

ABDERRAHMANE MIRA UNIVERSITY OF BEJAIA



FACULTY OF ECONOMIC SCIENCES, COMMERCIAL SCIENCES AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCIAL SCIENCES

THESIS

In order to obtain a degree of;

MASTERS IN COMMERCIAL SCIENCES

Option: MARKETING

TITLE OF THE THESIS

THE EFFECT OF INFLUENCERS ON MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS.

CASE STUDY: SOME FIRMS FROM UGANDA.

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Academic year: 2024/2025

DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this research work with profound love to my parents **YIGA STANELY & NALUNKUUMA JANE** for their unconditional love, to my siblings for their support, to my friends close and distant ones, classmates and teachers for their invaluable support and contributions to my studies. With great love, I also dedicate this research work to myself for believing in me, for the hard work and perseverance showcased during the whole study period. I highlight the immeasurable support of my special people in my life; **IMMANUEL BEN MISAGGA, MR MAKONZI MICHEAL, DR ROSEMARY NAKIJOBA, JOOMU KENNETH** for their support, guidance and undivided availability throughout this journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis represents a culmination of perseverance, support, invaluable guidance, and intellectual growth, and I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all those who contributed to its realization.

First and foremost, I am grateful to the Almighty God for the gift of life, for the opportunity, strength, and wisdom He granted me for the successful completion of this work.

Next, I extend my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor, **Dr.BOUROUAHA ABDELHAMMID**, for his excellent supervision, unwavering guidance, and support throughout the writing of this thesis. His enduring patience, time, and intellectual assistance have been instrumental in shaping and improving the quality of this work.

I am immensely grateful to my esteemed lecturers at the University of Bejaia for their continuous support, mentorship, and the knowledge they imparted on me throughout my academic journey. Their passion for knowledge, rigorous instructions, and intellectual discussions have enriched my understanding and shaped my academic and personal growth.

To my family and friends my young sister **NAKANWAGI JENNIFER**, my friends **HAMIDOU Bah** from Mali & **BAYE Sidi Yahya** from Senegal, The Ugandan community of Bejaia , The community of senegalese I owe immeasurable gratitude for their unconditional love, outstanding support, and belief in me during my studies. Their help, prayers, and words of encouragement have been invaluable, and I am deeply indebted to them.

Finally, I thank the countless researchers, scholars, and authors whose work laid the groundwork for my study. The wealth of knowledge I discovered in the literature has broadened my perspectives and inspired me to delve deeper for a more comprehensive understanding of my topic.

ROBERT.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, social media has transformed how brands interact with consumers, shifting power away from traditional advertising toward peer-generated content and influencer communication. Social media influencer marketing—where individuals with substantial online followings promote products or services—has become a powerful strategy globally, particularly among youth. In Uganda, this trend is gaining traction as internet penetration increases and platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok attract large young audiences. However, despite this rise in usage, the actual effectiveness of influencer marketing in Uganda remains poorly understood. While global research highlights its influence on brand awareness and purchase intention, localized evidence in Sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly Uganda, is limited.

Scholars such as Freberg et al. (2011) and Djafarova & Rushworth (2017) have emphasized the importance of influencer credibility—particularly trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise—in shaping consumer responses. Other studies underline the role of authentic content and para-social relationships in encouraging engagement. Yet, these conclusions often stem from Western markets, where digital behavior differs from the Ugandan context. Thus, there is a critical need to examine how Ugandan consumers respond to influencer content and what factors determine marketing success in this unique cultural and digital environment.

The central research problem addressed in this study is the lack of empirical data on how influencer marketing affects consumer behavior, trust, and brand engagement in Uganda. The research aims to explore whether influencer credibility and content authenticity influence purchase decisions, particularly among young adults. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed: *Influencer credibility and authenticity positively impact Ugandan consumers' purchase intentions and brand trust.* Secondary questions include: *How do consumers perceive influencer credibility? and What factors strengthen or weaken the effectiveness of influencer marketing in Uganda?*

To achieve this, the research will examine how influencer marketing affects consumer engagement, brand perception, and purchasing behavior. It will explore the types of influencers most effective in this context, assess the tools they use to grow their audiences, and determine whether trust and para-social relationships drive marketing success.

This thesis is structured into three main chapters. The first chapter introduces the research topic and highlights its relevance within the Ugandan digital marketing landscape. It also presents the theoretical framework that guides the study, including Source Credibility Theory, Social Influence Theory, and Uses and Gratifications Theory. A brief review of existing literature is integrated to contextualize the role of influencer marketing in shaping consumer behavior and brand engagement.

The second chapter details the methodology used to conduct the research. A qualitative approach was adopted, including online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with Ugandan social media influencers, their followers, and representatives from companies using influencer marketing. This chapter explains the sampling strategy, data collection tools, and analytical methods applied to examine the effectiveness of influencer strategies in Uganda.

The third chapter presents and discusses the research findings, linking them to the theoretical insights introduced earlier. It analyzes consumer perceptions of influencer credibility and authenticity, their impact on purchase decisions, and the role of para-social relationships in building trust. The chapter concludes by summarizing the main findings, identifying limitations, and offering recommendations for future research and practice.

The main objective of this research is to examine the overall effectiveness of influencer marketing on consumer behavior in Uganda. Specifically, the study seeks to understand how social media influencers affect consumer purchase decisions and brand perception. Firstly, it aims to explore the various types of influencer marketing and assess the specific benefits they offer to companies operating in Uganda. In addition, the research intends to investigate the tools and strategies used by influencers to grow their follower base and enhance engagement. Moreover, it evaluates the growing adoption of influencer marketing among Ugandan

consumers and businesses, as well as its global expansion. The study also examines the customer's perspective on influencer marketing effectiveness, especially regarding trust, authenticity, and credibility. Furthermore, it aims to assess whether influencer marketing truly drives changes in consumer attitudes and behaviors. Finally, the research seeks to identify the key success factors and challenges that shape the outcomes of influencer marketing campaigns in the Ugandan context.

Research questions

With the rise of social media in Uganda, influencer marketing has rapidly become a preferred strategy for brands targeting digitally active consumers, particularly youth. However, the extent to which these influencers affect consumer behavior, trust, and purchasing decisions remains underexplored in the Ugandan context. While global research points to influencers' strong sway over buyer intent, localized insights are essential due to Uganda's unique digital adoption patterns, socio-economic dynamics, and content preferences. This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the effectiveness of influencer marketing strategies on consumer behavior, trust, and engagement in Uganda.

1. How influencer marketing strategy impacts teenagers and young adults' behavior and their purchasing intentions in Uganda? This question seeks to understand the direct effect of influencers on the buying behavior of Ugandan consumers.

Considering the practical outcomes of the project, there are two secondary research questions which should be answered within the project

How do Ugandan consumers perceive the credibility and trustworthiness of influencers? Addressing this question will help in understanding the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of influencer marketing in Uganda.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the research problem and questions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: Influencer credibility (trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness) positively influences Ugandan consumers' purchase intentions.
- H2: Authentic and relatable influencer content enhances consumer trust and brand engagement in Uganda.
- H3: Para-social relationships between influencers and followers significantly strengthen consumer attitudes and loyalty toward brands.
- H4: Cultural relevance and local identity in influencer content increase the perceived effectiveness of influencer marketing among Ugandan consumers.

Theoretical Framework

1. Source Credibility Theory:

This theory posits that the effectiveness of a message depends on the perceived credibility of the source. In the context of influencer marketing, the credibility of influencers can significantly impact their ability to persuade their audience. This framework will help analyze how Ugandan consumers perceive the credibility of influencers and how it influences their purchasing decisions.

2. Social Influence Theory:

This theory explains how individuals' behaviors are influenced by others within their social networks. Influencers, as key figures in social networks, can leverage their social influence to affect consumer behavior. This theory will be used to understand the mechanisms through which influencers impact marketing effectiveness in Uganda.

3. Uses and Gratifications Theory:

This theory suggests that individuals actively seek out media to satisfy specific needs or desires. In the context of social media, consumers may follow influencers to fulfill needs for information, entertainment, or social interaction. This framework will help explore why

Ugandan consumers engage with influencers and how this engagement translates into marketing effectiveness.

Literature review

Recent studies show that social media influencers (SMIs) play a significant role in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors through relatability, perceived expertise, and authentic content. Influencers are categorized as celebrities, micro-influencers, or niche content creators, each varying in their impact based on credibility and audience engagement (Freberg et al., 2011; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Key factors that enhance their effectiveness include trustworthiness, attractiveness, and content quality, which directly influence purchase intentions (Aw & Agnihotri, 2023; Till & Busler, 2000). Additionally, the Product Match-Up Hypothesis emphasizes that alignment between influencer persona and brand identity is crucial for credibility (Kamins & Gupta, 1994). In Uganda, despite the growing adoption of digital platforms like TikTok and Instagram, influencer effectiveness remains under-investigated, especially regarding how consumers perceive trust, expertise, and authenticity in localized campaigns.

Chapter Two: Methodology

Research Methodology (Empirical Study)

After presenting the research problem, theoretical framework, and literature review in the first chapter, this second chapter turns to the methodology employed in this study. It outlines the research design, sampling strategy, data collection methods, and analysis techniques. By explaining the empirical approach used, this chapter demonstrates how reliable data was gathered and analyzed to address the research questions on the effectiveness of influencer marketing in Uganda.

2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a **mixed-methods approach**, combining quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interviews) techniques to explore the effect of influencer marketing on consumer behavior in Uganda. A **descriptive and exploratory research model** was applied: the descriptive aspect captured digital behavior and platform trends, while the exploratory side investigated deeper perceptions like trust and authenticity.

2.2 Population and Sampling Strategy

The study targeted three groups:

- Social media followers in Uganda,
- Influencers active in lifestyle, fitness, travel, etc.,
- Brands that collaborate with influencers.

Sampling was **purposive and non-probabilistic**, focusing on individuals with experience in influencer marketing. Google Forms were used to collect follower data via Email and WhatsApp, influencer and company participants were recruited through direct outreach.

Uganda's youthful population (median age 16.4) and increasing digital adoption support this focus. According to **DataReportal (2024)**, over **15% of Ugandans are aged 18–34**, a key demographic highly active on platforms like **Instagram and TikTok**, where influencer culture thrives.

Final sample:

- 122 follower responses,
- 9 company responses,
- 7 influencer interviews.

2.3 Data Collection

Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires (both closed and open-ended) and semi-structured interviews. Influencer interviews were conducted online, recorded with consent, and later thematically analyzed. **Secondary data** included scholarly articles, marketing reports, and digital trend analyses (e.g., DataReportal 2024).

2.4 Instruments and Analysis

Three research tools were designed:

- A 24-item follower questionnaire (social media behavior and buying patterns),
- A 17-item company questionnaire (collaboration strategies),
- A 25-question influencer interview guide (motivation, brand fit, and audience interaction).

Quantitative data were analyzed using **descriptive statistics** (via SPSS); qualitative responses were examined using **inductive thematic coding**, focusing on credibility, emotional appeal, and brand alignment.

2.5 Ethics and Limitations

Participants gave **informed consent**, and responses were kept anonymous and confidential. Due to budget and data access constraints, internal brand performance metrics were unavailable. Non-English-speaking or offline users were also underrepresented. Despite these limitations, triangulating data from influencers, brands, and followers improved the study's validity.

2.6 Presentation of Findings

This chapter presents and analyzes the results of the survey and interviews conducted with social media users, influencers, and companies in Uganda. The findings offer insight into the

awareness and use of platforms, follower interests, influencer impact on consumer decisions, and brand-influencer dynamics.

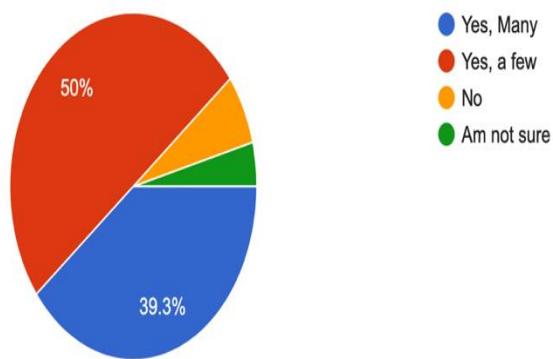
i. Awareness and Use of Social Media Platforms

According to the answers, almost all respondents use a social platform on the Internet. Most respondents use Instagram (65.6%) YouTube follows second at 50% twitter and snapchat almost got the same percentage in forty. The other respondents use TikTok, Facebook, but also Snapchat, Pinterest and other networks. Respondents on social networks mostly follow topics in the field of comedy and entertainment (49%) whereas educational content and lifestyle daily routines have the same percentage (38%). After them, important topics for which there is interest among the respondents are fashion and cosmetics which is understandable considering that most respondents are female. The least interest exists for video games. This data can help companies to decide in which areas to use influencers. Data, also, can help companies to know exactly where to focus their marketing activities - marketing programs and promotions.

Figure 1 Awareness of social media influencers by followers

1. Do you follow any influencers on social media?

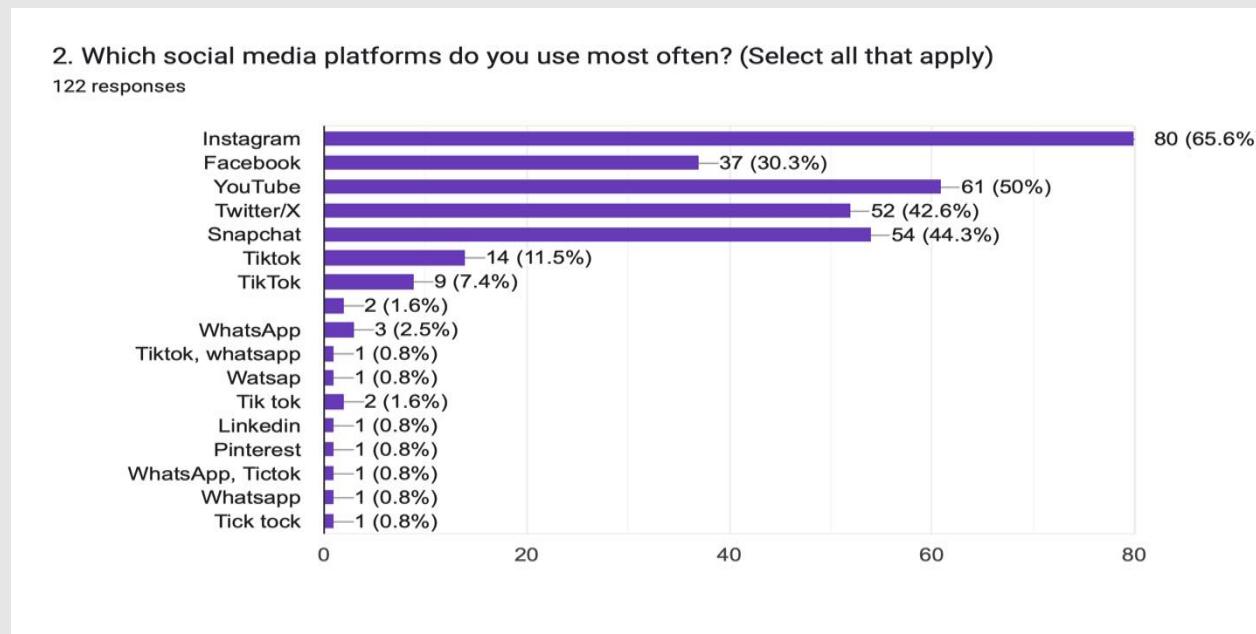
122 responses



Source: Own research of the authors

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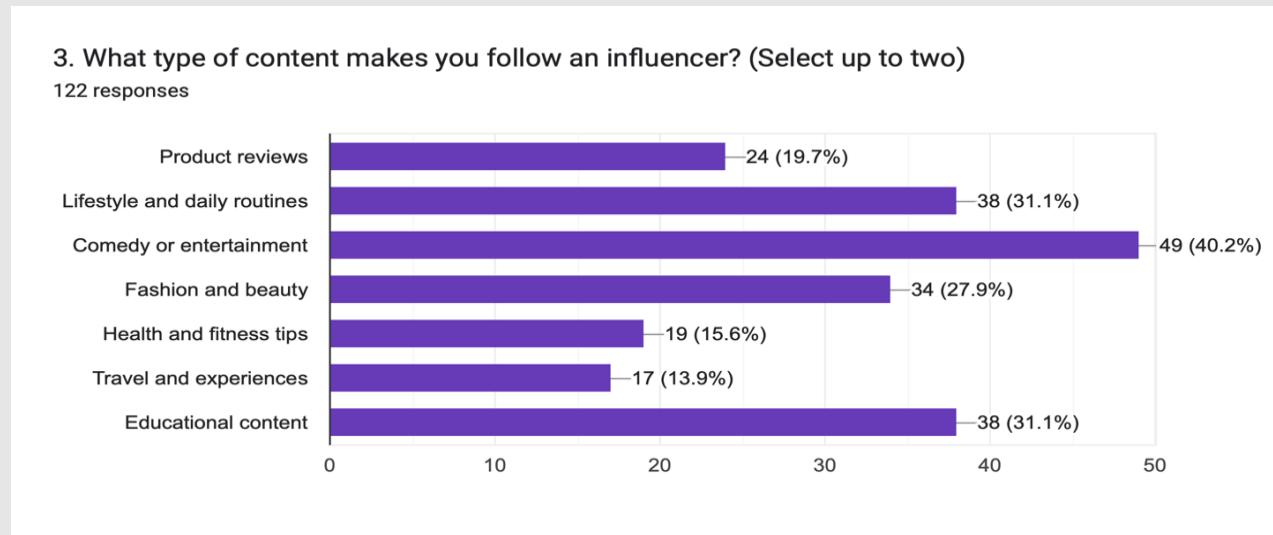
Figure 2 ; showing the social media platforms Ugandans use



Source: Own research of the author

Topics Followed by Respondents
Respondents were asked what types of content they follow most on social media. The majority cited **comedy and entertainment (49%)**, followed by **educational and lifestyle content (both 38%)**, and then fashion/cosmetics. Video games were the least followed category. This provides insight for brands regarding which content areas to prioritize when selecting influencers for collaboration

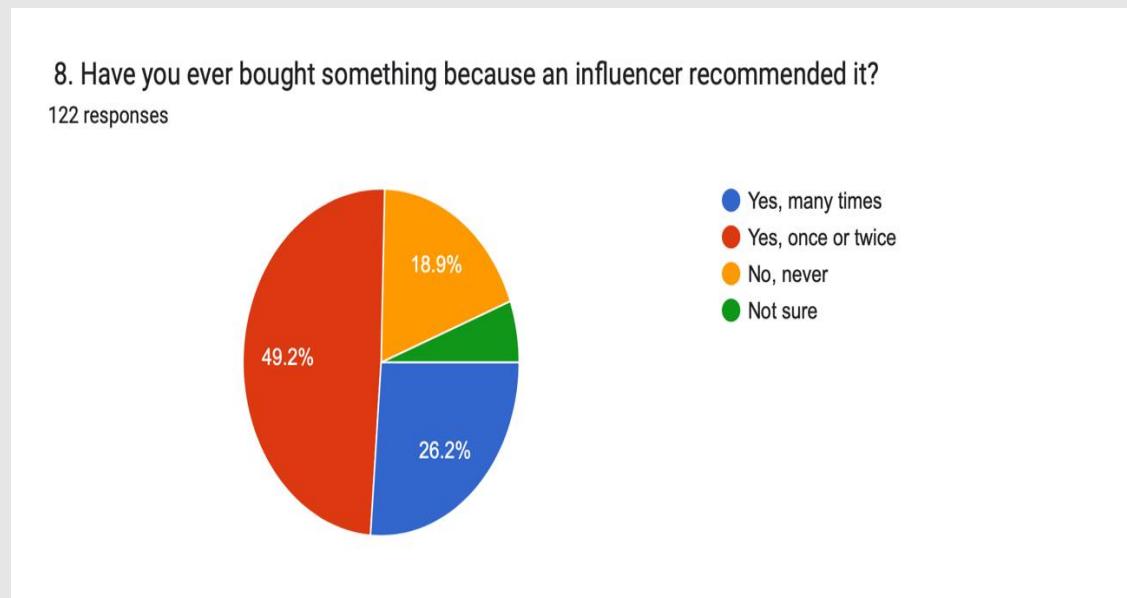
ii. Figure 3; the type of content Ugandans consume on internet



Source: Own research of the authors

iii. In the questionnaire; What is the impact of influencer marketing on the buying behavior of consumers is asked:

Figure 4; the effect of influencers on their followers



Source: Own research of the authors

From the chat above basing on our questionnaire distributed to the consumers or respondents from Uganda about influencer marketing and the effectiveness of the influencers in their field it shows they have at least made purchases of the products after being influenced with the percentage of 49. 2 they have at least bought once or twice products because of the influencers and 26% they have testified to it that they have many times bought their products because of the influential marketing in play, 18. 9% they haven't been influenced to buy their stuff because of influencers and 6% is not sure if they have been influenced or not.

IV. Profiles of the Influencers

A selection of seven Ugandan influencers was examined to understand the content they produce, platforms they use, and their follower size. **Table 4** shows that most influencers are active across **Instagram**, **YouTube**, and **TikTok**, with follower counts ranging from **20K to 3 million**.

These influencers cover fields such as fashion, beauty, health, lifestyle, travel, and food. The diversity in their niches reflects the multi-sector appeal of influencer marketing in Uganda.

Table 4 DESCRIPTION OF THE INFLUENCERS

INFLUENCER	FIELD	SOCIAL MEDIA	NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS
Influencer one	Fashion and beauty, lifestyle	TikTok, Facebook Instagram X(twitter)	3MILLION
Influencer two	Travelling, food and beverages	Instagram	100K
Influencer three	Fashion and beauty, lifestyle, vlogs	YouTube, Instagram, X	300K
Influencer four	Lifestyle	X, TikTok, Instagram	55K
Influencer five	Health and fitness	Instagram, snapchat	500K
Influencer six	Travel, lifestyle	Instagram, YouTube	
Influencer seven	Lifestyle, dancing,	YouTube, TikTok, Instagram	20K

2.7 Data Collection

The interviews were constructed in a semi-structured form, with open and close questions, to ensure that the interviewee would feel free discussing the topic they considered important (Bell et al., 2019). This also allowed us to further follow the inductive reasoning. During the interviews, the questions were asked in the same order as Bell et al., (2019) suggests it is important to avoid important variation in the replies. We asked permission to record the

interview in the beginning which then allowed us to transcripts the interview and avoid any loss of information. We also reminded the interviewee about the anonymity of their answer to make sure they would converse freely with us and feel comfortable discussing the questions. The interviews were conducted in English

We created three different types of interview questions guidelines. One was directed to the influencers; one questionnaire was directed to the followers, and one questionnaire was directed towards the companies.

a. Interview questions destined towards followers:

The interview questions directed toward followers (see Appendix 1) consisted of 24 questions, divided under topics to give a clearer understanding of what the questions were related to. The questions were derived from our theoretical background. The first questions of the interview were related to the followers, asking them to describe themselves and their habits on social media for us to confirm the respondent was a user of social media, and part of the population we sampled. The second part of the interview was related to influencers in general to determine if they follow some of them on the network and if so, why they do so. The third set of questions was meant to deal with the relationship between influencers and follower/customer purchase intentions in depth. Finally, the last questions of the interview helped us have a better insight on what people think about influencers, determining positive and negative aspects.

b. Interview questions directed towards influencers:

The interview questions directed toward influencers (See Appendix 2) consisted of 25 questions, also divided under topics to give a clearer understanding of what the questions were related to. The questions were derived from our theoretical background as well as for the follower questions the first set of questions were related to their presence on social media, asking them for how long they have been influential on the network, what social media they use the most and what is the content they post daily related to for example. This allowed us to confirm the respondent was a Beauty/Lifestyle, health and fitness, food and beverages

influencer etc on social media, and so, part of the population we sampled. The second part of the interview was centered towards partnership and the work they produce for brands. Those questions were asked to understand in depth the way they choose or not to work with a brand and so, their purpose when posting on social media. Finally, the third topic was related to their relationship with the people that follow them as well as how they perceived the influence, they have on them.

c. Interview questions (questionnaire) destined towards companies:

The interview questions directed toward the companies (See Appendix 3) consisted of 24 questions, divided under topics to give a clearer understanding of what the questions were related to. The first three questions asked the respondent to present the company, its role in it and if they were working with influencers or not. This allowed us to make sure the company was part of the population we sampled by being in the beauty/lifestyle field and working with influencers as a marketing strategy. The second part of the interview was related to the partnership they have with influencers and how they put it in place. Questions like "How do you decide who to collaborate with or not?" or "How do you determine the visibility of the message endorser, being the influencer in this case?" were asked. Finally, the third and last part included questions related to the relationship between influencers and followers/customers, and in what way it is beneficial for the brand.

Throughout the interviews, follow-up questions were asked depending on the answers of the respondent. Questions took more or less time depending on the respondent, according to their point of view and implication on the topic

2.8 EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

This section is dedicated to present the findings of our qualitative study. The empirical material consists of primary data sources from the semi-structured interview from our local influencers and questionnaires. Here are the general ideas and opinions that emerged from our different questions with the followers, the influencers and the brands.

a. Social media marketing

This part is about which social networks are used by followers and influencers and how influence works on these networks. Here we asked respondents about their network usage habits, their interactions with each other, their opinion on the relationship between followers and influencers and its impact (e.g., Appendix 1 and 2, interview questions).

b. Platforms

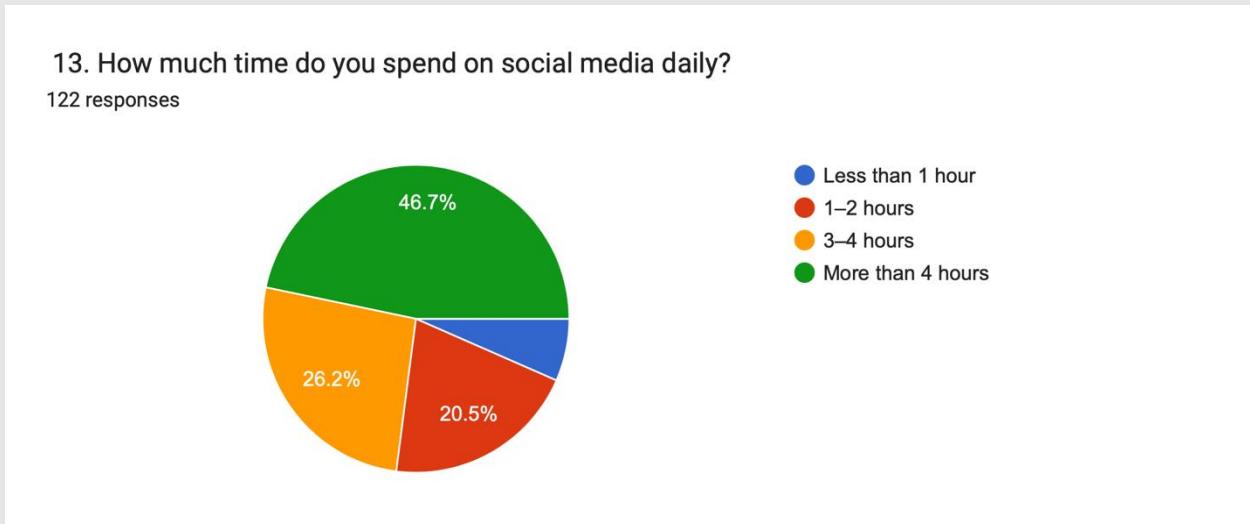
For influencers, the platforms on which they are most active and work the most are Instagram and TikTok. However, even if TikTok is the best platform to gain a maximum of followers at the beginning, Instagram requires less rigor and work on the content posted. Indeed, TikTok requires a greater effort as it is necessary to follow trends and make original videos if they want to reach a big audience (influencer one and four), *"I feel like TikTok requires more work. You always have to have new ideas and sometimes if I don't feel well or if I'm not in the mood I don't have the energy"* . The followers, as far as they are concerned, are used to follow the influencers mostly on Instagram and TikTok. Regarding their use of these platforms, the followers are used to spending two to three hours on them. However, most of them explain that their use of social networks would be lower without the presence of influencers.

Time Spent on Social Media

As illustrated in **Figure 5**, the majority of respondents reported spending a considerable amount of time on social media each day. Specifically, **46.7%** of respondents indicated spending **more than 4 hours daily**, while **26.2%** spend between **3 to 4 hours**, and **20.5%** between **1 to 2 hours**. Only **6.6%** reported using social media for **less than an hour** per day.

These findings highlight a **high level of digital engagement** among Ugandan users, reinforcing the potential of influencer marketing campaigns to reach consumers consistently throughout the day. Extended screen time increases both exposure to influencer content and the opportunity for content creators to influence purchasing behavior, brand perception, and consumer preferences.

Figure 5 time spent on social media



Source: Own research of the authors from questionnaire one.

Table 5General analysis of the questionnaire Distributed to the followers of influencer in Uganda and their effect on marketing effectiveness.

Aspect	Effectiveness level	Notes (substantial analysis)
Reach/Exposure	High	Most users follow influencers on major platforms

Content Engagement	Moderate to high	Comedy, beauty, lifestyle, content
Purchase Influence	high	Many make purchases basing on influencer input
Trust & Authenticity	mixed	Affects depth of influence and satisfaction
User interaction	Low to moderate	Limited feedback or advocacy behavior
Brand Support/Advocacy	low	Few users promote influencers unprompted
Market Perception	mixed	Growth recognized but saturation is a concern

c. Information and diffusion (WOM) (I= influencer)

Regarding the content posted on social networks by influencers, it depends on the influencer in question. In our case, the interviewed influencers were all fashion, beauty and lifestyle oriented. They post on Instagram about their life, the clothes they wear, the products they use

or their travels in the form of photos, videos and stories (I1, I2, I3), “*I often post my outfit, what I do during the day, what I eat, the really basic stuff or my trips*” (I1), “*mainly aesthetic pictures, products that I like, selfies or outfits*” (I3).

The followers see their posts and interact with them by liking, commenting or by sharing their posts. The diffusion is made thanks to the followers, in fact, they are often talking with friends about their favorite influencers and sometimes they share the influencers’ posts in their story , “*I sometimes send profile that I like to some friends for them to see*” , “*If I think an influencer is super cool, i would talk about it with my friends*” , “*If I see a product on an influencer story and I if I liked it I will talk about it to everyone*” (some random comments from chats from the followers).

2.9 Principles of Influencer marketing

This section is about influencer marketing in general. Respondents were asked here about the idea they have of the world of influence and influencers in general. The goal here is to understand and learn more about how influencer marketing works. Topics such as the size and types of influencers, the work of influencer agencies, partnerships and compensation were discussed (e.g., Appendix 2, interview questions)

a. Influence

We asked the influencers what the word “influence” means for them. In general, they explain that it is the fact they influence their audience to follow what they did and to influence their decisions. “*You have to influence people's decisions, what they buy or what they use to consider yourself an influencer*” (I3). This includes wearing the same clothes, buying the same products, going to the same place... To summarize, to try to be like them and to follow what they do (I1, I2, I3).

The companies are well aware of this: We use influencers because they are hugely idealized by followers. The followers want to look like them as much as possible and the influencers too: “*When I share on my social networks, I know that it will influence the consumers who follow me*

to either look like me or try to follow what I do” (I1). Influencers feel like their followers do not realize that or the extent of the impact influencers have on them: “*The people who follow me are not necessarily aware that they are influenced on a daily basis*” (I1).

b. SMI size and profile

Throughout all the interviews and questionnaires different sizes and profiles of influencers have been highlighted, especially by the followers and the influencers, which also distinguish different types of influence. The first distinction brought up is regarding the size of the influencer. In fact, INFLUENCER 5 made a contrast between “*bigger influencer*” and “*smaller influencer*” during the interview when talking about the relationship between follower and influencer. INFLUENCER 5 described two different types of relation according to the two sizes mentioned. Indeed, for them, bigger influencers feel less close to their audience than smaller one. The second characteristic of differentiation of influencer highlighted is the profile of the influencer. Some followers mentioned “*TV reality influencers*” (I2, I6) as being less trustworthy and only interested in making money. influencer 1 made the same distinction but using the words “*low-end influencers*” and “*qualitative influencers*”. Brands also state that the size and the profile of influencer can be an important factor when choosing who to work with, but it is not a major factor because the number of followers is not necessarily synonymous with engagement or credibility regarding followers (I1, I2).

c. Partnerships

The partnerships are a great option for companies as it is “*cheap and effective*” (influencer 2). Followers on the contrary are not fond of them: “*I am skeptical when it comes to partnership because I feel like I'm falling into a trap, and I don't necessarily trust the product*” (one of the comments from the questionnaire). Some influencers even qualify them as being “*fake*” (I2)

because “*it’s impossible to know if the influencer is honest about it except for the clothing*” (I2). In fact, it’s very hard to determine if the influencers actually use the products they promote. In the first part of our interviews with the followers, we asked them their opinion about the partnership shared in the influencer’s stories. Some of them answered that they just watch them out of curiosity, just to see what the product they promote is. On the contrary, other followers skip the video because they are not interested and they don’t believe what influencers say when they promote products. For those who watch the product promoted, they usually either buy it if they like the product or if they need it, or they do their own research about it. Regarding the purchase of the products promoted, some of the followers already bought them and others did not.

d. Monetary benefit

“*Being an influencer is a profession which pays a lot*” (I2). Influencers’ main source of revenue is the partnership with brands which are discussed above (I1, I2, I3). But according to Influencer 3, to make money out of social media, it’s important to have an audience who shares the same interests as you, otherwise brands would not want to work with them.

During the interviews, we ask the influencers if the brand and the quality of the products they promote are more important than the compensation they receive, in order to establish whether they care about what they promote. The answer to this question was quite of one mind, being that the brand and the quality of the products they have to promote and the money they receive to do so have to be well balanced as those partnerships can affect their image (I1, I2, I3). “*If I have a deal with a brand who sells good quality clothes it would be ok for me to be paid less because you get really expensive stuff for the partnership*” (I3), “*What you take into consideration when you choose the brand with which you work is above all its credibility and its reputation because it will have an impact on your account and it must correspond to your profile*” (I1).

e. Para-social relationship

We asked our interviewees what represents to them the relation they have with either the followers for the influencers or the influencers for the followers and how they would define this relationship. All the influencers explained that it is very important to have a good relationship with their audience if they want to have engagement which translates into likes, comments, reposts and therefore new followers (I1, I2, I3). They must “*create a relation*” (I1) which allows the followers to “*think you are their friend*” (I2). Therefore, influencers need followers, but they both have a different view of this relationship. Indeed, Influencers 1 stated that “*it's complicated to be friendly on a social network relationship, I would say that I am simply close to my community*”. On the other hand the followers seem to see this relation more like an amical one regarding the influencers, “*I feel like they see me quite as a friend more than an influencer*” (I3). They relate a lot to their favorite influencers and tend also to do the same things, buy the same products, and have the same life.

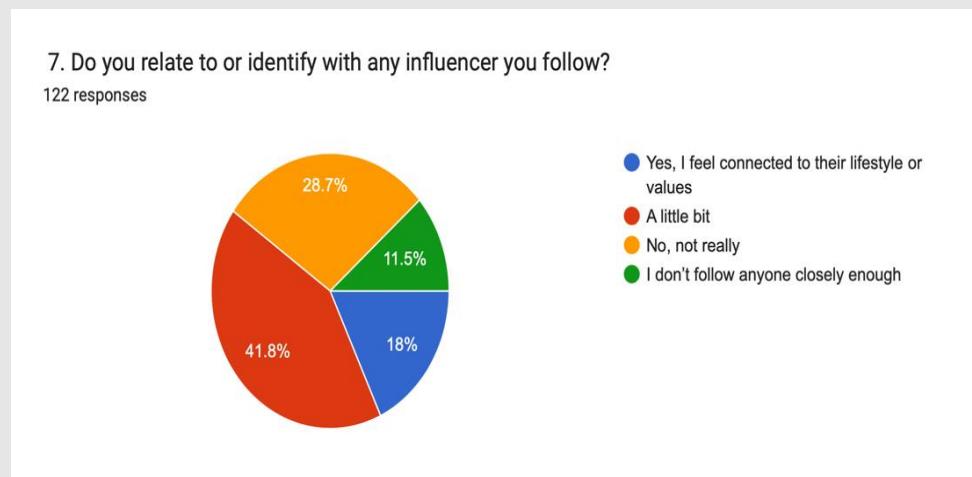
Impact of the influencers on the followers

The interviewees were asked about the potential impact that this influence could have on their followers. From the point of view of the influencers, their influence has an impact on the people who follow them, however this impact has two facets as it can be positive and negative (I1, I2, I3). For them, this impact is present since the moment they show and share a different life from their followers, “*I started making an impact on people and people started contacting me, sending me messages and I started making views because my lifestyle was different*” (I2). However, the influencers interviewed told us that they try not to have a negative impact on their community by only posting things that are in line with their values (I1, I2, I3).

In addition, a few influencers addressed topics like risky behaviors such as smoking. *Influencer 1* does not show or talk about their smoking on the networks because they consider that it will encourage some of their followers to do so. On the contrary, *influencer 3* thinks that being transparent about smoking allows people to understand that influencers are not like that naturally and allows them to complex less about the beauty of some person, “*Some girls pretend that they're natural when they have their lips and hair done for example. And it can make people insecure*” (I3), “*Being honest is so important because it gives people the opportunity to deal with their own issues and realize they're not alone*” (I3), “*I feel like Kylie*

Jenner had a huge impact on a whole generation of young women. Bella Hadid also had a huge impact with the foxy eyes" (I3). As explained before, there are two sides of the influencers impact on communities. Regarding the good impact of it, some of the followers explained that, depending on the influencers, some are very positive and creative people which helps and inspires them (comments from my questionnaire), *"If I think they're doing something creative then I might try to do something similar"* ,*"It can make me feel better"* . Similarly, the influencers explained that they sometimes help their communities with mental health issues, *"A week ago i wrote on Instagram that i started to go to the gym a lot because it helps with my mental health and makes me feel good and people were like "thanks for the recommendation"* (I3).

Figure 6 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INFLUENCERS AND FOLLOWERS



Source: Own research of the authors questionnaire one

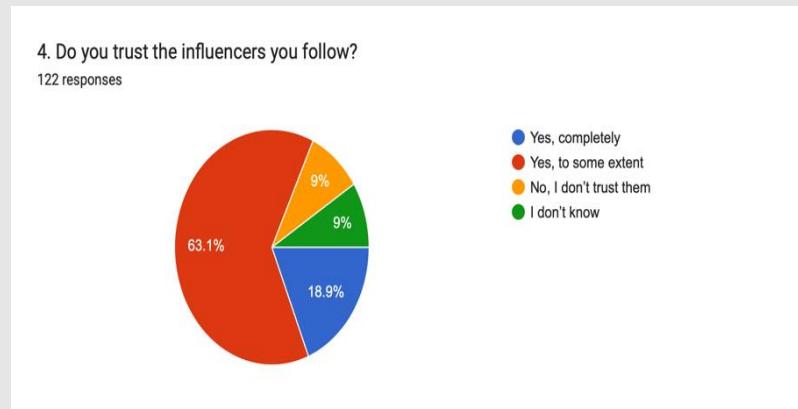
It's well explained in the chat below from the questionnaire of the followers or respondents as 18% feel so tightly much connected to the influencer their lifestyle and daily routine activities ,their values whereas we've got 41.8% that feel abit relational with their influencers, as 28.7% say notv really closec and can't relate with the influencer life and values.

Influencer marketing value

The goal here was to ask followers about the value of influencers in terms of trust, credibility, expertise and attractiveness to them. In the same way, the influencers were questioned in order to have their own opinion of their value. For the brands we wanted to know if these factors were important regarding their choice of influencers to work with

Trustworthiness

Figure 7; TRUSTWORTHNESS AND CREDIBILITY



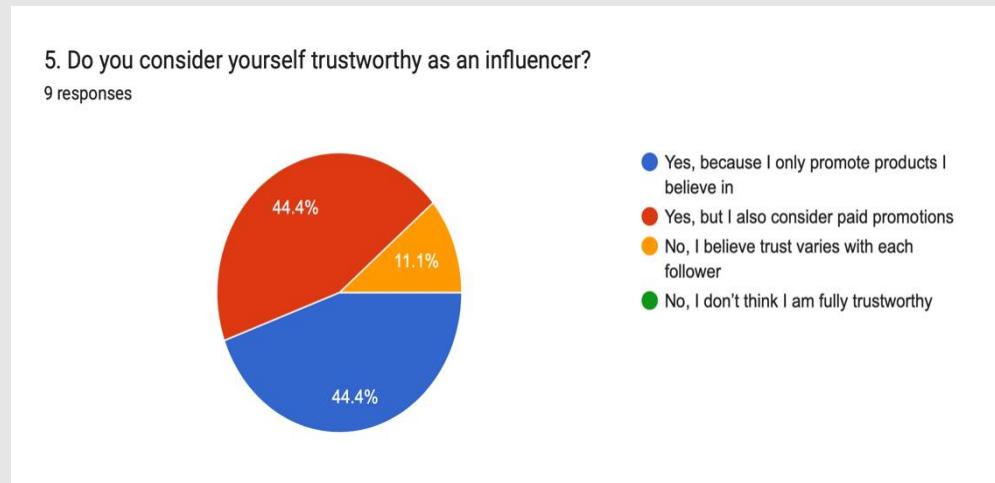
Source: Own research of the authors questionnaire one

The followers of the influencers have both trust and mistrust towards them. On one hand, some followers trust influencer's stories, contents, and the image they share on social media. They easily connect to the influencers and feel like they know them. These perceptions create trustworthiness at the percentage of 18.9 completely and 63.3% they trust them to some

extent. On the other hand, some viewers or followers do not trust all influencers in general which brings the percentage of 9%. These followers perceive that the influencers are sharing their stories and experiences only for money and creating a fake image as they are filtering a lot of their posts to give an attractive representation of an idyllic life which may not be true (according to their comments from questionnaire). This is also the case for influencers issued from tv shows, the viewers think that these influencers are not trustworthy people as they are doing it only for earning money or fame, without being considerate right-or-wrong and the impact it can have on communities.

However;

Figure 8; TRUSTWORTHNESS AND CREDIBILITY



Source: Own research of the authors questionnaire two

However, the influencer self-reflection is that they are 88.8% trustworthy, "I consider myself to be trustworthy and not recommend a product that I don't really like or use" (I3). They try to be the most honest in the best possible way in what they are sharing with their audience by posting only the things that they agree with. They tend to avoid tempering and try to give an image of themselves closer to their reality (I1, I2, I3).

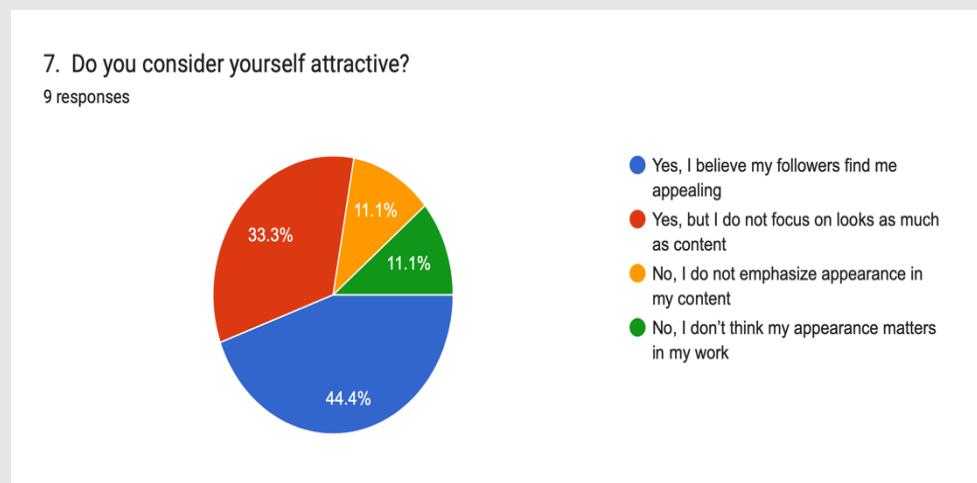
Regarding the brandsquestionned, the trustworthiness is an important factor to be considered when choosing the influencers, they are working with as they will be a direct messenger of the

company. *We are very careful when choosing the influencers, we work with. Of course, the popularity of the influencer is a determining factor, but it is even more important that this influencer is someone who can be trusted by his audience*

Attractiveness

Concerning the attractiveness of the influencers, followers find them attractive in general. Influencers tend to smile, they wear nice and expensive clothes, and they represent themselves in charming and glamorous ways. Some answers to the question "Do you find this person attractive?" were: "*He is good looking. He does a lot of sports. He has a nice smile, takes care of himself and has nice outfits.*" (influencer1) or also "*Yes she is pretty, she is smiling, she is funny and natural*" (Influencer3). Likewise, the influencers know that they must put an attractive image because it is their asset. Both confidence and attractiveness help to gain an audience because the followers aspire to be the same as the influencers (I1, I2, I3). Regarding the brands interviewed, they don't choose randomly the influencers they want to work with. They want people with a good image on the social networks and they are also aware that someone attractive will have more visibility than another. "*The attractiveness of a person plays a role, but it's still quite subjective and a brand is not going to base itself only on that. I would say that we have standards, and that the most important thing is the image they give to their followers*"

Figure 9; ATTRACTIVENESS OF AN INFLUENCER



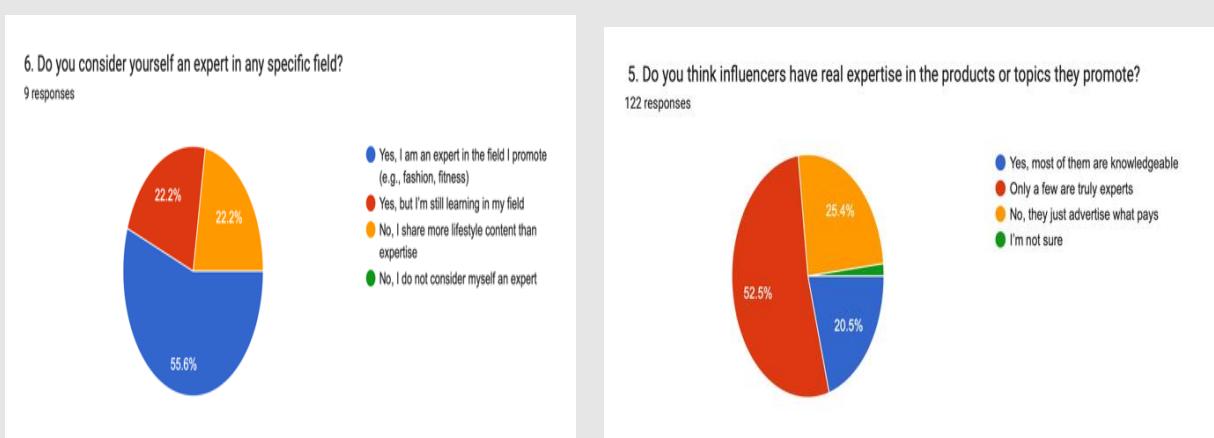
Source: Own research of the authors questionnaire two

Meanwhile, some influencers don't consider looks or their attractiveness to be appealing as their content basement.

Expertise

While expressing their opinions about the expertise of their favorite influencers on social media, the followers have mixed feelings. Their respective answers show that on one hand, younger followers (13 and 14 yo) believe that specialized influencers have experience in their field (I6, I7). For example, expertise in fashion for beauty and fashion influencers. On the other hand, older followers (from 21 to 24 yo) believe that influencers only have expertise and experience in being performant on social media, because they have been doing it for several years (F1, F2), "*I think he has to have a minimum of knowledge about stuff he does*" (comment from questionnaire1). This opinion is shared by influencers, as they don't believe they have any expertise in a specific field except to know how to reach people on social media and make money out of it (I1, I2, I3). On the contrary, some followers do not think that influencers have any specific knowledge, or expertise in fashion or beauty as seen below in the chats from different questionnaires

Figure 10,11; EXPERTISM AND SPECIALISATION OF INFLUENCERS



Source: Own research of the authors questionnaire two
research of the authors questionnaire one

Source: Own

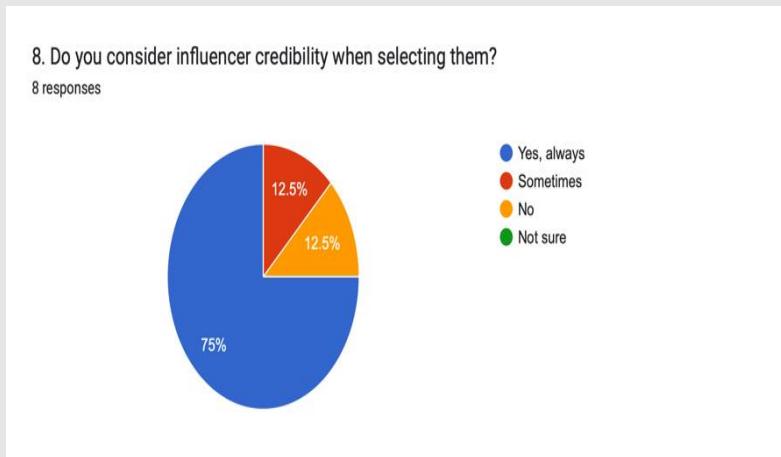
For brands, the expertise of an influencer is not a necessary factor, it can be an advantage but generally they try to choose someone who is used to talking about a certain content like fashion, Food & Beverages, beauty and fitness for example and who is related to the products they sell.

Credibility

For the followers, the influencers they are following are credible when they talk about personal subjects like body image, mental health or something particular that they are used to share. For example, when it is about products or brands regarding fashion and beauty, the followers feel like the influencers know what they are talking about and this makes them credible for the audience. On the other hand, sometimes we say things that do not seem relevant for some of the followers "*When it's about a brand or a product, yes, but sometimes we say some stupid things*" (I7) or we don't publish the same kind of stuff anymore "*I would but sometimes we'll go a long period of time without posting anything in depth*" and in these cases we appear less.

Regarding the brands that work with influencers, the credibility of them is an important factor when choosing the influencers, they will work with (B1, B2), "*Yes I take into account the credibility of the influencer when hiring them*" (B1). This factor is based on the image that the influencers send back to their audience as well as the content they share, therefore it is important to choose an influencer with a good image and related to the brand because in the other case, they will lose credibility. The influencers also think that they are used by the brands for this reason, "*I feel like they choose you as an influencer because they could never be as authentic as you could be with your followers*" (I3).

Figure 11, CREDIBILITY OF INFLUENCERS BEFORE BRANDS



Source: Own research of the authors questionnaire three

Customer purchase behavior

In this part of the study, interviewees were asked about their purchase behavior in relation to influencers. The goal here was to learn more about the potential impact of influencers on the different stages of the consumer's purchasing process which are: purchase intention, purchase decision and post-purchase.

Purchase intention

Influencers have an impact on the purchase intention of their followers. In fact most of the followers interviewed explained that even if they didn't have a need at the beginning nor the intentions to buy something, they feel like when watching the influencers posting about a product they, at the same time, put the idea on you head that you want and you need "*Even though I don't buy directly what they promote, if you see them constantly (because most influencers promote the same stuff) it is going to stick in your mind and you'll be like "Oh i need this product because everyone has it"*" (Influencer4).

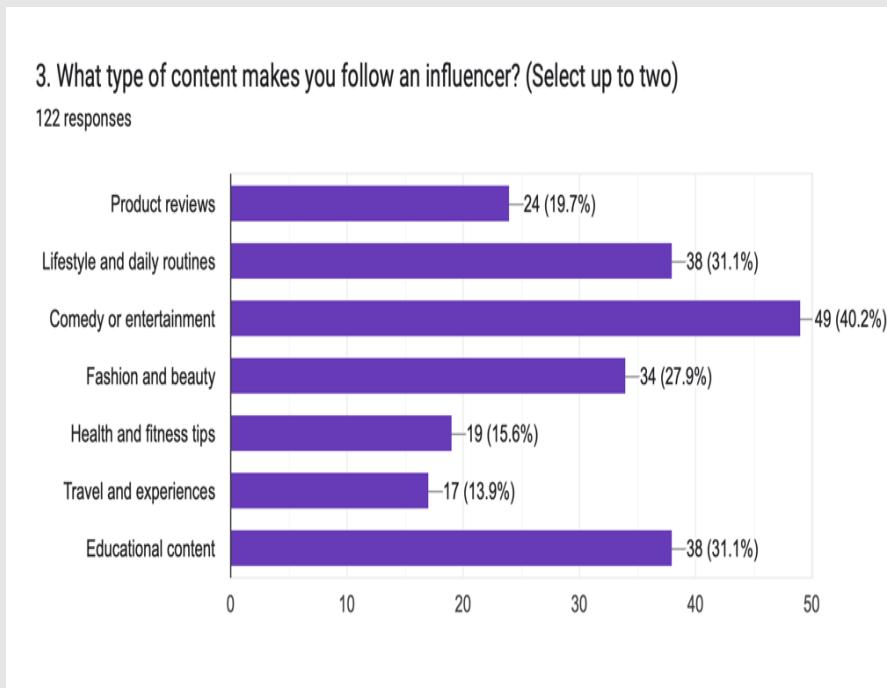
They also think that even if they didn't want to buy, influencers often offer promo codes that change their initial intentions and encourage them to potentially buy the product(s) they were promoting (comments from questionnaire), *"Yes, because for example if I want to buy a swimsuit and I saw one on an Instagram story or post of an influencer I will go see it, and sometimes there is a discount code"* (I2). Similarly, the influencers agree with this and are convinced that they have an impact on the purchase intention of their followers, *"Yes there is obviously an impact"* (I2). Indeed, their posts are seen by many people and even if there is no partnership with brands, the majority of the comments are often based on requests for references concerning clothes or beauty products in order to buy the same and look like them (I1, I2, I3), *"I did a tiktok that got 1M views just for my jacket. I wasn't paid but the top comments were about where my jacket came from"* (I2), *"Yes, if for example I wear a pair of shoes or a jacket it will influence my community to potentially buy the same thing because people are constantly consuming"* (I1). This is also explained by the fact that the followers want to be like the influencers so they tend to buy the same things, *"People will buy the things you promote or wear because they want to look like you. For example, some people might think that if they buy the lipstick I use, they will have the same lips as me"* (I3). The companies also join this opinion, and this is also one of the reasons why they use influencers, because they bring them visibility and impact the followers' purchase intentions (B1, B2), *"I use influencers because they have a lot of visibility, and all my clients are on social networks. So that's where you have to be if you want to sell. You have to be present where the user is present"* (B1).

Purchase decision

Regarding the purchase decision of the followers, the line between intention and decision is thin. Some followers had bought a product issued by an influencer's recommendation (F1, F2). On the other hand, even though followers didn't buy a product just on the recommendation

of an influencer, before making a purchase, some people go to see if their favorite influencers have bought it or use it. We also asked the interviewed followers about their buying decision habits. First, the majority of them search for information before buying a product. They either look at the reviews on platforms Instagram of the brand, videos of influencers on YouTube.

Figure 12 like figure 03 on the content ugandans consume on the internet



Source: Own research of the authors questionnaire one

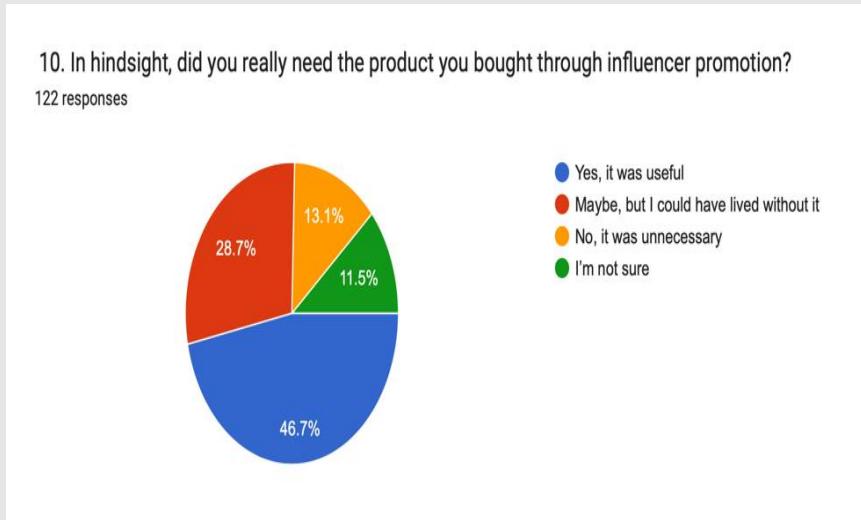
This can be evidenced from the chats as the product reviews take almost 20% of the consumed content basing on the sample space tested on the people of Uganda

Post-Purchase

During the interviews, we asked the followers who did purchase a product based on an influencer recommendation their feelings about it once they received and used it. We first asked them if they have ever been disappointed with a product derived from a partnership.

The majority actually answered positively as their product(s) were useful at the rate of 46.7% almost 29% could have lived without but it's the effect of influencers on the market that led to the purchases. Here it's the system of win win between the influencer and the brand or the company, 13% they said it was unnecessary for them to buy the product and the rest if the percentage is not just sure.

Figure 13 determining the influencers effect on the followers or the market



Source: Own research of the authors questionnaire one

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, we will confront our findings with the theory of previous research stated. The analysis and discussion are following the same order as our empirical findings presented in the previous chapter and will provide answers to our research questions.

Social Media Marketing

Platforms

Today, there are many platforms for sharing and interacting between people but the most popular is Instagram. Indeed, this social network allows influencers to post visual contents which pleases users enormously and generates engagement as Duggan and Smith (2013) had

explained. For followers, this craze for sharing photos and videos of their favorite personality influences their use of social networks. Indeed, followers think that their use of social networks and especially Instagram would be lower if influencers did not exist. This shows us that Influencers have an impact on the use that followers make of social networks.

Interaction

Thanks to social media, the interactions between consumers, brands and followers are easier and quicker (Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi, 2012). In our case the followers interact with followers and brands by liking, commenting and sharing their contents with other people. Influencers try to involve a lot of their followers even if they don't directly interact with them as they are numerous. By involving them they create engagement which is what brands want. Indeed, if the consumers are engaged it allows brands to learn about them and adapt their response and offers (Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi, 2012).

By interacting with influencers, the followers also interact with brands and help to spread marketing messages as well as encourage others to do the same thing.

Information, diffusion and eWOM

Information is spread very quickly thanks to social media as there are no geographical or temporal barriers (Holt, 2016). When influencers post content on Instagram, the followers can interact with them and share the content with others. The followers help to diffuse the marketing message posted by influencers and brands. It is an electronic version of the word-of-mouth; people share the content to others which then share also the content. The goal here is to spread an idea, an opinion, a brand image to as many as possible in order to involve them as well and to encourage them to buy. Thanks to social media the influencers and the brands obtain more visibility and reach their goal in terms of sales or engagement.

Social media marketing is a very powerful tool. By connecting a lot of people while removing geographical and temporal barriers, social networks like Instagram play an important role for brands and influencers. Indeed, thanks to a single platform, like Instagram, companies can interact and engage consumers. Influencers share content on the network and create

commitment from their followers. By sharing, liking and commenting on the posted content, followers spread marketing information and give visibility to brands. Finally, we can say that brands, thanks to influencers, use social media and the interactions created as a tool to promote ideas, products and services.

Influencer-marketing

Principles of Influence

The principles of influence are based on 6 factors by Cialdini (2017). These factors are used in influencer marketing and help to understand what the effects of influencer on consumers are. We asked the influencers interviewed to give a definition of the influence for them. They all agree to say that the influence consists of impacting the normal behavior of their followers by inciting them to do the same things and buy the same products. Looking at the 6 principles of influence, a person is more or less influential when they combine several or all the principles. Concerning the interviewed influencers, they use the majority of the principles. Indeed, influencers by sharing content, recommendations, promo codes and by engaging their followers to answer their stories

or with contests for example, create in their audience this feeling of being indebted which corresponds to the principle of reciprocity and consistency. Moreover, regarding the principle of social proof, thanks to their popularity on the networks and their large number of followers, influencers gain credibility and are people with expertise for their followers. Concerning the scarcity principle, when influencers share offers on the networks, they are often limited in time or in quantity, this increases their influence on the followers' buying behavior. Finally, the majority of followers follow people they can identify with, and regarding the last principle which is "liking" they are therefore more likely to favor them.

SMI/Size and profile

Regarding the social media influencers, we saw that there are different types of influencers regarding their size, their profile and the contents they share. All the influencers interviewed were oriented on fashion and beauty. One of them is a mid- influencer (25,001-100,000 followers) and the rest of them are macro influencers (more than 100,000 followers). The

greater the number of subscribers, the more popular the influencer is considered to be and the more credible he or she becomes to his or her audience and to future followers (Cialdini, 2016). However, this popularity does not necessarily translate into follower engagement or simply into the influencer's credibility. The interviewed followers make a distinction between big influencers and smaller ones and think that a smaller influencer would be closer to his community than a bigger influencer who would not necessarily have the time to interact with everyone. Brands are aware of this and therefore do not rely entirely on the number of followers to choose who to work with. The size of the influencer is therefore an important factor, it would have an influence on the followers who will tend to believe that an influencer with a lot of followers is necessarily synonymous with an important person who shares good content. Brands also know that by choosing an influencer with a large follower base, the visibility will be more important. However, they are careful about the engagement of followers and the credibility of influencers. Our findings also put in light that two types of influencers can be dissociated. Indeed, the followers interviewed explained that the TV show influencers are not trustworthy and do this only for the money even if they have a lot of followers. This shows us that even if the size of an influencer means popularity that does not translate into real quality.

The credibility of influencer

Influencer marketing is a powerful tool for brands and can have an important impact. But if brands want of this impact to be beneficial for them, they have to choose carefully the influencers they want to work with. In this subsection is discussed how the influencers are perceived by the follower according to four factors, in order to determine whether the credibility of the influencer has an impact on the brands the influencers work with.

Lou and Yuan (2018), in the SMIV model, discussed three factors to define the amount of persuasiveness influencers have on their followers, namely the expertise of the influencers, their trustworthiness and their attractiveness. Regarding their expertise, our findings demonstrate that in general, younger followers are more inclined to believe what influencers will say or show on their social media as they qualify them as being expert in a specific field. This can be explained by the fact that young people are more gullible. On the contrary, older

followers do not consider influencers to be experts in any field. Those data enable us to conclude that whether or not influencers have expertise doesn't impact the choice of the followers to follow or interact with them, and this is why expertise is not a necessary characteristic for a brand when choosing influencers, they want to work with. They rather take into consideration the type of content the influencer shares on social media in order to work with influencers related to the product they want them to promote. The second factor that impacts the credibility of influencers is their trustworthiness. Our findings demonstrate that followers have both trust and mistrust toward influencers, depending on the background of those latter. Accordingly, the influencers interviews consider themselves as being 100% trustworthy but admit that some influencers do not care of the impact they can have on communities. This is the reason why brands carefully review this factor as influencers become a direct messenger of the company when they start working together. The third and final factor used to determine the amount of persuasiveness of influencers is the attractiveness. Our findings demonstrate that followers find the influencers they follow attractive and sometimes even follow them because of this attractiveness. Once again, the brands are well aware of that and take this factor into account when selecting influencers.

To conclude on the credibility of the influencer, it is a really important factor for brands. They are very careful about the image that influencers reflect, the content they share as well as their authenticity because the credibility of the influencer will have an impact on the credibility of the brand when they start working together.

Agency and transparency of paid collaboration

In this subsection, we focused on the analysis of the influencer's agency as well as the paid collaboration.

Firstly, our findings demonstrate that agencies provide influencers with tools to grow on social media as well as creative and aesthetic advice for their content. This shows clearly that influencers usually have a lot of people working with them to improve their social media and to give that illusion of perfection. In other words, followers think that they follow one person, being the influencer, when really their account is the result of the work of several people. This questions the authenticity and spontaneity of influencers. Secondly, our findings show that when influencers promote a product through a partnership, it is hard to determine whether the influencers really like the product or have even used it before talking about it. This process,

once again, questions the sincerity and honesty of the influencers when they present partnered products to their followers.

Para-Social relationship Influencers/Followers

In the theoretical part we explained what a para-social relationship is. According to Sokolova and Kefi (2019), this one-way relationship is based on the illusion of intimacy for one of the parts. The relations between influencers and followers are often para-social ones and this have a cognitive, affective and behavioral impact on them. Influencers explained to us that their relationship with followers is important, as it is the quality of this relationship that generates follower's engagement afterwards. However, although influencers try to respond and interact as best, they can with their followers, it is difficult to do so with everyone and even more so if they are very numerous. Therefore, it is impossible here to talk about a two-way relationship (Sokolova and Kefi, 2019). Influencers cannot describe this relationship as a friendly one but just expresses the fact that they are close to them. It is important for influencers that followers feel close to them and have this feeling of intimacy, of friendship because it allows influencers to have credibility and therefore influence on them. Most followers follow influencers to whom they feel similar in their way of dressing, of living and then develop this relationship with them. The latter identify or compare themselves to the influencers and have a need to try to reproduce their actions, to buy the same things. Influencers therefore have an impact on followers. Indeed, through social networks such as Instagram, they share content with users and thus create this social relationship with them, generating a change in behavior among followers.

Downsides of SMI

Although influencer marketing brings many benefits to brands and influencers, it is important to question the impact this strategy has on network users and consumers. The utilization of this strategy within fashion and beauty industries are at the center of controversial topics (Greenwood et al., 2008; Perloff, 2014). Regarding our findings the influencers were very clear

and affirmed that this influence has an impact on followers and consumers. There is some good impact on communities but many of them are negatives. The influencers interviewed tried to not have a negative impact, but they stated that today, many influencers don't even think about the repercussions of their actions and content posted on social media. And this is the case for very big influencers which have a huge impact on people.

Regarding the positive impact, what stands out the most is the fact that influencers can be a source of positive inspiration for their community. On the other hand, they are a spokesperson and can therefore address serious issues and propagate positive ideas, as is the case with the "body positive". However, when it comes to controversial topics such as surgery, the question would be whether to talk about it or not. For some of our influencers, talking about it is not an option, it is the last one trying to have a positive impact, showing it would influence followers to do the same (I1, I2). Conversely, for other influencers, being honest in all aspects with their audience would avoid creating complexes related to the physicality of their followers (I3).

Research summary

With our research, we wanted to study whether the use of influence by brands and influencers, has a real impact on the behavior of young consumers. We wanted to study the points of view of the brands that use influencers for marketing purposes, the influencers who are directly connected to the consumers and finally the consumers themselves. With the use and the analysis of the collected data during the different interviews, the purpose of this thesis was to provide insight on how the brands and influencers use social media to influence people and then to highlight the possible effects of this influence on the purchasing behavior of consumers, but also on their general behavior and lifestyle, and to study whether these three actors, and especially consumers, are aware of the extent of this influence.

To meet the purpose of the research, the following research question were formed:

RQ1 How influencer marketing strategy impacts teenagers and young adults' behavior and their purchasing int in uganda?

When it comes to the impacts of using influencer marketing on consumers, there are many, which are either positive or negative. Firstly, influencers have an impact on the purchasing

decisions of their followers. Influencers share content with them such as product recommendations in partnerships, but also their personal purchases related to fashion and beauty. Followers tend to identify with influencers and therefore seek to imitate them. To do so, they will buy the same products or use their coupon codes for certain brands. Clothing, make-up and even cosmetic surgery, followers aspire to look like their favorite influencers and the beauty ideal they diffuse.

However, this relationship impacts other aspects of their behavior in cognitive and emotional ways. Indeed, although influencers try to limit the negative impacts, they mostly convey an ideal of beauty that their audience will try to achieve. Some followers 60 are only inspired by influencers, but others identify and compare themselves with them a lot and therefore develop frustration, complexes and physical or mental issues.

RQ2;How Ugandan consumers perceive the credibility and trustworthiness of influencers?

Local Identity and Cultural Relevance

Ugandan consumers place significant value on influencers who reflect their own social and cultural realities. Credibility is often rooted in relatability—when an influencer shares personal experiences, uses local languages like Luganda or Runyankole, and incorporates cultural nuances in their content, they are more likely to resonate with their audience. Consumers appreciate when influencers reference local events, traditions, or social challenges because it signals authenticity and cultural alignment. Unlike Western influencers who may appear distant or overly polished, Ugandan audiences prefer personalities who feel accessible and grounded in everyday Ugandan life. This alignment with local identity fosters a sense of trust that goes beyond mere popularity.

The Power of Authenticity Over Fame

In the Ugandan social media landscape, authenticity is often more influential than celebrity status. Micro-influencers, who have smaller yet highly engaged followings, are particularly

trusted because they tend to communicate more personally and directly with their audience. These influencers often share their journeys, struggles, and opinions without the gloss of overproduction, making them appear more genuine. Ugandan consumers are increasingly skeptical of influencers who only post polished sponsored content without showing real-life context. Trust is especially enhanced when influencers are transparent about partnerships and clearly label advertisements or endorsements. When followers feel that the influencer is honest and not merely motivated by financial gain, credibility increases.

Consistency as a Measure of Reliability

Consistency plays a crucial role in shaping how Ugandan consumers assess influencer trustworthiness. Audiences look for influencers who stick to their core message and brand over time. For example, if an influencer is known for advocating healthy living, followers expect them to consistently promote that lifestyle across all posts, including partnerships. Sudden shifts in tone or messaging such as promoting products that contradict their previously stated values—can lead to skepticism. Moreover, influencers who steer clear of political controversy or social scandals tend to maintain higher levels of trust. In a country where political affiliations can quickly polarize public opinion, neutrality and a consistent moral stance often enhance an influencer's credibility.

Domain-Specific Trust and Expertise

Ugandan consumers also evaluate trustworthiness based on an influencer's knowledge and authority in a specific area. Whether it's fashion, technology, agriculture, or personal finance, influencers who consistently provide insightful, practical, and locally applicable content are perceived as credible experts. For instance, a tech influencer who reviews budget smartphones suitable for the Ugandan market will likely be seen as more trustworthy than one promoting high-end foreign devices. Expertise is not only about knowledge but also about the ability to translate that knowledge into actionable advice relevant to local contexts. Consumers value influencers who are informative, helpful, and in tune with their realities.

Peer Influence and Community Validation

Word-of-mouth and social validation heavily influence consumer perceptions in Uganda. Trust is often reinforced through the comments, likes, and shares of fellow users—particularly in WhatsApp groups, Facebook communities, and even offline discussions. When an influencer is positively mentioned or recommended by peers, they are more likely to gain credibility. Additionally, an influencer's association with well-known and trusted brands or public figures can also enhance their image. If a respected NGO, for example, partners with an influencer to promote health education, that influencer's trustworthiness can increase significantly due to the perceived endorsement from a reliable institution.

Platform Perception and Demographics

The platform an influencer uses can also shape how they are perceived. On Instagram and TikTok, where content is often visual and trend-driven, younger Ugandans are the primary audience. While these platforms are popular, trustworthiness is closely tied to how authentic and spontaneous the content appears. Overly curated posts might be seen as less genuine. In contrast, Facebook remains widely used across different age groups and regions in Uganda and is often viewed as a more community-oriented and serious platform. Influencers active on Facebook may benefit from a perception of being more grounded, informative, and engaged in meaningful conversations, thus enhancing their credibility.

chapter three

Analysis and Discussion

Building on the methodology described in the previous chapter, this third chapter presents and interprets the findings of the empirical study. The results obtained from questionnaires and interviews with influencers, followers, and companies are analyzed in relation to the theoretical framework and existing literature. This chapter aims to provide insights into how influencer

credibility, authenticity, and cultural relevance shape consumer behavior and marketing effectiveness in Uganda

i. Conclusion on empirical study, discussions and analysis

Overall, the credibility and trustworthiness of influencers in Uganda depend on a blend of authenticity, consistency, expertise, and cultural resonance. Consumers are increasingly discerning and expect influencers to be honest, locally relevant, and knowledgeable. They value those who remain true to their identity, communicate openly about brand partnerships, and consistently provide value. In a digital environment marked by rapid growth and increasing awareness, trust is no longer just about follower count—it's about the depth of connection, cultural sensitivity, and community engagement that an influencer brings to the table.

ii. General Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the effectiveness of influencer marketing in shaping consumer behavior, brand perception, and purchase decisions within the Ugandan context. Amid the growing influence of social media in Uganda, particularly among young adults, this research aimed to understand the roles that influencer credibility, authenticity, and content quality play in affecting marketing outcomes. Through a combination of theoretical frameworks—including Source Credibility Theory, Social Influence Theory, and Uses and Gratifications Theory—and qualitative data collected from influencers, followers, and companies, the study has provided a comprehensive and culturally grounded analysis.

The findings reveal that influencer marketing indeed plays a significant role in influencing purchase intention and consumer engagement in Uganda. A large portion of respondents admitted to purchasing products because of influencer promotions, demonstrating the persuasive power that relatable and trustworthy influencers hold. Furthermore, platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube emerged as dominant channels for influence, with fashion, lifestyle, and entertainment content being most consumed. However, the perceived

effectiveness of influencers goes beyond content alone; it is shaped by their perceived authenticity, consistency, and cultural alignment with their audience.

Importantly, the study shows that Ugandan consumers value influencers who reflect their lived realities and communicate openly. Micro-influencers, in particular, seem to foster deeper parasocial relationships and are perceived as more authentic compared to celebrity influencers. Brands also recognize that engagement rates and credibility matter more than just follower count when selecting influencers for partnerships. Nevertheless, challenges such as lack of transparency in sponsored content, over-commercialization, and trust erosion were highlighted as potential threats to the long-term impact of influencer marketing.

Moreover, the study sheds light on the dual nature of influencer impact—both positive and negative. While influencers can inspire and guide consumer behavior, they also risk perpetuating unrealistic standards and triggering issues related to self-esteem and consumer skepticism, particularly among younger users. Therefore, ethical practices and transparency are vital for maintaining trust and marketing integrity.

In conclusion, influencer marketing has proven to be a valuable and increasingly relevant strategy for firms in Uganda. Its success is dependent on a combination of influencer traits, content relevance, and consumer trust. The research recommends that businesses strategically collaborate with credible influencers who resonate with their target demographic and uphold authenticity in their communication. Future research may delve deeper into the psychological effects of influencer culture, cross-cultural comparisons, and the long-term evolution of digital consumer behavior in emerging markets like Uganda.

iii. Limitations of the study

In this subsection are mentioned the limitations of my research which might be helpful to consider for possible future research in the same field. To start with, the influence is subjective, and has always a different impact depending on each individual and their experience and opinion. So, it needs to be acknowledged that my findings regarding the influence that

influencers can have on followers could be different if other individuals would have been questioned. This thesis is also subject to subjectivity and the opinion of the author could have influenced some analysis. The author tried to handle the limited rationality by including three perspectives, namely the influencers perspective, the follower's perspective and the brands perspective. We also interviewed several people in each category in order to increase the generalizability of our research.

Secondly, it is important to consider some limitations regarding the observational study. In fact, the exact same research questions could have a different answer if studied a year earlier or a year later as influencer marketing is a new marketing strategy and is in constant evolution. Moreover, my study focused on beauty food, beverages and lifestyle influencers and their followers, and the findings could be different if done in another field or if other influencers have been targeted. Indeed, some influencers might be trustworthy when others are not and it's something very hard to determine. Furthermore, our study was mainly conducted on english speaking individuals which limited our result from a cultural point of view as it is another factor of variation given the fact that TikTok one of the most used almost 6million people is full of luganda speakers not english.

iv. Contribution and suggestion for future research

An interesting area for further research could be an in-depth study of the impact of influencers and social media on the new generations, not only in the marketing field but also in the psychological field. Indeed, throughout our study and especially the interviews we conducted, a lot of questions were raised concerning the negative impact influencers have on teenagers using social media. As influencers mainly show the best part of their daily life and generally embellish it, their followers can feel frustrated. The filters, photo editing and smoking,plastic surgery of some influencers is not helping them either, as most of the time they are not even transparent about it.

APPENDIX

The two questionnaires and interview questions distributed and destined to followers, companies(brands) and influencers in Uganda

Interview questions for influencers

Influencer Marketing Survey – Uganda

Dear influencer,

My name is kaguggube Robert (THE MEGATRONE), and I am currently conducting a research project (**masters degree**) on THE EFFECT OF INFLUENCERS ON MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS IN UGANDA. This survey is intended to collect the views of social media users like you on how influencers impact your choices, perceptions, and purchasing decisions.

Your participation is completely voluntary and anonymous, and your answers will be used solely for academic purposes. The survey will take approximately 5–10 minutes to complete. I kindly request your support by taking the time to answer the questions below as honestly as possible.

Thank you very much for your valuable time and input!

Yours truly,

KAGUGGUBE ROBERT

University of Bejaia

kaguguberobert688@gmail.com

Section 1: Influencer Profile

How long have you been an influencer?

What type of content do you usually post about? (*Select all that apply*)

What social media platforms do you primarily use? (*Select all that apply*)

How many total followers do you have across all your social media platforms?

Section 2: Trust and Expertise

Do you consider yourself trustworthy as an influencer?

Do you consider yourself an expert in any specific field?

Do you consider yourself attractive?

Section 3: Brand Partnerships and Revenue

What is your principal source of revenue as an influencer?

How often do you collaborate with brands on partnerships?

Have you ever promoted a brand without being paid for it?

Section 4: Collaboration and Brand Alignment

How do you decide which brands to collaborate with?

How do you receive instructions from the brand on what to deliver?

Is the brand and the quality of the products you promote more important than the compensation?

Section 5: Influencer Impact and Engagement

Do you think influencers really have an impact on their followers?

To what extent do you think influencers impact their followers' purchasing behavior?

Why do you think people are willing to purchase what influencers advertise?

How do you manage to maintain authenticity and trust with your audience while collaborating with brands, especially when you're promoting products for compensation?

What do you believe is the most significant change that influencer marketing has brought to the way businesses connect with consumers, and how do you see this evolving in the future?

Questionnaire one for brands

Dear marketing manager,

My name is kaguggube Robert (THE MEGATRONE), and I am currently conducting a research project (**masters degree**) on THE EFFECT OF INFLUENCERS ON MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS IN UGANDA. This survey is intended to collect the views of social media users like you on how influencers impact your choices, perceptions, and purchasing decisions.

Your participation is completely voluntary and anonymous, and your answers will be used solely for academic purposes. The survey will take approximately 5–10 minutes to complete. I kindly request your support by taking the time to answer the questions below as honestly as possible.

Thank you very much for your valuable time and input!

Yours truly,

KAGUGGUBE ROBERT

University of Bejaia ALGERIA

kaguguberobert688@gmail.com

Section 1: Company and Experience

1. What is the size of your company in terms of number of employees?

- 1–10 employees (Micro enterprise)
- 11–50 employees (Small enterprise)
- 51–250 employees (Medium enterprise)
- More than 250 employees (Large enterprise)

2. Have you ever used influencer marketing as a strategy?

- Yes, we currently use it
- Yes, but we no longer use it
- We are considering it
- No, we have never used influencer marketing

3. Do you currently collaborate with influencers?

- Yes, regularly
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- No, never

Section 2: Influencer Collaboration Process

4. How do you usually establish collaborations with influencers?

- We contact them directly
- We use influencer agencies or platforms
- Influencers reach out to us
- Through referrals or industry connections

5. How do you send instructions or briefs to influencers?

- Through a written contract or document
- Through informal communication (calls, emails, DMs)
- We let the influencer decide content style
- We don't give specific instructions

6. What factors do you consider when choosing which influencer to work with? (Select all that apply)

- Audience size
- Engagement rate
- Content quality
- Relevance to brand
- Credibility/trust
- Pricing/cost of collaboration

Section 3: Evaluating Influence and Value

7. How do you evaluate the influence of an influencer on their audience?

- By engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments)
- By conversions/sales generated
- By reach/impressions
- By brand mentions or awareness generated

8. Do you consider influencer credibility when selecting them?

● Yes, always

● Sometimes

● No

● Not sure

9. If yes, what do you consider when determining credibility? (Select all that apply)

● Authenticity

● Professionalism

● Past brand partnerships

● Audience feedback

● Niche relevance

10. How do you control the perceived value of the influencer's content for your brand?

● We approve all content before publishing

● We provide creative guidelines

● We co-create content with the influencer

● We trust the influencer's style and messaging

Section 4: Measuring Effectiveness

12. What is the most important factor for a successful influencer campaign?

● High-quality content

● Influencer reach

● Sales/conversion impact

● Audience engagement

● Brand alignment

13. How do you develop brand awareness with influencer campaigns? (Select all that apply)

● Hashtag campaigns

● Giveaways

● Sponsored posts

● Influencer storytelling

● Product reviews/unboxings

14. What impact do you think influencer marketing has on consumer purchase intentions?

● Strong – it directly influences purchase decisions

● Moderate – it increases interest but not always leads to purchase

● Weak – only builds visibility

● No impact

15. What advantages do you see in using influencers for marketing? (Select all that apply)

● Increased brand exposure

● Better engagement with target audience

● Higher ROI than traditional ads

● Boost in product credibility

- Quick reach to niche markets

16. What are the disadvantages of using influencers? (Select all that apply)

- Hard to measure ROI
- Risk of misrepresentation
- Costly
- Dependence on influencer behavior
- Fake followers/metrics

17. Do you consider influencer marketing to be a long-term strategy?

- Yes, it is essential for future marketing
- Maybe, but it depends on trends
- No, it's more of a short-term tactic

Questionnaire two for the followers

Influencer Marketing Survey – Uganda

Dear Respondent,

My name is kaguggube Robert (THE MEGATRONE), and I am currently conducting a research project on the **effect of influencers on marketing effectiveness in Uganda**. This survey is intended to collect the views of social media users like you on how influencers impact your choices, perceptions, and purchasing decisions. Your participation is completely voluntary and anonymous, and your answers will be used solely for academic purposes. The survey will take approximately 5–10 minutes to complete. I kindly request your support by taking the time to answer the questions below as honestly as possible.

Thank you very much for your valuable time and input!

Yours truly,

KAGUGGUBE ROBERT

University of Bejaia

kaguguberobert688@gmail.com

1. Do you follow any influencers on social media?

- Yes, many
- Yes, a few
- No
- I'm not sure

2. Which social media platforms do you use most often? (Select all that apply)

- Instagram
- TikTok
- Facebook
- YouTube
- Twitter/X
- Snapchat
- Other (please specify): _____

3. What type of content makes you follow an influencer? (Select up to two)

- Product reviews
- Lifestyle and daily routines
- Comedy or entertainment
- Fashion and beauty

- Health and fitness tips
- Travel and experiences
- Educational content

4. Do you trust the influencers you follow?

- Yes, completely
- Yes, to some extent
- No, I don't trust them
- I don't know

5. Do you think influencers have real expertise in the products or topics they promote?

- Yes, most of them are knowledgeable
- Only a few are truly experts
- No, they just advertise what pays
- I'm not sure

6. Do you think influencers present their lives in a realistic way?

- Yes, very realistic
- Somewhat realistic
- Not realistic at all
- I don't pay attention to that

7. Do you relate to or identify with any influencer you follow?

- Yes, I feel connected to their lifestyle or values
- A little bit
- No, not really
- I don't follow anyone closely enough

8. Have you ever bought something because an influencer recommended it?

- Yes, many times
- Yes, once or twice
- No, never
- Not sure

9. How satisfied were you with the product(s) you bought based on influencer recommendations?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

10. In hindsight, did you really need the product you bought through influencer promotion?

- Yes, it was useful

- Maybe, but I could have lived without it
- No, it was unnecessary
- I'm not sure

11. When you see a sponsored post/story from an influencer, what do you do?

- I watch it fully if it's interesting
- I skip most of them
- I only watch if it's a product I like
- I rarely notice sponsored content

12. If the influencer promotes a product you're interested in, what do you usually do?

- Visit the brand page
- Ask the influencer a question
- Look for more reviews online
- Ignore it
- Other: _____

13. How much time do you spend on social media daily?

- Less than 1 hour
- 1–2 hours
- 3–4 hours
- More than 4 hours

14. Out of your social media time, how much is spent watching influencer content?

- Almost none
- Less than 30 minutes
- 30 minutes to 1 hour
- More than 1 hour

15. Do you think influencers impact your decisions when choosing between similar products?

- Yes, I usually choose the one they recommend
- Sometimes, depending on the influencer
- No, I make my own decisions
- I don't think about

Section: Evaluating Influencer Effectiveness in Uganda

16 Do you give feedback to influencers (e.g., likes, comments, DMs)?

- Yes, frequently
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

17 Do you advocate for influencers by recommending them to others?

- Yes, all the time

- Occasionally
- Only if I trust them
- Never

18 Have you ever helped an influencer by promoting their brand/product for free (e.g., reposting, tagging)?

- Yes
- No
- I don't remember

19 How tolerant are you when an influencer makes a mistake (e.g., misleading post, apology)?

- Very tolerant – everyone makes mistakes
- Somewhat tolerant – depends on the issue
- Not tolerant – I unfollow or ignore them
- I don't pay attention to their behavior

20 How often do you interact with influencers (e.g., polls, live chats, replies)?

- Very often
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

21 Do you share content or profiles of influencers you follow?

- Yes, regularly
- Sometimes
- Only if it's useful or funny
- Never

22 What impact do influencers have on your thinking or lifestyle?

- Very positive – they motivate or inform me
- Somewhat positive – I get ideas from them
- Neutral – no real effect
- Negative – I feel pressured or discontent

23 Have you ever compared yourself to an influencer?

- Yes, often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

24 How did you feel after comparing yourself to an influencer?

- Inspired – I want to improve myself
- Motivated but also pressured
- Insecure or frustrated
- No effect – I don't compare myself

25 Would you like to become an influencer yourself? Why or why not?

- Yes – I want to inspire or help others
- Yes – It looks like a fun and rewarding career

- No – It looks stressful or fake
- No – I'm not interested in public attention

26 What do you think of influencer marketing in Uganda.....

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the effectiveness of influencer marketing as a promotional strategy in the Ugandan market. With the rise of social media platforms, influencers have become essential intermediaries between brands and consumers. The research aims to evaluate how influencer characteristics—such as credibility, authenticity, and audience connection— influence consumer purchasing behavior and brand perception.

Using a quantitative approach, data was collected through a structured questionnaire in google forms was distributed to social media users in Uganda. The findings indicate that consumers are more responsive to influencers who appear trustworthy, relatable, and authentic. Furthermore, the study reveals that influencers with strong parasocial relationships (i.e., perceived closeness and familiarity) have a greater impact on consumer decisions than traditional advertising methods.

Despite challenges such as content saturation and lack of regulation, the study concludes that influencer marketing is a powerful tool for brand awareness and engagement in Uganda. The research offers practical recommendations for brands aiming to optimize their influencer strategies, including a focus on niche targeting, transparency, and long-term collaborations.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, Uganda, social media, consumer behavior, authenticity, parasocial relationships, marketing effectiveness