

MIDOCEAN UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Media and Digital Marketing

Master's in Digital Marketing

Final Research Proposal

Title:

The Impact of Influencer Marketing on Consumer Engagement: A Comparative Study between Small Businesses and Established Brands in Saudi Arabia

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1. Introduction

Social media platforms have dramatically transformed marketing dynamics in Saudi Arabia. Among these transformations, influencer marketing has emerged as a key strategy to connect brands with consumers. As a practicing influencer, I have personally witnessed significant differences in audience engagement when promoting small businesses versus well-established brands. This research aims to explore the root causes of this disparity and understand how

influencer marketing truly impacts consumer engagement across different business types.

2. Literature Review

To support the foundation of this study, several academic sources were reviewed. Lou & Yuan (2019) examined the role of message credibility in building consumer trust. De Veirman et al. (2017) focused on how influencer reach and content alignment affect consumer attitudes. Chetoui et al. (2020) explored influencer credibility in the context of fashion marketing, and Lim et al. (2017) studied the mediating role of customer attitude in influencer marketing. Together, these studies underline the importance of trust, credibility, and brand familiarity in influencing engagement levels.

3. Problem Statement

Despite the growing popularity of influencer marketing, not all campaigns yield equal results. When promoting large brands, influencers often experience high engagement, whereas small business promotions tend to underperform—even with similar content quality. This inconsistency raises a critical question: What drives the difference in consumer engagement between these two brand categories?

4. Significance of the Study

Understanding this gap is crucial for both marketing practitioners and small business owners. The findings of this study can help influencers set realistic expectations, guide businesses in refining their marketing strategies, and ultimately improve the efficiency of influencer collaborations across the Saudi market.

5. Research Objectives

- Compare engagement levels in influencer campaigns for small versus large brands.
- Identify key variables influencing campaign performance.

- Examine the role of consumer trust in engagement outcomes.
- Recommend actionable strategies for enhancing influencer marketing effectiveness.

6. Research Questions

- How does consumer engagement differ between small and large brand promotions?
- What are the primary factors behind successful influencer campaigns?
- In what ways does consumer trust vary with brand recognition?
- What approaches can improve the performance of small business influencer marketing?

7. Key Concepts and Definitions

- Influencer Marketing: A form of marketing that uses individuals with an online following to promote products or services.
- Engagement: Audience interaction with content, including likes, comments, shares, and click-throughs.
- Trust: The confidence consumers place in an influencer's recommendation and authenticity.

8. Hypotheses

- H1: Established brands receive significantly higher engagement in influencer campaigns.
- H2: Consumer trust is positively correlated with brand size and familiarity.
- H3: Strong influencer-audience relationships can offset the effects of limited brand recognition.

9. Theoretical Framework

This research builds upon two main theories:

- Trust Transfer Theory: Suggests that consumer trust in influencers can be transferred to the brands they endorse.
- Social Proof: Proposes that people are influenced by others' behaviors, particularly when they

perceive a message or brand as popular or widely accepted.

10. Methodology

A mixed-method approach will be adopted, combining:

- Quantitative data: Through a structured online survey targeting social media users in Saudi Arabia aged 18–45.
- Qualitative analysis: By reviewing previous influencer campaigns and performance analytics.

11. Data Collection and Measurement Tools

- Online survey including Likert-scale questions to measure trust, engagement, and purchase intention.
- Metrics such as comment volume, likes, CTR, and shares from selected past campaigns.
- Descriptive data analysis to summarize survey results.

12. Scope of the Study

- Geographical Scope: Saudi Arabia
- Human Scope: Social media users aged 18–45 who follow influencers
- Time Frame: Current academic semester

13. Statistical Tools and Tests

- Descriptive statistics for general trends
- T-test for comparing average engagement across brand types
- Correlation analysis to examine trust-engagement relationship
- ANOVA to explore variance across subgroups if applicable

14. Proposed Timeline

Week 1: Topic selection and proposal finalization

Week 2-3: Survey design and pilot testing

Week 4-6: Data collection phase

Week 7-8: Data analysis and interpretation

Week 9-10: Drafting the research paper

Week 11: Final revisions and submission

15. References

- Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*.
- De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising*.
- Chetoui, Y., Benlafqih, H., & Lebdaoui, H. (2020). How fashion influencers contribute to consumers' purchase intention. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*.
- Lim, X. J., et al. (2017). The impact of social media influencers on purchase intention and the mediation effect of customer attitude. *Asian Journal of Business Research*.