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## Exploring Influenceability: Key Factors Shaping the Effectiveness of Social Media Influencer Endorsements

### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study explores how different factors collectively influence the effectiveness of social media influencer endorsements as well as shaping consumer behavior and brand perception.

**Study design/methodology/approach:** The research employs a qualitative hybrid thematic approach, integrating inductive strategies from interviews with a deductive framework based on existing theories. This method allows for a thorough exploration of the factors affecting influencer endorsement effectiveness.

**Sample and data:** The sample includes 14 female Instagram users, aged 18-30, selected through non-probability purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data.

**Results:** Four key themes emerged: Influencer Fame, Engagement, Credibility, and First Impressions. Fame is shaped by content quality, follower count, and message value. Engagement builds trust through interactive, meaningful content. Credibility is tied to perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity. First impressions strongly influence consumer perceptions.

**Originality/value:** This study fills a gap by examining multiple factors simultaneously, offering a comprehensive understanding of influencer effectiveness and valuable insights for marketers seeking to refine their strategies.

**Research limitations/implications:** The study's qualitative nature and specific demographic limit generalizability. Future research with larger, more diverse samples and quantitative methods is recommended. Additionally, the fast-changing social media landscape may challenge the ongoing relevance of findings, suggesting the need for longitudinal studies.

**Keywords:** Influencer Marketing, Social Media, Consumer Behavior, Qualitative Research.

**JEL classification:** M31

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## الملخص

# العوامل المؤثرة في فعالية توصيات المؤثرين على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي

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هدف الدراسة: تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف فعالية توصيات المؤثرين على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي من خلال تقديم رؤى حول كيفية تأثير العوامل المختلفة على سلوك المستهلك وإدراك العلامة التجارية.

تصميم/ منهجية/ طريقة الدراسة: تعتمد الدراسة على منهج هجين يجمع بين التحليل الاستقرائي والاستنتاجي. تم دمج استراتيجيات استكشافية من خلال المقابلات النوعية مع إطار نظري يستند إلى الأدبيات السابقة، مما يسمح بفحص شامل للعوامل المؤثرة في فعالية توصيات المؤثرين. عينة الدراسة وبياناتها: شملت العينة 14 مشاركة من النساء تتراوح أعمارهن بين 18 و30 عاماً، يتفاعلن بشكل فعال مع المؤثرين على إنستغرام وتم جمع البيانات من خلال مقابلات شبه منظمة. نتائج الدراسة: كشفت النتائج عن أربعة مواضيع رئيسية: شهرة المؤثر، مشاركة المؤثر، مصداقية المؤثر، والانطباعات الأولى. الشهرة تتحدد بجودة المحتوى وعدد المتابعين، في حين تعزز المشاركة التفاعلية الثقة. ترتبط المصداقية بالخبرة والأصالة، بينما تؤثر الانطباعات الأولى بشكل كبير على تفاعل المستهلكين.

أصالة الدراسة: تقدم الدراسة تحليلاً شاملاً للعوامل المؤثرة على فعالية توصيات المؤثرين، مما يوفر رؤى هامة للمسوقين.

حدود الدراسة وتطبيقاتها: حد التصميم النوعي للدراسة والتركيز الديموغرافي المحدد من قابلية تعميم النتائج. يمكن للأبحاث المستقبلية استخدام نهج كمي مع عينة أكبر وأكثر تنوعاً. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يشكل التطور السريع لمنصات وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي تحدياً في الحفاظ على ملاءمة النتائج بمرور الوقت. يوصى بإجراء دراسات طولية لتتبع التغيرات في فعالية التسويق عبر المؤثرين وتصورات المستهلكين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التسويق عبر المؤثرين، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، سلوك المستهلك، البحث النوعي.

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## **Introduction**

The rise of social media has transformed communication, marketing, and consumer behavior globally. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have not only created new forms of social interaction but also established influencer marketing as a dominant strategy for brands seeking to engage with their target audiences. Influencers, who command substantial followings and wield significant influence over their followers' purchasing decisions, have become critical intermediaries in the marketing ecosystem.

Influencer marketing leverages the trust and authenticity perceived in influencers' endorsements to influence consumer behavior. This strategy is particularly potent among younger demographics, who are more inclined to follow influencers and make purchase decisions based on their recommendations. However, the effectiveness of influencer endorsements is influenced by various factors.

Previous studies have often focused on single factors or isolated effects, such as influencer credibility or content quality, in understanding how influencers impact consumer behavior (Chekima et al., 2020; Hwang & Zhang, 2018). However, these studies tend to overlook the complex interplay between various elements that contribute to the overall effectiveness of influencer marketing (Yuan & Lou, 2020). Therefore, the primary purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of social media influencer endorsements by examining multiple interrelated factors through an Inductive/Deductive Hybrid Thematic Approach. The inductive component allows for themes and patterns to emerge organically from the data, providing fresh insights into how consumers experience and respond to influencer endorsements. Concurrently, the deductive approach grounds these findings within established theoretical frameworks, ensuring that the analysis is both innovative and anchored in existing knowledge (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

Through this methodology, the study aims to fill a significant gap in the literature by providing a holistic view of the dynamics that drive the effectiveness of social media influencer endorsements, ultimately offering more actionable insights for marketers and researchers alike (De Veirman et al., 2017).

## **Literature Review**

The digital landscape has significantly altered traditional marketing paradigms, leading to the emergence of influencer marketing as a critical strategy

for engaging consumers. Social media influencers are individuals who have built significant followings on social media platforms and can affect the opinions and behaviors of their audience due to their perceived authority, knowledge, or relationship with their followers (Abidin, 2015). Unlike traditional celebrities, social media influencers often gain their status through content creation and engagement within specific niches such as fashion, beauty, fitness, travel, or technology.

### ***Evolution of Influencer Marketing***

Influencer marketing has evolved from traditional word-of-mouth advertising into a sophisticated strategy leveraging social media platforms. Historically, brands have relied on endorsements from public figures to enhance their credibility and reach. The evolution of the internet and the proliferation of social media have democratized influence, allowing individuals outside traditional celebrity spheres to amass significant followings and wield substantial persuasive power (Freberg et al., 2011).

The rise of influencer marketing can be attributed to several key factors. First, the decline of traditional advertising effectiveness due to ad-blocking technologies and consumer skepticism has driven brands to seek alternative marketing channels. Second, the intimate and interactive nature of social media allows influencers to build trust and rapport with their audiences, making their endorsements more persuasive. Lastly, technological advancements in data analytics have enabled brands to measure the impact of influencer marketing campaigns more accurately, further legitimizing this strategy (Yuan & Lou, 2020).

Extensive research has been conducted on the effectiveness and dynamics of influencer marketing. Early studies focused on the role of influencers in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors. For instance, Freberg et al. (2011) highlighted the importance of perceived credibility and expertise in influencer marketing. Their research indicated that influencers perceived as knowledgeable and trustworthy were more effective in persuading their audience.

Subsequent research has explored various aspects of influencer marketing, including the psychological mechanisms underlying its effectiveness. De Veirman et al. (2017) examined the impact of influencer popularity on consumer perceptions and found that highly popular influencers can enhance brand perceptions and increase purchase intentions. Similarly, Jin and Phua (2014) investigated the role of source credibility and found that influencers' perceived expertise and trustworthiness significantly influence consumers' attitudes towards endorsed brands.

## ***Factors Impacting the Effectiveness of Influencer Endorsements***

Influencer endorsements involve influencers promoting a brand's products or services to their followers. These endorsements leverage the influencer's credibility, authenticity, and relationship with their audience to drive consumer behavior. The effectiveness of influencer endorsements is influenced by several factors, including the influencer's characteristics, the nature of the endorsement, and the context in which it is presented.

### *a. Source Credibility*

The Source Credibility Theory posits that the effectiveness of a persuasive message depends on the perceived expertise and trustworthiness of the source (Ohanian, 1990). Influencers who are perceived as knowledgeable and trustworthy are more likely to persuade their audience. Therefore, endorsements from credible and attractive influencers are more likely to be effective.

### *b. Authenticity and Engagement*

Authenticity and engagement are critical factors that contribute to the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Authenticity is demonstrated through consistent messaging, transparent partnerships, and personal engagement with followers. Authentic influencers are perceived as more credible and trustworthy, which enhances their persuasive power. When influencers maintain authenticity in their endorsements, they build long-term relationships with their audience, leading to higher engagement and brand loyalty (Audrezet et al., 2020).

Engagement further amplifies the impact of authenticity. Influencers who actively interact with their followers—through comments, likes, and direct messages—foster a sense of community and trust. High levels of engagement indicate an active and involved audience, significantly enhancing the effectiveness of influencer endorsements. Research suggests that engagement metrics, such as the number of likes, comments, shares, and direct interactions, are essential indicators of an influencer's effectiveness and the potential success of a marketing campaign (Janssen et al., 2022).

### *c. Content Quality and Relevance*

The quality and creativity of content produced by influencers significantly influence the success of influencer marketing campaigns. High-quality, visually appealing, and creative content can capture the attention of audiences and enhance

the perceived value of the endorsed products (Hughes et al., 2021). Endorsements that are seamlessly integrated into the influencer's content and storytelling are perceived as more authentic and less intrusive than explicit advertisements. Additionally, endorsements that align with the influencer's niche and audience interests are more likely to resonate with followers and drive engagement. This relevance and fit between the influencer and the brand are critical to the success of influencer marketing campaigns (Casaló et al., 2020).

#### *d. Platform and Reach*

The choice of social media platform and the influencer's reach on that platform also impact the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Different platforms cater to different demographics and content types. For instance, Instagram is well-suited for visual content and younger audiences, while LinkedIn is more appropriate for professional and B2B marketing (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). The influencer's reach, defined by their follower count and engagement rates, determines the potential visibility and impact of the marketing campaign.

### **Contributions**

From the previous discussion, it is evident that most studies have often examined these factors in isolation. There is a lack of integrated research that considers these elements together, particularly within the context of the rapidly evolving social media landscape. This study fills this gap by adopting a holistic approach to analyze the synergistic effects of influencer characteristics, fame, engagement, and credibility. By doing so, it provides a nuanced understanding of influenceability, offering valuable insights for marketers aiming to optimize their influencer marketing strategies. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by addressing the interconnectedness of these factors, thus providing a more comprehensive understanding for future research and practical application in influencer marketing.

### **Research Methodology**

Given the complexities surrounding consumer engagement with Social Media Influencers (SMIs) and the interplay of antecedents and outcomes within the influencer marketing industry, this paper employs a qualitative Inductive/Deductive Hybrid Thematic Approach (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This methodology, designed to reflect the cohesive synthesis introduced earlier, integrates both deductive and inductive strategies.

The research begins by leveraging the exploratory power of induction through qualitative interviews, then transitions into a deductive framework. This iterative integration of both paradigms helps uncover nuanced insights, fostering a holistic, multi-dimensional perspective of the SMI-consumer relationship within the hospitality and tourism industry.

### ***Research Design***

This research employs Hybrid Thematic Analysis (HTA) as outlined by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), a methodological tool for the analysis of textual data that facilitates the identification of emerging patterns. The analysis is conducted at a latent level, transcending the semantic layer of participants' lived experiences to interpret underlying meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2013). HTA combines both inductive and deductive approaches to thematic analysis, allowing for a nuanced interpretation of raw data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This approach is particularly appropriate for the present study, which aims to explore influencer marketing through a deductive thematic analysis within the framework of a conceptual model. The deductive phase of HTA will adhere to the method of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2013). By adopting a qualitative design, this research offers a more profound understanding of the nature and significance of psychometric constructs within the context of lived experiences (Shah & Corley, 2006).

### ***Sampling and Participants***

For this study, the focus will be on Instagram as it has experienced rapid growth, attracting leading brands and businesses. This is attributed to its one billion monthly active users, 500 million daily active users, and the fact that more than 90% of Instagram users have reported following a business account (Auxier & Anderson, 2021).

Purposive sampling was used, initially recruiting five participants through a combination of personal contacts, professional networks, and referrals. Subsequently, another 13 participants were recruited through snowball sampling. The purposive sampling method was chosen because it allows for the intentional selection of participants who are most likely to provide rich and insightful data, particularly in qualitative research where the goal is to explore in-depth experiences and perceptions. This sampling method also ensures that the selected participants can provide rich, relevant information regarding their interactions with social media influencers (Lehdonvirta et al., 2021; Lyon, 2015; Schillewaert et al., 1998).

The participants in this study are all female. The decision to focus exclusively on female participants was informed by existing literature that suggests significant gender differences in the responsiveness to social media influencers. Wang et al. (2024) discovered that female consumers are more inclined to buy clothing influenced by social media influencers than male consumers (Bhatia, 2018). This gender difference is due to female audiences viewing influencers as role models and trendsetters (Wu et al., 2015). Hudders and De Jans (2022) found that “women perceive themselves to be more similar to the female compared to the male influencer, leading to stronger feelings of parasocial interaction, which in turn positively affect brand attitude and post engagement.”

The sample size of 18 participants was selected for this study to ensure a comprehensive exploration of the research questions while achieving data saturation. In qualitative research, data saturation occurs when no new information or themes emerge, indicating that the sample size is sufficient for a thorough analysis. In total, 18 participants were initially interviewed for this study. However, it is important to note that only 14 participants were included in the final analysis. This discrepancy arose due to technical issues with the recordings of 4 participants, which unfortunately rendered their data unusable. Despite these challenges, the remaining 14 interviews provided robust and comprehensive insights. Previous studies have shown that in qualitative research, particularly with relatively homogenous populations, data saturation can typically be reached with 12 to 17 participants (Boddy, 2016; Francis et al., 2010). The chosen sample size aligns with these findings, ensuring that the data collected is both rich and representative of the population under study. This approach enhances the credibility of the research, as it allows for in-depth analysis while maintaining the feasibility of the study. Additionally, selecting a sample size that is adequate for saturation supports the validity of the findings, ensuring they are reflective of the participants' experiences and perspectives.

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, which were designed to explore participants' perceptions of influencer credibility, the impact of influencer reviews on their purchasing decisions, and the overall influence of social media endorsements on their behavior. Open-ended questions were employed to allow participants to express their views freely and in detail. With participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The semi-structured interview process was designed to ensure consistency and depth while allowing for the emergence of rich qualitative data. Interviews began with broad, open-ended questions aimed at building rapport and understanding the participants' general perspectives on Instagram usage and influencer interactions. For example, participants were initially asked, "Why do you use Instagram?" and "What type of influencers are you following?" These questions served as an entry point, encouraging participants to freely express their thoughts and experiences. The question order was generally consistent across participants to maintain a structured flow, although slight adjustments were made when necessary to follow the natural progression of the conversation. This approach balanced the need for uniformity in data collection with the flexibility to explore relevant topics that arose spontaneously during the interviews. The open-ended nature of the questions, such as "What makes you follow and trust unfamiliar influencers?" allowed participants to elaborate on their views without constraints, ensuring that key themes could be identified and explored in subsequent analysis. This structured yet flexible approach was crucial in enhancing the validity of the interview process, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing participants' perceptions and behaviors related to social media influencers.

In addition to the interview data, Instagram comments were incorporated as a secondary data source to enhance the understanding of influencer marketing dynamics. Over 100 comments were collected, providing a rich, real-time perspective on audience reactions and perceptions. These comments were analyzed using the same Inductive/Deductive Hybrid Thematic Approach applied to the interview data. The integration of these two data sources allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing consumer behavior in response to influencer endorsements.

The analysis was concentrated at the latent level, facilitating the classification of underlying assumptions held by participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The iterative Hybrid coding process began with open coding, where relevant keywords and phrases were identified to generate initial codes, which ultimately led to the emergence of distinct themes. This approach ensured that the final themes were both data-driven and reflective of the participants' subjective viewpoints, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the research context.

During the inductive stage, themes were initially generated from Instagram comments by identifying patterns and recurring sentiments (Kozinets, 2002; Koz-

inets et al., 2010). The inductive approach allowed data to shape the analysis without the constraints of predefined categories or theories, thereby enabling the identification of emerging patterns, themes, and concepts (Mayring, 2004). The interview transcripts were reviewed multiple times to ensure a deep familiarity with the data. These transcriptions, along with Instagram comments, were coded inductively, with cross-examination revealing similarities and differences in participants' interpretations. This was crucial in capturing the nuances of participants' experiences and perceptions regarding influencer marketing. For example, the themes of “Influencer Fame”, “Influencer Engagement”, “Influencer Credibility”, and “Influencer First Impressions” emerged organically through this process, reflecting the genuine concerns and observations of the participants.

Following the inductive phase, the deductive approach was applied to ground these emergent themes in established theoretical frameworks, such as Source Credibility Theory and the Halo Effect. This step ensured that the findings were not only innovative but also consistent with existing literature, enhancing the robustness of the analysis.

As illustrated in Table 1, the structured analysis resulted in the development of key themes, such as Influencer Fame, Influencer Engagement, Influencer Credibility, and Influencer First Impressions. The integration of these themes, supported by data from both interviews and Instagram comments, provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamics of social media influencer interactions, grounded in both participant data and existing theoretical frameworks.

**Table 1**  
**Codes and Themes**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Frequency (Interviews)</b>	<b>Frequency (Instagram Comments)</b>
Influencer Fame	Number of followers	14	12
	Unique content	12	15
	Social impact	8	10
	Engagement	10	8
Influencer Engagement	Interaction with followers	11	13
	Quality of content	13	20
	Frequency of posts	9	7

**Cont. Table 1**  
**Codes and Themes**

Theme	Code	Frequency (Interviews)	Frequency (Instagram Comments)
Influencer Credibility	Transparency	10	16
	Expertise	11	14
	Authentic storytelling	12	18
Influencer First Impressions	Initial visual appeal	13	15
	Perceived relatability	12	9
	Trustworthiness based on first contact	9	11

## Results and Discussion

In the domain of influencer marketing, understanding the factors that shape consumer behavior is paramount. Through the Hybrid Thematic Approach, four key themes emerged: Influencer Fame, Influencer Engagement, Influencer Credibility, and Influencer First Impressions. Each theme offers a distinct lens through which to examine the intricate dynamics between influencers and their audiences.

Influencer Fame explores the allure and influence of well-known personalities, highlighting the criteria that define social media fame and its impact. Influencer Engagement focuses on the role of active interactions and content creation in building trust and influencing consumer decisions. Influencer Credibility dissects the elements that contribute to an influencer's trustworthiness and expertise, emphasizing the importance of perceived authenticity and reliability. Finally, 'Influencer First Impressions' reveals how initial positive perceptions can extend to broader judgments through the Halo Effect, shaping long-term consumer trust and engagement.

To ensure clarity in the presentation and analysis of data, this study distinguishes between two primary sources of qualitative data: interviews and Instagram comments. Comments extracted from semi-structured interviews will be referred to as “participants”, while comments extracted from Instagram posts will be referred to as “users”. This distinction allows for a more precise analysis of how different types of feedback contribute to our understanding of the themes.

Together, these themes and the structured data analysis approach provide a

comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of influencer marketing. They offer insights into how influencers can effectively connect with and influence their audiences by considering both the qualitative feedback from interviews and the real-time reactions on social media platforms.

### ***Influencer Fame***

In the rapidly evolving landscape of social media, the concept of fame and the role of influencers have become pivotal in shaping user behavior and perceptions. In this study, the term “influencer” refers to individuals who have garnered significant followings on social media platforms due to their ability to sway their audience's opinions and behaviors. Understanding what constitutes an “influencer” is crucial for analyzing influencer fame, as it underpins their role as key intermediaries in the marketing ecosystem.

This theme “Influencer Fame” delves into the multifaceted criteria that define social media fame and its impact. By examining participants' views on what makes an individual famous, we gain insights into the essential traits that contribute to an influencer's perceived fame. The quality and nature of shared content, the number of followers, uniqueness, and the ability to convey socially valuable messages are key factors that determine an influencer's fame and impact (De Veirman et al., 2017; Yuan & Lou, 2020). The subsequent discussion will elaborate on these findings, providing detailed participant perspectives and examples that highlight the complexity of social media fame.

All participants agreed that the number of followers signifies a person's fame and credibility. To highlight the significance of who is considered an influencer and the importance of unique content, Participant “1” noted:

*“I consider people that I see on TV or in movies to be celebrities as well as musicians. The uniqueness of the influencer itself is key. The content has to be different from what other people provide.”*

The uniqueness of the influencer itself is key. The content must be different from what other people provide. Additionally, Participant “10” mentioned that being extraordinary and unique contributes to fame. When discussing what makes an influencer credible, Participant “7” highlighted the importance of transparency and personal storytelling: “I tend to trust influencers who share their personal experiences honestly. Transparency in their journey makes them seem more credible.” These views highlight that different people have varying criteria for recog-

nizing social media influencers.

All participants understood the term “influencers” and provided similar definitions. When defining a successful influencer, Participant “2” emphasized the importance of charisma and influence within a community: “An influencer should have a charismatic personality. Someone who can inspire people to follow them and is considered a trendsetter in their community” (Yuan & Lou, 2020). Participant “6” described an influencer as an individual whose information can significantly impact and influence others, either positively or negatively. This duality is significant as it suggests that influencers bear a responsibility to their followers, given their potential to sway opinions and behaviors (Leung et al., 2022). Participant “9” defined an influencer as someone who can alter decisions and aid in choosing between alternatives, emphasizing the decision-making impact of influencers (Freberg et al., 2011). Participant “13” defined an influencer as a person with valuable content.

The homogenization of content among influencers was a concern for many participants. Participant “3” (Badreya) expressed concerns about the growing similarity among influencers, which can undermine their credibility: “There is a trend where influencers are starting to look and act the same, promoting the same products, which takes away their uniqueness and makes them less trustworthy”. User “53” commented, “They all have the same content, same style, and same shops they advertise for... I do not consider them celebrities or influencers because none of them are famous for any achievement”. This highlights the importance of unique and valuable content in establishing true fame.

The findings shed light on how social media users perceive fame and the role of influencers on the platform. The criteria for determining fame and the understanding of the term “influencer” reflect broader social media dynamics and their influence on user behavior and perceptions.

Participants considered several factors when determining if someone is famous. The shared content, including significant events, news, and daily routines, is seen as an indicator of fame, as highlighted by Participant “9”. This suggests that the nature of the content plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of fame. The number of followers is another critical factor, with all participants agreeing that a large number of following signifies fame and credibility. This aligns with existing research that suggests social media metrics, such as the number of fol-

lowers and likes, are often equated with popularity and influence (De Veirman et al., 2017).

Moreover, the uniqueness and extraordinariness of an individual, as mentioned by Participant “10”, contribute to their fame. This idea resonates with the concept of “micro-influencer”, where individuals achieve fame by creating a personal brand that stands out from the ordinary (Marwick, 2015). Participant “12” further added that famous individuals should convey useful messages to society, reflecting the growing expectation for influencers to use their platforms for social good (Cheng et al., 2024; Gräve & Greff, 2018). These varied criteria indicate that fame is multifaceted, influenced by content quality, follower count, uniqueness, and social impact.

Participant “2” described an influencer as someone who captures attention and fosters interaction, highlighting the role of engagement in influencer effectiveness.

Marketers should recognize that Influencers’ fame is not solely about follower count but also about the quality and type of content shared. Crafting unique, engaging, and socially valuable content can enhance an individual’s or brand’s fame and credibility on the platform (Leung et al., 2022). Additionally, understanding the influential power of content can help brands collaborate effectively with influencers who align with their values and target audience.

Influencers play a critical role in shaping consumer decisions, and their ability to engage and influence should be leveraged thoughtfully. Brands should focus on partnerships with influencers who produce high-quality, authentic content that resonates with their audience. The dual impact of influencers’ content also suggests that brands should be cautious in selecting influencers whose values align with their own to avoid potential negative influences (Leung et al., 2022).

These findings show that the criteria for fame are multifaceted, involving content quality, follower count, uniqueness, and social impact. Influencers are understood to be powerful individuals who can significantly affect decisions and interactions through their content. These findings highlight the importance of quality content and authentic engagement in achieving and maintaining fame and influence on social media. For marketers, these insights underscore the need for strategic influencer partnerships as well as content that aligns with audience expectations and values.

## ***Influencer Engagement***

Influencer engagement is a critical factor in determining the effectiveness of influencer marketing. In this context, “influencer engagement” refers to the frequency and quality of interactions that influencers have with their followers, such as likes, comments, and direct messages. This type of engagement is distinct from the review process itself, which involves followers sharing their opinions and experiences with products or services (Tafesse & Wood, 2021).

Participants emphasized that influencers who frequently interact with their followers create a sense of community and trust. This interaction fosters deeper connections, making followers more likely to be influenced by the content shared by the influencer. Engaging content that resonates with personal interests and fosters electronic Word-of-Mouth (WOM) was noted to significantly impact consumer behavior and brand perception (De Veirman et al., 2017; Kozinets et al., 2010). Specific findings revealed that influencers who share relatable experiences and maintain consistent communication are more likely to influence purchasing decisions.

Each participant in the study experienced some degree of influence from Instagram reviews, contingent upon their personal interests and the types of influencers and accounts they followed. For instance, Participant “13” expressed confidence in purchasing a new product based on an influencer's review. This illustrates how engagement and the subsequent trust built through consistent interaction can directly influence consumer behavior. The discussion will detail participant experiences and insights, illustrating the importance of various engagement strategies and their effects on consumer decisions.

When asked about posting negative reviews on Instagram, most participants stated they would refrain from doing so, viewing the platform as a space for positive experiences and considering the dissemination of negativity as unnecessary, a sentiment echoed by Participant “12”. Nonetheless, a few participants indicated they would write negative reviews following poor customer service experiences, as noted by Participant “7”. For example, Participant “3” recounted posting a negative review after receiving a defective product and being blamed by the store, leading to immediate compensation after her complaint on Instagram. Some participants prefer to provide negative feedback directly and privately, as mentioned by Participant “13”. User “37” shared “I tried a restaurant based on an influenc-

er's recommendation, and it was awful! When I gave my opinion, the restaurant's owner blocked me, and the influencer never responded.” This highlights the potential long-term damage of negative first impressions.

Moore (2012) posited that consumers seek information through online reviews to reduce the perceived risks associated with purchase decisions. A prominent theme identified is the link between WOM and purchase decisions. Most participants, except for Participants “1”, “8”, and “3”, admitted to purchasing items introduced to them via a trusted influencer on Instagram, coupled with other reasons like their need for the reviewed product.

Prior research (Bearden & Rose, 1990; Goel et al., 2017; Parker & Flowerday, 2020; Wilcox & Stephen, 2013) indicates that women are more susceptible to social opinions than men, making them more likely to be influenced by influencer reviews, particularly for food products. Conversely, a few participants held contrary views. For instance, Participants “1” and “10” asserted they would only purchase products recommended by influencers if they were already interested in them, recognizing such recommendations as pure advertising.

The findings offer valuable insights into the role of Instagram reviews in influencing consumer purchasing decisions. The influence of Word-of-Mouth (WOM) through social media platforms underscores the complex dynamics between personal interests, the credibility of influencers, and consumer behavior. All participants were influenced by reviews to varying extents. The confidence expressed by Participant “13” in purchasing a new product based on an influencer’s review exemplifies the significant impact trusted influencers have on consumer behavior. This phenomenon is further supported by studies that emphasize the role of WOM in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors (Sun et al., 2021; Wallace et al., 2014).

While the majority of participants avoid posting negative reviews publicly, exceptions arise when there are significant customer service issues. Participant “3” shared an incident where a negative review led to immediate compensation, highlighting the potential effectiveness of public complaints in resolving customer grievances. This behavior aligns with the findings of Zhang et al. (2021), who noted that negative reviews can significantly impact consumer perceptions and prompt companies to address customer concerns promptly.

Some participants prefer to communicate negative feedback directly and pri-

vately to the concerned parties. This approach suggests a preference for conflict avoidance and maintaining social relationships, as noted in the study by Schau and Gilly (2003), which found that consumers often choose private communication channels to address issues without publicly harming the reputation of the brand or the influencer.

A dominant theme in the findings is the influence of WOM on purchase decisions. Most participants, except for a few, admitted to purchasing items they were introduced to through trusted influencers. This behavior is consistent with Moore's (2012) argument that consumers seek online reviews to mitigate perceived risks associated with purchase decisions. The trust placed in influencers by participants highlights the critical role of perceived credibility and authenticity in WOM (Verma & Dewani, 2021).

Interestingly, a few participants, such as Participants "1" and "10", displayed critical views towards influencer recommendations, recognizing them as a form of advertising. This skepticism reflects a growing awareness among consumers about the commercial nature of influencer endorsements (Lee & Kim, 2020; Naderer et al., 2021). It underscores the need for influencers to maintain authenticity and transparency to retain their credibility and influence over their audience.

The findings reveal the multifaceted impact of reviews on consumer purchasing decisions. The influence of WOM, the selective posting of negative reviews, and the critical views towards influencer recommendations collectively highlight the complex interplay of factors that shape consumer behavior on social media. These insights underscore the importance for marketers and influencers to foster trust and authenticity in their online engagements to effectively influence consumer decisions.

### ***Influencer Credibility***

This theme, "Influencer Credibility", captures the components of source credibility, including expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity, which participants consistently mentioned as vital for influencing consumer behavior. The exploration of participants' perceptions of influencers as reliable sources of information online have revealed these three distinct themes that align with the theoretical framework of source credibility (Ohanian, 1990; Sternthal & Craig, 1982). Participants' views varied significantly, with some dismissing influencers due to perceived lack of expertise or ulterior motives, while others preferred more relatable

and genuine figures. The following discussions highlighted nuanced perspectives on the role of personal journeys, the impact of negative press, and the influence of fashion and lifestyle inspiration on participants' trust and engagement with influencers. These findings offer a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics at play in the digital age of influencer marketing.

*a. Expertise*

The concept of expertise is a critical component of source credibility, as it reflects the perceived knowledge, skill, and competence of the source in relation to the subject matter (Sternthal & Craig, 1982). In the context of influencer marketing, participants' perceptions of influencers' expertise significantly affected their trust in the information provided. This aligns with Ohanian's (1990) framework, which emphasizes that an expert source is more likely to be persuasive because their knowledge lends authority to their statements.

In this study, not all participants viewed influencers as reliable sources of information online due to a perceived lack of expertise or ulterior motives, such as financial gain. This skepticism can be attributed to the belief that influencers without relevant expertise may provide biased or inaccurate information. Despite this, most participants expressed trust in influencers' reviews and expertise when it came to specific products, suggesting that the perceived expertise of the influencer in a particular domain can override general skepticism. Participant "14" highlighted the importance of transparency in establishing expertise, noting that a journey documented step-by-step would enhance their trust. This is consistent with findings by Freberg et al. (2011), who argued that transparency and demonstrated knowledge in a specific area bolster an influencer's credibility.

Moreover, Participant "7" mentioned that trust in an influencer's product recommendations is contingent upon liking the influencer, indicating that perceived expertise may also be influenced by personal affinity. This suggests that an influencer's ability to communicate expertise effectively is enhanced by their relatability and the connection they establish with their audience. This view is supported by De Veirman et al. (2017), who found that the perceived authenticity and expertise of influencers are crucial in determining their effectiveness in influencing consumer behavior.

*b. Trustworthiness*

The "trustworthiness" component of source credibility plays a critical role in

influencer marketing. In this context, participants' perceptions of trustworthiness significantly shaped their views on the credibility of influencers. Ohanian (1990) noted that a trustworthy source is more persuasive because their intentions are seen as genuine and sincere.

Participant “10” noted that trustworthiness depended on the individual's persuasive ability rather than their influencer type, suggesting that the personal qualities of the influencer, such as their ability to communicate effectively and convincingly, play a crucial role in establishing trust. This is supported by Chekima et al. (2020) and McCroskey and Teven (1999), who emphasize that trustworthiness is closely linked to perceived honesty and goodwill. Conversely, Participant “11” expressed distrust towards all influencers, citing the potential for editing and manipulation. This skepticism highlights the importance of transparency and the impact of perceived authenticity on trustworthiness. Participants also discussed the credibility of influencers' personal journeys, with some, like Participant “7”, doubting these narratives due to uncertainty about off-screen events. This aligns with the findings of Audrezet et al. (2020), who stress that perceived authenticity is critical in influencer marketing.

Moreover, Participant “2” speculated that influencers might fabricate personal journeys to sell products, further undermining trust. This view is echoed by Participant “18”, who dismissed interest in influencers' journeys, viewing them as tactics to create controversy. These sentiments underscore the delicate balance influencers must maintain to be perceived as trustworthy. The impact of negative press on trustworthiness was also evident, with most participants stating that such press would influence their view of the influencer and their endorsements. This is consistent with research by Lee and Kim (2020), which indicates that an influencer's credibility directly impacts a brand's credibility. However, Participant “11” remained unaffected by negative press, focusing solely on the product, suggesting that some consumers may prioritize the utility of the product over the influencer's reputation. Previous studies by (Elberse & Verleun 2012; Verma & Dewani 2021; Yuan & Lou, 2020) suggest that brands associate with influencers, hoping their positive reputation will enhance the brand's image, but must be cautious of the potential negative fallout from any controversies involving the influencer.

### *c. Attractiveness*

The attractiveness of an influencer, encompassing both physical appearance and personal characteristics, plays a crucial role in determining their impact on

like-minded consumers. According to Chekima et al. (2020), the appeal of an influencer can significantly sway consumer behavior, particularly in fashion and lifestyle domains. This notion is supported by participants in the study, who expressed that the fashion styles and lifestyles of influencers inspire their own fashion choices and social media content.

For instance, Participant “3” specifically mentioned using styles from influencers who wear Hijab as inspiration for her outfits and replicating similar content on her Instagram page. This highlights the importance of cultural and personal alignment in enhancing the influencer’s attractiveness to their audience. On the other hand, Participant “1” noted a sense of contentment with her current style, indicating that while influencers can inspire, personal satisfaction with one’s own style can also play a role.

Wilcox and Stephen (2013) emphasize the significance of strong connections within social networks, noting that opinions from these connections are highly valued and can influence the content shared by network members. The current research aligns with this, demonstrating that female followers frequently mimic their favorite influencers’ styles. This imitation extends to brand and product preferences, as observed by (Purwandari et al., 2022; Talay et al., 2015), who point out that followers often share the same preferences as their favorite influencers.

Most participants agreed that influencers serve as fashion icons, guiding their style choices. Participant “18” explicitly mentioned being heavily inspired by influencers, especially those professionally involved in fashion. This underscores the profound influence that professionally established influencers can have on their followers, reinforcing the idea that attractiveness, both in terms of appearance and professional success, enhances source credibility in influencer marketing (Chekima et al., 2020).

The previous discussion highlighted the complex dynamics of trust and credibility in influencer endorsements on social media. Participants’ views reflect broader trends in how consumers perceive influencers, revealing nuanced insights into the factors that drive credibility and trustworthiness in the digital age.

Participants’ skepticism towards influencers as reliable sources of information is rooted in perceived motivations and expertise. Influencers who are not special-

ists in the topics they discuss or appear to have financial motives are viewed with suspicion. This aligns with Ohanian (1990) research on source credibility, which indicates that perceived expertise and trustworthiness are critical in determining the effectiveness of a message. The preference for blogger-type Influencers over traditionally famous ones suggests that relatability and perceived authenticity play significant roles in establishing trust. These influencers are seen as sharing genuine experiences rather than seeking fame, resonating with the findings of Audrezet et al. (2020), who emphasize the importance of authenticity in influencer marketing.

The credibility of endorsements tied to influencers' personal journeys was also examined. While some participants doubted the authenticity of these narratives, suspecting them to be marketing tactics, others expressed trust in such endorsements if they were transparently documented. This dichotomy highlights the importance of transparency and authenticity in influencer marketing. Influencers who openly share their personal challenges and journeys can build stronger connections with their audience, as suggested by Labrecque et al. (2011). However, the skepticism about off-screen events and the potential for fabricated stories reflect the need for influencers to maintain high levels of transparency to avoid damaging their credibility.

Participants' responses about influencer fashion and lifestyle inspiration reveal the significant impact of influencers on consumer behavior. Many participants admitted to using influencer styles as inspiration for their own outfits and social media posts. This behavior aligns with the concept of social learning theory, where individuals model behaviors observed in others, especially those they admire (Bandura, 1977; Townsend et al., 2010).

The diverse responses to negative press about influencers indicate the complex relationship between the influencer's public image and their influence on brand perceptions. Most participants acknowledged that negative press could diminish their trust in an influencer and the associated brand, consistent with the findings of Spry et al. (2011) that influencer credibility impacts brand credibility. This reflects the risks brands face when associating with influencers, as any negative publicity can have adverse effects on consumer perceptions and brand loyalty (Elberse & Verleun, 2012). However, the fact that some participants remain unaffected by negative press highlights the variability in consumer responses and the potential for strong brand attachment to mitigate the impact of negative publicity.

For marketers, these insights emphasize the need for careful selection of influencers and the importance of fostering genuine, transparent relationships with their audience. Brands should be aware of the potential risks associated with influencer endorsements and strive to build resilience against negative publicity through strong brand identity and consumer trust.

### ***Influencer First Impressions***

The theme “Influencer First Impressions” has emerged from the inductive thematic analysis, emphasizing the crucial role of initial perceptions in influencer marketing. Participants highlighted how these first impressions significantly influence their trust and engagement with influencers. Under the lens of the Halo Effect, positive first impressions often lead to favorable perceptions of other traits such as credibility and reliability (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). The findings illustrate that these initial encounters can create a lasting impact, shaping consumer perceptions and interactions with influencers over time. The subsequent discussion will provide detailed accounts from participants, illustrating how first impressions shape their perceptions and interactions with influencers, thereby reinforcing the Halo Effect.

Smith et al. (2018) argue that the Halo Effect significantly influences how we perceive others. This cognitive bias, where an individual's overall impression affects perceptions of their specific traits, extends into consumer behavior, particularly regarding influencer endorsements. When participants were asked if they would purchase products from an unfamiliar website based solely on an influencer endorsement, about half expressed trust in the influencers they admire. They believe these influencers value their influence and are unlikely to misuse it, thus lending credibility to their endorsements. However, most participants would not rely solely on the influencer's opinion and would seek additional reviews from other customers or friends. For example, Participant “4” recommended conditional ordering (upon delivery-payment) to mitigate scam risks, as also suggested by Participant “6”. Conversely, some participants, such as Participant “5”, indicated they would only trust an unfamiliar website if it had been tried by someone they knew and trusted.

When participants were asked about their willingness to trust and follow unknown Influencers, nearly all participants stated they would follow an influencer based on page content and alignment of interests, as Participant “2” highlighted. This aligns with Thorndike's (1920) findings, which suggest that people's initial

perception of attractiveness influences their overall perception of an individual. For marketers, this means that the aesthetic appeal and relevance of influencer content are critical in attracting and retaining followers. Influencers should be encouraged to create high-quality, engaging content that aligns with the interests and values of their target audience to maximize their impact.

This underscores the significant role of the Halo Effect in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors concerning influencer endorsements. The findings reveal dual reliance on both influencer endorsements and peer reviews, reflecting a nuanced approach to trust in online purchasing decisions.

One key takeaway is the substantial trust participants place in the influencers they admire. This trust is rooted in the belief that influencers, aware of their influential positions, are unlikely to misuse their power. The implication here is that marketers leveraging influencer endorsements should focus on maintaining and highlighting the authenticity and integrity of their endorsers. Influencers should be perceived as genuinely endorsing products they believe in to foster consumer trust effectively.

The reluctance of some participants to trust unknown influencers without prior validation from trusted individuals highlights the importance of building strong, credible brand reputations. This is particularly critical for new or lesser-known brands attempting to leverage influencer marketing. Ensuring transparent and secure transaction processes, such as conditional payment options, can help mitigate consumer concerns about potential scams and build trust gradually.

Furthermore, this study highlights the broader implications of the Halo Effect in digital marketing. The initial perception of an influencer can significantly shape subsequent evaluations of their endorsements and recommendations. This reinforces the importance of first impressions in influencer marketing strategies. Marketers should carefully select influencers whose public personas and initial impressions align with the brand's values and image.

## **Conclusion and Implications**

This study delves into the intricate dynamics of social media influencer endorsements, focusing on the key factors that shape their effectiveness. By examining the themes of Influencer Fame, Influencer Engagement, Influencer Credibility, and Influencer First Impressions, critical elements that significantly impact con-

sumer perceptions and behaviors have been identified. The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of influencer marketing, highlighting the necessity for brands to adopt a strategic approach in selecting and collaborating with influencers.

The research reveals that influencer fame, characterized by the reach and recognition of influencers, plays a pivotal role in attracting initial consumer interest. However, fame alone is insufficient for long-term influence. Influencer engagement, manifested through interactive and meaningful content, enhances the persuasive power of endorsements by fostering deeper connections with followers. Influencer credibility, which includes authenticity, trustworthiness, and expertise, further solidifies the effectiveness of endorsements by building consumer trust. Finally, first impressions formed through initial interactions and perceptions of influencers significantly influence subsequent attitudes and behaviors toward the endorsed products.

### ***Theoretical Implications***

This study makes several significant theoretical contributions to the field of social media marketing and influencer research by addressing the complex interplay between various factors that contribute to the effectiveness of influencer endorsements.

One of the primary theoretical advancements presented in this research is the extension of the Source Credibility Theory, which traditionally emphasizes the expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness of the communicator (Ohanian, 1990). While these factors remain central, this study introduces the idea that their effectiveness is influenced by the dynamic interaction with other elements such as engagement and audience perception. Specifically, the research shows that influencer engagement and the initial impressions they create can significantly modify the impact of their perceived credibility, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of how credibility functions within the digital influencer space.

Another critical contribution of this study is the application and extension of the Halo Effect within the context of social media influencer marketing. The Halo Effect, a cognitive bias where the perception of one positive trait influences the perception of other unrelated traits, plays a significant role in shaping how consumers view influencers. This study demonstrates that when an influencer is perceived positively in one aspect—such as physical attractiveness or perceived authenticity—this positive perception tends to spill over into other areas,

such as trustworthiness and expertise, even if those areas are not directly related (Thorndike, 1920). The research further reveals that the Halo Effect can enhance the overall effectiveness of influencer endorsements, as consumers may generalize their positive impressions across various attributes of the influencer, leading to stronger persuasion and higher engagement levels. This finding suggests that marketers can strategically leverage the Halo Effect by selecting influencers who possess highly visible positive traits that can be generalized across their brand messaging.

In addition, this study contributes to the theoretical understanding of influenceability as a multifaceted construct. Influenceability is shaped not only by the traditional elements of credibility and attractiveness but also by dynamic aspects such as engagement, the Halo Effect, and the influencers' ability to foster personal connections with their audience. The research indicates that the combination of these factors creates a synergistic effect, amplifying the influencer's overall impact on consumer behavior. This broader conceptualization challenges previous research, which often examined these elements in isolation, offering a more integrated perspective on how influencers drive consumer decision-making (Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Yuan & Lou, 2020).

Finally, the use of an Inductive/Deductive Hybrid Thematic Approach in this study represents a methodological innovation, allowing for the discovery of emergent themes while ensuring that these findings are contextualized within existing theoretical frameworks (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This approach has enabled the study to explore the interactions between various factors influencing influencer effectiveness in a more nuanced and comprehensive manner. By validating and refining existing theories through this combined methodological approach, the study contributes to the ongoing development of qualitative research methodologies, particularly in the study of complex phenomena in digital marketing.

In summary, this study not only reinforces existing theories in the field of influencer marketing but also introduces new concepts and methodological approaches that push the boundaries of current knowledge. By offering a more holistic view of the factors contributing to influencer effectiveness, the research lays the groundwork for future studies to explore the complex, dynamic nature of social media influence in greater depth.

### ***Practical Implications***

The findings of this study also offer several practical insights for marketers, brand managers, and social media strategists who aim to leverage influencer marketing effectively. Firstly, the study underscores the importance of selecting influencers whose values, audience demographics, and content style align closely with the brand's identity. This alignment not only enhances the authenticity of the endorsement but also increases the likelihood of resonating with the target audience, thereby improving engagement rates and driving purchase intentions. Brands should prioritize long-term partnerships with influencers to foster deeper connections and sustained brand loyalty, as opposed to one-off collaborations which may lack the same impact.

Secondly, the research highlights the critical role of authenticity and engagement in influencer marketing. Marketers should encourage influencers to maintain transparency in their partnerships and foster genuine interactions with their followers. This can be achieved by co-creating content that resonates with the influencer's audience while subtly integrating the brand message. High levels of engagement, as evidenced by likes, comments, and shares, serve as key indicators of an influencer's effectiveness and should be closely monitored to assess the success of marketing campaigns.

Moreover, the study's insights into data saturation and the appropriate sample size for qualitative research can inform future studies and practical applications in market research. By understanding the importance of reaching data saturation, marketers can ensure that their research methodologies are robust, and their findings are comprehensive.

Finally, the integration of social media data, such as Instagram comments, offers a novel approach for brands to gauge consumer sentiment and adjust their strategies dynamically. This real-time feedback loop allows for more agile and responsive marketing efforts, which can be crucial in the fast-paced digital environment. Overall, these practical implications provide actionable strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns, thereby contributing to the strategic goals of the brand.

### **Robustness of Findings**

While qualitative research traditionally presents limitations in terms of generalizability, the findings of this study offer transferable insights that can be applied

to similar contexts. The detailed and context-rich descriptions provided allow for an understanding of the mechanisms influencing social media influencer effectiveness that may be relevant in other settings, thereby extending the applicability of the research.

Firstly, the use of data triangulation—incorporating both semi-structured interviews and Instagram comments—ensured that the themes identified were consistently observed across different data sources. This cross-verification process not only enhances the credibility of the findings but also provides a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics under investigation.

Secondly, the study adhered to a rigorous coding process, which included open coding and thematic abstraction. This systematic approach allowed for the careful identification and refinement of themes, reducing the potential for bias and ensuring that the themes accurately reflect the participants' perspectives. The iterative nature of this process, with constant comparison and revisiting of the data, further supports the reliability of the findings (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Kozinets, 2002; Spiggle, 1994).

The achievement of data saturation during the sampling process also contributes to the robustness of the results. Data saturation was reached when no new themes or information emerged from the analysis, indicating that the sample size was sufficient to capture the full range of relevant experiences and perceptions. This reinforces the validity of the findings, even within the specific context of this study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Additionally, researcher reflexivity played a crucial role in maintaining objectivity. Throughout the research, the researcher engaged in reflective practices, continually assessing and mitigating potential biases. This reflexive approach ensured that the analysis remained grounded in the data, rather than being influenced by preconceived notions or subjective interpretations (Gordon & Gurrieri, 2014; Watt, 2007).

## **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

Despite the insights provided by this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study's qualitative inductive research design, while beneficial for an in-depth understanding of influencer marketing dynamics, limits the generalizability of the findings. The sample size and demographic focus, predom-

inantly involving young female participants from Kuwait, may not represent the broader population. Future research could employ a quantitative approach with a larger and more diverse sample to enhance generalizability.

Second, the rapidly evolving nature of social media platforms poses a challenge in maintaining the relevance of findings over time. Influencer marketing strategies and consumer behaviors are continually adapting to new trends and technological advancements. Longitudinal studies are recommended to track changes in influencer marketing effectiveness and consumer perceptions over time, providing a more dynamic understanding of the field.

Third, this study primarily focuses on Instagram as the platform for influencer marketing. While Instagram is a significant player in the social media landscape, other platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter also play crucial roles in influencer marketing. Future research could explore the effectiveness of influencer endorsements across multiple social media platforms to provide a comparative analysis and identify platform-specific strategies.

Moreover, this study emphasizes the perspectives of followers and consumers, which is crucial for understanding the impact of influencer marketing. However, the viewpoints of influencers themselves and the brands that engage with them are equally important. Future research could adopt a multi-stakeholder approach, incorporating the perspectives of influencers and brand managers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the influencer marketing ecosystem.

Last, the themes identified in this study—Influencer Fame, Influencer Engagement, Influencer Credibility, and Influencer First Impressions—are explored in isolation. While this approach helps in understanding the individual impact of each theme, it does not account for the potential interactions between these factors. Future studies could employ a more integrative approach, examining how these themes interact and collectively influence consumer behavior and brand perception.

In conclusion, while this study provides significant contributions to the understanding of influencer marketing, addressing its limitations through future research can offer a more robust and comprehensive framework. Expanding the scope, employing diverse methodologies, and considering multiple perspectives will enhance the theoretical and practical applications of influencer marketing research.

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