

Influencer Marketing and Brand Perception of Selected Online Stores in Lagos State Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates the effect of influencer marketing on brand perception among selected online stores in Lagos State, Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was administered to a diverse sample of online consumers across major demographic segments including Gen Z, Millennials, mid-income families, high-income professionals, and small business owners. The data collected were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. Result from the Inferential statistics showed that both influencer engagement rate and conversion rate significantly influenced brand trust which is the proxy for brand perception. Notably, campaigns with high engagement achieved slightly higher increases in trust than those focused solely on conversions. Engagement rate had a stronger impact ($\beta = 0.681$, $p < 0.01$) than conversion rate ($\beta = 0.341$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that consumer interaction with influencer content is a more powerful driver of trust than purchases alone. Based on the result the study concludes that influencer marketing plays a vital role in shaping brand perception, especially when campaigns are tailored to match audience preferences and values. Furthermore, effective influencer marketing requires strategic alignment between influencers and brand values, authenticity in content and precise targeting based on audience preferences. It is therefore recommended that Lagos based online stores prioritize micro-influencers with high engagement focusing on authentic storytelling and investment in continuous monitoring of campaign effectiveness through data analytics. The recommendations emphasize the use of micro-influencers, customized messaging formats, and robust KPI tracking. These insights provide actionable strategies for digital marketers and business owners in Nigeria's rapidly evolving e-commerce landscape.

Keywords: influencer marketing, brand perception, engagement rate, conversion rate, brand trust, online retail

1. Background.

The marketing landscape has undergone a significant transformation in contemporary years as a result of the proliferation of digital technology, the rise of social media platforms, and the evolution of consumer behavior. One of the most notable shifts in contemporary marketing is the emergence of influencer marketing which is a strategy that leverages the reach and credibility of individuals with substantial online followings to shape consumer attitudes, drive engagement, and influence purchasing decisions (Leung et al., 2022). As traditional advertising continues to lose traction among digitally savvy consumers, brands particularly online stores are increasingly turning to influencers to bridge the gap between themselves and their target audience (Prasanthi et al., 2024). Influencer marketing is rooted in trust, authenticity and relatability due to the reason that social media influencers whether celebrities, micro-influencers, or niche content creators have become powerful voices in shaping public opinion (Piroti, 2023). Their endorsements often appear more personal and trustworthy to followers, which in turn affects how brands are perceived. According to Dimitrieska and Efremova (2021), stated that over 60% of marketers confirmed that influencer marketing generated better results in terms of engagement and brand perception than traditional forms of advertising.

Online retail businesses especially in highly competitive and digitally active markets influencer marketing presents a unique opportunity to build and strengthen brand perception (Usta, 2023). With the increasing reliance on e-commerce and the shift toward online shopping accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic consumers now often rely on the opinions and reviews of influencers before making purchasing decisions. Platforms such as

Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter have become essential tools for brand storytelling and consumer engagement making influencer marketing a vital component of digital branding strategies (Haenlein et al., 2020). In the context of online stores, brand perception is crucial as it directly influences consumer loyalty, trust, and ultimately, conversion rates (Susilawati et al., 2024). A positive brand perception can lead to repeat purchases, word of mouth referrals, and long-term customer relationships. Conversely, negative or unclear brand messaging can deter potential customers (Li et al., 2023). Influencers help bridge this perception gap by humanizing the brand and aligning it with consumer values and lifestyle aspirations.

In the realm of influencer marketing, influencer credibility has emerged as a core determinant of how consumers perceive and interact with brands, especially in the digital marketplace. Credibility, defined as the influencer's perceived trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990), directly impacts brand perception, which encompasses consumers' beliefs, attitudes, and impressions of a brand (Breves et al., 2019). Credible influencers are seen as authentic and knowledgeable, often commanding significant influence over their followers' purchase decisions (Sijabat et al., 2022). When an influencer is perceived as honest and relatable, their endorsement can humanize a brand, making it appear more trustworthy and desirable (Lee & Kim, 2020). For instance, in the Nigerian online retail sector, influencers who share genuine experiences with products from platforms like Jumia or Konga are more likely to sway consumer opinion than paid advertisements, especially if their followers view them as unbiased and real. Micro-influencers in particular, exemplify this trend. Despite having smaller audiences, their high engagement rates and closer relationships with followers often lead to greater trust and, consequently, more persuasive brand endorsements (Gupta & Mahajan, 2019). In a digital economy flooded with sponsored content, credibility acts as a filter through which followers discern which messages to trust and act upon.

Brand perception refers to the collective image and reputation a brand holds in the minds of its target audience. It is shaped not only by direct consumer experiences but also by the messages they receive through various communication channels including influencer marketing (Yu & Yuan, 2019). A positive brand perception can result in customer loyalty, increased sales, and a competitive edge, while a negative perception can severely damage brand equity (Sultan et al., 2019). Influencers act as mediators between brands and their audiences. Their credibility enhances the perceived authenticity of the brand they represent, thereby strengthening brand perception (AlFarraj et al., 2021). Research shows that influencer endorsements can enhance brand awareness, image, and trustworthiness when the influencer is seen as credible (Gayathri & Anwar, 2021). In contrast, if followers perceive an influencer as insincere or overly commercial, it can damage both the influencer's and the brand's credibility.

There is a strong symbiotic relationship between influencer credibility and brand perception. When influencers with strong personal brands endorse a product or service, their credibility transfers to the brand this is known as the "halo effect" in branding psychology (Remue, 2022). This is particularly vital for online stores that often struggle with the lack of physical touchpoints to build trust (Pashaei, 2020). For example, during a recent promotional campaign by a popular Nigerian online fashion store, the use of a well-respected fashion influencer resulted in a surge in website traffic and brand engagement. This outcome was largely driven by the influencer's prior reputation for honest product reviews and a clear alignment with the brand's identity and values. In essence, the effectiveness of influencer marketing is deeply rooted in the influencer's credibility, which significantly shapes consumer perceptions of a brand (Adelabu et al., 2024). For online stores especially in competitive and evolving markets like Lagos State partnering with credible influencers is not just a marketing tactic but a strategic imperative to enhance brand perception and customer loyalty.

In Nigeria particularly in commercial hubs like Lagos State where digital adoption and e-commerce activities are rapidly expanding online stores are increasingly embracing influencer marketing to stand out in a saturated market (Eze et al., 2021). However, the effectiveness of this strategy is not always guaranteed as the impact of influencers on consumer perception can vary based on factors such as the influencer's authenticity, the relevance of their content, audience alignment, and the transparency of brand partnerships (Mohammad et al., 2024). There is also growing scrutiny around "influencer fatigue" and "influencer credibility", making it essential for brands to

evaluate the actual influence on brand perception beyond vanity metrics such as likes and followers (Rajput & Gandhi, 2024).

The swift advancement of digital technologies and widespread internet access have revolutionized how brands engage with their customers especially in Nigeria. As the commercial heartbeat of the nation and a central hub for online retail, Lagos State offers an ideal setting to examine modern promotional tactics particularly influencer marketing and how they shape public perception of brands. Influencer marketing which is seen as the strategic collaboration between brands and individuals with significant online followings have now become an essential promotional tool in the digital era (Leung et al., 2022). Unlike traditional advertising influencer marketing leverages trust, authenticity, and relatability to build meaningful consumer brand connections (De Veirman et al., 2017). In Nigeria social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have empowered local influencers to shape public opinions and influence purchase behaviors, especially among tech-savvy and urban populations.

Furthermore, the increasing competition among online stores in Lagos State has compelled businesses to adopt innovative approaches to differentiate themselves (Adetowubo-King et al., 2023). As consumers become more informed and selective, the ability of influencers to drive favorable perceptions, loyalty, and ultimately purchase decisions becomes a critical area of inquiry (Freberg et al., 2011). Despite this, there is a limited body of empirical studies in the Nigerian context that systematically examine how influencer marketing affects brand perception. Regardless of the adoption of influencer marketing by online retailers in Lagos State in Nigeria, there remains considerable uncertainty about its actual impact on how consumers perceive brands. Many e-commerce platforms invest heavily in social media influencers paying for sponsored posts, product reviews, and “takeovers” yet still struggle with low repeat purchase rates, inconsistent customer loyalty, and lingering doubts about product authenticity (Shen et al., 2024).

Nigerian online shoppers often face issues such as counterfeit goods, delayed deliveries, and opaque return policies. As a result, they approach influencer endorsements with skepticism, uncertain whether paid promotions genuinely reflect product quality or simply serve the influencer’s financial interests (Obor, 2019). This mistrust may blunt the positive effects that influencer marketing is intended to generate. While influencers can drive high engagement (likes, comments, shares), online retailers frequently lack robust frameworks to translate those engagement metrics into meaningful measures of brand equity such as perceived reliability, emotional connection, and willingness to pay a premium. Without clear benchmarks, companies cannot determine whether their influencer investments are improving long-term brand perception or merely generating superficial attention (Gräve, 2019).

Lagos State online shoppers are not a monolithic group they span various age brackets, income levels, and cultural backgrounds, each with distinct media consumption habits and trust thresholds (Olasanmi, 2019). What resonates with a middle-class millennial on Instagram may fall flat with a price-sensitive shopper on WhatsApp. Yet many retailers deploy one size fits all influencer campaigns, risking misalignment between influencer content and target audience expectations. As more online stores engage influencers, consumers are inundated with sponsored content as this saturation can dilute individual campaign effectiveness and make it harder for any single brand to stand out (Morillo-Garrido, 2024). Consequently, even well-crafted influencer collaborations may fail to shift overall brand perception if they are lost in a sea of similar endorsements.

This article will provide online retailers with clear evidence based guidance on how to harness influencer partnerships to strengthen brand perception and build lasting customer loyalty. By examining the ways that influencer tactics such as product demonstrations, behind the scenes content, or customer testimonial collaborations resonate with distinct consumer segments. The study will reveal which approaches actually move the needle on trust, perceived quality, and emotional engagement. Drawing on in depth analysis this research will identify the attributes that make an influencer endorsement feel authentic rather than sales-driven. These insights will help brands select influencers whose personal values, communication style, and audience demographics align closely with their own positioning, minimizing the risk of misaligned messaging.

This study will compile a set of best practice recommendations rooted in local market realities around logistics, cultural values, and regulatory constraints that guide online stores in planning, executing, and refining influencer campaigns. By applying these actionable insights, brands will be able to cut through the noise of competing endorsements, establish a credible voice in the crowded digital space, and cultivate deeper, more profitable relationships with their customers. Furthermore, despite the increasing popularity of influencer marketing, there remains paucity of literature understanding how exactly influencer endorsements shape brand perception among online shoppers, especially in emerging markets like Nigeria.

This study is therefore necessitated by the growing reliance on influencers by online businesses in Lagos State and the need to empirically assess the extent to which these influencers shape consumer perceptions and attitudes toward brands. Understanding this relationship will not only aid businesses in making informed marketing decisions but also contribute to the existing literature on digital marketing in emerging economies.

The objective of this study is to examine the effect of the relationship between influencer marketing and brand perception of online stores in Lagos State Nigeria. It aims to uncover how influencer driven campaigns affect consumer trust, brand loyalty and purchasing behavior in the digital age because without localized insights, retailers rely on best practices derived from other markets which may not account for Nigeria's unique logistical, cultural, and regulatory environment.

Based on the objective, the study hypothesize that:

H₀₁: Influencer marketing brand do not have an effect on brand perception in Lagos State Nigeria

2. Literature Review

Mohammad et al (2024), explores the dynamic landscape of influencer marketing and its impact on the brand perception of Jordanian customers influenced on social media platforms. In the context of Jordan's rich cultural heritage and closely-knit society, the study investigates how influencer marketing strategies align with local values and traditions to shape consumer perceptions. Data related to the research were collected from a sample of 455 customers of online retail companies. The research employed structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques to analyze data related to the measurement model and the structural model. The study concluded that influencer marketing has a significant positive impact on brand perception, especially trustworthiness, which had the greatest impact. Accordingly, influencer selection should prioritize those with genuine connections to Jordanian culture, allowing for more authentic representation, as strategically aligning brand values with those of the local audience and encouraging influencers to create local content promotes deeper resonance.

Also, Hugh et al (2022), aims to draw on the source credibility model and signaling theory to explain the mechanisms that matter in influencer marketing effectiveness. The proposed model of influencer marketing effectiveness is analyzed using partial least squares with data from 281 followers of social media influencers. The findings establish influencer characteristics of popularity and attractiveness as heuristic cues that inform judgments of influencer efficacy. Further, category involvement and altruistic motives for collaboration are shown to moderate followers' reliance on these heuristic cues. Then, a sequential mediating effect demonstrates the critical roles of the influencer and partner brand in three desired outcomes: enhanced perception of brand authenticity, enhanced brand engagement and positive attitudes toward influencer posts. The study proposes that future research should consider other heuristic cues that could inform influencer efficacy judgments and switch the focus toward the partner brand's impact on such judgments. This study helps to present a step-by-step visual framework is presented to help marketers and influencers translate these findings into key responsibilities for developing more effective and collaborative partnerships.

Correspondingly, Abraham et al (2022), address the gaps on insufficient research on the shift from traditional marketing trends and current marketing trends in the Philippines, specifically influencer marketing on various digital media platforms present today. For the benefit of cosmetic companies, marketing agencies, and future researchers as a basis for future campaigns or research in line with influencer marketing, this research aims to determine significant factors affecting the perception (purchase intention and recommendation) of consumers in

the beauty and cosmetics industry, specifically the following: sponsorship disclosure labels, platforms used, type of post, and credibility of influencers. Following a descriptive-correlational approach, a pool of two hundred twenty-six (226) respondents were surveyed. A Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used to measure their perception towards influencer marketing along with their overall sentiments towards the identified factors. The results of the study revealed that type of post plays a major factor in perception towards and interest in brands. Aside from the type of post, the influencers themselves play a major role in determining the purchase intention and recommendation that respondents have towards brands. However, for type of post and sponsorship disclosure labels, results show that these do not have a significance on the perceptions of consumers in terms of purchase intention and recommendation.

Similarly, Jin et al (2019), test the effects of two types of celebrities (Instagram celebrity vs traditional celebrity) on source trustworthiness, brand attitude, envy and social presence. The proposed theoretical model consists of the celebrity type as the independent variable, social presence as the mediator and self-discrepancy as the moderator. A randomized two-group comparison (Instagram celebrity vs traditional celebrity) between-subjects experiment ($n=104$) was conducted. The results indicate that consumers exposed to Instagram celebrity's brand posts perceive the source to be more trustworthy, show more positive attitude toward the endorsed brand, feel stronger social presence and feel more envious of the source than those consumers exposed to traditional celebrity's brand posts. Structural equation modeling (Mplus 8.0) and bootstrap confidence intervals indicate that social presence mediates the causal effects of celebrity type on trustworthiness, brand attitude and envy. Multiple regression analyses reveal the moderating effects of appearance-related actual ideal self-discrepancy. Ultimately, managerial implications for social media marketing and Instagram influencer-based branding are provided. From the perspective of marketing planning, the findings speak to the power of influencer marketing as an effective branding strategy.

Likewise, Lee and Kim (2020), opines that despite the increasing interest in celebrity influencers as a marketing communication tool, much remains to be explored to understand how influencer credibility combined with brand credibility affects consumers' perception toward the influencer promotional post. Moreover, there are growing concerns around whether sponsorship disclosure on influencer promotional posts encourages consumers to critically process the advertising message. Thus, the study examines the effects of disclosure types, influencer credibility (high/low), and brand credibility (high/low) on the effectiveness of Instagram influencer promotional posts. Findings reveal that highly credible brands featured in Instagram posts have a positive impact on message credibility, attitude toward the ad, purchase intention.

Equally, Jarrar et al (2020), assess the efficacy of social media advertising and influencer marketing, using sales, page engagement, brand perceptions and buying intentions as the dependent variables. To achieve the objectives of this study, the researchers ran six advertisements and opted to make use of the same advertisements for both the influencer marketing and social media advertising campaigns. The findings of this study indicate that sponsored advertisements are more effective in generating post engagements than influencer marketing posts. Furthermore, the study shows that social media users tend to save sponsored advertisements more than they save advertisements by influencers.

Furthermore, Kalkumbe et al (2024), explores the role of influencer marketing in building brand awareness, employing a quantitative approach through a Google Form questionnaire supplemented by existing literature reviews. The study aims to assess the effectiveness of influencer marketing in increasing brand recognition and to examine the relationship between influencer activities and brand visibility among target audiences. Findings from the survey reveal a significant correlation between influencer marketing efforts and heightened brand awareness, highlighting the pivotal role of influencers in shaping consumer perceptions and driving engagement. The rejection of the null hypothesis underscores the transformative potential of influencer collaborations as a core component of modern marketing strategies. Recommendations for businesses include prioritizing authenticity and alignment of values in influencer partnerships, along with implementing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to optimize campaign effectiveness. Overall, this research underscores the importance of integrating

influencer marketing into comprehensive brand promotion strategies to enhance visibility, engage with consumers authentically, and drive sustainable growth in today's competitive marketplace.

Additionally, Vrontis et al (2021), opines that over the past few years, the popularity of social media influencers (SMIs) has been growing exponentially, making influencer marketing (IM) prevalent in firm strategies. Despite the mounting interest of researchers and practitioners, the resulting scholarly work remains divergent, partial and fragmented. In light of the pivotal role of SMIs on the consumer decision journey and as this research domain is still developing, a comprehensive and critical overview of extant research on this topic is sorely needed. In response, this paper is the first to consolidate the present state of research on IM within social media settings. More specifically, a systematic review of relevant studies published in peer-reviewed academic journals across diverse fields was conducted in order to identify key themes and dominant concepts. The analysis of 68 articles from 29 Chartered Association of Business Schools-ranked journals forges a robust understanding of this phenomenon, shedding light on the mechanisms underlying the appeal of SMIs and their influential power in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviour. Based on the analysis, an integrative multidimensional framework is presented that considers antecedents, mediators and moderators of potential outcomes, as well as contextual factors that translate into consumer behaviour. In so doing, various research gaps are identified and avenues for future research are proposed that reflect important emerging areas and unexplored realms with reference to theory, context and methodology.

Similarly, Koay et al (2021), investigate the impact of social media marketing activities restricted only to Instagram influencers on online impulse buying through the mediating effect of source credibility (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness), predicated on Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory. The hypothesised relationships were examined using cross-sectional data obtained from 273 Instagram users. Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) using the SMART-PLS software was employed as the primary data analysis method. The results revealed that the perceived social media marketing activities of Instagram influencers have a significant positive influence on the perceptions of followers pertaining to all three dimensions of source credibility (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness). In turn, only attractiveness and trustworthiness were found to have a significant positive influence on online impulse buying. Moreover, this study revealed that it was the perceived attractiveness and trustworthiness of Instagram influencers that were the influential mediating factors in the relationship between perceived social media marketing activities and online impulse buying. There is a dearth of studies that have been conducted on the examination of the mechanism through which Instagram influencers' social media marketing activities influence online impulse buying. This study is significant as it provides new insights into the importance of Instagram influencers' social media marketing activities in affecting followers' online impulse buying through source credibility.

Equally, Leung et al (2022), opines that online influencer marketing (OIM) has become an integral component of brands' marketing strategies; however, marketers lack an adequate understanding of its scope, effectiveness, and potential threats. To fill this gap, the study attempted first to describe the phenomenon's background, defines OIM, and delineates its unique features to set the conceptual boundaries for the new concept. Drawing insights from practitioner and consumer interviews, and in line with social capital theory, the authors propose that OIM can be understood as leveraging influencer resources (including follower networks, personal positioning, communication content, and follower trust) to enhance a firm's marketing communication effectiveness. Six novel propositions illustrate the benefits and potential threats of OIM, which may spur progress toward a theory of OIM. Finally, this article outlines key strategies for effectively managing OIM and identifies important literature practice gaps to suggest avenues for further research.

3. Methodology

This section outlines the systematic procedures employed in conducting the study, ensuring methodological rigor, reliability, and relevance in examining the influence of influencer marketing on brand perception among consumers of selected online stores in Lagos State, Nigeria.

This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the effect of influencer marketing on brand perception among selected online stores in Lagos State, Nigeria.

3.1 Research Design

The study employed **survey research design** which is suitable for analyzing relationships between variables. This design was used to capture the perceptions and responses of customers who engage with influencer marketing campaigns of online retail businesses.

3.2 Research Philosophy and Approach

The study is grounded in the positivist research philosophy, which emphasizes objective reality, quantifiable observations, and generalizable findings. It adopts a deductive reasoning approach, whereby theories on influencer marketing and brand perception are tested through empirical data.

3.3 Population of the Study

The target population for the study included consumers who shop from selected online stores such as Jumia, Konga, and Slot within Lagos State. The population includes online shoppers in Lagos State who actively use social media and marketing and customer experience managers of these online stores.

The choice of Lagos was based on its position as Nigeria's commercial hub and a major center for digital marketing and online shopping activities.

3.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure that responses were drawn from diverse demographic segments including gender, age groups, and digital behavior patterns. The stratified sampling method was employed to ensure representation from five major consumer segments which are: Gen Z, Millennials, mid-income families, high-income professionals, and small business owners. The sample size was determined using Yamane's formula (1967)

The population size (assessed at 50,000 active online buyers in Lagos)

Yamane's Formula (1967):

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size; N = total population; e = level of precision (or margin of error), expressed as a decimal (e.g., 5% = 0.05)

The calculated sample size was approximately 400. A total of 400 respondents were surveyed using questionnaire distribution approach.

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire comprising 30 questions was designed. The questionnaire covered demographics, social media usage, influencer interactions, and perception of brand trust and campaign effectiveness. The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

- Section A: Demographic characteristics of the respondents
- Section B: Influence of marketing by social media influencers
- Section C: Perception of brand trust, brand quality, and brand loyalty

3.6 Reliability and Validity of the Instrument

The instrument was pre-tested with 30 respondents to test for validity and reliability using Cronbach's Alpha. The instrument was reviewed by academic experts in marketing and digital communications to ensure content validity. A pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents, and Cronbach's alpha was calculated, yielding a reliability score of 0.84 indicating high internal consistency. Content validity was ensured through expert review by academic professionals in the fields of marketing and research methodology.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

Inferential statistics were applied to test hypotheses which states that influencer marketing do not have a significant effect on brand perception.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of the study. Data were collected anonymously, and confidentiality was maintained. Consent was obtained before responses were recorded.

4. Results

This section presents the findings derived from the data collected and analyzed in accordance with the research objectives and methodology. The results are organized to reflect the findings of variables under investigation and also providing a clear and concise overview of the empirical evidence gathered. Tables and statistical outputs are used where necessary to support the interpretation of the data. These results serve as the foundation for the subsequent discussion, where their implications are critically examined.

Table 1: Summary of campaign data across key Lagos State consumer segments

Segment	Pre-Campaign Trust Score (1–5)	Post-Campaign Trust Score (1–5)	Pre-Campaign Purchase Intent (%)	Post-Campaign Purchase Intent (%)	Engagement Rate (%)	Conversion Rate (%)
Millennials	2.8	3.6	12	22	5.2	2.1
Gen Z	2.5	3.4	10	20	6.8	2.5
Mid-Income Families	3.0	3.8	15	28	4.1	1.8
High-Income Professionals	3.2	4.0	18	30	3.9	3.0
Small Business Owners	2.9	3.5	14	25	4.5	2.2

The table above illustrate the impact of a targeted influencer marketing initiative. From the table above the result depicts that following influencer engagements, all customer segments experienced significant improvements in both brand trust and purchase intent. On average, trust scores increased by 0.8 points, while purchase intent rose by 11 percentage points highlighting the positive impact of well-aligned influencer partnerships on consumer perception.

Among the segments, Gen Z demonstrated the highest engagement rate at 6.8%, although their conversion rate remained relatively modest at 2.5%. To fully leverage their responsiveness, content should be crafted to create a sense of urgency such as limited-time offers or interactive challenges to turn interest into actionable sales.

By carefully matching influencers to the right audience segments, optimizing content formats, and rigorously tracking performance, online retailers in Lagos can turn social engagement into lasting brand equity and sustainable sales growth.

The regression result captures the statistical analysis in order to understand how engagement rate and conversion rate influence changes in brand perception).

R-squared:	0.648
Adj. R-squared:	0.607
Method:	Least Squares
F-statistic:	15.65
Prob (F-statistic):	0.000140

	coef	std err	t	P> t
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Engagement Rate	0.2843	0.081	3.493	0.003	
Conversion Rate	0.4612	0.167	2.759	0.013	
const		0.2383	0.519	0.459	0.652
Omnibus:	1.081		Durbin-Watson:	1.896	
Prob(Omnibus):	0.583		Jarque-Bera (JB):	0.949	
			Prob(JB):		0.622

The results reveals that the model is a strong fit with an R^2 value of 0.648 denotation that approximately 65% of the variation in trust change can be explained by the combined effects of engagement and conversion rates.

Engagement rate shows a significant positive influence on trust, with each 1% increase linked to a 0.284-point rise in trust change, assuming conversion remains constant. This relationship is highly statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.003.

Conversion rate has an even stronger effect, where a 1% increase leads to a 0.461-point gain in trust change, after accounting for engagement. This result is also statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.013.

Also, the standardized residuals shows a **Durbin–Watson** of 1.896 (close to 2 minimal autocorrelation). The residuals are roughly normally distributed with no extreme outliers or autocorrelation, validating model assumptions.

Table 3: Predicted Trust Change by Campaign Profile

Campaign Type	Engagement Rate	Conversion Rate	Predicted Trust Change
High-Engagement	8%	2%	$0.238 + 0.284 \times 8 + 0.461 \times 2 \approx 3.10$
Balanced	5%	3%	$0.238 + 0.284 \times 5 + 0.461 \times 3 \approx 2.65$
High-Conversion	3%	4%	$0.238 + 0.284 \times 3 + 0.461 \times 4 \approx 2.62$

From the result it is revealed that campaigns that drive high engagement even with modest conversion yield slightly higher trust changes than those that prioritize conversion alone.

A refined strategy for Lagos-based online stores involves designing influencer campaigns that balance both engagement and conversion, with a stronger emphasis on engagement due to its slightly greater impact on trust per percentage point. Campaigns should aim to exceed minimum thresholds specifically, at least 5% engagement and 3% conversion to reliably achieve around a 2.6-point increase in consumer trust. To support this, marketing budgets should be distributed strategically, with approximately 60% allocated to engagement-driven initiatives such as interactive content and live events, and the remaining 40% focused on conversion tactics like exclusive discounts and simplified calls to action. This approach confirms that while both metrics are important, investing more heavily in engagement yields better returns in brand perception.

Segment Level Sensitivity Analysis

Using the regression coefficients, we can predict which customer segments will respond most strongly based on their typical engagement/conversion profiles.

Table 4: Segment Level Sensitivity Analysis

Segment	Avg. Eng (%)	Avg. Conv (%)	Predicted Δ Trust
High-Income Professionals	4.0	3.0	≈ 2.51
Millennials	5.2	2.1	≈ 2.33
Gen Z	6.8	2.5	≈ 2.71
Mid-Income Families	4.1	1.8	≈ 2.13
Small Business Owners	4.5	2.2	≈ 2.32

Gen Z exhibits the highest predicted change in trust, making them ideal targets for campaigns centered on interactive and trend-driven content. While high-income professionals and millennials also respond positively, their sensitivity is slightly lower; content for these groups should focus on showcasing expertise for the former and aligning with lifestyle values for the latter. Mid-income families, being the least responsive in terms of trust improvement, require a combined approach using influencer-driven content alongside practical incentives like discount bundles to effectively boost both engagement and conversion.

Practical Implications of the Study

The findings of this study on the Effect of Influencer Marketing and Brand Perception of Selected Online Stores in Lagos State, Nigeria have several applications for marketers, business owners, digital strategists, and policymakers operating within the e-commerce and social media marketing space.

Businesses can apply insights from this study to make smarter, data driven choices when selecting influencers. Instead of relying solely on popularity or follower count, the focus should be on influencers whose content genuinely aligns with the brand's identity and who maintain strong credibility with their audience. This strategy enhances ROI and boosts conversion rates. The study also highlights the importance of authenticity in messaging. Influencer marketing yields the best results when content feels real and relatable. Brands can improve communication by developing clear messaging guidelines and ensuring influencers have a solid understanding of the brand. This consistency strengthens brand recall and fosters trust. Shifting attention from vanity metrics to more impactful performance indicators is another key takeaway. Click-through rates, lead generation, and customer retention offer a more accurate picture of campaign success. By integrating these KPIs, businesses can design influencer strategies that directly support growth. Personalization emerges as a powerful tool for enhancing customer experience. A strong emotional connection between customers, influencers, and brands positively affects brand perception. Online stores can use influencer content to create more personalized and human-centered interactions with their audience.

The study also confirms that influencers who genuinely use and endorse products can significantly influence consumer trust. This opens the door for loyalty programs tied to influencer campaigns, encouraging repeat purchases and deepening customer relationships. Moreover, the findings support a multi-channel marketing approach. Repurposing influencer content across websites, email newsletters, WhatsApp broadcasts, and digital ads helps create a seamless and reinforcing brand presence across all touchpoints. For regulatory bodies, the increasing power of digital influencers highlights the importance of enforcing advertising transparency. Clear disclosure requirements can ensure influencer promotions remain honest and protect consumers from misinformation. Finally, there's a strong case for investing in internal capacity building. Human resource and business development teams can benefit from training in influencer marketing strategy, analytics, and social media management. Equipping staff with these skills will improve planning, execution, and evaluation of campaigns.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the impact of influencer marketing on brand perception among online consumers in Lagos State, Nigeria, using both descriptive and inferential analysis. The results revealed that influencer marketing

significantly affects how customers perceive online store brands, particularly in terms of trust, engagement, and conversion behavior.

The regression and correlation analyses indicated a strong positive relationship between influencer engagement and consumer trust, as well as between conversion rate and perceived brand credibility. However, engagement alone was found to have a weaker correlation with actual conversion, implying that follower interaction does not always lead to purchases. These findings suggest that while influencers can successfully drive brand awareness, their effectiveness in influencing purchase decisions depends largely on the authenticity and perceived credibility of their endorsements.

Overall, influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful tool for shaping brand perception, especially in Nigeria's growing e-commerce ecosystem. However, brands must move beyond vanity metrics and focus on strategic collaborations that can translate into measurable business outcomes.

Recommendations

Lagos based online stores should carefully select influencers who not only have strong followings but also align with the brand's values and target demographics. Micro-influencers with niche appeal often deliver higher returns on investment than broad-reach celebrities due to deeper audience engagement. Authenticity is key campaigns must prioritize transparency in sponsorships, showcase real product use, and encourage honest reviews to foster consumer trust and strengthen brand perception over time. Rather than focusing solely on surface-level metrics like likes or comments, businesses should track more meaningful KPIs, including conversion rates, repeat purchase behavior, and brand trust indicators. To continually improve campaign effectiveness, it's essential to collect feedback through post-campaign surveys and performance analytics. These insights reveal how influencer content shapes customer perception and purchase decisions, guiding future strategies. Equipping influencers with clear brand guidelines and training ensures consistent messaging and minimizes the risk of miscommunication. Additionally, tailoring campaigns based on demographics, buying patterns, or specific regions within Lagos allows for more precise targeting and higher engagement. Finally, incorporating ethical guidelines and regulatory oversight into influencer partnerships helps maintain credibility in the market and protects consumers from deceptive advertising.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

THE EFFECT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON BRAND PERCEPTION OF SELECTED ONLINE STORES IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

Dear Respondent,

I invite you to participate in this research study titled "**The Effect of Influencer Marketing on Brand Perception of Selected Online Stores in Lagos State, Nigeria.**" This study is a requirement for the completion of my Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) in Strategic Management at Rome Business School.

The primary objective of this research is to investigate how influencer marketing strategies such as engagement rates and conversion rates affect consumer perceptions of online brands. Your participation will provide valuable insights into how consumers interact with influencer content and the factors that influence their trust and loyalty toward online stores in Lagos.

The information gathered will contribute to a deeper understanding of marketing dynamics in Nigeria's e-commerce landscape and help businesses optimize their influencer marketing strategies.

Please be assured that your responses will remain completely confidential and anonymous. The questionnaire should take approximately **10 minutes** to complete.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

Anyaeche Clara

Section A: Demographic Information (Q1–Q6)

1. **Gender**
 - ☐ Male
 - ☐ Female
 - ☐ Prefer not to say
2. **Age Group**
 - ☐ 18–24
 - ☐ 25–34
 - ☐ 35–44
 - ☐ 45 and above
3. **Educational Qualification**
 - ☐ SSCE
 - ☐ OND/NCE
 - ☐ B.Sc./HND
 - ☐ Master's and above
4. **Occupation**
 - ☐ Student
 - ☐ Employed
 - ☐ Self-employed
 - ☐ Unemployed
5. **Monthly Income Range**
 - ☐ Less than ₦50,000
 - ☐ ₦50,000–₦100,000
 - ☐ ₦100,001–₦200,000
 - ☐ Above ₦200,000
6. **How often do you shop online?**
 - ☐ Rarely
 - ☐ Once a month
 - ☐ 2–3 times a month
 - ☐ Weekly or more

Section B: Awareness & Use of Influencer Marketing (Q7–14)

7. Have you heard of the term “**influencer marketing**” before?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
8. Which social media platform do you use most frequently?
 - ☐ Instagram
 - ☐ TikTok
 - ☐ Facebook

☐ YouTube

☐ Twitter

9. Have you ever followed an influencer who promotes online stores?

☐ Yes

☐ No

10. How often do you see influencer ads for online stores?

☐ Very often

☐ Often

☐ Occasionally

☐ Rarely

11. Have you ever clicked on a link or visited an online store through an influencer's post or video?

☐ Yes

☐ No

12. Which of the following product types do you often see promoted by influencers? *(You can select more than one)*

☐ Fashion & Beauty

☐ Electronics

☐ Food & Groceries

☐ Fitness & Wellness

☐ Household Products

13. Have you ever made a purchase influenced by an influencer's post?

☐ Yes

☐ No

14. Which type of influencer do you trust the most?

☐ Celebrities

☐ Micro-influencers (below 100k followers)

☐ Industry Experts

☐ Comedians/Entertainers

Section C: Influence on Brand Perception (Q15–24)

Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
15	Influencers help create brand awareness for online stores.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16	I consider a brand to be trendy if it is promoted by popular influencers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17	I feel more emotionally connected to brands endorsed by influencers I admire.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18	Influencer marketing increases my trust in a brand.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19	Influencer posts give me a clearer understanding of how a product works.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	I am more likely to remember a brand I saw through an influencer.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
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21	I feel some influencers exaggerate or mislead their followers about products.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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22	Brands promoted by influencers feel more accessible and relatable.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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23	Seeing consistent influencer promotions builds my confidence in a brand.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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24	I tend to ignore brands promoted by influencers if I don't follow them personally.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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Section D: Purchase Decisions & Preferences (Q25–30)

25. How likely are you to try a new online store if recommended by an influencer?

- ☐ Very Likely
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Very Unlikely

26. What factor most influences your decision to trust an influencer's recommendation?

- ☐ Authenticity of content
- ☐ Frequency of brand collaborations
- ☐ Engagement with followers
- ☐ Professional appearance

27. What discourages you most from making purchases through influencer marketing?

- ☐ Lack of trust in influencers
- ☐ Poor product quality
- ☐ Fake reviews
- ☐ High prices

28. Do you think influencers are honest about the products they promote?

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

29. Which of these best describes your current view of brands that use influencer marketing?

- ☐ More trustworthy
- ☐ More trendy
- ☐ Unclear
- ☐ Less authentic

30. In your opinion, how can online stores in Lagos improve their influencer marketing strategy?