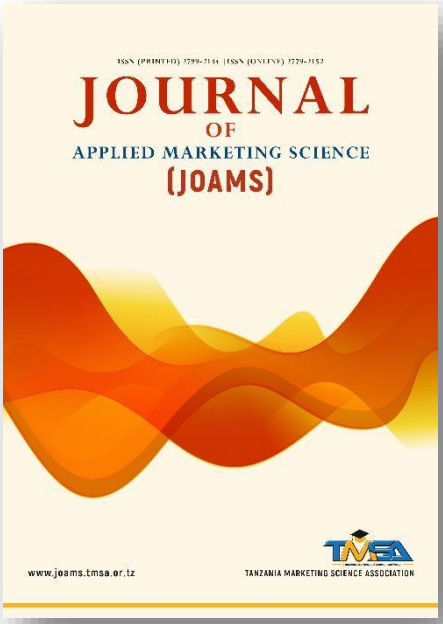


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The Role of Influencer Marketing in Building Brand Awareness in the Digital Era: A Case of Airtel Tanzania

- ***Lidya Nyamwanji***

ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of influencer marketing on brand awareness, using Airtel Tanzania as a case study. The research focused on three key dimensions of influencer marketing: influencergenerated content, audience engagement, and the role of social media platforms. Using a structured questionnaire given to a sample of 384 people, a mixed research approach was employed. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression were used to analyze the data and identify the link between brand awareness results and influencer marketing approaches. The results indicated that brand awareness for Airtel was favorably and notably affected by all three parts of influencer marketing. Among them, audience engagement and social media platform usage came after influencer-generated content. The Two-Step Flow Theory and Social Identity Theory, helped to explain the way people receive, interpret, and absorb messages from opinion leaders inside social groups, supported the study. Findings showed that correct platform choice, interactive content, and content quality all contribute significantly to improving brand visibility and recognition among digital customers. The research finds that influencer marketing should be seen as a strategic element of digital marketing plans because it is an effective tool for raising brand awareness. It advises companies to create original content, promote meaningful influencer-audience engagement, and thoughtfully choose channels that fit the preferences of their target audience. Limitations regarding scope and technique are also noted in the study, together with recommendations for more research, including longitudinal studies and cross-industry analysis. Generally, the study adds insightful contributions to the changing subject of influencer marketing in Tanzania's digital environment.

Keywords*: Influencer marketing, Brand awareness, Audience engagement, Social media platforms*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Influencer marketing is broadly spreading all over the world in this digitalized era. Most of the organizations especially private companies have been using influencers in promoting and advertising their goods and services through social media like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, and other social media and electronic media such as radio and television (Jones,

2021). This is because influencers have the power to convince the majority to use a certain kind of an organization's service or good.

Influencers are fundamentally content generators and disseminators on social media (Malik, 2023). In the world of digital marketing, influencer marketing has become a crucial tactic, especially when it comes to creating and strengthening brand identities. According to Leung *et al.*, (2022), influencer marketing is the practice of working with people who have a sizable internet following the order of promoting goods, services, or brands. These influencers, who could be celebrities, business leaders, or microinfluencers, use their reputation and extensive social media following to sway their audience's judgments on what to buy (Mero *et al*., 2023). This marketing strategy's rests in its capacity to build customer involvement, trust, and genuine connections between brands and consumers. Social media has revolutionized how businesses have engaged with consumers, thus making digital marketing integral for promoting products and building brand awareness. As such, brands have shifted to influencer marketing to connect with consumers in a more impactful way (Joshi et al., 2023). Typically, influencers are people with a big number of followers on the internet, and they are able to leverage their influence and relationship with consumers in influencing perceptions and buying decisions. Brands gain trust and authenticity with target audience using influencer marketing unlike traditional marketing, thus making marketing more engaging and effective (Cartwright *et al.*, 2022). The significance of influencer marketing is demonstrated by its capacity to boost brand recall and consumer involvement. Studies show that consumers have more faith in influencer recommendations than advertisements from companies (Mouritzen *et al.*, 2024). Hence, brands conducting influencer-based campaigns witness better engagement and enhanced brand loyalty (Barta *et al.*, 2023). Unfortunately, studies on how companies can leverage influencer marketing techniques to improve brand perception and customer interaction have not received extensive attention from researchers.

Influencer marketing is well established in developed economies, with brands working with influencers across a variety of sectors including fashion, tech, and finance. The US, UK, and Germany are prime examples of this growth due to their advanced digital infrastructure and high social media penetration (Venciute *et al*., 2023). Brands have also used their data to leverage their influence in these economies, setting best practices for companies globally, with influencer marketing informing their marketing strategies as they work to build brand love and create loyalty among customers. However, the use of influencer marketing in less developed countries like Tanzania is still just emerging but gaining momentum. As

internet access and social media usage grow, more Tanzanian businesses, including Airtel Tanzania, are starting to adopt influencer marketing as part of their branding (Wang *et al*., 2019). Thus, this study examines how influencer marketing influences brand awareness of products in Tanzania, given the assumption of digital literacy, cultural influences, and trust of consumers. These insights allow businesses to find out how they could scale their influencer marketing strategies in emerging markets to maximize the impact. Although influencer marketing is steadily growing, it still poses a challenge for brands.

This can result in ineffective campaigns and reputational risk if influencers and brand values are misaligned (Mero *et al*., 2023). Moreover, over commercialization fears and the credibility of the influencer may impact the trust and engagement of the consumers. The effect of transparency and ethical influencer marketing practices in Tanzania was also examined based on the findings of this study (Jones, 2021). Therefore, the present research aims to fill this gap by exploring the role of influencer marketing in enhancing brand awareness in developing markets where influencers play a major role in promoting goods and services especially in a market like Tanzania. This research highlighted the essential strategies, market dynamics, and threats to offer a comprehensive perspective for companies seeking to utilize influencer marketing successfully. The results supplement the wider conversation regarding digital marketing and provide practical insights for marketers and policymakers looking to leverage influencers for effective brand marketing.With the growing influence of social media platforms, influencer marketing has also become a key component for brands which are looking to build a digital footprint. Companies utilize influencers to connect with their audience directly in a manner that builds trust and improves brand awareness (Leung, Gu, & Palmatier, 2022). Although influencer marketing has been shown to be effective in various scenarios, the impact it has on longterm brand engagement and consumer devotion warrants further study especially in growing economies such as Tanzania. Comprehensive reviews carried out on influencers and their effect on consumers found that influencer marketing significantly improved brand perception and consumer interaction. In fact, studies show that influencer recommendation have more trust than traditional advertising which leads to increase purchase intention and better connection with the consumers (Syed *et al.*, 2023). That said, the studies have been largely limited to developed markets with a more advanced digital infrastructure and social media penetration. In less developed countries where the market dynamics are different, the performance of influencer marketing strategies have not

received thoroughly consideration. Studies from developing countries stem from this potential point to severe limitations as well. Coffie *et al.,* (2022) reported that there is a positive attitude regarding influencer post and stated that consumers followed and accepted posts by influencers in fashion, beauty and telecommunication domains. But they also point out challenges like low internet accessibility in some areas, poor digital literacy and skepticism towards influencer authenticity, which inhibit the success of influencer marketing in the region. Additionally, previous studies have mainly addressed general social media marketing, without accounting for the specific influence of digital content creators in Tanzania's commercial sphere.

Influencer marketing in Tanzania is still in its infancy, but there are a few challenges standing in the way of its full potential. Digital Illiteracy, high cost of influencers poor regulation, poor network system and others (Jones, 2021). Also, the oversaturation of influencer content and the transition into a near exclusively commercial space means that consumers have grown weary of consuming content with a marketing agenda, resulting in a reduced engagement rate and diminished effectiveness for brands. Such factors introduce uncertainties to the efficacy of influencer marketing in augmenting brand awareness and consumer trust in Tanzania.

Businesses in Tanzania, such as Airtel Tanzania, have implemented numerous strategies to overcome these hurdles and improve the efficiency of influencer marketing. Brands have been focusing on choosing influencers with values that cohere within their brand message, allowing them to gain authenticity and increase consumer trust (Koay *et al.,* 2023). Additionally, brands have started focusing on long-term partnerships with influencers instead of just hiring them for a single promotional post, as a way to create and sustain trust with their audience. Although these strategies hold potential, there still a lack of empirical evidence on their long-term efficacy, pointing towards a need for more research. This study seeks to address this knowledge gap by examining the impact of influencer marketing on brand awareness in the context of Tanzania especially Airtel Brand. The results guide the effective usage of influencer marketing in brand-building initiatives in emerging markets and they add significant knowledge to the broader context of digital marketing in Tanzania.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW *2.1 Theoretical Framework*

2.1.1 Two Step Flow Theory

The Two-Step Flow Theory, proposed by Paul Lazarsfeld, Elihu Katz, and others in the 1940s, marked a significant shift in our understanding of the communication influences audience. According to this theory, media messages do not reach the general public directly instead, the

material is filtered and evaluated by opinion leaders' people that others turn to for credibility and competence in specific areas Duh & Thabethe, (2021). These opinion leaders then pass on their interpretations of media messages to their followers, influencing how they perceive and respond to the information. Lazarsfeld's research revealed that this twostep flow of communication interpersonal communication, particularly through trusted opinion leaders had a greater influence on people's decisions than typical mass media channels (X. Wang et al., 2019). This theory challenged the previously held belief that mass media had a direct impact on the public by emphasizing the role of social networks and personal relationships in knowledge dissemination and public opinion development. Theory rests on major assumptions. First, not all customers are equally influenced or influenced by media; instead, high media engagement and social standing act as middlemen. Second, the leaders of the opinion not only relay messages, but re -interpret them, embed the reliability, before sharing individual approaches, cultural relevance and reliability with their network (X. Wang et al., 2019). Third, the effect of these leaders depends on the beliefs and social relations they maintain with their followers. This approach assumes that communication is a social process in which the meaning is co-made instead of being transmitted only. As a result, the persuasion is often more effective when arbitrariness is done by reliable individuals rather than being directly generated from media channels.

Previous studies have widely enforced two-step flow principles in contexts such as political campaigns, health communication and marketing. For example, Chan and Mishra (2020) used the principle of how influential people shaped public behavior during the Covid-19 epidemic, showing that the audience was more receptive to messages from familiar figures than familiar data than direct government announcements. In marketing, Abidin (2021) implemented the framework to find out how the support of Instagram influencers affected the purchase intentions of the followers, finding that individual engagement and relativity increased the message reliability. These studies confirm that the opinion leaders act as gatekeepers of influence, validated and personalized information from the methods that resonate with groups of specific audiences. It displays the adaptability of the principle for both traditional and digital communication environments.

In today's digital landscape, the two-step flow principle is relevant to understanding how social media influencers act as modern-day opinion leaders in raising the brand awareness of Airtel. Influencers filtered Airtel's marketing material, translated it into reliable stories, and distributed it through platforms such as

Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and Twitter, making it a bridge between the brand and its target audiences (Jones, 2021). By evaluating which platforms and impressive strategies attract consumers the most effectively, the study can identify how these digital opinion leaders increase the perceptions of Airtel's visibility and shape. The principle underlines the importance of the brand's identification, recall, and the importance of confidence, relativity and personal interaction in running the top-of-mind awareness, making it a strong ideological basis for analyzing the role of influential marketing in the telecom industry.

2.1.2 Social Identity Theory Social Identity Theory, created by Henri Tajfel in the 1970s, describes how people identify themselves and others into social groups, which influences their behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions. Tajfel and Turner (1979) claimed that an individual's self-concept is largely determined by his or her memberships in various social groups and that this sense of belonging has a significant impact on their decisions and interactions with brands (Leung, Gu, & Palmatier, 2022). It underlines the high level of self-esteem that people derive from the groups with which they identify, demonstrating how group dynamics can influence consumer decisions. When businesses successfully align with the values and identities of their target audience, they generate a higher level of emotional connection, loyalty, and engagement.

Here, influencers are influential persons in given social groups can be regarded as playing an important role in forging these connections between a brand's message and the audience's values or aspirations.

According to this theory, group membership and favorable social comparisons help people to keep or raise their self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). A brand that is related to a group a person identifies with becomes part of the individual's self-esteem, therefore driving more brand loyalty and promotion. Another assumption holds that consumers look for goods and services that reflect their identity and signal group membership to others. This helps explain why brand communities are formed and why support is given more weight based on data related to the same social group. In today's digital age, influencers often serve as symbolic representatives of some lifestyle, values, or cultural identity, making them a powerful agent to transmit brand messages through methods that resonate with their followers.

Previous studies have implemented the social identity theory in various contexts, including consumer behavior, brand loyalty, and impressive marketing. For example, Ashforth and MAEL (2020) investigated how the employee's identity with an organization extended the internal brand advocacy, while Carlson et al. (2021) studied how the identity of

consumers with brand communities strengthened loyalty and purchase intentions.

In Influencer Marketing, D Veerman et al. (2022) found that followers who share similar values and lifestyle with influencers are more likely to rely on their support and adopt brands that they promote. These findings highlight the importance of conformity between the influencers, brands and consumers in creating effective marketing strategies.

In the context of this study, the theory is highly relevant to understanding how the influencers contribute to Airtel's brand awareness. Influencers act as leaders of opinion within their social circles, embodying values and lifestyle, which they aspire to identify or identify with. The company can create a sense of belonging and community around its services by partnering with influential people whose identity is closely aligned with Airtel's target audiences. This alignment not only increases the message reliability, but also strengthens brand recognition, memory and loyalty.

In addition, theory provides a framework for analyzing how influencers' cooperation with Airtel on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok connects with specific social groups, eventually leading to emotional engagement and high levels of market entry.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review Influencer marketing has become a well-known branding tool on a global scale, because of its ability to increase brand visibility through strategic endorsements on social media platforms, according to Delgado Quintana (2023), influencers, especially microinfluencers, have the power to dramatically alter brand perception. In developed economies with relatively high levels of digital penetration and engagement, this type of marketing has shown particularly good results. The efficacy and reach of influencer campaigns are impacted by the uneven adoption of digitalization in Less Developed Nations (LDCs), like Tanzania. The impact of contextual elements like audience skepticism, digital literacy, and internet access on influencer marketing results in LDCs has been the subject of numerous studies. According to Venciute *et al*. (2023), for instance, influencer marketing may raise brand awareness in these situations, but its full potential is frequently limited by a lack of digital infrastructure and consumer mistrust of online ads. These results imply that audience preparedness and local conditions play a larger role in the success of influencer campaigns in developing nations than follower counts.

Trust is a recurrent theme in the literature and is a crucial factor in determining the success of influencer marketing. According to Mouritzen *et al*. (2024), because of their perceived relatability and authenticity, micro-influencers are more likely to inspire trust than traditional celebrities. Their research indicates that authenticity affects purchasing decisions in

addition to increasing brand trust. Research by Isyanto *et al*. (2020) and Yeukai & Dominique (2023), however, challenges this viewpoint. They found that consumers in Zimbabwe and other African markets are becoming more skeptical, particularly when influencers fail to disclose paid partnerships or promote rival brands. .

These contradictory results emphasize on the need for more thorough research on the trust component in various sociocultural contexts, especially in Tanzanian markets. Another body of literature focuses on audience engagement, content quality, and influencer credibility. These three elements are critical for influencer marketing success, according to Malik (2023), despite the fact that his research is based on Western economies with advanced internet infrastructure. Mawanza (2021), who researched the Zambian setting, found that many influencer efforts failed due to a lack of audience-influencer congruence. In a similar vein, Rifaldo and Wardi (2021) discovered that when influencers advocate many businesses at once, their perceived authenticity suffers, limiting their capacity to influence customer perceptions. These findings demonstrate how important brand alignment and content congruence are in maintaining influencer reputation.

Another area of growing attention in the industry is emotional engagement. Bhosale and Salunkhe (2019) discovered that influencers who develop personal ties and deliver authentic stories had more devoted following. Their work exemplifies how emotionally charged storytelling may create ties with viewers and encourage long-term engagement. Their research is limited to the United States, which raises the question of whether similar emotional dynamics exist in culturally diverse locations such as Tanzania. More localized research is needed to assess the universality of these emotional engagement mechanisms, given the cultural diversity and diverse consumer values in LDCs.

Furthermore, the social media platform used to conduct influencer marketing initiatives has a significant impact on their success. Instagram and TikTok are popular among younger audiences because to their visual and participatory formats; yet, Facebook is still frequently utilized in Tanzania for a larger audience (Venciute *et al*., 2023). However, there has been minimal empirical research comparing the effects of various platforms on brand awareness in specific industries, such as telecoms.

Harding *et al*. (2019) explored the usage of Instagram to promote local companies, focusing on the cultural aspects of influencer marketing.

His research found that influencers in the fashion and beauty industries were most successful when their messaging reflected the

values of indigenous cultures. This suggests that cultural resonance and local relevance may be just as important as follower count or posting frequency. However, Harding's research does not look into whether these influencer collaborations result in long-term consumer retention or brand loyalty, indicating yet another vacuum in the literature.

2.3 Research Gap

Although the number of studies on influencer marketing has been increasing, most of them are limited to developed economies with different digital infrastructure and consumer behavior as opposed to the Less Developed Countries (LDCs) like Tanzania. High engagement time in the market makes it conducive for the influencers to promote products (Delgado Quintana, 2023). Mouritzen *et al*., (2024) emphasize on the significance of authenticity and trust in influencer collaborations, an issue that is well-established in Western contexts. In contrast, studies in African markets like that of Venciute *et al*., (2023) indicate that limited internet access and digital skepticism are factors that resonate with potential consumers and thus tag an image of untrustworthiness to influencer marketing, which may compromise their buying behavior. TCRA, (2020) reports that in Tanzania, a lot of consumers are still not convinced about influencer promotions; especially in cases where the endorsements are not visible. The findings also identify an apparent literature gap in terms of understanding what adaptations to influencer marketing strategies are required to overcome Tanzania's unique challenges in the digital landscape.

Furthermore, although Venciute *et al.*, (2023) and Pick, (2020) have offered perspectives on influencer marketing's impact on brand awareness and consumer engagement in developing countries. The study addressed the long-term development of brand loyalty and trust, focusing on the short-term effectiveness of campaigns. Furthermore, Sachin Bhosale, and Ashwini Salunkhe, (2019) discussed emotional engagement in influencer marketing, without considering the societal factors, influencing indigenous consumer response to influencer endorsements in LDCs. In addition, authenticity, and over-commercialization, as shown by Pick (2020), are also indicating brands need to take more strategic and sustainable approaches towards influencer marketing. This study addressed this knowledge gap by examining the role of influencer marketing on Airtel brand awareness in the context of Tanzania. By exploring the aspects of influencer generated contents, audience engagement and influencer social media platforms on enhancing brand awareness in the broader context of digital marketing in Tanzania.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a descriptive research design that integrated both quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate the role of influencer marketing on brand awareness, focusing on Airtel Tanzania. The quantitative aspect utilized structured questionnaires with Likert-scale items to collect measurable data on influencer-generated content, audience engagement, and the use of social media platforms. The qualitative component involved interviews analyzed through thematic analysis to provide deeper insights and validate quantitative findings. The study was conducted in Ilala District, Dar es Salaam—an urban, tech-savvy area suitable for examining digital marketing practices. The target population comprised 250,000 Airtel customers and staff who actively engage with influencers online. Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula, a representative sample size of 384 respondents was determined. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were employed to ensure that both general consumers and expert participants were included.

Primary data were collected through questionnaires and interviews, with SPSS used for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) summarized data patterns, while multiple regression analysis tested the relationship between influencer-generated content, audience engagement, social media platforms, and brand awareness. Validity was enhanced through pilot testing and expert review, while reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha (≥ 0.7). Ethical standards including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly observed. This comprehensive methodology ensured accurate, reliable, and ethically grounded insights into how influencer marketing shapes Airtel Tanzania's brand awareness.

4.0 PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

The Findings Which Were Collected Through Questionnaire and Interviews. The Analysis Was Done by using SPSS Version 25 after the summarization. The presentation of findings was done through tables with descriptive statistics where frequencies, and percentages, have been shown. The discussion of findings considered the direct relationship of the findings and that of the reviewed literature to draw the conclusion.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

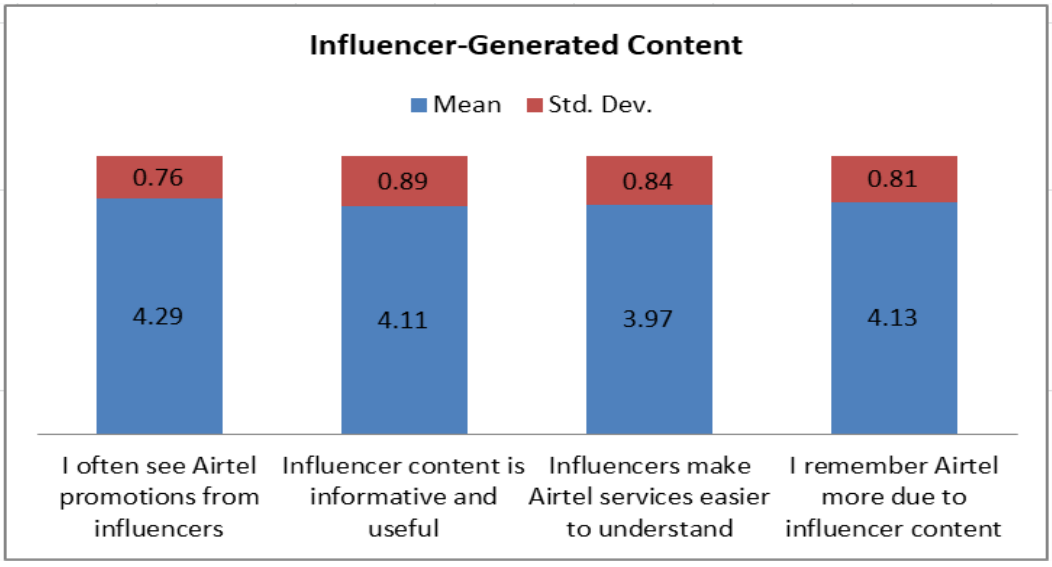
This section presents the descriptive statistics relevant to the study. Descriptive analysis plays a crucial role in addressing the research questions and provides an initial understanding of the data. It is also essential for checking any potential violations of the assumptions underlying the statistical techniques used in later analysis. The descriptive statistics are presented using frequencies and tables to summarize the characteristics of the variables under investigation. In addition, this section

includes the empirical interpretation of the findings.

4.1.1 Role of Influencer-Generated Content on Airtel Brand Awareness

This section presents the first objective of the study, which was to evaluate the role of Influencer-Generated Content on Airtel Brand Awareness. Its purpose is to check how the content produced and shared by Airtel Tanzania affects the recognition, memory of consumers and services of Airtel. The Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree, was used to measure responses. This measurement approach helped in converting subjective consumer perceptions into quantitative data for statistical analysis. The statements targeted major areas such as the frequency, information, clarity, and memory recall of Airtel content shared by the effects.

Table 1 Role of Influencer-Generated Content on Airtel Brand Awareness



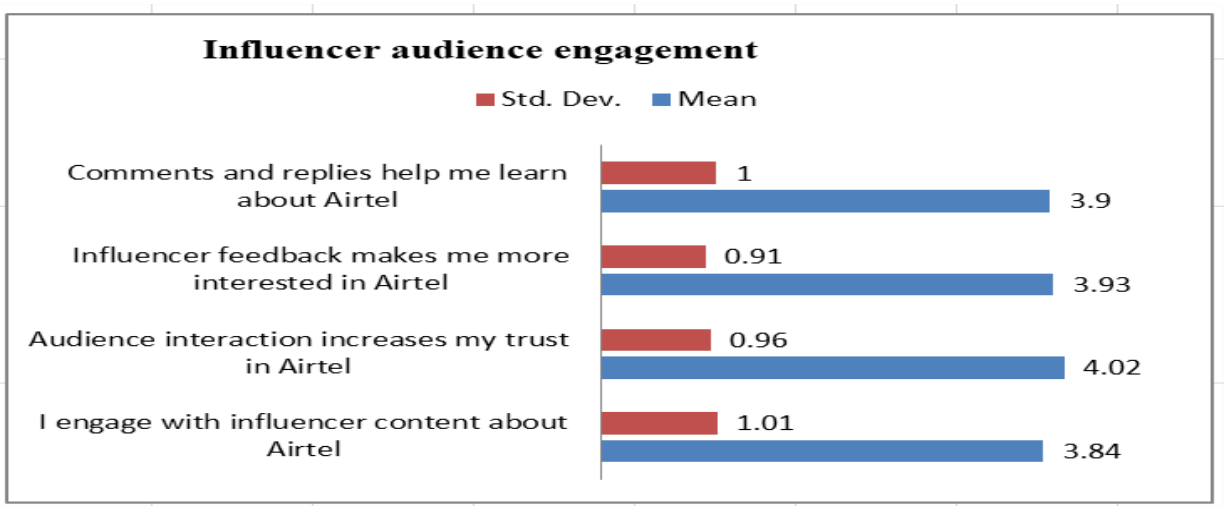
Source: Field Data (2025)

Suggest that "I often see Airtel promotions from influencers", the statement received the highest average score of 4.29 with a standard deviation of 0.76. This indicated a strong level of agreement between respondents that Airtel actively uses influencers in its promotional efforts. A high frequency of exposure is an important component in brand visibility and awareness. The relatively low standard deviation suggests stability in reactions, which means that most responders have regularly faced impressive manual propaganda related to Airtel. This discovery supports the idea that visibility through impressive materials plays an important role in shaping brand recognition. The integration of the affected in Airtel's

marketing strategy seems to be broad and effective, attracting the attention of the target audience. With a mean of 4.11 and a standard deviation of 0.89, the statement "Influencer content is informative and useful" demonstrated that most respondents feel the content influencers publish is valuable. By informing the public about Airtel's products, bundles, or features, informative content can help to raise brand recognition. Sharing pertinent and significant content by influencers improves consumer confidence and enhances the brand's image. The mean score of 3.97 and a standard deviation of 0.84, the assertion "Influencers make Airtel services easier to understand". This result indicates a good level of agreement, suggesting that the impressive influencer content not only promotes but also explains the services offered by Airtel. The statement "I remember Airtel more due to influencer content" got an average score of 4.13 and a standard deviation of 0.81, which reflects a strong consensus among the respondents. This discovery suggests that the impressiverelated content positively affects brand recall, a major element of brand awareness. Memory**Table 2 Influencer Audience Engagement** based reactions are important in marketing, as consumers are more likely to purchase or recommend brands that they can easily remember.

4.1.2 Role of Influencer Audience

Engagement on Airtel Brand Awareness This section presents the findings addressing the second specific objective of the study, which aimed to analyze the role of influencer audience engagement in enhancing Airtel brand awareness. Audience engagement refers to the degree to which followers interact with influencer content through actions such as liking, commenting, sharing, or responding to posts. This interaction enhances visibility and trust in the brand being promoted. The study employed a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), to measure the level of agreement with statements related to influencer-audience interaction.



Source: Field Data (2025)

The results show that the first statement, "I engage with influencer content about Airtel", recorded an average score of 3.84 with a standard deviation of 1.01. This indicates that a good number of respondents actively interact with influencer posts related to Airtel, such as liking, commenting, or sharing. The engagement is an essential element in digital space as it reflects the level of interest and accountability of the user. Slightly high standard deviations suggest that although the engagement is usually higher, there is some variation between the respondents. Factors such as individual interest in Airtel, perceived relevance of content, and confidence in the influencer may be responsible for the difference in the level of engagement. This discovery implies that Airtel's influencer marketing campaigns are effective in starting consumer interactions, which serve as a motivator to the participation and memorialization of the deep brand. During interview as one 29-year-old Airtel staff had this to say:

> *"…. When I see people comment or share Airtel posts, it makes me trust the message provided by influencer more."*

This finding reinforces the value of audience engagement as a form of social validation; enhancing influencer credibility and organically amplifying Airtel's brand reach key insights for optimizing future digital campaigns. The second statement, "Audience interaction increases my trust in Airtel," shows a 4.02 mean and a standard deviation of 0.96. This is one of the highest average scores in this section, which suggests that when other users attach to influencer content, it strengthens the confidence of the defendant in the Airtel brand. Social evidence, as likes, shares and comments from other users, reinforces the credibility of

both the influencer and the brand they represent. With a mean of 3.93 and a standard deviation of 0.91, the third statement, "Influencer feedback makes me more interested in Airtel," shows that respondents believe more in Airtel when influencers take the time to respond to comments or provide clarifications. Stronger relationships and increased brand loyalty result from two-way interaction between influencers and followers. Influencer responsiveness enhances emotional connection to both the brand and the influencer by giving the audience a feeling of being heard and valued. Personalized engagements like those of Airtel can lead to greater willingness to investigate goods, ask for more information, or perhaps change telecommunication providers. The small deviation shows once more uniformity in opinions, confirming that reaction is seen as a major engagement component. During the interview, one 32-yearold staff member respondent had this to share:

> *"People learned about the Airtel internet bundle through people asking questions under an influencer's post. The brand didn't say everything, but the comments helped."*

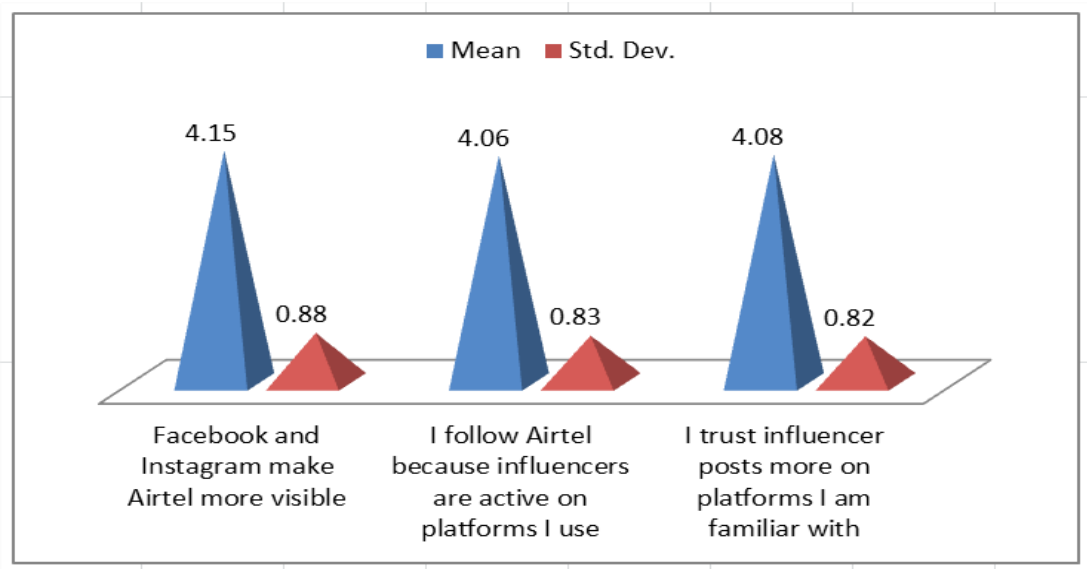
This highlights the practical value of real-time engagement and positions influencer responsiveness as a critical tool in Airtel's customer communication strategy.

With a mean score of 3.90 and a standard deviation of 1.00, the last entry, "Comments and replies help me learn about Airtel," showed that interaction in the comment area helps one to better grasp Airtel's services. Often, comments made by other users include testimonials, experiences, or inquiries that offer more perspectives. Similarly, answers from influencers or the brand might help to clarify offers, characteristics, or advantages that might not be completely represented in the first post. The learning process is improved by this peerto-peer information sharing, which also helps to build brand awareness. The somewhat little variance in responses indicates that many respondents profit from reading remark threads. In this digital world, comments serve as informal customer evaluations and feedback systems that influence judgments and perceptions.

4.1.3 Role of Influencer Social Media Platforms on Airtel Brand Awareness

This section addresses the third specific objective of the study, which aimed to determine the effectiveness of influencer social media platforms in enhancing Airtel's brand awareness. Social media platforms serve as primary channels through which brands and influencers communicate messages, making them an essential component of digital videos, and the audience can react differently marketing strategies. Different platforms offer based on the nature of the platform used.
various formats, such as text, images, and

Table 3 Role of Social Media Platforms on Airtel's Brand Awareness



Source: Field Data (2025)

With a mean score of 4.15 and a standard deviation of 0.88, the assertion "Facebook and Instagram make Airtel more visible" got the highest score. This suggests that most participants agree that these two channels are most successful in raising Airtel's visibility. Particularly well-resonating with the younger, tech-savvy population, Facebook and Instagram are well-known for their rich, visualbased content types including short form videos, reels, and stories. Such material is sometimes seen as more genuine and funnier, therefore extending both reach and memory. The high mean score implies that influencing marketing on these platforms is quite effective in terms of brand recognition and impression. Furthermore, the somewhat small standard deviation points to a common view among participants, therefore implying a constant belief in the visibility benefit provided by these platforms. These observations suggest that in competitive markets, Facebook and Instagram serve as effective means to increase digital

exposure and generate brand awareness. With a mean score of 4.06 and a standard deviation of 0.83, the second item measured was "I follow Airtel because influencers are active on platforms I use." This result shows that consumers are more likely to follow or engage with Airtel when they come across its influencers on platforms they are already engaged on.

4.2 Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression was conducted to examine the impact of the independent variables (influencer-generated content, audience engagement, and social media platforms) on the dependent variable (brand awareness). This statistical model was chosen to assess the predictive power of the influencer marketing elements in explaining variations in brand awareness among respondents. The model summary, ANOVA table, and regression coefficients are presented, followed by interpretations of each output. The model present with equation below:

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error
0.767	0.589	0.584	0.611

Source: Researcher (2025)

The model results show an R-squared value of 0.589, which means that the three influencer marketing factors account for around 58.9% of the variance in brand awareness. This shows a rather high degree of explanatory capability, implying that powerful predictors of brand awareness are influencer-generated content, audience engagement, and the social media platforms. The Adjusted R^2 of 0.584 verifies the model's robustness by correcting for the number of predictors. With a standard error of 0.611, the observed values' average distance from the regression line, the low value confirms that the model matches the data nicely. These results

$$Brand\ Awareness = \beta_0 + \beta_1 + \beta_2 + \beta_3 + \varepsilon$$

Table 4 Model Summary

Where;

- β_0 is the intercept.
- $\beta_1\beta_2$ and β_3 are the coefficients that represent the influence of influencergenerated content, audience engagement, and social media platforms respectively
- ϵ is the error term.

4.2.1 Model Summary

The Model Summary provides the R-squared value, which indicates how much variance in the dependent variable (Brand Awareness) is explained by the independent variables.

indicate that consumer perception and recollection of the Airtel brand are shaped significantly by influencer marketing approaches.

4.2.2 ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

The ANOVA table shows whether the regression model is statistically significant. The **Sig.** value tells us if the model significantly predicts Brand Awareness.

Table 5 ANOVA

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	223.142	3	74.381	62.83	0.000
Residual	155.418	380	0.409		
Total	378.560	383			

Source: Researcher (2025) The findings show that with a p-value of 0.000, the F-value of 62.83 shows that the model is very significant at the 0.001 level. This implies that a regression equation fits better than a model without any predictors. That is to say, brand awareness is much influenced by the interplay of audience interaction, platform effectiveness, and influencer-generated content. The low p-value (< 0.05) confirms that the variation explained by the model is not due to random chance, and that the independent variables together make a meaningful contribution to the dependent variable. **Table 6 Multiple Linear Regression Results**

4.2.2 Regression Results

This sub-section presents Multiple Linear Regression results that predict the impact of influencer marketing on Airtel brand awareness. Its purpose was to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between each independent variable, Influencergenerated content,

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	Beta	Z	P>|z|
Influencer-Generated Content	0.352	0.067	0.301	5.25	0.001
Audience Engagement	0.296	0.064	0.271	4.63	0.000
Social Media Platforms	0.334	0.065	0.290	5.14	0.000
No. of Obs	384				

Source: Researcher (2025)

With a z-value of 5.25 and a p-value of 0.001, influencer-generated content has the highest which shows great relevance, the regression unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.352) and a coefficients given in Table 4.7 reveal that standardized beta (β = 0.301). This means that,

audience engagement and social media platforms and dependent variables, brand awareness. The results presented in Table 4.7 below:

all other variables remaining equal, every oneunit rise in influencer-generated content should correspond to an anticipated 0.352 rise in brand awareness. This shows clearly that well-curated influencer content helps to grab consumer attention and boost recognition of Airtel services. Less than 0.05, the p-value points statistically significant effect. These results match marketing literature stressing how important influencer messaging is in strengthening consumer-brand ties.With a standard error of 0.064, a beta of 0.271, a zvalue of 4.63, and a p-value of 0.000, the second independent variable, audience engagement, displays a significant positive coefficient of 0.296. Higher user engagement, including likes, comments, shares, reactions, and so forth, helps Airtel's brand awareness, thus strongly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Active engagement increases brand recognition, trust, and memorability.

Interactions with influencer content reveal not only greater interest but also strengthen Airtel's and the influencer's legitimacy. Therefore, participation works as a multiplier effect that more widely and effectively distributes the brand message across channels.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The discussion of findings demonstrates that influencer-generated content, audience engagement, and social media platforms collectively have a substantial and statistically significant effect on Airtel Tanzania's brand awareness. The descriptive and regression results confirmed that influencer-generated content was the most influential predictor ($\beta = 0.301$, $p < 0.001$), underscoring that consumers' awareness and recall of Airtel's services are strongly shaped by the quality, credibility, and relevance of influencer messages. Participants perceived influencer content as authentic, informative, and aligned with their lifestyles—characteristics that traditional advertising often lacks. These findings align with the Two-Step Flow Theory, which posits that influencers reinterpret and transmit brand messages in ways that are relatable to audiences, thereby enhancing understanding and trust. Similarly, the Social Identity Theory supports that when consumers identify with influencers' values and social groups, their attachment to the endorsed brand deepens, transforming brand awareness into an emotional and cognitive association rather than mere recognition.

Furthermore, the study established that audience engagement ($\beta = 0.271$, $p < 0.001$) significantly strengthens the relationship between influencer marketing and brand awareness. Respondents indicated that

interactions such as commenting, liking, and sharing influencer posts made Airtel's brand appear more trustworthy and approachable. Active two-way communication between influencers and followers facilitated a participatory culture that transformed consumers from passive viewers into active brand participants. This dynamic reflects findings from Djafarova and Tropimenko (2019) and Casaló et al. (2020), who argue that interactive influencer–audience relationships enhance brand credibility and loyalty. By responding to followers' feedback, influencers foster a sense of community and belonging, reinforcing the emotional ties between consumers and Airtel. Hence, engagement does not merely serve as a marketing metric but functions as a relational mechanism that sustains long-term brand visibility and consumer trust in competitive digital markets.

Lastly, social media platforms ($\beta = 0.290$, $p < 0.001$) emerged as strategic mediators that determine the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Platforms such as Instagram and Facebook were found to significantly enhance brand visibility due to their visual richness, interactivity, and audience familiarity. Respondents expressed greater confidence in influencer content shared on platforms they frequently use, reflecting how platform familiarity amplifies credibility and message retention. This finding is consistent with Nadányiová and Sujanská (2023) and Lou and Kim (2019), who note that platform choice affects engagement patterns and brand trust. The results emphasize that selecting the right digital channel is as critical as crafting compelling content. For Airtel, leveraging highly interactive, visual platforms like Instagram and TikTok can optimize influencer campaigns by matching consumer habits and enhancing message resonance. Collectively, these results reveal that influencer-generated content, meaningful engagement, and strategic platform use jointly form a robust model for building and sustaining brand awareness in Tanzania's evolving digital marketing landscape.

6.0 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

The study concludes that influencer marketing plays a pivotal and positive role in enhancing brand awareness, particularly for technologyoriented companies like Airtel Tanzania operating in the digital era. The research confirmed that influencer-generated content, audience engagement, and the use of social media platforms are significant predictors of brand visibility and recall. Among these, influencer-generated content had the strongest impact, underscoring the importance of authenticity, creativity, and relevance in shaping consumer perceptions. Audience engagement further strengthened brand trust through interactive exchanges such as

comments, likes, and shares, transforming consumers from passive viewers into active brand advocates. Likewise, the choice of social media platforms—especially Instagram and Facebook—was found to influence message credibility and audience reach, reaffirming that communication effectiveness depends on using the right channels aligned with audience preferences. Together, these findings verify that brand awareness is not driven by isolated influencer activities but by the synergistic interaction of credible content, active engagement, and strategic platform selection. Based on these findings, the study recommends that companies adopt a strategic, contentdriven approach to influencer marketing. Organizations should collaborate with influencers who align with their brand values and who can create high-quality, relatable, and interactive content that resonates with target audiences. Brands should also promote twoway communication by encouraging influencers to engage directly with followers, fostering trust and emotional connection. Furthermore, selecting the most suitable social media platforms—those that support visual storytelling and active participation—will enhance campaign impact and message retention. Finally, continuous monitoring and evaluation of influencer performance using data-driven metrics such as engagement rate, reach, and audience sentiment are essential to improving campaign effectiveness. For longterm competitiveness, businesses must treat influencer marketing as an adaptive and ethical communication strategy, evolving alongside consumer behavior and technological advancement to strengthen both brand loyalty and digital presence.

7.0 LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES *7.1 Limitations*

This study, while providing valuable insights into the role of influencer marketing in enhancing brand awareness, presents certain limitations that must be acknowledged. First, it was confined to the context of Airtel Tanzania, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other industries or regions with different consumer behaviors, brand reputations, and cultural dynamics. Thus, while the results are relevant to telecommunications and similar markets, they may not fully apply to other sectors. Moreover, the use of a cross-sectional research design restricted the ability to capture long-term effects or evolving trends in influencer marketing, as data were collected at a single point in time. Given that digital marketing landscapes and audience perceptions change rapidly, a longitudinal approach would provide richer insights into temporal variations. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data through questionnaires introduced potential response bias, as participants might have provided socially desirable or inaccurate

responses. These methodological constraints necessitate cautious interpretation of the results, though they do not diminish the overall contribution of the study to the understanding of influencer marketing's impact on brand awareness.

7.2 Areas for Further Studies Future studies should broaden the scope of investigation by exploring the effects of influencer marketing across multiple sectors such as fashion, finance, and healthcare to determine whether the current findings hold in varied contexts. Further research should incorporate additional variables like influencer credibility, content frequency, message congruence, and influencer category (micro vs. macro) to better understand their respective contributions to brand awareness. Employing longitudinal and qualitative methods, including interviews and focus groups, could capture more nuanced consumer perceptions and track behavioral changes over time. Moreover, comparative cross-country or cross-cultural studies would illuminate how contextual factors influence influencer effectiveness, offering global insights into digital marketing strategies. Researchers are also encouraged to examine platform-specific dynamics for instance, how engagement differs on Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube to develop more targeted and adaptable influencer marketing frameworks for different digital ecosystems.

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