

Influence of Social Media Brand Influencers on Believability and Usage of Brands Among Selected Undergraduates in Kwara State

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Abstract

This study assessed the influence of social media brand influencers on the believability and usage of brands among undergraduates at selected universities in Kwara State. The consumer socialisation theory was used as the anchor for the study. Using the stratified random sampling, probability proportionate to size (PPS) was adopted to select primarily the study's sample size among 381 respondents at the University of Ilorin, Kwara State University, Malete and Landmark University, Omu-Aran. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences IBM SPSS 21.0 was utilised for the analysis. The findings showed that university students perceived social media brand influencers as giving instantaneous updates on products; they also gave moderate attention to social media platforms and always used Twitter as their preferred social media platform. Moreover, the result of the effectiveness of social media brand influencers on brand believability and usage showed that the majority of respondents agreed that social media brand influencers impact brand believability and usage with ($M=3.6$, $SD=1.3$). Other findings showed that testimonials from trusted social media brand influencers influence social media users' believability and usage with ($M=3.5$, $SD=1.2$). This suggests that the undergraduates in Kwara State have a high reliance on the content shared by social media brand influencers. The study concluded that today's companies have to work with digital influencers to improve their brand image and build a sense of loyalty among consumers.

Keywords: Social Media, Brand Influencers, Believability, Brand Usage, University Undergraduates

1. Introduction

The rise of social media has significantly influenced the way young people, especially college and university students, interact with brands (Rebelo, 2017). Indeed, Liu, Jiang, Lin, Ding, Duan, and Xu (2015) indicate that undergraduate students are more likely to be influenced by information provided by individuals characterised by a high level of exposure, which may include celebrities. For this reason, Liu, Jin, Briones and Kuch (2012) argue that most companies have considered influencer identification as an important approach, because social media can facilitate the spread of advertising messages through the 'recommendations' of influencers to their large follower networks. Therefore, marketers have to understand that their marketing efforts can increase sales

and profit if they can manage the use of social media and the power of social media influencers. However, much of the influencer research has been done from the perspective of the "brand enthusiasts" (Abidin & Ots, 2016). Despite the body of literature on them, the credibility and authenticity of the influencers in creating brand awareness and messaging have come into question (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki & Wilner, 2010). Their impactful influence on consumers' buying behaviour and their product perception has compelled many studies to consider the trends in popularity and influence of the influencers. In a study by Kwak, Lee, Park, and Moon (2010), three measures were employed to assess the effectiveness of influencers on Twitter, namely: the number of followers, page ranking, and the number of retweets, with ranking being the most prominent. In this regard, Sertoglu, Catli,

and Korkmaz (2014) express that through an influencer, purchase intentions for viewers are determined, and subsequently, the problem is formed, followed by the acceptance of the information that is provided to the audience.

Considering that social media inherently engenders skepticism toward corporate advertising (Akar & Topcu, 2011), this research aimed to determine the perceptions of credibility that social media users, especially undergraduate students, attach to influencers and the resultant impact on trustworthiness and engagement. This research is expected to help managers and marketers overcome this problem, as the actual experiences of consumers are already available. With more sophistication, they may attempt to reassure managers and marketers that the influencer, in tandem with platforms like Instagram and Twitter, is indeed a very important 'bridge' for completing the sale and extending the engagement. Although, numerous similar studies have been conducted, which include but not limited to the works of Abidin and Ots (2016), Dolbec and Fischer (2015), Abidin and Thomson (2012), De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017), and Solomon (2017), that show how social media influencers influenced the perceptions of users toward brands, the influence of social media brand influencers on believability and usage of brands, particularly among undergraduates, have not been adequately examined. This, therefore, underscores the need to investigate the believability of social media influencers by undergraduates before the usage of a particular brand and to understand the relationship between social media influencers and the social media users among undergraduates in Kwara State universities. Specifically, this study aimed to investigate (i) students' social media usage pattern and perceptions about social media influencers on engagement with any particular brand (ii) the effectiveness of social media brand influencers on brand believability and usage among selected university students in Kwara State, and (iii) the influence of social media influencers on the believability and usage of brands among undergraduates in Kwara state.

2. Literature Review

Content, Expertise, and Social Identity as Power of Social Media Influencers

According to Forbes (2016), a social media influencer (SMI) possesses the capacity to shape the attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, and purchasing decisions of their audience. It was elucidated that this is attrib-

utable to their capacity to exert influence, along with their engagement and communication with their audience. Li, Lee, and Lien (2014) assert that social media influencers (SMIs) are distinguished by their ability to create and disseminate high-quality content across their social media platforms. This is accomplished through the provision of recommendations, images, and other forms of content that persuade a consumer to acquire a particular product (Forbes, 2016). Li et al. (2014) contend that SMIs can enhance their content by personalising it, thereby allowing followers to gain insight into their personal experiences (Forbes, 2016).

Consumers are posited to be influenced to accept the information conveyed through personalised content, as they perceive their interests, attitudes, and viewpoints to be aligned with those of the SMIs (Kapitan & Silvera, 2015). However, Nejad, Sherrell, and Babakus (2014) observe that an individual's current motivations, interests, and attitudes can significantly influence their focus and comprehension of the information presented within the content. To foster a sense of direct communication from the source, SMIs must construct their narratives in a more personalised manner, contrasting with those of corporations (Park, Lee, & Han, 2007; Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014).

When evaluating the acceptance of information from SMIs, consumers consider expertise to be an exceedingly desirable attribute (Valck, Hoffman, Hennig-Thurau, & Spann, 2013). The consumer's perception of the SMI's capacity to generate accurate and reliable content is frequently utilised to delineate competence within this domain, given the consumer's established relationship with the SMI (Nejad, Sherrell, & Babakus, 2014). If an SMI is perceived as an authority in their respective field, the consumer will probably embrace the information presented by the SMI (Valck et al., 2013). According to Kapitan and Silvera (2015), SMIs are celebrated for their specialised knowledge and expertise across various product categories, such as fashion or beauty, rather than being confined to a singular area. When SMIs endorse a product, their expertise and knowledge contribute to their perceived credibility, as they demonstrate familiarity with the subject matter (Kapitan & Silvera, 2015). Nejad et al. (2014) indicate that while expertise influences a consumer's attachment to the information provided by the SMI, credibility exerts a more substantial effect on how the consumer interprets the content presented. The appeal of the SMI fosters a more favourable disposition towards the product being mar-

keted, and in a broader context, knowledge can enhance brand consideration (Kapitan & Silvera, 2015).

As a result, a consumer's connections and perceptions of a social media influencer (SMI) may be the most significant factor influencing their attitude towards the SMI (Li, Lee, & Lien, 2014). A positive correlation between a consumer's SMI and the recommended product may pique the consumer's interest and raise their awareness of the product, perhaps leading to a purchase (Li, Lee & Lien, 2014). For example, a consumer may be surfing their social media profiles when they notice an advertisement for a clothing brand created by a prominent and likeable SMI. Because of the attractiveness of the SMI in the advertisement, the buyer may believe that they can have the same thing and look just as good. This influence can occur even if the buyer was not looking for a specific piece of clothing. As a result, the brand that sells the product that SMI promotes attracts the consumer's attention and may lead to a purchase. Additionally, a client will consider the brand that was introduced by the SMI when selecting from a set of clothing goods at a store (Kapitan & Silvera, 2015). This image indicates that when consumers see people they look up to wearing, using, or presenting a brand's products, they are more inclined to adopt and purchase those items over those from other businesses (Forbes, 2016).

According to Liu et al. (2015), trust can influence the level of influence between a consumer and an SMI, while Nejad, Sherrell, and Babakus (2014) stress that the level of belief a consumer has in the material determines how trustworthy they perceive it to be. Going a step further, Al-Oufi, Kim, and Saddik (2012) define trust as the positive outcome of an activity based on another person's beliefs, facts, or actions. A trustworthy SMI can encourage customers to accept product recommendations more easily, according to Liu et al. (2015). To preserve clients' trust, the SMI must continue to be proficient in their area of specialisation, such as fitness or fashion (Liu et al., 2015). SMIs are perceived as more trustworthy and credible than people who offer their knowledge on a specific product category, so their credibility suffers when they provide information on topics outside of their area of expertise (Forbes, 2016). Trust is also required when determining the value of an SMI's opinions and recommendations (Liu et al., 2015). Meanwhile, Li et al. (2014) argue that companies need to select the right SMI to have the greatest impact on consumers. According to Liu et al. (2015), firms should give

special focus to targeting SMIs who have a high degree of trust (as well as competence). Customers are more likely to trust an SMI when they interact with someone who understands their interests and tastes in goods and brands (Liu et al., 2015). As a result, a consumer may be more inclined to purchase if they receive recommendations from a reliable source (Hsu, Lin, & Chiang, 2013).

Influencers' Impact on Consumers' Decisions on Social Media

In the realm of social networks, a previously passive individual may abruptly transition into an active and knowledgeable participant (Belagati, 2017). Social networks facilitate the dissemination of customer sentiments and experiences regarding products and services among users. Potential consumers, driven by the desire to acquire insights from individuals who have utilised and purchased the products they are contemplating buying, frequently engage with product evaluations shared by virtual influencers, as noted by Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) and Barzdaitė and Abromavičius (2016). A substantial number of consumers actively seek online evaluations of products and services and rely on opinion leaders to ascertain the influence of product information on their purchasing decisions (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Barzdaitė & Abromavičius, 2016).

The primary objective of influencer marketing is to enhance brand recognition and sales figures. The endorsements and recommendations provided by influencers on social media platforms directly contribute to the realisation of these objectives (Edson, Escalas, & Bettman, 2015). The endorsements and suggestions made by influencers are frequently regarded with seriousness, which can significantly aid the organisation in attracting new clientele. The recommendations from influencers are often perceived as more trustworthy than conventional advertising. According to Černikovaitė (2018), individuals who place confidence in the opinion leaders are likely to purchase the product or service and, upon satisfaction, are predisposed to repeat the purchase.

Consequently, influencers possess a unique persona, a distinct set of values, and a specific domain of expertise, alongside a robust personal brand identity. They inherently attract a considerable number of followers on social media, and their audience tends to exhibit consistency in relationships, interests, and even socioeconomic status. They engage in dialogue with

their followers and encourage their behaviours; their voice is authentic, and they adhere to a set of principles (Černikovaitė, 2018). When followers of a brand share, comment on, or “like” a reference to that brand, it enhances the brand’s visibility online. Furthermore, the followers of the contributor will have the opportunity to disseminate the trademark entry and peruse comments. In this manner, the brand’s information is disseminated more broadly, and the outreach expands organically.

The influencer can engage numerous, even highly specific, demographic segments (Bush, Martin, & Bush, 2004). This attribute proves to be particularly advantageous when the brand’s target audience is narrowly defined. In such instances, it is prudent to collaborate with an influencer who caters specifically to that brand rather than opting for a widely recognised personality. Based on the preceding observations, the organisation assesses the influence of social media influencers on consumer purchasing decisions before soliciting them for favourable reviews of their products or services. Influencers have cultivated trust and fostered intimate connections with their followers. In this context, users perceive influencers as credible sources of information concerning specific products or services. Individuals are often regarded as possessing a particular status due to their substantial follower base, frequently exceeding 10,000.

Branding with Social Media

On social media platforms, influencers interact with brand consumers authentically and sincerely. According to a study by Ashley and Tuten (2014), branded activities on social media can be strategically employed to enhance brand traffic, foster customer engagement and loyalty, facilitate word-of-mouth marketing, and elevate brand awareness and recognition. The content disseminated on social media is frequently shared and contributed by actively participating customers. Foslund (2012) posits that participation can manifest either as passive engagement, such as merely consuming media content, or as active involvement, exemplified by the submission of user-generated narratives. Commonly utilised metrics for assessing consumer engagement encompass comments, clicks, follower counts, referrals to others, inquiries, friend requests, or the completion of a purchase (Falls, 2010).

These consumer behaviours that culminate in a brand reference within an individual’s network are designated as influence impressions (Li & Bernoff, 2008). Such influence impressions represent a form

of earned marketing on social media platforms, analogous to word-of-mouth advertising. Individuals utilise social media to cultivate and sustain relationships with both brands and other individuals, owing to their intrinsic sociability. By actively engaging with their followers on social media, influencers possess the capacity to alter their audience’s opinions, attitudes, and beliefs regarding brands. Influencer marketing constitutes a pivotal strategy that organisations deploy to engage and forge connections with their targeted audience, as evidenced by empirical studies. Theoretical frameworks concerning the efficacy of influence and individuals’ perceptions of inclusivity within a brand community are intrinsically linked to the ability of social media influencers to cultivate authentic relationships with brand consumers. The marketing landscape is continually evolving, with social media platforms such as Instagram playing a vital role in broadening customer outreach. In the pre-social media era, content may have been subject to more stringent control; however, the present landscape is characterised by ordinary individuals exerting influence over their followers and articulating their opinions, values, and perspectives on products. Comprehending the methodologies employed by these influencers in managing their brands, whether it be through user engagement, the promotion of specific brand identities, or the nature of content produced, is of paramount importance.

Empirical Review

The brand acceptance and the influence of social media relationships are well-researched. Atika, Ujang and Tinaprilla (2019) did a study of social media influencers’ effects on brand image, self-concept and buying intention. Data were gathered from the online survey on websites and social media sites. Samples were collected through convenience sampling, and the samples of the study consisted of 219 respondents in total. In this research, exogenous variables involved the social media influencers; the intervening variables included the brand image and self-concept, while the purchase intention was treated as the endogenous variable. This study used the SmartPLS software in analysing the data through the analytical method of Structural Equation Modelling. The study found that though brand image has a positive significant effect on the intention to purchase, self-concept and social media influencers significantly had negative impacts on the intention to buy. It is ascertained that social media influencers highly boost the consumers’ views both on the local cosmetics brand and themselves. Besides, brand image is shown to have a positive impact

on the intention to make purchases.

Gorgulu (2019) examined how trust in Instagram influencers affected customers' tendency to buy a brand. The research tested for relationships that may exist between the trust of Instagram users in digital influencers and associations made with attributes of advertised products. Data was collected by conducting an online survey targeted at users of Instagram. Higher influencer trust resulted in a higher level of brand involvement, loyalty, and image, as found by the results of this study. In addition, the correlation of brand loyalty with the consumer's trust in digital influencers was found to be strongly positive, while the brand image and consumer trust in digital influencers showed a similar correlation.

The purpose of the study by Baker (2018) was to investigate social media influencers as a source of advertising for the Irish cosmetics industry from the perspective of female millennial consumers. Seven in-depth interviews were conducted in total, where female Millennial consumers shared an interest in beauty and social media influencers. This research applied an interpretivist inductive methodology to derive a true representation of the opinions of women Millennial consumers. The thematic coding was applied to interpret such opinions. It emerged from the findings that marketers must ensure reliability by portraying the lives of social media influencers to be similar to those of Millennial consumers. The study also found that even though female Millennials were aware of the practice, they did not approve of influencers manipulating publicly shared images.

In their study, Kostic Ivanovic and Okanovic (2018) explored the emergence of social networks in research into social media influencer marketing practice centred around brand and business engagement with consumers. The study aimed to explain influencer marketing in a social media context by tracing the marketing roots of the concept and placing it in the digital era and a world where social media connects individuals. The study classified influencers into different categories that will help campaign creators monitor, assess, and choose the best influencers for a certain campaign and brand. However, according to Forbes magazine, the findings were that influencer marketing is the most favourite current marketing trend. Along the same line of argument, the findings from the literature review indicate that the increased popularity of social networks has transformed the way companies and brands communicate with their clients.

Theoretical Approach

Consumer Socialisation Theory (CST)

The Consumer Socialisation Theory readily serves as this study's foundation. According to the theory of consumer socialisation, through the three steps of modelling, reinforcement and social engagement, consumers acquire concepts and behaviours from the socialisation agent. The process of copying the behaviour of the socialisation agent is what is referred to as modelling. The socialisation agent may use both positive and negative reinforcement strategies. Last but not least, social interaction promotes learning through strategies, including deliberate consumer training. Consumer learning happens when the client and the socialisation agent interact (Moschis & Moore, 1979). According to Moschis (1987), peer group influence, which includes the authority of the influencing agent, has a major impact on a consumer's behaviour and opinions.

The theory of consumer socialisation maintains that consumers learn concepts and behaviours from the socialisation agent through three processes: contact, modelling and reinforcement. Consumer modelling refers to reproducing the behaviours of the socialisation agent. The agents can use methods of positive and negative strategies for reinforcement. Lastly, social connection enables learners to acquire knowledge in ways such as intentional consumer training. Moschis and Moore (1979) would contend that consumer learning emanates from the interaction between the client and the socialisation agent. In this case, according to Moschis (1987), the social media influencer would be a "socialisation agent", in that they are an influencing source of the imposition of norms, attitudes, motives, and behaviours in the customer.

This, therefore, situates the social media influencers as agents of computer-mediated socialisation. The undergraduates are, thereafter, likely to imitate the norms, attitudes, motivations, and behaviours of the social media influencers they follow. Consumers are influenced to act in a manner that is consistent with the attitudes and behaviours of the social media influencer they follow, and they learn about the product and/or its usage from the influencer.

3. Material and Method

This study applied a quantitative approach of the survey method to study how social media brand influencers affect beliefs and the use of certain brands

among Kwara State undergraduates. Three universities in Kwara State were selected from the three senatorial zones in the state, with a combined population of 67,661. These include Landmark University, Omu-Aran (Kwara South), with a student population of 4,264 (Student Affair Unit, 2020); University of Ilorin (Ilorin) with 44,897 students (Academic Support Services, 2020) from Kwara Central; and Kwara State University, Malete (Kwara North) with 18,500 students (Student Affair Unit, 2020). The sample size for the study was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan sample size table, which gave 381. The stratified sampling technique was adopted to achieve systematic selection to ensure an approximately equal representation. Thus, stratified sampling with probability proportionate to size was used in arriving at the sample size for the study. This is because PPS recognises many groups (or the composite characteristics) in the target population and then takes the appropriate actions to incorporate them in the sample (Umar & Usman, 2015). It is particularly useful when the sampling units range greatly in size since it ensures that individuals in larger sites have the same chance of being included in the sample as those in smaller settings, and vice versa. PPS and weighting average were used in determining the sample size of respondents at each university, since the selected institutions are not of the same size, as shown in the table below:

Table 1: Universities and Sample Size

S/N	Universities	Population Figure	Proportion	Sample Size
1	University of Ilorin	44,897	381 x 44,897 / 63,661	253
2	Kwara State University	18,500	381 x 18,500 / 63,661	104
3	Landmark University	4,264	381 x 264 / 63,661	24
4	Total	67,661		381

This was done by dividing the total sample size of 381 by the sum of undergraduate students from the University of Ilorin, Kwara State University, and Landmark University, respectively, times the undergraduate students in each university, to ensure that the respondents are proportionally represented. The sample size of respondents in each university is also shown in the table. The University of Ilorin had a sample size of 253, while Kwara State University and Landmark University had 104 and 24 respondents, respectively. Meanwhile, the study used a simple random sampling technique in the process of administering question-

naires to the respondents, considering the different faculties and departments in each of the selected universities. And thus, with a random sampling method, every undergraduate in the study area had the chance of being selected (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, IBM SPSS 21.0, was used for data analysis. Inferential statistics, frequency tables, numbers, percentages, mean, and standard deviation were employed to comprehensively present and analyse the findings. This was done in congruence with the research objectives of the study.

4. Result and Discussion

Data were gathered and quantitatively evaluated based on the findings of a cross-sectional survey study about the influence of social media brand influencers on undergraduates' beliefs and brand usage in three universities in Kwara State.

Table 2: Social Media Usage and Perception of Social Media Influencers

Social media usage	Frequency	Percentage
How often do you use social media?		
Often	131	35.4
Seldom	30	8.1
Always	173	46.8
When I get a notification on give always	28	7.6
I don't	8	2.2
Total	370	100
Which of the following social media platforms do you use most?		
Instagram	184	49.7
Twitter	186	50.3
Total	370	100
How much attention do you pay to the use of social media platforms?		
No attention	75	20.3
Much attention	14	38.6
Moderate attention	152	41.1
Total	370	100
What is your perception of social media influencers?		
Very Credible	83	22.4
Easy Accessibility	121	32.7
Instantaneous Product update	166	44
Total	370	100

The data in Table 2, which is on social media usage, indicate that the majority of the respondents always made use of social media, with 46.8%, while 2.2% of the respondents noted that they did not use social media, making them the least of the respondents. On the type of social media platforms used by respondents, the majority, that is 50.3% of the respondents, used Twitter as their social media platform, while 49.7% of the respondents were users of Instagram. In respect of the attention given to these social media platforms by respondents, majority i.e., 41.1%

of the respondents gave moderate attention to their preferred social media platforms, followed by 38.6% of the respondents that gave much attention to social media use, while 20.3% of the respondents gave no attention to social media. On respondents' perception of social media influencers, 44.9% of the respondents perceived social media influencers as giving instantaneous brand updates about a brand, while 32.7% of the respondents perceived them as having easy accessibility, and 22.4% of the respondents perceived them to be very credible.

Table 3: Effectiveness of Social Media Brand Influencers on Brand Believability and Usage

Effectiveness of Social Media Brand Influencers	Level of Agreement*0%							
	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD	%
Social media brand influencers generate leads for new brands through trends or hashtags, giving the product more popularity	15.7	11.6	12.4	29.7	30.5	3.5	1.4	70
Social media brand influencers' approach is consumer-oriented, as there are possibilities of giveaways for product effectiveness	14.6	14.9	16.2	27.6	26.8	3.4	1.4	68
Social media brand influencers' involvement in product affirmation allows for niche marketing	11.4	10.3	18.9	30.5	28.9	3.6	1.3	72
Social media influencers can reach a wider and more diverse audience	15.7	17.3	19.7	25.1	22.2	3.2	1.4	64
Social media brand influencers bring more exposure to your brand and can attract new customers	9.2	12.4	18.4	33.2	26.8	3.6	1.3	72
Social media brand influencers can add value to a brand and reinforce its positioning.	11.1	13.2	22.4	27.6	25.9	3.4	1.3	68
Total						4.14	1.62	63.2

***Scale: 1=Strongly disagree 2= Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree**

The data in Table 3, which is on the effectiveness of social media brand influencers, indicates that 30.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that social media brand influencers generate leads for new brands through trends or hashtags, giving the product more popularity with (M=3.5, SD=1.4). The Table also revealed that 27.6% of the respondents agreed that the social media brand influencers' approach is consumer-oriented, as there are possibilities of giveaways for product effectiveness with (M=3.4, SD=1.4). Moreover, 30.5% of the respondents agreed that social media brand influencers' involvement in product affirmation allows for niche marketing with (M=3.6, SD=1.3), while 25.1% of the respondents agreed that social media influencers can reach a wider and more

diverse audience with (M=3.2, SD=1.4), 33.2% of the respondents agreed that social media brand influencers bring more brand exposure and can attract new types of customers with (M=3.6, SD=1.3). Lastly, 27.6% of the respondents agreed that social media brand influencers can add value to a brand, help reinforce its positioning and market segmentation with (M=3.4, SD=1.3). From the table, it can be seen that items 3 and 5 have the joint highest mean (3.6). It can also be seen that all the items have a mean that is above the decision point (3.00). It could, therefore, be concluded that all items on the effectiveness of social media brand influencers were agreed upon by the respondents.

Table 4: Influence of Social Media Influencers on Believability and Usage of Brands

Influence on believability and usage of brands	Level of agreement*							
	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD	%
Social media users' loyalty to social media brand influencers influences brands' believability and usage	24.1	10.8	16.2	20.0	28.9	3.2	1.5	64
Testimonials from trusted social media influencers influence brands' believability and usage	10.5	12.4	14.1	45.4	17.6	3.5	1.2	70
Product hype by social media brand influencers positively stimulates the believability and usage of brands	29.2	11.9	15.4	31.4	12.2	2.9	1.4	56
Expatriating the efficacy of brands influences brands' believability and usage	18.6	11.1	8.9	49.7	1.6	3.2	1.3	64
A social media brand influencer's personality helps build the believability and usage of brands	23.5	11.9	16.8	29.7	18.1	3.1	1.4	62
The credibility of social media brand influencers influence brands' believability and usage.	23.5	12.4	19.7	26.8	17.6	3.0	1.4	60

*Scale: 1=Strongly disagree 2= Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

The data in Table 4 which is on the influence of social media influencers on the believability and usage of brands among undergraduates in Kwara State indicates that 28.9% of the respondents strongly agreed that social media users' loyalty to social media brand influencers influences brands' believability and usage with (M=3.2, SD=1.5), while 45.4% of the respondents agreed that testimonials from social media brand influencers translate to social media users believability and usage with (M=3.5, SD=1.2). In the same vein, 31.4% of the respondents agreed that product hype by social media brand influencers positively stimulates the believability and usage of brands by social media influencers with (M=2.9, SD=1.4). Moreover, 49.7% of the respondents agreed that social media brand influencers carry their social media followers along in brand showcase by expatiating the efficacy of such brand product with (M=3.2, SD=1.3), while 29.7% of the respondents agreed that social media brand influencer's personality helps build the believability and usage of brands with (M=3.1, SD=1.4), and 26.8% of the respondents agreed that the credibility of social media brand influencers influence believability and usage of brands with (M=3.0, SD=1.4). Based on the results shown in the Table, it can be seen that one item (three) was below the decision point of 3.00. Also, item 2 has the highest mean. This implies that the respondents strongly agreed that testimonials from trusted social media influencers influence social media users' believability and usage. It can be concluded that undergraduates in Kwara universities highly believe content taken from social media brand influencers.

Based on the efficacy of social media brand in-

fluencers, the findings of the study revealed that these influencers increase the popularity of products by referring consumers to new businesses through hashtags or trends. The results on the efficacy of social media brand influencers, therefore, support Lim et al.'s (2017) findings that followers of specific social media influencers are more likely to believe their messages due to experience and credibility; hence, social media influencers are considered more potent and effective in driving their followers' behaviour. The study established that product believability and usage are influenced by the loyalty of social media users to social media brand influencers, the belief and usage of social media users are affected by testimonials from social media brand influencers, and that product hype from social media brand influencers positively influence social media users in their belief and usage of brands.

These findings were based on how certain Kwara State undergraduates' beliefs in social media influencers affect their brand usage. Also, social media brand influencers engage their fans in brand displays by providing details about the efficacy of a brand product. This result confirms Wang, Kao, and Ngamsiriodom's (2017) arguments that when the source, such as "an Instagram influencer," was trustworthy, then the posted information can lead to the creation of belief and attitude change; it also shapes the behaviours of the recipients. To that end, Černikovaitė (2018) also expresses that influencers create an aura of "reliable relationship" and, thereby, "got the trust" of their audience. In this respect, it is considered that the influencers are a reliable source of information about certain goods or services. The findings also support the study of Gorgulu (2019), who identifies that the

relationship between brand loyalty and trust of consumers in digital influencers is preceded by the relationship between brand image and consumer trust in digital influencers, which, in turn, affects brand use.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Over the years, social media brand influencers have indeed proved able to influence the decisions of social media users by trending a new or current brand across many social media handles. Business entities have gained financially from the utilisation of social media brand influencers because, through hashtags or trends, they have created leads to new businesses that often increase a company's exposure or popularity. As these have already established relationships with individuals whom they believe have similar interests in life and other factors, it would seem these individuals ensure others' ideas, beliefs, and behaviours change

or alter, due to that pre-existing allegiance. The power and influence a consumer has with media outlets affect businesses and their credibility regarding usage because the information that such influencers can offer shapes a customer's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours towards a brand. Social media influencers affect decisions of their followers on brand selection and usability since they are highly respected by their followers. It is, therefore, recommended that social media brand influencers establish a consistent relationship between their clients, the brand owners, and followers by quickly and aptly attending to the needs or concerns of their followers. This will increase the number of followers and potential usage of the brand displayed via social media handles. Working with digital influencers is also essential for modern organisations to increase consumer loyalty and brand recognition.

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