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Consumer Behavior in the Functional Beverage Sector: A Systematic Review of Influencer Marketing, Brand Awareness and Perceived Homophily

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Consumer Behavior in the Functional Beverage Sector: A Systematic Review of Influencer Marketing, Brand Awareness and Perceived Homophily

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Abstract

The functional beverage products such as kombucha have gained prominence within the trends of consumption owing to their health benefits and natural production processes. However, the foundations of consumer behavior are still scattered in the academic literature, especially regarding influencer marketing, brand awareness, and perceived homophily. The structured review was conducted according to the PRISMA framework, and 34 peer-reviewed articles were identified and reviewed across major academic databases such as ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, and SpringerLink. The findings reveal that influencer marketing impacts customer behavior through credibility, authenticity, trust and engagement. Brand awareness increases recognition, reduces ambiguity and facilitates informed consumption choices. Perceived homophily strengthens persuasion through relatability and social identification between the influencer and the consumer. The review reveals the interactive effects of these aspects via communicative, cognitive and social mechanisms on consumer behavior. The report also highlights the absence of comprehensive research in the context of growing kombucha market in Uganda. This study provides a consistent synthesis of dispersed findings and advances an integrated perspective on consumer behavior. It also offers useful insights for marketers looking to promote consumption through credible influencer campaigns, solid brand positioning and socially relevant communication.

Keywords: *consumer behavior, influencer marketing, brand awareness, perceived homophily, functional beverages, comprehensive literature review*

1. Introduction

Growing environmental concerns, increasing health consciousness, and changing purchasing patterns have made consumer behavior an important area of research (Peattie, 2010; White *et al.*, 2019). Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the environmental and social consequences of their purchasing decisions, leading to greater demand for products that promote both personal well-being and environmental sustainability (Joshi & Rahman, 2015). This shift has stimulated interest in consumption practices across various industries, particularly the food and beverage sector (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006; Grunert, 2011). Within this context, functional beverages such

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as kombucha have attracted considerable attention because of their perceived health benefits, natural fermentation processes, and alignment with consumption trends (Jayabalan *et al.*, 2014). Kombucha is a fermented tea beverage commonly associated with improved digestive health, wellness, and environmentally friendly production practices, making it highly relevant to discussions of consumer behavior (Greenwalt *et al.*, 2000; Villarreal-Soto *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, consumer adoption of kombucha is increasingly influenced by cultural familiarity with fermented products and growing exposure to digital marketing platforms, particularly in emerging economies (Tamang *et al.*, 2016; Kamboj *et al.*, 2020).

Recent marketing literature emphasizes the importance of influencer marketing, brand awareness, and perceived homophily in shaping consumer behavior (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Casaló *et al.*, 2020). Through social media platforms, influencer marketing significantly affects consumers' attitudes and purchase decisions by fostering credibility, authenticity, trust, and engagement (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Brand awareness enhances consumers' ability to recognize and recall brands, thereby reducing uncertainty and facilitating informed purchasing decisions (Keller, 2001; Aaker, 1996). Likewise, perceived homophily which is the extent to which consumers perceive similarities with influencers strengthens trust, message acceptance and persuasion because individuals are generally more receptive to information from sources, they perceive as similar to themselves (McPherson *et al.*, 2001; Brown & Reingen, 1987).

Although extensive research has examined influencer marketing, brand awareness and perceived homophily independently, relatively few studies have integrated these constructs to explain consumer behavior (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Ki *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, empirical evidence examining their combined influence within the context of functional beverages, particularly kombucha, remains limited, especially in emerging economies where socio-cultural and economic conditions may shape consumer behavior differently (Sheth, 2020).

Although previous studies have independently examined influencer marketing, brand awareness and perceived homophily, several important gaps remain. First, existing reviews tend to focus on social media marketing, with limited attention to functional beverages such as kombucha. Second, the literature has rarely synthesized these three constructs within a single conceptual framework explaining consumer behavior. Third, most available evidence originates from developed economies, while evidence from emerging markets, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa and Uganda, remains scarce despite the rapid growth of the functional beverage market. Consequently, there is limited understanding of how communication, cognitive and social mechanisms jointly influence consumer behavior within this context. This systematic review addresses these gaps by integrating the available evidence and identifying directions for future research.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Review Design

This study adopted a systematic literature review (SLR) to synthesize existing research on consumer behavior, with particular emphasis on influencer marketing, brand awareness, and perceived homophily. A systematic literature review provides a structured and transparent approach to identifying, evaluating, and integrating evidence from previous studies, thereby

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enhancing the reliability and validity of research findings (Snyder, 2019; Tranfield et al., 2003). The review was conducted and reported in accordance with the PRISMA framework which guided the identification, screening, eligibility assessment and inclusion of studies, ensuring transparency, consistency and methodological rigour throughout the review process (Page *et al.*, 2021).

2.2 Data Sources

The literature search was conducted using Google Scholar as a general academic search engine alongside major scholarly databases, including ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, and SpringerLink. The use of multiple databases increased the comprehensiveness of the search, reduced publication bias, and enhanced access to high-quality peer-reviewed literature (Gusenbauer & Haddaway, 2020; Tranfield *et al.*, 2003). The search strategy was developed based on the study objectives and employed predefined keywords related to the main study variables, including *consumer behavior*, *influencer marketing*, *brand awareness*, *perceived homophily*, *functional beverages*, and *kombucha*. Boolean operators (AND and OR) were used to combine search terms and improve search efficiency (Briner & Denyer, 2012). For example, search combinations such as "influencer marketing" AND "consumer behavior" AND "brand awareness" were used to identify relevant studies. The search was limited to articles published between 2000 and 2025 in order to capture developments in consumer behavior and digital marketing associated with the growth of social media platforms (Appel *et al.*, 2020; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Prior to screening, inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to ensure the quality and relevance of the studies included in the review (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Only peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2000 and 2025 were considered eligible. Studies were required to examine at least one of the key variables, namely consumer behavior, influencer marketing, brand awareness, or perceived homophily, within a marketing or consumer behavior context. Studies focusing on digital marketing and the food and beverage sector, particularly functional beverages such as kombucha, were also considered relevant (Appel *et al.*, 2020; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Conference papers, dissertations, reports, duplicate publications, studies unrelated to the research variables, and studies lacking adequate methodological rigor were excluded to maintain the quality and credibility of the review (Snyder, 2019; Tranfield *et al.*, 2003).

2.4 Quality Assessment of Included Studies

To ensure the methodological quality of the evidence included in this review, all studies that satisfied the inclusion criteria were critically appraised before the final synthesis. The quality assessment was guided by the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklists and the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Tools, which are widely recognized for evaluating the methodological quality of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies. The appraisal considered five key criteria: (i) clarity of the research objectives, (ii) appropriateness of the study design, (iii) adequacy of the sampling procedures, (iv) transparency of the data collection and analysis methods, and (v) consistency between the findings and the conclusions. Each study was assessed as Yes, Partially, or No for each criterion.

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2.5 Study Selection Process

The study selection process followed the PRISMA 2020 framework, which consists of four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion (Page *et al.*, 2021). During the identification stage, relevant studies were retrieved from the selected databases. Duplicate records were subsequently removed before titles and abstracts were screened to eliminate studies that were not relevant to the objectives of the review. The remaining full-text articles were assessed against the predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria to determine their methodological quality and relevance (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). A total of 742 records were initially identified through database searches. Following the removal of 128 duplicate records, 614 studies were screened based on their titles and abstracts, resulting in the exclusion of 472 studies. Subsequently, 142 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility, of which 108 were excluded because they were irrelevant to the study objectives, did not address the key variables, were not peer-reviewed, or lacked sufficient methodological quality. Ultimately, 34 studies satisfied all the inclusion criteria and were retained for the final review. The study selection process is illustrated in Figure 1.

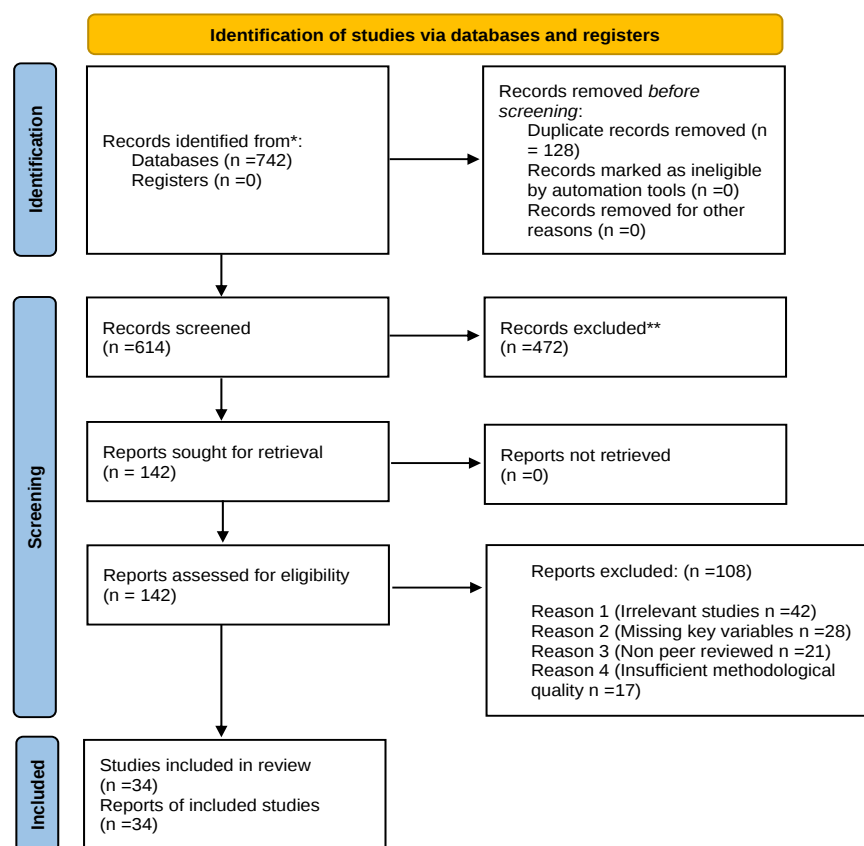


Figure 1: PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram

The study selection process followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines and is presented in Figure 1. A total of 742 records were identified through database searches. After removing 128 duplicate

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2.6 Data Extraction and Analysis

Data from the selected studies were extracted using a standardized data extraction form to ensure consistency and minimize bias throughout the review process (Snyder, 2019; Tranfield *et al.*, 2003). Information extracted from each study included the authors, year of publication, country or study context, study objectives, methodological approach, variables investigated, and key findings relevant to influencer marketing, brand awareness, perceived homophily, and consumer behavior. The extracted data were synthesized using thematic analysis, which is widely recognized as an appropriate method for integrating evidence from studies employing different research designs (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Thomas & Harden, 2008). Through thematic synthesis, four major themes emerged: influencer marketing consumer behavior; brand awareness and consumer behavior; perceived homophily and consumer behaviors; and the integrated effects of influencer marketing, brand awareness, and perceived homophily on consumer behaviors. These themes provided a coherent framework for interpreting the existing literature and identifying relationships among the study variables.

2.7 Reliability and Validity

Several measures were adopted to ensure the reliability and validity of the review. First, multiple academic databases were searched to improve the comprehensiveness of the literature search and minimize publication bias (Gusenbauer & Haddaway, 2020). Second, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were consistently applied to reduce subjective bias during study selection (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Third, the review strictly followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, which enhance transparency, methodological rigor, and replicability in systematic reviews (Page *et al.*, 2021). Finally, a standardized data extraction procedure and thematic analysis approach were employed to ensure consistency in synthesizing findings across the selected studies (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Thomas & Harden, 2008).

3. Results

3.1 Overview of Included Studies

The final sample consisted of 34 peer-reviewed articles published between 2000 and 2025 that met the inclusion criteria for this review. These studies were undertaken in developed and emerging markets using various methodologies, including quantitative surveys, experimental designs and qualitative approaches. Most studies focus on digital marketing, social media engagement and consumer behavior. We synthesized the findings using a thematic analysis approach, which allowed us to identify recurring patterns in the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Three overarching themes emerged related to the study variables: influencer marketing, brand awareness and perceived homophily. Taken together, these topics illuminate the communicational, cognitive and social mechanisms underlying consumer behavior.

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Table 1: Descriptive Summary of Included Studies (n = 34)

Category	Description	Frequency	Interpretation
Study Context	Developed countries	20	Majority of studies originate from advanced digital markets
	Emerging markets	14	Growing focus on sustainability and digital influence in developing contexts
Methodology	Quantitative (surveys)	21	Dominant approach for testing variable relationships
	Experimental studies	7	Examine causal effects, especially in influencer marketing
	Qualitative studies	6	Provide deeper insights into consumer perceptions
Research Focus	Influencer Marketing	13	Most studied variable in digital consumer behavior
	Brand Awareness	9	Emphasis on cognitive decision-making processes
	Perceived Homophily	6	Emerging social influence factor
	Consumer Behavior	6	Growing research interest in sustainability outcomes
Data Collection Context	Social media platforms	24	Reflects dominance of digital environments
	General consumer markets	10	Broader consumer behavior contexts

Source: Authors' synthesis of the reviewed literature (2026)

Table 1 presents the descriptive summary of the studies included in the systematic review and reveals several notable trends. First, the predominance of studies conducted in developed countries suggests that research on influencer marketing and consumer behavior is more established in digitally advanced economies. Nevertheless, the increasing number of studies from emerging markets indicates growing scholarly interest in understanding how digital marketing influences consumption in these contexts (Kamboj *et al.*, 2020). Second, the dominance of quantitative survey methods demonstrates that researchers have primarily focused on examining the relationships among influencer marketing, brand awareness, perceived homophily, and consumer behavior. In contrast, experimental and qualitative studies provide complementary insights into the causal mechanisms and underlying consumer perceptions that shape consumption (Snyder, 2019). Third, influencer marketing emerged as the most extensively investigated construct, reflecting its growing importance in contemporary digital marketing. Brand awareness continues to be recognized as a critical cognitive factor influencing consumer decision-making (Keller, 2001), while perceived homophily has increasingly been identified as an important social mechanism that

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enhances trust, credibility, and persuasive communication between influencers and consumers (McPherson *et al.*, 2001; Brown & Reingen, 1987). Finally, the predominance of studies conducted within social media environments underscores the central role of digital platforms in shaping consumer behavior through communication, social influence, and consumer engagement (White *et al.*, 2019).

Table 2: Summary of Included Studies (n = 34)

No.	Author(s)	Year	Journal / Source	Method	Key Findings
1	Lou & Yuan	2019	<i>Journal of Interactive Advertising</i>	Survey	Trust and credibility drive purchase intention
2	De Veirman <i>et al.</i>	2017	<i>International Journal of Advertising</i>	Experiment	Number of followers affects brand perception
3	Sokolova & Kefi	2020	<i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i>	Survey	Trust and parasocial interaction influence behavior
4	Djafarova & Rushworth	2017	<i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>	Qualitative	Influencers affect purchase decisions
5	Casaló <i>et al.</i>	2020	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	Survey	Influencers increase engagement and behavioral intentions
6	Ki <i>et al.</i>	2020	<i>Psychology & Marketing</i>	Survey	Authenticity improves influencer effectiveness
7	Jin <i>et al.</i>	2019	<i>Marketing Intelligence & Planning</i>	Survey	Influencers shape consumer attitudes
8	Schouten <i>et al.</i>	2020	<i>International Journal of Advertising</i>	Experiment	Relatable influencers enhance persuasion
9	Audrezet <i>et al.</i>	2020	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	Qualitative	Authenticity drives persuasion
10	Evans <i>et al.</i>	2017	<i>Journal of Interactive Advertising</i>	Experiment	Disclosure affects consumer trust
11	Chu & Kim	2011	<i>International Journal of Advertising</i>	Survey	Online communication influences behavior
12	Cheung & Thadani	2012	<i>Decision Support Systems</i>	Literature Review	Online influence reviews purchase decisions

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13	Freberg et al.	2011	Public Relations Review	Survey	Defines influencer characteristics
14	Keller	2001	Marketing Management	Conceptual	Brand awareness underpins behavior
15	Yoo et al.	2000	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	Survey	Marketing activities build brand equity
16	Netemeyer et al.	2004	Journal of Business Research	Survey	Developed measures of brand equity
17	Macdonald & Sharp	2000	Journal of Business Research	Survey	Awareness affects product choice
18	Huang & Sarigöllü	2012	International Journal of Research in Marketing	Survey	Awareness improves market outcomes
19	Romaniuk et al.	2017	Journal of Business Research	Survey	Awareness enhances brand recall
20	Wang & Scheinbaum	2018	Journal of Consumer Behavior	Survey	Similarity and trust enhance credibility
21	Kim & Kim	2021	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	Survey	Relatability enhances persuasion
22	Bu et al.	2022	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	Survey	Homophily increases purchase intention
23	Chen	2025	Journal of Business Research	Survey	Relatability drives impulse buying
24	White et al.	2019	Journal of Marketing	Literature Review	Provides behavior change framework
25	Joshi & Rahman	2015	International Strategic Management Review	Literature Review	Identifies drivers of consumer behavior
26	Peattie	2010	Annual Review of Environment and Resources	Review	Explains complexity of green consumption
27	Vermeir & Verbeke	2006	Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics	Survey	Demonstrates attitude–behavior gap
28	Vermeir & Verbeke	2008	International Journal of Consumer Studies	Survey	Values influence consumer behavior

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29	Thøgersen	2010	<i>Journal of Consumer Policy</i>	Conceptual	Sustainability influences decisions
30	Grunert	2011	<i>Trends in Food Science & Technology</i>	Review	Sustainability affects food choices
31	Jayabalan et al.	2014	<i>Comprehensive Reviews in Food Science and Food Safety</i>	Review	Discusses chemical composition and health benefits
32	Villarreal-Soto et al.	2018	<i>Journal of Food Science</i>	Review	Explains functional properties of kombucha
33	Tamang et al.	2016	<i>Frontiers in Microbiology</i>	Review	Highlights cultural relevance of fermented products
34	Kamboj et al.	2020	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	Survey	Digital influence affects consumer behavior

Source: Authors' synthesis of the reviewed literature (2026)

Table 2 summarizes the 34 studies included in the review. The studies indicate that influencer marketing is the most frequently examined factor influencing consumer behavior, particularly through trust, authenticity, engagement, and relatability. Brand awareness emerged as an important cognitive mechanism affecting consumer choice and brand equity, while perceived homophily was consistently associated with trust, persuasion, and purchase intention. The reviewed studies also highlight the growing role of digital platforms in shaping consumer behavior and promoting consumption across different contexts.

4. Discussion

4.1 Influencer Marketing and Consumer Behavior

Studies have consistently shown that influencer marketing is an important driver of consumer behavior. Influencers, as contemporary opinion leaders, shape consumers' attitudes and purchase decisions by creating credible, authentic, and engaging content (Casaló *et al.*, 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). This finding is consistent with the broader digital marketing literature, which emphasizes the increasing role of social media influencers in influencing consumer decision-making (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). A recurring theme across the reviewed studies is that trust and credibility are the primary mechanisms through which influencer marketing influences consumer behavior. Consumers are more willing to purchase products when they perceive influencers as transparent, authentic, and genuinely supportive of the products they endorse (Audrezet *et al.*, 2020; Ki *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, the quality of influencer-generated content, including storytelling, visual appeal, and emotional engagement, enhances consumers' receptiveness to marketing messages (Jin *et al.*, 2019). These findings reinforce the view that

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effective influencer marketing extends beyond information dissemination to persuasive communication that builds consumer trust and engagement.

Within the functional beverage sector, particularly kombucha, influencer marketing plays an important role in shaping consumer perceptions and purchase decisions. Consumers frequently rely on influencers for information regarding the health benefits, quality, and lifestyle value of kombucha products (Jayabalan *et al.*, 2014). Consequently, credible and authentic influencer content can increase awareness, trust, and acceptance of kombucha among health-conscious consumers (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017; Jayabalan *et al.*, 2014). In addition, parasocial interaction, defined as the perceived personal relationship between consumers and influencers, strengthens emotional attachment and behavioral intentions (Lee & Watkins, 2016; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Thus, influencer marketing functions not only as an informational tool but also as an emotional mechanism for encouraging purchasing decisions.

4.2 Brand Awareness and Consumer Behavior

The reviewed studies indicate that brand awareness is a fundamental cognitive determinant of consumer behavior. Higher levels of brand awareness improve consumers' ability to recognize, recall, and differentiate brands, thereby reducing uncertainty and facilitating informed purchasing decisions (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012; Keller, 2001). The findings further indicate that consumers are more likely to purchase products from brands they recognize and trust (Macdonald & Sharp, 2000; Yoo *et al.*, 2000). Influencer marketing also becomes more effective when consumers are already familiar with the promoted brand because brand awareness provides the cognitive foundation through which influencer messages are interpreted and evaluated (Keller, 2001). Moreover, brand knowledge enhances perceived quality and customer value, both of which are particularly important in consumption contexts where credibility and ethical considerations influence purchasing decisions (Grunert, 2011; Netemeyer *et al.*, 2004). Within the kombucha market, brand awareness is especially important because many consumers remain unfamiliar with fermented functional beverages. Greater awareness enables consumers to recognize kombucha brands, understand their health and sustainability attributes, and distinguish them from conventional beverages (Greenwalt *et al.*, 2000; Jayabalan *et al.*, 2014). Consequently, consistent branding and integrated marketing communication strategies are essential for strengthening consumer trust and encouraging purchasing behavior (Yoo *et al.*, 2000).

4.3 Perceived Homophily and Consumer Behavior

The reviewed studies demonstrate that perceived homophily is an important social determinant of consumer behavior. Consumers are more likely to trust and engage with influencers who share similar characteristics, values, and lifestyles, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of marketing communication (Kim & Kim, 2021; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). Within consumption contexts, perceived similarity strengthens consumers' emotional attachment to influencers, making them more receptive to consumption-related messages (Bu *et al.*, 2022). The findings further suggest that perceived homophily enhances persuasion by making influencers appear more relatable and authentic. Consumers who perceive similarities with influencers are more likely to internalize marketing messages and translate them into favorable behavioral intentions (Bu *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, similarity strengthens trust between influencers and consumers, which is a critical

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determinant of purchase intentions (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). Consumers generally perceive information from relatable influencers as more credible than information from dissimilar sources (Kim & Kim, 2021).

In the context of kombucha consumption, perceived homophily may strengthen consumers' trust in influencers who share similar health beliefs, lifestyles, and wellness values. Since kombucha is closely associated with healthy living and consumption, consumers are more likely to respond positively to recommendations from influencers they perceive as similar to themselves (Aaker, 1996; McPherson *et al.*, 2001). Consequently, the effectiveness of influencer marketing depends not only on influencer popularity but also on the degree of similarity perceived by the target audience (Bu *et al.*, 2022).

4.4 Integrated Effects on Consumer Behavior

The reviewed evidence indicates that influencer marketing, brand awareness, and perceived homophily operate as complementary rather than independent determinants of consumer behavior (Bu *et al.*, 2022; Keller, 2001; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Influencer marketing captures consumers' attention through credible and engaging communication (De Veirman *et al.*, 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019), while brand awareness strengthens consumers' ability to recognize brands and reduces uncertainty during purchase decisions (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012; Keller, 2001). At the same time, perceived homophily enhances trust, emotional attachment, and message acceptance by increasing consumers' perceptions of similarity with influencers (Kim & Kim, 2021; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018).

Collectively, these findings suggest that consumer behavior is shaped through communicative (influencer marketing), cognitive (brand awareness), and social (perceived homophily) mechanisms, which is consistent with contemporary consumer behavior literature emphasizing the interaction of informational, psychological, and social influences in decision-making (Joshi & Rahman, 2015; White *et al.*, 2019). For example, Lou and Yuan (2019) found that influencer credibility significantly enhances purchase intentions, whereas De Veirman *et al.*, (2017) demonstrated that influencer characteristics shape brand perceptions and consumer attitudes. Similarly, Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) reported that perceived similarity strengthens trust between influencers and consumers, while Bu *et al.*, (2022) found that homophily positively influences purchase intentions. Together, these studies illustrate how communicative, cognitive, and social mechanisms jointly influence consumer behavior. Theoretically, this review advances the literature by integrating insights from influencer marketing, brand awareness, and homophily research into a coherent conceptual framework explaining consumer behavior in the functional beverage sector. Unlike previous studies that have examined these constructs independently, this review demonstrates their complementary roles in shaping purchasing decisions and identifies important opportunities for future empirical research, particularly in emerging markets.

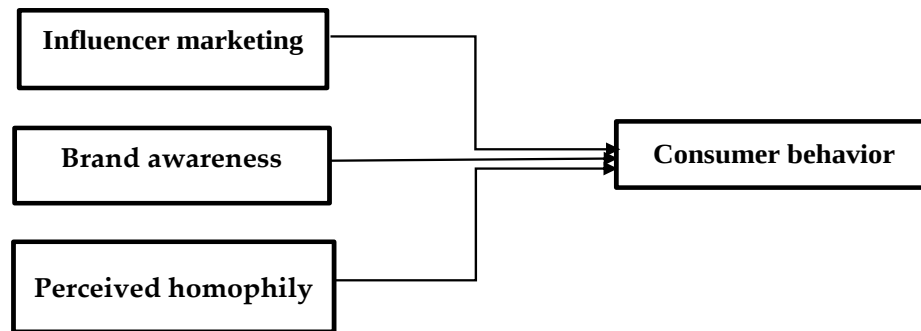


FIG 2: Conceptual Framework

Source: *Authors' synthesis from the reviewed literature (2026)*

Figure 2 summarizes the relationships identified in the reviewed literature. The framework suggests that influencer marketing, brand awareness and perceived homophily are key determinants of consumer behavior toward functional beverages such as kombucha. The framework provides an integrated perspective derived from the re-viewed studies and highlights areas for future empirical validation.

4.5 Limitations of the Review

Although this review followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, it has some limitations. A formal risk of bias or certainty of evidence assessment was not conducted, which may affect the strength of the conclusions drawn from the reviewed studies. Furthermore, the included studies varied considerably in terms of methodology, context and population, limiting the possibility of conducting a meta-analysis and affecting the generalizability of the findings. Despite these limitations, the review provides a comprehensive synthesis of the literature on influencer marketing, brand awareness, perceived homophily and consumer behavior in the functional beverage sector.

4.6 Implications for Practice, Policy, and Future Research

Practical and Policy Implications

The findings suggest that marketers of functional beverages should utilize credible influencers, strengthen brand awareness and develop relatable marketing messages to promote consumption. Policymakers and consumer protection agencies should encourage transparency in influencer marketing and support consumer awareness initiatives that promote purchasing behavior.

Future Research Directions

Future studies should validate the proposed framework in different cultural and geographical contexts, particularly in emerging markets. Researchers may also examine additional factors such

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as consumer trust, environmental concern and perceived risk to provide a deeper understanding of consumer behavior. Further research focusing on kombucha and other functional beverages is particularly recommended.

5. Conclusions

This study synthesized evidence from 34 peer-reviewed studies on the influence of influencer marketing, brand awareness, and perceived homophily on consumer behavior. The findings indicate that these factors jointly influence consumer decisions through trust, credibility, recognition, and perceived similarity, highlighting the important role of digital marketing and social influence in promoting consumption. Although the review provides valuable insights, evidence from Uganda and other emerging markets remains limited. Future research should validate the proposed framework in different contexts and examine additional factors such as trust, perceived risk, environmental awareness, and consumer engagement.

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