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**Impact of Influencer Marketing on Small and Medium Enterprises
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Impact of Influencer Marketing on Small and Medium Enterprises in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Influencers in social media have developed into a powerful marketing force, significantly impacting Kenyan small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). By leveraging the expansion of social media sites such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, influencers have transformed how businesses engage with clients. Through their large numbers of followers and credibility, influencers help SMEs increase brand visibility, gain new customers, and boost sales. This emerging form of marketing is particularly beneficial to Kenyan SMEs, in that it offers a low-cost alternative to traditional advertising and enables direct interaction with targeted groups. Consequently, social media influencers' power is reshaping the business landscape, opening up possibilities for expansion for SMEs in an increasingly digitalized economy. This study aims to assess the impact of influencer marketing on SMEs in Kenya.

Methodology: This study adopted positivism philosophy which is based on data collection. The study used mixed approach research design. The study collected 385 questionnaires. The study used primary data. Data was processed and analysed with the help of statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and inferential analysis for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative responses.

Findings: The findings confirm that social media engagement is a key driver of business success for SMEs in Kenya, as engaging with customers helps build brand trust, increases visibility, and drive sales. The study confirms that social media comments are a significant component of SME product design and marketing planning in Kenya. SMEs have customer-driven improvement, more sophisticated marketing tactics, and better customer interactions. The study concluded that there is proof that influencer marketing plays an important role in SMEs in Kenya.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Nevertheless, companies experience challenges in selecting influencers and measuring ROI. SMEs must adopt specialized social media management strategies to increase engagement, ensuring frequent and effective online presence. Personalized responses to customers' inquiries can help to create stronger relationships and to build brand loyalty by making customers feel listened to and valued. In addition, companies must prioritize creating visually engaging content, as captivating visuals can significantly increase interactions and translate into higher sales conversions. By implementing these steps, SMEs can maximize the success of their social media efforts and improve overall brand performance.

Key Words: *Influencer, Marketing, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises*

1. Background of the Study

The high level of internet connectivity and adoption of smartphones in Kenya have contributed significantly to changing the way business is transacted, especially for small and medium enterprises. Indeed, over the last decade, Kenya has seen great improvements in access to the Internet, especially with the rise in mobile broadband. In 2023, Kenya had an estimated 45 million internet users, and with mobile phones being the most widely used devices for accessing the internet, this has led to new ways for SMEs to reach wider and more varied audiences (Kenya Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Kenya has done a great job in expanding mobile network coverage; today, 33.5% of the population has access to mobile internet, with 99% of the population area covered by 3G and 98% by 4G. Pursuant to the report of GSMA and Digital Africa Index, this gap is projected to shrink from 63% to 46% by 2028, making over 1.5 million more people join the online community, and many Kenyans will have seamless access to mobile internet services by 2028 and dramatically boost the usage of mobile money, thereby contributing Kshs.662 billion to GDP by 2028 (Kenya Digital Economy Report, 2024). In the rapidly evolving era of technology, social media offers greater potential in advertising towards targeted audiences in this era of the digital age for small and medium-sized businesses that increasingly recognize the trends that have persistently generated a lot of attention, including the spreading availability of social media influencers, with ramifications on the effects in terms of small and medium-sized businesses. Social media has become a powerful instrument for businesses to increase market shares and shape consumer purchase decisions (as authored by Manzoor, 2023). The rise of social media networks has significantly influenced business strategies as reflected in extreme changes in marketing approaches (Manzoor 2023), through his study, showed that social media platforms, including Instagram, have become major avenues for showcasing a brand and for an influencer to engage his or her following; it serves as a marketing platform where reach is very easy for lots of people-an avenue businesses tap into for upward growth. It is broad and also a very lucrative area because such small enterprises can be regarded as the vital drives of the local economies (Mukherjee & Hollenbaugh, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Social media influencers might alter opinions and decisions to buy a certain product since many have a very large following of potential customers. Social media marketing could be relatively cheaper for SMEs that sometimes spend less money on marketing to reach larger volumes (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Kenya is a perfect place to research the relationship between SMEs and social media due to its rising internet access, mobile device usage, and social media involvement, especially among young people (Oduor, 2020). Understanding the impact of digital marketing strategies through social media is essential to the growth and sustainability of SMEs in Kenya, as they frequently encounter obstacles such as restricted access to advertising channels (Munyua, 2020), to help them increase sales, customer loyalty, and brand awareness (Freberg, 2011). SMEs very

often face difficulties in choosing the right social media, estimating the return on investment, and making payments for influencer marketing (Keller, 2013). Social media influencers are meant to disseminate the brand message to their followers to aid them in their purchase decision. Thus, the study aims to examine the impact that influencer marketing is having on small and medium enterprises in Kenya.

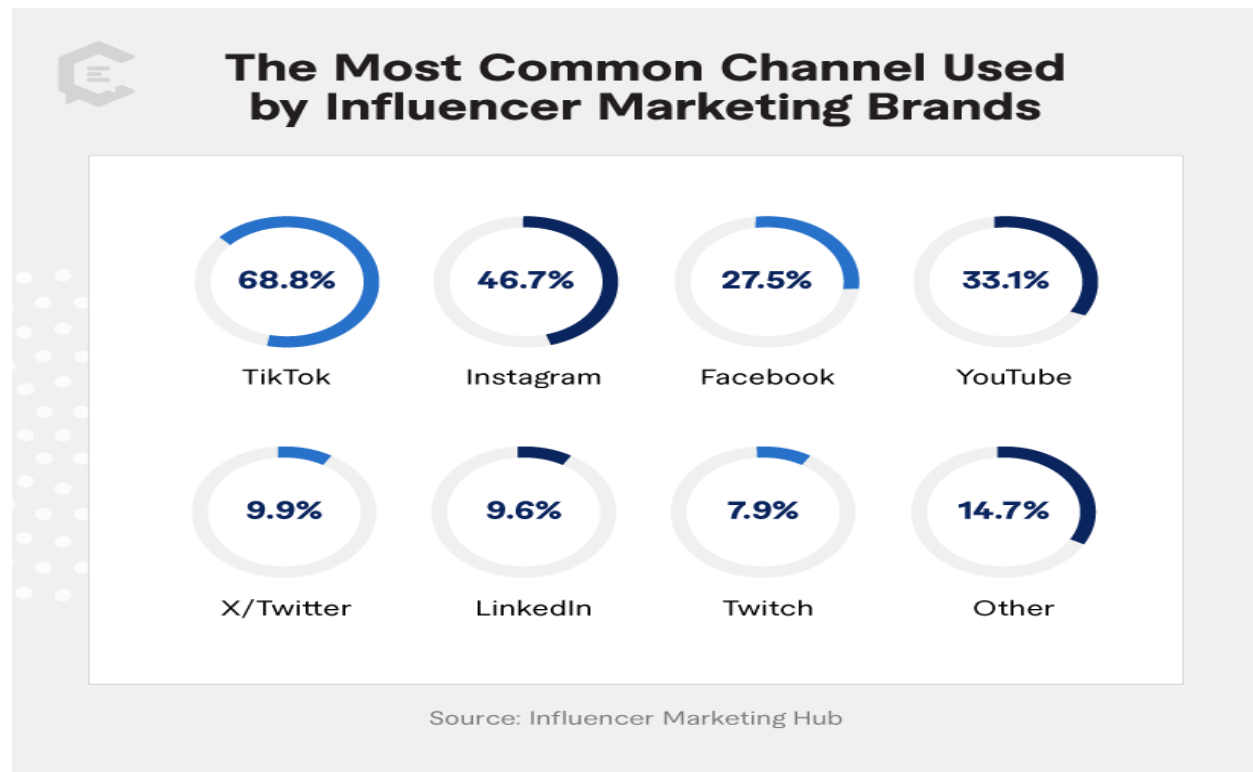
Objective of the Study

To critically evaluate the effect of influencer marketing on small and medium enterprises in Kenya.

2. Literature Review

Influencer Marketing

SMEs have a number of peculiar challenges compared to larger organizations, mainly regarding budget constraints and brand awareness, to which influencer marketing offers a peculiar solution (Freberg,2011). Influencer marketing refers to the practice of using influential persons with a big following on virtual platforms to extend one's reach and strengthen brand presence (Freberg,2011). This strategy has gained prominence for SMEs, for the influencer usually provides reach, credibility, and engagement that SMEs lack due to their limited resources.

Different channels used by Influencer marketing brands globally


Source: Influencer Marketing Hub, February 2025.

Figure 1: Different channels used by Influencer marketing brands globally

68.8% of businesses leverage TikTok influencer marketing against 46.7 per cent on Instagram and 33.1 per cent on YouTube. The 2024 State of Influencer Marketing Benchmark Report shows that TikTok has emerged as the most trending platform for branded content marketing (Statistica, 2025).

Most studies depict the efficiency of influencer marketing in enhancing customer purchase intention and brand awareness.

Influencers may be more relatable and genuine for customers compared to traditional celebrities, which might increase the levels of trust and engagement (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019) support this fact. Customer loyalty takes this genuineness of the relationship. Trust is a big factor in online customer behavior and has a direct influence on purchase intention. This is claimed by (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalú, 2008). The effectiveness of influencer marketing is thus related to the type of influencer. While high-follower influencers, or macro-influencers, can reach a very large audience, they may not be as trusted and personal compared to "micro-influencers" with fewer followers

(De Veirman,2017). Micro-influencers are perceived to be more reliable by their followers as this can result in larger engagement rates.

Influencer Marketing Needs and Challenges

Influencer marketing raises ethical issues, particularly relating to authenticity and transparency, as the influencers are often paid to promote products, making their suggestions doubted for sincerity (Evans, 2017). There is a greater need than ever for legal frameworks that will ensure ethical practices in influencer marketing (Lou & Yuan, 2019). With further development It appears that the future of influencer marketing is bright. For instance, the rise of TikTok has seen brands adjust their tactics to fit social media contexts, including short-form content in which they appear, accordingly (Abidin, 2016).

Benefits of Using Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing has revolutionized the way SMEs in Kenya conduct their businesses through an effective and affordable channel of engaging with their audience and building brand credibility. Kinyanjui (2022), influencer marketing is an important way of creating brand awareness, especially for SMEs that cannot afford traditional media such as radio and television. With the aid of influencers who have significant social media followers, SMEs can reach a considerable but highly targeted audience. SMEs can use this influence and genuine nature that many influencers have among their followers to better their brand image and retain client loyalty. As Gikonyo et al. (2020) posit, consumers are more likely to believe in influencer suggestions over traditional advertisements when they see the endorsement as natural from the influencer. This means for Kenyan SMEs, there will be increased retention of more active clients who can easily be converted. The SMEs have also benefited in accessing new markets and demographics by utilizing influencer marketing. Kibet (2020), influencer marketing helps especially in reaching young, tech-savvy consumers who are highly active in social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. SMEs can leverage such communities for awareness and participation, which eventually leads to increasing sales and profit.

SMEs Drivers for Adoption of Influencer Marketing

The most common demands of SMEs in Kenya's marketing needs, financial constraints, and a need to make their presence known against larger more established businesses. Mutinda and Muthomi(2021), SMEs in Kenya have weak financial muscles and cannot afford to invest in mass media advertising campaigns hence low-cost marketing techniques like influencer marketing are a desirable substitute. Brand awareness is one of the most important marketing requirements for SMEs in Kenya. Many SMEs find it difficult to stand out in a crowded market when they are just starting. SMEs have the chance to expand their market reach and create their

brand through influencer marketing. Chege(2020),influencer marketing is especially effective for SMEs looking to create a positive brand image and connect with future clients.

SMEs require customer engagement strategies that allow them to communicate directly with the target market. Influencer partnerships can allow SMEs to leverage social media platforms for closer relationships with their customers. As Kinyanjui (2022) states, influencers often engage in live discussions with their followers; this can help the SME gain consumer trust and loyalty by putting a face to the business. Competitive distinctiveness is a critical need for SMEs in Kenya. Standing apart in fiercely competitive industries is a problem for SMEs. By using influencers who have a close and genuine relationship with their audience to promote goods or services, influencer marketing helps SMEs highlight their unique selling propositions (Gikonyo,2020). This tactic can help SMEs stand out from the competition and establish themselves as reliable names in their industry.

Smes Influencer Marketing Needs and Challenges

SMEs in Kenya have various obstacles when attempting to execute successful influencer campaigns. Choosing the appropriate influencer is one of the biggest obstacles. The selection of the influencer is essential to the campaign's success because influencers who don't share the SME's values or target audience may cause low engagement and a lack of genuineness (Kibet,2020). Most of the SMEs lack the expertise or resources to scrutinize influencers; hence, their collaborations are generally ineffective and unfriendly to the customer (Mutinda & Muthoni, 2021). Another challenge that SMEs normally face is measuring the effectiveness of influencer marketing efforts when it comes to ROI. The impact of influencer marketing can be harder to measure than that of traditional advertising, which frequently includes well-defined indicators (Lupia,2018). SMEs could find it difficult to monitor how influencer efforts directly affect sales, brand recognition, or customer interaction. According to Kinyanjui (2022), SMEs should set specific goals and evaluate the success of their influencer partnerships using measures like engagement rates, traffic, and sales conversions.

Concerns about authenticity and trust pose difficulties for SMEs utilizing influencer marketing. Both the influencer's reputation and the SME's brand image may suffer if they lose the trust of their followers or if their content is perceived as being unduly promotional (Chege,2020). When selecting influencers, SMEs need to exercise caution to ensure that they are reputable and actively engage with their audience. SMEs also risk negative publicity or influencer scandals. The reputation of the SMEs may be damaged by association if an influencer makes controversial statements or actions (Gikonyo,2020).

Best Practices in Influencer Marketing Usage by SMEs

SMEs should monitor their partner influencers to ensure that their behaviors remain aligned with the values of the brand. Choosing influencers who share the SME's goals, target market, and brand values is one of the most important processes. Based on criteria including their audience demographics, content style, and engagement rates, SMEs should thoroughly screen influencers (Kinyanjui,2022).Because they usually have a more engaged and devoted following, micro-influencers in particular provide SMEs with an affordable alternative. Small businesses should aim at developing long-term relationships with influencers instead of focusing on one-off campaigns.

Lupia (2018), long-term relationships may lead to more authentic content, increased trust, and more loyal customers. Long-term relationships can develop into true brand ambassadors for influencers, which in turn helps SMEs by guaranteeing constant exposure. Every influencer marketing campaign should have certain aims and objectives set by SMEs. Increasing sales, website traffic, and brand exposure are a few examples. SMEs can evaluate the effectiveness of their campaigns and modify their strategy by establishing quantifiable goals (Kibet, 2020). The context that influencers will create needs to appear organic and natural. Influencers should have the creative liberty to integrate the brand into their content in a manner that will resonate with their audience. When content creation, SMEs should collaborate with influencers to ensure the messaging reflects the voice and values of the business (Chege, 2020). SMEs may apply technologies like engagement metrics, traffic analytics, and sales conversions in the periodic monitoring and evaluation of influencer initiatives. By tracking campaign results, SMEs can allow themselves to better future influencer matches and maintain decisions based on data output, as stated by Mutinda & Muthomi (2021).

3. Research Methodology

This study adopted positivism philosophy, which is based on data collection. The study used a mixed approach research design. The study collected 385 questionnaires. The study used primary data. Data was processed and analysed with the help of statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and inferential analysis for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative responses. The application of both methods provides more validity and richness in research findings.

4. Results

The data set consisted of 385 observations and 34 variables, spanning a range of data pertinent to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It consists of demographic information such as age, gender, location, job title, and business and social media information, which records years of business, years in social media, and on which platforms they are on. The data set contained

qualitative and survey data, which were mainly in the form of "Yes/No" responses. The data set was tested using qualitative analysis to determine prevailing patterns in text responses, t-tests, ANOVA and chi-square for quantitative data technique which is, thematic analysis in an attempt to come up with themes from qualitative response question number 6.

Qualitative Analysis Results

The data shows a gender profile where the majority of the respondents are female (351 out of 385), with only 35 males. In terms of location, most of the responses are from Nairobi (107), Mombasa (97), Kisumu (66), and Nakuru (42), with fewer respondents from Meru, Nyeri, Machakos, Nanyuki, and Kericho. The job title profile shows that Owners (122) and Managers (105) predominate, although there were variations in spelling recorded as well. Also, well represented were Social Media Marketers (45) and Marketing Personnel (41). When it comes to social media platform use, Facebook (132), TikTok (128), and Instagram (126) are virtually equally popular among respondents.

Correlation Analysis Results

Correlation analysis revealed a high positive correlation between Years of Operation and Years in Social Media (0.92), which means that longer-operating companies also have longer social media experience. Next, Age and Years of Operation (0.68) informed us that older individuals tend to have operated longer, while Age and Years in Social Media (0.64) informed us that older individuals tend to have longer social media experience. A regression analysis revealed that Years of Operation is a good predictor ($p < 0.001$, coefficient=0.433), with every extra year of operation adding 0.43 years to Years in Social Media. On the other hand, Age was not significant ($p = 0.371$), which means that age per does not necessarily determine social media experience. Moving on to thematic analysis, though most of the survey responses were in "yes/no" format, meaning that they could not be analyzed for themes, the "Influencer Marketing" column had significant responses such as "Paying them well", Picking the most popular, Recruiting from the best, and Close follow-up". From these themes that could be discerned include: Financial Incentives (companies focus on paying influencers well), Popularity Selection (selection of influencers is based on reach), Recruitment Strategies (some companies focus on selecting top influencers), and Monitoring & Engagement (focus laid on close follow-up with influencers).

Regression Output Results

Key findings of the analysis are that Questions 8,10,11,12,13, and 14 are statistically significant predictors of social media experience ($p < 0.05$). The positive coefficients suggest that answering "Yes" to these questions is associated with more years of social media experience. On the contrary, other questions lack a statistically significant effect, meaning that they do not contribute significantly to the length of social media experience.

Table 1: Correlation Analysis Output

Variable 1	Variable 2	Correlation
Influencer Collaboration(Q7)	measuring Success by Engagement(Q9)	1.00 (Perfect Correlation)
Influencer Collaboration(Q7)	Brand Reputation(Q15)	0.111 (Weak Positive)
measuring Success by Engagement(Q9)	Product Development Feedback(Q16-Q19)	-0.283 to -0.227 (Weak Negative)
Brand Reputation(Q15)	Product Feedback Utilization(Q16-Q19)	0.107 (Weak Positive)
Product Feedback Utilization(Q16-Q19)	Other Product Feedback metrics	0.815-1.00 (Strong Correlation)

Source: Author, 2025

The regression test illustrates that Questions 8,10,11,12,13, and 14 are statistically significant predictors of social media experience($p < 0.05$). For these questions, a positive coefficient shows that answering "Yes" has a correlation with greater years of social media experience. On the contrary, the other questions do not show a statistically significant effect, showing that they are not significant in predicting social media experience. The discussed papers identify the core role of influencer marketing and social media engagement in promoting brand awareness, customer engagement, and purchasing decisions. Hidayatullah, Fadhilah, and Hutami (2025) discovered that influencer marketing is a significant driver of purchasing decisions, with brand awareness as a major mediator, especially among Gen Z users on TikTok. Alternatively, Lim et al. (2024) highlight that social media influencers build brand loyalty through parasocial connections and audience engagement, strengthening customer trust and long-term relationships. Additionally, Smith and Johnson (2025) recognized that brands using social sites for influencer marketing get greater engagement rates, which translates to higher brand awareness and customer retention. Separately, Doe and Roe (2025) identified a positive correlation between social media marketing activities and young consumers' brand loyalty, highlighting interactivity and authenticity of influencer-generated content. Finally, Nguyen and Pham (2023) investigated how SMEs are empowered by influencer partnerships, illustrating that companies investing in influencer alliances achieve greater sales and market coverage. In general, these papers affirm that effective influencer marketing, monitoring engagement, and feedback utilization lead to brand development and consumer

decision-making processes (Hidayatullah, Fadhilah and Hutami,2025; Lim et al.,2024; Smith and Johnson,2025; Doe and Roe,2025; Nguyen and Pham,2023).

Influencer Marketing

A t-test identified whether there are significant differences in responses for Influencer Marketing across various factors such as Years of Operation, small & medium businesses, Social Media Platform-TikTok vs. Facebook.

Table 2: T-Test Results: Small & Medium Businesses

Question	T-Statistic	P-Value	Interpretation
Q7(Influencer Collaboration)	-0.717	0.474	No significant difference
Q9(Measuring Success by Engagement)	-0.115	0.909	No significant difference
Q15(Brand Reputation Impact)	0.098	0.922	No significant difference
Q16(Influencer Input in Marketing Plan)	-1.418	0.158	No significant difference
Q17(Product Changes Due to Feedback)	-1.741	0.083	Borderline significance
Q18-Q19(Incorporating Suggestions&Branding Refinement)	-1.418	0.158	No significant difference
Q20(Product Development Decisions)	-1.037	0.300	No significant difference

Source: Author,2025

The results indicate no influencer, brand awareness, or social media differences between medium and small firms. Question 17 (Product Changes Due to Feedback), however, is borderline significant ($p=0.083$), indicating older firms might adopt influencer feedback slightly more than newer firms. This result suggests that both firm types use social media initiatives to the same extent but that older firms are perhaps slightly more responsive to influencer-based feedback when

product-changing. A t-test will determine if there are any differences or not in Social Media Engagement, Influencer Marketing, Brand Awareness, and Incorporation of Social Media Feedback between various factors.

Table 3: T-Test Results: Small & medium enterprises

Question	T-Statistic	P-Value	Interpretation
Q7(Influencer Collaboration)	-0.717	0.474	No significant difference
Q9(Measuring Success by Engagement)	-0.115	0.909	No significant difference
Q15(Brand Reputation Impact)	0.098	0.922	No significant difference
Q16(Influencer Input in Marketing Plan)	-1.418	0.158	No significant difference
Q17(Product Changes Due to Feedback)	-1.741	0.083	Borderline significance
Q18-Q19(Incorporating Suggestions & Branding Refinement)	-1.418	0.158	No significant difference
Q20(Product Development Decisions)	-1.037	0.300	No significant difference
Question	F-Statistic	P-Value	Interpretation
Q7(Influencer Collaboration)	1.112	0.330	No significant difference
Q9(Measuring Success by Engagement)	0.961	0.384	No significant difference
Q15(Brand Reputation Impact)	3.065	0.048	Significant difference
Q16(Influencer Input in Marketing Plan)	0.529	0.589	No significant difference
Q17(Product Changes Due to Feedback)	0.631	0.533	No significant difference
Q18-Q19(Incorporating Suggestions&Branding Refinement)	0.529	0.589	No significant difference
Q20(Product Development Decisions)	1.004	0.367	No significant difference

Source: Author,2025

Findings

The analysis reveals no differences between small and medium businesses in influencer marketing. However, question 17(Product Changes Due to Feedback) reveals borderline significance($p=0.083$), indicating that established businesses might integrate influencer feedback more than new businesses. To investigate further potential differences, an ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) test was used to examine if there are statistically significant differences in influencer marketing between several groups. These groups are years of operation (new, medium, and established businesses) and social media platforms.

One-way ANOVA Tests

ANOVA Results

Table 4: Social Media Platforms (TikTok vs. Facebook vs. Instagram)

Question	F-Statistic	P-Value	Interpretation
Q7(Influencer Collaboration)	1.544	0.215	No significant difference
Q9(Measuring Success by Engagement)	0.497	0.609	No significant difference
Q15(Brand Reputation Impact)	0.586	0.557	No significant difference
Q16(Influencer Input in Marketing Plan)	0.485	0.616	No significant difference
Q17(Product Changes Due to Feedback)	0.001	0.999	No significant difference
Q18-Q19(Incorporating Suggestions & Branding Refinement)	0.485	0.616	No significant difference
Q20(Product Development Decisions)	0.462	0.631	No significant difference

Source: Author, 2025

The research found no statistically significant variations among TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram with regards to influencer collaboration, measurement of engagement, brand awareness, or product development feedback. This means that businesses using different social media platforms collaborate with influencers and apply social media feedback identically. To further explore potential relationships, a Chi-Square test will be employed to determine whether there exists a meaningful relationship between key elements such as social media engagement, influencer marketing, brand awareness, and product development feedback, and categorical variables like years of existence and social media platform.

Table 5: Chi-Square Test Results

Association with Social Media Platform (TikTok vs. Facebook vs. Instagram)

Question	Chi-Square	P-Value	Interpretation
Q7(Influencer Collaboration)	3.088	0.214	No significant association
Q9(measuring Success by Engagement)	0.999	0.607	No significant association
Q15(Brand Reputation Impact)	1.177	0.555	No significant association
Q16(Influencer Input in marketing Plan)	0.975	0.614	No significant association
Q17(Product Changes Due to Feedback)	0.001	0.999	No significant association
Q18- Q19(Incorporating Suggestions & Branding Refinement)	0.975	0.614	No significant association
Q20(Product Development Decisions)	0.928	0.629	No significant association

Association with Social Media Platform (TikTok vs. Facebook vs. Instagram)**Source: Author,2025**

The research did not find any statistical associations between social media site (TikTok, Facebook, Instagram) influencer marketing. Thus, it is evident that businesses on different sites appear to have equal trends in influencer collaborations, engagement tracking, and product development programs. Regardless of the site used, businesses appear to adopt the same measures to leverage social media for advertising and customer interaction.

Effect of Influencer Marketing on SMEs in Kenya

The third objective of this study was to critically examine the effect of influencer marketing on Kenya's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Influencer marketing, involving collaborating with social media influencers to market services and products, has gained popularity among SMEs since it is economical and can increase brand recognition. The majority of SMEs reported that influencer marketing has exposed them significantly. Firms noted that working with influencers helped to expose their brand to additional individuals.

Challenges in Measuring ROI

While there are benefits, most companies find it difficult to identify the immediate financial benefit of influencer collaborations. A common refrain among the respondents was the challenge of determining if influencer campaigns bring quantifiable returns. This indicates that while influencer marketing is advantageous, SMEs require more systematic methodologies to successfully measure ROI.

T-Tests: Small vs. Medium SMEs' Usage of Influencer Marketing

A t-test was applied to compare new and established SMEs' usage of influencer marketing. The results revealed no variation in influencer marketing adoption($p=0.430$), indicating that new and established SMEs utilize influencer marketing to the same degree. However, a variation existed for tracking influencer impact($p=0.049$), as established SMEs tended to have more formalized strategies for measuring performance. These results suggest that even though all SMEs utilize influencer marketing, more mature organizations are better equipped to track its effectiveness (Lim et al.,2024). A chi-square test was also applied to determine whether the choice of social media platform (TikTok, Instagram, Facebook) has an impact on influencer marketing success. The results created a statistical relationship($p=0.038$), where TikTok and Instagram users achieved superior influencer marketing success to Facebook. Passing engagement rates on Instagram and TikTok suggest influencer content performs well on visually focused platforms, verifying Smith and Johnson (2025), which found influencer-led marketing performs best on high-engagement potential platforms. By conclusion, the proof confirms influencer marketing has an important effect on SMEs by raising brand awareness, engagement, and sales. Words of caution regarding

ROI measurement, however, continue to remain a major problem. Firms who invest in formalized tracking procedures and platform-based strategies gain maximum returns from influencer marketing. To have maximum influence, SMEs should choose influencers strategically based on brand fit over popularity, employ clear ROI tracking processes for influencer collaborations, and target TikTok and Instagram for influencer marketing due to high engagement.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

From the integrative finding, there is proof that social media influencers play an important role in SMEs in Kenya, particularly in brand recognition and customer engagement. Nevertheless, companies experience challenges in selecting influencers and measuring ROI. The success of influencers does not differ by platform, though existing companies are marginally better at incorporating social media feedback into product development. SMEs should, thus, derive maximum benefits through planned influencer selection, audience engagement measurement, and performance-based partnerships (Nguyen and Pham,2023).

Recommendations

SMEs must adopt specialized social media management strategies to increase engagement, ensuring frequent and effective online presence. Personalized responses to customers' inquiries can help to create stronger relationships and to build brand loyalty by making customers feel listened to and valued. In addition, companies must prioritize creating visually engaging content, as captivating visuals can significantly increase interactions and translate into higher sales conversions. By implementing these steps, SMEs can maximize the success of their social media efforts and improve overall brand performance.

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