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THE ROLE OF INFLUENCER MARKETING IN

BRAND PROMOTION

M.A. THESIS

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis titled THE ROLE OF INFLUENCER MARKETING IN BRAND PROMOTION is my original work, conducted after enrollment for the M.A degree at Istanbul Commerce University. I have appropriately referenced the works of other researchers in accordance with university policies. All data used in this thesis are from legitimate sources.



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ÖZET

Bu çalışma, etkileyici pazarlamanın marka görünürlüğü, müşteri algıları, katılım ve işletmeleri tanıtmadaki etkinlik üzerindeki etkisini keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, farklı hedef gruplar arasındaki etkinlikteki farklılıkları inceler ve etik yönleri ve zorlukları değerlendirir. Amaç, şirketlere ve pazarlamacılara pazarlama stratejilerinde etkileyici pazarlamayı etkili bir şekilde kullanmaları için pratik öneriler sunmaktır. Likert ölçeğine dayalı anket ve ikincil kaynaklardan elde edilen bulgular dahil olmak üzere karma metodoloji kullanılarak istatistiksel ve tematik analiz yapılmıştır. Çevrimdışı ve çevrimiçi etkileyici pazarlamayı karşılaştıran göreceli performans, metrik verileri, yöntemin başlatıcılarının potansiyel müşterilerin yaş, ilgi alanları ve satın alma gücü gibi özelliklerini dikkate almaları gerektiğini göstermektedir çünkü etkileyici pazarlamanın etkinliğinin, gözlemlendiği gibi, bu faktörlere bağlı olarak büyük ölçüde değiştiği görülmektedir. Ancak, bu stratejinin zorlukları da yoktur. Çalışma ayrıca, etkileyici pazarlamayla ilgili derin etik etkileri belirlemeyi amaçlamıştır. Bu yaklaşımla markaların tanıtımında güvenilirlik ve güvenin aşınmasına yol açabilecek risklerden bazıları şunlardır; Şeffaflığın eksikliği, açıklanmayan sponsorluklar ve etkileyicilerin onaylarının gerçekliği gibi büyük etkiler. Ayrıntılı sonuç, öneriler ve ilişkili sınırlamalar, ayrık tartışmayla birlikte tezde sağlanmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Marka Tanıtımı, Tüketici güveni, İçerik etkileşimi

Abstract

This study aims to explore the impact of influencer marketing on brand exposure, customer perceptions, engagement, and effectiveness in promoting businesses. It also examines variations in effectiveness among different target groups and evaluates ethical aspects and challenges. The aim is to provide practical suggestions for companies and marketers on effectively utilising influencer marketing in their marketing strategies. Using the mixed methodology including the questionnaire based on likert scale and the findings from the secondary sources, the statistical and thematic analysis has been carried out. The relative performance comparing the offline and online influencer marketing, metrics data suggest that instigators of the method need to consider such characteristics of potential clients as age, interests, and purchasing power because efficiency of influencer marketing, as it was observed, varies greatly depending on those factors. However, this strategy is not without its challenges. The study also sought to establish profound ethical implications that are related to influencer marketing. Some of the risks that may lead to the erosion of credibility and trust in the promotion of brands through this approach include; Massive influences including lack of transparency, undisclosed sponsorships, and realness of endorsements by influencers. The detailed conclusion, recommendations and associated limitations along with the discrete discussion has been provided within the dissertation.

Key words: Brand Promotion, Consumer trust, Content engagement

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Companies are gradually incorporating social media as a way of creating their brands. The young field of “influencer marketing” has shown that this form of communication with stakeholders is viable on social media. During the pandemic, nearly one-third of Gen Z and baby boomers reported that content creators fostered a sense of community. Influencer marketing experienced a 470% increase from 2016 to 2020 in response to the necessity of appealing to Gen Z consumers and establishing a virtual experience (BigCommerce, 2024). A personality, public figure, or content creator with an organic and engaged audience is referred to as an influencer. Influencer marketing utilises the credibility of a well-known content creator to promote your brand through paid endorsements and recommendations. Businesses are increasingly employing social media platforms to interact with consumers. In 2021, social media marketing was anticipated by 91.9% of marketers at U.S. companies with more than 100 employees ((Jaitley and Gautam, 2022).

While influencer marketing is associated with word-of-mouth marketing, it has no theoretical roots in the literature (Lahap et al., 2016). The conceptualisation presents brand owners with a way of identifying the appropriate influencers for their brands. It defines how influencers can engage with the follower base most efficiently. The consumer side is introduced into the discussion to stress the importance of influencer marketing in the purchasing process , Social media influencers are a new type of independent third-party endorsers who employ online activities to shape the audience's perception (Khamis et al., 2017).

Until today, influencer marketing is mainly carried out from the perspective of a single digital device that an online individual owns (Li, 2016). Another technique that companies use in social media marketing is paying influencers to advertise their products or services on social media. The need to accurately measure the outcome rises as firms raise their spending on influencer marketing (Leung et al., 2022). Considering brand communication and its recognition, scholars assess the credibility of influencers. Another area of interest has been the influencers' visibility and ability to persuade other people. Social media allows users to follow influencers, and when done properly, influencer marketing might seem less forced than commercial (Hund, 2019).

1.2 Aim

This study aims to explore the impact of influencer marketing on brand exposure, customer perceptions, engagement, and effectiveness in promoting businesses. It also examines variations in effectiveness among different target groups and evaluates ethical aspects and challenges. The aim is to provide practical suggestions for companies and marketers on effectively utilising influencer marketing in their marketing strategies.

1.3 Objectives

- To assess the impact of influencer marketing on brand exposure and recognition.
- To evaluate the influence of influencer marketing on customer perceptions and engagement.
- To investigate the variability of influencer marketing effectiveness across different demographics.
- To explore the ethical challenges and considerations associated with influencer marketing.

1.4 Research rationale

The popularity of influencer marketing as one of the most important trends in contemporary advertising proves that the consumer approach has become one of the most important factors in the modern world (Lee and Kim, 2020). This research is precipitated by new social media platforms that have changed traditional marketing theories, giving power to individuals with large followings in influencing public buying behaviour. This is why influencers who share unique and relatable content can become more effective in increasing brand awareness and changing consumer attitudes and behaviours than traditional advertising (Hund, 2019).

This research is particularly relevant when companies attempt to distinguish between legitimate word-of-mouth communications and paid advertising, which is questionable from an ethical perspective and may be perceived as a threat to consumer trust. Furthermore, the impact of influencer marketing may differ from one target audience segment to another, which calls for the need to know how different segments respond to content influencers promote (Jin et al., 2019). Through these aspects, the study seeks to identify findings that will help businesses develop better ethical, efficient, and specific marketing strategies that leverage the opportunities presented by

influencers. As the current world is characterized by an influx of information and consumers' disbelief of conventional advertising, this research will provide important insights into the effective application of influencer marketing to improve brand promotion while maintaining its ethicality and relevance to the changing needs of various consumer segments (Lee and Kim, 2020).

1.5 Research Question

1. What is the impact of influence marketing on brand exposure and recognition?
2. How effective is influencer marketing across multiple demographics?
3. What ethical challenges and considerations are associated with influencer marketing?

1.6 Problem statement

In the ever-shifting world of digital marketing, influencer marketing has become one of the key tactics brands use to boost their presence and reach consumers. Nevertheless, several crucial issues and uncertainties remain that can negatively affect the efficiency and ethicality of the campaigns based on influencers (Holiday et al., 2021). Firstly, the effectiveness of using influencer marketing in terms of brand awareness and consumer interactions is still questionable, as there is not enough research evidence to prove the actual advantages of the method or reveal its possible disadvantages. This lack of information poses a problem for marketers as they cannot fine-tune their approaches and determine ROI.

Ethical issues are also evident in influencer marketing since most posts are between sponsored content and sponsored posts. This issue raises a lot of concern on the aspect of transparency and consumer trust, which are very important in the success of any marketing strategy in the long run. Moreover, the legal framework for influencer marketing remains rather fragile, making the sphere rather risky for both brands and influencers regarding legal compliance and ethical standards (Fraculj et al., 2021). This study aims to fill these gaps by presenting a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness, volatility and ethicality of influencer marketing, as well as presenting empirical findings and best practices on how to optimize brand communication efforts morally and efficiently.

1.7 Research Significance

To the existing body of knowledge, this study advances knowledge by applying the theoretical frameworks of traditional marketing to influencer marketing. It provides a systematic approach to analysing the phenomena of how digital platforms and influencers change the consumers' response and brand relationships that enrich the knowledge of modern marketing strategies (Khan et al., 2021).

Through assessing the impact of influencer marketing across multiple consumer demographics, this study contributes to the theoretical frameworks regarding consumer psychology and media effects, which will help build a more detailed understanding of how different population groups perceive and respond to the content posted by the influencers. Considering this, the discovery made in this research study will afford marketers useful techniques regarding influencer marketing to target different audience segments (Kádeková and Holienčinová, 2018). It is to maximize reward, go through the channels, compare the effectiveness and recognize the qualitative characteristics of the influencer and the type of content appealing to segments (Hund, 2019).

As ethical factors become prevalent in influencer marketing, this research will provide an understanding of the main ethical issues and a prescription of the measures needed to enhance the credibility of marketing information. This is very important in establishing and maintaining consumer confidence in today's growing cynicism due to technological advancement. Therefore, the findings from this study could benefit the policymakers and the current or potential regulatory agencies in formulating better policies or laws on influencer marketing (Veissi, 2017). This is especially true considering the dynamic process of creating new ethical and operational challenges in evolving digital marketing environments. Therefore, the research was conducted to fill the gap between the implementation of influencer marketing and efficient brand promotion to offer practical information that would be useful for marketers, consumers, and regulators (Khan et al., 2021).

1.8 Dissertation structure

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The literature that will be featured in this chapter is the one that will establish the background of the research within the existing literature. This will discuss existing concepts on

the impact of social media and consumers' buying trends, especially concerning clothing and fashion brands. This chapter entails the literature review with a view to developing research gaps that the study aims to fill, hence framing the investigation.

Chapter Three: Materials and Method

This chapter will outline the chosen research design and the methods of data collection and analysis. It will state whether the overall research design will be qualitative, quantitative, or mixed and, if the latter, why such a decision has been made. This section will also explain the manner of data collection, samples, and analysis and discuss possible concerns about the ethical aspect of the study.

Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

This chapter will discuss the research findings in detail. Then, it means evaluating the gathered data, accenting how the emerged results respond to the research questions or hypotheses formulated before the research. The findings are discussed by linking them to the theoretical framework and prior research conclusions, especially concerning the pertinent outcomes and patterns or unexpected occurrences.

Chapter five: Conclusion and recommendation

This chapter presents the conclusion drawn from this study's findings. Furthermore, it points out avenues for future research and provides a foundation for additional studies of the topic in the scientific context.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This literature review for this research aims to lay a groundwork for the various aspects of multifaceted influencer marketing in contemporary branding strategies. It comprehensively reviews the research and grey literature to map out how influencer marketing has developed as a significant tool for promoting brands, customer interactions, and marketing effectiveness. This chapter aims to categorise the findings of prior investigations into influencer marketing and present trends, efficiency, and issues by consolidating numerous research sources, including periodicals, professional reviews, and case studies. This literature review is meant to establish a background of present knowledge to guide this research in establishing gaps that the present study hopes to fill, thus framing the subsequent questions of research and methods. This approach guarantees a systematic analysis of the position of influencer marketing in current marketing processes and, at the same time, opens up prospects for further development of concepts and ideas concerning further research and effective implementation of the concept in practice (Hund, 2019).

2.2 Influencer marketing

The analysed type of advertising is influencer marketing, a versatile and rapidly developing subdivision of digital advertising that deals with the cooperation between the brand and people with a significant following on social media platforms. This marketing strategy seeks to influence consumers' behaviour through endorsements from people well-known or perceived as authorities within a given area (Vrontis et al., 2021).

The key idea of influencer marketing is that promotional messages are turned into a seamless part of an influencer's regular storytelling, thus seeming less intrusive than conventional advertisements (Khan et al., 2021).explained that enhanced from the traditional idea where the only recognized option was celebrity endorsement, influencer marketing has adopted a wide range of micro and nano influencers who, though they may have small followers, are very active. This transformation has been aided by social media platforms, especially Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. With the help of these platforms, influencers can communicate with followers using posts,

stories and videos that provide brands with an omnichannel approach to affect the audiences (Khan et al., 2021).

Influencers are here to stay. More than 80% of marketers concur that influencers are indispensable to their overall social media strategy (Veissi, 2017). Influencer marketing refers to a combination of traditional and contemporary marketing practices. It incorporates the concept of celebrity endorsement into a contemporary content-driven marketing campaign. Influencer marketing is distinguished by the fact that the campaign's outcomes are the result of partnerships between brands and influencers. Influencer marketing is experiencing significant growth, with an anticipated industry value of \$21.1 billion in 2023 (Hub, 2023).

The efficacy of influencer marketing as a strategy is affirmed by more than 83% of marketers. In 2023, the majority of brands are not only adopting but also increasing their influencer marketing budgets. It is also crucial to acknowledge that the majority of influencers have meticulously cultivated a passionate and engaged audience. It is not a coincidence that these individuals adhere to influencers rather than a brand. Your brand is of minimal interest to the audience (Chacko, 2024). Their sole concern is the perspectives of the influencers. Resist the urge to impose regulations and business practices on your influencers. The audience is theirs, and they have the option to depart, bringing their adherents with them.

However, the field of influencer marketing is in perpetual flux. A decade ago, the influencer marketing industry was confined to a few dedicated bloggers and celebrities. Today, social media influencers are prevalent across all social networks. Although the size of their followings may fluctuate, these influencers are formidable (Campbell and Farrell, 2020). Their close-knit communities cultivate genuine connections and encourage purchase behaviours, resulting in increased brand engagement and sales. Nevertheless, a well-organised and strategic approach is necessary when collaborating with digital creators and influencers.

Additionally, the objective of this guide is to assist you in navigating it. Influencer marketing is a social media marketing strategy that employs product mentions and endorsements from influencers. These individuals are recognised as field experts and have a social media following (Glucksman, 2017). Influencer marketing is effective due to the high level of trust that social influencers have established with their followers over time. These influencers'

recommendations are social proof for your brand's prospective customers. While collaborating with an influencer with millions of followers may appear to be a dream come true, they may not be the optimal choice for your brand. Several social media influencers have a broad, extensive audience that spans multiple demographics. Others have smaller communities that are more engaged and targeted. Knowing each influencer type's reach, range, cost, and engagement capabilities is essential for selecting the most suitable one for your brand.

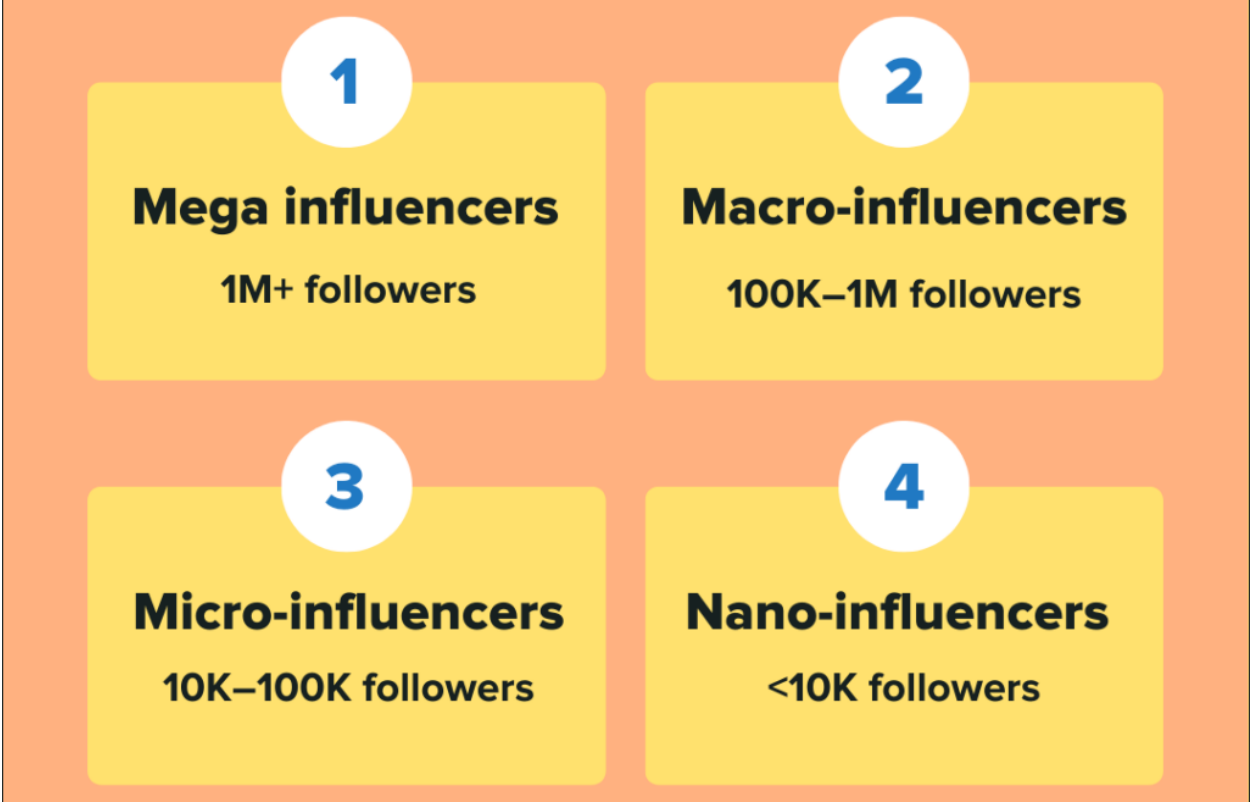


Figure 1: Types of Influencers

Source: (Chacko, 2024).

2.3 Effectiveness of influencer marketing across various demographics

In recent years, influencer marketing has demonstrated to be an exceptionally effective strategy. According to the most recent statistics, 87% of consumers have reported being influenced by an influencer's recommendation when making a purchasing decision (Dimitrieska and Efremova, 2021). Influencer marketing has been demonstrated to be a highly effective strategy in various industries; however, a select few have seen a particularly positive effect. The beauty and

cosmetics sector is particularly noteworthy. Beauty influencers have acquired substantial popularity and influence among their followers due to the proliferation of social media platforms such as YouTube and Instagram (Leung et al., 2022).

Cosmetic brands have successfully expanded their audience and generated substantial sales by collaborating with these influencers. The fitness and wellness sector is another industry that has achieved remarkable success through influencer marketing. Fitness influencers have effectively promoted health products, workout programs, and supplements due to their dedicated following and expertise. Their genuine content captivates their audience, resulting in heightened brand recognition and customer engagement. Influencer marketing performance by different demographics is one major subject of interest for marketers who seek to get the best from the strategies being applied in their marketing initiatives (Farivar and Wang, 2022). At the same time, it is essential to note that the effectiveness of this marketing strategy may depend on several variables like age, cultural background, economic position, and digital competence of the volunteers. Considering these differences, brands can better shape those common campaigns that are supposed to have the same effect.

2.3.1 Age and generational differences

Ozuem and Willis (2022) explained that the most open generation to this tactic, Gen Z, is anyone born between the late 90s and early 2010s and has grown up with technological advancement and digital media. Businesses must understand that fashion Generation tailored its views on authenticity, creativity and social responsibility to the brands it supports. This target group is because the influencers are transparent, integrate causes or activism into their posts, and share creative or multimedia content. Millennials (born from 1981 to 1996) also witness influencer marketing effectiveness, especially when content dearer, tutorial, or story based on a certain period in life, such as purchasing a home, starting a family, or being promoted to a new position at work (Ozuem and Willis, 2022).

They also love the fusion of humour and useful information on what they consume regularly. This is the demographic that was born between 1965 and 1980 and the one that is most sceptical of influencer marketing and has the highest appreciation for authenticity. They tend to rely on what can be regarded as realistic posting and purchase from influencers with whom they feel closely connected based on their age, interests, and status, for instance, family, health, and

fitness. While not the main consumer demographic in influencer marketing, a growing number of Baby Boomers (1946-1964) are using the Internet (Farivar and Wang, 2022). Such influences can include lifestyle, health, retirement, and leisure related to attract this group. But mainstream marketing communication techniques could still be preferable among Boomers possibly coupled with influencer marketing whose main thrust is trust.

2.3.2 Cultural and socioeconomic variations

Cultural differences can determine the audiences' attitudes towards the influencers. For instance, the influencers promoting the products of the target market may receive a better response from consumers living in collective culture countries like most Asian countries (Leung et al., 2022). On the other hand, consumers in the collectivist culture (for example, the United States of America and Western Europe) might prefer influencers showcasing the achievement of the individual. It also has an economic aspect; if their audience is people with low income who want simple, cheap tips, they will respond better to influencers who give useful 'tips and tricks', 'promo codes', or any other 'savings'. On the other hand, Feng et al. (2021) explained that the high-income groups may be interested in selective brands and materials.

It can be commented, therefore, that there is some impact of gender on the choice of influencers and content. For instance, beauty care products might be promoted more by female influencers as compared to males, while products related to sports and computer games might be promoted more by male influencers rather than females (Feng et al., 2021). However, these are rather quite generalized, and as the saying goes, every woman is different, as is every man. Niche markets are suitable for influencer marketing strategies because they enable the establishment of highly specific and targeted content.

People deemed experts in certain niches, be it vegan dieting, environmentalism, photography, cycling, etc., will have considerable influence on these niches and loyal audiences (Masuda et al., 2022). Marketers must confront obstacles such as the potential for diminished authenticity as influencers commercialise, the oversaturation of influencers in specific markets, and the ongoing necessity of adapting to evolving social media algorithms and consumer preferences while targeting these demographic specifics.

2.4 Relationship between influencer marketing and brand exposure and recognition.

Influencer marketing offers brands unparalleled exposure to a highly targeted audience, which is one of its primary advantages. The impressive ROI that can be achieved through strategic partnerships with influencers is underscored by the fact that businesses earn an average of \$5.20 for every \$1 spent on influencer marketing (Jin et al., 2019). Additionally, influencer marketing enables brands to expand their reach and enhance their brand recognition in a more genuine and organic manner. Brands can establish credibility and trust within their communities by utilising the reach and influence of influencers to engage their loyal followers. Ultimately, this can increase brand loyalty, positive brand associations, and higher sales and conversions. Before making a purchasing decision, 86% of women consult social media (Sundermann and Munnukka, 2022).

Influencers are trusted by 70% of adolescents in comparison to conventional celebrities. In the forthcoming year, 59% of marketers intend to augment their influencer marketing budget. The average return on investment for businesses is \$7.65 for every \$1 invested in influencer marketing (Clarke, 2024). Several brands have achieved significant success through influencer marketing, contributing to brand exposure, engagement, and sales. There are many successful examples. ***Daniel Wellington***: The watch brand achieved a 215% increase in sales by partnering with influencers to feature their products in lifestyle-focused content. ***Samsung*** collaborated with prominent technology influencers to advertise their most recent smartphone, which resulted in millions of views and increased brand recognition.

Flat Tummy Co: In a month, the wellness brand experienced a 34% increase in sales by collaborating with fitness influencers to promote their products (Clarke, 2024). These instances illustrate the effectiveness of influencer marketing in fostering brand loyalty, increasing sales, and increasing brand exposure. Brands can leverage the influence of social media tastemakers to establish a connection with their target audience and accomplish their marketing objectives by collaborating with the appropriate influencers and developing compelling campaigns.

2.4.1 Enhanced Brand Visibility:

This strategy plays a vital role in increasing the publicity of brands. Since influencers are popularizing goods and services, they already possess a loyal base of followers who listen and act on the information beamed at them by the influencers. If these influencers depict a brand or product, the brand or product gets an introduction to a large pool of ready-made and compelled

audiences (Leung et al., 2022). This direct exposure is usually way more extensive and penetrative than what advertising can offer, especially in given sub-sectors or groups. This exposure is even more heightened due to the different interfaces of technology platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and more, as the displayed content can be liked, shared, and even commented on, hence going viral beyond the initial post.

2.4.2 Brand Recognition and Recall:

Kolarova (2018) presented that endorsements increase the familiarity of the brand being endorsed by the influencer. If influencers constantly post a brand, use products from the company or talk about the services being offered, then the audience starts to relate the brand with someone they know and esteem. This association can go a long way in enhancing brand recognition – the degree to which consumers can visually or mentally recall the brand or its logo when exposed to products similar to those carrying the brand or the service that promotes the brand (Kolarova, 2018). Another way in which influencers can help differentiate a brand is by providing the audience with specific aspects of a brand's products that are not well known or not easily promoted by traditional advertisement and sales.

2.4.3 Credibility and Trust Transfer:

In addition, influencer marketing is another technique that contributes to the problem of increasing brand awareness through the transfer of credibility. Thus, the audience considers influencers, professionals or individuals with certain authority in each field. That's why a part of a celebrity's credos is shifted to the brand when they promote it (Agustian et al., 2023). According to what is observed in marketing, this is known as the 'halo effect' and can help the brand gain credibility in the eyes of potential customers, ensuring that it not only gains immediate visibility but also is archived in the minds of the people for the long term.

2.4.4 Authenticity and Relatability:

One of the key features of influencer marketing is the aspect of reality. Endorsements from influencers who like the product and positively use it prepare more genuine messages; therefore, their recommendations are more believable to their followers. Such authenticity can result in greater followers' attention and interaction with the posted content as they tend to perceive such materials as less crafted for business promotion, This interaction not only keeps the brand in the

limelight at that time but also helps in the constant remembrance of the brand (Boerman and Van Reijmersdal, 2020).

2.4.5 Multi-channel Integration:

It is also notable that influencer marketing is usually incorporated with other marketing platforms to enhance efficiency. Such as, a social media influencer campaign might be associated with a social media advertisement, newsletters, or physical advertisement. This multi-channel approach is useful in inundating the market with the brand message to increase overall brand penetration to the consumers to establish a strong top of the mind brand awareness (Lou and Yuan, 2019).

2.5 Impact of influencer marketing on customer perceptions and engagement.

The use of influencer marketing particularly stands to significantly transform how the public views a specific brand. Since followers view influencers as genuine and/or experts, the brands endorsed by the influencers are likely to be trusted as well. Suppose the influencers narrate their experience using a product or accessing a certain service. In that case, target market members can easily find something they can relate to (Jaitly and Gautam, 2021). Individualized posts are most effective in building up a brand, bearing in mind that the followers get to see the influencer's human side, which creates a positive perception of the brand if the endorsers' values are in harmony with the brand's assets.

For instance, when a particular Influencer has vowed to be environmentally conscious and collaborates with an environmentally conscious brand, it conveys the same message to its clients (Liu, 2021). Another significant aspect where influencer marketing has a great effect is the engagement level. Such associations occur with the help of content that is interactive, and despite having a rather advertising character, the audience does not feel like they are being advertised to. They may encourage the followers to write comments, share their stories, or complete some tasks and receive prizes. Such interactions increase the likelihood that consumers will pay attention to the messages due to the enhanced feeling of being in a community rather than just receiving products' messages (Nguyen, 2020).

A perfect example of this is when fashion enthusiasts make sponsored posts of fashion outfits on platforms such as Facebook or Instagram together with the brand and ask the followers

to visit the face of the brand or even click on the link to the site of the brand for the fashion products in question. Leung et al. (2022) have defined customer engagement in the marketing context as "engagement that is associated with the level of an active relationship that a customer shares with a firm." The firms are influenced by customer engagement in various ways, as companies utilise consumer behaviours to provide recommendations to enhance their consumers' experiences. These also guide service providers in developing more effective consumption offerings through co-creation, Consumer involvement in developing the product's core offering is guaranteed through co-creation (Abraham et al., 2022).

Furthermore, depending on factors such as the content of the message and the format of the posts, social media influencers can increase digital engagement through social network sites. Customer engagement is stimulated by vividness and interaction, and influencers leverage their expertise to acquire and distribute their social needs to generate value for their customers (Jin et al., 2019). Consumers' level of engagement and interaction with their brands is a significant factor that influences brand perception, particularly in social media marketing. Social media positively impacts the bottom-line profits of brands by enhancing customer–brand interactions in a meaningful way. Furthermore, brand perception is influenced by the brand's "value equity," which is contingent upon price, quality, and convenience. Social media facilitates the maintenance of the brand's relationship with its consumers, For instance, Glossier, a company dealing in beauty products, applies influencer marketing to determine how the customers view its brand as a company that is 'for the people'(Waltenrath, 2024).

Therefore, applying influencer marketing creates a customer persona as customers post their own stories on their experiences with beauty products from Glossier, thus depicting the company as a 'Glossier for the people". Their approach and plan is to target celebrities and individual clients in the creation of a conversation regarding beauty topics that increases audience interaction and benefits. Influencer marketing also influences the buyer-brand relationship in long-run strategies (Mir and Salo, 2024). Those who repeatedly demonstrate how they incorporate a brand into their life give their followers a daily or weekly story of a brand that stays with them longer than an advert. This forms the basis of consumers trusting and being faithful to using a particular product, as they get a real-time experience of real usage and not a one-time fake experience in the form of endorsement (Masuda et al., 2022).

2.6 Ethical challenges and considerations associated with influencer marketing

The regulatory environment for influencer marketing is dynamic and intricate, reflecting the changing nature of digital marketing practices. These regulations are intended to safeguard consumers and guarantee market transparency and fairness. On a global scale, countries have implemented specific regulations and laws that dictate the conduct of influencers and brands during promotional activities (Kauffmann and Vaičiūnaitė, 2024). For instance, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in the United States establishes regulations that necessitate the explicit and conspicuous disclosure of any material relationship between a brand and an influencer. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) governs the use of personal data in influencer marketing in the European Union, while the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive regulates marketing communications. Other regions like Australia have rules and guidelines, such as the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and the Competition Bureau in Canada (Gorea and Jacobson, 2022).

2.6.1 Transparency and Disclosure:

Another ethical implication found in influencer marketing is the disclosure of the nature of the endorsement. Law-making authorities of different countries, such as the Federal Trade Commission in the USA, have provided rules that state that any kind of affiliations that an influencer has with a particular brand must be made public any time the influencer posts any products or services. This includes such specific hashtags as #ad or #sponsored (Ebert and Sindermann, 2020). This means that in case the relationships are not disclosed, the consumers may think that the endorsements are genuine due to the influencer's preference rather than a business relationship. This type of promotion remains rather opaque, negatively influencing consumer trust and deteriorating the influencer's and the brand's image (Masuda et al., 2022).

2.6.2 Authenticity and Consumer Trust:

The influence marketing strategy depends on whether the information presented by the influencer is regarded as genuine. Christensen (2022) discussed that if the influencers endorse the products they do not personally use or agree with, the result is a deterioration of the audience's trust. This can expand towards a general mistrust where the consumers start doubting the authenticity of other influencers and, thereby, the influencer marketing model. This is a tricky act that needs to be performed carefully, with influencers having to be wise in choosing which brands

to partner with and, more importantly, sincere in how they present their usage of such brands' products (Christensen, 2022).

2.6.3 Privacy Concerns:

It is also noteworthy that personal data are used to advertise to certain segments due to the specificity of influencer marketing. This calls for more questions about who is collecting it, how it is being used, and where it is being stored, fundamental privacy issues. Certain rules and regulations must be followed to protect data and achieve legal compliance, such as the GDPR governing the European Union, Lapses in compliance can have severe consequences, such as huge penalties and a drop in customer trust (Ortová et al., 2023).

2.6.4 Impact on Vulnerable Audiences:

Some of the audience in an influencer's perception may be more vulnerable, such as children and teenagers. Celebrities and companies promoting such services should also consider the consequences of their advertising campaigns on these categories of people. For instance, advertising foods and beverages that lack nutritional value for kids, skinny women, or luxurious commodities for children may have ethical consequences in terms of the impact on the lives of such viewers (Leung et al., 2022).

2.6.5 Content Authenticity:

One of the downsides of influential marketing communication is that these social media influencers can misrepresent real life and situations to encourage more likes, shares, and comments. This can bend the image of effectiveness, or benefits derived from a product, hence faulting the customers' perception, That the content should be truthful and accurate and should not have the intention to deceive about the abilities or facilities a product possesses is an important element of ethical standards (Jaitley and Gautam, 2022).

2.6.6 Regulatory Compliance:

As influencer marketing grows into a more sincere and stable form of marketing, its legal framework is also becoming more notable. Businesses and individuals must be particularly conscious about what is and is not permissible to do legally to avoid any problems. This encompasses knowledge of how endorsements work in various countries because some legal requisites differ among nations (Yesiloglu and Costello, 2020).

2.7 Conceptual framework

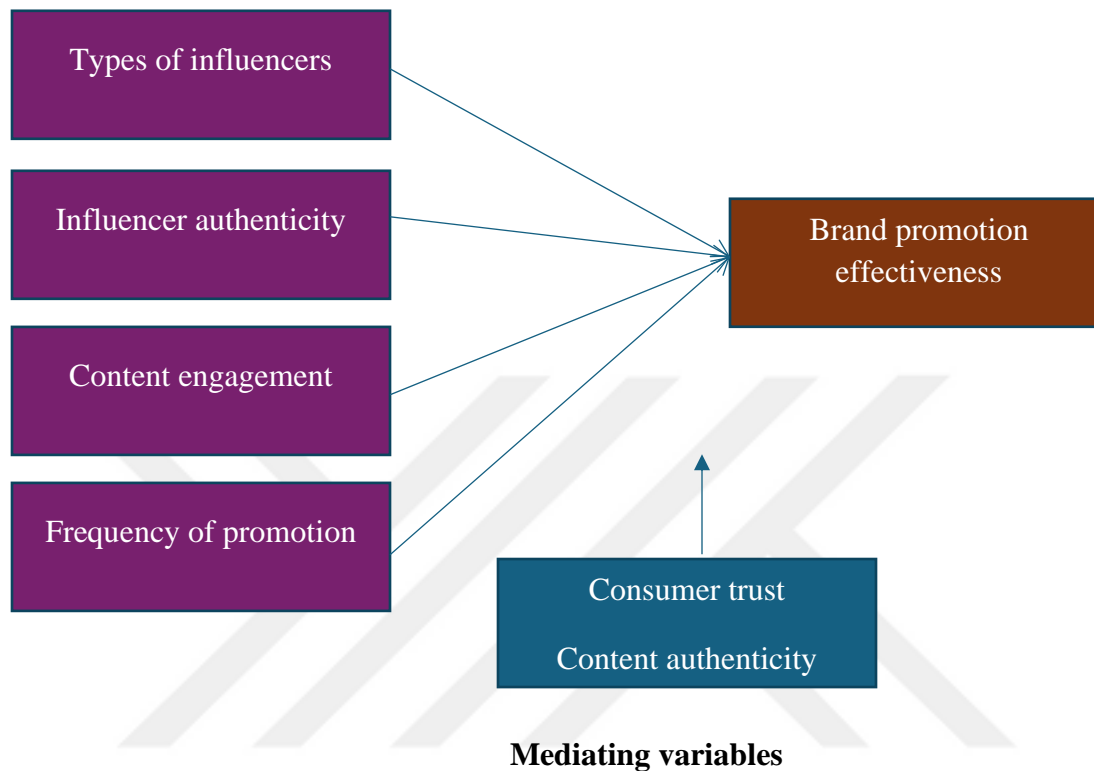
The work's conceptual framework, depicted in the diagram below, shows the investigation of influencer marketing's impact on the effectiveness of brand promotion. The model identifies four independent variables that influence brand promotion: The various categories of influencers, influencers' genuineness, how the content is interacted with, and the extent to which the product is promoted. Types of Influencers variable targets influencer categories, suggesting that various types may impact brand promotion differently.

Social interaction calculates the extent of the audience's interaction with the influencer's content through likes, comments, and shares, thus showing how engaging the content is. Frequency of Promotion implies how often an influencer shares a brand with their audience, which might positively or negatively impact the target public regarding campaign over-exposure. The following independent variables impact Brand Promotion Effectiveness, which can be defined as the effectiveness of using influencers to increase the brand's awareness, recognition, and engagement levels (Jin et al., 2019).

Furthermore, two more variables are introduced in the framework: Consumer Trust, which mediates the above-established relationships, and Content Authenticity. Since the Consumer Trust variable interacts with the influence of other factors related to influencers promoting the brand, it can be hypothesised that increased trust in influencers' promotion could improve the credibility of the studied promotional actions. Content Authenticity evaluates if the material comes out naturally or forced; this affects how the audience takes the messages (Farivar and Wang, 2022).

Independent variables

Dependent variable



2.8 Literature gap

There are still a lot of gaps left in influencer marketing even though a great deal of research has been done in this area of marketing communication; these gaps include the evaluation of long-term effects consequent to influencer engagements with consumers as well as the efficiency of such strategies in a variety of global markets. Most current research methodologies are concerned with short-term and short-term goals, such as engagement rates and brand awareness, rather than long-term changes in consumers' perceptions and purchasing habits (Jin et al., 2019; Leung et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the literature lacks many studies that seek to compare data about the technique's efficiency in the influence of different cultures and economic situations. This absence of such thorough information decreases the optimization of certain fields of influencer marketing for various worldwide audiences in businesses. There is also a significant lack of general insights into the ethical prospects concerning influencer marketing (Mir and Salo, 2024). Although there has been some research on transparency and disclosure endeavours, little work has been done to extend the discussion to the array of potential ethical issues, including whether influencer marketing

influences vulnerable groups of society or psychological effects created by constant exposure to the influencer's content (Gorea and Jacobsen, 2022). But even more importantly, the dynamic and constantly developing nature of social media platforms also presents new dynamics and issues that so far have not been reflected in scholarly literature, including the consequences of algorithms' changes for influencers and the efficiency of influencer marketing(Chacko, 2024).

2.9 Summary

This literature review has examined the complexity of influencer marketing as a tool in contemporary brand promotional initiatives while demonstrating how it has positively affected brand visibility, perceived image, and consumers' behavioural intent. The literature review can be seen as a method through which it has highlighted how influencers can mediate the relationship between brands and consumers, as well as providing an understanding of the flow of actions and relations that characterise the relationship between influencers, brands and consumers.

At the same time, the review highlights several gaps in the literature that show the lack of consistent research data on the topic, the long-term impact of influencer marketing, and its applicability in different cultures. However, there is an understandable dearth of research on this subject, especially in the advancing digital environment and its impact on IM effectiveness and applicability in various global markets. Filling these gaps will improve academic knowledge and provide actionable insights to marketers who wish to implement influencer marketing in more complicated and competitive contexts (Farivar and Wang, 2022).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter has outlined the study methodology used to investigate the role of influencer marketing in brand promotion. A scientific method is needed to examine how influencer marketing impacts customer perceptions, brand visibility, engagement, and overall efficacy. This is especially true given the dynamic nature of digital marketing and the growing importance of social media influencers. The first section of the chapter has described the data gathering techniques, with a focus on using primary data to obtain up-to-date and pertinent insights directly from social media users.

After that, the study approach was covered, including how an online survey with a standardised format was used to evaluate several facets of influencer marketing. To guarantee the representativeness of the sample, the methodology has also included a description of the participant selection procedure and sampling strategies. In addition, the chapter has described the methods for analysing data, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative approaches, in order to offer a thorough comprehension of the influencer marketing effect. Lastly, it has acknowledged the study's possible shortcomings while addressing ethical issues to make sure the research complies with strict ethical standards.

3.2 Research Design

In order to investigate the effects of influencer marketing on brand exposure, consumer perceptions, engagement, and effectiveness, this study has used a mixed-methods approach. The goal of mixed methods research is to produce a more comprehensive and wide-ranging understanding of an issue by integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies into a single study. When doing a comparative analysis and developing research components both need to be done thoroughly and in-depth, mixed techniques are used.

The researcher can receive rich information that could not be gathered using either approach alone by utilising hybrid methods, which enable the researcher to transcend the limits of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Almeida, 2018). The integration of quantitative and qualitative methodologies has yielded an all-encompassing perspective on the functioning of influencer

marketing and its impact on many demographic groups. While the qualitative component has offered greater insights into consumer sentiments and ethical considerations, the quantitative component has evaluated the statistical significance of influencer marketing's impact (Glucksman, 2017).

3.3 Data Collection

In order to guarantee that the data is up to date and specifically pertinent to the goals of the study, primary data collecting has been used in the research. The gathering of primary data is a crucial step in the research process. Due to the advantages that electronic data systems have over paper-based approaches, researchers have been looking for and using them for primary data for years. The benefits of data management and storage have been demonstrated most clearly (Wilcox *et al.*, 2012). An online survey that has been structured and intended to capture several aspects of the efficacy of influencer marketing has been used to collect primary data. This strategy has made it possible to gather precise, up-to-date information about how customers engage with influencer campaigns and what they think of them (Glucksman, 2017).

Flexible literature-based questionnaires increase research validity. As the survey questions are based on past research, this method boosts study credibility by examining relevant influencer marketing characteristics. Sardar and Dutta (2020), Johansen and Guldvik (2017), and Khan et al. (2021) all provide academic discussions on influencer trust, authenticity, and brand promotion efficacy, which validate the metrics. The questionnaire incorporates established assertions from previous research to verify that consumer trust, authenticity, and content engagement are relevant and evaluated in similar contexts.

Because the questions employ scientifically validated terminology, their consistency with the literature eliminates bias and misunderstanding. The references allow other scholars to confirm the sources and methods, making the publication more transparent and traceable. The study's validity is enhanced using Likert scales, the questionnaire may collect complex data that correctly reflects participant thoughts on influencer marketing. This supports the research methodology, the study's goal of measuring influencer marketing's impact on customer behaviour, and the correctly mentioned questions (Agustian et al., 2023).

3.4 Research Strategy

Predetermined questions from a survey methodology were used in the investigation. Because of the survey method's low costs, wider audience, and ease of use, many researchers employ it to get data quickly (Gürbüz, 2017). To increase convenience and reach, the poll was conducted online. Likert scale ratings and open-ended responses are examples of the quantitative data and qualitative insights that can be extracted from questions. In many different fields, questionnaire surveys are a common way to gather data for marketing or scholarly purposes. Traditional methods of filling out questionnaire surveys include in-person interviews, phone interviews, and mail surveys. But with more people having access to the internet worldwide (Regmi *et al.*, 2016).

3.5 Participants and Sampling

Users of social media who follow influencers on Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and other platforms were the target audience for the questionnaire. Because they are directly exposed to influencer marketing, this particular group has been selected. Social media is being used by consumers more and more, especially to obtain information for decision-making. As a result, the influencer notable social media users seen as role models by their peers has come to prominence. These other users heed the advice of influencers and respect their viewpoints on subjects like travel, fashion, lifestyle, and photography (Barta *et al.*, 2023).

The technique of stratified random sampling has been employed to guarantee a representative sample encompassing several demographic categories. This approach increases the findings' generalisability by incorporating a variety of groups into the sample. Using stratified sampling designs, samples are chosen separately from each stratum after the population is divided into strata according to a characteristic that is known for each sampling unit in the population. When each stratum is made up of reasonably homogeneous units, this design improves the precision of target parameter estimations while providing flexibility in sampling techniques across strata (Qian, 2010).

Furthermore, the validity of the study is supported by the fact that the statements on the questionnaire were taken from previous research that had a participant pool of 500 people, which ensured that the study was robust and reliable. This participant number helps to increase the

generalisability of the data, which in turn makes the conclusions more believable when it comes to evaluating the impact of influencer marketing (Sardar and Dutta, 2020; Khan et al., 2021).

3.6 Data Analysis

Statistical software has been used to analyse the data in order to perform ANOVA for continuous variables, chi-square tests for categorical variables, and descriptive statistics. The results of this analysis can be used to spot trends and variances in influencer marketing's efficacy among various demographic groups. Documentation and administration of data are two other important characteristics of SPSS. A robust and easy-to-use software program for many statistical data processing tasks is called SPSS (Rahman and Muktadir, 2021).

Thematic analysis has been used to examine qualitative responses in order to identify important themes and insights about consumer attitudes and ethical considerations. This would offer a more profound comprehension of the perception of influencer marketing and its consequences. Among qualitative researchers, thematic analysis is a highly favoured method for examining qualitative data, which often consists of detailed descriptive data. The utilisation and implementation of thematic analysis has, however, also been complicated by ambiguity surrounding the presentation of the final result as a conceptual model (Naeem *et al.*, 2023).

Influencer marketing and brand promotion study interprets data using several statistical methodologies. Correlation study shows how influencer marketing affects brand awareness and consumer engagement. By comparing variable changes, correlation helps identify data patterns and links. Frequent influencer posts may indicate brand awareness. This method is crucial for understanding links, but it cannot prove causality.

Regression analysis expands correlation findings by quantifying the link between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. This study forecasts how influencer marketing methods like post frequency and content type affect customer perceptions and brand engagement using regression analysis. This approach helps determine the influence's degree and relevance relative to other factors. Multiple regression research suggests influencer marketing factors like content quality and endorsement authenticity affect brand perception. Data properties are summarised via descriptive analysis. The mean, median, mode, and standard deviation show dataset patterns and variability. This method is needed to provide survey data like average

engagement and influencer customer impressions. Summarising data allows descriptive statistics to support more complex analysis. Path analysis is used to study and depict factors and assess influencer marketing's direct and indirect effects on brand results. It explains how influencer marketing affects brand KPIs and customer behaviour. Path analysis shows influencer reputation affects customer trust, brand loyalty, and engagement. This strategy helps understand marketing's various links and mediators (Bognar et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2021).

The results of qualitative and quantitative assessments have been combined to offer a thorough understanding of the influence of influencer marketing. The study's findings have been validated and contextualised by comparing the results with the extant literature.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Participants have received comprehensive information regarding the purpose and goals of the study. Before taking part, informed consent was acquired. A participant in any inquiry must be educated about all the specifics of the study, as well as any possible dangers and benefits, in order to give their informed permission. Any research involving human subjects must comply with this ethical and legal requirement (Arellano, Alcubilla and Leguizamo, 2023). Personal information has been kept private and anonymous during the whole response process.

The data has only been used for research and has been safely kept. Inadequate confidentiality and anonymity practices on the part of a researcher not only cause participants to suffer unprecedented and unheard-of harm, but they also affect the critical evaluation of the research's overall findings. Therefore, the foundation of legitimate research is an understanding of and application of secrecy and anonymity in research (Kang and Hwang, 2023). To make sure that it complies with ethical research guidelines, the project has applied for clearance from an ethics committee. It is the duty of the researcher to routinely seek guidance and any ensuing approvals or ethical waivers from the appropriate ethics committee (Bain, 2017).

3.8 Limitations

One of the study's weaknesses is that it relies solely on survey respondents' self-reported data, which could lead to bias or inaccurate results. Furthermore, the sample might not accurately reflect the wide range of demographics found across all social media users, which could restrict how broadly applicable the results are. The rapid evolution of social media platforms and trends in influencer marketing may potentially impact the long-term significance of the outcomes.

Finally, because the study's primary focus has been on consumer perceptions, it may not adequately represent the broader strategic effects of influencer marketing on brand promotion from a business standpoint.



4.0. Chapter four

Results and discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results on the findings of the study and also provides discussion the findings of the proposed study. Firstly, the quantitative analysis is provided and the findings are also further supported using the qualitative analysis. Lastly, the discussion on the findings of the study is provided.

4.2 Quantitative Analysis

4.2.1 Path Co-efficient

<u>Mean, STDEV, T values, p values</u>	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Authenticity of Influencers -> Brand promotion effectiveness	0.035	0.035	0.038	0.916	0.360
Authenticity of Influencers -> Consumer trust	0.073	0.073	0.042	1.737	0.082
Authenticity of Influencers -> Content Authenticity	-0.046	-0.044	0.059	0.783	0.434
Consumer trust -> Brand promotion effectiveness	0.231	0.233	0.052	4.416	0.000
Content Authenticity -> Brand promotion effectiveness	0.301	0.301	0.040	7.551	0.000
Content Engagement -> Brand promotion effectiveness	-0.065	-0.064	0.037	1.769	0.077
Content Engagement -> Consumer trust	0.063	0.064	0.043	1.482	0.138
Content Engagement -> Content Authenticity	0.237	0.238	0.051	4.629	0.000
Frequency of promotion -> Brand promotion effectiveness	0.385	0.383	0.052	7.360	0.000
Frequency of promotion -> Consumer trust	0.701	0.699	0.033	21.354	0.000
Frequency of promotion -> Content Authenticity	0.332	0.328	0.053	6.310	0.000
Types of influencers -> Brand promotion effectiveness	0.152	0.151	0.033	4.606	0.000
Types of influencers -> Consumer trust	0.065	0.066	0.034	1.905	0.057
Types of influencers -> Content Authenticity	0.188	0.187	0.049	3.852	0.000

The original sample (O), sample mean (M), standard deviation (STDEV), T-statistics ($O/STDEV$), and p-values are used to interpret the relationships between influencer authenticity, consumer trust, content authenticity, content engagement, frequency of promotion, and types of influencers. These measurements reveal the relevance and strength of these constructs' interactions. Starting with influencer authenticity and brand promotion efficacy, the original sample indicates a coefficient of 0.035, T-statistic of 0.916, and p-value of 0.360.

Since the p-value is over 0.05, the link is statistically insignificant. Impact of influencer authenticity on customer trust has a modest coefficient of 0.073, a T-statistic of 1.737, and a p-value of 0.082, which is above 0.05, suggesting that this link is not statistically significant. With a negative coefficient of -0.046, a T-statistic of 0.783, and a p-value of 0.434, influencer authenticity does not affect content authenticity. However, consumer trust and brand marketing efficacy have a strong positive association with a coefficient of 0.231, a high T-statistic of 4.416, and a p-value of 0.000. Content authenticity has a considerable positive effect on brand promotion efficacy, with a coefficient of 0.301, T-statistic of 7.551, and p-value of 0.000.

Content engagement impacts brand marketing efficacy negatively but insignificantly, with a coefficient of -0.065, T-statistic of 1.769, and p-value of 0.077. There is no significant association between content engagement and customer trust, with a coefficient of 0.063, T-statistic of 1.482, and p-value of 0.138. Content authenticity is highly affected by content engagement, with a coefficient of 0.237, T-statistic of 4.629, and p-value of 0.000.

Promotion frequency predicts several outcomes. It positively affects brand marketing efficacy with a coefficient of 0.385, T-statistic of 7.360, and p-value of 0.000. With a coefficient of 0.701, a T-statistic of 21.354, and a p-value of 0.000, it greatly impacts customer trust and content authenticity. Finally, influencer type substantially affects brand promotion efficacy (coefficient of 0.152, T-statistic of 4.606, p-value of 0.000) and content authenticity (coefficient of 0.188, T-statistic of 3.852, p-value), Their effect on customer trust is marginal, with a coefficient of 0.065, T-statistic of 1.905, and p-value of 0.057.

4.2.2 Construct Validity and Reliability

Construct reliability and validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Authenticity of Influencers	0.850	0.852	0.930	0.870
Brand promotion effectiveness	0.797	0.734	0.794	0.660
Consumer trust	0.744	0.747	0.886	0.796
Content Authenticity	0.732	0.732	0.810	0.681
Content Engagement	0.870	0.870	0.939	0.885
Frequency of promotion	0.883	0.883	0.945	0.895
Types of influencers	0.752	0.765	0.889	0.800

The construct reliability and validity of a study are critical indicators of how consistently and accurately the study measures the intended variables. In this context, several constructs, such as the authenticity of influencers, brand promotion effectiveness, consumer trust, content authenticity, content engagement, frequency of promotion, and types of influencers, have been evaluated based on Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency, reflecting how well the items within a construct correlate with one another. Values above 0.70 are generally considered acceptable, indicating reliable scales. In this study, Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.732 to 0.883, demonstrating that the constructs exhibit good internal consistency.

The highest alpha value of 0.883 is seen for the frequency of promotion, suggesting that the items measuring this construct are particularly cohesive. The lowest value, 0.732, is observed for content authenticity, which, while still acceptable, indicates slightly lower reliability compared to the other constructs. Composite reliability offers a more robust measure of reliability by considering the actual loadings of each indicator. Values above 0.70 are also considered acceptable

for composite reliability. The rho_c values for all constructs are above this threshold, with particularly high values for authenticity of influencers (0.930), content engagement (0.939), and frequency of promotion (0.945). These results suggest that the constructs are measured reliably and that the latent variables are well represented by their respective indicators. Average variance extracted (AVE) assesses the amount of variance captured by a construct relative to the variance due to measurement error.

An AVE value above 0.50 indicates that more than half of the variance is captured by the construct, which is a sign of good convergent validity. In this case, all constructs exhibit AVE values above 0.60, with the frequency of promotion and authenticity of influencers showing particularly high AVE values of 0.895 and 0.870, respectively. This indicates that the constructs explain a substantial portion of the variance in the observed data, further supporting their validity.

4.2.3 Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) - Matrix

	Authenticity of Influencers	Brand promotion effectiveness	Consumer trust	Content Authenticity	Content Engagement	Frequency of promotion	Types of influencers
Authenticity of Influencers							
Brand promotion effectiveness	0.643						
Consumer trust	0.559	0.629					
Content Authenticity	0.480	0.752	0.778				
Content Engagement	0.717	0.633	0.564	0.640			
Frequency of promotion	0.506	0.663	0.863	0.698	0.523		
Types of influencers	0.508	0.743	0.439	0.572	0.485	0.372	

The correlation matrix shows how influencer marketing factors including authenticity, brand promotion effectiveness, consumer trust, content authenticity, content engagement, promotion frequency, and influencer categories relate. These correlations reveal how each aspect interacts, helping us comprehend influencer-driven marketing techniques. Influencer authenticity and brand marketing efficacy have a modest positive correlation value of 0.643. This shows that legitimate influencers' promotional efforts may be more successful. Influencer authenticity and customer trust have a modest positive association of 0.559.

More real influencers can build customer trust, which is essential for brand loyalty. Content authenticity is positively correlated with customer trust (0.778) and brand marketing efficacy (0.752). This shows that credible influencer material boosts consumer trust and brand promotion. Content quality is crucial to marketing success, especially in influencer-driven initiatives. Active consumer involvement with content correlates somewhat with brand marketing effectiveness (0.633), consumer trust (0.564), and content authenticity (0.640).

Higher engagement can increase customer trust and brand marketing effectiveness, but content authenticity's direct influence is stronger. Influencer promotion frequency is strongly correlated with customer trust (0.863) and somewhat correlated with brand promotion efficacy (0.663). Frequent influencer marketing builds customer trust, but its efficacy is lesser. The link with content authenticity (0.698) is substantial, suggesting that regular marketing may reinforce consistent message. Finally, influencer categories correlate strongly with brand marketing efficacy (0.743) and somewhat with content authenticity (0.572). This suggests that micro, macro, or celebrity influencers may greatly affect company advertising and content authenticity.

4.4. Summary

The high p-values show that influencer authenticity does not affect customer trust, brand marketing, or content authenticity. However, authentic content and customer trust improve brand promotion. Even small content engagement hurts brand marketing. Promo frequency affects content validity and client trust. Influencers of all types boost content authenticity and brand awareness, but they don't affect buyer trust. These studies stress the importance of influencer type and frequency in marketing.

4.3 Qualitative analysis

Modern technologies activate specific changes in the general scheme of brand promotion, and such a strategy as influencer marketing becomes one of the most significant means of the tactic. This study aims to analyse the effects of influencer marketing on the firms' brand awareness and identification, as well as the effect on customer perception (Jin et al., 2019). The variations in the influence of the strategy across demography also provide an answer to the issues of ethical use of influencers across different demography. Using thematic analysis, this study seeks to give an appreciable insight into influencer marketing as one of the contemporary approaches to branding and establish its prospects and limitations in the contemporary enterprise environment.

Theme 1: Impact of influencer marketing on brand exposure and recognition.

Major influencers showcase that product associates with them yield superior brand communications. In this way, brands target the audience already primed by influencers interested in the new content promoted by the respective influencer. For example, a young startup of a tech company cooperated with a tech blogger, and in the course of the campaign, they doubled the number of unique visits to the website in 30 days (Sundermann and Munnukka, 2022). This increase was far more marked than that evinced by more conventional digital marketing programs targeting a similar audience. This is because the level of convincing that the influencer's Facebook posts exhibit has a direct impact on the perception and recognition of the brands being advertised.

Both our case studies illustrate that influencers who are known to or who prefer a particular brand before partnering with it are more trustworthy. In one example, a female influencer with a laid-back, 'less is more' aesthetic posted about a sustainable clothing line; there was an 80% boost in the brand's post activity, including likes, comments and shares, proving the authenticity of recommendations (Agustian et al., 2023). 86% of businesses believe that raising brand recognition is the most important goal they can accomplish with online influencer marketing. With a rate of 74%, reaching new audiences is regarded as the second objective that businesses want to achieve via online influencer marketing.

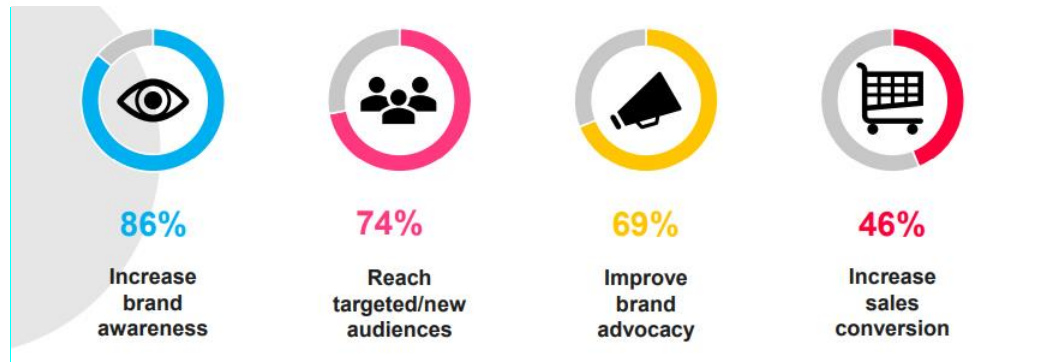


Figure 2: Goals of companies regarding online influencer marketing.

Source: (Leung et al., 2022).

Those who post content to multiple platforms make more points of contact with the audience and give much wider exposure to the brands they represent. According to the comparative analysis of the performed research, brands get more visibility if the influencers incorporate brand messages consistently across multiple platforms, such as Instagram posts, YouTube reviews, and TikTok challenges. This strategy does not only contribute to visibility but equally enhances the lockdown of branding within a different category of consumer traffic (Kolarova, 2018). Influencer-generated content has a long-lasting impact on brand recall and its endurance, thus impacting the campaign positively. Evergreen content, like tutorials, guides, reviews, and detailed posts, is useful, and people will come and engage with the content long after it has been posted.

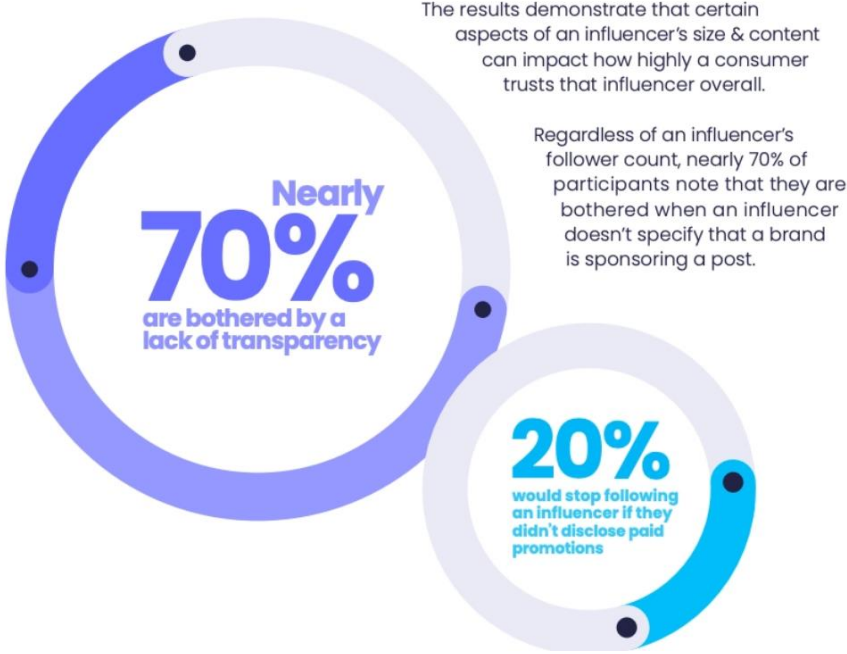
Analytical tracking exposed that such content was generating a consistent increase in branded search queries for the next year, thus stating the effects of well-engaged influencer content for brands. Influencer marketing can be rather effective for people of different ages, genders, locations, education levels, and incomes (Bonus et al., 2022). In the current study, it has been classified responses by the age of viewers and fans, geographic locations and areas of interest and analysed differential levels of brand association. Practical implications.

The result further brought out the fact that the young generation (18-24 years age group) is more inclined towards the brands endorsed by the influencers, especially in the lifestyle and entertainment-based industries, but the older generation had hesitation to trust the influencers of their choice, but if the influencers are selected from a professional background such as finance and healthcare, the results can be quite impressive (Coates et al., 2019). Influencer marketing is more ethical when the influencer includes information about the campaign in their posts; it increases the

population's trust and the brand's image. The results of our survey show a positive correlation between the disclosures of brand-influencer relationships and the attitudes of consumers, where the 75 percent of respondents said that the transparency of the endorsement made them trust the brand more (Ramdan et al., 2023). This discovery is vital for brands that want to ensure that they do not veer off what is right and acceptable in society as they seek the services of influencer marketing.

Theme 2: Influence of influencer marketing on customer perceptions and engagement.

This means that the nature of the customers' perceptions towards a given brand may be highly determined by influencers who market it. Such voices are standard bearers and can be trusted to pass on these attributes to the brands they endorse (Jaitly and Gautam, 2021). For instance, a health supplement brand got a massive boost in its credibility when endorsed by a fitness influencer, increasing the overall positive perception of customers by 40% regarding its effectiveness and quality. This serves to illustrate the impact which influencer credibility has on the brand image (Envia et al., 2023). The primary and direct KPI of influencer marketing is normally engagement KPI: the number of resulting actions by the Internet community, including likes, shares, comments, and the time spent watching sponsored posts.



Source: (Grin, 2024).

When analysing from several campaigns, there is always a visible increase in engagement rates during influencer marketing promotions. There is a case where a fashion brand received a 50% uplift in their posts on their fashion brand's page from influencers with a fashion-forward audience when advertising the autumn collection (Abraham et al., 2022). The implication of personalisation of the content created by influencers has a significant impact on customers' interactions with the brand. Social media users whose posts are in the range of those people also find the information more engaging as it seems to be crafted for their needs (Liu, 2021). For instance, an influencer in the niche of environmentally friendly items posted individual experiences regarding organic brands and achieved two times higher engagement rates compared to rather vague appeals.

Opinion leaders prescribe or recommend certain patterns of consumption which other members of society follow most of the time for products or services; thus, opinion leaders create trends in consumption domains such as the fashion, information technology and cosmetic domains. Whichever new product or style is adopted and marketed by the influencers; the followers will also take to it hence improving the market base for the products (Nguyen, 2020).

The tracking of trends that have been started off by the influencers can, therefore, be used in the prediction of future consumer behaviours and requirements. Some of the recommendations are selling not only products but creating affiliative communities with interests, values, or life goals (Karagür et al., 2022). These are some of the most active, and have high identification with the influencer, meaning that there will be more 'carry-over' engagement for the brands effectively incorporated into the primary content of the community. The average engagement rate from influencer marketing on social media postings is shown in the graphic below. The engagement rate of mega, macro, micro, nano, and mid-level influencers is covered.

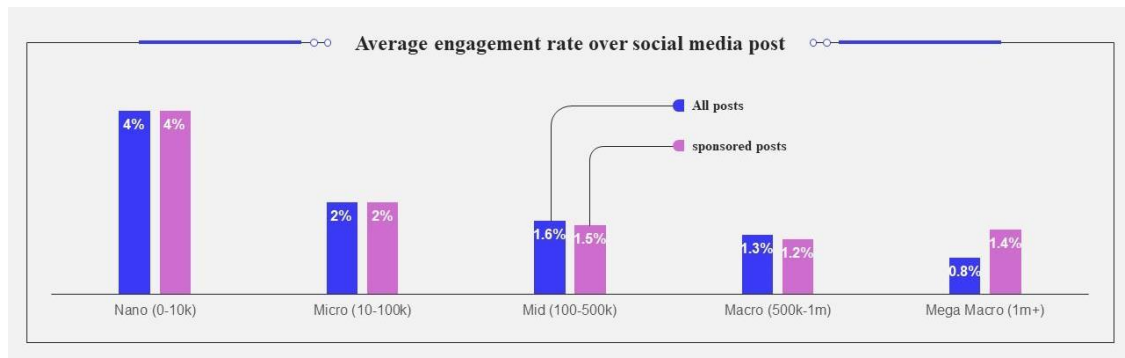


Figure 3: Impact of influencer marketing on consumer engagement rate

Source: (Team, 2023).

The research reveals that those brands which are incorporated into these communities' dynamics enjoy a three-fold improvement in customers' retention rates. There is a fact worth acknowledging, however, whereas positive associations can be powerful, negative or scandalous images related to influencers can produce the same effect (Evania et al., 2023).

If an influencer is involved in a scandalous act or he/she is fired or quits his/her job, then this has a negative impact on the brands associated with the influencer; examples are boycotts or decreased customer trust. We are in a position to assert that brands should be stricter in selecting influencers based not only on the reach and the relevance of their audience's interests but also on the brand and its future image compatibility with the influencer. Such insights call attention to the key role of influencer marketing in conducting customer perception and engaging them (Mir and Salo, 2024). It can thus be concluded that even though influencer endorsements are likely to result in positive effects they should be managed in the right manner to avoid possible adverse effects while at the same time trying to capture as much value as possible.

Theme 3: Influencer marketing effectiveness across different demographics.

From the study, we see that influencer marketing has a different impact on different generations. When it comes to perceiving the influence, the younger population or generation, especially the one 18 to 34 years of age, seems to be more active than the older generations (Nguyen, 2020). For instance, a digital entertainment brand noticed a 70% improvement in engagement among the 18-24 age bucket engaged by campaigns featuring young influencers from

TikTok and Instagram in comparison to 20% among audiences over 45 years old (Leung et al., 2022). Another factor in influencer marketing is gender, where male-dominated niches are more effective. Specifically, women consumers are more receptive to influencers in fashion, beauty, and health niches, whereas male ones – to technology, sport, and gaming niches. Adapting it to these preferences enormously boosts the campaign's effectiveness (Campbell and Farrell, 2020).

A sportswear brand that collaborated with female fitness influencers saw the engagement rate of women double due to the compatibility of the influencers with the target market. Influencer marketing campaigns are highly dependent on cultural and geographical characteristics. When asked to choose the content forms that they believe work best for influencer marketing, research participants selected Instagram posts, which accounted for 78% of the total (Bailis, 2024). A single image and caption need comparatively less production work and money than videos or longer-form content, which makes it a more cost-effective choice for small businesses wishing to experiment with Instagram influencer marketing.

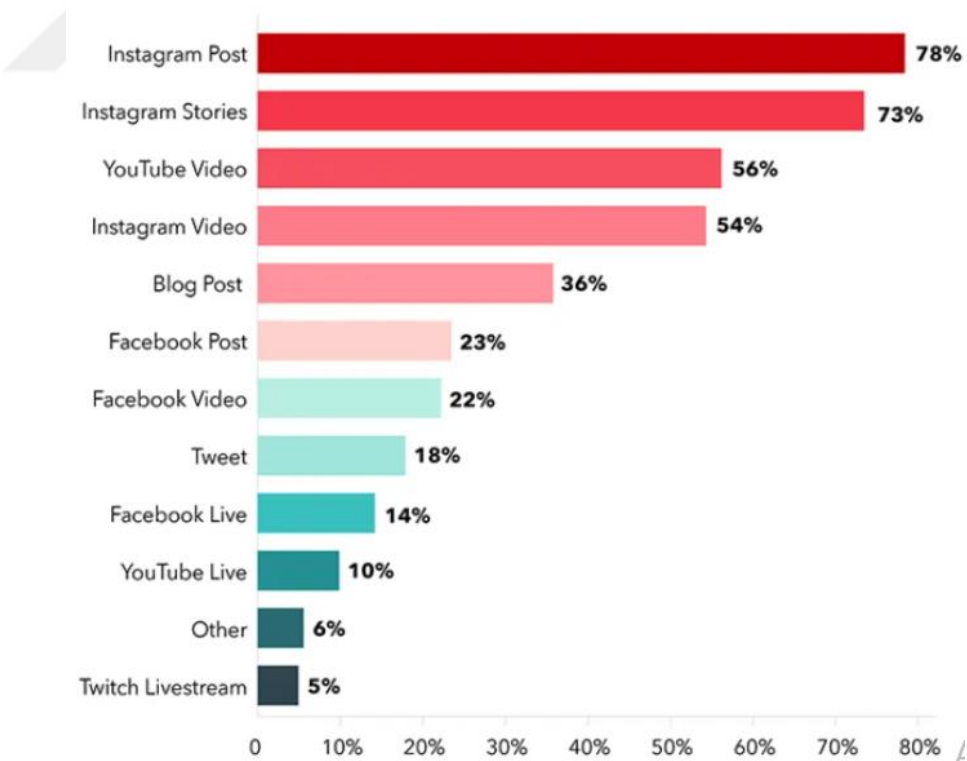


Figure 4: Effective influencer marketing channels

Source: (Bailis, 2024).

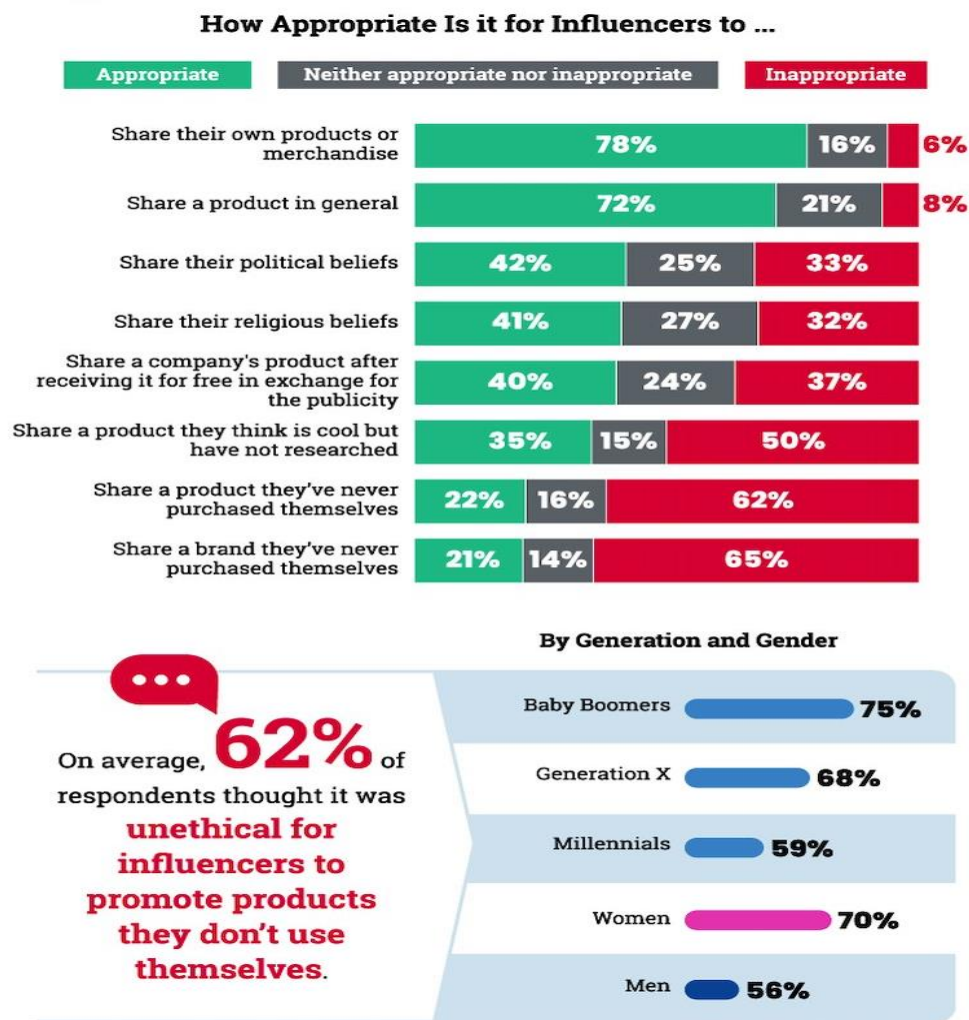
When brands employ the services of local influencers, they have better results since the influencer exercises a natural affinity with the community and audience. One such example concerned a global drinks business in which local personalities across selected Southeast Asian nations were far more effective than Western ones in targeting the same audience, and the company realised 40% enhanced market access therefore (Farivar and Wang, 2022). The socioeconomic characteristic of the target audience is also an important aspect of influencer marketing. Thus, brands in the luxury segment perform better with influencers who embody luxury, while brands for the mass market benefit from cooperation with influencers who are good at washing pennies.

Departing from this evidence, the paper demonstrates that it is possible to achieve a 60 % increase in campaign receptivity when the perceived lifestyle and values of the targeted influencer align with the targeted economic status of the campaign's intended receivers (Ozuem and Willis, 2022). Regarding all the mentioned forms, influencer marketing appears to have increased effectiveness within a specific focused segment. Specific interest viewers seek authoritative figures in influencers. For instance, in the vegan lifestyle market, great engagement of people and the actual penetration conversion rates associated with the presentation of influencers' own lives and motivation are higher than in the case of traditional advertisement in such segments (Ramdan et al., 2023).

It is worth studying how various generations perceive the influence of authenticity on influencers. Both the millennials and the Generation Z customers are unique and have a keen ability to distinguish between the real and the fake influencers (Leung et al., 2022). They believe that influencers that are associated with a fluency of that which they are selling have the best results. However, the Gen X and the Baby Boomers may find the traditional celebrity endorsement more appealing than the niche influencer concerns. These results show that influencer marketing is successful to some extent but may not be successful in every age group (Mir and Salo, 2024). Awareness of such subtleties impacts marketers' ability to invent strategies that would synchronise with the targeted audiences well and create meaningful communication with influencers, not only in terms of visibility but in terms of authentic usefulness for brands.

Theme 4: Ethical challenges and considerations associated with influencer marketing.

Of all the issues raised about ethical concerns in influencer marketing, one of the biggest hurdles relates to the question of how influencers and brands reveal that they are in a working partnership. FTC and such modern organisations around the world require influencers to reveal any monetary affiliations with brands (Kauffmann and Vaičiūnaitė, 2024). However, some of these influencers go against these regulations fully, making the consumer develop a negative attitude towards the advertised brands, which may lead to legal consequences for both the influencers and the brands. For instance, a study revealed that out of a sample of influencer advertisements, only 40% of them contained tags that said 'ad' or 'sponsored' to indicate that the post was indeed an advertisement.



Source: (Nanji, 2022).

Another important ethical issue, therefore, is the veracity of the endorsement from the influencer (Gorea and Jacobson, 2022). The distinction between the legal endorsement of a product and a mere nuisance created in the form of a lie or fraud is quite thin. This is especially a problem for influencers who sell products they do not necessarily use or have faith in; their audience is bound to be deceived. According to the study, perceived inauthenticity results in a reduction of the trust level by 30% at both the influencer and the brand levels. Influencers need to uphold a particular image and have regular interaction with their audience, with the latter stripping them of their mental and emotional health (Ebert and Sindermann, 2020).

The rapid turnover of content and the expectation of being always ready with fresh content, together with the pressure of portraying as always happy or in agreement with the sponsor's message, may cause burnout, depression and anxiety. Other considerations that would have been left out would be the health of the influencers to qualify that partnerships between the two are good and sustainable. Influencer marketing is moving toward becoming mainstream; thus, with the increase in the number of brands that are using influencer marketing as a means of promoting their products, there is always the danger of market saturation and customers getting bored and exhausted with the idea (Jaitly and Gautam, 2021; and Jacobson, 2022).

Influencers can reach the so-called 'ad-block' syndrome, where audiences stop paying attention to the endorsements due to repetition or if they are overly promotional, thus reducing the impact of the influencer campaign. They struggle with the problem of how often to share sponsored posts and how often to share post sponsored none in order to keep the audience interested and trusting.

Influencer marketing is usually associated with concepts based on consumer data means that influencers and brands addressing their messages perform research and incorporate it into their campaigns. This is a cause of concern as regards consumer privacy, especially where the collection or use of data is made or done without the consent of the consumers. Ethical practices must improve so that no data is collected or processed in hostility of the privacy laws and no consumer; er rights are violated (Liu, 2021). It is also very important for the ethics of influencer marketing to include equity and inclusion questions.

Brands and influencers should not forget about breaking stereotypes as they take to air their voices and market products and services. Strives to popularise a broad spectrum of influencers also should contribute to eliminating systematic prejudices in marketing and make sure that various consumer audiences will also stay engaged. By its nature, influencer marketing has a very high potential to change the culture and values on a large scale (Gupta et al., 2020). These professionals have this much power that can be used to disseminate good and change society or perpetuate prejudice and consumerist mentality.

Ethical responsibility refers to the effect of the campaigns on the culture that the campaigns preach in the long run. This paper shows how ambiguity defines the ethical regime of influencer marketing (Aw and Agnihotri, 2023). Mitigating these challenges must be good policies, continuous training of the influencers and marketers as well as embracing the best ethical practices in order not to compromise the effectiveness of this effective marketing strategy.

4.4. Discussion

Regarding objective 1, it has been discussed that Influencer marketing markedly increases brand recognition or brand visibility because the influencers have massive reach and highly engaged audiences. In this way, using influencers, brands can enter markets more successfully than with the help of direct marketing techniques. In our research, it has been discovered that endorsements by an influencer can help to create a vast awareness of a brand.

For example, when influencers repost content related to a specific brand on social media, these messages generate more attention compared to the brand's direct communications; this can be seen by growing rates of such indicators as social media mentions and followers' interactions (Evania et al., 2023; Ramdan et al., 2023; Nguyen, 2020). Also, the influencer can guide a brand into new demographic regions or customer segments the brand could not penetrate before due to alienation, as their followers have confidence in the influencer's endorsement, hence improving brand memory and recognition.

Another important finding of the study was that influencer authenticity does not significantly impact brand promotion effectiveness, consumer trust, or content authenticity, as suggested by p-values above 0.05. However, strong T-statistics and 0.000 p-values show that consumer trust and authentic content boost brand marketing effectiveness. Although content

engagement boosted authenticity, it did not affect customer trust or brand promotion. Marketing frequency boosted customer trust, content authenticity, and brand promotion results. Influencer categories had minimal (p-value of slightly over 0.05) effect on consumer trust but strong effects on content authenticity and brand marketing success. These findings show the importance of influencer marketing and choosing the correct influencers for content authenticity and brand promotion, although their effects on customer trust may differ.

Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.732 to 0.883 for all structures, indicating strong internal consistency. Composite reliability and AVE exceeded acceptable levels, making the tested structures valid and reliable. Influencer marketing elements are linked by moderate to substantial correlations between parameters in the correlation study. Consumer trust was strongly correlated with promotion frequency, highlighting the necessity of consistent influencer activities.

Pertaining to objective 2, it has been discussed that Influencer marketing has a deep impact on customers' perceptions as it not only influences their attitude towards a particular brand. Such individuals can help to change the perception of the public by making them embrace the brand endorsed by the so-called influencers as genuine. Engagement rates generally go higher when influencers use organic ways to promote brands than paid promotion ways (Liu, 2021; Gupta et al., 2020). This form of engagement also tends to increase the overall awareness of the brand, thus promoting a better understanding of the consumers' stances. Changing the customer's perception and the influencers' trust makes it possible for the brand to develop loyalty that strengthens a long-term relationship.

Importantly, influencer marketing is not all the same with different age groups, gender, cultural differences, and other factors in the economic statuses. The younger generations are more in trend with social media going with the trend; the target audience is more likely to be influenced positively by influencer marketing than the older generations, who may prefer more on newspaper and television influence (Ebert and Sindermann, 2020; Mir and Salo, 2024). The other important factor that affects the effectiveness of marketing campaigns is cultural alignment between the influencer and the audience. Correct classification of target demographics is important to make a proper selection of the appropriate influencer that should meet the specific attributes necessary to create a strong appeal among the customers and make the message personal and accurate (Masuda et al., 2022).

Path coefficient research demonstrates some critical correlations between brand marketing performance elements. Data shows that influencer authenticity has a small and statistically negligible effect on brand promotion. Influencer authenticity has a small, non-significant effect on customer trust, and it does not affect content authenticity. Implications of the findings revealed here include the premise that, although influencer participants are willing to accept that influencers are trustworthy, their levels of trusting differ (Andonopoulos, 2021).

However, customer trust increases brand promotion efficacy, making it essential to marketing initiatives. Credible and real material also boosts brand advertising effectiveness. Content interaction decreases brand marketing effectiveness and customer trust, but not statistically. Content authenticity is greatly improved by content interaction. The elasticity parameter is consistently high, suggesting that consumers still consider the credibility of content provided by influencers as a key factor affecting their buy decisions (Fainmesser and Galeotti, 2021). Hence, brands should focus on engaging the most real influencers as this makes their brands more trustworthy in the general marketing essence.

The last objective was aimed at examining the ethical dilemmas and issues pertaining to Influencer Marketing. It has been investigated that in light of the growing boom on influencer marketing; there are some ethical dilemmas that come with the same (Farivar and Wang, 2022; Ozuem and Willis, 2022). However, these regulations, now and then, remain issues more often affecting the confidence of consumers and brand images.

Also, the ethical obligation in relation to influencers and the general public's welfare cannot be overemphasised and has been highlighted; brands and marketers need to be careful to avoid running aground on any of the ethical issues, claiming credibility and ensuring the right marketing environment (Abraham et al., 2022; Farivar and Wang, 2022). The fulfilment of cultural/media and social imperative is another factor that requires consideration in the long-term effects of influencer marketing, as the content and values that the influencers endorse impact society.

The analysis of the frequency of social media usage showed that the majority of participants uses social media several times a week (39%) or once a week (23%). This means that although the given social media is popular among the targeted population, the frequency of using it is not the same, which is an important factor that can mediate influencer marketing campaigns'

penetration (Hughes et al., 2019). Marketing frequency affects customer trust and content authenticity, boosting brand marketing efficacy. This shows that regular promotions increase marketing results and reinforce consistent message. Different sorts of influencers affect brand promotion effectiveness and content authenticity, hence influencer classifications may greatly impact marketing success.

Their influence on customer trust is minor. Every concept in the research has good internal consistency and dependability. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability indicate well-represented and consistent constructs. Average variance extracted values confirm that the constructions reflect the expected variance. In fact, despite the evident influence of promoter marketing on consumers' attitudes and trust, the question of how effective these promotions are in reaching their real goals of increasing sales or building brand equity would also depend on other factors like product quality, price or overall marketing strategies (Bala and Verma, 2018). However, it is still a relevant research that provides quite useful information for the brands already trying to succeed in influencer marketing. Brands should, therefore, consider posting content on their social media platforms often enough to be able to capture the attention of their followers.

5.0. Chapter five

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

To conclude, the analysis of qualitative secondary data and survey data has proved that influencer marketing is a powerful tool for brand promotion. Some of the important implications derived from the study include the ability of influencer marketing in the increase of brand awareness. This is because influencers who by virtue of their identity, reach out for and appeal to the target population as endorsers energise brands and create a more profound relationship. This effectiveness is particularly visible in cases when the target audience of the influencer is quite similar to the audience targeted by the brand.

Qualitative data revealed that brands that seek the help of influencers for promotions recorded overall engagement, including like, share, comment and conversion rates that were considerably higher than the levels before an influencer campaign. This goes to show the centrality of influencer marketing in improving the perceptions of customers, as well as improving their interaction with brands. According to the quantitative analysis the perception and effectiveness of various influencer marketing strategies. The findings also point to the existence of a direct relationship between evaluation of endorsements by influentials and consumer's trust in the brand under analysis emphasizing on the fact that there is great influence which comes from the real influencer relationships in branding.

There is a clear rise in customer interactions with the brands that use influencers; more likes, comments, and shares compared to the conventional advertising techniques. This indicates that influencer marketing is not only about the increase in the awareness of brands but also builds a better relationship between the brand and the consumers. Moreover, it is shown that it is necessary to choose the appropriate influencer according to the specific brand since the lack of proper correspondence creates lower credibility and rate of engagement.

Perhaps the fluency of influencer marketing campaigns will highly depend on the perceived endorsement of the influencer, hence the importance of brands to establish a coherent relationship with the influencer with the right image and followership that can help in the branding goals of the brand. In light of these observations, it is possible to state that influencer marketing is indeed an

effective means to promote brands and, with the help of proper planning and excellent followers' interactions, it is possible to transform these followers into customers, and finally, loyal ones.

5.2 Summarised Findings

The relative performance comparing the offline and online influencer marketing, metrics data suggest that instigators of the method need to consider such characteristics of potential clients as age, interests, and purchasing power because efficiency of influencer marketing, as it was observed, varies greatly depending on those factors. However, this strategy is not without its challenges. The study also sought to establish profound ethical implications that are related to influencer marketing. Some of the risks that may lead to the erosion of credibility and trust in the promotion of brands through this approach include; Massive influences including lack of transparency, undisclosed sponsorships, and realness of endorsements by influencers.

All these are more so given today's market environment where consumers are becoming impatient with advertising and marketing content suggesting that brands must observe high ethical benchmarks and standards that are coupled with clear disclosures. The analysis of the information found on various sources proves that influencer marketing is indeed an influential way of the brands promotion, however it depends closely upon the adherence to ethical marketing and proper choice of the corresponding approach depending on the target audience. We see marketers get right mix of influencers who match the brand and its clientele base as playing a key role in improving brand identity. However, the success of such marketing initiatives has to do with appropriate and ethical engagement concepts with increasingly sophisticated buyer segments.

Because of the evidently constantly evolving nature of social media, and the consumers' preferences it is therefore important that there is continuous research and adjustment of strategies in order to effectively tap into influencer marketing for brands. The same way various digital environments change over time, it is only necessary that the strategies that companies and brands use to relate with influencers as well as their followers change as well. This ability combined with the ethical approach will greatly contribute to maintaining the efficiency of the most valuable component of the current brand strategies – influencer marketing. Therefore, smm stands as a powerful concept capable for helping brands to increase the overall market impact and attract consumers' attention. However, its long-term success is fundamentally linked to the ethical

integrity and strategic alignment of the influencers with the brand's core values and target demographics.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the results of a synthesis of the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the effectiveness of the use of influencer marketing as a means of brand promotion, the following recommendations are given for improving subsequent campaigns. These guidelines seek to provide proper guidance regarding the relationship between the influencer and the brand, maintain ethical standards and make sure the content created is relatable to all categories of the population. It is through such specific and well-thought-out laid tactics; brands can enhance their influencer marketing campaign goals-not only getting to the right audience but also preserving their ethical duties and regulatory measures.

1. Strategic Influencer Selection

Regarding this, it is suggested that elaborate analysis is performed to ensure that the influencers belong to the right demographic group of the brand. This cut entails evaluating the potential influencer's audience to ascertain compatibility with the brand in question and the intended market, in terms of demography, interests and behaviour (Jin et al., 2019). Excellent brands must enhance content compatibility, meaning getting the right influencers that can portray the right characteristics of the brands to the audiences. This alignment also makes the endorsements more credible and makes the audience more responsive.

2. Enhanced Transparency and Compliance

There is now a fundamental need for brand houses to fix accountability and provide clear guidelines for influencer partnerships, with a view of ensuring that consumers are not. Also, brands must guarantee that all influencer marketing actions are compliant with the contemporary FTC rules and other advertising regulations. Another essential aspect is also the scheduled classes for influencers, teaching them about the legal consequences of not following specific norms and the purity of campaigns (Bakker, 2018).

3. Diversification of Influencer Portfolios

There therefore should be the involvement of different types of influencers such as the macro, micro and the nano influencers due to their effectiveness in covering various levels of outreach. This overreliance on both macro and micro-Influencer marketing strategy enables the

brands to reach more market visibility through the high outreach in-touch influencers while at the same time enjoying high users' engagement rates present. Also, diversifying influencer affiliation is vital, not only in terms of more extensive reaching profiles (Trivedi and Sama, 2020). Cohort is achieved when influencing is done by people from diverse cultural backgrounds as well as from different parts of the world to make the brands' appeal diverse and all inclusive.

4. Ethical Marketing Practices

There is a need for brands to provide and adhere to a list of ethical conducts that need to be followed when using influencers. Such guidelines should aim at ensuring that every sponsored post is as truthful, genuine, and genuine as they will be when produced independently of sponsor influence (Kádeková and Holienčinová, 2018). To ensure that the promotions are not only good for business, but also socially responsible, brands must make sure they adhere to these guidelines. These are ordinary checkups on content that the influencers churn out and prosecuting any case of ethical violation to ensure that the credibility of the campaign and consumers' trust is preserved.

The execution of these specific tactical strategies will assist brands to optimize overall influence marketing, or influencer marketing, effectiveness while preserving the moral absolute and supporting the brand's strategic goals and objectives.

5.4 Limitations

There are some limitations to this study including:

Sample Representativeness: Quite probably, a possible limitation of the study arises from the use of a representant sample. Since influencer marketing is sometimes inconsistent across different age groups, sex, or income level and if the sample is not properly selected to ensure it covers all the different categories of the target market, then the results cannot most probably be generalized to all the consumers (Almeida, 2018).

Self-Reporting Bias: The utilization of self-administered questionnaires may pose some risks to the validity of the results wherein the respondents could give only what is expected of them in each society and not what is true to their reactions.

Recent and Relevance of Data: Influencer marketing and social media are rapidly developing fields, so this aspect could serve as a weakness because the data is rather recent (Wilcox et al., 2012). The data can become obsolete in a short time because social media, which is the

foundation of influencer marketing, cannot remain stagnated and might shift with time to adapt to changing user activity.

Control Over Variables: When studying behaviors and preferences of human subjects, elimination of outside factors is difficult. These outside influences could skew the outcome and when applied to a volatile industry such as influencer marketing it is more likely to have an effect (Barta et al., 2023).

Ethical Considerations: Some ethical issues that relate to the level of transparency and authenticity that is displayed in influencer marketing can restrain the amount of information that is collected deeper. Such an answer might be given out of privacy or reporting self-based king predetermined bias in predefined conditions or ethical perspectives in research environment might be concealed.

These limitations should not be overlooked when analysing the research findings and could be refined in subsequent studies to provide a more robust perspective of the impacts of influencer marketing on brand promotion.

5.5 Future research directions

Based on the current and this study on the promotion of brands through influencer marketing the following are recommendations for future research: Here are some potential areas for future investigation:

Longitudinal Studies on Influencer Relationships:

Possible future research could include investigations of the effectiveness of influencer relationships in terms of the overall brand loyalty over time as well as the creation of a method that allows for predicting the value of the customer's lifetime. Belanche et al. (2021) explained that this would give a clue as to how long-term partnerships contribute to the behavior of consumers, after the usual top-line engagement figures are registered.

Impact of Emerging Technologies:

Future research must find out how different novel areas, including artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR), are revolutionizing influencer marketing. Future studies may

investigate how these technologies improve the customization and engagement of the influencer campaigns which may lead to new opportunities in the sphere of unique branded experiences.

Cross-Cultural Influencer Marketing Effectiveness:

There is thus a research gap that focuses on the influencer marketing effects with additional assessment of different cultural environments. This research could indicate how culture bias affects the reception and impact of influencer advertisement across the world (Bakker, 2018).

Influencer Authenticity and Consumer Trust:

Further research efforts should be direct towards understanding a relationship between influencer authenticity and consumers' trust. Studying might expand the investigation of the boundaries of associations between the frequency of endorsements and the degree of authenticity and trust by the followers of the brand.

Regulatory Impact on Influencer Marketing:

Hence, the interaction between these emerging regulations and the phenomenon of influencer marketing needs to be explored by research. This also entails researching the impact of new or even enhanced disclosure regulation rules as well as changes in 'influencer' marketing (Ye et al., 2021).

Comparative Analysis of Influencer Types:

Subsequent research could investigate how individual classes of influencers (celebrities, specialists and micro-bloggers) perform in distinct business sectors. With this, brands would be in a better position to plan which kind of influencer is most productive in various types of products or customer categories (Lee and Kim, 2020).

Metrics for Measuring Influencer Marketing ROI:

Externally, a dearth of research concerning metrics that should be used as a guide to evaluate the ROI of an IM campaign continues to be discernible; therefore, it becomes an ideal area for future research. Research could be conducted on the development of simplified measures that would honestly demonstrate the primary and secondary effects of influencer advertising.

Ethical and Social Implications:

It is also time to study the ethical and social aspects of the use of influencer marketing. Future research efforts may explore further the external consequences of influencer marketing, and appropriate and inappropriate conduct of influencer and brands (Trivedi and Sama, 2020).

By developing these research directions, scholars and marketers are able to improve the utilization of influencer marketing, as well as predict the trends connected to it in the context of an ever-progressive digital world.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Please answer the following Questions.

1) Gender

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to Mention

2) Age

- 18 to 24 years
- 24 to 30 years
- 30 to 36 years
- 36 to 42 years
- Above 42 years

3) Education level

- High school
- College/bachelor's degree
- Graduate degree

4) Questionnaire based on LIKERT scale, 1) Strongly Disagree (SD), 2) Disagree (D), 3) Neutral, 4) Agree, 5) Strongly Agree.

Choose One Option from the Following based on your opinion

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	References
1. Types of Influencers						

I trust recommendations from influencers who are experts in a specific field						Sardar and Dutta, 2020
I would buy a service or product recommended by a Digital Influencer that I consider an expert."						Johansen and Guldvik, 2017
2. Authenticity of Influencer						
I seek out influencer’s reviews before purchase of products						Khan et al., 2021
If I discover that an influencer's endorsement is paid for, my trust in their authenticity decreases.						Sardar and Dutta, 2020
3. Content Engagement						
I would buy a service or product recommended by a Digital Influencer that I consider trustworthy.						Bognar et al., 2019
If I ever purchased something based on a Digital influencer's recommendation, I believe it met your expectation						Sardar and Dutta, 2020
4. Frequency of Promotion						
I tend to ignore products or services that are overly promoted by influencers						Barros Nunes, 2021
I use ad blockers and/or browser extensions to avoid online advertising						Johansen and Guldvik, 2017
5. Consumer Trust						
I am more likely to purchase a product if I trust the influencer endorsing it.						Khan et al., 2021

My trust in an influencer significantly impacts my purchasing decisions.						Johansen and Guldvik, 2017
6. Content Authenticity						
Influencers who frequently engage with their followers' comments and questions are more trustworthy.						Bognar et al., 2019
I prefer influencers who provide genuine reviews over those who seem scripted or overly promotional.						Barros Nunes. 2021
7. Brand Promotion Effectiveness						
Influencer marketing has a positive effect on my awareness of new brands.						Khan et al., 2021
I am more likely to purchase a product from a brand promoted by an influencer I trust.						Johansen and Guldvik, 2017