

## The Role of Influencers in Online Second-Hand Clothing Shopping: The Case of Dolap Application in Türkiye



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**ABSTRACT:** The main purpose of this study was to explore the effects of influencers on consumers in the Dolap application in Türkiye, an online second-hand clothing shopping platform. In this context, a semi-structured interview form was used with 20 people who use the Dolap application. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and over the phone. It has been revealed that the influence of influencers on the purchase of second-hand clothing by consumers using the application is low, but the brands used by the influencer when making a purchase decision can affect the purchase decision. The most important basic criterion for purchasing clothing is economic benefit. The most common problem is payments. Buyers are happy to buy cheaper products in the market and sellers are happy to earn income and profit. In this study, the shipping process and the mismatch between the product's image and the product itself emerged as the main sources of concern. According to the results, influencers can have an impact on consumers in terms of purchasing branded products at affordable prices, following fashion, and partially creating environmental awareness. It can be stated that the second-hand clothing market, even in the online environment, paves the way for consumers to develop a purchasing behaviour pattern specific to their own identities and lifestyles, is preferred for reasons such as obtaining economic value (financial savings) due to the opportunity to find quality and branded products at a more affordable price, providing functional benefits arising from the use of the product.

**KEYWORDS:** Online second-hand shopping, influencer, Dolap application.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Globalization and technological developments have led to overconsumption by creating unrealistic needs of consumers. There are many stimuli that encourage today's consumers to consume fast. Especially thanks to smart mobile devices, online purchasing habits are starting to increase (İnce & Kadioğlu, 2020). Consumers who shop second-hand online sometimes assume the role of buyers and sometimes sellers. There is an intense interaction between consumers using online second-hand platforms. Therefore, word-of-mouth communication is frequently used on these platforms (Şen, 2021). Many reasons such as pandemic conditions, shopping addiction, and influencer posts cause consumers to consume more and reshape their consumption habits. Influencers can influence consumers' purchasing attitudes and behaviours by sharing almost every moment of their daily lives on social media. Even in second-hand online shopping, it is possible to state that influencers have an impact on their followers. It is known that there are various studies that online influencer marketing (Leung, et al. 2022) influences and compels consumers in various ways by sharing posts on social media platforms and influences their purchasing decisions in the online shopping process (Nandagiri and Philip, 2018; Staudinger, 2019; Semiz and Zengin, 2019; Yuan and Lou 2020). There are also some studies on the influence of influencers on consumers' attitudes and behaviours towards second-hand clothing and fashion products (Mohammad et al. 2020; Farhadi and Stefanska 2020; Lidgren and Major 2021; Shrivastava et al. 2021: Boardman et al. 2022). There are also studies on second-hand clothing shopping motivations as part of sustainable consumption (Kiehn and Weller, 2018), the role of social media influencers on consumers' consumption of sustainable fashion products (Lidgren and Major 2021), the impact of social media influencers on purchase intention (Saima and Khan 2020) and sustainable fashion products (Kapoor et al. 2022).

Online second-hand shopping platforms in Türkiye include Sahibinden.Com, Letgo, Modacruz, Dolap, Sahaf, Zebramo, Bebecruz and many others. These platforms cover tools and equipment in many categories such as home-garden, hardware and hardware, type products, electronic sports, vehicles, baby and children, movies, books and music, antiques, clothing.

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Applications such as Sahibinden.com, Letgo, and Dolap are online platforms where consumers especially want to sell second-hand products; among these, Dolap application constitutes the research subject of this study. This study examines how influencers can create an impact on consumers based on the Dolap application, one of the online second-hand shopping sites. In this study, the usage habits of consumers regarding the Dolap application and the problems experienced are also determined. It is expected that the results of this study may contribute to filling the gap in the national literature on the subject and may lead to further research to be conducted with mixed methods by comparing the results of other studies on similar topics.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Concept of Influencer and Its Impact on Consumers

Since the emergence of "influencers" as commercial bloggers in the mid-2000s, content types have evolved rapidly to become the focus of attention, especially among Generation Z. While popular content categories often focus on an important topic such as fashion, food, parenting, etc., influencers of the highly feminized "lifestyle" genre are actively creating and sharing content from their personal lives to engage with their followers and build their own brands (De Jans et al., 2019; Abidin, 2019; Feng et al. 2020). Influencers create spheres of influence by sharing their experiences on a wide range of specific topics such as fitness, fashion, beauty, DIY, vacation, entertainment, etc. with their followers (Nandagiri & Philip, 2018). Influencers are seen as relatable and trustworthy, allowing them to be important messengers for consumers seeking advice on products (Forbes, 2016: 79). According to the influencer's popularity analysis, some researchers identify them with the role of opinion leader. Influencers can also be considered as opinion leaders based on their ability to be influenced by their words or ideas (Ramadanty & Safitri, 2019: 49). Today's consumers' purchasing behaviors are shaped by influencers, people whose knowledge and experience in a particular field are trusted. Influencers help the brand build trust through collaboration and disseminate brand information to potential consumers (Belanche et al. 2021: 186); they create their message based on direct and personal relationships with buyers and thus influence the purchasing decisions of online consumers who are constantly monitored (Tworzydło et al., 2019: 146).

Influencers seek information that supports consumers' purchasing decisions. Therefore, it is stated that influencers have an important place in consumers' purchasing decisions as long as they do not appear fake and abnormal (Staudinger, 2019: 17; Semiz & Zengin, 2019: 2343-2344). For example, in China, influencers are reported to be the primary trigger for online sales of second-hand apparel and luxury fashion products (Boardman et al. 2022). On the other hand, Viro and Mikkola (2023: 55-56) examine the impact of influencer's posts in the context of online second-hand fashion promotion in three dimensions: education, entertainment, and aesthetics. Mohammad et al. (2020) state that influencers have a direct positive impact on consumers' attitude towards second-hand clothing, consumer engagement and careful consumption behaviour. Shrivastava et al. (2021) investigated influencers as a driving force in using online second-hand clothing buying platforms, while Farhadi and Stefanska (2020) talked about the possible effects of influencers' participation in the second-hand apparel market. According to Lidgren and Major (2021), influencers inspire new habits by exhibiting sustainable patterns in their own consumption behaviour; they can offer consumers the opportunity to direct them to sustainable alternatives in second-hand consumption, especially in the fashion sector.

When these studies are analysed, it is revealed that influencers affect the purchasing decisions of consumers and that they are followed due to the prominence of concepts such as reliability, sincerity (sincerity) and expertise. Influencers with a specific consumer profile can reach more consumers by expanding their following, as well as expanding their sphere of influence with their mediocrity.

## III. RESEARCH METHODS

### A. Research type and model

This study uses a survey model. This is because the usage habits of consumers who use the application called "Dolap" where second-hand clothing products are sold online, the problems they experience and the effects of influencers in this process are examined within their natural conditions (Karasar, 2014). This study also shows an exploratory characteristic. According to Burns and Bush (2015), exploratory research can also be conducted when new or more up-to-date information is needed. According to the authors, exploratory research helps to define terms and concepts. Therefore, exploratory research can be conducted by simply reading a journal or observing a situation. On the other hand, it should be noted that this study is descriptive in nature. Sönmez and Alacapınar (2013: 49) state that measurement tools such as questionnaires, interviews, observations, investigations, multiple choice, open-ended, fill-in questions, etc. can be used in descriptive research depending on the problem.

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## B. Population and sample

The population of this study consists of people who buy and sell second-hand goods using the Dolap application. The population units cannot be known exactly. According to Burns and Bush (2015), small and unrepresentative samples are often used in exploratory research. In this study, purposive sampling was used to collect data through a semi-structured interview form with 20 experienced consumers to access new and up-to-date information about a subject that is not known much. Coyne (1997) states that large samples are not necessary to provide qualitative data, Strauss, and Corbin (2014) state that qualitative studies are conducted with purposive samples determined in small numbers, and Neuman and Robson (2014) state that samples with detailed and rich content are sufficient.

## C. Data collection tool

An interview form was used as a data collection tool. In the first part of the form, there are 7 demographic questions describing the respondents. In the second part, there are 8 multiple-choice questions describing the habits of the online second-hand clothing shopping application, Dolap. In the third section, a total of 4 open-ended categorical questions (economic, social, environmental, and hedonic) were included to explore the impact (role) of influencers on the consumer in the online second-hand clothing shopping application. Additional probes were added to these questions throughout the interview to obtain more detailed data. 14 of the interviews were conducted face-to-face in Tekirdağ, where the researchers live. Interviews with only 6 people who use the Dolap application were conducted over the phone. Because it was not possible to meet face-to-face with these people. In cases where face-to-face interviews are not necessary or the questions are short, it is stated that such methods are used to save costs and provide data quickly because the respondents are distributed over a wide geographical area (Wrenn et al. 2002: De Vaus, 2002). Each telephone interview lasted approximately 10 minutes. Hill et al. (2002) point out that telephone interviews should be between 10-15 minutes. The data obtained are qualitative in nature.

**Table 1. Interview method and number**

Interview method	Cities	Number of persons
Interview by phone	İstanbul	3
	Çanakkale	1
	Edirne	1
	Düzce	1
Face to face interview	Tekirdağ	14
<b>Total</b>		<b>20</b>

## D. Data Analysis

Burns and Bush (2015) state that the most common exploratory research method is to explain existing knowledge, that it is widely used in marketing, that secondary data analysis can be done very quickly, and that libraries and the internet provide access to a wide range of secondary data sources, including information contained in books, articles, journals, special reports, papers and newspapers. In this study, since books, articles, theses, journals, magazines, and websites were analysed, "document analysis" was also conducted in a sense. Because in addition to these documents, some authors point out that document analysis can be conducted on visual and written elements (Yıldırım and Şimşek 2008: 188; Baş and Akturan, 2013: 118; Turan and Özen, 2013: 134). The qualitative findings obtained in the interviews were analysed in detail due to the grammatical features used (Baş & Akturan, 2008); especially some of the participants' statements were directly quoted (Seidman, 2006).

## E. Validity-Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, each word was handwritten, and the answers were repeated and confirmed. Some important sentences of the respondents were directly quoted. In this research, especially the first author has experience with the Dolap app. Secondly, the first author knows many people who use such applications, which provided a significant advantage in sampling and did not cause difficulties in understanding and explaining the subject. Third, the fact that the first author has such experience increases the likelihood of understanding the jargon used by the participants, trust in the researcher, and truth-telling (Daymon & Hollaway, 2005).

## F. Limitations

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## IV. FINDINGS

The interview findings obtained in this study are given below. According to Table 2, more than half of the participants were female (60%), aged 40 years and below, married (55%) and had a bachelor's degree (75%). Half of the participants (50%) graduated from health and engineering departments, and half of them (50%) work in the private sector and as health personnel. Although there is no specific income distribution of the participants, most of the participants (65%) have a monthly income of 20001 TL and above.

**Table 2. Demographic characteristics (n=20)**

Variables	Groups	F	%	Variables	Groups	F	%
<b>Gender</b>	Female	12	60	<b>Graduated Department</b>	Business Administration	3	15
	Male	8	40		Tourism	3	15
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>		Health	5	25
<b>Age</b>	30 years and below	5	25		Faculty of Education	2	10
	31-40 years	6	30		Engineering	5	25
	41-50 years	5	25		Sport Sciences	2	10
	Age 51 and over	4	20		<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>		Health Personnel	5	25
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	11	55		Public Personnel	2	10
	Single	6	30		Student	5	25
	Divorced/Separated/Widowed	3	15	Private Sector Per.	3	15	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>	Tradesmen	2	10	
<b>Educational level</b>	Associate Degree	3	15	Self-employed	3	15	
	License	15	75	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>	
	Master's Degree	1	5	15.000 TL and less	5	25	
	PhD	1	5	15.000-20.000 TL	2	10	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>	20.001-25.000TL	5	25	
<b>Monthly Income</b>				25.001-30.000 TL	3	15	
				30.001 TL and more	5	25	
				<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>	

Findings regarding the usage habits of the locker application are given in Table 3. Table 3 shows the findings regarding the usage habits of the Dolap application. Most of the participants (60%) have purchased clothes with the Dolap application 3 times or more before. However, most of the participants (40%) have never sold clothes with the Dolap application before. The most important main criterion (45%) for the participants when buying clothes with the Dolap app is "economic benefit". Most of the respondents (35%) stated that they had "problems with payments" on the Dolap app. Most of the participants (85%) stated that the most pleasing aspect of being a buyer in the Dolap application is the advantage of "being able to supply the products in the market at a cheaper price". Most of the participants (70%) stated that the most pleasing aspect of being a seller in the Dolap application is "making a profit". Most of the participants stated that the main concerns experienced in the Dolap application are "the seller's inability to ship the product despite putting the product up for sale" (40%) and the problem that "the product image and the incoming product do not match" (40%).

**Table 3. Findings regarding the usage habits of the locker application (n=20)**

Questions	Groups	F	%
Number of clothes previously purchased with the Dolap app	1 time	6	30
	2 times	2	10
	3 times	7	35

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	4 times and more	5	25
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of clothes previously sold with the Dolap app	Never	8	40
	1 time	6	30
	2 times	1	5
	3 times	2	10
	4 times and more	3	15
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>
The most important criteria when buying clothing with the Dolap app	Authenticity	1	5
	Being a brand	3	15
	Catching the trend	2	10
	Functional	4	20
	Economic benefit	9	45
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>
The most common problem in the Dolap app	Problems in the process of selling clothes	2	10
	Problems in the process of buying clothes	6	30
	Problems with payments	7	35
	Problems in dealing with customers	3	15
	Other	2	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>
The joys of being a buyer on the Dolap app	Being able to supply products in the market at a cheaper price	17	85
	Creating conscious awareness of the consumer	2	10
	Easily find the requested product through filters	1	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>
What is the happiest thing about being a seller on Dolap App.	To be able to offer the product to be sold at the desired price	3	15
	Easy communication with customers	1	5
	Encouraging negotiated purchases with the addition of a price offer option	2	10
	Profit making	14	70
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>
The main concern with the Dolap App.	Failure of the seller to ship the product despite putting it up for sale	8	40
	The problem that the product image and the incoming product do not match	8	40
	Fraud	4	20
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>
The effect of reviewing the sales or favorites of the influencer who is not previously known by the user in the Dolap application on the purchase decision	If it is an influencer I like and follow, it influences my purchase decision	5	25
	Influences my purchase decision even if I don't like it and don't follow it	5	25
	Impressive does not influence my purchase decision	3	15
	It does not affect my purchasing decision as I have other priorities other than influencers in my purchasing decisions	7	35
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

Regarding the purchase decision of reviewing the items sold or favoured by the influencer who was not previously known by the user in the Dolap application, most of the participants (35%) stated that it did not affect the purchase decision because they had other priorities other than influencers in their purchasing decisions. Important clues that influencers may have economic, social, environmental, and hedonic effects on consumers when using online second-hand shopping sites are given in Table 4.

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Table 4. Similar and different effects of influencers on consumer use of online second-hand shopping sites

Variables	Similar Impacts	Different Impacts
<b>Economic Impacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The advantage of purchasing branded products at affordable prices</li> <li>• The desire to look like an influencer who is felt to be close to oneself, even if there is an economic constraint</li> <li>• Influencing the purchase decision by creating the perception of "cheap" with the sharing made by the influencer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The influencer spends most of his time on social media, so he uses second-hand shopping sites only for advertising purposes.</li> </ul>
<b>Social Impacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some consumers' purchase decision is not influenced by the influencer selling for charity.</li> <li>• The influencer's review of the products purchased by the influencer to make the consumer feel better encourages second-hand purchases.</li> <li>• Since consumers pay attention to the clothing style of the people around them, influencers have an accelerating effect on fashionable purchasing decisions.</li> <li>• Consumers think that the products they see in influencers shape their purchasing decisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the influencer is buying and selling a nostalgic product, it affects the purchase decision.</li> <li>• When influencers constantly promote products due to their profession, it is a good idea to examine the products they sell.</li> </ul>
<b>Environmental Impacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influencers create environmental awareness and the influencer's views and actions on this issue influence the purchase decision.</li> <li>• Since influencers themselves consume a lot of products, it is doubtful that they are environmentally conscious.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If it is an influencer that I have been following for many years, its attitudes towards waste and its environmentalist attitudes make me positive towards the products it sells.</li> </ul>
<b>Hedonic Impacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some consumers think that if price were not a priority, they would prefer to buy new products rather than second-hand products, so the influencer would not play a role in my purchasing decisions.</li> <li>• An influencer that I feel close to myself influences my purchase decision because I want to use the products he/she uses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the influencer has a positive attitude towards a needed product, the consumer starts researching online to buy it cheaply.</li> <li>• Since it is important what the consumer, not the influencer, thinks about a product, the consumer's opinion is prioritized and a purchase decision is made.</li> </ul>

## DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study is to explore the effects of influencers on consumers in the case of Dolap, an online second-hand clothing shopping platform.

The interviews revealed that the most important basic criterion for clothing purchases is "economic benefit", and the most important criterion is "problems with payments". Another striking finding is that buyers are most happy with the opportunity to "buy cheaper products in the market" and sellers are most happy with the opportunity to "make a profit". In this study, the shipping process and the mismatch between the product image and the product itself emerged as the main sources of concern. In addition, influencers were found to be effective on consumers in purchasing branded products at affordable prices, following fashion, and creating environmental awareness. Kiehn and Vojkovic (2018: 46) concluded that the reasons why millennials buy second-hand clothing online are due to fashionable appearance. There are also doubts that the influencers in this study are environmentally conscious as they consume a lot of products. Indeed, Farhadi and Stefanska (2020: 35) conclude that there is no relationship between the influencer and the environmental factor. Therefore, it can be stated that the influencer does not have any effect when it comes to the consumer's awareness of the environmental situation. On the other hand, Borusiak et al. (2021) state that the impact of consumers' environmental concerns on their attitudes towards second-hand shopping is high.



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In contrast to this study, Viro and Mikkola (2023) emphasize that influencers have an important role in education, entertainment, and aesthetics in their study on the impact of influencer marketing videos on consumers in the second-hand fashion online store market. For example, the authors point out that in terms of education, the type of information, the delivery of the message and the person delivering it are important; in terms of entertainment, the personality, energy, and engagement of the influencer; and in terms of aesthetics, the visuality of the videos is important. In terms of education, the credibility and persuasiveness of the influencer is important, as well as verbal information about sustainability and the online store. In terms of aesthetics, the style of the influencer is perceived as attractive, as well as visuals such as basic colours and short text. Shrivastava et al. (2021) found that influencers are the primary source for communicating fashion sustainability information through visuals and posts. Using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to understand the impact of influencers on the second-hand market, Farhadi and Stefanska (2020) found that influencers can increase participation in the second-hand apparel market. In the end, it can be stated that the second-hand clothing market, even in the online environment, paves the way for consumers to develop a purchasing behaviour pattern specific to their own identities and lifestyles, is preferred for reasons such as obtaining economic value (financial savings) due to the opportunity to find quality and branded products at a more affordable price, providing functional benefits arising from the use of the product, and the influencers on these preferences have a partial effect on some consumers. To reveal this effect more clearly, purposive sampling will be necessary to reach much larger masses using such applications, and to conduct analyses by obtaining qualitative and quantitative data. The most important limitation of this study is that only a group of 20 people who use the Dolap application were interviewed. In future studies, studies that examine the subject from different aspects related to second-hand online shopping applications and sites can be conducted.

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