



The Impact of Influencer Marketing on Consumer Buyer Behavior

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ABSTRACT

Influencer marketing has gained significant popularity in recent years. A social media influencer is an individual who has developed a substantial following in a specific industry and can influence others through their authenticity and reach. Brands are increasingly collaborating with social media influencers to engage target audiences, boost brand recognition, enhance brand image, and drive profitability. These influencers promote new products or emphasize a brand's appeal through social media channels. This study aims to assess the impact of social media influencers' credibility, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise on consumer behavior at the Western University of Communication (WUC). The research employed a positivist philosophy and a quantitative approach. Data was collected through questionnaires from 320 respondents in Tlokweng, Mogoditsane, and Riverwalk, Botswana. Measures of central tendency, regression analysis, and correlation analysis were conducted using SPSS version 21. The results revealed that the expertise of social media influencers has a strong and significant impact on consumer behavior at WUC, followed by their attractiveness, trustworthiness, and credibility. Collectively, the four study variables namely credibility, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise were positively and significantly linked to consumer behavior at WUC. The findings contribute to marketing literature by highlighting the importance of these attributes in shaping consumer behavior. Additionally, the study demonstrates the extent of influence social media influencers have on consumer behavior at WUC. Beyond theoretical implications, the findings also provide practical insights for digital marketing strategies involving social media influencers.

Keywords: Social Media, Influencers, Influencer Marketing, Consumer Behavior

JEL Classifications: M31, M37, M39

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has gained popularity across the globe and is utilized for a variety of marketing initiatives, including public relations, sales promotion and advertising. Influencer marketing is a result of the expansion of social media. The younger generation, particularly the Millennials, are fond of this new marketing strategy. Compared to the older generation, young people are more active on social media. This novel idea has gained acceptance all over the world, but it appears that many marketers and organizations are less knowledgeable about how social media influencer marketing affects consumer behaviour. The social media platform is a method that has rapidly been used across the world. All forms of business are now using social media to perform various business activities,

especially marketing. The development of digital marketing has connected people from all over the world, transforming the world into a global village. This has encouraged buyers, sellers, and marketers to conduct business online. People of all ages and from all countries use the internet to acquire information among other functions (Lisichkova and Othman, 2017). The world is becoming more and more interconnected. A study conducted by the Kepios group in 2023, indicates that they are 4.76 billion social media users around the world in January 2023, equating to 59.4 per cent of the total global population. This growth has necessitated the need for social media influencer marketing. Influencer marketing has become one of the most indispensable forms of the digital marketing world (Influencity.com, 2022). With millions of internet users connecting every day to chat,

browse, shop, and learn, it comes as no surprise that marketers have harnessed the power of online influencers to inform, inspire, and ultimately guide consumers to their products. Geyser (2022) mentioned that the world around us has changed considerably over the last few years and influencer marketing appears to be more important than ever for connecting brands with their target customers. Influencer marketing has become one of the most indispensable forms of online marketing worldwide. With millions of internet users browsing social media feeds for entertainment, inspiration, and product recommendations each day, it comes as no surprise that brands are increasingly leveraging the power of the web's most recognizable faces for promotion. Partnering with content creators can improve brand awareness and exposure, unlock new or niche audiences, and ultimately drive conversions. A survey conducted by the Influencer Marketing Hub in 2023, indicates that the influencer marketing industry is set to grow to approximately \$21.1 Billion by the end of 2023. Barta et al., (2023) argued that influencer marketing has become a crucial element in the modern marketing mix and its success is driven by the credibility, engagement and cost-effectiveness it offers to brands and marketers.

Several nations and organizations have implemented influencer marketing on a global scale, According to a report done by E-marketer in 2022; about 75% of US marketers use influencer marketing. By 2025, 36% of US marketers are expected to be utilizing influencer marketing, according to the same report. In America, social media influencer marketing is used by both private and public organizations. In Asia, social media influencer marketing grew quickly and exponentially. For example, in 2019, social media influencer marketing was worth \$638 million in South East Asia and the value is expected to triple to \$2.59 billion by 2024. According to Impact.Com (2021), 428 million Southeast Asians are now on the internet. In Europe, a study conducted by Influencycity.com in 2022, indicates that in 2022, there were 252.1 million Instagram users in Europe. In Europe, influencers are divided into four categories namely Nano-influencers those with profiles of between 1000 – 10 000 followers; Micro-influencers those with profiles of between 10000 and 100000 followers; Macro-influencers those with profiles of between 100 000 - 1 million followers and finally, Mega-influencers those with profiles of 1 million plus followers. A study by Influencycity.com in 2022 indicates that most Western countries have got macro and mega influencers. In Africa, influencer marketing is also rising but at a lower rate compared to other continents (Chiguvi, 2022). This is mainly because of some of the following reasons poor technology, poor ICT infrastructure, and low internet literacy level, computer phobia among other factors.

The emergence of smartphones in Africa, the world's youngest continent, began in 2000. Africa is home to more than 60% of the world's youth. Nevertheless, influencer marketing is being adopted, albeit more slowly than on other continents. Influencer marketing has been growing for some time and has started to trend upward (Business Insider Africa, 2022). Over the past few years, influencer marketing has proven to be an effective method of advertising. Many more African brands are courting the kind

words/body image of individuals and groups to impact the purchase decisions of consumer(s) (Financialquest.com, 2022). This development is still novel in many African countries due to high levels of poverty. South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Egypt, and Morocco are leading countries in terms of digital marketing and technology. However, in Botswana, the usage of social media influencer marketing is still elusive. Influencer marketing is only used by big organizations mainly the private sector. The public sector in Botswana has also started to realize the importance of influencer marketing and as such institutions like the Botswana Football Association used Tebogo Letsile in 2023 as one of their influencer marketer for the 2027 AFCON bidding process with the Confederation of African Football (CAF). This study seeks to measure the impact of social media influencer marketing on consumer behavior, using a case study of the Water Utilities Corporation in Botswana.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents the literature review of the study on social media influencer marketing and consumer behaviour.

2.1. Theoretical and Conceptual Background

2.1.1. Source Credibility Theory

According to the source credibility theory (Hovland and Weiss, 1951), an influencer or source's perceived credibility affects the audience's behaviour and purpose. It refers to how much the audience depends on the source to advance their knowledge and competence in comprehending goods and services. According to this theory, a source's credibility is made up of elements that determine how people consider an endorser or influencer to be credible. Hovland and Weiss (1951) considered perceived trustworthiness and expertise as the credibility determinants. This theory is well linked to this study topic because credibility is one of the constructs of the research.

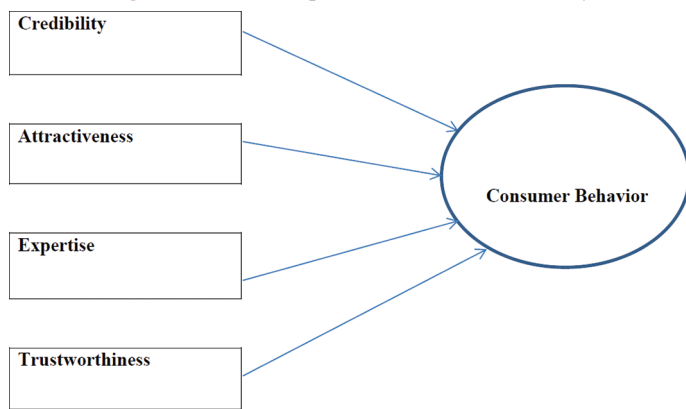
2.1.2. Conceptual framework

This study was guided by the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1. According to Miles et al. (2017), a conceptual framework is an explanation of the important elements of a study, such as the principal components, variables, or constructs, and the presumptive relationships between them, either graphically or narratively. The study constructs of this study are credibility, attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness as independent variables and consumer behaviour as the dependent variable.

2.2. Empirical Review and Hypothesis Development

2.2.1. Influencer marketing

There are numerous definitions of influencer marketing (Gutounig, et al., 2022; Chen, et al., 2024; Belanche et al., 2021; Lou & Yuan, 2019). According to Gutounig et al., (2022), influencer marketing is a marketing tactic that involves working with users of social media and other content creators who influence various-sized communities. According to Chen, et al., (2024), influencer marketing is a sort of social media marketing that relies on endorsements and product mentions from opinion leaders, or those who have a sizable social following and are recognized

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework of the study

Source: Chiguvi et al., (2025).

as authorities in their field. Belanche et al. (2021), influencer marketing provides brands and businesses with additional ways to connect with consumers in a cutthroat market. Influencer marketing is essentially a sort of advertising where the major emphasis is on leveraging well-known public figures in a specific niche to spread the message that a certain product or company wants to offer. Instead of engaging with the target group, the brand owners would hire or persuade a well-known celebrity to promote the brand to the vast majority of consumers. Social media marketing and content marketing are fundamentally combined with influencer marketing. Influential people can use their social media channels to share the brand's message, which encourages more people to engage with the brand's image. Influencer markets also frequently use content marketing, either by producing content for the influencers to market to customers or, occasionally, by the influencers themselves producing the content and marketing it. It is important to understand that while social media marketing, content marketing, and influencer marketing are closely related, they are not the same thing. They operate well when integrated through. According to Chiguvi (2021), people will always have more faith in a brand when positive things about it are mentioned by third parties as opposed to the brand itself. Influential individuals can disseminate the businesses' message on their own. And when it comes from a social media influencer, a figure worshipped by many, consumers grow to depend more heavily on the brand. This exemplifies influencer marketing's influence and strength in modern business.

2.2.2. Influencer

An influencer is someone who has the power to alter the behaviours or decisions of consumers in a given situation. According to Kotler and Keller (2009), an influential person is a proactive person who, as a result of their intellectual capacity, has a reasonable influence on their network and communities. In addition, Wang et al. (2022) defines influencers as powerful individuals who become an authority in their chosen field to gain more followers. Choi & Rifon (2012) view influencers as people who serve as opinion leaders and are seen as mentors and active participants in online communities with the power to sway the opinions of other community members. The Influencer Marketing Benchmark Report 2023 indicated that the influencer marketing industry is set to grow to approximately \$21.1 Billion in 2023.

Table 1: Features of an influencer

Authors	Characteristics
Cotter, 2019; Marwick, 2018; Khamis, et al. 2017	Trust, Relevance, attractiveness, Expertise.
Stubb, et al., 2019; Wellman et al., 2020; Chae, 2018	Knowledgeable/Expertise Credibility, Trust. Knowledge, authenticity, passion
Cotter, 2019; Wellman et al., 2020; Nhu, 2020	Expertise, Power, Relevance, Reach, attractiveness. passion
Hsieh, 2023; Lim, et al., 2017; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018	Physical Attractiveness, Trust, credibility, Expertise.
Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Erdogan, 1999	Product Match-up, Reach, relevance, trust, attractiveness

Source: Author, 2025

2.2.3. Types of Influencers

According to Park et al., (2021), there are four major types namely Nano-influencers those with profiles of between 1000 – 10 000 followers; Micro-influencers those with profiles of between 10000 and 100000 followers; Macro-influencers those with profiles of between 100 000 - 1 million followers and finally, Mega-influencers those with profiles of 1 million plus followers.

2.2.4. Characteristics of Influencers

Although all influencers have strong relationships with their fans, selecting influencers that are pertinent to the company is especially crucial. Trust, credibility, attractiveness, reach, engagement, relevance, and knowledge are just a few of the traits that make someone a good influencer (Cotter, 2019; Marwick, 2018; Khamis et al., 2017; Stubb et al., 2019; Wellman et al., 2020). The characteristics of an influencer are shown in Table 1

2.2.5. Consumer behavior

Consumer behavior in marketing refers to the actions and decisions that people make when they are purchasing or using products (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008). Consumer behavior towards a product includes everything from the initial decision to buy it, to how they use it and whether or not they continue to purchase it in the future. Consumer behavior is the mental and physical activities undertaken by household and business customers that result in decisions and actions to pay for, purchase, and use products and services (Schiffman et al., 2013). Human behavior is very complicated and unpredictable by nature. In business research, therefore, the area of consumer behavior has been continuously being studied. Consumers are users of the products and services, at the same time; they are the ones who decide to choose products and services. Consumer behavior is a study of how they buy, how they pick one brand while numerous brands are out there, how often and from where they buy, as well as, the reason why the consumer buys a product instead of another. Shah et al. (2012) defined consumer behavior as those acts of individuals directly involved in obtaining, using, and disposing of economic goods and services, including the decision processes that precede and determine these acts. Behavior can be done by an individual, by a group of people who can influence each other's actions or by an organization (Chiguvi and Musasa, 2021).

2.2.6. Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior

It is worth noting that consumer buying behavior is studied as a part of marketing and its main objective is to learn the way how individuals, groups, or organizations choose, buy use, and dispose of goods and the factors such as their previous experience, taste, price, and branding on which the consumers base their purchasing decisions (Kotler and Keller, 2012). It has been established that consumer buying behaviour is the outcome of the needs and wants of the consumer and they purchase to satisfy these needs and wants. Although it sounds simple and clear, these needs can vary depending on personal factors such as age, psychology, and personality. Also, some other external factors are broad and beyond the control of the consumer. Several researches have been carried out by academics and scholars on identifying and analyzing those factors affecting consumers' buying behavior and as a result, various types of factors have been identified. Kotler (2019) also suggested that cultural, social, personal, and psychological elements are the most influential factors for consumer buying behavior as illustrated in Figure 2.

In this study, the researcher focuses much attention on the social factors. According to Hoyer and Stokburger-Sauer, (2012), social factors impacting consumer behavior arise as a result of interactions of perspective consumers with others in various levels and circumstances. Targeting members of society perceived as opinion leaders usually proves an effective strategy when marketing products and services due to the potential of opinion leaders to influence the behavior of other members of society as consumers. The researcher wants to investigate the impact of social media influencer marketing on consumer behavior at WUC.

2.3. Hypothesis Development

2.3.1. SMI credibility

Credible influencers are capable of influencing consumer attitudes and purchasing intents since they are perceived as professionals and seem convincing when using their social media accounts, according to Aaker (1992). Influencer marketing is influenced by credibility. Ohanian (1991) discovered a substantial correlation between customer attitude and purchase intention. The most important credibility component influencing followers' behavior has been recognized as trustworthiness (Wiedmann and Von Mettenheim, 2021). Selflessness, according to Walster et al. (1966), is the cornerstone of dependability. Consumers are more likely to respond positively to endorsers who are thought to be trustworthy than to endorsers who are thought to be less trustworthy (Walster

et al., 1966). Whether the audience considers these celebrity endorsements as experts in their subject, trustworthy endorsers have stronger persuasive power (McGinnies and Ward, 1980). The most crucial factor contributing to forming followers' attitudes about the recommended brand is the perceived trustworthiness of social influencers (Bhatt, et al., 2013). The aforementioned justifications were used to form the hypothesis.

H₁: Social media influencers' credibility has a positive significant effect on consumer behavior at WUC.

2.3.2. SMI attractiveness

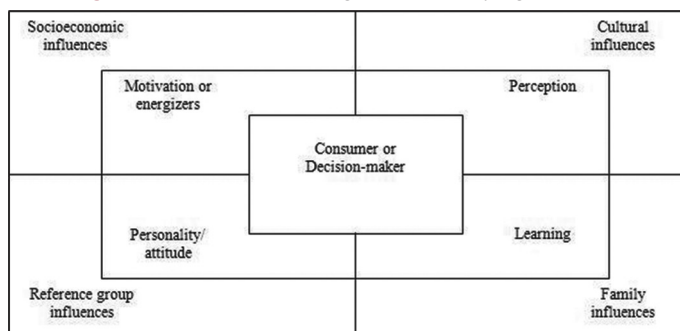
According to another study, source knowledge along with attractiveness has a significant impact on consumer purchase intentions (Yi and Gong, 2013). As a result, social media superstars can influence customer attitudes towards specific brands and the purchase intentions of the customers. To win consumer confidence and retain the customer for a longer period, these online superstars must maintain mastery of their content. As a result of previous research, it has been concluded that information or recommendations about brands and products which come from a source that is an expert, attractive with good skills and knowledge will have a positive impact on consumer behaviour toward brands (Till and Busler, 2000). Several past studies suggest a positive relationship between attractiveness, the physical beauty of the source, and buying behaviour of customers (Erdogan, 1999; Grave, 2017). Similarly, previous researchers have also discovered a significant positive relationship between source attractiveness and purchase intention (Petty et al., 1983; Erdogan, 1999; Chaiken, 1979; Dion, 1972; Horai et al., 1974; Reingen and Kernan, 1993; Shavitt et al., 1994). An attractive social media influencer can affect consumers with positive outcomes. Endorsers with attractive features can exert a positive attitude on consumers subsequently resulting in a purchasing intention (Till and Busler, 2000). Endorsers with attractive characteristics may therefore demonstrate a positive perception toward consumers and influence customer purchase intention (Pornpitakpan, 2004). Social media celebrities with amazing appeal and beauty can influence the intentions of followers. Social media influencers with amazing appearances are more inclined to capture followers' attention. The attitude of customers toward a social media celebrity can be enhanced if the social media celebrity is physically attractive and appealing (Bardia et al., 2011). Another important criterion to consider when evaluating the potency of opinion leaders is attractiveness. There is a positive relationship between the attractiveness of the influencer and consumer behaviour. The aforementioned justifications were used to form the hypothesis.

H₂: Social media influencers' attractiveness has a positive significant effect on consumer behaviour at WUC.

2.3.3. SMI trustworthiness

Erdogan (1999) defined trustworthiness as the endorser's sense of integrity, belief, and self-respect. It is believed that an endorser with a high level of knowledge and dependability toward their viewers and followers will result in a better reception of the message communicated. If information or recommendation related to brand and products comes from a source who is believed or considered to be trustworthy that information is considered to be credible and consumers act differently according to the degree

Figure 2: Factors influencing consumer buying behaviour



Source: Gilbert (1991)

of risk and level of trust they have toward the information they obtained and when information or recommendation is credible, degree of perceived trust toward that information will be high and the customer will trust that information or recommendations (Shamhuyenhazva et al., 2016; Lou et al., 2019). On social media sites, these internet celebrities are considered to be opinion leaders because they achieve a high level of trust and appreciation from their followers (Mendoza, 2010). Influencers are commonly used to increase message authenticity and efficacy (Clow et al., 2006). If the influencer is believed to be trustworthy the information, he or she conveys has more authenticity and efficacy (Ohanian, 1990). Trustworthiness increases consumer confidence that the celebrity endorser is not engaging in opportunistic behaviour (Gefen, 2000). Social media celebrity is considered to be more trustworthy compared to the content provided to customers by companies and thus these internet personalities become an increasingly important information source. These internet celebrities are perceived to be trustworthy and thus have a stronger effect on customer purchase decisions related to products and services (Abidin, 2016). From the previous research, it is stated that the trustworthiness of the social media celebrity has a significant impact on the trust that consumers have in them and on their content and posts (Lou et al., 2019). Thus, from past research, it can be found that followers purchasing intent is highly impacted by the social media influencers' trustworthiness. The aforementioned justifications were used to form the hypothesis. H₃: Social media influencers' trustworthiness has a positive significant effect on consumer behaviour at WUC.

2.3.4. SMI expertise

Expertise is the perceived capacity of the source, based on his or her knowledge, abilities, and experience, to offer accurate information (Wiedmann and Mettenheim, 2021). Expertise refers to an influencer's knowledge, skill, and experience about a specific product or topic (Umeogu, 2012), as well as the validity of his or her claims about the product or topic (Silvera and Austad, 2004). Expertise is a source's competency or capacity to make remarks on a certain subject or issue based on their knowledge or abilities (McCroskey, 1966). If information or suggestions about a brand or product come from a source who is an expert with strong skills and knowledge about the brand or product, the information or recommendations will have a positive influence on the consumer, and the customer will accept the information or recommendations (Halvorsen et al., 2013). A source with high competence compared to one with little experience appeared to contribute towards ensuring favorable opinions about the endorser and the commercial proposition, according to the researchers (Braunsberger, 1996). It is further said that customers' attitudes, behavioral intentions, and actual behavior are influenced by source knowledge (McGinnies and Ward, 1980). Celebrities who are considered to be experts seem to be more persuasive and eligible to influence consumer buying behavior (Ohanian, 1991). Influencer expertise affects both the attitude and purchasing intention of followers (Till and Busler, 2000). Another researcher suggests that source expertise has a significant positive impact on purchase intention (Pornpitakpan, 2004). Influencers who are viewed as experts can lead towards ensuring authenticity propelling their followers to the content so the acceptance level of the message is higher (Metzger et al., 2003). However, from the previous research, it can be founded

that the features of endorsers such as expertise have a significant impact on customer purchasing intentions. The aforementioned justifications were used to form the hypothesis.

H₄: Social media influencer's expertise has a positive significant effect on consumer behavior at WUC

3. RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

This study employed a positivist research paradigm. Jansen (2023) argues that positivism is rooted in the belief that knowledge can be obtained through objective observations and measurements. In other words, the positivist philosophy assumes that answers can be found by carefully measuring and analyzing data, particularly numerical data. This philosophy fits well in this study because it assisted the researcher in measuring the structural relationship between the independent and dependent variables of the study.

3.1. Respondents

The targeted population of this study comprised WUC customers (households and Businesses) in Gaborone, Botswana. In this study, the researcher selected 320 respondents in three major WUC-paying offices (Tlokweng, Mogoditsane and Riverwalk) in Botswana, as illustrated in Table 2.

3.2. Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. To check the internal consistency of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was used and calculated. For internal validity, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sample adequacy was conducted through SPSS. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) mentioned that the validity of variables which are close to or above the value of 0.6 can be acceptable and deemed effective for conducting the study.

3.3. Data Analysis

The collected data was statistically analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Measures of central tendency were employed to analyze the data using descriptive statistics. After determining the descriptive statistics of the study, inferential statistics was used to test the research hypotheses to determine the impact of social media influencer marketing on consumer behaviour.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Statistical Reliability

The study results in Table 3 shows Cronbach's Alpha for the variables of the study and the alpha coefficient for all of the multiple-item measures are higher than 0.7, which proves that all of the items have relatively high internal reliability in this study. Furthermore, all of Cronbach's alpha results are above 0.8 which is the really good score of being reliable and indicates a very high level of internal consistency on the scale of the study. Therefore, all the measurement items are considered acceptable and deemed effective to conduct the study.

4.2. Validity

The study set the KMO variable at 0.6. The analysis in Table 4 from the KMO test indicates that the variables were sufficient

for internal validity as KMO values for all the study variables are greater than 0.6. This infers that the measurement items are measuring what they intend to measure in this study.

4.3. Descriptive Statistics

Results in Table 5 indicate that mean responses ranged between 2.68 and 3.35. The results suggested that on an average majority of the customers agreed that the social media influencers' credibility has got an impact on their consumer behavior at WUC. The majority of the customers have indicated that they follow social media influencers because of the content with a mean score of 3.35 and a standard deviation of 1.458. This infers that the content is critical for the customers to believe the social media influencers at WUC. This implies that management at WUC should create content that draws the attention of the public as well as stimulate the interest and induce the desire of the customers to attract and increase huge following on WUC's social media platforms.

Results in Table 6 indicate that mean responses ranged between 2.68 and 3.07. The results suggested that on average the majority of the customers agreed that the social media influencers' attractiveness has got an impact on their consumer behaviour at WUC. The majority of the customers have indicated that they follow social media influencers because they are elegant with a mean score of 3.07 and a standard deviation of 1.315. This infers that the elegance of the social media influencer is critical at WUC. This implies that management at WUC should not choose everyone to be their social media influencer but the management must choose individuals who are elegant, classy, handsome or attractive to the customers. This will likely stimulate and positively impact the consumer purchase intentions at WUC.

Results in Table 7 indicate that mean responses ranged between 2.64 and 3.07. The results suggested that on average the majority of the customers agreed that the social media influencers' trustworthiness has got an impact on their consumer behaviour at WUC. The majority of the customers have indicated that they follow social media influencers because they are sincere and trustworthy with a mean score of 3.07 and standard deviation of 1.226 and 1.281 respectively. This infers that if the customers trust the social media influencer, there is high likelihood of the customers following the influencer. This means that the management at WUC should select social media influencers who are sincere, reliable, honest and dependable. These attributes have got influence on the consumer buying intentions of the consumers at WUC.

Results in Table 8 indicate that mean responses ranged between 2.89 and 3.17. The results suggested that on average majority of the customers agreed that the social media influencers' expertise has got impact on their consumer behaviour at WUC. The majority of the customers have indicated that they follow social media influencers because they are knowledgeable, skilled, and experts with a mean score of 3.17; 3.12, and 3.04 respectively. This infers that if the customers follow social media influencers who are knowledgeable, skilled, experts, and experienced. This means that the management at WUC should select social media influencers who are experts, especially in areas of water management to convince the customers and influence their purchase intentions.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents

Sampling frames WUC	Targeted Respondents (N)
Tlokwen	105
Mogoditsane	110
Riverwalk	105
Total	320

Table 3: The results of Cronbach's alpha of the study variables

Cronbach's alpha coefficients	Cronbach's alpha	Conclusion
Social media influencers' credibility	0.889	Reliable
Social media Influencers' attractiveness	0.976	Reliable
Social media influencers' trustworthiness	0.841	Reliable
Social media influencers' expertise	0.863	Reliable

Table 4: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index for variables

Variables	KMO index	Df	Conclusion
Social media influencers' credibility	0.676	4	Valid
Social media Influencers' attractiveness	0.712	4	Valid
Social media influencers' trustworthiness	0.687	4	Valid
Social media influencers' expertise	0.783	4	Valid

Table 5: Effect of social media influencer's credibility on consumer behaviour

Variables	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance
I follow influencers because their authenticity of personal stories they share.	320	2.86	1.259	1.586
I follow influencers because of their content.	320	3.35	1.458	2.127
I follow influencers because they are always accurate.	320	2.70	1.375	1.890
I follow influencers because I believe them.	320	2.86	1.256	1.578
I follow influencers because they are attractive.	320	2.68	1.312	1.721
Valid N (leastwise)	320			

Table 6: Effect of social media influencer's attractiveness on consumer behaviour

Variables	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance
I follow influencers because they are attractive.	320	2.68	1.312	1.721
I follow influencers because they are handsome/beautiful.	320	2.93	1.310	1.716
I follow influencers because they are sexy.	320	2.86	1.456	2.121
I follow influencers because they are classy.	320	2.98	1.268	1.608
I follow influencers because they are elegant.	320	3.07	1.315	1.729
Valid N (leastwise)	320			

4.4. Hypotheses Testing

The results in Table 9 indicated that there is a positive relationship between social media influencer's credibility and consumer

Table 7: Effect of social media influencer's trustworthiness on consumer behaviour

Variables	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance
I follow influencers because they are dependable.	320	2.64	1.278	1.634
I follow influencers because they are honest.	320	2.82	1.156	1.336
I follow influencers because they are reliable.	320	2.97	1.173	1.375
I follow influencers because they are sincere.	320	3.07	1.226	1.504
I follow influencers because they are trustworthy.	320	3.07	1.281	1.641
Valid N (listwise)	320			

Table 8: Effect of social media influencer's expertise on consumer behaviour

Variables	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance
I follow influencers because they are expert.	320	3.04	1.438	2.068
I follow influencers because they are experienced.	320	3.01	1.306	1.705
I follow influencers because they are knowledgeable.	320	3.17	1.239	1.535
I follow influencers because they are qualified.	320	2.89	1.229	1.511
I follow influencers because they are skilled.	320	3.12	1.330	1.769
Valid N (listwise)	320			

Table 9: The regression analysis results of the relationship between Social media influencers' credibility on consumer behaviour at WUC

Model summary				
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Standard error of the estimate
1	0.693 ^a	0.323	0.332	10.42214

^aPredictors: (Constant), Social Media Influencer's Credibility

Table 10: Hypothesis test results on the relationship between social media influencer's credibility on consumer behaviour at WUC

		Coefficients				
Model		Unstandardized coefficients	Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.	
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1						
	(Constant)	13.272	11.343		1.235	0.14
	Social media influencer's credibility	0.681	0.318	0.693	1.014	0.000

^aDependent variable: Consumer behaviour

behavior at WUC. The respondents have also agreed that social media influencers' credibility has got influence on consumer purchase intentions as illustrated in Table 5. This infers that the effect of social media influencers' credibility is making approximately 69.3% influence on consumer behavior at WUC ($\beta = 0.693$, t -value = 1.014 and $P = 0.000$). Table 10 indicates the correlation value ($r = 0.693$, $P = 0.000$). This means that there is a significant strong positive relationship between social media influencers' credibility and consumer behaviour at WUC. Therefore, hypothesis one is supported in this study.

H₁: Social media influencers' credibility has a positive significant effect on consumer behavior at WUC.

4.5. Discussion of the Result

The study results in Tables 9 and 10 show that social media influencers' credibility positively affects consumer behavior at WUC. This research finding is in line with the study findings by (Aaker 1992, Kgosi 2022) who also postulated that credible social media influencers can influence consumer attitudes and purchasing intents since they are perceived as professionals who give accurate and authentic information. Ohanian (2021) also corroborated that social media influencers' credibility has got a significant influence on consumer behaviour. The researcher can safely conclude that social media influencers' credibility positively affects consumer behavior at WUC.

The results in Table 11 indicated that there is a positive relationship between social media influencer's attractiveness and consumer behavior at WUC. This implies that the effect of social media influencer's attractiveness is making approximately 89.6% influence on consumer behavior at WUC ($\beta = 0.896$, t -value = 1.034 and $P = 0.000$). Table 12 indicates the correlation value ($r = 0.896$, $P = 0.000$). This means that there is a significant strong positive relationship between social media influencers' attractiveness and consumer behaviour at WUC. This implies that management at WUC should not choose everyone to be their social media influencer but the management must choose individuals who are elegant, classy, handsome or attractive to the customers. These attractiveness variables have a significant positive impact on consumer behaviour at WUC. Therefore, hypothesis two is supported in this study.

H₂: Social media influencers' attractiveness has a positive significant effect on consumer behavior at WUC.

4.6. Discussion of the Result

Table 12 revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between social media influencers' attractiveness and consumer behaviour at WUC. This result is similar to the study findings by

Moleti (2018) who also postulated that there is a significant strong relationship between social media influencer's attractiveness and consumer behaviour. In the study, Ezenwafor et al., (2021) argued that the social media influencer's elegance, classy, handsome or beauty and attractiveness have got a positive influence on the customer's purchase intentions. The study findings by Boahene et al., (2019) also confirmed that social media influencer's attractiveness is positively linked to consumer behaviour in the services industries. It is also vital to note that, the social media influencers who are perceived to be more attractive have a stronger effect on consumer product choices (Abidin, 2016). This research also states that social media influencers are having a strong impact on the attitude of consumers. According to the research presented by Lim and other available literature, social media influencers are having a significant impact in positively shaping consumers' attitudes towards brands (Lim et al., 2017) and this study's results are consistent with this particular research and the available literature. Moreover, another research study was presented by Lou and Yuan in 2019 in which the positive and significant impact of the attractiveness of social media influencers been assessed and it is stated by the authors that influencers with attractiveness are more likely to affect the purchasing behaviour of the customers (Lou and Yuan, 2019). This means that WUC should consider the attractiveness of the social media influencer to stimulate consumer behaviour.

The results in Table 13 indicated that there is a positive relationship between social media influencers' trustworthiness and consumer behavior at WUC. This implies that the effect of social media influencers' trustworthiness is making approximately 82.7% influence on consumer behavior at WUC ($\beta = 0.827$, $t\text{-value} = 1.064$ and $P = 0.000$). Table 14 indicates the correlation value ($r = 0.827$, $P = 0.000$). This means that there is a significant strong positive relationship between social media influencers' trustworthiness and consumer behaviour at WUC. This infers that if the customers trust the social media influencer, there is a high likelihood of the customers following the influencer. This means that the management at WUC should select social media influencers who are sincere, reliable, honest and dependable. These

attributes have got influence on the consumer buying intentions of the consumers at WUC. Therefore, hypothesis two is supported in this study.

H₃: Social media influencers' trustworthiness has a positive significant effect on consumer behavior at WUC.

The results in Table 14 revealed that there is a significant strong positive relationship between social media influencers' trustworthiness and consumer behaviour at WUC. Trustworthiness refers to the integrity and perceived believability of the source (Chetioui, et al., 2021). The research findings by (Chetioui, et al., 2021) found that trustworthiness exerts a positive influence on an individual's attitude towards online shopping. Baig and Shahzad (2022) also confirmed that social media influencers' trustworthiness is positively related to the attitude of customers towards the brand. In 2021 AlFarraj and others have conducted research in which they have stated that when the sources are trustworthy and effective it positively enhances the purchase intentions of the customers and also attracts the customers towards the brands (AlFarraj et al., 2021). Similarly, this output is in line with research presented by (Abdullah et al., 2020; Weismueller et al., 2020; and Ahmad and Huvila, 2019). The similarity between this research study and previous empirical pieces of evidence makes this research more significant. This infers that if the customers trust the social media influencer, there is a high likelihood of the customers following the influencer. This means that the management at WUC should select social media influencers who are sincere, reliable, honest and dependable. These attributes have got influence on the consumer buying intentions of the consumers at WUC.

The results in Table 15 indicated that there is a positive relationship between social media influencers' expertise and consumer behavior at WUC. This implies that the effect of social media influencer's expertise is making approximately 92.8% influence on consumer behavior at WUC ($\beta = 0.928$, $t\text{-value} = 1.048$ and $P = 0.000$). Table 16 indicates the correlation value ($r = 0.928$, $P = 0.000$). This means that there is a significant strong positive relationship between social media influencer's expertise and consumer behaviour at WUC. Therefore, hypothesis four is supported in this study.

H₄: Social media influencers' expertise has a positive significant effect on consumer behavior at WUC.

The study findings both in Tables 15 and 16 indicated that there is a positive relationship between social media influencers' expertise and consumer behaviour at WUC. This result was confirmed by Baig and Zhahzad (2022) who also postulated that social media influencers' expertise is positively related to the attitude of

Table 11: Regression analysis of the relationship between Social media influencer's attractiveness on consumer behavior at WUC

Model summary				
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Standard error of the estimate
1	0.896 ^a	0.421	0.420	10.4201

^aPredictors: (Constant), Social media Influencer's attractiveness

Table 12: Hypothesis test results on the relationship between social media influencer's attractiveness on consumer behaviour at WUC

Model	Coefficients			t	Sig.
	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	B	Standard error	Beta		
1					
(Constant)	14.394	16.467		1.383	0.14
Social media influencer's attractiveness	0.821	0.496	0.896	1.034	0.000

^aDependent variable: Consumer behaviour

Table 13: Regression analysis of the relationship between Social media influencer's trustworthiness on consumer behaviour at WUC

Model summary				
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Standard error of the estimate
1	0.827 ^a	0.413	0.412	12.1307

^aPredictors: (Constant), Social Media Influencer's Trustworthiness

Table 14: Hypothesis test results on the relationship between social media influencer's trustworthiness on consumer behaviour at WUC

Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Standard error	Beta		
1					
(Constant)	8.294	5.467		1.495	0.12
Social media influencer's trustworthiness	0.792	0.196	0.827	1.064	0.000

^aDependent variable: Consumer behaviour

Table 15: The regression analysis of the relationship between Social media influencers' expertise on consumer behaviour at WUC

Model summary				
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	0.928 ^a	0.414	0.414	11.8728

^aPredictors: (Constant), Social Media Influencer's Expertise

Table 16: Hypothesis test results on the relationship between Social media influencers' expertise on consumer behaviour at WUC

Model	Coefficients			t	Sig.
	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1					
(Constant)	14.894	12.467		1.422	0.12
Social media influencer’s expertise	0.924	0.412	0.928	1.048	0.000

^aDependent variable: Consumer behaviour

customers towards the brand.

5. CONCLUSION

The research results confirmed that social media influencer marketing has got a significant impact on consumer purchase intentions at WUC. The study findings revealed that the social media influencer's expertise is more critical and significant in influencing consumer behaviour at WUC with a ($\beta = 0.928$). This infers that consumers tend to follow social media influencers who have a high level of expertise with regard to water hygiene, water management and usage. These results show that WUC should use social media influencers who have expertise in water to influence consumer behaviour. Therefore, it is concluded that the social media influencer's expertise has got a strong significant positive impact on consumer behaviour at WUC.

The study findings also revealed that the social media influencer's attractiveness is positively linked to consumer behaviour at WUC with a ($\beta = 0.896$). This implies that management at WUC should not choose everyone to be their social media influencer but the management must choose individuals who are elegant, classy, handsome or attractive to the customers. Therefore, it is concluded

that the social media influencer's attractiveness has got a strong significant positive impact on consumer behaviour at WUC.

The study findings in chapter four also revealed that the social media influencer's trustworthiness is critical and significant in influencing the consumer purchase decisions at WUC with a ($\beta = 0.827$). This means that the management at WUC should select social media influencers who are sincere, reliable, honest and dependable. These attributes have got influence on the consumer buying intentions of the consumers at WUC. Therefore, it is concluded that the social media influencer's trustworthiness has got a strong significant positive impact on consumer behaviour at WUC.

Finally, the study findings also indicated that the social media influencer's credibility has got a significant positive influence on consumer behaviour at WUC with a ($\beta = 0.693$). Therefore, it is concluded that the social media influencer's credibility has got a strong significant positive impact on consumer behaviour at WUC.

This study is novel and unique at WUC. According to the best knowledge of the researcher, this study is new at WUC and hence sets the base and platform that will assist WUC in enhancing its social media platforms to greater heights. WUC is a state parastatal

but by enhancing and investing in this area of social media, it will transform the organization to greater heights. It will enhance the organization's productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness, it will attract more customers, encourage people to pay their water bills on time, and eventually increase revenue to WUC.

This study has also contributed a lot towards the contribution to literature in the context of Botswana concerning social media influencer marketing. This contribution will provide information concerning social media influencer marketing available. This study will also assist policymakers in the water industry to explore this new trending phenomenon to enhance quality service delivery in the water sector industry which is deemed as a loss-making entity in many countries.

To improve the effectiveness of social media influencer marketing to influence consumer behavior, the following measures should be considered by the WUC management. Firstly, WUC management should increase maximum publicity about social media influencer marketing to attract a large number of people to like the organization's social media platforms. WUC should also improve the quality of the content on social media platforms. They need to incorporate the importance of hygiene, quality water, climate change and any topical issues. Excellent content helps to attract and retain new and existing users of social media platforms. WUC should make use of well-informed social media influencers, who are well-equipped with the knowledge of water management to give relevant information about the product to the audience. The use of experts will help to attract many people, hence positively influencing consumer behavior. WUC should also need to educate the public about the convenience of using social media platforms to access water utility services. For example, instead of the customers queuing to make water payments at WUC offices, the customers can be encouraged to use WUC social media platforms. This will enhance better service delivery as well as increase customer satisfaction. It will also bring more convenience to the consumers and enhance productivity at WUC. WUC need also to invest a lot in social media infrastructure by adopting new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). This will help to enhance the brand image and also attract more people to like WUC's social media platforms. WUC also need to package its own influencers by profiling them and exposing them to the world. This will help to increase the competitiveness of the organization and at the same time attract more new followers towards the social media platforms at WUC.

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