



The Impact of Influencer Marketing on Brand Awareness among Instagram Users

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of influencer marketing on brand awareness among Instagram users. Instagram has become an important digital marketing platform because it allows brands to communicate with users through visual, interactive, and personalized content. Influencers help brands increase visibility by presenting products through posts, reels, stories, reviews, and recommendations. The study explains how influencer marketing supports brand recognition and brand recall among users. It also highlights the major factors that affect influencer marketing effectiveness, including influencer credibility, content quality, audience engagement, influencer popularity, message value, influencer-brand fit, and frequency of exposure. The discussion shows that users are more likely to notice and remember brands when influencers are perceived as trustworthy, authentic, and relevant to their interests. Overall, the paper concludes that influencer marketing is an effective strategy for increasing brand awareness on Instagram, but its success depends on proper influencer selection, meaningful content, and genuine engagement with the audience.

Keywords

Influencer marketing; brand awareness; Instagram users; influencer credibility; brand recognition; brand recall; social media marketing; content engagement.

1. Introduction

Instagram has become an important platform for digital marketing because it allows brands to communicate with users through visual, interactive, and personalized content. Unlike traditional advertising, Instagram marketing is not limited to direct brand messages. Brands now use influencers to present products and services in a more natural and relatable manner. Influencer marketing is especially useful because influencers already have an established relationship with their followers.

Their posts, reels, stories, product reviews, and recommendations can help brands reach audiences who may not respond strongly to traditional advertisements (Jin et al., 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Influencer marketing refers to the use of individuals who have social media popularity, credibility, and audience influence to promote a brand or product. On Instagram, influencers often shape user attention through lifestyle content, product demonstrations, sponsored posts, reels, and personal recommendations. Studies show that influencer marketing can affect consumer attitudes, trust, engagement, and purchase intention when the influencer is perceived as credible and the message is valuable (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Therefore, influencer marketing is not only a promotional technique but also a relationship-based communication strategy.

Brand awareness is the ability of consumers to recognize or recall a brand when they see its name, logo, product, or promotional message. In the context of Instagram, brand awareness may develop when users repeatedly see a brand in influencer posts, remember the product after watching reels, or recognize the brand through influencer recommendations. Research suggests that social media influencers can increase consumer attention and engagement, which may support stronger brand awareness and brand recall (Leung et al., 2022; Gross & von Wangenheim, 2022).

The present topic is important because Instagram users are exposed to a large number of brand messages daily. In such a competitive environment, brands need communication strategies that can create attention and memory. Influencer marketing helps brands become visible by using the influencer's trust, popularity, and content style. Previous studies have found that influencer credibility, message value, authenticity, and engagement are important elements in shaping consumer responses to branded content (Belanche et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2023; Liu & Zheng, 2024). Therefore, this paper focuses on how influencer marketing affects brand awareness among Instagram users.

2. Concept of Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is a form of social media marketing in which brands collaborate with individuals who have the power to influence the opinions, attitudes, or behavior of their followers. These individuals are known as influencers because their followers trust their recommendations, lifestyle choices, product reviews, and personal experiences. Influencer marketing has grown because consumers often prefer peer-like recommendations over formal advertisements (Vrontis et al., 2021; Leung et al., 2022).

Influencers can be categorized into different types based on their follower count and market reach. Mega-influencers usually have a very large audience and are often celebrities or public figures. Macro-

influencers have a strong online presence and are useful for reaching broad audiences. Micro-influencers and nano-influencers have smaller audiences but often maintain closer relationships with their followers. Research suggests that follower count alone does not guarantee better engagement. Instead, the suitability of the influencer, audience relevance, and content quality also affect influencer marketing performance (Wies et al., 2023; Spörl-Wang et al., 2025).

Instagram is suitable for influencer marketing because it supports different types of content, including posts, reels, stories, live sessions, and short videos. These formats allow influencers to present brands in both informative and entertaining ways. For example, a beauty influencer may promote a skincare brand through a product tutorial, while a fashion influencer may promote a clothing brand through outfit posts or reels. Such content can make the brand more visible and memorable among followers (Gross & von Wangenheim, 2022; Chen et al., 2023).

Brands use influencers because influencers can reduce the distance between the brand and the consumer. When users see a product being used by an influencer they follow, the promotion may appear more personal and trustworthy than a direct advertisement. Lou and Yuan (2019) found that message value and credibility influence consumer trust in branded content. Similarly, Sokolova and Kefi (2020) showed that credibility and parasocial interaction can affect consumer responses to influencer promotions. These findings suggest that influencer marketing works because it combines brand promotion with personal influence.

3. Brand Awareness among Instagram Users

Brand awareness is one of the first stages in consumer decision-making. Before consumers evaluate or purchase a product, they must first know that the brand exists. Brand awareness includes brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition means that consumers can identify a brand when they see its name, logo, packaging, or advertisement. Brand recall means that consumers can remember the brand without being directly shown the brand name. Instagram can support both recognition and recall because users repeatedly see brand-related content in posts, stories, and reels (Jin et al., 2019; Leung et al., 2022).

Among Instagram users, brand awareness is strongly connected with visual exposure. When a brand is repeatedly displayed in influencer content, users may start recognizing the brand even if they do not immediately purchase the product. Influencers often use attractive visuals, storytelling, captions, hashtags, and product demonstrations to create attention. This repeated exposure can increase familiarity with the brand. Gross and von Wangenheim (2022) explain that sponsored posts on Instagram can generate engagement when the content fits the platform and the influencer's audience.

Brand awareness is also influenced by how users emotionally connect with influencer content. If users find the influencer authentic and relatable, they may pay more attention to the brands promoted by that influencer. Chen et al. (2023) found that authenticity management strategies influence engagement with sponsored videos. This means that when influencers present branded content in a natural and believable way, followers may respond more positively. In this way, authenticity can support brand awareness because users are more likely to notice and remember brands promoted through credible content.

Brand awareness on Instagram is not created only through exposure. It is also shaped by engagement. Likes, comments, shares, saves, and story interactions show that users are paying attention to the content. When users engage with influencer posts, they spend more time with the brand message. This can improve brand memory and increase the chance that users will remember the brand later. Gu and Duan (2024) argue that consumer engagement in influencer marketing is influenced by motivational factors, while Ao et al. (2023) show that influencer marketing has a positive relationship with customer engagement and purchase intention.

4. Relationship between Influencer Marketing and Brand Awareness

Influencer marketing can increase brand awareness by improving brand visibility. When influencers promote a brand to their followers, the brand reaches a wider audience. This is especially important for new or lesser-known brands that need quick visibility. Influencers can introduce the brand through posts, reels, stories, product reviews, giveaways, and discount codes. These activities help users become familiar with the brand name and product features (Vrontis et al., 2021; Rajput & Gandhi, 2024).

Influencer promotions can also improve brand recall. When users see the same brand repeatedly in influencer content, they are more likely to remember it later. Repetition is important in brand awareness because consumers may not remember a brand after only one exposure. On Instagram, stories and reels allow influencers to present the same brand in different forms. For example, an influencer may first introduce a product in a story, then post a reel using the product, and later share feedback or a discount code. This repeated exposure can strengthen brand memory (Gross & von Wangenheim, 2022; Leung et al., 2022).

The relationship between influencer marketing and brand awareness is also affected by influencer credibility. If followers believe that the influencer is honest, knowledgeable, and authentic, they are more likely to pay attention to the promoted brand. Belanche et al. (2021) found that influencer credibility affects followers' attitudes and behavioral responses toward influencers. Liu and Zheng (2024) also highlight the persuasive role of influencers in shaping brand credibility and purchase

intention. These studies suggest that credibility can make influencer messages more effective in building brand awareness.

Content format plays an important role in this relationship. Instagram reels, posts, and stories can create different levels of attention. Reels may be effective because they are short, entertaining, and easily shareable. Stories may be useful because they create a sense of immediacy and direct interaction. Posts may provide more stable visibility because they remain on the influencer's profile. Chen et al. (2023) show that sponsored video content can drive digital engagement when authenticity is managed effectively. Therefore, influencer content must be designed carefully to support brand awareness.

Influencer marketing can also increase brand awareness through social proof. When users see that an influencer and many followers are engaging with a brand, they may perceive the brand as popular or trustworthy. Likes, comments, and shares can signal that the brand is receiving attention from others. Wies et al. (2023) found that follower count influences social media engagement, but the relationship is not always simple. This shows that both influencer popularity and audience engagement matter in creating brand awareness.

Evidence from broader social media platforms also supports the idea that influencers can help brands grow their online presence. Benevento et al. (2025) found that influencers can affect brand social network growth during new product launch events. Although their study focuses on Twitter, it is relevant because it shows that influencer activity can support brand visibility in social media environments. For Instagram, this suggests that influencer marketing can help brands reach more users and improve awareness when campaigns are planned strategically.

5. Factors Affecting Influencer Marketing Effectiveness

One major factor affecting influencer marketing effectiveness is influencer credibility. Credibility includes trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, and authenticity. If an influencer is seen as honest and knowledgeable, followers are more likely to believe the promoted message. Lou and Yuan (2019) found that credibility and message value affect consumer trust in branded social media content. Similarly, Sokolova and Kefi (2020) found that credibility and parasocial interaction influence consumer responses to influencer promotions. Therefore, credibility is essential for creating brand awareness.

Another factor is content quality. Influencer content should be clear, attractive, informative, and relevant to the audience. Poor-quality or overly promotional content may reduce user interest. On the other hand, creative content can improve attention and memory. Chen et al. (2023) show that

authenticity in sponsored videos can improve digital engagement. This means that content should not look forced or disconnected from the influencer's normal style. When branded content fits naturally into the influencer's profile, users are more likely to accept it.

Audience engagement is also important. Engagement includes likes, comments, shares, saves, story replies, and direct interactions. High engagement shows that followers are actively responding to the influencer's content. Ao et al. (2023) found that influencer marketing is connected with customer engagement and purchase intention. Gu and Duan (2024) also explain that engagement is shaped by psychological and motivational factors. For brand awareness, engagement matters because active interaction increases the visibility and memorability of brand messages.

Influencer popularity can affect brand awareness, but popularity alone is not enough. A celebrity influencer may reach a large audience, but a micro-influencer may create stronger trust and closer engagement with followers. Wies et al. (2023) suggest that follower count has a complex relationship with engagement. This means that brands should not select influencers only on the basis of follower numbers. They should also consider audience relevance, engagement rate, content style, and fit with the brand.

Message value is another important factor. Users are more likely to remember a brand when the influencer's message provides useful information, entertainment, or emotional appeal. Lou and Yuan (2019) found that message value plays a role in consumer trust toward branded content. For Instagram users, message value may come from product tutorials, honest reviews, styling tips, personal experiences, or discount information. Such content can help users understand and remember the brand.

Influencer-brand fit also affects campaign success. If the influencer's personality, content category, and audience match the brand, the promotion appears more natural. For example, a fitness influencer promoting sportswear may be more believable than promoting an unrelated product. Leung et al. (2022) explain that influencer marketing effectiveness depends on several factors, including influencer characteristics, content features, and audience responses. This indicates that influencer selection should be based on strategic fit, not only popularity.

Frequency of exposure is another factor in brand awareness. When users see a brand repeatedly through influencer content, they may become more familiar with it. However, excessive promotion may also create irritation. Therefore, brands need to balance visibility and overexposure. Spörl-Wang et al. (2025) highlight that influencer marketing effectiveness depends on multiple predictors, which means that campaign success is shaped by a combination of influencer, content, and audience-related factors.

6. Conclusion

Influencer marketing plays an important role in increasing brand awareness among Instagram users. Instagram provides brands with visual and interactive tools such as posts, reels, stories, and sponsored content. Influencers use these tools to introduce brands, explain products, share experiences, and encourage user engagement. Through repeated exposure and credible communication, influencer marketing can improve brand recognition and brand recall among users (Gross & von Wangenheim, 2022; Leung et al., 2022). The effectiveness of influencer marketing depends on several factors, including influencer credibility, content quality, engagement, audience relevance, message value, and influencer-brand fit. Studies show that credibility, authenticity, and engagement strongly influence how users respond to influencer promotions (Belanche et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2023; Liu & Zheng, 2024). Therefore, brands should not choose influencers only because of high follower count. They should select influencers whose audience, content style, and credibility match the brand.

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