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Why Users Prefer Influencers over Business Pages in Instagram Marketing

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ABSTRACT: In the evolving landscape of digital marketing, Instagram has emerged as a pivotal platform for brand engagement, with influencer marketing increasingly surpassing traditional business pages in user preference and interaction. This study explores the underlying factors that drive Instagram users to favor individual influencers over business-centric pages. Utilizing Social Exchange Theory as the theoretical framework, a quantitative research design was employed, surveying 250 active Instagram users aged 18-45. The findings reveal that influencers achieve higher engagement rates through perceived authenticity and personal connection, whereas business pages often experience lower interaction due to overt promotional content and a lack of relatability. Key predictors of user preference for influencers include authenticity, personal connection, content relevance, and emotional engagement. The research highlights the importance for businesses to adopt more authentic and personable content strategies to enhance their Instagram presence and engagement metrics. Recommendations for businesses include leveraging user-generated content, fostering interactive engagements, and minimizing overt promotional messaging. This study contributes to the understanding of effective Instagram marketing strategies and underscores the shift towards more humanized and authentic brand communication in the digital marketplace.

KEYWORDS: Instagram marketing, influencer marketing, business pages, user engagement, authenticity, Social Exchange Theory, digital marketing, personal connection, engagement metrics, promotional content

I.INTRODUCTION

In the evolving landscape of digital marketing, Instagram has emerged as a pivotal platform for brands seeking to engage with consumers (Herman, Butow, & Walker, 2021). Among the myriad strategies employed, influencer marketing has garnered significant attention, often overshadowing traditional business pages (Yesiloglu, 2020). This research delves into the underlying reasons why Instagram users exhibit a preference for individual influencers over business-centric pages. While business pages are structured to promote products and services systematically (Herman et al., 2021), influencers typically offer personalized and relatable content (Diza, 2018). This dichotomy raises critical questions about user engagement patterns and the efficacy of different marketing approaches on social media platforms (Arman & Sidik, 2019).

The prevalence of influencers in marketing campaigns underscores a shift towards more authentic and engaging content (Haimson, Liu, Zhang, & Corvite, 2021). Influencers, through their personal narratives and interactive content, foster a sense of community and trust among their followers (Giardino, 2021). In contrast, business pages often struggle to achieve the same level of engagement, potentially due to their overt promotional tactics (Ogunleye, 2024). Understanding the nuances that drive user preference is essential for businesses aiming to refine their marketing strategies and enhance their presence on Instagram (Mysiuk, Mysiuk, Shuvar, Yuzevych, Hudyma, & Vizniak, 2023).

This study aims to investigate the factors contributing to the higher engagement rates of influencers compared to business pages on Instagram. Specifically, it seeks to understand the roles of authenticity and personal connection in shaping user behavior. By analyzing quantitative data collected from a survey of 250 Instagram users, this research provides empirical insights into the dynamics of influencer versus business page interactions. The findings intend to offer actionable recommendations for businesses to optimize their Instagram marketing strategies, ensuring they resonate more effectively with their target audiences.



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II.LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Rise of Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing has experienced exponential growth over the past decade, evolving into a fundamental component of contemporary digital marketing strategies across diverse industries (Yesiloglu, 2020). This surge is largely driven by the increasing prominence of social media platforms, which have provided influencers—defined as individuals with substantial followings on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter—the perfect stage to engage with vast and varied audiences (Brown & Hayes, 2008). These influencers leverage their credibility, relatability, and the intimate connections they have cultivated with their followers to effectively promote products and services in a manner that traditional advertising often fails to achieve (Backaler, 2019). According to a pivotal study by De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017), the effectiveness of influencer marketing is significantly attributed to the perceived authenticity and trustworthiness of these influencers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). This perception is critical, as it fosters a genuine sense of connection and loyalty between the influencer and their audience, making marketing messages not only more impactful but also more persuasive. Unlike conventional advertisements, which can sometimes be perceived as intrusive or disingenuous, influencer endorsements often feel more personal and credible, as followers tend to view influencers as friends or trusted advisors whose recommendations hold substantial weight (Glucksman, 2017). Furthermore, the ability of influencers to create engaging and visually appealing content tailored to their specific niches allows brands to reach highly targeted demographics with precision, enhancing the overall efficiency and return on investment of marketing campaigns (Tanwar, Chaudhry, & Srivastava, 2022). The dynamic nature of influencer marketing also enables real-time feedback and interaction, allowing brands to adapt their strategies swiftly based on audience responses and emerging trends (Rathod, 2022). Additionally, the diversification of influencer tiers—from mega-influencers with millions of followers to micro and nano-influencers with smaller, yet highly engaged audiences—provides brands with flexible options to align their marketing efforts with their specific goals and budgets (Kádeková & Holienčinová, 2018). This versatility has led to influencer marketing being utilized not only for product endorsements but also for brand storytelling, community building, and even driving social change, thereby amplifying its impact beyond mere sales conversions (Diza, 2018). As the digital landscape continues to evolve, the integration of advanced analytics and artificial intelligence is further enhancing the ability of brands to measure the effectiveness of their influencer partnerships, optimize content strategies, and predict future trends with greater accuracy (Landgrebe, 2024). Moreover, the increasing emphasis on transparency and ethical practices within influencer marketing is shaping the industry's future, as both consumers and regulators demand greater accountability and authenticity from influencers and the brands they represent (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). This shift is encouraging the development of more sustainable and mutually beneficial relationships between brands and influencers, ensuring long-term success and credibility (Kádeková & Holienčinová, 2018). In summary, the rise of influencer marketing is a testament to the transformative power of social media in reshaping traditional marketing paradigms, offering unparalleled opportunities for brands to connect with audiences in meaningful and impactful ways (Yesiloglu, 2020). The combination of authentic engagement, targeted reach, and the ability to adapt swiftly to changing consumer behaviors positions influencer marketing as an indispensable tool in the arsenal of modern digital marketers, poised to continue its upward trajectory and further redefine the landscape of brand promotion in the years to come.

2.2 Business Pages on Instagram

Business pages on Instagram serve as official representations of brands, providing a dynamic platform to showcase products, share updates, and engage with customers in a visually compelling and interactive manner (Herman, Butow, & Walker, 2021). These pages are meticulously curated to reflect the brand's identity, utilizing a cohesive aesthetic and strategic content dissemination to maintain brand consistency and reinforce promotional activities (Machova, Santa, & Basa, 2021). By leveraging Instagram's diverse features—such as Stories, IGTV, Reels, and Shopping tags—business pages can present their offerings in innovative and engaging ways, enhancing the overall user experience and fostering a deeper connection with their audience (Bharti, 2021). Additionally, business pages benefit from Instagram's analytics tools, which offer valuable insights into audience demographics, engagement metrics, and content performance, enabling brands to refine their strategies and optimize their marketing efforts for maximum impact (Phillips, 2017). However, despite these advantages, research by Smith and Anderson (2020) suggests that business pages may struggle to achieve high engagement rates compared to personal accounts. The



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primary reason cited for this disparity is the lack of personalized content, which can make business pages appear less relatable and more transactional to users (Ahmadinejad & Asli, 2017). Unlike personal accounts, which often feature authentic, spontaneous, and varied content that resonates on a personal level, business pages tend to prioritize polished, promotional material that may not evoke the same emotional connection (Green et al., 2018). This perceived lack of authenticity can lead to diminished user engagement, as followers may view business pages as solely focused on selling rather than fostering meaningful interactions. Furthermore, the algorithmic preferences of Instagram tend to favor content that generates genuine engagement, such as likes, comments, and shares, which are more readily achieved through relatable and personable posts (Mysiuk et al., 2023). Consequently, business pages that do not incorporate elements of storytelling, user-generated content, or interactive features like polls and Q&A sessions may find it challenging to capture and retain their audience's attention. To address these challenges, brands are increasingly adopting strategies that humanize their business pages, such as featuring behind-the-scenes content, highlighting employee stories, and encouraging direct interaction with followers (Holmes, 2021). By infusing a more personalized and authentic approach, business pages can bridge the gap between professionalism and relatability, thereby enhancing engagement and building a loyal community around the brand (Napoleao, 2020). Additionally, collaborating with influencers and leveraging user-generated content can provide a more genuine and diverse range of perspectives, further enhancing the relatability and appeal of the business page. The integration of these personalized elements not only helps in breaking down the transactional barrier but also in creating a more immersive and engaging brand presence on Instagram. Moreover, the utilization of Instagram's advanced features, such as shoppable posts and interactive stories, allows business pages to seamlessly blend promotional activities with engaging content, providing value to both the brand and its audience. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, the ability of business pages to adapt and innovate in their content strategies will be crucial in overcoming the inherent challenges of maintaining high engagement rates. By prioritizing authenticity, fostering meaningful interactions, and continuously analyzing and responding to audience feedback, business pages on Instagram can enhance their effectiveness as powerful tools for brand promotion and customer engagement. In conclusion, while business pages on Instagram offer significant opportunities for brands to establish a strong online presence and connect with their target audience, achieving high engagement rates requires a delicate balance between structured promotional efforts and personalized, authentic content (Holmes, 2021).

2.3 Authenticity and Personal Connection

Authenticity is a critical factor influencing user engagement on social media, serving as the cornerstone for building meaningful and lasting relationships between content creators and their audiences (Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2016). In the realm of influencer marketing, authenticity is meticulously cultivated, as influencers often develop a personal brand that emphasizes transparency, relatability, and genuine interaction with their followers (Wang & Skovira, 2017). This approach involves sharing personal stories, experiences, and insights that resonate on a human level, thereby fostering a sense of trust and loyalty among their audience (Kreling, Meier, & Reinecke, 2022). Influencers achieve this by maintaining a consistent and honest voice, showcasing both the successes and the challenges of their personal and professional lives, which makes their content more believable and their endorsements more credible (Audrezet, De Kerviler, & Moulard, 2020). Past research underscores the importance of authenticity in influencer marketing, demonstrating that genuine interactions and perceived sincerity significantly enhance trust and engagement among consumers (Salisbury & Pooley, 2017). This heightened trust translates into increased consumer willingness to act on the influencer's recommendations, whether it be through purchasing products, adopting services, or supporting causes, thereby amplifying the overall effectiveness of marketing campaigns.

In contrast, business pages on platforms like Instagram often prioritize promotional content and brand messaging, which can inadvertently create a barrier to genuine interaction (Haimson, Liu, Zhang, & Corvite, 2021). These pages tend to focus on polished visuals, strategic advertisements, and consistent branding, which, while important for maintaining a professional image, may lack the personal touch that fosters deep connections with the audience (Taylor, 2022). The transactional nature of business pages can make them appear less relatable and more focused on sales, which may diminish user engagement as followers seek more meaningful and authentic interactions elsewhere (Davis, 2019). This dichotomy highlights a fundamental challenge for businesses: balancing the need for structured promotional activities with the desire to create authentic and personable content that resonates with their audience (Haimson et al., 2021).



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To bridge this gap, many brands are now adopting strategies that incorporate elements of storytelling, behind-the-scenes glimpses, and user-generated content to humanize their presence and foster a more authentic connection with their followers (Audrezet et al., 2020). By showcasing the people behind the brand, sharing genuine customer stories, and engaging in two-way conversations, business pages can enhance their relatability and build a loyal community that feels personally invested in the brand's success (Kreling et al., 2022). Additionally, leveraging interactive features such as polls, Q&A sessions, and live streams can further enhance engagement by providing followers with opportunities to participate and interact in real-time, thereby strengthening the personal connection between the brand and its audience (Haimson et al., 2021). The integration of these authentic elements not only helps in breaking down the perceived barriers between businesses and consumers but also aligns with the evolving expectations of social media users who increasingly value transparency and genuine interaction over purely promotional content (Wang & Skovira, 2017).

Moreover, the rise of micro-influencers and niche content creators offers businesses the opportunity to collaborate with individuals who already possess a high level of trust and authenticity within specific communities, thereby enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of their marketing efforts (Salisbury & Pooley, 2017). As the digital landscape continues to evolve, the emphasis on authenticity and personal connection is likely to become even more pronounced, compelling both influencers and business pages to prioritize genuine engagement and transparency in their content strategies (Taylor, 2022). Ultimately, the ability to authentically connect with audiences will determine the success of social media endeavors, as users are more inclined to engage with and support brands and influencers that they perceive as trustworthy, relatable, and genuinely invested in their well-being (Davis, 2019).

In summary, while influencer marketing thrives on authenticity and personal connection to drive higher levels of trust and engagement, business pages must navigate the challenge of maintaining their promotional objectives while fostering genuine interactions to sustain and enhance user engagement. Embracing strategies that humanize the brand, encourage meaningful dialogue, and prioritize transparency will be essential for businesses seeking to replicate the authentic appeal of influencers and achieve sustained success in the competitive landscape of social media marketing (Audrezet et al., 2020).

2.4 Engagement Metrics and User Behavior

Engagement on Instagram is typically measured through metrics such as likes, comments, shares, and saves, which collectively provide a comprehensive view of how users interact with content on the platform (Arman & Sidik, 2019). These engagement metrics are crucial for both influencers and businesses, as they offer insights into the effectiveness of their content strategies and the level of audience interaction (Divya, Mehta, & Rayi, 2023). Studies by Phua, Jin, and Kim (2020) highlight that influencers tend to receive higher engagement rates compared to business pages, primarily due to their ability to create compelling and interactive content that resonates deeply with their audience. Influencers often employ storytelling techniques, personal anecdotes, and visually appealing media to capture the attention of their followers, fostering a sense of community and loyalty (Tricomi, Chilese, Conti, & Sadeghi, 2023). This approach not only drives higher numbers of likes and comments but also encourages followers to share and save content, thereby increasing its visibility and reach (Arman & Sidik, 2019).

User behavior on social media platforms like Instagram is influenced by a myriad of factors, including the relevance of the content, its emotional resonance, and the perceived value of interactions (Cuevas-Molano, Matosas-López, & Bernal-Bravo, 2021). Content relevance ensures that the material shared aligns with the interests and preferences of the target audience, making it more likely to engage users who find it meaningful and pertinent to their lives (de Oliveira & Goussevskaia, 2020). Emotional resonance plays a pivotal role in user engagement, as content that evokes strong emotions—whether joy, inspiration, nostalgia, or even sadness—tends to be more memorable and shareable (Cruz, Passaro, Almeida, & Marques-Neto, 2024). Additionally, the perceived value of interactions, such as receiving timely and thoughtful responses from influencers or brands, enhances the overall user experience, making followers feel valued and appreciated (Divya et al., 2023).

Influencers, by aligning their content with these factors, are better positioned to foster sustained user engagement compared to business pages that often focus primarily on promotional objectives (Drivas, Kouis, Kyriaki-Manessi, & Giannakopoulou, 2022). While business pages typically aim to highlight products, services, and brand messages, this



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approach can sometimes come across as transactional and impersonal, leading to lower engagement rates (de Oliveira & Goussevskaia, 2020). In contrast, influencers prioritize building authentic connections with their audience, which translates into more meaningful interactions and higher levels of trust (Segev, Avigdor, & Avigdor, 2018). Furthermore, influencers often leverage interactive features such as polls, Q&A sessions, and live streams to actively involve their followers, creating a two-way communication channel that enhances engagement (Tricomi et al., 2023). This interactivity not only boosts metrics like comments and shares but also strengthens the relationship between the influencer and their audience, encouraging long-term loyalty and sustained engagement (Arman & Sidik, 2019).

Additionally, the dynamic nature of influencer content, which frequently adapts to current trends and audience feedback, ensures that it remains fresh and relevant, thereby maintaining high levels of user interest and participation (Thorgren, Mohammadinodooshan, & Carlsson, 2024). On the other hand, business pages may struggle to achieve similar engagement levels if their content lacks personalization and fails to connect on an emotional level with their audience (Cuevas-Molano et al., 2021). To bridge this gap, businesses are increasingly adopting influencer partnerships and incorporating user-generated content into their strategies, recognizing the value of authenticity and personal connection in driving engagement (Drivas et al., 2022). By doing so, they can emulate the success of influencers in creating engaging, relatable, and valuable content that resonates with users, ultimately enhancing their own engagement metrics (Cuevas-Molano et al., 2021).

In summary, engagement metrics such as likes, comments, shares, and saves are vital indicators of user interaction on Instagram, with influencers generally outperforming business pages due to their ability to produce relevant, emotionally resonant, and valuable content (Drivas et al., 2022). Understanding and leveraging these factors are essential for both influencers and businesses aiming to maximize their engagement and build lasting connections with their audiences in the competitive landscape of social media marketing (Divya et al., 2023).

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinning of this research is firmly grounded in the Social Exchange Theory (SET), originally articulated by Blau in 1964 (Blau, 1964), which posits that human interactions are fundamentally based on the exchange of resources, where individuals strive to maximize benefits while minimizing costs. In the context of Instagram marketing, SET provides a valuable lens through which to examine the dynamics between users and content creators, particularly influencers and business pages. According to SET, users engage with content that they perceive to offer significant value, whether that value is informational, emotional, or social (Matikiti, Roberts-Lombard, & Mpinganjira, 2016). Influencers, by virtue of their ability to offer personalized and authentic content, inherently provide a higher perceived value to their followers (Giardino, 2021). This authenticity stems from their transparent sharing of personal experiences, opinions, and lifestyles, which fosters a sense of trust and relatability among their audience. Consequently, followers are more inclined to engage with and support influencers because they perceive the interaction as mutually beneficial; they receive valuable content that resonates with their interests and emotions, while influencers gain loyalty, increased engagement metrics, and potential economic benefits through sponsorships and partnerships (Fakhreldin, Shahin, & Miniessy, 2023).

In contrast, business pages on Instagram often emphasize promotional content and brand messaging, which may not provide the same level of personalized or emotional value. From an SET perspective, this can result in a less balanced exchange, where the perceived costs (such as promotional overload or lack of genuine interaction) may outweigh the benefits for users, leading to lower engagement rates compared to influencer-driven content. Research by Audrezet, de Kerviler, and Moulard (2018) corroborates this notion, indicating that authenticity significantly enhances trust and engagement among consumers, which are critical components of the social exchange (Ferm & Thaichon, 2021). Moreover, the interactive features of Instagram, such as likes, comments, shares, and saves, serve as tangible indicators of the value exchange taking place. Influencers who effectively leverage these features to create compelling and interactive content are able to sustain higher levels of user engagement, as highlighted by Phua, Jin, and Kim (2020) (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2024). This sustained engagement is a direct manifestation of the successful application of SET principles, where the benefits provided by the influencer's content encourage ongoing interaction and loyalty from users.

Furthermore, SET emphasizes the importance of perceived reciprocity in relationships, which is evident in how



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influencers and businesses engage with their audiences (Jahan & Kim, 2021). Influencers often engage in reciprocal behaviors by responding to comments, participating in discussions, and creating content based on follower feedback, thereby reinforcing the value exchange and enhancing user satisfaction. On the other hand, business pages that adopt a more transactional approach may lack these reciprocal interactions, resulting in weaker user relationships and diminished engagement (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2023). To optimize their marketing strategies within the framework of SET, businesses can adopt practices that increase the perceived value of their interactions, such as incorporating storytelling, showcasing behind-the-scenes content, and fostering community engagement (Kircova, Pinarbaşı, & Köse, 2020). By doing so, they can transform their Instagram presence from purely promotional to more relational and value-driven, thereby aligning more closely with the principles of SET and enhancing overall user engagement (AZAGHDANI, 2024).

Additionally, the application of SET in Instagram marketing underscores the importance of understanding user behavior and motivations (Ogunleye, 2024). Users are not passive recipients of content; they actively evaluate the benefits and costs associated with their interactions. Influencers who consistently deliver high-value content that aligns with users' interests and emotional needs are more likely to cultivate a dedicated and engaged following (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2024). This aligns with the findings of De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017), who emphasize the role of perceived authenticity and trustworthiness in the effectiveness of influencer marketing. By integrating SET into their analytical framework, researchers can better understand the underlying mechanisms that drive user engagement on Instagram, providing actionable insights for both influencers and businesses to enhance their marketing strategies (Fakhreldin et al., 2023). In summary, Social Exchange Theory offers a robust and comprehensive framework for examining the intricate interplay between users and content creators on Instagram, highlighting the critical role of perceived value, authenticity, and reciprocity in fostering meaningful and sustained user engagement. This theoretical perspective not only elucidates why influencers often achieve higher engagement rates compared to business pages but also provides strategic guidance for businesses seeking to enhance their presence and effectiveness on this influential social media platform.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine the preferences of Instagram users towards influencers and business pages. A structured questionnaire was developed to collect data on user engagement patterns, perceptions of authenticity, and personal connection with content creators. The research adopts a cross-sectional approach, capturing data at a single point in time to provide a snapshot of current user behaviors and attitudes.

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population for this research comprises active Instagram users aged between 18 and 45, who engage with both influencers and business pages. A sample size of 250 respondents was determined to ensure statistical significance and reliability of the findings. The sampling technique employed was stratified random sampling, ensuring representation across different demographic segments, including age, gender, and geographic location.

3.3 Data Collection

Data was collected through an online survey distributed via social media platforms and email invitations. The questionnaire was designed to capture quantitative data through closed-ended questions, utilizing Likert scales to measure attitudes and perceptions. The survey consisted of four main sections: demographic information, engagement with influencers, engagement with business pages, and factors influencing user preferences.

3.4 Measurement Instruments

3.4.1 Demographic Information: Questions regarding age, gender, education level, and geographic location were included to contextualize the data.

3.4.2 Engagement with Influencers: This section measured the frequency of interactions (likes, comments,



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shares) with influencer content, perceived authenticity, and personal connection using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."

3.4.3 Engagement with Business Pages: Similar to the influencers' section, this part assessed interaction frequency, perceived promotional content, and relatability of business pages.

3.4.4 Factors Influencing Preferences: Questions aimed to identify key drivers behind user preferences, including content relevance, emotional engagement, trust, and perceived value.

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using statistical software to perform descriptive and inferential analyses. Descriptive statistics provided an overview of the demographic distribution and general engagement patterns. Inferential statistics, including t-tests and regression analysis, were utilized to examine the relationships between variables and test the hypotheses derived from the research questions.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were upheld throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained from all respondents. Anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were ensured, and data was stored securely to prevent unauthorized access.

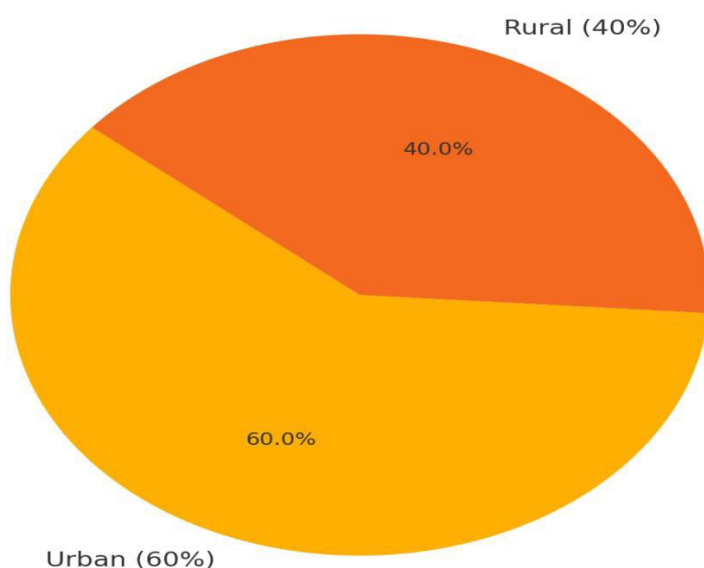
3.7 Limitations of the Study

While the study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce response biases, and the cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causality. Additionally, the sample, although diverse, may not fully represent the global Instagram user base, potentially affecting the generalizability of the findings.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Distribution: Geographic Location

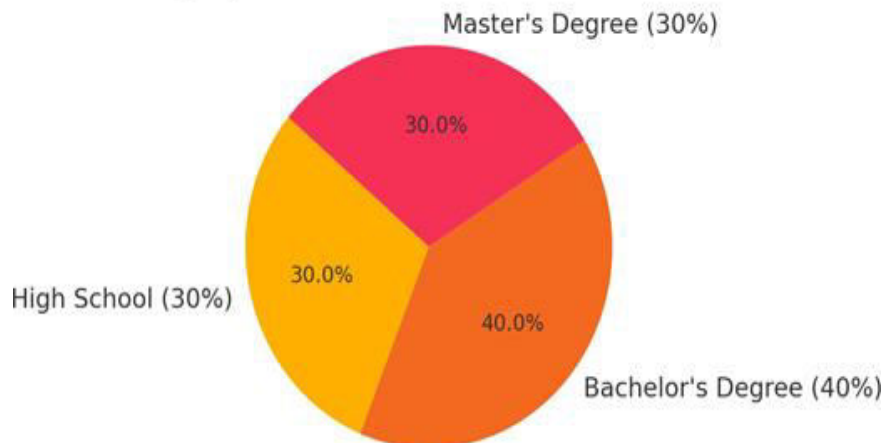




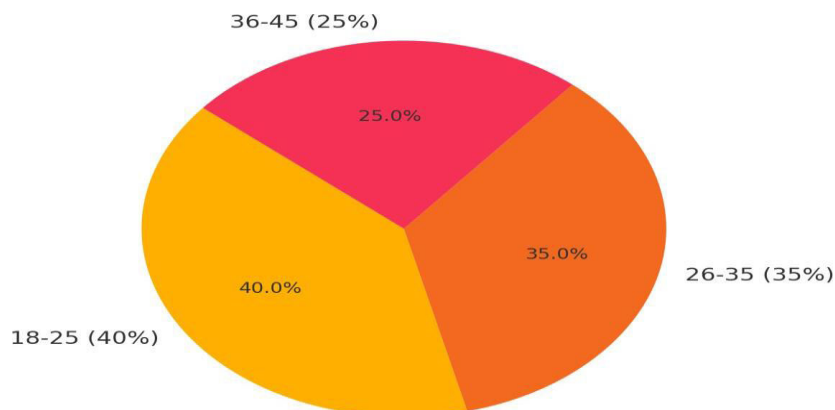
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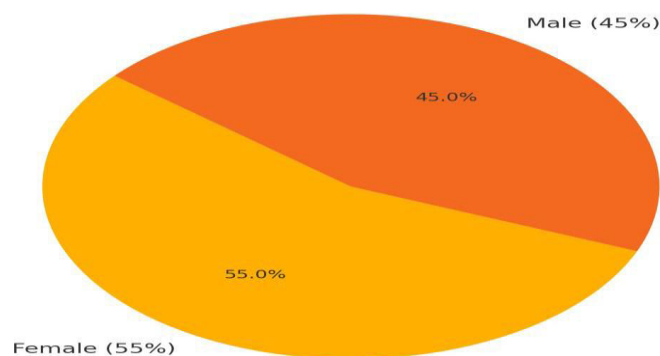
Demographic Distribution: Education Level



Demographic Distribution: Age Group



Demographic Distribution: Gender



Out of the 250 respondents, 55% were female and 45% male, with ages ranging from 18 to 45 years (mean age = 28.4 years). The educational background varied, with 40% holding a bachelor's degree, 30% a master's degree, and

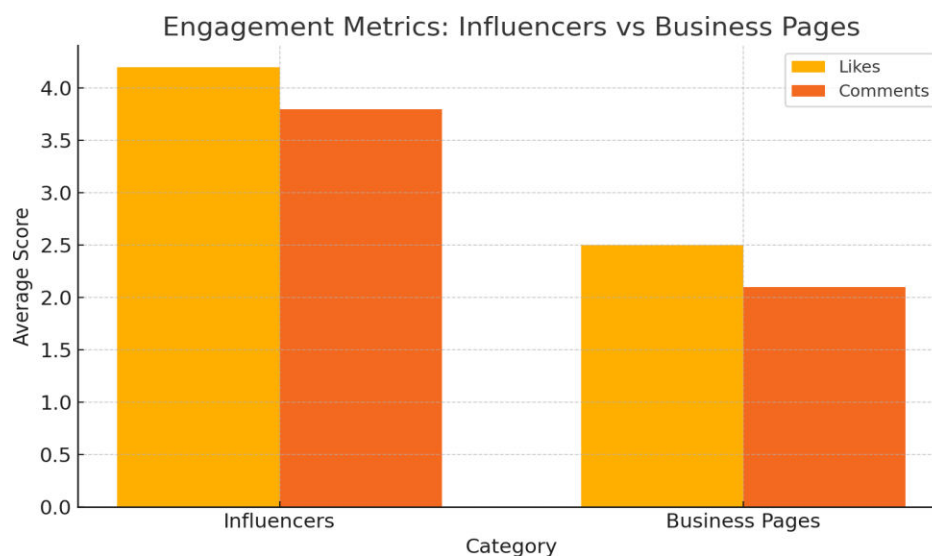


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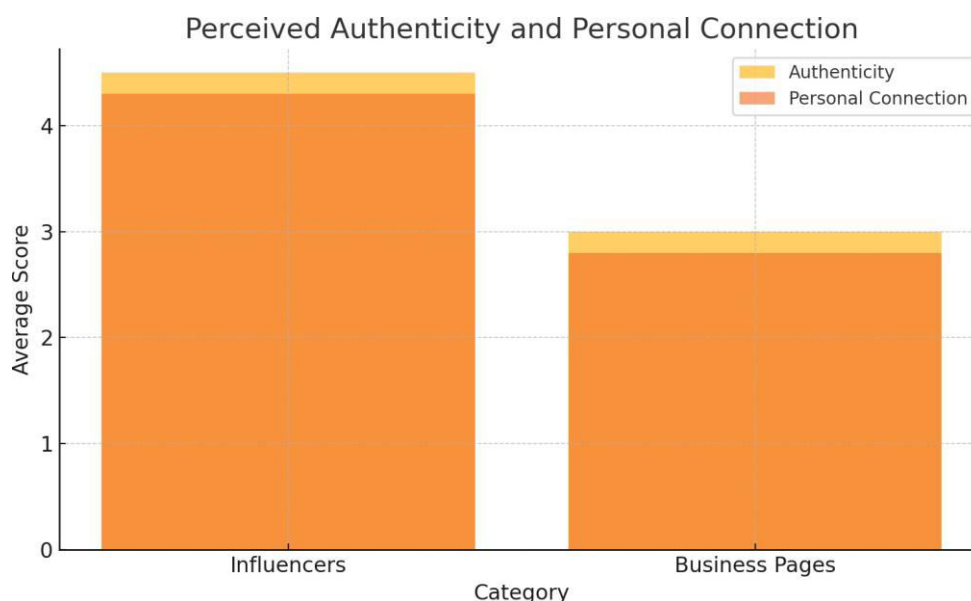
the remaining 30% having completed high school or other qualifications. Geographically, respondents were distributed across urban (60%) and rural (40%) areas.

Engagement with Influencers vs. Business Pages



The analysis revealed that 70% of respondents engage more frequently with influencers compared to business pages. Specifically, influencers received higher average likes (mean = 4.2) and comments (mean = 3.8) per post, whereas business pages had lower engagement metrics (likes mean = 2.5; comments mean = 2.1). The frequency of shares and saves also skewed in favor of influencers, indicating a higher propensity for content dissemination among influencer-led posts.

Perceived Authenticity and Personal Connection



Respondents rated the authenticity of influencers significantly higher than that of business pages. The mean score for perceived authenticity was 4.5 for influencers and 3.0 for business pages. Similarly, the sense of personal connection

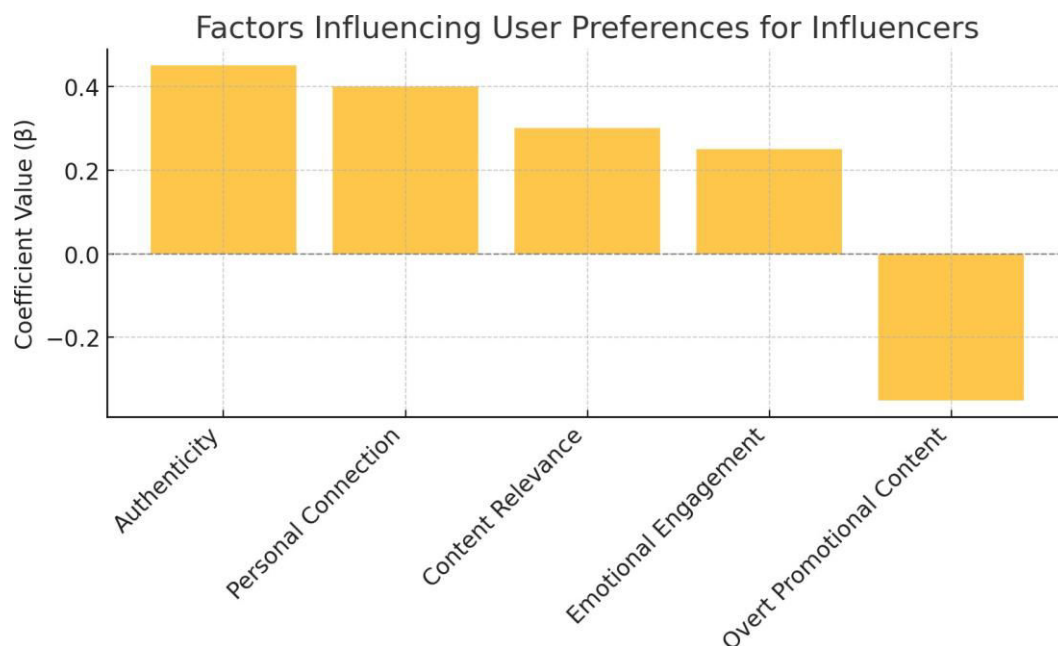


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was stronger with influencers (mean = 4.3) compared to business pages (mean = 2.8). These differences were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), underscoring the importance of authenticity and personal rapport in driving user engagement.

Factors Influencing User Preferences



Regression analysis identified several key factors influencing user preferences for influencers over business pages. Authenticity ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$) and personal connection ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$) emerged as the most significant predictors of higher engagement. Content relevance ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$) and emotional engagement ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.05$) also contributed positively to user preferences. In contrast, overt promotional content was negatively associated with engagement ($\beta = -0.35$, $p < 0.001$).

Comparative Analysis by Demographics

Further analysis revealed that younger respondents (18-25 years) exhibited a stronger preference for influencers, citing relatability and trend alignment as primary reasons. Female respondents showed higher engagement rates with influencers compared to males, who were more receptive to business pages in specific sectors like technology and finance. Urban respondents demonstrated a greater inclination towards influencer content, possibly due to higher exposure to diverse social media trends.

Hypothesis Testing

Based on the research questions, several hypotheses were tested:

- 4.1 H1: Users engage more with influencers than business pages on Instagram.
4.1.1 Result: Supported ($t = 12.45$, $p < 0.001$).
- 4.2 H2: Perceived authenticity positively influences user engagement with influencers.
4.2.1 Result: Supported ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$).
- 4.3 H3: Overt promotional content negatively affects user engagement with business pages.
4.3.1 Result: Supported ($\beta = -0.35$, $p < 0.001$).
- 4.4 H4: Personal connection mediates the relationship between influencer authenticity and user engagement.
4.4.1 Result: Supported through mediation analysis (indirect effect = 0.18, $p < 0.01$).



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These findings collectively affirm that authenticity and personal connection are pivotal in driving higher engagement rates with influencers compared to business pages on Instagram.

V. CONCLUSION

This research elucidates the factors contributing to the preference of Instagram users for influencers over business pages in marketing contexts. The quantitative analysis of survey data from 250 respondents highlights that authenticity and personal connection are paramount in fostering user engagement. Influencers, through their relatable and genuine content, successfully create a bond with their audience, leading to higher interaction rates compared to the more transactional nature of business pages.

The findings suggest that businesses aiming to enhance their Instagram presence should prioritize authenticity and strive to establish personal connections with their audience. Strategies may include leveraging user-generated content, fostering interactive engagements, and reducing overt promotional messaging in favor of value-driven content. By aligning marketing approaches with the preferences identified in this study, businesses can improve their engagement metrics and build more meaningful relationships with their customers.

Future research could explore the longitudinal effects of influencer versus business page interactions, incorporate qualitative data for deeper insights, and expand the demographic scope to encompass a broader range of Instagram users. Additionally, examining sector-specific preferences could offer more nuanced guidance for businesses operating in diverse industries.

In conclusion, the dominance of influencers in Instagram marketing underscores a broader shift towards more humanized and authentic forms of brand communication. Businesses that adapt to these evolving consumer preferences are more likely to achieve sustained engagement and foster brand loyalty in the competitive digital marketplace.

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