level factors were positively associated with consumer motivation for adopting a healthy lifestyle: (1) possessing a health-conscious personality, (2) showing physical concerns, and (3) conforming to societal expectations or norms related to health and wellness behavior.

4.1.2.1. Health Consciousness

Previous literature has indicated a variety of motivations, such as enhancing self-esteem, improving physical appearance, responding to social influences, and deriving enjoyment, among others, that drive consumers to embrace a health-conscious way of life and sustain behaviors associated with health and well-being (Nadine Henley and Robert J. Donovan, 2002; Kilpatrick, et al., 2005; Ashton, et al., 2015). However, the majority of consumers are motivated to continue their health and wellness behaviors in a sustainable manner by being conscious of valuing and attaching importance to their physical and mental health. Consumers who prioritize their health and wellness continue to engage in behaviors that align with this motivation. People who follow a wellness-oriented lifestyle prioritize their nutrition and physical fitness, actively manage stress, and are aware of environmental health risks (Kraft and Goodell, 1993, p. 18).

Consumers aspire to integrate practices such as physical exercise, nutritious dietary habits, meditation, or yoga into their routines, driven by the desire to maintain their physical and mental well-being. This aspiration serves as a coping mechanism to contend with the challenges they face in various domains of life, including the demands of professional endeavors, ultimately contributing to an elevated sense of happiness and equilibrium. The research findings reveal the presence of consumers who diligently prioritize both their physical and mental well-being, sustaining their motivation in this regard, alongside those who initiate and maintain a health-conscious lifestyle in response to health issues or ailments.

4.1.2.1.1. Physical and Mental Health

Physical health and mental health are of vital importance in the lives of individuals and are concepts that affect each other and have an inseparable relationship. Physical and mental health are intricately linked and exert mutual influence through various mechanisms (Prince et al., 2007). Individuals' conduct and way of life exert a direct impact on their physical and mental well-being. Wang and Geng (2019) found that lifestyle has a substantial impact on both physical and psychological health. Health-related behavioral choices, including engaging in physical exercise, adhering to a nutritious diet, refraining from smoking, practicing meditation, and relaxation techniques, not only enhance individuals' physical health but also contribute positively to their mental well-being. One area that has been studied is the relationship between food and mood, with studies suggesting that following a healthy diet may be associated with a lower incidence of depression (Sa' nchez-Villegas et al., 2009). Physical activity is another important lifestyle element that has been studied for its psychological health advantages (Dale et al., 2014). The majority of the participants underscored their commitment to a health-conscious lifestyle, attributing this dedication primarily to its pronounced benefits for their mental well-being.

“Not only physically, but also mentally we wear out a lot during the day. We are very much affected by the people in our lives, working life, emotionally too. And I believe that sports really release a hormone of happiness for myself.”
(E.Ö.)

“Since health is a holistic thing, I think that mental health is part of health, that's why sports have a great contribution.” (B.T.D.)

In the context of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, it has been noted that various external factors, including social influences, physical appearance, and the impact of social platforms, play a significant role. However, the most prominent factor appears to be the positive impact on the participants' hormonal, mental, and physical well-being, which contributes to the development of a sustainable lifestyle. Additionally, these individuals exhibit a high level of health awareness and demonstrate ongoing commitment to their health and wellness practices driven by intrinsic motivation.

4.1.2.1.2. Diseases

Initiating the adoption of a health-conscious lifestyle is a behavioral imperative that should commence at an early age, affording individuals the opportunity to experience sustained well-being and vitality without having to face any diseases. Moreover, a health-conscious lifestyle affords proactive protection and preventive measures against a wide spectrum of ailments. Irrespective of age, individuals, at some point in their lives, may experience transient or chronic illnesses as they transition from childhood to the elderly stage. Therefore, the adoption of a healthy lifestyle by individuals not only contributes to their overall well-being but also serves as a pivotal determinant in reducing potential health-related risk factors. Cultivating a health-conscious way of life, regardless of one's age, offers a multitude of health advantages. It has been empirically substantiated to lower the likelihood of cardiovascular diseases, reduce the prevalence of obesity and diabetes, mitigate the susceptibility to malignancies, psychological disorders, and cognitive impairments (Dima-Cozma et al., 2014). Adopting a healthy lifestyle proves effective in preventing and, notably, treating a variety of diseases, with a particular focus on cardio-metabolic conditions, including diabetes mellitus, atherosclerosis, hypertension, and dyslipidemia. This perspective of addressing diseases through lifestyle interventions has been shown to be highly cost-effective, as demonstrated by Herman et al. (2005).

The findings of this study reveal that certain participants incorporated physical activities into their lives at an early age due to illnesses they had, while others adopted healthy dietary habits and a health-conscious lifestyle in their middle years in response to health issues that emerged.

“With the disease, I started fitness both in basketball and in the gym. It caused my heart valve to expand and relax my heart. In this process, I have established my sports discipline and gained nutritional habits, I can say that the process started like this. Then it became part of my life.” (O.K.)

“I'm a reflux sufferer. Since it is very uncomfortable in my stomach, I do it obligingly. I already have to pay extra attention to some things.” (B.T.D.)

“The thyroid issue came out in 2018, so actually it started with Gizem my nutritionist telling me about healthy eating rather than diet and learning what to put in or not to put in your body.” (L.Ç.)

Confronting adverse circumstances and illness led participants to believe that a healthy lifestyle would facilitate a more successful coping process. Consequently, they embraced a healthy lifestyle for this reason, subsequently prioritizing health and wellness behaviors in their lives and incorporating them into their routines. In earlier research, it was highlighted that elderly individuals with specific diseases tended to exhibit health-preserving behaviors as a means of safeguarding their well-being. However, this present study observed that individuals diagnosed with certain diseases during their younger years initiated health and wellness behaviors at an early stage, subsequently integrating them into their daily lives and internalizing them as habitual practices, rather than merely adopting them as a means to protect their health.

4.1.2.2. Physical Concerns

In contemporary society, individuals are confronted with various physical concerns, including body dissatisfaction, heightened body focus, and the pursuit of an ideal body image, which has evolved in diverse manifestations over time. These concerns hold significant importance and serve as prominent considerations in the lives of individuals. They prompt individuals to actively partake in endeavors aimed at promoting healthy dietary practices, engaging in regular physical exercise, achieving weight loss goals, and embracing other beneficial lifestyle behaviors. Examining the trait-like element of body image has been the main focus of earlier research on the effects of physical activity. These research (e.g. Brewerton, Steelfson, Hibbs, Hodges, & Cochrane, 1995; Matheson & CrawfordWright, 2000; Wichstrom, 1995) showed that increased physical activity is associated with a negative body image, a heightened body focus, weight preoccupation, and drive for thinness. Body-image concerns may also influence whether we eat healthily and how much we consume (Cooley & Toray, 2001; Stice, 2002). In the realm of physical appearance, it is observed that men exhibit a desire to attain a more muscular physique, whereas women tend to aspire towards a slimmer body shape and thus, they want to look more masculine and feminine for both genders, respectively (Grogan & Wainwright, 1996; Grogan & Richards, 2002; Tiggemann, 2004; McCreary et al., 2005). This pursuit is driven by a shared objective of enhancing attractiveness and aesthetic appeal. In this study, it was observed that consumers' physical concerns, such as their aspiration for enhanced physical attractiveness and the need for self-assurance related to their bodily image, serve as driving factors for adopting healthy dietary habits, engaging in regular exercise, and pursuing weight loss.

4.1.2.2.1. Attractiveness

The perception of physical attractiveness plays a significant role in individuals' lives. Physical attractiveness holds a dual nature, serving as both a source of influence and a paradox. Its impact is far-reaching, affecting individuals from infancy (e.g., "What a cute baby!") to old age (e.g., "Doesn't he look good?"), and at every stage in between (Patzner, 2006, p. 15). Prior literature studies have indicated that individuals initiate engagement in physical activities due to perceived low levels of body attractiveness, and sustain their participation when they observe favorable transformations in their physical appeal. Considering the beneficial influence of physical activity on body image perception as indicated by previous research (Burgess et al., 2006), it is plausible that individuals perceiving low levels of body attractiveness may be motivated to engage in exercise with the intention of improving this aspect. Conversely, it is also feasible that individuals who observe enhancements in their body attractiveness could be incentivized to participate in physical activity (Moreno-Murcia et al., 2011). The changes in the Body Image States Scale (BISS) suggest that being aware of having trained and expended calories may have resulted in a more favorable view of one's own body (Vocks et al., 2009). This research revealed that the dissatisfaction of consumers with their own bodies, feelings of physical anxiety, and perception of low body attractiveness, as influenced by their social environment, served as motivating factors for engaging in physical exercise, expressing a desire to lose weight, and adopting healthier dietary habits.

"I did it to lose weight, not to be healthy or to be well. After that, I looked, as my body became beautiful, as my muscle ratio really increased, as my body got in shape, I started feeling good." (E.Ö.)

"The most significant motivator for me is undeniably the improvement in my physique. When commencing any form of exercise, the motivation generally stems from the desire to lead a healthy lifestyle, intertwined with the aspiration for a more aesthetically pleasing physical appearance. This holds true in my case as well." (M.Y.)

Additionally, it has been observed that consumers, regardless of gender, experience concerns about their physical appearance and are motivated by the desire to establish relationships and appear more attractive to the opposite sex. The physical concerns

elicited by individuals in relationships have played a role in the development of body dissatisfaction, which in turn has contributed to the emergence of reasons and motivations for initiating a healthy lifestyle.

“When male-female relationships started, being liked by women was a huge motivator.” (O.K.)

Among the most frequently cited motivations for consumers to initiate and sustain health and wellness behaviors is the perception of an improved physical appearance and increased attractiveness when they adhere to these behaviors.

4.1.2.2.2. Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is a powerful force that can help people feel better and be more courageous (Camiré et al., 2009). According to Gacar (2013), self-confidence is the primary motivator of human conduct and people's progressive contentment. The cultivation of self-confidence is intrinsically linked to an individual's conviction in achieving a state of well-being, encompassing both spiritual and physical dimensions. Consequently, engaging in activities promoting a healthy lifestyle, which concurrently nurture these aspects of an individual's well-being, significantly fosters the development of this sentiment. In prior scholarly examinations within the field of literature, it was underscored that physical activities play a pivotal role in enhancing an individual's acquisition of self-confidence. It has been proposed that physical activity can help to the development of self-confidence, and that self-confidence can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression levels while also serving as a tool for social integration and equality for women in society (Ayyildiz et al., 2019; Gökkaya et al., 2017). In the present study, male participants expressed that possessing self-confidence affords them an enhanced perception of bravery and physical prowess within societal contexts, outlining their acquisition of such attributes through engagement in physical activities.

“I can clearly say that sports give people self-confidence. The sense of self-confidence it brings offers many opportunities. Being a strong man in the world we live in, especially in Turkey and in my childhood, being one takes you a few steps ahead at all times, in all environments, in all social conditions. That was the biggest trigger at first.” (O.K)

The results indicate that men can enhance their self-confidence in social situations and society by engaging in sports. Nonetheless, it can be anticipated that incorporating other essential health and wellness practices like meditation, yoga, and nutritious eating into a healthy lifestyle will foster a sense of self-worth and bolster this self-confidence through internal motivation. Future research can explore this further.

4.1.2.3. Conformity

A crucial concept that influences and shapes consumer behaviors is conformity. Conformity is defined in marketing by Burnkrant and Cousineau (1975) as: a) the tendency of opinions to create a group norm (i.e., a set of group expectations on how members should behave), and b) the inclination of individuals to conform to the group norm.

The notion of conformity holds significance for consumers from two distinct perspectives with regard to the demonstration and sustenance of health and wellness behaviors, as well as the cultivation of motivational aspects of this lifestyle. Firstly, within this contemporary era, consumers concerns about preoccupations related to aesthetics and the attainment of an ideal physical appearance, irrespective of gender. Today's young girls (and males) live in a society that values youth and beauty. They are constantly assaulted with messages emphasizing the necessity of looking beautiful, younger, and thinner (Ertekin and Atik, 2015). In numerous nations today, women are often compelled to prioritize their outward appearance and regulate their conformity to the prevailing standards of beauty and youth (Carolan, 2005). In this sense, fashion and clothing are the way they express their own self and convey their identity to the society. Consumers exhibit a strong inclination to embody an idealized image and attire akin to those adorned by prominent individuals within their social circles and influential figures they encounter in various societal contexts. In conformity with prevalent fashion trends, such individuals engage in the pursuit of wholesome dietary practices and physical exercise as a means to attain the desired physical appearance, coupled with the ability to procure and wear the apparel of their choosing.

Secondly, the contemporary surge in health and wellness practices, encompassing activities such as healthy dietary choices, physical exercise, and mindful meditation, has witnessed rapid growth and integration into the daily routines of individuals. This paradigm shift has been widely observed and disseminated through various channels, including social media platforms and personal interactions within intimate social circles. The increasing prevalence of health and wellness behaviors has positioned

them as prominent trends within society. Consequently, individuals who do not partake in these practices may experience fear of alienated or an intensified inclination to conform to these prevailing societal norms. Consumers are more worried about being isolated if they believe they are being excluded from the majority group (Kang et al.,2019). Briefly, conforming to fashion trends and fear of being alienated are very important in terms of consumers' most valuable motivations in maintaining health and wellness behaviors.

4.1.2.3.1. Conforming to Fashion Trends

In previous literature studies, there are no studies on the association of exercise and healthy eating with fashion, which is a factor in people's motivation for fashion and adopting and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. However, as an interesting and different study, it has been observed that the perception that dressing style reflects comfort or seriousness affects and is related to the eating styles of individuals. Wang et al.'s (2021) study focuses on the influence of a key component of clothing, namely clothing style (formal or informal), on consumers' consumption decisions for healthy or unhealthy foods.

Based on the findings of Wang and colleagues (2021), varying clothing styles, both formal and informal, can evoke distinct associations with clothing imagery. Consequently, consumers tend to select food options (healthy or unhealthy) that align with the specific clothing-image associations, a phenomenon referred to as clothes-food congruence. Wearing formal clothes, for example, can stimulate formal-clothes associations such as self-control and organization. Formal- (vs. informal-) clothing connections are associated with healthy (vs. unhealthy) dietary choices.

In the findings of this research, it was observed that, unlike Wang et al. (2021) study, individuals attach importance to fashion and encourage them to eat healthy and exercise. Clothing and fashion are one of the factors that play the biggest role in dressing up in their daily lives, making an impression on other people, and creating their own identities. Consumers frequently invest a significant amount of money and time on what they wear every day because they believe that what they wear has a significant impact on the impressions that others have of them (Peluchette et al., 2006). When individuals disrupt their healthy diet and take a break from their exercise routines, it may cause sadness for them not being able to wear the clothes they desire, and this may not only be dependent on clothes but also reflected in their social lives. When individuals cannot wear the clothes they desire, they may have to distance

themselves from social life. According to Kwon (1994), if a person has positive feelings about his or her outfits, he or she will experience more self-perceived emotion, more sociable, and more competent at work. Briefly, fashion and clothes are remarkable influence in the lives of individuals as a cycle, and they are an important source of motivation for them to acquire and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

“I can say that the biggest motivation is definitely fashion. Being able to buy anything you want, wear anything... (L.Ç.)

There is an observable trend wherein the idealized and tangible representation of fashion and physical appearance has significantly influenced consumers' aspiration for such aesthetics, subsequently motivating their engagement in health and wellness practices. This situation was also observed in another participant in Table 8. As a result, the effect of fashion and clothing on individuals' maintaining a healthy lifestyle was clearly seen as a very valuable finding. This finding can be supported by future studies of more diverse socio-demographic populations.

4.1.2.3.2. Fear of Being Alienated

Empirical research has demonstrated that consumers' health and wellness behaviors are influenced by underlying psychological substructures. Psychological aspects like one's beliefs and attitudes about health play a significant role in forecasting the commencement of health-improving actions and restraining behaviors that might undermine one's health (Rosenstock, 1974). The health and wellness trend is an important trend that is rapidly increasing among consumers. The importance of this has not been emphasized in previous literature studies regarding the increasing tendency of consumers to engage in behaviors that include a healthy lifestyle in order not to be excluded from or to feel included in the mass attitude that adapts to a healthy lifestyle.

As an important finding of this research, it has been observed that consumers adapt and maintain their health and wellness behaviors with the motivation to adapt to the majority. This situation was mentioned from a close perspective in the study of Ntoumanis and Thøgersen-Ntoumani (2007). Indeed, the intention of individuals to cultivate a favorable impression among their peers indirectly shapes their engagement in healthy lifestyle behaviors (Ntoumanis and Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2007). However in the findings of this research, an identified motivation to avoid feelings of social

estrangement pertains to the assimilation of a health-conscious lifestyle, which has gained traction as a prevalent cultural phenomenon. This lifestyle has become deeply intertwined with the daily routines of consumers, with its associated discourse permeating various social spheres, including those occupied by celebrities, influencers, and social media communities. Consequently, individuals are driven to adopt and sustain health and wellness practices as a means of avoiding a sense of alienation within these conversations and in their day-to-day existence.

“I felt alienated because I use social media very actively and I follow a lot of influencers, I follow bloggers, I also follow doctors. I feel like a person who is unhealthy and excluded from that society. For example, at school, everyone talks about these issues because it is popular now. Because I did not want to be left behind, I became curious about it. I started with that psychology in order not to be isolated from my surrounding groups and not to be excluded, I really felt much more fit when I found myself doing sports. I am much more motivated.” (M.Ö.)

A similar occurrence was noted in another participant as indicated in Table 8. The trend of individuals sharing health-oriented activities, such as nutritionally balanced meals like bowls and salads, or regular exercise routines, on digital platforms has evolved to a point where it is widely practiced among the general consumer population. Those who do not partake in such behaviors are often perceived as unhealthy and are socially isolated. Social media platforms play a significant role in facilitating this phenomenon. Sharing eating habits on social media can reveal one's offline eating behaviors to others, creating a sense of disclosure and a desire for a positive image. This desire may act as a type of pressure or commitment, encouraging individuals to replicate these behaviors offline (Ntoumanis and Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2007). As a consequence, the noteworthy observation that the prevalence of a health-conscious lifestyle and consumers' inclination towards conforming to this prevailing trend to evade feelings of social exclusion represents a significant motivational factor that has not been adequately emphasized in prior scholarly investigations.

4.2. Barriers and Factors that Prohibit Consumers' Health and Wellness Behaviors

The obstacles and barriers that the participants highlighted in achieving and sustaining a healthy lifestyle are grouped under three main themes: 1) Social Factors; 2) Personal factors; 3) Accessibility.

4.2.1. Social Factors

Many consumers participating in the study have encountered challenging social factors in maintaining or adapting to a healthy lifestyle. Among these social influences, it has been observed that in certain situations, consumers' families and friends act as barriers. Social influences are a significant determinant of consumers' health and wellness behaviors. Previous literature studies have shown that within social factors, families and friendships both serve as motivating factors for individuals to adopt a healthy lifestyle, but also create obstacles due to reasons such as unhealthy eating, time wastage, and misdirection (Zhang et al., 2016; Cardel et al., 2020).

4.2.1.1. Family

In the findings, it was seen that among the barriers that participants perceived and had the most difficulty coping with, behaviors such as an unhealthy diet, lack of exercise, and the social environment caused by the family and friends created a difficulty for the participants. Family and friend factors have not been shown as a prominent barrier in the literature, but the findings reveal that these have a remarkable impact on the external barrier that consumers encounter.

“My family doesn't live a very healthy life. Most of them, they eat quite fatty dishes because of their eating habits. I have to make my own food inside the house, so it makes it difficult for me.” (B.T.)

“You can't change your family, my parents don't eat very unhealthily, but they don't do it like I pay attention to. In other words, there are pies, rice, etc., which are eaten every day. That was the thing that pushed me the most.” (F.G.)

It was observed that the families of the participants cooked fatty, high-calorie meals at home depending on the traditional food culture. The fact that they have difficulty in coping with their will power or preparing a healthy meal alone only for one person creates a barrier in this sense.

Prior literature also stated that especially for women there were more barriers such as, family commitments, the cost, and someone to exercise with (Sport Wales, 2017 and

Williams-Burnett, 2014). Likewise, in this research, it has been seen that the family is a compelling factor for healthy eating. Although the family barrier of healthy eating is not mentioned much in the previous literatures, it has been seen that it is an important factor

4.2.1.2. Friends

In the research, findings show that in social barriers, the friend factor as well as the family factor create challenges to consumers' behavior towards a healthy life.

“I also have a group of friends who drink 7/24 and live unhealthily. When I hang out with my friends who drink, sometimes they can force me to drink alcohol, and I drink sometimes so that the atmosphere doesn't deteriorate.” (B. N.)

“I think the biggest factor is because of the group of friends. It turns into fast food or turns into wraps somehow. I think it's all because of the friend groups.” (H.G.)

In addition, it was observed that both participants tended towards unhealthy options in order not to disturb the atmosphere in the friend environment. Consequently, it has been seen that the effect of friends on consumers who have healthy lifestyle intentions is considerable and can have a negative impact.

4.2.2. Personal Factors

Personal factors consist of lack of motivation, economic constraints, lack of time and other excuses.

4.2.2.1. Lack of Motivation

There are barriers that consumers personally encounter and can not cope with. Lack of motivation as the theme consistent with previous findings is a significant barrier.

In previous literature studies, lack of willpower is a barrier related to lack of motivation and is included as psychological barriers that participants have. Earlier studies have identified self-control and willpower as significant psychological hurdles for European consumers (Lappalainen et al., 1998). Specifically, psychological barriers such as willpower negatively impact healthy eating intention (Michaelidou,2012).

“Not every person's motivation progresses at the same pace in the same way, for example, it is unclear whether our mood will drop after half an hour. I get

up and say let's go to training today. I take supplements, I drink my coffee, I eat my food. When I'm leaving the house, I change my mind and say let's not go today, and it happens a lot that I'm back home.” (M.Y.)

“When your mood is low, people become more lazy.” (F.T.)

It was observed that the participants were able to take a break from a healthy lifestyle when they could not find motivation. Consistently, In Pinho, et al. (2018) research, it was found several associations between perceived barriers to healthy eating and food consumption, of which the most frequent was self-reported lack of will power. Hereby, the reasons such as lack of motivation, low motivation or unwillingness of consumers, close to the lack of willpower mentioned in the prior literature, constitute an obstacle in the intention to do exercise and healthy eating. Michaelidou (2012) findings suggest that that healthy eating campaigns in the Czech Republic should focus on combating psychological barriers such as will power and eating habits by providing, for instance, toll-free numbers for psychological support.

Psychological support for consumers' health and wellness behaviors such as healthy eating and doing sports, to encourage them more and to overcome their low motivation and reluctance, toll-free numbers mentioned in the prior literature study can be very useful in coping with psychological barriers.

4.2.2.2. Economic Constraints

Findings reveal that, the socio-economic level of the individuals within the scope of personal factors was seen as a compelling obstacle in adopting and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. As a controversial issue in the old literature studies, there are two separate differences of opinion under the names of self-improvement or self-preservation. According to the approach of self-improvement, it has been emphasized that only the upper classes or people with high socio-economic level can lead a healthy lifestyle in the society. If wellness really is only for self-improvement, then this leaves wellness practices to only the "elite" in a society (Gamby et al.,2021).

In the research findings, it has been seen that the economic factor creates an obstacle for young age groups to go to the gym, exercise with personal trainers, and try to eat healthy.

“If I was paying for these, that is, the fee for my own sports teacher, with the money I earn, I could not pay this. Or if I wanted to use those protein powders or those probiotics from macrocenter, I couldn't. But since I live with my family and my father pays for it, I have such an opportunity. But if I look at my own income right now, I am not in a position to afford it myself.” (M.Ö.)

Correspondingly, previous literatures, indicated high prices and monetary costs as a physical barrier to eating habits and healthy eating (Lappalainen et al., 1998; Conner and Norman, 2005; Pinho, et al., 2018). It has been stated that eating healthy and doing sports requires a personal budget. It is emphasized by the participants that those who can maintain healthy lifestyle can be provided by people with high socio-economic level.

4.2.2.3. Lack of Time

The study also sheds light on the timelessness barrier that prevent health and wellness behaviors as a result of consumers' busy lifestyles.

“When you have a small child as a single parent, you can face time-related challenges. This includes tasks like preparing meals, practicing yoga, meditation, attending work, and attending to the needs of the child, which sometimes can converge. Yes, time-related challenges.” (A.A.)

“There are moments when we are in time crunch because 24 hours a day, so no matter how hard you try, you cannot do it during the 24 hours. Some things actually need to be programmed beforehand. When there is a problem in nutrition of food, the efficiency in sports is reduced by 50%. Therefore, one of the things I can recommend is to get up early in the morning and cook the food products in the morning during the day.” (A.Y.)

The most prevalent barrier among participants leading to unhealthy dietary habits is the constraint of time owing to work environments. Moreover, temporal constraints arising from hectic lifestyles have been observed to disrupt engagement in yoga and meditation practices.

In the previous studies, time constraints and lack of time are among the key barriers or the most frequently cited barriers to healthy eating (Pinho, et al., 2018; Garcia & Mann,

2003; Jun, Arendt, & Kang, 2016; McEachern, Seaman, Padel, & Foster, 2005; Ashton et al., 2015).

“I never believe in this concept of timelessness, when a person wants to do something, really there is time.” (Y.G.)

On the contrary, according to participants (Y.G.) while timelessness can be seen both as an excuse also be seen as a significant obstacle due to reasons such as busy work life.

4.2.2.4. Excuses

The findings show that another barrier that can be included among psychological barriers is excuses. It has been seen that these excuses consist of external or internal factors, preventing consumers from doing sports or eating healthy.

“I'm making excuses. I won't be able to say no because some people stop eating because of stress. I am a person who clings to food and dessert from stress.” (E.Y.)

“It happens in sports. For example, there is the weather condition, there is fatigue, sometimes there are some excuses.” (B.T.D.)

By showing external or internal sources as excuses, it was seen that the participants were aware of deceiving themselves, creating excuses for themselves. As with the lack of motivation, in these cases, it can be ensured that they can cope with excuses by creating psychological support or motivation.

Zunft, et al. (1999) stated that excuses that could be considered as psychological barriers. It was stated that excuses are barriers for people not doing sports or not showing physical activity in general. It was mentioned ‘not a sporty type’ or ‘too old’ as a barrier and use this statement as an excuse not to increase their levels of activity (Zunft, et al.,1999). Similarly, in this research, it has been seen that consumers who do not support health and wellness behaviors create excuses that are described as psychological barriers.

4.2.3. Accessibility

Consumers face accessibility barriers both in terms of affordability and product availability in achieving the healthy lifestyle they desire. The expense associated with

a healthy lifestyle, particularly due to price inflation and economic crises, has been observed to impose a more severe constraint. Additionally, consumers encounter difficulties in terms of product diversity or unavailability.

4.2.3.1. Affordability

While the economic crisis is a major problem all over the world, it poses a major obstacle for consumers' health and wellness behaviors, especially in Turkey. In October 2022, Turkey experienced its highest inflation rate of 85.51 percent within the given timeframe (Statista, 2024). Inflation is raging. At 9.1 percent, the US inflation rate in June 2022 was the highest since 1981 (McKinsey's & Company, 2022). With the economic crisis, consumers face difficult situations when they try to have a healthy lifestyle. Dave and Kelly (2012), investigated the effect of business cycles on the consumption of various types of “healthy” and “unhealthy” foods. Dave and Kelly suggest that fruit and vegetable consumption would decline by 9 percent.

“The products you buy now are more expensive. If I buy, I buy less. In fact, there are 7 days a week, you can eat healthy 4 days at most, and you can't do it on the other days because it's a bit of a strain financially.” (E.Y.)

“For example, if I'm going to buy three, I'll buy one, it affects in that respect. So I do self-restraint. I don't buy this month, it's like I'll buy it next month, so you can't get what you want right away.” (F.G.)

Consequently, the participants have a negative impact on their healthy eating by restricting both themselves and their budgets with the economic crisis. The economic crisis is a compelling barrier to accessing the healthy products or healthy lifestyles they desire.

While the economic crisis has caused consumers to buy fewer products in terms of quantity, another financial challenge has emerged wherein consumers perceive healthy eating to be more expensive. Consequently, they tend to gravitate towards alternative options, such as fast food, which are considered to be less conducive to overall well-being.

“Since I want to eat healthy, I would order a salad or a fit food, but because it hurts to give much more money for a salad, I used to make a salad at home as much as possible, so I don't eat something healthy outside.” (R.A.)

“Healthy snacks are more expensive and because of this I eat fast food, wraps etc with my friends. There are times when I adapt to them because of this.”
(H.G.)

Respondents conveyed that healthier food options, snacks, or meals come at a higher price compared to less healthy alternatives. They indicated a barrier in perceiving healthy meals as costlier when ordering online or dining out.

4.2.3.2. Availability

Product availability is among the most notable barriers for consumers with healthy lifestyles. Consumers who want to eat healthy still do not have access to healthy products in terms of alternatives and the diversity of menus in the restaurants and markets, even if the importance of this issue increases. McKinsey's (2022) report reveal that consumers are frustrated because retailers and food producers aren't keeping up with their quest for conscious eating (McKinsey's & Company, 2022).

There is a consensus among the participants that there are few vegan nutrition alternatives as mentioned by a participant (A.A.) in the coding table.

“For example, if I were a vegetarian, I would suffer very much. If I was vegan, I would rather live in a place where there is an alternative to vegetable milk instead of milk.” (R.A.)

Since the research was conducted in Turkey, healthy product variety for consumers and healthy food alternatives in restaurants or dining places were found to be very limited compared to other countries. The variety of functional food in Turkey was quite less (Gok and Ulu, 2019).

“For example, I think there is less variety in the restaurant, but whether I go to the very basic restaurant X or to the same restaurant A, the style of the two restaurants is very different, but they have the same menus under the name of healthy eating, it's always a salad, something with broccoli, and something else that seems healthy, in fact, it's not healthy at all, on the contrary, it's much more oily.” (M.Ö.)

It has been observed that the healthy meal alternatives and varieties in the menu options of the restaurants are less, and that the consumers also emphasize that the

healthy meals in the restaurants are fatty. It is seen that the variety of healthy dishes in the menu options of restaurants is limited and does not have the expected content, so consumers have a negative perception and are badly affected.

Eating healthily at restaurants has become a key consideration for both consumers and catering establishments (Choi and Zhao, 2010). As a result, it has been seen that alternatives in restaurants play a very important role and create a barrier in both encouraging consumers to eat healthy and not hindering consumers who want to eat healthy. Also, it has been observed that the product variety in the markets is less compared to other countries.

4.3. Effect of Social Media and Social Media Influencers on Consumer's Health and Wellness Behaviors

Social media influencers, who disseminate health and wellness practices and generate content promoting a healthy lifestyle across various social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, hold a significant and influential position in shaping consumers' health-related behaviors. This research has uncovered a spectrum of effects experienced by consumers, encompassing both favorable and adverse outcomes across a broad range of domains

The subsequent section delves into the empirical findings elucidating the constructive impact of social media influencers on consumers' healthful lifestyles, elucidating the benefits they confer and the extent of their influence.

4.3.1. Positive Consequences and Implications

4.3.1.1. Informativeness

The internet undeniably serves as the primary tool for accessing health-related information. Social media platforms play a crucial role in disseminating motivational messages and techniques aimed at enhancing body composition, well-being, and overall quality of life. This is particularly evident in the areas of dietary choices, diet regimens, physical fitness, and exercise methodologies, all of which hold the promise of guiding users on social media towards desired outcomes (Paes et al., 2021). Individuals with a keen interest in adopting and sustaining a health-conscious lifestyle are increasingly turning to social media platforms to access health and wellness content, facilitated by recent technological advancements. Rather than seeking information through physical visits to medical professionals, dietitians, or personal trainers, individuals opt to follow social media influencers and professionals with a

substantial online following. They derive valuable insights from content shared by individuals who possess a significant follower base.

The research findings revealed that consumers acquired novel insights from social media influencers, including previously unfamiliar knowledge pertaining to physical development, alternative and nutritionally beneficial recipes, corrected misconceptions about the proper execution of physical activities, and other pertinent information that could be incorporated into their pursuit of a healthy lifestyle.

“You know, I learned much better what and how much I should take, what and at what rate it should enter my body. I learned how to make protein pancakes. I learned how to prepare such sugar-free desserts.” (B.N.)

“For instance, I might have neglected leg workouts for about 10 years and always considered abdominal exercises as unnecessary. However, I learned from social media influencers that leg and core programs are crucial for enhancing testosterone levels in the body, essential for overall upper body development. I can't pinpoint the exact social media influencer, but I decided to give it a try and ended up transforming myself. What I learned significantly elevated my proficiency in sports.” (O.K.)

It has been observed that narratives conveyed by social media influencers through YouTube channels, Instagram stories and posts, TikTok videos, and similar social media platforms provide valuable information to consumers and have a positive impact on them. A noteworthy insight gleaned from the results is that, as an example, a participant was persuaded by a social media influencer's narrative information to engage in leg training, even when he initially considered it unnecessary. This resulted in a shift in the participant's beliefs and behaviors, ultimately fostering a positive transformation in health and wellness practices. According to the narrative followed by the participant, as indicated in Table 8, she began incorporating carbohydrates into her diet, despite never having done so before, as she believed it would benefit her muscles when consumed alongside protein. Similarly, within this finding, it has been observed that the narrative of the social media influencer has the capacity to persuade, influence beliefs, and induce behavioral change in the consumer.

These findings elucidate the positive impact of informative narratives on consumers, concurrently demonstrating the presence of narrative transportation and parasocial interaction between consumers and social media influencers.

The belief that the consumer is persuaded by the narrative of the social media influencer, resulting in a direct change of belief and behavior, has been observed. Narrative transportation has effects of persuasion, belief, behavior, and attitude on audiences who immersed in the story. The persuasive influence of storytelling is so strong that it has the potential to alter an individual's convictions and attitudes (Green and Brock, 2000).

Furthermore, when examining parasocial interaction, the participant in the leg training example mentioned above expressed that they felt the closest affinity to the social media influencer whose character and philosophy resonated most with their own, emphasizing the participant's highest level of persuasion.

“Within the realm of social media influencers, I find a sense of self-identification with the character and philosophy of Barış, yet I harbor no affinity for the others, nor do I resonate with their characters.” (O.K.)

Parasocial interaction stands for the degree to which a media consumer views a media figure as a close social companion (Horton and Wohl, 1956). Therefore, it has been observed that social media influencers play a constructive role as informative sources in influencing consumers' adoption of a healthy lifestyle. They establish parasocial interactions with consumers and within the context of narrative transportation, successfully persuade, influence beliefs, and bring about positive changes in consumers' attitudes.

On the other hand, certain consumers articulate their adherence to social media influencers solely for utilitarian gains, devoid of concurrently establishing emotional affinity or, in other words, fostering a parasocial relationship.

“I approach it as an influencer. I don't establish a connection with my own character; whether they are good or bad people based on what they show is not important to me in terms of character. I simply know what I need to take from them.” (H.G.)

“I don't feel a close connection to my own character; I follow social media influencers for the purpose of benefiting.” (F.T.)

Hence, although parasocial interaction is evident in certain consumers, it has been noted that others lack any such interaction and merely engage with and follow narratives for utilitarian purposes.

4.3.1.2. Encouragement

In the context of promoting health and wellness behaviors, it is of utmost importance to encourage consumers to initiate, adapt, and sustain such behaviors. Social media content and the influence of social media influencers play a crucial role in showcasing various aspects of a healthy lifestyle, including physical activities, relaxation exercises, and nutritious eating habits. By conveying the notion that these behaviors are accessible and achievable for consumers, they serve as catalysts in encouraging individuals to embark on and uphold a healthy lifestyle. This influence is particularly significant as consumers may encounter challenges in assimilating to a healthy lifestyle or may desire a sense of companionship in this journey. Initiatives designed to assist individuals working with social media influencers to adopt healthier lifestyles could be strengthened by engaging natural supports. These supports could reinforce consumers' behavior changes through encouragement and by reciprocally modifying their own behaviors (Aschbrenner et al., 2012, p. 241). Sharing information on social media encourages healthy living. With contemporary technology such as mobile applications that assist healthcare practitioners engage with their patients, social media has become a vital part of the entire care philosophy (Ahmad et al, 2019).

In this research, it was seen that social media and social media influencers encouraged consumers in two positive ways. Social media influencers have encouraged consumers by showing that they can start physical activities and relaxation exercises such as yoga with simple movements, even though they have no experience and have not received professional training.

“It came to my advantage that Çetin çetintaş started directly from the initial level of yoga. He could really start at beginner level, he was making special videos for begininng level. I learned with him, his first poses and so on, and then he encouraged me.” (F.G.)

“My start to sports was entirely with social media... When I started to open exercise videos so that I could exercise at home, at some point those exercise videos evolved into yoga. Then I continued to take yoga into my life.” (H.G.)

Furthermore, it has been observed that social media influencers encourage health and wellness practices through motivational stories when consumers face reluctance or diminished motivation to participate in physical activities. Additionally, owing to social media, it has been noticed that consumers are motivated to embrace a healthy lifestyle by viewing content from individuals within their social circles, such as friends and family, who also endorse a healthy way of living.

“I come across motivational videos. After watching them, I have to get up and go to sports right now and. It’s such an enthusing thing.” (M.Y.)

“Another feature of these influencers that is actually important to me is that they constantly encourage the positive they constantly encourage what needs to be done.” (A.Y.)

In conclusion, it has been observed that, primarily through the motivational narratives and speeches presented by social media influencers, these individuals have been found to mitigate consumer reluctance and motivation depletion. Influencers have been seen to effectively diminish such resistance, inciting action and bolstering encouragement, particularly when consumers are disinclined or demotivated.

Furthermore, the belief and encouragement of consumers with no prior experience in engaging in physical activities, leading them to believe that they are capable of undertaking such activities, serve to demonstrate social media influencers’ conviction in their own abilities. This situation indicates a compelling persuasion process and is associated with consumers actively participating. The persuasive impact, conveyed through influencers' narratives, signifies the occurrence of narrative transportation theory between social media influencers and consumers. According to Hinyard and Kreuter (2007), they propose that the persuasive impact of narrative effects is best understood through the framework of the transportation theory. This is because persuasion primarily happens when individuals engage in pleasurable processing of entertainment, leading to heightened emotional responses, as opposed to a mere cognitive processing of information. For instance, participants (H.G.) and (F.G.)

emphasize their lack of prior experience in yoga, underscoring that their engagement in this activity was facilitated by the encouragement of social media influencers. It has been observed that the inspiring narratives of social media influencers augment consumers' self-belief and prompt them to take action. Green and Brock (2000) along with Green, Brock, and Kaufman (2004) have indicated that the persuasive influence of narrative transportation is achieved through a decrease in adverse cognitive reactions, the authenticity of the experience, and the elicitation of intense emotional responses.

Moreover, prior research has indicated that parasocial interaction notably influences consumers, particularly in the context of engaging in physical activities and adopting healthy dietary practices, thus fostering a desire for exercise and promoting a healthy lifestyle (Sakib et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2022). In the in-depth interviews conducted in this study, it was observed that parasocial interaction plays a pivotal role in motivating and encouraging consumers. Specifically, consumers tend to watch content of social media influencers whom they perceive as relatable, with whom they can identify through their personal histories, and whom they view as close or authentic, rather than those they do not find personally engaging. Certainly, it's possible for individuals to experience a greater sense of intimacy or friendship with media figures when engaging with them on social media compared to their interaction with one-sided, symbolic relationships with characters in traditional media (Kwok et al., 2021; Rihl and Wegener, 2019). Media personalities have the capacity to influence the motivations, beliefs, and actions of their audience (Bandura, 1986, 2001). Horton and Wohl (1956) contended that viewers could experience a semblance of friendship with television characters or hosts. Viewing a television series enables the audience to form intimate emotional and psychological connections with the characters in the show, giving rise to what is known as parasocial relationships (PSRs) (Hoffner, 1996).

“For example, I am more impressed by the influencers I follow because they were overweight like me and have lost weight. That's why I think such people motivate and influence me more than a famous person.” (B.T.)

“There are many people who constantly share nutrition or exercise. The people we usually follow are the ones who seem more sincere to us and seems closer to me.” (F.G.)

It appears that the observed parasocial interaction among certain consumers is motivated by a perceived alignment with their own character and personal history. In conclusion, it has been observed that the parasocial interaction established between particular consumers and influencers exerts a significant influence on motivation, encouragement, and the adoption of health and wellness behaviors, underscoring its crucial role in this context.

4.3.1.3. Affordability

Another positive outcome attributed to social media and social media influencers is the enhanced affordability in terms of ease of consumer access to essential products required for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Furthermore, social media influencers play a role in providing consumers with substantial financial opportunities and guidance in adopting a healthy lifestyle.

Particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ability to procure health and wellness products through social media and the substantial impact of social media influencers' recommendations on consumers' adoption of a healthy lifestyle have become noteworthy phenomena. Lockdown measures have led to a surge in internet usage, causing more customers to develop a habit of online browsing and engaging with social media platforms. This trend keeps them informed about the latest product launches. Social media platforms play a significant role in showcasing current trends, which, in turn, have a strong influence on customers, motivating them to make online purchases (Jeżewska-Zychowicz et al., 2020). Social media and influencers play a remarkable role in assisting consumers with the accessibility of health and wellness products, such as discount coupons and links to promotions.

In this study, consumers have emphasized the high cost associated with adopting a healthy lifestyle. They have noted that various products and services integral to a healthy lifestyle, including sportswear, exercise equipment, healthy food, wellness products, and personal trainers, are expensive. In this context, consumers have underscored the value provided by social media and social media influencers in mitigating these cost concerns.

“Among the names I have mentioned, two professional bodybuilders, they give discount codes to their followers, because that's why they get products that you can buy with 40% discount, and if the price is high, after that code comes, they are reduced to a degree that they can easily get what they want.” (B.N.)

“For instance, as conveyed by Sofie during the Black Friday event, Women's West had a significant discount of 70%. In response to this information, I procured a variety of products, including BCA, protein supplements, and collagen vitamins for hair, nails, and overall well-being.” (L.Ç.)

It has been observed that consumers have the opportunity to attain numerous product discounts through social media content and narratives presented by social media influencers. Consequently, this has enabled them to acquire expensive health and wellness products at significantly reduced costs.

Furthermore, a participant has articulated the notion that retaining a personal trainer is financially burdensome in the context of physical activities. However, the participant has highlighted the ability to incorporate a cost-effective approach to a healthy lifestyle by following social media influencers and engaging with their video content related to physical activities.

“When we look at it financially, for example, if you work with a reformer pilates teacher, it costs so much, but when you do it on the internet, we watch those people, they make money, but it doesn't cost us anything.” (B.T.D.)

The provision of discount links by social media platforms, along with the issuance of various discount coupons by social media influencers and their announcements of discounts, facilitating consumers' engagement in health and wellness behaviors without incurring financial expenditures, contributes significantly to the support and benefit of consumers in adopting a healthy lifestyle. In the realm of health and wellness, the provision of discount coupons and links by social media influencers for nutritious foods, sportswear, vitamins, and supplements can significantly contribute to motivating and encouraging consumers to pursue healthier dietary choices and sustain physical activity. Therefore, it appears that the affordability aspect of the opportunities offered by social media and social media influencers plays a pivotal role as a determinant in this context.

4.3.1.4. Practicality

Social media influencers, in addition to offering consumers positive opportunities to enhance the affordability of products related to a healthy lifestyle through discount coupons and links, provide various ways of practicality that have not been previously emphasized in existing literature.

As explained in the above section, consumers encounter challenges in sustaining health and wellness behaviors (such as healthy nutrition, physical activity, yoga, etc.) due to affordability concerns. But as a solution, social media influencers provide practical solutions to address the cost barriers associated with healthy eating and engaging in physical activities. Social media influencers were observed to offer a great deal of convenience by providing practical recipes using readily available and cost-effective ingredients, thereby eliminating the need for consumers to purchase these expensive products.

“Products are sold at the Macro center, and I find it very costly and not necessary. This Bengi Kurtcebe is teaching to make a new recipe with the ingredients that are at home, that is, there are always greens, salads, tomatoes at home, that is, dishes that always exist at home. She doesn't oblige you to go to macro center and buy any of brands, so she has such recipes about healthy eating on youtube. I'm trying to do them.” (M.Ö.)

“In the sense of sweetener, for example influencers says, honey is very expensive, dates are cheaper if there is no honey, put dates. For example, if there are no walnuts or nuts, put coconut cinnamon, if there is no cocoa, do something else, for example.” (E.Y)

In this context, upon closer examination of the findings, it becomes evident that social media influencers offer highly practical recommendations and significantly contribute to consumers' efforts towards healthier dietary choices. They are observed to provide solutions to the barriers encountered by individuals in preparing healthy meals when they are unable to afford expensive health-oriented products by offering alternatives. Furthermore, exercising with personal trainers at home or in fitness centers can pose a financial burden for individual consumers and potentially create another impediment to their participation in physical activities. Social media influencers who share content related to physical activities, relaxation exercises, or yoga, offer substantial convenience to consumers in incorporating physical activity into their lives. In the findings of this study, participants, as exemplified in Table 8, expressed that influencers assisted them in their physical exercise routines and helped them overcome potential financial barriers, underscoring the valuable role played by social media influencers in this regard.

“For example, sometimes I don't have a personal trainer, I have a lot of energy or I'm in Izmir, etc. There are a lot of free videos on youtube, especially Sofie, I follow a lot of her videos, there is a 10-minute, 15-minute program, I can do them.” (L.Ç.)

Participants who are unable to access gym facilities or utilize various exercise equipment, for example, learn equivalent physical activities through social media influencers and are able to incorporate them into their lives. Furthermore, other participants benefit from physical activity videos offered by social media influencers as if they were personal trainers. In this regard, as a result, social media influencers not only motivate or encourage consumers to integrate physical activities into their lives but also provide highly valuable recommendations and significant assistance in promoting physical activity engagement.

4.3.2. Negative Consequences and Implications

In the research findings, it has been observed that social media and social media influencers exert both positive and negative influences on consumers' pursuit of a healthy lifestyle. Initially, social media and influencers are noted to provide consumers with motivation, encouragement, and stimulation in their endeavors toward a healthier lifestyle. However, it has been observed that consumers, particularly in the context of their exercise routines and physical activities, are occasionally inadequately cautioned, misdirected, or provided with erroneous information, resulting in physical injuries. Additionally, the perpetuation of unrealistic body models and continuous exposure to idealized physical appearances in social media content by influencers has been identified as a factor fostering obsessions that adversely impact consumers' pursuit of a healthy lifestyle.

4.3.2.1. Physical Injury

In various social media platforms, influencers who specialize in health and wellness behaviors and pursue this as their professional occupation or lifestyle share exercise routines they perceive as either normal or intense without a consciousness of potential harm to themselves or others. When these influencers do not provide appropriate warnings regarding their exercise routines, such posts may lead to severe and potentially hazardous outcomes for novice or individuals with differing body indexes. While prior research has not extensively explored the existence of this risk, a few studies have investigated the potential for consumer harm through posts on social

media platforms, specifically highlighting concerns within specific exercise regimens. Influencers who lack expertise in fitness and wellness may inadvertently encourage their followers to engage in behaviors that pose health and injury risks (Ori et al., 2019). For instance, Buchanan et al. (2023) discovered a significant occurrence of injuries among women who attempted advanced yoga poses shared by influencers on social media.

In this research, in contrast to previous studies, empirical evidence was gathered indicating that injuries can indeed transpire, and such physical injuries are not limited to the domain of yoga but also extend to other physical activities, stemming from attempts to replicate the exercise routines propagated by social media influencers. Therefore, within the context of this research, the significance of this issue lies in its importance for both raising awareness among consumers and prompting social media influencers to provide prudent guidance. This study has observed that a significant number of consumers have experienced injuries in specific areas of their bodies after attempting physical activities recommended and endorsed by social media influencers, such as workouts, exercises, and yoga.

“Especially since Çetin Çetintaş puts such a difficult routine there, you are inflicting violence on your own body because it aims to strengthen the body in a short time... You are doing yoga for 2 hours without interruption by Çetin Çetintaş. He has a series, for example, it should not be done for 2 hours in a row. I got injured in my knee.” (F.G.)

“Since Serdar Aktolga is a person with such a strong body, he said, do not enter the shoulder press with a light weight. I also did a high weight pressing that day and I can't do much movement in my right arm right now, the maximum weight I can lift right now is 15 kilograms. Frankly, that day, I was pumped up. I was thinking like I can do this.” (M.Y.)

It is of paramount importance for social media influencers to be cognizant of the fact that consumers may have been inactive in sports for an extended period, could lack prior athletic experience, or may be at a beginner level, thus necessitating responsible content sharing, devoid of misleading information. The findings of this study highlight the significance of this issue, underscoring the pervasive impact of social media

influencers in propagating awareness regarding the negative consequences that can arise from their actions in this regard.

4.3.2.2. Obsession

In prior research endeavors, numerous investigations have been undertaken to examine the ramifications of idealized physiques and body representations propagated through social media, with a particular focus on their impact on the demographic of young women. These investigations consistently reveal deleterious outcomes, including but not limited to heightened levels of body dissatisfaction, susceptibility to eating disorders, discontentment, concerns pertaining to body image, and demonstrable adverse effects on mental well-being (Klein, 2013; Perloff, 2014; Choukas-Bradley et al., 2022). The continual exposure of consumers to the pervasive ideals of an immaculate physique and the resultant potential for manipulation, leading to adverse impacts on both their physical and mental well-being, underscores the hazardous consequences associated with social media and the dissemination of such content by influencers.

The findings of this study further substantiate that the perpetuation of unrealistic or fictitious perfect and idealized physiques, coupled with incessant exposure to body postures on social media by influencers, significantly and detrimentally influences consumers.

“I'm comparing it to the body of the people I follow, I say this time it was like 'Ezgi Fındık', this time my leg muscle was like 'Şeyma Subaşı'. I was very tired. I endured the fatigue once again, thinking that my six-pack would become more visible, and my back would also become visible. Then I started to feel nauseous, my head began to spin. For example, I learned that I have vertigo for the first time in my life.” (M.Ö.)

“Attaining unrealistic physiques becomes possible, to a certain extent, by using supplements that seriously harm one's health. That's why, when I see those physiques, I automatically consider resorting to those supplements.” (A.Y.)

In accordance with the expressions provided by several consumers above and those included in this study, it has been observed that social media and influencer content engender an obsession among individuals to attain a physique akin to the idealized standards promoted, reaching unhealthy dimensions and leading to a departure from

rational thought processes. Consumers, in their pursuit of achieving the perceived perfect physique, have been noted to experiment with supplements that pose health risks, negatively impacting their well-being, succumbing to illnesses such as vertigo due to the pursuit of an idealized body, and experiencing adverse psychological consequences, including a sense of failure and psychological distress associated with the fixation on attaining such a physique.

This further shows that consumers are deeply immersed and manipulated into the narratives of social media influencers because it appears to strongly influence and in some way lost themselves thus, negatively affect their attitudes and behavior. Within the context of narrative transportation, it is seen that consumers who have seriously obsessed over healthy lifestyles are highly immersed in the narratives of the social media influencers they follow, and this affects their attitudes and behaviors by believing and being convinced that they can have a body similar to the body of the influencer.

“I perceive a close affinity with the character. In fact, visually speaking, there is a striking resemblance between myself and Göktuğ Alaf. Consequently, I follow him with a distinct sense of affinity, for instance.” (A.Y.)

“Actually, there are thousands of people who do sports and share them on Instagram, but none of the names I follow are focused solely on sports or healthy nutrition. For example, I attach so much importance to sports and healthy eating, so why don't I follow them? This is also a contradiction. Because I don't feel close to that person.” (M.Ö.)

Both participants tend to derive health and wellness information from social media influencers whom they follow, as these influencers are perceived to closely align with their own personalities and lifestyles. Therefore, it is seen that both participants had parasocial interaction and at the same time were deeply immersed in the narratives and influenced their attitudes and behaviours.

In this context, it has been noted that participants who exhibit a heightened degree of immersion in social media influencers and perceive a significant affinity with these influencers experience notable adverse effects in their pursuit of attaining the physique endorsed by the respective social media influencer. Hence, it is apparent that the adverse impact on consumer attitudes and behaviors stems from the narrative

transportation context and parasocial interaction between social media influencers and their audience.

There is clear suggesting that particular consumers experience adverse effects due to narrative transportation and parasocial interaction. Previous researchs has not prominently highlighted any negative consequences associated with these phenomena. It is crucial for social media influencers to be cognizant of this aspect and adopt a direction and attitude that takes into account the potential negative impact. The findings of this study carry substantial significance, underscoring the necessity to attentively consider and investigate these effects in future research endeavors. Consequently, the dynamics of narrative transportation and parasocial interaction are observed to exert both positive effects, such as informativeness and encouragement, as well as negative influences on this particular cohort of consumers.

While acknowledging the limitations of generalizability, it is noteworthy that certain participants in this study explicitly emphasizing engagement to social media influencers primarily for utilitarian purposes. Therefore, particular of consumers manifested a distinct absence of emotional closeness or connection with social media influencers therefore it has been observed that there was no parasocial interaction in some consumers.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In discussion section, I will highlight the theoretical contributions. Furthermore, this section involve three main themes. Within the scope of the primary objective of the research, it provides an additional contribution to the existing literature by presenting current motivations and barriers of consumers in adopting and maintaining health and wellness behavior within the context of substantial contemporary changes. Additionally, objective of the study within this section is to present findings regarding impact of social media and social media influencers on consumers' health and wellness behavior, based on narrative transportation and parasocial interaction theories.

5.1. Motivations and Factors that Initiate Consumers' Health and Wellness behavior

Motivational themes were apparent for consumers' health and wellness behavior including; social factors (such as family, friends, social media comments of followers, and social media influencers' contents) and personal factors (e.g. possessing a health-conscious personality, exhibiting physical concerns, and conforming to societal expectations or norms related to health and wellness behavior).

First of all, in consistent with prior literature studies, among the social factors, family and friends consistently provide motivation for consumers to initiate and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Munt et al. (2017) has demonstrated that among the leading contributors to healthy eating is the role of family and friends in promoting healthy nutrition. Bragg (2009) emphasized the significant role of social influences (friends, parents and family members) as a determining motivational source within physical activity. In prior literature studies, comments and impact of social media followers as a stimulus for consumer motivation have not been specifically categorized as a motivator. However, in this current study, amidst the evolving digital landscape, a significant portion of consumers now allocate the majority of their time to social media platforms. Notably, positive feedbacks such as likes, the sending of emojis that have become popular on social media, and both favorable and unfavorable critiques from consumers' social media followers contribute to consumers' sense of gratification and worth, serving as a motivating factor for them to replicate such wellness and healthy practices engagements in the future.

Moreover, within the research, it is evident that individuals characterized by a heightened health consciousness sustain their health and wellness behaviors through

motivations associated with both physical and mental well-being. Nonetheless, the motivation linked to mental health appears to exert a greater influence among participants compared to that of physical health motivation. Furthermore, previous literature frequently emphasizes the adoption of a healthy lifestyle as beneficial for the treatment of various illnesses (Dima-Cozma et al., 2014). Among motivations for older individuals to embrace a healthy lifestyle, preserving their health is highlighted (Kirkby et al., 1999; Kolt et al., 2004). However, this study indicates that individuals diagnosed with certain diseases at a young age not only prioritize the protection of their health but also embrace health and wellness behaviors as a lifestyle choice, implementing them as ingrained habits. These findings expand upon existing literature, suggesting that early-onset diseases can potentially have a positive impact on individuals' ability to sustain health and wellness behaviors.

In addition, physical attractiveness was among the most frequently cited motivations of the participants. Parallel to earlier studies, the motivation for consumers to display health and wellness behaviors includes the desire to appear more attractive. The motivation to be attractive for individuals with physical concerns is supported by the research of Satia et al. (2001), Burgess et al. (2006), Kilpatrick et al. (2010), and Ashton et al. (2015). Also, the research specifically observed that engaging in sports and thus improving physical strength specifically instilled self-confidence in men. Additionally, while attractiveness appears to create an external concern for consumers, self-confidence is an internal issue. Participants in this study expressed that engaging in physical activity boosted their confidence, making them feel more secure while socializing in society, and they conveyed this motivation. In support of this view, Ayyildiz et al. (2019) and Gökkaya et al. (2017) argue that physical activity can help to the development of self-confidence.

The motivation of conforming to fashion trends appears to have a significantly positive impact on health and wellness behaviors. Previous studies have highlighted various external motivations, but the alignment with conforming to fashion trends and dressing up fashionably has not been shown as an external motivation before. It was observed that female participants' motivation to maintain this healthy lifestyle in terms of nutritious eating and engaging in physical activities stems from the desire to be able to wear fashion clothing and conform to fashion trends. Participants emphasized that when they deviate from health and wellness behaviors, they are unable to wear their desired and fashionable clothing, indicating a substantial impact on their social lives.

This outcome stands as a crucial finding warranting further exploration among a larger cohort of male and female participants in forthcoming research endeavors.

The motivation behind consumer behavior, which distinguishes it from other studies on social conformity, lies in the increasing popularity of a healthy lifestyle. Consumers are driven to adopt health and wellness behaviors due to a desire to conform to societal norms and fear of social exclusion. This motivation is prevalent among participants who confront that in both offline (such as schools, homes, workplaces) and online (social media platforms, Instagram) settings, many people engage in healthy eating, physical activity, and actively share their healthy lifestyle choices. The primary motivation for embracing this lifestyle is to be included in a community that promotes such behaviors, thus avoiding social alienation and striving for social harmony. This finding underscores the significance of the motivation to avoid social alienation and maintain social cohesion.

5.2. Barriers and Factors that Prohibit Consumers' Health and Wellness Behaviors

Themes of obstacles and barriers faced by consumers towards maintaining a healthy lifestyle include; social factors (family and friends), personal factors (lack of motivation, economic constraints, lack of time and other excuses), and accessibility (affordability and product availability).

Initially, although family and friends can function as catalysts for consumers' health-related behaviors and well-being, they concurrently pose impediments to the adoption and sustenance of these behaviors. The barriers posed by family and friend factors against healthy eating and physical activity are supported by the research of Tiedje et al. (2014) and Ashton et al. (2015). It seems that due to the role model relationship, family and friends can inadvertently push individuals toward unhealthy behaviors. Additionally, in line with Lappalaine et al. (1998), Kearney and McElhone (1999), Michaelidou et al. (1999), Zunft et al. (1999), Conner and Norman (2005), and Pinho et al (2018), findings show that a prominent psychological barrier that consumers frequently face in adopting healthy eating and engaging in physical activity is a lack of motivation coupled with the tendency to provide rationalizations or excuses.

Another consistent finding with previous studies that the participants expressed is that lack of time adversely and dominantly affects a healthy lifestyle, creating barriers to unhealthy eating habits, inability to practice yoga and engage in exercise. Pinho et al. (2018) have stated that obstacles related to time, such as 'irregular work schedules' and

a 'busy lifestyle,' were linked to a decrease in the regular consumption of vegetables and homemade meals.

Moreover, in line with Lappalainen et al. (1998), Garcia and Mann (2003), McEachern et al. (2005), Jun et al. (2016), and Pinho et al. (2018), findings show that a compelling barrier that consumers frequently face in adopting healthy eating and engaging in physical activity is personal economic situation. A disparity was observed between participants of varying socioeconomic statuses regarding the maintenance of their health and wellness behaviors. Those in high socioeconomic status demonstrated no issues in upholding these behaviors, whereas participants with low socioeconomic status encountered challenges in achieving and sustaining their health and wellness practices.

The existing body of literature has traditionally underscored the significance of financial barriers stemming from individual socio-economic circumstances. However, contrary to prior research, the present study reveals that the escalating economic crisis in recent years have had an adverse impact on consumers' accessibility, particularly in terms of obtaining nutritious food. Findings show that consumers are constraining their food intake in terms of quantity and reducing their consumption of healthy food products or the frequency of consuming healthy meals compared to previous years. Additionally, an accessibility barrier not previously emphasized in the literature is the perception held by consumers that healthy foods are more costly than unhealthy alternatives, leading them to opt for less healthy options. Consequently, due to the cost of healthy food products appears to exert a detrimental influence on the accessibility of healthy eating.

Prior research underscores the crucial role of retailers, food manufacturers, restaurants, and catering services in providing access to health-conscious food choices for consumers (Choi and Zhao, 2010; McKinsey & Company, 2022). Nonetheless, within the barriers that consumers currently face in healthy eating, this study reveals that individuals seeking healthy and vegan dietary options encounter notable challenges accessing a satisfactory array of nutritious food offerings in restaurants, catering services, or markets. This unavailability of options poses a substantial barrier, compelling them towards unhealthy alternatives.

5.3. Effect of Social Media and Social Media Influencers on consumer's health and wellness behaviors

5.3.1. Positive Consequences and Implications

The themes related to the positive impact of social media and social media influencers on consumers' health and wellness behaviors encompass informativeness, encouragement, affordability, and practicality.

In previous literature, the narrative transportation effect of social media influencers' narratives related to health and wellness has been explored, focusing on women's health issues, cancer, skincare, and prescribed drug usage. It has been observed that in these fields, social media influencers have brought about changes in consumers' attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors (Murphy et al., 2011; Zou et al., 2021; Kim, 2022). This research extends previous literature studies by finding that the narrative transportation effect occurs in consumers who adopt healthy lifestyles by being highly immersed in social media influencers' informative narratives about healthy eating and physical activity. Substantial and favorable alterations in consumers' attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors concerning healthy dietary habits and exercise routines have been unveiled. These changes are attributed to the narrative transportation effect instigated by the informative narratives disseminated by social media influencers.

Furthermore, a segment of consumers who positively changed their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours in their healthy eating and exercise routines had a parasocial interaction with the social media influencer they followed. In Sakib et al. (2020) study, it was revealed that parasocial interaction creates an intention to exercise for individuals, while in this study, it is seen that parasocial interaction between consumers and social media influencers occurs in the field of healthy nutrition as well as physical activity. It is seen that both narrative transportation and parasocial interaction theories are expanding in different areas. Additionally, it was seen that some groups of consumers do not have a parasocial interaction with social media influencers. They did not perceive any sense of closeness or connection with the social media influencer they followed; they pursued these influencers solely for utilitarian gains, thereby there was no parasocial interaction between them. Consumers' prejudices or mistrust towards social media influencers may cause the lack of parasocial interaction between them.

Additionally, previous literature has emphasized that social media influencers have a motivational power on consumers' intent to exercise (Durau et al., 2022). However, different from the previous study, the current investigation revealed that the narratives

communicated by social media influencers served as a source of encouragement for consumers, beyond the motivation that social media influencers provide and have a persuasive effect. It was observed that by watching the content and narratives of social media influencers, consumers initiated yoga and physical activity behaviors that they had previously not engaged in. Consumers being encouraged to start physical activities they have not done before through the narratives of social media influencers shows that the narrative transportation effect occurs among consumers. Consumers seem to be persuaded by the narratives presented by social media influencers, as evidenced by the impact on their behavioral patterns. The persuasive power of narrative can alter an individual's views and attitudes (Green and Brock, 2000).

It was also observed that the parasocial interaction between consumers and social media influencers encouraged and motivated consumers in health and wellness behaviours. Respondents expressed heightened motivation derived from engaging with physical activity narratives shared by social media influencers they perceived as close and resonant with their personal experiences. A similar view is also supported in the literature. Parasocial interaction has a significant impact on consumers, especially concerning involvement in physical activities and embracing healthy eating habits, thereby encouraging an interest in exercising and advocating for a healthy way of life (Sakib et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2022).

Moreover, different from the previous study, the current investigation revealed that the discount coupons, links and content offered by social media influencers both facilitate consumers' health and wellness behaviors and have a positive effect on reducing their financial difficulties in adopting a healthy lifestyle. The participants highlighted the high cost of personal trainers at gyms and instead mentioned that they can engage in physical activity for free by following the content of social media influencers. Furthermore, consumers stressed that leading a healthy lifestyle can be expensive, but they can easily obtain health and wellness products, such as vitamins, accessories, and sportswear, at discounted prices through links and discount coupons shared by social media influencers. The study further illuminates that social media influencers offer consumers practical and valuable recommendations in the context of health and wellness behaviors that can contribute to affordability. Social media influencers facilitate the maintenance of consumer health and wellness behaviors by providing practical solutions for healthy eating that do not necessitate the purchase of expensive

health products, as well as opportunities for physical activity that do not mandate the use of professional exercise equipment.

5.3.2. Negative Consequences and Implications

The themes related to the negative impact of social media and social media influencers on consumers' health and wellness behaviors encompass physical injury and obsession. The research conducted by Ori et al. (2019) underscores the potential negative impact on consumers' well-being and the associated risk of physical injury resulting from the lack of expertise among social media influencers in the domain of physical activity and exercise. Moreover, Buchanan et al. (2023) presents direct evidence of consumer injuries during the practice of yoga. Notably, this study extends the current body of literature by definitively demonstrating that participants not just in yoga practice but also in various physical activity and exercise routines depicted by social media influencers encounter physical injuries and harm during their attempts at replication. Social media influencers seemingly exert an adverse impact on consumers within this context.

Furthermore, prior literature has not addressed the adverse implications stemming from narrative transportation and parasocial interaction between social media influencers and consumers. The study demonstrated that participant exhibited immersion in the narratives of physical activity and exercise routines shared by social media influencers. This immersion or engrossment led to an excessive obsession among consumers on attaining the identical physique as these social media influencers, subsequently caused the emergence of behaviors that had negative effects on consumers themselves. Notably, one participant experienced illness, while another contemplated the usage of harmful supplements. Accordingly, the present findings highlight the narrative transportation effect manifested by social media influencers, creates obsession among consumers. This study adds to the existing scholarly discourse by revealing that the behaviors and attitudes of consumers can be both positively and negatively influenced by the narrative transportation effect. Moreover, findings reveal that consumers who are exhibiting obsession perceive a sense of intimacy with the social media influencers they follow, attributing traits of these influencers to their own identities, thereby there was a parasocial interaction between them.

Consequently, this investigation contributes to the scholarly discourse by exploring the role of social media influencers in both facilitating and complicating consumers'

motivations and barriers. This is achieved through an examination of narrative transportation and the application of parasocial interaction theory.



CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

In conclusion section, I will highlight the practical, managerial and policy implications of the study, besides limitations of this research and future research opportunities.

6.1. Practical, Managerial and Policy Implications of the Study

The outcomes of this research serve as valuable guidance for communicators, brands, marketers, and professionals in the field, assisting in bolstering consumer motivations and reducing obstacles related to the maintaining consumers' health and wellness behaviors. In this regard, managerial implications offer guiding recommendations for social media influencers to advocate for consumers' health and wellness behavior.

First of all, for social media influencers, they should be aware that they are creating profound changes in consumers' health and wellness behaviors and attitudes. For the physical injuries experienced by consumers revealed by this research, social media influencers should share their content with a full understanding of the potential risks and taking appropriate form, technique and safety precautions in their exercise routines. To mitigate consumers' obsession on attaining an ideal or perfect physique, social media influencers can disseminate diverse body shapes, promote inclusivity, endorse body positivity, and provide content emphasizing the absence of a singular ideal body. By presenting authentic, unaltered depictions of realistic body forms, this approach may help diminish the obsession on aspiring to an idealized physical appearance. Additionally, the research findings indicate that the content produced by social media influencers has a positive impact on consumers' motivation to engage in health and wellness behaviors. This suggests that social media influencers have the potential to mitigate psychological barriers, such as excuse-making or lack of motivation. Through the dissemination of content centered around achievable objectives and regular routines pertaining to health and wellness behaviors, social media influencers can effectively enhance individuals' motivation by providing incentives, such as discount coupons, to encourage their followers. Furthermore, to enhance the motivation of consumers inspired by friends and family, social media influencers can incentivize consumers by getting discounts from brands on multiple gym memberships, group fitness sessions, group yoga sessions, and group-focused healthy cooking events, whether family-based or friend-focused.

Secondly, for individual consumer, in order to foster a healthy lifestyle and overcome familial barriers, individuals seeking to adopt such a lifestyle can prioritize the

significance of nutritious eating habits and regular physical activity to enhance their overall well-being. By serving as positive role models, these individuals can inspire their family members to embark on a similar path, while also promoting awareness by disseminating scientific literature and resources within the family network. Furthermore, individuals who desire to embrace a healthier way of life but encounter challenges from their social circle can overcome this obstacle by surrounding themselves with friends who also prioritize and promote a healthy lifestyle. Alternatively, consumers can work towards minimizing the impact of their friends' perspective on unhealthy habits and lack of exercise by encouraging them to participate in activities that revolve around health and fitness. Additionally, in order to facilitate the adoption of health-promoting behaviors among time-constrained consumers, engage in proactive strategies such as preparing nutritious meals during weekends for consumption on weekdays, and engaging in brief yet intensive exercise sessions can mitigate time constraint barriers. Additionally, to boost or sustain the motivation of people influenced by social media followers, online communities where individuals display positive health and wellness habits can be beneficial. Engaging in supportive conversations within these communities can encourage members to improve their health behaviors through constructive feedback and mutual encouragement. The promotion of the mental health benefits associated with healthy nutrition and exercise can be disseminated to broader consumer audiences via diverse media channels. Individuals who persist with these behaviors driven by the recognition of their positive impact on mental health can bolster their own motivation while concurrently fostering awareness among others by sharing their experiences on selected social media platforms. Individuals adopting a healthy lifestyle amid specific health conditions and developing habitual practices can share their intrinsic motivations, health journeys, benefits, and transformations to similar circumstances who engage in health practices primarily driven by obligation.

Thirdly, for policy makers, proactive measures such as organizing activities centered around healthy food preparation, outdoor walks, and exercise can effectively diminish the presence of obstacles or resistance that may impede family members from embracing these health-oriented practices. In addition, according to the study conducted by Michaelidou (2012), it is recommended that healthy eating campaigns in the Czech Republic prioritize addressing psychological obstacles, such as willpower and eating habits. One effective approach in this regard could involve the provision of

toll-free helpline services for psychological support. To address the needs of individuals with low socio-economic status, it is imperative for community members, organizations, and public health agencies to spearhead targeted initiatives and policy measures aimed at enhancing the affordability of healthy and nutritious food. Government support programmes and community-based initiatives could be launched to provide affordable access to healthy products for individuals facing major challenges in the face of the economic crisis.

6.2. Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

Although this study yields various unique findings, it is constrained by several limitations. The sample of this research is limited socio-demographically, focusing on a narrow spectrum of gender, income level, and age groups. Motivations and barriers of consumers in adopting and maintaining health and wellness behavior and consumers' impact from social media and social media influencers can be examined from the perspectives of individuals from different age (Gen Z or older), gender and income groups.

Additionally, this study has focused on the impact of social media influencers on consumers and considered solely the perspective of consumers. However, the perspective of social media influencers regarding health and wellness topics, their alignment with brand guidance in this domain, and the impacts of their perspectives can be investigated. This exploration would enable a better understanding of the perspective held by social media influencers on health and wellness context.

Furthermore, subsequent research could explore the influence of social media influencers on consumers' health and wellness behaviors, specifically examining their ethical behavioral impact.

Also, subsequent research endeavors may enhance insights by incorporating focus group studies into the research methodology, involving the participation of academicians, health professionals, brands, and communicators. This approach can offer valuable recommendations towards gaining a more profound comprehension of consumers' motivations, barriers and the dynamics regarding their health and wellness behavior in general and the influence exerted by social media influencers in this regard. Furthermore, prospective research endeavors could enhance societal health and wellness behaviors by examining role of governmental and non-governmental organizations through a marketing lens.

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