

## **NEW MARKETING CHANNEL AND SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS AS MARKETING TOOLS FOR LADIES FASHION: A STUDY OF PORT HARCOURT CITY LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

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**Abstract:** This study examined how social media influencers are marketing tools for ladies' fashion clothing, a study of Port Harcourt City local government. The objectives of the study were set to ascertain common social media platform influencers use as marketing tools among the residents of Port Harcourt City LGA, to examine the impact of social media influencers on the popularity and customers loyalty of the ladies fashion clothing in Port Harcourt City LGA, and to determine the challenges encountered in using social media influencers for the marketing of ladies' fashion clothing in Port Harcourt City LGA. The two-stage Communication Model was adopted for this study. The population used for the study was that of female residents in Port Harcourt City local government, which is 501,105. To arrive at an equitable sample size, the Taro Yamane's Formula for determining sample size was adopted. A total of four hundred (400) female residents of the study were sampled for the study, however 370 returned copies of the questionnaire were used for analysis of the study. The survey design was adopted with the questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. The random sampling technique was used for the study. The questionnaire was a 4-point modified Likert ranking scale. The instrument was validated. Also, test re-test method correlation was used to ascertain the reliability of the research instrument and the reliability coefficient was calculated to be 0.75 for the tests. Mean statistical tools were used to answer the three research questions. The findings of the study show that some common social media apps influencers used as marketing tools among the residents of Port Harcourt City are as follows; Tik Tok, YouTube, Facebook pages, Snapchat, Instagram subscribers, Search engine optimization (SEO). The study also revealed that the impacts of the social media influencers on the popularity and customers loyalty of the ladies fashion clothing in Port Harcourt City include high popularity of the products, and high sales of the products, the findings show that a lot of Port Harcourt city residents prefer to patronize popular fashion products, and that social media influencers help to get the products to the door post of the customers so that they can be easily purchased online. Finally, the study revealed that the challenges encountered in using social media influencers for marketing in Port Harcourt City include: marketing and sales of low-quality products, indiscipline in marketing, and unprofessionalism in marketing practice, difficulty in turning marketing into sales, and low accessibility of online marketing by a greater number of residents. Thus, the study recommends that; marketers and product owners should be encouraged to utilise these new social media influencers as tools in making their products to be easily known by consumers, the government should be actively involved in regulating the excesses of social media marketing, and that there should be avenues to ensure that products that are marketed and sold through the social media meet the required standard of customers.

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**Keywords:** Social media, Influencers, New marketing, e-Marketing, Marketing tools

## Introduction

Marketing channels has evolved over time since the early days of the Internet, there have been many digital marketing channels, in recent years, and there has been a significant expansion in the number and complexity of Internet marketing methods. Paid advertising and other paid marketing methods have been displaced in digital marketing. Now content and promotion can be delivered through a variety of efficient ways (Dajah, 2020). According to Digital Global Overview report in 2021, Digital advertising, events, influencer marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, word-of-mouth, and conventional marketing through mass media and print are all examples of marketing methods in 2023. The advertising business has been compelled to adapt and become more acquainted in order to influence and engage with consumers as more social media platforms are introduced and new ones continue to expand and change. Social networking platforms are often used by more than two billion internet users, a number that has grown over time. As social networking site become mobile friendly and popular the number of people using them increases steadily (Kemp, 2021).

The marketing objectives of a brand/company is mostly increasing brand awareness, generating leads, enhancing conversion, and encouraging repeat business, regardless of how your marketing channel is defined. Several marketing channels are used to introduce a product to the market, (Chi, 2011). A company's marketing channels are crucial. Indeed, the channels is the way a link is created between a business and its clients. A manufacturer's marketing network determines how well their firm does. It is almost impossible for a brand to forge such a tight connection with its consumers and influencers on its own (Hall, 2016). Influencer marketing is a genuinely effective equalizer because it has the potential to shift the balance of power away from those in positions of power and toward those in positions of power who are able to share some of it.

An influencer is someone who can impact and sway people (their audience) purchasing decisions using his or her authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with the audience in a distinct niche, with whom they actively engage (De Veirman, 2017). The size of the following is determined by the size of his/her niche topic. Social media influencers have slowly built eager, ardent audience. Audience that would follow and listen to the influencer opinion rather than a brand they don't really know.

Influencers, can be anybody and they can be anywhere. Their social media following is what makes them influential, a person with a large following on social media make the most engaging posts on their specialist topics, post pictures on Instagram, make fashion videos on YouTube, dissect topics on relationship, electronic gadget or discusses medical point of view, or just dances and gist with his/her audience on TikTok, they post the most beautiful photos, create the most entertaining videos, and host the most enlightening online discussions. Some individuals will have hundreds of thousands (if not millions) of followers. However, many are normal ordinary people, they have established a reputation as expert in their field of discuss, and people go to them for answers to questions, (Koay et al, 2020).

Social media influencers are now a very popular marketing channel. The Influencers' authentic, relatable, and reaction-stimulating content differentiates this type of marketing from traditional marketing channels. Influencer marketing is a very effective way for brands to communicate and engage with customers on social media, which is why it is popular. It has the potential to drive sales and increase brand awareness (Lee & Watkins, 2016). In 2005, social media influencing marketing began, with videos on YouTube, and grew quickly when

brands/companies saw its potentials. Influencer marketing is now a base for brands across the various markets. It is growing at a CAGR of 28% between 2019 and 2023 (Statista, 2018, 2019, 2020a). This is because influencers make the audience feel close like a family, and guides them on what they buy and things they buy, by careful hinting and recommendation.

Influencer marketing is not new at all, for many years' brands used celebrities, and athletes, to promote and market their business product and services. Brands just a few years ago started to accept that social media is here to stay and that their business needed to be online, they realized this new crop of people called influencer's overshadowed celebrities with their popularity, fame and credibility online. Influencer marketing is a new way to market goods and product of online (Jin, 2019). A combination of both old and new marketing tools is what Influencer Marketing is. It places celebrity endorsement in a modern-day content-driven marketing campaign. It is a collaboration between brands and influencers in a marketing campaign. Influencer marketing does not only involve celebrities. It rather centers on influencers who most times do not view themselves as famous in the traditional sense. 93% of brand strategy for marketing is using Influencers, millennial and GenZ-er account for 8.2% of the average number of personal social media account this means that it uses a cross-channel driven marketing channel, to compete in their business. Influencer marketing industry by the end of 2022 is assumed to be worth \$16.4 billion (Ismail, 2020).

Brands can connect to customers using digital communication, because of expanding technology. The traditional model of marketing and advertising which was limited to TV, print, and radio has been upended now audience can be reached in real time across social media, paid online advertisement (Nanji, 2017). The consumer uses social media to meet other people who have used the product or services and get real time feedback, which helps them learn from the experience of others, and make better decision on purchasing a product or services.

Audiences see and believe social media influencers as genuine, they have a loyal and large following online, whether on YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Their audiences trust their recommendations than that of the brand/business, so when an influencer recommends a product, it appears more trustworthy than traditional advertising. An influencer can drive traffic to a brand's website and increase its social media exposure because of their loyal audience.

### **Statement of the problem**

For years marketers have used different channels to connect with their customers and promote their products, traditional marketing used to be the only channel used, during the rise of social media a new marketing tool was realized called influencer marketing. Marketing strategies with which to get consumers have changed, so many things are not the same anymore. There are researchers who argue that influencers do not help in the marketing process in Nigeria, because of the deception of social media. There are many fake influencers who buy followers, likes, comments, and other things for their page. Most influencers exaggerate on how many followers they have, their engagement and their influence on their followers. The question at hand is whether influencer marketing has helped foster a more trusting relationship between the consumer and the brand, and if the influencer is an important channel to help maintain brand loyalty. This study therefore is to find out if influencers are marketing tools for ladies fashion in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area.

### **Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this study is to determine how social media influencers can be used as marketing tools for ladies' fashion clothing, a study of Port Harcourt City local government. Precisely, this study sought to:

1. Ascertain common social media platform influencers use as marketing tools among the residents of Port Harcourt City Local Government.
2. Examine the impact of social media influencers on the popularity and customer's loyalty for ladies' fashion clothing in Port Harcourt City Local Government.
3. Determine the challenges encountered in using social media influencers for the marketing of ladies' fashion clothing in Port Harcourt City Local Government.

### **Research questions**

The following research questions guided the investigation;

- What are the common social media platforms influencers use as marketing tools among the residents of Port Harcourt City Local Government?
- What is the impact of social media influencers on the popularity and customer loyalty of ladies fashion clothing in Port Harcourt City Local Government?
- What are the challenges encountered in using social media influencers for the marketing of ladies fashion clothing in Port Harcourt City Local Government?

### **Literature review**

#### **Social Media Influencers**

To accept social media influencers as a marketing tool we must understand social media, it cannot be understood without first defining it, Web 2.0: a term that describes a new way in which end users use the World Wide Web, a place where content is continuously altered by all operators in a sharing and collaborative way (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). "It deals with what people are doing with the technology than the technology itself, users are creating and consuming social media, which in turn adds value to the apps and website that allows them, rather than just using it to get information. It has progressed from just getting information to interaction, and collaboration between groups and individual.

Social media has grown from being just a place to keep in touch with your family and friends, now buyers can check out their favorite brands. This helps marketer make use of sites and apps to reach their customers as it provides a new way to shop. "Technology related developments such as the rise of powerful search engines, advanced mobile devices and interfaces, peer-to-peer communication vehicles, and online social networks have extended marketers' ability to reach shoppers through new touch points" (Shankar et al. 2011, p. 30).

#### **What is influencer marketing?**

Influencer marketing is the most essential new marketing method for those professionals at the forefront of purchasing decisions. The term "influence" can be widely defined as the ability to influence a person, thing, or sequence of events. (Brown & Hayes, 2008). According to Brown and Hayes, an Influencer is "a third party who significantly influences the customer's purchasing decision but may never be held accountable for it." Influencers are those that have the ability to influence the purchasing decisions of others due to their authority, knowledge, position, or relationship." (Business Dictionary). Social media influencers are ordinary people who persuade consumers to make a purchase choice. Anyone can be a social influencer, influencing others' brand affinity and purchasing decisions. (Singh et al. 2012), define influencer marketing as "a technique that employs social media

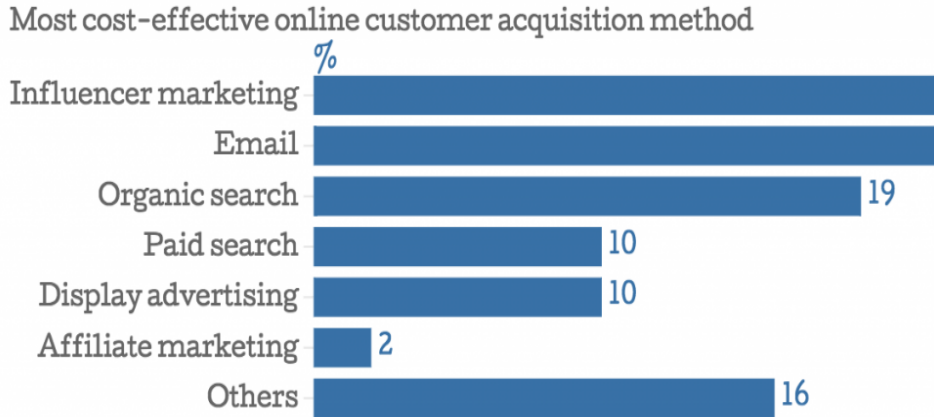
(content created by everyday people using highly accessible and scalable technologies such as blogs, message boards, podcasts, microblogs, and bookmarks, social networks, communities, wikis, and vlogs) and social influencers (everyday people who have an outsized influence on their peers by virtue of how much content they share) to achieve an organization's marketing and business needs (Matthews, 2013). Social media influencers are those who post their opinions on YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram or other social media channels. The most important aspect of this is that they have a large community/ following on social media and are willing to produce sponsored content for their followers.

### **What motivates the use of Influencer Marketing?**

Social media users, look up to Instagram models, Twitter personalities, TikTokers, and YouTube influencers for recommendations or to learn which brand or product is popular in the market when they have to make a decision on what to buy. As a result, brands are getting influencers to endorse their products using their various social media channels. The most important new marketing strategy to adopt is influencer marketing, which uses influencers as a marketing tool. There are numerous strategies that could help boost sales. Yet, nothing can compare to the success that influencer marketing has recently seen. Influencer marketing is word of mouth marketing, and it generates twice as much sales as paid advertising, according to studies, customers who purchase a product through word-of-mouth have a 37% higher retention rate, which is another reason why brands want to reach their customers through influencer marketing (Brown et al. 2013).

Influencer marketing is a channel for connecting with social media users. The rise and use of social media has reduced consumer's engagement with traditional forms of advertising and marketing. Traditional advertising is ignored by consumers, approximately 65% of people skip ads posted during or before online videos. According to Brown et al. (2013) more than ever, social media channels are being used to initiate conversations with customers and establish direct relationships with them. For brands engaging influencers has proven to be an effective way to get a sale, so brands are investing significant funds in influencer marketing.

According to a 2019 Mediakix survey, brands are partnering with influencers to launch various types of innovative campaigns, they pay premium on influencers and their suggestions; and spend time working with them to improve business strategy. Influencer marketing is incredibly effective in this way, with the primary focus on increasing brand awareness (84%), reaching new audiences (71%), and generating sales (64%) Tomoson (2016). Increased brand advocacy, increased brand awareness, increased reach to newly targeted audiences, increased share of voice, and increased sales conversion are the top five reasons why marketers use influencers in their marketing campaigns (Nanji, 2017).



Data: Tomoson (2016)

Dajah, (2020) says Influencer marketing is quiet affordable, it allows for both large corporations and small start-ups business to create marketing campaigns according to their budget, while advertising campaigns, for television commercials, magazine and newspaper ads, and so on, require a large amount to plan and execute. Influencer marketing, is affordable and easier to implement.

Influencers can be classified in numerous ways. There are massive influencers, macro influencers, and micro influencers (Tomoson, 2016). Generally, we distinguish influencer by the number of followers they have:

**Nano influencers:** This is the smallest group of influencers. Spiryn (2023) says that Nano influencers don't have a specific niche, their influence is small but are considered very genuine and sincere by their followers. They are your everyday social media user; this makes them more relatable. They have a small number of followers, between 1000-10,000. A study by Aspire.io (2022) found that nano-influencers have over twice the number of engagement than macro influencers.

**Micro influencers:** Micro influencers have a large number of followers than the Nano-influencer. Their social media presence is larger than a normal person but smaller than a celebrity. They usually have between 10,000-100,000 followers. As explained by Spiryn (2023) micro influencers create content on a specific niche, their followers are more devoted and active, and they have very high engagement rates. Their followers has the same interest as them and see them as authority figure in that field, and look to them for recommendation for their purchasing decisions.

**Macro influencers:** Spiryn (2023) says that macro influencers, have the second largest follower count between 100,000- 1,000,000. They are most times specialist in their field, here you can find some c-list celebrities, bloggers, vloggers YouTubers, social media managers, scientists, and people with established popularity outside social media, politicians, makeup artist, hairstylist, photographer, artist and other public personalities. It is harder to get them to work or influence for you and when interested their rates are usually high.

**Mega influencers:** Mega influencer have more than a million followers, they are more famous but not very influential, in this tier, and there are almost exclusively celebrities, athletes, actresses, and music artists. They have a distant relationship with their followers. When it comes to influencer marketing campaign, they are booked, busy and very expensive and only the biggest companies and brand can afford them, and are most times not interested because they earn money through other means. Companies with limited resources can work with micro (1,000-5,000 followers) or Nano (less than 1,000 followers) influencers to achieve remarkable results

without spending a fortune. Marketers are generating revenue from influencer marketing, they are make 10-20 times more than they invested, and in line with this their marketing budget keep increasing to get more influencer on board with their business.

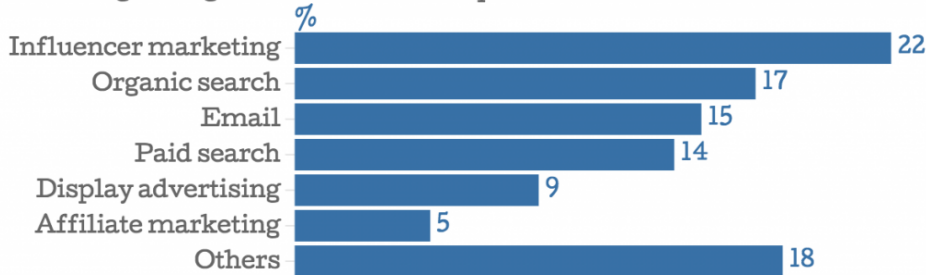
According to Takumi's 2020 research, Micro and Nano influencers generate high engagement rates than influencers with very high following, influencers with up to 1,000 followers can generate about 9.7% engagement rate, while influencers with 1,000-4,000 followers can generate 4.5% engagement rate. Micro and Nano influencers tend to build trust and authenticity, and are relatable to their audience, which increases their ability to engage an audience. In a study conducted by Experticity, 82% of consumers are more likely to listen to recommendations made by micro influencers than those made by influencers with a large number of followers. Based on surveys by Jeff Forster for convinceandconvert.com influencer marketing can generate a good average ROI of \$6.50 for every dollar spent, making it an appealing option for marketers (Forster,2020).

Social media Influencers are the essential part of storytelling, and help build up personal relationship between brands and customers, they are no longer an afterthought in marketing campaigns Influencers seen as genuine experts in their field and not simply advertisers, with 92% of consumers basing what they buy on the posts of influencers (Tomoson, 2016). Their ability to promote brands and keep audiences engaged and is what make brands keep returning for more (Forster, 2020).

Influencer marketing has its issues, engagement that are not authentic and have been bought by influencers are discouraged, the field is always changing and finding solutions. For example, Instagram is now very strict about fraudulent activities, and can suspend the influencers account, making them start to grow their page from scratch which is not easy to achieve. Werner (2023) states in influencermarketinghub.com that companies have also become more cautious and vigilant when engaging with influencers, thoroughly screening them for fake followers that are bought or the use of bots to increase followers.

Influencer marketing has become a mainstream marketing channel, and established itself in the advertising industry and regulatory authorities, social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and brands are taking steps to strengthen its position as a marketing channel. Influencer marketing will continue to grow in popularity in the future, it will become a more purposeful and effective way to communicate and engage with audiences. As stated in Tomoson (2016), brands will continue to collaborate with influencers, drawn by the endless possibilities, and industry growth.

Fastest-growing online customer-acquisition method



Data: Tomoson (2016)

## Theoretical Framework

### Two-stage Communication Model

The two-stage flow of information theory developed by E. Katz and P.F. Lazarsfeld in 1955 was adopted for this study. The tremendous and fast growth of social media, will make influencers who are current opinion leaders play an even bigger role in brand marketing and customer purchasing. The two-stage flow of information theory states that information first reaches opinion leaders or influencers who then disseminate it to the general public. This model is often referred to as the two-stage communication model in advertising and was developed by E. Katz and P.F. Lazarsfeld in 1955. Because they have the power to subtly affect other people's attitudes and behaviours on social networks, opinion leaders are crucial because they are powerful, they fulfill particular social roles. They frequently have important roles in significant public or private institutions functioning in a particular society, which grants them authority. Also, they possess substantial knowledge and competence in the particular field. Their typical traits include a relatively high degree of self-esteem, an open outlook on the world, high material and social standing, extensive professional activity, a favorable attitude.

Many research has been conducted on the theory of communication using a variety of scientific disciplines, which includes sociology, psychology, philosophy, cultural sciences, management sciences, arithmetic, and computer science. Marketing communication, according to Kotler and Keller (2014), refers to the various ways a business's attempt to inform and remind consumers, directly or indirectly, about the products and brands they have to offer. In a sense, marketing communication is the voice of the company's and brands. It allows businesses to communicate with customers and build bonds with them.

Advertising, sales promotion, public relations, and direct sales are the most used components of marketing communication, more tools were added over time. They are social media communication, event marketing, digital marketing, and direct marketing. Social media developed as a result of the social creation of online material, which has had a significant impact on the diversity of the field and the dynamics of the emergence of new forms. Social media has a significant impact on businesses as well as consumers, businesses make use of social media to learn more about prospective customers and actively promote products. Consumers usually learn about products through social media and base their decisions on that knowledge (Ismail, 2020).

Social media is involved with the concept of influencer marketing. Cialdini (2006), a social psychologist and economist, introduced the idea of an influencer in 2001. He discovered that a person with influence possessed social power, credibility, dedication, and constant activity. He was not referring to TikTokers, instagramers, or YouTubers, this term came in later years. Experts, activists, artists, idols, and lifestyle designers are all considered influencers in today's world. Recommendation marketing and influencer marketing are similar; the latter solely emphasizes the viewpoints of influencers. As Geysler (2023) says in this type of marketing, the influencers (advertises) rather than the advertised goods or services take center stage.

An influencer has an impact on the opinions of others and cultivates a strong bond with numerous individuals who strongly identify with them, most times, it is through their blog, or vlog (a video blog), they are active on Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, YouTube, or another social networking site, with a substantial (at least several hundred thousand people) audience. Trusted, credible and capable of swaying the opinions of the people gathered around them (Ismail, 2020).

### **Empirical Review**

According to Vyatkina (2019) who conducted a study titled "The Impact of Influencer Marketing on the Global Economy". The main purpose of the study was to explain why influencer marketing is effective. The method used were Logic analysis, inductive and deductive methods, analysis of scientific literature and other research methods.

Works of Russian, European and American scientists, which threw light on the problems of traditional marketing communications and influencer marketing, and served as theoretical background for the data analysis in the study. The study concluded that influencer marketing is the most popular marketing instruments with the ability to create content that is authentic and engaging to the relevant audience. The influencer industry has proven successful against a wide array of brand initiatives (merchandising drive periods, new product launches, corporate charitable programs, brand loyalty and base support across a brand’s portfolio). It says that the question to ask is when and how influencer marketing should be integrated into overall marketing plans. Since it is growing, companies need to take a more strategic and proactive approach to define how and when they should use influencers. As it is crucial that the influencer’s content aligns with brand’s overall image.

Okposo (2022) conducted a study titled “The Effectiveness of Nigerian Social Media Influencers in Promoting Brands and Products”. The study employed a quantitative approach incorporating 205 social media users, who were chosen through purposive sampling, using questionnaire which was used to ensure that the users are representative of major social media platforms in Nigeria. His study found that there is a significant positive relationship between credibility perception of social media users and the effectiveness of social media influencers. The most significant factors that determine the effectiveness of Nigerian social media influencers include interactivity, informativeness, trendiness and word-of-mouth. It concludes that there is a significant positive relationship between the credible perception of social media users and the effectiveness of social media influencers in promoting brands and products/services.

Corroborating further, the study used the Karanikolova (2019) in his work “Fashion Influencer Decoded”. Influencers have become the bridge brands use to reach the customer through the ever-changing and evolving cultural communities. The study used the survey design with the questionnaire and interview as instruments for data collection. In this study, the researcher used luxury fashion brands as case studies. She says Collaborations between the influencer and brand can bring back life to the brands and make them fresh in the eyes of potential new customers. The brands use influencers in different ways from just creating one-time post for exposure or testing the influencer’s community to invitations to events for connection and gained media and spreading the brands message on a bigger scale faster, while delivering to diverse consumers. The study shows that when brands and influencers collaborations are done right, they have an impact on the brands from business point of view and results in creating loyal clients. The paper shows that influencer marketing is very useful to luxury houses. Influencers are the new transmedia to reaching the customer through creating long-lasting and meaningful relationships.

**Methodology**

This study employed the survey research design with the questionnaires as instrument for data collection. The population of this study includes the ladies who are residents of Port Harcourt City local government area. The population of ladies resident in Port Harcourt City is 501,105. To arrive at an equitable sample size, the Taro Yamane’s Formula for determining sample size was adopted. The formula thus n=

$$\frac{N}{1+N(e)^2},$$

Where n = the sample size sought. N = population which is 501,105 in Port Harcourt City local government, and e = level of significance (reliability) which is = 0.05.

Hence, n =

$$\frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} = \frac{501,105}{1+501,105 (0.05)^2} = \frac{501,105}{1+501,105 \times 0.0025} = \frac{501,105}{1252.7} = 399.9 \approx 400.00$$

A total of four hundred (400) ladies resident in the study areas were sampled for the study, and the random sampling technique was used. The entire process of sampling was done in a single step with each subject selected independently of the other members of the population.

400 copies of the questionnaire were administered but only 370 were returned. Marital status used in the study is single, married, or divorced. The questionnaire was used to collect the data. The 15-item questionnaire was structured using the Likert ratio scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The instrument was validated using face and content validity. The reliability index of the instrument was 0.75.

In carrying out this research work, mean and rank order statistical methods were used in relation to the items of factors studied. Conclusion was made based on the calculated mean scores. A criterion mean is determined as follows:

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{SA} - \quad \quad \quad 4 \\
 \text{A} \quad \quad \quad \quad 3 \\
 \text{SD} \quad \quad \quad \quad 2 \\
 \text{D} \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad 1 \\
 \text{This } 4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = \quad \quad \quad \frac{10}{4} = 2.5
 \end{array}$$

Hence, the sum of the mean divided by the total number of respondents is 2.5 becomes the criterion mean, here negative and positive responses are determined. Any item that has a mean score which is below 2.5 was regarded as negative and therefore rejected while any score from 2.5 and above was regarded as positive and therefore accepted.

**Presentation of Data**

**Research Question One**

**What are the common social media platforms influencers use as marketing tools among the residents of Port Harcourt City Local Government?**

Table 1: mean scores of respondents on the common social media influencers used as marketing tools among the residents of Port Harcourt City Local Government

	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Remark
1	TikTok	245 (980)	95 (285)	20 (40)	10 (10)	370 (1315)	3.55	Accepted
2	YouTube	145 (580)	168 (504)	32 (64)	25 (25)	370 (1173)	3.17	Accepted
3	Facebook pages	190 (760)	92 (276)	52 (104)	36 (36)	370 (1176)	3.18	Accepted
4	Snapchat	149 (596)	96 (288)	75 (150)	50 (50)	370 (1084)	2.93	Accepted
5	Instagram	201 (804)	129 (387)	21 (42)	19 (19)	370 (1252)	3.38	Accepted

**Criterion mean = 2.5; n=370**

Table 1 showed that the respondents accepted all the items as the common social media influencers used as marketing tools among the residents of Port Harcourt City Local Government, because their mean values were above the criterion mean of 2.50. The common social media influencers used as marketing tools among the residents of Port Harcourt City are as follows; TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and Facebook.

**Research Question Two**

**What is the impact of social media influencers on the popularity and customer loyalty of ladies fashion clothing in Port Harcourt City Local Government?**

Table 2 mean scores of respondents on the impacts of the social media influencers on the popularity and customers’ loyalty of the ladies fashion clothing in Port Harcourt City Local Government.

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Remark
6	They lead to high popularity of the products		129 (387)	21 (42)	19 (19)	370 (1252)	3.38	Accepted
7	They lead to high sales of the products	201 (804)	92 (276)	52 (104)	36 (36)	370 (1224)	3.18	Accepted
8	A lot of Port Harcourt residents prefer to patronize popular fashion products	201 (804)	129 (387)	21 (42)	19 (19)	370 (1252)	3.38	Accepted
9	Social media influencers help to get the products to the door post of the customers so that they can easily purchase online	199 (796)	96 (288)	58 (116)	17 (17)	370 (1217)	3.29	Accepted
10	Social media influencers have no impacts on the purchasing power of the products	32 (128)	39 (117)	93 (186)	206 (206)	370 (637)	1.72	Accepted

**Criterion Mean= 2.5; n=370**

Table 2 showed that all items were accepted by the respondents as the impacts of the social media influencers on the popularity and customers loyalty of the ladies fashion clothing in Port Harcourt City Local Government, because their mean values were above the criterion mean of 2.50. The impacts of the social media influencers on the popularity and customers loyalty of the ladies fashion clothing in Port Harcourt City include the following: They lead to high popularity of the products, they lead to high sales of the products, A lot of Port Harcourt residents prefer to patronize popular fashion products, and that social media influencers help to get the products to the door post of the customers so that they can easily purchase through online.

**Research Question Three**

**What are the challenges encountered in using social media influencers for the marketing of ladies fashion clothing in Port Harcourt City Local Government?**

Table 3 mean scores of respondents on the challenges encountered in using social media influencers for marketing of ladies fashion clothing in Port Harcourt City Local Government?

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Remark
11	Marketing and sales of low-quality products	205 (820)	85 (255)	47 (94)	33 (33)	370 (1202)	3.25	Accepted
12	Indiscipline in marketing	146 (584)	80 (240)	124 (248)	20 (20)	370 (1092)	2.95	Accepted
13	Unprofessionalism in marketing practice	149 (596)	96 (288)	75 (150)	50 (50)	370 (1084)	2.93	Accepted
14	Difficulty in turning marketing into sales	65 (260)	185 (555)	77 (154)	33 (33)	370 (1002)	2.71	Accepted
15	Low accessibility of online marketing by greater number of residents	65 (260)	185 (555)	77 (154)	33 (33)	370 (1002)	2.71	Accepted

**Criterion mean = 2.5; n=370**

Table 3 showed that the all items were accepted as the challenges encountered in using social media influencers for marketing in Port Harcourt City, because the mean values of the accepted items were above the criterion mean of 2.50. The challenges encountered while using social media influencers for marketing in Port Harcourt City include the following: Marketing and sales of low-quality products, Indiscipline in marketing, unprofessionalism in marketing practice, difficulty in turning marketing into sales, and low accessibility of online marketing by greater number of residents.

**Discussion of Finding**

**Research question 1:** What are the common social media platforms influencers use as marketing tools among the residents of Port Harcourt City Local Government? The results of analysis from the table shows that the respondents accepted all the items as the common social media platforms used by influencers as marketing tools among the residents of Port Harcourt City Local Government. Over 80% of women do their fashion and accessories shopping online, they look to their favourite influencers to serve as their guide online—getting the best sales prices, researching the best quality items and noting the must-haves and trends, In order to get the involvement of the respondents in social media, the question on the social media platforms used shows that — TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, were all used. These results align with the results of other studies such as Zatwarnicka-Madura et. al (2022) whose analysis of research results showed very similar trends in the use of social media. Three social media platforms that dominate are Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. In each of them, over 70% of the respondents declared systematic use, and every third respondent systematically uses Snapchat and Tik-Tok.

**Research question 2:** What is the impact of social media influencers on the popularity and customer loyalty of ladies fashion clothing in Port Harcourt City Local Government? The results from table two above show that the majority of respondents agreed that social media influencers post about a product lead to high popularity, high sales and an impact on the purchasing power of the products. This result is in line with the findings of Kantar research conducted in Poland in 2020, where half of the respondents of his study made a purchasing decision following the recommendation of an influencer. This implies that following the results it is the decisions of social media users to like the brand and post which are influenced by the personalities of the influencers. However, studies like Zatwarnicka-Madura et al. (2022) found demographics results which do not align with those of this study their research shows little impact of influencers and a low level of trust in them.

**Research question 3:** What are the challenges encountered while using social media influencers for the marketing of ladies fashion clothing in Port Harcourt City Local Government? The findings in table 3 reveal the challenges encountered in using social media influencers for marketing of ladies fashion clothing in Port Harcourt City Local Government which include Marketing and sales of low-quality products, indiscipline in marketing, unprofessionalism in marketing practice, difficulty in turning marketing into sales, and low accessibility of online marketing by greater number of residents. These results go with the findings of Jarrar et. al. (2020) who asserts that influencer marketing is not as effective as sponsored advertisements on social media. While Mangold et al. (2017) from his result says that the influencer is more cost effective for the brand and the creation of great content using the promotion material will boost sales, grow the brands, lead generation and constant traffic for the organization.

The most important factors that determine the effectiveness of social media influencers are interactivity, information, trends and word of mouth. The ability of influencers to share trending brands and products is the single most important factor in determining their effectiveness.

### **Conclusion**

The result derived from this study has shown that social media influencers are effective marketing tools. Influencers shape the attitudes and behaviour of their followers, because of the trust the audience have for them, their expertise are important drivers to their followers' purchase intention, and they buy fashion products online. The use of social media apps to influence ladies in Port Harcourt is a plus. There are a few challenges from the point of quality of product marketed, which is a manufacturing problem, which also leads in low sales. The study's results show that even with the challenges, social media influencers still have a great influence on female residents in Port Harcourt. It can also be concluded that majority of the residents surveyed perceived influencer marketing to be fairly effective and would have wished that they checked and used the products before marketing it to their followers. Influencers are becoming savvy at determining the best way to engage with their audience. Social media influencers are the new tools used by brands to market their products, the power some people have to influence purchasing decision is priceless, but caution must also be exercised when using them. This study concludes that personalization is a major determinant of social media influencers being marketing tools for ladies fashion in Port Harcourt City Local Government.

### **Recommendations**

- ❖ Marketers and product owners should be encouraged to utilise these new social media influencers as tools in making their products to be easily known by consumers.
- ❖ The government should be actively involved in regulating the excesses of social media marketing.
- ❖ There should be avenues to ensure that products that are marketed and sold through the social media meet the required standard.

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