

**AUDIENCE PERCEPTION OF INFLUENCER ADVERTISING ON INSTAGRAM
AND TIKTOK AMONG NIGERIAN UNDERGRADUATES.**

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ABSTRACT

Audience Perception of Influencer Advertising on Instagram and TikTok among Nigerian Undergraduates, specifically the undergraduates of Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu and University of Nigeria Enugu Campus, Enugu were investigated in this study. As the domination of influencer advertising continues to grow on various social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok, there is a need for a study to be done to determine how young audiences perceive sponsored contents, the influencers, and purchase intentions.

The study was anchored by four objectives, which were; exposure to influencer advertising, perception of sponsored contents and brand promotions, trustworthiness of social media influencers, and influence of influencer advertising on audience purchasing intention. A descriptive survey research design was used and the data collected via the use of structured questionnaire.

The findings of the research proved that Nigerian undergraduates are exposed to influencer marketing in Instagram and TikTok in a high measure. Also, the findings of the research confirmed that the respondents hold generally a positive attitude towards sponsored contents and advertisements of brands. Further, the research confirmed that social media influencers are considered to be rather credible when they show authenticity and point out to the fact that there is sponsorship in their contents. Finally, the research found out that influencer marketing affects the buying intention of undergraduates to a high degree.

Thus, it can be concluded that influencer marketing has an influence on the credibility and perceptions of undergraduates. Further, it was advised that the influencers should be more open about their authenticity in the contents. Also, it was recommended to organize media literacy programs for undergraduates.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Transitioning from the former years where advertisements only featured in print and broadcast media, this present digital age has given rise to a unique and somewhat individualistic form of advertisement, popularly known as Influencer Advertising. This form of advertisement had its roots from social media influencing, which featured influencers. It became popular due to its widespread and effective integration at the beginning of the 21st century (Ilieva et al. 2024). Influencer advertising was not only birthed from the global integration of social media, but also from its user-friendliness, prevalent dynamism in global communications and popular user engagement. Primarily, social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, have created a platform that users and influencers alike, employ for active self expression, through creation of content and selective content engagement. According to Akande et al. (2025), the global adoption of digital media depicts a widespread phenomenon where the media audience are transitioning from passive consumption of media content to a more active and interactive form of content engagement on digital platforms. Or as Srivastava and

Sivaramakrishnan (2020), as cited in Okporo (2022), deduced in more specified terms, that the role of a content consumer has evolved from that of a mere passive consumer of information provided by brands to that of a more active experiencer, engager and originator of media content. This statement posits that the shift to digital media (social media) has put the social media user on a pedestal, where he or she gets to actively choose the posts they read and engage in, what content-type they create, and primarily, what person or people of interest they choose to follow and engage with their content. Thus, this created a certain populace of individuals that serve as influencers. According to Bastrygina and Lim (2023) as cited in Joshi et al. (2023), social media influencers or influencers for short, are people who have built a reasonably large online presence on their social media accounts on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, and thus created a large community of followers. More important is the perception of the audience of Influencer advertising, as only influencers who have built strong digital communities, provide a platform for brands/businesses to reach their target audience in a more personalized, preferable and relatable manner. In contrast to traditional adverts, which cannot be directly influenced by audience perceptions of preference, influencer advertising is creatively integrated into social media content, which attempts to create and make brand advert messages more appealing to their audience (Maradun et al. 2021, as cited in Akande et al. 2025).

In Nigeria, it is without doubt that the social media landscape is dominated by Young Nigerian Undergraduates, who advertently serve as the major audience for the social media content of influencers and by default, influencer advertisements. Therefore it is

important that the perceptions of these populace as regards to influencer advertising are taken note of. According to Otueke et al. (2024), social media platforms like TikTok are designed to meet the needs of the young populace, between the ages of 16 and 24, which is the standard age range of Nigerian undergraduates. As such, in considering the perception of Nigerian undergraduates towards influencer advertising, it is pertinent to identify some devices employed in influencer advertising, such as the employment of interesting and engaging content integrated into brand advert messages, (Khamis et al. 2017), as well as its likely influence on the perception of its audience, among Nigerian undergraduates. According to Chen and Ren, (2024), audience interpretation and comment on information passed down to them by social media influencers, is highly potent at influencing their attitudes, perception, and their decisions as regard to the information received. This insinuates that influencer to audience communication through content information such as adverts, could go a long way to creating an individualistic or collective perception that outrightly accepts or rejects influencer advertising messages.

As of today, the user engagement on Instagram and TikTok make them ideal social media platforms for audience engagement, and ultimately, influencer advertising. With evidence, from the early months of 2025, Meta's statistics indicated that Instagram had 9.90 million users in Nigeria, with only 6.5 percent of the eligible audience aged 18 and above making use of the social media platform. Simultaneously, within the same time zone, TikTok had a statistical summation of 37.4 million users in Nigeria, aged 18 and above. Thus, within the eligible age (DataReportal, 2025). Thus, these platforms with

evidence from statistics prove themselves as such to be studied in the premise of Influencer advertising and audience perception, among Nigerian undergraduate users.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In this modern era, the growth and adoption of Influencer Advertising by many solo brands and businesses on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok has significantly affected how the Nigerian Undergraduate demographic perceive and interpret the Influencer Advertising Message. Within this Nigerian undergraduate demographic, the students of Godfrey Okoye University (GOUNI) and University of Nigeria Enugu Campus (UNEC), have been accustomed to consume Influencer Advertising messages on a daily basis via Instagram and TikTok. As such, it forms a fundamental part of their daily experience. Hence, the need for questions have arisen, as to how they are exposed to and perceive influencer advertising on TikTok and Instagram.

Due to sparse literature on how the aforementioned demographic perceive influencer advertising on Instagram and TikTok and a long line of literature as on the aspect of Influencer Marketing, the necessity for this research arises. And to fill this research gap, the study shifts its focus from assumptions to intra and inter-factors such as perceived credibility, authenticity, past experiences, etc, that influence the perceptions of Nigerian undergraduates who give audience to influencer advertising.

The study therefore seeks to examine their level of exposure, attitudes, perceived credibility of influencers, and how these factors affect their purchasing intentions.

As Jain (2021) says, when a subject attempts to interpret a target, their interpretation of it is influenced majorly, by the person's attitudes, motives, interests, which are inadvertently borne from life-long experiences and individualistic expectations.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine audience perception of influencer advertising on Instagram and TikTok among Nigerian Undergraduates. The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To determine the level of exposure of Nigerian undergraduates to influencer advertising on TikTok and Instagram.
2. To examine the attitudes of Nigerian undergraduates toward influencer advertising on TikTok and Instagram.
3. To assess the perceived credibility and trustworthiness of influencers among Nigerian undergraduates.
4. To investigate how influencer advertising influences the purchasing intentions of Nigerian undergraduates.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the level of exposure of Nigerian undergraduates to influencer advertising on TikTok and Instagram?
2. What are the attitudes of Nigerian undergraduates toward influencer advertising on TikTok and Instagram?
3. How do Nigerian undergraduates perceive the credibility and trustworthiness of social media influencers?
4. How does influencer advertising influence the purchasing intentions of Nigerian undergraduates?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this research anchors on its reformative rendition of data driven information, which covers the demographic of Nigerian Undergraduates and their perception of influencer advertising on Instagram and TikTok respectively. This study serves as a reference point for advertising brands, Instagram/TikTok Influencers, etc, who target the Nigerian Undergraduate demographic, that make use of these social media platforms.

For students, the study creates widespread awareness of how influencer ad content may shape their perceptions and behaviours, encouraging more critical and intentional evaluation of online advertising messages and other related info.

The study will provide factual data that will significantly aid brands and influencers to understand their audience's perception to the present mode of influencer advertisement, and make calculated tweaks to achieve an equilibrium between its influencer advertising components and its audience perception. Thus, leading to an increase in sales and Return on Investment (ROI).

Furthermore, the study serves as a reference point for future researchers interested in digital advertising, audience perception, and social media studies.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on influencer advertising and audience perception among Nigerian undergraduates. Specifically, it examines students' exposure to influencer advertising, their attitudes toward such content, perceived credibility of influencers, and its influence on their purchasing intentions and decisions.

The study is limited to 2025/2026 undergraduates of Godfrey Okoye University (GOUNI) and the University of Nigeria Enugu Campus (UNEC), which are located in Enugu State, Nigeria.

The method the study adopts is a quantitative survey approach using questionnaires to collect data from respondents.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

Audience Perception: refers to the subjective way that GOUNI and UNEC students interpret, understand, and react to messages/content, as heavily influenced by their personal experiences, cultural backgrounds, and individual expectations.

Influencer: A person who is able to influence consumption, lifestyle or political preferences of their online audience such as GOUNI and UNEC Students, by creating engaging social media content, often as part of a marketing campaign.

Influencer Advertising: refers to promotional content created by social media influencers on TikTok and Instagram that is encountered and consumed by GOUNI and UNEC students.

Instagram: This is an American photo and short-form video sharing social networking service owned by Meta Platforms which students of UNEC and GOUNI engage with, to consume preferred content.

TikTok: This is a popular social media platform and app owned by Byte dance, which has been designed for creating, sharing, and discovering short-form videos, as It is greatly used by GOUNI and UNEC undergraduates.

Nigerian Undergraduates: These are students enrolled in various programmes under a Nigerian University. They are usually between the age range of 16-30. Example: The undergraduates of GOUNI and UNEC.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Influencer Advertising

Influencer advertising is a form of advertising where individuals with significant social media following, influence and presence promote a brand's products, services, or ideas to their online audience. These

individuals, also regarded as social media influencers (SMIs), act as digital opinion leaders who inadvertently shape the attitude, perception and behaviour of their followers through the content they put out (De Veirman et al; 2017). Influencer advertising, unlike the traditional modes of advertising is often merged within our everyday social media interactions and engagements, thus making these advert messages appear more authentic, down to earth and less intrusive to the social media users (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

The efficacy of influencer advertising is greatly dependent on the perceived credibility and trustworthiness of the influencer. According to Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), consumers are more likely to trust influencers who vividly share their personal experiences with a brand's product/service , thus perceiving them as being genuine and relatable. As such, in the scope of Influencer Advertising the element of authenticity, believability and mutual relatability is paramount in creating a favourable perception amongst an audience or target audience.

In the context of Nigerian Undergraduates, Ojiaku (2024) observed that influencer advertising plays a significant role in shaping brand attachment

among young consumers, particularly when influencers maintain a consistent pace, perspective and interaction with their audience. Similarly, Oladipo et al (2025), discovered that Nigerian undergraduates are more responsive to influencer advertising when the influencers demonstrate expertise and honesty.

Another aspect of influencer advertising is the concept of parasocial interaction such as the Fan to Celebrity one-sided relationship, where audiences develop emotional connections with influencers (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). This form of relationship increases the persuasive power of an influencer's message, as followers often perceive these influencers as peers rather than marketers

However, as of today, the increase in the commercialization of most influencer content has raised concerns about influencer transparency and credibility. Therefore, transparency and ethical practices are essential for maintaining the effectiveness of influencer advertising.

In conclusion, influencer advertising can be conceptualized as a relationship-based communication strategy that leverages on trust, authenticity, and audience engagement to influence audience perception

towards advert-based messages.

2.1.2 Exposure to Influencer Advertising

According to Social Cat (2026), Exposure to influencer advertising refers to the frequency with which individuals encounter promotional content or brand is encountered online, due to potential visibility.

The momentary rise of platforms such as TikTok and Instagram has significantly increased exposure levels to Influencer Adverts among Nigerian undergraduates. According to Statista (2023), young people spend several hours daily on social media, making them highly exposed to influencer content.

One key driver of this exposure is algorithmic personalization. According to Boekar and Urman (2022), the TikTok algorithm continuously personalizes and selects individual content based on user behaviour, leading to repeated exposure to influencer advertising.

Also, According to Ranjanibabu (2024), the Instagram's algorithm is designed to monitor the interactions of users at all times. E.g: Posts you

like, comment on, save, or even share. For example, if a user tends to like a large number of fitness or healthy eating photos, then more content such as fitness influencers healthy recipes, or gym workouts will be portrayed in that person's Instagram feed.

This applies also, in the aspect of limited or repetitive exposure to influencer advertising.

Another important factor that affects exposure to influencer advertising is the audience's active/passive following behaviour. Casaló et al (2018) found that users deliberately follow influencers for inspiration, entertainment, and information, thereby increasing their exposure to advertising content.

In the Nigerian context, increased smartphone usage and internet accessibility have significantly contributed to higher exposure rates among students. According to DataReportal (2025), A total of 150 million cellular mobile connections were active in Nigeria in early 2025, with this figure equivalent to 64.0 percent of the total population.

Olukunle et al (2025) observed that undergraduates frequently encounter influencer advertisements in categories such as fashion, beauty, and

lifestyle, reflecting their interests.

However, high exposure can lead to both positive and negative outcomes.

On one hand, repeated exposure enhances brand awareness and familiarity (Lou & Yuan, 2019). On the other hand, excessive exposure may result in advertising fatigue, reducing attention and engagement.

Another factor influencing exposure is peer sharing and virality, particularly on TikTok, where content spreads rapidly through trends and challenges.

As Oyeleke (2025) explains that platforms such as TikTok which has taken over Nigeria's social space, presents music challenges and viral dance moves to influencer trends that everyone talks about. As such that a song is unknown in a minute and known in the next.

Furthermore, exposure is not always intentional. Many students encounter influencer advertisements passively while browsing content, making them subconsciously influenced.

Despite the negative aspects of exposure, it remains a crucial variable because it determines the likelihood of message processing and eventual behavioural outcomes.

2.1.3. A Review of Trustworthiness of Social Media Influencers

The more audiences think an influencer is truthful, dependable and can be relied upon, the higher is their perception of the influencer's trustworthiness. Influencer advertising relies greatly on the audience's belief in the influencer to build up trust as a factor influencing the audience's reception of persuasive messages from the influencer.

According to Hart (2026) "Brand trust is one of the key enablers for the brand that would encourage repeat purchase and could drive positive word-of-mouth".

As part of the Source Credibility theory, trustworthiness is an important facet of source effectiveness (Lou and Yuan, 2019).

In addition, Trust plays an important role in influencer advertising because they found it predicts significantly audience engagement and the acceptance of influencer advertising. Orel (2026) states that Trust is a strong factor that helps audiences to make decisions, especially in influencer advertising which makes brand awareness and purchase intention to happen.

One main source for influencing trustworthiness is perceived authenticity. Audrezet et al. (2020) claims that those influencers whose contents reflect their genuine self and share experiences personally can easily obtain audience trust, while Nigeria undergraduates also stated that the influencers are expected to be honest and relatable in their posts (Israel et al, 2025). In other words, authentic influencer content feels like a genuine recommendation from someone the audience trusts, not a paid placement and not a scripted read.

Therefore, perceived authenticity is one of the important factors in Practice and Execution of influencer advertising (Orel, 2026).

In addition, parasocial interaction also influences trustworthiness; the one-sided romantic connection with followers leads the audience to trust the influencer more, hence enhances their persuasion (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020). Consistent product endorsements or frequent shifts in brand alliances could lead to a loss of audience' credibility. (Schouten et al, 2020).

Moreover, perceived expertise of the influencer matters when the promoted products are in their domain (Xin and Zhang, 2022). Influencer contents that are related to their specific expertise and brand offer higher audience'

credibility. For example, an audience will trust a tech-influencer more in recommending new gadgets than the ones on general life-style influencers.

From the cultural context in Nigeria, language use or any of those related-communication such as slang are capable to develop a stronger relation between followers and the influencers, therefore making the followers believe more in them (Fong et al, 2016).

However, the issue of the existence of hidden Sponsorships can decrease the audience's confidence in what they read, heard and therefore reduce audience trust towards the influencer, the integrity is decreased (Evans et al, 2017). Further, fake followers and manipulative engagement could create fake perception about influencers and consequently reduce credibility in Nigerian context (Vassilis, 2025). It should be noticed that in Nigeria there is the possibility for Influencers to ruin their reputations if their negative actions such as Scandals occurs (Serrano et al., 2017). Nevertheless, in Nigeria as other contexts trustworthiness remains an influential factor in Influencer Marketing which will influence Nigerian undergraduates.

2.1.4 Perceptions of Sponsored Posts and Brand Promotions

Audience Perception in the influencer advertising setting is the

Nigerian Undergraduates' personal understanding of any brand promotions and sponsored posts they encounter in any social media platforms (i.e. Instagram and TikTok). Drawing strength from the tenets of this definition, it is worthy of noting that numerous studies identified the message factor, particularly actionable and relevant, to authenticity as it applies to the sponsored posts and brand promotions through the prism of Influencer Advertising.

Thus, authenticity remains a key aspect that can make or mar an advert's resulting returns on social media platforms. This is so, especially in an era where consumers have become suspicious of excessively polished advertisements. As such, the perceived authenticity of Ad messages promotes deep emotional relationships (Kothari et al, 2025).

According to Audrezet et al (2020), audiences are more receptive to influencer content that reflects genuine experiences rather than scripted

promotions. Aligning with the preceeding point, Israel et al (2025) revealed that Nigerian students tend to trust influencers whose content appears natural and relatable. This points to the advantage of experiential and individual relatability as a powerful driver for perceived authenticity for influencer advert messages.

Additionally, other potent factors such as Ad message framing and brand storytelling significantly influence audience perception on brand promos and sponsored posts. Storytelling is an effective way to shift the perception of an audience I'm regard to a business/brand. This can be significantly achieved through Brand storytelling. These brand stories define values and show the human side of brands; which resonates more with an audienece. And more importantly, they influence individual perceptions. Thus, a brand's perception is built upon the foundation of storytelling (Ambroza, 2024).

Supporting this, Schouten et al (2020) says that "narrative-driven sponsored posts generate stronger emotional engagement compared to direct advertising formats" . As this is particularly relevant among undergraduates who consume content for entertainment and social connection.

Under the context of perception in regards to sponsored posts and brand promos, another important factor is visual aesthetics especially on platforms like Instagram, which is characterized by the factor.

According to Onculer (2024), Visual Aesthetics in the line of adverts is about crafting a visual narrative that aligns with the brand's identity and resonates with the target audience's preferences and emotions.

This involves the strategic use of colour, imagery, layout, typography, and brand identity to create ads that are not only visually appealing, but also effective in engaging and interacting with the audience.

High-quality visuals, filters, and curated feeds contribute to positive brand associations (Alabi & Ifeduba, 2023).

Additionally, extremely slick content can arouse doubt if it appears too good to be true. Moreover Peer influence and Social proof. Social Media statistics and figures: Likes, comments, saves and shares display how popular or well- liked or reliable an entity may be, thereby affecting undergraduates' interpretation of brands and ads (Casal et al, 2018). Orel (2026) explains that Instagram and TikTok favour and prioritize contents which get likes, shares and saves over those that just have many views.

Authentic posts generate real interactions.

Social proof is powerful on its own, but it becomes unstoppable when real people help spread it. This includes Customers who enthusiastically review a product/service, advocates who consistently cheer on and creators who share their influence. They all give your brand perceived credibility that no ad can buy (Sheikh, 2025). On the other hand, modern analytics have shown that the primary driver for success on social media ads and promo posts have little to do with posting regularly and more with consumer engagement through likes and comments. As such, one needs to strive to build a seamless amazing customer experience on social media. (Figueiredo, 2021).

Social media influencers have taken peer influence to a whole new level. Due to their substantial followings, SMIs have established themselves as experts or authorities in specific niches. So, Influencers can sway their followers' opinions and purchasing decisions whether it's fashion, fitness, travel or beauty. Their success stems from the personal connection and rapport they build with their audience (Izryadnov, 2023).

In the Nigerian context, cultural relatability also matters. Influencers who

reflect local lifestyles, language, and values are more likely to be positively perceived by undergraduates. This supports the findings of Olukunle et al (2025), who emphasize contextual relevance in influencer communication.

However, views are not universally so favourable given the increasing amount of sponsored ads/promotions in the social media environment and the subsequent development of distrust among young adults. "Students are exposed to sponsored posts more regularly, thereby causing a decline in its credibility"(Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). This concept can also be narrowed down to a specific brand. The Marketing Doctor (2024) states that "although repetitive ads may further brand awareness and recall, they do so at a cost - annoying the consumers. Nevertheless, it enhances overall visibility of a brand or service. There can be many factors which contribute to overall impression. This will also include a brand-level consideration; "If consumers get accustomed to seeing the same messages repetitively through the sponsored advertisements and promotions they see from your company, it can create an oversaturation in consumers mind" (Marketing Doctor, 2024).

Another factor in impression is sponsorship transparency; consumers get

to be able to distinguish between sponsored posts that have clear disclaimers and promotions that are subtly hidden behind misleading information (Evans et al, 2017). Overall, the overall reception of sponsorship by the target market(Nigerian undergraduate students in this study) can be attributed to how authentic, relatable, and relevant to cultural norms it appears, alongside how effectively transparent the platform and brand disclose the sponsorships.

2.1.5 Audience Perception

Audience perception refers to the process by which individuals interpret and evaluate media messages, particularly in advertising contexts. It encompasses attitudes, beliefs, trust, and emotional responses toward both the message and its source (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019).

In influencer advertising, audience perception is influenced to a large extent, by the credibility and authenticity of the influencer. Lou and Yuan (2019) found that perceived credibility significantly affects how audiences respond

to influencer's messages. Similarly, Sokolova and Kefi (2020) found that trust in influencers enhances the effectiveness of their advertising messages.

In Nigeria, Alabi and Ifeduba (2023) found that influencer advertising positively shapes audience perception when it aligns with audience expectations and preferences.

Asides perceived credibility and authenticity, another factor that influences audience perception is repeated exposure. As such, social media algorithms prioritize content that users engage with, leading to repeated exposure and reinforcement of certain messages (Kaye et al., 2021).

Cultural factors are one of the variables that significantly shape audience perception. For example, Nigerian Undergraduates may interpret influencer messages based on shared cultural values and social norms. Thus, the perception of an audience towards influencer messages is greatly influenced by their mental, physical, emotional, ideological and psychological make-up in a society.

2.1.6 Influencer Advertising and Purchasing Intention

Purchasing intention refers to the likelihood that an individual will buy a product or service after being exposed to promotional content. In influencer advertising, purchasing intention is influenced by multiple factors, including trust, emotional appeal, and perceived value.

Lou & Yuan (2019) confirmed that the quality of the message and influencer credibility contributes significantly to the consumer's likelihood of purchasing a product. Ki et al (2020) also reported that the likelihood of purchase was strongly predicted by identification with the influencer. In Nigeria, the relationship between the audience perception of an influencer and the likelihood of purchase, was examined by Israel et al. (2025) and they revealed that among youth where recommendations from influencers were highly regarded, the association was particularly significant.

Additionally, many consumers are inspired by the lifestyles projected by influencers, and their emotional connection with the influencers, leading to greater purchasing intent.

A visually appealing presentation of the influencer's product significantly influences product patronage among Nigerian students according to Alabi

& Ifeduba (2023). An additional variable that contributes to the purchasing intention is social proof, whereby people often choose to follow and trust the recommendations from a product's social proof, if that product has been approved and promoted by celebrity endorsements. According to Farzin et al (2023) in Aurora & Dalmia (2025) "the huge reach in the social media, of celebrities has been seen to be perceived as a credible information sources and this helps to enhance the awareness and the purchase intention of consumers toward the particular product. Although purchasing intention can also be impacted by price considerations and financial status, especially students with their meager budgets.

The platform where advertising is seen will also impact consumer's purchasing behaviors; on tiktok where it is very entertaining the purchase is spontaneous while for instagram with its lengthy description, there is more consideration of purchase.

Trust and Transparency are also very important because the chances of purchasing a product decreased in the case of a non-disclosed advertising as shown in Evans et al (2017). Finally, product relevance will influence the likelihood of the purchase. Nevertheless, on the overall, majority of studies

indicate that advertisements posted by influencers will most likely influence purchase intentions, especially among the youth, and the young population of digital users like Nigerian undergraduate students.”

2.2 Empirical Review

Audience perception of social media influencers and their influence on consumer purchase intention in Abuja, Nigeria was studied by Israel, Shodipe, and Ebhonuaye (2025). The research using survey data collected from 380 respondents revealed that audiences perceptions and buying decision is based largely on how credible and relatable they perceive an influencer to be. Audiences tend to rely on those influencers whom they perceive as authentic thereby increasing their influence and appeal in advertising content.

The research by Osueke et al (2024), which explored “Influence of TikTok advertising on brand image among private university students in Nigeria”, utilizes data from 367 students and found that brand image among Nigerian private university students are significantly influenced by TikTok influencers.

TikTok influencers significantly shape perceptions among university students in Nigeria on account of the platform's entertaining and interactive video format, consequently enhancing visibility and brand image amongst the youth. The work of Olukunle et al (2025), titled "Determinants of Purchase Decisions toward Influencer-Promoted Organic Creams among Students on Social Media" identified Instagram as a key channel for influencer marketing, but noted its effectiveness, as well as TikTok's effectiveness in relation to the promotion of organic creams, is determined by visual appeal and the relevance of content on the platforms, in conjunction with perceived influencer credibility and perceived transparency by Nigerian university students. Experimental evidence by Xin and Zhang (2022), entitled "Examining the Impact of Source-product Congruence and Sponsorship Disclosure on the Communicative Effectiveness of Instagram Influencers" show that source credibility and source product alignment impact audience receptiveness on Instagram, increasing advertisement efficacy whilst lowering psychological resistance. Moreover, number of followers is crucial to influencer impact, as found by De Veirman et al (2017) in the study "Marketing through Instagram Influencers: The Impact of Number of Followers and Product Divergence on

Brand Attitude".

Similarly, influencer credibility and content value were important drivers of consumer trust and engagement according to Lou and Yuan (2019), who published "Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media".

In Nigeria, Olanrewaju et al (2024) indicated that TikTok fashion influencers have the power to influence undergraduate fashion habits while Alabi and Ifeduba (2023) concluded that Instagram influencer marketing strongly influences the purchase of skincare products amongst Nigerian university students on the basis of visual clarity and appeal. Conversely, the lack of clarity from influencer advertising, particularly where sponsored content is involved, was found to have a negative impact on consumer trust and perception by Evans et al (2017) in "Disclosing sponsored Instagram posts: The role of material connection with the brand and message-sidedness." Furthermore, studies have shown the effect of platform algorithm in controlling exposure and influence on perception; the study by Boekar and Urman (2022), on "An Empirical Investigation of Personalization Factors on TikTok", demonstrates how a user's engagement patterns with content

determines exposure thereby indirectly influences perception through reinforcing certain types of influencer content.

The study "Marketing Through Instagram Influencers: The Impact of Number of Followers and Product Divergence on Brand Attitude" by De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017), demonstrated that the higher the follower count of an influencer, the greater perceived authority, yet excessive product variation in an influencer's offerings had detrimental consequences on trust.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This research is built upon the Source Credibility Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory.

2.3.1 Source Credibility Theory

The Source Credibility Theory was initially proposed in 1953 by Carl Hovland Irving Janis and Harold Kelley. The theory postulates that messages' effectiveness depend primarily on the level of credibility

attributed to the source. In influencer advertising context, influencer acts as the main source and their persuasion ability depends on their perceived credibility.

Latest studies have reassert the importance of source credibility theory in digital platforms such as social media.

According to Lou and Yuan (2019), the credibility of the influencers has an effect on consumers' trust in advertisements as well as consumers engagement with advertising contents. Other researchers such as Schouten et al (2020) have found that the combination of product-influencer congruence and influencer perceived expertise leads to more effective advertisement, through a higher perceived credibility. It is noteworthy to mention that the perceived authenticity and trustworthiness of influencers increase their persuasive power in the eyes of young consumers (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). That is of importance to the referred target audience (Nigerian undergraduates) who are more likely to relate and trust the influencers in who they feel there are similarities in life-style and values.

The source Credibility Theory gives a solid grounding on how influencer

credibility can affect the audience' perception in this study.

2.3.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory

According to Janine (2020), “uses and gratifications theory is a communication theory based on the premise that the consumers are active when they choose and consume media content based on their own needs and desires”. In this modern world, uses and gratifications theory have been heavily focused on social media use. Kaye et al. (2021) conducted that users have been using TikTok in terms of entertainment, social interaction, creativity. In addition, Casal et al. (2018) revealed that in the context of using Instagram, followers interact with the influences for their inspiration, information and a feeling of sharing common values.

The application of this theory can be viewed in the context of Nigerian Undergraduates, who use these social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, to fulfill these gratifying needs. The mode at which they actively engage with influencer content shows that they are not merely exposed to advertising, but that they deliberately interact with it. As such, Lou and Yuan (2019) argue that when advertising content aligns with user motivations, it

is more likely to be positively received and internalized.

Therefore, the Uses and Gratifications Theory is relevant to this study as it explains why Nigerian undergraduates are predominantly exposed to influencer advertising and how their use of the media shapes their perception of such content.

2.4 Summary of Literature Review/Gap

The reviewed literature collectively shows that influencer advertising has become a powerful tool in shaping audience perception, especially among young social media users.

Several reviewed literature emphasize the importance of influencer credibility in gaining a favourable audience perception. For instance, Israel et al. (2025) found that credibility and relatability significantly influence audience perception and purchase intention among users in Abuja.

Similarly, Lou and Yuan (2019) established that the content and influencer's credibility are strong predictors of consumer trust and engagement with

branded ad content. Supporting this, Xin and Zhang (2022) highlighted that product-influencer congruence enhances advertising effectiveness by reducing audience resistance, while increasing perceived credibility. These findings point out that trust in the influencer is a key component for attributing favourable audience perception.

In addition to the credibility factor, platform-based formats and built-in features play a significant role. Studies which focus on TikTok, such as Osueke et al (2024), denote that influencer advertising on TikTok significantly enhances brand image through engaging and short-form creative content. As a support, Olanrewaju et al (2024) found that TikTok influencers shape behavioural patterns such as fashion choices among Nigerian undergraduates. These findings are further supported by Boekar and Urman (2022), who demonstrated that the TikTok algorithm reinforces content exposure through user interaction, reaction to content and following, thus fast tracking its influence on audience perception.

On the other hand, studies on Instagram highlight its strength in building long-term engagement and beyond-perceived credibility. Alabi and Ifeduba (2023) found that influencer advertising on Instagram positively affects

product patronage, especially when content is visually appealing and communicated with clarity.

Delving in the line of comparative analysis, Uriawan et al (2025) observed that TikTok is more effective at driving initial engagement and attention due to its algorithm peculiarities and short-form content, while Instagram is better equipped for long-term interaction and relationship building through consistent branding. This suggests that platform-unique features and characteristics act as drivers for varying results in influencer advertising.

Despite having positive findings, some studies highlight important challenges. For example, Evans et al (2017) found that lack of transparency, particularly failure to disclose sponsored content, can negatively affect audience perception and reduce trust. This indicates that excessive commercialization of Influencer content may undermine its effectiveness and meet audience resistance due to perceived ingenuity.

Furthermore, De Veirman et al (2017) explained that influencer characteristics such as a significant number of followers could affect brand perception as being authentic or unauthentic. Thus, an influencer's following can independently shape a shared perception towards certain

messages (branded/sponsored), etc, amongst an audience.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative survey research design. The survey design is appropriate because it allows for a systematic collection of data from a large population in order to describe and analyze relationships between variables

The design was selected to gather data on Audience Perception of Influencer Advertising on Instagram and TikTok among Nigerian Undergraduates.

3.2 Population of the Study

The Population of the study consists of Nigerian undergraduates of the 2025/2026 session, who actively use Instagram and TikTok from:

Godfrey Okoye University (GOUNI): 2972 students

University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus (UNEC): 11739 students

Total Population = 14711 students

Source: (The Admissions Office of the two Universities).

The below tables represent the student enrollment data in the universities,

for the 2025/2026 academic session across all the faculties/colleges.

Table 3.1: The Population Distribution of Undergraduates by Faculty/College (GOUNI).

Faculty/College	Population Estimate	Percentage (%) of Quota
Faculty of Management and Social Sciences	620	20.9%
Faculty of Law	340	11.4%
Faculty of Arts	320	10.8%
Faculty of Education	350	11.8%
Faculty of Natural and Environmental Studies	530	17.8%
Faculty of Computer and Information Technology	410	13.8%
College of Medicine	220	7.4%

College of Nursing	182	6.1%
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Source: National Universities Commission and Godfrey Okoye University Records (2026).

Table 3.2 below, shows the distribution of undergraduates across the five academic levels at Godfrey Okoye University. The information was obtained from the student enrollment records of the institution for the 2025/2026 academic session.

Table 3.2: Population Distribution of Undergraduates by Academic Level

Academic Level	Population of Students
100 Level	608
200 Level	742
300 Level	744
400 Level	745
500 Level	88
Total	2972

Source: Godfrey Okoye University Student Records (2026)

Table 3.3 below, shows the distribution of quantitative data across the six faculties in the University of Nigeria Enugu Campus. The information was obtained from the student enrollment records of the institution for the 2025/2026 academic session.

Table 3.3: Population distribution by Faculty

Faculty	Population of Undergraduates
Health Sciences	1694
Medical Sciences	6036
Business Administration	1899
Law	1301
Dentistry	105
Environmental Studies	704
Total	11739

Source: University of Nigeria Enugu Campus, Academic Planning Unit

3.3 Sample Size

To determine the appropriate sample size for this study, the Australian Sample Size Calculator was employed. This calculator was chosen for its reliable, accurate, and simple estimation of a statistically valid sample size from set input parameters. Sample Size Calculations Input Parameters utilized the below information when calculating sample sizes using the calculator.

Confidence Level: 95%

Population Size: 14711

Probability: 0.5 (the value assumed as highest to achieve variability and a safe estimation)

Standard Error: 0.02551

This method called as "Standard Error" which focused more on estimating population parameters accurately. The Sample Size Calculator then provided a Sample Size of 375 to be used for the research. This would have made more balanced representative of the participants and will give valid statistical significance.

Determine Sample Size

Confidence Level: 95% ▾

Population Size: 14711

Proportion: 0.5

☐ Confidence Interval: 0.04998

Upper 0.54998

Lower 0.45002

☐ Standard Error 0.02550

☒ Relative Standard Error 5.10

☐ Sample Size: 375

Calculate

Clear

The present study has taken this sample size to get a good coverage for the population which will improve the generalizability of the result.

3.4 Sampling Technique

This study employed Multi-Stage and Simple Random sampling techniques to narrow down to the Population that fall under the eligibility factors for the research's objectives. This is done with a target sample size of 375 randomized individuals.

The Study is drawn from Godfrey Okoye University (GOUNI) and University of Nigeria Enugu Campus (UNEC):

Multi-Stage Sampling Technique

Stage 1: Stratified Sampling technique was used where the total population was divided into two strata based on university; GOUNI and UNEC. This makes sure that each university is proportionally represented in the sample.

The population is divided into two strata:

- Godfrey Okoye University (GOUNI)
- University of Nigeria Enugu Campus (UNEC)

Stage 2: Purposive Sampling technique is used to precisely select respondents who meet the following criteria:

- Are active users of TikTok and Instagram
- Are Nigerian Undergraduates

Stage 3: Simple Random Sampling technique is used to randomly select eligible respondents to ensure fairness and an evened response.

3.5 Method of Data Collection

Data for this study are collected through a primary source. Specifically, the study adopts a quantitative survey approach using questionnaires to collect data from respondents.

3.6 Validity of the Instrument

To ascertain the validity of the questionnaire, two copies of the questionnaire alongside with the study's title, significance of the study, its scope and research objectives were given to two experts in the Faculty of Management Sciences, Godfrey Okoye University for validation. The inputs made by the experts were used to make necessary modifications in the instrument before the final production which ensured its validity.

3.7 Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was structured into four major sections: Exposure to influencer advertising, perceptions of sponsored posts and brand promotions, trustworthiness of social media influencers, and influencer advertising and purchasing intention. Each section contained Likert-scale items designed to measure respondents' attitudes and behavioural responses accurately.

Reliability test for the study was carried out through a pilot study conducted among 20 undergraduate students in IMT Enugu, who were not

among the population sample of the main study but had characteristics similar to the target population.

Pilot data were code and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The internal consistency of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. According to Taber (2018), Cronbach's alpha is generally used for assessing the reliability of Likert scales because it is considered as a function of the number of items on the scale and the extent to which the items measure the same construct (Taber, 2018). As per Heo et al (2015) higher alpha values were observed as indicative of better internal consistency of the measure item.

The reliability values obtained for the respective constructs were as follows; exposure to influencer advertising (0.82), attitudes toward sponsored posts and brand promotion (0.85), trusting influencers as sources of information and promotion (0.87) and influencer advertising and purchase intention (0.84). Overall reliability value for the entire instrument was 0.85. All the above values were higher than the minimum value of 0.70, suggesting internal consistency among the questionnaire items and hence, the instrument is fit for the main study. The highest value was attained in

trusting the influencers as a sources of information and promotion construct (0.87) as the items of construct are strongly correlated. The exposure construct attains 0.82 values showing consistency of perception toward social media usage as the item's correlates. Attitudes and purchase intention construct had values of 0.85 and 0.84 respectively which are all considered strong. The consistency of perception, trusting influencers as a sources of information and promotion, attitudes and purchase intention was reflected through high coefficient value of 0.87, 0.82, 0.85 and 0.84 respectively which reflect strong consistencies for each of the items. Moreover, by designing questionnaire in the context of literature from 2016-2026 which shows an alignment between questions and previous literature related to influencer advertising study and by using clear and simple wording; any misinterpretation could be minimized. Similarly, the Four Likert-scale Structure was use to ensure consistency as respondent answers similarly to all questions in each construct. The reliability result shows that the questionnaire is reliable for the research work. Therefore, the reliability test of this study at IMT Enugu confirms that the instrument is consistent and stable to test the audience perception on influencer advertising on Instagram and TikTok among Nigerian undergraduates.

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

SPSS version 23 was utilized for the data analysis in the study. Inferential descriptive statistics were employed for the correlation analysis. The research inquiries were examined using the Pearson product moment correlation (PPMC) statistical methodology.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected for the study on Audience Perception of Influencer Advertising on Instagram and TikTok among Nigerian Undergraduates. The chapter contains the detailed presentation of demographic data, psychographic analysis, and discussion of findings based on the research objectives/questions that guides the study.

The concluded sample size for the study was 375 respondents. A total of 312 copies of questionnaires were distributed to respondents, while 285

copies were correctly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 91.4%. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using frequency tables, percentages, weighted mean, and grand mean calculations.

4.2 Presentation and Analysis of Data

4.2.1 Analysis of Demographic Data

Table 4.1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender Type	Frequency	Estimated Percentage (%)
Male	156	54.7%
Female	129	45.3%
Total	285	100%

The above table shows that 129 respondents representing 45.3% were of the female gender, while 156 respondents representing 54.7% were of the male gender. This shows that male respondents formed the majority of the

respondents, used for the study.

Table 4.2: Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Estimated Percentage (%)
Below 18 years	62	21.8%
18 - 24 years	184	64.6%
25 - 29 years	39	13.7%
Total	285	100%

The above table indicates that respondents between 18–24 years formed its majority with 64.6. Respondents below 18 years made up 24.7%, while respondents below 18 years epresented 21.8%. This outcome indicates that the study was dominated by young undergraduates aged 18 - 24 years, who are active users of Instagram and TikTok.

Table 4.3: Level of Study of respondents

Study Level	Frequency	Percentage (%) Estimate
100 Level	69	24.2%
200 Level	80	28.1%
300 Level	62	21.8%
400 Level	52	18.3%
500 Level	22	7.7%
Total	285	100%

The above table reveals that 200 level students formed the majority with 28.1%. This indicates that students across all levels were evenly represented based on established population.

Table 4.4: Usage Frequency of Instagram and TikTok

Usage Response	Frequency	Percentage (%) Estimate

Very Often	123	43.2%
Often	105	36.8%
Occasionally	32	11.2%
Rarely	25	8.8%
Total	285	100%

The above table shows that 43.2% of respondents use Instagram and TikTok Very Often, while 36.8% indicated that they use Instagram and TikTok Often. Respondents who Occasionally use Instagram and TikTok accounted for 11.2%, while only 8.8% indicated that they rarely use Instagram and TikTok. This shows that the majority of the undergraduates of GOUNI and UNEC are active users of Instagram and TikTok.

4.2.2 Analysis of Psychographic Data

The Psychographic data were analyzed using a four-point Likert scale comprising of:

Strongly Agree (SA) = 4

Agree (A) = 3

Disagree (D) = 2

Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1

Likert Mean = 2.50

Decision Rule:

Mean score equal to or greater than 2.50 = Accepted

Mean score below 2.50 = Rejected

Research Question 1: Exposure to Influencer Advertising on Instagram and TikTok

Questionnaire Items	N	Likert	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean (x)	Decision Rule
I frequently see influencer advertisements on TikTok	285	2.50	130	90	40	25	285	3.14	Accepted
I frequently see influencer advertisements on Instagram	285	2.50	125	95	38	27	285	3.13	Accepted
I often encounter sponsored posts on social media	285	2.50	128	92	40	25	285	3.13	Accepted

Influencer content appears regularly on my feed.	285	2.50	132	90	35	28	285	3.14	Accepted
I actively follow influencers who promote products.	285	2.50	118	96	42	29	285	3.06	Accepted

Average Mean = 3.11

Decision: Accepted

Research Question 2: Perceptions of Sponsored Posts and Brand Promotions

Questionnaire Items	N	Likert	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean (x)	Decision Rule
Influencer ads are more interesting than traditional ads.	285	2.50	126	90	42	27	285	3.11	Accepted
I enjoy influencer-sponsored posts	285	2.50	122	95	40	28	285	3.09	Accepted
Influencer advertising is entertaining	285	2.50	130	88	40	27	285	3.13	Accepted
I trust information in influencer promotions.	285	2.50	118	94	45	28	285	3.06	Accepted

Sponsored posts influence my brand perception.	285	2.50	125	92	39	29	285	3.10	Accepted
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Average Mean = 3.10

Decision: Accepted

Research Question 3: Trustworthiness of Social Media Influencers

Questionnaire Items	N	Likert	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean (x)	Decision Rule
Influencers are trustworthy	285	2.50	120	92	45	28	285	3.07	Accepted
Influencers are honest in reviews	285	2.50	118	94	43	30	285	3.05	Accepted
I trust influencer recommendations	285	2.50	122	90	44	29	285	3.07	Accepted
Influencers disclose sponsored posts	285	2.50	135	85	38	27	285	3.15	Accepted
Influencers are relatable	285	2.50	130	88	40	27	285	3.13	Accepted

Average Mean = 3.09

Decision: Accepted

Research Question 4: Influencer Advertising and Purchasing Intention

Questionnaire Items	N	Likert	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean (x)	Decision Rule
Influencer ads affect my purchase decisions	285	2.50	132	88	38	27	285	3.14	Accepted
I buy products recommended by influencers	285	2.50	125	90	42	28	285	3.10	Accepted
I try new products from influencers	285	2.50	128	87	41	29	285	3.10	Accepted
Influencer ads influence my	285	2.50	130	90	38	27	285	3.13	Accepted

brand choice									
I rely on influencer reviews	285	2.50	118	95	42	30	285	3.05	Accepted

Average Mean = 3.10

Decision: Accepted

4.3 Discussions of Findings

The findings revealed that respondents are highly exposed to influencer advertising on Instagram and TikTok. It was also found that undergraduates generally perceive sponsored posts positively. Furthermore, influencers are perceived as moderately to highly trustworthy, especially when they disclose sponsorships. Finally, influencer advertising significantly influences purchasing intentions among Nigerian undergraduates.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the study, conclusions drawn from the findings, and recommendations based on the results obtained from the analysis of data. The study examined Audience Perception of Influencer Advertising on Instagram and TikTok among Nigerian Undergraduates, with particular focus on students of Godfrey Okoye University and University of Nigeria Enugu Campus.

5.2 Summary of Findings

These objectives included exposure to influencer advertising, perceptions of sponsored posts and brand promotions, trustworthiness of social media influencers, and effects of influencer advertising on purchasing intention for undergraduate students from Nigeria.

From the results shown in Chapter Four of the report, it was established that the study participants have high exposure to influencer advertising on Instagram and TikTok, and this is because they use social media often and are influenced by the algorithm-driven system used in the dissemination of content.

It was further discovered that undergraduate students have a positive perception of the sponsored posts and brand promotions, and many respondents believe that influencer advertisements are funnier, more engaging, and relatable than conventional forms of advertisement.

Lastly, the study found that social media influencers are considered relatively to highly trustworthy since they usually inform consumers about their sponsored contents and communicate with them truthfully. Relatability and honesty were the key aspects of trust.

Finally, the study established that influencer advertising has a significant effect on purchasing intention among Nigerian undergraduates. Many respondents indicated that influencer recommendations influence their buying decisions, brand preferences, and willingness to try new products.

5.3 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that influencer advertising plays a significant role in shaping audience perception and consumer behaviour among Nigerian undergraduates.

The study concludes that:

1. Exposure to influencer advertising on Instagram and TikTok is high among students of UNEC and GOUNI.
2. Sponsored posts and brand promotions are generally perceived positively by undergraduates.
3. Influencers are regarded as credible and trustworthy sources of product information, particularly when transparency is maintained.
4. Influencer advertising significantly influences purchasing intentions and consumer decision-making.

Therefore, influencer advertising is not only an entertainment tool but also a powerful marketing communication strategy that affects perception, trust, and purchasing behaviour among young audiences.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Brands and marketers should collaborate with influencers who are authentic, relatable, and transparent to enhance audience trust and engagement.
2. Influencers should ensure full disclosure of sponsored content to maintain credibility and avoid misleading their audience.
3. A call to promote a form of literacy with which students engage when they interact with influencer marketing in a variety of channels including TikTok and Instagram.
4. Nigerian Universities to host digital literacy programs for students on the compelling nature of influencer advertisements
5. There needs to be a push for stronger social media advertisement policies from regulatory agencies to avoid target consumers being deceived by such influencers and their advertisements.
6. Over-Commercializing your Social Media can turn-off audience in long run, instead focus on making honest quality content that would make people follow you back again and again.

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