

The Influence of Influencer Marketing in Increasing Brand Awareness and Sales for SMEs

Kresnawidiansyah Agustian^{1*}, Rachmat Hidayat², Agustian Zen³, Ratih Ayu Sekarini⁴, Aulia Januar Malik⁵

^{1,2,3,4}Universitas Islam Jakarta, DKI Jakarta, Indonesia

⁵Institut Bisnis Muhammadiyah Bekasi, West Java, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 28 September 2023

Revised: 30 September 2023

Accepted: 2 October 2023

DOI:

10.61100/tacit.v1i2.54

Key words:

Influencer marketing, Brand awareness, SME Sales



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT

In the ever-evolving digital era, marketing through social media has become one of the most effective tools to promote products and services. One of the latest marketing trends that is emerging is the use of influencers in marketing strategies. This study aims to investigate the effect of influencer marketing on increasing brand awareness and sales for SMEs. The technique applied is a qualitative literature analysis with an emphasis on in-depth understanding of the subject over the period from 2012 to 2023. The results of this study indicate that influencer marketing has great potential to provide significant benefits to SMEs in their endeavours to reach their target market, expand brand awareness, and increase sales. In an ever-changing digital world, influencers hold unique appeal as a source of influence that can connect brands with relevant and engaged audiences.

ABSTRAK

Pada era digital yang terus berkembang, pemasaran melalui media sosial telah menjadi salah satu alat yang paling efektif untuk mempromosikan produk dan jasa. Salah satu tren pemasaran terkini yang sedang mengemuka adalah penggunaan influencer dalam strategi pemasaran. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menginvestigasi pengaruh pemasaran influencer terhadap peningkatan kesadaran merek dan penjualan bagi UKM. Teknik yang diterapkan adalah analisis literatur yang bersifat kualitatif dengan penekanan pada pemahaman mendalam tentang subjek selama periode dari tahun 2012 hingga 2023. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pemasaran influencer memiliki potensi besar untuk memberikan manfaat yang signifikan bagi UKM dalam upaya mereka untuk mencapai target pasar, memperluas kesadaran merek, dan meningkatkan penjualan. Dalam dunia digital yang terus berubah, influencer memiliki daya tarik unik sebagai sumber pengaruh yang dapat menghubungkan merek dengan audiens yang relevan dan terlibat.

1. INTRODUCTION

In our ever-evolving digital age, the dynamic landscape of marketing has witnessed a profound transformation, with the employment of social media emerging as a paramount and remarkably potent instrument for the promotion of products and services (Sudirjo, 2023). Within this contemporary marketing milieu, a notable trend that has been steadily gaining traction is the integration of influencers into overarching marketing strategies (Maitri et al., 2023). An influencer, in this context, denotes an individual who not only commands a substantial and influential presence across various social media platforms but also possesses the unique ability to exert a persuasive influence on consumer behavior. Moreover, their strategic involvement in marketing endeavors serves the dual purpose of not only catalyzing shifts in consumer preferences but also fortifying and nurturing a robust and enduring brand identity.

The widespread adoption of influencer marketing is a phenomenon that transcends the boundaries of large corporate entities and is progressively gaining prominence within the realm of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). SMEs, representing a vital cornerstone of a nation's economic landscape, play an indispensable role in fostering job creation and stimulating economic expansion (Kamar et al., 2022). As such,

* Corresponding author, email address: kresnawidiansyah@gmail.com

it becomes imperative for SMEs to not merely embrace but actively leverage the potency of efficacious marketing strategies to ensure their resilience and competitiveness within an ever-evolving and fiercely competitive marketplace.

The central aim of this research project is to thoroughly investigate the impact and effectiveness of influencer marketing in the context of enhancing brand awareness and driving sales growth specifically for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). It is noteworthy that influencer marketing, despite its rising popularity, remains a relatively emerging methodology within the vast landscape of marketing strategies. Furthermore, there exists a notable scarcity of comprehensive research that comprehensively examines its implications for SMEs, especially concerning its potential to bolster brand recognition and boost sales figures. Hence, the significance of this research study cannot be overstated, as it promises to provide invaluable insights into the ways in which influencer marketing can serve as a powerful and transformative tool for SMEs. By shedding light on the potential advantages and challenges inherent in this marketing approach, this research endeavor is poised to offer SMEs a clearer roadmap toward the achievement of their marketing goals, thereby enhancing their competitive edge in an ever-evolving business environment.

Several previous studies have examined the influence of influencer marketing. Previous research shows that influencer marketing can be effective in increasing brand awareness of large companies (Ferina et al., 2021). This happens because influencers have a large and engaged audience on social media, which allows brands to reach a wider audience. Studies also show that influencer marketing can influence consumer purchasing decisions (Mandiri et al., 2022; Sari, 2023). When a trusted influencer recommends a product or service, consumers are more likely to purchase it. The size and quality of influencers can have a significant effect. Some research suggests that influencers with a large number of followers (macro-influencers) can reach more people, but influencers with a more focused audience (micro-influencers) can have a stronger influence (Conde & Casais, 2023). Some studies may also try to measure the Return on Investment (ROI) of influencer marketing campaigns. This is important for large corporations as they want to ensure that their investment in influencer marketing delivers the desired results (Krywalski Santiago & Moreira Castelo, 2020). The type of product or service being promoted may also affect the results. Some products may be more suitable for promotion by influencers than others, depending on the nature of the product and its target audience. When looking at the results of previous research, most of them focus on large companies and pay less attention to SMEs. This research will provide new insights into how SMEs can adopt influencer marketing as an effective marketing strategy, which can help them expand their market reach, increase brand awareness, and ultimately, increase sales.

Moreover, in view of the continually evolving landscape of consumer behavior, which is increasingly gravitating towards the realm of social media platforms, there arises a pressing need for a more profound comprehension of the profound influence wielded by influencer marketing (Aw & Chuah, 2021). This comprehension, when attained, possesses the potential to bestow upon Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) a wealth of invaluable insights as they embark on the journey of formulating marketing strategies that are not only pertinent but also remarkably effective in capturing their target audience's attention. Consequently, it is with a vision of optimism and foresight that this research endeavor is undertaken, as it seeks to make a notable and affirmative contribution to the overarching objectives of SMEs. By shedding light on the intricate dynamics of influencer marketing, this research aspires to empower SMEs to strengthen their foothold in the marketplace, thereby enhancing their growth prospects and ensuring their long-term viability amidst the ever-evolving marketing challenges of the digital era. In essence, this study aspires to serve as a guiding light for SMEs, providing them with the essential navigational tools to not only survive but also thrive within the multifaceted and constantly expanding digital landscape.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is a marketing strategy that involves the collaboration between brands or companies and individuals who wield influence and popularity on social media or within specific industries (Chopra et al., 2021). These individuals, commonly referred to as "influencers," boast a sizable and dedicated follower base on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, TikTok, and more. Influencer marketing harnesses the allure and impact of these influencers to promote products, services, or specific brands to their audience (Patmawati & Miswanto, 2022). Below are some key characteristics of influencer marketing:

1. **Popularity and Influence:** Influencers have the ability to influence the behaviors and opinions of their followers. They are often regarded as authorities in specific fields, such as beauty, fashion, food, technology, or lifestyle (Mahardhani, 2023; Suherlan, 2023).
2. **Engagement and Connection:** Influencers have a closer relationship with their followers compared to conventional advertising. They actively interact with their communities, answering questions, providing recommendations, and sharing personal experiences.
3. **Quality Content:** Influencers create engaging, creative, and relevant content that aligns with the interests and values of their followers. This can take the form of photos, videos, reviews, tutorials, or other attention-grabbing posts.
4. **Authenticity:** Authenticity is a crucial aspect of influencer marketing. Followers expect influencers to promote products or services that align with their values and fit their lifestyles.
5. **Collaboration:** Brands or companies collaborate with influencers to create promotional content. This can include product reviews, unboxing, real-life product usage, or other special campaigns.
6. **Measurement of Results:** Influencer marketing can be measured through various metrics, including the number of new followers, engagement rates (likes, comments, shares), increased brand awareness, and sales generated from influencer campaigns.

Influencer marketing has become an integral part of the digital marketing strategies of many brands and companies. It proves to be an effective tool for reaching a more specific target audience, particularly the younger generation that spends significant time on social media (Ohara, 2023; Said Ahmad et al., 2023). In some cases, influencer marketing can create strong emotional connections between a brand and consumers, as followers feel more connected to the brand through recommendations and experiences shared by the influencers.

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness, represents the level of consumer knowledge and understanding of a brand or product (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012). It reflects how much consumers recognize, recall, and can identify a particular brand when they see or hear about it. Brand awareness is a critical initial step in the consumer journey toward making purchase decisions (Kim & Chao, 2019; Rijal, 2023). There are two main components of brand awareness:

1. **Aided Awareness:** This refers to the level of consumer awareness of a brand when they are given cues or guidance. For example, if someone is asked about car brands and provided with options, they may be able to identify a specific brand because they've heard the name before.
2. **Unaided Awareness:** This measures how well consumers can recall a brand without assistance or guidance. When someone can spontaneously mention a particular brand when discussing a product or service category, it indicates a high level of brand awareness.

Brand awareness is highly significant in marketing because it: 1) **Facilitates Decision-Making:** Consumers tend to choose brands they know and trust. High brand awareness can make consumers more likely to consider and select products or services from that brand. 2) **Enhances Customer Loyalty:** Brand-aware customers are more likely to make repeat purchases if they've had positive experiences. This can lead to more loyal customers. 3) **Streamlines Marketing and Promotion:** Brands with high awareness have a larger customer base to target through marketing campaigns and promotions, making it more effective. 5) **Competitive Edge:** In a competitive market, high brand awareness can provide an advantage in gaining market share and outperforming competitors. To achieve strong brand awareness, companies typically employ various marketing strategies, including advertising, promotions, social media presence, collaboration with influencers, and more. Additionally, providing positive customer experiences and ensuring that the brand meets customer expectations play pivotal roles in building and maintaining a strong brand awareness.

SME Sales

SME sales refer to the quantity of products or services sold by Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) within a specific period (Gherghina et al., 2020). SMEs are businesses with smaller scales compared to large corporations and often have limited resources, including fewer employees, capital, and smaller production capacities (Joensuu-Salo et al., 2023). Therefore, SME sales measure the performance of these businesses in selling their products or services in the market. SME sales can be measured in various ways, including:

1. **Sales Volume:** This reflects the number of products or services sold by SMEs in a specific unit or volume. For instance, the quantity of physical products sold or the number of services provided within a designated time frame.
2. **Sales Value:** This represents the revenue earned by SMEs from the sales of their products or services. It includes the selling price of products or services multiplied by the quantity sold.
3. **Market Share:** SME market share is the percentage of total sales within a specific product or service category that is controlled by SMEs in that market. It can indicate how successful SMEs are in competing within the market.
4. **Sales Growth:** Sales growth refers to changes in the quantity of products or services sold over time. Positive sales growth signifies that SMEs are expanding and gaining more customers or market share.

SME sales play a crucial role in assessing the business health and the ability of SMEs to survive and grow (Ausat & Suherlan, 2021). Strong sales are a vital source of revenue, which can be used for further investment in the business, employee payments, expanding operations, or developing new products and services (Ausat et al., 2022; Karneli, 2023). Effective marketing strategies, inventory management, product/service quality, pricing, and excellent customer service are essential factors that can influence SME sales (Sutrisno et al., 2023). Therefore, SMEs often need to focus on managing all these aspects effectively to achieve and maintain healthy and sustainable sales. In addition, effective marketing strategies, including influencer marketing as mentioned in the previous question, can significantly contribute to boosting SME sales.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, a qualitative literature review method has been employed to delve deeply into the topic of influencer marketing's impact on enhancing brand awareness and sales for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within the time frame spanning from 2012 to 2023. The primary aim of this approach is to identify, assess, and amalgamate pertinent academic literature that has been published in various journals, conference papers, and other academic sources accessible through Google Scholar. The research adheres to a set of crucial steps. Firstly, the researcher initiates the process by pinpointing a specific and relevant research subject, together with a comprehensive understanding of the context and research objectives. Subsequently, well-defined and explicit search criteria are formulated to steer the literature exploration on Google Scholar. The search encompasses the years between 2012 and 2023. Once the search results are obtained, the researcher undertakes a rigorous selection process by scrutinizing the abstracts and summaries of each located article or source. Any literature that proves irrelevant or does not meet the research criteria is excluded from the analysis. The chosen literature is then subject to thorough examination, concentrating on the identification of significant findings, concepts, theories, and prevailing trends within the literature. A qualitative approach is utilized to attain an in-depth comprehension of the research subject. The outcomes of the literature scrutiny are subsequently synthesized and interpreted by the researcher to form a comprehensive grasp of the research topic. Furthermore, these findings are structured into a detailed research report characterized by a well-organized and lucid format. The report encompasses the primary discoveries, analyses, and profound interpretations. The research culminates in the formulation of conclusions that succinctly encapsulate the primary findings and implications derived from the literature review concerning the research topic. This methodology empowers researchers to gain a comprehensive and profound insight into the research topic without necessitating primary data collection. By drawing upon existing literature, this study has the potential to make a valuable contribution to the development of theories, problem-solving, or decision-making across various scientific domains, particularly in the context of influencer marketing's influence on boosting brand awareness and sales for SMEs.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In the swiftly changing landscape of the contemporary digital era, marketing has experienced a transformative shift of immense magnitude. The advent of social media and various online platforms has wrought a revolution in the manner in which brands interact with their customer base. Among the myriad changes within this dynamic terrain, one of the most conspicuous and noteworthy has been the ascent of influencer marketing. Influencer marketing has not only attained a position of prominence but has also transcended the confines of colossal corporate entities, expanding its influence to encompass Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). This phenomenon has left an indelible mark, not just on the business world, but on the broader spectrum of marketing strategies, reshaping the way products and services are promoted and fostering new

avenues for engagement and collaboration.

Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) often operate within the confines of limited resources and frequently find themselves treading the challenging path of intense market competition (Rizos et al., 2016). They face the formidable task of not only establishing a resilient and distinctive brand identity but also extending their reach to potential customers while simultaneously boosting their sales performance (Sutrisno, 2023). In this intricate landscape, influencer marketing emerges as a strategic linchpin, playing a pivotal and multifaceted role. Influencer marketing, with its dynamic and adaptive nature, serves as a vital conduit through which MSMEs can harness the influential power of individuals who have cultivated substantial followings and credibility in various niches. These influencers enable MSMEs to create authentic and engaging connections with their precisely targeted audiences. By harnessing the persuasive sway of influencers, MSMEs can not only foster brand recognition but also sow the seeds of trust and loyalty among consumers (Haudi et al., 2022). This symbiotic partnership between MSMEs and influencers encompasses an array of strategies, from product endorsements and reviews to immersive storytelling and behind-the-scenes glimpses into the brand's ethos. As this collaboration unfolds, it has the potential to elevate MSMEs to new heights by unlocking untapped markets, amplifying their market presence, and ultimately catapulting their sales figures to unprecedented levels. Influencer marketing stands as a transformative force that empowers MSMEs to navigate the competitive landscape with finesse, fortify their brand foundation, and flourish in the ever-evolving business ecosystem.

The question that arises is, why is influencer marketing so effective in increasing brand awareness and sales for SMEs? Let us delve deeper into what makes influencer marketing stand out as a formidable strategy. Influencers are individuals who have painstakingly cultivated a robust following on social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and various others. They are not merely figures of popularity but also hold significant credibility in the eyes of their followers. When an influencer recommends or endorses a product or service, their followers often perceive it as a recommendation from a trusted friend or an expert in a particular field (Cabeza-Ramírez et al., 2022). This fosters an emotional bond between the influencer and their followers, which is akin to a relationship built on trust, authenticity, and shared interests. The essence of influencer marketing lies in its ability to harness the innate human desire for connection and trust (G. Dalangin et al., 2021). These influencers, with their carefully curated content and engaging narratives, have the power to sway opinions, shape preferences, and ignite conversations within their dedicated communities. As they share their personal experiences and genuine endorsements, they transcend the traditional barriers of advertising and connect with their audience on a deeply relatable level. In this era of digital saturation, influencer marketing emerges as a powerful tool that allows brands to access not just a vast audience but a receptive and engaged one (Haenlein et al., 2020; Wanof, 2023). It serves as a bridge between brands and consumers, facilitating authentic dialogues, and offering an avenue for brands to be seamlessly integrated into the everyday lives of their target audience. This unique approach opens doors for brands to become a part of the stories and aspirations of their customers, ultimately leading to a more profound and enduring impact on the market. In summation, influencer marketing's prominence arises from its ability to humanize the marketing landscape. It leverages the influence and credibility of individuals who have cultivated genuine connections with their followers, transforming marketing efforts into meaningful interactions and cultivating brand loyalty that extends beyond the transactional.

For Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), forging collaborations with influencers who are aligned with their respective niches or industries can yield substantial advantages. Firstly, this strategic partnership aids in reaching an audience that might be challenging to access through conventional marketing channels. Influencer followers are typically highly engaged and enthusiastic about the content shared by their trusted influencers, thereby enabling a brand's message to penetrate a remarkably focused and receptive audience (Lou & Yuan, 2019). By aligning with influencers whose expertise and interests closely align with their own products or services, SMEs can effectively tap into a pool of potential customers who already exhibit a keen interest in the relevant niche. This resonance between the influencer's content and the SME's offerings creates a natural and seamless connection, enhancing the likelihood of garnering genuine interest and trust among the influencer's dedicated followers. Moreover, collaborating with influencers provides SMEs with the opportunity to harness the influencer's creative prowess. Influencers excel in crafting compelling narratives, visually appealing content, and engaging experiences for their audience. When applied to the promotion of SME products or services, this creativity can breathe new life into marketing campaigns,

transforming them into captivating and memorable brand stories (Andhini & Andanawarih, 2023). Additionally, influencer collaborations can extend beyond mere endorsements. They can encompass immersive and authentic experiences, such as product unboxings, behind-the-scenes insights, or even influencer-generated content that showcases the SME's offerings in real-life scenarios. These multifaceted interactions not only facilitate a deeper level of consumer engagement but also establish an emotional connection between the brand and its potential customers. Partnering with relevant influencers empowers SMEs to access untapped market segments, leverage the creativity and authenticity of influencers, and establish meaningful connections with an engaged and focused audience. This collaboration is, therefore, a strategic and multifaceted approach that can significantly enhance an SME's marketing efforts and overall brand impact.

Secondly, the influence of an influencer can significantly enhance brand awareness. When an influencer consistently incorporates an SME's brand or product into their content, it fosters top-of-mind awareness among their followers. These followers not only become aware of the brand but also open themselves up to the possibility of trying the product or service due to the influencer's endorsement. This consistent presence of the SME's brand within an influencer's content creates a powerful psychological effect. Followers begin to associate the brand with the influencer they trust and admire, making it a familiar and even preferred choice when they consider making a purchase within that particular niche or industry (Ao et al., 2023). Moreover, influencer-generated content often offers a more organic and relatable perspective on the brand. It showcases how the product or service seamlessly fits into the influencer's everyday life, making it appear more accessible and relevant to the audience. This not only bolsters brand awareness but also positions the SME as a natural and trustworthy choice for potential customers. Collaborating with influencers is akin to planting the seeds of brand recognition that gradually blossom into a full-fledged presence within the minds of their engaged followers (Ibáñez-Sánchez et al., 2022). As the influencer consistently integrates the SME's offerings into their content, it ensures that the brand remains at the forefront of the audience's consciousness, making them more inclined to explore and ultimately choose the products or services endorsed by the influencer.

Thirdly, influencer marketing frequently encapsulates a powerful element of authenticity. Influencers tend to promote products or services that align with their own values and lifestyle choices. This naturally conveys the impression that the brand is an integral and authentic part of the influencer's everyday life, fostering a sense of trustworthiness among their followers. The authenticity in influencer marketing emanates from the fact that influencers are not merely endorsing products for monetary gain; rather, they are selectively choosing to associate with brands that genuinely resonate with their beliefs, preferences, and experiences (Audrezet et al., 2020). This deliberate alignment between the influencer's personal identity and the promoted brand lends a heightened level of credibility to the endorsement. As influencers seamlessly integrate the SME's offerings into their content, they do so in a way that appears organic and congruent with their regular activities. This depiction of the brand as a natural and unforced inclusion in the influencer's life makes it relatable and appealing to their audience. Followers are more likely to trust recommendations that mirror the influencer's authentic lifestyle choices and feel reassured that the product or service genuinely delivers on its promises. Furthermore, the authenticity conveyed through influencer marketing serves to differentiate it from conventional advertising (Leung et al., 2022). While traditional ads often appear scripted and detached from real life, influencer endorsements exude a sense of genuine enthusiasm and personal connection, making the brand message far more relatable and impactful. The authenticity inherent in influencer marketing is a potent force that fosters trust and resonance with the audience. The alignment of values and lifestyle choices between the influencer and the SME's brand creates a compelling narrative that not only enhances the brand's reputation but also ensures that it is perceived as a reliable and integral part of the influencer's life by their followers (Berne-Manero & Marzo-Navarro, 2020). This authentic connection can be a game-changer in building long-lasting relationships with customers and driving brand loyalty.

Lastly, the measurement of influencer marketing outcomes can be relatively straightforward. With the assistance of data and analytics, SMEs can gain insight into the extent to which influencer campaigns have succeeded in boosting brand awareness and driving sales. Metrics such as the acquisition of new followers, engagement rates, and increases in sales attributable to influencer campaigns can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of this strategy (Tjandrawibawa, 2020). The use of data-driven analytics in influencer marketing empowers SMEs to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of their campaigns. They can track key performance indicators (KPIs) that specifically align with their marketing objectives. For instance, by monitoring the growth in their social media following (Ausat, 2023; Azzaakiyyah, 2023), SMEs can gauge the campaign's impact on brand exposure. Similarly, tracking engagement metrics, such as likes, comments,

and shares, offers insights into the level of audience interaction and interest generated by influencer-generated content. Moreover, the impact on sales can be quantified by attributing revenue increases to influencer-driven initiatives. By employing unique tracking links or promo codes associated with influencers, SMEs can trace the direct impact of influencer marketing on their bottom line (Wielki, 2020). This level of traceability allows for a precise assessment of return on investment (ROI), enabling SMEs to make data-informed decisions regarding future influencer collaborations. The measurement aspect of influencer marketing not only provides SMEs with concrete evidence of their campaign's success but also furnishes them with a wealth of insights to fine-tune their strategies. This iterative process allows SMEs to continuously optimize their influencer partnerships, adapting them to evolving market dynamics and customer preferences. The ease of measuring influencer marketing outcomes, thanks to data and analytics, affords SMEs the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of their campaigns comprehensively. By utilizing a range of metrics, from audience growth to engagement rates and revenue attribution, SMEs can gain a deep understanding of the impact of influencer collaborations and refine their strategies for maximum impact.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to bear in mind that collaborating with influencers also necessitates meticulous planning. SMEs must select influencers who align with their brand, possess an understanding of the influencer's audience, and collaborate effectively to achieve shared objectives. The success of an influencer campaign is also contingent upon the SME's ability to deliver high-quality products or services that can meet the expectations of the influencer's followers. The process of influencer selection warrants careful consideration. SMEs should evaluate potential influencers not only based on their follower count but also on the relevance of their content and the alignment of their personal brand with that of the SME. By identifying influencers whose values, interests, and aesthetic resonate with the SME's brand identity, a more authentic and impactful partnership can be forged (Ki et al., 2020). This strategic alignment ensures that the influencer's endorsement feels genuine and resonates with their audience. Understanding the influencer's audience is equally vital. SMEs should delve into the demographics, interests, and behaviors of the influencer's followers. This knowledge helps in tailoring the campaign to cater to the specific preferences and needs of the influencer's audience. Crafting content and messaging that is both appealing to the influencer's followers and aligned with the SME's brand message is essential for a successful collaboration. Collaboration between SMEs and influencers should extend beyond mere promotion. It should encompass a shared vision and objectives. Effective communication and goal-setting are paramount to ensure that both parties are working in harmony towards a common goal, be it increased brand awareness, higher engagement, or improved sales. Moreover, the ultimate success of an influencer campaign hinges on the SME's ability to uphold the promise made to the influencer's audience. This entails delivering products or services that not only meet but ideally exceed the expectations generated by the influencer's endorsement. By consistently offering high-quality experiences, SMEs can foster trust, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth among the influencer's followers, translating into sustained growth and brand affinity. While influencer marketing offers immense potential for SMEs, it necessitates careful planning and execution. The process involves selecting the right influencers, understanding their audience, and establishing a collaborative partnership built on shared objectives. Additionally, delivering exceptional quality in products or services is pivotal in fulfilling the expectations generated by influencer endorsements and ensuring long-term success (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019).

Hence, influencer marketing has emerged as one of the most potent tools at the disposal of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) for augmenting brand awareness and bolstering sales in this ever-evolving digital era. With the right approach and astute collaborations, SMEs can harness the formidable potential of influencers to attain even greater success in an increasingly competitive marketplace. The evolving digital landscape has ushered in an era where consumers are inundated with a deluge of content and choices. In such an environment, influencer marketing stands as a beacon, guiding SMEs towards the spotlight of recognition and engagement. By strategically partnering with influencers whose values and interests align with their brand, SMEs can unlock access to a highly engaged and receptive audience. The power of influencer marketing lies not only in its reach but also in its authenticity. When influencers authentically endorse an SME's products or services, they create a connection that transcends conventional advertising. This connection is built on trust, and it resonates with the influencer's dedicated following. As a result, the SME's brand becomes more than just a product; it becomes a trusted recommendation from a revered source. Moreover, influencer marketing provides SMEs with the advantage of precise measurement. Through data-driven analytics, they can quantify the impact of influencer campaigns, tracking metrics such as follower growth, en-

agement rates, and revenue increases directly attributed to influencer collaborations. This data-driven approach empowers SMEs to make informed decisions, optimize their strategies, and allocate resources effectively. Influencer marketing has emerged as a dynamic and indispensable tool for SMEs navigating the complex digital landscape. By embracing this strategy with precision and collaborating intelligently with influencers, SMEs can tap into a wellspring of potential, enhancing brand recognition, fostering consumer trust, and achieving notable success in a fiercely competitive market. The strategic utilization of influencer marketing is akin to hoisting a sail in the winds of the digital age, propelling SMEs toward greater heights and brighter horizons.

5. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, SUGGESTION, AND LIMITATIONS

This research has conducted a comprehensive analysis of the impact of influencer marketing on the enhancement of brand awareness and sales within the realm of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The findings of this study conclusively affirm that influencer marketing holds immense promise for delivering substantial advantages to SMEs in their pursuit of reaching their intended consumer base, amplifying brand recognition, and augmenting sales figures. In the constantly evolving landscape of the digital realm, influencers emerge as a distinctive and highly effective conduit of influence, serving as a bridge that connects brands with pertinent and actively engaged audiences.

The implications of this study are as follows: SMEs can consider influencer marketing as an integral part of their marketing strategy. Collaboration with suitable influencers can help them reach a wider audience and increase brand visibility. Selection of the right influencer is the key to success. SMEs should understand the influencer's audience and ensure that the influencer has a fit with their brand values and lifestyle. Analysing and measuring the results of influencer campaigns needs to be consistently applied. By understanding metrics such as follower growth, engagement rate, and sales lift attributable to the campaign, SMEs can optimise their strategy.

Suggestions for optimising the use of influencer marketing are: Set clear objectives before launching an influencer campaign. Whether the goal is to increase brand awareness, boost sales, or achieve other specific objectives. Developing a strong partnership with the influencer. This includes good communication, role clarification, and clear expectations. Conduct in-depth market research to identify influencers that resonate with the SME's target audience and brand. Integrate influencer campaigns with the overall marketing strategy, including social media, advertising, and other content, to achieve greater synergy.

The limitations of this study are: This research is conceptual and theoretical in nature. The results may vary depending on the industry sector, SME size, or other factors. The influence of influencer marketing may vary depending on the influencer chosen and how the campaign is executed. Therefore, the results may not always be consistent. This research did not consider the cost and risk aspects associated with influencer marketing. SMEs need to consider these aspects in their marketing strategy planning. In all, influencer marketing is a powerful tool in the digital marketing era, and SMEs that can use it effectively can gain significant benefits in increasing their brand awareness and sales. However, this approach should be carefully considered and tailored to each SME's business context and goals.

REFERENCES

- Andhini, G. K., & Andanawarih, F. Q. (2023). The Importance of Brand Stories towards Brand Perception and Purchase Intention in Gen Z Indonesians. *The Winners*, 23(2), 143-152. <https://doi.org/10.21512/tw.v23i2.7481>
- Ao, L., Bansal, R., Pruthi, N., & Khaskheli, M. B. (2023). Impact of Social Media Influencers on Customer Engagement and Purchase Intention: A Meta-Analysis. *Sustainability*, 15(3), 2744. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15032744>
- Audrezet, A., de Kerviler, G., & Guidry Moulard, J. (2020). Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation. *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 557-569. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.008>
- Ausat, A. M. A. (2023). The Role of Social Media in Shaping Public Opinion and Its Influence on Economic Decisions. *Technology and Society Perspectives (TACIT)*, 1(1), 35-44. <https://journal.literasisainsnusan-tara.com/index.php/tacit/article/view/37>
- Ausat, A. M. A., Siti Astuti, E., & Wilopo. (2022). Analisis Faktor Yang Berpengaruh Pada Adopsi E-commerce Dan Dampaknya Bagi Kinerja UKM Di Kabupaten Subang. *Jurnal Teknologi Informasi Dan Ilmu*

- Komputer (JTIK)*, 9(2), 333–346. <https://doi.org/10.25126/jtiik.202295422>
- Ausat, A. M. A., & Suherlan, S. (2021). Obstacles and Solutions of MSMEs in Electronic Commerce during Covid-19 Pandemic: Evidence from Indonesia. *BASKARA: Journal of Business and Entrepreneurship*, 4(1), 11–19. <https://doi.org/10.54268/BASKARA.4.1.11-19>
- Aw, E. C.-X., & Chuah, S. H.-W. (2021). “Stop the unattainable ideal for an ordinary me!” fostering parasocial relationships with social media influencers: The role of self-discrepancy. *Journal of Business Research*, 132, 146–157. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.04.025>
- Azzaakiyyah, H. K. (2023). The Impact of Social Media Use on Social Interaction in Contemporary Society. *Technology and Society Perspectives (TACIT)*, 1(1), 1–9. <https://journal.literasisainsnusantara.com/index.php/tacit/article/view/33>
- Berne-Manero, C., & Marzo-Navarro, M. (2020). Exploring How Influencer and Relationship Marketing Serve Corporate Sustainability. *Sustainability*, 12(11), 4392. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12114392>
- Cabeza-Ramírez, L. J., Sánchez-Cañizares, S. M., Santos-Roldán, L. M., & Fuentes-García, F. J. (2022). Impact of the perceived risk in influencers’ product recommendations on their followers’ purchase attitudes and intention. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 184, 121997. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2022.121997>
- Chopra, A., Avhad, V., & Jaju, and S. (2021). Influencer Marketing: An Exploratory Study to Identify Antecedents of Consumer Behavior of Millennial. *Business Perspectives and Research*, 9(1), 77–91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2278533720923486>
- Conde, R., & Casais, B. (2023). Micro, macro and mega-influencers on instagram: The power of persuasion via the parasocial relationship. *Journal of Business Research*, 158, 113708. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.113708>
- Ferina, N., Sri, G., & Putu, L. (2021). Does Influencer Marketing Really Improve Sustainable Brand Awareness and Sales? *Inovbiz: Jurnal Inovasi Bisnis*, 9(1), 167. <https://doi.org/10.35314/inovbiz.v9i1.1889>
- G. Dalangin, J. J., Mc Arthur, J. M. B., Salvador, J. B. M., & Bismonte, A. B. (2021). The impact of social media influencers purchase intention in the Philippines. *Jurnal Studi Komunikasi (Indonesian Journal of Communications Studies)*, 5(3), 551–568. <https://doi.org/10.25139/jsk.v5i3.3708>
- Gherghina, Ștefan C., Botezatu, M. A., Hosszu, A., & Simionescu, L. N. (2020). Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs): The Engine of Economic Growth through Investments and Innovation. *Sustainability*, 12(1), 347. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12010347>
- Haenlein, M., Anadol, E., Farnsworth, T., Hugo, H., Hunichen, J., & Welte, D. (2020). Navigating the New Era of Influencer Marketing: How to be Successful on Instagram, TikTok, & Co. *California Management Review*, 63(1), 5–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0008125620958166>
- Haudi, H., Handayani, W., Suyoto, M. Y. T., Prasety, T., Pitaloka, E., Wijoyo, H., Yonata, H., Koho, I. R., & Cahyono, Y. (2022). The effect of social media marketing on brand trust, brand equity and brand loyalty. *International Journal of Data and Network Science*, 6(3), 961–972. <https://doi.org/10.5267/j.ijdns.2022.1.015>
- Huang, R., & Sarigöllü, E. (2012). How brand awareness relates to market outcome, brand equity, and the marketing mix. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(1), 92–99. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.02.003>
- Ibáñez-Sánchez, S., Flavián, M., Casaló, L. V., & Belanche, D. (2022). Influencers and brands successful collaborations: A mutual reinforcement to promote products and services on social media. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 28(5), 469–486. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2021.1929410>
- Joensuu-Salo, S., Viljamaa, A., & Kangas, E. (2023). Marketing first? The role of marketing capability in SME growth. *Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship*, 25(2), 185–202. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JRME-05-2021-0070>
- Kamar, K., Lewaherilla, N. C., Ausat, A. M. A., Ukari, K., & Gadzali, S. S. (2022). The Influence of Information Technology and Human Resource Management Capabilities on SMEs Performance. *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence Research*, 6(1.2), 1. <https://doi.org/10.29099/ijair.v6i1.2.676>
- Karneli, O. (2023). The Role of Adhocratic Leadership in Facing the Changing Business Environment. *Journal of Contemporary Administration and Management (ADMAN)*, 1(2), 77–83. <https://doi.org/10.61100/adman.v1i2.26>
- Ki, C.-W. (Chloe), Cuevas, L. M., Chong, S. M., & Lim, H. (2020). Influencer marketing: Social media influencers as human brands attaching to followers and yielding positive marketing results by fulfilling

- needs. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 55, 102133. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102133>
- Kim, R. B., & Chao, Y. (2019). Effects of brand experience, brand image and brand trust on brand building process: The case of Chinese millennial generation consumers. *Journal of International Studies*, 12(3), 9–21. <https://doi.org/10.14254/2071-8330.2019/12-3/1>
- Krywalski Santiago, J., & Moreira Castelo, I. (2020). Digital influencers: An exploratory study of influencer marketing campaign process on instagram. *Online Journal of Applied Knowledge Management*, 8(2), 31–52. [https://doi.org/10.36965/OJAKM.2020.8\(2\)31-52](https://doi.org/10.36965/OJAKM.2020.8(2)31-52)
- Leung, F. F., Gu, F. F., Li, Y., Zhang, J. Z., & Palmatier, R. W. (2022). Influencer Marketing Effectiveness. *Journal of Marketing*, 86(6), 93–115. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429221102889>
- Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 19(1), 58–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501>
- Mahardhani, A. J. (2023). The Role of Public Policy in Fostering Technological Innovation and Sustainability. *Journal of Contemporary Administration and Management (ADMAN)*, 1(2), 47–53. <https://doi.org/10.61100/adman.v1i2.22>
- Maitri, W. S., Suherlan, S., Prakosos, R. D. Y., Subagja, A. D., & Ausat, A. M. A. (2023). Recent Trends in Social Media Marketing Strategy. *Jurnal Minfo Polgan*, 12(2), 842–850. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.33395/jmp.v12i2.12517>
- Mandiri, L. N. P., Jamhari, J., & Darwanto, D. H. (2022). Influencer Marketing Affect Consumer Purchase Decisions On Cimory Product. *Agro Ekonomi*, 33(2), 80. <https://doi.org/10.22146/ae.73195>
- Ohara, M. R. (2023). The Role of Social Media in Educational Communication Management. *Journal of Contemporary Administration and Management (ADMAN)*, 1(2), 70–76. <https://doi.org/10.61100/adman.v1i2.25>
- Osei-Frimpong, K., Donkor, G., & Owusu-Frimpong, N. (2019). The Impact of Celebrity Endorsement on Consumer Purchase Intention: An Emerging Market Perspective. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 27(1), 103–121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10696679.2018.1534070>
- Patmawati, D., & Miswanto, M. (2022). The Effect of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention: The Role Brand Awareness as a Mediator. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Business Management*, 1(2), 170–183. <https://doi.org/10.54099/ijebm.v1i2.374>
- Rijal, S. (2023). The Importance of Community Involvement in Public Management Planning and Decision-Making Processes. *Journal of Contemporary Administration and Management (ADMAN)*, 1(2), 84–92. <https://doi.org/10.61100/adman.v1i2.27>
- Rizos, V., Behrens, A., van der Gaast, W., Hofman, E., Ioannou, A., Kafyeke, T., Flamos, A., Rinaldi, R., Papadelis, S., Hirschnitz-Garbers, M., & Topi, C. (2016). Implementation of Circular Economy Business Models by Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs): Barriers and Enablers. *Sustainability*, 8(11), 1212. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su8111212>
- Said Ahmad, Muh. I., Idrus, M. I., & Rijal, S. (2023). The Role of Education in Fostering Entrepreneurial Spirit in the Young Generation. *Journal of Contemporary Administration and Management (ADMAN)*, 1(2), 93–100. <https://doi.org/10.61100/adman.v1i2.28>
- Sari, A. R. (2023). The Impact of Good Governance on the Quality of Public Management Decision Making. *Journal of Contemporary Administration and Management (ADMAN)*, 1(2), 39–46. <https://doi.org/10.61100/adman.v1i2.21>
- Sudirjo, F. (2023). Marketing Strategy in Improving Product Competitiveness in the Global Market. *Journal of Contemporary Administration and Management (ADMAN)*, 1(2), 63–69. <https://doi.org/10.61100/adman.v1i2.24>
- Suherlan, S. (2023). Digital Technology Transformation in Enhancing Public Participation in Democratic Processes. *Technology and Society Perspectives (TACIT)*, 1(1), 10–17. <https://journal.literasisainsnusan-tara.com/index.php/tacit/article/view/34>
- Sutrisno, S. (2023). Changes in Media Consumption Patterns and their Implications for People's Cultural Identity. *Technology and Society Perspectives (TACIT)*, 1(1), 18–25. <https://journal.literasisainsnusan-tara.com/index.php/tacit/article/view/31>
- Sutrisno, S., Ausat, A. M. A., Permana, R. M., & Santosa, S. (2023). Effective Marketing Strategies for MSMEs during Ramadan in Indonesia. *Community Development Journal: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 4(2), 1901–

1906. <https://doi.org/10.31004/cdj.v4i2.13792>

Tjandrawibawa, P. (2020). The Effect of Using Instagram Influencers in Building Conseva's Brand Awareness. *The Winners*, 21(1), 67–73. <https://doi.org/10.21512/tw.v21i1.6497>

Wanof, M. I. (2023). Digital Technology Innovation in Improving Financial Access for Low-Income Communities. *Technology and Society Perspectives (TACIT)*, 1(1), 26–34. <https://journal.literasisainsnusan-tara.com/index.php/tacit/article/view/35>

Wielki, J. (2020). Analysis of the Role of Digital Influencers and Their Impact on the Functioning of the Contemporary On-Line Promotional System and Its Sustainable Development. *Sustainability*, 12(17), 7138. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12177138>