

MAXIMIZING PRODUCT PROMOTION THROUGH STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

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ABSTRACT

Strategic communication is vital for the successful promotion of products in the contemporary digital economy. Social media influencers play a crucial role in helping brands connect authentically and engagingly with their target audiences. This research investigates the impact of social media influencers on consumer perceptions and purchase decisions. By employing theoretical data exploration and empirical quantitative methods, the study aims to validate the hypothesis that social media influencers have a direct and positive effect on maximizing product promotion. Primary data were collected via an online survey as a quantitative research instrument from 115 participants, and the responses were analyzed using SPSS software. The findings reveal that consumers frequently engage with influencer content, often make purchases based on influencer recommendations, and perceive influencers as more influential than traditional advertisements. Furthermore, the study highlights that influencer promotions encourage consumers to research products and that the relevance of recommendations to personal interests significantly enhances trust in influencers. This research contributes to both marketing practices and academic discourse by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of influencer marketing. It offers insights into optimizing digital marketing strategies through the strategic use of social media influencers, thereby enhancing promotional outcomes in today's dynamic marketplace.

KEYWORDS: product promotion, strategic communication, social media influencers, digital marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic landscape of contemporary marketing, social media influencers have emerged as pivotal agents of change, fundamentally transforming traditional advertising paradigms. Their pervasive influence profoundly affects consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions, positioning them as essential components of modern marketing strategies. This shift underscores the growing importance of ethical considerations in influencer collaborations as the ethos of socially responsible marketing continues to evolve. This introduction sets the stage for a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted role of influencers and their significant impact on product promotion, while highlighting the increasing emphasis on ethical marketing practices.

The emergence of social media influencers has catalyzed a profound transformation in product promotion, ushering in a new era characterized by authentic and engaging connections with consumers. The scale of this transformation is reflected in the substantial financial investments being made in influencer marketing. Recent data reveals that global spending on influencer marketing is projected to surpass \$21 billion by 2024, marking a dramatic increase from \$8 billion in 2019. This contrasts sharply with the relatively modest growth rates observed in traditional advertising expenditures, such as TV and print media, indicating a significant shift toward digital and influencer-driven promotional strategies. For example, overall global advertising spending, including traditional media, is expected to reach approximately \$900 billion in 2024, demonstrating a slower growth trajectory compared to the exponential rise in influencer marketing investments [Influencer Marketing Hub, 2022]. Furthermore, global ad spending in the influencer advertising market is forecasted to reach \$35.09 billion by 2024, with an anticipated annual growth rate of 9.91% from 2024 to 2029, leading to a projected market volume of \$56.28 billion by 2029. The average ad spending per internet user in the influencer advertising market is estimated at \$6.16 in 2024 [Statista, 2022].

Despite the widespread belief in the impact of social media influencers on consumer behaviour, more empirical research is needed to specifically address their direct and positive effect on product promotion. While influencers are acknowledged for shaping consumer decisions, detailed analyses of how they drive engagement, purchasing behaviour, and trust are limited compared to traditional advertising methods. This study aims to fill this gap by providing empirical evidence on how consumers interact with influencer content, make purchasing decisions based on influencer recommendations, and perceive influencers in comparison to traditional advertisements. The research also seeks to identify key factors contributing to influencer effectiveness, such as the relevance of recommendations to personal interests and the authenticity of influencer content. By addressing these aspects, the study aims to deepen academic understanding of influencer marketing dynamics and provide practical insights for marketers seeking to enhance their promotional strategies.

The primary objective of this research is to evaluate how social media influencers affect consumer behaviour, including engagement, purchase frequency, comparisons with traditional ads, impact on product research, and trust based on product relevance. Specifically, the study aims to (1) examine the extent to which respondents engage with influencer content, (2) evaluate the frequency of purchases based on influencer recommendations, (3) analyze the comparative influence of influencers versus traditional advertisements on purchasing decisions, (4) investigate whether influencer promotions lead to further research on promoted products or services, and (5) understand how the relevance of a product or service affects trust

in influencer recommendations. The hypothesis guiding this research is H1: Social media influencers directly and positively influence the maximization of product promotion.

Through these objectives, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of social media influencers in promoting products and to identify key factors that enhance their influence. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights for marketers and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of influencer marketing dynamics in the modern marketplace.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Hallahan (2004), a growing number of organizations recognize that various communication disciplines aim to achieve organizational objectives, and are thus seeking ways to optimize communication strategies to enhance efficiencies and reduce redundancies. Strategic communication is defined by six communication strategies employed by organizations: management communication, marketing communication, public relations, technical communication, political communication, and information/social marketing campaigns.

Strategic communication can also be explained by considering why companies need it. As defined by Hallahan et al. (2007), organizational communications are worth analyzing for several reasons: the ability to distinguish between traditional communication activities and their effects is rapidly disappearing; fundamental changes in public communication are being driven by technology and media economics; organizations increasingly use a variety of methods to influence the behaviors of their constituencies—what people know, how people feel, and how they act relative to the organization; and finally, strategic communication acknowledges that purposeful influence is the core goal of organizational communications. These reasons, particularly those related to digital marketing—which also includes social media marketing and the role of influencers in promoting products and services—are essential to contemporary marketing communication. "Strategic communication further includes the study of all communication practices, including those of public relations, advertising, and marketing, as well as other disciplines" (Hallahan et al., 2007).

Rosengren (2000) defines strategic communication as involving entities and their intentional attempts to communicate or create meaning. These efforts also generate essential factors for establishing meaning between an organization and its stakeholders. Hallahan et al. (2007) add that strategic communication involves examining how an organization presents itself as a social actor in creating public culture and discussing public issues.

To understand the impact of social media, it is essential to recognize how social media has transformed the rules of strategic communication (Scott, 2007). Scott (2007) describes how web marketing aims to deliver content precisely when buyers need it, emphasizing the need for two-way engagement with customers rather than delivering one-way messages. In this context, social media allows marketing communication to engage customers and invite them into the conversation. Strategic communication is also closely related to corporate communication, reflecting an organization's goals and efforts to engage multiple audiences simultaneously (Cornelissen, 2011). As defined by Falkheimer and Heide (2014), a robust communications department enables the development of expertise in the field and facilitates optimal handling of strategic communication issues, where the boundaries between internal

and external communications are increasingly blurred.

Influencer marketing can be considered part of a company's communication strategy. According to Gundová and Cvoligová (2019), influencer marketing is a "marketing practice that leverages well-followed online users who are able to influence consumers' attitudes and decision-making processes in favor of brands or ideas." Numerous studies have examined the effectiveness of social influencers in product promotion. For instance, research conducted by Nielsen (2012) found that 92% of consumers worldwide trust user-generated content and word-of-mouth recommendations more than they trust advertising. According to various data analyses, influencer marketing can generate up to eleven times higher ROI than other digital marketing techniques, especially as innovative industries continue to evolve. "Influencers and marketers alike are finding new ways to reach audiences and promote products, with the industry projected to grow to \$13.8 billion by 2021" (Dimitrieska & Efremova, 2021).

In recent years, influencer marketing has undergone a profound transformation, revolutionizing the conventional landscape of advertising. Various authors assert that social media influencers have become pivotal figures in marketing, wielding significant influence over the promotion of products and services (Brown & Hayes, 2018; Blazevic Boggar et al., 2019; Nascimento, 2019; Joshi et al., 2023). Influencers are often classified based on audience reach and engagement, with their role extending beyond mere promotional activities to curating content that fosters genuine connections with followers, thus nurturing relationships of trust and personalization (Usman & Okafor, 2019; Gu & Duan, 2024; Joshi et al., 2023; Ao et al., 2023).

Several authors explore the methodologies of influencers and the intricacies of brand alignment, emphasizing the importance of fostering mutually beneficial relationships between influencers and companies (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Gustavsson et al., 2018; Belanche et al., 2021; Ibáñez Sánchez et al., 2021; Okonkwo & Namkoisse, 2023). Their findings highlight the necessity of negotiation processes that go beyond financial considerations, requiring both parties to navigate issues such as creative control, exclusivity, and the duration of collaboration in the evolving landscape of influencer engagement.

Focusing on socially responsible influencer campaigns, Khamis et al. (2016) emphasize ethical considerations such as transparency, citing case studies like the collaboration between Patagonia and environmental influencers as examples of this trend. Masuda et al. (2022) extend ethical considerations beyond transparency, examining the ethical implications of influencer endorsements, particularly in relation to sensitive topics. Their work underscores the need for influencers to navigate ethical grey areas with caution. However, Farivar and Wang (2022) highlight the challenges of balancing business objectives with moral obligations, calling for careful navigation of these ethical dilemmas.

Mammadli (2021) provides insights into the distinctions between macro-influencers and micro-influencers, highlighting the unique traits and engagement dynamics associated with influencers targeting different audience sizes. To explore the psychological aspects of influencer impact, Nguyen and Johnson (2020) delve into the cognitive processes that shape consumer behavior in response to influencer content. Their work adds a psychological perspective, shedding light on how influencers shape consumer perceptions and decision-making. Jean et al. (2019) examine the importance of authenticity in influencer marketing, analyzing how perceived authenticity affects audience trust and engagement by deconstructing the notion of authenticity in influencer-generated content. Furthermore, Kim

and Chen (2018) explore the cultural dimensions of influencer marketing, investigating how influencers adapt their content to align with diverse cultural expectations—a crucial consideration for brands involved in global influencer campaigns.

The literature provides a comprehensive overview of social media influencer marketing, encompassing strategies, effectiveness, ethical challenges, and socially responsible practices. Ongoing research is essential for successfully navigating the evolving terrain of this powerful marketing paradigm.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This research employs a dual approach, combining theoretical data exploration with a quantitative methodology, to understand the impact of influencer endorsements on consumer perceptions and purchase decisions. The theoretical aspect involves a comprehensive secondary data collection process, drawing from books, articles, and academic papers to enhance understanding of influencer tactics, customer reactions, and ethical considerations within contemporary marketing environments. Additionally, the study utilizes a quantitative research methodology to investigate the direct impact of social media influencers on product promotion.

The research design integrates primary data collected through a structured survey questionnaire. Data was gathered via an online survey distributed to a representative sample of 115 participants. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure the representativeness of the sample, dividing the population into subgroups based on characteristics such as age, gender, and geographic location. Targeted recruitment strategies ensured diverse participation, and the final sample was designed to reflect variations in age, gender, education, and geography, thereby enhancing the generalizability and accuracy of the findings. The survey included Likert-scale questions to measure respondents' engagement with influencer content, purchasing behaviour influenced by influencers, comparisons of influencers to traditional advertisements, research behaviour following influencer promotions, and the relevance of product recommendations to personal interests.

Advanced statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS software to test the hypothesis. A One-Sample t-test was utilized to assess whether the mean responses to specific survey statements significantly differed from a neutral midpoint (typically set at 3 on a 5-point scale). This test helped gauge the level of agreement or disagreement with statements regarding engagement with influencers, purchasing behaviour, and perceptions of influencers compared to traditional advertisements.

Additionally, a regression model was developed to evaluate how multiple independent variables—such as consumer behaviour, ethics and transparency, influencer content authenticity, and social media influencers' content—impact the dependent variable of product promotion. The Normal P-P Plot was used to verify the normality of residuals, with points near the diagonal line suggesting that residuals were approximately normally distributed. Furthermore, a scatterplot of standardized residuals against standardized predicted values displayed a random distribution around the horizontal axis, indicating no increasing or decreasing variability with predicted values, thus confirming the assumption of homoscedasticity.

This study also carefully considered ethical guidelines. All participants provided informed consent, and their responses were anonymized to ensure privacy. The research adhered to ethical standards to maintain the integrity and confidentiality of the data collected.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

A survey questionnaire was employed to investigate consumer views on influencer marketing, yielding valuable insights into people's expectations, interests, and habits in the digital age. The findings provide critical feedback to both companies and influencers regarding key issues that shape influencer partnerships.

The research sample (N=115) included respondents with diverse sociodemographic characteristics. In terms of age distribution, the majority of participants fell within the 18-34 age group, with 35.7% aged 18-24 and 33.9% aged 25-34. Other age groups were represented in smaller proportions, including 14.8% aged 35-44, 9.6% aged 45-54, 5.2% aged 55-64, and 0.9% above 65 years. The average age of respondents was approximately 31.73 years. Gender distribution was predominantly female, accounting for 64.3%, with males constituting 33.9%. A small percentage (1.8%) preferred not to disclose their gender.

Regarding education, 30.4% of the respondents held a bachelor's degree, and an equal proportion (30.4%) held a master's degree. A notable portion (19.1%) had completed some college or vocational training, while 13.9% were high school graduates. A smaller percentage (6.1%) held doctoral degrees, and none reported having less than a high school education. In terms of income distribution, the majority fell into the lower income brackets, with 34.8% earning below €1,000 and another 34.8% earning between €1,000-2,500 per month. Additionally, 22.6% reported earning between €2,501-5,000, while smaller percentages fell into higher income brackets: 3.5% earned €5,001-7,500, 0.9% earned €7,501-10,000, and 3.5% earned more than €10,000 per month.

The respondents' usage of internet-accessible devices revealed several notable patterns. All participants (100%) reported using smartphones, followed by 72.2% who use laptops, 20.9% who use tablets, and 16.5% who use desktop computers. In terms of device usage, most respondents (86.1%) used their devices primarily for communication. Additionally, 81.7% used them for social media, 77.4% for work or professional tasks, 65.2% for education, and 56.5% for entertainment.

Regarding time spent on social media, the distribution was as follows: 16.5% of respondents spent less than 30 minutes per day, 17.4% spent 30 minutes to 1 hour, 27% spent 1 to 2 hours, 23.5% spent 2 to 3 hours, 9.6% spent 3 to 4 hours, and 6.1% spent more than 4 hours daily. The most frequently used social media platforms among the respondents were Instagram (68.7%), followed by Facebook (42.6%), TikTok (39.1%), LinkedIn (36.5%), Snapchat (13.9%), and Twitter (13%).

Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Table 1) of 0.878 indicates a high level of internal consistency reliability for the scale used in this study, suggesting that the items are reliable measures of the construct being investigated. With a sample size of 115 respondents and 18 items in the scale, this coefficient reflects a strong correlation among the items, implying that they consistently assess the same underlying construct or concept. In general, a Cronbach's alpha value above 0.7 is considered acceptable for research purposes, while values exceeding

0.8 are regarded as very good [DeVellis, 2016]. Descriptive statistics display 18 statements on which hypothesis H1 is based. It presents values: sample size, minimum and maximum range, mean, standard deviation, and variance.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha coefficient (H1)

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
,878	,877	18

Source: Authors

Questions are posed on a Likert scale, where "1" represents the lowest and "5" is the highest. The "Mean" column denotes the arithmetic mean of the items, while the standard deviation results represent the deviation from the arithmetic mean. The table's standard deviations per selected item are small, indicating that the arithmetic mean accurately represents the research results. From the obtained results of descriptive statistics, it can be observed that the highest number of respondents assigned the highest mean score to statements: "It is important for influencers to promote socially responsible or ethical brands/products" (Mean=4.15; σ =0.984), "I believe the influence of social media influencers on consumer behaviour will increase in the future" (Mean=4.04; σ =0.981), and "Stricter regulations in influencer marketing would enhance trust and credibility in the industry" (Mean=4.02; σ =0.963). Based on these descriptive statistics, it appears that while respondents generally tend to more or less agree with the statements, there is relatively little variability in their responses.

Table 2. One-sample t-test (H1)

One-Sample Test						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
I frequently engage with content created by social media influencers.	24,956	114	,000	2,704	2,49	2,92
I often purchase a product/service based on an influencer's recommendation.	20,756	114	,000	2,026	1,83	2,22
The relevance of a product or service to my interests significantly influences my decision to trust an influencer's recommendation.	30,732	114	,000	3,357	3,14	3,57
I engage in product/service research after encountering it in an influencer's promotion.	27,830	114	,000	3,174	2,95	3,40
I consider social media influencers more influential in purchasing decisions compared to traditional advertisements.	25,823	114	,000	3,078	2,84	3,31

Source: Authors

To confirm the hypothesis that social media influencers have a direct and positive impact on maximizing product promotion, the most relevant statements from the One-Sample Test (Table 2) are as follows:

- *I frequently engage with content created by social media influencers* - the results $t(114) = 24.956$, $p < 0.001$, mean difference = 2.704 (95% CI: 2.49 to 2.92) indicate that respondents frequently engage with influencer content, demonstrating their active role in product promotion.

- *I often purchase a product/service based on an influencer's recommendation* – the t-test results are $t(114) = 20.756$, $p < 0.001$, mean difference = 2.026 (95% CI: 1.83 to 2.22). This statement confirms that influencer recommendations lead to product or service purchases, a critical aspect of product promotion.

- *I consider social media influencers more influential in purchasing decisions compared to traditional advertisements.* The results $t(114) = 25.823$, $p < 0.001$, mean difference = 3.078 (95% CI: 2.84 to 3.31) highlight the influence of social media influencers in comparison to traditional advertising, indicating their superior role in product promotion.

- *I engage in product/service research after encountering it in an influencer's promotion.* This statement and its t-test results $t(114) = 27.830$, $p < 0.001$, mean difference = 3.174 (95% CI: 2.95 to 3.40) show that influencer promotions prompt product/service research, contributing to promotion and potential purchases.

- *The relevance of a product or service to my interests significantly influences my decision to trust an influencer's recommendation* - the t-test results are $t(114) = 30.732$, $p < 0.001$, mean difference = 3.357 (95% CI: 3.14 to 3.57) This highlights the importance of targeted content in product promotion, where the relevance of the product significantly influences trust and purchase decisions.

All results are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) and indicate mean differences significantly greater than zero. This provides strong support for the hypothesis that social media influencers today directly and positively influence product promotion. Respondents frequently engage with influencer-generated content, purchase products based on influencer recommendations, perceive influencers as more relevant and influential than traditional advertisements, and often research products or services after encountering them in influencer promotions.

The regression model (Table 3) was employed to assess the impact of multiple independent variables on the dependent variable, specifically evaluating how factors such as understanding consumer behaviour, ethics and transparency, influencer content authenticity, and social media influencers' content influence product promotion.

Table 3. Regression analysis (H1)

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	46,482	4	11,620	10,305	,000 ^b
	Residual	124,040	110	1,128		
	Total	170,522	114			

a. Dependent Variable: Product promotion.

b. Predictors: (Constant), Understanding consumer behaviour, Ethics and transparency, Influencer content authenticity, Social media influencers' content.

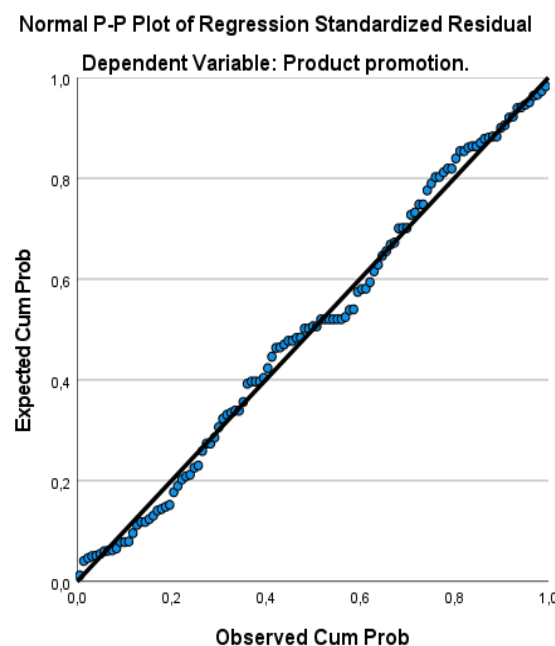
Source: Authors

This test utilizes ANOVA to evaluate the significance of the regression model and the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The results indicate degrees of freedom (df) of 4 for the regression model and 110 for the residuals, for a total of 114. Mean Square values are 11.620 for the regression and 1.128 for the residuals. The F-value of 10.305 is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the combination of the

independent variables (understanding consumer behaviour, ethics and transparency, influencer content authenticity, and social media influencers' content) significantly predicts the dependent variable (product promotion).

The results suggest that the model includes significant predictors that collectively explain the variation in product promotion, further supporting the hypothesis that social media influencers have a direct and positive impact on maximizing product promotion. The findings indicate that the independent variables substantially influence product promotion, confirming the critical role that social media influencers and related factors play in this context. Consequently, the regression model demonstrates that the independent variables are significant predictors of product promotion, reinforcing the hypothesis that social media influencers positively and directly contribute to product promotion.

Graph 1. Testing the normality of residuals (H1)



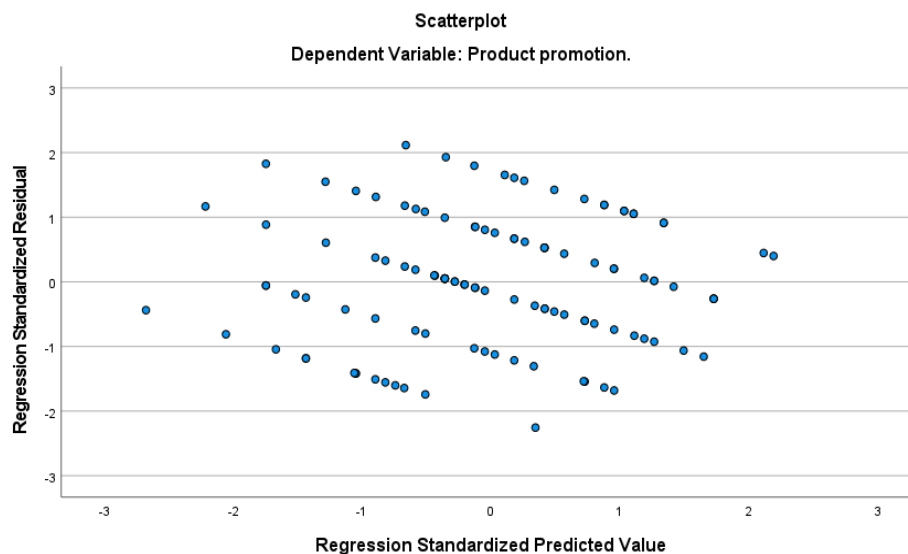
Source: Authors

Based on the provided graphs (Graph 1 and Graph 2), the normality of residuals and the presence of any patterns or deviations were analyzed. The Normal P-P Plot (Graph 1) illustrates the cumulative probability of observed standardized residuals against the expected cumulative probability for a normal distribution.

The points on the plot lie close to the diagonal line (the line of 45 degrees), suggesting that the residuals are approximately normally distributed. Minor deviations from the line are standard and do not necessarily indicate a serious violation of the normality assumption. Overall, the P-P plot indicates that the distribution of residuals closely matches a normal distribution, supporting the normality assumption.

The Scatterplot (Graph 2) displays standardized residuals against standardized predicted values. The dispersion of points is randomly distributed around the horizontal axis ($y=0$), which is a good sign.

Graph 2. Testing the homoscedasticity of residuals (H1)



Source: Authors

This finding indicates the absence of any obvious patterns, suggesting that the residuals do not exhibit variability that increases or decreases with predicted values. The lack of straightforward linear or curvilinear patterns indicates that the model's linear assumptions are satisfied. Consequently, the assumption of homoscedasticity (equal variability) is fulfilled, which is crucial for the validity of the regression model. Based on these graphs, the fundamental assumptions of regression analysis are met, providing confidence in the accuracy and reliability of the model results. This further supports the hypothesis that social media influencers have a direct and positive impact on maximizing product promotion.

5. DISCUSSION

This paper reveals crucial insights into influencer marketing, emphasizing the significant role of transparency and authenticity in influencer partnerships. The findings highlight a shifting consumer landscape, where individuals increasingly value genuine connections and trustworthy recommendations. This observation aligns with prior research by Voramontri and Lieb (2019) and Joshi et al. (2023), reinforcing the impact of influencers on purchasing decisions.

The study supports the hypothesis that social media influencers significantly enhance product promotion. Furthermore, the high Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.878 indicates strong internal consistency reliability for the scale used, suggesting that the items effectively measure the intended construct. This reliability enhances the validity of the research findings and instills confidence in the drawn conclusions. Descriptive statistics provide a comprehensive overview of respondents' perceptions, revealing consistent trends in their attitudes toward influencer marketing. The minor standard deviations indicate minimal variability in responses, suggesting a high level of agreement among participants.

The One-Sample t-tests conducted reveal that respondents frequently engage with influencer content [$t(114) = 24.956, p < 0.001$], often purchase products based on influencer recommendations [$t(114) = 20.756, p < 0.001$], and perceive influencers as more influential than traditional advertisements [$t(114) = 25.823, p < 0.001$]. Moreover, influencer promotions

prompt significant product research [$t(114) = 27.830, p < 0.001$], and the relevance of a product to personal interests greatly influences trust in influencer recommendations [$t(114) = 30.732, p < 0.001$]. These findings align with prior research emphasizing the growing impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior. For instance, Hughes et al. (2019) demonstrated that influencers' recommendations significantly affect purchase intentions, particularly among younger demographics more engaged with social media platforms. Similarly, De Veirman et al. (2017) highlighted that the perceived authenticity of influencers enhances consumer trust and engagement, leading to higher conversion rates. The importance of message value and credibility in influencer marketing is further supported by Lou and Yuan (2019), who found that these factors significantly affect consumer trust in branded content on social media. Additionally, Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) explored the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles, showing that such credibility influences the purchase decisions of young female users, reinforcing the critical role of trust and authenticity in influencer marketing.

The regression model used in this study further supports the hypothesis by identifying significant predictors of product promotion, including understanding consumer behavior, ethics and transparency, influencer content authenticity, and the nature of social media influencers' content. The ANOVA results [$F(4, 110) = 10.305, p < 0.001$] confirm that these variables collectively explain a significant portion of the variance in product promotion, corroborating findings from existing literature on the critical role of these factors in influencer marketing effectiveness.

Graphical analysis of residuals confirms the validity of the regression model, indicating that the assumptions of normality and homoscedasticity are met. The Normal P-P Plot and Scatterplot demonstrate that residuals are normally distributed and exhibit no apparent pattern, thereby supporting the reliability of the model results.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper affirms the significant impact of social media influencers on product promotion, demonstrating their effectiveness in engaging consumers, influencing purchase decisions, and driving product research. The findings underscore the importance of transparency, authenticity, and relevance in influencer marketing. Marketers can leverage these insights to optimize their strategies, ensuring that influencer partnerships align with consumer expectations and preferences.

The research findings comprehensively explain why influencers are more impactful than traditional advertising. According to the results from the One-Sample t-tests, respondents frequently engage with influencer content and often purchase products based on these recommendations. This is supported by Brown and Hayes (2008), who highlight that understanding consumer behaviour allows brands to effectively target and engage influencers who resonate with their audience's interests. Consequently, consumers are more likely to purchase products based on influencer endorsements. Furthermore, Khamis et al. (2016) assert that ethics and transparency play a crucial role in building trust in influencers. Transparency in labelling sponsored content enhances the credibility of influencers, explaining why respondents tend to trust them more than traditional advertisements. The authenticity of influencer content and the number of followers significantly impact consumer attitudes, as shown by De Veirman et al. (2017). Influencer content that appears authentic and relevant

improves brand attitudes and increases the likelihood of consumers responding positively to recommendations, including making purchases and conducting product research.

Additionally, Lou and Yuan (2019) emphasize that social media influencer content directly influences consumers' purchase intentions, indicating that influencer promotions significantly stimulate product research. The relevance of a product to personal interests further enhances the credibility of influencers, supporting the notion that product relevance contributes to trust in their recommendations. Collectively, these findings confirm that engagement with influencer content, transparency, authenticity, and product relevance make influencers significantly more impactful than traditional advertisements, greatly contributing to prompting product research and purchase decisions among consumers. The results underscore the shifting dynamics of digital marketing, wherein influencer-driven approaches increasingly supplement traditional advertising methods. As consumers continue to seek authentic and relatable content, the role of social media influencers is likely to expand, necessitating a focus on ethical and transparent practices in brand collaborations.

This study makes a significant scientific contribution to understanding the role of social media and influencers in product promotion. It provides empirical evidence that influencers have a direct and positive impact on product promotion, aligning with and extending existing literature through specific quantitative data. The insights related to digital marketing—including social media marketing and the role of influencers—are crucial elements of strategic communication in today's marketing landscape. Additionally, the study identifies key predictors of successful product promotion through influencers, such as understanding consumer behaviour, ethics and transparency, influencer content authenticity, and the nature of social media content. These findings can assist marketing professionals in directing their strategies with influencers, thereby enhancing strategic communication and digital marketing efforts. Moreover, the analysis of residual plots confirms the reliability of the statistical models employed, offering a methodological framework for future research in this area. This study contributes to a better understanding of how influencers affect consumer behaviour and provides practical guidelines for optimizing strategic communication and marketing strategies in the digital age.

However, this study has several limitations. First, the sample size is relatively small and homogeneous, which may limit the generalizability of the results to a broader population. Most respondents belong to a specific demographic group already active on social media, potentially introducing bias into the findings. Second, the study relies on self-reported data, which can lead to subjective biases and inaccuracies. Third, the research was conducted within a specific timeframe without accounting for potential changes in consumer behaviour over time. Finally, not all variables that could impact the effectiveness of product promotion via influencers were included in the analysis, suggesting that additional factors may warrant consideration in future studies.

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