

A Critical Review of Influencer Marketing's Influence on Brand Perception and Consumer Buying Decisions

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Influencer marketing has emerged as a dominant strategy in digital marketing, leveraging social media influencers to shape brand perception, build consumer trust, and drive purchasing behaviour. With the shift from traditional celebrity endorsements to digital influencers, brands increasingly rely on influencer collaborations to enhance engagement and authenticity. However, the effectiveness of influencer marketing varies based on factors such as influencer credibility, engagement rates, and consumer psychology.

Objectives: This review aims to critically analyse the role of influencer marketing in shaping brand perception and influencing consumer buying behaviour. It explores key psychological drivers such as social proof and FOMO, evaluates the impact of different influencer categories (macro, micro, and nano), and examines the ethical challenges surrounding transparency, fake engagement, and misleading content. Additionally, the study identifies research gaps and proposes future research directions to improve the measurement and effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies.

Methods: This study adopts a literature review approach, synthesizing insights from existing academic research, industry reports, and case studies. The review categorizes influencers based on follower count and engagement levels, compares influencer marketing with traditional advertising methods, and examines metrics used to evaluate campaign success. Key performance indicators (KPIs), ROI measurement models, and consumer trust-building strategies are analysed to assess influencer marketing's impact on brand equity.

Results: The analysis reveals that influencer marketing is highly effective in building brand trust and influencing consumer behaviour, particularly when influencers maintain authenticity and transparency. Nano- and micro-influencers often generate higher engagement rates compared to macro-influencers, despite having a smaller reach. Social proof, personalized recommendations, and FOMO significantly impact consumer purchasing decisions. However, challenges such as secret sponsorships, fake followers, and the inability to track ROI hinder the credibility and performance of influencer marketing. Ethical practices and regulating authorities are necessary to ensure transparency and trust between brand-influencer collaborations.

Conclusions: Influencer marketing can impact brand attitudes and consumer behavior, but its success is contingent on thoughtful influencer selection, transparency, and ethics. Brands must integrate data-driven approaches to measuring influencer performance and maintain compliance with evolving regulatory demands. Future research agendas must prioritize empirical studies, cross-industry comparisons, and advanced ROI measurement approaches to enhance the sustainability and accountability of influencer marketing campaigns.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Brand Perception, Consumer Trust, Social Proof

1. INTRODUCTION

Influencer marketing refers to a marketing practice in which organizations partner with individuals who have established credibility within a specific group of the audience to sell products or services. Influencer marketing has gained prominence with the advent of digital media and social platforms, disrupting the traditional advertising environment (Abbasi et al., 2024). The plan aims to utilize the influence and credibility that an influencer holds among the public in a bid to offer real brand experiences.

Influencer marketing is an online advertisement form by which influencers, individuals with a large number of followers on social media, promote services or products to their followers. Influencer marketing relies on the psychological effect of social proof, whereby individuals tend to imitate some behavior or preference in individuals with whom they can identify (Revinzky et al., 2025). Past influencer marketing has developed from celebrity endorsement on mainstream media to a more democratized approach in which individuals on online platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok are able to become influential (Colabi & Sharaei, 2024). The transition from mainstream media to digital marketing has allowed brands to target audiences with highly targeted and personalized campaigns.

According to Zhang (2024), the global influencer marketing industry has grown over the past five years since 2019 owing to the growth of digital platforms and the demand for authentic content from consumers compared to traditional advertising. The social media channel is the dominant marketing channel for influencer marketing, and it allows for interaction between influencers and their audience using content such as posts, videos, and live sessions. The dominant platforms influencing this trend include Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, which allow influencers to create engaging content that resonates with their audience (Manjare & Ningule, 2024). Algorithmic content sharing is one of the drivers of social media-influencer marketing success. Social media websites like these prefer highly engaging content, and influencer-based promotions are seen by the most suitable target segments (Boroumand & Afrouzeh, 2024). Secondly, social media metrics reveal audience behavior, making it easier for brands to optimize marketing. According to Seifi et al. (2024), a study says that authenticity of influencer content is one of the drivers of consumer engagement and trust. Consumers are more likely to be influenced by user-generated content than by direct brand messages, and for this reason, influencers are a part of modern marketing strategies.

1.1 Macro, Micro, and Nano Influencer Types

Influencers are categorized based on the number of followers, engagement ratio, and influence level:

1. Macro-Influencers: They possess between 100,000 and several million followers. They are commonly celebrities, area of expertise professionals, and top-tier content developers. They offer mass reach but have low engagement rates relative to smaller influencers since they have a broader audience base (Raišutytė, 2024).
2. Micro-Influencers: They have 10,000 to 100,000 followers. They have very active followings and high trust among niche groups. Brands prefer micro-influencers because of their ability to generate more authentic interactions and higher engagement rates compared to macro-influencers (Revinzky et al., 2025).
3. Nano-Influencers: They have fewer than 10,000 followers but are in close connections with their followers. They are most effective for local marketing and niche product promotions. Nano-influencers have the highest engagement rates and are therefore effective for targeted campaigns (Abbasi et al., 2024).

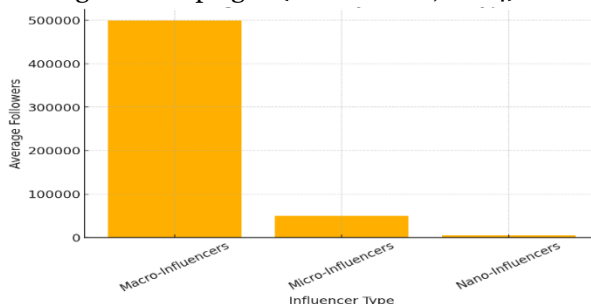


Fig 1. Average Followers by Influencer Type

Figure 1. above shows Bar Chart which shows the average number of followers in different categories of influencers (Macro, Micro, and Nano). This helps highlight to what extent macro-influencers have the largest audience and nano-influencers the smallest audience.

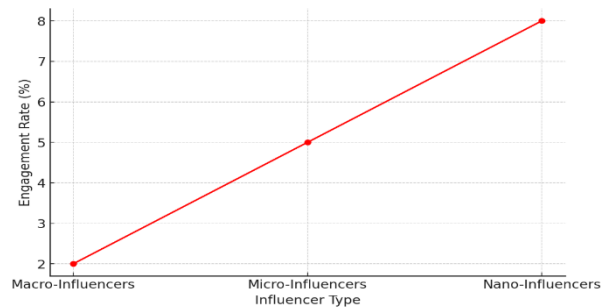


Fig 2. Engagement Rate by Influencer Type

Figure 2. Line Chart illustrates engagement rates by type of influencer. Nano-influencers will most probably have the highest engagement rates, whereas macro-influencers, while having large audiences, tend to have lower engagement rates. Above visuals help to understand the trade-off between reach and engagement that is present in influencer marketing. Each type of influencer serves a distinct purpose in marketing campaigns. Macro-influencers are used for mass reach, while micro- and nano-influencers help brands create emotional bonds with customers through personalized interaction. Influencer marketing continues to evolve as social media platforms introduce new features, and consumer sentiments shift towards more realistic and relatable content. Now, brands opt for long-term influencer collaborations and leverage influencer influence for gaining long-term commitment and loyalty towards the brand.

1.2 Aim of the Review

The main aim of this review is to critically assess the effect of influencer marketing on brand image and consumer buying behavior. With social media influencers becoming a key element of online marketing campaigns, it is necessary to analyze how influencer credibility, authenticity, and engagement affect consumer buying behavior and trust. This review surveys the effect of different types of influencers—macro, micro, and nano—on consumer involvement and brand loyalty and discusses trade-offs between reach and authenticity.

Aside from that, the review also tries to identify the determinants of success for influencer campaigns, for example, the role of transparency, social proof, and psychological determinants like FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). Drawing from a review of existing literature, theoretical frameworks, and case studies, the review also tries to show an appreciation of best practice for brands looking to get maximum value out of their influencer marketing campaigns. Additionally, this study identifies the regulatory and ethical concerns of influencer marketing, namely the concerns of sponsorship transparency disclosure, deceptive engagement, and the risk of consumer manipulation. The study further compares various methods of measuring the effectiveness of influencer campaigns, such as key performance indicators of engagement rates, ROI, and consumer sentiment analysis. By synthesizing research findings and practical case studies, this review offers marketers, researchers, and brands a platform to understand the evolving dynamics of influencer marketing. It not only presents a critical analysis of prevailing practices, but also identifies existing research gaps and prescribes future research directions for enhancing the effectiveness and ethical execution of influencer marketing strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Influencer marketing is presently a central component of internet marketing strategies through the utilization of social media influencers to create brand interaction, loyalty, and purchasing behaviour. Social media has enabled the influencers to access massive audiences and create content that shapes consumer attitudes and choices (Khaleghi, 2025). The literature review examines how influencer marketing has evolved, the role played by social media, the different types of influencers, and how they affect consumer behaviour.

Influencer marketing has evolved from the initial celebrity endorsements to online media where non-celebrity individuals gain substantial influence on social media (Abbasi et al., 2024). Although brands used to collaborate with mainstream media celebrities, the evolution of micro- and nano-influencers has encouraged diverse marketing

strategies. Contemporary studies highlight that consumers perceive influencer recommendations as more authentic compared to traditional advertisements (Charkhkard, 2024).

Table 1. Comparison of Traditional and Digital Influencer Marketing

Feature	Traditional Celebrity Endorsement	Social Media Influencer Marketing
Reach	Broad audience, but limited engagement	Niche and segmented audience with high engagement
Authenticity	Perceived as scripted and commercialized	Often perceived as authentic and personal
Cost	High	More flexible and cost-effective
Data-Driven	Limited tracking and analytics	Advanced analytics for tracking engagement

Social media has transformed influencer marketing with the potential of content creators to build active communities. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube play a significant role in disseminating marketing content, generating consumer trust, and affecting purchase decisions (Dupuis et al., 2025). Algorithmic visibility of social media amplifies influencer exposure, allowing brands to target consumer segments tactically.

Table 2. Engagement Metrics Across Platforms

Platform	Average Engagement Rate (%)	Preferred Content Type
Instagram	3.86	Images, Stories, Reels
TikTok	5.30	Short-form videos
YouTube	2.70	Long-form videos, tutorials
Twitter	1.20	Tweets, Threads

(Source: Meng et al., 2025)

Influencers are classified according to the number of followers and their engagement levels, which identify their efficiency in advertising campaigns (Jha, 2025).

- 1.Macro-Influencers: They have 100,000 to millions of followers. They provide high reach but have low engagement rates due to their broad follower base (Wan & Mattila, 2025).
- 2. Micro-Influencers: With a following of 10,000 to 100,000, micro-influencers have higher engagement rates and focus on niche markets (Dong et al., 2024).
- 3. Nano-Influencers: They have fewer than 10,000 followers but enjoy strong connections with their followers. They are best suited for localized and community-oriented marketing (Jain et al., 2024).

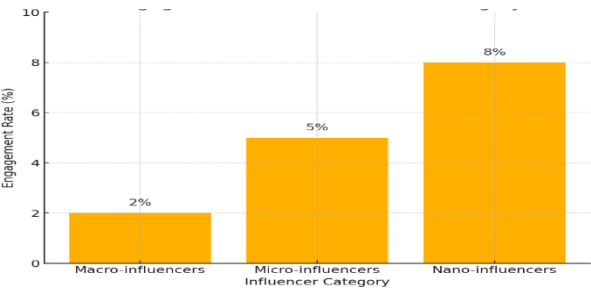


Figure 3. Follower Count vs. Engagement Rate

Figure 3. illustrates the relationship between the number of followers and engagement rate.

2.1 Impact of Influencer Marketing on Consumer Behaviour

Research shows that influencer marketing significantly affects consumers' purchasing choices. Consumers' attitudes towards brands that are promoted by influencers are influenced by trust, perceived expertise, and relatability

(Elhajjar & Itani, 2025). Influencers create persuasive narratives that establish an emotional connection with the audience, thereby leading to more effective marketing campaigns than traditional advertisements.

Table 3. Factors Influencing Consumer Trust in Influencer Marketing

Factor	Influence on Consumer Trust (%)
Authenticity	85%
Transparency	78%
Expertise	70%
Frequency of Engagement	65%

(Source: Rusanen, 2024)

The growing influence of social media marketing has spawned ethical concerns of transparency, data privacy, and consumer manipulation (Movaghar et al., 2024). Some of the problems that have led to regulatory policies requiring influencers to disclose paid partnerships are undisclosed sponsorships and misleading content.

Influencer marketing is now a data-driven practice that relies on social media in order to build consumer trust and engagement. Although macro-influencers provide mass reach, micro- and nano-influencers offer higher engagement and relatability. Social media platforms allow for targeted marketing campaigns, and ethical issues continue to be a driver of the regulatory landscape of the industry. Future research needs to cover the long-term effects of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour and brand loyalty.

2.2 Research Objectives

1. To research the effect of authenticity compared to sponsored content on consumer trust and brand perception.

This objective looks to analyse the impact of the type of content (sponsored vs. authentic) on the emotional connection of consumers with the brand and trust in the brand when viewing influencer ads. The study will analyse whether consumers perceive authentic influencer content to be more believable and trustworthy than overtly sponsored content.

2. To assess the impact of influencer credibility on brand trust and consumers' purchasing behaviour.

This objective deals with understanding the relationship between the credibility of influencers (i.e., their expertise, transparency, and how well they reflect the values of the brand) and its influence on consumer trust in the brand. The research will look at how influencer credibility can influence purchasing intention and brand loyalty among consumers.

3. IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON BRAND PERCEPTION

Influencer marketing has transformed the way brands engage with consumers, altering the models of conventional advertising. Via social media platforms, influencers have become key to shaping brand perception, credibility, and engagement. The following analysis is a consideration of the implications of influencer marketing on brand perception based on content authenticity, influencer credibility, and endorsement's role in creating brand identity.

3.1 Influence of Authentic vs. Sponsored Content

Authenticity is a central driver of influencer marketing success. Research shows that customers will more readily trust content that appears to be authentic compared to content that is explicitly labeled as sponsored (Bishri, 2024). Perceived authenticity of influencer endorsements has a significant impact on consumer attitudes. Content that aligns with the personal values or lifestyle of the influencer has a greater chance to resonate with audiences.

Sponsored content, while effective at driving brand awareness, is also susceptible to skepticism, especially if it reads as too promotional in nature or if it doesn't fit the influencer's usual content (Kukreja, 2024). A study found that sponsored content, if explicitly disclosed and organically woven into an influencer's usual narrative, is still able to evoke positive brand attitudes (Bishri, 2024).

3.2. The Credibility of Influencers and Its Effect on Brand Trust

The credibility of an influencer is important in determining the impact of their endorsement on brand trust. Very credible influencers who are seen as being expert, relatable, and open can endorse brand credibility through

recommendations. Less credible influencers or those who have engaged in controversial conduct will discredit the brand by association (Bishri, 2024).

Evidence indicates that the relationship between brand trust and influencer credibility is stronger when the values of the influencer and the brand align (Kukreja, 2024). For instance, a health and fitness influencer endorsing a health supplement company will be found to be credible if the influencer has previously endorsed products related to wellness.

3.3. Brand Perception Based on Influencer Endorsements

Influencer endorsement influences consumers' brand perceptions. Research has proven that influencer endorsement enhances the salience of the brand and leads consumers to perceive the brand image in a positive way (Kukreja, 2024). Brands that collaborate with credible influencers benefit from the credibility and trustworthiness of the influencer, which can be transferred to the brand.

Moreover, the engagement level of the influencer's audience is crucial in determining the effectiveness of the endorsement. High-engagement influencers, even with smaller audiences, often drive stronger emotional connections and, consequently, more significant shifts in brand perception (Kukreja, 2024).

3.4. The Influencer Role in Building Brand Identity

Influencers play a vital role in the development and communication of a brand's personality. Their tone, style, and brand are generally equated with the values and personality of the brands they work with. Influencers can make a brand more human through their content and more genuine and authentic towards their audience (Bishri, 2024).

Influencer branding consistency also contributes to building the brand image. Consistency in messages from an influencer aligns with brand values, and this accumulates a congruent brand image, which is desirable for the target audience. Influencers are also cultural intermediaries in the sense that they are introducing brands to new cultural territories or communities and hence cementing the brand identity (Bishri, 2024).

The influence of influencer marketing on brand awareness is multifaceted. Authentic content is more likely to produce greater brand trust, while sponsored content is either positive or negative depending on the manner in which it is presented. The credibility influence by the influencer is at the forefront of developing consumer trust and loyalty, with more credible influencers having a positive impact on brand perceptions. Furthermore, influencers also play a significant role in shaping and communicating brand identity, leading to both immediate visibility and ongoing interest. With the changing dynamics of influencer marketing, brands must exercise caution to select influencers that fit their values and engage the audience in an authentic way to create a positive brand perception.

4. PSYCHOLOGICAL DRIVERS OF INFLUENCER MARKETING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Influencer marketing has transformed the dynamics of the way brands communicate with customers and shape purchasing behavior. This abstract discusses some of the most significant psychological drivers of social media influencer-led consumer purchasing behavior, including social proof, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), personalized recommendations, and impulse purchase effects.

4.1. Psychological basis for consumer buying decisions that are influencer-driven

Consumer buying behaviour is greatly influenced by cognitive bias and emotions, and these are typically managed by influencer marketing. Individuals do not buy based on their needs but also on emotional appeal, social approval by influencers, and perceived value (Aliyev, 2025). Influencers use their own brand and storytelling strategies to establish an emotional connection with their audience, thus initiating a purchase. One of the psychological drivers is social proof, whereby other people's behaviour is utilized by customers to make their own decisions. If the influencer endorses a product positively, the followers, especially those who trust the influencer, will purchase the same product, thinking that it will fit their own needs or specifications (Sajikumar & Sreedharan, 2020). The action is based on the process of social conformity, whereby people imitate the decision of others, especially where there is uncertainty.

4.2. Social Proof and FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) as Drivers of Purchases

Social proof is the psychological phenomenon in which people copy the behavior of others, especially when they perceive that the act is supported by successful or intelligent people (Aliyev, 2025).

4.3. Social Proof and Its Impact on Buying Behaviour

Influencers are the agents of social proof who openly show their consumption of products, even requesting their followers to consume the same.

FOMO (Fear of Missing Out): Social proof also influences buying behaviour through FOMO, where customers fear missing something of value or on trend. Influencers create a sense of urgency by highlighting limited products or promo deals. Their followers might not want to miss out on the offer and feel compelled to rush into action (Rachmad, 2024).

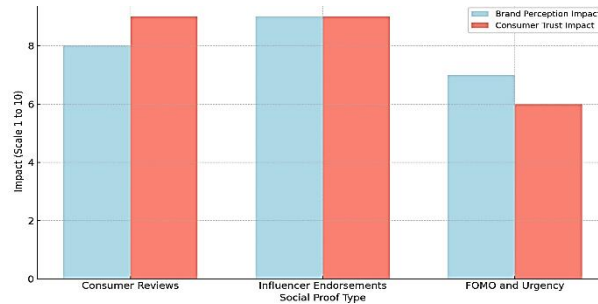


Fig 4: Impact of social proof on brand perception and consumer trust

Figure 4 is a bar chart indicating the impact of different types of social proofing on consumer and brand trust perception. As the figure illustrates:

- Consumer Reviews hold immense influence when it comes to brand attitude and consumer trust, which indicates the extent to which value true customer feedback has in shaping opinions.
- Influencer Endorsements also have a significant role to play in both aspects, reflecting the strong influence of genuine influencers on consumer behaviour and brand credibility.
- FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and Urgency are less influential on consumer trust but still influence brand perception, demonstrating the ways in which urgency and trendsetting can drive purchases, even when trust is low.

4.4. Influence of Personalized Recommendations on Purchase Intent

Personalized recommendations are also a key influencer of consumer purchasing decisions. Niche influencers or any influencers will recommend products based on the specific needs and interests of a fan. Personalized recommendations are more appealing to consumers because they feel that they are personalized and thoughtful. Personalization also wins the consumer's trust with the product as it is felt to be more attuned to their specific needs, interests, and values.

Influencers pick products aligned with their lifestyle or interest, and therefore their endorsement comes naturally. This customized recommendation creates a feeling of credibility and trust, and this has a highly positive effect on purchasing intent (Siddiqui & Ismail, 2024). The psychology of customized recommendations is based on the theory of reciprocity, where the customer believes that he/she owes something to the influencer for attention and therefore must purchase the product.

4.5. The Influence of Influencer Marketing on Generating Impulse Purchases

Impulse buying is an impulsive, at times emotional, unplanned purchase. Influencer marketing is effective in inducing impulse buying behavior due to the co-occurrence of emotional stimuli and social proof and FOMO-induced pressure. Influencers promoting products in a live stream or time-limited offer scenario are able to effectively increase the likelihood of impulsive buying (Aliyev, 2025). In influencer endorsement studies on TikTok, it was found that the emotional response generated by influencer endorsement was directly influencing impulse buying behaviour of consumers (Douglas, 2024). The rapidly evolving, highly visual product promotions induce excitement, once again leading to impulse purchases.

Table 4: The Impact of Psychological Drivers on Consumer Buying Behaviour

Psychological Driver	Effect on Purchase Decision	Impact on Impulse Buying
Social Proof	Consumers follow the actions of influencers they trust, increasing product desirability.	Moderate to High
FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)	Creates urgency by highlighting limited-time offers or exclusive access.	High
Personalized Recommendations	Increases trust by making the product seem more tailored to individual needs.	Moderate
Emotional Appeal	Drives consumers to make emotional decisions, often resulting in impulse buying.	High

Influencer advertising is highly driven by the psychological motivations behind consumer purchasing. Impulse buys are influenced by social proof and fear of missing out, and product appeal is enhanced through personalized suggestions. Emotional triggers by influencers influence impulse purchases, and customers buy on an emotional rather than logical level. Brands should be aware of these psychological triggers so that they can utilize influencers in marketing to influence immediate and long-term purchasing behaviour.

5. CONSUMER TRUST AND RELATIONSHIP WITH INFLUENCERS

The interaction between consumers and influencers is a major force behind the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Brands that have long-term relationships with influencers have higher engagement levels and trust among consumers. This involves taking into account the value of building trust through long-term relationships, the place of transparency and disclosure in influencer marketing, the fine line between authenticity and commercialization, and the influence of influencer credibility on consumer behaviour.

5.1. Creating Trust through Long-Term Influencer Relationships

Long-term collaborations between influencers and businesses foster loyalty and trust, both on the influencers' and followers' side. Influencers, through ongoing endorsement of a brand over a period of time, develop consistency and credibility, which finally leads to the establishment of customer trust. It has been shown that influencers who have long-term working relations with a brand tend to convey trustworthiness and influence purchasing behaviour positively (Kosunen, 2020). Among the benefits of long-term partnerships is that it enables the creation of deep emotional connections. Consumers perceive authenticity when influencers continuously portray a brand, compared to endorsing a series of disconnected products. This enables the creation of a cohesive brand narrative that connects with consumers, fostering brand loyalty and trust (Sankala, 2024).

5.2. Impact of Disclosure and Transparency on Influencer Marketing

Transparency is critical in influencer marketing in order to maintain the trust of the consumers. Transparency through paid partnership disclosure is an indicator of sincerity and honesty, and brand and influencer trust is boosted (Gole et al., 2024). Non-disclosure of paid material, on the other hand, fosters perceptions of dishonesty and decreases trust and brand reputation (Klein, 2024). Consumers trust influencers disclosing paid affiliation with a brand, as per a study by Rachmad (2024). Such transparency is not only critical to maintain trust, but also to maintain ethical practice of influencer marketing. Clear marking with phrases such as "#ad" or "#sponsored" is now standard practice to maintain credibility and long-term customer relations.

5.3. Authenticity vs. Commercial Interests

Consumers' Points of Attraction One of the largest challenges facing influencer marketing is the conflict between being authentic and being commercial. Consumers increasingly realize the commercial motivation behind the endorsement of influencers. While influencers are considered trusted individuals, their authenticity may be questioned if their content seems fake or overly commercial (Kapitan & van Esch, 2022). Research illustrates that consumers are more apt to trust influencers whose brand endorsements occur naturally within the flow of their personal content, rather than influencers who appear to be overly commercial (Sankala, 2024). For example, an influencer who actually uses a product in their life is seen as more authentic than an influencer who simply endorses products they don't use. The challenge for brands is ensuring their influencer partnerships align with the personal brand of influencers and the values of their audience.

5.4. Influencer Credibility and Its Direct Impact on Consumer Buying Behaviour

Influencer credibility has a direct impact on consumer buying behaviour. Influencers who are specialists in their niche, whether fashion, health, or technology, are more likely to influence the buying decisions of their audience (Borchers & Enke, 2022). Credibility is developed over time depending on consistency, expertise, and the quality of content shared by the influencer. In research carried out by Mucundorfeanu et al. (2022), it was determined that influencers who consistently share useful, well-researched, and helpful content have greater influence on the buying decisions of their audience compared to influencers who build their promotions on superficialities. The sincerity and perceived expertise of the influencer can transform an endorsement into a strong recommendation, leading to improved conversion rates for businesses. Influencer marketing relies on trust and the dynamics between customers and influencers. Trust is built through long-term collaborations, and transparency in disclosure guidelines lends credibility to the endorsements. Walking the thin line between being authentic and too commercial is critical because customers will not think twice before opting-out the moment that they feel an influencer is anything less than authentic. Finally, the credibility of influencers directly affects the behaviour of customers, with credible influencers having improved engagement.

6. EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INFLUENCER MARKETING

Influencer marketing is now a major part of modern digital marketing campaigns, and it requires effective measurement methods to assess its impact on brand perception, ROI (Return on Investment), and customer behaviour. This section provides various measurements to assess the success of influencer marketing, including brand perception shifts, tracking customer decisions, and establishing long-term vs. short-term campaign impact.

6.1. Brand Perception Change Evaluation Metrics

- Monitoring brand perception change via influencer marketing is carried out by tracking the changes in attitude, awareness, and sentiment for a brand after an influencer campaign. The KPIs that are measured to quantify this include:
- Brand Awareness: Metrics that indicate the number of people who have been exposed to the brand and remember it after seeing an influencer's post.
- Brand Sentiment: Tracking customer sentiment through social media feedback (likes, comments, shares) and surveys, and determining whether the perceptions of the brand have improved.
- Engagement Rate: The interaction on the content, i.e., mentions, shares, comments, and likes, is used to gauge the engagement level of consumers with the brand's message.

Table 5: Brand perception driven by influencer campaigns

Metric	What it Measures	Measurement Tools
Brand Awareness	Increase in consumer recognition of the brand	Social media analytics, surveys
Brand Sentiment	Positive or negative shifts in perception	Social listening tools, sentiment analysis
Engagement Rate	Level of consumer interaction with content	Social media platforms' analytics

This table 5 illustrates how different measurements, from brand awareness to sentiment, can quantify changes in brand perception brought about by influencer campaigns. Using social media analytics and sentiment analysis software, brands can now ascertain how their message is being viewed by the target audience (Rachmad, 2024).

6.2. ROI (Return on Investment) in Influencer Campaigns

Calculating the ROI of influencer marketing is necessary in order to determine the financial success of a campaign. ROI has traditionally been calculated on the basis of a comparison between the cost of a campaign and the revenue or value generated. Influencer marketing ROI can be more difficult to calculate than traditional marketing due to the indirect role that influencers have on the formation of consumer behaviour.

Common methods of calculating ROI include:

- Revenue-Generated Metrics: Actual sales or conversions generated due to the promotion by the influencer, usually measured using affiliate links or promo codes.

- Cost Per Thousand Impressions (CPM): An advertising metric that is the cost to reach 1,000 people.
- Customer Lifetime Value (CLV): Calculates the estimated long-term profit an influencer-based customer will bring.

Table 6: Different ROI metrics

Metric	Description	Method of Measurement
Revenue-Generated	Direct sales or conversions from the campaign	Affiliate links, promo codes, purchase tracking
Cost Per Thousand Impressions (CPM)	Cost to reach 1,000 people	Total spend divided by impressions
Customer Lifetime Value (CLV)	Long-term value of customers acquired	Calculate projected profit per customer

This table illustrates the way different ROI metrics, for instance, revenue and CPM, determine influencer campaign financial success, while CLV predicts the long-term value of consumers generated through influencer marketing (Bell & Olukemi, 2024).

6.3. The Challenge of Tracking Consumer Decisions Influenced by Influencers

It is hard to monitor the consumer decision-making process influenced by social media influencers due to the indirect and complicated nature of influencer influence. While influencers can directly influence a consumer to purchase something, the process from exposure to final decision often involves several touchpoints on several platforms.

To tackle this, brands are utilizing:

- Multi-Touch Attribution Models: These models track consumer interactions across multiple platforms and measure how each interaction contributes to a conversion.
- Influencer Impact Surveys: Brands sometimes conduct post-purchase surveys asking consumers which influencer or campaign prompted them to make the purchase.

However, there is a significant challenge in isolating the specific effect of a specific influencer, especially if consumers are exposed to messages through multiple channels from multiple influencers or marketing communications (Kosunen, 2020).

6.4. Long-Term vs Short-Term Influencer Marketing Effects

The influence of influencer marketing is typically measured in short-term and long-term contexts. Short-term effect typically entails immediate boosts in brand awareness, engagement, and sales, while long-term effect is focused on building brand loyalty, consumer trust, and long-term customer relationships.

- Short-Term Effects: These are typically quantifiable in the form of direct ROI, engagement levels, and sales lift.
- Long-Term Effects: These include creating brand loyalty, customer advocacy, and long-term customer lifetime value growth.

Table 7: Various aspects of influencer marketing

KPI	What It Measures	Importance
Engagement Rate	Interaction with content (likes, shares, comments)	Indicates how well the content resonates with the audience
Reach and Impressions	Total views and exposure of influencer content	Measures the campaign's visibility and audience engagement
Conversion Rate	Percentage of users who take a desired action	Shows the effectiveness in driving sales or desired outcomes
Return on Investment (ROI)	Profitability of the campaign compared to the cost	Measures the financial success of the campaign
Brand Sentiment	Consumer perception and attitude change post-campaign	Indicates how the campaign has shaped brand perception

This table 7 shows how a range of KPIs are used to measure various aspects of influencer marketing performance, from engagement through to financial return (Khan & Shalini, 2024).

The measurement and tracking of influencer marketing success rely on a combination of tools and KPIs to provide a summary of how a campaign is faring. By using social media analysis tools, sentiment analysis, and customer feedback directly, it is possible to quantify the influence of influencers on brand recall and purchasing behaviour. The KPI indicators, i.e., engagement rate, reach, ROI, and conversion rate, assist in campaign success measurements and effective decision-making on future marketing strategies.

7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CHALLENGES IN INFLUENCER MARKETING

Influencer marketing is a strong force within the digital marketing arena yet is also beset by a multitude of ethical concerns that must be handled responsibly. They range from influencer disclosure and fake followers and manufactured engagement to deceptive posts and pushback on over-commercialization by consumers. We explore here the ethical issues and what they might mean for influencers and brands.

7.1. Influencers' Disclosure and Authenticity Issues

Transparency is one of the most important ethical issues in influencer marketing, specifically in disclosure of sponsored partnerships. Influencers who fail to disclose paid posts risk misleading their followers, causing consumers to lose their trust in influencers and the advertising industry in general. (Bahar & Hasan, 2024). The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has enacted guidelines requiring clear disclosure in instances where influencers are paid to promote products, such as using hashtags "#ad" or "#sponsored" (Sands et al., 2022).

When disclosure is not properly carried out, it is a matter of consumer deception. Poor transparency can lead to negative consumer attitudes because followers may feel deceived once they realize that the influencer's content is motivated by commercial intent rather than endorsement (Riefa & Clausen, 2019). However, the majority of consumers are already doubting the authenticity of influencers even when content is properly disclosed. As influencer marketing continues to grow, authenticity in these relationships needs to be maintained for brand credibility (Alipour et al., 2024).

7.2. Negative Effects of Fake Followers and Artificial Engagement

Another significant ethical concern in influencer marketing is the use of fake followers and artificial engagement. Some influencers, or even firms, purchase fake followers or engagement metrics (e.g., likes, comments, or shares) to increase their perceived popularity and influence (Borchers & Enke, 2022). While such conduct can temporarily boost influencer profiles, it ruins the trust between the influencer and his or her followers. Fake followers generate fake metrics that deceive the true reach and engagement of an influencer, and brands end up paying for campaigns that do not deliver real customer attention. This manipulation undermines the success of influencer marketing and discredits influencers and brands involved (Ducato, 2020).

7.3. Influence of Fake Influencer Content on Consumer Attitudes

Deceptive material, where influencers sell items without full disclosure of effectiveness or potential drawbacks, has a detrimental effect on consumer attitude. For example, when influencers endorse beauty products, yet omit side effects or the fact that they used photo-editing apps, consumers feel misled (Harris, 2018). Consumers tend to be more likely to trust influencers providing genuine reviews and feedback on personal experience. When influencers endorse unrealistic expectations or hide important information, this creates consumer dissatisfaction, mistrust, and, in some cases, public outrage. This is particularly problematic in areas like health and beauty, where misleading endorsements have significant consequences on the well-being of consumers (Kay et al., 2023).

7.4. Consumer Backlash Against Over-Commercialization of Influencer

Content Over-commercialization is yet another ethical problem with influencer marketing. The higher the number of paid collaborations influencers make, the more commercialized their posts will be, and possibly repel the audience (Hudders & De Jans, 2021). Customers may feel that influencers do not share authentic voices anymore, but instead are motivated primarily by profits. This can lead to consumer backlash, with followers retracting their engagement or complaining about the perceived lack of personal touch in the content. Influencers and brands must balance sponsored posts with organic, non-commercial posts to maintain an air of authenticity as well as trust. If the followers

perceive an influencer as being too commercial, they will likely begin to question the credibility of their endorsement, with future campaigns being less successful (Kay et al., 2023).

Influencer marketing ethics are necessary to maintain trust, credibility, and long-term consumer relationships. Issues of poor disclosure, fake engagement, misleading content, and over-commercialization can undermine the effectiveness of influencer campaigns and damage the reputation of the brand and influencer. Brands must emphasize transparency, authenticity, and genuine consumer relationships to navigate these pitfalls effectively.

8. CASE STUDIES AND EXAMPLES OF INFLUENCER MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

Influencer marketing is now one of the strongest forms of digital marketing, with numerous brands using social media influencers to connect with potential customers. In this chapter, we present some of the successful influencer marketing campaigns, failed or controversial campaigns, and case studies in the fashion, technology, and beauty sectors. Every case provides an understanding of how the approach was made, what were the challenges, and what were the lessons learned.

8.1. Successful Influencer Marketing Campaigns and Their Impact on Brand Perception

Successful campaigns leverage influencers to create authentic relationships with their followers. Below are some notable examples of campaigns that were well-received and significantly impacted brand perception.

Nike and Colin Kaepernick: One of the most successful campaigns in recent years was Nike's collaboration with former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick. The campaign, launched in 2018, featured Kaepernick as the face of their "Just Do It" campaign. Despite facing some controversy, the campaign increased Nike's brand loyalty, with sales rising by 31% in the first few days after its release. The campaign resonated deeply with Nike's core demographic, particularly younger, socially-conscious consumers, and demonstrated how an influencer can shape brand perception positively when aligned with social values (Freberg, 2021).

Fenty Beauty by Rihanna: Rihanna's Fenty Beauty brand revolutionized the beauty industry by using influencers across a broad spectrum of skin tones and ethnicities. Fenty's influencer marketing strategy centered around inclusivity, and its launch was a massive success. The brand's influencer partnerships, particularly with micro-influencers, helped solidify its position as a brand that represents diversity. Fenty's marketing campaign not only increased product sales but also positively impacted its brand perception, positioning it as a leader in inclusive beauty (Rachmad, 2024).

8.2. Failures or Controversial Influencer Marketing Campaigns

Not all influencer campaigns have a smooth ride; several have been met with backlash due to poor execution or ethical concerns. Here are a few examples:

Pepsi and Kendall Jenner (2017): Pepsi faced intense criticism after it released an advert featuring Kendall Jenner that was accused of making light of social justice movements. The ad showed Jenner delivering a Pepsi to a police officer in a friendly way in the midst of a protest, something that was viewed as tone-deaf and exploitative by many. The backlash was so severe that Pepsi pulled the advert and apologized. This is a valuable example of how influencer marketing can go horribly wrong when brands fail to resonate with the values of their target audience (Gräve, 2019).

Fyre Festival (2017): Fyre Festival, a festival promoted by influencers like Kendall Jenner, Bella Hadid, and other celebrities, was a massive failure. The festival, which had promised luxury villas and top-notch acts, ended in a disastrous, disorganized debacle. This caused widespread damage to the reputation of the influencers and the festival, illustrating how promotion of products or events without due diligence can go awry (Pollay & Dewhirst, 2002).

8.3. Case Studies Across Industries

Fashion Industry

Fashion Nova and Cardi B: Fashion Nova, a fast-fashion e-retailer, gained enormous popularity by association with celebrities and influencers like Cardi B. The genuine endorsement by Cardi B helped the brand resonate with her fans, and Fashion Nova became one of the top e-retail brands. This campaign highlighted the power of celebrity influencers in the fashion industry and their ability to enhance brand perception through personal connections with consumers (Abidin & Ots, 2016).

Tech Industry

Apple and Influencers for the iPhone X Launch: Apple's influencer marketing strategy for the iPhone X launch involved working with high-profile tech influencers and YouTubers who unboxed and reviewed the phone. This campaign successfully generated massive buzz around the product, leading to high pre-order numbers. The tech influencers were able to provide credibility to the brand, making consumers feel like they were getting firsthand insights into the product before its official release (Sands et al., 2022).

Beauty Industry

Huda Beauty and Instagram Influencers: Huda Kattan, the founder of Huda Beauty, used Instagram influencers to grow her brand. By tapping into the power of micro-influencers and beauty gurus on Instagram, Huda Beauty was able to rapidly expand its reach and create a loyal customer base. The company's influencer marketing strategy focused on authenticity, showcasing real-world users of their products, which positively influenced brand perception and boosted consumer trust (Johansen & Guldvik, 2017).

8.4. Lessons Learned from Influencer Marketing Campaigns

The following lessons can be gleaned from both successful and controversial campaigns:

Authenticity is Key: Both Nike and Fenty Beauty's campaigns worked because they stayed true to their brand's values and focused on authenticity. Consumers are quick to spot inauthentic partnerships, as seen in the backlash against Pepsi's ad featuring Kendall Jenner. Brands should ensure that influencers genuinely align with the product and message (Sands et al., 2022).

Transparency and Disclosure Are Essential: Influencers must clearly disclose paid partnerships. Failure to do so can result in consumer scepticism, as seen through various controversies centered around undisclosed sponsored content. Transparent relationships are the cornerstone of maintaining consumer trust (Rachmad, 2024).

Know Your Audience: The Fyre Festival and Pepsi campaigns both demonstrate the pitfalls of failing to grasp the sensitivities of the audience. Brands need to think through how their influencer campaigns will be received by the target audience and steer clear of controversial or tone-deaf messages.

Influencer marketing is a highly effective method of brand building as well as a risky one when not planned well. Nike and Fenty Beauty's successes illustrate how collaborations with influencers that truly represent the brand can be highly successful. Pepsi's Kendall Jenner advert and the Fyre Festival, on the other hand, illustrate the dangers of the brand not thinking through ethics, consumer sensitivities, and transparency. Brands can create better and more ethical influencer marketing campaigns by examining these successes and failures.

9. LIMITATIONS

Even though this review provides a comprehensive analysis of the effect of influencer marketing on brand attitude and purchasing behaviour, certain limitations should be highlighted. One of the significant limitations is the utilization of secondary research and literature rather than empirical data. While the observations are derived from credible sources, they do not entail original data collection, such as surveys, interviews, or experimental studies, that would provide more concrete evidence of the direct influence of influencer marketing on consumer trust and buying decisions. The absence of first-hand empirical data limits the potential for establishing cause-and-effect relationships between influencer credibility, engagement rates, and brand perception. Another limitation is the short-term focus of most existing studies. Most existing studies examine short-term effects, such as engagement rates, likes, shares, and short-term sales conversions, without giving adequate attention to the long-term influence of influencer marketing on brand loyalty, customer retention, and long-term trust. While influencer campaigns can generate instant brand awareness and sales boosts, it is not yet evident what their long-term effects on consumer behaviour are. Follow-up studies must adopt a longitudinal approach in order to assess how influencer collaborations influence brand perception over time.

10. RESEARCH GAPS

Despite the extensive analysis of the impact of influencer marketing on brand perception and consumer behaviour, several research gaps remain. One of the biggest limitations is the reliance on secondary research, theoretical models, and case studies rather than empirical studies. While literature is insightful, primary research in the form of

controlled studies, surveys, and qualitative consumer interviews is needed to ascertain the real impact of influencer marketing on trust and purchase decisions. Most studies also focus on short-term effects, such as engagement rates and purchase intent at the time, but fail to offer a longitudinal perspective on the contribution of influencer collaborations to brand loyalty and long-term consumer relationships.

Another gap lies in industry-specific application of influencer marketing. While research has extensively dealt with industries such as fashion, beauty, and lifestyle, we know little about its application in sectors such as healthcare, technology, finance, and B2B marketing. These sectors are even more likely to require an enhanced level of credibility, expertise, and regulatory compliance, yet we know little about the effect of influencer credibility on high-involvement purchase decisions. Cultural and regional variations in the effectiveness of influencer marketing are also under-researched. Consumer trust in influencers varies across geographical and economic settings as a result of cultural norms, social structures, and local advertising regulations. Comparative studies on the effectiveness of influencer marketing in various markets would be of immense value to global brands.

11. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future research must fill the gaps and limitations identified in this review to enhance the strategic effectiveness and ethical execution of influencer marketing. One of the main areas is the long-term impact of influencer marketing on customer retention and brand loyalty, as most studies concentrate on short-term engagement rather than long-term consumer relationships. Cross-industry studies are also required to examine influencer marketing in healthcare, technology, finance, and B2B sectors, where credibility and expertise are paramount. Another main direction is regional and cultural differences in the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Consumer trust and engagement vary across cultural and economic contexts, and comparative studies are required on how different markets respond to influencer campaigns. Lastly, ROI measurement model development remains a main area, as existing methods cannot capture the full impacts of influencer marketing. Future research should explore AI-driven analytics, multi-touch attribution modelling, and blockchain transparency solutions to improve the measurement of campaigns.

Finally, regulatory and ethical considerations need to be investigated more, particularly in relation to fake engagement, deceptive advertising, and adherence to disclosures. With new technologies on the horizon, such as metaverse and virtual influencers, studies need to investigate how they influence brand engagement and consumer trust.

12. CONCLUSION

Influencer marketing is a major force behind brand perceptions and purchasing decisions by way of authentic engagement, authentic endorsement, and psychological factors like social proof and FOMO. This review emphasizes that the efficacy of influencer marketing is significantly increased when influencers present themselves as authentic and disclose openly that they have affiliations with companies. Nano- and micro-influencers, with smaller fan bases, achieve higher engagement rates and better trust relations, emphasizing the power of personal and authentic engagement over extensive yet superficial reach.

However, the review also identifies serious ethical and practical concerns in influencer marketing, from undisclosed sponsorships to fake followers, manufactured engagement, and misleading promotional messages. These practices compromise brand credibility and customer trust to a great extent, and this necessitates greater transparency and adherence to regulation requirements.

Brands must integrate advanced analytical solutions, apply multi-touch attribution models, and emphasize metrics representing both short-term engagement and long-term customer lifetime value.

Future studies must be empirical and longitudinal in nature to have a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term impact of influencer marketing on brand equity and loyalty. Comparative studies across industries and cultural contexts will also enhance the strategic value of influencer marketing.

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